

KRZYSZTOF MALICKI

BETWEEN OBLIVION AND EXCLUSIVE MEMOR[‡]

THE PAST OF THE JEWS IN THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY
OF THE INHABITANTS OF RZESZOW



WYDAWNICTWO UNIWERSYTETU RZESZOWSKIEGO

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INTRODUCTION

Reflection on the history of Jews from the area of current Poland has a characteristic feature, namely the significant disproportion between the dynamic development of studies on Jewish life and the Holocaust during the war, as well as the scale of social memory about it; expressed both in material commemorations and the cognizance of current residents in areas formerly inhabited by Jews or sites of their extermination. Despite the steady increase in the number of popular science publications, and the fact that the most important places of the Holocaust involving Polish Jews have been in time commemorated in the form of museums or memorial sites, social studies still show large areas of social obliviousness or falsified memory¹. Sławomir Karpalski writes about Jews who used to live in Poland: "It can be said that they are commemorated, but not remembered"². What is more, as the research of social research centers indicate, over seven decades since the end of the war, it seems to have changed just a little, and probable changes in the memory of Poles have been occurring very slowly. "War damage in the area of memory," as Antoni Sulek observes, "has not yet been removed, we are still in the period of post-war "cleansing"³. Understanding and explaining such a situation requires continuous research and constant diagnosis. This book attempts to address this issue.

This book is a result of a series of research conducted at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Rzeszow in the years 2010–2016 and is an expanded version of a monograph published in 2016 entitled "70 years after the Holocaust"⁴. The goal of the entire research which this book embraces is to diagnose the contemporary memory of the inhabitants of Rzeszow on the history of the Jews who used to reside in the city until 1945. In this year, after liberation from the Germans, the last

¹ P. T. Kwiatkowski, L. M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka, A. Szpociński (2010), *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*. Muzeum II Wojny Światowej, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Gdańsk-Warszawa.

² S. Karpalski (2016), *Żydzi i zagłada w polskich kulturach pamięci: między antagonizmem i agonem*, Teksty drugie 2016, no. 6, p. 354.

³ A. Sulek (2017), *Badacz i świadek drugiej generacji. O ratowaniu lokalnej pamięci zagłady Żydów*, Więż, vol. 4, p. 74.

⁴ K. Malicki (2016), *70 lat po Zagładzie, Przeszłość Żydów w pamięci zbiorowej mieszkańców Rzeszowa*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego. See also: K. Malicki (2021), *Pomiędzy niepamięcią a pamięcią ekskluzywną. Współczesny Rzeszów wobec swej żydowskiej przeszłości*. Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały, vol. 17.

anti-Semitic riots took place in Rzeszow. Then, the last few survivors of the Holocaust vacated the city. Thus, a four-hundred-year chapter of the uninterrupted presence of Jews in the history of Rzeszow came to an end.

This book is based on social surveys conducted on large representative samples of inhabitants of the capital of the Podkarpace Voivodeship. The first survey was carried out in 2010 on a sample of 585 city residents. This study was repeated in a slightly amended form in 2015 on an enlarged sample of 800 people. The materials obtained, became the starting point for further exploration of the topic. Since the memory of the past of any community is not only the concept people have, but also various processes of creating memorial sites, the empirical data from both surveys has been completed through documentation of the Social Policy Department of the Voivodeship Office in Rzeszow. An in-depth analysis of the processes of commemoration of both the heritage of Jews and the local politics of memory on many levels, was possible thanks to the fact the author of this book has worked in the Committee for the Protection of the Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom in Rzeszow (whose jurisdiction covers the entire voivodeship). In Rzeszow, there are many places connected with the Jewish past, although they are not always properly identified and therefore it is impossible for an unacquainted person to become familiar with the multi-faceted and rich past of this community in the history of the city. These memorial sites, however, are in no way to be overlooked while exploring Rzeszow and its most important pre-war buildings of the current capital of the Voivodeship. Concepts regarding history, and official monuments/ memorial sites, are not the only areas where forms of memory of the past can be searched for. A sociologist can determine the condition and forms of this memory from many other factors. Some are official and are supported by state or local government institutions (major celebrations or monuments), others are expressed through social activities, more bottom-up and resulting from passion and the need to preserve or restore memory. Very often, thanks to such circles of people, memory is reconstructed at a local or even much broader, regional and even national level. That is why, over the past few years, the author's observations and participation in regularly organized ceremonies in Rzeszow aimed at commemorating the Jews who were slain have been an important source of knowledge.

The collected materials also include recorded interviews with the residents of the city, conducted as part of various research projects on the memory of Jews and their Holocaust, conducted both individually and as part of classes with sociology students of the University of Rzeszow.

Addressing this topic was a challenge, given the specific character of today's capital of Podkarpace. The pre-war poviat town, which Rzeszow was until 1939, was largely destroyed during German occupation. The destruction primari-

ly affected the ghetto areas. During the war, more than a third of the city's inhabitants, mainly Jews, were killed. After the war, Rzeszow was to become a model socialist city, which influenced the shaping of its urban space. These new concepts did not attach great value to the past, especially to the realities of the independent state before 1939. The city underwent huge transformations, not only during the Polish People's Republic, but also after 1989, and today it is a dynamic socio-economic organism, young in a demographic sense. Such a situation does not usually correspond with reflecting on the past. However, such socio-economic success of an urban community- a voivodeship city and its region – is most often impossible without investing in a collective identity which is difficult to build without referring to historical roots. Thus, becoming familiar with it and diagnosing the condition of memory of the past appear to be a task for both cognitive and practical purposes.

By virtue of the fact that the city's population is almost eight times greater than its post-war population, and as a result of extensive spatial and symbolic transformations, traces of the presence of the former Jewish community in this area have been to a very large extent covered up, but not eliminated completely. They are expressed today in forms of material commemorations, as well as by the awareness of the residents of Rzeszow, who have adopted a variety of attitudes towards the history of the annihilated Jewish community. The decision to begin research on this subject years ago was justified by abundant evidence demonstrating that the memory of Jews is not insignificant, at least for a certain portion of city residents. Therefore, this work is an attempt to observe the phenomenon of local community memory and to discuss this particular aspect.

The aim of this book is to present one of the important elements of the local recollection of the current capital of Podkarpacie, without which discussion on the relationships between the past and the present of a modern city would be a failure. At the beginning of the 21st century, recollection of the past of Rzeszow is still at the stage of shaping. As social research reflects, there are still more gaps and inaccuracies in the perception of residents about the city's past than sound and solid knowledge. Many layers of the past of the local community are simply unknown. That is why this study undertakes this particular element of the history of Rzeszow, being a support for all local activities whose goal is to work for the local community by referring to the historical and contemporary transformations of recollections of the past.

This practical goal is certainly defined by the challenges that both city authorities and active leaders of local communities are facing today. The renaissance of various forms of memory of the past, which has been visible in the last two decades, as well as all processes of discovering the past should also be subject to the exploration and monitoring of social researchers.

To sum up, I would like to refer to personal experiences from my high school education period which in time took the form of the research presented here, which in turn contributed to the development of this book. During my high school education, each day, on my way to school, I walked through the city park in Rzeszow, the oldest in the city and a former Jewish cemetery. Back then, there was no monument informing people what existed there for many centuries and what tragic events took place there during the war. The square was dominated by an unbecoming monument of a Soviet soldier. It suggested a completely different past for this place and the name Plac Ofiar Getta (Victims of the Ghetto Square) (still called Plac Zwycięstwa – Victory Square by many residents) caused additional cognitive dissonance. There are still layers of thousands of broken pieces of Jewish matzevah, priceless historical treasures often dating back to the 16th century, which the Germans used to harden this street at the beginning of the occupation located beneath the street where my old high school is situated. People discovered this much later. Similar to many other facts from the past of the annihilated Rzeszow Jews. History lessons in school, where students should learn about such events, did not really touch on the Holocaust, nor did they at all mention local aspects. Discussing the Holocaust from the perspective of national history meant that the opportunity to demonstrate that these unprecedented events were local and so close, was irretrievably lost.

Extracurricular knowledge and that gathered on my own, already led to the search for further, in-depth information. It resulted in an attempt to piece together the parts of a forgotten past, both broken up and mixed up by time. Not so much by further historical studies, but by referring to the living memory of contemporary city residents and connecting the past with the present.

Here, I would like to acknowledge those who, through their support, contributed to the creation of this book. I would like to extend special thanks to students of the Institute of Sociology at the University of Rzeszow, participants of several research projects within classes on social research methods and techniques, who were confronted with this unusual problem for sociologists.

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CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF RESEARCH

1.1. Memory and city as a subject of sociological research

Cities are particularly important social research objects. As Andrzej Majer notes, for sociologists a city has "mainly a human dimension, which means that physical area and social area are, or at least should be, inseparable."⁵ Although the post-industrial era has changed the approach to areas by the process of its deterritorialization and creating its previously unknown forms (for example on the Internet)⁶, a city still remains a unique object, arousing interest in countless researchers. Although there are views that modern cities are only an abstraction and a reality difficult to isolate on the urban-rural continuum, there is a general consensus that in urban space we encounter a special concentration and escalation of social problems, which on this scale cannot be encountered anywhere else.⁷

The amount of these problems is great, thus making it the subject of research for a multitude of scientists representing numerous sub-disciplines of social sciences. This book analyses one of these numerous problems which is the special dimension of social life in the urban space which is the collective memory of the inhabitants of Rzeszów, the voivodeship city and capital of Podkarpacie. More specifically, a special element of this memory related to the past and the heritage of Rzeszów Jews. This phenomenon is analyzed mainly through its most popular manifestations – the aspect of awareness of the city's population as well as the physical and symbolic dimension.

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, there was a great increase in the interest in collective memory which resulted in an exponential rise of publications of various kinds. One could even say that never before had the research of social

⁵ A. Majer (2010), *Socjologia i przestrzeń miejska*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, p. 17.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

⁷ J. Wódz (1989), *Spoleczna rola przestrzeni – wprowadzenie do rozważań socjologicznych nad przestrzenią* [in:] J. Wódz (ed.), *Przestrzeń znacząca. Studia socjologiczne*, Katowice, pp. 9–23.

memory been so popular. Determinants and causes of this popularity are obviously complex, but certain civilizational and cultural phenomena of the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries are definitely some of them. According to Pierre Nora, this process of "return of memory" is caused, among others, by the uncertainty of the future, which makes people look back into the past. Equally important is the process of democratization of the perception of the past, until now through history as a science, reserved rather for government elites and universities⁸. A variety of ways of addressing the past and evoking memory that had not been noticed and had not been taken into account resulted in a great change in the study of the past. As Jacek Żakowski notes: "Disputes about the past have taken over a considerable part of attention so far devoted to various visions of the future, not only in the Polish public debate, (...). And not only in Poland is it impossible to escape from the past and from responsibility. But this unexpected change does not affect just the direction we are looking. The way we perceive the past has also been changing. A positive history present at universities and taught in schools (...) is today in a decline"⁹. This means new research areas for sociologists since the beginning of the 20th century and since the groundbreaking works of Maurice Halbwachs, with theoretical foundations for research projects on the collective memory of many social categories.

Mentioning Halbwachs's name here is well justified. Despite the popularity of collective memory research, some basic theoretical aspects related to learning about this subject require at least a brief introduction, as this book discusses issues being at the intersection of sociology, history, psychology and anthropology. Several key issues should be introduced as they relate to further discussions, and they are all connected with Maurice Halbwachs who developed the concept of collective memory. He was the first to draw attention to collective perception of the past and memory which lives beyond the individual. Until then, memory had been considered as a domain of psychology. He also considered the social determinants of memory and its social "framework." In his opinion, this framework creates communities such as: family, social classes, and nations. In his book aptly titled "Social Memory Framework," he also draws attention to the dilemma of researchers of the past on how to distinguish history (the research domain of historians) and collective memory (the research domain of sociologists)¹⁰.

The theory of collective memory has evolved considerably since Halbwachs times. A lot of empirical research has been undertaken, and the large and often

⁸ J. Żakowski (2002), *Rewanż pamięci*, Sic!, Warszawa, pp. 61–63.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 12–13.

¹⁰ M. Halbwachs (1969), *Spoleczne ramy pamięci*, tłum. M. Król, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa; M. Halbwachs (1997), *La mémoire collective*, Éditions Albin Michel, Paris.

pioneering contribution of Polish sociologists to theoretical and empirical studies in this field should be emphasized¹¹. Many issues related in various ways to this topic have also been analyzed. It is understandable that researchers were particularly interested in, among others, issues such as: memory transfer channels, the identity and legitimacy function of memory, the role of myths in creating common ideas about the past or the relationship between memory and space.

Although the abovementioned Halbwachs analyzed the social "framework" of collective memory in terms of such groups as a family, social classes or religious communities; there is no doubt that territorial communities, especially those where certain forms of territorial identity are noticed, can be made a similar subject of analysis. The relationship between collective memory and identity – which has already been signaled – seems indisputable and is thoroughly analyzed by social researchers¹². As Marek S. Szczepański notes, regional identity is based, among others, on elements such as: identification with the region, awareness of cultural heritage, understanding the meanings and symbols of material culture, individual and collective relationship with protagonists and historical institutions¹³. It seems that the elements that make up the regional identity can also be applied to other territorial communities, with the city becoming a particularly interesting subject of research in this respect. Especially if the city is treated as an integral whole in a historical perspective, where elements from the past and the present are construed together. According to Kazimiera Wódz: "Historic buildings, historical monuments, places of religious worship and a city center with buildings, offices, institutions and shops are examples of space of symbolic meaning derived from tradition, from the current hierarchy of values and from symbolic universes, myths, stereotypes, beliefs and knowledge that function there and are sustained thanks to social communication"¹⁴.

¹¹ N. Assorodobraj (1963), „Żywa historia”. *Świadomość historyczna: symptomy i propozycje badawcze*, „Studia Socjologiczne” no. 2; B. Szacka (1983), *Przeszłość w świadomości inteligencji polskiej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa; A. Szpociński (1989), *Przemiany obrazu przeszłości Polski. Analiza słuchowisk historycznych dla szkół podstawowych 1951–1984*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa; P. Kwiatkowski (1990), *Spoleczne ramy tradycji. Przemiany obrazu przeszłości Mazowsza Płockiego w publikacjach regionalnych 1918–1988*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa.

¹² B. Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, pp. 47–54.

¹³ M.S. Szczepański (1999), *Tożsamość regionalna – w kręgu pojęć podstawowych i metodologii badań* [in:] G. Gorzelak, M.S. Szczepański, T. Zarycki (eds.), *Rozwój. Region. Społeczeństwo*, Uniwersytet Warszawski, Wydawnictwo Rolewski, Warszawa–Toruń, pp. 82–83.

¹⁴ K. Wódz (1990), *Planowe i żywiołowe tworzenie, naznaczanie i przyswajanie przestrzeni miejskiej – założenia teoretyczne badań w czterech miastach Górnośląskiego Okręgu Przemysłowego* [in:] K. Wódz (ed.), *Problemy metodologiczne badań procesów planowych i żywiołowych w mieście*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice, p. 73.

Undoubtedly, a city as a territorial collectivity constitutes (or may constitute) the "framework" of the shared memory of the past. The forms of this memory may be diverse and may be more or less developed. Of course, the forms and shapes of these "frames" depend on many factors. The city's history and the material heritage of the past are probably of greatest importance here. This situation appears obvious for cities with a long and rich history. History itself is sometimes the greatest asset of these territorial units, ensuring tourists' interest and generating investments. Larger problems appear in the case of local or regional communities with a poor portrayal of the past, which sometimes has to be created or even invented from scratch. As Wojciech Łukowski notes, in this field "creativity is sometimes accompanied with ridicule, undoubtedly indicating determination in the search for originality"¹⁵. However, even the most prosperous past does not guarantee success. It is necessary for it to be recalled and promoted.

The relationship between the number of historical objects denoting the tradition and continuity of a city, and symbolic perception is confirmed by comparative studies of various Polish cities¹⁶. In the case of Poland, the greatest interference in building this continuity was undoubtedly precipitated by World War II which, as a result of German occupation, led to a scale of destruction that had never before happened in Polish history. Material losses, especially in national culture, must have affected the identity of the inhabitants of the cities which were rebuilt or settled anew (new residents often without roots and connections with their new places of residence). What is more, the new system desperately strived to fill this emptiness with new values based on their "own" portrayal of history. Free market spatial transformations occurring in urban areas after 1989 often harmed the process of maintaining historical tradition rather than helped it. As Bohdan Jałowiecki notes: "The destruction of historical space may lead to the loss of cultural identity of a given community, and this threat is even more visible as the pace of the process of creating production and consumption areas of modern industrial civilizations increases"¹⁷. Of course, the communist period was of great importance too. Then a large-scale selection of symbolic spaces incompatible with the dominant ideological system took place. Moreover, it was a period full of paradoxes, as on the one hand, everything which impinged on the strengthened image of the past was consistently eliminated, and on the other, at least some threads of national history had to be accepted, trying to give them

¹⁵ W. Łukowski (2009), *Symboliczne domykanie społeczności lokalnych i regionalnych w późnonowoczesnej przestrzeni społecznej. Przykład Mazur* [in:] G. Gorzelak, M. S. Szczepański, W. Ślęzak-Tazbir, *Człowiek – miasto – region. Związki i interakcje. Księga jubileuszowa Bohdana Jałowieckiego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, p. 171.

¹⁶ H. Libura (1990), *Percepcje przestrzeni miejskiej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa, p. 167.

¹⁷ B. Jałowiecki (1985), *Przestrzeń jako pamięć*, „Studia Socjologiczne”, no. 2, p. 134.

new meanings or to adapt to existing official ideology. The city of Warsaw and the reconstruction of some of its areas (e.g. the Old Town or the Royal Castle) is often provided as an example¹⁸. Peripheral cities, which Rzeszow was, were of course in a completely different and not so favorable situation.

Theoretical concepts which explain the social creation of space are an immanent part of the sociology of the city and a starting point for analyses of this topic. According to Bohdan Jałowicki, there are three types of spatial behavior resulting from the functional and symbolic nature of space. First of all, the creating of space depends on the method of production and the dominant ideology. Secondly, the marking of space is also conditioned by ideology, often at the stage of space creation. Third, assimilation, meaning the adaptation or modification of (usually informal) space to the standards of your portrayal¹⁹.

Therefore, it is difficult to analyze urban space in isolation from the past and the political and ideological context implemented by the actors of creating urban space. As the author emphasizes: "Urban space is therefore a message that can only be read as a whole. This whole consists of both the present and the past, individual elements and the relationships between them – the world of things and the world of symbols"²⁰.

In his opinion, space, which is a "permanent memory of society", can be "filled" in three ways: the first a quantitative increase – new texts and forms; the second method is "regrouping" the structure, which changes the nature of space; the third symbolizes 'forgetting,' i.e. eliminating particular spatial forms or changing their original function²¹. Not one of these processes is accidental, which is emphasized by Marek Ziółkowski: "Recalling memory is always done due to the contemporary interests and contemporary business of specific entities. These "subjects of memory" participate in a kind of a game of the memory of a given society"²². Creating, selecting and transforming the symbolic layer of the city or forgetting are complicated phenomena that can be a topic for a separate study. In this place, we should refer to the history of Rzeszow, which makes a memory-spatial framework for further discussion on the phenomenon of memory about the community of Jews living in the city. Rzeszow may certainly be an interesting case illustrating the abovementioned processes in two areas which are important here: creating / transforming space during profound political changes and selecting its symbolic layer.

¹⁸ B. Jałowicki, M.S. Szczepański (2006), *Miasto i przestrzeń w perspektywie socjologicznej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, pp. 187–199.

¹⁹ B. Jałowicki (2010), *Spoleczne wytwarzanie przestrzeni*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, pp. 24–25.

²⁰ B. Jałowicki (1985), *Przestrzeń jako pamięć...*, p. 132.

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 132–133.

²² M. Ziółkowski (1999), *Cztery funkcje przywracanej pamięci*, „Studia Socjologiczne”, no. 4, p. 63.

As previously mentioned, the historical and symbolic layers of a city play a significant role in shaping awareness. Old churches, tenements, elements of defensive systems and palaces play a significant role. Rzeszów has interesting experiences in this respect. As this new, socialist city, expanded after 1944, it had to reconcile the old past with the new buildings that were created on drawing boards under the watchful eye of the local secretaries of the Voivodeship Committee of Polish United Workers' Party. Of course, everything which was new was preferred, at the expense of a constant devastation of the old city. "Post-war changes in spatial symbolism," as Marian Malikowski writes, "were aimed to eject from consciousness such values as localism (which was associated with provincialism), poverty, underdevelopment and old traditions that were treated as bourgeois, petty-bourgeois or feudal (...). Rzeszów in the visions of its creators was to be a large and modern socialist city with revolutionary traditions"²³. The transformations made by the new authorities were reflected in the attitude of the inhabitants towards their own city. Research from the seventies shows that during that time, the inhabitants of Rzeszów rated the symbolic places of the capital of the region very low. Among the people with the highest level of education, there were many demands for the reconstruction and restoration of the old center and monuments destroyed during the war²⁴. These studies generally found a discrepancy between the assessment of the city's characteristics relating to the broadly understood present (urban layout, job prospects) and those that were associated with the past and symbolism. While the former were highly rated, the latter just the opposite²⁵.

The process of diagnosing this specific "breakup" with the city's past during the period of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) most likely had its consequences in the attitudes of subsequent generations of Rzeszów residents, which was developing dynamically despite the political changes (this was also due to the administrative reform of 1999, eliminating regional competitors for the position of the capital of the region) and absorbing many new residents, often young, arriving to study at the city's universities. Considering the huge influx of people from the surrounding villages in the PRL period, it is not surprising that the research indicates that the level of memory of the inhabitants about the city's past was low. The city was a historical *terra incognita*²⁶.

²³ M. Malikowski (1991), *Powstawanie dużego miasta. Drogi i bezdroża socjalistycznej urbanizacji na przykładzie Rzeszowa*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Rzeszowie, Rzeszów 1991, p. 238.

²⁴ M. Malikowski (1984), *Więź mieszkańców z miastem. Studium socjologiczne na przykładzie społeczeństwa miasta Rzeszowa*, Towarzystwo Naukowe w Rzeszowie, Rzeszów, p. 129.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ H. Kotarski, K. Malicki (2013), *Stolica Podkarpacia wczoraj i dziś. Studium socjologiczne społecznych aspektów przemian w Rzeszowie w latach 1989–2009*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów, pp. 81–97.

Today, these paradoxes make Rzeszow an interesting case not only for sociologists, but also for urban planners, because the city, through its spatial and architectural forms, can tell its intricate stories. In the central part of the city there are two spaces superbly connected together, created as a result of the rivalry for great ideological projects. On one hand there are places located around the old town. It is a space with many churches, historic tenement houses, the market square and monuments, which still symbolize the connection with national history (monuments of Adam Mickiewicz and Tadeusz Kościuszko erected during the liberal Galician autonomy) and the contribution of the local community to the struggle for liberation (the monument of Colonel Leopold Lis-Kula built during the Second Polish Republic). Located alongside it is a radically different world of the monumental neoclassical buildings of the ruling party and the authorities, which after 1989 were efficiently adapted to new needs. Large empty areas once designed for the purpose of demonstrations and marches in front of local party activists today are filled with parking lots, recreation areas, and large as well as high-end shopping centers. This is an ironic sign of the triumph of capitalism over real socialism, although - another paradox - the whole area is dominated by one of the largest communist monuments in Poland commemorating the revolutionary act in Rzeszow.

These two parts of the city are, therefore, bonded by areas of recreation and trade/commerce, which can "tame" even the abovementioned flagship monument. This monument towering over the city, despite commemorating the often dark pages in the history of the region (including the brutal "strengthening of people power" after 1944 and which involved officers of the Security Office) is constantly enjoying the great sentiment of the city's inhabitants (most often unaware of what the monument commemorates). Surveys of inhabitants from 2009 and 2015 clearly show that the most preferred (as leisure spaces, "magic places", places chosen as the city's showcase) are these areas with a long history. The areas from the PRL period are systematically less often indicated²⁷.

Symbolic places, such as monuments and memorial sites, are a separate issue. In 1940, the Germans removed all monuments of national historical figures (Mickiewicz, Kościuszko, and Lis-Kula). After the war, the new authorities delayed the reconstruction of the first two, which did not occur until the eighties. Perhaps the reason for this decision was the fact that the monuments of the most accepted ones—the hero of the struggle for freedom and the national poet of Poland—used to be located in this part of the old city, which the new authorities wanted to erase from memory. What is more, in 1989 they looked horrible as

²⁷ H. Kotarski, K. Malicki, M. Palak, K. Piróg (2016), *Rzeszowska diagnoza społeczna 2015*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszow 2016.

they had not been renovated. Only in 1992 did the monument of Lis-Kula returned to its former place. In his case, returning before 1989 was obviously out of the question. Although there are many local patriotic ceremonies taking place at this monument, it seems that it no longer plays such a role as before the war and it is not as significant as it used to be in the past when Lisa-Kula was widely known and familiar to people in the whole country²⁸. He brought great splendor to the powiat town of Rzeszow, making this "favorite soldier of the Marshal" an important element of city marketing. Therefore, we may agree with Marek Ziółkowski when he writes: "Even when a single element is precisely reconstructed, it functions in a fundamentally different context, which changes its cultural sense"²⁹.

The city's space is therefore a "framework" of memory, and historical events taking place there, outstanding citizens or historical objects are its important building elements. The issue of city collective memory is one of the subjects of city sociology research, and the beginning of the 20th century yielded a number of interesting studies devoted to this issue, often making it the main subject of research. Monographs on the social memory of Poznań³⁰ and Olsztyn³¹ are worth mentioning here. These works analyze memory in terms of the creators and recipients of local memory. They also do not ignore symbolic spaces. The issue of collective memory of the city's inhabitants also appears as an important element of many other works, including Warsaw³², Gdansk³³, Wrocław³⁴ and Rzeszow³⁵.

²⁸ M. Wojdon (2006), *Bohaterowie w edukacji historycznej II Rzeczypospolitej na podstawie wywiadów z byłymi uczniami* [in:] M. Kujawska, B. Jewsiewicki (eds.), *Historia, pamięć, tożsamość. Postaci upamiętniane przez współczesnych mieszkańców różnych części Europy*, Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań, pp. 400–401.

²⁹ M. Ziółkowski (1999), *Cztery funkcje przywracanej pamięci...*, p. 60.

³⁰ Ł. Skoczyła (2014), *Pamięć społeczna miasta – jej liderzy i odbiorcy*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa.

³¹ R. Sierocki, R. Kleśta-Nawrocki, J. Kowalewski (2014), *Praktykowanie pamięci. Olsztynianie – rekonesans antropologiczny*. Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, Oddział w Olsztynie, Instytut Historii i Studiów Międzynarodowych UMW w Olsztynie, Olsztyn. Wnikliwą analizę obrzędów upamiętniających przeszłość zawiera: M. Karkowska (2014), *Pamięć kulturowa mieszkańców Olsztyna lat 1945–2006 w perspektywie koncepcji Aleidy i Jana Assmannów*, Wyd. IFiS PAN, Warszawa.

³² M. Madurowicz (2008), *Miejska przestrzeń tożsamości Warszawy*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa.

³³ J. Załęcki (2003), *Przestrzeń społeczna Gdańska w świadomości jego mieszkańców. Studium socjologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk.

³⁴ M. Lewicka (2006), *Dwa miasta – dwa mikrokosmosy. Wrocław i Lwów w pamięci swoich mieszkańców* [in:] P. Żuk, J. Pluta (eds.), *My Wrocławianie. Społeczna przestrzeń miasta*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław, pp. 99–133.

³⁵ H. Kotarski, K. Malicki (2013), *Stolica Podkarpacia wczoraj i dziś...*, pp. 81–97.

What is particularly important, more and more works were devoted to a particular segment of the memory of cities related to the tradition of Jews residing there. This is the case of Lublin and Białystok³⁶. Often, local studies on this topic indicate a problem that also appears on pages of this book – obliviousness and insensitivity to Jewish tradition³⁷.

Exploring symbolic sites, "reading the city" through its past, is the subject of relatively broad interest for researchers and it is undoubtedly more important than simply discovering the determinants of meeting the need to learn about the past. "Reading the city also has a practical dimension (...). It makes it possible to discover the key to harmonious continuation and development of all elements of the structure of a modern city, and to protect its locality and identity inscribed in the cultural environment and awareness of the inhabitants"³⁸. Of course, while preserving one thing, other things are simultaneously eliminated. It may happen everywhere, not only in a non-democratic system. In case of Rzeszów, every regime left its mark on the city's past in a more or less destructive form. Memorial sites often "demanded" elimination of their "competitors." Alexander Wallis notes: "Because symbols embody human feelings, attitudes and beliefs, creating new symbols is accompanied by forgetting, eliminating, and even destroying existing symbols. Especially when the old symbols are not compatible with the feelings and beliefs of the ruling authorities"³⁹.

Contemporary Rzeszów has still not finished and probably – like any other city – will not finish dealing with its past soon. There are demands for extreme modernization at the expense of history, which should always be preserved and fostered. I point out these problems here, because they will appear more than once in the context of the topic discussed. The memory of Rzeszów Jews, although the topic may appear marginal, says a lot about the inhabitants of Rzeszów, their attitudes not only towards the past, but also towards the tradition

³⁶ Katarzyna Szop-Rutkowska, *Niepamiętane historie miasta. Żydowska przeszłość Białegostoku i Lublina w (nie)pamięci obecnych mieszkańców*. [in:] *Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne*, vol. VIII. Białystok 2011, S. 68-83.; M. Kubiszyn, J. Zętar, *Miasto po Zagładzie. Dzielnica żydowska w Lublinie i jej upamiętnienia* [in:] *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały*. vol. 14., Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, Warszawa 2018, pp. 387-418; Marta Kubiszyn, *Niepamięć postpamięć współpamięć. Zagłada lubelskich Żydów jako przedmiot kultury pamięci*, Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2019.

³⁷ T. Nawrocki, K. Bierwaczek (2020), *Pomiędzy trauma wojny a codziennością. Pamięć zbiorowa mieszkańców górnośląskiej wsi Bojszowy*, Wydawnictwo naukowe Scholar, Warszawa.

³⁸ D. Kłosek-Kozłowska (2002), *Język przestrzeni a tożsamość kulturowa miasta* [in:] A. Koseski, A. Stawarz, *Tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa współczesnego miasta w Polsce*, Warszawa-Pułtusk, pp. 31-32.

³⁹ A. Wallis (1967), *Socjologia wielkiego miasta*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, p. 71.

of the past and culture, both in a local and in a much broader dimension. Thus, both the nature and the form of commemoration deserve the attention of the researcher, as well as an analysis.

1.2. Memory—levels of analysis

This chapter discusses selected and key issues, which constitute an essential introduction to memory analysis in a form that will conduct and determine the research procedure and analysis relevant for the purposes of this book. The main goal is to define the forms of memory of the inhabitants about the past of the Jewish minority, which is no longer present in the city (apart from material artefacts)

Barbara Szacka defines collective memory as "ideas about the past of one's own group, constructed by individuals from remembered information from various sources and reaching them through various channels – in accordance with the rules discovered by psychologists. They are understood, selected and transformed in accordance with their own cultural standards and beliefs. In turn, these standards are created socially, and therefore common to members of a given community, which leads to the unification of perceptions about the past"⁴⁰. It defines collective memory as shared ideas about the past of one's own group, but these ideas must also find expression in specific actions, e.g. in commemorating the past in a material/physical way, through monuments or memorial plaques. That is why collective memory includes "also all people and events of this past that are commemorated in various ways. It is also defined by various forms of commemoration"⁴¹. Pierre Nora, in a much more concise definition, simply describes collective memory as "remains of the past in a perceived group, experiencing and remembering of groups, or what these groups do with the past"⁴².

1.2.1. Individual, collective and institutional memory

By analyzing the above definitions of collective memory in a more detailed way, and by considering its individual elements, it is impossible not to notice that this is an extremely complex social phenomenon, which is also a dynamic

⁴⁰ B. Szacka (2006), *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit...*, p. 44.

⁴¹ B. Szacka (2000), *Pamięć społeczna* [in:] *Encyklopedia socjologii*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa, p. 53.

⁴² P. Nora, *Mémoire collective* [in:] J. Le Goff, R. Chartier, J. Revel (eds.), *La nouvelle histoire*, Paris 1978, p. 398. Cyt. za: J. Le Goff (2007), *Historia i pamięć*, tłum. A. Gronowska, J. Stryczyk, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa, p. 152.

whole where (in relation to events remembered from the recent past) several elements can be distinguished: a) the memory of individuals concerning their own experiences, b) collective memory created out of shared experiences and the commonly agreed upon symbolic language of these experiences, and c) the official message of the image of the past and official commemoration⁴³. By examining a bit more distant memory, in a situation where it is no longer just a part of experience, but also indirect transfer, these elements undergo transformations and are certainly no longer strictly separable. They often intersect and complement each other, taking on new forms. Let us examine each of these levels below.

The memory of individuals should be considered as the most rudimentary and basic level of collective memory. Individual memory refers to personal experiences and if it is somehow "shared" with other individuals who have experienced the same event, and it can turn into a seed of collective memory. Therefore, individual memory rarely functions only at the level of an isolated individual. This is only possible if you do not share memories of the past or keep souvenirs which nobody sees. As Aleida Assmann notes: "Following sociologist Maurice Halbwachs we assume that a lonely person would not be able to develop memory. Memories are created and intensify in communication, that is, exchanging them with other people. So, like language, memory grows into people from outside, and there is no doubt that language is its most important foundation. However, personal nonverbal memories also exist"⁴⁴.

This memory is often manifested in interactions with other people, in memories, conversations or stories addressed to and received by, for example family, friends or acquaintances. It can be expressed in material forms, such as: collected souvenirs, letters, diaries, photos (usually of the family). An important manifestation of such a memory can be individual acts of commemoration such as visiting certain places, e.g. graves or memorial sites, not necessarily officially commemorated. These places can be "important" due to the past, which is significant from the perspective of these individuals, and located outside the area of official commemoration. However, a depositary and a carrier of such individual memory can also be a person who, although they did not experience a certain event personally, knows about it from oral traditions and in some way the content of this memory is important to them and worth cultivating. Individual memory is closely connected with higher level memory – the memory of groups and collectives.

The second level of memory (according to above-quoted Barbara Szacka) refers to communities that carry memory derived from shared experiences.

⁴³ B. Szacka (2006), *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit...*, pp. 44–45.

⁴⁴ A. Assmann (2009b), 1998 – *między historią a pamięcią* [in:] M. Saryusz-Wolska (ed.), *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa. Współczesna perspektywa niemiecka*, Universitas, Kraków, p. 158.

Over time, the number of such communities always decreases and disappears together with the death of the last depositary. In the case of people with specific experiences from the point of view of the history of 20th century Poland (e.g. participants of the 1920 or 1939 wars, insurgents, prisoners of concentration and labor camps), the number of them decreases year by year. Assuming that only those who experienced the past personally are the depositaries of such memory, we would, however, have to claim that each memory must disappear over time, which is not always the case. Collective memory (of certain events) may also include those who did not experience certain events in person, but the content of this memory is important enough to express it in certain behaviors. In this case, over time, the number of such communities does not decrease but it can even grow and exceed the original communities of people who participated in a given event from the past. For example, we can mention the memory of the Warsaw Uprising, which – cultivated for half a century in a private way and limited to the population of insurgents and their families – is currently experiencing renaissance which is expressed in respect for the uprising and its values of people from even the youngest social categories⁴⁵. Here we can discuss the concept of “collective memory,” which can be described, after Lech M. Nijakowski, as a group of people not only connected by a specific biographical experience (and often by family and regional bonds), but also people without such family bonds who identify themselves with the event and are ready for sacrifices which result from such a choice and strong emotional bonds⁴⁶. A more common case is family memory. The experiences of an ancestor (participation in an uprising, deportation, fighting during the war) often become an important element of family memory, manifested in for example participation in events related to its commemoration, or at least passing this memory on to future generations in the form of memories or souvenirs of that ancestor. This memory can also be manifested in unofficial anniversary celebrations (although it sometimes happens that they overlap officially celebrated anniversaries and they are thus intensified), meetings, self-published memories, books and publications. Although this is not legal, it is not uncommon to commemorate places in a semi-official way. This was the case even in the PRL era, when, despite the will of authorities, the victims of the Katyn massacre were commemorated. Today, this type of activity can be found, for example, in the case of national minorities⁴⁷. Currently, many initiatives to commemorate the past come

⁴⁵ M. Napiórkowski (2016), *Powstanie umarłych. Historia pamięci 1944–2014*, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa.

⁴⁶ L.M. Nijakowski (2008), *Polska polityka pamięci. Esej socjologiczny*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa, pp. 145–146.

⁴⁷ K. Malicki (2009), *Upamiętnianie przeszłości jako źródło konfliktów w przestrzeni symbolicznej regionu podkarpackiego* [in:] A. Szpociński (ed.), *Pamięć zbiorowa jako czynnik integracji i źródło konfliktów*, Collegium Civitas, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, pp. 47–71.

from individuals or associations preserving the memory of certain events. Such initiatives arrive (in a various degrees of conflict) at a new level – to the official local or state institutions that are responsible for commemoration policy and control whether memory cultivated in social space has not gotten out of control, which could threaten the stability of the community.

The third element is the memory of institutions, in this case mainly the state and local government institutions. The importance of memory for the legitimization of authority has been thoroughly discussed by memory researchers⁴⁸ although the most known description of this phenomenon undoubtedly comes from George Orwell. There is therefore no need to discuss this phenomenon here. Each country (not only totalitarian, but also democratic) strictly guards policy in the field of the collective memory of its community (usually national). Not only symbolic spaces and forms of commemorating the past are controlled but also the content which is taught at schools. Although the status of a modern democratic state does not allow for full control, it is sufficient enough to impose (or at least propose) certain forms of commemoration through material memorial sites or teaching programs that are important for shaping the historical canons of the community.

Taking all of the above into consideration, we can therefore distinguish the following levels of memory analysis that can be applied to various territorial communities including the residents of the capital of the region discussed here.

It is crucial to discuss these elements in this book, since we will seek the answer to the question about the memory of the inhabitants of the capital of Podkarpacie, regarding the past of the Jews of Rzeszów. It will be done at each level of this analysis, by exploring and discussing those elements that contain a part of this memory of this national minority annihilated by the German occupation. In research on this issue, it should always be determined whose collective memory is to be explored (which group or category). In our case it is Polish memory – the memory of Poles, residents of the city of Rzeszów. Former neighbors or their descendants, or people who migrated to the capital of the region in a more or less distant past and they came into contact (in a more or less conscious form) with the past of the city where Jewish history was undoubtedly an important element. In a classic perspective: victims – perpetrators – witnesses, this analysis focuses on the last element – witnesses and their descendants⁴⁹.

Therefore, the memory of historical events functions at three levels, which according to Barbara Szacka, we defined as: individual, collective and institutional. Specification of these levels is only the beginning of the analysis, as each of these three levels can be manifested to various degrees in other important dimensions (at least three of them) which should be discussed here.

⁴⁸ B. Szacka (2006), *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit...*, pp. 54–58.

⁴⁹ R. Hilberg (2007), *Sprawcy, ofiary, świadkowie*, tłum. J. Giebułtowski, Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, Wydawnictwo Cyklady, Warszawa, p. 7.

1. Collective memory has been expressed from the earliest times through material commemorations, e.g. monuments, memorial plaques, memorial sites, cemeteries, etc. (material level). The scale of influence of such places can vary. On the one hand, there are special commemorations which allow experiencing the past emotionally (e.g. Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, area of the former Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, cemetery in the Katyn forest). They are of great importance for shaping collective memory at the level of the entire nation. They are also perfectly identified and strongly rooted in collective consciousness. On the other hand, there are thousands of monuments and smaller memorial sites around us, which are not recognized elements of the landscape and are usually not at all identified due to their content and meaning. There is a certain paradox in this situation. Although they are the most permanent and unchangeable forms of memory (sometimes such monuments have survived many system changes), they are also elements of collective memory that are often unnoticed, unknown, and unrecognizable. In this sense, the scale of the influence of the transfer of memory of these places is inversely proportional to durability and inalterability over time. The institution of a museum certainly plays an important role here. Museums are becoming more and more vital in memory transfer. There are several reasons why. First of all, they are the greatest expression of cultural memory. Secondly, they are becoming more and more attractive, e.g. by using multimedia and direct contact with exhibits, which are favored by young people. Thirdly, they are often the subject of heated disputes about the vision of the past that is to be included in exhibitions. Poland is an excellent example, with the dispute over the Museum of The Second World War in Gdansk (mainly about whether the museum is to have a universal and European form, or a national and martyrologic form)⁵⁰.

2. Rituals and ceremonies, all kinds of collective activities (ritual level) also play an important role. In the period of totalitarian regimes, almost everyone had to participate in certain rites. Today, even if a ceremony is organized by a state or local government and the most important national anniversary is celebrated, this situation applies to a large extent only to "interested" persons willing to come, listen to speeches, and watch the prepared attractions. Therefore, it is not surprising that contemporary national and patriotic ceremonies reach for more and more unconventional forms, sometimes even taking the form of performance, there are no poems and songs but performances of re-enactment groups. This is also the case when an event is unofficially commemorated by unofficial "memory communities", beyond the calendar of official celebrations. It should be

⁵⁰ K. Malicki (2013), *Europejski uniwersalizm czy polska martyrologia? Spór o przekaz historii w polskich muzeach w latach 2004–2013* [in:] A. Szpociński (ed.), *Przeszłość w dyskursie publicznym*, Collegium Civitas, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, pp. 249–263.

remembered that events of this type almost never take place in a social vacuum. During each ceremony and rite there are bystanders that may be affected. This can be the case in church celebrations commemorating certain events. For many participants, such situations can be an accidental opportunity to encounter the memory of a certain event. Here too, the issue of the influence of such events on its participants and potential witnesses should be taken into account.

3. Finally, collective memory is shaped through education and schooling, as well as the media with their educational and opinion-forming content (educational level). Such transfer, due to its universal character, has a very great impact and affects almost every individual, providing it with the necessary minimum knowledge of the past and shaping standards and rating schemes. This especially applies to school teaching, yet although historical education is common and obligatory, it does not always lead to awakening monumental attitude, i.e. attitudes that make people perceive the past through connections between one's fate and the fate of their ancestors⁵¹. The media have a significant role, although today the extensive number of transfer channels of superficial and random content often damages the creation of a coherent picture of the past rather than helps it.

Undoubtedly, the content conveyed in education and media has the largest influence on shaping the vision of the past; but it is also the easiest to change. Rites and celebrations endure as long as there are people interested in participating; however, due to their cyclical nature (e.g. anniversary celebrations), they are from time to time renewed in memory, sometimes taking on the features of an institution. Monuments and material commemorations (even if forgotten) usually persist, often even against system changes. Taking all of these dimensions into account, a researcher of memory must therefore answer one of the key questions: which of these aspects is to be the subject of analysis of local memory of the Jewish community, the victims of the Holocaust? How have these forms evolved over time and which ones play the most important role?

1.2.2. Memorial sites and their typology

The subjects of commemoration are (or can be) events or people documented in historical sources, as well as those from the world of mythology. Some can be easily and universally identified, others simply forgotten or unrecognized. It is not difficult to see that a memorial site which is well recognized and commemorated in a material form can cease to exist physically and remain only in the minds of those who still remember. And vice versa, the material form can eventually become an empty shell, forgotten and incomprehensible with no liv-

⁵¹ K. Malicki, K. Piróg (2016), *Postawy młodzieży ponadgimnazjalnej wobec przeszłości i historii Polski XX wieku*, Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warszawa, pp. 170–172.

ing memory. The key question is, therefore, how to classify and how to situate memorial sites according to their place during the process of commemoration, as well as according to the presence and recognition in the awareness of their recipients?

When attempting to answer this question, two important issues should be mentioned.

First of all, the ideological and legal order, which is always of great (though not absolute) significance for any form of memory creation. The reality of the state's total power over the memory of the past described by George Orwell is only an ideal type, so far existing only in literature. Even in totalitarian states, there were loopholes to avoid control over many of areas of memory reserved for the state, or there were oversights in this regard. Democratic countries are also trying to control commemoration processes and influence the process of creating an image of the past of a community, which results from the importance of memory in identity processes and processes of legitimation of political power⁵². Attempts at commemorating frequently face potential opponents, which often triggers sharp conflicts about memory. In Poland, the entire controlling policy over commemoration processes is exercised by the state (until 2017 through the Council for the Protection of the Memory of Fight and Martyrdom and its provincial committees, currently by the same committees, but within the Institute of National Remembrance). The purpose of state control is not only to avoid symbolic or aesthetic chaos. It is primarily the desire to control the "symbolic domain" of the community, i.e. "the territory where a given group (ethnic, national, regional, cultural, etc. (...)) controls creating symbolic spaces (...). The boundaries of the symbolic domain do not need to coincide with the borders of the political domain"⁵³. Since even the best control system is not absolutely tight, there are always gaps that make it possible to break out of the official system. In this case, it is not only about illegal commemoration (the most vivid and emotional example is commemoration of national minorities). Examples of leaks in the commemoration system are also places of memory inherited from old ideological systems, which for various reasons have survived and in an unrecognized form exist, waiting perhaps for their re-interpretation.

Secondly, an understanding of the memorial sites proposed above results in a situation where not only potential and still non-existent commemorations are discussed, but also those existing in reality, although outside of the officially and legally accepted spatial and symbolic order. Thus, there is a need to take into account individual forms of memory such as murals, religious signs, chapels, community gatherings and all other forms where collective memory lives, even

⁵² B. Szacka (2006), *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit*, Scholar, Warszawa. pp. 47–58.

⁵³ L.M. Nijakowski (2006), *Domeny symboliczne. Konflikty narodowe i etniczne w wymiarze symbolicznym*, Scholar, Warszawa, pp. 108–109.

of the smallest communities. It is even more important as sometimes even the most marginal situations can initiate the process of official commemoration. This means taking into consideration the potentially unlimited number of memorial sites, from which only a few will be physically commemorated. This is a dilemma that should be considered in the context of the selectivity of human memory crucial for this issue. "To remember something," writes Aleida Assmann, "it must be forgotten, but what is forgotten does not necessarily disappear forever"⁵⁴. It is clear that not many memorial sites have the opportunity to be found in the strict and well-identified canon of a given community, in the sphere of recognition, at least of the majority of its members. Material commemoration (e.g. a monument or museum) incomparably increases the chance of being in the minds of its recipients, although paradoxically the inappropriate form (unclear form of the monument, boring museum exhibition) can cause just the opposite effect. Therefore, it is worth mentioning here the concept of "canon" and "archive" of Aleida Assmann. According to her, the process of "entering a canon" of the community is rigorous, but it ensures "a permanent place in the working cultural memory of society"⁵⁵. Due to the limited memory of people, only a few places of memory can enter the canon of the community (national, local, religious, etc.) Extensive selection is necessary, because only then is it possible to ensure good recognition of those found in the canon. Everything beyond the canon is directed to passive memory – the archive. "It is a basis of what can be said in the future about the present when it will have become the past"⁵⁶.

This issue can be initially analyzed through the four model situations presented in Diagram 1. They show a path, a series of consecutive stages which memorial sites pass. Some pass through each of these stages, others only through a few⁵⁷.

1. "Archive stage", when the past associated with memorial sites is not commemorated and it fades away from social awareness, yet is potentially accessible due to its presence in cultural memory (places related to history, forgotten but registered in archives and records⁵⁸). This situation in all probability covers the widest range of memorial sites that are unrecognized, unidentified

⁵⁴ A. Assmann (2013), *Między historią a pamięcią. Antologia*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa, p. 86.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 76–78.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

⁵⁷ K. Malicki (2020), *Między kanonem a archiwum — o systematyzacji i klasyfikacji miejsc pamięci*, [in:] „Kultura i Społeczeństwo”, vol. 4.

⁵⁸ This applies not only to places from the distant past, but also the most modern. The reports of German operational groups carrying out mass crimes against Jews during World War II are good examples. They contain lists of hundreds and thousands of places of mass crimes, only some of which have been commemorated in any way and do not function much in the awareness of local communities.

while at the same time not commemorated in a material form. They do not arouse, understandably, social emotions. This does not mean that these areas of memory (people, events, symbols) are irrevocably forgotten. They are located in an "archive," in a memory potentially available, although for almost all members of the community (except for a small group or individuals – experts) inaccessible and of no interest. This situation may occur when an event remembered by a community, though not commemorated, was blurred in memory over time. This area therefore has a "deposit" of potential, yet undiscovered places of memory.

2. "Intention stage"– when historical events are to some extent recorded and remembered in collective memory but are not commemorated. In a sense, this is a transitional stage for any remembered event or person (or memorial site in general) before its official commemoration. Sometimes, however, such a place of memory cannot find its material expression. It must remain in the awareness of the community that remembers it; sometimes temporarily, sometimes much longer. This phenomenon often occurs in systems that try to control the past and impose their own vision of history, when the official image of history collides with the bottom-up, unofficial memory. To illustrate this situation, the example of the massacre of Gdansk shipyard workers can be given. Between December 1970 and December 1980, this event could not be commemorated but in memory for those who, against the system, managed to commemorate the communist crime in the communist system, it was just "suspended." A similar example is the memory of Katyn before 1989.

3. "Canon stage" Here, events from the past are recorded, remembered and well-identified in social awareness and collective memory (or in a major part of its community), relatively well-identified and commemorated in symbolic space. In this stage the most canonic elements of the memory of each community can be found. In the case of the national memory of Poles, such places are certainly the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the former Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp and a monument to the Little Insurgent. The canonic images of these commemorations function in the common collective memory and are important elements of the historical canon of the community. Such places can also exist in smaller communities; then, they are part of the regional or local canon. Understandably, there are not many of such memorial sites, since an excess of commemoration would make any subsequent one less recognizable.

Paradoxically, perhaps a particularly large category of commemorations are memorial sites that are commemorated, but have been forgotten over time, or the nature of the commemoration is unknown or completely unclear to the community. It is **4. "landscape stage"** which covers numerous memorial sites that over time have become an "element of the landscape", disregarded and not identified with the past, sometimes even with a different meaning assigned by members of the community.

The intention and canon stages can be referred to the memory defined by Aleida Assmann as functional or "inhabited" memory.⁵⁹ Its main function is to form and strengthen the identity. It also requires constant practices and rituals⁶⁰. The archive and landscape stages can be located within "non-functional" memory or – as Aleida Assmann writes – storage and "second degree" memory which "absorbs everything which has lost its live relationship with the present"⁶¹.

All four stages mentioned above are ideal types. Obviously, there may be some exceptions to this division. Most often they are indirect situations (e.g. a commemorated event, even though it was forgotten, functions in the minds of a very small number of people and is only identified by them). Sometimes, as a result of commemoration, a given space "passes" from one category to another. Collective memory as a dynamic phenomenon (although to a limited extent) allows various changes in this matter.

Creating material memorial sites is usually the domain of the authorities, experts on the past, urban planners and artists – active individuals. The meaning given to existing memorial sites by their creators (most often experts) is rarely reflected in the awareness of the recipients, as it was intended. It is not uncommon for the commemoration of a person or an event, through its awkward and too professional form, to evoke different associations and content. Many places of memory are treated by those who pass by them each day only as an element of the landscape, not identified with anything, sometimes treated as a forgotten space decoration. "Regardless of the artistic value and quality, the monument permanently coalesces in the imagination of the residents with their city. Everyday coexistence, as a consequence of getting used to, hinders or even prevents an objective judgment"⁶². The problem is not only about reading the message of the memorial site and identifying it with specific content, events or people from the past. Very often, this problem also applies to the aesthetic form which makes it difficult to understand the message. The consequence is a frequent situation where memorial sites (most often monuments, but not exclusively) are treated as the end of the commemoration process, although commemoration should in fact be its beginning.

We usually pay attention to the material commemoration (intended, planned or already existing) only in situations of conflict, disputes over symbolism, message or the background of its creators. The most important thing is probably that

⁵⁹ A. Assmann (2009a), *Przestrzenie pamięci. Formy i przemiany pamięci kulturowej*, tłum. Piotr Przybyła, [in:] Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska (ed.), *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa. Współczesna perspektywa niemiecka*, Universitas, Kraków., p. 128.

⁶⁰ M. Saryusz-Wolska (2014), *Pamięć funkcjonalna*. [in:] Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, Robert Traba (eds.), *Modi memorandi, Leksykon kultury pamięci*, Scholar, Warszawa. p. 325–326.

⁶¹ A. Assmann (2009), *Przestrzenie pamięci...*, p.128.

⁶² J. Hübner-Wojciechowska (1986), *Spoleczno-artystyczne warunki powstawania pomników w Polsce w latach 1945–1980*, Instytut Kultury, Warszawa. p. 110.

the material form of commemoration does not determine its nature forever. The presented examples show that the classification of individual memorial sites according to the discussed situations is never final. What is in the area of the identified, well-recognized canon today, in the future may leave this canon, find itself on the periphery of memory, and even pass to the sphere of the archives, where it will be the domain of few experts. How long a memorial site will be in a certain stage depends on many factors, although certainly the key role is always played by "work of memory", participation in its "live" forms.

1.3. Role of memory in Polish-Jewish relations

The study of the memory concerning the Jews is undoubtedly one of the specific forms of discovering Jewish heritage in Poland. It "requires an emotional and intellectually multidimensional journey"⁶³. Seemingly, it is a journey into the past, the reconstruction of events whose beginnings in the case of Rzeszów date back to the 16th century and end in the middle of the 20th century. However, the past in this case is inextricably linked to the present, showing the importance of such explorations and their need not only for understanding the history of the city, but above all of contemporary Polish portrayals of the past.

During almost three decades after 1989, major transformations took place in the Polish memory of the past. They mainly concerned the heritage of the communist regime and attempts to reconstruct memory that was not so long ago subjected to strong censorship. The issue of Polish-Jewish relations undoubtedly has a special place among these problems. Milestones of these transformations were great debates around such works as: "Shoah" by Claude Lanzmann, "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" by Jan Błoński or "Neighbors" by Jan T. Gross. Even though the debates, which took place most often in intellectual environments, pervaded other social categories and influenced the transformation of the collective memory of all Poles⁶⁴.

Controversy over the development of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp space were of great importance⁶⁵. All these debates and controversies have contributed to a lengthy process that has not yet been finished and whose study and monitoring is a challenge for researchers and the science of present-day society. However, these debates were invaluable and made Polish discourse on relations with

⁶³ J. Webber (2011), *Dlaczego Polska ma znaczenie dla Żydów i dlaczego mieć je powinna?* [in:] I. Głuszyńska, Z. Mach, *Szkice o dziedzictwie kulturowym Żydów*, Wyższa Szkoła Administracji, Bielsko-Biała, p. 37.

⁶⁴ P. Forecki (2010), *Od Shoah do Strachu. Spory o polsko-żydowską przeszłość i pamięć w debatach publicznych*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań.

⁶⁵ M. Kucia (2005), *Auschwitz jako fakt społeczny. Historia, współczesność i świadomość społeczna KL Auschwitz w Polsce*, Universitas, Kraków.

the Jewish people one of the most advanced among all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

While discussing the assumptions of Maurice Halbwachs's theory, it was mentioned that there is no one single memory. This also occurs in Polish-Jewish relations. The Polish memory regarding Jews consist of content different than the memory of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust about Poles. As Maria Hirszwicz and Elżbieta Neyman put it: "*The image of the war in the eyes of a young Pole is only associated with reports about the common saving of Jews and with the cases of their frequent ingratitude towards their rescuers*"⁶⁶.

This situation has profound consequences for everyone interested in exploring the problems of contemporary memory of Jews, because research on almost all age categories of Poles (except for the oldest, remembering the realities of the Second Polish Republic and war) already contains indirect, secondary ideas about Jews, similar to the text quoted above⁶⁷. To sum up, it is worth recalling Konstanty Gebert's statement, who writes about Polish and Jewish memory: "These two memories are, as can be clearly seen, quite radically contradictory. It is important for Poland to view this contradiction *sine ira et studio*"⁶⁸.

However, Polish-Jewish dialogue about memory cannot be abstracted from a much broader social context of a supranational character, especially since the memory of the Holocaust has now become an immanent element of reflection on the past in the Western cultures. It appears that at the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, there were still two important areas of transfer of memory concerning World War II and the Holocaust. The first one is the last witnesses of the war and their accounts, while the second one is a national-institutional message, built into the policy of many countries, not just European ones. This state policy includes the content of school textbooks, the themes of

⁶⁶ M. Hirszwicz, E. Neyman (2001), *Spoleczne ramy niepamięci*, „Kultura i Społeczeństwo”, vol. XLV, no. 3–4, p. 39. Bardziej szczegółowe omówienie obszarów spornych pamięci Polaków i Żydów [in:] L.M. Nijakowski (2008), *Polska polityka pamięci. Esej socjologiczny*. Wydawnictwo Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa, pp. 163–169.

⁶⁷ In a study carried out in 2009 by the Museum of the Second World War and Penton on 1,200 inhabitants of Poland, the issues of Polish-Jewish war relations appeared in most of the problem fields discussed. From these results emerges a heroic image of national history, and Poles most often present themselves as a nation of people who want to help suffering Jews. 81.5% of respondents supported the opinion that Poles often or very often helped Jews survive the war, and 75.8% that Poles rarely or very rarely gave Jews to Germany. Source: P.T. Kwiatkowski (2010), *II wojna światowa jako doświadczenie narodowe* [in:] P.T. Kwiatkowski, L.M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka, A. Szpociński, *Miedzy codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*, Muzeum II Wojny Światowej, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Gdańsk–Warszawa, p. 145.

⁶⁸ K. Gebert (2000), *Kłopoty z pamięcią* [in:] *Shoah. Pamięć zagrożona?*, „Znak” (6), pp. 32–33.

museum exhibitions, and the nature of commemorated places. The role of this policy of memory is different and depends on the country's historical past and the meaning it attributes to memory about the extermination of Jews. Therefore, the rank of memory of the Holocaust is different in the case of Israel, and different in the case of the USA or European countries. In Poland, this process seems to be accurately reflected in the Jan Assmann's concept of communicative memory and cultural memory.

Communicative memory includes here direct accounts reaching to maximum three or four generations back. Its most important features are: the experiences of history as part of an individual biography, informal forms created through everyday interactions and a message passed by non-specialized witnesses. With their demise, cultural memory plays an increasingly important role. It includes mythical prehistory, and takes forms such as ceremonies and holidays, and the message is passed through specialized carriers of tradition⁶⁹.

While the Jewish past in Polish communicative memory includes accounts of witnesses about the pre-war coexistence of Poles and Jews and the drama of the Holocaust, in the case of cultural memory, it focuses on certain events from history expressed mainly by the most important anniversaries celebrated in Poland. There are two anniversaries related to the Holocaust which dominate, namely the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Accompanying celebrations increase the importance of suffering and heroism of people who sacrificed their lives. It is less common to discuss the broader context of these acts of crime, e.g. about the indifference of witnesses and the passivity of those who, having the opportunity, could have prevented the crime. The changes in the mental state of many witnesses as well as victims, which make them obedient tools of the criminal machine, are also not mentioned. Cultural memory built on myths also reduces the entire past to selected elements of the common past, where there is suffering but also help. Perhaps this is a necessary tribute paid to remember at least what is most important. We are not able to remember everything, and such selection is necessary.

When talking about cultural memory, we most often refer to certain key points. They are not only the Auschwitz and Warsaw Ghetto, but also Jedwabne and Kielce. The murder of Jews in July 1941, or the massacre of 1946, have a very special place, although they collide with the collective memory of Poles and are reluctantly mentioned as they focus on the sensitive issues of the attitudes of witnesses to the Holocaust (and its survivors); which cannot be ignored today, and which largely determine the discourse on the Holocaust, not only in Poland, but in the global dimension.

⁶⁹ J. Assmann (2008), *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa, p. 71.

These issues are particularly intensively discussed during many anniversaries. This also applies to schools, although here they are manifested in a larger area in terms of events and objects. This applies not only to history, but also to literature (this obviously depends on the historical period being taught but the Polish-Jewish threads in many canonic required reading books must also be taken into account). There is also transfer through official media (press, Internet, television, radio). It should be emphasized that, with the exception of the Internet, all of these types of media are subject to fairly strict standards of content presentation, which reduces the scale of presenting anti-Semitic content.

In the local dimension, and this is the subject of the analysis presented in this book, the situation becomes difficult because it is not easy to isolate strictly regional threads from the issues of Polish-Jewish relations, especially today when we refer to post-war generations. This subject matter is an inseparable element of settling with the past and an important topic of debate on history and anti-Semitism in the national dimension. Many opinions functioning in the social dimension have their roots in debates of a broader scope than regional, so when beginning to study memory about Jews, one should bear in mind that respondents' opinions may be based on debates heard in media or on pop cultural works, not on family memories or on experiencing memorial sites related to the life and extermination of Jews in the region.

1.4. Methodology of research

Research on collective memory presents many methodological problems. As was emphasized in the previous part, memory can be expressed not only on the level of awareness, but also in the material forms and through specific behavior of individuals or social groups, e.g. rituals or ceremonies. In the case of surveys on smaller territorial communities, it seems even necessary to take into account all these dimensions, since, as will be presented when discussing the results of the research, they influence each other. This means that various appropriate research methods and techniques need to be used, which in turn will determine the communities under study. A certain convenience for a sociologist is the fact that in the case of such a territorial unit as a city, the number of commemorations in various forms related to a specific subject (in this case the memory of Jews) is limited and it is possible to analyze each such case relatively thoroughly.

Research subjects

The nature of the exploration is mainly determined by research problems which result from the assumed goals. According to the author, the research

should not only be descriptive and describe the state of memory of residents of the capital of Podkarpacie. Therefore, an explanatory and prognostic goal was also set.

The main point is to answer the question about the forms of contemporary memory of the inhabitants of Rzeszow about Jews inhabiting the city until 1945, and then present in the city space in various forms of material commemorations as well as rituals and celebrations. As part of this problem, we can distinguish three main points corresponding to the dimensions of collective memory highlighted earlier.

- I. What is the memory of the city's inhabitants in the awareness dimension (expressed through knowledge and common notions)?
 - What is the knowledge of Rzeszow inhabitants about the past of Jews who lived in the city throughout four centuries (16th-20th centuries)? What is the knowledge about places connected to the life of the pre-war Jewish community and about the places of their Holocaust within the city and outside it? Do the city inhabitants have accurate knowledge about the proportion of the Jewish population in the populace of the pre-war city and the scale of human losses of this community during the war?
 - What do the oral traditions about Jews among the city residents look like? Is the subject of Jewish life and the Holocaust discussed in families? And if so, what are these conversations about, what are their topics?
 - What are the common beliefs about the pre-war life of Jews in Rzeszow? How is this minority's contribution to the pre-war city life assessed in the field of culture, science, commerce or political activity? What is the view of Rzeszow inhabitants on Polish-Jewish relations during the war?
 - How is the past associated with Rzeszow Jews perceived from the perspective of contemporary educational and promotional activities? To what extent can memory be used to promote the city?
 - What emotions do the memories about Rzeszow Jews or contact with places in the city area that were related to their lives and the Holocaust evoke in the city inhabitants
- II. How is the memory about Rzeszow Jews expressed in material commemorations?
 - What forms (monuments, plaques, museums, memorial sites) do material commemorations of the past of the Jews of Rzeszow have? In which period, in the years 1944–2016, were they mostly created? Were there any conflicts?
 - Who initiated the processes of material commemoration and what possible barriers did they meet? Were there any acts of vandalism upon memorial sites?

III. How is the memory of Rzeszow Jews expressed in local ceremonies and rituals?

- Which ceremonies systematically address this issue? Who is the initiator and the organizer? What behaviors accompany these celebrations?

Communities under study

In order to answer these questions, it was necessary to explore not only the collectivity of the inhabitants of Rzeszow, but also to reach for the official materials of various institutions that deal with the issue of commemorating the past (including the memory of Jews). Therefore, to address the research subjects listed above it was necessary to study the following:

- residents of Rzeszow – a representative sample and in-depth interviews;
- material commemorations – official and iconographic materials, historical studies;
- celebrations – iconographic materials, local press, personal experience.

Methods and techniques

An important dilemma faced by the researcher is certainly the choice of adequate research methods and techniques. This choice should be determined by the subject of the study⁷⁰. The dispute between the quantitative and qualitative approach to this topic is important as both schools of research contribute to understanding the phenomenon of collective memory by supplying an extensive and valuable output. In the case of the issues discussed, it seems that the best solution is to use so-called triangulation, which means examining the issue "from at least two different points of view. Usually such a multiple approach is obtained by using different methodological perspectives"⁷¹.

There are several types of triangulation, among which so-called methodological triangulation is essential. It means using more research methods and techniques (survey questionnaires, unstructured interviews, existing data, historical materials). Another type is data triangulation, which means obtaining data from various sources (e.g. respondents' statements on certain issues are verified in historical sources)⁷². According to Piotr Chomczyński: "data triangulation and methodological triangulation are quite often used in sociological research. Thanks to triangulation, research gains a more comprehensive character, and the theory generated on its basis explains the nature of the relationships it describes to a greater extent"⁷³. For this reason, the following research techniques were used in this study:

⁷⁰ S. Nowak (1985), *Metodologia badań społecznych*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, pp. 46–47.

⁷¹ U. Flick (2011), *Jakość w badaniach jakościowych*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, p. 79.

⁷² *Ibidem*, pp. 82–83, 85–87.

⁷³ P. Chomczyński (2012), *Triangulacja* [in:] K.T. Konecki, P. Chomczyński, *Słownik socjologii jakościowej*, Difin, Warszawa, p. 320.

1. A structured interview is carried out through direct contact with the inhabitants of Rzeszow by the interviewers. It should be emphasized that it is not a survey questionnaire. They are similar, as in both of the techniques the researcher introduces the topic (they are the source), they are standardized and the same tool is used, a list of questions and standardization. However, the main differences between these techniques are the method of communication, the possibilities of influencing the respondent (and also of observing and controlling) and recording⁷⁴. The structured interview technique combines direct contact with the respondent and standardization of the questions. The choice of an appropriate research sample allows obtaining data that is used to justify the claims and conclusions through statistical calculations⁷⁵.

2. Unstructured interview. There is a lot of controversy in expert literature regarding the degree of unstructured interview standardization. In an extreme form, it is claimed that the participation of the interviewer should be limited just to listening⁷⁶. Some researchers recommend that the role of the interviewer should be "only to ask further questions from time to time, or to request explanation etc."⁷⁷. Undoubtedly, before the interview, the researcher must prepare a list of points they are looking for, which does not mean that they should ignore new circumstances that may arise during the conversation⁷⁸.

3. Personal experience. The assumption that "the social world should be studied in its<<natural>>condition, undisturbed by the researcher"⁷⁹ often means that the sociologist faces the dilemma of participation in certain social processes that are important for understanding the issue being investigated and which may or may not be part of their duties or interests⁸⁰. The solution is to use the personal experience method. This method is based on the assumption that "the researcher's knowledge and experience gathered through participation in the stud-

⁷⁴ L. Gruszczyński (2003), *Kwestionariusze w socjologii. Budowa narzędzi do badań survey-owych*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice, pp. 13–15.

⁷⁵ J. Lutyński (1994), *Metody badań społecznych. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, Łódź, pp. 152–154.

⁷⁶ E. Babbie (2003), *Badania społeczne w praktyce*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, p. 327.

⁷⁷ R. Mayntz, K. Holm, P. Hübner (1985), *Wprowadzenie do metod socjologii empirycznej*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, p. 132.

⁷⁸ J. Niedbalski (2012), *Wywiad swobodny (Free interview)* [in:] K.T. Konecki, P. Chomczyński, *Słownik socjologii jakościowej*, Difin, Warszawa, p. 335.

⁷⁹ M. Hammersley, P. Atkinson (2000), *Metody badań terenowych*, tłum. S. Dymczak, Wydawnictwo Zys i S-ka, Poznań, p. 16.

⁸⁰ In the case of the author of this study, it refers to the fact that in 2012–2019 he was a member of KOPWiM (Committee for the Protection of Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom) responsible for memorial sites. He also belongs to a rather small group of people cultivating the memory of Jews in the form of annual marches of the Remembrance March of Rzeszow Jews or Holocaust Day.

ied processes, or more generally in social life, constitute an important and irreplaceable resource of data to be analyzed"⁸¹. This way of enriching the researcher's perspective "recognizes the value and usefulness of " intimate familiarity "with the research area in the qualitative research"⁸².

4. Analysis of official documents. As Antoni Sulek notes: "Books on methodology define official documents and data as basic and the most valuable sources of information in sociology. In fact, sociology uses these materials less frequently than one would think"⁸³. Official data is an extremely diverse set of information, among others primary and secondary documents can be distinguished. The place and time when they were produced is important as well as the level to which they refer (individual or group). In an analysis of this type of material, not only explicitly expressed content should be taken into account, but also elements that were suppressed or were outside of the content⁸⁴.

In this book, empirical data from the following studies from 2010–2016 were used:

1. A survey called "Rzeszow Jews in the minds of the inhabitants of the city of Rzeszow" carried out from April to May 2010, on a sample of 585 residents of Rzeszow randomly selected by name and address, proportionally according to residential areas from the database of residents kept at City Hall. The study was a part of a research project carried out by the Institute of Sociology at the University of Rzeszow in cooperation with the City of Rzeszow during an assessment of the functioning of the city authorities.

2. A survey called "Rzeszow Jews in the minds of the inhabitants of the city of Rzeszow II" carried out from November to December 2015, on a sample of 800 residents of Rzeszow. Similar to the study from 2010, questions about the memory of Rzeszow Jews were part of the questionnaire carried out in the study of the Institute of Sociology of the University of Rzeszow in cooperation with Rzeszow City Hall on the functioning of city institutions. Also, in this case, the sample was randomly selected by City Hall statisticians from the residents' database, proportionally to the residential areas.

3. Research project: "Jewish life and extermination in memory of the inhabitants of the Podkarpacie region". 73 in-depth interviews conducted in 2012, including 44 with witnesses to the war (some of the interviews were about memories related to Rzeszow)

⁸¹ Ł. Marciniak (2012), *Metody doświadczenia osobistego (Personal experience methods)* [in:] K.T. Konecki, P. Chomczyński, *Słownik socjologii jakościowej*, Difin, Warszawa, p. 181.

⁸² *Ibidem*.

⁸³ A. Sulek (2002), *Ogród metodologii socjologicznej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, p. 103.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 104–107.

4. Research workshop "Rzeszow, its past and present" organized as a part of classes with sociology students of the I complementary master's studies of the University of Rzeszow, from April 17th until May 23rd 2016. In spring 2016, as part of the research project, class participants (students) conducted 32 in-depth interviews with city residents representing various occupations and profession categories.

Table 1. Methods and techniques used in the research

Community under study / data sources		Residents of Rzeszow	Residents of Rzeszow	Residents of Rzeszow	Documentation: Social Policy Department (WKOPWiM)	Celebrations and rituals: Remembrance March of Rzeszow Jews International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust
1		2	3	4	5	6
Quantity / research sample		N=585	N=800	N=32	-	-
Research period/ time		2010	2015	2016	1944–2016	2013–2016
Method		Quantitative	Quantitative	Qualitative	Qualitative	Qualitative
Technique		Structured interview	Structured interview	Unstructured interview	Analysis of official documents	Personal experience / photographic documentation
Research Problems	I. Awareness aspect	I.1. Knowledge about the past of Rzeszow Jews	– places of residence – places of extermination – memorial sites – percentage of Jews in 1939 . – percentage of Jews – the victims of Holocaust	– memorial sites and sites connected with the past of Jews	---	---

1		2	3	4	5	6
		I.2. Memory-Oral traditions	– interviewees – topics of conversations	– family conversations	---	---
		I.3. Potrayals	– contribution of Jews in development of the city – Polish-Jewish relations	---	---	---
		I.4. Postulates	– attitude towards the museum of Rzeszow Jews – attitude towards using the past for promotional purposes	---	---	---
		I.5. Emotions	---	– emotions evoked by contact with places related to the life and extermination of Jews	---	---
	II.1. Material aspect	---	---	---	– type and form of commemorations – material commemorations 1944–2016, conflicts, barriers,	---

1		2	3	4	5	6
					reactions of institutions – acts of vandalism	
	II.2. Ritual aspect	---	---	---	– initiators	– non-material commemorations 2002–2016: participants, behaviors, forms of memory

Source: self-study

The aim of the project was to reconstruct the character of the city of Rzeszow that function in the minds of the respondents. One of the aspects of the study was the subject of Rzeszow Jews. The questions touched on the issues of family knowledge transfer, familiar aspects of Jewish presence, knowledge about memorial sites, and general thoughts on the contribution of Jews to the city's past.

4. Archives and official documents of the following institutions: Social Policy Department of the Voivodeship Office in Rzeszow - documents of the Committee for the Protection of Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom (documentation about commemorations in Rzeszow, correspondence with initiators and Warsaw headquarters - Council for Protection and Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom).

5. Local press, historical publications documenting the history and martyrdom of Rzeszow Jews, guidebooks on memorial sites, official registers of crimes from the German occupation, etc.

6. Photographic documentation of the ceremony (Remembrance March of Rzeszow Jews and International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of The Holocaust of 2013–2016) and places related to the life and extermination of Rzeszow Jews.

CHAPTER 2

JEWS FROM RZESZOW – THEIR PAST AND HERITAGE

2.1. Origins and the increase of diaspora

Jewish history is a unique and integral element of Polish history. This community has been visible and has influenced all important social, political and economic processes, both on a national and regional level since the beginnings of statehood in the tenth century. This situation also concerns the area of the present Podkarpacie region and the many cities and towns within this region. Polish – Jewish connections in the present area of south-east Poland date back to the beginning of the Polish state and were first mentioned in the 19th century. Rzeszow, although becoming the most important urban center only after World War II, is also considered an important place in the history of mutual relations between these two nations. On the chronological and historical map of the history of Rzeszow, the Jews only appeared in the 16th century⁸⁵, but later they were uninterruptedly present within the periods of the greatest development of the city until almost being completely annihilated.

Rzeszow as the capital of the region that has been dynamically developing, compelling us to focus on the historical conditions of social, economic and symbolic processes observed in an urban area. This chapter briefly introduces the past of the Jews from Rzeszow and compares the past with the present. This reveals the scale of the Holocaust carried out on the largest national minority living in Rzeszow until World War II.

The past of Rzeszow is inseparable from the history of the Jewish community, although it should be kept in mind that distant history may not always be familiar to, or ingested by, the inhabitants of a given territory. The past of the present capital of the region predates the incorporation charter under German law, which occurred in the 14th century. Rzeszow had existed much earlier as a small early medieval settlement in the Wisłok valley. Incorporated into the

⁸⁵ Some sources report that Jews might have lived in Rzeszow before year 1340. Source: *Rzeszow* [in:] S. Spector, G. Wigoder, E. Wiesel (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Life before and during the Holocaust*, vol. 2, New York University Press, New York 2001, p. 1111.

King's property at the turn of 1340/41 by Kazimierz the Great, from 1354 to 1845 Rzeszów was a private city. The first centuries after the charter were not the most successful. Despite its relatively good location on the trade route with the east in the 15th and 16th centuries, fires and invasions slowed down the development of the city, whose population did not exceed two thousand residents.

The Jews appeared in the history of Rzeszów in the mid-16th century. They were first mentioned in relation to the discovery of a Jewish tombstone from 1553 in the old cemetery in the center of the current city. It is the oldest monument of this type confirming the fact that Jews inhabited the city, although they must have appeared here much earlier⁸⁶.

At that time, Rzeszów had a little over 2,000 residents. The size of the Jewish diaspora among the population of the city at this time is unknown, yet given the fact that this community could have no more than six houses, the size of this group most likely did not exceed 100 people⁸⁷. The first Christian-Jewish antagonisms and restrictions imposed by city owners were also recorded during this period, according to which, for example, only Jews with their own plots of land could build houses in the city. The number of houses that Jews could possess was also limited. However, it should be remembered that Rzeszów was not an exception here among other Polish cities, and such restrictions were not unusual at that time⁸⁸. Mutual relations between Christians and Jews were mainly related to religion and trade, which was a consequence of differences in religion and professions. The restrictions on the Jews of Rzeszów at that time can be described as relatively moderate, and the owners of Rzeszów themselves appreciated their contribution in the field of various professions necessary for the efficient functioning of the urban organism. In the mutual relations between the castle and the Jewish community, it was primarily the economic interest and extensive pragmatism that eliminated, or at least limited, any activity aimed at discriminating against Jews. This was also the case in the field of economic relations and justice⁸⁹.

⁸⁶ M. Bałaban (1929), *Zabytki historyczne Żydów w Polsce*, Warszawa, p. 114; W. Wierzbieniec (1995), *Z dziejów gminy żydowskiej w Rzeszowie*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 3, p. 79.

⁸⁷ J. Pęckowski (1913), *Dzieje miasta Rzeszowa do końca XVIII wieku*, Rzeszów, s. 386; A. Przyboś (1958), *Rzeszów na przełomie XVI i XVII wieku* [in:] F. Błoński (ed.), *Pięć wieków miasta Rzeszowa XIV–XVIII*, Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne Oddział w Rzeszowie, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, p. 97.

⁸⁸ R. Witalec (1993), *Historia Żydów Rzeszowskich od XVI wieku do 1944 roku (krótki zarys dziejów)*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 1, p. 65.

⁸⁹ B. Wizimirska (1993), *Chrześcijaństwo i Żydzi w Rzeszowie w XVII i XVIII wieku*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 1, pp. 75–90; B. Wizimirska (1995), *Żydzi przed sądami rzeszowskimi w XVII i XVIII wieku*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 3, pp. 91–103; B. Wizimirska (1999), *Sytuacja prawna Żydów w Rzeszowie XVII i XVIII w.*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 8, pp. 3–18.

At the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries (when Mikołaj Spytek Ligęza was the owner of the city), thanks to flourishing crafts and trade, Rzeszów experienced the most intensive period of its development. The Jewish community had a significant share in this process. During this time, numerous important buildings were constructed in the city, such as the castle and fortifications. Being moved away from the Old Town, in the 17th century Jews also settled in the New Town, where they could have 40 houses. However, they very often did not fully obey this restriction⁹⁰. After the Tatar attacks in that period, Jews were assigned to manage, and keep on military alert, one of the city's defensive towers. In the mid-seventeenth century, Rzeszów became a residential city of the noble Lubomirski family. At that time, an increased process of moving the Jewish population closer to the center of the city was recorded. As Franciszek Kotula notes:

Because it wasn't until the Lubomirski family, for an appropriate remuneration, that Jews were allowed to settle in the city at the end of the 17th century. Under Ligęza, due to the regulations at the time, the presence of Jews in the city was not possible (...) Thus, there must have been a special Jewish district somewhere, something like a suburb. Well, this district was near the old synagogue⁹¹.

The Jewish community was developing dynamically and by the end of the 18th century it constituted almost half of the city's population. At the outset of the 18th century, Jews owned 16 houses in the Market Square, a school, a court and two synagogues. The oldest synagogue was founded in the 16th century (the so-called Old Town Synagogue). In the early eighteenth century, a second (so-called New Town synagogue) was built. Jews dealt mainly with trade and goldsmithing⁹². The range of services offered by Rzeszów Jews was extremely broad. In the mid-eighteenth century, the list of city merchants included 85 Jewish and 6 Christian names⁹³. It would be untrue, however, to identify Jews solely with commercial professions. Already in the 16th century, the structure of their professions changed significantly. During this period, there were more craftsmen than merchants among them. Competition from Christian merchants, of course, led to fierce conflicts. They intensified from the beginning of the 17th century along with the progressing economic crisis related to wars and the weakening of Poland⁹⁴. In the mid-18th century, Jews practiced 55 professions in the city,

⁹⁰ J. Motylewicz (1994), *Przemiany gospodarcze, demograficzne i ustrojowe* [in:] *Dzieje Rzeszowa*, F. Kiryk (ed.), vol. I, Rzeszów, p. 228.

⁹¹ F. Kotula (1958), *Obwarowania Rzeszowa i rozwój przestrzenny miasta w XVII–XVIII wieku* [in:] F. Błoński (ed.), *Pięć wieków miasta Rzeszowa XIV–XVIII*, Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne Oddział w Rzeszowie, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, p. 185.

⁹² R. Witalec (1993), *Historia Żydów rzeszowskich od XVI wieku do 1944 roku*, pp. 65–66.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 66.

⁹⁴ J. Wijaczka (2010), *Długi „złoty wiek” dziejów Żydów w Rzeczypospolitej (od początku XVI do połowy XVII w.)* [in:] *Atlas historii Żydów polskich*, Demart, Warszawa, pp. 59–101.

mainly (apart from trade) in the textile – clothing and metal-mechanical industries⁹⁵. Jews dominated the goldsmithing sector in particular, which made local products known in Europe as "Rzeszow gold", finding customers even at the court in St. Petersburg⁹⁶.

In the 18th century, however, along with the process of the fall of Poland, the gradual collapse of the city also progressed. Periods of temporary increase were accompanied by periods of population decline in the city. The reasons for this situation were people's obligations and liabilities (e.g. taxes), epidemics, fires and armed incursions into the city.

2.2. Partitioning of Poland

As a result of the first partitioning of Poland in 1772, Rzeszow was incorporated into the Austrian monarchy. At that time, the city was the seat of the district (powiat), and in 1845 as a result of a decree by Ferdinand I, it became a free city. Despite the peripherality of the region, Rzeszow was developing relatively dynamically at that time, especially since the mid-nineteenth century, when Galicia received a significant degree of autonomy. In the years 1858–1861, the city had a railway connection with Krakow and Lviv. Its location on an important communication route favored the development of trade. This partly compensated for the lack of developed industry, which was not present in the city until the period of the Second Polish Republic. Therefore, small craft enterprises predominated, wherein local Jews had a significant share.

The number of Jewish people in Rzeszow during the partitions was significant, although due to the expansion of the city, their percentage gradually decreased over time. In 1816, there were 3,575 Jews living in Rzeszow, which constituted 77.6% of the total population. In 1880, there were already 5,820, but the percentage in the total population decreased to 52.1%. In 1900, 6,320 Jews lived in Rzeszow which constituted 42.1% of the city's population; and in 1910 there were 8,785 of Jews which constituted 37.1%⁹⁷. Such a group of inhabitants of a different religion required an adequate number of synagogues and prayer houses. At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a third synagogue was built on the square near the Old Town synagogue, exclusively for Orthodox Jews. The

⁹⁵ Z. Szulc (1993), *Struktura zawodowa ludności żydowskiej w Rzeszowie w XVIII wieku (na podstawie rejestrów podatkowych)*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 1, p. 95.

⁹⁶ S. Krakowski (2007), Rzeszow [in:] F. Skolnik, M. Berenbaum, *Encyclopaedia Judaica. Second Edition*, vol. 17. Thomson Gale, p. 603.

⁹⁷ W. Wierzbieniec (2008a), Rzeszow [in:] Gershon David Hundert (ed.), *The Yivo Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, Yale University Press, p. 1642.

head of the Jewish community was a kahal which consisted of the elders of the synagogue. The Head of the Court was a rabbi⁹⁸. In the mid-nineteenth century, there were 380 houses in the city, half of which were in Jewish hands. There were also shops, squares, gardens, public houses, breweries, distilleries and tanneries in the suburbs⁹⁹. The Jewish community was not, of course, monolithic in both the property aspect and religious aspect related to the worship of a particular tzaddik. The Austrian Partition was a unique place in this respect. After the First Partitioning of Poland, Galicia became an active center of Hasidism. Hasidism was introduced to the area of current Poland thanks to a student of Dow Ber from Miedzyrzecze – Elimelech. It was in 1772 that Elimelech settled in Lezajsk, where he created a thriving movement, as he authored the classic work of Noam Elimelech, and developed the full doctrine of the so-called Practical Tzaddikism. Numerous tzaddik families that filled Galicia, and the lively response that their teachings gained, not only made the province and each of its towns active centers of religious life, but also places of disputes and rivalry over various approaches to religious principles¹⁰⁰. However, strong stratification was evident especially when looking at professions. The most numerous were merchants and traders, there were plenty of craftsmen, and even physical workers¹⁰¹. Therefore, wealth and prosperity were also accompanied by extreme poverty. The number of Jews and their activity in trade caught the eye of almost every visitor. Samuel Bredetzky, an Evangelical pastor who traveled through Galicia in 1805, in his diary referred to Rzeszow as the "Galician Jerusalem"¹⁰². This term later became popular and stuck to the city on the Wisłok River for good.

The period of the Austrian Partition, lasting almost a century, influenced not only the economic character of Galicia, but also the mentality of the inhabitants of the region, including the Jews themselves. In Rzeszow, like in every town in Galicia, the contradictions of contemporary Jewish life, in which Orthodox Hasidim were on one side, and followers of Haskalah – the Jewish Enlightenment – on the other, were visible. It was also in Galicia where the Jewish-Galician identity of the so-called "Galitzianers" was formed. They identified themselves with

⁹⁸ R. Witalec (1993), *Historia Żydów rzeszowskich od XVI wieku do 1944 roku*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 1, pp. 66–69.

⁹⁹ T. Opas (1993), *Stan posiadania i własność nieruchomości Żydów w Rzeszowie w XVIII i pierwszej połowie XIX wieku (do 1848 r.)*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. I, p. 113.

¹⁰⁰ M. Wodziński (1998), *Groby cadyków w Polsce*, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Polonistyki Wrocławskiej, Wrocław, pp. 11, 25.

¹⁰¹ T. Bieda (1993a), *Żydzi w Rzeszowie w świetle spisu ludności z 1869 r. (struktura zawodowa Żydów)*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 1, p. 147.

¹⁰² S. Bredetzky, *Reisebemerkungen über Ungarn und Galizien*, A. Doll, Wien 1809, bd. 1. [za:] S. Schnür-Peplowski (1896), *Galiciana 1772–1812*, Księgarnia H. Altenberga, Lwów, p. 153.

their province more strongly than other nations, such as Poles or Ukrainians. This identity survived the monarchy and moved to the United States and Palestine with Jewish emigrants¹⁰³.

Life in a relatively small city, such as Rzeszow, was largely determined by holidays and professional duties related mainly to trade. Shopping, trade and exchange were inseparable elements of everyday life. This everyday life was interrupted by holidays, celebrated on different days of the week, and thus introducing specific divisions in the community. Jewish rites related to holidays, weddings and funerals were typical for Galician cities and towns. The presence of Jews in this area was something completely natural, although it was always exotic to people from the outside:

On Saturdays and Sundays, the market square was empty and quiet. In towns and on the outskirts of larger cities it was a Saturday, a holiday, when streets and alleys looked very special. Dignified black figures were slowly walking from all directions towards the synagogue. They were orthodox Jews wearing long, black bekishe (zaydenekapote), in shtreimelon on their heads, carrying velvet, embroidered pouches called szideluk or tefilin where they kept prayer books and tallits - white garments with black stripes and silver trim worn as prayer shawls. If an elderly Jew had a grandson over the age of seven, then he had the privilege of carrying these ritual treasures. At that time, young Polish children were running away and hiding in houses, as these black figures caused such fear¹⁰⁴.

Polish-Jewish relations were characterized by spatial closeness, but at the same time by a social distance resulting from religious and cultural differences. An observer of the realities of the time wrote: "In general, everything that was different about Jews caused misunderstandings and problems. It did not apply to the girls – they dressed and acted like Polish women"¹⁰⁵. The differences also generated conflicts and antagonism. "It did often happen that the coexistence of Poles and Jews was friendly, or at least correct. Yet, Poles looked at Jews most often with a certain amount of envy because of their wealth. They expressed their dislike in various ways"¹⁰⁶.

The period of almost one and a half centuries of partitions ended with World War I. At that time Rzeszow suffered significant material losses. The city was initially occupied by the Russians, and in 1915 it was seized by the German and Austro-Hungarian armies. This situation remained unchanged until November 1918.

¹⁰³ L. Wolff (2014), *Galicyjscy Żydzi. Mity imperialne i tożsamości prowincjonalne* [in:] J. Purchla, W. Kos, Ż. Komar, M. Rydiger, W.M. Schwarz (eds.), *Mit Galicji*, Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, Wien Museum, Kraków, pp. 124–128.

¹⁰⁴ F. Kotula (2003), *Tamten Rzeszow*, Mitel, Rzeszow, p. 438.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 441.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 450.

2.3. Second Republic of Poland

During the period of the Second Republic of Poland, Rzeszów was a district town on the western outskirts of the Lviv region. The strong influence of Kraków and Lviv did not help its development. In the years 1918–1939 the area of the city did not change, while the populace increased. In 1931, in Rzeszów there were 26.9 thousand residents. On the eve of the outbreak of World War II, there were already 42,000 people, about a third of which were Jews. During this period, Rzeszów industry was underdeveloped and production was of poor quality. The crisis after 1929 led to the closure of many enterprises, which resulted in an increase in the unemployment rate to 20.6% in 1935. Due to the formation of the Central Industrial District, the city experienced one of its most significant periods of economic growth, whose positive effects are still visible today in the Podkarpacie region. Employment in industry increased to 6,000 people (in 1935 it was only 1.6 thousand)¹⁰⁷.

In the years 1918–1939 in the district city of Rzeszów, the vast majority of Jews lived under the strong influence of the religious tradition of their ancestors. This community was still not homogeneous. There was strong property stratification and even diversity among the followers of the same religion. Hasidic Jews represented the most radical religious attitude. Rzeszów Jews had two synagogues open to the public, but at the same time there were many prayer houses (around 30 in 1939) for individual religious groups, and even particular professions and associations. However, the whole community was integrated by the commune – a religious self-government which organized education, not only in cheders and yeshivas, and supported the poor. In 1914, the Rzeszów commune consisted of 14,000 members (this number also included Jews from nearby towns)¹⁰⁸.

In 1931, Jews constituted 41.7% of the city's population (11,228 people). They worked mainly in craft, trade and freelance occupations. They were also active in the field of politics and local government. In 1934, out of 35 seats in the City Council, the Jewish community was represented by 15 councilors with their own club and deputy mayor. All major Zionist parties were present and active in the city. The most numerous were the Organization of General Zionist,

¹⁰⁷ J. Basta (2011), *Przemysł* [in:] J. Draus, G. Zamoyski (eds.), *Encyklopedia Rzeszowa*, Miłtel, Rzeszów, pp. 612–614.

¹⁰⁸ W. Wierzbieniec (1995), *Ustrój i organizacja rzeszowskiej gminy żydowskiej w okresie autonomii Galicji i II Rzeczypospolitej* [in:] *Z przeszłości Rzeszowa, Materiały z konferencji naukowej w 640-lecie lokacji miasta, 12–13 X 1994*, Rzeszów 1995, pp. 191–204; W. Wierzbieniec (2001), *Stosunki wyznaniowe. Wyznanie mojżeszowe* [in:] *Dzieje Rzeszowa*, F. Kiryk (ed.), vol. III, Rzeszów, pp. 447–473.

Orthodox Zionists, and the Poale Zion Jewish Socialist Labor Party. Rzeszow also supported the Jewish settlement in Palestine. In the years 1918–1939 six hundred young Jews departed Rzeszow for Palestine¹⁰⁹. The Jewish community could express their different views in the local Jewish press. There were several newspapers, though published at different times and usually for short periods due to costs and a lack of funds¹¹⁰.

Changes in the birth and death ratio in Rzeszow reflected general socio-economic trends observed in the region and in the whole country. More prosperous periods were characterized by an increase in population, while periods of wars and crises by a decline. From the end of the 19th century until 1914, there were two births for every one death in the Rzeszow Jewish community. In the years during World War I, the rate was even - one to one. In the years 1922–1928, before the Great Depression, a significant demographic increase in the Jewish community was recorded: one death for every 2.5 births. After 1929, there were 1.6 births for every one death, and after the outbreak of the war in 1939, only 0.4 births for every one death¹¹¹.

The assimilation of the Jewish population (e.g. by adopting the Christian religion or using Polish language) is a separate issue. Although the exact scale of these phenomena cannot be estimated today, it is certain that, e.g. based on the census from 1931, we find that in Rzeszow the number of people declaring Mosaic religion was almost twice as high as the number of people declaring Yiddish and Hebrew as their native languages¹¹². This would mean a significant degree of assimilation, at least as far as language is concerned.

2.4. Occupation and Holocaust

The German Wehrmacht occupied Rzeszow on September 9, 1939. From October 1939 until the end of German occupation in the beginning of August 1944, Rzeszow as a district city was a part of the so-called Krakow district of the General Government. Almost throughout this entire period, the head of civil administration in the city was the head of the district (a starost), Dr. Heinz Ehaus, a lawyer and SS lieutenant colonel. Before the war he was a senior Ge-

¹⁰⁹ W. Wierzbieniec (1995), *Z dziejów gminy żydowskiej w Rzeszowie*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 3, pp. 86–88.

¹¹⁰ M.E. Ozóg (1996), *Prasa żydowska w Rzeszowie w latach 1918–1939*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 4, pp. 55–73.

¹¹¹ K. Ozóg (2014), *Ruch naturalny ludności żydowskiej w okręgu metrykalnym w Rzeszowie w latach 1842–1943*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. XXVI, p. 96.

¹¹² G. Zamoyski (1994), *Mniejszości narodowe na Rzeszowszczyźnie w świetle wyników spisu powszechnego z 1931 roku*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 2, pp. 165, 169.

stapo officer in Berlin, one of the most influential district managers in the General Government¹¹³. He pursued an extremely brutal anti-Jewish policy in which he expressed his radical anti-Semitism. He continued to adopt this attitude until he left the city in the summer of 1944. Following the example of his superior from Krakow, he chose the castle in Rzeszow as his headquarters. As a result of his repressive actions in the following years, the city changed radically, both in terms of population and architecture. In his activities he was supported by an active branch of the Krakow Gestapo and other police-militarized German organizations involved without exception in the repression of the local population¹¹⁴.

The first sign of German occupation practice in relation to Jews was the Germans' attitude towards Jewish places of worship. As a witness of the reality of war noted: "Immediately after entering Rzeszow, at dawn on September 9, 1939, the Germans rushed at both synagogues with real fury (...) Within days, their interiors that had been decorated and cherished for centuries were completely demolished and destroyed. Precious ancient ritual accessories which had been meticulously kept, were stolen. Huge brass candlesticks and chandeliers, masterpieces of art, precious silver Torah covers, and other objects were taken as spoils of war. The buildings were transformed into stables, and next into storage and warehouses"¹¹⁵.

Just four days after the Wehrmacht occupied the city, the new German authorities introduced the first anti-Jewish law that forced them to mark their shops. The following months brought, among other things, laws on forced labor for Jews, marking them with the Star of David and limiting their places of stay. The climax was the law by Governor General Hans Frank of the 15th of October 1941, introducing the death penalty for Jews leaving the ghetto area, and for people who would knowingly gave them shelter. This directive coincided with the creation of a confined Jewish "residential area, "the so-called ghetto, in areas of the General Government, including Rzeszow. The ghetto was shuttered at the turn of December 1941 and January 1942. This formally implemented oppression and prosecution was accompanied by the constant and almost everyday public beating and humiliation of Jews, shaving their beards and forcing them to do pointless work¹¹⁶.

¹¹³ Before arriving to Rzeszow in 1940, Ehaus was a manager (Landkommissar) in Nisko, a place that the Germans had chosen as a "Jewish reserve". In May 1945 he committed suicide. M. Roth (2009), *Herrenmenschen. Die deutsche Kreishauptleute im besetzten Polen – Karrierewege, Herrschaftspraxis Und Nachgeschichte*, Wallstein, Göttingen, pp. 469–470.

¹¹⁴ S. Zabierowski (1973), *Organizacja hitlerowskiej policji bezpieczeństwa we wschodnich powiatach dystryktu krakowskiego w latach 1939–1945*, Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce, vol. XXV, Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, Warszawa.

¹¹⁵ F. Kotula (1947), *Z dziejów Rzeszowa 1939–1944. Losy rzeszowskich zabytków i pamiątek*, Rzeszow, p. 60.

¹¹⁶ Z.K. Wójcik (1998), *Rzeszow w latach drugiej wojny światowej. Okupacja i konspiracja 1939–1944–1945*, Rzeszow–Kraków, pp. 144–145, 151–153; S. Fishman, M. Dean (2012), *Rzeszow* [in:] M. Dean, M. Hecker (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933–1945*, Vol. II:

These actions preceded the largest Jewish Holocaust, which the Germans decided upon in the autumn of 1941, and for the following months prepared for it by building special extermination centers¹¹⁷. A camp in Belzec, built from December 1941 to March 1942 was the first place of death for Jews from Rzeszow and the eastern part of the Kraków district¹¹⁸.

The final act of the extermination of Rzeszow Jews took place in July 1942, when the largest deportations from Rzeszow to the death camp at Belzec took place. During the two months preceding these events, mass executions of Jewish prisoners held at the Rzeszow castle were carried out and all small ghettos in the Rzeszow district were liquidated, concentrating the entire Jewish population in the Rzeszow ghetto. Following the model of similar activities in other cities, the ghetto was divided into sectors, first eliminating those inhabited by older, sick and weak Jews. On July 7, several thousand Jews were gathered in the area of the Jewish cemetery. Some were transported to the forests near the town of Glogow and murdered. Others were taken to the railway station in Staroniwa, from where they were transported to Belzec in freight wagons¹¹⁹.

What occurred in July was extremely brutal. A chronicler of events occurring during the occupation described the following:

Finally, "The Transport". After 3pm, an SS unit of some affable boys entered the ghetto and surrounded a terrified and shocked group of about two and a half thousand people. The gate from Kopernika Street was opened and these "nice" boys suddenly turned into real devils. Upon command, they started screaming extremely loudly and began to beat these defenseless human beings. The macabre parade headed, almost running, to Grunwaldzka street, then Matejko street, next near Farny church, the new post office at Moniuszki street—heading in an obvious direction: the Staroniwa railway station (...). Here, a mother, seeing what was happening with other children, took her own baby by the feet and smashed it against the wall of a house. Its head broke open. The mother abandoned the corpse on the road and continued hurriedly running while being beaten. Finally, the station and cattle cars. Fifty people were put in each one (...). The murdered were taken to the Jewish cemetery in Czekaj and thrown onto one pile. The carts full of dead bodies continued to flow from the ghetto. A mountain of corpses. Dead bodies laid there all night. People who lived nearby said that they could hear moaning coming from the cemetery; thus, some were still alive. Someone reported it. Police arrived and ended the suffering of the wounded or dying¹²⁰.

Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indianapolis, p. 567.

¹¹⁷ S. Friedländer (2010), *Czas eksterminacji. Nazistowskie Niemcy i Żydzi 1939–1945*, Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa; C. Browning (2012), *Geneza „ostatecznego rozwiązania”. Ewolucja nazistowskiej polityki wobec Żydów. Wrzesień 1939 – marzec 1942*, tłum. B. Gutowska-Nowak, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków; R. Hilberg (2014), *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, vol. 1–3, tłum. J. Giebułtowski, Wydawca Piotr Stefaniuk, Warszawa.

¹¹⁸ R. Kuwałek (2010), *Obóz zagłady w Belżcu*, Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, Lublin, p. 172.

¹¹⁹ Z.K. Wójcik (1998), *Rzeszow w latach drugiej wojny światowej...*, pp. 155–158.

¹²⁰ F. Kotula (1999), *Losy Żydów rzeszowskich. Kronika tamtych dni*, Rzeszow, pp. 110–111.

The liquidation of the ghetto was later described from a different perspective by one of the would-be victims of the deportation of that time:

The route to the trains in Staroniwa was the last path for Rzeszow Jews (...). Gehenna started at the gate. The Germans rushed people, beat them with batons, forced them to run, which in their state of health was impossible. Everyone who fell was shot. Others fell atop those already on the ground, so the number of dead at the gate was increasing (...). The route from the ghetto to the railway station was full of dead bodies and drenched in blood. On that day, city hoses discharged copious amounts of water to wash away the innocently spilled Jewish blood. Freight wagons waited on a sidetrack. People were loaded inside them, treated worse than cattle. Cattle had food and water, but those unfortunate people were meant to die in stuffy and cramped wagons, without food and drink. The Germans remarked: "They don't need anything anymore"¹²¹.

None of the Jews from Rzeszow who were deported to the camp in Belzec survived. All of those deported became part of 450,000 mainly nameless¹²² victims of the third, after Auschwitz and Treblinka, extermination camp in German-occupied Europe¹²³.

The following deportations to Belzec took place on the 10th, 14th and 19th of July and later also in August and November. There were also deportations of patients of Jewish hospitals to the forests near the town of Glogow, where they were shot. As a result of these July actions, around two-thirds of the Jews from Rzeszow were slain. The remaining 4,000-6,000 Jews remained in the reduced ghetto, which was now a forced labor camp (Zwangsarbeitslager). In March 1943, the population of Rzeszow amounted to 20,600 residents, including 3.5 thousand Jews. The final liquidation of the ghetto took place on the 2nd and 3rd of September 1943. This time the destinations for deportation of Jews from Rzeszow were the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Szebnie camps, as well as the forests near Glogow. In the deserted ghetto remained only small clean up commands (units) and Jews working in the aircraft engine factory. All these prisoners continued to be transported to concentration camps until July 1944, shortly before the city's liberation¹²⁴. The number of Jews from Rzeszow deported and murdered during "Operation Reinhardt" is difficult to estimate due to the fact that Jews were transferred to the Rzeszow ghetto from other ghettos in the whole district, and even from more distant areas such as Krosno. The killing of the Jews, sending them to various places as slave labor, as well as the chaos associated with extremely brutal deportations make

¹²¹ M. Oster (2013), *Gehinom znaczy piekło: przeżyłem getto i dziewięć obozów*, oprac. i wstępem opatrzyła E.H. Łazoryk, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków, p. 103.

¹²² In the one and only account of a survivor of this camp there is a name of a Jew from Rzeszow working in the dentist command (unit). R. Reder (1946), *Bełżec*, Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna przy Centralnym Komitecie Żydów Polskich, Kraków, p. 49.

¹²³ R. Kuwałek (2010), *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu...*

¹²⁴ S. Krakowski (1990), *Rzeszow* [in:] I. Gutman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, Macmillan Publishing Company, Collier Macmillan Publishers, New York – London, vol. 3, s. 1315; T. Bieda (1993), *Eksterminacja Żydów w Rzeszowie w latach 1939–1944*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 1, pp. 155–158.

it very difficult to talk about accurate statistics. Most likely, in July 1942 alone, 16.5 thousand were deported to Belzec. And from the entire Rzeszow district (so not only from Rzeszow) as many as 24,000¹²⁵.

The extermination of Jews had a kind of special symbolic finale in Rzeszow. Although the deportations and the Holocaust took place in the greatest possible secrecy, with the Germans not even attempting to document and publicize these processes, in Rzeszow, the "final solution" was commemorated by the perpetrators themselves in a specific way. It is a small plaque from Rzeszow castle that has survived until now, which credits Kreishauptmann SS-Sturmabführer Dr. Heinz Ehaus in the largest extermination of Jews in the city in July 1942. Attached to the wing of a broken eagle knocked down from the castle in August 1944, it has survived until today and can be found in the District Museum in Rzeszow¹²⁶.

2.5. Post-war period

The Red Army entered Rzeszow on August 2, 1944. After the war, in the face of the loss of Lviv and the long distance from Krakow, a decision was made to promote a new voivodeship. Since, for political reasons, it could not be Przemyśl (religious character, uncertainty about the future of the city located just alongside the border with the USSR), the authorities decided to choose Rzeszow, which in 1944 became de facto the capital of the region (de iure a year later). At the turn of 1944/1945, apart from Lublin, Rzeszow was one of the largest cities where institutions of the new authorities were established. It led to an inflow of highly qualified workers who, however, left the city almost immediately after the liberation of the rest of the country from the hands of the Germans. Survivors of the Holocaust also came to the city.

As a result of the German occupation, the Rzeszow Jewish community practically ceased to exist. At the turn of June and July 1945, there were only 287 Jews in Rzeszow, in 1946 no more than 178 (including all national minorities)¹²⁷. According to statistics from 1946, 700-800 Jews from Rzeszow survived the occupation, most of them, about 600, in the USSR¹²⁸.

¹²⁵ E. Rączy (2014), *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim w latach 1939–1945*, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, Rzeszow, pp. 297–299.

¹²⁶ J. Kermisz (1946), *Dokumenty i materiały do dziejów okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce*, vol. II: „Akcje” i „wysiedlenia”, Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce, Warszawa–Łódź–Kraków, p. 116. It is worth noting that shortly after the deportation of Jews from Rzeszow, in which Ehaus participated with great commitment, Himmler promoted him in November 1942 to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

¹²⁷ J. Basta (1994), *Mniejszości narodowe na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1944–1946*, „Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne”, vol. 2, pp. 183–184.

¹²⁸ Z. K. Wójcik (1998), *Rzeszow w latach drugiej wojny światowej...*, p. 161.

The Holocaust survivors who returned to Rzeszow after the war left the city as a result of anti-Semitic rioting in June 1945. The causes of the events, triggered by the exceptionally brutal murder of a 9-year-old girl, are still unknown, as is/are the perpetrator(s)¹²⁹. This murder, however, awakened resentment and the myth of ritual murders, which led to anti-Semitic incidents, after which the Jews had to leave the city for fear of their safety. After this final exodus, the four-hundred-year history of the presence of Jews in the city came to an end. In Rzeszow what remained were only the physical, material remains of destroyed synagogues and cemeteries which were the topic of discussions and decisions for a long time.

In the period of the Polish People's Republic the city itself was a place of great changes, also of a social nature. Shortly after the war, the vast majority of its inhabitants were migrants, mostly from villages near Rzeszow and smaller towns of the region. For new residents, Rzeszow was an attractive place in terms of finding a job, receiving education and social promotion. This is true even today. The city is the capital of the region, and its competitors like Krosno, Przemyśl and Tarnobrzeg have lost their status of district capitals. The ever-developing Rzeszow is still located in the area that was once filled with the rich history of Jews. There are places that witnessed the greatest development of this community and its complete destruction.

¹²⁹ K. Kaczmarek (2008), *Pogrom, którego nie było. Rzeszow, 11–12 czerwca 1945 roku. Fakty, hipotezy, dokumenty*, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Rzeszow.

CHAPTER 3

JEWES IN THE MEMORY OF CONTEMPORARY RESIDENTS OF RZESZOW

3.1. Introductory note

When analyzing collective memory of the past of members of a specific community, two issues should be highlighted. First of all, the fact that portrayals of the past consist of a number of autonomous and not always compatible elements. One of them is certainly historical knowledge, although even in this case the researcher encounters the significant problem of distinguishing between correct and false knowledge. It is not always easy to make distinctions in this matter, especially since knowledge of the past does not consist of dates or statistics alone, which are easy to verify. Sometimes the vision of the past is built on certain facts that cannot be verified due to a lack of sources. Most often, factual and correct knowledge of historical events constitutes an element of awareness of just a few members of a specific community, especially when the subject of such knowledge is very specific and unique. This means that the "other side of the coin" which is the historical realities "knowledge" that is false and inconsistent, cannot be omitted in the analysis of such notions. Although, from a historian's point of view, it is pointless to consider such elements, from the perspective of sociological research, knowledge about the scale of deformations and distortion, which are the basis of attitudes towards some aspect of social life, seems to be particularly important. In addition to knowledge (true and false), the image of the past is based on such elements as various beliefs and affective and behavioral dispositions. They determine the position of a given individual towards a historical event expressed in declarations such as "right," "good," etc.

Secondly, when analyzing this type of data, various preconditions of the declared views and notions should be taken into account. It would be a mistake to assume that portrayals of the past are only influenced by demo-social factors, although here can be found many explanations important to the researcher. Undoubtedly, a lot depends on state and regional and local symbolic policies, school education or intellectual disputes in a broader public discourse, often based on publications about sensitive and controversial aspects of the history of

a given community. Social perceptions of the past are indisputably the result of the influence of other factors, which certainly include oral traditions. Bearing in mind the subject of this work (the memory of the inhabitants of Rzeszów about the life and extermination of Jews), in addition to the role of oral traditions, the role of Polish religious tradition, strongly rooted in Judaic tradition must also be taken into consideration. During the period of communism, the family and the church played an important role in transferring alternative sources of knowledge and shaping ideas about the past. Within families or religious communities there is a constant process of shaping attitudes towards the past, certainly also in the area analyzed here. It should not be forgotten that this topic has been extremely neglected in education for years¹³⁰.

3.2. Knowledge about the past of Jews

Information on the scope of knowledge of the inhabitants of Rzeszów about the history of Jews living in the city can be obtained by answering six open questionnaire questions. Respondents could freely indicate the correct answer or declare a lack of knowledge about the issues the questions referred to. Respondents were therefore asked to indicate:

- places in the area of Rzeszów related to the life of the Jewish community before World War II;
- places in the city connected with suffering and the Holocaust during World War II;
- the location of the extermination of Rzeszów Jews outside the city (the form of this question was different in 2010 and 2015);
- places related to the history of Jews and commemorated at sites within the present-day city;
- percentage of Jews living in the city before the outbreak of World War II;
- percentage of Rzeszów Jews killed during the war.

An important comment should be made here. In the first four questions, the respondents' answers varied in their degree of precision. While e.g. pointing to synagogues as places related to the pre-war life of the Jewish community was obvious, there was a problem in the case of many parts of the city (streets, buildings) as to which such a relationship existed (or at least could exist), but was less

¹³⁰ J. Ambrosewicz-Jacobs (2020), *Islands of Memory. The Landscape of the (Non) Memory of the Holocaust in Polish Education from 1989 to 2015*. Jagiellonian University Press, Kraków; H. Węgrzynek (2011), *Tematyka Zagłady w podręcznikach szkolnych (1945–2009)* [in:] F. Tych, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska (eds.), *Następstwa zagłady Żydów. Polska 1944–2010*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Ringelbluma, Lublin, pp. 597–623.

obvious. However, such responses should generally be considered correct for at least two reasons. First of all, the pre-war specificity of the city, where Jews constituted almost 40% of the population and in fact led an extremely rich economic and cultural life. Thus, indicating various spaces of broadly understood "exchange" is most appropriate. Secondly, such answers point to real (and correct) ideas of Rzeszow as a space related to the economic and cultural activity of Jews, not only in the area between the synagogue and the cemetery.

The situation was different in the case of questions about the place of extermination of Rzeszow Jews. Here, it is quite easy to separate correct and incorrect answers, although it should be borne in mind that answers such as Treblinka or Sobibor (even though the answer was incorrect, it is possible that individual Jews associated with Rzeszow were killed there) can indicate the knowledge about the Holocaust itself. Similar is the case of Katyn (where the percentage of Jewish victims - which must not be forgotten - reached 10%) or Markowa. From a historian's perspective, the answers are incorrect, but they are important for a sociologist, since they allow recreating the structure and forms of such images, which is always valuable, if not for practical (the possibility of corrections through potential education), then at least for purely cognitive reasons .

The situation is quite different in the last two questions about the percentage of Jews living in the city before the war and the Holocaust victims. Here you can very precisely determine which answer is correct and which is not. However, it is not the most important from the point of view of this study to accurately define the percentage of people with exact knowledge (as the percentage would be minimal), but more interesting is the distribution of responses, indicating some tendencies regarding the nature of such phenomena as the scale of the presence of Jews in the life of the city in the pre-war period or an idea of the actual scale of the Holocaust. From a sociologist's point of view, therefore, it is more important whether the respondents know the general (and proper) proportions, not the precise percentages.

In the first four questions, an important issue was raised, namely the idea of the real scale of the spatial location of the Jewish community in pre-war Rzeszow and on the map of the local Holocaust. These aspects are essential as they address the issue of Jewish life and the Holocaust in a very local perspective, which force us to pay attention to one particular phenomenon. Unfortunately, the history of Poland is very strongly presented, especially in schools, from a central and national perspective, eliminating almost all regional and local aspects. Of course, some regions of Poland are privileged in this respect, while others are not. This is noted by Jerzy Ronikier: "We can easily realize that the history of our country is written initially from the point of view of Wielkopolska, then Malopolska, and then it moves to Mazowsze and stays there until today

(in fact to Gniezno, Krakow and Warsaw)"¹³¹. Rzeszow and Podkarpacie seem to be particularly disadvantaged. They almost do not exist in the "great history of the nation", and research into the awareness of the contribution of the inhabitants of this region to the history of Poland situates them not only on the economic, but also on the historical outskirts¹³².

When analyzing the results of research from 2010 and 2015, it is worth examining the respondents' answers indicating their lack of knowledge. In 2010, regarding the question about places related to the life of the Jewish community in the city before World War II, almost 70% of respondents were unable to give an answer. In 2015, this percentage increased to almost 73%. Regarding the question about the places related to the suffering and extermination of Jews in Rzeszow during World War II, the scale of their ignorance was even greater: in 2010 almost 78%, in 2015 almost 85%. Regarding the question about locations outside of the city where Rzeszow Jews were killed, the scale of ignorance was similar: in 2010 almost 49% and in 2015 almost 85%. This large disproportion resulted from the differing content of the questions (in 2010, in the answers it was possible to indicate places located in the area of the city, which significantly reduced the number of "I don't know" responses). Responses to the question about places commemorated at sites within the city and related to the life of Rzeszow Jews asked in 2015 did not contribute much to the research, as over 87% of respondents could not give any example. The percentage results in questions about the percentage of Jews living in the city before the war and the victims of the Holocaust are much better. In the former question, a lack of knowledge was declared by 50.5% in 2010 and 60.8% in 2015. In the latter: 57.9% in 2010 and 66% in 2015. Of course, after analyzing the answers in terms of correctness, it turns out that only a few out of half of the respondents (several percent on average) answered correctly, which indicates that many residents of Rzeszow either had false notions or tried to guess the correct answer.

Table 2. Places related to life of Jewish community in the City before World War II

	2010				2015			
	Men	Women	Total		Men	Women	Total	
			n	%			n	%
<i>I</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Synagogues	9.2%	10.1%	57	9.7	15.6%	14.9%	122	15.2
Streets in the city center	6.6%	11.2%	54	9.2	—	—	—	—

¹³¹ J. Ronikier (2002), *Mit i historia. Mitotwórcze funkcje podręczników szkolnych*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków, p. 162.

¹³² K. Malicki (2012), *Pamięć przeszłości pokolenia transformacji*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, pp. 122–127.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Main Square	6.7%	6.4%	38	6.5	–	–	–	–
Old Town	2.5%	8.4%	35	5.9	2.5%	4.5%	29	3.6
Ofiar Getta Square– Wolności Square (cemetery)	1.7%	5.8%	24	4.1	3.9%	3.4%	29	3.6
Jewish District	2.1%	0.9%	8	1.4	0.3%	0.9%	5	0.6
Kirkut Czekaj	0.8%	0.9%	5	0.8	10.3%	10.0%	81	10.1
Garncarski Square	0.8%	0.6%	4	0.7	–	–	–	–
Entire city	0.8%	0.6%	4	0.7	–	–	–	–
Jewish Community Center WDK	0.8%	0.3%	3	0.5	–	0.7%	3	0.4
Jewish tenements	–	0.6%	2	0.3	–	–	–	–
Train station area	0.8%	–	2	0.3	–	–	–	–
Dormitory Jałowego street	0.4%	–	1	0.2	–	–	–	–
Inn Pobitno	–	0.3%	1	0.2	–	–	–	–
Jewish shops	–	0.3%	1	0.2	–	–	–	–
Staroniwa	–	–	–	–	0.6%	0.2%	3	0.4
I don't know	73.3%	67.5%	409	69.9	72.6%	72.9%	582	72.7
Quantity(total)	240	345	585	–	358	442	800	–

Source: personal research.

Generally speaking, from 2010 to 2015, the percentage of responses declaring a lack of knowledge increased in all the questions. The data signals that a maximum one-fifth of Rzeszow residents have some correct knowledge of the history of Rzeszow Jews based on facts.

When analyzing the responses given to the question about places related to the life of the Jewish community in the city before World War II (in 2010, this question was answered by 30.1%, in 2015 - 27.3%) a dominant role of one specific place can be noticed, namely the two synagogues (9.7 % respondents in 2010 and 15.2% in 2015). In the survey carried out in 2010, there was a high percentage of relatively vague indications of sites located in the Main Square (6.5%) or around it (9.2%), or places in the city center (5.9%). 4.1% of respondents pointed to Ofiar Getta Square, but not all of them simultaneously referred to the history of the former cemetery. Perhaps, in many cases, the name of the Square itself suggested the answer but it has clear connotations with the war period, not the pre-war years. The 2015 survey contains indications that are much more precise, but at the same

time less diverse. The dominant areas of Jewish life were again the synagogues (increase to 15.2%) and the cemetery in Czekaj District (10.1%). Interestingly, there are not many references to the oldest, though nonexistent, area of the old cemetery at Ofiar Getta Square. The name of the Square appears in 3.6% of the responses, but again only a small portion mentioned the history of this place. Only a minimal percentage of respondents gave the name of an interesting and important place embodying the dynamic culture of Rzeszow Jews located in the Community Center of the Tannenbaum Foundation, today's Voivodeship Cultural Center (0.5 and 0.4%).

The respondents definitely had more difficulties identifying places related to the suffering and extermination of Jews in Rzeszow during World War II. The most frequent answer was the ghetto area (13.5% of responses in 2010 and 8.2% in 2015). Such answers indicate an awareness of the existence of a "Jewish residential area," and thus the tragic events that were associated with this place (although perhaps the name Ofiar Getta Square indicates a war context of events that took place near this area may have influenced that choice). The area of Ofiar Getta Square was in second place, in both surveys (in 2010 - 4.1%, in 2015 - 4%), a place of the concentration of Jews before deportation to Belzec while at the same time a place of mass slaughter. The percentage of indications of the cemetery in Czekaj District is relatively low. This indication is correct as, during the occupation, numerous murders and summary executions by the Rzeszow Gestapo took place. The research shows a very limited awareness of the role of the Staroniwa railway station, in a sense a symbolic area, since freight wagons filled with Jews from Rzeszow departed from that place and transported them to gas chambers in Belzec.

Table 3. Places related to the suffering and extermination of Jews in the area of the city of Rzeszow during World War II

	2010				2015			
	Men	Women	Total		Men	Women	Total	
			n	%			n	%
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
Rzeszow Ghetto	10.4%	15.7%	79	13.5	7,0%	9.3%	66	8.2
Forest near Glogow	2.5%	0.9%	9	1.5	–	–	–	–
Ofiar Getta Square	1.3%	6.1%	24	4.1	5.0%	3.2%	32	4.0
Staroniwa	–	0.9%	3	0.5	1.7%	0.7%	9	1.1

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
City Center	–	0.6%	2	0.3	1.1%	1.4%	10	1.2
Main Square	1.3%	1.4%	8	1.4				
Czekaj Cemetery	2.5%	2.9%	16	2.7	2.5%	1.8%	17	2.1
Rzeszow Castle	0.8%	0.3%	3	0.5	0.8%	–	3	0.4
Gestapo Headquarters on Jagiellonska Street	–	0.3%	1	0.2	–	–	–	–
Labour Camp PZL	0.4%	–	1	0,2	–	–	–	–
Cellars beneath Main Square	0.8%	–	2	0.3	–	–	–	–
Synagogues	–	–	–	–	0.3%	0.7%	4	0.5
I don't know of such places	80.8%	75.7%	455	77.8	84.6%	84.6%	677	84.6
Total:	240	345	585	100	358	442	800	100

Source: personal research.

Knowledge about the places of execution and martyrdom of Rzeszow Jews outside the city is extremely limited. This question was answered by 51.5% of respondents in 2010 and 15.2% in 2015 (this disproportion partly results from the differing content of the question. In 2010 it was possible to indicate places both in and outside the city). The places of the greatest importance in this context were Belzec, Auschwitz, Szeged and the forests near Glogow Malopolski. However, they were very rarely mentioned by respondents. Auschwitz dominated the answers in 2010 (28.2%), but in 2015 it appeared only in 6.5% of the answers. Although the largest number of Jews from Rzeszow were killed in Belzec, only 4.3% of respondents in 2010 and 1.1% in 2015 indicated this place. An awareness of the role of the largest extermination center after Auschwitz and Treblinka in Europe is therefore very limited. The position of the forest near Glogow, where thousands of Jews from the Rzeszow ghetto were shot is somewhat better, but with a margin of error. In 2010, 6% of respondents indicated this place, in 2015 only 2.6%.

The results of the study also show an extremely low awareness of commemorated memorial sites for Rzeszow Jews. Only 12.8% of respondents could provide an example of such places. Undoubtedly, a certain explanation for this situation is the relatively small scale of commemorations of the past of Rzeszow

Jews. The most frequently mentioned cemetery in Czekaj (6.7%) is almost always closed and probably only a few residents of Rzeszow had the opportunity of visiting it. Although it is located in a not particularly prominent place, it to some extent draws attention as it is located near the local bazaar which is very often visited by the inhabitants of Rzeszow. Only a few more respondents were aware of the existence of the memorial stone monument at Ofiar Getta Square (4.6%). This monument provides information on the old Jewish cemetery and about the deportation in 1942. Since the respondents did not show their awareness of this place in the previous answers, it can be assumed that the monument is still largely only identified with dramatic events of the war, which is also due to the name of the square. In any case, the perception of this space deserves further in-depth research in the future. Few respondents (2.7%) indicated plaques showing the past of Rzeszow synagogues. Although the awareness of the relationship between synagogues and Jewish life is much greater, these responses would indicate a relatively low influence of such a form of commemoration and information medium.

In some of the answers to this question, which should be emphasized, Markowa village appears again. This place is particularly important in the context of memory about Jews and the Righteous Among the Nations in a regional dimension. Probably, for a few respondents Markowa is somehow related to Rzeszow itself, although this is not a correct association. Certainly, these responses signal some form of memory, and that after the opening of the Museum of Poles Saving Jews in Markowa in March 2016 it will take on new forms and will certainly increase, making Markowa an important memorial of that period of World War II, at least at a local level.

Table 4. Places of the Holocaust on the area of Poland

	Places in the city of Rzeszow or in Poland, where Rzeszow Jews were killed during World War II 2010				Places outside the city of Rzeszow related to the suffering and annihilation of Rzeszow Jews 2015			
	Men	Women	Total		Men	Women	Total	
			n	%			n	%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Auschwitz	27.1%	29.0%	165	28.2	6.1%	6.8%	52	6.5
Rzeszow Ghetto	10.0%	13.0%	69	11.8	–	–	–	–
Majdanek	6.3%	6.4%	37	6.3	2.5%	0.9%	13	1.6
Forests near Glogow Mlp.	4.2%	7.2%	35	6.0	2.0%	3.2%	21	2.6

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
Places outside Rzeszow in the area of Podkarpacie	3.8%	5.8%	29	4.9	1.7%	1.1%	11	1.4
Belzec	2.5%	5.5%	25	4.3	0.8%	1.4%	9	1.1
Extermination Camps	1.3%	4.1%	17	2.9	1.7%	2.7%	18	2.2
Treblinka	2.1%	2.9%	15	2.5	–	–	–	–
Czekaj Cementery Dolowa Street	2.9%	2.0%	14	2.4	–	–	–	–
Warsaw Ghetto	2.1%	2.0%	12	2.1	–	–	–	–
Markowa	0.8%	2.9%	12	2.1	2.2%	1.8%	16	2
Other places in Poland outside Podkarpacie	1.3%	2.3%	11	1.9	–	–	–	–
Concentration camps	1.3%	1.7%	9	1.5	–	–	–	–
Rzeszow	1.3%	0.9%	6	1.0	–	–	–	–
Katyn	1.3%	0.6%	5	0.8	–	–	–	–
Sobibor	0.4%	0.6%	3	0.5	–	–	–	–
Pustkow	0.4%	0.6%	3	0.5	–	–	–	–
Staroniwa train station	–	0.9%	3	0.5	–	–	–	–
Other ghettos in Poland	0.4%	–	1	0.2	–	–	–	–
Plaszow	0.4%	–	1	0.2	–	–	–	–
WSKCamp	0.4%	–	1	0.2	–	–	–	–
Szebnie	–	0.3%	1	0.2	–	0.2%	1	0.1
Lubomirski Castle	0.4%	0.0%	1	0.2	–	–	–	–
I don't know of such places	51.3%	46.7%	284	48.5	85.8%	84.2%	679	84.8
	240	345	585	–	358	442	800	–

Source: personal research.

Table 5. Commemorated places related to the life of Rzeszow Jews (year 2015)

<i>1</i>	Men	Women	Total	
			N	%
<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
Czekaj Cementery	6.4%	7.0%	54	6.7
Ofiar Getta Square with “a monument”	5.6%	3.9%	37	4.6

1	2	3	4	5
Synagogues with plaques	3.1%	2.5%	22	2.7
Markowa	0.0%	0.9%	4	0.5
Forests near Glogow Mlp.	0.3%	0.2%	2	0.3
I don't know of such places	87.2%	87.3%	698	87.2
Total	358	442	800	100.0

Source: personal research.

The issue of memorial sites in Rzeszow was also present as part of in-depth interviews with the city's residents carried out in the spring of 2016. As the respondents were not experts who deal with history professionally (although there were two interviewees with considerable knowledge resulting from their teaching profession and interest in history), the material received largely corresponds to the results of the conducted surveys.

Also, in the case of this study, relatively few respondents were able to comprehensively present places related to the life and extermination of Rzeszow Jews. Particularly noteworthy is an answer from one of the local politicians:

Let me begin with both synagogues – Old Town, the current State Archives building and New Town, where - after the reconstruction - the BWA Art Exhibitions Center is located. There is also a Jewish cemetery on Rejtana street. There is also the Voivodeship Cultural Center building, built in 1929 by the Adolf Tannenbaum foundation that used to be the Bet Am Jewish Community Center. There are other buildings. New street and square names were assigned during my mayoralty. We also commemorated the Jews murdered in the Rzeszow ghetto, hence Ofiar Getta Square. This only happened in the early 1990's . Earlier...nothing. They didn't even deserve the name of the square. By the way, this square is an old, 16th-century Jewish cemetery. There is also a commemorative plaque on the Old Synagogue, you should someday go, see and read the text in three languages . A monument was placed in the forest near Glogow, where Germans murdered several thousand Jews during the war. Later, at Ofiar Getta Square, a basalt stone was placed with a commemorative plaque, remembering the extermination of the Jews of Rzeszow in 1942. This is a minimal decency (W.09.M.68. Academic teacher).

The above answer should be considered as exceptional due to the relatively large amount of knowledge resulting from profession and interests. Other responses did not contain such comprehensive information. Generally, elderly people presented more extensive knowledge:

I know that there are the remains of the Jewish cemetery near the market square. On Ofiar Getta Square, once called Zwycięstwa Square, I guess there is

a synagogue on Bożnicza Street. Besides this, I don't know of any other places. Generally, most of the tenement houses were probably owned by Jews, hence the well-known saying "your streets, our tenement houses", this coexistence was probably not getting on well, probably for many different reasons, but as far as buildings, I can only indicate these two (V.13. M.54.Engineer).

Sometimes, knowledge about Jewish history was the result of the character of the workplace, in this case, the former synagogue:

I can't say much about the history of the Jews in Rzeszow. I know that many of them lived here. Where the archive is now, it used to be an old synagogue, but now there is nothing left inside. Now the building is being taken away from us and the archive will be moved because the current building will probably be taken over by the city. Maybe they will renovate it because it is nice and has a history, but it is in very bad condition. The current entire Wolnosci Square was once a Jewish cemetery, but I don't remember it, I just heard that. (W.23.K.63 Archivist).

There is an interesting statement of an elderly respondent with no family connections to the city:

The subject of Rzeszow Jews is completely strange to me because I am not a native of Rzeszow. I can only say that I know some places related to these people. They are two Jewish cemeteries. One at Rejtana Street, and the other one, which I mentioned earlier, and which is desecrated by the monument of the invader. There are also two synagogues next to this cemetery. In general, the topic of Jews does not exist for me. I treat this nation like others, for example, Spaniards or Danes etc. (W.20.M.69 Road technician).

The answers to the last two questions about knowledge were to estimate the scale of awareness as to the percentage of Jews in the population of the pre-war city and the scale of the Holocaust. 49.5% of respondents answered the first question in 2010 and 39.2% of respondents in 2015. Providing answers, however, was not always the same as providing true data. Generally, the majority of people who estimated the percentage of Jews in the pre-war city were close to correct. Although the percentage of Jews in the pre-war city did not exceed 40%, it can also be assumed that the answers indicating a higher percentage were very close to being correct.

Table 6. Answers to the question: “What was the % of Jews in the population of the city before World War II?”

	2010			2015		
	Men	Women	Toal	Men	Women	Total
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
Less than 20%	7.1	2.0	4.1	2.2	3.2	2.8
21–40%	23.1	12.6	16.9	12.3	14.0	13.3

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41–60%	15.5	13.2	14.1	16.5	14.7	15.5
61–80%	4.6	10.8	8.3	7.3	5.7	6.4
Over 80%	5.0	6.7	6.0	0.6	2.0	1.4
I don't know	44.5	54.7	50.5	61.2	60.4	60.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: personal research.

The perception of the scale of the Holocaust of Rzeszow Jews is much lower. The scale was the same regardless of the area of occupied Poland. 42.1% provided an answer in 2010 and 34% in 2015. The closest to being correct (answers over 80%) were 12.1% of respondents in 2010 and 8.5% in 2015.

Table 7. Answers to the question: „What %of Rzeszow Jews died during World War II?”

	2010			2015		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Less than 20%	5.9	3.5	4.5	3.9	2.9	3.4
21–40%	7.2	7.1	7.1	5.9	5.7	5,8
41–60%	7.2	7.6	7.5	6.4	9.0	7.9
61–80%	10.1	11.5	10.9	8.4	8.6	8,5
Over 80%	13.1	11.5	12.1	10.1	7.2	8.5
I don't know	56.5	58.8	57.9	65.4	66.5	66.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: personal research

3.3. Contact with the past of the Jews and oral traditions

While commenting on the nationwide results of research from 2002 on the phenomenon of anti-Semitism (whose part was the subject matter of the transfer of knowledge about the past of Jews), Andrzej Żbikowski stated: "In fact, every person we interviewed heard something about Jews in their households. What they heard was of varying degrees of importance, but most of the respondents treated these stories as anecdotes or curiosities."¹³³ Many of the issues raised were related to the memory of Jews, and their pre-war relations with the Polish

¹³³ A. Żbikowski (1996), *Źródła wiedzy Polaków o Żydach. Socjalizacja postaw* [in:] I. Krzemiński (ed.), *Czy Polacy są antysemitami? Wyniki badania sondażowego*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa, p. 81.

population and the Holocaust, although the share of the latter memories was not very significant. The survey revealed that for many Poles, the source of knowledge about Jews (though not only about history and relations from the past, which is the most important for this work) is family and conversations with parents and grandparents. 48.3% of respondents used this source of knowledge¹³⁴.

A small part of the inhabitants of Rzeszow (at the same time a margin of representative samples of the inhabitants selected randomly for the purpose of the surveys), due to their age, must have experienced direct contact with the pre-war Jewish community. These types of memories should be considered extremely valuable. This topic, which is difficult to explore in quantitative research, appeared in qualitative research and in-depth interviews. Individual memories about contacts with Jewish neighbors in Rzeszow were included in the research material of two projects carried out in 2012 and 2016. In the former, material related to Rzeszow Jews included 4 out of 44 interviews held in Podkarpacie Voivodeship¹³⁵. In 2016, 30 people were interviewed, however, the material obtained was definitely more limited.

The broadest range of memories was obtained from people during in-depth interviews in 2012. The material collected during this research is of great value and report not only the Jewish life in the pre-war city, but above all the period of the Holocaust and the crimes committed by the Germans. Excerpts from two interviews are cited below. One of them (man, born in 1925) describes the specific moment of creating the Rzeszow ghetto and concentrating the Jews from nearby towns there.

But when the Jews were transported to the ghetto, an order came that I, together with another man, should take a horse-drawn cart and go to Strzyzow on a particular day and at a particular time. And we did. He was driving the cart and the family appointed me to help. So, I was there during the deportation of these Jews from Strzyzow to the ghetto in Rzeszow. Traffic, hustle, carts from the entire region. We were assigned a family. I don't remember helping with packing. We provided the cart, we had it ready. The family certainly couldn't take everything they had. I remember a scene that is stuck in my mind. A lawyer, a Jew, I knew that as I went to school in the city for a few years, I knew he was a lawyer, bareheaded who was standing in a formal stance facing this German gendarme, he explained something but I did not know what he was talking about, but I noticed this attitude of superiority this gendarme had over this Jew, who was certainly better educated. And I remember such scenes of saying goodbye to

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 65–95.

¹³⁵ K. Malicki (2017), *Poza wspólnotą pamięci. Życie i Zagłada Żydów w pamięci mieszkańców regionu podkarpackiego*. Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warszawa.

Jewish and Polish women, crying with tears. Certainly, there were onlookers who observed it with indifference or satisfaction. This anti-Semitic propaganda was successful; they were certainly interested in Jews leaving their places so they could take them over, an apartment or something. I also remember the conversations...where are they taking them? Well, for now, to Rzeszow, but they are to be gathered near Lublin and remain there in a kind of camp. Those places were Treblinka or Belzec, but at that time none of us was aware of that. And in the evening, we brought these Jews to Rzeszow, in the evening, we traveled all night, it was a married couple, two or three children and their luggage, we all sat in a way that everyone could fit in. We didn't talk. We were indifferent to each other. In Czudec, after passing through the town, there was a park there, I don't know if you know, the remains of the manor park, we stopped there to rest the horses. We stopped for a while. In the morning we took them to Rzeszow. It was designated. The queue of carts, you didn't have to know where they were going. We unloaded them there and left them (Interview nr. 29)¹³⁶.

The ghetto itself appears in every memory. Apart from the Przemyśl ghetto, the ghetto in Rzeszow was one of the largest in the region. Unlike ghettos in smaller towns, it was separated from the so-called "Aryan side".

I remember the Jewish ghetto, it was Galezowski Street. On Galezowski Street there was this shop my father used to go to, where he bargained over the price when he was buying fabric from this Jew. Galezowski Street, I still remember where this store was. There was a gate, at the end, where the street ended, towards Wolności Square there was a gate, a German stood there. It was already a ghetto. Mickiewicza Street, it was the same, Main Square. I remember they were taken to the ghetto. They transported people on carts from Blazowa to Rzeszow, literally there were going to their deaths (Interview nr. 25)¹³⁷.

Another answer (man, born in 1926) gives a detailed description of life in ghetto, observed from the outside.

I lived on the first floor of a building on Baldachowka. We had two windows overlooking Krol Kazimierz Street and two overlooking Baldachowka. There was the ghetto. Garncarski Square, Naruszewicz Street, Baldachowka, Dekert Street – it was all occupied by Jews. I don't remember exactly, but probably at the end of 1942 or at the beginning of 1943, they brought Jews into the ghetto. Maybe sooner, maybe late 1941 – I'm not sure. In any case, when we moved there in 1942, there were no Jews yet, but immediately they began to flow in there, they started to be transported. The buildings were separated by posts and wire, and the Jews were isolated from other districts. On one side of Baldachowka, i.e. on the left as you walk from the Main Square there was the district

¹³⁶ K. Malicki (2017), *Poza wspólnotą pamięci ...*, pp. 190-191.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 191.

for wealthier Jews. There were two buildings, now there are apartment blocks. On the right side, along Krol Kazimierz Street and Baldachowka, there was one higher building, then there was another one, and here there were one-storey buildings - now demolished. The poorer Jews lived on this side – older people, children, maybe the sick, I don't know. In any case, they were very poor, because at 1:00 or 2:00 pm – I mean mealtime- then the wealthier Jews would bring food (their leftovers, or maybe something more) to give to the poor. There was always a gathering there, many Jews with bowls and pots, they were waiting for the rich ones to give them something (in this ghetto). On the other side of where I lived there was a tenement house that has survived to this day. There the Jews worked. Shoemakers on the first floor and tailors on the second floor. Every day in the morning there was a group of people going up the hill (from the ghetto, from there to the hill). I don't know how many of them, one hundred, two hundred, maybe one hundred and fifty. In the summer they worked longer, in the winter shorter, because it was getting darker sooner. They were escorted by their Jewish patron, because the Jews had "their" police. The Germans did not want to get dirty so much to beat the Jews, as they often say here, that the Germans shot Jews. I lived there for two or three years, as long as the ghetto lasted. It was there for two years. I did not see Germans ever shoot a Jew there. The Jewish police did the dirty work there. They walked with clubs with such handles, either from axes or from shovels and prodded these Jews. I wasn't so interested in it. My father was more interested. Sometimes in his spare time he looked through the curtain, although it was completely forbidden to observe what was happening in the ghetto (German ban). At night, the windows had to be covered. You could hear shots, various things like that at night, but that wasn't allowed to be seen. There was a situation (my father told me the other day - after the liquidation of the ghetto, when there were still German checkpoints, because some Jews were hiding) that a Jewish policeman brought a Jewish woman to the Germans. Baldachowka and King Kazimierz streets - here was a German checkpoint, where the guard patrolled the street back and forth. A Jewish policeman brought a young Jewish woman, she might have been 17–18 years old. The German asked her something and she broke free and ran away. Later this policeman caught her and brought her back. And she ran away again. It was then that this German took off his rifle and shot her. It was one scene that my father saw and related the next day (...) If there were any "actions, "they were at night. From what I saw, and my father saw, the Germans did not abuse Jews. Rather it was the Jewish police. I saw them beating the Jews, chasing them with clubs, but the Germans - I did not see. Sometimes at night, a little farther. I'm saying, when this German shot this Jewish girl, he called somewhere, and a German patrol arrived. They took this German, just placed him in the car and

took him somewhere, I don't know where, I don't think they punished him, I don't know, but there was another police officer who replaced him. This Jewish woman was lying there for a long time, several hours. Once the ghetto was liquidated, the Germans were there for a month or half a month. I think they knew that Jews were still hiding there. They came out themselves: one at a time, in twos, in threes, they kept them there and later transported them somewhere. It wasn't the Germans that specifically searched for them. It was only the Jewish policemen. I witnessed beatings. More than once I saw through the window when they were going to and coming back from work and how these Jewish police beat them. They had arranged it earlier, whether one was late, stumbled or something, so they "pounded" them with these clubs, it was unpleasant to watch that a Jew was beating another Jew. It was the worst. They knew that they would not live much longer. I don't know, maybe they didn't realize. Yes, you could hear that. And that car that transported the dead bodies. I don't know if it was a Jew. Some older man, he went to Slowackiego Street in the morning, because there was an entrance somewhere, Garncarski Square and there to Galezowski Street, because I think they buried them on Rejtana Street (...) Here, where Plac Wolności is now, there used to be a Jewish cemetery. There were marble monuments. The cemetery here at Rejtana Street, currently there are no graves, but there used to be plenty. When I was walking near this cemetery, I saw a lot of monuments there, especially made of marble with inscriptions. There didn't use to be any wall here, now there is. On Wolności Square, where the monument is located, it used to be a cemetery as well. From Kopernik Street to the former Voivodeship Committee. Many of these marble tombstones were at the cemetery at Wolności Square. The Germans were preparing to attack the USSR. They were building roads. They also demolished these marble tombstones and used them, I remember, they used the parts with Hebrew inscriptions to build the street. If Sobieski Street, formerly called 1st of May Street, was excavated, it would be possible to dig up these tombstones now. They used them to harden the street [they arranged them] to harden it. To this day I, I remember these inscriptions in Hebrew (Interview no. 39)¹³⁸.

The best remembered scene from the war period was the liquidation of the ghetto in the summer of 1942. The scale of German brutality left its mark on the witness's memory.

I remember, I saw it. You know, today there are a lot of people who say different things, but it was, you know, when they did it for the first time, when they pulled people out. Screaming, crying, shootings. Literally all night. They removed these Jews until noon. (...) And then the whole night, they would run

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 192–193

away, then they were caught, until three o'clock when they opened the gates and told them to run. It was a massacre. Well now to commemorate, it is organized every year, only that they walk from Staroniwa train station to this square¹³⁹. Well then, the name was changed, Victory Square to Victims of the Ghetto Square. (...) I lived right there on Matejki Street, in front of the church, in this house, on the first floor. When the Jews were led for the first time, nobody knew what it was all about, because it lasted all night, you know. And then before three o'clock, the police ordered shops to close, and told people to move away. And then, they were hurrying, here from Kopernik Street, Grunwaldzka Street this way and to Matejki Street up and to Staroniwa. It was on this street; there was a massacre. The next deportations were slower. Here, I remember, it was Tuesday or Friday at the end of this deportation, I remember, I was sitting on this terrace, here above the pharmacy, and I saw an officer who was standing on a motorcycle trailer: "Langsam, langsam" and these Jews were led to Staroniwa. I remember that as well. Once they went along this street, which is now called Kopernika street, then Mikoska here, from Grunwaldzka street towards Krakowska street, that way, it was a different route, it happened only once. It was obvious that it was ...you know, it was a horrible scene. At the time when I was a little boy, I was emotional. Well, but you know. You know, now when I look back it was terrible. How could you treat people like that? How could you actually murder an entire society? I distinctly saw an old Jew and a Jewish woman were walking, they had a suitcase that this Jew was carrying, and this woman could not run, and she fell. This Jew wanted to help her up, so he was hit in his back with a rifle butt and this woman was kicked. After all, they were drunk, those soldiers. This gang. In Farny Square there was also a Jewish woman running towards the parish to escape, so he waited, and when she got close, he shot her. Here this place was full of dead bodies, it is difficult to say, but about a hundred, something like that. Here on this part of the street. On Pulaski Street over there, there were pools of blood. And then they were packed in wagons, locked, without water, for a long time before this transport went to Belzec. People were dying in these wagons. But you know, now you don't talk about it, it's the past. Well, it's completely different now, you know, it's all different. Now a new history is being created, unfortunately ... From the apartment you could go out on such a terrace with a view of Kopernik street, Mikoska, Farny Square, and what was happening there on Victims of the Ghetto Square. You didn't even have to go out, simply open the windows, you could hear what was happening, shootings, screaming, crying. Rzeszow was not so big, there was no traffic, there was silence, you could hear everything. They were military police or SS. In any

¹³⁹ March Commemorating the Liquidation of the Ghetto (see Chapter 5.2)

case, they mostly had rifles, Mausers, automatic weapons. You know, it's hard for me to say, but I think so, because with these gorgets, it was the military police. And there was a lot of Jewish police. They walked at the end as the last ones. And then they loaded those corpses onto a cart. Later, people explained what had happened in Staroniwa, but I didn't see it. You know, Sir, packing them into these wagons. There was lime everywhere. These people were just standing there and relieving themselves. They were suffocating there. Gruesome. There was a railway man, a train driver or something, he said when they got to Belzec, to that station and then the whole crew, whether a train driver or a helper or something, they had to leave and the Germans got in and all the transport went farther to this camp. It didn't take long before the train came back empty. So, the prisoners there must have been ordered to wash it, clean it, empty it of corpses, from all this. Now it is easy to use the word corpses, but it is unfathomable... (Interview nr. 43)¹⁴⁰.

Another account is a description of the deportation which most likely took place in autumn 1942, although the author was not sure of the date. The details indicate November 15, 1942, when Jewish children were deported (Fishman, Dean 2012: 568).

Children under the age of five or six were loaded onto trucks. There were two or three older people who looked after these children. The children were loaded into cars. I saw two cars which left with these children. Maybe there were more than those two which I saw. Later, the Jews were led in columns. It lasted maybe two or maybe three days. They would not be able to deport them in just one day. One part was going to Staroniwa, to the station, and the other to Grunwaldzka Street, straight on, not to the station, only to a kind of ramp and there the Jews were loaded. There (on Grunwaldzka Street) I saw everything, because I was a child, we were curious, where they were led, what was going on? They (the Germans) didn't let us go farther but in this square, we saw how they loaded them into these wagons. The wagons were red and packed with the Jews. They were led by SS men with dogs at their sides. This is what I saw (Interview nr 39)¹⁴¹.

The quoted fragments of interviews prove the tremendous value of the accounts of the witnesses.

The scope of memories in the interviews conducted in 2016 was much more limited. Some interviewees had the opportunity to experience contact with Jews directly, although due to the fact that 77 years passed since the outbreak of the war, only two respondents could recall childhood memories. The range of memories is very limited, as in the case of the following account of an 86-year-old city resident:

¹⁴⁰ K. Malicki (2017), *Poza wspólnotą pamięci...*, pp. 199-201

¹⁴¹ Poza p. 201

One picture is stuck in my mind. I was walking with my mom in the center of Rzeszow and we saw Jews buying milk or food from people from the villages. She told me a lot of stories, but it's difficult to recall them now. I remember only this moment, that there were a lot of them, and they were buying food. (*Int.18.W.86. Accountant*).

The statement of a man who remembers the reality of the Second Polish Republic and the German repressions from the period of 1939–1944 draws particular attention:

When the war broke out, I was still attending school. The people were coming, no one knows from where, to where and to whom, and they were mostly Jews who came from Germany. We called a Jew “a chalat”, they had long beards and payots. When the Germans came, Dear Lord, they pulled out their bayonets, grabbed their beards and cut them off. And if someone complained, they reached for their gun, one shot and it was over. There were times when dead bodies were lying on the street and you had to be careful when walking. It was different than now, when everybody deserves to be buried. Sometimes, if someone had carts, the bodies were taken to Czekaj, as it was called, meaning to Rejtana street, or to the old cemetery, which is next to the market hall, to the main square next to the town hall and Victory Square (*Int.12.M. 89. Driver*).

Contact with the past of Jews also includes experiences with the material remains of this community. The following is the statement of a man who has lived in the city since he was born and has special meaning in this context:

We used to play in a stream near the rainbow bridge. A long time ago, when we used to come there, the whole stream bed, now overgrown, was lined with matzewah from the Jewish cemetery, the one on Dolowa street. You could slip on them. It would be interesting if they were dug up now and transferred back to the cemetery (*Int.01.M.56. Mechanic*).

Two of the interviewees noted yet another unusual contact with the Jewish past, but through a direct meeting with Holocaust survivors. In the first case, a survivor from Debica:

But I knew one gentleman who was Jewish, he was my math teacher at school, but not in Rzeszow, and he often told us how he was hiding among others in a tomb in a cemetery. It was in a town near Debica, it was the year 1944. He told us what had happened to him. Later he was taken in by some family and once when the Germans were approaching the town, he hid in a stable, where there was cattle, he hid under the manger, where the cows were fed. He heard these German shouting, beating, and the gate to this stable suddenly opened, he often told us about that, and he saw a German gendarme, a machine gun in his hand, with a flashlight and he stopped the flashlight on the manger under which he was sitting and then he began to pray very earnestly, because he knew that this was the end and that German came and started looking at him and he was staring at that German. He said he had the impression that it lasted ages. And this German then turned off the flashlight and left. This is the story I know (*Int.22.M.80. Doctor*).

In the second statement, the name of a very important person in the history of the Holocaust of Rzeszow Jews, namely Moshe Oster, an author of a book about the tragedy of Rzeszow Jews, is mentioned.

I am currently emailing with a lady from Israel who, despite being well over 80 years old, is very physically and mentally fit. She visits Poland in January, when Holocaust Day is celebrated, because on that day the Red Army liberated the Auschwitz concentration camp. This lady's name is Lucia Retman and she comes from Lubaczow. I met her a few years ago during a conference when I spoke about the German crimes of World War II. She always remembers Catholic holidays and sends me wishes, despite being Jewish. What she has experienced is very touching; she was helped by a Polish family, Mrs. Pomorska's family, who was awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal. She possessed Catholic records, as some priest helped to obtain them. (...) I also met a gentleman who was born in Rzeszow, his name is Moshe Oster. He wrote a book "Gehinom means hell. I survived the ghetto and nine camps". A very interesting and shocking account. He escaped from transport to the extermination camp (*Int.09.M.68. Academic teacher*).

The results of Rzeszow surveys from 2010 and 2015 indicate a relatively small scope of the phenomenon of oral traditions of knowledge about Jews and their past through conversations with family or friends. In 2010, 82.7% of respondents declared that they did not talk about it at all. In 2015, this percentage increased to 85.5%. It can be assumed that these results confirm that the contribution to the transfer of the content related to the past of Jews (and not only) of people from the oldest age categories, whose number is decreasing year by year, is of a great importance. It means that, in a few years, the percentage of people declaring taking up such issues in their conversations may further decrease.

Table 8. People involved in conversations about the past of the Jews.

	2010				2015			
	Men	Women	n	%	Men	Women	n	%
<i>l</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Friends	5.9%	5.3%	32	5,4	3.4%	2.9%	24	3.1%
Parents	3.3%	1.8%	14	2,4	3.6%	2.9%	25	3.3%
Father or mother	0.8%	2.3%	10	1,7	0.8%	0.9%	9	0.9%
Family	2.1%	1.2%	9	1,5	0.8%	2.5%	15	1.8%
Teachers, lecturers	2.5%	0.9%	9	1.5	0.6%	0.9%	6	0.8%
Grandaprents	–	2.0%	7	1.2	1.4%	2.0%	15	1.8%
Neighbors	1.3%	0.9%	6	1.0	0.3%	0.2%	2	0.3%
Others	1.3%	0.9%	6	1.0		0.2%	1	0.1%
Jews (survivors, tourists)	0.8%	0.9%	5	0.8	0.8%	0.7%	6	0.8%

<i>1</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Elderly people, witnesses	0.4%	0.6%	3	0.5	0.3%	–	1	0.1%
Priests	–	0.3%	1	0.2	0.3%	–	1	0.1%
I do not remember	–	–	–	–	0.6%	0.2%	3	0.4%
Different residents of Rzeszow	–	–	–	–	2.0%	0.7%	10	1.3%
I did not have any conversations	82.8%	83.6%	483	82.7	85.2%	85.7%	682	85.5%
Total	240	345	585	–	358	442	800	–

Source: personal research

However, 17.3% and 14% of respondents conducted such conversations (in both years, respectively). Those interlocutors can be put into three categories. The first group is a family including parents and grandparents. The second group is friends and neighbors. The third group consists of other people with whom the relations are less intimate, often met by accident, including, for example, witnesses of the war or Jewish tourists from the USA or Israel.

The topic of such conversations mainly concerns general issues of a historical, cultural and religious nature. Not so uncommon, they relate to the pre-war life of Jews in the city and their contribution to the history of Rzeszow. The issue of the Holocaust as the topic of such talks was signaled on average by about 3% of respondents. Traces of Jewish memorial sites, however, were almost not mentioned at all. There is almost no indication of anti-Semitism as a topic of such conversations.

Table 9. What exactly were the conversations about?

	2010			2015		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
<i>1</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7
General conversations about Jews	6.3	3.8	4.8	1.4	1.1	1.3
Lifestyle, culture, traditions	2.5	4.3	3.6	2.8	2.0	2.4
Holocaust	2.1	3.5	2.9	2.5	3.4	3.0
Role of Jews in the history of Rzeszow	2.9	2.6	2.7	0.6	1.1	0.9
Relations between the Poles and the Jews	0.4	0.9	0.7	0.6	1.1	0.9
Family contact with Jews before the war	0.4	0.6	0.5	–	0.2	0.1

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
About memorial sites (Jewish cemeteries, synagogues)	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.8
Reclaiming of once Jewish property by Jews	0.8	–	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4
History of Jews	–	–	–	2.2	1.6	1.9
Jewish trade	–	–	–	1.4	0.5	0.9
Post-Jewish buildings	–	–	–	0.6	–	0.3
I do not remember	–	–	–	0.3	0.2	0.3
Antisemitism	–	–		–	0.5	0.3
Others	0.8	0.6	0.7	–	0.7	0.4
I did not have such a conversation	82.9	83.5	83.2	86.6	86.4	86.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: personal research

Since quantitative research does not allow us to sufficiently explore this relatively uneasy and very niche issue, it appeared in the series of unstructured interviews with residents of Rzeszow conducted in 2016. At this point, it is worth recalling some statements, because although relatively few respondents declared conducting conversations about the past of Jews in the city, it seems that many more inhabitants (at least those connected with it through the origin of families) were confronted with memories of older people. Out of the 32 interlocutors, about half indicated that they had heard some forms of memories about Jews in their family households. Let me emphasize that generally they were not conversations, but rather listening to someone talking, and the Jewish past suddenly returned to the present day. It should also be noted that the majority of the statements quoted below are from people who are family-related to the city, although there are of course exceptions to this.

In many statements, we come across a description of pre-war life transmitted by grandparents and parents, in which Poles and Jews lived side by side, doing business. Some memories are good, others just the opposite. The period of the war is also mentioned. A common feature of these statements, numerous and similar to each other, is always a reference to grandparents who told pre-war and war stories. Below there are portions of later generations of Poles that contribute to the outline of the image of Jews. Very frequently heard stories about former Jewish neighbors must have had a strong influence on them.

My in-laws, who are unfortunately deceased, had knowledge about it, once there were certainly more Jews both in Rzeszow and in the nearby villages, I often heard stories of quarrels with them.

They tended to be enterprising, and Poles envied them. I remember they told me that Poles would constantly throw stones at a Jewish shop. In Rzeszow during the war, the Germans established a ghetto here and people had to move there, my father-in-law said that it was somewhere on Lwowska street, my mother also told me that Jews had to move from Tyczyn to Rzeszow, a human tragedy, so many children died of various diseases there, apparently the conditions were horrid. But the in-laws also said that some of them survived, people helped as much as they could, hid them (*Int.03.W.56. Accountant*).

Yes, my grandparents sometimes mentioned the Jewish population living in Rzeszow, the Jews were wealthy, they had tenements, shops, pubs, and there were also synagogues. Memories of the war are not pleasant, I mean the ghetto, where people were murdered (...) The Jews were transported to the forest near Glogow, then they were shot, they died in the camps, simply terrible, it is just terrible (*Int.04.M.35. Social worker*).

I remember my grandfather, who did not like Jews personally, who kept talking about them, but I would rather not repeat what he said (...) he mentioned that a few had some shops in the area and not only my grandfather had that attitude towards them. It was said that often unpleasant incidents took place. But as I said, I prefer not to mention those stories. (*Int.05.M.43. Taxi driver*).

My grandfather ran a shop in the village, and he was doing business with the Jews, so I heard a lot about them. They lived in the village, and my dad always said that the Jewish women were very beautiful. I know that in the village, the relations between Jews and Poles was positive, they helped each other. My grandfather came here to Rzeszow, to trade with Jews, to exchange goods, he bought some things there and he brought them to the village. I can say that I know the positive side of Jews, in the sense that they never deceived my family. There was even a situation when a Jew with a fabric shop noticed that the construction of the ghetto in Rzeszow near Ofiar Getta Square had begun, so he told my grandfather to take everything for free and give it back to him after the war. My grandfather was so honorable that he was afraid that something could go missing, something could go wrong, so he refused (*Int.11.W.49. Interior designer*).

My grandparents mentioned that many Jews used to live here, but honestly, I was not interested in this subject at the time. As far as I know, there were two Jewish cemeteries in Rzeszow, and the one on Dolowa street is still there. Now it is a closed cemetery and I have never been there (Int.24.W.32. Mathematician).

My grandparents and parents mentioned the Jews just occasionally, they said that Rzeszow was a Jewish city, even some people laugh that we are not Rzeszow, but Mojzeszow, that moski lived here. There were a lot of them here, they had their own tenement houses and shops, but they were good because Poles were poor, they went to Jewish stores, they could buy on credit, they assimilated together. They mainly resided in the city center. The Jews said: the tenements are Jewish, and the streets are yours. To this day, they want to buy back their old tenement houses on 3 Maja Street or Grunwaldzka Street, they try to regain their property. Poles are looking for the owners in Israel and buy the tenements up. They had money, they were bankers, they did business. (...) They had money, shops, etc. There were various things, good and bad, between the communities, some people remember good things, some people the bad things. My family didn't have much contact with them. I have never driven them in my taxi. (*Int.25.M.56. Taxi driver*).

I talked about the Jews with my father-in-law, who mentioned them to me because he had contact with them, as a supplier of goods, he brought them various products. During the conversation, he said that the Jews mostly lived in the center of Rzeszow. He remembers them as honest people, but talking about money, they were very precise, firm and meticulous, they did not give up even

a penny. My father-in-law talked about one gentleman who was a Jew and was hidden by one lady during the war period and later he married her and worked hard enough to ensure her a good standard of living. I know these stories from my father-in-law, but I personally did not have any contact with this nationality, first of all, because I lived in a completely different district, newly built at that time, and even if someone was Jewish, they did not want to admit it (*Int.19.M.80. Installer Technician*).

They have mentioned something, but rather in a negative context. Everybody knows is the Jewish stereotype. I do not know any significant details on this subject (*Int.31.M.51. Undertaker*).

The statements quoted above should not suggest that this topic was present in stories told in every household. As mentioned, this concerned about half of the respondents. Therefore, it is worth paying attention to interlocutors who did not have similar forms of memories in their family households, and for whom the fact of exploring the past did not seem something particularly important:

Neither my parents nor I have never talked about Jews. I don't want to sound racist, but I have a rather negative attitude towards the Jewish population, I have never been interested in their history or followed their fate. In my opinion, there were too many of them and it had a negative impact on the city (*Int.10.M.62. Bus driver*).

Somehow, I don't remember such conversations in my family or in the families of my friends. Somehow, I have never been particularly interested in their influence on the city's development and their influence on the fate of the city. I just remember that during some conversations unrelated to my family, I learned that before World War II the city had been called Mojzeszow (*Int.13.M.54. Engineer*).

We didn't talk about the Jews in my home, we had our own problems and other ethnic groups, let alone their past, was not important to us. (*Int.28.M.39 Paramedic*).

3.4. Images of the Jewish past

In his comment on the quoted results of research on the subject of anti-Semitism of Poles (whose element was the aspect of sources of knowledge about Jews), Andrzej Żbikowski pointed out to an interesting fact that: "the interviewees have a similar attitude. They, despite being aware of their little knowledge about Jews, make very audacious and unequivocal judgments about Jews"¹⁴². These words are proven in the research material presented below, concerning ideas about the contribution of Jews to the history of Rzeszow.

As discussed earlier, the respondents' knowledge of the Jewish past was rather limited. There was little awareness of the places in Rzeszow related to this national minority. About 70-80% declared a lack of knowledge. The answers to ques-

¹⁴² Żbikowski A. (1996), *Źródła wiedzy Polaków o Żydach. Socjalizacja postaw* [in:] I. Krzemiński (ed.) *Czy Polacy są antysemitami? Wyniki badania sondażowego*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa, p. 86.

tions about the contribution of Jews to the life of Rzeszow before World War II in the field of e.g. culture, trade or politics were slightly different. The percentage of answers reporting a lack of knowledge about these issues was lower, although a lot depended on the question itself, e.g. about the contribution of Jews to the political life of the city, 60-70% of respondents could not give an answer, but about the contribution to the trade, 30-55%. Same in the case of previous questions, the level of declared ignorance increased in the years 2010–2015, although it should be emphasized that the opinions about the contribution of Jews to the city's life should be analyzed not so much in terms of real "knowledge" (which in some matters, e.g. activities of pre-war Jewish councilors in the city council, is extremely specialized and probably only available to expert researchers), but more generally about the attitude towards Jews, often sympathy or antipathy. This was expressed in the respondents' beliefs whether it was a positive or a negative contribution.

The obtained results show that the Jewish contribution to the city's history is assessed rather positively. The activity of Jews which received the best opinion was trade (62.6% in 2010 and 41.2% in 2015). At this point, I must refer to the previously quoted statements of the inhabitants of Rzeszow, who provided examples of the memories of grandparents and parents in their family households. Almost without exception they concerned mutual trade. This is certainly an evident sign of the phenomenon of those memories that were passed on by a generation of people who remember the pre-war period.

There were also positive opinions about the development of culture, science and education (44.7 and 42.2% in 2010, 28.5 and 24.6% in 2015). The lowest positive opinions were given to political activity (29.6 in 2010 and 21.5% in 2015), but it should be remembered that in this last question the percentage of those declaring a lack of opinion was very high. The observed decrease in the percentage of respondents who answered the questions generally translated into an increase in the percentage of responses indicating a lack of knowledge or opinion on these issues.

The negative assessments of the presence of Jews in various aspects of the pre-war life of the city are worth noting. Here, we observe that despite the five-year break between the two surveys, the share of negative opinions about Jews did not decrease significantly. Contribution to culture was assessed negatively by 6.1% of respondents in 2010 and 5.5% in 2015. The same applies to trade from 5.5% to 3.3%, in science from 5.3% to 4.2%, in politics from 10.5% to 5.9%, and in the overall assessment from 5.8% to 3.5%. Negative ratings are characterized by slightly better stability.

The past of Rzeszow Jews is not only a closed deposit of historical experiences and messages reserved for the hermetic environment of historians. It is also a challenge to the future and the need to constantly face various difficult tasks in overcoming prejudices accumulated in the past, dealing with difficult

cards of pre-war years and occupation, and finally managing the past for the needs of contemporary relations of both nations. History is constantly present in the form of memorial sites and symbolic spaces (some commemorated, others not), whose exploration is meant to change the opinion of present-day people by drawing conclusions from a dramatic history.

Table 10. What was the role of the Jews in the city of Rzeszow?

		2010			2015		
		Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
CULTURE	Positive rather major	17.6	26.1	22.6	16.3	15.4	15.8
	Positive rather minor	24.0	20.7	22.1	14.9	10.9	12.7
	Difficult to say	50.2	48.6	49.3	63.4	68.5	66.2
	Negative rather minor	5.2	2.1	3.4	3.9	4.1	4.0
	Negative rather major	3.0	2.4	2.7	1.4	1.1	1.3
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
TRADE	Positive rather major	47.4	55.6	52.2	36.1	34.2	35.1
	Positive rather minor	10.7	10.2	10.4	6.4	5.9	6.1
	Difficult to say	36.3	28.8	32.0	54.4	56.7	55.6
	Negative rather minor	2.6	2.1	2.3	2.0	1.8	1.9
	Negative rather major	3.0	3.3	3.2	1.1	1.4	1.3
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
EDUCATION	Positive rather major	15.8	21.9	19.4	14.4	12.5	13.3
	Positive rather minor	23.9	21.9	22.8	11.6	11.1	11.3
	Difficult to say	54.7	51.1	52.5	70.4	71.6	71.1
	Negative rather minor	4.3	3.0	3.5	3.4	3.9	3.6
	Negative rather major	1.3	2.1	1.8	0.3	0.9	0.6
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
CITY POLITICS	Positive rather major	13.2	13.3	13.3	9.2	7.9	8.5
	Positive rather minor	16.2	16.3	16.3	13.4	12.7	13.0
	Difficult to say	60.7	59.5	60.0	70.3	74.3	72.6
	Negative rather minor	6.8	7.6	7.3	5.3	2.9	4.0
	Negative rather major	3.0	3.3	3.2	1.7	2.0	1.9
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
CITY LIFE IN GENERAL	Positive rather major	26.7	27.2	27.0	16.9	20.7	19.0
	Positive rather minor	18.6	18.8	18.7	14.6	11.1	12.7
	Difficult to say	48.7	48.4	48.5	64.1	65.4	64.9
	Negative rather minor	2.1	3.6	3.0	3.1	1.8	2.4
	Negative rather major	3.8	2.1	2.8	1.4	0.9	1.1
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: personal research

During the study, respondents were confronted with several statements, asking them to express their opinion on whether they agreed with them or not. The topic of the questions (some of them were repeated in 2010 and 2015) concerned the broadly understood impact of Polish-Jewish relations and the drama of war on the contemporary creation of memory policy, commemoration of the past and viewing (from a Polish perspective) the history of both nations.

Table 11. Postulates regarding the promotion of the city by referring to the local history of Jews

		2010			2015		
		Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
A Museum of Rzeszow Jews should be established in Rzeszow	Definitely yes	18.0	21.6	20.1	5.3	5.2	5.3
	Rather yes	41.0	37.3	38.8	22.5	29.4	26.3
	Difficult to say	19.4	24.8	22.7	42.4	40.3	41.2
	Rather not	9.2	11.3	10.4	20.8	19.0	19.8
	Definitely not	12.4	5.0	8.0	9.0	6.1	7.4
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Places connected with the history of Jews in Rzeszow are appropriately commemorated.	Definitely yes	7.0	6.2	6.5	5.6	4.3	4.9
	Rather yes	29.1	27.4	28.1	35.5	43.9	40.1
	Difficult to say	35.8	35.4	35.5	44.4	40.1	41.5
	Rather not	18.6	21.2	20.2	10.9	10.4	10.6
	Definitely not	9.5	9.8	9.7	3.6	2.3	2.9
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: personal research.

The first aspect focused actions aimed at preserving memory. Two questions considered memorial sites for Jews from Rzeszow. In 2010, 58.9% of respondents agreed with the statement that a Museum of Rzeszow Jews should be established in Rzeszow, 18.4% were opposed, and 22.7% had no opinion. After five years, we observe a significant decline in acceptance for the building of such a museum. This time 31.6% supported this idea, 27.2% were against it, 41.2% did not have an opinion. In 2010, 34.6% of respondents believed that the memo-

rial sites for Jews were properly commemorated. 29.9% said the opposite and 35.5% had no opinion. In 2015, 45% of respondents were convinced that Jewish memorials were properly commemorated, and 13.5% were of the opposite opinion. 41.5% of respondents did not have an opinion.

These data indicate that over the period of five years, not only the acceptance of the idea of commemorating the history of Rzeszow Jews in the form of a museum decreased significantly, but also the belief that already existing memorial sites properly preserve this past. Given that there were no major changes in terms of remembrance activities at that time (only a memorial stone in 2005), these answers would rather suggest an increase in reluctance for any subsequent memory restoration activities, and a decrease in the number of people convinced that the Jewish past is not commemorated in a way that is due to it (because there is undoubtedly much to do in this matter).

Several questions in the 2010 and 2015 surveys also concerned the possibility of using the heritage of the Jewish past to promote the city. In 2010, 66.7% of respondents agreed that the past was related to Rzeszow Jews is a very important element of the city's history (11.9% thought the opposite, 21.4% did not have an opinion). In the same year, 60.1% of respondents disagreed with the statement that nowadays there is no need to restore memory about pre-war Rzeszow Jews (19.4% agreed, and 20.5% had no opinion). These responses would indicate a great potential in recalling the memory of Jews for contemporary promotional activities. However, again in 2010 and 2015 a trend of decreasing acceptance for such ideas could be observed.

Table 12. Attitude to ideas referring to the past of the Jews (year 2010)

Question	Answers	Men	Women	Total
There is no need to restore the memory of pre-war Rzeszow Jews.	Definitely yes	5.0	4.2	4.5
	Rather yes	20.3	11.3	14.9
	Difficult to say	21.6	19.7	20.5
	Rather not	27.5	29.3	28.5
	Definitely not	25.7	35.5	31.6
	Total	100	100	100
The past connected with Rzeszow Jews is an important element of the city's history.	Definitely yes	25.7	26.1	25.9
	Rather yes	37.2	43.3	40.8
	Difficult to say	21.1	21.5	21.4
	Rather not	10.1	7.7	8.6
	Definitely not	6.0	1.5	3.3
	Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: personal research.

In 2010, 41.9% of respondents agreed with the statement that the history of Jews who lived in the city should be used in the promotion of Rzeszow. Five years later, this percentage dropped to 30.7%. The percentage of people with the opposite opinion increased, from 23.8% to 27.2%, and also the percentage of people who did not have an opinion on this matter (from 23.3% to 41.1%).

Table 13. Attitude towards using the past of Jews in promoting the city

The history of Jews should be used in the promotion of Rzeszow	2010			2015		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Definitely yes	15.5	13.7	14.5	4.8	5.0	4.9
Rather yes	22.1	31.0	27.4	26.1	25.6	25.8
Difficult to say	33.7	34.7	34.3	41.4	42.7	42.1
Rather not	16.0	13.7	14.6	19.3	18.3	18.8
Definitely not	12.7	6.9	9.2	8.4	8.4	8.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: personal research.

Table 14. Attitude towards statements about Polish-Jewish relations (year 2015)

	Answers	Men	Women	Total
During the pre-war period, Poles and the Jews coexisted rather without conflict.	Definitely yes	7.0	6.8	6.9
	Rather yes	32.1	35.1	33.8
	Difficult to say	50.2	47.2	48.5
	Rather not	9.3	8.6	8.9
	Definitely not	1.4	2.3	1.9
	Total	100	100	100
During the war most Poles tried to help the Jews.	Definitely yes	10.4	11.3	10.9
	Rather yes	46.5	41.2	43.6
	Difficult to say	35.8	40.0	38.2
	Rather not	5.9	6.1	6.0
	Definitely not	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: personal research.

There were interesting results in the case of two questions about mutual Polish-Jewish relations in the pre-war period and during the occupation. In a 2015 survey, 40.7% of respondents agreed with the statement that before the

war Poles and Jews lived in Rzeszow generally without any conflict. 10.8% were of the opposite opinion, and 48.5% did not have any opinion. Referring to the war, 54.5% agreed that most of the Poles tried to help Jews during the war. 38.1% had the opposite opinion and 7.4% did not have any opinion on this issue.

In 2015, there were also two questions regarding the controversial and highly evocative issue of Poles returning once Jewish property to their original owners and the necessity to teach about the history of Jews in the city of Rzeszow. More than a third of respondents (36.2%) disagreed with the statement that property once belonging to Jews in Rzeszow before the war should be returned to their descendants. 23.1% supported the restitution of property. 40.7% did not have any opinion.

More respondents agreed that Polish youth should be educated about Jews who once lived in the city. 44.4% supported that idea, 19.6% were opposite, 36% did not have an opinion.

Table 15. Attitude towards education about the Holocaust and the return of once Jewish property (year 2015)

	Answers	Men	Women	Total
Youth should be taught about the Jews that once lived in the city.	Definitely yes	8.1	8.8	8.5
	Rather yes	33.5	37.8	35.9
	Difficult to say	35.3	36.6	36.0
	Rather not	17.0	14.5	15.6
	Definitely not	6.1	2.3	4.0
	Total	100	100	100
Property that belonged to the Rzeszow Jews before the war should be returned to their descendants.	Definitely yes	5.9	4.8	5.3
	Rather yes	16.0	19.3	17.8
	Difficult to say	40.6	40.8	40.7
	Rather not	21.3	19.7	20.4
	Definitely not	16.2	15.4	15.8
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: personal research.

3.5. Relevance of the memory of the Holocaust

The last and the most difficult aspect of the subject under study was the case of reflecting on the former presence of Jews in the city, for instance through contact with memorial sites, and the thoughts and emotions that the presence of such places could evoke. This topic was obviously not taken up in the quantita-

tive survey in an interview questionnaire. However, it appeared in in-depth interviews that allowed a more thorough analysis of this issue, although it should be noted that the material in this area was extremely limited. Most respondents had never considered it, so they were also unable to give an answer. It was a strange topic for them, as was the history of the annihilated Jewish community. Paradoxically, the views expressed could explain the lack of view on these problems. In their laconic statements, especially those younger respondents, they used the "outdatedness" of these issues as justification of such situation:

I believe that it does not matter for Rzeszow at the present time. For the survivors and their families, history certainly does not bring good memories (*W.07.K.23. Student*).

Even for older people, these issues seemed strange and not directly related to them:

Honestly speaking, I have not [thought about it]. I think it is due to the fact that, first of all, I don't have any memories related to them, neither good nor bad. I also do not know the history of this nation well, so I respect these places, but they do not evoke any special emotions. I don't know how to answer this question. I have never thought about it or analyzed it (*Int.19.M.80. Technician Installer*).

Perhaps Rzeszow does not have a history such as Markowa has, which again reappears in the statements of one of the interlocutors:

It may be because people are not aware of it, they do not know this part of history. They should be reminded of the history of the city, which is somewhat related to Jews. Now it is more often discussed, but not in Rzeszow, only in areas outside the city. I have a family in Markowa where the Ulm family came from. They and their children died tragically because they had been hiding some Jews. It is good that now a museum commemorating this family and Jews was established there (*Int.21.M.75. Engineer*).

Only in a few answers do we come across elements of reflection on the past and in a sense, its relevance to the present:

Emotions appeared mainly at the time of learning about and discovering the history of these places and the people associated with them. As for the reflections, they are mainly about the complexity of Polish-Jewish relations, I mean the human attitudes of representatives of both nationalities. Knowing a broader aspect of history, I mean on the one hand the so-called "Righteous among the nations," and extortionists (during Nazi occupation: a person who demanded money from Jews under threat of informing the Nazis about them) on the other. On the one hand, good neighbors that I know from my grandmother's stories and those who contributed to the strengthening of "people's power" on the other, (*Int.27.M.35. Historian*).

Sometimes profession, occupation and interests become the reason for reflection. In the following statement there is a specific and almost unnoticed element - the past is also important for understanding the attitude of reluctance and anti-Semitism:

I think you have to come back to it as much as possible. For example, my house is Jewish. We found out about it from the land and mortgage register. it was built in 1927. All these houses nearby were Jewish, my house was the only one built of brick, so it can be concluded that it was owned

by a wealthy Jew. The synagogue is also worth mentioning. It is in a very bad condition, which is a pity, because I think it is also a history lesson, at least I have not heard that it was possible to enter the building and see what it looks like, but I know that Jews who come to Rzeszow go there. It seems to me that such a negative attitude towards Jews is not entirely reasonable, because I think that exchanging cultures is quite normal, we will not run away from the past. I am surprised that a lot of people like, for example, to listen to Jewish music, but it would be the best if Jews were not present, after all, it is, I apologize for my words, an idiocy (Int.11.W.49. Interior designer).

3.6. Antimemory

To sum up the above subject of research on the knowledge and ideas of Rzeszow residents about the Jewish community of this city, it is worth confronting the quoted statements with a specific source, namely police statistics, where some acts of anti-Semitism taking place in the city space and others related to the subject of this work have been reported. Such behavior - although being a margin that relates to small circle of its inhabitants - completes the overall picture of the problem in some respects.

Although the phenomenon of anti-Semitism is not the subject of this study, it is necessary to identify some of its aspects at this point. It is due to the fact that such attitudes may also appear in relation to the memory about Jews (in evaluation of historical facts related to the Holocaust or in behavior towards memorial sites), which are undoubtedly an indicator of a specific anti-Semitic "antimemory." There are many variations of anti-Semitism: political (belief that Jews have too much influence on the situation of the country), religious (belief that Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus), cultural (Jews as foreigners) and historical (related to their attitude towards the Holocaust and seeing Jews as a threat to their self-esteem)¹⁴³. Ireneusz Krzemiński has been carrying out research on anti-Semitism since the 1990s and it is the most comprehensive empirical resource of information about the forms of this social problem and its transformations over the last two decades in Poland¹⁴⁴. It is therefore necessary to mention some of the phenomena observed in the space of Rzeszow, which in various ways are targeted at the memory about the past of Jews. Certainly, the most expressive dimension of this type of phenomena are cases of vandalism in places related to Jewish martyrdom or negation of the Holocaust¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴³ A. Sułek (2012), *Dużo antysemitów, ale znowu mniej*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 25 maja 2012.

¹⁴⁴ I. Krzemiński (ed.), 1996, *Czy Polacy są antysemitami? Wyniki badania sondażowego*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa; I. Krzemiński (ed.), 2004, *Antysemityzm w Polsce i na Ukrainie. Raport z badań*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa; I. Krzemiński (ed.), 2015, *Żydzi – problem prawdziwego Polaka. Antysemityzm, ksenofobia i stereotypy narodowe po raz trzeci*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa.

¹⁴⁵ Therefore, we do not analyze the quite common anti-Semitic acts of football supporters (some notorious both here and abroad, such as the case of 2010 and the banners ‘The Aryan En-

According to data kept at the Voivodeship Police Headquarters in Rzeszow, between 2005–2009 in Podkarpacie there were twelve cases of propagating anti-Semitism. One incident had a rather specific form. In 2007, an investigation was initiated against a Rzeszow high school teacher who was said to have propagated racist slogans and encouraged students to read Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Other cases involved the distribution of anti-Semitic leaflets, performing Nazi gestures, and the posting of Nazi content. However, the vast majority of such acts did not concern Rzeszow itself.¹⁴⁶ It should be remembered that Rzeszow on a map of "hate crimes" targeted at Jews visiting Podkarpacie or places of their culture and the Holocaust, usually gives way to other cities in the region, which are a more popular destination of descendants of Jews visiting the region (e.g. Lezajsk, Lancut).

Organized trips and pilgrimages of Jews are monitored by law enforcement entities, e.g. in 2012, the City Police Headquarters in Rzeszow secured 8 several-day stays of Jewish pilgrimage and tour groups.¹⁴⁷ There were no incidents reported.

In the period of 2009–2016, only occasional cases of similar behavior were recorded in Rzeszow, e.g. in 2013 an investigation (finally discontinued) was carried out regarding the placing of an inscription offensive to Jews on the fence of a Rzeszow company. In the same year a similar investigation was conducted into hate speech directed against national differences in the form of anti-Semitic leaflets placed in the building housing Polish Radio Rzeszow. No perpetrator(s) was ever found¹⁴⁸.

The disadvantage of police statistics is that not all anti-Semitic acts are the subject of proceedings and even less find their way to court. In the urban space one can encounter many anti-Semitic graffiti (although significant improvement should be noted in this respect). Some of them appear in places related to the life of the Rzeszow Jewish community and their Holocaust. Until now, no major vandalism of memorial sites in Rzeszow has been reported, which has unfortunately taken place in other cities of Podkarpacie.

tourage is coming' and 'Death to Hooked Noses', which became the subject of TV reports from France and the USA) and sporadic and often topical in media anti-Jewish behaviors directed not so much at the memory of Jews or at their memorial sites, but rather as an expression of anti-Semitic phobias and prejudices.

¹⁴⁶ Analysis of hate crimes in Podkarpacie between January 1, 2005 and March 31, 2009 (report by the Voivodeship Police Headquarters in Rzeszow from May 4th, 2009, typescript possessed by the author).

¹⁴⁷ M. Skiba, Hate crimes in Podkarpacie and the preventive measures of the Police (2005–2012) (article in print, provided by the author).

¹⁴⁸ Information from the Provincial Police Headquarters in Rzeszow regarding hate crimes for the years 2013–2016 (prepared on August 8th 2016).

CHAPTER 4

MEMORIAL SITES

4.1. War damage and post-war dilemmas

Great socio-spatial transformations in the area of Rzeszow during the war, resulting from the German policy of the extermination of Jews and the deliberate destruction of symbolic places related to their history, to a large extent changed the image of the city which, following the war, was chosen as the seat of the newly created Rzeszow Voivodeship. The Germans destroyed large parts of Rzeszow which were inhabited primarily by the Jewish population. The scale of the devastation of these places was incomparable in the history of the city. The destruction of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues and the almost complete annihilation of Jewish residents made Rzeszow, in a sense, a new social entity. Over the subsequent decades, dynamic changes ensued as a result of it becoming the capital of the voivodeship and the inflow of thousands of new residents, mainly from the surrounding villages.

The scale of the Holocaust is reflected in post-war statistics. According to data in the report of the Organizing Committee of the Jewish Religious Congregation of March 18, 1947 to the Central Statistical Office, as of January 1, 1947, in Poland there were 80 Religious Congregations. Four of them were located in the area of the then Rzeszow Voivodeship. The one in the city of Rzeszow (located at Rynek 23) had a synagogue, a social welfare program and one cemetery. Interestingly, the survivors could not even count on any form of religious support. The report notes that there was no rabbi in Rzeszow. Although there were 2.5 thousand rabbis in Poland before the war, almost all of them were murdered by the Germans¹⁴⁹. As was described in chapter 2, the small Rzeszow Jewish community existed for a year after liberation, but subsequently Jewish life almost completely eradicated in the city. It was definitely symbolic for the four hundred-year history of the Jews of Rzeszow, but it did not change the fact that, even though the city was devastated, there were still numerous traces of Jewish history, whose fate was unknown.

¹⁴⁹ K. Urban (2006), *Cmentarze żydowskie, synagogi i domy modlitwy w Polsce w latach 1944–1966 (wybór materiałów)*, Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, Kraków, pp. 163–167.

Shortly after the war, the new city authorities faced many dilemmas related to the development of such places and to their future. Charred synagogues and devastated Jewish cemeteries were a visible sign of the "final solution" policy pursued by the Germans long after the war, but the city in the process of reconstruction had to face this problem as well. It also had to incorporate and develop those facilities and areas nobody maintained, as there was no local Jewish community. Decisions taken at that time shaped the forms of commemorating the Jews of Rzeszow for the next decades.

A guide titled "Plan Rzeszowa. Informacje" ("Plan of Rzeszow. Information") published in the late 1950s, presented an interesting perspective on this newly emerging socialist city. The author of the introduction that focused on the history, Franciszek Błoński, mentions only two Jewish traces in the city - two synagogues "thoroughly destroyed by the Nazi occupants," adding that soon one will be adapted for archives and the other for the purpose of artistic exhibitions. There are also no details about the roughly mentioned Voivodeship Community Center ("the former Community House of the Tanenbaum Foundation"). In this guide there is no information about the old Jewish cemetery on Plac Wolności (Victory Square), although it was noted that the square was "recently planted with trees to form a kind of park in which (...) there is a big monument of Gratitude to the Soviet Army, created according to the design of the sculptor Wojtowicz from Warsaw." There is no reference to the history of the obliterated ghetto, although this area "is located where old, primitively built tenement houses destroyed during the occupation used to be, and some of them can still be seen in the side streets today"¹⁵⁰. It is just one of many examples of an attempt to falsify the city's history and exclude Jews. In the history of the city published in 1965, in the text devoted to the history of the city in 1918-1939, there is not even the slightest mention that Jews resided in Rzeszow at that time¹⁵¹.

This chapter discusses the history of the most important places related to the life and extermination of Rzeszow Jews, as well as the often complicated processes of commemorating them. In the present day capital of Podkarpacie there are not many such places officially commemorated. Of course, not every aspect connected with history must (and cannot) be expressed in the form of a memorial site such as a monument, a memorial plaque or a museum. However, sometimes the scale of some events requires at least some kind of marking of such a place. Each of the places presented in this chapter had a different past, but what they have in common is that they were devastated during the war and later

¹⁵⁰ F. Błoński (b.d.), *Zwiedzamy Rzeszow* [in:] *Plan Rzeszowa. Informacje* (PTTK Rzeszow, b.d), pp. 3-15.

¹⁵¹ P. Bik, *Zdobycze i perspektywy Rzeszowa*, [in:] *Rzeszow*. Wydawnictwo Artystyczno-Graficzne, Kraków 1965.

had a complicated future associated with an attempt to preserve them or adapt them for new purposes. These processes speak volumes, and not only about the history associated with Rzeszow Jews. They probably speak the most about those who remained in the city after the war, acquired and developed these places and had to face the extraordinary heritage of the recent city co-inhabitants.

4.2. Old Cemetery and Plac Ofiar Getta (Victims of Ghetto Square)

Probably the oldest place associated with the history of Rzeszow Jews is the area of the present Plac Ofiar Getta (Victims of Ghetto Square), located in the very center of Rzeszow, near the Market Square, between Boznicza, Kopernika, Zeromski and Pilsudski streets. It is one of the most popular places in the city while at the same time (as was mentioned in the previous chapter), the most forgotten; despite the obelisk of the Memorial Stone which has stood there since 2005.

Located in the very center of today's Rzeszow, the Jewish cemetery was the oldest and most unique account of the relationships of Jewish people with Rzeszow. The tombstones (matzewah) from the 16th century were the oldest traces of the presence of Jews in this area. The oldest part of the cemetery is located on the eastern part of Boznicza street. Today it is a parking lot and unfortunately it is not protected or commemorated in any way, although beneath the cars parked there are the graves of the most eminent figures of Jewish life from the first centuries of their presence within the city. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the old cemetery was systematically expanded, and by the 19th century its area covered almost two hectares. It was surrounded with a brick wall which in time created more and more problems. In the mid-nineteenth century, and not without opposition from Jews, the cemetery was divided into two parts – nowadays located by Jan III Sobieski Street. The disputes reached even the Viennese court. People were buried there until 1914 and then it ceased. Prior to the Second World War the cemetery was still divide¹⁵². A witness to pre-war Jewish life comments on this area as follows:

I remember very well, others remember it too: both parts of the cemetery, until 1939 were surrounded by a high brick wall, with pieces of glass from broken bottles on top, preventing getting inside. You could see trees from behind the wall. They were plums and cherries, and their fruit were tempting poor boys. Do you think the wall was an obstacle for them? There were holes made in the wall despite the fact that it was monitored and constantly repaired. The holes made it easier

¹⁵² F. Kotula (2003), *Tamten Rzeszow*, Mitel, Rzeszow, s. 446; W. Wierzbieniec (1990), *Cmentarze żydowskie w Rzeszowie*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Rzeszowie” Seria Społeczno-Pedagogiczna i Historyczna, Zeszyt 1/1990, pp. 119–125.

to get inside and to pick fruit. It also made a great shortcut. Jews never used them as it would be a profanation of the cemetery. What is more, the actual jungle growing in Jewish cemeteries and the densely set gravestones covered with weeds, were an excellent hideout, especially in the Summer. Thus, it was a perfect playground for boys, where they could play hide-and-seek, and for those who liked to imbibe and play cards in peace and quiet..."¹⁵³.

In the middle of October 1939, the Germans ordered the area of the cemetery to be "tidied up," which resulted in the destruction of the wall around it and the removal of matzevah¹⁵⁴. The aforementioned observer wrote the following concerning this act of vandalism as follows:

I observed them working almost every day (...). At the same time, they started the modernization of Chopin Street, which was almost a dirt road. Everybody knows that this is a very long street. A lot of stone was needed to make a hard foundation. So, they used tombstones from the Jewish cemeteries. And not only from cemeteries in Rzeszow, but also from Czekaj, where the Jewish cemetery covered several hectares. The gravestones were split into the sizes needed for the foundation (...). They mostly used tombstones made of sandstone. The granite and marble ones were sold by the authorities to stonemasons, who transformed them into catholic tombstones"¹⁵⁵.

In the summer of 1942, in the area of former cemetery. the greatest tragedy in the four hundred-year history of the Jews of Rzeszow occurred. In this area, the Germans gathered the victims before transporting them to the gas chambers at the mass extermination site in Belzec¹⁵⁶. All victims were violently abused, and many people were murdered by SS and German police officers.

After the war, the future of the cemetery area was the subject of dilemmas for the city authorities. In the letter of the Jewish Religious Congregation to the Central Committee of Polish Jews of July 1, 1948, one read: "Mr. Ślusarczyk, the mayor of the city said (...) that in the square where the cemetery was formerly located, a lawn should be made so that the people would not destroy the buildings [synagogues]"¹⁵⁷.

Significant spatial transformations that took place in the area of the former cemetery compel us to question the motives of the then "actors of social spatial

¹⁵³ F. Kotula (2003), *Tamten Rzeszow...*, p. 428.

¹⁵⁴ Z. K. Wójcik (1998), *Rzeszow w latach drugiej wojny światowej...*, p. 147.

¹⁵⁵ F. Kotula (2003), *Tamten Rzeszow...*, pp. 428–430.

¹⁵⁶ An important location connected with the extermination of Rzeszow Jews is also the forest near Glogow Malopolski. Currently, there are two large mass graves of the Jews murdered in 1942–1944, surrounded by a wall and commemorated with an obelisk and commemorative memorial plaques. The problem of these graves appeared in April 1950 in the Poviastarost Office in Rzeszow which decided to secure two graves of Jews (70 × 6 and 50 × 4) with a solid fence and to exhume the bodies of the Poles. In the letter of the lawyer M. Reich of May 5, 1950 to the CKŻP informing about this meeting, we read: "The case of these graves is that they are not secured, and they are driven over by cars or by carts". See. K. Urban (2006), *Cmentarze żydowskie...*, pp. 280–282.

¹⁵⁷ K. Urban (2006), *Cmentarze żydowskie...*, p. 296.

creation" which at that time were officials of the City Council. "In the reality of the communist party-state system, these institutions did not really have much to say, even in strictly local matters. They remained strictly subordinated on one hand to the higher levels of administration (voivodship council and the "head-quarters"), and on the other (more important) to the relevant party organizations (...). However, the councils could still decide on street names (...) The decisions, however, had to be approved by the National Voivodeship Council"¹⁵⁸. Certainly, such decisions were made by the party, but as there are no documents of the former PZPR (Polish United Workers Party) it is impossible to ascertain what the decision-making processes of that time looked like. The fact is that the former cemetery area was transformed into a place dominated by symbols of the new power.

For 60 years, on Plac Zwycięstwa (Victory Square) (since 1990 called Plac Ofiar Ghetta) no information could be found about the past of this site. After the war, as a result of the gradual development of the surrounding area, the square was surrounded by restored old tenements and synagogues, post-war apartment blocks and Józef Pilsudski Avenue (during the Polish Peoples' Republic period - Lenin Avenue). The square itself was a perfect example of the urban vision of the communist authorities, dominated by a completely new symbolism. The main axis of the square went from the monumental building of the PZPR Voivodeship Committee, which was facing the Monument of Gratitude, located in the center of the square - a former cemetery. During the Polish People's Republic, the Jewish past of this place was almost completely effaced, especially when both nearby synagogues were transformed into the State Archives and the Centre of Art Exhibitions (BWA), and the area of the square was partly covered with concrete or planted with trees. There was no information on the walls of the synagogues (except for a small memorial plaque on the New Town synagogue with information about the past of the building, which has been there since the 1960s) so the past and history of these buildings were not obvious to the public.

Until the first initiative to commemorate it in 2004, the park did not indicate any trace of its past related to Jews. The only trace suggesting a connection of this site with war events is the name of the square itself – Plac Ofiar Ghetta. This name, however, referred to a very small part of war history that was associated with the area. Few residents of the city (especially those who settled after the war) knew that this square, was not only a part of the so-called closed residential area - the ghetto, but below it is the oldest Jewish cemetery in Rzeszow. The knowledge that the parking lot located next to the synagogues is the oldest part

¹⁵⁸ D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec (2011), *Rewolucja w pamięci historycznej. Porównawcze studia nad praktykami manipulacji zbiorową pamięcią Polaków w czasach stalinowskich*, Universitas, Kraków, p. 232.

of this cemetery, the burial place of the most eminent figures of Jewish religious and cultural life, was even more exclusive.

The monument of Gratitude to the Soviet Army, which is crumbling, located in the square (erected at the turn of 1950/1951 to commemorate soldiers of the Red Army's 60th Army of the 1st Belorussian Front) is another cognitive dissonance. It depicts a soldier with a flag and a five-pointed star; however, its indistinct shape makes it difficult to interpret it correctly and creates cognitive confusion. It was intensified in 1966, when a memorial plaque was attached to the base of the monument providing information about the fact that at this site, "the soil of battlefields, places of execution and the martyrdom of the Rzeszow region" was interred. It slightly altered the meaning of the monument¹⁵⁹.

In 2004 Mirosław Kędzior and Janusz Korbecki proposed an initiative which was particularly important for restoring the memory of Rzeszow Jews. They prepared a design for the Memorial Stone monument to point out the existence of the cemetery and the tragedy of the deportations to Belzec in 1942. In February 2004, the stone monument design was submitted to the mayor of Rzeszow and pre-approved.

In the documentation of the Memorial Stone design submitted to decision, makers from the city authorities and the Committee for the Protection of the Memory of Fight and Martyrdom, we can find information on the history of the cemetery from the 16th century to the deportations to extermination camps. Referring to the latter (the tragedy of the Rzeszow Jewish community), it is written that the monument will be located at the "Umschlagplatz of the Jewish residents of Rzeszow and the surrounding area." The authors of the idea of the monument at the same time emphasize the educational value of such a commemoration and the necessity to respect such a special place as a cemetery, which for Jews is an area that does not allow any interference that could violate the gravesites. This text reads, among others:

After the war, the area of the cemetery was converted into a park, with no information or memorial plaque about the rich and tragic history of this piece of land. We believe that this place is a unique area on the map of Rzeszow. Our desire is to put a "stone monument" that recalls the memory of many generations of Jews, residents of Rzeszow, who together with other citizens co-created the history of the city. Due to the specific character of the place and a respect for Judaic law, the design cannot allow a violation of the soil of the cemetery. Hence, it is impossible of make a concrete foundation for the monument. That is why we wish to use a basalt erratic block weighing approximately 12 tons, which will guarantee the stability of the

¹⁵⁹ D. Czarnecka (2015), „*Pomniki Wdzięczności*” Armii Czerwonej w Polsce Ludowej i w III Rzeczypospolitej, IPN, Warszawa, p. 465.

monument and will make it immovable. A matzevah made of black granite will be mounted to the stone with information etched in both Hebrew and Polish.

They also emphasized that the content of the inscription was agreed upon with the Council of Rabbis at the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, and with the Jewish Historical Institute.

The documentation indicates that further procedures regarding the approval of the memorial site were carried out efficiently and with no objections from the institutions responsible for supervision of the urban space. On May 17, 2004 the co-initiator of the idea of commemoration, Mirosław Kędzior, requested an opinion on the project from the Rzeszow branch of the Voivodeship Office for the Protection of Monuments in Przemyśl, which he received on May 27, 2004. At the same time - on May 24th, the Deputy Mayor of Rzeszow, Franciszek Kosiorowski accepted the design of the commemoration. The procedures were similarly expedient in the Committee for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites (KOPWiM) and the Warsaw Council. Two days later, Mirosław Kędzior and Jauszus Korbecki turned to the KOPWiM for an opinion on the new memorial site. On June 9th, the KOPWiM in Rzeszow asked the ROPWiM in Warsaw (Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites) for an opinion, notifying them that the KOP did not raise any objections to this initiative. On July 6th, Minister Andrzej Przewoźnik approved, requesting only a slight correction to the monument's inscription, to make it clear that it concerned World War II. In a letter of the 14th of July, the director of the WPS, Marek Łagowski, informed the applicants that the design had been approved.

The co-initiator of the commemoration, Mirosław Kędzior, recalled in a press conference years later:

It pained me that although decades had passed since the war, there was no memorial plaque providing information on the fact that in the center of Rzeszow there is a burial place for thousands of people who co-created the city. It hurt me that there were vagrants sitting there and drinking. Together with Janusz Korbecki, we determined that something had to be done. We decided to make people aware that they were in a cemetery, to remind these individuals that tens of thousands of people disappeared from this place in one day. According to the Talmud message, "If not us, then who, if not now, then when" we began to fight for the Memorial Stone. And we did it (...). People were asking: what is this stone, why are we placing it? (...) Later somebody splashed paint all over the memorial plaque¹⁶⁰.

The monument was unveiled on July 7, 2005, on the 63rd anniversary of the deportations to Belzec. Mirosław Kędzior told the press: "Over the last few days we spent working with this stone, we experienced various negative reactions. Yet, we were surprised by the reaction of many young people. They were

¹⁶⁰ A. Gorczyca (2012), *Trzeba przypominać, że żyli tu Żydzi. Rozmowa z Mirosławem Kędziorem, współorganizatorem Marszów Pamięci*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 6 lipca, p. 2.

surprised that there is a cemetery on this spot. They explained that if they had known about it, they would have behaved differently."¹⁶¹ Tomasz Krakowski, from the board of the Jewish community in Warsaw who participated in this event, commented on the character of the commemoration and its form as follows: "In our culture, mitzvah is an important religious duty. This term also means commandments. Burying the dead is one of the most important mitzvah. Everyone who comes to the cemetery places their stone. Adding a stone is a duty and a commandment. This stone is the mitzvah of the people of Rzeszow, a beautiful gesture towards our community"¹⁶².

4.3. Small synagogue (called Old Town Synagogue)

Most likely, it dates back to the beginning of the 17th century. It is known that it had already existed in 1617. In 1627, by order of the owner of Rzeszow Mikołaj Spytek Ligeża, Jews were assigned to one defensive tower "behind the synagogue"¹⁶³. Located on the outskirts of the old town, the synagogue was part of the city's fortifications (demonstrated by the tower). It was reduced to ashes several times: during the invasion of Rakoczy and the Cossacks in the 17th century – being rebuilt in 1671. Torched again during a fire in 1842, it was once again renewed, with some interference in the original form of the building¹⁶⁴. Each reconstruction meant changes in its appearance, so today it is difficult to recreate its original appearance. Franciszek Kotula wrote about it as follows: "Both buildings, especially the Old Town synagogue, changed dramatically by expanding it without any plan, chaotically by various religious brotherhoods. So, over the century, shapeless groups of buildings were formed – the older one almost reached Mickiewicz Street. One of these parts, which narrowed the passage from Mickiewicz Street to Żeromski Street was demolished in 1939 and those near Mickiewicz Street, in the autumn of 1940 and in the winter of 1941. The rest, which is the seventeenth-century core, together with the oldest parts added later, remain to this day"¹⁶⁵.

In the synagogue there was a hall for men, while a section for women was later added. The synagogue was rectangular in the shape, having stone and brick walls, and with buttresses in the corners and between the windows. There were many changes in its architecture over the centuries, as can be concluded after

¹⁶¹ A. Gorczyca (2005), *Micwa się spełniła*", „Gazeta Wyborcza", 8 lipca, p. 3.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*.

¹⁶³ A. Przyboś (1958), *Rzeszow na przełomie XVI i XVII wieku...*, pp. 98–99.

¹⁶⁴ J. Pęcowski (1913), *Dzieje miasta Rzeszowa do końca XVIII wieku...*, p. 123.

¹⁶⁵ F. Kotula (1947), *Z dziejów Rzeszowa 1939–1944...*, p. 61.

analyzing plans and drawings of the city which have been preserved (e.g. by Wiedemann from 1762, or by Grotti from 1905). The last reconstruction before the First World War took place in 1905. In 1934, the synagogue was officially registered as a cultural monument¹⁶⁶.

As early as September 1939, German soldiers demolished the interiors of both synagogues. Shortly afterwards, religious practices were banned, and all group prayers were severely eradicated¹⁶⁷. Shortly after the war, the previously mentioned observer of the reality of occupation wrote about this building: "The old synagogue after the mass<< deportation>>of Jews in the summer of 1942, was converted into a warehouse for the furniture which were left by the deportees who, as it would later come to light, were slaughtered,. (...) It was in relatively good condition and it can be restored"¹⁶⁸.

Information arising from the time shortly after the city's liberation, was no longer valid two years later. In the letter dated May 22, 1948 from the City Council to the Voivodeship Office, we learn the following information about the construction of the Old Town synagogue:

It survived the war. Jews did not care about it and did not secure it properly. The curator of the Museum of the City of Rzeszow asked the Jewish Committee in Krakow if the Museum could take over caring for it and organize one of its departments there. The Museum did not receive any answer, and in a private conversation the curator was told: "there are no more Jews, so let the synagogue disappear too." In the winter of 1946–1947, thieves entered through unprotected holes and removed the buttresses so that the roof sagged. The City Council indicated this deficiency several times to the then Provincial Monuments Conservator, and The Museum Curator informed the Jewish Committee. There was no reaction from either side. Finally, the roof collapsed in the storm of March 1947. This building will quickly be ruined by rains, frosts and sun (...). The older synagogue is valuable for the city of Rzeszow, since in one of its corners there is a tower which is the only remnant of the city's fortifications (...). [Now the synagogue] consists of two parts: a sixteenth-century stone and brick original part containing this tower, and a large, nineteenth century worthless part added later. The City Council suggests demolishing the annex and restoring the old part¹⁶⁹.

The future of the synagogue was still a topic of discussion of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (CKŻP) and the Supreme Religious Council of the Jewish Religious Congregations for another year. On June 18, 1949, the CKŻP informed the Ministry of Public Administration that it agreed for the synagogue to be taken over by the Rzeszow branch of the Association of Polish Artists for administrative purposes and as a place for exhibitions¹⁷⁰. It seemed that the

¹⁶⁶ M. Piechotka, K. Piechotka (1999), *Bramy nieba. Bóżnice murowane na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa, pp. 183–186.

¹⁶⁷ Z.K. Wójcik (1998), *Rzeszow w latach drugiej wojny światowej...*, p. 147.

¹⁶⁸ F. Kotula (1947), *Z dziejów Rzeszowa*, p. 61.

¹⁶⁹ K. Urban (2006), *Cmentarze żydowskie...*, p. 295.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 297.

Rzeszow branch of the Association was not particularly interested in managing the property which it received by a decision of the Rzeszow Voivode on July 1, 1949, because on September 29, 1951, the Department for Religious Affairs in Rzeszow dispatched a letter to the District Board of the Association in Kraków, informing them that "The Association has not made any efforts towards the reconstruction of the" small synagogue "(...) which means that there is a danger that this monument may be further devastated and may even collapse." Thus, the Voivodeship National Council overruled the previous decision of the Voivode and ceded the synagogue to the Directorate of State Archives to be adapted for the district archive in Rzeszow¹⁷¹.

The synagogue was granted to the State Archives in October 1951. The attached technical description described the building as follows:

The building consists of parts. The first one is a former prayer room, built of crushed stones and brick, with the top finial made of brick as it was created later. There are buttresses in the corners of the room and between the windows. On the north side there is a staircase, spiral, in a shape of a fortified tower, topped with a cornice. As it is made of brick, this indicates that it is an annex which dates back to the second half of the 18th century. The vaulted ceiling in the prayer room, which was supported by four columns - collapsed. On the west side, there is another plastered annex with a pseudo-Renaissance attic, with "Klein" ceilings - originally the ground floor served as a vestibule and the first floor was a gallery for women. To the south there is another extension with a staircase, with a conical roof with a cornice on the top, covered with brick, with "Klein" ceilings which was previously a gallery for women. The entire building has no basement, no roofs, doors or windows, the stairs are broken or rotten – the building is 75% destroyed. In 1949, thanks to the efforts of the Conservation Office of the Voivodeship, the debris was removed, and the building was secured against the access of unauthorized persons¹⁷².

After the war, during the process of adaptation for the purposes of the archive, the outer walls were preserved and the bimah was removed. The room was also divided into two floors and the roof was rebuilt, as a result of creating a third floor in the attic space¹⁷³.

The synagogue served as the headquarters of the State Archives in Rzeszow until 2016. In the first half of October that year, the archive was moved to its new headquarters. The building was returned to the Jewish community in Krakow and leased by the Town Hall. The building's new purpose is offices of officials of Town Hall of Rzeszow.

Affixed to the building are four informational and commemorative memorial plaques. The first of them – a standard one that is placed on historic buildings in Rzeszow (with the coat of arms of the city) with only informational content (in Polish, German and English):

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 298.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*, pp. 299–300.

¹⁷³ M. Piechotka, K. Piechotka (1999), *Bramy nieba...*, p. 186.

The Old Town Synagogue called Small Synagogue, built at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, originally defensive in nature, rebuilt several times, among others in the mid-nineteenth century. Reduced to ashes in 1944, rebuilt 1953–1963. Made of stone.

The second one from 1998 and signed by the founders: Association of the Jews of Rzeszow in Israel and the city of Rzeszow. It is dedicated to "the memory of the Jews of Rzeszow - victims of Nazism". The main element of this memorial plaque is a broken menorah and a quote (in Polish, Hebrew and English) from the Book of Jeremiah (8,23): "...That I might weep Day and Night over the Slain of the Daughter of my People".

Next plaque also mentions the victims, reporting only the building's war past and honoring the Jewish victims of the war: "This building served as the "old" synagogue desecrated and demolished by the German occupiers. In memory of above 20000 Jews from Rzeszow and the venicity murdered in years 1939-1945 by the German genociders".

The final one (October 24, 2021) commemorates Rabbi David Alter Kurzmann (1878-1942) caretaker of the Kraków ghetto orphanage who was murdered in October 1942 in Extermination Camp in Belzec with the orphans he cared for.

4.4. Grand synagogue (called New Town Synagogue)

It was constructed at the beginning of the 18th century (between 1705 and 1710)¹⁷⁴. Thanks to the permission of Hieronim August Lubomirski in 1686, it was located "near the rampart in the New Town", so, as in the case of the Old Town synagogue, near the defensive rampart. The preserved iconographic sources indicate that over the next two centuries (and certainly from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century) it underwent significant transformations. Until the war, it consisted of a main hall (on a trapezoidal floor plan 15 x 16 x 17.5 m, with a bimah and four pillars) a hallway, above which was a gallery for women, open toward the main hall¹⁷⁵.

During the war, as all places of religious worship for Jews, it was devastated and desecrated. Franciszek Kotula wrote shortly after the war: "Before retreating, the New Town synagogue, where valuable wares were kept, was torched by the Germans. During the fire, part of the vault collapsed, and the walls were scratched, so that today it is in ruin"¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷⁴ J. Pęcowski (1913), *Dzieje miasta Rzeszowa do końca XVIII wieku...*, pp. 123–124.

¹⁷⁵ M. Piechotka, K. Piechotka (1999), *Bramy nieba...*, pp. 286–288.

¹⁷⁶ F. Kotula (1947), *Z dziejów Rzeszowa 1939–1944...*, p. 61.

The condition of the building after the war was tragic. In the letter of May 22, 1948, from the City Council to the Voivodeship Office we read:

Today the building is in ruins, maybe romantic, and nobody would mind it if it was located on the sidelines. But it is located in one of the busiest areas of the city (...). The state of ruin is getting worse each day and one day some accident may occur (...). The New Town synagogue presents a danger and the City Council, which is responsible for security in the city, must demolish it¹⁷⁷.

In the letter of the Jewish Religious Congregation to the CKŻP of July 1, 1948, we read that "the main upper two attics should be removed, as there is a danger of collapse. Apart from that, the walls are strong, and the very thick pillars protect ceilings from collapse. This synagogue should be covered with a roof to protect it against precipitation"¹⁷⁸.

In June 1948, Rzeszow was visited by a commission comprised of the Jewish Religious Congregation and the Voivodeship Jewish Committee. In the letter of the Jewish Religious Congregation to the CKŻP of July 1, 1948, we read that as a result of talks with President Ślusarczyk, it was decided "that because of the historic nature of the synagogues, they should not be razed and should be properly preserved. And if this was impossible, due to high costs, at least the Old Town synagogue should remain. " The letter ends with a significant statement: "We think that the City Council of Rzeszow should also contribute a certain amount of money to cover the necessary investment, especially since this Board expropriated many Jewish properties, as we were informed, without compensation, for the purposes of the city"¹⁷⁹.

On June 18, 1949, the CKŻP informed the Ministry of Public Administration that, as the Old Town synagogue was surrendered to the Association of Polish Artists, we "propose that the Association as an equivalent (...) should renovate or protect the synagogue located next to it", which is the New Town synagogue. Since, as described earlier, the transfer of Old Town Synagogue to the Association did not take place, a new owner of the devastated building had to once again be found¹⁸⁰.

The synagogue was finally rebuilt between 1954–1963. It also underwent major reconstruction, which drastically changed its original shape. Currently, it serves as the headquarters of the Center of Art Exhibitions (BWA) in Rzeszow¹⁸¹.

On the New Town synagogue there are three memorial plaques which provide information on the history of the building. The oldest, from the 1960's

¹⁷⁷ K. Urban (2006), *Cmentarze żydowskie...*, p. 295.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 296–297.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 297–298.

¹⁸¹ M. Piechotka, K. Piechotka (1999), *Bramy nieba...*, p. 288.

mentions the construction of the synagogue in the 17th century and that it was obliterated by the "Nazis" in 1944. It also states that the building was "rebuilt by the PWRN (...) for the purpose of the development and promotion of art in the voivodeship." The second one – a standard one placed on historic buildings in Rzeszow – contains the following in Polish, German and English: "New Town Synagogue, called Grand – erected at the end of the 17th century, originally defensive, baroque, rebuilt between 1705–1712 by J.Ch. Belotti; and later in the first half of the 19th century. In 1944 it was burnt to the ground, rebuilt 1954–1966. The upper part was added during reconstruction".

The third and most recent one, unlike the others, provides information on the victims of the Holocaust and contains the following information: "This building served as the "new" Synagogue desecrated used as a stable and demolished by the German occupiers. In memory of above 20000 Jews from Rzeszow and the vicinity murdered in years 1939-1945 by the German genociders".

4.5. New cemetery in Czekaj District

Since the old cemetery in the city center was already too small at the end of the 18th century, land known as Czekaj on the eastern part of the Wislok River was purchased in 1849. The cemetery area was enlarged in 1920. The oldest matzevah there dates back to 1851, indicating that the area was quickly adapted for funeral purposes. After the outbreak of war, the Czekaj cemetery also witnessed crimes against Jews from Rzeszow. At first, it served the Germans as the burial place of those who had been shot or had died in the ghetto on the west side of the Wislok River. The area also served as the local branch of the Security Police as a place for executions. The fact that it was located far from the center of Rzeszow did not prevent it from being intentionally devastated and vandalized. Upon the order of the Germans, most of the matzevah were seized and used for construction purposes. Some of them preserved, however, since supervision over the process of the cemetery's destruction was not as strict as in the case of the old cemetery. Some of them were used to strengthen the riverbed. Some survived, primarily the many concrete foundations of matzevah that can still be seen today. After the war, there were attempts to put the preserved matzevah in their original places, but with no success. They are still in the cemetery to this day. In 1983 the cemetery was entered onto the list of monuments¹⁸².

At the western wall of the cemetery, the renovated ohels of several prominent figures of the pre-war community of Rzeszow Jews can be seen. Particularly note-

¹⁸² W. Wierzbieniec (1990), *Cmentarze żydowskie w Rzeszowie...*, pp. 123–125.

worthy are the burial sites of members of significant Hasidic families, e.g. Cwi Elimeleh from Blazowa and Jozue from Rybotycze. The former was a grandson; the latter was a great-grandson of Tzvi Elimeleh from Dynow, the founder of the well-known tzaddik dynasty. Jozue from Rybotycze (who died in Rzeszow in 1932, was the author of comments to the Pentateuch titled *Keren Joshua*)¹⁸³.

Currently, the cemetery has several commemorations of its tragic past. Of the most general character is a monument with Polish and Hebrew inscriptions dedicated to "The martyred victims of the bloody Nazi crimes. Jewish Survivors of the Rzeszow region" (date on the monument, 24 August 1947). At the cemetery, we also find the commemoration: "In the memory of 19 Jews shot by Nazis on March 4, 1944 in Rzeszow. To Benjamin Gross - wife and children". On a few of the preserved matzevah there are inscriptions and Jewish ornamentation.

This cemetery is the site of the annual celebration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27. The ceremonies are usually accompanied by a rabbi's prayer.

4.6. Jewish Community House

In 1907, an association and cooperative called Beth Jehuda was established in Rzeszow. Its goal was to "organize" and "foster" the "intellectual and social life of Jews" and "build a community center in Rzeszow". In 1909 a square was purchased for just this purpose, but work was halted as a result of World War I. Furthermore, nothing was accomplished after the war because of post-war impoverishment. The center was eventually built thanks to Adolf Tannenbaum during the years 1926–28. The two-storey, 920 m² building became the main center for the cultural life of Rzeszow Jews. There were even 5,000 volumes in the library in 1933. After 1939, the building was adopted by the German authorities as a Center for the German Soldier. After the war, the building temporarily served as the headquarters of the Rzeszow Theater; and from 1953 it was taken over for the purposes of the Voivodeship Community Center of Trade Unions¹⁸⁴. The book collection was destroyed¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸³ M. Wodziński (1998), *Groby cadyków w Polsce...*, pp. 216–217. On the tombstone of Jozue from Rybotycze you can read, among others: "Here is our teacher and master, a great gaon, well-versed in the open as well as in secret, righteous, saint of Israel, holy light, holy scion of the holy trunk, venerable, holy and glorious his name (...). He served in the rabbinical crown in the commune of Rybotycze, and then pitched his tent of law in the local commune and was a faithful shepherd of the sons of Israel. "

¹⁸⁴ M. Lorens (2014), *Powstanie żydowskiego Domu Ludowego im. Adolfa Tannenbauma w Rzeszowie* [in:] *Z przeszłości Rzeszowa*, vol. 5, pp. 89–97.

¹⁸⁵ Z.K. Wójcik (1998), *Rzeszow w latach drugiej wojny światowej...*, p. 91.

As can be concluded from the previously discussed survey results of Rzeszow residents, the past related to the building housing the current WDK (Voivodeship Community Center) in Rzeszow on Okrzei Street is not particularly strongly identified with the history and culture of Rzeszow Jews. Knowledge about this aspect of the WDK building's past history is practically unknown to city residents, although there was an attempt to alter this situation (not very successful as the results shown by surveys) by placing a memorial plaque inside the building providing information on the history of the building related to activities of the "Hanoar Hatzioni" Zionist organization. Although the activities of Zionist youth organizations was just one of many aspects of the rich and diverse cultural activities of the former Tannenbaum Foundation building, it was this aspect that was unexpectedly recalled from the past due to the youth's contribution to the establishment of the State of Israel. The history of this place should be thoroughly discussed, not only because it became the reason for a rather specific conflict over Polish-Jewish memory over time. The history of the memorial plaque is a perfect example of the procedures of commemorating the past at that time. It was initiated outside of Poland and was decided by: the Rzeszow KOPWiM, the Warsaw ROPWiM and local institutions.

Most likely, the first initiative to commemorate Zionist organizations at the former Jewish Community House of Tannenbaum took place in 2002.¹⁸⁶ The idea to place a commemorative plaque in the current WDK building came from Arie Edelheit the then secretary of the "Hanoar Hatzioni" world movement. On January 28, 2002, he sent official letters to the most influential authorities of the Podkarpacie voivodeship (one to Voivode Zdzisław Siewierski, the other to marshal Bogdan Rzońca). He proposed placing a small memorial plaque (55 cm x 40 cm) with an inscription: Before World War II, in this "Community Center", there once was the "Hanoar Hatzioni" Jewish youth organization.

Based on the documentation of the Department of Public Policy of the Voivodeship Office in Rzeszow, it can be stated that the case was dealt with relatively quickly, and the idea itself found far-reaching acceptance in all institutions responsible for the commemoration procedures. On March 11, 2002, Deputy Voivode Kazimierz Surowiec (simultaneously the chairman of WKOPWiM) in a formal letter asked the ROPWiM in Warsaw for an opinion, informing them that the Rzeszow Committee raised no objections as to the content and form of this commemoration. Less than one month later, the secretary of the ROPWiM Andrzej Przewoźnik responded, relating to them acceptance of the content of the

¹⁸⁶ Everything is based on the documents of the Committee for the Protection of the Memory of Fight and Martyrdom in the Department of Social Policy of the Voivodeship Office in Rzeszow

memorial plaque by the Warsaw headquarters. From the letter of April 30, 2002, sent by Kazimierz Surowiec to Arie Edelheit, we learn that, after consulting the ROPWiM in Warsaw, the Rzeszow Committee "accepts with no amendments the content of the inscription."

For unknown reasons, the commemoration process was suspended for a further two years. Perhaps due to the fact that the preparation and mounting of the memorial plaque (as well as satisfying the many formal issues related to obtaining permission, for example) is the responsibility of the applicant and could not be efficiently achieved from the Hanoar Hatzioni headquarters located in the United States. It required engaging a local person who was familiar with local relations. This explanation is supported by the fact that in the documentation we find a letter from July 15, 2003, where the World Office of "Hanoar Hatzioni" authorizes Waldemar Wywrocki (director of the "Staroniwa" Community Center in Rzeszow) to represent their office in the city of Rzeszow in this case.

On March 29, 2004, Waldemar Wywrocki, as a representative of the World Office of "Zionist Youth" ("Hanoar Hatzioni"), again asked the KOPWiM in Rzeszow to affix the memorial plaque. The new request most likely resulted from the fact that at that time the applicants considered amending the previously approved inscription. The new memorial plaque indicated: In this building of the "Community Centre" there was once a very active "Hanoar Hatzioni" Jewish Youth Movement whose goal was to rebuild the state of Israel. The unveiling of the memorial plaque was planned for June 21st as an event accompanying the Days of Jewish Culture in Rzeszow.

As the new content required the re-approval of the KOPWiM, all required formalities were repeated in the following months. It should be emphasized that they were conducted fairly effectively, and the institutions of the Rzeszow Committee and the Warsaw Council were positive about the idea of commemoration.

In a letter of 5th of April 2004, the Committee asked the representative to complete the documentation (the design of the memorial plaque, a cost calculation, and permissions from both the owner of the building and the conservator of monuments). On May 20, 2004, in the previously completed application, Waldemar Wywrocki once again asked for permission to place the memorial plaque. From the content of the letter, it is worth citing the justification of the applicants: "the aforementioned memorial plaque would be a testimony showing the young generation of Rzeszow the history of the Jewish society residing in Rzeszow before World War II, as well as an expression of respect for people who supported young people in pre-war Rzeszow."

Further procedures were carried out very expediently. At the meeting of the Committee on June 2, 2004, the content of the memorial plaque was approved.

Only minor stylistic changes were proposed¹⁸⁷. A week later, the mounting of the memorial plaque was approved by Marek Jastrzębski, the director of the Voivodeship Community Center in Rzeszow (after a positive opinion from the Marshal of the Voivodeship). The same day, permission was given by the Voivodeship Office for the Protection of Monuments in Przemyśl - Rzeszow branch. Again, the KOPWiM turned to Warsaw requesting an opinion. An interesting fact is that the reply was received on July 12th (after the unveiling of the memorial plaque), although the chairman of the ROPWiM, Andrzej Przewoźnik, gave a positive opinion on both its form and content.

On June 21, 2004, the unveiling ceremony took place. It was attended by guests from Israel and the USA, representatives of "Hanoar Hatzioni", including the Israeli ambassador and representatives of state and local government authorities (Deputy Voivode, Deputy Mayor of the city).

The new memorial plaque was intended to be both commemorative and educational. However, it should mainly remind us of the past of the former Tanenbaum Foundation building and its contribution to the formation of youth groups who co-created the state of Israel. Most likely, neither the authors of this idea nor Polish officials could foresee that the memorial plaque would soon become the subject of a specific conflict caused by a right-wing politician representing the city.

On October 12, 2004, MP Zygmunt Wrzodak lodged a strong protest to the Minister of Interior and Administration Ryszard Kalisz. In the parliamentary interpellation and the six-page letter, the MP raised the issue of the memorial plaque placed inside the WDK, emphasizing that "the topic of our sovereignty should be written and discussed." The majority of the letter is devoted to "historical" deliberations about the history of Jews. He analyzes the history of the idea of the state of Israel since "the legions of Rome dispersed the population of the Jewish province all over Europe" and refers extensively to the so-called Judeo-Polonia. According to him, any glorification of Zionist movements in Poland undermines Polish sovereignty: "In Poland, in the presence of local authorities and representatives of the local community, an organization that would gladly make our country disappear, or at least limit Polish sovereignty and territorial independence was commemorated. It is difficult to find an example of a similar commemoration of anti-Polishness even during the times of the Polish People's Republic (...). Was this commemoration made in Rzeszow deliberately, or did someone mislead the local authorities? (...) Perhaps the idea of another memorial

¹⁸⁷ In this "Community Center" building there was once a very active "Hanoar Hatzioni" Jewish Youth Organization whose goal was to rebuild the state of Israel.

plaque will be suggested to the local community by Erika Steinbach. After all, numerous representatives of the German occupation administration who had lived there had to flee from Rzeszow." In the further part of the interpellation, MP Wrzodak mentions paragraphs of the Penal Code, which in his opinion, "the Prosecutor's Office should apply to the participants and initiators of the above-mentioned memorial plaque." He ends his long letter with the following statement:

Maybe somebody in Poland cares about the independence and sovereignty of the country, about the defense of its territory or at least about the defense of its dignity, which is insulted by such memorial plaques (...). All you have to do is choose the appropriate paragraph to prevent similar incidents from happening again. The memorial plaque must be removed from this Polish public space.

The MP's interpellation was officially processed. On October 29, 2004, Undersecretary of State, Jerzy Mazurek, from the Ministry of Interior and Administration asked the Deputy Voivode Jan Kurp to provide explanations regarding this matter. In the reply of November 4, 2004, the Deputy Voivode presented the background of the case, explaining that the content and form of the memorial plaque was accepted by representatives of the Committee, which consisted of, after all, "representatives from the world of science, social activists dealing with these issues, as well as representatives of the museum, the Institute of National Remembrance, the Roman Catholic Church (sic!) and the ZHP (Polish Scouting Association)".

The MP's arguments were commonly considered as beside the point and the case was closed. For some time thereafter, you could read about this case in the press, although the number of articles and letters from readers regarding this case was relatively small. However, the way the memorial plaque appeared also evoked some controversy. After being affixed, there were a lot of critical comments regarding its esthetic aspect. In his interpellation, MP Wrzodak described the memorial plaque as "ordinary, ugly, made of metal. The tacky, piece of metal with Polish inscription glued to the main memorial plaque was nothing but insulting." Indeed, the memorial plaque was not produced of a particularly high-quality 1mm thick aluminum sheet in gold color. In an interview with a local newspaper, the WDK director stated "I agree with the opinions regarding its low standard. This is a sticker rather than a memorial plaque. " Waldemar Wywrocki, the representative and the applicant himself also expressed doubts: 'I am dissatisfied with the esthetics of the memorial plaque. It should be replaced with a bronze one'¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸⁸ J. Koryl (2005), *Gorąca tablica*, „Dzień Rzeszowa”, 17 lutego.

March Commemorating the Liquidation of the Ghetto

(Phot. Krzysztof Kapica)









CHAPTER 5

rites, rituals and celebrations

5.1. Introductory note

The past of Rzeszow Jews (more specifically their annihilation during the war) is also commemorated by local rituals and rites. Their modest number, limited size and relatively small number of participants significantly limits the possibility of in-depth analyses. Taking this into consideration, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the memory of the entire population of Rzeszow in relation to the issues discussed. The scale of rituals and rites, however, allows some insight into a specific group of the city's residents - the organizers of these celebrations and their participants, who undoubtedly belong to a small group of people with the highest level of sensitivity and interest in the past of the Rzeszow Jewish community.

It should be emphasized that this ritual-rite way of commemorating the past concerns a very specific subject, namely the Holocaust, which in the area of Rzeszow meant a huge number of individual and collective acts of brutality and murders. In the opinion of supporters of the thesis that the Holocaust was an unprecedented and incomparable event in history, "the authentic memory of the Holocaust represents a mystery in the eternal present."¹⁸⁹ Thus, the choice of appropriate forms and ways of commemorations is of great importance. In the case of Rzeszow, these forms are subtle and restrained. Annual celebrations at Rzeszow cemeteries have both a commemorating and an educational character.

From the beginning of the reflection on collective memory, this concept was associated with rituals. This view was very explicitly expressed, among others by Paul Connerton:

My argument is that, if there is such a thing as social memory, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies¹⁹⁰.

Initially, the concept of ritual was identified with the religious sphere. Repetitive and unchanging gestures, words made up the social "frame of memory" that fosters social integration and building identity. M. Halbwachs defined the concept

¹⁸⁹ A. Heller (2001), *Pamięć i zapomnianie. O sensie i braku sensu*, „Przegląd Polityczny” 52–53, p. 26.

¹⁹⁰ P. Connerton (2007), *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 71.

of the ritual as "a set of gestures, words, liturgical objects expressed in material form"¹⁹¹. The concept of ritual is most often associated with the sequence of expressive and communicative actions having an ordered, repetitive and institutionalized character. They are also symbolic and refer to non-empirical reality. Relationships of ritual with collective memory occur when the ritual refers to a vision of order in the past¹⁹².

All rituals have a repetitive character, and their automatic repetition naturally indicates relationships with the past. However, not all rituals are expressive¹⁹³. Different forms of expression of participants of rituals and rites commemorating the past are certainly a form of living memory of history. Today it is visible especially in the area of activities of various types of reenactment groups¹⁹⁴. Nowadays, it is difficult to indicate a more important celebration (both local and national), when this element of reference to the past occurs. As Izabela Skórzyńska notes:

If a monument, architecture, a museum in the traditional sense proves that something is remembered, then performances prove that it is still being contemplated¹⁹⁵.

The memory of Jews from Rzeszow is upheld by two local ceremonies of a ritual-rite nature. Each year, the scenario of both is almost identical. The first one (A march commemorating the liquidation of the ghetto in 1942) is secular in nature, occasionally with the participation of a rabbi, while the second (Holocaust Remembrance Day) combines both secular and religious aspects (the presence of a rabbi and saying Kaddish).

5.2. March Commemorating the Liquidation of the Ghetto

The oldest and most interesting from the point of view of issues related to the memory of Jews in Rzeszow is undoubtedly the Rzeszow March Commemorating the Liquidation of the Jewish Ghetto in Rzeszow.

Many factors contribute to the fact that it is a unique event from both local and regional perspectives. This is mainly due to the fact that it is a completely bottom-up and socially inspired initiative, started by two people who are sensitive to

¹⁹¹ M. Halbwachs (1969), *Spoleczne ramy pamięci*, tłum. M. Król, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, p. 318.

¹⁹² S. Kaprański (2014), *Rytuał* [in:] M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba (eds.), *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, p. 444.

¹⁹³ P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember...* pp. 44-46.

¹⁹⁴ P.T. Kwiatkowski (2008), *Pamięć zbiorowa społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie transformacji*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa, pp. 110-185.

¹⁹⁵ I. Skórzyńska (2007), *Inscenizacje pamięci: misteria nieobecności w Lublinie* [in:] I. Skórzyńska, C. Lavrence, C. Pépni (eds.), *Inscenizacje pamięci*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań, p. 84.

memory. This event is also consistently organized every year, even though the number of Holocaust survivors participating in it has decreased over time and there are years when the attendance is not high. The march has become an inseparable element of social events taking place in the city in July. Since it has been present for many years, it is undoubtedly an extremely valuable event which confronts, by its serious nature, the residents of Rzeszow with the forgotten past. What is especially important, for years the march of remembrance has been combining both the living form of commemoration, which is the March of The Living with the material forms of memory initiatives. This occurred in 2005, when the area of the Jewish cemetery in the center of Rzeszow was commemorated.

While analyzing all fourteen marches organized until 2016, it can be said that this event is in a sense "remorse," deafening and consistently pointing to the gaps and negligence in local memory, which until the moment of taking up this initiative had not existed. What is more, as previously mentioned, it attempts to fill the gaps whenever possible. The march fills many "blank spots" in the space of commemoration, it symbolically clips together four centuries of Jewish history. It begins at the last station which symbolizes the Holocaust and then returns to the place which is the oldest remembrance of the presence of Jews in Rzeszow.

The first march took place on July 7, 2003. One cannot find any information about this event in the press or local media. It was only mentioned for the first time in 2004¹⁹⁶. The organizer of the march described the happenings as follows:

There was only a handful of us. Together with Janusz Korbecki and several friends we took a banner with a star of David upon it and went from Plac Ofiar Getta to Staroniwa train station. The same route that over 20,000 Rzeszow Jews set off on their journey to the death camps. During subsequent marches, we reversed the route to symbolically turn this death march into the march of the living (...). People were probably a little shocked when they saw us. We were walking with the star of David, and we were not a group of Jews. This situation had not happened in Rzeszow before. But I don't think that people were hurling insults at us. It started during subsequent marches. Once a group of hooligans were taking photos of us¹⁹⁷.

From the Polish perspective, the participants' motivations are interesting. Some of the participants are descendants of the survivors, but it seems that a lot of people participating in this march have a variety of motivations which can be

¹⁹⁶ *Marsz pamięci*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 8 lipca 2004, p. 3. Janusz Korbecki for “Gazeta” said: "Although only few people remember, here in the square next to the synagogues in Rzeszow, there was a Jewish cemetery. Only few remember that there was a ghetto in Rzeszow. We want to remind people about this. "

¹⁹⁷ A. Gorczyca (2012), *Trzeba przypominać, że żyli tu Żydzi. Rozmowa z Mirosławem Kędziorem, współorganizatorem Marszów Pamięci*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 6 lipca, p. 2.

identified by analyzing the statements recorded by the media which were observing the march.

The first group of motivations is connected with the direct memory of the Holocaust. Here we find older participants, for whom memories of pre-war and war times are still alive. One of the men:

I've lived in Rzeszow for years, I remember pre-war times. Jews were our neighbors, we lived in harmony. And I still remember this cemetery¹⁹⁸.

Some older participants still remember the tragedy of the July deportations. A city resident:

Because I remember these people. I remember a little boy named Gilelc, who was running away from the Germans, but they killed him anyway¹⁹⁹. Another man:

Then, in July 1942, I was five years old, but I remember the old station. I was there with my grandmother shortly after the Germans deported the Jews. I saw firemen who were pumping water. I asked my grandmother if they were watering the flowers, she told me that they were washing away the blood. When we were walking along the streets, my grandmother told me: children like you were walking this way (...). I thought I would go the same route and pay respect to my grandmother and those people who had died²⁰⁰.

The middle-aged as well as young participants had different motivations. Here our attention should be drawn to the statements of three of them. One of them points to the fact that participation may be a response to the symptoms of anti-Semitism:

I think we should pay tribute to thousands of people who were murdered. And show that such a march can take place in Rzeszow, where signs of anti-Semitism can be seen²⁰¹.

For another it is an integral part of Polish history:

"For me, this march commemorates an event important for the history of Poland. We remember about Mickiewicz, about Szyborska's birthday, we should also remember such an event"²⁰². Sometimes it is just out of sympathy: "The Jewish people have experienced a lot of ignominy. I feel compassion and sympathy for them"²⁰³.

Undoubtedly, the event should be discussed in the context of anti-Semitic acts. During the march in 2013, Mirosław Kędzior said:

"This march is our testimony of the memory of those who were murdered. But in a situation where supporters of Nazism and nationalism are becoming louder and more aggressive, it takes on a different meaning. It is also a voice of opposition to aggression and, unfortunately, anti-

¹⁹⁸ A. Gorczyca (2005), *Micwa się spełniła*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 8 lipca, p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁰ A. Gorczyca (2011), *Pamiętaję o rzeszowskich Żydach*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 11 lipca, p. 2.

²⁰¹ A. Gorczyca (2006), *Marsz pamięci*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 8–9 lipca, p. 1.

²⁰² KR. (2013), *Upamiętnili likwidację getta*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 8 lipca.

²⁰³ A. Gorczyca (2006), *Marsz pamięci*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 8–9 lipca, p. 1.

Semitism"²⁰⁴. Referring to his activities in the field of preserving the memory of Jews, he said: "I was called names:" You Jew. "My children too (...). Anti-Semitism has not disappeared in our country. Before one of the marches, someone painted the Star of David hanging from gallows at the Staroniwa station. Our Jewish friends saw it"²⁰⁵.

The number of participants in the march ranges from several dozen to almost one hundred people. The organizer of the march commented: "There were such years that there were a lot of us, but again there are just few of us. I wish that our initiative would be introduced in other cities"²⁰⁶. Some representatives of the city authorities take part in the march (most often the Deputy Mayor in recent years, in 2006 Mayor Tadeusz Ferenc himself²⁰⁷) or representatives of various organizations and institutions, however, this is not regular, but more occasional participation. The speeches of the representatives of the city authorities invariably emphasize that there was a "community of suffering" between Polish and Jewish nations, and the surviving Jews owe their lives to the Poles hiding them. According to Magdalena Prokopowicz and Waław Wierzbieniec: "The speeches prove the political nature of the memory about the Holocaust. In a place which symbolizes the death of Jews who constituted a significant part of the city's inhabitants, the city authorities emphasize the unity of the victims of Poles and Jews and the heroism of sacrificing Poles to save Jews"²⁰⁸.

In the march participated, among others: Konstanty Gebert from the Midrasz Association (2006), Monika Krawczyk, director of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (2006), Piotr Kadłcik, chairman of the Religious Community in Warsaw (2009), rabbi Michael Schudrich (2013). The Holocaust survivors play a very special role. In the history of the march a few of them took part: Moshe Oster (in 2006–2008), Mieczysław Winogórski (2006–2008), Judit Elkin (from 2006 to 2018)²⁰⁹. The most eminent of them was

²⁰⁴ A. Gorczyca (2013), *Ten marsz to protest przeciwko nienawiści i agresji*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 6–7 lipca.

²⁰⁵ A. Gorczyca (2012), *Trzeba przypominać, że żyli tu Żydzi...*

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁷ Tadeusz Ferenc: "The city of Rzeszow is a city open to people of all religions. You are always welcome here, please visit us again. " A. Gorczyca (2006), *Marsz pamięci*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 8–9 lipca, p. 1.

²⁰⁸ M. Prokopowicz, W. Wierzbieniec (2016), *Pamięć o Holokauście na Podkarpaciu na początku XXI wieku na przykładzie obchodów rocznicowych*, „Studia Podlaskie”, vol. XXIV, p. 202.

²⁰⁹ Anna Gorczyca (2006), *Marsz pamięci*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 8–9 lipca, p. 1; L. Szura (2007), *Tych drzew tu nie było, były kamienie i dużo krwi*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 9 lipca, p. 1; A. Gorczyca (2008), *Rzeszow wciąż pamięta*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 7 lipca, p. 4; *Marsz tych, którzy pamiętają o Holokauście*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 6 lipca 2009, p. 2; *Marsz pamięci*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 5 lipca 2010, p. 2; A. Gorczyca (2011) *Pamiętają o rzeszowskich Żydach*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 11 lipca, p. 2; *Będziemy pamiętać*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 11 lipca 2016, p. 2.

Moshe Oster, the author of published memories. Yet, as Mirosław Kędzior emphasized: "I was pleasantly surprised to see many young people participating in this march"²¹⁰. It is them who give hope that the memory of such events will not disappear and that it will be passed on to next generations".

As it was already mentioned in subsection 4.2, in 2005 the march was a great opportunity to unveil the Memorial Stone. Monika Krawczyk, the director of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, commenting on the ceremony, reinforced that: "There are 1,200 Jewish cemeteries in Poland, most of them are in very poor condition. In Rzeszow, there is no one else to come to this place and think about people who have already passed away"²¹¹. With the commemoration of the cemetery, this situation has changed. But it is not the last intention to fill the gap in the spatial memory of the city. During his stay in Rzeszow, Moshe Oster stated: "This stone is more important for you, for Poles, not for us, but I am glad that it is there"²¹².

In 2019, the march organizers announced that it was the last march as they decided to stop organizing it. It happened after the Institute of National Remembrance criticized the name of the march as it did not indicate clearly who was responsible for the creation and liquidation of the Rzeszow ghetto.

5.3. Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

Another important commemoration of Rzeszow Jews is the Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. Established by the UN General Assembly in 2005 and is celebrated on January 27, on the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp in 1945.

The agenda of the first Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust in Rzeszow in 2009 included commemorating the victims at the cemetery on Rejtan street and the opening of an exhibition "Portrait of the Jewish family of Tannenbaum - Rzeszow philanthropists" in the lobby of the University of Rzeszow, prepared by Marcin Jasiński. Subsequently, there was a session on "Those who Experienced Holocaust" with two members of families awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations - Jadwiga Stola and Danuta Tłalka. Among the guests was also Father Romuald Weksler-Waszkinel. At the end of the day,

²¹⁰ A. Gorczyca (2008), *Rzeszow wciąż pamięta*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 7 lipca, p. 4.

²¹¹ A. Gorczyca (2005), *Micwa się spełniła*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 8 lipca, p. 3.

²¹² A. Gorczyca (2006), *Marsz tych, co pamiętają i chcą pamiętać*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 6 lipca, p. 3.

a service was held for those murdered in reprisal for helping Jews as well as for the Jews who died²¹³.

Commenting on the motivations to organize such commemorations, Professor Waław Wierzbieniec, the initiator, noted: "In Rzeszow, there were 13,000 Jews before the war. The Jews, in the Lesko powiat constituted nearly 55 percent of the population. It is our moral duty to commemorate this day, to make people realize how great a contribution Jews made to our cultural identity and how much we lost when they were gone"²¹⁴.

In 2010, present among the guests of the commemoration at the University of Rzeszow were: Ewa Ficowska, rescued by Irena Sendler as a six-month-old infant from the Warsaw ghetto; Lucia Retman from Hajfa, born in Dynow, hid in Lubaczow by the family of Zofia Pomorska (honored with the medal of The Righteous Among the Nations); and Shlomo Wolkowicz from Israel, saved from the murder of Jews in Zolochiv near Lviv. As it was the year before, the ceremony ended with a mass at the Dominican church and the reading of names of Poles murdered for helping the Jews. As part of the Rzeszow celebrations, other events took place in the following days: January 28 – "Geniza land, air, fire" of Raphael Rogiński, Dariusz Pado and Radosław Wiśniewski – a performance at the University of Rzeszow; a day later – a presentation of the book "On the History of Polish-Jewish Relations in the 20th Century" at the Institute of National Remembrance; February 3 – at the same place – a lecture by Artur Patek from Jagiellonian University "Escape from the Shoah. Jews on their way to Palestine during World War II"²¹⁵.

The celebrations in 2011 were held according to a similar scenario. In the morning, at the new cemetery in Czekaj District there was a small ceremony with a rabbi saying the kadish. Almost every year it is Shalom Dov Ber Stambler, the chairman of Chabad-Lubawicz in Poland. On behalf of local institutions wreaths are put and candles are lit. This year particular attention was paid to Jan Karski. One of the participants was Ewa Wierzyńska, the coordinator of the program "Jan Karski unfinished mission" initiated in 2010. The ceremonies were accompanied by a lecture at the University of Rzeszow by Professor Gustaw Cornini from Italy about memoirs and memories of the Second World War. There was also an exhibition "Faces of Resistance. War photographs by Faye Schulman, a Jewish partisan". At the same time, in the lobby of the Podkarpacie Marshal's Office in Rzeszow there was an exhibition "The Samaritans from Markowa. The Ulm family - Poles

²¹³ *Program Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holocaustu*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 27 stycznia 2009, p. 4.

²¹⁴ A. Kulczycka (2009), *Ożywić pamięć o ofiarach Holocaustu*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 28 stycznia, p. 1.

²¹⁵ L. Szura (2010), *Srebrna łyżeczka jak metryka*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 28 stycznia, p. 2.

murdered by the Germans for saving eight Jews” prepared by dr. Mateusz Szpytma.

Among the guests at its opening were Lucia Retman from Haifa and Judith Elkin. As in previous years, the celebration ended with a mass and reading of the names of the cities where Jews were rescued, and the names of those Poles involved in helping them. The organizers of the Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust were: The Unit of Jewish History and Culture of the Institute of History of the University of Rzeszów, the Dominican Convent, the Podkarpacie Teacher Education Center, the Rzeszów branch of the Polish Historical Society, and the "Ślad" Regional Historical Remembrance Association²¹⁶.

In the opinion of Magdalena Prokopowicz and Wacław Wierzbiec, the celebrations organized in Podkarpacie, whose aim is to remember Jews, are initiatives which are

Bottom up (...), they are organized by the association and private individuals: social activists, regionalists (...) Those commemorations are somehow joined by the centralized memory, shaped top-down by state and local authorities. This memory is mainly the memory of Poles as the nation the most tormented by Germans during World War II (...) or the memory of Poles helping the persecuted Jews (...). They talk about the extermination of Jews as an event that ended the history of Jews in Podkarpacie, its scale, sacrifices and consequences in the region, city and its surroundings, with its main emphasis on the role played by Polish, local Righteous Among the Nations in saving the Jews²¹⁷.

The scale of the commemorations is systematically increasing every year. In 2017 they took place in 38 cities, including Rzeszów. The scale of commemorating the 11th Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust in Podkarpacie in January 2019 should be described as unprecedented. The ceremonies were organized in 69 cities (including Rzeszów). There were lectures, memories of survivors and presentations of new scientific publications devoted to the Holocaust in Podkarpacie. The celebrations also included Catholic services and prayers of Judaism believers. There were several dozen regional institutions and associations involved in organization, including the most important regional authorities and the largest universities. In Rzeszów, the focal point of these celebrations was awarding Professor Shimon Redlich, the author of, among others, the distinguished monograph on the memory of Jews from Brzezany, with an honorary doctorate from the University of Rzeszów on the 28th of January 2019.

²¹⁶ *Rzeszów pamięta o ofiarach Holocaustu*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 28 stycznia 2011, p. 2.

²¹⁷ M. Prokopowicz, W. Wierzbieniec (2016), *Pamięć o Holokauście na Podkarpaciu...*, p. 214.

Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

(Phot. Krzysztof Kapica)









CONCLUSIONS

The examination of the memory of Jews outlined in this work from the perspective of contemporary residents of the capital of the Podkarpacie region in the second decade of the 21st century, almost 80 years after the apogee of the Holocaust of this community in Rzeszow, prompts the drawing of conclusions and making suggestions for potential actions. As was emphasized in the introduction, the main intention behind the research that became the basis of this study was primarily to support contemporary activities carried out by the creators of memory policy, the people interested in discovering and preserving the heritage associated with the Rzeszow Jewish community. Defining of the social map of memory of the developing and dynamically transforming capital of the region should therefore be considered the foremost and essential element of any activities in this area. Such a postulate concerns not only this issue. Social research should always form the basis for intentions aimed at social or symbolic transformation of an area.

The knowledge of the inhabitants of the local community about some aspect of history, and colloquial images they have about it, are often crucial for potential educational activities. The way the sociological explorations presented here are used also depends on political decision-makers. Undoubtedly, monitoring the forms and formats of memory of the inhabitants of the capital of the region should be continued by utilizing the empirical data collected so far.

This research also had another purpose - to obtain and retain information about the shapes of the memory of the city's inhabitants on special moments in the history of Rzeszow at the beginning of 21st century, a time of great spatial, urban and social changes. A survey conducted in 2010 allowed the reconstruction of ideas about the past of Jews, including the memories of people who still remembered the war. Another survey from 2015 was carried out when the age structure of the city's population "shifted" and the percentage of people with some contact with Jews living in the city until the war was drastically reduced. The next study brought information solely from people who only heard about the Jews of Rzeszow from indirect reports.

Thus, the material collected in this work may in the future be used for further research on possible trends in the transformation of the memory about the Jewish community living in the city, which is – of only a few in the region – a place of their rich culture, long history and one of the greatest tragedies of the Holocaust.

The social memory of the inhabitants of Rzeszow about the Jewish community living in the city should be analyzed on several levels. The first is the awareness of the past, which is usually made up of common ideas about past events. It, of course, includes a certain (usually small) scope of factual knowledge. The scope of such information, as shown by the research, is not particularly large and, comparing the results of Rzeszow surveys from 2010 and 2015, it can be concluded that it is becoming the deposit of an increasingly smaller number of inhabitants. It should be emphasized at this point, that treating historical knowledge as the key element for social attitudes is not entirely correct. As Jadwiga Possart already noted in the 1960's: "Serious social disputes about the attitude toward history are, normally, not disputes about facts but about values. Greater or lesser knowledge about the past is a one thing and a particular attitude towards the past is a different thing (...) people deprived of elementary historical knowledge sometimes react very vividly to historical issues, and vice versa, people with some knowledge relate to this issue completely indifferently"²¹⁸.

This means that declared attitudes towards various elements of social reality associated with, for example, preserving Jewish heritage or openness to the past associated with this non-existent community can be much more sensitive indicators of memory. A comparison of the results of the two surveys presented in this respect leads to rather pessimistic conclusions. Colloquial ideas about the history of Rzeszow Jews situate their past in areas related almost exclusively to economy and trade, as well as to war martyrdom. This is a relatively well-identified field, also probably because of oral traditions, which often seem to take up these topics (at least until the generation which remembers the war and pre-war times is still alive). However, Rzeszow Jews were active on a much broader field of social activity than just economics. This past is not at all recognized and urban space does not help here. The memorial sites dedicated to Rzeszow Jews are poorly marked and many of their achievements, important from the point of view of the city's history are not evoked.

An interesting aspect of this research was the subject of the intergenerational transfer of knowledge about Rzeszow Jews. Certainly, there are considerable dependencies between the phenomenon of memory transfer and the attitude towards the Jewish past. The question that should be asked, not only by researchers on this subject is: what will happen when the last witnesses of the presence of Rzeszow Jews die, and the burden of the transfer of knowledge about these topics will be taken over only by local institutions (e.g. educational institutions,

²¹⁸ J. Possart (1967), *Wybrane elementy „potocznej” świadomości historycznej mieszkańców miast Polski współczesnej*, Warszawa, Komitet do spraw Radia i Telewizji „Polskie Radio i Telewizja” – Ośrodek Badania Opinii Publicznej i Studiów Programowych, p. 5.

media)? Taking into account the limited knowledge on these issues indicated above (to some extent undoubtedly a consequence of the activities of these local educational institutions) and the lack of a separate museum addressing these issues, the forecasts in this matter also seem to be pessimistic.

Unfortunately, the past of Rzeszow Jews does not evoke much emotion. It was confirmed, to some extent, through the interviews with city residents. One can dare say that not only the past related to the topic of the research, but also many aspects of Polish history, would not contribute to arousing greater emotions in a significant part of the respondents. And yet, the fact that the importance of these issues is undoubtedly ignored indicates that this subject is absent from the local map of memory of the residents of Rzeszow.

The second area which was taken into account when discussing the subject of memory about Rzeszow Jews are the material commemorations. Generally, it should be stated that there is a natural discrepancy between what existed until 1939 and what has remained in the city space until now. The restored synagogues are the most visible testimony of the past, although the question is whether these places could be better used to restore the memory about Jews, especially after the state archive was moved in the autumn of 2016. The scope of commemorations in Rzeszow - informing and reminding about the history of Jews - is rather modest if we take into consideration the size of pre-war life and the scale of the Holocaust. Several memorial sites that exist in the city space at the moment are more a postulate for further actions in this direction. The solution to this problem could be the Museum of Rzeszow Jews, where such topics could find its full expression and be not only an important point for shaping the memory of residents, but also an element of promoting the interesting past of the current capital of the region, aspiring to the role of a metropolis.

It should be added, that in Rzeszow there is no space very well identified by the inhabitants with the life or extermination of the Jews (except for synagogues and cemetery in Czekaj District, although to a very limited extent). Most of such places are located on the fringe of the memory of the city's inhabitants. They are either completely unidentified with this unique history or they are only elements of the city that are unnoticed and passed by every day. This is the landscape stage-the existence of the memorial site as an unrecognized object, indifferent to members of the community, beyond its functional memory.

Finally, an important area of the analysis must refer to the complex structure of memory discussed at the beginning of this work, which, according to Barbara Szacka, was described on three levels: individual, collective and institutional. The memory about Rzeszow Jews is without a doubt the strongest on the level of some active communities that take up these unique topics and influence local government institutions. An excellent example is anniversary celebrations. The

participation of local government institutions seems to be rather passive, limited to standard speeches, and very similar each year. This is also confirmed by initiatives to create material commemorations related to preserving the memory of Jews, which primarily come from local communities and active individuals. One can risk stating that the memory of the past of Rzeszow Jews functions (or more accurately - smolders) between the individual level and the level of local communities. Here, it takes on interesting forms and influences the third level, namely local government and state institutions.

Thus, it is worth recalling here the frequently repeated (while at the same time regularly downplayed) postulate to teach history and sensitize people to the past through local issues including people who are still alive, and the spaces that we pass by almost every day. As Sandra Lustig notes:

The local, specific perspective of looking at historical events makes history more accessible to amateur historians: local events are easier to understand than the great politics of many years ago. For example, in the context of the Shoah, the statistic of the 6 million Jews who were murdered is hard to imagine: although very precise, it may seem almost abstract, even unreal. Yet, if a plaque states, for example, that 57 Jews who lived in this particular city were packed into cars exactly on that particular square and taken to concentration camps on a particular day, such information appeals to the imagination much more rapidly and intensely²¹⁹.

This means talking about the past not through the perspective of 'dead' and academic history of textbooks (which is often reflected in dramatically ineffective school education), but by sensitizing people to individual stories, memories, and contact with the unfortunately limited number places of living memory. It also means a change of the policy of commemorating the past and accepting the fact that erecting a monument or building a museum is just the beginning of the process of creating memory, not its end. These postulates - which are not only related to this subject - seem to be still valid. And still a task for the future.

How does one summarize the presented results of research on the memory of the past of Rzeszow Jews, and which words will be most adequate for its fullest characterization? Certainly, it cannot be said that Rzeszow is an area of social obliviousness about its Jewish past, defined as a deliberate action aimed at removing specific content (here, the past of Jews) from the collective memory²²⁰.

²¹⁹ S. Lustig (2008), *Alternatywy dla „żydowskiego Disneylandu” – przykłady możliwego podejścia do przeszłości żydowskiej w europejskich miastach* [in:] M. Murzyn-Kupisz, J. Purchla (eds.), *Przywracanie pamięci. Rewitalizacja zabytkowych dzielnic żydowskich w miastach Europy Środkowej*, Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, Krakow, p. 95.

²²⁰ Marta Karkowska, Filip Pazderski, *Zapomnienie*, [in:] *Modi Memorandi*, pp. 545-546

It is not proved by an analysis of the symbolic space of the city - commemorating the past of Jews in a minimal degree but allowing an individual from the outside to form an image of the former, annihilated past. It is more problematic to determine the extent of obliviousness in the minds of the inhabitants themselves. We cannot state without in-depth research if there is, and how advanced it might be, a process of deliberately omitting memories about this aspect of history or repressing it from consciousness. This phenomenon as an area of psychology remains a research challenge.

Certainly, it cannot be said that Rzeszow is a social space which fosters the memory of such a crucial part of its past. Until now, there is no museum in the city that would focus on this aspect of its past (not including some exhibits at the District Museum). All the spaces that were used by the Jewish community of the city has been adapted for new needs. Until now, in the largest place of suffering of Rzeszow Jews – the Staroniwa train station – there is no trace that would allow passers-by to discover that this was the last place in Rzeszow that its former Jewish citizens had seen before their extermination. A powerful memory of the Jews certainly exists, but it is the domain of a small group of people, which is most clearly proven by the July remembrance marches or January celebrations at the Czekaj cemetery. This is an exclusive memory of few individuals. For them, it is important to pass it on to future generations.

At this point, one could risk saying that there is a significant gap in the city's social space regarding the important element of its future. This is not an irreversible phenomenon and does not mean a complete loss of knowledge about this part of its history. All media used to restore this memory are "at the fingertips" and can be easily reached. However, at the moment there is no will from the local authorities, since such activities would most likely be criticized by the city's inhabitants. Such phenomena are referred to in social sciences as obliviousness²²¹. The Jewish past is not denied, destroyed or censored, but it is still on the fringe of memory of the dynamically developing capital of the region. It is still waiting for its moment, the time of recollection, when its rightful place in the collective memory of the community will be restored.

²²¹ P.T. Kwiatkowski (2014), *Zapomnienie* [in:] M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba (eds.), *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa.

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