GAL-ED | On the History and Culture of Polish Jewry

Gal-Ed is a peer-reviewed journal, published continuously since 1973.

Publications of the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center
Book 207

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY אוניברסיטת תל אביב

GAL-ED

On the History and Culture of Polish Jewry

Volume 25

Editor: Gershon Bacon
Associate Editors: Scott Ury, Avner Holtzman and Adam Teller

The Institute for the History of Polish Jewry and Israel-Poland Relations
The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center
Tel Aviv University
2017

The publication of this collection was made possible by the support of Beth Shalom Aleichem and the Faculty of Humanities at Tel Aviv University

Editorial Secretary and Book Review Editor: Dror Segev
Language Editor for the English Section: Ruvik Danieli
Language Editor for the Hebrew Section: Avi Ben-Amitay

Design: Ella Raskin

The Institute for the History of Polish Jewry and Israel-Poland Relations
Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center
Tel Aviv University 6997801, Israel
galed@tauex.tau.ac.il

© Tel Aviv University 2017
ISSN 0334-4258

MICHAŁ ADAM PALACZ

CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS IN THE POLISH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, 1941-1949

Introduction

The Polish School of Medicine (PSM) at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, was an autonomous Polish-language institution operated by the Polish government-in-exile in London. Its faculty and students were mostly Polish soldiers and civilian war refugees. When PSM was created, on 24 February 1941, it was the only Polish institution of higher education in the world.[1] In Poland proper the German occupiers were closing universities and exterminating the local intelligentsia as part of a systematic campaign to destroy the country's intellectual life. By the time it ceased operations in March 1949, PSM had accommodated more than 400 Polish refugees, including 9 professors, 28 lecturers, 15 assistants, 26 administrative and technical employees, and 361 students. 227 undergraduate medical students received Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB, ChB) degrees; 19 physicians obtained the Doctor of Medicine (MD) degree.[2] Only 13 percent of the refugees at PSM returned to Poland after 1945. Around half of them settled in Great Britain, while the others emigrated to Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, or different British colonies in Africa, Asia, and the West Indies.

---

[1] Józef Brodzki, ed., *Polish School of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh and London 1942; Jakub Rostowski, *History of the Polish School of Medicine*, Edinburgh 1955; W. A. Wojcik, "Time in Context: The Polish School of Medicine and Paderewski Hospital in Edinburgh 1941 to 1949," *Proceedings of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh* 31 (2001):69-76.

[2] Rostowski, *History*, pp. 42-66.

The significant presence of Jews among the students and faculty of PSM has so far attracted undeservedly little scholarly interest. Official records, postwar memoirs, and reminiscences, as well as more recent commemorative publications, rarely mention Christian-Jewish relations at the School. Among Polish historians of medicine, only Roman Meissner and Jakub Gąsiorowski have devoted any attention to Jewish students and to alleged antisemitic practices at this unique institution.[3]

The following article analyzes antisemitism as a factor in Christian-Jewish relations at the Polish medical faculty in Edinburgh. Antisemitism was a conspicuous element of university life in interwar Poland. Purported instances of antisemitism at PSM will be critically examined in order to determine whether and to what extent anti-Jewish discrimination and violence was present among Polish refugees in wartime Edinburgh.

Antisemitism and medicine in interwar Poland

The Second Polish Republic (1918-1939) was a culturally heterogeneous, multinational state in which only 65 percent of the citizens were ethnic Poles. The country's 3 million Jews, who were officially considered to be a religious rather than a national minority, comprised at least 10 percent of the total population.[4]

The historiography on Christian-Jewish relations and on antisemitism in this period remains contentious and politically sensitive.[5] Whatever

[3] K. Meissner, "Polski Wydział Lekarski w świetle 'nowych' dokumentów archiwalnych," in idem, ed., *Księga pamiątkowa w 80-lecie Uniwersyteckiego Wydziału Lekarskiego w Poznaniu: Studia i materiały*, Poznań 2001, pp. 357-361; Jakub Gąsiorowski, *Losy absolwentów Polskiego Wydziału Lekarskiego w Edynburgu*, Toruń 2004, pp. 35-38.

[4] Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Ojczyzna nie tylko Polaków: Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce w latach 1918-1939*, Warsaw 1985, pp. 31-51. Tomaszewski's estimates are more reliable than the data on national and religious minorities from the official censuses of 1921 and 1931.

[5] See, for example, Ezra Mendelsohn, "Interwar Poland: Good for the Jews or Bad for the Jews?" in Chimen Abramsky et al, eds., *The Jews in Poland*, Oxford 1986, pp. 130-39; idem, "Jewish Historiography on Polish Jewry in the Interwar

their position, however, almost all historians of interwar Poland agree that universities, especially the faculties of law and medicine, were hotbeds of antisemitism. Discriminatory measures and physical attacks were directed against Jewish students in response to the perceived "Judaization" of the free professions. In fact, in the academic year 1921-22 Jews composed 35 percent of all medical students at Poland's five medical schools (see Table 1). Ten years later, according to Raphael Mahler's estimates, 46 percent of all physicians in Poland, including 55 percent of private medical practitioners, were Jewish.[6] However, the notion that Jews were somehow "overrepresented" in the medical profession needs to be deconstructed in light of socioeconomic conditions in the Second Polish Republic.

TABLE 1

JEWISH MEDICAL STUDENTS AT POLISH UNIVERSITIES IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1921-22

Faculty of Medicine	**Number of medical students**	**Number of Jewish students**	**Percentage of Jewish students**
University of Warsaw	1683	628	37 percent
Jagiellonian University (Kraków)	848	249	29 percent
Jan Kazimierz University (Lwów)	1225	598	49 percent
University of Poznań	288	3	1 percent
Stefan Bathory University (Wilno)	398	87	22 percent
TOTAL	4442	1565	35 percent

Source: Antoni Cieszyński, 'Czy i jak należy przeciwdziałać nadmiernemu przyrostowi lekarzy w Polsce,' *Polska Gazeta Lekarska*, 11 (1923), p. 195.

More than 60 percent of the population of interwar Poland was employed in agriculture, and in 1921 more than 33 percent of people above age 10 were illiterate. In the eastern borderlands (*kresy wschodnie*) up to 48 percent of

---

Period," *Polin* 8 (2004):3-13; David Engel, "On Reconciling the Histories of Two Chosen Peoples," *American Historical Review* 114 (2009):914-29; Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia, Volume III: 1914 to 2008*, Oxford 2012, pp. 56-59.

[6] Raphael Mahler, "Jews in Public Service and the Liberal Professions in Poland, 1918-1939," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (1944):325.

all adults, including up to 70 percent of women, could not read or write.[7] The Jewish community, however, was largely urban and highly literate; it traditionally valued the pursuit of both religious and secular knowledge. Although only 10 percent of the total population, they comprised around a third of all town dwellers. Thus Jewish youth had relatively easier access to high schools and universities than the more numerous children of Christian peasants. Nonetheless, after Poland regained independence in 1918, the Jews and other minorities were effectively barred from employment in the public sector, which provided 50-60 percent of white-collar jobs in interwar Poland. Pushed out of that sector, the young Jewish intelligentsia flocked to liberal professions such as medicine and law, as these were relatively free from governmental control.[8] The predominance of Jewish private medical practitioners resulted from the fact that Jews were rarely employed in university clinics, municipal hospitals and other institutions maintained by public funds.[9]

Although the purported overrepresentation of Jews in the medical profession resulted largely from discriminatory policies of the Polish state, extreme nationalists waged a ruthless struggle against Jewish medical students and physicians. This antisemitic campaign had three aspects: limiting the number of Jews admitted to university faculties of medicine, separating Christian and Jewish medical students (or "ghettoization" of the Jews), and excluding Jews from the medical profession (or the "de-Judaisation" of Polish medicine).

The Academic Schools Act of 1920 empowered faculty councils at Polish universities to restrict the admission of students by means of a *numerus clausus*.[10] In the early 1920s organizations of nationalist students such as the All-Polish Youth (*Młodzież Wszechpolska*), which were affiliated with the broader National Democratic movement, demanded the introduction of a specific *numerus clausus* for Jews corresponding to their percentage in the total Polish population. These demands were supported by many university professors and medical practitioners who feared that overproduction of physicians would inevitably lead to a gradual proletarization and pauperization of the respected medical profession. [11] In 1923 and again in 1931 National Democratic deputies in the Polish parliament proposed legislation that would officially allow all institutions of higher education to restrict admission on the basis of nationality and religious creed. These proposals were rejected by the *Sejm*, but an unofficial *numerus clausus* for Jewish students was introduced by all five medical schools in the academic year 1923-24.[12]

---

[7] Józef Buszko, *Historia Polski 1864-1948*, Warsaw 1984, pp. 341-42; Henryk Zieliński, *Historia Polski 1914-1939*, Wrocław 1983, pp. 332-35.

[8] Mahler, "Jews in Public Service," pp. 291-313; C. S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars*, New York 1977, p. 106; Elżbieta Więckowska, *Lekarze jako grupa zawodowa w II Rzeczpospolitej*, Warsaw 2004, pp. 178-79; Gerhard Besier and Katarzyna Stokłosa, "Antisemitismus im Polen der Zwischenkriegszeit," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 23 (2010):549-74.

[9] Mahler, "Jews in Public Service," p. 327.

[10] Więckowska, *Lekarze jako grupa zawodowa*, pp. 109-10; Wanda Wojtkiewicz-Rok, "Propozycje programowe w zakresie reform kształcenia medycznego w latach 1926-1939 Wydziału Lekarskiego Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego,"

The extreme nationalists simultaneously attempted to separate Jewish students completely from their Christian colleagues. In the 1920s the All-Polish Youth managed to take control of many self-help and educational societies at Polish universities. The Jews were soon excluded from the nationalist-controlled student organizations. Consequently, separate societies of Jewish medical students were founded in Lwów, Warsaw, and Wilno.[13]

A more bizarre attempt to segregate Jewish and Christian medical students was connected to the so-called cadaver affair. According to state

Medycyna Nowożytna: Studia nad Historią Medycyny 5 (1998):81-83.

[11] Cieszyński, "Czy i jak należy przeciwdziałać nadmiernemu przyrostowi lekarzy w Polsce," *Polska Gazeta Lekarska* 11 (1923):192-97. See also Tadeusz Brzeziński, "Rozwój wydziałów lekarskich polskich uniwersytetów w latach 1918-1939," *Archiwum Historii i Filozofii Medycyny* 56 (1999):103-104.

[12] Mahler, "Jews in Public Service," p. 342; Harry Rabinowicz, "The Battle of the Ghetto Benches," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 55 (1964):151-59; Szymon Rudnicki, "From 'Numerus Clausus' to 'Numerus Nullus'," *Polin* 2 (1987):246-68; idem, "Anti-Jewish Legislation in Interwar Poland," in Robert Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and its Opponents in Modern Poland*, Ithaca 2005, pp. 148-70.

[13] Andrzej Garlicki ed., *Dzieje Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 1915-1939*, Warsaw 1982, pp.153-61; Grzegorz Brożek, "Ruch studentów medycyny w Uniwersytecie Stefana Batorego w Wilnie w latach 1919-1939," *Archiwum Historii i Filozofii Medycyny* 62 (1999):209-10; Stanisław Zwolski, "Nauczanie medycyny w Polsce — od Komisji Edukacji Narodowej do wybuchu drugiej wojny światowej," in Andrzej Śródka ed., *Zarys historii nauczania medycyny w Polsce od roku 1939: Wybrane zagadnienia*, Kraków 2012, p. 36.

regulations, corpses that were not claimed from hospitals or mortuaries by relatives or friends within a specified period of time were handed over to the medical schools for the purpose of teaching human anatomy. Jewish religious law, however, regarded dissections as sacrilegious, and therefore Jewish burial societies often retained control of unclaimed Jewish corpses. In 1921 some nationalist and Catholic student activists began to demand that Jews should not be allowed to dissect Christian corpses. They also argued that their Jewish colleagues should be banned from anatomy classes until the supply of Jewish cadavers matched the percentage of Jews among medical students. Although many secular Jewish students personally opposed the religious taboos concerning human dissections, Jews generally viewed the affair as a thinly-veiled attempt to prevent them from receiving a medical education. The conflict over the supply of Jewish cadavers lingered well into the 1930s, often leading to physical attacks on Jews trying simply to attend anatomy classes. As a result of the "cadaver affair" Jewish students at some medical faculties were eventually forced to practice dissections only on Jewish corpses and at separate tables.[14]

The subsequent campaign for the introduction of separate seating for Jews in university lecture halls was accompanied by even more violent attacks perpetrated by gangs of nationalist thugs armed with wooden clubs, iron bars, metal chains, and sometimes even guns. In the 1930s outbursts of violence on university premises frequently led to the suspension of lectures, making normal academic work almost impossible. In October 1937, under the pressure from the rectors of Polish universities, who feared further disturbances, Professor Wojciech Świętosławski, the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Education, allowed the introduction of "ghetto benches" at all institutions of higher learning in Poland. Jewish students who refused to be seated in the allocated rows were often beaten and driven from the lecture halls. Christian professors and students who protested against the ghetto benches were also verbally and physically attacked by nationalist extremists.[15]

---

[14] For an extensive analysis of the "cadaver affair" see Natalia Aleksiun, "Christian Corpses for Christians!: Dissecting the Antisemitism behind the Cadaver Affair of the Second Polish Republic," *East European Politics and Societies* 25 (2011):393-409; eadem, "Jewish Students and Christian Corpses in Interwar Poland: Playing with the Language of Blood Libel," *Jewish History* 26 (2012):327-42. The "cadaver affair" was not a uniquely Polish form of antisemitic agitation: see Irina Livezeanu, "Interwar Poland and Romania: The Nationalization of Elites, the Vanishing Middle, and the Problem of Intellectuals," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 22 (1998):412.

The attempts to appease the radicals by allowing for the "ghettoization" of Jewish students only encouraged further antisemitic excesses at Polish universities. The nationalists wanted a complete "de-Judaization" of Polish universities. They organized "Day without a Jew" and "Week without a Jew" campaigns, during which Jewish students were blocked from entering lecture halls and classrooms.[16] Some educational institutions responded to these demands with the introduction of a *numerus nullus*. In the final years before the outbreak of Second World War, Jewish students were not admitted at all to the medical faculties at the University of Poznań and the Jagiellonian University in Kraków.[17] Moreover, in the late 1930s many professional associations in Poland introduced "Aryan paragraphs" to their bylaws. Under such clauses all people with Jewish origins were excluded from membership.[18] For instance, in October 1937 the General Assembly of the Union of Polish State Physicians (*Związek Lekarzy Państwa Polskiego*), which represented half of the medical practitioners in Poland, voted 140 to 103 that only Christian-born citizens could be regular members of the association. A significant number of physicians who opposed this obviously anti-Jewish amendment seceded from the Union in protest.[19] Similarly, in spring 1938 the Society of Medical Students (*Koło Medyków*) at the Józef Piłsudski University in Warsaw enacted a provision that barred membership to anyone with Jewish ancestors down to the third generation.[20]

---

[15] Rabinowicz, "Battle," pp. 151-59; Polonsky, *Jews in Poland Russia*, pp. 87-88; Heller, *Edge of Destruction*, pp. 122-23; Yisrael Gutman, "Polish Antisemitism Between the Wars: An Overview," in idem et al, eds., *The Jews of Poland between Two World Wars*, Hanover, NH 1989, p. 104.

[16] Rabinowicz, "Battle," p. 154; Heller, *Edge of Destruction*, p. 121; Rudnicki, "From 'Numerus Clausus' to 'Numerus Nullus'," p. 262.

[17] Mahler, "Jews in Public Service," p. 345; Rudnicki, "From 'Numerus Clausus' to 'Numerus Nullus'," p. 262.

[18] Mahler, "Jews in Public Service," p. 312; Heller, *Edge of Destruction*, p. 128; Polonsky, *Jews in Poland and Russia*, pp. 87-88.

[19] Mahler, "Jews in Public Service," pp. 329-31; Więckowska, *Lekarze jako grupa zawodowa,* pp. 200-205.

[20] Monika Natkowska, *Numerus clausus, getto ławkowe, numerus nullus, "paragraf aryjski": Antysemityzm na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim 1931-1939*, Warsaw 1999,

The radicalization of the campaign against Jews in the medical profession was encouraged by a number of factors, including the severe economic crisis of the 1930s; the example of anti-Jewish measures adopted in neighboring Germany, Romania and Hungary; and the eventual espousal of antisemitic slogans by the ruling military regime in Poland.[21] Antisemitism in interwar Poland has often been portrayed as generally lacking openly racist overtones. It has also been argued that local Jew-hatred never assumed the genocidal dimensions of its German version.[22] However, the attempts at "de-Judaizing" Polish medical faculties and at "Aryanizing" professional associations demonstrate that indigenous antisemitism in Poland was, at least indirectly, influenced by Nazi racial ideology. The anti-Jewish measures of the late 1930s were clearly inspired and legitimized by the passing of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935.[23]

Because of those measures the number of Jewish medical students in Polish universities rapidly decreased, from 35 percent in 1921 to only 9.3 percent in academic year 1938-39.[24] Jews who could not or would not study at Polish medical faculties because of antisemitic discrimination and violence had to seek education at foreign universities, provided their families had the necessary financial resources. Those who obtained foreign degrees and wished to practice medicine in Poland were obliged to undergo the lengthy and often complicated process of credential validation (*nostryfikacja*). In accordance with regulations issued by the

p. 156.

[21] For a general overview of antisemitism in the late 1930s, see Melzer, "Antisemitism in the Last Years," pp. 126-137; Polonsky, *Jews in Poland and Russia*, pp. 77-80; W. W. Hagen, "Before the 'Final Solution': Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Antisemitism in Interwar Germany and Poland," *Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996):368-77; E. D. Wynot, Jr., "'A Necessary Cruelty': The Emergence of Official Antisemitism in Poland, 1936-39," *American Historical Review* 76 (1971):1035-1058.

[22] Gutman, "Polish Antisemitism," p. 107.

[23] Emanuel Melzer, "Antisemitism in the Last Years of the Second Polish Republic," in Gutman et al, *Jews of Poland between Two World Wars*, p. 137. It has recently been argued that racism was actually inherent in the thinking of Roman Dmowski (1864-1939), the chief ideologue of Polish antisemitism and extreme nationalism. Grzegorz Krzywiec, *Chauvinism, Polish Style: The Case of Roman Dmowski (Beginnings: 1886-1905)*, Frankfurt a. M. 2016.

[24] Więckowska, *Lekarze jako grupa zawodowa*, p. 178.

Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Education in 1924, this process usually entailed reexamination by one of the Polish faculty councils.[25] Because the vast majority of those who applied for recognition of foreign medical diplomas were Jewish, nationalist-dominated student organizations and even some faculty councils lobbied the Ministry officially to limit the number of annual validations. Like in the debate that preceded the introduction of discriminatory quotas in the 1920s, the opponents of recognizing foreign medical degrees combined fears of "Judaization" with the perception that physicians were being overproduced in Poland. As a result, it became practically impossible to have foreign credentials validated during the final years of the interwar period.[26]

All things considered, the almost twenty-year-long antisemitic campaign at Polish universities must have left a profound psychological effect on Jewish students who were denied equal rights in their own homeland. This phenomenon explains why the majority of future Jewish students of PSM pursued medical education in France, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy or Czechoslovakia before the Second World War. For example, Ludwik Mirabel, a future graduate of PSM, was accepted to Piłsudski University in Warsaw in 1937 but, after experiencing segregation and violence, decided to enroll as a medical student at the University of Grenoble. A summary of an interview with Mirabel published in 2007 reported that "Ludwik no longer remembers what the official pretext for putting green stamps on the Jewish students' University cards was but [recalls that] the result was an identification kit for the use of roaming student gangs looking for the Jews to beat up. He could not always count on meeting his school friends in time for bodyguarding. He felt smothered and decided he had to get away."[27]

Jerzy (George) Arendt, another future graduate of PSM, could not obtain a place at the medical faculty in Warsaw because of the *numerus clausus*. Many years later he recalled that “Poland was very antisemitic. Jews were treated as second class citizens. It was not safe for a Jew to walk in the park. I did not want to stay there.”[28]

---

[25] Minister Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego, "Rozporządzenie z dnia 3 kwietnia 1924 roku w przedmiocie nostryfikacji zagranicznych dyplomów naukowych," *Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, no. 9, poz. 84 (1924):140-42.

[26] Cieszyński, "Czy i jak należy przeciwdziałać," p. 196; Heller, *Edge of Destruction*, p. 121; Wojtkiewicz-Rok, "Propozycje programowe," p. 87; Natkowska, *Antysemityzm na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim*, pp. 177-82.

[27] Ludwik Mirabel and Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo, "Conversations between Ludwik Mirabel and Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo," *Newsletter of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada* 5 (2007):41.

Despite the antisemitic measures at prewar Polish universities, many Polish Jewish medical students volunteered for the Polish exile army, formed in France after the fall of Poland in 1939. When France fell in June 1940, some of them managed to escape to Britain, either by crossing the English Channel or via the more dangerous route across Francoist Spain, Portugal, and Gibraltar. Two Jewish students who took the latter route, Szabsa Markus and Jerzy Honigsberg, were intercepted by the Spanish authorities and spent several months in the notorious concentration camp in Miranda de Ebro. Alicja Lubicz-Sawicka (née Mandel), a female Jewish graduate of PSM, arrived in Edinburgh via the Soviet Union, where she had volunteered for the Polish Women’s Auxiliary Service, part of the Second Polish Corps under the command of General Władysław Anders. After completing their medical education in Edinburgh, several Jewish graduates of PSM rejoined their Polish Army units as medical officers and took part in the Allied invasion of Europe in 1944. One of them, Henryk Seid, was even awarded the *Virtuti Militari*, Poland’s highest decoration for bravery on the battlefield.[29] It has been argued that there was a general reluctance among Polish Jews abroad to serve under the Polish flag during the Second World War.[30] The medical officers who were educated at PSM could perhaps be seen as an exceptional group among Polish Jewish refugees in Britain.

Christian-Jewish relations at PSM

In total, 406 Polish medical refugees (members of the teaching staff and students of PSM) arrived at the University of Edinburgh during or immediately after the Second World War. The majority had previously been associated with one or more of the five medical schools in prewar Poland. Almost half of the 361 students had already began their education at Polish universities. Another 15 percent, Jews and non-Jews, had studied medicine in France, Belgium, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Lithuania, Switzerland, Austria, Britain, Canada, Lebanon, Romania, or Hungary. In addition, one in ten students had originally pursued higher education in disciplines other than medicine in Poland or abroad, while 75 students had not had any university experience before coming to Britain.[31] This last group was made up mostly of refugees born in the 1920s who had left occupied Poland as teenagers and were admitted to the first year of medical studies at PSM. This was the only age group in which females outnumbered males (by a 2:1 ratio). All together, 109 women, including 106 students and 3 assistants, made up almost 30 percent of all medical refugees at PSM.[32] The proportion of female students at PSM was therefore significantly higher than the average 20 percent of women at prewar medical faculties in both Poland and Britain.[33]

---

[28] Medical Refugees Collection, Department of History, Philosophy and Religion, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford (henceforth MRC), interview with Dr George Arendt by Rebecca Lewis, 4 October 1999.

[29] See short biographies of all the graduates of PSM in Gąsiorowski, *Losy absolwentów*, pp. 99-270.

[30] Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*, Oxford 1979, p. 125.

Unlike the age and gender structure, a comprehensive social profile of Polish medical students in Edinburgh is impossible to reconstruct because the preserved records of PSM rarely contain information about the profession of the students' parents. However, partial data available from other sources, such as biographies, interviews and obituaries, suggest that children of the intelligentsia — "a stratum of non-manual workers, earning their living through intellectual, professional, and clerical activities, clearly separated from the lower classes by secondary and higher education, and connected to the upper classes by common patterns of social life"[34] –

---

[31] M. A. Palacz, *The Polish School of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh (1941-1949): A Case Study in the Transnational History of Polish Wartime Migration to Great Britain*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2015, pp. 286-88.

[32] Ibid., pp. 89-93.

[33] For the statistics on female students at Polish and British medical schools before the Second World War, see *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1939*, Warsaw 1939, p. 332; Ministry of Health and Department of Health for Scotland, *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Schools*, London 1944, pp. 260-61.

[34] Jan Szczepański, "The Polish Intelligentsia: Past and Present," *World Politics* 14 (1962):411.

predominated among Polish medical refugees.[35] Children of professionals, especially medical practitioners, formed a discernible subgroup within this category. A significant number of Polish medical students in Edinburgh, especially many women, were children of high-ranking military officers. The most prominent example was Wanda Piłsudska, the older daughter of Marshal Józef Piłsudski. Other social strata, such as the landed gentry and the bourgeoisie, were less well-represented among PSM students, and it seems that there were very few medical refugees with peasant or working-class parents.[36]

Examination records, matriculation cards, and other preserved documents include more or less complete information about the religion, citizenship, and nationality of the 361 students who attended PSM between 1941 and 1949.[37] These sources show that the religious composition of PSM was more homogeneous than in medical schools in prewar Poland. Roman Catholics made up 84.5 percent of the student body at PSM, while 23 men and 12 women adhered to "the Mosaic [Jewish] faith" (*wyznanie mojżeszowe*). These made up 9.7 percent of students and were the largest religious minority among Polish medical refugees in Edinburgh (see Table 2). The proportion of Jewish students at PSM was nearly the same as the 9.3 percent Jews comprised of the student bodies of the five Polish medical schools in 1938-39.

TABLE 2

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF MEDICAL REFUGEES AT PSM

Religion	**ALL REFUGEES**		**STUDENTS**	
	No.	**percent**	**No.**	**percent**
Roman Catholic	345	85.0 percent	305	84.5 percent
Jewish	37	9.1 percent	35	9.7 percent
Lutheran	10	2.5 percent	10	2.8 percent
Orthodox Christian	1	0.2 percent	1	0.3 percent

---

[35] Palacz, *Polish School of Medicine*, pp. 94-95.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Edinburgh University Archives, Edinburgh (henceforth EUA), IN 14/4: Student record schedules ("Black Book"), 1941-1948; IN 14/7: Record schedules of non-completing students, 1941-1947.

No religious affiliation	7	1.7 percent	5	1.4 percent
No information available	6	1.5 percent	5	1.3 percent
Total	406	100 percent	361	100 percent

Sources: Edinburgh University Archives, IN14: Records of PSM, 1940-1949; GD46: Papers of Wiktor Tomaszewski, 1938-1996; Oxford Brookes University, Department of History, Philosophy and Religion, Oxford: Biographical Database of European Medical Refugees in Great Britain, 1930s-1950s; Biographical Database of Members of the Polish Medical School at Edinburgh; World Biographical Information System Online, http://db.saur.de/WBIS; Kazimierz Nowak, *Udział Krakowskich Lekarzy w Fenomenie Polskiego Wydziału Lekarskiego Uniwersytetu w Edynburgu*, Kraków 2006; Jakub Gąsiorowski, *The Story of the Graduates of the Polish School of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh 1941-1949*, Szczecin 2012.

Registration of births, marriages and deaths in interwar Poland was conducted by religious communities. As a result, nonpracticing Jews and even many atheists were formally connected with Judaism. For this reason, historians of prewar Poland customarily use data on followers of the so-called Mosaic faith to indicate the number of Jews.[38] However, a few individual refugees did not adhere to any denomination, while the religious affiliation of several others is unknown because of incomplete records. Moreover, comprehensive data on the religious affiliation of members of the teaching staff is not available, and while it is known that at least three members of the teaching staff had some Jewish origins, the sources are not always precise about their actual religious affiliation.

Official documents of PSM were modeled after prewar Polish templates. Thus matriculation records clearly differentiated between citizenship (*obywatelstwo*) and nationality (*narodowość*). 34 students of "Mosaic faith" at PSM were prewar Polish citizens, while the citizenship of the remaining one is unclear. According to their official student records, all but one of the Jewish students declared Polish nationality.[39] The only exception was Mordchel Margolis (later Mark Paul David Martin), who adhered to Jewish nationality. Before the war he had attended a *Tarbut* high school in Grodno.[40] This educational background may explain

---

[38] Tomaszewski, *Ojczyzna nie tylko Polaków,* pp. 31-51.

[39] See above, n. 37.

[40] Gąsiorowski, *Losy absolwentów,* p. 189. *Tarbut*, ("culture" in Hebrew) was a network of private, secular, Zionist-oreinted Hebrew-language schools. On these schools see Nathan Eck, "The Educational Institutions of Polish Jewry (1921-1939)," *Jewish Social Studies* 9 (1947):12-15; Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe*

Margolis' declaration of a separate Jewish national identity, which was rather atypical among Polish Jews at PSM. It is possible, however, that some of the Jewish students declared Polish rather than Jewish nationality in order to avoid potential discrimination in the admission process.

Partial data suggest that the social structure of Polish Jews at PSM was slightly different from the student body as a whole. Although parents of some Jewish refugees hailed from different subgroups of the intelligentsia, such as surgeons, lawyers, journalists and clerks, a significant number came from bourgeois or petit-bourgeois families. For example, the father of Mordchel Margolis was a brewery owner in Grodno, while Jan Jakub Chazan was the son of a cloth merchant from the same city. The majority of Jews at PSM could probably be considered "Poles of Mosaic faith" (*Polacy wyznania mojżeszowego*), a term referring to culturally and linguistically Polonized Jews who rarely observed Jewish traditions but formally retained their religious identity.[41] The family background of Ludwik Mirabel offers a good example:

> As [were] many other Jewish middle-class families, the Mirabels were assimilated. [Ludwik's] grandmother who lived in a resort near Warsaw called Otwock with her husband Rotbart (his mother's father, her first husband, died of intestinal obstruction) used to light a candle on Sabbath. But her progeny did not observe religion. Ludwik remembers that as a child he had once asked his father: "Daddy does God exist?" His father said: "Don't bother me now. Can't you see? I'm drinking coffee." In retrospect the observance of a religion in his milieu was partly a class-snobbery issue. Temple was something that the shabby, jargon [Yiddish]-speaking Hassidim attended, chanting and dancing on Saturdays.... Polish was the only language spoken at Ludwik's home. He heard Yiddish for the first time in the street after the move to Nowolipie [a Jewish quarter in prewar Warsaw].[42]

between the World Wars, Bloomington, IN 1987, pp. 65-66.

[41] On the "Poles of Mosaic faith" and on assimilated Jews in interwar Poland, see Heller, *Edge of Destruction*, pp. 34-37; Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe*, pp. 29-32; Polonsky, *Jews in Poland and Russia*, 3:63; Szymon Rudnicki, "Jews in Poland Between the Two World Wars," *Shofar* 29 (2011):21-22. For a related observation of Polish Jewish ex-servicemen in postwar London, see Jerzy Zubrzycki, *Polish Immigrants In Britain: A Study of Adjustment*, The Hague 1956, pp. 214-15.

[42] Mirabel and Medvedeva-Nathoo, "Conversations," p. 34.

Several students at PSM came from Jewish families that had converted to Roman Catholicism or to Lutheranism. The family of Hanna Segal (née Poznańska), a graduate of PSM who later became a renowned British psychoanalyst, is an interesting example. One of Hanna's ancestors was a Jewish tailor who took part in the Kościuszko Uprising of 1794. In recognition of his patriotism, local Poles decided to change his name from the German-sounding Rotblatt to Poznański — that is, someone who comes from the city of Poznań. Her father, Czesław Poznański, was an assimilated Polish Jew who officially converted to Roman Catholicism during the Revolution of 1905 in order to demonstrate his loyalty to the Polish national cause at a time when the leadership of Warsaw Jewry supported the Tsarist regime. His wife (Hanna's mother) came from a non-assimilated Jewish family but also converted in order to have her marriage registered.[43]

Jakub Rostowski, professor of neurology and psychiatry (1941-1949) and the last Dean of PSM (1946-1949), converted to Roman Catholicism before the First World War. Born in 1884 as Jakub Rothfeld, he adopted his Polish-sounding surname in 1938.[44] Perhaps it is significant that the suffix "-ski" historically denoted members of the nobility, analogous to the particles *von* in German or *de* in French. Yet despite genuine identification with the Polish language, culture, and national cause, "Poles of Mosaic faith" and even converts to Christianity were not regarded as "true Poles" by many ethnic Poles. Ludwik Mirabel was forced to discover his Jewish identity through contact with Polish antisemites:

> "I always thought I was a Pole till I heard from the others that I was not." When he first learned to read, being a true little nationalist, he would redraw the maps to represent the glories of historical Poland stretching "from sea to sea" i.e. from the Baltic to the Black Sea. But to some Poles no Jew could ever be accepted as truly Polish.[45]

It is neither possible nor necessary to ascertain exactly how many men and women at PSM identified themselves as Jews in a religious, national, or cultural sense, but there was undoubtedly a significant presence of self-described Jews among Polish medical refugees at the University of Edinburgh. Although the individual identities of Poles of Mosaic faith, of secular Jews, and of Christians of Jewish origin were multifaceted and often changed over time, this complexity was usually lost on those who regarded "Poles" and "Jews" as mutually exclusive categories.

---

[43] Jean-Michel Quinodoz, *Listening to Hanna Segal: Her Contribution to Psychoanalysis*, Hove 2008, p. 4.

[44] Bianka Mikołajewska, "Rostowski: minister z afrykańskiej puszczy," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24 May 2013.

[45] Mirabel and Medvedeva-Nathoo, "Conversations," pp. 34-35.

There is compelling evidence that some extreme nationalists and antisemites were also present at PSM during and immediately after the war. Although there are no official data on such people, wartime and postwar reminiscences contain some revealing clues. According to the memoirs of Stefan Grzybowski, an informal leader of the Socialist faction at PSM, written between 1943 and 1945, the student body of PSM was divided into Socialist and National Democratic factions. The latter group was especially well represented among the students from Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów, and the Polish Students' Hostel in Edinburgh was said to be a "camouflaged lair of the National Democrats" (*zakamuflowane gniazdo endecji*).[46]

Similarly, Professor Zygmunt Albert, who worked before the war as an assistant in the Department of Pathological Anatomy at Jan Kazimierz University, recalled in his autobiography that two future professors at PSM, Włodzimierz Koskowski and Józef Dadlez, were the leaders of a local faction of extreme nationalists and antisemites. According to Albert, Dadlez threatened his academic future after he refused to sign a petition demanding the exclusion of Jews from the Association of Assistants in 1938. In turn, Professor Koskowski was supposedly known as the "Führer" of this group of extreme nationalists.[47] Similar accusations were raised in Communist Poland when Koskowski's prewar associate was purged from one of the restored Polish universities. On the other hand, Professor Tadeusz Kielanowski, who worked as an assistant at Jan Kazimierz University at the same time as Albert, argued in his memoirs that Professor Koskowski was a

[46] EUA, GD46/Box 5: memoirs of Stefan Grzybowski, 1943-1945, p. 4. See also Stanisław Gebertt, "Życie studentów na Polskim Wydziale Lekarskim w Edynburgu, 1941-1949," *Archiwum Historii i Filozofii Medycyny* 57 (1994):337.

[47] Zygmunt Albert, "Szkice autobiograficzne 1939-1981," *Archiwum Historii i Filozofii Medycyny*, Supplement no. 4 (1996):17.

right-wing activist but not an antisemite.[48] Further interesting information can be found in the autobiography of a Polish pilot, Czesław Blicharski, who studied law at Jan Kazimierz University. In his reminiscences he frequently mentioned two future graduates of PSM, one of whom was his roommate in the student dormitory. They were all members of the extreme nationalist All-Polish Youth organization. Blicharski described without shame their active participation in antisemitic boycotts and street riots in prewar Lwów.[49]

These three memoirs were written many years after the events they described; hence the information about alleged prewar antisemites should not be taken at face value. Albert's and Kielanowski's opinions about whether or not someone was an antisemite are necessarily subjective and given to the faults of human memory.[50] On the other hand, Blicharski's memoir is perhaps uniquely valuable because there are few postwar accounts of antisemitic violence that openly present the point of view of the perpetrators. Taking into account the well-document presence of both Jews and Polish nationalists among medical refugees at the University of Edinburgh, one could reasonably expect that prewar antisemitism might have resurfaced at PSM between 1941 and 1949.

In fact, in late 1943 rumors about alleged antisemitism at the Polish medical faculty, including the charge that Jewish students were being forced to sit at separate tables, began to circulate in Britain.[51] This accusation was included in a memorandum sent in September 1943 by the Board of Deputies of British Jews to Ignacy Schwarzbart, a Jewish member of the Polish National Council (a political body that advised the Polish government-in-exile in London).[52] On the other hand, about two months later, 21 Jewish medical students sent an open letter to Professor Antoni Jurasz, the organizer and first dean of PSM, in response to rumors that a member of the British parliament was planning to submit an interpellation to His Majesty's Government regarding the issue of antisemitism at the Polish medical faculty in Edinburgh. The signatories of the letter, who described themselves as "Poles of Mosaic faith," declared that they were unaware of the existence of any numerus clausus for Jews and that there had never been "ghetto benches" at PSM. They also stated that the teaching and administrative staff treated the Jews equally to other students and that they were not discriminated against because of their religion or origins. The signatories of the letter pointed out that Jews had been allowed to resume their interrupted studies at PSM without the need to repeat the courses and examinations they had already passed at foreign universities, even though their course of study was often very different from the prewar Polish medical program. The Jewish students also mentioned that they were all members of the Polish Students' Association in Great Britain and took part in all its activities and social events. Finally, the Jews emphasized that their relations with students of other religions were always satisfactory and sometimes even cordial and friendly.[53]

---

[48] Tadeusz Kielanowski, *Prawie cały wiek dwudziesty: Wspomnienia lekarza*, Gdańsk 1987, p. 204.

[49] Czesław Blicharski, *Tarnopolonanina żywot niepokorny*, Warsaw 2013, pp. 86-116.

[50] On the subjectivity and faulty mechanisms of human memory see, *inter alia*, Luisa Passerini, “Memory,” *History Workshop* 15 (1983):195-96.

[51] Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, p. 125.

[52] Ibid., p. 126.

This letter is the only official document known to deal explicitly with the issue of Christian-Jewish relations at PSM. Nonetheless, the main arguments of the letter can be corroborated by some other, more circumstantial, evidence. Minutes of meetings of the Faculty Council reveal that PSM was eager to admit as many medical students as possible and that the entry requirements were purely academic. Some Jewish soldier-students may have faced problems with Polish military authorities, who were not always willing to grant the necessary leave of absence. However, the difficulties in obtaining temporary relief from the Armed Forces also applied to Christian soldiers who wished to resume their medical studies. This nuisance was a source of constant squabbling between the Faculty Council of PSM and the Polish military and civilian authorities.[54] In fact, there was at least one case when PSM actively supported a Jewish student's application for temporary relief from active military service for

[53] Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, London, A 19 II/76, Letter to the Dean of the Polish School of Medicine in Edinburgh, 13 November 1943. The document was discovered by R. K. Meissner. See Meissner, "Polski Wydział Lekarski," pp. 357-61.

[54] EUA, IN 14/3: Minutes of Faculty Meetings, 1940-1949.

the purpose of studying medicine in Edinburgh.[55]

Minutes of meetings of the Faculty Council also confirm that Polish Jews who had begun their medical studies at foreign universities were not subject to discrimination in the admissions process. In contrast, the Faculty Council consistently refused to validate foreign medical diplomas. Ernest Thorn, Dr Kalfus, and Stanisław Gol (graduates of the universities in Geneva, Basel and Liège, respectively) unsuccessfully applied to have their diplomas recognized by PSM in 1941. Another foreign graduate, Joel Reissman, was denied validation in 1943.[56] There is no other information available about these four physicians, but it seems that at least some of them may have been Jewish. The rationale behind the Faculty Council's decision in their cases is unclear, but it was most likely motivated by legal considerations rather than by antisemitic prejudice. The right to recognize foreign medical diplomas was not mentioned in the Constitution of PSM.[57] It is perhaps revealing that the Faculty Council also refrained from nominating new professors and docents (senior lecturers). There was no legal basis for granting academic titles by PSM; this power was regarded as a future prerogative of postwar universities.[58] It could only be speculated that, taking into account the prewar controversies surrounding validation of medical diplomas, the Faculty Council of PSM preferred to defer the issue until after the liberation of Poland.

In any event, the lack of open hostility between different groups of Polish medical refugees can also be corroborated by memoirs whose authors can hardly be accused of trying to whitewash Polish antisemitism. Stefan Grzybowski argued in his wartime memoirs that personal relations between students of different political worldviews improved considerably at PSM in comparison with the prewar period. This peaceful coexistence was facilitated by a division of labor within the Edinburgh Branch of the Polish Students' Association in Great Britain. The National Democrats were more involved in internal activities among the Polish student body.

---

[55] Ibid.: Minutes of Faculty Meetings, 2 Feb 1943.

[56] Ibid.: Minutes of Faculty Meetings, 24 May 1941; 24 June 1941; 10 Oct 1941; 18 Mar 1943.

[57] EUA, IN14/1: Constitution of PSM, 24 Feb 1941.

[58] EUA, IN 14/3: Minutes of meetings of the Committee for the Enlargement of the Faculty Council, 19 Nov 1946; 26 Nov 1946; 29 Nov 1946.

They took over the day-to-day management of the Polish Students' Hostel, set up a savings-and-loan scheme for students, and organized regular social events, such as traditional Christmas Eve suppers and name-day parties for the Dean of PSM. On the other hand, the Socialists were more involved in maintaining contacts with British student organizations and with disseminating information about Poland to external audiences.[59] Similarly, Stanisław Gebertt, a Lutheran of Jewish origin, recalled in his postwar reminiscences of student life at PSM that personal relations between colleagues of different ethnic backgrounds and ideological persuasions were unexpectedly good at PSM, even though prewar political conflicts sometimes resurfaced during student meetings.[60]

Retrospective accounts dealing with Christian-Jewish relations at PSM more explicitly can be found in the personal files of 14 graduates who were interviewed around 2000 by Rebecca Lewis, an undergraduate student from Oxford University.[61] The majority of Roman Catholic respondents described the general attitude towards the Jews as friendly and stated that there was no antisemitism. For example, one of the graduates recalled that he "did not encounter any discord between Poles and Jews at the PMS [sic]. The general attitude towards Jews was satisfactory."[62] Moreover, four Catholic graduates pointed out that some of their best friends at PSM were actually Jewish.[63] Some of the respondents stressed that there was essentially no difference between Christian and Jewish students, because they were all Poles: "All the Jewish students I knew considered themselves Poles. The general attitude towards them was cordial, no different to ethnic Poles."[64] "Don't think about someone being Jewish. No difference."[65] Only one Roman Catholic student remembered a range of different attitudes towards the Jews: “There were many Jewish colleagues. The general attitude towards them was friendly, indifferent and occasionally unfriendly.”[66]

---

[59] EUA, GD46/Box 5: memoirs of Stefan Grzybowski, 1943-1945, p. 4.

[60] Gebertt, "Życie studentów," p. 338.

[61] The questionnaires and transcripts of interviews are held in the Medical Refugees Collection (henceforth MRC), maintained by Paul Weindling at the Department of History, Philosophy and Religion, Oxford Brookes University.

[62] MRC: Oskar Jerzy Slowik.

[63] Ibid.: Mrs. Lewicka/H. B. Marszałek, Doreen Milford, Oskar Jerzy Slowik, and Z.M. Sharnagiel.

[64] Ibid.: Dr. Henry Podlewski.

[65] Ibid.: Edmund Collie-Kolibabka.

George Arendt, the only Jewish graduate interviewed by Rebecca Lewis, conveyed a much more pessimistic picture of Christian-Jewish relations:

> There was little social contact and camaraderie for me amongst the other students. There was no instance of friendliness in the males. One example of antisemitism was in the delivery of Red Cross parcels to be distributed amongst the students. These parcels were sent to a building by a church at the West End of Princes Street [Polish Students’ Hostel at 5 Grosvenor Crescent, Edinburgh], which served as something like a student union. A sign went up saying, “students please attend for the distribution of Red Cross parcels on such and such a date,” however there was a postscript saying, “the remainder will be distributed to Jews on such and such a date (later).” There were no actual attacks on Jewish students although some students were known to hate Jews. The teaching staff were merely officious.[67]

Interestingly, the same person cosigned the November 1943 letter from the Jewish students that portrayed Christian-Jewish relations in a much more positive way. Some reasons for this discrepancy will be suggested below.

For now, however, it seems reasonable to conclude that there was no open antisemitism at PSM. In contrast to prewar Polish medical faculties, the admission of Jewish students was not limited by discriminatory quotas. The Jews were not forced to sit in humiliating “ghetto benches” and were not excluded from student organizations and social activities. The relations between Christians and Jews were generally satisfactory, especially if compared with antisemitic excesses that were commonplace at universities in prewar Poland. However, the cordiality of personal relations between Christian and Jewish colleagues depended largely on individual attitudes. Some ethnic Poles were close friends with Jews, while others merely tolerated them. Even if some Polish Catholic students actually harbored anti-Jewish hatred, they were not allowed to manifest it publicly in word and deed.

---

[66] Ibid.: Wladyslaw J. Mitus.

[67] Ibid.: Interview with Dr George Arendt by Rebecca Lewis, 4 Oct 1999.

Several interrelated factors may have played a role in preventing the rise of antisemitism at PSM. Shared wartime experiences certainly contributed to a growing sense of national unity. The patriotism shown by Polish Jewish students and the common struggle against antisemitic Nazi Germany overshadowed, at least temporarily, the ethnic and religious differences that could otherwise have estranged them from the Christian majority. This sense of wartime solidarity was clearly expressed in some of the responses to Rebecca Lewis' questionnaire: "One of [the Jews] was my best friend at a time (now he lives in Australia). We grew up, fought and suffered together."[68] "Attitude towards [Jews] was friendly and we all were in the same boat."[69]

It can be argued, moveover, that the long-distance nationalism of Polish medical refugees in Edinburgh was less radical and more inclusive than its short-distance counterpart in prewar Poland.[70] The setting up of an autonomous Polish-language medical faculty in wartime Edinburgh can be seen as a cultural and political project that was aimed primarily at the preservation in exile of Polish medical science and education.[71] Perhaps it was this self-imposed exile mission that forced Polish nationalists at PSM to change their political priorities. The fight against the perceived "Judaization" of Polish medicine was absolutely irrelevant at a time when the Germans were exterminating the Polish intelligentsia, Jewish and Christian alike. It was expected that after an Allied victory in the war Polish medical refugees would return to their homeland and contribute to the reconstruction of universities and healthcare services.[72] The expected shortages of academic staff and medical personnel in postwar Poland may have prompted the Faculty Council of PSM to admit all the suitable candidates for medical studies, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, or religious creed.[73]

---

[68] Ibid.: Z.M. Sharnagiel.

[69] Ibid.: Wladyslaw Alexander Wielhorski.

[70] Benedict Anderson defined a long-distance nationalist as someone who "finds it tempting to play identity politics by participating (via propaganda, money, weapons, any way but voting) in the conflicts of his imagined *Heimat*." Benedict Anderson, "The New World Disorder," *New Left Review* I/193 (1992):3-13. Despite Anderson's apparent disdain for this phenomenon, it seems that the model of long-distance nationalism can be applied to the more benign activities of PSM, which involved raising awareness about German atrocities against Polish universities and intellectuals (propaganda), providing financial and material support to displaced compatriots (money), and supporting the Allied war effort by training medical officers for the Polish Armed Forces in the West (weapons).

[71] For a more detailed discussion of long-distance nationalism at PSM, see Palacz, *Polish School of Medicine*, pp. 141-60.

The specific wartime conditions in which PSM operated also limited the possibility of student unrest. Many refugees took the responsibility for the future of Polish science very seriously and concentrated on their studies at the expense of extracurricular political activities, which were often prioritized before 1939. The program of medical studies at PSM was much more intense than in prewar Poland. Attendance at lectures was mandatory, and holidays were limited to the necessary minimum. During the long summer vacations, the students were often required to attend military training in Polish army camps in rural Scotland. In fact, the majority of the students were soldiers on temporary leave from active service in the Polish Armed Forces, and as such, they were subjected to strict military discipline. Military and civilian students were also dependent on financial aid received from the Polish and British governments in London. The threat of being recalled to active military service and the risk of having one's stipend withdrawn were powerful incentives to self-discipline that compelled many potentially unruly students to concentrate on passing their exams in a timely fashion.[74]

Thus even if there were some extreme nationalist elements among the student body and the teaching staff of PSM, their position was relatively weaker than in prewar Poland. The nationalist students ceased to be an organized and independent political force that could dictate demands to intimidated authorities. The Polish government in London allowed the creation of the Polish Students' Association in Great Britain only two years after the opening of PSM. The Edinburgh Branch of this organization was personally supervised by Dean Jurasz.[75] According to Roman Meissner, Professor Jurasz uncompromisingly opposed antisemitism as the prewar Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Poznań, and it would be highly unlikely for him to have tolerated anti-Jewish excesses among Polish students in Edinburgh.[76] From 1946 until its final closure in 1949, PSM was headed by the Jewish convert to Catholicism Jakub Rostowski. In the eyes of many prewar antisemites he would still have been considered a Jew. The fact that Rostowski was elected dean proves that the purportedly antisemitic faction at PSM was clearly outnumbered, at least from 1946 to 1949.

---

[72] EUA, IN14/3: Minutes of Faculty Meetings, 19 Mar 1943; Brodzki, *Polish School of Medicine*, p. 48.

[73] The Faculty Council of PSM received estimates from occupied Poland that personnel shortages in postwar medical faculties might be as high as 50 percent. See EUA, IN14/3: Minutes of Faculty Meetings, 16 Oct 1943.

[74] Rostowski, *History*, pp. 56-57; Gąsiorowski, *Losy absolwentów*, pp. 54-65.

PSM's long-distance nationalist project involved informing the world about German crimes in occupied Poland. The propaganda efforts of Polish medical refugees in Edinburgh were centered around raising awareness of German atrocities committed against the Polish intelligentsia in general and against prominent scientists in particular. In close cooperation with the Polish government-in-exile, representatives of PSM disseminated news from occupied Poland among academic and medical circles in Allied and neutral countries.[77] In this context, it seems plausible that concerns over possible British reactions to Polish antisemitism may also have played a role in preventing anti-Jewish discrimination from resurfacing at PSM. Even though Britain witnessed a resurgence of antisemitism during the Second World War, and there were allegations of anti-Jewish prejudice in the British government and army,[78] academic circles in the United Kingdom vigorously opposed the antisemitic practices that were adopted by Polish universities in the interwar period. 300 professors and University MPs signed a manifesto against the introduction of "ghetto benches" in 1937, while the National Students Organisation in London condemned the actions of their Polish counterparts.[79] Commenting on the situation at PSM, George Arendt observed that "Poles there were very conscious that antisemitism was frowned upon in England."[80] Regardless of the actual British attitudes towards Jews, Polish medical refugees in Edinburgh would have been careful not to antagonize their British hosts in any way. After all, PSM was able to function only thanks to the magnanimous assistance of the University of Edinburgh and the tacit approval of the British government.

---

[75] EUA, GD46/Box 5: memoirs of Stefan Grzybowski, 1943-1945, pp. 7-8.

[76] Meissner, "Polski Wydział Lekarski", p. 357.

[77] In contrast to German crimes against the Polish intelligentsia, analogous Soviet atrocities, such as the so-called Katyń massacre, were not publicized by PSM, in accordance with the foreign policy of the Polish government-in-exile. See Palacz, *Polish School of Medicine*, pp. 150-56.

[78] Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, p 93. See also Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society during the Second World War*, Manchester 1989; Aaron Goldman, "The Resurgence of Antisemitism in Britain during World War II," *Jewish Social Studies*, 46 (1984):37-50.

Wartime improvement in Christian-Jewish relations at PSM, even if merely superficial, may also have been influenced not only by the internal logic of Polish long-distance nationalism but also by what Eric Hobsbawm has called the "recoil effect of the Holocaust."[81] It seems that antisemitic excesses would have hardly been tolerated within the walls of the University of Edinburgh at a time when the first news of the mass murder of Jews inside German-occupied Poland started to reach Britain. In late 1942 and early 1943 the Polish government-in-exile in London made public the report of Jan Karski, the first credible eye-witness account of the mass extermination of Jews taking place in German-occupied Poland.[82] The fact that information about the Holocaust reached PSM is evidenced by a reference to the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (April-May 1943) in the open letter from the Jewish students of 13 November 1943.[83]

Finally, it can be argued that Jews at PSM deliberately adopted a low profile and preferred to accentuate their Polish patriotism rather than a separate Jewish identity. Based on prewar experiences, they were probably aware that advancing a specific Jewish agenda, and especially appealing for British intervention on their behalf, would have actually exacerbated rather than contained anti-Jewish resentments harbored by some ethnic Poles. Ethnic Poles universally resented international interventions on

[79] Rabinowicz, "Battle," p. 158.

[80] MRC: Interview with Dr George Arendt by Rebecca Lewis, 4 Oct 1999. Note that Polish wartime refugees often used 'England' and 'Scotland' interchangeably.

[81] E. J. Hobsbawm, "Are We Entering a New Era of Antisemitism?," in Helen Fein ed., *The Persisting Question: Sociological Perspectives and Social Contexts of Antisemitism*, Berlin 1987, p. 375.

[82] Keith Sword, Norman Davies, Jan Ciechanowski, *The Formation of the Polish Community in Great Britain, 1939-1950*, London 1989, pp. 115-16.

[83] See above, n. 53.

behalf of Polish Jewry. In the early years of the Second Republic, Jews were often accused of disloyalty towards the reborn Polish state.[84] Similarly, during the Second World War the Polish government-in-exile claimed that allegations of rampant antisemitism in the Polish Armed Forces were inspired and exploited by Soviet propaganda in order to discredit anti-Communist Poles.[85] Under such circumstances, Ignacy Schwarzbart tried unsuccessfully to prevent left-wing British MPs from giving publicity to genuine instances of antisemitism that were revealed in 1944 by 224 Jewish deserters from the Polish Army.[86] The strategy of downplaying the "Jewish question" and emphasizing wartime national unity and loyalty to the common Polish cause may have partially motivated the open letter in which Jewish students unequivocally refuted allegations of antisemitism at PSM. The existence of such a wartime strategy could also explain the obvious discrepancy between the optimistic tone of the letter of 1943 and the poignant bitterness of George Arendt's postwar reminiscences.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that, despite a significant presence of both Jews and Polish nationalists among medical refugees at the University of Edinburgh between 1941 and 1949, antisemitic discrimination and violence, which were commonplace at faculties of medicine in prewar Poland, did not resurface at PSM. Jewish students were not subject to discrimination by the Faculty Council in the admission process, and personal relations between colleagues of different religious creeds and ethnic backgrounds were on the whole satisfactory, even if the Christian-Jewish rapprochement at PSM was merely superficial. The lack of open hostility toward Jews did not necessarily mean that all the prejudices of

[84] David Kaufman, "Unwelcome Influence? The Jews and Poland, 1918-1921," in P. D. Stachura, ed., *Perspectives on Polish History*, The Centre for Research in Polish History, University of Stirling, Occasional Paper No. 2, 2001, pp. 64-79.

[85] For a detailed discussion of discrimination against Jewish soldiers in the Polish Armed Forces in Britain see Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, pp. 120-30; David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939-1942*, Chapel Hill 1987, pp. 83-113; idem, *Facing a Holocaust: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943-1945*, Chapel Hill 1993, pp. 108-37.

[86] Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, p. 128; Engel, *Facing a Holocaust*, pp. 127-29.

Polish nationalists disappeared as a result of their wartime displacement to Britain. The available evidence suggests that the rise of prewar forms of antisemitism at PSM was prevented by a combination of interrelated factors, such as a growing sense of wartime solidarity among Jewish and non-Jewish refugees, the priority that Polish nationalists gave to the exile mission of PSM, concerns over negative reactions from the British hosts, stricter control over student life and organizations, the relative weakness of extreme Polish nationalists, and adoption by Polish Jews of a deliberately low profile. The last phenomenon explains perhaps why the existing sources rarely mention the significant presence of Jews among Polish medical refugees in Edinburgh. The appeasing attitude of Jewish students towards the Christian majority suggests that their day-to-day life at PSM may have been shaped by the prewar legacy of discrimination and violence. Indirect allusions to “days without Jews” and the smashing of Jewish shop windows in Warsaw, which casually appear in Stefan Grzybowski’s wartime diary, point to the fact that such uncomfortable memories also lingered in the consciousness of non-Jewish students.[87] It seems therefore that the spectre of antisemitism haunted the halls of PSM, even though it was not allowed to materialize in full.

---

87 EUA, GD46/Box 5: memoirs of Stefan Grzybowski, 1943-1945, pp. 5, 7.