



Maciej Motak*

The fate of Krakow's builders and architects of Jewish origin in the face of World War II. Possibilities of applying the micro-historical method in research on architecture and urban planning

Abstract

This article is about the fate of a group of architects and builders in Krakow during World War II. After the outbreak of the war and the start of the German occupation in September 1939, they found themselves in a very difficult position. As the persecution intensified, so did the opportunities for their professional activities strongly diminish, although they did not disappear.

The article outlines in more detail two individual situations – those of Samuel Mehl and Jakub Stendig – one related to the creation of a building, the other to, among other issues, the loss of a building. The research used methods often applied in the studies in architecture and urbanism: literature analysis, search in archives, field research. The micro-historical method, which is rather rarely used in such research, was also applied. This method, which has been used for nearly 50 years in scientific, mainly historical research, is based on studying and preserving the individual element of the narrative while aiming to generalise the result.

In spite of the extremely cruel persecution of the Jewish population in Krakow during World War II, some architects and builders of Jewish origin continued their professional activity under various and difficult conditions. Its forms varied from design work and construction of residential buildings, to care for historical monuments, to construction activity in a concentration camp. Professional activity and specific skills may have contributed to the fact that proportionally more Jewish architects and builders survived the Holocaust than the Jewish community in Krakow as a whole. The consequences of the Holocaust for the architecture and space of Krakow were serious and varied: the loss of an important professional group, the loss of valuable architectural and artistic works, the change of features in newly designed buildings. The legacy of the work of architects and builders of Jewish origin in Krakow is very significant. It has been commemorated in a variety of tangible and intangible forms, although insufficiently in proportion to its scale.

Key words: World War II, Jews, micro-history, architects and builders, Krakow

Introduction

The first part of the article presents the origins, main assumptions and characteristics of the micro-historical method – not generally used in the study of architecture and urban planning – and identifies an example of scientific research in the discipline of history carried out using this method. This example is thematically linked to the subject matter of the article. In the following section, using, among other things, this very method, the article dis-

cusses the conditions and fate of architects and builders of Jewish origin in Krakow during World War II and the impact of this tragic period on the history of the city and its space. The subject falls within the temporal scope of World War II (1939–1945), although with specific references to the inter-war period (1918–1939) and the post-war period (after 1945). It falls within the territorial scope of the city of Krakow during this period (enlarged in 1941). It deals with the situation of a specific group of artists.

The author sought answers to several research questions. Were there any opportunities for professional activity for the artists belonging to this group? Were there any opportunities for architects and builders to survive, differ-

* ORCID: 0000-0002-5223-9895. Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology, Poland, e-mail: maciej.motak@pk.edu.pl

ently from the situation of the Jewish community in general? What consequences did the Holocaust have for the shaping and transformation of the architecture and space of Krakow?

The state of research

The subject of the persecution and extermination of the Jewish population during World War II has been presented in many publications. With regard to the Krakow area, the most important studies include publications by Dora Agatstein-Dormontowa (Agatstein-Dormontowa 1957) and Aleksander Bieberstein (Bieberstein 1985), which cover the whole range of issues, as well as by Roman Kielkowski (Kielkowski 1981) and Ryszard Kotarba (Kotarba 2022), which are mostly concerned with the history of the Płaszów concentration camp (KL Płaszów¹).

Among the numerous studies on the architecture of Krakow of the interwar period and its builders, the subject of the conditions and activities of individual builders of Jewish origin is addressed in publications by Barbara Zbroja (Zbroja 2005), which extensively present the built heritage of architects and builders, and Maciej Motak (Motak 2022), who, among other things, presents the education of builders at the Krakow State Industrial School (Państwowa Szkoła Przemysłowa – PSP) and outlines their professional activity. On an individual level, the subject is discussed in biographies of individual builders, e.g. Fryderyk Tadanier (Twardowska 2016) and Edward Kreisler (Zbroja 2006), and in monographs of selected buildings, e.g. the Funeral Home designed by Adolf Siódma (Zbroja 2003).

The most recent and currently most important study on the activities of architects and builders of Jewish origin in Krakow is Barbara Zbroja's book (Zbroja 2023). It also presents, although outside the declared temporal scope of the study, a great deal of information on their fate after September 1939.

Particularly important, also from the point of view of the present research, are the published memoirs, with accompanying study, of engineer Jakub Stendig (Stendig 2020), a prisoner of the Krakow Ghetto and then of the KL Płaszów.

Research description, methods

The research was conducted in 2022–2023 and was extended and supplemented in 2024, taking into account and using the micro-historical method and the latest literature on the subject. Other methods included: literature analysis, archive analysis, and field research. The aim of the research was to attempt to gather the current state of knowledge on the subject under study and to determine the consequences of the losses incurred some 80 years ago by the architecture, space and community of Krakow. Moreover, the author's intention was to verify the hypothesis on the pos-

sibility of applying the micro-historical method in research on architecture and urban planning.

Numerous and diverse research methods are used in scientific research conducted in the discipline of architecture and urban planning. Some of them are used so frequently that they are considered characteristic of scientific research in this discipline. In particular, the following methods belong to this group: logical argumentation, historical-interpretative, experimental, quantitative (including statistical), simulation and modelling, qualitative and case study methods; for research with a strong practical demand, interventionist (action research) and heuristic methods are applied; in addition, mixed methods are used (Niezabitowska 2014, 12). Authors of studies on research methodology and methodology in general distinguish a number of research methods (Pieter 1975; Apanowicz 2002; Zieliński 2012), among which comparative analysis, for example, is often mentioned.

Other research methods are used less frequently, exceptionally, or not at all in the discipline of architecture and urban planning. They also include, however, methods used in research carried out within other disciplines and considered to be characteristic of them. One of these is micro-history, i.e. the micro-historical method.

The micro-historical method is characteristic of the field of humanities, especially the discipline of history itself. It represents a type of historical writing based on properly conducted research. It was developed in the 1970s, primarily in the Italian scientific community and later also in the German and American communities. Italian scholars Giovanni Levi and Carlo Ginzburg, both born in 1939, are considered its main founders and leading representatives. Together with other scholars sharing their approach and views, they [...] *approached the analysis of official documents and records with scepticism, placing great emphasis on the internal criticism of the source. They also sought new typologies of historical sources, placing great importance on oral accounts and on the role of tradition* (Gregorowicz 2014).

The main premise of the micro-historical method is to preserve the individual element of the narrative while striving for generalisation. It assumes that individual cases, experiences and situations can enable the understanding and presentation of specific phenomena in a more general way, and at the same time they can individually contain valuable data and observations. Sometimes the use of the method results in a far-reaching involvement of the researcher and, in individual situations, may even cause his or her comments and opinions to become subjective (Domańska 1999, 232–233).

An example of a recent publication in Polish which programmatically employs the micro-historical method is a comprehensive two-volume study devoted to the fate of Jews in selected areas of occupied Poland during World War II (Engelking, Grabowski 2018). Justifying the choice of the method, the editors and authors emphasised that [...] *micro-history, manifesting, as it were, its fragmentary or incomplete nature, nevertheless leads, in the intention of its theorists and practitioners, to statements of a general nature, to outlining the broader historical context, to grasping and interpreting the relations between the local and the*

¹ KL Płaszów was located in the southern part of Krakow: partly on the territory of the Podgórze and Płaszów districts (including the area of the two Jewish cemeteries that were destroyed) and partly on the territory of Wola Duchacka (a pre-war suburb, a district of Krakow since 1941).

global. Research conducted on the micro scale opens up the perspective for understanding phenomena and mechanisms beyond the local and leads to conclusions on the macro scale (Engelking, Grabowski 2018, 17).

As mentioned, the micro-historical method does not belong to the group of research methods frequently used in research in the discipline of architecture and urban planning. In particular, it is not presented among the accepted methods. On the basis of the analysis of relevant excerpts (including introductory parts) of more than one hundred doctoral theses, book chapters and books devoted to architecture and urban planning, the author found that in none of the analysed positions was micro-history declared or even mentioned as a leading or auxiliary research method. Nevertheless, the analysis made it possible to establish that in some of the studies certain elements of the scientific workshop and the way of conducting research work, characteristic of micro-history, were used.

It can therefore be assumed that there are certain possibilities and advantages of applying the micro-historical method to the study of architecture and urban planning. Elements of micro-history can be applied in them, even if their presence is not explicit.

Krakow architects and builders of Jewish origin in the face of World War II

In the inter-war period, several hundred professionals in the fields of architecture and construction were professionally active in Krakow, either making designs or implementing them, often combining these two types of work. This number fluctuated due to the new entrants to the profession and due to the economic situation, in the construction industry in particular. The prosperity was significantly affected by, among other things, the Great Depression of the early 1930s, though its impact on the construction business (and thus on work opportunities for designers and contractors) was quite complex². Nevertheless, throughout the inter-war period, a steady general upward trend in the number of people active on the Krakow design and construction market should be noted. Five censuses, preserved in the National Archives in Kraków (Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie – ANK) resources³, contain the names of a total of 228 such persons, while the last complete census of 1934 contains 188 names (Motak 2022, 31–37). The actual number was probably somewhat higher, taking into account persons omitted from the censuses due to short term residence, changing places of residence and work, as well as the sometimes different and changing criteria and scopes of registration of professional groups over time. According to the author of this article, the number reached a total of about 300 people, while in 1939, before the outbreak of the war, it was just over 200 people.

² With the general economic collapse, the crisis period proved favourable for some investments and investors, due to decreases in material and labour prices; moreover, the construction industry was among the branches of the economy in which the crisis began to be overcome earliest.

³ The above-mentioned inventories kept in the National Archives in Krakow date from 1922, 1925, 1928, 1931, 1934.

In the interwar years, architects and builders of Jewish origin formed a significant part of Krakow's creative circle. This group was also characterised by a steady growth during this period, also in relation to the size of the entire Krakow professional community. Some researchers estimate the share of specialists of Jewish origin at the end of the interwar period at over 30% (Zbroja 2023, 7).

It should be stressed that in the interwar period, the importance of belonging to this group, was only one of many determinants of work and life. In the first, 1921 Constitution of the Second Polish Republic, it was stated that the Republic [...] shall ensure within its territory complete protection of life, liberty and property to all without distinction of origin, nationality, language, race or religion (Ustawa 1921, art. 95), and [...] all citizens shall be equal before the law (Ustawa 1921, art. 96). The provisions of the new constitution, enacted in 1935, put more emphasis on the duties than on the rights of citizens, but also stated that [...] neither origin, nor religion, nor sex, nor nationality shall be a reason for limiting these [to influence public affairs – MM] rights (Ustawa 1935, art. 7). Yet the factual situation partly deviated from the declaration, e.g. architects of Jewish origin were rarely entrusted with the design of public buildings (Zbroja 2024). The situation worsened after the death of Marshal Józef Piłsudski in 1935. Nationalist circles enforced the segregation of students at some universities (also at the two Polish Polytechnics in Warsaw and Lviv), and at the end of the 1930s, some Polish representatives of various professional circles, like some lawyers, took measures to limit the activity of members of the Jewish community by, for example, exclusion from professional associations. Such measures were also taken in the architectural community. On 29 May 1937, the general assembly of the Association of Architects of the Republic of Poland (Stowarzyszenie Architektów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej – SARP) passed the “Aryan paragraph” – so defined in the original (SARP 1937, 12–13)⁴. After the revised statute of the organisation was approved, deletions began: on 1 July, 1939, 56 members were removed from the membership list of the Warsaw Branch of SARP, the largest of the 13 branches (SARP 1939, 5). In the last years of the independence of the Second Polish Republic, nationalist and anti-Semitic sentiments and activities became more and more intense; they found increasing acceptance and support, among others from parts of the academic community of the Warsaw Polytechnic (Popiołek-Roßkamp 2023).

It is worth adding that all of Krakow's architects and builders of Jewish origin, with probably only one exception, declared Polish nationality (Zbroja 2023, 83). Among them were many people known not only for their professional – design and construction – activities, but also for their merits in the social field (Henryk Ritterman was an activist of the Humanitarian Association Solidarity “B’nei B’rith”), patriotic field (Alfred Düntuch was the author of the design of the monument to the Jewish soldiers killed in

⁴ Many delegates spoke in favour of the “Aryan paragraph”. The majority did not speak. Only one person spoke against it: architect Roman Piotrowski.



Fig. 1. Ludwik Gintel (the first standing player from the right), a student of the State Industrial School and future builder, as a representative of Poland in the first inter-state football match of the Polish national team, in Budapest, 1921 (source: Dąbrowski 1928–1929, 853)

Il. 1. Ludwik Gintel (pierwszy stojący zawodnik od prawej), uczeń Państwowej Szkoły Przemysłowej i przyszły budowniczy, jako reprezentant Polski w pierwszym międzypaństwowym meczu piłkarskim polskiej drużyny narodowej, w Budapeszcie, 1921 (źródło: Dąbrowski 1928–1929, 853)

the fight for Poland's independence), sporting field (Ludwik Gintel was an outstanding footballer of the sports clubs Jutrzenka and Cracovia and a multiple representative of Poland in international matches; Fig. 1). They were

active for the benefit of their community as well as the whole of Krakow. It should be noted that from school year 1933/1934 onwards, all pupils of Jewish origin (of Mosaic faith) in the PSP school gave, or at least had their Jewish nationality recorded, whereas previously their Polish nationality had been recorded (Motak 2022, 27).

The situation of Krakow's architects and builders of Jewish origin changed profoundly and deteriorated rapidly with the outbreak of World War II and the subsequent placing of Krakow and the rest of Poland under the administration of the German Nazi state, which occurred partly in the autumn of 1939 and partly, in the lands occupied in 1939–1941 by the Soviet Union, in the summer of 1941. Belonging to the Jewish community had an enormous impact on the fate of individuals from then on, who experienced persecution and suffering, which in the vast majority of cases ended in death by 1945, mainly in 1942–1943.

By subsequent orders of the German occupation authorities, Jews in Krakow were obliged to wear marking armbands and were gradually deprived of their rights: to their property, to travelling, to education (for example, on 20 December 1939, Jews studying to become builders at the PSP were removed from school) and to many other basic human rights. They were then physically removed from almost all of Krakow. In the second half of 1940 and the beginning of 1941, most of them had to leave the city, while

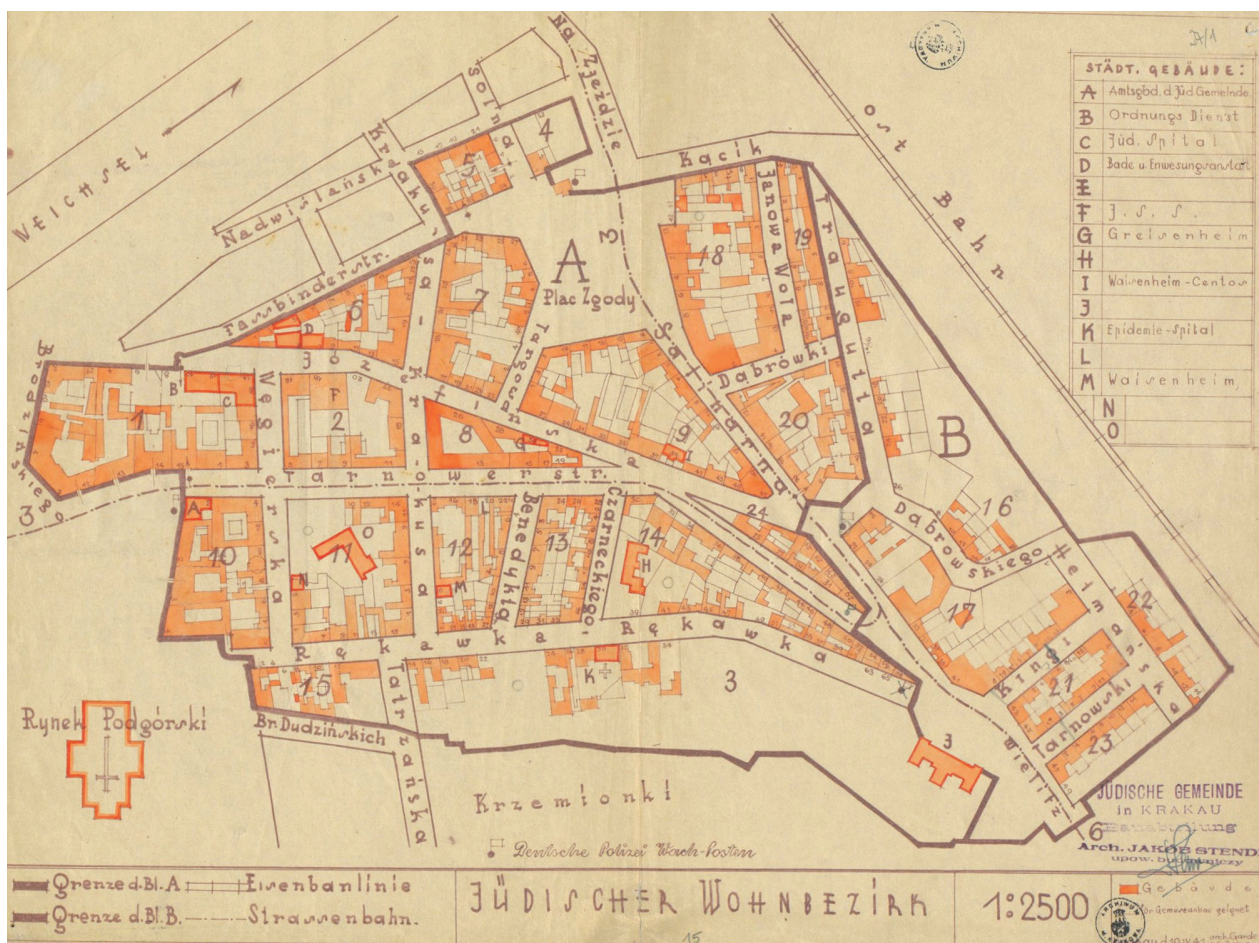


Fig. 2. Plan of the Krakow Ghetto, drawing by Jakub Stendig, 1941 (source: ANK, sign. 29/33/SMKr/774, p. 45)

Il. 2. Plan Getta w Krakowie, rysunek Jakuba Stendiga, 1941 (źródło: ANK, sygn. 29/33/SMKr/774, s. 45)

the remaining ones were forced to live in a small ghetto established in the Podgórze district in March 1941 (Fig. 2). The area of the Krakow Ghetto was reduced several times, while some of its inhabitants were murdered in the process; it was finally liquidated in March 1943, with the remaining inhabitants being deported to KL Plaszow or transported to extermination camps. KL Plaszow functioned as a large forced labour camp and concentration camp from 1942 to early January 1945.

1939–1940. Stanisław Mehl

On 31 August 1939, engineer Stanisław Mehl (Fig. 3) collected his identity card, issued by the Municipal Authority (magistrate) in Krakow. He usually used the first name Stanisław, less frequently Szulem. However, according to the documentation and the will of the petitioner, the name on the issued document was Schulem (Mehl's application 1939). This was, as it soon turned out, the last day of peace in Krakow and Poland.

It is likely that Mehl reported to the magistrate in the early afternoon. Probably both on 31 August and 1 September he appeared for work in the morning at the construction site at 16 Spokojna Street. The opening information of the construction log book issued in 1938 records that the technical construction manager eng. Stanisław Mehl, resident at 10 Smoleńsk Street, was present at the site "every day, in the mornings" (Construction log book 1938–1940, 6).

The construction of the house at 16 Spokojna Street was one of several (and one of at least three at this street) commissions Mehl carried out in the first three quarters of 1939. At the time, the street's name had only been in use for a short time (since 1938) and in some documents (including... magistrate documents) it was still referred to as Boczna [Side] Czarnowiejskiej Street or Czarnowiejska Boczna Street. The project was approved on 21 December 1938, and the additional plans (i.e. the replacement project) were approved on 14 June 1939 (Design 1939). The entire documentation was drawn up by Mehl (Fig. 4). The very next day after the first approval, excavation began, and in the next days the concreting of the "banquettes" (foundations) and cellar walls followed. However, the intense work lasted only a few days: from 22 to 24 December and from 27 to 29 December. On 30 December, engineer Mehl noted "foundations ready, cellar walls partly [completed]". On that day, work stopped for nearly six months, the reason probably being a change of ownership of the plot and the constructed house. Work resumed on the day the supplementary plans were approved (14 June 1939) with "the assembly of the barrack and preparatory work for further construction". In the following days, the next storeys were built, the ceilings were form-worked and concreted. It is noteworthy that for several days "no work was done", which was probably connected with the heavy summer rains. In the last ten days of August, finishing work on the interiors of the building began. The recently installed electricity and gas installations were also formally approved at this time. In his last entry in the building diary before the outbreak of the war, Stanisław Mehl noted "internal plasters". The following day, 1 September, he wrote: *Due to war actions, the works have been*



Fig. 3. Schulem (Szulem, Stanisław) Mehl, a photograph from the application for an identity card, 1939 (source: ANK, sign. 29/218/940, p. 211)

Il. 3. Schulem (Szulem, Stanisław) Mehl, fotografia z wniosku o wydanie dowodu osobistego, 1939 (źródło: ANK, sygn. 29/218/940, s. 211)

interrupted (Construction log book 1938–1940, 22). This may have been due to workers being called up to the army (general mobilisation was not announced in Poland until 30 August) as well as to general unrest and the new situation. *The course of events in the first days of the war was similar in almost all Polish cities. From the first days of the invasion, all architectural activity in both design studios and construction companies ceased* (Litwin 2017, 40); resumed after some time, took place on a limited scale and under very changed conditions (Popiołek-Roßkamp 2021). On 6 September the German army occupied Krakow.

In 1940, after six months, construction work resumed. The work, now mainly finishing, progressed somewhat more slowly than it had until the end of August 1939. The entries to the construction log book continued to be made by Mehl. Paradoxically, however, he was no longer the official site manager (although he did in fact perform this role), as evidenced by the visiting inspector's remark on 8 May about "no marking of a site manager"⁵. Mehl's handwritten

⁵ The inspector's remark could be interpreted in two ways. It could mean the lack of formal appointment of the site manager or the absence of the obligatory armband on his arm. As an analogous remark also applies to the masonry contractor (before the outbreak of the war it was Jan Dukat, while after the resumption of works it was Franciszek Cieszyński, the first version seems more likely. The inspector's signature is insufficiently legible. All the entries in the construction log book were made in Polish.

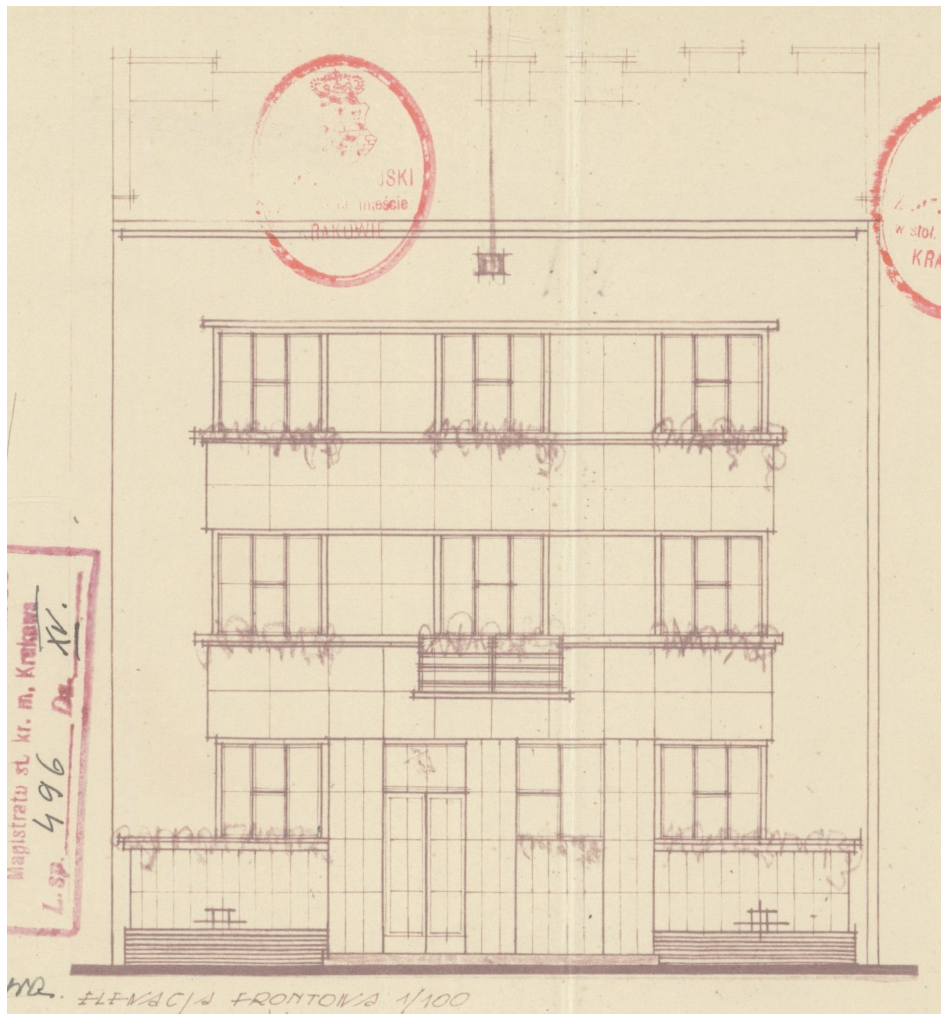


Fig. 4. Project of a residential building at 16 Spokojna Street (originally: Czarnowiejska Boczna St.), designed by Stanisław Mehl, 1938–1939. Front elevation (unchanged in both versions of the project) (source: ANK, sign. ABM, ul. Spokojna 16, f. 851, plate 1)

Il. 4. Projekt budynku mieszkalnego przy ulicy Spokojnej 16 (pierwotnie: ul. Czarnowiejska Boczna), wykonany przez Stanisława Mehla, 1938–1939. Elewacja frontowa (niezmieniona w obu wersjach projektu) (źródło: ANK, sygn. ABM, ul. Spokojna 16, f. 851, pl. 1)

reply on 15 May stated that *The inspector's instructions about the marking of the site manager should be complied with* (Construction log book 1938–1940, 24–25). For three months, from 11 April to 13 July 1940, Mehl ran the construction site and made daily entries in the log book. These included finishing work, such as “putting up cookers” and “tiling of the bathrooms”. The final entries are laconic: “interior plasters”, followed by “as above”, “as above”, etc. On 13 July the construction was completed (Construction log book 1938–1940, 28). The building still exists today and has been continuously inhabited (Fig. 5).

In 1940 Stanisław Mehl was still living in Krakow, but at the beginning of the following year he had to leave the city, which resulted from the displacement of the most of Jewish population ordered by the German authorities. His further fate during the war is not known; nevertheless, it is known that he survived the war, lived in Krakow for a short time afterwards, and emigrated to the United States in 1946 (Zbroja 2023, 156).

1942–1944. Jakub Stendig

In 1941, engineer Jakub Stendig (Fig. 6), a graduate of the PSP school in Krakow, an experienced designer (Fig. 7) and respected building advisor to the Jewish community in Krakow, and a veteran of Poland's defensive

war in 1939, was forced to live in the Ghetto. Until the last moment before the displacement of the Jewish population from Kazimierz (and other districts of Krakow), he made an inventory of the furnishings and works of art of Krakow's synagogues (Fig. 8). He made efforts to protect them even after the Ghetto was closed (Stendig 2020, 255–269). The most valuable objects of worship were moved to the Funeral Home (Fig. 9) and hidden in its dome; they were later discovered by the Germans and looted.

In 1942, Stendig was relocated to KL Plaszow, employed by the German authorities in its construction and expansion. He survived his stay in the camp and its evacuation. Shortly after the war, he testified before commissions investigating Nazi crimes and also wrote down his memoirs, an invaluable source of reliable knowledge about the camp, characterised also by great sensitivity. These memoirs are arranged thematically: the individual buildings of the camp are described, their design, erection, conversion, use and liquidation. As a professional, Stendig was involved in most of the construction activities in the camp, carrying out the orders of the German authorities and, at the same time, constantly mindful of his duty of care for the people, both his family and the entire community of the imprisoned. Stendig was given the duty of preparing for destruction of the main hall of the Funeral Home, [...] *a monumental Jewish building which the Jewish commu-*

nity of Krakow had proudly built for several years (Stendig 2020, 110), and which, after the founding of KL Plaszow, found itself in the camp and, on the orders of the German commandant, was used to house livestock. *I was also assigned by the Bauleiter [...] the task of demolishing the cemetery hall. I don't know what judgement history will make about our technical role when it comes. [...] For us the day was similar to Tisha B'av, when we remember with sadness the demolition of the temple* (Stendig 2020, 115).

Stendig described the circumstances of the torment and in many cases death of Krakow architects and builders employed at KL Plaszow, personally well-known and close to him: Diana Reiter (Stendig 2020, 181), Emanuel Morgenbesser (Stendig 2020, 134, 135), Zygmunt Grünberg (Stendig 2020, 124–130, 144) and many others among the thousands of prisoners and victims of this camp. There were so many people in the camp that some of the prisoners he certainly knew, such as Henryk Jakubowicz, one of Krakow's most outstanding pre-war construction entrepreneurs (murdered in KL Plaszow in 1943), are not mentioned by Stendig and he may not even have known about their stay and death in the camp. Shortly after the war and his return to Krakow, Stendig left for Sweden and then for Israel, where he worked as an architect and died in 1952 at the age of 60.

Micro-histories

Two of the dozens of stories of Krakow's architects and builders of Jewish origin have been outlined above. All the stories, known to varying degrees, contain information about their fates, allowing to assemble a picture of the fate of a particular community. In September 1939, Ludwik Gintel managed to make his way to Lviv and later reached Palestine; after the war, he worked in Israel as an architect. In the autumn of 1939, Diana Reiter was employed in the design office of Kazimierz Kulczyński, which provided her with a livelihood and a job in her profession until she was deported to the Ghetto. She was killed in KL Plaszow. Like Gintel, Edward Kreisler made it to Lviv, where he worked in architectural offices, first Soviet, then German, and went into hiding from 1942. After the war he worked on his pre-war project, the edifice of the National Museum in Krakow, and died in 1946. Henryk Ritterman died in his own flat in Krakow in 1940, while Samuel Baum a year later as a POW in a German camp. Adolf Siódmak was arrested on a street in Krakow in 1940; he was deported and died later in a concentration camp. Zygmunt Grünberg went through the torment of the Plaszow, Auschwitz and Flossenbürg concentration camps, where he was probably killed in March 1945. Ignacy Bierer was arrested by the Soviet occupiers and murdered in 1940 in Katyń.

At the outbreak of World War II, at least 76 architects and builders of Jewish origin were actively involved in design or construction in Krakow (Zbroja 2023)⁶ (Motak 2022).

⁶ Of the 91 Krakow builders and architects of Jewish origin whose activities and fates are presented in the publication by Zbroja, 15 people died before 1939 (Zbroja 2023).



Fig. 5. Spokojna Street with, among others, tenement house No. 16 on the left, designed by Stanisław Mehl (with the superstructure added) (photo by M. Motak, 2024)

Il. 5. Ulica Spokojna, po lewej widoczna m.in. kamienica nr 16, zaprojektowana przez Stanisława Mehla (z późniejszą nadbudową) (fot. M. Motak, 2024)



Fig. 6. Jakub Stendig with his wife Felicja née Infeld, photo ca. 1915 (source: Eva Ariela Lindberg family archive – Polish Roots in Israel project / Museum of the History of Polish Jews POLIN)

Il. 6. Jakub Stendig wraz z żoną Felicją z domu Infeld, fot. ok. 1915 (źródło: archiwum rodzinne Ewy Arieli Lindberg – projekt Polskie korzenie w Izraelu / Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich POLIN)



Fig. 7. On the left side of Hieronima Wietora Street (originally: Skawińska Boczna St.): the buildings of the former Jewish Gymnastic House (No. 13–15, designed by Adolf Siódma, built in 1926–1930, since 1991 the seat of Old Town Youth Cultural Centre) and former Jewish School “Work Centre” (No. 7, designed by Jakub Stendig, built in 1935–1937, since 1978 the seat of Special Educational Centre) (photo by M. Motak, 2022)

Il. 7. Po lewej stronie ulicy Hieronima Wietora (pierwotnie: ul. Skawińska Boczna): dawny Żydowski Dom Gimnastyczny (nr 13–15, zaprojektowany przez Adolfa Siódmaka, wzniesiony w latach 1926–1930, od 1991 siedziba Staromiejskiego Centrum Kultury) i dawna Szkoła Żydowska „Ognisko Pracy” (nr 7, zaprojektowana przez Jakuba Stendiga, wzniesiona w latach 1935–1937, od 1978 siedziba Specjalnego Ośrodka Szkolno-Wychowawczego) (fot. M. Motak, 2022)

Two of them died after its outbreak and most probably in connection with it, even before the Holocaust which lasted in its greatest intensity from the spring of 1942. At least 37 people were killed in the Holocaust conducted by Nazi Germany, the vast majority in 1942 and 1943, including at least 8 people who were murdered in the Plaszow concentration camp and at least four people in the Belzec (Bełżec) extermination camp. Four people died or were murdered after deportation into the Soviet Union. At least 26 people survived the Holocaust in occupied Poland or elsewhere, at least a few of whom died shortly after the war resulting from their wartime experiences (this number may be higher). The fate of several people, including the places and circumstances of their deaths, is still unknown.

Conclusions

Thus, in the Holocaust – over a period of about three years – at least half, and probably slightly more, of the representatives of the community of Krakow’s Jewish builders and architects perished. According to most researchers, only slightly more than 10% of Polish citizens of Jewish origin, who in 1939 comprised over 3 million people, survived the Holocaust. Probably this percentage was not higher in Krakow: out of 64,000 people, [...] *fewer than 1,000 survived the war in camps or in hiding* [...] and [...] *a certain number, difficult to determine but not very high, survived in Western European countries and in the Soviet*

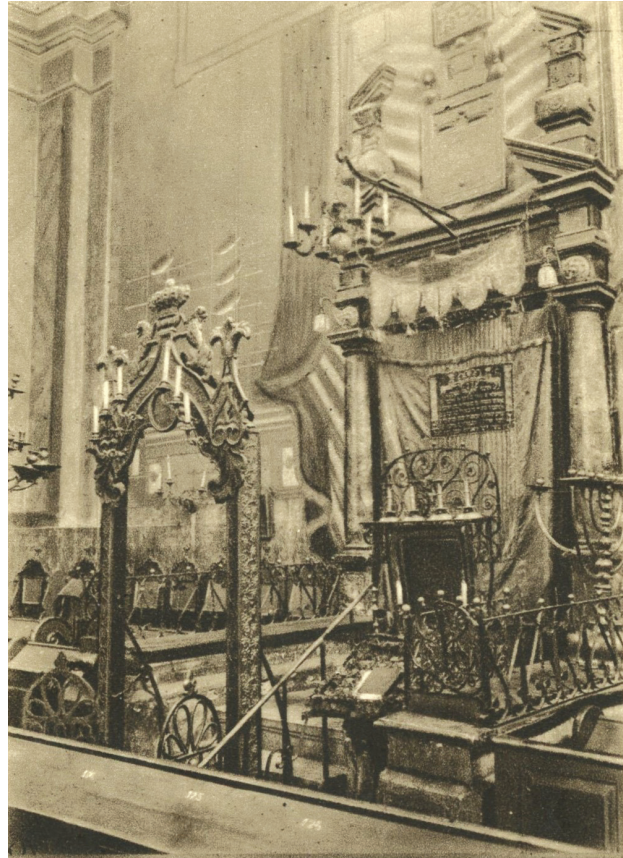


Fig. 8. Altar cabinet in the Isaac Synagogue [original signature on the reverse].

Photo *Żyd. Akad. Koło Mił. Kraj. w Krakowie* [Żydowskie Akademickie Koło Miłośników Krajoznawstwa w Krakowie, i.e., Jewish Academic Society of Country Lovers in Krakow], ca. 1930 (source: postcard published by Stow. Bnej B’rith w Krakowie [B’nei Brith Assoc. in Krakow], from the M. Motak archive)

Il. 8. Szafa ołtarzowa w bóżnicy Izaka [oryginalny podpis na odwrocie].

Fot. *Żyd. Akad. Koło Mił. Kraj. w Krakowie* [Żydowskie Akademickie Koło Miłośników Krajoznawstwa w Krakowie], ok. 1930 (źródło: widokówka wydana nakładem Stow. Bnej B’rith w Krakowie, z archiwum M. Motaka)

Union (Kielkowski 1981, 95). The latter group also included a larger, over-1000 group of people saved through Oskar Schindler’s efforts, as well as those scattered in many countries in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. In total, there were probably about just over 5% of the pre-war inhabitants of Krakow who were saved, whom the German authorities recognised as Jews according to their “law” and subjected to the strongest persecution and ultimately extermination. In the 2nd half of the 1940s there were about five to fifteen thousand surviving Jews living in Krakow, most of whom had not lived in Krakow before the war, and for many a short stay in the city only preceded their eventual departure from the country.

The higher percentage of Survivors in the group of Krakow builders and architects may have been related to one of several reasons: on average greater financial resources (which created greater opportunities for departure at the be-

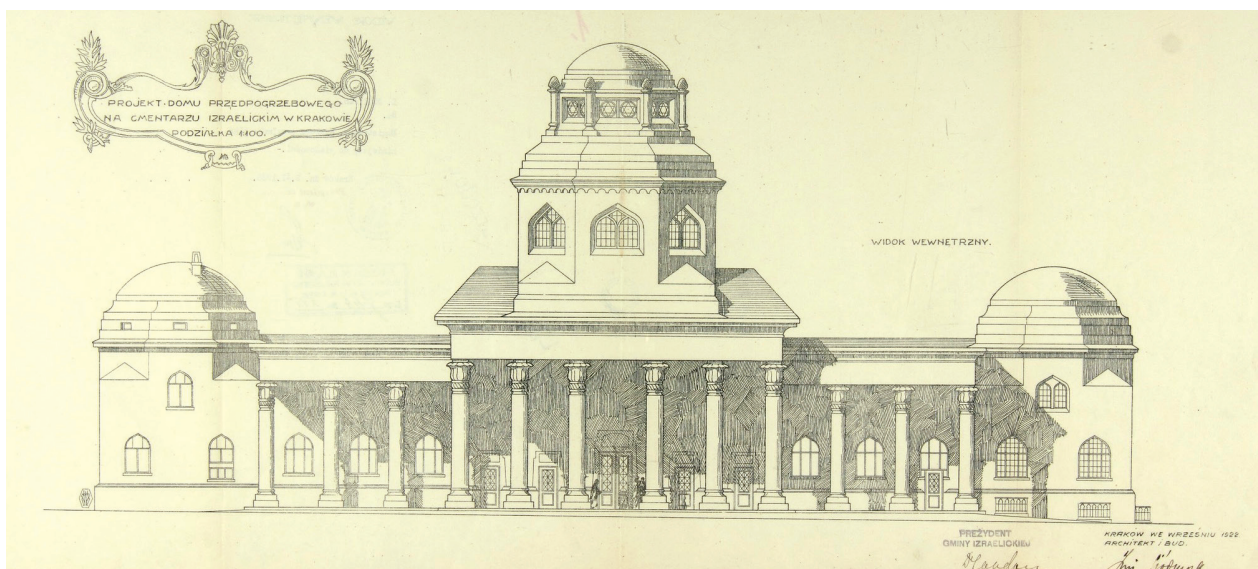


Fig. 9. Project of the Funeral Home in Jerozolimka Street in Krakow, designed by Adolf Siódmał, 1922. The building had served the 1932-opened cemetery, but by 1939 its interiors were not yet fully completed (source: ANK, sign. ABM, 29/1410, ul. Jerozolimka 14, f. 330b, plan 1)

II. 9. Projekt Domu przedpogrzebowego przy ulicy Jerozolimskiej w Krakowie, wykonany przez Adolfa Siódmał, 1922. Budynek służył cmentarzowi otwartemu w 1932 roku, ale do 1939 roku jego wnętrza nie były jeszcze w pełni ukończone (źródło: ANK, sygn. ABM, 29/1410, ul. Jerozolimka 14, f. 330b, plan 1)

ginning of the war, or greater opportunities for later hiding), a high degree of assimilation and closer contacts with the non-Jewish population (which made it easier to find shelter and, in the first period of the war, also employment in Polish companies), and the periodic use of professionals by the German occupiers as slave labour (which in some cases postponed physical death). In the face of the cruel and ruthless Holocaust machine that lasted several years, none of these factors, or even all of them together, could ensure survival, but they did somewhat increase its chances.

As a result of World War II and the Holocaust, the professional community of architects and builders of Jewish origin in Krakow was annihilated and its participation in the general professional community almost completely disappeared. Holocaust survivors mostly left Krakow and Poland within a few years after the end of the war. Some of the few who remained in Poland left Krakow for other places, and some also changed their names and surnames (Litwin 2017; Zbroja 2023).

Original, valuable buildings were lost from the city space. The monumental Funeral Home, a beautiful work of inter-war Krakow architecture selected in a design competition, was not rebuilt, and even its still salvageable remains were demolished at the end of the 1940s (Fig. 10). The interiors of the synagogues were devastated and most of their priceless furnishings and works of religious art were irretrievably lost.

The loss of community of Jewish architects and builders, combined with other social and economic changes occurring in Poland after World War II, meant certain new features in the architecture of Krakow. After the war, private tenements, many of which before the war had been built for Jewish investors and designed by Jewish architects and builders (although this was by no means the rule and there

were many situations to the contrary), were no longer built. Individualised emblems (“godła”) above the front entrances ceased to be used on residential (and non-residential) buildings. In the inter-war period, especially in the 1930s, builders and architects were keen to use emblems with images of animals (Fig. 11), plants and various symbols. In the case of Christian investors and designers, these emblems much more often contained Christian religious symbolism, which was not the case among Jewish investors and designers (nor was Jewish symbolism used), although even in this case it was not the rule or the effect of any order, but rather cultural habits and aesthetic preferences.



Fig. 10. Remains of the Funeral Home in Jerozolimka Street in Krakow (photo by M. Motak, 2024)

II. 10. Pozostałości Domu przedpogrzebowego przy ulicy Jerozolimskiej w Krakowie (fot. M. Motak, 2024)



Fig. 11. Two emblems placed over the entrances to tenement houses designed by Ludwik Gintel:
 a) at 5 Sereno Fenna Street (house completed in 1939),
 b) at 13 Kornela Ujejskiego Street (house completed in 1937)
 (photos by M. Motak, 2015 and 2019)

Il. 11. Dwa godła umieszczone nad wejściami do kamienic zaprojektowanych przez Ludwika Gintla:
 a) przy ulicy Sereno Fenna 5 (dom ukończony 1939),
 b) przy ulicy Kornela Ujejskiego 13 (dom ukończony 1937)
 (fot. M. Motak, 2015 i 2019)

Summary

In the first post-war years, many important activities were carried out in Poland for the documentation and commemoration of the Holocaust. In the following years, however, the emigration of Jews from Poland intensified, in the face of the trauma caused by being near the places of death of loved ones and anti-Semitic incidents. Subsequent policies of the Polish authorities, particularly after 1968, were not sufficiently conducive to adequate research and commemoration, including various grassroots and foreign initiatives. The situation has gradually improved since the 1980s.

The most important legacy of the work of Jewish architects and builders in Krakow is the hundreds of buildings that still exist today, which were designed by them and



Fig. 12. One of the hundreds of inscriptions commemorating the communities murdered in the Belzec death camp. A fragment of the memorial site at the former German Nazi extermination camp in Belzec (designed by A. Sołyga, Z. Pidek, M. Roszczyk, built in 2004) (photo by M. Motak, 2014)

Il. 12. Jeden z setek napisów upamiętniających społeczności zamordowanych w obozie zagłady w Belżcu. Fragment założenia miejsca pamięci w byłym niemieckim obozie zagłady w Belżcu (proj. A. Sołyga, T. Pidek, Z. Roszczyk, real. 2004) (fot. M. Motak, 2014)

constructed under their direction. The most recognisable are buildings from much earlier eras, including the 15th–18th-centuries synagogues in the Kazimierz district; however, most of them are residential buildings (see Fig. 5) and, to a lesser extent, public utility (see Fig. 7) and industrial buildings constructed in the interwar period, by D. Reiter, L. Gintel, Z. Grünberg, H. Jakubowicz, S. Mehl, H. Ritterman, A. Siódma, J. Stendig and many other designers. Together with almost the entire built heritage of this period, they are highly appreciated today.

Important commemorations of the activities of architects and builders are publications dedicated to the whole group or to individuals (indicated in the state of research). There are also mostly modest commemorations in urban space, such as the “signatures” of the architects, not uncom-

mon in the interwar period, in the form of small plaques on the front façades of buildings designed by, among others, Z. Grünberg, H. Gutman, J. Oberleder, B. Birkenfeld and J. Silberstein. In addition, architects and builders of Jewish origin are commemorated, together with the entire Jewish community of Krakow, with monuments, plaques, in particular in the former Ghetto area, at the Jewish Cemetery in Miodowa Street, in the area of the former KL Plaszow camp, where an open-air exhibition opened as part of the KL Plaszow Museum in 2024⁷ (see Fig. 10), and at other places of martyrdom, including in Bełżec, far from Krakow (Fig. 12). To a small extent they have been commemorated abroad, above all in Israel, where artists from Central Europe, including Polish lands, have played an important role in shaping its architecture (Świątkowska 2016).

⁷ Paths have been marked out, the boundaries of the former cemeteries have been marked, and numerous information boards and other commemorative elements have been placed including a model of the Funeral Home near its remains. The site plan of the open-air museum was made by Borysław Czaraczew and Sławomir Kogut.

In the author's opinion, the micro-historical method can prove useful in the studies of some issues of architecture and urban planning. This applies to both historical and contemporary issues, and was used in the former. However, micro-history cannot be used, except for a few narrow and very specialised research works, as the only method of conducting research. Statistical methods, interviewing, and all other methods predisposed to research in the discipline of architecture and urban planning, already mentioned above, seem particularly suitable to accompany it.

The father of the author of this article was a student at the Krakow State Industrial School from 1948 to 1952, and later was a structural engineer. He recalled a few times several of his school friends. One of them was a later architect, the son of a well-known pre-war Krakow architect who died shortly after the war. My Dad's words from 40 years ago, describing the drama of circa 80 years ago, stuck in my memory: "They tormented his father".

Translated by
Maciej Motak

References

- Agatstein-Dormontowa, Dora. "Żydzi w Krakowie w okresie okupacji niemieckiej." *Rocznik Krakowski* 31, (1957): 183–224.
- Apanowicz, Jerzy. *Metodologia ogólna*. Gdynia: Bernardinum, 2002.
- Bieberstein, Aleksander. *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985.
- Construction log book, Boczna Czarnowiejskiej St., 1938–1940, National Archives in Kraków sign. 29/1410/ABM Spokojna 16 f. 851, 6–117.
- Dąbrowski, Marian, ed. *Dziesięciolecie Polski Odrodzonej 1918–1928*. Warszawa–Kraków: Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny, 1928–1929.
- Design of the building at 16 Spokojna St., 1939, National Archives in Kraków, sign. ABM, ul. Spokojna 16, f. 851.
- Domańska, Ewa. *Mikrohistorie. Spotkania w międzyświatach*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1999.
- Engelking, Barbara, and Jan Grabowski, eds. *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 1–2. Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018.
- Gregorowicz, Dorota. "Mikrohistoria. Otwieranie nowych horyzontów." *Hist-mag*, June 19, 2014. Accessed March 11, 2024. <https://histmag.org/mikrohistoria-otwieranie-nowych-horyzontow-9621>.
- Kielkowski, Roman. *...Zlikwidować na miejscu! Z dziejów okupacji hitlerowskiej w Krakowie*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1981.
- Kotarba, Ryszard. *Żydzi Krakowa w dobie Zagłady (ZAL/KL Plaszow)*. Kraków–Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2022.
- Litwin, Edward. "Architekci Ziemi Krakowskiej, ich rola i działalność w czasie II wojny światowej i niemieckiej okupacji, a także po wyzwoleniu Polski." In *Architekci krakowscy. Z dziejów krakowskiego oddziału SARP 1877–1958*, edited by Bohdan Lisowski, and Krystyna Łyczakowska, 39–70. Kraków: SARP Kraków, 2017.
- Motak, Maciej. "Architekci czy rzemieślnicy? O budownictwie krakowskich okresu międzywojennego." In *Studia nad architekturą i urbanistyką Polski międzywojennej*, vol. 6: *Planowanie, budowanie i ulepszanie Wielkiego Krakowa w odrodzonym państwie*, edited by Maciej Motak, 9–89. Kraków: Politechnika Krakowska, 2022.
- Niezabitowska, Elżbieta. *Metody i techniki badawcze w architekturze*. Gliwice: Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej, 2014.
- Pieter, Józef. *Zarys metodologii pracy naukowej*. Warszawa: PWN, 1975.
- Popiołek-Roßkamp, Małgorzata. "Architects in the General Government: Activities, Reckoning, Memory." *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung / Journal of East Central European Studies* 70, nr 4 (2021): 663–688. <https://doi.org/10.25627/202170411055>.
- Popiołek-Roßkamp, Małgorzata. "Displaced and forgotten. The phenomenon of anti-Semitism among architects in Warsaw in the second half of the 1930s." *Medaon – Magazin für jüdisches Leben in Forschung und Bildung* 17, no. 33 (2023): 1–13. https://www.medaon.de/pdf/medaon_33_popiolek-rosskamp.pdf.
- SARP. "IV Doroczne Walne Zebranie Delegatów SARP-u." *Komunikat SARP*, nr 6–7, (June/July 1937).
- SARP. "Sprawozdania i komunikaty." *Komunikat SARP*, nr 6, (June 1939).
- S. Mehl application for identity card, 1939, National Archives in Kraków, sign. ANK 29/218/940/s. 211.
- Stendig, Jakub. *Plaszów. Ostatnia stacja krakowskiego żydostwa*. Kraków: Muzeum Krakowa, 2020.
- Świątkowska, Bogna, ed. *Adrichalim. Architekci: leksykon pochodzących z Polski architektów działających w Palestynie i Izraelu w XX wieku*. Warszawa: Bęc-Zmiana, 2016.
- Twardowska, Kamila. *Fryderyk Tadanier*. Kraków: Instytut Architektury, 2016.
- Ustawa Konstytucyjna z dnia 23 kwietnia 1935 r.* Dz.U. 1935 Nr 30, poz. 227. <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19350300227/O/D19350227.pdf>.
- Ustawa z dnia 17 marca 1921. Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej.* Dz.U. 1921 Nr 44, poz. 267. <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19210440267/O/D19210267.pdf>.
- Zbroja, Barbara. "Edward Kreisler – zapomniany krakowski architekt." *Rocznik Krakowski* 72, (2006): 181–211.
- Zbroja, Barbara. "Hala przedpogrzebowa cmentarza żydowskiego przy ul. Jerolimskiej w Krakowie." *Rocznik Krakowski* 69, (2003): 171–186.
- Zbroja, Barbara. *Leksykon architektów i budowniczych pochodzenia żydowskiego w Krakowie w latach 1868–1939*. Kraków: Wysoki Zamek, 2023.
- Zbroja, Barbara. *Miasto umarłych. Architektura publiczna Żydowskiej Gminy Wyznaniowej w Krakowie w latach 1868–1939*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2005.
- Zbroja, Barbara. "Żydowscy architekci w międzywojennym Krakowie. Spacerownik." Accessed April 2, 2024. https://mck.krakow.pl/images/upload/wystawy/Awanguardia/Multimedia/spacerownik_www.pdf.
- Zieliński, Jarosław. *Metodologia pracy naukowej*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra-JR, 2012.

Streszczenie

Losy krakowskich budowniczych i architektów pochodzenia żydowskiego w obliczu II wojny światowej. Możliwości stosowania metody mikrohistorycznej w badaniach dotyczących architektury i urbanistyki

Artykuł dotyczy losów grupy architektów i budowniczych w Krakowie w czasie II wojny światowej. Po wybuchu wojny oraz rozpoczęciu okupacji niemieckiej we wrześniu 1939 r. znaleźli się oni w bardzo trudnym położeniu. Wraz z nasileniem prześladowań również możliwości ich działalności zawodowej silnie zmniejszyły się, aczkolwiek nie zanikły.

W artykule zarysowano bliżej dwie indywidualne sytuacje – Samuela Mehla i Jakuba Stendiga – jedna związana z powstaniem budynku, druga m.in. z utratą budynku. W badaniach korzystano z metod często stosowanych w badaniach nad architekturą i urbanistyką, takich jak analiza literatury przedmiotu, analiza archiwaliów, badania terenowe. Zastosowano również metodę mikrohistoryczną, która w takich badaniach nie jest stosowana bądź stosowana bardzo rzadko. Metoda ta, używana od blisko 50 lat w badaniach naukowych, głównie historycznych, opiera się na badaniu i zachowaniu elementu indywidualnego narracji przy jednoczesnym dążeniu do generalizacji wyniku.

Mimo niezwykle okrutnych prześladowań ludności żydowskiej w Krakowie w czasie II wojny światowej niektórzy architekci i budowniczowie pochodzenia żydowskiego przejawiali w rozmaitych i trudnych uwarunkowaniach aktywność zawodową. Jej formy były zróżnicowane: od pracy projektowej i prowadzenia budów kamienic mieszkalnych, przez opiekę nad zabytkami, po działalność budowlaną w obozie koncentracyjnym. Aktywność zawodowa oraz określone umiejętności mogły przyczynić się do ocalenia proporcjonalnie większej liczby architektów i budowniczych żydowskich aniżeli ogółu społeczności żydowskiej w Krakowie. Konsekwencje Zagłady dla architektury i przestrzeni Krakowa były poważne i zróżnicowane: utrata ważnego środowiska zawodowego, utrata cennych dzieł architektury i sztuki, zmiana cech w nowo projektowanych budynkach. Dziedzictwo działalności architektów i budowniczych pochodzenia żydowskiego w Krakowie jest bardzo znaczne. Zostało ono upamiętnione w rozmaitych formach materialnych i niematerialnych, aczkolwiek w stopniu niewystarczającym w proporcji do jego skali.

Słowa kluczowe: II wojna światowa, Żydzi, mikrohistoria, architekci i budowniczowie, Kraków