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## Facing Sweden: The Experience of Sweden after the Forced Migration from Poland During the Antisemitic Campaign, 1967–1972

This article presents how the historical experience of Sweden is depicted in six biographies about the lives of Polish-Jewish refugees who migrated to Sweden from Poland in 1967–1972 due to the antisemitic campaign. It is an early output of the dissertation project *Vi, de fördrivna* [We, the Expelled], for which the historical experiences of this migrant group are being collected and analyzed. The depiction of Sweden in the biographies is viewed from the perspective of historical orientation. Generally, the biographies give a positive picture of Sweden. The Sweden illustrated is contrasted with a repressive depiction of Poland during the antisemitic campaign. Sweden at the time of arrival is also contrasted with Sweden in later years, which might be described as Sweden in decline.

**Keywords:** Polish-Swedish relations, antisemitism, Jewish history, historical experiences, migration

### Introduction

Between 1967 and 1972 almost 3,000 refugees (Górniok 2016: 3) left Poland for Sweden. This was the result of the antisemitic campaign initiated by the ruling communist party after the Six-Day War in 1967 and the student protests of March 1968. These refugees were part of the last major emigration of the once numerous Polish Jewry. Most were children of Holocaust survivors and several were survivors themselves. They constitute a group with certain historical experiences which in several aspects distinguish them from the larger Polish or Jewish minorities in Sweden (Ilicki 1988). Their experiences are part of Polish-Jewish history and the Holocaust, yet they are separated from Poland through migration across the Iron Curtain. They have watched the political development of Poland from the sidelines as part

of a Swedish Polish-Jewish community. The Polish-Jewish refugee migration of 1967–1972 is in many aspects distinguished from other Polish-Jewish migrations to Sweden due to several common experiences, one of them being the shared experience of how they encountered Sweden after the antisemitic campaign.

The aim of this article is to describe the experience of Sweden based on six biographical works, to a large extent auto-biographical, about Polish-Jewish migrants arriving in Sweden in 1967–1972. It is an early output of the dissertation project *Vi, de fördrivna* [We, the Expelled], for which the historical experiences of the Jewish refugees who came to Sweden from Poland in 1967–1972 are being collected and analyzed (see *Vi, de fördrivna* 2022). The project broadly examines the historical experiences of the group, whereas this article focuses on one central theme. In order of publication, the six biographical works are as follows: *Historien om Adam Bromberg* [The History of Adam Bromberg] by Henryk Grynberg (2000); *Ett liv i glädje och tårar* [A Life in Joy and Tears] by Zalma Puterman (2008); *Hilarys historia* [The History of Hilary] by Jerzy Sarnecki (2013); *Åka skridskor i Warszawa* [Ice Skating in Warsaw] by Emilia Degenius (2014); *Huset med de två tornen* [The House with the Two Towers] by Maciej Zaremba (2019); and *Flykten till Marstrand* [The Escape to Marstrand] by Anna Grinzweig Jacobsson (2020). This article focuses on the Swedish material published in Swedish, and part of the historical experiences expressed in a Swedish public sphere. There are several biographies published in Polish that capture the experience of the antisemitic campaign and the refugee migration connected to it. One significant example, which displays a positive narrative about migration, re-establishment, successful careers and happiness, is *Wygności do raju: Szwedzki azyl* [Exiled to Paradise: The Swedish Refuge] by Krystyna Naszkowska (2017). This book shares many aspects with my analysis of the Swedish biographies.

I will refer to this material as biographies. Based on this source material I analyze the historical experiences of Sweden, which are both the authors' own experiences and the experiences of others mediated through the authors. How do they describe their encounter with Sweden? How do they describe Sweden? What part does Sweden play in their historical experiences?

I have developed the theoretical framework of the dissertation project *Vi, de fördrivna* as a hermeneutic oral history. It puts foundational epistemological assumptions from the historical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jörn Rüsen into the practice of oral history, with the aspect of dialogue at its core. Inspired by Martin Buber, oral historian Malin Thor Tureby describes dialogic oral history as a subject-subject relation (Thor 2001). Holocaust scholar and oral historian Henry Greenspan, in turn, has worked with a number of Holocaust survivors over decades in what he calls collaborative conversations (Greenspan 2010). I view both Thor Tureby's and Greenspan's approaches as hermeneutic oral history, even though they do not use the term. The text-based analysis in this article is a way to approach the historical experiences of this group at the first analytical

level of the dissertation project. The project aims later to go further and engage in collaborative conversations with people from the refugee group in question. This article is also a way to approach scholars in the field of Polish-Swedish relations and Polish-Jewish history. It is in this context that this article should be understood.

As it is here, the definition of historical experiences is based on the works of Rösen. History is viewed as a task of orientation and our historical experiences are memories with a meaning attached to them. These memories might be our own or passed on by others, privately or publicly. To describe the historical experiences in the biographies is not only a task of describing what is in the texts but also of understanding the meaning. We extract meaning from the past in the task of historical orientation. The meaning of the past provides answers to help us find out where we come from, why and where we are now, who we are, where we are heading, and how we should act in the future.<sup>1</sup> The hermeneutic dialogic approach seeks to formulate the meaning of the past for these people. I seek a subjective historical knowledge, not the objective truth nor a purely discursive knowledge. This approach has evolved through encounters and dialogue with living people about their historical experiences.

Why is it interesting to study the experience of Sweden and why are the historical experiences of the refugees who came to Sweden of interest? The group being studied has experiences of the major historical traumas of the twentieth century: the Holocaust and World War II, the experience of Stalinist terror and later – migration across the Iron Curtain. The refugee migrants of the antisemitic campaign have also experienced Sweden, a country that avoided the war and stayed neutral during the Cold War. These aspects define the viewpoint from which they communicate their experiences in the biographies. The article is written in the context of Scandinavian studies in Poland. It puts emphasis on a Polish-Swedish relation of importance in the historical culture in both countries, a Polish-Jewish–Swedish relation.

## 1. Previous research

In Poland, several historical studies on the antisemitic campaign have been written since the fall of the communist regime.<sup>2</sup> There is a large number of studies dealing with different aspects of the campaign. Recently, the historian Anat Plocker published *The Expulsion of Jews from Communist Poland: Memory Wars and Homeland Anxieties* (Plocker 2022). Plocker sets out from the observation that earlier research on the antisemitic campaign has been dominated by a dissident narrative that

<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to Rösen's concept of historical orientation, see, for example, *Evidence and Meaning* (Rösen 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Frequently quoted overviews include *Marzec 1968* [March 1968] and *Polski rok 1968* [The Year 1968 in Poland] by Jerzy Eisler (1991, 2006), as well as *Kampania antyżydowska w Polsce 1967–1968* [The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967–1968] by Dariusz Stola (2000).

describes it as a tool of repression used by the government to handle the political situation in Poland at the time. Plocker draws on Sara Ahmed in introducing emotions as a crucial aspect of political analysis. The people behind the antisemitic campaign, in Plocker's analysis, sincerely feared a Jewish conspiracy. She puts the aspect of memory war at the core of the antisemitic campaign and describes the Polish fear of Jews as a threatening "other." The political events were fueled by a conflicting commemoration where the suffering of Jews stood against the suffering of Poles. The Jews were even accused of conspiring with West Germany to put the blame for the Holocaust on the Poles (Plocker 2022). This creates an important background to view the experience of Sweden that is presented in this article.

The academic works on the Polish Jews who migrated to Sweden can be presented in a more exhaustive manner in this format. The first studies were two sociological dissertations on this specific migration, published in 1988 and 1991: Julian Ilicki's *Den föränderliga identiteten* [The Changing Identity] and Jaff Schatz's *The Generation*. Ilicki surveys the changing identity of the younger generation among the refugees. His main observation is that the Jewish identity has become stronger due to the antisemitic campaign and the migration (Ilicki 1988). Schatz's *The Generation* is a historical sociological study based on interviews with the older generation, born around 1910, of interwar Jewish Communists who became refugees in Sweden or Denmark due to the antisemitic campaign (Schatz 1991).

Historian Łukasz Górniok studies the Swedish refugee policy in official documents from the reception of both the Czechoslovak and Polish refugees in 1968 (Górniok 2016). Historian Izabela Dahl, in turn, researches Polish-Jewish forced migration to Sweden during the whole postwar era using a range of different theoretical approaches and source materials: *Anschluss und Zugehörigkeit* (Dahl 2013). Her dissertation includes an interview study where she identifies four themes that summarize the common memories of the migrants: (1) the memory of Polish antisemitism; (2) the memory of a common traumatic past; (3) the memory of the Jewish tradition; and (4) the memory of Polish culture (Dahl 2013: 360 ff.). These themes focus entirely on life before migration and might contrast the experience of Sweden that I present in this article.

Previous research on the historical experiences of this specific group of Polish-Jewish refugees in Sweden has been approached superficially as part of larger projects, or, as in the case of Schatz's study, focused on one specific generational experience. The contribution of the project *Vi, de fördrivna* is to collect and analyze the group's historical experiences as a whole and to go deeper into how they orientate themselves historically. The experience of Sweden is one of the main themes among their historical experiences.

## 2. Viewing life from a well-established position

When the Polish-Jewish refugees left Poland for Sweden, they arrived in a country that in many ways was a stark contrast to what they knew before. In the biographies, the authors reflect on their arrival in Sweden 40–50 years later. They also look back from an established position in the Swedish society. They are distinguished professionals, celebrities in some cases, who recall the beginning of a life of successful integration and extraordinary professional careers. One of the authors, Jerzy Sarnecki, is Sweden's most prominent professor in criminology. Another, Maciej Zaremba Bielawski, is a journalist known for in-depth reportages in the most popular newspaper in Sweden, *Dagens Nyheter*. Adam Bromberg and his daughter Dorothea are known for Bromberg's publishing house, which introduced the Nobel laureates Miłosz, Singer, Paz and Coetzee in Sweden. Adam Bromberg was also a well-established publisher in Poland until the antisemitic campaign. Even though the other authors and protagonists of the biographies are not well known, they are well-established professionals with strong cultural capital. The historical experiences of Sweden presented in this article may therefore be viewed as the experiences of the well-established and not representative of the group as a whole.

Except *Historien om Adam Bromberg*, all the biographies were written in Swedish for a Swedish audience. The Bromberg biography also places the least emphasis on life in Sweden (Grynberg 2000). In the other biographies, where the reception and life in Sweden is described in more detail, an intended Swedish readership might have influenced the consistently positive portrayal of life in Sweden.

## 3. The underlying historical experience of the Holocaust

The historical experience of the Holocaust overshadows all other experiences in the biographies. Every person in them is positioned, and later events are understood, in relation to the Holocaust. The experience of the antisemitic campaign is important since it echoes the Holocaust, yet its importance is also diminished in comparison.

The Swedish authorities did not always appear to recognize the historical experiences of the refugee group in question. Recurring associations to the Holocaust were aroused in transfers between different settlements and during selections for further transfers. The most shocking example of this can be found in *Hilarys historia*. Their first encounter with Sweden resembles in many ways a historical reenactment of the Holocaust.

Sometime late in the afternoon (it was probably evening but still bright) we arrived at a kind of industrial building on the outskirts of Gothenburg. The bus drove into a yard that was fenced with high planks. When the bus drove in, someone closed the gate. The harsh woman

announced, with her German accent, that we had to get off. Then she said something that caused a moment of icy silence. She said: “You should all take a shower, and your clothes should be disinfected.” “After all these years that have passed, I begin to wonder if I really remember correctly,” I say. “Did they really tell us that women and children should go in one direction, and men in the other? Were we then told to undress and leave our clothes in a neat pile on a bench? Was there really a yellow sign with black text where the only word you could tell was FÖRBJUDEN (FÖR/B/JUDEN!)?” Hilary basically confirms my memory picture. [*Förbjuden* means “forbidden” but it happens to end with “-juden,” which means “Jews” in German. So, the innocent sign resembled German signs from the Nazi era. ME] (Sarnecki 2013: 397).<sup>3</sup>

Despite these terrible circumstances, the Sarneckis, father and son, laugh together at the situation forty years later: “When I tell him about the sign, we cannot stop laughing. Now, more than forty years later, it seems really funny” (Sarnecki 2013: 398). The prerequisite for this to appear funny is that this frightening situation was not followed by other offensive, humiliating, and frightening experiences. It is described as an uncharacteristic example in a mainly well-meaning reception organized by the Swedish authorities. For the most part, the problems with the reception were of a less serious nature.

#### 4. Embracing the *miljonprogrammet* (The Million Program)

The refugees in question came to Sweden during the era of the so-called *miljonprogrammet*, a state-sponsored program aiming to construct a million housing units in a bid to solve the housing shortage. The evaluation of this program changed radically in the decades following the arrival of the refugees. Today, the *miljonprogrammet* is often associated with ethnically segregated suburbs with social problems. The program included many kinds of buildings in diverse architectural styles, but in the general historical consciousness it is associated with suburban neighborhoods and large blocks of flats.

When Jerzy Sarnecki describes how happy they were to move into a newly built four-room apartment in Orminge, he adds a clear “we thought.” In this way, he demonstrates a historical distance to the period when the newly built area of Orminge was admired and was a popular place to move to. Swedish readers can generally perceive the contrast to today’s problematic view of the *miljonprogrammet* neighborhoods.

After arriving in Stockholm we were busy looking for an apartment. At that time, it was not difficult to find an apartment in one of the *miljonprogrammet* areas built around the city. We thought there were some fantastically nice apartments – large, bright, warm, well-planned, well-equipped, close to services, and with relatively good communications. Compared

<sup>3</sup> All translations from Swedish are my own.

to our apartment in Warsaw, this was pure luxury. We went to Kungsängen and looked at an apartment, but finally we decided to move into a four-room apartment in Orminge. The apartment was excellent, we thought, it was close to the forest and we had a garage for our Opel that had to spend the rest of its life there (Sarnecki 2013: 404).

Sarnecki also describes a period when they stayed with friends of the family in the newly built Stockholm suburb of Vårby in a similar way (Sarnecki 2013: 403). These areas were popular but they declined at the same time as the Swedish welfare state and the Swedish ability to integrate migrants. The aesthetic value of the architecture also declined together with this social development.

## 5. Difficulties

There are some difficult aspects of coming to Sweden. In comparison with the social life in Poland, Sweden sometimes appears quiet and cold; the people are inaccessible. There are also times when a feeling of alienation is described. The most obvious sign of alienation was the assignment of a special kind of passport to migrants, a *främlingspass* (alien's passport). Knowledge about Poland and Judaism is generally low in Sweden and it is often difficult for Swedes to pronounce Polish names successfully. Emilia Degenius changed her name because "Białostocka was too difficult in the new country" (Degenius 2014: 20).

The well-organized reception could sometimes be perceived as problematic if the refugees did not share the opinion of the authorities about what was best for them. Most of the refugees were placed in various camps, often in rural areas, to study Swedish and explore their options of further integration into the new country. An illustrative example of the double-sidedness of being taken care of by the rational Swedish state is given by Jerzy Sarnecki. The refugees could buy some clothes, but the employees of the camp came along to give them advice on the most rational purchases. Sarnecki writes: "Adults, many of whom until recently held high positions in Polish society, now had to negotiate which trousers and underpants were good value or not" (Sarnecki 2013: 400).

Anna Grinzwieg Jacobsson's *Flykten till Marstrand* is based on interviews with the refugees accommodated at a camp on the island of Marstrand, where she came with her parents together with 200 other Polish-Jewish refugees. She describes the relationship between the refugees and the established Swedish Jewry as a difficult one. Having conducted detailed interviews with 17 people, at the end of her book Grinzwieg Jacobsson concludes: "When you move countries, cultural clashes take place, no wonder. But it is interesting that the biggest [clash], judging by the stories, seems to have taken place between the Polish and the Swedish Jews" (Grinzwieg Jacobsson 2020: 152).

The encounter with the Swedish Jews can be described as an expectation of a community that was not realized. The Polish Jews were forced to officially renounce their Polish citizenship and were expelled from the country. They were generally in need of a Jewish community but not so much a religious congregation. The encounter turned out, to some extent, to be a disappointment for both parties. The two groups were Jewish in different ways, they had different experiences of Jewishness.

The biographies deal with some cultural clashes such as the complicated relation to the established Swedish Jewry. Also, questions of structural exclusion in the ethnically homogeneous Sweden are touched upon. Still, the difficulties encountered in Sweden are never comparable to the hardships experienced in earlier life.

## 6. A positive depiction of Sweden

The dominating impression of Sweden in the biographies is positive. As described above, the biographies look back on life from a well-established position. Sweden is the place of – at least to some extent – a happy ending.

If we compare the historical situation of the arrival in Sweden with the return to Poland of those who survived the Holocaust and World War II in the Soviet Union, such as Adam Bromberg, Hilary Sarnecki and Zalma Puterman, a certain aspect of historically effected consciousness becomes evident. They were in a similar situation of upheaval and insecurity but also of hope in both cases. When they look back on this with the facts in hand, with the experience of the antisemitic campaign and with the knowledge of how the attempt to create a socialist Poland led to a dictatorship under Soviet control, a lens of disappointment, sadness or anger is placed over their memories of hope and commitment to rebuilding Poland after the war.

One way to understand the positive image of Sweden can be described through stark contrasts in the biographies. The experience of having struggled with Polish authorities, which in various ways made it difficult for them to obtain a permit to leave, both through inefficient bureaucracy and pure corruption, meant that government officials in Sweden who simply did their job could appear in a utopian light. Sweden becomes a point of comparison to describe the oppression in communist Poland. One of Anna Grinzweig Jacobsson's interviewees describes Sweden as a normal country, one of the few in Europe (Grinzweig Jacobsson 2020: 135). Still, not wonderful or even good, just normal. Emilia Degenius studies hard and performs well in a Polish school, but the teachers punish her with low grades during the antisemitic campaign. "I get the highest grade in math. The highest grade in French. But it is only later. Only in a few years. Only when I have changed school. And land" (Degenius 2014: 87). Not being discriminated against in school turns out to be a victory.



On the back of Zalma Puterman's autobiography it says: "Zalma Puterman is now a retired associate professor in practical philosophy at Uppsala University. For him and his family, Sweden became a country of refuge, and it also has its place of honor in the book" (Puterman 2008). The choice of words "country of refuge" connotes providing protection and rest, especially when it gets a "place of honor in the book." The title *Ett liv i glädje och tårar: en polsk judes öde* [A Life in Joy and Tears: The Fate of a Polish Jew] suggests a story with great hardships but which – through the back page text – promises a happy ending in Sweden. The book also begins with a photograph of a walnut tree, moved from Poland to northern Uppland in Sweden, and the tree is bearing fruit (Puterman 2008: 11). The symbolism is clear, perhaps the whole of the Polish-Jewish migration of 1967–1972 might be represented?

Puterman describes life in Sweden as liberating in several different ways, not only in terms of political rights or antisemitic oppression, but also simple cultural aspects, for example, that it is more acceptable to say no to the offer of an alcoholic drink. He finds other cultural aspects more difficult to understand, such as arranging a meeting instead of visiting a friend at short notice. The encounter with Swedish culture is mainly about undramatic phenomena in comparison with how Polish society is portrayed as imbued with antisemitism. On one occasion, however, Puterman describes how he as an immigrant is discriminated against by the authorities. With the help of a lawyer that Puterman knows from work, the authorities corrected the mistake, and the problem was solved. This story of discrimination and restoration is accompanied by another story: a government clerk discovers that the Puterman family, during their establishment phase in Sweden, was entitled to money for housing that they did not know about. The official arranges for them to receive retroactive payments. This event is given a symbolic value: "The most positive thing for me was not the money, that was of course welcome and a great joy, but not the most important thing in the context; the most important thing was the pleasant experience of living in a country where the law applies to everyone, even to us immigrants" (Puterman 2008: 289).

## 7. Refugee reception then in the light of now

Another historical aspect of central significance for the historically effected consciousness is the change in refugee reception between 1967–1972 and the early decades of the twenty-first century, which culminated in the so-called "refugee crisis" in 2015. In comparison, the Swedish reception of 1967–1972 is presented in an even brighter light. The biographies approach this comparison in several places. There are references in the biographies to the migrants in the twenty-first century living in anticipation and uncertainty. On the other hand, one explicit example from *Hilarys historia* describes how the whole family got into studies or employment almost instantly (Sarnecki 2013: 404). The arrival in Sweden is depicted

in several positive passages in the biographies. Zalma Puterman and his family sat freezing outside on the deck of a ferry between Copenhagen and Malmö. He felt anxiety and uncertainty about whether he would be able to support his family in a new country. After that comes the description of the first encounter with Sweden:

The arrival in Malmö was both liberating and pleasantly surprising. As soon as we got off the boat, a customs officer came forward and kindly asked if our name was Puterman. The surprise was total, how did he know our last name? In Vienna, we received no information that the Swedish authorities would take care of us like this. When I answered affirmative to his question, he welcomed us to Sweden, asked us to remain where we stood and wait for a taxi that he would pick up. The taxi, he added, will drive us to the hotel and we do not have to pay for it, the hotel does. In our wildest imagination there on the dark and cold deck, we could not have dreamed of such a reception in the new country. All my anxiety was blown away. I immediately felt that we would thrive here (Puterman 2008: 277).

## 8. Crossing the Iron Curtain

Another contrast in the biographies' descriptions of Sweden is that between East and West, and crossing the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. Even though Sweden was neutral, there seemed to be no doubt that they had come to the West, both in the material and political terms. Several people write about how they traveled by train or bus looking out of the window over a country where everything is illuminated, clean, and in order. Many highlight examples of the impression of shops in Sweden, how many there were and the large amount of different goods. Maciej Zaremba's description of walking through Warsaw while slowly eating a precious banana contrasts with a society where everyone has access to bananas (Zaremba 2019: 91 ff.). On arrival in Stockholm, Zaremba buys a pack of quality-brand cigarettes for himself: "At the cash register I also asked for a pack of Dunhill. Then I tried to appear unmoved when I removed the plastic wrapper, opened the top, removed the golden paper from the left compartment and brought the pack to my nose" (Zaremba 2019: 279).

Zaremba's first day in Stockholm is described in a suggestive way, preserved in the memory of the smell at the metro station at Odenplan. The materiality and sense of freedom on the other side of the Iron Curtain is evident: "For many years after that, I have tried to evoke the memory of the cloudless expectation of life that has become one with this scent. I succeeded a few times, but only there, below the stairs, closest to the track, at Odenplan's metro station. And now it's gone. It was April 30, 1969, my first day in Sweden" (Zaremba 2019: 280).

Anna Grinzweig Jacobsson describes in one of her historical accounts how Sweden was forced to accept the Polish-Jewish refugees if they were to live up to the status of a humanitarian superpower (Grinzweig Jacobsson 2020: 66). This

also affects the view of the refugees' encounter with Sweden in 1967–1972. Sweden was considered a great humanitarian power. The citizens' standard of living increased continuously, and neutral Sweden developed a self-image as the most democratic and humanitarian country on earth. Sweden was a country that had escaped two world wars and seemed to avoid a cold one too. Emilia Degenius contrasts the exceptional position of Sweden when comparing the compulsion to lie in Poland, unlike in Sweden: "You lie about everything, hard to imagine in a country that has almost never had to lie" (Degenius 2014: 210).

## 9. The decline and support of Sweden

Sweden has since then become a less exceptional country and the gap in economic standards between Poland and Sweden has narrowed. Many commentators argue that the Swedish welfare state has been dismantled, and descriptions of the public employment services, for example, illustrate the well-functioning bureaucracy that once existed as part of an institutional nostalgia. Also, antisemitism has become more apparent in Sweden. This means that the contrast between Sweden today and in the past plays into the positive description of the Sweden of days gone by. In Hilary Sarnecki's words: "Sweden is unfortunately not as it used to be!" (Sarnecki 2013: 422).

It is sometimes as if the longing for a fair and good country is projected onto Sweden, and if the opposite is not proven, fairness is presumed. And the reception seems to have lived up to this longing. When Hilary Sarnecki meets an openly antisemitic Swedish colleague at KF (Kooperativa Förbundet, Swedish Cooperative Union), however, the ideal image fades: "Hilary took this incident very hard. He had imagined that in this wonderful country, and especially in the friendly place where he worked, no one harbored that kind of emotion. I point out that his idea of Sweden and KF was naive" (Sarnecki 2013: 409). Hilary agrees and has since then updated his attitude. He adds: "But I wanted so badly to believe that we had finally found a country without abuse of power, corruption, antisemitism and everything else that had plagued us for so long" (Sarnecki 2013: 409).

There is an almost utopian longing, a messianism, in the hopes Hilary, and others in the generation who migrated with him, directed towards Sweden. Jaff Schatz's study of Hilary's generation highlights a messianic Jewish tradition in this generation's various choices of ideological positions. Regardless of whether they chose the Communists, the Bundists, or the Zionists, there was a hope for emancipation and a radically improved existence in the near future (Schatz 1991). Is it possible to include the utopian vision of Sweden in the same messianic tradition? And of course, there were concrete examples of uncorrupt authorities, tolerance, material prosperity, social safety nets, healthcare and education for almost everyone. And, antisemitism was not as visible as in Poland. Since his arrival, Hilary had voted

for the Social Democrats. Despite the fact that he, over the years, updated his view of Sweden, he was annoyed until his death at fellow immigrants who were negative towards Sweden (Sarnecki 2013: 422).

It is interesting to note how they still express that others in their generation of migrants had a more negative view of Sweden and the Swedes. In the biographies discussed here, no one expresses their own negative opinions in this way. It may not be polite to do so, but the criticism of Poland, its antisemitism, nationalism and the corrupt rule is fierce. The very basic premise for the description of the two countries is derived from the immigrants being thrown out of one and accepted in the other. This creates two very different perspectives to describe the countries from. Zalma Puterman recounts how the attitude towards Poland and the migration to Sweden was a sensitive subject between him and his wife Helena; it even threatened their marriage. Helena was a majority Pole, Catholic and non-Jewish. She had left Poland with her husband, even though she had not really wanted to. Puterman describes their marriage as happy before 1968 and unhappy afterwards (Puterman 2008: 307). She did not share the same perspective on Poland as the Polish Jews, who had grown up with structural antisemitism as a basic condition of life, who had lost their relatives in the Holocaust and been exposed to the antisemitic campaign. Puterman explains the many conflicts: “The reason for this was often that I raised a problem concerning Poland and Polish antisemitism or told a funny story that she did not like” (Puterman 2008: 297). Freed from the patriotic love for Poland, it was easier for him to engage in the new country: “As for the love of the motherland, I felt liberated from it, but she did not” (Puterman 2008: 298).

## 10. Navigating towards nations

Countries such as Poland, Sweden, the Soviet Union and Israel are extremely important points to relate to in the migrants’ identity process. The biographies are critical and try to give a nuanced picture of all the countries. They are the least critical of Sweden, but it is obvious that they are oriented in a national world. The countries themselves are often described as actors: Poland “threw us out” and Sweden “accepted us.” This way of writing and speaking creates the impression that there is a specific will in each nation. When a Swede turns out to be an antisemite, Hilary’s image of Sweden is threatened. Is Sweden a secret antisemite?

Emilia Degenius and Anna Grinzweig Jacobsson were so young on arrival in Sweden that their Swedish is better than their Polish. For them, Sweden is clearly “home,” and Swedish society is one they identify with more than their native Polish. Grinzweig Jacobsson takes her starting point in the remark that the story of the Polish-Jewish refugees who came to Sweden is also part of Swedish history and that the ignorance about it is striking. This ignorance might distance the refugees from the Swedish majority as they do not share common experiences:

I explain what happened, that the country expelled the last remnant of the Jews left after the war. Then people react with dismay: “How is it possible, just twenty years after that...?” Somehow one seems to take the Holocaust as a guarantee of “never again.” But in Poland, Jews who returned to their former homes after the war were murdered. By neighbors who took over their houses and possessions. In Poland, there is the city of Kielce, infamous for the 1946 pogrom in which some forty Jews lost their lives (Grinzweig Jacobsson 2020: 8).

She also describes how Poland is struggling with phantom pain and writes that several reportage books have been published about those who fled. But not in Sweden: “The event is also part of Sweden’s history. Three thousand Jews came here, a significant addition to the Jewish minority” (Grinzweig Jacobsson 2020: 10).

## Conclusion

In this article I have analyzed the depiction of Sweden in six biographies of migrants who came to Sweden in 1967–1972 as a result of the antisemitic campaign in Poland. Sweden is a central theme in the biographies but the focus depends on the generation. Holocaust survivors tend to focus more on the life before the migration to Sweden, while the younger generation emphasize life in Sweden. The portrayal of Sweden is generally positive by both generations. They came to Sweden, met some challenges that they overcame and established a good life. Their former homeland, Poland, betrayed them, it threw them out. This contrast between Sweden and Poland runs through all the biographies.

The migrants expected a direct sense of community from the Swedish Jews. This did not emerge at once, however, which led to disappointment. It is fundamental to understand the several contrasts that make the Sweden they arrived in appear in an even better light. Apart from the main contrast with Poland during the antisemitic campaign, there is the contrast with the situation of refugees arriving in Sweden in the twenty-first century. Consequently, it is crucial to consider the depiction of Sweden in the biographies without forgetting about the historically effected consciousness of the protagonists and without overlooking their present-day position, as it is from this position that they look back and find meaning in their historical experiences.

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