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JEWS IN PARTISAN UNITS IN THE HOME ARMY'S  
RADOM-KIELCE DISTRICT  
(A CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESEARCH)

The service of Jews in Polish army formations during the Second World War has been discussed many times in the scientific discourse.<sup>1</sup> This topic was also the subject of a scientific conference entitled 'Jews and the Polish Army in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', organised in 2016 by the Institute of National Remembrance's Sub-Branch in Kielce and the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce.<sup>2</sup>

At this point, it is necessary first of all to mention the studies – in Polish and English – conducted by Capt Benjamin Majerczak [Meirtchak], who documented the Jewish members of the Polish armed formations who fell in defence of their country. He devoted most of his work to the soldiers of the Polish Army formed in the USSR (the author himself served in the 1st Infantry Division of the 1st Polish Army) and the soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in the West [*Polskie Siły Zbrojne*

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<sup>1</sup> C. Henschel, 'Juden im Militär. Erfahrung und Erinnerung im 19. and 20. Jahrhundert', *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 2013, no. 12; J.D. Zimmerman, *The Polish Underground and the Jews 1939–1945*, Cambridge 2015; id., *Polskie Państwo Podziemne i Żydzi w czasie II wojny światowej*, transl. M. Macińska, Warszawa 2018 (the Polish edition differs from the English one); *Żydzi w Polsce w służbie Rzeczypospolitej 1939–1945. Wybór źródeł*, ed. A.K. Kunert, Warszawa 2002.

<sup>2</sup> *Żydzi i wojsko polskie w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. T. Domański, E. Majcher-Ociesa, Warszawa 2020.

na Zachodzie], presenting the scale of the phenomenon in Poland itself to only a small extent. In this area, he first compiled the names of those killed during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and the Warsaw Rising in 1944. He also included members of the People's Army and soldiers of the Peasants' Battalions [*Bataliony Chłopskie*, BCh] from the Lublin region in his research. On the other hand, he described the Jewish soldiers of the Home Army to only a very limited extent.<sup>3</sup>

Another example is the work of Joshua D. Zimmerman; this author presented the Home Army in a negative light, attempting to prove that the Armed Forces within Poland prohibited the admission of people of Jewish nationality.<sup>4</sup> In turn, Christopher R. Browning, while describing the fate of the German forced labour camp in Starachowice, showed people serving in the Home Army as having deterred and driven away those Jews who managed to escape German captivity.<sup>5</sup>

Nor was he the only researcher who failed to study the fate of the Jewish soldiers in the Home Army's ranks. This topic is omitted in most works on the military endeavours by the people of the Mosaic faith; historians dealing with the history of the Polish Underground State and the Home Army devote little space to it. Information on this subject can primarily be found in the memoirs of veterans describing their comrades-in-arms (these works are cited in the footnotes later in the article).

Perversely, one may also conclude that it is precisely because of this modest source base that no one has so far undertaken to elaborate on this issue. There are also few materials about the Jews in the Home Army in the Archives of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. Neither have the testimonies of Bernard Marek<sup>6</sup> or Szymon Datner<sup>7</sup> yielded much fruit in this respect.

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<sup>3</sup> B. Meirtchak, *Jews-Officers in the Polish Armed Forces 1939–1945*, Tel Aviv 2001; id., *Żydzi – żołnierze wojsk polskich polegli na frontach II wojny światowej*, transl. Z. Rosiński, Warszawa 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Zimmerman, *The Polish Underground*.

<sup>5</sup> Ch.R. Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp*, New York 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw; hereinafter: AŻIH), The testimony of Bernard Marek, S/333/83, Stanisław Olczyk, Józef Garas, On Jewish partisans in the Kielce region, copies of letters from 1947; *ibid.*, S/333/112, List of Jewish partisan (based on press reports); *ibid.*, S/333/169, Jews in the resistance and the underground, notes; *ibid.*, S/333/170, Jews in the resistance and the underground, notes.

<sup>7</sup> AŻIH, The testimony of Szymon Datner, S/340. Grzegorz Berendt criticised Datner's research in his article 'Żydzi zbiegli z gett i obozów śmierci', in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, ed. A. Sitarek, M. Trębacz, E. Wiatr, Łódź 2012, pp. 121–24.

On the other hand, the information gathered by the Association of Jews, Former Participants in the Armed Struggle with Fascism [*Związek Żydów Byłych Uczestników Walki Zbrojnej z Faszyzmem*, ZŻBUWZzF], which also includes documents from the Association of Jewish Partisans in Poland [*Związek Partyzantów Żydów w Polsce*, ZPŻP] which merged with it,<sup>8</sup> confirms the image of the community of Jewish veterans that predominates in the general consciousness. For obvious reasons, these materials cannot be the sole source for research, as they only contain information about the fate of those Jews who remained in Poland after the Second World War, or who became involved in veterans' activities.

An analysis of the personal files and petitions for decorations which have been preserved allows us to characterise this community in greater detail. Among the members of the ZŻBUWZzF, soldiers from the front units of the Red Army and the Polish Army formed in the USSR from 1941 clearly predominate.<sup>9</sup> However, this group is not directly related to the present study.

Therefore, when considering the group of Jewish partisans mentioned in the title, one should refer to the information (dating probably from mid-1945) when the ZPŻP numbered 727 veterans (532 men and 195 women), including 41 officers,<sup>10</sup> 106 NCOs and 580 rank-and-file soldiers. In terms

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<sup>8</sup> The Union of Jewish Partisans in Poland was established on 19 November 1944 in Lublin. It was made up of members of partisan units and participants in battles in ghettos and camps. In mid-1945, it had 727 members, and in August 875 (it never exceeded 1000 members). From September 1945, it was a member of the Organising Committee of Participants in the Armed Struggle with Germany [*Komitet Organizacyjny Uczestników Walki Zbrojnej z Niemcami*]. The ZPŻP, whose leading activists belonged to the Polish Workers' Party, declared their subordination to the Communist authorities and hostility towards any other form of opposition (including the AK and the Polish government in London). At their initiative, on 20 April 1947, the Association of Jews, Former Participants in the Armed Struggle with Fascism, was established, and the ZPŻP became part of this new organisation (AŻIH, Association of Jews, Former Participants in the Armed Struggle with Fascism [hereinafter: ZŻBUWZzF], 318/20, Personal files – statistical data, Letter from the chairman of the ZPŻP to the National Organising Committee of the Congress of Participants in the Armed Struggle with Germany, Warsaw, 27 August 1945, p. 2; A. Grabski, *Żydowski ruch kombatancki w Polsce w latach 1944–1949*, Warszawa 2002; website of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, [http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Zwiazek\\_Partyzantow\\_Zydow\\_\(ZPZ\)](http://www.jhi.pl/psj/Zwiazek_Partyzantow_Zydow_(ZPZ)), accessed 22 February 2018.

<sup>9</sup> AŻIH, ZŻBUWZzF, 318/22, Personal files of veterans.

<sup>10</sup> It is worth recalling the names of the Jewish officers: 1 lieutenant colonel (Gustaw Alef-Bolkowiak 'Bolek'), 3 majors (Tomczyn, Margulis, Jaworek), 6 captains (Grynszpan, Leo, Gruber, Doroszewicz, Bednarczyk, Trokki) and 31 lieutenants and second lieutenants (in the list without surnames, only Lt Josef Ozik could be identified).

of the formations in which they operated during the war, the numbers were as follows: 218 people belonged to Jewish organisations, 52 people to Polish groups, 222 people to Soviet groups and 235 people to mixed units. The members included 145 wounded and 30 war invalids. While preparing the list, the ZPŻP secretariat also emphasised that 101 members had received military distinctions, including 5 who had received the Grunwald Cross [*Krzyż Grunwaldu*] and 4 the Cross of Valour [*Krzyż Walecznych*].<sup>11</sup> With regard to party affiliations, 72 members belonged to the Polish Workers' Party, 2 to the Polish Socialist Party, 2 to the *Bund* All-Jewish Workers' Union, 12 to Zionist organisations, while 639 members were not members of any party.<sup>12</sup>

An analysis of the personal material shows that during the Second World War the ZPŻP's members were primarily active in Soviet partisan units operating in the eastern provinces of the Second Polish Republic, and partially also in the areas incorporated by the German occupiers into the General Government. The armed groups in which the Jews operated were mostly formed and commanded by Soviet paratroopers, and from 1944 they were indirectly trained and directed by two decision-making centres: the Belarusian Partisan Staff, and the Polish Partisan Staff based in Moscow.

The second group of Jewish partisans were members of the People's Guard and People's Army units who served in all the Communist guerrilla structures; the third were soldiers from the Jewish Fighting Organisation [*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*], including a small group of survivors of the ghetto uprisings in Warsaw and Białystok (the collection also includes posthumous petitions for participation in the war). Finally, there are those who acted in unrelated formations, created from below for the purposes of survival and self-defence.

The small group of 52 Jews serving in Polish formations in whom we are interested included soldiers of the Polish Army [*Wojsko Polskie*],<sup>13</sup> the Polish

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<sup>11</sup> The following were awarded the Grunwald Cross: Gustaw Alef-Bolkowiak, codename 'Bolek'; Tomczyn, Margulis, Jaworek, Grynspan; while the Cross of Valour was awarded to: Róża Durman, Dora Lask, Zelman Erenberg, Chaim Feferkorn.

<sup>12</sup> AŻIH, ZŻBUWZZF, 318/20, Personal files – statistical data, Statistical material on members of the ZPŻP, [Warsaw], [1945], p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Before the outbreak of the Second World War, Jews served in the Polish Army. As Polish citizens, they were subject to the obligation of universal military service, and also held positions as professional soldiers and officers in permanent service. Like all those subject to mobilisation, Jews also

Armed Forces in the West,<sup>14</sup> the National Armed Forces [*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*]<sup>15</sup> and the Union of Armed Struggle – the Home Army [*Związek Walki Zbrojnej – Armia Krajowa*], among others. Among the surviving personal questionnaires of members of the ZPŻP, only two declared membership of the Home Army's partisan units (Julian Aleksandrowicz and Izrael Czyżyk, mentioned below).

So what motivated the small, even nugatory number of Jews in the ranks of the Home Army? We will probably never know their reasons, if only because there are so few surviving accounts. On the national scale, there were probably several hundred Jews serving in the Home Army. In many cases, their pre-war political views determined whether they chose to join particular formations or establish their own armed groups. However, Polish Jews often had no choice in which structures they would serve; they were ready to join whichever organisation which could protect them against extermination by the Germans at a given moment. As Grzegorz Berendt wrote, “their contacts and cooperation resulted from the general conditions in a given area and the attitudes of individual commanders of a given formation”<sup>16</sup>.

The situation of the Jews was worsened by the experiences of Polish society in the eastern borderlands of the Second Polish Republic. After the USSR's attack on Poland on 17 September 1939, some people of Jewish nationality demonstrated their joy *en masse* at the Red Army's occupation of Polish

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took part in the fighting during the defensive war of 1939, such as Ajzyk Bloch, who volunteered to join the army as a reservist and fought in the 21st ‘Children of Warsaw’ Infantry Regiment in defence of the capital. On the other hand, 2nd Lt Dr. Julian Aleksandrowicz was mobilised to the 74th Upper Silesian Infantry Regiment in Lubliniec, with which he went to the front as the head of a battalion dressing point (AŻIH, ZŻBUWZzF, 318/36, Ajzyk Blocha award petition, Wrocław, 12 February 1948, pp. 42–3; *ibid.*, Petition for the decoration of Julian Aleksandrowicz, [Kraków], [1947], p. 9).

<sup>14</sup> Chaim Wadunhauser (aka Czesław Czabański) was one of those who transferred from the Polish Army in the USSR to the 2nd Polish Corps. He followed the corps' entire combat route up to the battles for Monte Cassino and Bologna (*ibid.*, 318/23, Declarations of requests, Chaim Wadunhauser's declaration, Warsaw, n.d., p. 51).

<sup>15</sup> Jankiel Klajman (aka Jan Kowalski), codename ‘Jaś’, declared his service in the NSZ branch in the Lublin region. In 1942, he escaped from a transit camp in Radogoszcz in Łódź (or from a transport to the Majdanek concentration camp). For some time he hid in the forests of the Lublin region. He joined the partisan unit he encountered there: the NSZ unit under the command of NN ‘Jacek’. Due to his young age (born 1928), he was the orderly commander (*ibid.*, 318/23, Personal files, Combatants, G–O questionnaires, Jankiel Klajman's questionnaire, [Warsaw], [1945], p. 91).

<sup>16</sup> G. Berendt, review of ‘*Żydowski ruch kombatancki w Polsce w latach 1944–1949*, August Grabski, Warszawa 2002’, *Dzieje Najnowsze* 2004, vol. 36, no. 3, p. 250.

territory. Moreover, they actively participated in the activities of the Soviet occupation administration, acting against the Polish people as they did so. As Marek Wierzbicki emphasised, after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, in the Borderlands in 1941:

[...] hostility was shown to everyone associated with Soviet power, and sometimes there was even retaliation against sympathisers with Soviet power, regardless of their nationality, i.e. Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, and especially the Jews, for their cooperation – whether real or only imaginary – with the Soviet authorities or for showing pro-Soviet sympathies in 1939–1941.<sup>17</sup>

The news of the cooperation between Jews and Soviets spread throughout the territory of occupied Poland, and did not inspire people in other parts of the country to show any confidence in working together at all, let alone in any resistance activity. The stereotypes rooted in Polish society could also have played a role: the Jew as the enemy of the Polish nation. Jewish activity during the Soviet occupation had further consequences: Poles came to consider the entire Jewish community as hostile to the Polish state.<sup>18</sup>

In wartime conditions, it was not only those collaborating openly with the occupiers who were most feared. Attention was also paid to the people who conducted espionage and intelligence activities, who provided the German security services with information about pro-independence activities. The Home Army counterintelligence also warned “against Jewish agents who conceal themselves or mostly work legally on either side (Commies [*komuna*] or Gestapo)”<sup>19</sup> In some situations, the fear of leaks turned into greater suspicions, or even open psychosis, towards anyone encountered by chance, for example at places where partisan units were stationed.

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<sup>17</sup> M. Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941*, Warszawa 2007, p. 265.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>19</sup> Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe Wojskowego Biura Historycznego (Central Military Archives of the Military History Office), IX.3.34.8., Home Army, Kraków District, Letter from Lt Bronisław Waclawski, codename ‘Domian’, to Department II (Intelligence) of the Home Army’s Nowy Targ District Command, n.p., 15 December 1943, unpaginated.

This fear applied not only to people of Jewish nationality, but also to representatives of other ethnic minorities or foreigners resident in Poland during the war. This sometimes resulted in the fact that, for security reasons – as a preventive measure – some Home Army commanders issued orders warning against accepting non-Poles into the partisan units subordinate to them. One example may be the guidelines issued by Brig. Brunon Olbrycht, codename ‘Olza’, commander of the Home Army’s *Śląsk Cieszyński* Operational Group. In a letter of 13 October 1944, he forbade his commanders from accepting foreigners (Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Germans and Russians) into the ranks of the Home Army, although he did not mention Jews in this document.<sup>20</sup>

Fear of foreigners appeared more often. For example, a letter from the commander of the Home Army’s Iłża District of 2 September 1944 concerned the suspicious activities of Gestapo units which from mid-August 1944 were believed to be organising espionage networks with the aim of identifying the Home Army’s commands and partisan units. In this light, the commandant ordered caution in accepting new candidates for units; however, he did not categorically forbid any groups from serving in the ranks of the AK partisan units.<sup>21</sup>

Dariusz Libionka, on the other hand, has drawn attention to just such a top-down ban on accepting Jews into the ranks of the Home Army. To confirm this idea, he offered a very narrow interpretation of the instructions to Home Army commanders entitled ‘Guidelines for partisans’ issued on 13 March 1943. At this point, it should be noted that the guerrilla units included in the Polish Armed Forces after the creation of the Sabotage Division ([*Kierownictwo Dywersji*], ‘Kedyw’, whose tasks were directly referred to in the instructions cited) were initially organised and recruited based on local communities; their soldiers, after completing their tasks, were supposed to blend back in with everyday life

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Letter from Brig Brunon Olbrycht, codename ‘Olza’ (commander of the Home Army’s *Śląsk Cieszyński* Operational Group) to Maj Adam Stabrawa, codename ‘Borowy’, inspector of the Home Army in Nowy Sącz, n.p., October 23, 1944, unpagged.

<sup>21</sup> Muzeum Jacka Malczewskiego w Radomiu (Jacek Malczewski Museum in Radom), DH/3334, Letter from the commander of the Iłża Home Army District regarding the functioning of the Gestapo, n.p., 2 September 1944, unpagged.

under occupation.<sup>22</sup> The instructions were to “basically organise small, efficient and elusive troops not exceeding a platoon [in size]. For special operations and under favourable conditions, they can be combined into a larger unit”.<sup>23</sup> This then rules out the hypothesis put forward by Libionka.

He also stated that after the collapse of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the fighters of the Jewish Combat Organisation who had evacuated from the ghetto were not included in the partisan units of the Home Army; as evidence of this, he quoted the opinion of Icchak Cukierman, codename ‘Antek’:

As fighters – from the point of view of the Home Army – we were redundant everywhere on Polish soil. This does not mean that there were no people among them for whom the humanitarian aspect was important. But their organisation wasn’t geared to that. The Home Army was not an aid organisation, it was a military organisation. And as such, it did not need us, either in the fighting ghetto or in the Aryan part of Warsaw. We were also unnecessary for them in the partisan fight – as Jews, we were redundant everywhere.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Underground partisan units were by their nature quite hermetic bodies. These observations result from many years of studies of soldiers’ biographies, as individuals and in fighting units. The structures of the underground, and then of the sabotage divisions, were made up of trusted people, most often relatives and colleagues who had often known each other from the pre-war period. The reliance on only familiar persons ensured the highest level of discretion. The networks of such connections meant that successive soldiers admitted into the unit had received recommendations from people who were already part of the Home Army structures, which ensured counterintelligence security and prevented the admission of suspicious or unchecked people. One example of a family network is the Stefanowski family, in 1943 serving in the 3rd platoon of the 1st Home Army’s ‘Ponury’ Partisan Group: Lt Jerzy Oskar Stefanowski, codename ‘Habdank’ (platoon commander), his brother cadet sergeant Władysław Stefanowski, codename ‘Jawa’ (non-commissioned officer); and their sister Ludmiła Stefanowska, codename ‘Zjawa’ (liaison officer). Other soldiers from this platoon were related to each other: rifleman Jerzy Bartnik, codename ‘Magik’; rifleman Wojciech Olbrycht, codename ‘Kosa’; and nurse Krystyna Witecka *née* Olbrycht, codename ‘Przekora’. There are many more examples of units based on friendships. This is clearly visible, for example, in the 1st platoon of the Home Army’s 1st ‘Ponury’ Partisan Group, whose soldiers came almost entirely from Bodzentyn, a small town where everyone knew each other (M. Jedynak, ‘Mieszkańcy gminy Bodzentyn w oddziałach partyzanckich Armii Krajowej “Ponurego” i “Nurta”’, in *Z dziejów Bodzentyna w okresie II wojny światowej. W 70. rocznicę pacyfikacji 1943–2013*, ed. L. Michalska-Bracha, M. Przeniosło, M. Jedynak, Kielce 2013).

<sup>23</sup> ‘Appendix no. 1 to order no. 252/Kdw by the Home Army commander regarding guidelines for organising and conducting partisan warfare], Warsaw, 13 March 1943, in *Dokumenty do dziejów Zgrupowań Partyzanckich AK “Ponury”*, ed. M. Jedynak, Kielce–Kraków 2014, pp. 75–78.

<sup>24</sup> After D. Libionka, ‘ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu RP wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich’, in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, vol. 24, ed. A. Żbikowski, Warszawa 2006, p. 93.



One must agree with the opinion that there was no room for Jews in the Home Army. Indeed, it was not an aid organisation, but an integral part of the Polish Armed Forces, and had other fundamental goals. The fighters evacuated from the Warsaw ghetto were not directed to partisan units outside of Warsaw, as in mid-May 1943 these units were largely still being formed. As part of the Home Army's 'Kedyw' Sabotage Division, which was being reorganised in January that year, the sabotage groups operated in an irregular manner, based on 'small warfare' tactics (i.e. fighting on their own territory). Meanwhile, newcomers were to be provided with housing and all the other conditions necessary to live in the new area.<sup>25</sup> In the Home Army's Radom-Kielce District, the first formation that could successfully conceal a larger number of Jews was the Home Army's 'Ponury' Partisan Groups, organised in mid-June 1943 under the command of 'Silent Unseen' [*Cichociemny*]<sup>26</sup> Lieutenant Jan Piwnik, codename 'Ponury'.

In connection with the conditions under the German occupation presented above (including mutual fears among the communities), it can be stated that the circumstances for the Jews joining the Home Army units sometimes represented a compromise between their personal views and the situation in a given area. This in turn meant that some of the Jews who served in the Home Army during the war did not disclose their origin. It is impossible to establish today what the main reason for this discretion was. It could have resulted from fear of possible anti-Semitic behaviour among their Polish comrades-in-arms; however, it might also have been an unconditional reflex related to the general principle of looking after one's own safety. This specific form of Jewish underground activity, even among 'their own people', resulted from over three years of everyday war experiences. It protected both those in hiding and those who helped them from being exposed. In addition, hiding one's identity was facilitated by the principle of using organisational codenames within the underground. None of the comrades in arms were to ask for their true personal data. Strict secrecy was the rule in this regard, covering both the soldiers and their families.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>26</sup> *Cichociemni*, a.k.a. *Cichociemni Spadochroniarze Armii Krajowej*, the 'Silent Unseen', were elite special-operations paratroopers of the Polish Army in exile, created in Great Britain during the Second World War to operate in occupied Poland.

Of the individual cases presented later in the article, around 30 per cent of them admitted being of Jewish origin (however, this dozen or so soldiers cannot constitute a representative sample to draw any far-reaching conclusions).<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, after many years, these habits of discretion and concealing origins mean there is little broader knowledge about the citizens of Jewish nationality within the ranks of the Home Army. Not much information has been preserved in their wake. Often, apart from stating the fact that they did indeed serve in Home Army units, it is impossible to outline their wartime fates in greater detail. This does not allow us to make detailed analyses of individual cases, or to get to know the broader context of their life choices. We only know that Jews served in the Home Army from scattered and partial analyses of the phenomenon.

This thesis is confirmed by the queries and research carried out after the Second World War by Bernard Marek – historian, journalist, and from 1949 to 1966 director of the Jewish Historical Institute. In his testimony, located in the Institute's archives, we can find numerous notes devoted to Jewish resistance fighters in the Home Army. These include a note on a group of ten Jews who served in the Home Army's 'Bartkiewicz'<sup>28</sup> and 'Krybar' Groups<sup>29</sup> before the outbreak of the Warsaw Rising. After 20 September 1944, both these units were merged into the 36th Infantry Regiment of the Home Army's Academic Legion.<sup>30</sup> After the collapse of the uprising, on 5 October 1944, the soldiers of the 36th Home Army Regiment

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<sup>27</sup> M. Melchior, 'Uciekinierzy z gett po "stronie aryjskiej" na prowincji dystryktu warszawskiego – sposoby przetrwania', in *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka, Warszawa 2007, pp. 350–55.

<sup>28</sup> The Home Army's 'Bartkiewicz' Group: a Home Army unit under the command of Maj Włodzimierz Zawadzki, codename 'Bartkiewicz', who fought from 5 August to 3 October 1944 in the Warsaw Uprising in Śródmieście. After 20 September, the Group was transformed into the 2nd and 3rd battalions of the 36th Home Army Infantry Regiment; for more see M. Kledzik, *Zgrupowanie AK majora Bartkiewicza*, Warszawa 2002.

<sup>29</sup> The Home Army's 'Krybar' Group (Combat Group 'Krybar', from 3 September 1944 the Home Army's 'Powiśle' Group): a Home Army unit under the command of Capt Cyprian Odorkiewicz, codename 'Krybar', from 3 September 1944 under Maj Stanisław Błaszczak, codename 'Róg'; this unit fought in the Warsaw Rising until 6 September 1944 in Powiśle District. After 20 September, the soldiers of 'Krybar' joined the 36th Home Army Infantry Regiment; for more see W. Rosłoniec *Grupa "Krybar". Powiśle 1944*, Warszawa 1989.

<sup>30</sup> The 36th Infantry Regiment of the Home Army's Academic Legion: a unit of the Home Army under the command of Lt Stanisław Błaszczak, codename 'Róg', part of the Home Army's Stefan Okrzeja 28th Infantry Division. It was established after 20 September 1944 from the merger of three Home Army Groups: 'Bartkiewicz', 'Róg' and 'Krybar'; for more, see Kledzik, *Zgrupowanie AK*.

marched into German captivity; unfortunately, there is no detailed information about the fate of its Jewish soldiers.<sup>31</sup>

At least a dozen people of Jewish origin also served in the Home Army's 'Gustaw' Battalion, whose roots lay in the National Military Organisation [*Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa*],<sup>32</sup> and in the Home Army's 'Harnaś' Battalion formed on its basis.<sup>33</sup> Among the Jewish soldiers who took an active part in the Warsaw Rising were Józef Levi (Lewi), codename 'Zdzisław', a doctor from the sanitary unit of the Home Army's 'Harnaś' Battalion, who worked during the battle at the infirmary on 4 Mazowiecka Street in the Northern Śródmieście district.<sup>34</sup>

However, according to the findings of Edward Kossoy, at least 1150 Jews took part in the Warsaw Rising itself (the total of all the formations taking part in the fighting). These included fighters who had survived the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Jews liberated from the *KL Warschau* in Gęsiówka in the first days of the Warsaw Rising, and those who were already hiding in the city. Most of them did not reveal their true origins, which makes more detailed calculations difficult.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand it is known from individual reports that, for example, Second Lieutenant Josef Ozik (aka Julian Dubrovnik), codename 'Nili' or 'Wili', served in the Home Army's Warsaw District. Until 1939 he had been a non-commissioned officer of the Polish Army, and after the defensive war in 1939 he was in *Stalag IA Stablack*, in today's Stabławki, from which he was either released or escaped. In March 1943, he joined the organisation – as he himself explained – “out of a desire

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<sup>31</sup> AŻIH, The testimony of Bernard Marek, S/333/170, Note 'Partyzantka w Polsce', n.p., n.d., p. 363.

<sup>32</sup> The Home Army's 'Gustaw' Battalion: a Home Army unit under the command of Maj Ludwik Gawrych, codename 'Gustaw', who fought in the Warsaw Rising in the Old Town and in the city centre; for more see R. Bielecki, "Gustaw" – "Harnaś". *Dwa powstańcze bataliony*, Warszawa 1989.

<sup>33</sup> The Home Army's 'Harnaś' Battalion: a division of the Home Army established on 6 August 1944 on the basis of two companies of the Home Army's 'Gustaw' Battalion. It was commanded by 2nd Lt Marian Krawczyk, codename 'Harnaś'. During the Warsaw Rising, the unit fought in the Nowy Świat district. After 3 September 1944, it was reunited with the Home Army's 'Gustaw' Battalion, for more see *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> K. Kosiński, "Ekonomia krwi". *Konspiracja narodowa w walczącej Warszawie: 1939–1944–1990*, Warszawa 2020, p. 543.

<sup>35</sup> E. Kossoy, 'Żydzi w Powstaniu Warszawskim', *Zeszyty Historyczne* 2004, no. 147, pp. 43–78. For more named examples of Jews participating in the Uprising's battles, see *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie*, Warszawa 2009; K. Bielawski, 'Żydzi w Powstaniu Warszawskim', on the *Virtual Shtetl* website, <https://shtetl.org.pl/pl/zydzy-w-powstaniu-warszawskim>, accessed 8 February 2021.

to fight Germany [*sic*] and take revenge for the tragedy of the Jewish nation”. Reaching the rank of sergeant, he was a company commander in the ‘Wampira’ unit; He ended the war in the ranks of the Home Army as a second lieutenant.<sup>36</sup>

In turn, in the Home Army’s Piotrków Trybunalski sub-district, two or three unknown Jews joined the Home Army’s ‘Mściciel’ Partisan Unit in autumn 1942 under the command of Tadeusz Bartosiak, codename ‘Tadeusz’. They may have been the brothers Szymon and Szmul (Samuel) Cytrynowicz, who were known to have possessed firearms. However, it is impossible to unequivocally establish the nature of their association with the Home Army unit. As Wojciech Zawadzki emphasises, according to Zdzisław Ignacy Kiełbasiński, codename ‘Dąbal’ (deputy commander of the above-mentioned unit), these Jews may have been German informers and perpetrators of an ambush near Albertów on 3 January 1943. As a result of an investigation carried out by the Home Army command, they were sentenced to death for treason.<sup>37</sup>

The figures obtained as a result of a query in the Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute correlate with the information published by the Home Army during the war. In August 1944, in the ‘Information Bulletin’ [*Biuletyn Informacyjny*], the main press organ of the Polish Underground State, there was a short message about foreigners and representatives of national minorities serving in the Polish Armed Forces: “Jews are also fighting in the ranks of the Home Army. Their number is, of course, relatively small in view of the almost total extermination of Polish Jews by the Germans. For example, in one division there are just three Jews. The commander of the Jewish Combat Organisation has called on all Jewish fighters to participate in the Home Army’s fight”.<sup>38</sup> It should be emphasised that this announcement was published in the official press organ of the Polish Underground

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<sup>36</sup> AŻIH, ŻZBUWZzF, 318/23, Personal files of veterans, Josef Ozik’s questionnaire, Warsaw, 11 July 1945, p. 146; *ibid.*, Opinion of the commander of the Special Political and Propaganda Group of the Capital City of Warsaw on Josef Ozik, Warszawa-Praga, 6 October 1944, p. 146.

<sup>37</sup> For unknown reasons, the sentence was carried out not only on two or three Jews from the Home Army’s ‘Mściciel’ Partisan Unit, but also on a group of a dozen or so Jews hiding in the nearby Czółno forest near Lubochnia, in the area where the unit operated; for more, see W. Zawadzki *Tajemnice Diablej Góry. Historia wyklętej miłości*, Końskie 2017, pp. 67–78.

<sup>38</sup> Studium Polski Podziemnej (The Polish Underground Movement Study Trust in London; hereinafter: SPP), Sources, 20, ‘Foreigners in the Home Army’, ‘Słowacy, Francuzi, Żydzi w szeregach AK’, *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, Warsaw, 18 August 1944, vol. 6, no. 55 (263), p. 2.

State. Similar materials from the era could probably include data on the service of the minorities in the Home Army, as referred to in the *Information Bulletin*.

In fact, some Jews did also find a place for themselves in the Home Army. They shared the plight and misery of guerrilla life together with their comrades-in-arms. They fought together against the German occupiers; they enjoyed victories and suffered defeats together. So far, little has been written in Polish historiography about the positive events related to the service of Jews in the Home Army. This study presents the fates of those representatives of the Jewish minority who, thanks to their active participation in the structures of Fighting Poland in the Kielce region, survived the Second World War,<sup>39</sup> the German occupation and the Holocaust.<sup>40</sup>

At the end of 1942, during Aktion Reinhardt (part of the so-called final solution to the Jewish question), most of the ghettos in the Radom district were liquidated. The surviving Jews who had managed to avoid deportation to the death camps or forced labour camps remained in hiding. One way to survive in this situation was to join the partisan units, so the Jewish survivors sought opportunities to join the Home Army formations that had been active in the area since spring 1943.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The author is aware that some Home Army soldiers also murdered their comrades-in-arms of Jewish origin. The analysis of these cases is beyond the scope of this article. For the sake of order, however, at least two such tragic events should be mentioned: Rifleman Roman Olizarowski, codename 'Pomsta', a fugitive from the Warsaw ghetto. In 1943, a soldier of the long-range radio security unit, Lt Jan Kosiński, codename 'Inspektor Jacek', transferred in November to the Military Sabotage Division of the Home Army's 'Chosen Ones' [*Wybraniec*] unit. He was killed by soldiers after disclosing information about his origin (C. Chlebowski, *Pozdrowcie Góry Świętokrzyskie*, Warszawa 2017, p. 317; A. Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, Warszawa 1957, pp. 46–48; A. Skibińska, J. Tokarska-Bakir, "Barabasz" i Żydzi. Z historii oddziału AK "Wybraniec", *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 2011, no. 7, pp. 78–82). Codename 'Miś', name unknown: a doctor in the Home Army's 'Barwy Białe' Partisan Unit. Suspected of spying on behalf of the Germans. Killed in spring 1944 on the order of unit commander Lt Kazimierz Olchowik, codename 'Zawisza' (J. Mazurek, A. Skibińska, "Barwy Białe" w drodze na pomoc walczącej Warszawie. Zbrodnia AK na Żydach', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 2011, no. 7, p. 428).

<sup>40</sup> The activity of Jews in the Kielce region has so far only been studied in relation to the Communist formations (S. [Shmuel] Krakowski, "Żydzi w oddziałach partyzanckich Gwardii Ludowej i Armii Ludowej na Kielecczyźnie", *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 1968, no. 65–66, pp. 51–71).

<sup>41</sup> A separate issue (which has been impossible to specify, due to the large number of persons whose data one would have to study within the Home Army's Radom-Kielce District) involves tracing the fate of the Poles of Jewish origin. For example Zdzisław Witebski, codename 'Poraj' and his sister Krystyna Rachtan *née* Witebska, codename 'Justyna', siblings serving in the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Home Army Legions, came from an assimilated and secular Jewish family (Piotr Rachtan, 'Krystyna Maria Rachtan, dr nauk ekonomicznych [11 XI 1921 – 22 VI 2007]', Warsaw, 16 December 2017, typescript, p. 2 [author's private collection]).

One of these survivors was Henryk Kuperszmidt, codenames 'Bratek' & 'Kwiatek', from Grzybowa Góra near Skarżysko Kościelne, who, due to his Jewish origin, had been in hiding since autumn 1942. In June or July of the following year he joined the Home Army's 'Ponury' Partisan Groups under the command of 'Silent Unseen' Lieutenant Jan Piwnik, codename 'Ponury', and was assigned to the 1st Group under 'Silent Unseen' Lieutenant Eugeniusz Kaszyński, codename 'Nurt'. Throughout the 1943 campaign, he fought directly in the ranks of the 1st Platoon under the command of Second Lieutenant Euzebiusz Domoradzki, codename 'Grot'.<sup>42</sup>

While he himself was safe in the ranks of the Home Army, on 7 July 1943, as a result of a denunciation, German policemen from the *Stützpunkt* at Mirzec carried out a raid in Skarżysko Kościelne and Grzybowa Góra. The punitive expedition was intended to find Kuperszmidt and Stefan Sieczka from Skarżysko Kościelne, who were hiding from the Germans. "From Skarżysko Kościelne, the policemen kidnapped Helena (aged 37), Henryk (aged 13), Barbara (aged 1) Sieczek, and Zbigniew (4) and Balbina (5) Łyżwa. Next, they abducted [Henryk's wife] Anna Kuperszmidt, 24 years old, and her daughter Leokadia, 1½ years old, from Grzybowa Góra. [...] All of them were then shot between Grzybowa Góra and Gadka".<sup>43</sup> They were buried in the forest at the place where they were executed, but their families later exhumed their relatives' bodies and buried them in the cemetery in Skarżysko Kościelne.<sup>44</sup>

Now alone, Henryk Kuperszmidt remained until the end of the war in the Home Army's partisan units, which in summer 1944 were transformed into the

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<sup>42</sup> Chlebowski, *Pozdrowcie Góry*, p. 496.

<sup>43</sup> T. Domański, 'Działalność Stützpunktu w Mircu w latach 1942–1944', in *Historia Ziemi Starachowickiej*, vol. 2: *Polityka okupacyjnych władz niemieckich wobec ludności polskiej w powiecie starachowickim w latach 1939–1945*, ed. P. Rozwadowski, Starachowice 2010, p. 95; T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie na wsi kieleckiej 1939–1945*, Kielce 2011, pp. 203–04.

<sup>44</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych (Central Archives of Modern Records) in Warsaw, Files of Józef Rell, 7, Lists of platoon soldiers, districts, Letter from the head of the Skarżysko Kościelne commune to the Board of the District Association of Participants in the Armed Struggle for Independence and Democracy in Skarżysko-Kamienna, Skarżysko Kościelne, 24 February 1948, p. 4; Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Kielcach (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Kielce; hereinafter: AIPN Ki), District Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation – Institute of National Remembrance in Kielce, 53/301, Photocopies of municipal court surveys regarding executions and mass graves, questionnaire no. 107 on mass executions and mass graves concerning Grzybowa Góra, Starachowice–Wierzbnik, 29 September 1945, pp. 9–10.

1st battalion of the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Home Army Legions. During Operation Tempest [*Burza*], he served in the 2nd company under Second Lieutenant Marian Świdorski, codename 'Dzik'. In the period from 6 to 23 September 1944, he was temporarily assigned to the sanitary patrol of the 1st battalion of the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Home Army Legions.<sup>45</sup> He ended the war as a senior rifleman [*starszy strzelec*, roughly equivalent to a private first class]. In 1945 he changed his name to Kwieciński.<sup>46</sup>

It is worth adding that Kuperszmidt's sister Antońska was also in hiding at that time. She was a liaison officer of the Peasants' Battalions partisan unit under the command of Cpl Władysław Janiec, codename 'Rinaldi'.<sup>47</sup>

Halina Kon (by her first marriage Zawadzka) also found shelter in the same unit as Kuperszmidt. In autumn 1942 she escaped from the Końskie ghetto shortly before its liquidation. On 3 and 7 November 1942, the Germans took the local Jews to the Treblinka II extermination camp in two transports (6000 and 3000 people). The last Jews from Łódź were transported to Szydłowiec on 6 and 7 January 1943, and from there they were sent to Treblinka II on 13 January 1943.<sup>48</sup>

After escaping from Końskie, Halina Kon reached Warsaw, where she tried to hide, but she was forced to leave the capital after losing her forged Aryan papers. She reached Starachowice via Koluszki and Skarżysko-Kamienna. From October 1942 to spring 1943 she took shelter with a Polish family, the Słowiks, in Starachowice. This family had been collaborating with the Home Army's Starachowice Sub-District. Kon concealed herself with them, adopting a Polish

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<sup>45</sup> Muzeum im. Orła Białego w Skarżysku-Kamiennej (White Eagle Museum in Skarżysko-Kamienna), The 'Nurt' Archives, Order from the commander of the 1st battalion of 2nd IR Leg HA no. 32/44, n.p., 6 September 1944, unpagued; *ibid.*, Order from the commander of the 1st battalion of 2nd IR Leg HA no. 36/44, n.p., 23 September 1944, unpagued.

<sup>46</sup> AIPN Ki, Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Kielce (hereinafter: WUSW Kielce), 014/1025, The operational investigation of operation 'Szantaż', memo from a meeting with a secret collaborator, ps. 'Tadek', on 19 April 1968, pp. 119–19v.

<sup>47</sup> E. Kołomańska, 'Polskie podziemie niepodległościowe w ratowaniu Żydów na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1939–1945', in *Żydzi i wojsko polskie*, p. 240.

<sup>48</sup> H. Zawadzka, *Ucieczka z getta*, Warszawa 2001; 'Końskie', in *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life. Before and during the Holocaust*, vol. 2: *K-Sered*, ed. S. Spector, New York–Jerusalem 2001, p. 654; 'Końskie', in *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos during the Holocaust*, vol. 1: *A-M*, ed. G. Miron, Jerusalem 2009, pp. 340–41.

surname. At their request, she worked (in July 1943?) as a liaison officer during the unsuccessful action against the collector for the *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* company stores in Starachowice. After the arrest of the ringleaders, for security reasons the Home Army Sub-District Headquarters in Starachowice sent her to the nearest partisan unit; this was the aforementioned 1st Platoon of the 1st Group of the Home Army's 'Ponury' Partisan Groups, then commanded by Second Lieutenant Euzebiusz Domoradzki, codename 'Grot'.<sup>49</sup>

In the forest, Halina took the pseudonym 'Malina' and was assigned to the sanitary service. The field hospital was managed by Second Lieutenant Dr Kazimierz Łotkowski, codename 'Zan'.<sup>50</sup> According to unconfirmed reports, the wife of Dr Łotkowski "had been a baptised Jew before the war. One of the neighbours reported this to the Germans and the woman was arrested. Kazik [Kazimierz Łotkowski] managed to escape and hide in the forest, while the fate of his wife is still unknown to this day".<sup>51</sup>

Halina Kon, codename 'Malina', stayed in the Home Army unit in Wykus in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains until autumn 1943. She was trained in the use of weapons and in first aid. As a nurse, she took part in the combat actions undertaken by the Home Army's 'Ponury' Partisan Groups. She shared the fate of all the other soldiers too, which she recalled as follows:

I took part in actions several times, sometimes in remote places. [...] I didn't know the names of the places we were sent to, or the people who we visited at night. I knew that most often these were people cooperating with the partisans. Sometimes, however, they were collaborators with the Germans, and our unexpected visits were a threat or even a punishment. Despite all the difficulties and the constant danger in which I lived in the camp and during the field trips, I felt safer here than in Starachowice. The little pistol I always had with me made me feel better. In the forest, I no longer reacted to the word 'Jew' as I had in Starachowice.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Zawadzka, *Ucieczka z getta*, pp. 119–21.

<sup>50</sup> Chlebowski, *Pozdróćcie Góry*, pp. 192, 493.

<sup>51</sup> Zawadzka, *Ucieczka z getta*, p. 122.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.



However, in the 1st platoon under cadet corporal Władysław Wasilewski, codename 'Oseta', one Second Lieutenant Israel Czyżyk, codename 'Adam' (aka 'Adam Jemioła' or 'Stefan Salwowski') served in the 3rd Group, commanded by Second Lieutenant Stanisław Pałac, codename 'Mariański'. After the start of the war Czyżyk, a Warsaw tailor and a member of the Bund, managed to reach the eastern territories of Poland. In 1939–41 he lived in Lwów (today Lviv in Ukraine) under the Soviet occupation and continued to work as a tailor. After the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, he left the city for fear of being arrested by the Germans.<sup>53</sup>

He reached the Kielce region, where he joined the People's Guard [*Gwardia Ludowa*<sup>54</sup>]. From 3 March 1943, he served in the 1st squad of the platoon led by cadet corporal Władysław Wasilewski, codename 'Oset', in the GL branch of Kielce Region, under the command of Second Lieutenant Ignacy Robb (Rosenfarb), codename 'Narbutt' (who was also Jewish). After the GL troops had been broken up by the Germans near Zalezianka on 15 May 1943, he and the 'Oseta' platoon merged with the 'Ponury' Partisan Groups, and followed them through the entire duration of their combat. He survived the winter with a reduced unit in the Opatów region.<sup>55</sup>

During Operation Tempest in spring 1944, Izrael Czyżyk was commander of the heavy machine gun section in the 4th heavy weapons platoon of the 1st company of the 1st battalion of the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Home Army Legions. His section used a CKM wz. 30, a Polish-made clone of the American Browning M1917 heavy machine gun. He ended the war as a platoon member in the ranks of the Home Army.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> AŻIH, ZŻBUWZzF, 318/22, Personal files of veterans, Izrael Czyżyk's questionnaire, [Warsaw], n.d., p. 90.

<sup>54</sup> *Gwardia Ludowa* (the People's Guard, *GL*) was a Communist underground armed organisation created in early 1942 by the Communist Polish Workers' Party in German-occupied Poland, with sponsorship from the Soviet Union.

<sup>55</sup> AIPN Ki, Archives of the Association of Remembrance of the Home Army's 'Ponury'-'Nurt' Partisan Groups in the Świętokrzyskie Region (hereinafter: ASP), 212/393, Personal file of Stanisław Pałac, Statement by Izrael Czyżyk, Warsaw, 17 August 1945, sheet 4; AŻIH, ZŻBUWZzF, 318/22, Personal files of combatants, Izrael Czyżyk's questionnaire, [Warsaw], n.d., p. 90; Chlebowski, *Pozdrówcie Góry*, p. 512; M. Jedynak, *Władysław Wasilewski "Oset", "Odrowąż" (1921–1943). Harcerski instruktor i partyzancki dowódca*, Kielce 2016, p. 46; List of soldiers of the Home Army's 'Ponury' Partisan Groups, n.p., December 1943, in *Dokumenty do dziejów Zgrupowań Partyzanckich AK "Ponury"*, ed. M. Jedynak, Kielce–Kraków 2014, p. 273.

<sup>56</sup> AIPN Ki, ASP, 212/393, Personal file of Stanisław Pałac, Statement by Izrael Czyżyk, Warsaw, 17 August 1945, p. 4.

Another member of the same regiment (but in the ranks of the 2nd squad of the 3rd platoon of the 2nd company of the 1st battalion) from the end of July 1944 was Rifleman Józef (Zvi) Halperin, codename 'Ziuk', who officially registered as Józef Malczewski, the name he had adopted in 1942; he served as a section officer. He hid in the area of Baranowicze until spring 1944, from where he reached the Kielce region via Warsaw. Reporting to a partisan detachment of the Home Army, he said to the liaison officer:

'I would like to join a unit that is not anti-Semitic, as my beloved cousin, she married a Jew', He replied that there were also Jews in the Home Army, although only a few of them; that many of those who had escaped had joined the People's Army [the Soviet-backed Polish force]; that both organisations were helping the ghetto insurgents; and expressed his regret that the aid was so limited and that the heroic uprising had been so brutally suppressed. He praised the unit led by Captain 'Nurt' to which he intended to send me.<sup>57</sup>

'Ziuk' reached the detachment with a group of eight Polish foresters; he persuaded them to come from Baranowicze to Suchedniów especially for this purpose, and they deserted there with their weapons. He went through the entire campaign of 1944 with this detachment, taking part in the attack in Dziebałtów (on the night of 26–27 August 1944) and in the battles near Lipno and Chotów (29–30 October 1944), among others. He ended the war as a senior rifleman.<sup>58</sup>

Meanwhile, Rifleman Jerzy Bette, codename 'Papcio', served in the 4th company 'Jędrusie' of the 2nd battalion of the 2nd Home Army Legions. He joined the unit in 1943, when the group was operating independently of the Home Army as the 'Jędrusie' Partisan Unit. As his comrade-in-arms Włodzimierz Gruszczyński, codename 'Jach', recalled,

[...] he seemed happy to have someone to protect him and... that he didn't have to go to the fighting; it was safer for both sides. Bette joined the group in the summer

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<sup>57</sup> J. Halperin, *Ludzie są wszędzie*, Warszawa 2002, pp. 240–41.

<sup>58</sup> Record sheet of Józef Halperin, [Warsaw], 27 July 1989 (from the collection of Zdzisław Rachtan, codename 'Halny'); Halperin, *Ludzie*, pp. 243–94.

of 1943 with two Bergman submachine guns (which at that time only the German police forces used). [Marcin Kozłowski] 'Łysy' met him walking, obviously unarmed, on the road from Klimontów to Sulisławice. Realising he was a stranger, he demanded identification at gunpoint. Bette did not hide his religion. He guessed the armed man was with the underground. He offered his services as an educated man. He was accepted. He claimed to have escaped from the prison in Sandomierz.

In August 1944, Jerzy Bette deserted from the unit. He probably moved to a branch of the BCh, and then to the People's Army.<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, in the ranks of the 9th company of Lieutenant Tadeusz Kolatorowicz, codename 'Kruk', in the 3rd battalion under Capt Stefan Kępa, codename 'Pochmurny', the 2nd Regiment of the Home Army Legions included one 'Kukułka'; only his surname, Gitman, is recorded. Tadeusz Jandula, codename 'Nowy', wrote about him in his memoirs: "I was friends with a Jew from Staszów, Gitman, 'Kukułka', who, unable to sleep at night due to his frostbitten feet, made my night watches pleasant with his Jewish jokes and stories".<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, no detailed information about this man has survived.

People with Jewish roots also served in other partisan units of the Home Army. In 1944 during the restoration of the Armed Forces in Poland, the above-mentioned Dr Julian Aleksandrowicz, codename 'Twardy', an escapee from the Cracow ghetto, was appointed doctor to the 1st battalion of the Home Army's 172nd Infantry Regiment, which was formed on the territory of the Home Army's Kozienice Region in the Radom Inspectorate. On 27 August 1944 this unit, which had not yet been fully mobilised, became part of the 3rd Infantry Regiment of the Home Army Legions as the 3rd battalion. Second Lieutenant Aleksandrowicz performed his functions in this division until the second half of August 1944; he was then transferred to the position of deputy head of the sanitary service of the 2nd Infantry Division of the Home Army Legions, where he remained until the end of October 1944.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> W. Gruszczyński, *Odwet i Jędrusie. Monografia*, Zagnańsk 2011, p. 152.

<sup>60</sup> T. Jandula, 'Nowy', *Ocalić od zapomnienia*, vol. 3, Końskie 1998, p. 947.

<sup>61</sup> J. Aleksandrowicz, *Kartki z dziennika doktora Twardego*, Kraków 2001, pp. 132–71; J. Aleksandrowicz, E. Stawowy, *Tyle wart człowiek...*, Lublin 1992, pp. 86–109; M. Rice, 'A Doctor's War Testimony. The Four Incarnations of "Dr. Twardy"', in *Jewish Medicine and Healthcare in Central Eastern Europe. Shared Identities, Entangled Histories*, ed. M. Moskalewicz, U. Caumanns, F. Dross, Cham 2019, pp. 199–217.

Another doctor of Jewish origin also served with the 4th Infantry Regiment of the Home Army Legions: Lieutenant Doctor Adam Browar-Paszkowski, codename 'Lepszy'. He was assigned to the regimental sanitary unit from 27 August to 19 September 1944.<sup>62</sup>

It has also been possible to find traces of Jewish soldiers in the units formed in the second wave, during the reconstruction of the Armed Forces in Poland. Two Jews from Szydłowiec served in the Home Army's Iłżecki Infantry Regiment, which had been decimated after the battle in Piotrowe Pole (1–2 October 1944). They managed to leave the battlefield together with other soldiers. They came under the orders of Second Lieutenant Seweryn Maczuga, aka Andrzej Bielański, codename 'Wrzos'; and stayed with his company for some time in the area of Parszów and Suchedniów until the turn of December 1944. Unfortunately, their names and surnames were not recorded.<sup>63</sup>

Home Army soldiers helped representatives of the Jewish minority not only in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, and not just by accepting them into their ranks. One noteworthy example is the activity of the 'Kedyw' partisan unit of the Home Army's Częstochowa District under the command of Second Lieutenant Jerzy Kurpiński, codename 'Ponury'. In 1943, when his men were operating in the area of Żłoty Potok and Włoszczowa, "they were constantly feeding a dozen or so Jews from Żarki and Włoszczowa. They also provided them with medicines, clothing and underwear, 'to the best of the unit's abilities'".<sup>64</sup> A similar aid campaign was also carried out by other entities of Fighting Poland, including the BCh Special Unit under the command of cadet corporal Eugeniusz Fąfara, codename 'Nawrot', in the region of Opatów; as did the field structures subordinate to Second Lieutenant Jan Pszczoła, codename 'Wojnar', commander of the BCh District in Pińczów.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, the Capital City's Office of Internal Affairs in Warsaw, 0423/2943, Operational case of Codename 'Connector' about Adam Browar-Paszkowski; W. Borzobohaty, *"Jodla". Okręg Radomsko-Kielecki ZWZ-AK 1939-1945*, Warszawa 1988, p. 387.

<sup>63</sup> R. Trzmiel, 'O oddziale partyzanckim AK Seweryna Maczugi (Andrzeja Bielańskiego) "Wrzosa"', *Nowe Pismo Starachowice* 1991, part 1, no. 4; part 2, no. 5, p. 6; L. Żmijewski, *Parszów i okolice. Z dziejów powiatu starachowickiego*, Starachowice 2000, pp. 36–37.

<sup>64</sup> J. Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów. Słownik*, Warszawa 2014, p. 491. In this work, the author also discusses the aid rendered by Home Army and BCh soldiers, as well as members of the NSZ, to Jews in other parts of occupied Poland (*ibid.*, pp. 488–92).

<sup>65</sup> *Bataliony Chłopskie w walce o narodowe i społeczne wyzwolenie*, ed. K. Przybysz, Warszawa 1975, pp. 305–06; E. Kołomańska, 'Polskie podziemie niepodległościowe w ratowaniu Żydów na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1939–1945', in *Żydzi i wojsko polskie*, pp. 244–45.

The participation of Jews in the Home Army units' armed effort did not differ much from how the other soldiers. Poles and Jews faced the same conditions and treatment in the forest, as did the Austrians, British, French and Germans. After the war Józef Halperin, codename 'Ziuk', recalled those times as follows:

In the forest I was a man who had the right to live; during this period, I felt that I was no longer alone, that there were people around me who – for better and for worse – were sharing my fate. And this feeling made me hope that after the long night that surrounded us all, daylight would come. This feeling was largely due to the specific atmosphere in the unit led by [*Cichociemny* Captain Eugeniusz Kaszyński] 'Nurt', who gave people a sense of security, that they would not be surprised by the enemy, that they would not be unnecessarily exposed to danger, that they would be treated humanely, and that their basic needs would be provided for. Order, camaraderie, and self-discipline were the rule in this battalion, without military rigour.<sup>66</sup>

Sgt Izrael Czyżyk, codename 'Adam', made a similar statement; after the Second World War he was an active member of the Jewish Committee in Warsaw and the Warsaw Committee of the Bund. After serving for a year and a half in the ranks of the Home Army, in August 1945 he wrote the following statement:

From June 1943 to the end of November 1944, I was in the partisan unit of the Home Army under the command of Capt [Stanisław Pałac] 'Mariański'. Under the command of Capt 'Mariański' we fought numerous battles and victorious fights against the Germans. In his behaviour towards the soldiers, Cpt. 'Mariański' was a fair and kind commander, who made no distinctions on the basis of nationality.<sup>67</sup>

One more testament to his service in the ranks of the 1st battalion of the 172nd Home Army Infantry Regiment and the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment

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<sup>66</sup> Halperin, *Ludzie*, pp. 289–90.

<sup>67</sup> AIPN Ki, ASP, 212/393, Personal file of Stanisław Pałac, Statement by Izrael Czyżyk, Warsaw, 17 August 1945, p. 4.

of the Home Army's Legion, given independently of others, and certainly fully conscious of his words, was left behind by Lieutenant Julian Aleksandrowicz, codename 'Twardy', who recalled his assignment to the Home Army's partisan units:

One great feeling never left me, the most beautiful and the most human: the feeling of freedom. I was aware that my life was now in my own hands, that I held it myself – not the enemy. That I could only die in battle, and not like a defenceless creature at the mercy of fate. The feeling of having regained my human dignity on the path I had won, with the help of Real People [*sic*], was a compensation for yesterday's humiliation. I am a soldier again, but with such an expanded awareness of my service, of my social role – so much more than in September 1939.<sup>68</sup>

The profiles of the soldiers presented above and their testimonies confirm the fact that Jews could and did serve in the structures of the Polish Armed Forces. Even if many of them decided not to disclose their origin, they felt secure in the partisan units operating in the Radom-Kielce AK District. Such unknown episodes in the recent history of the Polish and Jewish nations should be disseminated more widely. They should serve as evidence for future generations that different religions can coexist in a single place and time, even in such a difficult period as war.

The subject of the Jewish soldiers' activity in the Home Army has been only fragmentarily researched and still little is known. I realise that this article is only a contribution to the research on their service in the ranks of the Polish Underground State; yet, I hope that it will open up a broader discussion of the problem and act as an incentive to understanding this important aspect of the history of the Second World War.

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<sup>68</sup> Aleksandrowicz, *Kartki z dziennika*, p. 74.

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## SUMMARY

During the Second World War, a few of the Jews who survived extermination found refuge in the ranks of the Home Army. The article presents the fate of those Jews who served in partisan units organised and operating in the Radom–Kielce AK District in the years 1943–44. Due to the modest source base, their motivations, the circumstances in which they joined the ranks of the Polish Armed Forces, the course of their service, and sometimes their further fates have been presented from a peripheral perspective. The profiles of the soldiers and their testimonies confirm the fact that the Jews could and did serve in the structures of the Home Army.

## KEYWORDS

Home Army • Jews • World War II  
• partisans • Kielce region