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ACTIVITY OF THE *VOLKSDEUTSCHE* WŁADYSŁAW SEREDYŃSKI  
AND HIS SON ROMAN IN THE LIGHT OF THE SURVIVING  
FILES FROM A CRIMINAL CASE TRIED UNDER THE AUGUST  
DECREE. A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE GERMAN  
OCCUPATION OF THE LUBACZÓW LAND

Nationality policy was one of the key tasks pursued by the administration of the Third Reich on the occupied Polish lands during World War Two. According to Leszek Olejnik, “its goals were to strengthen ‘Germanness’ on eastern lands incorporated into the Reich and to antagonise various groups of Polish society, as well as to attempt to create new nations.”<sup>1</sup> The creation of the German Nationality List (*Deutsche Volksliste*, DVL), or *de facto* the German national community, was undoubtedly a result of this policy. This found its practical expression in the legal and political solutions introduced in annexed, conquered and occupied countries.<sup>2</sup> During the German occupation, the term *Volksdeutsch* meant a person who was listed as being of German origin and therefore had “considerable privileges over the Polish or Jewish population.”<sup>3</sup>

On the territories of the Republic of Poland annexed by the Third Reich, the list was introduced by a decree of 4 March 1941. It should be noted that the first

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<sup>1</sup> L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960* (Łódź, 2003), p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, *Zdraycy narodu? Losy volksdeutschów w Polsce po II wojnie światowej* (Warsaw, 2006), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> W. Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych z almanachem* (Warsaw, 2003), p. 533.

measures aimed at national segregation were taken in Wartheland already in the autumn of 1939, but the March decree established legal norms in this area for the entire territory annexed to the Third Reich. This regulation entered into force guided by the aim of not losing “a single drop of German blood.” The inhabitants of the annexed areas were to express their wish to belong to the German nation themselves. The prerequisite for this was the fulfilment of several criteria, such as German origin and “racial adaptation,” or the applicant’s behaviour under the German occupation.<sup>4</sup>

The Regulation of 4 March 1941 on the German nationality list and citizenship also introduced the division of German nationality groups. The first of these groups included people who spoke German on a daily basis in pre-war Poland, were politically active and nurtured German traditions through their activities in various political organisations. The second group consisted of people who were also of German nationality, spoke German daily and promoted German culture but behaved passively in the national struggle. The third group consisted of people of German origin, who had become Polonised over time but were assumed to be able to become full members of the German community in the future. This group also included persons of non-German origin who were married to Germans, as well as individuals with unexplained nationality, who spoke a Slavic language but tended towards German due to their association with the German culture, and who did not acknowledge their roots before 1 September 1939. The fourth and last group included people of German origin who had become Polonised and actively cooperated with the Polish authorities in the interwar period or were involved in Polish social and political organisations.<sup>5</sup>

In the areas annexed to the Third Reich, a total of 2,815,000 people registered on the German nationality list. Of this number, 959 thousand (34.07%) belonged to

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<sup>4</sup> Olejnik, *Zdrójcy narodu?*, pp. 25–26.

<sup>5</sup> Z. Izdebski, *Niemiecka lista narodowa na Górnym Śląsku* (Katowice–Wrocław, 1946), p. 63; A. Karolak, “Kwestia Niemieckiej Listy Narodowej w audycjach rozgłośni im. T. Kościuszki,” *Białostockie Teki Historyczne* 12 (2014), pp. 184–185; W. Jastrzębski, *Polityka narodowościowa w okręgu Rzeszy Gdańsk–Prusy Zachodnie (1939–1945)* (Bydgoszcz, 1977), pp. 393–395; Z. Boda-Krężel, *Sprawa Volkslisty na Górnym Śląsku. Koncepcje likwidacji problemu i ich realizacji* (Opole, 1978), p. 14; R. Kaczmarek, “Niemiecka polityka narodowościowa na Górnym Śląsku (1939–1945),” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2 (2004), p. 123; K. Strykowski, “Akta niemieckiej listy narodowościowej i ich pozostałość w Archiwum Państwowym w Poznaniu,” *Poznański Rocznik Archiwalno-Historyczny* 13/14 (2005–2007), pp. 146–168.

nationality groups I and II, while the remaining 1 million 856 thousand (65.93%) belonged to groups III and IV.<sup>6</sup> About 100,000 people of German origin from the General Governorate (German: Generalgouvernement, Polish: Generalne Gubernatorstwo, GG) must be added to this figure. The problem of the *Volksdeutsche* in the GG was of much lesser importance. Initially, the occupiers did not envisage a Germanisation of the local population, especially since Poles were overwhelmingly dominant and people of German origin mainly had been Polonised.<sup>7</sup> This was especially true in the pre-war voivodeships of Lublin and Lvov (the Rzeszow Region). Hence, during the occupation period, the action of restoring Germanness was intensified among the colonists, who were persuaded to sign the German nationality list. Many of them were considered valuable “in racial and hereditary-biological terms.”<sup>8</sup> Candidates for the *Deutschstämmige* were subject to examination by the SD and the Emigration Headquarters, which divided them into groups A and B, the equivalent of groups III and IV of the German nationality list valid in the territories incorporated into the Third Reich.<sup>9</sup> Registration on the DVL allowed many people to collaborate openly; it also helped protect them from repressions.<sup>10</sup>

This article shows the attitude, behaviour and activity of Władysław and Roman Sereżyński (father and son), residents of Lubaczów, who decided to become collaborators. The article also aims to describe the trial held before the Court of Appeal in Rzeszow at an away session in Lubaczów. Its proceedings aroused considerable interest among the local population. For a broader context, the article also describes the situation of Lubaczów Jews during the occupation.

The activity of Władysław and Roman Sereżyński was established based on the files of the post-war criminal case tried under the August Decree,<sup>11</sup> held in the

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<sup>6</sup> C. Madajczyk, “Polityka okupanta wobec narodu polskiego w okresie II wojny światowej,” in *Problemy wojny i okupacji*, ed. by W. Góra and J. Gołębiowski (Warsaw, 1969), pp. 56–57.

<sup>7</sup> Olejnik, *Zdrajcy narodu?*, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm i okupacje 1938–1945*, vol. 2 (Poznań, 1984), p. 242.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> B. Musiał, “Niemiecka polityka narodowościowa w okupowanej Polsce w latach 1939–1945,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2 (2004), p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> At the end of the Second World War, in order to punish war criminals and Polish citizens who collaborated with the German occupants, the people's government passed new provisions in the internal criminal law, covering special occupation crimes. On 31 August 1944, the communist authorities published a decree concerning the punishment of fascist-Hitlerite criminals guilty of murder and ill-treatment of the civilian population and prisoners of war, and the punishment of traitors to the

Branch Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Rzeszow (*Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Rzeszowie*) under two call numbers: AIPN Rz, 358/38 and AIPN Rz, 358/39<sup>12</sup> [Court of Appeal in Rzeszow, criminal case file concerning Władysław and Roman Sereżyński, accused of collaboration with the Germans and active participation in the liquidation of the Lubaczów Ghetto, i.e. acts under Article 1.2 of the Decree of 31 August 1944.].

To date, no scholarly study has been published that addresses the Sereżyński family's involvement in the extermination of Jews. Fragmentary information can be found in Simon Lavee's book *Oddział niezwyknięzonych*.<sup>13</sup> The author, based on the testimony of a Lubaczów Jew – Edmund Katz – made for the Yad Vashem Institute,<sup>14</sup> describes in perfunctory terms an event in which Roman Sereżyński took part.<sup>15</sup> In addition to this information, the book refers to the Sereżyński

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Polish Nation (*Journal of Laws* 4 [1946], item 16). Between 1945 and 1949, the decree was amended five times. See A. Skibińska, J. Petelewicz, "Udział Polaków w zbrodniach na Żydach na prowincji regionu świętokrzyskiego," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 1 (2005), pp. 120–123; R. Gieroń, "Postępowania karne prowadzone w latach 1947–1955 w sprawach przestępstw okupacyjnych popełnianych przez policjanta granatowego Jana Błażeja. Przyczynek do badań nad stosunkami polsko-żydowskimi," *Analecta Cracoviensia* 49 (2017), pp. 219–247; *idem*, *Półmrok. Procesy karne w sprawie przestępstw okupacyjnych popełnianych przez chłopów wobec Żydów w województwie krakowskim* (Cracow, 2020); T. Domański, "Proces z dekretu sierpniowego policjantów granatowych z Wodzisławia oskarżonych o popełnienie zbrodni na Żydach," *Polish-Jewish Studies* 1 (2020), p. 79.

<sup>12</sup> Previous call number of the files: I K. 73/49, K.O. 370/50, K. 331/50, SAR 38, IPN GK 225/38.

<sup>13</sup> S. Lavee (Łukawiecki), *Oddział niezwyknięzonych. Drużyna żydowskich partyzantów Armii Krajowej pod dowództwem Edmunda Łukawieckiego w latach 1941–1944* (Rzeszow, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> The author refers to the M49E/3300 call number (the document is also held in the archival resource of the Jewish Historical Institute under the call number of AŻIH 301/3300, a brief history of the search for two Poles – war criminals by Edmund Katz – captain of the American Navy [Krótka historia poszukiwania dwóch Polaków – zbrodniarzy wojennych przez Edmunda Katza – kapitana amerykańskiej marynarki wojennej], 17 January 1948, pp. 1–2). It should be noted that Edmund Katz was not an eyewitness to the events from the period of the German occupation of the Lubaczów region. He learned about the activities of the Sereżyńskis from Oskar Meiler, who was connected with Lubaczów and whom he met in Paris. Edmund Katz left Lubaczów in 1928 and settled permanently in the USA, where he served as an officer in the United States Navy. He left his parents and siblings in Lubaczów. After the end of the hostilities, he came to Poland for a time to obtain information about his immediate family. He also visited Lubaczów for this purpose. His parents and brothers died during the German occupation. Only his sister, Barbara Katz, survived the occupation and settled in Wrocław after the war.

<sup>15</sup> The book reveals that Władysław and Roman Sereżyński personally killed Jewish people, "boasting that they could not sleep peacefully at night if they had not killed several Jews during the day." We can learn about the killing of Jews by Władysław Sereżyński from the testimony of a married couple, Wolf and Henia Remmer, who survived the occupation by hiding in the buildings of Antoni Dorota in Młodów near Lubaczów. In a letter sent to the Prosecutor's Office of the District Court

family as *Volksdeutsche*, who “became hunters of Jews.”<sup>16</sup> The figure of Władysław Seredyński also appeared in the memoirs of Father Jan Jagodziński and Eugeniusz Szajowski.<sup>17</sup>

More information about the activity of Władysław and Roman Seredyński is provided by a testimony given by Stanisław Młodziński to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on 10 March 2009.<sup>18</sup> The author, who remembers the German occupation of Lubaczów, gives a lot of detailed information about the liquidation of the local ghetto and also describes the events involving Władysław Seredyński.

### Władysław and Roman Seredyński

Władysław Seredyński was born on 10 September 1897 in Surochów (Jarosław County) into the family of Jan and Antonina, née Kmiotek.<sup>19</sup> He arrived in Lubaczów following his wife Anna, née Meder, in 1921. The couple first settled in nearby

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in Przemyśl, they wrote: “From 1941 Władysław and Roman Seredyński were a terror to the Polish and Jewish population. From 1941 onwards, the defendants constantly abused the Jews in a beastly manner. During the total resettlement of Jews from Lubaczów in 1943, both defendants, armed with revolvers, and iron sticks, leading a dog with them, without the assistance of the police, dragged out the Jews hidden in burrows and cellars, taking from them on the spot everything they saw, then leading them to the cemetery; they beat the Jews mercilessly on the way, forcing them to hand over their money, while at the cemetery they ordered them to undress, cruelly abused them, and cut off the poor unfortunates’ fingers alive, together with their jewellery [...]. A certain Laji Helpert had her gold teeth pulled out alive, then they made them strip naked, [with] beatings and taunts that they would make a good phosphate, they shot them deliberately in other places, inflicting even greater torments on the unfortunate victims so that they ended their lives in terrible agony. Władysław [Seredyński], who was called upon to carry out the execution, fired 17 shots at a certain Mendel Herzberg [...].” According to the same witness, on 15 March 1943 Władysław Seredyński, in the presence of a Ukrainian policeman, was also supposed to have personally shot two Jewish women from Dachnow captured in one of the houses on Kościuszki Street. See Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Rzeszowie (Branch Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Rzeszow, hereinafter AIPN Rz), 353/38, Letter of Wolf and Henia Remmer to the Prosecutor’s Office of the District Court in Przemyśl concerning Władysław Seredyński, 4 April 1944, pp. 215–217 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>16</sup> Lavee (Łukawiecki), *Oddział niezwykłych*, p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> J. Jagodziński, *Wspomnienia z okazji jubileuszu 60-lecia kapłaństwa* (Zamość, 2014), p. 20; E. Szajowski, “W polskiej szkole w sowieckim Lubaczowie,” ed. J. Grechuta, in *Lwowskie pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)*, ed. T. Bereza (Rzeszow, 2006), p. 155.

<sup>18</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (hereinafter USHMM), RG-50.488.0273, The testimony of Stanisław Młodziński, 10 March 2009, held by the museum, transcription: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn45093> (accessed 15 January 2021).

<sup>19</sup> AIPN Rz, 00112/1, Card E-14 from the general information card file of the WUSW in Rzeszow concerning Władysław Seredyński, 17 January 1967.

Młodów and Ostrowiec, and then in Lubaczów on Rejtana Street, near the town centre.<sup>20</sup> On 25 January 1923, their son Roman was born in Młodów.<sup>21</sup> Two years later, Władysław Seredyński was employed by the Lubaczów Municipal Board as a janitor and an undertaker. He continued to work in this profession after the onset of the German occupation.<sup>22</sup> He was assisted in his work at the cemetery by his son Roman, who did not have a permanent job after completing seven years of primary school and a bricklaying course. His situation changed after the onset of the German occupation. He was then given the post of a field officer of the volunteer fire brigade based in Lubaczów.<sup>23</sup>

According to the memoirs of the regionalist Eugeniusz Szajowski, Władysław Seredyński became known as a supporter of the authorities of the time already during the Soviet occupation of the Lubaczów area. “During Soviet times,” recalled Eugeniusz Szajowski, “shops operated under the name of a ‘cooperative’ or a ‘mahazin’ [...]. One of the Soviet shops [...] was launched in the pre-war shop of the agricultural circle opposite the St Stanislaus Church [in Lubaczów]. I once stood in a kilometre-long queue to buy sugar [...]. Order in the queue was guarded [...] by Władysław Seredyński, suitably attired in a pre-war horned cap with a red star. It is difficult to say whether he did this officially or, as it were, on his own initiative.”<sup>24</sup>

According to surviving records, Władysław Seredyński and his son Roman signed the German nationality list in 1942 and began collaborating with the German occupiers. They were involved in hunting down and denouncing Jews at the time of the liquidation of the Lubaczów Ghetto early in January 1943. In 1942–1943, according to eyewitness testimonies, Władysław Seredyński made no secret of his criminal activity in Lubaczów. He felt very secure under the protective umbrella of the German gendarmerie and the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police. He manifested

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<sup>20</sup> J. Tabacek, *Ulica Tadeusza Rejtana – ulicą rzemieślników* (Lubaczów 2017), p. 24; Jagodziński, *Wspomnienia z okazji jubileuszu*, p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> AIPN Rz, 00112/1, Card E-14 from the general information card file of the WUSW in Rzeszów concerning Roman Seredyński, 19 January 1967.

<sup>22</sup> According to his testimony, for some time he served in the local fire brigade, where he assisted the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police in maintaining order in the city.

<sup>23</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/38, Minutes of the interrogation of Roman Seredyński, 15 January 1948, p. 47 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>24</sup> Szajowski, “W polskiej szkole,” p. 155.

his belonging to the German nation and his support for the occupying authorities with a swastika pinned to the lapel of his jacket.<sup>25</sup>

Władysław Seredyński owed his registration on the DVL to his wife, whose ancestors were descendants of German settlers who had settled in the village of Burgau (Karolówka) near Lubaczów.<sup>26</sup> The German authorities then classified the family in the third nationality group.

## Lubaczów

In the interwar period, Lubaczów was a small town with a population of over 5,000, located in the north-eastern part of the Lvov Voivodeship. According to the *Skorowidz miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, in 1921, the dominant nationality in the town were Poles (2,991 people), followed by Ruthenians (1,793 people) and Jews (519 people).<sup>27</sup> If we take religion into account, the numbers are entirely different. The majority of the town's inhabitants were Greek Catholic (2,199 people), Mosaic (1,715 people) and Roman Catholic (1,384 people) faiths.<sup>28</sup> At the turn of 1938 and 1939, Lubaczów had a population of 6,700, of which about 2,000 were Jews.<sup>29</sup>

The city was under German occupation twice. The first time was from 12 to 26 September 1939.<sup>30</sup> After this period, under the German-Soviet Treaty on Borders and Friendship of 28 September 1939, the Wehrmacht units withdrew and surrendered the area to the Red Army. For the second time, the German occupation of Lubaczów began on 24 June 1941, following the outbreak of the German-Soviet war.

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<sup>25</sup> German badge worn by *Volksdeutsche*.

<sup>26</sup> The village-settlement of Burgau was established in 1783 on the land of the village of Młodów as part of the *Josephinische Kolonisation*. The village was founded by four families from the German Reich, who at that time were awarded perpetual usufruct of 86 hectares of farmland. In 1812, a total of 30 Germans lived in the village. At the turn of the 20th century, some of the German inhabitants of the village emigrated to North America. Their farms were acquired by Poles and Ukrainians. During the Second Polish Republic, the village lost its German origin. In 1938, the German name of the village was replaced by the Polish name Karolówka. See P. Rydzewski, *Ziemia Lubaczowska* (Lublin, 2015), pp. 19–21, 24, 146; "Zmiana niemieckich nazw miejscowości," *Gazeta Lwowska*, 15 March 1939.

<sup>27</sup> *Skorowidz miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, vol. 13: *Województwo lwowskie* (Warsaw, 1924), p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 6.

<sup>29</sup> P. Sygowski, A. Trzciniński, "Żydzi lubaczowscy i ich cmentarz," *Rocznik Lubaczowski* 8 (1998), p. 110.

<sup>30</sup> Archiwum Parafii pw. św. Stanisława w Lubaczowie (Archives of the St Stanislaus Parish at Lubaczów, hereinafter ApL), Lubaczów Parish During the War (1939–1945), Entry of the Red Army into Lubaczów in September 1939 and the First Months of the Soviet Occupation, part 3, p. 15, handwritten.

From 22 June to 1 July 1941, the German 17th Army was fighting in the district of Lubaczów; then, the district was subject to the actions of the commander of the 13th rear area of the army group, who was responsible, among other things, for the organisation of the military occupation administration.<sup>31</sup> The city was then governed by the 575th Local Commandery II, which remained in power until 1 August 1944.<sup>32</sup>

Adolf Hitler's decree of 1 August 1941 created the Galizien District (also known as the Lvov District), which became part of the General Governorate.<sup>33</sup> According to the administrative division, the districts were divided into counties (Kreis), which were divided into municipalities (Gemeinde).<sup>34</sup> Lubaczów lost its county status then but retained its position as an urban municipality (Landkomisariat)<sup>35</sup> subordinated to the county office (Kreishauptmannschaft) in Rawa Ruska. This urban municipality consisted of four smaller areas: Horyniec, Krowica Hołodowska, Lubaczów the village and Oleszyce.<sup>36</sup> In the spring of 1942, a total of 6,237 Jews lived in the Landkomisariat area. Of this number, 2,276 resided in Lubaczów, 2000 at nearby Oleszyce, 456 at Horyniec, 300 at Krowica Hołodowska and Basznia each, and 905 in the surrounding villages.<sup>37</sup>

The county starost of Rawa Ruska was at the same time the head of the Lubaczów Landkomisariat. Dr Hans-Walter Zinser held this position until February

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<sup>31</sup> J. Bańbor, "Przewodnik po niemieckich źródłach i materiałach do historii Ziemi Lubaczowskiej podczas niemieckiej okupacji w latach 1939–1944 (wybór źródeł)," *Rocznik Lubaczowski* 13–14 (2008), p. 244.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>33</sup> G. Mazur, J. Skwara, J. Węgiński, *Kronika 2350 dni wojny i okupacji Lwowa. 1 IX 1939 – 5 II 1946 r.* (Cracow, 2007), p. 223; G. Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej. Położenie ludności, polityka okupantów, działalność podziemia* (Cracow, 1994), p. 64.

<sup>34</sup> *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 6: *Generalne Gubernatorstwo. Relacje i dokumenty*, ed. A. Bańkowska (Warsaw, 2012), p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> Landkomisariat (*Landkommissariat*), i.e. a rural commissariat – a type of a branch office that was created in counties with a larger area, headed by a commissioner. *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, p. 27; Gieroń, *Półmrok. Procesy karne*, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> Z. Kubrak, *Dzieje Lubaczowa. Lubaczów od czasów najdawniejszych do lipca 1944 r.*, vol. 1 (Rzeszow, 2016), p. 697.

<sup>37</sup> W. Wierzbieniec, "Formy szukania pomocy i możliwości egzystencji przez Żydów w okresie Holocaustu na terenie obecnego powiatu lubaczowskiego – wybrane aspekty," in *Wojna i pamięć. Przewodnik po miejscach pamięci narodowej na terenie powiatu lubaczowskiego. Materiały z sympozjum naukowego zorganizowanego w dniu 4 września 2009 r. w 70. rocznicę wybuchu II wojny światowej w Muzeum Kresów w Lubaczowie* (Lubaczów, 2009), p. 92.



1942. He was followed by Gerhard Hager,<sup>38</sup> who took over and maintained the position until 24 July 1944. The work of the Landkomisariat in Lubaczów was managed in place of the starost by the local Ukrainian lawyer Bohdan Kulczycki. The mayor of the town was Andriy Mytko. There was a German gendarmerie post in the town, commanded by N.N. Strauss,<sup>39</sup> as well as a post of the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police under the command of Hryhoriy Paczecha.<sup>40</sup> In addition to the administration and the organs of power, there was also a Jewish Council of Elders (Judenrat) appointed by the occupiers on the basis of a decree issued by Governor Hans Frank on 28 November 1939,<sup>41</sup> whose work was directed by the lawyer Dr Jozef Osterman. The Jewish Order Service (Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst) operated under the council.<sup>42</sup>

From August 1941 onwards, the German policy towards the local population was increasingly repressive. A curfew and a ban on assemblies were imposed in the town, and notices were also posted threatening inhabitants with capital punishment for disobeying the imposed order. The occupying authorities set up a detention centre in the former court building. Arrests and the first executions began.<sup>43</sup>

### The Ghetto in Lubaczów

A closed quarter for the Jewish population was established in Lubaczów on 10 October 1942, under the supervision of the head of the Gestapo in Rawa Ruska, Untersturmführer Helmut Späth.<sup>44</sup> It consisted of two parts. The main ghetto

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<sup>38</sup> M. Roth, *Herrenmenschen. Die deutschen Kreishauptleute im besetzten Polen – Karrierewege, Herrschaftspraxis und Nachgeschichte* (Göttingen–Wallstein, 2009), p. 450.

<sup>39</sup> The name of the gendarme established based on the files of the Chief Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Poland (*Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich*, hereinafter GKBZH). Files lack complete personal data. See AIPN Rz, 191/911, Investigation files on the crimes committed against Jews in the Lubaczów Ghetto by German officers, Report on the investigation, p. 9 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>40</sup> Kubrak, *Dzieje Lubaczowa*, p. 698.

<sup>41</sup> K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie Polacy i Żydzi 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2009), p. 87.

<sup>42</sup> Kubrak, *Dzieje Lubaczowa*, p. 722.

<sup>43</sup> Z. Konieczny, “Straty biologiczne i materialne byłego powiatu lubaczowskiego w latach 1939–1944,” *Materiały i Studia Muzealne (Przemyśl)* 3 (1980), p. 14; R. Ogryzło, “Wybrane zagadnienia demograficzne powiatu lubaczowskiego (1938–1948),” *Rocznik Lubaczowski* 5 (1994), pp. 96–97; Kubrak, *Dzieje Lubaczowa*, pp. 697–698.

<sup>44</sup> Helmut Späth (1907–1953), SS-Untersturmführer. After the war, convicted of war crimes. See Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, hereinafter AIPN), 2188/286; Files on crimes committed in Mińsk and Rawa Ruska. Files con-

occupied the central part of the town. It stretched from the junction of Mickiewicza and Piłsudskiego Streets to the intersections of the Market and Konery Streets, Kościuszki and St. Anne's Streets, Kościuszki and Piłsudskiego Streets and Kościuszki and Tartaczna Streets. This part of the ghetto was fenced off and surrounded by a two-metre-high barbed wire fence.<sup>45</sup> The other part of the ghetto consisted of a one-storey building built during the Soviet occupation with an adjacent area around it, located just behind Kościuszki Street to the north.<sup>46</sup> A survey conducted by the Branch Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes (*Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich*, OKBZH) in Rzeszów shows that the number of Jews resettled to the Lubaczów Ghetto varied between 6,000 and 7,000, depending on the period.<sup>47</sup> It contained Jewish people transported there from Niemirów, Potylicz, and the Lubaczów Landkomisariat.

The cramming of so many people into a small area, deprived of elementary sanitary and hygienic conditions, food and medicine, resulted in the spread of disease and increased deaths. "Several thousand people gathered in the ghetto were exposed to hunger, diseases and despair. They were forced to do torturous work, pulled carts themselves instead of a horse, were beaten with a truncheon to make the cart move faster, to do the prescribed tasks faster. At night, the Jews, like hunted animals, crawled under the wires to get food for the children and themselves,"<sup>48</sup> wrote Eugeniusz Szajowski in his memoirs.

Still in October 1942, a survey by the Chief Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes (*Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich*, GKBZH) in Poland, showed that about 2,500 Lubaczów Jews were deported to the German extermination camp in Belzec,<sup>49</sup> others to labour camps in Stary Dzików, Cieszanów

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cerning Kurt von Gottberg and Helmut Rudolf Späth; Letter from the prosecutor Dr. Rückerl (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen) to the director of the GKBZH in Poland, 17 November 1970, p. 46.

<sup>45</sup> Lavee (Łukawiecki), *Oddział niezwyknięzonych*, p. 90; Kubrak, *Dzieje Lubaczowa*, p. 725.

<sup>46</sup> E. Szajowski, "Tylko ziemia została ta sama. Lubaczów 1942–1943," *Rocznik Lubaczowski* 9–10 (2000), pp. 277–278.

<sup>47</sup> AIPN, 2448/871, Results of the GKBZH in Poland poll and the OKBZH (Branch Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes) in Warsaw poll collected in the years 1968–1972. Results of a poll concerning the Rzeszów Voivodeship, Lubaczów County – ghettos – Lubaczów County, Information about Hitlerite crimes in Lubaczów, p. 4 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>48</sup> Szajowski, "Tylko ziemia," p. 277.

<sup>49</sup> AIPN Rz, 191/358, Polls of the GKBZH in Poland – ghettos – Lubaczów County, p. 3 (according to the pdf numbering).

and Parczew. The following month, about 2,000 Jews from Oleszyce were brought into the Lubaczów Ghetto.<sup>50</sup> Before the end of November, about a thousand of them, including those suffering from typhus, were deported to Belzec. Still, others were killed on the spot, including in the Jewish cemetery.

On 1 December 1942, based on a decree by the SS and Police Commander in the General Governorate, General Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger, a Jewish residential area – a secondary ghetto – was established in Lubaczów, just as in other towns.<sup>51</sup> It housed Jews whom the occupiers had not managed to deport from the primary ghetto or those who had been in hiding and had avoided deportation.

The secondary ghetto in the Lubaczów area existed briefly, a little over a month. The pretext for its liquidation was the progressing typhus epidemic, which took a deadly toll.<sup>52</sup> About 25 people died there every day. The final liquidation began on 7 January 1943.<sup>53</sup> The day before, at 8.00 a.m., a train entered the Lubaczów railway station from the direction of Jarosław, from which German gendarmerie officers from Rawa Ruska got off. In an even line, they headed towards the market square. On the spot, they were deployed in two classrooms of the elementary school. There they spent the night, and in the morning, with the support of the Ukrainian and Jewish police, they set out for the action in liquidation groups of three to four (one Ukrainian and one Jewish policeman assisted by one or two German gendarmes). As the action began, all exit gates at the junction of the streets to the ghetto were closed. Gendarmes and Ukrainian policemen stood at the corners and street exits.<sup>54</sup>

According to Stanisław Młodziński's testimony, after the gates to the ghetto were closed, "Jewish policemen would go inside and chase the compatriots who were there out into the street, where they were lined up in even rows and then escorted

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<sup>50</sup> C. Crisci, A. Kruglov, "Lubaczów," in *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, ed. by G.P. Megargee, M. Dean, vol. 2, part A (Bloomington, 2012), p. 801.

<sup>51</sup> *Dziennik Rozporządzeń dla Generalnego Gubernatorstwa (The Journal of Regulations for the General Governorate)*, no. 98, Regulation concerning the establishment of Jewish housing quarters in the Radom, Krakau and Galizien District, Cracow, 14 November 1942, pp. 683–686.

<sup>52</sup> Crisci, Kruglov, "Lubaczów," p. 801.

<sup>53</sup> AIPN Rz, 191/911, Information about Hitlerite crimes in Lubaczów, p. 104 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>54</sup> J. Mroczkowski, *Obserwator* (Warsaw, 2013), p. 50.

to the local railway station.”<sup>55</sup> Another witness, Marian Kopf, reported that “cargo wagons were standing there [...]. Everything was organised in such a way that the transport only started at dusk, so that they did not know where they were going, and they were going east, to a camp – a crematorium.”<sup>56</sup> Adam Bauman described this event in a similar way before the prosecutor of the OKBZH in Rzeszow on 9 November 1989: “after the Jews had been escorted to the railway station, they were placed in a transport and taken to the death camp in Belzec.”<sup>57</sup>

A day later, on 8 January, a search was made in the ghetto for places where Jews might be hiding. Those found were escorted to the vicinity of Dachnow or to the cemetery in Lubaczów, where they were shot and buried. The tragedy of those days is conveyed by the recollections of the already mentioned Marian Kopf,<sup>58</sup> as well as by the entries in the chronicle of the Lubaczów parish: “Human meanness takes a toll now, and in two forms: either by pointing out to trackers the shelters of the Jews, or by glancing greedily at the abandoned Jewish property [...]”.<sup>59</sup>

Some Jews managed to escape during the liquidation action and hid in the surrounding forests or in nearby Oleszyce. The latter were caught and shot a week later, on 14 January 1943 (a total of 174 people). In the following weeks, more people who were in hiding were caught. Only 19 Jews survived the liquidation of the Lubaczów Ghetto.<sup>60</sup>

## The Activity of the Seredyńskis

Władysław Seredyński and his son Roman became active during the liquidation of the Lubaczów Ghetto. They walked around it and exposed the places where

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<sup>55</sup> USHMM, RG-50.488.0273, Testimony of Stanisław Młodziński, 10 March 2009, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn45093>, accessed on 15 January 2021.

<sup>56</sup> M. Kopf, “Tamten czas,” part 6: “Lubaczów. Rok 1943,” *Rocznik Lubaczowski* vols 13–14 (2008), p. 349.

<sup>57</sup> AIPN Rz, 191/911, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Adam Bauman, 9 November 1989, p. 49 (according to the pdf numbering). In his testimony, Adam Bauman cites the Belzec death camp as the place where Jews captured during the liquidation of the Lubaczów ghetto were deported. It is known that transports arrived at Belzec until mid-December 1942. From then on, the camp was closed to new transports, and the Germans proceeded to liquidate it. It is most likely that the Jews captured during the liquidation of the Lubaczów ghetto were deported to the Sobibor extermination camp.

<sup>58</sup> Kopf, “Tamten czas,” part 6, p. 346.

<sup>59</sup> ApL, Lubaczów Parish During the War (1939–1945), Year 1943, p. 75, handwritten.

<sup>60</sup> Crisci, Kruglov, “Lubaczów,” p. 801.

Jews were hiding. They continued to do so even after the operation had ended. A Lubaczów resident, Leopold Telca, described them as “human hyenas who played a disgraceful role in the denunciation of Jews.”<sup>61</sup> According to the testimony of a witness Karol Małecki, “Władysław Sereżyński was the caretaker over the ghetto [...], he was its terror, the Jews feared him more than the Germans. He [...] collaborated with the occupiers and, on his own, sought out individual [persons] or entire Jewish families [...], abused them [...], took money and valuables from them and then handed them over to the German gendarmerie or the Ukrainian police.”<sup>62</sup>

Stanisław Młodziński remembered an event<sup>63</sup> from January 1943, already after the liquidation of the Lubaczów Ghetto, involving Władysław Sereżyński. He captured two Jewish children in one of the buildings within the ghetto on Kościuszki Street, and then led them to the Lubaczów cemetery, where they were shot by a local gendarme.<sup>64</sup> The witness was 12 years old at the time and saw the entire event from a hill right next to the cemetery.<sup>65</sup>

According to the testimony of other witnesses, in the same month, the Sereżyńskis detected and delivered a dozen Jews to the gendarmerie or the Ukrainian police. Władysław captured and turned over two more women named Herzberg (according to the witness Józef Cisowski, one of them was brought by Sereżyński to the gate of the Jewish cemetery in Lubaczów,<sup>66</sup> the woman tried to escape but was handed over to a gendarme officer and shot there<sup>67</sup>). Another victim (according to the testimony of another witness, Jan Tabaczek) was a 12-year-old Jewish boy

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<sup>61</sup> AIPN Rz, 191/911, Testimony of Leopold Telca, 26 August 1969, p. 108 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>62</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/38, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Karol Małecki, 30 July 1946, p. 18 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>63</sup> The witness does not give an exact day date for this event.

<sup>64</sup> USHMM, RG-50.488.0273, Testimony of Stanisław Młodziński, 10 March 2009, transcription: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn45093> (accessed 15 January 2021).

<sup>65</sup> According to the surviving records of the August case, the above event was also seen by the witness Feliks Fusiński. The children were hiding in an abandoned house belonging to the Onyszkiewicz family. They were found there and captured by Władysław Sereżyński and brought to the local cemetery.

<sup>66</sup> The cemetery at Lubaczów was the place where the German gendarmerie and the Ukrainian auxiliary police carried out mass shootings of the town's Jewish inhabitants. According to an investigation by the OKBZH in Rzeszów, around 1,000 people were shot in the cemetery.

<sup>67</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/38, Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Cisowski, 10 January 1948, p. 60 (according to the pdf numbering).

named Gabel, captured on a Sunday afternoon, a week after the liquidation of the Lubaczów Ghetto. Sereďyński stopped him in one of the streets and brought him to the gate of the cemetery, where the child was shot by a Ukrainian police officer.<sup>68</sup>

Other witnesses, Władysław Koś and Mikołaj Pomorski, testified that the victims of Władysław Sereďyński included the wife of the local dentist, Regina Spir and her five-year-old son Ryszard (both of whom were taken by Sereďyński to the cemetery and shot there<sup>69</sup>) as well as a woman called Eichel (she sold newspapers in Lubaczów), N.N., a woman named Hula and Berek Reinfeld, who decided to return to the town after the ghetto was liquidated.<sup>70</sup>

The lack of mercy on the part of Władysław Sereďyński was also experienced by the four-year-old Luncio Mandel (who was hidden by the Górecki family). Feliks Górecki, who worked as a watchman for the *Liegenschaft* in Lubaczów, later testified: “[...] I saw two gendarmes accompanied by Sereďyński from the castle hill. At that moment I said to my wife: ‘hide the child’ [...], my wife grabbed the child by the hands and ran out of the room, wanting to hide with the child behind the manor stables. At that moment, I saw Władysław Sereďyński waving his hand towards my wife and shouting: ‘Don’t hide, don’t hide,’ from which I inferred that he knew a Jewish child was being kept with us and had brought the gendarmes. Seeing the futility of running away, my wife stopped behind the stables. The child was captured and taken to town.”<sup>71</sup>

Also linked to the Górecki family case is the tragic fate of the Taube and Schmelke families. They were hiding in a shelter located in one of the manor buildings of the Lubaczów *Liegenschaft*. They had already been helped by the Górecki family. According to the minutes of Feliks Górecki’s interrogation,<sup>72</sup> Sereďyński leaned

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Jan Tabaczek, 13 January 1948, p. 63 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Władysław Koś, 22 January 1948, p. 72 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Mikołaj Pomorski, 24 January 1948, p. 72 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Feliks Górecki, 27 January 1948, p. 76 (according to the pdf numbering). Based on the surviving records, it is unclear whether Feliks Górecki and his family suffered any repression from the occupying forces for helping Jews.

<sup>72</sup> The *Liegenschaft* buildings had already been raided by the gendarmerie and the Ukrainian police. The officers had information from which it was clear that Jewish families might be hiding in the building complex. It is not clear from the files who directly was the perpetrator of the denunciation.

over the opening and started calling the persons in hiding to come out: "Come out, I know you are there, nothing will happen to you." Górecki testified: "I was sure that there was no one in the bunker, as I myself had seen the Jews from the bunker escape into the forest. Meanwhile, to my surprise, Abraham Taube, a Jew who was a colleague of Seredyński's, came out, heard his voice, rejoiced and turned to him: 'Władziu, how good that it is you, we need matches and candles.' At these words he handed Seredyński some money."<sup>73</sup> It was dollars. Seredyński hid the note and promised to deliver the necessary products. In doing so, he ordered them to stay where they were. He himself, in turn, informed the Ukrainian police. Later that day, the officers arrived at the site. Hiding there with Abraham Taub were his wife and a Liegenschaft employee, Schmelke, with his family. A total of seven people were captured that day. All of them were taken to the town and then most likely shot near Hrynków, not far from Dachnów.<sup>74</sup>

Władysław Seredyński also contributed to the apprehension of the local Jewish lawyer Feiner. We know of his direct involvement in this event thanks to the eyewitness testimony of Michał Szafrński, a lawyer's neighbour. The capture took place during the liquidation of the Lubaczów Ghetto. Having escaped from a gendarmerie patrol, Feiner was hiding in his neighbour's house. However, he was spotted by Seredyński, who captured him, assisted by a gendarme. The execution was swift. The lawyer was led out of the courtyard and shot in Rejtana Street.<sup>75</sup> Seredyński also had on his conscience a woman named Farber,<sup>76</sup> who, together with her sister (née Fridman) and daughter Maria, initially hid in an attic in the local mill, and then on the premises of the nearby farm of the Ukrainian Wachnianin family, in a small hiding place next to the stables.

Seredyński's son Roman, in turn, captured and handed over to the gendarmerie two children from the Schmidt family and the Jewish woman Regina Tell.<sup>77</sup> The

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<sup>73</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/38, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Feliks Górecki, 27 January 1948, p. 77 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/38, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Michał Szafrński, 7 February 1948, pp. 87–88 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>76</sup> The person referred to is probably Feigale Farber née Fridman who, together with her husband Moshe Farber, owned a mill in Lubaczów. See O. Heumann-Regev, "I rzeka nadal płynie," in *Wojna i pamięć. Przewodnik po miejscach pamięci narodowej na terenie powiatu lubaczowskiego*, vol. 4, ed. by S.P. Makara, B. Woch, and J. Mazur (Lubaczów, 2009), p. 152.

<sup>77</sup> Before the war, the woman was the owner of a pastry shop on Mickiewicza Street at Lubaczów.

woman was found on Sunday morning in the house of Eleonora Przybylska on 3 Maja Street in Lubaczów. The course of events was similar to the case of lawyer Feiner. Regina Tell knocked on the door of her house, wanting to hide from a gendarmerie patrol. Przybylska let her in. However, the Jewish woman was spotted by Roman Sereżyński and led out into the street. The whole incident was witnessed by several people who were going to the church for a mass on that day. Some knew the young Sereżyński and stood up for the woman, but he remained adamant. He seized her by force, put her on a cart, and then headed towards the Lubaczów market.<sup>78</sup>

These were not all the crimes committed by the Sereżyńskis. Only those where witnesses recognised the victims are listed. Their testimonies show that Władysław Sereżyński captured and handed over to the gendarmerie or the Ukrainian police many other people of Jewish nationality, not only from Lubaczów, but also from the surrounding villages. The cruelty of the Sereżyński family, and of Władysław in particular, is shown by the testimony of Julian Bukietyński, who described in detail the capture of a young Jewish woman in the Lubaczów Ghetto. The witness did not recognise the woman. He explained that the incident took place in January 1943, on a Sunday afternoon. Władysław Sereżyński captured the woman after a chase between Kościuszki and Sienkiewicza Streets. The captured Jewish woman was shot by a Ukrainian policeman in one of the Jewish backyards.<sup>79</sup>

## Further Developments

In the autumn of 1943, both Sereżyńskis left Lubaczów. On 2 November 1943, Władysław left for Jarosław,<sup>80</sup> explaining this fact as a flight from the occupying authorities who wanted to send him eastwards to the vicinity of Żółkiew, where, in line with his previous profession, he was employed to bury the dead.<sup>81</sup> According

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<sup>78</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/38, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Feliks Górecki, 27 January 1948, p. 81 (according to the pdf numbering); *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józef Meder, 26 January 1948, p. 71 (according to the pdf numbering); AIPN Rz, 353/39, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Eleonora Przybylska, 27 September 1949, pp. 30–31 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>79</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/38, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Julian Bukietyński, 29 January 1948, p. 80 (according to the pdf numbering); AIPN Rz, 353/39, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Sidorska, 24 September 1949, pp. 24–25 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>80</sup> Sereżyński left his former wife, Anna Meder, for a woman who lived in the town of Jarosław.

<sup>81</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/39, Minutes of the main hearing, 30 November 1949, p. 183 (according to the pdf numbering).



to him, that same year, he was sent from Jarosław to work in the trenches in Koło, and from 6 June 1944, he was in Germany, in Frankenstein in the Rhineland. On 25 October 1945, he and his second wife settled in Opole, where he took up a job at a Polish Railways (*Polskie Koleje Państwowe*, PKP) station.

In October 1943, Roman Sereżyński was assigned to the German artillery troops stationed in Baranczyce near Sambor. He stayed there until August 1944. As the front approached, he and his unit headed west towards Cracow. After Red Army units occupied the city, he deserted from his mother unit and joined the Soviet army, concealing his service in German formations. He remained with Red Army units until April 1945, after which he settled in Ujazd in Strzelce County, near Opole, where he initially worked in one of the local factories.<sup>82</sup> He married and took up service in the Civic Militia (*Milicja Obywatelska*, MO).<sup>83</sup>

### Investigation, Trial, and Sentence

Until April 1946, the Sereżyńskis could feel relatively safe. The immediate impulse to take an interest in their activity was a writ from the head of the Municipal Court in Lubaczów, dated 3 April 1946, to the local Municipal Board regarding the investigation of German crimes in the county. The Municipal Court in Lubaczów could have taken an interest in this case on the recommendation of the Prosecutor's Office of the Special Criminal Court in Cracow, Rzeszów Branch, which in turn took action most probably at the initiative of Edmund Katz mentioned above, whose family was murdered during the German occupation in Lubaczów.<sup>84</sup>

On 6 May 1946, the court received a reply containing a description of Władysław Sereżyński and information on his current place of residence.<sup>85</sup> On 8 June 1946, the

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Roman Sereżyński, 15 January 1948, pp. 48–49 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>83</sup> Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej we Wrocławiu (Branch Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Wrocław, hereinafter AIPN Wr), 0131/2834, Personal files of the MO functionary concerning Roman Sereżyński, The course of Roman Sereżyński's service, p. 31 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>84</sup> Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute), 301/3300, Brief history of the search for two Poles – war criminals by Edmund Katz – captain of the American Navy, p.1.

<sup>85</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/38, Reply of the Municipal Board in Lubaczów to the Municipal Court in Lubaczów, 6 May 1946, p. 3 (according to the pdf numbering).

findings made by the Municipal Board were forwarded to the Prosecutor's Office of the Special Criminal Court in Cracow. From then on, Władysław Seredyński's activity during the Nazi occupation became the subject of interest for various authorities and institutions.

As early as 22 June 1946, the Rzeszow Branch of the Prosecutor's Office of the Special Criminal Court in Cracow asked the County Command of Civic Militia in Lubaczów to open an investigation into the case of Władysław Seredyński. The militiamen of the local command immediately took action. Based on his church certificate and witness statements, his personal details and, in part, details of his activity during the German occupation were established. The activity of his son Roman also came out.<sup>86</sup> In addition to the County Command of Civic Militia (KP MO), the County Office of Public Security in Lubaczów was also involved in the case. In the course of time, the investigation against the Seredyński family was taken over by the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Przemyśl District Court.<sup>87</sup>

Władysław Seredyński was arrested on 19 December 1947 by functionaries of the Civic Militia in Opole, based on a decision issued by the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Przemyśl District Court. The arrest took place at his house at 5 Kolejowa Street in Opole, where he lived with his family. On the same day, he was taken to the Prosecutor's Office at the Przemyśl District Court. The following day he was questioned and placed under pre-trial detention.<sup>88</sup> The statement of reasons stated that Władysław Seredyński was suspected of an offence under Article 1 of the Decree of 28 June 1946 concerning criminal liability for deviation from nationality during the war of 1939-1945<sup>89</sup> and under Article 1 of the Decree

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, Report by the Civic Militia (MO) from the conducted investigation concerning Władysław Seredyński, p. 20 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>87</sup> By a decree of 17 October 1944, the special criminal courts adjudicating on persons accused of offences contained in the decree of 31 August 1944 were abolished. Since then, the competences of the special criminal courts were taken over by the district courts. In the years 1949–1950, offences specified in the August Decree were dealt with in the first instance by the courts of appeal, and from 1951, by voivodship courts. See Act Amending the Rules of Criminal Procedure of 27 April 1949, *Journal of Laws*, No. 32 (1949), item 238; Act Amending the Rules of Criminal Procedure of 20 July 1950, *Journal of Laws*, No. 38 (1950), item 348.

<sup>88</sup> AIPN Rz, 358/38, Decision on the temporary arrest of Władysław Seredyński, 20 December 1947, p. 35 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>89</sup> Decree of 28 June 1946 concerning criminal liability for deviation from nationality during the war of 1939–1945, *Journal of Laws*, No. 41 (1946) item 237.

of 31 August 1944 in the wording of the Decree of 11 December 1946 concerning the punishment of fascist-Hitlerite criminals, consisting in acting “to the detriment of persons persecuted on racial grounds [...] he captured and delivered Jewish population into the hands of the German authorities.”<sup>90</sup>

Władysław Seredyński was imprisoned in Przemyśl prison. On 27 December 1947, the deputy prosecutor of the Przemyśl District Court, M. Wiśniewski, sent the KP MO in Lubaczów the files of the criminal case against the Seredyński family with an order to carry out a detailed investigation aimed at collecting evidence confirming their cooperation with the German occupiers. The Public Prosecutor’s Office set a time limit of three weeks in which to complete this task. The county command, acting on the instructions of the prosecutor’s office, issued a public notice on 9 January 1948, which called for eyewitnesses to any criminal activity by the two Seredyńskis during the period of German occupation to appear in person at the headquarters of the KP MO in Lubaczów. On 1 January 1948, Roman, who was then on duty at the KP MO in Ujazd, was arrested. He, too, like his father, was taken to the headquarters of the Prosecutor’s Office of the Przemyśl District Court, where he was interrogated on 15 January and subsequently placed under pre-trial detention in Przemyśl prison.<sup>91</sup>

Twenty-eight witnesses responded to the appeal of the county militia and were questioned between 10 January 1948 and 14 February 1948 at the headquarters of the KP MO in Lubaczów. Most of them described in detail the traumatic experiences and situations in which the two Seredyńskis were involved. What emerged from the witness testimonies was a picture of ruthless and cynical informers and denouncers acting out of personal motives to please the occupying authorities. The witness testimonies were crucial for the subsequent court proceedings. It was mainly on their basis that the officers of the KP MO in Lubaczów realised the seriousness of the charges. Some of the testimonies complemented each other. They concerned the crimes committed by the Seredyńskis during the liquidation

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<sup>90</sup> AIPN Rz, 358/38, Decision on the temporary arrest of Władysław Seredyński, 20 December 1947, p. 35 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>91</sup> AIPN Rz, 190/284, Personal file of prisoner Roman Seredyński, copy of the death sentence issued by the Court of Appeal in Rzeszów concerning Roman Seredyński, 1 December 1949, p. 11; *ibid.*, Decision on the temporary arrest of Roman Seredyński, 15 January 1948, p. 3 (according to the pdf numbering).

of the Lubaczów Ghetto in January 1943, but also during the later period, when they caught Jews who had managed to outlive the liquidation of the ghetto. This testimony also formed the basis for the later indictment.

Over time, through 1948 and 1949, the list of existing witnesses gradually expanded with new names, mainly people of Jewish nationality who survived the occupation.<sup>92</sup> Their testimony further incriminated the suspects. Witnesses who settled in Munich after the war said that the Sereďyńskis not only denounced and caught Jews but also killed them personally. However, neither the inquiry nor the subsequent investigation confirmed this thread in the case.

After 20 February 1948, the prosecutor's office extended the first pre-trial detention for Władysław Sereďyński, and the same was decided for his son, Roman, after 15 March 1948. The pre-trial detention was successively extended as the following months passed. After considering the materials collected so far, the Prosecutor's Office of the Przemyśl Regional Court opened an investigation on 15 March 1948 in relation to the arrested.<sup>93</sup>

On 3 May 1948, Roman Sereďyński started voluntary cooperation with the Special Department of the Przemyśl Prison as an informer under the pseudonym "Rak". He was recruited by Platoon Sergeant Ryszard Drwięga. At that time, the young Sereďyński undertook to "report on noticed offences, crimes and preparations against prison order and state authorities."<sup>94</sup> In the pledge, he assured that he would continue to cooperate with the Security Office (UB) after leaving prison.<sup>95</sup> During the period of his imprisonment from 6 May 1948 to 18 August 1950, he made ten reports.<sup>96</sup>

According to a surviving record card, Władysław Sereďyński was also registered as an informer under the pseudonym "Jastrząb" (Hawk). The recruitment

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<sup>92</sup> Testimony in this case was given by, among others, Józef Rygiel (Legnica), Barbara Katz (Wrocław), Leja Meiler (Wrocław), Estera Diana Meiler (Wrocław), Maria Siedliczek (Wrocław), Luba Weiner (Munich), Zanut Weiner (Munich), Samuel Baeker (Munich), Max Schenker (Munich), Meier Schenker (Munich), Singer Gebrüder (Munich), Maria Koch (Munich), Pepi Feber (Munich), Benjamin Kammer (Landsberg), Regina Post (Fürth near Nuremberg), Anchel Bogner (Vancouver), Wolf Remer (Montreal).

<sup>93</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/38, Decision to open an investigation regarding Władysław and Roman Sereďyński, 15 March 1948, pp. 184–185 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>94</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/38, Decision to open an investigation regarding to Władysław and Roman Sereďyński, 15 March 1948, pp. 184–185 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>96</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/39, Decision, 2 October 1950, p. 26.

was supposed to have taken place, as in the case of his son, in a Przemyśl prison. We are unable to establish how the elder Sereďyński's cooperation as an informer proceeded, as his file with reference number 752/I was destroyed.<sup>97</sup> Undoubtedly, the convicts' cooperation as informers was an attempt to obtain a favourable stand from the justice authorities.

All the witnesses who had testified between 10 January 1948 and 14 February 1948 at the headquarters of KP MO in Lubaczów were interrogated again on 18, 24 and 31 May that same year, this time by a judge of the Municipal Court in Lubaczów. In the following months, further interrogations of witnesses took place to clarify and supplement certain aspects of the investigation. These concerned the case of, among other things, the bringing of two women of Jewish nationality (one named Herzberg) and handing them over to the Ukrainian police and the disclosure and handing over to the gendarmerie of two Jewish families hiding in the building of the palace and castle complex belonging to the *Liegenschaft* in Lubaczów.

With all this extensive evidence at its disposal, the Prosecutor's Office of the Przemyśl District Court, 20 months after Sereďyński's arrest, decided on 10 October 1949 to close the ongoing investigation with an indictment. At the same time, on the same day, the decision was made to exclude the case against Roman Sereďyński for separate proceedings, as it was stated that this would "contribute to its simplification."<sup>98</sup> This turn of events was requested by the accused himself in an application of 23 August 1949 he made to the prosecution.

The indictment, prepared by the deputy prosecutor of the Przemyśl District Prosecutor's Office, was filed on 25 October 1949 with the Court of Appeal in Rzeszów. It described in detail the acts the defendants were charged with. Władysław Sereďyński was accused in point 1 A of acting "to the detriment of persons persecuted for racial reasons in such a way that he captured and handed over to the gendarmerie or the Ukrainian police N. Herzbergowa called 'Łapcio',

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<sup>97</sup> AIPN, 2911/1, Card E-14 from the general information card file of the "C" Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych*) in Warsaw, concerning Władysław Sereďyński, 13 April 1977. The card lacks the date of the destruction of the file.

<sup>98</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/39, Decision of the Deputy Prosecutor of the District Court in Przemyśl in a criminal case against Władysław and Roman Sereďyński, 10 October 1947, p. 35 (according to the pdf numbering).

N. Herzberżanka, called 'Prosima', Mejer Gabel, Reigina Spir with son Rysiek, N. Eichl, N. Herzbergowa, the wife of Tuli, N. Reinfeld, N.N. named 'Hula', four-year-old Luncio Mandel, lawyer N. Fainer, N. Ferberowa and N. Fridmanowa, showed to the Ukrainian police the hiding place of N. Taube with his wife and N. Schmelka with his family of a total of 7 people."<sup>99</sup> In addition, Władysław Sereżyński was accused of handing over and capturing several of Jewish people of unknown identity or indicating to the gendarmerie where they were hiding. He was also accused of taking part, under the authority of the wartime occupation authorities, in confiscating food – point 1 B. The prosecutor charged Roman Sereżyński "that, in January 1943 in Lubaczów, during an action to destroy the Jewish population, meeting the authorities of the German state halfway, he acted to the detriment of persons persecuted for racial reasons in that he captured and handed over to the gendarmerie two children N.N. Schmidt and N. Tellówna and a whole array of Jewish persons of undetermined names."<sup>100</sup> The two Sereżyńskis also used physical violence against the captured Jews.

The indictment additionally contained a statement of reasons with a list of 35 witnesses; it also indicated the Court of Appeal in Rzeszów as having the jurisdiction to hear the case. The main hearing date was set for 30 November, 1 and 2 December 1949 in an away session at the Municipal Court in Lubaczów.<sup>101</sup> The hearing began on 30 November at 9 a.m. The bench was presided over by Judge Zbigniew Klementowski of the Court of Appeal in Rzeszów, in the presence of bench judges Joachim Boruta and Michał Błażej. The prosecutor was the sub-prosecutor of the Przemyśl District Court, Romuald Łabaziewicz. After the judge read out the indictment, the Sereżyńskis decided to give explanations as asked by the presiding judge. Just like during the investigation, the defendants did not feel guilty and did not admit to having signed the German nationality list. In relation to these facts, Władysław Sereżyński, who was interrogated during the main hearing on 30 November, said: "When my wife registered with the German commission, she gave my name as well. I was referred to the com-

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, Deed of indictment, 19 October 1949, p. 38 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> AIPN Rz, 190/284, Writ rejecting the appeal from the Court of Appeal in Rzeszów, 5 November 1949, p. 94.

mission where, on the basis of my certificate of baptism, it was established that I was Polish and I was released.”<sup>102</sup>

Regarding the accusation of crimes committed in the ghetto, he explained that “during the German occupation, I was a gravedigger all the time, and in the ghetto I carried out [as read] activities connected with disinfecting corpses [as read] and places infected with typhus in the company of the Ukrainian police. [...] I did not take part in bringing Jews to the ghetto, I did not see the liquidation of the ghetto.”<sup>103</sup> Later in the trial, Władysław Sereżyński, answering many questions from the panel of judges, began to contradict the previous narrative. He stated: “I was given a pass so that I could follow and take away hiding Jews with the Ukrainian police. One morning I went with the Ukrainian police to the Lubaczów area and one of them shot an old Jewish woman he met. I did not look for the Jews myself, but only with the Ukrainian police and the German gendarmerie.”<sup>104</sup> He presented a version that showed he was only assisting by virtue of his duties as a cemetery caretaker, as his job was to bury the dead. He assumed a similar position when referring to the individual deeds he was accused of. Although he admitted that he had taken part in some of the events, he played down his involvement – he was merely present during the events, and the deeds were committed by others.

Due to the considerable number of charges against the Sereżyńskis, I have presented only selected issues relating directly to Władysław below. Regarding the denunciation and surrender to the gendarmerie of the three Jewish women (named Farber, her daughter Maria and her sister named Fridman) found on the farm of the Ukrainian Wachnianin, the accused placed the responsibility for their surrender not on himself but on two other *Volksdeutsche* who were with him at the time – Jan and Adam Reisinger: “I persuaded him [i.e. Adam Reisinger – W.H.] to stop looking for them, but he kept looking and discovered the Jewish women hidden in the hay: Fridmanowa with her sister and daughter. Jan Reisinger and Adam Reisinger, and I led these Jewish women to the gendarme standing on the

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<sup>102</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/39, Minutes of the main hearing, 30 November 1949, p. 180 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182 (according to the pdf numbering).

road,” in turn, regarding Regina Spir and N. Reinfeld, Sereżyński hid behind oblivion or lack of any knowledge.<sup>105</sup>

Like his father, during the trial, Roman Sereżyński also pleaded not guilty to the charges. He categorically denied having anything to do with the capture of the two Jewish children named Schmidt and the woman named Tell. The accused only admitted that, after the liquidation of the ghetto, he had taken part “in carrying away [as read – W.H.] the Jews shot by the police.”<sup>106</sup>

The Sereżyńskis’ words were contradicted by many eyewitnesses, as well as by the testimony of the defendants themselves. During the trial, Władysław Sereżyński blamed his son for, among other things, taking part in catching and capturing Jews with the gendarmerie. There was no longer any question of any family ties, all that mattered was survival. Roman’s son did not remain indebted. Firstly, he alluded to his father’s alleged opposition to signing the German nationality list, although he initially fully supported his father’s narrative on the matter. The truth turned out to be quite different – it was the elder Sereżyński who hinted to his wife that, having German roots, she should register with the German commission: “First, my father and mother went to the commission, and then I was summoned to it.”<sup>107</sup> Secondly, during the main hearing, Roman Sereżyński testified: “during the German occupation, there were rumours about my father that he should have a sack of gold because he was supposed to have given away a lot of Jews.”<sup>108</sup>

As to the guilt of the defendants, the court had no doubts. The charges against them were confirmed by eyewitness testimonies, and Władysław and Roman also partially admitted their guilt. During the trial, a total of 26 witnesses to the crimes committed by the Sereżyńskis were questioned, and the elder of the two admitted (in addition to his participation in the capturing and bringing to the occupiers three Jewish women hiding on the farm of the Ukrainian Wachnianin) also to the capturing of the Jewish woman Herzbergowa, called “Łapcio,” two Jewish children hiding in the house of the Onyszkiewicz family, and to assisting the gendarmerie during manhunts for Jews. He justified his attitude – as already

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187 (according to the pdf numbering).



mentioned – by the fact that, as the town gravedigger, he was forced to carry out the mayor's orders.

The younger Seredyński, on the other hand, admitted that, as a member of the volunteer fire brigade, he had taken part in capturing a Jewish woman named Tell. It was difficult for him to deny this offence, as her apprehension was witnessed by at least several people. Roman justified his attitude in a similar way to his father – as a firefighter, he followed orders from his superiors (according to him, the volunteer fire brigade was at that time subordinated to the *Landkommissar* and the gendarmerie),<sup>109</sup> and he was threatened with the death penalty for refusing.<sup>110</sup>

On 1 December 1949, the Court of Appeal in Rzeszów, at an away session in the Lubaczów Municipal Court, did not have the slightest doubt about the Seredyńskis' guilt. Władysław was found guilty of at least 20 crimes committed against persons of Jewish nationality, whose names were listed in the indictment, while Roman was found guilty of at least three crimes committed against persons of Jewish nationality, i.e. against two children called Schmidt and a Jewish woman called Tell. The court additionally admitted that the younger Seredyński had also contributed to giving away many Jewish persons of undetermined names.

The Court of Appeal sentenced Władysław and Roman Seredyński to death. Both were also deprived of their public rights and civil rights of honour forever; a forfeiture of all property to the State Treasury was also ordered. In its statement of reasons, the court found that both defendants had taken part in liquidating the Lubaczów Ghetto. In the opinion of the town's inhabitants, they were known for their overt cooperation with the occupiers as people who tracked down and captured Jewish residents of Lubaczów who managed to survive the period of the ghetto's liquidation. "In this activity, both defendants, as being familiar with the

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<sup>109</sup> During the German occupation, the fire brigade was subordinate to the police; this was the result, among other things, of a meeting held on 18 September 1940 in the Office of the District Instructor-Commissioner in Lublin. During this meeting, the structure and organisation of fire protection in the General Governorate were established. At that time, in county offices, among others, a county fire instructor was appointed, who was subordinate to the Kreishauptmann, while all fire brigades were counted among the fire police, subordinate to the police or gendarmerie. See [http://kalinowski.weebly.com/uploads/4/9/1/6/4916495/sraz\\_ogniowa\\_pod\\_okupacja\\_niemiecka.pdf](http://kalinowski.weebly.com/uploads/4/9/1/6/4916495/sraz_ogniowa_pod_okupacja_niemiecka.pdf) (accessed 18 January 2021).

<sup>110</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/39, Minutes of the main hearing, 1 December 1949, p. 198 (according to the pdf numbering).

local relations, collaborated with the gendarmerie and the Ukrainian police with zeal and utter fondness,” the statement of reasons reads. “This is evidenced by the circumstances surrounding the criminal action of the defendants, in particular, the conduct of the defendants during the capturing and bringing of the victims to their death [...]. In determining the punishment for both defendants, the Court, taking into account the magnitude of the crimes committed by them, of their renunciation – through their conduct – of any human feelings [...], came to the conclusion that the interests of organised society, the norms of compassion applicable between people and the public-state interest require the full elimination of the defendants from society. The Tribunal did not find any circumstances that could speak in favour of the defendants.”<sup>111</sup>

Later that same month, the defendants’ counsels filed an appeal against the verdict with the Supreme Court in Warsaw. The convicts also petitioned President Bolesław Bierut in writing to change the death sentence to a prison sentence – in this petition, they again denied the charges brought against them. Roman Sereżyński stated: “[the imposed death sentence] is a shift of part of the blame from my father to me.”<sup>112</sup> He pointed out that the sentence was highly unfair and unjust.<sup>113</sup> Władysław, on the other hand, with regard to the offences named under point 1 A, stuck to the version that he had not taken part in the murder and capturing of Jews, but had only been present at this procedure as a gravedigger – “forced by an order of the mayor.” As for the offences under point 1 B, on the other hand, he stated that he was merely carrying out the orders of his immediate superiors as an employee of the municipal board: “I was to accompany the German gendarmerie in searches, especially at the station, and to collect food from the population, which I took back to the gendarmerie.”<sup>114</sup>

At a review hearing on 30 May 1950, the Supreme Court in Warsaw upheld the sentence passed by the Court of Appeal in Rzeszów. Roman Sereżyński appealed once again on 1 June 1950 to President Bolesław Bierut for clemency – it

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, Conclusion of the judgement, 1 December 1949, p. 221 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter of Roman Sereżyński to President Bolesław Bierut, 14 December 1949, p. 229 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/39, Letter of Władysław Sereżyński to President Bolesław Bierut, 6 December 1949, p. 237 (according to the pdf numbering).

was a desperate plea for life. Separate petitions for his pardon were also submitted by his mother Anna (31 May 1950), and his wife Matylda (12 June 1950). On 2 October 1950, President Bierut did not exercise his right of pardon.<sup>115</sup> The death penalty by hanging was carried out on 22 October 1950 in a prison in Przemyśl.<sup>116</sup>

## Conclusions

This article contributes to a follow-up research work on the history of the German occupation in the Lubaczów area. The described trial shows the post-war struggle of the justice system in judging the perpetrators of wartime crimes. In the case of the court records concerning the Seredyńskis, a rich body of evidence was collected, based mainly on eyewitness testimonies. These files on the criminal case tried under the August Decree are among the best documented in Lubaczów County.

Based on the surviving case files, we obtain information on the activity of two people in Lubaczów who – during the Nazi occupation – were involved in the denunciation and rounding up of Jews. What is unusual in this case is that the crimes were committed by a father and a son. Their involvement in exterminating the Jewish community gathered in the Lubaczów Ghetto leaves no doubt. Their motive seems obvious – they were trying to buy into the favour of the occupying forces. In the statement of reasons for the verdict, we can read that they both “collaborated with the gendarmerie and the Ukrainian police with zeal and utter fondness.”<sup>117</sup> An equally important reason was the greed for profit. Ideological issues were of little importance here, especially as both were able to manoeuvre between the Soviet and German authorities. Władysław Seredyński is also remembered as an ardent collaborator of the Soviet authorities in Lubaczów between 1939 and 1941, while his son Roman, faced with the imminent defeat of the Third Reich in

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter of the Director of the Clemency Bureau to the Court of Appeal in Rzeszow, 5 October 1950, p. 286 (according to the pdf numbering).

<sup>116</sup> AIPN, 2449/1, Card from the card file of convicted persons concerning Władysław Seredyński; AIPN, 2882/1, Card from the card file of prisoners convicted under the PKWN Decree of 31 August 1944; AIPN, 2449/1, Card from the card file of convicted persons concerning Roman Seredyński.

<sup>117</sup> AIPN Rz, 353/39, Conclusion of the judgment, 1 December 1949, p. 218 (according to the pdf numbering).

1944, deserted from the German army and joined Soviet troops. In June 1946, he joined the Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Parta Robotnicza*, PPR).

During the work on the article, the author has not succeeded in establishing all the victims of the Seredyńskis, nor – apart from a few cases (the name of a gendarme by the name Strauss is mentioned in the files) – the direct perpetrators of the murders of the Jews the accused turned over to the German authorities. The files also show the involvement of other *Volksdeutsche* in this activity, and this issue, therefore, requires research into their attitudes and actions against the Jewish community.

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## SUMMARY

This article presents the participation of the *Volksdeutsche* Władysław Sereżyński and his son Roman in crimes committed against persons of Jewish nationality in Lubaczów (*Kreis Rawa Ruska*) during the German occupation and the post-war criminal case under the August Decree, which took place before the Court of Appeal in Rzeszów at an away session in Lubaczów. Both were sentenced to death by the sentence of the Court of Appeal in Rzeszów of 1 December 1949. The sentence was executed on 22 October 1950. Due to its wider context, the article also presents a brief description of Lubaczów, the situation of the local Jews during the German occupation and the liquidation of the ghetto.



The crimes committed by the Sereďyńskis took place in January 1943 in the Lubaczów area, mainly during the liquidation of the local ghetto. They consisted in denouncing and turning over persons of Jewish nationality to the gendarmerie or the Ukrainian police. The criminal activity of Władysław Sereďyński and his son Roman was established based on the surviving files from the Decree of 31 August 1944 concerning the punishment of fascist-Hitlerite criminals guilty of murder and ill-treatment of the civilian population and prisoners of war and the punishment of traitors of the Polish Nation.

#### KEYWORDS

Władysław Sereďyński • Roman Sereďyński • Lubaczów • *Volksdeutsch*  
• trial • ghetto • Jews