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'ARYAN PAPERS'. ON THE HELP PROVIDED BY POLES IN LEGALISING FALSE IDENTITIES FOR JEWS IN THE TERRITORY OF THE GENERAL GOVERNORATE FOR THE OCCUPIED POLISH REGIONS

„Aryan acquaintances got me an Aryan certificate for free."[1] With this sentence, Tadeusz Bluth from Jasło began the account that he wrote shortly after the end of the war. When discussing his tragic life during the occupation, he did not mention how he had acquired a document that ensured a new identity and allowed him to survive up to the German retreat. We can no longer find out the names of the people who selflessly helped him and whether those were pre-war or occupation acquaintances. This very significant fact was obscured by a description of more important events that had a crucial impact on the fate of this man, who had been fighting for his life day by day for several years.

Bluth's case is not unique. Although the motif of adopting a new identity on the basis of false documents appears in many accounts, diaries and memoirs related to the history of the Polish lands under German occupation, for many reasons the process of acquiring these forged documents has not yet been comprehensively

[1] The Archive of Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (hereinafter JHI Archive), The Accounts of the Holocaust Survivors (hereinafter Acc.), 301/624, An Account of Tadeusz Bluth, n.d. [1945], p. 1.

studied. The size and internal diversity of the community – if it is possible to use such a term – of people using assumed names is one of the most important factors. This group included Jews attempting to save their own lives, Polish political and social activists persecuted for political reasons, and denounced Underground soldiers forced to escape their homeland. Many of them changed their identity several times, usually not knowing to whom they owed their next chance to hide from the Germans. Acquiring a new identity was in retrospect often judged as a significant event but certainly less important than more memorable situations such as changing places of residence, escaping from the Germans and their collaborators, or taking part in Underground operations.

Researchers interested in how such people lived with such forged papers will find only a few items on the library shelves related to producing and distributing such documents to the persecuted. Here, the research of Stanisława Lewandowska comes indisputably to the foreground, as the book and two comprehensive articles she wrote are devoted to how the Underground organisations devised new identities[2]. The memoirs of several people involved in the underground preparation and use of false identity have also been published.[3] To research the fates of Jewish individuals, we have at our disposal sparse – mostly laconic – memoirs from Polish resistance members who took part in forging documents for ghetto escapees.[4] However, there are many more memoirs about people of Jewish nationality who used forged

[2] S. Lewandowska, *Kryptonim 'Legalizacja' 1939–1945*, Warsaw 1984; S. Lewandowska, 'Zakonspirowanie i legalizacja. Służby miejskie okupowanej Warszawy w akcji pomocy ludziom ściganym przez gestapo', *Dzieje Najnowsze* 1981, vol. 13, no. 1–2, pp. 145–170; S. Lewandowska, 'Z fałszywym Ausweisem... O komórce legalizacyjnej Kierownictwa Dywersji na terenie Obszaru Warszawskiego Armii Krajowej 1939–1944', *Rocznik Mazowiecki* 2004, vol. 16, pp. 75–90.

[3] *Inter alia:* S. Jankowski, *Z fałszywym ausweisem w prawdziwej Warszawie. Wspomnienia 1939––1946*, vol. 1–2, Warsaw 1981; K. Leski, *Życie niewłaściwie urozmaicone. Wspomnienia oficera wywiadu i kontrwywiadu AK*, Warsaw 1994; M. Wojewódzki, *W tajnych drukarniach Warszawy 1939–1944,* Warsaw 1978.

[4] E. Chądzyński, 'Pomoc Żydom udzielana przez konspiracyjne biuro fałszywych dokumentów w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej', *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce* 1970, no. 75; T. Czarnomski, 'Pomoc ludności żydowskiej udzielana przez pracowników Wydziału Ewidencji Ludności Zarządu m.st. Warszawy w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej', *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce* 1970, no. 75; F. Arczyński, 'Referat Legalizacyjny Rady Pomocy Żydom', in *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, compiled by W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna, Warsaw 2007, pp. 91–92; W. Zagórski, "Aryjskie papiery' dla ukrywających się Żydów', in *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej…*, pp. 158–160.

papers.[5] Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov[6] and Gunnar S. Paulsson[7] made very interesting attempts to show the mechanisms by which people hiding in Warsaw acquired new identities. The book by Małgorzata Melchior should be noted in particular; the author very carefully analysed many aspects of how false identities were created and how the people living under assumed names functioned, based on conversations with Holocaust survivors and their accounts.[8]

However, such publications are scarce. Most of them concern people connected with the Underground: the soldiers of secret organisations, as well as ghetto escapees supported by the Council for Aid to Jews with the Government Delegation for Poland (codenamed *Żegota*). To this end, the aim of this article is to recall some issues related to the help in legalising false identities given to Jews by Poles who were not connected with the military and civil Underground, including in the provincial areas of the General Governorate. Postwar accounts by both those who were helped and those who did the helping during the occupation are the main sources on which this text is based.

Before I discuss the issues included in the title of this study, I will describe the legal regulations on identity cards that were in effect in interwar Poland and then from the autumn of 1939, including in the central Polish territories occupied by the Germans. It may seem surprising, but the Republic of Poland as recreated after 1918 did not develop a system in which each adult citizen possessed a document confirming their identity. The first national ID cards were issued in the 1920s; in reality, these were passports for people going abroad so they could check into hotels and boarding houses. Getting such a document was very expensive (in 1930, the fee

[5] For example: A. Blady-Szwajger, *I więcej nic nie pamiętam*, Warsaw 1994; M.M. Chęciński, *Jedenaste przykazanie: Nie zapomnij*, Toruń 2004; J. Holzer, *Historyk w trybach historii. Wspomnienia*, Cracow 2013; J. Kot, *Ruleta kasztanów. Wierna opowieść o młodości wzrosłej w burzliwą dojrzałość podczas światowego kataklizmu*, Toruń 2003; W. Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall. Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto*, New York 1979; S. Rotem, *Wspomnienia powstańca z warszawskiego getta*, Warsaw 2012.

[6] J. Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Strategie przetrwania. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy*, Warsaw 2004.

[7] G.S. Paulsson, *Utajone miasto. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy (1940–1945)*, Cracow 2009. (English edition: G.S. Paulsson, *Secret city: the hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press 2003). It is worth adding that this author's findings have met with sharp criticism (see H. Dreifuss, 'Utajone miasta, kilka uwag o metodologii Gunnara S. Paulssona', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 2014, vol. 10, part 2, pp. 823–852).

[8] M. Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość. Polscy Żydzi ocaleni na 'aryjskich papierach'. Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego*, Warsaw 2004.

amounted to more than 100 złoty), so these were purchased only by well-off people travelling the world either as tourists or on official business. Later, information about temporary registration of residence on the national territory began to be recorded in this document. Only a Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland published in March 1928 made it possible to obtain a national ID card which meets our contemporary understanding. This card was issued by a local office after submitting a written application and a nominal fee amounting to only 60 Polish grosz, plus the cost of taking a photograph at one's own expense. However, it is necessary to stress that it was not compulsory to obtain this document.[9]

Apart from a passport or a national ID card, a citizen of pre-war Poland could present other documents confirming their identity to the authorities: a copy of their birth or marriage certificate, a certified statement from the local authority of permanent residence on its territory, a military identity card, a clerical identity card, or a union ticket. There was, however, no requirement to carry them on one's person. The reality of the period was such that no document was needed for contact with banks or credit unions (they preferred a system of bearer bills of exchange), or for concluding notarial deeds (it was sufficient to bring a witness with any kind of identity card along to the office, and this witness confirmed the identity of the applicant before a notary). In practice, hundreds of thousands of citizens of the Republic of Poland, of all sorts of nationalities and faiths, especially inhabitants of villages and small towns, successfully went about their social and economic lives without any documents confirming their personal identity.

The situation changed radically at the beginning of the German occupation. The escalation of repressive actions (especially the verification of identity papers), as well as the random searches on the streets and in residences, meant that a lack of an identity card could have far-reaching and negative consequences. The Germans allowed pre-war passports and national ID cards, and those who did not have them had to carry birth certificates. In November 1939, the General Governorate's authorities introduced a requirement for Polish people to permanently carry an official certificate, colloquially called the *palcówka* ('fingerprint'), that could be presented to police officers. This document contained basic personal data and

[9] A. Baczyńska, *Historia dowodu osobistego w Polsce*, https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/historia-dowodu-osobistego-w-polsce/sd95s, accessed 10 August 2018.

information such as nationality, education, occupation, military rank and place of employment. It did not have a photograph; it was authenticated by a thumbprint (hence its common name) and the signature of the owner.[10]

The events unfolding in the *Kresy Wschodnie* (Eastern Borderlands) of the Republic of Poland, namely the 1939–1941 Soviet occupation, are also of vital importance for this study. After the official incorporation of this area into the Soviet Union, a census conducted there formed the basis for the 'passportisation' action during which Polish citizens received Soviet ID cards.[11] Many of these people, representing different nationalities and faiths, became targets for extermination. Some were murdered on the spot, and very large numbers of people were deported to *gulags* or exiled. Shortly after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, a part of the *Kresy* was incorporated into the General Governorate, and its residents fell under the equally criminal rule of the German occupiers.

A turning point in the intensification of German control over the residents of the General Governorate – not only Poles but also representatives of other nationalities – came in 1941. The introduction of a law obliging each Pole aged 18–60 to work required a certificate from employers confirming the employment; this *Personalausweis* (colloquially, *auswajs*) became a document that could be used to avoid trouble during contact with the police. After a short time, an employment card (*Arbeitskarte*) – a special sheet issued in two copies, one kept by the employer and the second by the employment office (*Arbeitsamt*) – was created to complete the *Personalausweis*. However, the introduction by Hans Frank of executory provisions in June 1941 for a long since dead-letter decree, ordering each non-German resident of the General Governorate over 15 years of age to have an identity card (*Kennkarte*; colloquially written in Polish as *kenkarta*), turned out to be most important. A number of documents had to be submitted to the local office that issued the *Kennkarte*: an application form, two photographs, a birth certificate (or in the case of Christians, a baptismal certificate), a certified attestation of permanent

[10] *Wybrane dokumenty represji i życia codziennego. Cechy formalne i tło historyczne. Opracowanie na podstawie zasobu Archiwum Fundacji 'Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie'*, Warsaw 2009, http://www.fpnp.pl/edukacja/Dokumenty.pdf, accessed 10 August 2018.

[11] *Conf.* e.g. S. Gacki, "Paszportyzacja'. Przebieg paszportyzacji obywateli polskich i likwidacji sieci opiekuńczej Ambasady RP w Moskwie', *Karta. Niezależny Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1993, no. 10, pp. 117–131.

residence and, if possible, a pre-war national ID card. This *Kennkarte* included basic personal data, a photograph, forefinger prints, information on the bearer's religious denomination and occupation, as well as the officially confirmed place of residence.[12]

Although the Germans had intended to finish the operation of issuing the *Kennkarten* in 1942, the process lasted until April 1943. These dates are of the utmost importance for this study: the operation of issuing those documents coincided with the gruesome process of liquidating the ghettos in the General Governorate, and ended with the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In Warsaw and elsewhere, each escapee from the closed districts who was searching for a chance of survival had to consider acquiring a *Kennkarte* and, therefore, assuming a false identity. This was often a long and complicated process. It is worth recalling that few people had any real hope of hiding from the Germans, Polish blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*) or Poles sympathising with the German anti-Jewish policy. The most important matter was a 'good appearance', that is a lack of the physiognomic features commonly associated – also because of the extremely aggressive propaganda endorsed by the Nazis – with the Jewish nationality, such as dark eyes, a prominent nose or raven-black hair. Almost all men and boys practising Judaism were circumcised, which explicitly indicated their Jewish origin.[13] Besides 'good appearance', a perfect command of the Polish language (without inserting dialectal terms or phrases derived from Yiddish) as well as knowledge of Polish customs and Catholic practices were extremely important. Such 'role-playing' could be exposed at any moment for all sorts of reasons, such as refraining from Holy Mass and other religious practices, as well as an exaggerated emphasis of one's Christian religiousness. Numerous post-war accounts by Poles speak in terms not of suspicion, but rather absolute certainty that some of their neighbours or co-workers, as well as more distant acquaintances, were in reality concealed

[12] *Wybrane dokumenty*…, http://www.fpnp.pl/edukacja/Dokumenty.pdf, accessed 10 August 2018.

[13] The aid rendered by doctors, especially those from Warsaw, to Jews in hiding, also falls within the scope of this study. These doctors performed procedures of foreskin restoration and rhinoplasty, among others (*conf.* M. Ciesielska, 'Zabiegi likwidujące skutki obrzezania wykonywane w Warszawie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Wstępna próba opisu zjawiska', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 2017, vol. 13, pp. 437–446).

Jews pretending to be people of Polish nationality. The Poles in question either did not put that knowledge to use, or (as will be discussed in a further part of this study) made efforts to help the persecuted. However, others decided to blackmail or even denounce such people.[14]

The existing sources, especially accounts and memoirs related to the period of the German occupation, emphasise the distinct importance of baptismal certificates as the most important documents for persons forced to adopt a new identity. A baptismal certificate made it easier to obtain other documents that authenticated their new personal identity. A Jewish child (who would not be old enough to be formally obliged to work and thus carry a *Kennkarte*), trying to survive in the countryside of the General Governorate without informing others about her or his Jewish origin, had to have a Christian baptismal certificate for the registration of residence.

The sources suggest there were four important ways of obtaining copies of Christian and, above all, Catholic baptismal certificates. Most common was to receive a baptismal certificate from Polish acquaintances. Many people kept the documents of their family members, both alive and deceased, at home. It was also easy for a Catholic to go to a parish and, for a small donation, to obtain an excerpt from the baptismal certificate of one of their next of kin: a sister, a brother, a wife or a child. There are reports recorded in many postwar accounts about receiving such a document from Poles, free of charge, which gave Jewish people a chance to survive. This paper recounts several such cases.

A teenager named Sala Zylberbaum received from a Polish woman a certificate of "some, it seems, dead little girl."[15] Janina Kroch, who was pursued by the Germans, found her way from Lvov (Lviv, Lwów) to Brody, where Alina Holdenmajer gave her a certificate concerning her deceased niece.[16] Helena Ostrowska found temporary shelter in a Polish household, but the family could not keep her there. In that critical situation, a neighbour offered his help and gave her his wife's certificate.[17] Stefan Bulaszewski gave his deceased sister's certificate to his school friend Maria Justman,

[14] See e.g. G.S. Paulsson, *Utajone miasto*…, p. 60ff.; M. Melchior, *Zagłada*…, p. 180ff.
[15] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/1297, An Account of Sala Zylberbaum, 15 January 1945, p. 1.
[16] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/362, An Account of Janina Kroch, n.d. [1945], p. 4.
[17] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/2466, An Account of Helena Ostrowska, 22 January 1947, p. 2.

an escapee from the Warsaw Ghetto,[18] while Szoszana Rakowska from Ruszcza near Cracow received a certificate from her neighbour, Jan Rzepecki, which belonged to his sister Stanisława, who had settled in the *Kresy Wschodnie* in the interwar period.[19] Edmund Szewczyk and Antoni Szymański, wishing to help their former supervisor Julian Lewenstein, acquired the certificate in a Lublin parish of Aleksander Kosidło, who had emigrated to the United States many years earlier.[20] Józef Mützenmacher received from a Polish acquaintance a certificate concerning Jan Kot of Lvov, who had enlisted as a volunteer in the Polish Army in September 1939 and was missing in action; Józef was informed that both the parents of the missing man and the priest who issued the certificate knew about the deception and, if needed, would testify that Kot had been found and was working for the Germans.[21]

Some Poles also became involved with acquiring baptismal certificates on a larger scale. Sometimes they did this for altruistic reasons; however, it was often just one element of a longer process of acquiring new documents, for which a fee was paid (this matter will be mentioned in a later part of this study). Such activities were possible primarily in large cities, where not only priests but also parish secretaries, and in some cases family members, were engaged in issuing baptismal certificate copies from parish registers.

Stanisław Szymański of Warsaw described how, after obtaining general information about a person who needed false documents (their sex, age, etc.), he would contact Feliksa Piotrowska, the wife of the organist and secretary of the Church of the Visitation of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in the Old Town. She searched in the records for data of deceased people which corresponded to the 'need', and then looked for their birth certificates, from which copies were drawn up. She did not demand payment for these activities.[22] Bronisław Nietyksza, who was working for the local Warsaw authorities, describes the process as follows:

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[18] The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance (hereinafter AIPN), Chief Commission for the Prosecution of the Crimes against the Polish Nation (hereinafter GK), 392/1688, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Stefan Bulaszewski, 23 January 1971, p. 5; *ibidem*, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Maria Bulaszewska, 23 January 1971, p. 10.

[19] AIPN, GK, 392/897, A Copy of the Statement of Szoszana Goldberg, 28 November 1988, p. 16.

[20] AIPN, GK, 392/372, An Account of Edmund Szewczyk and Antoni Szymański, 6 April 1984, pp. 2–2v.

[21] J. Kot, *Ruleta*…, p. 132.

[22] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/2975, An Account of Stanisław Szymański, 20 November 1947, pp. 1–2.

"I had two arranged [prearranged – S.P.] Roman Catholic parishes – one on Three Crosses Square (St. Alexander's Church) and the other on Narutowicz Square (St. Jacob's Church). I had an agreement with the parish priests and secretaries of these parishes that they would not issue death certificates for deceased people in the 18–60 age range, leaving them in the records of living people in a given parish. In case of the need to issue a *kenkarta* to a person of Jewish origin as an Aryan, a suitable birth certificate of a person already deceased but not deleted from the records was then chosen. In this way those people obtained authentic and formally valid documents." [23]

The above examples have one common element: taking over the identities of deceased people or, more rarely, people who were currently far away from their birthplaces or places of residence. Such actions were understandable. If there appeared to be two people with identical names (a Pole and his Jewish 'doppelganger') in one city or township, or even district, this posed a huge danger of discovery by the Germans. Maximilian Tauchner, an escapee from Lvov, mentioned it:

"The conviction that it was better to have 'true' documents (i.e. those of real existing people, and not completely forged) was in those times one of the illusions seized upon by harried and rushed Polish Jews, searching for various possibilities of 'legalising' their stay among their Polish fellow countrymen." [24]

Although the flow of data between the occupiers' offices was not smooth, there was a very high probability that the true identity of a ghetto escapee would be discovered, especially if he assumed the identity of a person already registered somewhere else, e.g. at an employment office. The fate of Andrzej Hałys from Monasterz is a clear illustration. He gave the certificates of his two sisters and two brothers, who were working as forced labourers in the *Reich*, to four members of a Jewish family, the Fryders. However, they made the error of remaining in the area of Monasterz and acquiring legal employment on farms thanks to these certificates. When the new workers were reported to the *Arbeitsamt*, the deception was exposed. Hałys was arrested and spent a long time in jails and camps; however, he managed to live long enough to be liberated.[25]

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[23] AIPN, GK, 392/1500, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Bronisław Nietyksza, 28 July 1986, pp. 4–5.

[24] AIPN, GK, 392/315, An Account of Maximilian Tauchner, n.d. [September 1995], p. 33.

[25] AIPN, GK, 392/1847, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Andrzej Hałys, 29 May 1968, p. 2.

Alina Zajączkowska of Cracow, who offered her certificate to a school colleague, Blanka Rubin, had more luck, probably because Blanka promised to leave Cracow.[26] The memoirs of the teenager Jakub 'Jasio' Michlewicz, who after escaping from the Warsaw Ghetto was in hiding near Piaseczno pretending to be a Pole, sound extraordinary:

"After some time, the landlord told me to get a certificate. I went twice to Warsaw to some Polish acquaintances [but] they did not want to give me the certificate. At the third time, the landlord said: 'You must bring the certificate, and I will keep you even if you are a Jew, but if you do not have the certificate, then do not come back at all.' I could not sleep from the worry, and when I fell asleep, my mommy appeared in a dream and ordered me to go to one boy with whom we lived together in the past, as he would give me the certificate. I went and this boy bought a certificate and gave it to me. [...] With the certificate, I came back to the landlord. There was still trouble because everyone called me Jasio while Ryszard was the name written on the certificate. But I said that my mother used to called me that."[27]

The surname of Ryszard, the teenager who decided to help his Jewish colleague, will probably remain unknown.

It was very uncommon for the persecuted to ask a parish priest or a vicar of a Catholic parish to issue a baptismal certificate.[28] Father Marceli Godlewski, the parish priest of All Souls Church in Warsaw, was the clergyman best remembered for helping Jews in this way.[29] It was noted in the memoirs that at a certain moment his activities became an open secret in Warsaw, and many Poles instantly suspected anyone using a certificate with Father Godlewski's signature to be of Jewish origin.[30] Other clergymen working in provincial parishes, such as Father Stefan Podsiedlik

[26] AIPN, GK, 392/352, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Alina Zajączkowska, 18 February 1985, p. 4.

[27] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/1800, An Account of Jakub Michlewicz, n.d. [about 1946], pp. 3–4. For more on the topic of dreams of Jews experiencing occupational traumas, see B. Engelking, 'Sny jako źródło do badań nad Zagładą', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 2013, vol. 9, pp. 19–47.

[28] This issue falls within the scope of discussion about the Catholic Church's stance on the Holocaust (see e.g. J. Wąsowicz, 'Kościół ratujący Żydów', *Biuletyn IPN* 2019, no. 3, pp. 95–103; D. Libionka, 'Polska hierarchia kościelna wobec eksterminacji Żydów – próba krytycznego ujęcia', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 2009, vol. 5, pp. 19–70).

[29] See K. Madaj, M. Żuławnik, *Proboszcz getta*, Warsaw 2010, *passim*.

[30] AIPN, GK, 392/1327, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Maria Drejer, 23 July 1970, pp. 6–7.

from Miechów[31] and Father Ludwik Barski from Ciepielów,[32] also provided aid to ghetto escapees. Priests often tolerated thefts of blank baptismal certificates. One participant in such an action recalled the following:

"I went to the parish in Podgórze, to the parish priest Józef Niemczyński. He had known me since I was little; I was rambling through the parish and, when the sacristan was looking the other way, I stole blank baptismal certificates, the stamping seals, a little facsimile of the parish priest. [...] Another priest, Stanisław Mazak, was filling out these baptismal certificates in Latin." [33]

Sometimes obtaining a certificate from a Catholic priest meant receiving baptism. However, this rarely applied to adults,[34] and was performed much more often for Jewish children hidden in Polish houses. This phenomenon has complex causes that still require careful study. Acquiring a baptismal certificate, usually with an invented Polish surname, was of course the primary motivation. This certificate made it possible to register the child's residence and to live relatively normally. The neighbours were informed – especially if the new household member was not an infant but a child of several years – that he or she was an orphan they had taken in, a descendant of distant relatives who had died or been arrested, or even the spouse's illegitimate child. Sometimes Poles decided to baptise the child at her or his parents' request, but equally often they would do so without the family's knowledge.[35] The godparents registered in the records would have to testify to the child's origin, taking into consideration the reprisals the Germans would take if the child's true identity was discovered.[36]

It is incorrect to assume that the acquisition of a baptismal certificate by a Jewish person never involved the payment of a fee. Existing sources point out that, at least

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[31] S. Podsiedlik, *Relacja* in *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej…*, p. 596.

[32] Father Ludwik Barski died during the occupation. The inhabitants of Ciepielów said that after the end of the war, Jews saved from the Holocaust came there and reported that they had received false baptismal certificates from him.

[33] B. Engelking, *Zagłada i pamięć. Doświadczenie Holocaustu i jego konsekwencje opisane na podstawie relacji autobiograficznych*, Warsaw 1994, p. 48.

[34] For example, JHI Archive, Acc., 301/444, An Account of Janina Kalita, n.d. [1945], p. 1; S. Podsiedlik, *Relacja…*, p. 596.

[35] AIPN, GK, 392/1489, An Account of Helena Dutkiewicz, 7 August 1979, pp. 1–2; AIPN, GK, 392/1380, An Account of Waleria Dorosz, 20 March 1979, pp. 2–3.

[36] For example, AIPN, GK, 392/225, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Jadwiga Cebera, 19 November 1985, pp. 10–11.

in some cities, the demand for such documents led to the formation of groups of Polish sellers who charged high fees. Admittedly, these were not as substantial as the fees for false *Kennkarten*, although they often represented a considerable expense. Syda Konis described how "heaps of birth certificates" (probably the attachments to national ID card applications that were submitted in the interwar period) lay in the attic of the district office headquarters in Sandomierz, and so she could buy one of these certificates for 150 złoty.[37] Paulina Hirsch, living in Cracow, acquired a certificate thanks to a female "Polish acquaintance", paying ten times more for it – as much as 1500 złoty.[38] However, it is unknown whether this amount was a typical or an exceptional sum on the local market.

Getting a Christian baptismal certificate was the first step to acquiring a false *Kennkarte* – false, because it included untrue data, and at the same time valid because it had been issued by an office under German control. Some were afraid that their origin would be exposed, despite taking over the identities of people who were deceased or far away from their birthplace. If an opportunity existed, such people sometimes decided to take the next step and get married in a Catholic church using false certificates. After the ceremony, they received a fully 'true' marriage certificate which could be presented at the occupying forces' offices. Of course, only people who were deeply Polonised and familiar with Catholic customs had such an opportunity. Although marriage should per canon law be preceded by banns in the parishes of the bride and groom, this was not strictly observed during the occupation period. The betrothed could present themselves to the priest as displaced persons from the Polish lands incorporated into the *Reich*, or as escapees from the area of Soviet occupation, and explain their haste in getting married as being motivated by a forthcoming parting. A Polish witness known to the priest would play a crucial role in this case and testify to the authenticity of the story. As mentioned above, Maximilian Tauchner and his betrothed came to Warsaw from Lvov, equipped with false certificates with Polish surnames. When they decided to get married using these certificates, it became necessary for them to find a credible witness:

[37] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/426, Natan Gross, 'Papierowe Polki' w Niemczech. Z opowiadań Sydy Konis, Cracow, n.d. [1945], p. 1.

[38] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/453, An Account of Paulina Hirsch, n.d. [1945], p. 12.

"And here, in the execution of this plan – Tauchner mentioned years later – we were helped for the first time by Jurek Zwierzchowski – a young, brave and honourable man with a big heart whom we met through a mutual female acquaintance. To our quite shy question as to whether he could be our witness during the church wedding ceremony, he agreed without hesitation, and as such he attended – as a 'true' witness – our wedding in St. Teresa Church […]. Of course, he did it for us, as well as later in other cases, completely selflessly! And it was not completely natural and understandable in the Warsaw of that time!"[39]

Although cases of Jews getting married using fictional identities were uncommon, they did occur, primarily in Warsaw and its environs. Wilhelm Förber from Poznań (using false documents bearing the name 'Stefan Górski') and his fiancée also decided to take this step.[40] Antonina Kalko of Warsaw showed great heroism and acquired false documents bearing the name 'Stanisław Więckowski' for her fiancée Jakub Pasierman, and she married him using those credentials. Unfortunately, they did not live to see the end of the war as they were arrested by the Germans (probably denounced by neighbours) and murdered with Mariusz, their eighteen-month-old son, in the forts near Włochy.[41]

Besides baptismal certificates and marriage certificates, confirmation of registration of residence was a mandatory attachment to an application for the issue of a *Kennkarte*. To secure suitable lodgings in villages and smaller towns, it was necessary to provide a baptismal certificate to the house owner, who would take it to the local authorities to complete compulsory registration. A clerk entered the data into either the resident-population or floating-population register, and then issued a suitable confirmation. In some large cities, chiefly Warsaw, population records were maintained in the form of extensive card indexes, which made it possible to check the previous addresses of the applicant. In the General Governorate, the sudden appearance of a person 'from nowhere', searching for accommodation with only a Christian baptismal certificate to

[39] AIPN, GK, 392/315, An Account of Maximilian Tauchner, n.d. [September 1995], p. 33.

[40] AIPN, GK, 392/532, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Władysław Ciesielski, 14 February 1985, pp. 10–11.

[41] AIPN, GK, 392/128, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Zygmunt Bogusławski, 14 November 1985, pp. 9, 12.

hand, might arouse suspicions of being a ghetto escapee. Even if the compulsory registration was completed, submitting a residence statement certified for only a few weeks or even days often made the Germans supervising the issue of *Kennkarten* distrustful. In such a situation, a back-dated certified residence statement, preferably dating from the beginning of the occupation or even the pre-war period, could authenticate the new identity. Stanisław Szymański mentions that regular workers at the registration office in Warsaw who were willing to make such fake entries charged a fee of 1500 złoty each time, never asking whether this was on behalf of a Jew in hiding or an Underground soldier facing arrest.[42] After purchasing a certificate in Cracow, the above-mentioned Paulina Hirsch was registered free of charge, probably as an 'extra' to the deal.[43]

It can be concluded from the accounts and memoirs that there were relatively minor problems with acquiring ID photographs for *Kennkarten*. This was quite a considerable expense for poor people, and small provincial towns often did not have a photographer, so officials usually accepted older photographs from the interwar period, and even those made with amateur cameras. However, there were photographic studios, such as the one belonging to Zygmunt Szporek on Świętojańska Street in Warsaw, in which pictures were taken and then developed on amateur rolls of film to make false documents for Jews.[44]

The last step was the submission of an application for a *Kennkarte*, and (usually after a few weeks of waiting) its collection. This was risky because the applicant had to collect the *Kennkarte* in person, and fingerprints had to be appended to both copies (one remained at the office) in the presence of an official. Some people were paralysed by the fear of exposure and that the Germans would be waiting at the local office.[45] Leon Bukowiński, who helped to produce false documents for Jews hiding in Warsaw, mentioned that he solved this problem by asking an office porter to take the prepared *Kennkarten* away from the office, and returned them to

[42] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/2975, An Account of Stanisław Szymański, 20 November 1947, pp. 1–2.

[43] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/453, An Account of Paulina Hirsch, n.d. [1945], p. 12.

[44] S. Sheybal, *Wspomnienia 1891–1970*, Cracow – Wrocław 1984, p. 194.

[45] The local authorities accepted the applications for *Kennkarten* and forwarded them with attachments to district offices. There the documents were prepared, stamped and signed, and next returned from the offices to the local authorities, where they were collected by the applicants, who left their fingerprints on the documents while doing so.

the relevant office with the fingerprints already added.[46] In smaller towns, village heads and secretaries of local authorities had relatively free access to the documents, so they could often provide similar aid to escapees by issuing false *Kennkarten*. These included Edward Wyrzykowski, the head of the Kobyłka township, who offered Polish documents to Sabina Barenholc,[47] as well as Jan Wronkowski, the secretary of the local authorities in Korczew, who acquired a false *kenkarta* for Perla Morgensztern.[48]

Some Poles who attempted to get a legal *Kennkarte* were unable to present birth certificates to the Germans, particularly those born in central Russia or the *Kresy Wschodnie*. Even after the latter region was taken over by the Wehrmacht in June 1941, contact with far-off parishes was very difficult. Besides, many of them did not function and their records had been destroyed by the Soviet authorities during the occupation. In such cases, the Germans had to tolerate all sorts of replacement documents attached to the applications for *Kennkarten*, including those issued by the Soviet administration. This was a common phenomenon because the Galicia district was also required to issue new documents; after the outbreak of the Soviet--German war many Poles from the *Kresy Wschodnie*, who often had come to reside in that area since September 1939, moved to the so-called old General Governorate. Jews wanting to hide from the Germans' repressive measures had a chance to assume the identities of Poles who either vanished into jails without a trace after being arrested by the Soviets or were deported to exile and Gulag.

Halina Schütz, who moved from Lvov to Cracow with her parents and grandmother in 1942, later mentioned that all members of her family had birth or baptismal certificates as well as some additional documents, and she also had a school certificate bearing the name of Halina Klof.[49] Her fellow countryman Wilhelm Ettinger shared his story:

"I had a Polish acquaintance in Lvov who had been the director of a power station in Yavoriv in Soviet times. He remained grateful to me for my attitude towards Poles when I visited him in Yavoriv as an inspector. He offered help in obtaining false

[46] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/4424, An Account of Leon Bukowiński, 12 September 1949, p. 3.
[47] AIPN, GK, 392/1065, A Copy of the Statement of Sabina Suchocka, 15 September 1948, p. 20.
[48] AIPN, GK, 392/329, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Kazimierz Miłobędzki, 19 February 1985, pp. 17–21.
[49] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/329, An Account of Halina Schütz, 20 June 1945, p. 1.

papers. On second thought, he decided that if I left immediately, he would give me his papers. He did not give me his birth certificate, only a prewar attestation from the Siemens company and his diploma of master electro-technician. He provided me with various family information and surnames which, in any case, I did not note down and soon forgot. I also almost always forgot that I was a married man and had a child. I was called Adam Hanisz."[50] Zygmunt Tune described his experience as follows:"We resolved to leave Lvov. My older brother, Norbert, who was working in the main railway shops as a locomotive mechanic, received from his Polish colleagues the birth certificate and school certificate of one [of them], and a copy of the baptismal certificate and Russian passport [identity card – S.P.] of the other. My younger brother [Akiba] received a passport in the name of Zbigniew B…, also from a Polish colleague. We received all those documents from them free of charge."[51]

The fates of Janina Kroch and her relatives are also interesting. They received aid from Zdzisław Stroński, the former vice-president of Lvov. This was not selfless because, as Janina stated, "we paid big money for all the documents." However, they received original documents, issued by the municipal office of Lvov, of people deported by the Soviets in 1940 to the East, together with written statements of witnesses that confirmed the deportation. These documents proved to be very credible. Janina shares what happened while she lived in Lvov pretending to be a Polish teenager waiting for the return of her parents from the Soviet Union:

"In the summer of 1942, two *Kripos* came. They demanded my baptismal certificate, tested my religious knowledge, left a guard at my home, and went with the baptismal certificate to the parish. After two hours, they came back, everything checked out. They caught me twice on the street as a Jewess. After checking the documents, they released me."[52]

Janina Kroch lived to see the end of the occupation, and her mother survived as an Aryan using the documents acquired with the help of Zdzisław Stroński. Her father was caught not wearing a Jewish badge by the *Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst* of

[50] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/339, An Account of Wilhelm Ettinger, 23 June 1945, p. 1.

[51] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/2242, An Account of Zygmunt Tune, 12 March 1947, pp. 5–6. Let us add that Akiba Tune received Soviet documents from a colleague he had known since childhood (JHI Archive, Acc., 301/2240, An Account of Akiba Tune, 18 March 1947, p. 1).

[52] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/362, An Account of Janina Kroch, n.d. [1945], p. 3.

the Lvov Ghetto and was handed over to the Germans. He perished in unknown circumstances.[53]

For many Jews in hiding, acquiring documents in this way was very difficult, and often quite impossible. They had neither the right contacts among Poles nor enough financial means; they were often unable to overcome the fear and trauma resulting from their experiences under the occupation.[54] Thus they attempted to acquire any *Kennkarten*, often completely false ones, which might help them to avoid arrest during an inspection by a patrol of the gendarmerie or a search of their residence. There was a huge market for such documents, but the quality of production was inconsistent. According to rumours, a false *Kennkarte* could be bought in the Warsaw market for just 500 złoty, but these 'papers' were forged in the most primitive way. Even low-ranking officers of the German police were systematically trained in discovering elements that indicated forgery. Adam Dębicki, hiding in Warsaw, received a fake, completely blank *Kennkarte* from an unknown Pole. He describes a certain friendly man named Kalbarczyk, a concierge of one of the houses, who then acquired ink, probably of a special consistency or colour, which Dębicki could use to fingerprint the *Kennkarte*.[55] Nevertheless, a considerable sum had to be paid for a well-forged *Kennkarte*. Benedykt Müntz, his wife, daughter and son-in-law escaped from Lvov to Warsaw, and Aryan documents were waiting for them there. These documents should have cost 5000 złoty, but forgers forced them to pay as much as 18,000 złoty. This expense paid off, however, and Müntz mentions his identity papers were repeatedly verified during stops and searches on the streets of Warsaw; he also

[53] *Ibidem*.

[54] Zdzisław Morawski, the son of the owner of the Nowa Wieś estate near Grójec, mentioned: "I remember that in the later stage of the war, probably in 1943, two cultural and intelligent women, mother and daughter, with quite distinct Semitic features came to us. We put them in a vacant room in the pavilion and ordered them not to leave it until the time when they, first, received their certificates and, later, based on those documents, their *kennkartas*. Both ladies, however, were in a state of complete nervous exhaustion. This is hardly surprising, since for three long years they were – as they said themselves – hunted prey. [...] If they had sat out quietly a week or two, it might have been possible to dye them blonde and somehow legalise their existence. But they could not bear the tension. On the second or third night, they left the house, not informing anyone, and went in the direction of Mogielnica, quite Godforsaken and distant from the main roads." A few hours later some Germans telephoned the property, instructing them to bury the bodies of two women shot by a patrol of the gendarmerie (Z. Morawski, *Gdzie ten dom, gdzie ten świat*, Warsaw 1997, pp. 155–156).

[55] AIPN, GK, 392/299, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Adam Dembicki, 29 January 1985, p. 24.

survived a Gestapo search during which he was ordered to state all the data from his *Kennkarte* out loud and describe the location of the parish church that issued his baptismal certificate.[56] Leopold Bieder, hiding in Cracow, borrowed 3000 złoty to purchase a false *Kennkarte*.[57] Although we do not know whether that was the total charge for the purchase, it can probably be assumed that a similar sum of several thousands was the typical cost of a reasonably professionally forged document.

Sometimes the ghetto escapees came by chance upon soldiers of the Underground, who had access to people forging documents within the underground structures. Mieczysław Soporek of Warsaw, who helped a young Jewish clockmaker Jakub Ekselman, says laconically:

"My chief from the Underground, Jerzy Kubiak, came to my shop, noticed a Jew working there, and asked him whether he had papers. He answered that he did not. Kubiak, at his own initiative, arranged him a *Kennkarte* in the name of Franciszek Kisio."[58]

Stanisław Dąbrowa-Kostka, the chief of the legalising unit for the 'Rzeszów' subregion of the *Armia Krajowa* (the Home Army), acted in the same way. In a flat in Cracow he met a Jew hidden there, Stanisław Agatstein (the brother of the prominent poet Mieczysław Jastrun). He acquired – as he emphasised, "perfectly made" – documents for him in the name of Jerzy Gierowski: not only the *Kennkarte* but also other documents, including a birth certificate and school certificates.[59] Other sources also present similar cases of help being given to people in need by members of other underground organisations such as *Polska Niepodległa* (Independent Poland)[60] or the *Bataliony Chłopskie* (Peasants' Battalions).[61]

It is worth adding that Jews in hiding usually had no influence over what their new identity would be when receiving such purchases or gifts. In addition to learning this personal information by heart, it was often necessary to adapt

[56] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/476, An Account of Benedykt Müntz, 1 June 1945, pp. 8–9.

[57] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/1646, An Account of Leopold Bieder, 20 April 1946, p. 1.

[58] AIPN, GK, 392/848, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Mieczysław Soporek, 8 February 1990, pp. 4–6.

[59] AIPN, GK, 392/639, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Edmund Tutsch, 12 September 1984, p. 4.

[60] AIPN, GK, 392/166, An Account of Henryk Gębski, 16 March 1984, pp. 1–1v.

[61] AIPN, GK, 392/643, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Helena Brodowska-Kubicz, 8 April 1986, p. 6.

respective elements of their appearance to the information in the document. Helena Kitaj-Drobnerowa recalls that a friend of hers received false documents that indicated that he was a brown-haired man. Because he had red hair, and his photograph was in the document, he had to dye his hair regularly. Fortunately, he found a Polish barber to do this every few weeks.[62] Although it may seem to be something of little importance to a person in hiding, in reality it was literally a matter of life or death.

As mentioned earlier, a *Kennkarte* was a mandatory identity card for each non-German resident of the General Governorate after 1943. A person using a false identity knew that to make the deception work, it was also necessary to own other documents: birth or baptismal certificates, registration of residence, and even fabricated photographs.[63] The biggest problem was with the *Ausweis*, the certificate confirming employment (the best option was to work in an industrial plant that was important for the military needs of the Reich). Although Jews in hiding sometimes took up legal jobs, many used false employment certificates, usually purchased on the black market or forged by Poles connected with the Underground. At the end of the occupation, acquiring a real employment card was not too difficult if you knew a clerk susceptible to corruption. Janusz Pstrokoński, from Olesin near Warsaw, helped Bernard Fogelewicz after the Warsaw Rising; he acquired a baptismal certificate for Bernard without much effort, and used the information therein to produce an employment card in Grodzisk Mazowiecki for him. This last operation involved a bribe of 10 kg of sugar.[64]

In the terms of occupation, many people preferred not to have the *Ausweis* at all rather than use forged documents. In the biggest cities of the General Governorate, Germans regularly organised round-ups (*łapanki*) by blocking chosen streets, city quarters or stopping train passengers. Those caught were gathered in special detention places and their documents were handed over

[62] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/1524, An Account of Helena Kitaj-Drobnerowa, n.d. [about 1946], p. 107.

[63] In Radom Jadwiga and Roman Szafrański hid Anna Kerc, the young daughter of a Jewish doctor from Bydgoszcz. They acquired a first communion dress for her and asked a vicar from a parish in Radom to take a photo with the child to commemorate her receiving first communion. However, it did not prevent the girl's death at German hands (AIPN, GK, 392/1499, Survey Concerning Aid Provided during the Occupation to Jewish Population on the Territory of Poland, n.d., pp. 1–3).

[64] AIPN, GK, 392/1682, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Janusz Pstrokoński, 25 July 1970, pp. 12–13.

to various *Arbeitsämter*; those that broke curfew were also often sent to these detention places. The discovery of a false *Ausweis* involved the risk of Gestapo officers being summoned, while not having the document at all meant deportation to forced labour in the Reich. It is interesting that many ghetto escapees using false identities actually sought the opportunity to be transferred to Germany: women were particularly eager to apply for departure, but for circumcised men the mandatory detailed medical examination constituted an insurmountable barrier. Polish officials at various *Arbeitsämter* had to meet the German demands, and each volunteer was valuable to them. Thus the officials often turned a blind eye to incomplete documents or certificates of doubtful quality, and sometimes even their complete absence was tolerated.[65] Information about female Jews hiding among people working in the Reich appear in numerous postwar accounts;[66] they were called 'papierowe Polki' ('Polish women on paper')[67]; the well-known poet, writer and film-maker Natan Gross probably coined this term.

One of the helpers was Jan Marczyk, an employee at the *Arbeitsamt* in Nowy Sącz, who recollected:

"When the Germans started the liquidation of the ghetto in Nowy Sącz in 1942, a number of my Jewish acquaintances came to me for rescue. Then, taking advantage of my employment at the *Arbeitsamt*, I supplied these Jews with documents, most often in a Ukrainian surname, and I reported when the transport of people deported to labour camps in Germany was leaving, and that such-and-such a Jew was leaving at that time. I obtained the documents in this way: Lemkos directed to forced labour sometimes brought birth or baptismal certificates in two copies, and I used

[65] For example, the story of Zygmunt Konopiński can be recalled here. Konopiński, after escaping from a forced labour camp for Jews, found himself in Nowe Miasto. With no opportunities to hide himself or any documents, he went to an employment office. He later mentioned that he told 'fables' to officials about his fate, stating his place of birth was in Sarny in the Volhynia region. He was sent to Germany and worked there as a farmhand until the end of the war (JHI Archive, Acc., 301/125, An Account of Zygmunt Konopiński, 13 May 1945, p. 1).

[66] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/2194, An Account of Lusia Grosman, 17 February 1947, pp. 1–4; JHI Archive, Acc., 301/3029, An Account of Brucha Sznajer, 29 October 1947, p. 2; JHI Archive, Acc., 301/3330, An Account of Estera Rauch-Kwiatkowska, 30 March 1948, p. 20ff.

[67] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/426, Natan Gross, 'Papierowe Polki' w Niemczech. Z opowiadań Sydy Konis, Cracow, n.d. [1945], p. 1ff.

one of those copies. I also had cases when they brought stamped forms without a surname written down – so I enter[ed] a surname."[68]

Another employee of the *Arbeitsamt* in Nowy Sącz, Antoni Buczek (later arrested by the Germans and murdered in the Auschwitz death camp), assisted Marczyk in this operation. The clerks who accompanied the labourers deported to the Reich also knew about the Jews among them.[69]

Frydzia Kleist was one of these. She used a false certificate to check into a hotel in Warsaw:

"In the hotel, by chance I met on the stairs a man, and he approached me, seeing that I was standing around looking intimidated and undecided. He said that he recognised that I was a Jewess, and advised me to sign on for deportation to Prussia and bleach my hair beforehand."

In the Reich, she met over a dozen girls hiding in the same way and using Aryan papers. However, they were denounced by a Polish female worker and went to jail. Some of the girls admitted their Jewish origin, others did not. Frydzia Kleist was very lucky, as in the German jail she met another prisoner, a Pole from Gródek Jagielloński, who knew the Polish woman whose identity Frydzia was using, as well as her family. He proposed that during the investigation Frydzia should call him as a witness to her Polish nationality, and thanks to him she was released.[70]

Keeping in touch with the residents of the General Governorate who aided the female ghetto escapees was a matter of huge importance for those women staying in Germany on Aryan papers. Exchanges of correspondence, and sometimes also of packages, 'proved' that they had Polish family members in their place of previous residence. Kazimierz Miłobędzki used his contacts in the Warsaw *Arbeitsamt* to help Gołda Hochberg, Szajndla Lendner and Ruchla Zieleniec to resettle to the Reich, and then corresponded with them for many months, authenticating their otherwise false identity.[71] The worker Stefan Górski, returning

[68] AIPN, GK, 392/303, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Jan Marczyk, 28 January 1985, p. 27.

[69] AIPN, GK, 392/303, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Jan Neriwal, 17 December 1985, pp. 8–9.

[70] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/781, An Account of Frydzia Kleist, n.d. [1945], p. 2.

[71] AIPN, GK, 392/329, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Kazimierz Miłobędzki, 19 February 1985, pp. 17–21; *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata. Ratujący Żydów podczas Holocaustu. Polska*, vol. 1, ed. I. Gutman, cooperation S. Bender, S. Krakowski, Cracow 2009, p. 469.

from his leave near Tarnów, took the teenager Sonia Bejtscher (who was using false documents) with him to Germany. He introduced her to other workers as his betrothed, and he kept continuous contact with her even though they were staying in different towns. After a few months, Górski heard that Polish workers were calling him a 'Jewish uncle', which indicated that Sonia's nationality had been exposed. He procured leave for her and, despite her resistance, he forced her to leave for the homeland, forbidding her to return. When she did not come back at the designated time, he was arrested by Germans and detained for several days. He was released after explaining that he had only met the girl on a train and knew nothing about her.[72]

The case of Michał Chęciński is also worth recounting. After his escape from a labour camp in Silesia, he found his way by chance to a German farm in which Polish and Ukrainian forced labourers were employed. When asked, Michał admitted that he was a Jew, and a Pole, Bronisław Słaby, decided to help him:

"'I have an idea,' says Bronek [a diminutive of Bronisław – S.P.] confidently. 'When were you born?' 'In 1924'. 'Great'. One Russian [a Soviet prisoner of war that had worked earlier at the farm – S.P.] forgot his birth certificate at my place. He was called Mikołaj Sadowski, it is a seemingly Polish surname. Only he was born in 1905 in Odessa. But the Germans still do not know where this Odessa is. I will scratch this zero a little, and it will say 1925 as the year of birth. Just right for you. And you will be this Mikołaj instead, do you understand?"[73]

Instructed in detail what he was to tell the German village head (*Bauernführer*), Michał Chęciński went to him the next day:[74]

"A young girl, about fifteen years old, appears in the kitchen. Not checking any of my documents, she asks for my personal identity and enters them into some form, stamps it, and the *Bauernführer* signs. [...] The girl gives me a paper, I say thanks and leave. I read what she entered onto the *Arbeitserlaubnis* [work permit – S.P.] form – Mikołaj Sadowski, born in 1925 in Odessa. I cannot believe my eyes how easy it is to grant me the right to exist in this land. What would I do without you, Bronek?"

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[72] AIPN, GK, 392/885, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Stefan Górski, 22 June 1988, pp. 3–4.
[73] M.M. Chęciński, *Jedenaste przykazanie*…, p. 177.
[74] *Ibidem*, p. 178.

The fates of people of Jewish nationality hiding on the territory of the General Governorate and using false documents followed different paths. Some ghetto escapees fell into German hands, while others were tracked down by Polish blackmailers who robbed them of their money and all their movable property with any sort of value.[75] Some were unable to psychologically and physically endure the hardships of their escapes over many months, and died. Others happened upon well-wishers who, despite their justified suspicions, provided accommodation and aid. Finally, although this was definitely rare, some assumed their new character so perfectly that their behaviour did not arouse any suspicions. When the end of the occupation and the war approached, many – especially those whose families had been murdered in executions, ghettoes and death camps – decided to keep the new identities created for them during the occupation and begin a new life. Others returned to their original first names and surnames, although this was not always easy.[76] Estera Rauch-Kwiatkowska described her life after being freed by American troops:[77]

"I was freed in Lübeck on the 2nd May of 1945. I found out that there were still Jews in Lübeck on Marli Street [Marlistrasse]. Jews from a concentration camp lived there. I went to them. I entered the gate, and I met one Jewess. I asked her where the chairman of a committee was. She: 'What for?' I said: 'I am a Jewess with Aryan papers and I want to return to the Jews'. She answered me: 'We do not acknowledge Jews with Aryan papers, only we are Jews', showing a tattoo from Auschwitz on her arm. I decided to remain with my Aryan papers until the situation became clear. I remained in a Polish [Displaced Persons'] camp."

The process of choosing between abandoning or retaining false identities is an interesting subject for further research, which could deepen the knowledge about the Holocaust and the trauma of its survivors.

The beginning of this article indicates that it is only a small contribution to the research concerning one of the aspects of Holocaust survival strategies. When discussing the ordinary Poles living in the General Governorate who helped the

[75] *Conf.* J. Grabowski, *'Ja tego Żyda znam!'. Szantażowanie Żydów w Warszawie 1939–1943*, Warsaw 2004.

[76] See M. Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość…*, p. 331ff.

[77] JHI Archive, Acc., 301/3330, An Account of Estera Rauch-Kwiatkowska, 30 March 1948, p. 22.

Jews to legalise false identities, it is necessary to remember that we may never be able to research or quantify this phenomenon comprehensively. However, this does not change the fact that the sources show numerous examples of attitudes that in retrospect may be called as public-spirited. Although dealings such as handing over one's certificate or a certificate of a family member to a Jewish person in hiding, helping Jews acquire other documents, accepting the role of a witness during a church wedding, or providing a back-dated registration of residence for a ghetto escapee under a Polish surname may – despite the context of the entire terror of the occupation – appear of little significance, they were often the first step on the way to saving someone's life. The surnames of the majority of people who, in the moment of greatest difficulty, decided to aid those in need will probably remain unknown forever. Nevertheless, that does not mean that we should forget about them.

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SUMMARY

Under the German occupation, Jews in the General Governorate sought any possible means of saving themselves and their closest family from the criminal policy of the Germans. One such way was to acquire false documents and operate under the guise of Poles and Christians. Adopting a new identity could only succeed if one had a very good command of Polish language, customs and culture. Acquiring false documents was a complicated process which required cooperation with Poles. Obtaining a baptismal certificate in the Catholic Church was the most important step. Friendly people provided such documents free of charge. These were the papers belonging to their next of kin, especially those who were deceased or missing in action. A market of forged baptismal certificates also existed. The next step was to acquire a residence attestation, which created a chance to obtain an identity card (*Kennkarte*). Well-off people could attempt to purchase whole sets of forged documents. Some ghetto escapees received them free of charge from Poles engaged in the anti-German military and civilian Undergrounds. Living under a false identity was very difficult. Such people were tracked down by both Germans and Polish blackmailers. Deportation to forced labour camps in Germany was often the best chance of survival for a person in hiding. A number of ghetto escapees pretending to be Polish women or men managed to survive in Germany until the end of the war.

KEYWORDS

false documents•General Governorate•Holocaust