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THE GERMAN MUNICIPALITY-LEVEL ADMINISTRATION
IN THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND ITS SURVIVING
RECORDS FOR THE STUDY OF POLISH-JEWISH RELATIONS.
THE EXAMPLE OF THE RADOM DISTRICT

Polish-Jewish relations in the General Government (GG), which was only a part of the occupied Polish territories, is an extensive subject. It encompasses the complexity of the attitudes of Poles towards Jews and Jews towards Poles, taking into account the reality imposed by the occupying German authorities that determined the fate of both nationalities. Since it was in the GG that the German state first massively and structurally persecuted the Jews and then committed genocide against them, researchers have drawn on a variety of sources to describe the factors that shaped ethnic and social relations between the Polish majority and the Jewish minority under the conditions created by the occupier.

The comprehensive body of literature on Polish-Jewish relations that has been published indicates that aspects of the occupation are dispersed across a wide array of archival materials. These materials are housed in Polish institutions and foreign entities in countries such as Germany, Israel, the United Kingdom, and the United States.¹

¹ For more, see A. Skibińska, in collaboration with M. Janczewska *et al.*, *Źródła do badań nad zagładą Żydów na okupowanych ziemiach polskich. Przewodnik archiwalno-bibliograficzny* (Warsaw, 2007). The other co-authors include Dariusz Libionka, Witold Mędykowski, Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, Jakub Petelewicz, and Monika Polit.

Many documents related to this subject have been published as source editions. It is impossible to list them all here. It suffices to point to the monumental work of the Ringelblum Archive,² published by the Jewish Historical Institute. Hundreds of memoirs by Holocaust survivors have also been published, revealing the Polish-Jewish context, including the experiences and perspective of children: *Dzieci żydowskie oskarżają* (Jewish Children Accuse),³ *Dzieci Holokaustu* (Children of the Holocaust),⁴ and *Czarny rok... czarne lata...* (Dark Year... Dark Years...)⁵

When writing about Polish-Jewish relations under German occupation, one can, quite obviously, also try to identify sources relating to the narrower problem of mutual relations, for example help given to Jews (including published sources)⁶ or, at the opposite extreme, the betrayal and denunciation of Jews. In the latter case, the basis for the research reflections is the archival materials from criminal proceedings initiated under the PKWN Decree of 31 August 1944 on the punishment of fascist-Hitlerite criminals guilty of murdering and mistreating the civilian population and prisoners of war, as well as traitors to the Polish Nation, i.e. the so-called August decree-related files.⁷ Sometimes, a more detailed examination

² So far, 36 volumes of this publication have been published.

³ *Dzieci żydowskie oskarżają*, ed. by K. Czarnota (Warsaw, 1993).

⁴ *Dzieci Holokaustu mówią*, ed. by K. Meloch and H. Szostkiewicz (Warsaw, 2012).

⁵ *Czarny rok... czarne lata...*, ed. and footn. by W. Śliwowska, forew. by W. Śliwowska and K. Meloch, afterw. by M. Turski (Warsaw, 1996).

⁶ See A. Krochmal, "Problem pomocy Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej jako aktualny postulat badawczy," *Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne* 17 (2006), pp. 215–223; *ead.*, *Pomoc Żydom podczas II wojny światowej w świetle źródeł archiwalnych* (Przemyśl, 2018); *ead.*, "Pomoc Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej w świetle polskich i niemieckich źródeł archiwalnych," in *Z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich w XX wieku*, ed. by E. Czop and E. Rączy (Rzeszów, 2009), pp. 38–55; *Pomoc Żydom podczas II wojny światowej w źródłach archiwalnych. Zbiór studiów*, ed. by A. Krochmal (Przemyśl, 2021); W. Mijał, "Realizacja programu INDEX w Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde," *Szczeciński Informator Archiwalny* 19 (2006), pp. 169–182; *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, select. and ed. by S. Piątkowski, vol. 1: *Dystrykt warszawski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa* (Lublin–Warsaw, 2018), vol. 2: *Dystrykt krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa* (Lublin, 2020), vol. 3: *Dystrykt lubelski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa* (Lublin–Warsaw, 2020), vol. 4: *Dystrykt radomski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa* (Warsaw, 2020), vol. 5: *Dystrykt Galicja Generalnego Gubernatorstwa i Wołyń* (Lublin–Warsaw, 2021).

⁷ A fairly extensive literature has already been published, emphasising the negative context of Poles' attitudes towards Jews during the Second World War, and using as a source the so-called August Decree-related files; see, i.a., *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 1–2, ed. by B. Engelking and J. Grabowski (Warsaw, 2018); B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień. Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 2011); J. Grabowski, *Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945. Studium z dziejów pewnego powiatu* (Warsaw, 2011); R. Gieroń, *Półmrok. Procesy karne w sprawie przestępstw okupacyjnych popełnionych przez chłopów wobec Żydów w województwie*

of the typology of sources, while ignoring their archival topography to focus on their record-forming structure,⁸ can reveal unexpected similarities. The reason for this is that a great deal of space is taken up by Jewish and Polish testimonies (elicited sources) and post-war criminal files, the files mentioned above relating to the trials conducted under the August Decree. Numerous accusations of the lack of credibility and impartiality have been made against the latter archival corpus due to the historical circumstances of its creation. Irrespective of research disputes, it is based on the August Decree files that the story of Polish-Jewish relations during the German occupation, especially in the Polish provinces, is intensively shaped.⁹

krakowskim (Cracow, 2020). There is an unquestionable lack of source studies on the so-called August Decree-related files. From this area see T. Domański, "Postępowania sądowe z dekretu z 31 sierpnia 1944 r. jako źródło do dziejów relacji polsko-żydowskich ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem procesów tzw. sierpniówkowych na przykładzie powiatu kieleckiego," in *Relacje polsko-żydowskie w XX wieku. Badania – kontrowersje – perspektywy*, ed. by T. Domański and E. Majcher-Ociesa (Kielce–Warsaw, 2021), pp. 127–151; T. Domański, "Z historii oddziału 'Wybranieckich,' czyli o wiarygodności materiałów śledczych i operacyjnych UB," *Arcana* 106–107 (2012), pp. 253–279 (Part 1); *Arcana* 109 (2013), pp. 120–144 (Part 2); *id.*, "'Sierpniówki' jako źródło do dziejów Armii Krajowej w Okręgu Radomsko-Kieleckim na przykładzie procesów przed Sądem Okręgowym, Sądem Apelacyjnym i Sądem Wojewódzkim w Kielcach. Wybrane problemy badawcze," in *Z dziejów Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego na Kielecczyźnie 1939–1945*, ed. by J. Gapys and T. Domański (Kielce, 2016), pp. 167–217.

⁸ This standpoint is suggested by Krochmal, *Pomoc Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej*, pp. 40–42.

⁹ The most comprehensive study devoted entirely to the August trials came from the pen of Andrew Kornbluth (*The August Trials. The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland* [Cambridge–London, 2021]), to some extent following up on the previous ideas put forward by the author (*id.*, "'Jest wielu Kainów pośród nas.' Polski wymiar sprawiedliwości a Zagłada, 1944–1956," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 9 [2013], pp. 157–172). Kornbluth's work draws a picture of Polish-Jewish relations which, according to the scholar, emerges from the trials for "meeting the German authorities half-way/going along with the German authorities," in the shortest terms, this picture can be described as follows: most of the crimes depicted in his book took place without the knowledge or presence of the Germans or even German involvement at all. Often, the seizing and killing of Jews by "neighbours," Kornbluth argues, was the result of a joint effort of the local community without "direct German involvement" (*id.*, *The August Trials*, p. 47). Finally, according to the author, the evidence presented during the trial reveals that the involvement of Poles in the "ethnic cleansing" of their Jewish neighbours, especially in the countryside, was more enthusiastic, more sophisticated and more widespread than previously thought (*ibid.*, p. 169). Kornbluth's theses would deserve a detailed review. At this point, I will point out that one can, of course, agree with Kornbluth that some of the crimes committed against the Jews by some Poles took place without German knowledge. There was overzealous involvement and various forms of physical violence during the seizing of the Jews, but the thesis that there was no German involvement in the process is completely wrong and is contradicted by the elementary knowledge derived from reading the "August Decree files" (see A. Skibińska, "'Dostał 10 lat, ale za co?.' Analiza motywacji sprawców zbrodni na Żydach na wsi kieleckiej w latach 1942–1944," in *Zarys krajobrazu. Wiśń polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*, ed. by B. Engelking and J. Grabowski, introduction by K. Persak, [Warsaw, 2011], p. 349; Gieron, *Półmrok*, pp. 119–122).

Surprisingly absent from previous research on Polish-Jewish relations in the GG between 1942 and 1945 is the archival legacy of the lowest level of the German civil administration of the occupied territories – the files of the municipalities. Under the order of 27 June 1940, Governor General Hans Frank established unions of municipalities (*Gemeindeverbände*) in the GG, covering counties within the former inter-war borders. The unions of municipalities took over the assets of the pre-war local government units but were not their legal successors, as they were local government units in name only. Mayors and village leaders¹⁰ became henceforth functionaries of the occupation administration, which used local government structures only as its executive bodies.¹¹ In this manner, Germans wiped out the authentic pre-war Polish local government and created captive bodies to realise their aims. Mayors were appointed by the governor (head of the district) and village leaders by the German starost. In light of these findings, the presentation of the role of a mayor, village leader or sub-village leader as an intermediary between the German authorities and the local community should be considered only partially correct.¹² In the occupation system, these officials were an essential part of the German authority, albeit composed of Poles. Of course, it should be remembered that Germans and *Volksdeutsche* also held the functions of mayors or village leaders in the district. Therefore, voices speaking about a “German-Polish” administration are entirely wrong, and they flat-out distort the reality of the occupation¹³ since there was no such administration.

¹⁰ In Polish: *sołtys*.

¹¹ For more see C. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. 1, (Warsaw, 1970), pp. 215–216; W. Kozyra, “Okupacyjna administracja niemiecka na ziemiach Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w latach 1939–1945,” *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska* 60/1 (2013), Sectio G, pp. 45–46; A. Wrzyszczyk, “Administracja terytorialna w ustawodawstwie okupanta niemieckiego w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie (1939–1944). Part 1 (1.09.1939 – 31.07.1940),” *Z Dziejów Prawa* 12/20 (2019), pp. 617–636.

¹² Such a view is presented by Alina Skibińska (“Dostał 10 lat,” p. 349) and Bartłomiej Ługowski. According to Ługowski, “The mayors became intermediaries between the German occupation authorities and the local population. Their main task became to communicate the occupant’s orders and to implement them. To this end, it became necessary to hold conferences of mayors from the whole county at the starost’s office, as well as conferences in the buildings of the municipal offices of the village leaders from the whole municipality, at which the mayor passed on the current orders of the starost and instructed them to announce them to the population in a customary manner.” (B. Ługowski, “Funkcjonowanie urzędów gmin wiejskich w dystrykcie lubelskim Generalnego Gubernatorstwa w latach 1939–1944,” *Studia z Dziejów Państwa i Prawa Polskiego* 21 [2018], p. 337).

¹³ Engelking and Grabowski, “Wstęp,” in *Dalej jest noc*, p. 19.

The main difficulty in researching the production of the municipal offices is that it is highly incomplete. During the war, the records were systematically destroyed by underground organisations that wanted to make the task of the German administration more difficult.¹⁴ Documents were also destroyed at the time of the German withdrawal and the Soviet invasion. Probably due to the state of preservation of the source material, many works dealing with Polish-Jewish relations lacked references to the records of the municipal administration. Suffice it to say that municipal archives, with a few exceptions, are practically absent in the book *Dalej jest noc* (Night Without End).¹⁵ Even Bartłomiej Ługowski, in his interesting study on the operation of the rural municipal offices in the Lublin district, did not devote a single sentence to the Jewish question.¹⁶

Against the background of the general neglect in this area, the research of Dagmara Swałtek (Swałtek-Niewińska) stands out positively. A few years ago, based on the preserved documentation of the municipality of Wawrzeńczyce (Kreis Miechów, Cracow district), she attempted to depict the fate of the local Jewish community during the Second World War. However, some of the author's formulations or conclusions should be considered debatable. Concluding her reflections, Swałtek wrote, among other things:

Municipal officials did not make decisions about the life or death [of Jews – T.D.]. Nevertheless, without the detailed censuses of the Jewish population, the compilation of documents from the registers and all other information provided by the mayors, the deportation and murder of the Jewish population would have been much more difficult. The municipal officials, of course, could not have

¹⁴ In the Kreis Busko, one of the ways of protecting files from destruction by underground troops was to keep the documentation in the offices of the union of municipalities' boards; see Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach [State Archives in Kielce, hereinafter APK], Files of the Municipality of Busko, 1067, Letter of the Board of the Union of Municipalities (Gemeindeverband) Kreishauptmannschaft Busko to all mayors and municipalities in the county, Busko-Zdrój, 15 June 1944, p. 4.

¹⁵ See bibliography in *Dalej jest noc*, pp. 647–670. A particularly characteristic example of this is the lack of files from the municipality of Czarnocin, located within the Kreis Miechów, whose file legacy from the German occupation amounts to more than 300 archival units. Also Jan Grabowski's book (*Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945. Studium z dziejów pewnego powiatu*, [Warsaw, 2011]) failed to use municipal records.

¹⁶ Ługowski, "Funkcjonowanie urzędów gmin wiejskich," pp. 333–345.

foreseen how the occupiers would use the materials provided, but they unwittingly became one of the tools of the Holocaust.¹⁷

The Germans applied similar mechanisms to the Judenrats to force them to perform various tasks. In this interpretation, each of these institutions was an unwitting tool of the German Holocaust policy. Regardless of the interpretative issues, however, Swałek has thoroughly demonstrated the usefulness of municipal records for the detailed study of Polish-Jewish relations and, in particular, the coercion of officials at the lowest levels of the German administration to implement anti-Jewish policies.

In the case of the Radom district,¹⁸ rural community records are deposited in four state archives: in Częstochowa, Kielce (with a branch in Sandomierz), Piotrków Trybunalski (with a branch in Tomaszów Mazowiecki) and Radom. Przemysław Snoch, Łukasz Guldon and his mother Romana, Krzysztof Urzędowski and Sebastian Piątkowski commented on their significance for regional studies of Polish-Jewish relations. However, the analysis was basically limited to listing specific record groups without a scholarly exploration of their content.¹⁹ The available materials are discussed similarly in the guide edited by Alina Skibińska. The authors mentioned only in passing the presence of the Holocaust threads (implicitly also the question of Polish-Jewish relations) in the rural municipalities' records, concentrating on municipal and starosty records (for example in the State Archives in Częstochowa,

¹⁷ D. Swałek, "Żydzi i zagłada Żydów z Wawrzeńcyc w świetle akt gminnych," in *Zarys krajobrazu*, p. 190. The same tasks were performed by the Judenrats. In this interpretation, each of these institutions was an unwitting tool of the German Holocaust policy. On the activities of the Judenrats, see B. Engelking, "Życie codzienne Żydów w miasteczkach dystryktu warszawskiego," in *Prowincja noc. Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, ed. by B. Engelking, J. Leociak, and D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2007), pp. 119–221.

¹⁸ In this article, I have not considered the general characteristics of the Radom district, as these issues have been discussed many times. From the abundant literature, see i.a. S. Piątkowski, *Okupacja i propaganda. Dystrykt radomski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa w publicystyce polskojęzycznej prasy niemieckiej* (Lublin–Radom, 2013), pp. 19–39.

¹⁹ P. Snoch, "Materiały do dziejów Żydów w zasobie Archiwum Państwowego w Częstochowie," in *Źródła archiwalne do dziejów Żydów w Polsce*, ed. by B. Woszczyński and V. Urbaniak, (Warsaw, 2001), pp. 109–115; K. Urzędowski, "Źródła do historii Żydów w Polsce w Archiwum Państwowym w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim," in *ibid.*, pp. 255–257; R. Guldon, "Źródła do historii Żydów w zasobie Archiwum Państwowego w Kielcach," in *ibid.*, pp. 181–191; S. Piątkowski, "Źródła do dziejów ludności żydowskiej w XVII–XX wieku w zasobie Archiwum Państwowego w Radomiu," in *ibid.*, pp. 323–325; R. Guldon and Ł. Guldon, "Akta z okresu okupacji hitlerowskiej w archiwach państwowych województwa świętokrzyskiego," *Almanach Historyczny* 3 (2001), pp. 203–217.

in the State Archives in Kielce). The usefulness of municipal records was somewhat more clearly indicated in the case of the State Archives in Piotrków Trybunalski and Radom.²⁰ So far, however, there has been no detailed qualitative analysis of municipal records of the Radom district in terms of their usefulness for the study of Polish-Jewish relations. Filling the above research gap is the aim of this sketch.

To begin with, it's crucial to acknowledge that municipal records play a key role in understanding Polish-Jewish relations during the war. These records provide insight into the backdrop of the occupation and the functioning of the most basic tier of German administration, primarily made up of local people within a system established and overseen by the Germans. The individual units of the archives mainly contain correspondence (orders) sent by the German starosts (district heads) directly or through unions of municipalities to the boards of individual municipalities or mayors and village leaders for their immediate execution. The municipalities then reported to the German starost's office on the extent to which they had carried out the tasks imposed on them. The scope of activities involved was fairly uniform throughout the GG.²¹ The circulation of correspondence proves the totality of the German occupation.²² The German starosts imposed on mayors and village leaders an obligation to send every last piece of information necessary for the efficient management of the conquered area and for economic and human exploitation, such as the population size of the individual villages, maps and communication layout of the villages; the number of men able to work; the size and productivity of farms; the amount of livestock owned or the number of bicycles. The starosts even wanted information on scrap metal collection campaigns in progress or maintenance of the graves of German soldiers.²³ Numerous orders concerned reporting on forced labour, including constructing and upkeeping roads, deforesting areas, and providing unpaid horse-drawn transport services, among other duties.²⁴ All orders were

²⁰ Skibińska in collaboration with M. Janczewska *et al.*, *Źródła do badań nad zagładą*, pp. 45–46, 52–53, 66.

²¹ Ługowski, "Funkcjonowanie urzędów gmin wiejskich," pp. 333–345.

²² This state of affairs is reflected in most detail in the reports of the conferences of the village leaders that have survived.

²³ Ługowski, "Funkcjonowanie urzędów gmin wiejskich," pp. 338–339.

²⁴ Archiwum Państwowe w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim [State Archives in Piotrków Trybunalski, hereinafter APP], Records of the Municipality of Gorzkowice [hereinafter AGG], 531, Letter of the Mayor of the Municipality of Gorzkowice to the Starost Office's Department of Economy in Piotrków Trybunalski,

made public. At the same time, the German supervisors attached great importance to poster campaigns and the organisation and maintenance of notice boards.²⁵

The surviving municipal correspondence shows very clearly that village leaders were forced by the German authorities to participate in the deportation of people for forced labour.²⁶ The German occupation system not only assumed that the responsibility for the preparation of the labourers' lists was transferred to the municipal committees but also made the village leader a kind of hostage to the execution of the imposed amount of labour. Here is an example from the municipality of Rzecznów (Kreis Iłża):

According to the distribution list sent by the relevant authorities, the quota of persons to be sent to the Reich for agricultural labour in that community is four persons. I therefore instruct you to bring, together with the Recruitment Committee and the Village Police [Blue Police] on 30 March 1943, one person as a partial quota to the local Municipal Board. As this is the final quota, bringing in one person on the date above is mandatory. Any evasion of this will be severely punished, and in the case of a greater offence, even severe imprisonment [is envisaged]. An alternate way to express this could be: The individual presented to the Board must fulfil all the prerequisites for departure and subsequent work.²⁷

Gorzkowice, 21 November 1940, no page numbers. The village leaders were also obliged to send lists of names of the inhabitants of each village who had not turned up for forced labour. Such lists were sent to the municipalities (see APP, Records of the Municipality of Woźniki [hereinafter AGW], 833, Report of the Village Leader of Kozierogi, Kozierogi, 29 September 1944, no page numbers).

²⁵ APK, Records of the Municipality of Końskie [hereinafter AGK], 214, Minutes No. 2 from the meeting of village leaders, Przyborów, 30 January 1940, p. 10; APK, AGK, 313, Letter of the Końskie Kreishauptmann Albrecht to mayors of all municipalities in the county, Końskie, 6 August 1940, p. 330; *ibid.*, Letter of the Końskie Kreishauptmann Albrecht to all mayors and village leaders, Końskie, 24 October 1940, p. 91; *ibid.*, Letter of the mayor of the municipality of Końskie to the board of the municipality of Końskie, Końskie, 11 November 1940, p. 90.

²⁶ On the deportation of forced labourers from the Western parts of the Radom district, see R. Kotewicz, "Grabież i eksploatacja ekonomiczna przez okupanta hitlerowskiego na terenie powiatu tomaszowskiego," *Biuletyn Okręgowej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Łodzi Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* 5 (1997), pp. 102–119. The article underlines the role of the village leader forced by Germans to take part in this system of exploitation.

²⁷ Delegatura IPN w Radomiu – Wydział Archiwalny [Institute of National Remembrance Delegation in Radom – Archival Department], hereinafter AIPN Ra], Sąd Okręgowy Radom [District Court Radom, hereinafter SOR], 108/138, Letter of the mayor of the municipality of Rzecznów to the village leader of the village of Rzecznówek, Rzecznów, 25 March 1943, fol. 38.

An example of another practice comes from the same village – making the rural population pay for the activities of German punitive expeditions sent against it.²⁸

The principle of collective and individual responsibility was widely applied in the GG. The Germans mastered fear management to perfection. Pacifications, arrests and individual and mass executions clearly showed the consequences of not obeying the occupation laws. In addition, the linguistic layer of the orders issued played an essential role in the constant intimidation of the conquered population. For example, it is worth referring to the correspondence from the municipality of Boszczynek (correspondence from the German Starost's district in Miechów, Cracow district). In just one letter addressed by the municipality administration to the village leaders of this municipality, one can find as many as seven ultimate and arbitrary phrases: "I make you personally responsible," "village leaders who neglect their duty will be held disciplinarily accountable," "I will not tolerate this any longer,"²⁹ "you are to present immediately," "the village leaders are to make a meeting immediately and make the population aware of the consequences it will suffer," "you are to try by all means," "you are to report to me."³⁰

The shifting of responsibility for the exploitation of people onto the shoulders of the local Polish population and the German administration, which was made up of members of that community, is therefore all too obvious. Quantifying the extent of human suffering concealed behind this dry administrative tone is impossible. The German actions led to profound social disintegration and tensions between the village leader and the other residents. It was the village leader, a policeman or, for example, a member of the quota committee with whom the Polish peasant

²⁸ The local village leader was made responsible for collecting the outstanding quota amounts. After the war, the village leader was prosecuted for collaboration with the occupation authorities. The documents he kept, showing that he had acted on orders from the occupying authorities, contributed significantly to his acquittal of the charge of collaboration with the Germans (AIPN Ra, SOR, 108/138, Letter of the mayor of the municipality of Rzecznów to the village leader of the village of Rzecznówek, Rzecznów, 10 September 1943, fol. 40; *ibid.*, Letter of the mayor of the municipality of Rzecznów to the village leader of the village of Rzecznówek, Rzecznów, 23 September 1943, fol. 44; *ibid.*, Letter of the mayor of the municipality of Rzecznów to the village leader of the village of Rzecznówek, Rzecznów, 28 January 1943, fol. 43).

²⁹ Here, the board informed about two farmers locked in a camp until the milk quota is delivered (APK, Records of the municipality of Boszczynek, 482, Letter of the board of the municipality in Boszczynek to all village leaders of the groups of villages [Polish sing. *gromada*] in the municipality, Boszczynek, 28 November 1941, p. 3).

³⁰ *Ibid.*.

population had direct contact and whom they considered responsible for the situation. At the same time, the system of brutal terror led to abuses and crimes. Some village chiefs or other local officials eagerly took advantage of these circumstances to make profits and enrich themselves. It is not surprising, therefore, that during the post-war legal settlements, many village leaders sat on the benches of the accused.³¹

As for reducing municipalities and village leaders to the role of tools serving the occupant's interests, this also applied to the use of the local administration in the Jewish question. An analysis of the sources leads to the conclusion that rural municipalities throughout the GG carried out similar "Jewish" tasks as in the Cracow district. The extent of the duties delegated to the municipalities (despite the incomplete documentation preservation) is apparent from a parallel analysis of files from the entire Radom district. Thus, under the directives of the German local administration, a census of the Jewish population was conducted in the spring of 1940, labour cards were distributed, quotas were collected, and lists of Jewish workers (aged 16–25) for forced labour were drawn up.³² In the early days of the occupation, German institutions employed Jewish labourers through the municipalities. The demand for a specific number of labourers was reported to the municipality, which, in turn, approached the Judenrat.³³ Also, where there were "small Jewish properties," they had to be leased to "the Volksdeutsche or Poles" with the help of the mayors.³⁴

The municipalities, on German orders, played a crucial role in controlling the movement of the Jewish population. They prepared lists of names of Jews

³¹ Czesław Madajczyk, a classic historian of the German occupation in Poland, has already written about the attitude of village leaders, see C. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1970), pp. 215–216.

³² T. Domański, "Prześladowania Żydów na prowincji Kreishauptmannschaft Kielce w latach 1939–1941," *Res Historica* 54 (2022), pp. 481–532; APP, Records of the Municipality of Dmenin [hereinafter AG Dmenin], 680, List of Jews residing in the settlement of Teodorów, [no date, no place], no page numbers; APK, Records of the Municipality of Duraczów [hereinafter AG Duraczów], 214, Minutes No. 6 of the meeting of village leaders of the municipality of Duraczów in Pomyków, Pomyków, 9 March 1940, p. 21.

³³ Archiwum Państwowe w Tomaszowie Mazowieckim [State Archives in Tomaszów Mazowiecki, hereinafter APTM], Records of the Municipality of Będków [hereinafter AGB], 579, Letter of the board of the municipality in Będków to Mr [Icek] Lipfeld in Będków, Będków, 30 August 1940, p. 116; *ibid.*, Letter of the board of the municipality in Będków to Mr [Icek] Lipfeld, Chair of the Judenrat in Będków, Będków, 27 May 1940, p. 121.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter of the Kreis Tomaszów's Department of Nutrition and Agriculture to the board of the municipality in Będków, Tomaszów, 24 April 1940, p. 133.

living in the municipalities and villages. They reported Jewish families who had arrived in or left the area voluntarily. Even the most minor information concerning individuals was sent to the German starost's offices.³⁵ It is worth noting that the visible principle of mutual control between the municipal authorities and the Judenrat in Kreis Tomaszow and Kreis Radomsko was established in an atmosphere of German administrative terror. The Tomaszow Kreishauptmann demanded information from the mayors as to whether Jews arriving in the municipal area, especially from the Reich, reported within 24 hours and whether the mayor maintained a record of individuals who reported. At the same time, he asked periodically in writing whether the Judenrat submitted the names of new arrivals.³⁶ The Piotrków Kreishauptmann "made all mayors personally accountable to him" for meeting the deadline for the Judenrats to complete the census of the Jewish population (6 February 1940).³⁷ In addition, municipal authorities headed by a mayor could issue certificates authorising Jews to leave their place of residence (a sectioned-off place), if only to go to work³⁸ or for medical treatment.³⁹ In turn, just before the deportation action, in the summer of 1942, the municipalities sent lists of Jewish houses with the amount of rent paid. The Judenrat confirmed these lists.⁴⁰ Sometimes, the mayors, as in the case of a certain Schubert in the municipality of Łazisko (with its seat in Ujazd, Kreis Tomaszow), decided on the division of labour within the Judenrat, incidentally at the request

³⁵ APK, Records of the Municipality of Końskie, 214, Minutes No. 1 of the meeting of village leaders of the municipality of Duraczów, Duraczów, 30 January 1940, p. 5; APK, AGK, 313, Letter of the Końskie Kreishauptmann to the mayors, Końskie, 20 May 1940, p. 401; APTM, Records of the Municipality of Łazisko [hereinafter AGŁ], 223, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Łazisko to the starost's office in Tomaszów, Ujazd, 20 February 1942.

³⁶ APTM, AGB, 579, Letter of the Tomaszów Kreishauptmann to the mayors of the county, Tomaszów Mazowiecki, 11 April 1940, p. 149.

³⁷ APP, Records of the Municipality of Gidle, 32, Letter of the Radomsko Kreishauptmann to all mayors in the county, Radomsko, 30 January 1940, no page numbers.

³⁸ Many individual permits issued for the Jews of Będków by the mayor, Adolf Pusch, are preserved in the records of the above municipality (see APTM, AG Będków, 579, pp. 23–30).

³⁹ One such example comes from the municipality of Łazisko. In December 1941, the mayor issued an appropriate certificate to Pinkus Scheinfärber permitting him to take his wife to Piotrków Trybunalski for treatment; however, in April 1942, he ordered that Genia Scheinfärber's request to go to the hospital in Piotrków be refused (APTM, AGŁ, 223, Letter of Genia Scheinfärber [Szajnferber] to the mayor in Ujazd, Ujazd, 21 April 1942, p. 16; *ibid.*, Certificate [Bescheinigung], Ujazd, 31 December 1941, p. 17).

⁴⁰ APTM, AGB, 579, Correspondence with the Ownerless and Jewish Properties Chief Administrator, pp. 50–55.

of the President of the Judenrat, Gerber. The surviving correspondence between the municipality and the Judenrat should be seen primarily in the context of the verification of the residence cards carried out by the Judenrat in Ujazd (together with the local Ordnungsdienst) by order of the German authorities just before the deportation action in 1942.⁴¹ At the same time, the municipality of Łazisko received supplementary tasks from the starost's office of Tomaszów. Based on a verbal order, the municipality officials were to provide the starost's office with lists of all the Jewish residents of Ujazd, including the addresses where Jews lived. Indeed, such lists were prepared.⁴² The local Judenrat also prepared a list of the Jews living in Ujazd.⁴³ In the same way, lists of names were drawn up in other municipalities in this Kreis.⁴⁴ Perhaps the German authorities in the run-up to Operation "Reinhardt" had the opportunity to verify the data from two different institutions.

The municipalities also dealt with housing matters, such as the quartering (resettlement) of Jews within their territory between individual houses. Administrative decisions were made in connection with the "housing needs of the authorities," which were distinctly underscored in the correspondence.⁴⁵ In the municipality of Łazisko, the board also allocated premises to the Judenrat and the Jewish Order Service.⁴⁶ Individual documents refer to municipal arrests of Jews whom Blue Police officers guarded. The legal basis for the detentions is unknown.⁴⁷

Documents at the municipal level also contain traces of the process of ghettoisation within the municipalities⁴⁸ and evidence of the tragic provisioning of

⁴¹ APTM, AGŁ, 223, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Ujazd [Łazisko] to the board of the Judenrat in Ujazd, Ujazd, 19 June 1942, p. 23; *ibid.*, Letter of members of the Judenrat in Ujazd to the board of the Municipality of Łazisko, [4 July 1942], p. 31.

⁴² *Ibid.*, [List of Jews. Groups I–IV], Ujazd, [no date], pp. 37–41.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, [List of names of Jews], Ujazd, 17 June 1942, p. 43 ff.

⁴⁴ APTM, AGB, 579, List, Będków, [no date], pp. 59–70.

⁴⁵ See for example APTM, AGŁ, 223, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Ujazd [Łazisko] to Mrs Piwowarska, widow of Mr Piwowarski, Ujazd, 11 February 1942, p. 7; *ibid.*, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Ujazd [Łazisko] to Wojciech Pachulski, Ujazd, 11 February 1942, p. 8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Letter of the Judenrat and the Jewish Order Service to the board of the Municipality of Łazisko, Ujazd, 24 February 1942, p. 13.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Łazisko to the Polish Police Station in Ujazd, Ujazd, 17 April 1942, p. 14.

⁴⁸ APP, Records of the Municipality of Pławno [hereinafter AGP], 121, Letter of the Radomsko Kreishauptmann to the mayor in Pławno, Radomsko, 31 January 1942, no page numbers.

the Jewish population in the autumn of 1939⁴⁹ and the employment of Jews in the *corvée* (slave labour force). Municipal documents also depict instances of indirect annihilation of Jews and the escalation of Polish-Jewish conflicts. For example, at the end of May 1942, the mayor of the municipality of Pławno demanded from the Labour Office in Radomsko that local Jews be used as *corvée* labour, for which he gave the following reasons:

I would like to mention that the Polish population in Pławno is scarce [earlier in the letter he informed about the workload of Polish workers – T.D.], as a lot of young people left for agricultural work in Germany, several people work at regulating the Warta river in the Zettl company in Gidle. Jews, on the other hand, do not work anywhere; they stand and sit in front of their houses in Pławno all day long, and only a small number of Jews work at digging ditches in the Zettl Company in Gidle, but there are a lot of them in Pławno, about 500 people.

As a result, Jews were sent to “public works.”⁵⁰ Thanks to the data sent by the municipalities forced to do so, the Germans took over Jewish properties, to which also the Polish population was moved.⁵¹

The correspondence preserved in the municipal records clearly shows that the German authorities treated the “post-Jewish” property as their own property and prosecuted all attempts by the local population to steal the property of the Third Reich.⁵² Through the municipalities, a several-point “Warning” issued by the Tomaszów Kreishauptmann, Dr. Ghlen, dated 3 January 1942, related to the so-called

⁴⁹ APTM, Records of the Municipality of Długie [hereinafter AG Długie], 323, Letter of the mayor of the Municipality of Długie to the starost of Kreis Tomaszów, Długie, 29 December 1939, no page numbers.

⁵⁰ APP, AGB, 121, Copy of the letter of the mayor of the Municipality of Pławno to the Labour Office in Radomsko, Pławno, 28 May 1942, no page numbers; *ibid.*, List of Jews sent to public works, Pławno, 6 June 1942, no page numbers; *ibid.*, List of workers designated to report for work on 5 June 1942, no page numbers.

⁵¹ APTM, AGB, 579, Copy of the letter of the Radom District’s Department of Economy to the municipal commissioner of Tomaszów, Będków, 9 January 1943, fol. 9; APK, AG Duraczów, 305, Letter of the board of Jewish and ownerless properties to the Municipality of Duraczów, Końskie, 21 April 1942, p. 1; APK, Records of the Municipality of Niewachlów, 47, Angaben über die ehemals jüdischen Grundstücken, [no date, no place], p. 5; APK, AGK, 313, Letter of the Końskie Kreishauptmann to the mayors, Końskie, 16 May 1940, p. 447; *ibid.*, List of the Jewish properties located on the territory of the Końskie Municipality, Końskie, 21 May 1940, p. 448.

⁵² APK, AG Duraczów, 305, Letter of the board of Jewish and ownerless properties to the mayor of the Municipality of Duraczów, Końskie, 7 November 1942, p. 3.

fur action, was also distributed, which read: "Jews who are still in possession of fur coats, furs or leather after 7 January 1942 will be shot. I decree for the Tomaszów district that all purchases of fur coats, furs or leather of any kind made directly or indirectly from Jews after 2 January 1942 are made null and void." The starost further forbade the purchase of the said goods from Jews (it can be inferred that by the Christian population). He threatened: "Offences will be punished with an appropriate penalty in line with point 1. for aiding or complicity."⁵³ In the first point of the order, the starost threatened Jews that if they continued to possess furs after 3 January 1942, they would be shot. As far as Christians were concerned, the meaning of the order was clear: trade with the Jewish population was a crime.

Particular importance was attached to the performance of specific tasks by the municipalities, and care was taken to ensure they were duly carried out. As the German policy towards the Jews became more stringent, the tone of proclamations and orders also grew progressively stern. The Radomsko Kreishauptmann issued many orders. One example is the obligation placed on the shoulders of the village leaders to distribute the Order concerning the Restrictions on Residence in the GG for Jews of 15 October 1941.⁵⁴ The order addressed to the mayors of the municipality of Dmenin (Kreis Radomsko) read: "The village leader must warn all Jews that under no circumstances are they to leave their *gromada*. If caught, the Jew will be taken to the nearest German authority, which will hand him over to the court, for such he will face the death penalty!" The order indicated that "the execution of my order must be reported in writing to the Kreishauptmann, as the executive authority, by 6 December at the latest! I make Mr. Village Leader personally responsible for punctual and conscientious execution."⁵⁵ The village leaders were required to confirm the receipt of the order in writing.⁵⁶ The municipal authorities were to immediately put up posters "The Jew – your swindler" ("Der Jude – dein

⁵³ APTM, AGŁ, 196, Warning, Tomaszów, 3 January 1942, no page numbers.

⁵⁴ The records of the Municipality of Łazisko also contain the district governor's "own" order, dated 12 December 1941, restricting the right of residence of Jews in the district. The order was distributed by the Tomaszów Kreishauptmann, Dr. Ghlen (*ibid.*, Order concerning the restriction of the residence of Jews, Tomaszów, 12 January 1942, no page numbers).

⁵⁵ APP, AG Dmenin, 679, Letter of the mayor of the Municipality of Dmenin to a village leader, Dmenin, 5 December 1941, no page numbers.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Betrüger”) in all the municipalities that constituted the Kreis Radomsko. Indeed, such posters were put up already by the following day, on 6 February 1942, according to information from the municipality’s mayor of Pławno, in all villages.⁵⁷ The local Kreishauptmann also made mayors and village heads responsible for producing accurate inventories of Jewish and “ownerless” houses in the autumn of 1941.⁵⁸ The order ended with an unequivocal statement: “I will impose hefty disciplinary penalties for negligent reporting.”⁵⁹ And indeed, such reports were sent. When they were considered too general or incorrect, the village leader was obliged to supplement them.⁶⁰ The German orders went even further in the situation of taking a census of all representatives of this nationality living in the municipalities “or being employed by any farmer” just before the “eviction” of the Jews. For example, the mayor of the city of Dmenin, named Kirsch, warned village leaders against trying to help Jews: “I point out that if Mr. Village Leader tries to hide any Jew, he will be punished directly by the Kreishauptmann.”⁶¹

In the municipal documents of the Radom district, there are also orders reminding of the death penalty for helping Jews in connection with their deportation to the death camps. In Kreis Busko, an order was issued by the German Starost in Busko, Dr. Schäfer, with the following content:

Announcement. Subject: Sheltering Jewish escapees by Poles. Under Regulation No. 3 concerning the Restrictions on Residence in the General Government of 15 October 1941 [...], the Board of the Municipality of Zagość hereby announces

⁵⁷ APP, AGP, 121, Report of the office of the Municipality of Pławno, [no date, no place], no page numbers.

⁵⁸ It is worth noting that the lists included Jews and Poles (APP, AGD, 679, Letter of the Radomsko Kreishauptmann to all mayors, Radomsko, 6 February 1940, no page numbers).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter of the mayor of the Municipality of Dmenin to the village leader of the *gromada* of Dziepółć, Dmenin, 19 September 1941, no page numbers. Not all municipalities made equal efforts to draw up the inventory of assets. In the case of the Municipality of Duraczów, the chief trusteeship of the district they were threatened with handing over the case to the “district chief.” The delay was about six weeks. APK, AGD, 679, Letter of the chief trusteeship office in Kreis Końskie to the mayor of the Municipality of Duraczów, Końskie, 2 February 1944, p. 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Letter of the mayor of the Municipality of Dmenin to the village leader of the *gromada* of Orzechówek, Dmenin, 19 August 1942, no page numbers. The list was to be extremely detailed and include name and first name, date of birth, “whose house he/she lives in, who he/she works for, is he/she married or single, comments” (*ibid.*).

to all residents of the municipality that any Pole who takes in a Jew and shelters him shall be liable to punishment under this regulation. Also punishable by death will be the person who provides Jewish escapees or Jews who are not registered with the police with room and board or sells them food.⁶²

A decree by the SS and police commander in the Radom district, Herbert Böttcher, in the autumn of 1942, was circulated through the starosts and then the municipalities (mayors, village leaders). In the peak moment of Operation “Reinhardt” in the Radom district, Böttcher “reminded” the residents that helping Jews, including trade, was liable to be punished by the death penalty.⁶³ In Kreis Tomaschow, the local starost made individual village leaders responsible for announcing the order in each village.⁶⁴ The content of Böttcher’s order makes it clear that the Germans were aware of the mass escapes of Jews and their attempts to seek refuge on the so-called Aryan side. They, therefore, sought to prevent this by radical means.

Jewish issues were indirectly reflected in several orders and duties imposed on municipalities about maintaining “public safety” in the field.⁶⁵ German determination was by no means dictated by considerations towards the civilian population. Still, it stemmed from protecting their interests, in other words the desire to drain the economic potential of the occupied areas undisturbed. For this reason, in rural areas, the Germans resorted to tried and tested methods – terror and holding the conquered population hostage to their policies. Gradually, under the threat of numerous punishments, they forced the villagers and the local administration to participate in collective security maintenance by creating a system of watches, also known as guards and hostage-hood. Once again, the Germans resorted to the tried and tested “divide and rule” method. Apart from the Blue Police, night watches (guards)⁶⁶ and “voluntary”

⁶² APK, Records of the Municipality of Zagość [hereinafter AGZ], 19, Letter of the Kreishauptmann of Busko-Zdrój, Dr. Schäfer to all mayors of Kreis Busko, Busko, 26 September 1942, p. 57.

⁶³ J.A. Młynarczyk, S. Piątkowski, *Cena poświęcenia. Zbrodnie na Polakach za pomoc udzielaną Żydom w rejonie Ciepłowa* (Cracow, 2007), p. 70.

⁶⁴ APTM, AKŁ, 223, Starost of Kreis Tomaschow to all mayors, [no place], 25 September 1942, p. 82

⁶⁵ Some orders regarding proper fire equipment maintenance and fire alarms undoubtedly carried positive overtones (APP, AGW, 833, Letter of the mayor of the Municipality of Woźniki to the anti-aircraft defence commander, Woźniki, 14 August 1943, no page numbers).

⁶⁶ In addition to night guards, the Piotrków Kreishauptmann ordered the creation, during the 1943 harvest period, of “field auxiliaries,” unknown anywhere else, in numbers – depending on the size of the village – from one to several. This order was posted in the county and communicated to village leaders

fire brigades were supposed to guarantee peace in the field. The Voluntary Fire Brigade (VFB) was recognised as a militarised unit of the German police. According to German orders, they had to be established in towns where VFBs had not previously been active. Therefore, the term “voluntary” should be written in inverted commas. Firefighters were also integrated into the SS judiciary system. According to an order handed down by the higher commander of the SS and police in the GG, the German fire brigades in the GG as “technical auxiliary police” under the SS Reichsführer’s order of 8 March 1943 (in conjunction with the SS Reichsführer’s order of 8 August 1942 concerning the application of the emergency judiciary of the order police and its auxiliary units) were subordinate to the SS judiciary. In turn, members of the Voluntary Fire Brigades were subject to this judiciary in the case of “general, military and criminal offences which they commit in service or a uniform.” In a special order, a certain Reihnd wrote that the subordination “to the police emergency judiciary is the same as the subordination of soldiers to military courts.”⁶⁷ The County Fire Instructor, in a letter addressed to the fire commanders in Kreis Tomaszów, directed that the above order be read out at a special meeting and that a case of “any misdemeanour and negligence on duty or during a fire will be considered a punishable act and may be brought before an extraordinary police court.”⁶⁸

As early as the beginning of 1941, in the Cracow District (a circular of 6 March), ten hostages (this was the term used) were appointed in each of the Kreis Miechów municipalities for two weeks. These people’s names and addresses were sent to the Kreishauptmann in Miechów and the Landkomisar in Kazimierza Wielka.⁶⁹ An example of the content of the notice was as follows: “By the circular of 6 March

during a briefing. At the same time, the same Kreishauptmann who had recommended the creation of “field auxiliaries” underlined at a meeting with the village leaders that failure to turn in the quotas would be punishable by death (APP, Records of the Municipality of Gorzkowice, 634, Order of the Piotrków Kreishauptmann to all mayors, Piotrków, 22 July 1943, no page numbers).

⁶⁷ APTM, Records of the Municipality of Budziszewice, 279, Translation of the order of the Ordnungspolizei’s chief, Berlin, 21 September 1943, no page numbers. For more on the judiciary of the SS in the GG, see A. Wrzyszc, “Sądownictwo SS i policji w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie (stan badań),” *Studia Iuridica Lublinensia* 19 (2013), pp. 361–371.

⁶⁸ APTM, AG Budziszewice, Letter of the County Fire Instructor in Tomaszów Mazowiecki to the fire commanders in the county, Tomaszów Mazowiecki, 3 November 1943, no page numbers.

⁶⁹ APK, AG Czarnocin, 1366, Letter of the board of the Municipality in Czarnocin to the Kreishauptmann in Miechów and the Landkomisar in Kazimierza Wielka, Czarnocin, 18 April 1942, fol. 25.

1941 [...] the board of the municipality reports that the following residents of the municipality have been selected as hostages for the municipality here for the period from 20 April to 4 May 1942.” The names are given below. The appointed men were to patrol the area and apprehend all suspicious persons, including Jews, and hand them over to the German authorities. The duties also included guarding selected buildings, such as churches and businesses.⁷⁰

In the Radom District, orders for the formation of peasant guards were issued in the middle of 1942, and the regulations were made more specific in the following months. The essential order for Kreishauptmannschaft Kielce was given by its Kreishauptmann on 16 December 1942 (sent to the municipalities by the Board of the Union of Municipalities on 30 December 1942). The village leaders in Kreis Kielce were obliged to draw up “guard duty plans for every 14 days.” It is particularly important that the names of the peasants (together with their addresses) designated as guards were to be forwarded via the village leaders to the German gendarmerie posts.⁷¹ In addition, guards had to be instructed on how to raise the alarm most effectively and provide means of transport – bicycles or horse-drawn carts – also for 14 days.⁷² This order had to be carried out by 5 January 1943. The letters dispatched by the board of the municipality of Suchedniów (Kreis Kielce) serve as compelling evidence that the order was executed entirely. The plan for night watches, drawn up by the village leaders, was sent to the German gendarmerie in Skarżysko-Kamienna. An appropriate meeting of the village leaders was also organised, during which they were instructed about the order issued by the

⁷⁰ The process of creating guards in the rural areas of the Cracow district is quite correctly discussed by Jan Grabowski. However, the author omitted the topic of sending the “guards” personal data to the German authorities. See J. Grabowski, “Strażacy, wiejska straż nocna i granatowa policja a zagłada na obszarach wiejskich w dystrykcie krakowskim,” in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, ed. by A. Sitarek, M. Trębacz, and E. Wiatr (Łódź, 2012), pp. 252–253; J. Grabowski, “Społeczność wiejska, policja granatowa i ukrywający się Żydzi: powiat Dąbrowa Tarnowska 1942–1945,” in *Zarys krajobrazu*, pp. 146–150; see also Gieroń, *Półmrok*, pp. 186–187.

⁷¹ Also, in Kreis Tomaszów, the names of the civil guards were sent by the municipal authorities to the gendarmerie stations under Kreishauptmann’s order. Extensive lists of guards from many localities have been preserved there, with a breakdown into individual shifts (see APTM, Records of the Municipality of Lubochnia [hereinafter AGL], 796, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Lubochnia to the gendarmerie post in Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Lubochnia, 29 January 1943, no page numbers).

⁷² APK, AGS, 47, Letter of the VdG (Board of the Union of Municipalities of the Kielce County) to the mayors of the Kreishauptmannschaft Kielce, Kielce, 30 December 1942, fol. 5.

Kreishauptmann.⁷³ It was incumbent on the village leader to “report to the starost’s office” those evading this task.⁷⁴

The queries conducted in the surviving records from the activities of the municipalities during the occupation make it possible to assume that in some areas of the GG, the peasants considered the compulsion to participate in the night patrolling of villages an unwanted necessity. As a result, the system proved to be inefficient. The Germans then resorted to methods which they believed would be effective in discouraging the countryside from any attempts at resistance. In January 1943, the Board of the Union of Municipalities in Kielce sent an order issued by the German Kriminalpolizei – Kripo, which read as follows:

During the liquidation of robbery gangs, it has been found that several people from other villages are living and staying in the villages in the area of this county without registering their residence. Therefore, I instruct the Commanders to inform the local population through the mayors and village leaders that any person residing or arriving in a village should be registered immediately. At the same time, the local population should be instructed that if a person is discovered living or staying in a village without being registered, then seven inhabitants of that village will be arrested and sent to a concentration camp. Any person arriving in the village for a longer or shorter stay must be reported immediately to the police station or the mayor, who will report him to the police.⁷⁵

According to a handwritten annotation on the document, the order was announced at the village leaders’ conference and posted publicly.⁷⁶ Although we do not know the results of this order, the terrorising of the population and the use of collective responsibility must have influenced the mood of the inhabitants and, above

⁷³ APK, AGS, 47, Letter of the board of the Municipality in Suchedniów to the Board of the Union of Municipalities in Kielce, Suchedniów, 14 January 1943, fol. 8.

⁷⁴ The order read: “A criminal report will immediately be made to the Starost’s office about the evaders of the guard duty.” (APK, AGZ, 19, Board of the Municipality in Zagość to Mr Village Leader of the village of Wola, Zagość, 7 January 1943, p. 45).

⁷⁵ APK, Records of the Municipality of Suchedniów [hereinafter AGS], 47, Copy of the letter of Kriminalpolizei Kielce to the commanders of the Polish Police posts in the Kielce county, Kielce, 5 January 1943, fol. 7.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*.

all, created panic or at least suspicion towards all strangers in the village. Threats of immediate arrest and imprisonment for “neglecting one’s duty as a watchman or cutting one’s time short” were also sent to the village leaders in other Kreises, for example, Tomaschow.⁷⁷ Under no circumstances were the guards allowed to be paid any remuneration (even in kind).⁷⁸

It is worth adding that the German control of the rural population did not only consist in making the village leader responsible for registering every stranger. There was also a provision throughout the district ordering that a list of household members (called a “Hauslista” – a name derived from the German language) be hung on the door and that a list of the inhabitants of each house be sent (and, as documents testify, it was done) to the German gendarmerie, the German starost’s office and the municipality. The lists were regularly revised to reflect changes (deaths, new arrivals, departures), with the Polish community’s printing expense borne.⁷⁹ This rule was introduced at the turn of 1942 and 1943. Its temporal coincidence with the ongoing deportations of Jews to death camps in the district, the attempts to prevent Jews from fleeing and finally, the development of an armed anti-German underground could not have been a coincidence. Thanks to this recommendation, the not very numerous gendarmerie knew where everyone lived. It also gained another “legal” tool for enforcing obedience. The commanders of the district gendarmerie platoons were also among those authorised to summon representatives of the local administration and give them orders. For instance,

⁷⁷ APTM, Records of the Municipality of Mikołajów, 448, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Mikołajów to the village leader of the village of Stefanów, Mikołajów, 8 March 1943, no page numbers. It is noteworthy that in the same municipality, a security order sent by a mayor called Keppler to all village leaders has been preserved. The mayor threatened all residents in areas where a local dairy existed that they would answer for it with their lives and property if the dairy were attacked (*ibid.*, Letter of the mayor of the Municipality of Mikołajów to all village leaders in the municipality, Mikołajów, 23 September 1943, no page numbers).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter of the mayor of the Municipality of Mikołajów to all village leaders in the municipality, Mikołajów, 4 May 1943, no page numbers.

⁷⁹ See also APP, AGG, 634, Letter of the mayor of the Municipality of Gorzkowice to the German gendarmerie in Niechcice, Gorzkowice, 22 March 1943, no page numbers; APP, Records of the Municipality of Przerąb, 85, [Information for the Municipality of Przerąb, Kreis Radomsko], 25 January 1943, no page numbers; State Archives in Kielce – Division in Sandomierz [hereinafter APK], Records of the Municipality of Rytwiany [hereinafter AGR], 27, Minutes No. 7 of the village leaders’ meeting of the *gromada* of Rytwiany, Rytwiany, 4 March 1943, p. 216; *ibid.*, Minutes No. 8 of the village leaders’ meeting of the *gromada* of Rytwiany, Rytwiany, 18 March 1943, p. 217.

in the Zagość municipality, the platoon commander, via the county's Blue Police commander, called the mayor, the secretary, and the village leaders to a meeting. The "invitation" clearly stated that non-attendance could result in penalties.⁸⁰

It is interesting to note that no German norms mention any specific tasks of the guards concerning Jews. It can, therefore, be assumed that in the Radom district, as in other areas of the GG, capturing Jews was treated as part of general activities. Most often, instructions for capturing Jews were given by the officers of the gendarmerie and civilian structures during the meetings (briefings) of the village leaders organised in the municipalities. Only a few German orders have survived, which instructed local authorities to arrest Jews.⁸¹ In addition to those known from other areas of the GG, in the Radom district, during a meeting in the Rytwiany municipality on 24 June 1943, an order was promulgated "to deliver hiding Jews to the nearest Polish police station or German gendarmerie."⁸² In any case, the village leader (or his deputy) became a central figure in the security system created by the Germans as a representative of the German authorities and the man responsible for physically delivering the captured person to the police unit.⁸³ Furthermore, the organised nature of this system is corroborated by the numerous testimonies of defendants and the operational pattern, which was confirmed during the August Decree trials.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ APK, AGZ, 19, Letter of the county Polish Police commander in Busko to the Polish Police post in Chrobrze, Busko, 17 July 1942, p. 82; *ibid.*, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Zagość to village leaders, Zagość, 17 July 1942, p. 84.

⁸¹ See Grabowski, "Społeczność wiejska," p. 154. However, there was an order introduced on 28 October and 10 November 1942 by Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger, commander of the SS and Police East, ordering that the authorities be informed about Jews staying outside the "Jewish residential area." (B. Musiał and O. Musiał (collab.), *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* [Poznań, 2019], pp. 127–130).

⁸² APKS, AGR, 27, Minutes No. 19 of the village leaders' meeting of the *gromada* of Rytwiany, Rytwiany, 24 June 1943, p. 228.

⁸³ Night watchmen were required to stop any person after the "forbidden" hour and escort them to the village leader for a "thorough document and identity check" (APKS, AGR, 27, Minutes No. 9 of the village leaders' meeting of the *gromada* of Rytwiany, Rytwiany, 25 March 1943, p. 219).

⁸⁴ As an aside, it should be added that the Voluntary Fire Brigade was also involved in maintaining security. All VFBs were recognised as part of the non-German police forces in the GG. Volunteer firemen were not subject to deportation to forced labour in the Reich. The Germans also introduced a system of control over the fire brigades. They were subject to the emergency police courts, just as "soldiers were subject to military courts." (APTM, Records of the Municipality of Mikołajów, 448, Translation of the order of the Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei [BdO] of 21 September 1943, no page numbers).

The next stage in the entanglement of Polish society in the creation of a rural security system turned out to be the establishment of “village councils” or “*gromada* (village or village group) security councils” (Kreis Tomaschow), which took place in mid-1942.⁸⁵ The extent of the tasks that rested on these bodies is revealed in the surviving correspondence from the municipality of Zagość in Kreis Busko. Kreishauptmann Dr Wilhelm Schäfer issued the order to organise the councils on 26 June 1942. It can be assumed that it applied to the entire Kreis Busko area. Initially, the tone of Dr. Schäfer’s order was relatively mild. The starost ordered the formation of a council in each village separately and the election of its members from among the wealthiest farmers. These people were to notify the nearest German gendarmerie station of the appearance of any non-resident (stranger) in the village. Only in the absence of the German gendarmerie was the Blue Police the competent authority to be approached. The village leader and the council were to organise guards of three to four men armed with sticks.⁸⁶ The subsequent correspondence leads us to believe that the establishment of councils was not uniformly seamless across all regions, and it could even be said that in some areas, it was carried out with reluctance.⁸⁷ Therefore, the starost’s subsequent order on the matter was fundamentally different, clearly indicating possible repression. The council was to consist of six of the wealthiest farmers from the individual villages, who, with their own lives and property, guaranteed the proper operation of the night watches. These, in turn, were obliged to report all strangers and assaults immediately to the nearest police station (border police or German gendarmerie). The number of guards was maintained, but an additional restriction was introduced – the municipality was to be notified of the guards’ names.⁸⁸ As a consequence of the new order, the board of the municipality sent out the following notices to the farmers:

⁸⁵ The boards of the municipalities forwarded the lists of persons “elected” to security departments at the *gromada* level to the starost’s office (APTМ, Records of the Municipality of Czerniewice, 61, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Czerniewice to the starost’s office in Tomaszów, Czerniewice, 3 July 1942, no page numbers).

⁸⁶ APK, AGZ, 19, Letter of the Kreishauptmann in Busko to all mayors and boards of municipalities in the county of Busko, Busko, 26 June 1942, p. 87.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter of the Kreishauptmann in Busko to all mayors in the county [Busko], [Busko], 30 October 1942, p. 54.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Zagość to the village leaders of the village, [Zagość], 18 November 1943, p. 43.

Under the order of the County Starost of Busko, I appoint you as a village council member. Your duties include constant control of the night guard consisting daily of ... [this in the text – T.D.] guards armed with walking sticks. You are responsible for the smooth functioning of the night watch with your life and property and for ensuring that all strangers appearing in the village are immediately reported to the police stations concerned. If bandits are present or an assault is discovered, the whole village should be immediately alerted, and the nearest police station should be notified at the same time by horse messenger. Mayor.⁸⁹

Still, on the same day, a list of council members for each village was drawn up, with 66 people indicated by name and place of residence.⁹⁰ The German county starost appointed a night watch controller in each municipality.⁹¹

As mentioned above, the village leaders' meetings within the municipality were essential in transmitting German orders. The considerable gaps in the archives make it impossible to trace the dynamics of this phenomenon in detail. It was one of the recurring points of the meetings, and its frequency arose from the German policy currently being implemented. Anti-Jewish threads had already appeared in the content of the minutes dated January 1940. Each order was handed over in one copy to the village leader for distribution and announcement to the inhabitants. For example, in the municipality of Duraczów in Pomyków (Kreis Końskie), the village leaders' meeting of 30 January 1940 called on the village leaders to present a census of "Jews wishing to leave for Russia" and "the content of the order of the Starost of the Końskie County was made known [...], regarding the holiday rest in trade, and on public holidays and Sundays it [trade] is particularly forbidden to Jews." Later, during the same meeting, another order of the starost on the ban on the purchase and slaughter of cattle by Jews was announced.⁹² The order held

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Zagość to [a farmer], Zagość, 18 November 1942, p. 42.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, List of persons appointed to the village council, Zagość, 18 November 1942, pp. 49–50.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Letter of the Kreishauptmann in Busko to the Municipality of Zagość, Busko, 18 December 1942, fol. 24; *ibid.*, Letter of the board of the Municipality of Zagość to the county starost's office in Busko, Zagość, 26 February 1943.

⁹² APK, AGK, 214, Minutes No. 2 of the meeting of village leaders held on 30 January 1940 at the chancellery of the board of the Municipality in Pomyków, 30 January 1940, ff. 10–11.

Jews responsible for supply shortages.⁹³ In the municipality of Rytwiany (Kreis Opatów), on 20 August 1942, during a meeting of the village leaders, the issue of “the use of carts and bicycles by Jews” was discussed⁹⁴ (such a ban was in place). The lack of precision in this document suggests that this matter must have been brought up and reiterated previously. It was also revisited at a meeting held a week later (27 August 1942).⁹⁵ This suggests that the local population was relatively unconcerned about the ban.

Indeed, after the 1942 deportation of the Jews to the death camps (“Operation Reinhardt”), the presence of Jewish threads in the daily operation of the municipalities diminished considerably. At the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943, there were still issues of inventorying the remaining properties, matters of rents for houses and flats left behind by the displaced Jews and the demolition of the “former Jewish houses.” In all cases, it was correspondence between the county departments and Der Hauptverwalter des herrenlosen und jüdischen Grundbesitzes (the chief administrator of ownerless and Jewish properties), as well as the Kreishauptmannschaft.⁹⁶

Another example from the municipality of Zalesice (Kreis Radom) demonstrates the atmosphere of the occupation times in connection with Jewish issues. In mid-1943, Łucja Molenda, a resident of the municipality of Michałów, approached the local office seeking the endorsement of requisite documents needed for issuing an identification card (Kennkarte). The head of the municipality did not want to sign the document because the baptismal certificate was missing, and the photo-

⁹³ The order had the following content: “It has been ascertained that the Jews, contrary to their religious regulations, have begun to consume meat and fat from pigs and have consequently endangered the Polish population’s meat and fat security. Jewish butchers go to the countryside and compete with Polish butchers by driving up prices in the purchase of animals for slaughter. In addition, they often go against the ban on ritual slaughter issued by the Governor General on 26 October 1939. In order to prevent these abuses and to improve the provision of food to the non-Jewish population of the county, I forbid Jews, with immediate effect, to buy all animals for slaughter and to slaughter them.” (APK, AGK, Ban on the slaughter and purchase of cattle by Jews in the Końskie county, Końskie, 13 January 1940, p. 639).

⁹⁴ APKS, AGR, 27, Minutes No. 3 of the meeting of village leaders of the *gromada* of Rytwiany, Rytwiany, 20 March 1943, p. 188.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Minutes No. 4 of the meeting of village leaders of the *gromada* of Rytwiany, Rytwiany, 27 March 1943, p. 191.

⁹⁶ APTM, AGL, 223, Correspondence between the chief board of abandoned and Jewish properties in Kreis Tomaschow and the municipality of Łazisko in Ujazd, pp. 83–95; APTM, AGB, 579, Correspondence between the chief board of abandoned and Jewish properties in Kreis Tomaschow and the Municipality of Będków, pp. 1–18.

graph showed a woman with a “Jewish appearance.” He instructed the petitioner to seek a signature in the municipality of Brody.⁹⁷ It is difficult to deduce from the laconic record whether the case concerned an ethnic Polish woman or, indeed, a Jewish woman in hiding. With a high degree of probability, however, it can be assumed that it was a Jewish woman, as evidenced by the filing of the application outside the place of residence. The lasting impact of the occupation era and the crucial influence of German directives are apparent here.

The municipal administration sources are barely a fragment of the documentation depicting Polish-Jewish relations created during the Second World War. Nonetheless, these archives are insufficiently valued and infrequently delved into in modern historiography. Abounding in all sorts of German norms, they luminously expose the context of Polish-Jewish relations during the German occupation. This includes, most importantly, the degree to which Polish society was intertwined in the actions of the occupier and compelled to partake in German anti-Jewish strategies. In the structure created by the German authorities, the boards of the municipalities and the mayors using the village leaders (sub-village leaders) formed, on the one hand, a kind of transmission belt of all oppressive orders and, on the other hand, played an essential role in the enforcement of these orders. Of particular importance were the measures to maintain the village security system. During the occupation, the Germans established a system of moral lawlessness designed to incite hostile acts against the Jews.⁹⁸ Undoubtedly, the system’s efficiency should also be analysed in connection with the filling of the posts of mayors by Germans and the Volksdeutsche.

To comprehend the unique characteristics of the occupation period, as I have attempted to illustrate in this outline, it is essential to examine the tasks comprehensively performed by the municipal structures. The reading of the files leads to the conclusion that Germans used a similar mechanism to force rural communities to participate in economic and human exploitation for the benefit of Germany. In future research on the analysed corpus of archival material, it should, therefore, be of fundamental importance to attempt to compare the zeal of municipal officials in enforcing German policies against Jews and Poles.

⁹⁷ APTM, AGB, 42, Letter of the mayor of the Municipality of Zalesice to the board of the Municipality of Brody, Łączany, 9 June 1943, p. 26.

⁹⁸ As cited in Gieroń, *Półmrok*, p. 53.

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SUMMARY

This article discusses the legacy of the records produced by German administrative bodies at the municipality level in the General Government, considering their applicability in the study of Polish-Jewish relations, as illustrated by a single district in the GG. In the numerous correspondence addressed by the starosts' offices to the municipalities, one can find various examples of specific orders aimed at intimidating the conquered population and forcing it to participate in the implementation of German anti-Jewish policies. This is evidenced by the creation of peasant guards by the Germans or by making the village leader responsible for registering the traffic of the rural population. The examination of the remaining records confirms that the measures to be implemented by the Polish population against the Jews were part of a series of imposed standards. These standards, through effective fear management, aimed to transform the subjugated population into a submissive instrument serving to realise the objectives of the occupier.

KEYWORDS

German administration • occupation • village leaders • municipality
• Polish-German relations