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INDIVIDUAL AID PROVIDED TO JEWS IN GHETTOS IN THE GERMAN OCCUPATION: THE PRE-WAR STANISŁAWÓW VOIVODESHIP (1941–1943)

Introduction

The criminal German policies led to the material and physical exhaustion of the Jews confined in the ghettos, which was a form of indirect extermination and a stage of the Holocaust. For some ghetto inhabitants, aid provided by non-Jewish people was the only chance for rescue. The article presents the scale of this phenomenon and discusses its conditions and forms.¹ The subject of the author's analyses is exclusively the individual manifestations of aid provided to Jews. Therefore, this study will not deal with cases of institutional support, such as those provided by the structures of the Polish Underground State or churches and religious associations.

¹ The article is the outcome of the author's research into aid provided to Jews in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship during World War II, carried out as part of the IPN Central Research Project "The History of Jews in Poland and Polish-Jewish Relations, 1917–1990." Text is partly based on the author's doctoral thesis.

Thus the study shall draw on the definition of aid developed and adopted by the initiators of the research programme “Index of Poles Murdered and Persecuted for Aid to Jews during the Second World War.”² Thus aid is defined as:

[...] documented or verbally certified, prohibited by German law, conscious, active and positive activities undertaken for the benefit of the Jewish population, which was segregated under German law. In order for a deed to be considered as aid, the condition of its measurable efficiency must be fulfilled, and the activity in question should lead to a specific result, i.e. an improvement of the situation in which the person was before the aid arrived.³

The chronological boundaries of the article are set by the years 1941 and 1943, which is related to the period of operation of the ghettos in the area under study. The first ghetto there was established in August 1941 (in Rohatyn), and the last was liquidated in the first half of June 1943 (in Stryj, Rohatyn and Żurawno). The area under study was narrowed down to the Stanisławów Voivodeship within its boundaries of 31 August 1939. During the German occupation, the area was part of the Distrikt Galizien (Galitsia Province) of the General Governorate. Initially, the Germans established five district offices (Kreishauptmannschaft) in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship, with headquarters in Horodenka, Kałusz, Kołomyja, Stanisławów and Stryj.⁴ In addition, the area of the pre-war Rohatyn district was placed under the district office in Brzeżany.⁵

The discussed geographic area was ethnically diverse. According to the results of the population census carried out in 1931, more than one million four hundred

² For more on the project, see M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, “‘Indeks Polaków zamordowanych i represjonowanych za pomoc Żydom w okresie II wojny światowej’ – stan badań, wyniki pierwszego etapu projektu, perspektywa badawcza,” in *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2019), pp. 64–73.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴ Over time, the occupier changed the administrative division of these areas. In 1942, the district governor's office in Horodenka was abolished, and in mid-1943, the same happened to the district governor's office in Kałusz; M. Du Prel, *Das Generalgouvernement* (Würzburg, 1942), pp. 384–385; W. Bonusiak, *Małopolska Wschodnia i Wołyń w czasie II wojny światowej* (Rzeszów, 2022), p. 46.

⁵ W. Bonusiak, *Małopolska Wschodnia i Wołyń*, p. 46; *idem*, *Małopolska Wschodnia pod rządami Trzeciej Rzeszy* (Rzeszów, 1990), p. 19; G. Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej. Położenie ludności, polityka okupantów, działalność podziemia* (Cracow, 1994), pp. 64–65.

and eighty thousand people inhabited it. The Ukrainian population was by far the predominant one, accounting for almost 73 per cent of the voivodeship's population. The percentage of Poles was just under 17 per cent. Jews, on the other hand, accounted for 9.44 per cent of the population in 1931, with nearly one hundred and forty thousand people living in the region at the time.⁶ According to Grzegorz Hryciuk's findings, in 1939 the Stanisławów Voivodeship may have been inhabited by more than one hundred and forty-nine thousand Jews.⁷

It is difficult to estimate the number of Jews residing there during the first period of the German occupation. Under Soviet rule, the Jewish population experienced only slight circulation. Above all, it increased through the arrival of refugees from the western areas of German-occupied Poland. However, some became victims of the Soviet deportations into the USSR. In course of the evacuation of the Soviet state apparatus in June 1941, about 2 per cent of the local Jews moved eastwards. Any demographic loss, however, was offset by a wave of Jews from Hungary deported to the Stanisławów Voivodeship during the first period of the German occupation. According to the calculations of Ukrainian researchers Lyubov Solovka and Svitlana Oryshko, thirteen to fourteen thousand Jews expelled by the Hungarian authorities from Transcarpathian Ruthenia found themselves in this area.⁸

On 17 December 1941, a decree by Governor General Hans Frank came into force, which implemented the isolation of Jews in ghettos in the Distrikt Galizien that had been in force in the so-called old General Governorate Distrikts since September 1940.⁹ However, where ghettos were established and what their nature was, depended entirely on the initiative of the local German occupation authorities.¹⁰

⁶ *Drugi powszechny spis ludności z dn. XII 1931 r. Województwo stanisławowskie*, series C, fascicle 65, (Warsaw, 1938).

⁷ G. Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach 1931–1948* (Toruń, 2005), p. 237.

⁸ L. Solovka, S. Oryshko, *150 iz 150 000... : Holokost yevreyiv Prykarpattya yak skladova etnodemohrafichnoyi Katastrofy Shkhidnoyi Halychyny* (Ivano-Frankivs'k, 2019).

⁹ We are referring to the Fourth Regulation on the Introduction of General Administration Regulations in the Distrikt Galizien (Galicia province), which introduced, among other things, the General Governorate Residence Restriction Regulation of 13 September 1940 with the amendments contained in the Second and Third General Governorate Residence Restriction Regulations of 29 April 1941 and of 15 October 1941. See *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 1941, No. 120.

¹⁰ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich, 1996); T. Sandkühler, „Endlösung” in Galizien. *Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz 1941–1944* (Bonn, 1996), p. 154.

It is often impossible to state whether there was a ghetto in a particular town. As Dieter Pohl pointed out, to establish the facts historians often have to rely solely on the testimonies of witnesses, whose assessment of the nature of a particular place of Jewish isolation place is sometimes inaccurate. Testimonies sometimes mention the ghetto, while the place was not formally arranged as one, and Jews stayed there on other terms. For example, it served as a camp next to a forced labour establishment, or was a quarter of the city inhabited by Jews even before the war. Meanwhile, the ghettos established by the German authorities had clearly defined boundaries, from which the non-Jewish community was removed, and the Jewish population was forcibly relocated. Access to and from these ghettos was controlled by administrative regulations.¹¹

In the two-volume *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust* and in the *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* prepared by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the information on the fifteen ghettos established by the Germans in the former Stanisławów Voivodeship may be found, namely in Bolechów, Bursztyn, Gwoździec, Horodenka, Kałusz, Kołomyja, Kosowo, Nadwórna, Rohatyn, Stanisławów, Stryj, Śniatyn, Tłumacz, Tyśmienica and Żurawno.¹² It appears that the ghetto existing in Skole should also be added to this list.¹³ Thus, ghettos were in operation in almost every pre-war district town, with the exception of Dolina¹⁴ and Żydaczów, and apart from district towns (in Bolechów, Bursztyn, Gwoździec, Tyśmienica, Żurawno). The following table presents a list of ghettos operating in the territory of the pre-war

¹¹ T. Sandkühler, „Endlösung” in Galizien, p. 154.

¹² *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, vol. 1–2, ed. G. Miron, S. Shulhani (Jerusalem, 2009), pp. 65–66, 95–96, 240–241, 277, 333–335, 350–352, 509–510, 660–661, 730–731, 749–754, 765–767, 834–836, 854, 992; *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, ed. G.P. Megargee, M. Dean (Bloomington, 2012), pp. 751–753, 766–768, 779–781, 788–789, 790–793, 797–798, 810–812, 821–822, 828–829, 831–836, 839–841, 845–846, 853–854.

¹³ The information on the ghetto in Skole is contained in the handbook *Dovidnyk pro tabory, tyurny ta hetto na okupovaniy terytoriyi Ukrayiny (1941–1944) / Handbuch der Lager, Gefängnisse und Ghettos auf dem besetzten Territorium der Ukraine (1941–1944)*, (Kyiv, 2000), p. 75. Moreover, the existence of this ghetto is mentioned by Anita Ekstein, who during the German occupation stayed with her parents in Skole (USC Shoah Foundation, 18280, interview with Anita Ekstein née Helfgott, 7 August 1996).

¹⁴ In Dolina, due to the existing natural isolation of the Jews in one part of the city, it was not necessary to demarcate a special quarter (*The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps*, vol. 2, pp. 773–774).

Stanisławów Voivodeship, taking into account the occupational administrative division imposed by the Germans in the General Governorate.

Table 1. Ghettos on the Territory of the Former Stanisławów Voivodeship

Location of the ghetto	District office under the German occupation (Kreishauptmannschaft)
Bolechów (Bolechow)	Stryj
Bursztyn	Brzeżany ¹⁵
Gwoździec	Kolomea
Horodenka	Horodenka (until April 1942), then Kolomea
Kałusz	Kałusz (until July 1942), then Stanisław
Kołomyja	Kolomea
Kosów	Kolomea
Nadwórna	Stanisław
Rohatyn	Brzeżany
Skole	Stryj
Stanisławów	Stanisław
Stryj	Stryj
Śniatyn	Kolomea
Tłumacz	Stanisław
Tyśmienica	Stanisław
Żurawno	Stryj

Source: The author's study based on: *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, ed. G. Miron, S. Shulhani (Jerusalem, 2009); *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, ed. G.P. Megargee, M. Dean (Bloomington, 2012); *Dovidnyk pro tabory, tyurmy ta hetto na okupovanyi terytoriyi Ukrayiny (1941–1944) – Handbuch der Lager, Gefängnisse und Ghettos auf dem besetzten Territorium der Ukraine (1941–1944)* (Kyiv, 2000).

Throughout the German occupation of the Stanisławów Voivodeship, ghettos were established at various times and under differing conditions. The first one was established in Rohatyn as early as August 1941. The district governor from Brzeżany, Hans-Adolf Asbach, ordered the Jews of Rohatyn to relocate to the

¹⁵ The non-Germanised name of the district governor's office in Brzeżany is found in the *Amtliches Gemeinde- und Dorfverzeichnis für das Generalgouvernement auf Grund der Summarischen Bevölkerungsbstandsaufnahme am 1. März 1943* (Cracow, 1943), p. 3.

Jewish quarter, from where all non-Jewish inhabitants had to leave immediately. Until November 1942, Jews were allowed to move freely throughout Rohatyn, although they were only allowed to leave the town as organised groups of workers. After this date, they were ordered to stay exclusively within the boundaries of the Jewish quarter. As the extermination operation progressed from March 1942, the Rohatyn ghetto was gradually reduced, eventually shrinking to half of its original size. Despite this, Jews from nearby villages were continuously brought into its diminishing boundaries.¹⁶

Table 2 shows the estimated number of inhabitants of each ghetto at the time of its establishment. However, the number of Jews residing in the ghettos changed over time. This was due to both the relocation of the Jews from smaller towns to the ghettos and the regular anti-Jewish operations and deportations to the Bełżec extermination camp. At this stage of the research, it is impossible to establish exactly how many Jews passed through each Jewish quarter.

Table 2. Type, Period of Operation and Number of Ghetto Inhabitants in the Pre-War Stanisławów Voivodeship

Ghetto location	Type of ghetto	Approximate date when established	Period of operation	Approximate inhabitants number when established
Bolechów	open	September/October 1942	up to 3 months	ca. 2,500
Bursztyn	open	September 1941	ca. 13 months	ca. 1,600
Gwoździec	no data available	late 1941 / early 1942	at least 4 months	ca. 1,500
Horodenka	initially open, then closed	Autumn 1941	ca. 10 months	ca. 4,500
Kałusz	open	late 1941 / early 1942	at least 5 months	ca. 6,000
Kołomyja	closed	March 1942	ca. 11 months	not less than 16,000

¹⁶ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 155; <https://rohatynjewishheritage.org/en/heritage/ghetto/>, accessed 12 December 2023.

Ghetto location	Type of ghetto	Approximate date when established	Period of operation	Approximate inhabitants number when established
Kosów	initially open, then closed	October 1941	ca. 11 months	ca. 3,700
Nadwórna	initially open, then closed	April 1942	ca. 6 months	ca. 3,600
Rohatyn	initially open, then closed	August 1941	ca. 22 months	ca. 3,000
Skole	no data available	no data available	no data available	no data available
Stanisławów	closed	December 1941	ca. 14 months	not less than 20,000
Stryj	initially open, then closed	July 1942	ca. 11 months	ca. 10,000
Śniatyn	open	March 1942	ca. 5 months	no data available (after the first deportation operation, ca. 1,500 remained in the ghetto)
Tłumacz	initially open, then closed	March/April 1942	ca. 6 months	ca. 3,500
Tyśmienica	open	March 1942	ca. 5 months	no data available
Żurawno	no data available	September/October 1942	ca. 9 months	no data available

Source: The author's research based on: *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, ed. G. Miron, S. Shulhani (Jerusalem, 2009); *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, ed. G.P. Megargee, M. Dean (Bloomington, 2012); <https://teatrnn.pl>.

The period of operation of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship town ghettos also varied; the average period being over 9 months.¹⁷ The longest-existing ghetto was in Rohatyn, which operated for as long as 22 months, until June 1943.¹⁸ The ghetto in Bolechów existed the shortest, from September or October 1942 until the end of November of that year; after that, the town's Jews were barracked in camps

¹⁷ Findings based on the data found on the portal "Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN" Centre, <https://teatrnn.pl>, accessed 12 December 2023.

¹⁸ For more on the Rohatyn ghetto, see <https://rohatynjewishheritage.org/en/heritage/ghetto/>, accessed 12 December 2023.

attached to their workplaces. For several months, the largest ghettos in the region fulfilled their role, separating Jews from the rest of the population: in Stanisławów (about fourteen months), Kołomyja and Stryj (about eleven months each).¹⁹

The aid provided to Jews living in ghettos in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship has not yet been the subject of historians' interest, and no studies on the subject have been published. The very subject of the existence of Jewish quarters in the area under analysis has so far been treated superficially in the literature in the field. In fact, it has only appeared as one of the threads in Holocaust research discussion, where the most important works in this matter have been published outside of Poland.²⁰ In this respect, various encyclopaedic publications are useful for systematising basic information about the individual ghettos.²¹ We should also not forget the extremely valuable initiatives of institutions and associations that, in order to spread knowledge about the fate of the Jewish population, have developed portals with basic information about local communities in this regard.²²

When undertaking research into any aspect of the operation of ghettos in the South-Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic under the German occupation, one must face the serious problem of the very limited availability of sources. This applies especially to the provincial Jewish quarters established by the Germans. This is because the official documents of the German administration,

¹⁹ See <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/boleschow-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/stanislawow-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/kolomyja-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/stryj-akcja-reinhardt/>, accessed 12 December 2023.

²⁰ It is worth mentioning the most complete monographs by German historians: D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*; T. Sandkühler, „*Endlösung*” in *Galizien*. A publication discussing the course of the Holocaust in this area has also been published in Ukraine: L. Solovka, S. Oryshko, *150 iz 150 000*. See <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/boleschow-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/stanislawow-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/kolomyja-akcja-reinhardt/>; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/stryj-akcja-reinhardt/>, accessed 12 December 2023.

²¹ *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, vol. 2 and 4, ed. I. Gutman (New York – London, 1990); *Dovidnyk pro tabory, tyurny*; *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life Before and During the Holocaust*, vol. 1–3, ed. S. Spector (New York, 2001); *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps*, vol. 2; *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos*; *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, vols. 1–2, ed. G.D. Hundert (New Haven – London, 2008).

²² Particularly noteworthy is the portal <https://teatrnn.pl/>, run by the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre” Centre in Lublin, which provides systematised information on the course of the Aktion “Reinhardt” in individual localities in the Eastern Borderlands, as well as <https://rohatynjewishheritage.org>, a portal set up by the Rohatyn Jewish Heritage organisation, which documents the course of the Holocaust from the perspective of Rohatyn, one of the county towns. Accessed 12 December 2023.

which were presumably destroyed already at the time of the liquidation operations, are no longer extant.²³ The primary sources of information about the aid provided to Jews during the German occupation are the testimonies of the rescued and of the rescuers. The most important and most abundant material is kept in the collection of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.²⁴ A no less important collection is kept in the Yad Vashem Institute Archives in Jerusalem.²⁵ The testimonies within the archival collections of the Institute of National Remembrance are also noteworthy.²⁶ These testimonies are complemented by collections of the so-called oral histories. The author used recordings made available by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education.

Conditions Affecting Aid to Jews in the Ghettos

Considering the contemporary attitudes of non-Jews towards the Holocaust, the fear of the consequences for those involved in helping Jews undoubtedly comes to the fore. In implementing their extermination policy towards Jews, the Germans aimed at their complete isolation, breaking off all relations with the non-Jewish social environment. The key piece of German legislation implementing this policy and increasing the population's fear of helping was the Third GG Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941 issued by Hans Frank. Not only did it stipulate the death penalty for Jews leaving without authorisation their designated residential districts, but it also criminalised the deliberate sheltering of Jews by non-Jews.²⁷ Wilhelm Friedrich Krüger's regulation of 10 November 1942 made these regulations even more rigorous: it also introduced the death penalty for helping to escape from the so-called Jewish residential quarters, feeding Jew-

²³ G. Berendt, "Żydzi zbiegli z gett i obozów śmierci," in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, ed. A. Sitarek, M. Trębacz, E. Wiatr (Łódź, 2012), p. 125.

²⁴ Here, the key material is held in three record groups: 301 (Testimonies), 302 (Memoirs) and 349 (Awards Documentation Department of Yad Vashem at the Jewish Historical Institute).

²⁵ This particularly applies to the M.31.2 (Collection of The Righteous Among the Nations Department); O.3 (testimonies) and O.33 (testimonies, diaries and memoirs) record groups.

²⁶ The most important documents for the study of the present topic are undoubtedly those kept in the record group No. 392.

²⁷ The Third GG Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 1941, No. 99, p. 595.

ish fugitives, and hiding them.²⁸ Such repressive legislation by the occupation authorities was, on the one hand, intended to discourage Jews from seeking rescue outside the ghettos and, on the other, to effectively deter non-Jews in the General Governorate from undertaking aid efforts.

Of particularly importance in the context of aid considerations was the nature of the various Jewish residential quarters. Initially, these took two forms. Some operated as open ghettos, usually confined to districts or quarters of the city where the Jews had hitherto predominated. Jews living in other areas of the city were forced to move to the demarcated ghetto. The non-Jews were also removed from it. It is this element that appears to be crucial in the distinction, which is difficult to grasp, especially for witnesses, between living in an open ghetto and existing in towns where no Jewish quarter was established.

The area of an open ghetto was usually left without any fencing, limited only to the installation of signs reading “Jewish residential quarter” (*Wohngebiet der Juden*).²⁹ In this type of residential quarter, the Jewish population therefore had incomparably more opportunities to maintain contact with the Christian neighbours. This does not imply, by any means, that they were not affected by restrictions of various kinds. Jews were not allowed to leave the designated quarters, except to go to work. Each quarter was also characterised by its peculiarities stemming from local conditions and orders from the German occupation authorities. For example, at the end of 1941, a “Jewish residential quarter” was established in Kałusz, which had the character of an open ghetto. However, the curfew was strictly observed, and Jews violating it were shot on the spot.³⁰ Apart from Kałusz, open ghettos in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship operated also in Bolechów, Bursztyn, Śniatyn and Tyśmienica.

Conditions in the closed ghettos were significantly worse. In the area under study, the two largest ghettos, located in Stanisławów and Kołomyja, were of this type from the outset. These ghettos were surrounded by a wooden fence, barbed

²⁸ The police regulation concerning the establishment of Jewish residential quarters in the Radom, Krakau and Galizien Distrikts of 10 November 1942, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 1942, No. 98, pp. 683–686.

²⁹ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 157.

³⁰ M. Dean, “Gospodarka wyzysku: ‘warunki życia’ w gettach na Kresach Wschodnich,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 3 (2007), p. 118.

wire, or obstacles otherwise preventing Jews from leaving freely. In Stanisławów, the Germans created a Jewish quarter in the second half of December 1941 that was separated from the rest of the city by a wooden fence, clearly marked with the painted Stars of David, and in some places reinforced with barbed wire barricades. On the “Aryan” side, a blue and white stripe was painted along the fence on the pavement, marking the zone that could not be approached. At the entrance to the ghetto there was a sign saying “Aryans are absolutely forbidden to enter.” On the side of the ghetto, on the other hand, signs were posted that read “Leaving the Jewish quarter is strictly forbidden.” In addition, all windows facing the so-called Aryan side were boarded up.³¹ In Kołomyja, on the other hand, it was decided to divide the Jews according to their usefulness for work and to distinguish three Jewish quarters. Each of these was surrounded by a fence. In November 1942, the second and third ghettos were liquidated, and in January 1943, the Jewish quarter in Kołomyja was in practice reduced to a single street.³²

In the closed ghettos, all allowed traffic was strictly controlled through entrance gates. On the outside, the German Schutzpolizei (Schupo) officers and the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police managed the gates, while inside, the Jewish Order Service (Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst) was responsible.³³ The ghetto gates were crucial places – they were a passage between the reality of the ghetto and the “Aryan” parts of the cities and towns. Witnesses have kept memories of the detailed inspections that took place at the gates. This largely depended on the attitude of the guards, including their willingness to accept bribes and whether extra rations of food could be smuggled into the ghettos. Many times, in Jewish accounts we shall find

³¹ Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), O.3, 6666, Testimony of David Lachin, 11 June 1990; AYV, O.3, 6391, Testimony of Menachem Darsher, 6 May 1991; Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (hereinafter AŻIH), 302/175, Memories of Safrin Horacy, pp. 28, 37.

³² Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw (hereinafter AIPN), 3077/87, Documentation of the Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce [Main Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Poland] (hereinafter GKBZHwP) concerning the crimes committed by S. Sterzl and other Gestapo officers, minutes of the interrogation of the witness Tadeusz Mariasz, 2 October 1974, p. 187; AYV, O.3, 2304, Testimony of Emil Brigg, 1 September 1963; T. Berenstein, “Eks-terminacja ludności żydowskiej w Dystrykcie Galicja (1941–1943),” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 61 (1967), p. 25; <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/kolomyja-akcja-reinhardt/>, accessed 12 December 2023.

³³ In the Stanisławów ghetto, for instance, its boundaries were patrolled by ten Schupo officers along with 25 members of the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police. (D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 157).

references to the particularly negative attitude of the Jewish Order Service officers, who were particularly zealous and meticulous in their searches.³⁴ One testimony states that even after an inspection by a Ukrainian policeman:

[...] on the other side of the gate a Jewish militiaman stands, his inspection must also be passed. Living among the Jews in the ghetto, this militiaman is more familiar with smuggling methods, making his inspections more effective. He searches thoroughly, orders you to take your coat and jacket off.³⁵

The nature of some Jewish quarters in the examined area evolved over time. Initially open, these ghettos were later sealed by German authorities as the Holocaust progressed. The example of the Horodenka ghetto illustrates how seamless such a transition could be. The ghetto was probably established here in the autumn of 1941³⁶ and took an area of about a quarter of the western part of the town. Some specialists and farmers were allowed to live outside the ghetto.³⁷ At that time, the Jewish quarter was not fenced off, but only guarded by Jewish policemen patrolling it.³⁸ In the spring of 1942, following two major anti-Jewish operations (in December 1941 and April 1942), Jews previously living in nearby towns were concentrated in the Horodenka ghetto. (This was, by the way, a typical practice of the German authorities for the ghettos located in district towns). The Horodenka ghetto became

³⁴ AŻIH, 302/175, testimony of Safrin Horacy, p. 41; AYV, O.3, 2142, testimony of Jakub Heger, 1 November 1960, pp. 13–14.

³⁵ B. Rosenberg, *I ja tam bylam... Wspomnienia z okresu wojny i okupacji hitlerowskiej. Kołomyja 1939–1945*, 1951, a manuscript held in the library collection of the Yad Vashem Institute, p. 65.

³⁶ Various dates for the establishment of the Horodenka ghetto can be found in the testimonies of the surviving Jews and historical studies. The date of 8 November 1941, which was recalled in the detailed memories of, among others, Sabina Charasz, seems to be the most probable (AŻIH, 301/1434, testimony of Sabina Charasz, n.d.). According to Martin Dean, the ghetto was established in December 1941; M. Dean, "German Ghettoization in Occupied Ukraine: Regional Patterns and Sources," in *The Holocaust in Ukraine: New Sources and Perspectives* (Washington, 2013), p. 87. 6 December 1941 as the date of establishment of the Jewish quarter appears in the investigation of the Okręgowa Komisja Badań Zbrodni Hitlerowskich [District Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes] (hereinafter OKBZH) in Wrocław (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Warsaw, 12/6, Investigations of the OKBZH in Wrocław conducted between 1968 and 1970.)

³⁷ AŻIH, 301/1434, Testimony of Sabina Charasz, n.d.

³⁸ AYV, 0.62, 4/3732547, Testimony of Mendel Rosenkrans, 16 May 1945; recording of the testimony of Tomasz Miedziński, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn507769>, accessed 12 December 2023; AYV, O.3, 6429, testimony of Yaakov Issakhar, 1 May 1991.

a closed one.³⁹ However, it was not surrounded by either a wall or barbed wire. It was located in a naturally enclosed space,⁴⁰ whilst the movement of people to the “Aryan” side through the passages from the ghetto (of which there were as many as sixteen) was strictly limited.⁴¹

The Kosów ghetto, established in October 1941, was also sealed by the Germans only in April 1942, after several months of operation.⁴² In Stryj, the ghetto, which had existed since the summer of 1942, was finally closed in December 1942, when it began to function as a “secondary” ghetto.⁴³ Secondary ghettos were created by the German occupation authorities in the last phase of the Holocaust in order to concentrate the remaining Jews.⁴⁴ Pursuant to the regulation issued by Wilhelm Friedrich Krüger on 10 November 1942, residential quarters of this type were also established in Rohatyn, Stanisławów and Stryj.⁴⁵ These ghettos had a particularly high mortality rate. Huge density of residents, disastrous sanitary conditions and pervasive hunger facilitated the spread of deadly epidemics.⁴⁶

The degree of how hermetic a given Jewish residential quarter was determined by the possibility of maintaining contact between the Jews incarcerated there and the population on the “Aryan” side. The more scrupulously the ban on Jews leaving the ghetto and bringing goods into it was observed, the more difficult it became to provide aid. As time progressed, the quarters shrank rapidly as particular streets were systematically excluded following extermination operations and mass deportations. Meanwhile, gate control became increasingly stringent.

In 1942, the Germans temporarily tightened the entry checkpoint control at the Jewish quarter in Stanisławów. Julian Baczewicz recalled: “Those returning from work were searched thoroughly, there were incidents where they were stripped

³⁹ T. Berenstein, “Eksterminacja ludności,” p. 18.

⁴⁰ AŻIH, 301/1434, testimony of Sabina Charasz, n.d.

⁴¹ AŻIH, Social Court at the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (hereinafter CKŻwP), 313/78, The case of Alfred Merbaum, minutes of the hearing before the Social Court at CKŻwP, 25 January 1949, p. 92.

⁴² The Aktion Reinhardt in Kosów – an entry prepared by the “Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN” Centre, <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/kosow-akcja-reinhardt>, accessed 12 December 2023.

⁴³ A. Kruglov, M. McConnell, M. Dean, “Stryj,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps*, p. 835.

⁴⁴ M. Dean, “German Ghettoization,” p. 64.

⁴⁵ T. Berenstein, “Eksterminacja ludności,” p. 19.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

naked and when the smallest thing was found, they were beaten until they bled.”⁴⁷
This had a huge impact on the conditions in the ghetto:

It is important to highlight that during this period, a severe famine occurred. Each day, sixty to eighty people succumbed to hunger, a situation that worsened as spring approached. For the first time in my life, I saw people swollen from starvation, and there were thousands in such a state. These people were dying in excruciating agony.⁴⁸

There is no doubt that the food blockade of the ghetto was planned and aimed at increasing the mortality rate of its inhabitants. Bernard Szander’s testimony confirms this:

After several days of such starving of the ghetto, Streege⁴⁹ came to the ghetto and stopped in front of the house of the chairman of the Jewish community, Goldstein, and called him out to the street for talks, which I witnessed. Then, Streege asked Goldstein what was the recent mortality rate in the ghetto. Goldstein stated that it went up from 11 to twenty-something people a day. Streege replied that the ghetto was still getting too much food and that in this way the liquidation of the ghetto would take too long, as he had calculated that by cutting off the food supply up to 500 people should die a day. From that point onward, food restrictions ceased to be applied, and regular extermination operations commenced.⁵⁰

It is also important to remember the spectrum of various factors that, in the conditions of the German occupation, affected the relationships between Jews and the Christians, including the latter’s willingness to provide aid. These factors included social distance, the pre-war past experiences (which worsened under the Soviet occupation), general desensitization and indifference due to wartime

⁴⁷ AŻIH, 301/4026, Testimony of Julian Baczewicz, n.d.

⁴⁸ AŻIH, 301/4648, Testimony of D. Bertisch, 12 April 1946.

⁴⁹ Walter Streege was the Schutzpolizei commander in Stanisławów (T. Sandkühler, „*Endlösung*” in *Galizien*, p. 150).

⁵⁰ AIPN, 164/570, vol. 2, minutes of the interrogation of the witness Bernard Szander, 14 July 1947, p. 11.

conditions, increased activity of Ukrainian nationalists, and the economic hardship faced by society as a result of the occupation.⁵¹ The process of ghettoisation led Jews to material ruin and physical exhaustion, significantly reducing their ability to act. All this meant that only a few chose to help the Jews residing in the ghettos located in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship.

Forms of Aid

It is worth emphasising that each case of aid was different. For the Jews confined to the ghettos, where the provisioning situation was becoming more desperate by the month, the primary objective was to obtain additional food outside the Jewish quarter. Only regular trade with the Christian population could at least alleviate the food shortage in the ghetto. It should therefore come as no surprise that the most common form of aid directed at this group of Jews was the provision of food: both the gratuitous donation of food, as well as trade with ghetto inhabitants. Of course, commercial contacts between Jews and non-Jews flourished already before the establishment of the ghettos, and were also a characteristic feature in towns where Jewish quarters were not demarcated. Markus Willbach from Obertyn emphasised in his testimony that during the first period of the German occupation in his home town, contacts between the Jewish and Christian populations were mainly related to attempts to obtain food from the local peasants. However, only the wealthier Jews were able to exchange goods for foodstuffs at specified conversion rates that, in addition, changed over time:

In the early spring of 1942, a new suit was due for a quarter of a [cubic] metre of wheat, and for a male fur coat one could receive half a [cubic] metre of wheat. The prices for dairy and other food products were proportional to this. The purchase of these products from the Christian population by way of exchange was, of course, strictly confidential.⁵²

⁵¹ For more, see M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, "Relacje polsko-żydowskie w okresie II wojny światowej. Kontekst i uwarunkowania," in *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich*, pp. 31–61.

⁵² As cited in M. Willbach, "Skupisko żydowskie w Obertynie podczas II wojny światowej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 35 (1960), p. 115.

One of the most important ways for Jews to obtain additional, and sometimes even their only food was to smuggle goods into the ghettos. The intermediation of the Christian population was often a prerequisite for this. Of course, it was not uncommon for non-Jews to initiate trade contacts, seeing the opportunity for additional earnings. In their testimonies, the surviving Jews of the former Stanisławów Voivodeship often mentioned attempts to obtain food on the “Aryan” side and organised smuggling, but they did not pay much attention to these issues and limit themselves to laconic mentions. Thus, it is impossible to establish the scale of smuggling or the personal details of those involved. Nor is it possible on the basis of Jewish testimonies to reconstruct precisely how food was distributed to individual ghettos. Individual descriptions of such activities can, however, be found in the testimonies of Poles whose relatives traded with Jewish quarters.

Franciszka Gawlik née Mamczur outlined the practice of organised smuggling of goods into the Stanisławów ghetto, in which her parents Michał and Stefania Mamczur were involved. During the German occupation, they lived in the capital of the former voivodeship at 36 Kołłątaja St. The location of their house was crucial in this case because on the opposite side of the street was the fence of the Jewish quarter. As the author of the testimony emphasised, her family home was so conveniently “situated with its veranda facing the pavement that one could enter and leave very quickly without being noticed by anyone.”⁵³ It thus provided an ideal place for the transfer of produce destined for the ghetto:

Peasants by appointment brought about 20–30 litres of milk, 10–15 kg of butter, cheese, eggs, flour, vegetables and cereal grains, especially wheat. Always the same Jews would come to our house, of course, at an agreed time, to collect the food, and so the milk and butter would be collected early in the morning and the other articles late in the afternoon.⁵⁴

The Mamczurs’ involvement in smuggling goods may have been much greater. The quoted testimony also mentions that Stefania carried 10-kilogram parcels of

⁵³ AŻIH, 301/7026, testimony of Franciszka Gawlik née Mamczur, 29 April 1988.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

food three to four times a week to two transfer points. Such points were mainly appointed in buildings standing on the border between the ghetto and the “Aryan” side. The first one was situated in the courtyard of a street corner single-family house, where a certain “young man” would collect a package from Stefania using an agreed password. The second was in a house whose window was situated above the fence surrounding the ghetto. On a precisely specified day and at an agreed time, Stefania Mamczur would throw a food parcel through the window.⁵⁵

Kazimierz Gacki was also involved in trading with Jews from the Stanisławów ghetto. He operated a sweets shop near the gate of the Jewish quarter. Besides his main supply, he also sold butter and eggs. He would prepare a parcel with the agreed-upon contents, which an appointed individual would then collect. This person would then walk towards the ghetto gate, immediately hand the parcel to those waiting, and walked on.⁵⁶ The Ukrainian Mykaylo I. from Żurawno also mentions trade with Jews in a recorded interview.⁵⁷ He sneaked into the Jewish quarter in Stryj three times to sell food. In his testimony, he did not reveal how he came into contact with Jews, he only mentioned that he brought the goods each time to the same people, whose personal details he did not know. Crossing the ghetto border the next time, he already knew who he was supposed to go to. “The guards passed by, but I was careful [...] [The Jews] asked for butter, eggs and cheese. [...] [In return] they gave shoes, trousers, shirts, etc., everything they didn’t need. Since we didn’t have that, we took it.”⁵⁸

The described cases are undoubtedly examples of typical commercial transactions in which it is difficult to capture the boundary between aid and a mere desire to earn money. However, regardless of the motivations of the people involved in smuggling, their activity fulfils the condition of measurable effectiveness in improving the situation of Jews, which is necessary to consider the activities undertaken as manifestations of aid. Those involved in smuggling also risked their lives by breaking the occupier’s laws.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ AŻIH, 349/24/661, letter of Kazimierz Gacki to the Jewish Historical Institute, 4 June 1986, p. 5.

⁵⁷ The Yahad-in Unum organisation does not provide full details of the interviewed witnesses.

⁵⁸ Yahad-in Unum, interview with Myjaylo I., 2 September 2013, <https://yahadmap.org/#village/zhuravno-zhurawno-zuravna-lviv-ukraine.630>, accessed 12 December 2023.

A seemingly universal regularity was pointed out by Elżbieta Rączy on the basis of her research. The trade exchange had its own dynamics and changed depending on the Jews' situation. Its frequency decreased as the extermination operation progressed and the economic situation of the Jews deteriorated dramatically. Jews, who were losing their material resources, often relied solely on their contacts.⁵⁹ We can also see the correlation between the economic situation and the ability to maintain trade contacts in the case of the ghettos on the territory of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship.

The food aid provided to the inhabitants of the Jewish quarters was not limited to commercial transactions and organised smuggling. In the source material we find many instances of selfless donations of food, above all by non-Jewish acquaintances of people confined in the ghetto. Franciszek Konopka testified that after the establishment of the Stanisławów ghetto, he regularly gave food to his friend from his school days, Edward Nagelberg. During the German occupation, the Pole worked as a carpenter's helper in the Stanisławów-based furniture factory Unia. In the late autumn of 1941, he was transferred to one of the factory's branches, which found itself within the boundaries of the ghetto created by the Germans. About forty Jewish workers, including Nagelberg, were employed there at the time. Konopka used to give him part of his food ration. In addition, through a man called Zynwalewicz, who worked at the mill on Halicka Street, Konopka testified he organised flour for the Jews employed at the factory:

I took the flour I received from Zynwalewicz, about 50 kg by sledge to the fence of the ghetto, where I handed it over, throwing it over the fence to Nagelberg, with whom I had already arranged it beforehand and who was already waiting on the other side of the fence. I took the flour together with my brother [Michał Konopka – T.G.]. Apart from this case, in similar circumstances, I delivered flour to Nagelberg about six more times. We delivered the flour at night, taking advantage of the atmospheric conditions – the snowfall, which covered the

⁵⁹ E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2008), p. 54.

tracks. I delivered the flour [...] to the Jewish ghetto until March 1942, that is, until we were withdrawn from this branch.⁶⁰

Food aid for Jewish acquaintances is also mentioned by Ignacy Snigowski from Kołomyja. Before the war, he was a teacher in several Kołomyja schools, where he made the acquaintance of Jews who taught Jewish religion. Their names were Szeirman (first name unknown) and Jurys Mendel. Even before the Jewish quarter was sealed, Szeirman came to Snigowski and asked him for food aid while he was in the ghetto. As Snigowski testified:

For a period of one year, or more precisely during 1942, about once every fortnight at an agreed place on Wałowa Street, to which the ghetto adjoined, I carried food to Szeirman – rolls, butter, sausage, corn flour, wheat flour, vegetables, sugar, and so on. Each parcel was about 2 kg. My wife sewed special bags, I tied them on a string and tossed them discreetly to the waiting Szeirman through a hole between the corner of the house and the fence. [...] I agreed that Szeirman was to take some of the products for himself and deliver some to Mendel. Once I did not meet Szeirman at the agreed place, I concluded that he was probably dead, or had been deported, and after that I did not venture into the ghetto with food any more.⁶¹

The willingness to provide food aid obviously also depended on the economic situation of the Christian population. The above Markus Willbach, in his testimony mentioned Christians who, especially during the first period of the German occupation, gave food rations to the poorest of the local Jewish community. “Later on, however, almost no one gave these miserable people even a piece of bread gratuitously, because the Christian population also faced food shortages, and they had nothing with which they could pay for food.”⁶² Jan Budzianowski, who lived in Kołomyja during the German occupation, testified in turn that his wife:

⁶⁰ AIPN, 392/205, minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Konopka, 16 November 1984, p. 6.

⁶¹ AIPN, 392/1663, Minutes of the interrogation of Ignacy Snigowski before OKBZH in Opole, 7 April 1970, p. 7.

⁶² As cited in M. Willbach, “Skupisko żydowskie,” pp. 115–116.

[...] systematically dropped off food in the form of potatoes, cheese, flour to agreed places, from where the Jews from the ghetto would take these products, leaving various pieces of clothing, which my wife in the countryside would exchange for food products, because otherwise, we would not be able to help the Jews for lack of provisions.⁶³

However, Budzianowski did not specify whether they charged any fees for the food or kept some of the products they acquired for themselves.

In a recorded interview, Dora Mandel née Glass referred to the favourable attitude of a part of the population, especially the Polish, towards Jews imprisoned in the Stanisławów ghetto and working outside its borders:

Polish acquaintances would come, they wanted something from us, then they would bring [food], there were good people, you cannot say that they were all bad [...] I will confirm it again. There were warm-hearted people, they risked their lives for us too. They did what they could. They would come, bring some potatoes, whatever they could, whatever they could share. And what could we give them? This miserable life that no one wanted? If an Ukrainian [guard] was good, he allowed them to cross the [ghetto] border with those bundles. If not, he confiscated [the bundles] and, worse, killed [them].⁶⁴

When discussing the issue of food aid, it is important to distinguish between forms of providing it, such as the delivery of food to those in need outside the ghetto and the delivery by the Christians directly to the Jewish quarter. Certainly, the former way was a more common practice, associated with less risk. This was the practice of Józefa Basiuk, among others, who worked on a poultry farm in Stanisławów and gave food to Jews who also worked there. It seems this aid functioned more like a commercial transaction. Food was received by, among others,

⁶³ *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 5: *Dystrykt Galicja Generalnego Gubernatorstwa i Wołyń*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2021), p. 150.

⁶⁴ USC Shoah Foundation, 16733, Interview with Dora Mandel, 12 July 1996.

Regina Fields, who then took it to the ghetto after finishing her work and delivered it to her relatives.⁶⁵

In the case of sealed and tightly controlled Jewish quarters, the sensitive moment was the very crossing of the ghetto border by Jews carrying hidden food or the transfer of food into the ghetto by non-Jews. As the examples cited above show, a variety of smuggling techniques were used. Most often food was thrown over the fence or the enclosure, but sometimes the decision was made to smuggle it through the entrance gate. Sometimes this was done by guards as middlemen. For example, Ukrainian Frania Bielska née Dedek, thanks to one of the Ukrainian guards, regularly passed food to her pre-war employers imprisoned in the Nadwórna ghetto.⁶⁶ Far more often, however, both the Jews and the Christians helping them had to outsmart the guards.

In her testimony, Franciszka Gawlik described in detail how Jews collecting goods from her parents prepared to return to the ghetto:

One of the persons collecting butter, cheese and eggs was a young 17–18 year old girl who carried the butter and cheese in her underpants – she wore 3 pairs of underpants, the second pair were special rubber underpants in which she placed the butter and cheese wrapped in a piece of cloth, and then she put on a third pair of underpants and in this way carried the dairy products to the ghetto. How she carried the eggs, my mother does not remember.⁶⁷

Blanka Rosenberg, who witnessed the Holocaust in the Kołomyja ghetto, mentioned her brother's similar method of carrying milk. He would wrap a flat rubber bag around his naked body, into which he would pour a litre of milk obtained from local peasants, then he would put on his clothes and in this way try to cross the ghetto border.⁶⁸ In Stanisławów, Jews employed at a certain furniture manufacturing plant located outside the Jewish quarter carried food obtained from Polish

⁶⁵ USC Shoah Foundation, 22256, Interview with Regina Fields, 7 May 1996.

⁶⁶ The Yad Vashem Righteous Database, https://righteous.yadvashem.org/?search=bielska&searchType=righteous_only&language=en&itemId=5652223&ind=0, accessed 12 December, 2023.

⁶⁷ AŻIH, 301/7026, testimony of Franciszka Gawlik née Mamczur, 29 April 1988.

⁶⁸ B. Rosenberg, *I ja tam byłam*, p. 65.

and Ukrainian workers in specially crafted planks into which about a kilo of grain was poured. The Jews employed as carpenters left the ghetto every day carrying work equipment; the equipment prepared for smuggling therefore did not raise the suspicions of the guards.⁶⁹

At some point during the occupation, Kazimierz Gacki worked for a German enterprise collecting recyclable materials and met the Jews employed there. He was able to enter the Stanisławów ghetto, where the company's warehouse was located, and regularly collected raw materials gathered by Jews. He noted:

When entering the area [of the ghetto] by [horse] cart, I had a flat box fixed under the platform in which I carried butter, meat and whatever Jews asked me for. I left the transported goods with my former landlord of the house at 4 Krasieńskiego Street, Adolf Singer, who distributed the articles at his own discretion.⁷⁰

Occasionally, when Jews secured additional food independently, they required assistance from non-Jewish individuals to transport it into the ghetto. This was true for Blanka Rosenberg, who was confined in the Kołomyja ghetto with her young son and her brother Roman. She succeeded in reaching out to her parents, who were living under better economic conditions in the Jewish quarter in Gorlice.⁷¹ On hearing of the dramatic plight of their children, they decided to regularly send them food parcels. A friend of the Jewish siblings was involved in this venture. In her memories, Rosenberg noted:

[...] we started receiving one-kilogram food packages from home at the specified addresses. Each week two to three loaves of bread, some groats or sugar. Our material situation becomes truly royal. The question of how to smuggle these treasures into the ghetto [...] becomes the only problem. And to this my brother [...] finds such an answer: at an appointed time in the night, he crawls to the ghetto fence. His principal's elderly maid, a Polish woman, appears to be

⁶⁹ AŻIH, 301/7026, Testimony of Franciszka Gawlik née Mamczur, Mamczur, 29 April 1988.

⁷⁰ AŻIH, 349/24/661, Letter of Kazimierz Gacki to the Jewish Historical Institute, 4 June 1986, p. 5.

⁷¹ They met her parents through non-Jewish friends of her brother Roman, with whom he worked in one of the enterprises employing Jews from Kołomyja (B. Rosenberg, *I ja tam byłam*, p. 65).

casually walking by on the Aryan side adjacent to the fence and swiftly tosses a parcel over it.⁷²

Clearly, this was fraught with extreme risk. Rosenberg emphasises:

Each such escapade wrecks my nerves. I count the minutes that pass and they seem to last an eternity. Occasionally, the Ukrainian night watchmen of the ghetto open fire and put an end to more than one life. Many a slice of bread is paid for with a human life. No non-Jew dares to go near the fence surrounding the ghetto, he knows well that the penalty for doing so is death. This makes us even more able to appreciate the humane attitude of the young Ukrainian woman – the principal of Romek – and her elderly servant, who with so much sacrifice [...] saved me and the child from death by starvation.⁷³

Among other cases of food aid provided to Jews imprisoned in ghettos in the former Stanisławów Voivodeship, mention is due to Jan Dzuździak (or Duczak), who, working as a butcher, regularly delivered meat to the Jewish quarter in Śniatyn.⁷⁴ In this case, however, there is no information as to under what circumstances he provided aid or how he delivered meat to the ghetto. Bronisława Iwanicka (née Torbiak) from Stanisławów, indicated in her testimony that together with her grandmother, who before the war worked in a restaurant run by a Jewish woman, she delivered food to the ghetto for her former employer. In this case, too, there are no details available.⁷⁵

Sometimes in the source records the information could be found about small gestures related to the donation of food, which cannot be verified. For example,

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ AIPN, 392/1625, the case of Michał Halkiew and Weronika Halkiew-Kamińska, minutes of the interrogation of Bolesław Antoni Bielecki before OKBZH in Opole, 23 April 1970, pp. 8–10; Archives of Modern Records (hereinafter referred to as AAN), Aid for the Jewish Population, 1521/3, Documentational Questionnaire of the Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację [Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy] (hereinafter ZBoWiD), (concerning the witness Bolesław Bielecki), 1 August 1968, fols. 219–221.

⁷⁵ The KARTA Centre, Oral History Archives, Poles in the East, 511, Testimony of Bronisława Iwanicka, 9 September 2007.

Łucja Werstler (née Cieślik), born in 1935, reported that when she saw the dramatic conditions in which her peers lived in the Nadwórna ghetto, she threw apples over the fence of the Jewish quarter. As she emphasized, this required a child's cleverness, as the guards patrolling the streets did not allow her to stand near the fence.⁷⁶

The tangible support given to Jews also included helping them to escape from the ghetto, either by getting someone out directly or by arranging conditions that would enable them to escape on their own. Of course, only a handful of Jews chose to leave the ghetto. Not everyone could be helped either. Many factors were of importance there. It was definitely easier to leave the ghetto for people who spoke Polish or Ukrainian, knew the customs that allowed them to find their way among the non-Jews and had the so-called "good looks" [i.e. appearance similar to "Aryan" – facial features, eyes and hair colour, etc.] – than for representatives of the traditional, orthodox Jewish community. Due to circumcision, it was much easier to help women than men.

In most cases, the testimonies regarding assistance in escaping the ghetto are so brief that it is impossible to reconstruct the circumstances or the course of the rescue operation. For instance, the minutes of the interrogation of Karol Koluszko from Łysiec reveal that many years after the war, he testified that at the request of Bernard Kandel, who had been hiding in his father's house for some time, who had led his two sisters, Nusia and Salka, out of the Stanisławów ghetto.⁷⁷ However, there is nothing more mentioned in detail.

Escapes increased significantly during the anti-Jewish operations conducted by Germans. In November 1942, in Stryj, Emilia Korlatowicz helped her Jewish friends from the Dubowy family to escape. Again, it is impossible to reconstruct the events that led to them leaving the Jewish quarter.⁷⁸

Joanna Cyniak's testimony provides slightly more information that helps us reconstruct a broader picture of the aid activities. After the Germans sealed the Jew-

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2395, testimony of Łucja Werstler, 25 July 2011.

⁷⁷ OKŚZpNP in Katowice, S 45/02/Zn, main files of the investigation concerning the case of a homicide in 1943 in Łysiec, the Stanisławów district, of three persons of Jewish nationality, minutes of the interrogation of Karol Koluszko before OKBZH in Bydgoszcz, 1 February 1977, p. 1394.

⁷⁸ AŻIH, 301/1676, testimony of Mojżesz Dubowy, 22 May 1946.

ish quarter in Stanisławów, she secretly sewed an armband with a Star of David to visit her friend Ludka Weseli of the Rost family in the ghetto and as she recounted:

It was a crazy idea, but at the time I didn't realize that I was endangering not only myself but also my whole family. I heard that some elderly people [from the area taken by the ghetto] did not leave their homes and stayed. That these grandmothers and grandfathers [were] so old [that they] didn't leave their homes. So I thought to myself, and there was an Ukrainian I was acquainted with on guard duty, and I said, "Listen, let me through. My grandmother stayed there. I want to visit her." And he says: "Yes, I'll let you through, but remember, I finish my duty at 5pm. So you have to be back in time." So I put on that armband that I had embroidered, with the Star of David, and went to visit my friend Ludka. They, mother and Ludka, were touched, how I got in and everything.⁷⁹

Ludka's mother asked for help in getting her daughter out. Ludka had an agreed place to hide with a relative in Lwów, but she needed help to get to the city safely. Joanna Cyniak recounts:

So I got Ludka out, but I didn't make it on time because that Ukrainian on guard, on the ghetto border, was already gone. So we went to the river [Bystrzyca Nadwórniańska, demarcating the ghetto boundary from the east – T.G.] [...], [continued] along the bank, and [passed] under the wires. Mother [of the Jewish girl] also gave us a few pennies, because I didn't have any. We went on foot to the railway station. There was a train to Lwów, [...] we bought a ticket and got on the train. But in a moment two uniformed Germans came to our compartment and sat down opposite us. And Ludka was a pretty girl, very pretty, and she knew German. [...] I could see that they were flirting with her, because she was a really pretty girl. We arrived at the train station. They let us go in front of them and walk, and at the station the German guards stopped us. They [the

⁷⁹ Museum of the Second World War, oral history interviews, 103, Interview with Joanna Cyniak, 4 July 2014.

Germans from the train] replied that we were with them. That's how we managed to arrive in Lwów.⁸⁰

A resident of Turka, Józef Beck, at the request of his Jewish acquaintance Milbauer, got the latter's daughter Rachela⁸¹ and her cousin Lucia Blaufeld out of the Kołomyja ghetto. Under the pretext of taking the bodies of people who had died in the ghetto to the cemetery, a Pole made his way into the Jewish quarter on a horse-drawn cart. He hid the girls under a pile of corpses collected on the platform and in this way bypassed the gate control.⁸² Maria Rosenbloom also escaped from the Kołomyja ghetto with the help of Poles. In her testimony, however, she did not reveal the personal details of the people who helped her escape. Instead, she emphasised that they were a married couple, and they were landowners before the war, well known to her parents. She had not known them personally before. Before the war, they had probably been linked to Maria's father through business, and according to her, their help could have been a form of repayment for some favour. The escape from the ghetto was planned for Christmas 1942. Maria changed into the provided outfit, in which she could pretend to be an Ukrainian, and jumped over the ghetto fence at an agreed place. On the "Aryan" side, the aforementioned couple were waiting for her. She was taken by sleigh to the railway station, from where she continued her journey alone.⁸³

As has been demonstrated, getting someone out of the ghetto often required a coordinated plan and special preparations. In a letter sent in 1986 to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Józef Trziszka described how his parents Władysław and Maria from the village of Krechowice (Dolina district) managed to get out of the ghetto the daughter of their Jewish acquaintance, Irena Enis, born in 1933 or 1934. Władysław Trziszka went there first to find her. It was probably then that he initiated her into the escape plan. After a few days, Maria Trziszka entered the ghetto, led the girl to the "Aryan" side with the help of her relatives and handed

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ After the war her name was Rachela Shtibel. USC Shoah Foundation, 57243, Interview with Rachela Shtibel, 6 November 2011.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG-50.030.0379, Interview with Maria Rosenbloom, 17 September 1996.

her over to her father.⁸⁴ The task was not too difficult, as the ghetto there was open. Nevertheless, even trying to get someone out of such a place, especially spontaneously, without a plan, was fraught with risk.

Nor was it always the case that attempts to get acquaintances out of the place of concentration of Jews were successful. This is evidenced by the case of Bronisława Docenko. During the occupation she lived with her mother in Delatyn. A German was accommodated in their house. Once Bronisława overheard him reveal in a conversation with her mother that an anti-Jewish operation was planned for the next day. This prompted Bronisława, then 17 years old, to make a spontaneous decision to try to rescue her Jewish friend, probably named Jenta (surname unknown). Many years after the war, the Polish woman reported: "I think to myself – what will be, will be, I take this Jewish girl by the hand and run home with her [...] A German saw us and started shooting. And he shot her [...] He thought I was Jewish too, but he didn't shoot me."⁸⁵ The German soldier followed her to her family home, convinced that he was dealing with a Jewish fugitive. Bronisława's mother managed to alleviate the situation and assured the soldier that they were a Christian family.

Definitely more often, which the examples above also prove, aid was provided to long-standing, pre-war acquaintances. However, there were also cases of supporting Jews who were complete strangers or whom one had only met under wartime circumstances and with whom some kind of a deeper bond had not yet been established. An example is the story of the rescue of the Lazar family from Stryj by the Polish couple Zofia and Władysław Strzelecki. In October 1942, two months before the Jewish quarter in Stryj was sealed, Zofia Strzelecka entered it to trade. At that time, she regularly sold milk to Jews. When she found her way to Sabina Lazar's flat, the latter asked her to find someone ready to shelter her family. After a few days, Strzelecka returned to the ghetto and informed Lazar that she would hide her in her own home.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ AŻIH, 349/24/743, letter of Józef Trziszka to the Jewish Historical Institute, 3 March 1986.

⁸⁵ The KARTA Centre, Oral History Archives, Poles in the East, 2380, Testimony of Bronisława Docenko, 24 November 2011.

⁸⁶ Leon and Sabina Lazar and their three sons: Jakub, Marek and Slotor, decided to escape from the ghetto on the eve of the day it was sealed (30 November 1942) and found shelter in the home of Zofia and Władysław Strzelecki, where they stayed until the Red Army entered Stryj (AYV, M.31.2/4412, Statement

Józef Matusiewicz did the same. He came from the village Rozdół in Żydaczów district. During the German occupation, he was employed in a warehouse in one of the factories where Jews worked. One day, Fiszel Helfgott, previously unknown to him, in an act of desperation, asked him to rescue his daughter Anita, who was then in the ghetto in Skole. Several decades after the war, Anita Ekstein née Helfgott reported:

I have a letter that Matusiewicz wrote to me in 1956. He wrote that my father was absolutely distraught, he didn't know where to turn and what to do after losing my mother, he feared that any day soon, he would come home from work and I wouldn't be there. And it was as if my father was asking him for help.⁸⁷

Matusiewicz agreed, completely selflessly. He made his way to the ghetto in Skole, from where, under the cover of darkness, he got the girl out and hid her in his own house in Rozdół.⁸⁸ Anita Ekstein described the moment she left the Jewish quarter:

He took me out in a potato sack. He warned me not to make any noise, move or draw attention to myself. It was not a closed ghetto. He had a pass, he was able to go in and out. He [...] carried me to some horse-drawn cart, covered me with straw and drove me to his town.⁸⁹

In reviewing the forms of aid provided to Jews imprisoned in the ghettos, mention should also be made of the situation when someone made their way into the Jewish quarter to provide medical care. It has been possible to establish one case of such aid in the analysed area. Abraham Shtertzer in the *Księga pamięci Rohatyna* (The Community of Rohatyn and Environs Memorial Book) noted: "The Jews had a friend in Rohatyn, Dr. Runge, who shared their suffering and wanted to help

by Jacob Lazar, 21 January 1988 r. n.p.; *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata*, vol. 2, ed. I. Gutman, Cracow 2009, p. 701).

⁸⁷ USC Shoah Foundation, 18280, Interview with Anita Ekstein née Helfgott, 7 August 1996.

⁸⁸ *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, vol. 2, p. 449.

⁸⁹ USC Shoah Foundation, 18280, Interview with Anita Ekstein née Helfgott, 7 August 1996.

them. He would come to the ghetto very often to treat the sick, to comfort them.”⁹⁰ That was presumably a Pole, Witold Runge, who served as a district physician in Rohatyn before the war.⁹¹

Of great importance for Jews in the ghettos was to maintain contact with family members living outside the Jewish quarter. This, too, in some cases, required the involvement of non-Jewish acquaintances. For example, Jurko Dun, an Ukrainian from Stryj, regularly passed information between the Fiksel family, who were confined in the Stryj ghetto, and their niece Lea Grossman (later Szternberg), who was in forced labour in Germany under a forged identity. He facilitated their communication until the Fiksel family’s death in 1943.⁹²

It is worth noting that, in many cases, aid was not limited to one form. Władysław Bruniany from Nadwórna not only smuggled food regularly for an acquaintance staying in the local ghetto, but also organised his escape and gave him shelter.⁹³ Maria and Florian Wojnerowski from Kołomyja did the same. Initially, they donated food to the befriended Goldstein family, imprisoned in the Kołomyja ghetto. They then selflessly helped their relatives, Fannie Gitterman and her minor son, Aleksander, to escape from the ghetto.⁹⁴

In Emil Brigg’s testimony, we find information about the multi-faceted help provided to Jews in the Kołomyja ghetto by a Pole named Tomasziewicz. Brigg and his father prepared a hideout (“bunker”) for his family in the Jewish quarter. Initially, Tomasziewicz helped them gather the provisions necessary to survive in the shelter. He bought the food with the money obtained through the sale of the Briggs’ possessions. At the time of the danger, three Jewish families were hiding in the bunker, while Tomasziewicz acted as a liaison between the hiding place and the outside world.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ A. Shtertzer, “How Rohatyn Died,” www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rogatin/roh032e.html, accessed 11 December 2023.

⁹¹ Z. Stós, “Zapomniany grobowiec dra Witolda Runego na cmentarzu parafialnym w Brzesku,” <https://brzesko.ws/DesktopModules/Articles/ArticlesView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=11269&mid=10640>, accessed 10 December 2023.

⁹² AYV, M.31.2/5258, statement by Lea Szternberg née Grossmann, n.d.

⁹³ *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, vol. 1, p. 67.

⁹⁴ AYV, M.31.2/2815, statement by Fanny Gitterman, 20 September 1983, n.p.; AYV, M.31.2/2815, statement of Maria Rosenbloom, 25 October 1983, n.p.; AYV, M.31.2/2815, statement by Menek Goldstein, 11 May 1983, n.p.; *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, vol. 2, pp. 822–823.

⁹⁵ AYV, O.3, 2304, testimony of Emil Brigg, 1 September 1963.

In order to obtain additional food, Jews often had to sell their belongings. The participation of non-Jews in this endeavour was also invaluable. Albin Tyll, a Pole of German origin, regularly delivered provisions to the Kołomyja ghetto from February 1942, aiding the Sanberg family and other Jews, and also acted as an intermediary in exchanging Jewish belongings. He exchanged the clothing and household items he collected from the ghetto inhabitants among the local peasants for food.⁹⁶

It happened that this multidimensional aid was not limited to one ghetto. An example of how far it could reach is the attitude of Maria Dziańkowska from Stanisławów, who was befriended with the Jewish family named Kohn. When Zofia and Emanuel Kohn and their daughter Irena (Irit) ended up in the Stanisławów ghetto, the Polish woman offered to help. She regularly provided them with food and medicines. After Emanuel's death, she made efforts to get the two women out of the Jewish quarter. On 1 February 1942, she helped them to escape and hid them in her house.⁹⁷ At the same time, she financially supported Zofia's parents, Leon and Esther Breuer, who were confined in the Kołomyja ghetto. In addition, she delivered medicines to the Jewish quarter in Rohatyn, where Zofia's brother Saul Breuer was imprisoned, and distributed medicines to Jews in need.⁹⁸

The Ukrainian Tekla Korba, on the other hand, helped the Jewish Winkler family from Kałusz in two different ghettos. After the death of her husband, Barbara Winkler and her three young children found themselves in the Kałusz ghetto. It was an open ghetto, which enabled the Ukrainian woman to sneak in every evening for six months and deliver food to them. Just before the ghetto was liquidated, in the autumn of 1942, Tekla Korba managed, under unknown circumstances, to move the Winklers to the Jewish quarter in Stryj, which was also an open ghetto

⁹⁶ AYV, M.31.2/12381, mail message of Mila Mesner to the Yad Vashem Institute's Righteous Among the Nations Department, 7 June 2011, n.p.; The Righteous Database, https://righteous.yadvashem.org/?search=Tyll&searchType=righteous_only&language=en&itemId=9493932&ind=0, accessed 14 January 2022.

⁹⁷ She acted as an intermediary in obtaining false documents for Jewish women and organised a safer shelter for them in Bukaczowice.

⁹⁸ AYV, M.31.2/89, Statement by Zofia Kohn, 17 September 1947, p. 1; *Księga Sprawiedliwych*, vol. 1, pp. 150–151; N. Aleksun, "Historia pomocy – Dziańkowska Maria i Bizion-Horyśławska Józefa", <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/historie-pomocy/historia-pomocy-dziankowska-maria-i-bizior-horyslawska-jozefa>, accessed 12 January 2022.

until December 1942. Moreover, she rented a flat near the established ghetto to provide shelter for the Winklers in case of danger. She subordinated her life to caring for this Jewish family. Among other things, she took on several casual jobs to raise funds to buy food, which she then regularly delivered to the Winklers in the ghetto. In June 1943, Barbara and her youngest daughter, whose name is unknown, were killed in a liquidation operation. The other two girls, Pnina and Ruta, managed to escape. Korba hid them in her flat, where they stayed until the end of the German occupation.⁹⁹

The consequences of providing aid cannot be overlooked. Two persons who provided aid to Jews living in ghettos in the former Stanisławów Voivodeship suffered reprisals from the Germans. The first was Jan Dudziak (Duczak), arrested by the Germans under unknown circumstances in the spring of 1942 in connection with the delivery of food to the Jewish quarter in Śniatyń. He was initially imprisoned in Śniatyń, then transferred to a prison in Kołomyja, where he was presumably executed at the end of the hostilities.¹⁰⁰ Stanisław Mostowiak was arrested by the Gestapo on 1 October 1942 in Tłumacz for supplying food to Jewish acquaintances from his school days who were imprisoned in the Tłumacz ghetto,¹⁰¹ and was taken to a prison in Stanisławów, from where he was sent to KL Lublin. He died there on 2 June 1943.¹⁰²

Aid Statistics

In the course of the research, 72 individuals who helped Jews in ghettos within the studied area were identified. Although Ukrainians were the majority in the Stanisławów Voivodeship, sources indicate that Poles were the primary helpers. Specifically, 57 Poles (including one of German descent), 11 Ukrainians, and three

⁹⁹ The Righteous Among the Nations Database, https://righteous.yadvashem.org/?search=Korba&searchType=righteous_only&language=en&itemId=4015736&ind=1, accessed 12 December 2023.

¹⁰⁰ AIPN, 392/1625, the case of Michał Halkiew and Weronika Halkiew-Kamińska, minutes of the interrogation of Bolesław Antoni Bielecki before OKBZH in Opole, 23 April 1970, pp. 8–10; AAN, Aid for the Jewish Population, 1521/3, Documentational Questionnaire of ZBoWiD (concerning the witness Bolesław Bielecki), 1 August 1968, pp. 219–221.

¹⁰¹ In addition, he delivered food parcels also for the father of Ludwika Czechowicz who lived in the ghetto in Lwów (AIPN, 392/819, letter of Ludwika Czechowicz to GKBZHWP, 27 June 1988, p. 12).

¹⁰² AIPN, 392/819, letter of Beata Opoczyńska to Żanetta Maria Knobloch, 20 September 1988, p. 13; *ibid.*, letter of Ludwika Czechowicz to GKBZHWP, 27 June 1988, p. 12; *ibid.*, letter of Żanetta Knobloch to GKBZHWP, 14 January 1985, p. 7; www.straty.pl, accessed 13 December 2023.

persons from Polish-Ukrainian families were involved. The nationality of one person could not be determined. Of those identified, men provided slightly more aid (42) compared to women (30).¹⁰³

The number of 72 persons who helped should be regarded as the lower limit of the phenomenon. They account for less than 9 percent of all verified cases established in the course of research on the overall issue of aid provided to Jews in the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship.¹⁰⁴ It follows that the clear majority of gestures of aid were shown to Jews who had left the ghettos or had not moved to them at all.

The geographical distribution of the source-confirmed cases of aid is as follows. The largest number of people helping Jews in ghettos lived during the German occupation in the Kołomyja district (19). Slightly fewer in the Stryj (15) and Stanisławów (12) districts. Before the war, these were the most populous areas in the voivodeship and had the highest percentage of the Jewish population. During the occupation the above-mentioned districts became areas of the highest concentration of Jews during the period of ghettoisation where the largest Jewish quarters in this part of occupied Poland operated. Markedly fewer people involved in this type of aid were recorded in the other districts: Kałusz (7), Nadwórna (5), Rohatyn (4), Kosów (3), Dolina (2), Tłumacz (2), and Horodenka, Śniatyn and Żydaczów (one in each).

Analysis of the source material also makes it possible to answer the question about which ghettos received aid from non-Jews in the examined area. Table 2 shows the number of people providing aid to Jews staying in ghettos in each locality.

Table 2. Number of Persons Involved in Helping Jews in Pre-War Stanisławów Voivodeship Ghettos

Ghetto location	Number of persons involved in helping
Kołomyja	22
Stryj	14
Stanisławów	11

¹⁰³ The author's findings.

¹⁰⁴ The author's findings.

Ghetto location	Number of persons involved in helping
Kałusz	7
Rohatyn	5
Nadwórna	4
Śniatyn	3
Kosów	2
Skole	2
Tłumacz	1
Horodenka	1

Source: The author's research.

Interestingly, the data in the table do not overlap with the data on the place of residence of the people involved in aid activity, from which it is clear that the aid sometimes crossed the borders of the district where the person providing it lived. In the case of two individuals, it was not possible to establish which ghettos their aid went to. In two cases, residents of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship helped Jews staying in the Lwów ghetto.

Among the forms of aid provided to Jews incarcerated in the ghettos, food aid, in the broadest sense, comes to the fore. No fewer than 48 people were involved in this, accounting for 67 per cent of all established cases of aid to Jews incarcerated in ghettos. On the other hand, various activities aimed at smuggling Jews out of the Jewish quarters were undertaken by no fewer than 17 non-Jewish residents of the Stanisławów Voivodeship. In the case of 44 people, their aid was not limited to only one form and often aid to Jews imprisoned in ghettos was an additional manifestation of their broader aid activity.¹⁰⁵ Most of the people listed (38) knew the Jews they were helping. Only 14 helped strangers. In the case of 20 people, the sources do not provide such information.¹⁰⁶

Of the inhabitants of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship honoured by the Yad Vashem Institute with the Righteous Among the Nations title, 29 persons (12 per cent) provided aid to Jews imprisoned in ghettos. This group included

¹⁰⁵ The author's findings.

¹⁰⁶ The author's findings.

22 Poles (including one of German origin), 4 Ukrainians and 3 persons from a Polish-Ukrainian family. For most, this was only one type of aid they provided. The remaining 43 people referred to in this article were not awarded The Righteous Among the Nations title. Due to the nature of the aid provided to Jews imprisoned in the ghettos, particularly food aid, which may have reached a wider group of recipients, it is impossible to determine how many Jews actually benefitted from it.

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SUMMARY

The article examines the aid provided to Jews in ghettos established between 1941 and 1943 within the territory of the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship. It outlines the Jewish quarters established by the German occupiers and focuses on the conditions and forms of support offered by non-Jews. Drawing on numerous testimonies from both recipients and providers of aid, the article presents various instances of this support and concludes with a statistical overview of the phenomenon.

KEYWORDS

Stanisławów Voivodeship • ghetto • aid to Jews