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## RESISTANCE AND STRUGGLE FOR THE SURVIVAL OF GARBATKA JEWS UNDER THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

### Introduction

This article aims to explore the attitudes and behaviour of the Jewish inhabitants of Garbatka towards the German occupiers, with a particular focus on resistance. It examines the various forms of resistance and the circumstances under which these actions were undertaken.<sup>1</sup> Repressive German policies and the omnipresent terror brought about a variety of phenomena and attitudes, both positive and negative, and had an overwhelming impact on relations between the Poles and Jews. The terms of the German occupation put human characters

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, the term ‘resistance’ refers to the conscious actions taken by Jews, both individually and collectively, to survive the Holocaust. This includes the “illegal” (in terms of German occupation laws) activities, i.a. acquisition of food, passive resistance directed towards the German occupation orders, escapes from ghettos, aid to those in hiding, using aid from Poles, and participation in underground and partisan activities. These are only some of the possible forms of resistance aimed to defy the German occupier’s will and violence. See, among others, J. Nalewajko-Kulikow, *Strategie przetrwania. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy* (Warsaw, 2004), p. 174; “O pomocy, o ratowaniu Żydów i o badaniu Zagłady – z profesorem Nechamą Tec rozmawia Małgorzata Melchior,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), p. 542.

to the toughest test. It intensified and sharpened social attitudes and divisions, phobias and resentments (including those of an anti-Semitic background), and the egoism of particular social groups. The testimonies and recollections of Jews – Holocaust survivors, and of Poles who provided them with aid make it possible to look at certain events from different points of view. In this case, the testimony of an anonymous Jewish woman who lived in Garbatka for five months in 1941 (until the end of December of that year) proved extremely valuable.<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the use of testimonies and memories as indirect sources means that there often emerges a “competition [...] between the ‘scholarly truth’ and the ‘truth of memory.’”<sup>3</sup> The inability to verify a substantial part of the information<sup>4</sup> only exacerbates this problem.

By showing the relationship between Jews and Poles in the context of the dramatic experiences of the Second World War, the article broadens the knowledge of Garbatka’s recent history and contributes to the development of research into the history of local communities.

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<sup>2</sup> Anonymous testimony entitled “Pozdrowienia z prowincji [Opis sytuacji ludności żydowskiej w Garbatce od wybuchu wojny do grudnia 1941 r.],” in *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 6: *Generalne Gubernatorstwo. Relacje i dokumenty*, ed. A. Bańkowska (Warsaw, 2012), pp. 321–326. This testimony stands out among the other first-hand sources researched there. The number of events outlined, as well as the attitudes and behaviour of both individuals and groups of Garbatka’s inhabitants, make possible to present many previously unknown problems concerning the first years of the German occupation. Taking up the subject of relations between Poles and Jews, the anonymous author of the testimony tried to approach it not only from the perspective of the sensitivity and experience of the Jewish community. When describing the excesses directed against the Jewish population, she paid attention to the causes and conditions of the negative behaviour of the inhabitants of Garbatka. This provides an insight into the state of awareness and understanding of the behaviour of Poles and Jews in the conditions created by the German occupier. This testimony contains a great deal of information about the occupation terms and the living conditions of Garbatka’s Jews. The subjective nature of the source calls for the researcher’s caution, but this does not diminish its importance in the discussion on the relations between the inhabitants of Garbatka, representing different nationalities, and problems that have been forgotten or passed over in silence.

<sup>3</sup> M. Woźniak, *Przeszłość jako przedmiot konstrukcji. O roli wyobraźni w badaniach historycznych* (Lublin, 2010), p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Only a few of the testimonies referred to in this article were written just after the war. Most, like the majority of the memoirs, were penned many years later. The same problem applies to the interviews published since the 1990s in the periodical *Moja Garbatka*.

## Garbatka and its Inhabitants before 1939

Garbatka<sup>5</sup> is located on the south-eastern edge of the Kozienice forest,<sup>6</sup> and its resort part is placed in a forested area. In the inter-war period, it belonged to the Policzna municipality in the Kozienice district, which was 35 per cent forested. Before 1939, it had a population of about two thousand people, which made it the most populous village in the municipality. Garbatka's traditions as a summer resort date back to the end of the 19th century. Due to its specific microclimate, the inhabitants of Warsaw, Lublin, Radom, Kielce or Łódź used to come here for holidays. They lived in numerous summer villas built before World War I and in the interwar period. Garbatka's residents and the surrounding area benefited from this financially. Before the outbreak of World War II, it was the only village in the municipality with electricity. Garbatka's major advantages were its good railway connection (location on the Radom–Dęblin line) and road access (proximity to the Kozienice–Zwoleń road).<sup>7</sup>

A brochure published in 1930 extolled the value of this tourist destination, well-known in the region:

The railway station is conveniently located on the Dęblin–Radom line, being the third station from both Dęblin and Radom, offering a 45-minute ride in either direction. Daily, eight passenger trains towards Skarżysko pass through Garbatka, including five from Warsaw to Cracow, and seven towards Dęblin, four of which come from Cracow to Warsaw, along with numerous cargo trains.

Garbatka is nestled in a serene pine forest, its landscape gently undulating with hills that shield it from strong winds, resulting in a remarkably steady

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<sup>5</sup> In sources produced during the German occupation, several neighbouring villages (including Garbatka Podlas, Garbatka Długa, Garbatka Nowa) in the Policzna municipality may have appeared under the name Garbatka. Currently, Garbatka-Letnisko is the seat of the municipality in the Kozienice district. Moreover, Garbatka-Letnisko municipality includes the abovementioned villages, and also Garbatka Zbyszyn and Garbatka Dziewiątka.

<sup>6</sup> See *Lasy Puszczy Kozienickiej. Monografia przyrodniczo-leśna*, ed. R. Zielony (Warsaw, 1997), pp. 9–47.

<sup>7</sup> E. Januszewicz, "Wiek XX – między II a III Rzeczpospolitą," in *Policzna. By czas nie zaćmił i niepamięć*, ed. E. Januszewicz (Sycyna, 2004), p. 31; M. Wierzbicki, "Postawy mieszkańców Garbatki w czasie II wojny światowej (refleksja badawcza)," in *Od zniewolenia do wolności. Studia historyczne*, ed. A.F. Baran (Warsaw–Białystok, 2009), pp. 455–456; K. Zając, "200 lat powiatu kozienickiego," *Ziemia Kozienicka* 23 (2010), p. 86.

temperature. [...] The picturesque surroundings are truly delightful, with woods stretching to Kozienice, just 16 km away. The ground is highly permeable, ensuring no mud even after heavy rain, and the water from wells over 18 metres deep is exceptionally pure and refreshing. [...] The Vistula River flows about 12 kilometres away, while a small creek meanders through the forest on its western bank. The air is pristine and therapeutic, particularly beneficial for those with weak lungs. [...] The summer season, lasting from 1 May almost to November, attracts around eight thousand visitors. [...] There are over four hundred rental houses available for seasonal guests, with new ones constantly being built. The local community is known for its friendliness, hospitality, and helpfulness towards visitors. Guesthouses offer comfortable accommodation with all-day catering. Essential services like the post office, telegraph, and telephone are readily available on site. [...] The forest paths provide ample opportunities for long walks. [...] Excursions [can be made], both on horseback and on foot, to favourite destinations such as Czarnolas, Policzna, Zwoleń, and Kozienice, as well as by rail to Sandomierz, the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, Janowiec with the ruins of the Firlej castle, Puławy, and Kazimierz on the Vistula River.<sup>8</sup>

A large population, two industrial plants (the State Sawmill with a furniture workshop employed 160 people in 1939, and the State Resin Distillery employed about a hundred), a railway station, a post office, a State Police station, the Garbatka Forestry District (which included two forestry administration regions: Krasna Dąbrowa and Molendy), a seven-class public primary school (some of the pupils continued their education in secondary schools, e.g. in Radom), a pharmacy and a doctor's practice, numerous shops, a coal depot, agricultural tools and cement products storehouse, a municipal slaughterhouse and fairs regularly held on Wednesdays "gave it the characteristics of an urban-type settlement."<sup>9</sup> In Garbatka – as Marek Wierzbicki notes:

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<sup>8</sup> W. Wojtaśkiewicz, *Garbatka-Letnisko* (n.p., 1930), pp. 14–17.

<sup>9</sup> E. Januszewicz, "Wiek XX," pp. 32–34; S. Meducki, *Przemysł i klasa robotnicza w dystrykcie radomskim w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Warsaw–Cracow, 1981), pp. 100–101; K. Stalmach, *Rozwój terytorialny i przemiany osadnicze miejscowości Garbatka od XV wieku do wybuchu II wojny światowej* (Radom, 2010), pp. 129, 138; M. Wierzbicki, "Postawy mieszkańców Garbatki," p. 455; W. Wojtaśkiewicz, *Garbatka-Letnisko*, pp. 14, 17.

favourable climatic conditions caused the settlement of many valuable individuals from the intelligentsia (teachers, doctors, clerks) and petty bourgeoisie (merchants, craftsmen) circles, as well as an influx of summer visitors, who shaped the mentality of the settlement's inhabitants through personal contacts.<sup>10</sup>

Three land estates (in Policzna – owned by Count Stefan Przeździecki, Czarnolas, and Świetlikowa Wola), along with mills, a brickyard, and a distillery in Policzna, provided employment for the municipality's residents. Seasonal work was also available in the forest, at road paving, and with wealthy farmers. Garbatka residents found jobs in Pionki and Radom, while some sought livelihoods in Warsaw.<sup>11</sup> The municipality of Policzna was inhabited by Catholics, Protestants and Jews.<sup>12</sup> The majority of Jews lived in Garbatka and Jabłonkowo, which had a synagogue. In other localities, only just a few families resided.<sup>13</sup>

In the interwar period, about 500 Jews resided in Garbatka. They made a living from farming, small crafts and trade. Some of them earned additional income by renting rooms during the summer season.<sup>14</sup> Bolesław Talar from Garbatka, whose family maintained close contacts with Jewish acquaintances, stated that “the Jews in Garbatka maintained their distinct national identity” and “did not inter-marry with the Poles living there.”<sup>15</sup> Many years later, only fleeting memories of the relationships from that time remained in the minds of other residents:

Ajzyk, a Jew, had a grocery shop selling “everything from pumpkin seeds to herrings,” and was licensed to sell cigarettes and vodka. His brother-in-law Piniek

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<sup>10</sup> M. Wierzbicki, “Postawy mieszkańców Garbatki,” p. 455.

<sup>11</sup> E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” pp. 31–32.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31; K. Urbański, *Gminy żydowskie małe w województwie kieleckim w okresie międzywojennym* (Kielce, 2006), p. 217.

<sup>13</sup> E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” p. 31. According to the findings of Krzysztof Stalmach (*idem*, *Rozwój terytorialny*, p. 112), Jews were among the first to buy holiday home plots in this village. Between 1918 and 1939, the Orthodox Jews of Garbatka belonged to the Jewish community in Gniewosów, and the community board was dominated by Zionists and Orthodox Jews (K. Urbański, *Gminy żydowskie*, pp. 216–218).

<sup>14</sup> “Listy, polemiki, opinie,” *Dziennik Radomski*, 8–11 November 1996, p. 10. Adam Rutkowski estimated the size of the Jewish community in Garbatka before 1 September 1939 at 300 people (*idem*, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie radomskim podczas okupacji hitlerowskiej,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 15/16 (1955), p. 156).

<sup>15</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika Garbatki-Letnisko* (Pionki, 1998), p. 111.

had a slightly more modest shop, also selling victuals. Abuś, on the other hand, ran a fabric shop. Jewish butchers sold veal and beef. Jews kept a firm grip on the services: Szlama, Josek, and Kapusta were shoemakers. Brajtman was the most sought-after tailor, while Pruchnik was somewhat less valued. Szulim was a boot maker.<sup>16</sup>

Our neighbours included the Kielman family (a household of five?). They owned a grocery shop, as well as a bakery. Mr. Kielman, well-regarded in the Jewish community for his honesty and helpfulness, managed the grocery where he also sold bread. I frequently visited his shop, and he would note down our purchases on credit (he gave on credit), which we settled every two weeks. Idka Wajsborg, the watchmaker's daughter, was the prettiest. Abramek was the best at football.<sup>17</sup>

The atmosphere of Polish-Jewish relations in Garbatka is well captured in Regina Renz's description of everyday life in towns in the Kielce Voivodeship during the interwar period:

Poles and Jews living in the same town formed two distinct communities. [...] Jews had a unique approach to each buyer, excelling in persuasion and business dealings compared to Polish merchants. [...] Many Poles and Jews grew up together in the same courtyards, fostering friendships that often lasted for years. The intelligentsia interacted with educated Jews. [...] Both communities adhered to a model of peaceful isolation, living without conflict but also without deep friendships.<sup>18</sup>

The political sympathies of the townspeople of Garbatka oscillated around the Piłsudski camp (*Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem*, the Non-Partisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government, BBWR, then *Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*, the Camp of National Unity, OZN), *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna* (Polish Social-

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<sup>16</sup> M. Baran, "O strachu, podłości i miłości," *Moja Garbatka* 1/2 (2007/2008), p. 190, as cited in E. Mudrak, *Garbatka – udreka, życie, raj utracony. Z historii rodu Wagów* (Łomża, 2022), p. 79.

<sup>17</sup> *Z pamięci Ojca*, notes from the conversations with Adolf Śmietanka dated: 28 March 2004, 16 May 2004, 27 August 2005 and 30 August 2005, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> R. Renz, *Życie codzienne w miasteczkach województwa kieleckiego 1918–1939* (Kielce, 1994), pp. 87–91, 93–94.

ist Party, PPS)<sup>19</sup> and the agrarian party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe*, SL). The left-wing current of the PPS was relatively strong.<sup>20</sup> Socialism garnered significant support among the Jews. It was within left-wing parties that Polish and Jewish political activists collaborated most effectively.<sup>21</sup> Representatives of left-wing groups and organisations organised May Day rallies and marches in Garbatka. They were protected by police due to attempts by members and sympathisers of the National Democrats to break them up. Striving to improve the living conditions, and in defence of the workmates, a PPS cell organised a sit-down strike in March 1937 at the sawmill and distillery that lasted about a week. A “workers guard” was formed to keep order and defend the plants against strike breakers. The strike was successful.<sup>22</sup> Also a strike organised at the distillery in June 1938 resulted in a wage increase.<sup>23</sup>

One of Garbatka inhabitants was Dr. Jan Jaworski, a prominent activist in the agrarian movement and the *Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej RP “Wici”* (Union of Rural Youth, ZMW RP “Wici”) in the Kielce Voivodeship.<sup>24</sup> Another well-known agrarian

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<sup>19</sup> In the interwar period, PPS had a strong political influence in the Kozienice district, especially in Kozienice, Pionki and Garbatka. The district's residents worked, i.e., in the armaments factories in Radom and Pionki, where the activity of socialist organisations had a long tradition (J. Zdrojowski, *Rola partii robotniczych w życiu społeczno-politycznym ziemi radomskiej w latach 1930–1939* (Radom, 1982), pp. 42–45; K. Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1993), p. 81).

<sup>20</sup> A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik (fragmenty),” *Moja Garbatka* 2016, pp. 45–46 (memoirs written in 1964); E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> S. Piątkowski, *Dni życia, dni śmierci. Ludność żydowska w Radomiu w latach 1918–1950* (Warsaw, 2006), pp. 98–99, 101. PPS's fight against anti-Semitism played a non-negligible role (P. Tusiński, *Postawy polityczne mieszkańców Radomia w latach 1918–1939* (Radom, 1996), pp. 138, 140, 144).

<sup>22</sup> J. Hatys, S. Iwaniak, “Z dziejów ruchu robotniczego na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1918–1939,” in *Z dziejów ziemi kieleckiej (1918–1944)* (Warsaw, 1970), p. 55 (striking workers won a 20 per cent pay rise); R. Śmietanka, *Szkice z dziejów Garbatki* (Garbatka-Letnisko, 1992), pp. 26–27.

<sup>23</sup> J. Zdrojowski, *Rola partii robotniczych*, p. 151.

<sup>24</sup> J. Borkowski, “Ruch ludowy na Kielecczyźnie w latach międzywojennych,” in *Z dziejów ziemi kieleckiej (1918–1944)* (Warsaw, 1970), p. 74. After leaving Poland in September 1939, Jan Jaworski became a member of the Rada Narodowa (National Council, parliamentary body at the Polish government-in-exile) on behalf of the agrarian party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe*, SL). He was a close associate of Polish Prime Minister and Commander-in-chief in exile General Władysław Sikorski. While in exile, he was instrumental in bringing Jan Prot, the pre-war director of the State Gunpowder Plant in Pionki and a leader of the pro-government camp in the Kielce Voivodeship, before a commission to investigate the reasons for Poland's defeat in September 1939 (E. Duraczyński, R. Turkowski, *O Polsce na uchodźstwie. Rada Narodowa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 1997), pp. 22, 25, 28–29, 35, 40, 56–57, 87, 96, 131, 144, 161, 163, 311–314; M. Wierzbicki, *Z Polską pod rękę. Jan Prot (1891–1957) i odbudowa niepodległego państwa polskiego*, (Lublin–Warsaw, 2017) pp. 97–99, 115, 122).

activist was Łukasz Kumor – a school teacher in Garbatka and also a member of the main board of *Towarzystwo Oświaty Demokratycznej “Nowe Tory”* (Democratic Education Society).<sup>25</sup> The supporters of the Piłsudski and pro-government *Sanacja* camp<sup>26</sup> were particularly visible among teachers.<sup>27</sup> The school in Garbatka, attended by dozens of Jewish pupils, was a place for the creation of the cult of Józef Piłsudski and the “Legionnaires’ deed” of World War I.<sup>28</sup> Very popular among the school-aged youth were *Związek Strzelecki “Strzelec”* (Rifle Association) and *Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego* (Polish Scouting and Guiding Association).<sup>29</sup>

The Kozienice district was also influenced by communist organisations – *Komunistyczna Partia Polski* (Communist Party of Poland, KPP) and *Komunistyczny Związek Młodzieży Polskiej* (Communist Union of Poland’s Youth, KZMP).<sup>30</sup> According to the opinion of the Kielce Voivode, in the 1930s, Kozienice had “the busiest [communist] organisation in the entire Radom-Kielce Circuit.”<sup>31</sup> In this context, Jewish milieus underwent a process of political radicalisation.<sup>32</sup> In August 1936, a policeman in Kozienice detained “Motek Grynszpan, known for his

<sup>25</sup> J. Grzywna, *Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego na Kielecczyźnie 1905–1939* (Kielce, 1993), pp. 148–149. Among the organisations operating in Garbatka between the wars, it is also worth mentioning the *Narodowa Organizacja Kobiet* (National Women’s Organisation), the *Stowarzyszenie Katolickiej Młodzieży Polskiej* (Association of Polish Catholic Youth), the *Ochotnicza Straż Pożarna* (Volunteer Fire Brigade), the *Kasa Stefczyka* credit union, the *Kasa Koleżeńska “Bratnia Pomoc”* (Bratnia Pomoc Peer Support Fund “Brotherly Help” Peer Support Fund), the *Spółdzielnia Spożywców “Dom Ludowy”* (“Dom Ludowy” Food Cooperative), the *Stowarzyszenie Spożywców “Społem”* (Społem Food Association), *Zrzeszenie Rzemieślnicze* (Craftsmen’s Association), *Zrzeszenie Drobnych Kupców* (Small Merchants’ Association) and *Koło Przyjaciół Garbatki* (Friends of Garbatka Circle) (W. Wojtaśkiewicz, *Garbatka-Letnisko*, pp. 12–14; M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 71; E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” p. 35).

<sup>26</sup> P.A. Tusiński, *Postawy polityczne*, p. 237.

<sup>27</sup> J. Grzywna, *Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego*, pp. 173–174.

<sup>28</sup> *Kronika szkolna szkoły powszechnej w Garbatce (gm. Policzna, pow. kozienicki)* ([Garbatka], n.d.), *passim*, copy held by the author of the article. See also H. Wójcik-Łagan, *Kult bohatera narodowego. Józef Piłsudski w szkolnej edukacji historycznej w latach trzydziestych XX wieku* (Kielce, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” p. 46; M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 71; E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” p. 35.

<sup>30</sup> M. Urynowicz, *Żydzi w samorządzie miasta Kozienice w okresie międzywojennym 1919–1939* (Warsaw, 2003), p. 39, 72. In Gniewoszów, not far from Garbatka, the first communist organisation in the Kozienice district was reportedly established in January 1919. (J. Zdrojkowski, *Rola partii robotniczych*, p. 32).

<sup>31</sup> As cited in M. Urynowicz, *Żydzi w samorządzie*, p. 39. Cells of the General Jewish Labour Bund existed i.a. in Gniewoszów and Kozienice. (J. Zdrojkowski, *Rola partii robotniczych*, pp. 46–47). Moreover, the Zionist Organisation operated in Gniewoszów. In 1927, its branch was headed by the community secretary Josek Kuropatwa (E. Słabińska, *Inteligencja na prowincji kieleckiej w latach 1918–1939* (Kielce, 2004), p. 237).

<sup>32</sup> P.A. Tusiński, *Postawy polityczne*, pp. 39, 73–74, 208.

communist activities, and another unidentified individual, who raised suspicion.” The latter turned out to be Sumer Perelsztajn from Garbatka-Letnisko, a secretary of the four-person KZMP cell in that locality.<sup>33</sup> During a search of his flat, police officers found many “books and magazines with leftist viewpoints.”<sup>34</sup>

It should be emphasised that the county did not witness such a radicalisation of anti-Jewish attitudes as seen in other areas of the Kielce Voivodeship in the second half of the 1930s, where there were riots or anti-Jewish incidents.<sup>35</sup> In Garbatka itself, even the slogans of an economic boycott of Jews did not gain many supporters:

We were on good terms with the Jews. However, after 1935, when national parties in Poland “attacked” there was in Garbatka some bullying of the Jews from the resort. My father read an article in a Radom newspaper warning that such behavior would harm Garbatka, as many locals relied on the income from Jewish summer visitors. The article suggested that Jews might boycott Garbatka if mistreated. Parents disciplined their children. Children were breaking windows in Jewish houses because their fathers were glaziers...<sup>36</sup>

Incidents occurred among school-aged youth.<sup>37</sup> Fr. Wincenty Wojtaśkiewicz, the parish priest who taught religion lessons at the school, played an infamous role in

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<sup>33</sup> J. Zdrojkowski, *Rola partii robotniczych*, p. 32.

<sup>34</sup> M. Chęć, “Metody i efekty zwalczania środowiska komunistycznego Polski międzywojennej przez władze państwowe (na przykładzie Radomia i regionu),” *Radomskie Studia Humanistyczne* 3 (2016), p. 68. There was a communist cell in Garbatka in the 1930s that supposedly had contacts with “the Soviet envoy in Königsberg in East Prussia” and received money from there. It consisted of “five people from Garbatka, four from Pionki, two from Kozienice and two from Brzózka.” It was based in Garbatka because in Kozienice and Pionki the communists were closely watched by the counter-intelligence (M. Baran, “Wspomnienia,” Part 2: “O czasach budowy nowego kościoła pw. Nawiedzenia NMP w Garbatce,” *Moja Garbatka* 4 (2003), p. 59).

<sup>35</sup> See M.B. Markowski, J. Gapys, “Konflikty polsko-żydowskie w województwie kieleckim w latach 1935–36,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 4 (1999), pp. 41–94; P.A. Tusiński, *Postawy polityczne*, pp. 140–144.

<sup>36</sup> “Byli tu mniejszością,” ed. E. Dziedzicka, *Moja Garbatka* 1 (2005), p. 32 (oral account of Bronisława Szczepaniak, 21 May 2004). About Radom’s Jews summer vacations in Garbatka, see D. Zaidenweber (nee Eiger), “Wspomnienia z Radomia,” ed. J. Mitek, *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 45 (1/2) (2011), p. 61: „Up to eleventh year of my life, we have spent every summer in Garbatka [...] we have rented a small cottage, as almost every our acquaintances from Radom.”

<sup>37</sup> Between 1935 and 1936, 706 Christian and 50 Jewish children attended the school in Garbatka; between 1937 and 1938, 752 children – including 45 Jewish children – attended it; for the 1939 school year, 768 children – including 52 Jewish children – were enrolled. (M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 32, 34–35).

this. He fostered anti-Semitic attitudes among the pupils and deepened anti-Jewish prejudice on religious grounds. In the *Kronika szkolna* (School chronicle) we read:

This year [1936], after returning from a trip to Palestine, [...] Fr. W. Wojtaśkiewicz began inciting children against the Jews. After his lessons, the children engaged in disruptive antics toward their Jewish peers. The headmistress confronted the priest, demanding he stop creating disorder on the school premises.<sup>38</sup>

## The German Occupation in Garbatka

The outbreak of World War II marked the most tragic period in Garbatka's history. The German army's immense technical superiority meant that hostilities had spread to the Kozienicka forest by the second week of war. On 8 September, the Wilno Cavalry Brigade attempted to halt the German advance towards the Vistula River on the Radom-Kozienice road, but after heavy fighting, they were dispersed and eventually defeated on the outskirts of Maciejowice. After capturing Kozienice on 9 September, the German 13th Motorised Infantry Division (13. Infanterie-Division (motorisiert)) took control of the Radomka River near Głowaczów and Ryczywół, while the 1st Light Division (1. Leichte Division) secured the road from Kozienice to Dęblin, turning west to encircle the advancing dispersed Polish units. Soldiers from the 3rd and 36th Infantry Divisions of the Polish Army fought in the Garbatka area. Several were killed during the air raid on the railway station in Garbatka.<sup>39</sup> On 14 September, near Laski (a few kilometres from Garbatka), a large group of soldiers of the Polish 3rd Infantry Division were taken prisoner by the Germans. Another group tried to cross the Vistula near Sieciechów, but they were also taken prisoner.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Kronika szkolna*, p. 237. The circumstances of the events indicate that the priest's behaviour stemmed from a tradition of anti-Judaism, see A. Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej* (Warsaw, 2005), p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> The list of the fallen kept in the State Archives in Radom contains 13 names (APR, Records of the Municipal National Council in Policzna, 58/254/0/21, List of Polish soldiers killed during the war against the Germans on 5 September 1939 in Garbatka, the Policzna municipality, p. 27). According to Maria Dziędzicka (*eadem*, *Kronika*, p. 171), eleven Polish soldiers died at the time. However, there are fifteen names on a symbolic plaque at the cemetery in Garbatka-Letnisko.

<sup>40</sup> M. Porwit, *Komentarze do historii polskich działań obronnych 1939 roku*, vol. 2: *Odwrót i kontrofensywa* (Warsaw, 1983), pp. 335–338, 340–341, 343–344; R. Śmietanka, *Szkice z dziejów*, p. 27.

A girl from Garbatka thus recalled the outbreak of the war:

The first bombs in Garbatka fell already on Sunday, striking the railway station and in front of the stairs of the Skorupski aunt and uncle's villa, which was opposite the station [...]. Fortunately, no one was killed, but people fled in panic to the nearby forests as the bombardments continued. [...] My father and other officials from Garbatka were housed in barracks in Radom. Mum [...] was engaged at the railway station, not only with colleagues from school, organising help, drinks, and cigarettes for the troops heading to the front. [...] On the fifth day of the war, father found us in Garbatka Długa. [...] Returning from Radom, he saw the torments of people fleeing beyond the Vistula, as institutions and offices were being evacuated. Terrified families with children lay near bombed trains, in forests, bushes, and potato fields, dragging or losing their belongings. [...] Numerous refugees passed through the school in Garbatka Długa, asking for food or accommodation. At night, demobilised or still armed soldiers shone torches in windows, which filled us, children, with dread and terror. After the German army entered, we returned to our flat to find the furniture moved across the staircase and signs of the presence of tenants from Pionki. My embittered mother, fearing subsequent lawlessness of those uncertain times [...] accepted the invitation [...] of a teacher friend and decided to move us [...]. Meanwhile, my father's family [...] upon their return from the forester's lodge found the wooden villa partly ruined, without windows and, unfortunately, much of it looted. Through the broken windows, the kitchen door torn off by a bomb blast, [...] mattresses from the bedrooms, bedding, clothes, part of the tableware had been taken away. With the help of friendly neighbours, my uncle managed to recover some of the stolen property.<sup>41</sup>

In the German-occupied area, military authorities were installed, executions and crimes occurred, numerous arrests were made, and hostages were taken. The mood of depression caused by the defeat of the defensive war, fear of bombardment and artillery barrage, fear of losing all life's possessions amidst the chaos of

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<sup>41</sup> E. Bojakowska-Pikul, "Garbatka jest też i moja," *Moja Garbatka* 1 (2005), p. 27.

war were further intensified by reports of the German army's incomprehensible and unprecedented terror and cruelty, including the deliberate killing of civilians, Poles, and Jews from both villages and towns. On 13 September 1939, in the village Cecylówka, near Kozenice, German soldiers from the 13th Motorised Infantry Division locked up 56 people (43 Poles and 13 Jews) in a barn. The barn was set on fire and those trying to escape were shot at. Only three men managed to escape.<sup>42</sup> The people were horror-stricken. "My father kept bringing home news of German repressions against the Poles. One day, when he came back from the market [...], he told us about the burnt men in Cecylówka";<sup>43</sup> "terrible news spread through the village: in the not so distant Cecylówka, the Germans burned more than fifty men alive in a barn. People were overwhelmed with horror. My father stopped sleeping in the room and sent my brothers out into the fields on any pretext."<sup>44</sup> In Zwolen, the Germans also burned a group of Jews in a barn.<sup>45</sup>

In mid-September, a transit camp was set up in Kozenice, in the parish church and the park surrounding it. Thousands of men passed through it: civilian refugees, Polish soldiers trying to hide, men detained in their homes. In the camp, on the church square, German soldiers committed atrocities against Jews.<sup>46</sup> It seems

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<sup>42</sup> T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie na wsi kieleckiej 1939–1945* (Kielce, 2011), p. 55; B. Jasek, "Szkice do historii Powiśla Kozienickiego," ed. M. Grabarczyk, *Ziemia Kozienicka* 21 (2009), p. 98. According to Grzegorz Kocyk's findings, the sequence of events was as follows: "They locked the detainees at the end of the village in Kazimierz Gzowski's barn. They surrounded the building with machine guns, doused it with petrol, then opened the gates and, throwing grenades at the people, set them on fire. Fifty-four people died, including forty-two Poles and twelve Jews. One Jew, who was later murdered in the ghetto, and three Poles managed to escape from the burning barn." (G. Kocyk, "Wrzesień 1939 r. w północnej części powiatu kozienickiego," *Ziemia Kozienicka* 12 (2005), p. 35).

<sup>43</sup> "Samoloty nadleciały od strony Radomia. Wspomnienia spisane przez Dominika Kucińskiego na podstawie rozmowy z panem Stanisławem Kucharskim urodzonym w 1926 r.," *Ziemia Kozienicka* 20 (2009), pp. 109–110.

<sup>44</sup> F. Mazur, "Byłam wtedy nastolatką. Okruchy wspomnień z lat okupacji niemieckiej w Stanisławicach i Kozienicach," ed. B. Mazur, *Ziemia Kozienicka* 20 (2009), p. 60. Cf. T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, pp. 54–55.

<sup>45</sup> T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, p. 56.

<sup>46</sup> *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 6, pp. 334–336; A. Skibińska, "Połowa miasteczka," *Karta* 47 (2005), pp. 41–42: "Men were subjected to the first degrading acts – their beards were cut off, they were ordered to 'sweep' the monastery courtyard with them. In retaliation for Rabbi Perlov's escape to the east, the local wealthy man Shmuel Moshe Korman was publicly tortured, Dr. Gąsior's daughter was raped, and he himself was beaten to death. A few days later, the palace [of King Stanisław August Poniatowski], Rabbi Magid's synagogue and his house were burnt down, the cemetery with the ohel (grave chapel) was desecrated; earlier, the holy books of the Talmud and the Torah scrolls were ordered to be carried into the synagogue courtyard, set on fire and the Jews were forced to dance around the bonfire."

that “the main aim of organising this camp was to intimidate the population right at the beginning of the occupation. [...] this objective was then achieved.”<sup>47</sup> The inhabitants of Garbatka probably also received the tragic news of the murder of 250 Polish prisoners of war on 8 September 1939 near Ciepiałów (about 30 km south of Garbatka) by German soldiers from the 15th Regiment of the 29th Motorised Infantry Division.<sup>48</sup> A few weeks later, wagons with soldiers taken prisoner after the Battle of Kock (2–5 October 1939) passed through the railway station in Garbatka from Dęblin towards Radom.<sup>49</sup> German guards shot at prisoners escaping from the transport, but it is difficult to determine the number of the victims.<sup>50</sup>

The experiences of the inhabitants of Garbatka and the surrounding areas (an irregular quadrangle bounded by Kozienice, Pionki, Zwoleń, and Dęblin) during the first months of 1939 can be illustrated by a passage from a study by Jacek Chrobaczyński, an expert on the German occupation:

It was a novel type of war and occupation. Total war and occupation. [...] in place of existing rules, customs, and habits, there emerged widespread argument of criminal strength and violence, combined with extraordinary brutality, ruthlessness, and hatred. [...] From the outset, this new total war and occupation not only shattered and shook society’s daily life and privacy but also traumatically brutalised it to an incredible extent. Everyday life became perilous and uncertain.<sup>51</sup>

## German Occupation Authorities

After the German army occupied Garbatka on 10 September 1939, the Wehrmacht field command, located in the school building, took over the control. It implemented directives on maintaining “order” and all aspects of society func-

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<sup>47</sup> B. Jasek, “Szkice do historii,” p. 23.

<sup>48</sup> T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, p. 39.

<sup>49</sup> It was the last battle fought by the Samodzielna Grupa Operacyjna “Polesie” (“Polesie” Independent Operational Group, SGO “Polesie”) under the command of General Franciszek Kleeberg, and very last battle of the September 1939 campaign. SGO “Polesie” attempted to reach the Vistula River and, after the crossing, to break through to the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, to continue the guerrilla warfare there. Three soldiers from Garbatka fought in SGO “Polesie” (M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 95–97).

<sup>50</sup> P. Siliniewicz, “Od Suwałk do Stalagu IV C Mülberg,” *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy* 3 (2009), p. 161.

<sup>51</sup> J. Chrobaczyński, *Czas nieszczęść, cierpień, oporu i walki. Przegrani zwycięzcy? Społeczeństwo polskie między wrześniem 1939 a majem 1945* (Cracow, 2017), pp. 131, 133.

tioning. Numerous houses were seized as quarters for German soldiers. As part of the German civilian authorities' network, pre-war local administration structures began to operate, under the supervision of the occupier and with limited powers. However, the occupiers sought to fill key positions with *Volksdeutsche*.<sup>52</sup> The mayor of Policzna was Adolf Jeske and his deputy Adolf Rap, both German settlers from Władysławów.<sup>53</sup> Roman Gruzela, a *Volksdeutscher* from Danzig, was appointed as the head of the sawmill and the forestry railway.<sup>54</sup> The situation was similar at the post office and the railway station. After signing the *Volkliste*, Garbatka resident Roman Waldeker became the stationmaster.<sup>55</sup> In autumn 1939, German forestry administration, and Polish foresters deported from Poznań province and Pomerania were brought to Garbatka. The Forest Inspectorate (*Forstinspektion*) was soon established there, which supervised the forests and forest management in the entire Kozienice Forest. It was headed by Baron von Keysserling, a German from Latvia. Both he and Hellebrandt, who managed the Forest Inspectorate, are negatively remembered by Poles.<sup>56</sup>

The Radom District and the individual municipalities were under the constant supervision of the German security police (including the Gestapo) and the

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<sup>52</sup> S. Meducki, *Wież kielecka w czasie okupacji niemieckiej (1939–1945). Studium historyczno-gospodarcze* (Kielce, 1991), p. 27, 31. "Municipal and district officials, as well as police officers, following the orders of the occupiers, were obliged to immediately return to their former workplaces and take up their previous activities." (*ibid.*, p. 27). In the Kozienice District, which was merged with the Radom District as part of the Distrikt Radom in the General Governorate, lived numerous German settlers. They held key positions in the German occupation local administration and joined the gendarmerie, demonstrating, as the future showed, ruthlessness and cruelty towards Poles and Jews. According to Stanisław Meducki (*ibid.*, p. 40), there were 4,863 Germans in the Radom District at the beginning of March 1940, representing 1.5 per cent of the total population. See also S. Piątkowski, "Ludność niemiecka w województwie kieleckim w okresie międzywojennym (1918–1939). Szkic do portretu," in *Spółeczność ewangelicka Radomia podczas okupacji niemieckiej*, ed. J. Kłaczków (Radom, 2009), pp. 29–45.

<sup>53</sup> E. Januszewicz, "Wiek XX," p. 31. In the Policzna municipality, larger numbers of German settlers lived in Józefów and Władysławów.

<sup>54</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 46–47, 90. It is important to stress that in the memory of the employees of the sawmill Gruzela had a positive record. He tried to help Poles in various ways.

<sup>55</sup> Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej Delegatura w Kielcach (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Delegation in Kielce hereinafter AIPN Ki), 013/2041, Files of investigation against Roman Waldeker, minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Roman Waldeker, Kozienice, 31 October 1946, pp. 29–31.

<sup>56</sup> P. Kacprzak, "Nadleśnictwo Garbatka – zarys historii jednostki i gospodarki leśnej," *Moja Garbatka* 1 (2006), p. 44; M. Dziedzicka, "Nadleśniczy Hellebrandt," *Moja Garbatka* 1 (2006), p. 49.

order police. As part of the latter, German gendarmerie operated in rural areas. The Policzna municipality, including Garbatka, was patrolled by gendarmes from stations in Kozienice and Zwoleń. These stations, manned by a dozen gendarmes each, were located several kilometres north and south of Garbatka. They were supported by a special platoon of gendarmerie.<sup>57</sup>

The gendarmerie controlled a several-person station of the *Polnische Polizei* (the Polish Police of the General Governorate, called “Blue” because of the colour of their uniforms) in Garbatka.<sup>58</sup> The duties of the “Blue” policemen mainly included countering criminal offences and illegal trade, as well as maintaining order in the subordinate area. However, they were also deployed to assist in operations carried out by the German police, including those against Jews.<sup>59</sup> At the Garbatka station, as at other Blue Police stations in the Radom District, policemen from the Polish lands annexed to the Third Reich (Greater Poland and Pomerania Provinces) were employed, transferred there with their families.<sup>60</sup> The years of occupation showed that there were officers serving at the Garbatka station, both cooperating with underground organisations and overzealous in carrying out official duties or orders from their German superiors.<sup>61</sup> The published memoirs of Aleksander Barzycki include information about the killing of two policemen serving at the

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<sup>57</sup> S. Meducki, *Wież kielecka*, p. 34. “Moreover, three companies of gendarmerie were deployed in the Distrikt, operating in the so-called protected areas [...], formed at the beginning of June 1943, which were later increased to battalions. At the same time, the mobile reserve unit of the police headquarters initially consisted of a company of motorised gendarmerie and one platoon of gendarmerie. During the period when larger manhunts were conducted in the district, this reserve was increased, with up to three battalions of 450–500 men each.”

<sup>58</sup> S. Piątkowski, “Policja polska tzw. granatowa w Radomiu i powiecie radomskim (1939–1945),” *Między Wisłą a Pilicą. Studia i materiały historyczne* 2 (2001), p. 111. According to the author, the number of Blue Policemen in particular stations in the area of interest in July 1942 was as follows: Garbatka – 3 policemen, Zwoleń – 8, Kozienice – 4, Pionki – 5, Gniewoszków – 3, Sieciechów – 2.

<sup>59</sup> W. Borodziej, *Terror i polityka. Policja niemiecka a polski ruch oporu w GG 1939–1944* (Warsaw, 1985), p. 26; J.A. Młynarczyk, “Pomiędzy współpracą a zdradą. Problem kolaboracji w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie – próba syntezy,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1 (14) (2009), pp. 114–117.

<sup>60</sup> S. Piątkowski, “Policja polska tzw. granatowa,” p. 112.

<sup>61</sup> W. Borodziej, *Terror i polityka*, p. 27; M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 110; W. Molenda, *Adam, Bilof... Tomasz... Zygant i inni. Wspomnienia oficera, organizatora i dowódcy konspiracyjnego Wojska Polskiego* (Radom–Warsaw, 1992), pp. 71, 73, 94, 112, 118, 121, 153–154, 161, 163–164, 168; S. Piątkowski, “Dwie narracje. Tematyka policji granatowej na łamach niemieckiej prasy polskojęzycznej i polskiej prasy,” in *Policja granatowa w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w latach 1939–1945*, ed. T. Domański, E. Majcher-Ociesa (Kielce–Warszawa, 2019), p. 261; S. Piątkowski, “Policja polska tzw. granatowa,” pp. 125–126.

Garbatka police station, carried out following the “sentence of the Court of Underground Poland.”<sup>62</sup>

Until mid-1942, the German 51st Police Battalion was stationed in Pionki, about a dozen kilometres west of Garbatka. The gendarmerie station in Zwolen was reinforced at the end of 1942 by sixteen new men (Germans and Ukrainian nationalists).<sup>63</sup> In turn, strong German military units were stationed in Dęblin, also several kilometres East from Garbatka and on the other side of the Vistula River, who manned the Dęblin fortress and protected an important railway junction, an airfield and a military training ground. There was also a POW (Polish, Soviet, French, and, later on, Italian) camp there.<sup>64</sup>

An SS detachment of several dozen men was stationed in the German-occupied country estate in Policzna, and the occupying forces in Garbatka were supplemented by members of the Werkschutz (factory guards) at the distillery, and the Bahnschutz (railway guards who secured trains and inspected the condition of the tracks and other railway facilities).<sup>65</sup>

The fear and dread of meeting members of the occupying forces was overwhelming:

There were gendarmes, *Volksdeutsche*, Blue Police and various confidants hanging around everywhere. [...] They were rooting around for meat and pork fat from the secret slaughter, sniffing out traders. They often went to the Vistula harbour

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<sup>62</sup> A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” p. 55.

<sup>63</sup> J. Franecki, *Hitlerowski aparat policyjny i sądowiczy i jego działalność w dystrykcie radomskim ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem ziemi radomskiej* (Radom, 1978), pp. 29, 32 and p. 33: “The activity of the gendarmes was all the more dangerous because many of them were recruited from among the [local] German settlers, who knew both the Polish language and the local relations very well. Therefore, every gendarmerie station was a place of torture and murder of hundreds of Poles. [...] During the occupation, at least 500 people were killed at the post in Zwolen.” For more on the effectiveness of the measures taken by the German gendarmerie, see T. Domański, “Prześladowania Żydów na prowincji Kreishauptmannschaft Kielce w latach 1939–1941,” *Res Historica* 54 (2022), pp. 487–489. In Sucha, a village at the Pionki–Zwolen road, a German SS unit of several dozen men was stationed to protect a horse stud and cattle farm (S. Meducki, *Wieś kielecka*, p. 72).

<sup>64</sup> D. Sula, “Kontekst,” *Karta* 99 (2019), pp. 96–97. For more, see J. Trzaskowski, *Twierdza Iwagorod-Dęblin 1937–1944* (Dęblin, 2011). The importance of Dęblin for the Germans was emphasized in the reports of the Polish underground (*Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939–1945*, vol. 1, Part 2: *Wrzesień 1939 – czerwiec 1941* (Warsaw, 2015), pp. 576, 792, 800–803, 809).

<sup>65</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 65; E. Januszewicz, “Wiek XX,” p. 39.

in the village of Łoje [a dozen or so kilometres east of Garbatka – R.Ś.K.], where they robbed ships sailing with food to Warsaw. They also tracked down young people, intending to capture them and send them to forced labour in Germany.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the great danger, the residents of the Kozienice district began to collect weapons left behind by Polish soldiers in the forests and fields after the September battles. The Germans, realising this, sent provocateurs to suspected milieus. As a result of successful provocations (several Garbatka residents were misled by such) and actions taken after neighbour denunciations, many people were repressed.<sup>67</sup> Provocations against patriotic circles, which undertook various actions breaking the regulations introduced by the occupying forces, were a dangerous weapon in the hands of the Germans. This was pointed out in the reports of the Polish independence underground:

Particularly harmful for us was the method used by the Germans of using provocateurs pretending to be Hubal's [partisan unit] recruiters.<sup>68</sup> They lured many people into a trap. [...] The occupiers also took good care of the larger parts of the forests, where [German] forest guards were set up.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> J. Abramczyk, *Partyzanci z Kozienickiej Puszczy. Wspomnienia dowódcy oddziału partyzanckiego BCh* (Warsaw, 1971), p. 35. The informers were suspected to be among the German settlers: "The Polish relationships, right from the first days of captivity, were seriously affected by German settlers [...]. In the Kozienice District, there were whole concentrations of Germans living in the villages of Karolin, Janów, Władysławów, Leokadiów, Ługów, Holendry Kuźmińskie, Chinów, Kępa Wólczyńska, Polesie, Żabianka, Sosnow, Józefów, Grabów nad Wisłą, Zielonka Nowa and others. Their families served as outposts for German information and intelligence." (B. Nować, *Wspomnienia z lat wojny i okupacji* (Radom, 1998), p. 57).

<sup>67</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 36: "In March 1940, Garbatka was shocked by the execution in a sand gorge next to the forest railway engine house, of a farmer from Wólka Policka for hiding weapons. He was accused by his own wife." See also p. 98.

<sup>68</sup> This passage concerns the activity of the partisan unit *Oddział Wydzielony WP* (Detached Unit of the Polish Army) commanded by Major Henryk Dobrzański (also known by his *nom-de-guerre* "Hubal") in the Kielce and Opoczno districts in the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940. In the first days of October 1939, a mounted unit of several dozen men under Dobrzański's command was advancing through the Kozienice Forest towards the Świętokrzyskie Mountains; Ł. Ksyta, *Major Hubal. Historia prawdziwa* (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 122–123. In the early spring of 1940, the German occupying forces carried out in retaliation for support to this unit a repressive action against the rural population in the region of Skarżysko-Kamienna and Szydłowiec. Over seven hundred people were murdered, and several villages were burnt down; T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, pp. 123–159.

<sup>69</sup> Semi-annual organisational report of the Commander-in-chief of the *Związek Walki Zbrojnej* (Armed Struggle Union, ZWZ) General Stefan Rowecki to General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, Warsaw, 21 November 1940 in *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939–1945*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 633.

The stringent terms of the German occupation also applied to labour regulations. According to Stanisław Meducki, who researched industry functioning in the Radom district, the goal was “to systematically harness the labour resources of the Polish population in the General Governorate.”<sup>70</sup> The Germans effectively thwarted attempts to evade employment in industrial plants.<sup>71</sup> Already at the very beginning of the German occupation, abandoning work was treated as “sabotage and passive resistance,” as “an act directed against the [German] armed forces.” Compulsory work was introduced for all able-bodied persons between the ages of 18 and 60. In Distrikt Radom (Radom Province), a decree on “compulsory labour” for young people aged between 14 and 18 came into force in December 1939. From mid-March 1940, the occupiers implemented regulations restricting the possibility of changing the employer, and from 15 January, personal ‘work cards’ (*Arbeitskarten*) issued by the *Arbeitsamt* (German labour offices) were introduced as compulsory documents. From February of that year, only the *Arbeitsamt* was entitled to hire Poles to work or allow them to take up apprenticeships. Due to the people’s resistance to forced recruitment, the *Arbeitsamt* began issuing personal summons, with severe penalties for failure to appear. Employment in armaments factories, on the other hand, offered protection from deportation to forced labour in Germany.<sup>72</sup> The residents of Garbatka and the surrounding villages (such as Molendy, Ponikwa) sometimes managed, through various tricks, to avoid being deported to Germany.<sup>73</sup>

Agricultural production came under the control of the occupying forces and peasant farms under the supervision of German agronomists. The aim was ruthless, colonial-type exploitation of the countryside. Garbatka’s residents who were engaged in agriculture had to hand over quotas in kind (including meat, grain and potatoes) in addition to paying taxes. There was a “food office” in Garbatka, which was subordinate to the Municipal Office in Policzna. Several people worked

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<sup>70</sup> S. Meducki, *Przemysł i klasa robotnicza*, p. 41.

<sup>71</sup> The German-imposed low wages and high free (and black) market prices, along with insufficient food rations on ration cards (also imposed by Germans), led to a significant increase in the number of people engaging in trade.

<sup>72</sup> S. Meducki, *Przemysł i klasa robotnicza*, pp. 41–43, 62–63. For information about the German occupation-era reality, see S. Piątkowski, *Okupacja i propaganda. Dystrykt radomski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa w publicystyce polskojęzycznej prasy niemieckiej (1939–1945)* (Radom, 2013).

<sup>73</sup> A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” p. 48.

in the “office” under German control.<sup>74</sup> The gathered grain quotas were stored in the classrooms of the local school. A ‘ringer’ recorded the animals in the particular farms for the occupiers’ needs.<sup>75</sup> The size of the quotas, which increased dramatically from year to year, led to the drastic impoverishment of peasant farms, with severe penalties imposed for failing to meet the deadlines for giving away the goods. To make matters worse, agricultural products were frequently confiscated on various pretexts; in fact, it was common looting.<sup>76</sup>

In August 1940, Garbatka was “flooded with German soldiers coming from the Western Front to take a rest.” By the time of the German attack on the Soviet Union, i.e. almost until the end of June 1941, there were to be “more than four thousand” of them there.<sup>77</sup>

The arrival of thousands of Poles deported from areas incorporated into the Reich also affected the living and working conditions of the population of the Radom Province (Distrikt Radom), including the residents of Garbatka. At the end of 1939 and the beginning of 1940, around one thousand deportees had to be resettled in the Gniewoszów and Kozienice municipalities (in the Kozienice district within its pre-1939 borders). The arrival of the deported persons took place at the station in Garbatka, and some of the newcomers from Greater Poland remained there for a longer stay.<sup>78</sup> It is possible that the influx of people from elsewhere contributed to Garbatka-Podlas having a population of 2,276 and Garbatka-Letnisko of 1,720 in 1940, according to Maria Dziedzicka’s findings.<sup>79</sup>

Later, the strength and ruthlessness of the German occupier was demonstrated by the resettlement of thousands of rural dwellers from several dozen villages in the Radom District, carried out for the needs of the military.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> AIPN Ki, 013/2041, Investigation files compiled against Roman Waldeker, Testimony of the witness Konrad Kudłowski, Kozienice, 5 October 1946, fol. 18.

<sup>75</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 116.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* For more, see T. Domański, “Niemiecka polityka okupacyjna wobec wsi w dystrykcie radomskim (stan badań i postulaty badawcze),” *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 40 (2014), pp. 25–38; W. Jastrzębski, “Dzień powszedni na wsi polskiej pod okupacją niemiecką,” in *Represje wobec wsi i ruchu ludowego (1939–1945)*. *Wies polska między dwoma totalitaryzmami*, vol. 3, ed. J. Gmitruk, E. Leniart (Warsaw, 2009), p. 150.

<sup>77</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 37.

<sup>78</sup> S. Piątkowski, *Okupacja i propaganda*, p. 22; M. Baran, “Pan Profesor. Wspomnienie o prof. dr. Stanisławie Ziemeckim,” *Moja Garbatka* 2 (2004), p. 37; E. Bojakowska-Pikul, “Garbatka,” pp. 28–29.

<sup>79</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 193.

<sup>80</sup> T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, p. 317; S. Meducki, *Wies kielecka*, pp. 72–73.

## The Situation of Jews until the Establishment of the Garbatka Ghetto

From the onset of the war, German soldiers, along with police and paramilitary units across Poland, perpetrated violent crimes against Jews. This included beatings, humiliation, forced labour, the burning of synagogues and Jewish property, and murders. In the first several months of the occupation, German policy was marked by the “breaking of economic strength and the pauperisation of the Jews.”<sup>81</sup> Laws were enacted to isolate Jews from the rest of the population (such as removal from public service, exclusion from economic life, gradual restriction of movement, obligation to wear the identifying sign – the armband with the Star of David, exclusion from legal protection) and to expropriate and plunder them. This was accompanied by discrimination in all areas of life, as well as stigmatisation through intensive and widespread anti-Semitic propaganda (depicting Jews as parasites, usurers, spreaders of disease and plague).<sup>82</sup>

Alarming news of cruelty towards Jews was coming from the surrounding villages. In Sieciechów, east of Garbatka, a few kilometres from the Vistula, a German soldier ordered a Jew to climb a ladder up a tall tree. He then took the ladder and ordered him to jump down. The man suffered death on the spot. In Wola Klasztorna, on the road from Sieciechów to Gniewoszów, passing Jews were abused and humiliated by German gendarmes. They were told to “get down and get up.” The Germans beat them and “made them shave their beards.”<sup>83</sup> The Jews of Garbatka also experienced the brutality of the German gendarmes from Zwolen.<sup>84</sup> The

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<sup>81</sup> C. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 1970), p. 213. The planned process of physical extermination of the Jews was spread out over time. As a result of ghettoisation and then mass deportations to death camps in 1942, most Jews were exterminated. Relatively few survived by being sent to (and then often escaping from) forced labour camps. A period of deportation in the summer and autumn of 1942 was followed by the third phase of the Holocaust as part of the “Judenjagd” (“Hunt for Jews,” see *ibid.*, pp. 213–231, 306–348). For information about the Holocaust in the Kielce Voivodeship, see, i.a., K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim* (Cracow, 2004), pp. 24–207; T. Domański, *Stan badań nad pomocą świadczoną Żydom przez ludność polską w okresie II wojny światowej na okupowanych terenach województwa kieleckiego* (Kielce, 2021), pp. 20–25.

<sup>82</sup> See, among others, B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* (Poznań, 2019), pp. 29–30.

<sup>83</sup> S. Siek, K. Zając, *Sieciechów. Szkice do dziejów miejscowości. Od czasów najdawniejszych do współczesnych* (Kozienice–Sieciechów, 2009), p. 66.

<sup>84</sup> *Z pamięci Ojca*, pp. 1–2.

*Volksdeutsche* who lived and worked in Garbatka also took part in the beating and humiliation of Poles and Jews.<sup>85</sup>

Adam Rutkowski noted that the Jewish population in Garbatka counted 384 people in June 1940, increased to 571 by May 1941, and reached 1,300 by October 1941.<sup>86</sup> Their representation was the Jewish Council of Elders (*Żydowska Rada Starszych, Judenrat*), set up by the occupier and chaired by Icek Perelsztajn. In 1940, the Jewish Social Self-Help (*Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna, ŻSS – Jüdische Unterstützungstelle, JUS*), established by a decision of the German occupation authorities, took charge of organising aid for the Jews. The county committees and delegations of the ŻSS collected available financial and material resources, organised soup kitchens, hospitals, orphanages and old people's homes. On many occasions, dry provisions (mainly bread and potatoes) were distributed instead of hot meals due to the lack of other possibilities. The Garbatka ŻSS Delegation, which was subordinate to the Radom Committee of ŻSS, provided a variety of aid to the poor: clothes, food, medicines and sometimes money. Several hundred zloty were received from Radom for this purpose every month. However, this aid was clearly insufficient.<sup>87</sup> According to a 1940 document, the Judenrat in Garbatka had one hundred charges under its care. There was no soup kitchen, but dry provisions were distributed to 41 people.<sup>88</sup>

Jews from Garbatka were exploited as unpaid labour, working in logging, earth-works, and drainage works,<sup>89</sup> as well as on the estate of Count Antoni Przeździecki

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<sup>85</sup> AIPN Ki, 013/2041, Investigation case-file concerning Roman Waldeker, minutes of the interview with the witness Mieczysław Ostrowski, Kozienice, 1 October 1946, p. 23.

<sup>86</sup> A. Rutkowski, "Martyrologia, walka i zagłada," pp. 100, 156. Michał Grynberg highlighted a crucial aspect of the relocation of Jews: "From the onset of the occupation, Jews were repeatedly moved from one place to another. This strategy of transferring them from smaller ghettos to larger ones was designed to undermine any potential plans to organise a resistance movement with the help of non-Jews. The unfamiliar surroundings, changed conditions, and the urgent need to secure shelter and food in new locations made it exceedingly difficult to resist the occupiers." (M. Grynberg, "Ruch oporu Żydów podczas okupacji hitlerowskiej," in *Studia z dziejów Żydów w Polsce*, ed. Z. Borzymińska, A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 1995), pp. 37–38).

<sup>87</sup> S. Piątkowski, "Pomoc społeczna i działalność charytatywna w gettach dystryktu radomskiego (1939–1942)" in *Dobroczynność i pomoc społeczna na ziemiach polskich w XIX, XX i na początku XXI wieku*, ed. M. Przeniosło (Kielce, 2008), pp. 165–166, 169–170, 173.

<sup>88</sup> S. Piątkowski, "Pomoc społeczna i działalność charytatywna," p. 173; K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 108–109.

<sup>89</sup> S. Piątkowski, "Wytwórnia prochu w Pionkach w latach wojny i okupacji hitlerowskiej (1939–1945)," in *Szkice z dziejów Pionek*, vol. 4: *Państwowa Wytwórnia Prochu – Wytwórnia Chemiczna Nr 8 – Zakłady Tworzyw Sztucznych „Pronit”. Ludzie – fabryka – miasto (1922–2000)*, ed. M. Wierzbicki (Pionki, 2009), p. 39.

in Policzna taken over by the Germans (there was also a sanatorium for SS men established there). In winter, they cleared roads. Under the supervision of German soldiers, they shovelled snow from the several-kilometre-long road from Garbatka to Policzna.<sup>90</sup> In the memoirs of a Garbatka resident we read:

The winters of 1940–1941 and 1941–1942 were extremely cold, marked by heavy snowstorms. The road stretching from Kozienice to Zwoleń, and from Garbatka to Policzna, was buried under so much snow that a large military vehicle couldn't be seen in the passage dug through it. This tunnel through the snowdrifts was excavated in a single day, obviously by hand, by local Jews.<sup>91</sup>

Towards the end of 1940, they probably also worked at the construction site of two railway sidings and ramps at the railway station in Garbatka.<sup>92</sup>

It seems that almost until the end of 1941, the situation of the Jewish community in Garbatka was bearable, given the rigours and the terror of the German occupation.<sup>93</sup> However, in the autumn of 1941, due to a large influx of Jews removed from other towns and villages (including the nearby Jabłonkowo) and the spread of diseases, living conditions in Garbatka deteriorated significantly. Overcrowding and resulting sanitary issues led to the spread of infectious diseases such as typhus and dysentery. The insufficient supply of medicines further

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<sup>90</sup> E. Januszewicz, "Wiek XX," p. 38.

<sup>91</sup> M. Baran, "Przyspieszone dorastanie," *Moja Garbatka* 3 (2002), p. 8. Forcing Jews to shovel the snow from the roads was a widespread practice among the German administration. See i.a. T. Domański, "Prześladowanie Żydów na prowincji. Kreishauptmannschaft Kielce w latach 1939–1941," *Res Historica* 54 (2022), p. 507; S. Piątkowski, "Żydzi w Szydłowcu w latach wojny i okupacji (1939–1945)," in *Żydzi szydlowieccy. Materiały sesji popularnonaukowej 22 lutego 1997 roku*, ed. J. Wijaczka (Szydłowiec, 1997), p. 117; W. Rządkowski, *Staszów w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Staszów, 2017), pp. 24, 42–43.

<sup>92</sup> *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939–1945*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 576.

<sup>93</sup> The situation of Jews in Kozienice in the first two years of the German occupation was similarly assessed by Marcin Urynowicz in his chapter "Chaima Bermana życie i śmierć. Z dziejów pomocy Żydom," in *„Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje?...” Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej*, ed. A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2009), pp. 257–258. Cf. T. Domański, "Prześladowanie Żydów," p. 497 (regarding the situation in Chęciny). Another perspective on the situation in Garbatka should also be made note of. According to an anonymous author of an interesting text published in *Dziennik Radomski*, 8–11 November 1996 ("Listy, polemiki, opinie" column, p. 10), already before the end of 1941, a vast majority of Jews in Garbatka found themselves in very difficult living conditions, and about 90 per cent of them were "extremely poor."

worsened the situation.<sup>94</sup> The German demand for an infectious diseases hospital, a delousing room and a bathhouse was beyond the financial means of the local Jewish population.<sup>95</sup>

The life of the Jewish community in Garbatka, particularly their living conditions before the establishment of the ghetto by the Germans, is outlined in the testimony of a Jewish woman who stayed in the village for five months in 1941 and returned to Warsaw at the end of this year. Much of the information she provides is quite surprising. It is difficult to determine whether her testimony reflects the experiences of the majority of Jews living in Garbatka, or just of a certain group with which the author of the testimony was connected. It is intriguing that she mentions the lack of hostility on the part of the German soldiers stationed in Garbatka:

The Jewish population in Garbatka consisted mostly of craftsmen and hard-working labourers. Until the end of that month, i.e. December 1941, the Jews lived off work and trade in the countryside. Hunger was unknown in that area. The poorest Jew baked challah bread and cakes and cooked fish every Friday. They had meat for dinner every day, often a piece of poultry. No Jewish shop or stall was open during the entire German occupation, that is since September 1939. On market days, however, Jews traded their goods. The Germans accommodated there did not do anything bad to the local Jews until the outbreak of the German-Russian war. They got along with Jews quite well. Many Jews lived off the Germans. For baking a cake, the Germans gave a bucket of sugar, flour, petrol and wood. For making a pair of shoes or boots with uppers from entrusted leather, they paid with leather for several [more] pairs of shoes. For coffee, they gave wood at low prices: 10 zloty a metre.<sup>96</sup>

The anonymous author also described the relations between Poles and Jews:

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<sup>94</sup> Medicines and dressings were delivered to the ghetto by Włodzimierz Skrzyński, owner of a pharmacy in Garbatka ("Garbatka w listach Danuty Skrzyńskiej z Ciechocinka do Marii Dziedzickiej," *Moja Garbatka* 2 (2006), pp. 139–140).

<sup>95</sup> "Listy, polemiki, opinie," *Dziennik Radomski*, 8–11 November 1996, p. 10. The undertakings mentioned above were expected to cost several tens of thousands of zlotys.

<sup>96</sup> Anonymous testimony entitled "Pozdrowienia z prowincji," p. 321.

The Poles there also lived on fairly friendly terms with Jews. [...] The aid provided by the local Jews and Christians to the expelled refugees, many of whom passed through Garbatka, was very considerable. The Jewish refugees stayed overnight with the Christians, ate with them and were often clothed by them. The Jewish community organised a kitchen used exclusively by the refugees. For breakfast they were given bread with marmalade and half a litre of coffee, for dinner one litre of soup, for supper again bread with coffee. Refugees from Góra Kalwaria, Piaseczno and Grójec settled in Garbatka. They settled there quite well and felt like permanent residents of the town. Every Jew prepared provisions for the winter. For example, a simple Jew, who before the war barely had enough to survive a day, prepared for himself for the winter: ten metres of potatoes, two to three metres of wood, ten kilogrammes of lard, a bag of flour, groats, four to five metres of coal, two barrels of cabbage, beans and so on.<sup>97</sup>

However, not all Polish residents behaved decently. A group of residents unfriendly to the Jews supported the German idea of removing them from Garbatka:

Immediately after the armistice [after the end of the 1939 September campaign – R.Ś.K.], the Germans were going to expel the Jews from there. They only demanded a few hundred signatures from Poles. After a few weeks they collected about 100 signatures. The date for the expulsion was approaching. The signature of the local priest [the parish priest Wincenty Wojtaśkiewicz – R.Ś.K.], who was a well-known anti-Semite before the war, was still missing. However, this anti-Semitic priest did not want to sign the list. Although he did not like Jews, he refused to sign. Thus this order was annulled.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 321–322. For more information on the movement of the groups of Jews in the Radom district, see S. Piątkowski, “Stan opieki społecznej wśród Żydów dystryktu radomskiego w świetle sprawozdania American Joint Distribution Committee z 1941 roku,” *Między Wisłą a Pilicą. Studia i materiały historyczne* 4 (2003), p. 120: “The Radom district, located on the border of the Distrikt Warschau [Warsaw province], has seen an influx of refugees both from within this Distrikt and from Warsaw itself. These refugees, typically wandering on foot from village to village with no means of support, rely solely on the assistance of Jewish welfare organizations, placing a heavy burden on these institutions. Often wandering without a plan, they frequently gather in very numerous groups in towns completely unprepared to accommodate them. Unable to find support, they move on after a few hours or days, aided only by a small allowance.”

<sup>98</sup> Anonymous testimony entitled “Pozdrowienia z prowincji,” p. 321. The testimony also mentions the restrictions on the type of food: “The German gendarmerie carry out frequent searches in Christian

The German initiative was thwarted, but it revealed a group of people (a few per cent of the total population of the village) inclined to engage in some form of collaboration with the occupier. This behaviour targeted the Jewish population and put the list signatories on the brink of collaboration with the German administration.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, nothing indicates that these actions were coerced. It was therefore a conscious, circumstantial and opportunistic attitude of cooperation that undermined loyalty to the community of Polish citizens. At most, one may speak of German engagement as an instrument of indirect influence of the occupying power on the conquered population. Such behaviour had the effect of weakening the “patriotic potential” and social bonds within the local community.<sup>100</sup> Such behaviour could have been a harbinger of other crisis situations in relations between Poles and Jews. However, two things should be paid attention to when analysing the described incident: firstly, the situation occurred at the beginning of the occupation, when there were still no clearly defined and unambiguous rules of conduct in relations with the German occupier (reference is made to the codes of conduct soon developed by the Polish Underground State), and secondly – and more importantly – the overwhelming majority of the Polish residents of Garbatka rejected the German plan to remove the Jews from the village.

It can be presumed that pre-war influences and mutual political sympathies between the two nationalities played an important role. These were so strong that

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and Jewish homes to determine whether meat is cooked or whether dry potatoes are eaten. Both things are strictly forbidden. Finding a grater in any dwelling is an evidence that potatoes are being grated and potato noodles or fried potato pancakes are being made. This is contrary to the German order: potatoes may be eaten only in a soup. Because of this offence, many residents have been severely punished. During searches, meat is sought for in pots. If they find it, it is seized.” (*ibid.*, p. 325).

<sup>99</sup> For information about the definition of collaboration, the different typologies of this phenomenon and the evaluation of negative social attitudes during the German occupation, see, i.a., C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm i okupacje 1938–1945. Wykonywanie okupacji przez państwa Osi w Europie*, vol. 2: *Mechanizmy realizowania okupacji* (Poznań, 1984), pp. 335–387 (pp. 335–337 in particular); *idem*, “Między neutralną współpracą ludności terytoriów okupowanych a kolaboracją z Niemcami,” *Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi* 21 (1988), pp. 181–196; P. Madajczyk, “Zdrada i kolaboracja jako polskie ‘Flucht und Vertreibung,’” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 4 (42) (2010), pp. 91–103; P. Majewski, “Kolaboracja, której nie było... Problem postaw społeczeństwa polskiego w warunkach niemieckiej okupacji 1939–1945,” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 4 (36) (2004), pp. 59–71; J.A. Młynarczyk, “Pomiędzy współpracą a zdradą,” pp. 103–107; T. Strzembosz, *Rzeczpospolita podziemna. Społeczeństwo polskie a państwo podziemne 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 88–89.

<sup>100</sup> J. Chrobaczyński, *Czas nieszczęść*, p. 165.

both Polish and Jewish residents of Garbatka took part in an “illegal” political action organised in Garbatka in 1939 or 1940:

The anniversary of Poland’s independence, 11 November, was celebrated in Garbatka in this way: Polish eagles were drawn in chalk on all state buildings and the inscription: ‘Long live the free, independent Poland of peasants and workers.’ Flags made of red paper were hung in several places. The cemetery where Polish soldiers lie was covered with red paper garlands.<sup>101</sup>

In the second half of 1941, the people of Garbatka helped Soviet prisoners of war escaping from railway transports:

On the Dęblin-Radom route, Polish railwaymen, transporting prisoners of war, unhooked two wagons at each station where the train with the prisoners stopped. All Russian soldiers who were still able to stand on their feet fled into the fields and forests. The Polish and Jewish population helped them with money, food and clothing.<sup>102</sup>

Retrospectively, it can be stated that this manifestation of the patriotic attitude and the will of anti-German resistance was a rather risky behaviour. This is because it could have drawn the attention of the German security police to the “rebellious” village. In August 1941, there was a problem with the spread of infectious diseases in Garbatka. According to the anonymous account, already been quoted several times above, the mortality rate among those who contracted typhus was two per cent. Once again, prejudices and anti-Jewish sentiments emerged. A group of Poles [in the account called “endeks” – from National Democracy (*Narodowa*

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<sup>101</sup> Anonymous testimony entitled “Pozdrowienia z prowincji,” p. 325.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 325–326. The testimony further reads: “During the journey, Red Army soldiers [i.e. Soviet POWs] jumped out of the carriages of passing trains, many saving themselves this way. One soldier, however, leapt onto an iron pillar and died instantly. The commander [possibly Krawczyk? – RŚK] did not permit a [public] funeral to be organised, ordering a secret burial in the Christian cemetery instead. He provided a red runner, and ordered bury the killed soldier in it. The entire population of Garbatka, solemnly and quietly, with bowed heads, accompanied the deceased Russian soldier to his final resting place. The next day, his grave was adorned with red flowers and garlands. The grave is maintained continuously.”

*Demokracja*, ND)] blamed them for the spreading of the disease. Accusations were directed at Jewish refugees, who were said to have “brought typhus.” These were, according to the author, “false accusations,” but they reached the commander of the local Blue Police station (the author describes him as a “*Volksdeutscher* from Poznań”). He announced that “all non-local Jews who settled in Garbatka of their own accord, i.e., not refugees, must quickly and immediately leave the health resort (Garbatka is a health resort).”<sup>103</sup> The testimony lacks data on the impact of this decision. Given the police chief’s propensity for taking bribes, it can be assumed that the expulsion was halted.<sup>104</sup> However, the information contained in the testimony raises some doubts. This is because it brings up the question of the possibility that the chief of the post could have taken the decision to evict a group of Jews on his own. Such a decision would have collided with the authority of the German occupation administration.

After a few months, a “group of anti-Semites” resumed their activities, not only spreading anti-Jewish propaganda (which also affected the local church), but also “going from one German office to another to enforce the confinement of Jews in the ghetto and their separation from Christians.”<sup>105</sup> The full circumstances of the incident remain unclear, as the description relies on a single source. Therefore, it is challenging to determine whether this was a consequence of the German plans to establish closed quarters for Jews or an isolated, selfish act by individuals demoralized by the violent laws imposed by the German occupation. Either way, the action taken was directed against the Jewish population.

In the middle of December 1941, the situation was becoming increasingly tense. After the conference of “all village headmen and mayors” organised by the Germans in Radom, the implementation of the plan to create closed quarters for Jews gathered pace. In anticipation of the inevitable events, representatives of the

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322. For information about the typhoid epidemic in the Kielce district, see T. Domański, “Prześladowanie Żydów,” pp. 499–501.

<sup>104</sup> Anonymous testimony entitled “Pozdrowienia z prowincji,” p. 324. “He is a big bribe taker and a drunkard, an alcoholic. For a glass of vodka you can do anything with him. He does a lot of good for the Jews. At the beginning of the winter [1941] he borrowed, without a penny [of reward], the military from the barracks, which had been built there and had been standing empty since the German-Russian war. He also distributed a quota of wood for the poor at 11 groszy per metre. At every opportunity, he catches Jews in the street and makes them stand him a vodka.”

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

Judenrat in Garbatka sought to influence the location of the ghetto by offering a substantial bribe to Commander Krawczyk (ten thousand zloty and several furs). They selected a site located entirely on the outskirts, adjacent to the road [the Kozienice-Zwolen route? – R.Ś.K.], aiming to maintain contact with the outside world.<sup>106</sup> However, they greatly overestimated the possibilities of the police station's commander.<sup>107</sup> The site they had indicated was not approved by the Radom district governor Friedrich Egen, who arrived in Garbatka on 28 December, together with "ghetto specialists," and stated: "in this place Jews will be too comfortable. They will have too many opportunities to move freely and breathe fresh air." He designated another location, in the central part of Garbatka, and set a deadline for the move "by 30 December" 1941. He warned that "Christians and Jews who do not move [in and out of the planned ghetto] by that hour would be shot."<sup>108</sup>

The site chosen by the Germans for the ghetto and the short timeframe for the relocation provoked strong emotions and violent reactions from the inhabitants of Garbatka, who were directly affected (the displaced Poles were to receive much poorer buildings from Jewish families in exchange for the property taken from them). Anti-Jewish sentiment was fuelled by statements made by the "leader of the National Democrats," who, as the author of the account noted, stated that the Jews had obtained the ghetto site by bribing the German district governor, because "they do not want to move out of here [...] they just want to live with Christians." It is worth citing a longer passage from this account (which has already been quoted several times):

In this way, an antagonism arose rapidly and unexpectedly. This seed of hatred fell on fertile ground. To understand this, the following still needs to be explained: The Jews of Garbatka, numbering about 500, have lived here for several generations and live more or less in one concentrated area. Due to a lack of space, the Jews who settled here a few years ago live somewhat further away from the other Jewish residents. There are 17 families of them. And these 17 families have to move into the ghetto, to join the other Jews who are supposed to stay in their previous

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Aleksander Barzycki in his memoirs ("Pamiętnik") noted: "He [Krawczyk] spoke German and got along easily with the German authorities" (p. 53).

<sup>108</sup> Anonymous testimony entitled "Pozdrowienia z prowincji," pp. 322–323.

places. On the other hand, the number of Christian families who should leave the quarter designated for the Jews is 70. These are the richest peasants, who have the richest estates in the area. So, firstly, they have nowhere to move to, because the houses of these 17 Jewish families would only be enough for a small number of peasants. Secondly, the Jewish houses are not suited to their needs because they lack essential adjacent buildings, such as stables and barns for both livestock and non-livestock purposes. Therefore, they all shouted with one voice: at no price, even if there were human casualties, would they give up their land and their properties. And they would take revenge on the Jews who supposedly chose this place and not another. "The Jews will starve to death in the ghetto; we will not allow any food to reach them because they want to ruin us!" shouted the peasants.<sup>109</sup>

Jankiel Perelsztajn was beaten, and stones were thrown at Jewish flats. A group of "young boys from among the school children" threatened "to attack the Jews if they dared to move." How the events unfolded and when tempers eventually cooled remains unknown.<sup>110</sup> The testimony states that by 30 December 1941, seventeen Jewish families had moved in with other Jews already living in the designated area.<sup>111</sup> The author herself, because of the "tense situation, tried to leave" and eventually left the village on 30 December 1941. She arrived in Warsaw, "where she has her family and a home."<sup>112</sup>

## Resistance of the Ghetto Residents

In January 1942, the ghetto in Garbatka was already operational.<sup>113</sup> The creation of a closed quarter in a village along the railway route fitted well with German plans to concentrate Jews in ghettos and forced labour camps. According to

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 323–324.

<sup>110</sup> It may be only presumed that more serious riots were prevented by the attitude of those Garbatka residents who were associated with the pre-war left-wing groups (especially PPS). Some of them lived in the centre of Garbatka. Nearby, there were two factories – a distillery and a sawmill – where left-wing influences were particularly strong. See also J. Lachtara, "Z działalności Gwardii i Armii Ludowej w powiecie Kozienice w latach 1942–1944," *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 3 (1988), pp. 221–222.

<sup>111</sup> Anonymous testimony entitled "Pozdrowienia z prowincji," p. 324.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> According to Adam Rutkowski, the Garbatka ghetto was established "in the first days of January 1942" (*idem*, "Martyrologia, walka i zagłada," p. 85). In another publication, we find the exact date of the establishment of the ghetto in this village: 18 January 1942 ("Listy, polemiki, opinie," *Dziennik Radomski*, 8–11 November 1996, p. 10).

Maria Dziedzicka, author of *Kronika Garbatki-Letnisko*, 25 Polish families were displaced from the area designated for Jews. The area was fenced off with barbed wire and was patrolled – under German supervision – by the Blue Police and the *Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst* – the Jewish Order Service, popularly known as the Jewish Police. Garbatka was regularly visited by German gendarmes from Zwolen.<sup>114</sup> The establishment of the ghetto altered the dynamics of relations between Poles and Jews. Attempting to leave the ghetto without a permission was punishable by imprisonment or even death. Poles who helped Jews in escaping faced the same severe penalties.<sup>115</sup>

The Jewish inhabitants of Garbatka were not passive in the face of the anticipated, subsequent restrictions imposed by the occupier. Based on the testimonies, admittedly scant, it can be assumed that some planned to hide or blend in with the Polish community.<sup>116</sup> Bolesław Talar recalled:

I was acquainted with several Jewish families in Garbatka, such as the tailor Brajtman and the Menażka family. Menażka owned an abattoir and had three fine-looking daughters. Marysia Menażkówna, one of the daughters, was a close friend of my sister-in-law. During the war, she asked me to teach her about our faith, knowing that I had studied at a Higher Seminary. I agreed and tested her knowledge of the catechism. She knew the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments almost by heart. However, she was not baptised.<sup>117</sup>

Others, fleeing persecution, hid with their Polish neighbours.

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<sup>114</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 65, 109. See also “Byli tu mniejszością,” p. 32; K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 151.

<sup>115</sup> S. Piątkowski, “Polacy wobec eksterminacji ludności żydowskiej (1939–1945). Próba określenia postaw i ich źródeł na przykładzie dystryktu radomskiego,” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 1 (34) (1999), p. 132; A. Rutkowski, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada,” pp. 84–85.

<sup>116</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 110–111. Two young Jewish women are mentioned in this context: Lola Manys and Marysia Menażkówna. They spoke Polish well and had a chance to live a “normal life.” It is clear that the “desire to thwart the plans of the occupying forces” by means of hiding (or even planning such an undertaking), escaping from the ghetto or transport was a form of resistance against the Germans (M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa, nora, grób. Wojenne kryjówki Żydów w okupowanej Polsce* (Warsaw, 2012), p. 171).

<sup>117</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 111. For more on “learning” Christian religion and habits, see J. Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Strategie przetrwania*, pp. 87–93.

In September 1939, when we escaped beyond the Vistula [...] it was in our flat that Kielman stored 2 suitcases of his belongings for some time. Mr. Świtka, as the landlord, gave him the keys to our flat. In 1940 or 1941 [...] the Germans (who came from Zwolen) entered the Kielmans' house. They were probably gendarmes [...]. They set fire to Kielman's beard, who was praying at the time. He escaped to our house, to the dining room, he did not stop praying. He prayed for a long time. The Germans were looking for him, maybe they wanted to kill him, but they did not enter our house. They did not do searches in the houses. [...] He stayed in our house for about 1–1.5 hours. We went outside and there was no one there anymore. He also looked around and went back to his house.<sup>118</sup>

In one of the Polish houses designated as part of the established ghetto for Jewish residence, there were three hiding places, prepared by a member of the Union of Armed Struggle-Home Army (ZWZ-AK) underground who had previously lived there. At least one of these was used by the Jews staying there until the ghetto was liquidated.<sup>119</sup>

It is difficult to determine exactly when the numerous Jewish escapees, in defiance of the German prohibitions,<sup>120</sup> began to seek refuge in the Kozienice forest. They also hid in various places along the Vistula River and among the Poles.<sup>121</sup> In a forest near the village of Ruda (about 6–7 km from Garbatka), a group of Jews from Kozienice hid in a shelter.<sup>122</sup> Among those seeking shelter were also refugees

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<sup>118</sup> *Z pamięci Ojca*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>120</sup> S. Krakowski, "Żydowski opór w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie," in *Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, ed. D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2004), pp. 286–287.

<sup>121</sup> M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa*, p. 164. The author cited excerpts from the testimony of a Jewish boy, Szajka Nussenbaum (b. 1934) from Nowa Sól near Kozienice, who recalled hiding in many homesteads – "sometimes [...] in some attic, sometimes in a barn, sometimes in some dungeon." See also B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień... Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw, 2011), pp. 57–58, 119, 123, 176, 182–183, 190, 201; J. Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów. Słownik* (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 172, 307, 320, 340, 408; B. Jasek, "Szkice do historii," p. 23; S. Piątkowski, "Polacy wobec eksterminacji," p. 137; M. Tokarczyk, "Okupacja hitlerowska i pierwsze miesiące po wojnie w mojej rodzinie i wsi," *Ziemia Kozienicka* 20 (2009), pp. 92–93.

<sup>122</sup> S. Janeczek, "Kozienice pod okupacją hitlerowską w latach 1939–1945," *Ziemia Kozienicka* 14 (2006), pp. 71–72.

from the Warsaw ghetto.<sup>123</sup> Fourteen-year-old Mordka Papirblatt, after his father's death by starvation in the Warsaw ghetto, came to "an aunt living in the village of Garbatka" (i.e. in the Garbatka ghetto?). After some time, his mother arrived with the other children.<sup>124</sup>

There were several locations in Garbatka that facilitated "saving lives," including emergency shelters and both temporary and permanent hiding places.<sup>125</sup> Such hideouts were located in the houses (and other outbuildings) of Garbatka residents, both Poles and Jews, and in the nearby woodlands. Abram Lancman, a teenage escapee from the Warsaw ghetto, upon reaching the Garbatka railway station in late April 1942, learned from an accidentally met person about a "nearby Jewish hideout."<sup>126</sup> It later turned out that he was not the only one who used temporary accommodation in the Garbatka ghetto before moving on. Many years later Lancman recalled:

In the ghetto [in Garbatka – R.Ś.K.] I was assured that I did not have Semitic features, and this woman realised at a glance who I was. [...] For some time I wandered around the town [this is how he describes Garbatka – R.Ś.K.], until finally a young couple took me in. The man was a tailor. [...] In return, they described the conditions here. Here, too, there were round-ups for forced labour for the Germans, but there was no shortage of food. Someone who came from the Warsaw Ghetto might have had the impression of finding themselves in a holiday retreat. [...] In the evening, I learned from them that a young girl, also a refugee from the Warsaw Ghetto, lived nearby. [...] My hosts, respectable people, were unable to support me, so they offered to look for work for me. Among the residents, there were some who could afford to pay someone for doing their forced labour for them. [...] I went to work. It was a gruelling job

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<sup>123</sup> J. Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, pp. 169–170, 266, 307, 316; M. Melchior, "Uciekinierzy z gett po 'stronie aryjskiej' na prowincji dystryktu warszawskiego – sposoby przetrwania" in *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, ed. B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka (Warsaw, 2007), p. 346, footnote 106.

<sup>124</sup> A. Żbikowski, "Żydowskie przesiedleńcy z dystryktu warszawskiego w getcie warszawskim 1939–1942 (z pogranicza opisu i interpretacji)," in *Prowincja noc*, p. 229, footnote 15.

<sup>125</sup> M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa*, pp. 50, 262.

<sup>126</sup> A. Lancman, *Młodość w czasie Zagłady*, trans. A. Przedpeńska-Trzeciakowska, introduction by W. Bartoszewski (Warsaw, 2002), p. 93.

consisting in carrying heavy stones. But the money I got for it was not enough to live on. A respectable tailor and his wife advised me to try my luck in Zwolen, Radom or Kozienice. So one day I set off.<sup>127</sup>

It is very likely that there was a contact point (a “hideout”) in the Garbatka area (in the ghetto?)<sup>128</sup> on the escape route of the Jews from Kozienice through the woods of the Kozienice Forest towards the south (the vicinity of Gniewoszków? Zwolen? – R.Ś.K.).<sup>129</sup> The route led through Janików near Kozienice and the village of Molendy – villages located a few kilometres from Garbatka – the guides were Poles.<sup>130</sup> It also cannot be ruled out that the destination was the railway station in Garbatka. It is possible that some of the fugitives tried to get to Warsaw by train. Garbatka was located on a railway route used by members of various underground formations, including the communist Gwardia Ludowa (People’s Guard, GL) and couriers of various organisations.<sup>131</sup> Six Jews, probably fugitives from Kozienice, hid for many months in the farm buildings of Władysław Amanowicz in Anielin, a village a few kilometres from Garbatka in the direction of Pionki.<sup>132</sup> There are also sources mentioning escapes from the Gniewoszków ghetto, both in the direction of Zwolen and northbound, towards Kozienice.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 93–94.

<sup>128</sup> A. Rutkowski, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada,” p. 129: “Numerous groups escaped from [...] Kozienice [...]. It can be stated with utmost certainty that there was not a single rural municipality in the Radom District, not a single village, not a single forest where Jews were not hiding in 1942, 1943 or even 1944.”

<sup>129</sup> Minutes of the interview with the witness Władysław Bak concerning the murder of Józef Suchecki and Jan Wolski committed by the Germans due to the aid they provided to persons of Jewish nationality of unknown identity in Zwola (Sarnów municipality, Radom district), Kielce, 28 May 1987, in *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 4: *Dystrykt radomski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2020), pp. 299–300.

<sup>130</sup> Testimony of Tadeusz Rydel regarding his death sentence passed by the Germans for aiding Joel and Herszka Litman, Chaja and Selig Berman and other persons of Jewish nationality in the vicinity of Janikowo (Brzeźnica municipality, Radom District), Suwałki, ca. 3 May 1979, in *ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>131</sup> J. Piwowarek, “Powstanie i działalność bojowa oddziału partyzanckiego GL im. Ziemi Kieleckiej,” *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 22 (1962), p. 320. See also A. Bikont, *Cena. W poszukiwaniu żydowskich dzieci po wojnie* (Wołowiec, 2022), p. 1023; K. Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny*, p. 228.

<sup>132</sup> “Historia z Anielina. Rozmowa Marii Dziedzickiej ze Stanisławą Budzisz. Anielin, 15 sierpnia 2010 r.,” *Moja Garbatka* 2016, pp. 292–293.

<sup>133</sup> Minutes of the interview with the witness Bolesław Paciorek regarding the aid he provided to Lipa Winnykamień, Frederick Weinstein and other persons of Jewish nationality in Gniewoszków (Sarnów municipality, Radom District), Radom, 8 April 1970, in *Relacje o pomocy*, vol. 4, pp. 95–96.

Bolesław Górniak, who worked in the forest near Garbatka and Molendy during those years, recalled: “ghetto escapees and Soviet prisoners of war who had fled from camps were hiding in our forests.”<sup>134</sup> Over time, the fugitives who survived the German raids began to form groups. These groups frequently resorted to forcibly obtaining food, which led to accusations of banditry from the local population.<sup>135</sup> Among others, Jewish escapees from the forced labour camp at the gunpowder factory in Pionki were hiding in the nearby forests. During the second half of 1944 one of the Jewish groups, which included Elias Waingarten from Jabłonowo (Policzna municipality), hid for several months in a bunker built in the forest near Pionki.<sup>136</sup>

More often than not, due to serious problems with provisions, these people found themselves in dramatic situations.<sup>137</sup> In addition, Jewish groups hiding in the forests were seen as “communist” and associated with Soviet partisans.<sup>138</sup> The Home Army’s main press organ, *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, repeatedly warned against supporting “Soviet diversion,” which provokes brutal German reprisals and heavy

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<sup>134</sup> B. Górniak, “Las w moim życiu. Przetrwanie okupacji hitlerowskiej, praca..., dorastanie... (1939–1944),” *Ziemia Kozienicka* 20 (2009), pp. 29, 47.

<sup>135</sup> P.M. Majewski, J. Vajskebr, “Sytuacja w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w świetle niemieckich statystyk policyjnych. Próba analizy ilościowej,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 4 (2016), pp. 594–595. See also S. Piątkowski, “Bandytyzm i inne formy przestępczości kryminalnej na obszarach wiejskich Generalnego Gubernatorstwa w początkach okupacji niemieckiej (październik 1939 – czerwiec 1941),” in *Polska pod okupacją 1939–1945*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 2015), pp. 64–121. In the Garbatka area, a typical bandit group consisting of several Poles, including two locals, operated. This group was known for its violent activities and had committed several robberies. In June 1942, it was liquidated by German gendarmes and Blue Policemen from Garbatka (A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” pp. 49–50). See also M. Brzeziński, *Armia Izaaka. Walka i opór polskich Żydów*, trans. M. Habura (Cracow, 2013), pp. 343–344.

<sup>136</sup> Minutes of the interview with the witness Antoni Karaś regarding the aid he provided to Elias Waingarten in Pionki (Radom district), Kozienice, 24 June 1970, in *Relacje o pomocy*, vol. 4, p. 172. See also S. Piątkowski, “Wytwórnia prochu w Pionkach,” pp. 41–42.

<sup>137</sup> S. Piątkowski, “Oprawcy, prześladowcy, ratownicy. Problematyka Zagłady w aktach radomskiej ekspozytury Prokuratora Specjalnego Sądu Karnego w Lublinie,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), p. 492.

<sup>138</sup> A. Puławski, “Postrzeganie żydowskich oddziałów partyzanckich przez Armię Krajową i Delegaturę Rządu RP na Kraj,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2 (2003), pp. 278, 295–296, 300; S. Krakowski, “Podziemie polskie a Żydzi w latach drugiej wojny światowej,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 2 (2000), pp. 173–177; W. Łukaszun, “Ratunek czy niebezpieczeństwo? Obszary leśne w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie jako miejsce schronienia ludności żydowskiej,” in *Okupowana Europa. Podobieństwa i różnice*, ed. W. Grabowski (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 124–138; W. Molenda, *Adam, Bilof*, pp. 128–133.

civilian casualties.<sup>139</sup> To make matters worse, between Kozienice and Garbatka, in the village of Kociołki, German provocateurs showed up. Pretending to be “agricultural workers” looking for work, they attempted to get into touch with the “forest people.” The provocation ended with the arrests of people suspected of links with underground organisations.<sup>140</sup>

It is not known whether the Jews of Garbatka fled to the partisans. There is no evidence of this, but it cannot be ruled out. Especially since in the Kozienicka forest, close to Garbatka, actions were carried out by a partisan unit of the *Socjalistyczna Organizacja Bojowa* (Socialist Combat Organisation) under the command of Lt. Kazimierz Aleksandrowicz pseud. “Huragan.”<sup>141</sup> Julian Aleksandrowicz pseud. “Twardy” and several other Jews belonged to this unit.<sup>142</sup> It should be added, however, that in the same area there was a Home Army unit under the command of Lt. Ignacy Pisarski pseud. “Maria.” Negative opinions circulated among the Jewish population about the partisans from this unit. It was believed that the commander of the unit and his subordinates were hostile towards Jews.<sup>143</sup>

From the summer of 1942, an independent partisan unit made up of Jews operated in the forests in the Ciepielów and Zwoleń area. In 1943, it became part of a GL unit under the command of Jan Kowalik pseud. “Janek” (later the unit

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<sup>139</sup> See i.a., “Cudze rękoma,” *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, 11 June 1942, 23 (127) (1942), p. 2; K. Sacewicz, “Gwardia Ludowa w świetle opracowania Biura Informacji i Propagandy Komendy Głównej Armii Krajowej pt. ‘Informacja o działalności agentur Kominternu w Polsce (sierpień – wrzesień 1942 r.)’” in *Polska pod okupacją 1939–1945*, vol. 3 (Warsaw, 2019), pp. 237, 248.

<sup>140</sup> T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, pp. 237–238. See also W. Molenda, *Adam, Bilof*, p. 149.

<sup>141</sup> K. Aleksandrowicz, “Wspomnienia ‘Huragana’,” in *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna w latach wojny i okupacji 1939–1945. Księga wspomnień*, vol. 1, ed. E. Hałóń (Warsaw, 1994), pp. 22–24. The unit was formed in 1943. According to the memoirs of Lt. “Huragan,” apart from Poles, it included Russians, Georgians, Italians, French, Austrians and Jews. As part of the unification action, the unit came under the command of the Home Army’s Kozienice District. Major skirmishes with the forces of the German occupier took place in the vicinity of Pionki, Polica and Garbatka. See also J. Aleksandrowicz, *Kartki z dziennika doktora Twardego* (Cracow, 1983), pp. 61, 99; K. Dunin-Wąsowicz, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny*, pp. 166–167; E. Stec, “Polska Partia Socjalistyczna Okręgu Radomskiego w walce z okupantem w latach 1939–1944,” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 1/2 (1983), p. 341; J.D. Zimmerman, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne i Żydzi w czasie II wojny światowej*, trans. M. Macińska, ed. M. Rusiniak-Karwat (Warsaw, 2018), pp. 402–403.

<sup>142</sup> J. Aleksandrowicz, *Kartki z dziennika*, p. 99.

<sup>143</sup> S. Piątkowski, “Oprawcy, prześladowcy, ratownicy,” p. 492; M. Wierzbicki, „Pierwsza Kadrowa” *Inspektoratu Radomskiego AK. Zarys dziejów oddziału partyzanckiego „Cezara” – „Harnasia” – „Marii”* (Pionki, 1994), pp. 151, 159, 179; J.D. Zimmerman, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne*, pp. 402–403.

took the name “Dionizy Czachowski”).<sup>144</sup> It is likely that a group from this unit (which included Jewish partisans) carried out an attack on the railway station in Garbatka in 1943.<sup>145</sup>

Carrying out anti-German operations or undertaking activities against the occupier's orders required great caution and adherence to the rules of conspiracy, especially secrecy. Any shortcomings cost dearly, as the occupation conditions also encompassed activity of German informers watching local communities. On 4 June 1942, in Garbatka (in a forest called Choinka), the Germans killed, for unknown reasons, three Jews.<sup>146</sup> At an unspecified time (June 1941 or August 1942) and in unspecified circumstances, 17-year-old Sura Leizer was raped and murdered.<sup>147</sup>

The Jews from Garbatka were sent, i.e., to forced labour in a factory camp at the gunpowder factory in Pionki. During their work they interacted with Polish workers with whom contact, admittedly, was limited and controlled by Werkschutz guards. There were then “illegal” contacts (transfer of food, trade, exchange of information) between workers of both ethnic groups. These activities were carried out in defiance of German orders, the violation of which was punishable by flogging, arrest or even death.<sup>148</sup> Polish residents of Garbatka also worked at the gunpowder factory in Pionki. Among them was Zofia Dróżdż, who took part in such “illegal” activities alongside her friends:

During the occupation, I was married and had a one-year-old son. My husband was deported by the Germans to forced labour in the Reich. [...] I mostly walked to work, as the trains ran erratically. [...] Joskowa, a Jewish woman from Garbatka, worked with me, as well as Hersiek and Josek, both brothers of Dorcia, my best childhood friend. [...] Her brothers from the Garbatka ghetto were transported with a large group of young Jews to the Pionki ghetto. Dorcia could not be helped because the ghetto was guarded. Working in a gunpowder

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<sup>144</sup> S. Krakowiak, “Żydzi w oddziałach partyzanckich Gwardii Ludowej i Armii Ludowej na Kielecczyźnie,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 65/66 (1968), pp. 65–66.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>146</sup> *Rejestr miejsc i faktów zbrodni popełnionych przez okupanta hitlerowskiego na ziemiach polskich w latach 1939–1945. Województwo radomskie* (Warsaw, 1980), p. 53.

<sup>147</sup> M. Hamela, “Działalność Posterunku Policji w Garbatce Letnisku,” *Moja Garbatka* 3 (2003), p. 6.

<sup>148</sup> S. Piątkowski, “Polacy wobec eksterminacji,” p. 138.

factory, Joskowa turned to me with a request: “Zosia, bring me groats, bread, onions, garlic – we are starving.” I organised help, initiating a circle of trusted people. When we crossed the factory gate, each of us had small portions of food prepared for the Jews, so that they would not be conspicuous, because Ukrainians were standing at the gate, and they applied severe penalties for smuggling. They warned that a court would be assembled for any help given to the Jews. Working with me was Kołakowska, a woman from Poznań deported to Garbatka, who was caught by the Ukrainians at the gatehouse smuggling food to Jews. As punishment, they stuck splinters between her fingers. There were a lot of people from Garbatka working at the factory. As we entered the first gate, insulting words rang in our ears: “Attention: here come the bandits from Garbatka!” After the extermination of the Jews in “Choinka” [after the execution on 12 July 1942 – R.Ś.K.], Joskowa approached me again with a request: “Zosia, pluck and bring me a pine branch from the place where my husband was killed.” I complied with her wish, bringing a broken pine branch from the place of the extermination. She hugged it to her heart and wept heavily.<sup>149</sup>

The establishment of the ghetto drastically reduced the freedom of movement and, above all, of getting food – though it was not impossible.<sup>150</sup> However, one had to be courageous and clever, exploit loopholes in the ghetto system and have good connections with other Garbatka residents. Neighbourly, collegial, friendly or even working relationships between Poles and Jews played a major role. Ryszard Gieruszka recalled:

My father, Władysław Gieruszka, leased a square to the Jews. They built two wooden houses on this lot. Three families lived there: the Aron, the Abuś and the Lejbuś families. They would have been fine had it not been for the war. The Jews were deprived of food rations [...]. They [...] took risks, going out at night, looking for their livelihood. The Blue Police turned a blind eye to this. Even though it was an isolated area, Poles helped the Jews. My parents, Apolonia

<sup>149</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 111. See also S. Piątkowski, “Oprawcy, prześladowcy, ratownicy,” p. 495.

<sup>150</sup> “Byli tu mniejszością,” p. 32: “One could not enter the ghetto, but if one persisted – one could” – a passage from an oral testimony by Marian Baran of 6 June 2003.

and Władysław, were farmers and had a permanent pass with the right to enter their property. My mother intentionally left the cellar with potatoes open so that the Jews could feed themselves. Very brave were Franciszek Maj and Bolesław Michalak from Wygwizdów. They brought food to the ghetto.<sup>151</sup>

Franciszek Maj described how he had business dealings with ghetto residents:

I used to deliver flour to the Jew Aron. He baked bread and sold it. At night, I brought meat, potatoes, groats, whatever I could. At night, because during the day there were lots of German and Polish spies. One time I brought half a cow. I was spotted by a Blue Policeman, Krawczyk. This encounter ended quite happily. The station's commander accepted a "piece of meat" and let Maj go – "nothing bad happened to me, nothing bad happened to the Jews either."<sup>152</sup>

### The Pacification of Garbatka

On the night of July 11 to 12, 1942, Garbatka was encircled by strong German police and army units. Anyone attempting to breach the cordon was shot. Security police officers, organised into special groups, conducted a meticulously planned operation within the village. Garbatka was divided into sectors, and every house with someone on the proscription list was surrounded by the Germans. Thorough searches were conducted multiple times. Detainees, after brief interrogations, were classified into a specific group of "criminals" (marked 1 to 5). For the majority of the detainees, the pacification operation, which lasted for many hours, ended with them being put on a freight train standing at the railway station. The transport was diverted via Radom to Auschwitz concentration camp. A few dozen people remained at the site. They were placed in a school building and subjected to an intensive investigation for many days.

The pacification of Garbatka was conducted in a similar manner both in the sectors inhabited by the Polish population and in the ghetto. According to the official report made after the operation, 297 people (221 Poles and 76 Jews) were arrested.

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<sup>151</sup> M. Dziedzicka, "Holocaust w Garbatce," *Dziennik Radomski*, 25–27 October 1996, p. 10.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

On 12 July 1942, 217 people (141 Poles and 76 Jews) were sent to Auschwitz. The authors of a study on the transports of Poles to Auschwitz wrote that this was “the only instance in the camp’s history where prisoners were arrested in a single village and immediately transported directly to the camp.”<sup>153</sup> At least a dozen people were shot while trying to escape or get through the roundup cordon. In the ghetto and in the nearby “Choinka” forest, the Germans killed dozens of Jews.<sup>154</sup>

Aleksander Barzycki – a pre-war policeman, who served at the Garbatka’s Blue Police station during the German occupation and cooperated with the Home Army intelligence service – wrote in his memoirs:

There were four Gestapo men, two of whom were probably from Godów near Radom (surname Kreutz). They were the ones who carried out the massacre of Jewish families. They went with the gendarmes from house to house in the ghetto and whoever was in the house they killed. In this way, they killed sixty-two people, mostly men, and a few days later – with a shot to the back of the head – they killed two Jewish women and two Jews who were temporarily assigned to maintain order (i. e. to take care of cleaning) in the school building where the hostages arrested by the Nazis were detained. I was among them [i.e. hostages] as well.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> *Księgi pamięci. Transporty Polaków do KL Auschwitz z Radomia i innych miejscowości Kielecczyny 1940–1944*, vol. 2, ed. F. Piper, I. Strzelecka (Warsaw–Oświęcim, 2006), p. 735. On Garbatka pacification see also W. Borodziej, *Terror i polityka*, p. 27, 118–119, 217 (note 210); T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, pp. 120–121; M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 117–119; W. Molenda, *Piekło w raju* (Radom, 1992), pp. 13–17; J. Pawlak, *Pięć lat w szeregach armii podziemnej* (Warszawa, 1967), pp. 39–46; S. Piątkowski, “Pacyfikacja Garbatki,” <https://zapisyterroru.pl/dlibra/context?id=1760-2>, accessed 7 May 2024.

<sup>154</sup> According to S. Piątkowski, “Pacyfikacja Garbatki,” in the ghetto, the Germans killed about thirty and in the woods about sixty Jews, whereas in a publication by T. Domański and A. Jankowski, *Represje niemieckie*, p. 120, the total figure of 59 Jews killed that day in Garbatka is mentioned. The authors also stated that “no fewer than 314 [people], including 238 Poles and 76 Jews,” had been sent to a concentration camp. It should be noted that the authors of the memoirs give a much higher number of persons detained during the pacification, ranging from seven hundred (J. Pawlak, *Pięć lat w szeregach*, p. 39) to over 970 (W. Molenda, *Piekło*, p. 36). The authors of the information, which appeared in the underground *Biuletyn Informacyjny* in July 1942, stated that the pacification in Garbatka was one of the largest operations of this type conducted by the German occupier; they also emphasised that the Anti-Semitic riot was a part of it (“Oblawa w Garbatce,” *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, 30 July 1942, 30 (134) (1942), p. 5; S. Piątkowski, “Prawda w trybach propagandy. Okupacyjne losy regionu świętokrzyskiego w publicystyce ‘Biuletynu Informacyjnego’ Związku Walki Zbrojnej – Armii Krajowej (1940–1945),” *Świętokrzyskie Studia Archiwalno-Histyczne* 6 (2017), p. 151).

<sup>155</sup> A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” p. 50.

The immediate cause of the pacification was the results of an investigation into attacks on military freight trains on the Radom-Dęblin route, which were used to transport food and various supplies for German soldiers on the eastern front. The German investigation established that the assaults were organised between Pionki and Garbatka. Probably in the spring of 1942, a group of informers started observing the inhabitants of Garbatka. As a result, several hundred people were put on proscription lists. Meetings between the informers and representatives of the German police took place in the house of the village leader.<sup>156</sup> The German security police obtained information that the village was the seat of an underground structure, being an “Inspectorate of the Polish Insurgent Union” (*Polski Związek Powstańczy*, PZP), with which police officers from the Garbatka’s Blue Police station were cooperating. It was also suspected that an underground youth organisation was operating in Garbatka.<sup>157</sup> It should be added that at that time Garbatka was indeed the headquarters of the ZWZ-AK’s Kozienice District.

According to the memoirs of Polish authors, it used to be assumed that the train robberies were the work of a group of a dozen or so young people, including school-age youth. One of the inspirers or leaders was supposed to be a Radom secondary school student living in Garbatka named Nalazek. However, the actual leader of the group was probably Stanisław Jezuita. The group had no links with underground organisations operating in the area: ZWZ-AK, *Bataliony Chłopskie* (Peasant Battalions, BCh) or earlier with the *Polska Organizacja Zbrojna* (Polish Armed Organisation). However, railway employees from Pionki and Garbatka co-operated with this group. The son of the commander of the Garbatka police station belonged to the group of attackers; the commander himself, Andrzej Krawczyk, also benefitted from the actions.<sup>158</sup> However, there may have been many more associates, which might have included, for example, those who were involved in hiding or transporting seized materials and then selling them.

Since at least January 1942, the Germans had been investigating train robberies. As a result of interrogations of several individuals detained by gendarmes

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>157</sup> W. Borodziej, *Terror i polityka*, pp. 27, 118–119, 217 (note 210); T. Domański, A. Jankowski, *Reprezje niemieckie*, pp. 120–121.

<sup>158</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 117–118; W. Molenda, *Piekło*, p. 13.

from Zwoleń and surveillance by German informers, including some Poles from Garbatka, many people were identified as acting against the German occupiers, and a threat of compromising the local Home Army structures occurred.<sup>159</sup> The group's exposure by the Germans was facilitated by the nonchalance and disregard for basic secrecy rules, such as the public flaunting of wealth by several robbery participants. The initially random arrests eventually led to the identification of the entire group and the false admissions by some detainees of cooperation with an unidentified underground organisation.<sup>160</sup>

Years later, Captain Władysław Molenda pseud. "Grab" of the AK's Kozienice District command recalled that "the activities of the Jezuita and Nalazek group were widely known," and that the group's leadership, led by "various motives, considered robbing German trains as one of the ways of gaining a livelihood." However, he further stated that "it may have been about sabotage,"<sup>161</sup> and that among those in charge of the underground organisation in the area, consideration was given to the possibility of taking over the initiative to stop the "insane activity" and to control the group "as a disciplined organisation" in order to "direct it to fight effectively against the occupying forces."<sup>162</sup> Conversely, Capt./Mjr Józef Pawlak pseud. "Bartosz," "Brzoza," who commanded the Home Army's Kozienice District from July 1942 to August 1944 after Capt. Adam Bielawski's death during the pacification of Garbatka, wrote in his study on the history of the underground in the Kozienice district during World War II: "The local population and the District's Command responded positively to the daring actions of this group, as they were detrimental to the enemy."<sup>163</sup>

Bronisław Nowaś, one of the organisers of the BCh and the underground agrarian party (Stronnictwo Ludowe, SL) in the Kozienice district, was highly negative in his opinion of the events. In his memoirs, published several decades after the war, he stated:

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<sup>159</sup> K. Solek, "Tragedia Garbatki za okupacji hitlerowskiej w roku 1942," *Wrocławski Tygodnik Katolików* 14 (1979), pp. 5–7.

<sup>160</sup> W. Molenda, *Piekło*, pp. 14–15.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14. Captain Władysław Molenda was the second deputy commander of the AK's Kozienice District, and from May 1944 to January 1945 the head of the District Directorate of Diversion (*Kierownictwo Dywersji*, Kedyw).

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>163</sup> J. Pawlak, *Pięć lat w szeregach*, p. 40.

In Garbatka, underground activity was practised almost openly, and Garbatka was not Stawki, Ursynów, Wilczowola or Wola Klasztorna [villages in Koźienice district – R.Ś.K.], where everyone had lived together since childhood and knew each other inside out. It was a mixed bunch of various local and transient people here – farmers, traders, smugglers, Jews, gypsies, etc. Among the organised there were quite a few reckless and over self-confident people, letting others know that “you know who I am...,” “we won’t allow it,” “we will show,” “we will deal,” etc. This inevitably led to a disaster. Garbatka was a convenient village, everyone went there, and among them, early on, also our organisation [the BCh – R.Ś.K.]. One did not have to wait long for the consequences of this not very prudently conducted action. Garbatka paid a high blood sacrifice for it.<sup>164</sup>

It is difficult to conclude whether the group from Garbatka had contacts or co-operated with the “sabotage-diversion railway group” described by Edward Stec, organised by members of the *Socjalistyczna Organizacja Bojowa* (Socialist Combat Organisation) and *Związek Walki Zbrojnej* (Union of Armed Struggle, ZWZ) from Pionki and other towns near Garbatka. Operations were also carried out on the Pionki-Garbatka railway line, and weapons, ammunition, military equipment, clothing and food were taken from German transports heading eastwards.<sup>165</sup> Nor

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<sup>164</sup> B. Nować, *Wspomnienia z lat wojny i okupacji*, p. 151. Among historians dealing with the history of the underground in the Koźienice District after the outbreak of World War II, Marek Wierzbicki was the most critical of the group’s activity. Describing the behaviour of Garbatka’s inhabitants under the German occupation, he distinguished three categories of attitudes: egoistic-antisocial, adaptive, and civic. He considered the activity of the group attacking German trains as “the most harmful manifestation of the egoistic attitude.” In his view, this activity led to the July 1942 tragedy: “At this point, the questions irresistibly spring to mind: why did local society fail to prevent the reckless assaults that led to the brutal intervention of the occupying forces? Why did the local elite behave passively in this matter? What can explain the lack of reaction of the Home Army underground to the activity of the robbery group? The absence of adequate sources forces one to rely on conjectures, which can be considered research hypotheses that necessitate further verification. It can be assumed that the attacks on German trains generated sympathy [for the robbers], as they objectively harmed the enemy and, albeit to a small but nonetheless significant extent, weakened its military potential. Furthermore, these attacks provided material benefits to a particular, albeit hard to precisely identify, segment of the local community. They enriched not only those directly involved in the robberies but also some railway workers, Blue Policemen, traders, and others who were able to gain additional income, which was of no small importance during those difficult times. However, there seemed to be a lack of restraint and imagination to foresee the likely consequences of this robbery-based activity. Consequently, the ‘sins’ of a few brought misfortune upon Garbatka, affecting many of its inhabitants.” (M. Wierzbicki, “Postawy mieszkańców Garbatki,” pp. 449–450).

<sup>165</sup> E. Stec, “Polska Partia Socjalistyczna Okręgu Radomskiego,” pp. 338–339, 345.

can it be ruled out that it possibly would be the same organisation under which both groups that attacked German trains operated.

In the literature, there are also references – probably unnoticed by contemporary researchers – to the involvement of a group of Jews in “the first half of 1942” in attacks on “German military trains passing through Garbatka towards the Eastern Front.”<sup>166</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the statement following this information that in retaliation “an SS punitive expedition [...] arrested [...] 350 Poles and 75 Jews” who were then “all sent to [Auschwitz],”<sup>167</sup> goes too far and is partly untrue. This thesis is based on the testimony of Mordka Papirblat, a fugitive from the Warsaw Ghetto, detained and deported to Auschwitz during the pacification of Garbatka. However, in the light of the current research, this testimony is not considered a reliable source for describing the pacification action, its causes and all the circumstances.<sup>168</sup>

Nonetheless, it can be argued that the entry of the Germans into the ghetto was not accidental, it was an integral part of the pacification of Garbatka. The Jews killed on the spot or deported to Auschwitz were not accidental victims of German terror, but were singled out, at least in large part, by the German security police. The aim of the repressions was to eliminate those involved in various forms of resistance and to intimidate the entire Jewish community residing in the Garbatka ghetto.<sup>169</sup>

The repressed Jews may have been linked in various ways to the Poles who took part in the assaults. They may have acquired information about the transports or

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<sup>166</sup> A. Rutkowski, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada,” p. 128. According to the author, between 1940 and 1941 on the Dęblin-Radom railway line, “Polish railway workers practised systematic sabotage,” including throwing “large quantities of coal from passing wagons” to the surrounding “Polish and Jewish population.” In connection with this sabotage, “the German gendarmerie conducted numerous searches on Poles and Jews.” (p. 125).

<sup>167</sup> A. Rutkowski, “Martyrologia, walka i zagłada,” p. 128.

<sup>168</sup> See also M. Dean, S. Piątkowski, “Garbatka-Letnisko,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, vol. 2, ed. M. Dean (Bloomington, 2011), p. 221. The authors noted that on 12 July 1942, the German police conducted an anti-partisan retaliation operation, following an attack on a German supply train by forces of the Polish resistance. Daniel Brewing, on the other hand, placed the information on the pacification of Garbatka – which is intriguing in this context – directly before Heinrich Himmler’s statement of 24 May 1944 that “ghettos, however sealed they may have been, were the headquarters of every partisan and band movement” (D. Brewing, *W cieniu Auschwitz. Niemieckie masakry polskiej ludności cywilnej 1939–1945*, trans. R. Dziergwa, Poznań, 2019, pp. 236–237).

<sup>169</sup> In October 1941, there were one thousand and three hundred Jewish people in Garbatka.

hidden the materials they seized and then traded them. It should be remembered that for ghetto inhabitants acquiring food and other necessities was part of the struggle for physical survival.

The activities of the underground community described by Adam Rutkowski on the basis of an anonymous testimony of a Jewish woman who spent five months in the Garbatka ghetto<sup>170</sup> still requires further research. It can be stated that the resistance in the Garbatka ghetto was not the work of individuals, but rather a group effort with organised characteristics, likely involving several dozen people.

### Poles Helping Jews after the Liquidation of the Ghetto

After the pacification of Garbatka and the subsequent liquidation of the ghetto (18 August 1942),<sup>171</sup> several Jews were still hiding in the village.<sup>172</sup> In all known cases, those in hiding obtained one-off or long-term aid of the Polish residents of Garbatka. A notable case is that of Professor Stanisław Ziemecki (formerly Landau), a physicist and university teacher who fled there from Warsaw due to the threat of arrest. After some time, he began tutoring several young people, and Leszek Kołakowski (later a world-famous philosopher), who was living in Garbatka at the time, would go to him for physics and mathematics lessons. In 1943, his wife Anna and his son Stanisław joined the professor, and together they lived in a small house in the resort part of Garbatka.<sup>173</sup>

Stanisław Ziemecki's case is peculiar in that, by tutoring, he could have been "discovered." Did he trust the people around him that much? It is not known whether his background had been recognised and whether anyone was interested.

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<sup>170</sup> Anonymous testimony entitled "Pozdrowienia z prowincji," pp. 321–326.

<sup>171</sup> "Listy, polemiki, opinie," *Dziennik Radomski*, 8–11 November 1996, p. 10; A. Rutkowski, "Martyrologia, walka i zagłada," p. 156; K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 165, 207. The Jews of Garbatka were formed into two columns on 18 August 1942 and marched to Pionki and Zwolen. It is likely that six Jews were killed on this day during the liquidation of the ghetto (while trying to escape?).

<sup>172</sup> E. Bojakowska-Pikul, "Garbatka," pp. 27–29; M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, pp. 109–111; E. Fąfara, *Gehenna ludności żydowskiej* (Warsaw, 1983), p. 542–543; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Matka zostawiała otwartą piwnicę z ziemniakami," *Rzeczpospolita-Plus Minus*, 23–24 March 2019 (supplement: *Nieznane historie. Z dziejów ratowania Żydów pod okupacją niemiecką*), pp. 32–33.

<sup>173</sup> M. Baran, "Pan Profesor. Wspomnienie o prof. dr. Stanisławie Ziemeckim," *Moja Garbatka* 2 (2004), pp. 36–37; Z. Mentzel, *Kołakowski. Czytanie świata. Biografia* (Cracow, 2022), p. 62. Among others, the doctor Janina Pietrusiewicz, Leszek Kołakowski's aunt, helped Professor Stanisław Ziemecki ("Byli tu mniejszością," p. 35).

Perhaps what we have in this case is a “benevolent tolerance for a person trying to hide.”<sup>174</sup>

There were probably more stories like this, as another story testifies:

I knew one of the Jews in hiding from my work at the distillery. At one time a man appeared there, as Zaleski, with a little boy. There were rumours that he was an insurgent from the Warsaw Ghetto. He worked with us for a while; I think he was employed fictitiously. I heard about another one, that he was hiding at Jagodziński's, near the “construction site.”<sup>175</sup>

The abovementioned “construction site” is what the locals referred to as a place in the wooded area of the holiday part of Garbatka, by a stream flowing not far from the first buildings; it is possible that the aforementioned escape route of the Jews from Kozienice passed through this place.

In 1943, a young woman and her two children arrived in Garbatka. According to Zbigniew Karpala, this occurred “after the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.” Stanisława Denkiewicz “brought three people to our house.” Shortly thereafter, Zbigniew Karpala’s mother obtained “fictitious baptismal certificates for the names Lucjan and Edward Rakoczy” from the parish priest, Father Józef Kuropieska (the previous parish priest, Father Wincenty Wojtaśkiewicz, had died in Auschwitz). The boys, aged 5 and 7, and their mother lived with the Karpalas until January 1945. “I heard from the mother of these boys in 1968. As a gift, she gave my mother a gold chain with a cross and the inscription ‘Jeruzalem’. At that time, they lived in Israel, in Haifa,” Zbigniew Karpala concludes his memoirs.<sup>176</sup>

The same Jewish family was helped by Jan Krekora from Garbatka. In Eugeniusz Fąfara’s book outlining the fate of Jews under the German occupation, a letter sent many years later from Israel to Jan Krekora, one of the carers of the rescued family, is cited as follows:

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<sup>174</sup> M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bezludna wyspa*, p. 66.

<sup>175</sup> *Z pamięci Ojca*, p. 4.

<sup>176</sup> Z. Karpala, “Pamiętna noc 12 lipca 1942 r. w Garbatce. Wspomnienia o ojcu,” *Moja Garbatka* 2 (2004), pp. 11–12.

One such spot, where fate tossed me at the cruellest of times, was Garbatka. It left memories that cannot be erased. Knowing no one, helpless, with two children, relying solely on instinct, I was unable to even keep my secret. And yet I survived. I know how much I owe to people like Mrs. Karpala, with whom I had a kind of a second home: the lady who made it possible for me to exist, even though it entailed risk, and many other people who tried to help me selflessly. It was a source of great moral support for me at that time, when you let me in as if I were like everyone else.<sup>177</sup>

In 1943, for a few months, under the protection of the priests and “under the care of Mrs Łaganowska,” a young Jewish woman, Nina Wilczyńska, lived in the vicarage. She later hid “at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Kądzierski”<sup>178</sup> (Kędzierski?).

Other recollections from Polish residents indicate that several more Garbatka Jews survived the German occupation. The survivors included Icek Manys, who was supposed to serve in the “Jewish guard” in Pionki, and Brejtman, “the best tailor in Garbatka.” There was also a Jewish woman who survived (no further details are available; she was an acquaintance of Ryszard Gieruszka’s family), who “miraculously managed to escape from the ghetto.” She reportedly hid with Polish acquaintances until the end of the German occupation, and then left for Łódź.<sup>179</sup> In the villa “Piotrówka” (in the resort part of Garbatka), the Hornberger family hid a Jewish woman named Pawłowska until the end of the occupation (she came from “Choinki,” the central part of Garbatka).<sup>180</sup> A Jew whom Polish acquaintances nicknamed Kapusta (“Cabbage”) survived Auschwitz. His father was a shoemaker. He returned to Garbatka and lived there for some time. In 1945 or 1946, he left

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<sup>177</sup> E. Fąfara, *Gehenna*, pp. 542–543.

<sup>178</sup> E. Bojakowska-Pikul, “Garbatka,” p. 30.

<sup>179</sup> M. Dziedzicka, “Holocaust,” p. 10. Cf. M. Baran, “Obrazek z dzieciennych lat. Ułani w Garbatce,” *Moja Garbatka 2* (2006), p. 125: “Two neighbours, my older friends, served in the cavalry in Vilnius before the war: Antoni Bachanek and Icek Cymerman, called Manes, because that was his father’s name. [...] Icek survived the camp [...] in Pionki and then [Auschwitz], returned to Garbatka for a short time after the war and immediately emigrated to Palestine. He lived in Jerusalem, where he was a magistrate’s official. He had a son and a daughter. [...] But until the end he corresponded with Antoni Bachanek, a friend from his childhood and cavalry service years.”

<sup>180</sup> “Byli tu mniejszością,” p. 35 – from the letter of Irena Kordyasz-Bojanowska to Elżbieta Dziedzicka, Wrocław, 14 March 2001.

for Cracow, and later for Vienna.<sup>181</sup> A young Jewish boy, Fuks, who had previously lived in the centre of Garbatka, also returned from Auschwitz (his father was a watchmaker and was killed on 12 July 1942 during the pacification). He did not visit his hometown until many years later, already as a Belgian citizen.<sup>182</sup> There is also a mention of Lola Manys being in hiding (she married Ajzyk Flamenbaum), but she probably did not live to see the end of the German occupation.<sup>183</sup>

Estera Flamenbaum (daughter of the shoemaker Symucha Flamenbaum) hid with Aleksander Barzycki for a few days, then moved on “with her siblings to Pionki.” After the war, she personally thanked Barzycki for the help he had given her. The second Jewish woman (who was supposed to be Estera’s cousin), who hid at his place for several dozen days in the late autumn of 1944 (from 4 November to 14 December), left a less glorious record in the memory of this Garbatka resident. Before leaving, she robbed him (took his “most valuable” items). “I found her in Jedlnia in one of the three houses as you approach Jedlnia on the left side of the railway track,” Barzycki wrote in his diary, “I took back only part of [the stolen items] and donated the rest. [...] in Jedlnia, after me, she robbed some teacher.”<sup>184</sup> In another place of his account, he noted: “she survived the war.”<sup>185</sup>

There is also talk among Garbatka residents of an unsuccessful escape into the forest by a Jew in July 1942 (is this about the pacification of 12 July 1942?). He was

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<sup>181</sup> “Byli tu mniejszością,” pp. 32–33.

<sup>182</sup> M. Dziedzicka, “Holocaust,” p. 10.

<sup>183</sup> M. Dziedzicka, *Kronika*, p. 110.

<sup>184</sup> A. Barzycki, “Pamiętnik,” pp. 45, 50. It seems that such situations – in the time of the brutal and cruel Anti-Semitic action – occurred more frequently. Various records from the occupation era contribute to such a picture. However, the accounts of the people, who acted like that, trying to survive the Holocaust, are extremely unique. In the moving letter of a young Jewess, written in the winter of 1942 to the family in Wodzisław (Jędrzejów district) which was robbed by her, she explains: “Dear Ladies and Gentlemen! I do not know if you ever forgive me for my hideous deed, but fate forced me to do what I did. I am an Israelite and I am pursued like a wild animal, I resort to lies, deceit and meanness, I steal in order to survive this terrible war, I want to live because I am young, I want to live, but will I survive when so many of my brothers have already died and are dying constantly? I am not sure of a single day or hour of my life. At the moment I am writing this letter, I am already far away from you, I am fleeing to the border, if I survive this hell of war, I will make up to you for the wrongs you have suffered because of me. I am very, very unhappy, and my unhappiness is due to the fact that my mother gave birth to me as a Jewess. I thank you for all the good things you have done and I am very sorry. I hope you survive the war and... that you won't have to hide like I have to.” As cited in: Z. Jezierska-Koźlicka, “Nieznajoma,” *Przyjaciel Wodzisławia* 27 (2010), p. 124.

<sup>185</sup> A. Barzycki, „Pamiętnik,” p. 58.

reportedly shot where there is now a “chapel in the birch alley behind the ‘Polanka’ reservoir” (a place on the outskirts of the forest near the holiday part of Garbatka).<sup>186</sup> At the end of September 1942 (probably on 23 September<sup>187</sup>), transports of Jews from the Zwolen ghetto (and from Pionki?) were sent from the railway station in Garbatka to Treblinka. Adolf Śmietanka recalled: “When the Jews were going to the transport, the people in Garbatka, above all women, gave them water and food. This was done in secret, because the Germans did not allow it.”<sup>188</sup>

Garbatka was the site where various attitudes of Poles towards Jews during the German occupation were observed. Aid in supplying food and medicines to the Jewish quarter, hiding fugitives from the Garbatka ghetto and other localities (sources contain descriptions or references to a dozen cases of long-term hiding or helping) as well as cooperation in political and diversion operations. Hostile behaviour towards the Jews, caused primarily by the German occupier policy, was also present. It is likely that several dozen people who were already known for their prejudice and dislike of Jews before 1939 took part in these activities.

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<sup>186</sup> “Byli tu mniejszością,” p. 34.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> *Z pamięci Ojca*, p. 1. Bronisław Nować, who witnessed the march of the Jews from Zwolen, could not understand their passive attitude in the face of the dramatic events: “They marched down the road from Zwolen to Garbatka (17 km) in groups of about three hundred people. Usually such a group was escorted by five – six black-uniformed Ukrainians or maybe Latvians and a few Jewish militiamen. The whole route after the group had passed was covered with corpses. Every few dozen metres, the soldiers would drag their chosen victims out of the line, lay them on the ground on their faces and shoot them in the back of the head. They did this slowly, unhurriedly repeating the gun, pulling the trigger while the victims waited for their bullet. They did everything in front of the group. It was puzzling. Three hundred convicts against six soldiers. No one managed to show even a hint of despair, no one tried to save themselves by running away. They died on a mass scale, they died without resistance. One day, I was riding my bicycle from Wilczowola to Zwolen, 8 kilometres away, and I counted thirty-seven corpses on that route, in [groups of] three or four of them in roadside ditches. I thought to myself: why don’t these people, knowing after all that they are going to perdition, lash out at their tormentors and claw at them? The transports passed through Strykowice Górne, Wilczowola, Policzna and Garbatka, from which villages it was not far to the forests. Garbatka is situated in a forest. So why did they not overpower the murderers and try to escape in between the buildings and from there into the fields and forests, as far away from the routes as possible? After all, I myself – certainly under different circumstances – tried to escape from a transport of prisoners of war [in 1939 – R.Ś.K.]. [...] There were, after all, cases where our soldiers tried to escape from under the bullets of the firing squads, and some succeeded.” (B. Nować, *Wspomnienia z lat wojny i okupacji*, pp. 100–101). However, the author of these recollections may be mistaken in his assessments. He probably did not spend all his time watching the road from Zwolen to Garbatka and did not witness all the events. Despite his claims, the number of deaths may indicate the number of attempts at resistance or escape.

## Conclusion

The German occupiers failed to fully isolate the Jewish residents of Garbatka from their Polish neighbours. They also did not succeed in paralysing the spirit of struggle and resistance. Jewish resistance, both of individuals and groups, took the form of a variety of ventures that broke occupation laws, from smuggling food (and other necessities), preparing hiding places and obtaining false documents (e.g. baptismal etc. church certificates), up to participating in sabotage and diversionary operations. Some activities, such as participating in “illegal” political activities or taking part in attacks on German trains, went beyond the priority fight for physical survival. Manifesting patriotic attitudes together with the Polish inhabitants of Garbatka was an expression of great civil courage. Even greater courage was required to participate, even indirectly, in sabotage actions on the railways (robbery of German military supplies). The latter activities are unusual and distinguish the Jews of Garbatka against the background of other known forms of resistance of the Jews in the Radom district under the German occupation. On the other hand, taking advantage of the opportunity to bribe officials of the occupation administration (including Blue Policemen), despite its moral ambiguity, was a common practice in the ghettos. This allowed individuals to better prepare themselves for unexpected German repressions.

The current state of research does not allow to precisely determine the extent of the Jews’ involvement in various forms of anti-German resistance in Garbatka. However, it is estimated that several dozen Jews consciously and actively participated. They do not appear to have formed a local survival group, but individual participation in Polish partisan activities cannot be ruled out. Hiding was a common form of resistance, as well as using temporary hiding places (either personally prepared or encountered by chance), receiving one-off help from acquaintances or strangers, and often getting long-term aid provided by Polish residents of Garbatka. Many instances of resistance likely went undocumented, with only difficult-to-verify references remaining.

The involvement of Garbatka’s residents in “illegal” activities did not avoid the attention of the German security police. Garbatka was recognised as a centre for the organisation of resistance and secret activity, and for the collaboration of Jews and Poles. Surveillance by German agents and Polish local collaborators led to the

brutal pacification of the entire village. Among those murdered and deported to Auschwitz were probably the most active members of the Jewish community of Garbatka. The collected material allows us to hypothesize the existence in Garbatka before the pacification of a group of conspiring Jews with left-wing (communist?) views and collaborating with local Poles having similar views.<sup>189</sup> Arguably, pre-war contacts and political sympathies played a major role.

Neither the Poles nor the Jews in Garbatka were prepared for such a large-scale repressive operation as was carried out on 12 July 1942. In addition to disregarding the warnings of the Home Army intelligence service, carelessness and disregard for the basic rules of secret activity were also evident.<sup>190</sup> This led to the tragedy of hundreds of Garbatka residents. It was only after many months that a Home Army task group captured most of the informers. They were led to a forester's lodge in the village of Śmietanki (between Garbatka and Kozienice) and subjected to "examinations" there. They were all sentenced to death; "they were hanged – one hung the other." The sentence was carried out in the forest "between Garbatka and the road to Leśna Rzeka and Molendy." The traitor (the village headman) was not apprehended at the time, but after a provocation involving planting of deliberately stolen goods as evidence objects and the sending of an "anonymous letter," he was arrested by the Germans and taken to Auschwitz. There – as we read in the testimony – he was probably "finished off by prisoners from Garbatka."<sup>191</sup>

Did the pacification in July 1942 thwart the possibility of survival for a larger group of Jewish residents of Garbatka? Did Garbatka have a chance to become a base of secret activity, survival groups or combat groups for the local Jews? This is something we will never know. The terrain conditions, the tradition of resistance and the leftist influence would have been conducive to this.<sup>192</sup> Perhaps the tragedy in Garbatka harmed the activities undertaken in other localities. Fear may have

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<sup>189</sup> See the program catchwords of the PPS (including those of the socialist left), in J. Tomicki, *Lewica socjalistyczna w Polsce 1918–1939* (Warsaw, 1982), pp. 291, 305, 400, 406–408.

<sup>190</sup> W. Molenda, *Adam, Bilof*, pp. 68–69.

<sup>191</sup> A. Barzycki, "Pamiętnik," p. 56.

<sup>192</sup> J. Lachtara, "Z działalności Gwardii i Armii Ludowej w powiecie Kozienice w latach 1942–1944," *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 3 (1988), pp. 221–222; K. Styś, "Zwycięstwo będzie Twoją nagrodą..." in *Szkice z dziejów Pionek*, vol. 2: *Miasto i region*, ed. S. Piątkowski, M. Wierzbicki (Pionki, 2001), pp. 204–205, 215–216, 218, 220–221, 225.

paralysed bold plans for cooperation between Poles and Jews in the nearby local communities. It is worth mentioning a document published by Alina Skibińska concerning an unusual event in Gniewoszków at the beginning of May 1942. In the local synagogue, Poles and Jews met “covertly” to discuss the possibilities of engaging Jews in “diversion” activities in cooperation with the Polish underground, as well as the possibilities of hiding with the help of Poles.<sup>193</sup>

In towns lying not far from Garbatka (Gniewoszków, Kozienice, Pionki, Zwolen), the most common manifestation of Jewish resistance was escapes from the ghettos and obtaining food on the “Aryan side.” The escapees usually tried to hide at the homes of their Polish acquaintances; sometimes they used hiding places and bunkers built in the woods. When obtaining food and forged documents, aid from the Poles was essential.<sup>194</sup> According to Adolf Misiuna, a member of the Pionki AK structures, there was a ten-member Jewish resistance group consisting of seven men and three women in the Pionki factory camp. On the premises of the gunpowder factory, they collaborated with AK soldiers. Some members of the group possessed “revolvers and 50 rounds of ammunition each.”<sup>195</sup> Krzysztof Urbański is of the opinion that this group belonged to the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Combat Organisation, ŻOB), and fled to the forest during the liquidation of the camp in 1944.<sup>196</sup> Near Pionki, in the Kozienice Forest, there was also another group of armed Jews. Little is known about its activities.<sup>197</sup> However, there’s a known case of several escapees from a forced labour camp in Pionki, who joined the unit of Lt. Kazimierz Aleksandrowicz “Huragan.”<sup>198</sup> Further away south from Garbatka, in

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<sup>193</sup> A. Skibińska, “Życie codzienne Żydów w Kozienicach pod okupacją niemiecką,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 3 (2007), pp. 84–85.

<sup>194</sup> Minutes of the interview with ‘the witness Bolesław Paciorek regarding the aid he provided to Lipa Winnykamień, Frederick Weinstein and other persons of Jewish nationality in Gniewoszków (Sarnów municipality, Radom District), Radom, 8 April 1970, in *Relacje o pomocy*, vol. 4, p. 95–97; G. Berendt, “Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po ‘aryjskiej stronie,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), pp. 122, 131; B. Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień*, pp. 123, 176, 201; *Relacje o pomocy*, vol. 4, pp. 50, 67–68, 70–71, 170–175; S. Piątkowski, “Oprawcy, prześladowcy, ratownicy,” p. 495.

<sup>195</sup> A. Misiuna, “Pionki w latach II wojny światowej – wspomnienia,” in *Szkice z dziejów Pionek*, vol. 1, ed. M. Wierzbicki (Pionki, 2000), pp. 199, 202–203. The author also mentions several Jews who survived the German occupation by hiding in Pionki and the surrounding area.

<sup>196</sup> K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 210.

<sup>197</sup> S. Piątkowski, “Oprawcy, prześladowcy, ratownicy,” p. 492.

<sup>198</sup> J.D. Zimmerman, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne*, pp. 402–403.

the forests of Iłża in 1942, an armed group of Jewish fugitives from Iłża, Kazanów, Ostrowiec, Sienna and Szydłowiec was active.<sup>199</sup> Another “independent group of Jews” operated until mid-January 1945 in the forests near Szydłowiec.<sup>200</sup>

It seems that after the pacification in July 1942 and the murder of a group of the most active people, the majority of the Jews residing in the Garbatka ghetto took a passive attitude towards the German plans, including the deportation operation. During this time, adaptation was the primary tactic to follow in the hope of survival.

It should be remembered that the residents of Garbatka and the surrounding area still lived in an atmosphere of the occupation-era terror. Between 1943 and 1944, German gendarmes and soldiers killed more than three hundred people from villages in an approximately twenty kilometres radius from Garbatka. In the municipality of Policzna, to which Garbatka belonged, several dozen people were killed as a result of pacifications and executions, including in Molendy, where on 22 July 1943 and 7 April 1944, Germans killed thirty people.<sup>201</sup>

In Policzna alone, on 12 June 1943, German gendarmes killed thirty two of its inhabitants, including “four families with children and old people.” In addition, four young men, who were probably hiding from being sent to forced labour in the Baudienst (Construction Service, German-organised compulsory service for Polish youth),<sup>202</sup> were arrested and sent to Auschwitz. From time to time, German manhunts combed the forests of the Kozienice Forest in search of partisans.<sup>203</sup>

Following the pacification, despite the dire circumstances and the constant threat of death, several Jews went into hiding in Garbatka with the assistance of Poles. They survived until the end of the German occupation.

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<sup>199</sup> K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 210.

<sup>200</sup> S. Piątkowski, “Żydzi w Szydłowcu,” p. 131. Piątkowski does not rule out the existence of an underground organisation in the Szydłowiec ghetto and the possession of weapons by dozens of Jews (p. 129).

<sup>201</sup> *Rejestr miejsc i faktów zbrodni*, pp. 14, 26, 28–29, 52–54, 60, 70, 74, 87–89, 112, 118, 129–130, 140, 190, 192–193, 196–197.

<sup>202</sup> E. Gajda, “Krwawy dzień w Policznie,” in *Zbrodnie hitlerowskie na wsi polskiej w latach 1939–1945. Wspomnienia, pamiętniki i relacje*, ed. S. Durlej, J. Gmitruk (Kielce–Warsaw, 2008), pp. 80–81. For more, see M. Wróblewski, *Śłużba Budowlana (Baudienst) w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1940–1945* (Warsaw, 1984).

<sup>203</sup> J. Abramczyk, *Partyzanci z Kozienickiej Puszczy*, pp. 137–138.

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## SUMMARY

The article aims to present the attitudes and behaviour of the Jewish inhabitants of Garbatka towards the German occupier, particularly the attitudes of resistance. The conditions set by the occupation-era reality and Polish-Jewish relations are discussed. Jewish resistance, both of individuals and groups, took the form of a variety of ventures that broke the German occupation laws, from smuggling food (and other necessities), preparing hideouts and obtaining forged documents (e.g. baptismal etc. other church certificates) to participation in sabotage and diversion actions. Some activities, such as participating in “illegal” political actions or taking part in attacks on German trains, went beyond the priority fight for physical survival. Manifesting patriotic attitudes together with the Polish inhabitants of Garbatka was an expression of great civil courage. Even greater courage was required for participation, even indirectly, in sabotage actions on the railways (robbery of German army property). These latter activities distinguish the attitude of the Jews of Garbatka from other known forms of resistance of the Jews in the Radom District during the German occupation. The current state of research does not enable determining the exact scale of the involvement of Jews of Garbatka in various forms of anti-German resistance. However, it can be assumed that several dozen Jews took part in resistance consciously and actively. They do not seem to have formed a local survival group, but the participation of individu-

als in the Polish partisan movement cannot be ruled out. The records researched allows us to hypothesise the existence in Garbatka before the pacification of the village on 12 July 1942 of a community of Jewish secret activists with left-wing (communist?) views, who collaborated with local Poles with similar views. Pre-war contacts and political sympathies probably played a major role. After the pacification and killing of the most active individuals, the majority of the Jews in the ghetto adopted a passive attitude towards the German plans. During this time, adaptation was the primary tactic to follow in the hope of survival.

By showing the relationship between Jews and Poles in the context of the dramatic experiences of World War II, this article seeks to broaden the knowledge of Garbatka's recent history and thereby contribute to the development of research on the history of local communities under the German occupation.

#### KEYWORDS

World War II • Garbatka • ghetto in Garbatka • resistance of Jews •  
German repressions • Polish-Jewish relations • Jews in hiding