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THE INVOLVEMENT OF POLICE FORCES IN THE PERSECUTION AND EXTERMINATION OF JEWS IN TARŁÓW BETWEEN 1939 AND 1944

Summary

The article examines the role of police units established by the German occupying authorities in the surveillance, persecution, and extermination of the Jewish population in Tarłów, a village located in the Radom District of the General Governorate. The text presents biographical information on members of German, Polish, and Jewish police formations. Their actions targeted 1,500–1,700 Jews residing in Tarłów, approximately 500–700 Jews resettled there between October 1939 and September 1942 under the German policy of persecution, and an additional 5,000 Jews from neighbouring towns who were concentrated in Tarłów during September and October 1942. On 19 October 1942, around 7,000 Jews confined in the Tarłów ghetto were deported to the Treblinka II extermination camp, where they were subsequently murdered.

Keywords

Tarłów • Holocaust • police • collaboration

In the Second Polish Republic, Jewish religious communities operated in roughly 800 cities, towns, and settlements, encompassing populations that ranged from several hundred to several hundred thousand. The German occupying authorities did not establish ghettos in all of these places. Of the several hundred ghettos, only a relatively small number have been studied in detail. The dramatic events that unfolded in Warsaw, Cracow, Lwów, Łódź, Wilno, and other voivodeship and county towns have been the subject of extensive research and description. For most ghettos, however, such work has not been undertaken. I believe it is time to gather information about them, which is why I have written the following article on Tarłów.

Basic information on the fate of Jews in Tarłów during the war can be found in encyclopaedia entries published by the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. These entries, however, are necessarily brief. Yet historical sources survive that allow for a fuller reconstruction of the experiences of Tarłów's Jewish community under German occupation in World War II. Among these are the files from investigations and trials concerning occupation police officers active in the municipality of Tarłów. These officers were the principal executors of German occupation policy and the most visible representatives of authority to the local population, both Catholic and Jewish. The leading role was assumed by German military police officers, whose orders were implemented by Poles serving in the so-called Blue Police; at the lowest level of the hierarchy stood members of the so-called Jewish police. Although formally subject to German directives, in daily practice their service in Tarłów between 1939 and 1942 was overseen primarily by the Blue Police. This hierarchy of dependence provides the framework for the order in which the individual topics are presented in this article. Unfortunately, the surviving sources do not permit a balanced account of German, Polish, and Jewish police officers. Almost no official documents from the war years concerning Germans have survived. Moreover, those German officers who served in Tarłów and nearby Lipsko, when questioned after the war, offered only sparse recollections – likely out of fear of incriminating themselves. As for the so-called Blue Police, wartime materials include their personal card indexes, which make it possible to trace their service up to December 1941. For those recruited later, records provide information on

their service between 1942 and 1944. We learn a little more from the post-war investigations conducted against several of them. In this article, I deliberately cite extensively from the records of Polish Police officers to make this material more widely known. Were it possible to do the same for the Germans, I would; however, the scarcity and poor preservation of sources in Germany make this impossible. As for the Jewish police, we possess only fragmentary information, drawn from the testimonies of Jewish and Polish witnesses who themselves were not members of that formation.

One of the major challenges in assessing the role of officers from different police formations in the repression and extermination of Jews in Tarłów between 1939 and 1942 is the absence of official documents produced by the occupiers that directly address this issue, combined with the very limited number of post-war accounts and testimonies. As for Polish law enforcement agencies, the fate of the Jews of Tarłów attracted no attention from the Public Security Department, the Citizens' Militia, or the public prosecutor's office until the late 1960s. A telling example is the material on German crimes in Starachowice County, collected in 1948 during the trial of Herbert Bötcher, SS and Police Commander of the Radom District. The report sent to the County Headquarters of the Citizens' Militia by the commander of the Tarłów station refers only to a handful of Polish victims and omits entirely the tragic fate of the Jewish inhabitants, who made up more than 90 per cent of the fatalities in the municipality.¹

This article concentrates on actions directed against the Jewish population and therefore does not address non-Jewish victims of the discriminatory, repressive, and exterminatory measures carried out in the Tarłów municipality. In this regard, their circumstances were no different from those of Polish Christians living in the rural areas of the Radom District.

Tarłów is a village that, during the German occupation of 1939–1945, was part of Starachowice County (formerly Iłża County) in the Radom District, which had been established in October 1939 as part of the General Governorate (*Gen-*

¹ *Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, hereinafter AIPN), *Główna Komisja* (Main Commission, hereinafter GK), 179/79, Materials sent by the Commander of the Citizens' Militia (MO) station in Tarłów to the Citizens' Militia County Headquarters in Starachowice, 30 September 1948, pp. 47–53.

eralgouvernement, GG). In 1936, the municipality had a population of 7,578.² Over one third of it lived in Tarłów.³ A document from April 1942 states that before the outbreak of the war, the local Jewish religious community comprised 1,500 people.⁴ On the eve of the war, the settlement was home to at least a thousand Christians and more than 220 Jewish families, most of whom earned their livelihood through small trades and crafts. Some families were so impoverished that, in the early 1930s, they could not afford to pay contributions to the religious community, which funded community workers, a religious school, and a house of prayer. For four centuries, the village had served as a market centre for a dozen or so neighbouring settlements.

Tarłów suffered relatively little damage during the fighting of the Polish campaign in 1939. The Polish Army offered no resistance to the Wehrmacht, which captured the village on 8 September. Once new rules for local civil administration were established, the occupiers formally recognised the rural municipality of Tarłów (*Landgemeinde Tarlow*).⁵

As a result of German anti-Jewish policies, the lives of most residents changed dramatically and within a short time. The population was subjected to restrictions imposed by the occupiers, though in practice their enforcement appears to have been limited, since no institutions staffed by German officials or officers were present in the village until at least early 1943. Before then, the Germans appeared only sporadically, yet, as sources indicate, they made their presence felt through the brutality typical of occupiers. Probably the most severe repression that the population experienced was inflicted by the police formations.

² *Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach* (State Archives in Kielce, hereinafter APK), *Urząd Wojewódzki Kielecki* (Kielce Voivodeship Office, hereinafter UWK), vol. 5776, Letter from the Municipal Office in Tarłów to the Iłża Starosty in Wierzbnik, 1936, p. 30. The municipality included the following villages and colonies: Ciszycza Dolna, Ciszycza Górna, Ciszycza Kolonia, Ciszycza Przewozowa, Czekarzewice, Dorotka, Helenów, Hermanów, Janów, the colony of Kochanów, Kozłówek, Tarłów, Ściegna, Sulejów, Tomaszów, Wólka Tarłowska, and Zemborzyn Kościelny.

³ The tsarist authorities deprived Tarłów of its municipal rights in 1869. After the rebirth of the Republic of Poland in 1918, the Polish authorities granted it the status of a settlement, which was an intermediate form between a town and a village.

⁴ *Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, hereinafter AŻIH), *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna* (Jewish Social Self-Help) (hereinafter 211), vol. 1014, Statistical information on Jews in Tarłów, 1 April 1942, p. 47.

⁵ *Archiwum Państwowe w Radomiu* (State Archives in Radom, hereinafter APR), 596, vol. 2578, Certificate issued by the mayor of the rural municipality of Tarłów, 6 June 1944, p. 8.

Between 1939 and 1942, the population grew significantly. Within two years, around 700 people – some arriving from distant regions of the country – were added to the existing Jewish population. In October 1939, the Germans began deporting Poles and Jews from territories incorporated into the Reich to the General Governorate, and some of these deportees also settled in Tarłów.⁶ They included former functionaries of the State Police. The settlement also became a refuge for Jews who had fled other towns in search of better living conditions, among them individuals escaping the extreme deprivation of the Warsaw ghetto.

On 12 May 1941, both local and newly arrived Jews were forced into an open ghetto in the centre of the settlement. By 19 December 1941, a ban on leaving this area had been imposed.⁷ Six months later, approximately 2,200 people languished in the ghetto under extreme deprivation.⁸ From August to mid-October 1942, during Operation Reinhardt, which had already been underway for several weeks in the Radom District, approximately 5,000 Jews from neighbouring ghettos were transferred to Tarłów. As a result, the Jewish population of Tarłów rose to about 7,000.

On 19 October 1942, during what the Germans referred to as an “action” (*Aktion*), almost all prisoners of the ghetto were deported and subsequently murdered at the Treblinka II extermination camp. Around 250 people were killed either on the spot or en route to the railway station in Jasice, from which the transport of Jews from Tarłów departed for Treblinka. Their bodies were buried in the Tarłów Jewish cemetery. The burial of the bodies was entrusted to a group of Jewish men, some of whom had previously served in the local Jewish Ghetto Police (*Jüdische Ordnungsdienst*, JOD).⁹ They were also ordered to clear the houses in the former

⁶ A group of Jews from Łódź arrived in the settlement in March 1940, and refugees from Warsaw began to arrive in the first weeks of 1941 (AŻIH, 211, vol. 114, Letter from the Jewish Council in Tarłów to the Jewish Social Self-Help Organisation [Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna, ŻSS] in Cracow, 1 April 1941, p. 1; S. Piątkowski, “Rodzina żydowska w okupowanym Radomiu,” in *Rodzina żydowska 1939–1945. Wybrane zagadnienia*, eds. M. Grądzka-Rejak and K. Zieliński, Warsaw–Cracow, 2024, p. 131).

⁷ AŻIH, 211, vol. 1014, Letter from the ŻSS Delegation in Tarłów to the ŻSS Presiding Committee, 19 December 1941, p. 68; *Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku* (Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk), Testimony of Leokadia Markiewicz, 2 August 2021.

⁸ AŻIH, 211, vol. 1014, Statistical form concerning the ghetto in Tarłów, 1 June 1942, p. 47.

⁹ The photograph, taken during the displacement in Tarłów, depicts men collecting bundles and other items left behind by Jews in the market square. Its author, Władysław Frączak, identified them as members of a Jewish work commando. Seventeen figures are visible, though the image does not capture the entire square. After the war, a German military policeman testified that 20 Jews had been left behind to clean up the market square (*Archiwum Delegatury Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Radomiu* [Archives

ghetto of their contents. On 1 March 1943, the authorities of the General Governorate published population data for individual localities, reporting a total of 9,605 inhabitants in the rural municipality of Tarłów, including 1,504 in the settlement itself.¹⁰ The statistics suggest that in mid-1942, approximately 3,700 Jews and Poles lived in the settlement, and by mid-October of that year, the number may have temporarily risen to as many as 8,700. These individuals were defenceless victims of the German occupation policies, enforced by police formations composed of officers of various nationalities but operating under German regulations and the orders of German commanders.

The Germans

From early 1942 until late July 1944, SS-*Standartenführer* Dr. Herbert Bötcher held command over the occupation police forces in the Radom District. His co-workers were comprised of SS officers with the following names: Wilhelm Blum, Werner Börnemann, Buchmeyer, Otto Burger, Doppler, Martin Geiger, Günewich, Kępke, Kroschell, Kutscha, Nell, Pahlke, Post, Reinke, Rokita, Schekell, Seifert, Schild, Schiper, Veicht, Lothar Wandel, Hermann Weinreich, and Wolf.¹¹ Bötcher's deputy in charge of the Security Police (*Sicherheitspolizei*, Sipo) was SS *Obersturmbannführer* Fritz Lipphardt, and his deputy was Joachim Illmer. The deputies of the Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei*, Orpo) were, in turn, Colonels Wurm, Baehren, and Metzler. Their responsibilities included, among other things, the daily supervision of Jews in the district and the collection of money and valuables taken from those murdered. SS *Sturmführer* Kępke directly commanded an execution squad composed of Ukrainians, which was employed, for example, in shootings in Radom. Bötcher and his subordinates sexually abused Jewish women from the HASAG camp in Skarżysko, who were then murdered.¹²

of the Institute of National Remembrance, Delegation in Radom, hereinafter AIPN Ra], 108/137, vol. 3, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the District Court in Radom, 28 January 1949, p. 98).

¹⁰ *Amtliches Gemeinde- und Dorfverzeichnis für das Generalgouvernement auf Grund Der Summarischen Bevölkerungsbestandsaufnahme am 1. März 1943*, Krakau 1943, p. 66.

¹¹ *Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Kielcach* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Kielce, hereinafter AIPN Ki), 53/610, Minutes of the interrogation of Jur Cynamon, 23 May 1947, p. 199; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Manel, 5 June 1947, p. 218; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Otto Burger, 26 January 1948, p. 327.

¹² AIPN Ki, 53/610, Minutes of the interrogation of Chaim Milchman, 27 May 1947, p. 201.

In his testimony on the extermination of Jews, Böttcher stated, among other things: “[Odilo] Globocnik notified us when the train was ready and how many Jews it was to carry. Globocnik also sent a few sotnyas of Ukrainians to Radom to take care of the evacuation and secure the transport.”¹³ Some Jewish witnesses recalled Böttcher’s presence during anti-Jewish operations, not only in the district capital but also in county towns such as Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski in April 1942.¹⁴

In his testimony of 21 November 1945, Walter Schellenberg, a high-ranking officer in the Berlin Sipo structures, stated that the largest branch of the Security Police was the Secret State Police (*Geheime Staatspolizei*, Gestapo), numbering between 40,000 and 50,000 officers. The Criminal Police (*Kriminalpolizei*, Kripo) comprised about 15,000 officers, while the SS Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst des SS*, SD) had around 3,000.¹⁵ As Schellenberg explained:

In common usage, including in orders and directives, the abbreviation SD was used as a synonym for Sipo and SD [Sipo und SD]. In most cases, operational activities were carried out by members of the Gestapo, not by members of the SD or Kripo. In the occupied territories, Gestapo officers [Leute der Gestapo, Gestapo Leute] often wore SS uniforms with SD insignia.¹⁶

Herbert Böttcher explained the scope of competence of the services under his authority as follows:

The difference between the Gestapo and the SD was that the Gestapo was a state institution, a special type of state police, and its officers were civil servants. It had executive powers. The SD, on the other hand, was a party cell whose members were not civil servants but members of the NSDAP, most of whom also belonged to the SS. The task of this organisation was to observe all manifestations of political life and to collect information. Not all members of the Gestapo were

¹³ AIPN Ki, 53/610, Minutes of the interrogation of Herbert Böttcher, 3 September 1947, pp. 226, 226b.

¹⁴ AIPN Ki, 53/610, Minutes of the interrogation of Aron Frydenthal, 16 February 1948, p. 362.

¹⁵ *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, vol. 31, Nürnberg, 1948, p. 498.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

SS men, although all Gestapo officers wore uniforms in Poland. Those who were not members of the SS wore SS uniforms because of a special decree. Gestapo officers who belonged to the SS also belonged to the SD. The SD kept its finger on the pulse of state life and was interested in all its manifestations.¹⁷

Comments on uniforms made by both Nazis shed light on why Polish and Jewish witnesses often gave imprecise identifications of the institutional affiliations of the perpetrators of German Nazi crimes after the war. Wilhelm Josef Blum was the main organiser of the extermination of Jews in the Radom District. He arrived in Radom on 1 August 1942. After consultations with local German police chiefs, a deportation schedule was established for individual counties and towns. The first deportation took place in Radom on 5 August.¹⁸ At 8 p.m. the previous day, German police units and an askari unit were assembled, while Blue Police officers and members of the Radom ghetto police were mobilised. Powerful searchlights were installed to illuminate the first section of the ghetto designated for deportation. On 5 August, at 10 p.m., the expulsion of people from their homes began. They were led in columns to the railway station and forced into the waiting goods wagons. These activities continued throughout the night.

SSHauptsturmführer Adolf Gottfried Feucht,¹⁹ head of Subsection IVB – the so-called Jewish Subsection – at the Radom Sipo headquarters, was responsible for the deportation of Jews from the Radom District, including those from smaller towns. Under his command were twelve police officers, who formed the core of the deportation commando.²⁰ It is assumed that they primarily acted as

¹⁷ AIPN Ki, 53/610, Minutes of the interrogation of Herbert Böttcher, 27 February 1948, p. 405b.

¹⁸ K. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim*, Cracow, 2004, pp. 161–162; S. Piątkowski, *Dni życia, dni śmierci. Ludność żydowska w Radomiu w latach 1918–1950*, Warsaw, 2006, p. 219; J.A. Młynarczyk, *Judenmord in Zentralpolen. Der Distrikt Radom im Generalgouvernement 1939–1945*, Darmstadt, 2007, p. 255.

¹⁹ Adolf Gottfried Feucht (born on 7 May 1909, Mannheim) headed the Sipo in Częstochowa in 1940–1941, then served in Radom. In 1944, he was involved in suppressing the Warsaw Uprising. He is thought to have died on 8 May 1945 in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia (J.A. Młynarczyk, *Judenmord in Zentralpolen*, p. 255).

²⁰ This is the number of the Sonderkommando members given by Christopher R. Browning in his work *Pamięć przetrwania. Nazistowski obóz pracy oczami więźniów* (trans. Hanna Pustuła-Lewicka, Wołowiec, 2012, p. 108). However, Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, in his book *Judenmord in Zentralpolen* (p. 255), cites witness statements suggesting that the Sonderkommando (SK) may have numbered between 15 and 30 members. Herbert Böttcher confirmed that Feucht was head of the Jewish Affairs Sub-

consultants, instructing local Sipo and military police officers on how to organise the deportations to ensure maximum efficiency from the German perspective. Because many other deportations coincided with the Tarłów operation (19 October) – such as those in Ostrowiec (11–12 October), Siemno (15 October), Chotcza Nowa (17 October), Połaniec (18 October), Piotrków (14–20 October), Opatów (20 October), and Iłża (22 October) – it is difficult to identify the direct perpetrators of the Tarłów events by name. The first historian to analyse the course of events throughout the district formulated a thesis that a single commando unit was involved, which operated successively in successive counties, which explains why the entire operation lasted from early August to early November 1942.²¹ This would mean that a Sonderkommando of about one hundred people carried out the deportation of over 350,000 people. This is impossible, especially since the dates of some of the operations indicate they occurred simultaneously. Regardless of these issues, we still do not know for certain who was in command in individual localities and who was directly subordinate to these commanders. A former military policeman from Lipsko testified that the deportations from Chotcza, Ciepeliów and Solec were carried out by a military police unit from Starachowice under the command of a captain named Trommer.²²

After being dragged from their homes, people were gathered in the square, held under guard until dawn, and subsequently forced through rural areas to railway stations. Devices powered by electricity aided the perpetrators in individual localities, yet they could not be employed to control the mass of people driven along country roads, often through forests. Unlike earlier operations to concentrate Jews in ghettos, these marches were marked by horrific brutality and a bloody response to any form of resistance – even to delays in the column caused unintentionally. Polish horse-drawn cart drivers recalled traumatic experiences of transporting elderly people and women with small children to stations under German orders. The train convoys departing from the Radom District were prepared in a particular

section at the Sipo headquarters in the Radom District (AIPN Ki, 53/610, Minutes of the interrogation of Herbert Böttcher, 27 February 1948, p. 405b).

²¹ A. Rutkowski, "Martyrologia, walka i zagłada ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie radomskim podczas okupacji hitlerowskiej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 3/4 (1955), p. 135.

²² AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the District Court in Radom, 28 January 1949, p. 95.

way: the floors of the carriages were covered with a thick layer of lime for sanitary purposes.²³ Around 100–150 people were forced into each wagon, where they suffocated from lime dust and died from overcrowding and thirst, especially as the trains often stood for days at railway stations. The exhausted victims had no strength to rebel or flee. This may have been among the measures Wilhelm Krüger, head of the police in the General Governorate, alluded to when, on 18 June 1942, he told Hans Frank that the deportations were prepared “down to the smallest detail.”²⁴ In any event, the transport from Tarłów to the Treblinka II extermination camp was carried out in this manner.

The darkest chapter in the history of the Jews of Tarłów unfolded on 19 October 1942, when an operational unit of the Security Police carried out the aforementioned deportation of ghetto prisoners to the Treblinka II extermination camp. We do not know who commanded this operation on site, who his direct subordinates were, or to which Sipo unit they belonged. We also do not know the size of the auxiliary unit that performed guard and convoy duties and killed those who resisted on the spot. These armed men were sometimes referred to as askaris – a term originally used for colonial soldiers of the Second Reich before 1918, drawn from the indigenous population but commanded by Germans. Reportedly, the unit sent to Radom at the disposal of the Sipo numbered 140 men and was led by SS Untersturmführer Erich Kapke.²⁵ During such operations, it was common practice to employ officers from the local or nearest German military police stations, together with the Blue Police under their authority – referred to in German documents as the “Polish Police” (*polnische Polizei*). One resident recalled that on 17 October 1942, a unit in Tarłów was composed of Latvians, some of whom had attended Polish schools in the north-eastern borderlands before the war.²⁶

²³ By using lime, the Germans wanted to minimise the risk of infectious diseases being transmitted in the wagons.

²⁴ Minutes of the police meeting on the state of security in the General Governorate and the relationship between the administration and the police in connection with the establishment of the State Secretariat for Security, 18 June 1942, in *Okupacja i ruch oporu w dzienniku Hansa Franka 1939–1945*, vol. 1: 1939–1942, Warsaw, 1972, p. 484.

²⁵ J.A. Młynarczyk, *Judenmord in Zentralpolen*, p. 256; D. Libionka and J. Leociak, “75. rocznica akcji „Reinhardt” Zagłada Żydów. *Studia i Materiały* 13 (2017), p. 34.

²⁶ Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk, Testimony no. 483 of Anna Kołsuta née Tomalska (born on 12 October 1929), recorded in Tarłów on 5 August 2021.

In most of the photographs from the deportation in Tarłów, two types of uniforms are visible. The first are military police officers, wearing long coats with dark collars. Some carry rifles slung over their shoulders or backs, while the wide buckles of their belts are prominent at the waist. Several also wear holsters with handguns. The slit at the back of the coat ends in a ribbing decorated with two large, shiny metal buttons. The gendarmes wear lightcoloured peaked caps. One of them – an officer or non-commissioned officer in a peaked cap – stands beside a column of Jews waiting in the market square to be led out of the settlement. At the centre, standing separate from the others, is a uniformed man in an officer's cap with a dark rim, dressed in a long, lightcoloured, possibly leather coat and officer's boots with uppers. In the photograph taken in Tarłów, a man watches a column of several hundred men lined up along the main road of the settlement. Behind them, six uniformed men block the road, preventing retreat, with two cars parked nearby. Just beyond, another group of similar figures stands at the roadside, though their identities cannot be discerned. A subsequent photograph depicts a lorry with a tarpaulin-covered load area.

Next to the Germans, we see members of the auxiliary unit in slightly different uniforms. They also wear long coats and forage caps, both made of the same fabric in the same colour. They all have rifles, as well as haversacks and canteens hanging from their belts. In one of the photographs, a long column of men is lined up on the main road crossing the market square. Next to them, on both sides, every few dozen steps, there are askaris. There are no armed men with submachine guns, nor any machine gun positions, in the photos. In the foreground, we see a group of several dozen women and children, next to whom there are three gendarmes and four askaris bustling about. One gendarme is looking through a woman's bundle, while another, together with an askari, is holding a bag or pillowcase into which they are collecting money and jewellery.

The Germans also summoned members of the Volunteer Fire Brigade, subordinate to the German police, to carry out their orders. At least two of them appear in one of the photographs. They can be recognised by their firefighter caps with a leather lacquered visor. One of these firefighters, wearing his official headgear, can also be seen in a photograph taken in completely different circumstances, namely during the forced requisition of horses for the Germans, organised in front

of the Volunteer Fire Brigade station in the market square. Like the police officer, he assists during an operation carried out by civilian officials and a German in the uniform of an officer or non-commissioned officer of the military police.

It should be added that some Jews, sensing or simply knowing what the so-called resettlement actually meant, decided to hide from their persecutors. We do not know how many such people there were in Tarłów. The information we have indicates that there were at least ten. Aware of these Jews' escapes, the German police forces organised manhunts, using both German military police and Blue Police officers from local stations, as well as compact police units the size of a platoon. Several hundred Jews fell victim to these manhunts in the Radom District.²⁷

The initial deportation of Jews from Radom is noteworthy, as the Tarłów operation was conducted in much the same way. Despite beginning after 2:00 a.m. on an autumn night, its other features were identical. The historian recorded another detail emphasised by local residents, a point understandable given the night-time circumstances of the action. "Several hours before the deportation, a team from the power plant installed high-intensity incandescent bulbs, each with a brightness of several hundred candlepower."²⁸ This was to ensure proper lighting. Electric power was introduced to Tarłów as early as 1936.

In mid-June 1942, Herbert Bötcher, head of the German police structures in the Radom District, described the forces under his command as follows: "With regard to the Sicherheitspolizei and Ordnungspolizei in the district, they had at their disposal – apart from the patrol units [Einzeldienst] – four companies and five Schutzpolizei units stationed in larger cities."²⁹ At the beginning of 1943, during a period of intensified activity by the Polish underground armed resistance, these forces were reinforced, as will be discussed later.

Tarłów's affiliation with Starachowice County suggests that counterintelligence and intelligence activities on behalf of the occupying authorities were carried out by the Sipo office in Starachowice. It was headed by Beker, a native of Hohenburg.

²⁷ A. Rutkowski, "Martyrologia, walka i zagłada ludności żydowskiej," pp. 129–131.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

²⁹ Minutes of the police meeting on the state of security in the General Governorate and the relationship between the administration and the police in connection with the establishment of the State Secretariat for Security, 18 June 1942 in *Okupacja i ruch oporu w dzienniku Hansa Franka*, p. 486.

He had at his disposal a translator, Adolf (Kuno) Konowalczyk, who had lived in Pionki before the war. Konowalczyk enjoyed tormenting Poles and Jews. He regularly robbed shopkeepers without paying for the goods. An officer named Labum also abused Poles and Jews. Gestapo officer Erich Schutz was a Volksdeutscher who boasted that he had belonged to a German underground organisation in Poland before the war. After September 1939, he acted as a provocateur, posing as a Pole who illegally purchased weapons from peasants – arms collected from battlefields or abandoned by the army. Then, together with Gestapo officers, he arrested these peasants for violating the regulations on the obligation to surrender weapons to the occupying authorities. Schutz became known in Starachowice as a sadist who persecuted Poles and Jews and extorted material goods from his victims. He was wounded in an attack carried out by Home Army soldiers; treated in Radom, he never returned to Starachowice. However, an attack by the Polish underground on Gestapo officer Józef Przewoźny, who abused Poles and Jews, was successful. Another Gestapo officer, a Volksdeutscher named Franciszek Kapuścik, originally from Racibórz, survived the war. The Gestapo officer Hajduk also came from Racibórz.³⁰ In 1952, officers of the Starachowice PUBP established that Feliks Miller of Pabianice had served as deputy head of the Sipo station. He worked as an investigative officer, as did Ryszard Wódel from Tomaszów Mazowiecki. Ignacy Helermejer, by contrast, was Austrian. Franciszek Kijewski, a renegade who chose to pursue a career under German rule, served the Gestapo as a translator and tortured prisoners.

The existing evidence on the personnel of the Starachowice Sipo office shows that superiors prioritised candidates with pre-war knowledge of Polish realities and language when selecting staff.³¹ It is worth remembering that in March 1943, 203,930 people lived in Starachowice County, including 423 with Reichsdeutsche status and 944 with Volksdeutsche status.³² The occupiers had a large pool of candidates to recruit from for the police force. Yet the question remains: who trained

³⁰ AIPN Ki, 015/35, vol. 3, Minutes of the interrogation of Feliks Łęcki, 19 February 1953, p. 60.

³¹ AIPN Ki, 015/35, vol. 3, Report of the County Public Security Department in Starachowice on the course of the operative case file initiated against persons associated with the German police in Starachowice, 3 January 1953, pp. 67–69.

³² APR, 209, vol. 13338, Population statistics for Starachowice County, 1 March 1942, p. 145.

the selected pre-war Polish citizens of German nationality to carry out tasks within the political and law enforcement structures, and when.

A German commanded them, but his subordinates were, at least in part, pre-war criminal officers of the Polish State Police. In Starachowice, the Kripo included: Stanisław Bajor, Bolesław Kilian, Józef Laprus, Kazimierz Mess, Stefan Michalak, Stanisław Nowakowski, and Marian Tomczyk. Among them, Bajor and Michalak were remembered as people who extorted money from Poles and Jews under various pretexts.³³

During the post-war investigation and trial, Herbert Böttcher attempted to minimise his responsibility for the crimes committed in the district. Nevertheless, excerpts from his testimony are interesting and shed light on the events in Tarłów. For example, he stated the following about the functioning of the military police: “If a police station was unable to handle a case on its own, the matter was referred to me. I then decided, for example, to coordinate several police stations to suppress specific actions undertaken by Poles.”³⁴ Undeniably, the rural municipality of Tarłów was the location of coordinated actions undertaken by military police from various stations.

Until the end of 1942, there was no German military police station in Tarłów, which was part of the Ordnungspolizei. In rural areas, the military police oversaw auxiliary units, some of which were recruited from pre-war citizens of the Republic of Poland. In the settlement under discussion, this role was carried out between 1939 and 1944 by the military police station in Lipsko, located 22 km from Tarłów.³⁵ It was headed by several commanders, including Brübach, Lieutenant Max Kupfer (until October 1942), Peter Luckeneder (from October 1942 to January 1944), Hauptwachmeister Meyer and Otto (Hugo) Peterlunger (from January 1944).³⁶ According to Alfons Himmel, Luckeneder was the most cruel of them all. Their subordinates were: Sylwester Beumert, Bischofsberger, Bornhöft, Louis (or

³³ AIPN Ki, 015/35, vol. 3, Minutes of the interrogation of Feliks Łęcki, 19 February 1953, pp. 61–62.

³⁴ AIPN Ki, 53/610, Minutes of the interrogation of Herbert Böttcher, 27 February 1948, p. 402b.

³⁵ The station was located on Zwoleńska Street, in a brick building. It was evacuated at the end of summer 1944 (AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Wyroda, 27 May 1969, p. 541; AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel at the County Public Security Department in Wałbrzych, 1 July 1946, p. 75).

³⁶ Born on 20 August 1901 in Hall.

Ludwig) Brending, Erich, Karl Fröhle, Emanuel Fröhlich, Garbisch, Paul Gast,³⁷ Gerken, Edward Glanert, Georg Gulden,³⁸ Alfons Himmel, Hunger, Klarner,³⁹ Werner Lück, Mahler, Alfred Melke, Mengele, Johann Meyer, Hugo Petterlunger and Georg Ziegelmeier.⁴⁰ Other remembered officers include interpreter Emil (or Emanuel) Martin,⁴¹ Gustav Messel, Stöcker and Gustaw Werner.⁴²

Himmel maintained that by November 1943, the Lipsko station was staffed by nine military police officers.⁴³ On another occasion, however, he spoke of 12 military police officers. One of the Polish witnesses, in the context of repressive actions, mentioned “a flying military police unit of 8–10 people, led by the elder son of [Volksdeutscher] Vos from Lipsko.” Elsewhere, the witness described Vos’s son as “assisting the Germans.”⁴⁴ I am uncertain whether he was a military policeman or merely an open informant for the officers of that formation. One of the military policemen identified him as a Volksdeutscher informer and provided his full name: Waldemar Voss from Lipsko.⁴⁵ A cook employed at the Lipsko station recalled the officers’ appearance: “They wore lightgreen uniforms with orange insets and eagles on their caps.”⁴⁶

Our formal knowledge of these officers is based primarily on investigation records and the postwar trial of Alfons Himmel⁴⁷ in Radom, where he was charged with crimes committed in Starachowice County.⁴⁸ Himmel was born in 1909 in

³⁷ Born on 6 February 1894 in Dresden.

³⁸ Born on 4 March 1891 in Adelsdorf.

³⁹ This name was given by one of the witnesses, who worked at the military police station in Lipsko (AIPN Ra, 108/137 vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Ryszard Zapolski, 16 July 1947, p. 164).

⁴⁰ *Słowo Ludu* (Radom), 6 April 1982.

⁴¹ Martin was believed to be from Janów near Zwolen (AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes documenting the inspection of Alfons Himmel’s case files, 12 December 1969, p. 253). German investigators identified him as Emanuel Martin, born on 6 August 1898 in Klimontów, Piotrków Trybunalski County (Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg [hereinafter BALg], B-162, vol. 9782, Note in the investigation files, 1981, p. 409).

⁴² AIPN Ki, 7/69, Official memo of the District Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Kielce, 9 April 1969, p. 2.

⁴³ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel at the County Public Security Department (PUBP) in Wałbrzych, 1 July 1946, p. 70.

⁴⁴ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Foder, 23 October 1947, pp. 105, 106.

⁴⁵ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the Prosecutor’s Office in Radom, 8 January 1948, p. 259.

⁴⁶ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the interrogation of Jadwiga Bazelska, 21 January 1949, p. 72.

⁴⁷ Sebastian Piątkowski provides a more detailed account of Alfons Himmel in this volume.

⁴⁸ Arrested for the first time in December 1945, Himmel appeared before the District Court in Radom after more than three years and was sentenced to death on 21 February 1949. The sentence was

Zabrze. He had a basic education, but – interestingly – before the war, he worked for some time as an accountant. He arrived in German-occupied Poland on 1 October 1941 as a military police officer in the ranks of the Ordnungspolizei. During his first known, recorded interrogation, this German criminal said that until the autumn of 1939, he had been a civilian employee in various companies. He was then mobilised into the border guard, from where he was sent for three months of police training in June 1942, after which he began serving at the station in Lipsko, Starachowice County. He held the rank of Wachtsmeister, and because he knew Polish, he served as an interpreter, among other things. He testified that he served in Lipsko until July 1944. Describing his attitude towards Poles, he stated that he acted “according to the rules.”⁴⁹ In his second testimony, he stated that he served in Lipsko from October 1941 to May 1944.⁵⁰ The difference is significant in that the first version absolved him of participation in the extermination of the majority of Jews in the area in question. Several Polish witnesses from Lipsko indicated that Alfons Himmel initially behaved relatively calmly and was not aggressive towards Poles. He even warned them about searches and arrests. This changed after he was wounded in a skirmish with partisans in 1943.⁵¹ These reservations did not apply to the treatment of Jews. From time to time, still before the end of 1942, Himmel was sent to the post in Tarłów.

Before the war, Władysław Frączek lived in Łęczycza, a territory later incorporated into the Reich. In 1940, he moved to Tarłów, where he operated a photography studio until August 1944. His testimony indicates that in 1943, a military police station was established in the village, subordinate to the one in Lipsko. He was certain of this because he had taken various photographs at the request of officers stationed in Tarłów.⁵² Another witness states that this branch operated from September 1942 to March 1944. The September date contradicts another statement

carried out on 22 October 1949 (AIPN, 00611/480, vol. 2, The verdict in the case of Alfons Himmel, 21 February 1949, pp. 40–64).

⁴⁹ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel at the PUBP in Wałbrzych, 11 December 1945, pp. 14–16.

⁵⁰ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel at the PUBP in Wałbrzych, 25 February 1946, p. 23.

⁵¹ Cf. AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Ryszard Zapolski, 16 July 1947, p. 5; AIPN, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the interrogation of Jan Sykucki, 25 January 1949, p. 57.

⁵² AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the interrogation of Władysław Frączek, 8 July 1969, p. 200.

by this witness, who claims that the facility was established “immediately after the displacement of the Jews,” which, as we know, took place on 19 October 1942.⁵³ Another resident of Tarłów dated the establishment of the military police station to early 1943,⁵⁴ a version that appears most credible. According to this account, the station functioned until February 1944. Years later, the commander of the Blue Police station in Solec testified that in 1943, during one operation, he was assisted by four or five German military police officers from Tarłów, who arrived on horseback, followed by several Polish Police officers from the same village on bicycles.⁵⁵

According to Polish witnesses, the Tarłów military police station was staffed by Werner Grube, Alfons Himmel, Klos, Koch, Mayer, and others. Mayer initially served as commander, but after his death in a clash with partisans, Himmel was appointed from Lipsko. Six military police officers were permanently stationed in Tarłów, though their number rose to thirty at times. After the war, German investigators identified Majer from Tarłów as Josef Mayer, born on 31 January 1914 in St. Peter near Braunau am Inn. He served in the 1st military police battalion sent to fight partisans in the eastern territories, including Galicia.⁵⁶ A comparison of sources from various origins indicates that Grube and Koch were not local military police officers, although they were indeed stationed in Tarłów in 1943–1944. The investigation and trial of Himmel did not prove that he had been permanently stationed in Tarłów for an extended period of time, but rather that he had travelled there quite often from Lipsko, carrying out orders issued by successive commanders of his main post.

Polish witnesses could not tell the difference between uniformed Germans, as their uniforms were similar despite belonging to different formations. Consequently, they classified Grube and Koch – who in reality served in the 3rd platoon of the 10th company, 3rd battalion of the 17th SS Police Regiment – as military police. This platoon, about 20 men strong, was stationed in Tarłów as the garrison of a fortified point (*Stützpunkt*) only in the spring of 1943. The company

⁵³ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the interrogation of Marian Dunal, 18 September 1969, p. 207.

⁵⁴ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the interrogation of Daniel Ptak, 17 October 1969, p. 237.

⁵⁵ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stanisław Stępiak, 5 May 1971, p. 135.

⁵⁶ BALg, B-162, vol. 9781, Note of the prosecutor of the Central Office of the State Justice Administrations for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Ludwigsburg, 18 January 1974, p. 85.

commander was Captain Otto Siemers.⁵⁷ Police officers from the SS police regiment were stationed in the same building as the military police, which made it even more difficult for Polish witnesses to distinguish between them. That is why they claimed that a motorised military police unit had been stationed in Tarłów since 1943 and estimated its strength at 30–70 officers.⁵⁸ In light of Bötcher's remark about the possibility of combining forces if necessary, it seems that both figures could have been true, depending on the day. After receiving information about acts that were considered criminal, a police platoon from Tarłów was sent to arrest the suspects. Franciszek Błotko, the pre-war commander of the PP station in Tarłów, and other officers from the Blue Police station in Solec and Lipsko also participated in these operations.⁵⁹ This shows that not only German officers were mobilised, but also Poles who were dependent on them. Some Volksdeutsche from Poland had previously served as volunteers in the collaborationist Sonderdienst formation, in which they joined in 1939 and occasionally served until early 1943. At this point they were sent to the Waffen SS training centre in Żytomierz, and after a short time, together with their colleagues from other countries, to the Nordholz police battalion formation site near Cuxhaven in northern Germany. The SS police platoon stationed in Tarłów consisted of Nazi volunteers, some of whom had already participated in actions against the Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish populations between 1939 and 1943. A former military policeman testified:

In the last days of November 1942, a motorised military police company for special tasks was assigned to the area covered by our station in Lipsko. The company was divided into units of 40 men each, sent to Lipsko, Ciepiałów, Tarłów and Sienno. The motorised military police worked independently, and our station had nothing to do with them.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Otto Siemers, born on 13 April 1914 in Möhnsen (BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Minutes of the interrogation of Otto Siemers, 18 September 1981, p. 399).

⁵⁸ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the interrogation of Piotr Kotur, 17 October 1969, p. 236.

⁵⁹ AIPN, 0061/480, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel, 28 February 1949, p. 52.

⁶⁰ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the District Court in Radom, 28 January 1949, p. 99.

The last sentence is not true, because the military police, who had been stationed in the area for a long time and had local Volksdeutsche in their ranks, served as guides for the special platoons.

A former member of the platoon sent to Tarłów, who was born in 1923 in Radom County, a former citizen of the Republic of Poland, and who had previously served in the Sonderdienst, testified about the platoon:

The company's platoons were divided up and sent to different locations. I don't remember it very well now, but the company headquarters and one platoon were stationed in Opatów. The 3rd platoon, to which I belonged and which was commanded by Sergeant Werner Grube, was sent to Tarłów. It was a small settlement. We were quartered in a large red-brick school building. We had to arrange our own quarters on the first floor. Grain was stored on the ground floor. Two Luftwaffe personnel were stationed in the attic, observing the area and the sky. I do not remember whether they were already there when we arrived or whether they appeared later. I also do not remember whether they were still there when we left the post. [...] Our post was located by the market square. The school had a vestibule, from which the main entrance opened into the building. For security reasons, we did not use the main entrance, but the entrance from the schoolyard. The building stood on a hill. Its rear was secured with the so-called *chevauxdefrise*, or spiked barricades. Initially, the guards stood guard in front of the building, and later inside. [...] To the right of the Catholic church was a Polish Police station. Polish Police officers wore navy blue uniforms. Whenever we carried out any activities, the Poles always took part in them. [...]

On the first floor of the school, we were accommodated in groups of 8–9 people in one classroom. The commander of our platoon, Grube, was quartered in a separate room together with one of the military police officers. This officer came from Hamburg and was called Stade or Staude, or possibly Stater. I do not know which military police station he belonged to. Both Grube and this officer had the same rank (Wachtmeister). The kitchen was also on the first floor. I don't remember the cook's name, but he was assisted

by a Polish girl.⁶¹ There were no separate cells in the building. The arrested were interrogated in Grube's office. He had a telephone at his disposal. He also slept there. We had a military passenger car and a lorry at our disposal. They were operated by one driver. As far as I remember, he was Austrian. We did not have horses or dogs. I do not remember if we had bicycles. I do not know who served as an interpreter, perhaps it was one of the military policemen or one of the Polish Policemen, some of whom spoke German. I learned Polish at school, of course, but at home we only spoke German. However, my knowledge of Polish did not allow for direct, perfect translation from that language. I was never present in the office during interrogations. Grube conducted them himself. During operations, I served as an interpreter when needed, as much as I could. [...]

The squad leaders in our platoon were professional police officers. One of them – judging by his accent – came from Munich. The following served with me in Tarłów: Reichsdeutscher Fritz Schulz (he was the cook), Alfred Brandsch, Thomas Miess, and Wagner (all from Transylvania), squad commander Wagner (from Styria), and Meckelburg, who was killed in action near Warsaw. Vogel was killed on the same day as Grube, during fighting with partisans in Yugoslavia. [...] A characteristic feature of the post in Tarłów was that the crew members were often changed, which is why I do not remember all the names exactly. I spent one of the Christmas holidays in Tarłów [1943] [...] Towards the end of the war, our company was serving in Yugoslavia. We were taken prisoner in Austria. I was released on 23 June 1945.⁶²

This witness denied any knowledge of crimes committed by the German occupying forces in Tarłów and the surrounding villages in 1943–1944. Most likely, this was because he was quickly treated as a suspect in the investigation into his involvement in those crimes. Alfred Bradsch gave a similar account. He added that the windows of the ground-floor rooms in the school had been covered with

⁶¹ Fritz Schulz from Bremen served as the cook (BALg, B-172, vol. 9782, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfred Brandsch, 19 June 1969, p. 258).

⁶² BALg, B-162, vol. 9781, Minutes of the interrogation of Albert Würfel, 22 October 1980, pp. 153–160.

thick boards for security reasons, and that these rooms were used to store grain, as his comrade in arms had also stated.⁶³ He also said that

The commanders of the squads at the outpost in Tarłów were the Reichsdeutsche Wagner and Forster.⁶⁴ The interpreter was a Volksdeutscher from Poland named Koch. His first name may have been Edmund. After a major operation that took place shortly before our transfer from Tarłów [in January or February 1944], Koch deserted.⁶⁵ We did not see him again after that. Another interpreter was called Balluk or something similar. Georg Gabel and Thomas Mies, Skolar and a certain Betlehem from Pomerania, also served there with me.⁶⁶

Alfred Bradsch described platoon commander Werner Grube as a man who followed the rules and severely punished his subordinate, Rudolf Czech, for appropriating products brought by peasants to the weekly market in Tarłów.⁶⁷ Bradsch – of course – had also not heard of any civilians being shot, and to his knowledge, only those who resisted and posed a threat during the attempt to arrest them were shot.

From the findings of German investigators, we know that Michael Dämischuk also belonged to the aforementioned 3rd platoon of the 10th company, 3rd battalion of the 17th Police Regiment. He was born on 25 March 1925 in Popieluchy and died on 3 September 1943 near Grochowice in Opatów County (22 km south of Tarłów). On that day, another German from the Tarłów outpost, Erich Rönn, was also killed.⁶⁸ However, their colleague Franz Rudolf, a Volksdeutscher from Hungary, survived the war after being transferred to a platoon stationed in Ciepielów. Bela Stefanek was also born in Hungary in 1919. Thanks to his long stay in Germany before the war, he spoke German fluently, but at the same time had

⁶³ BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfred Bradsch, 17 June 1979, p. 259.

⁶⁴ One of the witnesses mentioned two other names of squad commanders: Beuger and Alfred Walla. The former was killed in action during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 (BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Minutes of the interrogation of Bela Stefanek, 10 April 1981, pp. 389, 390).

⁶⁵ Koch's desertion was confirmed by another police officer (BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Minutes of the interrogation of Bela Stefanek, 8 April 1981, p. 381).

⁶⁶ BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfred Bradsch, 17 June 1979, pp. 262–263.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁶⁸ BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Note in the case file concerning the German military police station in Tarłów, 30 January 1980, p. 334.

difficulty understanding some of his colleagues who, as he claimed, spoke “broken German.”⁶⁹

It cannot be ruled out that officers belonging to the 9th Company of the 17th SS Police Regiment, who were stationed in Ożarów at the same time, also took part in the actions in the municipality of Tarłów; especially since the crew of the police station in Tarłów joined the operations of their comrades-in-arms from Ożarów. This was precisely the case when Dämtschuk and Rönn, members of a fifteen-strong support unit under the command of Werner Grube, were killed in a fight with seven partisans.⁷⁰ The decision to deploy the 10th Company’s forces in a similar manner was probably made by its commander, Captain Otto Siemers. From the summer of 1943 until at least April 1944, the 12th Company of the aforementioned regiment was also stationed in Starachowice County. Whenever necessary, platoons from companies 9, 10 and 12 cooperated in anti-partisan operations.

Members of the 7th Company of the 22nd Police Regiment were stationed in nearby Ciepiałów. Franz Rudolf mentioned that the 10th Company of the 17th SS Police Regiment was largely made up of Volksdeutsche from Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania and Hungary. This is confirmed by the surnames of some of them: Filipiak, Kamiński, Nowacki, Witkowski, Wojciechowski.⁷¹ When interrogated several decades after the war, members of the German police in Tarłów and the surrounding area unanimously used the term “bandit fighting” (*Bandenbekämpfung*) to describe their duties in the area in question, and referred to the partisans they pursued and killed as bandits. The terms “resistance movement” and “partisans” did not appear in any of the testimonies. As can be seen, the terms adopted during the Nazi period were still part of their vocabulary more than thirty years after the defeat of the Third Reich. Otto Siemers, who was responsible for his men stationed in Tarłowo, testified:

As for the actions resulting in death that have been presented to me, I must say that I never gave an order to shoot anyone myself, nor did I witness any

⁶⁹ BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Minutes of the interrogation of Bela Stefanek, 8 April 1981, p. 378.

⁷⁰ BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Copy of Werner Grube’s note on the operation in Grochowice, 3 September 1943, p. 337.

⁷¹ BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Minutes of the interrogation of Franz Rudolf, 24 January 1980, pp. 347–348.

shootings. Moreover, it was not our unit's task to carry out executions. Killing only occurred in combat situations. If executions had been carried out, I, as the unit commander, would have been informed. But I am not aware of any such reports, also from hearsay.⁷²

Until 1944, the Germans mentioned above carried out arrests, interrogations and executions of Polish civilians, Jews, Polish conspirators, Soviet soldiers who had escaped from captivity, and members of Soviet reconnaissance groups. One of the German perpetrators indicated that the actions were carried out early in the morning, and at the latest before noon, in order to find the wanted persons at home or in hiding places located elsewhere.⁷³ In 1942, the aforementioned individuals participated in the deportation of Jews to Treblinka. Rev. Jan Madejski from Tarłów recalled:

A particular cruelty in the persecution of Jews was shown by the gendarme Majer [actually Mayer], known as "crooked mouth." He forced others to address him as the "bandit commander." Captured victims were tormented until, when asked "who am I?," replied that he was the "bandit commander." Only then would he decide their fate – sometimes murdering them in a refined manner, at other times, in a fit of whimsy, letting them go free.⁷⁴

According to testimonies, Mayer always carried a thick club with him and used it to beat people who unwittingly crossed his path. In 1943, he was shot by partisans near the village of Dąbrowa, 4 km from Tarłów. He was about forty years old at the time. Even some of the other military police officers (for example, Koch) were terrified of his cruelty, attributing it to the negative influence that Mayer's time at the front had had on him.⁷⁵ Alfons Himmel was appointed the next commander. The functionary Klos was also remembered for playing the accordion while his

⁷² BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Minutes of the interrogation of Otto Siemers, 18 September 1981, p. 401.

⁷³ BALg, B-162, vol. 9782, Minutes of the interrogation of Bela Stefanek, 10 April 1981, p. 392.

⁷⁴ Memoirs of Rev. Jan Madejski, held at the rectory of the Holy Trinity Church in Tarłów.

⁷⁵ BALg, B-162, vol. 9781, Minutes of the interrogation of Eligiusz Pietrkiewicz, 18 September 1969, p. 38.

colleagues carried out interrogations. According to a witness, this was done to drown out the screams of those being beaten. In fact, one of the photographs of the Tarłów military police, taken during their leisure time, shows an officer with an accordion. Koch, a forty-year-old red-haired man, was remembered as someone who liked to shoot at people. In the village of Maruszów, the military police shot two Jews – itinerant traders from Tarłów.⁷⁶ In the spring of 1943, military police brought seven Jews (two men, three women and two several-year-old children) to Tarłów from the village of Potoczek, where they had been sheltered by Poles. Dogs kept at the police station were used to track them down: a German shepherd named “Teri” and a St. Bernard named “Wir.” The Jews were brought in around 9:00 a.m. and at 4:00 p.m. they were led towards the ruins of the synagogue and the prayer house standing next to it. They were escorted by two military policemen, including Koch and Grube. The Jews were ordered to lie on their backs in a meadow next to the building. Koch murdered them with pistol shots to the forehead. Polish witnesses watched the crime unfold from a distance of about 100 metres. The other military police stood by with submachine guns ready to fire but did not use their weapons at that time. The Germans ordered the bodies to be buried in a single grave in the Jewish cemetery. As the victims had been thoroughly searched beforehand, they were placed in the pit fully clothed. As the witness pointed out, they were not pre-war residents of Tarłów.⁷⁷

Presumably in the autumn of 1943, on a Sunday morning, military police brought a Jew named Berek, the pre-war owner of a timber yard, from the village of Okół. He was immediately taken to the Jewish cemetery in Tarłów and shot there. Kazimierz Janowski and another resident of Tarłów, who were on their way to Sunday mass, witnessed the execution. The Germans took the men to a car and then ordered them to bury the body.

Later on, Poles, mainly peasants, dominated among the victims, but the military police also killed Jews who had previously escaped deportation. When it was decided that the forces of the local military police station were insufficient, reinforcements were called in, including from Radom. Support was also provided

⁷⁶ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the interrogation of Stanisław Przepiórka, 13 August 1982, p. 85 (Series II).

⁷⁷ BALg, B-162, vol. 9781, Minutes of the interrogation of Eligiusz Pietrkiewicz, 18 September 1969, p. 39.

by a unit referred to by a witness as an “operational group” and “flying military police.”⁷⁸ In the summer of 1943, military police officers from Tarłów shot Joachim Zawisza. Military police officers from the station in Lipsko also participated in his arrest. Although Zawisza was a Catholic, the Germans gave the command that he be buried in the Jewish cemetery. The same happened to the body of Edward Ignasiak, a Catholic brought from the village of Okół. Among the Polish victims were also members of the six-person Piecyk family from Julianów, Edward Gąsior from Sulejów, Tadeusz Janowski from Wólka Pętkowska, Stanisław Pietruszka from the village of Tomaszów, and two visiting tobacco merchants, all of whom were killed at different times. The following victims came from the village of Okół: Józef Choinka, Edward Ignasiak, Józef Kosiak, Józef Kostrzewa, Marian Goliński, Jan Niewadzki, Jan Pernak, Antoni Walczyk, and Franciszek Osojka with his wife and two-year-old child.⁷⁹

It is possible that the murder of the three-member Osojka family and the burning of their farm were connected to the arrest of a Jew named Berek in the village of Okół. On that day, the Germans did not arrest or kill anyone else in the village; their sole target was the Osojka family. No explanation was given to the other villagers, or at least none was recorded in the testimony of Józef Długowolski, who was 34 years old at the time. Two weeks after the earlier crime, the military police in Tarłów carried out a similar atrocity, this time against Szczepan Kowalczyk, Stefania Kowalska, and her four children, aged two to seven. After the killings, the bodies were placed inside Stefania’s house, which the Germans then set ablaze. On this occasion, the repression was justified by alleged connections to the Polish armed underground.⁸⁰

The village of Okół lies about six kilometres from Tarłów. Several men detained there were taken to the police station in Tarłów, where they were interrogated and murdered. Similar crimes were committed by military policemen stationed in neighbouring municipalities. Witnesses later recalled these events during inves-

⁷⁸ The “operational group” was stationed in the primary school building in Lipsko.

⁷⁹ BALg, B-162, vol. 9781, Minutes of the interrogation of Eligiusz Pietrkiewicz, 18 September 1969, pp. 40–41; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Paweł Lato, 14 January 1970, pp. 47–48; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Długowolski, 13 January 1970, p. 50.

⁸⁰ BALg, B-162, vol. 9781, Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Długowolski, 13 January 1970, pp. 49–50.

tigations conducted between 1969 and 1976 in Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany against these perpetrators.⁸¹

Born in 1924, the Polish witness testified, among other things, about his stay in custody at the military police station in Tarłów:

There was already a man in the cell whom I did not know, aged about 35. His hands and legs were bound with a chain, and the end of the chain was attached to the bars on the window. The guards had beaten him so badly that he was covered in bruises. We were both interrogated then.⁸²

The witness quoted was sent from his cell to a penal labour camp, but his companion in suffering was shot dead by the military police the next day in the village of Sudoł, and his body was left in a gutter.

Władysław Smaga, a teacher from Tarłów, remembered the military police from Lipsko from their visits to the village and surrounding settlements.⁸³ Witness testimonies refer to more than twenty villages where, between 1943 and 1944, military police murdered local residents. Among them were Czekarzewice, Julianów, Wola Pawłowska, and Zemborzyn, all situated near Tarłów. Some of the military police officers knew Polish. A witness testified about one of them:

Among them was a German, a pre-war colonist named Voss, who at that time [in February 1943 – G.B.] returned wounded from the Eastern Front, joined the German military police and murdered Poles. Before the war, his father, a German who owned a dye factory, lived in Lipsko.⁸⁴

The military police officers Alfons Himmel, Emil Martin, and Gustav Werner reportedly spoke Polish, which enabled them to independently verify testimonies. Thanks to Voss, his father and brother, their German neighbours and their knowl-

⁸¹ BALg, B-162, vol. 9781, A list of crimes committed by military police officers from the Tarłów station, compiled by German investigators on the basis of testimonies from Polish witnesses, 1972, pp. 81–83.

⁸² BALg, B-162, vol. 9781, Minutes of the interrogation of Henryk Oszczedlewski, 19 September 1969, p. 75.

⁸³ AIPN, 0061/480, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Władysław Smaga, 8 October 1947, p. 26.

⁸⁴ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the testimony of Józef Wyroda, 27 May 1969, p. 52.

edge of the area, they were able to get around more easily and gather information from locals. The Germans acted selectively, targeting specific addresses, which indicates they were guided by intelligence rather than acting blindly. They knew, for example, that Jews were leaving the so-called closed ghettos despite a strict ban in an effort to escape starvation. In the spring of 1942, they set up an ambush for those who had left the Lipsko ghetto illegally, resulting in the death of at least one woman.⁸⁵

As one of the residents of Tarłów pointed out: “German military police from the station in Lipsko would often come to Tarłów for various operations. They almost always came on market days.”⁸⁶ It should be noted that some actions carried out by the Lipsko military police were conducted independently, without the involvement of their colleagues stationed in Tarłów in 1943, even though these operations took place very close to that settlement. Local witnesses, who recognised the personnel of the Tarłów post by sight, were able to distinguish them from “outside” military police officers.⁸⁷

Himmel was accused of participating in dozens of crimes. He was convicted, among other charges, for murdering a Jewish woman in Tarłów in 1942. This may have been the event later described by a witness:

Sometime in 1942, probably in the summer, I was at the market in Tarłów. I saw two German military police officers [...] leading a young, pretty Jewish woman. They walked with her and talked to her, leading her between them. They reached a nearby field. There, one of the Germans ordered the Jewish woman to turn around and shot her in the back of the head with a rifle. They left, and I do not know who buried the Jewish woman. I did not know the names of those Germans.⁸⁸

It can be assumed that the reason for the public, summary execution was the unauthorised leaving of the ghetto. The witness did not provide the victim’s name

⁸⁵ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the interrogation of Ignacy Cender, 13 August 1982, p. 91 (Series II).

⁸⁶ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the testimony of Marian Dunal, 18 September 1969, pp. 207–208.

⁸⁷ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the testimony of Paweł Mgłosiek, 17 October 1969, p. 242.

⁸⁸ The witness’s testimony contains two contradictory statements. First, he says that the perpetrators were gendarmes from the station in Tarłów, which is doubtful, considering the time of the murder. Then he states that he does not know whether the perpetrators were from the station in Tarłów or in Lipsko (AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the testimony of Jan Lipiec, 20 September 1969, p. 216).

and did not know the names of the perpetrators.⁸⁹ Leokadia Markiewicz reported that, together with a group of other children, she witnessed the Germans shooting several Jewish women on a field located by a stream about 200 metres from the Tarłów market. The victims were first ordered to kneel down and then shot in the back of the head. The terrified Polish children fled from the scene of the crime. We do not know whether the field mentioned in both accounts is the same place. However, the death of the women may have been caused by what Rev. Jan Madejski mentioned in the parish chronicle, writing that the Germans sexually abused Jewish women and then murdered them as witnesses to their crime of so-called racial defilement (*Rassenschande*), punishable in the Reich since 1935. What is certain is that both crimes were committed in broad daylight before the eyes of the populace, in the immediate vicinity of the ghetto. Władysław Czerwonka testified in the 1940s that he saw Himmel shoot “in the autumn of 1942” in Tarłów, “an 18-year-old Jewish girl and an old Jewish man.” The witness was a coachman who had brought the perpetrator from Lipsko to Tarłów.⁹⁰ In the winter of 1942–1943, Himmel and his companions transported a Jewish man who was around 40 years old from Tarłów through Czekarzewice. Behind the village, they ordered him to get off the cart and shot him in a field. The Polish coachman was ordered to search the pockets of the murdered man, and the money found was taken by the military police. The Pole was ordered to bury the body.⁹¹

During the deportation of Jews from Tarłów, Himmel, who had arrived from Lipsko, shot at least two elderly Jewish women and a girl aged around 10.⁹² After the deportation, Himmel and Messel shot a three-year-old Jewish girl named Fojecka.⁹³ He shot one of the Jews from Tarłów in Lipsko and, in front of onlookers, pulled the shoes off his feet.⁹⁴ Fearing accusations of “defiling the race,” he

⁸⁹ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the testimony of Jan Lipiec, Kielce, 20 September 1969, p. 21.

⁹⁰ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Władysław Czerwonka, 16 July 1947, p. 162; AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes documenting the inspection of Alfons Himmel's case files, 12 December 1969, p. 256.

⁹¹ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes documenting the inspection of Alfons Himmel's case files, 12 December 1969, p. 261.

⁹² AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the interrogation of Marian Dunal, 18 September 1969, p. 207.

⁹³ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Final Report on Case No. 7/69 regarding crimes committed by military police officers of the Lipsko station, 1969, p. 307.

⁹⁴ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Eleonora Czerwonak, 16 July 1947, pp. 157–158.

and gendarme Emil Martin murdered his mistress Helena Rozental in Lipsko. Himmel lured her out of the ghetto, and Martin shot her on the pretext of punishing her for leaving the sealed quarter without permission.⁹⁵ This is how her relative – who was in the USSR during the war and, after his return, gathered information from comrades in the Polish Workers' Party about the deaths of his closest relatives – described it:

Between 1940 and 1944, Hümel [actually Himmel] personally shot Helena Rozental near the mill. On his way from Lipsko to Tarłów, he killed 10 minor children and others: a Soviet citizen, a Polish citizen of the Jewish faith near Czerwiński's barn, and others. As for my family, before committing these murders, Hümel said that the Rozental family had to be destroyed because they were communists. One of their members, their uncle Alter Rozental, is a well-known communist activist who fled to Russia.⁹⁶

In Lipsko in September 1943, Himmel also shot other Jews, including Regina Wojciechowska, a Polish woman whom he mistook for a Jew because of her Semitic appearance.⁹⁷ Her mother gave a different account of the incident; according to her, the military police believed that Regina was trying to avoid meeting them because she did not have her identity documents with her. They found this suspicious and opened fire on her.⁹⁸ Incidentally, the two reasons are not contradictory. A cook working for the military police in Lipsko testified about Himmel:

In 1943, I saw him leading a Jewish woman near the military police building. He disappeared with her behind the buildings, and I heard a shot. Later, people

⁹⁵ The circumstances of the incident were described in greater detail by the head of Civil Struggle in Iłża County, who knew Helena Rozental; cf. AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of defence attorney Stefan Mitrowski, 16 July 1947, pp. 133–134, 136; AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Waław Szymański, 2 August 1947, pp. 226–227.

⁹⁶ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the interrogation of Alter Rozental, 8 January 1949, p. 92.

⁹⁷ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Walerian Pytlak, 16 July 1947, p. 155; AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes documenting the inspection of Alfons Himmel's case files, 12 December 1969, pp. 255, 258, 259, 260.

⁹⁸ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Józefa Wojciechowska, 28 January 1948, p. 144.

said that he had shot and killed this Jewish woman. I suppose that she had been discovered after the Jews had been displaced.⁹⁹

Himmel was responsible for the deaths of at least several dozen Poles and Jews murdered in other towns in the municipalities of Chotcza, Dziurków, Lipsko, Solec and Tarłów. He was a sadist who often severely beat those he detained. Some of them described their ordeal.¹⁰⁰ Himmel extracted confessions by torturing detainees, including with a red-hot iron.¹⁰¹ He confessed to killing two Jews brought from Chotcza and a Polish official in Lipsko, who, according to him, extorted bribes from the population for not sending them to forced labour in Germany. Elsewhere, he confessed to participating in the shooting of four Jews, a Pole and a Russian in the village of Gawęczyn in the municipality of Ciepeliów.¹⁰² Tarłowski, a baker who had been beaten by Himmel and Martin and later imprisoned in Lipsko for three days on charges of illegally slaughtering pigs, testified about an incident that occurred before May 1942: "I saw Himmel and Martyn [actually Martin] driving through Tarłów in a taxi [passenger car]. They caught a Jewish woman from Tarłów on the street, took her outside the town, and shot her."¹⁰³ Another resident of the municipality recalled:

In the winter of 1942, I saw German military police driving a cart from the village of Okół through the village of Czekarzewice, transporting a 40-year-old Jew from Tarłów. They stopped in the village of Czekarzewice. One military policeman remained on the cart, while the other, Himmel, got off, led the Jew into a field and shot him there. The military policeman who remained on the cart called me and told me to go with him to search for the Jew. When I reached

⁹⁹ AIPN Ra, 108/357, vol. 3, Minutes of the interrogation of Jadwiga Bazelska, 21 January 1949, p. 73.

¹⁰⁰ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Aleksander Prokop, 12 August 1947, pp. 279–281.

¹⁰¹ Witness: "I often saw military police officers taking turns beating people, with Himmel actively participating. Hot wires were applied to the legs of those arrested, mostly Jews" (AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Ryszard Zapolski, 16 July 1947, p. 164).

¹⁰² AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel at the PUBP in Wałbrzych, 25 February 1946, pp. 25–26; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel, 1 July 1946, p. 71.

¹⁰³ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Władysław Lasota, 13 September 1947, p. 26.

the gendarme, the Jew was still moving, and the gendarme ordered me to search him. I started searching his pockets and found money in one of them. I gave it to the gendarme who had brought me there, and in the other [pocket] I found a handkerchief and a piece of string. I gave those to the gendarme too, and he told me to put them back in the pocket. When I started [doing this], he took the money, and they were about to leave, when the military police commander [...] told me to tell the village leader that this Jew had died of a heart attack.¹⁰⁴

The commander of the Blue Police station in Lipsko called Himmel a “Polish-eater (*polakożerca*), a sadist,” who “took pleasure in shooting people.”¹⁰⁵ He also testified that Blue Police officers had to participate in many repressive actions carried out by military police. Another officer from the same station testified: “I heard that during the deportation of Jews from Lipsko, Himmel went berserk, personally shooting Jews.”¹⁰⁶ On the subject of another village, the testimony of the local village leader reads as follows:

In the autumn of 1942, during the deportation of Jews from Chotcza, gendarme Himmel was present. As I was passing by to order peasants to provide carts for the deportees, I heard a shot behind Sowiński’s barn. Gendarme Himmel emerged from the place where the shot had been fired. He stopped me and ordered me to take people and bury the Jew who was lying there. There were four gendarmes there at the time. They had gathered all the Jews in front of the municipal office, while one Jew (*żydek*) remained in his apartment. I saw his body behind the barn, and that is who the people buried. I do not know the name of this Jew (*żydek*).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Stefana Krawczyka, 26 September 1947, pp. 27–28 [The testimony was given in a local rural dialect – K.D.].

¹⁰⁵ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Tomasz Powroźnik, 19 February 1947, pp. 106–107.

¹⁰⁶ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Antoni Choduszko, 22 February 1947, p. 112.

¹⁰⁷ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Wojtalik, 23 October 1947, pp. 107–108. The fact reported by Wojtalik was also described by another resident of Chotcza, who buried a shot Jew together with his brother-in-law. The victim tried to avoid arrest, jumped out of the flat window, and ran away. Himmel stood in his way and shot him (AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Skorupski, 23 October 1947, p. 109). [The witness uses the diminutive noun *żydek*, a derogatory term for a Jew – K.D.].

The residents of Tarłów also saw Himmel in their town on the day the local Jews were deported.

In an attempt to reduce his responsibility for participating in repressive actions, Himmel pointed to various individuals who had been involved. He provided interesting information about one of them:

Among others, there was also a Volksdeutsch military policeman named Emil Martin from Janów near Zwoleń at our station [in Lipsko]. He knew the area very well because he had lived there his entire life. That is why he was able to provide a lot of information to the military police commander. [...] Because this military policeman looked very similar to me, it is possible that people confuse me with Emil Martin.¹⁰⁸

As a military policeman, Himmel had informants, eighteen in total, in several towns. He testified that in Tarłów he had recruited two people to supply information about those who violated German regulations: Tomala, who owned a shop in the market square, and Nowak, a municipal official.¹⁰⁹ The payment for the information was food and clothing materials.¹¹⁰ It should be added that Karol Tomalski from Tarłów, who was detained in connection with this part of Himmel's testimony, denied collaborating with the gendarme and demanded a confrontation with him.¹¹¹ In response to his words, Himmel testified:

Every Monday, six of us, led by our commander, would travel to Tarłów to supervise the market held there at the time. On that day, we would also receive a report from the commander of the local Polish Police station. Tomalski K. owned a general store in the market square. On average, every other week, the commander of our station and I were Tomalski's guests for breakfast at

¹⁰⁸ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel, 8 April 1948, p. 41.

¹⁰⁹ AIPN, 0061/480, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel, 25 February 1946, p. 12; AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel at the PUBP in Wałbrzych, 25 February 1946, pp. 24, 62.

¹¹⁰ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel at the PUBP in Wałbrzych, 25 February 1946, p. 25.

¹¹¹ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Letter from the PUBP in Starachowice, 12 June 1946, p. 68.

his flat. During breakfast, we often discussed cases of robbery that had taken place in the Tarłów m[unicipality] area, and Tomalski would name people who, in his opinion, could have been involved in these robberies. Most often, his information was incorrect. In one case, for example, he said that 50 kilos of sugar stolen from the Agricultural Cooperative had been purchased by a certain restaurant owner from the market (the husband of a fat woman). After checking, it turned out to be untrue. Tomalski did not make any denunciations of a political nature.¹¹²

This additional testimony by Himmel exonerated Tomalski from accusations of collaboration with the Germans. People aware of the realities of the German occupation realised that most contacts with Germans did not amount to harming fellow citizens.

Other residents of Tarłów were known to be informants for the Germans. Some of them were shot on the orders of the local Home Army command. The partisans tried to determine who was informing on them to the Germans. In the case of Chołun, the owner of a restaurant in the village of Pawłowice in the municipality of Tarłów, the conspirators entered his home and killed the informant's wife and daughter. He survived because he managed to hide. This took place in 1943. In retaliation, the Tarłów motorised military police unit, which had been informed of the incident by Chołun, raided Pawłowice and killed several people there. A female acquaintance of the doctor from Tarłów lived in Pawłowice; she was an informant for the motorised military police.¹¹³ On the other hand, Jews detained by the Germans were interrogated about, among other matters, which of their Christian neighbours had assisted them in hiding outside the ghetto. These methods produced the anticipated outcomes: the Jews identified their helpers, who, in the cases, cited had acted from financial motives. It was then the responsibility of the motorised military police to arrest these individuals.

¹¹² AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel at the PUBP in Wałbrzych, 25 February 1946, p. 76.

¹¹³ AIPN, 0061/480, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel, 28 February 1949, pp. 53–54.

The testimony of one of the witnesses introduces a significant difficulty in determining beyond doubt who personally committed specific crimes. A resident of Tarłów testified 27 years after the dramatic events:

As for the German military policeman Himmel, who was from the German military police station in Lipsko, he was said to be the cousin of officer Himmel from the station in Tarłów. I knew them by sight, and I know they were not the same person. The one in Tarłów was taller. Both were around 35 years old.¹¹⁴

This is the only testimony of this kind. Himmel himself did not mention any cousin. However, several dozen Polish witnesses remembered him only as one of the Lipsko military police officers; they did not mention that he had been seconded to Tarłów for even a few months.

The preserved documentation clearly demonstrates that the primary perpetrators of crimes against the Jewish population in Tarłów and the surrounding area before 19 October 1942, and afterwards, were German military police and police officers. However, their actions were not the only ones to impact defenceless civilians.

The Blue Police

In the 1930s, the county starost of Iłża repeatedly pointed out that the staffing of police stations in his area was very low, and that the few officers had to deal primarily with order-related and clerical matters.¹¹⁵ Before the outbreak of the war, among the policemen who served at the Tarłów station were Ludwik Musiał (1921–1929),¹¹⁶ Jan Pożoga (1923–1925),¹¹⁷ and Stanisław Dziekan (1925–1927).¹¹⁸ Bronisław Kutera, who will be discussed later, was Dziekan's subordinate for ten years.

¹¹⁴ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the testimony of Marian Dunal, 18 September 1969, p. 207.

¹¹⁵ APK, 2680, vol. 90, Situation report by the county starost of Iłża for the period 1–31 January 1937, 17 February 1937, p. 28.

¹¹⁶ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Ludwik Musiał, 2 December 1941, p. 107.

¹¹⁷ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Jan Pożoga, 2 December 1941, p. 102.

¹¹⁸ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Stanisław Dziekan, 2 December 1941, p. 20.

Before the war, the State Police station in Tarłów was located on the first floor of a brick building on Kleparz Street. In the 1930s, it was headed by the aforementioned Franciszek Błotko.¹¹⁹ He arrived in Tarłów in July 1924 and served there for over fifteen years. In 1924, he had already served several years in the police; he put on the uniform in July 1919 and served at police stations in Kielce, Wierzbnik, and Starachowice. His personal questionnaire shows that from 1912 to 1918 he wore the uniform of the Austro-Hungarian army, which was due to his birth in the territory of the Habsburg Monarchy, in Oświęcim County. From this service, he acquired knowledge of the German language and attained the military rank of sergeant (*feldfebel*). On 15 October 1918, following the collapse of Austrian rule in Lesser Poland, he joined the Polish Army and was assigned to the military police with the rank of staff sergeant. Within a few months, however, his superiors appear to have concluded that – despite the complex wartime situation – his skills were more urgently needed in maintaining order on the home front. His transfer from the Polish Army to the police thus seems to have taken place during the conflicts with Bolshevik Russia and Ukraine, as well as amid tensions on Poland's borders with Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, and Germany. Sergeant Błotko's long period of service in Tarłów may indicate that he did not commit any major mistakes during that time, and at the same time, no characteristics were observed in him that would predestinate him for service in a position other than that assigned to the chief village of a rural municipality. When, in the spring of 1936, the communists intensified their activities in Tarłów and the surrounding area, the composition of the Tarłów cell of the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) was quickly uncovered. It consisted of at least four people, as that was how many were arrested in June 1936. The adult leader was sentenced in November of that year to five years' imprisonment, and his three underage companions to suspended prison sentences. We do not know what role Błotko played in uncovering this cell, but it can be assumed that his long-standing knowledge of the local community was at least helpful. Błotko remained at the Tarłów police station until 20 September 1939, so he witnessed the Wehrmacht's entry into the settlement. However, he was no longer the commander at that time.

¹¹⁹ Franciszek Błotko, born on 26 August 1890 in Skiedzień, Oświęcim County, vocational education, locksmith (AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal questionnaire of the functionary of the Polish Police, Franciszek Błotko, p. 142).

On the day of the German attack on the Tarłów police station, Commander Tomasz Porębski and officers Franciszek Gruk and Maruszewski were on duty. On 3 September, they detained three men suspected of being German saboteurs and handed them over to Polish soldiers, who summarily executed them. The saboteurs' wives, originally from Silesia, later learned of the circumstances of the incident. They passed this information on to the German police, who arrested the Polish Police officers and several other people involved in the detention of the saboteurs in Tarłów on 6 January 1940. The police officers were executed in Radom in July of that year.¹²⁰ Franciszek Błotko escaped such a fate, having left his post in Tarłów by September. For the Blue Policemen who arrived in the settlement during the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940, however, the episode must have been a cause for serious reflection.

On 1 November 1939, Błotko began serving in the police force in nearby Solec nad Wisłą. He was still there two years later. On his personal questionnaire, he signed his name as Franz Blotko, sergeant of the Polish Police (*Pol. Polizei, Obermeister*). None of the other nine Blue Policemen serving at the station in Solec at the time declared that they knew German. They were all younger and lower in rank than him. Perhaps this is why the Tarłów policeman was posted to a larger station in a town. But this is only a hypothesis, an attempt to explain the circumstances of Błotko's disappearance from Tarłów. What is certain, however, is that his name appears in the context of police operations carried out by the military police in Lipsko in villages near Tarłów. Witness statements indicate that at an unknown point in time, he was appointed commander of the Blue Police in Lipsko, where he served from 1943 to 1945.¹²¹ He died there of illness in March 1945.

Arrested in 1936, Michel Josek (later Michał) Kuncman, a communist from Tarłów, was released from prison before completing his sentence amidst the chaos following Germany's invasion of Poland. He travelled to Warsaw, where he remained until the surrender of the capital's garrison at the end of September 1939,

¹²⁰ M.E. Niezgodziński, *Szczęściu trzeba pomagać! Kronika Kompanii Armii Krajowej „Tarłów”*, Łódź, 2007, pp. 37, 77.

¹²¹ Speaking about the German operation in Pawłowice, the witness testified that the deaths of two girls were prevented by “the commander of the Blue Police from Lipsko, Błotko. [...] Blue Policeman Błotko helped the Poles as much as he could” (AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes of the testimony of Józef Osojca, 15 May 1969, p. 33).

after which he returned to Tarłów. In his post-war biography, he noted that the Germans had begun to take an interest in him, prompting him to cross into the Soviet-occupied territories. It is not known who informed the Germans about him. Kuncman wrote about a “denouncer.” However, it is not certain whether this is true or just an attempt by Kuncman to show himself in a good light to his post-war superiors.¹²² Judging by the records, Franciszek Błotko was no longer serving in Tarłów when Kuncman returned home. But it was probably difficult for him to move around, as he was responsible for his family – his wife and four teenage children. So perhaps he continued to live in the village, in which case he would undoubtedly have noticed the appearance of a convict who had not served his sentence behind bars. However, there is no evidence that he was the one who denounced the 25-year-old communist of Jewish nationality to the Germans. Other officers from that police station must have also known about Kuncman’s case.

In order to limit the involvement of police personnel brought in from Germany, the Third Reich leadership established auxiliary police formations. These were staffed either by pre-war national police officers or by individuals recruited on an ad hoc basis without formal training. During the period of military administration in the central territories of Poland conquered by the Wehrmacht, an order issued on 10 October 1939 directed the use of pre-war Polish Police officers to regulate traffic, serve as court messengers and municipal bailiffs, and patrol marketplaces in order to maintain public order and counteract speculation.¹²³

In an announcement dated 30 October 1939, the senior SS and Police Commander in the General Governorate called on officers of the Polish State Police to return to service. He gave them little time, ordering them to register by 10 November.¹²⁴ This was announced in the *Dziennik Rozporządzeń Generalnego Gu-*

¹²² Kuncman wrote: “After the Germans entered Warsaw, I returned to my hometown. Shortly after my arrival, they began searching for me, forcing me to hide with neighbours and relatives in the countryside. Following an unsuccessful attempt to arrest me, I was obliged to leave and made my way to western Ukraine, then under Red Army control. In the latter half of November 1939, I reached Lwów” (*Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe Wojskowego Biura Historycznego* [Central Military Archives of the Military Historical Bureau], 845/63/111, Life history [życiorys] of Michał Kuncman, 16 March 1950, n.p.).

¹²³ E. Wójcik and P. Rogowski, “Wybrane dokumenty do dziejów polniszche Polizei z zasobu byłej Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce,” in *Policja granatowa w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w latach 1939–1945*, eds. T. Domański and E. Majcher-Ociesa, Kielce–Warsaw, 2019, p. 106.

¹²⁴ *Verordnungsblatt des Generalgouverneurs für die besetzten polnischen Gebiete*, 30 November 1939, Nr. 2, S. 16.

bernatorstwa (Journal of Regulations of the General Governorate). However, the regulation on the establishment of the “Polish Police” (*polnische Polizei*) is dated 17 December 1939.¹²⁵ Governor-General Hans Frank signed it. It was a formation formally subordinate to German officials responsible for a given city or district. It was treated as a kind of municipal guard, as evidenced by the coats of arms of the respective administrative units worn on their caps. It was the Germans who decided which of the pre-war officers could serve in it. It should not be forgotten that hundreds of police officers were killed during the Polish campaign, while others fell victim to persecution at the beginning of the German occupation because of their actions against representatives of the German minority who had been engaged in anti-Polish activities before the outbreak of war or in 1939. Their fate was probably a determining factor in the behaviour of at least some of the surviving PP officers. In addition, several thousand police officers fell victim to the Katyń Massacre in the spring of 1940. It is worth noting that after 17 September 1939, some police officers who had served in the eastern voivodeships before the war also ended up in Starachowice County.

The December regulation established that police officers’ armament, set by the Germans, was primarily handguns and batons. The type and quantity of long guns, as well as the allocation of ammunition, also depended upon the decisions of German superiors. In towns, police officers served at police stations, and in villages at police posts. It was from there that they were sent to carry out tasks in the field. In a letter dated 29 May 1940, the Germans pointed out to Polish mayors that, despite the formally municipal nature of the Blue Police, they did not exercise direct authority over this formation.¹²⁶ Its operational superiors were local Orpo commanders.

It is worth noting that reporting for service was compulsory. However, point 10 of the regulation of 17 December 1939 states:

The Polish Police are obliged to carry out the orders of the German authorities immediately and unconditionally. Incorrect execution of orders or refusal to carry out orders from the German authorities will be punished by immediate

¹²⁵ The regulation of 17 December 1939 was not published. So far, its content is known only from a typescript preserved in the files of one of the German police battalions deployed in the Lublin District.

¹²⁶ E. Wójcik and P. Rogowski, “Wybrane dokumenty,” p. 108.

dismissal, special penalties or the immediate death penalty. The task of the German authorities is to supervise the execution of all tasks assigned by the German authorities, as well as to impose additional disciplinary penalties. The commander of the order police, together with the services subordinate to him, supervises the Polish uniformed police, while the commander of the security police, together with the services subordinate to him, supervises the Polish criminal police, each within the scope of their official duties.¹²⁷

Officers were threatened with penalties, including the death penalty, for improper performance of their duties or failure to perform them. Despite this, some of them fell into disfavour with the Germans, and 10–15 per cent were sent to concentration camps or punished by death.¹²⁸ To enforce greater obedience, in April 1942, the senior SS and Police Commander in the General Governorate issued an order stipulating that in the event of desertion from service, punishment could be imposed on immediate family members; they would be sent to a concentration camp or forced labour in Germany, and minors under the age of 14 would be placed in an orphanage. “All police officers were required to sign a declaration confirming their knowledge of this provision. It should be added, however, that repressive measures were also applied to the families of police officers who had deserted their posts in the earlier period, in accordance with the principle of collective responsibility introduced by the Nazis,” writes an expert on the subject.¹²⁹

This additional measure was introduced at a time when the Germans were carrying out the total extermination of Jews, and some of the victims were trying to

¹²⁷ The original text reads: “Befehle der deutschen Dienststellen müssen von der polnischen Polizei unverzüglich und rücksichtslos durchgeführt werden. Schlechte Durchführung oder Verweigerung der gegebenen Befehle werden mit der sofortigen Ablösung, besonderen Strafen, gegebenenfalls mit dem sofortigen Tode bestraft. Die Überwachung der Durchführung aller befohlenen polizeilichen Aufgaben ist Aufgabe der deutschen Polizeidienststellen, desgleichen die Verhängung von zusätzlichen Dienststrafen. Die Dienstaufsicht über die polnische uniformierte Polizei führt der Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei mit seinem nachgeordneten Dienststelle und für die polnische Kriminalpolizei der Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei mit seinem achgeordneten Dienststellen, jeder in seinem Dienstsektor” (*Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie* [State Archives in Lublin], Police Battalion in Zamość, 35/515/0, a.u. 82, Aufbau und Organisation der polnischen Polizei 1939–1941, p. 7).

¹²⁸ A. Hempel, *Pogrobowcy kłeski. Rzecz o policji „granatowej” w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 1990, p. 93.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

rescue themselves by escaping from the ghettos that were being liquidated. Capturing them was one of the duties of the Blue Police. They were also given the right to kill Jews who were illegally staying outside the areas designated for them by the Germans. Ignoring the presence of persons sought by the Germans in the event of a denunciation, which was visible to those around them, resulted in penalties for the police officers, but this did not change the fact that the Germans did not have to find out about all such situations, so punishment for inaction was not inevitable.

No later than the end of April 1941, the Germans decided that Blue Police officers could punish Polish common criminals by death, using firearms. The Germans began to use them as substitutes for executioners, although many police officers proved emotionally incapable of killing.¹³⁰

In the wartime files of Stanisław Tużnik, headmaster of the public school in Tarłów, there is a statement that, in identical or closely similar form, was required of all Polish public employees and officials. This obligation extended even to those active in the pro-independence underground. Comparable statements also appear in the few surviving personal dossiers of Blue Police officers.¹³¹ It reads as follows:

I pledge to fulfil my official duties towards the German administration obediently, faithfully and conscientiously.

I do not feel bound by oaths of allegiance and official commitments made to the former Polish state, its authorities or political organisations.¹³²

The Blue Police station in Tarłów was staffed by ten officers.¹³³ This is a significant increase compared to the pre-war staffing levels. The documents do not provide a direct explanation for this increase in staffing levels, even as early as 1939.

¹³⁰ E. Wójcik and P. Rogowski, "Wybrane dokumenty," pp. 113–114.

¹³¹ Information obtained on 14 February 2025 from Tomasz Domański, who has researched the activities of the *Polnische Polizei* in the Radom District of the General Governorate.

¹³² "Erklärung. Ich verpflichte mich, in Gehorsam gegenüber der deutschen Verwaltung meine Dienstobliegenheiten treu und gewissenhaft zu erfüllen. An einen dem ehemaligen polnischen Staat oder seinen Organen oder einer politischen Organisation geleisteten Treu- und Diensteid oder eine entsprechenden Verpflichtung halte ich mich nicht gebunden" (APR, 209, vol. 2627, Personal file of Stanisław Tużnik, 1941, p. 10).

¹³³ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Voivodeship Headquarters of the Citizens' Militia in Kielce regarding three Blue Police officers from the station in Tarłów, 11 March 1971, p. 84.

In December 1941, Józef Pawelec commanded these officers.¹³⁴ His subordinates were Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski,¹³⁵ Franciszek Cyran, Aleksander Czechowicz,¹³⁶ Jan Ćwik, Romuald Drobiecki,¹³⁷ Paweł Gróg,¹³⁸ Bronisław Kutera,¹³⁹ Jan Liberski¹⁴⁰ and Antoni Nowak.¹⁴¹ Until August 1940, Adam Grzesiak, Wojciech Majerczak and Józef Wrona also served at the station, and were then transferred together on the same day to Bałtów. According to the testimony of their colleague from the police station in Solec, the Blue Policemen from Tarłów had five-shot Mannlicher cavalry carbines and 40 rounds of ammunition each.¹⁴² They were also issued hand grenades, which were stored at the station, likely in the same manner as small arms when off duty, at least until the emergence of partisan groups in 1942.

Józef Pawelec was born on 12 April 1913 in the colony of Skobierzyń (Skowierzyn) in Dębica County. After completing primary school, he attended a technical secondary school, graduating in 1933. He then studied for two years at Lwów Polytechnic University in the Faculty of Civil Engineering. After the war, he claimed that his studies were interrupted by his conscription into military service, which sounds unbelievable.¹⁴³ It is possible that he was simply forced to interrupt his studies for other reasons and was then called up for military service. He served in the infantry from 25 August 1935 to 21 September 1936. This short period suggests that he was a so-called cadet (officer-in-training) with a census, that is someone with a full secondary education. He completed his military service with the rank of platoon commander. From 15 October 1936 to 18 September 1939, he was an officer of the State Police in Cracow (15 October 1936 – 1 July 1937), at the police academy in Mosty Wielkie in Volhynia (1 July 1937 – 12 December

¹³⁴ Józef Pawelec, born on 12 April 1913 in Skowierzyn, son of Jan and Agnieszka, née Karbowniczek.

¹³⁵ Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, born on 8 February 1916 in Ostrożec, Dubno County, son of Feliks and Zofia, née Lusarz.

¹³⁶ Aleksander Józef Czechowicz, born on 15 January 1890 in Czuszków.

¹³⁷ Romuald Drobiecki, born on 7 February 1921 in Drzewica, son of Jan and Janina née Milczarek (AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Romuald Zbigniew Drobiecki, 16 May 1942, p. 182).

¹³⁸ There is no mention of this officer in the preserved German documents concerning the staffing of police stations in Iłża-Starachowice County from December 1941 and spring 1942 (AIPN, GK, 105/127).

¹³⁹ Bronisław Kutera, born on 15 November 1897 in Lubień, son of Szymon and Anna, née Mróz.

¹⁴⁰ Jan Liberski, born on 25 May 1904 in Osterfeld, son of Ignacy.

¹⁴¹ Antoni Nowak, born on 13 June 1913 in Mikulczyce, son of Jakub and Jadwiga, née Matysiak.

¹⁴² AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Stanisław Stępniak, 5 May 1971, p. 135.

¹⁴³ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Life history of Józef Pawelec, 20 April 1961, p. 74.

1937) and in Wierzbnik (12 December 1937 – 18 September 1939). A German form states that he joined the occupation-era Polish Police on 15 October 1939, beginning his service in Starachowice. At the end of 1941, he held the German rank of Polizeihauptwachtmeister within this formation.¹⁴⁴ He was married and had a child. The commander of the Home Army post highlighted the cooperation of the local Blue Police commander with the conspirators:

If there was a shootout between [Home Army] soldiers and bandits, to avoid suspicion and pacification due to the constant surveillance by airmen in the observation tower built on the roof of the school [in Tarłów], Police Commander Pawelec would report to the military police that the police patrol he had sent out had encountered bandits and used up, for example, 60 rounds of ammunition. These 60 rounds were given to us, and they were very much needed for the 16 Mannlicher rifles that were part of the equipment of the [AK] team in Dąbrowa. Only the police had Mannlicher rifles. Apart from that, all rifles, heavy machine guns, and light machine guns used Mauser ammunition.¹⁴⁵

In a post-war personal questionnaire, Pawelec provided false information about his professional career prior to May 1945. He claimed that between 1936 and 1939, he was a deputy construction site manager at the Stalowa Wola steel-works, between 1940 and 1943, he worked for a private construction company in Lwów, and then for two years at a construction company in Zimna Woda. It was not until the 1960s that he admitted he had been a member of the Home Army. Between 1945 and 1947, he was employed at the starosty in Tarnobrzeg, and then changed jobs, completing his engineering studies in building materials technology at the Warsaw University of Technology in the early 1950s. From 1949 onward, he was permanently associated with the capital. As an engineer, he held various responsible positions in the construction industry. He had poor knowledge of

¹⁴⁴ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Józef Pawelec, 13 December 1941, p. 6.

¹⁴⁵ M.E. Niezgodziński, *Szczęściu trzeba pomagać!*, pp. 37–38.

German.¹⁴⁶ During the investigation conducted in 1971, in which he was a suspect, he testified as follows:

Immediately after completing my basic military service, I was sent for special training in Mosty Wielkie in Wołyń, where we were trained in methods of protecting the arms industry. From Mosty Wielkie, I was sent to Starachowice in the Kielce Voivodeship, where I worked in a special unit – a section of the State Police Headquarters – until the outbreak of World War II. I arrived in Starachowice in mid-1938. The unit I mentioned above was tasked with protecting the Starachowice factories, which, among other things, produced military equipment. After the outbreak of war, as a reserve second lieutenant, I was mobilised and went to Jarosław to the 39th Infantry Regiment. The Germans defeated us near Sokal, not far from the eastern border of Poland. After this defeat, I changed into civilian clothes and returned to Starachowice. In Starachowice, I joined a newly formed organisation called the ZWZ (Union of Armed Struggle) and worked at the Starachowice starosty (county office) as an economic clerk. On the recommendation of the ZWZ, I then joined the Polish Police in Starachowice. In 1940, I worked here as a civilian employee in the supply department. I did not have a weapon and did not wear a uniform. At the beginning of 1942, I was transferred to Tarłów in the then Iłża County to the position of commander of the Polish Police station. My transfer to Tarłów was agreed upon by the ZWZ and the county commander in Starachowice, Jan Antczak.¹⁴⁷

A comparison of this biography with the data recorded in the German personal form reveals a discrepancy in military rank. If Pawelec's post-war account was truthful, then he had falsely claimed to the Germans that he was a non-commissioned officer, although by 1 September 1939, he had already been promoted to his first officer rank. Later, in information provided to the law enforcement authori-

¹⁴⁶ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Personal questionnaire of Józef Pawelec, 20 October 1967, pp. 65–72.

¹⁴⁷ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Pawelec, 1 October 1971, pp. 433–434.

ties of the Polish People's Republic, he gave a date later than the actual one for his assignment to duty in Tarłów.

Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski was born on 1 January 1912 in Ostrożec, in Dubno County in Volhynia. In December 1941, he was a bachelor. By that time, he had completed seven years of primary school and was working as a typesetter. Between 1928 and 1933, he worked at a printing house in Łuck. From 1 November 1933 to 1 September 1935, he served in the Polish Army cavalry. He left the army as a non-commissioned officer. He was admitted to the State Police on 1 July 1937 and remained there, according to what he told the Germans, until 1 September 1939. During that period, he was assigned to a reserve company in Warsaw (1 July 1937 – 1 December 1937), a police academy (1 December 1937 – 1 May 1938) and a horse reserve company in Łódź (1 May 1938 – 1 September 1939). He joined the occupation-era Polish Police on 20 November 1939. He was first sent to Starachowice, and from 30 August 1940 to the police station in Tarłów.¹⁴⁸ In December 1941, he held the German rank of Polizeiwachtmeister. He later described his wartime experiences as follows:

The outbreak of World War II found me in Łódź. From Łódź, I travelled via Warsaw towards Lwów, where, near Bełżec, I was disarmed along with other police officers and then transported by the Germans to Kielce. There, we were accommodated in the stables of a horse artillery unit. In Kielce, the Germans announced that all police officers had to return to the towns where they had previously served, because they had to resume their work there. I also reported for duty and said that I had served in the Łódź unit of the mounted police reserve. Since I couldn't prove it with any documents, which I had destroyed earlier when I changed my uniform for civilian clothes, I asked two of my friends from the horse reserve in Katowice to certify that I was also a policeman. They confirmed this to the Germans, who then released me and ordered me to go to Łódź. It was sometime in November 1939 when I arrived in Łódź and reported for duty with the Polish Police. After a few days, along with a dozen or so other

¹⁴⁸ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, 2 December 1941, p. 179; M.E. Niezgodziński, *Szczęściu trzeba pomagać!*, pp. 80–81.

police officers, I was sent to Starachowice. [...] I stayed in Starachowice for about six months, after which I was transferred to Tarłów, where I served as a police officer until August 1943. At the beginning of that month, I escaped from the police station and joined a local Home Army forest unit commanded by “Szary,” whose surname I did not know then and still do not know. I remained in this unit until 28 October 1943.¹⁴⁹ Then, with the consent of “Szary” and equipped with the so-called false documents, I went to Warsaw, where I settled in Okęcie. [...] That is where I was when the war ended. From the moment I arrived in Warsaw until the liberation of Warsaw, I worked at Pawłowski’s marmalade factory. [...] I would like to emphasise that from the moment I arrived in Warsaw from the Home Army forest unit until I appeared before the Verification Commission in Łódź at the end of 1945, I used the name Longin Furmanek, born in 1914 in Warsaw-Czyste.¹⁵⁰

His Home Army commander, based in Tarłów, gave him the following assessment:

Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski made a name for himself as a righteous citizen and was quickly drawn into the underground movement. Armed with a rifle and dressed in a police uniform, he provided cover for large weapons transports and secured locations for briefings, training sessions, and lectures for non-commissioned officer courses. He himself enrolled in the Officer Training Course. He supported our night patrols by serving at the police station. In case of danger, his task was to signal the Volunteer Fire Brigade Guardhouse, where Commander Pluta consistently ensured that the appropriate officer was on duty.¹⁵¹

A pre-war policeman who served in the police before the outbreak of war and during the German occupation, at one point alongside Józef Pawelec, expressed the following opinion on the involvement of Blue Policemen in the service: “It

¹⁴⁹ He used the pseudonym “Forma” there.

¹⁵⁰ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, Kielce, 30 September 1971, p. 380.

¹⁵¹ M.E. Niezgodziński, *Szczęściu trzeba pomagać!*, p. 37.

seems indisputable to me that younger police officers were more committed to serving the Germans during the Nazi occupation than older police officers. It is difficult for me to say why this was the case.”¹⁵² It should be noted that the person who uttered these words was born in 1898, making him several years younger than most of the police officers from Tarłów, including Józef Pawelec. Yet this claim is challenged by the example of Bronisław Kutera, born in 1897, who is remembered for his zealous service to the Germans. His actions included shooting a Jewish woman searching for food outside the ghetto and pursuing Jews who hid after the ghetto’s liquidation, which led to the deaths of those he chased.

Aleksander Czechowicz was born on 15 January 1891 in Czusów, Miechów County. By December 1941, he was married with two children aged 17 and 20, who presumably lived with his wife in Łódź. He reported having a primary education and stated that his occupation was farm labourer. He did not serve in either the German or Polish armies, and it is unknown whether he fought in another army during World War I. From 15 November 1919 to 1 September 1939, he served in the State Police, stationed throughout in the 6th police district in Łódź. On 16 October 1939, he joined the occupation-era Polish Police. For a month, until 16 November, he was assigned to the 4th district of the German police, also in Łódź. From 17 November 1939 to 18 February 1940, he served in Starachowice. On that day, he arrived in Tarłów and joined the Polish Police station. By December 1941, he held the German rank of *Polizeiwachmeister*.¹⁵³ This is what he testified about his service thirty years later:

After the September defeat, I found myself in Starachowice, where at the end of 1939 or the beginning of 1940, I was again called up for service in the Polish Police. In the winter of 1939 or early 1940, together with [Franciszek] Cyran, Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski and [Antoni] Nowak, we were sent to Tarłów in what was then Iłża County. In Tarłów, we were joined by [Bronisław] Kutera, a pre-war policeman who also lived there. After a few weeks, [Jan] Liberski

¹⁵² AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Jan Gurba, 8 May 1971, p. 135.

¹⁵³ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Aleksander Czechowicz, 2 December 1941, p. 180.

arrived and assumed command of the Polish Police station. I do not recall who else served at the station at that time. German military police and Luftwaffe soldiers were also quartered in the local school, with around twelve military policemen and about five Luftwaffe soldiers stationed there. Our station was located together with the post office in a single-storey building on the market square. After about a year or a year and a half, Tadeusz [actually Józef] Pawelec replaced Commander Liberski. In late 1943, Pawelec fled with other policemen to join the partisans. At that time, Kutera and Ćwik were shot by the Germans. T. Ciemnoczułowski also escaped with Pawelec. [...] I did not flee the police station until the local population was displaced due to the approaching front in 1944. [...] some policemen from our station maintained contact with the local Home Army organisation. I had no contact with the Home Army.¹⁵⁴

Jan Ćwik, referred to as Johann in German documents, was born on 1 November 1898 in Sienno, in Iłża County. In December 1941, he was married and had a seven-year-old child. At that time, he stated that he had completed his primary education, that is seven years of elementary school. He knew Russian, both spoken and written. From 9 March 1919 to 10 September 1921, he served in the Polish Army in the 25th Infantry Regiment. He left the army as a non-commissioned officer. He joined the State Police on 28 June 1923 and remained there until 18 September 1939, serving successively in (Druskininkai) (28 June – 1 September 1923), Druja in Dzisna County (1 September 1923 – 1 March 1925), at the police academy in Stanisławów (1 March – 6 July 1925), in Uścierzyki in Kosów County (6 July – 1 November 1925) and in Jasienów in the same county (1 November 1925 – 18 September 1939). He joined the ranks of the occupation-era Polish Police on 1 June 1941, assigned to the station in Tarłów. Six months later, he held the German rank of Polizeihauptwachtmeister.¹⁵⁵ After the war, his wife claimed that he had been drafted into the Blue Police “as a result of an order

¹⁵⁴ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Aleksander Czechowicz, 17 November 1971, pp. 155–156.

¹⁵⁵ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of Polish Police, Johann Ćwik, 2 December 1941, p. 181.

by the German authorities and served in the rank of senior constable.¹⁵⁶ She also described certain events from her marriage that occurred during the war:

The late Jan Ćwik served at the police station in Uścieryski [!] until the outbreak of war in 1939, then he left for Sienno. In May 1941, he received a summons from the German authorities in Radom to join the Police because if he did not, a camp was waiting. On 1 June 1941, he joined the Polish Police and left Sienno for Tarłów, where he served, but [that was] for the benefit of the Polish State, because he joined the Polish Partisans in 1942.¹⁵⁷

The document illustrates the limited command of Polish of the policeman's wife, who had completed only a few years of elementary school. It does not, however, explain why Ćwik was not drafted into the Blue Police as early as autumn 1939, when he presumably returned to his hometown after fleeing the Soviet-occupied territories.

Romuald Zbigniew Dobiecki was born on 7 February 1921 in Drzewica, Tomaszów County. He was unmarried in December 1941, and his father was still living in Drzewica. By that time, Dobiecki had completed elementary school and three years of vocational commercial school, after which he worked as a clerk and acquired a limited knowledge of German. He did not serve in the Polish Army. On 15 May 1942, he joined the occupation-era Polish Police and was assigned to the Tarłów station as a police constable.¹⁵⁸ According to his testimony, he joined the Blue Police as a volunteer.¹⁵⁹ A month after starting his service, he was sent to Nowy Sącz for police training. Six months later, he returned to Tarłów, where he

¹⁵⁶ The statements made by his wife, known from post-war documents, do not specify that her main goal in 1948 was to rehabilitate her husband, who had been killed by the Germans in August 1943, and to obtain a widow's pension (*Archiwum Akt Nowych* [Central Archives of Modern Records, hereinafter AAN], Files concerning Jan Ćwik, Letter from Marcela Ćwik to the Rehabilitation and Qualification Commission for Former State Police Functionaries at the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, 22 December 1947, p. 258, copy obtained from Dr. Tomasz Domański).

¹⁵⁷ AAN, Files concerning Jan Ćwik, Life history of Jan Ćwik, written down by his wife Marcela Ćwik (née Magda, born on 26 March 1902 in Kosowo, later Stanisławów Voivodeship), [1947 or 1948], p. 261.

¹⁵⁸ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of Polish Police, Romuald Zbigniew Drobiecki, 16 May 1942, p. 182.

¹⁵⁹ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Romuald Drobiecki, 10 November 1971, p. 141.

again encountered the same police officers: Pawelec, Ciemnoczułowski, Cyran, Czechowicz, Ćwik, Grzesiak, Kutera, Nowak, and Wrona.¹⁶⁰

Saturnin Aleksander Jabłoński was born on 8 January 1915 in Tarłów. He was unmarried in 1941. After completing primary school, he trained as a bricklayer. From 16 February 1938 until September 1939, he served in the 6th Artillery Regiment of the Polish Army in Lwów, leaving the army with the rank of corporal. On 3 May 1942, he joined the occupation-era Polish Police and was assigned to the station in his hometown of Tarłów, with the rank of police constable.¹⁶¹

Bronisław Kutera, born on 15 November 1897, was from Lubienia, Iłża County. In December 1941, he was married and had three children aged four months, six, and eight. He completed six years of primary school and worked as a farm labourer. From 20 July 1919 to 7 December 1921, he served in the 39th Infantry Regiment of the Polish Army in Jarosław, leaving the service with the rank of private. On 1 May 1928, he was admitted to the State Police and served at the Tarłów station without interruption until the outbreak of World War II. There, on 1 November 1939, he was conscripted into the occupation-era Polish Police. By December 1941, he had risen to the rank of police sergeant.¹⁶² It is possible that Officer Kutera was overly zealous in carrying out the tasks assigned to him by the Germans. In the context of the operation against Soviet paratroopers, one of the witnesses testified:

as far as I know, the police officers did not want to shoot those three men and did not aim at them at all. I heard them talking among themselves, saying that it would be better if the men fled. However, there was a policeman from Tarłów by the name Kutera among them, and he shot them. Policeman Czechowicz also took part in the killing. Both of them collaborated with the Nazis and were later shot by order of the resistance movement.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of Polish Police, Saturnin Aleksander Jabłoński, 1 March 1942, p. 183.

¹⁶² AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of Polish Police, Bronisław Kutera, 2 December 1941, p. 184.

¹⁶³ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józef Kawalek, Kielce, 6 January 1970, p. 28.

It is difficult to determine the credibility of the witness, as we cannot be certain whether he saw who shot the Soviets. Kutera and Ćwik – not Czechowicz – deserted from the police in August 1943 but were discovered by the Germans and shot by them, and not by the Polish resistance movement.

Jan (Johann) Liberski was born on 25 May 1904 in Osterfeld, Recklinghausen County, Westphalia. In December 1941, he was married and had a seven-year-old child. He reported completing seven years of primary school and initially working as a miner. He was probably raised in Germany, as he was fluent in spoken and written German. His parents appear to have returned to Poland after World War I, since he served in the 56th Infantry Regiment of the Polish Army from October 1925 to April 1927, leaving the service as a non-commissioned officer. Very soon, on 1 July of that year, he joined the State Police and served as an officer until early September 1939. His postings included police stations in Poznań (July – 1 December 1927), Świerżeń (1 December 1927 – 1 October 1928), Pobiedziska (1 October 1928 – 1 April 1929), Poznań again (1 April – 1 May 1929), the police academy (1 May – 1 October 1929), and the Warsaw police criminal academy (1 May – 1 November 1935). From 1 May to 1 September 1939, he was assigned to the criminal police department in Poznań. After leaving Greater Poland, either by escape or displacement, he arrived in the General Governorate. There, on 15 January 1940, he joined the occupation-era Polish Police, initially assigned to the County Headquarters in Starachowice, and from 1 February 1940 to the police station in Tarłów. By December 1941, he held the rank of *Polizeimeister*.¹⁶⁴

We do not know whether Jan Liberski was related to Ignacy Liberski, the municipal translator in Tarłów.¹⁶⁵ This seems likely, as a municipal official was needed to cooperate with the Germans, and he may have learned the language in Westphalia.

Antoni (Anton) Nowak was born in Lwów on 13 June 1913. In December 1941, he was married and had a seven-month-old child. He reported completing seven years of primary education and working as an electrician. From 1 September 1934 to 1 September 1936, he served in the 6th Armoured Battalion

¹⁶⁴ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Johann Liberski, 2 December 1941, p. 185; AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Enquiry from the Citizens' Militia Voivodeship HQ (KW MO) in Kielce to the KW MO in Poznań regarding Jan Liberski, 23 June 1973, p. 233.

¹⁶⁵ M.E. Niezgodziński, *Szczęściu trzeba pomagać!*, p. 36.

of the Polish Army and was transferred to the reserves as a non-commissioned officer. A month after demobilisation, he was accepted into the State Police, where, until the outbreak of war, he served in the police reserve company in Warsaw (1 October 1936 – 1 April 1937), the police academy in Mosty Wielkie (1 April – 1 December 1937), and was eventually assigned to the police station in Sienno, Iłża County. On 15 October 1939, he enrolled in the Blue Police at the Sienno station, and on 15 October 1941, he was transferred to Tarłów. By then, he held the rank of police sergeant.¹⁶⁶ According to one of the policemen, Nowak was probably shot by the German mayor of Sienno, named Kinetz, on the day of the occupiers' evacuation from the town.¹⁶⁷

Franciszek Cyran was born on 1 November 1895 in Łódź. In December 1941, he was married and had two children aged 18 and 20. He reported completing only four years of primary school and noted that, before joining the State Police, he had worked as a weaver. From 11 January 1919 to 20 February 1922, he served in the military police of the 4th Infantry Division of the Polish Army and was discharged as a noncommissioned officer. On 15 January 1925, he joined the State Police and remained there until 6 September 1939, first in Łódź (15 January 1925 – 1 May 1934) and later in Ruda Pabianicka. On 27 October 1939, he was serving at the police station in Tarłów with the rank of Wachtmeister.¹⁶⁸

Mieczysław Religa, who served in Tarłów after the tragic events described in this article, falls outside the scope of this study, although he, like other police officers, represented a danger to a Jewish child hiding in the village since autumn 1942. Religa was born on 1 October 1921 in Sienno, Iłża County. By December 1941, he was unmarried and childless, had completed seven years of primary education, and was working as a lathe operator. He did not serve in the Polish Army, but on 16 March 1944, he joined the Blue Police and was stationed in Tarłów.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Antoni Nowak, 2 December 1941, p. 186.

¹⁶⁷ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect, Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, 28 September 1971, p. 420.

¹⁶⁸ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Franciszek Cyran, 16 December 1941, p. 187.

¹⁶⁹ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Mieczysław Religa, 16 March 1944, p. 202.

Romuald Drobiecki, who arrived in Tarłowo in May 1941, also met police officers named Wrona and Grzesiak. He described them as elderly men.¹⁷⁰ The documents confirm the presence of such persons at the local police station, but at an earlier date.

Adam Grzesiak was born on 11 December 1888 in the village of Cychry, municipality of Błonie, Grójec County. He completed just three years of primary school and claimed to be a miller by profession. He was married, and in 1941, his two children were 13 and 15 years old. At that time, his wife and children were living in Łódź. He did not serve in the Polish Army, though – given his age – this does not rule out earlier service in one of the armies of the partitioning powers. From 15 September 1919 to 12 September 1939, he served in the State Police, first in Warsaw (15 September 1919 – 1 March 1928), then in Łódź (1 March 1928 – 5 September 1939). On 6 September 1939, he was evacuated and reported ending his service six days later. He returned to Łódź, where on 17 October 1939 he began performing police duties under German orders. The Germans sent him to Starachowice, where he arrived on 21 November and remained until 5 December of that year. On 6 December, he appeared at the police station in Tarłów, from where he was transferred to the nearby town of Bałtów on 6 August 1940. At the beginning of December 1941, he held the German rank of Hauptwachtmeister.¹⁷¹

Józef Wrona was born on 23 October 1891 in Brody, a village in the municipality of Styków, within Iłża County. By the age of fifty, he was married and the father of a twenty-seven-year-old daughter. He did not report any formal general education. In the education section of his personal form, the official recorded “selftaught” (*eigene Ausbildung*). Wrona had previously worked as a labourer. He spoke Russian, which he had most likely learned because he lived in the Russian partition. He did not serve in the Polish Army, but on 1 July 1919, he joined the State Police and remained in its ranks until 8 September of that year. He was assigned to the garrisons in Sieradz (1 July 1919 – 1 August 1934) and Łódź (1 August 1934 – 8 September 1939). On 17 October 1939, he returned to service,

¹⁷⁰ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Romuald Drobiecki, 10 November 1971, p. 141.

¹⁷¹ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Adam Grzesiak, 2 December 1941, p. 174.

this time under the German command. On 21 November of that year, on their orders, he arrived in Starachowice, from where, after two weeks, on 5 December, he reported to the police station in Tarłów. Like Grzesiak, he served at the Blue Police station in Bałtów from 6 August 1940. He was still there a year and a half later as a Wachtsmeister.¹⁷²

Another officer who served in Tarłów together with Grzesiak and Wrona was Wojciech Majerczak, born on 6 October 1913 in Szczawnica Wyżna, Nowy Targ County. By December 1941, he had not yet started a family. He completed seven years of primary school and worked as a labourer. In 1935–1936, he fulfilled his basic military service, attaining the rank of corporal. Three months after being discharged to the reserves, he joined the State Police, serving in Herby Stare (7 December 1936 – 30 June 1937), Mosty Wielkie (1 July – 14 December 1937), and Starachowice (14 December 1937 – 6 September 1939). Between 6 and 20 September 1939, he took part in the ordered evacuation. On 20 October 1939, the Germans admitted him to the county headquarters of the Blue Police in Starachowice. From there, he was sent to Tarłów on 18 February 1940 and to the police station in Bałtów on 6 August of the same year. He was still serving there as a Wachtsmeister in December 1941.¹⁷³

In 1942 or 1943, the police officers Ćwik and Kutera began cooperating with the Home Army. This fact came to the Germans' knowledge, which both officers realised. They decided to desert the Blue Police force and left their service without permission. Under unknown circumstances, the Germans found out their whereabouts in the village of Skarbka in the municipality of Pętkowice, located in Wierzbnik-Starachowice County (formerly Iłża), surrounded the fugitives, and shot them on 8 August 1943.¹⁷⁴ Officer Cyran reportedly died of an illness during the war.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Józef Wrona, 2 December 1941, p. 177.

¹⁷³ AIPN, GK, 105/127, Personal card of the functionary of the Polish Police, Wojciech Majerczak, 2 December 1941, p. 175.

¹⁷⁴ AAN, Files concerning Jan Ćwik, Certificate issued by the mayor of the municipality of Siemno regarding the circumstances of Jan Ćwik's death, 28 November 1946, p. 259.

¹⁷⁵ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Romuald Drobiecki, 10 November 1971, p. 142.

The widows of Kutera and Ćwik, having no means of support in Tarłów, and probably also taking into account the local population's knowledge of the negative aspects of their husbands' activity in the German service, decided after the war to leave and settle in other regions of the country.

After presenting selected information about the staff at the Blue Police station in Tarłów, we can make some general observations. It is noteworthy that at least six officers who had worked before the war in the territories incorporated into the Reich in October 1939 were stationed at the Tarłów post; five of them had been in Łódź when the war broke out, and one in Poznań. This indicates that, apart from Kutera, the officers had no prior ties to the local residents, and most of them were unfamiliar with each other beforehand. This was beneficial from the Germans' point of view, as they had to have limited trust in each other, not knowing how their new colleague would behave under conditions of terror when confronted with attempts to break the wartime regulations.

Pre-war professional, middle-aged police officers formed the majority. Several entered service even before Governor General Hans Frank formally summoned them to report for duty in the police force. It can be assumed that those recruited in October or November 1939 reported when summoned. One of the pre-war officers was not recruited until June 1941; he may have enlisted voluntarily, although, after the war, his wife claimed otherwise. The same applies to the youngest officers who joined the Blue Police in March and May 1942. Three pre-war police officers had previously sworn at least two oaths: first as soldiers of the Polish Army, and later upon joining the State Police. By carrying out German orders directed against Polish citizens, two of them violated those oaths, while the others remained loyal to the oath they had taken before the German occupiers. Pawelec's appointment as commander was influenced, at least in part, by his higher education, although Liberski possessed stronger police training and was fluent in German. Apart from the two youngest officers, all the Blue Police officers had served in Tarłów for most of the time that the ghetto existed in this village. Only one of them knew the village and its inhabitants from before the war.

The Blue Police was used by the Germans to perform various tasks. During post-war investigations, in which some officers and residents of the Tarłów municipality and neighbouring areas testified, the names of the members of several

family-based gangs that had robbed the local population – both Christians and Jews – were identified.¹⁷⁶ Among them were brothers Stanisław and Józef Osojca, who had been sentenced to long prison terms before the war for banditry and robbery. In September 1939, they were released from the high-security prison in Święty Krzyż and returned home. After some time, the Germans issued an arrest warrant for them. The Blue Police arrested Stanisław and took him back to prison, where he died. Józef managed to avoid arrest by the Tarłów police officers led by Liberski. The Lipiec family maintained contact with the bandits. They stored the stolen goods, and a man wearing clothes from the robbery was killed by the Germans on their property.¹⁷⁷

In addition to their standard duties of combating ordinary crime and preventing or suppressing riots, the Blue Police carried out German orders and persecuted those regarded as enemies of the Third Reich, regardless of nationality or pre-war citizenship. Evidence suggests that they generally sought to avoid harming Poles, acting against them only on the explicit instructions of the Germans and particularly when German personnel were present in the village. This may explain why, after the war, dozens of Polish witnesses who had not suffered repression at their hands due to their overzealous service to the Germans offered favourable testimony on their behalf. In the case of Jews, the situation may have been different; we know of two incidents in which, it seems, the Blue Police took actions that could have been avoided. The first was the shooting of a Jewish woman who left the ghetto in search of food for her family. Witnesses recalled her husband's despair and the widespread discussion of this event, including among local Christians. The second condemnable act was the round-up of Jews hiding in the area after the liquidation of the Tarłów ghetto. This will be discussed further later.

In 1948, the County Headquarters in Starachowice instructed the commander of the Citizens' Militia station in Tarłów to collect information concerning Jan Ćwik. He fulfilled the order, though the findings remain somewhat puzzling. The only incriminating evidence recorded about the deceased policeman was his involvement in a pursuit of Soviet paratroopers in 1942, during which two were

¹⁷⁶ M.E. Niezgodziński, *Szczęściu trzeba pomagać!*, p. 32.

¹⁷⁷ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Verdict in the case of Józef Pawelec, Kielce, 31 October 1949, pp. 190–192.

killed and the third was handed over to the German authorities. It was further established that he had accepted bribes from individuals engaged in clandestine livestock slaughter or the illicit trade in flour.¹⁷⁸ The PUBP in Starachowice also did not raise any significant allegations against Ćwik.¹⁷⁹ The members of the presidium of the Tarłów Municipal National Council signed the following opinion:

The aforementioned [Jan Ćwik] was an upright Pole who did not participate in any roundups or manhunts. During the German occupation, while serving at the State Police station in Tarłów, he did not act to the detriment of the Polish State. He conducted himself impeccably and did no harm to anyone. He was a valuable citizen and his attitude towards Polish citizens was good.¹⁸⁰

This latter opinion is detached from reality. We can only speculate as to what determined it. However, most of the documented information about Constable Ćwik from 1948 does not mention the fate and extermination of 7,000 Jews who stayed in Tarłów for a long time or only a few weeks or days, between 1939 and 1942.

In 1949, an investigation was conducted against Józef Pawelec. It concerned, among other things, the denunciation of Stanisław Osojca, a sympathiser of the Polish Workers' Party, to the German military police in 1942. Osojca was sent to a concentration camp, where he lost his life. Józef Jarosz, suspected of having links to an independence organisation, was also reported to the Germans, but managed to avoid arrest and later had to go into hiding. At least several other people of Polish nationality or Soviet citizenship were persecuted by the Germans and even killed as a result of Commander Pawelec's activity. Pawelec and Ciemnoczułowski took part in the shooting of a member of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) at the end of November 1942. Pawelec and several of his subordinates from the police station belonged to the Tarłów Home Army company. They sometimes passed

¹⁷⁸ AAN, Files concerning Jan Ćwik, Opinion of the commander of the MO station in Tarłów on Jan Ćwik, 22 June 1948, p. 271 (copy provided by Tomasz Domański).

¹⁷⁹ AAN, Files concerning Jan Ćwik, Letter from the PUBP in Starachowice to the Rehabilitation Commission at the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, 28 June 1948, p. 272 (copy provided by Tomasz Domański).

¹⁸⁰ AAN, Files concerning Jan Ćwik, Opinion of the Presidium of the Municipal National Council in Tarłów, 14 June 1948, p. 274b (copy provided by Tomasz Domański).

on information about known dates of German anti-conspiracy operations to its commander.

The Appellate Court, in its 1949 ruling, and the Supreme Court, in its 1950 ruling, acquitted Pawelec of the charges, but did not deny his membership in the Blue Police.¹⁸¹ It is worth noting that the indictment did not mention the involvement of the Blue Police in German anti-Jewish activities. Although Pawelec's police activity had been known to the law enforcement authorities of the so-called People's Republic of Poland since the late 1940s, he falsified his biography in official documents for the next two decades. Pawelec falsified details of his professional activity between 1936 and 1945 in personal questionnaires and curricula vitae, omitting his police service in the pre-war and occupation periods. He supplied misleading information, and notably, there is no indication that these claims were ever challenged. Despite this, he went on to hold successive positions of responsibility within Warsaw's construction institutions. His acquittal in the court of first instance rested in part on letters affirming that he had not harmed the local population, signed separately by the former commander of the People's Guard in the Tarłów area and by thirty-one residents of that village.¹⁸² The dramatic events of the German occupation surfaced also during a Security Department investigation in 1953–1954, which examined the activity of the Home Army in Tarłów and the surrounding areas. It remains to be established whether Józef Pawelec was recruited as a secret informant by the political police at that time and whether he relied on their protection when submitting false information in official personal documents. However, after several years, the events of the war resurfaced once more. As is known, even before the anti-Jewish campaign of 17 October 1942, the Germans decided to spare the lives of a group of JOD members temporarily. These individuals collected the bodies of those murdered on the way to the railway

¹⁸¹ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Official memo, Kielce, 22 June 1971, pp. 222–225; AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Kielce, 31 October 1949, pp. 227–228; AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Judgment of the Supreme Court, 24 March 1950, p. 229; AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Minutes documenting the inspection of case file IK5/49 of the former Appellate Court in Kielce, concerning Józef Pawelec, 18 January 1972, pp. 178–179.

¹⁸² AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Statements by Józef Jarosz (9 December 1947), 31 residents of Tarłów (13 January 1949), 26 residents of Helenów (20 January 1949) and 36 residents of Czekarzewice (20 January 1949), pp. 184, 185, 186, 187.

station in Jasice, as well as those killed in the ghetto, either while being driven to the assembly point or later when they were discovered in hiding. It was most likely they who dug a mass grave for approximately two hundred victims of those events in the Tarłów Jewish cemetery.¹⁸³ Together with members of the Volunteer Fire Brigade, they emptied houses in the ghetto of their belongings and sorted the items that had been removed. They were tasked with carrying the equipment designated by the Germans for auction to the local population. They realised that their days were numbered. They were in relatively good physical condition, and at least some of them were familiar with the area and its inhabitants. At least six chose to escape, and they succeeded. Alfons Himmel claimed that twenty Jews from the work detail (*Arbeitskommando*) had escaped. They were helped, among others, by Jan Krawczyk, Ignacy's son, who lived in Kochanów near Tarłów, by the forest. Krawczyk, a corporal, and belonged to the local Home Army unit at the time.¹⁸⁴ He was a pre-war professional non-commissioned officer in the Polish Army.

Two weeks after the liquidation of the ghetto, Blue Policemen from Tarłów appeared at Jan Krawczyk's house to arrest Jewish fugitives. They tried to escape, two of them were shot in the yard in front of the house, the third ran through the fields for almost a kilometre, but he was also hit by the policemen's bullets. A witness described the last moments of the man's life:

I remember the early hours of 21 November 1942, when gunshots rang out near my house. Curious, I stepped outside and saw a man darting from the woods that hid my view of Jan Krawczyk's home. He was moving quickly eastwards. Two "Blue" policemen were chasing him, dropping to one knee from time to time and firing their rifles at the fugitive [...] After some two hours, I saw Jan Krawczyk's horse-drawn cart heading towards Tarłów. There was something

¹⁸³ On the inner side of the fence that now separates the Jewish cemetery from the road, there is a visible depression in the ground, several metres long and more than two metres wide. This area originally formed the rear, unused part of the cemetery, where space was available to dig a large burial pit. It can be assumed that the remains of the victims of the crimes of 19 October 1942 and the days that followed lie in this very place.

¹⁸⁴ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Letter from the Headquarters of the Citizens' Militia in Kielce to the Headquarters of the Citizens' Militia in Lipsko, 30 July 1971, p. 273; AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Memo documenting the inspection of case files concerning Tadeusz Badowski *alias* Budzyń, 31 August 1971, pp. 367–368.

on the cart, but I don't know what. The police officers mentioned above were walking next to the cart. I don't know who was driving it. I don't remember if I saw Jan Krawczyk then.¹⁸⁵

Police officer Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, interrogated as a participant in the roundup, testified that Krawczyk himself had reported the Jews' whereabouts to the police station. More precisely, he informed the commander Józef Pawelec about it.¹⁸⁶ The former policeman testified:

Through Edward Niezgodziński, we proposed to the Jews that we would take them across the Vistula River and transfer them to a forest unit in the Lublin region. The Jews firmly refused and continued to hide at Krawczyk's house. Our proposal was motivated by the belief that, sooner or later, the Germans would discover the hiding place and, as a result, would certainly murder the entire Krawczyk family. Moreover, we, the police, feared trouble with the Germans, since Jews were hiding so close to the police station without our knowledge. For the Germans, such a situation would have seemed unbelievable.¹⁸⁷

That is all from the witness. Meanwhile, when deciding to discontinue the investigation, the prosecutor came up with a more elaborate justification for the actions taken by the Blue Police officers against the Jews on Krawczyk's farm. We read in it:

The shooting of Jewish police officers by PP officers in Tarłów was considered a necessity at that time, arising from fears that cooperation between Polish Police officers and the resistance movement would be exposed – something the Jews in hiding were aware of. The Jewish police officers in hiding, who were armed, did not follow the rules of conspiracy. They walked around the village with

¹⁸⁵ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Stanisław Rup, 6 November 1971, pp. 131, 132.

¹⁸⁶ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Memo documenting the review of court files concerning Tadeusz Badowski *alias* Budzyń, 31 August 1971, p. 368.

¹⁸⁷ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, 28 September 1971, p. 421.

weapons in their hands, accosting residents, and they also knew members of the resistance movement, including Blue Policemen. They refused to join the underground organisation or cross the Vistula River. Fear of German reprisals for harbouring Jews, as well as fear that the Germans might capture them and thereby expose the Polish Police's links with the resistance movement, made it necessary to decide to liquidate them.¹⁸⁸

Ciemnoczułowski wrote that Jews "were hiding near Tarłów." The transcript of his interrogation does not mention that Jews, armed and not observing the rules of conspiracy, were walking around the village and accosting people. In this way, the prosecutor independently supplemented the set of factors motivating the decision to shoot the fugitives. Those given by Ciemnoczułowski boiled down to concerns about the safety of Krawczyk's family and the Blue Police officers.

On the indicated day, several policemen went to Jan Krawczyk's house, called him outside, and ordered the Jews to surrender without resistance. The Jews were staying in the barn, did not obey this order, and instead attempted to escape.¹⁸⁹ Krawczyk's neighbour heard the shots, left his farmyard and saw a Jew from Tarłów running across the field, pursued by two Blue Policemen, Kutera and Ćwik, who were shooting at him. The fugitive was shot dead by the aforementioned policemen in front of the witness, about 500 metres from Krawczyk's farm. The policemen shot two other Jews on the farm.¹⁹⁰ Witnesses reported that the two men who were shot were Jews from Tarłów named Koń and Mandelbaum.¹⁹¹ Policemen Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, Czesław Czechowicz, and Franciszek Cyran likewise took part in the Kochanów operation.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Decision to discontinue the investigation against Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski and Józef Pawelec, 25 April 1972, p. 221.

¹⁸⁹ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, 21 January 1953, p. 373.

¹⁹⁰ The testimony was given in January 1953 by Stanisław Rup from the village of Kochanów (AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Memo documenting the review of court files concerning Tadeusz Badowski *alias* Budzyń, 31 August 1971, p. 369).

¹⁹¹ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Extract from the minutes of the interrogation of Julian Krawczyk, 9 January 1954, p. 374; AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Extract from the minutes of the interrogation of Zygmunt Krzyżanowski, 21 January 1954, p. 369.

¹⁹² AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, 21 January 1953, p. 373.

Zygmunt Krzyżanowski and two other farmers from Tarłów buried the bodies. For unknown reasons, they were not buried in the Jewish cemetery. In the early 1970s, the militia described the burial sites of Jews shot by Blue Police officers on 21 November 1942: “One of them was buried in the Wólczanski forest near the place where he died. The other two Jews were buried near the road leading from Tarłów to Ożarów, opposite Krawczyk’s buildings, about 50-60 metres south of Krawczyk’s field.”¹⁹³ According to at least one witness, three Jews managed to escape from the encirclement.¹⁹⁴ There were too few Blue Police officers to stop them.

On the night of 18–19 March 1943, someone killed Jan Krawczyk.¹⁹⁵ He was tied to a tree on his property and beaten to death with sticks. His wife, Leokadia, recounted the story. She identified Jews as the perpetrators of the crime. We do not know why the woman survived. Sources are silent on whether she was not at home at the time, whether she hid, or whether the perpetrators simply decided to let her live. In any case, the information reached Ciemnoczułowski, who passed it on to Home Army company commander Edward Niezgodziński and police commander Józef Pawelec. A decision was made to liquidate the Jews – in other words, to shoot them. The credibility of Leokadia Krawczyk’s words was not checked. Of course, her husband’s death was a fact; Ciemnoczułowski had seen his body.¹⁹⁶

Witnesses indicated that three Jewish policemen were shot dead in the forest by the road from Tarłów to the village of Potoczek. The commander of the combat group ordered to carry out this execution confirmed that it was carried out by Home Army soldiers under the command of Second Lieutenant Tadeusz Badowski “Palma” on the orders of the commander of the Tarłów Home Army post, Edward Niezgodziński “Wilk.”¹⁹⁷ “Wilk” was to obtain the consent of the

¹⁹³ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Letter from the MO County Headquarters to the MO Voivodeship Headquarters in Kielce, 4 September 1971, p. 383.

¹⁹⁴ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Stanisław Rup, 6 November 1971, p. 132.

¹⁹⁵ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Julian Krawczyk, 9 January 1954, p. 375.

¹⁹⁶ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, 28 September 1971, pp. 421–422. After the war, Leokadia Krawczyk remarried and left Tarłów with her husband.

¹⁹⁷ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Tadeusz Badowski, 9 November 1971, pp. 137–138. In 1954, Badowski was sentenced to five years in prison for his participation in the killing of the aforementioned Jews (*ibid.*, p. 139). Tadeusz Badowski, son of Józef and Stanisława, was born on 4 June 1905 in Grodziec near Będzin. Fearing the Germans after the Polish Defensive War of 1939, he left his homeland and took refuge with his aunt Janina Jasińska in the village of Pętkowice. His brother Marian also settled there. Until 1943, both helped their aunt on her farm. In Pętkowice, at the turn of

Home Army district command for this. The sentence was passed because Jews were blamed for the murder of Jan Krawczyk, a Home Army soldier.¹⁹⁸ The liquidation group also included Marian Badowski “Fuks” (brother of “Palma”). One of the Jews killed was Jankiel Brukirer, the son of a textile shop owner in Tarłów. The testimonies of former Home Army soldiers from 1952–1953 also gave the names of the other victims: Tanachowicz and Dydia.¹⁹⁹ Before their death, they hid on Stanisław Kucharski’s farm in Wólka Tarłowska.²⁰⁰ Sixty years later, Niezgodziński described the circumstances of the operation as follows:

After several months [?] of clean-up work, six Jewish policemen fled to the forest. They stayed mainly in the area around the village of Kozłówek. They occupied a cottage they had found, ordered the owner to keep watch so they would not be in danger, and camped there for several days, requiring him to prepare food for them. They set up ambushes on the road and took money from people travelling along this route to Ostrowiec to buy goods. Despite various attempts to persuade them to move to another area, to join a forest group, etc., they rejected such proposals.

One day, military police from Lipsko came to the (Blue) police station in Tarłów and took the entire unit to assist in surrounding Józef Krawczyk’s forester’s lodge in Wólka Tarłowska. Inside the lodge were Jewish police officers – three managed to escape, while three were killed in the ensuing crossfire.

It was impossible to determine who had informed the military police about the whereabouts of the Jews (anyone could have notified them by telephone from one of the numerous telephones in post offices, offices, sawmills, etc. in the

1939 and 1940, they joined the Union of Armed Struggle (ZWZ). They were under the command of the ZWZ-AK in Tarłów. Tadeusz took the pseudonym “Palma” (Palm tree) and Marian took the pseudonym “Fuks” (Fluke) (AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Tadeusz Badowski, 9 November 1971, p. 137).

¹⁹⁸ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, Łódź, 21 January 1953, p. 373.

¹⁹⁹ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Memo documenting the review of court files concerning Edward Niezgodziński, 19 August 1971, p. 342; AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, The verdict in the case of Tadeusz Badowski, 4 June 1954, p. 371.

²⁰⁰ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Information of the KP MO in Lipsko for the KW MO in Kielce, 28 July 1971, p. 330; AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 1, Memo documenting the review of court files concerning Tadeusz Badowski *alias* Budzyń, 31 August 1971, pp. 367–368.

area). After a few days, the three Jews returned to the forester's lodge and stabbed Krawczyk to death with pitchforks. Józef Krawczyk was a platoon commander of the local Home Army team, so I immediately sent a report to the District with a request to send a forest group to eliminate this threat. In response, I received a sharp letter telling me to deal with the matter on my own.

Through the forester Michał Wołowicz, I convinced the Jews that after this crime, they could no longer count on the favour of the local people, and that on a specific day, a unit of the so-called *spaleni* [compromised Home Army members, known in Polish as *spaleni* (burnt) – K.D.] would be crossing the Vistula River, and they could join them. Of course, Wołowicz did not know that this unit consisted of people chosen by me, unknown to the local Jews, under the command of Second Lieutenant Tadeusz Badowski “Palma” and in the top three were Marian Badowski “Fuks,” Janusz Brandys “Porat,” etc. These three [Jewish] policemen reported to the designated place and were shot by the above-mentioned individuals. From the operation, I received their weapons and 5 USD, which came in handy for purchasing paper for the newsletter that was just being published.²⁰¹

In this version, Niezgodziński misrepresented the facts in several places. It is difficult to imagine that he did not know that it was his subordinate who reported the Jews to the police station. The operation was carried out solely by Polish police officers; the Germans did not participate. The Jews could not have spent several months cleaning up the ghetto, since the deportation took place on 19 October and the round-up of fugitive members of the JOD on 21 November 1942. The Jews who survived returned to Krawczyk not after a few days, but after almost five months. Since they forced peasants to feed and shelter them, why would they attack people travelling to Ostrowiec in broad daylight? This would have provoked a response from the German military police and the Blue Police. The basic condition for survival on the so-called Aryan side in the Radom District was cooperation with individual or organised Poles. It is unlikely that the Jews would have rejected the offer to join the forest unit, as doing so would have increased their chances of sur-

²⁰¹ M.E. Niezgodziński, *Szczęściu trzeba pomagać!*, p. 37.

vival. Their alleged refusal is inconsistent with their acceptance of the proposal to cross to the eastern bank of the Vistula, particularly after the killing of Krawczyk, a member of the Home Army. Only a few details in Niezgodziński's account can be regarded as factual; the remainder appears to be confabulation driven by motives that remain unclear.

Also, Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski claimed in 1971 that the Jews refused to join the Polish underground. If this were the case, their motives are hard to fathom. Perhaps they had information about the partisans that made them fear them? However, this is only a hypothesis unsupported by evidence. The fact is, however, that according to Niezgodziński, as many as seven officers of the Blue Police belonged to the local Home Army company.²⁰² Together with several dozen other underground soldiers, they were able to effectively help at least a few Jews. Niezgodziński does not mention that he took any action to save any of the known Jews, whether local or those who arrived after September 1939.

Aleksander Czechowicz managed to avoid giving evidence about his service in the Blue Police until November 1971. Then, probably after receiving appropriate advice from his defence attorney, he invoked Article 166(1) of the Criminal Code and refused to answer questions about his knowledge of the dark side of the Tarłowo police station. On the day of his testimony, he was 81 years old.²⁰³

With an investigation underway and evidence pointing to the involvement of Blue Policemen in Tarłów and the surrounding area in wartime murders, Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski committed suicide on 27 January 1972. He threw himself under a train; no third parties were found to have been involved.²⁰⁴ A former police officer took his own life two days after being released from custody. The co-defendant, engineer Józef Pawelec, consistently denied the charges. In view of the death of one of the defendants and the lack of clear evidence against the other, the investigation was discontinued and Pawelec was cleared of the charges against him.

²⁰² The following police officers belonged to the Tarłów Home Army company: Officer-in-training Józef Pawelec, Corporal Tadeusz Ciemnoczułowski, Platoon Commander Aleksander Czechowicz, Platoon Commander Kutera, Platoon Commander Cyran, Platoon Commander Ćwik, and Corporal Drobiecki (M.E. Niezgodziński, *Szczęściu trzeba pomagać!*, p. 155).

²⁰³ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Aleksander Czechowicz, 17 November 1971, pp. 156–157.

²⁰⁴ AIPN Ki, 012/107, vol. 2, Official memo, 2 February 1972, p. 206.

Jewish Order Service (Żydowska Służba Porządkowa, ŻSP),
also known as the Jewish Ghetto Police

Estera Gold's testimony describes the realities of life in the settlement between September 1939 and June 1942. Among other things, we read:

This was the result of reports made by Jews who, out of jealousy, denounced the wealthier residents of the town. When there were no wealthy people left, they denounced the moderately wealthy, and so on. They received gifts from every soul and were very zealous in their activity. Hersz Tanachower. I don't remember any other names. All of them later became policemen, to our detriment. [...]

The Judenrat collected double the amount from us. When the Germans demanded 5,000 zlotys, they collected 10,000 from us, and our town was very poor. These contributions were a terrible nuisance. The Germans threatened that if they did not receive the demanded sums, they would create a ghetto, and they kept extorting money from us. Finally, the ghetto was established, and the unforgettable rule of the Jewish police began. We went to forced labour 7 km outside Tarłów. We dug pits 6 m deep and extracted gravel.²⁰⁵ The Judenrat robbed us of our rations of flour, marmalade, etc. Songs ridiculing the Judenrat were written, which we sang on our way to work. We were forbidden to go to the countryside to trade. There was famine in the town. We would sneak into the countryside to earn some money. Polish boys often denounced us. As a result of these denunciations, the Germans would come, often only after a month, to take the "guilty" ones away to their death. That's how my father was caught. And they would have certainly shot him, because he had already dug his own grave, if it hadn't been for the intervention of the village leader, who bribed them with vodka. We also worked in the manor house and in the fields.²⁰⁶

Once, the Judenrat summoned us to work. We did not suspect anything bad, so we reported for duty. It turned out that it was a trick on the part of the Judenrat. The SS demanded that people be sent to Skarżysko. We were herded

²⁰⁵ The witness writes either about the shooting range set up near Tarłów or about the phosphorite mine located near the village of Chałupki.

²⁰⁶ Estera Gold is referring to the estate in Potoczek belonging to Janusz Gombrowicz, brother of the writer Witold Gombrowicz.

into a prison and held there for six days. No one from our families was allowed to see us, so I left without even saying goodbye to my parents.

The Jewish police guarded us very diligently. I never saw my parents again. We had no luggage. We were not warned that we had to leave the town, and seventy of us were thrown into a car. The police threw bread into the car; the stronger ones grabbed several loaves, while the weaker ones had to do without bread. This was accompanied by beatings. Finally, we set off, seventy of us in a closed car. On a hot day, we were suffocating from the lack of air and cramped conditions. We were forced to stay in our seats, keeping a metre's distance from the two Germans who escorted us. One of them put on an air of friendliness, seemingly allowing us to step out of the car at stops to get some fresh air. But the other guard, a good man, warned us secretly not to do so, because his companion was only waiting for an opportunity to shoot us in the back. Finally, after eight hours of torment, we arrived in Skarżysko. It was June 1942.²⁰⁷

The local Roman Catholic priest, Rev. Jan Madejski, recalled:

To maintain order in the ghetto, a special Jewish police force was established, armed with wooden batons and consisting of young Jews whom the Germans promised better chances of survival. Jewish police officers were often very cruel to their fellow Jews in the presence of the Germans.²⁰⁸

The comments on the Jewish order service, commonly referred to as the “Jewish police,” contained in the testimonies of Estera Gold and Rev. Jan Madejski, are among the few that mention the functioning of this formation in Tarłów. We do not know how many people were involved in it or who was its commander. Gold mentioned only one policeman, Hersz Tanachower. We do not find this surname in the pre-war records of Tarłów Jews. However, hairdressers Icek Tanachowicz and Lejbuś Tanachowicz are listed there, so perhaps Gold meant someone from their family. In their post-war testimonies, Poles mentioned several other policemen,

²⁰⁷ AŻIH, 301, vol. 1067, Testimony of Estera Gold, pp. 1, 2 (manuscript).

²⁰⁸ Memoirs of Rev. Jan Madejski held at the rectory of the Holy Trinity Church in Tarłów.

among them Jankiel Brukirer. In fact, a cloth merchant bearing this surname lived in Tarłów before the war. The name Mandelbaum was also mentioned, which was very common in the local community; in the early 1930s, sixteen professionally active residents of the settlement bore this name. The witness gave the name Koń, but perhaps it was Iser Kohn, who worked as a carpenter before the war.²⁰⁹

In one of the Tarłowo Registry Office books, we find two separate entries concerning the deaths of Dawid Horowicz (aged 48, a merchant by profession) and Abram Feljszakier (aged 38, a shoemaker by profession).²¹⁰ They died “as a result of a heart attack” on the same day (27 April 1942) and at the same time (11:00 a.m.). Both facts were reported simultaneously on 19 August 1942 by two witnesses: Herszek Tanachowicz (aged 25, a hairdresser by profession) and Izrael Mandelbaum (aged 32, a chauffeur by profession). One can only guess what the real cause of the simultaneous death of these middle-aged men was. It was probably not a “heart attack.” However, the records in the Civil Registry Office book most likely contain data on at least two members of the Tarłów Jewish order service, as indicated by the coincidence of their names with those mentioned in other source materials in the context of the functioning of the JOD. For unknown reasons, there are no other entries in the Civil Registry records about people murdered in Tarłów by the German occupation-era police forces before 19 October 1942. The names of people shot during the deportation operation carried out on that day were also not entered into the records. German military policeman Alfons Himmel testified:

In November 1942, I received an order to clean up after the Jews had been displaced from Tarłów. Twenty Jews were left for me to do the work. One evening, I received a telephone call informing me that the Gestapo from Radom would be coming for these Jews the next morning. I informed the Jews of this, telling them: if they wanted to escape, they should do so that night. The next day, the house where they lived was empty. This incident was known throughout Tarłów.

²⁰⁹ APK, UWK, vol. 1668, Lists of fee payers to the Jewish Religious Community in Tarłów from 1929, 1930, 1931 and 1932, pp. 1–433.

²¹⁰ *Archiwum Urzędu Gminy w Tarłowie* (Archives of the Municipal Office in Tarłów), *Urząd Stanu Cywilnego* (Civil Registry Office, USC), Book for non-Christian denominations for the year 1942, n.p.

These Jews lived on the market square, in the third house from the restaurant owned by the widow of a Polish policeman.²¹¹

In the photographs taken in Tarłów on 19 October 1942, we can see various situations unfolding in the market square and the so-called lower market. At the intersection of the roads leading through these places, there is a wooden kiosk with the inscription “Owocarnia” (fruit shop) visible from afar. A few metres away, there is a group of policemen: three military policemen and four Blue Policemen. One of the military policemen is arranging or drawing something on the ground. The others, with their heads bowed, are watching what he is doing. However, what is far more interesting is that there are four men in different uniforms, but wearing identical round caps with light-coloured rims, standing against the wall of the kiosk, and one of them is holding his hand in such a way that a white armband is visible on the sleeve of his jacket, on his forearm. The caps resemble those worn by the Jewish police in the Warsaw ghetto. It seems certain that these four men are members of the JOD, awaiting orders. A few dozen metres away, along the walls of the ghetto buildings at the lower market square, a crowd of people stands with packages. At least one military policeman and one Blue Policeman carry rifles with bayonets slung over their shoulders. Four men under a kiosk hold nothing in their hands – no walking sticks, batons, or even simple sticks. They are watching the German and Polish officers.

In the next photograph, taken from a slightly different angle of a similar part of the market, only two members of JOD are captured waiting by the kiosk, but looking in a different direction than in the previous photo. These are undoubtedly the same people as in the photo described earlier.²¹²

In photographs taken in Tarłów during the auction of Jewish furniture and other items on 21 October 1942, several figures are seen wearing white armbands on their right arms. These are most likely members of a Jewish labour detachment, composed in part of members of the JOD. This time, we do not see elements of ghetto police uniforms known from large cities (for example, Warsaw, Łódź), such as uniform

²¹¹ AIPN, 0061/480, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Himmel, 28 February 1949, p. 58; AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the District Court in Radom, 28 January 1949, p. 98.

²¹² AIPN Ki, 53/517/4, Photograph taken by Władysław Frączak, 17 October 1942, pp. 7–8.

headgear. The men from Tarłów captured in the photograph on 21 October are wearing various civilian clothes and flat caps. One of them is dressed in a battle-dress jacket, breeches, and officer's boots with uppers. Their faces cannot be seen in the images. Judging by their silhouettes, they appear to be relatively young men.

No further detailed information is available regarding the daily interactions between JOD members and the police structures established by the Germans in Tarłów: the German military police and the subordinate so-called Polish police.

Conclusion

Day after day, police officers from various formations were the most visible face of the occupying authorities in Tarłów. They carried out the harshest harassment, repression, and crimes. Understandably, the perpetrators were reluctant to disclose their activities in Tarłów during interrogations conducted by post-war Polish and German law enforcement and judicial authorities. Only a handful of perpetrators were ever brought before these bodies, and even fewer as defendants. Unfortunately, the information provided by Polish and Jewish witnesses was very imprecise, even in testimonies given only a few years after the war. The preserved investigative and trial materials contain no indication of any intention to comprehensively examine the greatest crime in the history of Tarłów – committed against 1,500 local residents and more than 5,500 other Jews, who were expelled from Tarłów to their deaths on 19 October 1942. Investigators never asked a single question about the existence of the Tarłów ghetto or the course of the deportation of Jews to the Treblinka camp. This lack of commitment is evident, for example, in the actions of militiamen from Tarłów between 1945 and 1949, as well as officers of the County Headquarters of the Citizens' Militia and the County Public Security Department in Starachowice, in conjunction with voivodeship-level institutions in Kielce. During the war, several dozen Polish Catholics from the Tarłów community were murdered or killed in combat. Many residents testified about their deaths, and they then became the focus of the investigators. Rarely, and only by chance, did the investigators note any references to the deaths of individual Jews, and they failed to record the massacre of 99.9 per cent of those who lived in Tarłów between 1939 and 1942. Privately, those Jews are remembered by an increasingly small number of local witnesses, while the post-war administration of justice consigned them to oblivion.

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