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DZIAŁOSZYCE AND THE GERMAN CRIME AGAINST ITS JEWISH COMMUNITY DURING WORLD WAR II

Summary

Before World War II, the Jewish community made up the majority of Działoszyce's population, then part of the Kielce Voivodeship, shaping it into a quintessential shtetl with a vibrant Jewish cultural and economic life. Following the German invasion of Poland in 1939, this entire world was shattered. As across all occupied Polish territories, the Germans imposed anti-Jewish laws and launched systematic persecution. What began with exclusion and segregation culminated in 1942, during Operation "Reinhardt" (*Aktion Reinhardt*), with the mass murder of all Jews in Działoszyce whom the occupiers had labelled as "unnecessary."

The article offers a detailed account of this process, using the example of a small provincial town to illustrate the fundamental mechanisms of the Holocaust. It also explores efforts at self-organisation, acts of resistance, attempts to rescue Jews on the so-called Aryan side, and the evolving dynamics of Polish–Jewish relations up to 1942.

Keywords

Działoszyce • Holocaust • German crimes

The history of Działoszyce – a small town situated in the southern part of the Świętokrzyskie region – during the period of German occupation remains largely unexplored in Polish historiography. Instead, there have been occasional publications of a fragmentary and popular nature and references in academic literature.¹ The history of the Jewish community in Działoszyce was addressed only in broad strokes; notably, the study titled *Działoszyckie rocznice* (The Anniversaries of Działoszyce), which examines the town's history from 1918 to 1990, devotes merely a single sentence to the fate of the local Jews.² In this context, the contributions of Dionizy Czubala and Agnieszka Dziarmaga's doctoral thesis – which remains in manuscript – stand out positively.³ Both works focus primarily on Holocaust remembrance and its impact on the collective memory of Polish society across wartime, post-war, and contemporary generations. Czubala's narrative approach offers valuable insights into individual experiences of the Holocaust in Działoszyce, presenting specific names and locations of events, though these are not always framed within the broader historical context of the German occupation. These we can find in the studies describing the Holocaust in the Distrikt Krakau, authored by Ernestyna Podhorizer-Sandel and Elżbieta Rączy.⁴ Działoszyce, as one of hundreds of towns, is, quite obviously, mentioned only briefly. Compared to other towns in the region, it stood out due to its large Jewish population, which significantly outnumbered the Christian (Polish) population.

¹ A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*, Tuchów, 2014; A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie biografie. 600-lecie praw miejskich 1409–2009*, Tuchów, 2009; A. Sznajderski, *Jutrzenka wolności*, Tuchów, 2008, p. 120.

² A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*, p. 43.

³ *O tym nie wolno mówić... Zagłada Żydów w opowieściach wspomnieniowych ze zbiorów Dionizjusza Czubali*, selec. and ed. P. Grochowski, Toruń, 2019; A. Dziarmaga, "Przywracanie pamięci o żydowskich mieszkańcach i ich losach w wybranych miasteczkach (sztetlach) w województwie świętokrzyskim jako element budowania narracji o polsko-żydowskiej przeszłości we współczesnej Polsce po 1989 r.," unpublished PhD thesis, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, 2022.

⁴ E. Podhorizer-Sandel, "O zagładzie Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 2 (1959), pp. 87–109; E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim w latach 1939–1945*, Rzeszów, 2014.

The experience of the local Jewish community is discussed in the chapter entitled “Powiat miechowski” (Miechów County),⁵ authored by Dariusz Libionka, included in the collective publication *Dalej jest noc* (Night without End).⁶ However, alongside valuable findings regarding the persecution of local Jews, there are also exaggerated assessments that are detached from the facts. Some simplifications result from the omission of the historical context of the events described (German anti-Polish regulations; the consequences of the *divide et impera* policy towards Jews in 1939–1942) and existing – important – sources. It is particularly striking how often leadership of the first deportation action in Działoszyce (2–3 September 1942) is erroneously attributed to individuals other than the actual perpetrators – a misrepresentation that has already been the subject of academic controversy.⁷ At the same time, Libionka refrained from offering a more comprehensive account of the fate of the Jews in Działoszyce, instead portraying German actions through terse, impersonal remarks – noting merely that, as elsewhere in the General Governorate, forced labour, identification measures, and economic restrictions were imposed.⁸ However, the subject deserves a more detailed discussion, taking into account individual cases. A descent to the micro level, combined with the study of previously unknown documents, will allow us to recover the names of the victims from oblivion and to present the history of the extermination of Jews in Działoszyce in 1939–1942.

This article aims to explore the previously outlined issues within a defined chronological framework, which requires no further elaboration. The initial date signifies the onset of the German Reich’s occupation of Poland – and, consequently, the town of Działoszyce – while the latter corresponds to the deportation operation

⁵ More information about the administrative jurisdiction of Działoszyce during World War II can be found further on.

⁶ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” in *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 2, eds. B. Engelking and J. Grabowski, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 13–211.

⁷ See T. Domański, *Korekta obrazu? Refleksje źródłoznawcze wokół książki „Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski”, t. 1–2*, red. Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, Warszawa 2018, Warsaw, 2019; D. Libionka, “Odpowiedź na recenzję Tomasza Domańskiego pt. „Korekta obrazu? Refleksje źródłoznawcze wokół książki »Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski«, t. 1–2, red. Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, Warszawa 2018” („Polish-Jewish Studies”, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Warszawa 2019),” <https://www.holocaustresearch.pl/index.php?show=555&strona=558> (accessed 31 January 2025).

⁸ See, e.g., D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 48–49.

of November 1942. This event marked a pivotal moment in the history of the Jewish community in Działoszyce. At that time, the Germans declared the town *Judenrein* or *Judenfrei* (free of Jews), signifying the end of Jewish settlement in the area.⁹ The extermination of the local Jewish population did not cease in 1942. This ongoing sequence of atrocities demands thorough examination – placing greater emphasis on the lived experiences and survival strategies of the Jews of Działoszyce, rather than merely recounting the chronological history of Jewish presence in the town.¹⁰ An in-depth examination of the subsequent phase of the Holocaust – considered within the broader context of the German occupation, including policies targeting both the Jewish population and the surrounding Polish community (such as the criminalisation of aid and the coercive involvement of civilians in anti-Jewish actions) – undoubtedly warrants substantial exploration. However, such a discussion would extend well beyond the limits of this already comprehensive article.¹¹

It is appropriate to reference the source material at the close of this introductory section. Given the destruction of administrative records generated by German civil, police, and military authorities, alternative sources – such as induced sources and sources based on eyewitness testimonies (*źródła relacyjne*) – have become indispensable for reconstructing the events of 1939–1942. These accounts were predominantly created during judicial proceedings held in Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany. A particularly rich repository of information is found in the book of memory of the community of Działoszyce, *Sefer izkor shel kehilat Dzialoszcic ve-ha-seviva*,¹² published in 1973, which is now also available online in

⁹ A report to this effect is said to have been sent to Governor General Hans Frank by Scherner's chief of staff (see below), Martin Fellenz. *Archiwum Oddziałowej Komisji Ścigania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Krakowie* (Archives of the Branch Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation in Cracow, hereinafter AO Kr), S78/2023/Zn, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stanisław Krupa, Cracow, 15 April 1966, pp. 19–20.

¹⁰ D. Libionka, "Zagłada na wsi w optyce polskiej konspiracji (1942–1944)," in *Zarys krajoznawstwa. Wieś polska wobec Żydów 1942–1945*, eds. B. Engelking and J. Grabowski, introd. K. Persak, Warsaw, 2011, p. 87; A. Skibińska, "„Dostał 10 lat, ale za co?“. Analiza motywacji sprawców zbrodni na Żydach na wsi kieleckiej w latach 1942–1944," in *ibid.*, pp. 313–444.

¹¹ For more on these phenomena, see B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...*, Poznań, 2019; T. Domański and A. Gontarek, "Ujęcia i modele badawcze zjawiska pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków na okupowanych ziemiach polskich. Przegląd stanowisk polskich i polsko-żydowskich historyków," *Polish-Jewish Studies* 5 (2024), pp. 87–134.

¹² *Sefer izkor shel kehilat Dzialos-ha-seviva zic ve* [Yizkor Book of the Jewish Community in Działoszyce and Surroundings], Tel Aviv, 1973. Publication published by the Community of Działoszyce,

an English-language edition. These testimonies are effectively enriched by wartime sources created contemporaneously. Particularly valuable for analysing the issues at hand are the preserved records of the *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna* (Jewish Social Self-Help) – primarily reflecting aspects of daily life – the diary of Chaim Ischak (Yitzchok) Wohlgelernter (Wolgelernter), municipal documents from the Kreis Miechów, and surviving office files from the Polnische Polizei (PP) station in Brzesko Nowe. The final two categories of sources, in particular, which include numerous German orders issued for the region under study, offer crucial insight into the development of German anti-Jewish policy in the Kreis Miechów and, by extension, in Działoszyce.

September 1939 and the Period of the Military Rule

From the second half of the 19th century, Działoszyce was an important centre for Jewish settlement. At that time, it lay within the Kielce Governorate of the Russian partition. During the interwar years, the town belonged to Pińczów County in the Kielce Voivodeship. The number of Jews living there was significantly larger than the Polish population; the 1921 census recorded 5,632 Jews and only 1,127 Christians.¹³ Jews engaged in various economic activities. Their primary sources of income included small-scale trade with the local population, long-distance commerce, and small-scale manufacturing and craft production. They operated tanneries, water mills, oil mills, soda water factories, and more, which contributed to the considerable wealth of some. As in many other towns of similar size and structure, social stratification was evident. Despite economic issues, the town remained an important cultural centre and the local hub of “shtetl life.”¹⁴

The world that surviving Jews later depicted in idyllic tones was shattered with the outbreak of World War II. On 3 September 1939, Działoszyce came under bombardment – many Jews engaged in trench digging were injured, and Rebbe

Skalbmierz, and Kazimierza Wielka and the Community of Działoszyce in the United States. The publication does not indicate who the editor was.

¹³ K. Urbański, *Gminy żydowskie małe w województwie kieleckim w okresie międzywojennym*, Kielce, 2006, p. 78.

¹⁴ For more, see A. Dziarmaga, “Przywracanie pamięci,” p. 124 ff.; R. Renz, *Życie codzienne w miasteczkach województwa kieleckiego 1918–1939*, Kielce, 1994.

Moshe Jurista lost his life.¹⁵ The Germans also bombed a train, injuring many Poles and Jews. Within days, driven by hopes of continuing the fight, groups of young men began leaving the town en masse for the eastern regions of Poland, joined by representatives of the Polish authorities. German patrols first entered Działoszyce on 7 September 1939. Although the Wehrmacht's arrival was initially calm, the atmosphere darkened shortly after the front moved on, when a soldier fatally shot an unidentified girl.¹⁶ Persecution then began. Germans from Miechów often came to Działoszyce and committed acts of physical violence against Jews.¹⁷ The situation at that time did not differ significantly from that in the rest of the occupied Polish territories. On 18 September 1939, while the military administration was still in place, a German functionary named Poll issued a proclamation to the inhabitants of Działoszyce, calling for obedience and announcing that any looting would be punished by death. He introduced a curfew from 7 p.m. and ordered all weapons and radio sets to be handed over to the municipal authorities. Failure to comply with the order would result in the execution of ten hostages. During the subsequent German civil administration, the number of hostages was increased, ultimately encompassing ten Poles and the entire Jewish community council.¹⁸ The practice of designating hostages continued in 1940, having already been implemented across the county under orders from the Kreishauptmann of the Kreis Miechów. It likely persisted until June 1941 and served as a source of additional income for representatives of the German authorities. Wealthy Jews were deported to Kazimierza Wielka and released only after their families paid substantial sums of money.¹⁹

¹⁵ Perhaps it is the same person who was mentioned in the survey concerning the course of military operations in the Pińczów County. See *Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach* (State Archives in Kielce, hereinafter AP Ki), *Starostwo Powiatowe* (County Starosty, hereinafter SP) in Pińczów, 276, Survey concerning the course of military operations and the German occupation, Pińczów, 16 August 1945, p. 34; A. Langer, "During and After the War," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi365.html#Page380> (accessed 30 January 2025).

¹⁶ "Dokument nr 22, Prześladowania Żydów w Działoszycach. Opowieść z Działoszyc," in *O tym nie wolno mówić*, p. 62.

¹⁷ Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), O.3/2565, The Testimony of Helena Dresner, 1982, p. 2.

¹⁸ A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*, pp. 42–43.

¹⁹ AP Ki, *Akta Gminy* (Municipal Records, hereinafter AG) Topola, 1199, Letter from the Mayor of the Municipality of Topola to all village leaders in the municipality, Topola, 16 March 1940, p. 31; AP Ki, *Starostwo Powiatowe* (County Starosty, hereinafter SP) in Pińczów, 276, Survey concerning the course of military operations and the German occupation, Działoszyce, 3 August 1946, p. 83; Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary. A Chronicle of Tears*, n.p., 2014, p. 62.

The German Civil and Police Administration Responsible for Implementing the Anti-Jewish Policy

At the turn of 1939 and 1940, after the cessation of the hostilities and the introduction of German civil administration, Działoszyce became part of the German occupation district in Miechów – Kreishauptmannschaft Miechów (abbreviated to Kreis Miechów), formed from the merger of parts of the pre-war counties of Olkusz, Miechów, and Pińczów.²⁰ Smaller administrative units were established for the pre-war territories of Pińczów and Olkusz counties in the form of Landkommissariats, each overseen by a land commissioner (*Landkommissar*) and reporting to the Kreishauptmann. Działoszyce fell under the jurisdiction of the land commissioner based in Kazimierza Wielka.

The Kreishauptmann, followed by the Landkommissar, since they had the power to issue relevant orders, supervise and control various institutions within the civil and, to some extent, the police administration, played a key role in putting into effect and shaping their own anti-Jewish policy and the German occupation policy in general. It was not without reason that representatives of this level of the administrative machinery were called “little Führers.”²¹ In the Kreis Miechów, the function of Kreishauptmann was held by Eduard Boss (no date), Wilhelm Engler (until 11 January 1940), Hans-Walter Zinser (until 1 August 1941), and Alfons Kalpers (until the end of the German occupation). During the first so-called liquidation actions (autumn 1942 – more on this below), Friedrich Schmidt became Kalpers’s deputy. The function of the land commissioner in Kazimierza Wielka was held by, among others, SS Obersturmführer Hans Sierk and Hamburger²² (until September 1941).²³

²⁰ The German authorities incorporated most of the former Pińczów County into the Kreishauptmannschaft Busko in the Radom District, and part of the former Olkusz County directly into the Third Reich.

²¹ R. Gieroń, *Półmrok. Procesy karne w sprawie przestępstw okupacyjnych popełnionych przez chłopów wobec Żydów w województwie krakowskim*, Cracow, 2020, p. 29; W. Wichert, “System polityczny i administracyjny Generalnego Gubernatorstwa w latach 1939–1945,” *Polish-Jewish Studies* 3 (2022), p. 69.

²² The names of some functionaries do not appear in the documents and could not be determined; therefore, only their surnames are provided in such cases.

²³ Upon leaving his post, Hamburger sent a letter to the mayors and police stations, in which he “wished everyone much effort and joy in their work for the good of the people” (AP Ki, AG Topola, 1752, Letter from the Land Commissioner in Kazimierza Wielka to all mayors and police stations in the Landkreis, Kazimierza Wielka, 2 September 1941, p. 37).

His immediate successor was Oskar Schmidt.²⁴ The deputy Land Commissioner of Kazimierza Wielka in 1941–1945 was Josef Schmitz.²⁵

The main repressive force was the security police (*Sicherheitspolizei und Sicherheitsdienst*, SD – Sipo), whose Division IV was the notorious Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*), and Division V – the criminal police (*Kriminalpolizei*, Kripo) and the order police (*Ordnungspolizei*, Orpo). At the county level and below, the organisational presence of the Sipo was relatively limited. *Działoszyce* came under the authority of the external office of the Sipo (*Außendienststelle*, Adst) located in Miechów, the capital of the Kreis Miechów. It consisted of two divisions – the Sipo and the Kripo. Therefore, in the available sources, largely based on post-war witness testimonies, there are considerable discrepancies as to the specific duties of individual functionaries. Contrary to its name, the Kripo, which was part of the security police, did not only deal with criminal offences, but also (if not primarily) with political matters and keeping the conquered territory under control (through daily terror). Key roles in this structure were played by criminal secretary Martin Friedrich Beyerlein, who headed the Adst Sipo and SD in Miechów in 1942–1943, and Philipp Riedinger,²⁶ commander of the local Kripo, and Johann Karl, his deputy. In 1939, Polish functionaries were compelled by the Germans to serve in the Kripo in the unit known as the *Polnische Kriminalpolizei* (Polish Kripo). Initially led by Second Lieutenant Stanisław Kowalski, leadership passed to Walery Kosołko following Kowalski's arrest. Though outwardly cooperating with the Germans, Kosołko was actually a sworn member of the Polish Home Army. He was later succeeded by Stanisław Brywczyński of Poznań.²⁷

The second police force tasked with surveillance, control, and repression was, as previously mentioned, the Orpo. It was organised into the *Schutzpolizei* for

²⁴ D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," pp. 37–38; Bundesarchiv Außenstelle Ludwigsburg (hereinafter BAL), B.162/6478, Minutes of the interrogation of Karl Wurl, Eckernförde, 19 July 1962, p. 39.

²⁵ From July to autumn 1941, Schmitz worked at the *Kreishauptmannschaft* Lemberg (Lwów, now Lviv). See BAL, B.162/01353, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Josefa Schmitz, Köln, 23 July 1962, pp. 128–129.

²⁶ One of the officials of the *Kreishauptmannschaft* Miechów testified after the war that Riedinger was the head of the SD at the time of the establishment of the ghetto in Miechów and that the ghetto was under his command (BAL, B.162/6478, Minutes of the interrogation of Karl Wurl, Eckernförde, 19 July 1962, p. 38).

²⁷ For more, see D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," pp. 39–41.

major urban centres and the Military Police for smaller towns and rural areas. As the German occupation progressed, the structure of the Orpo became increasingly complex and expanded in scope. During the initial three years of the occupation, the Military Police played notable role in the region under study. It was commanded by a Kommandeur (KdGend), who oversaw the leaders of individual captaincies (*Hauptmannschaften*), each responsible for several counties. This level of command served as an intermediate link between the district gendarmerie commander and the county platoons. Such organisational models were implemented in Miechów, Nowy Targ, and Cracow. In Miechów in 1940, this position was held by Hauptmann Schön.²⁸ Nonetheless, each county town – such as Miechów – hosted a stationed platoon of the Military Police.²⁹ In 1940, the platoon was led by Somer, and in the following year, command was assumed by Lieutenant Herman Hartwig. During the deportation of Jews to extermination camps, Opitz commanded the unit, followed by Wilhelm Buczinski.³⁰ In mid-1943, Lieutenant Eduard Baumgarten served as deputy commander of the district platoon of the Military Police, followed by Steinkell.³¹ Many witnesses pointed to his particularly anti-Polish and anti-Jewish attitude.³² Functionaries of the district platoon manned field posts. Three such posts were established in the Kreis Miechów, namely in Miechów, Wolbrom and Kazimierza Wielka.³³ Initially, a Military Police post was also established in Działoszyce. Franz Hartl, Hans Geier, Arthur Herzinger, and Johan Hess were among those who served there. The Działoszyce post was disbanded in 1940, placing the town under the jurisdiction of the post in Kazimierza Wielka.³⁴ The latter had a staff

²⁸ *Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie* (National Archives in Cracow, hereinafter referred to as AN Kr), *Komenda Powiatowa Polnische Polizei* (County Polnische Polizei Command, hereinafter KP PP) Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the Miechów KP PP to the commanders of the county PP stations, Miechów, 29 April 1940, p. 13.

²⁹ Due to a significant lack of administrative sources (resulting from the destruction of documents from the occupation period), it is frequently challenging to reconstruct the complete staff composition.

³⁰ This spelling of the surname appears in the final report on Dr. Schmidt's crimes (see below).

³¹ D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," p. 42.

³² AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 1, Copy of a letter from the county platoon of the Military Police in Miechów to the Military Police stations in Miechów and Kazimierza Wielka, Miechów, 24 May 1943, p. 73.

³³ August König may have been in command of the post in Kazimierza Wielka. This was until January 1943. AO Kr, S78/2023/Zn, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Teofil Kowalczyk, Cracow, 11 February 1947, p. 64.

³⁴ BAL, B.162/40578, Investigation against Dr. Friedrich Schmidt, pp. 17–18; BAL, B.162/28991, Minutes of the interrogation of Johan Hess, Bremen, 12 October 1973, p. 201.

of twenty functionaries. In 1941, they were commanded by Mathias Bayerl, and Zettel, among others, served there.³⁵

At the lowest level of the German Ordnungspolizei (Orpo) hierarchy was the Polnische Polizei, which was commonly referred to as the Blue Police for their distinct uniforms. This force consisted primarily of Poles, many of whom had served as functionaries in the pre-war State Police. They were compelled by the German authorities to become part of this newly established unit in the autumn of 1939.³⁶ Hans Frank's order of 17 December 1939 establishing the Blue Police explicitly stated that failure to obey an order from a German superior would be punished by death. Orders were typically given verbally. In practice, the Germans from the Schupo, the Military Police, and the Kreishauptmann or Stadtkommandant exercised complete control over the activities of the PP. They were free to command and direct its functionaries as they pleased.

By late 1939, a Polnische Polizei station was established in Działoszyce,³⁷ formally placed under the jurisdiction of the County Command in Miechów. The following persons served as county commanders under German authority: Lieutenant Waclaw Miziołowski, Major Stanisław Siwoń, Senior Sergeant Kazimierz Nowak,³⁸ and Lieutenant Władysław Szaciłło.³⁹ The Działoszyce station

³⁵ BAL, B.162/5973, Interrogation of Mathias Bayerl, Wertach, 8 April 1967, p. 112.

³⁶ The Polish Police were additionally engaged in occupation-related tasks targeting both ethnic Poles and the Roma. For more, see A. Hempel, *Pogrobowcy kłęski. Rzecz o policji „granatowej” w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 1990; *Policja granatowa w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w latach 1939–1945*, eds. T. Domański and E. Majcher-Ociesa, Kielce–Warsaw, 2019.

³⁷ At the outset of the war, a group referred to as a “militia” was formed in Działoszyce to carry out law enforcement duties. The duration of its activity remains contested. It is probable that its former members were later absorbed into the PP (this solution was commonly used, e.g. in the Distrikt Radom).

³⁸ On 2 February 1943, a special pursuit unit was formed in the Kreis Miechów. Dariusz Libionka erroneously states that it consisted of about a dozen Blue Policemen from various stations, commanded by Nowak. In fact, according to information provided by the county PP commander in Miechów on 6 February 1943, the unit consisted of military police and police functionaries, commanded by Lieutenant Baumgarten, with Nowak as one of his deputies. The change in personnel and Nowak's assumption of command took place at a later date (AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 9, Order no. 2 of the county PP commander in the Miechów County, Miechów, 6 February 1943, p. 7; D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 44).

³⁹ Libionka incorrectly identifies Major Siwoń as the first county PP commander; in fact, this position was held by Lieutenant Miziołowski (AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the county PP commander in Miechów to all county posts, Miechów, 26 January 1940, p. 3; D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 43).

oversaw operations in the town of Działoszyce, the Drożejowice Municipality, and the villages of Chmielów and Szczotkowice within the Sancygniów Municipality.⁴⁰ In April 1943, it was staffed by twelve functionaries. The name of the first commander of the station is unknown. From 1 September 1941, this function was performed by Senior Sergeant Piotr Sałabun, who was sent to Działoszyce from Sancygniów.⁴¹ For some time, his deputy, and then commander of the station (from June 1942 to July 1942) was Joachim Kasowski.⁴² Then, during the first deportation, this position was held by a certain Łaganowski.⁴³ At various times during World War II, the following functionaries served at the station in Działoszyce: Bolesław Madejski, Władysław Król, Michał Burzyński, Bolesław Barc, Zygmunt Stefaniak, Bolesław Sznajderski, Antoni Kłusek, Władysław

⁴⁰ The Blue Police station was located in Działoszyce, in the Market Square. See A. Sznajderski, *Jutrzenka wolności*, p. 120.

⁴¹ Piotr Sałabun, Second Lieutenant of the Polnische Polizei was born in 1900, and served in the State Police before the war. In September 1939, after the evacuation, he found himself in the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic. He returned to the lands occupied by the Third Reich and hid under a false name. In 1941, according to his own words, at the urging of Colonel Roman Sztaba, he joined the Blue Police. Since he knew German, he became the commander of the police station in Sancygniów, then in Działoszyce, and finally the area commander in Działoszyce. In 1944, he took up the position of deputy county PP commander in Miechów. At the end of the occupation, he was promoted to second lieutenant, which was an absolutely exceptional event. At the same time, he was secretly a soldier in the anti-German underground as part of the Union of Armed Struggle/Home Army. *Archiwum Delegatury Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Kielcach* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Delegation in Kielce, hereinafter AIPN Ki), 128/206, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Piotr Sałabun, Wrocław, 7 February 1948, pp. 27–28; AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony of Piotr Sałabun during the main hearing, Cracow, 29 November 1948, pp. 133–135; AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 9, Order No. 2 of the county PP commander in Miechów, 21 November 1941, p. 5.

⁴² Until 1941, he was held in an Oflag camp. He volunteered for service with the Blue Police, and on 1 October 1941, he was assigned to Działoszyce as deputy commander of the police station. When Senior Sergeant Sałabun was appointed area commander, Kasowski took over as station commander (as of 1 June 1942). In July 1942, on the orders of county commander Major Siwoń, he was transferred to Ojców to serve as area commander. He served until 11 September 1942, when the former area commander, Senior Sergeant Kazimierz Nowak, returned. He then returned to Działoszyce, where a German military policeman was serving as commander. Kasowski also served in Pilica and Proszowice, from where he deserted in July 1944. *Archiwum Akt Nowych* (Central Archives of Modern Records, hereinafter AAN), *Akta byłych funkcjonariuszy Policji Państwowej, Straży Więziennej, Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza i Straży Granicznej* (Files of former functionaries of the State Police, Prison Guard, Border Protection Corps and Border Guard, hereinafter ABF), Joachim Kasowski, Curriculum vitae, Poznań, 23 June 1946, p. 445.

⁴³ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Waclaw Kapsa at the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 247. It is possible that Ludwik Skoczylas also served as a commander at some point. A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*, p. 118.

Chmura,⁴⁴ Michał Czaban, Bolesław Bojanowski, Stefan Rekuła,⁴⁵ Stanisław Wójciak, Zygmunt Kamerdyniak, Leon Fronc, Krzysztof Opaliński, Julian Ordysiński, Okoń,⁴⁶ Józef Skosolas, Jan Rospond and Eugeniusz Rokosz.⁴⁷ In 1941, the Germans introduced an intermediate organisational level in the county PP structure – a group or regional station (with its own commander). One such station was established in Działoszyce and covered the town of Działoszyce and the municipalities of Czarnocin, Skalbmierz and Sancygniów, with Sałabun taking up the position of regional commander.⁴⁸

The second half of the occupation saw fundamental shifts in the structure and activities of the police forces. In the Cracow District, following the example of solutions used in the neighbouring districts, so-called protected territories (*Schutzgebiete*) and protected zones (*Schutzbezirke*) were created. Miechów formed an independent protected zone, subordinate to the Western Protected Territory (*Schutzgebiet West*). A special unit was also made to fight “bandits,” headed in the district by SS Oberführer Julian Scherner.⁴⁹ To reinforce the police forces in the area, so-called strongpoints (*Stützpunkte*) were formed, which, unlike in the neighbouring Radom District, consisted of a German commander (officer) and Polish subordinates from the Blue Police.⁵⁰ Direct German supervision was intended to increase the discipline and zeal of the police. Even before the first deportation operation, the Germans established one of the *Stützpunkte*

⁴⁴ According to his own statement, he joined the Blue Police on the orders of an “underground organisation.” AAN, ABF, Władysław Chmura, Letter from Władysław Chmura to the Rehabilitation Commission, Bytom, 4 December 1948, pp. 118–119v.

⁴⁵ This policeman could not have taken part in either the first or the second deportation operation because he joined the Blue Police in 1944. See AIPN Kr, 010/1559, Characteristics, 20 February 1950, p. 15.

⁴⁶ This policeman was a Home Army soldier. AIPN Ki, 128/206, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jerzy Roman Lis, Sosnowiec, 1 March 1948, p. 49.

⁴⁷ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 9, Order no. 8 of the county PP commander in the Miechów County, Miechów, 7 May 1943, p. 29.

⁴⁸ In total, the PP stations forming part of the group station in Działoszyce in April 1943 were manned by 42 policemen. AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 1, Letter from the county PP commander in Miechów, Władysław Szaciłło, to the PP station in Brzesko Nowe, Miechów, 16 April 1943, p. 64v.

⁴⁹ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 1, Letter from the Commander of the Western Protected Territory to the commanders of the protected zones in Miechów, Cracow, and Nowy Sącz, Cracow, 14 July 1943, p. 80.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Order of the Commander of the Schutzbezirk Miechów, 15 October 1943, p. 111. Dariusz Libionka's article could be misinterpreted as implying that German military police reported to the Blue Police. Here is the relevant excerpt: “After the reorganisation of police structures in mid-1943, military policemen were sent into the countryside to bolster Blue Police stations” (D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 42).

in Działoszyce.⁵¹ Among those serving were Mehler, Müller, and Hoin (?),⁵² under the command of Military Police officers Hola and Rudolf Beck, followed later by Oberleutnant (later Hauptmann) Göse. The Military Police were, of course, also commanders of the local Blue Police. The station was disarmed on 26 July 1944 by units of the 106th Division of the Home Army, including the “Dzięcioł” – Działoszyce company.

After the operation, one of the Blue Policemen, previously sentenced to death by the underground court, was executed.⁵³ For a time, the so-called punitive expedition quartered in Działoszyce, consisting of twelve uniformed Germans (October 1943), and towards the end of the German occupation, a unit of German security forces composed of Eastern collaborators (possibly Ukrainian nationalists).⁵⁴

On a day to day basis, the duty of enforcing German regulations in Działoszyce, including controlling the civilian population (Jewish and Polish), was carried out by Blue Police functionaries. The Germans held them accountable for their tasks, which initially included combating illegal trade and other economic offences, as well as enforcing the curfew. Over time, anti-Jewish tasks were added: fining people for not wearing armbands with the Star of David and delivering Jews to barbershops to have their beards shaved off.⁵⁵ The police were also responsible for

⁵¹ Stanisław Czekaj gave this date during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun. See AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Stanisław Czekaj during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 11 January 1949, p. 265.

⁵² Sałabun mentioned these names after the war. AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Piotr Sałabun during the main hearing, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 140.

⁵³ The military police serving at the Stützpunkt in Działoszyce came from the Bielsko area. They spoke Polish very well, and Beck had even served in the Polish Army before the war. A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*, pp. 118–138; W. Kapsa, “Działoszyce pod okupacją hitlerowską (3),” in *Opowieści wojenne z Ponidzia*, vol. 3, ed. A. Kozera, Kielce, 2009, p. 165; J. Guzik, *Raławickie wezwania. Monografia okupacyjna ziemi miechowskiej 1939–1945*, Wawrzeńczyce, 1987, p. 135; AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 1, Order of the Commander of the Schutzbezirk Miechów, 8 November 1943, p. 115; BAL, B.162/6478, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Rudolf Beck, Backnang, 27 July 1963, p. 24; AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Paweł Kluczniok at the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 136.

⁵⁴ AO Kr, Ds. 1/81 (253), Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Teofil Śliwa, Pińczów, 3 December 1990, pp. 128–129; *ibid.*, Summary of investigation materials concerning the pacification of the village of Lubcza in the Wodzisław Municipality, 7 July 1944, Kielce, 1 February 1991, pp. 165–166.

⁵⁵ Among the local Jews, a belief arose that the collaboration between the Blue Police and the Germans consisted solely in carrying out these orders. A. Langer, “During and After the War.”

controlling Jews from the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst. They supervised the work of Jewish labourers, carried out the relocation of the population in the Jewish quarter in Działoszyce, and enforced the ban on leaving it (see below). The Blue Police also carried out political orders. The Blue Police in Miechów were supposed to counteract “acts by Polish or Jewish persons,” including by responding to accusations and denouncements.⁵⁶ However, this order was quickly changed, and such denouncements from Działoszyce were forwarded to the Military Police in Kazimierza Wielka.⁵⁷

Finally, it is worth mentioning the municipal (urban) administration established by the Germans, which was part of the broader occupation administration. At the beginning of the occupation, the German military authorities appointed Paweł Książek as mayor.⁵⁸ In the spring of 1940, he was replaced by Stanisław Czekaj (a former deputy starost of Pińczów, who also served as an official translator), who remained in this role until 1943. The probable reason for Książek’s removal from office was the way in which city passes were issued for trips to Łódź and the Dąbrowa Basin. A widespread commercial practice developed around this, benefiting both Poles and Jews. The former travelled to specific places and, in return for a fee, took care of the Jews’ business. However, the Germans found out about this, and Książek lost his position. The last mayor of Działoszyce during the occupation was Stanisław Mistecki.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the County PP Command in Miechów to the county police station commanders, Miechów, 31 March 1940, p. 11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter from the Military Police Platoon in Miechów to all county PP stations, Miechów, 20 July 1940, p. 20.

⁵⁸ Following the liquidation of the Polish local government on 3 February 1940, the Germans appointed advisors in Działoszyce, as they did throughout the General Governorate. Walery Bednarski, Leon Nurkowski, Kazimierz Smaczny, and Tadeusz Zwoliński were appointed as these advisors. A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*, pp. 42–45; “Dokument nr 22, Prześladowania Żydów w Działoszycach. Opowieść z Działoszycz,” in *O tym nie wolno mówić*, p. 62.

⁵⁹ Very soon after the Red Army entered, Mistecki was arrested and deported deep into the Soviet Union. At the time of his arrest, he was already an elderly man (born in 1888). The decision on the declaration of death issued by the Magistrates’ Court in Kazimierza Wielka states the date and place of his death – 15 July 1947, camp no. 6 near the town of Yanakiyevo (Donetsk Industrial District), where he was held as a “civilian POW.” The Town Council issued a highly favourable opinion of Mistecki’s activity during the German occupation as mayor. AIPN Ki, 59/237, Decision on the declaration of death, Kazimierza Wielka, 30 October 1948, p. 2; AP Ki, *Archiwum Miasta Działoszyce* (Archives of the Town of Małoszyce, hereinafter AMD), 2, Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Municipal National Council in Działoszyce, Działoszyce, 26 July 1945, p. 59.

The Judenrat and Jewish Institutions in Działoszyce⁶⁰

Around the turn of 1939–1940,⁶¹ in the Kreis Miechów, German authorities initiated the dismantling of the existing Jewish self-government system, which had been organised around religious communities. In its place, they imposed a compliant administrative body known as the Council of Elders (*Judenrat*). The members of this Judenrat were predominantly drawn from individuals who had previously been active in pre-war religious communities. Participation in the Judenrat was mandatory, and refusal to cooperate was punishable by death. The exact date of the Judenrat's formation in Działoszyce remains uncertain. Significantly, records show that as late as March 1940, the local Jewish community continued to use a German-language seal inscribed with the words *Jüdische Gemeindeverwaltung in Dzialoszyce* (Jewish Community Administration in Działoszyce),⁶² suggesting that the Judenrat had not yet been officially established at that time. It was probably established in the spring of 1940,⁶³ although we do not know its full composition. Moszek Jozek Kruk (the pre-war chairman of the community) became its president, and Abraham Dula became its vice-president. On 1 September 1941, *Gazeta Żydowska* reported that Izrael Płatkiewicz, Tobiasz Herszlewicz, Pejsach Sternberg, and Abraham Dula were expected to step down from their positions in the Jewish Council in Działoszyce. Commissioner Apfelbaum appointed Szmul Lewkowicz, Hercig Karmioł, Chiel Minz and Józef Skórecki to replace them.⁶⁴ Beginning in 1942, Izrael Skóra and a certain Grosswald became members of the Judenrat.⁶⁵ The

⁶⁰ During the interwar period, the Jewish community of Działoszyce encompassed not only the town's residents but also Jews from surrounding localities such as Sancygniów, Drożejowice, Topola, Borszczynek, Czarnocin, and Skalbmierz. Altogether, the community comprised 1,340 families. K. Urbański, *Gminy żydowskie*.

⁶¹ According to Dariusz Libionka, at that time, this process concerned Miechów, Słomniki, Proszowice, Nowe Brzesko, Książ Wielki, Działoszyce, Skalbmierz, Koszyce, Kazimierza Wielka, Wolbrom, Skała, Pilica and Żarnowiec. See D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," p. 49.

⁶² AP Ki, AG Topola, 1345, Announcement, Działoszyce, 1 March 1940, p. 93.

⁶³ Mosze Bejski recalled that when he left for Cracow in the autumn of 1939, the "old" community was still functioning, but when he returned to Działoszyce "after a few months," the Judenrat was already in office. M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi233.html> (accessed 30 January 2025).

⁶⁴ "Z miast i miasteczek. Działoszyce," *Gazeta Żydowska*, 11 August 1941, p. 2.

⁶⁵ AIPN Kr, 502/480, Testimony given by Izrael Skóra during the main hearing, Cracow, 18 May 1946, p. 325.

Judenrat headquarters were situated at 7 Rynek Street. Officially, the Jewish Council in Działoszyce operated under the jurisdiction of Izaak Apfelbaum, the commissioner overseeing Jewish councils in the Kreis Miechów. Apfelbaum, in turn, was under German control and faced personal accountability. Over time, he amassed significant influence within the German administration due to the community he represented, ultimately becoming a grey eminence among the Jews of Miechów. Opinions about his attitude were extreme, ranging from positive to negative.⁶⁶

Many contemporaries were highly critical of the activities of the Działoszyce Judenrat due to its excessive submissiveness to the German authorities. Gradually, it turned into a form of command centre for the Germans, who demanded specific goods (such as shoes and fabrics), which the Judenrat members then delivered. If a specific order was not carried out, the Germans applied the principle of collective responsibility.⁶⁷ It can be assumed that the members of the Judenrat acted submissively towards the Germans in the hope of being exempted from carrying out anti-Jewish orders and, later, from the impending deportations. However, this policy proved to be a mistake.⁶⁸ There were numerous conflicts between the Judenrat members and the Jewish community. Tensions arose due to the placement of newly arrived refugees in the homes of current residents, the compulsory taxation and levies imposed by the German authorities, and the insufficient support provided by social welfare systems. These conflicts were rooted in the broader context of exploitation and persecution by the occupiers, in which the Judenrat played a complicit role. The burden of social resentment often fell on those tasked with collecting money or goods for the Germans, as they became the visible agents of an oppressive system.⁶⁹ Critical assessments were also made ex post.⁷⁰ The ease

⁶⁶ D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," pp. 49–50.

⁶⁷ M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction"; S. Fishman and M. Dean, "Działoszyce," in *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1939–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe. Part A*, ed. M. Dean, Bloomington, 2012, p. 503.

⁶⁸ M. Rozenek, "The Outbreak of World War Two," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi261.html> (accessed 30 January 2025).

⁶⁹ The Germans applied the same mechanisms to rural municipalities and transferred responsibility for implementing their orders to mayors, village leaders and other officials of Polish origin. See T. Domański, "Niemiecka administracja gminna w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie i jej pozostałość aktowa do badań nad relacjami polsko-żydowskimi. Przykład dystryktu radomskiego," *Polish-Jewish Studies* 4 (2023), pp. 147–176.

⁷⁰ N. Wolgelernter, "Prologue," in Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 63.

with which people now make critical judgments stems from the widespread historical knowledge of how the Holocaust unfolded – knowledge that the residents of Działoszyce at that time did not have.⁷¹

Alongside the Judenrat, the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst (Jewish Order Service) played an important role in the daily German supervision of the Jewish community within the ghettos. Very little information about this structure has survived. In Działoszyce, its members included Icek Kołatasz, Jankiel Kac, and Chabi Lisie. The latter, a bookbinder by profession with a large family, was very keen to join the service so that he could take care of his loved ones.⁷² Serving in the ghetto police brought considerable benefits in the form of food rations, freedom of movement after curfew, and income.⁷³ It also facilitated contact with people outside the ghetto. Jewish ghetto policemen were paid. The commander received 5 zlotys for 8 hours of service, and the rank and file received 3 zlotys. They collected the contributions personally from other Jews, partly under duress. The police also carried out tasks that involved forcing other Jews to comply with German orders, such as collecting various “contributions,” providing Jewish labourers, and supervising them. The Jewish ghetto policemen were a tool of the Judenrat and, in reality, also of the Germans. This was the reason for the Jewish population’s hostility towards this formation. Chaim Ischak Wohlgelernter wrote:

Even before its true nature was revealed, this structure aroused distrust among most people, especially when members of the lower classes and the entire

⁷¹ The Judenrat in Działoszyce may be evaluated through the same lens that Barbara Engelking applied to the Jewish councils in the Warsaw district – institutions that, in a desperate bid for survival, engaged in a kind of a game with the German authorities. Engelking observed: “It is an illusion to think that it was possible not to engage in this game, that it was possible not to enter into any relations with the Germans or to oppose them. However, a side effect of this game was the spread of violence. In order to meet German demands, Jewish councils had to resort to coercion within their own communities. By using coercion, they sided with the authorities and became part of the German terror system. No wonder they were often seen as institutions collaborating with the enemy, that they were increasingly criticised and even hated by Jews. The Judenrats found themselves in a moral trap – wanting to do good, they contributed to the spread of evil.” (B. Engelking, “Życie codzienne Żydów w miasteczkach dystryktu warszawskiego,” in *Prowincja noc. Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, eds. B. Engelking, J. Leociak, and D. Libionka, Warsaw, 2007, p. 161).

⁷² W. Kapsa, “Policja w Działoszycach podczas okupacji,” in *Opowieści wojenne z Ponidzia*, vol. 4, ed. A. Kozera, Kielce, 2010, pp. 156–160.

⁷³ AYV, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 4.

underworld joined it. The order service very quickly gained considerable power and became the terror of the people. It tried to curry favour with their masters, the Gestapo, through servility and arrogance. During every operation and when carrying out orders, its functionaries distinguished themselves by their cruelty.⁷⁴

It is hardly surprising that some individuals abandoned their posts almost immediately. Elias Münz, for instance, resigned after barely a day and a half in office, when he was told to bring a Jewish woman before the Judenrat as a punishment for failing to pay taxes.⁷⁵

Throughout the German occupation, no formally designated ghetto was established in Działoszyce, although such plans were made.⁷⁶ Several variants of these plans have survived.⁷⁷ The first proposal designated an area outside the market square, which was insufficient to house the 2,350 Jews residing there. The second plan included, among other elements, “Dziekanowska Street, as an access road to the station, in the Aryan quarter,” yet this configuration lacked adequate space for 1,300 Jews. The third version listed only specific street names, suggesting that such a division would leave 300 individuals without accommodation. In yet another iteration of the proposed division of the town into “Polish” and “Jewish” quarters, concerns were raised about the absence of space for 600 Jews.⁷⁸ The continuous arrival of deportees to Działoszyce effectively hindered any attempt to officially delineate the ghetto’s perimeter. For a considerable time, the town functioned as an

⁷⁴ Ch.I. Wohlgelernter, “Działoszyce,” in *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945. Relacje świadków*, selected and edited by M. Grynberg and M. Kotowska, Warsaw, 2003, p. 31.

⁷⁵ *Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Warszawie* (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, hereinafter AŻIH), 301/3260, Testimony of Elias Münz (Mieczysław Brylski), Cracow, 13 June 1947, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe (*Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust. Besatzung, Verwaltung und Kollaboration*, Berlin–Boston, 2024, p. 577) attributed the initiative to create the ghetto to Mayor Paweł Książek, which, in light of surviving documents, is untrue. None of the surviving documents bears the mayor’s signature. There is also no evidence that the mayor took the initiative in this regard. It can only be assumed that such plans were made on German orders. As mentioned above, Książek lost his position in the spring of 1940, which makes it even more difficult to “attribute” him to the process of ghettoisation in Działoszyce.

⁷⁷ These are rough drafts with strike-throughs.

⁷⁸ AP Ki, AMD, 61A, Documents concerning plans to establish a ghetto in Działoszyce, n.d., n.p., pp. 1–4.

“open ghetto” and, as all witnesses consistently recall, it was eventually recognised as a Jewish residential quarter.⁷⁹ No physical barriers – such as fences or walls – separated the town from the outside world. In time, the absence of enclosure proved vital for sustaining connections with those living beyond the ghetto.

Statistical Overview of the Jewish Population

Before the outbreak of World War II, Działoszyce had a population of 6,371, of whom 5,019 were Jews. Already in the early days of September 1939, a wave of refugees from the western territories of the Second Polish Republic reached the town. Among them were also Jews. For many of them, Działoszyce was not just a stopover on their escape from the German invasion, but their final destination. They were Jews from Silesia, the Dąbrowa Górnicza Basin, Łódź and Cracow. Many of them were born or raised here, and during the interwar period, they emigrated to larger urban centres located in the western or central parts of Poland. In the autumn of 1939, they returned, driven by the desire to reunite with their families and the hope of surviving this difficult time more easily. Jews from Pińczów – the town which had been burned down at that time – also arrived in Działoszyce.⁸⁰ We know several names: Mosze Bejski came from Cracow; Dawid (Gustaw) Rajsfeld’s wife and daughter arrived from Łódź, along with several related families;⁸¹ Dawid Gelbart’s father and Meir (Majer) Zonenfeld came from Katowice; and Helena Dresner’s family arrived from Sosnowiec.⁸² Some Jews from Działoszyce, who in September 1939, in response to the call of the military authorities, went to the Eastern Borderlands to continue armed resistance against the Germans, never returned to their hometown. They ended up in the Soviet sphere of influence and were then sent deep into the Soviet Union – to the Donbas, the Urals, or Siberia.

⁷⁹ S. Fishman and M. Dean, “Działoszyce,” p. 504.

⁸⁰ M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction”; D. Bejski, “Social Assistance During the Nazi Occupation,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi261.html#Page267> (accessed 30 January 2025); S. Leszman (ben Jakub), “In the Polish Underground,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi298.html> (accessed 30 January 2025).

⁸¹ For affluent Jews from major urban centres such as Łódź, adapting to life in small provincial towns lacking sewage infrastructure and running water posed a considerable challenge. D. Rajsfeld (Gustav), “Memories,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi298.html#Page329> (accessed 30 January 2025).

⁸² D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi336.html> (accessed 30 January 2025); AYV, O.3/2565, Testimony of Helena Dresner, 1982, p. 1.

Others, such as Chaim Frajman's brother, fled to the USSR voluntarily.⁸³ Still others became victims of the Katyn massacre, including Szlama Gertler.⁸⁴ Another wave of refugees arrived in the Kreis Miechów in 1940, most of them in Działoszyce and Wolbrom.⁸⁵ In this case, the German anti-Jewish policy pursued in Cracow, from where the Germans decided to remove a significant part of the Jewish population, played a key role. The victims of this policy were mostly those who lacked the means to buy permits that would allow them to remain in their homes.

Table 1. The Population of Działoszyce in 1939–1942

Period	Number	
	Jews	Poles
1939	5,019	1,352 ⁸⁶
Spring 1940	6,328 ⁸⁷	1,186 ⁸⁸
October 1941	6,911	No data available
April 1942	7,228	1,891 ⁸⁹

Source: own study based on E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*; E. Podhorizer-Sandel, "O zagładzie Żydów"; AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/376, Letter from the Board of the Jewish Religious Community in Działoszyce to the Central Head of the Jewish Social Self-Help in Cracow, Działoszyce, 12 August 1940, fol. 2; A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*; D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski."

According to Elżbieta Rączy's findings, between September 1939 and spring 1940, the number of Jews in Działoszyce increased by as much as 25 per cent (see

⁸³ Ch. Frajman (New York), "Jankielówka and Its Jews," p. 239, <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi336.html#Page343> (accessed 30 January 2025).

⁸⁴ M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction."

⁸⁵ It is worth noting that the local Jewish population also helped ethnic Polish displaced persons, 37 of whom arrived in Działoszyce at the beginning of the occupation. W. Kapsa, "Działoszyce pod okupacją hitlerowską (2)," in *Opowieści wojenne z Ponidzia*, vol. 2, ed. A. Kozera, Kielce, 2009, p. 198; A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*, p. 43.

⁸⁶ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 74. Other data provided by Podhorizer-Sandel indicate that 4,574 Jews lived in Działoszyce before September 1939. See E. Podhorizer-Sandel, "O zagładzie Żydów," p. 88.

⁸⁷ At times, the number of refugees in Działoszyce reached as many as 3,200, including 400 families from Cracow. AŻIH, *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna* (Jewish Social Self-Help, hereinafter ŻSS), 211/376, Letter from the Board of the Jewish Religious Community in Działoszyce to the Central Head of the Jewish Social Self-Help in Cracow, Działoszyce, 12 August 1940, p. 2.

⁸⁸ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 74; Adam Sznajderski estimated the number of Jews living in the town at that time at 5,434, and Poles at 1,730. A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*, p. 43.

⁸⁹ D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," pp. 59, 67.

Table 1). By October 1941, it had already reached 6,911, including 2,337 refugees (33.81 per cent). The dissolution of the Military Police station in Działoszyce and the potential absence of the German police may have prompted many Jews seeking a chance for a safe existence to choose this place as a temporary settlement.⁹⁰ As a result of the social phenomena discussed above, particularly the resettlements, the Jewish population of Działoszyce grew from over 5,000 in 1939 to 7,228 in April 1942 and 7,500–8,000 in August 1942.⁹¹ The figures cited in the *Działoszyce Sefer Izkor* – 12,000 or even 15,000 Jews reportedly present in Działoszyce⁹² just before the initial deportation on 2–3 September 1942 – appear to be significantly inflated.⁹³ The influx of refugees led to catastrophic living conditions, marked by extreme overcrowding. Public buildings such as the synagogue and the Bet Midrash housed around a thousand individuals. Many others were forced to live in basements, attics, and quite literally – as contemporaries described it – in “every hole.”⁹⁴

The German authorities constantly sought to record (*Erfassung*) the population in the conquered territory and demanded that local administrations send them the relevant data. Since both Jewish and Polish municipalities submitted the same type of statistics, it was very easy to check these reports and detect mistakes or deliberate distortions. The system was constantly tightened so that no inhabitant remained outside the German records.⁹⁵ In November 1940, the Kreishauptmann ordered

⁹⁰ M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps,” p. 288, <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi365.html#Page374> (accessed 30 January 2025).

⁹¹ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 55, 85. Similar statistics can be found in handwritten, undated notes on the settlement structure of Poles and Jews in Działoszyce, preserved in the town records of Działoszyce (AP Ki, AMD, 61a, Figure breakdown, no place and date, p. 11). The estimated number of 6,000 to 8,000 Jews in Działoszyce prior to the deportation was also cited in the investigative materials concerning Dr. Schmidt BAL, B.162/40578, Investigation against Dr. Friedrich Schmidt, no place and date, p. 40.

⁹² M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps,” pp. 288, 289. The same as in AYV, O.3/129, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 4. The number of 12,000 Jews living in Działoszyce was also given by Stefan Krakowski in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, estimating the number of refugees at approximately 5,000. See S. Krakowski, “Działoszyce,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica. Second Edition*, eds. F. Skolnik et al., vol. 6, Detroit – New York – San Francisco – New Haven – Waterville – Maine – London n.d, p. 80.

⁹³ The data presented in the book of memory are based on the authors’ observations and estimates, whereas Rączy and Libionka present calculations based on statistics from the Jewish Social Self-Help, which lends their data greater reliability.

⁹⁴ So it was written in the book of memory. See also S. Fishman and M. Dean, “Działoszyce,” p. 503.

⁹⁵ The Germans’ thorough documentation of the ghetto’s inhabitants rendered resistance virtually impossible, as any act of defiance could have exposed others to collective punishment. M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction.”

municipalities to count all Reich Germans, ethnic Germans, Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, and others in the area under study. The report was also to include detailed information on the number of people who had arrived from the incorporated territories (specifying the area of origin) or other countries.⁹⁶ At the same time, the municipalities were given another duty – to send monthly information (by the tenth day of each month) on natural changes in the population, specifically births and deaths, to the county doctor in Miechów.⁹⁷

From the beginning of 1941, in the Cracow District, the process of concentrating Jews in selected centres became apparent. The prelude to these actions was, of course, the aforementioned expulsion of Jews from Cracow. The aim was to halt the dispersion of Jews in smaller towns and villages and concentrate them in designated areas, creating “Jew-free” zones. The “concentration” orders were issued by German starosts, including in Cracow (Kraków Land), Tarnów and Nowy Sącz.⁹⁸ In February 1941, the Land Commissioner in Kazimierz Wielka ordered that immigrant Jews settle only in three towns: Działoszyce, Skalmierz and Koszyce.⁹⁹ The order issued by the Kreishauptmann of Miechów on 9 April 1941 was along the same lines. Once again, municipal and rural officials, who were Poles, were embroiled in German anti-Jewish policy. Kreishauptmann Kalpers expected mayors and village leaders to ensure that

in municipalities where there were no Jews, Jews will not settle in the future either. Especially in Jewish-free towns, Jewish families are not allowed to settle or reside under any circumstances. Should Jews settle there, the mayor is obliged to expel them and refer them to the appropriate Judenrat.

Any difficulties should be reported to the county starost, providing detailed personal information and the last place of residence of the Jewish family.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ AP Ki, AG Nagorzany, 141, Letter from the Kreishauptmann of Miechów to all municipalities in the Kreis Miechów, Miechów, 5 November 1940, p. 39.

⁹⁷ AP Ki, AG Czarnocin, 1315, Letter from the county doctor in Miechów, Johan Martynetz, to the Board of the Municipality of Czarnocin, Kazimierza Wielka, 26 November 1941, p. 22.

⁹⁸ E. Podhorizer-Sandel, “O zagładzie Żydów,” p. 92.

⁹⁹ AP Ki, AG Nagorzany, 142, Letter to all mayors and boards of municipalities under the jurisdiction of the county starosty in Kazimierza Wielka, Kazimierza Wielka, 28 February 1941, p. 217.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter from the Kreishauptmann in Miechów to all mayors, Miechów, 9 April 1941, p. 186.

Economic Plundering

Soon after their establishment, the German occupation authorities – initially military, later civilian – rapidly issued a vast array of regulations that governed nearly every facet of daily life. As Mosze Bejski noted, “one decree followed another, and every day brought new restrictions.”¹⁰¹ Some of the decrees were issued by the central authorities of the General Governorate, while others were the brain-child of the Kreishauptmann or the land commissioner, in this particular case, the starost of Miechów and the Land Commissioner of Kazimierza.¹⁰² The German anti-Jewish policy in the years 1939–1942 has been discussed in numerous scholarly publications and therefore does not require a detailed analysis here.¹⁰³ The German objective was to eliminate Jews from social and economic life and, through systematic segregation and isolation, to strip them of both the material foundations of their existence and their personal freedom. German policies also established a new, racist social hierarchy: at the top stood individuals of German nationality (Reichsdeutsche and Volksdeutsche), followed by Poles, with Jews and the Roma relegated to the lowest tier.

Anti-Jewish orders primarily affected the economic sphere. Compulsory marking with the Star of David was introduced¹⁰⁴ for Jews and for businesses owned by Jews.

Equally quickly, the occupiers issued orders concerning the seizure of bank accounts and a ban on pension payments. At the first conference of mayors, Kreishauptmann Boos “authorised” towns and municipalities to impose special taxes on Jews.¹⁰⁵ On 4 January 1940, an order was issued mandating the “reporting of Jewish property in the General Governorate.” In the Kreis Miechów, however, this order was not enforced until after 13 March 1940, when the local starost issued his

¹⁰¹ M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction.”

¹⁰² Efforts were undertaken to bypass certain orders. A notable instance involves the prohibition on rail travel for Jews, where evidence suggests that mayors provided the required permits to facilitate such journeys. See AP Ki, AG Nagorzany, 141, Letter from the Kreishauptmann in Miechów to all mayors and village leaders in the county, Miechów, 26 November 1940, p. 25.

¹⁰³ For more, see J.A. Młynarczyk and S. Piątkowski, *Cena poświęcenia. Zbrodnie na Polakach za pomoc udzielaną Żydom w rejonie Ciepłowa*, Cracow, 2007.

¹⁰⁴ There is a reason to believe that the regulation may have been put into practice in Działoszyce in 1940. See AP Ki, SP in Pińczów, 276, Survey concerning the course of military operations and the German occupation, Działoszyce, 3 August 1946, p. 83.

¹⁰⁵ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 48.

own order on the matter. Jewish communities (through Judenräte) were responsible for reporting on the enforcement of the order. The property inventory was carried out in an atmosphere of fear and under threat of severe punishment. The order also applied to baptised Jews; moreover, their non-Jewish spouses were likewise classified as Jews.¹⁰⁶ In March 1940, goods in larger shops were registered, and in April, the registered goods were confiscated.¹⁰⁷ Following the orders issued at the central level, detailed orders began to be issued by the German Kreishauptmannschaft in Miechów. On 19 May 1940, the Kreishauptmann, through the county PP commander, ordered the Blue Police to close and register Jewish iron warehouses.¹⁰⁸

However, the Treuhandstelle, a trust agency through which the German authorities seized income from Jewish businesses and their property as so-called ownerless and abandoned, played a particularly important role in the policy of plundering the Jewish population. Due to the lack of preserved documentation on the agency's activities at the level of the town of Działoszyce and its surroundings, we know little about it. It is particularly difficult to estimate the scale of the material assets seized. Importantly, the available accounts divert the attention of researchers from the leaders and organisers of the exploitation to those who carried out these activities. As practice shows, the Germans very often appointed Poles from territories incorporated into the Third Reich to positions as trustees (commissioners). Knowledge of the German language greatly facilitated cooperation. Some of them probably accepted the German nationality list (*Volksliste*), but the scale of this phenomenon remains an open question. In any case, the circumstances of war provided significant opportunities for social advancement and rapid enrichment.¹⁰⁹ Among these individuals were Jan Gadocha from Katowice, commissioner of several Jewish oil mills and soap factories until autumn 1940, teacher Ignacy Mrugalski, trustee of one of the shops, and Stefan Sarybrat from Poznań.

¹⁰⁶ AP Ki, AG Topola, 1345, Letter from the Board of the Jewish Religious Community in Działoszyce to the Mayor of the Municipality of Topola, Działoszyce, 19 March 1940, p. 125.

¹⁰⁷ AO Kr, S37/16/Zn, vol. 1, Piotr Berghofer, *Memories of Jews from Częstochowa*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁸ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 17, Letter from the County PP Command in Miechów to all police stations in the county, Miechów, 19 May 1940, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ The exploitation of wartime circumstances for quick enrichment at the expense of the civilian population did not only affect Jews. Waclaw Kapsa, codenamed "Herman," recalls the scandalous behaviour of a certain Jan D., who blackmailed Poles and Jews, threatening to hand them over to the Germans in exchange for bribes and alcohol. W. Kapsa, "Działoszyce pod okupacją hitlerowską (3)," pp. 158–159.

The latter had a very bad reputation among the locals. He blackmailed Jews who, upon hearing him speak German, “ran away from him like from the devil,” and, at a later stage, he made a living by blackmailing Poles.¹¹⁰ As a result of changes in the commercial structure, which were a consequence of the legal exclusion of Jews, Poles filled the vacuum and opened several Polish shops.¹¹¹ The Germans also engaged in ad hoc economic plundering. Around the turn of 1941–1942, the Jewish community of Działoszyce was targeted by the so-called “fur operation” – a Nazi-led confiscation campaign in which warm outer garments were forcibly taken to outfit the Wehrmacht during the harsh winter months. Regrettably, the full scope of this campaign remains unknown.¹¹² Some of the resources were taken over by the occupiers as a simple levy, only for appearances’ sake, called a “contribution” or a “tax,” which was often collected in the ghetto and enforced by the Judenrat.¹¹³

The German policy of exploiting ethnic tensions between Poles and Jews¹¹⁴ was clearly manifested in the spring of 1941. As early as March, in the region under the jurisdiction of the Land Commissariat in Kazimierza Wielka, German authorities began conducting an inventory of Jewish farms.¹¹⁵ The description included the owner’s first and last name, the size of the farm, the nature and technical condition of the buildings, the condition of livestock and equipment, and an answer to the question of who physically ran the farm, specifically who was the owner or tenant (in each case, their details also had to be provided). The land commissioner left some discretion to the mayors to enter additional relevant information about specific farms, which would later be handed over to Polish farmers and agricultural labourers displaced from the territories incorporated into the Third Reich.¹¹⁶ This

¹¹⁰ He was probably persecuted by the Germans for the abuse. He escaped from Działoszyce, was sent to forced labour in Germany, and eventually ended up in an unspecified camp. See *ibid.*, pp. 160–166; W. Kapsa, “Działoszyce pod okupacją hitlerowską (2),” p. 199.

¹¹¹ W. Kapsa, “Pod okupacją hitlerowską (fragment większej całości),” in *Opowieści wojenne z Południa*, [vol. 1], ed. A. Kozera, Kielce, 2007, p. 124.

¹¹² A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*, p. 43.

¹¹³ M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction,” p. 24.

¹¹⁴ AIPN *Główna Komisja* (Chief Commission, hereinafter GK), 196/239, The act of indictment against Josef Bühler, Cracow, 31 May 1948, p. 19.

¹¹⁵ One of the landowners in Działoszyce was a certain Szentel, who owned several farms in the Kreis Miechów. W. Kapsa, “Działoszyce pod okupacją hitlerowską (3),” p. 160.

¹¹⁶ AP Ki, AG Nagorzany, 142, Letter from the Land Commissioner of Kazimierza Wielka to all rural and urban municipality boards under the jurisdiction of the county starosta in Kazimierza Wielka, 6 March 1941, p. 209.

process was to be completed by July 1941, when Jewish farmers – pursuant to an order of the Food and Agriculture Department of the General Governorate’s government – were to be “disinherited” and transferred to other locations.¹¹⁷ The owners of Jewish estates and farms also lived in Działoszyce. The operation in this area was carried out by Paweł Kluczniok, head of the Real Estate Authority (*Liegenschaftsverwaltung*) in the Kreis Miechów, who came from Silesia. “When he came to Działoszyce,” recalled an employee of the Działoszyce municipal office, “in order to maintain a more serious demeanour and ensure his prestige among the people, he forgot how to speak Polish and used only German, addressing everyone in German.”¹¹⁸ The Germans did not manage to complete the process of removing Jews from the villages at that time, because in July 1942, Jews continued to live in 90 localities in the Kreis Miechów.¹¹⁹

Towards the end of 1941, the German authorities in the Kreis Miechów paid special attention to the so-called abandoned (ownerless) and Jewish houses. On 15 December 1941, Karl Raftl, head of the Economic Office in the Kreis Miechów, sent a special letter to towns and municipalities demanding the immediate delivery of (“failure to comply with this demand will result not only in the most severe punishment, but will also harm the municipality’s purely personal interests”) very detailed information about “ownerless houses and building plots” in each municipality. In the case of Jewish property, the information was to include the number of houses and building plots seized, as well as their total number in each municipality.¹²⁰ The existing archival records from the town of Działoszyce do not allow for a definitive assessment of the extent to which the order was implemented.

In parallel with the widespread, systemic looting, German personnel from local police stations and civil institutions also engaged in acts of theft. The looting primarily affected Jewish merchants, whose property was an attractive target for

¹¹⁷ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 61.

¹¹⁸ W. Kapsa, “Działoszyce pod okupacją hitlerowską (2),” p. 200.

¹¹⁹ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 72.

¹²⁰ Each municipality was tasked with compiling a thorough account of every property – its estimated value, the income it generated from rent, its maintenance costs, and any outstanding taxes still owed. AP Ki, AG Boszczynek, 484, Letter from the Head of the Economic Office in the Kreis Miechów to the Mayor and municipal authorities in Boszczynek, Miechów, 15 December 1941, p. 71; AP Ki, AG Nagorzany, 142, Letter from the Head of the Economic Office in the Kreis Miechów to the Mayor and municipal authorities in Nagorzany, Miechów, 15 December 1941, p. 6.

those seeking rapid material gain at the expense of the defenceless. In the initial phase of the occupation (1939–1940), even the Military Police quickly established opportunistic relationships with local Jews. They took goods from some and sold them to others.¹²¹ German police and civil administration officials engaged in repeated and arbitrary thefts of jewellery, gold, and money, with a discernible regularity emerging in these actions. Every Monday and Thursday, thorough searches were conducted for restricted goods: fabrics, textiles, industrial products, leather, and shoes. Some spoke of “wagons full of goods” confiscated from local Jews. After discovering the hiding place, the Military Police confiscated all valuable items. Many goods belonging to Icek Majer Waga, Alter Spokojny, Dula, Gałązka, Szulimowicz, Platkiewicz, and others were stolen. The Germans confiscated, for example, the entire stock of textiles belonging to Meir Zonenfeld’s father, along with all his money, which led to his financial ruin. In most cases, the confiscations were accompanied by repression in the form of imprisonment, fines, and beatings. Many people were involved in this practice, including high-ranking officials and officers from Miechów, such as Schmidt, Beyerlein, Vogt, Becker, and Riedinger, and the most vicious gendarmes, such as Kozak and Dachauer-Kornhäuser¹²² or Schubert.¹²³

At the end of this peculiar chain were the local Blue Policemen. They extorted bribes in the form of goods from Jews (a similar practice was also applied to the non-Jewish population),¹²⁴ arbitrarily, without the knowledge of their superiors or the starosty authorities, also confiscated essential goods, or accepted bribes for refraining from confiscation. In addition, there were common thefts.¹²⁵ The County *Polnische Polizei* Commander, Major Siwoń, attempted to combat these

¹²¹ It is even possible to identify cases of male–female contacts between Germans and Jewish women in the early days of the occupation. AYV, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 4; A. Langer, “During and After the War.”

¹²² He was to serve in the Dachau concentration camp, earning him the moniker “Dachauer.” This gendarme used to say that he would rather shoot ten Jews than one dog. AYV, O.3/2565, Testimony of Helena Dresner, 1982, p. 1.

¹²³ N. Wolgelernter, “Prologue,” p. 63; M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction,” p. 38; A. Langer, “During and After the War.”

¹²⁴ T. Domański, “*Polnische Polizei* jako narzędzie realizacji niemieckiej polityki okupacyjnej w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie,” *Premisla Christina* 18 (2018/2019).

¹²⁵ See AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 9, Order no. 5 of the County PP Commander in Miechów, September 1941, p. 13.

pathological phenomena.¹²⁶ According to Ignacy Skóra, Jews had to furnish the apartments of every new policeman arriving in Działoszyce at their own expense.¹²⁷ An order was introduced prohibiting policemen from buying products at free market prices (“higher than those set by the authorities”), “as this would, it was argued, demoralise the black marketeers.”¹²⁸ The ban introduced by the Germans on Jews leaving the city without a pass from the municipal authorities provided an excellent opportunity for abuse and fast enrichment. Some policemen “loitered” in the town, watching who was leaving and where they went. One of the residents of Działoszyce recalled:

When such a Jew returned, he was caught and had to pay to be released. If he didn't have a permit from the magistrate or enough money to buy his freedom, his belongings were taken without hesitation. No one ever knew who paid the ransom – or how much was paid. [...] And even if he had been wronged, he wouldn't go to the mayor to complain about the person who had caught him and robbed him. Speaking up would only cost him more.¹²⁹

However, the scale of gratuities and bribes received by the police for acting as intermediaries between the so-called Aryan side and the Jewish quarter remains completely unknown. This phenomenon occurred throughout the entire General Governorate,¹³⁰ and it should be assumed that it also took place in Działoszyce. Chaim Wohlgelernter wrote about the policeman Julian Ordysiński: “There was no Jewish home where he did not indulge in drunken gluttony and accept all kinds

¹²⁶ In a letter to police station commanders, Major Siwoń wrote: “Such incidents significantly undermine the police, demoralise both the public and others, particularly young policemen, and ultimately distort the essential orders of the authorities, since the arbitrary actions of certain policemen may be perceived by people as authoritative orders” (AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the County PP Command in Miechów to all PP station commanders in the county, Miechów, 10 May 1940, p. 15).

¹²⁷ AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Ignacy Skóra at the main hearing, p. 272. Perhaps it was part of bribing the police.

¹²⁸ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the County PP Commander in Miechów to all police stations in the county, Miechów, 26 January 1940, p. 3.

¹²⁹ W. Kapsa, “Policja w Działoszycach,” p. 162.

¹³⁰ S. Szymańska-Smolkin, “Rola policji granatowej jako pośrednika w utrzymywaniu łączności między gettem a stroną aryjską,” in *Narody i polityka. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Jerzemu Tomaszewskiemu*, eds. A. Grabski and A. Markowski, Warsaw, 2010, pp. 216-217.

of bribes.”¹³¹ Apart from extreme cases, in practice, it turned out that the attitude of the police was, to some extent, acceptable to the local Jews. In *Sefer izkor* and other memories, there are no references to economic abuse by the police in the final phase of the existence of the Jewish residential quarter in Działoszyce.¹³²

Of course, it would be a gross mistake to classify all police officers as individuals who behaved solely in a malicious manner towards Jews. The aforementioned letter from Major Siwoń to the PP station commanders from June 1940 contains the following passage:

The inappropriate helpfulness of certain policemen toward Jews also casts doubt on the integrity of the police force. For instance, I have information indicating that a station commander assisted a Jew in acquiring a horse at an auction for the lowest price possible by bidding on the horse himself, using the Jew’s money, and then transferring the horse back to the Jew. It is beyond doubt that the Jew generously rewarded the accommodating officer. This reflects a noticeable decline in personal ambition and integrity among some members of the police, corrupts the conscientiousness of others, and diminishes the moral standing of the police in the eyes of both the authorities and the public.¹³³

In practice, between 1939 and 1941, the Blue Policemen often deliberately performed their duties in a tardy manner. For example, they did not draw up the mandatory lists of Jews leaving individual localities without the appropriate permission (April 1941).¹³⁴

Forced Labour

Concurrently with economic plundering and deprivation of their means of existence, the exploitation of Jews as a labour force began. In connection with

¹³¹ Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 93.

¹³² In the context of World War II, the acceptance of financial remuneration by policemen or civilian Poles in return for providing assistance was considered completely natural (as a kind of an exchange), contingent upon adherence to the initially agreed-upon terms. See E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Uwagi i spostrzeżenia*, ed. and introd. A. Eisenbach, Warsaw, 1988.

¹³³ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the County PP Command in Miechów to all PP police station commanders in the county, Miechów, 10 May 1940, p. 15.

¹³⁴ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 16, Phonogram of the County PP Command in Miechów to all PP stations, Miechów, 29 April 1941, p. 2.

the compulsory labour order issued by General Governor Hans Frank for Jews aged 14 to 60, the Kreishauptmann of Miechów began implementing this order by registering all labourers. He made the mayors responsible for the “accuracy of the registration,” alongside the Jewish community. Care was taken to ensure that no one was left out of the register. The Jewish community was to submit the completed lists of names to the mayor. On the other side of the process, upon arrival at a specified location, Jews were to register within 24 hours.¹³⁵ The introduction of a double – cross-checking – control system was intended, on the one hand, to tighten the registration system for Jewish labourers as much as possible and, on the other hand, to lead to social disintegration.¹³⁶ This mechanism is clearly illustrated in the order concerning the registration of labourers, issued by the mayor of the Municipality of Topola to the village leaders under his jurisdiction. Referring to the order from the Kreishauptmann of Miechów dated 21 February 1940, the mayor instructed the village leaders to “observe whether any Jews come to reside in the village and, if any new Jews arrive [...] immediately direct them to the Jewish community in Działoszyce for registration.”¹³⁷ The order was indeed carried out. Probably based on data collected by the village leader of Kamyszów, the mayor summoned the Jews listed by name to register in Działoszyce. He also informed them of the penalty of 10 years’ imprisonment for failure to comply with the German order.¹³⁸ The mechanism also worked in the opposite direction. Complying with the authorities’ order, the Jewish community in Działoszyce requested that the mayor of Topola (and, presumably, other municipalities located in the former religious community) register all Jews and provide key information such as personal details, age (date of birth), address, occupation, and date of arrival in the municipality.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ AP Ki, AG Topola, 1345, Letter from the Kreishauptmann of Miechów to the mayors in Miechów, Wolbrom, Pilica, Żarnowiec, Słomniki, Proszowice, Brzesko Nowe, Skała, Książ Wielki, Działoszyce and Koszyce, Miechów, 21 February 1949, pp. 95–96.

¹³⁶ A double, cross-checking control system was introduced in the municipalities of the Radom District. See T. Domański, “Niemiecka administracja gminna,” pp. 156–157.

¹³⁷ AP Ki, AG Topola, 1345, Letter from the Mayor of the Municipality of Topola to all village leaders in the municipality, Topola, 4 March 1940, p. 94.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter from the Mayor of the Municipality of Topola to the village leader of Kamyszów, Topola, 4 March 1940, p. 112.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, Letter from the Board of the Jewish Community in Działoszyce to the Mayor of the Municipality of Topola, Działoszyce, 14 March 1940, p. 120. As of 19 March 1940, 47 Jews resided in the

After registering the Jews, the Germans forced them to perform various acts of physical labour in Działoszyce. These included cleaning and repairing the streets, cleaning the Sancygniówka River, and sweeping the town. Food was provided by a soup kitchen. Specific tasks were assigned by the town council.¹⁴⁰ The number of Jews forced into slave labour at the beginning of the occupation was not very large in relation to the total population and amounted to about 100 people.¹⁴¹ The extent of exploitation thus depended on the size of the town and its specific needs. Around mid-1940, the demand for Jewish labour increased. At that time, the Germans began to implement a more systematic approach. Supervisors Adolf Mucha and Hofman arrived in Działoszyce. The former, serving as the head of the Labour Office (*Arbeitsamt*, AA) in Kazimierza Wielka, was responsible for organising the deportation of local Jews for forced labour in nearby towns and in the camps located in Cudzynowice, Rosiejów, Słaboszów, and Kazimierza Wielka.¹⁴² Hofman, by contrast, monitored the situation locally. Mosze Bejski rightly concluded that cooperation in this area between the Judenrat and the German authorities was excellent.¹⁴³ Jewish witnesses also recall a certain Górniak, also

municipality. *Ibid.*, Overall count of residents designated to receive Easter sugar, Topola, 19 March 1940, p. 141.

¹⁴⁰ W. Kapsa, "Pod okupacją hitlerowską," pp. 119–120; M. Rozenek, "The Outbreak of World War Two."

¹⁴¹ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 164.

¹⁴² In 1945, Mucha was arrested. Jewish survivors and other witnesses made serious accusations against him, including abuse and persecution (such as beatings and bribery). In the book of memory, he was even referred to as a German. In fact, he was an ethnic Pole, born in 1919, and originally from Tarnów County. He had lived in Działoszyce for a long time. In one of his statements, Mucha admitted to accepting bribes and beating Jews, while in another he denied all allegations. Many Polish witnesses testified in his defence, including claims that he had helped Jews by falsely employing them on nearby estates. Malys Singer also gave such a testimony. Ultimately, Mucha was acquitted of all charges by the Special Criminal Court in Cracow. The court deemed the testimonies provided by Jewish witnesses to be inconsistent and lacking coherence. It is plausible that Mucha was misidentified as Górniak – particularly in relation to the charge of abusing elderly Jews in a cemetery and staging an execution, an incident which Zonenfeld attributed to Górniak in the book of memory. Furthermore, the circumstances surrounding the events may have been overstated, with actions executed under German orders being portrayed as if initiated independently by the defendant. See AIPN Kr, 502/480, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Adolf Mucha, Katowice, 16 June 1945, pp. 30–32; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Adolf Mucha, Mysłowice, 26 October 1945, pp. 174–178; *ibid.*, Indictment against Adolf Mucha, Cracow, 26 January 1946, pp. 218–219; *ibid.*, Judgment of the Special Criminal Court in Cracow against Adolf Mucha, Cracow, 20 May 1946, pp. 335–339; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Mojżesz Cukierman, Katowice, n.d., p. 21.

¹⁴³ M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction."

a Silesian, who in 1941, on behalf of the Cracow's Arbeitsamt structures, conducted a census of all Jews in Działoszyce covering men aged 12–60 and women aged 15–55.¹⁴⁴ Jewish forced labourers were subjected to beatings and other forms of abuse.¹⁴⁵ Following the example of many other towns in the General Governorate, a rotational system of labour recruitment and the possibility of substitution were introduced.¹⁴⁶ Paradoxically, for some time, this solution was beneficial for some Jews who had been deprived of their means of subsistence and livelihood. These people could hire themselves out in exchange for more affluent individuals who wanted to avoid backbreaking and sometimes humiliating work, and thus gain at least a temporary opportunity to illegally purchase food or other goods and support their families.¹⁴⁷ The rates varied from 5 to 12 zlotys per day, and at times even Poles hired themselves out to perform physical labour for Jews – for example, members of the Stasik family (a father and two sons), who lived in a poor neighbourhood known as Jankielówka.¹⁴⁸

In the following years, the German authorities resorted to roundups, and those arrested were sent to labour camps in Kostrze and Podgórze to work for Richard Strauch. The Judenrat was forced to take responsibility for the recruitment of labourers, and it first turned to refugee camps. Those who were reluctant were brought in by the ghetto police.¹⁴⁹ The Judenrat was allowed to send a small amount of food, clothing, and blankets to these people. The harsh working conditions in the labour camps sometimes led to the death of prisoners, including Nuchim Laskier. After several months, the Judenrat attempted to exchange some labourers for others. Of course, the key question remained who should be sent, which led to numerous tensions and disputes. Few wanted to go voluntarily, although there were some who were willing to take the jobs of others in exchange for payment,

¹⁴⁴ M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps," p. 290; A. Tennenbaum, "The Deportations from Działoszyce, Skalbierz, and Miechów," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi298.html#Page304> (accessed 30 January 2025); AYV, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 6.

¹⁴⁵ AIPN Ki, 53/4478, Repression of the Jewish population before the establishment of the ghetto. Działoszyce, Warsaw, 26 March 1969, p. 22.

¹⁴⁶ T. Domański, "Prześladowania Żydów na prowincji Kreishauptmannschaft Kielce w latach 1939–1941," *Res Historica* 54 (2022), pp. 481–532.

¹⁴⁷ M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction."

¹⁴⁸ W. Kapsa, "Pod okupacją hitlerowską," p. 119.

¹⁴⁹ *Sefer izkor*, p. 262; AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Elias Ostry during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 153.

which they would then send to their families. Several such exchanges took place. The last group, already present in the camp, avoided deportation to Bełżec on 3 September 1942.¹⁵⁰

Jews could also be employed by companies and private individuals through labour offices established by the occupiers. Jewish labourers were supposed to receive the same wages as Polish labourers, but with a 20 per cent reduction. Once again, racial laws were enforced. Jewish labourers were sometimes deceived by fraudsters or swindlers who either did not pay them or hired them without the required certificates. This practice was actively implemented by Reich Germans and Volksdeutsche.¹⁵¹

At that time, the issue of employing Jews had already become so controversial that it was not always clear how to deal with it. For example, one of the local landowners, Andrzej Deskur from Sancygniów, refused to employ Jews from Działoszyce on his estate, as he believed that by doing so he would be contributing to their persecution.¹⁵² In other places, this was not seen in the same way. Jews from Działoszyce worked, for example, on the Mieszków estate on land improvement works.¹⁵³

Table 2. The Occupational Structure of the Jewish Residents of Działoszyce in 1939–1941

Category	Number until 1939	Number as of 31 October 1941
Jews	4,574	6,911
Merchants and traders	567	320
Craftsmen	827	766
Labourers	356	1,086
Liberal professions	22	36
Unemployed	c. 300	c. 800

Source: ŻIH, ŻSS, 378, Report, no place and date, p. 10.

¹⁵⁰ Ch. Frajman (New York), "Jankielówka and Its Jews," p. 237; M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction."

¹⁵¹ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 17, Okólnik, Miechów, 10 January 1942, pp. 55–56.

¹⁵² M. Chorążki, *Ziemiańskie wobec wojny. Postawy właścicieli ziemskich województwa krakowskiego w latach 1939–1945*, Cracow, 2010, p. 182.

¹⁵³ Helena Dresner was among those employed there. She spoke very positively about the help she received from the Polish engineer Szeliga. AYV, O.3/2565, Testimony of Helena Dresner, 1982, p. 3.

A purposeful German policy caused individuals to lose their businesses, and the arrival of refugees who had been stripped of their former means of livelihood contributed to rising unemployment and poverty. The conditions of the German occupation period and the transformation of the social employment structure are clearly illustrated in the occupational breakdown of the Jews of Działoszyce, recorded by the Judenrat in October 1941 (refer to Table 2). The number of people without employment rose from 300 in 1939 to 800, almost three times as many, which correlated with the number of refugees at that time (33.81 per cent). Approximate statistics concerned the number of labourers. The percentage of craftsmen, merchants, and traders was falling, which, as mentioned, was a consequence of the bans and restrictions introduced by the Germans.

Policy of Extermination

The German regulations imposed on Jews, restricting their freedom of movement – specifically, the first and second General Governorate residence restriction regulations – also led to the impoverishment of the Jewish population, malnutrition, general weakness, and, consequently, increased mortality. In Działoszyce, as in other provincial ghettos, the situation gradually deteriorated. The restrictions affected not only refugees, who were deprived of their property and means of livelihood, but also poor small traders, including those from the Jankielówka neighbourhood. Before the war, many Jews from there were involved in itinerant trade in the surrounding villages. Restrictions on movement made it impossible for them to earn a living.¹⁵⁴ In addition, the local Land Commissioner Hamburger had a very negative impact on the situation of Jews. In his proclamations to the Jewish population, he announced draconian (*drakonisch*) penalties for violating the previously introduced regulations: a ban on trade, a curfew, the obligation to register property, and to wear an armband with the Star of David.¹⁵⁵ Very quickly,

¹⁵⁴ Ch. Frajman (New York), “Jankielówka and Its Jews.”

¹⁵⁵ AP Ki, AG Nagorzany, 141, Letter from the Land Commissioner of Kazimierza Wielka to mayors and municipality boards under the jurisdiction of the county starosty in Kazimierza Wielka, Kazimierza Wielka, 9 December 1940, p. 27. The lack of an armband with the Star of David was classified by the Germans in the Kreis Miechów as a criminal offence. See AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the County PP Command in Miechów to all PP station commanders in the county, Miechów, 5 June 1941, p. 59.

on 1 October 1940, the same Land Commissioner introduced a ban on Jews leaving their places of residence, including villages. He emphasised that Jews would be fined between 20 and 500 zlotys (which were significant sums of money at the time) “by his officials,” sent to forced labour, or arrested.¹⁵⁶ Despite everything, in 1940, some Jews still considered the situation bearable, which was probably helped by the resources they had accumulated before the war.¹⁵⁷ Some could even afford to organise lavish parties. Wohlgelernter recalled:

In the second year of the war, on the 14th day of Shvat – January 1941 – my son Szraga Fajwel was born, named after my late father-in-law. His circumcision was held at the proper time and marked with solemnity, accompanied by a magnificent feast attended by the city’s dignitaries. Despite the difficulties of leaving the city and travelling by train – restrictions imposed by the cursed war – my father and mother arrived to take part in the celebrations.¹⁵⁸

Even outside the Jewish community, there were subjective assessments that in the years 1939–1941, the Germans treated Jews generally on an equal footing with the rest of the population, and that the change did not occur until 1941.¹⁵⁹

Sefer Izkor highlights three turning points that led to a sharp decline in their daily life conditions. All occurred in 1941:

- 22 June, marked by the German invasion of the Soviet Union;¹⁶⁰
- 15 October, when the Third General Government Residence Restriction Regulation was introduced, imposing the death penalty on Jews who left the Jewish quarter without permission, as well as on those who sheltered them;¹⁶¹
- and December, linked to the United States’ entry into the war following Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbour.

¹⁵⁶ AP Ki, AG Nagorzany, 141, Letter from the Land Commissioner of Kazimierza Wielka to mayors under the jurisdiction of the county starosty in Kazimierza Wielka, Kazimierza Wielka, 1 October 1940, p. 129.

¹⁵⁷ M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps.”

¹⁵⁸ Ch.I. Wohlgelernter, “Działoszyce,” p. 30.

¹⁵⁹ AP Ki, SP in Pińczów, 276, Survey concerning the course of military operations and the German occupation, Pińczów, 16 August 1945, p. 35.

¹⁶⁰ M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps.”

¹⁶¹ For more on the practice of German special courts in punishing Jews and Poles for violating this regulation, see K. Graczyk, “Die dritte Verordnung über Aufenthaltsbeschränkungen im Generalgouvernement vom 15. OktobQer 1941. Entscheidungen der Staatsanwaltschaft und der Sondergerichte zum unbefugten Verlassen eines jüdischen Wohnbezirks,” *Journal on European History of Law* 2 (2024), pp. 42–54.

In the longer term, the most important regulation for Jews was that of 15 October 1941. In his book of memory, Chaim Frajman somewhat absurdly attributes the issuance of this order to the authorities of the town of Działoszyce.¹⁶² The Germans intended to prevent Jews from having contact with the local population and, as a result, increase their mortality rate. Following Frank's regulation, many German Kreishauptmanns issued their own regulations defining the concept of a "Jewish quarter."

Among them was Alfons Kalpers, the Kreishauptmann of Miechów, who issued a relevant document on 10 February 1942. In it, he wrote:

1. Pursuant to the Third General Government Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941, I designate as the residential area for Jews and Jewish women of the Miechów County Starosty in Miechów their current place of residence, unless districts of the city, municipality or locality have already been designated as residential areas.
2. The place of residence shall be the urban or rural municipality or village where the Jew has his permanent residence on the date of entry into force of this regulation or, in the absence thereof, his accommodation.
3. Any crossing of the municipal boundary or of the boundaries of designated residential areas, as defined prior to the entry into force of this order, without prior official authorization shall constitute an unlawful exit.

The regulation entered into force on 15 February 1942, and all offences were to be punished in accordance with the Third General Government Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941.¹⁶³

Given the constantly deteriorating conditions, obtaining food, hygiene products and fuel, in other words, everything necessary to support families, became of fundamental importance to Jews. Newcomers to the town found themselves in a particularly difficult situation.

¹⁶² See Ch. Frajman (New York), "Jankielówka and Its Jews."

¹⁶³ AP Ki, AG Topola, 1347, Letter from the internal board of the Kreis Miechów to mayors in the Kreis Miechów, Miechów, 10 February 1942, p. 8; *ibid.*, Regulation, Miechów, 10 February 1942, p. 9.

Charitable activities aimed at improving the material situation of the Jews of Działoszyce can be divided into organised and individual efforts. In the former case, clothing and food were initially collected spontaneously, but this initiative was quickly institutionalised. Representatives of Zionist youth movements were primarily involved in social assistance. It was led by Szlama Kaczka, Chaim Kaczka, Salomea Gertler, Josek and Szlama Szulimowicz, Motel Rozenek, Moszek Kamelgart, Alter Friedman (Frydman), Moszek Rozenek, Szmul Wdowiński, Eli Zilber (Eliasz Silber), Izrael Skóra and Dow Bejski.¹⁶⁴ The Judenrat was also engaged in social welfare.¹⁶⁵ On 14 June 1940, the Social Self-Help Committee was established. At the outset of its activities, it operated with very limited financial resources – just 2,500 zlotys in total, including 1,000 zlotys from the American Joint Distribution Committee (known as the Joint) and 1,500 zlotys provided by the local Judenrat. The Działoszyce committee received equally modest material support from the Judenrat in Cracow, the Joint and the Health Protection Society (*Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia*, TOZ) in Warsaw. The aid included a chest of clothing, 45 kilograms of condensed milk, 25 kilograms of Ceres cooking fat, and various medicines. In the early phase of its activity, the committee identified two primary objectives: to establish a soup kitchen and an outpatient clinic, and to intensify efforts to provide food for children. It also outlined longer-term initiatives, such as collecting clothing, expanding access to medical care, providing support to refugees, and founding a kindergarten.¹⁶⁶ The necessary equipment was purchased, and a shared kitchen and dining room were set up. The scale of demand is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of Meals Served by the Soup Kitchen in Selected Months and Years of the German Occupation

Period	Number of meals
26 June – 31 July 1940	7,537
August 1940	11,393

¹⁶⁴ D. Bejski, “Social Assistance During the Nazi Occupation”; M. Rozenek, “The Outbreak of World War Two.”

¹⁶⁵ M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction”; D. Bejski, “Social Assistance During the Nazi Occupation.”

¹⁶⁶ AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/376, Letter from the Board of the Jewish Community in Działoszyce to the Head Office of the Jewish Social Self-Help in Cracow, Działoszyce, 12 August 1940, p. 2.

Period	Number of meals
September 1940	9,564
May 1941	1,966 (paid and free)

Source: AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/376, Letter from the Social Self-Help Committee at the Jewish Council in Działoszyce, 11 October 1940, p. 14.

In July 1941, a branch of the Jewish Social Self-Help (*Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*, ŻSS) was established in Działoszyce, headed by Izaak Berger. Its members also included Marian Rolnicki and Chaim Meryn.¹⁶⁷ There must have been quite strong internal conflicts, as another “establishment” of the Jewish Social Self-Help took place in November 1941. This time, the president of the Judenrat, Kruk, became the chairman.¹⁶⁸ Regardless of the personal battles, the aid committee in Działoszyce, and later the ŻSS, received a subsidy of 500–2,500 zlotys per month from Cracow (via the local Judenrat), including funds from the Joint. These funds were used to purchase food, and based on the quantities listed in the reports, it appears that the items were bought from existing shops or cooperatives.¹⁶⁹ At black market prices, these amounts would have been sufficient for very little. In addition to funds from the ŻSS county committee, the Judenrat in Działoszyce received very modest food supplies (in March 1941, this amounted to 20 kilograms of marmalade and 21 kilograms of cod liver oil for feeding children).¹⁷⁰ As part of social assistance, a legal advice centre and an arbitration court were also established, and financial assistance was even provided. Great care was taken to look after children who were diagnosed with anaemia, scabies, and head lice.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/377, Letter to Isaac Berger in Działoszyce, Cracow, 31 July 1941, p. 46.

¹⁶⁸ AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/378, Letter from the Jewish Social Self-Help in Cracow to Moszek Jozek Kruk, Cracow, 29 November 1941, p. 18. In January 1942, the composition of the Social Self-Help Committee (ŻSS) underwent another change. Kruk retained his position as chairman, while Abraham Chaba and Jozek Szulimowicz joined as new members. *Ibid.*, Letter from the Jewish Social Self-Help in Cracow to Moszek Jozek Kruk, Cracow, 28 January 1942, p. 37.

¹⁶⁹ AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/377, Confirmation of receipt of the amount of 2,500 zlotys, Działoszyce, 17 August 1941, p. 49; AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/376, Letter from the Jewish Council in Działoszyce, Cracow, 15 August 1941, p. 59. In April 1941, the sum of 1,500 zlotys was enough to buy 330 kg of pasta, 160 kg of barley groats, 160 kg of pearl barley, 160 kg of sugar, 10 kg of potato flour and 16 kg of “March” flour. See *ibid.*, Letter from the Judenrat of Działoszyce to the Jewish Social Self-Help in Cracow, Działoszyce, 15 April 1941, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Receipt, Działoszyce, 9 March 1941, p. 58.

¹⁷¹ AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/376, Report on the activity of the social welfare in Działoszyce, 30 November 1940, p. 25; AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/378, Letter from the Social Self-Help Committee at the Jewish Council to the

Towards the end of the Jewish quarter's existence, the situation became dramatic, as the German authorities completely stopped distributing food to Jews.¹⁷² Unfortunately, no statistical data from that period is available to illustrate the overall material conditions. However, one report from the social welfare authorities in Działoszyce, dated late 1941, offers precise figures. According to its authors, in October 1941, 3,750 individuals – representing 54.26 per cent of the population – applied for social assistance from which 3,288 people (47.57 per cent) received aid. This indicates that the local Jewish social institutions managed to provide support to this group. The data above allows for several important conclusions. It points, first, to the effective organisation of social work, and second, to the substantial material resources available to the Jews of Działoszyce. Additionally, it suggests that food could be sourced from the surrounding Polish population. For comparison, detailed calculations from the provincial ghettos of the Kreis Kielce show that in towns where the Germans resettled Jews displaced from areas annexed into the Reich – amounting to roughly one-third of the pre-war population, as in Działoszyce – up to 80 percent of the Jewish population received social assistance. There were also numerous reports of cases of death by starvation.¹⁷³ In the case of Działoszyce, available sources are silent about such extreme cases, although there are mentions of hunger and malnutrition.¹⁷⁴

Many Jews tried to continue their pre-war commercial and economic activities as far as possible. In October 1941, 120 Jewish-owned businesses were still operating. The spreading hunger and shortages of basic necessities prompted Jews to take the risk of leaving the city for nearby villages without German permits. Chaim Jakubowicz traded in leather and footwear.¹⁷⁵ Unconventional methods were used to circumvent German regulations. Chaim Szymon Szulimowicz travelled throughout the area. Because he had a long, distinctive beard, which was forbidden, he would tie a scarf around his face, claiming to have a toothache, and, thus disguised, would

Jewish Social Self-Help in Cracow, Działoszyce, 10 December 1941, pp. 23–24; *ibid.*, Report on child care activities carried out in December 1941, p. 32.

¹⁷² W. Kapsa, “Pod okupacją hitlerowską,” p. 124.

¹⁷³ T. Domański, “Prześladowania Żydów na prowincji,” pp. 501–502.

¹⁷⁴ M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction”; S. Leszman (ben Jakub), “In the Polish Underground.”

¹⁷⁵ AIPN Ki, 128/206, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Chaim Jakubowicz, Kłodzko, 8 March 1948, p. 143.

wander around the villages. He did business with all the farmers, which enabled him to bring home basic foodstuffs.¹⁷⁶ Many Jews, especially the wealthier ones or those with any material resources, sold valuable items, primarily jewellery and other valuables. Clothes and everyday items were also a valuable “currency.”¹⁷⁷ Without judging the situation, it should be noted that supporting several thousand people required significant amounts of food. Grain was bought illegally from the local Polish population and then ground illegally, for example in the village of Łosowice at Zali Wajnbaum’s. One could even say that a certain network developed. There may also have been cases of support being provided for altruistic reasons.¹⁷⁸ It is known, for instance, that around the turn of 1941 and 1942, certain belongings of an individual named Furgał were held by Rev. Wojciech Buczek, a vicar from the local parish, and Jan Jamroży, the headmaster of the local school.¹⁷⁹

Undoubtedly, there were cases in which certain individuals exploited the desperate conditions of others for their own benefit.¹⁸⁰

The examples presented above clearly demonstrate that the Germans failed to break Polish–Jewish contacts, which was one of the primary goals of their policy towards Jews. Barter trade continued uninterrupted until the second deportation on 8 November 1942, but it became increasingly risky. Poles faced punishment for contacts with Jews. Notably, as early as March 1940, the Kreishauptmann of Miechów imposed a ban on the sale of agricultural products to Jews, who were already being grouped with the so-called “smugglers and traders.” Both buyers and sellers were to be punished.¹⁸¹ Another ban concerned the provision of horse-

¹⁷⁶ D. Rotam (Rotner), “I Fainted – and Was a Free Man,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi336.html#Page361> (accessed 30 January 2025).

¹⁷⁷ S. Leszman (ben Jakub), “In the Polish Underground!”

¹⁷⁸ D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce”; W. Kapsa, “Policja w Działoszycach,” p. 163.

¹⁷⁹ Although both men were reported to the authorities, Sałabun managed to ensure the items were returned to their owner just in time – before the expected search. See AIPN Ki, 128/206, Certificate, Działoszyce, 1 March 1948, p. 39; AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Rev. Zygmunt Madej during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 261.

¹⁸⁰ It has been confirmed that a gang of extortioners consisting of Jews and Poles operated in Działoszyce. It was led by a German informer, Genowefa Niebelska, whom Commander Sałabun was supposed to “get rid of.” He did not explain what he meant specifically, perhaps he meant physical elimination. AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Piotr Sałabun during the main hearing, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 135.

¹⁸¹ AP Ki, AG Topola, 1345, Letter from the Mayor of the Municipality of Topola to all village leaders in the municipality, Topola, 2 April 1940, p. 136. The death penalty for trading grain is also mentioned in *Sefer izkor*. See D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce.”

drawn carts to Jews, which was their primary means of transport. Through the introduction of quotas and supervision of agricultural policy, the Germans sought to seize all surplus grain and other agricultural products, leaving Poles with only the bare minimum necessary for survival, thus making the food situation of the Polish population increasingly dramatic.¹⁸²

The Germans spread anti-Semitic propaganda (the process was led by Johann Vogt).¹⁸³ The area in question received not only Polish-language German propaganda newspapers – commonly known as “reptile papers” – but also special circulars directed at the local population. One such circular, issued in March 1942 to solicit the so-called winter aid for the Wehrmacht, was authored by the NSDAP office in Miechów.

Although Poland could have expected a steady increase in poverty and misery after losing the war, the sharp sword of the German Army paved the way for the Polish people to be liberated from the clutches of international Jewry, and with each passing day, the Poles’ existence is developing from a terrible state of exploitation into a life that will be crowned with the concept of work and bread.¹⁸⁴

Access to medical care in Działoszyce was dire. Jewish doctors were prohibited from practising their profession, and at that time, only one doctor remained in the town – Dr. Karol Grębowski, a soldier of the Home Army. He was committed to the Home Army command to help all sick people, regardless of their nationality. And indeed, he repeatedly risked his life to break German prohibitions and treat Jews, as he recalled after the war:

I often gave medical help to Jews. Most of the time, I did so at night, but when there was an urgent need, I also provided assistance during the day. The Germans were unaware of my actions, as I was extremely cautious. I should add that I never accepted any payment for the help I gave.

¹⁸² AP Ki, SP in Pińczów, 276, Survey concerning the course of military operations and the German occupation, Pińczów, 16 August 1945, p. 35.

¹⁸³ AO Kr, S78/2023/Zn, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Teofil Kowalczyk, Cracow, 11 February 1947, p. 64.

¹⁸⁴ AP Ki, AG Koszyce, 277, Circular, Miechów, 5 March 1942, pp. 32–33.

Among those he helped, he mentioned Haskiel Spiro, Karol Birkenfeld, Feliks and a Jewish girl in her teens. The doctor also ran a secret first aid course for Jews.¹⁸⁵

Table 4. Epidemic Diseases in the Jewish Residential Quarter in Działoszyce according to the ŻSS Report

Period	Name of Disease and Number of Cases			
	Abdominal typhoid	Spotted typhoid	Dysentery	Tuberculosis
1940	26	–	6	15
1941	3	117	5	30
January 1942	–	6	–	–
February 1942	–	2	–	–
March 1942	–	2	–	–

Source: AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/379, Circular no. 57, Cracow, 24 February 1942 [?], p. 10.

Given the severe overcrowding of the Jewish population and the lack of food, hygiene, and disinfectants, it is not surprising that epidemics of infectious diseases – abdominal typhoid, spotted typhoid, dysentery, and tuberculosis – broke out in Działoszyce. In April and May 1941, the highest incidence of disease in the Cracow District was observed in Działoszyce, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, Książ Wielki, Pilica, Proszowice, Słomniki, Wolbrom and Żabno.¹⁸⁶ There were 117 cases of spotted typhoid (see Table 4). However, given the high population density in Działoszyce, the incidence of the epidemic must be considered low. The local Jews owed this success to the dedication of the aforementioned Dr. Grębowski and Dr. Dwojra Lazar, who arrived from Cracow in early 1940.¹⁸⁷ Dr. Lazar’s arrival in Działoszyce significantly energised efforts to combat the spread of epidemics by all available means. In August 1940, a Sanitary Committee was formed, chaired by Dr. Lazar, with three Judenrat members – including its head, Moszek Kruk – serving on the committee. The town was divided into four aid zones and designated “asylums”

¹⁸⁵ “Dokument nr 29,” in *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 2: *Dystrykt krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selec. and ed. S. Piątkowski, Lublin–Warsaw, 2020, p. 107; E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 146–147.

¹⁸⁶ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 152–153.

¹⁸⁷ Due to the ban on Jewish doctors practising medicine, her work was likely only possible through the Sanitary Committee.

were established to shelter those in need. Sanitary regulations were strictly enforced, with fines imposed for violations, and a public awareness campaign was launched to educate the population.¹⁸⁸ Many other ad hoc measures were taken, such as disinfecting homes with sulphur or high-temperature steam.¹⁸⁹ The treatment of Jews from Działoszyce in hospitals located in Pińczów and Cracow – and, from 10 May 1941, also in Skalbmierz – incurred substantial expenses. In December 1941, the Judenrat established an epidemic hospital in Działoszyce to treat cases of abdominal typhoid and spotted typhoid. Its operational costs were about 6,000 zlotys per month. The sick were cared for by Dr. Grębowski and Dr. Lazar, as well as two Jewish nurses. In addition, guards were posted at isolated houses.¹⁹⁰ In addition to the measures they took on their own, the Jews of Działoszyce had to comply with German regulations. Jews arriving from Cracow were ordered by the German authorities to undergo disinfection and disinfestation, without which they were not allowed to settle.¹⁹¹ The Germans charged the residents with the costs of combating the epidemic – in accordance with the order of the chief county doctor, the costs of sending sanitary and disinfection columns to the affected areas were to be covered by the municipal authorities for the Christian population and the Judenrats for the Jews.¹⁹²

The German prohibition on gatherings was in effect, yet some youth activists chose to defy it in protest. One of the survivors, Dow Bejski, clearly pointed to Zionist youth. Active members included the brothers Szlama Kaczka and Chaim Kaczka, Józef and Szlama Szulimowicz, Mosze and Dow Bejski, as well as Moszek Kamelgart, Elias Silber, Mosze Rozenek, Mordechaj Rozenek, and Alter Friedman (Frydman). These were the same people who were heavily involved in social activities. Resistance initiatives also emerged from this environment. It is not known

¹⁸⁸ AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/376, Letter from the Judenrat in Działoszyce to the Health Protection Society in Cracow, Działoszyce, 3 January 1941, p. 30; *ibid.*, To the Jewish Community of the Town of Działoszyce, Działoszyce, 17 February 1941, p. 50.

¹⁸⁹ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 148; M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction.”

¹⁹⁰ AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/377, Letter from the Judenrat in Działoszyce to the ŻSS in Cracow, Działoszyce, 26 May 1941, p. 9–10; AŻIH, ŻSS, 211/379, Letter from the Judenrat in Działoszyce to the ŻSS in Cracow, Działoszyce, 12 March 1942, p. 9; “Dokument nr 29,” in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 108.

¹⁹¹ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 16, Letter from the County Starosty in Miechów to all Mosaic faith communities in the county, 7 August 1940, p. 1.

¹⁹² AP Ki, AG Czarnocin, 1315, Letter from the Kreis Miechów’s Department of Health and Welfare to all urban and rural municipality boards in the county, Miechów, 21 May 1941, pp. 95–96.

whether their discussions led to the creation of a political organisation.¹⁹³ It can be assumed that the Zionists mentioned above had contacts with Jewish organisations in the Zagłębie region and Cracow, as mentioned by Mosze Bejski.¹⁹⁴ As early as 1940, Szlama Leszman established ties with the Polish Socialist Party. It was likely through this organisation that he obtained “Aryan” identity papers under the name Władysław Dobia, enabling him to relocate to Cracow and continue his underground work – alongside his cousin – posing as a Pole. During this period, he occasionally returned to Działoszyce.¹⁹⁵

At the opposite end of the spectrum were those Jews whose survival strategy was collaboration. However, the Germans used their services and relied on them only for a specific period of time. Survivors recall a certain Mosze Frydrych, who denounced wealthy Jews from Działoszyce and arranged train passes with the Germans, only to be shot by them in the end.¹⁹⁶ On 20 November 1941, Jakubowicz, Spokojny, and an unidentified Jew were shot on Riedinger’s orders. According to the testimony of Juliusz Spokojny, Jakubowicz had acted as a Gestapo informant. Spokojny and Jakubowicz’s younger brother were killed to prevent the disclosure of the fact that Riedinger had personally grabbed gold dollars.¹⁹⁷

In addition to anti-Jewish economic and social regulations that struck at the economic foundations, the Germans also persecuted Jews on strictly religious grounds. In the early days of the war, they closed synagogues and houses of prayer, banned public prayers, and prohibited the wearing of beards. In particular, the latter decree was met with a boycott. Many devout elderly Jews did not leave their homes for months, and when necessary, they covered their faces with scarves to pretend they were ill. This did not go unpunished. This was the case, for example, with Mosze Bejski’s father. At the same time, the Germans banned ritual slaughter and the sale of kosher meat.¹⁹⁸ They also confiscated the appropriate butchery tools.

¹⁹³ M. Rozenek, “The Outbreak of World War Two.”

¹⁹⁴ M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction.”

¹⁹⁵ S. Leszman (ben Jakub), “In the Polish Underground.”

¹⁹⁶ AYV, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 6; E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 225.

¹⁹⁷ E. Wójcicka and P. Rogowski, “Miechów i ziemia miechowska w okresie II wojny światowej w świetle zeznań Włodzimierza Bilana,” *Świętokrzyskie Studia Archiwalno-Historyczne* 6 (2017), p. 224.

¹⁹⁸ Mosze Bejski’s belief that, despite these restrictions, meat in the ghetto was always kosher seems unfounded. M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction.” This prohibition was reiterated in subsequent

Physical Extermination

Even though, as noted earlier, the Wehrmacht's entry into Działoszyce was relatively peaceful, in the area where the former Kielce and Cracow regions converged, mass crimes against Jews and acts of violence occurred in as many as 19 localities.¹⁹⁹ In Działoszyce itself, there were initially no reports of violent persecution or extermination of Jews, although the town was one of the larger Jewish communities.

The Germans did not need a permanent Military Police station in Działoszyce to effectively enforce occupation regulations. Military Police officers from Kazimierza Wielka visited the town frequently – sometimes even daily.²⁰⁰ Almost every order directed against Jews carried the threat of the death penalty. Survivors highlight the pervasive terror and constant fear, recalling the deaths of many Jews during the ghettoisation period – though often without providing specific names or details of the circumstances. From the scraps of information available, it can be concluded that, for example, in connection with restrictions on ritual slaughter, several butchers were murdered, including a woman, among them Moszek Cudzynowski (19), Rachela Cudzynowska (60) and Pintel (Pinkus?) Drobiarz (60). Some died for resisting payment of the so-called contribution to the Germans.²⁰¹

German police forces sometimes resorted to violence on the slightest pretext. In what was likely the autumn of 1939, a German soldier passing through the town accidentally shot himself while intoxicated. The incident occurred at night, and fearing disciplinary repercussions, he falsely accused the local population of attacking him. German soldiers and SS men arrived almost immediately, surrounded the town, and arrested hostages, among whom, apart from seven Polish Christians, there were two Jews, Szmul Lewkowicz and Dow Bejski. The hostages were to be shot if weapons were found. A group of five SS men broke into the home of Rabbi Lejzor Epszajn, an elderly man. Searching for weapons, they behaved with ostentatious brutality: they beat the rabbi and his family

years. See AP Ki, AG Koszyce, 32, Minutes of the conference of village leaders of the Municipality of Koszyce, 8 January 1941, p. 8.

¹⁹⁹ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 264.

²⁰⁰ M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction."

²⁰¹ See, e.g., *ibid.*; M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps," p. 290. Jews from Działoszyce also died in other places. In Miechów, before the first deportation (the exact date is unknown), ten Jews were murdered for unknown reasons. The Judenrat of Działoszyce made efforts to have them released. *Ibid.*

members and cut up Torah scrolls. Finally, they humiliated the man by cutting off one of his locks of hair and dragging the battered man through the town.²⁰² Ultimately, no weapons were found, and the situation was saved by the Polish mayor Książek, who assured the soldiers of his loyalty to the authorities and the innocence of the residents.²⁰³

The increase in the number of Jews from Działoszyce being exterminated was strongly influenced by the GG Residence Restriction Regulation issued on 15 October 1941, as was the case throughout the General Governorate. In the face of severe hunger, many Jews chose to risk their lives by leaving Działoszyce and heading into the countryside, seeking food by any means they could.

Szlama Leszman recalled in his memoirs that Jews who tried to reach nearby villages were frequently shot along the roads by German police – either by the Military Police or their subordinates, the Blue Policemen.²⁰⁴ Given the lack of sources, we can only estimate the number of Jewish victims between 15 October 1941 and 2 September 1942, including those who died at the hands of German police functionaries and those who were brought before German special courts.²⁰⁵ From available accounts, we know that five Jews were shot on charges of illegally purchasing a cow from a Polish farmer. The Germans first took the Jews to the town hall and then to a hill behind the Jewish cemetery, where one of the perpetrators murdered them with a shot to the back of the head. One of the Poles who was passing by in a cart was forced to transport the bodies to the cemetery, where a brigade with shovels was already waiting.²⁰⁶

On another day, the Germans killed four butchers. They caught them killing a calf. The next day, two Jews were shot – Hilel Skopicki and Szulim Aszer Zelikowicz, who were “doing business with the commissioner responsible for Jewish property.” They also killed several merchants transporting their goods from one

²⁰² A. Tennenbaum, “The Deportations from Działoszyce.”

²⁰³ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “My First Fear of Death,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi261.html#Page271> (accessed 30 January 2025); A. Sznajderski, *Działoszyckie rocznice*, p. 42.

²⁰⁴ S. Leszman, “In the Polish Underground.”

²⁰⁵ Leszman’s claim that the primary role of the Blue Police after December 1941 was to capture Jews leaving the town is a significant overstatement. *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ In his post-war testimony, the man said that he deliberately drove along the road next to the execution site to see for himself what had happened to the arrested Jews. See “Dokument nr 48, Woźnica zmuszony do transportu Żydów II. Opowieść z Miernowa,” in *O tym nie wolno mówić*, pp. 78–79.

place to another and several people for attempting to leave the ghetto.²⁰⁷ According to Meir Zonenfeld, the aforementioned fur operation also resulted in fatalities. Those who refused to hand over their clothes were murdered.²⁰⁸ According to testimonies published in *Sefer izkor*, the individuals responsible for these atrocities were Germans: Beyerlein, Schmidt, Kozak, Riedinger, Facht, Dachauer, Schubert, Robert, and their subordinates, the Blue Policemen Madejski and Kamerdyniak. In the latter case, witnesses did not indicate who exactly the Blue Police were supposed to kill or where.²⁰⁹

Jan Grabowski accuses the Blue Policemen from Działoszyce of committing numerous crimes against Jews. However, these allegations warrant careful scrutiny, as both the available sources and – most importantly – their interpretation are inconsistent. The foundation of Grabowski's claim is the testimony of "Adam Langner" [*sic*]. The manner in which this testimony was "scientifically processed" merits further explanation. During my research for this article, I determined that the testimony in question was actually given by Abram Langer in German in 1949. The relevant passage from Grabowski's book, which cites this testimony, reads as follows:

In the period preceding the liquidation of the ghetto [in Działoszyce – T.D.], the men under Sałabun's command carried out numerous executions. In several cases, individual Jews were killed, but on one occasion, the Polish police arrested all people with the surname Rafałowicz in the ghetto (there were thirty of them), took them out of the town, and shot them.²¹⁰

Indeed, Langer stated in 1949 that the Blue Police took thirty people with the surname Rafałowicz out of the city and shot them all. However, his testimony is very vague and focuses mainly on the person of the PP station commander. We read, among other things, that Sałabun "was active in all operations against Jews" (*war bei allen Aktionen gegen die Juden tätig*), "always cooperated with the German authori-

²⁰⁷ A. Rafałowicz, "Under the German Boot," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi336.html#Page357> (accessed 30 January 2025), p. 256; A. Langer, "During and After the War."

²⁰⁸ M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps."

²⁰⁹ A. Tennenbaum, "The Deportations from Działoszyce."

²¹⁰ J. Grabowski, *Na posterunku. Udział polskiej policji granatowej i kryminalnej w zagładzie Żydów*, Wołowiec, 2020, p. 99.

ties” (*Er hat immer mit den deutschen Behörden, SS etc., zusammengearbeitet*) and “actively participated in the killing of five butchers” (*in einem Fall in Działoszyce 5 Fleischer ermordet wurden, wobei Zalobon aktiv beteiligt war*).²¹¹ Elsewhere, the witness testified that three people were taken to the cemetery, where they were found shot dead the next day. They were Löschman, Spokojny and one other person whose name is unknown (*Ein andermal wurden 3 Menschen auf den Friedhof geführt, wo sie am anderen Tage erschossen aufgefunden wurden. Es handelte sich um einen gewissen Loschman, Spokojny, und andere der Name des Dritten ist mir nicht mehr rememberlich*). Sałabun’s exact actions cannot be discerned from this record. Did he murder them himself, or did he merely assist in the execution on German orders, in other words, was he present at the scene of the crime? There is no mention of any other policemen.

What is most surprising is that Grabowski did not conduct a comparative analysis of Langer’s testimony. If he had done so, he would have noticed that many years later, in the Działoszyce book of memory, a man signed as Abraham Langer (it is difficult not to suspect that this is the same person) wrote: “One day, the Germans killed four butchers.” He also described the murder of the Rafałowicz family, presenting a different version of events than before: first, all those bearing the surname Rafałowicz (thirteen people) were arrested, and then “all the Rafałowicz family members gathered were taken by the Germans to the Szczotkowice meadow and shot.” Aszer Rafałowicz also referred to this incident. According to his testimony, 22 members of the Rafałowicz family were arrested by the Gestapo. He did not mention their further fate. Mosze Bejski wrote most extensively about the case. He clearly indicated that the Gestapo or the Military Police ordered the arrest of all men with the surname Rafałowicz in Działoszyce. The Germans had a list of residents, so no one escaped. They took everyone out of the town, and there, a military policeman named Kozak murdered four or five of them. They ordered the ghetto police to assist, who most likely buried the murdered. These events were supposed to have taken place in Działoszyce on “13 Av 1942.”²¹²

²¹¹ AIPN Ki, 128/209, Statement by Abram Langer, Deggendorf, 13 February 1949, p. 130. It should be noted here that a typo entered the German-language minutes, with “Fleischer” mistakenly written as “Flischer.”

²¹² M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction”; A. Rafałowicz, “Under the German Boot”; A. Langer, “During and After the War.” Av, a month in the Jewish calendar, usually aligns with the end of July and the beginning of August.

It is important to emphasise that we cannot be certain whether all of these incidents involved the murder of Jews during the final phase before deportation. Given the size of the Jewish quarter at the time – estimated at 7,000 to 8,000 people – and the available sources, it can be stated that direct extermination during this period targeted only specific individuals or groups. This state of affairs may have been due to several overlapping factors, such as the lack of a permanent German Military Police station, the absence of physical barriers separating Działoszyce from the outside world, and the transfer of responsibility for enforcing the ban on leaving residential quarters to the Polnische Polizei functionaries, and it is possible that the latter (apart from the examples mentioned) did not always fulfil their duties of “securing” the Jewish quarter in accordance with German expectations.

The First Deportation

In the spring of 1942, preparations for the genocide of Jews in the Cracow District reached a critical stage. Already on 3 October 1941, orders had been issued for the systematic surveillance of Jews in the Kreis Miechów.²¹³ German authorities recognised that such a large population likely included individuals previously targeted by the “security authorities” – namely, those politically involved or with potential for resistance. To identify and isolate these individuals, all Jews displaced from the jurisdiction of a given police station were subjected to verification, with their personal data cross-checked against county and central surveillance registers maintained by the General Governorate. The same rule was to apply to new arrivals. In practice, this meant the surveillance of thousands of people.²¹⁴ Similar to neighbouring districts, these extensive and time-consuming operations were likely driven by a desire to eliminate individuals who might later resist deportation efforts. The searches primarily focused on Jews suspected of communist affiliations. Arrests and killings occurred in Miechów and its surrounding areas, among other locations.²¹⁵

²¹³ During Riedinger’s trial, one of the witnesses, Jan Koster, testified that it was Riedinger who gave the order to draw up a list of communists. AIPN Kr, 502/714, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Koster, 23 December 1947, p. 209.

²¹⁴ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 17, Letter from the criminal police station in Miechów to the county PP commanders, Miechów, 3 October 1941, p. 16.

²¹⁵ E. Wójcicka and P. Rogowski, “Miechów i ziemia miechowska,” pp. 226–227.

To streamline the implementation of the genocide, a local special staff of *Aktion Reinhardt* was established, headed by SS Oberführer Julian Scherner, the SS and police commander of the Cracow District. SS Hauptsturmführer Martin Fellenz, serving as chief of staff, and Wilhelm Kunde from Division IV of the Cracow Gestapo also held key managerial and decision-making roles. At the level of the Miechów Kreishauptmannschaft, Kreishauptmann Kalpers, his deputy Schmidt, and other subordinates, as well as officials from the Arbeitsamt and the Sipo and Orpo commanders, headed by Beyerlein and Riedinger, were involved in preparing and organising the crimes.²¹⁶ They were directly responsible for determining the nature and extent of the involvement of the Sonderdienst,²¹⁷ Baudienst, and non-German (*nichtdeutsche*)²¹⁸ police forces under their authority – specifically the Polnische Polizei and the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst – in the deportation operations.

One of the basic goals of the German occupation authorities was to maximise the “concentration” of Jews in larger administrative centres, from where they were to be transported to their death. On 30 June 1942, Kreishauptmann Kalpers issued an order to create 21 Jewish residential quarters (*jüdische Wohnbezirke*) in the Kreis Miechów, including 9 in the former Miechów County, 5 in the Wolbrom Land Commissariat, and 7 in the Kazimierz Wielki Land Commissariat. Such a quarter was also established in Działoszyce. It covered the town itself and the collective municipalities of Sancygniów and Czarnocin. According to the order, Jews living in the existing municipalities were to leave them and move to their new places of residence by 15 July 1942. The resettlement date was set for 13–14 July. Jews who did not comply with this order were subject to the death penalty under the Third Residence Restriction Regulation issued on 15 October 1941. A similar punishment was to be imposed on those who knowingly helped them, which of course applied to the local Polish population.²¹⁹ Due to the absence of sources, it is not possible to determine how many Jews were resettled to the “Działoszyce residential

²¹⁶ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 71–72; E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 37, 249; E. Podhorizer-Sandel, “O zagładzie Żydów,” p. 98

²¹⁷ Young Volksdeutsche served in it.

²¹⁸ Starting in 1942, this was the term most often used in German administrative documents to refer to the Blue Police and other ethnic auxiliary units.

²¹⁹ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 3, Order, 30 June 1942, pp. 11–12.

quarter.”²²⁰ According to Dariusz Libionka’s findings, over a thousand Jews were resettled throughout the Kreishauptmannschaft Miechów, and the Blue Police were entrusted with supervising the operation. However, some Jews remained in the villages until the beginning of the deportation operation.²²¹ The concentration of Jews in selected quarters was accompanied by an anti-Jewish propaganda campaign aimed at the local Polish population. On 9 July 1942, under the pretext of combating an epidemic, the German authorities sent a letter to all mayors and village leaders, reminding them to inform the Polish population of the ban on contact with Jews, who “are carriers of infectious diseases.”²²² In the two weeks leading up to the first deportation, the Germans carried out extensive “logistical” preparations. Military Police arrived in Działoszyce, took topographical photographs, and requested a town map from the Judenrat, indicating all roads leading out of the area.²²³

It is not known whether news of the existence of places of immediate death reached Działoszyce at the end of August 1942. According to Agnieszka Sabor, at the end of August and beginning of September 1942, several escapees from a transport to an extermination camp appeared in Działoszyce and brought terrible news. Rumours about “operations” in the General Governorate and the deportation of Jews in various directions had certainly been circulating since the summer of 1942. According to rumours, Jews were being transported to the Russian front to perform various types of work, and so on.²²⁴ For the Jews of Działoszyce, the events in Słomniki – specifically the deportation operations on 28 August and 2 September 1942²²⁵ – and the accounts brought by refugees from Wolbrom served as a grim warning. It became clear that disaster was looming. For three

²²⁰ In the interwar period, the Jewish community in Działoszyce included Jews from the following localities: Sancygniów, Drożejowice, Topola, Boszczynek, Czarnocin and Skalbmierz – a total of 1,340 families. According to a post-war survey, during the occupation, 54 Jews lived in the Municipality of Boszczynek, 17 of whom were shot. K. Urbański, *Gminy żydowskie*, p. 80; AP Ki, SP in Pińczów, 276. Survey concerning the course of military operations and the German occupation, Boszczynek, 8 August 1946, p. 52.

²²¹ An exception was made for Michałowice, where the operation was led by Beyerlein. D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 66–69.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

²²³ AYV, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 7.

²²⁴ D. Bejski, “My Own Experience in the Holocaust,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi298.html#Page307> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²²⁵ For more, see D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 72–77.

consecutive days, community members gathered at the Jewish cemetery, praying at their ancestors' graves in hopes of averting the impending tragedy.²²⁶ Today, it is well established – supported by extensive evidence on the deportation process during *Aktion Reinhardt* – that deportations within the General Governorate were preceded by forced contributions. This pattern was evident in Działoszyce as well as in other towns across the Kreis Miechów.

On 25 August 1942, Beyerlein and Schmidt demanded that all towns deliver huge sums of money and gold by 3 a.m. the following morning.²²⁷ Some saw this as a trick and a trap. Meir Zonenfeld's father said, "I will not pay for the murder of my wife and children," and when the Judenrat officials came for the demanded amount, he burned the money.²²⁸ Seeing the danger, the Judenrat in Działoszyce, following the example of neighbouring towns whose efforts had been successful, attempted to organise craft workshops. They declared that 1,000 skilled workers and 2,000 labourers would be made available to the Arbeitsamt. The endeavour proved futile. On the eve of the deportation, the manager of the potential workshops, who had arrived in Cracow to discuss the matter, was "sent back empty-handed."²²⁹ From Wohlgelernter's diary and *Sefer izkor*, it can be concluded that members of the Judenrat and OD officers also attempted to save themselves and avoid deportation. The price was a guarantee that no one would escape from the ghetto.²³⁰

²²⁶ A. Sabor, *Sztetl. Śladami żydowskich miasteczek. Działoszyce – Pińczów – Chmielnik – Szydłów – Chęciny. Przewodnik*, Cracow, 2011, p. 35; M. Rozenek, "The Outbreak of World War Two." The testimonies of Chaim Wohlgelernter and Aryeh Shachar (Lejb [Lajbl] Jutrzenka) provide a detailed description of the prayers. See Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, "Jews Repent," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi261.html#Page273> (accessed 30 January 2025); A. Shachar (Lajbl Jutrzenka), "Chapters from the Past," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi261.html#Page280> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²²⁷ I have not found any information about the specific amount, but witnesses speak of "huge sums."

²²⁸ A. Tennenbaum, "The Deportations from Działoszyce," p. 183. The Judenrat collected this contribution during the deportation operation itself. According to Zonenfeld, it was intended to cover the costs of travel "to the East," while Spokojny claimed that it was to postpone the deportation (AYV, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 8; BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Juliusz Spokojny, Augsburg, 3 May 1963, p. 71).

²²⁹ D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," p. 70.

²³⁰ Thus wrote Mosze Bejski in *Sefer izkor*: "Among other things, we learned that despite assurances given to the Judenrat and the Ordnungsdienst that they would remain in Działoszyce and not be deported with the others, they ultimately ended up with us. The explanation was that the promise had indeed been made and even officially stamped. However, when the Germans discovered that several individuals managed to flee the town, at the last moment they added the Judenrat and the Jewish police." (M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction").

According to Wohlgelernter, Beyerlein stamped the relevant papers for huge sums of money.²³¹

Shortly before the operation, knowledge of it became almost widespread. Poles – local post office clerks – warned their Jewish acquaintances.²³² Wohlgelernter's family was informed by the restaurateur Wróbel, who on 2 September 1942 was ordered to prepare several hundred meals. It was expected that these were intended for the police forces.²³³ Rumours coming from various sources meant that shortly before the deportation, or even on the same day, just before the ring surrounding Działoszyce was closed, hundreds of Jews attempted to escape. We will never know their exact number, but the scale of the phenomenon was quite large.²³⁴ People desperately searched for a chance to survive with Polish farmers they knew near Działoszyce. Entangled in various dependencies, the fugitives confronted numerous dilemmas – such as financial concerns, family obligations, and the care of small children – that were mirrored in thousands of other cases across the General Governorate.²³⁵

The direct blow to the Jewish community came on 2 September 1942, corresponding to the 24th day of Elul in the Jewish calendar.

That afternoon, several hundred German functionaries and their subordinates arrived in Działoszyce by special train to carry out the ghetto's liquidation. The exact size and composition of the group remain unknown. However, Szlama Szulimowicz later recalled the presence of numerous SS personnel and members of the Sonderkommando, the special unit tasked with such operations.²³⁶ Chaim Wohlgelernter spoke of 200 Germans and 300 young men from the Baudienst who had been brought in and placed under their command.²³⁷ According to a Polish

²³¹ Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 109.

²³² AYW, O.3/2565, Testimony of Helena Dresner, 1982, p. 4.

²³³ Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary*; Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, "Jews Repent."

²³⁴ Gustaw Weinfeld, a resident of Działoszyce, estimated the number of fugitives at around 4,000. These figures are exaggerated, but the number of those who did not comply with German orders was very high and could have exceeded 1,000, which was about 15 per cent of the total population. AŻIH, 301/1765, Testimony of Gustaw Weinfeld, n.p., n.d., p. 1.

²³⁵ M. Melchior, "Uciekinierzy z getta po „stronie aryjskiej” na prowincji dystryktu warszawskiego – sposoby przetrwania," in *Prowincja noc*, p. 371; M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction"; S. Szulimowicz, "The Evil Decrees," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi261.html#Page278> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

²³⁷ According to Libionka, at the beginning of 1942, the Baudienst outpost had 360 workers (later more), divided into four work groups. A German named Hubert Turnegger led the whole operation.

witness, the group consisted of several Gestapo officers, a number of German Military Policemen, and Blue Policemen (including some from the local station)²³⁸ along with Baudienst workers. There are significant discrepancies regarding the number of German Military Policemen who participated in the operation. Chaim Jakubowicz, interrogated after the war, testified that there were about forty of them. This seems very likely, considering the staffing of the Military Police stations in the Kreishauptmannschaft Miechów.²³⁹

Regardless, the operation was conducted on behalf of the German state by Reich functionaries and auxiliary units they had established. German civil and police authorities were central figures, acting as both commanders and organisers of the mass atrocity. Witnesses confirmed this, stating that “the entire operation was commanded by Germans.”²⁴⁰ Of course, there could be no question of any independence on the part of the Blue Police, let alone the unarmed Baudienst.²⁴¹ The Germans determined the duties of these formations, using the Blue Police and Baudienst workers to surround the town. During the operation, some were given additional assignments. “The Gestapo, however, did not employ them solely for labour – they were under its command, particularly for orders focused on the annihilation and murder of all Jews.”²⁴² Surviving testimonies suggest that the Germans gave alcohol to Baudienst youth to blunt their emotional response to the atrocities.²⁴³

The Judenrat and the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst were similarly used by the Germans. First, the Judenrat was ordered to gather all Jews in the market square.²⁴⁴

According to the findings of the post-war investigation into the crimes of Dr. Schmidt, this outpost was larger. Turnegger took command in March 1942, and each of the four work groups had 250 people. BAL, B.162/5971, Final report on the crimes of Dr. Schmidt, Ludwigsburg, 4 November 1964, p. 69; BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Kalpers, Düsseldorf, 18 July 1961, p. 50.

²³⁸ According to his own statement, Stanisław Wójciak – mentioned earlier – could not have been involved in the liquidation operations in the Kreis Miechów in the second half of 1942, because he was in custody at the time. The Germans had arrested him for “disobedience.” AAN, ABE, Stanisław Wójciak, Letter from Stanisław Wójciak to the rehabilitation commission, n.d., n.p., pp. 197–198v.

²³⁹ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 78. See AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Chaim Jakubowicz during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 156.

²⁴⁰ AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Ignacy Skóra during the main hearing, p. 272.

²⁴¹ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 78–79.

²⁴² Ch.I. Wohlgeleerter, “Działoszyce,” p. 30.

²⁴³ Each Baudienst member was to receive a bottle of vodka. BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Juliusz Spokojny, Augsburg, 3 May 1963, p. 71.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

The mayor was instructed to have notices posted around town, stating where the Jews were to report and what belongings they were permitted to take. People from outside the ghetto were forbidden, under the threat of death, to appropriate any of the property left behind.²⁴⁵ This provision was based on the assumption that all Jewish property left in apartments automatically became the property of the Reich and, as German property, was subject to special protection. In addition, a megaphone announced that no one was allowed to leave the town.

The actual deportation began on the morning of 3 September 1942.²⁴⁶ It was marked by crying, fear, anxiety, and deep concern for families.²⁴⁷ Most Jews obediently complied with the orders. They were supervised by a police force made up of Jews, which maintained the “order” required by the occupiers. Gestapo officers, Military Police, and some of the Blue Police entered the ghetto.²⁴⁸ The Germans also used the local fire brigade, which, as a militarised service, was, like the Jewish ghetto police, fully dependent on their orders.²⁴⁹

For the Gestapo, the forced gathering of Jews in the market square became yet another occasion to assert their dominance and absolute power. Mosze Bejski personally witnessed armed Gestapo officers dragging five or six individuals from the crowd and compelling them to do various “exercises.”²⁵⁰ Members of the Blue Police also exploited the situation. Chaim Wohlgelernter recalled the anti-Semitic rants delivered to the assembled crowd by Julian Ordysiński, an officer of the *Polnische Polizei*.²⁵¹

Some attempted to hide. Eighteen individuals sought refuge in a mill, standing beneath cascading water in a desperate effort to remain concealed. Somehow, the

²⁴⁵ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 78.

²⁴⁶ On the same day, the Jews from Skalmierz were deported to Działoszyce and Miechów. The non-German police and *Baudienst* forces used for these operations must therefore have been divided and thus limited in number. A. Shachar (Lajbl Jutrzenka), “Chapters from the Past”; A. Rafałowicz, “Under the German Boot.”

²⁴⁷ D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce.”

²⁴⁸ After the war, Dr. Grębowski spoke about the murder of all patients in the hospital in Działoszyce by the Germans. Perhaps this event took place during the so-called deportation. The murder of sick people in hospitals was a common practice of the Germans during individual deportation operations. See “Dokument nr 29,” in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 108.

²⁴⁹ AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Antoni Sielecki during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 150. During the war, Sielecki was the commander of the fire brigade.

²⁵⁰ BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Mosze Bejski, n.d., n.p., p. 245.

²⁵¹ Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 93.

Germans discovered their hiding place. At first, they planned to execute everyone on the spot, but ultimately, the group was added to the transport.²⁵² Some of those who resisted, attempted to escape, or in any way “interfered” with the activities of the liquidation units were murdered on the spot immediately after being found.

The Germans roamed the town and gave orders to Jewish policemen, *Polnische Polizei* officers, and the *Baudienst* youth. Each of these formations performed tasks assigned by their German superiors. Together with the Germans, they searched buildings, cellars and all places where Jews could hide. Jews from the *Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst* played a particularly important role in this, as they knew the customs of their fellow Jews and how they built hiding places. Chaim Wohlgelernter described it as follows: “The *Ordnungsdienst*, together with the *Gestapo*, went from flat to flat. When they found a sick or elderly person who could not walk on their own, they shot them on the spot.”²⁵³ Rabbi Staszewski was murdered by the Germans in his own bed. The tinsmith Akiba Zyngier was also killed. Baruch Popper was shot near a grain warehouse.²⁵⁴ Among the victims were many relatives of Juliusz Spokojny: two of his father’s brothers, his grandmother, and his father’s sister with her child.²⁵⁵ These are just a few examples.²⁵⁶ Shots could be heard all day long. The search for people provided the Germans with an excellent opportunity to steal valuables and money.²⁵⁷ *Kripo* chief Philipp Riedinger was deeply engaged in the search efforts to the extent that he broke his leg in one of the cellars. The task of removing the bodies fell to a special sanitary commission made up of Dr. Grębowski and a town hall employee, Waclaw Kapsa. There were 47 bodies in total. The bodies were taken away by Polish peasants who happened to be in the city that day and were forced by the Germans to do so.²⁵⁸

²⁵² A. Sabor, *Sztetl*, p. 36.

²⁵³ Ch.I. Wohlgelernter, “Działoszyce,” p. 31.

²⁵⁴ D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce,” p. 223, A. Rafałowicz, “Under the German Boot.”

²⁵⁵ BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Juliusz Spokojny, Augsburg, 3 May 1963, p. 73.

²⁵⁶ During Riedinger’s trial, reference was made to the murder of approximately twenty Jewish girls during the first deportation. I have not been able to uncover any additional details about this incident.

²⁵⁷ M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps.”

²⁵⁸ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 79. Many farmers arrived in Działoszyce at that time to deliver their compulsory quota of agricultural produce. After completing their “task,” they were also “equipped” with vodka. “Dokument nr 48, Woźnica zmuszony do transportu Żydów II. Opowieść z Miernowa,” in *O tym nie wolno mówić*, p. 79.

While gathering people and searching for Jews in hiding, the Germans spread several rumours. Among them was the claim that a few unfortunate souls would be left in the ghetto for “collecting money, jewellery, and gold.” The truth emerged when these people were ordered to join the others.²⁵⁹ Another rumour is recounted by Chaim Wohlgernter: “Various rumours were being spread throughout the town. It was said that the Judenrat and the Ordnungsdienst would be dissolved, and that those who managed to hide until the end of the operation would survive and be able to return to the town.”²⁶⁰ Meanwhile, before noon, Scherner’s staff functionaries arrived in the town. The crowd, hoping for good decisions, welcomed the news of a joint feast of Jews – members of the Judenrat and the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst – with the Germans.²⁶¹ Ultimately, however, Wilhelm Kunde – described as “a key figure in the Cracow-based Gestapo” – declared that documents previously stamped by Beyerlein would no longer be recognised. The Judenrat and the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst were given just ten minutes to join the assembled crowd, with a warning that “anyone who was a minute late would be shot.”²⁶²

Shortly after noon, several thousand Jews gathered in the market square in Działoszyce. Then, marching columns were formed. Under the supervision of the Military Police and with the participation of the Blue Police, the rounded-up people were escorted to the narrow-gauge railway station. There, the Jews were loaded into wagons and transported to Miechów. Local Poles reportedly sat along the tracks and laughed at the Jews, responding to their cries for help with: “Would you have given us anything?”²⁶³

²⁵⁹ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “Years of Pain,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi336.html#Page349> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²⁶⁰ Ch.I. Wohlgernter, “Działoszyce,” p. 31; M. Bejski, “Days of the Shoah,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi233.html> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²⁶¹ This is exactly how Wohlgernter described it. However, the attitude of the Judenrat during the deportations was generally viewed very critically. He wrote: “While everyone was aware that the ground was burning under their feet, the Judenrat continued to carry out German orders in Miechów and Działoszyce. Kruk, while collecting contributions before the deportation, behaved ruthlessly.” (Ch.Y. Wolgernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 110). See also M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction”; A. Tennenbaum, “The Deportations from Działoszyce”; Ch.Y. Wolgernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 109.

²⁶² Ch.Y. Wolgernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 109.

²⁶³ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 79.

On that day, the most shocking act of the tragedy of the Jews of Działoszyce took place in the town. German commanders announced that all elderly, infirm, and unable to walk to the railway could use a “lift.” From the early hours of the morning,²⁶⁴ these people were transported by carts²⁶⁵ to the Jewish cemetery and to the place next to the cemetery, where dogs and sick horses were buried. On the night before the execution, the Germans ordered the young men from the Baudienst to dig large pits there.²⁶⁶ One of the residents forced to transport Jews to the cemetery reported: “I was assigned to transport them. The Jews were led by the Military Police and the [Blue] Police to pits outside the town, where the Germans and the Gestapo took them and shot them. I wasn’t there because they didn’t allow Poles or our [Blue] Police to come near.”²⁶⁷

The Germans also used the men from the Baudienst to bury the bodies. Their accounts provide details of the tragic events:

Fifty metres from the ditch, the Jews were ordered to strip naked and then enter the ditch, where German Military Police and Gestapo officers standing above the ditch shot the victims. The next group of Jews was lined up over the ditch and shot from behind, then pushed into the ditch. In this way, about 1,200 Jews were buried in three layers in the ditch, after which the young labourers covered the ditches with earth. The operation [...] lasted from morning until 2 p.m.²⁶⁸

It is certain that at least some of the Gestapo and Military Police were in a state of alcoholic stupor. It cannot be ruled out that some people were buried while still alive. Witnesses remember a mass grave shaking with the trembling bodies.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Waław Kapsa during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Saławun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 251.

²⁶⁵ The number of carts used by the Germans to transport the victims to the place of execution varies in different sources, ranging from 16 to 100.

²⁶⁶ AIPN Ki, 53/4478, Executions – Działoszyce, Giżycko, 1 May 1969, pp. 47–48.

²⁶⁷ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Piotr Karociński during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Saławun, Cracow, 1 December 1948, p. 436. The commander consistently denied that he was in Działoszyce on that day. AIPN Ki, 128/208, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Fischel Walberg at the main hearing in the case of Piotr Saławun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, pp. 144–145.

²⁶⁸ Quoted from D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 79.

²⁶⁹ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “Years of Pain.”

According to documentation created shortly after the war, a total of five pits were dug: two in the Jewish cemetery and three adjacent to it.²⁷⁰ Even then, the number of victims was controversial. No exhumation was carried out there, so we are left with estimates. It was reported that 500–1,600 people were buried there.²⁷¹ The number 1,200 appeared in Polish underground documents and is also given by Meir Zonenfeld in his book of memory and in his survivor testimony submitted to Yad Vashem. It was most likely determined on the basis of clothing left behind by Jewish coachmen Szmul Goldkorn and Pałasznicki. They transported the clothes to the synagogue, after which they were also shot by the Germans.²⁷² In turn, an official of the Działoszyce magistrate reported 1,400 murdered – because that was how many *Kennkarten* were left behind.²⁷³ Therefore, the most likely number of people murdered in a mass execution in Działoszyce is 1,200–1,400.²⁷⁴ Considering the above, it can be concluded that the crime in Działoszyce was one of the largest – if not the largest – single-instance mass murders in the pre-war territory of the Kielce Voivodeship.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁰ This location of the grave is provided by the most reliable source, as it was created immediately after the war – the survey of the Magistrate's Court in Kazimierz Wielka. See AIPN Ki, 53/308, Questionnaire on mass executions and mass graves, Kazimierza Wielka, 8 October 1945, pp. 63–65. Executions of Polish civilians, including Wincenty Koza, were also carried out by the Germans near the cemetery wall in Działoszyce. AO Kr, Ds. 1/81 (253), Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Teofil Śliwa, Pińczów, 3 December 1990, pp. 128–129. Digging a pit or pits large enough to contain such a number of bodies must have taken a long time and required considerable manpower. It can therefore be assumed that the involvement of Baudienst youth in surrounding and guarding the town was smaller than commonly believed.

²⁷¹ Elżbieta Rączy estimated the number of victims of this crime at around 500, while Dariusz Libionka estimated it at 1,200–1,600. The post-war survey of the Magistrate's Court in Kazimierz Wielka mentions 1,500 victims. Juliusz Spokojny mentioned the figure of 4,000 when he was interrogated after the war as a witness in connection with Dr. Schmidt's crimes. AP Ki, SP in Pińczów, 276, Survey concerning the course of military operations and the German occupation, Działoszyce, 3 August 1946, p. 83; AIPN Ki, 53/308, Questionnaire on mass executions and mass graves, Kazimierza Wielka, 8 October 1945, pp. 63–65; BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Juliusz Spokojny, Augsburg, 23 March 1960, p. 61.

²⁷² M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps," p. 293.

²⁷³ "Dokument nr 36, Junak robi zdjęcia podczas egzekucji. Opowieść z Działoszyce," in *O tym nie wolno mówić*, p. 71.

²⁷⁴ An exhumation could dispel any doubts.

²⁷⁵ Perhaps another mass execution took place during the deportation. In this case, it involved a dozen or so Jewish children who were fleeing towards Niewiatrowice (in the direction opposite to the Jewish cemetery) but were captured and shot. See AIPN Ki, 53/4478, Executions – Działoszyce, Giżycko, 1 May 1969, pp. 47–48.

Few managed to survive the massacre. A girl of about ten years of age, wounded in the neck and mouth, received professional help from Dr. Grębowski. She probably survived the war. Under similar circumstances – “in the summer following the shooting of the Jewish population”²⁷⁶ – the same doctor operated on Haskiel Spiro, who had attempted suicide but survived. He was saved by a Pole who brought him to the doctor. A few days later, Spiro, mentally broken and unwilling to hide, was found by either the Germans or the Blue Police and murdered.²⁷⁷

On the day of the first deportation, roundups of Jews in hiding began in the vicinity of Działoszyce and continued for several days. The chase for Jewish fugitives extended to the town’s nearby regions. Among those shot by the Germans were members of the family of Aryeh Shachar’s wife, Moszek Platkiewicz, and his wife, Rywka.²⁷⁸ The manhunts were initiated and organised by the German Military Police. The Germans also used the Blue Police, the local fire brigade, and civilians who had been herded to search for the fugitives.²⁷⁹

Some of the roundups were carried out by the Blue Police under orders from the Germans. At that time, following an order from the commander of the Orpo in the General Governorate (BdO) issued in December 1941, they were to be led by the commander of a group of police stations.²⁸⁰ Jews found in Działoszyce in the first days after the deportation were sent to Wolbrom, where the operation was still in progress, and then taken to the cemetery and killed.²⁸¹

The role of the Blue Police in the killings remains deeply controversial. The Germans carried out mass executions outside the town, while the Blue Police were required to provide support inside and around it. They were ordered to shoot anyone who disobeyed German commands or attempted to escape. They thus operated in the fraught space where the orders of German commanders and the fate of Jewish victims intersected. Sent to do the dirty work, they were the most

²⁷⁶ This record clearly brings to mind the first deportation.

²⁷⁷ “Dokument nr 29,” in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 107.

²⁷⁸ A. Shachar (Lajbl Jutrzenka), “Chapters from the Past.”

²⁷⁹ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Joachim Kasowski during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 1 December 1948, p. 433; AIPN Ki, 128/208, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Marcin Tarski during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 11 January 1949, p. 261.

²⁸⁰ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the County PP Command in Miechów to all group commanders and station commanders, Miechów, 1 February 1943, pp. 71–71v.

²⁸¹ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 79–80.

visible – something reflected after the war in the statement of Ignacy Skóra, one of the survivors, who testified: “The action was carried out by the Polish police rather than the Germans.”²⁸² However, these statements – made during the post-war trial of Piotr Sałabun, who served as commander in Działoszyce and later as regional commander of the Polish Police – are not supported by the facts. The commander’s role, along with the lengthy legal proceedings under the August decree, is highly controversial due to inconsistent and conflicting witness testimonies. As a result, making clear historical judgments and reconstructing the events of the German occupation based on this case is simply difficult.²⁸³

Equally controversial is the way in which this figure is described by some authors dealing with the history of the *Polnische Polizei*. Let us refer to Jan Grabowski – already mentioned in this article – who, in his book *Na posterunku* (On Duty, pp. 117 and 205), twice described Sałabun as a “dangerous murderer.” He also included a statement by Jakubowicz from the *Sefer izkor* of Działoszyce: “Just shoot. I heard him several times. [...] By evening, 2,000 people had been killed in this way during the deportation.” However, Grabowski omitted the portion of Jakubowicz’s statement that described the deportation of Jews to Miechów and the executions in Działoszyce – events in which the Blue Police did not participate – and retained only the figure of 2,000 Jews killed. This editorial choice strongly implied that it was the Polish Police functionaries who carried out the killings, which was clearly not Jakubowicz’s intention. Meanwhile, neither Grabowski nor Dariusz Libionka, in “Powiat miechowski” (The County of Miechów), *passim*, frequently cited here, mentioned Sałabun’s efforts to aid Jews. Libionka addressed these omissions only in his most recent article, “Zaprowadzanie sprawiedliwości” (Bringing Justice), following my critique published in the review *Korekta obrazu?* (Correcting the Picture).

Finally, it is worth examining the role of the *Baudienst* in actions against Jews. This was a specialised service, with recruitment carried out on a compulsory

²⁸² AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Ignacy Skóra during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, p. 272.

²⁸³ The testimony incriminating Sałabun, which references his behaviour, was provided by Chaim Jakubowicz. The matter is thoroughly discussed in D. Libionka, “Zaprowadzanie sprawiedliwości. Śledztwa i postępowania sądowe wobec funkcjonariuszy aparatu okupacyjnego i Polaków w służbie niemieckiej z Kreis Miechów,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 19 (2023), pp. 277–325.

basis²⁸⁴ – organised similarly to military conscription.²⁸⁵ The German authorities exercised absolute discretion over how these young men were deployed, often subjecting them to a brutal climate of administrative and physical terror. For those who deserted the service, the consequences were severe. German orders issued to the Blue Police in June 1941 were unequivocal: deserters were to be detained, and if “the police patrol sent for this purpose does not find the fugitive at home, one of his family members must **absolutely** [original emphasis – T.D.] be taken as a hostage and delivered to the Construction Service office in Miechów.”

Post commanders and police officers directly involved in these operations were bound by a strict duty to carry out orders.²⁸⁶ Escape was punishable by death. The threats directed at the Baudienst youth were not empty words. Shortly after the so-called second deportation operation in the Miechów prison, a mass murder of prisoners took place. Thirty-one people (Poles and Jews) fell victim to this brutality, including two men who had escaped from the Baudienst.²⁸⁷

The crimes committed by the Germans against the young men do not in any way justify those who showed excessive zeal in serving the Germans. Another event illustrates the complexity of the situation. Among the young men executed in Działoszyce, there was one who, at the risk of his own life, tried to take photographs of the execution.²⁸⁸

A Concentration in Miechów

Before reaching Miechów, the Jews from Działoszyce were taken out of the wagons and led to a designated place, where Kripo officers, gendarmes, policemen

²⁸⁴ However, the Germans introduced certain exceptions: commanders, drivers, and those operating motor pumps in the Volunteer Fire Brigades were exempted from the Baudienst service. See AP Ki, AG Boszcynek, 1373, Letter from the Board of the Union of the Kreis Miechów Municipalities (Verwaltung des Gemeindeverbändes) to all municipal boards in the county, Miechów, 10 November 1942, p. 116.

²⁸⁵ The municipalities had to compile lists of all men from the specified age groups and send them to the German authorities.

²⁸⁶ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the County PP Command in Miechów to PP station commanders in the county, Miechów, 12 July 1941, p. 61. At village leaders' meetings, there were threats to arrest the parents of young men who had escaped the service. See AP Ka, AG Kidów, 547, Minutes of the village leaders' meeting of the Municipality of Kidów, p. 188.

²⁸⁷ E. Wójcicka and P. Rogowski, “Miechów i ziemia miechowska,” p. 228.

²⁸⁸ “Dokument nr 36, Junak robi zdjęcia podczas egzekucji. Opowieść z Działoszyce,” in *O tym nie wolno mówić*, p. 71.

and functionaries from the Miechów prison were already waiting with whips and iron crowbars.²⁸⁹ The entire route from the place where the people were unloaded to the assembly point was guarded by Blue Policemen, including functionaries from Działoszyce. There were appalling scenes of beating and robbing the Jews who were expected to have money. At the head of the procession, Riedinger rode on a white horse.²⁹⁰ It was forbidden to stand, and people had to sit on wet grass. The Jews from Miechów provided their brothers with bread and water.

The next morning, the Jews from Miechów joined those who had arrived. The gathered people were ordered to stand up, and then everyone was divided into groups – men, women, and children. Then, the Germans and Arbeitsamt employees from Cracow carried out a selection. Healthy men were chosen, among whom were also Jews from Działoszyce and Skalbierz.²⁹¹ The exact size of the group remains uncertain. Some witnesses estimate it at 1,500 to 2,000 men, while others suggest a significantly smaller number, around 800.²⁹² Following the selection process, the group was transported to Cracow: those marked for execution were placed in locked wagons, whereas those assigned to labour camps were transported in open wagons.²⁹³ In Cracow, the group was divided. The chosen ones were sent to labour camps, while most of the women, children, and elderly people were transported by the Germans to the extermination camp in Bełżec, where they were killed.

The Second Deportation

The deportation from Działoszyce on 3 September 1942 did not mark the end of the local Jewish community. In the town, as in many other former Jewish communities across the Kreis Miechów, those who had survived the initial wave of deportations began to gather again.²⁹⁴ The Germans tacitly accepted this fact. In Działoszyce, they gathered everyone in the synagogue and in the courtyard of the

²⁸⁹ AYW, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 8.

²⁹⁰ A. Chobeh (Chaba), "Years of Pain"; M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps."

²⁹¹ D. Bejski, "My Own Experience in the Holocaust," p. 83; M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps."

²⁹² AYW, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 9.

²⁹³ M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps."

²⁹⁴ This turn of events is discussed in more detail by D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," pp. 87–92.

town hall. They formed a small Judenrat with Josel Richter as its chairman.²⁹⁵ The returning residents arrived from two directions. The first group included those who had sought refuge nearby – sheltering with Polish peasants or hiding in fields and bushes – the impossibility of continuing to hide eventually compelled them to return. Among them was the six-member family of Eliyahu Rozdział (Raziel), then an eight-year-old boy, who had found refuge with a Polish farmer before the first deportation.²⁹⁶ After several days in hiding, fifteen members of Aszer Rafałowicz’s family returned to Działoszyce.²⁹⁷ They were joined by fugitives from the Radom district: Opatów, Staszów, and Wiślica. The second group consisted of fugitives from labour camps in Prokocim, Płaszów, and Kostra. The conditions there were so difficult that the prospect of returning home was their only hope of survival. We know the names of only a few of them, including Dawid Gelbart, Moszek Jutrzenka, and Aryeh Shachar (Lejb [Lajbl] Jutrzenka), who reached Działoszyce via Skalbierz.²⁹⁸ An unknown commissioner stayed at his house, running their family shop. At the sight of Shachar, he immediately left the house.²⁹⁹ Abraham Chobeh (Chaba) returned to Działoszyce from the camp in Kostra after paying a bribe (40 dollars in gold).³⁰⁰ Meir Zonenfeld arrived from the camp in Płaszów via Nowy Korczyn. Some residents returned just a few days before the second deportation.³⁰¹ In addition, the Germans withdrew about fifty members of the Judenrat and the OD from the labour camp in Cracow to Działoszyce.³⁰² We do not know exactly when this happened. The claims by some researchers that the decision was primarily driven by the need to gather additional labour are also highly questionable. After all, new fugitives were constantly arriving in the Działoszyce ghetto, and at the beginning of November 1942, the remnant ghetto

²⁹⁵ M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps,” p. 297.

²⁹⁶ E. Rozdział (Raziel), “All Alone in Hiding,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi298.html#Page324> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²⁹⁷ They were helped in their escape from Działoszyce by ghetto policemen.

²⁹⁸ In Skalbierz, he witnessed a scene that he found outrageous. The entire Judenrat, together with the Ordnungsdienst, ate, drank, and partied, men and women together, as if it were a wedding. A. Shachar (Lajbl Jutrzenka), “Chapters from the Past.”

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ Ch. Frajman (New York), “Jankielówka and Its Jews.”

³⁰¹ D. Bejski, “My Own Experience in the Holocaust”; D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce”; M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps,” p. 298.

³⁰² D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 87–88; M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction.”

numbered 1,100 Jews. Fifty people did not make a noticeable difference. Other reasons, which we do not know, must have prevailed.

However, the conditions of existence in Działoszyce were already completely different than just a few weeks earlier. All Jewish houses were closed and sealed. Some of them were looted and robbed, although some remained untouched even several weeks after the deportation.³⁰³ Meir Zonenfeld recalled the circumstances of his “return” to Działoszyce:

I did not go back to my flat because a Blue Policeman was living there.³⁰⁴ This policeman completely looted my flat, even though the Germans had forbidden Poles from looting Jewish flats on pain of death. I was afraid of this policeman who, ironically, was no less afraid of me, but had the advantage of being able to “do away with me.” So I moved in with my brother-in-law in his untouched flat, and we stayed there for another seven weeks, until 9 November 1942.³⁰⁵

The newly established Judenrat demanded a fee – “a large sum of money” – from anyone wishing to return home.³⁰⁶

The Germans formed labour brigades from the Jews present in Działoszyce to clean up the ghetto and sort the looted goods.³⁰⁷ This was, in fact, the completion of the looting of Jewish property that had begun at the beginning of the war. Half of the 1,100 Jews worked in five facilities outside Działoszyce, most of them in Raclawice and Rosiejów.³⁰⁸ Some of the workers, such as Meir Zonenfeld, used their employment to secure financial resources for the remaining years of the occupation. Preparations were also underway for emergency hiding places.³⁰⁹ After some time, the Judenrat announced another action. Some Jews attempted to escape. They obtained information about the German plans from their Polish friends and

³⁰³ Ch. Frajman (New York), “Jankielówka and Its Jews”; M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps.”

³⁰⁴ His name is missing in the testimony.

³⁰⁵ AYV, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 12.

³⁰⁶ Ch. Frajman (New York), “Jankielówka and Its Jews.”

³⁰⁷ M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps.”

³⁰⁸ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 88.

³⁰⁹ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “Years of Pain.”

fled the town at the last moment. Among them were the aforementioned Moszek Jutrzenka and Aryeh Shachar,³¹⁰ Chaba and Zonenfeld's four-man brigade. Many years after the war, the latter recalled the help that Commissioner Paweł Kluczniok had tried to give his group (in gratitude for a well-done repair of a car part). He personally obtained certificates of necessity for their employment from Beyerlein and provided carts to transport Zonenfeld's belongings to a temporary hiding place located in the former Ickowicz mill, 1.5 kilometres from Działoszyce. The fugitives had weapons and sixty rounds of ammunition with them.³¹¹ Shortly before the first deportation, a small group of Jews from Działoszyce, including Józef Ptasznik, made contact with local activists of the communist Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR), and several cells were formed. They returned to Działoszyce after the announcement of the "asylum," but eventually fled before the second deportation and joined the aforementioned PPR.³¹²

The second deportation took place on 8 November 1942. On that day, an order was issued by the Kreishauptmann announcing the deportation of Jews from the entire Kreis Miechów. The Kreishauptmann threatened that anyone who helped Jews or looted their abandoned premises would be sentenced to death under the order of 5 September 1939.³¹³ This order was issued by Schmidt, who was standing in for the absent Kalpers, and he boasted about it in a letter to Governor General Frank.³¹⁴ The Jews of Działoszyce were ordered to gather in one place and take 15 kg of luggage with them. The assembly point was organised in the magistrate's courtyard. The operation was commanded by Beyerlein. The local Blue Police and Baudienst youth were also forced to participate in the deportation. Those who failed to escape or find effective hiding places were transported to Miechów, where they were soon killed. The execution most likely took place in

³¹⁰ A. Shachar (Lajbl Jutrzenka), "Chapters from the Past."

³¹¹ AYW, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 13; M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps."

³¹² AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony of Józef Ptasznik at the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 173; AIPN Ki, 128/206, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Chaim Jakubowicz, Kłodzko, 8 March 1948, p. 90.

³¹³ M. Roth, *Herrenmenschen. Die deutschen Kreishauptleute im besetzten Polen – Karrierewege, Herrschaftspraxis und Nachgeschichte*, Göttingen, 2009, p. 217.

³¹⁴ D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," p. 92; BAL, B.162/5969, Draft letter to the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office, n.p., 22 October 1962, p. 59.

a forest near Chodów.³¹⁵ Pifa, a saleswoman in a fabric shop, was reportedly one of the few – perhaps the only – survivors of the massacre. According to her testimony, the execution occurred in a ravine and was carried out with machine-gun fire. Pifa was slightly wounded. She was at the top of a pile of bodies and managed to summon the strength to escape. She was helped by other Jews, including Szlama Leszman. However, it is not known whether the woman ultimately survived the occupation.³¹⁶

Meanwhile, the hunt for fugitives persisted. Military Police, aided by the Blue Police, conducted the operations, systematically searching homes one by one. According to the testimonies, Commander Sałabun was acting “harshly,” while other Blue Policemen escorted the captured Jews out of the buildings.³¹⁷ According to Dawid Gelbart, who had taken refuge in an attic, the gunfire following the second deportation continued for approximately two weeks. Other witnesses described it as a “massive outbreak of shooting.”³¹⁸ Among those killed were Majer Szulimowicz, his wife, and their son Josel.³¹⁹ The area was searched, and those captured were murdered in the Jewish cemetery. The scale of this operation is unknown. A tragic fate befell, among others, a group of Jews who were hiding in the house of Abram Rozenek.³²⁰ The executions in Działoszyce lasted about a month.³²¹ After the second deportation, three or four days later, the Germans organised an auction in Działoszyce of the property of the murdered Jews. It was conducted by Riedinger, assisted by the Blue Police and the fire brigade.³²²

³¹⁵ A. Rafałowicz, “Under the German Boot.” According to Spokojny, ghetto police from Działoszyce was murdered in Miechów. BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Juliusz Spokojny, Augsburg, 3 May 1963, p. 71.

³¹⁶ S. Leszman (ben Jakub), “In the Polish Underground.”

³¹⁷ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Piotr Karociński during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 1 December 1948, p. 437; AIPN Ki, 128/208, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Antoni Sielecki during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 147.

³¹⁸ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “Years of Pain.”

³¹⁹ From the testimony, it can be concluded that after the second deportation, the witness hid in Działoszyce for some time and heard gunshots every day. D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce.”

³²⁰ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “Years of Pain.”

³²¹ AIPN Ki, 53/4478, Executions – Działoszyce, Opole, 24 October 1969, pp. 49–50.

³²² AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony of Stanisław Czekaj during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 11 January 1949, p. 267; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Antoni Sielecki during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 147. Paradoxically, Jews in

Sometimes, the Blue Policemen sabotaged German orders. Some Jews owed their lives to them. Policeman Kamerdyniak helped Mosze Bejski and eleven other people escape, including the Lewitt brothers, Salk Kacengold, Szaniecki, and Jechiel Rajsfeld. For two years, from the second deportation until the end of the German occupation, Commander Sałabun hid Fabian Schlang. He kept him in his own apartment, which was located at the PP station (Germans were also quartered there). In addition, Sałabun helped a married couple of converts named Zielski. Commander Kasowski also helped Jews. Through his trusted friend Kiwa Jasny, he warned them about the planned arrests. According to later reports, Kasowski “defended people from the Germans [...] and even hid Jews.”³²³

Documents issued in Poland shortly after the war generally identified the Military Police and the Gestapo as the entities responsible for the first deportation. Among those specifically named were Beyerlein, Schmidt,³²⁴ Riedinger, and a little-known Oberleutnant Kommod from Cracow. Further investigations conducted in Germany identified additional individuals as perpetrators, including Baumgarten, Karl Lichtblau, and Kozak. They were said to have been involved in the murder of Jews at the cemetery.³²⁵ The name of the execution squad that shot Jews at the execution site has not been established. According to Dariusz Libionka, they may have been functionaries from the 65th Police Battalion stationed in Cracow.³²⁶ It is possible that the aforementioned Lieutenant Hartwig – whom a military policeman, interrogated after the war, had brought to Działoszyce for the first deportation –

hiding also took advantage of the opportunity to purchase property. For instance, Józef Ptasznik spent a staggering 30,000 zlotys on clothing for Wnęk, who had been helping him. AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Józef Ptasznik during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, pp. 173–174.

³²³ AIPN Ki, 128/206, Expert opinion, Cracow, 19 February 1946, pp. 23–25; M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction”; AAN, ABF, Joachim Kasowski, Curriculum vitae, Poznań, 23 June 1946, p. 444; *ibid.*, Expert opinion, Działoszyce, 24 September 1946, p. 451v.

³²⁴ During the deportation, Schmidt demonstrated significant initiative. In practice, the starost had substantial latitude in such matters – he could “stand aside” or take an active role in shaping the course of the “action.” This included overseeing the deportation and extermination of Jews, and at times even committing murders “with his own hands.” Schmidt opted for the latter. See M. Roth, “Starostowie powiatowi i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim Generalnego Gubernatorstwa,” in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, eds. A. Sitarek, M. Trębacz, and E. Wiatr, Łódź, 2012, p. 280.

³²⁵ BAL, B.162/40577, Final Report on the Murders of Dr. Friedrich Schmidt, Ludwigsburg, 4 November 1964, p. 149.

³²⁶ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 79.

was also involved in the “execution in Działoszyce.”³²⁷ Beyerlein³²⁸ and Riedinger were definitely present during the first deportation. Some witnesses identified the latter as the leader of the operation.³²⁹

The issue of responsibility for the extermination of the Jews of Działoszyce was raised during the Riedinger trial, which took place in Poland between 1947 and 1949. In the second point of the indictment, Riedinger was accused of personally directing the liquidation of the Jews of Działoszyce, during which 1,500–1,600 people were killed.³³⁰ The defendant did not plead guilty. He explained that he had been in Działoszyce for one day, was involved in the liquidation of Jewish property, and “did not see any shooting or Jews.”³³¹ Witnesses, on the other hand, described his method of “work.” Jakub Bochner recalled: “[...] the accused never came to the fore, he acted from behind the scenes, his people acted for him. Then he would wring his hands and say that it happened because he wasn’t there.”³³² Józef Pomirski added: “The accused was an extremely cunning man. If, for example, two people were to be arrested, he would arrest ten, then release eight, just to make an impression that he was such a good guy.”³³³ Ultimately, Riedinger was found guilty of the charges against him, including the liquidation of the Działoszyce ghetto “in September and December 1942,” and was first sentenced to life imprisonment and, after an appeal procedure, to death.³³⁴ The historical expert opinion that was key to this verdict was presented by Dr. Jan Sehn, chairman of the District Commission for the Investigation of

³²⁷ BAL, B.162/5971, Investigation against Dr. Friedrich Schmidt, Ludwigsburg, 4 November 1964, p. 74.

³²⁸ Beyerlein was identified by Jewish witnesses from Działoszyce. See BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Mosze Bejski, n.p., n.d., p. 248.

³²⁹ M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps”; AO Kr, S78/2023/Zn, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jakub Bochner, Cracow, 9 October 1969, p. 61. The first deportation was led by a tall, lean Gestapo officer. AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Paweł Kluczniok during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 136.

³³⁰ AIPN Kr, 502/1714, Indictment against Philipp Riedinger, Cracow, 20 November 1947, p. 185.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, Testimony given by Philipp Riedinger during the main hearing, Cracow, 26 May 1948, p. 270.

³³² *Ibid.*, Testimony given by Jakub Bochner during the main hearing in the case of Philipp Riedinger, Cracow, 26 May 1948, p. 281.

³³³ AIPN Kr, 502/1715, Testimony given by Józef Pomirski during the main hearing in the case of Philipp Riedinger, Cracow, 24 April 1948, p. 25.

³³⁴ In his letter to the Supreme Court, Riedinger wrote that he did not know anything about when and how the Jews from Działoszyce were resettled. See AIPN Kr, 502/1716, Letter from Philipp Riedinger to the Supreme Court, Cracow, 9 January 1950, pp. 96–97.

Hitlerite Crimes in Cracow and judge of the Appellate Court.³³⁵ The sentence was executed on 16 August 1951.³³⁶ Many years after the war, the German judiciary conducted proceedings against Martin Fellenz, Scherner's chief of staff, and the aforementioned Dr. Friedrich Schmidt. The latter worked in the 1960s as... a barrister in Schleswig.³³⁷ I have not been able to find any documents indicating that either of them was charged with crimes committed in Działoszyce, although the crime itself has been mentioned. Another "desk murderer," Alfons Kalpers, testified in these trials as a... witness. Among other representatives of the German civil administration, Vogt was also tried, but again, there is no mention that the events in Działoszyce were taken into account.³³⁸

During the organisation of both deportations, an atmosphere of terror reigned in the town. When interrogated after the war, Commander Sałabun reported that during the first deportation, the Germans had designated seven hostages to be executed if cases of Jews being hidden were discovered.³³⁹ This fact has not been mentioned in other sources. In general, the non-Jewish population tried not to leave their homes unnecessarily. Some apartments were reportedly marked with crosses to avoid police raids and deportation. At least one non-Jewish resident was shot dead – he was mistaken for a fleeing Jew.³⁴⁰

Despite the threat of death for helping Jews in Działoszyce, some members of the Polish population chose to hide them. One such example was the home of Kazimierz Zwoliński. Water and bread were secretly passed to Jews – sometimes

³³⁵ Sehn derived Riedinger's responsibility from the Third Reich's theory of leadership, recognising that he was the Führer in the Kreis Miechów, the master of life and death. D. Libionka, "Zaprowadzanie sprawiedliwości," pp. 285–286.

³³⁶ AIPN Kr, 502/1715, Judgment of the District Court in Cracow, Cracow, 21 September 1948, pp. 325–327; *ibid.*, Duplicate of the Supreme Court's sentence, n.p., 21 January 1949, pp. 325–327; AIPN Kr, 502/1716, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Cracow, 5 January 1950, pp. 75–81; *ibid.*, Letter from the Prison Service in Cracow to the Ministry of Justice, Cracow, 29 February 1952, p. 172.

³³⁷ BAL, B.162/5969, Copy of a letter to the Attorney's Office at the State Court in Flensburg, n.p., n.d., p. 54.

³³⁸ D. Libionka, "Zaprowadzanie sprawiedliwości," pp. 289–290.

³³⁹ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Piotr Sałabun during the main hearing, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 152.

³⁴⁰ A. Sabor, *Sztetl*, p. 36; AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Waclaw Kapsa during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, pp. 247, 251; AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Olga Szumlakowska during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 139.

in exchange for payment. Many respected citizens of Działoszyce could not bear to witness the atrocities; they turned away, overcome with sorrow and tears. One of them, a man named Woźniak, demonstratively closed his shop.³⁴¹

An atmosphere of terror and intimidation also prevailed in the nearby villages. Between the first and second deportations, while the ghettos were still functioning and German police roundups were at their peak, the local Kreishauptmann issued threats to peasants during regular meetings with village leaders. “Village leaders were once again informed that farmers must not purchase goods from Jews, provide them shelter, sell them food, etc. – such offences were punishable by death.”³⁴²

Even earlier, the registration law had been tightened. Village leaders were required to ensure that every newcomer to the municipality registered within 24 hours. Furthermore, “every newcomer to a community must immediately register with the municipality, and anyone leaving the community (place of residence) must deregister with the municipality.”³⁴³ The timing of these regulations in relation to the ongoing deportation campaign was unlikely to be coincidental – nor was the prohibition on baptising Jews, introduced in October 1942.³⁴⁴

The Germans soon issued an order forcing peasants to participate in rural self-control (also known as the security system), which involved an obligation to detain any stranger in the village and report this fact to the nearest police station.³⁴⁵ Under this system, the regulations became more detailed, and ultimately, village leaders were personally responsible for enforcing these regulations, becoming hostages to the German policy.

³⁴¹ AIPN Ki, 128/208, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Kazimierz Zwoliński during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 146; Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 110.

³⁴² AP Katowice, AG Kidów, 547, Minutes of the Village Leaders’ Meeting, Kidów Municipality, 4 October 1942, p. 47.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the Village Leaders’ Meeting, Kidów Municipality, p. 184; *ibid.*, Minutes of the Village Leaders’ Meeting, Kidów Municipality, 5 October 1942, p. 11

³⁴⁴ See T. Domański, “Konwersje Żydów na katolicyzm w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie na przykładzie diecezji kieleckiej,” *Polish-Jewish Studies* 2 (2021), pp. 202–219; M. Grądzka-Rejak, “„Od dłuższego czasu straciłem wszelki kontakt z żydami i żydostwem”. Neofici w okupowanym Krakowie w świetle materiałów Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 13 (2017), pp. 342–371.

³⁴⁵ Depending on the region, it was referred to either as the village guard or as the practice of hostage-taking. T. Domański, “Niemiecka administracja gminna,” pp. 162–163.

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village leaders were instructed to personally verify that anyone arriving in their community possessed valid identity documents and deregistration certificates from their previous residence. They were also required to watch newcomers' behaviour and, if any suspicion arose, to promptly report them to the nearest police station and municipal authorities to prevent potential consequences.³⁴⁶

The atmosphere of fear in the Kreis Miechów and across the whole General Governorate was exacerbated by roundups and executions of the Polish population. Repression was applied at the discretion of the authorities, including against those who evaded social and economic exploitation or were involved in underground activities.³⁴⁷ The occupation laws imposed by the Germans made Polish–Jewish relations extremely risky.

Each participant in the events had their own reflections on the reactions of those around them, often based on subjective assessments. Chaim Wohlgernter wrote bitterly:

It was impossible to hide with friends in the town, or even to consider it. Although we left all our belongings with them for safekeeping, they did not want to know us. Why would they want to save us? What harm would it do to them if we died? After all, the property in their hands would remain theirs anyway.³⁴⁸

Wohlgernter drew attention to instances of dishonesty towards Jews. Objective factors – such as withdrawing a promised offer of help due to fear of execution – were not always considered by those facing immediate danger. Jews often interpreted the refusal to help through the lens of their own life-threatening circumstances.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ AP Ka, AG Kidów, 547, Minutes of the Village Leaders' Meeting, Kidów Municipality, p. 54.

³⁴⁷ AO Kr, Ds. 1/81 (224), Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Leokadia Strojek, Proszowice, 21 March 1990, pp. 11–12; *ibid.*, Minutes of the Interrogation of the witness Zofia Urbaś, Tarnów, 3 December 1991, pp. 183–185; R. Gieroń, *Półmrok*, pp. 53–77.

³⁴⁸ Ch.I. Wohlgernter, "Działoszyce," p. 31.

³⁴⁹ Ch.Y. Wohlgernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, pp. 106–107.

Amidst widespread wartime poverty, some individuals were willing to loot abandoned Jewish properties. The Germans had declared these buildings as property of the Reich, adding another layer to the situation: the looting concerned movable property that had already been stolen by the occupiers. This behaviour reflected a broader social trend. Following deportations, many homes were plundered. Certain members of the Blue Police undermined German orders, often with the tacit approval of Commander Sałabun, who chose not to intervene. In some cases, Blue Police functionaries actively participated in the looting.³⁵⁰ Others showed excessive zeal. Policeman Zygmunt Kamedyniak caught a man named Sławiński red-handed.³⁵¹ The man's brother, who tried to defend him, was also arrested. This happened in the presence of the Land Commissioner from Kazimierza Wielka, who brought the Gestapo from Miechów. Both men were shot in the market square in Działoszyce. The execution was carried out by Gendarme Kozak following the pronouncement of the sentence by Commander Sałabun.³⁵²

Closing Remarks

Between 1939 and 1942, the extermination of the Jews in Działoszyce unfolded according to a pattern replicated in hundreds of towns and villages across occupied central Poland, within the General Governorate. It began with social segregation and stigmatisation, escalated into widespread alienation, and ultimately led to confinement within a designated residential zone – in this instance, the entire town of Działoszyce. Simultaneously, the German occupation authorities systematically, or through tolerated individual theft, stripped the local Jewish

³⁵⁰ See M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps"; AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Stanisław Czekaj during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 11 January 1949, p. 265.

³⁵¹ There were reports that one of the men entered a Jewish house at the owner's request. AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony of Waław Kapsa during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 249.

³⁵² During the gathering of evidence for the investigation against Herbert Böttcher, SS and police commander in the Radom district, two eyewitnesses (Stefan Sznajderski and Stanisław Skowron) testified that the Sławiński brothers, Stefan Sobczyk and several Jews were shot during the execution and their bodies were taken away in horse-drawn carts to the cemetery. AIPN, GK, 179/150, Appendix to the order of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Radom, 15 August 1948, p. 11; AIPN Ki, 128/206, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Piotr Sałabun, 7 February 1948, p. 29; AIPN Ki, 128/207, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Szczubiał, Kazimierza Wielka, 28 June 1948, p. 31.

population of their property and dismantled the economic foundations of their existence. The intensifying persecution led to the impoverishment of the population and malnutrition, which resulted in increased susceptibility to infectious diseases and a rise in mortality. Finally, in 1942, as part of *Aktion Reinhardt*, German police forces (the Gestapo, the Military Police, the Polnische Polizei, or the so-called Blue Police, and the Baudienst) and the civil administration (Kreishauptmanns, labour offices) carried out the so-called deportations on 2–3 September and 8 November 1942. The first deportation saw Jews sent to Miechów, where a selection process was carried out: the young and healthy were dispatched to labour camps, while the remainder were deported to Sonderkommando Belzec and killed.

A special unit of the German police executed between 1,200 and 1,400 individuals at the Jewish cemetery in Działoszyce. Following the second deportation, Jews were transported in carts or forced into the forest near Chodów, where they were shot. Both deportations were marked by brutal roundups targeting those attempting to escape. Every person captured during these operations was killed. Thirty years later, Dawid Gelbart thus reflected on the tragedy: “Działoszyce was buried in a ravine, in three long graves.”³⁵³

The scale of the crimes committed by German forces in Działoszyce between 1939 and 1942 was shocking, but due to a lack of documentation and the post-war chaos, it is impossible to determine its exact extent. Despite some reports, the number of Jewish residents in Działoszyce before the first deportation in 1942 was not 12,000 or more, but closer to 8,000. How many managed to hide or escape remains unknown. What is known is that before the second deportation, approximately 1,100 Jews had gathered in the remnant ghetto. Some individuals from this group did survive. By the 1970s, around 330 Jews from Działoszyce were living in Israel, with several hundred more residing elsewhere.³⁵⁴ If we assume that there were about 500 of the latter, then the number of those who survived the German occupation of Działoszyce in various places would be about 800, meaning that 10 per cent of the Jewish population survived.

³⁵³ D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce.”

³⁵⁴ M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction.”

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