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## THE KILLING OF JEWS IN DZIAŁOSZYCE ON THE NIGHT OF 16–17 JUNE 1945: VICTIMS, PERPETRATORS, AND UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS

### Summary

This article seeks to explore the question of responsibility for the murder of several Jews in Działoszyce on the night of 16–17 June 1945. Given the current state of research, a definitive answer remains elusive. It is unclear whether the killings were part of a targeted liquidation operation conducted by an anti-communist and pro-independence underground combat group – possibly involving the units led by Corporal Jan Stempkowski “Michał,” Corporal Zbigniew Stawowczyk “Nurt” (Current), and Second Lieutenant Apolinary Kubicki “Grom” (Thunderbolt) – in response to a perceived, though potentially misidentified, threat. Alternatively, the murders may have been a spontaneous act driven by anti-Semitic ideology, particularly the belief in “Jewish communism,” aimed at intimidating individuals suspected of collaboration with the newly established communist authorities. The first version is the most likely, which is also supported by the historical context and the sequence of events that took place in 1945 in Działoszyce and the surrounding area. However, given the serious

concerns surrounding the reliability of the available sources – especially the investigative materials – any conclusions must be approached with considerable caution.

### Keywords

Działoszyce • killing of Jews • anti-communist and pro-independence underground • Second Lieutenant Apolinary Kubicki “Grom” (Thunderbolt)

Attempts to describe the numerous events of 1945 that led to civilian deaths (including the deaths of Jews) will be ineffective unless framed within the context of the “terror of the first year.” The initial months – from July 1944 to July 1945 – constituted the “most cruel, bloody and criminal” phase of the communist regime’s establishment in Poland.<sup>1</sup> It was a period marked by the dominance of Soviet repressive forces. The Red Army’s presence on Polish soil ensured the implementation of “revolutionary change.” However, Polish society was predominantly reluctant or even hostile towards the imposed regime, and the communists’ intensification of terror against their opponents led to many bloody, often fratricidal, fights. In addition to armed clashes with Soviet repressive forces, pro-independence and anti-communist underground units carried out operations targeting party activists, as well as NKVD and Security Department agents. Tragically, innocent and random civilians also lost their lives. Even the mere suspicion of sympathizing with “Bolshevism” could provoke violent reprisals from the “Cursed Soldiers.” Violence, uncertainty about the future, and the haunting presence of death became everyday realities. The period known as the “terror of the first year” was further marked by chaos, the collapse of traditional social bonds, widespread property loss, shifts in economic structures, and escalating nationality-based tensions.<sup>2</sup> It was during this period, as Krystyna Kersten observed, that:

a system of interconnected elements [took shape]: Jews – communist authorities – Polish society – forming a vicious circle of mutually enhancing resentment

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<sup>1</sup> J. Eisler, *Czterdzieści pięć lat, które wstrząsnęły Polską. Historia polityczna PRL*, Warsaw, 2018, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> For more, see M. Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga: Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Cracow, 2012.

that began in 1944–1945. [...] at the heart of Polish–Jewish relations at that time were two haunting constructs: “Jewish communism” and “reaction.” The former conflated Jews with the unpopular communist regime, while the latter equated resistance to that regime with right-wing nationalism, fascism, and anti-Semitism – casting a wide swath of Polish society as reactionary. These two spectres – symmetrical, mirror reflections of each other, so to speak – emerged from a shared effort to construct a synthetic image of the enemy within the collective consciousness of both communities.<sup>3</sup>

This article seeks to explore the question of responsibility for the murder of several Jews in Działoszyce on the night of 16–17 June 1945. The most likely hypothesis will be presented, along with the presumed circumstances and conditions that led to this tragic event. Given the serious concerns surrounding the reliability of the available sources, any conclusions must be approached with considerable caution. This text is a contribution to research on the attitude of the pro-independence underground towards Jews in 1945.

### “The Terror of the First Year.” The Communists Seize Power

Towards the end of 1944, the Miechów Inspectorate of the Home Army – covering the counties of Olkusz, Miechów, and Pińczów – was gripped by escalating tension. On 4 December 1944, the Home Army inspector of Miechów, Colonel Bolesław Nieczuja-Ostrowski, known by the pseudonym “Tysiąc” (Thousand), acting under Special Order No. 3, declared a “state of emergency’ in the northern parts of the count[ies] of Olkusz, Miechów and Pińczów,<sup>4</sup> i.e. in areas most heavily influenced by Soviet forces and communist authorities.” On the same day, in

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<sup>3</sup> K. Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, komunizm: Anatomia półprawd 1939–68*, Warsaw, 1992, pp. 112–113.

<sup>4</sup> Within the organisational structures of the Polish Workers’ Party and the People’s Guard (*Gwardia Ludowa*, GL) in the Cracow district, the strongest areas were Miechów and Wiślica (including Pińczów and its environs). Alongside Poles and Russians, there were also Jews in the People’s Guard/People’s Army (*Armia Ludowa*, AL) groups. For more, see P. Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza: Droga do władzy (1941–1944)*, Warsaw, 2006, pp. 351–352; M. Korkuć, “„Trudne warunki i silny nacisk niemiecki...”. Komuniści na ziemi krakowskiej 1939–1945,” in *Polska Partia Robotnicza, Gwardia Ludowa / Armia Ludowa na ziemiach polskich 1942–1944/45*, eds. K. Kaczmarek and M. Krzysztofiński, Rzeszów, 2013, pp. 65, 69, 75, 81–82, 87–88; M. Korkuć, „Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce...”: *Niepodległościowe oddziały partyzanckie w Krakowskiem 1944–1947*, Cracow, 2002, pp. 51, 70; W. Ważniewski, *Walki partyzanckie nad Nidą 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 1975, pp. 161, 196.

Secret Order No. 12, he reiterated the importance of the “anti-bandit action.” A few days later, on 13 December 1944, the head of intelligence of the 106th Infantry Division reported to Colonel “Tysiãc”: “The Home Army must show a strong hand against bandits, regardless of whether they are Bolsheviks, members of the Polish Workers’ Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR) or, finally, members of the Peasants’ Battalions (*Bataliony Chłopskie*, BCh). We are disqualified in the eyes of the aforementioned and already doomed to destruction, so we must show our strength, because only then will the enemy feel respect. [...] If we do not show our fist, they will defeat us.”<sup>5</sup>

Communist guerrilla units were accused of banditry (mainly robbery, brutal treatment of civilians, and murder of members of the pro-independence underground). In connection with such cases, special Home Army groups carried out death sentences on persons accused of criminal offences (including members of Stanisław Klacz’s “Śmigły” unit).<sup>6</sup> Conflicts of a political and ideological nature were accompanied by tensions between different social milieus.<sup>7</sup> In addition, classic common banditry, which had already been a serious problem for the pro-

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<sup>5</sup> M. Korcuć, “„Trudne warunki i silny nacisk niemiecki...”” p. 91. From other areas, counterintelligence reported on escalating tensions with Soviet partisans: “Bolshevik units are increasingly demonstrating their hostile attitude towards the Home Army. In conversations conducted in passing while patrolling the area, threats are made against Poles, especially Polish partisans and members of the Home Army. [...] they do not shy away from conversations, their aim being to obtain as much information about us as possible” (quoted from: G. Mazur, “Od Armii Krajowej do Delegatury Sił Zbrojnych w Krakowie,” in *Armia Krajowa: Dramatyczny epilog*, ed. K. Komorowski, Warsaw, 1994, p. 55). See also B. Nieczuja-Ostrowski, *Rzeczpospolita Partyzancka: Inspektorat „Maria” w walce*, Warsaw, 1991, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> *Archiwum Delegatury Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Kielcach* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Delegation in Kielce, hereinafter AIPN Ki), 013/1428, vol. 2, Investigative files concerning membership of an illegal Home Army organisation operating in the Pińczów County and participation in the murder of members of the People’s Army in the case against Bohdan Thugutt, Summary of materials concerning persons detained in the Home Army “Dominika” case [July 1951?], pp. 236–242. The investigation also includes accusations of murdering Jews in hiding. See AIPN Ki, 013/1428, vol. 1, Summary of the case against Bogdan Thugutt “Betecha,” Pińczów, 16 January 1951, p. 233; *ibid.*, Statement by the commander of the Citizens’ Militia (*Milicja Obywatelska*, MO) station in Brzesko Nowe, Miechów County, concerning the killing of Stefan Czekaj, Eugeniusz Woźniak and Marcin Gach by the Home Army, Brzesko Nowe, 14 June 1950, p. 312. Cf. “Sprawa procesu pokazowego 106. DP AK w dokumentach UB,” eds. T. Gąsiorowski and F. Musiał, *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 22 (2004), p. 173, fn. 36; W. Ważniewski, *Walki partyzanckie*, pp. 161, 196.

<sup>7</sup> Cf., i.a., M. Chorązki, “Konflikty społeczne w strukturach AK na polskiej wsi na przykładzie Inspektoratu „Maria,”” *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 30 (2009), pp. 5–13; C. Brożek, “Organy bezpieczeństwa Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego w południowo-zachodniej części przedwojennego województwa kieleckiego,” *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 26/27 (2007), pp. 39–64.

independence underground for several years, intensified.<sup>8</sup> Perpetrators of specified crimes caught red-handed could be punished by death.<sup>9</sup>

NKVD units and special groups designated to establish voivodeship and county structures of the apparatus of repression (Public Security Department, Citizens' Militia) from scratch, which followed the frontline units of the Red Army in the second half of January 1945, began arresting people considered enemies or political opponents from the very first days after the Germans were driven out. Fears were confirmed regarding the serious exposure of the structures and people of the Polish Underground from the time of Operation "Burza" (Tempest), which took place six months earlier. There was a danger that the Soviet services, as well as the domestic security authorities, would take over and exploit people who had previously worked for the German occupiers.<sup>10</sup>

At the turn of January and February 1945, in Miechów County, NKVD officers, acting on information obtained from members of the Polish Workers' Party, initiated the first arrests of Home Army soldiers and individuals linked to the underground – among them landowners and peasants. Killings occurred as well.<sup>11</sup> Over the next few dozen days, there was a significant increase in the number of arrests of members of underground organisations and partisan units from the period of the German occupation.<sup>12</sup> Soviet soldiers' treatment of Poland as a conquered land, along with the terror of repression,<sup>13</sup> gave rise to spontaneously formed self-

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<sup>8</sup> S. Piwowarski, *Okręg Krakowski Służby Zwycięstwu Polski – Związku Walki Zbrojnej – Armii Krajowej: Wybrane zagadnienia organizacyjne, personalne i bojowe*, Cracow, 1994, pp. 57–59, 61.

<sup>9</sup> G. Ostasz, *Krakowska Okręgowa Delegatura Rządu na Kraj 1941–1945*, Rzeszów, 1996, pp. 107–108. By August 1944, "over 3,500 people from across the area who were acting to the detriment of the Polish nation and state" had been registered.

<sup>10</sup> A. Chwalba, "Krakowska konspiracja," *Biuletyn Informacyjny. Miesięcznik Światowego Związku Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej* 5 (2018), p. 11. According to the author, in the Home Army's Cracow Area (together with the Rzeszów Sub-Area), the Gestapo allegedly had "over 5,000 agents and collaborators, and between 800 and 1,000 in Cracow alone." They came from all social strata, including numerous representatives of national minorities. For more, see A. Chwalba, *Okupacyjny Kraków w latach 1939–1945*, Cracow, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> M. Korcuć, „Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce...”, p. 161. Information based on reports by the commander of the Home Army's Cracow District, Colonel Przemysław Nakoniecznikoff-Klukowski.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171–173. On 20 April 1945, the NKVD and SMERSH arrested Colonel Przemysław Nakoniecznikoff-Klukowski.

<sup>13</sup> *Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Krakowie* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Cracow, hereinafter AIPN Kr), 019/1, vol. 2, Reports and statements of the Department III of the PUBP in Miechów to the WUBP in Cracow from 1945–1946, concerning on-

defence units. The forests of the Kielce region became filled with partisans. Several dozen groups and units of the pro-independence underground (post-AK and national) began fighting against the NKVD, the security apparatus and representatives of the communist authorities. The threat posed by the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) (denunciations, participation in arrests and pacifications) prompted a swift response from the pro-independence underground. Actions against Communist Party officials varied: "[in] milder cases, they were limited to warnings: written warnings of the death penalty, confiscation of property and beatings. In more severe cases (and also in situations where warnings were ignored), death sentences were carried out."<sup>14</sup>

Considering the extent and intensity of the repression, it may be concluded that the communist authorities employed terror as a means of combating their opponents: "They took my neighbour away. All you had to do was say that someone was in the Home Army, and that person would be gone. Rumours spread that the Russians and the Security Department were arresting all Home Army members."<sup>15</sup> In one of the reports by the post-Home Army intelligence service (from early April 1945), we can read: "Miechów region. Arrests throughout the area, especially of Home Army members. The NKVD and PPR are particularly active in the Pińczów region, where they arrest Home Army members and rob them of their property."<sup>16</sup> Particularly active were the "specially designated 'NKVD operational groups' and 'SMERSH operational groups.'" The Soviets expanded their network of agents, and an assertion was even made that it was "at least 20 times more developed than the Gestapo network during the German occupation."<sup>17</sup> Intelligence gathered through covert agents posed a grave threat: "The NKVD [...] is currently deploying individual agents into the field, typically disguised as civilians. They settle in Polish homes, feigning hostility toward Bolshevism, and

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going operative work in the field of uncovering the pro-independence underground and criminal groups carrying out armed attacks in the Miechów County, pp. 15, 34, 43, 67.

<sup>14</sup> M. Korcuć, „Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce...”, p. 256.

<sup>15</sup> R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1945–1948*, Cracow 2002, pp. 42–68, 78–99.

<sup>16</sup> K. Krajewski and T. Łabuszewski, "Wyzwolenie? Terror sowiecki w dokumentach Delegatury Sił Zbrojnych na Kraj," in *W objęciach wielkiego brata: Sowietci w Polsce 1944–1993*, eds. K. Rokicki and S. Stępień, Warsaw, 2009, p. 417.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted after: M. Korcuć, „Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce...”, p. 161.

seek contact with underground activists and opposition figures, thereby gathering material for pacifications and arrests.”<sup>18</sup>

The raids and pacification operations resembled events from the period of the German occupation. In mid-May 1945, underground intelligence reports noted:

In Pińczów County, the Security, together with the Soviets, organised a manhunt in the forests for saboteurs. A confrontation ensued. The fighting has been going on for four days. The Security is bringing in military reinforcements. [...] No further details are available, as Pińczów County is surrounded and under close surveillance. [...] The militia in the villages wants to be dismissed from service. Hundreds of applications for dismissal are being sent to the authorities. [...] At the last minute, I learned that pacification had begun in Jędrzejów County.<sup>19</sup>

In June 1945, intelligence from the Armed Forces Delegation (*Delegatura Sił Zbrojnych*, a post-Home Army underground organisation) reported on the threat of a large-scale pacification operation in the Kielce region:

6 June [...] Warsaw. Approximately 5,000 Soviet NKVD personnel were assigned to pacify the Kielce region. Transports were already passing through Warsaw from the west. [...] 8 June. At a meeting of the Praesidium of the Council of Ministers, in the presence and under pressure from General Shatilov,<sup>20</sup> the pacification of the Lublin, Rzeszów, Kielce and Białystok voivodeships was approved. [...] The Soviet command plans to pacify the entire area and destroy all forest units in a single planned strike. [...] The first strike force consists of Soviet units, the second of Polish units. The stronger Soviet garrisons have already arrived in Jędrzejów and Kielce from the west.

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<sup>18</sup> P. Kołakowski, *Pretorianie Stalina: Sowietckie służby bezpieczeństwa i wywiadu na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 2010, p. 374. The Home Army intelligence also drew attention to the information network organised by the Internal Security Corps, modelled on the NKVD Internal Troops network. “It has been identified throughout Rzeszów Voi[vodeship], as well as in Cracow and Tarnów. Soviet intelligence experts and Jews work here and manage the entire operation” (*ibid.*, p. 392).

<sup>19</sup> Quoted after: R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, “Najtrudniej było złożyć broń,” a supplement to *Gazeta Lokalna* and *Gazeta w Radomiu*, August 1995, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Sergei Shatilov, Soviet general, head of the USSR Military Mission in Poland.

[...] 8–18 June (message) Działoszyce. Significant Soviet and Polish communist military forces, composed of assault infantry and armoured units, are currently concentrated in the area. There is talk of eliminating NSZ groups in the Chroberz forests.<sup>21</sup>

## Armed Resistance

The escalation of repression into terror, coupled with a persistent sense of danger, ultimately triggered widespread armed resistance – both spontaneous and organised. This resistance manifested in armed combat, including guerrilla warfare. Individuals escaping persecution joined existing patrols, groups, and guerrilla units, which were subordinate – at times only symbolically – to the structures of the post-Home Army or national underground. Independent forest groups also emerged. Such a “mass movement to the forest” as took place in the spring of 1945 was not part of the plans (for that period) of any of the underground organisations operating since the beginning of 1945.

Due to the Red Army’s January offensive, which caught the underground leadership by surprise, the Cracow District inspectorates of the Home Army demobilised their personnel, disbanded their structures, and concealed their weapons and organisational archives. The district command issued instructions titled *Wytyczne na okres po rozwiązaniu AK* (Guidelines for the Period after the Dissolution of the Home Army) and a study titled *Metody pracy NKWD* (NKVD Methods of Operation). The *Wytyczne* (Guidelines) were “a kind of a guide containing elementary rules that the Home Army soldiers should follow in communist Poland,” whereas the *Metody* (Methods), distributed by the post-Home Army underground structures, were intended for “a small group of officers and field commanders of the underground” who, after familiarising themselves with them, were to instruct their subordinates further orally.<sup>22</sup>

The Guidelines also include an analysis of the political reality at the time:

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<sup>21</sup> K. Krajewski and T. Łabuszewski, “Wyzwolenie?,” p. 438. See also F. Gryciuk and P. Matusak, *Represje NKWD wobec żołnierzy Podziemnego Państwa Polskiego w latach 1944–45*, vol. 2: *Wybór źródeł*, Siedlce, 1995, pp. 21, 40–43, 46–51.

<sup>22</sup> “Wytyczne Komendanta Okręgu AK Kraków na okres po rozwiązaniu AK oraz opracowane przez podziemie informacje o metodach pracy NKWD,” eds. D. Golik and K. Pięciak, *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 44 (2016), pp. 217–219.

[...] power passes into the hands of scum and the PPR, which fills managerial positions and introduces ruthless rule, often using well-known names and names of popular parties, such as the PPS (Polish Socialist Party) and Str[onnictwo] Lud[owe] [People's Party]. [...] The NKVD [...] with the help of the PPR, will proceed to ruthlessly purge the area of alleged reactionaries, including Home Army soldiers and political parties loyal to the Polish government. The main task of the NKVD will be to track down the Home Army. [...] Alongside the NKVD, military commanders (garrison commanders) in each municipality and town maintain their own networks of informants. [...] Arrests will begin at the lowest level, targeting the "outposts" where the greatest number of soldiers revealed themselves during Operation "Tempest," and in the course of their interactions with airborne units. [...] The true objective is to eliminate the valuable human element from the area, destroy the Home Army soldiers, undermine the Polish Government, and secure political advantage. [...] Ultimately, to shatter societal resistance through confusion and chaos.<sup>23</sup>

The document outlines "ways to survive and simultaneously paralyse the activities of the communists": "We must do everything we can to ensure that as many valuable people as possible survive the period of the Sov[iet] occupation." Under such conditions, it was deemed necessary "to join all kinds of offices to obstruct the rule of scum, and at the appropriate moment be able to take control of the situation, and to join the Polish security authorities."<sup>24</sup>

The "NKVD Methods of Operation" study stressed that "with the change of the occupier, the Gestapo was replaced by the NKVD." It highlighted the tactics employed by the Soviet secret services – "they are as varied and as uncharted as the cunning, slyness, and treachery of the people of the East." The document also issued a warning against informants:

There are many informants in our ranks – members of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) – an NKVD outpost. [...] It can be said that every Jew,<sup>25</sup> both civilian

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223–224.

<sup>25</sup> This reflects the original phrasing used in the document.

and military, is an NKVD agent. [...] To avoid danger, every Bolshevik – and above all, every Jew – should be approached with great caution. Under no circumstances should one engage in political disputes or attempt to persuade them. [...] The NKVD does not trust Polish agents.<sup>26</sup>

It is difficult to say why (based on what evidence or premises) such a hard accusation was made against the Jewish population.<sup>27</sup> At this stage of research, it remains difficult to determine how far the study's considerations influenced the practices of the "field" underground (partisan patrols, groups, and units).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225–226. Cf. J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie: Przejawy wrogości wobec Żydów w latach 1944–1947*, Warsaw, 2021, p. 160.

<sup>27</sup> "The attitudes of Jews were viewed through a predetermined lens. To Poles, a Polish communist was simply a communist – just as Russian or Ukrainian communists were seen as such. But a Jewish communist continued to be perceived as a Jew and was suspected of acting in the interest of his own ethnic group. The belief grew stronger: removing Jews was equated with eliminating communists" (P. Śpiewak, *Żydokomuna: Interpretacje historyczne*, Warsaw, 2012, p. 181).

<sup>28</sup> A certain cognitive pattern may have been at work, based on the assumption that collective opinion is shaped by the most visible individuals. Based on the activities of several functionaries and intelligence officers of Jewish origin, who were being observed by the underground intelligence service, those in charge of the underground structures in a given area may have decided to apply the so-called principle of collective responsibility. In the case of the Kielce Voivodeship, such a situation probably took place in Radom and Radom County in August 1945 (see R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Podziemie antykomunistyczne wobec Żydów po 1945 roku – wstęp do problematyki (na przykładzie województwa kieleckiego)," in *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich: Polityka, gospodarka, kultura, społeczeństwo*, eds. J. Wijaczka and G. Miernik, Cracow, 2005, pp. 255–256; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie*, pp. 111–112). In this context, it is worth highlighting one of the documents that was created in the autumn of 1945 at the NKVD "headquarters." In a report by Lieutenant General Nikolai Selyevanov (NKVD instructor/advisor to the Ministry of Public Security) to Lavrentiy Beria, People's Commissar for Internal Affairs of the USSR, dated 20 October 1945, attention was drawn to the large number of Jews in various structures of the communist authorities: "Some of the Jews who were active participants in the anti-fascist struggle, after gaining access to state offices, took up many managerial positions in them. [...] Jews make up 18.7 per cent of the Ministry of Public Security. They occupy 50 per cent of managerial positions. In the First Department, 27 per cent of the staff are Jews, and they hold all managerial roles. [...] In the Department for Functionaries (special inspection), Jews account for 33.3 per cent, all of whom occupy positions of responsibility. [...] At the Press Control Department head office, up to 50 per cent of the staff are Jews, and in the Radom office, the figure reaches 82.3 per cent. This situation provokes intense discontent among Poles, who speak of Jews "running rampant" in ministries and other Polish institutions. [...] All this is undoubtedly exploited by the anti-government underground, which spreads claims in its [...] publications and numerous leaflets about Jews running rampant in the Polish government, calling Bierut and other members of the government Jews and classifying them all as communists, "protégés" of Moscow. Such propaganda fuels anti-Semitism in the country [...]. In other [...] leaflets, the reactionary underground spreads the version of a "Jewish dictatorship in Poland," calling the current government a "Jewish-Bolshevik agency of Moscow" and saying that "the security services are run by Bolsheviks and Jews" (*Teczka specjalna Stalina: Raporty NKWD z Polski 1944–1946*, selec. and eds. T. Cariewska-

In the final section, the authors of the “NKVD Methods of Operation” issued a warning:

At first glance, the NKVD’s operations appear chaotic and disorganised. This impression is strengthened by the overall disorder and absence of any organisational principles. [...] Yet within this apparent confusion, the NKVD acts with clear intent. This, too, is a method. [...] Its defining traits include internal disruption, the creation of discord, and the spread of unrest. NKVD officers are skilled psychologists, which is why they tailor their methods to each individual.<sup>29</sup>

There is no doubt that these documents reached the officers of the disbanded Pińczów District of the Home Army. This was confirmed during the investigation by Second Lieutenant Bohdan Thugutt “Beteha,” commander of the 3rd Company, 4th Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment of the Home Army.<sup>30</sup>

With regard to the southern part of the Kielce Voivodeship (including the Pińczów County), the precise number and organisational affiliation of post-Home Army partisan groups and independent units – along with their associated underground networks, typically rural and less frequently urban outposts, as well as local underground structures – often remains an open question at the current stage of research. There were “loose” groups of partisans operating in the field, supported by local units but lacking broader organisational ties. It is likely that during this period, groups were also formed which, in addition to fighting informants or people whose activities posed a threat to them, were also involved in criminal activities (common banditry).<sup>31</sup>

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ja, A. Chmielarz, A. Paczkowski, E. Rosowska, and S. Rudnicki, Warsaw, 1998, pp. 421–422). See also J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, pp. 158–167.

<sup>29</sup> “Wytoczne Komendanta Okręgu AK Kraków,” pp. 217–219.

<sup>30</sup> AIPN Ki, 013/1428, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Bohdan Thugutt, Pińczów, 12 August 1948, f. 119. This happened during a meeting with Second Lieutenant Stanisław Padło “Niebora,” commander of the 4th Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment of the Home Army. See also AIPN Ki, 019/1, vol. 2, Operative report by the senior clerk of Section II of the Miechów PUBP for the period 23–28 August 1945, Miechów, 28 August 1945, p. 74.

<sup>31</sup> Piotr Niwiński concluded that it is possible “to distinguish between two types of ‘conspiratorial banditry’: bogus banditry and actual banditry” (P. Niwiński, “Czarne karty podziemia poakowskiego. Problem demoralizacji członków konspiracji niepodległościowej po 1945 roku,” in *Podziemie zbrojne na Lubelszczyźnie wobec dwóch totalitaryzmów 1939–1956*, eds. S. Poleszak and A. Puławski, Warsaw,

From spring to summer 1945, underground activity reached its peak. The actions included: self-defence (such as combat against operational units of repressive forces; execution of traitors, agents, and selected NKVD, Security Department, and Citizens' Militia personnel; armed resistance to arrests; and suppression of informants through contributions, flogging, or execution); assaults and disarmament of Citizens' Militia posts; securing funds to establish and sustain forest units (as well as to support families of the repressed); protecting civilians from criminal gangs and eliminating them; and retaliatory and repressive measures targeting the PPR structures and disseminating anti-communist propaganda. In rural areas, which were the main base for the pro-independence guerrilla movement in the Kielce region, the motto of fighting against the "new system" boiled down to combating all political activity of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) and opposing any changes in the economic and social life of the countryside that could in any way be associated with "communism." The argument of fighting to prevent the establishment of "kolkhozes" in Poland appealed to the imagination of young people from rural areas who joined the partisan movement.

The underground's liquidation operations targeting the Security Department and NKVD functionaries, overzealous militiamen and traitors, collaborators with the apparatus of repression (informers, informants, and communist activists associated with the Security Department)<sup>32</sup> were a form of self-defence for both the public and various formations of the pro-independence and anti-communist underground against surveillance, repression and terror. As Maciej Korcuć, mentioned earlier, noted, "the spring escalation of the conflict certainly resulted in a greater number

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2002, pp. 101–102). Rafał Wnuk wrote: "An action in which a group of underground soldiers, acting independently, appropriated money and goods necessary for survival from a state or cooperative shop will be regarded by some as banditry, while others will consider it entirely justified – a form of resistance against the communist state. As this shows, the classification of such acts depends heavily on the beliefs of the person making the judgment, particularly their emotional stance toward the People's Republic of Poland. [...] Each case of banditry should be assessed individually. Sources – especially those produced by County Public Security Departments and post-war courts – must be approached with great caution. In many instances, it is impossible to determine the true circumstances and nature of an event after over half a century (R. Wnuk, "Problem bandytyzmu wśród żołnierzy antykomunistycznego podziemia w Polsce (1945–1947)," in *Komunizm: Ideologia, system, ludzie*, ed. T. Szarota, Warsaw, 2001, pp. 72, 79).

<sup>32</sup> For information on the elimination of informers and other individuals threatening the pro-independence underground, see, among others, AIPN Kr, 019/1, vol. 2, Operative report by the senior clerk of Section II, the Miechów PUBP for 13–18 August 1945, Miechów, 20 August 1945, p. 66; AIPN Kr, 019/1, vol. 2, Situation Report: Miechów County, 10–20 August 1945, Miechów, 20 August 1945, p. 68.

of unplanned assassinations of specific Security Department functionaries. Many of these were undoubtedly the result of chance encounters. The terrorist activities of the new authorities fuelled a spiral of hostility and hatred. In these conditions, the actions of both sides took on the character of a ruthless struggle.” The dissolution of the civil and military special courts (operating within the Polish Underground State during the German occupation) made it necessary for “field” commanders to make such hard decisions.<sup>33</sup>

Many participants in the armed anti-communist resistance believed that communism was Jewish. This was a deeply rooted stereotype, further reinforced by the visible activity of people of Jewish origin in the government apparatus since 1945 and by the activities of the official propaganda.<sup>34</sup> This sentiment intensified the already charged emotional state of the underground soldiers.<sup>35</sup>

The constant sense of danger, intensified by fear of arrest and torture, made people acutely sensitive to the actions of real or suspected informers. It is likely that any contact between Jewish communities and Red Army officers or the Soviet security apparatus – perceived by Jews as a source of personal protection<sup>36</sup> –

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<sup>33</sup> M. Korcuć, „Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce...”, pp. 252–253. “The lack of sources does not allow for a precise reconstruction of the causes and specific reasons for the execution of certain death sentences. Certainly, a significant number of them were simply decided on the basis of intelligence gathered by the information networks of individual partisan units, which operated – and this must not be forgotten – in their own territory, among a friendly local population and through a network of caches and intelligence points that had been tried and tested for several years” (*ibid.*, p. 252). See also T. Łabuszewski, “Bandy reakcyjnego podziemia czy zbrojne podziemie niepodległościowe?,” *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u 19–20* (2003), pp. 23–24.

<sup>34</sup> Paweł Śpiewak looks at the problem from a slightly different perspective: “Anti-Semitic propaganda and murders of Jewish survivors, often carried out by partisan units, as it were, condemned Jews to support ‘democratic’ Poland. The other side was a threat: parochial reactionaries from the National Democracy movement. In the vision created by the propaganda of the time, on one side there was the camp of tolerance, democracy, progress, and alliance with the USSR, and on the other, anti-Semites, reactionaries, and defenders of the old order. This language itself dictated to Jews which side they had to be on. They could only find protection among the so-called democrats” (P. Śpiewak, *Żydokomuna*, p. 213).

<sup>35</sup> “[...] a mechanism for redirecting aggression that could not be aimed at actual enemies. Anger, intensified by a sense of powerlessness and unable to find expression in confronting the perpetrators of Poland’s and the Poles’ enslavement, was turned against a substitute enemy – Jews, who were perfectly suited to this role. They were weak, defenceless, and simultaneously associated with the forces that were the true source of frustration but too dangerous to confront directly” (K. Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, komunizm*, p. 133).

<sup>36</sup> See R. Wnuk, *Lubelski Okręg AK, DSZ i WiN 1944–1947*, Warsaw, 2000, p. 202; J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, pp. 163–164.

was often interpreted by underground intelligence services as overt collaboration with hostile foreign forces. Such assessments fostered a pervasive fear of denunciation and led to accusations of complicity in acts of terrorism against members of the anti-communist underground. These accusations could, in turn, result in elimination operations and fatalities. The absence of effective counterintelligence reconnaissance (including personnel capable of conducting it) may have led to supposed threats against the group's security being addressed not through the identification of individuals cooperating with the Security Department or the NKVD, but through killings carried out solely based on the prevailing stereotype of Jewish communists. Individuals with no connection to the intelligence network of the repressive forces may have been killed as a result.<sup>37</sup>

### The Unit of Second Lieutenant Apolinary Kubicki "Grom"

In 1945, a post-Home Army underground unit operated in the southern part of Pińczów County under the command of Second Lieutenant Apolinary Kubicki "Grom." The group emerged in response to repressive actions carried out by the Security Department (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, UB) and the Citizens' Militia (*Milicja Obywatelska*, MO) against Home Army soldiers who were being exposed. In an effort to survive the ensuing period of terror, many began to go into hiding – among them Second Lieutenant "Grom," who had been in concealment since January 1945, following his desertion from the "people's" Polish Army. The unit included Home Army soldiers from posts in Działoszyce and Skalbierz, as well as from nearby villages. In addition to several expropriation operations in Kazimierza Wielka and Raławice, it is also credited with carrying out "terrorist and robbery attacks on PUBP functionaries and MO stations in the counties of Jędrzejów and Miechów."<sup>38</sup> Members of the unit took part in a collection of money to "buy out two Home Army officers" (Franciszek Makuch "Zawierucha" and Bronisław Ściupido

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<sup>37</sup> R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Podziemie antykomunistyczne wobec Żydów po 1945 roku," pp. 251–253.

<sup>38</sup> AIPN Ki, 022/72, Characteristics no. 106 (ed. Z. Cieszkowski), Kielce, 1976, pp. 1–5. The deputy to Second Lieutenant "Grom" was Władysław Konieczny "Czyż." In September 1945, 26 individuals came forward, although "the group was reportedly composed of 41 members." The aforementioned "terrorist and robbery attacks" are poorly documented.

“Kukułka” [Cuckoo]),<sup>39</sup> who were associated with the unit of “Grom” and belonged to the local structure of the Military Security Organisation (*Wojskowa Organizacja Bezpieczeństwa*).<sup>40</sup> It can be assumed that Second Lieutenant Kubicki’s unit was associated with this organisation (it is difficult to determine for how long).<sup>41</sup>

The Military Security Organisation was a post-Home Army underground organisation. A district was organised in Pińczów County, to be led by Captain Jan Maniak “Mor” (during the German occupation, head of the Information and Propaganda Office in the Pińczów Home Army District), and his deputies were Captain Kazimierz Przybyśławski “Młot” (Hammer), and Franciszek Makuch “Zawierucha” (Storm). The district consisted of four outposts. The aim of the organisation was, as it was written in one of the “characteristics,”<sup>42</sup> “to fight the Polish Workers’ Party, boycott the orders of the people’s government, distribute hostile leaflets and eliminate employees of the Public Security apparatus and the Citizens’ Militia.” The organisation was to have armed groups at its disposal that could carry out elimination operations and “terrorist and robbery attacks on UB and MO officers, [...] on cooperatives and state institutions.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “I sent the money collected, a total of 9,000 zlotys, to ‘Młot’ by courier [...]. ‘Młot’ was supposed to give this money to the wife of one of the detainees. [...] The money was collected from acquaintances in the Działoszyce area. This was in early September 1945” (AIPN Ki, 41/58, Files from the case of Henryk Sokołowski heard before the Voivodship Regional Court in Kielce, Minutes of the interrogation of Henryk Sokołowski, Kielce, [January] 1946, p. 12). During the German occupation, Kazimierz Przybyśławski “Młot” (Hammer), was the head of sabotage for the Pińczów district of the Home Army. See B. Nieczuja-Ostrowski, *Rzeczpospolita Partyzancka*, pp. 21, 82, 115, 149.

<sup>40</sup> AIPN Ki, 022/106, Characteristics no. 154 (ed. Z. Cieszkowski), Kielce, 1976, p. 7. Lieutenant Franciszek Makuch “Zawierucha” was reportedly the deputy commander of the Pińczów district within the Military Security Organisation.

<sup>41</sup> AIPN Ki, 022/72, Characteristics no. 106 (ed. Z. Cieszkowski), Kielce, 1976, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> “Characteristics” are internal departmental studies devoted to groups, armed units and underground organisations of various origins, written on the basis of operative, investigative, court and so-called object files by selected functionaries of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They are not free of factual errors and “ideological” overinterpretation and vary in terms of reliability/credibility and research usefulness.

<sup>43</sup> AIPN Ki, 022/106, Characteristics no. 154 (ed. Z. Cieszkowski), Kielce, 1976, pp. 3–6. The organisation was believed to have maintained nine weapons caches. See AIPN Ki, 30/621, Files from the investigative case-file initiated against Jan Maniak and others, Minutes of the interrogation of Jan Maniak, Cracow, 12 January 1950, pp. 32–37. “In September 1945, [...] Kazimierz Przybyśławski gave the order to shoot the head of the PUBP in Bochnia, Second Lieutenant Stefan Jarzyna. This order was conveyed in writing to members of the WOB organisation, Stanisław Pałka ‘Lipa II’ (Lime II), who in turn delivered it also to WOB member Bolesław Niewiara ‘Kruk’ (Raven)” (AIPN Ki, 30/467, Files from the investigative case-file initiated against Jan Maniak and others, Decision to discontinue criminal proceedings, Kielce,

It seems that Second Lieutenant “Grom” – thanks to a local network of informants<sup>44</sup> – had a well-organised intelligence service at his disposal. Among those cooperating with him were several militiamen from the MO station in Działoszyce. The partisans tried to combat common banditry, which was very burdensome for the population. One of the militiamen cooperating with the unit was Witold Ciapciak, who at the time also served as a functionary of the County Public Security Department (*Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, PUBP) in Pińczów and worked as a municipal clerk in Działoszyce.<sup>45</sup> It later emerged that he had been “introduced” into the “Grom” unit “as a functionary of the Security Department in Pińczów,” and in September 1945, he “passed on information which subsequently formed the basis for [his] liquidation.”<sup>46</sup> It remains difficult to determine what game this UB functionary was playing – whether he was genuinely cooperating with the underground for a time, or had assumed “the role of a double agent” from the outset.<sup>47</sup>

The analysed files show that Second Lieutenant “Grom” maintained contacts with Colonel Bolesław Nieczuja-Ostrowski and Captain Kazimierz Przybyśławski, who, in the first half of 1945, were involved in creating new underground structures in the territory of the former Miechów Inspectorate of the Home Army. It is also very likely that he maintained contact with the commanders of the post-Home Army unit operating mainly in Jędrzejów County – Corporal Jan Stempkowski “Michał,” and Corporal Zbigniew Stawowczyk “Nurt.”<sup>48</sup>

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12 June 1951, p. 107). Second Lieutenant Jarzyna was killed on 10 September 1945 in Koszyce (Kazimierza Wielka County). See M. Korkuć, „Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce...”, p. 396.

<sup>44</sup> Bolesław Nieczuja-Ostrowski described the well-organised intelligence structures of the Home Army operating in Działoszyce and Kazimierza Wielka during the German occupation. Among those cooperating with the intelligence service was the so-called Blue Police. See B. Nieczuja-Ostrowski, *Rzeczpospolita Partyzancka*, p. 149.

<sup>45</sup> AIPN Ki, 025/517, Files from the operative case-file initiated against Apolinary Kubicki, Minutes of the interrogation of Apolinary Kubicki, Pińczów, 29 January 1946, p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> AIPN Ki, 103/1027, Personal files of the Security Service (*Służba Bezpieczeństwa*, SB) functionary, Witold Ciapciak, Official memo relating to the former PUBP Pińczów functionary, Witold Ciapciak, Kielce, 7 June 1975, p. 26. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 19, 22 and 23.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter from Witold Świerczyński to the Citizens’ Militia Voivodeship Headquarters in Kielce, Cracow, 6 February 1978, p. 27.

<sup>48</sup> AIPN Ki, 025/517, Minutes of the interrogation of Apolinary Kubicki, Kielce, 30 January 1946, p. 32; AIPN Ki, 41/58, Files from the case of Henryk Sokołowski heard before the Voivodeship Regional Court in Kielce, Minutes of the interrogation of Henryk Sokołowski, Kielce, 30 January 1946, p. 7v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Henryk Sokołowski, Kielce, 4 February 1946, pp. 8–9v.

In the first half of 1945, armed actions in Pińczów County were carried out by partisan units (or groups formed from them) of various origins, which came from other areas. The “Michał”-“Nurt” and “Huragan” groups (named after the pseudonyms of their commanders – Corporal Jan Stempkowski, Corporal Zbigniew Stawowczyk and Captain Jan Kurgan) arrived from Jędrzejów County. The “Michał” group was formed in early spring 1945 on the initiative of a local Home Army commander (Stempkowski was the commander of the sabotage section in the Home Army’s Wodzisław Sub-area). In March 1945, “Michał” and several other partisans carried out their first high-profile operation, which was the release of several people from the police station in Miechów, and by June, he had carried out several more self-defence and retaliatory operations (mainly in the Jędrzejów county and in some municipalities of the Pińczów and Miechów counties). Five Red Army soldiers (NKVD?) and several UB and MO functionaries were killed. In mid-May, the unit had over thirty members, mostly Home Army soldiers (including escapees from the disrupted prison in Miechów, among them two soldiers from the 27th Volhynian Division of the Home Army), three deserters and six members of the National Armed Forces. “Michał”’s deputy was Corporal Zbigniew Stawowczyk “Nurt,” commander of one of the three teams in the unit. On 3 June 1945, two combined groups – led by “Michał”-“Nurt” (commanded in this case by “Nurt”) and Stanisław Chmielewski “Buk,” from the National Armed Forces – conducted an unsuccessful attack on the prison in Pińczów.<sup>49</sup>

From the end of April 1945, Captain Jan Kurgan “Huragan” (Hurricane) operated in the Jędrzejów county, serving in the Home Army during the German occupation and later becoming the county commander of the Citizens’ Militia in Jędrzejów. He deserted, taking with him about thirty functionaries from the town itself (from the county and town headquarters) and from some MO stations located throughout the county. Four militiamen from the station in Nawarzyce, which was disarmed on 29 April, joined the “Huragan” group.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> AIPN Ki, 013/647, vol. 1, Files from the investigation into Jan Stempkowski’s membership of an illegal Home Army organisation, Minutes of the interrogation of Jan Stempkowski, Kielce, 28 February 1950, p. 201; AIPN Ki, 022/34, Characteristics no. 54 (ed. J. Rogala), Kielce, 1983, pp. 2, 4–5, 9–10; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie*, pp. 90–91.

<sup>50</sup> AIPN Ki, 022/193, Characteristics no. 275 (ed. J. Rogala), n.d., pp. 2, 4; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie*, p. 91.

In May 1945, specially formed partisan patrols from the “Michał”-“Nurt” and “Huragan” groups conducted several operations in the Pińczów County,<sup>51</sup> but the “forest fighters” from the first group were more active. They conducted operations aimed at identifying local collaborators of the security apparatus. Two UB functionaries captured in the village of Brzeście were interrogated to find out “who among the inhabitants of the local villages was providing information to the Security Department.”<sup>52</sup> Similar operations aimed at identifying collaborators of the Security Department were conducted by the “Michał”-“Nurt” group in the municipality of Nawarzyce, located in Jędrzejów County, among other places. As one account notes: “[...] in the first days of May 1945 [...] in the village of Konary, Nawarzyce Municipality [...] we went to see a Security Department functionary [...], who served as the municipal clerk in the municipality of Nawarzyce [...] ‘Michał’ offered him cooperation, to which he agreed, but he was soon arrested by the Security Department from Jędrzejów.”<sup>53</sup>

When analysing materials related to the activities of both partisan groups, one gets the impression that the Nawarzyce Municipality served as a base for planning and organising various activities targeted at communist centres of power.<sup>54</sup>

The harsh postwar realities compelled many individuals to seek a resolution to a situation on the brink of armed conflict. By mid-1945, local agreements had been reached, prompting some partisan groups to come forward. These disclosures offered a glimmer of hope to those trapped in a complex and often dramatic

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<sup>51</sup> AIPN Ki, 022/193, Characteristics no. 275 (ed. J. Rogala), n.d., pp. 2, 4, 6–7.

<sup>52</sup> AIPN Ki, 013/647, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Jan Stempkowski, Kielce, 7 June 1949, pp. 105–106. One Security Department functionary was released and another one was killed.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Zbigniew Stawowczyk, Kielce, 4 January 1950, p. 189.

<sup>54</sup> AIPN Ki, 015/2, vol. 7, Dokumenty ujawnieniowe/Security files relating to disclosures of Home Army soldiers, members of the Armed Forces Delegation for Poland (*Delegatura Sił Zbrojnych na Kraj*, DSZ), Conspiratorial Polish Army (*Konspiracyjne Wojsko Polskie*, KWP), “Nie” Organisation (short for *Niepodległość*, meaning “Independence”), National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*, NSZ), National Military Union (*Narodowe Zjednoczenie Wojskowe*, NZW), Home Army Resistance Movement (*Ruch Oporu Armii Krajowej*, ROAK), Freedom and Independence Association (*Wolność i Niezawisłość*, WiN) and other organisations, deserters from the Citizens’ Militia, Security Department, Internal Security Corps (*Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*, KBW), Internal Military Battalion (*Wojskowy Batalion Wewnętrzny*, WBW) and the Polish Army, Letter from the head of the PUBP in Jędrzejów to the head of the WUBP in Kielce, Jędrzejów, 29 June 1945, p. 14; *ibid.*, Report from the head of the PUBP in Jędrzejów to the head of the WUBP in Kielce, [Jędrzejów], [end of June 1945], p. 18; AIPN Ki, 022/34, Characteristics no. 54 (ed. J. Rogala), Kielce, 1983, pp. 9–10; AIPN Ki, 022/193, Characteristics no. 275 (ed. J. Rogala), n.d., pp. 2, 7.

predicament. However, they also fractured the unified front of resistance against the communist authorities, sped up proceedings against underground structures formed during the German occupation, and complicated efforts by emerging anti-communist organisations to reestablish clandestine activity. The authorities pursued a double-track policy: on the one hand, they officially and publicly called for people to “come out of the woods,” while on the other hand, through official channels, they pointed out that such moves “must not weaken the fight against reactionary bandits, must not hamper military operations against bandits, must not take the form of negotiations between equals, and must not in any way compromise the fundamental principle of the surrender of weapons by reactionary gangs.”<sup>55</sup>

In June and July 1945, the “Michał”-“Nurt” unit (then commanded by Zbigniew Stawowczyk) and the unit of Captain Jan Kurgan “Huragan” ended their armed activity in the Jędrzejów County. On 24 September 1945, members of Second Lieutenant Apolinary Kubicki “Grom” unit surrendered their weapons at the MO station in Sancygniów and officially left the underground. All those who came forward received “special certificates.” Despite the directive from the “communist headquarters” to “not weaken the fight against reactionary bandits,” this policy led to the killing of several partisans who had revealed themselves to the authorities by Security Department functionaries in October 1945, specifically in the case of the “Grom” unit. Kubicki testified: “[...] immediately after we revealed ourselves to the Liquidation Commission in Kielce, nine of us were arrested. Two of us – Józef Kula ‘Felek’ and Franciszek Konieczny ‘Jastrząb’<sup>56</sup> – were murdered, and three others were drowned in the river by the Security from Słaboszów and Miechów, in collaboration with the Citizens’ Militia (MO).”<sup>57</sup>

The killings of Kula and Konieczny, along with the discovery of additional victims – men who had been “shot and then drowned in Nidzica” – sparked

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<sup>55</sup> Letter from the Central Political Commission for Combating Banditry to voivodeship commissions for combating banditry, dated 18 June 1945, quoted after R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie*, p. 115.

<sup>56</sup> AIPN Ki, 022/72, Characteristics no. 106 (ed. Z. Cieszkowski), Kielce, 1976, pp. 27, 34.

<sup>57</sup> AIPN Ki, 025/517, Minutes of the interrogation of Apolinary Kubicki, Kielce, 30 January 1946, p. 34. See also AIPN Kr, 019/1, vol. 2, Five-day operational report from the 5th Department for Combating Banditry and Diversion of the PUBP in Miechów, submitted to the head of the WUBP in Cracow, covering the period 16–21 October 1945, Miechów, 21 October 1945, p. 104; A. Sznajderski, *Partyzancka odyseja*, Tuchów, 2004, pp. 303–305.

outrage among the residents of Pińczów and Miechów counties. “Large groups of rural inhabitants” attended the funeral ceremonies, “voicing their discontent over the brutal treatment of individuals who had openly declared their willingness to cooperate in good faith.”<sup>58</sup> Stefan Sito, organisational inspector of the Peasants’ Self-Help Union (*Związek Samopomocy Chłopskiej*), interrogated after returning from the Pińczów county at the Voivodeship Office in Kielce, testified:

As a result of my agreement, between 22 and 25 September of this year, 25 members of the Home Army came forward and surrendered their automatic and hand weapons at the MO station in Sancygniów. In connection with the above, I gave the leader of the revealed Home Army group, Józef Kula, a job as manager of the Peasants’ Self-Help Union’s mill in Szczotkowice, and I promised his deputy, Franciszek Konieczny, a suitable job. On 18–19 October this year, a unit from the Security Department in Miechów arrived at the site and arrested Kula and Konieczny, taking them away with them. The next day, both were found mutilated and dead in the village of Kalina in Miechów County. Furthermore, between 26 and 28 October this year, two bodies of men who had been shot and then drowned were found in the Nidzica River in Szczotkowice. Three weeks earlier, they had been arrested and taken away by the same unit from the Security Department in Miechów. [...] From the very manner in which the above-mentioned persons were killed (mutilated), and in particular from the fact that their bodies were left in open, visible places, it can be assumed that in this case we are most likely dealing with a deliberate act of sabotage, calculated to provoke discontent against the current government. I would like to emphasise that the mood of discontent is growing stronger every day and there are increasingly widespread calls for the appropriate state authorities to investigate these matters and bring those guilty of these heinous murders to justice.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach (State Archives in Kielce, hereinafter AP Ki), Voivodeship Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party (hereinafter KW PPR), 399, Minutes of the interrogation of Stefan Sito, [Kielce], 29 October 1945, p. 117. The document refers to two men found in the river.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

Further details, including information about the perpetrators, are included in the report of the Citizens' Militia County Headquarters for the Pińczów Starost:

I report that on the night of 16 to 17 [October] 1945, functionaries from the PUBP from Miechów, i.e. Śladkowski Witold, Chmielewski Stanisław, Wołoszyn Stanisław, and functionaries from the MO station in Słaboszów – Choryn Stanisław and Grycakowski Waclaw from Miechów carried out [an attack] on Stefan Ciupak and Zbigniew Zieliński, residents of the village of Jerzykowice,<sup>60</sup> Sancygniów Mun[icipality] [...]. While in Działoszyce, I, as the head of the investigation department and county commander of the MO in Pińczów, proceeded to the scene of the incident. Upon questioning local individuals, they confirmed having recognised the aforementioned persons. We then followed the trail and carried out search operations. Weapons were found in the home of Stanisław Wołoszyn, namely a Soviet PPD, 1 PPSH-41 and 1 PPS, and 1 Soviet carbine. During a search of Witold Śladkowski's home, weapons were found, namely a Czech machine gun and a Soviet bolt-action rifle. They themselves were not at home. During a conversation with the militiamen from [the station of] Słaboszów, who were suspected of the robbery, they confessed to the crime. When asked what they had in mind, they said that they were after Franciszek Konieczny [...]. Not wanting to get involved in their affairs, as it was a different voivodeship, we took the weapons to Działoszyce and went with the commander to the area to carry out an inspection. The inspection lasted from 16 to 25 October 1945. While in Kazimierza Wielka, a report came in that these functionaries of the Miechów PUBP in the area of the Pińczów Co[unty] had arrested seven people, two of whom were found murdered the next day, namely Józef Kula, res[iding] in the village of Sancygniów, Sancygniów Mun[icipality], and Franciszek Konieczny, residing in Chmielów, Sancygniów Mun[icipality], Pińczów Co[unty]. They were members who had surrendered their weapons

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<sup>60</sup> The name stated in the document is incorrect – it should read Iżykowice. During an assault on Zbigniew Zieliński, functionaries from the PUBP in Miechów and the MO station in Słaboszów (“a force of 12 men”) “beat two people and vandalised the entire flat” (AP Ki, KW PPR, 36, Daily report from the Citizens' Militia Voivodeship Headquarters in Kielce, covering the period from 31 October to 1 November 1945, Kielce, 3 November 1945, p. 54).

from the Home Army group led by Lieutenant “Grom.” Then, on 27 October 1945, two people were found murdered in the vicinity of Szczotkowice, Sancygniów Mun[icipality], by the Działoszyce [MO] Station. These people were identified as coming from the village of Niszkowa, Słaboszów Mun[icipality], Miechów Co[unty]. It follows that the perpetrators were the above-mentioned individuals. I request your intervention in this matter.<sup>61</sup>

Following the receipt of a report from the MO County Headquarters, Franciszek Sapięcha, Starost of Pińczów, appealed to the Kielce Voivode to take action on the matter. In his correspondence, citing the document provided by the MO County Headquarters, he stated that “the murder was an act of personal revenge” and noted that the Security Department functionaries Witold Śładkowski and Stanisław Wołoszyn “had been listed in criminal records prior to the war.”<sup>62</sup>

### The Killing of Jews in Działoszyce on the Night of 16–17 June 1945

In 1945, Działoszyce had the largest Jewish population in Pińczów County. According to research by Dariusz Libionka, 161 individuals of Jewish origin remained in the town after the war. They survived the occupation in hiding or returned from German concentration camps and sought to rebuild their lives in the new post-war reality.<sup>63</sup> Postwar political tensions and a pervasive sense of threat demanded heightened attention to both livelihood and personal safety. Daily life revolved

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<sup>61</sup> AP Ki, Voivodeship Office in Kielce II, 1283, Report of the Citizens’ Militia County Headquarters for the Starosty in Pińczów, Pińczów, 29 October 1945, p. 109.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter from the County Starost in Pińczów to the Kielce Voivode, Pińczów, 4 November 1945, p. 109. Investigations were conducted in 1957, 1958 and 1991–1993 into the crimes committed by the Security Department functionaries in October 1945, but they did not yield any significant results. See *Archiwum Prokuratury Wojewódzkiej w Kielcach* (Archives of the Voivodeship Prosecutor’s Office in Kielce), V Investigative Department, I Dz. 21/93, Main files relating to the murder of the former Home Army soldiers, Franciszek Konieczny and Józef Kula, vols. 1–2.

<sup>63</sup> 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. In his article, the author refers to two letters from Jewish survivors, currently held in the collection of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw – “the first letter lists 35 names, while the second includes 132.” He also uncovered “a list detailing the methods of survival” employed during the German occupation in Działoszyce. “Six out of thirty people reported that they survived in the forest, and two in the partisan movement (specifically in the People’s Guard)” (*ibid.*, p. 201).

around searching for missing relatives, efforts to recover one's health and attempts to reclaim lost property. On the night of 16–17 June 1945, an underground unit conducted an armed operation in the town, targeting Jewish residents. The incident profoundly affected the future of the local community.

Dariusz Libionka described the attack on Jews in Działoszyce as one among many acts of murder and robbery targeting the Jewish population in the Kielce Voivodeship in 1945. The primary target of the assault was Abraham Langer's apartment, where several people were staying:

There were five fatalities. Bencjon Czarnota died at the scene, while Chajm Jurysta died on the way to the hospital. His brother Berek, also a concentration camp survivor, and Eljasz Ostry were taken to the hospital in Miechów. Armed men broke into the building and demanded watches and money. They loaded stolen sewing machines, radios, and other items onto a cart. They lined up the Jews against a wall and opened fire, then threw grenades inside. That same night, the president of the local Jewish Committee, Szmul Piekarcz, was shot dead.<sup>64</sup>

According to this scholar, the attack was carried out by the post-Home Army unit under the command of Second Lieutenant Leon<sup>65</sup> Kubicki "Grom," which "included residents of Nawarzyce, Działoszyce, Opatkowice, Sancygniów and several other localities, and two MO functionaries from Działoszyce, with whom the loot was shared, were collaborators."<sup>66</sup> The above statements are based on the minutes of Henryk Wójcik's interrogation on 19 October 1945, and the significance and research value of this source have been assessed as follows: "The course of events was described by a 'cursed soldier' arrested by the Security Department."<sup>67</sup> Next, the author quoted an excerpt from the analysed minutes:

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202. The author referred to the testimonies of two Jews, which can be found in the *Działoszyce Memorial Book*.

<sup>65</sup> His name was actually Apolinary, but in the Security Department documents he was referred to as "Leon."

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* Dariusz Libionka did not mention the circumstances surrounding the "creation" (perhaps he was unaware of them) of documents (the minutes of the interrogations) by the PUBP functionaries in Miechów in those days. It is worth quoting here an excerpt from Adam Sznajderski's study: "On the night of 18–19 October 1945, a raid was conducted in the town of Działoszyce and the surrounding villages

We made a raid on Działoszyce, during which we murdered four Jews. One Jew was a miller, and I don't know who the others were. After killing the Jews, we stole 16,000 zlotys and three sewing machines from them. The entire group [about 30 people – D.L.] took part in this. The direct perpetrators of the murders of the Jews were four people from Nawarzyce, whose names or pseudonyms I do not know. These four took the money, and we took the sewing machines.<sup>68</sup>

Following the attack, the Jews who remained in Działoszyce – thirty former concentration camp prisoners, according to Abraham Langer – “hurriedly settled their affairs and left.” By February 1946, “not a single Jew” remained in the town.<sup>69</sup> Julian Kwiek, author of the well-known study *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie: Przejawy wrogości wobec Żydów w latach 1944–1947* (We Don't Want Jews Here: Manifestations of Hostility Towards Jews in 1944–1947), who also investigated the events in Działoszyce, offered a slightly different version of what took place:

During the night in Działoszyce, Bencjon Czarnota, Chaim Jurysta, Hersz Jurysta, Eliasz Ostry, and the chairman of the local Jewish committee, Szmul Piekarcz, were killed with hand grenades. According to Jewish testimonies submitted to the Voivodeship Jewish Committee in Kielce, the events unfolded as follows: an unknown unit entered the town during the night, ordered local militiamen to

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of Stępcowice, Lipówka, Opatkowice, Sancygniów and Chmielów. [...] Tadeusz Nawrot's account: “Then they took me, Henryk Wójcik and Antoni Błajszczak from Opatkowice. They drove us to Słaboszów. At around 3 a.m., the station commander came out and told Kula, Wójcik and Franciszek Konieczny from Chmielów near Działoszyce to get on a cart and go to Miechów. These three were escorted by three men [...], as Wójcik (the only one of the three who survived) later told me, about ten kilometres from Słaboszów, in Kalina Mała, the cart suddenly turned right, towards Giebułtów. There, in a ravine, Kula and Konieczny, who had been beaten to death, were thrown off the cart and shot. Wójcik was spared because, as they found, he was somehow related to one of Kula's and Konieczny's killers. They pointed him in the direction of Raclawice so he could escape, but he was so paralysed by what was happening in front of him that he couldn't move. He signed a paper stating that the two had been shot because they had tried to escape. They took him to Miechów and, like me, he was released after six weeks. Wójcik left for the Koszalin region, but because he was a crown witness, they finished him off and he died in unexplained circumstances. I didn't show up in the village for thirty years” (A. Sznajderski, *Partyzancka odyseja*, pp. 363–365).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* Continuing the discussion of the “Grom” unit, the author claimed that the group had been broken up. This is inaccurate, as the unit revealed itself to the authorities in September 1945 – as noted earlier in this text.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

remain at their posts, and began searching flats and houses occupied by Jewish residents. When the Jurysta brothers refused to open their door, a grenade was thrown into their flat, killing four people. In another flat, the chairman of the Jewish committee was killed. The family of the Jewish tailor Icek Cudzinowski and the Sarnów family were severely beaten, and Abraham Langer, Berysz Jurysta, and Elie Ostry were wounded.<sup>70</sup>

The information above suggests that actions against the Jewish population in Działoszyce were more extensive and that the attack had been premeditated. Leaflets bearing the slogan “Poland without Jews” appeared throughout the town, and following the assault, cries of “Long live the Home Army!” and “Down with Jews!” were heard.<sup>71</sup> Kwiek also highlighted inconsistencies in the available documentation concerning the number of fatalities. “The exact number of those murdered remains unclear. A report from the Security Department states that two Jews were killed and several others wounded – some of whom may have later died from their injuries. Other sources suggest that three or even six people were killed.”<sup>72</sup> Yet other data can be found in a study by Alina Cała, who stated that in Działoszyce, “during a night raid (16–17 June 1945), five people were killed and 50 wounded.”<sup>73</sup> A document drawn up at the County Information and Propaganda Department in Pińczów (*Powiatowy Urząd Informacji i Propagandy*) in early July 1945 mentions three fatalities and two people injured.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, p. 348. References to events in Działoszyce can also be found in the following publications: A. Żbikowski, “Morderstwa popełniane na Żydach w pierwszych latach po wojnie,” in *Następstwa zagłady Żydów: Polska 1944–2010*, eds. F. Tych and M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, Lublin, 2011, p. 89; J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, Warsaw, 2018, p. 491; A. Kopciowski, “Przemoc antyżydowska w powojennej Polsce w świetle ksiąg pamięci,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 14 (2018), p. 224.

<sup>71</sup> J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, p. 349. “In Działoszyce, Pińczów Co[unty], Kielce Voi[vodeship]. A gang murdered four Jews and scattered leaflets with the following message: ‘Long live the Polish People’s Party and the Home Army, long live Poland without Jews.’ They issued an ultimatum demanding that all Jewish families leave the town. Reported by telephone from Miechów. Copy to Podworski. 18 June [19]45” (AIPN Kr, 056/3, vol. 1, Transcript of a telephone conversation, [Cracow?], 18 June 1945, p. 270).

<sup>72</sup> J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, p. 349.

<sup>73</sup> A. Cała, *Ochrona bezpieczeństwa fizycznego Żydów w Polsce powojennej. Komisje Specjalne przy Centralnym Komitecie Żydów w Polsce*, Warsaw, 2014, p. 19. The number of Jewish casualties reported seems entirely unlikely.

<sup>74</sup> AP Ki, Voivodeship Information and Propaganda Department, 38, Survey conducted by the County Information and Propaganda Department in Pińczów for a briefing on 6 July 1945, p. 77. This

It is difficult to determine with certainty the cause of death of each individual – whether they were killed by gunfire or by hand grenade explosions. The use of firearms was confirmed by Elias Ostry, who survived the attack with injuries and testified before the Magistrate's Court (*Sąd Grodzki*) in Cracow in March 1948:

In 1945, Bencjan Czarnocha returned from the camp in Częstochowa. I was coming back from the forest at the time, and we moved in together in Działoszyce. On the night of 16 or 17 June 1945, at around 12:30 a.m., bandits attacked our house. Bencjan was shot in the stomach and collapsed. I was also shot, but by morning I was taken away. A doctor arrived and brought me to the hospital. That morning, I touched Bencjan Czarnocha and realised he was still alive. His body remained where it was. I did not attend the funeral.<sup>75</sup>

Julian Kwiek, like Dariusz Libionka, believes that the attack on Jews in Działoszyce was carried out by the “Grom” unit.<sup>76</sup> The authors obtained the data concerning the partisans’ participation in this raid from the minutes of Henryk Wójcik’s interrogation on 19 October 1945. In addition to details about the course of the events in the town – such as the participants in the raid, the victims and the seizure of their property, other actions and plans, and cooperation with militia-men – the following is also noted:

The entire group took part in this attack [...]. The organiser of the murder of Jews<sup>77</sup> was Second Lieutenant Leopold Kubicki. The direct perpetrators

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document, as part of information about attacks on Jews, also states that in Pińczów, “a grenade was thrown into a flat, injuring six people.” According to the known sources, it can be assumed that the following people were killed in Działoszyce in June 1945: Bencjon Czarnota (Czarnocha), Chaim Jurysta, Hersz Jurysta and Szmul Piekarz. The following people were injured: Icek Cudzinowski, Berek Jurysta, Abraham Langer, and Elias Ostry.

<sup>75</sup> AIPN Ki, 59/230, Files concerning the declaration of death of Bencjon Czarnocha, Minutes of the interrogation of Elias Ostry, Cracow, 22 March 1948, p. 13. Jerzy Gapys wrote about Elias Ostry: “After the liquidation of the ghetto in Działoszyce (1942), Elias Ostry survived the war in a barn on the Pierocice estate, which was owned by Gustaw Osuchowski, surrounded by the comprehensive care of the residents of the manor house and the farm” (J. Gapys, *Postawy społeczno-polityczne ziemiaństwa w latach 1939–1945 (na przykładzie dystryktu radomskiego)*, Kielce, 2003, p. 271).

<sup>76</sup> J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, p. 349.

<sup>77</sup> As in the original.

of the murders of Jews were four people from Nawarzyce, whose names and pseudo[nym]s I do not know. The four took the money, and we took the three sewing machines.<sup>78</sup>

It is worth noting the following sentence in the analysed minutes of Henryk Wójcik's interrogation: "The direct perpetrators of the murders of Jews were four people from Nawarzyce, whose names and pseudo[nym]s I do not know." Considering other information recorded in these minutes, the fact that the above-mentioned persons are unknown, even by their pseudonyms, is puzzling. During the next interrogation, Wójcik was to state that the individuals from Nawarzyce who did not hand in their weapons when the unit was revealed were "known to Kubicki."<sup>79</sup>

The lack of knowledge about the "four people from Nawarzyce," coupled with the fact that their commander, Second Lieutenant "Grom," was familiar with them, may indicate that individuals from another underground unit were directly involved in the murder of Jews in Działoszyce. Could they have belonged to the "Michał"- "Nurt" unit? This hypothesis appears highly plausible if the June 1945 killing in the town is viewed as part of broader underground operations targeting

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<sup>78</sup> AIPN Kr, 07/3006, Material from the files pertaining to the investigation into the membership of the unit commanded by Leon Kubicki "Grom," participation in murders and armed robberies, conducted against Henryk Wójcik, Minutes of the interrogation of Henryk Wójcik, Miechów, 19 October 1945, p. 3; AIPN Kr, 019/1, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of Henryk Wójcik of 19 October 1945, p. 107. Many people arrested during those years, while defending themselves against harsh sentences for political or armed anti-communist activity, confessed to criminal acts during investigations or before military courts. A similar situation may have occurred in the case of Wójcik. "Q. Tell us about your political activity and the activity of the whole gang after you joined in June 1945. A. We did not engage in any political activity. [...] We only engaged in banditry and robbery" (AIPN Kr, 07/3006, Minutes of the interrogation of Henryk Wójcik, Miechów, 19 October 1945, p. 4). This statement does not quite correspond to the other parts of the same interrogation: "according to Second Lieutenant Kubicki's statement, this money [part of the money from one of the robberies - R.Ś.K.] was to be used for the underground press [...] Q. Where were the higher authorities of your gang? A. The higher authorities of our gang were in Cracow. But who they were, I do not know. Jan Nowak was the liaison between us and Cracow, so he may be able to say something about it" (*ibid.*).

<sup>79</sup> AIPN Kr, 07/3006, Minutes of the interrogation of Henryk Wójcik, Miechów, 20 October 1945, p. 19. It is worth noting that two days earlier, Wójcik had mentioned the "four people from Nawarzyce," but did not identify them as the direct perpetrators of the murder of Jews (AIPN Kr, Minutes of the interrogation of Henryk Wójcik, Słaboszów, 18 October 1945, p. 21). It is worth mentioning here that Apolinary Kubicki had family ties with Nawarzyce. See AP Ki, District Court in Kielce, Criminal Division II, 1835, Act of indictment against Zygmunt Majcher and others, Kielce, 29 May 1946, p. 2.

collaborators with the communist authorities or those suspected of such collaboration – though this raises the critical question of justification and the criteria on which such suspicions were based. The leaflets that reportedly circulated at the time would support the interpretation of the events as a repressive operation carried out by the underground.<sup>80</sup>

The events that took place in Działoszyce over the course of several dozen days can also be cited as arguments in favour of the above hypothesis, with the proviso that their perpetrators have not yet been identified. At least two of these events were clearly political. On the night of 30 June–1 July 1945, the local headquarters of the Polish Workers' Party was attacked. Its representative was beaten, the Communist Party's premises were vandalised, and "the [red] banner was torn down and thrown onto the road, as was the [PPR] sign."<sup>81</sup> On 20 July, Adam Adamski, mayor of Działoszyce and a member of the Polish Workers' Party, was severely beaten – reportedly "his eye was knocked out." He was threatened with death if he refused to resign from his position.<sup>82</sup> At the end of July or the beginning of August, another leading PPR activist in the town was also severely beaten and soon died. In view of the above situation, the voivodeship-level leadership of the PPR accused the PUBP in Pińczów of inaction, negligence and "incapacity to perform duties." It demanded that the WUBP in Kielce replace

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<sup>80</sup> Although no original leaflets have been recovered, their content is known from other documents. The issue of cooperation between segments of the Jewish population and the communist authorities – or even the necessity of maintaining various forms of contact with their representatives, given the conditions of living of a community threatened "from many sides" – is a deeply complex one. In his investigation into the murder of Jews near Krościenko in May 1946, Maciej Korcuć examined the broader context of these tragic events. He noted, among other things: "The way in which the Soviet authorities used national minorities in building communist power structures and staffing leadership positions within the party and security apparatus fostered the belief that Jews were carriers of communist ideology and one of the pillars of the communist rule. Information and rumours about Jews holding numerous leadership roles in the state seeped into society. They became topics of discussion and word-of-mouth news, often in the form of gossip. For many, it was simply a part of the reality of the time [...]. In extreme interpretations, every person of Jewish origin was considered a carrier of communist ideology. This was an unfair view, which, on the basis of a kind of collective responsibility, extended to everyone the effects of the actions of communist or "security" activists, who constituted only a part of the Jewish community. It is difficult not to notice that this view also unjustly affected those Jews who had nothing to do with the construction of the new system of enslavement" (M. Korcuć, "Zbrodnia pod Krościenkiem 2/3 maja 1946 roku," *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 42 [2015], p. 116).

<sup>81</sup> AP Ki, KW PPR, 36, Report on accidents in the Pińczów County, prepared by the PPR county headquarters in Pińczów, Pińczów, [July 1945], p. 64.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

“the staff of the Public Security Department in Pińczów, as the work of the PPR depends on it.”<sup>83</sup>

It is puzzling that the “characteristics” of Second Lieutenant Apolinary Kubicki, pseudonym “Grom,” make no mention of the operation in Działoszyce and the murder of Jews. Could it be that the author had doubts, or perhaps considered the collected material too weak and unreliable, and felt that the case required more thorough documentation?<sup>84</sup> The same issue applies to the operative case file conducted against Second Lieutenant “Grom.”<sup>85</sup>

## Conclusion

At this stage of research, no documents have been uncovered that would enable a definitive answer to the key question: was the murder of Jews in Działoszyce in June 1945 an extermination operation carried out by an underground hit squad – possibly the “Michał” - “Nurt” unit, assisted by the group led by Second Lieutenant “Grom”<sup>86</sup> – in response to a perceived threat (perhaps mistakenly identified, leading to the killing of innocent people)? Or was it an arbitrary act by an underground unit driven by anti-Semitic motives, shaped by the “Jewish communist” narrative, intended to intimidate potential collaborators with the communist authorities? Accepting the second interpretation of events would be a serious burden and a stain

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<sup>83</sup> AP Ki, KW PPR, 36, Letter from the Department of Control, Voivodeship Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party in Kielce to the WUBP in Kielce, Kielce, 7 August 1945, p. 186. In December 1945, activists of the Polish Workers’ Party (PPR) from Pińczów made serious allegations against Marian Borycki, who “in February and March 1945 worked as deputy head of the Public Security Department (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, UBP) in Pińczów.” The allegations concerned, among other things, the release of several people from prison in exchange for bribes (the letter listed the names of specific individuals and the sums of money). See AP Ki, KW PPR, 29, Minutes, Pińczów, 31 December 1945, p. 211. This is yet another case that undermines the credibility of the documentation produced by the PUBP functionaries in Pińczów in the first months of 1945.

<sup>84</sup> AIPN Ki, 022/72, Characteristics no. 106 (ed. Z. Cieszkowski), Kielce 1976.

<sup>85</sup> AIPN Ki, 025/517, Files from the operative case-file (SOR) relating to Apolinary Kubicki. The details of two other incidents involving attacks on individuals of Jewish origin in Działoszyce and its vicinity could not be established. These include the beating of three Jews at the local police station and the killing of two Jews “who were travelling by train from Działoszyce to Słaboszów.” See D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 196–197; J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, pp. 295, 368; AIPN Kr, 019/1, vol. 2, Operative report from the Anti-Banditry Section covering a five-day period, 24–29 July 1945, Miechów, 28 July 1945, p. 42; AIPN Kr, 07/3006, Minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Konieczny, Słaboszów, 18 October 1945, p. 15.

<sup>86</sup> It is about seizing control of Działoszyce and gathering intelligence on the situation beforehand.

on the activity of Second Lieutenant “Grom” and his partisans.<sup>87</sup> In my opinion, the first version is the most likely, which is also supported by the historical context and the sequence of events that took place in 1945 in Działoszyce and the surrounding area. I consider the version involving a robbery during which Jews who resisted were shot to be the least credible.

The minutes of Henryk Wójcik’s interrogation on 19 October 1945 – considered by some researchers a key source for evaluating Second Lieutenant Kubicki’s unit – were recorded under exceptional circumstances: shortly after the brutal murder of two of Wójcik’s comrades, carried out in his presence. It is worth noting that, at the time, interrogation conditions did not meet standards that would today be considered necessary to ensure the reliability and credibility of testimony.<sup>88</sup> Testimony given under duress, under the threat of death,<sup>89</sup> would normally be rejected in criminal proceedings, especially when one considers the rules for producing this type of documentation. The absence of corroborating documents – such as statements before the military prosecutor or court hearings<sup>90</sup> – precluded a comparative analysis.

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<sup>87</sup> See M. Korcuć, “Zbrodnia pod Krościenkiem,” pp. 116–121. Cf. A. Żbikowski, “Morderstwa popełniane na Żydach”; J. Tokarska-Bakir, “Następstwa Holokaustu w relacjach żydowskich i w pamięci polskiej prowincji w świetle badań etnograficznych,” in *Następstwa zagłady Żydów*, pp. 794–795. When analysing post-war events, it is also necessary to take into account the history of Polish-Jewish relations during the German occupation. See *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec Żydów 1942–1945*, eds. B. Engelking and J. Grabowski, Warsaw, 2011, pp. 87–88, 128, 169, 343–345, 368–369, 372–374, 385–388, 394–396, 399–400, 431–432, 434–435, 438–441.

<sup>88</sup> See The Code of Criminal Procedure: “Article 171. § 1. The examined person shall be granted the opportunity to express himself freely within the framework designated by the purpose of the action in question, and only afterward may he be examined in order to complete, elucidate, or verify the statement presented. [...] § 4. Questions suggesting an answer to the examined person shall not be allowed. [...] § 5. It shall be inadmissible: (1) to influence the statement of the examined person through coercion or unlawful threat, (2) to apply hypnosis or chemical or technical means affecting the psychological processes of the examined person or aimed at influencing unconscious reactions of his organism in connection with the examination. [...] § 7. Explanations of the accused, testimony or statements given or made under conditions precluding the possibility of free expressions, or obtained against the prohibitions specified in § 5, cannot constitute proof” (*Kodeks karny. Kodeks postępowania karnego. Kodeks karny wykonawczy. 15 innych aktów prawnych. Stan prawny: 2024 r.*, Warsaw, 2024).

<sup>89</sup> This issue has already been raised by many researchers. See i.a. T. Domański, “Z historii oddziału „Wybranieckich”, czyli o wiarygodności materiałów śledczych i operacyjnych UB,” part 1, *Arcana* 106–107 (2012), and part 2, *Arcana* 109 (2013); R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, “Protokół przesłuchania jako źródło historyczne,” in *Wokół teczek bezpieki: Zagadnienia metodologiczno-źródłoznawcze*, ed. F. Musiał, Cracow, 2006.

<sup>90</sup> The defendants repeatedly presented conflicting versions of events or recanted statements previously made to investigators from the Security Department.

Finally, it is worth noting that the materials left behind by the security apparatus reflect not only isolated documents of questionable reliability,<sup>91</sup> but also a broader pattern of inadequate documentation concerning numerous criminal cases – including the incomplete recording of anti-Semitic offences.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> What and how it would be recorded (e.g. in the minutes of the interrogations) was decided by the UB investigators (the interrogator and the recorder), not the person being interrogated. For information on the falsification (or misinterpretation) of documentation concerning the activity of the Home Army in the southern part of the Kielce Voivodeship by the UB functionaries (including the PUBP in Pińczów), see, among others, C. Brożek, “Klemens Cabaj,” in *Konspiracja i opór społeczny w Polsce*, vol. 4, eds. M. Białek and K. Krajewski, Cracow–Warsaw–Wrocław, 2010, p. 61; “Sprawa procesu pokazowego 106. DP AK,” p. 195; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, “Działalność prowokacyjna urzędów bezpieczeństwa publicznego w województwie kieleckim i ich manipulacje przebiegiem i wynikami śledztw w świetle materiałów Wojskowego Sądu Rejonowego w Kielcach,” in „Zwyczajny resort”: *Studia o aparacie bezpieczeństwa 1944–1956*, eds. K. Krajewski and T. Łabuszewski, Warsaw, 2005, pp. 475–476; R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, “Podziemie antykomunistyczne wobec Żydów po 1945 roku,” p. 259. See also AIPN Ki, 013/223, Investigative files concerning Henryk Bączek, pp. 46–47; AIPN Ki, 013/1465, Investigative files concerning Stanisław Pietrzyk, pp. 91–92, 111; AIPN Ki, 022/69, vol. 1, Characteristics no. 102 (ed. Z. Cieszkowski), Kielce, 1982, pp. 3, 10, 13.

<sup>92</sup> At this stage of research, archival inquiries have not yielded any statements from victims of the attack or eyewitnesses that were recorded contemporaneously as part of the investigation. This significantly limits the ability to reconstruct the actual course of events. For further discussion of the challenges involved in identifying the (undisputed?) perpetrators of certain crimes against Jews during the German occupation, see J. Tokarska-Bakir, “Sprawiedliwi z Giebułtowa. NSZ w walce z Żydami,” in J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Bracia miesiące: Studia z antropologii historycznej Polski 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 2021, pp. 211–248. In her summary, the author observed that a striking feature of the communist justice system was that none of the individuals tried for the murder in Giebułtów were ultimately punished. She attributed this outcome to three key factors: the conciliatory stance of the communist authorities, reflected in successive amnesties; the political thaw of 1956, which significantly weakened efforts to prosecute crimes; and, most notably, the network of secret informants maintained by the Ministry of Public Security, which enabled many perpetrators to evade justice (*ibid.*, p. 248).

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