



Polish-Jewish STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

We invite you to explore the sixth volume of *Polish-Jewish Studies*, which builds upon recent scholarship in the field of Polish-Jewish relations. The articles in this volume are arranged into three sections: “Studies,” “Reviews/Polemics,” and “Chronicles.”

The first group of texts, presented in the section “Studies,” addresses Polish-Jewish relations in the interwar period (1918–1939) and in the years 1939–1945. Edyta Majcher-Ociesa opens with a nuanced analysis of a rarely addressed issue in the academic literature: the state of research on Polish-Jewish relations in the interwar period within Polish historiography. Subsequent studies explore the survival strategies of the Jewish population in the General Governorate, focusing on occupied Cracow (Martyna Grądzka-Rejak) and on Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska (Michał Siekierka). Taken together, these works offer a comparative perspective on similar phenomena within the same German-occupied entity, while also underscoring the local specifics of anti-Jewish policies across different regions of the General Governorate.

Other texts in the “Studies” section address the latter topic, focusing on the course, methods, and anatomy of the persecution of Jews in occupied Poland by the German occupation apparatus at the local level. Noteworthy is an article by Grzegorz Berendt, which examines the participation and contribution of police forces in the persecution and extermination of Jews in Tarłów (Radom District of the General Governorate) between 1939 and 1944, including the activities of the so-called Blue Police (*Polnische Polizei*). Berendt also considers the Jewish ghetto police as part of

the police system created by the German occupation authorities. In his view, they were largely obedient executors of orders from the German institutions to which they were subordinate. This assessment is not altered by the eventual extermination of the officers of this formation, carried out on the orders of the occupation authorities in 1942–1944. A similar perception of the historical context is presented in Tomasz Domański's article on German crimes against the Jewish community of Działoszyce, a town in the General Governorate during the war. He highlights the crucial issue of German leadership and responsibility for these crimes, while offering an objective and nuanced account of the attitudes of the *Polnische Polizei* officers engaged by the occupiers in the liquidation of Jews. Wojciech Hanus examines a related field of research, analysing the relatively underexplored issue of the extermination of Jews in the Kreis Rawa Ruska area. His study successfully organises and refines information on the course of the German extermination campaign there, while also offering reflections on the assistance provided to Jews by the non-Jewish population.

The second group of texts includes articles on negative acts committed against the Polish and Jewish populations during World War II and their post-war reckoning. Sebastian Piątkowski described the activity of Alfons Himmel, one of the officers of the military police station in Lipsko, Kreis Starachowice (General Governorate), as reflected in post-war investigative and trial material. Tomasz Gonet dealt with the case of the post-war reckoning of the Gestapo chief in Kołomyja, Peter Leideritz, and his wife Anneliese. Konrad Graczyk, on the other hand, presented the case of Michał Sokołowski, who was responsible for denouncing Jews hiding in Sanok, and of Wiktoria Kopiczak, who was helping them. These studies highlight the crucial role of records of post-war criminal proceedings in reconstructing the reality of the occupation.

The post-war attitude of the pro-independence underground towards the Jewish population is examined in Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki's essay on the murder of Jews in Działoszyce on the night of 16–17 June 1945. The author seeks to clarify the nature of this incident. This section concludes with Roman Gieron's article on the circumstances and rationale behind the Supreme Court's ruling of 18 October 1949, which broadened the interpretation of the term "capture" and influenced trials in the late 1940s and early 1950s concerning various forms of participation in the capture of Jews between 1942 and 1945.

In the “Reviews/Polemics” section, particular attention is given to Damian Sitkiewicz’s insightful review of Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe’s widely discussed German book, *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust. Besatzung, Verwaltung und Kollaboration* (Polish Mayors and the Holocaust: Occupation, Administration, and Collaboration). Equally thorough are the discussions of works addressing crimes committed against Poles from Ciepielów and the surrounding area who aided Jews (Konrad Graczyk, with a gloss by Sebastian Piątkowski); the crimes in Przedbórz at the end of May 1945 (in separate studies by Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Tomasz Toborek); the Warsaw ghetto (Martyna Grądzka-Rejak); labour camps for Jews in the Cracow District of the General Governorate (Alicja Jarkowska); and the rescue of Jews by Catholic clergy in the Archdiocese of Wilno during the German occupation of 1941–1944 (Radosław Wnorowski). The reviewed monographs – authored by Polish, Anglo-Saxon, and German scholars – span a wide range of issues concerning Polish-Jewish relations and various dimensions of Holocaust policy. Their critical analyses enrich the volume’s portrayal of the broad panorama of research problems it seeks to illuminate.

The volume concludes with a report by Wojciech Hanus, which provides a detailed description of the activities of the Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Rzeszów in connection with the 17th anniversary events devoted to the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust in the Podkarpacie Region (20–30 January 2025).

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STUDIES

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POLISH-JEWISH RELATIONS DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD IN POLISH HISTORIOGRAPHY. THE STATE OF RESEARCH

Summary

The article discusses the state of research on Polish-Jewish relations during the interwar period, divided into projects, key publications, and specific issues. Due to the vast number of studies, the focus is only on the most important works and the most popular research topics. Polish-Jewish relations were examined from both micro and macro perspectives. The discussion yielded a number of research findings and proposals, highlighting previously overlooked yet critical areas for further investigation. Particular attention was given to definitional frameworks. The analysis incorporated publications from both the interwar and post-war periods. This work aims to introduce the reader to scholarly literature on Polish-Jewish relations, as presented in both Polish historiography and Jewish historiography authored in Polish, as well as to outline prevailing research trends.

Keywords

Jews • Second Polish Republic • state of research • Polish-Jewish relations

Polish-Jewish relations can be examined on two distinct levels: the macro scale, which considers broad interactions between nations or communities at regional or national levels without delving into specifics; and the micro scale, which focuses on direct, interpersonal contact between individual Poles and Jews within a local, neighbourly context where the two communities intersect. Historian Regina Renz described the macro-scale relations as follows: “Jews and Poles living in the same town constituted two separate communities. [...] This phenomenon is astonishing: such significant closeness and such great psychological alienness.”¹ Soldier and diplomat Wiktor Tomir Drymmer (1896–1975) expressed a similar view:

In Poland, Jews adopted a markedly different tactic than in Germany and Russia. Only a small number assimilated, and some among them faced persecution from within the Jewish community. The broader Jewish population remained separate from Polish society, enclosed by an invisible ghetto wall. Jews were so numerous in Poland that the law of mimicry seemed unnecessary to them. Instead, they formed a nation within the surrounding state, distancing themselves from it almost entirely.²

The same viewpoint emerges across multiple publications.³

It should be borne in mind that in every country, all national or religious minorities constitute separate entities striving to secure their possessions and interests. Janusz Żarnowski stated:

From a social perspective, we are interested in the existence of national or ethnic groups that constitute certain autonomous structures. Some of these communities were predominantly separate societies, with a rich internal structure and co-

¹ R. Renz, *Życie codzienne w miasteczkach województwa kieleckiego 1918–1939*, Kielce, 1994, pp. 87–88.

² W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce. Wspomnienia żołnierza i państwowca z lat 1914–1947*, Międzyzdroje–Cracow–Warsaw, 2014, pp. 195.

³ “These two communities lived side by side for centuries, united by numerous and frequent shared interests, and yet they remained alien to each other. At times, their relationship even turned hostile” (F. Kotula, *Miasteczko na przykładzie Głogowa Małopolskiego i jego sąsiadów. Próba biografii*, Rzeszów, 2014, p. 170). See also A. Hartglas, *Na pograniczu dwóch światów*, ed. J. Żyndul, Warsaw, 1996.

hesion. [...] The social structure of Jews was notably distinct. The majority were petty bourgeois – merchants and artisans – many of whom were impoverished.⁴

The author sees links with the rest of society, but does not mention any details: “None of the national communities were self-sufficient; each was, to a significant degree, connected to others within the global social fabric of interwar Poland.”⁵ The issue of Jewish self-isolation is viewed from a somewhat different angle by Henryk Zamojski, who argued that: “The claims that the Jewish community distanced itself from broader society, resisted assimilation into Polish national life, and preserved its distinct religion, language, and customs should likewise be viewed as surprising.”⁶ As cited by Sławoj Felicjan Składkowski, Yiechel Nahari-Międzyrzecki also offered a commentary on the situation of Jews in Poland in 1937:

As a Jew and a Zionist, familiar with the situation of Jews [...] in almost all European countries and in Palestine, I can objectively state that the situation of Jews in Poland, as in all countries with high birth rates, is conditioned by economic difficulties and high unemployment, which creates fertile ground for anti-Semitic propaganda. I must add here that we Jews constitute about 10 per cent of the population of Poland, which is a higher proportion than in other countries.⁷

Given the vast body of literature on Polish-Jewish relations, this article cites only the most significant works and the most frequently examined research themes. It also identifies underexplored areas that are crucial to a fuller understanding of these relations. The opening section offers preliminary observations on the challenges faced by scholars, while the main body presents the current state of research, organised by key publications and thematic issues. A section on research projects and conferences is also included, and the article concludes with research proposals and conclusions. Publications that appeared both in the interwar period

⁴ J. Żarnowski, “Społeczeństwo,” in *Społeczeństwo polskie w XX wieku*, eds. W. Mędrzecki, S. Rudnicki, and J. Żarnowski, Warsaw, 2003, pp. 28–29.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ H. Zamojski, *Polacy i Żydzi. Dzieje sąsiedztwa – dzieje waśni. Historia stosunków polsko-żydowskich*, Warsaw, 2012.

⁷ S. Składkowski, *Kwiatuszki administracyjne i inne*, London, 1959, p. 277.

and after 1945 were taken into account. This work aims to introduce the reader to the scholarly literature on Polish-Jewish relations, as presented in both Polish historiography and Jewish historiography authored in Polish, and to outline pre-vailing research trends.

Preliminary Remarks: A Handful of Thoughts

The year 1918 is key to understanding Polish-Jewish relations in the interwar period. Three important issues related to Poland's recovery of independence are worth highlighting: the continuing influence of the partitioning powers' policies on Polish-Jewish relations after 1918, Polish-Jewish negotiations (1918–1921), and problems with minorities living in Polish territories during the formation of borders (1918–1921). It may be inferred that Polish-Jewish relations in the 1920s were shaped by prior experiences –specifically, the attitudes and policies of the partitioning powers toward Jews and Poles, as well as the decisions made during World War I.⁸ Further complicating these relations were the enduring differences among the former partitions, which manifested across nearly all facets of daily life. By the 1930s, however, Polish-Jewish relations were being actively shaped by the state, particularly through its nationality policies and Polish-language schooling. The year 1918 ushered in a new chapter in Polish-Jewish relations.⁹ The authors most often state that the majority of the Jewish community supported the creation of the Polish state,¹⁰ but it seems that the situation was more complicated than that. Janusz Pawlak wrote:

Just like the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 18th century, the reconstruction of Poland in 1918 was not as significant an event for most Jews as it was for most Poles. Jews, generally speaking, tried not to

⁸ K. Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*, Lublin, 2005; J. Pająk, "Armia rosyjska wobec galicyjskich Żydów podczas I wojny światowej," *Almanach Historyczny* 23 (2021), pp. 151–175.

⁹ S. Bergmann, "Bund a niepodległość Polski," in *Bund. 100 lat historii 1897–1997*, eds. F. Tych and J. Hensel, Warsaw, 2000; T. Schramm, "Żydzi wobec odradzania się państwowości polskiej," in *Przełomy w historii. XVI Powszechny Zjazd Historyków Polskich: Pamiętnik*, eds. K. Ruchniewicz, J. Tyszkiewicz, and W. Wrzesiński, vol. 2, Toruń, 2000.

¹⁰ H. Zamojski, *Polacy i Żydzi*, p. 79.

take sides because, as history had taught them, this had almost always led to their persecution. [...] Jews were loyal subjects, but they did not identify their interests with the fate of the state.¹¹

Before 1918, the situation in Polish territories in all three partitions seemed stable, and the future alongside Poles after 1918 appeared to Jews as something unknown and not necessarily better.

With the reestablishment of statehood, the Polish population, previously oppressed and discriminated against, emerged as the dominant majority. Relations with minorities had to be redefined in a new geopolitical situation. For this reason, among others, the Polish-Jewish negotiations after 1918 on the shape of mutual relations and the functioning of Jews in the reborn Polish state were an unpleasant experience for the Polish delegation. Even Józef Piłsudski, who cannot be accused of anti-Semitism, was critical of Jews during this period.¹² The behaviour of a part of the Jewish community after 1918 came as a surprise to many Poles. Jewish attitudes toward the newly reestablished state were diverse and marked by ambiguity. Communists and the Bund opposed its creation, as did wealthier entrepreneurs who operated on the Russian, German and Austrian markets. Most German Jews were opposed to the rebirth of the Polish state, and the Jewish community living in the former Austrian partition, which had various ties to the partitioning power, was also sceptical. A significant part of the community adopted a wait-and-see, neutral attitude and was ready to support the winner. A small group played an active role in the process of restoring Poland's presence on the map of Europe.

The negotiations exposed differing perceptions regarding the shape of the reborn Polish state. A significant factor was the pressure – along with the form it took – on the Polish government concerning Jewish national, cultural, and personal autonomy.¹³ The proposals voiced in that regard were not met with openness on the Polish side, so an anti-Polish defamation campaign was launched in the for-

¹¹ J. Pawlak, *Żydzi w dokumentach administracji państwowej w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym (1918–1939)*, Toruń, 2007, pp. 22–23.

¹² W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce*, p. 198.

¹³ J. Żyndul, *Państwo w państwie? Autonomia narodowo-kulturalna w Europie Środkowowschodniej w XX wieku*, Warsaw, 2000.

eign press, mainly in the United States.¹⁴ It was at that time that the image of the anti-Semitic Pole was created. It also turned out that Jews living in Poland were not decision-makers, and some of the talks with the Polish delegation took place in the United States. Roman Dmowski was invited to one of them, and he made no secret of his sceptical views, as this twist of events was perceived by the Polish side as a sign of ill will on the part of the other side.

Jews assessed their situation in the Second Polish Republic subjectively, without taking into account the specific nature of Poland. Feliks Tych stated that when it came to the territories of the “former Russian partition, where the majority of Polish Jews lived, [they] certainly had more rights in the Second Polish Republic than under tsarist rule. However, subjectively, they may have felt differently, as all citizens gained more civil rights.”¹⁵ Poles, rejoicing in their regained independence, began to settle down in their own country. Jews, on the other hand, could feel like second-class citizens: “[...] they were not only proportionally not allowed to participate in government, but also had almost no access to government positions. Jews viewed this as harassment on the part of the Poles, a lack of equal rights and a relative degradation of their position.”¹⁶

The process of shaping the borders of the Second Republic and the attitude of the Jewish community towards various events related to this process were also important in Polish-Jewish relations. The Polish-Bolshevik War and the attitude of Jews towards this key event had a huge impact on later mutual relations.¹⁷ They were accused of insufficient participation in the Polish Army, desertion and favouring the Bolsheviks (the events in Pińsk).¹⁸ Most Jews from Vilna and the surrounding area also supported Lithuanian claims to these territories.¹⁹ Their compatriots from

¹⁴ M. Nitecka, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Częstochowie w latach 1918–1939,” *Almanach Historyczny* 1 (1999), pp. 147, 166.

¹⁵ F. Tych, “Uwagi o stosunkach polsko-żydowskich w XX wieku,” *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 1 (34) (1999), p. 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

¹⁷ G. Berendt, “Obraz ludności żydowskiej we wspomnieniach Polaków – uczestników walk o granice państwowe w latach 1918–1920,” in *Polacy i sąsiedzi – dystanse i przenikanie kultur*, part 1, ed. R. Wapiński, Gdańsk, 2000; Z.M. Musiałik, *Wojna polsko-bolszewicka 1919–1920 a Żydzi*, Częstochowa, 1995; S. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw, 2004, pp. 47–59.

¹⁸ W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce*, pp. 198–200.

¹⁹ J. Wołkonowski, “Skargi mniejszości żydowskiej na arenie międzynarodowej na zachowanie się żołnierzy polskich podczas wyzwolenia Wilna w kwietniu 1919 r.,” *Miscellanea Historico-Iuridica* 5 (2007), pp. 105–120; H. Zamojski, *Polacy i Żydzi*, p. 81.

Lwów (now Lviv) and its environs likewise sided with the Ukrainians.²⁰ Only a few Jews took part in the Silesian Uprisings.²¹

Even today, researchers' attitudes towards 1918 are ambiguous and may raise doubts. In connection with the 100th anniversary of Poland's independence, numerous celebrations were held throughout the country, and many books commemorating this event were published, including a publication released with the misleading title *Polscy Żydzi dla Niepodległej (1918–1939)* (Polish Jews for Independent Poland, 1918–1939).²² Readers hoping to find accounts of positive Jewish contributions to Poland's independence and development may really be disappointed. This book includes descriptions of the pogrom in Kolbuszowa and anti-Jewish incidents in the counties of Strzyżów, Rzeszów, Mielec, and Tarnobrzeg during the spring of 1919. It also revisits the ideological backdrop of the period through yet another examination of Roman Dmowski's views. Nevertheless, the micro-scale research contained in the second part of this work, entitled "Polscy Żydzi w służbie Niepodległej" (Polish Jews in Service to Independent Poland), and Adam Sitarek's article on Polish-Jewish negotiations in 1918–1921 are undoubtedly worthy of attention.

Historians and columnists adopt various strategies to present the multifaceted relations between Poles and Jews. Some, in addition to describing a specific event that influenced mutual relations, discuss the attitudes of both sides towards it.²³ This seems to be a valid approach that highlights potential sources of conflicts and differences in the perception of the same events. Numerous instances illustrate this. In September 1919, a commission led by Senator Henry Morgenthau was formed to investigate violence against Jews in Central and Eastern Europe.²⁴ Its creation was welcomed by Polish Jews, whereas Poles were more reserved in their

²⁰ K. Markowski, *Dwa powstania. Bitwa o Lwów 1918*, Cracow, 2019.

²¹ Parys P., "Informacje o Żydach w aktach powstańczych (komunikat)," in *Żydzi na Górnym Śląsku w XIX i XX wieku*, eds. B. Kalinowska-Wójcik and D. Keller, Rybnik–Katowice, 2014, pp. 171–177. Some of the Jews who fought in the Silesian Uprisings came from the former Russian partition.

²² *Polscy Żydzi dla Niepodległej (1918–1939)*. *Historia, kultura, literatura*, ed. S.J. Żurek, Lublin, 2020.

²³ J. Wołkonowski, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie*, p. 13.

²⁴ P. Różański, *Stany Zjednoczone wobec kwestii żydowskiej w Polsce 1918–1921*, Gdańsk, 2007; K. Rośtański, *Polonji w Ameryce z Żydami sprawa w dobie Odbudowy Państwa Polskiego*, Warsaw, 1925; M. Urynowicz, "Raport Henry'ego Morgenthau. Przemoc antyżydowska podczas wojny z Rosją bolszewicką," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* 10 (2011); H. Zamojski, *Polacy i Żydzi*, p. 81.

assessments. In 1919, in *Gazeta Kielecka*, the author condemned the behaviour of the coalition partners, who treated Jews murdered on Polish soil differently from Poles who died at the hands of the Germans in the territories controlled by the latter, or at the hands of Ukrainians in Eastern Galicia: “But the coalition, which remembers the Jews in Poland and sends us Mr Morgenthau’s commissions²⁵ and which defends the *Hajdamaka* cutthroats, was unable to defend the murdered Polish population in Upper Silesia.”²⁶ Based on the above example and many others,²⁷ one might get the impression that Polish-Jewish relations are two separate histories – Polish and Jewish. We view these relations either through the eyes of Poles or through the eyes of Jews. However, it is the same history, with the same people participating in the same events, and the difference lies in the interpretation. Wiktor Tomir Drymmer presented the following point of view: “In Polish society, and I am talking about the vast majority of Polish society, our long-standing fellow citizens were viewed objectively, with their strengths and weaknesses taken into account. [...] Jews were predominantly characterised by social alienation and a possessive insistence on maintaining exclusive control over their property and material holdings.”²⁸ By contrast, Henryk Zamojski wrote from another perspective: “On the economic front, Jews were accused of allegedly seizing Polish property by force, dominating trade, demoralising peasants by getting them drunk in taverns, deceitfully buying up land and manipulating loans.”²⁹ The author then debunked each of these myths. It is also worth mentioning the historians who, despite the complexity of Polish-Jewish relations, their own views and origins, strove to present the facts objectively and draw conclusions that transcended divisions.

²⁵ P. Różański, *Stany Zjednoczone wobec kwestii żydowskiej*; M. Urynowicz, “Raport Henry’ego Morgenthau.” The commission, chaired by Senator Morgenthau, was established in September 1919.

²⁶ “Tragedia Górnego Śląska,” *Gazeta Kielecka* 189 (1919), p. 1; E. Majcher-Ociesa, “Obraz Górnego Śląska w międzywojennej Gazecie Kieleckiej,” in *Obraz medialny Górnego Śląska w okresie międzywojennym*, eds. D. Keller and K. Węgrzynek, Katowice, 2021, p. 62.

²⁷ A range of publications have explored the events in Lwów during the period of 22–24 November 1918, including: D.K. Markowski, *Dwa powstania*; G. Gauden, *Lwów – kres iluzji. Opowieść o pogromie listopadowym 1918*, Cracow, 2019; Z. Zaporowski, “Uwagi o relacjach polsko-żydowskich w czasie obrony Lwowa w listopadzie 1918 r.,” in *Relacje polsko-żydowskie w XX wieku. Badania, kontrowersje, perspektywy*, eds. T. Domański and E. Majcher-Ociesa, Kielce–Warsaw, 2021.

²⁸ W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce*, p. 198.

²⁹ H. Zamojski, *Polacy i Żydzi*, p. 67.

A key factor in presenting Polish-Jewish relations objectively is the careful definition of underlying terms and concepts.³⁰ When referring to pogroms, anti-Jewish events, riots, incidents, massacres, or pacification, historians must use precise language. Events of a similar nature should be described using consistent terminology, regardless of the identities of victims or perpetrators. Another concern is the disproportionate use of certain expressions, such as “pogrom” and “anti-Semitism.”³¹ In contrast, terms like “anti-Polonism,” “Polonophobia,” “anti-Catholicism,” and “anti-Christianity” are rarely employed, and the term “anti-Polonite” is almost never used – even in cases where it would clearly apply.³²

Basic Literature

Any serious inquiry into Polish-Jewish relations should begin with a set of foundational texts that serve as essential scholarly handbooks. Among these is the two-volume work *Żydzi w Polsce odrodzonej* (Jews in Reborn Poland), edited by Ignacy Schiper, Arie Tartakower, and Aleksander Haffka, with the second volume focusing on the interwar period.³³ Equally important is the thematic collection *Studia żydowskie w Polsce – przeszłość, stan obecny, perspektywy. Studium selektywne* (Jewish Studies in Poland – Past, Present and Future. A Selective Study),³⁴ which surveys the state of research on Polish Jewish history across various academic institutions. Also noteworthy is Jerzy Ogonowski’s monograph *Sytuacja prawna Żydów w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1918–1939. Prawa cywilne i polityczne* (The

³⁰ Concerns regarding the definitional level have been raised several times (for instance, in the review: E. Majcher-Ociesa, “Damian K. Markowski, „Dwa powstania. Bitwa o Lwów 1918”, Kraków 2019, Wydawnictwo Literackie, ss. 476,” *UR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3 (2019), pp. 159–171; and in the introduction to the publication titled *Relacje polsko-żydowskie w XX wieku*. Nonetheless, doubts have remained.

³¹ According to *Słownik pojęć żydowskich* (Dictionary of Jewish Terms), anti-Semitism refers to: “an ideology, political movement, or set of prejudices that justify hostility toward Jews. It is historically linked to nationalism and totalitarianism, rooted in traditions of xenophobia and ethnocentrism. Anti-Semitism draws on racism by erroneously identifying Jews as an anthropological race. More broadly, it encompasses hostile attitudes, verbal and physical aggression, unfavourable generalisations, and prejudices against Jews, as well as beliefs that justify such behaviours on religious, national, racist, political, or economic grounds.”

³² S. Kozanecki, *Antysemityzm, antyjudazm, antypolonizm. Źródła konfliktu*, Cracow, 1994.

³³ *Żydzi w Polsce odrodzonej. Działalność społeczna, gospodarcza, oświatowa i kulturalna*, eds. A. Schiper, A. Tartakower, and A. Haffka, vols 1–2, Warsaw, 1932–1933.

³⁴ *Studia żydowskie w Polsce – przeszłość, stan obecny, perspektywy. Studium selektywne*, ed. S. Gąsiorowski, Cracow, 2014.

Legal Situation of Jews in the Republic of Poland 1918–1939. Civil and Political Rights).³⁵ Although the book's title refers to the interwar period, it also includes a chapter on this issue from the 19th century. The subtitle itself is also somewhat misleading, as the author was interested in many topics, including the economy.

I recommend Andrzej Żbikowski's book titled *Żydzi* (Jews), which has the advantage of comprehensiveness though lacks footnotes. The author presents a wealth of information while keeping it accessible to the reader. The extensive use of photographs and maps deepens comprehension and facilitates engagement with the material.³⁶ Furthermore, publications on the history of the Jewish community, edited by Jerzy Tomaszewski³⁷ and Feliks Tych³⁸, have been released. Feliks Koneczny's work, *Cywilizacja żydowska* (Jewish Civilisation), by contrast, offers a different approach – examining Jewish history through a broad temporal lens and framing it in relation to Latin civilisation.³⁹ Ezra Mendelsohn⁴⁰ and Antoni Polonsky⁴¹ present the history of Jews in Poland within a broader historical and cultural context.

Only a few authors have addressed Polish-Jewish relations on a national scale. The first publication on this topic was Józef Orlicki's *Szkice z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich 1918–1949* (Sketches from the History of Polish-Jewish Relations 1918–1949), which appeared in 1983.⁴² The author discussed the period of the Second Polish Republic, World War II, and the post-war period, devoting most space to the war. The introduction, entitled “Antecedencje” (Antecedents), also presented Polish-Jewish relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in the Polish territories under partition. It was not until 2012 that Henryk Zamojski's book *Polacy i Żydzi. Dzieje sąsiedztwa – dzieje waśni. Historia stosunków polsko-żydowskich* (Poles and Jews: A Story of Coexistence, a Story of a Feud. A Historical Overview of Polish-Jewish Relations) was published.⁴³ How-

³⁵ J. Ogonowski, *Sytuacja prawna Żydów w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1918–1939. Prawa cywilne i polityczne*, Warsaw, 2012.

³⁶ A. Żbikowski, *Żydzi*, Wrocław, 1999.

³⁷ *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce w zarysie (do 1950 r.)*, ed. J. Tomaszewski, Warsaw, 1993.

³⁸ *Pamięć. Historia Żydów polskich przed, w czasie i po Zagładzie*, ed. F. Tych, Warsaw, 2004.

³⁹ F. Koneczny, *Cywilizacja żydowska*, Warsaw–Komorów, 2001.

⁴⁰ E. Mendelsohn, *Żydzi Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w okresie międzywojennym*, Warsaw, 1992.

⁴¹ A. Polonsky, *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce i Rosji*, trans. M. Wilk, Warsaw, 2014.

⁴² J. Orlicki, *Szkice z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich 1918–1949*, Szczecin, 1983.

⁴³ H. Zamojski, *Polacy i Żydzi*.

ever, its author, like Orlicki, focused primarily on World War II. Polish-Jewish relations are discussed in the post-conference proceedings *Z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich w XX wieku* (From the History of Polish-Jewish Relations in the 20th Century),⁴⁴ *Polacy, Niemcy, Żydzi w Łodzi w XIX–XX wieku. Sąsiedzi dalecy i bliscy* (Poles, Germans, Jews in Łódź in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Distant and Close Neighbours),⁴⁵ and *Życie codzienne społeczności żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich do 1942 r.* (Everyday Life of the Jewish Community in Polish Lands until 1942).⁴⁶

Several scholars have provided valuable regional insights into Polish-Jewish relations. Jarosław Wołkonowski's research on Wilno (now Vilnius) and its surrounding area stands out,⁴⁷ alongside Mariola Nitecka's examination of relations in Częstochowa during the interwar period.⁴⁸ Notable contributions also include Jerzy Gapys's study of the Kielce Voivodeship,⁴⁹ Izabella Kopczyńska's work on Poznań,⁵⁰ and Łukasz Połomski's exploration of the Nowy Sącz region.⁵¹

Books documenting Jewish communities across various voivodeships and selected counties of the Second Polish Republic also offer valuable perspectives. While these works primarily describe the Jewish population rather than focus on Polish-Jewish relations, they remain important contributions to regional scholarship. Among the authors of note are Waław Wierzbieniec,⁵² Anna Skupień,⁵³

⁴⁴ *Z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich w XX wieku*, eds. E. Czop and E. Rączy, Rzeszów, 2009.

⁴⁵ *Polacy, Niemcy, Żydzi w Łodzi w XIX–XX wieku. Sąsiedzi dalecy i bliscy*, ed. P. Samuś, Kurovice, 1997.

⁴⁶ *Życie codzienne społeczności żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich do 1942 r.*, eds. E. Majcher-Ociesa and B. Wojciechowska, Kielce, 2013.

⁴⁷ J. Wołkonowski, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Wilnie i na Wileńszczyźnie 1919–1939*, Białystok, 2004.

⁴⁸ M. Nitecka, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie," pp. 137–166.

⁴⁹ J. Gapys, "Relacje polsko-żydowskie w województwie kieleckim w latach 1918–1939. Wybrane zagadnienia," *Kieleckie Studia Teologiczne* 15 (2016), pp. 159–184.

⁵⁰ I. Kopczyńska, "Relacje polsko-żydowskie w Poznaniu w okresie dwudziestolecia międzywojennego," in *Od konfliktu do współistnienia i współpracy*, vol. 1: *Bliscy i dalecy sąsiedzi*, eds. K. Grysińska-Jarmuła and T. Maresz, Bydgoszcz, 2017, pp. 124–133.

⁵¹ Ł. Połomski, "Relacje polsko-żydowskie na Sądectczyźnie w okresie międzywojennym," *Rocznik Sądecki* 42 (2014), pp. 65–92.

⁵² W. Wierzbieniec, *Żydzi w województwie łwowskim w okresie międzywojennym. Zagadnienia demograficzne i społeczne*, Rzeszów, 2003.

⁵³ A. Skupień, *Ludność żydowska w województwie poznańskim w latach 1919–1938*, Poznań, 2007.

Agnieszka Olejniczak,⁵⁴ Wojciech Jaworski,⁵⁵ Tomasz Kawski,⁵⁶ and Izabela Lewandowska.⁵⁷

Works that examine Polish-Jewish relations and the history of Jewish communities through archival sources are essential for enriching our understanding of the past. A notable example is the 2001 collective volume titled *Źródła archiwalne do dziejów Żydów w Polsce* (Archival Sources for the History of Jews in Poland), edited by Bolesław Woszczyński and Violetta Urbaniak.⁵⁸ It is broken down into three parts, with the first volume opening with information about sources held in Polish archives. The first part contains articles based on documents from the Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (Central Archives of Historical Records), Archiwum Akt Nowych (Central Archives of Modern Records), and Archiwum Dokumentacji Mechanicznej (Mechanical Documentation Archives). Next, state archives in Poland's largest cities were analysed for information on Jewish history. This project covered the state archives in Białystok (including its division in Łomża), Bydgoszcz, Częstochowa, Elbląg (based in Malbork), Gdańsk, Kalisz, Katowice, Kielce, Koszalin, Cracow, Leszno, Lublin, Łódź, Olsztyn, Opole, Piotrków Trybunalski, Płock, Poznań, Przemyśl, Radom, Rzeszów, Siedlce, Suwałki, Szczecin, Toruń (including its division in Włocławek), the Capital City of Warsaw, Wrocław, Zamość and Zielona Góra. The authors also explored the holdings of the Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (Central Military Archives), the Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk (Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences), the Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Warszawie (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw), and the Archiwum b. Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu – Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej (Archives of the former Chief Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Pol-

⁵⁴ A. Olejniczak, *Żydzi w powiecie włocławskim w okresie międzywojennym (1918–1939)*, Włocławek, 2000.

⁵⁵ W. Jaworski, *Ludność żydowska w województwie śląskim w latach 1922–1939*, Katowice, 1997; W. Jaworski, *Żydzi w województwie śląskim w okresie międzywojennym*, Katowice, 1991; W. Jaworski, *Żydzi w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim. Zarys dziejów*, Sosnowiec, 2006.

⁵⁶ T. Kawski, "Ludność żydowska na Kujawach wschodnich i w ziemi dobrzyńskiej w okresie międzywojennym (1918–1939)," *Zapiski Kujawsko-Dobrzyńskie* 13 (1999), pp. 127–178.

⁵⁷ I. Lewandowska, "Społeczność żydowska na ziemiach pruskich (Warmii i Mazurach) na przestrzeni dziejów. Zarys problematyki," in *Żydzi wschodniej Polski*, Series 5: *W kręgu judaizmu*, eds. J. Ławski and I.E. Rusek, Białystok, 2017, pp. 349–376.

⁵⁸ *Źródła archiwalne do dziejów Żydów w Polsce*, eds. B. Woszczyński and V. Urbaniak, Warsaw, 2001.

ish Nation – the Institute of National Remembrance). The second part concerns sources held in Israeli archives, including the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives in Jerusalem, the archives of the Diaspora Institute at Tel Aviv University, the archives of the Dr. Zerah Warhaftig Institute for Research on Religious Zionism at Bar-Ilan University, the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, the Central Zionist Archives, the Massuah Archives at Kibbutz Tel Yitzhak, the Archives of the United Kibbutz Movement in Hulda and the Yad Vashem Archives. The third part is titled *Varia*.

A substantial portion of publications, especially at the micro level, consists of diaries, memoirs, and personal accounts. They provide insight into the direct neighbourly relations between Poles and Jews. Also noteworthy are the Jewish books of memory,⁵⁹ issued post-World War II,⁶⁰ which preserve the recollections of Jewish communities from specific towns. Most of these works focus primarily on the Jewish community, with Poles rarely appearing in the narrative. In this respect, they are no different from the recollections of Polish authors, who also concentrate on the lives of Poles, with relations with Jews being a rare theme, touched upon somewhere on the margins of the main narrative. In this context, it is worth mentioning Grzegorz Berendt's article on the image of the Jewish population in the memories of Poles.⁶¹

It is also worth reading articles published in profiled journals, including *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* (formerly known as *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*) and *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry, Polish-Jewish Studies* and *Studia Judaica*.

Specific Issues

Anti-Jewish incidents and the broader phenomenon of anti-Semitism remain central themes in historiographical inquiry, particularly among Jewish scholars, for whom these subjects appear to be the most frequently examined. Given the predomi-

⁵⁹ Jewish books of memory are also known as Yizkor books: *Pinkas*, *Pinkus*, and *Pinkes*.

⁶⁰ Examples of such books of memory include: *Opoczyńska księga pamięci*, eds. J. Gapys and E. Majcher-Ociesa, Opoczno, 2014; *Pinkes Szczekocin. Księga pamięci Szczekocin (Życie i zagłada żydowskiego miasteczka)*, ed. I. Sz wajcer (Ben-Awrom), Tel Aviv, 1959 (Polish edition eds.: M. Skrzypczyk, M. Tuszewicki, and A. Wieczorek, Szczekociny, 2010); *Tam był kiedyś mój dom... Księgi pamięci gmin żydowskich*, eds. M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, A. Kopciowski, and A. Trzciński, Lublin, 2009; *Księga pamięci żydowskiego Lublina*, ed. A. Kopciowski, Lublin, 2011.

⁶¹ G. Berendt, "Obraz ludności żydowskiej."

nantly urban composition of the Jewish population under investigation, scholarly attention has increasingly focused on Polish-Jewish relations within specific urban contexts. Beyond localised studies, several overarching dimensions of these relations have also been explored, encompassing economic, political, military, sporting, cultural, and educational domains. Meanwhile, certain areas of inquiry – such as the lives of Jewish farmers, instances of intermarriage, and informal relationships – pose notable methodological challenges, primarily due to the scarcity of source materials.

The issue of anti-Jewish incidents,⁶² which occurred most frequently in small towns rather than large cities and involved people who had come from outside the area, seems to have been well researched. Among other things, the incidents in Przytyk,⁶³ Odrzywół,⁶⁴ Mińsk Mazowiecki,⁶⁵ Brześć nad Bugiem,⁶⁶ Lvov,⁶⁷ and Przemyśl⁶⁸ have been investigated. Their causes varied, with attacks usually occurring as a result of a combination of circumstances and factors: economic, criminal, political, anti-Semitism, misunderstandings and misinterpretations of behaviour, or personal conflicts.

One potential issue lies in how terms are defined.⁶⁹ We generally consider pogroms to be events in which, in addition to the civilian population, uniformed ser-

⁶² A. Markowski, "Pogromy, zajścia. Zbiorowe akty przemocy przeciw Żydom w Białymstoku pierwszych dekad XX wieku," *Studia Judaica* 1 (2011), pp. 23–44; I. Cohen, *A Report on the Pogroms in Poland*, London, 1919; J. Żyndul, *Zajścia antyżydowskie w Polsce w latach 1935–1937*, Warsaw, 1994.

⁶³ P. Gontarczyk, *Pogrom? Zajścia polsko-żydowskie w Przytyku 9 marca 1936 r. Mity, fakty, dokumenty*, Biała Podlaska, 2000.

⁶⁴ J. Gapys and M.B. Markowski, "Zajścia antyżydowskie w Odrzywole w 1935 r. wyrazem wpływów endecji w województwie kieleckim," *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego* 1 (34) (1999), pp. 43–58.

⁶⁵ A. Gontarek, *Żydzi Mińska Mazowieckiego w latach 1918–1939*, Lublin, 2013; J. Laskowska-Gielo, "Pogrom w Mińsku Mazowieckim (czerwiec 1936 r.)," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 4 (2000), pp. 485–495. The title of Laskowska-Gielo's article may suggest that the pogrom in Mińsk Mazowiecki lasted a month, but the author did not specify the dates of the events.

⁶⁶ *Zajścia antyżydowskie w Brześciu nad Bugiem 13 V 1937 roku*, ed. W. Śleszyński, Białystok, 2004.

⁶⁷ J. Tomaszewski, "Lwów, 22 listopada 1918," *Przegląd Historyczny* 2 (1984), pp. 279–285; P. Różański, "Pogrom lwowski 22 listopada 1918 roku w świetle zeznań organizacji syjonistycznej złożonych przed komisją Morgenthaua," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 3 (2004), pp. 347–358; Z. Zaporowski, "Uwagi o relacjach polsko-żydowskich."

⁶⁸ W. Wierzbieniec, "Zajścia antyżydowskie w Przemyślu pod koniec 1918 roku," in *Świat niepożegnany. Żydzi na dawnych ziemiach wschodniej Rzeczypospolitej w XVIII–XX wieku*, ed. K. Jasiewicz, Warsaw–London, 2004.

⁶⁹ Varying interpretations of the term "pogrom" were present already in the interwar period. "For Jews, it was any mass-scale anti-Jewish incident that resulted in human casualties and economic losses. Poles generally understood the word 'pogrom' as an anti-Jewish action organised or supported by the authorities. They based this understanding of the term on its Russian origins." (S. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie*, p. 45).

vices are involved (and which were therefore planned), while anti-Jewish incidents are those that end with the arrival of uniformed services at the scene (spontaneous). In terms of their causes, they can be divided into those with economic motives (for example, in Przytyk on 9 March 1936) and those with retaliatory ones (in Pińsk and Lida in April 1919, Jews supported the communists; in Lwów in November 1918, they sided with the Ukrainians). Another factor to consider is the number of victims and injured individuals, alongside the type and circumstances of death. Typically, anti-Jewish events resulted in few, if any, fatalities – rarely exceeding four victims. For example, during the events in Przytyk, three people were killed: a Jewish couple (beaten to death by a crowd of Poles in their apartment) and a Pole (shot by a Jew); in Kielce on 11 November 1918, there were either two or four people. The largest number of casualties occurred during retaliatory events connected to the formation of the borders of the Second Polish Republic. These events, carried out by soldiers, were a response to cases of collaboration of Jews with enemies of the Poles. For example, in November 1918, the Polish Army and the pro-Ukrainian Jewish Militia clashed in Lwów, killing 44 people (including 7 in hospitals) – 33 Jews and 11 Christians.⁷⁰ In the interwar period, mainly in the early years of the Second Polish Republic, between 100 and 150 Jews were killed in various incidents,⁷¹ the vast majority of them during acts of retaliation for activities initially directed against Poles.⁷² Researchers have not yet determined the number of Poles killed by Jews during anti-Polish events or those whose deaths were caused by Jewish collaboration with the Bolsheviks, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Germans, or Lithuanians. The above presents the criteria for analysing anti-Jewish incidents that are measurable (encompassing the toll of killed, injured, and shot individuals, as well as the count of assailants). Some historians suggest using an emotional criterion – despite its immeasurability – while also omitting socio-economic context, replacing it with a “pogrom atmosphere,” and classifying all

⁷⁰ Z. Zaporowski, “Uwagi o relacjach polsko-żydowskich,” p. 40.

⁷¹ These are estimates based on our own research. Despite considerable interest in researching anti-Jewish events, no historian has yet presented a tabular calculation of all anti-Jewish events in the Second Polish Republic, broken down by date, location, number of fatalities, number of the injured, and number of participants.

⁷² R. Bubczyk, *A History of Poland in Outline*, Lublin, 2011, p. 123. According to the author, around the turn of 1919, an estimated 200 Jews were killed amid a surge of anti-Semitic pogroms.

such events as pogroms, arguing that alternative terms are mere euphemisms.⁷³ The aim was to elicit a specific response from Poles, especially from the authorities of the Second Polish Republic: “For Jewish activists and journalists, it was most important to use terms that would enable them to more effectively demand that the authorities issue appropriate orders and take the necessary measures to protect the lives and property of all citizens.”⁷⁴

I would like to dwell a little longer on Natalia Aleksium’s article entitled “Nihil novi? Historiografia pogromów z lat 1921–1939” (*Nihil novi? Historiography of the Pogroms of 1921–1939*).⁷⁵ Polish readers may be struck by the infantile first part of the article’s title: “Nihil novi?” It is puzzling that the author omits the key period of 1918–1921, when anti-Jewish events were most frequent. The text only mentions them briefly. The author categorises historians of pogroms into two groups: those who relativise their history – such as Piotr Gontarczyk and Marek Chodakiewicz – and those who do not, including Jolanta Żyndul and Artur Markowski. The author did not provide the number of people killed or injured in the events described, which suggests that this information is not important (it is only on page 102 that she provides specific figures for the fatalities and injuries resulting from anti-Jewish incidents in 1935–1937). The article contains an unfair assessment of Piotr Gontarczyk’s book on anti-Jewish incidents in Przytyk.⁷⁶ His work was based on extensive archival materials. In the “Documents” section, the author presents 34 distinct sources – including reports by the Voivode of Kielce and the Starost of Radom, a Court of Appeals ruling, and selected excerpts from books and press articles (pp. 141–367) – enabling readers to independently reconstruct the course of events and draw their own conclusions. Some authors treat the interwar period as a prelude to the Holocaust, such as Zbigniew Razowski, who wrote a text on Polish-Jewish relations in Chrzanów and the surrounding area in 1918–1923 as a contribution to research on the Shoah.⁷⁷ No valid methodology supports this connection.

⁷³ N. Aleksium, “Nihil novi? Historiografia pogromów z lat 1921–1939,” in *Pogromy Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX w.*, vol. 3: *Historiografia, polityka, recepcja społeczna (do 1939 roku)*, eds. K. Kijek, A. Markowski, and K. Zieliński, Warsaw, 2019, pp. 96, 98.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ P. Gontarczyk, *Pogrom?*

⁷⁷ Z. Razowski, “Relacje polsko-żydowskie w Chrzanowie i okolicy w latach 1918–1923 jako przyczynek do badań nad Szoa,” in *Ciemności kryją ziemię. Wybrane aspekty badań i nauczania o Holokauście*, eds. M. Grądzka-Rejak and P. Trojański, Cracow, 2019, pp. 171–187.

Research on anti-Semitism is also well advanced;⁷⁸ this issue has been addressed by Alina Cała, among others.⁷⁹ There is no shortage of biased works on this subject. An example of this is the characterisation of the State Police in Grzegorz Krzywiec's article entitled "Czy państwo w Polsce pomajowej było czynnikiem antyżydowskim (1926–1939)? Stan badań i perspektywy badawcze" (Was the Polish State Post-May 1926 a Driver of Anti-Jewish Sentiment [1926–1939]? State of Research and Analytical Horizons).⁸⁰ In footnote 53, the author quotes Janusz Tazbir, introducing his statement as follows: "Janusz Tazbir cites a rather characteristic event illustrating the position of a police officer in a small town in the Łomża region, and also shows the hierarchy of power." It is difficult to draw reliable conclusions from just one example, especially one as vivid as this. The phrase "quite a characteristic event" may also be puzzling, as it carries negative connotations, suggesting that the situation is repetitive. In the main body of the text, the author stated that "such practices recur in numerous diaristic accounts" and "there are many indications that they were widespread not only in this or that region of the country," but he failed to provide any sources. The paragraph ends with two questions: "How did the bureaucracy try to deal with this issue? Did it even attempt to do so?" This point should have been investigated and the questions

⁷⁸ J. Kruszyński, *Antysemityzm, antyjudyzm, antygoizm*, Włocławek, 1924; W. Mich, *Obcy w polskim domu. Nacjonalistyczne koncepcje rozwiązywania problemu mniejszości narodowych 1918–1939*, Lublin, 1994; M. Natkowska, *Numerus clausus, getto ławkowe, numerus nullus, „paragraf aryjski”. Antysemityzm na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim 1931–1939*, Warsaw, 1999; M. Wójcicki, "Stosunek komunistów polskich do problemu antysemityzmu w latach 1918–1925 w świetle dokumentów partyjnych," in *Konserwatyzm, nacjonalizm. Studia nad konfrontacjami ideowymi konserwatyizmu krakowskiego i demokracji narodowej przed 1914 r.*, ed. M. Jaskólski, Cracow, 1989, pp. 213–220; M. Domagalska, *Antysemityzm dla inteligencji? Kwestia żydowska w publicystyce Adolfa Nowaczyńskiego na łamach „Myśli Narodowej” (1921–1934) i „Prosto z mostu” (1935–1939) (na tle porównawczym)*, Warsaw, 2004; I. Kowalski, "Antysemityzm w Wielkopolsce w latach 1919–1939," *Kronika Wielkopolski* 3 (2001), pp. 31–49; J. Górny, "Polsko-żydowscy czytelnicy Weininger a żydowski „Selbsthass”," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 2 (2016), pp. 431–447. In the majority of publications, scholars stress that economic hardship – particularly widespread poverty – was the predominant factor behind anti-Semitic attitudes in the Second Polish Republic, alongside religious and political influences. A common belief held at the time was that after getting rid of the Jews, it would be easier for Poles to find work.

⁷⁹ A. Cała, *Żyd – wróg odwieczny? Antysemityzm w Polsce i jego źródła*, Warsaw, 2012. This book, translated by Mikołaj Golubiewski, was published in English under a slightly modified title: *Jew. The Eternal Enemy? The History of Antisemitism in Poland*, Berlin, 2018.

⁸⁰ G. Krzywiec, "Czy państwo w Polsce pomajowej było czynnikiem antyżydowskim (1926–1939)? Stan badań i perspektywy badawcze," in *Państwo i społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Zbiór studiów*, ed. J. Żarnowski, Warsaw, 2014 (*Metamorfozy Społeczne*, vol. 8).

answered, rather than leaving the reader to speculate. The author did not name the phenomenon he was describing, using general terms such as an “issue” or an “incident.” Researchers should pay closer attention to language, take responsibility for their words, and avoid drawing exaggerated conclusions. It seems that if the author had a better example illustrating the anti-Jewish behaviour of the police, he would have provided it or at least mentioned it in a footnote. The State Police was not an anti-Semitic formation.⁸¹

The other side of the issue is the anti-Polish activity of some Jews and their hostility towards Poles. In the works of researchers, we come across only minor references to this topic.⁸² A deeper analysis is warranted of incidents such as the aggressive behaviour of some Jews, for example the 1926 anti-Catholic unrest in Kraków linked to the takeover of St. Agnes Church;⁸³ the circumstances surrounding the 1931 death of Stanisław Waclawski, a student at Stefan Batory University and National Party activist;⁸⁴ and the 1932 killing of Jerzy Grodkowski, a veterinary student in Lwów.⁸⁵ Ritual murder also emerges as a potential research topic.⁸⁶

A significant part of research on the Jewish community in Poland focuses on cities and towns. This is not surprising, as Jews were predominantly an urban population. Most publications focus on the history of Jewish residents in specific towns.⁸⁷ These are often valuable works, whose authors have gathered a wealth

⁸¹ D. Buras, “W służbie i poza służbą. Postawy etyczne policjantów w II Rzeczypospolitej na przykładzie województwa kieleckiego,” in *Funkcjonariusze Policji Państwowej w II Rzeczypospolitej, podczas okupacji i okresie powojennym – w świetle źródeł archiwalnych i wspomnień*, eds. E. Majcher-Ociesa and W. Rutkowska, Kielce, 2022.

⁸² M. Urynowicz, *Żydzi w samorządzie miasta Kozienice w okresie międzywojennym 1919–1939*, Warsaw, 2003, p. 157; M. Nitecka, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie*, pp. 143–144.

⁸³ F. Banaś, *Moje wspomnienia*, Rzeszów, 2009, pp. 34–35.

⁸⁴ S. Rudnicki, *Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny. Geneza i działalność*, Warsaw, 1985, p. 118; A. Tyszkiewicz, *Obóz Wielkiej Polski w Małopolsce 1926–1933*, Cracow, 2004, pp. 227–228; R. Wapiński, *Narodowa Demokracja 1893–1939. Ze studiów nad dziejami myśli nacjonalistycznej*, Wrocław, 1980, p. 291.

⁸⁵ K. Rędziński, “Studenci żydowscy we Lwowie w latach 1918–1939,” *Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie* 25 (2016), pp. 592–593; “Zabójstwo Grotkowskiego,” *Glaukopis* 5–6 (2006), p. 108.

⁸⁶ J. Żyndul, *Kłamstwo krwi. Legenda mordu rytualnego na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Warsaw, 2011; R. Patlewicz, *Mord rytualny w Rzeszowie? Śledztwo historyczne*, Warsaw, 2020.

⁸⁷ G. Dymerska, “Żydzi koneccy,” in *Końskie. Zarys dziejów*, ed. M. Wikiera, Końskie, 1998; W. Jaworski, “Ludność żydowska w Chorzowie w latach 1922–1939,” *Zeszyty Chorzowskie* 1 (1996), pp. 86–99; M. Maciągowski, *Spółeczność żydowska w Chmielniku w XIX–XX wieku. Stosunki polityczne, gospodarcze i kulturalne*, Poznań, 2012.

of information and compiled it thoroughly, taking into account Polish-Jewish relations. However, this material is fragmented. Some towns with a troubled or complex history do not have their own monographs, such as Jedwabne, Przytyk or Działoszyce. Larger Polish cities – including Warsaw,⁸⁸ Łódź,⁸⁹ Wrocław,⁹⁰ Gdańsk,⁹¹ Radom,⁹² Kielce,⁹³ Przemyśl,⁹⁴ Kalisz⁹⁵ and Bydgoszcz⁹⁶ – have been the focus of monographs documenting the history of their Jewish communities. Given the diverse social and cultural landscape of the Second Polish Republic, greater emphasis should be placed on regional studies. Polish-Jewish relations varied significantly depending on location – differing in small towns of the Eastern Borderlands, in the Western Borderlands, and again in central Poland. In this regard, the book on locality edited by Anna Landau-Czajka offers valuable insights and is well worth mentioning.⁹⁷

One should also take into account such factors as the percentage of Jewish residents in individual localities. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to study Polish-Jewish relations in large centres and smaller towns separately? One could compare the relations prevailing in large Polish cities, where Jewish quarters were formed (in some cities, Jews did not reside in one quarter but were scattered throughout the city and lived among Poles, such as was the case in Kielce),⁹⁸ as well as – separately – in towns with a predominantly Jewish population. In this case, attention can be drawn to relations between Jews and Poles living in a town, as well as relations

⁸⁸ G. Zalewska, *Ludność żydowska w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym*, Warsaw, 1996.

⁸⁹ *Dzieje Żydów w Łodzi 1820–1944. Wybrane problemy*, eds. W. Puś and S. Liszewski, Łódź, 1991.

⁹⁰ L. Ziátkowski, *Dzieje Żydów we Wrocławiu*, Wrocław, 2000.

⁹¹ G. Berent, *Żydzi na terenie Wolnego Miasta Gdańska w latach 1920–1945 (działalność kulturalna, polityczna i socjalna)*, Gdańsk, 1997.

⁹² *Spółeczność żydowska Radomia w I połowie XX wieku. Kultura, Zagłada, rozproszenie*, ed. Z. Wiczorek, Radom, 2008; S. Piątkowski, *Dni życia, dni śmierci. Ludność żydowska w Radomiu 1918–1950*, Warsaw, 2006.

⁹³ K. Urbański, *Spółeczność żydowska w Kielcach*, Kielce, 1989.

⁹⁴ W. Wierzbieniec, *Spółeczność żydowska Przemyśla w latach 1918–1939*, Rzeszów, 1996.

⁹⁵ A. Pakentreger, *Żydzi w Kaliszu w latach 1918–1939. Problemy polityczne i społeczne*, Warsaw, 1988.

⁹⁶ A. Jedlińska-Kawska and T. Kawski, *Spółeczność żydowska w Bydgoszczy w XX wieku*, Bydgoszcz, 2015; Z. Biegański, *Mniejszość żydowska w Bydgoszczy 1920–1939*, Bydgoszcz, 1999.

⁹⁷ *Lokalność. Wsie, miasteczka, miasta na ziemiach polskich od XVI do XX wieku*, ed. A. Landau-Czajka, Warsaw, 2020.

⁹⁸ P. Wolańczyk, “Nieruchomości żydowskie na mapie przedwojennych Kielc,” *Studia Muzealno-Historyczne* 15 (2023), pp. 31–53.

with the non-Jewish surroundings of these towns.⁹⁹ The nature of these relations varied across distinct groups of towns.

Economic aspects of Polish-Jewish relations during the Second Polish Republic remain underexplored. The economic dimension, in my view, has played a pivotal role in shaping these relations historically. The sole comprehensive nationwide publication addressing this topic from a broad historical perspective, *Rola Żydów w rozwoju gospodarczym ziem polskich* (The Role of Jews in the Economic Development of Polish Lands),¹⁰⁰ stems from a conference convened by the University of Łódź. The book, edited by Janusz Skodlarski and Andrzej Pieczewski, consists of three parts: “Until World War I,” “The Interwar Period,” and “World War II and the Postwar Period.” In 2001, Bina Garncarska-Kadary’s work entitled *Żydowska ludność pracująca w Polsce 1918–1939* (The Jewish Working Population in Poland 1918–1939) was published,¹⁰¹ whereas in 2013, Edyta Majcher-Ociesa’s book *Aktywność gospodarcza ludności żydowskiej w województwie kieleckim w latach 1918–1939* (Economic Activity of the Jewish Population in the Kielce Voivodeship in 1918–1939) was published.¹⁰² Since that time, no comprehensive monograph on Jewish economic activity at either the regional or national level has been published, although articles focused on individual localities have continued to appear.¹⁰³

The participation of Jews in various areas of the economy, such as trade, industry, crafts, banking, agriculture, transport and communications, requires further reflection. Investigating trade patterns in Polish lands and how professional structures shaped Polish-Jewish relations is a vital area of study. Apart from Ignacy Schiper,¹⁰⁴ only a few historians¹⁰⁵ have undertaken such research, or their work

⁹⁹ For example R. Renz, *Życie codzienne w miasteczkach*.

¹⁰⁰ *Rola Żydów w rozwoju gospodarczym ziem polskich*, eds. J. Skodlarski and A. Pieczewski, Łódź, 2014.

¹⁰¹ B. Garncarska-Kadary, *Żydowska ludność pracująca w Polsce 1918–1939*, Warsaw, 2001.

¹⁰² E. Majcher-Ociesa, *Aktywność gospodarcza ludności żydowskiej w województwie kieleckim w latach 1918–1939*, Kielce, 2013.

¹⁰³ For instance, P. Skibińska, “Udział Żydów w życiu gospodarczym gminy Sławatycze w okresie dwudziestolecia międzywojennego,” *Studenckie Zeszyty Naukowe* 36 (21) (2018), pp. 129–138.

¹⁰⁴ I. Schiper, *Dzieje handlu żydowskiego na ziemiach polskich*, Warsaw, 1937.

¹⁰⁵ For instance, J. Chodorowski, *Struktura wewnętrznego handlu towarowego w Polsce*, Warsaw, 1938; A. Hodoly and W. Jastrzębowski, *Handel wiejski w Polsce międzywojennej. Liczby i fakty*, Warsaw, 1957; S. Górniak, *Handel detaliczny*, Lwów–Warsaw, 1935; Z. Landau and J. Tomaszewski, *Drobny handel i rzemiosło w Polsce w latach 1918–1923*, Warsaw, 1965; J. Tomaszewski, “Handel prywatny w Polsce w latach 1936–1939,” in *Drobnomieszczaństwo XIX i XX w.*, ed. S. Kowalska-Glikman, vol. 1, Warsaw, 1984.

has focused on trade from a regional perspective.¹⁰⁶ Recently, an interesting book by Iwona Kawalla-Lulkiewicz on trade in Cracow has been published.¹⁰⁷ Several works on crafts have been published, in which the authors also describe Polish-Jewish relations in this area of the economy.¹⁰⁸ Jewish banking has been the focus of a limited number of publications.¹⁰⁹ Also, Jewish cooperatives deserve greater attention from researchers.¹¹⁰

Polish-Jewish relations on the political level await further study. To date, Józef Piłsudski's views on the Jewish question are the best known. Among authors who have taken an interest in the Polish state's policy towards the Jewish minority are Andrzej Chojnowski,¹¹¹ Jerzy Tomaszewski,¹¹² Czesław Madajczyk,¹¹³ Emanuel Melzer¹¹⁴ and Kinga Czechowska.¹¹⁵ Grzegorz Berendt examined the Senate's economic policy of the Free City of Gdańsk toward its Jewish population between 1933 and 1939.¹¹⁶ The Jewish community's participation in elections at various

¹⁰⁶ R. Renz, "Położenie ekonomiczne handlu drobnotowarowego w województwie kieleckim w okresie międzywojennym," *Kieleckie Studia Historyczne* 8 (1990), pp. 191–206; K. Stępniewski, "Handel w województwie kieleckim w latach 1918–1939," unpublished PhD thesis, Jan Kochanowski Holy Cross Academy in Kielce, Kielce, 2003.

¹⁰⁷ I. Kawalla-Lulewicz, *Kupiectwo i handel w międzywojennym Krakowie (1918–1939)*, Cracow, 2020.

¹⁰⁸ R. Renz, *Rzemiosło województwa kieleckiego w okresie międzywojennym. Aspekty społeczne i gospodarcze*, Warsaw, 1984; B. Urbanowicz, *Rzemiosło w Częstochowie w okresie międzywojennym (1918–1939)*, Częstochowa, 2004; L. Frączek, *Rzemieślnicy szczekocińscy od XVIII do połowy XX wieku*, Szczekociny, 2016.

¹⁰⁹ W. Morawski, *Bankowość prywatna w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw, 1996; W. Morawski, *Słownik historyczny bankowości polskiej do 1939 roku*, Warsaw, 1998; E. Słabińska, "Żydowskie kasy bezprocentowego kredytu jako źródło finansowania rzemiosła, drobnego przemysłu i handlu w II Rzeczypospolitej," in *Rola Kościołów w życiu gospodarczym ziem polskich*, eds. K. Kowalski, R. Matera, and A. Pieczewski, Łódź, 2017.

¹¹⁰ A. Prowalski, *Spółdzielczość żydowska w Polsce*, Warsaw, 1933; A.B. Duszyk, "Żydowska spółdzielczość oszczędnościowo-kredytowa w Radomiu okresu międzywojnia," in *Spółeczność żydowska Radomia*, pp. 23–39; P. Kendziorek, *Żydowski ruch spółdzielczy w Polsce w pierwszej połowie XX wieku. Ideologia i praktyka społeczna*, Warsaw, 2020.

¹¹¹ A. Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej rządów polskich w latach 1921–1939*, Wrocław, 1979.

¹¹² J. Tomaszewski, "Memoriał z 1938 r. w sprawie polityki państwa polskiego wobec Żydów," *Teki Archiwalne. Seria nowa* 1 (1995), pp. 119–130.

¹¹³ C. Madajczyk, "Dokumenty w sprawie polityki narodowościowej władz polskich po przewrocie majowym," *Dzieje Najnowsze* 3 (4) (1972), pp. 137–169.

¹¹⁴ E. Melzer, *No Way Out. The Politics of Polish Jewry 1935–1939*, Cincinnati, 1997.

¹¹⁵ K. Czechowska, *Polska dyplomacja wobec „kwestii żydowskiej” w latach 1932–1939*, Gdańsk, 2023.

¹¹⁶ G. Berendt, "Polityka ekonomiczna Senatu Wolnego Miasta Gdańska wobec ludności żydowskiej (1933–1939)," *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi* 23 (2000), pp. 199–230.

levels – both active and passive – was significant. It valued elections and sought to increase the number of its representatives in the Sejm, Senate and municipal councils. Jews elected to these bodies looked after the interests of their voters – fellow believers living in a given area. Noteworthy among existing research are works addressing the attitudes of various political parties towards Jews, specifically the people's,¹¹⁷ socialist,¹¹⁸ and national parties,¹¹⁹ the Piłsudski camp,¹²⁰ as well as the Zionists.¹²¹ Jewish representation in the parliament of the Second Polish Republic has been the subject of research by Szymon Rudnicki¹²² and Janusz Fałowski.¹²³ A broad array of Jewish political parties played an active role,¹²⁴ shaping a dynamic and multifaceted political scene.¹²⁵ Monographs on cities and towns often include a separate chapter on the political preferences of their residents.¹²⁶

A number of studies have explored Jewish participation in local government during the Second Polish Republic. Notable examples include works by Wacław Wierzbieniec on Lwów,¹²⁷ Grażyna Łuszkiewicz-Dzierżawska on Radom,¹²⁸ Mag-

¹¹⁷ S. Mańko, *Polski ruch ludowy wobec Żydów (1895–1939)*, Warsaw, 2010.

¹¹⁸ E. Koko, *W nadziei na zgodę. Polski ruch socjalistyczny wobec kwestii narodowościowej w Polsce*, Gdańsk, 1995.

¹¹⁹ O. Bergmann, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec problematyki żydowskiej*, Poznań, 1998; G. Radomski, *Narodowi demokraci wobec problematyki mniejszości narodowych w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1918–1939*, Toruń, 2000; M. Sobczak, *Stosunek Narodowej Demokracji do kwestii żydowskiej w latach 1918–1939*, Wrocław, 1988.

¹²⁰ W. Paruch, *Od konsolidacji państwowej do konsolidacji narodowej. Mniejszości narodowe w myśli politycznej obozu piłsudczykowskiego (1926–1939)*, Lublin, 1997.

¹²¹ W. Jaworski, *Struktura i wpływy syjonistycznych organizacji politycznych w Polsce w latach 1918–1939*, Warsaw, 1996; W. Jaworski, *Syjonści wobec rządu polskiego w okresie międzywojennym*, Sosnowiec, 2002.

¹²² S. Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie*.

¹²³ J. Fałowski, *Mniejszość żydowska w Parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej (1922–1939)*, Cracow, 2006; J. Fałowski, *Posłowie żydowscy w Sejmie Ustawodawczym 1919–1922*, Częstochowa, 2000 (*Biuletyn. Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna w Częstochowie. Instytut Filozoficzno-Historyczny*, vol. 7).

¹²⁴ For example, G.C. Bacon, *Politics of Tradition. Agudat Yisrael in Poland 1916–1939*, Jerusalem, 1996.

¹²⁵ W. Jaworski, "Życie polityczne Żydów w Sosnowcu w okresie międzywojennym," *Rocznik Sosnowiecki* 2 (1993), pp. 50–61.

¹²⁶ P.A. Tusiński, "Żydowskie życie polityczne w Radomiu przed drugą wojną światową," in *Społeczność żydowska Radomia*, pp. 109–122.

¹²⁷ W. Wierzbieniec, "Uwagi nad udziałem Żydów w samorządzie Lwowa w okresie II Rzeczypospolitej," in *Historia i dziedzictwo regionów w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIX i XX w.*, eds. M. Stolarczyk, A. Kawalec, and J. Kuzicki, Rzeszów, 2011.

¹²⁸ G. Łuszkiewicz-Dzierżawska, "Przedstawiciele społeczności żydowskiej we władzach samorządowych Radomia (1916–1939). Aneks," in *Społeczność żydowska Radomia*, pp. 41–107.

dalena Mizgalska-Osowiecka on Częstochowa,¹²⁹ Anna Jodłowiec-Dziedzic on Cracow,¹³⁰ and Marcin Urynowicz on Kozienice.¹³¹ The latter author writes the following about relations in the Kozienice local government: “Jews who participated in local government in the Second Polish Republic faced a very difficult task, which was to advocate for the Jewish community’s interests.”¹³²

A few valuable studies concerning Polish-Jewish relations in the Polish Army¹³³ have been written, including biographical works.¹³⁴ One particularly valuable publication is *Żydzi i wojsko polskie w XIX i XX wieku* (Jews and the Polish Army in the 19th and 20th Centuries),¹³⁵ which features outstanding contributions by scholars such as Józef Smoliński, Jan Kęsik, Jerzy Prochwicz, Witold Jarno, Janusz Wojtasik, Stanisław Meducki, and Sebastian Piątkowski. Witold Jarno has offered a biographical portrayal of Baruch Steinberg, Chief Rabbi of the Polish Army, who was executed by the NKVD, most likely in Kharkiv. The works of the other scholars mentioned also merit further exploration.¹³⁶

Polish-Jewish relations in the field of sport are also an important topic that deserves attention.¹³⁷ Here, researchers focus either on a selected discipline or on a specific geographical area. Wiesław Pięta presented Polish-Jewish relations in the community of table tennis players,¹³⁸ whereas Eligiusz Małolepszy and Teresa

¹²⁹ M. Mizgalska, *Żydzi w samorządzie miasta Częstochowy w latach 1927–1939*, Warsaw, 2017.

¹³⁰ A. Jodłowiec-Dziedzic, “Żydzi w Radzie Miejskiej Krakowa w latach 1866–1939. Działalność na rzecz miasta,” in *Budowali nowoczesny Kraków. Żydzi w samorządzie miejskim, gospodarczym i finansowym miasta (1866–1939)*, ed. B. Cisowska, Cracow, 2014, pp. 230–273.

¹³¹ M. Urynowicz, *Żydzi w samorządzie miasta Kozienice*.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹³³ T.A. Kowalski, *Mniejszości narodowe w siłach zbrojnych Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (1918–1939)*, Toruń, 1998.

¹³⁴ M. Gałżowski, *Żydzi walczący o Polskę. Zapomniani obrońcy Rzeczypospolitej*, Cracow, 2021.

¹³⁵ *Żydzi i wojsko polskie w XIX i XX wieku*, eds. T. Domański and E. Majcher-Ociesa, Warsaw–Kielce, 2020.

¹³⁶ For example, J. Kęsik, “Dokumenty w sprawie polityki narodowościowej władz polskich na Kresach Wschodnich w latach 1937–1939,” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 1–2 (24) (1992), pp. 180–194; J. Kęsik, “Polityka narodowościowa w polskich siłach zbrojnych,” *Wrocławskie Studia z Historii Najnowszej. Prace historyczne* 26 (1998), pp. 15–29; J. Kęsik, *Zaufany Komendant. Biografia polityczna Jana Henryka Józewskiego 1892–1981*, Wrocław, 1995.

¹³⁷ *Z dziejów kultury fizycznej mniejszości narodowych w Polsce w XX wieku*, eds. T. Jurek, Gorzów Wielkopolski, 2007; R. Gawkowski and J. Rokicki, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w sporcie II Rzeczypospolitej,” in *Parlamentaryzm, konserwatyzm, nacjonalizm. Sefer jowel. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Szymonowi Rudnickiemu*, ed. J. Żyndul, Warsaw, 2010, pp. 221–240.

¹³⁸ W. Pięta, *Tenis stołowy wśród Żydów w Polsce (1924–1949)*, Częstochowa, 2008.

Drozdek-Małołepsza analysed sport in the Volhynian Voivodeship,¹³⁹ Andrzej Smolarczyk – in Polesia¹⁴⁰, and Aneta Rejman – in Rzeszów.¹⁴¹ While competing in sports, young people from different religious communities came into direct contact and often formed lasting friendships.

Another key topic is how Polish-Jewish relations are reflected in culture and education. Aleksander Hertz,¹⁴² Rafał Żebrowski and Zofia Borzymińska¹⁴³ explored the Jewish contribution to Polish culture. It is also important to recognise works that examine this topic from a regional viewpoint.¹⁴⁴ Marta Pawlina-Meducka, for example, focused on Jewish culture in the Kielce Voivodeship.¹⁴⁵ The press¹⁴⁶ and cinema¹⁴⁷ were also topics of coverage and analysis. Among those who examined the Jewish school system in the Second Polish Republic were Konrad Zieliński¹⁴⁸ and Stanisław Mauersberg,¹⁴⁹ whereas the organisation of education during the interwar period in the Second Polish Republic was examined by Danuta Krześniak-Firlej, Stanisław Majewski and Waldemar Firlej.¹⁵⁰ Andrzej Smolarczyk researched

¹³⁹ E. Małołepszy and T. Drozdek-Małołepsza, "Sport żydowski na Wołyniu w latach 1921–1939," *Sport i Turystyka. Środkowoeuropejskie Czasopismo Naukowe* 4 (4) (2021), pp. 25–41.

¹⁴⁰ A. Smolarczyk, "Żydowskie organizacje społeczno-kulturalne i sportowe na Polesiu w dwudziestolecu międzywojennym," in *Żydzi wschodniej Polski*, series 2: *W blasku i cieniu historii*, eds. J. Ławski and B. Olech, Białystok, 2014, pp. 177–189.

¹⁴¹ A. Rejman, "Kultura fizyczna ludności żydowskiej w Rzeszowie w okresie międzywojennym," *Z Najnowszej Historii Kultury Fizycznej w Polsce* 6 (2004), pp. 597–604.

¹⁴² A. Hertz, *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej*, Paris, 1961.

¹⁴³ R. Żebrowski and Z. Borzymińska, „Po-lin”. *Kultura Żydów polskich w XX wieku*, Warsaw, 1993.

¹⁴⁴ *Z dziejów i kultury Żydów w Galicji*, eds. M. Galas and W. Wierzbieniec, Rzeszów, 2018.

¹⁴⁵ M. Pawlina-Meducka, *Kultura Żydów województwa kieleckiego (1918–1939)*, Kielce, 1993; *Kultura Żydów polskich XIX–XX wieku*, eds. M. Meducka and R. Renz, Kielce, 1992; M. Meducka, "Instytucje oświatowo-kulturalne Żydów z małych miasteczek Kielecczyny w latach 1918–1939," in *Miasteczka polskie w XIX i XX wieku. Z dziejów formowania się społeczności*, ed. R. Kołodziejczyk, Kielce, 1992; M. Meducka, "Z życia teatralnego Żydów w województwie kieleckim w latach 1918–1939," in *Kultura Żydów polskich*.

¹⁴⁶ M. Fuks, *Prasa żydowska w Warszawie 1823–1939*, Warsaw, 1979; M.E. Ożóg, "Prasa żydowska w Rzeszowie w latach 1918–1939," *Prace Archiwalno-Historyczne* 4 (1996), pp. 55–73.

¹⁴⁷ K. Czajka, "Kina żydowskie w Warszawie w dwudziestolecu międzywojennym," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 3 (2013), pp. 561–569; K. Czajka-Kominiarczyk, "Żydzi w związkach zawodowych w przemyśle filmowym w Polsce w dwudziestolecu międzywojennym," in *Kultura. Literatura, sztuka i nauka w XX wieku*, ed. Z. Trębacz, Warsaw, 2020, pp. 223–240.

¹⁴⁸ K. Zieliński, "Szkolnictwo żydowskie w Polsce w latach 1918–1939," *Almanach Historyczny* 5 (2003), pp. 211–255.

¹⁴⁹ S. Mauersberg, *Szkolnictwo powszechne dla mniejszości narodowych w Polsce w latach 1918–1939*, Warsaw, 1968.

¹⁵⁰ D. Krześniak-Firlej, S. Majewski, and W. Firlej, *Organizacja szkolnictwa w II Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1939*, Kielce, 2014.

the topic of education in Polesie,¹⁵¹ and Kazimierz Rędziński¹⁵² and Mirosław Łapot¹⁵³ – in Lwów. Wojciech Jaworski investigated Jewish education in the Silesian Voivodeship.¹⁵⁴ The academic community was also analysed.¹⁵⁵ Some authors conducted research on the social activity of Jews.¹⁵⁶ There were open milieus in society for which diversity could be an asset. These included the artistic milieu,¹⁵⁷ but also the criminal world.¹⁵⁸

I would like to conclude this part of the article by discussing demographic research and a topic that is difficult to analyse, namely intermarriage and converts. Historians conducting demographic research point to differences between Poles and Jews, without which it is impossible to understand Polish-Jewish relations.¹⁵⁹ During the 19th century, the territories of Poland hosted the world's largest Jewish diaspora in terms of population. The onset of World War I triggered notable migratory movements within the Jewish community, accompanied by a rise in

¹⁵¹ A. Smolarczyk, "Szkolnictwo i oświata jako przestrzeń konfliktu w relacjach rządu polskiego i mniejszości narodowych na Polesiu w dwudziestolecie międzywojennym," in *Obszary zgody czy konfliktu? Kresy Północno-Wschodnie II Rzeczypospolitej*, eds. W. Śleszyński and A. Włodarczyk, Cracow-Białystok, 2014, pp. 85–101.

¹⁵² K. Rędziński, "Szkolnictwo żydowskie we Lwowie w latach 1918–1939," in *Edukacja międzykulturowa w wymiarze instytucjonalnym*, eds. J. Nikitorowicz and M. Sobiecki, Białystok, 1999, pp. 338–349.

¹⁵³ M. Łapot, *Szkolnictwo żydowskie we Lwowie (1772–1939)*, Częstochowa, 2016.

¹⁵⁴ W. Jaworski, "Oświata żydowska w województwie śląskim (1922–1939)," *Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy* 1/2 (2011), pp. 127–134.

¹⁵⁵ *Środowiska historyczne w II Rzeczypospolitej*, part 2, eds. J. Maternicki, Warsaw, 1987. Małgorzata Przeniosło compiled biographical dictionaries of professors at all universities in the Second Polish Republic, see M. Przeniosło, *Słownik biograficzny profesorów uniwersytetów Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Uniwersytet Stefana Batorego w Wilnie*, Kielce, 2022.

¹⁵⁶ K. Badziak, *Żydowskie organizacje społeczne w Łodzi do 1939 r.*, Łódź, 2002.

¹⁵⁷ G. Geronin, *Żydowskie twórcy i artyści związani ze Śląskiem Cieszyńskim*, Cieszyn, 2014.

¹⁵⁸ M. Bryła, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w środowisku przestępczym na terenie Małopolski w latach 1918–1939," in *Zagadnienia religijne i narodowościowe we współczesnych badaniach polskich, słowackich i ukraińskich na terenie Euroregionu Karpackiego*, part 2: *Aspekt historyczny, socjologiczny i politologiczny*, eds. K. Rejman and W. Wierzbieniec, Jarosław, 2017, pp. 367–377; N. Krynicka, "Świat przestępczy w literaturze jidysz," *Midrasz* 12 (1999), pp. 2–21; B. Kułan, "Komuniści w więzieniu w Kielcach w świetle raportów Straży Więziennej w latach 1932–1935," *Świętokrzyskie Studia Archiwalno-Historyczne* 8 (2019), pp. 95–119; M. Rodak, *Mit a rzeczywistość. Przestępczość osób narodowości żydowskiej w II Rzeczypospolitej. Casus województwa lubelskiego*, Warsaw, 2012.

¹⁵⁹ J. Gliksman, *Struktura zawodowa i społeczna ludności żydowskiej w Polsce*, Warsaw, 1930; S. Bronszejn, *Ludność żydowska w okresie międzywojennym*, Warsaw, 1963; W. Jaworski, *Stosunki demograficzne ludności żydowskiej w województwie śląskim w latach 1922–1939*, Katowice, 1991; A. Melezin, *Przyczynki do znajomości stosunków demograficznych wśród ludności żydowskiej*, Łódź, 1946; K. Ożóg, "Ruch naturalny ludności żydowskiej w okręgu metrykalnym w Rzeszowie w latach 1842–1943," *Prace Archiwalno-Historyczne* 26 (2014), pp. 67–99.

emigration. In the interwar period, the Jewish population in the Second Polish Republic experienced consistent growth, driven by elevated birth rates and continued arrivals from neighbouring regions. In 1924, the Polish *Aliyah* took place in connection with the reforms of Władysław Grabski.¹⁶⁰ At the end of the interwar period, Poland ceased to be attractive to some Jews, and emigration increased.¹⁶¹ Few historians dealing with the interwar period conduct research based on registry books.¹⁶²

One may infer that large-scale assimilation among Jews was limited.¹⁶³ Mixed marriages and informal unions exhibited the highest degree of assimilation. Upon entering such relationships, young individuals tended to reside within Polish communities, and their children were brought up in the Roman Catholic – or other Christian – faith. Research in this area remains challenging due to the limited number of documented cases and the scarcity of available sources. Converts also deserve mention, as their level of assimilation was notably significant.¹⁶⁴ We are talking about a relatively small group of people, whom the authors mentioned in connection with other research topics (for example when attempting to analyse industrialists as a social group).¹⁶⁵

Projects and Conferences

As part of its research project titled “The History of Jews in Poland and Polish-Jewish Relations, 1917–1990,” the Institute of National Remembrance released a series of related publications, including *Nasi sąsiedzi Żydzi. Z dziejów relacji polsko-żydowskich na Kielecczyźnie w XX wieku* (Our Jewish Neighbours. From

¹⁶⁰ S. Rudnicki and M. Wójcicki, “„Polska” alija,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 1 (2008), pp. 20–34.

¹⁶¹ A. Patek, *Żydzi w drodze do Palestyny 1934–1944. Szkice z dziejów aliji bet – nielegalnej migracji żydowskiej*, Cracow, 2009.

¹⁶² L. Frączek, “Śluby Żydów w Lelowie w latach 1872–1938,” *Świętokrzyskie Studia Archiwalno-Historyczne* 8 (2019), pp. 13–29.

¹⁶³ A. Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech... Asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej*, Warsaw, 2006.

¹⁶⁴ The topic calls for further, detailed examination. See also A. Szumański, “Moje lwowskie utracone dziedzictwo,” in *Funkcjonariusze Policji Państwowej w II Rzeczypospolitej*, pp. 229–247; T. Wiśniewski, “Konwersje Żydów na ziemiach polskich. Studium przypadku misji barbikańskiej w Białymstoku 1924–1939,” PhD thesis, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań 2011, <https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/server/api/core/bitstreams/a1c4adc7-66c5-42e0-9024-16d6b63cce07/content> (accessed 20 May 2025).

¹⁶⁵ E. Majcher-Ociesa, “Przemysłowcy wyznania mojżeszowego w województwie kieleckim w latach 1919–1939. Próba charakterystyki środowiska,” *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio F Historia* 76 (2021), pp. 277–299.

the History of Polish-Jewish Relations in the Kielce Region in the 20th Century) edited by Agnieszka Dziarmaga, Dorota Koczwańska-Kalita and Edyta Majcher-Ociesa,¹⁶⁶ as well as *Żydzi i wojsko polskie w XIX i XX wieku* (Jews and the Polish Army in the 19th and 20th Centuries)¹⁶⁷ and *Relacje polsko-żydowskie w XX wieku* (Polish-Jewish Relations in the 20th Century) – both edited by Tomasz Domański and Edyta Majcher-Ociesa.¹⁶⁸ The first of these books consists of two parts, the second features works submitted by students to the “Nasi sąsiedzi – Żydzi” (Our Jewish Neighbours) competition during its first three editions (2013–2015). These are interviews recorded with people who remember Jews, mainly with Poles. The works touch on a wide range of topics, from economic issues to mixed marriages, and are excellent examples of narratives describing relationships on a micro scale. The first part contains academic articles by historians written on the basis of these competition entries or inspired by them. The competition is still being organised and continues to enjoy sustained interest among students. As part of the project, Kielce also hosts a recurring conference titled “Relacje polsko-żydowskie w XX wieku. Badania – kontrowersje – perspektywy” (Polish-Jewish Relations in the 20th Century: Research, Controversies, Prospects). In 2023, the sixth edition of the conference was held under the title “Stereotypizacja w badaniach nad relacjami polsko-żydowskimi” (Stereotyping in Research on Polish-Jewish Relations).

The Jewish Historical Institute completed the project “Związani historią. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach polskich” (Bound by History. Polish-Jewish Relations in Polish Lands), overseen by Anna Landau-Czajka. It started in 2018 and concluded in 2021. The project aimed to develop a series of publications exploring the coexistence of Polish and Jewish communities within Polish territories. The first volume, authored by Jan Doktor, is titled *Bracia, obcy czy współobywatele? Debaty chrześcijańskie na temat judaizmu i jego wyznawców w Europie do początków XIX wieku* (Brothers, Strangers or Fellow Citizens? Christian Debates on Judaism and Its Followers in Europe until the Early 19th Century). The second volume,¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ *Nasi sąsiedzi Żydzi. Z dziejów relacji polsko-żydowskich na Kielecczyźnie w XX wieku*, eds. A. Dziarmaga, D. Koczwańska-Kalita, and E. Majcher-Ociesa, Warsaw, 2018.

¹⁶⁷ *Żydzi i wojsko polskie*.

¹⁶⁸ *Relacje polsko-żydowskie w XX wieku*.

¹⁶⁹ *Kultura. Literatura, sztuka i nauka w XX wieku*.

edited by Zofia Trębacz, examines aspects of culture, including literature, art, and science of the 20th century. Volume three, edited by Anna Landau-Czajka, is devoted to the theme of locality, presented in *Lokalność. Wsie, miasteczka, miasta na ziemiach polskich od XVI do XX wieku* (Locality. Villages, Towns and Cities in Poland from the 16th to the 20th Century). The fourth volume addresses economic issues.¹⁷⁰ The series is complemented by a publication titled *Żydzi i Piłsudski* (Jews and Piłsudski).¹⁷¹

It is also worth mentioning the research project undertaken by the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences “Społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Nowa próba syntezy” (The Society of the Second Polish Republic. A New Attempt at a Synthesis). Work on the project began in 2012. A series of conferences was held, and articles based on the papers presented there were published in the *Metamorfozy Społeczne* (Social Metamorphoses) series. The organisers looked, among other things, into culture,¹⁷² religion,¹⁷³ socialisation processes,¹⁷⁴ the state¹⁷⁵ and labour.¹⁷⁶ Volume 10 contains a comprehensive summary of the entire series.¹⁷⁷

In addition to the projects mentioned above, noteworthy are the series of conferences centred on the history of Polish-Jewish relations, along with the post-conference publications that emerged from them. In Białystok, meetings titled “Żydzi wschodniej Polski” (Jews of Eastern Poland) are regularly held, focusing on Jewish history in eastern Poland. Since 2013, the Institute of History at Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, in collaboration with the State Archives in Kielce, has been organising a series of popular science sessions titled “Społeczność żydowska w źródle archiwalnym” (The Jewish Community in Archival Sources). These ses-

¹⁷⁰ *Gospodarka. Wybrane problemy gospodarcze na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. A. Landau-Czajka, Warsaw, 2021.

¹⁷¹ *Żydzi i Piłsudski. Wybór źródeł do historii stosunków polsko-żydowskich w okresie międzywojennym*, ed. J. Żyndul, trans. M.M. Bułat, J. Diduszko, R. Gromacka, and A.M. Rosner, Warsaw, 2021.

¹⁷² *Kultura i społeczeństwo II Rzeczypospolitej*, eds. W. Mędrzecki and A. Zawiszewska, Warsaw, 2012 (*Metamorfozy Społeczne*, vol. 4).

¹⁷³ *Religia a społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. T. Stegner, Warsaw, 2013.

¹⁷⁴ *Procesy socjalizacji w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1914–1939*, eds. A. Landau-Czajka and K. Sierakowska, Warsaw, 2013 (*Metamorfozy Społeczne*, vol. 7).

¹⁷⁵ *Państwo i społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*.

¹⁷⁶ *Praca i społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, eds. W. Mędrzecki and C. Leszczyńska, Warsaw, 2014 (*Metamorfozy Społeczne*, vol. 9).

¹⁷⁷ *Społeczeństwo międzywojenne. Nowe spojrzenie*, eds. J. Żarnowski and W. Mędrzecki, Warsaw, 2015 (*Metamorfozy Społeczne*, vol. 10).

sions are held as part of a broader initiative, “Spotkania ze źródłem archiwalnym” (Meetings with Archival Sources), which aims to promote historical awareness and engagement with archival materials.¹⁷⁸

Several notable and thematic conferences have also been held, such as:

- “Rola Żydów w rozwoju gospodarczym ziem polskich” (The Role of Jews in the Economic Growth of Polish Lands) in Łódź, 23–24 September 2013
- “Kultura Żydów polskich w XIX i XX wieku” (The Culture of Polish Jews in the 19th and 20th Centuries) in Kielce, 1992
- “Obszary zgody czy konfliktu? Kresy Północno-Wschodnie II Rzeczypospolitej” (Areas of Consent or Conflict? The North-Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic) in Białystok–Tykocin, 24–25 September 2012.¹⁷⁹
- Furthermore, a number of town-specific conferences have taken place, including:
 - Częstochowa: “Żydzi częstochowianie – współistnienie, Holocaust, pamięć” (Jews – Częstochovians: Coexistence, Holocaust and Memory) in 2004
 - Cracow: “Żydzi w Małopolsce” (Jews in the Little Poland Region) in 1991
 - Lublin: “Żydzi w Lublinie” (Jews in Lublin) in 1995 and 1998.

Polish-Jewish relations have also been addressed during broader conferences on national minorities, including:

- Wrocław: “Rola mniejszości narodowych w kulturze i oświacie polskiej w latach 1700–1939” (The Role of National Minorities in Polish Culture and Education in the Years 1700–1939) in 1998
- Gdańsk: “Między Odrą i Dnieprem. Wyznania i narody” (Between the Oder and the Dnieper. Religions and Nations) held in 1997 and 2000.

Research Topics Requiring Further Exploration

Several key aspects of Polish-Jewish relations remain insufficiently explored by historians. These include Jewish attitudes toward the newly reestablished Polish state, the nationality policies pursued by Polish governments during the interwar period and their consequences for interethnic dynamics, Jewish po-

¹⁷⁸ Reports on these events are published annually in the yearbook *Świętokrzyskie Studia Archiwalno-Historyczne*.

¹⁷⁹ *Obszary zgody czy konfliktu?*

litical affiliations and involvement in both national and local governance, and Jewish contributions to Poland's economy across sectors such as industry, trade, craftsmanship, agriculture, transport, and communications. Interactions between Jewish communities and the largely Polish administrative apparatus also warrant further investigation. A notable gap exists in comprehensive, nationwide studies that provide macro-level analysis, as well as research addressing how Polish-Jewish relations have been perceived internationally. Notably, Przemysław Różański has examined these relations from the vantage point of the American discourse,¹⁸⁰ but the topic has not been exhausted. Dariusz Jeziorny, in turn, examined how British influence shaped legal regulations concerning Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁸¹

Among the many topics not yet addressed by historians are Polish-Jewish relations in rural areas.¹⁸² This topic is difficult to research due to the small number of preserved sources or accounts. However, we should remember that the majority of the Polish population of the Second Republic lived in rural areas, and this is a serious gap in research. There is limited research on Jews living in rural areas, whether engaged in farming or other professions like trade and craftsmanship, as well as on those who owned land during that time.¹⁸³ The state

¹⁸⁰ P. Różański, *Amerykańscy Żydzi i amerykańska dyplomacja wobec kwestii żydowskiej w Polsce 1922–1939*, Gdańsk, 2013; D. Jeziorny, *Londyn wobec ochrony mniejszości żydowskich w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej (1918–1919)*, Łódź, 2016.

¹⁸¹ D. Jeziorny, *Londyn wobec ochrony mniejszości*; K. Szudarek, "Rola Wielkiej Brytanii w ustanowieniu systemu ochrony praw mniejszości narodowych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej po I wojnie światowej. Artykuł recenzyjny monografii Dariusza Jeziornego „Londyn wobec ochrony mniejszości żydowskich w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej (1918–1919)”, Łódź 2016, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, ss. 192,” *Historia Slavorum Occidentis* 4 (2021), pp. 248–261.

¹⁸² Among the limited publications available on Jews in rural areas are: M. Chorążki, "Gmina Michałowice w latach 1918–1939," in K. Meus and M. Chorążki, *Na granicy. Monografia historyczna gminy Michałowice od schyłku XVIII wieku do 1949 roku*, vol. 2, Michałowice, 2018, pp. 178–179; M.B. Markowski, "Udział ludności żydowskiej w rolnictwie i handlu wiejskim województwa kieleckiego w latach 1918–1939," *Kieleckie Studia Historyczne* 8 (1990), pp. 207–227; *Żydzi wiejscy i małomiasteczkowi w obrazie wiosek i sztetli przełomu XIX i XX wieku*, eds. A. Dziarmaga and K. Karbownik, Kielce, 2024; E. Majcher-Ociesa, "Społeczność żydowska na wsi w świetle prac nadesłanych na konkurs dla uczniów „Nasi sąsiedzi – Żydzi”," in *Wieś polska na przestrzeni dziejów*, vol. 2: *II Rzeczpospolita i okres II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Klusek, Warsaw, 2024, pp. 105–126.

¹⁸³ E. Majcher-Ociesa, "Majątki ziemskie w posiadaniu Żydów w województwie kieleckim w latach 1918–1939," in *Rola Żydów w rozwoju gospodarczym*, pp. 175–188; E. Majcher-Ociesa, "Geislerowie z Wyczęrp Dolnych – przemysłowcy czy ziemianie?," *Studia z Historii Społeczno-Gospodarczej XIX i XX Wieku* 8 (2010), pp. 245–258.

of research on this topic has been addressed by Stanisław Mańko. His study, however, is incomplete.¹⁸⁴

Polish-Jewish relations within the Polish Army and officer corps, as well as the issue of desertion and avoidance of military service, remain topics that have yet to be thoroughly investigated. It is worthwhile to examine the actions of individual Jewish military personnel, though this topic should not be approached in a hagiographic manner. There is also a lack of research on religious life. Attachment to religion and the cultivation of tradition are among the few characteristics shared by Poles and Jews. Several works have been devoted to the functioning of Jewish religious communities during the Second Polish Republic,¹⁸⁵ but there are no publications on the supervision of these communities by the Polish administration. From a wider perspective, one may wonder what factors influenced Polish-Jewish relations in the context of Poles' relations with other minorities, such as Germans or Ukrainians. Was there any cooperation between minorities living in the Second Polish Republic against the Poles? One may also ask whether the Jewish population in the Second Polish Republic was a national or religious minority. Among the smaller topics, it is worth noting the issue of Polish language knowledge in this community.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the need for objectivity and balance in research on Polish-Jewish relations. It is essential to remember that the historian's role is to explain phenomena within a framework of cause and effect – not to provoke emotions or lend support to contemporary political agendas. In the pursuit of objectivity, historians should draw on all available sources, rather than selectively relying on materials that align with their thesis or originate from a particular community. At times, even the titles of certain publications may ap-

¹⁸⁴ S. Mańko, "Polacy i Żydzi w środowisku wiejskim Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Płaszczyzny współpracy i konfliktów," in *Gospodarka*, pp. 39–55.

¹⁸⁵ W. Jaworski, "Władze żydowskich gmin wyznaniowych w Modrzejowie i Sosnowcu (1868–1948)," *Rocznik Sosnowiecki* 7 (1998), pp. 159–162; T. Kawski, *Gminy żydowskie pogranicza Wielkopolski, Mazowsza i Pomorza w latach 1918–1942*, Toruń, 2010; T. Kawski, *Żydowskie gminy wyznaniowe w II Rzeczypospolitej. Studium historyczno-administracyjne*, Bydgoszcz, 2014; K. Urbański, *Gminy żydowskie duże w województwie kieleckim*, Kielce, 2003; K. Urbański, *Gminy żydowskie małe w województwie kieleckim w okresie międzywojennym*, Kielce, 2006; W. Wierzbieniec, "Z dziejów gminy żydowskiej w Rzeszowie (od XVI do XX wieku)," *Prace Historyczno-Archiwalne* 3 (1995), pp. 79–90; M. Widera, "Gmina wyznaniowa żydowska w Wieluniu w II Rzeczypospolitej w dokumentacji Archiwum Państwowego w Łodzi," *Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego* 39 (2019), pp. 211–230.

pear striking, as they embed a predetermined thesis and evoke strong emotional responses. Moreover, Polish-Jewish relations must be regarded as both Polish and Jewish in equal measure. During the interwar period, responsibility for the nature of these relations rested with both communities, and thus both nations share accountability for their quality.

Closing Remarks

The issue of Polish-Jewish relations continues to attract sustained attention from historians, though research efforts have been unevenly distributed. Scholarship has primarily centred on specific themes, such as anti-Semitism, anti-Jewish events, World War II, and the post-war period. Meanwhile, the interwar era appears to remain on the periphery of mainstream research, with economic interactions being especially overlooked.

Polish-Jewish relations in the Second Polish Republic were shaped by a range of factors and stemmed from events that were pivotal to the shared history of both communities. The year 1918, marking the rebirth of the Polish state, was undoubtedly a turning point. Particular attention should be given to the period of border formation (1918–1921) and the Polish-Jewish negotiations that took place during those years. External pressure from the Jewish diaspora in the United States did not help improve the situation. The nationality policies implemented by the partitioning powers significantly affected Polish-Jewish relations, with their consequences still evident in the 1920s. These relations took on different characteristics in the 1920s compared to the 1930s and varied notably between large urban centres and smaller towns or villages.

Interactions between the Polish and Jewish communities were primarily centred around economic activities. Jews also engaged regularly with the state administration, which was largely staffed by Poles. The literature on the subject indicates that Jews participated actively in political, educational, and cultural spheres. They played a significant role in the economy and had representation in both the Sejm and the Senate.

On a macro scale, Polish-Jewish relations in the interwar period can be considered rather cool. They were negatively affected by prejudices dating back to the partitions and the closed nature of the communities. However, among the whole

range of behaviours on a micro scale, neutral and positive ones prevailed, with anti-Jewish events and anti-Semitism constituting only a small part of them. The lives of both Jews and Poles were filled primarily with hard work and brightened by holidays.

This article does not claim to offer an exhaustive account of Polish-Jewish relations during the interwar period. My aim has been to outline the current landscape of scholarly research, highlighting both the areas that have received substantial attention and those that remain underexplored. In reflecting on the state of research, I have shared personal observations on the challenges inherent in historical inquiry and pointed to key events that influenced how Jews were viewed within Polish society. These reflections are intended as a contribution to a wider, ongoing dialogue.

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WORKING FOR GERMANS AS A SURVIVAL STRATEGY: JEWISH WOMEN IN OCCUPIED CRACOW – EVIDENCE FROM TESTIMONIES AND MEMOIRS

Summary

The article examines the little-researched fate of Jewish women in German-occupied Cracow, focusing on their survival strategies on the so-called Aryan side. It analyses selected cases of women who hid under false identities and found employment with German officials and Volksdeutsche in Cracow and its surroundings. Particular attention is given to those women who, on Aryan papers – most often as Poles – left to perform forced labour in the Third Reich. This article examines strategies of survival in a German environment and how Jewish women adapted to extremely dangerous conditions. It also considers cases in which women were assisted, consciously or not, by Germans. The text draws on memoirs and is intended as a contributory study, outlining directions for further research, including the need to compare Jewish survivors' testimonies with other accounts.

Keywords

Cracow • German occupation • Jewish woman • Aryan side • Germans • Volksdeutsche • forced labour • Third Reich

The history of Jewish women in occupied Cracow has been approached from various angles, yet numerous dimensions still require deeper investigation.¹ These include forced labour for German entrepreneurs as one of the ways of surviving during the existence of the Cracow ghetto. Women were employed, among others, in the factory of Austrian entrepreneur Oskar Schindler or in Juliusz Madritsch's clothing factory, and after the liquidation of the ghetto, also in the ZAL/KL Plaszow camp. Due to this, among other things, they survived the war.² Another theme concerns Jewish women who found themselves on the so-called Aryan side and the survival strategies they adopted. Each survivor's story reveals distinct events, circumstances, actions and strategies that must be considered in any comprehensive analysis of Jewish life on the Aryan side and of Polish-Jewish, German-Jewish, Polish-German, and Jewish-Jewish relations during the war.

One particularly noteworthy strategy was the use of false identities by Jewish women employed as domestic workers in the households of German officials or Volksdeutsche in Cracow and its surroundings. Another, still unexplored, area concerns Jewish girls and women living on the Aryan side under assumed names – most often as Poles – who left Cracow to work as forced labourers in the Third Reich. In archival collections, I found several examples of such women³ of various ages and family statuses (some with children, some without). Although further research will most likely reveal additional examples, at this stage it is impossible to define the scale of this phenomenon.

In this text, I recount twelve stories of women who either worked for Germans or Volksdeutsche on the Aryan side in Cracow or left to work as forced labourers in the Third Reich. Some of them were native Krakovians, others found themselves in the city and stayed there during the German occupation but came from Lwów or other places.

¹ Cf. M. Grądzka-Rejak, *Kobieta żydowska w okupowanym Krakowie 1939–1945*, Cracow, 2016; L.J. Weitzman, "Living on the Aryan Side in Poland. Gender, Passing, and the Nature of Resistance," in *Women in the Holocaust*, eds. D. Ofer and L.J. Weitzman, New Haven, CT, 1998, pp. 187–222; M. Mariańska and M. Mariański, *Wśród przyjaciół i wrogów. Poza gettem w okupowanym Krakowie*, Cracow, 1988.

² See, among others, "Schindler Oskar & Emilie (Pelzl)," <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4017377> (accessed 16 April 2025); "Madritsch Julius," <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4016227> (accessed 16 April 2025); "Titsch Raimund," <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4017885> (accessed 16 April 2025).

³ These are primarily memoirs identified during research, mainly in the Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, the Yad Vashem Archives, and in published memoir literature.

The article aims to examine the survival strategies of Jewish women in occupied Cracow, whether among Germans or as forced labourers in the Reich. The analysis focuses on their everyday choices, methods of adapting to extremely dangerous conditions, and – so far as the sources permit – the relationships they established with German employers, supervisors, and civilians in the hope of sustaining their false identities, preserving their lives, or improving their own and their families' situations. Particular attention is also given to cases in which Jewish women received help, consciously or unconsciously, from Germans living in Cracow. In this context, I give examples of Germans (or Austrians) who were awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations after the war. I also draw attention to cases of women who chose the homes of, for example, German officials as their place of work and existence on the Aryan side. I examine these cases based on the women's memoirs. In the text, I discuss selected cases, draw attention to various issues related to them, and pose research questions – including those for which there are no clear answers yet, which is why the article serves as an introduction to the topic. The text is a contribution outlining the issue in question. There is no doubt that this issue is so complex that it requires further, in-depth research, including statistical research. It is also worth attempting to compare the descriptions left by Jewish women with what their German employers had to say about forced labourers, if this can be gleaned from the sources. I leave this issue as a research problem for further investigation.

In the context of Jewish women who attempted to hide among Germans and Volksdeutsche as a survival strategy in occupied Cracow, many important research questions arise that require further in-depth analysis. First and foremost, it is worth examining the most common forms of employment for Jewish women on the Aryan side and how their situation differed depending on social, geographical and class factors. It is also crucial to understand what adaptation strategies – including both identity camouflage and the social skills necessary to survive in a foreign environment and a state of constant threat – these women used to obtain and keep their jobs. Also noteworthy are the roles of appearance, accent, place of origin and other behavioural factors, which were so important in the process of blending into society and avoiding exposure. It should be noted that, largely because of the specific conditions that made survival possible and shaped the choice of strategies,

these testimonies contain virtually no information about the Orthodox Jewish community and therefore provide no insight into the experiences of religious women. Instead, they are dominated by the memories of assimilated individuals who spoke Polish rather than Yiddish and who had abandoned Jewish tradition and religious practice. Descriptions of ritual, symbolic, or metaphysical aspects are also absent. Nevertheless, survival on the so-called Aryan side depended above all on securing a place to live and a source of income. It also seems important to ask questions about the nature of the relationship between the women in hiding and their employers – the Germans and Volksdeutsche. As a rule, the details of these relationships are unknown, so it is necessary to reconstruct them based on scattered memories, archival sources and trial documents.

This raises the question of the moral tensions that may have accompanied these women – whether and how they coped with the feeling of losing their identity or benefiting from the support of the occupier, even if their motivation was solely the will to survive (their own and/or that of their immediate family). Another important aspect is the role of informal support networks – contacts among Poles, acquaintances in the administration, circles of the intelligentsia, or neighbours – which were often crucial for finding work or for finding shelter in critical situations. Following this line of thought, asking about this phenomenon allows us to consider the extent to which working for the occupier was something exceptional and dependent on individual circumstances. Equally important is the need to analyse why this topic appears so rarely in post-war testimonies and historiography. It may have been treated as a taboo, suppressed by shame, moral ambiguity, or the difficulty of clear evaluation. At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that the phenomenon was marginal and therefore not widely discussed. Further research is required on how this form of survival is represented in autobiographical narratives and related literature, to understand how the memory of these experiences has been reshaped in culture and how it influences collective perceptions of the Holocaust as an extreme experience in which every act of rescue involved complex and often dramatic existential choices. This article seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate by outlining current research on the survival strategies of Jewish women in occupied Cracow. It highlights statistical data and examines the situation of Jewish women in the city after the outbreak of the war, which shaped their

subsequent fate. The discussion then turns to examples of women whose survival strategies involved working for Germans in Cracow or leaving to perform forced labour in the Reich.

Current Research on the Survival Strategies of Jewish Women on the Aryan Side

When analysing the extensive historiography of the German occupation in Cracow, it is noticeable that there is still a lack of broader discussion of the survival strategies adopted by Jews, or more specifically Jewish women, in this city. No full-length study has yet been devoted to the Jews who hid on the Aryan side in the capital of the General Government.⁴ The topic reappears in academic and popular science works, but rather in the form of case studies than comprehensive analyses. An example is Monika Stępień's article about the fate of Hela Fisher (Wanda Raczyńska), Miriam Hochberg (alias Mariańska; Maria Górka being her name on the Aryan side), and Mordechaj Peleg (Józef Mieczysław Piotrowski, later Mariański), all living in Cracow under false identities.⁵ In it, the author shows how different the fates of those in hiding could be. Although Miriam Hochberg, under the pseudonym Mariańska, was seeking shelter for herself and her husband, she was also an activist in the Cracow underground and the Żegota organisation,⁶ helping other persons in hiding. Hela Fisher, by contrast, lived under so-called Aryan papers, passing as Polish. The article demonstrates

⁴ Emanuel Ringelblum described a division of Jews into two categories during the war: those living "above the surface," that is, among Poles, and those living "below the surface," in constant hiding. See, E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*, Warsaw, 2020. Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow also uses the term "at the surface." M. Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość. Polscy Żydzi ocaleni „na aryjskich papierach”. Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego*, Warsaw, 2004, pp. 13–15; J. Nalewajko-Kulikow, *Strategie przetrwania. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy*, Warsaw, 2004, p. 8; G.S. Paulsson, *Utajone miasto. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy (1940–1945)*, Cracow, 2007, pp. 18–46; L.J. Weitzman, "Living on the Aryan Side," pp. 187–222. Cf. R. Gieroń, "Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na obszarze województwa krakowskiego w okresie II wojny światowej. Stan badań," in *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką. Przegląd piśmiennictwa*, eds. T. Domański and A. Gontarek, Warsaw–Kielce, 2022, pp. 269–318.

⁵ Cf. M. Stępień, "Dzień powszedni „papierowych Żydów” na przykładzie losów H. Fisher i M.M. Mariańskich," <http://www.wkj.ihuw.pl/wkj/index.php?page=sekcja-dzien-powszedni-zagladay> (accessed 20 August 2018).

⁶ See also B. Heksel and K. Kocik, *Żegota. Ukryta pomoc*, Cracow, 2017; T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945*, ed. A. Namysło, 2nd ed., Warsaw, 2020.

how complex and demanding this subject is, and how each case represents an individual struggle for survival.

I have previously analysed the coping strategies adopted by Jewish women on the Aryan side of the city and its surroundings in several publications.⁷ I also described one of these strategies, undertaken by both women and men: conversion and baptism in the Catholic rite.⁸ One research area that has not yet received broader and comprehensive treatment is the issue of Poles and representatives of other nationalities who offered assistance to Jews in Cracow and its surroundings, as well as those who received such help. This topic has been partially addressed in Krystyna Samsonowska's analyses.⁹ The question of survival strategies on the Aryan side, from the perspective of personal experience, is discussed in published memoirs, including those of Bronisław Szatyn, Julian Aleksandrowicz, Natan Gross, the Mariański couple, Roma Ligocka and Roman Polański.¹⁰ A great deal of

⁷ M. Grądzka-Rejak, *Kobieta żydowska*; M. Grądzka-Rejak, „Myśmy się nawzajem poznawały po oczach”... Z badań nad strategiami przetrwania kobiet żydowskich funkcjonujących „na powierzchni” po tzw. aryjskiej stronie w okupowanym Krakowie i okolicach,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 26 (2015), pp. 51–74; M. Grądzka-Rejak, „Usiłujemy żyć, jak gdyby nigdy nic. „Aryjskie” losy dwóch Żydówek krakowskich: Ireny Markiewicz i Marii Steczko, zapisane w pamiętnikach,” in *Kobieta i mężczyzna. Jedna przestrzeń – dwa światy*, eds. B. Popiołek, A. Chłosta-Sikorska, and M. Gadocha, Cracow–Warsaw, 2015, pp. 171–184.

⁸ M. Grądzka-Rejak, „Zapewniają, że szukają tylko Boga i swego zbawienia”. Konwersje wśród Żydów w okupowanym Krakowie w latach 1939–1942,” in *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici. Wokół pomocy Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Wenklar, Cracow, 2021, pp. 103–124; M. Grądzka-Rejak, „Od dłuższego czasu straciłem wszelki kontakt z żydami i żydostwem”. Neofici w okupowanym Krakowie w świetle materiałów Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 13 (2017), pp. 342–371. Cf. also A. Baciński, „Akcje organizacyjne arcybiskupa Adama Stefana Sapiehy na polu charytatywnym podczas okupacji niemieckiej (1939–1945),” in *Księga Sapieżyńska*, vol. 1: *Archidiecezja krakowska za pasterzowania Adama Stefana Sapiehy*, eds. J. Wolny and R. Zawadzki, Cracow, 1982, pp. 293–307; J. Czajowski, *Kardynał Adam Stefan Sapieha*, Wrocław, 1997; S. Dobrzański, „Archidiecezja krakowska podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945,” in *Księga Sapieżyńska*, vol. 1, pp. 437–460.

⁹ K. Samsonowska, „Pomoc dla Żydów krakowskich w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. A. Żbikowski, Warsaw, 2006, pp. 827–856; K. Samsonowska, „Pomoc Żydom i ratowanie ich w Krakowie w okresie okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945,” in *Krakowscy sprawiedliwi. Motywy, postawy, przesłanie*, Cracow, 2013, pp. 21–33; Cf. also M. Grądzka-Rejak, „Krakowscy Sprawiedliwi. Stan badań i portret zbiorowy,” in *Co warto, co się opłaca. Sprawiedliwi a kolaboranci*, ed. A. Bartus, Oświęcim, 2022, pp. 143–166; *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata. Ratujący Żydów podczas Holokaustu (Polska)*, ed. I. Gutman, Cracow, 2009; T. Seweryn, „Wielostronna pomoc Żydom w czasie okupacji hitlerowskiej,” *Przegląd Lekarski – Oświęcim* 1 (1967), pp. 162–183.

¹⁰ A. Peleg and B. Łabno, „Maria Hochberg-Mariańska,” in *Wojna to męska rzecz? Losy kobiet w okupowanym Krakowie w dwunastu odsłonach*, Cracow, 2011; B. Szatyn, *Na aryjskich papierach*, Cracow,

information on this subject can also be found in unpublished personal documents from the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, the Yad Vashem Institute and the Shoah Foundation.¹¹ The role of work as a crucial element of survival strategies has not yet received a thorough analysis. Employment served as camouflage, providing apparent legitimacy for residence and existence on the Aryan side. It also mattered for economic, psychological and social reasons.

The material aspects of the adopted survival strategies – closely connected with work as a source of livelihood – undoubtedly require further analysis. Attention should be given to cases in which Jews hiding on the Aryan side relied on paid assistance, handing over part of their possessions, most often pre-war property, in return. It is also important to examine how such survival strategies were financed such as through money, valuables, or promises such as the transfer of a flat. Jews hiding on the Aryan side were often compelled to pay ransoms to informers, blackmailers and extortioners in exchange for silence. According to available accounts, these payments sometimes equalled several months' wages at that time.¹² It should be emphasised that the money earned during the war was neither sufficient nor proportionate to the sums demanded. Relations among Jews are also relevant here, especially instances of blackmail by collaborators and efforts to exploit those in hiding financially. The issue of Jewish collaboration with the Germans has been examined by Alicja Jarkowska, though she did not explore the financial dimension of informers' activities in detail.¹³

1983; M. Mariańska and M. Mariański, *Wśród przyjaciół i wrogów*; J. Aleksandrowicz, *Kartki z dziennika doktora Twardego*, Cracow–Wrocław, 1983; N. Gross, *Kim pan jest, panie Grymek?*, Cracow, 2005; “Hannah Barnett,” in *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters. Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust*, ed. B. Gurewitsch, London–Tuscaloosa, 1998; R. Ligocka, *Dziewczynka w czerwonym płaszczyku*, Cracow, 2002; “Miriam Rosenthal,” in *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*; R. Polański, *Roman*, trans. K. Szymanowska and P. Szymanowski, Warsaw, 1989.

¹¹ For more, see *Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, hereinafter AŻIH), 301, Collection of testimonies of Jewish Holocaust Survivors; AŻIH, 302, Collection of diaries of Jewish Holocaust Survivors; Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), O.3, Testimonies of Holocaust Survivors; USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive, <https://vha.usc.edu/home>.

¹² Cf. e.g. AŻIH, 301/1218, Testimony of Barbara Pawlik; AYV, O.4/462, Testimony concerning Stefania Brandstätter.

¹³ A. Jarkowska-Natkaniec, *Wymuszona współpraca czy zdrada? Wokół przypadków kolaboracji Żydów w okupowanym Krakowie*, Cracow, 2018; A. Jarkowska-Natkaniec, *Brunatna pajęczyna. Agenci Gestapo w okupowanym Krakowie i ich powojenne losy*, Cracow, 2024. Cf. also D. Swałtek-Niewińska, “Gospodarowanie żydowskimi meblami w Krakowie w latach 1939–1945. Działalność Möbelbeschaf-

Jewish Woman and the War

The roles assumed by women during the early stages of the German occupation were crucial in shaping the actions and strategies connected to later deportations and the liquidation of the Cracow ghetto. World War II profoundly affected Jewish women's lives, accelerating their entry into the broader public sphere, which was largely driven by the need to work and support their families. In Cracow, many men left in the autumn of 1939 to avoid repression or conscription into the army, leaving women to assume the role of primary breadwinners. This situation also affected Christian women whose husbands, fathers, or brothers were imprisoned in prisoner-of-war camps or remained outside the borders of the General Government. Some women had to endure the consequences of their husbands' involvement in underground activities, which often resulted in their deaths during pacification campaigns. The ability to work, and the opportunity to do so, proved invaluable after the outbreak of the war, during the move to the ghetto, and then throughout its existence until its liquidation. Employment was frequently the only chance for biological survival. Work also offered opportunities to meet others, establish contacts, and maintain mental health. During the liquidation of the ghettos, the ability to work could determine survival in the selection process, even if the outcome was deportation to a labour camp. Considering that many jobs in the Cracow ghetto were controlled by Germans – owners of workshops and factories producing for the Third Reich economy – employment also meant becoming accustomed to working for the occupier as a survival strategy.

The war and occupation became, to some extent, a catalyst for social processes. From the very first weeks, Jewish women, who were often deprived of support from their husbands, fathers, and brothers, had to manage the challenges of daily life and meet the needs of their loved ones alone. During the occupation, the Jewish population was systematically marginalised and impoverished, and women endured further blows: the loss of their homes, the collapse of social circles and families, and, ultimately, the physical loss of parents, husbands, partners, or children. Despite these traumatic experiences, guided by the memory of the dead and

ftungsamt,” in *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950*, eds. J. Grabowski and D. Libionka, Warsaw, 2014, pp. 255–298.

a sense of responsibility for the survivors, many women took action to support their families, trying to resist apathy and despair. In the face of the repression and restrictions imposed by the German occupiers, they took on more and more responsibilities. As a result, as shown by studies on the situation of women in occupied Cracow, they increasingly took centre stage in the family structure.¹⁴ In addition to traditional household tasks, many of them took up paid work, often becoming the main breadwinners for their families.¹⁵ These strategies were particularly important before Operation “Reinhardt.”

Beyond factors such as education, financial status, or physical characteristics, qualities like flexibility, openness, and adaptability to rapidly changing realities played a crucial role in increasing women’s chances of surviving until the end of the occupation. The living conditions imposed by the German authorities rendered existing norms and value systems obsolete, replacing them with new, often arbitrary “rules” that forced Jewish women to adjust and redefine their social roles continually. Despite harsh realities and daily challenges, Jewish women sought to use their limited free time for rest. Such practices remained possible until the German authorities began implementing Operation “Reinhardt.” From that moment, daily priorities shifted entirely – the struggle for biological survival became the overriding goal.¹⁶

From the perspective of this article, two elements are of particular importance: the persistent drive to survive – the will to resist and act even under severe trauma – and the point at which Jewish women began to develop strategies for existence on the Aryan side. The liquidation of the Cracow ghetto, much more so than its creation, was a turning point that prompted the decision to escape and seek refuge outside its walls. This process intensified particularly after December 1942, when, after two mass deportations to the death camp in Bełżec, the ghetto was divided

¹⁴ For more, see M. Grądzka-Rejak, *Kobieta żydowska*.

¹⁵ For comparison, see A. Czocher, *W okupowanym Krakowie. Codzienność polskich mieszkańców miasta 1939–1945*, Gdańsk, 2011.

¹⁶ For more on this topic, see *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 5: *Getto warszawskie. Życie codzienne*, ed. K. Person, Warsaw, 2011; M. Grądzka-Rejak, “„Zdobywczynie życia”. Wybrane aspekty codzienności dziewcząt i kobiet żydowskich podczas okupacji niemieckiej (1939–1942),” in *Rodzina żydowska 1939–1945. Wybrane zagadnienia*, eds. M. Grądzka-Rejak and K. Zieliński, Warsaw, 2024, pp. 73–118. Cf. also M. Ferenc, “„Zaiste, nie mogło być gorszej rzeczy, niż być matką w getcie”. Trzy sceny z getta warszawskiego,” in *Rodzina żydowska 1939–1945*, pp. 47–72.

into two parts, and the Germans were already building the ZAL Plasow forced labour camp. According to the existing memoirs, there was a growing conviction at the time that the ghetto would soon cease to exist. Attempts to escape and leave the ghetto were therefore not only made on the days of its final liquidation (13 and 14 March 1943) but also earlier.¹⁷ With the growing awareness of the impending threat, efforts to obtain false identity documents – the so-called Aryan papers – intensified. These documents enabled people to begin a new life on the other side of the wall, often without the need to remain in hiding.

Female Prisoners Working in Juliusz Madritsch's Clothing Factory and Oskar Schindler's Factory

In the Cracow ghetto, as in other ghettos in the General Government, many people, including women, were employed in factories and workshops. Part of the ghetto functioned as a labour camp that was integrated into the Third Reich economy, which explains the presence of numerous factories both within and near the ghetto, including Juliusz Madritsch's Clothing Factory (*Fabryka Wyrobów Konfekcyjnych Juliusza Madritscha*) at 2 and 3 Podgórski Market Square,¹⁸ the Bonarka brickyard, the Municipal Cleaning Works (*Zakłady Czyszczenia Miasta*) (no women worked there at first, but in January 1942 four were employed, rising to about thirty by April), and Oskar Schindler's Deutsche Emailwarenfabrik in Zabłocie.¹⁹ The Craft Workshops (*Gemeinschaften*) on Krakusa Street, commonly

¹⁷ Cf. AŻIH, 301, Testimonies of the Holocaust Survivors.

¹⁸ Previously, they were located on Węgierska Street. Cf. AŻIH, 302/25, Diary of Michał Weichert, pp. 286–287.

¹⁹ Before the outbreak of World War II, the First Małopolska Factory of Enamelled Tableware and Tin Products "Rekord" (*Pierwsza Małopolska Fabryka Naczyni Emaliowanych i Wyrobów Blaszanych „Rekord”*) operated here. It was established in March 1937 by three Jewish entrepreneurs: Michał Gutman from Będzin, Izrael Kohn from Kazimierz in Cracow, and Wolf Luzer Glajtman from Olkusz. On 15 January 1940, Oskar Schindler leased the factory buildings at 4 Lipowa Street and 9 Romanowicza Street. He also purchased finished and semi-finished products, later acquiring a plot of land on Lipowa Street. Schindler then renamed the factory Deutsche Emailwarenfabrik (DEF) and was listed as its legal owner from 1942 (Cf. A.B. Skotnicki, *Oskar Schindler w oczach uratowanych przez siebie Żydów krakowskich*, Cracow, 2007; M. Pemper, *Prawdziwa historia listy Schindlera*, Warsaw, 2006; S. Müller-Madej, *Dziwczynka z listy Schindlera. Oczami dziecka*, Cracow, 2001). The *Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, hereinafter AIPN) hold testimonies and minutes from inspections of sites connected to these subcamps, *Główna Komisja* (Main Commission, hereinafter GK), 174/344, Materials concerning the subcamps of KL Płaszów; AIPN, GK, 174/345, Materials concerning the subcamps of KL Płaszów.

known as “Optima,” with facilities on Węgierska and Targowa Streets, also played an important role. Orders were also received from the Central Office for Craft Supplies (*Zentrale für Handwerkslieferungen*) at 26 Słowackiego Avenue. Renata Grünbaum,²⁰ who was employed there, mentioned the latter workplace in her testimony. The premises at 2 Lwowska Street housed Emmanuel Wachs’s factory, which produced lamps, bunker fans, and stoves.²¹ In addition, branches of various companies operated in the ghetto. Jewish women were mainly employed in tailoring and shoemaking workshops located, among others, on Węgierska Street (formerly the site of the Optima chocolate factory), as well as in places requiring precise manual work. Almost every one of these establishments employed at least a few women. Sometimes they were employed in administration, but mostly as manual workers in production halls.

Julius Madritsch, a textile expert born in Vienna, became a *treuhänder* (a trustee) during the German occupation of Poland and managed companies designated by the German authorities. These were two textile factories located near the Cracow ghetto. In 1941, Madritsch opened a private factory in the ghetto. Together with the plant manager, Raimund Titsch, he employed Jewish women and men, including those without qualifications. Madritsch and Titsch ensured decent working conditions, larger food rations and the opportunity to interact with Poles. A kosher kitchen was even set up at the workshops.

The Madritsch Clothing Factory specialised in sewing military garments, such as uniforms and overalls, and also produced men’s underwear. The factory in the Cracow ghetto was managed by Karl Heinz Bigell. As one employee, Anna Först, recalled, silk coats for German women were initially sewn there as well. Schorowa (her full personal details are unknown, and several variants of her surname exist), the workshop manager, was responsible for their production.²²

At first, the workshops operated on Węgierska Street, in a privately-owned house with several rooms adapted for use. Initially, only those who owned sewing machines were employed. Work in the factory was regarded as a way to avoid resettlement from Cracow, and Jewish women received food rations for their

²⁰ AŻIH, 301/4215, Testimony of Renata Grünbaum, pp. 9 ff.

²¹ R. Kotarba, *Niemiecki obóz w Płaszowie 1942–1945*, Cracow, 2009, p. 17.

²² AŻIH, 301/1706, Testimony of Anna Först, pp. 5–7.

labour. A few months later, the company moved to Rynek Podgórski, occupying a two-storey building and expanding its production. As a result, more people found employment, including both Jewish and Polish women. The latter worked in separate rooms and, unlike Jewish women, received monetary remuneration, though the specific rates remain unknown. Many Polish women volunteered for work to avoid being sent to forced labour in Germany. Although they worked separately, they were not completely isolated, and there were still spaces where both groups could meet. Anna Först was assigned work even though she did not own a sewing machine; one was lent to her in the workshop. This decision was made under the patronage of the manager, Mrs Schorowa. The women were instructed to work efficiently so that it would remain profitable for the Germans to keep the facility open as long as possible.

The quota was a minimum of four fatigue shirts or five pairs of trousers per person per day, which were given out cut to size. Everyone tried to work above the quota, just to keep their jobs and avoid displacement, so sometimes twice as much was produced. After a few weeks, the quota was increased to seven pairs of trousers or six fatigue shirts. I was not a seamstress, but a bank clerk, yet I learned to sew on a machine and became so skilled that I sewed 6 or 7 pairs of trousers a day.²³

In post-war testimonies, former Jewish workers recalled that some Polish women who came to the factory brought small amounts of food with them. When they returned home, they took away valuable items at almost no cost – items that Jews had exchanged for food.²⁴ However, the scale of this phenomenon is unknown, as is the scale of selfless aid. It should be borne in mind that attempts by Polish women employed in the factory to contact Jewish women may have been hampered by fear of possible consequences, especially after 15 October 1941, when the Germans issued a regulation imposing penalties – including the death penalty – for assisting

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Cf. A. Czocher, *W okupowanym Krakowie*; G. Berendt, “Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po „aryjskiej stronie”” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), pp. 110–143.

Jews.²⁵ The exchange of goods for food was one aspect of Polish-Jewish relations during the German occupation. It was often regarded as a form of assistance and rarely viewed negatively, though at times it could involve coercion or violence. Polish workers exploited this advantage, although their motivations varied. According to Anna Först, work at Madritsch's workshops began at 7 a.m. and lasted until 6 p.m., with a half-hour break for a meal. However, the women employed at the factory did not receive any remuneration, which meant that only better-off Jewish women could do this job. To survive the nearly eleven-hour workday, they had to bring food from home. In the Cracow ghetto, there was a widespread belief that employment "at Madritsch's" provided protection – initially from resettlement from the city, and later also from deportation to the death camp in Bełżec. Indeed, thanks to the efforts of the factory owner, the female employees and staff of Madritsch's workshops were not harmed during the deportation in June 1942. This reinforced the belief that work at the factory was stable and protected against deportation. Unfortunately, according to witness testimonies, in October 1942, almost the entire staff, including the manager, was transported to the death camp in Bełżec. Only a few people survived – those who did not show up for work on the day of deportation or who realised what was happening en route and managed to hide. After this deportation, additional individuals from those remaining in the Cracow ghetto were sent to Madritsch's workshops.

Madritsch and Titsch supplied textiles to other workshops employing Jews. Another factory was also opened in Tarnów, in the local ghetto. A delivery van was used to smuggle food from the Aryan side to the ghetto, which the factory managers turned a blind eye to. Madritsch also helped female employees hide on the Aryan side, with the support of Oswald Bousko,²⁶ an Austrian officer of the German police operating inside the ghetto, and other Viennese police officers.

After the liquidation of the Cracow ghetto (13–14 March 1943), Madritsch sought to enable the female workers from his factory – who had been transferred to the Plaszow camp – to continue working. Initially, he obtained permission for them to go to the factory, which continued to operate on the site of the former

²⁵ The Third GG Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 99 (1941), p. 595.

²⁶ "Bosko Oswald," <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4014067> (accessed 16 April 2025).

quarter. Many people were hidden in the factory. Some of them managed to escape to Tarnów and, from there, even to Slovakia and Hungary. No specific data on this issue is known. At the end of March 1943, Madritsch transferred 232 Jewish workers from Cracow to Tarnów without an SS escort. Many of them managed to escape and survive. Some Jews left the Tarnów ghetto by joining workers heading to work. Over time, Madritsch established a factory on the grounds of the ZAL Plaszow camp, where he provided his workers with slightly better conditions and additional food.

In September 1944, after the liquidation of the Plaszow camp, Madritsch and Titsch tried to transfer the workers to other factories, but without success. However, they managed to send about 100 people to Oskar Schindler's ammunition factory, thus saving them from certain deportation to camps in the Third Reich. After the war, Julius Madritsch published a brochure titled *Menschen in Not!* (People in Need!), in which he described his aid activities. In recognition of his and Raimund Titsch's efforts, the Yad Vashem Institute awarded them the title of Righteous Among the Nations relatively early, on 18 February 1964.²⁷

Another site of forced labour for Jewish female prisoners was a subcamp at Oskar Schindler's factory, located at 4 Lipowa Street. Established in the spring of 1943, the factory itself had already been in operation earlier. At first, Polish workers were employed there, but over time, Jewish prisoners were also sent in. Around 100 people worked there under compulsion and without pay, drawn initially from the Cracow ghetto at the end of 1942 and later from the Plaszow labour camp.²⁸ The prisoners were provided with food. From 8 May 1943, the subcamp formally came under the authority of the main Plaszow camp and was subject to its commandant. Since it was also a site of forced labour for women, I have chosen to include it in this article, while fully aware that it represents a very different survival strategy from taking up work with the Germans on the Aryan side.

The subcamp at Oskar Schindler's factory housed approximately 700 Jewish men and 300 Jewish women. The camp at Deutsche Emailwarenfabrik consisted

²⁷ "Madritsch Julius." Of the more than 360 people honoured with the title of Righteous Among the Nations for helping Jews in Cracow and the surrounding areas, at least nine were of German or Austrian origin.

²⁸ AIPN, GK, 174/344, Testimonies of Abraham Bankier, p. 60.

of four barracks for men, three for women, a kitchen, a barrack for Order Service (*Ordnungsdienst*, OD) functionaries, a small barrack for the so-called *Vorarbeiter* (foremen), a warehouse and an infirmary. After work, men and women were not separated and could spend time together.²⁹ There was also a dental room, a hair-dresser's and a laundry. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by armed sentries. The work of firing pots in huge kilns and in the section where sulphuric acid was used proved to be particularly exhausting.³⁰ The prisoners were supervised by factory foremen and the *Werkschutz* (German industrial guard), and from 1944 onwards also by SS officers.³¹

The liquidation of the subcamp at Oskar Schindler's factory began in August 1944. First, approximately 700 men and 160 women were transported to KL Plaszow, and then to camps located in the Third Reich. As a result of Oskar Schindler's long-term efforts, a camp for a selected group of prisoners was established in Brännlitz (in the Sudetes). It functioned as a branch of the Gross-Rosen concentration camp.³² In the following months, that is in October and November, a group of about 1,100 prisoners, both men and women, were brought there, some of whom worked in the aforementioned subcamp. Most of the workers at the subcamp at Oskar Schindler's factory survived until the end of the war.

Survival strategies

The approximate number of Jews who attempted to hide in occupied Cracow at various stages of the war is unknown. Estimates indicate that, when including converts, pre-war Cracow Jews, and those who sought refuge in the city for varying lengths of time, the population numbered several thousand. By way of comparison, at the beginning of the German occupation, the Jewish population of Cracow numbered roughly 70,000. Following forced resettlements in the second half of 1940 and early 1941, this number decreased by roughly 50,000. Initially, 11,000 Jews were sent to the Cracow ghetto, with slightly more women than men.

²⁹ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007.474.1, Remembrances by Anna Grun, [no page numbers].

³⁰ AIPN, GK, 174/344, Testimonies of Edward Majcherkowicz, pp. 52 ff.; *ibid.*, Testimonies of Róża Nass, p. 58; AIPN, GK, 174/344, Testimonies of Abraham Bankier, p. 63.

³¹ AIPN, GK, 174/344, Testimonies of Róża Nass, p. 58.

³² AIPN, GK, 174/344, Testimonies of Abraham Bankier, p. 64.

It is estimated that by June 1942, the number of inhabitants of the ghetto had risen to approximately 20,000. Following two deportation operations to the death camp in Bełżec, and the transfer of Jews from nearby towns, about 11,000 remained in the Cracow ghetto by March 1943.³³ Some of them were looking for the last opportunities to leave the quarter and take refuge on the Aryan side. Emanuel Ringelblum wrote during the war:

There are many Jews hiding in Cracow, despite the significant number of informers and denouncers who mercilessly track them down. Polish-Jewish relations in the Małopolska (namely, Lesser Poland) region have been very good for a long time. Obviously, this has contributed to the rescue of Cracow's Jews. It is worth adding that many Jews from larger provincial cities (Lwów, Cracow, Grodno and others) have been hiding for a year, or perhaps longer, on the Aryan side of Warsaw.³⁴

Regardless of the author's views on the Austrian monarchy's policy towards minorities, this is an important voice concerning the scale of denunciations in the city. Researchers estimate that 1,000–1,500 Jews may have survived the war in Cracow.³⁵ Consequently, there is also no information on how many Jewish women and girls attempted to hide on the Aryan side in Cracow or the surrounding areas. An important factor is the dynamics and change of hiding places after the liquidation of the ghetto, as in some cases these were surrounding towns near Cracow (such as Wieliczka, Wawrzeńczyce, Skała), and even, as Ringelblum mentioned, cities in other districts (for example, Warsaw or Lwów). Considering these diverse factors, it is necessary to examine the subsequent fate of the individuals analysed in this study and to extend the scope beyond Cracow.

To function and survive outside the ghetto, Jews could stay there either quasi-legally or in hiding. The former option was available only to a few – those deemed

³³ Cf. M. Grądzka-Rejak, *Kobieta żydowska*, pp. 40–70; A. Chwałba, *Kraków w latach 1939–1945*, Cracow, 2002; A. Biberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*, Cracow, 2001; R. Kotarba, *Żydzi Krakowa w dobie zagłady (ZAL/KL Plaszow)*, Cracow–Warsaw, 2022.

³⁴ E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*, p. 131.

³⁵ K. Samsonowska, "Pomoc Żydom i ratowanie," p. 22.

to have a “good appearance” who managed to obtain false documents. Properly forged papers created a new identity and offered potential protection in case of arrest. They also enabled access to documents such as a certificate of residence or a Kennkarte (identity card), which, subsequently, made it possible to find employment or housing. The production of the so-called Aryan documents engaged a wide spectrum of Poles, ranging from private individuals and members of various organisations to laypersons and clergy in parish offices.

Gender played a significant role in the survival strategy. Since circumcision did not apply to women, it was much easier for them to hide in non-Jewish surroundings. It was also important to be familiar with the environment in which they lived. In Cracow, both pre-war residents of the city and visitors from other towns stayed on the Aryan side. Natan Gross wrote about one such woman who tried to survive: “A small-town Jewish woman, even an intelligent one, does not know how to behave in such situations. She shows off too much and unnecessarily, which immediately draws attention.”³⁶ A Jew could be recognised for various reasons. It could be done by former colleagues, neighbours, or people whom she or he knew before the war. This made living in Cracow easier for Jewish women from outside the city. Teresa Prekerowa, who was involved in helping Jews during the war, drew attention to the dangers that awaited Jews on the Aryan side in her later scholarly work and monograph on the Council for Aid to Jews “Żegota”:

Much less noticeable to them [the Germans] was the uncertainty in behaviour on the street (Poles were also not at ease when dealing with the occupying authorities). There was no way that accents, specific linguistic expressions or certain cultural differences could give rise to any suspicions. Each of these traits immediately became sufficient clues for local informers and blackmailers – Volksdeutsche, Poles, Ukrainians, and Jewish informers – who could also take advantage of snippets of overheard conversations, information, and rumours. Jews felt besieged by them on all sides.³⁷

³⁶ AŻIH, 301/426, Testimony of Natan Gross.

³⁷ T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom*, p. 265.

In the context of the occupier's difficulty in recognising the origin of women staying on the Aryan side, it is worth noting the words of Natan Gross. In his post-war testimony, he emphasised: "The Germans are worried. They ask Janka and others: 'Are you Jewish?' The Germans are sometimes disarming in their naivety."³⁸ When the Germans employed women as domestic helpers or office workers, and so on, they were usually unable to recognise their nationality. The greater a woman's confidence and her ability to adapt to the new situation and assume the role assigned to her, the lower the risk of her being recognised.

After the liquidation of the Cracow ghetto, other possibilities were sought. Some women tried to live in the city, while others organised places of refuge for themselves in nearby towns. Some chose the alternative of volunteering for forced labour and leaving for the Third Reich. The same was true of working for German officials' families. An analysis of personal documents and post-war accounts shows that this is a separate and important research topic. Almost every story told is an example of a different fate, which must be taken into account when presenting the full picture of the presence of Jewish women on the Aryan side. Some of these fates can be systematised and classified into subgroups, yet many elude the rigid categories imposed by the researcher. Addressing this issue also requires a careful examination of Jewish-German and Jewish-Polish relations.

Working for the Occupier

Once every other possibility was gone, Jewish women even dared to take extremely dangerous steps. One of them was working for the Germans or the Volksdeutsche. Of course, working for one or the other was not always a last resort; it could be the first or the second choice. In the case of the Volksdeutsche, it was particularly noteworthy that some of them had lived in Cracow before the war. There was therefore a risk of being recognised and having their true identity discovered, which is why it was easier to hide for women who came from outside the capital of the General Government.

One example is Anna Weissberg, a former resident of Lwów, who made her way to Cracow during the occupation: "After the August [1942] operation in Lwów,

³⁸ AŻIH, 301/426, Testimony of Natan Gross.

she left for Cracow only with her birth certificate. She found work in a nearby village as a cowgirl through a newspaper advertisement.”³⁹ The operation she wrote about in her testimony took place on 10 August 1942. At that time, the Germans deported about 50,000 Jews from Lwów to the death camp in Bełżec.⁴⁰ Anna did not mention whether her family members were deported at that time.

However, the job she took on after seeing an advertisement in the collaborationist (*gadzinowa*) press proved too physically demanding for her. Based on her testimony after the war, it is impossible to determine exactly what her duties were. Nevertheless, for someone who had previously lived in an urban environment, working in the countryside was so hard that she was unable to cope with it in the long term. Eventually, she returned to Cracow. The testimony is rather laconic, making it impossible to determine which version of her life story Anna Weissberg presented, or whether there was any suspicion that she was concealing something. Such uncertainty might have subsequently led to attempts to probe those suspicions, followed by confrontation, and ultimately denunciation. Nevertheless, in Cracow, the woman “worked as a maid for the Volksdeutsche, without a certificate of residence.” Since she came from Lwów, there was no risk of her true identity being recognised by old acquaintances. This risk could have arisen if she had met someone who also came from Lwów and knew her true origins. Since she decided to work for a family of Volksdeutsche, she must have been convinced that neither her accent nor her characteristic Yiddish expressions would betray her.

Her strategy was interrupted by an event in December 1942. While walking down the street, Weissberg encountered “Obersturmführer Derley, an Austrian who headed the Durchgangslager for Ukrainians at the Sobieski School in Lwów. He also worked there in March 1942, during the first deportation of Jews. At that time, he released many young women.”⁴¹ They knew each other because Anna Weissberg worked at the Sobieski School at the time and was involved in a campaign to feed displaced persons, organised by the Jewish community. According to a post-war testimony, the man approached her and said: “Kleine, du bist klug, ich wunsche

³⁹ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich (1941–1944)*, Warsaw, 2007, pp. 62–63.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ AŻIH, 301/432, Anna Weissberg, p. 3.

dir viel Gluck.”⁴² Despite its rather positive outcome and tone, this event undermined her belief that she remained anonymous in the city. It made her fear that she might be reported to her employers. After several months of uncertainty, in April 1943, Anna Weissberg again encountered an acquaintance, this time a Polish friend from Lwów who came to Cracow. They eventually got married, which allowed her to change her surname, place of work and residence, and enabled her to obtain documents. As she recalled after the war: “Their wedding was officiated by this gentleman’s cousin, whereby he subsequently provided a backdated marriage certificate.”⁴³ Armed with solid “Aryan” papers and a Catholic husband, she was able to live more peacefully in the city. She no longer exercised the opportunity to work for the occupiers.

Another woman, Stefania Cang-Schutzman, who also came to Cracow from Lwów, left a very emotional testimony. Initially, she was there alone, but over time her child and her closest family – her mother, sisters and father-in-law – joined her in the city. The woman described in detail the process of finding a place for herself on the Aryan side:

[...] my hopes were dashed, no one wanted to take me or mine in, I was in an alien place without any friends, knowing that I must not reveal my origins in the slightest, because danger threatened me from all sides. I spent almost every night in a different flat. I made friends with the lowest of society, with prostitutes who, for a hefty fee, knowing who we were, agreed to put us up for one day.⁴⁴

The situation became even more complex when her mother arrived in the city with her child – a son who, to make matters worse, was circumcised. As she herself emphasised, from that moment onwards, it became even more difficult to find a place to hide. Perhaps Stefania and her child did not have what was considered a “good appearance,” which made it harder for them to find shelter and rendered

⁴² *Ibid.* Translation: “Little one, you are clever, I wish you lots of luck.”

⁴³ AŻIH, 301/432, Anna Weissberg, born 10 June 1919, Czortków, p. 3. [The witness’s language reflects archaic Polish usage, including a third-person construction and a form such as “przyczem” (whereby), which I have attempted to render in English – K.D.].

⁴⁴ AŻIH, 301/1794, Stefania Cang-Schutzman.

their identity easier to decipher. The woman recalled: "Out of pity, people let me into their flats for a few hours. Eventually, I made contact with an Aryan family who, for a large fee, took the child in for a while."⁴⁵ A few days later, Stefania, along with a friend of non-Jewish origin who had come to Cracow from Lwów, and other people, was arrested by the Gestapo on charges of belonging to a secret organisation. "What I feared most happened: the Gestapo arrested me, and my baby was left with complete strangers. My despair was boundless, but I knew that I had to play my part to the end."⁴⁶

She spent six weeks in prison. Upon her release, she was only able to see her child briefly: "I went to see my child immediately, but unfortunately, they did not allow me to enjoy my little one for long. The people who were looking after him gently held on to him and forced me out."⁴⁷ Perhaps they feared that after leaving prison, she would be followed, which could bring misfortune to the family where her son was staying. After all these experiences, and because her child was still staying with a Polish family outside the city, she returned to Cracow. There she began working as a seamstress in the military barracks. Four months later, she started working in the home of one of the German military officers. As she herself emphasised in her testimony: "The poor general did not know who he had as a maid."⁴⁸ The woman survived the war.

Other Jewish women living in Cracow on the Aryan side also took up work with German families in the city. We do not know, and will probably never know, the exact scale of this phenomenon, though it does not seem significant. There are isolated references in the existing testimonies that can be treated as research leads. Luba Schonbaum, who became Wanda Mączka after the war, recalled: "After moving to the Susmans, I stopped doing cottage industry work and worked in a German office as a clerk."⁴⁹ To provide another example, in the transcript of Reni Warszawska's testimony, who escaped from the ghetto to the so-called Aryan side in March 1943, it was highlighted that she found accommodation for a few days. The

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ AŻIH, 301/1953, Luba Schonbaum (Wanda Mączka).

woman was looking for work. When she managed to find a job – she took care of the house and the children – her “employers turned a blind eye, even though they suspected.”⁵⁰ To dispel suspicion, she obtained the necessary papers. Over time, she changed jobs and secured a position at the post office. Her situation grew more complicated in July 1943, when her brother was arrested and she and her daughter lost their home. Taking a risky step, she found accommodation with a German family, though she did not reveal her name. “A German housewife. She took her in. After three days, she returned to work. She stayed with the German woman for a week and ate there. They didn’t know what to do. She lost her job. She went to the countryside to Wesołowo near Tarnów.”⁵¹ This short excerpt suggests that she was treated rather well by her German hostess. The woman survived the war.

Anna Landesman’s testimony is emotional, though still largely laconic. She possessed Aryan papers, which gave her confidence in her actions. She bribed an official from the Wohnungsamt (German Housing Authority) to be granted her former flat again. At the same time, she obtained a work permit from the Arbeitsamt (German Employment Office) and secured a position there. Reality, however, proved markedly different from her expectations. As she recalled: “The conditions here are terrible for Poles, civil servants are not allowed to speak Polish. I worked for four months. I got on the wrong side of a German woman and was fired from my job. I thanked God, because I lived in constant fear that someone from the members of the public would recognise me.”⁵² Despite the secure position that her forged documents gave her, the woman still feared exposure. The conditions that prevailed among German officials were not favourable and caused excessive psychological stress. After some time, Anna Landesman resigned from the job there.

It is also worth mentioning P.P. Witkowski, who served as managing director of the Todt Organisation factory in Lwów during the German occupation of Poland. In 1941, Helena Hauser (née Koch) and her husband Wilhelm found employment at the plant, both using forged identity documents that confirmed their Aryan origin. Witkowski, aware of their Jewish origins, warned Wilhelm Hauser, who was not fluent in Polish, that his situation was particularly dangerous. He suggested moving

⁵⁰ AŻIH, 301/438, Renia Warszawska, born in 1920 in Łuck.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² AŻIH, 301/622, Anna Landesman on Zakrzówek.

to other, more provincial areas, where he would have a better chance of remaining anonymous. Shortly afterwards, Witkowski learned that Hauser and several other Jews had been arrested by the Gestapo and murdered. After this tragedy, Witkowski took care of the surviving members of the family – Wilhelm’s wife, their daughter, and mother-in-law – and sent all three to his sister Hedwig Kretchmar, who lived in Cracow. Kretchmar provided them with temporary shelter and enabled Helena to take up employment under a false Aryan identity. However, considering the risk of exposure by former acquaintances, after some time, she decided to send the Hauser family, posing as Polish labourers, to her sister-in-law and mother-in-law in Bautzen, Germany. They stayed and worked there until the end of the war, without revealing their identity. After the war, Helena Hauser remarried and settled in Great Britain. In recognition of their efforts to save lives, Hedwig Kretchmar and P.P. Witkowski were awarded, on 13 September 1979, by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem with the honorary title of Righteous Among the Nations.⁵³

It is worth mentioning here two Germans who stayed in Cracow during the occupation and helped Jewish women and their families. This assistance, in addition to helping them find accommodation or shelter for a certain period of time, included providing Aryan papers and helping them find employment. One of them was Max Nagler, an employee of the German postal service. Following the outbreak of World War II, he was assigned to the Postschutz, a unit tasked with securing postal infrastructure and services. He was sent to Cracow, where he took over a flat formerly belonging to the Jewish Arzewski family. Unlike many other representatives of the German administration, Nagler established contact with the former tenants and gradually became involved in supporting their entire family. His help extended to Stanisław and Bronisława Arzewski, their son Mieczysław (later Michael), Bronisława’s mother Stella Stabryła, and her sister and brother-in-law, Lola and Jakub Feuer. After the forced displacement of the Jewish population from Cracow began in May 1940 – as part of measures aimed at “cleansing” the capital of the General Government of Jews – Nagler continued to keep in touch with the family, who had settled outside the city. He visited them regularly, providing them with food and basic necessities.

⁵³ “Kretchmar Hedwig,” <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4015845> (accessed 16 April 2025).

In the summer of 1942, after the liquidation of the ghettos in the General Government had begun within Operation “Reinhardt,” the Arzewski family decided to return to Cracow. Nagler, who had since moved to a new place of residence, took in the six-member family. He sheltered them for more than two years, from September 1942 until January 1945, when Red Army troops entered the city.

Nagler remained in Cracow and did not withdraw with the German forces. Shortly after the Red Army entered, the surviving Jews reported to the Soviet military authorities together with Nagler, confirming that they owed their lives to him. This did little good, as Nagler was arrested and detained by the Soviet authorities. Despite numerous interventions, he was not released until 1949, when he returned to Germany. Many years later, on 29 June 2015, the Yad Vashem Institute awarded Max Nagler the title of Righteous Among the Nations.⁵⁴

Another person awarded the honorary title was Herbert Vogt, born in 1909 in Oppeln, Silesia (now Opole). During World War II, he worked in the Reich railway administration in Cracow. A deeply religious man who strongly opposed Nazi racial ideology, he aided persecuted Jews by supplying false identity documents that enabled them to live on the Aryan side and by helping them secure employment. In the second half of 1942, Vogt sheltered Stefania Kornfeld, a Jewish woman, and her six-year-old daughter in his flat – the mother for three days and the child for another six weeks. He also assisted Anna Shein, whom he regularly warned of impending roundups. He obtained two sets of documents for her: one under the identity of a Volksdeutsche and another under the identity of a Polish woman. These documents enabled her to survive on the Aryan side, secure employment – with Vogt’s help – and live under a false identity.

In 1943, when Anna Shein was in immediate danger, Vogt took her to the countryside, where she lived under a false identity as a German woman for three months. When she returned to Cracow, Vogt arranged papers for her to travel to Vienna. He also wrote letters of recommendation to trusted individuals who assisted her, enabling her to survive in the Austrian capital until nearly the end of

⁵⁴ “Nagler Max,” <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/5419489> (accessed 16 April 2025).

the war. For his actions, Herbert Vogt was honoured by Yad Vashem on 25 March 1979 with the title of Righteous Among the Nations.⁵⁵

The Fate of Amalia Mames

Born in 1900 in Cracow, Amalia Mames remained in her hometown for some part of the German occupation. In December 1940, like many other Jews, she was forced to leave the city. During the resettlements in 1940 and 1941, approximately 50,000 Jews were transported to various locations in the Cracow District, as well as to other parts of the General Government. These events irrevocably interrupted the continuity of Jewish settlement, family histories and the long presence of Jews in this city. Amalia Mames, together with her husband and teenage children – a son and a daughter – settled in Niepołomice. It is unclear whether they had any relatives there. Nevertheless, the available testimonies indicate that the family lived in relative peace until 21 August 1942. The summer of that year marked the end of the Jewish community in Niepołomice, when, during Operation “Reinhardt,” the Germans deported Jews from many towns in the Cracow District to the death camp at Bełżec. One of the survivors, Julian Fleiszer, recalled:

The Judenrat in Niepołomice near Cracow received an order from Major Kundt in Cracow that all Jews, regardless of age and gender, were to report to Wieliczka by 22 August 1942 at the latest. For this purpose, several hundred carts were made available to the Judenrat in Niepołomice, financed from a fund known as the contribution [paid by Jews].⁵⁶

Attempts were made to calm the Jewish population and assure them that they faced no danger. Survivor Amalia Mames emphasised:

It was forbidden to leave individually, only as part of a transport after gathering in the market square. We had no illusions about our fate, even though many other wise and intelligent people succumbed to delusions, unable to imagine

⁵⁵ “Vogt Herbert,” <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4018099> (accessed 16 April 2025).

⁵⁶ AŻIH, 301/159, Julian Fleiszer.

that such a mass murder, a crime committed against thousands of people, was possible. However, many people sought to escape from Niepołomice.⁵⁷

Among those who managed to escape the city at that time was Amalia's family. The woman recalled that many people tried to flee, aware that staying put was extremely risky. She also recounted the emotions that she and her loved ones experienced at that time: "We did not have the strength to fight, we could not imagine living on false documents and the struggles that would entail, so – by force of inertia – we went to Wieliczka."⁵⁸ The situation in Wieliczka was similar. To avoid further problems with registration, Amalia's husband obtained the so-called Aryan papers for his family. Thanks to this, they were able to leave the town and move to Cracow. They managed to do so before the deportation to the death camp in Bełżec.

Living in her hometown was not the easiest of experiences. The family began a period of wandering between Cracow and the surrounding towns. Amalia Mames emphasised:

We were isolated, living like on an island, separated from the rest of the population in the ghetto. Danger lurked at every turn; every child could betray us. We moved from place to place for four months, through villages and towns, but everywhere we aroused suspicion that we were Jews.⁵⁹

Fears of denunciation, the instability, the absence of permanent housing, and the lack of a steady source of income prompted the family members to separate. The son managed to leave for Tarnobrzeg, while the daughter found shelter with a Polish woman, Bronisława Leśniakowa, in Jasło. The reasons for choosing these particular destinations and the circumstances under which the daughter was placed in contact with Leśniakowa remain unclear. Unfortunately, the girl was soon robbed of her belongings there. Fearing for her future, she fled Jasło and returned to her parents in Cracow. Another chapter of wandering and moving from place to place

⁵⁷ AŻIH, 301/1377, Amalia Mames. The original spelling has been retained.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

began for the family. Because of blackmail and suspicions surrounding them, they separated again. Amalia and her husband headed towards Częstochowa, while her daughter was detained at the Arbeitsamt and taken to the Reich for forced labour. She left as a Polish woman. Amalia recalled:

At my husband's persistent urging, I left for Germany on 18 May 1943. I travelled to Berchtesgaden, where there was a demand for maids at the beginning of the season. My daughter was living in Kassel at the time, and I maintained correspondence with her.⁶⁰

It remains unclear whether her husband sought to protect her from further blackmail and the constant need to change lodgings, or whether he wished her to be closer to their daughter. Both women left the General Government using false (Aryan) papers. It should also be noted that Jewish women from other districts likewise managed to save themselves by leaving to work in the Reich or by taking positions in German offices. This subject requires further investigation in relation to other regions within the General Government.

In the remainder of her testimony, Amalia made no mention of any contact with her son. Regarding her husband, she added that she received letters from him for almost two consecutive months, after which she had no further news from him. As I mentioned, the woman ended up in Berchtesgaden, which was not without significance. Near Obersalzberg was the Berghof – Adolf Hitler's home and official residence from 1936 to 1945. This residence was the centre of Hitler's private and political life, and its location in the mountains provided both impressive views and relative isolation from the outside world. Amalia recalled:

At that time, traffic in Berchtesgaden was still normal, excursions were taking place, and only Germans were allowed to visit. Hitler's residence, the Berghof Obersalzberg palace, towered over the entire town, located over 1,000 metres above sea level, [reachable by] an hour and a half climb on foot. It was a huge housing complex, surrounded by SS barracks and equipped with a shelter. I was

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

informed about this by my employers, the four Rottenhorer sisters, owners of the Wiessbach Hotel. Hitler himself lived in the palace, while his entourage and party members lived in the complex.⁶¹

A bus service reserved for Germans connected the town with the housing estate, while entry was strictly prohibited to people of other nationalities. Amalia's account of how fellow hotel employees perceived the Führer offers particularly interesting insights:

In the environment where I worked, both the owners and tenants harboured an outright hostile attitude toward Hitler and the entire system. My employers trusted me completely and confided their feelings. The atmosphere of terror was so pervasive that they feared even their thoughts might be detected.⁶²

Such was her perspective and her memories of that period. Even if the references to hostility towards the ruling system or trust were exaggerated, certain concerns of the Reich's inhabitants had to be discussed in her presence. Such references are rare in Jewish accounts. The rest of Amalia's statement shows a lack of awareness or interest on the part of these same people in what was happening in the eastern territories occupied by the Reich:

I told them that the Jewish population had been murdered, that the Polish population was being deported en masse and shot. They were astonished and said that it was unbelievable that Germans were capable of such crimes, that there were such hyenas among them.⁶³

The language used in this passage is also important, as it suggests that only certain individuals with criminal tendencies would be capable of such actions. Amalia's life was spent working and concealing her identity. The fact that her stories about the tragedy of the Jewish population in the General Government were not

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

understood certainly affected her mental state, her sense of loneliness and alienation. The testimony does not describe the circumstances, but Amalia's daughter died during the war, and the woman also lost contact with her husband, who most likely also died.

Amalia lived to witness the liberation by the Allied forces. In early May 1945, they entered Berchtesgaden. Her survival strategy proved effective, and she returned to Cracow, where she gave testimony and sought information about her loved ones.

The Fate of Rena Knoll

One of the more widely described examples of survival strategies involving forced labour in the Reich is the story of Rena Knoll, who stayed in the Cracow ghetto and then on the Aryan side. After hiding in the city for some time, she left to perform forced labour in the Reich. Rena was a young girl at the time, born on 12 February 1927 to Ozjasz Knoll (born 23 March 1887) and Lea, née Poss (born 1893). Rena also had a younger sister, Sabina (born in 1930). Most of this information comes from a diary she kept during the war.⁶⁴ Rena's notes concerning her and her family's situation in occupied Cracow and in the ghetto have survived. They provide a detailed and emotional record of a growing girl experiencing her youth during German occupation. Their author left the ghetto on 10 March 1943, a few days before its liquidation. Rena described what happened later in the Aryan side in a post-war testimony given on 4 December 1945 in Cracow.⁶⁵ It is entitled "Papiery Aryjskie" (Aryan Papers) and begins with a brief explanation of why, in the narrator's opinion, the whole family was able to remain in the ghetto until March 1943. The decisive factor was her father's job, as well as her own, in the tailoring department of the Optima company. Rena recalled that there were rumours circulating in the ghetto that Optima was to be moved to the nearby ZAL Plaszow camp at the end of March. The girl's mother suggested that I should "run away to my Polish friends if I wanted to rescue myself, assuring me that she would come for me the very next day. I listened to my mother and went to my friends, the Sagans, who were Polish."⁶⁶ Rena's loved ones were separated. Ozjasz ended up in a camp, while Lea and Sabina made it to

⁶⁴ See R. Knoll, *Dziennik*, with introduction and editing by J. Kowalska-Leder, Warsaw, 2012, pp. 8–9.

⁶⁵ AŻIH, 301/1223, Rena Knoll.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

the Aryan side. Initially, they hid in one of the towns near Cracow, and after a few days they made their way to the city. According to the accounts, Rena never met with them again. She received financial support from her aunt, her mother's sister. After some time, her sister and mother were sent to an OD prison,⁶⁷ and then to the Plaszow camp. Rena wanted to follow in their footsteps, but her aunt stopped her, explaining that she should remain on the Aryan side, live there, settle down and try to get her mother and sister out of the camp. The women even paid a bribe to do so, but the person who was supposed to act as an intermediary was allegedly detained by the Gestapo and lost the money. Rena underlined:

At that time, my aunt Regina Pos risked her life to maintain constant contact between us and the barracks [in Plaszów] to the extent that the Germans put a price on her head because they already knew her description and had circulated it. She advised us to go to Germany for forced labour because the situation was becoming increasingly dangerous, and constant house searches made it impossible to be sheltered by strangers, especially since we had no documents.⁶⁸

This excerpt also shows the tension that existed within the occupied society in Cracow.

Rena described how she managed to find the contact details of a person who acted as an intermediary in transporting people to the Reich for forced labour:

We learned from our host's fiancée about a young man who worked at the Arbeitsamt, deporting Poles to forced labour in Germany. He sent Jews as well but for money. He usually turned those Jews in afterwards.⁶⁹

It is worth adding that the German authorities exerted enormous administrative pressure to deport people for forced labour. Questions remain about the extent of on-site verification of "undesirable" persons, including Jews. It also remains unclear how many other Jewish women took advantage of this intermediary. Later in the

⁶⁷ Prison of the Jewish Ghetto Police (JOD) in the Cracow ghetto.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

testimony, she points out that at that moment she found herself in a situation where she had little to lose. The alternative was to try to continue hiding in occupied Cracow, risking that the person who had mediated in the unsuccessful attempt to get her mother out of ZAL Plaszow might denounce her. She could also, as she had originally planned, try to get into the camp and lose that little bit of freedom. She therefore chose to leave with her aunt for the Reich:

we approached a man named Aleksander Rybik, reportedly an academic. My aunt sold her wedding rings, and each of us gave him two thousand for obtaining *Transportscheins* for the journey. On 10 October 1943, we departed with these documents, accompanied by a certain Polish man, bound for Tirol. During the journey, our papers were inspected six times.⁷⁰

Despite various inconveniences they encountered along the way and fears that they would be recognised at some stage, especially since their documents lacked photographs, which was a serious procedural violation, they reached the town of Igls near Innsbruck. There, Zofia Chrzanowska, a friend of the intermediary Aleksander Rybik, was waiting for them.

According to Rena's testimony, Chrzanowska was of Jewish descent. However, the question of her true identity was not discussed between them. The woman referred them to Józef Bania,⁷¹ a doctor of Polish descent living in Solbad Halle⁷² near Innsbruck. They were to stay there and find employment. Józef Bania appears in Rena's story as an extremely kind and good man:

He was a man with an incredibly kind heart. [...] He showed us an unexpected amount of kindness. He left his work when we approached him and accompanied

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Renia left an interesting description of his story in her post-war testimony: "He was an interesting character. A peasant, the son of a peasant from Tarnów, he was sent to work in Sudetengau, from where he escaped and ended up in a hospital in Innsbruck as a patient. There, he said that he was the son of a doctor who had been killed in Katyn, and so the doctors took care of him. He was quite intelligent and began to study medicine and Latin with enthusiasm. By assisting in autopsies, he learned to perform them so well that he was later paid for it" (*ibid.*).

⁷² Today this town is called Hall.

us to the Arbeitsamt, even though our legs were shaking with fear because we had no documents, except for a fake *Transportschein* without a photograph. We breathed a sigh of relief when we were given jobs as maids in a hotel.⁷³

Rena began working at a hotel where she was to serve alongside a German woman. As she herself recounted, the conditions there were far from standard:

There was a lot of work to do. The worst part was dealing with the German woman who harassed me at every turn. I had a month of peace because she fell ill and I arranged for her to be hospitalised at Bania's. However, when she returned after a month, she got even worse, so I turned to the hotel owner, no longer with a request but with a threat that if she did not relieve me of this German woman, I would do something she would remember. I was in such a mood that I kept thinking about suicide, and I felt guilty for leaving my mother. I kept dreaming about her, crying, and I wanted to go to the camp and share my mother's fate rather than live apart from her in this foreign country, exposed to constant harassment from that old German woman.⁷⁴

The girl managed to obtain permission to be transferred to another hotel where her cousin worked. However, she ended up in an even worse place. The experiences that her cousin had avoided became Rena's lot. In her testimony, she recalled:

I endured three hellish months there. The hotel owner, Rosa Steinmeyer from Halle in Tirol, made our lives miserable, deprived us of food, and used us for the hardest work in terrible conditions.⁷⁵

As in the previous case, Rena managed to have herself dismissed from this job. Until the end of the war, she and her cousin worked in a textile factory and lodged in private accommodation with a German woman. "We stayed there for two whole years, and we were treated very well." They lived to see the end of the war and the

⁷³ AŽIH, 301/1223, Rena Knoll.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

liberation. For some time, they prepared in the *Hachshara* for their departure to Palestine. Ultimately, however, Rena returned for a while to her hometown of Cracow.⁷⁶ Her survival strategy, although in circumstances different from those described in Amalia Mames's testimony, also proved effective.

Conclusion

In the reality of German-occupied Cracow, for some of the Jewish women in hiding, finding employment with the Germans and the Volksdeutsche was a survival strategy. Although extremely risky, it often proved to be their last chance of rescue. However, undertaking this kind of strategy required meeting many conditions, such as having an "Aryan" appearance, usually also appropriate false documents, knowledge of Polish (or German), as well as the ability to blend in socially with the surroundings. Women whose appearance indicated their origin, who spoke with a characteristic accent or who came from Cracow, where the risk of recognition was much greater than in the case of people who had arrived from other cities, found themselves in a particularly difficult situation.

The most common form of work was domestic service as a helper or cleaner. While these jobs provided the bare essentials of subsistence – food and a roof over their head – they carried a constant risk of exposure, whether from employers themselves or from the surrounding community, including neighbours and informers. An even greater danger came with employment in German administrative institutions, which, though they offered higher social status and access to information, required extreme caution, self-control, and resilience.

Informal networks of support – among Poles and others living on the "Aryan side" – were crucial. Neighbourly help, contacts in the administration, or acquaintances within the intelligentsia often determined whether one could secure work or shelter in moments of immediate danger. Even in times of relative stability, women in hiding lived under constant tension: every conversation, a careless gesture, a slip of the tongue, or unwelcome attention from those around them could expose them, leading to arrest and ultimately death.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

The details of the relationships between Jewish women in hiding and their German or Volksdeutsche employers remain unknown. This absence of evidence likely reflects both the scarcity of sources and the difficulty of speaking about such experiences after the war – particularly when they involved violence, coercion, sexual dependence, or morally ambiguous strategies of survival. It should also be recalled that mixed marriages between Jews and nonJews, as well as sexual relations with the so-called Aryans, were explicitly prohibited.

Ultimately, employment with the Germans and Volksdeutsche represented a drastic yet frequently sole avenue of survival for Jewish women in German-occupied Cracow. This path demanded not only compliance with specific conditions but also extraordinary resilience, adaptability, and the ability to sustain an imposed, fabricated identity. While it offered a means to survive, it came at profound emotional and moral expense. Such choices formed part of the wider spectrum of harrowing existential dilemmas confronting Jewish women during the Holocaust.

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THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SURVIVAL OF THE JEWISH POPULATION IN HUTA PIENIACKA AND HUTA WERCHOBUSKA (KREIS ZŁOCZÓW): TESTIMONIES OF SURVIVORS

Summary

The article explores the fate of Jews who went into hiding during World War II in the vicinity of Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska, located in the pre-war Tarnopol Voivodeship (Kreis Złoczów). The region's extensive forest complexes offered favourable conditions for evading German extermination efforts. In these forests, groups of Jews who had escaped from liquidated ghettos and transports to death camps struggled to survive.

The text draws on testimonies from Holocaust survivors, detailing their daily battles with hunger, disease, exhaustion, as well as constant fear. These accounts also shed light on the varied responses of the local population – both Poles and Ukrainians.

On 28 February 1944, Huta Pieniacka was attacked by the 4th Police Regiment of the 14th Waffen SS Grenadier Division "Galizien," with support from troops of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (*Ukrainska Povstanska Armia*, UPA). Some residents, having been warned of the impending assault, managed to flee; the others were murdered, and the village was

destroyed. Although the pacification targeted the Polish population, it also had grave consequences for Jews in hiding, intensifying the danger and severing local support networks.

Keywords

Huta Pieniacka • Huta Werchobuska • Holocaust • Kreis Złoczów • pacification • Jews in hiding

Introduction

This article aims to analyse the circumstances surrounding the hiding of the Jewish population in two pacified localities – Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska (Kreis Złoczów) – and their immediate vicinity. The villages themselves and their surroundings, due to the nearby forest complexes, were a convenient place of refuge for numerous groups of Jews. The issue was presented based on sources of Jewish provenance – specifically, testimonies of Holocaust survivors, from which extensive quotations were drawn.

During the Second Polish Republic, the area in question was located within the borders of the Tarnopol Voivodeship, on the border between the counties of Brody (Huta Pieniacka, Pieniaki Municipality) and Złoczów (Huta Werchobuska, Podhorce Municipality).¹ From the outbreak of World War II until June 1941, the Tarnopol Voivodeship remained under Soviet occupation. After the Third Reich's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, these areas were incorporated into the newly created Galicia District, which became part of the General Governorate on 1 August 1941. Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska

¹ “Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych z dnia 21 lipca 1934 r. o podziale powiatu brodzkiego w województwie tarnopolskim na gminy wiejskie [Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 21 July 1934 on the division of the Brody County in the Tarnopol Voivodeship into rural municipalities],” *Dziennik Ustaw* [hereinafter Dz.U.] 1934, no. 68, item 630; “Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych z dnia 14 lipca 1934 r. o podziale powiatu złoczowskiego w województwie tarnopolskim na gminy wiejskie [Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 14 July 1934 on the division of the Złoczów County in the Tarnopol Voivodeship into rural municipalities],” Dz.U. 1934, no. 64, item 572; *Skorowidz gmin Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Ludność i budynki na podstawie tymczasowych wyników drugiego powszechnego spisu ludności z dn. 9 XII 1931 r. oraz powierzchnia ogólna*, part 3a: *Województwa południowe*, Warsaw, 1935, p. 4.

(located about 2 km apart) were then within the boundaries of Złoczów County (Kreis Złoczów).²

At the turn of February and March 1944, the villages were subjected to a brutal pacification operation carried out by the 4th Police Regiment of the 14th Waffen-SS Grenadier Division, alongside a *kuren* [namely, a company-sized unit] of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) led by Maks Skorupski, who was collaborating with German forces at the time. These actions resulted in the deaths of over a thousand Polish civilians.³ Let us briefly examine the circumstances surrounding this tragedy. It took place in Huta Pieniacka on 28 February 1944. Five days earlier, an armed skirmish occurred between members of the Polish self-defence forces and a reconnaissance unit of the 1st Battalion of the 4th Police Regiment, composed of Ukrainians who were volunteers for the SS Division “Galizien.”⁴ As pointed out by prosecutor Waldemar Szwiec,⁵ who led the investigation into the pacification of Huta Pieniacka,

members of the self-defence group took up arms, believing that the attackers were Ukrainian nationalists dressed in German uniforms. They came to this conclusion based on the fact that the attackers spoke Ukrainian. As a result of these actions, two members of the group were killed, and eight others were wounded.⁶

² *Amtliches Gemeinde- und Dorfverzeichnis für das Generalgouvernement auf Grund der Summarischen Bevölkerungsbefragung am 1. März 1943, Statistisches Amt des Generalgouvernements, Krakau, 1943, p. 29.*

³ See W. Bąkowski, *Zagłada Huty Pieniackiej*, Cracow, 2001; H. Komański and S. Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim w latach 1939–1946*, Wrocław, 2004, pp. 66–71; S.S. Żuk, *Skrawek piekła na Podolu: Huta Pieniacka – Hucisko Brodzkie*, Warsaw, 2009; S. Srokowski, *Zanim spłonęli żywcem: Ukraińska zbrodnia w Hucie Pieniackiej*, Warsaw, 2024; *Za to, że byli Polakami*, ed. M. Gośniowska-Kola, Wschowa, 2009; *Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, hereinafter AIPN), 2904/308, An incomplete list of the persons murdered on 12 March 1944 in Huta Pieniacka, Brodzkie Hucisko, Czernica and Maleniska, compiled by Edward Gross, 5 May 2020, pp. 1–6.

⁴ G. Motyka, “Dywizja SS „Galizien” („Hałyczyna”),” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1 (1) (2002), p. 114.

⁵ The investigation into the pacification of Huta Pieniacka from 24 November 1992 was conducted by the District Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation in Cracow under the reference number S/5/92/U. Suspended on 22 December 1997, it was reopened on 14 March 2001 (S 10.2001.ZI), transferred to Warsaw on 8 June 2001, and returned to Cracow on 15 July 2003 (S.50.2003.ZN). It was thereafter closed on 8 September 2017 and reopened on 29 June 2023 – the current reference number is S 38.2023.ZN.

⁶ W. Szwiec, “Informacje o śledztwie w sprawie ludobójstwa dokonanego przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich w latach 1939–1945 na terenie Huty Pieniackiej,” in *Prawda historyczna a prawda politycz-*

The Ukrainians were to check whether a unit of Soviet partisans was stationed in the village (on 22 February 1944, a group of about sixty partisans under the command of Boris Krutikov left Huta Pieniacka so that their presence would not lead to the destruction of the village, which served as a base for their sabotage activities against the Germans).⁷ On the night of 27–28 February 1944, a courier from the Home Army Inspectorate in Złoczów arrived in Huta Pieniacka to warn residents that the SS subunits from the “Galizien” division were approaching. He also delivered the Inspectorate’s order to halt defensive preparations and withdraw armed personnel to prevent a military confrontation. This decision was influenced by recent events in Majdan Pieniacki, where a sub-unit of the police regiment from the SS Division “Galizien” had entered the village, interrogated its inhabitants, and ultimately released the men detained on suspicion of partisan activity following an investigation.⁸ However, the events in Huta Pieniacka unfolded differently. In the early hours of 28 February 1944, the village was surrounded, and without warning, buildings on its outskirts came under fire. A brief exchange of gunfire followed between the attackers and members of the local self-defence unit. The Ukrainian forces, having a significant numerical advantage, entered the village and subjected its population to brutal repression. Under the pretext of searching for Soviet partisans, many civilians were killed. Once the search concluded, residents were confined to their homes and barns, which were then deliberately set ablaze. Those who attempted to flee were shot at.⁹ The information on the investigation concerning the crime in Huta Pieniacka stated:

Drawing on eyewitness testimonies, as well as the available historical sources and scholarly publications, it has been determined that the number of victims

na w badaniach naukowych: Ludobójstwo na kresach południowo-wschodniej Polski w latach 1939–1946, ed. B. Paż, Cracow, 2015, p. 118.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 118–119.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁹ *Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Krakowie* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Cracow, hereinafter AIPN Kr), 1/2250, W. Bąkowski, “Była taka wieś w województwie tarnopolskim...” Karlino, 1992, manuscript, pp. 160–173; G. Motyka, *Od rzezi wołyńskiej do akcji „Wisła”*: *Konflikt polsko-ukraiński 1943–1947*, Cracow, 2011, pp. 260–266; “No. 30 [No date], [no place]. Excerpt from the intelligence case of the NKGB of the Ukrainian SSR ‘Zvery’ related to developments in Huta Pieniacka,” in *Poland and Ukraine in the 1930s and 1940s: Documents from the Archives of the Secret Services*, eds. J. Bednarek et al., Łódź–Warsaw–Kiev, 2012, pp. 451–452.

of the actions described ranged between 700 and 1,300 individuals. At the time, Huta Pieniacka comprised 172 farms and approximately 1,000 residents – though this figure does not include people from nearby villages who were present during the attack. Investigative findings indicate that around 160 people survived the pogrom.¹⁰

As a result of the pacification, the village ceased to exist (only the church and the school building survived).

The destruction of Huta Werchobuska occurred on 22 March 1944. The assault was carried out by units of the SS Division “Galizien,” supported by members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and local Ukrainian collaborators. Having been warned of the impending attack and aware of the massacre in Huta Pieniacka just days earlier, most of the population fled into the surrounding forest. The attackers looted the village and then set its buildings ablaze. Those who remained behind to defend their property were mostly killed.¹¹

State of Research

The existing literature on the subject devotes little attention to the rescue of Jews in the regions under discussion, this lack of attention also applies to the experiences and survival strategies of local Jews during the Holocaust. The earliest known testimony concerning Jews hiding in the forests around Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska comes from the memoirs of Zvi Weigler, published in Hebrew in 1957 in the magazine *Yedioth Yad Vashem*.¹² They were titled “For helping Jews, two Polish villages were burned down,” which clearly suggested that the destruction was carried out as a punitive measure.

Reuben Ainsztein cited Weigler’s testimony in his 1974 publication *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe*, which detailed life in the forests and

¹⁰ W. Szwiec, *Informacje o śledztwie*, p. 121.

¹¹ “No. 30 [No date], [no place]. Excerpt from the intelligence case of the NKGB,” p. 453; *Dokumenty zbrodni wołyńskiej*, vol. 2, eds. E. Gigilewicz, L. Popek, P. Sokołowski, and T. Zych, Warsaw, 2024, p. 160; H. Komański, “Eksterminacja polskiej ludności, powiat Złoczów. Huta Werchobuska,” *Na Rubieży* 10, no. 4 (1994), pp. 10–11.

¹² Z. Weigler, “Za udzielanie pomocy Żydom spalono dwie polskie wsie,” *Yedioth Yad Vashem* 12 (1957), pp. 15–16.

the activities of the Jewish resistance.¹³ In Polish scholarship, the first references to both villages in this context date back to 1968, when both Hutas appeared on a list of localities destroyed for aiding Jews, compiled by Szymon Datner in his book *Las Sprawiedliwych* (The Forest of the Righteous).¹⁴ This researcher wrote:

In early February 1944, in retaliation for providing shelter, food and care to about 100 Jews from Sasów (Złoczów County) who had escaped from a forced labour camp and were hiding in the surrounding forests, a German punitive expedition, together with a unit of Ukrainian fascists, surrounded the Polish village of Huta Pieniacka (near Sasów) and murdered its inhabitants, burning them alive. Along with the inhabitants, livestock and all buildings were burned. [...] three weeks after the massacre in Huta Pieniacka – for helping a group of Jews hiding in a nearby forest – a punitive expedition composed of German and Ukrainian fascists carried out a massacre in the village of Huta Werchobuska, near Sasów. Fortunately, mounted messengers warned the villagers in time of the approaching German column, enabling most of the village population to flee to the forest.¹⁵

In the scholarly literature published after 1989, Polish researchers have devoted some attention to the fate of Jews in the regions discussed, however, in the most well-known studies concerning, among other things, the pacification of Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska, the issues of the aid provided, the conditions in which Jews were hiding, and the circumstances of their deaths have not been the subject of in-depth research.¹⁶ Aleksander Korman mentioned that Jews were

¹³ R. Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe*, London, 1974, pp. 450–453.

¹⁴ S. Datner, *Las Sprawiedliwych: Karta z dziejów ratownictwa Żydów w okupowanej Polsce*, Warsaw, 1968.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 104–105.

¹⁶ G. Motyka, *Ukraińska partyzantka 1942–1960: Działalność Organizacji Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów i Ukraińskiej Powstańczej Armii*, Warsaw, 2015, p. 383; G. Motyka, *Od rzezi wołyńskiej*, pp. 260–262; W. Poliszczuk, *Dowody zbrodni OUN i UPA: Integralny nacjonalizm ukraiński jako odmiana faszyzmu*, vol. 2, Toronto, 2000, pp. 556–560; W. Poliszczuk, *Gorzka prawda: Zbrodnicość OUN-UPA*, Toronto, 1995, pp. 314–317; W. Poliszczuk, *Gorzka prawda: Cień Bandery nad zbrodnią ludobójstwa*, Toronto, 2004, p. 132; W. Siemaszko and E. Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 2, Warsaw, 2000, pp. 1003–1006; A. Korman, *Nieukarane zbrodnie SS-Galizien z lat 1943–1945, Chodaczów Wielki, Huta Pieniacka, Podkamień, Wyciń i inne miejscowości*, London, 1990; W. Konarski, “Zagłada Huty Pieniackiej,” *Szkice Historyczne* 1 (1996), pp. 105–113.

hiding in Huta Pieniacka in his book published in 1990, citing the *Przegląd Tygodniowy AK* (10–17 March 1944).¹⁷ Edward Prus also wrote about the deaths of Jews as a result of the pacification of this village.¹⁸

The most thorough examination of this topic can be found in Anna Zapalec's study, which explores the fate of Jews in the region between the German deportations and the arrival of the Red Army.¹⁹ The author invoked, among other things, Samuel Wander's testimony about the help provided by Poles, which contributed to the survival of Jews hiding in the forests:

I went to a friend's house in Huta Werchobuska. He fed me, dressed my wounds, and I went back to the forest. I met an old man who said that for denouncing a Jew, they would give 5 kg of sugar, 1,000 marks, and a set of clothing. Two friends, Uszer Podhorcer and Symche Baumer, went into the forest to get food and were shot by Ukrainians. Over time, a group of 18 Jews gathered. We had a hiding place in the forest. Before each round-up, Poles would warn us.²⁰

Citing Wander as a reference, the author stated that a group of several Jews were hiding around Huta Werchobuska and Huta Pieniacka, who were then murdered by Ukrainian nationalists. However, the details of this event were not disclosed.²¹ In Fajwel Auerbach's testimony, we read:

There were 30 of us in the forest. We hid in Huta Werchobuska and [Huta] Pieniacka. The inhabitants of these villages – Poles, very poor peasants – helped us, sharing their last morsels even though they themselves were starving. We stayed there from July 1943 to March 1944. Thanks to them, we survived. We had weapons. When there were raids, the village leader would warn us.²²

¹⁷ A. Korman, *Nieukarane zbrodnie SS-Galizien*, p. 41. The aforementioned *Przegląd Tygodniowy AK* (Home Army Weekly Review) held at the National Library is not available for viewing due to its condition.

¹⁸ "[...] in the school and barns, Polish and Jewish children were burned alive together" (E. Prus, *Holocaust po banderowsku*, Wrocław, 2001, p. 160).

¹⁹ A. Zapalec, "Powiat złoczowski," in *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 1, eds. B. Engelking and J. Grabowski, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 623–760.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 720.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 724.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 733.

It is also worth mentioning a relatively new publication by Ryszard Tyndorf and Zygmunt Zieliński entitled *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers*, which is devoted to the rescue efforts of the Catholic Church during the German occupation, also addresses the issue of the survival of Jews in the area around Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska.²³ Its authors wrote:

70–80 Jews who escaped [from Sasów] encountered a similar number of Jews from other camps and ghettos in the forests. They managed to survive thanks to Polish peasants from Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska. Both Polish villages were surrounded by hostile Ukrainian settlements, and to defend themselves against attacks by Ukrainian nationalists, the Poles organised a defence unit in each village, armed with several rifles.²⁴

References to Jews also appear sporadically in Polish memoirs. Władysław Bąkowski wrote about twenty Jewish civilians and one wounded Soviet partisan who were murdered on 28 February 1944 during the pacification of Huta Pieniacka. However, his list includes only five Jewish victims: Golenberg, a doctor from Podkamień; his wife, son, and daughter (names unknown); and the aforementioned partisan – Sierżantow (name also unknown, original spelling preserved). The author did not specify the circumstances under which these persons found themselves in Huta Pieniacka, limiting himself to stating the fact and listing them among the murdered.²⁵

Sulimir Stanisław Żuk, who served as a courier in the vicinity of Huta Pieniacka, wrote in his memoirs:

It happened that Jews fled and hid in the forests. Cases of Poles hiding Jews were punished with the immediate death of the hosts and the burning of their farms. Despite this, some Poles risked their lives to help Jews. Jews were also hidden

²³ R. Tyndorf and Z. Zieliński, *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers*, vol. 2, Lublin, 2023, pp. 636–637, 1079–1080.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 636.

²⁵ W. Bąkowski, *Zagłada Huty Pieniackiej*, p. 95.

in our house several times. My father and I made a special hiding place in the attic, concealed under the stairs, where a person could hide and wait for some time until the danger passed. It should be added that there were usually several Jewish families living in Polish villages; in neighbouring Hucisko Brodzkie, there were four Jewish buildings. Children from Jewish families attended the same school as Polish children.²⁶

The names Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska also appear in an undated document issued by the Main Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Poland, titled *Egzekucje na ludności polskiej za pomoc udzieloną Żydom – wykaz miejscowości* (Executions of the Polish Population in Retaliation for the Aid Provided to Jews: A List of Affected Localities). In this document, both villages are identified as sites of mass executions of Poles who had helped Jews.²⁷ We read in it:

Huta Pieniacka, USSR [now Ukraine – M.S.] – in the first days of February 1944, for hiding about a hundred Jews who had escaped from the ghetto and were staying in the surrounding forests, a German punitive expedition murdered the population of the village of Huta Pieniacka. All livestock was burned, the village burned all day, and the perpetrators made sure that no one survived. [...]

Huta Werchobuska,²⁸ USSR [now Ukraine – M.S.] – the site of a massacre on 23 March 1944, when Nazi forces murdered all of its inhabitants in retaliation for aiding Jews who were hiding in the village and the surrounding forest. The victims were burned alive in their homes, along with the buildings and livestock.²⁹

Considering the above information, it is worth noting that although brief descriptions and references to the situation of Jews in both villages – and to the aid they received from the Polish population – do appear, these topics have been only marginally addressed in scholarly discourse and have not undergone broader analysis.

²⁶ S.S. Żuk, *Skrawek piekła*, pp. 45–46.

²⁷ AIPN, 392/2040, Executions of the Polish Population in Retaliation for the Aid Provided to Jews: A List of Affected Localities, no date, p. 88.

²⁸ The spelling in the document is Wierchobuska.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Characteristics of the Area

Huta Pieniacka (Pieniaki Municipality, Brody County, Pieniaki Parish, Tarnopol Voivodeship) was located, as already mentioned, in the southwestern part of Brody County, on the northeastern border of the Złoczów County. The nearest larger towns were Brody and Złoczów. To the south were Hucisko Pieniackie and Werchobuż; to the east were Hołubica, Litowisko, Hucisko Litowskie, Hucisko Brodzkie and (further away) Podkamień; to the west were Huta Werchobuska, Majdan Pieniacki and Hucisko Oleskie; and to the north was Żarków, inhabited by Ukrainians, and Huta Nowa.³⁰ These were small Polish settlements located close to each other. To reach the main road, one had to travel about 10 kilometres in each direction along a dirt road, which was impassable for carts in winter and during rainy seasons. Huta Pieniacka was practically self-sufficient, with its inhabitants engaged in carpentry, blacksmithing and cooperage. Potatoes, rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, millet, wheat, hemp and flax were grown in the fields. Cattle, pigs and poultry were raised. Agricultural raw materials were processed on site or in nearby villages.³¹ The village was laid out in a circular plan, with a ravine and a small hill where a church was built in 1928, replacing an earlier chapel. Most of the houses were wooden. In the village was a four-grade elementary school and a community centre, which hosted occasional gatherings and celebrations. Relations among the inhabitants were warm; people felt close to one another and were characterised by deep piety. The Catholic worldview was reinforced by the proximity of Huta Pieniacka to Podkamień, home to a Dominican monastery with a miraculous painting of the Mother of God, which drew pilgrims from various regions during the church fair. Clergy and teachers were regarded as authorities. Matters important to the community were discussed by an informal council of elders. A Rifle Association was also present in the village.³²

³⁰ S. Srokowski, *Zanim spłonęli*, pp. 55–56; R. Kobylański, *Huta Pieniacka: Kainowa zbrodnia*, Wrocław, 2024, pp. 13–45.

³¹ AIPN Kr, 1/2250, W. Bąkowski, “Była taka wieś w województwie tarnopolskim...,” Karlino, 1992, manuscript, p. 26; W. Bąkowski, *Zagłada Huty Pieniackiej*, p. 37.

³² AIPN Kr, 1/2250, W. Bąkowski, “Była taka wieś w województwie tarnopolskim...,” Karlino 1992, manuscript, pp. 27–29. In the Second Polish Republic, the Rifle Association (*Związek Strzelecki*) was a social and educational organisation for young people. It drew on the traditions of its predecessor from 1910–1914 and mainly brought together pre-conscription youth, including those from rural and artisan backgrounds. For more on this topic, see, for instance, A. Zakrzewska, *Związek Strzelecki 1919–1939: Wychowanie młodzieży obywatelskiej*, Cracow, 2007.

Many of the names were of German origin, reflecting earlier settlement from the Silesia region.³³ Wojciech Kierepka, one of the former residents of Huta Pieniacka, described it as follows:

The area surrounding Huta Pieniacka was dominated by extensive forest complexes, which served as the primary source of livelihood for the local population. The village itself was arranged in an almost perfect circle, with two roads intersecting at its centre. Beyond the cluster of buildings lay a belt of meadows, pastures, and farmland with a width [...] ranging from 500 to 900 meters. This was followed by another strip of forest. The terrain throughout the region was nearly flat. Huta Pieniacka was comprised of approximately 130 farms, workshops, and labourers' homes, with an estimated population of around 1,000. The two wealthiest farmers owned about 12 to 13 morgas of land. All village buildings were constructed of wood and had thatched roofs, except for two farmers who owned brick houses with tiled roofs.³⁴

Due to its modest size and population of approximately 400, detailed accounts of life in Huta Werchobuska – a small village with a manor house located in Podhorce Municipality, Złoczów County, Tarnopol Voivodeship – are not available.³⁵

Two Occupations and the Holocaust in the Territory of Pre-war Tarnopol Voivodeship

Approximately 13 million people lived in the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic, with Poles constituting the dominant ethnic group. Jews, who made up slightly over 8% of the region's population, were concentrated primarily in cities and smaller urban centres, generally avoiding rural areas due to the nature of their occupations, which were not connected to agriculture. Within this community, professions related to trade, crafts, and small business predominated.

³³ W. Bąkowski, *Zagłada Huty Pieniackiej*, pp. 32–33.

³⁴ *Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej we Wrocławiu* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Wrocław), 477/32, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Wojciech Kierepka, 23 September 1969, pp. 28–34.

³⁵ H. Komański and S. Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich*, pp. 499–500.

A significant number were owners of small shops and workshops, while others worked in the liberal professions. Although some Jews were wealthy, the majority did not belong to the financial elite. Assimilation into Polish culture was limited; much of the Jewish community maintained its own language, traditions, and religious customs, which set it apart from the Polish population.³⁶

According to the 1931 census, Poles made up approximately 50% of the population in the Tarnopol Voivodeship, while Ukrainians accounted for around 45%. The second-largest national minority were Jews, whose share in the region's demographic structure did not exceed 5%. Less than 1% of the population belonged to other groups, including Germans, Russians, Czechs, and Belarusians.³⁷

After the Third Reich and the Soviet Union invaded Poland in September 1939, the Polish state was divided between the two occupying powers. In the south-eastern borderlands, control was taken over by the Soviet authorities, who quickly introduced wide-ranging mechanisms of repression and surveillance. The communist administrative apparatus, exploiting national minorities, often antagonised the local population and turned it against the pre-war state structures. In 1939–1940, a wave of arrests and deportations was initiated, affecting representatives of various social and national groups. Political activity was banned, and religious and social organisations were outlawed. The economy was also subordinated to the Soviet system through the nationalisation of private property and workplaces and the replacement of the Polish currency with the rouble.³⁸ While Poles were the primary group affected by displacement, the Jewish community also experienced the consequences of political upheaval, with many of its members deported deep into the Soviet Union. The reprisals were

³⁶ P. Eberhardt, "Liczebność i rozmieszczenie ludności żydowskiej na Kresach Wschodnich I i II Rzeczypospolitej w pierwszej połowie XX w.," in *Świat nie pożegnany: Żydzi na dawnych ziemiach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej w XVIII–XX w.*, ed. K. Jasiewicz, Warsaw, 2004, pp. 64–76.

³⁷ M. Siekierka, "Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom świadczoną przez ludność polską w okresie II wojny światowej na okupowanych terenach województwa tarnopolskiego," in *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką – przegląd piśmiennictwa*, eds. T. Domański and A. Gontarek, Kielce, 2022, p. 669.

³⁸ K. Jasiewicz, *Zagłada polskich Kresów: Ziemiaństwo polskie na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941: Studium z dziejów zagłady dawnego narodu politycznego*, Warsaw, 1998, pp. 105–121.

driven more by class than ethnicity, leading many Jews to perceive the USSR as less threatening than Nazi Germany.³⁹

The situation of the Jewish population worsened dramatically after 22 June 1941, when the Third Reich launched its offensive against the Soviet Union. Within a short period, German forces expelled the communist administration from the territories occupied since 1939. As they retreated, Soviet troops carried out numerous mass executions of political prisoners, notably in Lwów, Złoczów, and Tarnopol. These atrocities were later exploited by German propaganda as a pretext for orchestrating anti-Jewish pogroms, in which both the occupying forces and segments of the local population – including members of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) – took part.⁴⁰

At the turn of 1941 and 1942, Jews were confined to ghettos, where they lived in extremely poor conditions. In mid-1942, in accordance with the extermination plan that went down in history as Operation “Reinhardt,” the liquidation of the Jewish community began. The inhabitants of the ghettos were shot or deported to extermination camps, mainly to Treblinka, Sobibór and Bełżec.⁴¹ Collective responsibility was often applied, affecting entire families and local communities. Occupied Poland was one of the few countries in Europe where, on 15 October 1941, the Germans introduced the death penalty for providing aid to Jews (the so-called Third General Governorate Residence Restriction Regulation). Collective responsibility was often applied, affecting entire families and local communities.⁴²

German troops entered Złoczów on 2 July 1941. In the initial phase of the new regime, the town was administered by the German military command (Ortskommandantur), which oversaw both administrative and law enforcement functions. In August 1942, control shifted to the German civil administration, and Złoczów became the administrative centre of the Kreis Złoczów within the Distrikt Galizien.

³⁹ M. Hańderek, “Stosunek ZSRS do obywateli polskich narodowości żydowskiej,” https://przystanekhistoria.pl/pa2/teksty/78341%2CStosunek-ZSRS-do-obywateli-polskich-narodowosci-zydowskiej.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com (accessed 4 June 2025).

⁴⁰ D. Bechtel, “Od Jedwabnego do Złoczowa. Lokalne pogromy w Galicji, czerwiec–lipiec 1941,” in *OUN, UPA i zagłada Żydów*, ed. A.A. Zięba, Cracow, 2015, pp. 247–262.

⁴¹ See e.g. *Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, ed. D. Libionka, Warsaw, 2004.

⁴² *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, eds. A. Namysło and M. Grądzka-Rejak, Warsaw, 2019, p. 25.

The position of the Kreishauptmann – head of the district and representative of the Nazi civil authority – was held by Regierungsassessor Hans Mann until January 1943, when he was replaced by Otto Wendt. The Kreishauptmann wielded significant power over local governance, including oversight of security, economic policy, and the implementation of anti-Jewish measures. With the withdrawal of the Soviets, anti-Semitic sentiments intensified among the local population, incited in part by the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).

The turning point came with the discovery of mutilated bodies of NKVD prisoners in the cells of the Sobieski Castle. On 3 July 1941, local groups of Ukrainian nationalists initiated mass violence against the Jewish population in Żłoczów. Hundreds of Jews were captured and imprisoned in the local fortress, where they were forced to exhume the bodies from mass graves before being murdered. The pogroms lasted four days and resulted in the deaths of approximately 1,400 Jews.

The German authorities confiscated Jewish property, focusing primarily on valuables and items of significant material worth. The Jewish population was compelled to register and, shortly thereafter, subjected to forced labour. A ban on leaving the city limits was imposed, restricting movement and making escape considerably more difficult. In addition, Jews were burdened with heavy financial levies, enforced by the Żłoczów Judenrat under the strict oversight of the German administration. These measures formed part of a broader policy of discrimination, exploitation, and extermination.⁴³ From 1941, labour camps operated in Biały Kamień, Jachtarów, Kozaki, Lackie, Płuhów, Sasów, Zarwanica and Zborów.⁴⁴

In the spring of 1942, an open ghetto was established in Żłoczów, concentrating the town's Jewish population. In August, the Judenrat was forced to prepare a list

⁴³ See P. Dieter, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*, München, 1997, p. 63; W. Mędykowski, *W cieniu gigantów: Pogromy 1941 r. w byłej sowieckiej strefie okupacyjnej*, Warsaw, 2012, pp. 262–268; D. Bechtel, “Od Jedwabnego do Żłoczowa,” pp. 252–256; J.P. Himka, *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust: OUN and UPA's Participation in the Destruction of Ukrainian Jewry, 1941–1944*, Stuttgart, 2021 (“Ukrainian Voices,” vol. 12), pp. 207–208; K. Kiebusinski and A. Motyl, *The Great West Ukrainian Prison Massacre of 1941: A Sourcebook*, Amsterdam, 2017, pp. 383–392; *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, part A, eds. G.P. Megargee and M. Dean, Bloomington–Indianapolis, 2012, pp. 744, 758; A. Zapalec, *Ziemia tarnopolska w okresie pierwszej okupacji sowieckiej (1939–1941)*, Cracow, 2006, pp. 266–269.

⁴⁴ *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps*, vol. 2, pp. 758–759.

of 2,500 individuals considered unfit for labour. On 28–29 August 1942, during the first mass deportation, approximately 2,000 Jews were sent to the extermination camp in Bełżec. In December, the ghetto was converted into a sealed area, further worsening living conditions and severely restricting movement. On 1 December 1942, the occupiers established a second sealed ghetto in Złoczów, where surviving Jews from the town and nearby communities – including Gołogóry and Sasów – were resettled. The ghetto, situated around Mickiewicza and Targowa Streets, was enclosed by barbed wire and walls, with access controlled by Ukrainian police collaborating with the Germans. Conditions inside were tragic – marked by overcrowding, hunger, and disease – as part of a deliberate policy of extermination. The liquidation of the Złoczów ghetto occurred on 3–4 April 1943, during which approximately 3,500 Jews were murdered in mass executions. Following the ghetto's liquidation, a labour camp operated in the city under the supervision of SS Hauptscharführer Josef Grzimek.⁴⁵

The situation was similarly dire in the ghetto established in Brody in January 1942, which received Jews transported from surrounding towns and villages, including Koniuszków, Leszniów, Łopatyn, Olesko, Podkamień, Ponikowica, Ponikwa, Sokołówka, Stanisławczyk, Suchowola, and Toporów. The first deportation from Brody occurred on 19 September 1942, when between 2,200 and 2,500 Jews were sent to the extermination camp in Bełżec. Around 250 individuals – primarily the elderly and infirm – were murdered on the spot. On 2 December 1942, the ghetto was converted from an open to a sealed one, further worsening conditions. It was liquidated between late May and early June 1943.⁴⁶

In 1943, escapes by Jews from the aforementioned labour camps and liquidated ghettos took various forms, shaped by local conditions and the degree of security. Weaknesses in surveillance were exploited: guards were bribed, individuals hid in transports, and tunnels were used to facilitate escape. Support from the local population also played a crucial role. Those who managed to flee often sought refuge in the forests of the Werchobuż and Pieniaki regions, where, far from urban centres, they hoped to find safety.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 758–759.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*; M. Kuttan, *Ner Tamid: Yizkor leBrody*. Ramat-Gan, 1994; English version: *An Eternal Light: Brody, in Memoriam*, New York, 2018, pp. 43–51.

At the beginning of 1944, the threat posed by Ukrainian nationalists to the Polish population in the Kreis Złoczów intensified. By autumn 1943, the armed operations of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) targeting civilians had gradually expanded into the Galicia District. German administrative responses to these acts of violence were sporadic, largely due to the Wehrmacht's prioritisation of the Eastern Front, limited law enforcement capacity in peripheral regions – where Ukrainian auxiliary police often carried out policing duties – and the fact that interethnic conflict between Polish and Ukrainian communities served German interests within the framework of the German occupation policy.⁴⁷

Since most of the source material consists of Jewish testimonies, it is important to consider what Jews who witnessed the pacification of Polish villages knew about Polish-Ukrainian relations during the war before analysing these testimonies in the context of aid. Let us begin by recalling two significant perspectives on the subject.

Harry Brill (known before the war as Herschel Brill), who had been staying in Huta Pieniacka with his sister Clara Dreier (formerly Klara Brill) since June 1943, stated in his testimony that Ukrainian actions were a form of retaliation for the Second Polish Republic's policy toward the Ukrainian population in the Eastern Borderlands, which he referred to as "segregation." He suggested thereby that the methods used by both sides were adequate:

You have to understand that in this part of Poland, in Galicia, there were many Ukrainians and many Poles living there. The Ukrainians hated the Poles because the Ukrainians – or at least some of them – were subjected to segregation under Polish rule. The Ukrainians collaborated with the Germans, and the Germans had an SS division, a Ukrainian SS division, which collaborated with the Germans in killing Jews, mainly as guards in the camps. The Ukrainians wanted to take revenge on the Poles for the events of the previous war. It started with killing and burning villages. We were right in the centre of these events.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ E. Gross, *Kresowe dzieje podolskich wsi: Włochy, Ponikwa i Hucisko Brodzkie (1938–1944)*, Wrocław, 2004, p. 305; L. Kulińska and C. Partacz, *Zbrodnie nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w latach 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 2015, pp. 95–99.

⁴⁸ Archive at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews (hereinafter POLIN), Harry Brill, tape no. 2, 5th–6th min.

Bernard [Beryl] Scharf, born in 1914 in Majdan Pieniacki to a large family engaged in horse trading and shopkeeping, offered a differing view: he claimed that the pacification was the result of an ongoing “guerrilla war”:

The few Polish villagers in the villages also organised themselves into a partisan group called “AK” [written by Marek Scharf as “AKaf” – M.S.]. Almost every night, these two groups of partisans attacked each other, and we all heard the shooting. A Ukrainian priest used to travel from his village to a neighbouring village on Sundays to attend mass. One day, several young Poles dragged him out of his cart into the forest and killed him. The Ukrainians took revenge. In response, one night, the Poles dragged a Ukrainian professor, who was the leader of the Banderites, out of bed, took him to the forest and hanged him. Every night, when I walked to the village, I heard new stories about the fighting. This went on for months.⁴⁹

The testimonies cited reveal the limited understanding of local realities among Jewish witnesses. Both viewed events through the prism of their own experiences and general perceptions, rather than through a deeper understanding of relations between Poles and Ukrainians. This is an interesting topic, worthy of separate analysis.

Testimonies on the Aid Provided by Poles to Jews and on the Pacification of Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska

As the German liquidation operations intensified in the Kreis Złoczów, more and more Jews, with Polish help, attempted to escape from the liquidated ghettos and forced labour camps and take refuge in more remote, safer areas. In addition to the friendly (non-hostile) attitude of the Poles, the natural conditions mentioned in the accounts of Jews also helped them to survive: “The forests were large, so the survivors formed various groups, and for a long time one group might not have known about the existence of another.”⁵⁰ “The forests in this region spanned

⁴⁹ B. Scharf and M. Scharf, *Courage*, n.p., 2011, pp. 11–25, 45. Bernard Scharf’s taped recollections were transcribed by his son.

⁵⁰ R. Mosheh, “Mayn shtetl Sasov,” in *Sasiv Memorial Book*, New York, 2003, p. 127.

kilometres, allowing a person to enter and remain hidden indefinitely.”⁵¹ According to Samuel Wander, approximately 800 Jews were hiding in the forests surrounding Polish villages.⁵² One of them was Zwi Weigler, who recalled years later:

We learned that in Złoczów, it had been decided to send a company of 20 Ukrainian policemen to guard our camp. There were also rumours about a change in the camp overseer. So, we realised that we should not wait any longer, and we escaped. It was the night of 24 June 1943. We were a group of eight men and two women (several women were employed in the camp kitchen). We left one by one, met in a nearby grove, and from there went to a Polish peasant in the village of Dzwoniec, with whom we had previously made arrangements. [...] There were three Polish villages: Huta Pieniacka, Huta Werchobuska, and Majdan. Each was perhaps three or four kilometres from the other. So, we wandered between these villages.⁵³

Offering a different perspective, Clara Dreier wrote to Yad Vashem in 1996:

I worked at the palace inside the Brody fortress. The Germans were rounding up Jews in the territory of Brody until the end of June 1943. We knew that our time was slowly coming to an end. At night, a Polish man took us in a horse-drawn cart to Huta Pieniacka, a village located about 20 kilometres from Brody. I was placed with the Wesołowski family, and my brother with the neighbouring Kotowski family.⁵⁴

Another escapee from the camp, Joseph Schepps, also confirmed that aid was provided to Jews: “We fled to villages that I knew [...], where Poles lived, very nice people.”⁵⁵

Jewish testimonies paint a picture of coexistence between Jews and the Poles who rescued them. Two cases mention aid provided to armed groups. Let us hear

⁵¹ POLIN, Jacop Gang, tape no. 1, 24th min.

⁵² *Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, hereinafter AŻIH), 301/1403, Testimony of Samuel Wander, p. 7.

⁵³ Z. Weigler, “Za udzielanie pomocy Żydom,” p. 15.

⁵⁴ Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), ID 13793312, Letter from Clara Dreier, p. 1.

⁵⁵ POLIN, Joseph Schepps, tape no. 2, 8th min.

from Fajwel Auerbach, who described the mutual relations between one of the armed groups and the Polish civilian population as follows:

We hid in Huta Werchobuska and Huta Pieniacka. The inhabitants of these villages – Poles, very poor peasants – helped us, sharing their last bits of food even though they themselves were starving. [...] When there were raids, the village leader would warn us. Once, 500 Germans surrounded the forest, and because they were afraid to go deeper into it, they set dogs on us. We saved ourselves because my Polish friends warned us of the danger. As a result of denunciations, all the peasants from Huta Pieniacka and [Huta] Werchobuska were killed [“burned” has been crossed out – M.S.]. Some were burned alive in a barn. The village was destroyed, and of the 190 huts, only the church and the school remained. I saw the charred corpses of women and children.⁵⁶

Refael Mosheh’s testimony adds further detail to this account:

According to partisan accounts, there was one village in the forest, Huta Pieniacka, which was very friendly towards Jewish partisans, who spent time with the villagers, ate with them, and sometimes even slept there. The Banderites surrounded the Polish village, set it on fire from all sides, and burned it down along with its inhabitants. There were frequent clashes between Jewish partisans and Ukrainians, as the Germans did not dare to enter the forests. This lasted from the beginning of July 1943, when the camp in Sasów was liquidated, until March 1944,⁵⁷ when the surviving Jews were liberated by the Red Army.⁵⁸

Jewish witnesses (Zvi Weigler and others⁵⁹) also pointed to the local Ukrainian population as being responsible for denouncing Poles who were hiding Jews to the German authorities, which led to attacks on Polish villages. Weigler reported:

⁵⁶ AŻIH, 301/1200, Testimony of Fajwel Auerbach, p. 3.

⁵⁷ The original text contains an incorrect date: “until March 1945.”

⁵⁸ R. Mosheh, “Mayn shtetl Sasov,” in *Sasiv Memorial Book*, p. 128.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The population of the surrounding Ukrainian villages informed the German authorities that Jews and partisans had gathered in Polish villages. That winter, Soviet partisans were seen for the first time. Among our friends, there were also those who possessed weapons. Several members of our group joined the partisans. However, they only accepted young and healthy people – and most importantly, those who had weapons. [...] One day, two partisans whose group had been broken up and scattered joined our group. They brought German uniforms and weapons with them. [...] One day, the mayor of Złoczów invited the village leaders of the two Hutas to his office and warned them that if these peasants continued to help Jews and partisans, it would be the end of them. Despite this, the peasants did not change their attitude. Perhaps they did not believe the German official's threats. They only asked the Jews not to walk around the village during the day – and the Jews promised to keep their word.⁶⁰

Themes related to aid provided by Poles are also evident in descriptions of events that were crucial to both Poles and Jews in hiding – namely, the pacification of Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska. We are talking about Jews who were direct witnesses to the crime or learned about it from people staying in the forest. What is more, the accounts of survivors reflect the conviction that the destruction of Polish villages was a direct consequence of the help provided by their inhabitants and the rescue operations they carried out. The key words in this matter are found in the recollections of Zwi Weigler:

The Poles, who were a minority in this region, had an underground organisation with its own agents. We learned from them that the Germans were preparing a punitive expedition against the village of Huta Pieniacka for helping the partisans, and especially for helping Jews who were openly walking around the village. Upon hearing this news, all the Jews fled to the forest. The threats were not empty words. The retaliatory operation came in February 1944. At 6 a.m., the Germans and the Ukrainian SS arrived. They were seen approaching, but the peasants did not move, probably believing that they would not be killed.

⁶⁰ Z. Weigler, "Za udzielanie pomocy Żydom," p. 16.

The Germans and Ukrainians surrounded the village and began firing at it with machine guns and throwing hand grenades. Only a few peasants managed to escape; the rest of the population remained in the village. The Jews stood a kilometre away, at the edge of the forest, and watched everything. After opening fire on the village, the killers entered and gathered the farmers and their families in barns, together with their cattle. They set fire to the entire village. We heard screams, howls and the bellowing of cows. The Germans made sure that no people or animals escaped from the buildings. The village burned all day, and the killers did not leave until nightfall. At 1–2 a.m., we Jews entered the village. Many buildings were still burning. We gathered those wounded by gunshots and burns. Later, people from another Polish village arrived and began a rescue operation, transporting the wounded to the hospital in carts. Among them was a Jewish woman who had been hiding in the chimney of one of the houses. At that time, the front was already advancing, and people were convinced that the end of the Germans was near.⁶¹

Harry Brill recalled the pacification of Huta Pieniacka as follows, also addressing the German motives behind its destruction:

One day, they told us that the SS – the Ukrainian unit – would come to explore the village. Two rumours were going around. One was that they had found out that there were Jews there, that they were rescuing Jews. And the second rumour was that a few weeks earlier... you must know that the Poles who lived in the village had a few rifles for defence, because there was a war going on between the Ukrainians and the Poles... so the second rumour was that two SS policemen wanted to enter the village and killed the Poles [those who had the rifles – K.D.].

⁶¹ *Ibid.* A shorter description of the destruction of Huta Pieniacka was provided by Bernard Scharf from Majdan Pieniacki: “There were three villages in the area, inhabited mainly by Poles. One day, two Ukrainians came to look around one of the villages called ‘Bukoniewska’ [incorrect spelling used by Marek Scharf when transcribing from the tape – it should have been ‘Pieniacka’ – M.S.]. The Poles killed them both. Two days later, about five hundred Ukrainians on horseback surrounded the village. They allowed almost no one to escape. They gathered the villagers and pushed them into a barn along with cattle, doused the place with petrol and burned the entire village down, including the people and the cattle. The smoke and the stench of burning flesh spread for many miles. We didn’t know what had happened until I went to our village, Majdan, and someone told me” (B. Scharf and M. Scharf, *Courage*, pp. 49–50).

They wanted to enter, and then they gave the order for the Polish population to surrender – to lay down their arms, and they said that they would enter with the German police and inspect the village. When we were living in the village, one day, Russian partisans came. And they told us that that was it, that it was over... Apparently, the Russians sent Russian partisans ahead to destroy [whatever they could], e.g. by derailing trains. And when the partisans came, they took men aged 18 and over with them – to join the partisan movement. But again, women and children were not taken. So, after three days, we had the thrill of anticipation. But then they left the village. And we stayed in the village again... And then the story with the Ukrainians began – we didn't sleep that night. We were all dressed and ready. And then the Germans came and surrounded the village, because it was heavily forested all around. As they were surrounding the village at about 2:00–2:30 in the morning, they suddenly opened fire from all directions. My sister, that girl and I – there was also another man – ran straight through the snow into the forest. But they were all around us, shooting from all sides. I saw many Poles falling in front of us and dying. I fell on top of dead people. We just kept running until we reached the forest. When we entered the forest, I lost my sister. I didn't know where she was. So, I ran away – I was alone, and I ran.⁶²

Let us also refer to the third Jewish testimony, given by Irving Guttman:

We went to the village... it had a funny name: Huta Pieniacka. The Ukrainians were following the same route as the Germans. I slept at the house of a woman who let me stay there, Helena Monika Herszacka [Werszacka? – the recording is not clear – M.S.]. The village was surrounded by a huge forest, and between the forest and the village, there was a pasture. So, I ran into the house, grabbed my coat and told the woman that I was running away. She said, "Don't run away, I'll hide you." I said, "Listen, you gave me a bed, I spent the night here, but these are Germans, if the Germans catch me, they will shoot both you and me. You don't deserve that." How did I get to the forest? It's unbelievable, because bullets were flying around me. None of them hit me. I sat in the forest for two days. On

⁶² POLIN, Harry Brill, tape no. 2, 12th–15th min.

the third day, I went to the village. They razed the village to the ground. They killed women and children and burned all the houses. Who killed them? The Ukrainians. Yesterday they were still getting married, going to church together, and because of Hitler, the Ukrainians followed the Germans. And then they burned them.⁶³

The aforementioned Zwi Weigler also described the pacification of Huta Werchobuska, emphasising the importance of Polish villages as places whose inhabitants rescued Jews:

Three weeks later, the second village, Huta Werchobuska, was destroyed. It was on 23 March 1944. Early in the morning, a Polish horseman galloped in from one of the nearby villages, inhabited by Poles and Ukrainians, with the news that a Ukrainian group had been organised to carry out a punitive expedition against the Poles from Huta. The news spread among the Jews, who went deep into the forest. Soon, the killers appeared. Some managed to escape into the forest, others were burned and killed as in the first village. Initially, some residents tried to resist, but the killers were armed with numerous weapons and easily defeated them. This village was also burned down. At night, we entered the burned village (which was still burning in parts). Polish farmers from the surrounding area also arrived and tried to extinguish the fire and save what they could. The farmers who had fled did not return to their burned village but went to Złoczów. After both villages were burned down, we Jews were left without a base.⁶⁴

Let us compare this with the attack on Huta Werchobuska, as remembered by Jacob Gang, who was at the centre of events unfolding in this town:

Once, when I was in a village called Huta Werchobuska, it was late afternoon, and I was at home with the people who lived there. Three people who looked like partisans, three gentiles, entered the house. They were dressed like ordinary

⁶³ POLIN, Irving Guttman, tape no. 2, 16th–19th min.

⁶⁴ Z. Weigler, “Za udzielanie pomocy Żydom,” p. 16.

people. They asked the owner and his friend, who were sitting over a drink, if they could join the partisans. When they started talking, I realised that they had a German accent. They didn't know that [their speech betrayed them – K.D.]. They didn't even know that I was Jewish. Anyway, they got food and drink and left, all three of them. And then I told them, "Don't believe what they say, because they are neither Russians nor Ukrainians nor partisans. They are Germans." They asked, "How do you know?" I replied that they had an accent, a German accent; they didn't catch it. In any case, they left. I was asleep there, and at about 6 or 7 in the morning, in winter, I looked out the window and saw the whole village... it was a long village consisting of a single street. [...] On each side of the street stood the German army, all dressed in white, with skis and machine guns. The entire village was surrounded – the entire village. They pulled all the physically fit people out of their homes. These three were dressed like German officers; they were in uniforms, with snow masks and coats, all in white. They took them all away. I never saw these people again.⁶⁵

A similar belief about the reasons for the pacification of Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska, as expressed by Zwig Weigler, was held by siblings Clara Dreier (Klara Brill) and Harry Brill (Herschel Brill), who were in Huta Pieniacka on the day of the attack. During an interview for the USC Shoah Foundation, Clara recalled:

They took me to a place where my brother, my friend and another man were. We moved from place to place until finally one family took us in for a while. And one day they said that the Germans knew that Jews were hiding in the local forests and among us. They would come and kill us all. And we thought that they were like, you know... The next morning, they came. They burned down the whole little village, the people, their little houses... everyone was murdered. We started running into the forest. We returned to the forest. I ran in one direction and my brother in a very different direction, so I completely lost him. Being in the forest at that time, when there is nowhere to hide, there is snow, the trees are

⁶⁵ POLIN, Jacob Gang, tape no. 3, 0–2nd min.

bare, there is nothing... if someone suddenly walked by, they could see you. So, I stood aside and looked around. I saw two Gestapo [officers], in white capes, with machine guns, walking through the forest and looking around. I said to my friend... in the meantime, another boy came, I don't even know where he came from... I said, "Let's hide in this place." She asked, "Where can we hide here? There are no trees, no bushes, everything is so empty..." Somehow, we managed to get under a bush. They came and looked around, started searching right next to us, then on the other side, and passed us by. [...] It was a miracle, somehow they missed our tracks in the snow. So, we waited all day in the forest, and in the evening we came out. Everything... literally everything had been burned. There was nowhere left for us to go. No place where we could do anything or get food. So, we went back to the forest.⁶⁶

Polish testimonies also indirectly confirm that aid provided to Jews was the reason for the pacification of the village. Let us refer to the testimony of Wojciech Orłowski, who was hiding in a pile of brushwood at the time of the attack on Huta Pieniacka. The man reported:

At the last minute, nearly 40 people found refuge in my cellar, which had become a shelter. After nightfall, I led the surviving group – among them a Polish Jewish couple – out from hiding. Together, we made our way to the Polish village of Huta Werchobuska, where we received shelter and support.⁶⁷.

Bernard Scharf confirmed the number of Jews hiding in this village: "This time, however, many people fled as soon as they realised what was about to happen. About thirty Jews who had escaped from labour camps were hiding in this

⁶⁶ POLIN, Clara Dreier, tape no. 2, 9th–12th min.

⁶⁷ H. Komański and S. Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich*, p. 592. Another Pole, Mieczysław Mendelski, a witness to the pacification, included the following recollections in his description of his search for his father: "We only found traces of a camp left behind by the Banderites. Nearby, we saw destroyed dugouts. They had been a shelter for a large group of Jewish families who had stayed there after escaping from the ghetto in Brody. We knew about them because the residents of Huta Pieniacka had helped them. There is no doubt that the Jews who were there were murdered by the Banderites" (*ibid.*, p. 586).

village, including several small children aged eight and nine. During the raid, they all fled into the forest.”⁶⁸

The final issue concerns the significance that both villages and their surroundings held for Jews after the pacification. As previously mentioned, the Brill siblings recall that, following the destruction of the villages, Jews continued to hide in the nearby forests and even returned to the site of the tragedy in search of food or information. These locations served as a kind of “base,” as one of the survivors described it. Although destroyed, they still played a central role in the struggle for survival. However, there were also testimonies from Jews who treated the burned towns as areas to which they could no longer return due to the threat to their lives.⁶⁹ Those who returned to the destroyed villages searched for cabbage and potatoes, cut meat from dead and frozen farm animals, and sometimes stripped clothing and shoes from corpses. Clara Dreier recalled:

Every day we moved from place to place. We found dead cows and horses, cut out steaks and fried them on a fire. We found shoes and clothes. We took them from dead people. You could come across them. They could have been Poles or Jews, we don't know. [...] There were more than three of us, we were in a group. We found other people in the forest. Everyone was wandering around.⁷⁰

Harry Brill, on the other hand, stated:

We returned to the village at night – to those Polish villages and those pigs and cows that the Germans had killed. It was winter, so there was frozen meat. There was plenty of it. There was no bread, no salt, but there was meat. Then we went on to the dugouts, where we found potatoes and some cabbage. At least we had something to eat. Every night we looked for anything we could get hold of.⁷¹

⁶⁸ B. Scharf and M. Scharf, *Courage*, pp. 49–50.

⁶⁹ N.B. Meir (Pasternak), “Kolekcja wspomnień z Holokaustu,” in *Sasiv Memorial Book*, p. 228.

⁷⁰ POLIN, Clara Dreier, tape no. 2, 10th–12th min.

⁷¹ POLIN, Harry Brill, tape no. 2, 17th–18th min.

A similar method of survival was described by Irving Guttman and Sheldon Reiss, who made use of property left behind by the murdered inhabitants of Huta Werchobuska: "This village was completely burned down, with people and animals. We used to go there afterwards through the forest. We found meat from cows and that is how we fed ourselves."⁷²

After the pacifications, the forest became a place where Jews encountered more and more groups that they had to be cautious of – they had to avoid Ukrainians patrolling the area, which made it impossible to stay in one place for long. Jews often responded with fire and killed their attackers.⁷³ They also encountered distressed Poles who blamed them for the German massacres in the countryside.⁷⁴ However, they also met those who continued to help them.

Harry Brill, who had to find his sister who had gone missing during their escape, recalled his encounter with the residents of Huta Werchobuska:

I went there and decided to go [further – K.D.] and look for my sister. In the afternoon, I stopped in the second village that still existed, a Polish village. I saw the first house and asked how to get to Majdan, which was the third village. They advised me to just follow the dirt road in the forest. So, I entered the village. And I asked the first man I met how to get to Majdan. Which direction in the forest? And he kicked me and said that because of you Jews, they would burn this village too. "It's all your fault. Because of you, they burned Huta, because you were a Jew. And they found out that they were hiding Jews. So, I don't even want to see you." And he kicked me, so I decided to leave. However, he told me, "Go this way." And he kicked me, and I left.⁷⁵

⁷² POLIN, Irving Guttman, tape no. 2, 16th–19th min; POLIN, Sheldon Reiss, tape no. 3, 16th min.

⁷³ N.B. Meir (Pasternak), "Kolekcja wspomnień z Holocaustu," p. 228.

⁷⁴ The analysed accounts also mention an isolated attack by a group of Poles on Jews. Samuel Wander recalls: "In Huta Pieniacka, SS men murdered all Poles for helping Jews and partisans. They burned down the village. We lived off the products we found in the burned village. Once, we were attacked by Poles who demanded a ransom of two thousand. We were penniless, and they took our shoes and coats. It was winter, it was freezing, and I was left barefoot and without a coat. Our tormentors promised that they would not kill us if we denounced the rich Jews. These Poles were killed by the Banderites" (AŻIH, 301/1403, Testimony of Samuel Wander, p. 7).

⁷⁵ POLIN, Harry Brill, tape no. 2, 18th–19th min.

He finally found his sister in a damp, cold underground bunker, in a very poor condition. He took her to Józefa Schnitzer's house in Majdan Pieniacki. When she recovered, they lived and ate at the Schnitzer family's house and sometimes stayed in the forest for safety reasons. This fact was established thanks to correspondence between Maria Bernadka Huzarska, Józefa Schnitzer's daughter, and Clara Dreier:

We also remember that one evening, these boys came back from the forest with a girl named Klara. She was extremely exhausted, cold and hungry. She had a fever. Julek gave up his place on the stove and we put Klara there, because it was the warmest and best place at that time. [...] Early in the morning, a friend of our Hrycio [a Jew hiding with them, details unknown – M.S.] came running, shouting that there were three German cars in the village. They hurriedly took Klara and fled into the forest.⁷⁶

Conclusion

The extermination of Jews throughout the pre-war Tarnopol Voivodeship was planned by the Germans and organised and directed by the German occupation apparatus. However, they could not have carried out their criminal plans without the support of local auxiliary formations, whose members were much more familiar with the terrain and social realities. Such auxiliary units included, among others, police regiments composed of Ukrainian recruits and formed part of the SS Division "Galizien."

Around the turn of 1943 and 1944, Ukrainian nationalists sought to take advantage of the conditions created by the occupying forces to advance their own agenda. Guided by the ideological tenets of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), their efforts focused on the depolonisation of the eastern territories of the pre-war Second Polish Republic. These actions endangered not only Polish civilians but also Jewish communities, whom the OUN-UPA regarded as adversaries. For Ukrainian nationalists cooperating with the Germans, the mere presence of Jews in a region often served as justification for violent attacks. Such operations were intended to lend legitimacy to their cause, curry favour with the German

⁷⁶ AYV, ID 13793312, Letter from Maria Bernadka Huzarska to Clara Dreier, 3 November 1995, p. 4.

authorities, and secure access to German resources – arms, uniforms, and other supplies essential to furthering their political objectives.

The destruction of Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska – Polish settlements that functioned as self-defence hubs and bases for Soviet partisans – undoubtedly aligned with the interests of Ukrainian nationalists. This topic has been addressed in existing historical studies, which are cited throughout this paper. However, the issue of aid extended to Jews in these villages and their surrounding areas has received only fragmented and superficial attention. The current body of literature has not permitted a thorough analysis of such aid efforts, which have often been overlooked, and the presence of Jews among the Polish residents of both villages has been entirely neglected.

This study is the first to systematically address a significant gap in existing research, drawing in particular on the testimonies of Jewish survivors. The collected testimonies reveal that, around the turn of 1943 and 1944, Jews fleeing from the ghettos in Brody and Żłoczów, as well as from labour camps in the Kreis Żłoczów region, found refuge in Huta Pieniacka, Huta Werchobuska, and the surrounding forests. Their interactions with the local Polish population can be credibly characterised as sustained and organised aid efforts. Residents of both villages offered shelter in their homes, helped establish hiding places, provided food and essential supplies to those concealed in the woods, warned them of approaching German and Ukrainian patrols, arranged transport, and even supplied weapons. The testimonies suggest that this aid was a widespread endeavour – encompassing entire communities where Jews could move about with relative freedom.

Determining the exact number of Poles – specifically residents of Huta Pieniacka, Huta Werchobuska, and nearby areas – who assisted Jews is impossible. Identifying individuals who offered help is even more challenging, as Jewish sources largely overlook this subject, and Polish testimonies address it only marginally. The Kotowski and Wesołowski families, Wojciech Orłowski, and Józefa Schnitzer are among the few mentioned. Only one source analysed provides information about hostile attitudes of Poles toward Jews in hiding.

The question of whether assistance to Jews was the sole or direct cause of the destruction of Huta Pieniacka and Huta Werchobuska by the SS “Galizien” police

regiments remains unresolved and requires further investigation. Existing sources do not offer sufficient evidence to support this hypothesis. Nevertheless, Jewish survivors of the pacification, who witnessed the events firsthand, expressed no such uncertainty. In their testimonies, they attributed the tragedy of both villages to the act of helping Jews. To this day, the exact number of Poles killed in these villages, as well as the number of Jewish victims, remains unknown.

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

Summary

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

Keywords

Tarłów • Holocaust • police • collaboration

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Germans

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³⁶ Born on 20 August 1901 in Hall.

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

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

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

³⁷ Born on 6 February 1894 in Dresden.

³⁸ Born on 4 March 1891 in Adelsdorf.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁹⁷ AIPN Ki, 7/69, Minutes documenting the inspection of Alfons Himmel's case files, 12 December 1969, pp. 255, 258, 259, 260.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Blue Police

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴⁹ He used the pseudonym “Forma” there.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

Summary

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

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

Keywords

Działoszyce • Holocaust • German crimes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

September 1939 and the Period of the Military Rule

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Judenrat and Jewish Institutions in Działoszyce⁶⁰

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁷⁷ These are rough drafts with strike-throughs.

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

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

Statistical Overview of the Jewish Population

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1. The Population of Działoszyce in 1939–1942

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Economic Plundering

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹²⁹ W. Kapsa, "Policja w Działoszycach," p. 162.

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

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

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

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

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

Forced Labour

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy of Extermination

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁷² W. Kapsa, "Pod okupacją hitlerowską," p. 124.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Physical Extermination

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The First Deportation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²¹⁷ Young Volksdeutsche served in it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

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

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

²²⁵ For more, see D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 72–77.

consecutive days, community members gathered at the Jewish cemetery, praying at their ancestors' graves in hopes of averting the impending tragedy.²²⁶ Today, it is well established – supported by extensive evidence on the deportation process during *Aktion Reinhardt* – that deportations within the General Governorate were preceded by forced contributions. This pattern was evident in Działoszyce as well as in other towns across the Kreis Miechów.

On 25 August 1942, Beyerlein and Schmidt demanded that all towns deliver huge sums of money and gold by 3 a.m. the following morning.²²⁷ Some saw this as a trick and a trap. Meir Zonenfeld's father said, "I will not pay for the murder of my wife and children," and when the Judenrat officials came for the demanded amount, he burned the money.²²⁸ Seeing the danger, the Judenrat in Działoszyce, following the example of neighbouring towns whose efforts had been successful, attempted to organise craft workshops. They declared that 1,000 skilled workers and 2,000 labourers would be made available to the Arbeitsamt. The endeavour proved futile. On the eve of the deportation, the manager of the potential workshops, who had arrived in Cracow to discuss the matter, was "sent back empty-handed."²²⁹ From Wohlgelernter's diary and *Sefer izkor*, it can be concluded that members of the Judenrat and OD officers also attempted to save themselves and avoid deportation. The price was a guarantee that no one would escape from the ghetto.²³⁰

²²⁶ A. Sabor, *Sztetl. Śladami żydowskich miasteczek. Działoszyce – Pińczów – Chmielnik – Szydłów – Chęciny*. Przewodnik, Cracow, 2011, p. 35; M. Rozenek, "The Outbreak of World War Two." The testimonies of Chaim Wohlgelernter and Aryeh Shachar (Lejb [Lajbl] Jutrzenka) provide a detailed description of the prayers. See Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, "Jews Repent," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi261.html#Page273> (accessed 30 January 2025); A. Shachar (Lajbl Jutrzenka), "Chapters from the Past," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi261.html#Page280> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²²⁷ I have not found any information about the specific amount, but witnesses speak of "huge sums."

²²⁸ A. Tennenbaum, "The Deportations from Działoszyce," p. 183. The Judenrat collected this contribution during the deportation operation itself. According to Zonenfeld, it was intended to cover the costs of travel "to the East," while Spokojny claimed that it was to postpone the deportation (AYV, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 8; BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Juliusz Spokojny, Augsburg, 3 May 1963, p. 71).

²²⁹ D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," p. 70.

²³⁰ Thus wrote Mosze Bejski in *Sefer izkor*: "Among other things, we learned that despite assurances given to the Judenrat and the Ordnungsdienst that they would remain in Działoszyce and not be deported with the others, they ultimately ended up with us. The explanation was that the promise had indeed been made and even officially stamped. However, when the Germans discovered that several individuals managed to flee the town, at the last moment they added the Judenrat and the Jewish police." (M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction").

According to Wohlgerlinter, Beyerlein stamped the relevant papers for huge sums of money.²³¹

Shortly before the operation, knowledge of it became almost widespread. Poles – local post office clerks – warned their Jewish acquaintances.²³² Wohlgerlinter's family was informed by the restaurateur Wróbel, who on 2 September 1942 was ordered to prepare several hundred meals. It was expected that these were intended for the police forces.²³³ Rumours coming from various sources meant that shortly before the deportation, or even on the same day, just before the ring surrounding Działoszyce was closed, hundreds of Jews attempted to escape. We will never know their exact number, but the scale of the phenomenon was quite large.²³⁴ People desperately searched for a chance to survive with Polish farmers they knew near Działoszyce. Entangled in various dependencies, the fugitives confronted numerous dilemmas – such as financial concerns, family obligations, and the care of small children – that were mirrored in thousands of other cases across the General Governorate.²³⁵

The direct blow to the Jewish community came on 2 September 1942, corresponding to the 24th day of Elul in the Jewish calendar.

That afternoon, several hundred German functionaries and their subordinates arrived in Działoszyce by special train to carry out the ghetto's liquidation. The exact size and composition of the group remain unknown. However, Szlama Szulimowicz later recalled the presence of numerous SS personnel and members of the Sonderkommando, the special unit tasked with such operations.²³⁶ Chaim Wohlgerlinter spoke of 200 Germans and 300 young men from the Baudienst who had been brought in and placed under their command.²³⁷ According to a Polish

²³¹ Ch.Y. Wolgerlinter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 109.

²³² AYV, O.3/2565, Testimony of Helena Dresner, 1982, p. 4.

²³³ Ch.Y. Wolgerlinter, *The Unfinished Diary*; Ch.Y. Wolgerlinter, "Jews Repent."

²³⁴ Gustaw Weinfeld, a resident of Działoszyce, estimated the number of fugitives at around 4,000. These figures are exaggerated, but the number of those who did not comply with German orders was very high and could have exceeded 1,000, which was about 15 per cent of the total population. AŻIH, 301/1765, Testimony of Gustaw Weinfeld, n.p., n.d., p. 1.

²³⁵ M. Melchior, "Uciekinierzy z gett po „stronie aryjskiej” na prowincji dystryktu warszawskiego – sposoby przetrwania," in *Prowincja noc*, p. 371; M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction"; S. Szulimowicz, "The Evil Decrees," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi261.html#Page278> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

²³⁷ According to Libionka, at the beginning of 1942, the Baudienst outpost had 360 workers (later more), divided into four work groups. A German named Hubert Turnegger led the whole operation.

witness, the group consisted of several Gestapo officers, a number of German Military Policemen, and Blue Policemen (including some from the local station)²³⁸ along with Baudienst workers. There are significant discrepancies regarding the number of German Military Policemen who participated in the operation. Chaim Jakubowicz, interrogated after the war, testified that there were about forty of them. This seems very likely, considering the staffing of the Military Police stations in the Kreishauptmannschaft Miechów.²³⁹

Regardless, the operation was conducted on behalf of the German state by Reich functionaries and auxiliary units they had established. German civil and police authorities were central figures, acting as both commanders and organisers of the mass atrocity. Witnesses confirmed this, stating that “the entire operation was commanded by Germans.”²⁴⁰ Of course, there could be no question of any independence on the part of the Blue Police, let alone the unarmed Baudienst.²⁴¹ The Germans determined the duties of these formations, using the Blue Police and Baudienst workers to surround the town. During the operation, some were given additional assignments. “The Gestapo, however, did not employ them solely for labour – they were under its command, particularly for orders focused on the annihilation and murder of all Jews.”²⁴² Surviving testimonies suggest that the Germans gave alcohol to Baudienst youth to blunt their emotional response to the atrocities.²⁴³

The Judenrat and the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst were similarly used by the Germans. First, the Judenrat was ordered to gather all Jews in the market square.²⁴⁴

According to the findings of the post-war investigation into the crimes of Dr. Schmidt, this outpost was larger. Turnegger took command in March 1942, and each of the four work groups had 250 people. BAL, B.162/5971, Final report on the crimes of Dr. Schmidt, Ludwigsburg, 4 November 1964, p. 69; BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Alfons Kalpers, Düsseldorf, 18 July 1961, p. 50.

²³⁸ According to his own statement, Stanisław Wójciak – mentioned earlier – could not have been involved in the liquidation operations in the Kreis Miechów in the second half of 1942, because he was in custody at the time. The Germans had arrested him for “disobedience.” AAN, ABF, Stanisław Wójciak, Letter from Stanisław Wójciak to the rehabilitation commission, n.d., n.p., pp. 197–198v.

²³⁹ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 78. See AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Chaim Jakubowicz during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 156.

²⁴⁰ AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Ignacy Skóra during the main hearing, p. 272.

²⁴¹ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 78–79.

²⁴² Ch.I. Wohlgeleirnter, “Działoszyce,” p. 30.

²⁴³ Each Baudienst member was to receive a bottle of vodka. BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Juliusz Spokojny, Augsburg, 3 May 1963, p. 71.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

The mayor was instructed to have notices posted around town, stating where the Jews were to report and what belongings they were permitted to take. People from outside the ghetto were forbidden, under the threat of death, to appropriate any of the property left behind.²⁴⁵ This provision was based on the assumption that all Jewish property left in apartments automatically became the property of the Reich and, as German property, was subject to special protection. In addition, a megaphone announced that no one was allowed to leave the town.

The actual deportation began on the morning of 3 September 1942.²⁴⁶ It was marked by crying, fear, anxiety, and deep concern for families.²⁴⁷ Most Jews obediently complied with the orders. They were supervised by a police force made up of Jews, which maintained the “order” required by the occupiers. Gestapo officers, Military Police, and some of the Blue Police entered the ghetto.²⁴⁸ The Germans also used the local fire brigade, which, as a militarised service, was, like the Jewish ghetto police, fully dependent on their orders.²⁴⁹

For the Gestapo, the forced gathering of Jews in the market square became yet another occasion to assert their dominance and absolute power. Mosze Bejski personally witnessed armed Gestapo officers dragging five or six individuals from the crowd and compelling them to do various “exercises.”²⁵⁰ Members of the Blue Police also exploited the situation. Chaim Wohlgelernter recalled the anti-Semitic rants delivered to the assembled crowd by Julian Ordysiński, an officer of the *Polnische Polizei*.²⁵¹

Some attempted to hide. Eighteen individuals sought refuge in a mill, standing beneath cascading water in a desperate effort to remain concealed. Somehow, the

²⁴⁵ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 78.

²⁴⁶ On the same day, the Jews from Skalmierz were deported to Działoszyce and Miechów. The non-German police and Baudienst forces used for these operations must therefore have been divided and thus limited in number. A. Shachar (Lajbl Jutrzenka), “Chapters from the Past”; A. Rafałowicz, “Under the German Boot.”

²⁴⁷ D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce.”

²⁴⁸ After the war, Dr. Grębowski spoke about the murder of all patients in the hospital in Działoszyce by the Germans. Perhaps this event took place during the so-called deportation. The murder of sick people in hospitals was a common practice of the Germans during individual deportation operations. See “Dokument nr 29,” in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 108.

²⁴⁹ AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Antoni Sielecki during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 150. During the war, Sielecki was the commander of the fire brigade.

²⁵⁰ BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Mosze Bejski, n.d., n.p., p. 245.

²⁵¹ Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 93.

Germans discovered their hiding place. At first, they planned to execute everyone on the spot, but ultimately, the group was added to the transport.²⁵² Some of those who resisted, attempted to escape, or in any way “interfered” with the activities of the liquidation units were murdered on the spot immediately after being found.

The Germans roamed the town and gave orders to Jewish policemen, *Polnische Polizei* officers, and the *Baudienst* youth. Each of these formations performed tasks assigned by their German superiors. Together with the Germans, they searched buildings, cellars and all places where Jews could hide. Jews from the *Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst* played a particularly important role in this, as they knew the customs of their fellow Jews and how they built hiding places. Chaim Wohlgelernter described it as follows: “The *Ordnungsdienst*, together with the *Gestapo*, went from flat to flat. When they found a sick or elderly person who could not walk on their own, they shot them on the spot.”²⁵³ Rabbi Staszewski was murdered by the Germans in his own bed. The tinsmith Akiba Zyngier was also killed. Baruch Popper was shot near a grain warehouse.²⁵⁴ Among the victims were many relatives of Juliusz Spokojny: two of his father’s brothers, his grandmother, and his father’s sister with her child.²⁵⁵ These are just a few examples.²⁵⁶ Shots could be heard all day long. The search for people provided the Germans with an excellent opportunity to steal valuables and money.²⁵⁷ Kripo chief Philipp Riedinger was deeply engaged in the search efforts to the extent that he broke his leg in one of the cellars. The task of removing the bodies fell to a special sanitary commission made up of Dr. Grębowski and a town hall employee, Waclaw Kapsa. There were 47 bodies in total. The bodies were taken away by Polish peasants who happened to be in the city that day and were forced by the Germans to do so.²⁵⁸

²⁵² A. Sabor, *Sztetl*, p. 36.

²⁵³ Ch.I. Wohlgelernter, “Działoszyce,” p. 31.

²⁵⁴ D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce,” p. 223, A. Rafałowicz, “Under the German Boot.”

²⁵⁵ BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Juliusz Spokojny, Augsburg, 3 May 1963, p. 73.

²⁵⁶ During Riedinger’s trial, reference was made to the murder of approximately twenty Jewish girls during the first deportation. I have not been able to uncover any additional details about this incident.

²⁵⁷ M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps.”

²⁵⁸ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 79. Many farmers arrived in Działoszyce at that time to deliver their compulsory quota of agricultural produce. After completing their “task,” they were also “equipped” with vodka. “Dokument nr 48, Woźnica zmuszony do transportu Żydów II. Opowieść z Miernowa,” in *O tym nie wolno mówić*, p. 79.

While gathering people and searching for Jews in hiding, the Germans spread several rumours. Among them was the claim that a few unfortunate souls would be left in the ghetto for “collecting money, jewellery, and gold.” The truth emerged when these people were ordered to join the others.²⁵⁹ Another rumour is recounted by Chaim Wohlgernter: “Various rumours were being spread throughout the town. It was said that the Judenrat and the Ordnungsdienst would be dissolved, and that those who managed to hide until the end of the operation would survive and be able to return to the town.”²⁶⁰ Meanwhile, before noon, Scherner’s staff functionaries arrived in the town. The crowd, hoping for good decisions, welcomed the news of a joint feast of Jews – members of the Judenrat and the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst – with the Germans.²⁶¹ Ultimately, however, Wilhelm Kunde – described as “a key figure in the Cracow-based Gestapo” – declared that documents previously stamped by Beyerlein would no longer be recognised. The Judenrat and the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst were given just ten minutes to join the assembled crowd, with a warning that “anyone who was a minute late would be shot.”²⁶²

Shortly after noon, several thousand Jews gathered in the market square in Działoszyce. Then, marching columns were formed. Under the supervision of the Military Police and with the participation of the Blue Police, the rounded-up people were escorted to the narrow-gauge railway station. There, the Jews were loaded into wagons and transported to Miechów. Local Poles reportedly sat along the tracks and laughed at the Jews, responding to their cries for help with: “Would you have given us anything?”²⁶³

²⁵⁹ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “Years of Pain,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi336.html#Page349> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²⁶⁰ Ch.I. Wohlgernter, “Działoszyce,” p. 31; M. Bejski, “Days of the Shoah,” <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi233.html> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²⁶¹ This is exactly how Wohlgernter described it. However, the attitude of the Judenrat during the deportations was generally viewed very critically. He wrote: “While everyone was aware that the ground was burning under their feet, the Judenrat continued to carry out German orders in Miechów and Działoszyce. Kruk, while collecting contributions before the deportation, behaved ruthlessly.” (Ch.Y. Wolgernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 110). See also M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction”; A. Tennenbaum, “The Deportations from Działoszyce”; Ch.Y. Wolgernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 109.

²⁶² Ch.Y. Wolgernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 109.

²⁶³ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 79.

On that day, the most shocking act of the tragedy of the Jews of Działoszyce took place in the town. German commanders announced that all elderly, infirm, and unable to walk to the railway could use a “lift.” From the early hours of the morning,²⁶⁴ these people were transported by carts²⁶⁵ to the Jewish cemetery and to the place next to the cemetery, where dogs and sick horses were buried. On the night before the execution, the Germans ordered the young men from the Baudienst to dig large pits there.²⁶⁶ One of the residents forced to transport Jews to the cemetery reported: “I was assigned to transport them. The Jews were led by the Military Police and the [Blue] Police to pits outside the town, where the Germans and the Gestapo took them and shot them. I wasn’t there because they didn’t allow Poles or our [Blue] Police to come near.”²⁶⁷

The Germans also used the men from the Baudienst to bury the bodies. Their accounts provide details of the tragic events:

Fifty metres from the ditch, the Jews were ordered to strip naked and then enter the ditch, where German Military Police and Gestapo officers standing above the ditch shot the victims. The next group of Jews was lined up over the ditch and shot from behind, then pushed into the ditch. In this way, about 1,200 Jews were buried in three layers in the ditch, after which the young labourers covered the ditches with earth. The operation [...] lasted from morning until 2 p.m.²⁶⁸

It is certain that at least some of the Gestapo and Military Police were in a state of alcoholic stupor. It cannot be ruled out that some people were buried while still alive. Witnesses remember a mass grave shaking with the trembling bodies.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Waław Kapsa during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Saławun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 251.

²⁶⁵ The number of carts used by the Germans to transport the victims to the place of execution varies in different sources, ranging from 16 to 100.

²⁶⁶ AIPN Ki, 53/4478, Executions – Działoszyce, Giżycko, 1 May 1969, pp. 47–48.

²⁶⁷ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Piotr Karociński during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Saławun, Cracow, 1 December 1948, p. 436. The commander consistently denied that he was in Działoszyce on that day. AIPN Ki, 128/208, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Fischel Walberg at the main hearing in the case of Piotr Saławun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, pp. 144–145.

²⁶⁸ Quoted from D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 79.

²⁶⁹ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “Years of Pain.”

According to documentation created shortly after the war, a total of five pits were dug: two in the Jewish cemetery and three adjacent to it.²⁷⁰ Even then, the number of victims was controversial. No exhumation was carried out there, so we are left with estimates. It was reported that 500–1,600 people were buried there.²⁷¹ The number 1,200 appeared in Polish underground documents and is also given by Meir Zonenfeld in his book of memory and in his survivor testimony submitted to Yad Vashem. It was most likely determined on the basis of clothing left behind by Jewish coachmen Szmul Goldkorn and Pałasznicki. They transported the clothes to the synagogue, after which they were also shot by the Germans.²⁷² In turn, an official of the Działoszyce magistrate reported 1,400 murdered – because that was how many *Kennkarten* were left behind.²⁷³ Therefore, the most likely number of people murdered in a mass execution in Działoszyce is 1,200–1,400.²⁷⁴ Considering the above, it can be concluded that the crime in Działoszyce was one of the largest – if not the largest – single-instance mass murders in the pre-war territory of the Kielce Voivodeship.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁰ This location of the grave is provided by the most reliable source, as it was created immediately after the war – the survey of the Magistrate's Court in Kazimierz Wielka. See AIPN Ki, 53/308, Questionnaire on mass executions and mass graves, Kazimierza Wielka, 8 October 1945, pp. 63–65. Executions of Polish civilians, including Wincenty Koza, were also carried out by the Germans near the cemetery wall in Działoszyce. AO Kr, Ds. 1/81 (253), Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Teofil Śliwa, Pińczów, 3 December 1990, pp. 128–129. Digging a pit or pits large enough to contain such a number of bodies must have taken a long time and required considerable manpower. It can therefore be assumed that the involvement of Baudienst youth in surrounding and guarding the town was smaller than commonly believed.

²⁷¹ Elżbieta Rączy estimated the number of victims of this crime at around 500, while Dariusz Libionka estimated it at 1,200–1,600. The post-war survey of the Magistrate's Court in Kazimierz Wielka mentions 1,500 victims. Juliusz Spokojny mentioned the figure of 4,000 when he was interrogated after the war as a witness in connection with Dr. Schmidt's crimes. AP Ki, SP in Pińczów, 276, Survey concerning the course of military operations and the German occupation, Działoszyce, 3 August 1946, p. 83; AIPN Ki, 53/308, Questionnaire on mass executions and mass graves, Kazimierza Wielka, 8 October 1945, pp. 63–65; BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Juliusz Spokojny, Augsburg, 23 March 1960, p. 61.

²⁷² M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps," p. 293.

²⁷³ "Dokument nr 36, Junak robi zdjęcia podczas egzekucji. Opowieść z Działoszyce," in *O tym nie wolno mówić*, p. 71.

²⁷⁴ An exhumation could dispel any doubts.

²⁷⁵ Perhaps another mass execution took place during the deportation. In this case, it involved a dozen or so Jewish children who were fleeing towards Niewiatrowice (in the direction opposite to the Jewish cemetery) but were captured and shot. See AIPN Ki, 53/4478, Executions – Działoszyce, Giżycko, 1 May 1969, pp. 47–48.

Few managed to survive the massacre. A girl of about ten years of age, wounded in the neck and mouth, received professional help from Dr. Grębowski. She probably survived the war. Under similar circumstances – “in the summer following the shooting of the Jewish population”²⁷⁶ – the same doctor operated on Haskiel Spiro, who had attempted suicide but survived. He was saved by a Pole who brought him to the doctor. A few days later, Spiro, mentally broken and unwilling to hide, was found by either the Germans or the Blue Police and murdered.²⁷⁷

On the day of the first deportation, roundups of Jews in hiding began in the vicinity of Działoszyce and continued for several days. The chase for Jewish fugitives extended to the town’s nearby regions. Among those shot by the Germans were members of the family of Aryeh Shachar’s wife, Moszek Platkiewicz, and his wife, Rywka.²⁷⁸ The manhunts were initiated and organised by the German Military Police. The Germans also used the Blue Police, the local fire brigade, and civilians who had been herded to search for the fugitives.²⁷⁹

Some of the roundups were carried out by the Blue Police under orders from the Germans. At that time, following an order from the commander of the Orpo in the General Governorate (BdO) issued in December 1941, they were to be led by the commander of a group of police stations.²⁸⁰ Jews found in Działoszyce in the first days after the deportation were sent to Wolbrom, where the operation was still in progress, and then taken to the cemetery and killed.²⁸¹

The role of the Blue Police in the killings remains deeply controversial. The Germans carried out mass executions outside the town, while the Blue Police were required to provide support inside and around it. They were ordered to shoot anyone who disobeyed German commands or attempted to escape. They thus operated in the fraught space where the orders of German commanders and the fate of Jewish victims intersected. Sent to do the dirty work, they were the most

²⁷⁶ This record clearly brings to mind the first deportation.

²⁷⁷ “Dokument nr 29,” in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 107.

²⁷⁸ A. Shachar (Lajbl Jutrzenka), “Chapters from the Past.”

²⁷⁹ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Joachim Kasowski during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 1 December 1948, p. 433; AIPN Ki, 128/208, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Marcin Tarski during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 11 January 1949, p. 261.

²⁸⁰ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the County PP Command in Miechów to all group commanders and station commanders, Miechów, 1 February 1943, pp. 71–71v.

²⁸¹ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” pp. 79–80.

visible – something reflected after the war in the statement of Ignacy Skóra, one of the survivors, who testified: “The action was carried out by the Polish police rather than the Germans.”²⁸² However, these statements – made during the post-war trial of Piotr Sałabun, who served as commander in Działoszyce and later as regional commander of the Polish Police – are not supported by the facts. The commander’s role, along with the lengthy legal proceedings under the August decree, is highly controversial due to inconsistent and conflicting witness testimonies. As a result, making clear historical judgments and reconstructing the events of the German occupation based on this case is simply difficult.²⁸³

Equally controversial is the way in which this figure is described by some authors dealing with the history of the *Polnische Polizei*. Let us refer to Jan Grabowski – already mentioned in this article – who, in his book *Na posterunku* (On Duty, pp. 117 and 205), twice described Sałabun as a “dangerous murderer.” He also included a statement by Jakubowicz from the *Sefer izkor* of Działoszyce: “Just shoot. I heard him several times. [...] By evening, 2,000 people had been killed in this way during the deportation.” However, Grabowski omitted the portion of Jakubowicz’s statement that described the deportation of Jews to Miechów and the executions in Działoszyce – events in which the Blue Police did not participate – and retained only the figure of 2,000 Jews killed. This editorial choice strongly implied that it was the Polish Police functionaries who carried out the killings, which was clearly not Jakubowicz’s intention. Meanwhile, neither Grabowski nor Dariusz Libionka, in “Powiat miechowski” (The County of Miechów), *passim*, frequently cited here, mentioned Sałabun’s efforts to aid Jews. Libionka addressed these omissions only in his most recent article, “Zaprowadzanie sprawiedliwości” (Bringing Justice), following my critique published in the review *Korekta obrazu?* (Correcting the Picture).

Finally, it is worth examining the role of the *Baudienst* in actions against Jews. This was a specialised service, with recruitment carried out on a compulsory

²⁸² AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Ignacy Skóra during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, p. 272.

²⁸³ The testimony incriminating Sałabun, which references his behaviour, was provided by Chaim Jakubowicz. The matter is thoroughly discussed in D. Libionka, “Zaprowadzanie sprawiedliwości. Śledztwa i postępowania sądowe wobec funkcjonariuszy aparatu okupacyjnego i Polaków w służbie niemieckiej z Kreis Miechów,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 19 (2023), pp. 277–325.

basis²⁸⁴ – organised similarly to military conscription.²⁸⁵ The German authorities exercised absolute discretion over how these young men were deployed, often subjecting them to a brutal climate of administrative and physical terror. For those who deserted the service, the consequences were severe. German orders issued to the Blue Police in June 1941 were unequivocal: deserters were to be detained, and if “the police patrol sent for this purpose does not find the fugitive at home, one of his family members must **absolutely** [original emphasis – T.D.] be taken as a hostage and delivered to the Construction Service office in Miechów.”

Post commanders and police officers directly involved in these operations were bound by a strict duty to carry out orders.²⁸⁶ Escape was punishable by death. The threats directed at the Baudienst youth were not empty words. Shortly after the so-called second deportation operation in the Miechów prison, a mass murder of prisoners took place. Thirty-one people (Poles and Jews) fell victim to this brutality, including two men who had escaped from the Baudienst.²⁸⁷

The crimes committed by the Germans against the young men do not in any way justify those who showed excessive zeal in serving the Germans. Another event illustrates the complexity of the situation. Among the young men executed in Działoszyce, there was one who, at the risk of his own life, tried to take photographs of the execution.²⁸⁸

A Concentration in Miechów

Before reaching Miechów, the Jews from Działoszyce were taken out of the wagons and led to a designated place, where Kripo officers, gendarmes, policemen

²⁸⁴ However, the Germans introduced certain exceptions: commanders, drivers, and those operating motor pumps in the Volunteer Fire Brigades were exempted from the Baudienst service. See AP Ki, AG Boszczynek, 1373, Letter from the Board of the Union of the Kreis Miechów Municipalities (Verwaltung des Gemeindeverbändes) to all municipal boards in the county, Miechów, 10 November 1942, p. 116.

²⁸⁵ The municipalities had to compile lists of all men from the specified age groups and send them to the German authorities.

²⁸⁶ AN Kr, KP PP Brzesko Nowe, 2, Letter from the County PP Command in Miechów to PP station commanders in the county, Miechów, 12 July 1941, p. 61. At village leaders' meetings, there were threats to arrest the parents of young men who had escaped the service. See AP Ka, AG Kidów, 547, Minutes of the village leaders' meeting of the Municipality of Kidów, p. 188.

²⁸⁷ E. Wójcicka and P. Rogowski, “Miechów i ziemia miechowska,” p. 228.

²⁸⁸ “Dokument nr 36, Junak robi zdjęcia podczas egzekucji. Opowieść z Działoszyce,” in *O tym nie wolno mówić*, p. 71.

and functionaries from the Miechów prison were already waiting with whips and iron crowbars.²⁸⁹ The entire route from the place where the people were unloaded to the assembly point was guarded by Blue Policemen, including functionaries from Działoszyce. There were appalling scenes of beating and robbing the Jews who were expected to have money. At the head of the procession, Riedinger rode on a white horse.²⁹⁰ It was forbidden to stand, and people had to sit on wet grass. The Jews from Miechów provided their brothers with bread and water.

The next morning, the Jews from Miechów joined those who had arrived. The gathered people were ordered to stand up, and then everyone was divided into groups – men, women, and children. Then, the Germans and Arbeitsamt employees from Cracow carried out a selection. Healthy men were chosen, among whom were also Jews from Działoszyce and Skalbmierz.²⁹¹ The exact size of the group remains uncertain. Some witnesses estimate it at 1,500 to 2,000 men, while others suggest a significantly smaller number, around 800.²⁹² Following the selection process, the group was transported to Cracow: those marked for execution were placed in locked wagons, whereas those assigned to labour camps were transported in open wagons.²⁹³ In Cracow, the group was divided. The chosen ones were sent to labour camps, while most of the women, children, and elderly people were transported by the Germans to the extermination camp in Bełżec, where they were killed.

The Second Deportation

The deportation from Działoszyce on 3 September 1942 did not mark the end of the local Jewish community. In the town, as in many other former Jewish communities across the Kreis Miechów, those who had survived the initial wave of deportations began to gather again.²⁹⁴ The Germans tacitly accepted this fact. In Działoszyce, they gathered everyone in the synagogue and in the courtyard of the

²⁸⁹ AYW, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 8.

²⁹⁰ A. Chobeh (Chaba), "Years of Pain"; M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps."

²⁹¹ D. Bejski, "My Own Experience in the Holocaust," p. 83; M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps."

²⁹² AYW, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 9.

²⁹³ M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps."

²⁹⁴ This turn of events is discussed in more detail by D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," pp. 87–92.

town hall. They formed a small Judenrat with Josel Richter as its chairman.²⁹⁵ The returning residents arrived from two directions. The first group included those who had sought refuge nearby – sheltering with Polish peasants or hiding in fields and bushes – the impossibility of continuing to hide eventually compelled them to return. Among them was the six-member family of Eliyahu Rozdział (Raziel), then an eight-year-old boy, who had found refuge with a Polish farmer before the first deportation.²⁹⁶ After several days in hiding, fifteen members of Aszer Rafałowicz's family returned to Działoszyce.²⁹⁷ They were joined by fugitives from the Radom district: Opatów, Staszów, and Wiślica. The second group consisted of fugitives from labour camps in Prokocim, Płaszów, and Kostra. The conditions there were so difficult that the prospect of returning home was their only hope of survival. We know the names of only a few of them, including Dawid Gelbart, Moszek Jutrzenka, and Aryeh Shachar (Lejb [Lajbl] Jutrzenka), who reached Działoszyce via Skalbierz.²⁹⁸ An unknown commissioner stayed at his house, running their family shop. At the sight of Shachar, he immediately left the house.²⁹⁹ Abraham Chobeh (Chaba) returned to Działoszyce from the camp in Kostra after paying a bribe (40 dollars in gold).³⁰⁰ Meir Zonenfeld arrived from the camp in Płaszów via Nowy Korczyn. Some residents returned just a few days before the second deportation.³⁰¹ In addition, the Germans withdrew about fifty members of the Judenrat and the OD from the labour camp in Cracow to Działoszyce.³⁰² We do not know exactly when this happened. The claims by some researchers that the decision was primarily driven by the need to gather additional labour are also highly questionable. After all, new fugitives were constantly arriving in the Działoszyce ghetto, and at the beginning of November 1942, the remnant ghetto

²⁹⁵ M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps," p. 297.

²⁹⁶ E. Rozdział (Raziel), "All Alone in Hiding," <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dzialoszyce/dzi298.html#Page324> (accessed 30 January 2025).

²⁹⁷ They were helped in their escape from Działoszyce by ghetto policemen.

²⁹⁸ In Skalbierz, he witnessed a scene that he found outrageous. The entire Judenrat, together with the Ordnungsdienst, ate, drank, and partied, men and women together, as if it were a wedding. A. Shachar (Lajbl Jutrzenka), "Chapters from the Past."

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ Ch. Frajman (New York), "Jankielówka and Its Jews."

³⁰¹ D. Bejski, "My Own Experience in the Holocaust"; D. Gelbart (Baltimore), "The Tragedy of Działoszyce"; M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps," p. 298.

³⁰² D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," pp. 87–88; M. Bejski, "The Holocaust and Destruction."

numbered 1,100 Jews. Fifty people did not make a noticeable difference. Other reasons, which we do not know, must have prevailed.

However, the conditions of existence in Działoszyce were already completely different than just a few weeks earlier. All Jewish houses were closed and sealed. Some of them were looted and robbed, although some remained untouched even several weeks after the deportation.³⁰³ Meir Zonenfeld recalled the circumstances of his “return” to Działoszyce:

I did not go back to my flat because a Blue Policeman was living there.³⁰⁴ This policeman completely looted my flat, even though the Germans had forbidden Poles from looting Jewish flats on pain of death. I was afraid of this policeman who, ironically, was no less afraid of me, but had the advantage of being able to “do away with me.” So I moved in with my brother-in-law in his untouched flat, and we stayed there for another seven weeks, until 9 November 1942.³⁰⁵

The newly established Judenrat demanded a fee – “a large sum of money” – from anyone wishing to return home.³⁰⁶

The Germans formed labour brigades from the Jews present in Działoszyce to clean up the ghetto and sort the looted goods.³⁰⁷ This was, in fact, the completion of the looting of Jewish property that had begun at the beginning of the war. Half of the 1,100 Jews worked in five facilities outside Działoszyce, most of them in Racławice and Rosiejów.³⁰⁸ Some of the workers, such as Meir Zonenfeld, used their employment to secure financial resources for the remaining years of the occupation. Preparations were also underway for emergency hiding places.³⁰⁹ After some time, the Judenrat announced another action. Some Jews attempted to escape. They obtained information about the German plans from their Polish friends and

³⁰³ Ch. Frajman (New York), “Jankielówka and Its Jews”; M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps.”

³⁰⁴ His name is missing in the testimony.

³⁰⁵ AYV, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 12.

³⁰⁶ Ch. Frajman (New York), “Jankielówka and Its Jews.”

³⁰⁷ M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps.”

³⁰⁸ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 88.

³⁰⁹ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “Years of Pain.”

fled the town at the last moment. Among them were the aforementioned Moszek Jutrzenka and Aryeh Shachar,³¹⁰ Chaba and Zonenfeld's four-man brigade. Many years after the war, the latter recalled the help that Commissioner Paweł Kluczniok had tried to give his group (in gratitude for a well-done repair of a car part). He personally obtained certificates of necessity for their employment from Beyerlein and provided carts to transport Zonenfeld's belongings to a temporary hiding place located in the former Ickowicz mill, 1.5 kilometres from Działoszyce. The fugitives had weapons and sixty rounds of ammunition with them.³¹¹ Shortly before the first deportation, a small group of Jews from Działoszyce, including Józef Ptasznik, made contact with local activists of the communist Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR), and several cells were formed. They returned to Działoszyce after the announcement of the "asylum," but eventually fled before the second deportation and joined the aforementioned PPR.³¹²

The second deportation took place on 8 November 1942. On that day, an order was issued by the Kreishauptmann announcing the deportation of Jews from the entire Kreis Miechów. The Kreishauptmann threatened that anyone who helped Jews or looted their abandoned premises would be sentenced to death under the order of 5 September 1939.³¹³ This order was issued by Schmidt, who was standing in for the absent Kalpers, and he boasted about it in a letter to Governor General Frank.³¹⁴ The Jews of Działoszyce were ordered to gather in one place and take 15 kg of luggage with them. The assembly point was organised in the magistrate's courtyard. The operation was commanded by Beyerlein. The local Blue Police and Baudienst youth were also forced to participate in the deportation. Those who failed to escape or find effective hiding places were transported to Miechów, where they were soon killed. The execution most likely took place in

³¹⁰ A. Shachar (Lajbl Jutrzenka), "Chapters from the Past."

³¹¹ AYV, O.3/1281, Testimony of Meir Zonenfeld, p. 13; M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps."

³¹² AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony of Józef Ptasznik at the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 173; AIPN Ki, 128/206, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Chaim Jakubowicz, Kłodzko, 8 March 1948, p. 90.

³¹³ M. Roth, *Herrenmenschen. Die deutschen Kreishauptleute im besetzten Polen – Karrierewege, Herrschaftspraxis und Nachgeschichte*, Göttingen, 2009, p. 217.

³¹⁴ D. Libionka, "Powiat miechowski," p. 92; BAL, B.162/5969, Draft letter to the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office, n.p., 22 October 1962, p. 59.

a forest near Chodów.³¹⁵ Pifa, a saleswoman in a fabric shop, was reportedly one of the few – perhaps the only – survivors of the massacre. According to her testimony, the execution occurred in a ravine and was carried out with machine-gun fire. Pifa was slightly wounded. She was at the top of a pile of bodies and managed to summon the strength to escape. She was helped by other Jews, including Szlama Leszman. However, it is not known whether the woman ultimately survived the occupation.³¹⁶

Meanwhile, the hunt for fugitives persisted. Military Police, aided by the Blue Police, conducted the operations, systematically searching homes one by one. According to the testimonies, Commander Sałabun was acting “harshly,” while other Blue Policemen escorted the captured Jews out of the buildings.³¹⁷ According to Dawid Gelbart, who had taken refuge in an attic, the gunfire following the second deportation continued for approximately two weeks. Other witnesses described it as a “massive outbreak of shooting.”³¹⁸ Among those killed were Majer Szulimowicz, his wife, and their son Josel.³¹⁹ The area was searched, and those captured were murdered in the Jewish cemetery. The scale of this operation is unknown. A tragic fate befell, among others, a group of Jews who were hiding in the house of Abram Rozenek.³²⁰ The executions in Działoszyce lasted about a month.³²¹ After the second deportation, three or four days later, the Germans organised an auction in Działoszyce of the property of the murdered Jews. It was conducted by Riedinger, assisted by the Blue Police and the fire brigade.³²²

³¹⁵ A. Rafałowicz, “Under the German Boot.” According to Spokojny, ghetto police from Działoszyce was murdered in Miechów. BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Juliusz Spokojny, Augsburg, 3 May 1963, p. 71.

³¹⁶ S. Leszman (ben Jakub), “In the Polish Underground.”

³¹⁷ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Piotr Karociński during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 1 December 1948, p. 437; AIPN Ki, 128/208, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Antoni Sielecki during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 147.

³¹⁸ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “Years of Pain.”

³¹⁹ From the testimony, it can be concluded that after the second deportation, the witness hid in Działoszyce for some time and heard gunshots every day. D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce.”

³²⁰ A. Chobeh (Chaba), “Years of Pain.”

³²¹ AIPN Ki, 53/4478, Executions – Działoszyce, Opole, 24 October 1969, pp. 49–50.

³²² AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony of Stanisław Czekaj during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 11 January 1949, p. 267; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Antoni Sielecki during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 147. Paradoxically, Jews in

Sometimes, the Blue Policemen sabotaged German orders. Some Jews owed their lives to them. Policeman Kamerdyniak helped Mosze Bejski and eleven other people escape, including the Lewitt brothers, Salk Kacengold, Szaniecki, and Jechiel Rajsfeld. For two years, from the second deportation until the end of the German occupation, Commander Sałabun hid Fabian Schlang. He kept him in his own apartment, which was located at the PP station (Germans were also quartered there). In addition, Sałabun helped a married couple of converts named Zielski. Commander Kasowski also helped Jews. Through his trusted friend Kiwa Jasny, he warned them about the planned arrests. According to later reports, Kasowski “defended people from the Germans [...] and even hid Jews.”³²³

Documents issued in Poland shortly after the war generally identified the Military Police and the Gestapo as the entities responsible for the first deportation. Among those specifically named were Beyerlein, Schmidt,³²⁴ Riedinger, and a little-known Oberleutnant Kommod from Cracow. Further investigations conducted in Germany identified additional individuals as perpetrators, including Baumgarten, Karl Lichtblau, and Kozak. They were said to have been involved in the murder of Jews at the cemetery.³²⁵ The name of the execution squad that shot Jews at the execution site has not been established. According to Dariusz Libionka, they may have been functionaries from the 65th Police Battalion stationed in Cracow.³²⁶ It is possible that the aforementioned Lieutenant Hartwig – whom a military policeman, interrogated after the war, had brought to Działoszyce for the first deportation –

hiding also took advantage of the opportunity to purchase property. For instance, Józef Ptasznik spent a staggering 30,000 zlotys on clothing for Wnęk, who had been helping him. AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Józef Ptasznik during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, pp. 173–174.

³²³ AIPN Ki, 128/206, Expert opinion, Cracow, 19 February 1946, pp. 23–25; M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction”; AAN, ABF, Joachim Kasowski, Curriculum vitae, Poznań, 23 June 1946, p. 444; *ibid.*, Expert opinion, Działoszyce, 24 September 1946, p. 451v.

³²⁴ During the deportation, Schmidt demonstrated significant initiative. In practice, the starost had substantial latitude in such matters – he could “stand aside” or take an active role in shaping the course of the “action.” This included overseeing the deportation and extermination of Jews, and at times even committing murders “with his own hands.” Schmidt opted for the latter. See M. Roth, “Starostowie powiatowi i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim Generalnego Gubernatorstwa,” in *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji*, eds. A. Sitarek, M. Trębacz, and E. Wiatr, Łódź, 2012, p. 280.

³²⁵ BAL, B.162/40577, Final Report on the Murders of Dr. Friedrich Schmidt, Ludwigsburg, 4 November 1964, p. 149.

³²⁶ D. Libionka, “Powiat miechowski,” p. 79.

was also involved in the “execution in Działoszyce.”³²⁷ Beyerlein³²⁸ and Riedinger were definitely present during the first deportation. Some witnesses identified the latter as the leader of the operation.³²⁹

The issue of responsibility for the extermination of the Jews of Działoszyce was raised during the Riedinger trial, which took place in Poland between 1947 and 1949. In the second point of the indictment, Riedinger was accused of personally directing the liquidation of the Jews of Działoszyce, during which 1,500–1,600 people were killed.³³⁰ The defendant did not plead guilty. He explained that he had been in Działoszyce for one day, was involved in the liquidation of Jewish property, and “did not see any shooting or Jews.”³³¹ Witnesses, on the other hand, described his method of “work.” Jakub Bochner recalled: “[...] the accused never came to the fore, he acted from behind the scenes, his people acted for him. Then he would wring his hands and say that it happened because he wasn’t there.”³³² Józef Pomirski added: “The accused was an extremely cunning man. If, for example, two people were to be arrested, he would arrest ten, then release eight, just to make an impression that he was such a good guy.”³³³ Ultimately, Riedinger was found guilty of the charges against him, including the liquidation of the Działoszyce ghetto “in September and December 1942,” and was first sentenced to life imprisonment and, after an appeal procedure, to death.³³⁴ The historical expert opinion that was key to this verdict was presented by Dr. Jan Sehn, chairman of the District Commission for the Investigation of

³²⁷ BAL, B.162/5971, Investigation against Dr. Friedrich Schmidt, Ludwigsburg, 4 November 1964, p. 74.

³²⁸ Beyerlein was identified by Jewish witnesses from Działoszyce. See BAL, B.162/5968, Minutes of the interrogation of Mosze Bejski, n.p., n.d., p. 248.

³²⁹ M. Zonenfeld, “In Działoszyce and in the Camps”; AO Kr, S78/2023/Zn, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jakub Bochner, Cracow, 9 October 1969, p. 61. The first deportation was led by a tall, lean Gestapo officer. AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Paweł Kluczniok during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 136.

³³⁰ AIPN Kr, 502/1714, Indictment against Philipp Riedinger, Cracow, 20 November 1947, p. 185.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, Testimony given by Philipp Riedinger during the main hearing, Cracow, 26 May 1948, p. 270.

³³² *Ibid.*, Testimony given by Jakub Bochner during the main hearing in the case of Philipp Riedinger, Cracow, 26 May 1948, p. 281.

³³³ AIPN Kr, 502/1715, Testimony given by Józef Pomirski during the main hearing in the case of Philipp Riedinger, Cracow, 24 April 1948, p. 25.

³³⁴ In his letter to the Supreme Court, Riedinger wrote that he did not know anything about when and how the Jews from Działoszyce were resettled. See AIPN Kr, 502/1716, Letter from Philipp Riedinger to the Supreme Court, Cracow, 9 January 1950, pp. 96–97.

Hitlerite Crimes in Cracow and judge of the Appellate Court.³³⁵ The sentence was executed on 16 August 1951.³³⁶ Many years after the war, the German judiciary conducted proceedings against Martin Fellenz, Scherner's chief of staff, and the aforementioned Dr. Friedrich Schmidt. The latter worked in the 1960s as... a barrister in Schleswig.³³⁷ I have not been able to find any documents indicating that either of them was charged with crimes committed in Działoszyce, although the crime itself has been mentioned. Another "desk murderer," Alfons Kalpers, testified in these trials as a... witness. Among other representatives of the German civil administration, Vogt was also tried, but again, there is no mention that the events in Działoszyce were taken into account.³³⁸

During the organisation of both deportations, an atmosphere of terror reigned in the town. When interrogated after the war, Commander Sałabun reported that during the first deportation, the Germans had designated seven hostages to be executed if cases of Jews being hidden were discovered.³³⁹ This fact has not been mentioned in other sources. In general, the non-Jewish population tried not to leave their homes unnecessarily. Some apartments were reportedly marked with crosses to avoid police raids and deportation. At least one non-Jewish resident was shot dead – he was mistaken for a fleeing Jew.³⁴⁰

Despite the threat of death for helping Jews in Działoszyce, some members of the Polish population chose to hide them. One such example was the home of Kazimierz Zwoliński. Water and bread were secretly passed to Jews – sometimes

³³⁵ Sehn derived Riedinger's responsibility from the Third Reich's theory of leadership, recognising that he was the Führer in the Kreis Miechów, the master of life and death. D. Libionka, "Zaprowadzanie sprawiedliwości," pp. 285–286.

³³⁶ AIPN Kr, 502/1715, Judgment of the District Court in Cracow, Cracow, 21 September 1948, pp. 325–327; *ibid.*, Duplicate of the Supreme Court's sentence, n.p., 21 January 1949, pp. 325–327; AIPN Kr, 502/1716, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Cracow, 5 January 1950, pp. 75–81; *ibid.*, Letter from the Prison Service in Cracow to the Ministry of Justice, Cracow, 29 February 1952, p. 172.

³³⁷ BAL, B.162/5969, Copy of a letter to the Attorney's Office at the State Court in Flensburg, n.p., n.d., p. 54.

³³⁸ D. Libionka, "Zaprowadzanie sprawiedliwości," pp. 289–290.

³³⁹ AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Piotr Sałabun during the main hearing, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 152.

³⁴⁰ A. Sabor, *Sztetl*, p. 36; AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony given by Waclaw Kapsa during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, pp. 247, 251; AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Olga Szumlakowska during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 139.

in exchange for payment. Many respected citizens of Działoszyce could not bear to witness the atrocities; they turned away, overcome with sorrow and tears. One of them, a man named Woźniak, demonstratively closed his shop.³⁴¹

An atmosphere of terror and intimidation also prevailed in the nearby villages. Between the first and second deportations, while the ghettos were still functioning and German police roundups were at their peak, the local Kreishauptmann issued threats to peasants during regular meetings with village leaders. "Village leaders were once again informed that farmers must not purchase goods from Jews, provide them shelter, sell them food, etc. – such offences were punishable by death."³⁴²

Even earlier, the registration law had been tightened. Village leaders were required to ensure that every newcomer to the municipality registered within 24 hours. Furthermore, "every newcomer to a community must immediately register with the municipality, and anyone leaving the community (place of residence) must deregister with the municipality."³⁴³ The timing of these regulations in relation to the ongoing deportation campaign was unlikely to be coincidental – nor was the prohibition on baptising Jews, introduced in October 1942.³⁴⁴

The Germans soon issued an order forcing peasants to participate in rural self-control (also known as the security system), which involved an obligation to detain any stranger in the village and report this fact to the nearest police station.³⁴⁵ Under this system, the regulations became more detailed, and ultimately, village leaders were personally responsible for enforcing these regulations, becoming hostages to the German policy.

³⁴¹ AIPN Ki, 128/208, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Kazimierz Zwoliński during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 10 January 1949, p. 146; Ch.Y. Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, p. 110.

³⁴² AP Katowice, AG Kidów, 547, Minutes of the Village Leaders' Meeting, Kidów Municipality, 4 October 1942, p. 47.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the Village Leaders' Meeting, Kidów Municipality, p. 184; *ibid.*, Minutes of the Village Leaders' Meeting, Kidów Municipality, 5 October 1942, p. 11

³⁴⁴ See T. Domański, "Konwersje Żydów na katolicyzm w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie na przykładzie diecezji kieleckiej," *Polish-Jewish Studies* 2 (2021), pp. 202–219; M. Grądzka-Rejak, "„Od dłuższego czasu straciłem wszelki kontakt z żydami i żydostwem”. Neofici w okupowanym Krakowie w świetle materiałów Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 13 (2017), pp. 342–371.

³⁴⁵ Depending on the region, it was referred to either as the village guard or as the practice of hostage-taking. T. Domański, "Niemiecka administracja gminna," pp. 162–163.

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village leaders were instructed to personally verify that anyone arriving in their community possessed valid identity documents and deregistration certificates from their previous residence. They were also required to watch newcomers' behaviour and, if any suspicion arose, to promptly report them to the nearest police station and municipal authorities to prevent potential consequences.³⁴⁶

The atmosphere of fear in the Kreis Miechów and across the whole General Governorate was exacerbated by roundups and executions of the Polish population. Repression was applied at the discretion of the authorities, including against those who evaded social and economic exploitation or were involved in underground activities.³⁴⁷ The occupation laws imposed by the Germans made Polish–Jewish relations extremely risky.

Each participant in the events had their own reflections on the reactions of those around them, often based on subjective assessments. Chaim Wohlgernter wrote bitterly:

It was impossible to hide with friends in the town, or even to consider it. Although we left all our belongings with them for safekeeping, they did not want to know us. Why would they want to save us? What harm would it do to them if we died? After all, the property in their hands would remain theirs anyway.³⁴⁸

Wohlgernter drew attention to instances of dishonesty towards Jews. Objective factors – such as withdrawing a promised offer of help due to fear of execution – were not always considered by those facing immediate danger. Jews often interpreted the refusal to help through the lens of their own life-threatening circumstances.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ AP Ka, AG Kidów, 547, Minutes of the Village Leaders' Meeting, Kidów Municipality, p. 54.

³⁴⁷ AO Kr, Ds. 1/81 (224), Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Leokadia Strojek, Proszowice, 21 March 1990, pp. 11–12; *ibid.*, Minutes of the Interrogation of the witness Zofia Urbaś, Tarnów, 3 December 1991, pp. 183–185; R. Gieroń, *Półmrok*, pp. 53–77.

³⁴⁸ Ch.I. Wohlgernter, "Działoszyce," p. 31.

³⁴⁹ Ch.Y. Wolgernter, *The Unfinished Diary*, pp. 106–107.

Amidst widespread wartime poverty, some individuals were willing to loot abandoned Jewish properties. The Germans had declared these buildings as property of the Reich, adding another layer to the situation: the looting concerned movable property that had already been stolen by the occupiers. This behaviour reflected a broader social trend. Following deportations, many homes were plundered. Certain members of the Blue Police undermined German orders, often with the tacit approval of Commander Sałabun, who chose not to intervene. In some cases, Blue Police functionaries actively participated in the looting.³⁵⁰ Others showed excessive zeal. Policeman Zygmunt Kamedyniak caught a man named Sławiński red-handed.³⁵¹ The man's brother, who tried to defend him, was also arrested. This happened in the presence of the Land Commissioner from Kazimierza Wielka, who brought the Gestapo from Miechów. Both men were shot in the market square in Działoszyce. The execution was carried out by Gendarme Kozak following the pronouncement of the sentence by Commander Sałabun.³⁵²

Closing Remarks

Between 1939 and 1942, the extermination of the Jews in Działoszyce unfolded according to a pattern replicated in hundreds of towns and villages across occupied central Poland, within the General Governorate. It began with social segregation and stigmatisation, escalated into widespread alienation, and ultimately led to confinement within a designated residential zone – in this instance, the entire town of Działoszyce. Simultaneously, the German occupation authorities systematically, or through tolerated individual theft, stripped the local Jewish

³⁵⁰ See M. Zonenfeld, "In Działoszyce and in the Camps"; AIPN Ki, 128/208, Testimony given by Stanisław Czekaj during the main hearing against Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 11 January 1949, p. 265.

³⁵¹ There were reports that one of the men entered a Jewish house at the owner's request. AIPN Ki, 128/207, Testimony of Waław Kapsa during the main hearing in the case of Piotr Sałabun, Cracow, 29 November 1948, p. 249.

³⁵² During the gathering of evidence for the investigation against Herbert Böttcher, SS and police commander in the Radom district, two eyewitnesses (Stefan Sznajderski and Stanisław Skowron) testified that the Sławiński brothers, Stefan Sobczyk and several Jews were shot during the execution and their bodies were taken away in horse-drawn carts to the cemetery. AIPN, GK, 179/150, Appendix to the order of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Radom, 15 August 1948, p. 11; AIPN Ki, 128/206, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Piotr Sałabun, 7 February 1948, p. 29; AIPN Ki, 128/207, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Szczubiał, Kazimierza Wielka, 28 June 1948, p. 31.

population of their property and dismantled the economic foundations of their existence. The intensifying persecution led to the impoverishment of the population and malnutrition, which resulted in increased susceptibility to infectious diseases and a rise in mortality. Finally, in 1942, as part of *Aktion Reinhardt*, German police forces (the Gestapo, the Military Police, the Polnische Polizei, or the so-called Blue Police, and the Baudienst) and the civil administration (Kreishauptmanns, labour offices) carried out the so-called deportations on 2–3 September and 8 November 1942. The first deportation saw Jews sent to Miechów, where a selection process was carried out: the young and healthy were dispatched to labour camps, while the remainder were deported to Sonderkommando Belzec and killed.

A special unit of the German police executed between 1,200 and 1,400 individuals at the Jewish cemetery in Działoszyce. Following the second deportation, Jews were transported in carts or forced into the forest near Chodów, where they were shot. Both deportations were marked by brutal roundups targeting those attempting to escape. Every person captured during these operations was killed. Thirty years later, Dawid Gelbart thus reflected on the tragedy: “Działoszyce was buried in a ravine, in three long graves.”³⁵³

The scale of the crimes committed by German forces in Działoszyce between 1939 and 1942 was shocking, but due to a lack of documentation and the post-war chaos, it is impossible to determine its exact extent. Despite some reports, the number of Jewish residents in Działoszyce before the first deportation in 1942 was not 12,000 or more, but closer to 8,000. How many managed to hide or escape remains unknown. What is known is that before the second deportation, approximately 1,100 Jews had gathered in the remnant ghetto. Some individuals from this group did survive. By the 1970s, around 330 Jews from Działoszyce were living in Israel, with several hundred more residing elsewhere.³⁵⁴ If we assume that there were about 500 of the latter, then the number of those who survived the German occupation of Działoszyce in various places would be about 800, meaning that 10 per cent of the Jewish population survived.

³⁵³ D. Gelbart (Baltimore), “The Tragedy of Działoszyce.”

³⁵⁴ M. Bejski, “The Holocaust and Destruction.”

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THE EXTERMINATION OF JEWS IN THE KREIS RAWA RUSKA

Summary

This text explores the systematic extermination of the Jewish population in a provincial region located in the eastern part of the former Lwów (now Lviv) Voivodeship, which, between 1941 and 1944, was elevated to the status of a German occupation-era administrative unit known as the Kreis Rawa Ruska (a county starosty). Drawing on archival records, eyewitness testimonies, and scholarly literature, it traces the unfolding stages of this process – from the initial outbreaks of violence following the German invasion in June 1941, through the establishment and operation of the ghetto, to the deportations to the Belżec extermination camp and the eventual annihilation of the community. The narrative highlights both the direct role of the German terror apparatus and the responses of the local population in the context of aid provided to the Jews in hiding.

Keywords

Kreis Rawa Ruska • extermination of Jews • Galicia district • ghetto • deportations

Introduction

The subject of the extermination of the Jewish community in the Kreis Rawa Ruska territory has not yet been thoroughly researched or covered comprehensively in the relevant literature. References to this topic appear in various studies, but they are fragmentary. The literature explicitly devoted to this issue in the Polish bibliography is limited to a single two-page popular history article by Jakub Iszchułow entitled “Zagłada Żydów w mieście i powiecie Rawa Ruska” (The Extermination of Jews in the Town and County of Rawa Ruska).¹ The text was based on materials from the commission investigating Hitlerite crimes in Rawa Ruska² and contains very general information, which means that it can only be treated as an introduction to research on the extermination of the Jewish community in the area under study. The subject of the German occupation of the Kreis Rawa Ruska and the extermination of the local Jewish population is also raised in Tatiana Berenstein’s article *Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie Galicja (1941–1943)* (The Extermination of Jews in the Galicia District, 1941–1943).³ The author presents, in the form of a statistical and chronological summary, estimated data from nine localities in the Rawa Ruska Starosty, the number of Jews living in this area, and the approximate number of victims of *Aktion Reinhardt*.

In addition to the articles by Iszchułow and Berenstein, regional literature should be mentioned, primarily concerning those areas of the Kreis Rawa Ruska

¹ See J. Iszchułow, “Zagłada Żydów w mieście i powiecie Rawa Ruska,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce* 2 (1977), pp. 97–98.

² Presumably, this commission was a local branch of the Extraordinary State Commission for the Investigation and Examination of Crimes Committed by German-Fascist Invaders, i.e. the Regional Commission for the Investigation and Examination of Crimes Committed by German-Fascist Invaders in the Rawa Region (Rayonnaya komissiya po ustanovleniyu i rassledovaniyu zlozeyaniy nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov v Ravo-Russkom rayonye) headed by Maksim Sidorovich Gavrilenko, which conducted exhumation work in Rawa Ruska and the surrounding area between 24 and 30 September 1944. Its work culminated in the publication of a final report, the descriptive part of which contained information on the German occupation of the Kreis Rawa Ruska. The commission estimated the number of German victims in this area at 41,500. Among them were civilians, including Jews, as well as Soviet prisoners of war held in Stalag 325 in Rawa Ruska. For more, see *Gosudarstvennyy arkhiv Rossiyskoy Federatsii* (State Archives of the Russian Federation in Moscow, hereinafter GARF), f. P-7021, op. 67, d. 78, Final Report of the Commission for the Investigation and Examination of Crimes Committed by German-Fascist Invaders in the Rawa Region, 24–30 September 1944, pp. 136–143 (for digital copies of the document, visit http://protecting-memory-ua.org/images/rava_ruska/historical_sources/136-143.pdf [accessed 24 October 2024]).

³ T. Berenstein, “Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie Galicja (1941–1943),” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce* 1 (1967), pp. 3–58.

which are currently within the borders of the Polish state, such as part of the Lubaczów County (the town and municipality of Lubaczów and Oleszyce, and the municipality of Horyniec) and Tomaszów County (the town and municipality of Lubycza Królewska). Particularly noteworthy is the first volume of Zygmunt Kubrak's publication entitled *Dzieje Lubaczowa. Lubaczów od czasów najdawniejszych do lipca 1944 r.* (The History of Lubaczów: From the Earliest Times to July 1944),⁴ in which the author devotes one of the chapters to the German occupation, including the destruction of the local Jewish community. The book also provides information about Rawa Ruska as the capital of the German occupation-era starosty. The author of the present article also addresses the subject of the extermination of the Jews of Lubaczów in two articles. The first concerns the activities of a Jewish survival group led by Edmund Łukawiecki, while the second discusses the fate of the *Volksdeutsche* Władysław Sereżyński and his son Roman, who took part in denouncing Jews and liquidating the ghetto in Lubaczów.⁵

Valuable additions to research on the extermination of Jews in the area which, during the German occupation, was an integral part of the Kreis Rawa Ruska and is now located within the borders of the Polish state, are provided by articles and testimonies published in the *Rocznik Lubaczowski*,⁶ and other periodicals⁷ and

⁴ Z. Kubrak, *Dzieje Lubaczowa. Lubaczów od czasów najdawniejszych do lipca 1944 r.*, vol. 1, Rzeszów, 2016.

⁵ See W. Hanus, "Działalność volksdeutsche Władysława Sereżyńskiego i jego syna Romana w świetle zachowanych akt procesu karnego z dekretu sierpniowego. Przyczynek do dziejów okupacji niemieckiej ziemi lubaczowskiej," *Polish-Jewish Studies* 3 (2022), pp. 133–165; W. Hanus, "Edmunda Łukawieckiego strategia przetrwania w lasach lubaczowskich i Puszczy Solskiej w latach wojny i okupacji," in *Człowiek twórcą historii*, vol. 4: *Spółczesność Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w XX w.*, eds. C. Kukło and W. Walczak, Białystok, 2024, pp. 321–351.

⁶ M. Kopf, "Tamten czas. Część V, Lubaczów. Rok 1942," *Rocznik Lubaczowski* 11–12 (2007), pp. 201–235; M. Kopf, "Tamten czas. Część VI, Lubaczów. Rok 1943," *Rocznik Lubaczowski* 13–14 (2008), pp. 343–365; E. Szajowski, "Tylko ziemia została ta sama. Lubaczów 1942–1943," *Rocznik Lubaczowski* 9–10 (2000), pp. 276–291; Z. Kubrak, "Holokaust w Oleszycach," *Rocznik Lubaczowski* 11–12 (2007), pp. 51–59; J. Bańbor, "Przewodnik po niemieckich źródłach i materiałach do historii ziemi lubaczowskiej podczas niemieckiej okupacji w latach 1939–1944 (wybór źródeł)," *Rocznik Lubaczowski* 13–14 (2008), pp. 205–303; P. Sygowski and A. Trzciński, "Żydzi lubaczowscy i ich cmentarz," *Rocznik Lubaczowski* 8 (1998), pp. 103–159.

⁷ See L. Botner, "Życia lubaczowskiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej," ed. H. Olicka, in *Kalendarz Żydowski – Almanach 1992–1993*, Warsaw, 1992.

memoiristic literature.⁸ Equally important are works on the town and municipality of Lubycza Królewska.⁹ While these publications primarily examine the German occupation of Lubaczów, its surrounding areas, and Lubycza, comparing them with studies on Rawa Ruska enables a more comprehensive understanding of the Holocaust in the region under analysis.

Regarding foreign literature, it is worth noting encyclopaedias published in English and Russian – two focused on ghettos¹⁰ and one on the Holocaust in the USSR¹¹ – as well as works in German, Ukrainian, and Russian that explore the Holocaust within the territory of the Galicia District. The works of Jakub Honigsman,¹² Markus Roth,¹³ Patrik Desbois,¹⁴ and Dieter Pohl¹⁵ are particularly noteworthy.

The list also includes Ukrainian popular-historical regional publications detailing the history of Rawa Ruska and the extermination of its Jewish population.¹⁶ In comparison to Jakub Iszchułow's previously mentioned work, these publications offer a more detailed testimony of the Holocaust in the region under discussion, covering three deportation operations and the liquidation of the local ghetto. They also revise certain dates, events, and names, or enrich them with new informa-

⁸ E. Olbromski, *Nad Lubaczówką. Eseje – wspomnienia*, Marki, 2009; S. Lavee (Łukawiecki), *Oddział niezwykłych. Drużyna żydowskich partyzantów Armii Krajowej pod dowództwem Edmunda Łukawieckiego w latach 1941–1944*, Rzeszów, 2018; O. Regev, *A rzeka nadal płynie*, Lublin, 2014.

⁹ M. Koper, "Lubycza Królewska. Zagłada i próba upamiętnienia społeczności żydowskiej dawnego miasteczka," *Studia Żydowskie. Almanach* 2 (2) (2012), pp. 209–224; M. Koper, "Zapomniany sztetl – Lubycza Królewska. Śladami nieistniejącego miasteczka," in *Żydzi w Zamościu i na Zamojszczyźnie. Historia – kultura – literatura*, eds. W. Litwin, M. Szablowska-Zaremba, and S.J. Żurek, Lublin, 2012, pp. 233–253.

¹⁰ *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, eds. G.P. Megargee and M. Dean, vol. 2, part A, Bloomington–Indianapolis, 2012, pp. 818–821; *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, vol. 2, eds. G. Miron and S. Shulhani, Jerusalem, 2009, pp. 648–650.

¹¹ *Kholokost na territorii SSSR. Entsiklopediya*, ed. I.A. Al'tman, Moskva, 2009. Page 832 of this volume features a piece on Rawa Ruska written by Aleksander Kruglov.

¹² Ya. Khonigsman, *Katastrofa yevreystva Zapadnoy Ukrainy. Yevrei Vostochnoy Galitsii, Zapadnoy Volyni, Bukoviny i Zakarpat'ya v 1933–1945 gg.*, L'viv, 1998.

¹³ M. Roth, *Herrenmenschen. Die deutschen Kreishauptleute im besetzten Polen – Karrierewege, Herrschaftspraxis und Nachgeschichte*, Göttingen–Wallstein, 2009.

¹⁴ P. Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets. A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews*, New York, 2008.

¹⁵ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenvernichtung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944*, München, 1997.

¹⁶ See I. Bas and Ch. Lelyk, *Zhyttya ta zahybel' yevreys'koyi hromady (na prykladi mista Ravy-Rus'koyi)*, L'viv, 2013; P. Dolhanov, *Rava-Rus'ka. Zhyttya ta zahybel' yevreys'koyi hromady*, Kyiv, 2023.

tion – such as identifying individuals responsible for the crimes. With regard to Tatiana Berenstein's article and the data she compiled, these publications provide grounds for adjusting the estimated number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust within the Rawa Starosty. The literature on the subject is supplemented by archival sources, both published and unpublished. The first category includes the report *Rozwiązanie kwestii żydowskiej w dystrykcie Galicja* (The Solution of the Jewish Question in the Galicia District) by Fritz Katzmann,¹⁷ co-organiser of the extermination of Polish Jews in this area. This report stands out as one of the most representative German documents in which a high-ranking SS and police officer – directly responsible for the extermination of thousands – provides a detailed account of the crimes committed.¹⁸ The report also includes fragmentary details about the extermination of Jews in the region under study. Notably, it is supplemented with photographs taken at ghetto liquidation sites, several of which pertain to Rawa Ruska.

The second category of sources includes testimonies of Holocaust survivors from the Kreis Rawa Ruska. The testimonies of Abraham Schall and Wolf Sambol, written in German and held in the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, are invaluable.¹⁹ The first describes in detail the Holocaust in Niemirów, the second in Rawa Ruska, including the liquidation of the local ghetto and all of the deportations from the town. The same archive contains a several-page diary by Zelda Ginzberg entitled “Jak ja przeżyłam okupację” (How I Survived the Occupation),²⁰ in which

¹⁷ See F. Katzmann, *Rozwiązanie kwestii żydowskiej w dystrykcie Galicja*, ed. A. Żbikowski, Warsaw, 2001.

¹⁸ Fritz Katzmann (1906–1957) served as commander of the SS and police in the Radom District from 1939 to 1941, and subsequently in the Galicia District beginning on 13 October 1941, where he oversaw the mass extermination of Jews. He was promoted on 30 January 1943 to the rank of SS-Gruppenführer and Lieutenant General of Police. From 20 April 1943, he held the position of senior SS and police commander in the Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia. Following World War II, Katzmann evaded justice by assuming the false identity of Bruno Albrecht and settling in West Germany. He initially lived on the Baltic island of Fehmarn, near Württemberg, and later relocated to Griesheim near Darmstadt, where his family resided. He died in a local hospital in 1957. Two years prior to his death, he had confided his true identity to a nurse, who kept the information secret until after his passing (F. Katzmann, *Rozwiązanie kwestii żydowskiej*, pp. 5–11).

¹⁹ See *Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Warszawie* (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, hereinafter AŻIH), 301/4950, Minutes of the testimonies of Abraham Schall and Wolf Sambol, manuscript, 4 May 1945, pp. 1–11.

²⁰ AŻIH, 302/71, Zelda Ginzberg's Diary “Jak ja przeżyłam okupację 1941–1944,” manuscript, no date, pp. 1–5.

the author describes her struggle for life during the Holocaust in Rawa and the neighbouring Lubaczów, as well as a letter from November 1941 concerning the situation of the local Jewish community, written by the Judenrat in Rawa Ruska. This document is a valuable addition to the testimonies mentioned above.²¹

In turn, the Yad Vashem Institute Archives hold testimonies written in Polish by Franciszek Efraim Włoch,²² which, alongside Wolf Sambol's testimony, are crucial for showing the course of the extermination of the Jewish community in the area under discussion. The author was born in Żółkiew and spent the years of the German occupation in Rawa Ruska. He described in detail the months of the local ghetto's existence and the time after its destruction. The institute's holdings also include equally important testimonies by Lea (Leah, Lusia) Kramer (Rosenzweig),²³ Zelda Hinnenberg Mechlowicz,²⁴ Izaak Redlich,²⁵ and Józef Rygier.²⁶ The latter were written in Yiddish or English.

Worth noting is Kurt Lewin's published memoir, *Przeżyłem. Saga Świętego Jura* (I Survived: The Saga of Saint George), written in 1946 by the son of the Rabbi of Lwów.²⁷ This publication is a moving testimony to the tragedy of the Jewish population during the German occupation. Its author spent 1942 in Rawa Ruska.

The extermination of the Jewish population cannot be described without referring to books of memory dedicated to the Jewish community. We are particularly interested in the *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Rawa Ruska ve-ha-seviva*, published in 1973 in Tel Aviv in Hebrew and Yiddish.²⁸ One of the chapters, 146 pages long, is devoted to the extermination of Jews, and includes texts by

²¹ AŻIH, 211/896, Letter from the Judenrat in Rawa Ruska to the Jewish Social Self-Help in Cracow regarding the situation of the Jewish community in Rawa Ruska, 24 November 1941.

²² Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter YVA), O.3/1132, Testimony of Franciszek Efraim Włoch, 10 December 1958, pp. 1–8.

²³ YVA, O.3/1957, Testimony of Lea (Rosenzweig) Kramer, 1957, pp. 1–8.

²⁴ YVA, O.3/2148, Testimony of Zelda Hinenberg Machlowicz, 20 April 1946, pp. 1–24.

²⁵ YVA, O.3/8327, Testimony of Icchak Redlich, November 1963, manuscript, pp. 1–16.

²⁶ YVA, O.33/9774, Testimony of Józef Rygier, April 2013, pp. 1–78.

²⁷ K.I. Lewin, *Przeżyłem. Saga Świętego Jura spisana w roku 1946 przez syna rabina Lwowa*, ed. B. To-ruńczyk, Warsaw, 2006.

²⁸ *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Rawa Ruska ve-ha-seviva / Rawa Ruska memorial book*, eds. A.M. Ringel and I.Z. Rubin, Tel Aviv, 1973.

Chaim Spetzer,²⁹ Ben Zion Friedman,³⁰ Dan Berger,³¹ Ruth Haskell,³² Eliezer Unger,³³ Joshua Wallfuss,³⁴ and the previously mentioned Wolf Sambol³⁵ and Kurt Lewin,³⁶ rescued from the Holocaust in Rawa Ruska. In 2017, the book was translated into English.³⁷

A valuable supplement to the above book is the *Encyklopedia gmin żydowskich w Polsce* (Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities in Poland),³⁸ the second volume of which is devoted to Eastern Galicia. On pages 498–503, we find information about Rawa Ruska and its Jewish community in the interwar period and during World War II.

The *Encyklopedia*, like the Rawa Ruska memorial book, has been translated into English.

Lubaczów, which during the German occupation was the second largest town in the Kreis Rawa Ruska and had the status of a Landkommissariat, does not have its own “book of memory.” Alongside written testimonies and published memoirs, it is important to highlight the recordings and oral history interviews preserved by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection in Washington and the USC Shoah Foundation – Institute of Visual History and Education. The former houses audiovisual testimonies from Stanisław Młodziński and Ludwik Cencora, who witnessed the extermination of the Jewish community in Lubaczów.³⁹ The latter

²⁹ Ch. Spetzer, “Koniec mojego miasta Rawa Ruska,” in *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Rawa Ruska*, pp. 379–395.

³⁰ B.Z. Friedman, “Przez co przeszliśmy,” in *ibid.*, pp. 313–318.

³¹ D. Berger, “Wspomnienia dla przyszłych pokoleń,” in *ibid.*, pp. 395–399.

³² R. Haskell, “Jak zostałam uratowana,” in *ibid.*, pp. 520–522.

³³ E. Unger, “Rawa Ruska i Bełżec na mapie miejsca zniszczenia,” in *ibid.*, pp. 227–230.

³⁴ J. Wallfuss, “Moja próba. Z dziennika 1939–1942,” in *ibid.*, pp. 230–247.

³⁵ W. Sambol, “Fragmenty pamiętnika,” in *ibid.*, pp. 310–312.

³⁶ K.I. Lewin, “Rawa Ruska pod nazistowską okupacją,” in *ibid.*, pp. 359–365.

³⁷ See *Rawa-Ruska*, eds. A.M. Ringel and J.T.H. Rubin, Mahwah, 2017, <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Rava-Ruska1/files/Rawa-Ruska.pdf> (accessed 23 October 2024).

³⁸ *Pinkas hakehillot Polin. Entsiklopedyah shel ha-yishuvim ha-Yehudiyim le-min hivasdam ve-`ad le-ahar Sho`at Milhemet ha-`olam ha-szheniyah*, eds. D. Dąbrowska, A. Wein, and A. Weiss, Jerusalem, 1980, pp. 498–503, https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol2_00498.html (accessed 24 October 2024).

³⁹ Oral history interview with Stanisław Młodziński, 10 March 2009, held in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (hereinafter USHMM), RG-50.488.0273, transcript: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn45093> (accessed 19 December 2024); Testimony of Ludwik Cencora, 24 August

contains oral history interviews with Jewish survivors from Rawa Ruska, including Hebrew-language⁴⁰ interviews with Leah (Lea) Rosenzweig (Lusia Kramer)⁴¹ and English-language interviews with Berney Berger,⁴² Edith Lewin Schickman,⁴³ Kurt Lewin,⁴⁴ and Leon Hirsch.⁴⁵

In preparing this article, the author consulted printed German documents⁴⁶ as well as archival materials from the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw⁴⁷

2009, USHMM, RG-50.488.0282, transcript: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn45103> (accessed 30 November 2024).

⁴⁰ The transcripts of the interviews have been translated into Ukrainian. See <http://protecting-memory-ua.org/rava-ruska/usnoistorychni-svidchennia> (accessed 24 October 2024).

⁴¹ Oral history interview with Leah Rosenzweig (Lusia Kramer) given to Ronit Gabay, 13 October 1997, Interview code: 34376, USC Shoah Foundation – Institute of Visual History and Education (hereinafter USC Shoah Foundation), <http://protecting-memory-ua.org/rava-ruska/usnoistorychni-svidchennia> (accessed 10 December 2024).

⁴² Oral history interview with Berney Berger given to Suzanne Roberts, 21 March 1996, Interview code: 13485, USC Shoah Foundation, <http://protecting-memory-ua.org/rava-ruska/usnoistorychni-svidchennia> (accessed 10 December 2024).

⁴³ Oral history interview with Edith Lewin Schickman given to Jacqueline Leone, 15 June 1995, Interview code: 03516-4, USC Shoah Foundation, <http://protecting-memory-ua.org/rava-ruska/usnoistorychni-svidchennia> (accessed 10 December 2024).

⁴⁴ Oral history interview with Kurt Lewin given to Naomi Rappaport, 30 January 1997, Interview code: 25423, USC Shoah Foundation, <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/25423?from=search&seg=76> (accessed 24 October 2024).

⁴⁵ Oral history interview with Leon Hirsch given to Elsie Kisber, 13 November 2003, Interview code: 54740, USC Shoah Foundation, <https://refairesavie.museeholocauste.ca/eng/people-personnes/357/bio> (accessed 24 December 2024).

⁴⁶ See, among others, *Amtliches Gemeinde- und Dorfverzeichnis für das Generalgouvernement, Distrikt Galizien*, Krakau, 1943, <https://pbc.gda.pl/dlibra/publication/36451/edition/64122/content> (accessed 24 October 2024); *Amtliches Fernsprechbuch für das Generalgouvernement. Herausgegeben von der Deutschen Post Osten, Ausgabe 1942*, Krakau, 1942, <https://bc.radom.pl/dlibra/publication/1269/edition/1230/content> (accessed 24 October 2024); *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 67 (1941), <http://dlibra.umcs.lublin.pl/dlibra/plain-content?id=7863> (accessed 24 October 2024).

⁴⁷ *Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, hereinafter AIPN), 2448/1481, Surveys conducted by the Chief Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes (hereinafter GKBZH) in Poland and the District Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes (hereinafter OKBZH) in Warsaw 1968–1972, Executions, vol. 2; AIPN, 2448/1483, Surveys conducted by the GKBZH in Poland and the OKBZH in Warsaw 1968–1972, Repression of the Jewish population before the establishment of the ghetto; AIPN, 2448/871, Surveys conducted by the GKBZH in Poland and the OKBZH in Warsaw 1968–1972. Surveys related to the Rzeszów Voivodeship, Lubaczów County – ghettos – Lubaczów County, Information about Hitlerite Crimes in Lubaczów; AIPN *Główna Komisja* (Chief Commission, hereinafter GK), 97/108, List of town and county starosts of the Galicia District; AIPN GK, 296/77, vols. 1–4, Files related to the case of Josef Grzimek.

and in Rzeszów,⁴⁸ State Archives of the Russian Federation,⁴⁹ Russian State Military Archives,⁵⁰ State Archives of the Lwów Region,⁵¹ Diocesan Archives in Zamość and the Archives of the Parish of St. Stanislaus in Lubaczów.⁵²

Drawing on testimonies, memoirs, and archival documentation, this article explores the extermination of the Jewish population in a provincial region that, after 1 August 1941, became part of the newly established administrative unit of Galicia under the designation Kreis Rawa Ruska. Situated near the German extermination camp in Bełżec, this area was among the first to be targeted during *Aktion Reinhardt*. Scholarly literature confirms that three deportation operations occurred in the area of Rawa Ruska in 1942: in March, July, and December. The last one was combined with the liquidation of the local ghetto. Existing publications have generally addressed the implementation of the criminal German *Aktion Reinhardt* in this region, along with references to the formation and activities of the local Judenrat and the conditions faced by the Jewish community under Ger-

⁴⁸ Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Rzeszowie (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Rzeszów, hereinafter AIPN Rz), 191/198, Register of places and facts of Hitlerite crimes (Lubaczów County); AIPN Rz, 191/357, Surveys conducted by the GKBZH in Poland, executions (Lubaczów County); AIPN Rz, 191/358, Surveys conducted by the GKBZH in Poland, ghettos (Lubaczów County); AIPN Rz, 191/364, Surveys conducted by the GKBZH in Poland, repression of the Jewish population before the establishment of the ghetto (Lubaczów County); AIPN Rz, 191/911, Investigation files on crimes committed against Jews in the Lubaczów ghetto by German officers, Report on the proceedings conducted; AIPN Rz, 602/1153, Criminal legal assistance files concerning the GKBZH's appeal requesting the examination of witnesses in the case of criminal activity conducted by Ukrainian police officers during the Hitlerite occupation in Rawa Ruska; AIPN Rz, 353/38, Files related to the criminal case concerning Władysław and Roman Seredyński; AIPN Rz, 358/39, Files related to the criminal case concerning Władysław and Roman Seredyński.

⁴⁹ GARF, f. P-7021, op. 67, d. 78, Final report of the Regional Commission for the Determination and Investigation of Crimes Committed by German-Fascist Invaders in the Rawa Region, 24–30 September 1944, pp. 136–143 (for digital copies of the document, see http://protecting-memory-ua.org/images/rava_ruska/historical_sources/136-143.pdf [accessed 24 October 2024]).

⁵⁰ Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy voennyi arkhiv (Russian State Military Archives, hereinafter RGVA), f. 1323, op. 2, d. 292 b, Report of the 24th Police Regiment on operations against partisans, the extermination of Jews and Gypsies, etc., August–December 1942 (for digital copies of the document, see http://protecting-memory-ua.org/images/rava_ruska/historical_sources/1323-2-292b.pdf [accessed 24 October 2024]).

⁵¹ Derzhavnyi arkhiv Lvivskoi oblasti (State Archives of the Lwów Region, hereinafter DALO), f. R-35, op. 12, spr. 81, Governorate of the Galicia District. Department of Internal Affairs; DALO, f. R-28, op. 1, Reports on the activity of the Ortskomendatur in Rawa Ruska; DALO, f. R-24, op. 1, spr. 390, Starosty of the Lwów Region.

⁵² Chronicle of the Roman Catholic parish of St. Stanislaus in Lubaczów, manuscript.

man occupation. This article seeks to offer a more detailed and structured account of the extermination process, examining the involvement of German police units in the atrocities, as well as giving estimates of the number of victims and those who survived owing to help provided by both Polish and Ukrainian individuals. It slightly transcends the rigid thematic framework by also addressing broader issues such as the administrative division of the region in question and the condition of the Jewish community before World War II, as well as during the Soviet and German occupations. Without examining these aspects, it becomes difficult to grasp the distinctive character of the area and to accurately reconstruct the process of extermination of the local Jewish population.

General statistical data on Jewish victims of the Holocaust in Rawa Ruska are also relevant to the research topic. It should be emphasised that this information needs to be supplemented and corrected. We know much more about the Jewish community and the Holocaust in the areas within the borders of the present-day Polish state, namely Lubaczów and Lubycza Królewska, which during the German occupation were an integral part of the discussed starosty, than about the Holocaust on the Ukrainian side of the border.

The text was written as part of research on Polish aid to the Jewish community and the Holocaust in the eastern part of the former Lwów Voivodship.

Population and Territory in the Interwar Period

Before the war, the Rawa County comprised a total of eleven rural municipalities (Bełzec, Bruckenthal, Hujcze, Magierów, Lubycza Królewska, Potylicz, Siedliska, Tarnoszyn, Wierzbica, Wróblaczyn, and Kamionka Wołoska) and three urban municipalities (Niemirów, Rawa Ruska, and Uhnów).⁵³ The county covered an area of 1,400.72 sq. km, which made it the fourth-largest in the former Lwów Voivodeship. It had a total population of 90,480.⁵⁴ The majority of the population

⁵³ "Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych z dnia 14 lipca 1934 r. o podziale powiatu rawskiego w województwie lwowskim na gminy wiejskie [Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 14 July 1934 on the division of the Rawa County in the Lwów Voivodeship into rural municipalities]," *Dziennik Ustaw* 1934, no. 64, item 550.

⁵⁴ G. Hryciuk and J. Stoćkyj, *Studia nad demografią historyczną i sytuacją religijną Ukrainy*, Lublin, 2000, p. 67; W. Wierzbieniec, *Żydzi w województwie lwowskim w okresie międzywojennym*, Rzeszów, 2003, p. 25.

was Ukrainian, which, if we take into account the language criterion, accounted for 67.28 per cent of the total population, or 60,880 people. These figures were even higher when religion was considered, with 68.94 per cent and 62,380 people, respectively. The second largest ethnic group were Poles, who, according to religious criteria, accounted for 22.43 per cent (20,290 people), and 18.42 per cent (16,670 people) according to language. The share of the Jewish community in the total population of the Rawa County in the interwar period ranged from 9.00 to 10.96 per cent, that is 8,146–9,918 people. The difference was also due to the criteria used (religion or language). The smallest community in the area in question was the German Evangelicals, which numbered 858 people in total, or 0.95 per cent according to the language criterion and 402 people (0.44 per cent) according to religion.⁵⁵

Although Jews were the third largest nationality in the county, they constituted the majority of the population in Rawa Ruska (56 per cent of the total, or 5,688 people). This was not an isolated case; in other cities of the Second Polish Republic, the Jewish population, due to its professional and social structure, was primarily associated with the urban environment.⁵⁶ Before the outbreak of World War II, Rawa Ruska was an important provincial economic and cultural centre. It owed its character to the railway lines running through the town, which connected it with Jarosław in 1857 and with Sokal a year later. During World War I, the Austro-Hungarian army built the strategically important Rawa Ruska – Zawada – Rejowiec line, which eventually enabled a direct rail connection between Lwów and Warsaw. Rawa was a transfer station on this route. The construction of the railway gave impetus to the creation of prosperous industrial enterprises in the town, the largest of which was a Belgian factory producing railway sleepers and bricks, built in 1929.⁵⁷

The Jewish community, which had inhabited the district since at least the mid-17th century, was mainly engaged in retail and wholesale trade, crafts, and transport. In the 1920s, the main occupations of the local Jews in Rawa Ruska were

⁵⁵ G. Hryciuk and J. Stočkyj, *Studia nad demografią historyczną*, pp. 67–69.

⁵⁶ W. Wierzbieniec, *Żydzi w województwie lwowskim*, p. 70.

⁵⁷ V. Butrym, “Stalag 325 w Rawie Ruskiej obiektem „czarnej” turystyki,” BA thesis, State School of Higher Education in Zamość, Zamość, 2017, p. 5.

itinerant trade and grain trade, as well as running small businesses and enterprises. A few were involved in agriculture. Still others, unable to find their place in the life of a provincial town, decided to emigrate to New York, where the Jewish colony from Rawa established a very prosperous emigrant organisation called *Merchaot Hewrat Bnai Lewi Icchak – Anszej Rawa Ruska*.⁵⁸

Emigration indicated that the financial situation of much of Rawa's Jewish community was less stable than commonly assumed. A significant number of Jewish residents lived in poverty and depended on aid from charitable organisations – most notably the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint), which was dedicated to supporting Jews across Europe in the aftermath of World War I. With assistance from the Joint and backing from Polish authorities, four soup kitchens were established in the town, providing free meals. Many Jewish inhabitants of Rawa, including children, also received supplementary food and clothing through the Joint's efforts.⁵⁹

In Rawa Ruska, there was a Jewish cooperative bank established in 1910, which granted loans to entrepreneurs, merchants, craftsmen, and farmers, as well as a well-developed furriers' cooperative. Other important enterprises included an artistic factory producing stone tableware and selling its products throughout the Russian Empire, founded by Shammaja Baumwal,⁶⁰ and an oil factory known throughout Galicia, owned by Herszel Monk. The percentage of Jews in the liberal professions was high. Twelve doctors were practising in Rawa, half of whom were Jews and the other half were Poles.⁶¹

In the interwar period, Icchak Nachum Twerski, son-in-law of the Bełżec *tzaddik*, was the rabbi in Rawa. There were four synagogues and prayer houses in the town. The political life of local Jews was diverse and included several main currents: ultra-Orthodox, Zionist, and socialist. The first was represented by *Aguda Israel*, led by Josef Mendel, one of the initiators of the establishment of a Jewish cooperative bank. From 1924, Zionist parties centred around *Hitachdut* and *Mizrach* were also active in the town, as well as numerous youth organisations: *Akiwa*,

⁵⁸ *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, pp. 498–503.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, pp. 498–503.

⁶¹ *Rocznik Lekarski Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (1938), pp. 518–519.

Betar, and Gordonia, and later also Ha-Szomer Ha-Cair and Ha-Noar Ha-Cijoni. In the 1930s, they were joined by the left-wing socialist General Jewish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia (Bund). In total, several political groups competed with each other in Rawa Ruska, offering programmes based on tradition, Zionism, and assimilation.

Parties supported various Jewish organisations, including a theatre club and a library of rabbinical works. Other organisations operating in the town included the General Zionist Cultural Association, the Craftsmen's Association, the "Jad Charuzim" Credit Society, the Merchants' and Farmers' Union, the "Hapoel" Sports Association, as well as two Jewish public and supplementary schools – the orthodox Bejs Jakow school for girls and a Hebrew language school, which also operated a kindergarten from 1931.⁶²

In the 1928 elections to the Town Council in Rawa, Jews elected 22 representatives, Poles 20, and Ukrainians 6. In the next elections in 1933, the Jewish community increased its representation to 24 councillors. Although they constituted the majority in the town and on the council, they never managed to elect a Jewish mayor.⁶³

In the interwar period, Rawa Ruska was an example of a town where relations between the Polish and Jewish populations were complex. Both communities lived side by side and cooperated in many areas of everyday life. Relations between them were generally good, with the Jewish community actively participating in economic and cultural life, developing trade, crafts, and other areas. At the same time, there were cultural, religious, and social differences which, combined with the nationwide wave of anti-Semitism that intensified in the 1930s, led to increased tensions and acts of hostility towards Jews.⁶⁴

The Outbreak of World War II and the Soviet Occupation

In September 1939, Rawa Ruska found itself within the defensive perimeter of Lwów. On 14 September, after two weeks of defensive fighting, it was captured by German armoured and motorised units of the XXII Panzer Corps. In the first few

⁶² *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, pp. 498–503.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

days after the capture of the city, the Germans introduced restrictions on movement and a curfew. A local Jew was shot for failing to comply with the curfew. The occupiers also broke into the local synagogue, where they desecrated Torah scrolls.⁶⁵

The German occupation of Rawa County lasted less than two weeks. Under the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and subsequent border corrections, German troops withdrew from the town and county on 24 September and ceded the area to the Red Army. The local Jews welcomed this with relief, but soon the changes introduced by the new occupiers also affected them. The Soviets dissolved Jewish organisations and social institutions operating in the town. In addition, following their nationalisation policy, they took over many Jewish businesses. The imposition of high taxes led to the closure of some synagogues.⁶⁶ During the two-year Soviet occupation of Rawa Ruska, the town underwent intense Sovietisation, accompanied by widespread repression, arrests, and deportations that targeted both Poles and Jews.

On 22 June 1941, without prior declaration of war, German troops attacked the USSR. Five days later, units of the Wehrmacht, specifically the 71st Infantry Division, entered Rawa. At that time, the town had a population of 11,146, of which over 7,000 (approximately 62 per cent) were Jews. As a result of the war, over 100 buildings were destroyed, and many others were seriously damaged. Around 400 Jewish families lost all their possessions.⁶⁷ Some residents welcomed the arrival of the German troops, and Ukrainians erected triumphal gates in the town.⁶⁸

German Occupation Authorities and the Indirect Extermination of Jews

Territories occupied by the Soviets after 17 September 1939 were taken over by Germany in June 1941.⁶⁹ On 1 August 1941, the areas of the former voivodeships of Łwów, Stanisławów, and Tarnopol were incorporated into the newly created Galicia

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ AŻIH, 211/896, Letter from the Judenrat in Rawa Ruska to the Jewish Social Self-Help in Cracow regarding the situation of the Jewish community in Rawa Ruska, 24 November 1941, p. 1.

⁶⁸ *Als Panzerjäger im Fronteinsatz* (DVD), dir. K. Höffkes, 2008.

⁶⁹ W. Bonusiak, *Polska podczas II wojny światowej*, Rzeszów, 1999, p. 173.

District. On 15 September 1941, a new administrative division was introduced, which remained in force during the General Governorate.⁷⁰ The previous Soviet oblasts (regions) and rayons (districts) were replaced by occupation-era starosties (*Kreishauptmannschaft*), covering the area of several pre-war counties.

The Rawa Ruska rayon, which until recently was an integral part of the USSR, under the new German administrative division, became the seat of a starosty. At the beginning of the occupation, power in the city was taken over by the military 403 Local Command (*Ortskommandantur*), and in the following days, rear units entered Rawa Ruska, including the 56th Reserve Grenadier Regiment and the 87th Communications Company, with the aim of organising support for the front divisions. The newly created Kreis Rawa Ruska covered an area of 2,547 sq. km and had a population of 142,000.⁷¹ The dominant nationality was Ukrainian, who constituted 71 per cent of the total population (100,980 people), followed by Poles – 18.9 per cent (26,853 people), Jews – 8.7 per cent (12,460), and Germans (*Reichsdeutsche* and *Volksdeutsche*) – 1 per cent (1,352 people).⁷²

The increase in the area and number of inhabitants was due to the fact that the Kreis Rawa Ruska was enlarged by parts of the territory that had previously been under Soviet occupation, specifically a part of the municipalities of Niemirów and Uhnów, as well as a significant portion of the former Lubaczów County, including the town of Lubaczów.⁷³ After the administrative changes, the Kreis Rawa Ruska comprised sixteen municipalities: Bruckenthal, Dobrosin, Horyniec, Krechów, Krowica Hołodowska, Lubaczów, Lubaczów (the town), Lubycza Królewska, Magierów, Niemirów, Oleszyce, Potylicz, Rawa Ruska (the town), Rawa Ruska, Uhnów and Wierzbiany.⁷⁴

Hans-Walter Zinser took on the role of Starost of Rawa, but in February 1942, Gerhard Hager succeeded him and remained in the position until mid-July 1944.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ G. Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe w Galicji Wschodniej i na Wołyniu w latach, 1931–1948*, Toruń, 2005, p. 41.

⁷¹ State as of August 1942; DALO, f. R-24, op. 1, spr. 258, Starosty of the Lwów District. Department of Internal Affairs. Division of the population and aid. Elderly population statistics by locality. August 1942 – November 1943, p. 11.

⁷² State as of 15 September 1942; G. Hryciuk and J. Stoćkyj, *Studia nad demografią historyczną*, p. 87.

⁷³ G. Hryciuk, *Przemiany narodowościowe i ludnościowe*, p. 41.

⁷⁴ *Amtliches Gemeinde und Dorfverzeichnis*, pp. 12–13.

⁷⁵ M. Roth, *Herrenmenschen*, pp. 450, 512.

The position of a town commissioner (*Stadtkommissar*) was also created – it was held by N. Laski. The police apparatus within the starosty comprised: a gendarmerie platoon (*Gendarmerie Zug*) based in Rawa Ruska, which had two gendarmerie stations in Rawa Ruska and Lubaczów; a Criminal Police Station (*Kriminalpolizei*, abbreviated Kripo) based in Rawa Ruska, reporting to the Police and Security Service (*Sicherheitspolizei – Aussendienststelle*) in Sokal under the command of Oswald Heyduk,⁷⁶ and the stations of the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police (*Ukrainische Hilfspolizei*) located in Rawa Ruska and all municipalities. During the spring of 1942, a Gestapo station with several personnel was established in the town under the command of Helmut Späth.⁷⁷

Upon entering Rawa, the Germans once again destroyed the synagogue and desecrated the Torah scrolls.⁷⁸ A similar situation occurred in Oleszyce. Beginning on 7 August 1941, anti-Jewish laws previously enforced in the General Governorate were extended to the Galicia District. Among the first actions taken by the German occupation authorities in Rawa Ruska was the imposition of a seven-million-zloty levy on the Jewish population. Jews were prohibited from leaving the city or walking on the sidewalks, required to wear armbands bearing the Star of David on their left forearm, and compelled to work if they were between the ages of 16 and 60. Many, subjected to humiliation, were forced to dismantle the old Jewish cemetery in the city centre. The Germans ordered its destruction, levelled the site, and constructed a road using stones from the shattered matzevot.⁷⁹ Similar activities were undertaken in Lubaczów, the second-largest town in the starosty, where authorities imposed a curfew and prohibited gatherings exceeding three individuals. Acts of terror also took place, including one on 29 June 1941 in Niemirów, where eight people lost their lives. In Rawa itself, assaults and beatings were frequent events.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenvernichtung*, p. 415.

⁷⁷ W. Hanus, "Działalność volksdeuschów," p. 141.

⁷⁸ R.S. Huberband, "Z książki „Kiddush HaShem,”" in *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Rawa Ruska*, p. 474.

⁷⁹ K.I. Lewin, *Przeżyłem*, p. 98; Oral history interview of Leah Rosenzweig (Lusia Kramer) given to Ronit Gabay, 13 October 1997, Interview code: 34376, USC Shoah Foundation, <http://protecting-memories-ua.org/rava-ruska/usnoistorychni-svidchennia> (accessed 19 November 2024).

⁸⁰ A. Kruglov and M. Dean, "Rawa Ruska," in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*.

Anti-Jewish and anti-Polish activities in the Kreis Rawa Ruska escalated during July and August 1941. It was during this period that the first mass executions occurred – notably in the Wołkowica forest, south of Rawa. This was where approximately 100 Jews, accused of Soviet collaboration and identified from precompiled lists, were shot by the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police. Further executions were carried out in Niemirów in mid-July, and on 11, 14, and 16 August in the Niwki forest, located 3 km from Lubaczów's center, where around 40 individuals, predominantly Poles, were killed.⁸¹

In July 1941, a fourteen-member Jewish Council (Judenrat) was established in Rawa Ruska, headed by Szymon Brawerman. In April 1942, he was replaced by N. Schweitzer,⁸² who, according to Kurt Isaak Lewin, incited the Germans against the Judenrat and the Jews of Rawa. "The occupiers watched this with malicious satisfaction, deliberately setting the parties involved against each other. They were delighted with Schweitzer and his actions."⁸³ Dr. Josef Mendel, a well-regarded physician in the town, stood in opposition to Schweitzer, consistently challenging both the occupiers and the chairman of the Jewish Council. His resistance led to his arrest, and he eventually died while in custody.⁸⁴

Rawa Ruska had two functioning Judenrats – one at the municipal level and another at the county level. The county council reported to the Jewish Council established in Lubaczów, led by Józef Osterman, and to the one in Niemirów, headed by Izrael Schall.⁸⁵ These councils, instituted by the Germans as administrative instruments to manage the Jewish population, were tasked with overseeing ghetto life, distributing food, and implementing the orders of the occupying authorities. By November 1941, of the more than 12,000 Jews residing in the Kreis Rawa Ruska, approximately 7,400 were concentrated in the county capital. A significant portion of the population lived in severe poverty, facing hunger, cold, and illness. Assistance was provided by the Jewish Social Self-Help (*Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*, ŻSS), an organisation established with German approval

⁸¹ T. Bereza, "Zapomniane ofiary „Siczy”. Las Niwki koło Lubaczowa, lato 1941 roku," *Gazeta Horyniecka* 47 (2017).

⁸² Y. Walfus, "Moja próba," p. 233.

⁸³ K.I. Lewin, *Przeżyłem*, p. 97.

⁸⁴ *Pinkas hakehillot Polin*, pp. 498–503.

⁸⁵ YVA, O.3/8327, Testimony of Icchak Redlich, November 1963, manuscript, pp. 1–16.

in May 1940. ŻSS operated through local branches, including the Jewish County Welfare Committee (*Żydowski Komitet Opiekuńczy Powiatowy*, ŻKOP) in Rawa Ruska, chaired by Mojżesz Wattenberg, and the ŻSS Delegation in Lubaczów, led by Major Schnitzer.⁸⁶

The organisation sought to provide social care for the Jewish population, organised soup kitchens, provided material support, and offered opportunities to earn a living. Funds came from subsidies from the occupation authorities, aid from foreign Jewish organisations, voluntary collections, and tax revenues paid by Jews. The activities of the ŻKOP and its delegations in the Kreis Rawa Ruska area focused mainly on aiding children and feeding the population in organised soup kitchens. The scope of the measures taken only partially met social needs.⁸⁷

Aktion Reinhardt

In late September and early October 1941, the highest-ranking Nazi German authorities resolved to carry out the physical extermination of Jews residing in the General Governorate. It is possible that, during this period, the order to construct the first extermination facility with permanent gas chambers was also issued.⁸⁸ The location of the camp was not chosen at random. Bełżec was an integral part of the Rawa County in the interwar period, and during the German occupation it first belonged to the Kreis Tomaszów Lubelski and, later from April 1940 to the Kreis Zamość. The village, located at the junction of the Lublin, Cracow, and Galicia districts, was ideally connected to both Lublin and Lwów. Most likely, the first people to be killed by gas in this place were a group of about 150 Jewish forced labourers from Lubycza Królewska working on the construction of the camp.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ "Pismo Wydziału Spraw Ogólnych i Organizacyjnych Prezydium ŻSS w Krakowie do Delegatury ŻSS w Lubaczowie, 17 IV, 1942 r., AŻIH, 211/642," ed. W. Wierzbieniec, in *Wojna i pamięć. Przewodnik po miejscach pamięci narodowej na terenie powiatu lubaczowskiego. Materiały z sympozjum naukowego zorganizowanego w dniu 4 września 2009 r. w 70. rocznicę wybuchu II wojny światowej w Muzeum Kresów w Lubaczowie*, eds. S.P. Makara, B. Woch, and J. Mazur, Lubaczów, 2009 (*Biblioteka Muzeum Kresów w Lubaczowie*, vol. 4), pp. 96–98.

⁸⁷ W. Wierzbieniec, "Formy szukania pomocy i możliwości egzystencji przez Żydów w okresie Holocaustu na terenie obecnego powiatu lubaczowskiego – wybrane aspekty," in *ibid.*, p. 116.

⁸⁸ R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, Lublin, 2010, p. 30.

⁸⁹ M. Koper, "Lubycza Królewska," p. 211; R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, p. 48; R. Kuwałek, "Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu, 1941–1943," in *Bełżec przez dzieje*, ed. A. Urbański, Lublin, 2008, p. 145.

The operation to eliminate the Jewish population in the General Governorate and the Bezirk Białystok was designated by the code name “Reinhardt.”⁹⁰ Its primary objective was the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Jews to ghettos and camps, followed by their physical extermination. The operation also aimed to exploit Jewish labour and confiscate their property for use by the German authorities.⁹¹ The extermination of Jews in the General Governorate began in March 1942. In the first phase, deportations took place in Mielec, Lublin, and Łwów, and then on 19 March also in Rawa Ruska. Units of the Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS*, abbreviated SD) from Sokal arrived in the latter town. Approximately 1,000 Jews were arrested, placed in railway wagons and transported to the German extermination camp in Bełżec. According to the testimony of the witness Wolf Sambol, the SD units, supported by the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police, gathered in a square near the Kripo building. “No one tried to escape, everything went smoothly, without shooting or fighting; no one knew what awaited them. About 1,000 Jews were gathered, mainly men and elderly women. On the same day, they were loaded into wagons, a hundred or more at a time, and transported to Bełżec.”⁹²

Crammed into trains, without water or food, Jews lost consciousness, and some died before reaching the destination. With the start of mass murders in the Bełżec extermination camp, Rawa Ruska became an important transport hub. Transports from the Galicia and Cracow districts, as well as from other European countries, including Austria, Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Hungary, passed through it, carrying Jews to the gas chambers and crematoria. According to eyewitness testimonies, these transports could consist of as many as 50–60 wagons.⁹³ As Franciszek

⁹⁰ The name referred to the surname of the head of the RSHA and protector of Bohemia and Moravia, Reinhard Heydrich, who was killed in an assassination carried out by the Czech resistance in May 1942 as part of Operation “Anthropoid” (for more, see B. Szykowski, *Czechosłowackie grupy SOE i zamach na Heydricha HHhH*, Warsaw, 2020).

⁹¹ R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, p. 30.

⁹² AŻIH, 301/4950, Minutes of the testimony of Wolf Sambol, a Jewish resident, regarding the persecution and murder of the Jewish population in the town of Rawa Ruska during the German occupation, 4 May 1945, pp. 4–5.

⁹³ YVA, O.3/1132, Testimony of Franciszek Efraim Włoch, 10 December 1958, pp. 2–3. Lea Kramer, in turn, estimates the number of wagons passing through Rawa Ruska at 50–120 (see YVA, O.3/1957, Testimony of Lea [Rosenzweig] Kramer, 1957, p. 6). In his book on the Bełżec extermination camp, Robert Kuwałek included a passage from the testimony of train driver Michał Kuśmierczyk: “At first,

Efraim Włoch recalled, each train arriving in Rawa had at least a half-hour break at the station, waiting for a phone call from Bełżec confirming that the camp was ready to receive the next transport. The information was received by a special German officer stationed at the station who was in direct contact with the camp command.⁹⁴

The transport that left Rawa Ruska for Bełżec on 19 March was therefore one of the first to be sent to this German extermination centre. The choice of location was not accidental. According to the plans for *Aktion Reinhardt*, deportations in the Galicia District were to begin in towns located along the main Lwów–Bełżec route. Rawa Ruska, as a transport hub located close to the extermination camp in Bełżec, played an important role.

During the early stage of *Aktion Reinhardt*, trains passing through Rawa were composed of sealed wagons with windows that were not barred. According to Franciszek Efraim Włoch, communication with those inside the wagons was possible. “Jews working at the station warned them that a death camp was located twenty kilometres away. However, the people in the wagons did not believe it, insisting that the Germans were taking them for forced labour.”⁹⁵

Some people, aware of the imminent danger, made dramatic attempts to escape from the train after it left the Rawa station for Bełżec. These were extremely perilous endeavours, as the last wagon was guarded by soldiers who fired at escapees. Those who jumped from the moving train were often injured. The wounded either returned to the town or hid in the surrounding forests. Realising what was happening, the Germans began placing shooters on the roofs of the wagons as well.⁹⁶

two transports arrived daily, but this later increased to three. Sometimes it happened that four or even five transports arrived. During that period, many wagons were empty. Typically, each wagon carried [...] 100 to 120 people, and a transport consisted of 40 to 60 freight wagons. The initial transports were densely packed with people, and there were no empty wagons. I recall asking the traffic officials at the Bełżec station, out of curiosity, how many Jews were in a transport. I was told 1,500 on one occasion, and 1,800 on another.” According to Kuwałek, the number of wagons mentioned by Kuśmierczyk and the reference to empty wagons pertain to the second phase of Bełżec’s operation, when transports became more frequent and escapes from the trains occurred relatively often. It is likely that in March and April 1942, aside from the notably large transports, the trains sent to Bełżec did not typically consist of such a high number of wagons (see R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, p. 104).

⁹⁴ YVA, O.3/1132, Testimony of Franciszek Efraim Włoch, 10 December 1958, p. 3

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹⁶ K.I. Lewin, *Przeżyłem*, p. 100; E. Unger, “Rawa Ruska i Bełżec,” p. 227; E. Unger, “Rawa-Rus’ka i Belzhets’ na karti mist’ znyshchennya,” http://protecting-memory-ua.org/images/rava_ruska/memoirs/Rava-Ruska-Yiddish-Parts.pdf (accessed 18 December 2024).

Zelda Ginzberg was one of the few who managed to escape from the train headed to Bełżec. She later recounted: "When the train began moving and had travelled eight kilometres from Rawa, five others and I forced open the wagon door and jumped out. As I hit the ground, blood poured from my head and legs. They were shooting at us. After an hour [...] I reached a certain Gentile. I told her I was Catholic, and she took me in."⁹⁷

From autumn 1942, transports passing through Rawa were already barred. In the testimony of Franciszek Efraim Włoch, we can read:

[...] the guards were no longer only at the end of the train, but also on the tender⁹⁸ behind the locomotive. Transports in wagons filled with lime also began to arrive. Since winter, the people were naked and looked like skeletons. In the empty carriages returning from Bełżec via Rawa, we found holes gnawed with teeth, through which people had thrown their children or tried to jump out themselves. Every day, several corpses of such desperate people were found on the tracks.⁹⁹

The second extermination action in Rawa Ruska took place on 27 July 1942. It was carried out by two companies from Lwów, specifically the German 133rd Police Battalion and the 60th Company of the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police, supported by a local platoon of German military police. On that day, approximately 2,000 Jews were deported to Bełżec. According to Wolf Sambol's testimony, when German units arrived in Rawa, the population panicked and began seeking shelter.

The town seemed deserted – no Jews could be found. Early in the morning of 27 July, the Gestapo forced the Judenrat to assist the Jewish police and a group (one Gestapo officer, one Jew, and one Ukrainian policeman) who began rounding up Jews in their homes and shelters. People were rounded up regardless of age or gender, including the sick and helpless. The number of detainees reached

⁹⁷ AŻIH, 302/71, Diary of Zelda Ginzberg titled "Jak ja przeżyłam okupację 1941–1944," manuscript, no date, p. 2.

⁹⁸ Tender – a specially designed vehicle used to transport coal and water for a steam locomotive.

⁹⁹ YVA, O.3/1132, Testimony of Franciszek Efraim Włoch, 10 December 1958, p. 5.

2,000 [...]. The operation differed from the previous one in that the Ukrainians gathered in the square used physical force mercilessly, even while escorting people to the railway station.¹⁰⁰ The final journey was accompanied by abuse, lamentation, and the cries of children, women, and men.¹⁰¹ After this operation, people in the town began talking about the extermination of the Jewish people, but no one knew the details.¹⁰²

The second deportation in Rawa occurred simultaneously with a similar operation conducted by the German occupiers in the nearby town of Niemirów. Before the war, Niemirów was home to around 2,500 Jews. During the Holocaust, the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police station – led by N. Pelach – played a central role in the town's persecution. Eyewitness Abraham Schall recalled that *Aktion Reinhardt* began there on 15 July, noting that “no one knew or sensed the approaching danger.” At dawn, German military police and SD units, assisted by Ukrainian police forces, entered the town and rounded up approximately 800 Jews, primarily the elderly, women, and children. While some managed to hide or escape into the forest, others – resigned to their fate – reported voluntarily. The sick and those who attempted to flee were executed on the spot.¹⁰³ Those who were captured were transported by trucks to Rawa, from where, on 27 July, they were deported together with others to the extermination camp in Bełżec. The houses and apartments left behind by the Jews of Niemirów were looted by the German military police, the Ukrainian police, and the local population.¹⁰⁴

Abraham Schall, quoted above, and his family were among those who managed to escape. After two days, they returned to the town with others. In his testimony, we read:

¹⁰⁰ AŻIH, 301/4950, Minutes of the testimony of Wolf Sambol, a Jewish resident, regarding the persecution and murder of the Jewish population in the town of Rawa Ruska during the German occupation, 4 May 1945, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ AIPN Rz, 602/1153, Criminal legal assistance files concerning the GKBZH's appeal requesting the examination of witnesses in the case of criminal activity conducted by Ukrainian policemen during the Hitlerite occupation in Rawa Ruska, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Leon Góra, 2 July 1980, fol. 3.

¹⁰² AŻIH, 301/4950, Minutes of the testimony of Wolf Sambol, a Jewish resident, regarding the persecution and murder of the Jewish population in the town of Rawa Ruska during the German occupation, 4 May 1945, p. 5; W. Sambol, “Fragmenty pamiętnika,” in *Sefer zikaron le-kehillat Rawa Ruska*, pp. 463–464.

¹⁰³ AŻIH, 301/4950, Minutes of the testimony of Abraham Schall, manuscript, 4 May 1945, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

However, we did not live peacefully. The first action was very unexpected, so we expected that another one could come at any moment. [...] We lived in such panic until September 1942. At the end of that month, the local Judenrat received an order to resettle all Jews from Niemirów to Rawa Ruska [...]. We reached our destination in the evening. At the same time, Jews from other towns in the Kreis, including Lubycza Królewska, Magierów, Potylicz and Uhnów, also arrived in Rawa. Upon arrival, everyone had to find accommodation on one of the three streets designated for the ghetto [...]. My family and I were lucky because we found accommodation with friends. However, there were also those who had no place to live and were forced to live on the streets.¹⁰⁵

Following the completion of the second operation, the Germans began establishing a ghetto in Rawa. It lacked electricity, but it remained open. Within its confines, there were only two wells available. The ghetto spanned three streets located in the city's most impoverished area.¹⁰⁶ In late September and early October 1942, Jews from surrounding towns – including Magierów, Niemirów, Potylicz, Lubycza Królewska,¹⁰⁷ and Uhnów – were forcibly crowded into the ghetto. The number of people imprisoned in the ghetto rose to 10,000. There were 20–30 Jews per room.

The population, confined to a severely overcrowded area and deprived of elementary sanitary conditions, food, water, clothing, and medical care, experienced a devastating typhus outbreak that claimed approximately 20 lives daily. Alongside the deportations to extermination camps, German forces conducted systematic pacifications and mass executions. During just October and November of 1942, several hundred individuals were killed in the town and its surrounding areas.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ At present, a part of L'viv'ska, Vasyl Stefanyk, and Mykhaylo Drakhomanov Streets.

¹⁰⁷ J. Peter, "Za trzy konie," in *Tomaszowskie za okupacji*, 2nd edn, Tomaszów Lubelski, 2019, pp. 90–94; R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, p. 63; M. Koper, "Lubycza Królewska," pp. 212–216; Y. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, Bloomington–Indianapolis, 1999, p. 383.

¹⁰⁸ These events included several executions and deportations carried out in late 1942: On 3 October, 29 people who had escaped from transports to Bełżec were executed near Rawa Ruska; on 4 October, during a pacification operation in Lubycza Królewska and the village of Kniazie, 48 people were killed – 16 Poles and 32 Ukrainians. Additionally, approximately 300 Jews from Lubycza Królewska were deported to the extermination camp in Bełżec and murdered there; between 15 and 21 November, 56 people were executed in the Rawa Ruska area; from 29 November to 5 December, another 60 individuals were

On 10 October 1942, under the direction of SS Untersturmführer Helmut Späth, head of the Gestapo in Rawa Ruska, a ghetto was established in Lubaczów, located within the Kreis Rawa Ruska. The ghetto was divided into two distinct sections. The first encompassed the central area of the town, stretching from the intersection of the pre-war Mickiewicza and Piłsudskiego Streets to the junctions of Rynek and Konery, Kościuszki and Świętej Anny, Kościuszki and Piłsudskiego, and Kościuszki and Tartaczna Streets. Until mid-November 1942, this section functioned as a semi-open zone. Barbed wire fencing, mounted on wooden poles, was installed only at select intersections – specifically where Kościuszki, Piłsudskiego, Świętej Anny, Konery, and Mickiewicza Streets converged.¹⁰⁹ The tenement houses lining the northern edge of the market square, their entrances sealed with boards, effectively served as a ghetto wall. Marian Kopf explained that the absence of a physical fence around the ghetto stemmed from the unique layout of the area – Jewish buildings were dispersed and scattered in many places among Aryan buildings.¹¹⁰

The second section, significantly smaller in size, was located just behind the northern part of Kościuszki Street and included a building constructed during the Soviet occupation.¹¹¹ According to a GKBZH survey, between 6,000 and 7,000 Jews were placed in the Łańcut-Rzeszów ghetto.¹¹² They were brought from across the entire Landkommissariat region,¹¹³ as well as from Niemirów and Potylicz. In October 1942, about 2,000 Jews were deported to the extermination centre in Bełżec, and some were also sent to nearby labour camps in Cieszanów, Dzików Stary, and Płazów. In November, around 2,000 Jews from the rural municipalities of Oleszyce, Potylicz, and Niemirów were brought in to replace them.

killed in the same vicinity. See “Rawa Ruska – akcja „Reinhardt””, <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/rawa-ruska-akcja-reinhardt/> (accessed 30 November 2024); M. Koper, “Lubycza Królewska,” pp. 214–215.

¹⁰⁹ M. Kopf, “Tamten czas. Część V,” p. 226.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ E. Szajowski, “Tylko ziemia została ta sama,” pp. 277–278.

¹¹² AIPN, 2448/871, Surveys conducted by the GKBZH in Poland and the OKBZH in Warsaw, 1968–1972. Surveys related to the Rzeszów Voivodeship, Lubaczów County – ghettos – Lubaczów County, Information about Hitlerite Crimes in Lubaczów, p. 4 (PDF); AIPN GK, 163/58, Questionnaires concerning camps and ghettos in the Rzeszów Voivodeship, Questionnaire concerning the ghetto in Lubaczów, 5 November 1945, p. 115.

¹¹³ Landkommissariats – rural commissariats – were branches of occupation-era starosties, each overseen by a rural commissioner (Landkommissar). They were established in rural counties and typically administered larger territorial areas.

Here, too, the conditions on the streets and in the courtyards were appalling. Filth, poor hygiene, and unsanitary conditions in the buildings were a major problem. All this, combined with widespread hunger and cold, contributed to the outbreak of abdominal typhus. As in Rawa, the disease took a heavy toll and became a pretext for the liquidation of the ghetto. According to Lola Botner, the Jews of Lubaczów already knew the true purpose of the German extermination camp in Bełżec. In her testimony, she wrote: "We are all trembling and afraid that every night may bring the end of our lives."¹¹⁴ To preserve their lives, Jews constructed underground shelters and various hiding places, hoping to wait out the operation undetected.¹¹⁵

On 10 November 1942, following an order from Friedrich Krüger, SS and Police commander of the General Governorate, the so-called Jewish residential quarters – also referred to as secondary ghettos – were established in the Galicia District and other regions.¹¹⁶ Their creation was intended to facilitate the final extermination of the Jewish population by the Germans.

Within the boundaries of the described starosty, two ghettos were established – one in Rawa Ruska and the other in Lubaczów. From that moment, both were sealed, and any attempt to leave was punishable by death. The Rawa Ruska ghetto was officially closed on 1 December 1942, after which even temporary exits for work were strictly prohibited. As in many other ghettos across the Galicia District, the outbreak of typhus served as a pretext for initiating the liquidation. In Rawa, this operation took place between 7 and 11 December 1942. Fearing death, many Jews hid in shelters and bunkers, both inside and outside the ghetto. Among them were members of the Post, Graf, and Klag families, who found refuge in the home of Fryderyk and Maria Czerwień, who lived on Asnyka Street in Rawa Ruska. They stayed there for about eighteen months, until the Soviets arrived.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ L. Botner, "Z życia lubaczowskiego," p. 102.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ "Rozporządzenie Wyższego Dowódcy SS i Policji w GG o tworzeniu żydowskich dzielnic mieszkaniowych w Okręgach Radom, Krakau i Galizien z 14 XI 1942 r.," in *„Żegota”. Rada Pomocy Żydom 1942–1945. Wybór dokumentów poprzedzony wywiadem Andrzeja Friszke z Władysławem Bartoszewskim*, ed. A.K. Kunert, Warsaw, 2002, p. 52.

¹¹⁷ AŻIH, 301/6575, Testimony of Maria Czerwień, given to the GKBZH in Poland, regarding her family's rescue of 11 Jews in Rawa Ruska during the German occupation, 18 February 1967, p. 2; AIPN, 392/37, Files regarding the aid provided by Fryderyk and Maria Czerwień, Statement of representatives

The liquidation of the Rawa ghetto was carried out by the 14th operational unit of the 5th company of the 24th Police Regiment, Task Force of the Northern Security District (*Sicherungsbezirk Nord, Einsatzkommando*), which arrived from Drohobych,¹¹⁸ supported by the SD from Sokal and the local German military police and Ukrainian police. SS Untersturmführer Josef Grzimek commanded the entire operation.¹¹⁹ Before the operation, the officers were vaccinated against abdominal typhoid. The testimony of Wolf Sambol, already quoted above, shows us the horror of those days:

The ghetto population, having already gone through two similar operations, understood that something terrible was starting again. The Jewish residents of the city shut the windows and doors of their homes – they had learned that even the simplest methods could be used to defend themselves. The sick were hidden in attics, basements, or bunkers prepared for this purpose. The streets of the district were completely silent. Gunfire began. Many had no place to hide. They waited, staying in their rooms. Doors and windows shook, and the shooting continued. Anyone struck by a bullet was lucky to die instantly. But it didn't end there. Day after day, everything started over.¹²⁰

Leon Góra testified before the OKBZH prosecutor that, during the liquidation of the ghetto, he witnessed several crimes committed by the Germans. In the minutes of the witness's interrogation, we read as follows:

of New York-based organisations Congregation Bnai Levy Isaac Anshei Rawa Ruska and Rawa Ruska Relief Committee, Sama Essing and Mosesa Katz, 27 May 1951, p. 64.

¹¹⁸ RGVA, f. 1323, op. 2, spr. 292 b, Report of the 24th Police Regiment on operations against partisans, the extermination of Jews and Gypsies, etc., August–December 1942, p. 6 (for digital copies of the documents, see http://protecting-memory-ua.org/images/rawa_ruska/historical_sources/1323-2-292b.pdf [accessed 24 October 2024]).

¹¹⁹ Josef Grzimek (1905–1950) – SS Hauptscharführer, commander of the German labour camps for Jews in Jaktorów, Racie near Rawa Ruska, Złoczów, and Bolechów between 1942 and 1944. At the end of 1943, he took up the position of commander of a Ukrainian guard company in a German forced labour camp in Szebnie near Jasło. For war crimes committed in German-occupied Polish territory, he was sentenced to death by the District Court in Warsaw on 29 January 1949 and executed by hanging a year later (S. Zabierowski, *Szabnie. Dzieje obozów hitlerowskich*, Rzeszów, 1985, pp. 85–90).

¹²⁰ AŻIH, 301/4950, Minutes of the testimony of Wolf Sambol, a Jewish resident, regarding the persecution and murder of the Jewish population in the town of Rawa Ruska during the German occupation, 4 May 1945, pp. 6–7.

A Ukrainian policeman standing next to the ghetto shot and killed a young Jewish woman and her 2-year-old child, whom she was carrying in her arms, with several shots from his rifle. The same witness also revealed that at around the same time, one of the German officers, accompanied by two Ukrainian policemen, shot and killed several Jews in an alley next to the ghetto, opposite Dickens' grocery store.

Góra also witnessed numerous hunts and roundups of Jews who had managed to flee the confines of the ghetto.¹²¹

During the operation, approximately 3,000 people were murdered on the spot – in the ghetto, in the new Jewish cemetery, as well as in the Kiczera Forest, near the village of Siedliska. The 14th operational unit alone shot 750 Jews in the ghetto. Most of the bodies were collected and buried in one of four mass graves in the cemetery. Another 2,000 Jews were deported on 11 December 1942 to the extermination camp in Bełżec. Among them were Jews from Lubycza and Niemirów.¹²² It was the last transport to this place.¹²³

From the last group of Jews, about 200 young people, both women and men, were selected. Some of them were placed in local forced labour camps in the villages of Rata and Kamionka, supervised by Josef Grzimek,¹²⁴ while others were transported to the Janowska Street camp in Lwów.¹²⁵ A group of 60 Jews, known as the “funeral team,” remained in Rawa. Their task was to remove the bodies of their murdered fellow Jews and bury them in mass graves in the cemetery.¹²⁶

¹²¹ AIPN Rz, 602/ 1153, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Leon Góra, 2 July 1980, p. 3.

¹²² YVA, O.3/8327, Testimony of Icchak Redlich, November 1963, manuscript, pp. 10–11.

¹²³ W. Curilla, *Der Judenmord in Polen und die deutsche Ordnungspolizei 1939–1945*, Paderborn, 2011, p. 803.

¹²⁴ AIPN GK, 296/77, vol. 2, Files related to the case of Josef Grzimek, Testimony of the witness Rudolf Merkel, pp. 323–325 (PDF).

¹²⁵ The Janowska camp – a German labour camp and concentration camp on the outskirts of Lwów on Janowska Street, operating between 1941 and 1944. The prisoners of this place were mainly Jews, although at the beginning there were also Poles and Ukrainians. It was liquidated in November 1943. The number of victims in this and other camps in Lwów is estimated at 200,000. See M.M. Borwicz, *Uniwersytet zbirów. Rzecz o obozie janowskim we Lwowie 1941–1944*, Cracow, 2014; D. Schenk, *Noc morderców. Kaźń polskich profesorów we Lwowie i Holocaust w Galicji Wschodniej*, Cracow, 2011; J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich (1941–1944)*, Warsaw, 2007.

¹²⁶ Ch. Spatzer, “Koniec mojego miasta Rawa Ruska,” p. 260.

After the December extermination campaign, Nazi propaganda labelled Rawa Ruska as *Judenfrei*, meaning “free of Jews.” Lusia Kramer, born in Rawa Ruska, documented in her testimony:

[...] there is so much terrible meaning in this word that neither reason nor the human heart can comprehend it [...] *Judenfrei* means that there will no longer be Jewish children going to school in the town, mothers praying by the light of Friday candles, or Jewish men wearing caftans on their way to synagogue [...] There will also be no Jewish cemetery where a rabbi will sing at a grave and a relative will recite the Kaddish; there will be nothing, Rawa Ruska will disappear!¹²⁷

In the nearby town of Lubaczów, the ghetto’s liquidation was scheduled for 7 January 1943. A platoon of German military police from Rawa Ruska participated in the operation. The strategy mirrored that used in Rawa Ruska: small units composed of German military police, along with Ukrainian and Jewish auxiliary police, operated in groups of three or four – typically one Ukrainian and one Jewish policeman accompanied by one or two German officers. At the outset, all street intersections leading to the ghetto were sealed off and guarded by German and Ukrainian police.¹²⁸

The tragedy of those days is also captured in the preserved parish chronicle. Under the entry for 7 January, it reads: “Since early morning, Jews have appeared visibly anxious, and reportedly, younger individuals have been fleeing into the streets. We witness Jewish militiamen escorting people from their homes and lining them up for transport. Much of this is happening right outside our windows. Heavy gunfire is soon met with the sight of corpses lying scattered everywhere.”¹²⁹

The record in the parish chronicle is consistent with the testimonies of Stanisław Młodziński, Adam Bauman, and Marian Kopf.¹³⁰ A transport carrying approxi-

¹²⁷ YVA, O.3/1957, Testimony of Lea (Rosenzweig) Kramer, 1957, p. 7.

¹²⁸ Oral history interview with Stanisław Młodziński, 10 March 2009, USHMM, RG-50.488.0273, transcript: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn45093> (accessed 19 December 2024).

¹²⁹ *Archiwum Parafii pw. św. Stanisława w Lubaczowie* (Archives of the Parish of St. Stanislaus in Lubaczów), The Parish in Lubaczów During World War II (1939–1945), 1943, manuscript, p. 75.

¹³⁰ Oral history interview with Stanisław Młodziński, 10 March 2009, USHMM, RG-50.488.0273, transcript: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn45093> (accessed 19 December 2024); M. Kopf, “Tamten czas. Część VI,” p. 346.

mately 2,000 Jews set off on their final journey from the station in Lubaczów to the German extermination camp in Sobibór.¹³¹ Some of the Jews were shot in the ghetto, the cemetery, and in the so-called Plebańskie Fields between Dachnów and Mokrzyca, 3 km from the town centre. The bodies of the murdered Jews were also transported to the last two locations.¹³²

The next day, the perpetrators searched the ghetto for hiding places where Jews could hide. Those who were found, as on the previous day, were escorted to the Plebańskie Fields, where they were shot and buried. Some Jews managed to escape during the liquidation and find refuge in the forests, including near Oleszyce.¹³³ However, within a week, they were found and shot in the Catholic and Jewish cemeteries in Oleszyce (a total of 174 people). All were buried in seven mass graves (each containing 20–30 bodies).¹³⁴

Returning to the events in Rawa Ruska, immediately after the liquidation of the local ghetto, there were still at least 160 Jews residing legally in the town (specifically the aforementioned “funeral team” and about 100 workers who were cleaning up the former ghetto). In addition, a number of people were hiding in well-camouflaged hiding places in the liquidated ghetto, who owed their existence to, among others, the aforementioned workers. The members of the “funeral team” were the first to be killed after completing their task. The execution took place in March 1943 at the local Jewish cemetery.¹³⁵

Those hiding in the ghetto made a desperate attempt at armed resistance. They managed to obtain weapons with the help of the local population, including a Home Army soldier, Mariusz Koziarczyk.¹³⁶ According to his testimony, in May 1943, he

¹³¹ During the liquidation of the Lubaczów ghetto, local Jews were deported to the German extermination camp in Sobibór, because in mid-December 1942, the Germans began liquidating the centre in Bełżec (W. Hanus, “Działalność volksdeutschów,” p. 144).

¹³² Oral history interview with Ludwik Cencora, 24 August 2009, USHMM, RG-50.488.0282, transcript: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn45103> (accessed 30 November 2024).

¹³³ A. Crisci and A. Kruglov, “Lubaczów,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, p. 802.

¹³⁴ Z. Kubrak, “Holokaust w Oleszyczach,” p. 52.

¹³⁵ Ch. Spatzer, “Koniec mojego miasta Rawa Ruska,” p. 260.

¹³⁶ Mariusz Julian Koziarczyk, son of Walenty and Waleria Schmidt, born on 23 October 1923 in Łañcut, lived in Rawa Ruska during the occupation and worked as a waiter in a local railway restaurant run by his uncle Jerzy Łoĩński. Together with his brother Ryszard, he belonged to the Home Army in Rawa Ruska County. In December 1943, both were arrested by the German military police for their underground activities. He was held in custody in Rawa and in a prison on Łackiego Street in Lwów. Ryszard

delivered several weapons to a group led by a Jew named Szame.¹³⁷ The Pole also remembered the name of another Jew who took part in this desperate rising, Kaumen Drucker. According to Franciszek Efraim Włoch, the insurgents “barricaded themselves in the cellars and, when ordered to leave their homes, responded with gunfire and grenades. A regular battle began.” According to the same witness, the pacification of the rising was to be led by Josef Grzmek’s wife, who took command from her husband that day and ordered the use of flamethrowers. According to the witness, she personally fired a machine gun at Jews trying to escape the fire.¹³⁸

The attempt to mount an armed opposition ended in failure.¹³⁹ According to Koziarczyk, the leaders of the fighting Jews, along with several other people, managed to escape from the ghetto and were killed in a skirmish with the German military police on the road leading from Potylicz to Rawa Ruska.¹⁴⁰

From 1 May 1943, there were also around 300 Jews in Rawa, who had been transported from the liquidated forced labour camp in Mosty Wielkie.¹⁴¹ The final end of the Jews in Rawa came on 8–10 June 1943 in the nearby Borowe Forest, those who had been brought from Mosty Wielkie and those who had managed to survive the rising in well-hidden hiding places in the former ghetto were murdered. The

Koziarczyk was murdered in April in prison, while Mariusz was released in March 1944. After the war, he settled in Kielce (AŻIH, 349/24/550, Letter from Mariusz Koziarczyk to the ŻIH in Warsaw, 10 April 1984, fols. 2–11; Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Katowicach (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Katowice), 53/1, Index card from a card-index of persons authorised to perform secret work (MOB work) from the Voivodeship Office of Internal Affairs (*Wojewódzki Urząd Spraw Wewnętrznych*, WUSW) in Katowice, Bielsko-Biała, and Częstochowa, concerning Mariusz Koziarczyk. [MOB stands for “mobilizacyjno-obronny” (“military and defence”). This abbreviation was used when registering people approved by the “C” division units for admission to work covered by state secrecy. Source: IPN’s glossary (t.n.).]

¹³⁷ AŻIH, 349/24/550, Letter from Mariusz Koziarczyk to ŻIH in Warsaw, 10 April 1984, p. 5.

¹³⁸ YVA, O.3/1132, Testimony of Franciszek Efraim Włoch, 10 December 1958, p. 5.

¹³⁹ AŻIH, 301/4950, Minutes of the testimony of Wolf Sambol, a Jewish resident, regarding the persecution and murder of the Jewish population in the town of Rawa Ruska during the German occupation, 4 May 1945, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ AŻIH, 349/24/550, Letter from Mariusz Koziarczyk to the ŻIH in Warsaw, 10 April 1984, p. 10.

¹⁴¹ Formally, it was a remnant ghetto, transformed in the autumn of 1942 into a forced labour camp for Jews in Mosty Wielkie, segregated into male and female sections, supervised by the SS. The imprisoned Jews worked, among other things, in a sawmill and on the construction of a railway line. The camp commander was SS Obersturmführer Willi Schulze. The camp was liquidated on 1 May 1943. Some of the inmates were murdered on the spot, while the rest were sent to the Janów and Rawa Ruska camps (A. Kruglov and M. Dean, “Mosty Wielkie,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, pp. 808–810).

last people in hiding were coaxed out with false assurances of relocation to forced labour camps in Potylicz and Rata – and were subsequently killed.¹⁴²

Table 1. Estimated Number of Victims of *Aktion Reinhardt* in the Kreis Rawa Ruska

Kreis Rawa Ruska	Jewish population before World War II		Number of Jewish victims of the Aktion Reinhardt		Deportations		Mass executions	
	as of 15 September 1942	as of 1 March 1943	1942	1943	to the death camp in Bełżec	to the death camp in Sobibór	1942	1943
	12,460	285	at least 8,000	ca. 4,000	19 March 1942, 27 July 1942, October 1942, 7–11 December 1942	8 January 1943	second half of August, mid-September, beginning of October, mid-November, 7–11 December	8–14 January, 13 February, mid-May, 8–10 June

Source: AŻIH, 301/4950, Minutes of the testimony of Abraham Schall and Wolf Sambol, manuscript, 4 May 1945, pp. 1–11; Table 8. “Powiat Rawa Ruska,” in T. Berenstein, *Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej*; R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, pp. 235–251; G. Hryciuk and J. Stočkyj, *Studia nad demografią historyczną*, pp. 87–88; “Rawa Ruska,” in *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia*, pp. 648–650; C. Crisci and A. Kruglov, “Lubaczów,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, pp. 801–802; A. Kruglov and M. Dean, “Rawa Ruska,” in *ibid.*, p. 819.

During *Aktion Reinhardt*, no fewer than 12,000 Jews from the Kreis Rawa Ruska were murdered. The extermination of the Jewish population in this region continued until the end of the German occupation. No fewer than 80 Jews survived the war – a mere fraction of the several thousand who once lived in the starosty. This number refers only to those who – during the war – stayed and went into hiding within the district or starosty. Jews who were deported from the Rawa region to

¹⁴² A.I. Kruglov, “Rava Russkaya,” in *Kholokost na territorii SSSR*, p. 832.

the depths of the USSR in 1940, returned to the country after the war, and then emigrated to Israel, the United States, or other countries were not counted. They endured the ordeal of deportation, many died during transport, and thousands never returned to their homeland. However, deportation to the East saved them from the Holocaust that took place in the occupied Polish territories.¹⁴³

Of the 80 Jews who managed to survive the Holocaust, most were saved in the urban areas of the Kreis Rawa Ruska. A total of 31 Jews were saved in the towns of the starosty, that is in Rawa Ruska, Lubaczów, Niemirów, and Uhnów, and 24 in the countryside. Another 15–20 Jews, born and living in the Rawa Starosty during the war, survived the German occupation by using “Aryan papers” in other parts of the occupied country or through forced labour in the German Reich.

No fewer than 35 Poles, at least six Ukrainians, and one German were involved in rescuing Jews in the Kreis Rawa Ruska area. In the towns, at least 25 Poles saved the lives of no fewer than 52 Jews. The greatest number of people were saved by Fryderyk and Maria Czerwień, Jerzy Łogiński, and Leonard Bartlakowski, also known as Robert Krysiński. The latter was the only German known to us who participated in saving Jews in this area. For a year and a half, the Czerwień family sheltered 12 Jews from the Post, Klag, Graf, and Diller families in their home.¹⁴⁴ Łogiński sheltered five Jews in a concealed attic space within his tenement house located in the city centre. Those sheltered were Berisch Steinfeld and his wife Lola, Dan Berger and his wife Fajga, along with their relative Matylda Kleiner. Additionally, shortly before the ghetto was liquidated, he saved the Steinfelds’ one-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Brajndla, in response to a plea from her parents.¹⁴⁵ Leonard Bartlakowski, who was born in Berlin to a Polish family that had acquired German citizenship,¹⁴⁶ served

¹⁴³ See, among others, Oral history interview with Awracham Woltser, 17 February 2004, item ID: 4899284, YVA, <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/documents/4899284> (accessed 23 December 2024); Oral history interview with Rosa Shoshana Bly, 7 November 2008, item ID: 7573767, YVA, <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/documents/7573767> (accessed 23 December 2024); Oral history interview with Jeszajahu Zimmerman, 2 April 2019, item ID: 13431373, YVA, <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/documents/13431373> (accessed 23 December 2024).

¹⁴⁴ W. Hanus, “Sprawiedliwi z Rawy Ruskiej. Fryderyk i Maria Czerwieniowie, Bazyli Chmielewski,” *Biuletyn IPN* 3 (2022), p. 75.

¹⁴⁵ AŻIH 349/24/1079, Documentation of the case concerning Jerzy Łogiński, Statement by Dan Berger, no date, pp. 5–6.

¹⁴⁶ He is listed as a person of German nationality in the Righteous Among the Nations database maintained by the Yad Vashem Institute.

as a translator for the German military police in Rawa Ruska during the German occupation. He hid four Jews in a hiding place beneath the floor of his flat in the city centre. The group included Abraham Weidenfeld and his wife Anna, Romana Kessler, and Stefania Reicher.¹⁴⁷

In the rural areas of the starosty in question, at least 14 Poles rescued no fewer than 20 Jews. The greatest number of individuals were rescued by Anna and Andrzej Antonik, along with their daughter Ludwika, from the village of Lisie Jamy, and by Antoni Dorota and his daughter Aniela from the village of Młodów – both situated near Lubaczów. The Antonik family hid Szmuel and Estera Broch, their son Hersz, and their niece Malka Stupp in the attic of a barn, while the Dorota family sheltered the three-member Remer family in an underground hiding place beneath a barn for nearly three years.¹⁴⁸

Among individuals of Ukrainian heritage who held Polish citizenship prior to the war, at least four families played a role in hiding Jews in the region under discussion. Responding to a plea from the Lapp family, Yekaterina Kleban took in their eight-year-old daughter, Ruzia, offering her refuge under her own roof. The young Jewish girl remained in Kleban's care for over two years and survived to witness the arrival of the Soviet forces. In the village of Rata, located approximately 3 kilometers north of Rawa, Anna and Roman Wywrocki rescued a Jewish infant – the daughter of the Schlettner couple. They hid the child in their home for sixteen months. Also, a resident of Lipina, Maria Ganczar, gave refuge in her buildings to her former neighbours, Moses and Chana Adler. They had previously stayed at Wasyl Nachacz's house in the nearby village of Zalesie. From the summer of 1943 to March 1944, Nachacz sheltered a total of six Jews (in exchange for a regular payment). Three of them – named Cioma, Flajszer and Dekiel – moved to Feliks and Wiktoria Balawender, who lived in the same village, at the end of 1943. The fates of Maria Ganczar, Wasyl Nachacz, and the Balawenders couple were tragic. All of them were arrested for helping Jews and imprisoned in the German military police station in Rawa Ruska, and then transported to a prison in Lwów, where

¹⁴⁷ "Bartlakowski Leonard," <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/righteous/4013818> (accessed 30 December 2024).

¹⁴⁸ *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata. Ratujący Żydów podczas Holokaustu. Polska*, vol. 1, ed. I. Gutman, Cracow, 2009, pp. 8–9, 136.

they were executed.¹⁴⁹ Of the Jews they hid, only Cioma survived the occupation.¹⁵⁰ These are the only known cases from the Kreis Rawa Ruska where people who helped Jews were killed.

All of the individuals listed above – except for the Balawender family – were recognised by the Yad Vashem Institute with the title “Righteous Among the Nations.” This honour was bestowed upon 21 Poles,¹⁵¹ 5 Ukrainians,¹⁵² and one German¹⁵³ from the Rawa Starosty region.

As already mentioned, 15–20 Jews in the Kreis Rawa Ruska survived thanks to the so-called Aryan documents, obtained from both Poles and Ukrainians, either for free or with payment. Among those rescued in this way were Lusja Kramer, Helena Flaum, Ruth Haskell, Zelda Ginzberg, and Ewa Kleiner. Zelda Grinzberg, equipped with a birth certificate issued in the name of Ksenia Wasilewska, left for Volhynia as a Ukrainian and, working on a farm there, survived until the Soviet invasion.¹⁵⁴ The remaining women were sent to forced labour in the Third Reich.

Chaim Spatzer, Hertz Graf, and his brother-in-law N. Graf survived the occupation years in one of the forest bunkers near Rawa. They survived thanks to the help of a Ukrainian friend who supplied them with food.¹⁵⁵ Samuel Sztork from Rawa survived the occupation by hiding in the Horyniec Forest, where he made contact with one of the local Soviet partisan units.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, Nathan Zimmer-

¹⁴⁹ See A. Namysło, “Wasył Nachacz, Maria Ganczar,” in *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, eds. M. Grądzka-Rejak and A. Namysło, Warsaw, 2019, p. 243.

¹⁵⁰ E. Rączy, “Feliks i Wiktoria Balawendrowie,” in *ibid.*, pp. 91–92.

¹⁵¹ Andrzej with Anna Antonik and Ludwika Janczura, née Antonik (Lisie Jamy near Lubaczów); Bazyli Chmielewski (Rawa Ruska); Fryderyk and Maria Czerwień (Rawa Ruska); Antoni Dorota and Aniela Mirkowska née Dorota (Młodów near Lubaczów); Jerzy Łogiński (Rawa Ruska); Walerian with Katarzyna Góra and Katarzyna Baran (Rawa Ruska); Marian Kocielski (Lubaczów); Józef Kulpa (Lubaczów); Jerzy Łogiński (Rawa Ruska); Witold Mączak (Oleszyce near Lubaczów); Helena Piestrak-Fiutowska (Oleszyce); Józef and Zofia Piotrowski (village of Górki near Rawa Ruska); Zofia Pomorska (Lubaczów); Jan Wużyński (Horyniec near Lubaczów).

¹⁵² Maria Ganczar (Lipina near Lubaczów); Jekaterina Kleban (Potylicz); Wasył Nachacz (Zalesie near Lubaczów); Roman and Anna Wywrocki (Rata near Rawa Ruska).

¹⁵³ Romuald Bartłakowski.

¹⁵⁴ AŻIH, 302/71, Zelda Ginzberg’s Diary “Jak ja przeżyłam okupację 1941–1944,” pp. 1–5.

¹⁵⁵ Ch. Spetzer, “Koniec mojego miasta Rawa Ruska,” pp. 393–395. The first and last names of this Ukrainian are unknown.

¹⁵⁶ A.S. Sztork, “Wśród partyzantów,” in *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Rawa Ruska*, pp. 450–461.

man and Israel Satz survived by enlisting in the Red Army in May 1941.¹⁵⁷ Ben Zion Friedman hid in the forests near Brody.¹⁵⁸ Some testimonies of Jews rescued from the Kreis Rawa Ruska area lack information about who provided them with support. This is the case, for example, with Simon Huberband, Ada Weichselbaum and Jeszua Wallfuss.

Evidence has also been preserved of Catholic clergy and nuns aiding Jews in the Rawa Starosty during the German occupation. Moni Grauer wrote in his memoirs: "I hid in a monastery in Rawa [Ruska] with the consent of Rev. [Jan] Podczerwieński, who was a friend of our family."¹⁵⁹ According to Leon Hirsza from Rawa Ruska, as a ten-year-old boy, he received help from a priest. In Lubaczów and Oleszyce, two priests, Stanisław Sobczyński and Józef Mroczkowski, issued at least three baptism certificates for Lusja Grünspan, Estera Vogiel, and Pepcia Blaiberger. The priests acted at the request of Polish women Zofia Pomorska and Jadwiga Fusińska.¹⁶⁰

Also, the Albertine Sisters extended their aid to the Jewish community. Sister Waleriana (Prakseda Żukowska) recounted that the sisters sheltered a Jewish child within their convent, ensuring the child's survival throughout the war and the German occupation.¹⁶¹

No formal assistance to Jews within the Kreis Rawa Ruska from the Council for Aid to Jews "Żegota" or the Home Army has been documented. Nonetheless, individual Home Army soldiers undertook efforts to rescue members of the local Jewish community, though these actions were spontaneous and grassroots in nature. Two testimonies have survived – one from a recipient of such aid and the other from a rescuer. The first is the account of Berney Berger, who, beginning in April 1944, was sheltered in the forests near Rawa by his former schoolmate and Home Army soldier, Stanisław Lętowiec.¹⁶² The Pole helped Berger build a small

¹⁵⁷ N. Zimmerman, "Ten, który pozostał przy życiu," in *ibid.*, p. 517.

¹⁵⁸ B.Z. Friedman, "Przez co przeszliśmy," pp. 467–471.

¹⁵⁹ M. Garuer, "Zostałem uratowany," in *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Rawa Ruska*, p. 484.

¹⁶⁰ E. Rączy and I. Witowicz, *Polacy ratujący Żydów na Rzeszowszczyźnie w latach 1939–1945 / Poles Rescuing Jews in the Rzeszów Region in the Years 1939–1945*, Rzeszów, 2011, p. 105; Z. Kubrak, *Dzieje Lubaczowa*, p. 735.

¹⁶¹ K.M. Babraj, „Być dobrym jak chleb”. *Domy zakonne Zgromadzenia Sióstr Albertynek Posługujących Ubogim od 1891 do 2009 roku*, Cracow, 2010, pp. 168–169.

¹⁶² The surname may have been spelled differently.

hiding place and then provided him with food and clothing.¹⁶³ Mariusz Koziarczyk, mentioned earlier, was a soldier of the Rawa Ruska County of the Home Army involved in helping Jews. For some time, he hid five Jews from the Schipermann, Berger, and Kleiner families in his family home in Rawa Ruska, and in May 1943, he delivered weapons to a group of Jews hiding in the former ghetto in Rawa Ruska.¹⁶⁴

The data presented and examples of assistance provided to Jews in the Kreis Rawa Ruska allow us to conclude that it was Poles – despite the higher percentage of Ukrainians in the area – who were more involved in rescuing Jews. This could have been due to both socio-political conditions and mutual Polish-Ukrainian-Jewish relations during the German occupation, as well as conflicts fuelled by social tensions dating back to the Second Polish Republic.

A higher proportion of Jews managed to survive in urban areas, likely due to more accessible hiding places, the possibility of obtaining forged Aryan documents, and the particular characteristics of the social fabric. Prior to the war, towns within the Rawa Starosty had significant Jewish populations,¹⁶⁵ which fostered extensive networks of personal connections. As a result, towns offered a relatively higher sense of security, with individuals sometimes able to rely on assistance from former acquaintances. In contrast, hiding in rural areas posed greater risks, exacerbated by the armed operations of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

* * *

This text seeks to document the extermination of the Jewish population in a provincial region located in the eastern part of the former Lwów Voivodeship, which, between 1941 and 1944, was designated as a German occupation-era starosty (Kreis Rawa Ruska). Drawing on archival records, eyewitness testimonies, and scholarly literature, it outlines the successive phases of this process – from the

¹⁶³ Oral history interview with Berney Berger given to Suzanne Roberts, 21 March 1996, Interview code: 13485, USC Shoah Foundation, <http://protecting-memory-ua.org/rava-ruska/usnoistorychni-svidchennia> (accessed 10 December 2024).

¹⁶⁴ AŻIH, 349/24/550, Letter from Mariusz Koziarczyk to ŻIH in Warsaw, 10 April 1984, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ Jews constituted the majority of the population in Rawa Ruska and Niemirów, while Poles were the majority in Uhnów. The only exception was Lubaczów, where the Ukrainian population was the largest, but if Poles and Jews were taken into account, both groups together constituted almost 60 per cent of the town's population.

initial outbreaks of violence following the German invasion in June 1941, through the establishment and operation of the ghetto, to the deportations to the Bełżec extermination camp and the eventual annihilation. The narrative also highlights both the direct actions of the German terror apparatus and the attitude of the local population in the context of providing aid to Jews in hiding.

This article forms part of a broader study on the Holocaust in the region historically referred to as Eastern Lesser Poland, encompassing the pre-war voivodeships of Stanisławów, Tarnopol, and the eastern portion of the Lwów Voivodeship. Between 1939 and 1944, this area experienced successive occupations – first by the Soviets, then by the Germans. As early as the summer of 1941, prior to the establishment of the extermination camp in Bełżec, the region was already targeted by Einsatzgruppen units, which carried out mass atrocities. The examination of the Holocaust's progression in the Kreis Rawa Ruska adds to our understanding of the localised aspects of the Jewish extermination. A key factor shaping this process and the implementation of *Aktion Reinhardt* – of which this area was among the first to be affected – was Rawa's geographical proximity to Bełżec, making it the nearest town in the Galicia District to the camp.

Accordingly, a possible area for further research could be the study of social relations within provincial, multicultural, and multiethnic communities in the eastern regions of the Second Polish Republic. This inquiry should consider the impact of both the Soviet and German occupations, which significantly influenced intergroup dynamics. Another proposed direction is the detailed reconstruction of the Holocaust's progression at the level of counties and municipalities in the Galicia District, with particular attention to the operations of the German terror apparatus and the involvement of local civil authorities. It is also suggested that the histories of individual localities be integrated into the broader narrative of the Holocaust – not only to complete the overall picture, but also to expose the mechanisms of violence and extermination that shaped its course in the so-called eastern territories.

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"I FELT SORRY FOR THE PEOPLE AND DIDN'T OBEY THE ORDER...". THE ACTIVITY OF ALFONS HIMMEL, A MILITARY POLICE FUNCTIONARY FROM THE STATION IN LIPSKO, KREIS STARACHOWICE (GG), AS REFLECTED IN POST-WAR INVESTIGATIVE AND TRIAL MATERIAL

Summary

Lipsko is a small town in central Poland. During the German occupation, it belonged to the Kreis Starachowice, which was part of the Radom District within the General Governorate (GG). Between 1940 and 1944, a military police station operated there, where one of the functionaries was Alfons Himmel. After the war, Himmel went into hiding but was eventually identified, apprehended, and sentenced to death in a 1949 trial. His testimony, along with that of numerous witnesses to his crimes, serves as a valuable source for understanding various aspects of the occupiers' policies towards Poles and Jews – especially the reasons for and procedures surrounding arrests and executions. These accounts also shed light on the everyday interactions between the military police and the local population.

Keywords

General Governorate • Radom District • Kreis Starachowice • German crimes • Holocaust

On the afternoon of Tuesday, 4 December 1945, Leokadia Kośnik, a postal clerk, was walking down a street in Wałbrzych when she noticed a man whose face and build seemed familiar. She recognised him as a German military policeman who, several months earlier, had taken part in setting fire to peasants' buildings in her home village on the Vistula River – and who had violently driven her away when she tried to douse the flames with a bucket of water.¹ At Leokadia Kośnik's urging, the man was apprehended by passers-by and brought to the Citizens' Militia station. There, he identified himself using a *Kennkarte* issued near the end of the occupation under the name of Leon Borek – an accountant born in Kozienice, residing in a village in Starachowice County, and employed in the accounting department of the Gieszcze Puste (now Głuszycza) Municipal Board in Wałbrzych County. Although he answered questions in Polish, his noticeable German accent likely raised suspicions. Moreover, the *Kennkarte* bore, among other markings, the stamp of the Military Police Station in Lipsko, corroborating Jadwiga Kośnik's testimony that the man had served there as a functionary. Suspicions may have been heightened by the discovery of a large amount of cash on the detainee – over 2,300 zlotys and 20,000 German marks.² Probably after a while, "Leon Borek" admitted that his real name was Alfons Himmel and that during the occupation he had been a military policeman in the aforementioned town. Four years later, the detained man was sentenced to death and executed in Radom prison.

Against the backdrop of thousands of cases prosecuted in post-war Poland under the so-called August Decree, Himmel's case may appear insignificant. Within the vast machinery of the German police apparatus in the General Governorate, he was merely a minor figure – a non-commissioned officer stationed at a pro-

¹ *Archiwum Delegatury Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Radomiu* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Delegation in Radom, hereinafter AIPN Ra), 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Leokadia Kośnik, 4 December 1945, p. 7.

² *Ibid.*, Alfons Himmel's personal inspection report, 11 December 1945, p. 3.

vincial outpost, overseeing several towns and impoverished rural areas on the Vistula River.

Yet the materials collected during the investigation and trial of Himmel hold exceptional value. Most notably, they underscore the critical role played by the German military police in the extermination of both Poles and Jews. On the scale of the Radom District, these records offer rare – and this is no exaggeration – insight into the everyday interactions between certain German police functionaries and the local populations under their control.

This is all the more valuable because Himmel,³ who knew Polish, was able – unlike other arrested Germans – to answer questions asked during interrogations at length, as well as to send the prosecutor and the court multi-page letters concerning his own activity.⁴ What is more, what he said about himself and what emerged from witness testimony paint a picture of a man with a morally ambiguous personality, whose actions alternated between cruelty – or even brutality – and acts of compassion toward the persecuted. Even in the last moments of his life, he seemed convinced that he would die innocently, because as a military policeman, he had done more good than harm for the inhabitants of Lipsko and the surrounding area.⁵

³ According to archival materials concerning Himmel and press reports from his trial (held in 1949), during the occupation, the military policeman spoke fluent Polish and understood perfectly well everything that was said to him in that language. In court, he uttered only short sentences in Polish, making longer statements in German. The press ironically remarked that he had “forgotten” Polish. When writing in Polish, he used the help of a translator.

⁴ The prosecutorial and court files underpinning this article are marked by a distinctive character, consistent with most materials generated under the Decree of 31 August 1944. While formal shortcomings in the prosecutorial proceedings are evident in retrospect, the materials nonetheless contain valuable information about wartime and occupation-era events that are rarely documented in sources of other provenance. In the investigation into Alfons Himmel’s activity, it is notable that the prosecutor rejected most of the suspect’s requests to interview individuals who might have testified in his favour. This was likely due to the already substantial body of incriminating evidence amassed against this military policeman. For more on the distinctive character of the so-called August trials, see for example T. Domański, “Sierpniówki jako źródło do dziejów Armii Krajowej,” in *Z dziejów Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego na Kielecczyźnie 1939–1945*, eds. T. Domański and J. Gapys, Kielce 2016, pp. 167–215.

⁵ As will be discussed later in this article, the indictment charged Himmel with involvement in dozens of repressive actions conducted by the military police from Lipsko, including numerous executions. Given the focus of *Polish-Jewish Studies*, I will not examine all of these events, but will concentrate on the extermination of Jews and the persecution of Poles who aided them. I also omit certain episodes from Himmel’s later life – such as his escape from custody, subsequent re-arrest, and recruitment, while in prison, as a secret collaborator for the public security authorities tasked with reporting on fellow inmates.

Alfons Erich Himmel was born on 1 May 1909 in Zabrze.⁶ All that is known about his father, Cyprian, is that he was a miner. His mother's name was Elizabeth, and the children's birth certificates state that her maiden name was Wollnitz, which should be considered a Germanised form of the Polish name Wolnica. This information suggests that the parents of the protagonist of this article formed a relationship in which, as was very often the case in Upper Silesia, both German and Polish traditions were cultivated daily. Alfons was raised with his twin brother Hugon⁷ and his brother Richard, who was two years older.⁸ At least four of his siblings died – his brother Heinrich died in 1911,⁹ his sister Anastasia in 1912,¹⁰ his sister Marie in 1913,¹¹ and another sister, Margarethe, in 1915.¹²

According to his testimony, Himmel completed primary school in 1923 and began an apprenticeship in accounting at one of the breweries in Zabrze. Although the details of this training remain unknown, he later stated that accounting was his profession before becoming a “police officer.” In 1929, he lost his job and remained unemployed until 1933, except for a brief period at a glassworks. That year, he found a permanent position at a brewery in Zabrze.¹³ This brought stability to the young man's life, which was confirmed by his marriage around 1937. Probably before the outbreak of World War II, the couple had two children.

Although he was drafted into the German army in September 1939, he was ultimately assigned, as he recounted, to the Border Guard (*Grenzschutz*). Over the next several months, he served at several posts – the longest being in Siemianowice Śląskie, where a section of the former Polish-German border served as a police border at the time. Although Himmel downplayed his work, describing it as checking passes and escorting people without the required documents to his superiors, his superiors' evaluation of him was positive. In June 1941, they

⁶ *Archiwum Diecezjalne w Gliwicach* (Diocesan Archives in Gliwice, hereinafter ADG), Records of the Parish of St Andrew the Apostle in Zabrze (hereinafter APZ), 1909, Birth certificate no. 576 of Alfons Erich Himmel.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Birth certificate no. 575 of Hugon Paul Himmel.

⁸ ADG, APZ, 1907, Birth certificate no. 1115 of Richard Joseph Himmel.

⁹ ADG, APZ, 1911, Death certificate no. 475 of Heinrich Gerhard Himmel.

¹⁰ ADG, APZ, 1913, Death certificate no. 345 of Anastasia Himmel.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Death certificate no. 642 of Marie Elisabeth Himmel.

¹² *Ibid.*, Death certificate no. 354 of Margarethe Himmel.

¹³ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Alfons Himmel, 11 December 1945, p. 14.

decided that Himmel was suited to work in the police force. After finishing a three-month training course in Zabrze, he was deployed to the General Governorate and stationed at the headquarters in Radom. Following a brief acclimatisation period, he was assigned to serve at the police station in Lipsko, a town located in the Kreis Starachowice within the Radom District of the General Governorate.¹⁴ He remained there from October 1941 (with breaks for a horse-riding course in Kozienice, holidays and hospital treatment) until July 1944, when the station was closed.¹⁵ Despite the absence of documented promotions in the archives, he swiftly attained the rank of senior sergeant (*Oberwachmeister*) – the highest rank permitted by his level of education.

It can be assumed that one of the most important reasons for sending Himmel to Lipsko was his proficiency in Polish. He spoke it fluently, so much so that some residents of the town were convinced that he was not German, but a Volksdeutscher who had lived in Poland before the war. Of all the military police officers serving at the station (initially nine, later twelve), only two spoke Polish.¹⁶ Himmel was therefore quickly sent on patrols, during which military police officers stopped suspicious individuals on roads, at markets and fairs, and searched farms for meat from illegal slaughter. After just a few weeks of service in Lipsko, he became a recognisable figure among the Poles living in the town and surrounding villages and was viewed rather positively. One witness stated: “At first, Himmel behaved tolerably, better than other military police officers.”¹⁷ Another witness stated, “During that period, Himmel demonstrated that he was a decent man with sympathy for Poles. On occasion, he would alert people in advance about upcoming searches.”¹⁸

¹⁴ During the occupation, the borders of the Kreis Starachowice overlapped with those of the pre-war Iłża County in the Kielce Voivodeship. It comprised 17 municipalities, including two urban ones – Iłża and Starachowice – and 15 rural ones: Brody, Chotcza, Ciepiałów, Kazanów, Krzyżanowice, Lipsko, Mirzec, Pawłów, Rzecznów, Sienno, Skarbka, Skarżysko Kościelne, Solec, Tarłów, and Wąchock.

¹⁵ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Alfons Himmel, 11 December 1945, pp. 14–15; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Alfons Himmel, 1 July 1946, p. 69.

¹⁶ For more on the station's staff and functionaries, see T. Domański and A. Jankowski, *Represeje niemieckie na wsi polskiej 1939–1945*, Kielce, 2011, p. 173; S. Piątkowski, „W płomieniach zaś ciągle odzywały się jęki...”. *Niemieckie zbrodnie na niosących pomoc Żydom Polakach z Ciepiewa i okolic (1942–1943)*, Warsaw, 2025, pp. 99–103.

¹⁷ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the main hearing in the case against Alfons Himmel, 15–18 February 1949, p. 192.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Jan Sykucki, 25 January 1949, p. 57.

He acted much more gently than his colleagues from the Lipsko police station, Emil Martin and Gustaw Messel – for many people, encounters with these two often ended in beatings and arrests. Of course, this did not mean that he could remain completely passive in carrying out his duties. One of the Poles recounted:

Before the Jews were expelled, i.e. before October 1942, I was arrested by Himmel at a market in Lipsko. He was accompanied by another policeman, Werner. Himmel searched me, looking for papers [illegal press – S.P.] and weapons, called me a bandit, kicked me and told me to go. Then I ran away.¹⁹

Between October 1941 and November 1942, Himmel presented his actions to the prosecutor and the court, offering detailed insights into the operations of the Lipsko Military Police station. The station's control over its assigned area relied heavily on a network of permanent informers. Though numbering only around thirty, their reports had devastating consequences. They supplied the Germans with intelligence on individuals engaged in illegal slaughter and the meat trade, those suspected of possessing weapons – whether due to involvement in military conspiracies or criminal activities – and people who offered shelter to strangers. The scale of the informers' degeneration is evidenced by the fact that they were not paid for their "work" with money, but with pork fat, cigarettes and vodka (from time to time, large quantities of these products were delivered to Lipsko from the county headquarters of the Military Police in Starachowice).²⁰ It is also known that, after committing murders, military police officers sometimes allowed their "trusted" individuals to take the victims' more valuable clothing and footwear. Some informers used the Germans to settle scores with neighbours with whom they were in conflict, or even with members of their own families. Occasional informers acted similarly.²¹

¹⁹ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Kwiatkowski, 21 July 1947, p. 10.

²⁰ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Alfons Himmel, 25 February 1946, p. 25.

²¹ One of the young farmers living in the village of Długowola was said to be an informer for the Lipsko military police. After the war, he was accused of denouncing sixteen men from various villages to the Germans, some of whom were killed. His involvement was mentioned to the Poles by the so-called

Himmel emphasised that Max Kuper, the commander of the Lipsko police station, was a rather passive person and did not take any action in response to most of the reports. He also gave examples of how he himself had helped Poles from Lipsko and the surrounding areas. These examples seem credible, as in most cases he gave the names of witnesses who could confirm his words or, if he did not know their names, he indicated the exact location of the house or farm where the events took place. Assigned by the station commander to carry out repressive measures, he sometimes – out of pity – refused to execute the orders given to him. When the measures were based on denunciations, he reportedly informed his superior that they stemmed from falsehoods motivated by personal revenge or envy. To support the innocence of potential victims, he cited statements from “trustworthy persons,” including village leaders and commanders of the *Polnische Polizei* stations in Lipsko and Ciepiałów.²²

These statements make no mention of Jews. Nor has any archival material been found regarding the participation of military police from Lipsko in supervising the inhabitants of ghettos in this or other localities before their liquidation. Although it is not known whether Himmel and other officers carried out operations in the sealed quarters, they certainly repressed people who sneaked out of them in search of food. In this situation, Himmel’s very close acquaintance (probably established in the spring of 1942) with Helena Rozental, a young Jewish woman from Lipsko who spoke German and was trying to earn at least a small income by working as a manicurist in Polish homes, caused widespread surprise. Due to her good looks and pleasant disposition, the woman was known to many Poles, who called her *Helcia*. In a small-town environment, this intimacy could not go unnoticed. Although it was obvious to the Poles who observed the girl’s – as it was described – “dates” with the policeman (they often walked in the woods and suburban meadows) that this relationship was a romantic one, including sexual relations, Himmel did not mention this issue in his post-war testimony, stating

Blue Police, who carried out arrests on the orders of the military police. According to the father of one of the murdered men, the informer, by making false reports, eliminated peers with whom he used to keep company, namely those who were more popular with girls than he was (AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the main hearing in the case against Alfons Himmel, 15–18 February 1949, p. 126).

²² See e.g., AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the Prosecutor of the Special Court in Świdnica, 3 November 1946, pp. 92–94.

only: “I liked her very much and maintained friendly relations with her, seeing her every day.”²³

Helena Rozental often visited the home of a Lipsko-based lawyer, Stefan Mitrowski. He said that she spoke favourably of Himmel, describing him as the only one among the military police who was a “human being” and the only one from whom it was possible to obtain information about the Germans’ planned operations against the Jews. These and other statements made by the woman reinforced the lawyer’s conviction that she was involved in the left-wing underground and was sacrificing herself to protect the inhabitants of the Lipsko ghetto.²⁴

In the early days of October 1942 (the exact date is unknown), late in the evening, Helena, after visiting the Mitrowskis, went to the Lipsko mill for a meeting with Himmel. This venture ended in her death, which was witnessed by the owners and employees of the mill. However, due to the darkness, they did not see everything clearly and later were unable to present a consistent account of the course of events. Certainly, in addition to the protagonist of this article, the military policeman Emil Martin – already mentioned as being known for his brutality – was also present at the scene of the crime. Himmel claimed that he was late for the meeting and that Martin, who was accidentally passing by the mill, encountered Helena and killed her for leaving the ghetto illegally. According to one of the witnesses, however, Himmel talked to the woman and at one point took a pistol out of its holster and shot her in the face; Martin, who was nearby, finished her off by shooting her in the head.²⁵

This crime must have had a shocking effect on the Jews of Lipsko, as it was a kind of foreshadowing of the fate that awaited them. It also caused a stir among Poles, as evidenced by numerous discussions about the motives behind Himmel’s actions, whom the local public held fully responsible for the murder. People remembered Helena’s statements, in which she repeatedly told Poles that the policeman had promised, if the Lipsko ghetto was to be liquidated, “he would arrange for her

²³ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Alfons Himmel, 8 and 20 December 1947, p. 41.

²⁴ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefan Mitrowski, 16 July 1947, pp. 134, 136.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 135–136.

not to be deported.”²⁶ Since the crime took place shortly before the liquidation of the quarter, some people assumed that Himmel, having learned of the date of the planned action, decided to fulfil his promise in such a gruesome manner. According to other rumours, the police authorities in Radom were informed about the gendarme’s affair with a Jewish woman. They allegedly ordered Himmel to “solve the problem” immediately, threatening him with severe consequences for “dishonouring the race” as a German. Another resident of Lipsko recounted years later:

There was a case where a German gendarme fell in love with a very pretty Jewish girl [...]. She became pregnant, and Germans were not allowed to have children with Jews – it was unthinkable. He was ordered to kill her. So, he arranged to meet her outside the Jewish ghetto. She left, even though Jews were not allowed to leave the ghetto. Then the German arranged with another gendarme to “blow her away.” Upon arriving at the bridge, she was shot in the back. Afterwards, they [namely, the gendarmes] notified the Jewish police that she had left the ghetto.²⁷

We will probably never know the truth. Himmel categorically denied the accusations of involvement in the woman’s murder, claiming that upon hearing of her death, he suffered such a severe nervous breakdown that his superiors sent him on a two-week holiday, which he spent in Zabrze with his wife and children.²⁸ Even if we assume that the gendarme’s feelings for Helena were very strong (as I mentioned, he himself described the relationship as nothing more than friendship), it is hard to believe his explanations.

The information about his leave was probably intended to counter the testimony of witnesses who claimed that between 10 and 12 October 1942, he and his colleagues from the military police station took part in the resettlement of Jews from three nearby towns – Chotcza, Ciepiałów, and Solec nad Wisłą – to the ghetto in

²⁶ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the main hearing in the case against Alfons Himmel, 15–18 February 1949, p. 192.

²⁷ “Wspomnienia lipszczan narodowości żydowskiej – fragment pracy Eweliny Ciupy,” in *Przerwane sąsiedztwo: Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Lipsku i okolicy we wspomnieniach i opisach*, ed. M. Łata (supplement to the *Życie Powiśla* magazine 2012, no. 4, p. 86).

²⁸ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Alfons Himmel, 8 and 20 December 1947, p. 42.

Lipisko.²⁹ One witness testified that in Chotcza, a young Jewish man hid in a house but was discovered and killed when he tried to escape through a window. Although no one saw whether it was Himmel who shot him or not, it is known that Himmel ordered the Poles to bury the body of the man who had been killed.³⁰ The testimony of another witness was similarly ambiguous. He said: "When Jews were being transported to the ghetto from Solec to Lipisko, I watched from behind some bushes as three military policemen killed three Jews. Himmel was there [among them], and he also shot at the Jews."³¹

The gendarme claimed that these testimonies were false. Although he admitted that he had participated in the liquidation of the Lipisko ghetto, which meant transporting its inhabitants to the ghetto in Tarłów, he emphasised: "I was in Lipisko during the deportation of the Jews, but I did not fire a single shot."³² He is remembered walking around the Market Square with his colleagues from the police station, ordering Jews to get into peasant carts. However, it is not known whether he accompanied them as a guard. This detail is important because, although not a single person died in Lipisko itself during the deportation, murders of those attempting to escape are said to have occurred on the way to Tarłowo. Himmel's role in these events remains unknown.³³

The liquidation of the ghettos in the Kreis Starachowice coincided with other events that significantly influenced Himmel's actions. In the autumn of 1942, many Jews who had escaped deportation to the death camps were hiding in the forests of the region, seeking ways to survive. Red Army soldiers who had escaped from

²⁹ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the District Court in Radom (SOR), 28 January 1949, p. 95.

³⁰ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józef Wojtalik, 23 October 1947, p. 107.

³¹ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the main hearing in the case against Alfons Himmel, 15–18 February 1949, pp. 189–190.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 194.

³³ The case files contain the minutes of the interrogation of Alter Rozenal, a Jew from Lipisko who, however, did not reside in the town during the German occupation. He testified that he had learned from the accounts of his compatriots that, during the deportation of Jews from Lipisko to Tarłowo, Himmel allegedly shot ten Jewish children on the road between the two towns. Rozenal did not provide the personal details of these witnesses, stating: "I learned this from comrades whose names I cannot reveal for party reasons, and I will be able to do so only after receiving permission from my superiors and only confidentially to the prosecutor himself" (*ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Alter Rozenal, 8 January 1949, p. 92).

prisoner-of-war camps also saw an opportunity for survival there. The intensification of common banditry – particularly by armed groups attacking the farms of wealthier peasants, mills, and manor houses – was accompanied by increased activity of the Polish military underground. Its peak came on 28 October 1942, when partisans from the Peasants' Battalions (*Bataliony Chłopskie*, BCh) broke into the Baudienst penal camp in Solec nad Wisłą and freed about 300 young Poles taken from other Baudienst camps throughout the Radom District. Six Germans were killed in the fighting, and thirteen were disarmed.³⁴

Criticised by the district police authorities, Max Kupfer, commander of the Lipsko police station, had to admit that he and his subordinates were unable to ensure effective supervision of the area under their jurisdiction. Hugo Peterlugen probably replaced him, and the 3rd Company of the 1st Motorised Military Police Battalion (*I. Gendarmerie-Bataillon (motorisiert)*) was sent to the Kreis Starachowice. Formed a few months earlier and operating in the Lublin region, this unit quickly gained a grim reputation as a squad of murderers specialising in destroying forest camps and exterminating those hiding in them – mainly Jews.³⁵ Individual platoons of the company were eventually deployed in Ciepiałów, Lipsko, Tarłów, and Sienna.

Due to his knowledge of Polish, Alfons Himmel was temporarily assigned to the military police headquarters in Ciepiałów, which was located on a farmstead in the so-called Górki. Here, he immediately had the opportunity to see what “police work” based on extreme and unrestricted violence meant. Although there was a detention centre at the police station in Lipsko, where arrested persons were held, beaten and starved, it was nothing compared to the conditions in Ciepiałów. Unlike the gendarmes from stationary posts, who patrolled the area on bicycles and peasant carts (wagons), the Germans from Ciepiałów were equipped with cars and motorcycles. This allowed them to cover dozens of kilometres every day. Almost every venture ended with the capture of Poles and Jews encountered on the

³⁴ J. Marszałek, *Obozy pracy w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w latach 1939–1945*, Lublin, 1998, p. 24; M. Sołtysiak, “Partyzanckie Zgrupowanie BCh „Ośka””, in *Kazanów nad Ilżanką*, ed. M. Sołtysiak, Radom, 2004, pp. 74–76.

³⁵ See R. Drabik, “Udział I Zmotoryzowanego Batalionu Żandarmerii SS w pacyfikacji ludności w dystrykcie lubelskim,” in *Wieś polska podczas II wojny światowej: Po pacyfikacji – losy i pamięć*, ed. M. Jedynak (in press); R. Drabik, “Udział I Zmotoryzowanego Batalionu Żandarmerii w wysiedleniach na Zamojszczyźnie,” *Archiwariusz Zamojski* 21 (2023), pp. 179–191.

roads and in villages, who were then transported to the farmstead and subjected to gruesome torture to extract confessions. A large wooden table set up in the courtyard was used for this purpose. The victim was strapped to it and beaten on the stomach and other parts of the body. The desperate screams of the tortured were drowned out by the gendarmes playing the accordion or playing loud music on a gramophone. The preserved materials contain no information that any of the prisoners held in the so-called Górki regained their freedom. A few were sent to Starachowice for further “investigation”; most lost their lives in executions carried out in a field adjacent to the farm buildings.³⁶

Although Himmel stated that he served in Ciepiałów only for a limited period, he was required to participate – as an interpreter – in the arrests and interrogations of detained persons. He was likely present at the scene of such events on numerous occasions, alongside other military police officers. One of the residents recalled it this way:

I also saw one of the Germans stop a Jewish man and woman who were passing by on the road. The Jewish woman handed him a bag of money to buy her freedom. However, the German did not let them go. There were several other Germans nearby with a lorry. [...]. The Germans immediately recognised that they were Jews. I saw how they pounced on these Jews and began to beat them terribly. They beat them with clubs, knocking out the Jewish woman's eyes, and tied the Jewish man's hands behind his back, ordering him to jump onto the back of the truck. They beat him with clubs as he tried. He was unable to jump onto the back of the truck. They took them to the palace and later shot them.³⁷

The gruesome actions of the functionaries of the 1st Motorised Military Police Battalion were aimed at gathering as much information as possible about the “enemies of the Reich” – not only those involved in military conspiracy, but also Jews

³⁶ See J.A. Młynarczyk and S. Piątkowski, *Cena poświęcenia: Zbrodnie na Polakach za pomoc udzielaną Żydom w rejonie Ciepiałowa*, Cracow, 2007, pp. 90–94; S. Piątkowski, „W płomieniach”, pp. 104–113.

³⁷ *Archiwum Delegatury Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Kielcach* (Archives of the Institute of the National Remembrance, Delegation in Kielce, hereinafter AIPN Ki), District Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation in Kielce (hereinafter OKŚZpNP), Ds. 85/69, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stanisława Lewandowska, 6 October 1969, pp. 48–49.

in hiding and Poles who were aiding them. This served as a prelude to a massive pacification operation, which soon spread to numerous municipalities in the Kreis Starachowice. Even before the operation officially began, military police from the station in Lipsko were already involved and growing increasingly ruthless. One can only speculate about the reasons for this escalation. Undoubtedly, they were also enforcing the order that any Polish family found to be hiding Jews or in possession of weapons was to be annihilated and their farm destroyed.³⁸ Himmel was among the group of military police functionaries who approached the execution of this order with extreme diligence. It is unclear whether this was due to pressure from other functionaries in the battalion or, for example, a desire to “rehabilitate” himself in the eyes of his superiors for his relationship with Helena Rozental. It is worth noting that, according to one Polish witness, two military police officers from Lipsko – Freilich and Kleiner – refused to take part in the executions and were not remembered by anyone as participants in the repressive actions.³⁹

It is significant that during the investigation and court proceedings, Himmel did not present any credible evidence of aid he allegedly provided to a person of Jewish descent.⁴⁰ He treated the fate of Jews captured by military police as a kind of backdrop to his story about Poles. It was obvious to him, and therefore not worth mentioning, that fugitives from the ghettos were first forced to testify and then shot in individual or mass executions. However, when recounting the events of autumn 1942, he gave two examples of support he allegedly gave to Poles who were helping Jews. He mentioned a Jewish man who was caught with a rifle and admitted that he had bought it from Leon Kniknicki, the commander of the *Polnische Polizei*

³⁸ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the District Court in Radom, 28 January 1949, p. 97.

³⁹ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Ryszard Zapolski, 16 July 1947, p. 6.

⁴⁰ In one of his statements, Himmel claimed that after the liquidation of the ghetto in *Tarłów*, he supervised a twenty-man commando of Jewish forced labourers tasked with searching the area of the former sealed quarter for valuable items. The gendarme allegedly encouraged all the Jews to escape, and the escape was reportedly successful. He added that this was “common knowledge” in *Tarłów* and requested that the mayor of the municipality be interrogated on the matter. While the escape of the workers may well have been remembered by Poles, the concept that Himmel facilitated it seems rather unlikely. Such rumours would likely have reached Lipsko, exposing the gendarme to serious command-level consequences (AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the District Court in Radom, 28 January 1949, p. 97).

station in Ciepiałów. Himmel allegedly warned the policeman about the arrest, and when the man fled, he persuaded his wife to file an official notice that her husband had been “kidnapped by partisans.”⁴¹ The second situation was supposed to have taken place in the village of Babilon. Himmel recounted:

Around 20 November 1942, a Jew was brought to the police station by two farmers from the village of Babilon, Lipsko Municipality. During the interrogation, he revealed where he had been hiding. I received an order, along with four gendarmes, to confront the Jew with the farmer who had sheltered him and to execute the culprit. Upon arriving at the first house in Babilon from the direction of Lipsko, I found a family of five, including two children. In response to their cries and pleas for mercy, I asked the farmer what he would do if he were in my place as a military police officer. He said he would certainly carry out the order. I felt sorry for these people and did not obey the order, explaining to the lieutenant that the Jew had denounced the farmer out of revenge, as he owed him money from the past.⁴²

Even if these stories were true, they could not obscure Himmel’s participation in the pacification of the Kreis Starachowice, which was confirmed by the testimonies of numerous witnesses. It began on 6 December 1942, when military police from Ciepiałów murdered at least thirty people in Ciepiałów and Rekówka, including members of the Kowalski, Kosior, Obuchiewicz, and Skoczylas families. Among the Poles murdered for helping Jews were both elderly people and children. The following day, the same functionaries raided the village of Świesielice and killed fourteen people (including members of the Wojewódka and Wdowiak families) suspected of possessing weapons and participating in the underground. The action was repeated on 8 December 1942, and Marianna Skwira, who had been helping Jews, fell victim to it. Her three children, as well as the entire family of a neighbour

⁴¹ *Ibid.*; S. Piątkowski, “Zbrodnie żandarmów z posterunku w Lipsku nad Wisłą na Polakach udzielających pomocy Żydom (1942–1943),” in *„Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje?...”. Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej*, ed. A. Namysło, Warsaw, 2009, p. 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*; AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the District Court in Radom, 28 January 1949, pp. 97–98.

accused of the same “crime,” managed to save their lives by escaping and hiding in the forest.⁴³

Although Himmel did not take part in these events, on 8 December 1942, along with other military police functionaries from Lipsko, he visited the village of Boiska-Kolonia. This followed a tip-off from an informer who overheard two farmers discussing a hiding place at the home of their neighbours, Leon and Wiktoria Kryczek, where Jews were sheltered. The couple, along with two other Poles found in their home (Leon’s aunt Barbara Stefanek and his cousin Józef Ciesielski), were murdered. The Germans brought both farmers to the scene of the crime and severely beat them as punishment for failing to report the information they possessed to the military police.⁴⁴ It is worth noting that, as this was quite unusual behaviour for the Germans, they spared Leon and Wiktoria’s two small children and ordered one of the neighbours to take them to his home. However, Himmel never mentioned that this “act of mercy” was his doing.

According to witnesses, on 14 December 1942, during an operation in the village of Tymienica Stara, Himmel was reportedly acting as a guide for military police officers from Ciepiałów. For having provided shelter to Jews hiding in the nearby forests, the Germans killed Szczepan Lasek, around 80 years old, along with his two teenage grandchildren, Genowefa and Zdzisław. The latter attempted to flee the scene of the massacre, but after being shot twice by the military police, he managed only to reach his neighbours’ yard before losing consciousness. The Germans found him quickly, and one of them executed the child with a pistol shot. A witness recalled:

They stood there for a moment until he stopped moving, [and then] they left. One of the gendarmes opened the door to my flat, said something in German – which I did not understand – laughed, closed the door and left. After they left,

⁴³ See J.A. Młynarczyk and S. Piątkowski, *Cena poświęcenia*, pp. 95–108; S. Piątkowski, „*W płomieniach*”, pp. 122–149.

⁴⁴ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the main hearing in the case against Alfons Himmel, 15–18 February 1949, p. 223; *ibid.*, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Krzak, 21 July 1947, pp. 121–122; S. Piątkowski, „*W płomieniach*”, pp. 20–21.

I approached the boy and found that he had been riddled with bullets. He was already dead.⁴⁵

The Germans then headed to Jan Szewczyk's farm. According to documents, a few days earlier, they had captured a Jewish man who, before his death, testified that he had been hiding at the home of a farmer to whom he had paid a large sum of money in exchange for help.

One of the gendarmes approached my son and shouted, "Were there Jews here?" They took me into the corridor, where one of them struck me on the shoulder with a stick. Then they led me out into the yard. When I said, "Gentlemen, I'm dying, though I am innocent," one of them hit me in the face. They took me to the barn and beat me with sticks as I lay on a hay basket. After the first beating, they told me to get up. Later, they laid me down again and resumed beating me. When they finally stopped, two of them went to the neighbours. Upon returning, they led me out of the barn. One of them – the one who spoke Polish – told me not to hide Jews, but to denounce them, because there was a reward for each Jew: 50 kilograms of sugar.⁴⁶

– Jan Szewczyk recalled. The Polish-speaking policeman was probably Himmel. Despite being tortured, Szewczyk did not confess to hiding fugitives from the ghettos, which probably saved his life and the lives of his loved ones.

The hero of this article also took part in an operation conducted by military police officers from Lipsko on 2 January 1943 in the village of Boiska. A few days earlier, they had captured a Jewish man with a leg wound. Upon noticing the professionally applied bandage, the Germans extracted a confession – likely under the pressure of beatings or perhaps because the detainee was lured by promises of mercy – that it had been applied by Józef Krawczyk, a resident of Boiska.

⁴⁵ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Wawrzyniec Jabłoński, 25 January 1949, p. 68. See S. Piątkowski, „*W płomieniach*”, pp. 152–154.

⁴⁶ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the main hearing in the case against Alfons Himmel, 15–18 February 1949, pp. 265–266.

The military police surrounded the Krawczyk family's house. I lived about twenty metres away from the Krawczyks and saw it from my window. After fifteen minutes, a military police officer, whose name I did not know, came to my flat and demanded that I go with him. I went with him, and he took me to the Krawczyk family's house, told me to take a sack and catch the hens [...]. It was quiet in the flat – only the military police were tossing belongings out of it. Then they led a cow out of the barn and told me to take it to the village leader.

– Jan Oleksiak recalled.⁴⁷ Soon afterwards, Józef, Zofia and Adam Krawczyk were shot dead in their home. The Germans then proceeded to rob the farm and load all of the valuable items onto sleighs or carts. A few minutes later, the house where the bodies of the victims lay was set on fire.⁴⁸

The military police then went to the Boryczka family farm, where they killed Zofia (who was of Jewish descent but had converted to Catholicism as an adult), her husband Stanisław, and their one-year-old son Zygmunt (according to some records: Zbigniew). Although they intended to set fire to the house where the bodies of the victims lay, they yielded to the pleas of the gathered farmers, who feared that the strong wind would spread the fire to the densely built-up village. The Germans then entered the neighbouring house. There, they found Józef Boryczka (Stanisław's brother), who fainted at the sight of them. When he regained consciousness, one of the Germans said, "Don't be afraid, we didn't come to kill you. We only killed your brother because he had a Jewish wife." He added that if Józef wished, he could move into the flat of his murdered relatives. Shortly after the military police left, Józef Boryczka – already on the verge of a heart attack – was taken to the hospital, where he died a few weeks later, never recovering the physical or mental health he had lost because of this ordeal.⁴⁹

The next operation by the Lipsko military police, in which Himmel was reportedly engaged, took place on 8 January 1943 in Słuszczyn. Its target was the farm-

⁴⁷ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Oleksiak, 5 January 1949, pp. 74–75.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; S. Piątkowski, „W płomieniach”, pp. 164–169.

⁴⁹ AIPN Ki, OKŚZpNP, Ds. 7/69, vol. 5, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Genowefa Kołacz, 22 January 1973, pp. 21–22v; AIPN Ki, OKŚZpNP, Ds. 37/71, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Włodarczyk, 22 January 1973, pp. 17v–18.

stead of Stanisław and Stanisława Borek, who lived there with their son Czesław and daughter Honorata Wójtowicz, her husband Piotr, and their several-month-old son Adam. They often took in “people from the forest” for the night, including Jews in hiding. The massacre began with the Polish neighbours being forced to take all their valuables out of the house and place them on a sledge. After completing this task, they were driven away and, from a distance of several dozen metres, could then watch as the Germans led the men, women and children who had been imprisoned in the barn to the house. Most of the adults were carrying sheaves of straw in their hands. After a while, one of the Germans broke a window and fired a series of shots from a submachine gun into the interior. Soon, the building was on fire. It is not known who among the victims died from bullets and who were burned alive.⁵⁰

Between late 1942 and early 1943, and in the months that followed, Himmel – along with other military police officers – actively participated in the murder of Jews seeking refuge near Lipsko. Those apprehended by military police patrolling the roads were often executed on the spot, though some were taken to the Lipsko military police station for interrogation. Jews captured by Poles collaborating with the Germans were also brought to the station. These prisoners were ultimately killed on a strip of wasteland behind the military police headquarters.

Eleonora Czerwonka recounted:

I lived near the military police station. It often happened that the military police would pass by my house and kill people. My flat is a little further back. Himmel often came to us and ordered my husband to bury the bodies. My husband lost his nerves because of this and died. Once, during the day, I saw the military police bring a Jew near my flat, and Himmel pointed his rifle at him. I ran away because I couldn't bear to watch it. There were three of them at the time. Shots were fired, and he [this man] was killed. Once, two people were killed, and the military police ordered me to take off their shoes.⁵¹

⁵⁰ AIPN Ki, OKŚZpNP, Kpp 5/81, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Bronisław Pałka, 9 December 1981, p. 166; *Polacy – Żydzi 1939–1945*, eds. S. Wroński and M. Zwolakowa, Warsaw, 1971, pp. 373–374.

⁵¹ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the main hearing in the case against Alfons Himmel, 15–18 February 1949, p. 226.

Another Polish woman, who worked at the police station as a cook, testified: “After the Jews were displaced, a Jewish woman was caught. Himmel led her out of the police station – I saw that, and then I heard a shot. It was Himmel who shot her. The Jewish woman was middle-aged.”⁵²

The murder of Jews was also connected to the death of a young Polish woman, Regina Wojciechowska, a resident of Radom who had come to Lipsko to visit her mother. In late summer 1943, she was returning home with her shopping when she saw military police approaching from the opposite direction. She stepped off the road and turned into a nearby meadow – she had forgotten to bring her identity documents. The Germans stopped their car, gave chase, and then opened fire. Regina was killed while attempting to cross the Krępanka riverbed. According to eyewitnesses, she was shot by Himmel, who fired a submachine gun while leaning against the bridge railing. After the killing, the military police stopped Poles walking along the road and told them they had “killed a Jewish woman.” Shortly thereafter, Himmel appeared at the Lipsko Municipal Office and ordered the body to be removed from the riverbank and buried in the Jewish cemetery. Local residents recognised the murdered woman and informed her mother of the tragedy.⁵³

According to witness testimony, Himmel underwent a radical transformation in 1943 – becoming, as one Pole described him, a “degenerate thug.” This shift was likely driven by his involvement in numerous crimes against Jews in hiding and the Poles who aided them, including interrogations, executions, and the burning of peasant farms. Around the same time, his brother (possibly his twin) was killed on one of the war fronts. Another contributing factor was an ambush in June of that year, carried out by a unit of the People’s Guard (*Gwardia Ludowa*) on the road between Lipsko and Ciepeliów. The car carrying the military police came under fire, and Himmel was wounded in the arm and leg.⁵⁴ The injuries were serious, though not severe enough to cause a long break in service. According to witness

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józefa Wojciechowska, 28 January 1947, pp. 143–144; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Sadowski, 10 March 1948, pp. 211–212; *ibid.*, vol. 3, Minutes of the main hearing in the case against Alfons Himmel, 15–18 February 1949, pp. 217–218.

⁵⁴ Three Germans were reportedly killed and five others wounded in this operation. B. Hillebrandt, *Partyzantka na Kielecczyźnie 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 1970, p. 525.

statements, after being shot, he became convinced that Poles were “ungrateful” and did not deserve his selfless acts of kindness.

Himmel became a frequent guest of a Polish family living on Lipsko’s Market Square. According to witness statements, their flat served as a kind of contact point for Poles who, by bribing the military police, sought to halt repressive actions or avoid being sent to forced labour in Germany. Himmel, to some extent, encouraged such dealings by publicly – and audibly – hinting that the military police had received tip-offs about individuals accused of illegal slaughter, illicit trade, or aiding “bandits.” In response to these remarks, farmers often chose to offer the military police “gifts” such as vodka, poultry, and eggs. These bribes were delivered to the aforementioned family. A teenage girl from the household, frequently seen with Himmel and regarded by locals as his “fiancée,” acted as an intermediary. She herself firmly denied any intimate relationship, and noted that over time, Himmel had become an alcoholic – a weakness Poles exploited to settle various matters with the military police.⁵⁵

This view was confirmed by individuals who had personally asked the German to show “kindness.” Stefan Kędziora, a farmer from Maruszów near Lipsko, testified: “Once, while drinking vodka with Himmel and talking about these arrangements, Himmel said to me, ‘If someone accused you, I would shoot you, even though we get along well.’”⁵⁶ Jan Sykucki, the village leader of Lipsko, recounted that a military policeman repeatedly demanded he deliver hens, other poultry, and eggs to the station. When these requests were not fulfilled promptly, the officer reacted violently: “He summoned me from my home and began striking me in the throat with his revolver. With each blow, I fell to the ground, and blood began to flow from my ears.”⁵⁷ In the following weeks, the drunken gendarme publicly announced several times that he would kill Sykucki. Fear for his life prompted the man to flee to the forest and hide there for several months.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Eleonora Hamielec, 1 October 1947, pp. 16–17.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefan Kędziora, 20 October 1947, p. 85.

⁵⁷ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jan Sykucki, 25 January 1949, p. 58.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

In December 1943, the Germans killed three farmers suspected of secretly slaughtering animals and trading meat. The brother of one of the murdered men, Władysław Liborski, recounted these events in court as follows:

In December 1943, the military police came [to our house] and knocked on the door, demanding to be let in. The accused was [among them]; he entered first, with a dog. He put the barrel of his gun under my chin and leaned me over the table. He asked who was staying at my house. He checked my identity and asked about [my brother] Jan Liborski. Then they took me to him. When they went to my brother's place, and he opened the door, Himmel hit him in the face and asked about the pig and the meat. They led my brother and me out into the yard and asked about the meat. My brother said he didn't have any meat. Then [Himmel] asked me about the meat – I replied that I was angry with my brother, and he let me go, but set his dog on him. The dog bit my brother's hand and face, because we saw it afterwards. We found out about [my brother's] death in the morning. In the morning, I saw three corpses: one corpse was on the doorstep, and two were in the yard.⁵⁹

From time to time, however, Himmel made conciliatory gestures. It is difficult to determine whether these were genuine or motivated by a desire to rehabilitate his reputation among Poles. Notably, these gestures were directed towards individuals suspected of underground activity. Perhaps the gendarme had heard rumours that members of the resistance movement were planning to eliminate him (witnesses at the trial confirmed that such an idea had indeed been considered), prompting him to construct a kind of protective umbrella around himself. Józef Wojtalik, the village leader of Chotcza, recounted:

Once, when they [the military police] arrested three people and brought them – people who were supposedly [members] of the underground – to me, I don't know who intervened, but Himmel came. Because they were lying down,

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the main hearing in the case against Alfons Himmel, 15–18 February 1949, pp. 215–216.

he ordered them to stand up, then released them and told them to go home. As he let them go, he said they weren't fit to be partisans – "What kind of partisans are they?"⁶⁰

In turn, Waław Szymański, a miller from Lipsko, described how, one day, passing military police officers invited themselves into his home for a meal accompanied by alcohol. During a lengthy conversation, Himmel pulled a list of names from his pocket and asked the miller what he thought of the Poles on it. Szymański got the impression that the officer intended to prompt him to warn those individuals that they might soon receive an unannounced visit from the Germans. That is exactly what he did: before the policemen left the mill, Szymański had one of his employees send an alert to his neighbours.⁶¹ A Polish woman also experienced Himmel's kindness. After the arrest of a group of Home Army soldiers from Lipsko, she moved to Starachowice. There, one day, she met Himmel, who warned her that she was wanted and then advised her to flee to another area of the General Governorate.⁶²

However, these events did not overshadow the military police's involvement in numerous repressive actions, particularly arrests and both individual and collective executions. These continued until July 1944, when the Eastern Front's advance to the Vistula River led to the closure of the military police station in Lipsko. After a brief stay in Starachowice, Himmel was transferred to the vicinity of Piotrków Trybunalski, where he performed guard duty. He later ended up in Wrocław and, after being drafted into the Wehrmacht, took part in the city's defence.⁶³ At the end of March 1945, he allegedly deserted and went into hiding in Gieszcze Puste (now Głuszyca), where a branch of the German Gross-Rosen concentration camp was located. As he himself described, he created a "partisan unit in defence of Jewish camps" there, which "killed" the camp guards, removed explosives placed under bridges, took care of protecting warehouses and factories, and then handed the town over to the Soviet army. As a result, he was to receive a "letter of protection"

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 188–189.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 252–253.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 274.

⁶³ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Alfons Himmel, 25 February 1946, p. 23.

and be presented by the Soviets to the newly appointed mayor as a “German with a Polish heart.” Although he asked the court to contact the County Starosty in Wałbrzych, where documents confirming this tale were supposed to be kept, there is no indication that this happened.⁶⁴ The veracity of this story is contradicted by the fact that after the war, Himmel no longer used his own name but presented false documents to confirm his Polish nationality.

The trial of Alfons Himmel before the District Court in Radom began on 15 February 1949 and attracted considerable interest. “Himmel is calm and confident. Young, of medium height, with dark hair and a grim, cloudy expression on his face, he stands at attention before the court. He answers questions in Polish. Briefly and laconically, ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ ‘I don’t know,’ ‘I don’t remember,’” wrote the press.⁶⁵ His line of defence was very weak. He focused on gaps in his own memory, accused witnesses of lying, and emphasised his frequent absences from Lipsko due to holidays and health problems – which in many respects contradicted his earlier testimony. He also claimed that he bore a strong resemblance to Emil Martin, a gendarme known for his brutality, which meant that they were often mistaken for each other during the occupation. However, witnesses (a total of 95) stated that the two gendarmes differed so markedly in appearance that it was impossible to confuse them.⁶⁶ He admitted to taking part in four engagements with partisans, as well as shooting a Volksdeutscher employee of the Labour Office (*Arbeitsamt*) in Starachowice during an attempted escape. In describing the latter incident, he emphasised that the man’s death had benefited the Polish population, as he was known for blackmailing young women and “enslaving” them through threats of deportation to forced labour in Germany.⁶⁷ The verdict was announced on 21 February 1949, addressing several dozen charges outlined in the indictment. Himmel was acquitted of some charges, sentenced to imprisonment for others,

⁶⁴ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Letter from Alfons Himmel to the District Court in Radom, 30 May 1949, pp. 418–419.

⁶⁵ “„Czy zabijał?” – „Nie!”. Były żandarm z Lipska Alfons Himmel nie przyznaje się do zarzucanych mu zbrodni. Pierwszy dzień procesu,” *Życie Radomskie* 46 (1949), p. 3.

⁶⁶ See e.g., “Obciążające zeznania świadków przygwoździły pokrętnie tłumaczenia Himmla. Trzeci dzień procesu byłego żandarma,” *Życie Radomskie* 48 (1949), p. 3.

⁶⁷ AIPN Ra, 108/137, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Alfons Himmel, 8 and 20 December 1947, p. 39.

and received the death penalty for each of the dozen or so brutal murders. These were ultimately consolidated into a single sentence.⁶⁸

In the following months, he fought desperately to save his life. At his request, an appeal was lodged with the Supreme Court to overturn the verdict, arguing, among other things, that he had been convicted of a murder that was not mentioned in the indictment, and that the court had refused to hear several witnesses he had named who were supposed to testify to his honesty. In August 1949, the cassation was rejected, and the main argument was the vast amount of material gathered during the investigation and trial, which allowed Himmel's behaviour to be described as a "continuous crime."⁶⁹

Later that month, attorney Marian Bartł petitioned Polish President Bolesław Bierut for Himmel's pardon. He wrote in his request:

Without questioning the gravity of the crimes committed by the convicted person as a blind and ruthless executor of Hitler's extermination policy, by virtue of my position as a defence attorney, I would like to point out that, as the court proceedings have shown – the convict showed several acts of mercy and consideration towards individual persons of Polish nationality [...], which seem to testify to a certain humanity on the part of the convict, giving rise to the conclusion that if it had not been for the combination of circumstances and conditions unfavourable to him and the criminal course of action imposed on him in advance by his superiors, the convict would not have committed the crimes attributed to him.⁷⁰

However, the District Court in Radom refused to support this request and issued a brief but highly indicative opinion:

The heinous acts committed by the defendant, which formed the basis of his conviction, fully warrant the enforcement of the sentence. Even if only a fraction

⁶⁸ "Wielokrotna kara śmierci dla kata Lipska Alfonsa Himmla," *Życie Radomskie* 52 (1949), p. 3.

⁶⁹ APIN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Judgment of the Supreme Court, 14 July 1949, pp. 420–423.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter from the defence attorney Marian Bartł to the President of the Republic of Poland, 30 August 1949, pp. 427–428.

of the proven offences had been substantiated, the severity of the punishment would remain unquestionably justified.⁷¹

There is little room to challenge this argument.

In October 1949, the Ministry of Justice notified the judicial authorities in Radom that Bierut had not exercised his right of pardon. The sentence was executed on 22 November 1949, most likely by hanging on a gallows located in the garage of the prison on Malczewskiego Street in Radom. The fate of the body remains unknown – due to the absence of burial records, it is possible that the remains were transferred to the morgue of the Medical Academy in Lublin and used by students for anatomical study.

To summarise the information presented above, several key observations emerge. Alfons Himmel can be regarded as an “ordinary” individual who, at a pivotal moment in his life, made decisions that irrevocably shaped his fate. Had the Nazis not come to power in Germany and had World War II not erupted, he would likely have remained in Zabrze, working as an accountant and leading a quiet family life. After being conscripted into the military police and deployed to the General Governorate, Himmel appears to have quickly realised that even in a provincial police station, he had become “the master of life and death” for thousands of Poles and Jews. Initially described as relatively humane and restrained, he gradually transformed into a brutal perpetrator. This shift was likely driven by a sense of impunity, peer pressure, and a growing desensitisation to the killing of defenceless victims. While the extent of his anti-Semitic beliefs remains unclear, Himmel demonstrated particular zeal in participating in the extermination of the Jewish population. His postwar statements suggest – albeit subjectively – that he viewed Poles who aided Jews as dishonourable and undeserving of mercy. While witnesses spoke of several dozen people killed by Himmel (one of them stated that, according to rumours circulating in the Lipsko area, there were as many as 97 victims),⁷² he himself saw his actions differently:

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Opinion of the District Court in Radom regarding the pardon of Alfons Himmel, 3 September 1949, p. 440.

⁷² APIN Ra, 108/137, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Franciszek Zygmunt, 19 August 1947, p. 288.

[...] my attitude towards the Polish population was as correct, good and kind as it was possible under the difficult conditions of the occupation. I helped the Polish population not for material reasons, because there is no price for human life, but for idealistic reasons, according to the police principle: "Help people wherever and however you can." In all cases where I provided assistance, I risked my life. I did so willingly, convinced that I would be met with gratitude. As a German military policeman, I was aware of the harsh fate that befell the Polish people, which is why I did not miss any opportunity to help whenever the opportunity arose.⁷³

Everything indicates that he held this conviction until the very last moments of his life.

⁷³ APIN Ra, 108/137, vol. 3, Letter from Adolf Himmel to the District Court in Radom, 27 January 1949, p. 111.

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CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST PETER LEIDERITZ, GESTAPO CHIEF IN KOŁOMYJA, AND HIS WIFE ANNELIESE

Summary

Following the war, Peter Leideritz, Gestapo Chief in Kołomyja, was tried before the Polish courts for his role in orchestrating the extermination of the Jewish population within his jurisdiction. His wife, Anneliese, faced charges related to crimes against Jews as well. Both were sentenced to death, although Anneliese's sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. This case study examines the post-war legal proceedings concerning crimes committed by the Germans in the county starosty of Kołomyja, located in the Galicia District of the General Governorate. It presents the couple's profiles, details their activities, and traces the course of the trials across various courts, with particular emphasis on the defence strategies employed by the Leideritzes.

Keywords

Extermination operations • crimes against Jews • trials and prosecution of German war criminals in Poland • Kołomyja • Galicia District of the General Governorate • Peter Leideritz • Anneliese Leideritz

In 1947, Peter Leideritz, Chief of the Kołomyja (Kolomyia) Field Unit of the Security Police and SD, reporting to the Commander's Office in Lviv (previously Lwów), appeared before the District Court in Warsaw. He was responsible, among other things, for supervising the extermination of the Jewish population in his area of jurisdiction. A year later, his wife Anneliese was also tried, accused of, among other things, murdering and abusing Jews. The text, which is a case study devoted to the issue of post-war reckoning for crimes committed by the Germans in one of the occupation-era counties they created in the South-Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic, presents the activity of the defendants and the course of their trials, with particular emphasis on their chosen defence strategy.

Peter Leideritz has drawn the attention of historians researching the extermination of Galician Jews. In their studies on the course of the extermination campaign in the Eastern Lesser Poland region, scholars such as Dieter Pohl,¹ Thomas Sandkühler,² and Dieter Schenk,³ among others, have addressed his role.⁴ Undoubtedly, the most comprehensive account of Leideritz's life in existing historiography has been provided by George Eisen, who dedicated a substantial section of his monograph to the Leideritz couple in the context of the fate of Hungarian Jews deported by Hungarian authorities to Eastern Lesser Poland from Carpathian Ruthenia after its annexation.⁵ The historian also attempted to describe Leideritz's post-war trial and the fate of his wife, but he presumably did not familiarise himself in detail with the trial documentation produced by the "people's" Polish justice system.

Leideritz conducted his criminal activity in the German-established county starosty in Kołomyja (*Kreishauptmannschaft Kolomea*), which was part of the Galicia District of the General Governorate, established after the Third Reich invaded

¹ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*, München, 1997.

² T. Sandkühler, „Endlösung” in Galizien. *Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiative von Berthold Beitz 1941–1944*, Bonn, 1996.

³ D. Schenk, *Noc morderców: Kaźń polskich profesorów we Lwowie i Holocaust w Galicji Wschodniej*, Cracow, 2011.

⁴ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*, München, 1997.

⁵ G. Eisen, *A Summer of Mass Murder: 1941 Rehearsal for the Hungarian Holocaust*, West Lafayette, IN, 2023.

the Soviet Union. It is worth noting that the defendant's area of activity covered a territory that had been under Soviet occupation since 1939 and which, in June 1941, found itself in the path of Hungarian troops allied with the Third Reich. The German administration did not take control of this territory until August 1941.

The German-occupied county starosty in Kołomyja initially encompassed the area of three pre-war Polish counties within their August 1939 borders – Kołomyja, Śniatyn, and Kosów.⁶ In April 1942, its area was expanded to include the pre-war county of Horodenka.⁷ The area, like the entire South-Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic, was characterised by rich social diversity and served as a unique cultural, ethnic and national melting pot. It was inhabited mainly by Ukrainians. Jews, like Poles, were concentrated primarily in urban centres. The largest of these in the area of interest to us was Kołomyja, inhabited by Jews, who in 1931 constituted 42.42 per cent of the town's population (over 14,000 out of a total population of approximately 34,000), followed by Poles (36.85 per cent) and Ukrainians (18.39 per cent).⁸ The German security apparatus, responsible for implementing the Third Reich's criminal policy towards the local population, began its activity with the establishment of an occupation-imposed administration. From 1 September 1941, the aforementioned field unit of the Lwów-based Security Police and SD Commander's Office operated in Kołomyja, under the command of Leideritz. His deputy was Erwin Gay.⁹ The organisational structure of the field unit was analogous to the structure of the Commander's Office of the Security Police and the Security Service (*Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*, KdS) in Lwów.¹⁰ It was divided into four departments. From the perspective of the deed of indictment, the most important was Department IV – the Gestapo, divided into four subsections – Communists, Ukrainians, Poles and Jews, and

⁶ M. du Prel, *Das Generalgouvernement*, Würzburg, 1942, pp. 384–385.

⁷ W. Bonusiak, *Małopolska Wschodnia pod rządami Trzeciej Rzeszy*, Rzeszów, 1990, p. 19; G. Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej: Położenie ludności, polityka okupantów, działalność podziemia*, Cracow, 1994, pp. 64–65; *Ämtliches Gemeinde- und Dorfverzeichnis für das Generalgouvernement auf Grund der Summarischen Bevölkerungsaufnahme am 1. März 1943*, Krakau, 1943.

⁸ *Drugi powszechny spis ludności z dn. 9 XII 1931 r. Województwo stanisławowskie*, Warsaw, 1938, p. 26.

⁹ Ch.B. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution. The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939 – March 1942*, Lincoln–Jerusalem, 2004, p. 349.

¹⁰ For more on the structure of the Security Police and the Security Service in the General Governorate, see A. Ramme, *Służba bezpieczeństwa SS*, Warsaw, 1984, pp. 151–167.

Counter-intelligence subsections.¹¹ Leideritz is specifically associated with the activities of the Gestapo in this area. Although he was the head of the entire field unit, witnesses in their statements and testimonies mostly refer to the head of the Gestapo, which clearly results from the witnesses' straightforward identification of the KdS structures with the Gestapo.

It is worth introducing Peter Leideritz. He was the son of Philip and Elizabeth, née Eitenmüller, and was born on 5 January 1911 in Kirsch-Beerfurth in Hessen, in the Darmstadt Administrative Region. He completed secondary school in his hometown and passed his school-leaving examinations. Before the outbreak of the war, he did not serve in the German army.¹² According to the findings of American investigators who interrogated him after his arrest, Leideritz joined the NSDAP Storm Troopers (Sturmabteilung, SA) in 1932. In February 1932, he also joined the NSDAP. He pursued a career in the police service. In 1933, he joined the Landespolizei as a police cadet. In 1935, he was employed as a police officer in Darmstadt. In 1936, he was transferred to the Schutzpolizei in Frankfurt am Main, where he served until the spring of 1939, after which he returned to Darmstadt, but now as a Gestapo functionary. After training in Berlin in early 1941, he was transferred to the Sicherheitspolizei in Lublin, and then, in early autumn, to Lwów, where he was entrusted with organising the Sicherheitspolizei office. In September 1941, Leideritz took over as head of the Kołomyja field unit of the Security Police and SD Commander's Office in Lwów.¹³ At that time, he already held the rank of SS-Obersturmführer.¹⁴ It is worth noting that, like the heads of other branches operating in the Galicia District, he was a member of the

¹¹ The field unit headed by Leideritz was divided into the following divisions: I – personnel, II – property management, IV – Gestapo, V – Criminal Police. However, no SD unit was established because the area was considered of little interest from a political intelligence perspective (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, hereinafter AIPN], 2586/270, Copy of the indictment in the criminal proceedings against Herbert Härtel *et al.* before the Regional Court in Darmstadt in 1966–1967, pp. 166–167).

¹² AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Case files related to Piotr Leideritz *et al.*, Minutes of the main hearing held before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw in the proceedings against Piotr Leideritz *et al.*, 17 November 1947, pp. 155.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Part 2, Memorandum prepared by the Headquarters of the Counterintelligence Corps of the United States Armed Forces concerning Peter Leideritz *et al.*, 16 August 1946, p. 516; D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 417.

¹⁴ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 417.

Special Assignment Task Force (*Einsatzkommando zur besonderen Verwendung*), which, under the command of Eberhard Schöngarth, operated in the summer of 1941 in Eastern Lesser Poland, where it was regarded as a kind of death squad. The most important perpetrators of the extermination operation in the region came from it – including Hans Krüger, the head of the Gestapo in Stanisławów, who held a position equivalent to that of Peter Leideritz in Kołomyja.¹⁵ Between 15 and 25 functionaries served in the field unit commanded by Leideritz.¹⁶ It is likely that the Grenzpolizei station in Śniatyn, where several German functionaries served under the command of an officer named Sachsem, was also subordinate to this unit.¹⁷

The Extermination of Jews from the German-Occupied County of Kołomyja

As already mentioned, Leideritz is most heavily incriminated by the extermination of the Jewish population in the county starosty of Kołomyja. One of the cornerstones of the German occupiers' policy was the liquidation of the Jewish community and all those considered by the Germans to be Jews. From the very first days of the German occupation, the Jewish population in the area under Leideritz's control was subjected to widespread repression and terror. Jews were regularly physically and psychologically humiliated, and their property was looted. Over the following weeks and months, the German policy towards Jews developed into a regular extermination operation. It began with mass executions, which were initially carried out in a forest complex a few kilometres from Kołomyja, near the village of Szeparowce. It was there that, on the orders of Peter Leideritz, around 3,000 Jews were murdered on 12 October 1941. In the months that followed, similar executions were conducted repeatedly, resulting in the deaths of anywhere from several hundred to several thousand people.¹⁸ Jews were also executed by

¹⁵ D. Schenk, *Noc morderców*, pp. 225–226.

¹⁶ AIPN, 2586/270, Copy of the indictment in the criminal proceedings against Herbert Härtel *et al.* before the Regional Court in Darmstadt in 1966–1967, p. 17.

¹⁷ G. Mazur, *Pokucie w latach*, p. 69.

¹⁸ T. Polin, "Kołomyja," in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe. Part A*, ed. M. Dean, Bloomington–Indianapolis, 2012, p. 792.

shooting in other locations, including the Jewish cemetery, where several hundred members of the local Jewish intelligentsia were killed in November 1941 and January 1942.¹⁹ Equally criminal acts – organised, supervised, and often carried out by the Kołomyja field unit – also occurred in towns such as Kosów, Horodenka, and Śniatyn.²⁰

In March 1942, the Germans established a ghetto in Kolomyia, and in April, they began deporting its inhabitants to the extermination camp in Bełżec. These deportations were coordinated by the German county starosty, which worked closely with the Kołomyja field unit of the Security Police and SD, headed by Leideritz. The deportations were extremely bloody, often accompanied by executions conducted on the spot. On 3 and 7 April, a total of over 6,000 Jews were deported from the town and the surrounding areas,²¹ on 7 September, another 4,769 from Kołomyja, and about 300 people were murdered on the spot.²² One of the largest transports to the extermination camp in Bełżec departed from Kołomyja on 10 September 1942, carrying 8,205 Jews from Kołomyja, Kutry, Kosów, Śniatyn, Horodenka, and Zabłotów. The final transport from Kołomyja to Bełżec took place on 11 October, carrying approximately 4,000 people. During this operation, around 100 Jews were also executed on the spot.²³ In December 1942, a significant part of the remaining Jews in the Kołomyja ghetto were murdered, and in February 1943, the ghetto was completely liquidated.²⁴ According to Lubov Solovka's and Svitlana Orishko's findings, the vast majority of the more than 50,000 Jews who found themselves in Kołomyja may have perished there.²⁵ It is estimated that between

¹⁹ L. Solovka and S. Oryshko, *150 iz 150 000... Holokost yevreiv Prykarpattia yak skladova etnode-mohrafichnoi Katastrofy Skhidnoi Halychyny*, Ivano-Frankivsk, 2019, p. 171.

²⁰ "Śniatyn – akcja „Reinhardt”" <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/sniatyn-akcja-reinhardt/> (accessed 28 October 2024); "Kosów – akcja „Reinhardt”" <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/kosow-akcja-reinhardt/> (accessed 28 October 2024); "Horodenka – akcja „Reinhardt”" <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/horodenka-akcja-reinhardt/> (accessed 28 October 2024).

²¹ R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, Lublin, 2010, pp. 113, 237.

²² *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 9: *Polen. Generalgouvernement August 1941–1945*, ed. K.P. Friedrich, München, 2014, p. 431.

²³ *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, eds. G. Miron and S. Shulhani, Jerusalem, 2009, p. 335.

²⁴ T. Berenstein, "Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie Galicja (1941–1943)," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 3 (1967), p. 25.

²⁵ L. Solovka and S. Oryshko, *150 iz 150 000...*, p. 175.

several dozen and just over 200 Jews from Kołomyja and nearby towns survived the German occupation in hiding.²⁶

All security police units in the Galicia District followed a similar pattern in their extermination of the region's Jewish community, but historians agree that the units led by Leideritz and the aforementioned Hans Krüger in Stanisławów carried out this task with particular zeal.²⁷ According to Dieter Pohl, the area of the German-occupied county starosty in Kołomyja was the territory within the Galicia District where the plan for the "final solution of the Jewish question" was carried out with remarkable consistency, and the units under Leideritz's command were highly effective in implementing this murderous policy.²⁸ This was probably due to several complementary factors. First of all, there were no enterprises in this area that were important for the German war effort, which is why the Germans had little interest in keeping Jewish forced labourers alive.²⁹ Leideritz's character traits – his radicalism, tendency towards brutality, and desire for personal gain at the expense of the exterminated Jewish population – were also significant factors. There is no doubt that he took part in the operations in person. Schlomo Tager, a survivor of the extermination of the Jews of Kołomyja, testified that in September 1942, during one of the deportations to the death camp in Bełżec, he saw Leideritz join German and Ukrainian policemen as they dragged Jews from their homes and gathered them in the town square. Leideritz personally took part in selecting individuals for deportation.³⁰

Peter Leideritz was not only directly responsible for overseeing the extermination of Jews from Kołomyja and nearby towns and villages – many of whom had been concentrated in Kołomyja on their way to the Holocaust – but also led a kind of death squad that operated throughout the occupied county starosty, carrying out mass executions of local Jews. One such operation involving Leideritz took place on 4–5 December 1941 in Horodenka, where the Germans shot approximately 2,500 people in a forest complex near the village of Siemakowce. Witness testimonies – including those of Leideritz's subordinates – offer harrow-

²⁶ A. Weiss, "Kołomyja," in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, vol. 2, ed. I. Gutman, New York – London, 1990, p. 814; T. Polin, "Kołomyja," p. 793.

²⁷ D. Schenk, *Noc morderców*, pp. 272, 276; G. Eisen, *A Summer of Mass Murder*, p. 135.

²⁸ D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 251.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

³⁰ Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), O.3/2143, Testimony of Schlomo Tager, 2 July 1960.

ing accounts of the executions. Alfred Kiefer, who participated in many of them, stated that shooting a thousand Jews typically took around four hours. When one group of executioners grew tired, Leideritz would assign replacements to ensure the operation continued “smoothly.” Although the Gestapo chief generally oversaw the process to maintain its efficiency, Kiefer testified that Leideritz personally took part in at least two executions and shot Jews himself.³¹

Anti-Jewish operations conducted in Kołomyja followed a similar pattern. The ghetto quarter was tightly surrounded, and Jews were brutally expelled from it and gathered in a designated assembly point. From there, the detainees were taken to the local prison and, the next day, transported to the extermination camp in Bełżec or led to the forest in Szeparowce, where the execution took place. Each time, these operations were an opportunity for the Germans to loot the victims’ property. As Albert Warmann, another of Leideritz’s subordinates, testified, the officers committed various types of extortion, especially during the Jews’ stay in prison. He confessed that he had taken bribes from prisoners, who were lured by the hope of being freed. In this way, German functionaries received gold watches, jewellery and other valuables. If Warmann’s testimony is to be believed, he himself was able to release about a hundred people from prison in exchange for various gifts, but, as he pointed out, it is highly likely that they were killed shortly afterwards in subsequent stages of extermination.³² There is no doubt that a similar practice also applied to Leideritz, as confirmed by the number of valuables confiscated from his home shortly after his arrest, as discussed later in this article.

A Reckoning for Peter Leideritz’s Crimes

After the war ended, Peter Leideritz hid under the assumed name of Peter Lewald. In his home region, near the town of Kirch Beerfurth, he worked as a farmhand in one of the small villages. He was recognised by several Jews, who informed the American occupation authorities about Leideritz’s criminal past.³³ On 7 August 1946, he was arrested by the Americans and extradited to Poland in

³¹ AIPN, GK, 164/584, vol. 2, Files concerning the case of Peter Leideritz *et al.*, Copy of the report from the interrogation of Alfred Kiefer on 31 May 1946, no date, p. 13.

³² *Ibid.*, Copy of the report from the interrogation of Albert Warmann, no date, p. 19.

³³ D. Schenk, *Noc morderców*, p. 156.

December of that year. While awaiting further action by the Polish judiciary, he was placed in the Warsaw-Mokotów detention centre on Rakowiecka Street. It was not until 23 July 1947 that charges were brought against him – two main counts in total. The first, under Article 1 of the Decree issued by the Polish Committee of National Liberation on 31 August 1944, concerning “The Punishment of Fascist-Hitlerite Criminals Guilty of Murder and Ill-Treatment of the Civilian Population and Prisoners of War, and the Punishment of Traitors of the Polish Nation,” was based on the findings that “between 1941 and 1944 in Kołomyja [...] he participated in the mass murder of Polish citizens, and in particular in the murder of the local Jewish population.” The second count, under Article 4 of the same Decree, concerned his involvement in a criminal organisation identified as the Geheime Staatspolizei (*Gestapo*). Along with Leideritz, four other war criminals extradited to Poland during the same period from the American and British occupation zones of Germany also faced charges: Franciszek Schauer – a Gestapo officer in Lwów, Eryk Buder – who served, among other things, as a guard in Lwów, Filip Spang – a prison guard, and Paweł Simon, who during the occupation was, among other things, a guard at the concentration camp in Heddernheim.³⁴

During the preparations for the trial, as with other trials of this kind, an announcement was published in the media calling for witnesses who could testify in the case to come forward. The announcement, entitled “Kto zna tych zbrodniarzy” (Who Knows These Criminals?), was published, among other outlets, in the Katowice-based *Dziennik Zachodni* newspaper on 29 July 1947. Among those who volunteered to testify about the crimes of the accused was Ludmiła Kulczycka – according to her testimony, her brother and father were arrested on Leideritz’s orders and murdered by the Gestapo. In a letter addressed to the District Court in Warsaw, Kulczycka stated that he had also been responsible for the public execution of nine young men from the Baudienst, who were accused of deliberately damaging a road compactor used in street construction. This incident was one of the few instances in which Leideritz’s crimes against persons of Polish nationality were explicitly mentioned during the proceedings.³⁵

³⁴ AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Deed of indictment against Peter Leideritz *et al.*, 23 July 1947, p. 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Letter from Ludmiła Kulczycka to the District Court in Warsaw, 31 July 1947, pp. 80–82.

It is important to note that the field unit under his command also carried out operations against the Polish population. However, the German terror was applied selectively, with its victims largely drawn from the broadly defined Polish intelligentsia and people active in underground resistance organisations. The Ukrainian population was also affected by repression. It is estimated that during the occupation, no fewer than 340 people were arrested in the area under Leideritz's control, of whom about 100 were killed. From the end of 1943, public executions were also commonplace in Kołomyja county, resulting in the deaths of at least 181 people, the vast majority of whom were Ukrainians.³⁶

The trial of the five defendants before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw was brief, commencing at 10:30 a.m. on 17 November 1947. The proceedings were presided over by Judge M. Dubikowski, with lay judges T. Zalewski and A. Wiśniewski. Deputy Prosecutor Zofia Rudziewicz presented the indictment, while Juliusz Ryteń served as court-appointed defence counsel for the accused.³⁷

After reading the indictment, Leideritz stated that he did not plead guilty. He said, among other things: "I did not belong to the Gestapo, only to the Sicherheitspolizei, [serving] as a border police commissioner. [...] I did not participate in the mass murders of the Polish and Jewish populations in Kołomyja."³⁸ However, during an earlier interrogation, he admitted that he had served in the Gestapo.³⁹ He consistently denied that he had participated in the murders of Jews. Initially, he claimed that the border police unit he commanded carried out only standard operations to secure the border with Romania and controlled traffic on it. During the trial, he repeatedly tried to prove that he was not in Kołomyja at the time of the extermination operations mentioned by the witnesses and that he had twice travelled to Germany for a three-month recuperative leave after contracting typhus.⁴⁰

³⁶ S. Siekierka, H. Komański, and E. Różański, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie stanisławowskim 1939–1946*, Wrocław, [2008], pp. 233, 250, 314, 638, 643, 649; G. Mazur, *Pokucie w latach*, p. 144.

³⁷ AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Minutes of the main hearing in the case of Leideritz *et al.*, held before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw, 17 November 1947, p. 154.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 155–156.

³⁹ AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Peter Leideritz, 8 May 1947, p. 649.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 650–651; AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Minutes of the main hearing in the case of Leideritz *et al.*, held before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw, 17 November 1947, p. 159.

However, Leideritz's line of defence could not withstand the incriminating witness statements. It is worth noting that the court found them to be credible. Not only were they Holocaust survivors who had experienced the cruelty of German functionaries, but they were also well-off, educated persons who had held positions of public trust before the war. A total of seven witnesses testified against Leideritz in court. In addition, the testimonies of two people who were unable to appear in court – Dawid Likwornik and Józef Horowitz – were read out.

The witness testimonies left no doubt regarding the defendant's guilt. Paula Axellrad, née Heimer, testified that the defendant had overseen all operations targeting the Jewish population of Kołomyja and had personally supervised the deportation of Jews to the extermination camp in Bełżec in April 1942. During this operation, the Germans set fire to a part of the ghetto – presumably to prevent Jews from hiding in pre-prepared shelters. Axellrad further stated that Leideritz killed several persons during the operation and that she witnessed him "throwing people alive into the fire."⁴¹ She emphasised his brutal treatment of those marked for deportation, particularly anyone who attempted to step out of line. One such victim was her brother-in-law, whom Leideritz, the head of the Kołomyja Gestapo, "beat to a pulp."⁴²

The defendant consistently adhered to his chosen line of defence, claiming: "I did not personally kill anyone, nor did I lead this operation. Throughout the entire period, I was solely responsible for border service matters."⁴³

Testifying as a witness, defence attorney Markus Audnej confirmed that Leideritz had played a central role in the anti-Jewish operations conducted by the Germans in Kołomyja. He further emphasised that Leideritz bore responsibility for the executions carried out in the forest near the village of Szeparowce in the autumn of 1941.⁴⁴

In his closing statement, the defendant appealed to the court for a fair sentence. The trial concluded at approximately 4 p.m., with Leideritz found guilty on both

⁴¹ AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Minutes of the main hearing in the case of Leideritz *et al.*, held before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw, 17 November 1947, p. 159.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴⁴ The witness mistakenly dated the executions to September 1941; the largest execution in the aforementioned forest complex took place on 12 October 1941.

counts and sentenced to death.⁴⁵ In his closing statement, the defendant appealed to the court for a fair sentence. The trial concluded at approximately 4 p.m., with Leideritz found guilty on both counts and sentenced to death. The Polish Press Agency released a communiqué announcing the verdict. Coverage of the trial appeared on the front page of the 19 November 1947 edition of *Dziennik Zachodni*, under the headline “Morderca tysięcy ludzi skazany na śmierć” (“Murderer of Thousands Sentenced to Death”).⁴⁶

One notable aspect of the trial and its aftermath was the conduct of Juliusz Ryteń, the court-appointed defence attorney. Although he had initially declared his intention to file a cassation appeal, in a statement submitted to the District Court in January 1948, Ryteń wrote that he had found “no grounds for filing the announced cassation appeal.” In the same communication, he requested to be released from his duties as Leideritz’s court-appointed defence attorney. Three days later, he also submitted a request to correct the minutes of the hearing and delete the sentence stating that the defence attorney raised mitigating circumstances, namely that the convicted person “was a victim of the Hitlerite system.” In his justification, he emphasised that he had not uttered these words and could not have uttered them because, “as the court proceedings demonstrated, [Leideritz] himself was part of the Hitlerite system.”⁴⁷ His attitude would confirm the existence of certain social pressure exerted on court-appointed defence attorneys not to be overzealous in defending war criminals.⁴⁸ However, questions remain as to whether he acted contrary to the interests of the convicted person and whether this complied with the rules of professional ethics applicable to defence attorneys.

Ultimately, Leideritz himself lodged a cassation appeal, which the Supreme Court dismissed in its entirety during a hearing on 4 November 1948. The last

⁴⁵ Four others, along with Leideritz, also received harsh sentences. Franciszek Schauer and Eryk Bud-er were sentenced to death, while Filip Spang and Paweł Simon received life imprisonment (AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, The judgment of the District Court in Warsaw in the case against Peter Leideritz, 17 November 1947, pp. 168–171).

⁴⁶ *Dziennik Zachodni*, 19 November 1947.

⁴⁷ AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Juliusz Ryteń’s statement addressed to the District Court in Warsaw, 16 January 1948, p. 211; *ibid.*, Juliusz Ryteń’s application to the District Court in Warsaw for correction of the hearing minutes, 19 January 1948, p. 210.

⁴⁸ A. Dziurok, *Osądzenie przestępstw okresu II wojny światowej przez Specjalny Sąd Karny w Katowicach w latach 1945–1946*, Katowice–Warsaw, 2024, p. 162.

chance to save his life was a plea for clemency to the President of the Republic of Poland, Bolesław Bierut. In it, Leideritz wrote:

Poverty and unemployment led me to join the German police in 1933. During the war in 1939, I was assigned to the border police in Kołomyja. In this position, as a German citizen, I was forced to perform duties that I would have had to perform in any other position. However, above all, I tried to be a human being.⁴⁹

Later in the letter, he listed individuals of Jewish nationality for whom he had allegedly obtained documents enabling them to cross the border, stating that this was done “at personal risk.” Concluding his request, he emphasised:

I know that I bear guilt together with the entire German nation for what the German nation did to other nations under Hitler’s rule. I sincerely regret this. However, I want to prove in my lifetime that I have deserved and still deserve to be called a human being.⁵⁰

It is impossible to say whether, in the face of imminent death, he truly regretted his actions or whether it was merely an attempt to save his life. The District Court in Warsaw rejected his request, stating: “The nature of the crime committed and the intensity of ill will sufficiently weigh in favour of Piotr Leideritz not deserving clemency.”⁵¹ Bierut agreed with this opinion and did not exercise his right to grant clemency.⁵² The sentence was carried out on 22 February 1949 in Warsaw.⁵³

⁴⁹ AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Peter Leideritz’s request for clemency addressed to the President of Poland, Bolesław Bierut, 6 October 1948, p. 278.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Opinion of the District Court in Warsaw on the petition for clemency filed by Peter Leideritz, 20 November 1948, p. 282.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Letter from the Ministry of Justice to the District Court in Warsaw regarding Piotr Leideritz *et al.*, 10 January 1949, p. 302.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Letter from the District Court Prosecutor to the District Court in Warsaw notifying of the execution of the sentence on Peter Leideritz, 24 February 1949, p. 322.

The Case of Anneliese Leideritz

The case of Anneliese Leideritz, wife of the head of the Kołomyja Gestapo, was considerably more complex and far less clear-cut. To understand her background, let us begin with some basic biographical details. She was born on 17 January 1915 in Ludwigshafen as Anneliese Dreyer. Her father, Gustaw, was killed in the autumn of 1915 on one of the fronts of World War I. Around 1922, her mother married for the second time, to a businessman named Martin Hein. Anneliese attended a private school in Ludwigshafen, followed by the Catholic Luiseninstitut secondary school in Mannheim. She later began studies at the Higher Commercial School affiliated with the Ursuline Institute. During this time, she remained with her mother and learned how to manage a household. In February 1939, she married Peter Leideritz and relocated to Frankfurt am Main. Together with her husband, she moved to places where he was stationed. She was not politically active and probably did not belong to any political organisations. Only from 1938 onwards was she a member of the Reichsluftschutzbund (National Air Raid Protection League),⁵⁴ a paramilitary group founded by Hermann Göring after the Nazis came to power in Germany, which succeeded pre-existing air defence organisations.

Survivors of the Holocaust who testified about events that took place during the occupation in Kołomyja sometimes mentioned Anneliese Leideritz's very hostile attitude towards Jews. References to her also appeared during interrogations conducted by the Americans concerning the crimes committed by her husband. These testimonies led to her also becoming the subject of interest of the American justice system, which was prosecuting German criminals. Like her husband, she was detained by the Americans and extradited to Poland, where she was to be held accountable for her actions during the war. The testimony of three Jewish witnesses interrogated after the war by American investigators in Germany proved crucial in her case. It became one of the pillars of the indictment and was used as the main incriminating evidence against Anneliese Leideritz at all stages of the court proceedings in Poland. It is worth noting that they were the only eyewitnesses to her murders of Jews. The first of them, Aron Windner,

⁵⁴ AIPN, GK, 296/129, The Anneliese Leideritz case files, Testimony of Anneliese Leideritz, 1 August 1946, p. 3.

testified that he saw Leideritz's wife with a pistol in her hand, shooting Jews on the streets of the Kołomyja ghetto during one of the deportation operations. He himself was hiding in a basement at the time, from where he observed one of the streets of the Jewish quarter through a small window. He had no doubt that the people shot by the Gestapo chief's wife died on the spot and that their bodies remained on the street for many hours. He also stated that he saw Leideritz's wife riding on horseback behind a group of Jews being escorted by the Germans to the forest in Szeparowce, where the executions took place. He emphasised that the woman behaved brutally towards them, beating some with a whip and shooting at people with a pistol.⁵⁵

Windner's testimony was corroborated by Toni Herrschkowitz, who also witnessed Anneliese Leideritz riding on horseback behind a column of Jews being led to their execution. "I can swear," he testified, "that I saw the wife of Gestapo chief Leideritz shooting at Jews both during the murders in the forests of Szeparowce and in the ghetto itself." Herrschkowitz, who was hiding in the cellar and probably witnessed the murders in the ghetto from there, did not explain the circumstances in which he witnessed Anneliese shooting at Jews during the execution in a nearby forest complex. He apparently meant the moment when the Jews were being led to the place of execution, and not the events taking place in the forest itself.⁵⁶

The last of the three witnesses testifying in Germany was Leon Wolfberg, whose testimony coincided with that of other survivors. He emphasised that Leideritz's wife actively supported her husband in his criminal activities. Wolfberg reportedly saw her shooting with a revolver at people fleeing the flames after the Germans set fire to the ghetto buildings. It did not matter to her that the victims were women or children. He also saw her escorting a column of Jews on horseback to their execution and beating those who lagged behind. He witnessed her shooting people who had fallen and could not continue walking. He saw her with his own eyes in the ghetto during the liquidation carried out by the Germans in February 1943, during which Wolfberg's wife and two children were killed. "She

⁵⁵ AIPN, GK, 164/584, vol. 1, Files concerning the extradition of Peter and Anneliese Leideritz, Excerpt from the interrogation of Aron Windner, Toni Herrschkowitz, and Leon Wolfberg by the Polish Military Mission in the American occupation zone of Germany in Darmstadt on 31 July 1946, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

never entered the ghetto without a revolver or a whip, and she used them without provocation,”⁵⁷ he testified.

In order to rule out the possibility of misidentification of the person referred to in the witness testimonies, American investigators decided to confront them with the detainee. This took place on 1 August 1946 in the Darmstadt prison. All of them recognised Leideritz’s wife and clearly emphasised that they did not doubt that she was responsible for the deeds described in the testimonies.⁵⁸

Anneliese and her husband were undoubtedly responsible for seizing Jewish property. After their arrest, the American authorities confiscated twelve chests filled with valuables, which the Leideritz family had sent from Kołomyja to Germany at the end of the war. They contained, among other things, furs, Persian carpets, bed linen, cutlery, crystalware, porcelain and other valuable items looted from Jews during the occupation.⁵⁹ The aforementioned Alfred Kiefer testified that the scale of property looting had grown so immense it began to provoke dissatisfaction among many German functionaries.⁶⁰ During her interrogation in Germany, Anneliese testified that she had arrived in Kołomyja with her husband in October 1941. She thus contradicted her husband’s testimony, who tried to prove during the trial that he had arrived in the city only later, and therefore could not have supervised, among other things, the execution conducted in the Szeparowce forest on 12 October 1941, and that he was not present during the extermination operation in Horodenka in December 1941.⁶¹ Anneliese admitted that during her stay in Kołomyja she heard that Jews were being shot, but she did not learn this from her husband, as she never discussed such matters with him. She acknowledged receiving a 6.35 calibre Browning pistol from him, intended solely for her personal protection.⁶²

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–8.

⁵⁹ AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 2, Memorandum prepared by the Headquarters of the Counterintelligence Corps of the United States Armed Forces concerning Peter Leideritz *et al.*, 16 August 1946, p. 517.

⁶⁰ G. Eisen, *A Summer of Mass Murder*, p. 150.

⁶¹ However, it is worth noting that she was inconsistent in giving the date of her arrival in Kołomyja. For example, during her interrogation in Poland on 5 March 1948, she testified that she had only been in this town in November 1941 (AIPN, GK, 296/129, Minutes of the interrogation of the accused Anneliese Leideritz, 5 March 1948, p. 180).

⁶² During her interrogation in Poland, she clarified that she had received the weapon in the autumn of 1943, but had never used it, and it had always been kept at home (*ibid.*).

It is worth highlighting further inconsistencies in the testimonies of both spouses. During his interrogation by American authorities, Peter categorically denied ever giving his wife a pistol or having seen her with any weapon. Anneliese, for her part, claimed she had never fired a pistol and denied striking anyone with a whip. She asserted complete ignorance regarding the transports of Jews organised by the Germans and emphatically denied ever escorting them on horseback. According to her statement, on the day the fire broke out in the ghetto – around 5 p.m. – she was shopping in the city. She maintained that she was neither carrying a gun nor a whip at the time and observed the blaze from a distance of approximately 300 meters, near the edge of the Jewish quarter. She insisted that no fleeing Jews passed her, nor did she approach the ghetto herself.⁶³

While imprisoned in Germany, she adopted a line of defence that she consistently upheld, even after her extradition to Poland. Prior to Leideritz's transfer to the Polish justice system, several German witnesses testified in her favour – among them, two secretaries who had worked at the county starosty in Kołomyja during the occupation, and an entrepreneur who had employed Jewish workers from the local ghetto.⁶⁴ Their primary objective was to demonstrate that the defendant had been misidentified. Luise Kaeser, née Schmidt – a secretary at the starosty who had maintained social ties with Leideritz during the war – testified that, based on Leideritz's character, she would not have been capable of committing the deeds attributed to her. Kaeser further noted that another German woman working at the starost's office in Kołomyja, Hertha Abicht, bore a resemblance to Leideritz and had been slated for transfer on disciplinary grounds after firing at Jews during one of the operations in the Jewish quarter. Abicht always dressed very elegantly, behaved arrogantly and, in Kaeser's opinion, was exceptionally "insolent." It was her that witnesses probably mistook for the wife of the head of the Kołomyja Gestapo.⁶⁵

Furthermore, during her interrogations, Anneliese sought to persuade first the investigators and then the court that her limited equestrian skills rendered her

⁶³ AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 2, Memorandum prepared by the Headquarters of the Counterintelligence Corps of the United States Armed Forces concerning Peter Leideritz *et al.*, 16 August 1946, pp. 516–518.

⁶⁴ G. Eisen, *A Summer of Mass Murder*, p. 151.

⁶⁵ AIPN, GK, 296/129, Translation of a letter from Anneliese Leideritz's defence attorney containing a statement by Luise Kaeser, 15 November 1947, p. 39.

incapable of committing the acts she was accused of. As she stated: "I was a very poor rider, and I first got on a horse in the summer of 1942."⁶⁶

The testimonies collected in Poland and presented during the trial of Anneliese Leideritz offer compelling insights. During prosecutorial interrogations, all witnesses confirmed that they had not witnessed firsthand the criminal acts she was accused of but had instead learned of them through secondary sources. Jonas Axellrad testified as follows:

from friends who are no longer alive, I know that she [Anneliese] urged her husband to destroy people who asked him for protection through her. I also heard that she treated the people who worked in her garden in an inhumane manner. She would walk around with a dog and a whip in her hand and beat the Jews working in the garden [...] or set her wolfhound on them, which would bite them to death.⁶⁷

Paula Axellrad, the wife of Jonas Axellrad, also gave testimony in the case. In the minutes of her interrogation concerning Anneliese, she stated: "I did not personally observe her taking action against Jews; the information I have about her was conveyed to me by others."⁶⁸ During questioning, Maria Krajowska admitted: "I cannot personally say anything about Anneliese Leideritz. I only heard that she treated the Jews brought to work on the Leideritz family's property inhumanely."⁶⁹ Andrzej Oskar Gotfryd stated the following in his testimony:

I worked as a doctor, and when patients came to me, they always complained that there was no woman worse than the wife of the Gestapo chief. There were cases when young people were assigned to her work, and whoever she did not like was shot or died some other violent death.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the accused Anneliese Leideritz, 5 March 1948, p. 180.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jonas Axellrad, 30 January 1948, p. 157.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Paula Axellrad, 30 January 1948, p. 158.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Krajowska, 21 January 1948, p. 173.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Oskar Andrzej Gotfryd, 1 April 1948, pp. 183–184.

Adolf Markus, who worked as a gardener in the homes of Gestapo functionaries during the German occupation, also had no opportunity to meet the defendant in person. As he testified: “Leideritz was known for her cruelty and for being able to ‘send someone to the other world’ for the slightest thing. Therefore, I avoided her and did not come into direct contact with her.” It was only from the stories of people who worked with him that he learned that she had taken part in operations in the forest near the village of Szeparowce.⁷¹ Krystyna Markus did not personally witness the actions ascribed to the defendant. Her only remark was: “Even the Germans I worked for warned me about Leideritz, saying that [...] she was even worse than her husband.”⁷²

On 15 June 1948, the prosecutor filed an indictment against Anneliese Leideritz with the court, which, as in the case of her husband, included two charges. First of all, under Article 1 of the aforementioned August Decree, she was accused of “participation in mass and individual murders of Jews.” The second charge referred to Article 2 of the same legal basis and concerned “acting to the detriment of the Jewish population by beating them with whips, setting dogs on them and unlawfully seizing their property.”⁷³

The trial commenced before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw on 30 December 1948. It was presided over by Judge Karol Sroczyński, with R. Maciejewska and S. Pruś serving as lay judges, and Deputy Prosecutor Zofia Rudziewicz – as in the case of Peter Leideritz – presented the indictment. The court-appointed defence attorney assigned to defend the defendant failed to appear at the trial, so the court appointed Wiesław Szczepański to perform this function. The defendant denied any wrongdoing and consistently upheld the defence strategy she had adopted from the beginning. The previously mentioned witness testimonies offered little new information, though they were notably more emotionally charged than those presented to the prosecutor. Adolf Markus described Anneliese as “the terror of everyone,” while his wife Krystyna recalled that she was known in town as “the jackal woman.” During the trial, the aforementioned accounts given to American investigators were also read out.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Adolf Markus, 4 February 1948, pp. 201–202.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Krystyna Markus, 4 February 1948, p. 203.

⁷³ AIPN, GK, 296/130, The Anneliese Leideritz case files, Indictment against Anneliese, 15 June 1948, p. 10.

The court cleared the defendant of the charge under Article 1 of the August Decree but found her guilty of actions harmful to the Jewish population and sentenced her to ten years in prison. In explaining its decision, the court noted several inconsistencies in the witnesses' statements. When deciding on the sentence, the court also took into account that, as the wife of the head of the Gestapo, she was held accountable for numerous actions, assumptions, and grim legends – many of which lacked sufficient evidence or were not attributable to her. Nonetheless, her excessive zeal, role in spreading terror, and displays of greed and cruelty towards the already brutally persecuted Jewish population suggest a significant degree of malice.⁷⁴

Both the prosecutor and the court-appointed defence attorney appealed against the verdict. The cassation hearing before the Supreme Court took place on 20 October 1949. The court upheld the prosecutor's cassation in the part concerning the acquittal under Article 1 of the August Decree and thus overturned the judgment in this respect and referred the case for reconsideration. In its justification, it emphasised, among other things, that the court of first instance had incorrectly assessed the testimony of eyewitnesses to Anneliese Leideritz's criminal activity. The Supreme Court dismissed the defendant's cassation appeal.⁷⁵

The case was referred to the First Criminal Division of the Appellate Court in Warsaw for consideration. On 3 May 1950, the court issued its verdict. Anneliese Leideritz was found guilty of offences under Articles 1 and 2 of the aforementioned decree and sentenced to death.⁷⁶ The defendant's lawyer appealed. The case was again referred to the Supreme Court, which, by its judgment of 10 October 1950, quashed the contested judgment and referred the case back to the court of first instance for reconsideration.⁷⁷

The case was last heard by the Fourth Criminal Division of the Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw. On 16 March 1951, the court delivered its verdict: Leideritz was once again found guilty and sentenced to death. In the grounds,

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Judgment of the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw in the case against Anneliese Leideritz of 30 December 1948, p. 171.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Supreme Court ruling in the Anneliese Leideritz case, 20 October 1949, pp. 206–212.

⁷⁶ AIPN, GK, 296/131, Anneliese Leideritz case files, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Warsaw, 3 May 1950, pp. 165–166.

⁷⁷ AIPN, GK, 296/132, Anneliese Leideritz case files, Judgment of the Supreme Court in the Anneliese Leideritz case, 10 October 1950, pp. 6–11.

the court indicated that the consistent, credible and mutually complementary testimonies of many witnesses left no doubt that Anneliese Leideritz had participated in the extermination operation, which was accompanied by the burning of the ghetto in Kołomyja in October 1942, and that she had participated in executions conducted by the Germans in a forest near the village of Szeparowce. The unequivocal identification of the perpetrator by witnesses during the confrontation ruled out the possibility that she had been mistaken for another person. In its reasoning for the judgment, the court devoted a great deal of attention to the Hertha Abicht thread. It emphasised that the witness statements admitted to the trial, which referenced the presence of the woman in Kołomyja, contained many contradictions, which made them unreliable. In conclusion, the court found that “the Hertha Abicht alibi was planted on the defendant during the investigation, and later attempts were made to reinforce it with ad hoc, fictitious and vague witness statements.”⁷⁸

On 22 March 1951, the convicted woman submitted a petition for clemency to Bolesław Bierut, the President of Poland. Following a favourable recommendation from the sentencing court, the President granted the request and commuted her death sentence to life imprisonment.⁷⁹

Anneliese Leideritz served her sentence at the Bydgoszcz-Fordon Penitentiary. In June 1954, in a serious condition and for the second time within a year, she was transferred to the prison hospital in Grudziądz. She died there on 6 July 1954. The autopsy revealed extensive multi-organ tuberculosis.⁸⁰

Finally, it is worth looking at the fate of other functionaries of the German security apparatus who were brought to justice for crimes committed in the German-occupied Kołomyja County. Albert Warmann, head of the Criminal Police Department in Kołomyja, was also tried in Poland. He was handed over to the Polish

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Judgment of the Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw in the case of Anneliese Leideritz, 16 March 1951, pp. 133–146.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Letter from Anneliese Leideritz to the President of Poland requesting clemency, 22 March 1951, pp. 131–132; *ibid.*, Opinion of the Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw on the clemency petition of Anneliese Leideritz, 6 June 1951, p. 184; *ibid.*, Letter from the Clemency Office of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Poland to the Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw regarding the commutation of Anneliese Leideritz's sentence, 18 August 1951, p. 194.

⁸⁰ *Archiwum Delegatury Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Bydgoszczy* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Delegation in Bydgoszcz), 49/4015, The medical history of Anneliese Leideritz, p. 4–16.

law enforcement authorities by the British occupation authorities in Germany on 20 December 1946. On 11 August 1948, the District Court in Lublin sentenced him to death. During the same trial, Alfred Kiefer, a Gestapo functionary in Kołomyja, was also sentenced to death. The sentence was executed at Lublin Castle prison on 10 December 1948.⁸¹ Six members of the Kołomyja Gestapo were prosecuted in the Federal Republic of Germany. In July 1967, the Regional Court (*Landgericht*) in Darmstadt delivered its verdicts in the cases of Erwin Gay, Friedrich Knackendöffel, Gerhard Goede, Alois Müller, Eberhard Lorenz Schäfer, and Werner Otto Schwenker. Gerhard Goede received the most severe sentence: life imprisonment.⁸² Additionally, during this trial, the court-imposed prison sentences ranged from 3 to 8.5 years.⁸³

Concluding Remarks

Peter Leideritz was one of the few – given the scale of crimes committed against Jews in the Galicia District of the General Governorate and the number of German security personnel involved – who stood trial and was held accountable. His role in the extermination of the Jewish population is beyond dispute. The defence strategy he adopted was typical of many war criminals: throughout the proceedings, he clumsily tried to shift the blame away from himself, but the District Court in Warsaw rejected his arguments and sentenced him to death. The question remains whether his wife was held accountable for her actual actions. Perhaps, as the court of first instance adjudicating her case suggested, she was largely held responsible for her husband's crimes and for cultivating a grim legend around herself. Undoubtedly, the prosecution and conviction of a married couple for crimes committed during the war in the occupied territories of Poland was a rare and exceptional occurrence.

⁸¹ *Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Lublinie* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Lublin), 330/226, The Alfred Kiefer and Albert Warmann case files, Judgment in the Alfred Kiefer and Albert Warmann case, 11 August 1948, pp. 33–34; *ibid.*, Indictment, p. 8; *ibid.*, Letter from the President of the Division of the District Court in Lublin to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Poland, 16 February 1949, p. 76.

⁸² Interestingly, twice – in 1949 and 1951 – proceedings in his case were conducted by the German public prosecutor's office in Lüneburg, and in both cases the law enforcement authorities decided to close the investigation due to the lack of evidence that he had committed a crime. See A. Eichmüller, *Keine Generalamnestie. Die strafrechtliche Verfolgung von NS-Verbrechen in der frühen Bundesrepublik*, München, 2012, pp. 355–356.

⁸³ AIPN, 2586/205, Court proceedings documentation of the Regional Court in Darmstadt in the Härtel *et al.* case, Copy of the sentence of the Regional Court in the Darmstadt in the Härtel *et al.* case, 28 July 1967, pp. 1–4.

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THE CRIMINAL CASE OF MICHAŁ SOKOŁOWSKI: A POST-WAR RECKONING IN SANOK FOR THE DENUNCIATION OF SHELTERED JEWS AND THEIR SHELTERER*

Summary

This article investigates the criminal prosecution of Michał Sokołowski for denouncing Jews hiding in Sanok, along with the woman who helped them. It delves into the ethnic dynamics of the Sanok region before and during World War II, presents statistical data on the Jewish population's wartime losses in the occupied Sanok County, outlines the legal framework for post-war justice, offers a detailed profile of the denouncer, and analyses the circumstances surrounding his actions. The article also features Wiktoria Kopiczak (Kosar), who sheltered Jews during the war, and outlines her prosecution before the German Special Court in Rzeszów, which initially sentenced her to death – a verdict later reduced to two years' imprisonment through clemency. It further recounts the post-war trial of

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Michał Sokołowski before the Voivodeship Court in Rzeszów, culminating in a sentence of five years and one month in prison, along with a two-year revocation of his public and honorary civil rights.

Keywords

denunciation • aid to Jews • death penalty • occupation • Holocaust

Introduction

This article presents a case study focused on the wartime denunciation of Jews in hiding and the woman who sheltered them. It aims to explore the motives behind the denouncer's actions, the circumstances and consequences of the denunciation, the post-war legal proceedings that followed, and the broader context of aid extended to Jews during the Holocaust. This study draws primarily on archival materials from the 1954 criminal trial of Michał Sokołowski that was held before the Voivodeship Court in Rzeszów and preserved in the Archives of the Rzeszów Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance. These records include court and prosecutorial documents, minutes of witness and suspect interrogations, and – crucially – files from the German criminal case against Wiktoria Kopiczak, who provided shelter to Jews and was sentenced by the Special Court in Rzeszów (*Sondergericht Reichshof*) in 1944. I came across this case while researching the activity of the Rzeszów Special Court, one of the German special courts operating in the General Governorate (GG) and presented it in an outline in an article devoted to the Special Court in Rzeszów.¹ In this study, I would like to discuss it in detail. What makes this case particularly distinctive is that the act prosecuted in the post-war Polish court proceedings was dual in nature – it involved the denunciation of both Jews in hiding and the individual who sheltered them.

This text offers a concise overview of Sanok's demographic landscape on the eve of World War II and during the occupation, highlighting the transformations brought about by the imposition of the occupiers' administrative divisions. It

¹ K. Graczyk, "Z działalności Sądu Specjalnego w Rzeszowie (*Sondergericht Reichshof*) podczas II wojny światowej," *Acta Iuridica Resoviensia* 4 (47) (2024), pp. 55–56.

traces the tragic fate of the local Jewish community, with particular attention to key sites of their concentration and the deportations that occurred. As a contextual framework for the case study, the author draws on the scholarly classification of Polish societal attitudes toward the extermination of Jews. The next section examines the attitudes of Poles in Sanok County towards persecuted Jews, referencing specific instances of individuals who offered shelter or other forms of aid, alongside examples of hostile actions such as denunciations. It also addresses the legal foundation of the trial under discussion and interprets it in the context of Michał Sokołowski's conduct. This article proceeds to outline the life of Wiktoria Kopiczak, detailing the circumstances under which she sheltered Jews and her subsequent death sentence passed by a German special court. It concludes with an account of Michał Sokołowski's post-war trial and a reflection on the motivations behind his actions.

Sanok as a Setting of Rescue and Denunciation

The events discussed in this article unfolded in Sanok during World War II. In the interwar period, the town served as the administrative centre of Sanok County, which was part of the Lviv Voivodeship. On the eve of the war, the county's population numbered approximately 120,000, comprised of roughly 50 per cent Poles, 40 per cent Ukrainians, and 10 per cent Jews. Within the town itself, the proportion of Poles was higher – around 70 per cent – while the Jewish community numbered about 5,400 residents. Sanok – alongside Rymanów, Bukowsko, and Jaśliska – was one of the main centres of the Jewish population in the county. During the German occupation, it became the administrative seat of the Landkreis Sanok, which was part of the Cracow District within the General Governorate.² Its borders differed significantly from those of the pre-war Sanok County – the area of the Landkreis more than doubled compared to its pre-war size. According to the Main Welfare Council, in 1940, it was inhabited by approximately 247,000 people – 124,000 Poles

² C. Cyran and A. Rachwał, "Eksterminacja ludności na Sanocczyźnie w latach 1939–1944," *Rocznik Sanocki* 4 (1979), pp. 31–32; "Sanok. Szlak chasydzki," p. 8, https://www.sanok.pl/asp/pliki/zakladka_turysta_grafiki/1szlak_chasydzki_sanok_pl.pdf (accessed 2 January 2025). The author would like to thank Dr. Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Dr. Tomasz Domański for their discussions during the work on this article.

(50.3 per cent), 113,000 Ukrainians (45.8 per cent) and 9,374 Jews (3.8 per cent).³ Detailed data for Sanok from February 1940 and March 1942 show 2,450 and 2,900 Jews, respectively, including displaced persons from the Reich, Bielsko, Biała, Cieszyń, Kraków, Łódź, Sosnowiec and Żywiec.⁴

In September 1942, the Jewish population from the Landkreis Sanok was ultimately deported. Before this, four concentration camps operated in the region – Bukowsko, Lesko, Sanok, and Ustrzyki Dolne. A ghetto was also set up in Sanok, housing an average of 250 individuals. By the time it was dismantled in February 1943, approximately 1,000 Jews had passed through it.⁵ Jews were transferred from the concentration sites to the camp in Zasław, which served as the final collection point before their deportation to the extermination camp in Bełżec.⁶

The forced labour camp in Zasław was established in the autumn of 1940 on the site of a cellulose factory under construction before the war. It operated for three years before closing. The first Jewish deportees arrived with their movable belongings, including livestock. In the summer of 1942, Jewish residents from across the Landkreis Sanok began arriving at the camp; around that time, a Jewish camp administration and a Jewish police force were established. Prisoners were used for various types of work, such as road repairs, demolition of Jewish houses, farm work and work in craft workshops. They received no pay, their food rations were meagre, and the sanitary and hygienic conditions in the camp were appalling; only some of them had shelter for the night. Prisoners stayed in the camp for a relatively short time – after just a few weeks, most of them were transported to Bełżec.⁷

On 5 September 1942, Jews were transported from Sanok to the camp in Zasław. The elderly and sick were murdered on the spot, at the Jewish cemetery in Sanok. After a few days, the first transport left Zasław for Bełżec, carrying about 4,000 people. In the summer of 1943, mass executions of Jews, Poles and Sinti took place in

³ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim w latach 1939–1945*, Rzeszów, 2014, p. 72.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁵ E. Rączy, “Sytuacja Żydów w powiatach leskim i sanockim w latach 1939–1942,” in J. Wallach, *Gorška wolność: Wspomnienia ocalałych z Holocaustu*, comp. and ed. E. Rączy, Rzeszów–Warsaw, 2022, p. 23.

⁶ For more on the subject of the extermination camp in Bełżec, see R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, Lublin–Bełżec, 2005.

⁷ E. Rączy, “Sytuacja Żydów w powiatach leskim i sanockim,” pp. 23–24.

the camp. It is estimated that no fewer than 10,000 people were transported from Zasław to Bełżec to be killed, and at least 2,000 were shot in the camp itself. The camp was finally liquidated at the end of the summer of 1943. The last to be shot on the spot were members of the Judenrat and the Jewish camp police.⁸ Based on the research of Elżbieta Rączy, a scholar specialising in the extermination of Jews in the Cracow District, at least 17,240 Jews were killed in the Landkreis Sanok during Operation "Reinhardt." Of these, 8,000 were deported to the Bełżec extermination camp, while more than 9,240 were executed by shooting.⁹

Historians identify four primary attitudes that Poles could adopt when encountering a persecuted Jew during the German occupation. The first – unequivocally negative – involved reporting the individual to the authorities, in accordance with the occupation-era laws, which typically led to the person's death. The second was passive: choosing neither to help nor to betray. The third entailed offering one-time assistance. The fourth involved long-term care and shelter. The final two responses should be regarded as positive. As Elżbieta Rączy pointed out, most historians currently agree that the second attitude prevailed among Poles, characterised by passivity, which was due to many factors, ranging from the events of the interwar period and mutual distrust, through limited social contacts, conflicting economic interests, cultural and religious differences, to the extremely difficult living conditions that the German authorities imposed on Poles.¹⁰

The scholar also pointed out that the attitudes of the Polish population towards the extermination of Jews in the Landkreis Sanok did not differ much from those in other parts of occupied Poland.¹¹ Individual aid prevailed, provided based on a verbal agreement between the person in hiding and the person providing shelter. Usually, single individuals were hidden, as they were easier to feed and conceal. However, some families helped larger numbers of people, such as the Pircak family (Michał, Stanisław and Stefania) from Prusiek near Sanok, who hid as many as seventeen escapees from the camp in Zasław.¹² Sometimes the aid provided was

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24; C. Cyran and A. Rachwał, "Eksterminacja ludności na Sanoczczyźnie," pp. 62–69.

⁹ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, pp. 312, 315.

¹⁰ E. Rączy, "Postawy Polaków wobec zagłady Żydów w czasie niemieckiej okupacji na przykładzie starostwa sanockiego," *Limes. Studia i materiały z dziejów Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* 11 (2018), p. 175.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 175, 181.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 177–178.

selfless, sometimes paid for, but the exact proportions cannot be determined due to a lack of sources. Jews were more often hidden in villages than in towns, because it was easier to find food and hiding places in rural areas. However, this also poses difficulties, because in the provinces – in small towns or villages – everyone knew each other well, and a new person immediately stood out and aroused interest. Another difficulty was the fact that the district was not ethnically homogeneous, and the nationality policy of the occupying authorities contributed to the intensification of the conflict between Poles and Ukrainians.¹³ It is not known how many Poles in the Landkreis Sanok helped Jews to survive. In 2018, historian Elżbieta Rączy documented that 36 Poles from the Landkreis Sanok area were recognised as Righteous Among the Nations. Through their courageous actions, 55 Jews survived. However, it should be noted that the number of those honoured constitutes only a fraction of the total number of rescuers.¹⁴ For comparison, after the war, this title was awarded to 335 residents of the western part of the Lwów Voivodeship of the Second Polish Republic, covering five Landkreis counties (Jarosław, Krosno, Przemyśl, Rzeszów, Sanok).¹⁵

The point of reference for the analysed case of denunciation should be the behaviour of several people involved in helping Jews in the Landkreis Sanok, as compiled by Elżbieta Rączy. She named, among others, Maria Bańkowska and her sister Aniela, who supplied Jews in the Sanok ghetto with food for several months; Stanisław Kawski, from whose pharmacy medicines were smuggled into the Sanok ghetto; clergyman Antoni Porębski and Maria Dżambowa's husband, whose name is unknown, who hid her (when he was arrested, his colleagues took care of her);¹⁶ Stanisław, Zofia and Władysław Stojowski from Sanok, who gave shelter to five Jews; the Baloski couple from Zagórz, who hid the Rott family; Tadeusz Srogi and Stanisław Mędryk from Sanok, who helped Tauba Felder; Zenobia and Józef Czekański from Sanok, who hid Czesław and Janina Gumkowski from Łódź;

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ E. Rączy, "Stan badań nad problematyką ratowania Żydów przez Polaków w zachodniej części województwa lwowskiego," in *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką*, eds. T. Domański and A. Gontarek, Warsaw–Kielce, 2022, p. 409.

¹⁶ E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, Rzeszów, 2008, pp. 55, 57, 76, 97.

Maria Rysz and Stanisława Kornecka from Sanok, who hid Leon Feld; Aniela Puć from Zagórz, who supplied Aron and Fajga Goldman with food; Maria Huk from Sanok, who hid a man named Kupler; Wiktoria Rolnik, at whose place Dr Leon Penner, a fugitive from Zasław, later a deputy prosecutor of the Special Criminal Court in Katowice, prosecutor of the Appellate Court in Katowice, voivodeship prosecutor in Katowice and director of the Judicial Department of the General Prosecutor's Office, survived the war;¹⁷ as well as the Righteous Among the Nations: Antonina Bąk from Jurowiec near Sanok; Tomasz and Olga Bil from Bykowce near Sanok, Stanisław Cara from Łukawica; Jan Kąkol and Magdalena Mielniczek from Bezmiechowa; Stanisława Laskowska from the village of Długie near Sanok; Miron Lisikiewicz from Lesko; the Piecuch family – Maria, Piotr and their daughter Maria from Srogów Dolny; the aforementioned Pyrcak family from Prusiek near Sanok; Jan and Aniela Raks from Zasław; the Wolański family – Stanisława, Władysław, Eugeniusz and Danuta from Jaćmierzów; Zofia Wajda-Liro from Lesko; the Woźny family – Michał, Maria and Andrzej from Markowiec near Sanok; Józef and Franciszka Zwonarz from Lesko, and Stefania, Władysław and Karol Szelka from Niebieszczany.¹⁸ This list can be supplemented based on the second volume of the publication *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945* (Accounts of Assistance Provided to Jews by Poles During 1939–1945), concerning the Cracow District of the General Governorate. In relation to the wartime events in the Landkreis Sanok, the book recounts the courageous actions of several individuals. Maria, Katarzyna, and Marcin Winiarski assisted an unidentified Jewish family by providing food and hiding a cow. Anna and Franciszek Wronowski sheltered Iza and Hersz Nagelbusz for nearly a year, ultimately losing their lives due to a denunciation. Jan Joss and his wife, along with Piotr Maszczak, offered refuge to Bronisława Szwarc in their homes.¹⁹

During the German occupation, some people took heroic action and provided shelter to Jews, while others committed reprehensible acts, such as denunciation.

¹⁷ A. Dziurok, *Osądzenie przestępstw okresu II wojny światowej przez Specjalny Sąd Karny w Katowicach w latach 1945–1946*, Katowice–Warsaw, 2024, p. 72.

¹⁸ E. Rączy, "Postawy Polaków," p. 25.

¹⁹ *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 2: *Dystrykt krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selec. and ed. S. Piątkowski, Lublin–Warsaw, 2020, pp. 444, 497–498, 502.

The case in question combines both types of behaviour, and the subsequent criminal case is an example of post-war reckoning and, as such, exemplifies so-called transitional justice.²⁰

It is somewhat difficult to place the analysed case of denunciation among other cases of this kind, as we do not have any statistical data in this regard. After the war, eleven people living in the Landkreis Sanok were tried for negative behaviour towards the Jews – ten Poles and one Ukrainian. The literature provides examples of such negative behaviour – the hiding of three Jews by Mikołaj Chanas in Zagórz, Samuel Pechter by Magdalena and Michał Wasser from Cisna, as well as the aforementioned Pyrcak family, all of which ended in denunciations. In the latter case, the denouncer's attention was drawn to the fact that the head of the family possessed foreign currency and had made large food purchases. Denouncers also contributed to the capture of Sara Langsam, and the Weiner and Osterjung families from Sanok.²¹

The August Decree and Its Interpretation

For historians dealing with the German occupation and legal historians, it is obvious that in Poland, the foundation for the post-war reckoning related to the attitudes and behaviour during World War II was the Decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation of 31 August 1944 concerning “The Punishment of Fascist-Hitlerite Criminals Guilty of Murder and Ill-Treatment of the Civilian Population and Prisoners of War, and the Punishment of Traitors of the Polish Nation” (the August Decree).²² The August Decree stipulated the death penalty for murder, ill-treatment, and all forms of persecution targeting civilians and prisoners of war, as well as for denunciations made to the occupying authorities. It also prescribed imprisonment for cases of blackmail involving demands for ransom in exchange for withholding denunciation to the German authorities.²³ The basis

²⁰ For more on this topic, see M. Krotoszyński, *Modele sprawiedliwości tranzycyjnej*, Poznań, 2017.

²¹ E. Rączy, “Postawy Polaków,” pp. 178–180.

²² *Dziennik Ustaw* (hereinafter Dz.U.) 1944, no. 4, item 16; consolidated text: Dz.U. 1946, no. 69, item 377.

²³ A. Lityński, *Historia prawa Polski Ludowej*, Warsaw, 2013, p. 115; A. Lityński, *O prawie i sądach początków Polski Ludowej*, Białystok, 1999, pp. 63–64; P. Kładoczny, *Prawo jako narzędzie represji w Polsce Ludowej (1944–1956): Prawna analiza kategorii przestępstw przeciwko państwu*, Warsaw, 2004, pp. 176–180;

for its issuance was the legislator's assumption that the Criminal Code of 1932 did not provide a sufficient legal basis for the criminal assessment of the nature and scale of the crimes committed by the German occupiers during World War II. Although the decree violated the principle of *lex retro non agit* and was of low legislative quality, it was eagerly awaited by the public after six years of war.²⁴ It is estimated that between 1944 and 1960, 21,000 sentences were handed down in cases involving crimes under the August Decree.²⁵

In its original wording, the August Decree under Article 1 stipulated the death sentence for "Any person who, acting to the benefit of the German occupying authorities: (a) took part or takes part in the commission of murder of civilians or prisoners of war, in their ill-treatment or persecution, (b) acted or acts to the detriment of persons residing in the territory of the Polish State, in particular through the capture or transport of persons sought or persecuted by the occupying authorities for whatever reason." The provision required deliberate action or intent. At the beginning of 1945, this provision was edited and its wording was slightly amended: "Any person who, acting to the benefit of the German occupying authorities, acted or acts to the detriment of persons residing in the territory of the Polish State, in particular through the capture or transport of persons sought or persecuted by the occupying authorities for whatever reason (excluding the pursuit of common crimes), by their denunciation, capture or transport, shall be subject to the death penalty." Article 1 of the August Decree received its final wording in December 1946: "Any person who, acting to the benefit of the authorities of the German state or its ally: (1) took part or takes part in the commission of murder of civilians, military persons, or prisoners of war, in their ill-treatment or persecution; (2) by denunciation or capture acted to the detriment of persons

L. Kubicki, "Zbrodnie z okresu II wojny światowej w świetle prawa polskiego," in *System prawa karnego: O przestępstwach w szczególności*, vol. 4, part 1, eds. I. Andrejew, L. Kubicki, and J. Waszczyński, Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow-Gdańsk-Łódź, 1985, pp. 153-157; L. Kubicki, *Zbrodnie wojenne w świetle prawa polskiego*, Warsaw, 1963, pp. 37, 63-67.

²⁴ R. Gieroń, *Półmrok. Procesy karne w sprawie przestępstw okupacyjnych popełnionych przez chłopów wobec Żydów w województwie krakowskim*, Cracow, 2020, pp. 84-86. In this volume, Roman Gieroń discusses how the August Decree evolved through legislative changes (*ibid.*, pp. 87-89).

²⁵ A. Kornbluth, "„Jest wielu Kainów wśród nas”. Polski wymiar sprawiedliwości a Zagłada, 1944-1956," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 9 (2013), p. 161.

sought or persecuted by the authorities for political, national, religious, or racial reasons shall be subject to the death penalty.”²⁶

Several phrases used in the regulations required clarification in court practice. The concept of “taking part in the commission of murders” was understood broadly to include incitement and aiding, as well as participation in summary police courts.²⁷ In addition, judicial decisions have included in this category “not only the perpetrator’s direct actions that lead to the victims’ deaths and are closely linked to the physical act of murder, but also those acts which, although not directly causing the murder, nonetheless provide assistance or support to the principal offender.”²⁸

The August Decree used two new concepts, previously unknown in Polish criminal law – “capture” and “denunciation”. The interpretation of the first of these evolved in particular. Initially, in February 1947, the Supreme Court opted for a strict interpretation, focusing on the individual aspect of the act rather than on “participating” in the capture or denunciation. This was accompanied by an effort to limit the number of death sentences. However, representatives of the doctrine criticised this position and, under this criticism, the term “capture” began to be interpreted broadly. For example, in October 1949, the Supreme Court ruled that the term “capture” covered not only actions aimed at the actual physical capture, but also all other actions performed after the capture, aimed at handing the victim over to the occupying authority.²⁹

“Denunciation” caused fewer problems. Aside from “acting to the benefit of the authorities of the German state,” it was deemed enough to merely report a wanted or persecuted individual to the occupying forces, without regard for the consequences that might follow. It was not required that the perpetrator be directly intent on handing the person over for extermination – it was sufficient that the persons were being sought or persecuted by the Nazi authorities and that the perpetrator, by turning them in, was acting to their detriment.³⁰ A denunciation, as defined in

²⁶ A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne w polskim prawie karnym z lat 1944–1956*, Wrocław, 2002, pp. 73–74.

²⁷ A. Lityński, *O prawie i sądach*, p. 64.

²⁸ Judgment of the Supreme Court of 13 July 1965, ref. no. IV KR 98/65, OSNKW 1965/11/133, LEX no. 121217.

²⁹ A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne*, p. 76; R. Gieroń, *Półmrok*, pp. 304–306.

³⁰ A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne*, pp. 80–81.

Article 1(2) of the August Decree, could involve truthfully reporting someone to the occupying authorities or providing a testimony to these authorities. Such actions could also be classified as acts to the detriment under Article 2 of the same Decree.³¹ For instance, a false report to the secret state police concerning a person who actively supported the German authorities and committed offences under the August Decree does not fall within the scope of Article 1(2) of the Decree, as it lacks “the necessary conditions – either in terms of the subject matter or the status of the entity involved – that would indicate the act benefited the German state authorities.”³² A review of court practice leads to the conclusion that not every denunciation of “persons sought or persecuted by the occupying authorities for whatever reason” constituted “acting to the benefit of the authorities of the German state,” and therefore not every denunciation was punishable. An informer who – acting to the benefit of the authorities of the Third Reich or its ally – made a report to the secret state police, committed a crime under Article 1 or 2 of the August Decree, depending on its content. If the content was unknown, the act was to be classified under Article 2 of the August Decree as an act detrimental to the Polish state during the war with Germany.³³ Article 1(2) of the August Decree, as discussed above, was applied in the case of Michał Sokołowski.

The Denouncer and the Denunciation

Michał Sokołowski, born on 28 August 1911 in Sanok, held Polish citizenship and was of Polish nationality. He received no formal education and was illiterate. Beginning in 1927, he worked at the Sanok municipal office as a sewer worker, with a brief interruption for military service between 1935 and 1936. Mobilised again in September 1939, he returned from service to resume employment at the municipal office, this time as a stoker and cleaner. He married in 1936 and had two children. Following a divorce in 1945, he remarried and fathered three more children. Around that time, he also became a professional firefighter in Sanok,

³¹ Judgment of the Supreme Court of 25 November 1950, ref. no. K 1274/50, OSN(K) 1952/2/18, LEX no. 161078.

³² A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne*, p. 74.

³³ Judgment of the Supreme Court of 9 November 1951, ref.no. II K 308/51, OSN(K) 1952/2/17, LEX no. 161076.

a role he continued to perform until his arrest. During the post-war investigation, he stated that he came from a peasant background and was a member of the Polish United Workers' Party.³⁴

During the German occupation, Sokołowski was employed at the municipal office. In 1942, he was allocated a flat that had previously belonged to Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Faced with a monthly wage of just 15 zlotys, which was insufficient to support his family, he turned to trading goods. His merchandise included sugar, tobacco, cigarettes, lighter flints, saccharin, and bread. As a result of his unauthorised market activities in Sanok, he was repeatedly penalised by both the secret state police and the Blue Police.³⁵ He was first arrested in 1941 by the Blue Policemen and detained for five weeks for trading in tobacco. In 1943, he was arrested again for illegally storing leather for shoes, this time by criminal police officers. During a search, 20 kg of sugar, 2,000 cigarettes and 150 zlotys were found in his possession.³⁶

According to Sokołowski's account, given during the post-war investigation (in 1954 in Rzeszów), he was interrogated in German custody about the origin of the leather and other goods found. He did not want to reveal his source, so he was severely beaten and lost some of his teeth. To avoid further torture, he made up a story that he received the goods from an unknown person who was said to arrive from Cracow on Wednesdays and Fridays. For three consecutive weeks, the police took him to the railway station and the market square, where he was supposed to show them the person they were looking for. As these efforts were unsuccessful, the interrogations, accompanied by beatings, were resumed. The head of the criminal police (unfortunately, his personal details could not be established) finally abandoned the subject of the leather and, through the interpreter Stanisław Ślęzak,³⁷ offered Sokołowski his freedom on condition that he would indicate the

³⁴ *Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Rzeszowie* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Rzeszów, hereinafter AIPN Rz), 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Michał Sokołowski of 10 July 1954, pp. 22–24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25; AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Michał Sokołowski of 30 August 1954, p. 29.

³⁶ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Michał Sokołowski of 30 August 1954, p. 30.

³⁷ Stanisław Ślęzak, born in 1895 in Wysoka, Rzeszów County, served in the State Police from 1919 to 1939, eventually becoming head of the investigation unit at the County Police Headquarters in Sanok.

places where Jews were hiding. Sokołowski replied that he did not know of any such places, but promised to look for them, after which he was released without any formalities such as signing a cooperation agreement.³⁸

During his interrogation, Sokołowski asserted that, despite the assumed obligation, he had made no effort to search for Jews. He recounted that one of his clients, while buying bread, mentioned having seen lights on several occasions in the evenings and at night in the basement windows of a building located on what was then Adolf Hitler Street (now 3 Maja Street). Several weeks later, Sokołowski conveyed this information to Ślęzak, who subsequently prepared a memorandum dated 19 July 1943:

Michał Sokołowski, an informant residing at 17 Adolf Hitler Street in Sanok, reports that for some time, light has been observed in the basement of a tenement house located on Adolf Hitler Street, situated behind Marzyński's hairdressing salon and in the direction of Breckhod's shop. The basement in question, formerly occupied by Jews, is currently vacant. Further information may be obtained from a woman living directly opposite the building; although Sokołowski does not know her name, he is able to identify her.³⁹

This was to be his only encounter with the policeman. When asked about his motives for passing the information, Sokołowski admitted that he had hoped the goods disclosed and seized during the search would be returned to him, but they

During the German occupation, he continued his service in the criminal police. In 1953, the Voivodeship Court in Rzeszów sentenced him to two years in prison for his role – between 1927 and 1935 in Sanok – as police station commander and later as a member of the county investigation unit, in the persecution of individuals affiliated with the Communist Party of Poland (*Komunistyczna Partia Polski*) and the Polish Socialist Party – Left (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Lewica*), who had been arrested for their political activities (*Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* [Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, hereinafter AIPN], 0298/559, vol. 5, Report on the authorisation to initiate a registry case-file against Stanisław Ślęzak, dated 28 March 1952, p. 74; AIPN, 0298/559, Application for permission to arrest Stanisław Ślęzak, dated 22 September 1952, pp. 85–86; AIPN Rz, 052/221, Judgment of the Voivodeship Court in Rzeszów in a criminal case against Stanisław Ślęzak of 21 July 1953, p. 4).

³⁸ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Michał Sokołowski of 31 August 1954, pp. 32–33.

³⁹ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Copy of a police memo dated 19 July 1943, p. 79. Punctuation in the quotation has been corrected, and abbreviations have been expanded.

were not.⁴⁰ The day after passing on the information, Sokołowski learned at the market that criminal police officers had caught Jews at the location he had indicated.⁴¹ He denied receiving any remuneration for denouncing them.⁴² When asked about Gestapo collaborators in Sanok and their whereabouts, Sokołowski named three people who denounced Jews. He had personally witnessed the shameful activity of one of them:

I knew a few people who worked with the criminal police, turning Jews in – I even saw it happen myself. One time, Słysz came by my place to buy cigarettes. While we were chatting, he mentioned that some Jews were hiding in his building. I told him, “You should get down to some work and stop worrying about the Jews.” A couple of hours later, I saw him walking with three Gestapo officers toward his building. About half an hour after that, they came out with the Wajner family. I would like to point out that Słysz is currently in prison.⁴³

Regarding the credibility of Sokołowski’s explanations, which he gave as a suspect, I would like to point out that he was an uneducated, illiterate man who was intensively interrogated for several days about various circumstances by different interrogators, who repeatedly asked him about the same things, presumably in an attempt to detect any possible lies. Despite this, he changed his explanations only once – they concerned his alleged conviction by a court for trading and a six-month sentence served.⁴⁴ After the interrogator asked again about the length of his sentence and how much of it he had served, he quickly corrected his answer and admitted that his earlier statements – made in an at-

⁴⁰ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Michał Sokołowski of 31 August 1954, p. 33; AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Michał Sokołowski of 2 September 1952, pp. 39–40.

⁴¹ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Michał Sokołowski of 4 September 1954, p. 41.

⁴² AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Michał Sokołowski of 8 September 1954, p. 49.

⁴³ AIPN Rz, 358/161, p. 50. Unfortunately, checking these names in terms of post-war criminal liability yielded negative results.

⁴⁴ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Michał Sokołowski of 30 August 1954, p. 30.

tempt to defend himself – were not true.⁴⁵ The critical analysis of the source does not provide sufficient grounds to doubt the accuracy of his account. Furthermore, in post-war criminal proceedings against Sanok residents for actions harmful to civilians, Sokołowski's name does not appear among those identified as informants for the German police.⁴⁶ On this basis, I indirectly conclude that his cooperation with the police was, as he himself stated, incidental rather than permanent. In my opinion, this is a relevant issue, as it minimises or even excludes the possibility of Sokołowski committing other offences within the meaning of the August Decree.

Victims of the Denunciation

Wiktoria Kopiczak (after the war, she married and changed her surname to Kosar), a Polish woman who provided aid and shelter to the aforementioned Jews, was born in 1900 in Grabówka, Brzozów County. She completed five years of elementary school, did not learn any profession, and initially worked on a farm. Subsequently, for 12 years – until 1939 – she was employed as a domestic worker by Sara Wenig, a Jewish woman who owned a delicatessen shop.

Wenig owned two houses in Sanok, the smaller of which, consisting of two rooms and two kitchens, she transferred to a Polish woman shortly after the German invasion. In 1942, Sara Wenig's son, Eisig, prepared a hiding place for himself in this house. When Jews were deported from Sanok in September 1942, Eisig Wenig and his sister Ida Schreiber fled and turned to Kopiczak for help. She took them in, and they stayed with her for a total of eleven months, until they were caught by the criminal police in July 1943. The Jews hid in a room specially prepared for this purpose – a pantry (a cellar) attached to the house. The entrance to the pantry was in the kitchen, occupied by a Polish woman, and was blocked by a wardrobe. The woman bought food partly with money received from the Jews and partly with her own funds.

⁴⁵ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Michał Sokołowski of 1 September 1954, p. 37.

⁴⁶ For example, AIPN Rz, 00141/534/J, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józef Kubiak of 5 April 1950, pp. 6–7; AIPN Rz, 00141/534/J, Handwritten copy of the testimony of Józef Kubiak, an SD agent arrested in Sanok, August 1950, pp. 46–47.

On that fateful day, Kopiczak – according to her own account – returned from work after dark (she was looking after her neighbours' children), and as soon as she entered the flat, Eisig Wenig moved the wardrobe aside and stood in the kitchen. He said someone was walking around the house, and it was probably the criminal police. The woman returned to her neighbour, Janina Lurska, whose children she was looking after. An hour later, a policeman arrived at Lurska's flat and demanded that the cellar be opened. At Lurska's request, Kopiczak took the keys and went to open the door. The policeman pointed to her flat. After opening the door, five policemen entered. They proceeded straight to the wardrobe, shifted it aside, and pulled out Ida Schreiber and Eisig Wenig – then began beating them. Eisig Wenig managed to take advantage of the police officers' inattention and escaped, but two days later, he was shot dead by functionaries of the *Polnische Polizei*.⁴⁷ The police officers took Schreiber and Kopiczak to the prison in Sanok. The women spent five weeks in the same cell. After that time, the Jewish woman was shot,⁴⁸ while the Polish woman was indicted by the Special Court in Rzeszów in December 1943. The case files have been preserved and were included in the evidence in the post-war criminal trial against Sokołowski so that certain conclusions can be drawn on their basis.

The German criminal case files contain several notable documents, including a police memo originally written in Polish based on Sokołowski's oral report, its German translation, and admission orders to the security police prison in Sanok dated 20 July 1943, issued for 52-year-old Ida Schreiber and 43-year-old Wiktoria Kopiczak.⁴⁹ The latter was interrogated on the same day and provided more details about the case we are interested in.

Based on the explanations given, the following Jews arrived at Kopiczak's flat in September 1942: Ida Schreiber, Eisig Wenig, and a man named Lerner with his wife. They begged her earnestly for hospitality, promising high remuneration after the war and financing her current needs until its end. The Polish woman refused,

⁴⁷ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Official note dated 21 July 1943, p. 197. For more on the attitude of the Polish Blue Police towards the Holocaust, see T. Frydel, "Zwykła organizacja, nadzwyczajna przemoc państwowa. Polska policja granatowa a Zagłada we wschodniej części dystryktu krakowskiego," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 17 (2021), pp. 99–134.

⁴⁸ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Wiktoria Kosar of 13 October 1954, pp. 75–76.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, *Aufnahmebefehl* vom 20 VII 1943, pp. 180–181.

stating that if they stayed with her, she would leave. That day, the Jews left the flat by climbing out of the window. Shortly afterwards, the Lerner were arrested by the police, while Schreiber and Wenig escaped. About two days later, Schreiber and Wenig knocked on the Polish woman's door again, asking for food and promising to leave later. Kopiczak, who had worked as a maid for the Jewish family for twelve years, was overcome with compassion and opened the door. The two of them began pleading with her to let them stay, promising to cover all expenses and assuring her that the situation would not last long – that things might soon change.⁵⁰ The Polish woman agreed, and the Jews occupied a small room, where the police later found them. According to her explanations, the woman did not charge them for shelter and used the money she received to buy food. The Jews cooked for themselves.

After listening to Kopiczak's free narrative testimony concerning the circumstances surrounding the hiding of Jews, the interrogator asked her about the possessions, valuables and money held by the Jews, as well as whether she knew that there was a penalty for "giving shelter to Jews." Kopiczak replied that the Jews had brought their belongings to the flat even before the issuance of the evacuation order for Sanok. She was unable to confirm whether these possessions included valuables or money, nor could she specify any amounts. She only knew about silver candlesticks, glasses, knives and forks. She also admitted that she was aware of the punishment for sheltering Jews.⁵¹

Ida Schreiber was interrogated on the same day. Her account differed in minor details. During the deportation, in addition to the Lerner, Wenig and Schreiber, the siblings' mother, Sara Wenig, also approached Kopiczak. After initially refusing, the Polish woman took them in for three days. After that time, everyone left her flat – the Lerner and Sara Wenig were subsequently arrested, while Eisig Wenig and Ida Schreiber managed to escape towards the village of Olchowce,

⁵⁰ These statements may reflect a significant degree of naivety or suggest the influence of rumours circulating among the population. Jafa Wallach observed that Jews were inclined to believe any "good news" that surfaced. For example, rumours spread that German forces were hastily retreating from the Eastern Front and that the war would end within days, or that portraits of Adolf Hitler had been removed from railway station walls – interpreted as signs of a revolution in Germany or the imminent end of the war. In each instance, these reports were ultimately proven false (J. Wallach, *Gorzka wolność*, pp. 62, 69).

⁵¹ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Vernehmungsprotokoll der Wiktoria Kopiczak vom 20 VII 1943, p. 185.

located east of Sanok. After several days of wandering around the fields, Schreiber returned to the flat and again asked Kopiczak to hide her. Shortly afterwards, her brother joined her. Schreiber reported that she gave the Polish woman money for food, newspapers, and tobacco, but not as payment for her help and shelter. She described in detail her own financial resources and valuables, including jewellery.⁵² She acknowledged that, before her deportation, she had entrusted various items – including pillows and clothing – to several individuals for safekeeping. The police subsequently searched these individuals' homes and sequestered these items.⁵³

The list of material evidence shows that at the time of her arrest, Schreiber had 26 dollars and 600 zlotys on her, as well as a man's pocket watch. In addition, many items were seized in her case, including women's and men's clothing, approximately 4 kg of wheat, a sewing machine and almost 4 kg of silver tableware.⁵⁴ The cellar where she was hiding with her brother was searched, and jewellery belonging to Eisig Wenig was found, including a gold bracelet, four gold rings, a gold dental crown and a silver cigarette case.⁵⁵ Items confiscated from Jews were partially transferred to the criminal police headquarters in Cracow – specifically jewellery – while other belongings, such as clothing, tableware, and similar goods, were designated as Jewish property and issued to the starost in Sanok.⁵⁶ In the summary police report, Kopiczak was accused of hiding Jews from September 1942 to 19 July 1943, as well as being Eisig Wenig's lover and "deserving the most severe punishment."⁵⁷ Interestingly, in the German version of the report, sentences referring to the sexual aspect and the severity of the punishment were underlined in pencil.⁵⁸

Dr Stepan Wytwycki, a defence counsel from Sanok, undertook the Polish woman's defence.⁵⁹ The indictment against Kopiczak, which was just over a page long, was submitted to the Special Court in Rzeszów on 23 December 1943.⁶⁰ It included a charge of knowingly providing shelter to Jews outside the designated

⁵² *Ibid.*, Vernehmungprotokoll der Ida Schreiber vom 20 VII 1943, pp. 189–190.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Search and sequestration report of 22 July 1943, pp. 200–201.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, List of material evidence from 20 July 1943, pp. 191–193, 195–196.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, List of material evidence from 20 July 1943, p. 197.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Notiz des Kriminalkommissariats in Sanok vom 26 XI 1943, p. 219.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Report of 23 July 1943, pp. 206–208.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Bericht vom 23 VII 1943, pp. 209–211.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vollmacht vom 7 X 1943, p. 224.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Anklageschrift vom 15 XII 1943, pp. 222–223.

Jewish residential quarter, in Sanok, between September 1942 and July 1943. The act was classified under Article 4b of the Third General Governorate Residence Restriction of 15 October 1941, in conjunction with the Police Regulation of 10 November 1943 on the Establishment of Jewish Residential Quarters in the Districts of Radom, Cracow, and Galicia.⁶¹

The hearing took place in Sanok on 24 February 1944 and lasted less than an hour and a half. The case was heard before the Special Court in Rzeszów by the following panel: District Court (*Landgericht*) Director Ernst Pooth served as presiding judge, with Regional Court (*Amtsgericht*) Councillor Heinrich Stümpel and Judge Dr Otto Woltereck acting as associate judges. Senior Prosecutor Dr Rudi Naumann participated in the proceedings, and Bailiff Hagelstein was responsible for recording the minutes. The Sondergericht Reichshof sentenced the Polish woman to death, attributing to her the act described in the indictment. In the grounds for judgment, it was noted that she did not act out of greed, which was probably taken into account later, during the pardon proceedings, which ended with the sentence being commuted to two years' imprisonment.⁶²

Unfortunately, due to a lack of sources, I was unable to present the circumstances surrounding the decision to exercise the right of clemency. Kopiczak lived to see the arrival of the Red Army. After getting married, now as Wiktoria Kosar, she testified in the post-war trial against Sokołowski, even though she did not know him at all. Neither her maiden name nor her married name appears among the

⁶¹ Dritte Verordnung über Aufenthaltsbeschränkungen im Generalgouvernement vom 15. Oktober 1941, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 1941, no. 99, p. 595. Article 4b of the Third Residence Restriction Regulation read as follows: "(1) Jews who leave their designated quarter without authorisation are liable to the death penalty. Anyone who knowingly hides Jews shall be subject to the same penalty. (2) Inciters and helpers shall be punished in the same way as the perpetrator; an attempted act shall be punished as an accomplished act. In milder cases, heavy imprisonment or prison may be adjudicated. (3) Sentencing shall be carried out by the Special Courts." For more on the practice of applying the Third General Governorate Residence Restriction Regulation, see J. Vöcker, "Criminality in the Face of Life and Death: Crime and Criminal Prosecution as a Part of Everyday Life in Warsaw Ghetto," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 71 (2022), pp. 201–234; K. Graczyk, "Die dritte Verordnung über Aufenthaltsbeschränkungen im Generalgouvernement vom 15. Oktober 1941. Entscheidungen der Staatsanwaltschaft und der Sondergerichte zum unbefugten Verlassen eines jüdischen Wohnbezirks," *Journal on European History of Law* 2 (15) (2024), pp. 42–54; A. Bartnicka and K. Graczyk, "In the Majesty of the Law? Jewish Residents of Warsaw in the Face of German Occupation Ordinances and Activities of Sondergericht Warschau – Part II," *Miscellanea Historico-Iuridica* 2 (23) (2024), pp. 517–544; K. Graczyk, *Niemieckie sądy specjalne w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 2025, pp. 265–313.

⁶² AIPN Rz, 358/161, Urteil in der Strafsache gegen Wiktoria Kopiczak vom 24 II 1944, pp. 238–240.

recipients of a medal of the Righteous Among the Nations. The above case of repression for helping the Jewish population has not yet been described in literature, in particular it has not been included in the following publications: *Rejestr faktów represji na obywatelach polskich za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej* (Register of Acts of Repression Against Polish Citizens for Aiding the Jewish Population During World War II),⁶³ *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945* (Accounts of Assistance Provided to Jews by Poles During 1939–1945),⁶⁴ and *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej* (Sanctions for Aiding Jews in Occupied Polish Territories During World War II).⁶⁵

The Criminal Trial of Michał Sokołowski

In August 1954, Sokołowski was arrested, and from then on, legal proceedings involving him continued, the essence of which has been discussed above. In mid-October 1954, the investigation against him was completed, and Sokołowski did not request any further investigation. At that time, the investigating officer of the Voivodeship Public Security Department in Rzeszów, Warrant Officer Julian Kozioł, drew up an indictment. Sokołowski was accused of:

On 19 July 1943, in Sanok, acting to the benefit of the authorities of the German state as a criminal police informant, he denounced the place of hiding of Ida Schreiber and Eisig Wenig, who were persecuted for national and racial reasons. As a result of this denunciation, they were captured and executed by shooting. At the same time, he caused the capture and detention of Wiktoria Kosar, who had been sheltering Ida Schreiber and Wenig in her home. She was subsequently sentenced to death by a German summary court for providing aid to persons of Jewish nationality.⁶⁶

⁶³ *Rejestr faktów represji na obywatelach polskich za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej*, eds. A. Namysło and G. Berendt, Warsaw, 2014.

⁶⁴ *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków*.

⁶⁵ *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, eds. M. Grądzka-Rejak and A. Namysło, Warsaw, 2019.

⁶⁶ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Act of indictment against Michał Sokołowski of 16 October 1954, pp. 88–91. In the indictment, due to a faulty translation from German, the incorrect name of the Special Court in Rzeszów was repeated, describing it as a summary court.

This deed was classified under Article 1(2) of the August Decree. In accordance with the procedure at the time, the indictment was approved by the prosecutor of the Voivodeship Prosecutor's Office in Rzeszów and then sent to the Voivodeship Court in Rzeszów.⁶⁷

The defence was undertaken by Józef Szczepanik, a defence counsel from Rzeszów. He requested that several witnesses be heard who were to testify about the defendant's reliable fulfilment of his professional and civic duties, his hostile attitude towards the occupiers, and his involvement in illegal trade during the occupation, for which he was arrested and forced to agree to inform on others in exchange for his freedom. This request was partially granted. It was rejected insofar as it coincided with the testimony of other witnesses.⁶⁸

The hearing before the Voivodeship Court in Rzeszów, convened in a panel composed of Judge Marian Toczyński as presiding judge and lay judges Amelia Jamróz and Ludwik Kotula, took place on 26 November 1954. The proceedings were attended by Aleksander Jędras, Voivodeship Prosecutor in Rzeszów, and Court Clerk Bronisław Barłowski. Upon presentation of the evidence, the prosecution upheld the indictment in full and requested the imposition of a severe penalty, whilst the defence petitioned for a reclassification of the offence under Article 2 of the August Decree⁶⁹ and the imposition of the most lenient punishment. In his final statement, the defendant agreed with the defence counsel's position.⁷⁰

The court found Sokołowski guilty of the offence as charged, except that he was not deemed to have acted as an informer for the criminal police. He was sentenced to five years and one month of imprisonment, along with the forfeiture of his public and honorary civil rights for two years. The modification of the factual findings relative to the indictment was presumably influenced by the testimony of

⁶⁷ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Decision on temporary detention of 5 August 1954, p. 15; *ibid.*, Decision to close the investigation of 16 October 1954, pp. 83–84; *ibid.*, Report concerning the suspect's review of investigative materials dated 18 October 1954, p. 87.

⁶⁸ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Request for evidence of 5 November 1954, p. 100; *ibid.*, Decision of 5 November 1954, p. 102.

⁶⁹ Article 2 of the August Decree reads as follows: "Any person who, acting to the benefit of the authorities of the German state or its ally, acted to the detriment of the Polish State, a Polish legal entity, civilians, military persons, or prisoners of war – under circumstances other than those specified in Article 1 – shall be subject to a penalty of imprisonment for no less than three years, life imprisonment, or the death penalty."

⁷⁰ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Minutes of the main hearing of 26 November 1954, pp. 131–139.

Stanisław Ślęzak, who stated that reports submitted by informers were not signed with their real names but with pseudonyms. Consequently, Sokołowski was not classified as a formal informer, but rather as an “ordinary” informant.⁷¹ His act was classified under Article 1(2) of the August Decree, that is in accordance with the indictment. The court refrained from imposing the death penalty, exercising its discretion to apply extraordinary mitigation of the sentence. This decision was based on several extenuating circumstances, including the defendant’s lack of prior criminal record, limited education, documented assistance to the Jewish population during the occupation, working-class background, severe material hardship experienced during the war, and the strain of providing for a large family.⁷²

The sentence was set to run from 26 November 1954 to 5 September 1959. The defendant was initially incarcerated in Rzeszów and subsequently transferred to Wiśnicz. In April 1956, he was granted amnesty, resulting in a reduction of his prison term to two years, six months, and fifteen days, and the forfeiture of his public and honorary civil rights for one year. In July 1956, Sokołowski was released on parole.⁷³

Conclusion

The motives of Kopiczak (Kosar) and Sokołowski deserve closer attention. In offering shelter, the woman was driven by humanitarian reasons and a sense of gratitude towards her former employers. Her relationship with Eisig Wenig may also have played a role – though likely a secondary one, since she never mentioned it – as did the promise of payment after the war. As Elżbieta Rączy points out, pre-war acquaintance was the most common reason Poles helped Jews, and Kopiczak’s (Kosar’s) case fits that pattern.⁷⁴

Although Sokołowski cannot be classified as an extortioner, since his actions were not driven by greed or an intent to blackmail, he nonetheless proved to be a damaging denouncer. According to the findings of the aforementioned scholar,

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁷² AIPN Rz, 358/161, Judgment of the Voivodeship Court in Rzeszów in the case of Michał Sokołowski of 26 November 1954, pp. 142–144.

⁷³ AIPN Rz, 358/161, Decision of the Voivodeship Prosecutor in Poznań of 30 April 1956, p. 166; *ibidem*, Decision of the Voivodeship Court in Rzeszów of 18 July 1956, p. 169.

⁷⁴ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów*, p. 101.

denunciation accounted for half of the cases in which Jews in hiding were exposed in the Rzeszów region.⁷⁵ The tragic death of Jews arrested after being denounced, and the sentencing of a Polish woman to death, were probably the outcome of Sokołowski's primitivism and intellectual limitations. Fear may have been a subjective factor influencing his attitude. Sokołowski was probably afraid of further interrogations combined with the use of coercive measures, which motivated him to denounce the Jews – an act that, in his perception, removed the personal threat to himself. In legal terms, Sokołowski acted with conditional intent; by making the denunciation, he sought to fulfil the agreements made under duress with the German police. However, his actions can be described as harmful overzealousness, as it does not appear that Sokołowski would have been punished for failing to report the incident. From this point of view, his conviction was entirely justified. It may constitute a typical example of subsumption under Article 1(2) of the August Decree.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 112–113.

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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.¹ 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 sympathising 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.² 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

¹ J. Eisler, *Czterdzieści pięć lat, które wstrząsnęły Polską. Historia polityczna PRL*, Warsaw, 2018, p. 69.

² 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.³

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,⁴ i.e. in areas most heavily influenced by Soviet forces and communist authorities.” On the same day, in

³ K. Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, komunizm: Anatomia półprawd 1939–68*, Warsaw, 1992, pp. 112–113.

⁴ 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 Krakowskim 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 “Tysiąc”: “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.”⁵

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).⁶ Conflicts of a political and ideological nature were accompanied by tensions between different social milieus.⁷ In addition, classic common banditry, which had already been a serious problem for the pro-

⁵ M. Korkuć, “„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.

⁶ *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.

⁷ 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.⁸ Perpetrators of specified crimes caught red-handed could be punished by death.⁹

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.¹⁰

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.¹¹ 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.¹² Soviet soldiers' treatment of Poland as a conquered land, along with the terror of repression,¹³ gave rise to spontaneously formed self-

⁸ S. Piwowarski, *Okręg Krakowski Służby Zwycięstwu Polski – Związku Walki Zbrojnej – Armii Krajowej: Wybrane zagadnienia organizacyjne, personalne i bojowe*, Cracow, 1994, pp. 57–59, 61.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ M. Korkuć, "Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce...", p. 161. Information based on reports by the commander of the Home Army's Cracow District, Colonel Przemysław Nakoniecznikoff-Klukowski.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 171–173. On 20 April 1945, the NKVD and SMERSH arrested Colonel Przemysław Nakoniecznikoff-Klukowski.

¹³ *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."¹⁴

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."¹⁵ 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."¹⁶ 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."¹⁷ 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

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.

¹⁴ M. Korkuć, „Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce...”, p. 256.

¹⁵ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, *Podziemie poakowskie na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1945–1948*, Cracow 2002, pp. 42–68, 78–99.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ Quoted after: M. Korkuć, „Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce...”, p. 161.

seek contact with underground activists and opposition figures, thereby gathering material for pacifications and arrests.”¹⁸

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.¹⁹

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,²⁰ 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.

¹⁸ P. Kołakowski, *Pretorianie Stalina: Sowietkie 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).

¹⁹ Quoted after: R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, “Najtrudniej było złożyć broń,” a supplement to *Gazeta Lokalna* and *Gazeta w Radomiu*, August 1995, p. 5.

²⁰ 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.²¹

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.²²

The Guidelines also include an analysis of the political reality at the time:

²¹ 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.

²² “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.²³

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."²⁴

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,²⁵ both civilian

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 223–224.

²⁵ 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.²⁶

It is difficult to say why (based on what evidence or premises) such a hard accusation was made against the Jewish population.²⁷ 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).²⁸

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 225–226. Cf. J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie: Przejawy wrogości wobec Żydów w latach 1944–1947*, Warsaw, 2021, p. 160.

²⁷ "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).

²⁸ 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.²⁹

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 “Beteħa,” commander of the 3rd Company, 4th Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment of the Home Army.³⁰

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).³¹

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.

²⁹ “Wytyczne Komendanta Okręgu AK Kraków,” pp. 217–219.

³⁰ 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.

³¹ 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)³² 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 Korkuć, mentioned earlier, noted, "the spring escalation of the conflict certainly resulted in a greater number

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).

³² 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.³³

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.³⁴ This sentiment intensified the already charged emotional state of the underground soldiers.³⁵

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 protection³⁶ –

³³ M. Korkuć, „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.

³⁴ 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).

³⁵ “[...] 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).

³⁶ 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.³⁷

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."³⁸ Members of the unit took part in a collection of money to "buy out two Home Army officers" (Franciszek Makuch "Zawierucha" and Bronisław Ściupido

³⁷ R. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Podziemie antykomunistyczne wobec Żydów po 1945 roku," pp. 251–253.

³⁸ 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]),³⁹ who were associated with the unit of “Grom” and belonged to the local structure of the Military Security Organisation (*Wojskowa Organizacja Bezpieczeństwa*).⁴⁰ It can be assumed that Second Lieutenant Kubicki’s unit was associated with this organisation (it is difficult to determine for how long).⁴¹

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,”⁴² “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.”⁴³

³⁹ “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 Voivodeship 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.

⁴⁰ 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.

⁴¹ AIPN Ki, 022/72, Characteristics no. 106 (ed. Z. Cieszkowski), Kielce, 1976, p. 8.

⁴² “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.

⁴³ 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 Palka ‘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 informants⁴⁴ – 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.⁴⁵ 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.”⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷

The analysed files show that Second Lieutenant “Grom” maintained contacts with Colonel Bolesław Nieczuja-Ostrowski and Captain Kazimierz Przybysławski, 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.”⁴⁸

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.

⁴⁴ 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.

⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ 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.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter from Witold Świerczyński to the Citizens’ Militia Voivodeship Headquarters in Kielce, Cracow, 6 February 1978, p. 27.

⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹

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.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ 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.

⁵⁰ 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,⁵¹ 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.”⁵² 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.”⁵³

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.⁵⁴

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

⁵¹ AIPN Ki, 022/193, Characteristics no. 275 (ed. J. Rogala), n.d., pp. 2, 4, 6–7.

⁵² 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.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Zbigniew Stawowczyk, Kielce, 4 January 1950, p. 189.

⁵⁴ 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.”⁵⁵

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’⁵⁶ – were murdered, and three others were drowned in the river by the Security from Słaboszów and Miechów, in collaboration with the Citizens’ Militia (MO).”⁵⁷

The killings of Kula and Konieczny, along with the discovery of additional victims – men who had been “shot and then drowned in Nidzica” – sparked

⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁶ AIPN Ki, 022/72, Characteristics no. 106 (ed. Z. Cieszkowski), Kielce, 1976, pp. 27, 34.

⁵⁷ 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.”⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ 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.

⁵⁹ *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 Waław from Miechów carried out [an attack] on Stefan Ciupak and Zbigniew Zieliński, residents of the village of Jerzykowice,⁶⁰ 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 PPS-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

⁶⁰ 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, Słaboszków Mun[icipality], Miechów Co[unty]. It follows that the perpetrators were the above-mentioned individuals. I request your intervention in this matter.⁶¹

Following the receipt of a report from the MO County Headquarters, Franciszek Sapiecha, 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 Śladkowski and Stanisław Wołoszyn “had been listed in criminal records prior to the war.”⁶²

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.⁶³ Postwar political tensions and a pervasive sense of threat demanded heightened attention to both livelihood and personal safety. Daily life revolved

⁶¹ 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.

⁶² *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.

⁶³ 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 Piekarz, was shot dead.⁶⁴

According to this scholar, the attack was carried out by the post-Home Army unit under the command of Second Lieutenant Leon⁶⁵ 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."⁶⁶ 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."⁶⁷ Next, the author quoted an excerpt from the analysed minutes:

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 202. The author referred to the testimonies of two Jews, which can be found in the *Działoszyce Memorial Book*.

⁶⁵ His name was actually Apolinary, but in the Security Department documents he was referred to as "Leon."

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁶⁷ *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.⁶⁸

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.⁶⁹ 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 Piekarz, 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

of Stępcice, Lipówka, Opatkowice, Sancygniów and Chmielów. [...] Tadeusz Nawrot's account: “Then they took me, Henryk Wójcik and Antoni Błajszczak from Opatkowice. They drove us to Ślaboszków. 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 Ślaboszków, 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).

⁶⁸ *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.

⁶⁹ *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.⁷⁰

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.⁷¹ 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.”⁷² 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.”⁷³ 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.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ 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.

⁷¹ J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, p. 349. “In Działoszyce, Pińczów Co[unt], 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).

⁷² J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, p. 349.

⁷³ 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.

⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵

Julian Kwiek, like Dariusz Libionka, believes that the attack on Jews in Działoszyce was carried out by the “Grom” unit.⁷⁶ 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 Jews⁷⁷ was Second Lieutenant Leopold Kubicki. The direct perpetrators

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.

⁷⁵ 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).

⁷⁶ J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, p. 349.

⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸

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."⁷⁹

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

⁷⁸ 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.*).

⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰

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."⁸¹ 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.⁸² 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

⁸⁰ 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 Korkuć 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. Korkuć, "Zbrodnia pod Krościenkiem 2/3 maja 1946 roku," *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 42 [2015], p. 116).

⁸¹ 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.

⁸² *Ibid.*

“the staff of the Public Security Department in Pińczów, as the work of the PPR depends on it.”⁸³

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? ⁸⁴ The same issue applies to the operative case file conducted against Second Lieutenant “Grom.”⁸⁵

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”⁸⁶ – 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

⁸³ 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.

⁸⁴ AIPN Ki, 022/72, Characteristics no. 106 (ed. Z. Cieszkowski), Kielce 1976.

⁸⁵ 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.

⁸⁶ It is about seizing control of Działoszyce and gathering intelligence on the situation beforehand.

on the activity of Second Lieutenant “Grom” and his partisans.⁸⁷ 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.⁸⁸ Testimony given under duress, under the threat of death,⁸⁹ 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 hearings⁹⁰ – precluded a comparative analysis.

⁸⁷ See M. Korkuć, “Zbrodnie 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. Wiśń 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.

⁸⁸ 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).

⁸⁹ 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.

⁹⁰ 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,⁹¹ but also a broader pattern of inadequate documentation concerning numerous criminal cases – including the incomplete recording of anti-Semitic offences.⁹²

⁹¹ 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.

⁹² 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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**BETWEEN “CAPTURE” AND “ACTING TO THE DETRIMENT.”
A VOICE IN THE DISCUSSION ON POST-WAR RECKONING
WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SO-CALLED
THIRD PHASE OF THE HOLOCAUST. A LEGAL AND HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE**

Summary

The article examines the context and rationale behind the Supreme Court’s decision of 18 October 1949, which broadened the definition of “capture” and influenced the legal treatment of individuals convicted in the late 1940s and early 1950s for various forms of involvement in the capturing of Jews between 1942 and 1945. This issue is primarily illustrated through the post-war criminal case of Adolf Kogut and Józef Szczepan, who were accused of informing the so-called Blue Police in Radgoszcz during the German occupation about the capture of four Jewish women in the village of Gruszów Wielki. They then transported three Blue Policemen by cart to the location, where the women were executed on the spot. The article explores the post-war legal proceedings and provides a microhistorical analysis of the deed committed by Kogut and Szczepan. This method

aims to shed light on the distinctive nature of trials concerning this category of wartime crimes and the complex issue of the appropriate punishment for individuals who, under occupation, were compelled to participate in various activities related to the capture of people fleeing the Holocaust.

Keywords

August trials • Adolf Kogut • General Governorate • Józef Szczepan • Supreme Court's decision of 18 October 1949 • post-war reckoning • trials • third phase of the Holocaust • capture • acting to the detriment of

In post-war Poland, under communist rule, the basis for prosecuting crimes committed during World War II was the Decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, PKWN), announced on 13 September 1944, and commonly referred to as the “August Decree.”¹

Under this legal act, prosecutions were initiated against a range of individuals, including officials of the occupation-era administration and police forces, concentration camp personnel, members of the *Polnische Polizei* (commonly known as the Blue Police), informers, and even soldiers and activists from the Polish underground and independence movements – accused of collaborating with the German occupiers. The newly established authorities employed wartime retribution not only as a means of asserting their legitimacy, but also as a tool to suppress political opposition, often by discrediting their rivals.²

¹ Its full name is the Decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation of 31 August 1944 concerning “The Punishment of Fascist-Hitlerite Criminals Guilty of Murder and Ill-Treatment of the Civilian Population and Prisoners of War, and the Punishment of Traitors of the Polish Nation” (*Dziennik Ustaw* [hereinafter *Dz.U.*] 1944, no. 4, item 16). Although this act lacked a legal basis and was issued by an unauthorised body, it nonetheless remains part of Polish law and continues to serve as the foundation for prosecuting war criminals. See L. Nowakowski, “Zasady odpowiedzialności za zbrodnie wojenne i zbrodnie przeciwko ludzkości,” in *Zbrodnie przeszłości. Opracowania i materiały prokuratorów IPN*, ed. R. Niedzielko, vol. 2: *Ludobójstwo*, Warsaw, 2008, p. 100.

² A. Machnikowska, *Wymiar sprawiedliwości w Polsce w latach 1944–1950*, Gdańsk, 2008, p. 311; P. Machcewicz and A. Paczkowski, *Wina, kara, polityka. Rozliczenia ze zbrodniami II wojny światowej*, Cracow, 2021, p. 255; A. Dziurok, *Osądzenie przestępstw okresu II wojny światowej przez Specjalny Sąd Karny w Katowicach w latach 1945–1946*, Katowice–Warsaw, 2024, pp. 357, 382.

The trials also encompassed individuals charged with crimes against the Jewish population. While recent years have seen a growing body of literature addressing the post-war reckoning in Poland with the Holocaust, a comprehensive account of this complex issue has not yet been written.³ Existing research indicates that, in addition to informers and extortionists, former so-called village officials – such as village leaders, their deputies, members of peasant guards, hostages, messengers, and individuals assigned to provide transport – were frequently prosecuted in group trials. These individuals had, several years earlier, carried out duties imposed by the German occupiers, which included various activities connected with the search for or capture of Jews. The exact proportion of those tried for crimes against the Jewish population who belonged to this category of village functionaries remains unknown, though it appears to have been considerable.⁴

To understand and evaluate the post-war trials of individuals involved in rounding up Jewish fugitives, one must examine how the interpretation of the

³ These are mainly regional works and case studies, recent works include, among others, A. Kornbluth, „Jest wielu Kainów pośród nas”. Polski wymiar sprawiedliwości a Zagłada, 1944–1956,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 9 (2013), pp. 157–172; M. Szpytma, „Zbrodnie na ludności żydowskiej w Markowej w 1942 roku w kontekście postępowań karnych z lat 1949–1954,” *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 40 (2014), pp. 39–66; T. Domański, „Proces z dekretu sierpniowego policjantów granatowych z Wodzisławia oskarżonych o popełnienie zbrodni na Żydach,” *Polish-Jewish Studies* 1 (2020), pp. 77–105; R. Gieroń, *Półmrok. Procesy karne w sprawie przestępstw okupacyjnych popełnionych przez chłopów wobec Żydów w województwie krakowskim*, Cracow, 2020; M. Roth, „Urzednicy przed sądem – ekstradycja nazistowskich zbrodniarzy z Niemiec i ich procesy w Polsce,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 19 (2023), pp. 259–276; D. Libionka, „Zaprowadzanie sprawiedliwości. Śledztwa i postępowania sądowe wobec funkcjonariuszy aparatu okupacyjnego i Polaków w służbie niemieckiej z Kreis Miechów,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 19 (2023), pp. 277–324; A. Bikont, „W sprawie zamordowania rodziny mojej...”. Jak Icek Lerner z Komarówki Podlaskiej szukał sprawiedliwości i jej nie znalazł,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 19 (2023), pp. 355–376; M. Korkuć, „Tak przyznaję się do winy”. Zabójstwo we wsi Rogów 1 lutego 1943 r. Studium przypadku,” in *Martyrologia wsi polskich w pamięci historycznej*, eds. T. Sikora *et al.*, Kielce, 2021, pp. 73–101; it is also worth mentioning an article by Andrzej Rzepliński, „Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej? Sprawy karne oskarżonych o wymordowanie Żydów w Jedwabnem w świetle zasady rzetelnego procesu,” in *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1: *Studia*, eds. P. Machcewicz and K. Persak, Warsaw, 2002, pp. 353–459. Against this backdrop, the works of Gabriel Finder and Aleksander Prusin (G.N. Finder and A.V. Prusin, *Justice behind the Iron Curtain. Nazis on Trial in Communist Poland*, Toronto, 2018), and Andrew Kornbluth (A. Kornbluth, *The August Trials. The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland*, Cambridge, 2021), which aspire to monographic status, stand out. The first publication, a study of post-war trials of German war criminals in Poland, provides readers with information on, among other things, the contribution of Polish Jews to these proceedings, while the second publication focuses on the prosecution of crimes committed by non-Jewish Polish citizens against Jews during the German occupation.

⁴ Cf. R. Gieroń, *Półmrok. Procesy karne*, p. 190.

term “capture” (as used in Article 1(2) of the August Decree)⁵ evolved after the war and influenced judicial decisions. Leszek Kubicki and Andrzej Pasek pointed to three periods of interpretation of this term, which were characterised by: (1) a strict interpretation, (2) a broad interpretation, and (3) a so-called moderate interpretation.⁶ The conclusion of the first period – namely, the era of strict interpretation – was associated with a decision issued on 18 October 1949 by the Supreme Court, sitting in an extended panel of seven judges, during a closed session in Łódź. In that ruling, it was acknowledged, *inter alia*, that “The concept of capture includes not only activities aimed at physically apprehending a person, but also all subsequent activities taken to transfer the captured individual to the occupying authority.”⁷

This article explores the circumstances and rationale behind the decision mentioned above, along with its impact on the trials of individuals convicted in the late 1940s and early 1950s for various forms of involvement in the persecution of Jews between 1942 and 1945. The issue is illustrated primarily through the post-war criminal case of Adolf Kogut and Józef Szczepan, who were accused of informing functionaries of the so-called Blue Police in Radgoszcz – during the German occupation – about the capture of four Jewish women in the village of Gruszów Wielki. They then transported three Blue Policemen to the site by cart,⁸ where those functionaries executed the women on the spot. This case is worth a detailed

⁵ The final wording of the provision referred to as Article 1(2) was established on 10 December 1946: “Article 1(2): Any person who, acting to the benefit of the authorities of the German state or any ally, by denunciation or capture acted to the detriment of persons sought or persecuted by the authorities for political, national, religious, or racial reasons shall be subject to the death penalty” (Dz.U. 1946, no. 69, item 376). It is worth adding that in the first version of the August decree, in Article 1(b), “capture” was linked to “transport” – “Any person who, acting to the benefit of the German occupying authorities, acted or acts to the detriment of persons residing in the territory of the Polish State, in particular through the capture or transport of persons sought or persecuted by the occupying authorities for whatever reason (excluding the pursuit of common crimes), shall be subject to the death penalty” (Dz.U. 1944, no. 4, item 16); in the February amendment, the phrase “denunciation, capture or transport” was used (Dz.U. 1945, no. 7, item 29), and it was not until the December decree that the phrase “denunciation and capture” was used.

⁶ With regard to the first period, Leszek Kubicki wrote about a “particularly narrow interpretation” or a “restrictive interpretation” (L. Kubicki, *Zbrodnie wojenne w świetle prawa polskiego*, Warsaw, 1963, pp. 115–120). Cf. A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne w polskim prawie karnym z lat 1944–1956*, Wrocław, 2002, pp. 75–80.

⁷ *Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie* (National Archives in Cracow, hereinafter AN Kr), 29/439/1362, Decision of the Supreme Court, Łódź, 18 October 1949, pp. 54v–55.

⁸ I will write more about the functionaries who murdered the Jewish women later in this article.

analysis,⁹ because it was during these criminal proceedings that a legal question arose, leading to the aforementioned decision of 18 October 1949 containing the extended interpretation of the term “capture.”

This article examines the post-war reckoning through the lens of criminal justice, offering a microhistorical perspective on the crime committed by Kogut and Szczepan. By reconstructing the events that took place in Gruszów Wielki – with the use of the available sources – it becomes possible to highlight the moral and practical dilemmas faced by members of the rural community within the broader framework of mechanisms established by the German occupiers in the General Governorate (GG) to “catch” Jews in hiding. My focus lies in understanding how the defendants became entangled in these imposed circumstances and how their deeds were judged in the post-war legal process. This approach aims to shed light on the distinctive nature of trials concerning this category of wartime crimes and to explore the issue of adequacy in sentencing individuals who, under occupation, were compelled to engage in activities involving Jewish fugitives. Ultimately, it seeks to address the question of whether Polish perpetrators of crimes against Jews were treated with exceptional leniency by the courts.¹⁰

In this article, I have used archival materials found in the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance and the National Archives in Cracow, as well as court rulings from the period under analysis.

The Third Phase of the Holocaust

In 1942, with the start of deportations to extermination camps and the liquidation of successive ghettos (as part of Operation “Reinhardt”)¹¹ in the General

⁹ Although the reference number of this case (the old reference number K 40/50) was included in the list of sources used in Jan Grabowski’s work on Dąbrowa County, there is no description of this story in the book (J. Grabowski, *Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945. Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu*, Warsaw, 2011, p. 247).

¹⁰ Cf. A. Kornbluth, *The August Trials*, pp. 274–275. The author of this work argues that the courts were exceptionally lenient towards the perpetrators of these crimes. It is worth noting that he did not present the realities of the occupation in the General Governorate in great detail. See a critical review of this publication: A. Dziurok, “Temida w służbie ideologii, narodu polskiego czy sprawiedliwości? Sądownictwo polskie wobec zbrodni na Żydach popełnionych w okresie II wojny światowej: Andrew Kornbluth, *The August Trials. The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London 2021,” *Polish-Jewish Studies* 5 (2024), pp. 432–449.

¹¹ Operation “Reinhardt” formed a component of the *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Final Solution to the Jewish Question). It was implemented by the German occupying authorities within the General Gov-

Governorate, a large group of Jewish fugitives appeared in rural areas, trying to survive. German authorities were aware of this and implemented measures aimed at “rounding them up.” In addition to German police functionaries and auxiliary services mobilised for action in the ghettos, the “rounding up” of fugitives also involved, as Dariusz Libionka wrote, local administration, namely “mayors, village leaders and firemen, and in some areas of the Cracow District, members of the Baudienst.”¹² The researcher added: “The roundups of Jews who had escaped during the operation – carried out with the forced involvement of the rural population – were organised not only by the police, but also by certain starosts.”¹³ Along with the deportation operations, special police pursuit groups (punitive expeditions) mobilised from members of the military police and the Blue Police functionaries) were also sent out into the field to track down Jewish fugitives.

It should be noted that this period also saw an intensification of repressive measures against those who aided the Jewish population. In November 1942, a few months after the launch of Operation “Reinhardt,” the *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* published police regulations issued by the Higher SS and Police Commander Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger. These regulations stated that any form of assistance to Jews would be punishable by death and imposed on the inhabitants of the General Governorate a mandatory obligation to report Jewish fugitives.¹⁴ Failure to comply with this obligation was to be met with the so-called police security measures. Information about all show executions and collective responsibility for rescuing Jews caused a great stir among local communities, especially among rural residents.¹⁵ These measures aimed to establish

ernorate and the Bezirk Białystok. The operation is generally regarded as having commenced with the deportations from the Lublin ghetto in mid-March 1942.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Polizeiverordnung über die Bildung von Judenwohnbezirken in den Distrikten Warschau und Lublin. Vom 28. Oktober 1942 (Police Regulation of 28 October 1942 concerning the creation of Jewish residential quarters in the Warsaw and Lublin Districts), *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 1942, no. 94, p. 666; Polizeiverordnung über die Bildung von Judenwohnbezirken in den Distrikten Radom, Krakau und Galizien. Vom 10. November 1942 (Police Regulation of 10 November 1942 concerning the creation of Jewish residential quarters in the Radom, Krakau, and Galizien Districts), *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement* 1942, no. 98, pp. 683–686.

¹⁵ For results of research conducted to date (as part of the “Index” project) on the scale and type of persecution for providing help to Jews, see *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, eds. M. Grądzka-Rejak and A. Namysło, Warsaw, 2019.

a situation where Jewish fugitives would be perceived as a danger to the safety of local communities.

The systematic pursuit and capture of Jewish fugitives continued for many months after the deportations had ceased, lasting until the end of the German occupation. In rural areas, the German military police, along with local police stations operating under their command, played a central role in executing this operation. Individuals from local communities – referred to as rural functionaries, including members of the night watch, village guards, and hostages – were also drawn into actions targeting Jews. Their role was to identify unfamiliar individuals and transfer them to village leaders, who were then responsible for notifying the police.¹⁶ This had tragic consequences for Jews in hiding.

It is important to remember that, beyond those coerced into pursuing Jewish fugitives, there were also individuals who exploited their suffering for personal gain and committed crimes against them. In the aftermath of the war, Polish judges were tasked with evaluating the conduct of both groups during criminal proceedings. When imposing penalties on persons forced to participate in the hunting down of Jews in hiding (for example, because it was a part of their duties), the assessment of their zeal was important. As we will read later in this article, it was often difficult to classify a given act under the specific provisions of the August decree.

The Capture of Hanka Erlich, Róża Barb, and her Daughters Ester and Eti

The judgment of the District Court in Tarnów of 13 January 1949 states that “in March 1944, in the *gromada* of Gruszów Wielki, Dąbrowa Tarnowska County, the inhabitants of the village captured four persons of Jewish origin and brought them to the village leader. Under pressure from residents fearing for their lives, the village leader ordered the defendants to go to Radgoszcz to fetch the police. Following the village leader’s orders, the defendants travelled by horse-drawn cart to Radgoszcz, from where they brought back three policemen who shot the

¹⁶ For more on the subject of forcing the Polish population (including village leaders and “guards”) to participate in the implementation of the German anti-Jewish policy, see T. Domański, “Niemiecka administracja gminna w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie i jej pozostałość aktowa do badań nad relacjami polsko-żydowskimi. Przykład dystryktu radomskiego,” *Polish-Jewish Studies* 4 (2023), pp. 147–176.

four captured individuals.¹⁷ For the deed they committed, the defendants were sentenced to two years in prison.¹⁸ They were Adolf Kogut, aged 24, and Józef Szczepan, four years his senior. At the time of the crime, they were 19 and 23 years old. They were born and lived in Gruszów Wielki. The above excerpt from the grounds for the verdict – signed by District Court Judge Władysław Szajna and lay judges Stanisław Adamus and Jan Adamczyk – is notably terse and fails to convey the full scope of the dramatic events that transpired several years prior. A more comprehensive understanding emerges only through examining the minutes of witness, suspect, and defendant testimonies preserved in multiple post-war criminal case files,¹⁹ along with other relevant sources.

The village of Gruszów Wielki is located more than three kilometres north-east of Dąbrowa Tarnowska, a town which in mid-1942 was designated in Tarnów County (*Kreishauptmannschaft Tarnow*) as one of the places of concentration for the local Jewish population.²⁰

The first deportation to the Bełżec extermination camp occurred in mid-June, during which approximately 500 individuals were transported, and several dozen were executed on the spot. The operation was repeated two months later, on 17 July, with a significantly higher toll: around 100 people were murdered immediately, and roughly 1,800 were deported to Bełżec. The remaining Jewish residents of the ghetto were slated for extermination on 18 September – estimates suggest this group numbered between 500 and 1,500. A small number of

¹⁷ AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Judgment of the District Court in Tarnów, Tarnów, 13 January 1949, pp. 41–41v.

¹⁸ Furthermore, pursuant to Article 7 of the August decree, the court ruled that they would suffer “forfeiture of property and loss of public and honorary civil rights [...] for a period of three years” (*ibid.*, p. 41v).

¹⁹ The reference is made to the documents related to the following cases: *Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Krakowie* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Cracow, hereinafter AIPN Kr), 502/3743, Files related to the case: Jan Osika is suspected of participating in the murder of a Jewish family in 1943, i.e., of acts under Article 1 of the Decree of 31 August 1944; AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Files related to the criminal case: Józef Szczepan, Adolf Kogut, residing in Gruszów, charged under Article 1 of the Decree of 31 August 1944; AN Kr, 29/747/IV K 211/52, Files related to the criminal case of Franciszek Kogut charged under Article 1 (2) of the Decree of 31 August 1944; AN Kr, 29/1304/533, Files of the District Court in Tarnów’s Prosecutor related to the case of Franciszek Kogut and the defendants.

²⁰ This is where Jews living in Gruszów Wielki were resettled, including the Weit family. See Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter YVA), O3/2020, Testimony of Abram Weit, Kirjat Tiwon, 4 February 1962, pp. 4–5.

individuals were left behind in the so-called Jewish quarter to tidy up and sort the belongings of those who had been deported.²¹ In December 1942, they were transferred to Tarnów.²²

Both before and during the aforementioned deportation operations, a group of Jews sought refuge on the so-called Aryan side of the town and tried to survive.²³ We do not know their exact number. As I have already mentioned, the German occupiers implemented measures aimed at capturing them. Sometimes the captured Jews were killed on the spot, along with those who had helped them. This was the case for Jadwiga Noyman and Wojciech Cieślak,²⁴ Szya Grintzman, members of the Kmiec and Sołtys families,²⁵ Anna Gruchała, and the members of the Szifra family she was hiding.²⁶ Particularly active in conducting such operations in the area in question was the German military police functionary Engelbert Guzek.²⁷ We know that at least several Jews survived in Gruszów Wielki until the end of the war. Thanks to the help of Zofia and Stanisław Pagos, as well as other residents (Józef Łabos, Mieczysław Rutyna, and a certain Kogut),²⁸ Abram and Awigdor Weit, who came from this village, survived.²⁹ Michał Pinkas also found

²¹ Karolina Orszulak, a resident of Wola Mędrzechowska, was most likely among those persecuted for maintaining contact with Jews confined to the ghetto in Dąbrowa Tarnowska – an act strictly prohibited under the laws of the occupation. On 16 October 1942, she was reportedly executed by German police functionaries for engaging in trade with Jewish individuals. Her death was documented in the School Chronicle of Wola Mędrzechowska, which also noted that she was the mother of Zofia and Roman, who were in the fourth and third grades, respectively (see K. Struziak, “Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej na wsi powiatu dąbrowskiego na przykładzie gminy Mędrzechów,” <https://ksszczucin.prv.pl/zydmed.htm> [accessed 3 September 2024]). The body of the murdered woman was buried in the cemetery in her native village (“Karolina Orszulak,” <https://straty.pl/szukaj-osoby.php> [accessed 3 September 2024]); J. Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów. Słownik*, Warsaw, 2014, p. 343).

²² E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim w latach 1939–1945*, Rzeszów, 2014, pp. 289, 293.

²³ According to Jan Grabowski, 38 Jews survived in the Dąbrowa Tarnowska County area (J. Grabowski, *Judenjagd*, p. 148). However, Krystyna Samsonowska and Bogdan Musiał stated that the number of survivors was much higher; see K. Samsonowska, “Dąbrowa Tarnowska – nieco inaczej,” *Więź* 7 (2011), p. 81; B. Musiał, “Judenjagd – „umiejętne działanie” czy zbrodnicza perfidia?,” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 43, no. 2 (2011), p. 162.

²⁴ T. Domański, “Stępień Władysław, Cieślak Wojciech,” in *Represje za pomoc Żydom*, pp. 296–297.

²⁵ M. Grądzka-Rejak, “Kmiec Bronisław, Kmiec-Wójcik Zofia, Sołtys Janina, Sołtys Bronisława,” in *ibid.*, p. 185–186.

²⁶ M. Grądzka-Rejak, “Gruchała Anna, Gruchała Julia,” in *ibid.*, pp. 157–158.

²⁷ See A. Musiał, *Krwawe Upiory. Dzieje powiatu Dąbrowa Tarnowska w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej*, Tarnów, 1993.

²⁸ I was unable to determine whether he was a member of Adolf Kogut’s family.

²⁹ YVA, O3/2020, Testimony of Awigdor Weit, Kirjat Amal, 7 February 1962, pp. 7–13.

refuge here, but in his post-war testimony, he did not give the name of the man who saved his life.³⁰

The group of Jewish fugitives who tried to survive in this area also included sisters Róża (Rozia) Barb, née Erlich³¹ (born in 1902), and Hanka Erlich³² (born in 1914). Their parents were Mojżesz and Sprinca. We know that they had a brother named Berisch (born in 1904). Before the outbreak of the war, the family lived in Dąbrowa Tarnowska. Most likely, after the German authorities carried out deportations from this town, Róża and Hanka hid on the so-called Aryan side with eleven-year-old Ester and seven-year-old Eti (also referred to in sources as Elta and Jenta),³³ who were Róża's daughters.³⁴ The family stayed in the vicinity of Dąbrowa Tarnowska, including in Gruszów Wielki, where they were probably hidden for some time by one of the local farmers.³⁵

At this stage of my research, I have not been able to find out more about the circumstances of their hiding (or being hidden) on the so-called Aryan side and their relations with the local population. None of the four women mentioned in this text survived the German occupation. In light of the available sources, I do not know the details of the act of capturing the Jewish women or the motives of those who committed this act. Witness testimonies collected during post-war investigations allowed for a detailed reconstruction of the events that took place after the Erlich sisters, and the girls were brought to the village leader in Gruszów Wielki. What makes this case stand out is that, beyond establishing the exact date, I was also able to estimate the timing of individual moments – something rarely achievable in such cases. Investigators conducting such proceedings often struggled to determine precise dates for the acts committed.

³⁰ *Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Warszawie* (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, hereinafter AŻIH), 301/767, Testimony of Michał Pinkas, n.p., 7 September 1945, p. 2.

³¹ See "Roza Barb," <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/names/337089> (accessed 29 August 2024).

³² See "Chana Erlich," <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/names/315549> (accessed 29 August 2024).

³³ AN Kr, 29/747/IV K 211/52, Minutes of the interrogation of Berisch Erlich, Tarnów, 4 June 1947, p. 13.

³⁴ Her husband was Mates Matatiah Barb, see "Mates Matatiah Barb," <https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/names/355882> (accessed 29 August 2024).

³⁵ AN Kr, 29/747/IV K 211/52, Minutes of the interrogation of Berisch Erlich, Tarnów, 4 June 1947, p. 13.

On 15 March 1944, at around 8 p.m., the Erlich sisters and the girls hiding with them were brought by several men to the house of Franciszek Kogut, the village leader of Gruszów Wielki. The village leader was not at home – he had been summoned to the Blue Police station on charges of failing to deliver a quota. After the war, Maria, Franciszek Kogut's wife, who was at home at the time, described these events as follows:

After 8 p.m., several men entered my house, bringing with them two Jewish women and two children. One of them asked me where the village leader was. I replied that he was not there, as he had gone to the village on business. I did not recognise the volunteers who entered because it was dark – there was no light in the room – and I do not know who went to fetch the village leader, as I was chased out to another house so that I would not scream, given my heart condition. The commotion they caused in my home left a profound and distressing impression on me.³⁶

As time went on, a large group of people gathered at the village leader's house, including several teenage children.³⁷ In her testimony, Maria did not indicate any persons who could have been responsible for the capture of the Jewish women or who participated in these events. Did she really not recognise anyone, or did she not want (or was afraid) to reveal the identity of the residents of the village where she lived? During post-war interrogations, her son Mieczysław identified the people who were supposed to guard the women who had been brought there:

I cannot say anything about the bringing of four Jewish women to our house because at that time I was at my neighbour's, but when I arrived, I found that

³⁶ AN Kr, 29/747/IV K 211/52, Minutes of the interrogation of Maria Kogut, Radgoszcz, 24 March 1947, pp. 11–12.

³⁷ Franciszek Kogut testified: "I would like to mention that when I came home, there were mostly adolescents there." (AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Copy of the minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Kogut, Tarnów, 1 December 1947, pp. 3–3v). A few years later, during his hearing before the Voivodeship Court in Cracow, he stated that, apart from Chmura, Pudelko and Urban, the following people were also present in the room: Leon Żelazny, Antonina and Franciszek Rokocz, his wife Franciszka, and his son Mieczysław (AN Kr, 29/747/IV K 211/52, Minutes of the main hearing before the Voivodeship Court in Cracow, Cracow, 6 December 1952, p. 243).

the Jewish women were being guarded by Józef Chmura, Stanisław Pudełko and Władysław Urban, all residents of Gruszów Wielki, Radgoszcz Municipality. The aforementioned demanded that they not be released and that the police be called, which they did, and there is no doubt that they were the ones who detained the Jewish women.³⁸

Franciszek Kogut, who returned home when the women had already been captured, testified as a defendant during his trial on 6 December 1952 that they had been brought there by the aforementioned Chmura, Pudełko, and Urban:³⁹

Returning from the police station in the evening, I was approached by a boy who told me that there were Jews in my house. When I entered the house, it was full of people, including four Jewish women, two adults and two children. I asked the Jewish women who had brought them there, and they pointed to Józef Chmura, Stanisław Pudełko and Władysław Urban. I should mention that there were about 50 people in the room. Because I was scared at the time, I did not remember who else was present. I told the Jewish women that I would have to report their presence to the authorities for fear of repression, and they replied that they were sick and tired of life. I did not speak to Chmura,

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Mieczysław Kogut, Radgoszcz, 27 June 1947, pp. 15–16.

³⁹ It is worth noting that five years earlier, Kogut did not initially mention the involvement of the local population in the events he described. When interrogated on 24 March 1947, he testified only that Jewish women had come to him and told him to report their presence to the Blue Police. He testified at the time: “In 1943 or 1944, I don’t remember exactly, in the spring, I was away from home. And at that time, as to the then village leader of the *gromada* of Gruszów Wielki, four Jewish women – two adult sisters and two daughters of one of the adults, under the age of 10 – came to me. When I came home, I asked them why they had nowhere else to go but to me, the village leader. You know what the times are like now, that I have to report to the police. Then one Jewish girl named Hanka replied to me: “We are sick and tired of life. We know that you will not give your life for us. Just don’t report us to the German police, only to the Polish Police Station in Radgoszcz.” Which is what I did [...] (*ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Kogut, Radgoszcz, 24 March 1947, pp. 9–1). It was only during the next interrogation, on 27 June, that he admitted that the Jewish women had been brought to him and that Stanisław Pudełko, Władysław Urban and Józef Chmura were supposed to guard them. He said: “I do not know about the matter of bringing four Jewish women to my house in March 1943, because I was not at home at that time, but when I arrived home, it is known to me that the Jewish women were being guarded by Stanisław Pudełko, Władysław Urban and Józef Chmura, all res[iding] in the *grom[ada]* of Gruszów Wielki. The aforementioned demanded that they not be released and that the police be called, and it is suspected that they were the ones who detained them” (*ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Kogut, Radgoszcz, 27 June 1947, p. 17).

Pudelko and Urban because they were angry with me about the quota. At one point, I told the Jewish women that I had to report them to the Gestapo, to which Chmura replied: "I am a Gestapo officer here."⁴⁰ Chmura told me I had to hand over the Jewish women to the Gestapo, and if I didn't, he would hand me over to the Gestapo himself. Józef Chmura was the one who spoke the most. Then the Jewish women turned to me and asked me to report them to the "Blue Police."⁴¹

It seems that the last part of the defendant's testimony should be treated with caution. It cannot be ruled out that he wanted to show that his intention was not to "act to the benefit of the authorities of the German state."

As I mentioned earlier, the available documentation does not provide many details about the capture of the Jewish women or the motives behind those who committed this act. According to Franciszek Kogut, they were captured while walking down the road.⁴² Pudelko and Urban, when interrogated after the war, denied any involvement in the capture of the Jewish women.⁴³ The investigation conducted against them did not prove their guilt. Could Józef Chmura have been responsible for their capture? He was not interrogated during the aforementioned proceedings because he was hiding.⁴⁴ According to the case files, charges were brought against

⁴⁰ In a statement made several years earlier, on 1 December 1947, Franciszek Kogut claimed that Chmura had said to the Jewish women: "Today, I am a Gestapo officer to you" (AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Copy of the minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Kogut, Tarnów, 1 December 1947, pp. 3–3v).

⁴¹ AN Kr, 29/747/IV K 211/52, Minutes of the main hearing before the Voivodeship Court in Cracow, Cracow, 6 December 1952, pp. 239–243.

⁴² This is what Franciszek Kogut testified during his trial (*ibid.*, p. 242).

⁴³ The first explained that: "On that critical day, I recall a boy approaching me and saying, 'You know what, Pudelko? The village leader's house is full of Jews.' I turned to my wife and said, 'I'm going to check on the village leader.' I went over and stayed for about five minutes. Inside, I saw two Jewish women I recognised from Dąbrowa – they used to run a bar there. I'm not sure if the village leader himself was present; the only person I saw was his lame son. I entered the room briefly, then left. I don't know whether Chmura and Urban were there. What I do know is that I saw Chmura walking down the road roughly an hour earlier – he was drunk at the time. I don't know anything more about this matter" (AN Kr, 29/747/IV K 211/52, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Stanisław Pudelko, Tarnów, 15 November 1947, pp. 29–30). Władysław Urban, on the other hand, claimed: "I only found out about the whole thing the day after [that day?], that some Jewish women had been shot. I don't know anything more about it, because I take no interest in such matters" (*ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Władysław Urban, Tarnów, 15 November 1947, pp. 31–32).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter from the Commander of the Citizens' Militia (*Milicja Obywatelska*, MO) Station to the Prosecutor's Office of the District Court in Tarnów, Radgoszcz, 14 November 1947, p. 23.

only one of the individuals mentioned above, Franciszek Kogut.⁴⁵ He was accused of “informing the Polish Police [*sic!*] that four Jewish women were staying at his place, while at the same time sending a cart, as a result of which the police arrived and shot the women on the spot.”⁴⁶ By the end of 1947, both Pudełko and Urban had been released from prison in Tarnów.⁴⁷

According to the prosecutor’s files, the proceedings against Chmura were suspended at the same time, and he was placed under surveillance.⁴⁸ At this point in my research, I have not been able to determine what happened to him afterwards.

Although proceedings had begun, a verdict in the case of Gruszków Wielki’s former village leader was not reached until the early 1950s. After posting bail on 17 March 1948,⁴⁹ Franciszek Kogut left prison and went into hiding.⁵⁰ He was not apprehended until several years later.⁵¹ On 8 December 1952, the Voivodeship Court in Cracow sentenced him to three years in prison, but pursuant to the amnesty act of 22 November 1952, the court reduced the sentence to one year and six months in prison.⁵² The court convicted him because he “informed the so-called ‘Polish Police’ about the capture of four women of Jewish nationality, as a result of which they were shot by the Blue Police.”⁵³

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Indictment against Franciszek Kogut, 5 December 1947, pp. 55–56.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, s. 55.

⁴⁷ Pudełko and Urban were released from prison in Tarnów on 9 December 1947 (AN Kr, 29/1304/533, Decision to Discontinue the Investigation, Tarnów, 6 December 1947, n.p.; *ibid.*, Release Notification for Investigative Prisoner Władysław Urban, Tarnów, 9 December 1947, n.p.; *ibid.*, Release Notification for Investigative Prisoner Stanisław Pudełko, Tarnów, 9 December 1947, n.p.).

⁴⁸ Pursuant to the decision of 16 December 1947, the investigation against Józef Chmura was suspended, and surveillance was ordered in the case ref. no. “Sp: 579/47” (*ibid.*, Reference, Tarnów, 29 December 1947, n.p.).

⁴⁹ AN Kr, 29/747/ IV K 211/52, Bail Receipt, Tarnów, 17 March 1948, p. 137; *ibid.*, Release Order, Tarnów, 17 March 1948, p. 141.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Report by Jan Sajdak, Commander of the Citizens’ Militia Station in Radgoszcz, to the Appellate Court in Cracow, Radgoszcz, 7 November 1949, p. 175; *ibid.*, Arrest Warrant, Cracow, 10 December 1949, p. 185.

⁵¹ He was apprehended only in 1952 (*ibid.*, Letter from the Commander of the Citizens’ Militia in Dąbrowa Tarnowska County to the Voivodeship Prosecutor’s Office in Cracow, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, 25 November 1952, p. 201).

⁵² *Ibid.*, Judgment of the Voivodeship Court in Cracow, Cracow, 8 December 1952, pp. 255–258.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

Notification of the Blue Police Functionaries in Radgoszcz About the Capture of Jewish Women

During World War II, village leaders were officials of the occupation administration responsible for implementing the objectives set by representatives of the German Reich. They were responsible for registering every stranger. Tomasz Domański noted: “the village leader (or his deputy) became a central figure in the security system created by the Germans as a representative of the German authorities and the man responsible for physically delivering the captured person to the police unit.”⁵⁴ Once deportations to extermination camps began, Jewish fugitives also became targets of these operations.

Initially, village leader Franciszek Kogut decided to appoint a person who was supposed to hand over Jewish women to German police functionaries.⁵⁵ At around 9 p.m., Franciszek Kogut’s son, Adolf, arrived at the farm of Jan Dziedzic in Gruszów Wielki. Dziedzic lived with his wife Stefania, his mother Maria and eight children, the youngest of whom was 2 years old and the oldest 10.⁵⁶ Stefania’s brother, Józef Szczepan, who worked with horses, was also staying at the farm at the time.⁵⁷ Adolf brought Dziedzic a note with instructions written down by his father:

To Eng[ineer] Jan Dziedzic. By directive of the village leader, you are required to go and take two Jewish women to the police station in Dąbrowa and [you will

⁵⁴ T. Domański, “Niemiecka administracja,” pp. 166–167.

⁵⁵ During the trial, Franciszek Kogut defended himself, saying: “I would like to add that a few months earlier, in Bagienice, the Germans set fire to a house and shot a man for hiding Jews. If I hadn’t been afraid of Chmura, I would have let the Jewish women go. [...] Chmura, Pudelko and Urban demanded that I hand the Jewish women over to the Gestapo, which I did not do” (AN Kr, 29/747/IV K 211/52, Minutes of the main hearing before the Voivodeship Court in Cracow, Cracow, 6 December 1952, p. 243). It is also worth noting that Kogut repeatedly emphasised that the Jewish women had no grievances against him. For example: “I wasn’t at home at the time, and when I came back, Chmura and Pudelko were both arguing with these Jewish women, of whom there were four. So I asked the Jewish women why they had come to me, and they replied that they had no grievances against me, only against those who had brought them there, those traitors. So I decided to report it to the police station in Radgoszcz, where I sent a cart which Szczepan Józef drove” (AIPN Kr, 010/7072, Minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Kogut, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, 14 April 1948, p. 10).

⁵⁶ AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Copy of the minutes of the interrogation of Jan Dziedzic, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, 5 January 1948, p. 5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Józef Szczepan, Tarnów, 26 October 1948, pp. 17–17v.

be liable to a penalty of – RG] 1,000 zlotys, if you fail to go, you will be arrested.
Gruszów Wielki, 15 March 1944 [signature:] Kogut.⁵⁸

Upon entering the kitchen, Adolf relayed the message to Stefania. She proceeded to the bedroom, where her husband lay asleep, and informed him that, by order of the village leader Kogut, he was to go to Dąbrowa Tarnowska together with the Jewish women who had been detained in the village. Jan replied that he would not go. Approximately half an hour later, Stefania went to the village leader's house and conveyed her husband's decision. There she saw the Jewish women and a dozen or so people gathered around. When the village leader learned that Dziedzic had refused to transport the Jews, he appointed Stefania's brother, Józef Szczepan. After the war, he testified:

My sister returned, saying that the village leader had categorically ordered that if Jan Dziedzic could not go, then I had to go, as I worked at his farm with the horses. I went to the village leader and told him that I would not go alone because night had fallen and I was afraid to go, to which the village leader replied that his son Adolf Kogut would go with me, which is what happened; Kogut and I went to Radgoszcz in a cart and when we arrived, we informed the police about the fact that the Jewish women had been detained and together with the police we went to Gruszów Wielki. When we arrived in Gruszów, I went home. There were three policemen, but I did not know them and cannot give their names.⁵⁹

This version of events was also confirmed by Adolf Kogut. He also mentioned the names of the functionaries who accompanied them to Gruszów Wielki:

Since it was night and Józef Szczepan was afraid to go alone, I went with him.
When we arrived in Radgoszcz, outside the police station, the officer on duty

⁵⁸ As proof of the order he had been given, Jan Dziedzic presented investigators with a piece of paper that had been brought to him by the village leader's son. It was added to the files related to the criminal case, allowing us to know its exact content (*ibid.*, Note from the leader of the *gromada* of Gruszów Wielki to Mr Jan Dziedzic, Gruszów Wielki, 15 March 1944, p. 4).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Józef Szczepan, Tarnów, 26 October 1948, pp. 17–17v.

asked us why we had come, and we explained that some Jewish women were being held at the village leader's house. Three policemen, Koń Wojciech, Rogacki, and Kapusta, got into the cart and went with us to Gruszów Wielki. I do not know what happened to those Jewish women – I only know that the police shot them.⁶⁰

The policemen who went to Gruszów Wielki⁶¹ from the Blue Police station in Radgoszcz were Szczepan Kapusta,⁶² Wojciech Koń,⁶³ and Jan Rogacki.⁶⁴ Most likely, with their arrival, the people gathered in the room began to disperse. The policemen interrogated the captured Jewish women in a separate room and conducted a personal search. The village leader was ordered to assign two villagers to assist the functionaries. The individuals who were most likely assigned at around eleven p.m. were Stanisław Urban and Władysław Taraska.⁶⁵ On the orders of the

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Adolf Kogut, Tarnów, 26 October 1948, pp. 16–16v.

⁶¹ See AIPN Kr, 502/3743, Petition to Discontinue the Investigation, Tarnów, 6 September 1947, pp. 23–24.

⁶² On 6 September 1951, Szczepan Kapusta (born on 29 April 1892) was sentenced by the Voivodeship Court in Cracow, pursuant to Article 1 of the August Decree, to 12 years in prison. From 6 June 1951, he was imprisoned in Płock. He was released on parole on 4 August 1954. Despite searches in the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance and the National Archives in Cracow, I have not been able to find the files related to this case. I am unable to determine whether the aforementioned sentence also concerned the murder of the Erlich sisters and the daughters of one of them (AIPN, 2911/1, General information card-index; AIPN Kr, 010/3538, Index-card concerning the prisoner Szczepan Kapusta, Płock, 4 August 1954, p. 10).

⁶³ Wojciech Koń (born on 4 April 1915) was arrested on 25 April 1945 by functionaries of the County Public Security Department (*Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, PUBP) in Dąbrowa Tarnowska in connection with his service in the Blue Police. His name was not listed in the register of convicted persons (AIPN Kr, 080/1, Destroyed files card-index).

⁶⁴ Jan Rogacki arrived in Radgoszcz from the pre-war Poznań Voivodeship in 1940. A butcher by trade, according to witness accounts, he initially resided on a "Jewish farm," where he was to engage in poultry trading and pig slaughtering. Beginning in either 1942 or 1943, he served in the Blue Police, reportedly using his position to accept bribes. According to Władysław Kmieć, Rogacki was responsible for shooting Jewish women in Gruszów Wielki, resulting in the deaths of three of them (AIPN Kr, 010/7072, Minutes of the interrogation of Władysław Kmieć, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, 13 April 1948, p. 8; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Kogut, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, 14 April 1948, p. 10; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Kruk, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, 13 April 1948, p. 11). After the war, he was wanted by the PUBP in Dąbrowa Tarnowska. According to a report dated 5 March 1948, his whereabouts had not been established (*ibid.*, Letter from the head of the PUBP in Dąbrowa Tarnowska to the Voivodeship Public Security Department [*Wojewódzki Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, WUBP] in Cracow, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, 5 March 1948, p. 14).

⁶⁵ AIPN Kr, 502/3743, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Władysław Taraska, Radgoszcz, 12 April 1947, p. 8; AIPN Kr, 010/7072, Minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Kogut, Dąbrowa Tarnowska, 14 April 1948, p. 10.

policemen, they dug a pit 50 to 150 metres away from the village leader's house. There, the functionaries executed Hanka, Róża, and her two daughters.⁶⁶ Earlier, Jewish women had been ordered to undress. After the murder, the policemen took the clothes belonging to the woman who was shot and drove away. The village leader added, "They did not drink vodka. No report was drawn up."⁶⁷ Taraska and Urban covered the bodies of the murdered women with earth and returned to their homes.⁶⁸

The Problem of the Legal Classification of the Act Committed by Adolf Kogut and Józef Szczepan

In 1946, on the initiative of Erlich Berisch, an investigation was launched into the murder of his family members. During the interrogation, the brother of the murdered victims testified:

In March 1946, I returned from Soviet Russia to Tarnów. Upon arrival, I learned from people in Dąbrowa Tarnowska that my sister Rozia Barb, née Erlich, and my other sister Hanka Erlich, Etla Barb, and Jenta Barb, Rozia Barb's daughter, had been shot during the German occupation in March 1944 in the village of Gruszów Wielki, 50 metres away from the house of the former village leader Franciszek Kogut. I therefore went to Gruszów Wielki to exhume the bodies, as they had been buried at the scene of the crime. When I arrived in Gruszów, I found out from a boy where the bodies were buried, and I dug them up myself and confirmed that they were indeed the bodies of my sisters and their children. I did not find the former village leader Kogut at home, but his wife informed me that these people had indeed been shot, and that the people mentioned above had been brought to her husband Franciszek Kogut, but she did not say

⁶⁶ AIPN Kr, 502/3743, Minutes of the interrogation of Berisch Erlich, Tarnów, 29 December 1946, pp. 1–1v; AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Copy of the minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Kogut, Tarnów, 1 December 1947, pp. 3–3v.

⁶⁷ AN Kr, 29/747/IV K 211/52, Minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Kogut, Radgoszcz, 24 March 1947 r., pp. 9–10; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Franciszek Kogut, Radgoszcz, 27 June 1947, p. 17; *ibid.*, Minutes of the main hearing before the Voivodeship Court in Cracow, Cracow, 6 December 1952, p. 242.

⁶⁸ AIPN Kr, 502/3743, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Władysław Taraska, Radgoszcz, 12 April 1947, p. 8.

who had brought them. In any case, people from the village had brought them to the village leader.⁶⁹

During the interrogation, Berisch testified that the person responsible for their execution was Jan Osika, a Blue Police functionary from Radgoszcz: "As I was informed, Jan Osika shot my sisters and their children on the spot, while the policeman Koń did not fire a single shot and even refused to participate in the execution."⁷⁰ However, the investigation conducted by the District Prosecutor's Office in Tarnów (ref. no. VI Ds 73/47) did not prove Osika's guilt. Although he was indeed a member of the Blue Police in Radgoszcz, he did not participate in the execution of Jewish women. The testimony gathered during this investigation led to the initiation of further proceedings against several residents of the village of Gruszów Wielki. Based on the evidence collected, the case involving four individuals (Franciszek Kogut, Józef Chmura, Stanisław Pudelko, Władysław Urban) was referred to separate proceedings (under ref. no. VI Ds 1088/47).⁷¹ On 15 November 1947, the prosecutor of the District Court in Tarnów issued a decision to arrest the suspects temporarily.⁷² As I have already mentioned, ultimately, only the former village leader was charged in these proceedings. Criminal proceedings against Adolf Kogut and Józef Szczepan were initiated in connection with these proceedings only in 1948 and were conducted under the reference number VI Ds 171/48.⁷³ In this case, the prosecutor had to determine the legal classification of the deeds of two young men, residents of the village of Gruszów Wielki, who, acting on the orders of the village leader, a functionary of the German occupation administration, reported the capture of four Jewish women.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Berisch Erlich, Tarnów, 29 December 1946, pp. 1–1v.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ AN Kr, 29/747/IV K 211/52, Official record, Tarnów, 10 September 1947, p. 3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Decision on the Temporary Detention of Stanisław Pudelko, Tarnów, 15 November 1947, p. 33; *ibid.*, Decision on the Temporary Detention of Władysław Urban, Tarnów, 15 November 1947, p. 35; *ibid.*, Decision on the Temporary Detention [of Franciszek Kogut], Tarnów, 15 November 1947, p. 37.

⁷³ Prosecutor Teofil Patroński, when sending the indictment against Józef Szczepan and Adolf Kogut to the District Court in Tarnów, requested that this case be "treated jointly" with the case of Franciszek Kogut, former village leader of Gruszów Wielki, against whom an indictment had been brought 11 months earlier (VI Ds 1088/47). However, these cases were not consolidated for joint hearing (AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Letter from the Prosecutor's Office of the District Court in Tarnów to the Sixth Criminal Division of the District Court in Tarnów, Tarnów, 9 November 1948, n.p.).

On 26 October 1948, the day of Kogut's and Szczepan's interrogation, the prosecutor of the District Court in Tarnów issued a decision to arrest the suspects temporarily.⁷⁴ A few days later, on 4 November 1948, prosecutor Marian Fischer brought charges against them, stating:

On 15 March 1944, in Radgoszcz, Dąbrowa County, acting to the benefit of the authorities of the German state, they acted to the detriment of persons of Jewish nationality, sought by the German authorities on racial grounds in a manner whereby they notified the police in Radgoszcz about the capture of four Jewish women in Gruszów Wielki, whereupon they brought three Blue Policemen to Gruszów Wielki by cart, who shot the captured women.⁷⁵

According to the prosecutor, this act was governed by the provisions of Article 1(2) of the Decree of 31 August 1944,⁷⁶ namely by "denunciation or capture" of persons sought or persecuted. It should be added that, in the event of conviction for this crime, the decree stipulated the death penalty – which could, of course, be commuted to imprisonment if the court applied the extraordinary mitigation of punishment described under Article 5 of the Decree.⁷⁷

However, the District Court in Tarnów, in its judgment of 13 January 1949, did not find that the defendants' deed constituted an offence under Article 1(2) of the August Decree and found that they had committed the offence of "acting to the detriment" described under Article 2⁷⁸ – in this case, the Decree provided for the following alternative penalties: death penalty, life imprisonment or a fixed

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Decision on the Temporary Detention, Tarnów, 26 October 1948, p. 18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Indictment, Tarnów, 4 November 1948, p. 25.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ "Article 5 (1). An act or omission committed under the influence of a threat, order or command does not exempt a person from criminal liability. (2). In such cases, the court may exercise extraordinary mitigation of punishment, taking into account either the characteristics of the perpetrator or the specific circumstances of the deed" (Dz.U. 1946, no. 69, item 376). The amendment to the Decree of 3 April 1948 introduced a new paragraph: "(3). The provision under (2) shall apply mutatis mutandis in cases referred to in Article 1(2), provided that special mitigating circumstances exist" (Dz.U. 1948, no. 18, item 124).

⁷⁸ "Article 2. Anyone who, acting to the benefit of the authorities of the German state or its ally, acted in a manner or under circumstances other than those provided for under Article 1, to the detriment of the Polish State, a Polish legal entity, members of the civilian population, or military personnel, or prisoners of war, shall be subject to a prison term of no less than three years or life imprisonment or the death penalty" (Dz.U. 1946, no. 69, item 376).

term imprisonment (the minimum term was set at three years). Since the court exercised extraordinary mitigation of punishment, taking into account either “the characteristics of the perpetrator or the specific circumstances of the deed” stipulated under Article 5(2), Kogut and Szczepan were sentenced to two years’ imprisonment.⁷⁹ In its grounds for the decision, the court stated that the defendants were young people raised “in a godforsaken village” who, “having received an order from the village leader to bring the police, believed that they could not disobey the authority represented by the village leader [and] that they did not act out of racial hatred.”⁸⁰

To sum up, the court hearing the case disagreed with the legal classification of the deed indicated in the indictment, because it found that:

persons of Jewish origin had already been denounced and captured by other persons and brought to the village leader, i.e. an official body serving the occupier, and the defendants, acting on the orders of that body, only brought the police and that was the end of their activities; they did not denounce or capture anyone, because someone else had already done so, therefore, the defendants acted in a different manner and under different circumstances than those stipulated under Article 1 of the Decree.⁸¹

The above-mentioned non-uniform legal classification of the same state of affairs by different procedural bodies shows the partial scale of the difficulties faced by lawyers after the war. It should be noted that Article 1(2) of the August Decree did not refer to “taking part in a capture,” but to the “capture” itself, which led to the doubts of lawyers described above, boiling down to the question: could this term be understood only as activities related to the physical capture of a person, or also other activities performed by other persons in connection with the captured person. Andrzej Pasek, a scholar specialising in German occupation crimes, pointed out that the concepts of capture (and denunciation) – found in Article 1(2) of the August Decree – were new in criminal law, and that there were

⁷⁹ AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Judgment of the District Court in Tarnów, Tarnów, 13 January 1949, pp. 41–41v.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

problems with their interpretation. He wrote that their interpretation remained strict until the turn of 1948. This was related to the severity of the punishment for the commission of the crime under Article 1(2) – namely, the death penalty.⁸² This position of the Supreme Court, leaning towards a strict interpretation, was negatively assessed in the legal literature of the time, as Pasek wrote, due to its failure to take into account the forms of committing a crime through “aiding” and “inciting,” which existed in the 1932 Criminal Code.⁸³ Since 1947, the meaning of “capture” has been increasingly broadened.⁸⁴

Likely informed by the aforementioned trends in case law, Prosecutor Fischer concluded in November 1948 – while drafting the indictment – that the deeds of the defendants from Gruszów Wielki met the criteria of Article 1(2) of the August Decree. Yet the verdict issued two months later by the District Court in Tarnów reflected a more stringent interpretation. Such divergence between the prosecutor’s and the judge’s views on whether the offence fell under Article 1(2) (denunciation or capture) or Article 2 (acting to the detriment) was a common occurrence in the post-war era.⁸⁵

Decision of Seven Judges of the Supreme Court Issued on 18 October 1949

More than two months after the District Court in Tarnów issued its judgment of 13 January 1949, both the defence counsel for the defendants, Tadeusz Krężel, and the prosecutor, Fischer, filed a cassation appeal against it.⁸⁶ On 6 July 1949, at an away session in Cracow,⁸⁷ three judges of the Supreme Court (in a panel headed

⁸² A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne*, p. 75.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 75–95. See also L. Kubicki, *Zbrodnie wojenne*, pp. 114–115.

⁸⁵ See A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne*, pp. 94–95.

⁸⁶ AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Letter from Attorney Tadeusz Krężel to the District Court in Tarnów, 17 January 1949, p. 38; *ibid.*, Letter from Assistant Prosecutor M. Fischer to the Regional Court in Tarnów, Tarnów, 19 January 1949, p. 39; *ibid.*, Order granting leave to examine the prosecutor’s cassation appeal against the judgment delivered on 13 January 1949, Tarnów, 24 March 1949, p. 45; *ibid.*, Order granting leave to examine the cassation appeal filed by defendants Józef Szczepan and Adolf Kogut against the judgment delivered on 13 January 1949, Tarnów, 28 March 1949, p. 48.

⁸⁷ For information on the away session centres of the Supreme Court’s Criminal Chamber, see A. Be-reza, *Sąd Najwyższy w latach 1945–1962. Organizacja i działalność*, Warsaw, 2012, pp. 64–69.

by Józef Zembaty), upon examining the cassation appeals of the defendants and the prosecutor, adjourned the case and referred the following legal issue to an enlarged panel of the Supreme Court for resolution:

Whether the term “capture” under Article 1(2) of the Decree of 31 August 1944, item 377/46, should be interpreted as referring exclusively to the act of physically capturing the individuals specified in that legal provision, or also as encompassing subsequent acts performed by others following the initial capture – such as guarding the captured individuals, transferring a Jew to the Blue Police or a German police station after they have already been captured and brought to the village leader, or transporting them to the authorities for formal handover.⁸⁸

On 18 October 1949, the Supreme Court, sitting in a panel of seven judges at a closed session in Łódź (presiding judge: Emil Stanisław Rappaport and Supreme Court judges: Marian Sokalski, Julian Potępa, Mieczysław Szerer, Alfred Eimer, Zygmunt Sitnicki, and acting judge Jan Dorsz), examined the legal question referred to it and formulated new rules for interpreting “capture,” which were entered into the book of legal principles. The decision issued at that time states that “capture” within the meaning of Article 1(2) of the August Decree is a continuing offence ending, in particular, with the cessation of the perpetrator’s actual control over the captured person. However, cooperation or aid during the commission of this offence justified liability for complicity or aiding. In view of this, the Supreme Court ruled that “capture” should be understood not only as acts consisting in the physical capture by the perpetrator of the persons referred to under that provision, but also as subsequent acts committed by another perpetrator, aimed at handing over the captured persons to the German authorities, and punishable either as complicity or as aiding, depending on the factual circumstances.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Excerpt from the hearing list and the minutes of the closed hearing of the Supreme Court’s Criminal Chamber at its away session in Cracow on 6 July 1949 in the case of Szczepan Józef and Kogut Adolf, Cracow, 6 July 1949, n.p..

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Decision of the Supreme Court, Łódź, 18 October 1949, p. 51v.

The justification states:

Each moment during which a person is deprived of liberty following their capture constitutes a committed criminal offence. However, the offence concludes either upon the release of the captured individual or when the perpetrator loses the capacity to exercise control over them. This loss of control also occurs when the individual is handed over to the authorities, thereby eliminating the perpetrator's actual dominion over the person. Consequently, anyone who, up to that point, participated in the perpetrator's actions *cum animo auctoris sive socii* is liable to a penalty under Article 1(2) of the Decree, provided they were aware that the individual was being sought or persecuted for the reasons specified therein. In accordance with these principles and within their defined scope, the term "capture" encompasses not only acts directed at the physical capture of a person, but also, following such an act of capture, any acts intended to transfer the individual to the occupying authority, thereby excluding the perpetrator's control of them. The severity of criminal penalties resulting from this interpretation, especially in cases where an individual knowingly provided only minimal or indirect assistance far removed from the deed of "capture or denunciation," may be mitigated solely through the provisions of paragraph 2 or paragraph 3 of Article 5 of the Decree. This mitigation is contingent upon the Court's determination that the perpetrator acted under the influence of a threat, order, or command (paragraph 2), or that "special mitigating circumstances exist" (paragraph 3). Such mitigation must not be achieved by misclassifying the deed under Article 2 of the Decree, which would constitute a legally incorrect requalification.⁹⁰

Following the above ruling, on 4 January 1950, the Supreme Court – convening in Cracow during an away session with a panel of three judges (Presiding Judge Alfred Eimer, along with Judges Józef Zembaty and J. Lewicki) – reversed the judgment issued by the District Court in Tarnów on 13 January 1949, which had sentenced Kogut and Szczepan to two years imprisonment. The case was remitted

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 54v–55.

to the Appellate Court in Cracow for reconsideration,⁹¹ as, following changes to the criminal procedure introduced on 1 July 1949, the Appellate Court had jurisdiction to hear cases under the “August Decree” at first instance.⁹²

Upon retrial, on 21 April 1950, the defendants were found guilty of committing an offence under Article 1(2) of the August Decree and each was sentenced to six years imprisonment.⁹³ Thus, they received a much harsher sentence (three times higher than the previous sentence of January 1949). Of course, apart from the change in the classification of the act and the severity of the criminal sanction in the case of Kogut and Szczepan, the effects of the above-mentioned ruling of 18 October 1949 were broader.

Harsher Penalties Imposed on Those Involved in Acts Related to Captured Jews

Under the revised interpretation, individuals deemed responsible for the acts described in Article 1(2) of the August Decree – an offence subject to the most severe penalty – may include those who were compelled to transport or guard previously captured Jewish fugitives, such as guards, hostages, or persons burdened with the duty to provide transportation. A few months before the new interpretation was published, on 31 January 1949, the District Court in Tarnów heard the case of several men accused by the prosecution that in April 1943, in Świebodzin (a village located about 10 km north-west of Gruszów Wielki), “acting to the benefit of the authorities of the German state, acted to the detriment of persons sought and persecuted by the German authorities on racial grounds, participated in the capture of the Jew Józef Adler.”⁹⁴ The prosecutor charged them with violat-

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Judgment of the Supreme Court delivered at an away session in Cracow, Cracow, 4 January 1950, pp. 57–58.

⁹² Act of 27 April 1949 amending the provisions of criminal procedure, Dz.U. 1949, no. 32, item. 238. See also A. Machnikowska, *Wymiar sprawiedliwości...*, p. 307.

⁹³ In addition, the court decided upon the deprivation of their public and honorary civil rights for a period of three years, and upon forfeiture of all of their property. Furthermore, the Court applied the period of their temporary detention – from 23 October 1948 to 21 April 1950 – as time served against the custodial sentence imposed on the defendants (AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Cracow delivered at an away session in Tarnów, Tarnów, 21 April 1950, pp. 88–88v).

⁹⁴ AN Kr, 29/439/1356, Indictment, [Tarnów], 15 May 1948, pp. 59–59v. Barbara Engelking wrote about the history of Józef Adler's capture, see B. Engelking, “„Po zamordowaniu udaliśmy się do domu”. Wydawanie i mordowanie Żydów na wsi polskiej w latach 1942–1945,” in *Zarys krajobrazu. Wiśń polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*, eds. B. Engelking and J. Grabowski, Warsaw, 2011, p. 277.

ing Article 1(2) of the August Decree. Among the accused were individuals who had been on night duty that day and were instructed to escort the captured Adler to the Blue Police station in Mędrzechów. The individuals in question were Piotr Mastalerz, Józef Mastalerz and Henryk Czupryna:

at night, while on guard duty on the road, they were summoned at some point by Alojzy Łazarz [who was the commander of the night guard – RG] to go to the house of the defendant Kaczówka, informing them that a Jew had been caught there. When the defendants arrived at Kaczówka's house, they found Józef Adler sitting, locked in a room, with the door handle tied with wire from the outside.⁹⁵

The former members of the guard did not deny that they had taken part in transporting Adler to Mędrzechów. Moreover, the following defendants appeared before the District Court in Tarnów: village leader Stanisław Czupryna (accused of ordering Adler's transport), Stanisław Magiera (summoned to provide a horse and a cart), and Władysław Kaczówka. The aforementioned guard commander Alojzy Łazarz was not among the defendants. The court, presided over by Stanisław Król,⁹⁶ disagreed with the legal classification of the defendants' deeds (as indicated by the prosecutor) and convicted all those named in the indictment under Article 2, finding that they had acted to the detriment of Józef Adler.⁹⁷ Władysław Kaczówka was sentenced to 8 years in prison, and Stanisław Magiera to 3 years in prison. However, the court applied extraordinary mitigation of punishment under Article 5(2) to Stanisław Czupryna, Piotr Mastalerz, Józef Mastalerz, and Henryk Czupryna and sentenced them to one year in prison.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ AN Kr, 29/439/1356, Judgment of the District Court in Tarnów, Tarnów, 31 January 1949, p. 177.

⁹⁶ In this case, the lay judges were Julian Rubacha and Jan Bochenek.

⁹⁷ "Since there was no evidence that any of the defendants had captured Józef Adler or participated in his capture, and in particular that the defendant Kaczówka had done so, the Court finds sufficient grounds to reject this legal classification of the defendants' acts. The Court took the view – in accordance with the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court – that since the offence under Article 1(2) of the aforementioned decree is punishable by only one criminal sanction, namely the death penalty, the attribution of this offence to anyone on this legal basis must be based on a criminal act that is significant beyond any doubt" (AN Kr, 29/439/1356, Judgment of the District Court in Tarnów, Tarnów, 31 January 1949, p. 175v).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 178

In December 1949, nearly a year later, the Supreme Court convened in Cracow for a cassation hearing and, applying a newly adopted interpretation of the term “capture,” determined that the prosecutor’s appeal was well-founded. Consequently, the case was remanded to the Appellate Court in Cracow for reconsideration.⁹⁹ The sentence was passed on 27 March 1950 at an away session in Tarnów. One of the defendants was acquitted,¹⁰⁰ and the remaining five were convicted under Article 1(2) of the August Decree. They received higher sentences than those imposed in the judgment issued on 31 January 1949. The highest sentence, that is nine years in prison, was imposed on Władysław Kaczówka, who, according to the court’s findings, “held the Jew Józef Adler under lock and key in his flat.”¹⁰¹ Stanisław Magiera, who, on the orders of the guard commander, provided a cart and transported the captured man together with the members of the guard, was sentenced to 6 years in prison.¹⁰² The former members of the guard, Piotr Mastalerz, Józef Mastalerz, and Henryk Czupryna, were

⁹⁹ The Supreme Court ruled that “the term ‘capture’ used in Article 1(2) of the Decree of 31 August 1944 should be understood to mean that the act constituting the content of this term should be considered to have been committed only when the detained person was actually handed over to the competent authority. In view of the above interpretation, it must be concluded that the defendants, who through their actions contributed to the surrender of Józef Adler – wanted by the German authorities on racial grounds, to the police[men] of the Blue Police, committed an offence under Article 1(2) of the Decree of 31 August 1944, and not an offence under Article 2 of that Decree” (AN Kr, 29/439/1356, Judgment of the Supreme Court at an away session in Cracow, Cracow, 14 December 1949, p. 209).

¹⁰⁰ This time, the former village leader Stanisław Czupryna was acquitted. Previously, the District Court in Tarnów had convicted him of committing an offence under Article 2 of the August Decree (*ibid.*, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Cracow at an away session in Tarnów, Tarnów, 27 March 1950, p. 236). This time, former village leader Stanisław Czupryna was acquitted. He had earlier been found guilty by the District Court in Tarnów for violating Article 2 of the August Decree. During the appeal, Piotr Mastalerz – who had initially accused Czupryna of ordering Adler’s transfer to the police – revised his statement, identifying the then commander of the guards as the one who issued the order. He testified: “The defendant clarifies that it was Łazarz who ordered the provision of the cart, not the village leader, and affirms that today’s testimony is accurate, since he now remembers the events clearly” (*ibid.*, Minutes of the main hearing before the Appellate Court in Cracow at an away session in Tarnów, Tarnów, 27 March 1950, p. 228).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Cracow at an away session in Tarnów, Tarnów, 27 March 1950, p. 235v.

¹⁰² As the Appellate Court’s judgment lacked any accompanying justification, I am unable to determine the reasoning behind the imposed sanction. It can be inferred that Magiera received a harsher sentence than the guards because he, along with Łazarz, entered the house where Adler was confined and, together with the guard commander, escorted the captured Jew out (*ibid.*, Minutes of the main hearing before the Appellate Court in Cracow at an away session in Tarnów, Tarnów, 27 March 1950, p. 228).

sentenced to 5 years and 6 months in prison for carrying out the order to escort Adler to the police station in Mędrzechów.¹⁰³ This sentence was five times higher than the previous one (a few months earlier, the District Court in Tarnów had sentenced them to one year in prison). The court applied extraordinary mitigation of punishment to all those convicted. The criminal case mentioned earlier is not an isolated incident. The broad interpretation outlined in the Supreme Court's decision issued on 18 October 1949 led to harsher criminal sanctions being imposed on some of the defendants.

The Issue of the Varied Nature of Acts Related to Physical "Capture"

In establishing new rules for interpreting "capture," the Supreme Court failed to consider that many acts associated with physical capture can differ greatly in nature and may actually result from it.¹⁰⁴ The case of the defendants from Bieniaszowice (Gręboszów Municipality), a village located only about 20 km north-west of Gruszów Wielki, clearly illustrates this problem. On 19 March 1944, Karol Motyka¹⁰⁵ and Teofil Cabaj brought Pajka Kapelner and Jakub, known as "Czarny," to the village leader, Franciszek Olbrycht. The village leader ordered Jan Gaweł to take them to Gręboszów at that time; it was his "turn to perform personal services for the municipality."¹⁰⁶ Olbrycht appointed Jan Moryl and Jan Cira as transport guards.¹⁰⁷ Upon arrival in Gręboszów, Moryl and Cira, following the village leader's instructions, went to the police station and handed the Jews over to the Blue Police functionaries.¹⁰⁸ The prosecutor of the District Court in Tarnów, Władysław Kossowski, in accordance with a broad interpretation, in the indictment issued on 28 January 1950, accused the two designated transport

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Cracow at an away session in Tarnów, Tarnów, 27 March 1950, p. 235.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. L. Kubicki, *Zbrodnie wojenne*, pp. 117–119; A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁵ Jan Grabowski provided the incorrect name: "Martyka," see J. Grabowski, *Judenjagd*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁶ AN Kr, 29/439/1366, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Cracow at an away session in Tarnów, Tarnów, 27 April 1950, p. 178v.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ It is worth mentioning that, according to the court, while passing through the village of Bieniaszowice, Moryl and Cira "signalled to Jan Gaweł to stop the horses. Gaweł then turned to the Jews sitting in the back and told them to get off the cart and run. But they responded that they didn't want to escape – they just wanted to go to work" (*ibid.*, p. 179).

guards and the then coachman of committing an offence under Article 1(2) of the August Decree.¹⁰⁹

The Appellate Court in Cracow, in its judgment issued on 27 April 1950 during a session in Tarnów, found that Jan Moryl and Jan Cira had committed the act specified in Article 1(2) of the August Decree. Since they had acted on the orders of the village leader, the court applied an extraordinary mitigation of punishment. Each of them was sentenced to 5 years and 6 months in prison.¹¹⁰ By contrast, Jan Gaweł, who had been obliged to provide a horse and a cart, was not convicted. The court gave the following justification:

The defendant, Jan Gaweł, was subject to a general and commonly enforced obligation to provide personal and material services to the village, including the provision of a horse and a cart. On the day the Jewish individuals were brought to the village leader, it was Gaweł's turn to fulfil this duty. At the request of the village leader, Olbrycht, Gaweł provided the horse and cart. Initially, he was unaware that his services would be used to transport the Jews. His acts, upon becoming aware, do not constitute guilt under Article 1(2) of the August Decree. The defendant did not take part in the capture of the Jews, but since he was assigned the duty of supplying a means of transport, he fulfilled the duty of providing a necessary complement to a mechanical means of transport – in this case, a horse and a cart. Defendants Moryl and Cira, acting as transport guards, were responsible for escorting the captured individuals and delivering them to the German authorities. While Moryl and Cira maintained control over the detainees, Gaweł's role was confined to managing the horses. There is little indication that he assisted his companions in the actual handover of the captives to the Germans.¹¹¹

In the cited judgment, the court found that the defendant Gaweł “fulfilled the duty of providing a necessary complement to a mechanical means of transport –

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Indictment, Tarnów, 28 January 1950, pp. 107–108.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Cracow at an away session in Tarnów, Tarnów, 27 April 1950, p. 180v.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 178v.

in this case, a horse and a cart.”¹¹² This line of reasoning was also found a few days later in a Supreme Court ruling that, in a different case, stated that the liability for “capture” did not extend to coachmen performing only the so-called mechanical tasks related to the operation of the vehicle.¹¹³ Thus, the court departed from the strictly defined legal principle.

The Final Revision of the Term “Capture”

The departure from the new interpretation was finalised on 2 February 1951,¹¹⁴ when, through a resolution of the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court, it was determined that the act of “capture” – understood as depriving an individual of their “freedom of movement” – constituted a criminal offence. The state of “capture” was deemed to have ended once the individual no longer retained “the ability to dispose of themselves.” Any subsequent actions of the perpetrator(s), including maintaining the victim’s deprivation of liberty and handing them over to representatives of the German occupying authorities, were considered consequences stemming from the initial act of “capture”.¹¹⁵

“Capture,” as defined in Article 1(2) of the Decree of 31 August 1944 (*Dziennik Ustaw RP* 1946, no. 69, item 377), constitutes an offence involving the deprivation of freedom of movement of a person covered by the aforementioned legal provision. This offence is considered complete when the individual is effectively deprived of the ability to exercise personal autonomy.

Whether the “capture” has been completed – i.e., whether the person has in fact been deprived of their freedom of movement before any perpetrator’s acts – depends on the specific circumstances of the case and is subject to the adjudicating court’s assessment.

If the court determines that the perpetrator’s acts occurred before the completion of the “capture” and were intended to deprive the individual of their freedom

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ This refers to the judgment of the Supreme Court of 6 May 1950, ref. no. K 165/50. As cited in: A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne*, p. 79.

¹¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 79; L. Kubicki, *Zbrodnie wojenne*, p. 119.

¹¹⁵ A. Pasek, *Przestępstwa okupacyjne*, p. 80.

of movement definitively, this finding may justify a conviction for complicity or aiding in the commission of the offence.

Subsequent acts intended to transfer the captured individual to the German authorities may be punishable under Article 2 of the aforementioned decree, depending on the nature of the act and the perpetrator's intent. Other acts committed against the victim after the capture may warrant separate charges under the Decree of 31 August 1944 or other applicable criminal laws, based on the factual findings in the case.¹¹⁶

The resolution stipulated that persons who, only after the "capture" had been completed, took actions aimed at surrendering the captured persons, could be held liable under Article 2 of the decree on "acting to the detriment of persons," and thus offences for which it was possible to impose milder sanctions than those stipulated for the offences described under Article 1(2). The result of the new interpretation was a relaxation of repression, including against persons convicted of participating in various activities related to Jewish fugitives.

More than four months later, at the end of June 1951, attorney-at-law Tadeusz Krężel, based on the changes in case law described above, filed a request on behalf of the convicted Józef Szczepan and Adolf Kogut for an extraordinary revision of their sentences.¹¹⁷ On 5 October 1951, the Supreme Court (composed of Adolf Dąb, presiding judge, along with judges Zygmunt Sitnicki and Jan Haber), after considering the extraordinary revision of the First President of the Supreme Court,¹¹⁸ overturned the judgment of the Appellate Court in Cracow of 21 April 1950 and upheld the earlier judgment of the District Court in Tarnów of 13 January 1949.¹¹⁹ The defendants Kogut and Szczepan received lower sentences. The justification stated:

¹¹⁶ As cited in *Orzecznictwo Sądu Najwyższego z zakresu materialnego prawa karnego (1945–1957). Zbiór analityczny w ujęciu przedmiotowym i artykułowym*, ed. G. Auscaler, Warszawa, 1958, pp. 536–537.

¹¹⁷ AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Request by convicts Józef Szczepan and Adolf Kogut for an extraordinary revision in their favour to be submitted to the First President of the Supreme Court in Warsaw, Cracow, [date of receipt: 23 June 1951], n.p. For information concerning the extraordinary revision, see A. Bereza, *Sąd Najwyższy*, pp. 182–188.

¹¹⁸ In a request for an extraordinary revision, submitted to the Supreme Court, he requested that the contested judgment be overturned with regard to the legal classification of the acts attributed to Adolf Kogut and Józef Szczepan and the penalties imposed on them, and that they be convicted under Article 2 of the August Decree and given lower penalties.

¹¹⁹ At the same time, it overturned the part of the judgment concerning the forfeiture of the property of both defendants.

An extraordinary revision is justified. The findings of both courts confirm that the defendants did not capture or denounce the individuals persecuted by the occupier. Rather, they reported the capture to the police station solely under the directive and threat of the village leader and subsequently guided the policemen to the location where the individuals had been detained. In light of the Full Chamber of the Supreme Court's ruling dated 2 February 1951, such conduct constitutes an offence under Article 2 of the Decree of 31 August 1944. Consequently, the contested judgment of the Appellate Court should be overturned, and the District Court's ruling should be upheld, as it correctly classified the legal nature of the act and imposed a fair sentence. Considering the defendants' social circumstances and financial condition, the Supreme Court deemed it both possible and appropriate to forgo the confiscation of their property.¹²⁰

In accordance with the ruling of the District Court in Tarnów on 13 January 1949, Kogut and Szczepan were each sentenced to two years in prison. By the time the Supreme Court upheld the extraordinary revision, both had already been deprived of their liberty for nearly three years.¹²¹ They were ultimately released in the second half of October 1951.¹²²

Based on an analysis of judgments issued – both by the Appellate Court in Cracow and by other appellate courts adjudicating during the period under review – in cases brought under the August Decree, I conclude that, following the final change in the interpretation of the term “capture,” the legal classification of certain acts committed in connection with captured Jews was revised in 1951 as a result of appeals. Specifically, some convictions were reclassified from Article 1(2) (denunciation or capture) to Article 2 (acting to the detriment of persons), result-

¹²⁰ AN Kr, 29/439/1362, Copy of the judgment of the Supreme Court, Warsaw, 5 October 1951, n.p.

¹²¹ By its judgment dated 13 January 1949, the District Court in Tarnów applied the period of temporary detention commencing on 23 October 1948 as time served against the custodial sentence imposed on the defendants (*ibid.*, Judgment of the District Court in Tarnów, Tarnów, 13 January 1949, p. 41v).

¹²² Adolf Kogut was released from the Labour Centre in Brzeszcze on 22 October 1951. Józef Szczepan was released from the Central Prison in Warsaw seven days later, on 29 October 1951 (*ibid.*, Notification from the Voivodeship Prosecutor's Office in Cracow to the Sixth Criminal Division of the Voivodeship Court in Cracow, Cracow, 1 November 1951, n.p.).

ing in the imposition of lighter sentences.¹²³ This reclassification may have led, as in the case of Kogut and Szczepan, to the release of convicted individuals prior to the enactment of the 1952 amnesty law.¹²⁴

Closing Remarks

Many of the most contentious issues in legal theory and practice revolve around the interpretation of law. The criminal trial of Adolf Kogut and Józef Szczepan – examined in detail – illustrates the post-war challenges of classifying acts committed under German occupation within the framework of the August Decree. This case also highlights how a shift in the interpretation of the term “capture” in 1949 temporarily led to harsher criminal penalties for certain individuals prosecuted for wartime offences, at least until a revised interpretation was issued on 2 February 1951. Among those affected were individuals convicted of various forms of involvement in crimes against the Jewish population, such as relaying information about the capture of Jews (in the role of messengers) or guarding detainees as hostages or members of a guard unit.

Although the process of reckoning in Poland largely stalled in the late 1940s and early 1950s, a significant number of judgments were nonetheless issued during that period in cases involving individuals who had participated in activities related to Jews during the German occupation. In some of these cases, a shift in the interpretation of the term “capture” may have led to the imposition of considerably harsher sentences – later mitigated, first through the appeal mechanisms referenced in the article, and subsequently by the 1952 amnesty act.

A thorough examination of this issue would require foundational research, particularly into the archival records generated by the Supreme Court, appellate

¹²³ The same applied to the other convicts mentioned in this article. On 3 March 1951, the Supreme Court, acting in extraordinary revision proceedings, reclassified the offence committed by Jan Cira and Jan Moryl from Article 1(2) to Article 2 of the Decree of 31 August 1944, and sentenced them to one year and six months imprisonment (AN Kr, 29/439/1366, Judgment of the Supreme Court, 3 March 1951, pp. 197–197v). At the revision hearing on 26 May 1951, the Supreme Court also revised the classification of the acts committed by Piotr Mastalerz, Józef Mastalerz, Henryk Czupryna, and Stanisław Magiera. For acting to the detriment of persons residing in the territory of the Polish state, they were sentenced to between two and three years in prison (AN Kr, 29/439/1356, Copy of the judgment of the Supreme Court, Warsaw, 26 March 1951, n.p.).

¹²⁴ Act of 22 November 1952 on amnesty, Dz.U. 1952, no. 46, item 309.

courts, and voivodeship courts that adjudicated such cases during the relevant period, along with comparative analysis. It would also be worthwhile to explore the following question: in judicial practice, did the broad interpretation of the law – and the resulting difficulty in classifying certain acts under Article 2 of the August Decree (acting to the detriment of persons) – lead to instances in which such individuals were acquitted? Such an analysis would significantly enhance our understanding of post-war judicial responses to Holocaust-related cases in Poland, particularly in evaluating the severity of the imposed penalties. As previously noted, the cases of Kogut and Szczepan – as well as others cited in this article – illustrate that certain criminal proceedings saw a temporary intensification of sanctions due to a shift in the interpretation of the term “capture.” This shift affected individuals prosecuted for acts involving Jews who had been captured. It would also be valuable to undertake a thorough investigation into the broader, extra-legal factors that contributed to this interpretive change.

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REVIEWS/ POLEMICS

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GERMAN CRIMES COMMITTED ON POLES WHO
HELPED JEWS – REFLECTIONS ON SEBASTIAN
PIĄTKOWSKI'S MONOGRAPH „*W PŁOMIENIACH ZAŚ
CIĄGLE ODZYWAŁY SIĘ JĘKI...*”. NIEMIECKIE ZBRODNIĘ NA
NIOŚĄCYCH POMOC ŻYDOM POLAKACH Z CIEPIELOWA
I OKOLIC (1942–1943) (“AND AMIDST THE FLAMES, MOANS
COULD STILL BE HEARD...” GERMAN CRIMES AGAINST POLES
WHO HELPED JEWS IN CIEPIELÓW AND ITS VICINITY,
1942–1943)¹, WARSAW: INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL
REMEMBRANCE, 2025, 215 PP.

In 2025, the Institute of National Remembrance Publishing House released a 215-page monograph by Sebastian Piątkowski titled „*W płomieniach zaś ciągle odzywały się jęki...*”. *Niemieckie zbrodnie na niosących pomoc Żydom Polakach z Ciepiewowa i okolic (1942–1943)* (“And Amidst the Flames, Moans Could Still

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Be Heard...” German Crimes Against Poles Who Helped Jews in Ciepeliów and the Surrounding Area its Vicinity, 1942–1943).² The book was reviewed by two historians: Dr. hab. Grzegorz Berendt, Professor at the University of Gdańsk, and Dr. hab. Jerzy Gapys, Professor at the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce. The author, a staff member of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), is a respected scholar specialising in the German occupation of Poland and the experiences of the Jewish population during World War II. His body of work includes several monographs, notably on the German prison in Radom,³ life in Radom during the war,⁴ and the everyday realities of Poles living in the territory of the General Governorate.⁵ What is particularly important in the context of his latest publication is that the author has also written a monumental seven-volume source edition entitled *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945* (Testimonies on Aid Provided to Jews by Poles, 1939–1945).⁶

The book under review focuses on the tragic events that unfolded in a section of the occupied Radom District within the General Governorate. Between early December 1942 and mid-March 1943, in the area of the Kreis Starachowice, German forces conducted a brutal pacification operation targeting so-called “bandits” – a term they used not only for individuals possessing weapons, but also for Jews in hiding and those who offered them assistance. The atrocities were carried out by German military police officers from the notorious 1st Motorised SS Police Battalion, led by Major Ernst Schwieger.⁷ Approximately 300 individuals – Jews,

² S. Piątkowski, „W płomieniach zaś ciągle odzywały się jęki...”. *Niemieckie zbrodnie na niosących pomoc Żydom Polakach z Ciepeliowa i okolic (1942–1943)*, Warsaw, 2025.

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⁴ S. Piątkowski, *Radom w latach wojny i okupacji niemieckiej (1939–1945)*, Lublin–Warsaw, 2019.

⁵ S. Piątkowski, *Życie codzienne Polaków w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w świetle ogłoszeń drobnych polskojęzycznej prasy niemieckiej*, Warsaw, 2021.

⁶ *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 1: Dystrykt warszawski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa; vol. 2: Dystrykt krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa; vol. 3: Dystrykt lubelski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa; vol. 4: Dystrykt radomski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa; vol. 5: Dystrykt Galicja Generalnego Gubernatorstwa i Wołyń; vol. 6: Białostoczczyzna, Nowogródzczyzna, Polesie, Wileńszczyzna; vol. 7: Trzecia Rzesza i ziemie polskie do niej wcielone, selec. and ed. S. Piątkowski, Lublin–Warsaw, 2018–2023.

⁷ For more information on this subject, see among others M. Seydler, *Ermöglichungsverhältnisse. Die Kooperation von NS-Sondereinheiten im Holocaust am Beispiel des I./SS-Gendarmerie-Bataillons (mot.)*, Weilerswist, 2023; R. Drabik, “Udział I Zmotoryzowanego Batalionu Żandarmerii SS w pacyfikacji ludności w dystrykcie lubelskim,” in *Wież polska podczas II wojny światowej. Po pacyfikacji – losy i pamięć*, ed. M. Jedynak, Kielce–Białystok, 2025; R. Drabik, “Udział I Zmotoryzowanego Batalionu Żandarmerii w wysiedleniach na Zamojszczyźnie,” *Archiwariusz Zamojski* 21 (2023), pp. 179–191.

Poles, Roma, and Soviet prisoners of war – were brutally killed. Victims were shot, burned alive, or beaten to death. While some cases suggest that those targeted may have had ties to communist groups or the resistance movement, the primary and overriding reason for these atrocities was their role in sheltering Jews.

The study under review is structured into an introduction, eight chapters, a bibliography, and a list of abbreviations. Chapter One outlines the administrative framework of German authorities in the Radom District. Chapter Two examines the district's role as a site of German extermination policies before December 1942. Chapter Three focuses on the Kreis Starachowice during the occupation, detailing both the county's infrastructure and the local population, and highlighting the setting of the atrocities explored in the book. Chapter Four dwells on the origins of the atrocities committed against Poles from Ciepiałów and the surrounding villages who aided Jews. Chapter Five introduces the perpetrators – military policemen stationed in Lipsko and Ciepiałów – and examines the circumstances of their operations. Chapter Six, titled “Pasma zbrodni” (A Series of Crimes), comprises eleven subchapters detailing specific acts of brutality carried out by German forces in the Kreis Starachowice, including in Ciepiałów Stary, Rekówka, Świesielice, Boiska-Kolonia, Tymienica Stara, Okole, Marcule, Lubień, Boiska, Słuszczyn, and Zajączków. The penultimate chapter lists other crimes committed in this area and discusses the fate of the perpetrators. The final chapter contains a traditional conclusion, in which the author summarises the information presented so far. He wrote:

Between 6 December 1942 and approximately 15 March 1943, German forces conducted a pacification operation in parts of the Kreis Starachowice, including the municipalities of Chotcza, Ciepiałów, Iłża, Lipsko, and Solec nad Wisłą – though the violence extended beyond these areas. The operation aimed at the physical extermination of the so-called “bandits,” a term the Germans applied not only to armed resisters but also to Jews in hiding and the Polish farmers who aided them. Even decades later, the scale of the bloodshed remains deeply disturbing. Archival records indicate that nearly 300 individuals of various nationalities were murdered over the course of just a few autumn and winter months. In addition to executions carried out in forests, fields, and along roadsides, the region witnessed approximately twenty such operations marked by

systematic brutality: the targeted killing of entire families, widespread looting, the burning of homesteads, and the prohibition of burying victims in Catholic cemeteries. In at least ten documented cases, Poles were executed for sheltering Jews – either those hiding on farms or among the so-called “people from the forest” (pp. 195–197).

The number of Poles who died for helping Jews in the ten cases mentioned above was, according to Sebastian Piątkowski’s calculations, over 70 people, including men, women, and children (p. 198).

Upon finishing the book, it becomes difficult to disagree with the author’s assertion that the brutal consequences of the pacification operation are both horrifying and profoundly disheartening. This reaction stems not only from the sheer number of victims, but also from the chilling consistency in the way the German perpetrators carried out their operations. The methods employed were disturbingly uniform, and the testimonies of individual atrocities committed against Polish farmers and their families follow a grimly familiar pattern. Sebastian Piątkowski’s examination of these events highlights a broader framework of extrajudicial repression, closely tied to the persecution of Jews and those who dared to assist them.

The anti-Jewish policy implemented by the German occupiers can be understood as unfolding in four distinct phases: exploitation, discrimination, stigmatisation, and isolation. These stages were reinforced by a series of regulations introduced within the General Governorate under the authority of General Governor Hans Frank. For instance, the regulation of 26 October 1939 mandating forced labour for Jews exemplified the exploitative phase; the regulation banning ritual slaughter reflected discriminatory intent; and the regulation issued on 23 November 1939 requiring Jews to wear armbands marked with the Star of David served as a tool of stigmatisation.⁸ Central to our topic are the Residence Restriction Regulations enacted within the General Governorate. Three such regulations were issued: the first on 13 September 1940, the second on 29 April 1941, and the third on 15 October 1941. The following discussion will focus on the third regulation,

⁸ A. Bartnicka and K. Graczyk, “In the Majesty of the Law? Jewish Residents of Warsaw in the Face of German Occupation Ordinances and Activities of Sondergericht Warschau – Part I–II,” *Miscellanea Historico-Iuridica* 1 (23) (2024), pp. 478–497, 517–544.

placing particular emphasis on the significance of Article 4b, which is especially relevant to the issue at hand and which reads as follows:

- (1) Jews who leave their designated quarter without authorisation are liable to the death penalty. Anyone who knowingly hides Jews shall be subject to the same penalty.
- (2) Inciters and helpers shall be punished in the same way as the perpetrator, an attempted act shall be punished as an accomplished act. In milder cases, heavy imprisonment or prison may be adjudicated.
- (3) Sentencing shall be carried out by the Special Courts.

It is necessary to quote the provision *in extenso* due to an error found in the reviewed book (p. 42). The author wrote: "On 15 October 1941, Governor Hans Frank issued a regulation for the entire General Governorate stating that any Jew who left the ghetto without permission would be punished by death. Any Pole who provided him with a hiding place would be subject to the same penalty." The author's restrictive interpretation of the punishment for those who provided shelter is problematic, as the relevant provision was not limited to Poles. In fact, the legislation enacted by the General Governorate extended its scope to any individual who knowingly offered shelter to a Jew who had left the designated residential quarter (ghetto), regardless of the offender's nationality. Thus, such acts could have been committed – and prosecuted – by Poles, Ukrainians, or Germans alike. To avoid empty words, I will refer to case law from the special courts, which clearly demonstrates that these provisions were enforced on this broader context. One instance illustrating the enforcement of this provision concerning a Pole is the verdict delivered on 2 June 1943 by the Special Court in Piotrków. Jan Góralczyk, a resident of the colony of Ryłsk Duży in the Regnów Municipality, was sentenced to death for sheltering a Jew in his barn for at least fourteen days. Additionally, when interrogated by the police regarding the presence of Jews, he deliberately provided false information.⁹ For the same act, in February 1944, the Special Court

⁹ Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi [State Archives in Łódź], *Prokuratura przy Sądzie Specjalnym w Piotrkowie* [Prosecutor's Office at the Special Court in Piotrków], 5298, Urteil gegen Jan Góralczyk vom 02.06.1943, p. 80.

in Stanisławów sentenced Leopold Zahler, a Ukrainian, who had given shelter to his Jewish wife for one night.¹⁰ An example of a German being convicted is the sentence issued against Alois Huber by the Special Court in Cracow in July 1944.¹¹ Theoretically, even another Jew (such as one who had previously left the ghetto legally) could have committed the aforementioned act. It would not be controversial to state that, in practice, it was Poles who most often bore criminal responsibility for sheltering Jews, but this does not alter the fact that the provision did not apply only to Poles.

The preceding remarks pertain to the process of judicial repression, specifically the enforcement of the Third General Governorate (GG) Residence Restriction Regulation and the legal proceedings conducted by German special courts (*Sondergerichte*).¹² In this context, I must point out an inaccuracy: on pages 26–27, the author appears to have mixed up special courts with summary courts. The author wrote:

Special Courts (*Sondergerichte*), which operated from their headquarters in Radom, with additional divisions in Częstochowa, Kielce, and Piotrków Trybunalski, were also endowed with sweeping powers. These courts were authorised to impose the harshest penalties –including death – for a range of offences. These included failure to meet imposed quotas, evasion of forced labour in the construction service, transmission of venereal disease to a German, and, in the case of Jewish individuals, leaving the ghetto or failing to wear the armband with the Star of David. The true character and purpose of these courts are starkly illustrated in the post-war testimony of Fritz Liphardt, one of their full-time “judges”: “If an arrested person appeared before a summary court, they were either sentenced to death or acquitted. In cases of acquittal, the person in ques-

¹⁰ *Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, hereinafter AIPN) *Główna Komisja* (Chief Commission, GK), 94/8641, Urteil in der Strafsache gegen Leopold Zahler vom 26.02.1944, pp. 6–7.

¹¹ K. Graczyk, “„Stołeczny” Sondergericht. Niemiecki Sąd Specjalny w Krakowie (Sondergericht Krakau) 1939–1945,” *Folia Historica Cracoviensia* 1 (30) (2024), pp. 7, 38, 79.

¹² For more on the analysis of the jurisprudence of the GG Special Courts based on the Third GG Residence Restriction Regulation, see K. Graczyk, *Niemieckie sądy specjalne w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 2025, pp. 265–313.

tion was usually sent to a concentration camp. Hundreds of death sentences were passed.”

The quoted passage raises two objections. Firstly, failure to wear the armband with the Star of David (an offence that was indeed within the jurisdiction of the Special Courts of the General Governorate) could not be punished by death (initially it was punishable by imprisonment, then by imprisonment and a fine, or one of these penalties)¹³ and I am not aware of any such sentence (which does not mean that failing to wear the armband could not be a punishable offence, occurring alongside acts punishable by death). Secondly, while Liphardt’s statement is valuable when considered alongside other sources referring to summary courts, it does not pertain to the Special Courts of the General Governorate, but rather to summary courts. Given the scope of this review, I will refrain from a detailed comparison. I will simply note that although their jurisdictions partially overlapped – for instance, cases not requiring the death penalty could be transferred from a summary court to a Special Court of the General Governorate – their institutional subordination, judicial composition, and standards of evidentiary procedure differed significantly. A further key distinction lies in the fact that acts of resistance were prosecuted before summary courts, not Special Courts.

The reviewed work would benefit from providing historical context on the distinction between judicial and extrajudicial forms of repression that developed in response to offences such as leaving the ghetto or sheltering Jews. This distinction is not currently evident to the reader. Initially, punitive measures were carried out through judicial channels, but these did not disappear when extrajudicial methods emerged. The latter, lacking formal legal procedures, proved more expedient for the German occupiers, aligning more closely with their objectives and facilitating a higher number of executions. According to the author’s findings, the implementation of extrajudicial measures was enabled by the so-called *Schießbefehl* – an order issued to the German police and military police to shoot any Jew found outside

¹³ Rozporządzenie o oznaczeniu żydów i żydówek w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie z dnia 23 listopada 1939 r., *Dziennik Rozporządzeń Generalnego Gubernatora dla Okupowanych Polskich Obszarów* (hereinafter DzRGGOPO) 1939, no. 8, p. 61; Drugie rozporządzenie o oznaczeniu żydów i żydówek w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie z dnia 19 lutego 1940 r., DzRGGOPO 1940, no. 15, p. 79.

the ghetto,¹⁴ and later extended to include any Pole who provided shelter to them. Based on the current state of knowledge, one might venture to argue that the route of repression was linked to the type of terrain in which “punishable” acts of aid took place. Residents of cities and towns were clearly more likely to be brought before the special court of the General Governorate, while rural residents were practically deprived of this possibility, although there are, of course, cases that defied this statement.

In my view, the issue outlined above serves as a clear illustration of Ernst Fraenkel’s theory of the dual state, formulated in relation to the political structure of the Third Reich. Fraenkel identified two distinct spheres: the normative state and the prerogative state.¹⁵ Put simply, the normative state encompassed formal procedures and administrative and judicial institutions functioning within the framework of established legal norms. In contrast, the prerogative state – often referred to as the “SS state” – was governed by directives rooted in political will, such as the Führer’s orders, arbitrary commands, or the use of brute force. When these insights are applied to the context of the General Governorate, it becomes evident that judicial and extrajudicial forms of repression were often employed simultaneously in comparable situations. When the Ulma family was murdered in Markowa on 24 March 1944, proceedings had been underway for about two weeks against Stanisława Kornecka for hiding a Jew in Sanok. On 19 April 1944, the woman was sentenced to death by the Special Court in Rzeszów, which was later commuted to one year in prison.¹⁶ Under the totalitarian system of the Third Reich, which was also occupying Polish territory, individuals had no influence on the type of repression applied to them. This was determined by factors beyond their control.

Sebastian Piątkowski argues in his book that the *Schießbefehl* was indeed carried out. Equally significant, however, is the evidence emerging from the testimony of

¹⁴ *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 9: *Polen: Generalgouvernement August 1941–1945*, ed. K.P. Friedrich, München, 2014, p. 132; B. Musiał, *Kto допоможе Żydowi...*, Poznań, 2019, pp. 94–95.

¹⁵ E. Fraenkel, *The Dual State. A Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship*, Oxford, 2017; M. Mączyński, *Organizacyjno-prawne aspekty funkcjonowania administracji bezpieczeństwa i porządku publicznego dla zajętych obszarów polskich w latach 1939–1945. Ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Krakowa jako stolicy Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, Cracow, 2012, pp. 442–446.

¹⁶ K. Graczyk, “Z działalności Sądu Specjalnego w Rzeszowie (Sondergericht Reichshof) podczas II wojny światowej,” *Acta Iuridica Resoviensia* 4 (2024), p. 52.

gendarme Alfons Himmel and the recurring pattern of German crimes, which indicates that in the Radom District, a *Schießbefehl* specifically targeted Poles who sheltered Jews.

The author wrote:

The motorised military police unit [...] had special authorisation from the SS- und Polizeiführer in Radom, Dr. Böttcher, to kill Jews and Poles on the spot without trial. I recall that whenever Jews were brought to our station, we always sent them to the motorised military police, who usually killed them,” Himmel recounted after the war (p. 108).

A consistent pattern emerges in the accounts of these crimes: Polish farms whose owners had helped Jews were surrounded and thoroughly searched. Regardless of whether any signs of Jewish presence – such as religious books – were discovered, all inhabitants were executed, sometimes even burned alive. The killings included not only adults but also children, with instances of the youngest being spared occurring only in sporadic cases (pp. 150–151). The perpetrators not only took their victims’ lives but, after seizing all items of value, set the house ablaze and prohibited burial in a Catholic cemetery. There is no doubt that such acts of brutality by the Germans were intended to instil fear and discourage any attempts to aid Jews. A poignant feature of each crime’s account in the book is the inclusion of personal details – names, birth dates, and ages of the victims – at the end of each entry. This information resonates deeply with the reader, reinforcing the human cost of these atrocities.

The question arises whether a similar order concerning the shooting of Poles who provided shelter to Jews was also issued in other districts of the General Governorate or whether it was issued at the central level. In my opinion, research into this issue should be presented as a research proposal. The recently analysed and publicised case of the Ulma family from Markowa in the Cracow District lends credence to this thesis.¹⁷ The lesser-known case of the Siniarski family from

¹⁷ M. Szpytma, *The Righteous and the Merciful*, Warsaw, 2023; M. Szpytma, *Sprawiedliwi i ich świat w fotografii Józefa Ulmy*, Warsaw, 2023.

Lutkówka in the Grodzisk Mazowiecki County would also indicate that such an order was issued in the Warsaw District. The files of the investigation conducted in the 1970s by the District Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Warsaw show that in March 1944, the military police from Mszczonów executed Stanisław Siniarski, his wife Marianna, their three children (fourteen-year-old Marian, eight-year-old Irena, and six-year-old Edward), and two Jews they were hiding.¹⁸ A similar *modus operandi* in the Lublin District is confirmed by the case of Zuzanna Brzezińska and her son Czesław, who were suspected of hiding Jews. The woman was shot dead by the Germans, while her son was wounded and miraculously survived.¹⁹ Another similar case was the shooting on 29 December 1942 in the village of Majdan Nowy in the Biłgoraj County of, among others, Jan Gniduła, Katarzyna Kowal, and her son Józef.²⁰ On the other hand, within certain areas of the Galicia District (notably the pre-war Stanisławów Voivodeship), Poles who helped Jews faced execution, though this penalty did not extend to children.²¹

The implementation of extrajudicial repression had tragic consequences for many human lives. The executions carried out by the German military police were conducted without any legal procedures, regardless of the German criminal law introduced at the beginning of the occupation. If the provisions of the General Governorate legislation had been applied to the Ulma and Siniarski families, as well as to many other families mentioned in Sebastian Piątkowski's book, adults (for example, Józef and Wiktoria Ulma, Stanisław and Marianna Siniarski) would have been brought before the Special Courts for knowingly sheltering Jews. Under no circumstances would this apply to children; however, as their age did not allow them to be held criminally liable under the provisions of the German Criminal

¹⁸ AIPN, 392/1382, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zygmunt Zgórzak at the District Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Warsaw, 4 July 1972, pp. 6–8; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Bronisław Zgórzak at the District Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Warsaw, 23 November 1972, pp. 13–21.

¹⁹ A. Gontarek, „„Synu, jako możesz, to uciekaj, bo ja już nie mogę”. Śmierć Zuzanny Brzezińskiej za dożywianie Żyda w Gutanowie na północnej Lubelszczyźnie,” in *Polacy ratujący Żydów w dystrykcie lubelskim 1939–1944. Oblicza pomocy*, eds. R. Drabik and A. Gontarek, Lublin–Warsaw, 2024, pp. 245–247.

²⁰ R. Drabik, „„Chcieliśmy pomóc Żydom prześladowanym przez Niemców”. Egzekucje na mieszkańcach Majdanu Nowego w Kreis Biłgoraj za pomoc ludności żydowskiej,” in *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, pp. 251–253.

²¹ See T. Gonet, *Pomoc Żydom na terenie przedwojennego województwa stanisławowskiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1941–1944*, Katowice–Warsaw, 2025, pp. 526–566.

Code, which was applied in the General Governorate by authorities subordinate to the Main Department of Justice in the General Governorate. These comments also apply to police regulations issued by the Higher SS and Police Commander in the General Governorate, such as the Police Regulation of 28 October 1942 on the Establishment of Jewish Residential Quarters in the Districts of Warsaw and Lublin. These legal acts did not contain an independent criminal norm, and the special courts of the General Government refused to apply them. This was the case, for example, with the Special Court in Lublin (judgment of July 1943).²² The Main Department of Justice in the General Governorate, which formulated critical comments on the judgment issued by the Special Court in Rzeszów, took the same position.²³ This judgement referred to the Police Regulation of 10 November 1942 on the Establishment of Jewish Residential Quarters in the Districts of Radom, Cracow, and Galicia, which was criticised because the police regulation did not contain an independent criminal norm and therefore should not have been referred to either in the indictment or in the judgment.²⁴ In other words, changes to the scope of criminal liability introduced through police regulations – such as criminalising the act of “feeding” a Jew – were not legally binding on the Special Courts of the General Governorate.

Judicial repression would therefore have had the effect of at least sparing the lives of the youngest victims.²⁵ However, there is no doubt that the *Schießbefehl* was issued with the intention of bypassing the judicial process, which was not as effective in deterring crime and was associated with certain difficulties and delays (court dates, the need for detention, court hearings).

It is saddening that most of the perpetrators described in the book – apart from those who died in battle – lived to see the end of the war and were then able to lead peaceful lives in the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. Sebastian Piątkowski mentions only two exceptions – Anton Krüger and

²² Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 137/301, Urteil des Sondergerichts in Lublin gegen Jan Kukielka, Michal Hubka und Kasimierz Dorosz vom 28.08.1943, pp. 32–39.

²³ *Archiwum Państwowe w Rzeszowie* (The State Archives in Rzeszów), *Sąd Specjalny Niemiecki w Rzeszowie* (The German Special Court in Rzeszów), 404, Urteil in der Strafsache gegen Stanisława Kornecka vom 19.04.1944, pp. 27–29.

²⁴ K. Graczyk, *Niemieckie sądy specjalne*, pp. 282–283.

²⁵ See B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże*, p. 143.

Himmel mentioned above. Krüger, who was a gamekeeper and supervisor of Polish foresters, cooperated closely with the police, initiated pacifications, participated in murders and arson attacks on buildings. In July 1943, he was shot by a Home Army liquidation group. In 1949, the District Court in Radom sentenced Himmel to the death penalty, which was carried out (pp. 192–193). The stark imbalance between the vast number of victims and the few perpetrators held accountable is deeply unsettling. In 1944, as part of Operation “1005,” the Germans undertook systematic efforts to erase evidence of their atrocities by dismantling mass graves and incinerating exhumed bodies. These calculated operations were intended to obstruct any future attempts at exhumation, victim identification, or the establishment of the true scale of the crimes (p. 194).

The reviewed book is a compendium on German crimes against Poles who helped Jews in the Radom District and, more broadly, in rural Poland. The publication’s major strengths include its concise, accessible form, narrative style, and length, which does not discourage readers from engaging with it. It can be recommended to those who wish to explore the issue of German crimes in occupied Poland from 1939 to 1945 in greater depth.

The publication serves as both a memorial to the dozens of individuals brutally killed by motorised German military police for aiding Jews, and a tribute to the victims – an aspect that unquestionably reflects the author’s commendable intent.

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A GLOSS TO THE REVIEW BY KONRAD GRACZYK

For the author of a book, reading a review prepared for publication is always a distinctive experience. I extend my sincere gratitude to Konrad Graczyk for reading my book on German crimes against Poles from the Ciepiałów region who rescued Jews, and for composing a thoughtful, critical review. I deeply appreciate his positive remarks and, with humility, accept the observations he has made regarding errors in this work.

Yet there is a particular critique in the review that I feel compelled to address. Its author writes:

The reviewed work would benefit from providing historical context on the distinction between judicial and extrajudicial forms of repression that developed in response to offences such as leaving the ghetto or sheltering Jews. This distinction is not currently evident to the reader. Initially, punitive measures were carried out through judicial channels, but these did not disappear when extrajudicial methods emerged. The latter, lacking formal legal procedures, proved more

expedient for the German occupiers, aligning more closely with their objectives and facilitating a higher number of executions.

And a few pages later:

The implementation of extrajudicial repression had tragic consequences for many human lives. The executions carried out by the German military police were conducted without any legal procedures, regardless of the German criminal law introduced at the beginning of the occupation. If the provisions of the General Governorate legislation had been applied to the Ulma and Siniarski families, as well as to many other families mentioned in Sebastian Piątkowski's book, adults (for example, Józef and Wiktoria Ulma, Stanisław and Marianna Siniarski) would have been brought before the Special Courts for knowingly sheltering Jews. Under no circumstances would this apply to children, however, as their age did not allow them to be held criminally liable under the provisions of the German Criminal Code, which was applied in the General Governorate by authorities subordinate to the Main Department of Justice in the General Governorate.

Please forgive me, but I find it difficult to imagine informing the readers of my book that, although the military police officers from the stations in Ciepeliów and Lipsko were pathological murderers, only a few dozen kilometres away in Radom there was a "just" German court that would have considered the cases of the Kowalski, Obuchiewicz, Kosior, and Skoczylas families if they had been brought before it. Furthermore, even if that court had sentenced members of these families to death, they could have appealed – through a lawyer – to Governor-General Hans Frank for clemency, which might have been granted to at least some of them. Admittedly, this would not have necessarily meant regaining their freedom, but it would have saved the lives of these "criminals" threatening the "security of the Reich."

Both the reviewer and I inevitably view the past with a certain subjectivity, as reflected in our studies. In my view, the German police and judicial system pursued common criminal goals focused on mass extermination, some of which were masked by the pretence of "justice." There is a simple example that illustrates this: in the summer of 1942, when the Germans were preparing to move Aktion

“Reinhardt” to the left bank of the Vistula River, there were at least several dozen Jews in Radom prison. Most of them came from small towns and had been arrested for illegally leaving the ghettos or for failing to wear armbands with the Star of David. They might have considered themselves fortunate, as they did not die immediately in the fields or on country roads, shot by military police. Although each of them was awaiting a “trial,” on the night when the liquidation of the so-called large ghetto in Radom began, German guards led them out of the building and added them to the column escorted to the railway station, where a train was already waiting to depart for the Treblinka extermination camp. No one cared about their legal status – it had already been decided that they had no chance of survival.

I understand the reviewer’s belief that the underage residents of Ciepeliów Stary, Rekówka, and other places I describe would not have been brought before a court. Yet does this mean they would not have been victims of repression that could lead to death? One case from Radom illustrates the point: the Germans held a teenager in the local prison for several months, only to execute him once he reached the age of majority. Everything was therefore carried out “with the full sanction of the law.” The youngest prisoners deported from Radom in January 1943 to the Majdanek concentration camp were 14 years old. Some of the children from Ciepeliów and the surrounding area might therefore have had a “chance” of being included in this transport. As for the younger children, what became of them? Perhaps they would have been sent to the camp in Łódź, where the Germans held children as young as six.

One of Ernst Fraenkel’s theses, also cited by the reviewer, holds that to build an effective totalitarian state, one should not pay heed to existing legal norms but rather be guided by the state authority’s current prerogatives. One area where this belief was put into practice was the General Governorate. As Marek Mączyński – referenced in one of the footnotes – observed in his book, the German police did whatever they wanted here, unchecked by the judicial apparatus. We should not forget this.

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DOMINIK FLISIAK, *ANTYŻYDOWSKA ZBRODNIA
W PRZEDBORZU. PYTANIA, ŹRÓDŁA, ODPOWIEDZI*
(INVESTIGATING THE ANTI-JEWISH CRIME IN
PRZEDBÓRZ: QUESTIONS RAISED, SOURCES EXAMINED,
ANSWERS PROPOSED), CHRZAN, 2024, 234 PP.

Polish-Jewish relations in the 20th century have, in recent years, sparked vigorous debate in both academic and public spheres.¹ The book reviewed here

¹ Selected publications on this topic: D. Engel, "Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland 1944–1946," *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998); J.T. Gross, *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści*, Cracow, 2006; *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, eds. Ł. Kamiński and J. Żaryn, Warsaw, 2006; *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 2, eds. L. Bukowski, A. Jankowski, and J. Żaryn, Warsaw, 2008; M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944–1947*, Warsaw, 2008; 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, 2012, pp. 71–94; M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944–1947: ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Cracow, 2012; J. Tokarska-Bakir, "Postwar violence against Jews in Central and Eastern Europe," in *Our Courage – Jews in Europe 1945–48*, eds. K. Bohus, A. Grossmann, W. Hanak, and I. Wenzel, Oldenbourg, 2020, pp. 64–81; J. Korzeniowski, "Bibliografia do tematu: „Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach” (4 VII 1946 r.)," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 4 (1996), pp. 78–80; J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego*, vols. 1–2,

examines Poles' attitudes and behaviour towards Jews in the immediate aftermath of World War II, a period during which some of them – though their number is difficult to determine – held anti-Semitic views and attitudes, resulting in pogroms, assaults, murders, and other acts of anti-Jewish violence.² The most dramatic and widely reported act of violence of the post-war period was the pogrom against Jews in Kielce in early July 1946. The issue of post-war pogroms, anti-Jewish incidents, and demonstrations has been frequently addressed in recent years. As already mentioned, Dominik Flisiak's publication *Antyżydowska zbrodnia w Przedborzu. Pytania, źródła, odpowiedzi* (Anti-Jewish Crime in Przedbórz: Questions Raised, Sources Examined, Answers Proposed) belongs to this trend.³ The author of the book is a trained historian and holds a PhD in humanities. He graduated from the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce. His research has primarily focused on the history of Zionist revisionists, a subject on which he has published numerous academic articles. His books include *Działalność syjonistów-rewizjonistów w Polsce w latach 1944/1945–1950* (The Activity of Zionist Revisionists in Poland in 1944/1945–1950), *Wybrane materiały ideologiczne i propagandowe Syjonistyczno-Socjalistycznej Partii Robotniczej Poalej Syjon-Hitachdut* (Selected Ideological and Propaganda Materials of the Zionist-Socialist Workers' Party Poale Zion-Hitachdut), and a biography titled *Jakob Steinhardt (1887–1968). Życie i działalność* (Jakob Steinhardt [1887–1968]. Life and Work).

This publication integrates a concise monograph on the Jewish community of Przedbórz before and during the war with a detailed analysis of the causes, course, and aftermath of the crime committed there in late May 1945, drawing on a rich selection of source materials. It is worth noting that appendices with documents are included after each chapter. Although the author's intention was likely to link a thematic discussion with selected source material, a clearer presentation of con-

Warsaw, 2018; J. Kwiek, "Wydarzenia antyżydowskie 11 sierpnia 1945 r. w Krakowie: dokumenty," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 1 (2000), pp. 77–89; A. Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie. 11 sierpnia 1945 r.*, Warsaw, 2000; J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Kocia muzyka. Chóralna historia pogromu krakowskiego*, vols. 1–2, Warsaw, 2024; W.W. Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914–1920*, Cambridge University Press 2018.

² See the latest findings on this issue in: J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie. Przejawy wrogości wobec Żydów w latach 1944–1947*, Warsaw, 2021.

³ D. Flisiak, *Antyżydowska zbrodnia w Przedborzu. Pytania, źródła, odpowiedzi*, Chrzan, 2024.

tent and findings would have been achieved through a comprehensive appendix of sources at the end of the volume. This approach would have been more coherent, especially given the frequent references to archival documents throughout the text. Otherwise, the book has a fairly classic layout. It consists of seven chapters, preceded by a list of abbreviations and an introduction, and culminating in a conclusion, bibliography, and indexes.

In the introduction, the author outlined why he undertook research into the crime committed against Jews in Przedbórz on the night of 27–28 May 1945, as well as when and in which archives he conducted his research. In this section, he also posed the research questions that guided him during his work: “To reconstruct the anti-Jewish crime in Przedbórz as accurately as possible, it was necessary to address several fundamental research questions: What was the history of the Jewish community in Przedbórz up to the outbreak of World War II? What befell the Jews of Przedbórz during the war? Who were Kazimierz Jezierski and Edmund Majchrowski – the key figures in understanding how the anti-Jewish crime unfolded? Are there any eyewitness testimonies of the murder in Przedbórz? Did the perpetrators of the attack face any consequences? Why were the victims accused of pro-communist attitudes? Did representatives of the Jewish community appear in Przedbórz after the crime was committed?”⁴ The introduction contains elements typical of historical publications, including summaries of individual chapters, a presentation of the literature on the subject, and the most important sources used in the research. The author also cites references to the crime in Przedbórz found in earlier publications by other researchers. Surprisingly, the literature cited does not include the very important work of Julian Kwiek, his recently published book entitled *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie. Przejawy wrogości wobec Żydów w latach 1944–1947* (We Do Not Want Jews Here. Manifestations of Hostility towards Jews in 1944–1947).⁵ In it, Kwiek describes various versions of the events in Przedbórz and indicates numerous sources on this issue. Regardless of whether the tone is affirmative or critical, the author of the reviewed publication should have referred to Kwiek’s work.

⁴ D. Flisiak, *Antyżydowska zbrodnia*, pp. 12–13.

⁵ J. Kwiek, *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie*, pp. 327–333.

The introduction lacks a summary or a clear outline of the themes explored in the following chapters. The abundance of quotations and references to various individuals gives the impression of chaos. Precise terminology is also lacking, particularly an explanation for the author's choice of the term "anti-Jewish crime" instead of alternatives such as "pogrom" or "anti-Semitic incidents." The introduction would have been an ideal opportunity to clarify the key criteria for selecting the sources included in the volume, as well as to justify the chosen structure of the work. Instead, the author confines himself to outlining only the fundamental principles that guided the editing of the selected materials.

In accordance with the research questions posed in the introduction, in the first chapter entitled "Społeczność żydowska w Przedborzu do pierwszego września 1939 r. Zarys tematyki" (The Jewish Community in Przedbórz until 1 September 1939. An Outline of the Subject Matter), Flisiak briefly discusses the history of Jews in the town from the first traces of their presence until the outbreak of World War II. This outline, spanning almost twenty pages, also includes an introduction to the location and history of the town. A relatively large amount of space is devoted to discussing the fate of the Jewish population until the partitions, including, for example, descriptions of the synagogue, often referred to by the author as a *bożnica* (a Polish equivalent for a synagogue). Incidentally, a photograph of this synagogue appears on the book's cover. The author also attempted to present events from the interwar period. His attempt to reconstruct relations with Poles living in the city is significant, though in this regard he also referred to events in other places in the Second Polish Republic. This chapter appears to have had the potential for expansion to address aspects of social history, including an analysis of the everyday life of Jews in Przedbórz and the factors shaping their relations with the town's non-Jewish residents, particularly in the interwar period. Incorporating such a perspective would have supported a deeper understanding of subsequent events during the German occupation and in the post-war years. Perhaps a memorial book could have provided additional information on this subject.⁶ The appendix of sources accompanying the chapter includes six documents from 1934–1938, among them

⁶ *Przedborz Memorial Book: 33 Years Since the Destruction of the Jewish Community*, published by Przedborz Societies in Israel and America, Tel Aviv, 1977, <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Przedborz/Przedborz.html>.

the minutes of a meeting of the Jewish Religious Community Council in Przedbórz, a list of individuals exempted from paying a municipal fee, and selected situation reports. Given this selection, it is not easy to discern the criteria used or the rationale behind including these particular documents.

The second chapter explores the experiences of the Jewish community in Przedbórz during World War II and in the aftermath of the German occupation of Poland. It is important to shed light on the events of May 1945. The narrative opens with the German invasion of Przedbórz and the destruction of the local synagogue. Subsequent pages detail the creation of the ghetto and the daily life of its Jewish inhabitants. The chapter concludes with an account of the ghetto's liquidation and the deportation of its residents to the Treblinka extermination camp in October 1942. However, Flisiak does not offer even approximate estimates of how many people were murdered on the spot and how many were transported. It is also unknown how many Jews escaped during the operation or earlier and hid in Przedbórz and the surrounding area. The author names several people who managed to survive until the end of the German occupation. In this chapter, he does not delve into the issue of Polish-Jewish relations during the occupation, especially in the so-called third phase of the Holocaust. The rest of the chapter deals with the end of World War II. Here, too, there is no brief analysis of Polish-Jewish relations at that time, a regrettable omission, as such an analysis would help the reader better understand the context of the events of May 1945. The chapter is accompanied by an appendix containing three documents related to the post-war period: a list of Jews residing in the Końskie County during the early months of 1945; a letter addressed to the Ministry of Public Security reporting murders and robberies targeting Jews between March and August 1945; and a letter detailing several cases of murders and robberies committed against Polish citizens of Jewish nationality, including incidents that occurred in Przedbórz.

The third chapter, titled „Kim był Kazimierz Jezierski? Świadectwa autorstwa Kazimierza Jezierskiego z lat 1946–1954” (Who Was Kazimierz Jezierski? Testimonies Authored by Kazimierz Jezierski from 1946–1954), centres on a figure whom the author considers crucial to understanding the anti-Jewish incidents in Przedbórz. Jezierski was, among other roles, affiliated with the National Party (*Stronnictwo Narodowe*) and served under Władysław Kołaciński “Żbik” (Wildcat),

the commander of a National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*, NSZ) partisan unit in the Kielce region. The latter's profile is likewise not explored in depth.

In March 1946, Jezierski was arrested by functionaries of the County Public Security Department in connection with his membership in the illegal Underground Polish Army (*Konspiracyjne Wojsko Polskie*). After interrogation, he was recruited to cooperate with the Security Department (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, UB). Flisiak provides a brief biography of Jezierski and then discusses the content of five documents collected in the appendix. These are transcripts of Jezierski's interrogations from the end of 1945, as well as from February 1954 and June 1954. The other two documents concern, among other things, the findings related to Jezierski's participation in the crime in Przedbórz, made by the head of the Investigation Department of the Voivodeship Public Security Department in Kielce.

Chapter four outlines the profile of another individual linked to the crime in Przedbórz. In this section, the author presents Edmund Majchrowski and his background. His biography is confined to a single paragraph, covering essential details such as his date and place of birth, origin, education, profession, and a brief note about his family. Majchrowski was employed at the County Public Security Department and was accused of murdering four Jews, as presented in the book. The remainder of the chapter focuses on twelve documents included in the appendix, including Teresa Hebińska's complaint against Majchrowski, a summary of the investigation's findings, the minutes of his interrogation, and other materials from the inquiry. Majchrowski was never prosecuted and later appeared as a witness in the court proceedings.

Chapter five, titled "Świadectwa pozostałych sprawców i świadków oraz informacje związane ze śledztwem prowadzonym w związku z antyżydowską zbrodnią" (Testimonies of Other Perpetrators and Witnesses, and Information Related to the Investigation Conducted in Connection with the Anti-Jewish Crime), presents the testimonies of individuals who may have been involved in the crime in Przedbórz. The chapter opens with an overview of the sources' appendix, which contains the most extensive set of documents in the book – 23 items in total – including interrogation reports, fragments of information, statements, excerpts from testimonies, and information derived from investigations. These materials pertain to, among others, Feliks Sokołowski, Józef Sokołowski, Józef Kluska, Jan

Bednarek, Jan Szklarz, Michał Pytlos, and Aleksandra Kularska. In analysing these testimonies, the author seeks to illuminate details that may help reconstruct the causes, the sequence of events, and the individual involvement in the crime committed in Przedbórz.

In chapter six, entitled “W stronę rekonstrukcji” (Towards a Reconstruction), Flisiak presents a discussion and documents concerning, among other things, Kazimierz Jezierski’s contacts with the political police. Ten source documents are attached to this section. However, the reader still does not learn how the author of the publication perceives and reconstructs the post-war anti-Jewish events.

The seventh and final chapter examines Juda Kamiński and his life in Przedbórz after the war. A survivor of the Przedbórz ghetto, Kamiński escaped in the autumn of 1942 and lived in hiding on the so-called Aryan side. During this time, he joined the ranks of the National Armed Forces and remained in hiding until the end of the German occupation. After the war, he converted to the Catholic faith and sought to assimilate into Polish society. He passed away in 1971. As Dominik Flisiak notes, “the picture of Jewish society in Przedbórz would not be complete without presenting his [Kamiński’s] wartime and post-war fate.”⁷ Still, he does not explain Kamiński’s post-war actions and decisions.

The book’s key questions – concerning the causes, chronology, and consequences of the crime against Jews in Przedbórz – are addressed only in the final chapter. There, the author identifies the perpetrators and explores possible motives, while also portraying the victims: the Jewish residents of Przedbórz and its surroundings before the war. The concluding chapter addresses the differing accounts introduced at the beginning of the book and features numerous extensive quotations.

Although the author focuses on a single case – a relatively small town – the issue he raises is highly relevant to understanding the post-war history of Poland’s Jewish community. Dominik Flisiak’s book, however, presents a rather eclectic composition. It resembles a curated collection of sources accompanied by commentary, rather than a conventional monograph. While the structure and content of any scholarly work ultimately rest in the hands of its author, it is the readers who must assess whether this particular approach is the most appropriate for the subject at

⁷ D. Flisiak, *Antyżydowska zbrodnia*, p. 188.

hand. The text and footnotes contain noticeable stylistic and linguistic flaws. Despite drawing on a broad bibliography, it is somewhat surprising to find sources like *Encyklopedia szkolna. Historia* (School Encyclopaedia: History) and general academic textbooks on Polish history – such as those covering the Middle Ages – among the references. As previously noted, the scope and depth of individual topics remain insufficient. Nonetheless, the book has its merits: notably, its engagement with a significant subject matter and its effort to confront complex issues and the intricacies of local history. I am hopeful that this publication will resonate with certain readers and will serve as a catalyst for further scholarly inquiry. The example of crimes against Jews in Przedbórz, taken up and discussed by the author, is an important attempt to fill in another blank spot on the map of post-war anti-Jewish violence in Poland.

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A SPATIAL TURN IN HOLOCAUST STUDIES. ANJA NOWAK,
VIOLENT SPACE. THE JEWISH GHETTO IN WARSAW,
BLOOMINGTON: INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2023, 329 PP.

As the largest ghetto created by the Germans in occupied Poland, the Warsaw Ghetto is supported by the richest and most diverse array of sources, which has given rise to an extensive and multifaceted body of scholarly literature.¹ Despite

¹ See among others *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vols. 6–36, Warsaw, 2012–2023; E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Pisma z bunkra*, ed. and introd. T. Epsztein, Warsaw, 2020; J. Stroop, *Żydowska dzielnica mieszkaniowa w Warszawie już nie istnieje!*, ed. A. Żbikowski, Warsaw, 2009; B. Engelking and J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, Warsaw, 2013; B. Engelking and D. Libionka, *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie*, Warsaw, 2009; M. Ferenc, „Każdy pyta, co z nami będzie”. *Mieszkańcy getta warszawskiego wobec wiadomości o wojnie i Zagładzie*, Warsaw, 2021; A. Grupińska, *Po kole. Rozmowy z żydowskimi żołnierzami*, Warsaw, 1991; A. Grupińska, *Ciągłe po kole: rozmowy z żołnierzami Getta Warszawskiego*, Warsaw, 2013; A. Grupińska, *Odczytanie listy: opowieści o powstańcach żydowskich*, Cracow, 2003; I. Gutman, *Walka bez cienia nadziei. Powstanie w getcie warszawskim*, Warsaw, 1998; I. Gutman, *Żydzi warszawscy 1939–1943*, Warsaw, 1993; S.D. Kassow, *Kto napisze naszą historię? Ukryte Archiwum Emanuela Ringelbluma*, Warsaw, 2017; J. Leociak, *Spojrzenia na warszawskie getto. Stawki*, Warsaw, 2011; K. Person, *Policjanci. Wizerunek Żydowskiej Służby Porządkowej w getcie warszawskim*, Warsaw, 2018; R. Sakowska, *Dwa etapy. Hitlerowska polityka eksterminacji Żydów w oczach ofiar. Szkic historyczny i dokumenty*,

this, every year new works are published in which authors analyse selected aspects of the functioning of this ghetto and the people confined within it. What is more, it can be observed that these publications do not essentially duplicate content (or do so only to a limited extent), and each contributes something new or modifies previous findings. Anja Nowak's 2023 book is another important publication on the Warsaw Ghetto. The uniqueness of this work lies in the topic chosen by the researcher. She analyses the space of the ghetto as a form and source of violence against the people imprisoned there. This time, the history of the Warsaw Ghetto is discussed from the perspective of space (public and private), the landscape of violence, and the experiences of individuals and social groups in the space of violence, which is, to some extent, a *novum* in the historiography of ghettos in occupied Polish territories to date.

Anja Nowak holds a doctorate from the University of British Columbia. She is an educator and author of the book *Elemente einer Ästhetik des Theatralen in Adornos Ästhetischer Theorie*, as well as an editor of the work *The More I Know, The Less I Understand: Young Researchers' Essays on Witnessing Auschwitz*; she has also published numerous articles, including articles devoted to the category of space in Holocaust studies. In the reviewed volume, she engages with the insights and contributions of scholars featured in the relevant literature, notably key figures of the spatial turn such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Michel Foucault.² They recognised space as a socially constructed phenomenon – both a mirror of prevailing social relations and an active agent in shaping them. As such, space functions as a dynamic social factor, underpinning historical transformations and differing across societies. Lefebvre's proposition that each society generates its own distinctive spatial form proves especially compelling within the framework of Holocaust studies, a perspective the author integrates into the reviewed work. Nowak also draws on the scholarship of Tim Cole, whose work encompasses social and environmental history, historical geography, and digital humanities. Cole's research centres on Holocaust landscapes – both historical and memory

Wrocław, 1986; R. Sakowska, *Ludzie z dzielnicy zamkniętej. Z dziejów Żydów w Warszawie w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej. Październik 1939 – marzec 1943*, Warsaw, 1993.

² H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Hoboken, 1991; M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley, 1988; M. Foucault, "Space, Power and Knowledge," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. S. During, New York, 1993, pp. 134–141; M. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 1 (16) (1986), pp. 22–27.

landscapes – as well as the Holocaust representation, the spatiality of ghettoisation in Budapest during the Holocaust, and the spaces of survival.³

The book *Violent Space* consists of four parts, preceded by a preface, acknowledgements, and a glossary of terms, and culminating in appendices such as maps, a discussion of the photographs included in the publication, biographical notes, and a bibliography of the literature and sources used. Its layout is therefore typical for publications on historical topics. Already in the first sentence of the preface, the author underlines that the book is partly about the history of the Warsaw ghetto in general and partly about the experiences of individuals forced to live within it. On subsequent pages, she “traces out the trauma that the space of the ghetto brought on Jewish people, the way it alienated, disoriented, hurt, and harmed them. [...] *Violent Space* is about these Jews and about the ghetto as a space that shaped Jewish experience of the first phase of the Holocaust.”⁴ Anja Nowak bases her considerations on historical and sociological research, primarily on the analysis of diaries and memoirs of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto, and combines the results of this research – mainly from personal sources – with an interdisciplinary study of the links between space and violence. This gives the reader the opportunity to learn about the most important moments from the period of the ghetto’s existence, while focusing on socio-spatial aspects. The author refers in particular to two types of space: private (apartments) and public (streets).

On 16 November 1940, the Germans sealed the Warsaw ghetto, enforcing a decree issued on 2 October and publicly announced on Yom Kippur (12 October) by Ludwig Fischer, the head of the Warsaw District. The decree ordered the establishment of a segregated “Jewish district.” A part of the city was, in a sense, removed from its previously compact structure, separated by a 16-kilometre wall and thus cut off from the view of outsiders. In his analysis of public responses to crisis, Marcin Zaremba pointed out that “the relocation of Jews to ghettos symbolically signified their objectification and exclusion from the human community. This shift diminished interpersonal interactions with Poles and, when coupled with

³ See selected references: T. Cole, *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto*, New York, 2003; T. Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes*, London, 2016; T. Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust. Journeying In and Out of the Ghettos*, London, 2011.

⁴ A. Nowak, *Violent Space. The Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw*, Indiana University Press 2023, p. vii

the earlier noted tendency to retreat into one's own social group, contributed to a decline in empathy toward Jews and even fostered hostility.”⁵ The more hermetic the ghetto became, the more difficult it was to see the hell in which its inhabitants lived and the violence they suffered every day. Yet, beyond serving as a site of confinement, isolation, and the indirect annihilation of the Jewish population, the ghetto remained a space for functioning, living in various social dimensions, trade, and smuggling. In its border zones, connections were established with the so-called Aryan side, linking the ghetto to the outside world.

Around 140,000 Jews and 113,000 Poles were forcibly relocated. For the Germans, the establishment of the so-called Jewish quarter served to deepen the exclusion of Jews from broader society and to intensify their isolation. For the Jewish population, however, the ghetto became a space of everyday existence – a setting where personal tragedies unfolded. Shortly after its gates were sealed, the Warsaw ghetto confined nearly 400,000 people, including both long-time Warsaw residents and those displaced from nearby towns and territories annexed by the Third Reich. Overcrowding emerged as one of the most severe hardships of daily life. Private space – the homes within the ghetto – was compressed to the extreme, with multiple families often packed into cramped quarters. This overcrowding severely impacted quality of life, eroded privacy, strained access to food and healthcare, and frequently led to conflict. Public space – the densely populated, congested streets – offered no relief. The ghetto was almost entirely devoid of green areas or parks, leaving residents with no refuge from the harshness of their surroundings, not even momentarily. From the very beginning, the Jews imprisoned there – unable to leave the district and overwhelmed by the prevailing conditions – felt lonely, abandoned, and cut off from the world. Their existence was restricted in every possible way and in every aspect. Analysing these events through the lens of spatial dynamics and the resulting violence against ghetto inhabitants – across social, private, public, and professional spheres – offers a valuable contribution to research on the fate of Jews during World War II.

The author defined the purpose of the research as follows: “My book addresses two main questions: First, how was the particular space of the ghetto created and organized – that is, which policies, regulations, decisions, practices, and actors (in-

⁵ M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Cracow, 2012, p. 134.

dividual or collective) were involved in its creation and defined its inner workings? And second, how did the people who were forced to inhabit this space experience it, and what did it do to them? While the first question involved the study of the ghetto's history, of its planning and implementation, the second inquiry focuses on the 'lived' space of the ghetto, on the way it affected people, the way it was perceived, navigated, and appropriated."⁶ The reviewed book approaches the ghetto not only as a historical space, but also stands out for its sociological perspective on the subject. Anja Nowak underscores and expands upon existing research showing that violence played a central role in the creation of ghettos and camps. Yet its impact extended further – violence profoundly influenced the conditions and operational rules of these sites, permeating every facet of social life. The ghettos constituted a form of violence in themselves. Their spatial configurations and related practices exposed, marginalised, and inflicted harm on those confined within them. Nowak undertakes a detailed analysis of both public and private aspects of daily life in the ghetto, illustrating how constrained space and pervasive violence shaped these experiences and ultimately influenced individual destinies.

The first part of the book is titled "Localization." It consists of an introduction and four chapters. In this part, the author outlines the theoretical and methodological framework on which she based her research and the book's narrative. First, she introduces the concept of spatial violence and outlines the terminology she will use throughout the publication. She analyses the most important findings of other researchers in this field. She also compares the spatial changes that the ghetto underwent. Additionally, she highlights issues related to mapping the ghetto space. Based on the analysed publications, archival sources, accounts, and memoirs, she identifies locations in the ghetto that interest her. Thanks to this, street names and individual places "come to life," gaining a more complete description, something more than just a name. An important issue raised in this part of the book is the network, showing the connections between individual spaces in the ghetto. This is an important area of social research. In the subsequent pages, the author presents the sources she used. The first and foremost source is the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, commonly referred to as the Ringelblum Archive. Particu-

⁶ A. Nowak, *Violent Space*, p. 3.

larly significant are the descriptions of the ghetto's spatial layout, contributed by Perec Opoczyński, Stanisław Różycki, and others. In the final chapter of this part, titled "Streets and Buildings," she identifies the public and private spaces central to her analysis. She examines the "images" of the ghetto's streets, focusing on the intimate events that occurred there in plain view. The streets served as channels of communication and gathering places – where people talked and exchanged information. Constantly crowded, day and night, they echoed with the footsteps of tens of thousands and the multilingual voices of their residents. They were also spaces of theft, prostitution, violence, crime, and death. Life in the ghetto unfolded in the streets, where it often came to a tragic end.

Regarding buildings, Anja Nowak analyses the opportunities, risks, and advantages they offered to tenants. She investigates their architecture, location, technical condition, apartment layout, and all aspects that may have mattered to residents in their daily lives. She also addresses details such as the height of the storey where the flat was situated. According to the author, many of these elements played a crucial role during critical momenta, such as deportations. In one of the subchapters, she points out the significance of buildings as social spaces.

The second part of the book is entitled "The Making of a Violent Space." The title refers to Tim Cole's work on the Budapest ghetto, and the author also identifies the earlier findings she will draw on in this section. Nowak discusses the fate of the Jewish population in pre-war Warsaw, tracing it back to the late Middle Ages. She examines the possibilities of settlement, the privileges granted by rulers that prohibited permanent residence, and the turning point that came in the 19th century. This serves as an introduction to the main topic. In the following chapter, she analyses the situation after the outbreak of war and the measures taken to establish a ghetto in occupied Warsaw. It outlines the individual decisions and actions that led to its creation. It also includes data on the changes to the ghetto's boundaries until its gates were sealed on 16 November 1940. Although this material is familiar to historians, the author places it within the framework of spatial research and points out the changes in the organisation of urban life. The final two chapters of this part focus on the functioning and destruction of the ghetto.

The most comprehensive and, at the same time, the most crucial part of Anja Nowak's publication is the third part entitled "Experiences of a violent space."

It consists of an introduction and fifteen short chapters. The author emphasises that one of the characteristics of a violent space is that it does not affect victims in the same way as direct means of violence, such as weapons. Whether it is an incidental or a more permanent situation, space forces people to relate to it and interact with it. As previously underlined in the existing literature, throughout its two and a half years of existence, the Warsaw Ghetto functioned as a violent space where the Germans aimed to restrict the lives of those imprisoned within. This compelled them to make deep adjustments to their behaviour and survival strategies in the harsh conditions imposed by the occupiers. Jews were continually forced to devise new methods of organising and reshaping a space that challenged their very existence. Therefore, this part describes and analyses the practices and forms of spatial violence experienced by the inhabitants of the ghetto. The author demonstrates how the ghetto as a space influenced the lives of its residents in various aspects of their daily functioning and how they attempted to endure and survive in this highly adverse environment. Anja Nowak guides the reader from the beginning of the German occupation, starting with the marking of Jews and their businesses in the public spaces of the city. She then demonstrates the escalation of these measures, including the planning of designated areas for the Jewish population in different parts of Warsaw, the construction of initial walls separating their homes, the establishment of the ghetto, the disintegration of this part of the city, and the forced relocations from areas outside of Warsaw or into the so-called Jewish quarter. She examines the development of Warsaw, refers to its spatial layout, and identifies possible places of refuge.

A key element of this section is the chapter focused on the loss of former homes and, as a result, the loss of numerous belongings, family keepsakes, and familiar personal space. The order to relocate to the ghetto marked a major shift in the daily lives of Jewish families. Family life is inseparably tied to the home – being in a space that is not only a material family hearth, but also one of moral and religious significance, and physically understood as a place of refuge. The command to abandon one's residence, often bound with an entire lifetime and more than one generation, was undoubtedly difficult to carry out. In the ghetto, the concept of home lost its traditional role as a refuge. The flats were sparsely furnished, missing everyday objects like books, appliances, and much of the furniture – reduced

to only the most essential items. They ceased to embody comfort or tranquillity. Overcrowding intensified the sense of insecurity. Exhausted from work and burdened by the monotony of daily life, residents spent their limited free time confined within four walls. The limited space and the accumulation of people – even if they were family members – made individuals feel overwhelmed and cornered by their presence in the ghetto. This also led to conflicts and disputes. The situation regarding accommodation in the ghetto was not stable but depended on changes to its boundaries as a result of deportations. In addition to the overcrowding in the ghetto, the sealing of its gates and its isolation from the rest of the city, the inhabitants suffered from a lack of space to spend the few free moments they had.

In the following chapters of the third part, Anja Nowak describes the ghetto as a place of both life and death, where children were born, but many more people died due to starvation, illness, exhaustion, and a lack of hope for change. She presents the ghetto as a city within a city, where natural processes occurred. People moved around, communicated, shared information, and spread rumours. They lived alongside one another, and spatial expressions such as “not far,” “far,” “near,” “next door,” or specific street names gained new meanings. The chapter focusing on the voices of the ghetto stands out. During the day, the streets echoed with the persistent cries of street vendors, the orders of Jewish policemen maintaining order, the voices of crying children, parents searching for their missing children, the multilingual conversations of passers-by, and the constant lament and melancholic songs of beggars.

The phenomenon of a sealed, demarcated ghetto attracted curious onlookers, including German soldiers, who came as if going on an excursion to “another world.” The author also examines the spatial dynamics of the ghetto during the deportations to the Treblinka extermination camp, showing how specific elements – such as streets and apartments – created both opportunities and dangers. Her observations on spaces of resistance are compelling, though this area clearly warrants deeper exploration. One could easily envision a dedicated part focusing on civil resistance, armed resistance, or the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising itself. A spatial study of the network of bunkers, shelters, and hideouts would offer significant scholarly value.

The book ends with Part IV, titled “Conclusion,” in which the author presents her key findings regarding the ghetto as a space marked by violence. Notably, the work

draws the attention of readers interested in the history of the Warsaw Ghetto and Holocaust scholars to the concept of space as a critical category of analysis, including within the realm of social inquiry. At the same time, the author acknowledges that the Warsaw Ghetto occupies a unique position and is not representative of the majority of ghettos established by the Germans in occupied Polish territories. As such, while the book offers valuable analytical directions, it also opens up further avenues for exploration by Holocaust researchers – particularly in relation to the many open ghettos or sites designated as concentration spots before deportation.

Violent Space. The Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw is a significant contribution to Holocaust historiography, despite certain limitations and aspects that could benefit from further elaboration or clarification (such as the concept of resistance space). A more extensive engagement with archival materials and a focused examination of particular demographic groups – by age, gender, or socioeconomic status – would enhance the work. Still, while many of the book's themes, insights, and data on spatiality and violence are also found in other studies on the Warsaw Ghetto, its strength lies in their thematic organisation and consolidation within this several-hundred-page volume. Drawing on a rich blend of personal and bibliographic sources and shaped by the author's eloquent prose, this book emerges as a layered and thought-provoking work. Its accessible narrative invites both experts and general readers into a nuanced exploration of space and violence as key dimensions in understanding the daily lives of Jews under German occupation. Each chapter not only deepens this insight but also sparks new questions and opens up unexplored avenues of inquiry – encouraging historians and scholars alike to investigate further and expand the field.

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MARIO WENZEL, *ARBEITSZWANG UND JUDENMORD. DIE ARBEITSLAGER FÜR JUDEN IM DISTRIKT KRAKAU DES GENERALGOUVERNEMENTS 1939–1944* (FORCED LABOUR AND THE MURDER OF THE JEWS: LABOUR CAMPS FOR JEWS IN THE CRACOW DISTRICT OF THE GENERAL GOVERNORATE, 1939–1944), BERLIN: METROPOL-VERLAG, 2017, 340 PP.

It is estimated that between 1939 and 1944, the German administration, police, military, and SS established between 900 and 1,000 forced labour camps in Poland and the occupied territories of the USSR.¹ These camps played a significant role in the persecution and extermination of the local population, mostly people of Polish and Jewish descent. Prisoners were subjected to forced labour in various sectors of the Third Reich's economy, including work for the Wehrmacht and SS. The first forced labour camps – designated for Jews (*Zwangsarbeitslager für*

¹ M. Wenzel, *Arbeitszwang und Judenmord. Die Arbeitslager für Juden im Distrikt Krakau des Generalgouvernements 1939–1944*, Berlin, 2017, 327 pp.

Juden, or Julag) – were established around the turn of 1939–1940. Their gradual liquidation occurred between 1942 and 1944. According to Józef Marszałek, by 1940, 68 such camps were already operating in the Lublin District.² According to Marszałek's estimates, between 1939 and 1945, as many as 792 forced labour camps operated in the General Governorate, 491 of which were designated exclusively for Jews.³ More recent findings by Karolina Trzeskowska-Kubasik suggest that the actual number may have been even higher.⁴

The book reviewed here by German historian Mario Wenzel, published in 2017, is a pioneering case study about German forced labour camps for Jews established in the Cracow District. The title may seem somewhat misleading, as not all camps located in the Cracow District were designated exclusively for Jews. Among the forced labourers were also Poles, Russians and even Belgians. Drawing on extensive and varied research in Polish and German archives – including the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung at TU Berlin, Staatsarchiv München, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (Freiburg im Breisgau), the Institute of National Remembrance, the Jewish Historical Institute, the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw, and state archives in Lublin, Radom, Rzeszów, and Przemyśl – the author examined the operation of 28 selected labour camps. Particular attention was given to camps in Rozwadów, Przemyśl, and Mielec, where SS Oberscharführer Josef Schwammberger served as commandant between 1942 and 1944, as well as to the three camps established by the Germans in Kraków-Płaszów: Julag I, Julag II, and Julag III.

The publication under review is structured around four main chapters, organised both chronologically and thematically: I. *Die „Judenpolitik“ und die Arbeitslager für Juden im Distrikt Krakau bis zum Frühsommer 1942* (“Judenpolitik” and the Labour Camps for Jews in the Cracow District up to Early Summer 1942); II. *Die*

² J. Marszałek, *Obozy pracy w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w latach 1939–1945*, Lublin, 1998, p. 14.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

⁴ “According to the findings of the author of this article, there were at least 29 camps of various types operating in the Kreishauptmannschaft Busko: prisoner-of-war camps, construction service camps, penal camps, fortification camps, as well as forced labour camps for Poles and Jews. Józef Marszałek gives the number of 21 camps, and the publication *Obozy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945* (Nazi camps in the Polish territories 1939–1945) lists 14 of them” (K. Trzeskowska-Kubasik, “Działalność niemieckich obozów w latach 1939–1945 na terenie Kreishauptmannschaft Busko [dystrykt Radom],” *Almanach Historyczny* 25 [2023], p. 332).

„Aktion Reinhardt” 1942/43 im Distrikt Krakau (“Aktion Reinhardt” in the Cracow District, 1942–1943); III. *Die Zwangsarbeitslager für Juden im Distrikt Krakau 1942/43 als Teil der „Aktion Reinhardt”* (Labour Camps for Jews in the Cracow District in 1942–1943 as Part of “Aktion Reinhardt”) IV. *Die Zwangsarbeitslager ab Herbst 1943* (Labour Camps from Autumn 1943 Onwards). The publication concludes with a set of final observations and an appendix listing labour camps for Jews that operated between 1940 and 1943 – a valuable resource for researchers. Table 1 presents camps established in 1940 and 1941, while Table 2 covers those founded in 1942 and 1943. The author provides statistical data exclusively on Jewish prisoners; however, the appendix lacks a brief introductory note and, where feasible, an additional column indicating the total number of prisoners. Such data would allow the estimation of the proportion of Jews among the camp populations. Notably, both tables share the strength of precisely identifying German and Austrian companies and industrial plants that exploited slave labour (including Rheinische Hoch- und Tiefbau, Daimler-Benz Flugmotorenwerke, STUAG A.G., and Siemens-Bauunion). This enables the tracing of specific firms involved in crimes against both Jewish and non-Jewish populations.

As stated in the introduction, the book aimed to highlight the significance of forced labour camps for Jews during various phases of persecution and extermination, and to illustrate the gradual changes in their character and living conditions throughout the war. Wenzel also sought to describe the formation of the “prisoner hierarchy, daily routines within the camp, and the food and sanitary conditions.” Another objective was to examine the attitudes and behaviour of German foremen (“der deutschen Meister”) and Polish foremen (“Vorarbeiter”), as well as the treatment of prisoners by camp guards – although the author devotes the most attention to the camp commanders.

The chapters of the monograph correspond to four phases of the German occupation policy of repression and persecution related to the establishment of forced labour camps in the Cracow District. The author begins by examining discriminatory and isolationist anti-Jewish measures, including ghettoisation and forced labour – particularly in road and railway construction (Chapter I) – which characterised the functioning of the first 20 camps in the district. To a lesser extent, until 1941, forced labourers were also employed in land improvement

projects and in the expansion of military infrastructure. The next phase (Chapter II) was devoted to the analysis, organisation, and development of the camps, their subcamps and smaller factory camps (including ZAL Plaszow) in accordance with the needs of the Third Reich and the implementation of Operation “Reinhardt” (Chapters II and III). The third phase was marked by the liquidation of ghettos and the transfer of Jewish workers to forced labour camps under the SS control. One must agree with the author that conditions in the Cracow District were better in the early phase of the camps’ operation due to the aid provided by the Jewish Social Self-Help Organisation (ŻSS), later transformed into the Jewish Aid Agency in the General Governorate (*Jüdische Unterstützungsstelle für das Generalgouvernement*, JUS). The aid reached Plaszow (German name for Płaszów) camp and its subcamps in Prokocim, Bieżanów and Kabel directly via Michał Weichert, the president of this institution, whose headquarters were located in occupied Cracow. In addition, communication between prisoners and representatives of the ŻSS-JUS, including its chairman, took place daily and established new networks of contacts. During the war, Michał Weichert was able to move freely around the Plaszow camp and its branches, as well as other places under the care of the ŻSS-JUS.

In the third part, the author also provides a detailed account of the functioning of ZAL Plaszow, which was transformed into a concentration camp in January 1944, along with its subordinate subcamps: Julag I (in Płaszów, on Wielicka Street), Julag II (in Prokocim, on Cmentarna Street), and Julag III (at the “Kabel” factory). He focuses on the conditions of camp life and the work performed by prisoners in both small and large factories and industrial plants, including the Julius Madritsch factory (relocated to the Plaszow camp on 14 September 1943), the “Optima” factory, the metalworks on Lwowska Street, Ernst Kühnpast’s box factory, and the Progress metal goods factory. The author also addresses the conditions prevailing within ZAL/KL Plaszow itself. He mentions the arbitrary shootings of prisoners carried out by Commandant Amon Göth as a distinguishing feature of the Plaszow camp, although such violence occurred in other labour and concentration camps as well. In my view, what characterised the Cracow Julags was a network of connections and dependencies rooted in shared interests, smuggling, and trade – often shaped by family relationships and ties, as many Jewish families from Cracow and

the surrounding area were imprisoned in the Plaszow camp.⁵ In the course of his deliberations, the author does not address this distinctive characteristic of the Cracow camp. Another issue I consider particularly significant is that functional roles within the Plaszow camp – such as kapos, block leaders, and orderlies – were assigned to prisoners selected by the Germans, primarily from the Jewish Order Service, especially from Cracow, and later also from surrounding towns.⁶ Unlike the author of the reviewed monograph, in my research I refer to them as “Jewish functionary prisoners” rather than as members of the “Ordnungsdienst” or “OD-männer.” Wenzel uses the latter two terms, which were commonly used by the prisoners themselves both during and after the war. A significant part of their tasks, as the author mentions, consisted of supervising the forced labour performed by Jewish workers, and therefore involved maintaining order in the roll call square, residential barracks, latrines and workshops.

As the author rightly observes, the culmination of the German forced labour camp system was marked by the intensified exploitation of Jewish prisoners shortly before their planned extermination – particularly in camps located in Mielec, Rzeszów, Dębica, Czarny Dunajec, Huta Komornicka, Biesiadka, and Stalowa Wola. Wenzel also highlights the role of the Jewish Social Self-Help Organisation and the Judenräte (Chapter III), which sought to intervene with local authorities (including the Kreishauptmanns) to improve the prisoners’ living conditions. This part also describes the participation of Jewish prisoners in the Third Reich’s infrastructure and armament projects and the role of camps managed by German companies in these activities (including Heinkel in Daimler-Benz and Degussa Ostwerke GmbH). The author examined the functioning of the forced labour camp in Czarny Dunajec, known as “HOBAG,” located on the premises of a sawmill, where, from the autumn of 1940, the Poles working there were joined by about 40 Jews commuting daily from Nowy Targ. In 1942, the camp area was fenced off with barbed wire.

The final chapter of the book (Chapter IV) focuses on the functioning of forced labour camps from autumn 1943 onwards, when they became an entrenched component of the Third Reich’s armaments policy. The subordination of several

⁵ R. Kotarba, *Żydzi Krakowa w dobie zagłady (ZAL/KL Płaszów)*, Cracow–Warsaw, 2022, p. 419.

⁶ A. Jarkowska, “Wybrane formy kolaboracji w obozie Płaszów. Charakterystyka zjawiska,” *Krzysztofory. Zeszyty Naukowe Muzeum Historycznego Miasta Krakowa* 38 (2021), p. 157.

camps – including Płaszów – to the SS Main Economic and Administrative Office (SS-WVHA) facilitated the more systematic exploitation of prisoner slave labour for the Nazi war economy. The author rightly underscores the worsening living conditions of the prisoners and the role of guard personnel within the camp hierarchy. However, his discussion of the latter remains limited due to insufficient source material. Wenzel offers a noteworthy account of the deployment of Jewish slave labour in the Third Reich, particularly during the final phase of the war. He traces the transfer of prisoners to camps such as Flossenbürg, Bremen-Blumenthal, the Augsburg-Pfersee subcamp (affiliated with Messerschmitt AG), and the Leonberg subcamp of the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp near Stuttgart. A striking example is his description of Jewish prisoners working in Hersbrück on the expansion of tunnels near the village of Happurg in northern Bavaria, where production of BMW aircraft engines was relocated. Messerschmitt AG also employed Jewish prisoners to assemble wings for the Me 262 jet fighter.

Wenzel's monograph offers a valuable analysis of the operation of forced labour camps in the Cracow District, which were shaped by the Third Reich's genocidal and armament-driven objectives. By examining several dozen such camps, the study provides insight into the scale of crimes committed against the civilian population and the systematic plundering of property during World War II. Further research into the seizure of Polish and Jewish assets by German and Austrian entrepreneurs, the Wehrmacht, the Luftwaffe, the SS, and state-owned enterprises would be particularly illuminating. Special attention could be given to beneficiaries such as the Deutsche Reichsbahn, including the Generaldirektion der Ostbahn (General Directorate of the Eastern Railways), headquartered in Cracow, and the Ostbahnbetriebsdirektionen (OBD), the so-called Operational Directorates of the Eastern Railways. However, this seems to be a topic for a separate book.

To conclude, Wenzel's book unquestionably merits special recognition within academic circles. Drawing on Polish, German, and Jewish sources, the author has skillfully reconstructed events and provided particularly thorough documentation of the camps in Szebnie near Jasło, Kraków-Płaszów, Mielec, Przemyśl, and Rozwadów.

I recommend additional literature for those interested in the subject, as it complements the author's narrative with further insights. Notably, the works of Polish

scholars published around the same time as the reviewed monograph, or in subsequent years, are particularly valuable. These include Witold Mędykowski's *Macht Arbeit Frei? German Economic Policy and Forced Labour of Jews in the General Government, 1939–1943* (2018), and Ryszard Kotarba's *Żydzi Krakowa w dobie zagłady (ZAL/KL Płaszow)* (The Jews of Cracow During the Holocaust [ZAL/KL Płaszow], 2022). In 2023, Michał Wachuła successfully defended his doctoral thesis entitled *Ocalić od zapomnienia. Wybór i opracowanie relacji więźniów obozu pracy przymusowej przy Fabryce Kabli w Płaszowie (edycja krytyczna)* (To Rescue from Oblivion: A Selection and Compilation of Testimonies from Prisoners of the Forced Labour Camp at the Cable Factory in Płaszów [Critical Edition]).⁷ The thesis provides valuable insights into the functioning of the ZAL/KL Płaszów subcamp referenced in the title.

⁷ Thesis defended at the University of the National Education Commission in Cracow, available at the UKEN archives, https://rep.up.krakow.pl/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11716/8303/MWachu%c5%82a_praca_doktorska_part_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed 1 June 2025).

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GRZEGORZ ROSSOLIŃSKI-LIEBE, *POLNISCHE BÜRGERMEISTER UND DER HOLOCAUST. BESATZUNG, VERWALTUNG UND KOLLABORATION* (POLISH MAYORS AND THE HOLOCAUST. OCCUPATION, ADMINISTRATION AND COLLABORATION),
BERLIN: DE GRUYTER, 2024, 1124 PP.

Introduction

The book by Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe entitled *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust. Besatzung, Verwaltung und Kollaboration* (Polish Mayors and the Holocaust. Occupation, Administration and Collaboration) was published by De Gruyter in Berlin in 2024.¹

Born in 1979, the author of the book describes himself as a Polish-German historian. From 1999 until 2005 he studied the history of culture and Eastern Europe at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). From 2002 to 2005, he

¹ The monograph was published only in German, so the translation of the excerpts included in Polish version of this review were the author's work.

was a scholarship holder of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Between 2007 and 2012, he collaborated with the University of Hamburg, concluding these activities in 2012 with the defence of his doctoral thesis focusing on Stepan Bandera and the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). His research has received funding from, among others, the Gerda Henkel Stiftung and the German Historical Institute in Warsaw. Between 2012 and 2014, he was involved in a research project on the Holocaust in the memory of the Ukrainian diaspora during the Cold War. Moreover, he conducted research as an employee of the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies. Between 2014 and 2018, he studied the attitudes of Poles towards the German occupation during World War II. He has also received scholarships from many institutions, including the Claims Conference, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, the Foundation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, and the International Institute for Holocaust Research, which is part of Yad Vashem. The issues he addresses concern anti-Semitism, fascism, and nationalism. He is currently employed as a *Privatdozent* (PD) at the Friedrich Meinecke Institute of History, one of the institutes within the structure of the Freie Universität Berlin (Free University of Berlin).

Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe earned the title of habilitated doctor at the Freie Universität in Berlin in 2023 on the basis of his dissertation *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust. Besatzung, Verwaltung und Kollaboration* (Polish Mayors and the Holocaust: Occupation, Administration, and Collaboration). There are no published online academic reviews of his monograph, which contributed to him obtaining the aforementioned degree, and therefore it is unclear which body is responsible for awarding this monograph the status of a scholarly work.

The 1,124-page publication is divided into ten chapters, preceded by an introduction of over fifty pages. Its structure is as follows, in chapter order: I. "Politics, Administration, and Legislation of the Second Polish Republic," II. "Cities as Places of Coexistence and Violence," III. "Pre-war Lives of the Occupation-era Mayors," IV. "War, Occupation, and Administration," V. "Mayors in the Administrative Network," VI. "The Holocaust," VII. "Mayors and the Polish Population," VIII. "Resistance, Everyday Life, and Repression," IX. "The Postwar Period," X. "Concluding Part."

Although I have read the entire monograph, only some of the issues raised in it are the subject of this review. In the introduction, Rossoliński-Liebe points out that his book is the first comprehensive study of the issue of Polish mayors in the General Governorate (German: *Generalgouvernement*, hereinafter GG).² Certainly, no broader research results on this subject have been presented so far. This does not mean that no one else has described them. Probably due to the subordinate role that mayors played in the German administrative structure, they did not attract much interest from scholars.

In his research, the author analysed the activity of 50 officials working in 22 towns and cities within the GG. He also noted that he examined 35 of them in detail, 31 of whom were Poles and four were ethnic Germans. Due to the ongoing armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, he did not analyse the activities of Ukrainian mayors, although he announced that a study on mayors who declared themselves to be Ukrainian would also be published in the future.³ The main objective of the research, as indicated from the very first pages of the monograph, was to show the activities of Polish mayors who, according to the author, allegedly supported the Germans in their policy of exterminating Jews, and would be therefore their ‘partners.’ Being certain of their involvement in this process, Rossoliński-Liebe states with full conviction already in the introduction that Polish mayors participated in the Holocaust, that is, they were the accomplices, and his research goal is merely to explore this issue.⁴ The starting point for the author’s further deliberations is not the question of whether Polish mayors participated in the extermination of Jews, but how they did it. One of the author’s goals was to create a collective biography of Polish mayors, which he believed aligned – at least in part – with a broader study of this professional group. He argued that examining issues such as cooperation with Jewish councils and German authorities, the establishment of ghettos, and land exploitation could shed some light on the attitudes and actions of individual mayors in rela-

² G. Rossoliński-Liebe, *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust. Besetzung, Verwaltung und Kollaboration*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024, p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

tion to these matters.⁵ The natural question that comes to mind is were then the members of the Judenrats also responsible for the Holocaust?

The author blames the German research conducted to date for its “selective national (nationalist) narrative about the Holocaust,” noting that such research began in the 1990s. He points out that the role of “local authorities,” mayors, and “other actors” has been completely omitted from this research, or that historical analysis in this area has been only marginal. He also criticises both Polish and other “national” historiographies that focus on the German occupation, arguing that they attribute, or rather, as the author writes, reduce responsibility for the Holocaust solely to decisions made by the German authorities.⁶ The review focuses on issues related to the extermination of Jews and the author’s hypotheses and arguments. To verify the footnoted sources, I conducted archival research on mayors’ activities in the Distrikt Warschau (Warsaw Province).⁷

Part I. The Created World of Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe

In the book’s introduction, the author criticises the terminology used to date, which he considers incorrect and imprecise. He explains that he avoids terms like “German authorities” and “German administration” because they are “imprecise” and “require clarification.”⁸ This approach must surprise any researcher who takes facts seriously. Terms such as “German authorities” and “German administration” are general and elementary, as well as established in scholarly literature, descriptions of the realities of the GG, the territories incorporated into the Reich, and the remaining Polish territories occupied by the German Reich in 1939–1945, especially the Eastern Borderlands from 1941. These terms refer to both civil and police or military authorities. Remaining within his own paradigm, which is incon-

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷ The archival research was conducted at the State Archives in Siedlce (*Archiwum Państwowe w Siedlcach*), the State Archives in Warsaw (*Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie*), the State Archives in Warsaw, Branch in Grodzisk Mazowiecki (*Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie Oddział w Grodzisku Mazowieckim*), and the State Archives in Warsaw, Branch in Otwock (*Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie Oddział w Otwocku*).

⁸ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 10.

sistent with historical truth, the author points out that the terms “German Reich” (*Deutsches Reich*), “General Governorate” (*Generalgouvernement*) and “ethnic Germans” (*Volksdeutsche*) are not placed in quotation marks, even though, as he claims, “they were invented or significantly inspired by the National Socialists.”⁹ It is difficult to explain the logic behind this idea – does the author intend to place all terms coined by the National Socialists in quotation marks? His deliberations on these terms are completely unnecessary and, at the same time, utterly unclear. Furthermore, the GG or even *Volksdeutsche* are not invented terms, but entities functioning under German law.¹⁰ Only the term “Third Reich” could be treated with caution as a colloquialism used to refer to the German Reich. In addition, the author points out that the Germans held positions in the GG only at the top of the administration.¹¹ Obviously, this is not true, as evidenced by the employment of Germans not only in the GG government at the aforementioned top level, but also in *Distrikt*-level (provincial) offices and in the *Kreises* (districts) [both terms will be used here for the German entities to avoid confusion – editor’s remark]. It is worth noting that the offices of *Kreishauptmanns* in rural *Kreises* and *Stadthauptmanns* in urban *Kreises* were branches of the German authorities – the GG government. These offices were held exclusively by the Germans. They had full administrative power in the *Kreises*, and Polish officials, including mayors, had to obey their orders without question. Moreover, German supervisors and administrators carried out various functions, typically at the managerial or directorial level within specialised administrative agencies such as forestry, agriculture, or cooperatives. Others oversaw estates and businesses looted from Poles and Jews. Collectively, they formed a substantial group with full authority over the occupied population. The author uses the term “local administration” to refer to mayors and municipal administrations, though he does not note that the administration – including the local level – was German in the state established by the Germans as an auxiliary to the Reich, the GG, and that ethnic Poles were employed only as officials required to obey unconditionally. In this context, it is worth asking the author: were the Jewish Councils, *Judenrats*, a Jewish-German administration?

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The author notes that during the Second Polish Republic, particularly in the latter half of the 1930s, the self-governing functions of urban and rural municipalities were partially curtailed. Building on this observation, Rossoliński-Liebe contends that this trend persisted within the GG.¹² Combining these two periods is completely ludicrous. Firstly, the author ignores the essential distinction between the sovereign state of the Second Polish Republic and the colonial construct of the General Government. Secondly, the role of mayors was indeed limited and some of their powers were transferred to district governors [Polish: *starosta*, head of *powiat* (district administration) – editor’s remark], but in pre-war Poland, Polish officials worked for their own country, not for the invaders, who were the Germans. Thirdly, the legal and state system of the GG had nothing in common with the Second Polish Republic. The Germans did not preserve the state structures of pre-war Poland, and the GG, as a German creation, completely broke with the Polish state and broadly understood Polishness.

It is useful to consider the concepts introduced by the author in the introduction, particularly in relation to the role of mayors. Primo Levi’s notion of the “grey zone” is significant; he acknowledged the complexity of interactions between occupiers and the occupied, highlighting the space between routine activities and collaboration. Rossoliński-Liebe not only engages with this concept but also emphasises that these interactions were asymmetrical, with the occupiers holding a dominant position. The author also cites Yehuda Bauer’s idea that collaboration can be identified when individuals align themselves with the occupiers’ ideological objectives.¹³ These circumstances did not pertain to Polish mayors, a point the author does not contest. It is important to note that although he references these concepts in the introduction, they are not applied in the main body of the monograph, including the conclusion.

Rossoliński-Liebe approached the subsequent theories underpinning the main content of his book in a totally different manner. Particularly significant is the concept of governing developed by Alf Lüdtke, which German historian Frank Bajohr paraphrased as follows:

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

The definition of governing as a social practice does not assume a clear, sharp division between the governing and the governed, between those who give orders and those who receive them but rather defines the process of governing as a quite amorphous field of forces in which actors relate to each other in various ways. Instead of inquiring about the passive, abstract stance of society towards those in authority, one takes into account the diverse forms of activities and behaviours within society.¹⁴

Applying this theory to the functioning of municipal officials in the GG and the German administration, the author assumed that the division between mayors and German authorities was not clear-cut, and that both groups influenced each other, and therefore the responsibility for the new tasks imposed on towns during the occupation, namely the Holocaust and economic exploitation, lies with both German officials and Polish mayors.¹⁵ The author argues that “the occupiers would not have been able to carry out the two aforementioned tasks in municipalities and towns without the participation of mayors and local administrations.”¹⁶ In relation to the above statement, it is necessary to address the ahistorical mode of thinking adopted by the author in his consideration of “what if...” scenarios. The issue of the Holocaust, as it relates to the monograph, will be addressed in a later section of the review.

Continuing his discussion of the actions carried out by the occupiers and mayors, Rossoliński-Liebe presented the following concept: “modern bureaucracies did not hinder the perpetrators’ actions, but rather facilitated them, as they minimised the specific responsibility of the actors involved through the ‘division of labour.’” According to this concept, responsibility for the persecution and murder of Jews, as well as for other forms of cooperation, “was divided between various offices, and within them, various organisational units and dozens, if not hundreds, of officials and other employees.”¹⁷ The author then argues that mayors, although they “headed the municipal administration and had an overview of all events, took on

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

only part of the overall task,” and also: “were not directly involved in the murder of Jews, unlike German or Polish policemen, firemen or village leaders, but acted mainly as ‘desk perpetrators.’”¹⁸ The author of the monograph adds that, in principle, mayors participated in the murder of Jews in two ways: firstly, by carrying out the orders of their superiors, and secondly, by exploiting the framework of the occupation to – on their own initiative – rob and harm Jews, as Rossoliński-Liebe calls these activities. He also adds: “because these two types of participation in the murder of Jews were intertwined, it is not always possible to clearly separate them.” For this reason, in his research, the mayors were considered perpetrators who, depending on the circumstances, were either victims of the German occupiers or of the Polish resistance movement.¹⁹ By describing Polish mayors as perpetrators and accomplices, the author also points to cooperation between the Germans and the “local administration,” even though these relations were based solely on the subordination of the Poles to the Germans. According to Rossoliński-Liebe, it was a dynamic process involving an exchange of ideas, plans and intentions, which ultimately led to joint action. The author attempts to look at their contacts from a broader perspective and argues that “objects” previously considered opposites in research, such as the occupiers and the occupied, or resistance and collaboration, are interconnected. The author even ceases to see any differences between them, thereby limiting the responsibility of the Germans for their actions, including the Holocaust, and shifting it onto Polish mayors. He is convinced that by using a “transnational approach” and rejecting “methodological nationalism in research on the Holocaust, occupation and collaboration,” he is expanding the existing research perspectives and shedding new light on long-known facts.²⁰ The analysed fragment of the introduction can be compared more to journalistic musings than to serious scholarly analysis. In his attempt to prove that Polish mayors participated in the extermination of Jews and were jointly responsible for it, Rossoliński-Liebe employed at least several methods that are certainly far from scholarly rigour.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* This term usually concerns the persons who issued orders or organised the repressions or mass murders, while not engaging in direct criminal acts; as such describing the Polish officials, who were not decision-makers in the process of the mass murder of the Jews as “desk perpetrators” or “Schreibtischtäter” is utterly misleading.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

While reading the monograph, one cannot help but reflect on the legal framework of the GG administration. On the one hand, the author is reluctant to use the term *Generalgouvernement*, General Governorate – the German-ruled administrative entity – and on the other, he introduces a non-existent and non-historical term into academic discourse: “Cracovian government” (*Krakauer Regierung*), which he uses to describe the form of government of the supreme authority operating in the GG. The term “Cracovian government,” coined by the author, appears 81 times throughout the book, including once as a subchapter title. Notably, it does not appear elsewhere in established academic literature.²¹ Meanwhile, the correct and proper name, which Rossoliński-Liebe is reluctant to use – the government of the GG (*Regierung des GG*) – not only existed and was an entity under German law, but also, which the author may not know, was recognised by the Supreme National Tribunal as a criminal organisation.²² It is worth noting that the GG was established under German law by a decree issued on 26 October 1939 by Adolf Hitler, commonly referred to as the Proclamation of the GG. Its content was officially entered into the official Reich’s journal of laws – the *Reichsgesetzblatt*.²³

By using the false term “Cracovian government,” the author attempts to create the impression that the GG, or rather its supreme authorities, were not German. Let us ask a rhetorical question: what does it mean that the government was “Cracovian,” who appointed it, and so on? From here, it is only a short step to using an equally erroneous term – one the author does not shy away from – according to which the administration in the GG was German-Polish in nature. To support the historically inaccurate thesis about the functioning of such an administration, the author cites the publication of regulations in the GG’s journal of laws (*Dziennik Rozporządzeń GG*) and other journals issued within the GG in Polish and German.²⁴ It should be emphasised that the journal was published by the Germans “for the occupied Polish territories”; even its title underscored their dominance

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 194, 381, 383, 652.

²² *Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej Główna Komisja* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Main Commission, hereinafter AIPN GK), 196/239, Indictment issued by the Prosecutor’s Office of the Supreme National Tribunal, Cracow, 31 May 1942, p. 51.

²³ *Erlass des Führers und Reichskanzlers über die Verwaltung der besetzten polnische Gebiete* vom 12 Oktober 1939, *Reichsgesetzblatt*, Part 1, 24 October 1939, no. 210, pp. 2077–2078.

²⁴ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 198.

over Polish lands.²⁵ Given that one country dominated another – in this case, Germany dominated Poland – it is inaccurate to speak of a “Polish-German daily.” The German occupiers made practical use of the Polish language, employing it in documents, including legal texts, to ensure that Poles could understand and comply with orders, and to disseminate German propaganda among the Polish population. Ethnic Polish officials had no influence over legal provisions within the GG. Nevertheless, the author frequently uses terms such as “Polish-German administration” and even “Polish-German legislation.”²⁶ The book offers a telling quote on this matter: “municipal administrations and other offices were Polish-German in nature, even if some of these buildings flew flags with swastikas.”²⁷ It is worth reminding the author that throughout the GG, only the symbols of the German Reich were allowed to be used, while the Polish emblem and national symbols were legally banned. It seems that the author is unaware of the actions taken to denationalise Polish offices, including the municipal authorities. Let us also recall that German was the official language of the GG, while beginning in 1941 Polish held the status of an “acceptable” language – after Ukrainian.²⁸ It is also worth noting that the large number of ethnic Polish employees at the lower levels of administration in the GG stemmed from the fact that the Polish population constituted the ethnic majority within this ‘state.’ It should be recognised that their performance of tasks in individual offices was solely the result of the occupier’s practical approach. The administrators of the GG, who failed to create an administration based exclusively on Germans, had to reach out to Poles in some way to implement their programme of economic exploitation and social control. This was achieved through orders given to them to carry out, instructions to impose and collect taxes, and minor forms of administration, such as applications and requests. Unfortunately, Rossoliński-Liebe overlooks the fact that, in November 1939, all civil servants employed in the municipal government prior to 1 September 1939 were compelled to return to work. Noncompliance was met

²⁵ *Verordnung über das Verlagswesen im Generalgouvernement*, *Verordnungsblatt des Generalgouverneurs für die besetzten polnische Gebiete* 1939, no. 3, 2 November, p. 19.

²⁶ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, pp. 51, 196–197, 199, 201, 228–229, 248, 578–579.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

²⁸ A. Wrzyszczyk, “Hierarchia aktów prawnych wprowadzonych przez okupanta niemieckiego w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w latach 1939–1945,” *Studia Iuridica Lublinensia* 22 (2014), p. 700.

with repression, meaning that officials typically resumed their duties not voluntarily, but under duress.

The notion of a so-called “Polish-German administration,” in light of the arguments already presented – especially those regarding the destruction of Polish statehood, the removal of national symbols by the Germans, the imposition of German as the official language, the enforcement of German law, and the compulsory appointment of officials – is entirely baseless. The Germans pursued an aggressive occupation policy, and Polish officials – including mayors – were entirely subordinate to them; they were obliged to carry out their occupiers’ orders and instructions. In this context, the author’s thesis regarding the existence of a “Polish-German administration” in the GG is both absurd and inconsistent with fundamental historical facts.

Rossoliński-Liebe went much further in his narrative, claiming that there was a legal continuity between the Second Polish Republic and the GG. It should be noted that his concept is absurd and demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of the era. This is shown, among other things, by a quotation from a German order: “the existing Polish law remains in force insofar as it does not conflict with the takeover of administration by German law and the exercise of sovereign military rights.”²⁹ The reference to existing Polish legal provisions did not stem from any intention to apply them in practice. Rather, the Germans selectively appropriated elements that served their interests, without seeking the consent of the Polish population. The application of Polish law by the Germans against the will of the Poles does not make it German-Polish law. These decisions were driven by pragmatic concerns, not by any effort to preserve even the vestiges of Polish statehood. The claim of legal continuity between pre-war Poland and the GG is based on flawed scholarly reasoning. One supposed piece of evidence is the decision of Kreishauptmann Kurt Driessen, who, in establishing the ghetto in Końskie, cited the Polish law of 21 February 1935 on combating infectious diseases.³⁰ This constitutes a *de facto* propaganda manoeuvre by the German occupying authorities, intended to create the illusion of concern for the population. The truth is that the

²⁹ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 199.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

GG, as part of the Greater German Reich, did not constitute a legal successor to the Second Polish Republic. In relation to the work's central topic, it should be noted that in the Second Polish Republic, mayors were initially elected by the local population, and, from 1933 onwards, by municipal councils. In contrast, under the GG, mayors in towns with populations of up to 20,000 were appointed by the Distrikt Governor upon the recommendation of the German *Kreishauptmann*, while in larger municipalities, those exceeding 20,000 inhabitants, appointments were made directly by the Governor-General.³¹

By constructing a specific notion of “legal continuity” between the Second Polish Republic and the GG, the author appears to pursue a broader objective: to suggest not only institutional continuity – particularly regarding mayors and magistrates – but also to imply the responsibility of pre-war Poland and its institutions, including administrative and local government bodies, in allegedly implementing measures akin to those enacted in the 1930s German Reich, namely the reality of systemic violence against Jews. While anti-Semitism did exist in pre-war Poland, comparing it with the German crimes of genocide against the Jews is an absurd proposition.

Since, according to the author, ‘Polish-German law’ was in force in the GG, laws passed by the Sejm in interwar Poland were invoked, and the ‘Cracovian government’ was functioning, it seems obvious that there was a kind of cooperation between the Germans and the Poles that could be described as collaboration. This word was, in fact, used in the subtitle of the monograph.

The narrative created by the author also includes another important, albeit unconfirmed, thesis, according to which the actions of Polish officials, specifically their alleged collaboration with the occupiers, were sanctioned by the Polish government-in-exile in London.³² Rossoliński-Liebe states:

The Polish resistance, operating primarily in the General Governorate, was one of the strongest in Europe. The Home Army (AK) and its predecessor, the Union of Armed Struggle (ZWZ), cooperated with the Polish government-in-exile in London, with which some mayors also maintained contact. The Polish

³¹ *Verordnung über die Verwaltung der polnischen Gemeinden*, *Verordnungsblatt des Generalgouverneurs für die besetzten polnische Gebiete* 1939, no. 9, 6 December, p. 71.

³² *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 8.

government-in-exile formally legitimised the cooperation of mayors and all other municipal employees with the German occupiers, as it assumed that without municipal administration, normal life in occupied Poland would be impossible. However, the government-in-exile and underground organisations condemned political collaboration or cooperation with the occupiers that harmed the Polish and Jewish populations.³³

The author's statement is an obvious misrepresentation, indicating a complete misunderstanding of the conditions of coercion and terror in which both mayors and residents of occupied towns found themselves. Rossoliński-Liebe does not attempt to prove this thesis in any way, nor does he support it with any documents or point to other arguments that might speak in its favour. It is therefore worth asking: is the author aware of what he is writing about? Is his monograph really serving scholarly purposes, including, above all, the pursuit of truth?

Regarding the issue of collaboration, it is worth noting that in examining this question, the author was unable to distinguish between the activities undertaken by the mayors on their own initiative and those imposed upon them by the German occupiers. This approach to the problem will certainly not lead to identifying who was responsible for what exactly. It is worth adding that those who were assigned specific duties also bear responsibility, albeit of a different kind. However, unlike the Germans, refusal to carry out these tasks could cost Polish mayors their jobs or even their lives. Responsibility for the actions of the occupiers can easily be attributed to Polish officials. In this context, a passage from the monograph in which the author speculates that the Poles perceived the Germans as a "master race" seems understandable but completely irrational. Accepting this – which the author concludes, contrary to logic – one could assume that the relations between German Kreishauptmanns and Polish mayors were collegial or even friendly.³⁴ Let us clarify that it was the Germans who referred to themselves as the "master race," not the Poles who perceived them as such. To claim that Poles entered into friendly and collegial relations with the Germans

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

because they regarded the occupiers as a 'master race' is a gross distortion of the violent and racist reality imposed on Polish lands by the invaders from the West beginning in 1939 and thereafter. It should be recalled that in the GG, the occupying authorities implemented a racial policy in which the Poles were explicitly regarded as inferior within the imposed hierarchy.

From the unreliable narrative of friendly relations between German and Polish officials, the author infers the existence of conditions conducive to cooperation, allegedly encouraging interaction between representatives of both nationalities. According to the author, this mutual engagement led to a process of learning from one another, which was particularly evident, in their view, during the establishment of ghettos and the exploitation of Jews. The author even claims that "mayors [Poles – author's remark] were often more responsible for the Holocaust than their 'German counterparts.'"³⁵

Rossoliński-Liebe apparently believes that, due to their constant interaction with German officials, Polish mayors played an important role in German local politics, and by shaping it, they also influenced state politics. Referring to the realities of the occupied towns, he states: "local politics is not only the implementation of state policy at lower levels, but it also offers scope for one's own political projects."³⁶ The author's conclusion is fundamentally false, given that the mayors did not pursue any policy of their own, but rather, as officials working within the German administration, implemented the German plan of action. The author's claim that Polish mayors pursued an independent policy serves to distort the historical narrative by attributing agency to Polish officials and equating their role with that of the German authorities. It must be stressed that such an equivalence is fundamentally untenable, as under German racial doctrine, the Poles had a status subordinate to the Germans.³⁷

The fundamental issues discussed in the monograph, as well as its structure, give rise to many critical reflections. In addition, the book has many poorly placed emphases and omissions – gaps concerning essential topics that should definitely have been included. Let us now proceed to discuss the structural

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

flaws of the publication. The first three chapters: I. "Politics, Administration, and Legislation of the Second Polish Republic," II. "Cities as Places of Coexistence and Violence," III. "Pre-war Lives of the Occupation-era Mayors," are of an introductory nature and concern the Second Polish Republic. Their main premise is to create an image of interwar Poland, and especially of the towns where Jews lived, as places full of violence towards the Jewish population or, at best, hostile to them. Such an image, especially of the second half of the 1930s, is not entirely without merit, but Rossoliński-Liebe's presentation of the matter, with its failure to distinguish between the brutal, downright murderous anti-Semitism of the Third Reich and the situation of Jews in pre-war Poland, aims to create a breeding ground for demonstrating the extensive involvement of Polish mayors in the Holocaust during World War II and to clearly show that this was merely a continuation of violent actions that allegedly began during the Second Polish Republic.

Unfortunately, the book does not have a chapter or subchapter devoted to the racist policies of the German state towards Jews in the 1930s. An ideal historical background for the author's reflections in subsequent chapters would be an analysis of the racial anti-Semitic German law (the Nuremberg Laws), gradually implemented and introduced by the Germans, and even an emphasis on the brutal actions of the National Socialists in Germany towards the Jewish minority, including Polish citizens living in the Reich. This unmentioned background could serve as a perfect introduction to the discussion of the extermination of Jews in cities in German-occupied Polish territories during World War II. The profile of the occupiers' actions should be one of the fundamental elements of the monograph, yet it is completely absent. Instead, a direct introduction to the occupation and the issues outlined in the title and subtitle of the monograph, at least in intention, is provided in Chapter IV, entitled "War, Occupation, and Administration." In Chapter V, "Mayors in the Administrative Network," little attention is paid to the destruction of cities and towns as a result of the actions of German artillery, armoured weapons, air force and infantry, as well as police formations, during the Polish campaign of 1939.³⁸ This gives the striking impression that the German

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

army and repressive apparatus did not conduct operations against the Polish and Jewish populations in September and October 1939.³⁹ It seems that the author does not assign sufficient importance to key historical context, addressing it only in a limited way. It is worth recalling that the first murders of Jews on Polish soil, carried out by Wehrmacht soldiers and German police units, occurred during the military campaign of 1939 – more than two years before Operation “Reinhardt.” Unfortunately, the author did not include even a mention of these significant events. In his monograph, the author marginalised an issue that was a crucial element of the German Reich’s policy, namely the displacement of Poles and Jews from the territories incorporated into the Reich to the GG. While Jews were mainly sent to cities, Poles were usually sent to the countryside. As a result of this, as well as the destruction caused by the aforementioned military actions, numerous cities in the GG were overpopulated.⁴⁰ These important, even key events, whose scholarly analysis is essential, should provide historical background and open the way for further consideration of the position of mayors and their actions. They are not of any interest to the researcher. Their omission is not only a huge factual error but also imposes the belief of “limited German agency” in the scholarly discourse on the Holocaust.

A characteristic feature of much of the work, especially the aforementioned chapters II,⁴¹ III,⁴² as well as VI⁴³, entitled “The Holocaust,” is the simplification of the narrative by reducing it to a “listing” of individual towns and mayors and a brief discussion of them. The author’s historical analysis of the “heads of the town administration” has been reduced to their laconically presented biographies and references to their activity before World War II, with particular emphasis, of course, on their participation in anti-Semitic actions. In Chapter VI, the author uses a case-by-case approach to discuss individual towns, attempting to prove the involvement of individual mayors in the Holocaust. Unfortunately, his approach

³⁹ See the subchapter in Chapter V, titled “Destruction of Cities, Military Administration and Recruitment of Mayors,” in *ibid.*, pp. 246–261.

⁴⁰ Jewish settlement in Polish towns dates back to the Middle Ages. In the 19th and 20th centuries, urban centres became the primary areas of Jewish life in Poland.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98–133.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 134–180.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 357–578.

has little in common with an analytical, scholarly, or problem-based approach to the issues raised. The author should point out certain problems characteristic of most mayors and the majority of towns, rather than listing municipal bodies and their leaders one by one and then characterising each case individually, as if he were a student. The proposed structure of the monograph is surprising for a habilitation thesis.

The author should also attempt to provide a brief overview – at least in the form of a subchapter – of the anti-Jewish policies pursued by the German repressive apparatus and administrative structures in the GG. These include methods of persecution, ghettoisation, the establishment of Judenrats, as well as the introduction of anti-Semitic legislation aimed at plundering, persecuting, and murdering Jews. Without even a minimal analysis of these issues, which undoubtedly form the historical context surrounding the actions of the German perpetrators, it becomes impossible to understand the role of Polish mayors and the nature of the German occupation in the GG.

Repeating hypotheses and theses in both the introduction and conclusion is a cardinal error that disqualifies any scholarly dissertation. Of course, there should be a correlation between the opening and closing sections of a scholarly study. In Rossoliński-Liebe's monograph, the introduction and conclusion are 'fluid' – the author mixes theses with hypotheses, while the proof of the latter, especially with regard to the Holocaust, is already indicated in the introductory part of the book. In fact, reading the introduction is enough to understand what the monograph is about and what hypotheses have been 'proven,' including the most important one, according to which Polish mayors were co-responsible for the Holocaust and benefited from it. What is more, the author does not actually pose any research questions in the book, and the involvement of mayors in the Holocaust is obvious to him and constitutes a starting point for further deliberations.⁴⁴

A serious shortcoming of the work – stemming from the author's methodological choices – is the absence of any analysis of German law, particularly the regulations issued by the Governor-General (in the official journal of laws for GG, *Verordnungsblatt*) and the official gazettes of Distrikt heads concerning the

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

functioning of the “town administration.” It was Governor-General Hans Frank, along with Distrikt governors and Kreishauptmanns, who issued the legal acts under which, among others, mayors and members of the Judenrats were required to operate.⁴⁵

The book is marred by fundamental flaws in the historian’s craft – errors that have no place in any serious scholarly work, let alone a habilitation thesis. The footnotes, to be precise, are not merely inaccurate; they actively obstruct comprehension. Instead of clarifying the text, they muddle the narrative and open the door to misreadings, including outright false interpretations. In short, they are ineptly executed. It is Rossoliński-Liebe’s practice to cite only the addressees of letters in the footnotes, while omitting the authors. Several footnotes were selected from among many, along with their numbering and the exact wording:

- 1) footnote 685: An den Herrn Kreishauptmann, 9.10.1940, APGM, AMGr, Bd. 542, Bl. 266;⁴⁶
- 2) footnote 691: An den Herrn Bürgermeister, 22.11.1940, APGM, AMGr, Bd. 542, Bl. 422;⁴⁷
- 3) footnote 720: Do Rady Żydowskiej (To the Jewish Council), 26.1.1942, APSi, AMSi, Bd. 365, Bl. 54;⁴⁸
- 4) footnote 739: An den Herrn Bürgermeister, 20.2.1940, APGM, AGKor, Bd. 248, Bl. 3;⁴⁹
- 5) footnote 762: Do Zarządu Miejskiego (To the Municipal Administration), 30.10.1940, APO, AMMM, Bd. 533, Bl. 22;⁵⁰
- 6) footnote 789: APGM, AMSk, Bd. 183, Bl. 67–167;⁵¹
- 7) footnote 1144: Do Pana Burmistrza (To the Mayor), 25.3.1940, APGM, AMGr, Bd. 519, Bl. 240;⁵²

⁴⁵ A. Wrzyszczyński, “Administracja terytorialna w ustawodawstwie okupanta niemieckiego w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie (1939–1944). Część I (1.09.1939 – 31.07.1940),” *Z Dziejów Prawa* 20 (2019), pp. 621, 627–628.

⁴⁶ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 497.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 502.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 506.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 510.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 580.

- 8) footnote 1617: Do Komisarycznego Zarządu Zabezpieczonych Nieruchomości (To the Provisional Administration of Seized Properties), 10.12.1942, APO, AMO, Bd. 871, Bl. 1,⁵³
- 9) footnote 1750: An den Herrn Stadthauptmann, 15.1.1942, APW, KBMW, Bd. 70, Bl.⁵⁴

The omission of the document's creator in the brief footnote descriptions demonstrates the author's unprofessional handling of historical method and forms part of a deliberate effort to inject disinformation into the account. In the main text, the author typically employs an impersonal style when referring to German actions, obscuring who was responsible, while the footnotes cite only the document's recipient. As a result, both the narrative and the footnotes prevent the reader from connecting German decision-makers with the actions carried out or decisions taken. Other errors made by the author in the footnotes concern incorrect information about the location of archival materials. In the footnotes on page 645 of the monograph – footnote 1565 (Do Pana Pełki Łukasza [To Mr. Łukasz Pełka], 17 December 1942, APSi, AMKo, Bd. 423, Bl. 11) and footnote 1566 (Do Pana Krauze Mieczysława [To Mr. Mieczysław Krauze], 17 December 1942, APSi, AMKo, Bd. 423, Bl. 14) – the author committed a formal error by stating that the archival collection Akta miasta Końskie (Files of the Town of Końskie, hereinafter AMKo) is held at the State Archives in Siedlce (*Archiwum Państwowe w Siedlcach*, hereinafter APSi). Meanwhile, the files of the town of Końskie are kept in the State Archives in Kielce (*Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach*).⁵⁵

In addition to misquoting archival collections, the author also makes another serious mistake – he alters the content of documents. He assigns archival reference numbers to documents other than those he quotes. Here is an example. On the basis of the documents registered under the reference number 1290 from the Akta miasta Siedlce (Files of the Town of Siedlce) archival collection held at the State Archives in Siedlce (*Archiwum Państwowe w Siedlcach*), Rossoliński-Liebe states that the Kreishauptmann of the Kreis Siedlce, Friedrich Seeman, reported: “ambitious and hard-working craftsmen now had the opportunity to earn a living in towns such as Łosice, Mordy and Siedlce. Those who wished to take advantage of this opportunity

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 652.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 659.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 645.

were asked to contact the relevant mayor, who would inform them whether the transfer was possible and which flat had been allocated.”⁵⁶ The document referred to by the author is probably factual, but the State Archives in Siedlce do not keep it in the “Files of the Town of Siedlce” archival collection under reference number 1290. Under this reference number, there is the “Książka meldunkowa ul. Piaski Zamiejskie 42, wł. Bareja Józef” (Registration Book for 42 Piaski Zamiejskie Street, owner Józef Bareja).⁵⁷ It is therefore difficult to determine in which fond and under which reference number the document used by the author is located.

The reference number “1290” from the Files of the Town of Siedlce reoccurs as an incorrect citation. Rossoliński-Liebe cites an announcement dated 16 May 1942, issued by Kreishauptmann Ernest Gramß of the Kreis Sokolow-Wengrow and addressed to the Polish population, which stated that “village leaders and bailiffs are obliged to report any foreigner lacking residence in the GG.” The Kreishauptmann ordered that every non-resident foreigner staying in the municipality temporarily must be reported to the relevant German Gendarmerie station. Villagers were obliged to immediately inform bailiffs and village leaders of the whereabouts of any “strangers.” Gramß threatened to send the village leader or bailiff to the labour camp in Treblinka for failure to comply with this order.⁵⁸ It is worth recalling once again that under the aforementioned reference number “1290” there is the “Registration Book for 42 Piaski Zamiejskie Street, owner Józef Bareja,” and not the announcement referred to by the author.⁵⁹

Part 2. The Holocaust and Jews

For the purposes of this review, and especially in connection with Chapter VI, archival research was carried out in the records produced by municipal offices in the Distrikt Warschau (Warsaw Province). The records cited by the author were

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 644.

⁵⁷ *Archiwum Państwowe w Siedlcach* (State Archives in Siedlce, hereinafter APS), collection Akta miasta Siedlce (Files of the Town of Siedlce, hereinafter AMSi), 1290, Książka meldunkowa ul. Piaski Zamiejskie 42, wł. Bareja Józef (Registration Book for 42 Piaski Zamiejskie Street, owner Józef Bareja); *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 644.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 725.

⁵⁹ Incorrect reference number provided by the author: Obwieszczenie nr 190 (Announcement no. 190), 16.5.1942, APS, AMSi, vol. 1290, p. 4

examined, their content verified and then compared with the chapter's treatment of the Holocaust.

Chapter VI, entitled "The Holocaust," examines the role of Polish mayors in the extermination of Jews. As the most significant chapter, its title partially overlaps with that of the book *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*. Were Rossoliński-Liebe's approach guided by a strict pursuit of objective truth, a more appropriate title might have been, for instance, "Polish-Jewish Relations." Essentially, the issues raised there relate to the broadly understood relations between Poles and Jews under the German occupation. It should further be emphasised that the chapter entitled "The Holocaust" constitutes a misrepresentation in the context of Polish mayors' participation, and particularly their alleged co-responsibility in the expulsion of Jews from town councils, the establishment of *Judenräte*, ghettoisation (i.e. forcible resettlement of Jews from their previous dwellings into ghettos), the imposition of forced labour, and the 'appropriation' (i.e. plundering) of Jewish property. Regarding all the problems and events mentioned, we can talk about the use of repression and persecution, but it was not yet a time of systematic genocide. The title of the chapter is even more misleading given that the issues in question occupy over 300 pages in the book (from page 357 to 688), whereas the description of the genocide within the Holocaust in the entire chapter devoted to it is limited to only 30 pages (from 689 to 729). These pages do, in fact, examine the extermination of the Jews – namely the liquidation of the ghettos and the final stage of the Holocaust. Considering the arguments presented, however, the chapter's title amounts to a scholarly misrepresentation.

To further the analysis of Rossoliński-Liebe's monograph, excerpts from the chapter "The Holocaust" concerning towns in the Distrikt Warschau were juxtaposed with the archival records cited by the author. Accordingly, both the main text and the source base employed in the book will be examined.

Rossoliński-Liebe points out that Polish mayors were beneficiaries of the forced labour of Jewish workers and profited from it. The book contains a sentence stating that "they learned to profit from their [the Jews' – author's remark] labour," but it does not specify who taught them this. Even if readers assume that it was the Germans, the author does not state this. In search of an argument to support this thesis, he refers to a document which is an employment

contract, according to which the mayor of Sochaczew employed 15 Jews, who, as Rossoliński-Liebe notes, were “examined and cleared of charges.”⁶⁰ Rossoliński-Liebe refers to the content of the document in a very inaccurate manner, citing only information that confirms his claim that Jews were not paid and that they were exploited. However, the actual content of the document completely contradicts this. The agreement notes the payment of the salaries, and although its amount was limited to only 80% of the Polish worker’s wages, however it was paid. The document also states that the costs of food and accommodation in this case were paid by the Jewish workers. The content of the narrative in the main text is completely inconsistent with the information contained in the document. Thus, the author is not so much mistaken in his interpretation as he is distorting the facts.⁶¹

Another example of presenting completely unreliable data to reach the desired conclusions concerns Warsaw. Referring to the content of an archival document produced during the tenure of the Commissioner Mayor of the City of Warsaw, Rossoliński-Liebe states:

The complexity of tax policy and the involvement of city councillors can be seen in Warsaw. The received administrative records show that Mayor Kulski and his administration participated in all areas of tax policy. Essentially, they protected Polish interests while disadvantaging Jewish residents, exploiting the anti-Semitic circumstances created by the occupiers to profit from Jewish helplessness.⁶²

To confirm this comment, the author refers to information passed by Ludwig Leist, the Stadthauptmann of Warsaw, to Mayor Kulski, according to which he would allow street music “only in very exceptional cases and only in the area of the

⁶⁰ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 593.

⁶¹ *Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie, Oddział w Grodzisku Mazowieckim* (State Archives in Warsaw, Branch in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, hereinafter APW OGM), collection Akta miasta Sochaczewa (Files of the Town of Sochaczew), 342, Employment contract concluded between the Kreishauptmann of Sochaczew-Błonie and the Mayor of Sochaczew, Prause, Warsaw, 24 May 1941, p. 12.

⁶² *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 668.

epidemic control zone.”⁶³ It is not necessary to refer to the content of the archival document, as Rossoliński-Liebe simply contradicts himself. Both the document and the monograph state that Stadthauptmann Leist, a German, forbade Jews from performing street music. For unknown reasons, the author manipulates the text, suggesting that also in this case Poles benefited from the tragedy of Jews. It is hard to guess what benefits he is referring to, and the person who prohibited the performance of music was a German official. It is unclear from where Rossoliński-Liebe draws the basis for his conclusions.

When discussing the enforcement of taxes on Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, he also proposed a similar interpretation, specifically one not based on facts. Let us quote an excerpt from the monograph:

The manner in which Kulski demanded payment of the “unpaid” bills was also morally questionable. Although gas bills had to be paid by individuals in the ghetto, he decided that the [municipal – author’s remark] gasworks should receive the amount owed to them for the entire ghetto from the Jewish Council. In doing so, he referred to a decision made by the Stadthauptmann on 29 June 1942. The same was to apply to electricity, water and sewerage charges. To collect these debts, the city administration wanted to collect the amount of 96,955 zlotys owed by “Jewish consumers” to the municipal gasworks from the Jewish Council in the next settlement, which was scheduled for July 1942. With this administrative step, the mayor ultimately succeeded in forcing the Jewish Council to pay the bills of impoverished or already murdered Jews.”⁶⁴

The actions described, which were certainly morally questionable, were not, as the author interprets them, implemented on the mayor’s initiative. He exercised executive power in the city as a subordinate of the Stadthauptmann and referred to the decision issued by him on 29 June 1942 regarding the enforcement of fees.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie* (State Archives in Warsaw, hereinafter APW), collection Komisaryczny Burmistrz Miasta Warszawy (Commissioner Mayor of the City of Warsaw, hereinafter KBMW), 70, Commissioner Mayor of the City of Warsaw to the Management of the Municipal Gasworks, Warsaw, July 1942, p. 45; *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, pp. 674–675.

Rossoliński-Liebe completely “ignores the person” of the Stadthauptmann, even though the content of the source clearly indicates Leist’s decision-making power and responsibility. The mayor did not decide on taxes, and besides, their main beneficiary was the “German administration,” so often overlooked by the author. Furthermore, it is unclear what the author intends when he speaks of collecting taxes from murdered Jews, particularly since the July 1942 document in question was likely drafted before the major deportation operation, even though mass killings by the Germans had already taken place. He may be alluding to Jews who died in other circumstances, yet he provides no clarification, thereby creating a false picture.⁶⁵

Rossoliński-Liebe’s interpretation of the actions of Otwock Mayor Gadomski led him to conclude that the mayor was campaigning for the collection of a tourist tax, known as the “spa tax” (German: *Kurtaxe*), in the Jewish quarter. According to the author’s narrative, Gadomski was to punish or expel from the city those who did not pay it on time.⁶⁶ The content of the document, typical of a German occupation-era poster written in German and Polish, does not indicate that the mayor himself sought to punish Jews who did not pay their contributions, but that he acted on the orders of the Germans. What is more, a Judenrat official was responsible for collecting the “spa tax,” and the mayor merely encouraged Jews to pay it. He did indeed warn that those who did not pay it on time could expect “appropriate sanctions, up to and including the removal of those who evade payment.” Significantly, his decision was based on unspecified bylaws. This suggests that both the mayor and those compelled by the Germans to collect the tax were aware of the contractual provisions arising from these bylaws. The author, however, does not acknowledge this, presenting the matter as though the mayor acted independently. Nor does he consider whether the tax applied to the entire city or solely to the Jewish quarter. Rossoliński-Liebe’s conclusions aim to portray tax collection as a form of repression against Jews, despite the absence of supporting evidence in his account.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, pp. 674–675.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 682.

⁶⁷ *Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie, Oddział w Otwocku* (State Archives in Warsaw, Branch in Otwock, hereinafter APW OO), collection Akta miasta Otwocka (Files of the Town of Otwock, herein-

Elsewhere, he states:

Two documents sent to Kulski by Leist also shed light on the practice of tax collection and enforcement procedures in the ghetto. In the first letter, dated 29 November 1941, the mayor asked the Stadthauptmann to release the city administration from the task of collecting debts in the ghetto and to entrust this task to the Jewish Council. Presumably, a decisive motive behind this request was that at that time most Jews were already so impoverished that the “city administration” [German: *Stadtverwaltung*] could hardly collect any more taxes and it was no longer worthwhile for them to operate in the ghetto. A third possibility [it is hard to find out why the third – author’s remark] is that the scandalous behaviour of the tax officials had become excessive and had to be stopped. Kulski wrote: “The experience of the municipal authorities from its law execution activities in the Jewish quarter leads to the conviction that collections from the Jewish population are becoming increasingly difficult and are mostly pointless. [...] In view of their [the Jews’ – editor’s remark] constant movement within their residential quarter [...] the percentage of the so-called untraceable addresses is growing. This makes enforcement increasingly difficult and overloads the office with paperwork, address investigations and similar administrative tasks.”⁶⁸

The document clearly indicates that the main reasons why the mayor attempted to stop collecting taxes in the ghetto were problems with locating Jews at their correct addresses and the associated administrative and investigative work, as well as the potential high risk of Polish officials becoming infected with typhus⁶⁹.

Rossoliński-Liebe added to the above quotation that “Medical reasons were also significant for Kulski. Some tax officials became infected with typhus” and that “the mayor wanted to retain control over the collection of taxes by the Jewish

after AmO), 2278, p. 11, Municipal Board, Otwock. Announcement signed by Mayor Jan Gadomski, Otwock, 5 March 1941, p. 11.

⁶⁸ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 678.

⁶⁹ Typhus was also an obvious reference to a common at the time anxiety of the German authorities of spreading an infectious disease.

Council.”⁷⁰ Referring in the above-quoted passages to the document sent by Mayor Kulski to Stadthauptmann Leist, the author assesses that the actions of the officials subordinate to the mayor were scandalous, but does not specify what this “scandalousness” was supposed to be all about. Such a statement – which, let us add, is unfounded – is baffling when used in a scholarly work. Such a judgment does not speak well of the historian’s preparation for analytical work. The unfounded nature of this statement is compounded by the fact that it is not supported by any substantive argument. The author even spots some kind of “profit-seeking” on the part of the Polish city administrator in a letter sent by the mayor to Stadthauptmann Leist, in which he sought to relieve his officials of the obligation to collect debts from Jews. Hence, in his commentary, the author speculates, without rational evidence, that the mayor, as a representative of the municipal authorities, had previously profited from collecting taxes, but at the time the document was issued, it was no longer profitable for him and for this reason he asked the Kreishauptmann to relieve his officials of the obligation to carry out these activities. Again, the author does not examine the real content of the archival document but interprets the data in a way that supports his arguments without relying on genuine information. Rossoliński-Liebe therefore fails to take into account that the main beneficiary of the taxes levied on Jews and Poles was the German authorities. His comment that the mayor wanted to retain control over tax collection by the Judenrat, while he was applying for complete exemption from this duty for himself and his officials, is nonsensical and proves that the author is unable to draw obvious conclusions from the facts. Does he really believe that control over the collection of taxes from Jews can be achieved by exempting tax officials from this obligation? The mayor hoped that the request submitted to Leist would resolve the outlined problems – the city administrator himself did not make decisions on matters that fell within the competence of the Stadthauptmann. However, Rossoliński-Liebe seems to overlook this fact and finds it much easier to draw conclusions pointing to the official’s profit-seeking and anti-Jewish attitude, even though the documents he cites do not confirm his interpretation.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ APW, KBMW, 70, Den Kommissarische Bürgermeister der Stadt Warschau and den Herrn Stadthauptmann, 24 November 1941, p. 27.

The actions of a butcher named Malczyk (whose first name remains unknown), who on 3 May 1940 applied to Mayor Kulski for assignment to stall no. 39 in the market hall on Koszykowa Street in Warsaw, previously owned by the Jewish merchant Laks, became the basis for Rossoliński-Liebe's depiction of the change "for the worse" in the attitude of Poles towards Jews "just a few months after the outbreak of war."⁷² The author resorts in this case to simple reasoning – a Pole wanted to take over a stall from a Jew in the hall on Koszykowa Street in Warsaw, so his actions prove that he was a bad person. It is implied that other Poles behaved in a similar manner. Such a generalisation by the author amounts to a misrepresentation, resting on only one example. It should be added that the author did not take into account the fact that Malczyk was not granted this stall because his application was rejected by other Poles – officials of the Commissioner's Administration of the City of Warsaw, who reported to Mayor Kulski. Are these activities supposed to indicate a deterioration in the attitude of Polish society towards Jews six months after September 1939, given that one Pole applied for a "position left vacant by a Jew" and others blocked it? The author's commentary on this matter essentially departs from historical discourse, once again showing the hallmarks of a journalistic interjection.⁷³

The next, equally bizarre conclusions proposed by Rossoliński-Liebe concern events in Otwock. Gadoński, who held the office of mayor there, was obliged by the Germans to draw up a list of all shops, divided into the so-called Aryan and Jewish ones. The mayor did indeed present such a list. The author points out that Gadoński was responsible for the takeover of the shops but did not provide any circumstances illustrating this process.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, Rossoliński-Liebe's critical reflection fails to consider the realities and distinctive character of Otwock as a town. The decline and subsequent confiscation of many shops resulted largely from German occupation policies, which caused Otwock to lose its significance as a spa and holiday resort. It is worth noting, with reference to the same document cited by the author – though unfortunately without adequate source criti-

⁷² *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 610.

⁷³ APW, KBWM, 1, Representative of the Distrikt Head for the City of Warsaw to the Commissioner Mayor. Industrial Department, Warsaw, 3 May 1940, p. 18.

⁷⁴ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 621.

cism – that out of more than 180 shops, 68 did not make it through the first years of the German occupation, largely because of the decline in patients visiting the health resort. This also applied to restaurants and small craft workshops, shoemakers, tailors, cobblers, among others. The takeover of most companies stemmed chiefly from the German-induced economic collapse of the town, not from the mayor's policies.⁷⁵

The attitude of Karol Roschilt, the mayor of Piaseczno, towards the transport of items from the local ghetto, taking into account the documentation, has not been interpreted according to the truth. In the opinion of the author, who refers to the content of a document sent by the mayor to Untersturmführer Erlinger, the "town administrator" protested loudly against the removal of items from the ghetto, implying that the mayor wanted to keep these possessions for himself. Unfortunately, the author seems to misunderstand the basic meaning of the document. The mayor wrote that items from the ghetto were being stolen and that a receipt should be issued for each item taken away. He did not dare to condemn the practice itself, but demanded that a document be issued stating that each of these items was taken from the Jewish quarter by the SS.⁷⁶

Referring to the limitation of Kulski's powers, Rossoliński-Liebe stated:

On 20 November 1939, his scope for action with regard to Jewish commercial activity was significantly restricted. He was no longer allowed to grant Jews licences to trade, nor was he allowed to permit them to work as self-employed craftsmen, open new commercial premises or register their bicycles, carriages and other vehicles for traffic. Jews were also only allowed to work as employees in their own businesses. The resolutions of the conference [held on 20 November 1939 – editor's remark] further obliged Kulski to permit all commercial activities by the Poles and Volksdeutsche (namely, ethnic Germans) and to make no distinction between them. With these regulations, the city authorities initiated

⁷⁵ APW OO, AmO, 710, Otwock Municipality. List of shops and workshops, n.d., n.p., p. 25 (original, German version), p. 27 (translation into Polish).

⁷⁶ APW OGM, collection Akta miasta Piaseczna (Files of the Town of Piaseczno, hereinafter AmP), 3213, Mayor of Piaseczno Karol Roschilt to Unterscharführer Erlinger, Piaseczno, 28 January 1941, p. 13.

the takeover of Jewish property, which was implemented by Kulski and the city administration and from which the Poles in particular benefited.⁷⁷

This passage touches upon several themes, each of which requires explanation. Firstly, it uses passive and impersonal phrases: “his scope for action [...] was significantly restricted,” “he was no longer allowed” and “the resolutions [...] obliged Kulski,” through which the author once again deflects responsibility for their decisions away from the Germans. Let us note that between 1935 and 1939, Kulski had powers arising from his position as Vice-President of Warsaw, which applied to both Poles and Jews living in the Polish capital. Let us add that pre-war Polish law did not prohibit Jews from running businesses, but the German occupiers did. It was they who decided that Kulski’s “scope for action was restricted,” “he was no longer allowed” and “the resolutions [...] obliged Kulski,” whereas literally all of the “rules” indicated were dictated, in accordance with German law, by Reich Commissioner Dr. Sauberzweig, who appears in the document cited by Rossoliński-Liebe as the President of the City of Warsaw, that is the superior of the city mayor. It was he who, on 22 November 1939, gave Kulski the above-mentioned set of instructions in writing, referring to the results of discussions that took place during a purported conference on 20 November 1939, the details of which remain unclear.⁷⁸ Thus, it was the Germans who introduced the laws from the initial stage of the occupation, not Kulski. It is undisputed that reference must be made to the comment quoted in the above passage, according to which “the resolutions [...] further obliged Kulski to permit all commercial activities by the Poles and ethnic Germans and to make no distinction between them.” Unfortunately, this passage misleadingly implies that the Germans and the Poles could conduct business on equal terms. In reality, economic life was subordinated to German racial policy, which placed the Poles at a disadvantage. When one considers the conditions in the GG – confiscation by Germans of Polish businesses, roundups, and deployment to the forced labour in the Reich through the (German-organised) *Arbeitsamts* – it becomes evident that the Germans and the Poles were not on equal

⁷⁷ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 611.

⁷⁸ APW, KBMW, 55, On Behalf of the President of Warsaw to the Commissioner Mayor. Industry Department. Translation into Polish, Warsaw, 22 November 1939, p. 2.

footing, especially in terms of running businesses. The author also overlooks the historical context, including numerous reprisals by the Germans against the Poles – especially torture, arrests, deportations to concentration and labour camps, and compulsory quotas.

In Rossoliński-Liebe's narrative, the mayor of Grójec, Antoni Wojdak, was held responsible for the displacement of the Jews from their homes in June 1940, which were designated for the needs of the Wehrmacht. Furthermore, in terms of authority and decision-making power, the author equated the Polish mayor with the German Kreishauptmann Werner Zimmerman, as if they both had similar powers in managing Jewish homes.⁷⁹ The content of the document on which the discussed fragment of the monograph is based clearly indicates that the request to occupy flats for the Wehrmacht was submitted by the Local Command (*Ortskommendantur*), obliging the mayor to prepare a list of vacant – so-called Jewish – premises.⁸⁰ The actions of Mayor Antoni Wojdak were presented as if he had taken apartments away from Jews on his own initiative. The document does not justify such a conclusion, since it was Wehrmacht soldiers who needed the premises.

Based on a document from the Otwock commune, the author attempts to demonstrate that Mayor Gadomski was responsible for selecting the site where the ghetto was established but fails to take into account that he did not act on his own initiative, but was ordered to do so on 2 July 1940 by Hermann Ruprecht, the Kreishauptmann of the Warsaw-Land District [*Kreis Warschau-Land* – editor's remark]. The mayor received an order to carry out an analysis of the town's inhabitants, indicating their national origin, and to provide information on a potential site for the ghetto.⁸¹ Rossoliński-Liebe does not cite the document indicating that the decision to establish the ghetto was taken by the Kreishauptmann himself, who, on 20 September 1940, sent a letter to Gadomski informing the mayor that it would be located in the so-called commercial quarter, inhabited mainly by Jews. The same document, which unfortunately did not interest the author, further

⁷⁹ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 494.

⁸⁰ APW OGM, collection Akta miasta Grójca (Files of the Town of Grójec), 542, Ortskommandantur to the Mayor of Grójec, Grójec, 4 June 1940, p. 43. It is worth noting that the author fails to provide information about the issuing entity, the Ortskommandantur.

⁸¹ APW OO, AmO, 2279, p. 4; *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 473.

records that Ruprecht ordered the resettlement of Jews from other quarters of the town into the ghetto within eight days. Furthermore, the document makes clear that it was the Kreishauptmann, not the mayor, who forbade Jews from purchasing land, engaging in business, and renting commercial or utility premises outside quarter no. 1 – the Jewish quarter. These prohibitions extended to Poles as well. Ruprecht explicitly stated that if he were to issue permits for the resettlement of Jews in the future, they would be confined to quarter no. 1. Although Rossoliński-Liebe cites these documents, he reduces their content to a passing mention, deliberately suppressing the fact that a German official was the one responsible for establishing the ghetto.⁸² In another case, he attempts to prove, referring to the instruction of 26 September 1940 issued by the Kreishauptmann of the Kreis Warschau-Land, that Gadomski allegedly modified it in favour of the Polish population. Although he quotes its content, he does not indicate at what point the mayor of Otwock altered the content of the document. This interpretation seems to be a misrepresentation and, at the same time, another journalistic interjection.⁸³ When discussing the establishment of the Otwock ghetto, let us refer to another excerpt from the book: “The mayor conscientiously complied with the Kreishauptmann Ruprecht’s demand of 2 July 1940 to draw up a plan for the ghetto in his town by 1 August 1940.”⁸⁴ The document referred to by the author in this passage concerns a completely different matter, and moreover, it is addressed not only to the mayor of Otwock. Let us cite the letter sent by Ruprecht, Kreishauptmann of Kreis WarschauLand, to the mayors and commune heads – a document also referenced by RossolińskiLiebe:

I intend to establish a ghetto for Jews in every municipality. After possible prior consultation with the chairman of the local Jewish council, I request that you submit appropriate proposals to me. A local plan marking the planned boundaries of the ghetto should be submitted to me. Deadline: 1 August [19]40.⁸⁵

⁸² APW OO, AmO, 2279, Kreishauptmann des Kreises Warschau-Land an den Herrn Bürgermeister in Otwock, Warschau, 20 September 1940, p. 36.

⁸³ APW OO, AmO, 2277, Announcement published by Mayor Jan Gadomski, signed by Kreishauptmann Dr. Ruprecht, Otwock, 26 September 1940, p. 8.

⁸⁴ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 473.

⁸⁵ APW, OO, AmO, 2279, p. 4.

On the basis of this archival material, it cannot be concluded that the mayor of Otwock diligently followed the Kreishauptmann's order; it only shows that the latter expressed his intention to establish ghettos in the Kreis Warschau-Land. In accordance with the order issued by Kreishauptmann Ruprecht on 13 January 1941, the ghetto in Piaseczno was fenced off. Five days later, the local mayor informed the chairman of the Jewish Council of this measure. Rossoliński-Liebe maintains that the mayor was also responsible for carrying out the task.⁸⁶ Once again, the narrative in the monograph completely contradicts the content of the document cited by the author in the footnote. According to the document, the chairman of the Jewish Council was responsible for all activities related to the sealing off of the ghetto in Piaseczno. It was he who, on the basis of the Kreishauptmann's decision, was obliged to erect a wire fence, raise the fences on individual properties, move the entrance gates, and install appropriate information boards. Furthermore, as indicated in the archival document, the Jewish Council was obliged to post guards at the entrance to the Jewish quarter.⁸⁷ The mayor was not obliged to perform any of the activities mentioned above; he only passed on the Kreishauptmann's orders to the chairman of the Jewish Council.

Another example of the author finding content that does not appear in the document concerns Otwock. According to Rossoliński-Liebe, Mayor Gadomski instructed the chairman of the Judenrat, Icek (Isaac) Lesman, to contact the head of the Polish Police station, Bronisław Marchlewicz, "as soon as possible" during the resettlement of Jews within the city as part of the ghettoisation process.⁸⁸ The phrase "as soon as possible" does not appear in the document, but there is an indication that the mayor suggests to Lesman that, "if necessary, he should consult the Head of the Polish Police station, Mr Marchlewicz, about the matter in advance."⁸⁹ The document was cited by the author with the suggestion that the mayor of Otwock was responsible for the resettlement of Jews in the town. In addition, the author's use of the phrase "as soon as possible" is intended to reinforce

⁸⁶ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 474.

⁸⁷ APW, OGM, AmP, 3213, Mayor of Piaseczno to the Chairman of the Jewish Council, Piaseczno, 18 January 1941, pp. 11–11v.

⁸⁸ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 478.

⁸⁹ APW OO, AmO, 2279, Mayor Jan Gadomski to the Chairman of the Jewish Council in Otwock, Otwock, September 1940, p. 44.

the narrative of the mayor's responsibility for the resettlements and his cooperation in this matter with the head of the Polish Police station. Meanwhile, the decision on resettlement was made by Kreishauptmann Ruprecht, while the mayor, as mentioned in the quoted document, passed on the order dictated by him to the Judenrat – in other words, the mayor only delivered to Lesman the orders issued by the representative of the German administration. It should be emphasised that the Germans did not allow any mayor or other head of the town administration to shape population policy without their knowledge and consent.

The following excerpt demonstrates another misinterpretation of the documents: "The Skierniewice municipal treasury benefited from the fact that in 1940, a total of 35 Jewish shops were sold and the owners had to settle their debts."⁹⁰ Furthermore, the document referred to by the author – namely, the list of Jewish shops – is actually an appendix to another archival source. This is significant, yet Rossoliński-Liebe fails to mention it. The document as a whole indicates that a ghetto was established in Skierniewice on the orders of the German Kreishauptmann. As a result, Jews were forced to leave their shops, which were their source of livelihood, and move to the Jewish quarter. Their property, especially their shops, remained in the area not covered by the ghettoisation, that is outside of the ghetto. The liquidation of the shops was therefore a consequence of the creation of the ghetto, and not the result of the mayor's decision.⁹¹ The documents do not indicate whether the town treasury benefited from the sale of the shops and whether it was in fact the beneficiary of this process.

When writing about Węgrów, the author of the monograph states that at the beginning of the war, the number of Jews in the town increased due to resettlements from large Polish cities, such as Łódź, and from nearby towns. This passage clearly fails to indicate those giving the orders for these resettlements, namely the Germans.⁹² This is also evidenced by the author's statement regarding the Kreis Sokolow-Wengrow at the end of 1941: "their relocation from small to larger towns

⁹⁰ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 612.

⁹¹ APW OGM, collection Akta miasta Skierniewic (Files of the Town of Skierniewice, hereinafter AmSk), 659, Certificate concerning the appointment by the Municipal Council of Mr. Janusz Moczulski as technical manager of works related to the fencing of the Jewish quarter, n.p., 21 November 1940, p. 6; APW, OGM, AmSk, 659, List of sold Jewish shops, n.d., p. 7.

⁹² *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, pp. 500–501.

had to be organised.”⁹³ The author mentions the existence of seven ghettos in the Kreis Sokolow-Wengrow, but fails to add that they were established by an order of the Sokolow-Wengrow Kreishauptmann, as is clearly indicated in the document in which the German Deputy Kreishauptmann Dr. Hermann wrote that he “ordered the creation of seven residential quarters in the Kreis Sokolow-Wengrow.”⁹⁴ Unfortunately, the author does not quote this information – and a declaration at the same time – that it was the Kreishauptmann himself, and not the mayor who was behind establishment of ghettos. Rossoliński-Liebe goes even further and, referring to a document produced by the Sokolow-Wengrow Kreishauptmann, states that the mayor of Węgrów, Władysław Okulus, “together with other mayors in the Kreis and the Kreishauptmann” organised horse-drawn carts to transport the Jews to Węgrów and other towns. The proposed interpretation is not true, as the mayor and other Polish officials did not show any independent initiative in the matter of providing horse-drawn carts, but acted on the orders of the Kreishauptmann. Moreover, the author states that cart owners were paid for their services and some profited from this, while Kreishauptmann Ernst Gramß announced the most severe penalties would be imposed on those who charged usurious prices.⁹⁵ The author thus presents an interpretation according to which the bad mayor ordered the establishment of a ghetto, while the good Kreishauptmann prohibited usurious profits. According to Rossoliński-Liebe’s line of reasoning, it was the Kreishauptmann who ordered the horse-drawn carts to be provided, and the people obliged to do so did not perform this work on a voluntary basis. The information about the penalties does not indicate, as the author suggests, that the workers profited from this, but rather that the Kreishauptmann used reprimands to maintain discipline and enforce his orders. Nota bene, it should be noted that Ernst Gramß signed the document concerning the provision of horse-drawn carts, while the actual author was his deputy, Dr. Hermann. Therefore, the

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 502.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*; APS, collection Akta Miasta Węgrowa (Files of the Town of Węgrów, hereinafter AmW), 46, Kreishauptmann’s Office Internal Affairs Sub-section in Sokolów to all mayors and commune heads. Letter signed by Dr. Hermann, Sokolów, 9 December 1941, p. 45.

⁹⁵ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 502; APS, AmW, 46, Kreishauptmann’s Office Internal Affairs Sub-section in Sokolów to all mayors and commune heads. Letter signed by Dr. Hermann, Sokolów, 9 December 1941, p. 45.

German authorities were responsible for this. Rossoliński-Liebe also wrote that the resettlement of Jews to larger towns in the Kreis facilitated their subsequent deportation to extermination camps – this is true, but overlooking the role of the Germans can lead to false conclusions.

The author addresses the issue of mayors' attitudes towards the deportation of Jews to extermination camps – the “liquidation of ghettos” – which were extremely brutal operations during which the Germans killed thousands of Jews on the streets of towns and cities. Rossoliński-Liebe writes:

Polish mayors showed varied behaviour during the deportations and shootings. While some of them withdrew during those days so as not to have to witness the horrific scenes, others actively participated. In principle, the mayors could not shirk their responsibility because they had to carry out the orders they received from the occupiers and were therefore fully aware of what was happening in their towns. Unlike some Kreishauptmanns and ethnic German mayors, there is no record of Polish mayors murdering Jews with their own hands on the day of deportation. Why this did not happen – because they were not allowed to carry weapons, because the murder of a Jew was not within their jurisdiction, because such behaviour would have discredited them in the eyes of the local population – remains an open question. Many mayors were indifferent to the deportations and did nothing to prevent them because they had become accustomed to the persecution of Jews. This is evident, among other things, in Kulski's behaviour. When an Easter pogrom took place in Warsaw in April 1940, he was still outraged and therefore intervened with Leist. In contrast, he merely observed the deportations in the summer of 1942 passively and did not intervene. The motto of every working day was: “business as usual.”⁹⁶

The author's speculations go far beyond historical discourse and once again bear the hallmarks of journalism rather than a thoroughly researched scholarly work. Speculations such as “what if...” are completely inappropriate in this type of dissertation. Rossoliński-Liebe, however, engages in such deliberations and,

⁹⁶ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 693.

moreover, leaves room for a reflection of dubious value. He emphasises that, if the mayors had been armed, if killing Jews had been considered their duty, and if they had not realised that their anti-Jewish actions would discredit them in the eyes of the population, they could certainly have acted with brutality – and, by implication, kill Jews. This is not the end of the unfounded, untrue, hurtful, unfair, and completely unscholarly remarks in the above-quoted passage. Rossoliński-Liebe emphasises the indifferent attitude of the mayors, including Kulski, and at the same time embellishes it with a completely irrelevant and ahistorical comment: “business as usual.” This raises the following questions: on what basis does the author claim that Kulski’s attitude was indifferent? What was he supposed to do, how was he supposed to react? Was he supposed to forbid the Germans from carrying out executions in Warsaw? The author is even reversing the concepts. What “business” is he referring to, considering that it was the Germans who set up trusteeship offices and other administrative structures to seize property belonging to both Poles and Jews? The author probably intended to emphasise the mayor’s “profit-seeking” in his alleged anti-Jewish “policy.” The German occupiers do not appear in the quoted passage. Furthermore, the author did not attempt to conduct even a simple historical analysis, replacing it with vague journalistic language, full of understatements, bordering on alternative history.

The author’s manipulations can be seen also elsewhere. Let us quote another excerpt from the book:

After the Jews of Węgrów had been gathered in the market square on 22 September 1942 and many of them had already been shot, they were forced to march about 17 kilometres to the railway station in Sokołów Podlaski, from where they were transported by freight train to the Treblinka extermination camp. Due to the number of people gathered there – probably around 6,000 – transporting them was a complicated process that required the cooperation of the city administration. Since some of the Jews were unable to make the journey on foot, they were transported by horse-drawn carts organised by Mayor Okulus.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 695.

The text acknowledges the SS marching column, but the author does not elaborate on the goals of its operation.⁹⁸ The fundamental problem with this passage is the detached way in which the liquidation of the Węgrów ghetto is described. The author speaks of “some” unidentified perpetrators and “someone” who shot the Jews yet fails to mention that these crimes were carried out by units of the German police, SS, and German Gendarmerie. Such omissions concern basic historical facts. As a result of eliminating the perpetrators, the narrative loses its meaning, and those responsible for the crimes, although known, are deprived of their identity and become absent. By omitting reference to the Germans as perpetrators, the author more readily places blame on the mayor of Węgrów, Okulus, who provided carts under German instruction. In the author’s view, the coercive nature of these orders is of no real significance. Yet it must be emphasised that such activities were also undertaken in hundreds, if not thousands, of other localities where residents were compelled to provide such services. This demonstrates that such practices were routine under occupation and nullifies not only responsibility but, more importantly, guilt for these actions.

The above excerpt needs consideration from another perspective. On the one hand, the narrative depicts the perpetrators of the murder in an impersonal way – the Germans are not mentioned – while on the other hand, the mayor, a Pole identified by name, is presented with striking clarity, his actions described in detail, namely obliging residents to provide carts. On the one hand, we have a constructed character, on the other, the perpetrators. This technique makes the reader’s perception focus on the more distinct, memorable, tangible and familiar person. It should be noted that the author demonstrates inconsistency in discussing the actions of Mayor Okulus, as illustrated in the following excerpt from the monograph. “As mayor, Okulus could not avoid administrative tasks related to deportations and had to coordinate the town’s administration, although the details of his actions are unknown.”⁹⁹ As mayor, he had to obey the orders of the German Kreishauptmann and the commanders of the German units murdering Jews. However, since the author does not know what actions the mayor took at that time, what is the pur-

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 695.

pose of including such a sentence? Does the undeniable fact that Okulus was the mayor of Węgrów at the time mean that he is responsible for the crimes committed during the Holocaust? Once again, the author's analysis lacks scholarly rigour. He chooses speculation at the expense of source basis.

Similarly, the author pointed to Mayor Kulski's participation in the deportations of Jews. Here is an excerpt from the text concerning this issue:

During the deportations, which lasted two months in Warsaw, he [Kulski – author's remark] carried out his usual administrative duties. It is not known whether or how he or the city administration supported the liquidation squad. As in other cities, the city administration was most likely involved. However, since most of the city administration documents were destroyed, it is not possible to reconstruct these activities.¹⁰⁰

Without any archival evidence, the author once again speculates about the assistance given to liquidation squads, which, as in the case of Węgrów, remain anonymous – as if they were not German squads known to us.¹⁰¹ Let us quote another fragment, which was placed directly after the passage concerning deportations in Warsaw:

On 14 September 1942, ten days before the end of the deportations, he [Kulski – author's remark] informed his employees in a circular letter that a recreation centre had been opened for them in Dąbrowa Leśna near Warsaw, where they could spend holidays with their families at favourable prices from 20 September onwards.¹⁰²

Initially, this fragment appears insignificant and irrelevant. However, its placement immediately after the information about deportations is meant to indicate that Kulski not only failed to oppose the murder of Jews but also opened a holiday

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 710.

¹⁰¹ The author merely stated that the records from the time when the Germans were deporting Jews to the Treblinka extermination camp shows that Kulski was busy with collecting outstanding taxes from the Christian and Jewish population, securing housing for his subordinates, and repairing buildings destroyed by Soviet bombing on 20 August and 1 September (*ibid.*, pp. 710–711).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

facility at that time and was focused solely on his own employees. To illustrate the work of the town hall, almost any record of Kulski's official operations on various matters handled by the municipal administration could be cited. Why this should serve as evidence of collaboration in the Holocaust remains unclear.

In the subchapter entitled "The Great Redistribution II. After the Deportations," the author begins with the outline of the situation following the deportation of Jews from ghettos to extermination camps and later emphasises that, "in some cases, entire neighbourhoods became vacant, which largely resolved housing shortages in many areas."¹⁰³ As Rossoliński-Liebe underlines, the extermination of Jews even resulted in a housing surplus in some areas. At the same time, the main text states that many houses and flats left behind by murdered Jews were in poor condition due to the fact that ghettos were often located in poor neighbourhoods without sewage systems or modern infrastructure, and also because they had been inhabited for many months by people living in difficult hygienic and material conditions.¹⁰⁴

Referring to archival records, the author nevertheless attempts to prove that Poles benefited from the deportations. Let us quote an excerpt from the monograph:

On 19 August 1942, the day before the deportation of Jews from Otwock to Treblinka, the Otwock chairman of the Provisional Administration of Seized Properties, Dymitro Nesterenko, announced that the former "Aryan owners" of the houses in the ghetto should obtain a permit from the police to enter this quarter so that they could take possession of their houses again immediately after the deportation of the Jews. At the same time, Nesterenko warned all citizens of the town not to loot the ghetto after the deportations.¹⁰⁵

Let us note that the above passage refers to Poles taking possession of houses that belonged to them before the creation of the ghettos and not houses owned by Jews at the time of the creation of the Jewish quarter. Let us analyse the documents

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 640.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 701.

read by the author and check whether the archival materials confirm his narrative. Referring to a document issued by the Otwock chairman of the Provisional Administration of Seized Properties,¹⁰⁶ the author forgot to add that Jewish properties, pursuant to the order of the governor of the Distrikt Warschau, Dr. Ludwig Fischer, were transferred to the Provisional Administration of Seized Properties. Therefore, they did not fall into the hands of Poles – the town's residents. Dymitr Nesterenko only warned that Poles should not vandalise these properties. Once again, the author's interpretation diverges completely from the content of the document quoted.¹⁰⁷

The author also refers to Warsaw, where, after the deportation, some of the houses were to be occupied by Polish townspeople and peasants who, according to Rossoliński-Liebe, plundered and demolished them, which was, he adds, "a practice that developed into a problem, even a veritable plague, in almost all of the communities" examined in his study. As a result of this plundering and devastation, the houses appeared to be demolished and robbed.¹⁰⁸ In citing these arguments, the author referred to a manuscript of Kazimierz Reczyński's diary entitled "Okupacyjni nadzorcy Wydziału Kwaterunkowego Zarządu Miejskiego w Warszawie 1939–1944" (Warsaw Municipal Administration Housing Department Supervisors during the Occupation, 1939–1944), held in the State Archives in Warsaw. During the German occupation, Reczyński worked in the Housing Department of the Warsaw Municipal Administration. Let us quote an excerpt from his diary:

The houses and flats handed over to us were in dreadful condition. Roofs were partly damaged, leaving water stains on the ceilings of the upper floors. Doors had been kicked in, most windows were shattered, and water marks spread across floors and ceilings. The furniture lay broken, drawers ripped out, with holes in the walls and stoves. In many flats even the floorboards had been removed – evi-

¹⁰⁶ Which was a German institution.

¹⁰⁷ APW OO, AmO, 2279, Plenipotentiary of the Provisional Administration of Seized Properties in Otwock, D. Nesterenko to all Aryan property owners in the Jewish quarter of Otwock, Otwock, 12 August 1942, p. 162.

¹⁰⁸ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 640.

dence of treasure hunters at work. We wondered who it might have been. The entrances to the area were still heavily guarded by the German Gendarmerie and the Blue Police, so it was likely that members of these organisations vandalised the flats. Or perhaps it was the Jews themselves? Slashed pillows and duvets completed the scene of destruction [...]. On the ground lay heaps of broken porcelain – some of it very old and beautiful – together with shards of glass and crystal. Amidst this rubbish were paintings and photographs torn from the walls, piles of partly valuable books, and sheets and scrolls of parchment inscribed in ornate Hebrew script.¹⁰⁹

The manuscript's author, describing houses that the Warsaw ghetto "handed over" to the Warsaw Municipal Administration during its downsizing, stated that those who might have caused damage were German Gendarmerie, Polnische Polizei officers, or Jews unwilling to surrender their property to strangers, but not peasants or townspeople – contrary to Rossoliński-Lieb's false claim based on Reczyński. Once more, the actual content of the archival source was distorted to build a narrative at odds with the truth. The author fails to draw factual evidence from this or other sources, relying instead on baseless insinuations.

The author may well recognise that it was the Germans who stripped Jews of their property rights, dignity, and ultimately their lives, yet he assigns the blame to Poles – particularly Polish mayors. His account serves a single purpose: to shift the narrative of responsibility for actions against Jews as far as possible from German perpetration. Writing in this spirit, he uses phrases that do not directly point to the perpetrators, for example: "Jews had to live in ghettos, dying from disease and malnutrition." Although the author does not explicitly assign responsibility, his claim elsewhere that Poles were behind the establishment of the ghettos makes the implication clear: in his view, Polish mayors were responsible for the diseases and malnutrition suffered by Jews in the ghettos. They also laid the foundations of the Holocaust.

¹⁰⁹ APW, collection Zbiór rękopisów (Manuscript collection), 748, K. Reczyński, *Okupacyjni nadzorcy Wydziału Kwaterunkowego Zarządu Miejskiego w Warszawie 1939–1944*, Olsztyn, June 1980, pp. 6–7.

Conclusions

Chapter X of the monograph, entitled “Concluding Part,” includes a subchapter entitled “Mayors and the Holocaust,” in which the author sets out his conclusions regarding his alleged research on the attitude of Polish mayors towards the extermination of Jews. Let us quote the author’s words:

On the one hand, mayors and municipal administrations functioned as tools of the German occupation in carrying out the Holocaust. On the other, they pursued the persecution of Jews on their own initiative. The boundary between these two forms of persecution was blurred, as mayors exploited the framework of antiSemitic regulations to advance their own antiSemitic policies.¹¹⁰

The sources cited by the author, and especially their creative and manipulated interpretation, which in many places is riddled with lies, definitely do not confirm that Polish mayors persecuted Jews on their own initiative. Moreover, the author argues that the mayors not only applied antiSemitic legal provisions but also refined them to fit the needs of the urban centres they governed.¹¹¹ Rossoliński-Liebe mistakenly assumes that mayors had the right to choose whether to apply German regulations. The thesis that mayors created their own legislation, even though they were not authorised by the Germans to issue any legal regulations for residents (but only to create internal instructions and regulations for the needs of municipal administrations), demonstrates a complete lack of knowledge of the realities of the German occupation. His analysis of legal matters goes further: he contends that Hans Frank’s antiSemitic laws could be enforced only within municipalities, in other words, with the “help of legal authorities.” In the author’s view, it was mayors and officials who had to oversee whether Jews wore the Star of David, whether their shops were properly marked, and whether they left the ghettos.¹¹² The lack of context, including the lack of an objective description of German terror against Jews, causes the text to turn into elaborate journalism that is far removed from scholarly rules. Pointing to the monitoring of the activities of Jews by Polish may-

¹¹⁰ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 1019.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 1020.

ors, while omitting German pressure and brutally enforced regulations, as well as SS and Gestapo units entering the ghettos to beat, rob and spread brutal terror is a misrepresentation and an attempt to conceal the actions of the Germans and, at the same time, to divert our attention to the actions of “Polish town administrators.” The author’s omission of the German context leaves the reader with only Polish mayors and Jews in mind – as if there were no Germans in the ghettos.

Manipulations also take on a different character, for example in the “Concluding Part.” Quoting Hans Frank’s regulation of 15 October 1941, Rossoliński-Liebe wrote that the law “forbade Jews to leave the ghetto.”¹¹³ The legal act is genuine, but the author omitted to mention that the issuer indicated the possibility of applying the death penalty to Jews who left the ghetto, as well as to Poles who helped them by providing a hiding place.¹¹⁴ According to the author, Polish mayors undoubtedly participated in the Holocaust, and their most important contribution was the establishment of ghettos, in which they allegedly played a key role. Rossoliński-Liebe argues that not only were they obliged by the German authorities to establish ghettos, but they were also “able to suggest which city quarter they preferred and how large the ghetto should be.” He also points out that the Kreishauptmanns agreed to their proposals, which proved that they made independent decisions on matters concerning the Jewish quarter.¹¹⁵ The author’s reasoning is completely nonsensical. Namely, the mayors did not make decisions on their own, but rather the Kreishauptmanns commissioned them to prepare analyses concerning the city. The statement that the mayors made decisions independently is untrue. The Germans did not grant them any powers in this regard.

The final conclusions contain an opinion purporting to prove that Polish mayors were responsible for the spread of typhus due to the very fact of creating Jewish

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ A fragment of Article 1, §4b of the regulation read as follows: “(1) Jews who leave their designated quarter without authorisation are liable to the death penalty. Anyone who knowingly hides Jews shall be subject to the same penalty. (2) Inciters and helpers shall be punished in the same way as the perpetrator; an attempted act shall be punished as an accomplished act. In milder cases, heavy imprisonment or prison may be adjudicated.” (*Dritte Verordnung über Aufenthaltsbeschränkungen in Generalgouvernement – Trzecie Rozporządzenie o ograniczeniach pobytu w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie z dnia 15 października 1941 r.*, *Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement*, 1941, no. 99, 25 October, p. 595).

¹¹⁵ *Polnische Bürgermeister und der Holocaust*, p. 1022.

quarters in parts of towns with poor infrastructure and no sewage system. According to the author, this was to lead to the “mass extermination of Jews” prior to their deportation.¹¹⁶ The lack of context regarding the German occupiers once again deliberately leads to the omission of the fact that the decisions to establish ghettos were made by the Germans. Rossoliński-Liebe suggests that mayors tried to reduce the size of the ghettos so that the Christian population would benefit from this.¹¹⁷ In this case, too, the decision was made by the Germans, as evidenced by numerous documents concerning, for example, the creation of the so-called residual ghettos by the German administration.

Another example from the “Concluding Part,” where the conclusions do not correspond to the facts, is the following excerpt:

Germans and Poles often competed for Jewish property. [...] The occupiers were usually only able to acquire some of the most valuable items. Objects that Jews left behind in their homes before deportation were transported to halls or warehouses and stored there, if they had not already been stolen by Poles who looted the ghettos. [...] Items that were not stolen by Poles but ended up in warehouses were partly sent to Germany and partly sold [...] to the local population.¹¹⁸

The author distorts the reality of the German occupation by portraying it as a rivalry between Germans and Poles over Jewish property, thereby placing the occupiers on the same level as the occupied. In doing so, he not only omits the harsh realities of Polish suffering under brutal German rule – including widespread robbery – but also suggests that both nations engaged in some kind of rivalry as if they were equals. It is absolutely key to note that the author, perhaps unconsciously, emphasises a completely different attitude towards the Germans and the Poles, which is reflected in the language. When he writes about Poles who took property belonging to Jews, he uses the words “stole” or “looted.” When he refers to the same actions by Germans, he writes about “transporting” to warehouses and “storing.” The above passage suggests that the Germans took

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1026.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1023.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1025.

what the Poles did not loot, as if the Poles were the first to seize Jewish property, followed by the Germans, whereas in fact the Germans were front and centre as both the first and principal beneficiaries. Once more, the historical context is ignored, and the facts are reversed and manipulated. On the one hand, the author outlined the operations of the German terror apparatus, while on the other hand, he omitted the activities of specialised German agencies and organisational units responsible for the plundering of Polish and Jewish property and its transport to the Reich.

The book's most serious and central claim is that, during Operation "Reinhardt," Polish mayors participated in the persecution and isolation of Jews within the ghettos. While Rossoliński-Liebe rightly stresses – an undeniable truth – that they did not play a decisive role in the deportations, he nonetheless encapsulates their involvement in the liquidation of the ghettos with the following words:

They undertook a range of organisational tasks, including hiring horsedrawn carts, preparing meals for the liquidation squads, coordinating with firefighters and Polish police officers, and supplying workers to dig mass graves.¹¹⁹

Certainly, all these secondary and tertiary actions did indeed depend on the mayors, but they did not "undertake" these activities on their own initiative; rather, they carried out orders imposed on them by the German occupiers and implemented their directives. I would like to emphasise that the word "undertook" used by the author misrepresents the actions that the Germans obliged the mayors to perform. In the next part of the argument, the author emphasises that "the most important contribution of the mayors in Operation "Reinhardt" was the long-term preparation of this mass crime."¹²⁰ The author seeks to persuade the reader that Polish mayors bore responsibility for concentrating Jews in smaller ghettos, implying that their actions paved the way for the subsequent transfer of the Jewish population to larger urban centres and, ultimately, for the execution of Operation "Reinhardt" – the systematic murder of these people. Concluding the

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1027–1028.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

topic of the extermination of Jews, Rossoliński-Liebe absurdly states that without their participation, Operation “Reinhardt,” namely the extermination, shootings and deportations, could not have been conducted.¹²¹

One of the author’s conclusions concerns national historiographies. As he points out, since the 1990s, this trend has been popular in Germany, among other places, where its representatives “have developed a selective, national narrative of the Holocaust in which mayors, local authorities, local offenders and many other actors in occupied countries have been either completely ignored or only marginally examined.” The author criticised also the narrative of Polish and other “national” historians, pointing out that the narrative of the Holocaust had been “reduced” to attributing the decision to perpetrate it to the actions of the Germans.¹²² Let us note that the author has already presented the same conclusion – specifically concerning the departure from German national historiography – in the introduction,¹²³ so the purpose of its repetition in the final section is hard to understand.

Rossoliński-Liebe states that by departing from what he describes as “nationalist historical narratives,” he has moved closer to those that are much closer to the truth, and that his work is therefore more objective. Nothing could be further from the truth. The author fits perfectly into the political manipulations, seeking to “spill” part of the responsibility from the Germans to the Polish mayors and, what is more, to Polish society of the World War II era. In this way, he creates a false image of the Holocaust.

The “Schlussteil” (Concluding Part) of Rossoliński-Liebe’s work brings together numerous arguments aimed at persuading readers that Polish mayors in towns of the GG under German occupation shared responsibility for the extermination of Jews. In his book, the author does not shy away from misrepresentations, such as distorting the content of documents and falsifying facts, contrary to what archival sources confirm. The method used in the book – citing authentic documents while contradicting their actual content – is clear academic malpractice. The deliberate mixing of genuine data with falsehoods is difficult for readers to detect and requires a confrontation of the author’s narrative with archival materials.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 1017.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Importantly, the author depicts the German occupation in a way that relegates the Germans as occupiers to the background, as shown by the absence of context and description of their actions – from September 1939, through the resettlement of Poles and Jews from territories annexed to the Reich, the terror against Jews including the creation of Judenrats and ghettos, and the role of the administration and German security forces in the liquidation of ghettos and the deportation of Jews. Furthermore, Polish mayors are entangled in the world artificially constructed by the author – the supposed reality of the German occupation in which the Germans are given only a limited role – where, in Rossoliński-Liebe's narrative, they are falsely elevated to equal partners of the Germans, likewise depicted as participants in the Holocaust. The author writes: "the involvement of Polish mayors in the Shoah constitutes a major contribution to this enormous crime."¹²⁴

In summary, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe's book, while creating the appearances of scholarly rigour, does not adhere to the principles of historical research. One gets the impression that it aims to convince the scholarly world that local officials in the GG, especially Polish mayors, were jointly responsible for the Holocaust – from as early as 1939 – while the role of the Germans, according to the author, was marginal.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1017.

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DOMINIK FLISIAK, *ANTYŻYDOWSKA ZBRODNIA
W PRZEDBORZU. PYTANIA, ŹRÓDŁA, ODPOWIEDZI*
(INVESTIGATING THE ANTI-JEWISH CRIME IN
PRZEDBÓRZ: QUESTIONS RAISED, SOURCES EXAMINED,
ANSWERS PROPOSED), CHRZAN, 2024, 234 PP.

The crime in Przedbórz has already received considerable attention, though it has not been sufficiently examined in depth.¹ Its impact is not determined by the number and quality of published materials, but rather by public perception. In May 1945, in a small town in the Końskie County, a cruel crime was committed

¹ Polemics surrounding the murder in Przedbórz were conducted in the local press: <https://radomszczanska.pl/arttykul/o-mordzie-zydow-w-przedborzu-odpowiadam-lukaszowi-czuryllo-i-przypominam-to-oddzial-zbika-n706340> (accessed 7 May 2025); <https://radomsko.naszemiasto.pl/przedborz-list-mieszkanca-w-sprawie-mordu-na-zydach-w/ar/c1-8002921> (accessed 8 May 2025). Reports from meetings with Leszek Żebrowski, historian specialising in the National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*, NSZ), also offer insight into his interpretive perspective: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBK7cmlvMwY>; <https://radomszczanska.pl/arttykul/leszek-zebrowski-w-przedborzu-kto-jest-winnym-morderstw-na-zydach-n710602> (accessed 7 May 2025).

against at least six people of Jewish nationality (the authors disagree on the number of victims – the most commonly cited figure is eight victims).² The perpetrators of this crime were linked, in a manner that has not been fully explained, both to the new authorities that were in the process of establishing themselves, in this case the County Public Security Department (*Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, PUBP), and to soldiers of the anti-communist underground stationed nearby (a group of the National Armed Forces under the command of Władysław Kołaciński “Żbik” [Wild Cat]). The subject matter of Dominik Flisiak’s book thus fits into the historical and ideological debates concerning Polish anti-Semitism and the controversy surrounding the activities of the organisation mentioned above. The media-driven intensity and emotional undertones surrounding the judgments appear to play a significant role in shaping the discourse on this subject. On the one hand, these judgments serve to debunk the history of the anti-communist underground soldiers, and to emphasise and document the thesis of their anti-Semitism. On the other hand, apologists for the cursed soldiers, especially those from the nationalist movement, are fighting, in their opinion, to defend the good name of the heroes who have been unjustly accused. It is not the reviewer’s task to enter into this dispute, let alone make categorical assertions. The question is whether the author of a new comprehensive publication on this subject brings more knowledge to this dispute.

Dominik Flisiak is a researcher focusing on the political life of the Jewish minority in Poland and on Polish-Jewish relations in the 20th century. This time, he decided to examine these relations from the vantage point of one specific and extremely dramatic event.

The book is divided into seven chapters, each accompanied by an appendix featuring a curated selection of documents, introduced and contextualised through detailed commentary. Of these chapters, four engage directly with the central theme reflected in the book’s title.

Firstly, it should be noted that the scope of issues discussed in the book exceeds the subject matter suggested in the title. This raises the first question. A significant

² A list of the names of the murdered Jews was published by regional historian Wojciech Zawadzki. He reports nine victims of the crime (W. Zawadzki, *Imienna lista ofiar m. Przedborza w II wojnie światowej*, Przedbórz–Bydgoszcz, 2012, pp. 30–31).

part of the publication is devoted to documents from the period chronologically preceding the events described. They concern the fate of the Jews of Przedbórz before and during World War II. Are they really that necessary? If the author wanted to provide background information on the events, he could have done so descriptively by referring to existing literature. Meanwhile, in a publication that is supposed to concern a single event from 1945, we find sources that are completely unrelated to the matter and even precede it by over a dozen years.³ The title and overarching concept of the book might have benefited from a different formulation, as they, in their current form, fall short of supporting the content effectively.

The structure of the entire publication also raises certain objections. In chronologically divided chapters, the author first provides a brief description and then, at the end, a collection of selected documents. In part, this seems justified. However, this would be the case if the author justified his choice each time and provided comprehensive commentary on the published sources. Unfortunately, in the descriptive part, Dominik Flisiak limits himself to summarising the selected material and does not justify his selection. I also find it quite perplexing that the descriptive sections include lengthy excerpts from documents whose full texts appear just a few pages later.

However, the most significant shortcoming of the work lies in its failure to provide a thorough assessment of the documents' reliability, as well as a critical comparison of their content that would allow for a conclusive, synthesizing commentary. In other words, the interpretative layer is insufficient and of a low standard. As previously noted, the events in Przedbórz remain emotionally charged and are interpreted in markedly different ways. The author of the recent publication on the topic, while citing (albeit rather selectively)⁴ arguments from both sides of the debate and reproducing documents already familiar to other scholars, offers no substantive new insights. Nor does the work advance our understanding of the crime's circumstances – aside, perhaps, from implicitly aligning with those who attribute the crime to anti-Semitism rather than opportunistic looting. Where such

³ D. Flisiak, *Antyżydowska zbrodnia w Przedborzu. Pytania, źródła, odpowiedzi*, Chrzan, 2024, pp. 47–58.

⁴ The author does not, for example, engage in polemics with Leszek Żebrowski's opinions contained in the introduction to Władysław Kołaciński's memoirs or with Żebrowski's statements defending "Żbik's" position, which are available on the Internet.

an analysis should be found, the phrase “it should be emphasised...” appears time and again, followed by information about various judgments and interpretations of the facts described. This can, of course, be seen as an expression of a certain objectivity and a resignation from pushing one’s own version of events. However, it is a serious flaw in the publication in question. The author’s assessment therefore boils down to the recognition that the crime was “anti-Jewish” in nature, with the justification not being based on the content of the documents cited and their analysis, but on, for example, the opinions of other authors or – which is a bizarre move – quotations from the nationalist press from the period of the German occupation illustrating the nationalist camp’s anti-Semitism. The second fairly clear opinion, which can be considered the author’s conclusion, is that Kazimierz Jezierski bears the greatest responsibility for the crime. In both cases, the assessments appear to be justified – supported by the attached documents – but it remains unclear whether the author substantiates them adequately.⁵ In the latter case, the author does not explain how the conclusion is derived from the content of the documents cited.

In my opinion, a rather perfunctory analysis of the materials presented also leads to errors and uncritical acceptance of the information contained in the documents. Jezierski was most likely never a member of the Polish Underground Army (*Konspiracyjne Wojsko Polskie*, KWP), as Flisiak claims, citing ministerial sources. After his arrest, as a man devoid of any principles, he disclosed the identities of KWP members from Przedbórz to the Security Department (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, UB) functionaries. This evokes the compelling issue of the post-war impunity of the perpetrators of the Przedbórz crime – an aspect the author leaves undeveloped and, consequently, misses the opportunity to explore a deeply disturbing and significant phenomenon. Paradoxically, all Jezierski had to do to avoid responsibility was to reveal his (questionable, as I have already mentioned) activity in the anti-communist underground to the amnesty commission. He needed his membership in the KWP to disclose it during the amnesty and take

⁵ Other researchers also draw attention to the responsibility of these two persons. R. Wnuk and S. Poleszak, *Niezlomni czy realiści? Polskie podziemie antykomunistyczne bez patosu*, Cracow, 2024, p. 762.

advantage of it, which in turn protected him from punishment for the crimes he had committed, which he had totally concealed. Not only was the court not very inquisitive in explaining them, but it even argued that Jezierski was not obliged to disclose them. Needless to add, Jezierski – quite naturally – could not and did not commit any criminal acts in the KWP mentioned above. These circumstances and his connections with the then authorities in Przedbórz contributed to the fact that he was able to completely evade the consequences, especially since he was immediately recruited as an informant for the Public Security Department (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, UBP). The underground activity for which others paid the highest price became, for Jezierski (albeit this activity was fictitious in his case), a gateway to taking advantage of the amnesty and avoiding responsibility for the crimes he had committed! Unfortunately, “several years of work” on the book (as the author claims) did not suffice for the formulation of what I consider to be fairly obvious judgments.

The second theme, also unjustly omitted by the author (at least in his commentary), concerns the passivity of the Security Service and Citizens’ Militia functionaries during the events described, which is linked to the impunity of the Przedbórz criminals. The accounts and court testimonies reveal the perpetrators’ certainty that no one would interfere with them while they were committing the murders. Such signals appear in the statements of Edmund Majchrowski, who was affiliated with the District Public Security Department (*Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, PUBP) and ranked second in terms of involvement in the crime, after Kędziński. It would have been a strange paradox if the PUBP officers had participated in a crime committed by representatives of the national underground, who were most hated by the authorities. This raises another issue and leaves unanswered the question of the extent to which the perpetrators were associated with or inspired by the NSZ. The book even raises the question of Władysław Kołaciński “Żbik’s” responsibility for the crime described. In fact, however, the only answer is a quote from the latter’s memoirs, in which he provides false information about the number of Jews in Przedbórz in May 1945. Kołaciński, without denying the murder itself, says that there were as many as 300 of them, and that three of them were killed as part of a sentence for their cooperation with

the communist apparatus of terror.⁶ In this case, Flisiak narrows his assessment of Kołaciński's attitude to questioning the latter's credibility in connection with the described lie. This is clearly not enough to conclude that someone is guilty. If the author wanted to undermine Kołaciński's version, he could have asked a fairly simple and obvious question: how can we talk about the execution of a "civilised" sentence if, as the published documents show, it was accompanied by common looting and violence?

Contrary to appearances, the number and consistency of the preserved accounts leave little to be explained regarding the course of the Przedbórz tragedy. Nonetheless, the motivations and intentions of the killers, as well as an analysis of the circumstances that allowed such a cruel crime to occur and go unpunished, may be the subject of consideration and discussion. For example, why was there no intervention by the functionaries of the then-ruling apparatus?

The book fails to substantiate the claim that anti-Semitic sentiments influenced the crime in question. Moreover, such an assessment is inherently flawed when the author bases their account of the partisan group's activities not on preserved archival documents, but rather on press publications from nationalist sources – materials that may well have been unknown to the participants of the events described. The author's task should not be to speculate on the alleged anti-Semitic views of the "Żbik" group, but to engage with them strictly through the lens of the available evidence. The question of whether the murder was committed for robbery or anti-Semitic reasons is, in my opinion, misguided, as the motives for the crime undoubtedly had both aspects. It seems more important to explain why it was possible in the first place. I would expect an insightful author to answer this question. Instead, we are presented with a technically competent (though strangely structured) edition of documents, whose greatest asset is that it brings together in one place most of the accounts of the events in question, which is supposed to enable the reader to form their own opinion about the crime described.

The author appears to have started with more ambitious intentions yet ultimately fell short – abandoning the effort midway and failing to fully harness the potential of the gathered material. Nevertheless, the documents and testimonies included

⁶ W. Kołaciński, „Żbik”. *Między młotem a swastyką*, ed. L. Żebrowski, Warsaw, 2018, p. 281.

offer a compelling glimpse into the unique realities of a small town at the close of the war, and the lives of those who played a pivotal role in shaping them. For people like Jezierski and Majchrowski, who were unscrupulous and hungry for influence and tangible benefits, there were two ways to achieve this goal. One was through the repressive apparatus of the time and cooperation with the communist authorities. The other was through the underground soldiers stationed nearby, with their determination and strength. In Przedbórz, it turned out that it was possible to be in both places at the same time, or at least to manoeuvre in such a way as to gain certain influence from both sources. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir⁷ characterised the phenomenon as a “mafia-like system of exchange of services, linking individuals across political divides”⁸ – and it is hard to disagree with her.

Returning to the structure of the work and the range of topics covered, one more surprising move should be pointed out. The last chapter of the book is devoted to Dr. Juliusz Kamiński. He was a doctor of Jewish origin who, after escaping from the Przedbórz ghetto, found himself in the “Żbik” unit, where he remained until the end of the war. After the war, he converted to Catholicism and was a well-known and respected citizen of the town.

The description of his fate within the unit is the subject of controversy and divergent interpretations. On the one hand, the presence of a Jewish doctor within the National Armed Forces is cited as evidence of the absence of prejudice among Kołaciński’s subordinates. On the other hand, surviving testimonies reveal the deep fear that gripped Kamiński, who reportedly never left Żbik’s side out of concern for his own safety. Commenting on his post-war trajectory, Tokarska-Bakir observed that “his loyalty to his comrades-in-arms implicated in the pogrom proved stronger than his solidarity with the victims.”⁹ Such a radical assessment is debatable, to say the least, and Wojciech Zawadzki has published an interesting polemic on this point of view.¹⁰ Without going into the details of the dispute, it is worth noting that the author of *Antyżydowska zbrodnia* refrains from commenting on Tokarska-

⁷ J. Tokarska-Bakir, “Terror w Przedborzu, noc z 26 na 27 V 1945 r.,” in *Bracia miesiące. Studia z antropologii historycznej Polski 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 2021, pp. 339–379.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 370–371.

¹⁰ <https://psbprzedborz.pl/pogrom-terror-czyli-mord/> (accessed 5 December 2024).

-Bakir's assessment and completely ignores Zawadzki's polemic. The same applies to the discussion that appeared a few years ago in *Gazeta Radomszczańska* on the subject of the Przedbórz massacre.¹¹ It is strange, given that Dominik Flisiak was also invited to comment on the subject and was interviewed by the periodical mentioned above.¹² Flisiak once more offers only a cursory reference to the events in question, without addressing the substantive debates related to the massacre.

The publication of a new book on a subject that has not been sufficiently covered so far would suggest that its author has something essential to add and is attempting to reinterpret the sources cited. Is this really the case? In my opinion, unfortunately, not. The author includes selected documents, but in his opinions and assessments, he uses the findings and opinions of other researchers.¹³ It is also unfortunate that he opts to engage with this material in such a selective way. While the book presents itself as honest and methodologically sound, it ultimately leaves the reader with a sense of dissatisfaction and ambivalence. In terms of interpretation, it adds little to the existing body of knowledge. Referring to the subtitle – *Questions Raised, Sources Examined, Answers Proposed* – one might say that Flisiak's work does indeed pose questions and present sources, but the answers, when proposed, feel superficial, often disconnected from the evidence and not clearly grounded in the material provided.

¹¹ <https://radomszczanska.pl/artukul/mord-w-przedborzu-do-rachunku-sumienia-brygady-swietokrzyskiej-przypominamy-n711646> (accessed 5 December 2024).

¹² <https://radomszczanska.pl/artukul/okreslam-to-mianem-antyzydowskiej-n896760> (accessed 5 December 2024).

¹³ Cf. M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944–1947*, trans. A. Madej, Warsaw, 2006.

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REV. TADEUSZ KRAHEL, *RATOWANIE ŻYDÓW PRZEZ
DUCHOWIEŃSTWO KATOLICKIE ARCHIDIECEZJI WILEŃSKIEJ
W CZASIE OKUPACJI NIEMIECKIEJ (1941–1944)* (THE RESCUE
OF JEWS BY THE CATHOLIC CLERGY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF VILNIUS DURING THE GERMAN OCCUPATION, 1941–1944),
BIAŁYSTOK, 2024, 500 PP.

The involvement of the Catholic clergy in the rescue of Jews under German occupation in pre-war Polish lands is still an under-researched area. An attempt to shed light on this issue has been made in the latest publication, *Ratowanie Żydów przez duchowieństwo katolickie archidiecezji wileńskiej w czasie okupacji niemieckiej (1941–1944)* (The Rescue of Jews by the Catholic Clergy of the Archdiocese of Vilnius During the German Occupation, 1941–1944). The author, Rev. Tadeusz Krahel, Doctor of Theology and long-time lecturer at the Archdiocesan Higher Seminary in Białystok, has dedicated the majority of his scholarly career to researching the history of the Diocese, and later the Archdiocese, of Vilnius (at the time Wilno). His body of work includes several monographs, such as *Mar-*

tyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945 (The Martyrdom of the Clergy of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, 1939–1945),¹ *Przez więzienia i obozy do kapłaństwa. Wojenne losy alumnów Seminarium Duchownego w Wilnie* (Through Prisons and Camps to Priesthood: The Wartime Fate of Students of the Seminary in Vilnius),² and *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej. Studia i szkice* (The Archdiocese of Vilnius During World War II: Studies and Sketches).³ He has also authored biographical studies on Blessed Revs. Henryk Hlebowicz,⁴ Stanisław Pyrtek,⁵ and Mieczysław Bohatkiewicz,⁶ as well as numerous articles on the history of the Catholic Church and the rescue of Jews – among them *Uwięzienia i zsyłki duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej w latach 1944–1952* (Imprisonment and Deportation of the Clergy of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, 1944–1952).⁷ Additionally, he compiled and edited anthologies of poetic prayers that incorporate themes associated with the veneration of Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn.⁸ His latest publication is therefore not thematically different from his other work and, as the author himself emphasises, is the result of several decades of research.

The book consists of three parts, preceded by a foreword by Prof. Jan Żaryn and an introduction. At the end, there is a short summary containing reflections on the research prospects in the field of the issue in question, a bibliography, as well as a list of abbreviations (only the most important ones), and an index of people and places. The publication has certain features of a biographical dictionary, although, as the author himself points out, the biographies are not dictionary-like but are more like descriptions of cases of providing aid to Jews. Each of them is topped off with a list of archival materials and studies used. Unfortunately, as Rev. Krahel himself admitted, he did not make direct use of the most important archives in the collections of the Jewish Historical Institute and Yad Vashem. The testimonies held

¹ T. Krahel, *Martyrologia duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej 1939–1945*, Białystok, 2017.

² T. Krahel, *Przez więzienia i obozy do kapłaństwa. Wojenne losy alumnów Seminarium Duchownego w Wilnie*, Białystok, 2015.

³ T. Krahel, *Archidiecezja wileńska w latach II wojny światowej. Studia i szkice*, Białystok, 2014.

⁴ T. Krahel, *Błogosławiony Henryk Hlebowicz: kapłan – męczennik*, Białystok, 1999.

⁵ T. Krahel, *Błogosławiony ksiądz Stanisław Pyrtek*, Włocławek, 2001.

⁶ T. Krahel, *Błogosławiony ksiądz Mieczysław Bohatkiewicz*, Włocławek, 2001.

⁷ T. Krahel, "Uwięzienia i zsyłki duchowieństwa archidiecezji wileńskiej w latach 1944–1952," in *Z dziejów represji sowieckich wobec Polaków w latach 1937–1952. Białoruś, Litwa, ziemie północno-wschodniej Polski*, ed. J.J. Milewski, Białystok, 2017.

⁸ *Poezja ostrobramska: modlitwa poetycka*, ed. T. Krahel, Białystok, 2002.

in these two centres are cited through a reference to Ryszard Tyndorf's publication.⁹ While it is understandable that research in Israel may currently be difficult to carry out for many reasons, conducting research at the Jewish Historical Institute does not pose any problems and, as far as possible, should be carried out first.

In the first part, consisting of 15 pages and entitled "Archidiecezja wileńska w czasie II wojny światowej" (The Archdiocese of Vilnius during World War II), the author briefly presents the fate of the archdiocese before 1939, when it covered the entire Wilno Voivodeship, the western and northern parts of the Nowogródek Voivodeship, the counties of Grodno, Wołkowysk, Sokółka, and the central and eastern parts of the Białystok County of the Białystok Voivodeship (a map of the archdiocese is included in the publication to facilitate locating places). It also presents statistical data based on population censuses conducted by parish priests during pastoral visits in 1938. According to these data, 1,496,212 Catholics lived in the archdiocese during the administration of Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski. There were 1,030,000 other residents of different faiths, of whom approximately 285,000 were Jews. This chapter also provides basic information on the division of the archdiocese following the outbreak of World War II, the establishment of new administrative authorities, and the situation of priests during the Soviet occupation, under Lithuanian rule, and during the German occupation.

The 37-page second part, entitled "Ratowanie Żydów przez księży archidiecezji wileńskiej" (The Rescue of Jews by Priests of the Archdiocese of Vilnius), offers a brief overview of the pre-war history of Jews and their wartime experiences, in addition to accounts of aid provided. The author describes the participation of Jews in anti-Polish demonstrations, the creation of welcome gates for the Red Army, and their participation in Soviet authorities in 1939–1941. Rev. Krahel also discusses Jewish efforts to assist the Polish clergy, referencing, among other cases, an example of this attitude in Mołodeczno. Mordechaj Pozner,¹⁰ who worked in a slaughterhouse during the Soviet occupation, intervened on behalf of Rev.

⁹ R. Tyndorf, *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy. The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers*, Lublin, 2023.

¹⁰ The author does not disclose the personal details of the Jew who rescued the priest. Cf. Ch. Shafran, *At the Onset of the War in Molodeczno*, http://www.eilatgordinlevitan.com/maladzyechna/mal_pages/m_stories_onset.html (accessed 27 May 2025).

Bolesław Łozowski, the local parish priest who had been arrested by local communists for anti-Soviet propaganda, which ultimately led to the priest's release.¹¹ The author then focuses on the situation of Jews living in the archdiocese at the time of the German Reich's attack on the USSR and at the beginning of the German occupation.

The inclusion of a subchapter on examples of Jews being rescued in this part of the book raises doubts, as some of the content is almost identical to that found in part three, which presents figures of clergymen. This applies, for example, to the case of Rev. Stanisław Janczaruk.¹² However, this is not the only comment that comes to mind when reading this chapter. It is important to critically examine the unthinking repetition of claims that, following the Soviet capture of Grodno in 1939, prisoners in the local jail were fed human flesh, and that soap was produced from the bodies of those killed. Similar myths circulated about the Germans, yet there is no credible evidence indicating that the Soviet repressive apparatus ever engaged in such acts.¹³

The author also examines whether any priests acted against Jews and cites a particularly disturbing account from Supraśl, where a local priest allegedly incited the Polish population against the Jewish community, leading to their expulsion and drowning in a nearby river. The account, reportedly recorded by the Germans for propaganda purposes, was given by Mendel Mielnicki, the son of an NKVD officer. The author deems this testimony unreliable due to Mielnicki's background. However, this unequivocal dismissal appears premature, and the matter clearly warrants further research.¹⁴

The third and most extensive part, comprising 324 pages, consists of 144 descriptions of cases of priests and monks who rescued Jews in the Archdiocese of Wilno. Some of them are accompanied by photographs and other iconographic material. Among those described, there are several persons whose presence may raise questions, as discussed below.

¹¹ There are more similar examples, see T. Krahel, *Ratowanie Żydów przez duchowieństwo katolickie archidiecezji wileńskiej w czasie okupacji niemieckiej (1941–1944)*, Białystok, 2024, pp. 48–50.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 181.

¹³ M. Bonek, *Ludzie na mydło. Mit, w który uwierzyliśmy*, Cracow, 2023.

¹⁴ T. Krahel, *Ratowanie Żydów*, pp. 68ff.

In presenting Rev. Stanisław Janczaruk, the author recounts an incident in Nowy Dwór (Białystok Voivodeship), in which German forces arrested four individuals, allegedly affiliated with Soviet authorities. The author prematurely assumes that some of them were Jewish. According to the available testimony, the priest intervened and successfully persuaded the officer to abandon the execution. While this act was undeniably courageous and carried the risk of death, there is no evidence confirming that any of the detainees were Jewish. Furthermore, the assumption that they were Soviet officials is also premature, as the sources do not explicitly support it. The ethnic makeup of the Soviet repressive apparatus was diverse and included Poles as well. The case of Rev. Stanisław Kuderewski also remains questionable. While he is acknowledged for commending the Milkiewicz family from Wierkowszczyzna (Wilno Voivodeship) for sheltering a Jew, there is no evidence of him providing any additional aid or engaging in efforts to rescue other members of the Jewish faith. Similar doubts arise regarding the classification of certain individuals as opponents of the extermination of Jews – specifically, Rev. Alfonsas Lipnickas Lipniūnas and Rev. Bolesław Moczulski. It is important to clarify that Rev. Lipniūnas was detained not for resisting the extermination itself, but for urging Lithuanians not to enlist in the German army, as noted by the author. As for Rev. Moczulski, Rev. Krahel suggests he may have denounced the killing of Jews and the plundering of their property, though the exact context of this alleged condemnation remains unclear. Given these ambiguities, categorising these clergymen as rescuers of Jews appears to lack sufficient justification.

Regrettably, the reviewed publication contains additional cases that raise concerns. The account of Rev. Karol Lubiańczyk's aid is based on a testimony that itself references other testimonies, in which "the thread of hiding local Jews recurs."¹⁵ Because this evidence is indirect, its reliability remains doubtful, which makes it difficult to justify the inclusion of this particular priest among those recognised as rescuers of Jews. Another example involves Rev. Adam Sawicki. Although no source verifies his participation in aid-related efforts, the author claims that "it can be assumed that Rev. Sawicki, as a close associate of Archbishop Jędrzejowski,

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

took part in his patriotic activity and in the rescue of Jews.”¹⁶ In another instance, Rev. Józef Sawicki baptised a Jewish man in a prison cell, although it is unclear what purpose this was supposed to serve. We can assume it may have been a form of spiritual assistance, although there is no connection between this fact and the case of survival.

In the descriptions of cases of aid provided by priests and monks, there are also certain themes concerning the fate of the clergy themselves, which seem implausible or are discussed imprecisely. For example, Rev. Czesław Matusiewicz – in addition to helping Jews – was also very active as a pastor in parishes in the north-eastern part of the Archdiocese of Wilno. According to the author, “during the German occupation, Rev. Matusiewicz travelled for pastoral purposes to the Soviet Union, just beyond the pre-war border of Poland.”¹⁷ Unfortunately, he does not explain how this was possible, since although the Germans did issue passes to cross the border with the USSR to members of separated families until 1941, it is improbable that the Soviets would allow the same for a Polish priest. It therefore appears, though the author does not clarify this, that it concerned the care of other parishes following the outbreak of the German-Soviet war and the eastward shift of the front line. In his biography of Father Michał Dionizy Klimczak, Rev. Krahel, in turn, describes the execution of the Franciscan along with several dozen others, noting that “policemen¹⁸ and German military police witnessed the event and later recounted it to the local population with tears in their eyes.”¹⁹ The murder itself is indisputable, but questions arise about the perpetrators’ reaction. Why would they discuss it with the local population and emphasise their regret for the crime they had committed? These issues have not been clarified.

It should also be noted that the author erroneously identifies the German repressions of 1942 – targeting, among others, priests and aimed at the physical annihilation of the Polish intelligentsia – as the *Polenaktion*. While such an operation did occur, it took place in 1938 and concerned Polish Jews residing in the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹⁸ When quoting the witness’s statement, the author does not specify which police force is being referred to.

¹⁹ As cited in *ibid.*, p. 194.

German Reich.²⁰ *Intelligenzaktion*, on the other hand, essentially ended in 1940. Another significant mistake is that one of the biographies mentions *Sonderaktion* from July 1943, but this term is not used as a proper name and simply means “a special operation.”

In addition to the foregoing comments, some observations on the editing are in order. The first thing that catches the eye is the incorrect page numbering in the table of contents, which does not correspond to that in the publication (there is a shift of two pages forward). Minor issues include: the names of the characters have been swapped (p. 47); the Soviet deportation took place in February 1940, not in February 1941 (p. 121); in the biography of Rev. Stanisław Żuk, the date of death in the header is 1987, while in the biography itself it is 1983; the biographical note on Rev. Jerzy Żamejć states that he issued a false baptism certificate to Ewa Szaldrowska, while the caption under the photograph of this document states that it was “probably” issued by Rev. Żamejć (pp. 386ff.). There are also certain stylistic lapses, such as: “because of a silly indiscretion” (p. 127), “killed by a bomb during the war front on 5 August 1944” (p. 148), and “he described the testimony beautifully” (p. 77). Another drawback is the repetition of testimony fragments and event descriptions, due to the fact that the same clergymen were sometimes involved in multiple rescue cases (for example, in the biographical notes on Rev. Adolf ŚnieżkaBłocki and Władysław Potocki). Such situations should be addressed through cross-references.

Despite certain doubts, shortcomings, and errors, it is important to recognise the significant effort Rev. Krahel devoted to preparing this study. Its value is heightened by its focus on the Eastern Borderlands – a region still underrepresented in research on aid efforts. The book sheds light on the stories of clergy members, not only prominent figures like Rev. Henryk Hlebowicz and Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski, but especially those whose roles in aiding Jews have been rarely acknowledged or entirely overlooked. This publication is the result of decades of research on the Archdiocese of Wilno, which Rev. Krahel has pursued since the 1970s. His long-term commitment allowed him to reach direct witnesses of events from 1939 to 1945, lending the work exceptional historical value. As such, it serves as a meaningful resource for broader studies on aid.

²⁰ J. Tomaszewski, *Preludium Zagłady. Wygnanie Żydów polskich z Niemiec w 1938 r.*, Warsaw, 1998.



CHRONICLES

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INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE, BRANCH IN
RZESZÓW: SEVENTEENTH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS DEVOTED
TO THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COMMEMORATION
IN MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST IN
THE PODKARPACIE REGION (20–30 JANUARY 2025). REPORT

Every year on 27 January, we commemorate the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, established on 1 November 2005 by the UN General Assembly to honour the memory of Jews murdered by the Germans during World War II. The date is not accidental – on that day in 1945, Red Army troops entered KL Auschwitz, the largest German concentration and extermination camp. During the four years of the camp's operation, the Germans killed at least 1.1 million people there, including about 1 million Jews, over 70,000 Poles, 21,000 Roma and Sinti, and over 25,000 prisoners of other nationalities, 15,000 of whom were Soviet prisoners of war.¹ Today, it remains one

¹ See the total number of people killed in Auschwitz by nationality or category of deportees at <https://www.auschwitz.org/historia/liczba-ofiar/liczba-zamordowanych/> (accessed 3 February 2025).

of the most important Holocaust memorial sites. Commemorations of this day are held around the world.

As every year, the central national commemorative events for the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust were held at the site of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp. The ceremony began in a tent set up in front of the main gate, where approximately 3,000 people gathered. It was attended by former prisoners who survived the ordeal of this place of torment, as well as by over 60 delegations from various countries and institutions, led by the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, and his spouse, Agata Kornhauser-Duda. Among the guests were kings, presidents, prime ministers, ministers, and diplomats from other countries, representatives of numerous international institutions and organisations, clergy, and employees of museums and memorial sites related to the Holocaust. Thanks to media coverage and the online broadcast, those who wished to commemorate the victims but could not attend in person were still able to take part in the ceremony. The Institute of National Remembrance was represented by its Deputy President, Dr. Mateusz Szpytma.

The main speeches were given by survivors Marian Turski, Janina Iwańska, Tova Friedman, and Leon Weintraub. Roman Lauder spoke on behalf of the donors supporting the activity of the Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau. He was followed by the museum's director, Dr. Piotr Cywiński, who thanked those gathered for their attendance and devoted his solemn speech to the importance of remembrance. The ceremony concluded with prayers recited by rabbis and clergy of various Christian denominations, and the lighting of candles by the heads of state delegations in front of a historic freight car placed at the main gate of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp.²

On 27 January, the principal anniversary events marking the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust in the Podkarpacie were held. At the New Jewish Cemetery on Dołowa Street in Rzeszów, Rabbi Shalom

² See "My, Ocalali, wiemy, że konsekwencją bycia obcym jest czynne prześladowanie. 80. rocznica wyzwolenia Auschwitz. Relacja z obchodów upamiętniających 80. rocznicę wyzwolenia KL Auschwitz-Birkenau, 27 I 2025 r.," <https://www.auschwitz.org/muzeum/aktualnosci/my-ocalali-wiemy-ze-konsekwencja-bycia-obcym-jest-czynne-przesladowanie-80-rocznica-wyzwolenia-auschwitz-,2574.html> (accessed 3 February 2025).

Dow Ber Stambler and Rev. Dr. Paweł Batory, Director of the Diocesan Museum in Rzeszów, led prayers in remembrance of Holocaust victims. Beneath the obelisk honouring those who perished, candles were lit, and wreaths, mourning bouquets, and stones were laid – the latter symbolising, in Jewish tradition, the enduring memory of the deceased. The Rzeszów Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance was represented by the Branch Director, Dr. hab. Dariusz Iwaneczko and Dr. hab. Elżbieta Rączy. Later that afternoon, as in years past, a prayer for world peace and for the victims of the Holocaust was held at the parish church in Rzeszów. The ceremony included the reading of the names of Poles from Podkarpacie who were murdered for aiding Jews, as well as the names of the Jews who died alongside them.³

In Podkarpacie, the tradition of holding days of remembrance for Holocaust victims dates back to 2008. Since then, they have become a regular event, lasting from several to over a dozen days each year. Their originator, main organiser, and coordinator is Dr. hab. Wacław Wierzbieniec, Professor at the University of Rzeszów and head of the Jewish History and Culture Unit, Institute of History, University of Rzeszów. Rzeszów was the first city in the region to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust on that day. In 2010, Jarosław joined the initiative, followed a year later by neighbouring Lubaczów. Over the years, more and more towns and villages have become involved in organising the commemorations.⁴ In 2017, anniversary events were held across 38 towns and at the Museum and Memorial in Bełżec, commemorating the deportation of the vast majority of Jews from what is now the Podkarpackie Voivodeship to the German extermination camp situated there.⁵

In 2021–2022, the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust in Podkarpacie was observed in a limited format due to the global and national epidemiological situation. In 2023, the commemorative events returned to their traditional form, continuing the practices established in previous years.

³ “XVII Obchody Dni Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu – Rzeszów, 27 stycznia 2025,” Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (Institute of National Remembrance), <https://rzeszow.ipn.gov.pl/pl8/aktualnosci/212876,XVII-Obchody-Dni-Pamieci-o-Ofiarach-Holokaustu-Rzeszow-27-stycznia-2025.html> (accessed 8 February 2025).

⁴ E. Rączy, “Obchody Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu na Podkarpaciu,” *UR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 1 (2017), p. 167.

⁵ R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, Lublin, 2010, pp. 235–251; E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dyskrtyce krakowskim w latach 1939–1945*, Rzeszów, 2014, pp. 270–345.

It is worth noting that numerous organisations and institutions contributed to the days of remembrance in Podkarpacie between 2008 and 2025, including local authorities of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship at various levels, the Institute of History of the University of Rzeszów, the diocesan curias in Przemyśl and Rzeszów, the Podkarpacie Board of Education, educational institutions, rural and urban cultural centres, museums, libraries, various foundations and private individuals. Since 2012, the IPN Rzeszów Branch has been a co-organiser of the anniversary events in Podkarpacie, and since 2016, they have been held under the patronage of the Marshal of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship.⁶

In recent years, commemorative events have taken place in numerous towns and cities throughout the voivodeship. These have featured prayers for Holocaust victims, talks, lectures, and both academic and popular history sessions focused on Polish-Jewish relations, culture, and the Holocaust. Key elements of the remembrance days also include film screenings,⁷ concerts,⁸ choir performances,⁹ exhibitions,¹⁰

⁶ E. Rączy, "Obchody Dnia Pamięci," p. 168.

⁷ As part of this year's programme, a series of film screenings were held in several towns: Jasło featured *Hugo z Jasła* (Hugo of Jasło, dir. Paulina Ibek, 2018); Głogów Małopolski presented *Miłość w czasach Zagłady* (Love in the Time of the Holocaust, dir. Maya Sarfaty, 2020); Lubaczów showcased *Partyzant z aparatem Leica* (The Partisan with the Leica Camera, dir. Ruth Walk, 2022); and Sanok hosted *Przekraczając rzekę: z Polski do raju* (Crossing the River: From Poland to Paradise, dir. Allan Novak, 2022). See "Program XVII Obchodów Międzynarodowego Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu na Podkarpaciu," 20–30 January 2025, <https://rzeszow.ipn.gov.pl/pl8/aktualnosci/211185,XVII-Obchody-Dnia-Pamieci-o-Ofiarach-Holokaustu-na-Podkarpaciu-20-30-stycznia-202.html> (accessed 6 February 2025).

⁸ Part of this year's commemoration was a concert of Jewish songs entitled *Lechaim*, performed by Małgorzata Pruchnik-Cholka (vocals and narration), Dariusz Kot (accordion), and Wojciech Front (double bass). The concert took place on 28 January at the Art Exhibition Office (*Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych*, BWA) in Rzeszów. See "28.01.2025 Koncert pieśni żydowskich Lechaim," BWA Rzeszów, <https://www.bwa.rzeszow.pl/aktualnosci/28-01-2025-koncert-piesni-zydowskich-lechaim,art513/> (accessed 6 February 2025).

⁹ The young people's performances took place on 24 January in Gać, 28 January in Jarosław, and 29 January in Leżajsk.

¹⁰ As part of this year's anniversary, numerous exhibitions were presented: in Krosno, it was *Śmierć za człowieczeństwo. Rodzina Ulmów* (Death for Humanity. The Ulma Family), prepared by the Rzeszów Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance; in Leżajsk – *Spółeczność żydowska w dziejach Leżajska* (The Jewish Community in the History of Leżajsk); in Lubaczów – *Sprawiedliwi ziemi lubaczowskiej* (The Righteous of the Lubaczów Region); in Narol – *Opowieści z ul. Górnej* (Tales from Górna Street) by Błażej Mysiak (a photography exhibition); in Rzeszów – *Miejsca w Galicji* (Places in Galicia) by Nina Talbot; in Tarnobrzeg – *Pamięć jest naszym domem* (Memory is Our Home); in Uherce Mineralne – *Dzielnica Argentyna* (The Argentina District) by Ewa Michałowicz-Smarzewska; in Wielopole Skrzyńskie – *Samarytanie z Markowej* (Samaritans from Markowa) by Arkadiusz Andrejkow (an exhibition of painted wood wall art), and *Śladami społeczności żydowskiej Wielopola Skrzyńskiego* (In the Footsteps of the Jewish Community of Wielopole Skrzyńskie) prepared by the Centre for Documentation and History of the Region of the Tadeusz Kantor Museum (see "Program XVII Obchodów").

meetings with book authors,¹¹ performances,¹² workshops, museum lessons,¹³ and meetings with survivors who witnessed the harrowing events of the war and the German occupation. For several years, historical walks following the paths of Jewish residents in towns and cities across the region have been held, involving both schoolchildren and adults. The organisers noted on their websites that “all these initiatives were an expression of respect for the other man that is deeply rooted in our culture,” and attracted “great interest both domestically and internationally, as shown by the number of visitors, including descendants of Holocaust survivors and their families, who came to Podkarpacie to participate in the commemorations.”¹⁴

The International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust in Podkarpacie, held between 20 and 30 January 2025, was the seventeenth edition of this anniversary event. Twenty-six towns and villages across the region participated in the wide-ranging programme, which was organised by the University of Rzeszów and the IPN Rzeszów Branch. The commemorations were held under the honorary patronage of Władysław Ortyl, Marshal of the Podkarpacie Voivodeship, and Konrad Fijołek, Mayor of Rzeszów. The ceremony was graced by the presence of Jeffrey Cymbler (USA), Aron Halberstam (Israel), Tamar and Szmuel Halpern (Israel), Sally Mizroch (USA), Ora Regev-Heumann (Israel), Paul Shapiro (USA), and Nina and Mark Talbot (USA).

¹¹ As part of this year's programme, the following meetings with book authors took place: in Gać – with Janusz Słysz, author of the book *Spółeczność żydowska na terenie gminy Gać* (The Jewish Community in the Gać Municipality); in Lubaczów – with Ora Regev-Heumann, author of the book *A rzeka nadal płynie* (And the River Still Flows); in Sanok – with Katarzyna Twardak, author of the book *Świat Żydów Sanoka* (The World of Sanok's Jews); in Strzyżów – with Dariusz Pado, poet, lawyer and contributor to literary magazines covering Jewish topics. See “Program XVII Obchodów.”

¹² On 29 January, the play *Dzieci bez dzieciństwa* (Children Without Childhood) was presented in Przemyśl (by the Teatr bez Granic theatre group from the Cultural Centre, written and directed by Magdalena Nuckowska); in Sanok, on 23 January, there was a staging of *Ostatnia zima w kryjówce milczenia* (The Last Winter in the Hideout of Silence) and a musical performance by young people from the School Complex No. 1 (Zespół Szkół nr 1); in Narol, there was a performative reading of Robert Gmiterek's short story from the volume *Epifania pana Eliasza* (The Epiphany of Mr. Eliazs) performed by Piotr Piela and Magda Chrabąszcz. See “Program XVII Obchodów.”

¹³ Workshops and museum lessons for children and young people were held in Błażowa, Lubaczów, and Sanok.

¹⁴ See “XIII Obchody Międzynarodowego Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu na Podkarpaciu,” <https://rzeszow.ipn.gov.pl/pl8/aktualnosci/136235,XIII-Obchody-Miedzynarodowego-Dnia-Pamieci-o-Ofiarach-Holokaustu-na-Podkarpaciu.html> (accessed 3 February 2025).

In the Podkarpacie region, it is customary to honour Holocaust victims at execution sites and Jewish cemeteries. These ceremonies are attended by rabbis and Christian clergy from various denominations, who offer prayers for the deceased, alongside representatives of local authorities, residents, and international guests. Mourning bouquets are placed at monuments and obelisks, candles are lit, and stones are laid in remembrance. This year, commemorations held in Gać, Głogów Małopolski, Haczów and Jagiełła-Niechciałki,¹⁵ Jarosław,¹⁶ Jasło,¹⁷ Korczyn, Krosno, Lubaczów, Nowosielce, Przemyśl,¹⁸ Rzeszów, Sanok,¹⁹ Stalowa Wola, Tyczyn, Wielopole Skrzyńskie and Zarszyn all followed this tradition.

¹⁵ On 28 January, the memory of Jews murdered during the war and the German occupation was honoured at the War Cemetery of Victims of Hitlerism in Jagiełła-Niechciałki, Przeworsk County. The ceremony was attended by members of the Jewish community and Polish clergy, led by Metropolitan Archbishop of Przemyśl Adam Szal, along with local residents and government officials. Among those buried in the cemetery are members of the Goldman, Didner, and Grünfeld families, who were sheltered by the blessed Ulma family. The Metropolitan read Psalm 130 and offered a prayer written by St John Paul II. Participants laid flowers and stones at the conclusion of the ceremony. See "Jagiełła-Niechciałki: Uczczono pamięć Żydów zamordowanych podczas II wojny światowej," Archidiecezja przemyska obrządku łacińskiego (The Latin Rite Archdiocese of Przemyśl), <https://przemyska.pl/jagiella-niechcialki-uczczono-pamiec-zydow-zamordowanych-podczas-ii-wojny-swiatowej/> (accessed 7 February 2025).

¹⁶ In Jarosław, Holocaust victims were commemorated on 28 January in two separate locations – at the Jewish Cemetery on Kruhel Pawłowski Street and at the execution wall in the Abbey of Benedictine Sisters in Jarosław. See Dzień Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu, Miasto Jarosław (Town of Jarosław), <https://miastojaroslaw.pl/szczegoly-aktualnosci/dzien-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holokaustu-iPK5oCrdACw8S-d4LMzB> (accessed 7 February 2025); "Program XVII Obchodów."

¹⁷ In Jasło, the anniversary events began on 20 January at the Jewish Cemetery on Floriańska Street, where prayers were recited, and candles were lit in memory of the murdered Jewish residents of the town. See "Obchody Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu w Jasle," Jasło Town Hall, <https://um.jaslo.pl/pl/obchody-dnia-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holokaustu-w-jasle/> (accessed 7 February 2025).

¹⁸ In Przemyśl, a special prayer was offered, flowers were placed, and candles were lit at the monument on Kopernika Street commemorating the Jews murdered in the local ghetto. During his address, Bishop Stanisław Jamrozek called for a heartfelt prayer for the victims of the Przemyśl ghetto and for all who endured suffering during World War II. Attendees recited Psalm 120 in both Polish and Hebrew, after which they proceeded to the Jewish Cemetery on Słowackiego Street, where a brief ecumenical prayer took place. See "Przemyśl: Obchody Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu," Archidiecezja przemyska obrządku łacińskiego, <https://przemyska.pl/przemy-sl-obchody-dnia-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holokaustu/> (accessed 7 February 2025).

¹⁹ On 23 January, Holocaust victims were commemorated in Sanok at the Jewish Cemetery, located at the corner of Kiczury and Głogowa Streets. Dr. Joanna Potaczek delivered a brief lecture on the history of the extermination of Sanok's Jewish community and their murder. Following the introduction, representatives of the Jewish community and clergy from the Roman Catholic, Polish Catholic, Old Catholic, Orthodox, and Greek Catholic rites offered a prayer. During the ceremony, candles were lit, flowers were laid, and memorial stones – crafted by inmates of the correctional facility in Uherce Mineralne and inscribed with the names of Jews murdered at the local Jewish cemetery – were placed. See "Międzynarodowy Dzień Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu," Powiat sanocki (Sanok county), https://powiat-sanok.pl/aktualnosc-1473-miedzynarodowy-dzien-pamieci_o-ofiarach.html (accessed 8 February 2025).

In addition to commemorating Jewish victims at sites of execution and Jewish cemeteries, the main form of commemoration is the organisation of numerous sessions, conferences, and lectures²⁰ with the participation of guests, descendants of Holocaust survivors, and employees of various institutions and organisations, including the Institute of National Remembrance. Between 20 and 30 January, a total of eleven conferences and popular history sessions were held in Błażowa, Gać, Jarosław, Lubaczów, Łupków, Przemyśl, Rzeszów, Sanok, Uherce Mineralne, and Wielopole Skrzyńskie.²¹

²⁰ A total of 17 lectures and open talks were delivered by employees of the IPN Branch in Rzeszów and other representatives of various institutions and organisations, including: Dr. Anna Stróż-Pawłowska – “Miejsca pamięci o Holokauście w dyskursie artystycznym” (Holocaust Memorial Sites in Artistic Discourse); Sister Katarzyna Kowalska NDS – “Czy dialog chrześcijańsko-żydowski jest potrzebny?” (Is Christian-Jewish Dialogue Necessary?); Marta Wójcik – “Przedwojenne sklepy i firmy żydowskie w Rzeszowie” (Pre-War Jewish Shops and Businesses in Rzeszów); Elżbieta Skromak – “Żydzi w Rozwadowie” (Jews in Rozwadow); Paul Shapiro (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, USA) – “Rozwadowian Roots of Paul Shapiro’s Family and Their Fate During the Holocaust”; Dr. Roman Niwierski – “O potrzebie wspomnień nieznanych. Niemieckie obozy pracy przymusowej dla Żydów w Rozwadowie i Stalowej Woli” (On the Need of Unknown Memories: German Forced Labour Camps for Jews in Rozwadow and Stalowa Wola); and Aron Halberstam, an enthusiast of Jewish history and heritage, Hasidic dynasties in Galicia and religious life. See “Program XVII Obchodów.”

²¹ On 21 January, at the Municipal Culture and Recreation Centre in Wielopole Skrzyńskie, Wacław Wierzbieniec gave a lecture entitled “Kultura żydowska i zwyczaje galicyjskich Żydów – czy takie same jak w Wielopolu Skrzyńskim?” (Jewish Culture and Customs of Galician Jews – Are They the Same as in Wielopole Skrzyńskie?). The guests – Sally Mizroch, Tamar and Szmuel Halpern, and Jeffrey Cymbler, all descendants of the Holocaust survivors – recounted the harrowing experiences of their families during the war and the German occupation. The session concluded with a lecture by Mariola Świętoń entitled “Wielopole Skrzyńskie we wspomnieniach byłych mieszkańców” (Wielopole Skrzyńskie in the Memories of its Former Residents).

On 22 January, a session took place at the local school complex in Błażowa on Ks. Adolfa Kowala Square, with attendees including Dr. Małgorzata Kutrzeba, President of the Friends of Błażowa Land Society (a local heritage group), Tamar and Szmuel Halpern, Jeffrey Cymbler, and Sally Mizroch. That same day, the Błażowa Urban-Rural Public Library hosted an evening dedicated to Jewish history and culture. During the event, a second popular history session was held, featuring speakers such as Marta Wójcik (a guide and enthusiast of Rzeszów) and the aforementioned guests from the USA and Israel. Traditional Jewish dishes were served as part of the gathering (see “Międzynarodowy Dzień Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu 2025,” Miejsko-Gminna Biblioteka Publiczna w Błażowej [Błażowa Urban-Rural Municipal Library], <https://biblioteka.blazowa.net/miedzynarodowy-dzien-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holokaustu-2025/> [accessed 8 February 2025]).

On January 23, the Jan Grodek State University in Sanok hosted a session titled “Ocaleni i ratujący. Holocaust Żydów na terenie Podkarpacia” (The Survivors and the Rescuers: The Holocaust of Jews in the Podkarpacie Region) in its auditorium on Mickiewicz Street. The first part featured a lecture by Dr. Anita Wolanin from the School Complex No. 1 in Sanok, who introduced attendees to Jewish narratives in the works of writer and poet Jerzy Wojtowicz. Students from the same school followed with recitations of Wojtowicz’s poetry, bringing his voice to life. Next, Dr. Joanna Potaczek – representing the Centre for Dialogue Among Religions and Nations and the Folk Architecture Museum in Sanok – pre-

As part of this year's International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, employees of the IPN Rzeszów Branch participated in events organised in nine towns in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, namely Czudec, Jedlicze, Krosno, Leżajsk, Lubaczów, Rzeszów, Tarnobrzeg, Tyczyn, and Wiśniowa.

sented a lecture titled "Ocaleni i ratujący. Holokaust Żydów na terenie Podkarpacia – zarys problematyki" (Survivors and Rescuers: The Holocaust of Jews in the Podkarpacie Region – A Thematic Outline), offering a broader historical and thematic perspective. In the second part of the event, guests – Sally Mizroch, Tamar and Szmuel Halpern, Nina and Mark Talbot, and Jeffrey Cymbler – shared personal reflections on their Galician heritage and their families' experiences during the Holocaust. The session ended with Romuald Zwonarz sharing the powerful testimony of his parents' bravery in risking their lives to rescue Jews during one of history's darkest periods (see "Program XVII Obchodów").

On 24 January, sessions were also held in Lubaczów, Gać, and Łupków. During the meeting at the Firefighters' House in Gać, Waclaw Wierzbieniec presented the culture and customs of Galician Jews, and the guests – Tamar and Szmuel Halpern, Sally Mizroch, and Nina and Mark Talbot – as before, discussed the fate of their families. On the same day, most participants in the session also attended an afternoon seminar in Łupków (See "Program XVII Obchodów").

On 27 January, the Stanisław Zając Hall at the University of Rzeszów hosted the 2nd International Conference entitled "Holokaust i po Holokaucie z lokalnej perspektywy" (The Holocaust and the Post-Holocaust Times from a Local Perspective). The speakers included Mariola Świętoń, Wojciech Dyrkacz, Gabriela Zagraniczna, Karolina Łętowska, Sally Mizroch, Paul Shapiro, Nina and Mark Talbot, as well as Tamar and Szmuel Halpern. The meeting was moderated by Waclaw Wierzbieniec.

On 28 January, a popular history session was held at the Nicolaus Copernicus High School No. 1 in Jarosław, featuring Waclaw Wierzbieniec, Jeffrey Cymbler, Paul Shapiro, Lili Haber, and Sally Mizroch. The following day, a similar session took place at the Juliusz Słowacki High School No. 1 in Przemyśl, with Waclaw Wierzbieniec, Lili Haber, Tamar and Szmuel Halpern, Sally Mizroch, and Jeffrey Cymbler participating (see "XVII Obchody Międzynarodowego Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu na Podkarpaciu," Uniwersytet Rzeszowski [University of Rzeszów], <https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/universytet/aktualnosci/xvii-obchody-miedzynarodowego-dnia-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holokaustu-na-podkarpaciu-ii-miedzynarodowa-konferencja-na-universytecie-rzeszowskim> [accessed 8 February 2025]; "Program XVII Obchodów").

On the final day of the commemorations, sessions were held at the correctional facility in Uherce Mineralne and at the Stanisław Barańczak Bilingual University High School in Rzeszów. In Uherce, the event opened with a lecture by Dr. Joanna Potaczek titled "Ocaleni i ratujący. Holokaust Żydów na ziemi sanockiej. Zarys problematyki" (Survivors and Rescuers: The Holocaust of Jews in the Sanok Region – A Thematic Outline). Following the lecture, Romuald Zwonarz shared with the prisoners the story of his parents, who courageously risked their lives during the war and the German occupation to save a Jewish family – an act for which they were later recognised by the Yad Vashem Institute as Righteous Among the Nations. Artur Górecki then presented the figures of other individuals who rescued Jews in the Sanok region and the Bieszczady Mountains. The final session, held at the university high school, was attended by Rev. Paweł Batory, Paul Shapiro, Jeffrey Cymbler, and Sally Mizroch (see "XVII Obchody Międzynarodowego Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu na Podkarpaciu," Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, <https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/universytet/aktualnosci/xvii-obchody-miedzynarodowego-dnia-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holokaustu-na-podkarpaciu-ii-miedzynarodowa-konferencja-na-universytecie-rzeszowskim> [accessed 8 February 2025]; "Międzynarodowy Dzień Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu," Służba Więzienna [The Prison Service], <https://www.sw.gov.pl/aktualnosc/zaklad-karny-w-lupkowie-miedzynarodowy-dzien-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holokaustu> [accessed 8 February 2025]).

In Krosno, the days of remembrance, attended by Dr. Wojciech Hanus from the IPN Historical Research Office in Rzeszów, commenced on 20 January 2025 at the Jewish Cemetery. A prayer was said, and candles were lit in tribute to the Holocaust victims. The participants then proceeded to Franciszkańska Street, where flowers were laid, and speeches were delivered in front of a plaque honouring the residents of the former ghetto in Krosno.²² The following item on the agenda was the opening of the outdoor exhibition “Śmierć za człowieczeństwo. Rodzina Ulmów” (Death for Humanity. The Ulma Family), prepared by the Rzeszów Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance.²³ The exhibition was on display in the Krosno market square until 16 February 2025. Dr. Wojciech Hanus introduced the guests to the theme of the exhibition and gave an open lecture titled “Losy żandarmów niemieckich z posterunku w Łańcucie uczestniczących w zbrodni na rodzinie Ulmów i ukrywanych Żydach” (The Fate of German Military Police from the Łańcut Police Station Who Participated in the Crime Against the Ulma Family and the Sheltered Jews) at the “Piwnica pod Cieniami” Gallery, which belongs to the Museum of Crafts in Krosno.²⁴

On the same day, anniversary events attended by a representative of the Rzeszów branch of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) were held in Wiśniowa. Three lectures were held at the Maria Konopnicka Primary School. Dr. Robert Witalec (deputy head of the IPN Rzeszów Branch Archives) familiarised the attendees with the documentation programme *Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod okupacją niemiecką w latach 1939–1945 – realizacja i wyzwania* (Human Losses and Victims of Repression under the German Occupation in 1939–1945 – Implementation

²² “XVII Obchody Międzynarodowego Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu,” Muzeum Rzemiosła w Krośnie (The Museum of Crafts in Krosno), <https://muzeumrzemiosla.pl/xvii-obchody-miedzynarodowego-dnia-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holokaustu/> (accessed 5 February 2025).

²³ The script for the exhibition was prepared by Wojciech Hanus (IPN Rzeszów), Maciej Korkuć (IPN Cracow), and Mateusz Szpytma (IPN Deputy President), with Katarzyna Hudzicka-Chochorowska (IPN Rzeszów) responsible for the graphic design, illustrations, and layout. The exhibition was first unveiled on 21 August 2023 in front of the Presidential Palace in Warsaw, and subsequently toured various locations in Poland and abroad, including the European Parliament in Strasbourg (opened on 16 January 2024), the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York (23 August 2023), the Cathedral of Saints Justus and Pastor in Alcalá de Henares near Madrid (23 August 2023), and St John’s Basilica in Berlin (9 September 2023).

²⁴ “XVII Obchody Międzynarodowego Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu,” Muzeum Rzemiosła w Krośnie, <https://muzeumrzemiosla.pl/xvii-obchody-miedzynarodowego-dnia-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holokaustu/> (accessed 5 February 2025).

and Challenges). Marian Irzyk spoke about local Poles murdered in Kozłówek for helping Jews, while Dr. Waław Wierzbieniec focused on the Jewish community living in the municipality of Wiśniowa and its extermination during the German occupation. The event concluded with a musical and verbal performance and an exhibition of materials related to the history of the Holocaust.²⁵

Zenon Fajger from the IPN Rzeszów Branch National Education Office took part in a remembrance day event in Tarnobrzeg, where he delivered two lectures to secondary school students at the Dr. Michał Marczak Municipal Public Library on the extermination of Polish Jews during World War II. Similar commemorative events were organised in Tyczyn on 22 January and in Czudec on 23 January. In Tyczyn, Dr. Elżbieta Rączy, coordinator of the commemoration from the University of Rzeszów and the IPN Rzeszów Branch Historical Research Office, met with young people to discuss the unfolding of the extermination of Jews in the German-occupied Rzeszów Starosty. In Czudec, Dr. Wojciech Hanus spoke to students from the local school complex about the tragic story of Józef and Wiktoria Ulma's efforts to hide Jews.²⁶

The events marking the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust in Lubaczów were also of significance. The main gathering, attended by Hubert Bury (head of the IPN Rzeszów Branch Office for the Commemoration of Polish Struggle and Martyrdom) and Dr. Wojciech Hanus, took place on Friday 24 January. Its focal point was a seminar titled "Pamięć. Świadećtwo. Sprawiedliwość" (Memory. Testimony. Justice), held by the municipality at the Aleksander Sas-Bandrowski Municipal Cultural Centre in Lubaczów.²⁷ It was opened by Wiesław Kapel, the Mayor of the Municipality of Lubaczów. The lectures given during the seminar addressed various aspects of the Holocaust. Dariusz Sałek (Museum of the Eastern Borderlands in Lubaczów) spoke about the fate of the Jewish commu-

²⁵ "Program XVII Obchodów."

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ The anniversary events were organised by the Starost of Lubaczów, the Mayor of the Town of Lubaczów, the Mayor of the Municipality of Lubaczów, the Mayor of the Town and Municipality of Narol, the Museum of the Eastern Borderlands in Lubaczów, the Władysław Broniewski Municipal Public Library in Lubaczów, the Municipal Cultural Centre in Lubaczów, the Rural Municipal Public Library in Lubaczów based in Basznia Dolna, the Municipal Cultural Centre in Narol, the Lubaczów Branch of the Society of Friends of Lwów and the South-Eastern Borderlands, the Museum and Memorial in Bełżec, the IPN Rzeszów Branch, and the Institute of History at the University of Rzeszów.

nity of Lubaczów and the surrounding area, and about ways of commemorating the victims; Ewelina Szumilak from the Museum and Memorial in Bełżec discussed the implementation of the German criminal Operation “Reinhardt” in the extermination camps in Bełżec, Sobibór and Treblinka; Dr. Wojciech Hanus focused on the extermination of Jews in the Kreis Rawa Ruska area; Zenon Swatek, the Deputy Starost of Lubaczów, presented the Holocaust of the Jewish population in Lubaczów and the surrounding area, while Maria Magoń, the President of the Society of Friends of Lwów (now Lviv) and the South-Eastern Borderlands, shared the stories of the Polish Righteous Among the Nations from the Lubaczów region. The session was concluded by Ora Regev-Heumann, who shared the dramatic story of her family, which lived in Lubaczów during the war and German occupation.²⁸

Following the seminar, participants visited the site known as Plebańskie Pole, situated between Mokrzyca and Dachnów near Lubaczów. There, delegations from various institutions and organisations laid flowers at the monument commemorating Jews murdered during the German occupation, while students from local schools laid stones. The commemoration in Lubaczów also served as an occasion to present the results of the memorial site’s revitalisation. As part of the site’s redevelopment, an avenue leading to the monument was constructed, along which three information boards were installed on brick pedestals. These boards provide details about the Jewish residents of Lubaczów and its surroundings, the local ghetto, and the extermination of the Jewish population. The content was prepared by the Rzeszów Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance.²⁹

That same day, Dr. Wojciech Hanus participated in the events held in Jedlicze, where he delivered a lecture at the local community centre on the post-war accountability of those responsible for crimes against the Ulma family and the Jews they had sheltered.³⁰

²⁸ “Obchody XVII Międzynarodowego Dnia Pamięci o Ofiarach Holokaustu. Seminarium i złożenie kwiatów,” Urząd Gminy w Lubaczowie (The Town Hall in Lubaczów), <https://www.gminalubaczow.pl/2025/01/24/obchody-xvii-miedzynarodowego-dnia-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holokaustu-seminarium-i-zlozenie-kwiatow/> (accessed 6 February 2025).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ “Prelekcja z okazji zbliżającego się Międzynarodowego Dnia Pamięci Ofiar Holokaustu,” Gminny Ośrodek Kultury w Jedliczu (The Municipal Cultural Centre in Jedlicze), https://gok.jedlicze.pl/aktualnosc-9194-prelekcja_z_okazji_zblizajacego_sie.html (accessed 8 February 2025).

The final town in the Podkarpacie region visited by employees of the Rzeszów branch of the Institute of National Remembrance was Leżajsk. The events held there to mark the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust took place in the Leżajsk County Museum. The ceremony began with a musical performance by the “Cantiamo” choir conducted by Barbara Kuczek. This was followed by an open lecture titled “Zbrodnia (nie)osądzona. Udział żandarmerii niemieckiej z posterunku w Łańcutie w mordzie na rodzinie Ulmów i ukrywanych Żydach i powojenna odpowiedzialność sprawców” (An (Un)judged Crime. The Participation of the German Military Police from the Łańcut Police Station in the Murder of the Ulma Family and the Jews They Sheltered. The Post-War Accountability of the Perpetrators), delivered by Dr. Wojciech Hanus. The attendees and guests also had an opportunity to visit a special exhibition dedicated to the Jewish community of Leżajsk.³¹

The 17th edition of the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust in the Podkarpacie Region provided an occasion to reflect on these tragic chapters in the region’s history, foster awareness, and highlight the role of historical education and intercultural dialogue in shaping a collective remembrance of the Holocaust victims.

³¹ “Dzień Pamięci o Ofiarach Holocaustu – relacja,” Muzeum Ziemi Leżajskiej (Leżajsk County Museum), <https://muzeum-lezajsk.pl/news/dzien-pamieci-o-ofiarach-holocaustu-relacja/> (accessed 10 February 2025).