

Not Only About  
**the Ulmas**

**Assistance Offered on Polish Territory  
to Jewish People  
During the German Occupation  
1939–1945**



Institute of National Remembrance – Commission of the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation

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During the German Occupation  
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Remembrance is a fundamental element of both Polish and Jewish national identity. Recognition of the need to cultivate it in the 21st century by Polish state institutions stems, above all, from the tragic experiences of WW II; namely, the German and Soviet occupations.

Following the aggression of the Third Reich and the Soviet Union against Poland in 1939, the multinational and multicultural Second Republic of Poland, inhabited by about 35 million citizens, disappeared from the map of Europe. The occupation of Polish territories thus became the preliminary step to the extermination of the Polish elite, the destruction, and economic exploitation of the entire society, and to the Holocaust of the Jewish and Roma people. During WW II, in the years 1939–1945, around 6 million citizens of pre-war Poland perished on occupied Polish territory.

Ever since its inception in 1998, the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation has performed its statutory tasks focused on documenting, investigating, and prosecuting crimes committed by the civil and military apparatus of the Third Reich on the occupied territories of Poland. Over the years, the institution became a leading research centre in Poland, specialising in the subject of German terror, which is evidenced by dozens of academic and popular scientific publications that enable us to learn more about the truth of WW II.

In its research, the Institute of National Remembrance has placed a strong emphasis on the extermination of Jews, Polish-Jewish relations under the German occupation, and issues related to the aid that, in so far as they were able, the Polish Underground State and Polish people provided to the Jews facing the Holocaust. Currently, research activity and educational projects undertaken in this area are carried out within

the framework of the IPN's Central Research Project 'The History of Jews in Poland and Polish-Jewish Relations in the Years 1917–1990.'

Commemorating and preserving awareness of the position of the underground Polish state on the Holocaust, as well as that of the Polish people who individually provided aid to Jews during WW II, is a special mission. All the more so at a time when attempts to distort history, manipulate facts, as well as to downplay and disavow the role of Polish people in the rescue of Jews are appearing more and more boldly in the public space.

Polish people trying to save Jews from the Holocaust, in both an organised manner and individually, fully deserve to be recognised as a phenomenon. This is a part of the legacy of past generations that we Poles are proud of. This refers to the Righteous, who were decorated with the 'Righteous Among the Nations' medal, as well as to those who did not yet receive this honorary title, even though their sacrifice was just as great as that made by the recipients. Still, we can call them the Polish Rescuers. The phenomenon of the Righteous and the Rescuers arises from their experience of being targeted by the German terror machine. Those who chose to provide aid to Jews from 15 October 1941 onwards were subject to the death penalty. Secondly, as the German occupation law directed against Jews and those who helped them developed in response to the fact that existing deterrents were regarded by the occupiers as insufficient, cases of providing aid to Jews were brought under the principle of collective responsibility. This meant that punishment by death for all acts of aid extended also to family members, including children, and wider communities, such as residents of a tenement house in a town or all the people living in a village. Thirdly, the Germans introduced the death penalty for the failure to report known instances of Jewish people receiving shelter, which was intended to create an atmosphere of fear and force people to denounce others. It is worth stressing that this brutal German law, which was enforced with utmost severity and on such a wide scale, applied only to the territory of occupied Poland.

Despite the draconian penalties, the terror of the occupation, the acute impoverishment of the Polish people, and the hunger that was often experienced during the German occupation, large numbers of Polish people decided to provide aid to Jews. Research shows that the willingness to provide wide-ranging aid, which was common, though not mass-scale, was evidenced chiefly by the rapidly tightening German laws aimed at utterly severing ties between Poles and Jews and eliminating any acts of aid performed by the



Poles. The commitment on the part of Polish people is also tangibly evidenced by the fact that Poland has the highest number of citizens awarded the title of 'Righteous Among the Nations' since WW II, a number which currently exceeds 7,000.

This publication is another awareness-raising title released by the Institute of National Remembrance recounting the aid provided to Jews by Polish people. However, there are two reasons why this is unique among the many available publications. Firstly, it was released to celebrate the beatification of the now blessed Ulma family from Markowa who were posthumously awarded the 'Righteous Among the Nations' title in 1995. The history of this family, which became a symbol of the martyrdom of Polish people persecuted for providing aid to the Jewish people, and the beatification process were discussed in an interview with the Vice President of the Institute of National Remembrance Mateusz Szpytma, who has been involved in raising awareness about the Ulma family for many years. Secondly, the publication gathers and reliably presents the most important information available on the subject of aid provided to Jews. It provides answers to pressing questions, such as just what is regarded as aid, how aid differed from rescue, and what types and forms acts of aid could take. It also tells us about the scale of the phenomenon, providing numbers and estimates related to those who rescued Jews. Great emphasis was also placed on explaining the political, legal, and economic conditions under occupation, as the phenomenon of aid cannot be described or understood without accounting for the broader historical context. Awareness of these matters leaves us with no illusions as to who were the perpetrators and who were the victims of WW II. Tomasz Domański, Alicja Gontarek and Grzegorz Berendt also discuss these questions in their articles.

The courageous and heroic attitude of a significant part of the Polish society, which deserves our deep respect, complied with the actions taken by the legal Polish government of the time, which developed the structures of the Polish Underground State in the occupied country. These structures were subordinate to the Polish government in exile. Aid measures were officially undertaken by the underground Council for Aid to the Jews 'Żegota,' established on 4 December 1942. It was the only state authority of this type in occupied Europe. It had a humanitarian profile, focused on providing aid and rescuing the lives of the Jewish people. It operated on the basis of a social committee that had been established earlier in the underground. It consisted chiefly of members of the Polish intelligentsia based in Warsaw and representing various political traditions, who did not remain passive in the face of the astonishingly rapid German liquidation of the

Warsaw Ghetto (in July-September 1942). It is worth stressing that Jews were also among the Council's leaders. Another article, by Waldemar Grabowski, deals with the activity and achievements of Żegota.

The last two articles take a closer look at the rescue of Jews from the individual point of view, presenting two specific localities; a town and a village, as examples. There were different conditions for assistance in these two types of areas. Roman Gieroń outlined the efforts made by Polish people who provided aid to Jews in Kraków, while Rafał Drabik described a new, hitherto unknown case of mass-scale repressions against Polish people who provided aid to Jews in Białka near Parzew (Lublin district).

I am convinced that this another reliable publication released under the aegis of the Institute of National Remembrance, which is a leading research centre in the field of aid to the Jews during WW II, will help deepen the understanding of this issue both in Poland and in the wider world.

I encourage you to read on and discover more.



Karol Nawrocki  
President of the Institute of National Remembrance

# How Heroism Overcame Fear

**Mateusz Szpytma**, Vice President of the Institute of National Remembrance,  
interviewed by Jan M. Ruman

How did the situation of the Jews change during the occupation? Initially it was the case that Poles suffered more repression than Jews. I know of situations in which a liaison officer of the Polish underground would wear an armband with the Star of David if she had to carry important information. Why? Well, because in round-ups the Germans were not at that time arresting Jews, but Poles who were being taken away to work.

It was not that simple. The situation of the Jews changed a lot during the German occupation. However, from the very beginning, there were different plans for the Poles and different plans for the Jews, although – especially with regard to the latter – not yet fully specified. Initially, the Germans took out their hatred on the Jews: synagogues were burnt, Jewish people were ridiculed and beaten, their beards were cut off in public. Quite soon, they were also subjected to orders eliminating them from economic life, restricting their liberties, e.g. Jews were forbidden to travel by train or were not allowed to appear in certain parts of cities, e.g. in Kraków within the Planty ring around the Old Town and in the Old Town of the city itself. However, it was a fact that Jews did not usually fall victim to round-ups to be transported to work in Germany. Jews were not deported, so if someone had an armband, they were released because there were other plans for this nation, which were to be implemented locally. On the other hand, round-ups were organised for Jews to exploit the Jewish labour force on site. Initially, these actions were of an unorganised nature.

As far as the Poles were concerned, from the moment the Germans entered our territory they began a series of repressions which were aimed at the physical elimination of the leadership elite of our nation. As in Palmiry, which was part of the *AB Aktion*, which in turn was a continuation of the *Intelligenzaktion*. Of

Jews being led out of the Warsaw Ghetto, April 1943.  
Photo: AIPN



course, some of these victims were also assimilated Jews to a large extent. Let us also remember that the first victims of Auschwitz, a camp for political prisoners, set up in the spring of 1940 – were Poles.

Coming back to the situation of the Jews, initially the Germans really did not know what to do with them. There were plans to create a reserve for the Jews, but this idea was abandoned. One of its organisers was Adolf Eichmann. Another idea was to concentrate the Jews in the General Government, which resulted in a wave of deportations of Jews from areas incorporated into the Reich. It was not until 1941, that a fundamental change of direction was decided. From then on, the Third Reich authorities made it their aim to murder all European Jews, and this objective was implemented wherever its influence reached.

## How Heroism Overcame Fear



Passers-by stop by a corpse lying in a street in the Warsaw Ghetto, 1941.  
Photo: AIPN

As repression of the Jewish population increased, so did the various forms of assistance from the Poles. It seems that there were differences between these forms of assistance in the villages and in the cities. In the city it was easier to hide, to find accommodation, easier to move from one place to another. Warsaw was a big city; you could remain anonymous. If a Jew had the so-called neutral physical appearance, it was much easier to hide her/

him. The situation was different in the countryside, where communities were smaller, and everyone knew each other. You can easily see what is going on at a farm if someone hides a group of Jews – there were such cases, for example, the Koźmiński family hid Jews. First in Warsaw, then when the number of those in hiding reached 23 – they were hidden near Warsaw. This family, living near such a big urban centre as Warsaw, could more easily take care of supplies. In the countryside it was different – if someone starts to buy more food, it is clear that they need it not only for their family, but for someone else. And this is immediately apparent, because one doesn't have the possibility that exist in a city to buy a little in one place, a little in another...

In fact, the assistance given to Jews in the countryside and in the cities are two separate issues, having their own specificities. And while I agree that the larger the locality, the greater the anonymity, which was of great importance for the aid, I would like to emphasise that according to research, Jews were more likely to be hidden in the villages, because it turned out to be easier to do so than in the city. Moreover, Jewish people, driven by their natural human instinct for life, fled to the countryside not only to take refuge at Polish homes, but also to simply try to survive another day. Over time, they formed self-defence groups in the forests, sometimes with

the support of the local population. Let us also recall, that the largest number of Polish Righteous Among the Nations actually came from rural areas. This does not change the fact that sheltering Jews in the countryside was a great challenge. Neighbourhood relations were more closely knit. In those days, people entered their neighbours' homes without knocking at the doors, and walked into cellars. What is more, village children would go to their neighbours out of mere curiosity. It is said that in the villages everyone knew almost everything about everyone, and this is true. It was still true during my childhood. Even more so during the occupation, when there had to be great discipline on the part of all to hide Jews in the farmyard even for a few weeks, let alone months or two years. Let us also emphasise that both in rural areas and in towns, the problem was food. Most of the population lived in poverty. In the countryside, the richer farmers tried to feed their families with what they had. At that time, bread was rarely bought, rather bread was baked at each household, while preparing extra quantities of food could also attract attention. Because hiding Jews in small communities was ex-



extremely risky, some people looked for a such a solution that would involve the entire community in the rescue. I even know of such an exceptional example: in one village the mayor purposely involved everyone in hiding Jews. That was so no one could claim he or she was clean and then wouldn't denounce any other person.

Street trading in the Warsaw Ghetto. Photo: ŻIH

An interesting method.

But risky. If a village has a few hundred people, even according to the law of statistical probability it follows that there will be one fool or mad person who, without realising what he is doing, will report it to the Blue Police or the Germans.

I once edited a publication related to the index of Poles repressed for helping Jews. At the time, I became acquainted with cases where even the Jews themselves could not stand the psychological pressure of being locked up, could not bear the fact that they had to go into hiding. I remember the case of a woman who had a quarrel with other Jews: she went to the Gestapo to report that they were bad towards her. She was convinced that she would survive. The Germans shot all those in hiding and the family hiding them. Finally, they killed the woman who reported the case.

There were sometimes cases of insanity among those in hiding. Mental illnesses increased and new cases appeared. When someone sits in a cellar without any sunlight for several months, what could one expect. Anyway, the situation also affected those who were providing a hiding place – their organism just could not cope with the constant stress. Yet can this be surprising when there was now widespread awareness of the death penalty for those in hiding and those providing refuge?

What were the most common forms of help for the Jews?

At the earlier stage – *ghettoisation* – it was first and foremost necessary to secure a fake identity. At that time it was not yet known that there would be a Holocaust. Jews were to be found in the ghettos, but it was not yet known, that these areas would be closed off. When a district was walled off, as in Warsaw or Kraków, then the Jews began to fear, that this might not be the final stage, but only a temporary one. And even then, they were avoiding their obligatory presence in the ghetto, looking for different places for themselves to take refuge. For this they needed the help of Poles because they had to change their identity. It was thus at this time when the Polish Underground State produced large quantities of fake documents for them.

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The Catholic Church also helped by issuing fictitious baptismal certificates. The organist at the All-Saints parish in Warsaw, to which I belong, created such certificates.

Surely this was already the case at the time when the deportation began from the ghettos to the death camps, although in fact some priests also did this earlier. An extremely important date for the Jews of the General Government was March 1942, when the implementation of what had been decided in 1941, and on 20 January 1942 was further clarified and arranged at Wannsee. There the decision for the extermination of the Jews was not taken, only the methods of how to organise an efficient 'killing machine' were defined. Two months later, the liquidation of the ghettos in Lublin and Mielec began. Let us emphasise, that the extermination in the General Government was preceded by an extermination operation in the lands incorporated into the Third Reich. There, as a test method, it began as early as December 1941. The first extermination camp, Kulmhof, began operating just then in Chełmno-on-the-Ner. In the Eastern Borderlands (*Kresy*), on the other hand, the extermination process in practice was started by the *Einsatzgruppen* immediately after 22 June 1941.

Members of the Einsatzgruppen murder Jews in Ivanhorod, Kirovohrad region in Ukraine, 1942. Photo: public domain





Returning to the situation in the General Government, the Germans carried out the liquidation of the ghettos methodically, district by district, one administrative region (*starostwo*) after another, planned as in an organised enterprise. Each such region was assigned an extermination camp. Although it is impossible to assign a particular camp exactly to an area, as this was evolving, so broadly speaking the western areas were served by Kulmhof and Auschwitz, the Kraków and Galicia districts – by mainly Bełżec (Belzec), and the Lublin District by Sobibór (Sobibor) and Majdanek, which was both a concentration and an extermination camp. The northern areas – by Treblinka. The latter is the largest cemetery of Polish citizens in our nation's history of over a thousand years. The Germans killed at least 800,000 people there, including most of Warsaw's Jews. From the German perspective, everything was going according to plan. It was only in this year 1942 that almost all the Jews realised that their end was approaching and that this was not some work-related forced migration or another stage of *ghettoisation*. A large proportion of them only now stopped thinking that they were needed as workers. There was a widespread realisation that the Holocaust was being implemented, which meant that everyone was destined for liquidation. Some Jews and Poles, however, were still deluded that the Germans could not liquidate such a multitude of people. It seemed completely irrational to them, even in economic terms. But in this matter the Germans were not rational.

This even today seems to be an unimaginable idea...

Any murder is irrational, and even more so the extermination of an entire nation, especially that in February 1942 the Germans began to lose slowly in the East. So at the time it was extremely irrational. After all, they needed Jews in the armament's plants, as a workforce. But Nazi ideology was stronger than hard realities, which could have perhaps facilitated their evil victory. Let us also give another unrelated Jewish example. When the Germans entered the Soviet Union in 1941, they largely resisted offers of mass collaboration, because they thought they could deal with communism and its supporters on their own. No use was made of nationalist ideas, such as those to create new subservient nation states, such as a nationalist Ukrainian or Belarusian state. What prevailed was the ideology of hatred for the 'inferior race' – i.e. the Slavs. Only limited use was made of support from potential allies – and some Ukrainians and representatives of yet other nations, after the oppressive murderous experience of communism, often came forward themselves and volunteered to

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collaborate. In the case of the Jews, on the other hand, there was no desire to continue to use cheap labour to the same extent as before, because the Holocaust was more important, which was to be total annihilation. The Germans were not at all rational about all this.

Many Jews were involved in tailoring – they could sew uniforms, clothes for the soldiers, but in the meantime the idea of murder prevailed.

It was then that many Jews realised that to survive, they had to get help from the Poles. This is when large-scale ghetto escapes began. The liquidation of the ghettos, as I have already mentioned, began in the spring of 1942. In Kraków, this occurred in March 1943; before that there were partial deportations. In the capital city of Warsaw they started from 22 July – the second most populous city in the world for Jews after New York – where the Jews finally realised that this was the end. Therefore, from July 1942, the search for help in Warsaw began on a much larger scale with the Poles – Catholic priests, various institutions and, above all, private individuals. If we sometimes hear that Poles were so late in starting to help the Jews and that the Council to Aid Jews ‘Żegota’ was established so late, this is due to a lack of knowledge about the ultimate reality and aims of the occupation. The Social Committee for Aid to the Jews was established in September 1942 and transformed into a state organisation at the beginning of December. This was the third year of the occupation, and in August a leaflet campaign was carried out by Zofia Kossak and Wanda Krahelska. Their protest was a shocking document followed by action. When the organisation was recognised by the Government Delegation for Poland, a structure was built. This activity was excellently outlined in the Institute of National Remembrance’s 2017 exhibition about ‘Żegota.’ You can see how many people were involved and from how many backgrounds. They were formed by all political forces of the Polish independence underground (with the exception of the extreme nationalist elements) and the Jewish National Committee and the *Bund*. The assistance provided by Poles was not on a mass scale, but it was widespread – that is, it involved various people from various walks of life. This means that different people from different milieus were involved. Even among more nationalistic circles, there were also those who rescued, but most Jews hid with those who, before the war, they had known and with whom they had cooperated, i.e. quite often in left-wing circles. It was slightly different with religious Jews, because they lived very much in isolation

from the Christian Polish world. They did not have so many contacts, and did not know Christian religious circles. It was much more difficult for them. They spoke Polish poorly, and if they did, it was with an accent, and as a result they were rather in a lost position for the option of hiding 'in plain sight.' So it may not come as a surprise, as I have already mentioned, that more people were saved by the help of leftist circles, because they had a lot of friends among the Poles. This is natural, in a situation when there is a risk of death for helping. This is because in such desperate times in the first place we give support rather to people we know or to people on someone's recommendation. Having a family, it was very difficult to take in a Jew you didn't know. It involved an enormous risk. Especially since the perfidious Germans also sent in agent Jews, who were told that they would save their lives by taking part in one provocation or another. These were difficult situations, especially since from October 1941, there was a death penalty for any Jew who left the ghetto, and for anyone who would give aid to such a Jew.

The Germans considered that an intentional act would be treated in the same way as an actually committed one: 'Instigators and helpers shall be punished in the same way as the perpetrator; an attempted act shall be punished as a committed act.'

This meant that the aid provided was at least partially effective, or at least noticeable by the Germans, so it had to be deterred. In 1942, the rules were tightened, and even incidental support also resulted in the threat of death. You could also lose your life or end up in a camp if one did not notice that there were Jews hiding in the neighbourhood, and did not report it to the Germans. The occupiers were incredibly effective in the way in which they spread terror, which they had indeed thought out well. For example, in addition to the expressed law aimed at limiting aid, they used other methods of collective responsibility, e.g. they appointed hostages, called in Polish '*dziesiętniki*' – from the number 'ten,' as guards/watchmen. What this meant was that every ten weeks another ten 'hostage' houses were selected, and if partisans or Jews appeared in the area during this time and the local inhabitants did not report it, the men or all the inhabitants of these hostage houses were to be shot. Understandably, then, these ten families were very anxious that at the time nothing happened. In a few more weeks, more people and their families could fall victim under this decree.

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We can understand what the Jewish police did in the ghettos... We emphasise that the policemen were trying to save their lives. Meanwhile, we measure the Poles by a different yardstick – as if they were not at risk at all during the occupation.

The *Polnische Polizei* was already commonly referred to during the war as the Blue Police (actually, navy-blue in colour), to distinguish it from the pre-war National Police (*Policja Państwowa*). From December 1939 onwards, officers were forcibly conscripted under penalty of death. It was thus a new formation, that carried out German orders under penalty of death. Often these forces also settled matters in Polish circles. An example? Someone reported that he had seen a Jew and reported this to the village leader or a Blue Policeman. He could, of course, turn a blind eye, but then he risked being reported. He could have reported it to the German gendarmerie, but then the gendarmerie would have come and liquidated the Jews and those who were hiding them. And the third option, the one often used to describe the Poles as cruel and mean. This was about situations where the problem was solved among themselves. The way it worked was that the Blue Police would come and execute Jews who had been denounced. Then the Blue Police would report to the Germans that they had met them while they were fleeing and had to kill them. In this way they saved themselves and also the lives of those Poles who were hiding these Jews. How to judge such a situation and the man who acted in such a way? I do not undertake such an assessment, because here every choice is satanic, horrible and criminal.

I think that there is still no balanced view of Poles under occupation, although we go far in understanding the dramatic situations in the ghettos. We understand the Jewish police who put the contingents on the ramp; they know that every day more people are being sent to their deaths, and sometimes they do so with excessive zeal. The commando that comes to liquidate the Warsaw Ghetto sees how efficiently the Jewish police operate. It decided that there was nothing to be done there, so it went to liquidate the Otwock ghetto.

Nevertheless, I view the Jewish policing in the ghettos negatively, as do many Jewish survivors. I do not consider them to be accomplices, but as victims who contributed to the deaths of other victims.

I also see it that way, but what about the assessment of the Blue Police?

While my assessment of the Blue Police is also, of course, decidedly negative, I encourage you to assess each of these police officers, if possible, individually. Let us remember that there were some cruel people among them who murdered Jews and Poles, but also men such as Franciszek Banaś, who was honoured with the Righteous Among the Nations medal after the war.

What shaped the attitude of Poles towards the Jews during the occupation, especially after they were locked up in the ghettos? In the early days of the occupation, there may have been a continuation of some attitudes that developed in the interwar period between the two world wars. My mother, for example, recalled – although it is difficult for me to place it in time – the terrible things people in Warsaw’s Praga district saw, how young Jews were herded under German rifles, who were forced to shout various slogans such as: ‘There is war because of us Jews’ or ‘Marshal Śmigły-Rydz taught us nothing. The golden Hitler came and taught us how to work.’ Mum was very much affected by the awful situation whereby these people had to shout out such stupid slogans, because that was a condition of their survival.

Selection of Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau, 27 May 1944.  
Photo: AIPN



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Before the war, things were different between Poles and Jews. There were those who maintained good relations with the Jews, but there were also certain anti-Semitic circles. However, this had nothing to do with what happened in 1939. The German occupation came, and Poles became witnesses to the Holocaust; and then, these behaviours became starkly different.

Some helped, others collaborated with the Germans, because in every nation there are different people. Many looked with compassion on the Jews. We know many testimonies of people who did not like Jews before the war, but when they saw what was happening, they said: 'after all they are people,' 'this is not right.' Such voices of opposition to the unfolding crime also came from the so-called nationalist side, even though their dislike of Jews, usually motivated by economic rivalry, was still present here. The murder of people was also inconceivable to those who, before the war, had wanted the Jews to leave Poland, and supported their emigration to Palestine or the USA. A characteristic is the protest of Zofia Kossak, who disliked Jews for being a Polish minority, but saw them as fellow human beings and fought for human dignity. It was she who called out the loudest: 'This cannot be!' She urged Polish society and the world to do something on this issue, and she herself actively helped Jews on a large scale in an organised manner.

There is also the example of Rev. Marcei Godlewski of the parish on Grzybowski Square in Warsaw, who before the war founded Christian unions and taught Poles how to fight for their rights in business. He taught Polish shopkeepers how to compete in the market, what to do when a Polish shop opened, and Jews as result lowered the prices in theirs. Yet when the murder of people began, he did everything he could to save them. In the vicarage at All-Saints' Church, he gave the Jews a roof over their heads, calling them 'parishioners.' There were priests who, from their pulpits, publicly exhorted – as the survivor Stella Zylbersztajn-Tzur recalls – to help the Jews, and after all, they risked doing so too, because legislation forbade such assistance. What did such help look like in smaller towns, where Polish and Jewish communities did not intermingle? Some of these Jewish people spoke little Polish.

The only way then was to build bunkers in the forest or to take people into homes, because living 'in the open,' even with good fake documents, was not possible. Hiding them in some barn and applying the principles of advanced conspiracy and an iron-clad consistency on both sides. If total discretion was kept, the

so-called 'bad looks' and a lack of knowledge of the Polish language did not play a role. Although by the end of the Second Polish Republic, almost all Jews spoke some Polish. The language was taught in schools; besides, they needed it to do business. But of course, you could immediately tell from a conversation that someone was of Jewish origin. Hiding 'in the open' was reserved for those who looked suitably Polish, knew the Polish language and, of course, it was easier for women than men. The latter were circumcised, and it was in this way that the Germans very often checked their origins.

Where did the phenomenon of the '*szmalcownik*' or bounty hunter, come from and how widespread was it?

Scoundrels and traitors are to be found in every nation. The blackmailing bounty hunters were people who wanted to make money and blackmailed Jews for this end, so they were a huge threat. To help someone, to save him, it took focused activity, of long duration and effort. Whereas a bounty hunter destroyed all that effort in a second. He demanded money, and if he didn't get it, he denounced them. One effective *szmalcownik* (bounty hunter) was enough and the whole village was paralysed with fear. This phenomenon was unfortunately not incidental. From Jewish accounts we know that Jews often encountered it. There is no doubt that the bounty hunters, as well as those who murdered, robbed Jews, were treated with real disgust not only by Jews, but also by other Poles. Let us also remember that in addition to the *szmalcowniks*, there were also German agents who acted as denouncers. It is well known that the perpetrators of the whole mechanism were Germans and without them, none of this would have happened. Only that there were a limited number of them, so without their agents and *szmalcowniks* (bounty hunters), they would have been blind. It was more difficult for them to recognise who was a Pole, who was a Jew, and the bounty hunter knew it. The Underground State not only called for not handing over Jews, but also criminalised such acts. It did not have much capacity to enforce it however. Therefore, although they were convicted, there were not so many executed sentences on the bounty hunters. It should be clearly emphasised here that our underground authorities did not collaborate with the Germans – as was the case in France and some other countries. They did not take any part in the Holocaust. The Polish authorities, whether at home or in exile, continued to insist that Jews were Polish citizens and should be helped. It is debatable to what extent help was given and how effective it could have been given the fact that the intention of the Germans was

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to exterminate all the Jews. Therefore, let us be clear that the bounty hunters were not only acting against the Jews and the Poles who saved them, but also, therefore, against the line of the Polish government, the Polish underground. They were outcasts of society who would be tried in a free Poland. The communists after the war condemned them too, unless they become their agents.

Ordinary people from the margins of society were sometimes exploited by the Polish Underground State. A pre-war thief could be useful in underground work because he had a certain cunning needed to deceive the occupying forces. The average person from the fringe did not necessarily become a *szmalcownik* (bounty hunter), so they must have been exceptionally amoral.

The *szmalcowniks* (bounty hunters) could not so easily blackmail those who operated in the underground, because these people would have neutralised them. They were afraid of revenge. The Poles had their agents among the Germans, and it happened that such information came to light. And yet to this day a huge number of anonymous letters have survived, also concerning the Polish underground. Because the Jews, according to the Germans, were the lowest in the social hierarchy, so they could easily fall victim to such individuals. Let us remember that the Jews had to find a way to secure or hide their property, i.e. they usually had it on or with them, and then it was so much easier to rob them, i.e. to steal from them any valuables, money or gold.

In the story of the Ulma family, extracted from local to national memory, everything comes clearly together as if through a zoom focus lens. There is selfless help, there is denunciation and there are the worst possible consequences for everyone.

And there is also the carrying out of an underground sentence on a man who, as we then and today suspected, denounced them, which is the whole spectrum in this story. Thanks to the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), I was able to research this story in depth. Although I come from this village and lived there for the first nineteen years of my life, and although I am from the family of Wiktoria Ulma, née Niemczak, who was my grandmother's sister and my father's godmother, I was able to research this story in depth. However, I did not deal with it in my professional work for years. It wasn't until in 2003 while at church that I heard of the start of





Reszel (in the middle), daughter of the Weltzes, probably with people from the Tencer family. This photograph – bearing visible traces of blood – was found in the house of the Ulmas on 24 March 1944. Photo from the collection of Mateusz Szpytma

the beatification process, that I suddenly felt an impulse. I realised that I was from this village, that I am a relative, that I have been working for the IPN for almost three years and that I must do something about it. After all, apart from a small note about Józef Ulma, as such, an interesting citizen of Markowa, apart from his name on the common plaque dedicated to those who ‘died at the hands of the Nazis or after the war at the hands of the fascists for consolidation of people’s power’ – they had nothing more. There were about two sentences in some book. At the time, I was working as an expert for the Prosecution Commission, that is, a historian cooperating with prosecutors. I thought that since I had encountered so many cases of murdered people who are commemorated, who have their own plaques and monuments, then maybe I too could do the same. I wanted to commemorate people from my village with a permanent, commemorative stone and a book. I then went to the head of the Kraków branch, Mr Janusz Kurtyka, and I told him that I had such a story in my family...

That, admittedly, the story did not concern the Kraków branch but the Rzeszów branch, but I asked if I could take care of it. He gave me the green light. Then I got very involved, reaching out for documents, people, materials and photographs. On the one hand, this story is not unusual, because after all, about a thousand Poles were killed for helping Jews. But on the other hand, the drama of it all is terrible, so many children died... even one unborn child. The amazing thing is, that so much material has survived. I was so drawn into it that I am still immersed in the story to this day.



Józef and Wiktoria Ulma. Photo from the collection of Mateusz Szpytma

Was there a conviction in Markowa that you had heroes in your midst, who died...

Awareness was widespread, but people did not realise just how terrible a course these occurrences had taken. It was treated as something typical of the times of this cruel war. Of course, the family remembered what it was like. I found out about it because I enjoyed looking through the photos in the family album. I recognised people in them, I knew something about everyone. But there was also a group of photos in which I knew absolutely no one by sight. For years they were the least important to me. However, when, as a young boy, I asked about them, I was told that these were the Ulmas, who had been murdered by the Germans.

What did you manage to establish?

The circumstances of this crime have been established. Records have been preserved from the trial of Josef Kokott, the young gendarme who murdered the largest number of people. He came from Opavian Silesia, today 7 km from the Polish border. It is this patch of German Silesia, which was incorporated into Czechoslovakia after the First World War. He declared himself, in 1939, as a German although he spoke Czech and a little Polish. I managed to establish the surnames of the Jews hiding in Markowa, including those of the Jews hiding at the Ulmas, and the first names of some of them. Then an employee of the Ulma Museum, Kamil Kopera, established the names of four more Jews and one Jewish woman. So today we know all the names of the Jews hidden by the Ulmas. When the monument was created, we still used the nickname Szallow-Goldman, and Szallow was a nickname stemming from 'Saul.' We have identified them all. We have also managed to find documents that tell us who might have denounced them. The documents of the Polish underground appear to show that it was, as suspected, a Blue Policeman – Włodzimierz Leś. He had cooperated zealously with the Germans during the occupation. I do not definitively say that he was the one who informed on them, but he certainly took part in the

crime. He was in the guard, and helped the gendarmes. It was he who, on 10 September 1944, was executed by a sentence of the Polish Underground State. We do not know exactly for which specific acts, but certainly for collaboration with the Germans. I managed to establish and get to know the pre-war Jewish community of Markowa, finding out where they lived and how many of them there were – about 120. I established the details of the commander of the execution squad that killed them. So far it was only known that his name was Eilert Dieken because that is what his subordinate Kokott stated in the files. Some historian wrote that this German had died in Germany and was difficult to find. I searched for him for many years in various ways, because not much survived in the archives. Every now and then I typed his name into Google and finally, after a few years, I found that in 1953, a man with that name and surname took part in the tender for the renovation of a station in Esens. He had such a rare name. I wrote a short letter to the German police in 2011 that we were looking for information about Eilert Dieken, who was on military duty in Łańcut, and I gave it to the director of the Museum-Castle in Łańcut, Poland, which at that time had started to work on the construction of the Ulma Museum. As luck would have it, the letter was signed by the deputy director, whose surname is Ulma. She is not a relative of Józef Ulma, but the identical surname helped a lot. The addressees recognised the fact that the Ulmas were making themselves a family museum. In the West, if someone is rich, they can make a memorial chamber in their home or a public place. This was thought to be the case. The station where Dieken had been, sent us some photos of him among the gendarmes from the 1950s. These were from some sort of jubilee – with champagne glasses in hand. We managed to recognise him in them, although he was barely visible. The big surprise was that a year and a half later, Dieken's daughter wrote to me. It turned out that the officer was reasonably well-known, having died in 1960. My letter was given to his daughter – informing her that someone in Poland was interested in her father. She wrote such a shocking letter, which found its way to the museum. She wrote that it was very good that the Ulma Museum was being created and she was glad that her father will be commemorated there, as he was a very good man. 'To my joy I know that as a result of his activities he did a lot of good to people. Anyway, I wouldn't expect anything else from him.' He was such a good father. She was delighted that he would be mentioned there and to this end she sent a photograph – from the war in full German gendarmerie uniform. She wanted to be invited to the opening of the museum. I went to see her with the director, Mr Mariusz Pilis, who was so shocked by this that he said he would make a documentary about it. I prepared myself very well and had all the documents concerning Dieken (in German). Even the ones that showed he received the Iron Cross in 1944 in the early summer. At first, I thought he had received it for the Ulmas, but it turned out that the application

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had been made a month earlier. He received it after the execution. I wanted to give it to her. Yet when I walked into a room in the nursing home and saw an old woman, I decided that I did not want to be guilty of a shock that might have led to a shortening of her life, because, after all, she is not responsible for what her father did. I sat down and asked only what she remembered about her father. After listening to her, I asked, if she wanted me to tell what I knew. She did not want to. So I said only that we had a completely different picture of him. 'If you have the strength and readiness, then I leave it all in the envelope. I'm not going to say what's in it, but I leave it for you to decide, because these are difficult matters, very difficult,' I said. I left her my card and added that if she wants to talk about it, she could call me at any time. I didn't say anything to her about her father. And she told me – apart from those things about his career and his service record – that when he did come home on leave, he would say that everything he did was secret, and he didn't talk to anyone about it.

So that seems to be the easiest way out.

And she also said that he was friends with Poles. I asked her: which Poles was he friends with? She replied that with the apple sellers at the market in Łańcut.

Was Dieken somehow particularly zealous in fulfilling his duties?

I think he was a standard officer- executioner; as a commander he participated only in major actions. Though he certainly had cruel subordinates. Among them the youngest was Josef Kokott, who, when he began his service in Łańcut in 1941, was just over nineteen years of age. However, in the case of the Ulma family, it turned out that Dieken, too, was also a ruthless murderer. From the IPN's findings published in the dictionary *Represje za pomoc Żydom* (Repressions for Aiding Jews) we know, that in occupied Mazovia it was not uncommon for adults helping Jews being murdered, or only those who were aware of German decrees, i.e. also teenagers. Infants and small children were spared. In contrast, this unit murdered Jews and then Józef and Wiktoria Ulma, and then a meeting was conducted to discuss what to do with the children. Dieken decided, however, that it was necessary to murder everyone. It was he who gave the order. When the village leader was brought in to bury the bodies shortly after the crime, who, knowing Dieken from the constant requisitions in Markowa and



Josef Kokott. Photo: AIPN



Eilert Dieken. Photo from the collection of the Museum of Poles Saving Jews

having some boldness, asked: ‘Commandant, and why was it necessary to murder those children too, after all they were innocent?’ To which the German escaped into irony – and all this is recorded in the documents. He replied: ‘So that the bunch wouldn’t have any trouble with them.’ That is, so that you don’t have any trouble with them. Ironically in the style of ... we did it for you. Interestingly, Dieken was not a Nazi in the formal sense.

#### How does one know this?

Because I wrote a letter in 2015 to Thomas de Maiziere, the Minister of the Interior of the Federal Republic of Germany. I described that I was investigating such a case and asked that the file of this gendarme be found for me. The Interior Ministry there decreed it to the archives and sent me the documents. I read from them that he was not a member of the NSDAP. On the other hand – and this is interesting – he had denied his Protestant faith before the war. In the questionnaire he indicated that he did not want to be a Christian, and gave as his reason his unwillingness to pay the church tax.

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On the crime itself, everything has been established. Has it been discovered what motivated the Ulmas that they agreed to take in Jews?

This is difficult to establish because, understandably, no diaries, memoirs, nor chronicles have survived. The Ulmas did not mention it either, so we are subject here to circumstantial evidence. This is a question more for the postulator of the beatification process. What is known is their life before the war, how they were perceived by the people and how they functioned. It can be assumed that the desire to help a person in danger stemmed from Christian motives. For in their home the book *Biblical Acts* was found with underlined passages: the parable of the merciful Samaritan and the doctrine of the love of neighbours... This was most likely the basis for their conduct. As a historian it is difficult for me to say anything more.

There is also this other circumstance indicating that the Ulmas did not gain material benefits, they did not take payment for saving these Jews lives. After all, a box was found with valuables next to one of the murdered individuals.

I think that these Jews contributed to their upkeep because that is natural. Whereas, we have no indication that they paid for their stay. It is a fact, that at the end of the occupation, this woman had such meagre decorative trinkets on her, also indicates that the help was selfless. Otherwise someone would have tried to take them from her. These valuables were seized by the gendarmerie.

Józef Ulma in the garden. Photo from the collection of Mateusz Szpytma



## How Heroism Overcame Fear



The Goldmans (nicknamed the Szalls) cutting and chopping firewood in the farmyard of the Ulmas, where they were hiding, Markowa, between 1942 and 1944. Photo from the collection of Mateusz Szpytma

Today there are those who say that accepting some form or type of payment is already proof that it was not disinterested help.

This can only be said by people who do not know the realities of the occupation.

Jerzy Koźmiński told me how Jews were hidden in his family. One of them was a watchmaker. He would take broken watches from wherever he could because there was money for each repair. The Koźmińskis were hiding 23 Jews, so it took a lot of money to support them. They went to great lengths to obtain funds to feed them. It was probably similar in the case of the Ulmas. Somehow, they managed, but the help itself was selfless.

This is evidenced by the possession of valuables by one of the Jewish women after fifteen months in hiding. From my research, it seems most likely that the Ulmas had been hiding Jews for just that long until their execution. From December 1942 to March 1944. We know that during the war everyone living in the Ulmas' home made a living by tanning leather, among other things.

Are there any traces that the Ulmas also helped other Jews. Has it been possible to find any evidence of this sort during the research? Were there any messages in the family?

Józef Ulma's brother knew about it, and it was later confirmed to me by other people, that Józef had previously helped the Ryfek family (they had this nickname: Ryfki). Probably, I am referring to the Tencer family. Józef probably helped them when they had a dugout outside the village in the bushes by the streams. They



The Ulma children.  
Photo from the  
collection of  
Mateusz Szpytma

were discovered and murdered. We must remember that from 1 August 1942, Jews were not allowed to live in Markowa. They had to be either in the ghetto in Łańcut or in the labour camp in Pełkiny. There were almost sixty people, or about half of those who had lived there before the war. Some fled or were removed by the Germans to the East already in September 1939. Only a handful of Markowa Jews reported to the ghetto.

#### Did the Germans know of such things from the population registry?

Well, that's right, and they knew that you had to search, and they ordered searches, manhunts, which had to be carried out by policemen, hostages and district firemen. The inhabitants had to go with the Blue Policemen and look for Jews. It is not known whether at least one German was present at this search – rather not, but there was an order, under penalty of death, that one had to search. Most probably 25 Jews were rounded up. Less than half of those in hiding. They were taken into communal custody. The German gendarmerie was notified, and all this happened on 13 December 1942. On the morning of 14 December, the Germans arrived and shot all the detained Jews. By then it was clear that it was impossible to survive



in the dugouts, and the time of year was not favourable either. What happened at the Ulmas' was part of what happened after these searches and sweeps. Those 25 Jews were executed, but the rest continued to get shelter in peasants' houses. They all survived except for the eight who were with the Ulmas. I am very impressed by the heroism of the Poles who continued to hide Jews after the death of the Ulmas.

Is this not greater heroism than that of the Ulmas themselves?

The Ulmas were shot, and these other families were not even frightened of being shot. Heroism overcame fear.

This is extraordinary. After all, the Ulmas were ruthlessly murdered together with all their children. We know that the subsequent executions made many Poles not want to continue taking the risk. Markowa must have had an exceptionally good reputation, because, after all, Jews also came there from outside; the Goldmans were from Łańcut.

This is puzzling because, after all, before the war this village hardly distinguished itself from other neighbouring villages in terms of Polish-Jewish relations. And here, after all, there were also roundups of Jews from 1942, which the Polish inhabitants had to carry out on German orders. Markowa, however, is the largest village, very cohesive (only a few of its inhabitants here did not have ancestors dating back to the 14th century), and a significant group of farmers were quite wealthy and had food reserves. In Markowa, the Jewish-neighbours and those from outside the village were in hiding. But the latter were either related to the Markowa Jews, or they came from the nearby area and were well known by the Polish villagers.

How did you manage to establish the names of the other Jews hidden in Markowa?

This was the result of my research into the Ulma family. I decided that I could not limit myself to describe only their story, but I should research all the other stories, which ended positively, as well as those in which the inhabitants did not play such a glorious role. Before I tackled these topics, it was in the literature, i.e. a village monograph from 1993, where there was information about 13 Jews who survived the occupation, and

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today we know that there were in fact 21. However, this is much more than before the detailed research was undertaken. If every village, like Markowa, had its own regional researchers, then not only monographs of individual villages, but Polish history textbooks would provide more complete knowledge, including the number of rescued or saved Jewish people. From my own experience I can say that this is often like detective work. This is a task for historians-regionalists because the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) cannot investigate every village or even every district. I must admit that if I had not come from Markowa, I would not have established these facts either, because, firstly, not everything would have been told to me (some of the facts can only be established by talking to living witnesses), and secondly, I don't know if I would have spent so many weeks to establish sometimes a single detail. With willpower and diligence, however, a lot can be done.

How did the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews during WW II come about?

After the unveiling of the monument to the Ulma family in 2004, Abraham Segal – one of the Jews who survived the occupation in Markowa, disseminated this story in Israel. And since the Ulmas already had the Yad Vashem medal, this attracted the interest of tour operators, who started to bring thousands of young

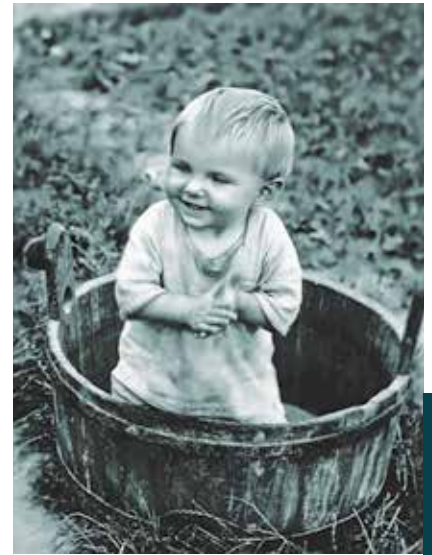


The Ulma children in the summer of 1943; from the left: Franuś, Stasia, Basia, and Badzio. Photo from the collection of Mateusz Szpytma

Israelis to the grave of the Ulmas. Since there were about 5,000 of them a year, and they came in waves, sometimes in eight to ten buses at a time, so I thought it would be worthwhile to have a place where they could stop and learn about the history of the Ulma family in peace. This coincided not only with the creation of my books about the Ulmas, but also with the scientific and documentary work of the IPN Branch in Rzeszów, especially Prof. Elżbieta Rączka and Igor Witowicz on the rescuing of Jews throughout the province, which made it possible to expand the subject matter in the future museum facility. And so, together with one of the town councillors, Bogdan Romaniuk, we got the local government of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship interested in this project, which realised this investment through the Castle Museum in Łańcut and opened the facility in 2016. It would not have been created without the Institute of National Remembrance, which provided the entire substantive development material for the permanent exhibition. The creation of this museum was one of the most difficult matters in my life. I took a long unpaid leave of absence from the Institute of National Remembrance and moved to the countryside for fifteen months to make it happen. This museum is about all the Poles who saved Jews. We outline there the whole situation and Polish-Jewish relations. Not just the positive ones, but all of them. We show the denunciations and those searches for Jews, which of course happened, but above all we show and celebrate the Heroes and the rescue of people in desperate circumstances.

There is a second place in Markowa, which also contains mementos of those who were hidden and those who were hiding Jews.

The museum does not have the authentic Ulma house (it has not survived to the present day). Many visitors were particularly interested in the appearance and conditions of the houses in which Jews were hidden. While managing the Ulma Museum for several months, I found out that one of the houses in which Jews were rescued was scheduled for demolition. I persuaded the Society of Friends of the Museum to purchase it, and thanks to the commitment of its activists, the Szylar house joined the dozen or so buildings



Marysia – the youngest Ulma child.  
Photo from the collection  
of Mateusz Szpytma



The Ulma Family  
Museum of Poles  
Saving Jews  
During WW II  
in Markowa.  
Photo: Sławomir  
Kasper / IPN

found thusfar and converted into the open-air museum. In this house, the hosts rescued seven Weltz family members who, after the war, left for the USA and settled in Brooklyn. The Szylar family kept in touch with them for many more years.

[Did you meet any families like the Ulmas during your research?](#)

In addition to the Ulmas, I learned the story of the Baranek family. When the symbolic memorial anniversary of their death was approaching, I went to Miechów, to the mayor's office, to organise a commemorative ceremony for them. He agreed. I then met members of this family who still lived at the scene of this crime. They were relatives of this family, because all the Baraneks (in a straight line) had been murdered, just like the Ulma family. Someone told me that he could show me the place where they were murdered.

He led me to a barn, and there was a door that had survived for eighty years. We look at that door, and there were bullet marks on it. The host told me that there were crosses drawn in chalk over these marks. Then he added that the barn was about to be demolished because it was falling apart. I then replied that

I would take this door to the museum. This way, more people also know about the Baranek family.

How many cases are there of the involvement of whole families who suffered repression?

I have not counted this. I estimate that there were about a thousand Poles murdered for helping Jews. In addition to that, there are those who ended up in camps.

It is said that the history of the Holocaust has been commemorated by high-quality Hollywood films. We on the subject of Poles rescuing Jews have mainly documentary productions. Will feature films of greater scope and for a wider audience be made?

I hope so because this is a story that should be shown. There will probably be films connected with the upcoming beatification.

The Pope has announced that the beatification of the Ulmas will take place on 10 September 2023 and interest in their story has increased. Markowa, with a population of 4,100 people, became known worldwide. Will this worldwide coverage of the Ulma story contribute to greater interest in the Poles who rescued Jews – as we, the Polish nation and state, were often in the past placed in the dock alongside the Germans?

This was due to ignorance or lies, of which there are many concerning the German occupation in Poland. The Ulma's case illustrates the repressiveness of the German war machine against the Poles. In our country, death was the punishment for many acts. There is the hope that people all over the world through the Ulmas will also learn about other stories of Poles rescuing Jews. This is also the purpose behind the creation of the museum. I could have only prepared an Ulma family commemoration, but the idea was broader. That is why its exhibitions are described in Polish, English and Hebrew. I hope that this is the beginning of the true story of what happened in our country during the war.



Łucja and Wincenty Baranek.  
Photo: AIPN



Tomasz Domański,  
Alicja Gontarek

## What Do We Know About the Aid Poles Gave to the Jews During WW II?

The aid provided by Poles to the Jews in the occupied territories of Poland during WW II is one of the most important issues being researched within the broader framework of Polish-Jewish relations during WW II. The recently published comprehensive collective work entitled *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom pod okupacją niemiecką* (The State of Research on Assistance to Jews under the German Occupation) proves that, contrary to popular opinion, also formulated and disseminated by some members of the academic community, we are far from any final conclusions regarding the scale of assistance and its topography (villages, towns, certain regions of German-Nazi occupied Poland). Nor have we systematised the terms we use to describe the subject of aid to the Jews.<sup>1</sup> Given that aid to the Jews was initially a grassroots reaction to the Holocaust and later became part of the official policy of the authorities of the Polish Underground State, the analysis of the above issue should begin with a presentation of the occupation-era context.

### What Was the German Occupation?

The issue of aid to the Jews is inextricably linked to the Holocaust perpetrated by the German state and the occupation that lasted from 1939 to 1945. The occupying forces made the conquered Polish territories the central site of the Holocaust. It is generally accepted that the Holocaust took place in three phases. The first, known as the period of ghettoization, consisted of the stigmatisation and dishonouring of persons of Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką. Przegląd piśmiennictwa*, eds. T. Domański, A. Gontarek, Warsaw–Kielce 2022.

nationality (e.g. the obligation to wear a Star of David armband), their economic and social degradation, their segregation in ghettos and the brutal exploitation and plundering of their property. Several thousand Jews had already been murdered by the Germans in September and October 1939. As a result of the disastrous living conditions created by the German occupation authorities, tens of thousands of Jews in the Polish territories died of starvation and work exhaustion already during the ghettoization phase (e.g. the Litzmanstadt (Łódź) ghetto was referred to as the ‘morgue of Europe’). The second stage of the Holocaust was the planned liquidation of Jewish people. In the summer of 1941, following the Third Reich’s aggression against the Soviet Union, the *Einsatzgruppen* (EG – Operational Groups of the Security Police) moved in behind the Wehrmacht troops and murdered hundreds of thousands of Jews, including Polish Jews, citizens of the Polish Second Republic till recently living under Soviet occupation. It is worth noting that the activities of the EG claimed its first Jewish-Polish victims as early as the autumn of 1939, when the Third Reich launched its aggression against Poland. In the second half of 1941, the decision was taken in the highest circles of the Third Reich to exterminate all representatives of the Jewish nationality within its sphere of influence. In December 1941, the German authorities opened the first mass extermination camp for Jews on occupied Polish territory (territory incorporated into the Third Reich) at Kulmhof am Nehr (Chełmno nad Nerem). In particular, Jews from the *Warthegau* (an incorporated region of Greater Poland and adjacent areas – JCz translator note) were murdered there. The main part of the extermination process on the territory of the General Government was carried out by the German state between 1942 and 1943 under the code name Operation Reinhardt. It involved the deportation of the Jewish population to extermination camps (Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka) and periodic extermination camps (KL Lublin, Majdanek). Operation Reinhardt claimed the lives of approximately 2 million Jews in this two-year period. Not only Polish Jews perished in the above camps, but also those brought there by the Germans from all over Europe. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Germans murdered 57,500 Jews from Białystok (deported from the Białystok district), 68,600 Jews from Łódź (deported from the *Litzmannstadt* ghetto), and Jews from Upper Silesia and the Zagłębie Dąbrowskie region. The third stage of the genocide throughout the occupied Polish territories, the *Judenjagd*, consisted of the persecution and murder of any Jew found outside a designated place (e.g. a labour camp).<sup>2</sup> During the

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<sup>2</sup> On the subject of the Holocaust, see D. Libionka, *Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie* (Annihilation of Jews in the General Government), Lublin 2017; R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich* (Annihilation of European Jews), vol. 1–3, Warsaw 2014.



various stages of the Holocaust perpetrated by the German state, many Jews – estimates range from around 230,000 to 300,000 – tried to save their lives and those of their relatives. It is estimated that 3.3–3.4 million Jews lived in Poland just before the outbreak of WW II. According to the latest findings, 1–3.5 per cent of Polish Jews survived the German occupation. However, including those who found themselves in the Soviet Union, as few as 10 per cent lived to see the end of the war.

Rescuing Jews became particularly important during the third phase of the Holocaust. It was then that the greatest number of Jews, sensing their fate, decided to seek rescue, most often from the local population, which the Germans designated as Aryan according to racial criteria. It can be assumed that those who tried to survive the Holocaust had a choice between two paths. The first, according to Emanuel Ringelblum, was to live ‘just below the surface,’ in total hiding, but retaining their Jewish identity, while the second was to try to integrate into Polish society, i.e. to live ‘on the surface.’<sup>3</sup> One researcher suggested an intermediate option, i.e. living ‘near the surface.’<sup>4</sup> Whichever of these paths was chosen, one was in contact with the occupational reality created by the Germans outside the ghetto walls. It is therefore worth examining what this reality was like and what as the result were the possibilities for helping Jews in the face of the Holocaust.

Relief activities were influenced by German racist policies towards the Polish population and general assumptions about the fate of the conquered Polish territories. The occupier’s plans differed regarding the territories incorporated into the Third Reich (Pomerania, Silesia, Greater Poland and part of the Łódź area), the central territories, i.e. the quasi-state creation known as the General Government, and the eastern territories (after 1941). According to German assumptions, the territories incorporated into the Third Reich should quickly become purely German (Germanised), without any Poles or Jews. This goal was served primarily by the murder (e.g. as part of the so-called Pomeranian Crime) of 30 to 50,000 representatives of the Polish elite (Polish leadership of various social groups) and the deportation of Poles (and Jews) to the General Government, as well as by the policy of populating the annexed territories with German settlers. As a result of German policy, most of the Jews, for example from the Pomeranian Voivodeship, were

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<sup>3</sup> E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie II wojny światowej* (Polish-Jewish Relations During WW II), Warsaw 1988, p. 80 ff.

<sup>4</sup> J. Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Strategie przetrwania. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy* (Strategies of Survival. Jews on the Aryan Side of Warsaw), Warsaw 2004, p. 50.

Skarżysko-Kamienna, dnia 22. 4. 1943 r.

*Zgłosz. dnia 22. 4. 1943 r.  
Lpoda 17.10*

## OGŁOSZENIE

Mimo zakazu kierownika Policji SS i naszego ogłoszenia z dnia 31. 3. 43 r. w którym wyraźnie z  
znaczaliśmy, że kara śmierci czeka każdego, kto w jakikolwiek sposób pomoże  
żydom do ucieczki, czy to przez donoszenie wiadomości, podawanie artykułów żywnoś-  
ciowych lub też tranzakcji pieniężnych,

### pracownik TADEUSZ NOWAK

nie zważając na rozporządzenie policyjne i nasze ostrzeżenie dopuścił się tego przestępstwa kilka-  
krotnie i to jak sam zeznał załatwiał tranzakcje pieniężne dla żydów na okrągłą sumę

20.000 - dwudziestu tysięcy złotych.

Niniejszym ogłoszeniem kierownik Policji SS w Radomiu udziela amnestji dla wszystkich dotych-  
czasowych przestępców. W przyszłości jednak każdego, któremu zostanie udowodnione podobne  
przestępstwo, czeka los NOWAKA

### PRACOWNICY!

Dyrekcja apeluje do waszego sumienia. Popatrzcie wstecz, wspomnijcie czasy, kiedy żydzi was  
wyzyskiwali i wyszali do szpiku kości, pomyślcie o bolszewickim barbarzyństwie w lesie Kartyńskim

dwanaście tysięcy polskich oficerów zanordowanych.

Jest przecież dla każdego całkiem jasne, że sprawcami są żydzi.

Kto pomaga żydom, mordercom swych braci i kolegów, jest zdrajcą.

**DYREKCJA**

Announcement of the execution of Tadeusz Nowak for helping Jews in the Hasag in Skarżysko-Kamienna. From the collection of the Institute of National Remembrance

deported to the General Government or murdered. Only a small percentage of the remaining Jews could be helped there.<sup>5</sup> In the territories incorporated into the Third Reich, ethnic Poles experienced various forms of extermination, physical persecution, repression, legal disenfranchisement, surveillance, Germanisation, resettlement and dispossession.<sup>6</sup> Extremely difficult living conditions turned their lives into a state of terror-induced vegetation, which severely limited their ability to help the Jews.

On the other hand, in the Polish Eastern Borderlands (the *Reichskommissariat Ostland* and the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine*), the German occupier, in pursuit of its war aims, clearly favoured (and antagonised) other national minorities – Lithuanians, Belarusians and Ukrainians (also in the eastern parts of the General Government) – at the expense of Poles and Jews. The German nationality policy consisted, among other things, in filling local administrative posts with representatives of the former minorities and in creating auxiliary police units. Poles who tried to help the Jews thus had to reckon with the ethnic conflict that arose during the German occupation, symbolised by the Volhynia Crime. In the voivodeship of Volhynia alone, an estimated 60,000 Poles were murdered by extreme Ukrainian nationalists, and an unknown number fled to the region's larger cities or towns or to the General Government, where there was no such threat. During raids on ethnic Polish concentrations, the aggressors also murdered discovered Jews who had been hidden by some Poles.

From the perspective of the anti-Jewish policy of the German state, the key factors turned out to be, above all, the greater possibilities of providing aid that existed in the central Polish territories, in the General Government. This area should therefore be given considerably more space in any analysis of the conditions for such aid.

The situation of the Polish population here was somewhat more favourable than in the areas incorporated into the Third Reich or in the eastern borderlands, although the German political and legal objectives were to turn the General Government into a reservoir of cheap labour and a raw material and food supply base for the Third Reich. To this end, in 1940, the German authorities carried out the liquidation of the

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<sup>5</sup> T. Ceran, M. Tomkiewicz, *Polacy ratujący Żydów na terenie przedwojennego województwa pomorskiego w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (Poles Rescuing Jews on the Territory of the Pre-war Pomorskie Voivodeship During the German Occupation) [in:] *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom...*, pp. 531–545.

<sup>6</sup> A. Namysło, *Po tej stronie był również Człowiek. Mieszkańcy przedwojennego województwa śląskiego z pomocą Żydom w okresie II wojny światowej* (On This Side There Was Also a Human Being. Residents of the Pre-war Silesian Voivodeship with Their Assistance to Jews During WW II), Katowice–Warsaw 2021, pp. 45–47.



Janina Luidor (first on the right) rescued by the Wróblewski family in Mirocice (Kielce district). Photo from the collection of the Institute of National Remembrance

Polish intelligentsia (landowners, clergy, teachers, social activists), which had previously been initiated in the incorporated territories, as part of the *Ausserordentliche Befriedungsaktion* (Extraordinary Pacification Campaign). It resulted in the deaths of 6,500 people. Similar measures were carried out in the subsequent years.

The remaining part of the population was to be turned into a submissive mass by German order, deprived of access to culture and education beyond the permitted minimum (cheap entertainment, primary education). A system of conscription for forced labour in the Third Reich was introduced, as well as compulsory labour and forced quotas for agricultural production, which proved particularly harsh in areas with backward agricultural structure (e.g. small farms in the Kielce region). As a result of these policies, the German state deported nearly 1.7 million Poles<sup>7</sup> to forced labour and drained millions of tonnes of food from the Polish countryside. Quotas and other forms of economic and human plunder were carried out by the German authorities with extreme brutality, which is why, especially in 1942–1945, the presence of German police formations in the General Government and the rest of Poland was widespread, increasing ever more the threat to those who rescued Jews. Unfortunately, some authors who describe the context of the relief effort mistakenly write about the absence of Germans in the villages between 1942 and 1945.

The shortage of food became a huge social problem, causing the prices of all products to rise several dozen times compared to the pre-war period, while nominal wages and social benefits were frozen (Jews could not benefit from them). The lack of food also became an indirect method of exterminating the Jews in the ghettos.

Furthermore, according to the racial criterion introduced by the Germans, different food standards were applied to Germans and other (far lower) standards to Poles or Jews. Free trade in basic products (e.g. grain, meat) was prohibited. Legally, food could only be obtained through ration cards, which in the case of Poles covered about 30–40 per cent of their dietary needs. People who could not function in the legal system, such as the Jews after 1942, had to obtain their supplies on the so-called black market. It is therefore not surprising that it became a common phenomenon, even in the villages, for Jews themselves to help one another with financial aid, especially for the purchase of food or medicine.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This statistic includes the General Government and the lands incorporated into the Third Reich. C. Łuczak, *Polityka ekonomiczna Trzeciej Rzeszy w latach II wojny światowej* (Economic Policy of the Third Reich in the Years of WW II), Poznań 1982, p. 361.

<sup>8</sup> This aspect of the occupation reality is discussed more extensively by G. Berend in this booklet.

In the General Government, any passive or armed resistance to the German authorities and the regulations they imposed, including underground activity, was bloodily suppressed – those found guilty were held individually and collectively responsible. The reality of the occupation was accompanied by terror in the form of public and mass executions (individual and collective) in towns and villages and at hundreds of execution sites; pacifications (burning down entire villages or parts of villages and murdering their inhabitants – including burning them alive)<sup>9</sup>; terrorist and reprisal actions that resulted in the deaths of many people; and everyday violence associated with deportations to concentration camps or forced labour camps, with roundups for work or the collection of quotas. According to historians, the Germans pacified more than 800 villages within the borders of present-day Poland alone. The use of the most brutal methods to combat resistance meant that German units, small in relation to the total population, but mobile and well-armed, were able to terrorise the local population effectively.

The General Government also became a site for the implementation of German colonisation policy. During 'Operation Zamość,' from the autumn of 1942, the Germans emptied 293 villages and displaced 110,000 Poles and replaced them with some 12–13,000 German settlers. Of the expelled Poles, about 11,000 were deported to Auschwitz and KL Lublin (Majdanek), where many died. The children of *Zamojszczyzna* (the Zamość region) became a symbol of Germanisation. In addition, the Germans evacuated hundreds of villages which they used as training grounds for the Wehrmacht (e.g. in the Radom district). In turn, mass deportations of Poles from areas incorporated into the General Government led to severe overcrowding and enormous housing problems, exacerbated in the second half of 1944 by the frontline situation. In the frontline belt, entire areas were destroyed, civilians displaced and abandoned neighbourhoods occupied by the Wehrmacht.

The ability to help Jews, or even to continue passive resistance to German authority, was affected not only by the threat of the death penalty and brutal terror, but also by German social engineering. This consisted of the introduction of orders and prohibitions that led to social disintegration, coercive self-regulating behavioural mechanisms at a scale abnormal in a healthy society, or to denunciations in towns and villages. One can therefore speak of the extraordinary perfidy of the German occupiers and of the entire occupation system.

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<sup>9</sup> See J. Fajkowski, J. Religa, *Zbrodnie hitlerowskie na wsi polskiej 1939–1945* (Nazi Crimes in the Polish Countryside 1939–1945), Warsaw 1981, p. 18.

## Assistance Offered to Jews – Death and Repression for Helping the Jewish People

Terror that became the Germans' main method of administering the conquered Polish territories during WW II also affected those Poles who decided to lend a helping hand to the Jews. From the very beginning of the WWII occupation period, the German authorities tried to disrupt and break up Polish-Jewish contacts.

They did not succeed completely, either by surrounding the ghettos with walls or with the help of anti-Jewish propaganda spread by the Germans, based on German racial legislation. Nor did the common Polish-Jewish historical background stand in the way of relief efforts. Undoubtedly, the anti-Semitism that existed in pre-war Poland did not disappear with the war. However, the extent of Polish aid to the Jews was determined primarily by the conditions of occupation created by the Germans. The extent of the broadly-understood assistance provided by the Poles to the Jews must have been noticeable because on 15 October 1941 the General Government issued the Third Residence Restriction Ordinance, signed by Governor General Dr Hans Frank, which introduced the death penalty for Jews who arbitrarily left their 'assigned district.' The same punishment was now also meted out to those who, according to the ordinance, knowingly provided shelter to 'fugitive' Jews. In the following months, the German occupation authorities, seeing the ineffectiveness of the already very restrictive law, clarified its provisions – finally deciding that any form of assistance would be punishable by death. Typically, posters announcing the death penalty for aiding Jews were distributed at every evacuation of a ghetto, large or small.<sup>10</sup> Along with the ban on any aid to Jews, the German authorities of the General Government also introduced a ban on the baptism of Jews on 10 October 1942. The coincidence with the ongoing Operation Reinhardt could not have been accidental, and for the Christian clergy it was a clear sign that the German authorities also interpreted baptism as aid.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This issue is discussed in detail in B. Musiał (in collaboration with O. Musiał), *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* (Who Will Aid the Jew...), [Poznań] 2019, pp. 76–100.

<sup>11</sup> For the full text of the document mentioning the baptism ban, see T. Domański, *Konwersje Żydów na katolicyzm w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie na przykładzie diecezji kieleckiej* (Conversions of Jews to Catholicism in the General Government on the Example of the Diocese of Kielce), *Polish-Jewish Studies* 2021, vol. 2, pp. 214–216.

It should also not be forgotten that the denunciation and surrender of Jews was made compulsory by the General Government based on the orders of 28 October and 10 November 1942: 'Whoever receives information that a Jew is staying illegally outside the Jewish residential area and does not report this to the police, will be subjected to police security measures....' In practice, these police measures meant being shot or sent to a concentration camp.<sup>12</sup>

The death penalty for aiding Jews was also applied in the Eastern areas of occupied Poland and in Serbia, although in the latter it was not enforced as effectively as in German-Nazi occupied Poland. Similarly draconian laws were not introduced in Western Europe. According to historical research, the German occupation in Western Europe was far more benign than in the eastern areas.

In addition, the Germans, wishing to limit Polish-Jewish contacts, used a system of incentives to track down Jews, which often proved effective in activating demoralised individuals. Some individuals from the extended fringes of society attempted to blackmail or denounce Jews in hiding, thus turning this activity into a source of livelihood. A clear distinction must therefore be made between anti-Jewish acts committed under duress and those committed voluntarily, motivated for example by anti-Semitism. These shameful acts were combated as far as possible by the Polish Underground State, although it was not until March 1943 that this information began to be made public.

It is also worth noting that the trial of those caught 'helping' Jews was handled by the *Sondergerichte* (German Special Courts), which did not always apply the highest level of punishment. Accused Poles were sentenced to imprisonment, deportation to a concentration camp (where many died or were murdered) or even acquittal. Proceedings were initiated when the 'crime' of aiding Jews was classified as an administrative offence. However, no one who decided to help could predict just how the German police units (*Sicherheitspolizei* – security police; *Ordnungspolizei* – order police), who were investigating the case directly at the scene of the 'crime,' would act in each situation. Their officers often deviated from bureaucratic procedures and administered 'justice' on the spot, without making a secret of it. On the contrary, the sounds of murdered people and the glow of burning buildings were meant to be a warning and a threat to the rest of the population.

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<sup>12</sup> B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...*, p. 193.



In every district of the General Government bloody reprisals were carried out against the Jews and the Poles who supported them. Most often, such methods were used against villagers who violated German orders in Jewish policy. Many such cases can be presented based on existing writings, especially those produced with the participation of researchers from the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN). One of the best-known examples of German bestiality is the story of the Ulma and Kowalski families.<sup>13</sup> In the cities, probably for logistical reasons, such brutal forms of repression did not occur.

It is important to recall and emphasise that even trading with Jews in the ghetto or with Jewish workers in labour camps was treated by the Germans as a crime of ‘aiding Jews.’ On more than one occasion, the names of those condemned to death were published in widely circulated official German announcements – *Bekanntmachung*.

### In the Sphere of Terms and Numbers

The historical judgement formulated many years ago by Marcin Urynowicz<sup>14</sup> about the profound neglect of research into the rescue of the Jews, and confirmed by recent findings in *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich* (The State of Research on Assistance to Jews in the Polish lands), also applies to the terms and definitions relevant to this issue. Terms such as ‘assistance’ and ‘rescue’ are usually used interchangeably, although they are not always identical.

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<sup>13</sup> From the numerous examples in literature see J.A. Młynarczyk, S. Piątkowski, *Cena poświęcenia. Zbrodnie na Polakach za pomoc udzieloną Żydom w rejonie Ciepeliowa* (Crimes Against Poles for Helping Jews in the Ciepeliów Area), Kraków 2007, pp. 75–115; M. Szpytma, *The Risk of Survival. The Rescue of the Jews by the Poles and the Tragic Consequences for the Ulma Family from Markowa*, Warsaw 2009; ‘Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje?...’ *Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (‘Who in Such Times Shelters the Jews?...’ Poles Assisting Jewish People During the German Occupation), ed. A. Namysło, Warsaw 2009; *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej* (Repression for Helping Jews in Occupied Polish Territories During WW II), eds. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, Warsaw 2019.

<sup>14</sup> M. Urynowicz, *Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej* (Organized and Individual Help of Poles to the Jewish Population Exterminated by the German Occupant During WW II) [in:] *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały* (Poles and Jews under the German Occupation 1939–1945: Studies and Materials), ed. A. Żbikowski, Warsaw 2006, p. 209.



Stanisław Kucharski, murdered on 25 September 1943, for helping Jews. Photo from the collection of the National Institute of Remembrance

Assistance is a broad term that includes life-saving actions. It should be recognised that rescue operations in the General Government administrative area can be traced back to 15 October 1941, when the Germans introduced the Third Residence Restriction Ordinance, under which Jews were punished with death for arbitrarily leaving places designated for them by the occupying forces, and Poles were punished for sheltering Jews and then for any assistance.<sup>15</sup> Rescue was thus an activity that lasted from the autumn of 1941 until the end of WW II. We are aware of the imperfections of this definition. We also assume that, in the complex reality of the German occupation, there may have been situations in which someone hid or was hidden much earlier, before the autumn of 1941. However, the date quoted above is symbolic and brings conceptual order to the phenomena analysed.

There is also a lack of in-depth scientific reflection on what the phenomenon of evacuation was in a broader sense, against the background of the complicated reality of the occupation years. The first works devoted to this phenomenon, written in the

<sup>15</sup> E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* (Polish Aid to the Jewish Population in the Rzeszów Region 1939–1945), Rzeszów 2008, p. 41; B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...*, p. 41.

1960s, already pointed out that it was undoubtedly a conspiratorial activity that required great determination, dedication, ingenuity and, very importantly, long-term and flexible planning and conceptualisation of activities. At the same time, the rescue activity required the use of various methods of action to minimise the risks involved in aiding, to protect the lives of the rescued Jews and the rescuers who decided to undertake this activity. The planning included, among other things, the creation of hiding places, the provision of food and all other necessary goods, the creation of a network of contacts, the production of documents that would enable the hiding of Jewish people.<sup>16</sup> The catalogue of these activities is very long, so it seems appropriate to introduce into the general lexicon a new research term to describe rescue actions. We are talking about Polish Rescue Strategies to help Jews in the face of the Holocaust. These strategies had to be sufficiently effective in the face of a very well-organised system of German law and terror aimed at discouraging help to the Jewish people under threat of severe repression, including the risk of losing one's life. A similar term, Jewish survival strategies, has been used in *Holocaust studies* for many years. It describes and helps to understand the process of struggle for life of the Jewish population under the German occupation. The term Polish Rescue Strategies is therefore an answer to the rightly raised question of what to call actions aimed at the simultaneous preservation of life by a person of Jewish nationality and by a representative of another nationality who rescues him/her. We are convinced that the introduction of this new term can contribute to a better understanding and problematisation of rescue processes, which are sometimes presented in a too atomised manner, as isolated and unrelated stories.

It is also worth considering what terms should be used to refer to those on the Aryan side who participated in the aid, i.e. Poles and representatives of other non-Jewish nations. Although the term 'Righteous' functions in the popular consciousness, it is important to realise that not everyone who helped was awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal after WW II. Many people did not receive this honour for various reasons. We can refer to such people as 'rescuers' to distinguish them from the group of recipients of the medal awarded by Yad Vashem in Israel.

In terms of basic (and currently functioning) concepts in the academic, journalistic and social sphere, we divide the assistance provided to Jews during WW II under German occupation into organised and individual,

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<sup>16</sup> *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej* (This One is From My Homeland), elabs. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinowna, Warsaw 1969; T. Berenstein, A. Rutkowski, *Pomoc Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Aid to Jews in Poland 1939–1945), Warsaw 1963.

although this is not the only typology we can propose. The former was provided by political parties, social and economic organisations and groups of citizens united by their social background (e.g. landowners) or their profession or occupation.<sup>17</sup> These groups formed larger or smaller informal underground support networks. Of particular importance, however, was the activity of Konrad Żegota's Committee for the Relief of Jews, which was founded on 27 September 1942 and in which more than 180 people participated. The Committee initiated the history of the 'Żegota' Council for the Relief of Jews, an underground organisation established on 4 December 1942 for the relief of Jews in occupied Poland, which operated within the structures of the Polish Underground State. Due to the difficult conditions of the occupation, Żegota covered only a few of the most important cities in the General Government, although people involved in its activities also tried to carry out smaller actions in the provinces.<sup>18</sup> Some of the aforementioned networks were closely or loosely connected with Żegota, or had no connection with it at all. The literature on the subject tells us that several thousand Jews in Warsaw on the Aryan side, especially children, were under the permanent care of this organisation. Unfortunately, we are unable to give the exact number of people who were helped by this organisation. For conspiratorial reasons, no such statistics were kept. Władysław Bartoszewski – a member of Żegota – stressed after the war that during the occupation tens of thousands of fake documents were issued to Jews to enable them to work outside the ghetto, but it is not known how many of them survived thanks to this.

The aid given to Jews during the occupation can also be characterised by the time factor. A distinction is therefore made between emergency aid, temporary aid and long-term aid. By emergency aid we mean help given in a specific situation, usually as a kind-hearted reaction. It could be showing a Jewish refugee the way, giving a piece of bread or medicine. Temporary help, on the other hand, might consist of giving shelter for a short period of time (e.g. a few days) or spontaneously giving food. The most self-sacrificing type of aid was long-term aid, which consisted of permanent or long-term shelter or systematic donations of food. These two elements most often determined the chances of surviving the Holocaust.

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<sup>17</sup> See M. Urynowicz, *Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc...*, pp. 214–217, 242–276.

<sup>18</sup> See T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945* (Conspiratorial Council to Aid Jews in Warsaw 1942–1945), Warsaw 1982, pp. 234–235, 237–238; M. Arczyński, W. Balcerek, *Kryptonim „Żegota”. Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Code-name „Żegota: On the History of Assistance to Jews in Poland 1939–1945), Warsaw 1983, pp. 93, 181.

The German state phased the Holocaust process, which resulted in different elements of assistance offered by Poles gaining distinct prominence, depending on the stage of the Holocaust. During the period of ghettoization (1939–1942), the most common forms of assistance included the provision of food, medicine and baptismal certificates or *Kennkarten* for the creation of a fake Aryan identity, as well as trade<sup>19</sup> (some of which was paid for). This type of assistance was also provided during and after Operation Reinhardt, when some of the Jews were imprisoned in labour camps known as *'Julags.'*

Another criterion for describing forms of aid is topography, both in the broad and narrow sense. It has already been mentioned that aid can be considered according to the area in which it was granted, i.e. in the General Government, the Eastern Borderlands and the areas incorporated into the Third Reich. According to another territorial criterion, towns and villages are treated separately, as are large urban centres and the province. As far as the urban-rural division is concerned, the results of the research have shown that most rescuers who individually decided to help Jews came from the countryside and from the largest cities of occupied Poland (Warsaw, Kraków, Lwów (Lvov)). The Germans were aware of this assistance (*Judenbegünstigung*)<sup>20</sup> and used the most brutal methods of anti-Jewish persecution against the inhabitants of the villages.

Compared to other places, the knowledge about the rescue of Jews in Warsaw is more detailed. According to estimates by Gunnar Paulsson, a total of 28,000 Jews<sup>21</sup> were in hiding there from the autumn of 1942. They were helped by between 70,000 and 90,000 Poles. The researcher called this phenomenon a 'hidden city.' He noted that it operated alongside underground Poland, the other 'hidden city,' and because it was in communication with it, the help provided by the Poles could be more effective. By comparison, Sweden, which was neutral during WW II, received about 9,000 refugees during the war.

Of the 28,000 Jews who found shelter with Poles in Warsaw, 11,500 survived, according to Gunnar Paulsson, a survival rate of 41 per cent. It is worth noting, however, that 61 per cent of those in hiding (17,000) survived the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. What was the practical nature of the Warsaw population's

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<sup>19</sup> S. Piątkowski, 'Aryan Papers'. *On the Help Provided by Poles in Legalising False Identities for Jews in the Territory of the General Governorate for the Occupied Polish Regions*, *Polish-Jewish Studies* 2020, no. 1, pp. 437–463.

<sup>20</sup> T. Domański, A. Gontarek, *Wstęp* (Introduction) [in:] *Stan badań nad pomocą...*, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Older literature refers to 15,000–20,000 Jews hiding in Warsaw.

attempt to protect the Jews? Well, as the above-mentioned historian speculates, if from October 1942 to August 1944 an average of about 20,000 Jews were hiding on the Aryan side of Warsaw, their hiding required the simultaneous preparation of 5,000 hiding places, looked after by 11,500 guards. The researcher claims that ‘the total number of hiding places needed during this period would have been 35,000 and the number of caretakers 80,500. Not all of them probably knew that they were helping Jews, although many of those who were not forewarned must have guessed that was the case.’<sup>22</sup>

Hiding and helping Jews in a city like Warsaw required many different efforts, such as obtaining food ration cards or suitable accommodation.<sup>23</sup> In the provinces the situation was somewhat different – it was relatively easy to escape from smaller, less well guarded ghettos, and during Operation Reinhardt many Jews made such attempts. In the villages it was easier to get hold of the heavily rationed food and to organise a suitable hiding place in a house or farm.

A detailed knowledge of the hiding places in Warsaw requires that attention be paid to the logistics of assistance. In the years 1942–1945, it was crucial for Jews to be provided with adequate shelter by those who hid them, to enable them to survive in the extremely harsh realities of the *Judenjagd* created by the Germans and, no less importantly, in the Polish climatic conditions. Jewish as well as Polish accounts of the hiding of Jews in villages mostly refer to hiding places organised and prepared in barns or other farm buildings and in houses in attics or under floors. They were usually hidden in shelters, underground hiding places, lockers or bunkers, which required a great deal of ingenuity and effort. Polish peasants proved to be skilful ‘engineers,’ able to cope admirably with any adversity. To build a hiding place that would give Jews a chance of survival, it was necessary not only to choose a location, but also to collect building materials (planks, beams) and to construct a suitable structure that would provide ventilation, food and the possibility of a quick escape in a threatening situation. In view of the many dangers, even the preparation of the hiding places, such as moving and spreading the excavated soil so as not to arouse suspicion, had a conspiratorial

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<sup>22</sup> For methodological assumptions and a detailed presentation of the estimates, see G. Paulsson, *Utajone miasto. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy (1940–1945)* (Secret City: Jews on the Aryan Side of Warsaw (1940–1945)), Kraków 2007.

<sup>23</sup> A. Czocher, *Okupacyjne uwarunkowania pomocy ukrywającym się Żydom w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie* (Occupational Determinants of Aid to Jews in Hiding in the General Government) [in:] *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici. Wokół pomocy Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej* (The Church. Jesuits. Jews: On Helping Jews During WW II), ed. by M. Wenklar, Kraków 2021, pp. 58–59.

character. After all, such constructions took many days. For security reasons, several such hiding places were often built within the confines of domestic or farm buildings, or even connected to each other. The Karczmarczyk family from the village of Brzózka (Grójec district) built an entire system of hiding places for Jews. Aida Miedzińska, who hid with them, recalls: 'The first was in a small room under a trunk. The second was in a mound where potatoes were stored for the winter, where the rats jumped on my head. The third hiding place was in the shed where they stored wood for the winter, the fourth was in the barn under the hay, and another was in the attic.'<sup>24</sup>

Obviously, it was the Jews who took the initiative to hide (the term the Jewish population of the time oftentimes used to describe it was 'to get shelter'), because they were the ones who needed help. Neither the rescuers nor the rescued could know how long they would stay in a particular place or when the war would end. The hiding places were changed by the Jews for reasons of safety or at the request of their former guardians. In some they hid for a few days, in others for a few weeks, and in others for several months or almost two years. It also happened that hiding places originally built by Poles for themselves out of fear of being rounded up for forced labour were used to hide Jews.

Research into the motivations of those who went into hiding is also very important for research into aid. The findings of Teresa Prekerowa, Szymon Datner, Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinowna or Israel Gutman, and, among younger researchers, those of Marcin Urynowicz and Elżbieta Rączy, clearly show that long-standing (often pre-war) acquaintanceships and humanitarian considerations were crucial in overcoming the barrier of fear and deciding to provide help, especially long-term help. Much less frequently, political-ideological, religious and family factors were decisive. This was vividly described by Polish witnesses: 'The mother said that Steinlauf cried before her and kissed her hands to receive them, and she had no conscience to refuse him,' and Władysław Stachurski added: 'The following year, in 1943, late in the evening, Beceal Szajber came to our house. He looked terrible. He was emaciated, thin, starving, in torn clothes, dirty and unshaven. His feet were frozen. With tears in his eyes, he begged me and his wife to keep him, or he would die. Out of pity for him, my wife and I took the risk of hiding him in our house,

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<sup>24</sup> *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945* (Accounts of Aid Given to Jews by Poles between 1939 and 1945), ed. S. Piątkowski, vol. 1, Lublin–Warsaw 2019, p. 40.

fully aware that if the Germans discovered him with us, we would both be in danger of inevitable death, as would our little daughter.<sup>25</sup> Many similar descriptions can be found in the memoirs and accounts of rescuers from all over the General Government.<sup>26</sup>

Survivors spoke differently about the motives of the Polish rescuers. In their accounts and memoirs, financial motives were emphasised alongside humanitarian ones. It should be noted, however, that an excessive focus on material issues often leads to far-reaching simplifications and exaggerations, and thus to a false picture of aid relations between Poles and Jews that is detached from the realities of the time.<sup>27</sup> In practice, given the economic plundering policy of the German occupation authorities, even farmers could not afford to cover the costs of food donations themselves, especially when several people were being rescued. Kilos of food had to be prepared to ensure the minimum caloric intake for survival of such a group. Contrary to appearances, acquiring the building materials (e.g. wooden planks) needed to prepare a shelter was not easy either, given the huge shortages of all materials. For these reasons, in very many cases the assistance had to be co-financed or paid for by the rescued, but just as often the assistance continued after the funds had been exhausted. Jews often provided tailoring, shoemaking or carpentry services in exchange for shelter or food.

The most difficult and controversial issue in scholarship and journalism is the question of estimating the scale of the aid phenomenon, i.e. the specific number of Poles involved in helping Jews, and the number of Jews who survived the Holocaust and the German occupation of Polish lands thanks to this aid. In both categories we do not have definitive data, but only certain estimates, and these vary widely. The number of Jews saved by the Poles reported in older literature (approximately 120,000) is not confirmed by more recent findings. According to Albert Stankowski and Piotr Weiser, some 15,000 to 20,000 Jews were saved thanks to Polish citizens of non-Jewish nationality, while according to Grzegorz Berendt the number did

<sup>25</sup> T. Domański, *Udział Polaków w pomocy Żydom na wsi kieleckiej 1939–1945* (Polish Participation in Helping Jews in the Kielce Countryside 1939–1945) [in:] *Pomoc świadczona ludności żydowskiej przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945 ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Kielecczyny* (Assistance by Poles to the Jewish People in the Years 1939–1945 with the Special Emphasis on the Kielce Region), eds. J. Gapys, A. Dziarmaga, Kielce 2016, p. 66.

<sup>26</sup> This problem is extensively present in the sources recently published in the IPN: *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom w latach 1939–1945*, selection and compilation S. Piątkowski, Lublin–Warsaw 2019–2022 (6 volumes concerning the districts of Warsaw, Lublin, Kraków, Radom, Galicia and the Białystok region).

<sup>27</sup> See T. Domański, A. Gontarek, *Wstęp...*, p. 8.



not exceed 50,000.<sup>28</sup> Similar discrepancies apply to the extent of Polish aid to Jews expressed in numbers. Gunnar S. Paulsson's figures for Warsaw (70–90,000 rescuers), Elżbieta Rączy's figures for the Rzeszów region (1,600 rescuers identified by name), and Grzegorz Berendt's figures for the Polesie voivodeship (several hundred people) show that the scale and scope of assistance varied greatly in the occupied Polish territories. In general, the number of helpers is estimated at between 30,000 and 300,000 people.<sup>29</sup> Such figures were given by Teresa Prekerowa, who believed that about 30,000 Jews were saved thanks to Polish help. She considered that many people were needed to save one person (she assumed a factor of 10, which, according to contemporary research, is not confirmed in many cases), and thus arrived at the above figures. Of this number, more than 7,000 Poles received the honour of Righteous Among the Nations. Determining the final or approximate number of all rescuers will be very difficult, especially when ad hoc, one-off and therefore very poorly recorded sources are considered. There may have been many more rescuers than the 300,000 cited. Many archival resources have not yet been used in research, so the need for further work and detailed studies seems obvious. The province has clearly been neglected in aid research. However, the available historical sources strongly suggest that there existed in Polish society a community of thousands of people willing to help the Jews, a willingness that was brutally suppressed by German anti-Jewish and anti-Polish policies.

Research is also underway into the Poles who were repressed for helping. It is estimated that no fewer than 700 Polish citizens of non-Jewish nationality<sup>30</sup> were killed for helping Jews. As part of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) research project 'Index of Poles Murdered and Repressed for Helping Jews,'<sup>31</sup> hitherto unknown cases of people killed for helping people of Jewish nationality are still being found and described.

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<sup>28</sup> A. Stankowski, P. Weiser, *Demograficzne skutki Holokaustu* (Demographic Consequences of the Holocaust) [in:] *Następstwa zagłady Żydów. Polska 1944–2010* (Consequences of the Annihilation of Jews: Poland 1944–2010), eds. F. Tych, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, Lublin 2012, pp. 15–38. The issue of the numbers of rescuers and saved is discussed in more detail by A. Namysło and M. Grądzka-Rejak, *Represje za pomoc Żydom...*, pp. 30–31.

<sup>29</sup> The said estimate is universally accepted and used by Polish academic community specializing in the historical research covering the period of the German occupation.

<sup>30</sup> See S. Datner, *Las sprawiedliwych* (The Forest of the Righteous), Warsaw 1968; W. Bielawski, C. Pilichowski, *Zbrodnie dokonane na Polakach przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzieloną Żydom* (Crimes Committed Against Poles by the Nazis for Helping Jews), Warsaw 1981; W. Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* (Crimes Against Poles Committed by the Nazis for Helping Jews), Warsaw 1987.

<sup>31</sup> *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych...*

The figures quoted above deserve a few sentences of comment. Very often in the scholarly and journalistic debate this issue is presented in a way that is far from the historical truth. On the one hand, the role of the Poles in the rescue of the Jews is often denied and marginalised, and negative attitudes towards the Jews are accentuated to an almost unprecedented degree, presenting them as a mass phenomenon, a kind of occupational-era norm. On the other hand, some people, by making unwarranted generalisations, create an idealistic image of Polish society as one that helped Jews *en masse*. However, as the results of research (and thousands of sources) show, the help was not massive but it was universal, and this is a fundamental difference. From where can we conclude that the help was universal? The above-mentioned policy of the German occupation authorities, which systematically tightened the law against all those who helped the Jews, is the main evidence of this. Elżbieta Rączy's research on the eastern part of the former Lwów (Lvov) Voivodeship shows even more clearly just how widespread aid was. Rączy found that various forms of assistance to Jews were recorded in 230 towns in this area.<sup>32</sup> We can therefore conclude that the phenomenon of assistance must have been noticed by the occupiers and constituted a considerable obstacle to the implementation of the anti-Jewish and extermination policy.

In conclusion, contrary to popular opinion, the historical record on the question of aid is far from conclusive. On the contrary, a whole catalogue of research shortcomings can be formulated, including the lack of a synthetic collective portrait of the Righteous. It is not known to what extent the generalisations made, for example, in *The Book of the Righteous*, and the partial conclusions presented by the authors of numerous smaller studies, are representative of the occupied territories as a whole. Nor are we able to provide definitive figures on the number of people who helped Jews in the occupied territories as a whole and in individual regions. Many archival sources have also not yet been used. The results of the research carried out so far in literature show that aid to the Jews was not of a mass/massive nature, but was widespread, especially in the General Government areas. The provinces have clearly been neglected in research on the aid provided to Jews. And just as there has been talk in recent years of the 'discovery of the provinces' in Holocaust research, this area should also be 'discovered' in the field of aid, regardless of the picture that

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<sup>32</sup> E. Rączy, *Stan badań nad problematyką ratowania Żydów przez Polaków w zachodniej części województwa lwowskiego* (The State of Research on Rescuing Jews by Poles in the Western Part of the Lwów (Lvov) Province) [in:] *Stan badań nad pomocą...*, p. 409.

## What Do We Know About the Aid Poles Gave to the Jews During WW II?

will emerge from individual studies in the future. The countryside, as Teresa Prekerowa's research and most recent findings show, was the primary area in which aid was provided. The key to understanding the phenomenon of aid is a thorough knowledge of the realities of the occupation period created by the policies of the German occupiers. Without taking these into account, research on aid will remain in a kind of vacuum and will not deepen our knowledge of Polish-Jewish relations during WW II. They should always be considered. It is not only and exclusively about the context of the Holocaust, but also about the numerous components of German policy towards the Poles, such as terror, criminal sanctions and repression.



## **German Economic Policy in Occupied Poland and the Material Conditions for Helping the Jews**

People who helped Jews in ghettos or those who tried to survive on the Aryan side were driven by various motives. They risked their own lives and those of their immediate family members for religious reasons, for humanitarian reasons, and to help pre-war friends and relatives. For many, material considerations were a very important motive. For some of the helpers, it was enough that the money they received from the Jews made it easier for them to cope with the difficulties of daily life under occupation, while others took advantage of the difficult situation to make as much profit as possible. It has not yet been established what conditions of the peculiar arrangements between the Jews struggling to survive and the people helping them were kept and what conditions were broken. The accounts of Jewish survivors contain numerous references to both situations.

Regardless of whether we are dealing with brave, self-sacrificing, decent and selfless people, or with greedy, evil, deceitful, and even – in extreme cases – criminal people, when we talk about the Holocaust and the phenomenon of helping Jews, we should not abstract from the economic situation created by the German authorities in occupied Poland. The material conditions for the provision of aid depended to a large extent on this.

As a result of the September 1939 campaign, thousands of dwellings were destroyed. This meant that new housing had to be found for families without a roof over their heads. Hundreds of thousands of people left their homes to escape the aggressors. On the territory of the General Government (GG) established in October 1939, there were also several hundred thousand Poles and Jews, who had been expelled from the territories recently incorporated into the Third Reich and found themselves in the General Government. The situation of non-Germans in the General Government was further complicated by the requisitioning

of thousands of houses and apartments for German institutions and their employees brought in from the German Third Reich. All this led, on the one hand, to an increase in the density of accommodation conditions available to the non-German population, especially in the cities, and, on the other hand, to an increase in the price of rental housing, even though rents were formally frozen.

From the very first days of the occupation, on both the German and Soviet sides of the new borders, Poles and Jews, as well as other groups considered enemies by the aggressors, were systematically robbed and dispossessed. The invaders did this by administrative means, but also individually, on their own. The perpetrators were soldiers, functionaries and officials of the occupying states. Regulations on the circulation of money caused Polish citizens to lose a significant part of the real value of their bank deposits, not to mention their savings held outside of the banks in pre-war Polish zloty currency. On the Soviet side, the property of those categorized as 'capitalist-exploiters' was confiscated. Under the German occupation, all Jews and part of the Polish population were deprived of their property, bank deposits and state-paid social benefits as early as 1939–1940. The confiscation of property and the obligatory contributions imposed on local communities, especially the Jews, gradually depleted the resources that might have been used to help people in need. The authorities of the Third Reich sought to exploit the defeated states as much as possible and subordinated their economic policy to this goal. For this reason, they did not introduce their own currency in the conquered territories, but maintained the pre-war monetary system (which, incidentally, was in line with international norms) or created a new one. This allowed the Germans to freely issue money and deliberately create inflation. In short, this kind of policy ensured the financing of the Third Reich's war effort. In the General Government, the occupier introduced a new currency – the zloty (called 'the zloty krakowski,' after the name of the city where the headquarter of Bank of Issue (Bank Emisyjny) was located - Kraków, or the 'młynarka,' after the surname of Feliks Młynarski – the president of that bank). The simultaneous blockade of wages and prices introduced by the occupying power led to the outflow of goods from legal trade and a flourishing of the black market. Already one year after the beginning of the occupation, the nominal free market prices of some basic goods, measured in Kraków Zlotys increased 30 or even 50 times. In the years that followed, prices continued to rise, so that by 1943 some nominal prices were more than a hundred times higher than they had been in August 1939 (See Table 1). For example, the price of a kilogram of bread rose from 30 groszy to several zlotys, and a kilogram of pork fat from 1.6 zlotys to 170 zlotys, and

later even to over 200 zlotys. Less drastically, but still very impactful, fuel (coal, coke or peat) and clothing became more expensive. Only the prices of certain transportation services, such as train or tram fares, remained basically unchanged, and when increases were introduced, they were relatively small compared to the rate of increase in the prices of goods and services available on the free market. The ratio between the cost of living in Warsaw in August 1939 and August 1942 was 100 to 4140.

**Table I.** Free market prices in the areas incorporated into the General Government in the years 1939–1944 (in zlotys)

Article	Unit of measure	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
Rye bread	kg	0.30	1.68	2.80	7.29	10.23	12.20	12.00
Finely ground barley	kg	0.47	2.42	4.48	18.79	27.30	36.60	32.80
Butter	kg	2.96	12.76	21.47	59.16	167.08	198.40	245.00
Pork fat	kg	1.58	6.74	15.83	56.65	155.10	190.01	174.00
Potatoes	kg	0.10	0.63	0.32	2.19	2.50	5.10	3.45
Sugar	kg	1.00	1.67	6.28	22.68	64.08	78.30	95.80
Eggs	each	0.08	0.36	0.54	1.35	3.28	4.30	4.95
Milk	litre	0.27	1.07	1.40	3.89	8.93	12.30	15.65
Naphtha	litre	0.38	No data	3.83	5.60	15.73	36.60	No data
Coal	tonne	48.00	No data	161.00	842–1200	1260.00	1350.00	1800.00

Source: J. Kostrowicka, Z. Landau, J. Tomaszewski, *Historia gospodarcza Polski XIX i XX wieku (Economic History of Poland XIX–XX c.)*, Warsaw 1984, pg. 414; Pro memoria (1941–1944). Raporty Departamentu Informacji Delegatury Rządu na Kraj o zbrodniach na narodzie polskim (*In Memory 1941–1945: Reports of the Government Delegation for Poland*), eds. J. Gmitruk, A. Indraszczyk, A. Koseski, Warsaw–Pułtusk 2004.

Over the course of several years, the Germans changed their policy toward non-German companies operating in the GG several times. Until 1941, more and more industrial enterprises were gradually closed down. Some others, such as workshops, were turned over to newly arrived Germans and *Volksdeutsche*. Machinery and raw materials for production and energy were exported to the Reich. As a result, the value of production in the GG in 1941 was 63 percent lower than before the war. This was accompanied by a decline in employment. In the Kraków region, for example, according to the 1940 industrial census, employment fell to 40 percent of pre-war levels. The extent to which Polish workers were affected by the liquidation of Jewish businesses and the confinement of their owners to ghettos has not yet been recognized. In addition, tens of thousands of former employees of public institutions (e.g. secondary schools and universities) were closed by order of the Germans.

Between 1942 and 1943, thousands of Polish retail and wholesale businesses were closed down. Growing unemployment led some people to seek work in Germany. Others took jobs in new professions, some working legally, others illegally, even engaging in criminal activities.

The intensification of production initiated by the Germans between 1941 and 1943 mainly affected companies working for the front and did not eliminate the phenomenon of mass unemployment.

The decline in the production of durable consumer goods immediately led to an increase in the price of not only new, but also used products. All available raw materials were used, regardless of their source. The ghettoization of Jewish artisans meant that their former customers were deprived of many services. Christian craftsmen were unable to meet the demand. Under these circumstances, the demand for highly skilled and sometimes almost free labour saved the lives of some Jews. After fleeing to the Aryan side, they worked in their old professions and sometimes – like tens of thousands of other citizens – changed their industry to adapt to the needs of the market. Sometimes they were employed even when those around them knew they were Jews. In other situations, they worked in secret for their hosts.

Important for understanding the economic aspects of the occupation in the GG is the knowledge that the Germans prohibited wage increases and social benefits. Thus, workers, pensioners, and retirees received nominally the same number of millions of zlotys as before 1 September 1939. With rising prices, this meant the progressive pauperization of millions of people. It is true that the situation of some workers was saved by the actions of their employers, who – in order not to lose staff – tried to pay more or less camouflaged



wage increases (money, allowances, free meals), but, as far as we know, this form of assistance was used by a minority of workers and officials.

In practice, among the Polish population, private businessmen, doctors, dentists, veterinarians, and owners of large commodity farms did quite well. However, they constituted the minority of society in occupied Poland.

Farmers, who had surplus food, earned money in the first years by selling their products at free market prices. Unfortunately, from 1942 onward, the Germans' rapidly increasing quota demands caused some farmers to run out of food for their own needs (See Table 2). The culling of herds, the surrender to the Germans of even grain intended for sowing, the lack of new machinery and tools and the means to maintain those already owned, as well as the scarcity of artificial and natural fertilizers, led to a reduction in the productivity of crops and livestock. In addition, from 1942, repression intensified for failure to fulfil the obligations imposed on the peasants by the occupying power. Farmers were sent to concentration camps. German expeditions burned the farms of 'debtors.' In July 1942, a decree was issued in the GG allowing the death penalty for quota arrears and illegal slaughter of animals. Due to the terror, the quotas were almost completely fulfilled.

**Table 2:** Size of the grain quotas imposed on the General Government (GG) between 1940 and 1943

Year	Supply contingent in tonnes
1940	383,000
1941	685,000
1942	1,200,000
1943	1,500,000

Source: J. Kostrowicka, Z. Landau, J. Tomaszewski, *Historia gospodarcza...*, p. 425.

The ruthlessly exploited countryside defended itself against the loss of any leftover food stock. Directly or indirectly, this affected Jews who had escaped from ghettos and camps and were trying to survive in rural and urban areas. Aside from other reasons (e.g. greed and fear), some rural communities treated Jews as

enemies who could not pay for food and obtained it through theft or robbery. Moreover, even if they had money and the peasants had a surplus of food, some farmers did not want to have any contact with the refugees because of the risk of death. In addition, the Germans created a system of material incentives that effectively induced individuals among the non-Jewish population to denounce Jews and those who assisted them. Unfortunately, there were too many people willing to make such a deal. For a few kilos of sugar, a few litres of vodka, or a few hundred zlotys, they were sending their fellow citizens to die.

When studies of the Holocaust mention the caloric value of food ration cards, the message is usually limited to the amount in relation to the ghetto population. In the case of the Warsaw Ghetto, the daily norm was about 230 calories, and in 1941 it was only 184, which was tantamount to a death sentence by starvation. The situation was saved only by food smuggled into the ghetto, but it was very expensive, and many people could not afford it. As a result, tens of thousands of prisoners died of starvation and diseases that more easily attacked their emaciated organisms. It should be remembered, however, that the ration of cards at official prices was also far from sufficient for the general population of the GG living outside the ghetto, unless they belonged to the privileged category (See Table 3). Moreover, they were gradually reduced until November 1943, with the result that their energy value dropped from 736 to about 400 calories. Although the declining productivity of Polish workers prompted the Germans to increase their rations to between about 940 and 2,000 calories per day, this change mainly benefited those employed in companies working for the front. Accounts from 1943 also report shortages in stores, which made it impossible to buy goods at official prices. This left the black market, where prices rose rapidly.

The economic situation was somewhat better in the territories incorporated into the Reich, where both Poles and Jews were entitled to higher food rations. Even the reduction of these rations in 1943 did not bring them down to the level of those in the GG. Some ghettos (especially Łódź) were exceptions.

All these aspects added up to the phenomenon of rapid mass impoverishment of most citizens of the Second Republic. Living in poverty, discouraged altruism sometimes drove people to commit crimes. This was explained by the need to defend the existence of one's family or group. The conditions, including economic conditions, created by the Germans meant that the majority of the 230,000 – 300,000 Jews who tried to survive on the Aryan side between 1942 and 1943 (after the liquidation of the ghettos) could not be saved. The high cost of living, with greatly reduced earning capacity, forced rescuers to take money from

the rescued Jews. Only the very wealthy could afford to provide unpaid, long-term assistance, especially when several or more people were being supported. Not only the fear of denunciation and reprisals, but also poverty was a negative factor discouraging assistance to non-family members. Bearing this in mind, even more recognition and respect must be given to those who helped even when the assisted Jews had no money at all, or their resources were exhausted long before liberation. We know of many such examples.

**Table 3.** Relative value of card rations compared to pre-war consumption

Consumer Group	Caloric value (in %)
Polish workers before the war	100.0
Allocation for Germans in the GG in 1941	100.5
Allocation for Jews in 1941	7.1
Allocation for Poles in 1941	25.6
Allocation for Poles in 1942	22.2
Allocation to Poles in 1943	15.9

Source: J. Kostrowicka, Z. Landau, J. Tomaszewski, *Historia gospodarcza...*, p. 416.



## The Jewish Aid Council ‘Żegota’ in the Structures of The Polish Underground State

The Polish Underground State consisted of three basic structures. The first was the armed forces – the Union of Armed Struggle (*Związek Walki Zbrojnej* – from 1942, renamed *Armia Krajowa* (AK), the Home Army), the second was the Government Delegation for Poland (*Delegatura Rządowa na Kraj*), which organized the secret Polish administration. The third branch of the Underground Poland (*Polska Podziemna*) was the Political Consultative Committee (*Polityczny Komitet Porozumiewawczy* – from 1944, the Council for National Unity (*Rada Jedności Narodowej*)), which brought together the most important political parties: the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the People’s Party (SL), the National Party (SN) and the Labour Party (SP). This form of the underground state functioned from 1941.

On 3 December 1940, Cyril Ratajski was appointed chief delegate of the government for the area of the General Government (GG) created by the Germans. By the fall of 1941, Ratajski’s secret authority covered practically the entire country. Within the Government Delegation for Poland, in addition to the central departments (corresponding to pre-war ministries) and field structures (district and county delegations), there were several special organizational units. The largest of these was the Directorate of Civil Struggle (*Kierownictwo Walki Cywilnej*), headed by Stefan Korboński<sup>1</sup> (we recently celebrated the Year of Korboński). Other specific units were, for example, the Council of Nationalities (*Rada Narodowościowa*), which worked on establishing mutual relations with national minorities or the ‘West’ (*Zachód*) unit (Polish ‘West’ Union in Conspiracy – *Polski Związek Zachodni w konspiracji*) – which dealt with Poles deported to the Third Reich for forced labour.

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<sup>1</sup> In his dispatches to London, Stefan Korboński informed about the tragic fate of Jews in occupied Poland. See S. Korboński, *Polacy, Żydzi i holocaust* (Poles, Jews and the Holocaust), Warsaw-Komorów 1999.



Henryk Woliński

Among these special structures there was also the Jewish Aid Council ‘Żegota.’ Its establishment and activities have been described in numerous publications in recent years, both by its members and by historians.<sup>2</sup>

The tragic fate of the Jewish population during the occupation led to the creation of structures dedicated to organizing aid for them. As early as 1940, a National Minorities Department was set up in the Information and Propaganda Department of the Central Office of the Union for Armed Struggle (*Biuro Informacji i Propagandy KG ZWZ*), headed by the historian Stanisław Herbst *nom-de-guerre* ‘Chrobot.’ Then a separate Jewish Office (*Referat Żydowski*) was created, headed by the lawyer and social activist Henryk Woliński *nom de guerre* ‘Wacław.’ The task of the Jewish Office was to document the fate of Jews in occupied Poland.

Contacts were maintained by Leon Fainer *nom de guerre* ‘Mikołaj’ of the *Bund* and Adolf Berman *nom de guerre* ‘Borowski’ of the Jewish National Committee (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa – ŻOB*), as well as by Arie Wilner *nom de guerre* ‘Jurek’ – a liaison officer of the Jewish Combat Organization (*ŻOB*).

Within the Government Delegation were, among others: The Labour and Welfare Dept., Information and Press Dept. and the Internal Affairs Dept. The former was established in April 1941, with the latter, Government Delegate for Poland and Deputy Prime Minister Jan Stanisław Jankowski *nom de guerre* ‘Wisła’ as its director. The Department carried out a wide range of forward-looking work on the organization of social affairs (trade unions, works councils, social insurance, health care) in the post-war period.

In addition to forward-looking work, active welfare work was carried out under the direction of Stanisław Stęplewski (after the collapse of the Warsaw Uprising, director of the ‘legal’ office of the Polish Welfare Committee in Częstochowa, and in conspiracy, social welfare officer of the local Government Delegation). They

<sup>2</sup> K. Iranek-Osmecki, *Kto ratuje jedno życie... Polacy i Żydzi 1939–1945* (Who Saves One Life... Poles and Jews 1939–1945), London 1968; M. Arczyński, W. Balcerak, *Kryptonim ‘Żegota’. Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939–1945* (Code-name ‘Żegota’: From the History of Helping Jews in Poland 1939–1945), 2nd ed., Warsaw 1983; T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942–1945* (Conspiratorial Council to Aid Jews in Warsaw 1942–1945), Warsaw 1982; M.M. Mariańscy, *Wśród przyjaciół i wrogów poza gettem w okupowanym Krakowie* (Among Friends and Foes Outside the Ghetto in Occupied Kraków), Kraków 1988; *Polacy – Żydzi 1939–1945* (Poles–Jews 1939–1945). Wybór źródeł, ed. A.K. Kunert, Warsaw 2001; *‘Żegota’ Council to Aid Jews 1942–1945. Selected Documents*, ed. A.K. Kunert, Warsaw 2002; *Ten jest z Ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945* (This One is From My Homeland. Poles Helping Jews 1939–1945), eds. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna, 3rd ed., Warsaw 2007.

cared for the arrested employees of the Delegation and their families, concentration camp prisoners and unemployed intelligentsia. In this work there was cooperation with other departments: Education and Culture, Justice and the Interorganizational Agreement for the Assistance to Prisoners. Extensive use was also made of cooperation with the Central Welfare Council (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*).<sup>3</sup> There was also a campaign to help the families of the executed ('RR Action' organized by Maria Chelmiczka *nom de guerre* 'Horpyna'), which was carried out mainly by scouts from the 'Grey Ranks' (*Szare Szeregi*). This aid amounted to 500 zlotys per month per executed person.<sup>4</sup> (Note that the same amount was available per each dependent in 1943 for 'Żegota').<sup>5</sup>

In 1943, 16,085,983 zlotys were spent on social welfare, including 907,100 zlotys – for individual aid, 5,094,231 zlotys – for political victims, 4,922,825 zlotys – for employees, 2,568,551 zlotys – for workers, 1,062,830 zlotys – for the youth, 967,950 zlotys – for displaced persons from the western part of Poland, 160,000 zlotys – for displaced persons from the eastern part of Poland. The Social Welfare Departments of the District Government Delegations (the voivodeships) spent 11,475,647 zlotys that year. In addition, 1,600,000 zlotys were spent on 'Żegota.' Furthermore, 7,812,000 zlotys<sup>6</sup> were spent that year on social welfare, run by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The Department of Information and Press, headed by Stanisław Kązicki from March 1941 to July 1945, not only published newspapers and books, but also prepared extensive reports for the Polish Government-in-Exile in London, including a description of the situation of the Polish Jews.

In May 1942 the Department of Security was established in the Department of Internal Affairs, headed by Leopold Rutkowski *nom de guerre* 'Muszyński.' Its head was the appointed lawyer Tadeusz Myśliński. Within the Department, nationality issues were dealt with by the Department for Minority Communities (its employees were lawyers Ignacy Radlicki<sup>7</sup> and Stanisław Piotrowski<sup>8</sup>); there was also a separate Jewish Department.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> As concerns the RGO see B. Kroll, *Rada Główna Opiekuńcza 1939–1945* (Central Welfare Council 1939–1945), Warsaw 1985; A. Ronikier, *Pamiętniki 1939–1945* (Memoirs 1939–1945), Kraków 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Information delivered to the author by Waław Szubert in 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the 'Żegota' Council for the period December 1942 – October 1943 [in:] *'Żegota' Rada...*, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> W. Grabowski, *Polska Tajna Administracja Cywilna 1940–1945* (Polish Secret Civil Administration 1940–1945), Warsaw 2003, p. 246.

<sup>7</sup> I. Radlicki, *Kapo odpowiedział – Auschwitz. Wspomnienia adwokata z obozu koncentracyjnego* (The Kapo Answered – Auschwitz: Memories of a Lawyer from the Concentration Camp), ed. M. Gałęzowski, Warsaw 2008. Ignacy Radlicki was imprisoned from 12 July 1940 to 2 May 1941 at Pawiak and Auschwitz.

<sup>8</sup> Stanisław Piotrowski '*Henryk Baryka-Gadomski*' was a desk officer for nationality matters at the Presidium Bureau of the Government Delegation until mid-1943. After the desk was liquidated, a Nationalities Council was set up, where Piotrowski continued to work.

<sup>9</sup> W. Grabowski, *Polska Tajna Administracja Cywilna...*, pp. 192–193.

In October 1942, Witold Bieńkowski *nom de guerre* 'Jan' became the head of the Prisoners' Unit (KW<sup>10</sup> – *komórka więzienna*) in the Department of Internal Affairs, whose task was to 'maintain constant contact with imprisoned Polish political prisoners, found in detention centres and camps.' In addition to the head, the unit was staffed by Władysław Bartoszewski *nom de guerre* 'Ludwik' and Bogna Domańska *nom de guerre* 'Bronisława,' as well as liaison officers Pelagia Piotrkiewicz *nom de guerre* 'Łucja' and Wanda Muszyńska *nom de guerre* 'Wanda.' Contact was maintained with the Security Police (*Sicherheitspolizei*) Prison in Pawiak at Dzielna Street in Warsaw, and from mid-1943 with other prisons and camps<sup>11</sup> (in Warsaw at Mokotowska and Daniłowiczowska Streets). In Warsaw, this contact was made through the prison guards: Ludwika Uzar-Krysiakowa *nom de* 'Lusia,' Janina Szubielska *nom de guerre* 'Mateczka,' Anna Kraska, Jadwiga Sadzińska, Jan Wacek *nom de guerre* 'Jan'<sup>12</sup> and Wanda Wilczańska. The unit prepared reports on the state of the prisons and Nazi camps, as well as secret messages and warnings of arrests.<sup>13</sup>

In the area of prisoner care, cooperation was established with the Interorganizational Agreement for the Assistance of Prisoners (*Międzyorganizacyjne Porozumienie Pomocy Więźniom*). Its president was the activist of the Confederation of the Nation (*Konfederacja Narodu*) Helena Jamonttówna *nom de guerre* 'Bogucka,'<sup>14</sup> and its presidium

<sup>10</sup> W. Bartoszewski, *Warszawski pierścień śmierci* (Warsaw Ring of Death), Warsaw 1970, pp. 23–25; A.K. Kunert, *Słownik biograficzny konspiracji warszawskiej 1939–1944* (Biographical Dictionary of the Warsaw Conspiratorial Underground in 1939–1944), vol. 3, Warsaw 1991, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> W. Bartoszewski, *Raport Komórki Więziennej Delegatury Rządu z 1944 r. o Pawiaku, Oświęcimiu, Majdanku i Ravensbrück* (1944 Report of the Prison Unit of the Government Delegation on Pawiak, Auschwitz, Majdanek and Ravensbrück), *Najnowsze Dzieje Polski 1939–1945* 1968, vol. 12, p. 157.

<sup>12</sup> S.M. Jankowski, *Śladami powstańczych legitymacji* (In the Footsteps of the Insurgents) [in:] *Kim byłeś? Gdzie jesteś? Losy powstańców warszawskich w dokumentach* (Who Were You? Where Were You? The Fate of Warsaw Insurgents in Documents), Kraków 2001, pp. 53–54.

<sup>13</sup> The reports of the Prison Unit were used many times in historical works after the war, see W. Bartoszewski, *Warszawski pierścień...*; B. Chrzanowski, A. Gąsiorowski, *Stutthof w świetle dokumentów Delegatury Rządu RP na Kraj* (Stutthof in the Light of the Documents of the Government Delegation for Poland), *Stutthof. Zeszyty Muzeum* 1984, vol. 5, p. 177–185; *Obóz koncentracyjny Oświęcim w świetle dokumentów Delegatury Rządu RP na Kraj* (Auschwitz Concentration Camp in the Light of Documents of the Government Delegation for Poland), eds. K. Marczeńska, W. Ważniewski, *Zeszyty Oświęcimskie* 1968, special issue (I); J. Marszałek, *Rozpoznanie obozów śmierci w Bełżcu, Sobiborze i Treblince przez wywiad Armii Krajowej i Delegatury Rządu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej na Kraj* (Reconnaissance of the Death Camps at Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka by the Intelligence of the Home Army and the Government Delegation for Poland in the Homeland), *Biuletyn GKBZpNP IPN* 1993, vol. 35, pp. 36–52; I. Caban, Z. Mańkowski, *Informacje o obozie w aktach Delegatury RP na Kraj* (Information about the Camp in the Files of the Government Delegation of the Republic of Poland in the Homeland), *Zeszyty Majdanka* 1967, vol. 2; K. Marczeńska, W. Ważniewski, *Treblinka w świetle akt Delegatury Rządu RP na Kraj* (Treblinka in the Light of the Files of the Government Delegation of the Republic of Poland in the Homeland), *Biuletyn GKBZH* 1968, vol. 19, pp. 129–164.

<sup>14</sup> Helena Jamontt (1914–1944), a lawyer, died on 21 August 1944 during the Warsaw Uprising (Z. Dłużewska-Kańska, Jamonttówna Helena [in:] *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 10, eds. K. Lepszy *et al.*, Wrocław 1962–1964, p. 404).



consisted of Halina Dąbrowska *nom de guerre* 'Wanda Leśniewska' – deputy, Danuta Miszczuk, N.N. 'Wisła' – secretary, 'Andrzej' N.N. – treasurer, 'Elżbieta,' N.N. and N.N. 'Magdalena'.<sup>15</sup> The Interorganizational people carried out a parcel campaign to provide food and medicine for concentration and labour camp prisoners, financed by the Government Delegation.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the Home Army and the Government Delegation, numerous underground organizations participated, including the NSZ – National Armed Forces, 'Unia,' PPS-WRN, Security Corps (*Korpus Bezpieczeństwa*), Camp of Fighting Poland ('*Pobudka*,' OPW<sup>17</sup>). Parcels were sent to camps in Auschwitz, Majdanek, Ravensbrück, Drutte, Hamburg, Gross-Rosen, Woldenberg, Stammlager Oskatz, Jaworzno, Dachau, Mohlenburg, Aussenlager Station George, Weimar, Oranienburg, Kiel, Fursternberg, Neuengamme and Dyhernfurth. The parcels were sent both to individual recipients and to so-called head offices, which distributed the food and other products received inside the camps. In addition to the individual parcels, they were also sent to so-called central offices, which distributed the food and other products received within the camps. At least ten headquarters were organized: three in Auschwitz, two in Ravensbrück, two in Hamburg, two in Gross-Rosen and one in Drutte. In addition to the Warsaw headquarters, there were units in Kraków, Lublin, Kielce, Częstochowa, and Radom. In May-June 1944 alone, the Delegation transferred 799,200 zlotys to the Inter-organizational Agreement for the Assistance of Prisoners, and between July 13 and 15, another 1,500,000 zlotys.<sup>18</sup>

As early as the spring of 1942, the Delegation submitted to London a comprehensive study entitled *The Terror of the Invaders in the Polish Lands (Terror najeźdźców na ziemiach polskich)*. Extensive sections of this document were devoted to the murder of Jews: 'The persecution of the Jews by the German occupiers is dealt with separately, because it concerns a separate nation, and also because the conduct of the Germans towards the Jews is eminently exterminatory in character and may therefore serve as an example to the whole world of what the Germans are capable of in such cases. The course of the persecution of the Jews by the Germans on Polish territory can be divided into 3 periods. [...] Period 3 – (from 1 July 1941). This period is characterized

<sup>15</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych (Archive of Modern Records) [hereafter: AAN], 202/II-60, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> Z. Zbyszewska, *Ministerstwo polskiej biedy. Z dziejów Towarzystwa Opieki nad Więźniami 'Patronat' w Warszawie 1909–1944* (Ministry of Polish Poverty. History of the 'Patronat' Society for the Care of Prisoners in Warsaw 1909–1944), Warsaw 1983, pp. 257–259.

<sup>17</sup> AAN, 202/II-60, Estimates for Care for Foreign Camps for July and August 1943, pp. 76–79; W. Grabowski, *Pomoc materialna Delegatury Rządu RP na Kraj dla więźniów obozów koncentracyjnych oraz obozów pracy. Referat materiałowy* (Material Assistance of the Delegation of the Government of the Republic of Poland at Home for Inmates of Concentration and Labour Camps), Kraków 1995, TS, in the collection of the District KBZHWP in Kraków, copy in the author's collection, pp. 49–52.

<sup>18</sup> *Sekcja Kontroli Delegatury Rządu na Kraj* (Control Section of the Government Delegation for Poland), elab. W. Grabowski, Warsaw 2022, pp. 307–331.

by mass murder. Apparently, the accelerated extermination of the Jews in the ghettos did not satisfy the impatient Germans, so in the Eastern territories more radical methods were used: murders on an unprecedented scale, carried out on the Jews either by the Germans themselves, with the participation of Ukrainians, or at the hands of Lithuanians. Only here did the Germans show what they were capable of. [...] The number of Jews murdered by the Germans or their lackeys in the Eastern territories, according to the figures and facts cited above, approaches 200,000.<sup>19</sup> A year later, in March 1943, the Government Delegation of the Republic of Poland estimated the loss of the Jewish population at almost 3 million individuals.<sup>20</sup>

German genocidal activity resulted in the following on 27 September 1942 – in agreement with the Government Delegation and in cooperation with several underground organizations: the Front for the Rebirth of Poland (*Front Odrodzenia Polski (FOP)*), the Polish Democratic Organization (*Polska Organizacja Demokratyczna*), PPS-WRN, and the Union of Polish Syndicalists (*Związek Syndykalistów Polskich*) – the establishment of the Provisional Committee for Aid to the Jews (named after Konrad Żegota). An extremely important role was played by a proclamation issued by the FOP in August 1942, entitled ‘Protest,’ which strongly condemned the German crimes committed in the ghettos established by the occupiers in cities and towns.<sup>21</sup> A month later, on 16 September 1942, a statement was published by the Directorate of Civil Struggle as a firm protest against the criminal activities of the Germans<sup>22</sup> in the main press organ of the Government Delegation, ‘*Rzeczpospolita Polska*.’

The Provisional Committee consisted of Zofia Kossak *nom de guerre* ‘Ciotka’ – the chairwoman, Wanda Kraheńska-Filipowicz *nom de guerre* ‘Alina Zabielska,’ Anna Lasocka *nom de guerre* ‘Anulka,’ Witold Bieńkowski, Władysław Bartoszewski, Ignacy Barski<sup>23</sup>, Janina Raabe-Wąsowiczowa *nom de guerre* ‘Ewa’ and Czesława

<sup>19</sup> AAN, 202/I-45, vol. 4, p. 944–952; W. Grabowski, *Dokumenty Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego o sytuacji na Białostocczyźnie po 22 czerwca 1941 roku* (Documents of the Polish Underground State on the Situation in the Białystok Region after 22 June 1941) [in:] *Wokół Jedwabnego* (On Jedwabne), vol. 2: Dokumenty (Documents), eds. P. Machcewicz, K. Persak, Warsaw 2002, p. 152.

<sup>20</sup> W. Grabowski, *Raport. Straty ludzkie poniesione przez Polskę w latach 1939–1945* (Report: Human Losses Suffered by Poland Between 1939 and 1945) [in:] *Polska 1939–1945. Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod dwiema okupacjami* (Poland 1939–1945: Human Losses and Repression Victims under the Two Occupations), eds. W. Materski, T. Szarota, Warsaw 2009, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> A.K. Kunert, *Ilustrowany przewodnik po Polsce Podziemnej 1939–1945* (An Illustrated Guide to Underground Poland 1939–1945), Warsaw 1996, p. 144.

<sup>22</sup> D. Libionka, *ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu RP wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich* (The Union for Armed Struggle-Home Army and the Polish Government Delegation to the Extermination of Polish Jews) [in:] *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały* (Poles and Jews under the German Occupation 1939–1945: Studies and Materials), ed. A. Żbikowski, Warsaw 2006, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> Ignacy Józef Barski (until 1930 Bobek) ‘Józef’ (1893–1963), during the Warsaw Uprising, in the Old Town, together with Kazimierz Studentowicz, edited the *Kurier Stołeczny*. In 1946, he was a member of the Provincial Board of the Labour Party in



Zofia Kossak



Wanda Kraheńska

Wojeńska. They were assisted by, among others, Stefan Szwedowski<sup>24</sup> and Zofia Demciuch<sup>25</sup> from the ZSP. By the beginning of December 1942, more than 180 people, 70 percent of them children, had been placed under the Committee's care. The Committee's activities covered Warsaw, Kraków, Brześć, Lublin, Kielce, Bochnia, Izbica, Zakopane, Zamość, Bilgoraj, Kraśnik, Radom, Puławy, Siedlce, and Białystok. Within two months, the Committee organized aid for Jews in hiding, attempting to provide documents, safe shelter, food, and clothing. It spent about 70,000 zlotys<sup>26</sup> on its activities. Social activities

proved insufficient, and support from government institutions was needed. In his report, Bieńkowski appealed to the Government Delegate for a permanent monthly allowance of 25,000 zlotys. In December 1942, the Provisional Presidium of the Council defined the principles of financing its activities; the funds were to come from: a) the budget of the Government of the Republic of Poland in London; b) funds collected at home and abroad (these were treated as auxiliary).<sup>27</sup>

The Government of the Republic of Poland in London was fully aware of the need to transfer additional funds to the country for the relief of the Jews. In December 1942, the Minister of the Interior, Stanisław Mikołajczyk *nom de guerre* 'Stem,' ordered the payment of \$5,000 from the Delegation's funds to Jewish organizations for

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Wrocław. Promotions: lieutenant of the infantry movement (1 June 1919). Decorations: Cross of Valour (no. 29,977, 9 April 1921, on order N.D. 15/21).

<sup>24</sup> Stefan Szwedowski 'Benedyktyński' (?), „Błażej” (1893–1973), among others, was head of the underground Polish Union 'Zachód' ('West'); after the war, he subjected to operational observation by Section VII of Department V of the Ministry of Public Security.

<sup>25</sup> Z. Kossak, *W Polsce Podziemnej. Wybrane pisma dotyczące lat 1939–1944* (In Underground Poland. Selected Writings on the Years 1939–1944), eds. S. Jończyk, M. Pałaszewska, Warsaw 1999, p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> Witold Bieńkowski's report on the activities of the underground Provisional Committee to Aid Jews for the period 27 September – 4 December 1942 [in:] *'Żegota' Rada...*, pp. 72–74.

<sup>27</sup> T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada...*, p. 115.

## Waldemar Grabowski



Roman Jabłonowski



Julian Grobelny

their wards.<sup>28</sup> Only three days later, another dispatch was sent with the order to release to Leon Feiner *nom de guerre* 'Berezowski' of the *Bund* also the sum of \$5,000 paid in London by Szmul Zygielbojm.<sup>29</sup> Also in December 1942, an order was sent to the country to 'give all possible assistance' to Grossfeld's lawyer's wife, Olga.<sup>30</sup> This is, of course, only an example, but it should be remembered that in addition to the funds transferred for organizational purposes, several financial grants were also transferred from London to specific individuals.

The increasing terror of the occupying forces against the Jews led to the establishment of the Council for Aid to the Jews at the Government Plenipotentiary's office<sup>31</sup> on 4 December

1942. It was composed of Julian Grobelny *nom de guerre* 'Trojan'<sup>32</sup> of the PPS-WRN – the chairman, and after his arrest on 1 March 1944, Roman Jabłonowski *nom de guerre* 'Jurkiewicz' – chairman from May to July 1944; Dr Leon Feiner *nom de guerre* 'Berezowski'<sup>33</sup> of the *Bund* – vice-chairman and then from November 1944 chairman of the Council; Tadeusz Rek *nom de guerre* 'Różycki'<sup>34</sup>, of the SL – vice-chairman; Ferdynand Arczyński *nom de guerre* 'Jan'<sup>35</sup>, of the SD/SPD – treasurer; Witold Bieńkowski *nom de guerre* 'Jan',<sup>36</sup> Ignacy Barski *nom de guerre* 'Józef,' Władysław Bartoszewski *nom de guerre* 'Ludwik' – FOP; Adolf Berman *nom de guerre* 'Borowski'<sup>37</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Studium Polski Podziemnej w Londynie (The Polish Underground Movement (1939–1945) Study Trust), [hereafter: SPP], Ministry of the Interior [hereafter: MSW], vol. 11, p. 357, Dispatch of 'Stem' no. 124a of 18 December 1942.

<sup>29</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 11, Dispatch of 'Stem' no. 126a from 21 December 1942, p. 360.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, Dispatch of 'Stem' no. 129 of 28 December 1942, p. 364.

<sup>31</sup> *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939–1945* (Home Army in Documents 1939–1945), vol. 2: June 1941 – April 1943, London 1973, p. 414, J. Piekalkiewicz's dispatch of 8 Feb 1943.

<sup>32</sup> A.K. Kunert, *Słownik biograficzny konspiracji warszawskiej 1939–1944* (Biographical Dictionary of the Warsaw Conspiracy 1939–1944), vol. 1, Warsaw 1987, pp. 74–75.

<sup>33</sup> Leon Feiner 'Berezowski' (1886–1945), doctor of laws, lawyer, activist of the Jewish Social-Democratic Party and editor of the magazine *Nowe Życie*, a *Bund* activist.

<sup>34</sup> Tadeusz Rek 'Różycki' (1906–1968), lawyer, activist of the People's Party (SL) 'Roch'.

<sup>35</sup> A.K. Kunert, *Słownik biograficzny...*, vol. 1, pp. 30–32.

<sup>36</sup> *Idem*, *Słownik biograficzny...*, vol. 3, pp. 40–44.

<sup>37</sup> Adolf [Abraham] Berman 'Adam' (1906–1978), political activist in the People's Republic of Poland, in Israel since 1950.



Stefan Sendłak

from the ŻKN – secretary until July 1944, Szymon Gottesman *nom de guerre* 'Józef Bogucki'<sup>38</sup> from the ŻKN – secretary from November 1944; Piotr Gajewski *nom de guerre* 'Piotr'<sup>39</sup> from the RPPS – from the end of 1943.

The Council Office was headed by Zofia Rudnicka *nom de guerre* 'Alicja' with the help of Janina Wąsowicz *nom de guerre* 'Ewa',<sup>40</sup> Celina Tyszkó *nom de guerre* 'Celinka' and Władysława Paszkiewicz – all from SD/SPD. Individual sectional offices were headed up by: Emilia Hiżowa *nom de guerre* 'Barbara'<sup>41</sup> from SD/SPD – housing, Aleksandra Dargielowa and Irena Sendlerowa *nom de guerre* 'Jolanta' from RPPS – children, Stefan Sendłak *nom de guerre* 'Stefan'<sup>42</sup> from PPS-WRN – field office, Ludwik Rostkowski – medical. Maria Kann *nom de guerre* 'Halina'<sup>43</sup> also took part in the work of the Council.

The duties of the Council were set forth in a letter to the Government Delegate dated 29 December 1942, which read: 'The task of the Council is to provide assistance to the Jews as victims of the extermination campaign of the occupying power, and this assistance is to help them to avoid death by legalizing them, assigning them rooms, providing them with material benefits or, where appropriate, finding them gainful employment as a basis of existence, administering and distributing funds – in a word, activities which may fall directly or indirectly within the scope of assistance.'<sup>44</sup>

Somewhat later, in February 1943, a Jewish desk was set up in the Internal Affairs Department of the Delegation. Its head was Witold Bieńkowski *nom de guerre* 'Jan.' The department also consisted of Władysław Bartoszewski *nom de guerre* 'Ludwik' – deputy head, Bogna Domańska *nom de guerre* 'Bronisława' – secretary, liaison officers: Wanda Muszyńska *nom de guerre* 'Wanda' and Pelagia Piotrkiewicz *nom de guerre* 'Łucja.' Alfred Borenstein<sup>45</sup> worked in the office for a while.

<sup>38</sup> 'Żegota' Rada..., p. 131.

<sup>39</sup> Piotr Gajewski 'Piotr' (1902–1975), communist political activist. He died in Warsaw.

<sup>40</sup> Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej (Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance) [hereafter: AIPN], 1571/410, p. 13, Dispatch no. 212 of 29 December 1943; W. Bartoszewski, 'Żegota' – zapomniana karta z dziejów podziemia ('Żegota' – a Forgotten Page from the History of the Underground), [in:] *idem, Na drodze do niepodległości* (On the Road to Independence), Paris 1987, p. 426.

<sup>41</sup> A.K. Kunert, *Słownik biograficzny...*, vol. 1, pp. 82–83.

<sup>42</sup> Stefan Sendłak 'Kalinowski' (1889–1978), during the Warsaw Uprising deputy of the District Government Delegate III Śródmieście-Północ. After the war, he worked at the CKW (Central Election Committee) until 1948.

<sup>43</sup> For further elaboration, see M. Kann, *Granice Świata* (Borders of the World), Warsaw 2000.

<sup>44</sup> T. Prekerowa, *Conspiratorial Council...*, p. 61.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64.

Bieńkowski became the permanent representative of the Delegation to the Council for the Relief of the Jews 'Żegota.' Teresa Prekerowa describes the wide range of the office's activities: 'It acted as an intermediary in the transfer of funds to the Council, organized meetings of its representatives with the Government Plenipotentiary, forwarded the Council's demands and complaints to the relevant units of the DR (Government Delegation) and endeavoured to obtain a quick and positive response to them, acted as an intermediary between the Council and the military underground (e.g. in the case of blackmail), forwarded the Council's letters to London etc.' It provided similar assistance to representatives of the Jewish underground, and ensured their contact with Jewish organizations abroad and, if necessary, with Polish organizations in occupied Poland.

The department also carried out actions on its own initiative. It prepared reports about Polish Jews and their needs and sent them to the ministries of the Polish Government-in-Exile in London. In addition, the office published a confidential information bulletin intended for various underground agencies, used reports from Polish and Jewish intelligence on matters of threats, armed resistance, and liquidation of the Jewish population, collected material to combat extortion and crime, used intelligence information from the Gestapo and Kripo (e.g. concerning investigations) to pass on warnings to those in danger, both those in hiding and those providing assistance etc.<sup>46</sup> Regarding the fate of the Jewish population, the spring 1943 Report on the Situation in the Polish Lands (*Sprawozdanie o sytuacji na ziemiach polskich*) stated: 'In general, the procedure is more or less the same: in towns and small cities, the Jews are murdered on the spot by the Germans and auxiliary troops of Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians. Only a smaller or larger percentage, but generally a small percentage, of young people who can work are left alive. [...] The number of Jews, Polish citizens, who died in the ghettos or were murdered by 28 February 1943, reached three million. In addition, hundreds of Jews from the Reich and other European countries occupied by the Germans had already been murdered.'<sup>47</sup>

The financial aid channelled through the delegation to Jewish organizations was of importance. From May 1943 to February 1944, the Government Delegation transferred the sum of 6,250,000 zlotys<sup>48</sup> to the Council for Aid to the Jews. According to Witold Bieńkowski's report, from January 1943 to May

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 64–65.

<sup>47</sup> AAN, 202/II-29, p. 4–5a.

<sup>48</sup> AAN, 202/I-36, p. 1, Letter from 'Wiktor' to 'Orkan' of 22 Feb 1944.

1943 – 11,250,000 zlotys<sup>49</sup> were transferred from the state budget to the Council through the Government Delegation. In addition, \$23,000 sent from London by Jewish organizations<sup>50</sup> were transferred in 1943.

In August 1943 the Jewish Labour Committee paid-in \$25,000, of which \$2,000 was to help displaced peasants from the Lublin area. The remainder was earmarked for the removal/extraction of Jews from the ghetto and the support of those outside the ghetto.

This money was to go to the People's Party ('Triangle') ('Trójkąt'). In addition, one thousand dollars from the Jewish Labour Committee was earmarked for Antoni Mitkinow. It was also reported at the time that the \$20,000 paid in Warsaw was earmarked for the Central Zionist Committee and the Jewish Committee.<sup>51</sup>

In September 1943, the Joint Committees paid the financial counsellor of the Polish Embassy in Washington the first \$100,000 to help the Jews. According to the decision of the Polish authorities, this money was to be sent immediately to the Government Delegate, who was to distribute it through the secret Council for Aid to the Jews.<sup>52</sup> At the beginning of October 1943, a transfer of \$10,000 to help the Jews<sup>53</sup> was addressed to the Government Delegate through 'Żegota.'

In December 1943, the Polish government in London informed the delegate in Warsaw that the joint committees had paid \$100,000 to help the Jews in Poland. Under the delegate's control, this money was to be used by the Jewish Committee. Moreover, the World Jewish Congress had contributed \$20,000 for the rescue and relief of Jews (under the control of the delegate), and the Jewish Labour Committee had contributed \$5,000 for 'Berezowski.'<sup>54</sup>

On 22 February 1944, a Dispatch no. 38 was sent to the Government Delegate, ordering the payment of 3 million zlotys to the disposal of the Council for Aid to the Jews.<sup>55</sup> Dispatch no. 167 of 19 July 1944, ordered the payment of \$95,300 to the Jewish Relief Committee, \$12,000 to Berman *nom de guerre* 'Borowski' for the left-wing Poale Zion, and \$45,000 to the *Bund*.

<sup>49</sup> Witold Bienkowski's report of 25 May 1944 [in:] *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką...*, p. 190.

<sup>50</sup> AIPN, 1571/410, Dispatch no. 212 of 29 Dec 1943, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 3, Transfers, p. 249.

<sup>52</sup> Instytut Polski i Muzeum im. gen. Sikorskiego (The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum) [hereafter: IPMS], A.9.Id/6B, Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior of 29 Sept 1943 and letter from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 4 October 1943.

<sup>53</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 4, Letter to the Government Delegate of 6 October 1943, p. 240.

<sup>54</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 1, Letter from 'Orkan' to the Government Delegate of 3 December 1943, p. 359.

<sup>55</sup> IPMS, A.9E/6, Compilation of dispatches sent to the Government Delegate in the Homeland in 1944 concerning money transfers.

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On 18 February 1944, 'Ignac' wrote from London to the Jewish National Committee: 'At my request, the National Council approved a special fund of 100,000 pounds sterling for you. Fifteen thousand pounds for the rescue of Polish Jews in the south of France. The Jewish Congress, through its work, has obtained a pledge of 12 million dollars. The Congress is currently working on the implementation of this action.'<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Arieh wrote the day before: 'The World Jewish Congress, in close consultation with the Representation, has given you one hundred thousand dollars; twenty thousand has already been paid to the Polish government, the rest will be paid in regular monthly instalments until the middle of this year.'<sup>57</sup>

A month later, in March 1944, Emanuel Scherer wrote to the *Bund*: 'In your dispatch of 23 November, \$81,000.00 is confirmed. In the following months, from the date of the previous letter (17 February 1944), 20,000 were sent to the Delegate (Government Delegate) for you [...] Now, with this letter, 15,000 are leaving for you [...] Independently of this, you should have received another \$5,000.00 in this period by other means. [...] From the Joint Committees for all Jews – so also for you – one hundred thousand dollars is on the way, the other hundred thousand will soon leave.'<sup>58</sup>

In the mail from London, which reached the Government Delegate in April 1944, there was a letter from the Minister of the Interior, Władysław Banaczyk *nom de guerre* 'Orkan,' in which he informed: 'In the present letter I am sending 125,000 [dollars] for the Jewish organizations paid here.'<sup>59</sup> The courier Jan Ciaś *nom de guerre* 'Kula,' who brought the mail, also delivered a special webbed body belt with pockets containing \$178,000.<sup>60</sup>

The Polish government in London did not limit itself to donating money; efforts were also made to save at least some of the Jews named by the Representation of Polish Jews. Only one such list from 1943 includes 19 persons; they were Dr Ignacy Schipper<sup>61</sup>, Menachem Mendel Kirszenbaum<sup>62</sup>,

<sup>56</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 5, p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, Arieh's letter to the IWW of 17 Feb 1944, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 6, Letter from Emanuel Scherer of 17 March 1944, p. 421.

<sup>59</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 1, Letter from 'Orkan' to the Government Delegate of 3 December 1943, p. 309.

<sup>60</sup> W. Grabowski, *Polska Tajna Administracja Cywilna...* (Polish Secret Civil Administration...), p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> Izaak Ignacy Schipper (Szyper) (1884–1943), member of the Polish Sejm (lower chamber of the Parliament) from the Jewish Circle since 1919, employee of the Judaic Institute in Warsaw, editor of the publication *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej*, Warszawa 1932, author of *Dzieje handlu żydowskiego na ziemiach polskich*, Warsaw 1937; murdered at Majdanek in 1943 (*Kto był kim w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, eds. J.M. Majchrowski, G. Mazur, K. Stepan, Warsaw 1994, p. 423; M. Urynowicz, *Adam Czerniaków 1880–1942. Prezes getta warszawskiego* (Adam Czerniaków 1880–1942. President of the Warsaw Ghetto), Warsaw 2009, pp. 112, 121).

<sup>62</sup> Menachem Mendel Kirszenbaum (?–1943), Zionist activist, member of the JDC (Joint) Advisory Committee, sat on the Jewish Coordination Committee, member of the KK ŻOB, went over to the Aryan side in January 1943, murdered at Pawiak prison.



Lipa Bloch<sup>63</sup>, Jakub Jankiel Trockenheim<sup>64</sup>, Antoni Buksbaum<sup>65</sup>, Dr Adolf A. Berman, Dr Emanuel Ringelblum<sup>66</sup>, Dawid Raduński<sup>67</sup>, Leyzor Lewin, Aron Blum, Jankiel Radzyński, Zalman Grynberg, Leib Szczarański, Jakób Berson and Rywka Finkelstein from Warsaw, Józef Szuw from Vilnius, Leib Mincberg<sup>68</sup> from Białystok and Marja Apte from Wieliczka.<sup>69</sup> It was proposed that these people be sent to Hungary, where they would be assisted by a Polish political liaison office in Budapest.<sup>70</sup>

On 19 July 1944, the Government Delegate presented the following objections of the representative of the 'Jewish Council' at the meeting of the National Unity Council: '1) that on the anniversary of the liquidation of the ghetto there was no mention of this subject in the Republic of Poland (*Rzeczpospolita*), 2) that there are anti-Jewish accents in the pamphlet entitled: 'Common Home' (*Wspólny Dom*) published by the Ministry of Agriculture, and 3) that anti-Jewish views were included in the letter of the head of the diplomatic department<sup>71</sup> to Minister Romer.' After a lively discussion in which the delegate – Jan Stanisław Jankowski – and Kazimierz Pużak *nom de guerre* 'Seret,' Józef Grudziński *nom de guerre* 'Makarewicz,' Franciszek Urbański *nom de guerre* 'Rzewuski' and Władysław Jaworski *nom de guerre* 'Olza' took part, it was agreed: '1) that the activities of the Jewish Committee should be limited to strictly charitable work and that after the end of the German occupation

<sup>63</sup> Eliezer Lipa Bloch (1889–?), head of the National Israel Fund for all of Poland, moved to Warsaw before the outbreak of WW II. During the occupation, he was in the management of the Jewish Social Self-help Society. At the beginning of 1943, he fell into the hands of the Germans. He died at the Majdanek camp.

<sup>64</sup> Jakub Jankiel Trockenheim (1881–?), in the years 1919–1939 city councillor of Warsaw, from 1935 senator of the Republic of Poland, from 1938 member of the Polish Parliament, member of the Provisional Commissariat Board of the Jewish Community in Warsaw, vice-president of the Capital Committee of the LOPP (*Kto był kim...*, pp. 555–556; M. Urynowicz, *Adam Czerniaków...*, pp. 155, 159, 163).

<sup>65</sup> Antoni Buksbaum, an activist of Poale Zion-Left, an escapee from the Janów camp, went to a camp for 'foreigners' in Hanover.

<sup>66</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum (1900–1944), historian, educator and social activist, founder of the underground archive of the Warsaw Ghetto (Ringelblum Archive), see E. Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939 – styczeń 1943* (The Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto: September 1939 – January 1943), transl. A. Rutkowski, introduction and ed. by A. Eisenbach, Warsaw 1983.

<sup>67</sup> Dawid Raduński (1889–1943), Zionist activist, member of the leadership of the TKUMA organisation in the Warsaw Ghetto.

<sup>68</sup> Lejb Jakub Mincberg (1884–1941), city councillor in Łódź from 1919 to 1936, president of the Union of Jewish Merchant Associations in Poland, member of the Polish Sejm from 1922, lived in Vilnius from September 1939 (*Kto był kim...*, p. 370).

<sup>69</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 4, List of Jewish activists in Poland as determined by the Representation of Polish Jews with a request to take appropriate steps to save them, p. 232.

<sup>70</sup> 'In connection with the money sent by the Jewish Labor Committee and the World Jewish Congress for the rescue of the Jews (order 23 and 10,000 you have already received in the mail on the 16th and 17th), please, in the first place, give aid and send to Hungary, of which our post will be notified, to the following persons.' The encrypted names were placed further on (SPP, MSW, vol. 4, Letter to the Government Delegate, pp. 230, 233).

<sup>71</sup> This refers to the Section/Department of Foreign Affairs of the Government Delegation.

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it should be incorporated into the General Welfare Committee. 2) That London should again be asked for clarification of Jewish matters abroad.<sup>72</sup>

The Council's provision of aid to the Jews through the Government Delegation continued at least until January 1945. In the second half of November 1944, Feiner *nom de guerre* 'Lasocki' was paid the sum of \$ 22,100 to 'Żegota.' On 18 December, he received another \$14,700 from the Delegation's funds, this time signing the receipt as 'Berezowski.'<sup>73</sup> Teresa Prekerowa reported that in November and December 1944, the Council received 14 million zlotys. Most of this was used to help 1,500 to 1,800 Jews hiding on the left bank of the Vistula, in the suburbs of Warsaw. It is estimated that there were about 2,700<sup>74</sup> Jews in this area.

According to conspiratorial account sources, in November and December 1944, funds were disbursed from the Government Delegation to: 'Żegota' – \$32,000, ŻKN – \$30,000 and *Bund* – \$14,700. As late as March-April 1945, the amount of \$67,000<sup>75</sup> was transferred from the funds of the Government Delegation to 'Żegota.' In mid-December 1944, the Chairman of 'Żegota' requested the Government Delegate to increase the monthly subsidy from 2 to 4 million zlotys.<sup>76</sup>



Tadeusz Seweryn

## Council for the Relief of Jews (*Rada Pomocy Żydom – RPŻ*) in Kraków

In March 1943, a branch of the Warsaw Council for Aid to the Jews was established in Kraków. Socialists, populists, and democrats participated in the work of the Council. In addition to finding hiding places for Jews and providing them with fake documents, a campaign was launched to smuggle them to Hungary. In January 1944 the composition of the RPŻ of the Kraków district was as follows Stanisław Dobrowolski *nom de guerre* 'Stanisław'<sup>77</sup> of the PPS-WRN – chairman; Władysław Wójcik *nom de guerre* 'Żegociński' of the PPS-WRN – secretary; Anna

<sup>72</sup> AAN, 199/2, pp. 100–100a, Minutes of the meeting of the Central Commission of the RJN on 19 July 1944.

<sup>73</sup> AIPN, 1571/349, Receipts for payments of 15 and 18 November and 18 December 1944, pp. 23, 24, 39.

<sup>74</sup> T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada...*, p. 112.

<sup>75</sup> *Sekcja Kontroli Delegatury Rządu...*, p. 602.

<sup>76</sup> Letter of the RPŻ to the Government Plenipotentiary of 15 December 1944 [in:] T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada...*, p. 438.

<sup>77</sup> Stanisław Wincenty Dobrowolski 'Stanisław' (1915–1993), PPS activist; after the war, among others, ambassador of the People's Republic of Poland in Greece, Denmark and Vietnam (T. Prekerowa, *Przewodniczący krakowskiej „Żegoty” Stanisław Wincenty Dobrowolski 22 VI 1915 – 8 IX 1993* (Chairman of the Kraków 'Żegota' Stanisław Wincenty Dobrowolski 22 VI 1915 – 8 IX 1993), *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce* 1993, no. 1–2, pp. 109–110).

Dobrowolska *nom de guerre* 'Michalska' of the SPD – treasurer; Władysław Wichman *nom de guerre* 'Władysław' of the SPD, Maria Hochberg *nom de guerre* 'Mariańska' of the WRN (a ward) – members; Tadeusz Seweryn *nom de guerre* 'Białowąż'<sup>78</sup> – representative of the district Government Delegate.<sup>79</sup>

In 1943 the District Council in Kraków took care of about a hundred people at a time, and its activities covered Tarnów, Bochnia, Przemyśl, Stalowa Wola, Mielec and Szebnie near Jasło. The monthly subsidy from the Council's headquarters was about 50,000 zlotys.

## Council for Aid to the Jews in Lwów (Lvov)

In May 1943 a District Council was established in Lwów (Lvov), consisting of representatives of the PPS-WRN, the Democratic Party, and the People's Party. The chairperson of the Council was Władysława Larysa Chomsowa *nom de guerre* 'Danuta'<sup>80</sup> of the SPD, the secretary was Józefa Pabst-Wolfowa *nom de guerre* 'Wanda' of the PPS-WRN,<sup>81</sup> and the treasurer was Przemysław Ogrodziński *nom de guerre* 'Adolf' of the PPS-WRN. The liaison officers were Maria Dąbrowicka *nom de guerre* 'Genowefa,' Halina Jacuńska-Ogrodzińska *nom de guerre* 'Barbara,' Barbara Szymańska *nom de guerre* 'Basia.' Artur Kopacz and Marian Wnuk from the SD<sup>82</sup> were also members of the Council. Co-workers included: Adam Pokryszko, Maria Bartłowa, Edward Pawluk, Eng., Justyna

<sup>78</sup> Tadeusz Seweryn 'Białowąż' (1894–1975), member of the SL 'Roch'; imprisoned in the PRL (People's Republic of Poland), member of the ZSL.

<sup>79</sup> AAN, 202/XV-1, Letter from 'Wencki' to the Delegation's national minorities desk of 2 I 1944, p. 136. See more extensively M. Arczyński, W. Balcerak, *Kryptonim „Żegota”...*, pp. 122–130; T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada...*, pp. 304–312; S.W. Dobrowolski, *Memuary pacyfisty* (The Memoirs of the Pacifist), Kraków 1989, pp. 166–242; M.M. Mariańscy, *Wśród przyjaciół i wrogów...*

<sup>80</sup> Władysława Larysa Chomsowa 'Danuta' (1885 [1891]–1966), SD activist in Lwów (Lvov); after the war in exile in France, Great Britain and Israel.

<sup>81</sup> According to Maria Wierzbička, 'Justyna's' flat on Domagalewiczów Street was the contact point for 'Żegota.'

<sup>82</sup> AAN, 202/XV-2, The letter of 'Wencki' to the Government Delegation's National Minorities Department] of 2 I 1944, p. 136. This document mentions as the Council members also 'Wiktor' from the SPD and 'Andrzej,' an unaffiliated member. See also M. Arczyński, W. Balcerak, *Kryptonim „Żegota”...*, pp. 130–131; T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada...*, pp. 316–322; H. Jacuńska-Ogrodzińska, *Wspomnienia lwowskie* [Lvov Memories] [in:] *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna w latach wojny i okupacji 1939–1945. Księga wspomnień*, vol. 1, Warsaw 1994, p. 447; Maria Wierzbička's letter to the author of 21 May 1990. The full composition of the Council is difficult to reconstruct due to differences in the accounts of the participants of the events. In the report of the Lwów (Lvov) Council from the turn of 1943 and 1944, the unrecognised pseudonyms are noteworthy, as Teresa Prekerowa wrote (*Konspiracyjna Rada...*, p. 319): 'Walery' from the PSD – secretary, 'Agapit' – ODR representative, 'Herburt' – member of the presidium of the Council. On the *List of Losses of the Polish Socialist Movement September 1939 – May 1945* published in *Polska*

Wolfowa, Karol Kuryluk *nom de guerre* 'Florian,' Dr Marian Krzyżanowski, Colonel Wacław Dzieńewczyc.<sup>83</sup> The report of 'Żegota' of October 1943 characterized its activities as follows: 'The scope of the work in terms of terrain is much greater, there is a much larger number of Jewish camps, since the Jewish population in these areas is much larger than in western Lesser Poland and the bordering areas of Silesia and former Congress Poland. A fact-finding tour to collect the necessary data and establish contacts with ghettos and Jewish camps in the Lwów (*Lvov*) region, undertaken by an envoy of the Lwów (*Lvov*) Council, provided some information about Kołomyja, Stryj, Brody, Borysław, Drohobych, and Przemyśl, and the possibility of possible individual assistance in some of these places. However, all this work, if it is to have any real results – even for local groups – depends on large sums of money, which the Central Council cannot provide due to lack of funds.

'The Lwów (*Lvov*) Council has recently been receiving 60,000 zlotys per month from the Central Council, and several dozen people in the Aryan district receive financial benefits. It should be noted that in September of this year the grant for Lwów (*Lvov*) – unfortunately – did not reach the Lwów (*Lvov*) Council, because the envoy of the Council, who received the corresponding sum from the Central Council together with a set of identity cards for Lwów (*Lvov*), was arrested on the way.'<sup>84</sup>

The most important question that arises in connection with the activities of the Council for Aid to the Jews is the number of Jews who actually benefited from its assistance. The answer is not easy, although secret reports provide information about the actual number of wards. It is difficult to add up this 'periodic' data. We know that in January-February 1943 the Council in Warsaw helped 200–300 people. In June-October it was already about a thousand people, and including the province, one and a half thousand people. In the first half of 1944 the Council helped between 3,000 and 4,000 people<sup>85</sup> in the occupied country.

It is worth remembering, however, that at one point in February 1944, the Council had under its care about 3,500 people. A similar number of people were under the care of Jewish organizations such as the *Bund* or the Jewish National Committee.

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*Partia Socjalistyczna w latach wojny i okupacji 1939–1945. Księga wspomnień. Aneks (Annex)*, Warsaw 1995, p. 24, the unrecognised 'Agapit,' is listed, who was killed on 26 August 1944 in the Warsaw Uprising.

<sup>83</sup> *Kronika 2350 dni wojny i okupacji Lwowa. 1 IX 1939 – 5 II 1946* (Chronicle of the 2350 Days of War and Occupation of Lwów (*Lvov*)). 1 IX 1939 – 5 II 1946), elabs. G. Mazur, J. Skwara, J. Węgierski, Katowice 2007, p. 345.

<sup>84</sup> *Polacy-Żydzi 1939–1945. Wybór źródeł* (Poles-Jews 1939–1945. Selection of Sources), elab. A.K. Kunert, Warsaw 2001, pp. 343–344. The arrest of the liaison officer Barbara Szymańska 'Basia' near Dęblin in September 1943.

<sup>85</sup> T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada...*, p. 111.

It is also worth remembering that by mid-1944, the Council cared for about a quarter of the Jews then in hiding in Warsaw.<sup>86</sup>

The financial side of the aid organized for Polish Jews has aroused considerable interest and controversy. Dariusz Libionka, referring to a publication by Dariusz Stola, claims that of the \$430,000.00 paid to 'Żegota,' only \$220,000 was received. He also claims that of the \$1.3 million paid since the fall of 1942, only \$600,000<sup>87</sup> arrived in the country. Libionka then speculates that perhaps some of these funds were not sent to the country at all. Continuing his reflections on the inadequacy of the Government Delegation's financial assistance to the Jews, Libionka quotes, without due comment, the statement that the underground political parties received one million zlotys per month.<sup>88</sup> This is a false statement. In 1942, the monthly subsidy for the four parties of the Political Consultative Committee (Polish acronym: PKP) was 40,000 zlotys.<sup>89</sup> Later, according to the decision of the Committee on National Affairs, which accepted the PKP's proposal, the monthly subsidy for the four political parties centred on the PKP was \$10,000 each per month<sup>90</sup> in 1943. The amount received locally in Warsaw depended on the black-market rate. But even these payments were not regular.

The question of money arouses considerable emotions, but it should be remembered that in practically no year did the Government Delegation receive sufficient subsidies. The aid received did not even cover the Delegation's budget approved by the Polish government. This is eloquently proved by a letter from Władysław Banaczyk, Minister of the Interior, dated 3 December 1943, in which we read: 'As I predicted in my previous letter, the implementation of the entire budget has become impossible for two reasons: the limited possibility of transfer 'in advance' [by air – W.G.], and the lack of dollars.'<sup>91</sup>

It seems reasonable to trace the fate of the body belts containing the funds allocated to the Government Delegation. There is quite precise data in the literature on this subject.

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<sup>86</sup> M. Urynowicz, *Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej* (Organized and Individual Help of Poles to the Jewish Population Exterminated by the German Occupant During WW II) [in:] *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką...*, pp. 238–239.

<sup>87</sup> D. Libionka, *Polskie piśmiennictwo na temat zorganizowanej i indywidualnej pomocy Żydom (1945–2008)* (Polish Writing on Organized and Individual Assistance to Jews (1945–2008)), *Zagłada Żydów. Studies and Materials* 2008, no. 4, p. 64; D. Stola, *Nadzieja i zagłada. Ignacy Schwarzbart – żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP (1940–1945)* (Hope and the Holocaust. Ignacy Schwarzbart – Jewish Representative in the National Council of the Republic of Poland (1940–1945)), Warsaw 1995, pp. 207–222.

<sup>88</sup> D. Libionka, *Polskie piśmiennictwo...* (Polish Writings...), p. 69.

<sup>89</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 11, Dispatch of 'Stem' no. 125 of 19 December 1942, p. 358.

<sup>90</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 1, p. 338.

<sup>91</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 1, Letter from 'Orkan' to the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Republic of Poland of 3 December 1943, p. 309.

**Table I.** Funds arriving in the country by air from February 1941 to December 1944<sup>92</sup>

Type of currency	For the Home Army (AK)	For the Government Delegation
US dollars (both dollars (cash) and in gold)	\$26,299,375.00	\$8,593,788.00
Pounds sterling in gold	£ 1,755	£ 1,644
German marks	3,578,000	15,911,900
Spanish pesos	10,000	–
Counterfeit occupation-period zlotys (aka 'młynarki')	40,869,800	400,000

What remains to be determined, of course, is the amount of money transferred into the country by land, as well as the question of the amount of money prepared in the communication bases but not sent to Poland. Let us begin our attempt to solve the above problems by determining the amount of cash found in Base no. 11 on 1 January 1945. According to the surviving cash ledger (*Podręczna księжка kasowa*) at the base, at that time there were funds belonging to the Special Department of the Supreme Commander's Staff and the Government Delegation (actually still the Ministry of Internal Affairs).<sup>93</sup> The 'military' money at that time was 43,200 gold dollars (14 belts' worth), \$6,550,200 actual dollars (136 belts' worth), 17,310,000 'młynarki' counterfeits (100 belts' worth).

The 'civilian' funds were much less, but still present on base: \$238,846 actual dollars (4 belts' worth), 1,860,000 German marks (3 packages), 600,000 'młynarki' counterfeits (belt no. 72/18).<sup>94</sup>

As far as funds earmarked for Jewish organizations are concerned, it should be noted that, for example, two belts with funds for Jews in Poland were sent from London to Base 11 in Italy *only* on 16 November 1944. The Government Delegation (DR) belt 247/25 contained \$72,000, including \$45,000 for the Jewish National Committee.<sup>95</sup> In contrast, belt DR 248/25 contained \$89,563, including \$78,938 for the *Bund* and

<sup>92</sup> J. Tucholski, *W sprawie Oddziału Łącznikowego Komendanta Głównego AK przy Naczelnym Wodzu na emigracji (VI Oddział Sztabu Naczelnego Wodza)* (On the Liaison Branch of the Home Army Commander-in-Chief to the Commander-in-Chief in Exile (VI Branch of the Commander-in-Chief's Staff)), *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 1983, no. 4, p. 212.

<sup>93</sup> SPP, Sk 25.25, Handy cash ledger book for the period from 1 December 1944.

<sup>94</sup> It is worth noting that the 'neighbouring' belts were dropped into Poland as early as April 1944. Belt 73/18 was taken by courier Jan Cias and belt 74/18 by courier Wiktor Karamać.

<sup>95</sup> SPP, MSW, vol. 9, Contents of belt DR 247/25; IPMS, A.9.E/6, Minutes of an inspection of the Social Department of the Ministry of the Interior conducted by a member of the College of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK), Dr Tadeusz Goryński, in March and April 1945, p. 464.

\$10,625 for the Jewish National Committee.<sup>96</sup> The belt was carried into the country by the 'Cichociemni': Major Adam Mackus *nom de guerre* 'Prosty' and Lieutenant Przemysław Bystrzycki *nom de guerre* 'Grzbiet,' who were parachute dropped at the outpost 'Wilga' near Nowy Targ on 22 November 1944. Such a late dispatch of these funds to the country meant that only a small amount could be used to help the Jews in hiding. This, of course, is only one example.

The question of the financing of underground activities in occupied Poland requires further research. At present, I can present preliminary results, which differ significantly from the data reported in previous publications (Tab. 1).

**Tab. 2.** Approximate amount of funds transferred by air for the Government Delegation in the years 1941–1945<sup>97</sup>

	US dollars (currency)	Dollars (in gold)	Pounds sterling (in gold)	German marks	Counterfeit zlotys 'młynarki'
Prepared for dispatching	7,389,034	3,280	874	18,550,400	1,000,000
Returned to the Ministry of Interior Affairs	328,846			3,410,000	850,000
Lost/missing	772,000			750,000	
Effectively delivered	6,288,188	3,280	874	14,390,400	150,000
Delivered (by %)	85.10%	100%	100%	77.57%	15%
As 'dropped' by couriers in flight since 30 July 1944	1,112,788			6,040,000	
Percentage of funds actually delivered	17.7%			41.97%	

In analysing the sums channelled to the occupied country, it should be remembered that the budget of the Government Delegation was set at \$5,724,000 for 1943 and was to rise to \$12 million in 1944<sup>98</sup>.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*, Contents of the DR 248/25 belt, p. 465.

<sup>97</sup> To this amount one should perhaps add 350,000 in 'młynarki' counterfeits from the DR 64/18 suitcase dropped on 8 April 1944, and 350–400,000 'młynarki' from the DR 67/18 suitcase, dropped on 9 April 1944. This would give an additional 700–750,000 'młynarki' – i.e. for a total of 850–900 thousand shipped over counterfeit 'młynarki' (85–90 per cent).

<sup>98</sup> W. Grabowski, *Polska Tajna Administracja Cywilna...*, p. 175.





## Helping Jewish Refugees on Kraków's Aryan Side

'I look with sadness into the windows of my parents' house. Maybe my father will run away and decide to take a last chance of rescue? My wife pushed me violently into the sewer, threw the baby on my head, then slipped in herself. With a deafening bang, the manhole sealed us off from the top.'<sup>1</sup>

This is how Julian Aleksandrowicz, a participant in the September 1939 Campaign, a doctor in the Kraków ghetto, a soldier in the Home Army and, after the war, a professor of medicine and a world-renowned scientist, recorded this dramatic moment in his memoirs. Together with his wife and son, he managed to escape through the sewers from the Kraków Ghetto, which at the time was being liquidated by the Germans.

Over the course of two days, 13 and 14 March 1941, Nazi officials slaughtered about 1,000 people in Kraków's district of Old Podgórze (*Stare Podgórze*), sent 2,000 to Auschwitz and 8,000 to the Płaszów camp on the outskirts of the city. But despite the efforts of the German occupation authorities, a certain group of Jews still tried to survive on the Aryan side of the city.

### Outside the Ghetto

The Kraków Ghetto had been established two years earlier. By the decree of 3 March 1941, the governor of the Kraków district, Otto Wächter, ordered the Jewish population living in the capital of the General Government (GG) to move to a separate area in the Podgórze district. At the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Aleksandrowicz, *Kartki z dziennika doktora Twardego* (Pages from Dr Twardy's diary), Kraków 2017, p. 59.



Gate I of the Kraków Ghetto, 1941. Entrance from Podgórski Square to Limanowskiego Street. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

beginning, about 11,000 people lived on an area of twenty hectares. Over time, their number increased to about 20,000.

The first deportations from Kraków to the Belzec (Belzec) death camp, which took place in June 1942, probably came as a great surprise to most of the ghetto inhabitants. In the weeks and months that followed, several people decided to seek refuge on the Aryan side of the city. They tried to survive by hiding or working under new identities thanks to fake documents. And the cost of obtaining Aryan papers was very high.



Julian Aleksandrowicz.  
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

So you had to have money and connections. Good looks and language skills were also important. None of this, however, guaranteed survival.

'A man forced to live outside the law created by a group of differently thinking people can only exist as a NOBODY [...] By chance, five such NOBODIES found themselves in a tiny room at 12a Smolki Street,'<sup>2</sup> wrote Aleksandrowicz about hiding in one of Kraków's apartments. Under German law, harbouring Jewish refugees was a crime against the Third Reich, punishable by severe penalties. The occupation authorities knew some Jews were trying to survive on the Aryan side, so they created a whole system to catch them. In addition to introducing the death penalty for aiding and abetting, the Germans, under threat of sanctions, ordered all inhabitants of the GG to denounce Jewish refugees. In rural areas, special groups of German gendarmes and Blue Policemen were responsible for tracking down and finding those in hiding. Their task

was also to repress those who helped them. In addition, under the system imposed by the Germans, various people profited from the tragic situation of the Jewish population. Blackmailers and informers were a particular threat to those in hiding.

## Organized Help

Eighty years ago, on the eve of the liquidation of the Kraków ghetto, a branch of the Council for the Relief of the Jews (*Rada Pomocy Żydom* (RPŻ)) was established in Kraków. Although it did not have adequate financial or human resources (it was not as developed as the RPŻ in Warsaw), from the first weeks of its operation its activists provided emergency assistance to Jewish refugees. They obtained fake documents and searched for hiding places for them.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p 65.



Stanisław Dobrowolski.  
Photo: sprawiedliwi.org.pl



Władysław Wójcik.  
Photo: sprawiedliwi.org.pl



Tadeusz Seweryn.  
Photo: sprawiedliwi.org.pl

The Kraków Council, which was subordinate to Warsaw headquarters, consisted of representatives of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) 'Freedom, Equality, Independence' (WRN), the People's Party (SL), and the Democratic Party (SD). The Chairman of the District RPŻ was Stanisław Dobrowolski, the Secretary was Władysław Wójcik, and the Treasurer was Anna Wójcik. The Government Delegation was represented by Tadeusz Seweryn. In time, through PPS-WRN activist Adam Rysiewicz, Maria Hochberg joined the Council as a representative of the Jewish population. Years later, she recalled the beginning of her work in the organization: 'The day I went there for the first time, the heavy gates opened, no, swung open, and a faint ray of hope broke through inside. It was late, much too late, but for those who were still alive and struggling with their bitter fate, it was their last salvation [...]'.<sup>3</sup> According to historians, at least several dozen people could have cooperated with the Kraków branch of the RPŻ.

The headquarters of the Council was in Kraków at 11/7A Jagiellońska Street. The organization operated under the cover of a trading company selling household chemicals. Tadeusz Seweryn recalled: 'In the

<sup>3</sup> M.M. Mariańscy, *Wśród przyjaciół i wrogów. Poza gettem w okupowanym Krakowie* (Among Friends and Enemies: Outside the Ghetto in Occupied Kraków), Kraków 1988, p. 100.

beginning, the RPŻ only took care of Kraków and its immediate surroundings. Later, the scope of our activities extended to Lwów (Lvov) in the east [...] and to the Silesian lands incorporated into the Reich in the west.<sup>4</sup> One of the most important forms of support provided by 'Żegota' to Jewish refugees was the already mentioned action of preparing fake Aryan documents. At first these were provided by underground organizations, but in time the Kraków branch established its own office.

In addition to providing fake documents and finding shelter for those in need, the Council's activists also helped prisoners in the camps, provided aid, informed the headquarters about the situation of the Jewish population, and tried to influence the behaviour of the inhabitants of Kraków and its surroundings through the underground press. There was also an action to transfer a group of Jews to Hungary. Despite ongoing research, we still do not know how many people survived thanks to the activities of the RPŻ in Kraków. After the war, a list of over three hundred names of families and individuals who benefited from permanent assistance was reconstructed. It is very likely that these are not all of them. There were probably more who received various types of assistance.

The clergy and other religious orders also helped the refugees. Several refugees, mostly children, found shelter with nuns. The assistance of the clergy, in addition to helping them find shelter, included the provision of baptismal certificates. Father Bruno Boguszewski, for example, carried out such activities in Kraków. In the 1970s, Anna Carter recalled: 'In order to save Jewish children, he gave out copies of certificates from original birth books.'<sup>5</sup> Anna obtained the documents for her children, Alina and Zygmunt, from the priest. Her daughter survived, as Alicja Kęsek, with 'kind-hearted Poles in Chrzanów.' Unfortunately, her son did not survive; he was probably murdered at the end of the war.

Soldiers of the underground resistance also helped. Franciszek Banaś, a Blue Police officer and Home Army soldier who was on duty at the entrance to the Jewish quarter in Podgórze, helped Róża Jakubowicz and her son Tadeusz escape from the ghetto. He helped them escape by bribing an SS-man. Other people also owed him their lives.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> T. Seweryn, *Wielostronna pomoc Żydom w czasie okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Multilateral Assistance to Jews During the Nazi Occupation) [in:] *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939–1945*, elabs. W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna, 3rd ed., Warsaw 2007, p. 130.

<sup>5</sup> Yad Vashem Archive in Jerusalem [hereafter: AYV], M.31.2/1360, Anna Carter's testimony, 7 February 1978.

<sup>6</sup> F. Banaś, *Moje wspomnienia* (My Memories), elabs. M. Kalisz, E. Rączy, Rzeszów 2009, pp. 10–11, 133.

## Individual Help

Most of the help, however, came from individuals who were not affiliated with any organization. And it was thanks to them that most Jews were saved. The terror of the occupation forced such helpers to leave no trace of their activities. Often information about them was passed on only by human memory. The files of the Righteous Among the Nations, kept in the archives of the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem, contain several hundred stories of such assistance given in the Kraków area. We should add, however, that these files do not reflect all cases of action in favour of Jewish refugees residing on the Aryan side of the city – it only provides a partial picture.

Why was help given? The results of the research so far indicate that it was mainly for humanitarian reasons and because of old friendships. It cannot be ruled out that religious reasons were also important in several cases. Some people helped by paying all the living expenses, while others did so in return for payment. Individual help was given from the beginning of the German occupation, but the highest number of such acts was recorded from 1942, i.e. from the beginning of Operation Reinhardt, the operation to exterminate the Jewish population living in the GG.

Lotti Rosenzweid, an escapee from the Płaszów camp, was hidden at 27 Frycza Modrzewskiego Street by Dominik Wajda and his wife Władysława Miarczyńska, thanks to a pre-war acquaintance. The woman was an acquaintance of Władysława's mother – both came from Bielsko. Thanks to her husband's contacts, the couple obtained fake documents for her. Lotti was responsible for running the house and taking care of the child. In emergencies, she would hide in the cellar or other corners of the house. In the 1960s, Lotti Rosenzweid (at that time using the name Ludwika Darska), trying to honour her guardians, declared: 'To Miarczyńska Władysława, her mother and Dominik Wajda, I am eternally grateful for their selfless help and care.'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> AYV, M.31.2/2762, Ludwika Darska's (Lotti Rosenzweid's) testimony, Tel Aviv, 20 February 1961.



Plan of the Kraków Ghetto. Photo: Krzycho / Wikimedia Commons

## Helping Children

Among the accounts of help given to Jewish refugees, particularly dramatic stories concern the fate of children who were placed in the hands of sometimes complete strangers in the hope that they would be rescued.

‘There [in the ghetto - R.G.] were our acquaintances Mr and Mrs Weber, who wanted to save at least their son at all costs. Jan was a pre-school boy, and we hid him,’<sup>8</sup> Aniela Nowak recalled many years later. At the request of the child’s mother, Karolina, she decided to help him escape: ‘The boy was taken behind the ghetto walls in a suitcase and brought to a place agreed with us. We raised him like a son for a month or more [...].’<sup>9</sup> Probably because of the danger, the little ghetto escapee was taken to the house of Michał and Anna Wierzbicki. Years later, their daughter, Wanda, recounted: ‘Mom brought a small, delicate boy. He will live with us,’ she said ‘but no one must know about it. It was Janek Weber.’<sup>10</sup> The boy lived with the Wierzbickis in a locked room. Years later he wrote that his guardians told him not to make any noise and not to go near the windows. Food was usually brought to him at night.

Despite every precaution, the family’s life was filled with fear. One summer day in 1943 or 1944, when German officers were searching the surrounding apartments, the Wierzbickis’ youngest daughter, Wanda, rushed Weber outside. Her father asked her to take Janek to the end of the garden, where the thick bushes provided a good hiding place. The boy was not found out. After the German action was over, he was brought back into the house. ‘Poor Janek sat as if punished in the hiding place,’ Wanda recalled. ‘Happily, we took him home to feed him and to eat something ourselves, since we hadn’t had anything to eat since 5 o’clock in the morning.’<sup>11</sup>

Janek was hidden with the Wierzbickis until the end of the German occupation, while his parents were sent to the Płaszów camp. Only his mother survived and emigrated abroad with him after the war.

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<sup>8</sup> AYV, M.31.2/6222, Aniela Nowak’s testimony, Kraków, 23 June 1994.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> AYV, M.31.2/6222, Wanda Styczeń’s (nee Wierzbicka) testimony, Kraków, [1994].

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.



## Repression for Helping

The price of helping Jewish refugees could be very high. We know from research to date that the predominant form of repression was the death penalty. Helpers were also arrested, imprisoned and sent to concentration camps.

'We were taken to a brickworks in Łagiewniki, and I had to wait there with the guard Puchała,'<sup>12</sup> recalled Zygmunt Weinreb after the war. Probably in October 1942, the boy was taken out of the ghetto by his cousin and taken to the house of Józef Puchała – the watchman, who lived with his wife Maria and two daughters on the premises of a brickworks on the outskirts of Kraków. After some time, Zygmunt's mother, Bronisława, came to Puchała and took her son away with her, most probably to the vicinity of Maków Podhalański.

Bronisława often came to Kraków, where she sold 'various things.' This was her main source of income. One day she did not return.

'I thought to myself that there was probably a big crisis and that my mother couldn't get on the train,' Zygmunt Weinreb recalled, 'but a few days later Puchała came to get me.'<sup>13</sup> He took the boy to Kraków, and after a while returned to take the rest of the Weinrebs' belongings. According to witnesses, Puchała was arrested in Maków Podhalański on suspicion of aiding Jews and sent to a concentration camp.



Franciszek Paślawski.

Photo: [sprawiedliwi.org.pl](http://sprawiedliwi.org.pl)

<sup>12</sup> Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw), 301/406, Zygmunt Weinreb's testimony, Kraków, 8 May 1945.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.



Rena Kardisch, saved and baptised.  
Photo: infocenters.co.il

After Józef's arrest, Zygmunt left the Puchała home. He survived by finding shelter in a hut run by the Albertine Brothers: 'I was very hungry and tired. I slept one more night in Zakrzówek, but in the morning I was barely alive. I met a tram driver who advised me to go to the nursery school on Polna Street in Dębniaki. There they told me that only small children were accepted and that I should go to the Albertine Brothers in Krakowska Street. I went there [...]. I stayed with the Albertine Brothers, and Mrs Thiel, the teacher, guessed that I was Jewish, and so did the Brother Superior, and they helped me a lot,'<sup>14</sup> recalled Zygmunt.

After the war, Zygmunt's rescuer Józef returned home from the concentration camp. 'He had sick lungs, renal contusions and an emaciated body. He never recovered. He died soon after, at the age of 36. He left his wife and two minor children without any means of support,'<sup>15</sup> his daughters Janina and Maria wrote decades after the war.

A similar story played out in the house at 15 Rękawka Street in Kraków, where the Paślawskis hid Romek and Rena Kardisch for several months. Unfortunately, towards the end of 1944, one of the tenants, probably under the influence of alcohol, reported to German officers that there were Jewish children in the Paślawskis' house. Rozalia Paślawska and several-year-old Romek were arrested. The boy was probably murdered, while the woman was released from Montelupich prison a few weeks later. Romek's sister survived thanks to the Paślawskis' daughter, who managed to get her out during a search. After the war Rena and her mother Esther emigrated to Israel.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> AYW, M.31.2/8593, Janina and Maria Puchała's testimony.

## **Conclusion**

We do not know how many people on the Aryan side of Kraków's assisted Jewish refugees, or how many of them were repressed for doing so. Nor do we know the extent of the various negative attitudes towards Jewish refugees under the occupation. The system created by the German authorities had a very important influence on people's attitudes – it forced and encouraged shameful actions. In the occupied Polish territories, 40-50,000 Jews survived. Some of them survived the war in various camps, others on the Aryan side.



## **Ninety-Nine Victims. The German Pacification of the Village of Białka near Parczew in the Lublin District as Retaliation for Offering Shelter to Jews and Soviet POWs**

The vast majority of individual cases of Poles rescuing Jews in occupied Polish territory took place in rural areas. This issue is still being researched, and despite the passage of almost 80 years since the end of WW II, historians are still discovering new, previously unknown cases of assistance to the Jewish population.

The results of the research so far have shown that among those who saved Jews was a group of Righteous Among the Nations from the Lublin district (*Distrikt Lublin*). According to the current findings, there were 571 people out of a total of 7,184 Polish Righteous Among the Nations, or 7.9 per cent. Most of the cases of helping Jews came from the Lublin district, where the Lublin ghetto, the largest in the district (*Kreis Lublin*), was located. Unfortunately, research on the repression of Poles by the Germans for helping Jews in the Lublin district is still incomplete. It is being carried out by the Institute of National Remembrance (*IPN*) as part of the project 'An Index of Poles Repressed for Helping Jews.' So far we have learned sixteen stories of Poles who were sentenced to death by firing squad, sent to concentration camps or imprisoned for helping Jews.

The latest research makes it possible to add another case to these shocking statistics. It is a unique event in that it was a mass pacification that is the largest known massacre of Polish citizens accused of helping Jews in the Generalgouvernement. The murder was committed by the Germans on 7 December 1942 in the village of Białka near Parczew. It is noteworthy that almost at the same time (6 December 1942) and

under identical circumstances (the liquidation of an armed camp at Kłamosze in the Starachowice Forest), German police forces ‘cracked down’ on the Kowalski, Kosior, Obuchiewicz and Skoczylas families in Ciepeliów Stary and Rekówka in the Radom district. At the time, 31 Poles and two Jews were killed.

The source material on the basis of which the findings on the pacification of Białka were made comes mainly from the Branch Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation of the IPN in Lublin (S.87/2007/Zn/Lu). It concerns the investigation of crimes committed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Motorised Battalion of the SS Gendarmerie in the Lublin region in 1942–1944 and genocidal crimes committed by officers of the 22<sup>nd</sup> German Police Regiment in 1942–1943 on the territory of the Lublin voivodeship with the participation of other German formations, i.e. acts pursuant to Art. 1 point 1 of the Decree of the PKWN of 31 August 1944 on the Punishment of Fascist-Hitlerite Criminals Guilty of Murder and Abuse of the Civilian Population and Prisoners of War, and of Traitors to the Polish Nation. The research included not only the testimonies quoted in the text, but also original German documents, which made it possible to describe the course of this dramatic episode in the history of the village of Białka during WW II.

## **The German ‘Bazaar’ Liquidation Campaign in the Parczew Forests**

Białka is a small village currently located in the municipality of Dębowa Kłoda, in the densely forested district of Parczew. During the war it was part of the Radzyń district, with 448 inhabitants, mainly of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox faith.

During the third stage of the extermination of the Jews in the Białka area, from 3–7 December 1942, the Germans carried out a large-scale operation to eliminate an ‘armed gang’ operating in the Parczew forests, which was ‘intensifying robberies.’ We can learn more about this from the German reconnaissance of the area: ‘The possibility that one or more armed gangs have taken up residence in these forests must be taken into account. [...] It was confirmed that an armed group of about 150 people had indeed stopped in bunkers in the Parczew forests, more precisely in the hunting sections 112–115, 132–135, 153–156 and 171–175. [...] In addition, according to the testimony of the foresters, there are a large number of hiding places and

shelters throughout the forest where more than 1,000 Jews<sup>1</sup> are hiding (these are probably whole Jewish families who have fled here from anti-Jewish actions). Some may be armed.’

In fact, the aforementioned ‘bandits’ and the Jews in hiding formed as if, a single clan. There were also Soviet prisoners of war who had escaped from German captivity. An armed group provided protection for the rest, who formed a family camp known in historiography as the ‘Bazaar.’ It was a camp of shelters and dugouts near a swamp called Rude Bagno.

Chuna Sobol recalled his stay

in the ‘Bazaar’ as follows: ‘In May 1942 they started to deport everyone from the villages to the ghetto in Parczew. As I could no longer look at it all [what was happening in the ghetto], I went back to the village, and when I was still there for a few weeks, a decree was issued that any village head who would not give up a Jew would be shot. So I decided to go to the forest with my whole family. I took my mother and father with me, and I had a wife and four sons and a daughter, and I [also] took a rifle. Then I gave word to Parczew that the people should come. They began to escape from the ghetto and came to the forest. In the forest, Russians who had escaped from captivity began to join in. I formed a group, and my group was



Monument to the murdered inhabitants of Białka in front of the school in Białka.  
Photo: Rafał Drabik

<sup>1</sup> Other reports mention several hundred Jews.

one of the best. I was in contact with Moscow. They helped us with planes. There was still a hunt for us, but I fought back.’<sup>2</sup>

Where did the name of the camp come from? Well, some of the Jewish inhabitants of Parczew, Sosnowica, Kodeniec and Ostrów Lubelski, who were familiar with the area of the Parczew forests and who had maintained trade contacts with Poles from the surrounding villages before the war, decided, in order to save their lives, to seek a livelihood in trade and services with the Polish population. They offered tailoring, shoemaking, etc. in exchange for food. The farmers brought mainly potatoes, flour, poultry, eggs and milk. The Jews also paid for the goods they brought in cash or with items they had salvaged from their own homes. Hence the name ‘Bazaar.’

In order to liquidate the ‘Bazaar,’ the Germans assembled a serious force. The pacification force consisted of units from the 1<sup>st</sup> Motorised SS Gendarmerie Battalion (*I. Gendarmerie-Bataillon [motorisiert]*), the 22<sup>nd</sup> German Police Regiment (*SS-Polizei-Regiment 22*) and the 101<sup>st</sup> Reserve Police Battalion (*Reserve-Polizei-Bataillon 101*). It was divided into four units which, from 3 December 1942, searched the following villages Jedlanka, Kolonia Kaznów, Ostrów, Rudki Kijańskie, Brzostówka and Makoszka. In each village the Germans physically liquidated the Jews they found and interrogated the village leaders and clergy. The remaining inhabitants, officers of the so-called ‘Blue Police’ (*Polnische Polizei im Generalgouvernement*), foresters and lumberjacks were then interrogated. These interrogations may have revealed that the inhabitants of Białka were particularly involved in assisting the ‘Bazaar.’

From the very first day of the liquidation operation, numerous bunkers and hiding places for Jews and former Soviet prisoners of war were discovered. On 3 December, the Germans shot 56 ‘armed bandits’ and 41 Jews, destroyed thirteen bunkers and captured two rifles.

On the second day of the operation, another 33 Jews were shot dead, 21 ‘bandits’ (12 wounded) and 32 bunkers destroyed. As a result of the two-day operation, there were four wounded on the German side, which shows that the victims of the roundup put up armed resistance. However, it is difficult to say how many people managed to break out of the encirclement or how many camouflaged shelters the Germans failed to discover.

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<sup>2</sup> Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Archive of Jewish Historical Institute), 301/1165, Chun Sobol’s testimony, 13 December 1945, p. 1.



As the occupying forces were aware that there might be other undiscovered bunkers in the area, on 5 December some of the units taking part in the operation were ordered to search the forests east of Białka. The German order of the day stated that the aim was 'to clear the area of Jews hiding there and to destroy the bunkers found.'

Georg Leffler, one of the officers of the 101<sup>st</sup> Reserve Police Battalion, recalled the operation as follows:

'We were told that there were many Jews in the woods, so we set out to search the area in a tight formation, but we could not find anyone – undoubtedly the Jews were very well hidden. In this situation we searched the woods again. Only then did we notice some chimney pipes sticking out of the ground. We discovered that the Jews were hiding in underground shelters. They were taken out easily, but in one of the shelters the Jews put up a fight. Some of my comrades went underground to get the refugees out, and they were then shot. [...] The Jews had to lie face down on the ground, and the execution was carried out with a shot in the neck. I don't remember who was in the execution squad. I think it was simply the men standing closest to the prisoners who were ordered to kill them. About 50 Jews were shot, including men and women of all ages, because whole families were hiding in the shelters. [...] The executions took place in public. A cordon was not formed because a group of Poles from Parczew had gathered near the execution site. They later received an order, probably from Hoffmann, to bury the shot Jews in the unfinished bunker.'<sup>3</sup>

As the report of the last day of the manhunt, 6 December, has not survived, it is not known how many people were murdered at that time. According to the report, which summarised the entire operation, a total of 154 'armed bandits and Bolsheviks' and 180 Jews were killed, although this division was artificially introduced by the Germans for propaganda reasons, as all – except the Soviets – were essentially ghetto escapees. Historians estimate that several hundred Jews probably were killed at that time.<sup>4</sup> The Germans included mainly victims in the report who were outside the shelters but did not enter the bunkers. The bunkers were blown up and then covered with earth, so the number of dead must have been higher than

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<sup>3</sup> See Ch.R. Browning, *Zwykli ludzie. 101. Policyjny Batalion Rezerwy i, ostateczne rozwiązanie w Polsce* (org. title: *Ordinary People. The 101st Police Reserve Battalion and the 'Final Solution in Poland'*), transl. P. Budkiewicz, Poznań 2019, pp. 148–149. Christopher Browning, following the accounts of officers of the 101st Police Reserve Battalion, erroneously dates the pacification of the Parczew Forests to October 1942.

<sup>4</sup> W. Curilla, *Der Judenmord in Polen und die deutsche Ordnungspolizei 1939–1945*, Paderborn 2011, p. 723 and pp. 753–754.

the German reports suggest. Polish civilians were also witnesses, as the Germans had assigned several wagon drivers from Białka to transport members of the German troops within the Parczew Forest for the duration of the operation.

### The Pacification of the Village Białka

After the liquidation of the 'Bazaar' in the Parczew forests, the Germans decided to punish those who had helped the camp. They understood the survival of such a large group of people in the forest was impossible without the help of the local population. The target turned out to be the village of Białka. This is indicated by an excerpt from the German report on the course of the operation, which is included in the materials of the above-mentioned investigation: 'During the operations of the past few days it was repeatedly noted that most of the population of the village of Białka in the eastern part of the Parczew Forest helped the bandits. All the evidence suggests that the Germans chose this village to retaliate against the Polish population for helping the 'forest dwellers' and to discourage others from doing the same. Perhaps the occupiers also wanted to avenge some of the Germans who were not so much wounded as killed during the action, as German reports suggest. Emilia Majewska, a witness to the events, recalled these German motivations after the war: 'I think he [the German commanding the action] told us through an interpreter that they killed a lot of men because the people of Białka were giving food to the bandits from the forest. [...] This German mentioned that some innocent people might have been shot among the dead, but that the bandits had also killed some innocent Germans.'

It is noteworthy that in the 1990s an officer of the 101<sup>st</sup> Reserve Police Battalion who took part in the pacification operations, Jean Heinen, admitted his participation in the combing of the Parczew Forest at the end of 1942, during which hundreds of Jews who had fled the ghettos were killed, but claimed that this and other 'patrols' were aimed eliminating the partisans and not the Jews.<sup>5</sup> This claim is untrue. It was only in the spring of 1943 that small partisan units began to form in the Białka area. As the regionalist and historian Maria Wójcik

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<sup>5</sup> Ch.R. Browning, *Zwykli ludzie...*, p. 282.



Preserved school building in Białka. It was used to hold women, children and a group of men who were not to be shot. Contemporary view. Photo: Rafał Drabik

points out in one of her public statements, 'at that time Białka was not one of the villages with any great experience of underground activity. It was not a permanent partisan base, and nothing happened there that could be interpreted as an attack on Nazi order or security.'

While there is no doubt that Białka was pacified for helping the 'Bazaar,' it is impossible to say for certain

under what circumstances the Germans were able to establish that the villagers were somehow 'favouring or helping the bandits.' An important detail appears in the post-war investigation material. It shows that during a manhunt in the woods the Germans captured one of the Jewish women. The woman was able to point out the hiding-places in the forest and the Poles from Białka who helped the Jews, as we shall see. We are talking here about the Bułtowicz family. It is not impossible that this could have been the direct cause of the pacification of this village, although, as already mentioned, Białka could have been singled out by the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, who were interrogated and perhaps even tortured during the manhunt, as well as by foresters or Blue Policemen.

The attack on Białka began before dawn on 7 December 1942. The village was surrounded by German troops. The inhabitants were not particularly surprised by the appearance of the Germans, as a manhunt



View of the school room in which the men were kept. Photo: Rafał Drabik



Vestibule of the school in Białka. Photo: Rafał Drabik

had been underway for several days in the surrounding forests for Jewish hiding places and escaped Soviet POWs. The sounds of gunfire and explosions from the ongoing operation reached the village. Contrary to many other crimes committed by unidentified German formations, it is possible, thanks to surviving German reports, to state precisely that the pacification operation in Białka involved units of the 1<sup>st</sup> Motorised Gendarmerie Battalion together with two platoons of the 25<sup>th</sup> Police Regiment (*SS-Polizei Regiment 25*), three companies of the 22<sup>nd</sup> *SS-Polizei Regiment*, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mounted Police Detachment (*Polizei Reiter Abteilung III*), the Pursuit Detachment of the 25<sup>th</sup> *SS-Polizei Regiment* and officers of the 101<sup>st</sup> Reserve Police Battalion, under the overall command of Captain Kurt Rogall.<sup>6</sup> Certainly German gendarmes from the Ostrów Lubelski post also took part in the operation.

According to a witness, the gendarmes did not enter the village at first, but ordered the village head, Aleksander Łukaszczuk, and his assistant to tell the inhabitants that they should all gather in front of the local school. They were also told to leave the doors of their houses open. Only later did the Germans check that everyone had left their homes. When several hundred inhabitants – women, men and children – had gathered in the square in front of the school, the Germans ordered the women and children to enter the

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<sup>6</sup> Hauptmann (Captain) Kurt Rogall was at the time commander of the 2nd Company of the 1st Motorised SS Battalion.

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school's common room, which was guarded by one of the gendarmes. The men remained outside. The men who worked in the forest and had forest workers' cards were then ordered to form a separate group. There were about 60 of them. Everyone's identity was checked. The remaining men were lined up in the school yard. The gendarmes made sure that no one escaped.

The next step was to interrogate all the men. Two or three people at a time were called into the school. One participant described the circumstances of his interrogation: 'After entering the building, one of the gendarmes asked me for my personal details (*ausweis*), read the identity card I had shown him, then asked me where the partisans were and where I kept my weapons. When I replied that I did not know and that I had no weapons, I was punched repeatedly and beaten with a pistol and then ordered to go outside.'

During the interrogations no one confessed to helping the Jews or the Soviets. However, the Germans managed to catch a Jewish woman, whose name they did not know, who was hiding in the village. She was found by the Germans then combing the village, in the buildings belonging to the Bułtowicz family, that was murdered a short time later. They had hidden her in an earth cellar near the house. She was shot dead immediately.

Jan Bloch was also murdered because he had disobeyed a summons and failed to appear at the school.

Only then did the German officers in charge of the operation arrive in Białka and take part in the interrogations. According to witnesses, the commanding officer, Kurt Rogall, came out at the end of the interrogation and said: 'They are all bandits' (*Alles banditen*). The men who did not qualify as lumberjacks were then divided into smaller groups of 8 to 20. The first group was escorted by three gendarmes to about 50 metres



View of the school room where women and children were kept. Photo: Rafał Drabik



Halina Kondracka, daughter of Władysław Izdebski, the new village leader appointed by the Germans on the day of the execution. He remained at this post for several weeks before being shot by the Germans. Halina Kondracka witnessed the execution as a young girl. Together with her mother, she was in the room with the women and children. Photo: Rafał Drabik

from the school and ordered everyone to lie face down on the ground. Among those in this group were Ignacy Bloch and Stanisław Przeździecki. The gendarmes then opened fire with submachine guns.

Ignacy Bloch, who survived the massacre, recalled the moment: 'I heard bullets near my head. I became weak from fright and sensation, and then I fainted. When I woke up, I found myself covered in blood, splattered with the remains of the brains of those killed around me. At the same time I realised that I was unhurt and had miraculously survived. I lay face down on the ground, not moving, pretending to have been killed. At that time I heard a series of shots, the screams of the German gendarmes and the groans of the wounded and dying, as the execution of the Poles – the inhabitants of the village of Białka – continued. The Germans went around shooting those who groaned or moved. I estimate that this execution lasted several hours. When the

remaining inhabitants of Białka, mostly women, approached the place of execution, I was convinced that the gendarmes had left, so I got up from the ground.'

On 7 December 1942, 98 Poles and one Jewish woman found in the village of Białka were killed – 99 victims. A total of 102 men were to have been executed, including the village chief and his son<sup>7</sup>, but six survived, including Ignacy Bloch. The others were: Włodzimierz Kondracki, Stanisław Suchorab, Antoni Stelmaszczuk, Stanisław Przeździecki and Bonifacy Walenciuk.

<sup>7</sup> Accounts on the circumstances of the deaths of the village chief and his son are divergent. According to witnesses, they were murdered in the final phase of the massacre for helping the 'bandits' or were killed a few days later. This case requires further research.

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The women and children in the day room were unaware of what was happening outside. At the sound of machine-gun fire, they raised a 'loud lament and scream.' To silence them, the Germans threatened to shoot them. When the women and children were let out of the school after the execution, they saw a macabre scene. The schoolyard was littered with the bodies of their husbands, fathers and sons. There were also several corpses in the meadow near the school. It is difficult to describe the feelings of the families, who first had to wait in silence for the death of their

loved ones, and then had to identify their bodies amidst widespread weeping and mourning.

Before leaving, the Germans appointed a new village head – Władysław Izdebski. They ordered the inhabitants to work, otherwise they threatened to repeat the action, which this time would end with the burning down of Białka and the murder of all its inhabitants. They also ordered the bodies to be buried. Most of the villagers were buried in the parish cemetery in Parczew. 'One day, 80 coffins of corpses were brought there on carts. Some of the Orthodox victims were buried in the Orthodox cemetery in Uhnin.' Only some of the victims were placed in coffins, others were simply wrapped in white sheets.

About a month later the Germans again surrounded the Parczew forests. On 14 January 1943, the combined forces of the 1<sup>st</sup> SS Motorised Gendarmerie Battalion (2 platoons), sections of the 25<sup>th</sup> Police



Monument to the murdered inhabitants of Białka in front of the school in Białka.  
Photo: Rafał Drabik



Mound where the men were executed in Białka. It is located a dozen metres behind the school building. Photo: Rafał Drabik



View of the mound and the school building  
Photo: Rafał Drabik

Regiment, the 1<sup>st</sup> Reserve Company of the 174<sup>th</sup> Division and the 1<sup>st</sup> Company of the 991<sup>st</sup> National Rifle Battalion, reinforced by local gendarmerie posts, carried out an operation lasting several hours against the Jews and Soviet POWs still hiding there.

The German occupiers returned to the 'Bazaar' in the spring of 1943. Again, as a result of the manhunt, many Jews and former Soviet POWs were caught and murdered. The Germans forced the village head of Białka to appoint men to bury the murdered Jews in the forest. One of the participants in the burial, Tadeusz Fijewski, recalled: 'It was the end of March or the beginning of April 1942 [1943]. I was ordered by the village head, together with a dozen other people, to take shovels and go to the forest called Altana, which I did, and we were to bury the bodies of the people killed by the Germans. The Germans were no longer in the forest. I saw a wooden earth staircase – destroyed, and in the bunker and in the forest, there were a lot of dead people – dressed in civilian clothes, mostly men, there must have been about 10–12 women. Most of the dead, and there must have been about 70–80 of them, had gunshot wounds, and some had ragged bodies, especially those lying in the shelters. I think the Germans threw grenades into the shelters. The dead were Jews and former Russian soldiers who had escaped from German camps. I do not know the personal details of those who were killed. These people were buried in these shelters and others in the forest where they were killed.'





Graves of the victims of the pacification of Białka, buried in the Orthodox cemetery in Uhnin. Photo: Rafał Drabik



Mass grave of Białka pacification victims in the Roman Catholic cemetery in Parczew. Photo: Rafał Drabik



Grave of Władysław Izdebski, village administrator appointed by the Germans and murdered by them in January 1943. In the background, graves of victims of the pacification of Białka. Photo: Rafał Drabik



Graves of Białka pacification victims in the Roman Catholic cemetery in Parczew. Photo: Rafał Drabik



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In 1950, the inhabitants of Białka built a mound on the site of the crimes committed by the Germans. In 1959, a monument with plaques bearing the names of the murdered was erected in front of the school. Every year, ceremonies dedicated to the murdered are held on a now-new pedestal. In 2022, the Israeli ambassador Yacov Livne took part in the celebrations of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pacification of Białka.

### Residents of the village of Białka murdered on 7 December 1942

1. Bartosiewicz Bronisław	b. 23 September 1897
2. Bartosiewicz Ignacy	b. 25 October 1884
3. Bartosiewicz Kazimierz	b. 16 September 1909
4. Bartosiewicz Leon	b. 8 September 1903
5. Belina Antoni	b. 17 January 1895
6. Bielecki Wacław	b. 1 December 1912
7. Bloch Jan	b. 27 March 1899
8. Borsuk Jan	b. 31 January 1909
9. Bułtowicz Bogusław	b. 1 March 1923
10. Bułtowicz Jan	64 years
11. Bułtowicz Jan	b. 27 October 1925
12. Bułtowicz Zygmunt	b. 27 February 1906
13. Czarnacki Jan	b. 23 June 1901
14. Czeberak Józef	b. 20 February 1908
15. Drabik Feliks	b. 27 May 1882
16. Drogosz Aleksander	b. 1928
17. Duda Stanisław	54 years
18. Dudkowski Bronisław	b. 21 August 1905
19. Dzyr Dionizy	b. 3 April 1900
20. Gisko Jan	b. 10 July 1882
21. Gontarczuk Franciszek	b. 4 December 1908

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|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 22. Gontarczuk Stanisław  | b. 25 April 1911     |
| 23. Górski Bolesław       | b. 2 December 1910   |
| 24. Grzywaczewski Czesław | b. 8 August 1927     |
| 25. Grzywaczewski Stefan  | b. 26 December 1895  |
| 26. Hernas Waclaw         | b. 25 September 1916 |
| 27. Izdebski Antoni       | b. 12 May 1908       |
| 28. Izdebski Jan          | b. 3 May 1894        |
| 29. Izdebski Kazimierz    | b. 28 December 1913  |
| 30. Izdebski Konstanty    | b. 11 March 1928     |
| 31. Izdebski Michał       | b. 28 July 1899      |
| 32. Izdebski Stanisław    | b. 17 May 1905       |
| 33. Izdebski Władysław    | b. 21 July 1909      |
| 34. Jaskulski Kazimierz   | b. 3 May 1924        |
| 35. Jędruszczak Antoni    | b. 15 May 1923       |
| 36. Jędruszczak Marian    | b. 14 September 1919 |
| 37. Jędruszczak Stanisław | b. 16 March 1911     |
| 38. Kabat Aleksander      | b. 16 December 1898  |
| 39. Kabat Bronisław       | b. 5 October 1903    |
| 40. Kondracki Michał      | b. 8 February 1900   |
| 41. Koperczuk Bronisław   | b. 1 September 1906  |
| 42. Koszmeła Jan          | b. 24 June 1914      |
| 43. Koszmeła Teodor       | b. 11 November 1908  |
| 44. Kot Jan               | b. 9 December 1922   |
| 45. Krakowiak Józef       | b. 7 December 1906   |
| 46. Kubicki Jan           | b. 18 July 1911      |
| 47. Kubicki Jan           | 63 years             |
| 48. Kunaszuk Józef        | b. 27 April 1907     |
| 49. Kunaszyk Mieczysław   | b. 19 January 1925   |

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50. Kuszyk Bolesław	b. 24 May 1921
51. Kuszyk Franciszek	b. 18 May 1914
52. Łukaszczuk Aleksander	b. 25 July 1895
53. Łukaszczuk Jan	b. 2 March 1927
54. Łukaszczuk Józef	b. 3 January 1917
55. Łukaszczuk Piotr	b. 20 June 1907
56. Łukaszczuk Tomasz	b. 2 July 1913
57. Łukaszczuk Władysław	b. 16 January 1905
58. Majewski Edward	b. 27 September 1891
59. Majewski Emilian	b. 23 June 1901
60. Majewski Konstanty	b. 30 July 1922
61. Makówka Aleksander	b. 7 May 1926
62. Makówka Jan	b. 15 March 1891
63. Makówka Władysław	b. 2 August 1918
64. Malan Bolesław	32 years
65. Miduszewski Marian	b. 6 November 1903
66. Mikulski Andrzej	b. 30 November 1893
67. Narusek Stanisław	40 years
68. Niściorok Józef	b. 28 September 1891
69. Panasiuk Czesław	b. 13 July 1928
70. Pisanski Kazimierz	b. 8 September 1912
71. Przystupa Feliks	b. 25 February 1923
72. Przystupa Mikołaj	b. 11 February 1889
73. Rujek Stanisław	23 years
74. Słomkowski Edward	b. 3 February 1899
75. Słomkowski Mieczysław	b. 1 March 1884
76. Stelmaszczuk Bazyle	b. 30 July 1899
77. Stelmaszczuk Jan	b. 14 October 1899

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|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 78. Stelmaszczuk Józef               | b. 20 April 1925     |
| 79. Stelmaszczuk Karol               | b. 30 May 1925       |
| 80. Stelmaszczuk Marcin              | b. 10 January 1895   |
| 81. Stelmaszczuk Sachar (Zachariasz) | b. 3 February 1914   |
| 82. Stelmaszczuk Władysław           | b. 18 March 1901     |
| 83. Suchorab Bronisław               | b. 23 October 1900   |
| 84. Suchorab Marian                  | b. 1 August 1922     |
| 85. Szlachta Paweł                   | 25 years             |
| 86. Sz waj Edward                    | b. 18 December 1910  |
| 87. Sz waj Stanisław                 | b. 3 January 1910    |
| 88. Wałęcki Aleksander               | b. 28 October 1891   |
| 89. Wałęcki Karol                    | b. 30 November 1923  |
| 90. Wałęcki Stanisław                | b. 27 February 1901  |
| 91. Wałęcki Szymon                   | b. 28 October 1911   |
| 92. Wałęcki Teofil                   | b. 29 December 1897  |
| 93. Wawer Józef                      | b. 30 September 1989 |
| 94. Zaczkowski Antoni                | b. 31 January 1905   |
| 95. Zaczkowski Franciszek            | b. 1 December 1877   |
| 96. Zając Nikita                     | b. 15 September 1890 |
| 97. Zgierski Stanisław               | b. 3 May 1899        |
| 98. Zieliński Józef                  | b. 19 March 1912     |
| 99. An unknown Jewish woman          |                      |



Israeli Ambassador to Poland, Yacov Livne, at the ceremony commemorating the murdered inhabitants of Białka. The Ambassador gave a short speech and laid flowers in front of the Memorial to the Murdered Residents of Białka (at the Gminny Ośrodek Kultury w Dębowej Kłodzie – Municipal Cultural Centre in Dębowa Kłoda)

