

Alicja Jarkowska-Natkaniec
(Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków)

Key words: *Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst*, II War War, Nazi occupation, Kraków ghetto, Kraków, Płaszów, Kazimierz

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to present the activities of the *Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst* [hereafter: OD] in Nazi-occupied Kraków during the years 1940-1945. This period includes OD organizations in Kraków's Jewish district, Kazimierz, in 1940, in the Kraków ghetto in 1941-1943 and in the German concentration camp at Płaszów in 1942-1945. Rounding off these topics is a paragraph touching on the post-war fate of OD officers under Polish law. Trials of OD members were held before the Special Criminal Court [hereafter: SCC] in Kraków in 1945-1947.

In discussing the issue, the author has sought to explain the reasons for which Jews joined the OD in light of the moral dilemmas facing OD members. The problems raised in this article are also an attempt to understand the role of the OD in the implementation of the German government's policy towards the Jews in the years 1940-1945, i.e. for the duration of the Jewish formation's existence. Holocaust studies lacks sufficient research on the history of the OD in Krakow, and it is therefore very important to fill this gap in the literature.²

In German-occupied Poland, several terms referring to the Jewish police were used interchangeably. In printed and archival sources, the organization is often called Ordnungsdienst, OD, Jewish Order Service (literal translation from German), Order Service, or, simply, the Jewish police. Its members are commonly called odemani [translation: OD-men] or Jewish policemen.

The OD in occupied Kraków (1940-1941)

It is difficult to unequivocally determine when the idea of establishing the Jewish police appeared. It arose from the need to maintain order in the Jewish community and to organize law enforcement operations within its territory. However, it is known that the formation of the OD occurred in the early years of the German occupation, and

¹ Summary of the thesis *Jüdische Ordnungsdienst in occupied Krakow 1940-1945*, written under the supervision of Dr hab. Stefan Gąsiorowski.

² There have been a number of publications on the German occupation of Kraków, in both Polish and other languages. The operations of the OD are mentioned only in the context of the history of the Krakow ghetto, in (among others) the following works: Chwalba 2002; Zimmerer 2004, as well as M. Bednarek, E. Gawron, G. Jeżowski, B. Zbroja, K. Zimmerer, in: *Katalog wystawy Kraków – Czas okupacji 1939-1945* (Catalog of the exhibition "Kraków under Nazi Occupation 1939-1945)," Kraków 2010.

that it was partly subordinated to the Jewish Council (Judenrat). The first information about the OD dates from August 1940, when *Gazeta Żydowska (Jewish Gazette)*³ included an article by an anonymous author on the establishment of the OD in Piotrków.⁴ The organization was at that time responsible for matters related to sanitation in the Jewish quarter. The author drew attention to the specific nature of the activities of OD men cooperating with the Judenrat in the preparation of workers for forced labor outside the ghetto. The editorial staff of the *Jewish Gazette* portrayed the OD as important enforcers of the Judenrat's commands so that readers would regard it with respect and trust.⁵

The first Jewish order-keeping force was established in the Jewish community in Kraków in 1940, in connection with the creation of Judenrat structures and the need to maintain order. The force probably included members of the Jewish community who felt obliged to care for the security of their coreligionists. Based on the accounts and reminiscences of witnesses to those events, it can be assumed that at its inception this group operated unofficially, and may have emerged spontaneously as a result of the first regulations discriminating against Jews in the General Government [hereafter: GG].

Commonly, the date of creation of the OD is assumed to be 5 July 1940.⁶ However, the makeup of its original membership remains unknown. In official German documents dating from 1941, next to certain names there is only a stamp with the name of the organization and the information that it had been established by a decision of the *Starosta* (municipal administration) of Kraków. Not all documents from the period of the Nazi occupation of Kraków have been preserved; thus it is difficult to attest to the reliability of that date. It should be borne in mind that the regulation might have been transmitted to the Jewish community orally.

The first news about the newly created Jewish order-keeping force in Kraków was published in the *Jewish Gazette* of 10 April 1940, in which an anonymous author described the OD. The contents of the article indicated that the Judenrat had been given permission from the city government⁷ and the German police to set up the OD. The 40 men belonging to the Jewish police were subordinate to the Judenrat. Work for the OD was considered honorable, and its officers received no remuneration for their services. An OD man was distinguished from the other members of the community by a cloth armband with the inscription *Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst* on the right sleeve.⁸

OD members were assigned to either the so-called internal or external group. The former was responsible for issues related to maintaining order in the buildings and social care institutions of the Jewish community, while the latter took part in the implementation of resolutions of the Judenrat and monitored public life in the Jewish parts of the city.

³ Occupation-era paper issued in Kraków in the years 1940-1942 on the initiative of the German authorities, under the control of the Propaganda Department of the General Government [hereafter: GG]. The *Jewish Gazette* contained false and biased information regarding the situation of the Jews in the GG.

⁴ Author unknown, *Jewish Gazette*, Year I (1940), no. 6, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 15, p. 3; no. 39, pp. 3-4.

⁶ Chwalba 2002: 165.

⁷ The function of municipal administrator in Krakow was performed by Karl Szmid (from February 1940 to March 1941).

⁸ Author unknown, *Jewish Gazette*, Year I (1940), no. 15, p. 2.

The first months of OD activity were probably limited to organizational and recruitment tasks: accepting, training, and supplying new applicants with the basic uniform. By December 1940, the OD had accepted 120 Jewish officers, selected by the Judenrat.⁹ This number, however, is not completely reliable, since it was published in the *Jewish Gazette* by an anonymous author.¹⁰ Based on an article of 10 September 1940, it can only be assumed that the Judenrat conducted a second round of recruitment for the OD.¹¹ Unfortunately, information regarding the terms and conditions under which candidates were to be accepted into the Jewish police is lacking. The first commander of the OD in Krakow was evidently Aleksander Choczner, a former OD captain in the Polish Army, who probably held the position from 1940 to March 1941.¹²

In their first months of activity, OD-men were not distinguished in any particular way from other members of the Judenrat. According to Aleksander Bieberstein, each member of the OD had a cap with a yellow ring, jacket and boots.¹³ Bieberstein did not give the exact date of the distribution of uniforms to OD-men; therefore, it must be assumed that it was at the beginning of 1941.

The first headquarters of the OD in Kraków was located in Kazimierz in a building at Estery Street 6.¹⁴ In February of the following year, it was moved to a building at Krakowska Street 41, the former premises of the Population Registry. No information has been found about any arrests made by the OD during this period.

A significant portion of the work carried out by officers of the OD consisted of policing the streets of the Jewish quarter in Kazimierz and its institutions. OD-men were also responsible for compliance with the curfew, established by the Germans from 9 pm to 5 am, by Jews in the Jewish community.¹⁵ In addition, the OD assisted in various operations of the occupation authorities against the Jewish community. OD-men were among those who took part in the deportation of Jews from Kraków, which lasted from November 1940 to April 1941.¹⁶ OD members escorted Jews to the transit camp located on Mogilska Street, and assisted SS troops in maintaining order.

The OD once carried out a command of the Gestapo. OD-men served, among other functions, as guards, bringing young Jews to the Resettlement Commission building at Piłsudskiego Street 23 and the German Department of Health at Grodzka Street 64 so that German doctors could conduct anthropological research on them.¹⁷ OD-men also participated in the requisition of Jewish housing organized by the German Billeting Office.¹⁸

The establishment of the OD in occupied Krakow was also related to the attitude of the German authorities towards the Jews. The creation of the Judenrat and a force

⁹ AJHI, ref. 301/448, p. 16.

¹⁰ Author unknown, *Jewish Gazette*, Year I (1940), no. 39, p. 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Kotarba 2009: 16.

¹³ Bieberstein 1985: 165.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Author unknown, *Jewish Gazette*, Year I (1940), no. 39, p. 4.

¹⁶ 6,292 people of Jewish descent were deported from Kraków.

¹⁷ Author unknown, *Jewish Gazette*, Year I (1940), no. 42, p. 3; testimony of Mieczysław Pemper in the trial of Oskar Brandt: AINR MC, 455/13, vol. 2, p. 63.

¹⁸ Author unknown, *Jewish Gazette*, Year I (1940), no. 28, p. 2.

responsible for maintaining order and sanitation in the Jewish quarter saved the Germans the trouble of creating their own system of administration. The service rendered in German institutions, the inspection of documents, participation in street round-ups, and escorting of Jews to transit camps all contributed to the gradual process of the OD's becoming independent from the Judenrat. The next phase in the activities of the Kraków OD was connected with the events of March 1941, when the force was reorganized and its members began to succumb to the process of demoralization.

The OD in the Krakow ghetto (March 1941 – December 1943)

The year 1941 was a turning point in the history of occupied Krakow and brought about many changes for the members of the city's OD and their families. One important event was the establishment of the Jewish ghetto in Kraków's Podgórze district, into which thousands of Jews were crammed in order to isolate them from the rest of society.¹⁹ Each body of German authority was then entitled to issue OD officers commands that had to be immediately executed. The smooth and efficient execution of the resettlement of Jews to the ghetto was connected with the participation of the OD as an auxiliary force. It is likely that the German authorities intended the Jewish police to serve as guards inside the gates of the ghetto in order to monitor and control the movement of people and vehicles entering and leaving the ghetto.

In March 1941, the OD office was moved to Podgórze, to a building at Józefińska Street 37.²⁰ An OD detention centre was also set up there, as a temporary holding area for Jews failing to comply with German regulations. The location was intended for individuals who had committed petty offenses such as fighting, assault, or theft. Initially, those lacking documents for the so-called Aryan side would go to this jail, and ultimately to the prison on Montelupich Street or directly to Auschwitz.²¹

In 1941, the post of OD director in Kraków was filled by Eng. Józef Ringel, a chemical engineering consultant. He probably headed the Jewish police for several months.²² His deputy was Symche Spira,²³ who did not enjoy a good reputation among the inhabitants of the ghetto, who believed he collaborated with the Gestapo and blindly carried out its orders. For the post of secretary of the OD, the former accountant Ozjasz Süsser²⁴ was chosen, followed by Benjamin Finster.²⁵ According to German official documents,²⁶ in 1941, 40 men aged between 19 and 53 belonged to the OD. The largest group among the members of the OD consisted of civil servants, tailors, and representatives of various

¹⁹ On 3 March 1941 the head of the district of Kraków, Otto Wächter, issued a decree establishing the Jewish quarter. By March 20 of that year, about 12,000 Jews had been resettled into the ghetto area.

²⁰ Author unknown, *Jewish Gazette*, Year II (1941), no. 62, p. 2.

²¹ Bieberstein 1985: 165.

²² State Archive in Kraków. Old German records, ref. PNN 33, p. 83.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁴ Bieberstein 1985: 168.

²⁵ State Archive in Kraków. Old German records, ref. PNN 34, p. 59.

²⁶ Identity card, document collection: CMA, ref. 451-573; State Archive in Kraków. Old German records, ref. PNN 1-40.

crafts and professions. The latter group included merchants, accountants, doctors and engineers.²⁷ Thus, they represented the elite of the Jewish community in Kraków.

The OD in the Kraków ghetto was divided into four divisions: political, financial, criminal and civil. According to Bieberstein the latter branch was subject to and followed the orders of the Gestapo. Supposed members of this branch included: Julian Appel, a certain Blodek, the brothers Michał and Ignacy Pacanower, Natan Schleifer and Wiktor Wertal.²⁸

Starting in 1941, Symche Spira gradually became dependent on the authority of the Judenrat. It is not inconceivable that he was able to conduct recruitment to the OD single-handedly. Aleksander Bieberstein, a witness of those events, stated that the most important avenues for admission to the Jewish police were bribery, favoritism and the ability to salute superiors in Polish and German.²⁹

The uniforms of OD-men did not undergo any significant changes. Spira obtained an additional allocation for all order-keeping units. They received jackets supposedly made from blankets, along with nightsticks. Members of the civil division of the OD received additional allocations. In addition to the basics, they received jackets, shirts, ties and armbands with the inscription *Ordnungsdienst* in Hebrew.³⁰

OD members, in addition to their service at the gates of the Kraków ghetto, were responsible for maintaining order within the gates, writing out summonses, directing traffic, escorting Jewish workers for forced labor outside the ghetto, and inspecting the documents (identity cards) of ghetto residents. A gradual increase in the responsibilities of the OD followed from August 1941 to March 1943.

In August 1941, the German authorities issued orders for the relocation of Jews from new communities connected to Kraków to the ghetto.³¹ In October of that year more than 20,000 people lived in the Kraków ghetto.³² Consequently, the German authorities carried out inspections of the documents in the Jewish quarter, directed by Symche Spira. After preparing a list of about a thousand old and unemployed people, the OD began raids and blockades of housing along with identity card inspections.³³

On 30 and 31 May 1942, a mass deportation of Jews from the Kraków ghetto to the death camp at Bełżec was carried out.³⁴ On the night of 31 May 1942 OD-men, at the behest of the German authorities, conducted inspections of identity cards in the Krakow ghetto. Following this examination, they gathered those destined for deportation at Plac Zgody, and escorted them the next day to the train station in Płaszów. From there, the Jews were sent to the extermination camp at Bełżec, to which a total of about

²⁷ CMA 451-573; State Archive in Kraków. Old German records, ref. PNN 1-40.

²⁸ State Archive in Kraków. Old German records, ref. PNN 35, p. 95; Bieberstein 1985: 165, 167.

²⁹ Bieberstein 1985: 165.

³⁰ Bieberstein 1985: 165-166.

³¹ In 1941 the occupation authorities attached the surrounding villages and towns to Kraków, creating the following districts: Łagiewniki, Jugowice, Borek Fałęcki, Kobierzyn, Skotniki, Pychowice, Bodzów, Kostrze, Przegorzały, Bielany, Wola Justowska, Chełm, Bronowice Małe, Tonie, Prądnik Biały, Witkowice, Górka Narodowa, Prądnik Czerwony, Olsza, Rakowice, Czyżyny, Łęg, Rybitwy, Bieżańów, Rząka, Prokocim, Wola Duchacka, Piaski Wielki, Kurdwanów.

³² Bieberstein 1985: 56; Pankiewicz 2012: 66.

³³ Bieberstein 1985: 53.

³⁴ Wroński 1974: 205.

2000 people were deported.³⁵ Further raids, round-ups and deportations from the ghetto to the Bełżec camp continued from 2 to 8 June 1942. About 5000 Jews went to the Bełżec death camp.³⁶ On 5 June the German authorities introduced a new identity card. On 7 and 8 June 1942, with the help of the OD, identity cards were inspected and a selection of persons to be deported was conducted. In the Kraków ghetto, several hundred Jews were killed and several thousand, including some from the “Optima” courtyard on Węgierska Street, were brought by the OD to the train station in Płaszów.³⁷ In summary, from the beginning of the operation to exterminate the Jews, about 7000 people had been sent from the Kraków ghetto to the death camp at Bełżec.³⁸

The main responsibilities of the OD were, therefore, maintaining order, issuing identity cards, carrying out document checks, participation in raids and blockades organized by the German authorities in the Kraków ghetto, and escorting people gathered at Plac Zgody to the Płaszów train station.³⁹ In addition, OD-men participated in searches of Jewish apartments in search of illegal residents in the Jewish quarter.⁴⁰ One consequence of the events associated with the extermination of the Krakow Jews, however, was the OD’s independence from the Judenrat.

On 20 June 1942, a decision of the German governor of Kraków, Rudolf Pavel, reduced the area of the ghetto.⁴¹ The Jewish police were given responsibility for the orderly resettlement of Jews to new homes.⁴² According to Franciszek Banaś, a “navy-blue” policeman [Polish policeman serving under the GG], following the deportations of June, the OD took control, among other things, of the division of population registration.⁴³

On 26 June 1942 OD-men were forced by the Gestapo to perform a show execution, hanging seven unknown men on the railway embankment next to the Płaszów station.⁴⁴ Because there were Poles among the murdered, the event was commemorated by the Nazis. This crime was aimed at awakening aversion to Jews, as the perpetrators, among the residents of Kraków.⁴⁵ One can only assume that the events of 26 June and October 1942 had a demoralizing effect on the members of the OD.

In October 1942, the OD once again carried out the orders of the German authorities. OD officers were responsible for maintaining order, taking people from their homes for deportation, forming them into columns and escorting them to Płaszów train station.⁴⁶ The process of deportation lasted one day. Approximately 600 Jews were killed on the spot and 7000 were deported to death camps.

³⁵ Wroński 1974: 207; Bieberstein 1985: 59.

³⁶ Wroński 1974: 208.

³⁷ Wroński 1974: 209; Bieberstein 1985: 64-65.

³⁸ Wroński 1974: 207; Bieberstein 1985: 59.

³⁹ AJHI ref. 301/448, p. 20; Bieberstein 1985: 64.

⁴⁰ AINR MC, DCINC, ref. case 127/46, p. 2.

⁴¹ AINR MC, DCINC, ref. case 127/46, p. 67.

⁴² Author unknown, *Jewish Gazette*, Year III (1942), no. 72 (9), p. 5.

⁴³ AJHI, ref. 301/5093, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Wroński 1974: 212; Bieberstein 1985: 77-78; Kotarba 2009: 19.

⁴⁵ AINR MC, DCINC, ref. Ds. 38/67 (testimony of Dawid Schlang, 1 September 1948); Pankiewicz 2012: 161.

⁴⁶ Bieberstein 1985: 75.

In November 1942, the German authorities excluded part of Lwowska Street, known colloquially as “Ukraine,” from the area of the Kraków ghetto.⁴⁷ During the same month, the Germans separated a group of 200 Jewish workers who were sent from the ghetto every day in the company of OD men to work on the construction of a labor camp in nearby Płaszów.⁴⁸ On 6 December 1942 the ghetto was divided by the German authorities into two parts: A for the employed and B for the unemployed.⁴⁹ The deadline for liquidation of the ghetto was set for 13-14 March 1943.⁵⁰

On 13 March 1943 at 6 o’clock in the morning, the SS, police and *Sonderdienst* surrounded the ghetto. From 11 am to 3 pm, OD-men gathered between 6000 and 8000 Jews from part A of the ghetto.⁵¹ In the next step, 14 March 1943, German troops carried out the liquidation of the ghetto’s part B, whose residents were allegedly to be directed to the German forced labor camp Julag I. On the streets, in hospitals and shelters, the Germans segregated Jews by gender, age, state of health and ability to work.⁵² The segregation did not apply to the families of OD-men, who, during the operation, gathered the bodies of the murdered and loaded them onto the platform of a truck, which then drove away to Płaszów.⁵³ On that day, about 2000 Jews from the Kraków ghetto were deported to KL Auschwitz.⁵⁴ In the ghetto remained only a few dozen Jews who cleaned up the area. OD-men worked on the deserted streets as well, collecting the bodies of victims and loading them onto the truck platform. The bodies were taken to the area of the nearby Płaszów *Zwangsarbeitslager* [hereafter: ZL Płaszów], where they were buried in a mass grave.⁵⁵

The “clean-up” of the former ghetto lasted until August 1943. Members of the Judenrat and the OD and their families remained in the area. Until September 1943, the building at Józefińska Street 39 housed branches of the SS and Gestapo.⁵⁶ The most zealous OD-men in the civil division followed the orders of the German authorities. These OD officers believed until the end that their involvement would be appreciated by the occupiers. On 14 December 1943, at the behest of Wilhelm Kunde, director for Jewish affairs, inconvenient witnesses of the Nazi crimes were murdered at Płaszów. Symche Spira, Michał Pacanower and Dr Wilhelm Armer perished along with their families.⁵⁷ Thus ended another stage of the operation of the OD, which, now consisting mainly of former OD-men from the Kraków ghetto, went on to maintain order in the forced labor camp at Płaszów.

⁴⁷ Pankiewicz 2012: 154.

⁴⁸ AINR MC, DCINC ref. Ds.7/67, p. 12; AJHI, ref. 301/448, p. 25.

⁴⁹ Wroński 1974: 239.

⁵⁰ Bieberstein 1985: 82.

⁵¹ Borwicz, Rost & Wulf 1946: 60; Kotarba 2009: 28.

⁵² Narrative of Roman Kraftlos: Borwicz, Rost & Wulf 1945: 115.

⁵³ Kotarba 2009: 29.

⁵⁴ Kotarba 2009: 29.

⁵⁵ Blumental 1947: 276.

⁵⁶ Bieberstein 1985: 92.

⁵⁷ Pankiewicz 2012: 248.

The OD at the German camp at Płaszów, 1943-1945

The decision to build a German forced labor camp at Płaszów was probably made in October 1942 and was directly connected with Heinrich Himmler's secret order of 9 October of that year, in which he commanded that the Jews subject to forced labor for the German army be placed in camps organized by and subordinate to the SS. Then, under an agreement made on 13 October 1942 between the commander-in-chief of the SS, head of the GG Gestapo Wilhelm Krüger, commander of the GG military district General Siegfried Haenicke and chief inspector of armaments Max Schindler, the German military authorities took over control of the Jews from the General Government. Henceforth, German firms and managers of German military units had to obtain special permission from the security police to employ Jews, and then were obliged to pay a certain sum into the account of the commanders of the SS and police in exchange for the use of the Jewish workforce.⁵⁸

The decision to concentrate Jews in the Płaszów camp was issued by the commander of the SS and SS Police, Oberführer Julian Scherner. The camp was located in the area of two Jewish cemeteries at Abrahama Street 3 and Jerozolimaska Street 25. Until December 1942, it was the duty of OD-men to escort a group of about 200 Jews to forced labor from the Kraków ghetto to ZAL Płaszów. After 10 December 1942, the first group of workers and OD-men from the Jewish quarter were billeted at ZAL Płaszów. From 1942 to 1944, the German camp at Płaszów was systematically expanded, eventually covering an area of 80 hectares.⁵⁹

In order to improve the supervision of the exiles at ZAL Płaszów, a structure of functional positions was created: block, kapo and order-keeping. The Germans filled them from among the prisoners who were to supervise the other convicts. The main functions in the camp were performed by inmates originating from the Kraków ghetto OD. Their tasks included supervision of a particular part of the camp in Płaszów, either industrial or residential. The industrial part consisted of the Madritsch confection factory (sewing uniforms for the army) as well as workshops for locksmiths, upholsterers, carpenters, electricians, automotive mechanics, furriers, shoemakers, tailors, paper makers and printers. The residential part of ZAL Płaszów was divided into three separate areas: for Jews, for Poles, and a common economic-administrative area.⁶⁰

The tasks of the ON at ZAL Płaszów were to maintain order in the residential barracks, in the workshops⁶¹ and on the assembly ground.⁶² The responsibilities of OD-men also involved the work of Jewish forced laborers. As part of their role, OD-men were responsible for the assignment of prisoners to different work teams. The German authorities assigned a senior OD-man to each workshop in the camp; at the end of the day, he drew up a report on the work accomplished that day.⁶³ The tasks of the OD also included daily inspection and escorting of workers involved in the construction of camp roads,

⁵⁸ Kotarba 2009: 23.

⁵⁹ Kotarba 2009: 23-25.

⁶⁰ Kotarba 2009: 72.

⁶¹ AINR MC 502/505, p. 46.

⁶² AJHI, ref. 301/3405, p. 1.

⁶³ Kotarba 2009: 105.

wells and fire prevention tanks, the water supply network, barracks and other masonry structures. Another activity of OD-men at ZAL Płaszów was keeping clerical records of prisoners arriving at the camp, as well as the performance of basic administrative tasks. The camp authorities appointed specific members of the OD for this. Among them was Majer Kerner.⁶⁴

Until 1944, within the residential area at ZAL Płaszów, barracks 13 and 14 were most likely at the disposal of the OD. The former contained OD headquarters and the office of its commander, Wilhelm Chilowicz. The latter housed an OD prison with 20 cells, in which inmates of the camp or prisoners from Montelupich Street and Pomorska Street prisons were temporarily detained.⁶⁵

Apart from the supervision of other prisoners, some of the Płaszów prisoners also occupied management positions. The highest-ranking were the commandant of the OD, Wilhelm Chilowicz, his deputy Finkelstein and about ten managers commonly referred to as “OD officers.” According to the testimony of witnesses, those occupying leadership positions included: Majer Kerner,⁶⁶ Olek Spanlang, Maniek Feber, Maks Zimmermann⁶⁷ and Marcel Goldberg.⁶⁸ The order-keepers, senior OD-men and the so-called Profos (prison director) Wilhelm Kranz formed a lower rank in the IP. Senior OD-men included the brothers Ferdynand and Bernard Sperling. The OD also consisted of some members of the Jewish Fighting Organization: Jakub and Erwin Lieberman and Dawid Liebling.⁶⁹

Following their adoption into the ranks of the OD, some OD-men received a uniform, which included a cap with a yellow ring, a serial number, and a gray-brown uniform.⁷⁰ This was not mandatory, so some members of the OD went about in plain clothes. However, they regarded the uniform as a mark of distinction from the other prisoners at ZAL Płaszów.

Senior OD officers in the camp wore a white belt, known colloquially as ‘the beam’, which probably signified the rank of OD officer. On the uniforms of OD-men of lower rank were badges or emblems. Each OD-man in the camp was also supposed to have a whip, which the prisoners called a “*rajtpejtsz*” [evidently from the German *Reitpeitsche*, “riding crop”].⁷¹

OD members, besides fulfilling their everyday responsibilities, also participated in occasional actions organized by the authorities of the Płaszów camp. Until the end of 1943, for example, OD-men conducted inspections in barracks and on the assembly ground, searching the personal belongings of prisoners and participating in executions in the German camp.

On 10 January 1944 ZAL Płaszów was transformed into a concentration camp, whose full name was Konzentrationslager Płaszów bei Krakau [hereafter: KL Płaszów]. Under the new rules, the OD branch within KL Płaszów was liquidated, its duties taken over

⁶⁴ AINR MC 502/564, pp. 14, 132; Kotarba 2009: 67.

⁶⁵ Kotarba 2009: 47.

⁶⁶ AINR MC 502/564, pp. 14, 29.

⁶⁷ Kotarba 2009: 74.

⁶⁸ AJHI, ref. 301/2307 p. 1; ref. 301/4526, p. 1.

⁶⁹ AJHI, ref. 301/1589, p. 1. The question of infiltration of OD ranks by the Jewish Fighting Organization requires a separate study.

⁷⁰ Bau 1990: 146.

⁷¹ AINR MC 502/482, p. 101.

by German SS-men and guards (*Wachmänner*). OD men were reassigned, however, as so-called *Feuermänner*, members of the fire brigade. Their responsibilities, with a few exceptions, did not change significantly.⁷² The only OD-man who remained his post was Marcel Goldberg, who worked at the Labor Office (*Arbeitseinsatz*) as a manager.⁷³ The rest of the order played only a minor role in the camp. Occasionally, at the command of the Germans, they participated in operations in the grounds. For example, Amon Goeth appointed Wilhelm Chilowicz to set up a *Kinderheim* in the camp. With the participation of two other OD-men, Simon Koch and Simon Grüner, he adapted barrack no. 5 as a “children’s home”; the building fulfilled that function until 14 May 1944.⁷⁴

On 13 August 1944, Wilhelm Chilowicz, the camp leader (*Lagerälteste*), was publicly executed. His body, along with a placard indicating the inmate’s offense, was exposed to public view.⁷⁵ In July 1944 the liquidation of KL Płaszów was begun. Between August and October of that year, German authorities sent thousands of prisoners to concentration camps in Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, and Buchenwald, and subsequently to Flossenbürg, Stutthof, and Mauthausen. On 14 January 1945, the Germans, under the leadership of commandant *SS-Hauptscharführer* Kurt Schupke, finally left the camp.⁷⁶

The trials of members of the OD before the Special Criminal Court in Kraków

On 16 April 1940, the “Resolution regarding the ‘hooded’ courts” [special courts which historically operated in periods of interregnum] issued by the Committee for National Affairs came into force in occupied Poland. It called for the death penalty for persons suspected, for example, of treason or espionage. In January 1942, the Military Special Courts began their operations. Until mid-1943 they examined matters involving criminal acts to the detriment of the state and the Polish nation. During the occupation, there were also Special Civil Courts and Judicial Commissions of Civil (from July 1943: Underground) Resistance.⁷⁷ A decree of the President of the Republic was issued in London on 30 March 1943 concerning criminal responsibility for war crimes.

After the end of World War II, former prisoners of Nazi concentration camps directed accusations to the Polish authorities against those who had exercised administrative functions in these camps. In the minds of Jews, the Judenrat and its subordinate units, particularly the OD, had become established as criminal organizations collaborating with the enemy. Criminal proceedings were initiated against members of these organizations, the chief accusation being collaboration with the occupation authorities. On 31 May 1944, the War Council of the Polish Armed Forces issued a “Decree on the punishment of the German-fascist criminals guilty of the murder and ill-treatment of

⁷² AINR MC 502/482, p. 101.

⁷³ AJHI, ref. 301/4526; ref. 301/4554.

⁷⁴ AJHI, ref. 301/3205, pp. 1-5.

⁷⁵ AJHI, ref. 301/3405, p. 2; Kotarba 2009: 146.

⁷⁶ Kotarba 2009: 124.

⁷⁷ Pasek 2002: 13-20.

civilians and prisoners of war, and of spies and traitors to the Polish people among Polish citizens and their supporters.”⁷⁸ Those suspected of war crimes or collaboration with the enemy were, however, judged according to the decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation [hereafter: PCNL], issued 31 August 1944: “On the punishment of Nazi-Fascist criminals guilty of murder and ill-treatment of civilians and prisoners of war and of traitors to the Polish nation.”

In the years 1944-1960 many Polish citizens accused of being informers or of other forms of collaboration with the Germans appeared before ordinary courts. On the basis of complaints formulated in the so-called “August Decree,” 18,000 people were sentenced. Officers of the OD and the Judenrat accused of collaboration with the enemy appeared before the Jewish Committees’ Courts of Honor, and next before the Social Courts of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland [hereafter: CCJP]. Lawsuits against OD-men and members of the Judenrat were usually held before the CCJP Social (Civil) Courts.⁷⁹

The main task of the CCJP Civil Court was prosecution covering the activities of members of the Judenrat, the Jewish police, the administration of German concentration camps and Jews collaborating with the Germans during World War II. It consisted of 18 members and made rulings in groups of three to five. After voting and considering the evidence and the results of the investigation, a decision was made by majority vote concerning the sentence, which included: admonition, reprimand, censure, suspension of civil rights for a period of one to three years, and exclusion from the Jewish community.⁸⁰ Many trials of former Jewish policemen were held before the CCJP Citizens’ Court in Warsaw, but none of the cases resulted in a conviction.

Criminal proceedings against former members of the OD were launched by Special Criminal Courts, called into being by the State Decree of 12 September 1944.⁸¹ They resulted in the judgments recorded in the provisions of the aforementioned Decree of the PKWN, 31 August 1944, as subsequently amended.⁸² Before the SCC in Krakow stood several former OD-men accused of collaborating with the Germans during World War II: the brothers Ferdynand and Bernard Sperling, Majer Kerner, and Dawid Liebling.

Most famous is the trial of the doctor Leon Gross and OD-man Majer Kerner, who on 26 August 1946 were sentenced to death for collaborating with the Nazis. Kerner was born on 27 June 1904, graduated from the University of Economics in Kraków, and began his OD service in March 1941. In May of that year he was appointed a deputy on guard duty in the Kraków ghetto. He was sent to ZAL Płaszów on 14 February 1943, where until 14 October 1944 he was responsible for all administrative and office functions and for maintaining order in the barracks and assembly ground. Then, starting in 1944, Kerner was in charge of the issuing of cards to prisoners. On 15 October of that

⁷⁸ Pasek 2002: 20.

⁷⁹ Wóycicka 2009: 177-189.

⁸⁰ Podolska 1996: 90.

⁸¹ *Dziennik Ustaw* 1946, No. 59, item 32.

⁸² On 16 February 1945, the Supreme Court modified the decree of 31 August 1944, dividing it into separate paragraphs: 1§1 applied to “participating in killings,” as well as in “the identification, recognition or deportation of persons wanted or persecuted by the occupying power for any reason (except for prosecution of ordinary crimes); 1§2 applied to acts committed ‘in a different manner than that provided for in §1 to the detriment of the Polish State, or persons from the civilian population or prisoners of war.’” Another amendment to the so-called August Decree was made on 10 December 1946: Pasek 2002: 88.

year he was sent via transport to the camp in Gross-Rosen, whence after a few days he was taken to a factory in Brünlitz in the Sudetens.⁸³

In the summer of 1945, as a result of an accusation made by Leon Krzemiń, a criminal investigation of the case of Majer Kerner, former OD-man at ZAL Płaszów, was launched.⁸⁴ The trial of Majer Kerner began in January 1946. During its course, a number of former prisoners of the German camp in Płaszów were questioned. The witnesses predominantly testified against Kerner. They blamed him for collaborating with the Germans and for sadistic abuse of other prisoners at Płaszów.⁸⁵ On 26 August 1945, during questioning, Majer Kerner defended his conduct, emphasizing his role in helping to rescue people from the Kraków ghetto and the Nazi concentration camp at Płaszów.⁸⁶ The SCC, however, found the accused's argument to be groundless, finding him guilty of the allegations set forth in the Decree of 31 August 1944, concerning punishment for Fascist and Nazi war criminals and traitors to the Polish nation. On 26 August 1946 in the Kraków SCC, Majer Kerner was sentenced to death. However, the SCC received two petitions for clemency from the wife of the accused, on 31 August and 2 October 1946. In December 1946 the SCC dismissed these claims. The files regarding the Kerner case contain no information regarding when, exactly, the execution of Majer Kerner took place.⁸⁷

Jewish law enforcement groups were formed in various cities of occupied Poland. They differed in their responsibilities, organizational structures, and some elements of their members' uniforms. In the process of the OD's creation, important roles were played by the particular location, population density and area of the ghetto. For example, the Warsaw ghetto, which measured 307 hectares, held a peak population of 460,000, whereas the Kraków ghetto's 20 hectares held somewhat fewer than 20,000 Jews. This had a strong impact on the process of creating Jewish law enforcement organizations in these cities.

The creation of the OD in occupied Kraków by the German authorities was primarily aimed at shifting the burden of managing the ghetto to the Jews themselves. The German authorities may have worked on the assumption that actions directed against the Jews would proceed more efficiently if they had the support of their brethren, i.e. Jewish policemen. In the early months of the OD's formation, individuals from the so-called respectable professions, fulfilling important functions among the Jewish population, were accepted into its ranks. Probably many Jews decided to serve in the OD for the sake of the resulting privileges, such as increased food rations, the right to go beyond the ghetto, or the assurance of safety for their families.

In the years 1941-1943 there were numerous changes in the functioning of the OD. Under the influence of responsibilities imposed on OD-men during resettlement, deportation and liquidation of the Kraków ghetto, the attitude of the inhabitants of the ghettos to the enforcers changed. The OD then came to be regarded as a criminal organization

⁸³ AINR MC 502/564, p. 33; testimony of Majer Kerner, *ibid.*, pp. 33, 134-136.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 27, 29, 34, 39, 55, 119-20.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

collaborating with the occupiers. The collaboration of Jews with Germans during World War II is, however, a separate topic of study currently under development.

In the opinion of witnesses, the Jewish police remained a criminal force. Neither the inhabitants of the Kraków ghetto nor the prisoners of the Nazi concentration camp in Płaszów had any confidence in OD officers. In the eyes of their fellow Jews, the enforcers were accomplices to crimes committed in the ghetto and camp. Some OD members, however, avoided performing their duties during deportation by adopting a passive attitude, which their co-religionists did not understand. Also among the OD were people who collaborated with the Jewish conspiracy operating at ZAL Płaszów, including the Lieberman brothers and Dawid Liebling.

It is difficult to evaluate the performance of the order-keeping force, which only performed the commands of the Judenrat and, with time, of the German authorities. The OD was given tasks requiring knowledge of the Jewish language, contact with other Jews, and force. The OD-men were probably called in as an auxiliary group when German officers were lacking for the implementation of a task.

In the years 1945-1955, about 40 Jews were accused of collaborating with the enemy before Polish national courts. Three-quarters of them were sentenced. Several former Jewish policemen were judged by the SCC in Kraków. However, most of the OD-men died in December 1943 in Płaszów; there is very little information about the fate of the others, especially since many Jews emigrated beyond the borders of Poland at the war's end. The trials of former OD-men before the SCC proved only that according to Polish law, one could not be punished for belonging to the OD.

ABBREVIATIONS

AINR MC – Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, documents of the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland

AINR MC, DCINC – Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, documents of the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland; the District Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes

AJHI – Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, Warszawa

CMA – Kraków Municipal Administration

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bau, J. (1990): *Czas Zbyszczczenia. Wspomnienia z czasów drugiej wojny światowej*, Tel Aviv.
- Bieberstein, A. (1985): *Zagłada Żydów*, Kraków.
- Blumental, N. (ed.) (1947): *Proces ludobójcy Amona Leopolda Goetha przed Najwyższym Trybunałem Narodowym*, Warszawa-Łódź-Kraków.
- Borwicz, M., Rost, N., Wulf, J. (eds.) (1945): *Dokumenty zbrodni i męczeństwa*, Kraków.
- Borwicz, M., Rost, N., Wulf, J. (eds.) (1946): *W trzecią rocznicę zagłady getta w Krakowie*, Kraków.
- Chwałba, A. (2002): *Kraków w latach 1939-1945 (Dzieje Krakowa, vol. 5)*, Kraków.
- Kotarba, R. (2009): *Niemiecki obóz w Płaszowie 1942-1945*, Warszawa-Kraków.
- Pankiewicz, T. (2012): *Apteka w getcie krakowskim*, Kraków.

- Pasek, A. (2002): *Przestępstwa okupacyjne w polskim prawie karnym 1944-1956*, Wrocław.
- Podolska, A. (1996): *Służba Porządkowa getcie warszawskim 1940-1943*, Warszawa.
- Wóycicka, Z. (2009): *Przerwana żałoba. Polskie spory wokół pamięci nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych i zagłady 1944-1950*, Warszawa.
- Wroński, T. (1974): *Kronika okupowanego Krakowa*, Kraków.
- Zimmerer, K. (2004): *Zamordowany świat. Losy Żydów w Krakowie 1939-1945*, Kraków.

