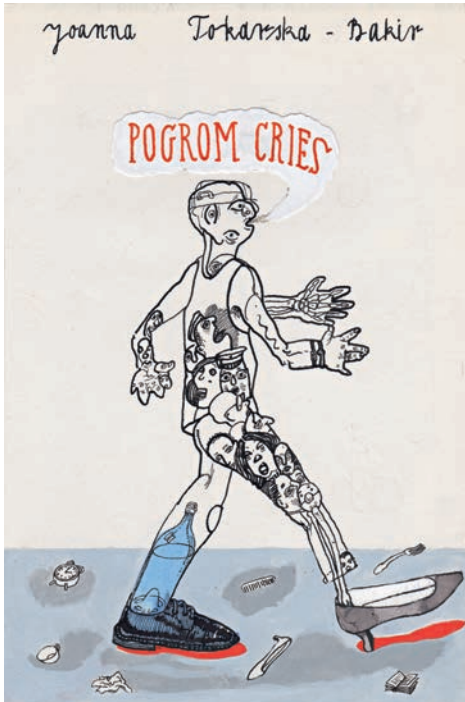


Joanna Tokarska-Bakir

Pogrom Cries – Essays on Polish-Jewish History, 1939–1946

2nd Revised Edition



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This book focuses on the fate of Polish Jews and Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust and its aftermath, in the ill-recognized era of Eastern-European pogroms after the WW2. It is based on the author's own ethnographic research in those areas of Poland where the Holocaust machinery operated, as well as on the extensive archival query. The results comprise the anthropological interviews with the members of the generation of Holocaust witnesses and the results of her own extensive archive research in the Polish Institute for National Remembrance (IPN).

"[This book] is at times shocking; however, it grips the reader's attention from the first to the last page. It is a remarkable work, set to become a classic among the publications in this field."

Jerzy Jedlicki, Professor Emeritus at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences

"From page one to the very end, the book is composed of original and novel texts, which make an enormous contribution to the knowledge of the Holocaust and its aftermath. It brings a change in the Polish reading of the Holocaust, and offers totally unknown perspectives."

Feliks Tych, Professor Emeritus at the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw

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Pogrom Cries – Essays on Polish-Jewish History, 1939–1946

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and Andrzej W. Tymowski

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To the memory of Henryk Pawelec, 1921–2015, and
Andrzej Ropelewski, 1923–2012

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Introduction: The land of the deadly exclusion

Those who are following the present developments in Poland will not be surprised that the question of what happened to Jews during the Second World War and right after it is steadily getting more and more attention. As time passes, the temperature of the debate seems only to increase. Since the formation of the Law and Justice [PiS] government, entire institutes and ministries have been devoting themselves to this topic. History is being written anew, in which Lech Kaczyński features as the leader of the Solidarity movement, and millions of Poles are involved in saving Jews in the Nazi-occupied Poland. A shrine to the Polish Righteous has been erected in Father Rydzyk's Toruń sanctuary. The Second World War is being fought again.

There are several reasons for the continued presence of this particular fragment of the past. Its harrowing nature and lasting consequences do not allow it to fade. The book *Pogrom Cries* is one of the efforts to examine this part of history in all its documentary depth. The author, Professor Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, is an ethnographer, cultural anthropologist, and public intellectual – her thinking defies artificial disciplinary divisions. She bases her work on archival research, interviews, anthropological and ethnographic studies. She writes about the culture of antisemitism and studies violence and social rituals. Her c.v. shows an impressive list of publications and awards. Her presence in public debates is invaluable. Hers is one of the most important voices in the controversies about Polish history and she keeps them more grounded in documented facts than they would be otherwise.

The ten studies that form the present book probe the history of Poland during the Second World War and in the immediate post-war period. The studies are based on materials from three regions – Kraków, Kielce, and, partially, Białystok. Focusing on these territories allows a dense description of something that is difficult to call other than ethnic cleansing: both during the German occupation and after the occupation ended. The focus of the studies is on perpetrators and abettors, the “neighbors” and the anti-German resistance movements, both on the left and the right. Their actions and motivations are described with unflinching clarity. For the author, the documentary thoroughness seems to be here a moral imperative of sorts. The reader will find the studies emotionally difficult to read. It must have been at least equally hard to write them.

As I said, all of the studies are thoroughly documented. Their innovative character consists in working on the words of persons who witnessed the events analyzed or participated in them. These words are found in interviews, legal depositions, various testimonies, and reminiscences. Tokarska-Bakir calls these fragments “verbal fossils” and they permit the reconstruction of both the facts and how people understood them. Hence the title of the book – *Pogrom Cries*. We are lucky to have it masterly translated by Blanka Zahorjanova (and one text by Avner Greenberg). The author exhibits a high degree of methodological self-awareness. There are no unsubstantiated claims. The assumptions are always questioned, opinions separated from facts. It is an exemplary work of research, on a topic whose violence did not distort the writing process.

The first study in the volume, “The Polish Underground Organization *Wolność i Niezawisłość* and anti-Jewish Pogroms, 1945–1946,” has been added to the present edition. It presents the newest thoughts and discoveries about the immediate post-World War II situation. The second study presents the etiology of the situation of Jews hiding to survive: the author analyzes several case stories from the regions mentioned above. She discusses the sources and the language of witnesses: their use of terms such as “to apprehend Jews,” “to hand over Jews,” “to hold,” “to conceal.” It is a particular vocabulary – a phrase can sound matter-of-fact and colloquial, but mean exploitation and death. Quoting the novelist and Holocaust survivor Bohdan Wojdowski, Tokarska-Bakir calls these words “the memory of that time.” Confronted with the testimonies of those who were hidden or saved, we get to comprehend the utter extremity of their situation.

Chapter three of the book is a case study of the trial of Tadeusz Maj, the leading commander of the leftist anti-German partisan movement in the Kielce region. His case, as well as the case of General Korczyński, contradicts the theory that it was only right wing partisan groups that were involved in the extermination of Jews. After the war, Tadeusz Maj was convicted of the systematic killing of Jews who, in June and July of 1944, were escaping from the Starachowice labor camp. The study unearths the links between those who persecuted Jews during the war and the post-war Kielce pogrom: these links point to Mieczysław Moczar, a “patriotic” communist, later responsible for the 1968 anti-Jewish purges.

The next chapter discusses the post-war completion of the anti-Jewish ethnic cleansing in the town and surroundings of Klimontów Sandomierski, a small urban entity typical of south-central Poland. The chapter is based on the ethnographic research undertaken in the years 2004–2008, and can be described in terms of the archeology of language. In the interviews with local people, the author and her collaborators probed the question of why the Jews who returned after the war soon disappeared from that area, how they were killed or chased

away. We follow the fate of four local millers and their unsuccessful efforts to reclaim their property and to rebuild their former lives. The author shows them as victims of the antisemitism that transforms itself into a discourse of anti-communism. The characters from that chapter reappear in the next study, which, analogically to Tadeusz Słobdzianek's play *Our Class*, looks at the neighborly and school links between the Klimontów victims and victimizers.

Chapter six discusses the role that the figure of the Bloodsucker played in the consolidation of the Polish nation in the immediate post-war period. In this cultural and anthropological study, Tokarska-Bakir looks at three versions of that figure: religious, national, and leftist. In the following chapter – “Pogrom Cries” – the work of the Bloodsucker is shown in all its murderous potential. The author cites the words uttered by participants or witnesses in the attempted Rzeszów pogrom of 1945, in the pogrom of Kraków of the same year, and in the 1946 pogrom of Kielce. In all three events, the blood libel rumors were the motivation for the initial mob gathering. The study shows the mentality of the victimizers and the dynamics of the transformation of a crowd into a pogrom mob. Chapter eight continues the analysis of the Kielce pogrom, which, although the best documented among such events, is still contested as to the reasons and inspiration behind it. In a structural analysis of the pogrom, the presence among the attackers of the representatives of the authorities is interpreted by Tokarska-Bakir in terms of the desire to establish territoriality – the “our-ness” of Polish territory. That social eruption bound the “people” to the elites. From then on, the elites tried to encourage Jewish emigration from Poland. “Antisemitism,” Tokarska-Bakir writes, “became a social cause that united Communists and anti-Communists alike.”

The ninth study, written with Alina Skibińska, is devoted to the important aspects of the history of a famous unit of the Home Army – *Wybraniec* – and of its leader. A thorough analysis of sources allows us to see the pattern of systematic murdering of Jews on the pretext of protecting the safety of the unit (or even without any pretext at all). The next and final chapter continues the research in the “racial liquidation” of Jews by partisan units. It is also a methodological summary of the way such research should be conducted. It is a proper end to the book, the language of which is direct and somber, the stories of killings and persecution horrific. Though its tone seems mild, it is highly polemical toward the established ways Polish historians use to work on these issues. If they touch them at all.

The above summary does not do full justice to this book, which is rich in argument, historical background, and insight. The ten studies have continuity between them and this quality gradually enriches the image of these times. Each study ends with conclusions, but they pertain to the topic discussed, without generalizations. Enough material is provided, though, for the reader to understand the repetitive

nature of ethnic cleansing. My own conclusions from reading these studies are very painful. The words quoted in the book, the “fossils” that come from the depth of violence, from the very heart of darkness, show murderous prejudices enshrined in customs, tradition, beliefs, and religion. Prejudices supported by local structures and social institutions. The rites of violence and the reasons for them are documented, not explained away. They cannot be contextualized or limited to a certain moment in history, though certainly the war provided a very fertile ground for them. We can recognize them in the language of the present; we can see the persistence of hostility that once led to murder. We are facing the revival of aggressive victimhood that removes the barriers of civility and remorse. Today’s return of Polish fascist movements, the acceptance of antisemitic argumentation, the near-sanctification of the soldiers who perpetrated the murders of Jews, described in this book, are all terrifying developments. Wojtek Wołyński’s cover illustration captures it aptly: The thugs are coming. The very same thugs. They are almost here.

I started by wondering about the reasons for the continued interest in the events of the Second World War: shouldn’t we have by now engaged in some other, more recent preoccupations? *Pogrom Cries* – the poignancy of its descriptions, the desperation of its quiet tone – is proof of the presence of that past. The writings about war, violence, Shoah, exterminations, refer to the past but speak also about the present. We can apply to this phenomenon the term, used in literary studies, of “synchronicity,” the coexistence of two time zones. This explains the popularity of the term “trauma” used in relation to war experiences – even if submerged in denial, the events resurface each time we encounter a “trigger” situation. Traumatic events seem to have the longevity of toxic waste; they remain in circulation, and are not degradable.

The concept of trauma is not necessary for “synchronicity” to function: memory itself is at the same time “now and then.” We think about ourselves, as individuals or members of a community, in a temporal way. In order to have an identity, to be authentic, we need continuity. We have a past so that we can hope for a future, a future that we want, that we imagine for ourselves. And what kind of continuity, of our past, do we see in the studies making up the present book? We see a land that is hostile to Jews not only because of the danger that hiding them brings. We see Jews pushed beyond the line that separates those who have an obvious right to live from those who are destined to die, their goods to be harvested, their traces erased. There was always a difference between the Christians and the Jews, but that difference was maximized in the years described in the book. What we are talking about is the complicity in ethnic cleansing, and the persistence of the hostility toward its victims. The echoes of the pogrom cries have not faded away.

* * *

Post Script

The second edition of *Pogrom Cries* is enlarged by an additional chapter, entitled *The Polish Underground Organization “Wolność i Niezawisłość” and Anti-Jewish Pogroms, 1945–1946*. The chapter deepens and completes the author’s analysis of the cognitive attitudes towards Jews of the members of that organization; a question is what turned into *pogromschiks*. The chapter is very important and based on thorough documentation, but I am happy to say that even before it was added the book has been recognized as a major achievement in Polish-Jewish studies. What’s more, *Pogrom Cries* has provided a grounding for the next step in Joanna Tokarska-Bakir’s extraordinarily incisive writing about the history of violence against minorities on the territory of Poland. That next step takes the form of the book *Pod klątwą. Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego* (*Under a Curse. A social portrait of the Kielce pogrom*). The book appeared in 2018 and is certainly a final word on the reasons and, especially, the sequence of events during the 1946 Kielce pogrom. On the basis of years of archival research, intense study and interviews, Tokarska-Bakir was able to prove beyond doubt that there was no single decision or intent behind the pogrom (the “communist provocation” thesis), and, following that certitude, was able to show multiple agencies that lead to the explosion of accumulated hatred and malevolence. *Under a Curse* allows us to see the actors and the events in all their horrible vividness.

Under a Curse is a breakthrough not only as an illuminating analysis of the mechanism of the two-day Kielce massacre, but also as an innovative approach to the historical and biographical documentation. In her accumulated knowledge about the region, the city, the participants in the pogrom and its victims, Tokarska-Bakir was able to reconstruct the social scene that made the violence happen. She discovered the links between participants, the dynamics of the decisions taken or avoided by the authorities, the atmosphere of siege in the city and its environs. I expect her book to lead to the revision of the commonly accepted version of the history of that pogrom. And, consequently, to have an enormous impact on the interpretation of the entire period of recent Polish history *tout court*.

One could say that there are no “final words” in the writing of history, but the depth and conclusive documentation that lie at the basis of *Under a Curse* allow me to make an exception to this rule. Many of the preceding studies that prepared this Kielce book are contained in the present volume. The fact that they lead to a next step in the author’s work does not diminish their value. Quite the opposite, their insight has been proven right, their energy turned out to be fertile

and productive. It is fascinating to see how the texts in this volume inform each other, build upon the knowledge that has been tested and enriched. They are part of a continuum of research, thinking and writing that is removing barriers to the clear and straight image of recent history.

This ark of historical, cultural and ethnographic work is quite unprecedented and should be admired as such. Fortunately, Professor Tokarska-Bakir does not labor totally alone. *Pogrom Cries* is a part of a larger intellectual production. I'm referring here to a (small) movement I would call the New School of Thinking about the Shoah, i.e., a number of historians, anthropologists, literary scholars, writers and journalists whose work examines the extermination of Jews during and after World War II. Most of the people I have in mind are women who, like Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, in their writings pierce through almost iron taboos. They avoid the pressures of discretion, academic loyalties, good taste, patriotism; they don't search for exculpatory context or for equilibrium between "two sides" of the matter. Another thing they reject is the paralyzing question: "How would I myself behave in such a situation?" that excuses the questioner from moral judgment or even study of reprehensible acts, placing the matter on the level of you-who-are-without-sin cast the first stone. I think about women-writers rather than men, because they accomplish this taboo-boosting style of work by renouncing the position of authority that protects against questioning and rejection. They look for what happened on a very basic level, most of all in human biography, but also in the changes of the city maps, in literature, in oral history. Learned as they are, they do not use a priori theories, they move on the ground rather than in the air. Knowing that they are not and don't want to be insulated by commonly accepted ideas, they fortify their research by extremely thorough documentation. They are governed by the belief that we can learn what happened and can present it in a way that will be heard. I have in mind historians, anthropologists, journalists and writers like Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Barbara Engelking, Alina Skibińska, Anna Bikont, Elżbieta Janicka, Anna Zawadzka, Aleksandra Domańska, Monika Sznajderman, and many others working on subjects of violence but also on family and neighborly stories that throw light on the history of Jews. Their work requires knowledge, modesty, and industriousness, because it goes against strong group loyalties, established clichés and authorities, state supported institutes and academia, and the easy camaraderie of the majority. The members of that New School work on the past without propagating any ideology or group. It seems to be the most fruitful way one can write about the Holocaust.

The flourishing of the New School of Thinking about the Shoah is meeting with strong political and academic barriers. The breakthrough in the approach

to the study of the Shoah did not come from the Polish historical establishment. For a long time already, the academic history in Poland has been too focused on being patriotic to produce any breakthrough. The authors of the most important works in the domain of recent history came from anthropology, ethnography, cultural and literary studies. Now these domains are under siege, and not only because they are often dealing with Jewish topics. All study of power relations in culture, of exclusion, gender, nationalism, postcolonialism are considered subversive. The new reforms of the Ministry of Education abolish these academic specializations, introducing instead a new discipline of “studies of culture and religion.” The state “captured” history: the universities and institutes that produce and employ new historians openly conduct a policy of regimentation of topics to be researched and conclusions to be reached. But it is never easy to silence people moved by the sense of responsibility for how the past is seen in the present. No matter how much money and honors the state-captured history bestows upon its acolytes, it is this other work, independent and free that is fruitful and interesting. As proven by the present book.

Chapter 1: The Polish Underground Organization *Wolność i Niezawisłość* and Anti-Jewish Pogroms, 1945–1946

Introduction

In the two years following the German occupation of Poland, before the consolidation of Communist rule in 1947, between 400 and 2,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors (depending on the estimate) encountered a form of violence that has long been a subject of historical debate. Several different explanations for this phenomenon have been put forward. Some have linked it to the absence of law and order in post-war Poland, others to the involvement of some Polish Jews in installing the Communist regime, while yet others have seen it as a response to Jewish efforts to re-acquire property that was appropriated during the war by Germans and Poles.¹ In this text, drawing on arguments advanced by Roberta Senechal de la Roche with regard to a 1908 race riot, or pogrom, in Springfield, Illinois,² I attempt to examine the anthropological dimension of such events in more detail.

In explaining the origins and nature of collective violence, scholars over the past few decades have moved away from traditional social strain theory,³ which posits *objective* threats as the reason for attacks, towards a more dynamic view in which the *perception* of threats by different individuals in changing social and historical contexts gives rise to violence. The affective turn in the humanities has also provided an impulse to reinterpret the traditional Aristotelian definition of fear, considered as “a painful or troubled feeling caused by the impression of an imminent evil that causes destruction or pain.”⁴ Today, most scholars of collective violence espouse a different reading of the phrase ‘that causes’ in the definition

1 See, for instance, David Engel, ‘Patterns of anti-Jewish violence in Poland, 1944–1946’, *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 26 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem 1998), 43–85, http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203128.pdf (accessed on 1/12/2017).

2 Roberta Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln’s Shadow: The 1908 Race Riot in Springfield, Illinois* (Carbonale: Southern Illinois University Press 1990).

3 Robert K. Merton, ‘Social structure and anomie’, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 3, no. 5, 1938, 672–682.

4 Aristotle, *Rhetoric. Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vol. 22, trans. by J. H. Freese (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1926), 2.5.1. For a discussion, see Anthony Bale, *Feeling*

above. They have concluded that fear as a stimulus does not trigger an automatic reaction since it is always filtered through a historically changing system of *deep-rooted cognitive habits* which interpret signals in accordance with a cultural system of expectations.⁵ Because of this, the focus of research on collective violence has shifted from threat to *threat perception*, since the same thing can be interpreted as threatening and non-threatening in different situations or cultures.⁶

While democratic society in theory accepts the upward mobility of minority groups, in traditional hierarchical society, based on the subjection of “deviants”, it is treated as a breach of the social contract. As we will see, this is precisely the type of situation we are dealing with in post-war Poland, where, for the first time, Jews assumed pivotal public positions.

The Wolność i Niepodległość Archive

This article analyses the deep-rooted cognitive habits among informers and reporters belonging to the organization Wolność i Niezawisłość (WiN, Freedom and),⁷ as seen in documents from the WiN archive, preserved at the Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (State Archive in Kraków), Poland, under reference no. ANKr 1214. It is estimated that WiN had between 20,000 and 30,000 members, making it the largest pro-independence organization in Poland after the Second World War.

WiN was founded on 2 September 1945, at the initiative of underground commanders who refused to accept the decisions of the Yalta Conference which made Poland part of the Soviet sphere of influence. The founders of WiN did not intend it as a political organization. Its leader, Lt. Jan Rzepecki, was referred to as “President,” and the organization’s board was to be elected by members. Nevertheless, those at the grassroots thought of themselves as soldiers and, particularly in central Poland, played an active part in the ongoing civil war. An important

Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages (London: Reaction Books 2010), 12.

5 W.M. Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2001).

6 Bale, *Feeling Persecuted*, 9–29.

7 I will cite documents from this collection in brackets in the text, usually without continuous pagination and omitting the titles of individual documents. The first number following the acronym “WiN” in brackets refers to the file number, the second number refers to the item’s shelfmark in the archive, and the third represents the scan number/s provided by the author. Tokarska-Bakir’s text and all WiN documents, unless otherwise stated are translated by Bartłomiej Sokół and Patrick Fox.

part of WiN's activities was a publishing and propaganda campaign, seen as a prelude to the expected free elections guaranteed at Yalta. Many of the sources analysed here were produced within its framework.

WiN, well known to scholars of Poland's post-war history, has so far been described only in political terms.⁸ In this text, I will offer an anthropological perspective based on documents in its archive relating the organization's attitude to Jewish Poles.⁹ Another criterion governing the choice of texts to be analyzed is a focus on the pogroms perpetrated in post-war Poland. Following the Second World War, Poland, like Ukraine, Slovakia and Hungary, witnessed numerous anti-Jewish pogroms, the first on 14 and 15 June 1945 in Rzeszów; the second on 11 August 1945 in Kraków; and the third and bloodiest, with forty-two victims, on 4 July 1946 in Kielce.¹⁰ Using Peter Brass's terminology, the *pogrom spark* almost everywhere in Poland in 1945–1946 proved to be accusations of ritual murder. What remains to be investigated is the nature of the *tinder*¹¹ that caught the spark.

Although WiN was established in the autumn of 1945, the archives, as well as the Kielce pogrom, document the earlier pogroms in Rzeszów and Kraków

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- 8 Mieczysław Huchla, Romuald Lazarowicz, Józefa Huchlowa and Zdzisław Wierzbiński (eds.), *Zrzeszenie "Wolność i Niezawisłość w dokumentach"*, vol. 1–6 (Wrocław: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej 1997–2000); Zbigniew Zblewski, *Okręg Krakowski Zrzeszenia "Wolność i Niezawisłość" 1945–1948: Geneza, struktury, działalność* (Kraków: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej 2005).
 - 9 Katrin Steffen, *Jüdische Polonität: Ethnizität und Nation im Spiegel der polnischsprachigen jüdischen Presse 1918–1939* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2004).
 - 10 Anna Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945 r.* (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny 2000); Jan Tomasz Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House 2006); Krzysztof Kaczmarski, *Pogrom, którego nie było. Rzeszów 11–12 czerwca 1945 r.: Fakty, hipotezy, dokumenty* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej 2008); Łukasz Kamiński and Jan Żaryn (eds.), *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1 (Kielce: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej 2006); Jan Żaryn, Leszek Bukowski and Andrzej Jankowski (eds.), *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 2 (Kielce: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej 2008); Bożena Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946* (Wrocław: Bellona 1992); Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Pogrom Cries. Essays on Polish-Jewish History, 1939–1946*, 2nd ed., trans. from Polish by Blanka Zahorjanova et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 2019).
 - 11 Paul R. Brass, "Introduction: discourses of ethnicity, communalism, and violence", Paul R. Brass (ed.), *Riots and Pogroms* (New York: New York University 1996), 1–55 (8); Werner Bergmann, "Pogroms", in Wilhelm Heitmeyer and John Hagan (eds.), *International Handbook of Violence Research* (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer Academics 2003), vol. 1, 351–367.

and the ripple effect¹² that followed the one in Kraków, including incidents in Tarnów (WiN, 7, c. 205, 3717), Radom (WiN 5, c. 41, 3557) and Rabka (WiN, 7, c. 205,3717). The goal here, however, is not to determine the course of any of these incidents. The intention is rather to learn about the social views of the perpetrators, whose statements and reports make up the WiN collection¹³. What were they afraid of? What outraged them? How did they view the conventions governing relations between the dominant ethnic group and the Jewish minority after the Holocaust? What customs did they believe to be threatened and by whom? What was the hierarchy of these norms? Who was supposed to defend them and who was perceived as the deviant against whom self-defence (pogrom) was organized, according to Senechal de la Roche's theory of collective violence¹⁴?

Classification of Fears

The most important threats linked by WiN informers in 1945–1946 to the behaviour of the Jews can be arranged according to the following six factors:

- A. fear of Communism, which, as is apparent in the widespread use of the term “Żydokomuna” (Judaeo-Communism), is believed by the authors of WiN reports to be collectively represented by Jewish Poles;
- B. fear of Jewish *upward mobility*: after positions unattainable in pre-war Poland became accessible to Jewish Poles in “Lublin Poland”¹⁵, something the dominant group experienced with humiliation and saw as a violation of the social contract providing for the subordination of the subordinated;
- C. fear of a Jewish plot articulated as “the Masonic conspiracy” or “Jewish world domination”;

12 Bergmann, “Pogroms”, 362.

13 The reports in the archive were generally compiled by more than one hand from many sources provided by several informants, often including visible “stitches” where one text ends and another begins.

14 Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln's Shadow*; Roberta Senechal de La Roche, “Collective violence as social control”, *Sociological Forum*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1996, 97–128.

15 “Lublin Poland” – a term that described the political system of Communist Poland. It was based on the name of the city in Eastern Poland where, on 22 August 1944, the founding document of Communist Poland, known as “Manifest Lipcowy” [The July Manifesto] was declared. The document guaranteed “the equality of all citizens, regardless of their race, religion or nationality”.

- D. demographic panic connected with the return/influx of Jewish Poles from the Soviet Union, and fears that they would reclaim their pre-war properties inhabited then by non-Jewish Poles;
- E. fear of racial pollution caused by mixed marriages on a massive scale, and the consequent “deforming influence” of Jewry, perceived as excluding Polishness;
- F. fear of ritual murder.

What proves striking in the reports about Jewish Poles compiled by WiN is descriptive language devoid of any civic categories. The language is strikingly distinct from expressions such as “Jewish citizens” or “Polish citizens of Jewish origin” that appear in the documents of “Lublin Poland”. What appears in the WiN documentation, rather, is the divisive and dichotomous term “Poles-Jews” which signals demonization, predisposing those so called to pogrom.¹⁶ It is well known that demonization facilitates the *collective attribution and liability* of transgression.¹⁷ The declaration in the WiN archives of the organization’s attitude towards national minorities states: “The Polish state secures equal civil rights to all national minorities in Poland”. However it makes these rights conditional on whether the minority “takes a friendly stance towards the state” and atones for its offences:

“All organizations, individuals or national groups, who have harmed the Polish Nation, must be justly punished” (WiN 10, c. 33, 3278).

Considering the context of declarations that justify collective responsibility in advance, the conditions imposed on the Jewish Poles for entering the Polish nation, could have proved difficult to meet.

A. Fear of Communism personified by Jews

The reports compiled by WiN in 1945 describe Jews as a homogeneous group:

“The society’s attitude towards the Government of National Unity is unanimous. We all share the opinion that the people in charge of the government have been sent mostly by Russia and obey orders from Moscow. No one, except for the Polish Worker’s Party [Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR] recognizes the Government of National Unity. All Poles know that this country is ruled by Jews and the NKWD¹⁸” (WiN 7, c. 42, 3558).

16 Bergmann, “Pogroms”, 357.

17 Bergmann, “Pogroms”, 357.

18 The NKWD (or NKVD in Russian) is the Narodowy Komisarjat Spraw Wewnętrznych (People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs), the principal joint law enforcement agency of the Soviet Union.

“Jews: their anti-state activity targets the Polish state and society” (WiN 5, c. 8, 2705).

“Almost all of them [Jews] are informers for the Soviets and the Office of Public Security” (WiN 7, c. 8, 3655)¹⁹.

“In the present democracy, they play a special role. Without exaggeration, you can say that every Jewish man or woman you come across is a member of the NKGB or NKWD” (WiN 5, c. 7, 2704).

However, detailed reports present a different picture:

“Jews can be divided into two groups. a) One faction aims at assimilating with Poles as fast as possible. This group pursues its goals by all sorts of means: conversion to Christianity, marriage [with non-Jews], changing their last names (common). This group stays in Poland. b) The second faction leaves Poland and goes abroad: to Palestine and, in most cases, to the areas occupied by the British. This group includes mostly poor and simple people” (WiN 7, c. 60, 3570).

Another report, possibly compiled by a person employed at the office of the Military Censorship, notes that “in letters sent abroad, Jews always ask their relatives to help them to leave Poland” (WiN 42, c. 41, 5262).²⁰

B. Fear of Jewish *upward mobility*

The reports notoriously express anxiety about the social and professional activity of Jews, who, not long before, had been deprived of their rights and, before the war, were only able to enter domains reserved for ethnic minorities. The following, from October 1945, is characteristic:

“Jews always stay united and do not disperse. However, today they play a prominent role in our political life. We see them in all significant political positions – in local government, the military, industry, etc. – although they try not to stand out, and assume Polish names to conceal their nationality. The rest of Jewish society believes that they have played ‘a beautiful role’ in our national life and seem to be waiting for an opportunity to emigrate from Poland” (WiN 2, 3560).

19 The Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego (UBP, sometimes UB, Office of Public Security) was the post-war Communist state security, intelligence and counter-espionage service. Its offices were part of the Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego (MBP, Ministry of Public Security).

20 The remark is confirmed by documents in the archive Sprawozdania Wydziału Cenzury Wojennej i Wojskowej Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego 1945–1946 (Reports of the Faculty of Military Censorship and Military Ministry of Public Security): Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej (Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance), Warsaw, BU_ 1572_3378, see 124.

“Jews are fixed in roles and positions everywhere throughout Poland. Even in the military they did nothing to ease the repressions” (WiN 1, c. 202, 2369).

The ethnic profiling present in the reports compiled by WiN reports relates exclusively to Jews and Russians. The following is a typical:

“A large percent of Jewish Communists, who came to Poland, had been trained in Russia, and are now being installed as ethnic Poles in central government, the Office of Public Security, the military, industry, commerce, the press, propaganda apparatus, radio and in the Polish Worker’s Party” (WiN 7, c. 214, 3730).

The author of this report is concerned that Jews impersonate Poles, which (together with “denying their Jewish origins”) forms a common conversational script in a society where civic identity categories are not applicable. Assimilative tendencies are interpreted as a means to acquire positions that the author is convinced are reserved for Poles. Although not all Jews are viewed as striving for prominent positions, this did not make their reputation any better. The following text was noticed in the conspiratorial press, *Na jakim koniu jadą żydzi w Polsce?* (*Which horse are the Jews in Poland riding?*):

“Jews aim at capturing all public life and bringing it under their control. They do not force their way into executive and representative positions but prefer to join at a second and third layer. They conceal their origins and assume Polish names. They want to seize control of the propaganda (Borejsza²¹), especially its most important departments – the press, film and radio – in order to form opinions and outlooks. In the military they seize control of all political, economic and intelligence functions. When it comes to the ministries, they try, primarily, to install themselves in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Security, the Treasury, Ministry of Industry. (...) The rule they follow is to control everything while sitting behind the Poles’ backs!!!” (WiN 11, c. 340, 3265).

C. Fear of Jewish conspiracy

The above attitude is evident in a report about the “Jewish world government” published nearly two years later (1947), which was meant to expose the efforts of “all world Jewry [to] conquer the world” (WiN 1, c. 2002, 3797). The principal document in the archive to focus on this subject, however, is the typescript entitled *Podbój psychosfery narodu gojów* (*Conquering the Psychosphere of the Goy Nation*), which elaborates on the theme of a population being deceitfully

21 Jerzy Borejsza (1905–1952), was a Communist and cultural activist, founder of the weekly *Odrodzenie* (*Revival*) and, in the years 1944–1948, chairman of the powerful publisher *Czytelnik* (*Reader*), one of the most important cultural institutions in Communist Poland.

subjugated by means of propaganda. The typescript proved to be a fragment of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*²². As it turns out, the message of this rather insane text, including its detailed theses, does not seem to give rise to any concern by the authors, for example, of the proclamation drawn up by the “Polski Ruch Niepodległościowy i Polityczne Kierownictwo Narodu Polskiego” (*Polish Independence Movement and the Leadership of the Polish Nation*) and addressed “Do Żydów w Polsce” (*To the Jews in Poland*). The text begins with a historical outline, contrasting Polish virtues with Jewish faults:

“Throughout its entire history, the Polish nation has displayed the greatest sympathy towards Jews. Already, at the time of the inquisition of the Middle-Ages, Poland extended its hospitality and protection to Jews banished from Western Europe, mainly from Spain. For the second time, Poland granted asylum to Jews banished from Nazi Germany before the Second World War, even though many of these Jews had collaborated with German intelligence in the ruination of Poland. In the tormented times under German occupation, thousands of Polish families were murdered, often burnt alive with their homes, for hiding or helping Jews – something for which Poles were executed, unlike in any other occupied country. Jews accepted help, although almost all the Jews, even those found accidentally, denounced their benefactors when facing imminent death (...). Meanwhile, the Jews in Poland, who in many cases owed their survival to the Poles – and who, from the moment of the German retreat, seized real power in Poland on behalf of the Soviet Union – started a system of government worthy of the methods used by the Gestapo” (WiN 1, c. 201, 2369–2374, and WiN 10, c. 65–69, 3235–3239).

The authors of the proclamation take the existence of the “Jewish world government” for granted, and accuse “Jewish circles” of advocating a “mafia-like, elitist imperialism”. However, they express hope that such uncontrollable ambitions can be somehow reconciled with the survival of the Polish nation:

“Even considering the aspiration of the Jewish world government to conquer the world, the prospect of destroying and exploiting the Polish Nation – both biologically and economically – proves incomprehensible. Under no circumstances is the Polish nation dangerous to the Jews. The Polish nation did not and does not display any imperialist values. This is why we call upon the Poles, not only in the interest of the Polish nation, but also of the Jewish nation, to change their adventurous plans, which could cause a new disaster – one that, this time, would be blamed on the Jews” (WiN 10, c. 65–69, 3235–3239).

22 The text in the typescript in question comprises pp. 211–257 in Janusz Tazbir (ed.), *Protokoły mędrców Syjonu*, trans. from Russian by Bolesław Rudzki (Warsaw: Iskry 2004). For information on this “Polish chapter” of the *Protocols*, see Ronald Modras, *Kościół katolicki i antysemityzm w Polsce w latach 1933–1939* (Kraków: Homini 2004), 108–109.

The reports prepared by WiN echo traditional motives for antisemitic violence. They even contain German propaganda materials, such as a pocket-size agenda with entries in Polish containing a set of antisemitic caricatures reminiscent of the Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer* (the origin and ownership of this publication is a subject of my forthcoming paper: «Józef Zabrzeski and the antisemitic agenda in the WiN archive»). The main motif in these caricatures is the “Żydokomuna” (Judeo-Communism), represented as agents of a Judeo-Communist cabal and as cynical, fat men smoking cigarettes, walking hand-in-hand with Trotsky-faced Bolsheviks. The following are captions accompanying the caricatures (WiN 36, c. 1–12, 4802–4826):

- “Jews came to Poland as beggars, crawling and fawning on others, behaving insincerely, pretending to be humble. After a few generations passed, the Jews possessed 83 per cent of the nation’s assets”.
- “Theft committed on non-Jews is viewed as an act dear to God, even according to the ‘most decent’ Jews”.
- “Trade and industry are the key to Jews to building their might and wealth. Their arrogance towards non-Jews keeps on growing”.
- “Jews embody selfishness, brutality, cruelty and a lust for rule. Mercilessly, they throw old and ill workers out on to the streets”.
- “Jews pretend to be honest tradesmen, but in reality spread discord, instigate the people to commit murders, spark fires, terror, revolution and fratricidal wars”.
- “Jews are masterful when it comes to stirring up the people and sparking fratricidal wars. By demoralizing the lower social classes, they turn them into passive, weak-willed tools to achieve their sinister goals”.
- “By the use of Marxists, Communists and Jewish Freemasonry, Jews systematically work on undermining the foundations of the nation and the Church”.
- “Jews promise workers to respect their dignity, promise them a life surrounded by beauty, but what the Jews really give the workers is hunger, poverty and death” (accompanying an illustration of “Communist paradise” by Karl Marx).
- “Woe to the nation that trusts the Jews and believes in their promises. The fate of this nation will be horrible”.
- “This is what the slogans ‘freedom, equality and fraternity’ really look like. Jews use these slogans to express their revolutionary aspirations” (accompanying an illustration of an execution carried out with a hammer and sickle).
- “The Jewish paradise under the sign of the hammer and sickle”.

Accusations of Masonic conspiracy – the fundamental thread from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* – recur several times in underground reports and other documents in the WiN archives:

“It has been established in the Kraków area that the Jewish Committee maintains contact with American Jews. The Kraków Jews admitted that international Masonic unions do exist and that their activity [is] stronger than before the war” (WiN 7, c. 91, 3601).

“International Communism, socialism and fascism, as well as the greatest powers – international Freemasonry and Jewry – threaten each Catholic nation separately and all of them together” (WiN 39, c. 12, 5109).

In a famous statement to American journalists by Primate August Hlond after the Kielce pogrom, quoted in the WiN archives in a document signed by the Kraków Curia, similar reasoning is used to assess the pogrom. The Primate’s opinion, according to which “the course of these unfortunate and deplorable incidents in Kielce shows that they cannot be attributed to racism” (WiN 38, c. 255, 5007), echoes the contemporary accounts referred to by Roberta Senechal de la Roche in her study of a 1908 race riot/pogrom in Springfield, Illinois. She quotes the Springfield press to the effect that it was not evidence of the “whites’ hatred towards negroes, but of the negroes’ own terrible misconduct” that explained the massacre (Senechal de la Roche 1990, 42)²³. Primate Hlond evaluates the war-time Polish-Jewish relations as good, the best evidence of which was the aid given by Poles to Jews during the war.

“The fact that these good relations are deteriorating, is to a great extent to be blamed on the Jews, who hold the leading positions in public life and strive for the imposition of a system of government on a nation that its majority does not want. This is a harmful game that gives rise to dangerous tensions. The fatal armed clashes on the political front in Poland bring death not just to the Jews themselves, but unfortunately for as many Poles” (WiN 38, c. 255 5007).

One of the reports by WiN broadened the above statement with a remark about the “outrageous percent of Jews present in positions related to public safety and justice” (WiN 11, c. 83, 3256). Attached to the report was the following comment: “This was the first time somebody paid attention to the composition of our *Isra-elite* (...) now the cat is out of the bag and everybody knows that they are all Jews!!!” (WiN 11, c. 159, 3259). Intended by the author of the report to expose the Polish Army as non-Polish – based on their language and expressions as well as the Polish allegedly spoken by the elites with a strong Yiddish accent – the

23 *Illinois State Journal*, 15–16 August 1908: “The implication is clear that conditions, not the populace, were to blame and that many good citizens could find no other remedy than that applied by the mob. It was not the fact of the whites’ hatred toward negroes, but of the negroes’ own misconduct, general inferiority or unfitness for free institutions that were [*sic*] at fault”, quoted in Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln’s Shadow*, 42.

comment reveals the way he feels about the role of Jews in society. The author claims his right to display contempt. He feels outraged by the introduction of penalties for “looking disrespectfully at Jews” in Lublin Poland (WiN 10, c. 83, 3256). Oblivious of the fact that he is calling for a restoration of *numerus clausus*, the author of the report follows Primate Hlond and openly criticizes granting Jews access to military and judiciary careers:

“We Poles should not be called upon to renounce racism and antisemitism. This should fall to the nation that deems itself the chosen people to lead the world of states, nations and all possible centers of life, into which they force themselves regardless of any numerical logic, against the will of nations, against the postulates of an equal start in life for everyone and the equal distribution of goods.

The nation from which mercenaries are commonly recruited, that hires itself to every enemy as traitors and torturers, that professes not universal ethics, but the ethics of the Talmud – such a nation cannot call upon others to renounce racism while cultivating it themselves. Members of this nation cannot solely aspire to the role of judges, security guards and educators of the nation they live in and prey on. What gives them the right to do so? Is it about their numbers? This is an obviously striking absurdity! Is it about the stature of their ethics and morality? (...) Maybe it is about some special abilities? So, it is a racially dominant nation. The *Herrenvolk* are the people chosen to rule and to judge, to take the most profitable positions in the state hierarchy, economic life, the judiciary, the military (except for frontline troops) and naturally also in public security organizations” (WiN 2, c. 202, 2486).

Here, Jews are being reproached for their promotion in the name of democratic values; “the postulates of an equal start in life for everyone and the equal distribution of goods”. They are not only being accused of procrastination, particularism, cowardice, greed, megalomania, but also of being ungrateful to the Poles who had been saving their lives throughout the war.

Considering these latter contexts, it is worth quoting an early testimony from December 1945 about an initiative of the Kraków Jews wishing to honor the Poles who had saved their lives during the war. A question that arises here concerns the intentions of WiN, which wanted to know the names of “the Righteous”.²⁴ Belief in any edifying intentions for this search, somewhat defies credibility.

“The Kraków Jews prepared a petition addressed to the Polish government under Ber- man, signed by about 100 people [figures are not reliable, since it exceeds the margin]

24 “Righteous Among Nations” is the honorary title for people who saved Jews, awarded by the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem and established by the government of Israel only many years afterwards. In the quote letter, such people were simply called “the Righteous”.

for honouring the Poles who came to the aid of Jews during the German occupation. In order to ensure their petition would be accepted, the Kraków Jews also addressed a petition to American Jews asking them to intervene in their case with the Polish government. Out of the total number of Poles, eight people to be awarded – such as Świerczewski, a propaganda instructor for the Polish Worker's Party (PPR) – had so far been identified. Most of the candidates to be awarded are said to be living in Warsaw” (WiN 7, c. 60, 3570).

D. Demographic panic

The demographic panic, connected with the influx of Jews from Russia and fed by propaganda, is an important source of the fear that appears in the reports for 1945. One of several reports, warning that “280 thousand” Jews would come to Poland (WiN 42, c. 16, 5228), stated that plans to bring Jews to the Western Territories were part of a plan to “Sovietize” Poland (WiN 42, c. 7, 5216). Several of the reports comment on a rift within the repressive and the disciplinary aspects of the state apparatus caused by the influx of Jews: on the one hand, there is the *Milicja Obywatelska* (MO, Citizen's Militia, the post-war state police force) and the Polish Army (also called the “*Żywiecki Armij*”) and, on the other, the UB, the state security and intelligence service. A possible example of this rift is contained in a letter from the Militia in Sosnowiec to the municipal authorities asking how to deal with Jews who were not paying taxes after moving into the city. The letter offered information about “a rally held by superintendents, who petitioned the Polish authorities saying they were being mercilessly exploited and bullied in the tenement houses governed by Jews” (WiN 42, c. 7, 5216). The Jews who had settled in tenement houses once owned by Germans had always been perceived domestically as landlords and thus had to be viewed as dangerous rivals by Polish caretakers (*dozorcy*).

Another report prepared by WiN describes Polish military officers, on the one hand, and an NKWD officer and UB officer, on the other, entering into conflict over the Jews.

“On 18 November 1946 a number of drunken sappers dragged a Jewish woman out of her house and bullied her, with one of them even firing a shot just above her head. Passing by was Captain Golodov from the NKWD, who saw the whole scene and stood up for the woman, for which he was beaten up by the soldiers. He then called the Office for Public Security, which arrested these four soldiers. Having learned of what happened, soldiers from the sappers' parent unit went to the UB building armed and ready to fight (...) The soldiers threw a few grenades into the street, fired shots at the building, shouting: ‘You Soviet pushovers, Polish NKWD, Moscow's servants!’ After long negotiations with the chief of the UB, the soldiers were allowed to enter the building” (WiN 7, c. 115, 3634).

A WiN report from 1945 reads: “The anti-Jewish attitudes escalate because of the provocative behaviour of the Jews, particularly that of Jewish officers.” All this is stated in a note written about Jewish civilians being executed for cooperating with the UB, and mentioning anti-Jewish leaflets which appearing in Tarnów on 11 August 1945 (WiN 42, c. 27, 5240). We do not know what form the “provocative behavior” of the Jewish officer took, although we do know that the reports mention several incidents of that kind.

E. Fear of “racial pollution”

The author of one report describes undefined Jewish Poles as “well-fed, well-dressed, crowding holiday and entertainment sites, doing their best to thrive, all of which makes a striking comparison with the very tough life led by the Polish peasants and workers” (WiN 9, c. 73, 5228). The author is also anxious about the effects of mixed marriages in which “typical Jewish features in no way disappear”:

“according to opinion of Jews themselves, interbreeding of the Jewish race with Poles, even with an acceptance of Christianity, does not result in a loss of the features of the Jewish race” (WiN 8, c. 73, 3799).

Considering the above statement, it becomes difficult to ignore a concealed fear of “race pollution”. The same fear was apparent in Springfield, Illinois, in 1908, and was expressed in a parallel question: “Can we assimilate the negro? The very question is pollution”.²⁵

In this context there are several reports of underground segregation initiatives relating to Jewish and non-Jewish Poles. One dating from the summer of 1945 states:

“In Łódź, the anti-Jewish action assumed a clearly defined character. Jews received written warnings saying they should leave Poland or otherwise would be shot. The security authorities cannot identify the source of these warnings but, despite assurances saying they are safe, the Jews are selling their workshops, buying foreign currency and going West. (...)

Captain Lec, a writer and director of the CDŻ²⁶ in Łódź is currently investigating a death threat received by Ryszarda Łatowa, a CDŻ employee. The letter contains notification that ‘as a result of keeping in with Jews, she is sentenced to death’. It is signed by ‘Colonel Ząb’, and marked with a death’s head. Similar letters have been received by all the Jews. Łatowa does not only keep in with the Jews, but also collaborates with the NKWD” (WiN 42, c. 208a, 5221).

25 Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln’s Shadow*, 25.

26 Despite my efforts, I could not decipher the abbreviation CDŻ.

The idea of segregation did not end with the demands circulated by the Polish underground however. Other reports make it clear that segregation was implemented by some local authorities:

“The National Municipal Council in Żywiec passed a resolution against allowing Jews to enter the town. A similar resolution was passed by the works council at the Solali Factory in Żywiec [Żywiec Paper Mill], which stated Jews should not be employed in the factory” (WiN 4, c. 331, 2625).

The WiN archives contain many reports of the murder of Jews. One from August 1946 contains an unsourced estimate, according to which “2,043 Jews were killed after the Soviets seized power in Poland” (WiN 4, c. 184) According to the Polish Worker’s Party, “the National Armed Forces and the Home Army have killed about 2500 people so far”. A report from 26 May 1946 concerns the so-called “train operation”. Apart from the mention of “racial issues”, the report offers no justification for the execution carried out as follows:

“A forest unit wearing Polish uniforms stopped the evening train on the railroad between Kamionka and Ptaszowka. They entered a car with five Jews who were travelling on this train. After both sides started a conversation in Russian and the Jews (convinced they were dealing with Soviets dressed in Polish uniforms) admitted they were Jewish, they were taken out of the train and shot next to the railway embankment” (WiN 4, c. 107, 2553).

F. Fear of ritual murder

Accusations of ritual murder played the greatest role in building tensions, and constituted the spark that ignited the Polish pogroms.²⁷ Rumors about ritual murder are the counterpart to accusations of the rape of a white woman that sparked the 1908 Springfield massacre in the United States.

Similar accusations, many throughout the WiN archives, appear in various versions and concern different periods. The report quoted in full in the Appendix to this article contains accounts from 1945. The Rzeszów pogrom of June 1945, described there, constitutes the *terminus post quem* of the archive documents. Another fragment of the text is based on an account of the Kraków pogrom

27 Marcin Zaremba, “The myth of ritual murder in post-war Poland and hypotheses”, in Michał Gałas and Antony Polonsky (eds.), *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry. Volume 23: Jews in Krakow* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization 2011), 465–507; Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga: Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* (Kraków: Znak 2012), 578–615.

given before the Jewish Committee in Kraków on 13 August 1945, the day following those events (WiN 7, c. 205, 3717–3721).²⁸

“While we would like to be understanding towards the Jews, and while we have no interest in fuelling antisemitism, we cannot turn a blind eye to what is, to say the least, a dishonest and destructive attitude on the part of the Jews in our society. During the German occupation, the Jews constituted the majority of the G[esta]po’s informers. Today, Jews also make up the core of the informers of the NKWD and its affiliate, the UBP [Office of Public Security], holding executive positions in both organizations. Jews take the filthiest of jobs, work for our enemies and occupy well-paid positions in commerce and industry, thus ruining the economy. They spread confusion and wreak havoc in all spheres and even go so far as to commit brutal murders, since they are confident that the almighty NKWD will defend them if need be” (WiN 7, c. 205, 3717).

The subsequent part of the text contains a detailed description of a ritual murder allegedly committed in Rzeszów. What is most striking in the excerpt below is the figure of the “rabbi dressed in a blood-stained white smock, [who] was caught red-handed next to the body of a girl, hanging upside down” (WiN 7, c. 205, 3717). The key fragment of the text reads as follows:

“When interrogated, the rabbi admitted that the body parts were the remains of sixteen children. However, he claimed that he had not committed transfusion murder, but that the Jewish nation had suffered great loss and thus many of its most prominent members needed to be nourished with human blood that could be obtained by these means” (WiN 7, c. 205, 3717).

The summary was written by an educated person, obviously struggling with cognitive dissonance. The text is a report, a blend of other various texts on the subject. On one hand, the author does not want to reject anything useful but, on the other, does not feel comfortable using the archaic superstition of the blood libel. This results in a compromise in which the superstition is made contemporary by means of the concept of “transfusion murder”²⁹. Nowhere does the author undermine the feasibility of such a murder and, a few pages later, notes that yet another murder described as “ritual murder” had been committed, and this time punished with the death penalty. The author also states that such murders are

28 The document is headed 2. “Mniejszości narodowe – repatriacja” (2. National minorities – repatriation), and dated “X [October] 1945. Informer No. 2”. “Informer No. 2” may have been close to the proceedings conducted by the military and police in Kraków on 13 August 1945.

29 Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, “The figure of the bloodsucker in Polish religious, national and left-wing discourse, 1945–1946: A study in historical anthropology”, *Dapim: Studies in the Holocaust*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2013, 75–106.

used by the NKWD, which tries to confirm “absurd rumours about ritual murders” (WiN 7, c. 205, 3718–3719):

“The NKWD used the chance discovery of the transfusion murders in Rzeszów as an opportunity, once again, to take advantage of anti-Jewish feeling” (WiN 7, c. 205, 3718–3719).

A different interpretation of the pogrom mechanism goes as follows: even murders of Jews who did not commit ritual murders, were committed by the NKWD in order to disgrace Poland in the eyes of the world. Such a perspective appears in the leaflet *Dość kręctw sowieckich (Enough Soviet Deceits)*, written in the autumn of 1945, which compares the scenarios of two pogroms that took place in 1945:

“This year on 11 June in Rzeszów at 12, Tannenbaum Street, they found the body of a nine-year-old, Bronisław Mandoń, who died from loss of blood drawn for transfusion. The culprits (four residing in Rzeszów, not registered anywhere but in NKWD files, who were Jews), were released after a few days on the order of the NKWD. So, if the NKWD had not known about the murder, it definitely approved of it. The case was stalled, while public opinion was directed to the anti-Jewish incidents triggered by the murder” (WiN 42, c. 646–647, 5605).

The author believes that the country is witnessing a dramatic reversal. Referring to the title of a book by Stanisław Mikołajczyk³⁰, Poland “has been raped” and bled to death like a slaughtered animal. Justice lies in the hands of the culprits, the Jews and the NKWD, who captured the country. Under such conditions, the pogrom becomes an act of popular self-defence aimed against Others who are attacking the most precious possessions of an abandoned nation: freedom, independence, women and children. The syllogism: “Jews=NKWD” proves key to the “Żydokomuna” myth, signifying a Judaeo-Communist cabal (WiN 4, c. 204–205, 3719–3729) and easing possible moral dilemmas. Claude Lévi-Straus described the myth as a contradiction-solving machine.

Nevertheless, the Kielce pogrom, possibly because of the shocking number of casualties, becomes an opportunity to develop a new kind of interpretation. The interpretation is visible in the report *Z ostatniej chwili: Nic Nowego (Breaking News: Nothing new)*:

“Following the pogroms in Rzeszów, Kraków and Silesia, a new pogrom in Kielce took place. Perpetrated by the same culprits in the same way, the pogrom began with the murder of a few children. One of them was released on to the streets with their hands, legs and neck cut. At the same time, NKWD agents explained that the murder had been

30 Stanisław Mikołajczyk, *Poland Raped: The Pattern of Soviet Aggression* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co. 1948).

committed by Jews. Outraged by the murder of innocent children, the mob attacked the Jews. (...) The anti-Jewish incidents were instigated by the NKWD from beginning to end. (...) Everyone knows that Russia had installed Jews in executive positions of all the ministries. Jews were used by Russia to destroy the Polish nation, although they are not always aware that, by doing what they do, they shatter any hope of staying in a future Poland, once and for all. This is why they often do not execute the orders they are given by Russia. They want to go along with the Poles. In order to prevent this, to make them more 'militant' and convince them from time to time to destroy Polishness, the NKWD arranges anti-Jewish provocations or even assassinations of citizens of Jewish origin disguised as reactionary acts" (WiN 10, c. 343, 3266).

This view of pogrom violence, absolving Jews, proves to be the exception. The suggestion that many more Jews shared such a suspicion of the Communist authorities is not reflected in the tone of subsequent WiN reports, which remained as hostile as they had ever been.

Perceived threat

Historians, psychologists and sociologists, advocating the theory of *general social strain* as an explanation for collective violence, are inclined to account for occurrences, such as pogroms, by focusing on the accumulation of burdens characteristic of a period that precedes or follows war or economic depression.³¹ In his book *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), the psychologist Gordon W. Allport made additions to this set of circumstances, including a "rapid change in the prevailing social situation", residential "invasion" by Blacks and a "rapid rise in immigrant population".³² The sociologist Allen Grimshaw (1965) developed the argument, adding "disorders in the 'classic accommodative pattern of superordination-subordination', in which whites, the dominant group, expected 'deference, obedience and complicity' from their black inferiors", to the list of incriminating factors. Grimshaw wrote that "the most intense conflict has resulted when the subordinate group has attempted to disrupt the *status quo*, or when the superordinate group has defined the situation as one in which such an attempt is being made".³³ Thus, for the first time, the notion of *threat* was differentiated from that of *perceived threat*.

31 Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln's Shadow*, 3.

32 Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley 1954), 59.

33 Allen D. Grimshaw, "Changing patterns of racial violence in the United States", *Notre Dame Lawyer*, vol. 60, 1965, 539–540, quoted in Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln's Shadow*, 3.

The sense of the majority being threatened by the minority might be related to the circumstances of living together: in employment, politics, education, the use of leisure facilities such as parks, restaurants, cinemas or amusement parks as well as public transport. According to the theory of *social strain*, the Springfield, Illinois, riots of 1908, constituted a moment of relief of the tensions arising from the increasing affluence and social visibility of Blacks. In his observations concerning the race riots in the United States in the years 1820–1960, Robert Maxwell Brown noticed that, since similar factors did not occur in all cities where the riots took place, the violence of Whites against the Blacks must have been triggered “by the *perceived threat* rather than the acts of violence”.³⁴ There was a growing call by commentators to rewrite the accepted explanations of these acts of violence, since becoming affluent seemed to have nothing to do with aggression and more to do with how the process was perceived by observers.

Roberta Senechal de la Roche wrote about the Springfield race riot in her book *In Lincoln's Shadow*. Judging from the response it provoked, the book proved to be one of the most inspiring works on pogroms in recent decades. Senechal de la Roche analyzes elements of Springfield's social context, such as the rise in affluence, prestige and political influence of Blacks (also when it comes to trading votes), as well as their improved vocational visibility (as, say, policemen and firemen) and political effectiveness (protests and anti-discrimination charges taken to court). She writes that

“the rioters viewed Springfield's blacks as a danger to their sense of dignity and status. Any signs of black success, power and upward mobility may have angered them (...) The two lynching victims were very successful black men. Also, recall that [the former] William English Walling felt that many of the whites he interviewed said that they were angry because the city's blacks behaved as if they were 'as good as the city's whites'”³⁵

On the basis of a thorough analysis of the economic situation in Springfield, including *residential and work patterns*, Senechal de la Roche argued that what the working-class rioters stood to lose in competition with Blacks was not jobs, homes or clients. The endangered values were physical separation and segregation, distance from the despised group, as well as their right to demonstrate superiority and show contempt. She concludes that the Springfield violence could

34 Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York: Oxford University Press 1975), quoted in Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln's Shadow*, 6: “white violence was often triggered by ‘white perception of black aggressiveness, not merely the act of black aggressiveness’”.

35 Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln's Shadow*, 148.

be understood as a normative, moralistic reaction to a “debased” form of deviant behaviour paradoxically represented by “black progress” which changed the situation of Whites in the social hierarchy.³⁶

Based on the Springfield historical experience, the theory of pogrom as an act of social control, as formulated by Senechal de la Roche, can be used to understand the anti-Jewish violence in Poland following the Second World War. The material that makes accessible the mindset of WiN informers shows the extreme polarization between Jewish and non-Jewish Poles. Legislation and social practices introduced by “Lublin Poland” clashed with the ideas of moral order embraced by the informers. The authors of the WiN documents perceived the granting of equal rights to Jews, who played an active part in “Lublin Poland”, including its repressive authorities, as a provocation against the very essence of these ideas. In reaction to this provocation, the informers felt humiliation and resentment. Acting in the underground, they were intent on gathering information about the world, while the world was not supposed to know of their existence. They often had positions in the military or local government. Judging by their access to detailed information in administrative and accounts offices, they did not take the risk of verifying the information they received and, even if they did so, they would not have contacted Jews. Compiled in the form of information gathered by the informers, the reports were sometimes criticized at headquarters as raw, excessively detailed and too extensive, which in turn points to a lack of cognitive control in conditions of growing encirclement.

WiN reports about Jewish Poles demonstrated a variety of views. Most certainly, not everyone supported Roman Dmowski³⁷ – whose writings are copiously represented in the archive (WiN 1, c. 24–54, 2291–2312) – and not all were trusting readers of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Still, it was the *Protocols* that shaped their vision of Jewish intentions. The absence of such issues in certain significant documents from the very beginning of the WiN organization might lead to the conclusion that the antisemitic attitudes of the informers evolved as a result of political tensions, that is, the behavior of Jews themselves. This, however, would be a conclusion in the spirit of the *general strain theory*. Rather, the increasing antisemitism in the reports may have reflected the mental states of

36 Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln's Shadow*, 151.

37 Roman Dmowski (1884–1939), a pre-war political thinker and chief ideologue of the right-wing National Democracy movement, argued that the Jews were Poland's most dangerous enemy. He was convinced that an “international Jewish conspiracy” existed, and believed that Zionism was only a cloak disguising Jewish ambitions to rule the world.

the informers, who were being tracked down, whose numbers were decreasing but whose ideological determination was growing. Another element indicating that informers were growing nervous is the erratic punctuation in their reports, which increasingly contained exclamation marks.

Similar to the mobility of Blacks in Springfield, the mobility of Jewish Poles in post-war Poland proved a threat that WiN supporters felt needed controlling even more urgently than Communism, since it was easier to put an end to “Jewish” than Soviet murders³⁸. Since society responded to attacks with those who felt themselves under threat with pogroms, it was logical that responsibility for the pogroms would be pushed on to those they attacked.³⁹ The pogrom is a type of *exclusionary ethnic violence*. Since those who participated in pogroms disseminated ethnic preferences and ethnic particularism, they had to create a narrative of threat and a need for self-defense⁴⁰.

Researchers studying *exclusionary violence* distinguish between structural and direct reasons for pogroms. They speak of the spark and tinder without neglecting the role of leaders, known as *ethnic entrepreneurs*,⁴¹ the press and organizations contributing to outbreaks of violence. The WiN reports present no evidence that the organization was involved in any pogroms, although, according to the leaflets they printed, their informers might have shared or even shaped the views of potential pogrom participants. In order to note similarities between the world views represented by both groups, it is enough to compare the material

38 Literature on this subject calls a similar surrogate object an *unreal threat*, see Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: Free Press 1956), discussed in Bergmann, “Pogroms”, 359.

39 Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln's Shadow*, 77.

40 For more on blaming the Jews for provoking riots such as the riots in Koenitz, see Werner Bergmann, “Exclusionary Riots: Some Theoretical Considerations”, in Cristhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann and Helmut Walser Smith (eds.), *Exclusionary Violence: Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan 2002), 172: “Power relations have, as one aspect of their reproduction, symbolic forms, in which they are interpreted and understood. A collective assault on an ethnic minority within a community must be legitimized and prepared culturally, since it violates the fundamental norms of communal life and, particularly in pacified societies, violates the state's monopoly for power. This means that certain frames that the in-group has agreed upon and that defined the action of the out-group as ‘unjust’ and ‘threatening’ have to be accepted by the public, as a so-termed ‘injustice frame’”.

41 Brass, “Introduction”, 8.

presented above with the cries of the pogrom mobs from Kielce, Kraków and Rzeszów.⁴²

If the world view expressed in the WiN reports could be extrapolated to contemporary society, the 1945–1946 wave of pogroms might be regarded, in the spirit of Senechal de la Roche’s theory, as a succession of aggressive, and evermore insistent attempts to control deviation, namely, the rapid progress towards equal rights being granted to Jewish Poles by “Lublin Poland”. Attempts like these were discriminative practices aimed against a group deprived of civic rights, implemented first during the Second Polish Republic and consolidated during the German occupation. In practical terms, the attempts translated into the assumption that “freedom and independence”, amplified in the name of the WiN organization, meant the freedom of the majority to discriminate against the minority. The attempts were also a rejection of Jews being granted access to offices unregulated by any quotas, as well as a call for the introduction of the *numerus clausus*. The above expectations became a filter for fears kindled by change. This is precisely why discriminative habits mentioned may be considered the structural reasons for post-war pogroms.

42 Tokarska-Bakir, *Pogrom Cries*, chapters 7 and 8 in this book.

Chapter 2: The Unrighteous Righteous and the Righteous Unrighteous¹

It is said that both Polish and Jewish memories are clouded by two forms of denial.² According to the self-exonerating version of their history, in which they present themselves as righteous, the Poles deny that any members of their nation murdered Jews during the period of German occupation. On the other hand, Jews, with their post-Holocaust anguish, seem to reflexively deny that any Poles helped or saved Jews. In this book, written in Poland six decades after the Holocaust, I seek to explore these perceptions in a manner that steers clear of both forms of denial.

The source material for this study comprises several hundred testimonies of Holocaust survivors and in some cases also of people who assisted and saved Jews – these people are referred to as the Righteous. The testimonies were given after the war before the Committee for Historical Documentation in Łódź and Kraków, and in individual cases also in Przemyśl and Białystok.³ The accounts

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- 1 Heraclites: “Immortal mortals, mortal immortals,” no. 62D, according to Diels.
 - 2 I employ here terms coined by Dr. Katarzyna Prot-Klinger, who developed them during the course of her many years of involvement with Polish and Jewish traumas, partly through meetings between groups of Polish and Israeli psychiatrists. Both types of denial (I use the term in the sense of *Verleugnung*; see Laplanche, Jean / Pontalis, J-B. / Modzelewska, E. / Wojciechowska, E. (transl.): *Słownik psychoanalizy*. Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne: Warsaw 1996, p. 376) are extremes, seldom portrayed by historians. But section 132a of the Polish criminal code, which prohibits “defamation of the Polish nation,” demonstrates the power of the first (Polish) type of denial. Such prevalent and widely held views, categorically denying any Polish culpability in the Holocaust, permeate all scholarly discourse. Over time, the danger of bias in this discourse grows proportionally with the refusal of its participants to recognize cultural context as an inseparable part of historical study.
 - 3 The Jewish Historical AŻIH (*Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, AŻIH), File 301. See “Relacje z czasów Zagłady”, Inwentory, AŻIH-INB, vols. 1–5, Warsaw, 1998. Certain aspects of the testimonies may be complemented by means of personal diaries (file 302). An auxiliary source of testimonies is Hochberg-Mariańska, Maria / Grüss, Noah (eds.): *Dzieci żydowskie oskarżają (Children Accuse)*. Plejada: Warsaw 1947, from which I examine primarily the testimonies from the regions of Kielce and Kraków, as well as selected testimonies from the collection Ficowski, Jerzy (ed.): *Dzieci Holokaustu mówią I (Children of the Holocaust Talk)*. Stowarzyszenie Dzieci Holokaustu: Warsaw 1993; Gutenbaum, Jacob / Latała, Agnieszka (eds.): *Dzieci Holokaustu mówią II*.

come from Jews and Poles who survived the Holocaust together, albeit under different conditions. Here I focus on the material from the Kielce and Kraków Provinces, and to a lesser extent from the Białystok Province. Since this evidence is limited and in no way constitutes a statistically representative sample (but no such sample is possible given that most witnesses were murdered before they could testify), the conclusions can only be tentative, based on a presumption that these cases are typical of events in these regions. Yet conclusions based on local accounts that repeat themselves cannot be easily rejected.

The testimonies in the archive of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw were collected in two ways. In some cases, witnesses arrived of their own volition in order to submit evidence to historical documentation committees. In other cases, the committees sought out witnesses and asked them to submit evidence.⁴ The archival collection also contains depositions by little children and illiterate or sick individuals, which indicates that the committee members collected testimonies in places such as Jewish orphanages. Presumably, the people who submitted testimonies were more or less associated with the Jewish community or registered with Jewish committees. Unlike most other people, they also must have had some awareness that their testimonies were of value. They were also prepared to testify in court. In case a deposition contained clear evidence which could be used in criminal proceedings, the committees would pass them on to the Polish authorities, which in turn were obliged by law to initiate the proceedings. There is also reason to believe that most of those who testified subsequently left Poland.

To the best of our knowledge, the witnesses – at least the Jewish ones – received no compensation whatsoever in exchange for their testimony. In some cases, Poles who testified indicated that they would not refuse financial assistance. Individuals helping Jews would in certain cases indeed receive such assistance⁵, which was especially useful in the dangerous circumstances caused by

Stowarzyszenie Dzieci Holokaustu: Warsaw 2001; Meloch, Katarzyna / Szostkiewicz, Halina (eds.): *Dzieci Holokaustu mówią III*. Stowarzyszenie Dzieci Holokaustu: Warsaw 2008. I wish to thank all the employees of the Jewish Historical Institute for their help in locating this material, and in particular Mr. Michał Czajka, who made available to me the book by Maria Hochberg-Mariańska.

4 I wish to thank Prof. Feliks Tych and Alina Skibińska for the conversations they held with me and from which I drew the ideas that guided me in the initial description of the nature of these sources.

5 The Joint had a budget for assisting Poles, who could likewise get help from The Committee For Assistance to Poles (*Komitet Pomocy Polakom*). Documentation regarding

testifying against the perpetrators, but also by sheltering Jews during the war (for more in this topic, see below).

The question as to the proportion of Holocaust survivors that decided to testify before the committees, and how this affected the nature of the testimonies, remains unanswered.⁶ Were they people who wished to revert to their Jewish identity and to rejoin Jewish community? Or did the witnesses include some who had experienced particularly severe trauma, on whose bodies and souls the Holocaust had left a wound deeper than that made on those who did not volunteer to give evidence? There are three arguments that run counter to such hypotheses. First of all, many of those who reported to the documentation committees did so not only to demand justice, but also to give the righteous their due. In other words, they were not necessarily intent on cutting all ties with Poles and Poland. Second, this group may well have included many Jews who, during the initial three years following the war, believed the slogans disseminated by the Polish leadership promising autonomy for national minorities. Such people would have resumed their Jewish identity in the hope of gaining true equality of rights in Poland. Third, another conjecture is equally credible: it could be that among those Jews who decided after the war not to reclaim their Jewish identities (and, therefore, not to submit testimony), were some who had had a good turn and who were therefore optimistic about the prospects for life in a mixed society. Or the contrary might be true: among those who refrained from testifying were perhaps some whose experiences were particularly harsh. In sum, there seems to be no unequivocal reason to believe that the evidence on which this

the assistance to Poles is archived by the Social Welfare Department of the Central Committee of Polish Jews.

- 6 These issues may be clarified through study of the methodology employed in collecting testimonies by the historical documentation committees in sources such as, "Instrukcja dla zbierania materiałów historycznych z okresu okupacji niemieckiej", Łódź, 1945; "Instrukcja dla zbierania materiałów etnograficznych z okresu okupacji niemieckiej", Łódź, 1945; "Instrukcja dla badania przeżyć dzieci żydowskich z okresu okupacji niemieckiej", Łódź, 1945; "Inwentarz Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej przy Centralnym Komitecie Żydów w Polsce (1944–1947); "Instrukcja dla zbierania materiałów historycznych z okresu okupacji niemieckiej" (The Archives of the Regional Committees for Historical Documentation from September 1947, branches of the Jewish Historical Institute in Katowice, Kraków, Warsaw, Wrocław 1945–1950), processed by Monika Natkowska, trans. from Yiddish by Martyna Rusiniak and Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, published by the Central Jewish Council, edited by Urszula Grygier, AŻIH, 303/XX.

article is based is skewed because only some of the Holocaust survivors submitted testimony to the Jewish Historical Documentation Committees.

Before concluding this methodological introduction, I need to address the issue of the critical attitude that a scholar must take with regard to such testimonies. Witness statements exert a great influence over the student of the past. This manifests itself in the decision about selected principles of scepticism the scholar is entitled to adopt or waive. The testimonies of three members of a Jewish family who survived by taking refuge with farmers in the Nowy Brzesk region exemplify the problem. They asserted that the mother of the family was shot dead by “local [Polish] fighters [jędrusie, as the partisans were known]”⁷. What evidence could contradict their recollections, unverifiable as they are, six decades after the event?⁸ This would be an inept question were it not for a known situation where it is fully justifiable: let us mention frequent false accusations that Jews were drawing up proscription lists for the NKVD. The Polish community in Podlasie found it much easier to make such accusations rather than e.g. point the finger at Polish mayors collaborating with Soviet authorities⁹. A memory may mislead not only when it is false or ignores facts; a tormented memory may even simplify certain facts.

The Body of Sources as a Discourse Framework

The detached style of these testimonies submitted by the survivors and rescuers alike stems from the witness statement procedure, where the testimony is taken down by a clerk. Apart from the children, the witnesses appear to be calm and to choose their words carefully. As part of the routine procedure, witnesses were warned that they bore personal responsibility for submitting false evidence. Yet despite all this, one can nevertheless sense the emotions at play beneath the formality of the structure imposed on them.

7 See four testimonies by members of the Elbinger family from Nowy Brzesk, “Corroboration of this crime by Polish partisans “jędrusie”: AŻIH 301/379 [1789]”.

8 Some stories cited in this chapter have, however, been confirmed by archival evidence thanks to archival research by other authors, see e.g. the incidents in Tuczepy and Denków below.

9 According to Bikont, Anna: *My z Jedwabnego*. Prószyński i S-ka: Wołowiec 2012, p. 116 there were 126 Poles and 45 Jews openly cooperating with the Soviet authorities in the area of Jedwabne. Counter to the accusations, individuals who were drawing up proscription lists were not Jewish.

Like every body of sources, these testimonies have a distinct “discourse framework”¹⁰, comprising content that can almost certainly be expected to be found in these sources. This content is related to the witnesses’ psychological state, and to the nature of the institution that gathers the testimonies and records them. Comparison of testimonies submitted on different occasions and in various periods, indicates that the historical moment exerts a minor but nevertheless noticeable influence on the rhetoric and the poeticality of expression.¹¹ A Jew who in 1945 was as yet unaware of the extent of the destruction of the Jewish people in the Holocaust, and who still held out hope for a shared life with the Poles, observed the past in a manner different to that of a Jew who survived the pogrom in Kielce. Factors such as the presence of a clerk, the mode of recording, the language in which the conversation was held, and the purpose of the testimony all had a real effect on the conditions under which the testimony was submitted¹². The language element was by no means unequivocal, since a conversation conducted in Polish could have signaled detachment from the Jewish experience, but alternatively it might have been an affirmation of the equality of rights in a democratic postwar Polish society. Also, by abolishing or creating distance to the witness’s narrative, the recorder of the testimony could determine, in a subtle yet unavoidable manner, the discursive framework within which the narrative was related.

To be exact, alongside testimonies whose final form was determined by an intermediary – the recorder of the deposition – this collection of sources includes also direct testimonies written by the survivors themselves or by the people who helped them survive. While the former type of testimony has inevitably undergone a measure of stylization, memories recorded by the witnesses themselves,

10 Based on Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse; for details, see also Howarth, David: *Discourse*. Open University Press: Philadelphia 2000.

11 This issue warrants a separate discussion. It could be based on a comparison between the testimonies of these survivors themselves as recorded in three aggregations of sources: the collections of the Institute, the three volumes of *Children of the Holocaust 1–3* and Bartoszewski, Władysław / Lewinówna, Zofia (eds.): *Ten jest z Ojczyzny mojej*. Świat Książki: Warsaw 2007 [1967].

12 In recent collections of testimonies one can even discern the influence of such subtle factors of discursive framework as, for example, the lighting used during videotaping. If the camera operator uses strong background lighting, it literally surrounds the subject with an aura of heroism, often resulting in appropriate narrations from witnesses. They may tend to avoid ambivalence or any reference to “gray areas” (Primo Levi).

either in Polish or in Yiddish¹³, exhibit a wide variety of register, vocabulary, and style. They use distinctive idiolects: the language of children, such as the testimony of Rózia Unger or that of Lili Szynowłoga; Polish local dialect with elements of mazuration, such as that of Szajek Nysybom; florid rhetoric, such as that of Fania Brzezińska, who clearly was an aspiring writer; or the biblical cadences of Abraham Forman, interspersed with verbatim verses from the psalms.¹⁴ Several of the witnesses seek to gain the sympathy and approbation of their anticipated readers by employing the political language of their time, including expressions such as “the reactionary underground”, “liberation”, and “Soviet brotherhood.”¹⁵ If such language is taken to be no more than the parroting of propaganda, its singular relation to the content of the testimony is lost. Such phrases grate on the reader’s ear only if the reader fails to acknowledge, in his/her own reaction, what the German philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer calls the “stimulus of prejudice” (*Vorurteile reizen*). This visceral reaction is often a marker of the difference between the Polish and Jewish historical experience.

The testimonies examined in this chapter are complemented by ethnographic fieldwork conducted, 60 years after the end of the war, in the Sandomierz region and in some other locations in Kielce Province.¹⁶ The ethnography offers a fresh

13 I have availed myself of the assistance of two translators, Sara Arm and Aleksandra Geller, who have translated over twenty Yiddish testimonies for me.

14 AŻIH, 301/4716, Abraham Furman, born 1898 in Ochotnica: “It was at that time that several people managed to escape to the forests and there they were living, in the heart of the forest, between crevices and cliffs. We starved for weeks on end, we slept under the stars. Virtually no one would give us shelter; everyone drove us away from their homes without giving us so much as one spoonful of hot water [...] [A]nd when, one November day in 1942, the first snow fell, the rural population set out to hunt for the tracks in the forests, in the pastures, in the woods and the cliffs [...] [O]ur hiding place was a large pine tree with extensive boughs that served as a house for us both, for me and my wife. We had everything there: fear, wind, snow, rain, yes and always also a few frozen potatoes that we could roast or cook for ourselves at night.”

15 AŻIH, 301/1276. See the reaction of the Jews to the Soviet invasion: “Following the terrible storm, the horizon of the Jews has brightened. The Soviet brothers accept us, embrace us with sensitive, motherly arms, give us complete freedom, place us on an equal footing as citizens, enable us to enjoy equality of human and civil rights, such rights as only recently were absolutely prohibited to us.”

16 This chapter constitutes an expansion and substantiation, by means of archival material, of a section of a report on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Sandomierz region in the years 2004–2008; for a full report, see Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: *Legenda o krwi. Antropologia przesądu (Blood Libel Legends: The Anthropology of Prejudice)*. W.A.B.: Warsaw 2008 (transl into French by M.Maliszewska, *Légendes du sang. Pour*

understanding of the topic of the Righteous. The language of these witnesses, now old men and women, constitutes, for the scholar capable of deciphering it, a window into the past, preserving as it does traces of wartime vernacular: “to apprehend Jews,” “to hand over Jews,” “to hold,” and “to conceal.”¹⁷ Among those who have demonstrated the significance of this phenomenon is Bogdan Wojdowski, a prominent writer of Polish Holocaust literature, who bases his writing on “colloquial speech, the voice of memory of that time”¹⁸. In the present chapter this very idiom serves as a key to unlock doors to other sources. If at all possible, it is this language that allows us to experience the past.

In this chapter, which constitutes a contribution to the history of mentality, I adopt the rule of “redescription”¹⁹, that is, a new reading of old sources. I have also availed myself of new ethnographic material which offers additional insights, or additional nuances, to the understanding of the subject. To see beyond our own conceptual walls, which box the subject in, we must first examine the concepts in our lexicon that are external to the subject, those that ethnography calls “etic,”²⁰ i.e. as described by outside observers (as opposed to “emic”, as described by a person within the culture). One of the professional risk factors for historians and anthropologists is succumbing to the persuasive powers of sources with which they, to a lesser or greater extent, unconsciously sympathize. According to the positivist methodological postulates, the more the researchers deny that the language of the sources influences them, the more they are liable to such influence.

Nevertheless, the author’s outlook inevitably casts a shadow on the sources. This idiom should be taken literally, given that there is no such thing as a

une anthropologie de l'antisémitisme chrétien, éditions Albin Michel, Paris 2015). The numbers and letters in square brackets indicate signatures on transcript pages.

17 Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: “Skaz antysemityzmu” (“Antisemitism Word for Word”). In: id.: *Teksty Drugie* 1/2. Institute of Literary Research: Warsaw 2009, pp. 302–17.

18 Grynberg, Henryk: *Prawda nieartystyczna* (*The Unadorned Truth*). Czarne: Warsaw 2001, p. 263.

19 “I was always of the opinion that one should begin to think thus, as though no one had thought of this before us, and only thereafter to learn from all the others,” Arendt, Hannah: *The Recovery of the Public World*. Hill, Melvyn (ed.) St. Martin’s Press: New York 1979, p. 337.

20 The linguist Kenneth Pike proposed the distinction between “emic” and “etic” concepts in the 1960s; see Headland, Thomas N. et al. (eds.): *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*. Sage Publications: London 1990. In the present text, I will use them as the interviewees’-informants’ concepts (emics), as opposed to critical concept (etics). The latter term (< etic) has no judgemental value whatsoever.

reader without a position. This must be countered with a pervasive awareness of our particular views, and a continuous effort to avoid the pitfalls of uncritical thought.²¹

I have chosen to refer to the two types of witnesses as “survivors” and “abettors.” I eschew the term “the rescued,” which implies that these people were merely objects to be rescued, while the others were fully capable of saving them if they wished. In reality, the first condition for survival was for the person facing death to embark on the tortuous path of searching for help, and to subsequently persevere. No one could survive who did not affirm, anew each day, his or her will to live. This can be seen in Adolf Rudnicki’s story *Złote okna* (*Golden Windows*).²²

In criticizing the tendency to depict those in need of assistance as objects bereft of the capacity to act of their own volition, I seek to counter portrayals of rescue that employ a childish, ambivalent dichotomy between “Jewish gratitude that transcends all possible reward,” and “ignoble Jewish ingratitude”²³. The Polish discourse that denies any responsibility for the fate of the Jews uses this dichotomy in speaking of the Righteous²⁴, to absolve itself of all blame for relations

21 See Žižek, Slavoj: “The Reality of the Virtual”, a lecture delivered in London on December 11, 2003: “In a given situation, there is always one universal truth. It can, however, be accessed only from a specific, partial and involved perspective.” On post-positivist normative ideal of history, see LaCapra, Dominick: *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London 2001, and also Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: “History as a Fetish”. In: Głowacka, Dorota / Żylińska, Joanna (eds.): *Imaginary Neighbors: Polish-Jewish Relations after the Holocaust*. Nebraska University Press: Lincoln, Nebraska 2007, pp. 40–63.

22 Adolf Rudnicki, “Złote okna” (“Golden Windows”). In: id.: *Opowiadania*. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy: Warsaw 1996, p. 123.

23 See Paul, Mark (ed.): *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors*. Polish Educational Foundation in North America: Toronto 2007), and in particular the chapter “Recognition and (in) Gratitude.” In a similar context and role see the recent work by Nowik, Mariusz: “*Nawet milion Polaków ukrywało Żydów*” (“As Many as a Million Poles Concealed Jews”), note from the inauguration of the home page of the Institute of National Remembrance, retrieved 25.10.2001, from www.zyciezazycie.pl.

24 Compare two examples of this discourse, separated by a distance of six decades. The first is a report by the army liaisons returning from Poland to London in late August 1945: “Since the Jews benefited from being able to hide among Poles, thanks to which over 50,000 of them were rescued from death, there is no doubt that they should have at least exhibited loyalty toward the Poles. Meanwhile, from the moment that the Lublin authorities entered the areas of the Polish state, the Jews immediately began to inform

between Poles and Jews during the period of German occupation. My choice of terms represents a conscious attempt to avoid the trap laid by such dichotomous usages.

The symbolic category of the Righteous should be similarly nuanced. I reserve the use of the term “Righteous” only for those who have been officially declared Righteous by Yad Vashem, substituting it with descriptive terms in this book. Both the rescue and the taking of risk in rescuing Jews were not sporadic acts of will, but rather decisions that had to be made anew every day. In some cases, such decisions were rescinded under pressure of circumstances. Did the righteous person in these cases become unrighteous?

The Righteous Unrighteous

One such ambivalent narrative was related to ethnographers in the village of Furmany

[Transcript 122w, Furmany near Sandomierz, informant no. 1]:

[O]ne such case occurred here, there on the edge of the forest, when they kept these Jews, hid them. I don't know for how long, what or how, I only know what people spoke ... then German police came, *gendarmes*, and killed eleven or twelve Jews ... the same guy ... who kept them ... went and told that a whole herd of Jews had set upon him and had been unwilling to leave him alone... He went on and on, so those, they came to see... [...] he kept those Jews for something, for some reason, didn't he? So they didn't touch them, his children neither, just those Jews

on those among whom they had previously hidden, claiming that they had blackmailed them, that they had extorted money from them. The Jews submitted names of AK [the Home Army, the main Polish resistance force, supported by the Polish government in exile in England] members to the authorities, and they themselves had dared as much as to beat and torture Poles in the camps, whom Jews had overseen with the agreement of the Soviets.” Source: Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, Archives ref. no. A9 III 2 c/64, Report of Polish military personnel, London, 2/10/1945. This quote is taken from: Grabski, August: *Działalność komunistów wśród Żydów w Polsce (1944–1949)* (*Communist Activity Among the Jews in Poland [1944–1949]*). Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: Warsaw 2004, p. 32. Sixty years later, in a conversation with a council employee from the village of Wielowieś in the Sandomierz region, the ethnographers note that the general public in the area thought that the number of Jews assisted by Poles was six times greater than that noted in the above-mentioned report [297N]: “Thirty thousand Poles were shot dead by the Germans only because they assisted Jews, and in Poland 300,000 Jews were rescued. That is to say, because we rescued them we lost 30,000 of our own. Because the Germans would kill the entire family that was helping Jews. And so this is how they repay us.”

only... And even – there were eleven of those Jews – one of them [ran away] somewhere... the bullet flew by, didn't kill...

[Informant no. 2]

Because first they placed them one next to the other, and he went and was shooting them in the heads, and he didn't hit one of them in the head, but just here by the ear, so he hurt him, but he thought he was already dead... They left, because it [was] in the evening, at night, [it was] dark... and this one he sprang up and fled into the forest...

[Informant no. 1]

Because later nobody knows what has become of him...

[Informant no. 2]

There were rumors that he was in England... [...] He had left, he had left, had fled, and so the Lord God brought him luck [...]

In inarticulate language that smacks of the truth, another resident of a village in the Sandomierz region told ethnographers:

[Transcript 175N, Sokolniki near Sandomierz]:

- I myself concealed them. Yes. [...] I kept them in hiding for two months, and then they kind of moved around among the same people... and people hid them.”
- **They came to you, right? Asking you for help?**
- [...] Yes, for help, because one [...] of the Jewish women, she had these goods, textiles, and she would bring what she had in this shop to keep for her, and used to take from us, stored them with us. And she used to go then to people's homes and people would feed her, kept her with them, then she paid the people with this merchandise. So also... in the end there was no way to keep them ... there was one guy, Alscher [Olcha – a Silesian, resettled from Silesia, a *Volksdeutsch* in German service], a Gestapo agent during German [occupation], and he found out about them, and people handed them over²⁵ and they were killed.
- **And you hid one person, or...**
- With children ... I hid two families.
- **I see.**
- There was this tailor and... He was – they, they were our neighbors – this Kajla, with children, she also had two sons. So then, and these... we were hiding [them], but... For a month, for a fortnight, like that, and [the family] moved on, and on, it was like that... It could not stay in one place for long, because someone informed and...
- **And in the village did the people know that these Jews were staying with you?**
- No, no, no, no. It was a hiding place. A hiding place. But they ... they were all killed. No one alive today knows about it and can come and tell about it...

25 The same euphemism for a denunciation appeared in other testimonies collected in 1946, for example in AŻIH, 301/1773.

The man speaks of Jews who did not survive even though they were helped. He himself had tried to rescue two families, to no avail – but he offers no details. A moment later he returns to the circumstances under which he received the Jews into his household. It transpires that a Jewish woman, a neighbor, came to take refuge in his barn, unbeknownst to him. He did not drive her away when he discovered her, but she did not stay there long – someone informed on her and she was murdered together with her two children.

[N179, Sokolniki near Sandomierz]:

- I go there to take some hay for bedding for the cows, and I fall into this pit there. And lo and behold – Jews are there. Well, she ... this Jewess was sitting there with these children.”
- **They were hiding there without your knowledge?**
- Yes, without my knowledge. And she was there, I don't know how many days she had been there. [...] And she grabbed [me] by the leg, and she begged to bring her something to eat, she was so hungry. Well, so I came home, I said to mother, to father, that this and that... First they made a hot [meal], and they already had to be fed, and she was there for some days and went onward. And she would return again, and again she pleaded with us, and we had to keep her there again for a week, or two weeks. Well, [we] felt sorry for these Jews!
- **And you weren't afraid to conceal Jews like that?**
- Good Lord, well, it ... how should we have turned them in, to death, you tell me? Well, how could we have turned them in? [...] Or drive them away like some animal out into the street? It was impossible. We had to take them in and that was that. And apart from that they were people we knew. And even if they had not been our acquaintances, it would have been impossible to do such a thing. I am of the opinion that one must take in a person and help him ... And not, you cannot this way, that... but I felt sorry for them, when they shot her, I saw it and it was making me sick. Gestapo [agents] came over, and there was also the Polish police. She was in the middle, the children on both sides ... and that's how they shot them, [lying] on the ground...

Note that the speaker recalls the event in a manner that does not endanger his perception of good order in his world. He helped; he could have done no more. “There was no way to keep them,” he says. Nevertheless, the painful memory of having watched their cold-blooded execution clouds his satisfaction at having done a good Christian deed.²⁶ In this narrative, there appears a theme of “people

26 One may unequivocally define the speaker's outlook as antisemitic. For example: “The Jews ruled before the war, and that was it.” “The Jews rule today as well. And when they rule, then we also feel that they are ruling. Because wherever there is an affair [involving corruption], then the Jew is there, a Pole is found there and Jews are

turning in” the Jews; yet the role of executioner is not played by one of the “people” who denounced them, but by a Silesian, a *Volksdeutsch*, and thus a stranger, which reaffirms the speaker’s conviction that all is as it should be in his world and that he himself had behaved properly.

In the next village over, named Radomyśl, the person who hunted down Jews is identified as a neighbor:

[272N, Radomyśl]:

- **And have you heard of anyone who handed Jews over to the Germans?**
- Yes, there were such people, here there was someone who used to capture the Jews and take them to Zaklików.
- **And why?**
- Because he gave him money for it.
- **The Germans? He simply did it for the money?**
- [C]ertainly not for love!
- **And what did you think of such a person then?**
- [W]e all cursed him: how could he, how could he! ... But these were such times, everyone was afraid, everyone kept very, very quiet!

According to this woman, the villagers, subjected to fear and terror, had condemned the Jew hunter, but his existence did not particularly shock anyone; in the popular belief, the Jew hunter played a “negative” role, and was just as indispensable as a “good” person.²⁷ How did the presence of a man like this affect the overall morality of the village? We learn about this only from Jewish testimonies. Szymon

found there.” “Now the Jews and the converted rule.” See Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi*, p. 623.

27 See, for example, the case of a girl who was hiding in the villages alongside the San River and who adopted a similar outlook. The testimony of Frieda Einsiedler, aged five when the war broke out: “From the moment they killed Grandma, no one did me any more harm. The farmers used to throw stones at me, they threatened me with the police, but I never took it to heart ... I knew them all already, I knew who the good ones were, who would not endanger me,” Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. 158. Another testimony concerns a neighbor who had engaged in hunting Jews [2089W]: “There was this little girl, there was this neighbor here [...] what did it bother him? And this girl was running, and so I said [to myself]: perhaps she’ll run somewhere, perhaps someone will take her in!?” **Did you see this?** “Of course! I remember it well... [H]e ran outside, caught hold of her, and handed her over to the *gendarmes*... [B]ut fate was not kind to him, for he didn’t live much longer either...” **But who was that? Are you talking about a German?** “No, this was my neighbor, one Krzaczkowski, Zygmunt... And he took that little girl over. It was terrible to watch that girl. She had run away, but I don’t know where from. Somewhere around here she [must have] had some relatives. Because she had run out of there and the child was running.”

Sztrumpf was hiding together with his son (who also survived), his brother and his family (who did not survive), and his mother and her granddaughter (who did not survive) in villages not far from Staszów. He did not venture to submit his testimony to the Historical Documentation Committee in Łódź until 1948.

[Clerk's note]

The witness came to us and requested that we accept his enclosed testimony and pass it on to the authorities... When he was asked why he had reported so late to submit evidence of this kind, he replied that up to now, he had been apprehensive as to level public accusations at the murderers of his family in fear of his safety. Now he is no longer afraid. [...]

“My brother, his wife and their children were hiding in various locations, the last one being at Józef Siudak's (son of Piotr and Juliana, res. in the village of Zapusty near Tuczępy), who murdered them after a few days. This happened roughly in the second half of June 1942. My brother and his family were murdered by Józef Siudak and his cousin Jan Siudak from the village of Wierzbica, municipality of Tuczępy. They shot them with guns at night, Józef Siudak took the corpses on a cart to the forest and buried them...”

When asked how he knew of all this, the witness answered: “I have been told of this by the above-mentioned Wilk Stefan [Sztrumpf and his son were mostly hiding with this Wilk in the village of Tuczępy] and Samiec Stefan, res. in the village of Zapusty. I hasten to add that Józef Furman, res. in the village of Zapusty, heard the shots and the cries of the victims. The murderers robbed their victims. I stress that the Germans were 25 kilometers from this village, in Chmielnik and Busk. Not one of them came to this village regarding matters concerning Jews. The peasants concealing Jews were in no danger from the Germans. [...] The Siudak brothers belonged to a band of robbers that hunted Jews, etc. In June 1942, Jan Siudak apprehended a beggar Jew, who was pretending to be a Pole, without the armband. He took him over to the head of the Tuczępy municipality. The municipal secretary Zarzycki (now working as an administrator) declared that it is not a municipal matter. So Jan Siudak led this Jew on a leash into the nearby forest and shot him dead in broad daylight. He did not even bury him. The body was seen by, among others, Kwiecień Jan, res. in the municipality of Tuczępy, the village of Podlesie, Busko district. Stefan Samiec saw Siudak, address noted above, leading this Jew on a leash into the forest. Kwiecień, in whose house I was hiding at the time, showed me a document he had found on the victim. Kwiecień told me that this Jew had been killed by Siudak Jan. I do not remember the surname written on the document, but the first name Jankiel had been erased, with Jakób written [instead]. Kwiecień said that before shooting, Siudak pulled down the victim's trousers to verify whether he was a Jew.”²⁸

28 For more on “verification”, see Chapter 9: “*Barabasz*” and the Jews, in this volume.

This testimony includes a section on the murder of the witness's brother; his mother, Cylka Sztrumpf, who would move from one hiding place to another in the vicinity of the village of Zapusty together with her granddaughter; and of two other Jews: Lutek Kleinmann and Feliks Gruszka. The first murder was allegedly committed by five local men, with the approval of the village mayor. Once they had murdered the mother, they removed her boots, extracted her gold teeth and tore out the earrings. The testimony concludes with a list of goods appropriated by the murderers: "a down pillow, 12 meters of silk cloth for shirts and a scarf."²⁹

29 The testimony of Szymon Sztrumpf, AŻIH 301/3702, recorded on June 22, 1948. I wish to thank Alina Skibińska (who is preparing a publication on the subject, *Przed sądem*) for finding corroborating information regarding Sztrumpf's testimony in the archival material of the Appeals Court in Kielce (SAK) 227a, 277b, 277c, where Józef Siudak and others were investigated in 1948. The material is preserved in the files of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN): "Siudak Jan, Siudak Józef, Furtak Jan, Dynia Piotr, Krawczyk Leon, Krawczyk Stanisław, Żelazko Julia, Misterkiewicz Stanisław, Krawczyk Konstanty Hipolit, Nowak Antoni, Furtak Maria, Janis Józef, Rudnik Stanisław, Kwiecijos Teofil, Furtak Paweł Piotr in the years 1943–1944 in the areas of the municipality of Tuczępy, Busko-Zdrój district, in their capacity as members of NSZ or BCh, murdered, or were complicit in the murder of Jews in hiding," b. 1216 SAK 277a, 277b, 277c: 1948: 1960. I quote the information about the case from Skibińska's notes: "During the German occupation a large NSZ group was operating in the territory of the municipality of Tuczępy. The commander of the organization was Waclaw Proszowski, and the group in Tuczępy was lead by Jan Chlond. This group fought members of other partisan groups (it killed two BCh members and was also involved in persecuting Jews). in summer of 1943 Jojna Sztrumpf's family, who had until then been hiding with various farmers, found refuge at Józef Siudak's, in whose cellar they stayed for several weeks. Under the impression that they were extremely well-off, Siudak murdered them with the help of his cousin Jan. Jan initially shot one person through the opening to the cellar, and Józef then murdered the others using an axe. In the summer of 1943, two Tuczępy residents, Jan Siudak and Stanisław Sapa, apprehended a Jew who claimed that he was from the village of Szaniec, and led him to the head of Tuczępy council and then to the *sołtys* in Wierzbica, Jan Furtak, who ordered the Jew to be shot dead in the nearby forest. In May or June 1943, upon the order of Stefan Borek, two Jewesses, Cylka Łaja Sztrumpf and her eight year-old granddaughter Słupska, were shot dead in a forest not far from the village of Tuczępy. After they were murdered, they were robbed of their shoes and golden rings. Stefan Borek captured Lutek Kleinmann, who was hiding in a rye field. Stanisław Krawczyk shot Lutek dead when he attempted to escape. Feliks Gruszka was caught in Julia Żelazko's home – she guessed that the peddler was Jewish and denounced him to Stefan Borek. Gruszka was taken to the forest and shot dead. The defendants pleaded not guilty."

In his testimony, Szymon Szwarcborg talks about the activity of Jew hunters in the village of Osiembrów, municipality of Rozniszew, Kozienice district. When the witness's sister approached one of the residents requesting that he return to her the belongings that she had left with him for safekeeping, the man set his dog upon her and then turned to the *soltys* (elected head of the village), demanding that she be arrested. The *soltys* severely beat the woman and then ordered two of the villagers to transport her by cart to the municipal offices (Polish: *gmina*) in Rozniszew. Since the municipal officials were unwilling to detain her, the farmers transported her to a sawmill where German gendarmes were stationed. It was only there that she was shot. In return, "Władysław Łukasik demanded a reward of [...] 50 kilograms of sugar. He was told in response that he would get the sugar once he brought also this Jewess' brother, meaning myself."³⁰

These two testimonies indicate that in these villages a fairly large group of people enhanced their livelihoods by capturing and robbing Jews (in the village of Zapusty this group comprised at least seven people). They made no particular effort to conceal their actions, as they murdered also in broad daylight. In their own way they tried to ensure that everything was done according to correct procedure: before they shot Sztrumpf's mother and her granddaughter, the murderers had received "a written note" from the *soltys*. In the first case, the group of murderers included the local blacksmith, and in both cases the village heads were members of the group. The gang of criminals in the village of Zapusty was engrossed in a game of cards with one of them³¹; and the appearance of one of the Jewish women cut short the party. It transpires that the names of the murderers were common knowledge in the village. One may conjecture whether and how this knowledge affected the history of these villages after the war.³²

It is difficult to assess how representative these villages were. Some people concealed the Jewish residents; others – such as the council secretary Zarzycki, the heads of the rural council of Rozniszew, or the Polish policemen who were stationed at Magnuszew and Grabów – feigned indifference and thereby

30 AŻIH, 301/3915. Regarding a reward of 50 kg of sugar, see also the testimony in AŻIH, 301/5306 from the village Obózek near Jedlińsk.

31 AŻIH, 301/3702.

32 The archive of the Jewish Historical Institute contains the testimonies of Poles who were shocked by the crimes committed in their villages during the German occupation. See, for example, AŻIH, 301/5306, Testimony of Tytus Dumala from nearby Jedlińsk, Skarżysko-Kamienna; and also, *ibid.*, testimonies pertaining to events in Książ Wielki.

protected the Jews.³³ Others murdered them, and there were even those – and it is perhaps appropriate to include among them the person who, according to the first testimony, produced information on what he had found in the pocket of one of the murdered – who were unable to arrive at a clear decision regarding the category to which they belonged.³⁴ This categorization somewhat complicates Jewish perceptions of the types of people they encountered, increasing the number of their categories to four: “Several of them pretended not to know the witness at all, some expressed understanding of his plight, expressed compassion and sought to lend a hand, while others sought to turn him in to the Germans.”³⁵ Among the possible responses, genuine apathy was in fact a deficiency – the lack of a visceral reaction, as seen in the testimony below: “Dawid [...] begged me not to turn him in.” At least two of these groups, the abettors and the informers, were hostile to one another (see the section below, “The Polish-Polish War Concerning the Jews”).

Conspiratorial Secrecy

Prior to addressing dissension among the Poles, it is necessary to paint, in broad brushstrokes, the conditions under which Jews were concealed. Every testimony that relates to this topic stresses above all that conspiratorial secrecy was an essential element of success. The following testimony shows that the speaker, who was nine years old at the time of the events she relates, had no inkling that her mother was hiding Jews. Her mother remained silent about it even after the war, out of apprehension that concealment of Jews was a punishable transgression under Polish law.

[W361]

- [M]y mother even concealed a Jewish woman.
- **And do you know anything about it?**
- I actually know nothing.
- **Nothing...**

33 On this “indifference”, see the Introduction to Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. 15. Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna, *Incognito ergo sum. O wytwarzaniu obojętności*, „Studia Litteraria et Historica”, 2: 2013.

34 The archive of the Jewish Historical Institute contains a number of testimonies of people of this sort, most of which include requests for financial compensation. See AŻIH, 301/3993. One of these files contains a letter written by a Jew from Ostrowiec, which he had titled “Last Will”. At the bottom of the page, there is an undeciphered code, which perhaps relates the true version of events.

35 AŻIH, 301/2252.

- Nothing, absolutely nothing, I only know that... She had a Jewish friend from Zaklików, who entreated her to conceal her, so she took her in and kept her somewhere under the barn, under the hay for some time – because obviously – it was not allowed, and later my sister arranged for [a travel card] allowing her to go for forced labor to Germany. Because somehow, they were taking, the Germans were taking [people] by force, but one could volunteer. So my sister reported there as a volunteer and gave the card to the Jewess – if it works out, it works out, if it doesn't, it doesn't, too bad – [...] and she left for Germany. And she apparently survived. [...] No, she didn't stay in Germany, she actually went somewhere else. Oh my, I don't know whether to Israel, I don't know where [she went], I don't remember because I was a child when the war ended, and she wrote a letter to my mother...
- **She made contact, that is.**
- She made contact immediately after the war... The war had just ended, so the Poles did not even know for sure whether to be scared for having concealed Jews, or not to be scared. Because it was not announced yet, and she had already made contact. My mother got really scared, because she had seven children. Mother says: Oh my, nothing is clear, what if they punish [us], or something, there were some dollars or something in that letter, she gave [them] to that postman, she burnt the letter, that was the end of the matter.³⁶

“Even my mother’s own mother didn’t know about it, and it would have been inconceivable to reveal it to strangers,”³⁷ say Mieczysław and Helena Gosk, who concealed “nine Jewish people, preventing their death at the hands of the Germans”. The ethnographic record contains only a handful of cases of villages in which no one was tempted to inform when it was an open secret that a particular villager was hiding Jews.³⁸ In certain cases, when the person hiding the fugitives couldn’t

36 To her dying day the speaker’s mother was unable to rid herself of the fear that her concealment of Jews would be discovered and she would be punished for it. See similar themes in Reszka, Paweł P.: “Łęk Sprawiedliwych”. Duży Format Supplement, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 13.2.2006.

37 Testimony submitted by the Gosks from Wyżyków, municipality of Puchały, AŻIH, 301/5835.

38 In the collection of testimonies examined here I have not found a single mention of such a situation. In the ethnographical material from the Sandomierz region there was one case, that of Olga Lilien-Mazur, a physician from Lvov, who was offered sanctuary in Mokrzyszyn near Tarnobrzeg, in which the entire community knew of her Jewish origin. Dr. Lilien worked as a paediatrician in the city, and died in August 1996, aged 92. “Everyone knew that she was here, everyone knew. But after all [...] had anyone informed on her, they may have done away with her, but no one was that malevolent toward her...” See also the village of Mulawicze, in which the entire community joined together to conceal little Wintluk. His story is related in Cała, Alina: *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej* (*The Figure of the Jew in Popular Polish*

maintain secrecy, another member of the family secretly took over this responsibility. This is what occurred in the case of Władysława Przerwa from the village of Łoje near Kozienice.³⁹ Before she took in David Goldman, who had escaped from the ghetto, he was being hidden by her brother, Mieczysław Maj, for two weeks.

Mr. Goldman would sew for the peasants, and several of them therefore kept him with them...⁴⁰ When this became known to the neighbors, they threatened my brother, saying that because of him the entire village would be set on fire. Mr. Dawid was forced to escape. In July (most probably 1943) I came across Mr. Dawid in a field. He entreated me not to turn him in. From then on I regularly brought him milk, bread, everything I had.

From early autumn of 1943 the fugitive was hiding in the owner's cowshed, initially without her knowledge and eventually with her consent. In the winter he would come inside in the evenings.

On one occasion some armed Polish partisans came in to eat supper. At the time Mr. David was in the small room. When my daughter asked them what they would do if a Jew wished to join the partisans, they said "A bullet in the head and into the Vistula he goes."⁴¹ I was extremely fearful that they might find out who was hiding with us. I hid Mr. Goldman under a duvet. When the partisans entered the small room they luckily failed to notice him. That's how Mr. Goldman survived with us until the liberation.

The motives for concealing Jews were sometimes changing over time. The members of the Elbinger family were prosperous textile merchants in Nowy Brzesk. We are familiar with their story through the testimony of their son Emanuel,⁴²

Culture). Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego: Warsaw 2005, p. 131. Among the reports in the volume *Dzieci oskarżają* is a testimony by Jusek Mansdorf, "On the 'Aryan' side": "The farmer understood who I was but did not say a word. After that the whole village knew. But the farmer did not throw me out and the people did not inform on me." See Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. XXV and pp. 100–7.

39 AŻIH, 301/5908, Testimony submitted on May 24, 1963.

40 See the testimony in AŻIH, 301/1773: A Jewish woman from Chlewice, who was hiding in various villages with Aryan papers, related something that she had overheard from the man who was sheltering her: "Let her bloody run wherever she will, I won't let go until I finish her off. I'll keep her over for the harvest but then I'll finish her off."

41 On the attitude of the Polish underground toward the Jews see Bańkowska, Aleksandra: "Partyzantka polska lat 1942–1944 w relacjach żydowskich". *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały* (*The Jewish Holocaust: Studies and Sources*) 1, 2005, pp. 148–64. See also below.

42 The testimony of Emanuel Elbinger in Ficowski, *Dzieci Holokaustu I*; another testimony in the author's archive, recorded in Kraków on July 5, 2008.

and the two testimonies of his sister Pola. The Elbingers hid with a family of farmers near the town.

During the day we were concealed in the attic, at night we slept in the house. At first it was good there, but as time passed the people hiding us made increasing demands. Conditions deteriorated, they gave us less and less food and continually demanded more of us. We had considerable property in safekeeping with various people. Mother would often go to Nowy Brzesk to bring money, [bringing along] my brother dressed as a girl. We were unable to meet the demands of our “benefactors.” Some days we ate nothing at all, and the farm owner once attacked father and beat him. The homeowner’s cousin was a member of AK and there was an ammunition store in the attic where we were hiding. We realized that our hosts were seeking to extort all our property from us and then kill us. Once we overheard a conversation: “Would that this should come to an end once and for all, we must sharpen the axes...” We found a shelter with another peasant, who agreed to conceal only myself and mummy. But it was difficult to escape from our hosts, they were guarding us well. Mum decided to trick [them]. She asked the host’s cousin to walk me over to a priest who had allegedly agreed to take me on. The guy was indignant: “You want me to walk a Jewish sprat?” Mum was glad and said she would walk me [there] herself.⁴³

Some survivors talked about Poles who despite family tragedies courageously persevered in their decision to conceal Jews. The testimony of Władysław Piwowarczyk, a Pole from Busko, whose brother had been a Communist prior to the war, begins with an account of how this brother, arrested by the Gestapo, was freed from the prison in Korczyn by his Jewish comrades, fellow Communists Szapsa Raca and Chaim Pisarz.

At night they pried open the lock of the cell door and freed him. [...] When they expelled the Jews from the town, more Jews came to me, the two Sztrosberg brothers with the wife of one of them, Wajnbaum with his wife and child, and Szapsa Raca’s fiancée, the three Cukier sisters – Communists – and Wajnbaum’s brother Szymek, with his wife. All of them together with my brother stayed in a hideout that I had prepared for them under the ground. They were all with me for a year; that is, from February 2, 1943. Since my family found it hard to meet their needs, my brother decided to leave the hiding place and take with him another five people. He took Szymek Wajnbaum, the three Cukier sisters, Szymek Wajnbaum’s wife. He led them to my sister Wojtaszewicz in the village of Stanisławice. She received all of them. She prepared a good hideout for them underground. Szymek Wajnbaum even installed a radio in there. They stayed there for

43 The testimony of Paula Ebinger: AŻIH, 310/310/4223, delivered to the Historical Committee in Kraków in 1947, and also testimony in Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*. Of the Elbinger family, only the father and the two children, Emanuel and Paula, survived. The family’s mother was murdered by local partisans (*jędrusie*) on one of the occasions on which she went out to search for food.

a whole year, up to January 31, 1944. Their hiding place was discovered by the people from the National Armed Forces (NSZ). My brother and the others were armed. As they were unable to get them out of that hideout themselves, they called 11 Blue policemen to counter them. They did these Jews in, along with my brother. [My] sister, fearful of the Gestapo, had to flee the village after they had done them in. She took refuge in my house with her husband and two children. I had to prepare another hideout for her.⁴⁴

In a letter sent from Paris on January 31, 1949, Izrael Wajnbaum confirms that Piwowarczyk was concealing Jews even after his brother was killed, and built no less than four shelters for them in his field. Clerk Klara Mirska comments:

Witness Piwowarczyk also showed me letters sent from Paris and Germany by the people he had saved. They are full of devotion; he also showed me their photographs with dedications. [...] Mr. Piwowarczyk impresses me as a very good and honest man. He has not come alone. He was accompanied by Jews from Nowy Korczyn, currently residing in Łódź, who were adamant that the story of his sacrifice should be recorded and stored in the Institute Archive.

Nevertheless, heroic deeds must have been rare⁴⁵. More often, we may suppose, the concealment of Jews looked as it did in Przysucha:

The entire large Biderman family (the mother and a number of sons) were killed by a local fascist Otwynowski Jan, now a resident of Przysucha and owner of several post-Jewish houses and plots, he comes from Opoczno. In 1942, he married miller Iwański's daughter. Otwynowski and his wife rented quarters from Baltowski [a forest trader]. In 1942, when the ghetto was on the point of destruction, some of its inhabitants were trying to survive at all costs. The Bidermans, together with their mother found "refuge" with the above-mentioned Otwynowski. This choice was evidently influenced by the good opinion of citizen Iwański, his father-in-law. Otwynowski was concealing the Bidermans together with their mother for about half a year. Once this "benefactor" Otwynowski had succeeded in extorting all their property (they received a lot of money from the sale of their manufactory [...]), the "honorable" citizen apparently decided that his "patriotic mission" had come to an end and murdered them all.⁴⁶

44 The testimony of Stanisław Piwowarczyk, recorded on November 11, 1949 in Łódź, AŻIH, 301/4160.

45 There is another testimony from the Kielce region that speaks of concealment of Jews despite a family member being killed for this reason. See the testimony of Dawid Fromowicz, AŻIH, 301/4055, regarding Antony Stolarz from Białolino Radłowskie near Tarnów. In this case too, it appears that the motive for aiding Jews stemmed from a left-wing outlook.

46 AŻIH, 301/4743, the testimony of Szymon Rosenberg, based on conversations held in Przysucha during the period of January-May 1950. For more testimonies referring to acts of treachery, denunciation, and murder, see AŻIH, 301/5420 (Łązów, municipality of

The Story of Maria Szczecińska

Political and religious convictions presumably impelled some left-wing Poles⁴⁷ to rescue Jews, whereas others were motivated by devout religious faith⁴⁸. But what other circumstances led Poles who do not fit these categories to decide to help Jews, and to persist in this over time?

The story of Maria Szczecińska from Staszów in the province of Kielce, a woman who concealed fifteen Jews over a period of 22 months, appears to be an extremely rare, albeit typical case. A report from the 1960s states:

On October 2, [1947], the citizens Pasmantier Bine, Segał Daniel and citizen Szpic Samuel reported to us and testified as follows: cit. Maria Szczecińska, resident at 39/22 Sienkiewicz Street, a Catholic and mother of five, concealed 15⁴⁹ Jews during the occupation in Staszów in [the province] of Kielce: Pasmantier Bine, Pasmantier Chaim, Daniel Segał, Rachmil Segał and [his] cousin Hersz Goldberg, Fela Piekarska, Andzia Piekarska, Benek Goldberg, Froim Goldberg, Adela Bend, Natan Bend, Szmul Wiener, Nachman Wiener, Goldberg Różia. We built ourselves a hiding place in the Staszów railway station, this was an excavation beneath cit. Szczecińska's apartment. She was a clerk who worked at the railway service. We were paying for the food. Her daughter was, she worked as a railway clerk. When the Gestapo found out that Jews were hiding in the station, Szczecińska led us to another hiding place in the forest, belonging to her acquaintances. She stayed there with us and protected us, and when things settled down she took us to her place, where we spent the entire day in the basement, and the evening in her flat, where we would take care of our various needs. She would see a priest in Kraków for confession, as she was afraid to tell someone in Staszów that she was concealing Jews. We stayed with her for 22 months. We help her as much as we can, but

Maluszyn and Pilczyce, Włoszczowa district); 301/2778 (Belek, municipality of Mierzwin, Jędrzejów district); 301/3262 (Skała, Miechów district), 301/1908 (Łopатовiec, Pińczów district), 301/4315 (Raclawice, municipality of Rabsztyn, Olkusz district); 301/2105 (Drohiczyn); 301/4716 (Ochotnica, Szczawa, Szczawnica, Łacko, Kamiénica near Limanowa, Jazowsko near Nowy Sącz); 301/381, testimony regarding the murder in Nagórki, municipality of Rogienice, Łomża district); see also Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, pp. 159–60; and also the testimony of Benjamin Einhorn, which corrects the version cited in Tadeusz Seweryn's article "Bread and Blood", in a publication marking the fifth anniversary of the destruction of the Kraków ghetto, p. 167 (AŻIH, 301/777). According to this testimony, the concealment of the Grübel family from Skrzydlina by Władysław Koza was based solely on the motives of robbery.

47 See documents regarding the concealment of Jews by the Kaniut family from Chorzów, who were associated with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), AŻIH, 301/6268.

48 See the section below, "Priests, Nuns and Catholic Laypeople".

49 Names of fourteen individuals are mentioned in the testimony.

cit. Szczecińska's financial situation is very difficult, she has 5. [*sic*] children. Szczecińska is an honest woman⁵⁰.

The next document in this collection was written in 1963. It is a personal history written in Szczecińska's own handwriting. From it we learn that when she became a widow in 1930 and remained the sole provider for five children, she obtained a position at the railway by virtue of personal connections and was transferred to Staszów (before that, she was working in her hometown of Brześć nad Bugiem)⁵¹. In 1941 a number of Jewish acquaintances approached her and asked her to conceal them. She agreed, and for a month (a different version of the testimony speaks of four months) she kept them in a woodshed. The fugitives then returned to the ghetto, where they were employed by Emler, a German road construction company. After the dissolution of the ghetto, they again asked her for sanctuary.

I must admit that – she writes – at the time, in 1942, when I agreed to take them all in, I thought that this would maybe last a few months and that the Germans would then calm down. I did not know that we would live in this awful horror for more than 2.5 years. I lived with the children in a small house, 200 meters from the station. During several dozen nights the children and I dug beneath one of the rooms, removing the earth partly to the river and partly to the garden. Later, together with the Jews, we completed the shelter and we even equipped it with electrical lighting. It seems to me that my concealment of these people was smoothed by the fact that I handed over to other Polish families all their valuables for safekeeping (unfortunately, not all of them were later willing to return the items that they had taken). Staszów is a small town. Generally everyone knew who had placed their valuables with whom, and as I had not received anything of the sort, nobody suspected, almost until the end of the war, that I could have taken on so many people without taking their property as well. ... To describe what lengths [we] had to go to in order to provide food for so many, without arousing suspicions by bulk shopping; or the deception and precautions we had to take so that one of the Jewish women (Pinka Pozmantier) could give birth to her baby in our house, I would have to write a book. I am unable to do that, but probably the best ending is the fact that when the first Red Army troops entered Staszów in late July 1944, fifteen Jews emerged from my hiding place alive and well...⁵²

Another version of Szczecińska's narrative, written three years previously⁵³, offers additional details. It gives the ages of Szczecińska's children, who shared the responsibility for concealing Jews in their home. Her eldest daughter was fifteen years old in 1939, and the youngest was ten years old. At the time, Szczecińska lived in a detached three-room house close to the station building. Since she

50 AŻIH, 301/2790.

51 AŻIH, 301/5715, signed "Staszów: March 19, 1963".

52 Ibid.

53 From the same file, AŻIH, 301/5715, testimony dated April 23, 1960.

hailed from Poland's eastern border regions, in town she was referred to as a "Russian". "I was rather isolated in Staszów and by virtue of this isolation I managed to conceal the Jews in my home," she writes. We learn that she ultimately gave shelter to three married couples: the Goldbergs with their two teenage sons, the Segals and the Bends; two bachelors related to Segal; Tola Goldberg's sister-in-law; and also Samuel Wiener with his cousin and Różia Goldberg. It was Bina Segal who gave birth to a baby in the hideout. The baby was entrusted to the care of Morsyna, a villager who – Szczecińska says – "was taking good care of it". In spite of that, the child died.

What remains etched in the memory of the reader of Szczecińska's testimony is her isolation, the imperative impressed upon the children to keep the secret under all conditions, the thought process that preceded the decision about how and where to build the shelter, and the conscious choice of poverty as protection against the jealousy of her neighbors. Seclusion, to the extent of physical isolation, blocked every breach through which the secret might have leaked, while her poverty prevented any suspicion that she might be hiding "rich" Jews.

Poverty – albeit not by choice – which despite itself spurs compassion that does not balk at sharing what little there is with others, also appears in the testimony of Lili Szynowłoga, who was five years old when the war broke out. She was hiding in the vicinity of Chęciny in the Kielce province.

A Polish acquaintance advised us [the girl and her mother] to go to the cemetery, to a poor old man who would take us in. Mummy delivered me there and paid for me. [...] My cousin and the old man knew of a hideout. They covered it with stone slabs from the graves. We bought a bundle of straw, we lined the hideout with straw to keep us warm. [...] We sat concealed there until Christmas. In the dark or with a candle-stub. We were scared to go into town. The old man brought us food when there was no one in the cemetery. [...] This old man, a beggar, he cooked for us. He was a very decent man. When the second winter came we no longer had money or provisions. [My] cousin went to town but there he was captured by AK [the Home Army] men, who wanted to know where rich Jews were hiding. But my cousin did not betray us, so they shot him dead in the town square and buried him in the cemetery where we were hiding. Mummy sat up all night, waiting for [my] cousin. Only three days later we learned about the tragedy and we cried so much. Mummy was v. weak and I was only little and there was no one to look after us. We would have died of hunger had it not been for that old man. He went about the villages and begged, and so protected us and concealed us for ½ a year until liberation. He treated me and my mummy as he would his own children. When he went to see friends at Christmas and got a cake, he would bring it home and divide into equal parts.⁵⁴

54 AŻIH, 301/2553. For the story of Lili Szynowłoga and her mother Guta, see Chapter 9: "Barabas" and the Jews, in this volume.

The Story of Victoria Nowosielska from Glinów

Zelman Zalcstrejger,⁵⁵ who escaped from the Opoczno ghetto in October 1942 together with his brother-in-law Herszek Cygielfarb, was concealed by Wikto-ria Nowosielska, a resident of a nearby village of Glinów. The two men stayed with her for 26 months, until the arrival of the Soviet army on January 17, 1945. Two familiar themes resonate in his description of her: solitude (even though Nowosielska was not alienated from her community) and poverty. Nowosielska's husband died two days after they took the Jews into their home. The couple was childless. Upon the death of her husband, neighbors and acquaintances came to visit her, which put the two Jews hiding in the attic at risk of being discovered. The money that the men brought with them sufficed for at most six months, until Easter 1943. From this time onward, Nowosielska fed them at her own expense: "She sold many things left by her husband, and made ends meet by engaging in petty trade. And she continued to feed us as before, as in the period when we were paying her for provisions – three times a day," Zalcstrejger explained. She received unwitting assistance from members of her own family from nearby Zachorzów, who supported the needy widow with provisions from their farm – potatoes, cabbage, and occasionally meat. "Nowosielska would give us the best food, such as lard and the like, and when we tried to refuse this she insisted, stressing that she was free to go about, so it didn't matter what she ate, while we were in confinement without fresh air and without seeing sunlight – and we therefore had to eat better." She kept the presence of the fugitives secret from her extended family. The two men in hiding could overhear conversations held in the apartment below through a crack in the ceiling, and through another crack in the roof they were able to observe the road.

The risk of discovery was greatly exacerbated during the period of the Warsaw Uprising (August 1944), which saw the arrival of a wave of refugees from the capital. "With Nowosielska's consent, we turned one of the rooms into a pig-sty and a hen-house, and we destroyed the kitchen stove and the heating stove in the other room in order to render it uninhabitable. And the people from Warsaw indeed were not tempted to take up residence in such accommodation." A similar stratagem was utilized when the front approached the village. The landlady "bandaged her head, spread around her all sorts of bottles and medicinal containers, and pretended that she was suffering from a serious ailment." The fear of contagion deterred the various gangs from seeking lodgings there, although it

55 AŻIH, 301/2533, recorded on July 24, 1947. The following four quotes also come from this testimony.

did not prevent them from searching the attic. To counter such eventualities an additional emergency hideout was installed in the house. This was a bunker for two people, excavated beneath the floor, in which Zalctrejger and Cygielfarb hid on certain occasions, having to lie still for ten to twenty hours.

In the second half of 1944, when tension in the village rose as the front approached, the two Jews suggested they would leave for the forest, but Nowosielska refused to agree to this.

She countered all [our] explanations with: 'If we are to die, then all of us. If we are to live, then all of us.' Nowosielska treated us even better than a mother would. Her sacrifice for us knew no bounds and was completely unselfish.

The testimony concludes by mentioning that Nowosielska was forced to leave her village after the liberation, although no reason is given⁵⁶. Two photographs are attached to the testimony. One of them shows Nowosielska standing between two much younger men with faces resembling hers.

Mydlów (1942–1945)

The following excerpts from another diary⁵⁷ show how concealment of Jews played out in situations in which the providers of protection failed to abide by the rules of secrecy that guided the protagonists of the cases above. This detailed account is one of many that illustrate how the relationship of a rescuer and a fugitive could change to the detriment of the latter; in this case the fugitive was saved by chance. The author of the diary is Urele (Aron) Sztarkman, a Jew taken to a labor camp in Narol, who subsequently survived deportation from Opatów to Sandomierz. Equipped with fake "Aryan papers", Sztarkman hid in the village of Mydlów.

[p. 53]

I have been walking all day. It is already evening. From afar I see a small hut in a field. The hut stands in a valley, one can hardly spot it between the hills and the valleys. I thought to myself how wonderful it would be were the farmer to agree to the plan forming in my mind. I approach. The dog begins to bark. The owner comes out. I ask

56 As a rule, those who had concealed Jews were forced to leave their homes when this was revealed after the war; see the section below, "Revenge Taken by Poles on Other Poles."

57 AŻIH, 301/108, "Majn adurchlebn fun jor 1939 biz 1945"; the above excerpts have been translated into Polish by Sara Arm. See also the description in Czajka, Michał: "Inwentarz zbioru pamiątek, Archiwum ŻIH, zespół 302". Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: Warsaw 2007, pp. 90–91.

if I may enter. Yes, he replies. I want to buy something to eat. He has nothing, not even a crust of dry bread. He has only three *morgs* [1 *morg* = approx. 1.4 acres] of infertile land, a small hut with a barn, a small horse. He too is small.

[p. 54]

He shivers with cold. [His] clothes – patches upon patches. He does not have a wife, she died three years ago. It is a fairly old man of 50. Only a poor girl, Marysia, visits him since she has nowhere else to go. He has no children either. I question him about everything. That he is poor and has no wife or children is very good as far as I am concerned. He tells me that if he had a pair of trousers and boots, Marysia would marry him. I tell him that I'm a Jew. I ask him if he would let me stay with him, not for free, I will pay him well. He says yes immediately. Even five people. No one comes here. Even Marysia agrees, but she wants a Sunday dress for church. I realize that the owner is completely unaware of the situation of the Jews. He would like to have everything immediately. We on our part have no choice.

[p. 57]

What is our⁵⁸ life with Paweł [the host's name] like? A winter in the bunker: the bunker is two meters long. We built a bed so as not to sleep on the floor. One cannot stand upright. We are forced to stand bent over.

[p. 58]

The bunker is dark, we can't see each other [...]. The proprietor comes over once a day and brings us food. The entrance to the bunker is very small. The dog stands guard over us alongside the bunker. That's how we know when to keep quiet. Quiet. Our host begins to catch on. Every day he needs something else. We have clothed him well. We have equipped Marysia with fine things.

We have already married this couple off.

Partisans are beginning to move about in the village. The AK partisans present a greater danger to us than the Germans. We are surrounded by enemies on all sides. Our host begins to catch up with what a Jew means, that he can be endangered too.

[p. 59]

Money opens up our Paweł's eyes. Every single day he has new requests, until now he has not understood our situation, that partisans also bring Jews to him [cause them to hide, transl. note]. He should be more careful about us.

Marysia, his wife, wants a lot, though she is not quite sure what. Our host orders us to buy him some more *morgs* of farmland. We attempt to explain that he must not buy now; people would immediately suspect him of hiding Jews. We will give him something else. We give him money.

We give him different things. Everything we have brought will be his.

We do not need anything. [We] just [need to] wait it all out. He needs more money every day. He finds new reasons to ask for money. [p. 60] He says he wants to build a

58 The author was hiding together with another fugitive named Leibke (Lejb).

new granary. We repeat – not now. So he wants to save this money for after the war. Now he wants to save the money intended for the purchase of a couple of morgs of farmland for after the war, too. He wants every last penny we have. That is why he keeps Jews.

Our host already gives us to understand to what extent our lives are at stake. He knows everything now. And his life is also at stake. This means we have to keep giving him money. And we are facing a dilemma, because how can we get so much money when we are just lying in a dark bunker? Marysia, his wife, wants something, too, although she is not sure what it is she wants.

[p. 61]

Our host understands that he mustn't wear his new smart clothes on Sundays, people would wonder in the church. But Marysia would not listen to reason⁵⁹. She wants to boast before her cousins about high laced boots that her husband ostensibly bought her. And he also made her a smart dress with a flowered headscarf. Marysia did not hide anything; she was a stupid girl, completely unable to fathom the danger. And thus suspicions grew over time, while our lives went by without a change, day or night.

[p. 62]

We had no idea of what was happening in the house.⁵⁷ On Sunday Marysia has guests; they wonder how she can afford such a good life. They say: your farmer has just three morgs of land [roughly 4.2 acres]. They start to suspect something, but they cannot figure everything out at once.

Paweł is well known in his village, everybody knows he is very poor. Paweł works for rich farmers as a hired hand at harvests; otherwise he would not be able to manage just with his farm. Everyone in the village knows that!

[p. 63]

Spring arrives. We move from the dugout to the attic, which makes for an excellent hiding place. [...] Due to constant lying in one position we could not sleep long. We woke up each morning to watch what was going on, [to see] peasants going into the field in the morning. We had to be careful not to overlook anything due to sleep. God forbid!

[p. 67]

We knew that Stach was the eldest in the village and had been married twice, both [of his] wives died.

59 See Białowitcz, Philip / Kowalik, Piotr (transl.): *Bunt w Sobiborze [A Promise at Sobibór: A Jewish Boy's Story of Revolt and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland]*. Nasza Księgarnia: Warsaw 2008, p. 141: "Here is a formerly modest man who is now throwing money around, apparently buying as much vodka as he can drink. The townspeople must have surely suspected that these riches come from hiding Jews – perhaps they have even managed to force a confession from him – and now they are going to set things right."

Now he is courting Maryśka. Maryśka is our neighbor's daughter, but she will not have him. She dislikes him as much as the rest of villagers do. He is wicked. [...] This winter he has turned in a Jew. It happened like this: one night a Jewish fugitive from a train transporting Jews to Treblinka came over to his house. He entreated Stach to let him warm up and get some sleep.

It was freezing and snowing outside. At first, Stach would not let him in, but when the Jew took out some money and showed it to him, this old pig allowed him to sleep in the barn.

[p. 68]

That is what his farm hand related to our host. Yet the next morning Stach locked the sleeping Jew in the barn and denounced him to the *sottys*. The Germans came, led him to the woods and shot him dead. Stach got the Jew's boots and 10 kilograms of sugar as a reward. [...]

Our host has always been telling us that nobody unnerves him more than Stach. "If he finds out about you, we're lost, all of us."

[p. 69]

Maryśka [the neighbor's daughter, courted by Stach] is different from other villagers. She is more of a city person. For some years she was helping a textile vendor, Berek. She liked Jews. If Berek came to her, she would hide him.

[p. 70]

Berek was an honest man. Every Christmas he gave her a dress and a headscarf. This was called a Christmas [present]. [Our] host said he should not be uneasy about her. If she learnt that Jews were hiding here, she would be very glad.

[p. 73]

The Germans are still here, we must still wait and lie in the hideout. Our time has not yet come. Our host tries to provide us with news every day: that the partisans are searching for Jews in order to eliminate them. The partisans announce in the village that anyone found keeping Jews will be punished by death. Our host does not allow me to go see our friends to get news. He has cut our contact short, so that one does not know about the other. He tells us that they are dead. They have been shot by the partisans.

[p. 74]

The risk to our lives becomes graver by the moment. The partisans now come to the village every day. They are also fighting the Germans. Every night, they are getting closer and closer to our house. Our house stands on the outskirts of the village, next to a little forest. That is why they often come over to have a rest at our host's.

As evening fell, ten to fifteen partisans arrived, armed with various weapons, and they begin interrogating our host, asking whether he knows of any Jews hiding in the village. The host makes them understand that if he were living in the middle of the village, he might know something, but here there is nobody around. They all

go to sleep, and in the morning go their way. Our host tells us all this, but we have overheard it ourselves.

[p. 75]

Our host is quite scared too, but Marysia, his wife, does not want to be careful. She wants to wear a new dress every Sunday and show off. [...]

Several partisans approach the window yelling: "Bring out the Jews that are in your house, otherwise we will shoot you dead." We are lying in the attic, half naked, undressed. We cannot move lest they would hear us. The situation is critical. The host tells them: "You can search everything. If you find Jews in my [farm], you can shoot me dead."

[p. 76]

The partisans believe what he says. They only search the barn, nothing else. On their way out, they tell him that this is the last time they are sparing his life. If they have to come again, he will be shot dead and his house burnt down.

Paweł retains his composure. He understands what the partisans tell him. Our host does not make us leave. He tells us not to run away if the partisans show up again. We realize that he is scheming to hand us in to the partisans.

I begin to explore alternative solutions.

[p. 77]

1944. I set out on the road again, but all the roads keep leading me to the same death [...].

The partisans are everywhere; the highest price is paid for catching a Jew. I return to the former location. My host is glad that I have returned. [...] I tell him that I have brought more money. This pleases him. We give him the first golden ten-rouble piece. He doesn't even know what it is, but tells us that he has heard of it. This is a very good thing.

He begins to promise us that we shall survive. Even if they do the worst to him, he will behave worthily.

[p. 78]

The host comes to us joyfully: "The Russians have arrived, the Russians have arrived!"

The literary authenticity of Sztarkman's diary is on a par with the psychological authenticity of the circumstances that he describes. As testimonies will show again and again, poverty is the best reason for agreeing to shelter a Jew. Yet in this case, the money that the Jewish fugitives had offered to their host paradoxically worked to their detriment, as it attracted attention and led to a suspicion that the host was hiding Jews. The farmer who takes in the two men gradually learns, in 1942, that Jews are being hunted down and that he could pay a high price – both money and his life – for concealing them. The farmer struggles with himself, and although not quite honest, he gets through the trials and emerges on the side of righteousness.

Mimicry

Some Jews were able to save themselves by disguising themselves as gentiles – that is, taking on false identities and obtaining “Aryan papers”. The ability to do so depended, of course, on “proper looks”, knowledge of Catholic customs and prayers, in short, on full integration into Polish society. If a Jewish refugee offered protection by a Pole could take on such an identity, both he and his benefactor had a better chance of surviving. Such cases feature prominently in the testimonies of children. Rózia Unger from Sandomierz relates the following:

In 1940, I think, Daddy handed me over to a farmer for whom I tended the cows. I also looked after the horses. There were children there and they played with me; they were very small and I looked after them. I so loved the little girls, like they were my sisters. They treated me like one of their daughters. I ate whatever they ate. In the beginning they concealed me, and later told the neighbors that I was a relative of theirs, and so I played alongside them and with them. They never told me I was Jewish; I went to church with them. I didn't know exactly what a “Jewess” was. During the first year I longed for Mummy, later I got used to things. I was there for five years. [...] After the liberation, one man who used to be Daddy's business partner and who knew that Daddy had placed me there, came over and took a picture of me. [...] I was afraid to return to the Jews, when I played with the children they would tell me that the Jews murder [gentile] children to make matzo. [...] I cried so much, I didn't want to stay with my aunt. Once, when walking across the market with my aunt, I started crying because I had seen village women selling blueberries and I wanted to return to the village with them⁶⁰.

Szajek Nysybom, who was five years old at the outbreak of war, went into hiding with farmers from 1942 onward in the vicinity of Kozienice. That he blended into his surroundings is apparent from the language of his testimony, which he gave in the local dialect. “My aunt and uncle were taken away,” he says, “[and] I got an idea to go to the village to a farmer and start work. [...] They knew me everywhere, so I figured that I should move on.”⁶¹ Nysybom wandered from one place to another, eventually managing to stay with one farmer for two years.

60 AŻIH, 301/3699. Blood libel legend is mentioned also in a testimony from 1947, given by a nine-year-old boy, Ludwik Jerzycki: “First I was in a village. I took the cow out to pasture and she would often run away from me into the wheat field. So then they would beat me. They always gave me bread to eat with black coffee, and sometimes kasha. After the liberation they brought me to a children's home in Chorzów. I cried, I didn't want to go to the Jews, because they told me that Jews killed children”; AŻIH, 301/2755.

61 AŻIH, 301/3003. A similar testimony was submitted by Szmul Ismah, who wandered homeless in the vicinity of Tykocin, AŻIH, 301/2735. On the topic of assimilation of

I prayed, I recited the rosary, but absent-mindedly, because I didn't think of anything, only of what would become of me⁶². I called myself Stanisław Walencik. I invented this name myself. I stayed there until the liberation, it was good there, they liked me and even when the Poles were being resettled before the uprising, they took me with them. I played my part well. When the Germans came to get hay, I would argue with them and always answer, I wasn't afraid of anyone. I looked the Germans straight into the eyes, because I knew it was better like that⁶³. Sometimes I would tell the farmer that I was going to go see my relatives for two days, and I would hide in a barn and then come back, so that they didn't know and did not realize that it was a scam.

His next host, who was childless, looked upon Szajek as his own son, and even told him he would leave his property to him. After the war, the boy thought that there were no Jews left. He made two attempts to find some: first he traveled to Łódź (“I spent the whole night at the train station and then I returned to the village.”) and then to Warsaw, where he “struck up a talk” with someone at the station. “This guy confessed to me that he was Jewish, so I also confessed that I was Jewish. He advised me to go to the Jewish Committee.” Szajek was sent to an orphanage in Śródborów; however, he has been through so much that it was difficult for him to believe in any permanence. His testimony ends as follows:

I don't want to give the farmer's name, I'm not going to write to him yet that I am not coming back. I will see what happens, I'm in no hurry. I don't know if this was a good idea. It doesn't matter, you just have to try.

Assimilation was far more difficult for older children. Basia Goldstein⁶⁴, nine years old upon the outbreak of war, would later testify that in spite of her “hosts treating [her] well,” it did not spare her from denunciation by the neighbors:

One day this Pole denounced me to the Germans. German gendarmes arrived and surrounded the house; I was herding cows in the field, they found me in the field. They

Jewish children in the countryside with the community, see Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. XIII.

62 See also the testimony of Witold Wajman, a secondary school student. AŻIH 301/2755.

63 The same theme crops up in the memory of Polish farmers from the Sandomierz region [139N]: “I was just looking the German in the eye, like [...] and he asked twice, three times, even five times... If you only turned your head and replied without looking him in the eye – then it would be ‘Rauss’ [get out] and off to the labor camp, for lying [...] but if you looked him in the eye, it was like you speak the truth, because you look him in the eye.”

64 AŻIH, 301/2793, testimony submitted in Łódź on October 5, 1947; the girl, identified as “Basia Goldstein” by the clerk, signed her name as “Frymer Dwojra.”

brought me to the *wójt*. The *wójt* testified that I was a Pole, told me to recite the rosary. I knew the prayers well and recited it without hesitation. So they let me go.

Even though the Germans believed it, Polish children did not:

Those of my age in the village did not want to play with me, they would say that I was a Jewess. I was often very sad, I had no one to confide in, I often longed for the Jews.

The theme of cruel behavior on the part of Polish children and “Polish boys” recurs again and again – so often that, in the absence of a reason to doubt the reliability of the testimonies, it must be seen as a mass phenomenon⁶⁵. Adults, even those who spoke good Polish and were familiar with the local dialect, found it even more difficult to survive during their wanderings through villages. This is reflected in the anonymous testimony of a mother who wandered around the Częstochowa area with her infant son.

[Walking] through the forests, I was trying to reach the Saint Anna monastery in a remote village near Przysrów. Dressed in a headscarf and an apron I looked like a peasant woman. It was a cold morning. My son, who awoke from his slumber, surprised and perturbed, asked: ‘Why are we leaving Dad?’ I replied: ‘We are Lord’s pilgrims and we shall wander around the villages...’⁶⁶

65 Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. XXIV and XXX, as well as testimonies in the body of the book on pp. 66, 70, 89, 111, 127, 132, 135, 137, 138, 156, 161, 182, 184, 256. Among the testimonies in the AŻIH, see 301/3215, on Polish youngsters from the area of Kulcza Mała who went out on horseback to hunt for Jews. See also 301/2736 on “Polish youngsters who show *gendarmes* the [locations of] hideouts.” Particularly shocking memories of the custom of forcibly undressing people in order to verify their Jewish origin are to be found, for example, on pp. 89 and 127. See also the testimony of a Home Army resistance soldier who operated in the Sandomierz and Skarżysko-Kamienna area. He told me that, at the time of the deportation of Jews from Skarżysko, there were Polish children who roamed around the railway station under German orders, looking up into the eyes of passers-by in search of Jews (March 8, 2008, testimony in the author’s archive). One should also note examples of different behavior on the part of children, such as AŻIH, 301/1791: “Polish youngsters were standing by and said: ‘Run away now, because no one is looking’”; AŻIH 301/ 3743: “I approached a girl that I knew with whom I had played when we were still free. She was glad to see me, greeted me nicely, fed me, and her mother meanwhile prepared a bag of food. Suddenly a man entered, a Jew hunter. I was alarmed and grew pale. My friend calmed me, I immediately controlled myself, she took out toys and a doll, we played as if nothing had happened, and I showed no sign of fear. But how afraid I was – probably God alone knew.” See also Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, pp. 128, 136, etc.

66 AŻIH, 301/1698.

This excerpt gives an impression that the author succeeded in deceiving the peasants only in those villages where the inhabitants had not experienced the temptation to enrich themselves at the expense of persecuted Jews. All through the autumn she tramped northward with her son, experiencing both good and bad encounters along the way. In the winter their predicament became so harsh that, like many others⁶⁷, she decided to go to the ghetto in Radom for the time being, and simultaneously try to obtain a work permit in her own village, Kłonice. Not even a local *Volksdeutsch* [an ethnic German Polish citizen] would hinder her effort.

In our village there were two Friedrich brothers, *Volksdeutsches*, who knew me. These two youngsters were crueler than any German... A terrible panic seized me when I saw one of them, [in the uniform of] a *gendarme*, standing at the door of the council office, checking the visitors. He recognized me immediately. He was staring at me in surprise. I had before my eyes the fair head of [my] child, the idea that I will not return [...]. Finally, the *gendarme* asks in a strange voice: "Why did you come here for your *Encarta*?" He struggled with himself and said: "go in." [...] There were 4 women in the room, Germans [...]. I started playing my role. I was wearing an apron, like a peasant. I entered, greeted them in a Christian way and I say: "It is so warm in here." Four pairs of eyes look at me inquisitively, disapprovingly: "Why have you come, why can't you wait to obtain a *kennkarte* [work permit] in the usual manner, at the municipal [office]?" In a plaintive voice of a peasant woman, I started lamenting that "I am so poor, but when I have a document, I can try to get a job somewhere, even leave for Prussia". I told even that my wicked family reproached me about every breadcrumb. I spoke a mazurating dialect, which they found incredibly amusing.

67 "I saw Jews coming out of hideouts, I saw an unconscious old man who had been beaten by the farmer with the shaft of a cart until he fell, Jewish women wearing wigs, they all came out of the forests, the mothers led them in the direction of the ghetto and the peasants mocked: 'Don't worry, this way too you'll end up in Treblinka.' [...] This was a deceitful ploy on the part of the Germans, an amnesty as it were, designed to concentrate them all in one place and to capture them all. A month later they destroyed the ghetto and sent everyone to Treblinka," *ibid.* See also AŻIH, 301/2425, Zalman Baum on the reaction of the Jews to such an "amnesty" in Sandomierz: "When they saw that the Poles were robbing and murdering them, the Jews returned to Sandomierz [...] Over 10,000 Jews gathered from all the surrounding villages." See also AŻIH, 301/1773: "In Ternopol, in July 1941, the witness was afraid to return home because the farmers along the way killed every Jew that passed by"; *ibid.*: "In Bełżec there was no point in the Jews escaping from the camp, since the locals would hand them in immediately." The same document relates the handing in of Jews in Doliszowice, in the Pińczów regional council and in Kazimierza Wielka.

The author of the testimony receives her documents, the *Volksdeutsch* lets her go again, but only a moment later a passing peasant woman says:

Look at this Jewess, she's wearing an apron, that's how she's trying to save herself now; why doesn't someone do something about it.⁶⁸

Sometime later, on a train, this woman again had the misfortune to come across peasants who recognized her:

One [man] from the neighboring village – a stupid, cunning, brutish thug – sat down next to us [the author was traveling with her infant son] and mockingly asked me where I was going. I said... “To Prussia.” I put all my eggs in one basket. In a threatening manner, he said: “Well, I'm not sure you will manage,” and he pointed to the gendarmes. [...] This peasant took the box with my child's clothes from me. I didn't say a word. [...] So I resorted to a trick. I approached two elegant Polish women and struck up a conversation with them. I wanted the peasant to think that they were acquaintances of mine who were helping me, and if he were to denounce me, he would have to denounce these Polish women as well. [...] Two random women have unwittingly saved my life.

Descriptions of the public exposure of a Jew's identity by Poles appear time and again in various testimonies. They recall the scene in Roman Polanski's film *The Pianist* in which a Polish neighbor of the Jewish protagonist (played by the Polish actress Katarzyna Figura), recognizes the fugitive and screams in horror: “A Jew! A Jew!”

Here are some examples from the testimonies:

[...] the landlady, that awful antisemite, began shouting in the corridor: “Quick, get those Jews out of here, or I'll call the police.”⁶⁹

Two men once grabbed me by the shoulders and shouted “You are a Jewess...”⁷⁰

All of a sudden a woman called to him, in a mixture of German and Polish – I recognized in her the concierge of our building before the war. She asks him whether he knows who the girl accompanying him is, and immediately adds: “She is a Jewess, I know her.”⁷¹

More than once she had heard how they called after her: “Grosman, Jewess, arrest her!” The witness managed to escape such individuals.⁷²

68 Compare to AŻIH, 301/2252.

69 Testimony of Pesla Penczyna, AŻIH, 301/1525.

70 Testimony of Rozalia Kożuchowicz, AŻIH, 301/2732.

71 Testimony of Bronisław Szwałca; Gutenbaum, Łatala: *Dzieci Holokaustu II*, p. 203.

72 The author of the testimony eventually succeeded in arranging a place for her son at an institution of the Albertinian nuns in Czestochowa. Once the origin of the five-year-old had been exposed, he was left at the doorstep of the nuns of the Skrytki order; but here too someone had informed on him to the authorities and the boy was shot by the

A Polish woman from Drohobycz was traveling with us on the train. We didn't know her, but she knew us, and immediately began to talk about Jews, saying that they were fleeing, that they wanted to live but would not succeed – they had already lived long enough⁷³.

The Polish-Polish War over the Jews

Underground, evasive maneuvers, isolation, covering up tracks, camouflage – the lexicon of Jewish hiding and concealment suggests military strategies. The testimonies, documents, and ethnographic interviews discussed here allow us to describe the assistance rendered to Jews as a literal war between Poles, involving the people who, without public and social support in rural areas (as can be inferred from the testimonies), helped the Jews survive. The Polish society, for reasons that will be discussed shortly, considered the assistance to Jews a breach of family and community loyalties, but moreover, according to right-wing ideology⁷⁴ prevalent even prior to the war, also a breach of national and

Germans. A similar situation – a description of extortion on a train and two unsuccessful attempts at extortion on the roads nearby Połaniec during the destruction of the ghetto – is portrayed in the testimony of Dorota Keller, AŻIH, 301/ 4635.

73 Testimony of Jan Kulbinger, who was 13 years old in 1943; Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. 221. See also Gutenbaum, Łatala: *Dzieci Holokaustu II*, p. 185: “On the way we came across a farmer on a cart harnessed to a horse: ‘What are you doing here, Jew boys, after all, all your people have gone to the gas. You yourselves can dig yourselves a grave here. Do you want spades?’” See also Białowitcz, *Bunt w Sobiborze*, p. 131: “Shortly afterward the axes destroyed our wall and we were exposed. As we emerged, the crowd that had assembled to watch clapped their hands and called out ‘Bravo!’ When they led us under guard, I understood how they had managed to find us – many local Poles went down on all fours and pressed an ear to the ground, and that’s how they hunted down the Jewish neighbors.”

74 See Chodakiewicz, Marek J.: *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne. «Zab» przeciw dwu wrogom (The National Armed Forces: Weapon Against Twin Enemies)*. Fronda: Warsaw 2005, p. 19; and *ibid.*, chapters 5 and 6, and in particular pp. 89, 319–20. See also a characterization of the ideology of the Polish Organization in ONR (the Radical National Camp or Falanga – a fascist organization established in 1934), from which split first the Lizard Alliance (*Związek Jaszczurczy*), which subsequently joined NSZ (National Armed Forces), in Wnuk, Rafał (ed.): *Atlas podziemia niepodległościowego 1944–1956 (Atlas of Underground Organizations in the Struggle for Independence 1944–1956)*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Warsaw-Lublin 2008), p. xxvii: “The ideology of OP [the Polish Organization of ONR] took shape prior to World War II, and did not undergo significant changes throughout its existence. Poles who could prove the purity of their race

confessional loyalties.⁷¹ While Polish opinion is divided regarding its origin and its reach, the conventional attitude is:

The Germans did the Poles a service by annihilating the Jews. From now on the Poles will be wiser, and will not allow the Jews to control them. The Jews present a far greater danger to Poland than the Germans. There is nothing more dangerous than a Pole who serves Jews⁷⁵.

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- over four generations were eligible to join the organization. Since the leaders of the national-radical camp defined Polishness in terms of ethnic origin, it could be passed on only through genetic inheritance, which precluded any possibility of assimilation of groups that were not Polish by ethnicity. As a group, the Jews were regarded as a particularly negative element, both for cultural-religious reasons and because of the position they had established within the prewar labor market”.
- 75 AŻIH, 301/1772, a conversation among Poles overheard by a Jew who was hiding under an “Aryan” identity. See also testimony 301/4567, submitted by Ida Gerstman on July 11, 1946. Gerstman succeeded in escaping from Kielce following the pogrom (1946), and her testimony sheds light on the awareness of the rural population in the Kielce area approximately a year after the end of the war: “I managed to get to Słowiki at five in the morning. At the station I heard how one of the peasant women was speaking: ‘I’m setting out, taking with me a knife, should I catch a Jew or Jewess I shall cut pieces of meat from them and salt them.’ [...] On the train I saw that people were looking at me suspiciously. One of the women pointed at me: ‘This is a lousy *żydowica* [Jewess, a pejorative], she should be thrown under the wheels of the train.’ Another woman responded to this with: ‘At the next stop we’ll hand her over to the militia – they can then shoot her.’ At the next stop the women seized me by the head and legs, and pulled me toward the track in order to throw me under the train. I pleaded for my life, and they replied that I was a Jewess, that I must bite the dust. The children began stoning me. I asked the railway clerk to shoot me because I couldn’t stand this any longer. He replied, ‘You want to die an easy death? Take your time, suffer a little more.’ Luckily for me a militia man arrived and ordered them to leave me alone, explaining that he himself would sort me out. They left me alone, and the policeman demanded that I give him a ‘tip’ for beer. I gave him the last 500 zlotys. He let me go. I returned to the train, and the peasant women identified me once again and handed me over to the police shouting ‘Kill the *żydowica!*’ The policeman led me to a detention room of the railway police. This was in Jędrzejów. They led me to a cell to which they led also another Jew, whom they had likewise removed from the train once they had identified him as a Jew. Before my eyes the militia man kicked him and a man in civilian clothes in the office hit him in his face. A group of children threw stones at us through an open window... A young girl in school uniform shouted: ‘Get out from under the bed, so that we can stone you, your good times have come to an end, now you must all die in agony, in return for our blood. We shall erect a monument of gold to Hitler and we shall ask of God that a newborn Hitler arise.’”

Such views took hold amongst the Polish public, particularly after part of the extremist far-right underground organization, the National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*–NSZ), was incorporated into the Home Army⁷⁶; therefore, in no section of the Polish public subject to German occupation was there a consensus regarding assistance to the Jews. The testimony of Abraham Finkler, who together with his group sought to join the Polish underground, illustrates this “lack of unity”:

Engineer Strzelecki, a member of the Home Army, entreated us to obtain weapons so as to fight the Germans together. Twenty-three Jews assembled, we went to the forests in which we had arranged to meet them. The Home Army men began to shoot at us, killed two Jews. Not being able to discern between the AL [People’s Army, leftist] and the Home Army, we did not look for partisans anymore. We lived as an independent partisan group in the forests in the Siedlce area⁷⁷.

76 Szapiro, Marek: *Nim słońce wzejdzie... Dziennik pisany w ukryciu 1943–1944 (Before the Sun Rises....: A Diary Written in Hiding 1943–1944)*. Tych, Feliks / Prokopowicz, Magdalena (eds.) Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: Warsaw 2007, p. 491; diary entries for April 19, 26, 1944: “The National Armed Forces were placed under the command of the Home Army underground, which in return ‘acknowledged their valuable civil contribution’”; and also, on p. 505: “It was inconceivable to me how it was possible to introduce into the Polish underground body, the Home Army, the so-called National Armed Forces. If we are to believe what is said, the people of the National Armed Forces were, at least up to March, the tool of the Germans for the elimination of peasants, Jews and so forth, unwanted elements within a fascist Poland. And such traitors are received with honor and praise merely because they lent a hand to an agreement (out of consideration of their own benefit)?”

77 AŻIH, 301/55. And compare with a testimony about a raid by Soviet partisans on refugees from Ostrów-Mazowiecka ghetto (a similar narrative included in the testimony of Helena Arbeiter quoted in Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. 160), and their subsequent swearing-in to the underground, and an attack by an unidentified group of armed Poles, who explained that this was a “party order,” AŻIH, 301/3055: “A group that wished to join the partisans had to swear allegiance in the presence of two Polish partisans. This was supposed to take place in a bunker, by the light of a coal gas lamp before the white-red Polish flag. The Polish partisans were armed with a machine-gun and sub-machine-guns, and at a particular moment they fired several salvos at those present, about sixteen in number [...] as became clear later, these partisans had belonged to a group of the People’s Army. For details of this matter, see Skibińska, Alina / Libionka, Dariusz: “*Przysięgam walczyć o wolną i potężną Polskę, wykonywać rozkazy przełożonych, tak mi dopomóż Bóg.*” *Żydzi w AK. Epizod z Ostrowca Świętokrzyskiego*”. *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4, 2008, pp. 287–323. See also the testimony of farmers who were engaged in work on behalf of the authorities in Kruszyna, AŻIH, 301/5306, which describes how a group of Jewish escapees had been

A diametrically opposite situation is portrayed in the following testimony. Abraham Furman was a member of the Home Army (AK) in the Szczawnica – Limanowa region in southern Poland, and a sympathetic comrade convinced him to leave.

[...] In 1943 I met a man who told me for the first time that what he termed “forest bands” were being created in the forests. This was the Home Army, which comprised people of various sorts. I thought that I, too, would find my place there, and would, first of all, be able to take revenge for all our people who had been murdered, and secondly, I would be able to protect the life of my wife, the only surviving member of the family, from this virulent pestilence – but to my deep regret I was wrong. After a number of weeks my strongest impression was of pervasive chaos, and beyond that, great hatred of Jews. I became friends with a very intelligent man there, I didn’t know who he was. Nevertheless, over time I learned that he used to be a judge, he was using the pseudonym “Góral”, and I never asked him his name. He was a retired Polish army captain. One night he said to me that I should try to get away, since he could not guarantee our safety⁷⁸.

A contemporary ethnographic source explains the reasons behind the refusal to shelter Jews; the mother of one of our aging informants, a partisan *in spe*, was guided by the following:

[406N, Sandomierz]

Nobody wanted to take them in! Because the whole family would be punished by death for [harboring] a Jew. [...] One Jew owned some land nearby, and he wanted [us] to take that Jew in, right? And the Jew was big, [...] he could have been about 24 years old, maybe 22 [...]. And mother didn’t want to take [him] in. [...] because mother knew that we were up to something. Well, but we didn’t talk about it with mother, of course. Because we were out at night, we had gatherings, we had shooting over there in the meadows, real shooting, a kind of military practice, right? And there was a small house where nobody lived, and we were renting it, so that’s where the training took place, also of cadets and officers, and such things. So that’s how she knew this and she was worried that if we knew about this we would turn these Jews in or we will take them ourselves, drag them out and eliminate them, and she didn’t want to take [them] in.

handed over to the Germans by a partisan unit from an unidentified organization: “The Polish commander and the German commander saluted each other.” See also the episode involving a group of escapees from Sobibor death camp, which was accepted into a partisan unit from an unidentified organization in the province of Lublin; Białowit, *Bunt w Sobiborze*, p. 211–13.

78 Testimony of Abraham Furman, AŻIH, 301/4716. The witness writes: “I am a born Jew, but I belong to the Polish nation, because that suits me fine.”

The testimony of Zelman Baum, who escaped from Sandomierz with his large family and several acquaintances and was hiding in local villages, sheds light on the mentality of some of the units of the Peasants' Battalions (*Bataliony Chłopskie*–BCh) in the Sandomierz area, and of certain members of the AK “Lotna” unit stationed in Wiązownica⁷⁹. These groups hounded Jews under the pretext of a campaign against gangs of robbers. The testimony likewise shows what the Polish definition of “robbery” meant from the Jewish perspective⁸⁰. By depriving the Jews of the right to obtain food and weapons, while at the same time refusing to accept them into the partisan forces, the Poles in effect condemned them to the same fate that the Germans had prepared for the Jews.

A friend of mine in the fighting unit revealed to me that the Peasants' Battalions organization, which had promised to provide us with weapons, intended to round us up and then liquidate us. We had for some time suspected that this was their real intention, and had thus not revealed everything to them. We possessed just two pistols and three grenades. [...] We had to get some more weapons by any means since buying them for money was impossible. Following a few ambushes, we managed to take [some] weapons from the Poles. We obtained army uniforms. We began to operate as Poles in areas where we were not known, and identified ourselves as the “Lotny” Peasants' Battalion. A Polish acquaintance was giving us organizational and inter-organizational passwords. He was a member of this organization, too. When we encountered people from BCh we always

79 Details of an encounter with a unit of this organization appear in Bauman's testimony. The gang was commanded by a local policeman named Śliwiński, who levied “a weekly tax from all the Jews in the town of Koprzywnica, and from us he took an individual ‘tax’ for failing to hand in the Jews to the authorities.” This gang was meant to receive from a unit of the Peasants' Battalions (or a Home Army detachment) supporting fire for its attack on a bunker containing Jewish escapees. The bunker was, in all probability, attacked under the guise of the campaign against “robber gangs.” See Chapter 4 in this volume. The website devoted to the People's Army “Lotna” unit claims that it, too, included three Polish Jews: Jerzy Bette was in the company from the day of its inception, and since he had a command of French and German, he was appointed to listening to news on radio stations... A second Polish Jew who saw action was “Fala”, whose surname was known only to the commander. He and “Bob” assassinated a dangerous Gestapo functionary in Sandomierz, in the stadium during a football game. We found out about the origin of the third one only after his death, when in his will he asked to be buried in the Jewish cemetery in Kraków. But, of course, this begs the question of why the Jewish origin of all these three fighters had been kept secret. See http://www.jedrusie.org/www_odwet/felietony.html.

80 See also Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, pp. 150–51, the testimony of Nuchim Werner from the area of Bitków, as well as the testimony of Hersz Cukier from the Ziemianowicze area on the Niemen River, *ibid.*, pp. 201–2.

made a point of asking for their password and giving them the response. They thus always accepted us as a BCh unit, and did not suspect us. We had many such encounters. We learned ever more about the workings of this organization. We knew that one of its objectives was to exterminate Jews. Every day we heard that they were searching for Jews and killing them⁸¹.

In search of the next of kin of Jankiel Penczyna, who was allegedly killed by the Wiązownica AK unit “Lotna”, Baum was compelled to put the motivation of one of the families harboring Jews to the test. Pretending, together with his friend, to be members of the “Lotna” unit mentioned above, they came to a farm in Smerdyn near Wiązownica on New Year’s Eve 1943.

When we entered the yard, I heard a bucket rattle in the pigsty. [...] It was the owner Dywan Stefan. He was serving food to the [Jews] we had been looking for. He started shouting “A tiu” at the pigs, to distract us. He left the bucket with the pigs, and he came out to face us on his own. Without flinching, he asked who we were. I answered: “Your countrymen.” When he came closer, he took fright on seeing armed soldiers in uniforms. [...] As it was the New Year’s Eve, his wife and children were not asleep yet. They looked terrified. [...] I informed him that he too was accused of harboring Jews. This way, I wanted to find out whether he was trustworthy and whether we can allow our loved ones to remain in his care. I emphasized that we had arrived to do our duty. If he confesses and hands the Jews over to us, nothing will happen to him. [...] After pondering it, he confessed. He entreated us not to cause him trouble with the organization [Dywan was a member of BCh]. He took the Jews in not because he wanted to use them and betray them, but because his conscience made him act this way. He entreated us not to conduct a search, [saying] he would ask the Jews to leave the following day. [...] Seeing that he was a decent man, we decided to tell him the truth. We apologized to him for everything. I showed [him] the pictures of the family that was hiding in his house. I informed him that they were my uncle and aunt. But the man did not believe us. The wife said that we must have murdered [my] cousin and that’s how we got the photograph.

81 AŻIH, 301/2425. Examples in the text. Acting on his own initiative, Baum captures the commander of a gang that engaged in hunting down Jews, and it transpires that he is Antoni Jarosz from the village of Przewłoka. The man, who thought that he had fallen into the hands of the Home Army, admitted that he had murdered Jews. Dywan, the group’s commander, forbade Baum to execute Jarosz. The testimony mentions also that Jarosz, who limped after being wounded in battle, had been “a major in Kielce,” see my *Social Portrait of the Kielce Pogrom*, 2 vols. (forthcoming). See there the mention of Jarosz, who in autumn 1944 commanded a militia outpost in Koprzywnica, and who provided a personal commendation on the aforementioned Edward Śliwiński.

As the owners' suspense would not subside and the morning was drawing near, Baum decided to write a few words in Yiddish on a piece of paper, and ask for it to be delivered to the hiding persons. This part of their wanderings had a happy ending.

When I was embracing my cousin, the owners fell to their knees before an altar and crossing themselves, they said that they would never have believed that all this was true.

However, there were instances of peasants fearing the partisans on some occasions⁸², but cooperating with them on others. Among many such narratives, Baum relates the story of seven escapees from the Sandomierz ghetto in the final stages of its dissolution, who had previously been hiding in Wiązownica. They were then told that they had to leave and find a different hiding place, since their host had taken in another person, a Jewish policeman named Morgen, far richer than they were.

The seven of them paid Czarniecki his due and decided to take the remainder of their property with them, so that they would be able to pay for another hideout. But Czarniecki was sorry to part with such good "clients", and let the seven men stay. At that time an AK group formed. The group discovered the seven, led them to a police station and turned them in to the Gestapo⁸³.

In the countryside, political motives were trumped by envy and greed for the "Jewish gold", and such hostile attitudes led those peasants who might have been inclined to help Jews to fear their neighbors⁸⁴ more than they feared the Germans. It is difficult to assess the extent of the degeneration of basic human decency in villages that enriched themselves at the expense of Jewish fugitives. Reading the testimonies is nearly unbearable – time and again the same scenario appears: Poles grant sanctuary to Jews and conceal them; then rob and murder them⁸⁵. True, atrocities such as the extraction of a gold tooth, as mentioned by Kazimierz Wyka⁸⁶, were not the norm among Polish farmers, but this is small comfort.

82 [184N] "In Trójca they hid seven and the partisans fell upon them and killed them, two remained."

83 AŻIH 301/2425.

84 AŻIH 301/1698.

85 See note 43 above, which indicates the sources for acts of murder in that collection of testimonies.

86 "A gold tooth extracted from the mouth of a corpse will always ooze blood, even after no one remembers where it came from," Kazimierz Wyka wrote in his book, *Życie na niby. Pamiątnik po klęsce*. Markiewicz, Henryk / Wyka, Marta (eds.) Universitas:

Solidarity and Discord

Some Jews who were turned in survived. Basia Goldstein, whose story was told above, survived, along with her Polish benefactors, by virtue of the Christian prayers that she knew by heart, and thanks to the assistance given her by the *wójt* (head of the rural council)⁸⁷. A Jewish boy adopted by Władysław Piwowarczyk's sister escaped an even graver danger. After one of the neighbors denounced him, the Opatów police chief himself verified whether the boy had been circumcised.

My sister held the boy firmly to her breast so that the commander could not pluck him from her and proclaimed: "You can kill me together with the boy. I shall not give up the boy." The police chief threatened to take her to the Gestapo if she refuses to hand over the boy, and left. [...] My brother [a pre-war communist in hiding after escaping from a German prison] went to see the police chief and threatened him that should he lay a hand on the boy or on [our] sister, or set the Gestapo on them, that would be the end of him⁸⁸.

This incident shows the limits of the control exercised by the Blue police – at least in Opatów. The testimony presented below illustrates the considerable influence exercised by Polish officials within the German administration⁸⁹ as transpires also from reports from the areas of Tuczepy and Osiemborów. In Mokrzyszów near Tarnobrzeg, the entire village was cooperating on hiding a medical doctor, Dr. Lilien, who had escaped from Lviv. The account makes it clear that both the head of the employment administration (*Arbeitsamt*) and the village head

Kraków 1984, p. 138. Regarding cases of the mutilation of body parts while extracting teeth on the part of Germans and Poles see, among other testimonies, AŻIH, 301/3743, 13, 1791, 3702, 1846, 2008, 4163. See also Białowit, *Bunt w Sobiborze*, p. 272, on the Jewish cemetery in Izbica.

87 AŻIH, 301/2793. See also Bauman's testimony regarding Mala Perlmutter from Tarnobrzeg (AŻIH, 301/2425): "The girl was accepted in Branów as a Polish child, thanks to the high-school teacher Lolek Wawrzycki from Branów. Many Poles testified that the girl was a Jewess, but thanks to Wawrzycki's efforts she was saved. She was raised in the priests' lodgings by the housekeeper."

88 AŻIH, 301/, notation missing. A similar circumstance is related in the testimony of Stanisław Jeronimski from the village of Chobotki, Malinówka regional council (?) [the question mark appears in the original] in the vicinity of Białystok, AŻIH, 310/1468.

89 "On the way we stopped to drink water next to the home of the head of the council. 'These are attractive brunettes,' said the head of the council. 'No doubt Jewesses.' 'No,' replied Mr. Sikorski with a smile that tried to conceal fear. 'These are relatives of my wife.'" The testimony of Ewa Janowska-Boisse, née Keinberg, Gutenbaum, Łatala: *Dzieci Holokaustu II*, p. 78.

(*soltys*) were involved in the decision to protect her. The village folk simply followed their lead:

[114N]

It was like this, [doctor Lilien] was actually on her way to work [...] [*Gendarmes* arrived to carry out a search on the premises of the local *treuhaender*, who had failed to deliver the required amount of produce to the authorities]. One [...] of the *gendarmes*, not Polish, but German, recognized her by her appearance and immediately said, "This is a Jewess." The *soltys* – who lived next door, and was getting along with us quite well, and knew [who doctor Lilien was] – said: "Don't trouble yourself about her, look, she's working, who works is not Jewish." He said that and left. And we were actually [...] – it must have been autumn, because we had already harvested the crops – we were there, making sauerkraut, sauerkraut. So this Połowicz [Stanisław Polubicz, who was head of the *Arbeitsamt*, protected Dr. Lilien and issued her a fake *kennkarte*], he already knew what was going on because this [episode] immediately became known [in the village]. He was a very decent man, and the three of us – there was this granary with produce in it – so the three of us, including the doctor, so that it wouldn't be so suspicious, the doctor and us two – my sister, she still lives around here, and I – he put us in that granary and locked it. [...] And the [*gendarme*] actually came riding on a horse, as [people] had already begun talking about it, and he went around the entire yard looking for her, but nobody talked to him. It was all quiet and as if Dr. Lilien had disappeared, but she was of course hiding. And that's how it turned out. But otherwise she had no other troubles, because somehow not a lot of people would come over here, so everyone got along. So she survived fairly easily, but she was grateful till the end.

One can but surmise what could have been done to rescue Jews had more Poles demonstrated solidarity with the victims, encouraged by the attitude of local authorities⁹⁰. Although what I call "the Polish-Polish war over the Jews" involved no small degree of risk, only seldom did this risk approach the level of danger that the Jews themselves faced. In the passage that follows, a *soltys* who attempted to rescue a fleeing Jew lost his fight against the local Jew hunters, but did not lose his life himself. This incident occurred in the village of Sokoły, not far from Białystok, only a few days prior to the take-over of the region by the Russians. The local farmers (among whom there was, according to the testimony, "a well-known

90 See the section below, "Priests, Nuns, and Catholic Laypeople." See too the testimony of Bronisław Szwejca; Gutenbaum, Łatala: *Dzieci Holokaustu II*, p. 203: "[A]ll of a sudden she called to him, in a mixture of German and Polish, the woman whom I recognized as the concierge of our building prior to the war. She asks him whether he knows who the girl accompanying him is, and immediately adds: 'She is a Jewess, I know her!' Mr. Czaplą drew his revolver, began to curse her, called her a Polish swine, and threatened to shoot her dead by his very own hand if she made even another sound."

antisemite by the name of Kazimierz Truskolaski,” who prior to the war had been jailed for murdering Dynoński, a Jew) apprehended a Jew hiding in the forest, Abram Kapłański, who sought to buy food.

Duchnowski, *sołtys* of the village of Lachy, allegedly entreated the Truskolaskis: “leave Kapłański alone, he is a decent guy.” The Truskolaskis allegedly threatened Duchnowski, “If you don’t bring him we will bring you [to the Germans]!”⁹¹

Another testimony tells of Izrael Lewin, a Jew from the area of Wizna, who was hiding in the home of a Polish friend during the notorious Jedwabne pogrom.

During the night, ‘boys’ from the village arrived asking about me, saying that they wished to purchase goods. Szymański, who realized what was happening, told them that he would protect me with an axe in his hand. The ‘boys’ left, but smashed the window panes with stones⁹².

Similar overtones characterize the testimony of Karolina Sapetowa, a wet nurse with the Hochweiser family who succeeded in rescuing two children by taking them to her own village in the vicinity of Wadowice.

At first the children would leave the house, but as time passed I had to conceal them inside. That, too, did not help. People knew that I was hiding Jewish children and they started intimidating and threatening me so that I would hand the children over to the Gestapo, claiming that the entire village would be burnt down because of them and [that everyone] would be murdered. The *sołtys* sympathized with me and this often reassured me. The most aggressive ones I used to pacify with gifts, or simply bribe them. [...] until one day the farmers decided to eliminate the children and made a plan to take them to the barn and then chop their heads off with an axe when they were asleep. [...] I got a life-saving idea. I put the children into a cart and told everyone that I was taking them out of the village in order to drown them. I went across the whole village and everyone saw and believed [it], and when the night fell I brought the children back and hid them at a neighbor’s⁹³.

91 Rachel Kapłańska, the person submitting the testimony, adds: “Sokoły, and in particular the village of Lachy, were, prior to 1939, under the influence of nationalist extremists,” and she warns that “if the Sokoli police were to arrest the members of the Truskolaski family this would lead nowhere. Kazimierz Truskolaski belongs to the People’s Army organization and this organization is very active there.” AŻIH, 301/1458.

92 Testimony of Izrael Lewin, AŻIH, 301/4391.

93 Testimony of Karolina Sapetowa in Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, pp. 275–77.

Such daring was unfortunately absent when Emanuel Elbinger's youngest sister⁹⁴, Szymon Sztrumpf's mother⁹⁵, her granddaughter and many others needed it the most. This theme returns in a sort of remorse in the words of a Polish policeman who, when asked by a Jew: "Why are you beating us, are we not being beaten enough?" retorted: "Should I be kissing you? After all, your landlord handed you in? Now I have the right to deal with you."⁹⁶ This issue is put into sharper focus by Maria Hochberg-Mariańska, as follows:

Among the Poles who traveled by train in the summer of 1942, at the height of the deportations from the ghettos, there were, it may be assumed, many who viewed those who apprehended Jews on the trains and handed them over to the police with disgust and shame. But very few of them had the courage to say something in those moments – just say it out loud. From my own experience I know that a few simple and direct words would have sufficed to make a person think and desist as he stood upon the brink of the chasm of this crime⁹⁷.

94 Testimony of his sister Pola, AŻIH 301/4223: "My little sister was hiding at the house of a widow we knew, she was a decent woman. [Her] neighbors threatened to report her to the Gestapo unless she takes the Jewish child to the deportation point. She got scared and she took the child to Brzesk, and left her on her own. [...] My little sister [she was 6 years old at the time] then went to the house of Polish friends, who were safekeeping many of our belongings, entreating them to let her stay at least during the day, as she would fend for herself overnight. She was shabby, since that woman had taken all her proper clothes. These people gave her some milk, but did not agree to let her stay. She went to see some other friends, but those declined, too. She was taken to the deportation point and put on the transport."

95 Testimony of Szymon Sztrumpf, AŻIH 301/3702.

96 AŻIH, 301/3262.

97 See Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. XXIII. See, for example, the testimony of Ewa Janowska-Boisse related above, Gutenbaum, Łatala: *Dzieci Holokaustu II*, p. 80: "The *sołtys*, who noticed that Władysław was befriending our mother, said to him one day, 'People are talking, saying that Mrs. Janowska is Jewish, and I shall have to report this to the police.' Władysław Nogala replied: 'If you do that, your head will rest there, on that rubbish dump.'" See also *ibid.*, p. 178, the testimony of Sven Sonnenberg: "'It appears as though some *Żydek* [pejorative for "Jew"] has wormed his way into the queue – let someone go and fetch a policeman, I'll keep him here.' I was petrified with fear. All of a sudden an old woman pushed her way from behind. When she was close she said to the salesman: 'What's happening here? What do you want of this boy? Can't you see you've scared him to death? [...] Give him bread and don't waste time. I wouldn't want to complain to my son that the service in this store isn't worth a thing.'"

Likewise, in the period following the liberation, known as the period of “railway operation [Polish: *akcja pociagowa*]”, nothing much changed in the atmosphere on Polish trains. A testimony dated January 1946 relates an attack on a train bearing Jewish refugees from Lviv, approaching to Kraków.

As I was walking down the platform [at the station Kraków-Płaszów] along the carriages I felt a blow to the head and heard a cry “Beat the Jews.” I instinctively started running, but at that moment I was apprehended by thugs who knocked me to the ground and began to beat and kick me. My glasses fell off; the thugs hit my nose, my forehead and my head swelled. Several militiamen stood beside me on the platform [...] and did nothing to help me. I tried in vain to get into one of the carriages. Also a doctor arrived accompanied by two nurses from the Red Cross, saw how the thugs were running after me and did not react at all... At that moment one of the hooligans approached the carriage, shouting “Where are the Jews here? I will kill them all.” Most fortunately, there was someone who shouted “There are no Jews here. A few minutes later, a Red Cross nurse entered and bandaged my wounds.”⁹⁸

Priests, Nuns and Catholic Laypeople

Not even places under the authority of the Catholic Church were immune to the Polish-Polish war over the Jews. The priests and nuns who sought to assist Jews had to deal with the same problems that beset laypeople. They faced attitudes that were deeply divided about the Jews, whether expressed by the clergy or the laypeople⁹⁹. Jews in hiding often overheard people exclaiming to their protectors “How can you, a Catholic, not be ashamed to conceal Jews?”¹⁰⁰ Behavior tolerated and even encouraged by the Church prior to the war, including jokes at the expense of Jews, mockery, and abuse, took on an entirely new significance under German occupation. The accounts collected in *Children Accuse* include many examples of cases in which church representatives or laypeople took a clear stand against such acts and even tried to prevent them¹⁰¹. Yet, the high frequency of such incidents was rarely ascribed to the prewar tolerance

98 Testimony of Dawid Grünbaum, AŻIH, 301/1357.

99 See testimony of Emanuel Erbingier about a priest in Nowy Brzesk, who feared his own vicar; see also cases of concealing children in Greek Catholic monasteries in Ukraine, in the memoirs of Kurt Lewin; id.: *Przeżyłem*. Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich: Warsaw 2007.

100 Testimony of Szmul Garber, AŻIH, 301/3535, regarding Bolesław Pogorzelski from Zabłudów, who concealed him during the German occupation.

101 See, for example, Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, pp. 111, 127, 128.

of antisemitism by the Church, but was broadly attributed to the “natural”, impersonal order of things¹⁰².

On more than one occasion, clergy, aware of the risk involved, refused to take in Jews. A Jewish woman, a mother with a small boy who sought shelter in the vicinity of Częstochowa, later testified:

Darkness. A group of peasants is milling in front of the gate to the monastery. I knew that a converted Jewess was working in the monastery, Sister Rozalia, and I asked to call on her. I told her openly who I was, and she went to ask the Mother Superior. Unfortunately the Mother Superior did not agree to put us up for the night, explaining that were this to become known to the Germans they would murder the entire community. She didn't believe I had walked 25 kilometers, and she kept telling my son: 'Go to your Daddy, go to Daddy's wagon'. But there was no Daddy, just the night and the forest lying ahead¹⁰³.

The mother and her son stayed the night in a village in the home of a farmer, who first made sure his property was well hidden, and then advised her to try again at the monastery the following day.

The nuns were glad that Sikora had put us up [and] spoke to a priest, Father Księżyk, who promised that the monastery would supply us with food, but he was afraid to allow me and my child to enter its walls. [...] We were generously supplied by the monastery. They also gave me food for Sikora, to appease him. My son played with Sikora's children, the nuns adored him. The vicar knew who we were and was quite helpful. Meanwhile I was running out of money and at night, I sometimes sneaked over to Kłonice, where I was storing my property at a priest's. Once during a raid I had to lie motionless, hidden in a haystack at the parsonage. My son, certain that I will not return, kept running away toward the monastery, didn't want to go to the farmer's, because he was scared of lice, and the farmer was forcing him to go back. A servant who worked in the monastery told her friend, under promise of secrecy, that we were Jews. They began whispering, pointing at

102 Note the similarity between this explanation and the outlook prevalent among peasants, of extortion and threats, addressed at the beginning of this article. This outlook is reinforced by the example of two or three antisemites from the prewar period, who rescued Jews during the occupation. These cases, which featured very extensively in the discussion of this topic, generally include the priests Stanisław Trzeciak, Jan Mosdorf and Jan Dobraczyński. A similar role is played by the episode, mentioned with surprising frequency, of Dr. Juliusz Kamiński, a Jewish physician with the Kielce-Częstochowa regiment of the National Armed Forces. See examples in Chodakiewicz, Marek J.: *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944–1947*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Warsaw 2008, p. 136, note 29, and additional references.

103 AŻIH, 301/1698.

us... The farmer was afraid to continue to accommodate us... I returned once more to the monastery and begged for sanctuary. They were afraid and our wanderings continued¹⁰⁴.

In the general atmosphere of fear and suspicion, people who wanted to help Jews were unsure about revealing their secret to their priests. A Staszów resident Maria Szczecińska (see above), who feared that the local priest would betray her, would travel as far as Kraków for confession¹⁰⁵.

A small collection of positively encouraging documents is kept in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. In an example from Janowice, a Jewish woman testified that a tertiary that was sheltering her was pressured by relatives to send her away. She eventually turned to her priest for advice:

He said to keep her on, since it was now winter and she had no place to go, and that now there were less [people] to keep than before. And so she stayed there for more than 11 months. Once there was a raid in the village, [they were looking] for partisans, and she spent 9 hours in the chimney. The tertiary explained her decision thus: the most important commandment in her view is Jesus' imperative regarding the need to host and feed a passerby who has lost their way, and it is more important to obey this imperative than the edict of the German authorities demanding that Jews be turned in. When Kozaczukowa's [the woman who had arranged a hideout for the woman giving the testimony] son was arrested in Białystok by the Germans for some offence or other, Mira offered her diamond earring to be used as a bribe to get him out. [But] the tertiary declined to accept this gift, saying they would find money for the guy somewhere else, and she [Mira] might well need the earring later. The tertiary was happy when Mira, in order to please her, would sing hymns and pray with her, but she would always add that she can get christened if she wishes, but only of her own accord, once she is free¹⁰⁶.

The memoirs of Fania Brzezińska from the town of Knyszyn in the Białystok region are replete with bitter portrayals of the behavior of her Polish neighbors¹⁰⁷,

104 See the testimony of Stella Kolin, née Obrebska (Gutenbaum, Łatala: *Dzieci Holokautu II*, pp. 89–90), who was accepted into the monastery at Czestochowa after the outbreak of the Polish uprising in Warsaw, and who revealed her Jewish identity in confession.

105 AŻIH, 301/2790.

106 Testimony of Mira Kwasowicer, AŻIH, 301/2007. Janowice near the railway station to Lewickie, Juchnowiec Kościelny municipality, in the Białystok province.

107 AŻIH, 301/1276, a description of the situation following the initial German incursion. Shortly thereafter the Germans withdrew from Knyszyn in the wake of the German-Soviet pact: "Sunday, September 17, 1939, noise, tumult, screams in German and devilish laughter, mixed with the inner gratification and the ironic smiles of cynical satisfaction on the part of our Polish citizens from the nearby villages, who would gain their sympathy with stolen Jewish property."

who marked houses with a cross or a Star of David in order to differentiate between Jews and Christians. When “a wild mob was gathering to stage a pogrom and burn the houses of the defenseless Jews,” Brix, the town’s priest, “risking his life, [...] walked into the rioting mob and ordered them to be quiet and to calm down”¹⁰⁸. This occurred in June/July 1941, following the Soviet retreat and the return of the Germans into the area.

While the Knyszyn priest was able to suppress the pogrom for a moment, a document pertaining to Father Ignacy Źyciński from Trójca near Zawichost shows that his priestly authority was actually negligible. From the testimony about Zofia Zysman, who on several occasions was concealed at the parsonage, it transpires that, although the priest was respected, this did not deter the locals from attacking his house when they suspected him of harboring Jews. On nineteen different occasions his home was subjected to raids by various gangs/partisan groups seeking traces of Jews¹⁰⁹. Apparently, Poles who accepted the authority of religious leaders on other issues did not necessarily listen to them when it came to the Jews. Furthermore, priests were more powerful in rural areas than in the cities. As a result, the situation in the countryside – where the Germans, various partisan groups, and the Church all competed for authority – was more complex than in the cities. Not all Catholics made their decisions in such a straightforward manner as the tertiary from Janowice described above did.

Of all the instances in which Poles placed themselves in danger for religious reasons, the story of Dawid Nassan, who witnessed the execution of his wife, daughter, parents, his wife’s parents, and five brothers and sisters, stands out. He related how a family of farmers from a village in the vicinity of Skała, municipality of Miechów, took him into their home.

108 On this issue see also Libionka, Dariusz: “Duchowieństwo diecezji łomżyńskiej wobec antysemityzmu i zagłady Żydów”. In: Machcewicz, Paweł / Persak, Krzysztof (eds.): *Wokół Jedwabnego*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Warsaw 2002, pp. 119–20, and from the same source, vol. 2, part V, document 15, p. 238 and footnote 3, Testimony of Samuel Suraski, AŻIH 301/3959. The editors of the volume of documents report the name of the priest as “Franciszek Brix.” See also document no. 4, pp. 196, 198 (the testimony of Pesia Schuster-Rozenblum, AŻIH, 301/1274, in which mention is made of the priest Cyprian Łozowski); and on this priest, see also Źbikowski, Andrzej: “Pogromy i mordy ludności żydowskiej w Łomżyńskim i na Białostocczyźnie latem 1941 roku w świetle relacji ocalałych Żydów i dokumentów sądowych”. In Machcewicz, Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, p. 207.

109 See also Gutman, Israel / Bender, Sara: *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations 5: Poland*. Yad Vashem: Jerusalem 2004, pp. 646–47. The name of Father Źyciński does not appear in Zofia Zysman’s testimony (AŻIH, 301/2016).

I begged him – says Nassan about his first meeting with his host – that if he believes there is God in heavens, he will give me some old clothes and I'll try to repay him. He told me he had none but he would try to find some, and he let me stay in his home. He gave me tattered trousers to wear in the meantime. He poured some water into a basin and rubbed my feet, as they were all white with frostbite. [...] He led me into his cowshed where he kept me for 8 days, but he was too poor to find me some other clothes. His wife went to see her mother and told her everything, saying she could not bear to look at my misery, but she could not help me, and she asked her to find some old shoes and clothes for me, as they couldn't just let me leave like that. Her mother gave her a pair of clogs [for me], but there was no jacket. But there were snowstorms and it was getting colder and colder each day. After a week, the woman [mother-in-law] came over and entreated her son-in-law to give me his clothes, just so that I would leave, as a Jewish woman had [just] been killed in Brzozówka [...]. My host, Józef Biesiada (who doesn't wish his name to be made public) [in fear of persecution from the accused; transl. note], promised his mother-in-law that he would order me out of his home. Once his mother-in-law left, he knelt down in front of his wife and begged her to allow him to let me stay. He explained to her that it was probably due to a divine miracle that God had rescued me from the cemetery, from the clutches of the executioners, and that this was God's will. They discussed this almost all night long. His wife explained to him that he was endangering them both and their four children, she cried and said that she was afraid, but he promised that he would conceal me well under the ground, and that the war would not last much longer. He eventually managed to convince his wife, he led me to the barn, and, although it was a Sunday, he removed the hay and began to dig a hideout in the ground, in which I could enter in a prone position. He did not ask me even for one penny, and said that he devoted his life to the grace of God. And that I should pay him only if in future I would be able to do so. And so I survived with him for 27 months, lying in that hideout, and I would only occasionally go out to relieve myself. [...] I was freezing in the winter, my shirt rotted on my body, lice were consuming me, but they really had nothing with which to clothe me. They lived in abject poverty, especially before the harvest, yet they shared whatever they had with me. In the winter, Józef would sometimes bring me hot water, so that I could warm up, when he bought 5 kg of coarse shredded tobacco, he would roll a cigarette for me. When the Red Army arrived, I was unable to walk without help, my legs were numb, insensitive. My host always said: "The Jews have always been here and will remain forever." And he triumphed. [...] It was not until two weeks later that my host carted me away, covered with fodder [...]¹¹⁰.

110 AŻIH, 301/3262, testimony submitted in Kraków on 25/6/1947. The same theme of moving a concealed Jew in a clandestine manner appears in the testimony of Pinkas Gruszniewski, AŻIH 310/2736: [in the year 1946] "She hid me under a blanket, and in the outlying villages she told people I was her nephew. She transported me to Łomża, my town of birth. I feared that someone might recognize me and could kill me, for no other Jew was living there any longer."

Revenge Taken by Poles on Other Poles after the War over Jews

A quite common ending of the above testimony leads to the subject of unforeseen consequences of the Holocaust. I began this chapter by noting that it addresses Jews and Poles who survived the Holocaust together – albeit according to different rules and under different circumstances. Both were at constant risk of immediate death during the war years; both were also hounded and hunted in Poland's rural areas after the war had ended. "A certain farmer said that had he known of someone who had concealed Jews in their house, he would have murdered such people on the spot," as Tema Kaplan testified¹¹¹. This time, the Jews, who had realized that they should avoid the rural areas, were in a far better situation¹¹².

A letter, written in 1947 by Miriam Hochberg-Mariańska to the editor of the Polish journal *Kultura* published in Paris¹¹³, tells of righteous Poles who, in their testimonies before the Historical Committee, requested that their personal details remain confidential out of fear that their lives would be disrupted if their stories became public knowledge¹¹⁴. While the historical committees endeavored to do this, such secrets were not always kept.

[When the Soviets came], my hostess registered me at a different school as Zygmunt Weinreb and was forced to send me to a students' residence, because people began to harass her for harboring a Jew.¹¹⁵

111 Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. 133.

112 See Chapter 4: *Ethnographic Findings on The Aftermath of the Holocaust...* in this volume.

113 See also Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. xxxii.

114 See, for example, Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. 131: "This gentleman does not wish his name to be mentioned, since he does not want it to become known that he concealed Jews." See also what happened to Antonina Wyrzykowska (a heroine of Jan Tomasz Gross's and Anna Bikont's books on the Jedwabne massacre, where Poles rescued fourteen Jews) after the war – she was beaten because she had concealed Jews. In the latter source, p. 253: "They yelled: 'You are abject servants of the Jews, you concealed Jews who crucified Jesus!'" ; see also p. 255: "I am pleased with mother. But my sister thinks that we had better deny it, lest they cut off all our heads"; p. 256: "You yourself, madam, do not know where we are living. So you tell me, madam, how many such people there are who will look favorably upon my concealing Jews? One in ten? And I am probably exaggerating? [...] In Poland I would not reveal such things to a priest for all the money in the world."

115 Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, p. 111.

Wacław Andresiewicz, from the village of Janów near Białystok, concealed the 19-year-old Abram Lipcer during the time of the German occupation. After the liberation, Lipcer sought to retrieve the property he had placed for safekeeping in the hands of one of the neighbors, but gave up the idea when a militiaman who knew him warned him that people were planning to kill him.

The clerk who recorded the testimony notes:

Once Lipcer had escaped, the militia came looking for him in Trofimówka. The head of the household, Andresiewicz, was beaten by militiamen, who broke two of his ribs (medical certificate from Janów). A few days later they came over again and beat him up. The first time they also robbed him. A week ago they were there again, they tore the fur lapel off his coat, [saying] “why did you protect the Jew?” When Lipcer reported this to the province militia command in Białystok, two militiamen were dismissed from their posts¹¹⁶.

The following three testimonies likewise address events in the Białystok region where, in the wake of the German retreat from the area, the phenomenon of the hounding of Poles who had rescued Jews is particularly common.

[Rosolty project, municipality of Zwyki, Białystok district].

In October 1945 the gangs that roamed the forest discovered that [Bogusław] Pogorzelski had been concealing me during the occupation period. In the night ... a gang of eight people banged on the door of his home. The man hid in the attic, his wife opened the door. They immediately said to her, “Give us this Jew. Aren’t you, a Catholic, ashamed of concealing a Jew!?” They took Pogorzelski to a separate room, beat him, threatened him, and when they did not find me they loaded all the belongings and clothes into sacks and promised that if within three days he brings me to a certain spot by a church near the village of Tryczowki, they will return all his belongings to him [and] let him go, they will only take me with them. Not aware of this, I arrived to Rosolty the following day. My hosts received me with tears, and entreated me to go back to Białystok, as forest gangs are after me and now, after what I have gone through, they can kill me. Pogorzelski did not sleep in his home for three months following this incident. When I was already living in Białystok, Pogorzelski would often come to see me and complain that the gang members often come to his house, blackmail him and follow him...¹¹⁷

116 Testimony of Samuel Goldberg, AŻIH, 310/1251.

117 Testimony of Samuel Gerber, AŻIH, 301/3535. Similar testimony of Pinkas Gruszniewski, AŻIH, 301/84: “After the liberation a woman from the village of Miastkowo named Sadowska came to the farmer’s smallholding. I heard her relating that she had concealed Jews and that she was therefore afraid of revenge on the part of the forest gangs, who had already attacked her on several occasions, fired shots, robbed her of horses, demanded gold.” Gruszniewski submitted also a second testimony –

[Testimony of the Gosks, a farmer and his wife from Wyżyki, municipality of Puchały, who concealed nine Jews for a period of 22 months]

[...] Once the front had moved, the partisans came and harassed us for several years. It was worst at night, we trembled with fear. It affected our health. The wife developed heart problems just from fear, but thank God the KBW destroyed these bands and now life is good...¹¹⁸

My parents-in-law, Krzysztof and Emilia Dębowski, resident in the Długołęka project 7 km from Knyszyn, concealed a Jewish family, rabbi Abram Krawiec together with his wife and children – altogether nine individuals – during the German occupation. They sat in hiding beneath the floor of a store. [...] No one knew of this throughout the period of occupation, only when the front approached, the family started feeling reassured. Once Jan Czerech, a neighbor, saw the rabbi's wife, who had gone out to fetch water from the well. From this time onward the neighbor started blackmailing my father-in-law. [What follows is a description of the denunciation to the Germans; however, the witness' father-in-law managed to convince them that the rabbi he is concealing is in fact his brother, not a Jew]. In May 1945 my mother-in-law's neighbor, Czerech Jan, told a certain forest gang that the Dębowski family had been hiding Jews. They attacked the house one night and my father-in-law Dębowski was murdered in his bed. The other members of the family managed to flee. All the farm equipment was looted. [...] After the murder of my father-in-law, the neighbor Czerech Jan [currently resident in the Długołęka project] has not stopped harassing me and my old mother-in-law keeps saying that I am a Jewish lackey and will die just like the Jews were dying¹¹⁹.

The theme of revenge taken by Poles on other Poles for rescuing a Jewish woman appears likewise in the testimony of Noemi Centnerschwer:

After the liberation they told me that I would not be able to remain with them, since the AK members often came to the village, and would kill them because of me. After some time, a few weeks later, they wanted to take me to Ostrów Mazowiecka, as there were Jews there, but I didn't want [to go], I was wary, thinking it was some kind of trap, because I had not seen any Jews in the village. One night at midnight the men from the

AŻIH 301/2736, in which we read: "My farm owner wanted me to be baptized as a Christian and spoke to the priest about this, but the priest was afraid, since there were armed groups of the UPA [Ukrainian Liberation Army] and of the National Armed Forces [NSZ] in the area, and had anyone found out that I was a Jew, they would have robbed the owner of all his property and would have killed me."

118 AŻIH 301/5835. See also the letters left by survivors concealed by the Gosks farmer family. The letters were sent from Israel in the 1960s, AŻIH, 301/5812.

119 Testimony of Alojzy Konopka, AŻIH, 301/2966.

Home Army came to see us. It was in autumn, a few months after the liberation. The next morning my host forced me to leave, claiming that they would kill him because of me. [...] I was still very scared, I was afraid of every Pole as if he were a German¹²⁰.

Given the atmosphere of persecution, the natural solution for many was to leave Poland. Many Poles who had helped Jews chose in the end to emigrate. During our fieldwork in Sandomierz, we often came across similar accounts:

[...] there was this one [man] here, near Wierzbno... and he was concealing a Jew, taking food out to the dog... there was this dog, and underneath there was that tunnel, where this Jew was [hiding], right? Underneath the kennel. He was feeding this dog, and this Jew was taking it, and so... Afterward that Jew married his [host's] daughter – his name was Kuraś – his daughter, they later emigrated to Israel.

The Unrighteous Righteous

Marek Szapiro once compared the guilt of Germans and Poles with regard to the Jews to that of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth¹²¹. This metaphor, while flawed in

120 AŻIH, 301/2750.

121 Szapiro, *Dziennik*, diary entry September 15, 1944: “When I examine the issue of the attitude of Germans toward the Jews on the one hand, and that of the Poles toward the Jews on the other hand, I think of a literary comparison, very different in detail and superficial... In the tragedy *Macbeth*, Shakespeare presents to us a married couple of criminals. The difference between him and her is apparent: before he comes to a decision to murder, the husband is compelled to ponder and to struggle with himself. The wife makes the decision immediately, with no indecision whatsoever; but every deed must be linked to something in one’s inner makeup that is responsible for it – if not prior to the deed, then in its wake! The moral crisis afflicts the reckless accomplice to the murder only after the deed has been done, because it did not occur beforehand. This is a profound problem in the psychological realm, and I refer to it here in order to stress that it has nothing in common with the analogy that I wish to draw. Hitler is, as it were, despite all the differences, the manifestation of Macbeth. Before deciding to commit the crime he calculated everything in advance and approached the task with a firm decision: if he wins the war, who will then care about the fate of the Jews? And if he loses the war, then what can one do, this will be the end of his regime and of Germany in its entirety, but the Jews will no longer be there. Among the Poles, on the other hand, the decision to assist the Germans in annihilating the Jews was made without any due preparation. And what is moving and generates strong emotion in this situation stems from the fact that the Polish victory is not the victory of Hitler. In this case, Lady Macbeth’s success depends on the defeat of Macbeth. And what, therefore, was the factor that made me think of this analogy? – this is the decisive image: when the victorious allies sit down to the

many respects, helps explain why Jews in general, including many whose lives were saved by Poles, nevertheless have little sympathy for the nation to which the Righteous belong. Well-known monographs about the assistance Poles provided to Jews, such as *Ten jest z Ojczyzny mojej* (*This Is My Compatriot*) by Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna¹²², or those dedicated to Żegota¹²³, focus on the nationwide activities organized by that distinguished cell of the Home Army. Yet this literature relates almost exclusively the spirit and the will of tiny part of the Polish intelligentsia, often leftist, whose views on the “Jewish question” were hardly representative of the Polish people as a whole, and who operated primarily within the cities, albeit also dependent on the villages and their produce¹²⁴. The situation was entirely different in the Polish provinces, represented in the testimonies addressed here mainly by the regions of Kielce and Kraków. True, even in these areas some leaders of the underground organizations understood how essential the imperative to assist Jews¹²⁵ was to the preservation of Poland’s national spirit and moral stature. But, when it came to the Jews, the outlying areas of Poland were ethically debased. It was a remote region, where people lived according to their own standards, resistant to all authority. Even the Church, which in general enjoyed its greatest support here, was unable to change much in these desolate areas. This was all the more the case because the Church itself had only recently gained an awareness of the consequences of the antisemitism that had previously been a significant part of its doctrine.

The Polish public, as a collective, prefers to identify itself with those Poles who saved Jews rather than those who persecuted and killed them. True, Yad Vashem has awarded the title of Righteous to more Poles than to any other

victory feast, the blood-stained figure of Banquo, the spirit of the Polish Jew, will be revealed to the Polish Lady Macbeth (but likewise to the entire world). And this will not be the realization of some moral compunction, but, quite openly and absolutely decisively, it will constitute the pointing of an accusatory finger at Poland.”

122 Bartoszewski, Lewinówna, *Ten jest z Ojczyzny mojej*, op. cit.

123 See Libionka, Dariusz: “Polskie piśmiennictwo na temat zorganizowanej i indywidualnej pomocy Żydom (1945–2008)”. *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały* 4, 2008, pp. 17–80.

124 See testimony of Jerzy Aleksandrowicz, in Hochberg-Mariańska, Grüss, *Dzieci oskarżają*, pp. 181–189.

125 A prominent literary figure that exhibits this level of awareness is Leszek in Sławomir Mrozek’s novella “Nos”. In: id.: *Życie i inne okoliczności*. Noir sur Blanc: Warsaw 2003, pp. 79–91.

national group. The problem is that the Poles who rescued Jews did so as individuals, in most cases in opposition to the society which now prides itself on them.

Translation: Avner Greenberg

Chapter 3: The Trial of Tadeusz Maj. The History of AL Unit “Świt” in the Kielce Region

In his book on the Starachowice forced labor camp, Christopher Browning says that while the Jews hiding in the forests during World War II faced danger from nationalist groups such as *Armia Krajowa*, AK (Home Army) and the ultra-nationalist *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*, NSZ (National Armed Forces), left-wing groups such as the communist-led *Gwardia Ludowa*, GL (People’s Guard) and its successor *Armia Ludowa*, AL (People’s Army) were in principle friendly toward the Jews.¹ No matter how many examples can be cited to support this thesis,² it is contradicted by the postwar trials of commanders accused of murdering Jews: Grzegorz Korczyński and his subordinates in the Lublin region,³ and Tadeusz Maj and his unit “Świt” in the Starachowice area of the Kielce region.⁴ This

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- 1 Browning, Christopher R.: *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp*. W. W. Norton: New York 2010, p. 252: Although some groups of “forest fighters” – normally those associated with the Communist People’s Army – would accept Jews into their ranks, partisans connected with the conservative and nationalist Home Army usually refused to do so. What is worse, there were cases of units belonging to the Home Army or National Armed Forces robbing Jews or killing them on the spot. See chapter 9 of this book.
 - 2 See reports of Jewish partisans, mainly from Record Group 301, Jewish Historical Institute Archive (*Archiwum Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*, AŻIH), collected in Diatłowicki, Jerzy (ed.): *Żydzi w walce. Opór i walka z faszystem w latach 1939–1945*, 2 vols. Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: Warsaw 2009–2010.
 - 3 Gontarczyk, Piotr: “Z genealogii elit PZPR. Przypadek Stefana Kiljanowicza vel Grzegorza Korczyńskiego”. *Glaukopis* 1, 2003, p. 214–229; investigation and trial materials relating to the case of Grzegorz Korczyński, Institute of National Remembrance Archive (*Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, AIPN), AIPN BU507/221. Gontarczyk was also the first author to discover and publish materials of the trial of Tadeusz Maj. See for example, id.: *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Droga do władzy 1941–1944*. Fronda: Warsaw 2004, pp. 346–348; see also footnote 13.
 - 4 The records of this trial are in the Archive of New Records (*Archiwum Akt Nowych*, AAN) in Warsaw, records of the Prosecutor General (*Prokuratura Generalna*, PG), PG 21/99; and Tadeusz Maj’s personal file, 8185; as well as in various collections in AIPN, such as documents concerning Adam Bakalarczyk, AIPN 0703/1132; and also complementary materials concerning the trial of Jan Kozieł, State Archive for the Capital City of Warsaw (*Archiwum Państwowe m.st. Warszawy*, APW), Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw (*Sąd Wojewódzki dla m.st. Warszawy*, SW), IV3K.126/53, no. 6.

chapter addresses the history of Tadeusz Maj, kept under wraps in the climate of factional power struggles between Polish communists during the late Stalinist period.

The murders of which Maj and his people were accused had been committed in the woods near Iłża from late June to December 1944. The victims were Jewish escapees from the Starachowice forced labor camp who had evaded deportation to Birkenau by breaking out and escaping into the woods in late June 1944.⁵ The survivors' recollections⁶ indicate that in these forests they encountered partisans from all the groups operating in the area – AK,⁷ NSZ, and AL. The survivors speak about robberies and killings they suffered at the hands of these units, but nonetheless emphasize that only left-wing units would accept Jewish members or in certain cases punish their members for robbing and killing Jews in allegedly unauthorized acts.⁸ The material from the trials of Tadeusz Maj and his subordinate Jan Koziół, presented below, contradicts the view that these were unauthorized acts of which the commanders were ignorant. It also demonstrates the level of antisemitism among AL soldiers and shows that the problem of antisemitic attitudes – normally seen as a reaction to Stalinism – was causing a rift among Polish communists much earlier. One main player emerging from the testimonies quoted below is Mieczysław Moczar, whose political clout in 1968 contributed to the last great wave of Jewish emigration from Poland.

5 Browning, *Remembering Survival*, pp. 246–255.

6 In *ibid.*, Browning quotes escapee testimonies, which can be found in Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, University of Southern California (VHA); see also www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Wierzbnik/Wierzbnik.html#TOC332, pp. 331–333, 362ff, retrieved 5.5.2012. One testimony by Louis Leib Feintuch from 1998, concerning a murder committed by an unidentified partisan group, certainly regards Maj's unit Świt; see sub-section *Kotyska* below.

7 On the murder of a group of Jews by an AK unit commanded by Wincenty Tomasik "Potok", see Skibińska, Alina: "Dostał 10 lat, ale za co?" Analiza motywacji sprawców zbrodni na Żydach na wsi kieleckiej w latach 1942–1944". In Engelking, Barbara / Grabowski, Jan (eds.): *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*. Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów: Warsaw 2011.

8 See Browning, *Remembering Survival*, pp. 250–254, for the story about the sentence Mieczysław Moczar passed against the murderers of a Jewish soldier. David Sela's testimony contains a similar account; see "In the Woods of Wierzbnik (with the Partisans)". In: Shutzman, Mark (ed.): *Wierzbnik-Starachowitz: A Memorial Book*. Public Committee of the Wierzbnik-Starachowitz Society in Israel and the Diaspora: Tel Aviv 1973, p. 333; available in English at www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Wierzbnik/wie332.html. This case is possibly connected to the Ząbek murder case discussed below.

Part 1. The Political Context of the Trial

Tadeusz Maj, a leading commander of Poland's AL partisan movement during World War II, served until September 1943 as a platoon commander (using the code-name "Róża") in *Związek Walki Zbrojnej*, ZWZ (Union for Armed Struggle), the nationalist precursor of AK, in Rzecznów, Starachowice county. After his promotion to AL unit "Świt" commander in 1944, he started using different aliases, "Różga" and "Łokietek". After the war, following a stint with *Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR (Polish Workers' Party), he was appointed deputy commander of *Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*, KBW (Internal Security Corps) brigade in Lublin, and in July 1945 the vice-chairman of a *Wolność-Równość-Niepodległość*, WRN (Liberty, Equality, Independence) chapter in Kielce. Between 1946 and 1949, he chaired Kielce's Special Commission which, *inter alia*, investigated so-called "speculators". From 1950 until his arrest in May 1951, Tadeusz Maj served as a public prosecutor in Łódź, though he had never studied law.

His file in the *Archiwum Akt Nowych*, AAN (Archive of New Records) contains a letter from 15 May 1945, marked 'top secret', addressed to *Komitet Centralny* PPR, KC PPR (PPR Central Committee), probably to its senior official and later a Politburo member Zenon Kliszko.⁹ The letter was sent by two KBW functionaries – Capt. Niewiadomski, head of the Personnel Department, and Maj. Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki, head of the Politics and Education Board.¹⁰

We are placing at your disposal Major Tadeusz Maj, who [...] as commander for political-educational affairs of the Third KBW brigade failed to carry out his assignments.... In many areas [Maj] turned out to be a nationalist, and manifested ill-will toward people of other ethnicities (Jews). According to information from former AL partisans, he was involved in shooting to death Jewish escapees from German camps.¹¹

9 Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki as a secret UB collaborator code-named "Pióro" (AIPN, BU 00945/170/Jacket) indicates in a letter that he submitted "a written report [on the Maj case] to KC PPR, handing it in to comrade Kliszko," *ibid.*, p. 43.

10 From mid-1944 Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki was Maj's deputy commander. During his trial for murdering Jews, held concurrently with Maj's trial, Świt member Jan Koziół "Galant" accused Orkan of antisemitism and ordering murders of Jews, APW, SW, IV3K.126/53, p. 61.

11 AAN, 8185, p. 7. In "Notatka służbowa" from March 28, 1951, officer Ludwik Sikora writes that Adam Bakalarczyk "Dulka" told Waclaw Tracz "Skóra" that "Łokietek [Tadeusz Maj] was summoned to the Central Committee by comrade Zambrowski."

Despite rumors, circulating soon after the war, of AL's wartime antisemitic acts,¹² investigation of AL partisans in connection with the murders of Jews¹³ was not launched until the autumn of 1948, when factional struggles in the PPR led one faction to seek incriminating evidence against the party's First Secretary Władysław Gomułka and his associates, including Mieczysław Moczar and Grzegorz Korczyński. At the time, a special group headed by Public Security Vice-Minister Roman Romkowski was tasked with combating "Gomulkism" and the 'nationalist right-wing deviation,' which had been denounced at a KC PPR conference. On March 3, 1950, the group was transformed into the Special Bureau of *Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, MBP (Ministry of Public Security) and, from 30 November 1951, it was known as Department X headed by Anatol Fejgin, with Józef Światło and Henryk Piasecki as vice-directors. Investigation of cases designated as "line 3" – which included 'provocations and sabotage in the PPR and AL during the occupation' – was supervised by Światło, who had been Fejgin's deputy in the Special Bureau as well as in the special group.¹⁴

KBW's *Zarząd Informacji* (Directorate of Information) began looking into Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki even before the outbreak of the PPR factional struggles that resulted in Gomułka's removal from the post of First Secretary of the PPR.¹⁵ This interest is apparent from Orkan's file, more specifically from his

12 For example, see the statement by Roman Przybyłowski, the WUPB deputy commander in Kielce, recorded during the IPN investigation into the Kielce pogrom (July 4, 1946), claiming that the Kielce district chief Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk was an antisemite who had ordered that Jews who tried to join his units be shot. "Przesłuchanie świadka Romana Przybyłowskiego", undated, in Żaryn, Jan / Kamiński, Łukasz (eds.): *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Kielce 2006, p. 377.

13 Some documents originating from these investigations were published in Chodakiewicz, Marek J. et al. (eds.): *Tajne oblicze GLAL i PPR*. Burchard Edition: Warsaw 1997–1999. Some historians, such as Ryszard Nazarewicz, tried to undermine the credibility of Światło's material, suggesting it has been fabricated as a result of political pressure. Beside the testimonies of Świt soldiers, other documents also contradict this theory: the 1945 report cited in the beginning of this chapter; Józef Bugajski's interrogation from 1948, corroborated by Władysław Sobczyński (see below); Roman Przybyłowski's testimony cited in footnote 32; and the contents of Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki's file (code-name "Pióro").

14 The chronology is based on Paczkowski, Andrzej: *Trzy twarze Józefa Światły. Przyczynek do historii komunizmu w Polsce*. Prószyński i S-ka: Warsaw 2009, pp. 112, 130, 148ff.

15 He was replaced by Bolesław Bierut at the KC PPR meeting which took place on August 31 – September 3, 1948.

29 February 1948 statement about his superior, Eugeniusz Iwańczyk-Wiślicz,¹⁶ one of the most important officials in Kielce, after Moczar. Iwańczyk-Wiślicz had established the “Świt” unit and appointed Tadeusz Maj its commander and Orkan his deputy in 1944. Orkan wrote that not only had Wiślicz earlier been a member of AK, which in those days was tantamount to a dangerous accusation, but he also ‘maintained very friendly relations with a Gestapo agent, chief forester Krüger from Marcule, who was subsequently shot to death by the AK underground.’¹⁷ Orkan also implied that Wiślicz was involved in murdering an unnamed communist in Jasieniec.¹⁸ This statement likely marked the beginning of an investigation code-named “Jesion” (see below), which was later taken over by Department X.

This early interest in Orkan is also evident from a 30 August 1948 report by Capt. Lewicki, a senior officer in KBW’s Information Department IV. He informs his superior, Col. Punda, that upon his request he had quietly investigated Orkan on the basis of a report received by sub-Lieut. Osiński, an officer in the Personnel Department of the KBW Regiment VII in Kielce.¹⁹ The investigation showed that Orkan-Łęcki, like Iwańczyk, a former member of ZWZ, had been arrested by the Germans in 1940.²⁰ When interrogated by them, Orkan allegedly gave away ‘the entire underground organization of ZWZ; as a result, several dozen people were arrested by the Gestapo’ and sent to Auschwitz. Among them was Capt. Lewicki’s source Stanisław Kosowski, who after the war served as head of municipal

16 Iwańczyk-Wiślicz “Stary Jakub” was a member of prewar right-wing groups and the AK platoon commander of the “Wola” Sub-district before founding Świt. From May 1944, he was chief of staff of AL’s Third Radom-Kielce Sub-district. When Mieczysław Moczar assumed AL Sub-district command at the end of June 1944, Wiślicz became his deputy; after: *Wieczorek, Mieczysław: Armia Ludowa. Działalność bojowa 1944–1945*. MON: Warsaw 1984, p. 94. After the war he served as a Kielce voivode until he was deposed in 1948. See *Akta osobowe Eugeniusza Iwańczyka Wiślicza*, AAN, 8500. See *Wiślicz-Iwańczyk, Eugeniusz: Echa Puszczy Jodłowej*. MON: Warsaw 1969.

17 See footnote 39.

18 AIPN, BU 00945/170, p. 20. To be precise, two PPR members.

19 “Sprawozdanie kapt. Lewickiego dotyczące przeprowadzonego wywiadu w sprawie ppłk. Orkana-Łęckiego ze sztabu KBW do szefa Zarządu Informacji KBW, płk. Bundy, 30 sierpnia 1948” AIPN BU 00945/170, p. 20. Sub-Lieut. Osiński’s report is probably the unsigned “Notatka” from August 9, 1948, *ibid.*, p. 19.

20 The incomplete “Wyciąg ze sprawy ‘Jesion’” from February 12, 1952 contains a mention (not corroborated elsewhere) that the NOW intelligence chief Jerzy Pyzalski, who perished in Auschwitz, allegedly claimed that Łęcki belonged to NSZ; AIPN, BU 00945/170, p. 45.

administration in Mirzec. Although Orkan also ended up in Auschwitz, 'he became deputy block leader, handed out food to prisoners [...] walked around in elegant clothes, and did not care about the terror reigning in the camp'.²¹ He was released after a year, which was deemed proof of his collaboration with the Germans.

When "Świt" partisans – considered Gomułka's supporters by association with Moczar²² – were subjected to methodical questioning in connection with Gomułka's ousting, the internal investigation revealed further and even more significant information. The key witness in the 'matter of Tadeusz Maj', as it was labeled in Orkan's report, was his subordinate Adam Bakalarczyk "Dulka".²³ Although he did not submit his testimony until 1951, his file in *Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, IPN (Institute of National Remembrance Archive) contains evidence of a prior investigation, conducted two years earlier: a record of interrogation of Józef Bugajski "Azja", a former "Świt" member.²⁴ He lists the crimes committed by the unit:

1. Robbing and shooting twelve Jews to death by the Kotyska River (participants: Maj, Waclaw Tracz, Bakalarczyk, Jan Kozieł, and others);
2. The murder of four Jews in the forester's cottage in Lipie (participants as above, plus Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki);
3. Murders of Jews committed by Wiślicz's *aide-de-camp*, Edward Konopski "Ząbek",²⁵ "with the tacit consent of "Łokietek" and Wiślicz";

21 Ibid., p. 21.

22 See Paczkowski, *Trzy twarze Józefa Światły*, pp. 110–112.

23 Adam Bakalarczyk (born 1921) was a ZWZ squad leader in Rzecznów and later deputy commander of Świt and chief of security in the Second AL Brigade. See reports about robberies he committed while working in this capacity in 1946, AIPN BU 703/1132, s. 7–74. He was later a lecturer and department head in the Central Training Office of the Ministry for Public Security Affairs, dismissed in June 1954; AIPN, BU 703/1132, s. 205. His complaint made to the Public Security Matters Committee was handled from October 16, 1956 by his former fellow partisan Marian Janic; AIPN BU 703/1132. Bakalarczyk returned to public life after Mieczysław Moczar's comeback in 1956 and wrote his version of events in his memoirs; Bakalarczyk, Adam: *Leśne boje*. MON: Warsaw 1962.

24 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bugajskiego Józefa, Sokołów", September 22, 1949, AIPN BU 703/1132, s. 126. At that time Bugajski was in prison, serving a sentence pursuant to art. 118 §2 of the Polish Army Penal Code in connection with art. 115 §1 of the Polish Army Penal Code. Copies of this interrogation record were also included in the Maj trial files, AAN, PG 21/99 and can also be found in the file of secret collaborator "Pióro" – Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki, AIPN, BU 00945/170, s. 17.

25 See sub-section *Ząbek's Case* below.

4. Hostility shown by Maj and Orkan toward a Jewish couple assigned to the “Świt” unit: Dr. Adam and Dr. Irka, physicians, whose last names are unknown. This hostility resulted in their expulsion and subsequent death while trying to break through the front lines near Baranowo in October 1944, with Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki playing an unclear role in this matter.²⁶

In 1947 or 1948, while serving in KBW Directorate of Information, Bugajski reported these incidents to the Directorate’s deputy chief, Col. Władysław Sobczyński,²⁷ whose name appears frequently in the investigation records. While serving a sentence for insubordination (details unknown), Bugajski was allegedly questioned in this matter by an officer from the Functionaries Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Public Security in autumn of 1948.²⁸

This is where the afore-mentioned Józef Światło comes into play. From October 1, 1950 he worked in MBP’s Department I (counter-intelligence) as the head of Section V²⁹ and then, together with Henryk Piasecki, served as vice-director of the Special Bureau that handled Wiślicz’s case. In his book – published after his flight to the West – Światło says:

In 1949, I was summoned by Gen. Romkowski and instructed to gather information on Wiślicz and his associates. [I] put together a team [Orkan-Łęcki “Pióro” was among the agents recruited] and Wiślicz was put under surveillance.³⁰

Adam Bakalarczyk’s personal file contains a summary of the investigation he supervised – the undated report is titled “The Code[-name] ‘Jesion’ Case”.³¹ The encrypted enquiry (with names filled into blanks by hand) regards Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk, the senior commander of “Świt”.

26 See sub-section *How the Defendant Maj Viewed His Conduct* below.

27 Sobczyński confirmed this, but may not have informed his superiors, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Władysława Sobczyńskiego”, September 18, 1953, AAN, PG 21/99, pp. 428431.

28 So far, only copies of some investigation material have been discovered in the IPN archives, in the personal files of Adam Bakalarczyk and secret collaborator “Pióro” – Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki. The latter contains copies of the testimonies of Józef Bugajski (September 22, 1949), Jan Świtek (March 21, 1951), Zygmunt Połowniak (May 21, 1951), Jan Kozieł (June 23, 1951), and Tadeusz Orkan himself (February 29, 1948 and March 22, 1951).

29 After: Paczkowski, *Trzy twarze Józefa Światły*, p. 111.

30 Błażyński, Zbigniew: *Mówi Józef Światło*. LTW: Warsaw 2003, p. 130.

31 AIPN, BU 703/1132, pp. 144–156. The last name of the person who wrote the report is unknown. It is part of a larger document, which is missing the first twelve pages.

The report emphasizes that Wiślicz's (hereafter referred to with code-name "Jesion") men, 'deriving from ZWZ, AK, and NSZ, infiltrated the Party and BP, MO, and WP structures after the war.'³² In fact, most of the former "Świt" members had earlier been in ZWZ: consider Tadeusz Maj, the ZWZ commander in Rzecznów. His deputy Orkan, just like the afore-mentioned Bugajski, worked for the KBW after the war. Bakalarczyk, Maj's second-in-command, worked as deputy chief of *Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, PUBP (District Office for Public Security) in Radom. Another former "Świt" member, Jan Kozieł, was a commandant at the *Milicja Obywatelska*, MO (Citizens' Militia) station in Skaryszewo,³³ and another, Jan Świtek, was a policeman in Częstochowa.³⁴

Similarly, Władysław Sobczyński,³⁵ head of the PUBP in Rzeszów and Kielce at the time of the July 1946 pogrom, a *Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye*, GRU (Main Intelligence Directorate) employee and a paratrooper with ties to Wiślicz, had built an illustrious career. Other individuals from his circle, such

32 See Roman Przybyłowski's statement, referred to in footnote 13: "the UB and MO posts in the Kielce region were mostly filled with former AL partisans, mostly 'Garbaty's' (Stanisław Olczyk) and Wiślicz's (Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk) men, as well as with [men] from some of the BCh units, such as Ozga-Michalski's." Cited in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 377.

33 APW, SW, p. 43.

34 APW, MBP, [copy of a copy], March 21, 1951, "Akta sprawy nr 113/51 przeciwko Koziełowi Janowi", no pagination.

35 Władysław Sobczyński (1904–1986), known as "Jurand", "Klych", or "Władek", was a member of the prewar Polish Communist Party in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. In 1939–1940 he worked for the Soviet police in Hrubieszów and then in Rożyszcze. From June 1941 he worked with the NKVD, received Soviet intelligence training, and was transferred to the Baranowicze region, and from February 1944 he was chief of counterintelligence in the "Janowski" group led by Leon Kasman. He was in the Parczew and Janów forests in the Lublin region in the spring of 1944, and from there he moved into the Kielce region. In his personal questionnaire, he listed the following organizations he had belonged to: PPR, WRN, BCh, AL, and the right-wing ZWZ, AK, and NSZ [!]. See "Ankieta personalna Władysława Sobczyńskiego", in Żaryn, Jan / Kamiński, Łukasz (eds.): *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Kielce 2008, p. 412. From June 27, 1945 to January 1946, he served as the WUBP head in Rzeszów and then in Kielce. Following the Kielce pogrom he was dismissed, arrested, and reprimanded "for lack of vigilance and for helplessness." On January 20, 1952, he was dismissed from the security apparatus, following charges that he participated in murdering Jews while in the AL. AIPN, BU 0305/388; AIPN, BU 0193/7009 v. 1–2 (7591/V). See Wiślicz on Sobczyński in Wiślicz-Iwańczyk, *Echa Puszczycy Jodłowej*, pp. 186–189.

as Mieczysław Róg-Świostek³⁶ and Marian Janic,³⁷ also rose to the top of the political hierarchy. Almost all these individuals had records of wartime murders of Jews.

Secondly, the report proves beyond any doubt that Wiślicz collaborated with the Gestapo,³⁸ which led to the execution of three GL men – PPR members – by the German gendarmerie. This did not have an impact on his good relations with Gestapo agent and chief forester Krüger.

“Jesion” himself admitted before CKKP [*Centralna Komisja Kontroli Partyjnej*, Central Party Control Commission] to contacts with the Gestapo agent and chief forester Krüger and to the elimination of three GL members in his (i.e. Jesion’s) house, but he claimed that he was maintaining contact with Krüger for intelligence purposes, upon orders from his AK commander Henryk Lewoński.

Naturally, the Special Bureau checked this information:

Questioned as a witness, Henryk Lewoński stated that he had never given “Jesion” instructions to carry out an intelligence mission. [...] When asked why he had written a fake statement [that he allegedly gave him such instructions], he explained that “Jesion” had asked him for such a certificate, because he needed it in order to be decorated with the Cross of Valor. [...] Lewoński had done this because he wanted to get a job [through Wiślicz’s lobbying in his capacity of Kielce Province Governor].³⁹

36 He describes them in his book *Czas przeszły, czas teraźniejszy*. Książka i Wiedza: Warsaw 1982. Świostek, from 1949 editor-in-chief of *Chłopska Droga*, was a reserve Lieutenant-Colonel and a board member at ZBOWiD; *ibid.*, pp. 16, 227.

37 Janic became head of the Bureau of Complaints and Grievances of the Committee for Public Security Affairs in 1956, in which capacity he reviewed the records of the Tadeusz Maj trial, see AIPN, BU 703/1132, p. 205.

38 The author of the report cites the testimony of Stanisław Daniszewski and others. See also Błażyński, *Mówi Józef Światło*, p. 130. Investigation files [“Sprawa kryptonim ‘Jesion’”, AIPN, BU 703/1132, p. 148] corroborate his testimony, including prisoners’ names.

39 In addition to Lewoński, Antoni Heda “Szary”, the AK commander in the area where Wiślicz operated, was also questioned. He had been under Wiślicz’s command in ZWZ and confirmed Wiślicz’s collaboration with the Gestapo (AIPN, BU 703/1132, p. 149). See also Heda, Antoni: *Wspomnienia “Szarego”*. Oficyna Wydawn. Interim: Warsaw 1992, pp. 44–45, quoting AK Sub-district chronicler Marian Langer, son of a forester from Klepacze: “In a nearby village of Jasieniec [a Gestapo agent] together with the gendarmerie killed three PPR delegates from Radom [...]. It took place in the presence of a local resident, Eugeniusz Iwańczyk “Wiślicz” (the future post-war Kielce voivode) who was under Krueger’s protection as his man, which is [confirmed by] eyewitness accounts.” See also *ibid.*, p. 45, describing Krueger’s funeral after his assassination

Another important document pertaining to this case, also referred to by Józef Światło, is the request for permission to recruit for the “Jesion” case. In this document, Lt. Ludwik Sikora seeks Henryk Piasecki’s (vice-director of MBP’s Special Bureau) permission to recruit Orkan-Łęcki, whose involvement should facilitate the investigation into Wiślicz. Its text bears an uncanny resemblance to the above-mentioned “Jesion” report: names are scored out and then filled in with the same handwriting as previously. This document – which looks more like an indictment rather than a request to grant a secret informant status – lists Orkan’s many crimes, from the betrayal of ZWZ in 1940, to ‘antisemitism and murders of persons of Jewish origin.’ Among the crimes listed are the aforementioned deaths of Drs. Adam and Irka; an order to execute a Jewish woman who asked to join the unit near Marcule⁴⁰; and, according to a now lost⁴¹ testimony by Tadeusz Maj, Orkan’s urging him (Maj) to eliminate Lt. Col. Bronisław Jaworski, a mine sweeper who had been assigned to the unit as a political advisor (for this testimony, see below⁴²). The “Request for Permission to Recruit” is dated 29 September 1951. Only three weeks later, on 20 October 1951, Józef Światło wrote about Orkan in alarm:

Lt. Col. Piasecki,

Recruitment should not be pursued. First, O.[rkan] is one of the figureheads himself and his dismissal later would be impossible [i.e. it would be impossible to bring him to trial]; second, and this is the most important main thing (*sic*), he will not be able to approach Wiślicz inconspicuously, since hundreds of kilometers separate them, whereas the arrival of Orkan at Wiślicz’s residence following the dismissal of Łokietek will immediately arouse his [Wiślicz’s] suspicions once they get to talking about the past.⁴³

Henryk Piasecki’s reply from 9 January 1952 says:

Orkan-Łęcki was recruited on 19 October 1951,⁴⁴ having received the verbal consent of Vice Minister Lewikowski. The objection was submitted in writing *post factum*, which I reported to Vice Minister Lewikowski.⁴⁵

by AK: “a solemn funeral took place at the cemetery [...] those who made a speech included also ‘the great Pole’ Iwańczyk-Wiślicz, who highlighted what a loss it was for the Third Reich.”

40 She was shot dead by Jan Koziel; see sub-section *Men and Women* below.

41 AIPN BU 00945/170, s. 13. It mentions one of the records that were excluded from Maj’s case, as reported by Capt. Jan Grzęda; see footnote 57.

42 See sub-section *How the Defendant Maj Views His Conduct* below.

43 AIPN BU 00945/170, p. 11.

44 In fact, the recruitment took place on October 22, 1956; see below.

45 AIPN BU 00945/170, p. 11.

Piasecki's reply was clearly untrue,⁴⁶ and reflects the tension between him and Światło.⁴⁷ This tension would affect the further course of the investigation.

Piasecki's decision, indefensible from the investigation standpoint,⁴⁸ served to protect Orkan and was made even though the request for Orkan's arrest had been ready since July 1 and was waiting for the signature of one of two Special Bureau vice-directors, who were rivaling with one another. The six-page arrest warrant lists the charges against him,⁴⁹ based on the testimonies by Jan Barszcz (16 March 1951), Jan Świtek (21 March 1951), Tadeusz Maj (2 June 1951), Jan Kozieł (21 June 1951), and Adam Bakalarczyk (28 June 1951).

In another important document, Maj. Henryk Połowniak (commander of the 153rd Battalion of the Border Protection Corps (*Wojska Ochrony Pogranicza*) and a GL District commander during the war) not only corroborated the charges against Orkan, but also added a few more.⁵⁰ In his 4 July 1951 letter to Minister Radkiewicz, Piasecki informed him in detail about the ongoing investigation of Kielce partisans, including Władysław Sobczyński, an NKVD agent.⁵¹

We should point out the differences in the phrasing of two contemporary official documents on the subject – the 29 September 1951 request for permission to recruit and the July 1951 preliminary plan for assembling a dossier in the case of “Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki”.⁵² While the latter, based on Maj. Połowniak's testimony, states that the murders ‘were not approved by the AL Command, and amounted only to his [Orkan's] licentiousness, as these individuals were probably aware [sic] of many of his misdeeds’,⁵³ the October ‘Report’ asserts that Orkan ‘was one of the organization's leaders from July 1944, and therefore was aware of the

46 The actual commitment to collaborate, written in Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki's own hand, is dated October 22, 1951; AIPN BU 00945/170, s. 16.

47 On the rivalry between Światło and Piasecki, see Paczkowski, *Trzy twarze Józefa Światły*, p. 135.

48 Światło was correct in pointing out the distance separating Orkan and Wiślicz. It was confirmed by the subsequent cessation of cooperation after Światło's emigration, as “the subject of interest [“Jesion”] resides in Lublin and informer ‘Pióro’ has no means to contact him.” See Ludwik Sikora's “Notatka służbowa dotycząca informatora ‘Pióro’”, February 16, 1954, AIPN, BU 00945/170, s. 49.

49 AIPN, BU 00945/170, pp. 33–39.

50 AIPN, BU 00945/170, pp. 26–27.

51 “Meldunek dotyczący Sobczyńskiego Władysława”, July 4, 1951, in the form of a letter from Henryk Piasecki to the Minister of Public Security Radkiewicz, AIPN, BU 703/1132, pp. 166–169.

52 AIPN, BU 00945/170 p. 39.

53 AIPN, BU 00945/170, p. 39.

organization's political direction and its leadership's actions, and he had committed the aforementioned crimes with the tacit agreement of the leadership; alternatively he was aware of whether these actions were in tune with Świt's aims.⁵⁴

How can this tone be reconciled with the immunity offered to Orkan? It appears his treatment was part of a larger design to lay all the blame on the unit commander, Tadeusz Maj, who carried out orders issued elsewhere. This is attested to by Maj's behavior during the investigation, as well as by Orkan's subsequent fortunes (see below).

Unfortunately, there are serious gaps in Maj's 1951–1953 investigation files. In 1951 he was questioned twenty times, sometimes two or three times a day. Afterward, however – as far as we can tell from the contents of the files – the investigation reached an impasse. The authorities did not respond to numerous requests from Maj's family, who did not know where Maj was being held. There is no record of any interrogation in the trial records from 1952,⁵⁵ while the interrogations (Barszcz, Świtek, Tracz – see below) resume in March 1953.

Remarkably, in May 1953, seventeen records of interrogations and three statements made by Maj himself are excluded from the case on the grounds that 'they are not relevant to the act of which the defendant is accused.'⁵⁶ One of these documents has been found in Bakalarczyk's file,⁵⁷ (while Orkan's file⁵⁸ contains a reference to another). Given that Maj was interrogated three times on June 4, this document may contain information about the leads in the investigation. Strictly speaking, although Maj's testimony indeed does not pertain to the crimes committed in the summer of 1944, it still has certain relevance due to its discussion

54 AIPN, BU 00945/170, p. 13.

55 The preserved fragments of "Charakterystyka agencji w sprawie 'Jesion'", January 12, 1952, indicate that in addition to Wiślicz, Department X was also working on Mieczysław Róg-Świostek, AIPN, BU 00945/170, p. 46.

56 Decision to exclude documents dated May 30, 1951 (two with this date); May 31, 1951 (two with this date); June 1, 1951; June 2, 1951; June 3, 1951; June 4, 1951 (three with this date: one of the three interrogation transcripts from that day is in the file of Adam Bakalarczyk; see footnote 57 below); June 5, 1951; June 6, 1951; June 8, 1951; July 6, 1951; as well as Maj's own testimonies from June 11, 12 and 13, 1951; signed by Capt. Jan Grzęda, May 18, 1953, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 369.

57 The document in question is "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Tadeusza Maja", June 4, 1951, AIPN, BU 703/1132, p. 95 and others.

58 Interrogation from June 2, 1951, regarding Orkan-Łęcki and his attempt to talk Maj into eliminating miner Michał Jaworski, is mentioned in the "Raport o zgodę na werbunek", AIPN, BU 00045/170, s. 13.

of the Kielce pogrom.⁵⁹ Interestingly enough, both Maj and Bakalarczyk were in Kielce on the day of the pogrom,⁶⁰ as were Sobczyński, chief of the Kielce WUPB [Provincial Office of Public Security], and Wiślicz, the Kielce Province Governor. The Kielce pogrom lead in Maj's case might have been related to the cases of Sobczyński and Wiślicz⁶¹ handled by the Special Bureau.

Maj's trial files contain only one record each of the interrogation of Sobczyński and Wiślicz from the autumn of 1953, wherein Sobczyński, however, mentions an interrogation that took place two years earlier. Neither of them said much, and both denied responsibility for the murders by the Kotyska River. Wiślicz denied having ordered Maj to shoot the Jews,⁶² claiming that while he was with the unit, he [Wiślicz] was always in Sobczyński's company, stressing his authority as an NKVD officer. He maintained that he learned that Maj had executed these Jews from Sobczyński, and added that Maj was directly subordinate to the 'commander of the Saszko District and his deputy, Zygmunt [Henryk] Połowniak ... while indirectly remaining organizationally subordinate to the Sub-district command, including myself.' The word 'including' amounted to pointing a finger at the AL Sub-district III commander Mieczysław Moczar, who had been out of favor since 1948.⁶³

By contrast, Sobczyński, AL Sub-district III chief of security, who also mentioned Moczar in passing, stressed that 'in principle, Maj should have carried out

59 Maj describes the street incidents that he had witnessed, and also makes note of the astonishing passivity of Sobczyński, the then chief of WUPB in Kielce; "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Tadeusza Maja", June 4, 1951, AIPN BU 703/1132, s. 95-75.

60 He worked in Radom until June 1946, at which time he was transferred to WUPB Kielce, and from there a month later he was sent to MBP Training Center in Łódź; "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Antoniego [sic] Bakalarczyka", June 29, 1949, AIPN BU 703/1132, s. 55.

61 Franciszek Maj wrote a letter to the State Council on June 25, 1954, reminding them that "none other than him [Tadeusz Maj] took active part in defusing the situation during the Kielce pogrom. He organized transport for wounded Jews, for which he was commended. It should also be mentioned that by accusing Sobczyński and Wiślicz, Łokietek concluded that the sources of the Kielce pogrom should be traced back to the occupation," AAN, PG 21/99, p. 552.

62 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Eugeniusza WiśliczaIwańczyka", October 16, 1953, *ibid.*, pp. 432-435.

63 On the circumstances of Moczar's falling out of favor during the period of struggle against the "right-wing nationalist deviation," see Lesiakowski, Krzysztof: *Mieczysław Moczar "Mietek."* *Biografia polityczna.* Rytm: Warsaw 1998.

only Wiślicz's orders,⁶⁴ but he was insubordinate and sometimes refused to execute orders. 'There was no official relationship whatsoever between myself and Maj,' he added. He confirmed that while he was with the unit, he was always in Wiślicz's company and claimed that he had learned that 'Maj shot thirteen Jews to death' only from a report submitted to him by Józef Bugajski in 1947 or 1948.⁶⁵

In the autumn of 1953, Department X was working on a "splinter case", completing its investigation of a "Świt" soldier Jan Kozieł, who had been arrested on charges of murdering Jews shortly after Maj's arrest. The indictment was drawn up on 12 October and was approved by Światło's direct superior, Anatol Fejgin.⁶⁶ During interrogation, Kozieł said, 'Łokietek's troops were often called on by Moczar, Zygmunt [Henryk Połowniak], Sobczyński, and someone else (heavily built) whose name I don't know.'⁶⁷

After Światło's emigration on 5 December 1953,⁶⁸ the investigation into cases related to the "Świt" members suddenly lost its momentum, especially following Anatol Fejgin's consequent dismissal on January 1, 1954. It was only then that the authorities decided to reply to the enquiries of Maj's family and explain the delays in the trial. The change in atmosphere is also indicated by the authorities' sudden interest in the prisoner's health. In a January 4, 1954 memorandum (addressee not clear), prosecutor Władysław Dymant noted that Department X kept delaying his indictment "in connection with the cases of Sobczyński and Wiślicz."⁶⁹ Ten days later, on 14 January 1954, the records of interrogations of Sobczyński, Wiślicz, and Maj were handed over to chief military prosecutor,

64 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Władysława Sobczyńskiego", September 18, 1953, Warsaw, AAN, PG 21/99, pp. 428–431.

65 See sub-section *Wiślicz and Sobczyński* below.

66 "Akt oskarżenia przeciwko Koziełowi Janowi", October 12, 1953, APW, SW, p. 4. The trial was scheduled to begin on January 24, 1954, and the sentencing took place on March 16, 1954, one week before the beginning of Maj's trial. Kozieł was sentenced to five years and one month imprisonment and loss of civic rights for two years. In 1956 Kozieł was pardoned. The two defendants were tried by the same judge, K. Kaczyński.

67 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Jana Kozieła", June 10, 1951, APW, MBP, no pagination.

68 See Paczkowski, *Trzy twarze Józefa Światły*, pp. 173–175.

69 In "Notatka" from January 4, 1954, AAN, PG 21/99, s. 217.

Gen. Stanisław Zarako-Zarakowski,⁷⁰ and the indictment filed eight days later by Capt. Marian Szpiega fails to mention Maj's superiors at all.⁷¹

Only Wiślicz was called as a witness in Maj's trial (27 March 1954).⁷² When Maj requested calling Sobczyński as a witness, the prosecutor himself opposed this, demanding that Sobczyński's testimony submitted during the investigation be read out instead.⁷³ However, the testimonies of Bakalarczyk, Tracz, and Barszcz implicating them both, and even the conclusion of the judgment citing execution orders from his superiors as a reason for Maj's reduced sentence⁷⁴ failed to move the prosecutor to hold them accountable.

Power struggles revolving around Mieczysław Moczar constitute the most enigmatic element of Maj's trial. Moczar's name came up unexpectedly in Adam Bakalarczyk's testimony on 28 July 1951: 'During the occupation Łokietek told me that he had handed over the money and other things taken from the Jews to Moczar.'⁷⁵ After that date, Moczar's name does not reappear in the investigation

70 On March 16, 1954, the documentation was supplemented with a transcript of Bakalarczyk's testimony from February 16, 1954, and a letter by Kazimierz Kostirko, director of MBP department from March 16, 1954; *ibid.*, p. 176. Andrzej Paczkowski describes the general's views as antisemitic; Paczkowski, *Trzy twarze Józefa Światły*, p. 103.

71 "Akt oskarżenia przeciwko Majowi Tadeuszowi", January 22, 1953, written by Capt. Marian Szpiega, *ibid.*, pp. 148–151.

72 "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Tadeuszowi Majowi", March 27, 1954, PG 21/99, s. 424. At the hearing, Wiślicz also said: "Sobczyński told me that Jews were wandering about the forest, endangering the units, which means that he had a rather positive opinion on what Łokietek has done."

73 *Ibid.*, pp. 526–527: "The defendant requests the questioning of witness Sobczyński. The prosecution opposes this request and requests that Sobczyński's testimony be read. The Court has decided not to grant the defendant's request regarding the questioning of Władysław Sobczyński, as the Court will determine the circumstances that the witness could describe himself, during the verdict phase [of the trial]."

74 Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw: "Sentencja wyroku w sprawie przeciwko Tadeuszowi Majowi", March 30, 1954, AAN, PG 21/99, s. 537, 538: "Considering the logical assumption that Sobczyński and Wiślicz, in case they did indeed issue this order to [Maj], will not confess to it anyway [...] the Court has not sufficiently clarified this issue, so crucial in this case [...] and therefore, according to the rule *in dubio pro reo*, it has ruled in the defendant's favor, admitting that he had acted upon orders from Sobczyński and Wiślicz."

75 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bakalarczyka Adama", June 28, 1951, AIPN, BU 703/1132, s. 101. Witnesses (e.g. Barszcz) testified that it was Bakalarczyk who gathered the money and valuables taken away from the Jews by the Kotyska River.

files for three years, but this is hardly due to an oversight on the part of the investigators.⁷⁶ This premise, combined with the exclusion of seventeen protocols from Maj's case files, gives us grounds to suppose that in addition to 'the Kielce pogrom case,' which incriminated Wiślicz and Sobczyński, Moczar's name could also have appeared in them. In any event, this name reappears in Maj's trial records only on 5 March 1954, in a letter by Maj's defense attorneys, Aleksander Soroka and Jan Załęcki, asserting 'the money taken away from the Jews was handed over [by Maj] to his superior, AL Sub-district commander Moczar.'⁷⁷ Two weeks later the defense suddenly changed its position, filing for 'admission of evidence from a witness, Gen. Moczar, currently Chairman of the WRN Presidium in Lublin, on the totality of the defendant's partisan activity.'⁷⁸ In response, one week later Maj dismisses his defense lawyers, preferring to defend himself.⁷⁹

However, the Moczar lead continues. On 29 March 1954, Capt. Marian Szpiega, who had written the indictment, drew up an "Information Note" concerning Bakalarczyk and Wiślicz's testimonies at Maj's trial. In it, he cited Bakalarczyk's testimony incriminating Sobczyński and Wiślicz. He then stressed that during the hearing Bakalarczyk 'said that the money looted from the Jews was handed over to Moczar.'⁸⁰ The authorities attributed so much significance to Bakalarczyk's repeatedly voiced allegations that they resorted to forgery to prevent them from seeing the light of day. We know about it thanks to the "Official Note" by the head of Section IV of the Bureau for the Affairs of MBP Functionaries, dated May 10, 1954:

Because during the first questioning Bakalarczyk revealed a certain fact that did not significantly bear on the Maj case, and it would have been inadvisable that [this fact] come to light during the court hearing, a new record [of the interrogation] was drawn up with Bakalarczyk, omitting this fact. Nevertheless, during the court hearing Bakalarczyk mentioned this fact.... Taking the above into consideration I move for dismissing Adam Bakalarczyk from his post in the p[ublic] s[ecurity] apparatus....⁸¹

76 This is mentioned *expressis verbis* in a letter to Col. Siedlecki regarding Bakalarczyk's testimony from May 1953, signed by Capt. Kalkus, head of Section I Department IV of the Functionaries Affairs Bureau at MBP: "the case in question cannot be investigated separately from the entirety of issues which are of interest to Department X."

77 AAN, PG 21/99, p. 444.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 474.

79 *Ibid.*, pp. 476–478.

80 AIPN, BU 703/1132, p. 158. Let us note that Bakalarczyk first mentioned this fact in the course of an interrogation on 28 June 1951.

81 Signed by Capt. Kyzioł, AIPN, BU 703/1132, s. 192.

And what happened to the secret collaborator “Pióro” – Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki? Although he signed a consent to cooperate, thereby admitting to the deeds he was accused of,⁸² he was never punished for them. Granting him a secret collaborator status was not his first stroke of luck. In a May 20, 1953 letter to the Director of the Functionaries Affairs Bureau, there is an annotation by Capt. Kałkus next to his name: “dead.”⁸³ In the margin next to this word an unknown hand (Józef Światło’s?) added: ‘He is alive and resides in Warsaw. Who is spreading this rumor about [his] death?’⁸⁴

After Światło’s flight abroad, Orkan could sleep soundly. On 16 February 1954, a senior official in Section I at Department K of MBP, Ludwig Sikora, drew up an “Official Note”, in which he wrote:

Cooperation with the informer “Pióro” has so far not yielded good results because the subject of interest [“Jesion”] resides in Lublin and informer “Pióro” has no means to contact him. The motion to arrest Orkan-Łęcki Tadeusz is irrelevant because of his poor health.⁸⁵

Orkan’s crimes were never investigated, even though as late as 1968 SB (Security Service) authorities once again reviewed the charges leveled against him by MBP’s Department X.⁸⁶ Orkan, Łokietek’s deputy and Moczar’s confidante, lived undisturbed at least until late 1960s, writing his memoirs and, in 1967, a narrative to the film about Moczar’s people, *Blisko lasu*.⁸⁷

82 This follows from a comparison between two documents, “Raport o zezwolenie na werbunek”, AIPN, 00945/170, p. 14, and “Zobowiązanie do współpracy”, *ibid.*, s. 16.

83 AIPN, BU 703/1132, copies: s. 178, 179, and 180. It is possible that Kyzioł meant another Tadeusz Łęcki (“Żak”), who had indeed perished during the war; see Róg-Świostek, *Czas przeszły i teraźniejszy*, pp. 60–62.

84 AIPN, BU 703/1132, s. 173. An annotation in the same handwriting appears on the margins in another place: “Was Maj questioned about this incident [homicide by the Kotyska River]? Did he report to someone about this incident? And who in the Central Committee did he talk to about this incident?” July 5, 1951, *ibid.*, s. 161.

85 AIPN, BU 00945/170, s. 49. He was ousted from the network of secret collaborators on March 29, 1954, *ibid.*, s. 52.

86 *Ibid.*, s. 53, 54. His file was filmed in 1975.

87 Film studio Czołówka, 1967, consultant Marian Janic. On Janic, see also Róg-Świostek, *Czas przeszły i teraźniejszy*, p. 86.

Part 2. The Trial of Tadeusz Maj: The Ideology of the “Świt” Unit as Reflected in Witness Testimonies

According to Maj’s testimony given the day after his arrest,⁸⁸ the combat force of “Świt” under his command numbered twenty-two people⁸⁹ in April 1944. The group was set up by Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk as a combat unit of the organization by the same name; Wiślicz was its founder. He appointed Maj, a graduate of officer cadet school and a former soldier in ZWZ and AK,⁹⁰ as its commander.⁹¹ Although the memoir literature published in the communist period,⁹² especially the late 1960s,⁹³ presented Świt as a *sui generis* proto-AL movement, the memoirs contain allusions to Iwańczyk’s shady past⁹⁴ and the ideology to which his group subscribed. According to Maj,

At the time, Świt’s ideological stance on the Jewish question was the same as that of ZWZ. Switching to Świt, people carried a certain ballast originating in ZWZ from hostile propaganda [...], because when the issue of eliminating a group of jews [sic] came up, no one opposed it.⁹⁵

88 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 26, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 315.

89 Wiślicz wrote about the number of partisans in the unit in his *Echa Puszczy Jodłowej*, p. 81: “In the spring of 1944, our Strachowice AL group grew to the size of at least a battalion of soldiers.” The coincidence of the name of the organization and the partisan unit under Maj’s command enabled Wiślicz to overstate the group’s numbers and strength. Other witnesses estimated Świt’s manpower at thirty soldiers. See e.g. “Przesłuchanie podejrzanego Jana Kozieła”, June 10, 1951, APW, MBP, unpaginated.

90 For Wiślicz on Maj, see id., *Echa Puszczy Jodłowej*, pp. 69, 132–134.

91 Most members of the group had earlier been members of ZWZ; see e.g. “Przesłuchanie świadka Warszawskiego Bolesława”, Warsaw, April 13, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 406.

92 See *Działalność organizacji “Świt” i II Brygady AL Ziemi Kieleckiej na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1942–1945*, typescript (1968), file of Wiślicz Iwańczyk, AAN, 8500.

93 Garas, Józef Bolesław: *Oddziały Gwardii Ludowej i Armii Ludowej 1942–1945*. MON: Warsaw 1963, pp. 232, 245; Józef Garas et al. (eds.): *Wspomnienia żołnierzy GL i AL*. MON: Warsaw 1962. See *ibid.* for reference to Orkan-Łęcki; also Róg-Świostek, Mieczysław: *II Kielecka Brygada AL “Świt” – Wspomnienia partyzantów*. Wojskowy Instytut Historyczny: Warsaw 1970; Wiczorek, *Armia Ludowa*, p. 94.

94 See e.g. Kornecki, Adam: *Spadochroniarze*. Unpublished typescript: “I soon met the Sub-district III chief of staff, Capt. Wiślicz [...] before the war Wiślicz was not a member of the revolutionary movement and, like he told me, he met our people completely by chance.” Personal file of Adam Kornecki, AAN, 7774, s. 7.

95 AAN, PG 21/99, pp. 323–324. During the trial Maj admitted that he “regarded ZWZ as a left-wing organization”; “Protokół rozprawy głównej”, March 16, 1954, *ibid.*, p. 507.

I was acting upon clear orders from Eugeniusz Iwańczyk, who told me that Jews should not be accepted into the group. Iwańczyk issued this order to me after two Jews were shot to death [by the Kotyska River].⁹⁶

Even its own members were not sure of the organization's character. According to Jan Barszcz,

When I joined Łokietek's unit [in May 1944], I was convinced that it was an AL unit, but after about two months [...] I learned that in addition to the name AL our unit also carried the name "Świt." [...] Pastuszko Edward ["Ptak"] commented on this appellation by saying that it was something related to AK.⁹⁷

I didn't know the exact name of the organization; Dulka-Bakalarczyk only told me that it was a military-peasant organization.⁹⁸

For his part, the founder of "Świt" himself considered it natural that "in contrast to the human resources at the disposal of GL, which lacked proper education, we were considered an intellectual group."⁹⁹

The attitude of the "Świt" members toward Jews, at best ambivalent, is reflected in the treatment of two physicians of Jewish origin, Dr. Adam (surname unknown) and his wife,¹⁰⁰ who were assigned to Maj's unit in September 1944. "Świt" member Józef Bugajski testified:

In September 1944...a surgeon and a woman physician of Jewish origin were assigned to the brigade. Right away Łokietek showed hostility, which manifested itself in ignoring these two, ridiculing them in front of others, and when the surgeon asked Łokietek to assign him with a pistol, Łokietek turned him down, laughing. This was recounted to me by the surgeon, who complained about Łokietek's behavior toward him and toward the

96 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza", May 27, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 332.

97 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Barszcza Jana", March 16, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 378.

98 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Tracza Waclawa", March 27, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 399. During interrogation, Bakalarczyk gives the year as 1943 instead of 1944 (see Wiślicz-Iwańczyk, *Echa puszczy jodłowej*, p. 142). "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bakalarczyka Adama", Warsaw, February 16, 1954, *ibid.*, p. 454.

99 *Działalność organizacji "Świt" i II Brygady AL Ziemi Kieleckiej na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1942–1945*. Unpublished typescript, 1968, p. 25, in Wiślicz-Iwańczyk's file, AAN, 8500.

100 Wiślicz: "It must be said that paramedics and doctors of Jewish origin were invaluable; they treated partisans with great dedication. I also knew two others – they were a couple – unfortunately they perished during the war, while crossing the front on the Vistula River," "Działalność AL na Kielecczyźnie. Relacja Eugeniusza Iwańczyka -Wiślicza. Nagrana w Zakładzie Historii Partii", September 9, 1965, *ibid.*, p. 122.

woman doctor, who was his wife. ...harassment on the part of Łokietek and Orkan,¹⁰¹ telling all kinds of lewd jokes in their presence and using filthy language was designed to drive these people out of the unit, which finally did happen, and they left the unit probably in mid-October 1944, and as far as I know these two persons perished while breaking through the front in the Baranów-Sandomierz area.¹⁰²

Jan Kozieł corroborated this information:

The attitude of the unit members toward Jews was not friendly, rather hostile. [...] in the summer of 1944 two people approached our unit. They were doctors, probably of Jewish nationality. The man's alias was Adaś, whereas the woman was called Irka. They were very good at what they did. I heard that when our unit was passing through the front, Irka was killed, whereas Adaś shot himself.¹⁰³

“Świt”, its Composition and Stationing

According to Maj, in spring 1944, shortly after its formation, the unit was merged with a GL unit under the command of Czesław Byk-Borecki “Brzoza”.¹⁰⁴ At that time it comprised two groups, one led by Jan Pocheć “Sosna” from Świślina near Starachowice, and the other by Dziubiński “Dąb”, who was killed shortly thereafter. When asked about other members of the unit, Maj listed the following:

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- 101 The witness verified the information at the hearing; Sąd Wojewódzki m. st. Warszawy. “Protokół rozprawy głównej”, March 27, 1954, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 513. On Maj's conduct, see also the testimony of Col. Bronisław Jaworski “Michał”, Sąd Wojewódzki m. st. Warszawy. “Protokół rozprawy głównej”, March 27, 1954, *ibid.*, p. 520: “The doctor and his wife complained to me about the particular attitude displayed toward them by all the members of the unit, including the defendant, who had allegedly refused to issue them with weapons”; see below.
- 102 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Józefa Bugajskiego”, September 22, 1949, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 376. During Jan Kozieł's trial in January 1954, Bugajski reformulates his statement: “The attitude toward that Jewish doctor was good, but toward the end deputy commander Orkan behaved improperly toward them; as a result, the doctor and his wife transferred to another unit, where later he perished.” “Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Janowi Koziełowi”, January 23, 1954, APW, SW, p. 44.
- 103 “Przesłuchanie podejrzanego Jana Kozieła”, June 10, 1951, APW, MBP, unpaginated.
- 104 See personal file of Czesław Byk-Borecki in AAN 8181, p. 4. See also Wiczorek, *Armia Ludowa*, pp. 290, 340–343, 344, 345, 417. At first Borecki headed the PUBP in Radom, then MUBP in Kielce, WUBP in Kielce and Zielona Góra; see Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 95. During his term in office in Radom and Kielce, he was accused of repeated embezzlement and robbery, including the charge that “gold was dug out in the ghetto, and it was split among ourselves”; “Przesłuchanie świadka Czerwińskiego”, AIPN, BU 703/1132, pp. 71, 73.

1. Bakalarczyk Adam “Dulka” from Rzecznów; 2. Maj Jan “Sęk” from Rzecznów; 3. Węgrzecki Edward [“Komar”] from Rzecznów (dead); 4. Ołowiak Ireneusz [“Huragan”] from Rzecznów (dead); 5. Maj Bolesław from Rzecznów (dead); 6. [Bolesław] Warszawski [“Jeleń”] from Rzecznów; 7. Tracz Waclaw “Skóra” from Rzecznów; 8. Bugajski Józef “Azja” from Rzecznów; 9. Józef Pyrciak “Pocisk” from the Grochów colony near Rzecznów (died); 10. “Kruk” from Jasieniec [Iłżecki], I don’t remember his name, nor how many others there were [...].¹⁰⁵ After it returned from the Janów woods [the force went there in May 1944 to take delivery of weapons from Soviet air drops]¹⁰⁶ the unit was under the direct command of Eugeniusz Wiślicz, contact with whom was maintained via messengers, or he would come directly to the unit.¹⁰⁷

Among the sites where the unit was stationed in the period between its return from the Janów woods and the establishment of the 2nd AL Brigade “Świt”, Maj mentions, among others, the following: in mid-July, the Kotyska River near Jasieniec Iłżecki;¹⁰⁸ immediately afterward Piotrowe Pole near Borsuk; and in early August a forester’s cabin called Lipie, near Wierzbnik.¹⁰⁹ All of these were places where Jews were murdered.

105 E.g. Władysław Dąbrowski, Wincenty Krzos, Jan Zaremba “Okrutny”, Stanisław Chmurzyński “Topór” (p. 34), Edward Pastuszko “Ptak”, Jan Kozieł “Galant” from Iłża (see Wiślicz, *Echa puszczy jodłowej*, p. 136, and NN “Smotek” from Starachowice. “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 27, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 371. In his 1949 testimony Józef Bugajski “Azja” added several *noms-de-guerre* of unit members: “Grom” [Jan Stanecki?, after Wiślicz, *Echa puszczy jodłowej*, p. 135] and “Zapałka” [Jan Świtek, after: *ibid.*; or Jan Latala, after: *ibid.*, p. 260] PG 21/99, p. 371. In his 1951 testimony Jan Barszcz added “Przychodni” (“currently with the Special Commission in Kielce”; perhaps Stanisław Olczyk-Garbaty might be concerned here), Edward Konopski “Ząbek” from Milanówek near Warsaw; “Orkan himself shot him to death with a machine gun,” s. 381, see below. Wiślicz, *Echa Puszczy Jodłowej*, pp. 134–135, 201 lists also Jan Zaremba “Okrutny”, Bolesław Balcerowski “Trzcina”, Tadeusz Borek “Wywrot”. It also gives Przychodni’s real name: [Stanisław] Rokita, Maj’s aide-de-camp (idem, 201). In Tracz’s testimony there also appears one Teodor Stępień “Glina”; “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Tracza Waclawa”, Warsaw, March 27, 1951, PG 21/99, s. 400.

106 At that time Maj joined forces with the units of Brzoza-Burecki “Wrzos” and “Góral”; “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Tracza Waclawa”, Warsaw, 27 March 1951, PG 21/99, s. 399.

107 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 27, 1951, PG 21/99, p. 3.

108 “In a spruce copse, we had shacks made of branches, keeping the rain out. Our shacks were placed willy-nilly on an area of about 100 m², with four or five checkpoints positioned around them,” “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Barszcza Jana”, Starachowice, March 16, 1951, PG 21/99, p. 382.

109 PG 21/99, p. 316.

The Kotyska River¹¹⁰

During the first interrogation after his arrest, Tadeusz Maj described the murder as follows:

In July 1944¹¹¹ a group of about ten¹¹² people of Jewish origin (including one woman) arrived.¹¹³ The group was brought over by “Szczęśliwy”¹¹⁴ with a view to joining our ranks. I agreed with “Szczęśliwy” that all of them should be accepted. At that time Władysław Sobczyński and Eugeniusz Wiślicz arrived and asked me why this group was hanging around the unit. I told them that they wanted to join our unit, and said that “Szczęśliwy” had brought them over,¹¹⁵ and that he had been with my unit for three days. Władysław Sobczyński responded to this by saying that all of them had to be eliminated. Wiślicz stressed that among them there are Jews from Ilża who know people from the unit and can inform on our unit by identifying them. On departing, Sobczyński stressed that the entire group must be completely eliminated. After Sobczyński and Wiślicz departed, I selected a group of people with automatic weapons to help me out, namely Bakalarczyk Adam “Dulka”,¹¹⁶ Tracz Waclaw “Skóra”, and others whose names I don’t recall.¹¹⁷

110 Kotyska is a small river by which the murder took place; there is also a hill of the same name. See Heda, *Wspomnienia “Szarego”*, p. 69.

111 Józef Bugajski confirmed the date and the number of Jews they encountered (“eleven Jews, and one Jewess”); “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bugajskiego Józefa”, September 20, 1949, PG 21/99, p. 370.

112 Maj referred to twelve Jews in his testimony; “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 27, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 328.

113 These people escaped from the Starachowice forced labor camp, which the Germans did not guard well after April 1944, *ibid.*; this is confirmed by everyone who testified on the matter.

114 For more information, see sub-section *Ząbek’s case* below.

115 One of the Jews who “assumed the nickname ‘Szczęśliwy’, was of medium height, wore a white sports jacket, thick leather officer’s boots, and special trousers for the shoes – breeches.” On *Szczęśliwy’s* boots, see sub-section *Ząbek’s case* below. “Protokół zeznania świadka Świtka Jana”, March 21, 1951, PG 21/99, pp. 393–394.

116 He later testified that he had ordered Bakalarczyk to select people for this operation; “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 28, 1951, PG 21/99, p. 336.

117 On May 27, 1951, he added the name of Edward Pastuszko “Ptak” and “Smotka” (PG 21/99, p. 326), Jan Kozieł “Galant” and Jan Maj “Sęk” (PG 21/99, p. 332). On March 30, 1953, he also listed Józef Bugajski “Azja”; PG 21/99, p. 366. See “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bugajskiego Józefa”, September 22, 1949, PG 21/99, p. 370. Jan Świtek named the following as the shooters: Tadeusz Maj, Bakalarczyk, Kozieł, Tracz, “Smotek” and Wiślicz’s *aide de camp*, *Ząbek*; “Protokół zeznania świadka Świtka Jana”, March 21, 1951, PG 21/99, p. 383. Warszawski named Bakalarczyk, Tracz, and Tadeusz Borek “Wywrot”; “Przesłuchanie świadka

Together with the above-mentioned, we went to the group of Jews and I told them to surrender all their money and valuables. After we collected the valuables, we searched them and found money [a single Polish banknote] on one of them.¹¹⁸ He was known from Wiślicz's description. I shot him in the head with a pistol. He crumpled to the ground immediately. Then the second one, who stood next to him, stepped out and said, "Shoot me too." So I shot him in the head, killing him then and there. I told the others to undress and fold their clothes neatly, which they did. I would like to mention that not all of them [stripped down] to their undergarments because [only] the clothing that was deemed worth wearing was taken away from them.¹¹⁹ After taking their clothes away, I told them to run while telling my people to shoot past them. I also did some shooting. I do not rule out the possibility that people who were with me shot the escapees.¹²⁰ After about a week, I met with Sobczyński who reproached me for not eliminating the entire group of Jews then and there.¹²¹

Warszawskiego Bolesława", Warsaw, April 13, 1951, PG 21/99, p. 410. Jan Koziel named himself, Bakalarczyk, Tracz, Tadeusz Borek, "Smotek", "Trzcina" and "Łokietek"; "Przesłuchanie podejrzanego Jana Koziela", June 10, 1951, APW, MBP, unpaginated.

- 118 It was "one banknote of Polish money"; "Protokół przełuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza", May 27, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 330. In subsequent testimony, he said it was "probably 500 złoty sewn into the jacket." Two years later (March 30, 1953), he said that it might have been a dollar bill. See also Tracz's testimony: "Then one Jew said he had money sewn in the jacket. Łokietek replied that because he didn't reveal the money right away he would be shot," "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Tracza Waclawa", Warsaw, March 27, 1951, PG 21/99, s. 399. See also Leib Fajntuch, cited in Browning, who also described this incident of forcing a group of fugitive Jews to surrender their valuables, the shooting of one who had kept one bill sewn into his clothing, and forcing the rest to scatter and run; Browning, *Remembering Survival*, pp. 249–250.
- 119 "Łokietek was the one to order who should take off which [clothes]"; "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Tracza Waclawa, Warsaw", March 27, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, pp. 402–403. "[T]here were rumors going around that they had all been undressed and Łokietek ordered them to run up the hill into the blackthorn bushes in pairs, and then the escapees were shot at." "Przesłuchanie świadka Warszawskiego Bolesława", Warsaw, April 13, 1951, PG 21/99, p. 412. "The money and jewellery handed in by the Jews was counted by Dulka-Bakalarczyk and, I think, Bugajski Józef [...]. I don't know what has been done with the money and the jewellery"; "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Tracza Waclawa", Warsaw, March 27, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 403.
- 120 "During the flight and the shooting I saw one of the [persons] running away fall, but he got back up and kept running [...]. I don't rule out [...] that a number of people might have been killed," PG 21/99, s. 331.
- 121 *Ibid.*, pp. 318–319.

When the interrogating officer suggested that the reason for killing the two Jews was that they had collaborated ‘with the Gestapo,’ Maj stated categorically that this ‘was not the key issue. I received an order from Sobczyński to eliminate the entire Jewish group.’¹²² He explained he had not questioned Sobczyński’s orders because ‘he was considered an NKVD spokesman, who came from the Soviet Union [and therefore] represented the correct political line.’¹²³ Toward the end he reiterated: ‘Wiślicz added that the two Jews from Iłża who allegedly knew everyone in the unit could thus pose a danger to us. I considered Wiślicz putting it this way as a pretext for murder.’¹²⁴

Only two years later, Maj began to stress that the man on whose elimination Wiślicz insisted so stringently was Kamiński from Iłża.¹²⁵ Bakalarczyk had already mentioned this name, but in the beginning Maj categorically dismissed the “espionage argument”. From 1953 onward Kamiński’s name appears in the files with growing frequency.¹²⁶ MBP functionaries were seriously investigating the hypothesis of Kamiński’s possible collaboration with the Gestapo two years later, and even though they failed to prove it, this ultimately led to Maj’s early release and the sweeping revision of the sentence.

Meanwhile, in the course of intensive interrogations in 1951, Maj added further grim details to his testimony about the execution by the Kotyska River. For example, he mentioned a conversation with a young woman in the group of executed people.¹²⁷

122 In the following days he continued to uphold the charges against Sobczyński and Iwańczyk; “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 27, 1951, *ibid.*, pp. 328 and 335; as he did two years later, “Protokół końcowego przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, Warsaw, May 20, 1953, *ibid.*, p. 416.

123 “Przesłuchanie podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 22, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 322. “I didn’t know Sobczyński, so Iwańczyk introduced him to me as the spokesman for the Soviet NKVD”; “Przesłuchanie podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 27, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 328.

124 “Przesłuchanie podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 26, 1951, AIPN, BU 703/1132, p. 94.

125 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, March 30, 1953, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 366; Wiślicz’s words recorded in “Protokół końcowego przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, Warsaw, *ibid.*, May 20, 1953: “Make sure not to miss that Kamiński from Iłża, who knows me well and knows also others.”

126 Kamiński is mentioned in the complaint filed by Maj’s wife, Eugenia, and addressed to Franciszek Józwiak, dated March 21, 1953, PG 21/99, p. 90.

127 Tracz refers to her in his testimony: “The Jewess was wearing a green dress and it seems she remained in it,” Sąd Wojewódzki Miasta Stołecznego Warszawy, “Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Tadeuszowi Majowi”, March 27, 1954, PG 21/99, s. 517.

I asked her insultingly whether she was a virgin, whether she had relationships with men, and which one of us she would want as a boyfriend. Because of her shyness, the woman did not answer and then I told her I would shoot her if she didn't answer, and fearing this, the woman chose me as her boyfriend.¹²⁸

The Jewish woman asked me to let her go together with her brother, but I turned her down and just told her to run alone.¹²⁹

On April 20, 1949, an MBP officer in Marcule recorded the testimony of Józef Giemza, a forester from Małuszyn.¹³⁰ It corroborates Maj's contention that not all the Jews were shot to death during the first encounter with "Świt" by the Kotyska River. Refugees from the Starachowice camp had long been in hiding in the Jasieniec Iłżecki area. They had built bunkers in the woods, and helped peasants with farm work in exchange for food.

Just before the harvest two Jews [*żydek*, diminutive form] from this group came to my apartment...they asked me for food.... One of them...about thirty years old, had been shot in a hand and started complaining to me that partisans took them away at night.... Then...these partisans brought them into the woods beyond the locality of Kotyska Pogórze (i.e., quadrant¹³¹ no. 155) and once they got there they told them to flee as a group, while they started shooting at them. He didn't tell me what had happened to the remaining Jews, because, as he explained...he had been shot in a hand, [and] he

128 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Tadeusza Maja", May 27, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 326. "The conversation led by Łokietek was of a mocking and humiliating character. E.g. [...] he was talking to the woman who belonged to the group. He asked her if she was a virgin, if she had already had intercourse with a man, which one of his men she would choose for a boyfriend, etc. These questions made Łokietek's group burst out in laughter. When the woman, shy and embarrassed, would not answer Łokietek's questions, he threatened to shoot her dead [...] if she didn't answer. So the woman said she would choose Łokietek. But Łokietek just spat on the ground and said in a vulgar way that he didn't need her"; "Przesłuchanie świadka Warszawskiego Bolesława", Warsaw, April 13, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 406; Maj confirmed this incident in "Protokół końcowego przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza", Warsaw, May 20, 1953, *ibid.*, p. 418. Warszawski's testimony regarding this incident: "I heard a playful conversation with the Jewess. Łokietek was asking her if she was married," Sąd Wojewódzki m. st. Warszawy, "Protokół rozprawy głównej", March 27, 1954, *ibid.*, p. 517.

129 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza", May 28, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 336. Waclaw Tracz: "When the Jewess entreated Łokietek to allow her to run in pair with [her] brother, Łokietek refused and she had to go on her own"; "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Tracza Waclawa", Warsaw, March 27, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 403.

130 Wiślicz called him a collaborator; Wiślicz, *Echa Puszczy Jodłowej*, p. 137.

131 Square-shaped designated section of the forest.

had managed to escape; as for the others, he supposes they were shot to death. After being wounded, this Jew set out for Lipie, where cit. Jankowska, who has a son Edward, dressed his wound. Then this Jew, his hand bandaged, came to me to get bread. This Jew told me that in the evening hours several partisans took them away. They told them they were taking them to a partisan unit, and then they started shooting at them. After this Jew left my apartment, I never saw them again. A long time afterward, passing through quadrant no. 155, I noticed corpses of murdered people, which had been dug out by foxes. As I figured out, these corpses lay uphill¹³² near the turn of the little river, in the place indicated by the Jew with an injured hand [...]¹³³

That the Jews were murdered after being given hope of acceptance into the unit is corroborated by Jan Barszcz's 1951 testimony. He said that at first 'two, perhaps one Jew' volunteered for the unit and after a conversation with "Łokietek", he was assigned to 'my group. He was with our unit for two days, slept together with me, expressed great satisfaction with his acceptance, and was saying that the unit command agreed to bring in his acquaintances.'¹³⁴ Two days later the Jew who was accepted by "Łokietek" 'did in fact bring in a group of people of ten to twelve persons of Jewish origin... they all looked good, i.e., they were well-dressed.' They were told to wait at some distance away from the unit for the commanders' decision. Barszcz claimed that at that time 'Wiślicz arrived on a bicycle and spent about an hour in Łokietek's shack.'¹³⁵ He did not know what they had talked about, but noted that after the conversation "Łokietek" came out of the shack with Wiślicz, Bakalarczyk "Dulka", and Edward Konopski "Ząbek", and they set out toward the group of waiting Jews. After half an hour, the witness heard automatic fire and several single shots, after which everything went quiet. 'I would like to mention that the entire unit was disturbed by those shots, and people thought that perhaps the Germans had surrounded the unit.'

132 As Warszawski testified: "Łokietek ordered them to run up the hill into the black-thorn bushes in pairs, and then the escapees were shot at"; "Przesłuchanie świadka Warszawskiego Bolesława", Warsaw, April 13, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 412. See also forester Giemza's statement in sub-section *Men and Women* below.

133 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Giemzy Józefa", April 20, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 376; "Przesłuchanie świadka Warszawskiego Bolesława", Warsaw, April 13, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 406. Perhaps the wounded man was Lejb Fajntuch, his brother or one of their companions; see footnote 118.

134 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Barszcza Jana", Starachowice, March 16, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 383. Warszawski and Jan Maj-Sęk buried the bodies of the two Jews shot personally by Tadeusz Maj by the Kotyska River; "Przesłuchanie świadka Warszawskiego Bolesława", Warsaw, April 13, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 411.

135 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Jana Barszcza", March 16, 1953, *ibid.*, p. 383.

On that night the unit set out for Piotrowe Pole, a distance of about fourteen kilometers (almost nine miles) from Kotyska. According to Barszcz,

On our way, as we were marching on, “Galant” – Kozieł Jan told me that all the Jews who had wanted to join our unit had been “done in,” or shot to death.¹³⁶ [...] During the day, I noticed that some of our people had different clothes and shoes. For example, I recognized with certainty a pair of trousers that Tracz Waclaw “Skóra” wore; they were a bit too tight. Besides, Tracz laughed when he showed me these trousers, saying, “Look, this is from the Jews who were supposed to be taken into the unit.” Ząbek also wore officer’s boots from the Jews, as well as many others did, mostly people from Rzecznów, with whom Maj clearly sympathized.¹³⁷

Piotrowe Pole

According to Barszcz’s testimony, the second murder of Jews took place shortly afterward, when the unit quartered for one day in the village of Piotrowe Pole. The murder was perpetrated by Jan Kozieł “Galant” and another member of Świt known as “Smotek,” whose real name remains unknown, and ‘who was generally known for not liking Jews.’ Barszcz said “Smotek” spoke freely about the murder, adding that they had taken ‘a lot of money and gold.’ After this incident, he personally saw “Smotek” and “Galant” with

a lot of paper money. I didn’t see gold on the afore-mentioned, but I recall that after the incident Smotek had a necklace, probably very expensive. According to Smotek, they carried out the murder on their own initiative. However, this matter was the talk of the unit, so it could not have escaped the attention of the high command.¹³⁸

Tadeusz Maj did not deny hearing about the murders that his men were committing of their own accord. He attributed these killings to demoralization precipitated by the act of shooting dead the Jews at the Kotyska River and acknowledged his responsibility.¹³⁹ However, it is not clear whether Maj had the same incident

136 Kozieł mentions “Smotek” saying almost exactly these words, see below; “Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Janowi Koziełowi”, March 13, 1954, APW, SW, p. 60.

137 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Jana Barszcza”, March 16, 1953, AAN, PG 21/99, pp. 385–386.

138 Ibid.

139 And rightly so, as is shown in the following statement: “Committing the murder, I was above all led by an order [...]. On the other hand, a recent image of the elimination of Jewish people by the Kotyska [River] was on my mind, where the commander of the combat unit ‘Świt’ himself – Maj Tadeusz ‘Łokietek’ was firing shots in person, this also had an influence on my adoption of a view that people of Jewish ethnicity

in mind as Barszcz did. Maj testified that one week after the Kotyska incident Orkan-Łęcki ‘told me that “Smotek”... together with “Ptak” – [Edward] Pastuszka had murdered one Jew in the area of the Starachowice forest.’¹⁴⁰ Two years later Maj added:

I heard...that one of the partisans under my command was returning from some assignment and in the woods encountered a group of people of Jewish origin, the same ones who were in the woods near Kotyska. I don’t know whether this partisan, “Smotek”, murdered these people. But knowing “Smotek”, I should say that he did kill those people, because telling the partisans about his encounter with these people “Smotek” wore a strange smile.¹⁴¹

In his testimony at the trial of Jan Koziół, who was accused of the crime at Piotrowe Pole, Jan Barszcz chose his words more carefully than before:

I recall that a few Jews died at the time [at Piotrowo Pole]. I only heard that “Smotek”, Tracz [“Skóra”], “Dulka” [Adam Bakalarczyk], “Ząbek” [Edward Konopski], and “Gallant” [Jan Koziół] had seen those Jews. “Smotek”, who later changed his alias to “Klawisz”, told me that he had “done in” those Jews – he said that he had lined them up and shot them dead.¹⁴²

Immediately after his arrest the accused Koziół related a different version of events:

Sometime after the incident by Kotyska our unit was camped in the woods near the village of Piotrowe Pole. A group of Jews came to us, about 5–7 people, who asked to be taken into the unit. They were only men. They made their plea to the commander of our unit. The commander told them to wait until the evening. When the evening came, the unit marched off and the Jews stayed behind. I don’t know what happened to them.¹⁴³

Lipie

The third incident Jan Barszcz related in detail happened at the forester’s cabin in Lipie near Wierzbnik. At that time the “Świt” unit was returning from Wykus

should be eliminated”; “Protokół zeznania podejrzanego Jana Koziół”, an undated copy, AIPN BU 00945/170, s. 31.

140 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 26, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, pp. 319 and 327.

141 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, March 30, 1953, *ibid.*, p. 368.

142 “Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Janowi Koziółowi”, March 13, 1954, APW, SW, p. 60.

143 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Jana Koziół”, June 10, 1951, APW, MBB, no pagination.

in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains.¹⁴⁴ The Jews were discovered in a barn near the cabin. Witnesses estimated the group was between three¹⁴⁵ and thirty people.¹⁴⁶ Apparently, there was one woman among them.¹⁴⁷ According to Barszcz,

We went [...] together to see them and talk to them. They asked what kind of group it was, who was the commander, and all of them expressed a desire to join our unit. However, “Łokietek” refused to take in so many people – there were some thirty of them altogether – I didn’t see any women. I don’t know what happened with them. I can only say that when our unit set out in the direction of Klepacz, the entire group of Jews followed us. In response “Łokietek” assigned several people, I don’t remember who, the task of stopping them and preventing them from tagging along. I don’t know what happened to this group, nor did I hear any comments on the subject in the unit.

Jan Świttek, another of Maj’s soldiers, confirmed Barszcz’s version:

At the time our unit was returning from Wykus [...], we encountered at the forester’s cottage in Lipie a group of Jews hiding in a barn – there were about fifteen or twenty of them. They expressed a desire to join the unit but were turned down. When our unit set out, the group of Jews kept following, and they were stopped by our people who prevented them from following the unit. I do not know any more details regarding these people.¹⁴⁸

Tadeusz Maj related the incident in rather vague terms:

Not long after this operation [by Kotyska], when my unit was camped near Lipie [...], a few Jews were brought over to me for a talk. These Jews declared that they wanted to join the unit. Orkan-Łęcki, Dulka-Bakalarczyk, and Edward Wiślicz-Iwańczyk were present during this conversation. After this conversation, we decided jointly not to take them into the unit. Despite this decision [...] after my unit left the forester’s cottage, these Jews, walking in a thickly packed group, kept following the unit. As a result, I ordered Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki to stay behind and push back the Jews who were following us. Then Orkan, together with several soldiers, stayed put. Shortly afterward, he rejoined the unit and said he had chased the Jews away. I didn’t ask him how he did it, and for his part he didn’t say anything about it to me.¹⁴⁹

144 See e.g. Wieczorek, *Armia Ludowa*, p. 101; Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki, in Garas et al., *Wspomnienia żołnierzy GL i AL*, p. 306.

145 “Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Janowi Koziełowi”, January 23, 1954, testimony of Józef Bugajski, APW, SW, p. 44.

146 “Przesłuchanie świadka Jana Barszcza”, March 16, 1951, APW, MBP, unpaginated.

147 Tracz, during the main hearing; see Voievodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw, “Protokół rozprawy głównej”, March 27, 1954, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 515.

148 “Protokół zeznania świadka Świtka Jana”, March 21, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 396.

149 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza”, May 27, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 327.

Two years earlier another “Świt” member, Józef Bugajski testified about this incident:¹⁵⁰

The incident took place about a month after the previous one [Kotyska], probably in the middle of August 1944, in the locality of Lipie, Starachowice county. Our unit, numbering about fifty people, was returning from the Świętokrzyskie Mountains and in the morning we stopped by a forester’s cottage in Lipie. Łokietek and his most trusted people such as Skóra, Dulka, Galant, and his deputy Orkan were inside the cottage, whereas the troops took up quarters in the barn. In that barn, there were also four Jews who were brought to Łokietek. I don’t know what happened with these people, but in any case, I didn’t see them again. They couldn’t have been let go, because it was daylight, and their release would have pose a danger of betrayal [*sic*] of the unit’s security, and the Jews could not go away out of concern for their own safety. I didn’t hear shots then, but it should be mentioned that our unit had silencers and said people could have been killed in this fashion. At that time there was [a member called] “Ząbek” in our unit, who was favored by Iwańczyk “Wiślicz”, and it was common knowledge in the unit that “Ząbek” shoots Jews. The opinion about this was well known, but it didn’t harm him.... I think that Ząbek’s actions were effected with Łokietek and Wiślicz’s tacit consent. Judging by their statements, which I often heard, and their behavior, I can say with certainty that Łokietek and even Orkan were hostile toward persons of Jewish origin.¹⁵¹

Men and Women

At the end of the summer of 1944, the forester Józef Giemza came across the bodies of two men in the vicinity of the forester’s cottage near Lipie (quadrant no. 190). His testimony was taken in 1950. On their bodies a note was found in ‘partly Russian’ language, reading: ‘for collaboration with the Germans.’ In his testimony Giemza also mentioned other corpses dragged about by foxes near Kotyska. They could have been the bodies of the two Jews killed in early July near the Kotyska River, which had been buried earlier by Bolesław Warszawski and Jan Maj “Sęć”.¹⁵² It appears that Jan Bugajski was in fact referring to the burial of these people:

One of the victims was missing an eye – from the comments made on this subject in Łokietek’s unit, it could be concluded that it was one Josek from Iłża, and the other one, young, twenty-five at the most. ... After we lowered them into the pit, Tadeusz Maj “Łokietek”, Bakalarczyk Adam “Dulka”, and Tracz Waław “Skóra” searched the pockets

150 Ibid., p. 370.

151 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bugajskiego Józefa”, September 22, 1949, *ibid.*, p. 372.

152 “Przesłuchanie świadka Warszawskiego Bolesława”, Warsaw, April 13, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 411.

of the victims. They removed five wristwatches, rings, and money, which they appropriated. I asked Łokietek to give me a watch but he didn't respond and didn't give me the watch. Then all of us gathered leaves to cover the bodies. While the bodies were being covered, Łokietek Maj addressed all those present with these words: "Never say a word about what you saw here, even after the war ends. Clear?"¹⁵³

Forester Giemza also mentioned the discovery of the bodies of two murdered women – one in quadrant no. 119 and the other in quadrant no. 154.¹⁵⁴ One of them could have been the victim of the murder that was witnessed by Jan Świttek.

I know of a specific case of murdering Jews in the woods between Marcule and the Lipie forester's [cabin]. It was at the end of July 1944; we were traveling to Marcule to take a delivery of sugar for the troops – myself, "Orkan" Łęcki Tadeusz, "Galant" – Kozieł Jan. In the woods we met a Jewess, about 28–32, very poorly dressed, in a well worn-out kerchief, such as is worn by women in those areas, of middle height, slender, auburn hair. This Jewess wept when she approached us, asking us to take her in. Jan Kozieł "Galant" jumped off the wagon and said, "Come on, I'll lead you to the unit," and pointed the direction to her into the woods, while he followed her. When she entered a copse, about twenty meters away from the road, he let off a brief burst from his automatic weapon and returned to the wagon. After he got back, Galant said "I guided her to the unit." Laughing, Orkan asked Galant, "She won't cry any more, right?" and Galant replied, "Definitely not."¹⁵⁵

Jan Kozieł presented a different version of this incident at his trial:

I was going with Orkan and the others to get supplies. Some woman accosted Orkan, and he told me to shoot her, which I did. [...] I don't remember how I shot her. [...] The incident with the Jewess made a great impression on me. However, I carry too many memories, which is why I can't remember the circumstances of her death. [...] I think I shot her with an automatic weapon. [...] The Jewess was middle-aged – neither young nor old.¹⁵⁶

153 Ibid.

154 "Przesłuchanie świadka Józefa Giemzy", April 20, 1950, *ibid.*, p. 377. See also his testimony in "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Janowi Koziełowi", January 23, 1954, APW, SW, p. 45.

155 "Protokół zeznania świadka Świtka Jana", March 21, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, pp. 395–396. Prosecutor Władysław Dymant's note from January 4, 1954: "The defendant Kozieł has only confessed to the murder of that woman [in the forest] near the village of Marcule," PG 21/99, s. 217. It also says that Kozieł was arrested on June 13, 1951 and that his trial was set to open at the Provincial Court of the Capital City of Warsaw on January 23, 1954.

156 In the same statement, Kozieł says: "I was walking behind them [i.e. Orkan and others], I think with Ząbek and Giemza." However, forester Giemza claims not to

However, under interrogation on 10 June 1951, the accused revealed more details affirming Świtek's testimony. He remembered, for example, that the woman 'was wearing red clothes.'¹⁵⁷

She asked Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki to accept her in the unit. Orkan turned to me and said, "Galant, get her to the eternal unit," which meant I should shoot her. I then told the woman to go to the copse nearby. She asked me whether we were going to the unit. I replied yes, we were, and pointed the direction to her. In the thicket I let off automatic fire into the woman walking ahead of me, killing her instantly. Afterward I returned to the wagon and reported to Orkan that the order had been carried out, after which we moved on to Marcule.¹⁵⁸

When sentencing Koziół, Judge Z. Kaczyński acted exactly as he did in sentencing Tadeusz Maj. Even the phrasing is identical:

The court failed to establish with exactitude whether the accused acted on orders from Orkan, the group's commander, or on his own initiative with the approval of Orkan as [his] superior.¹⁵⁹ [...] In view of the doubts that emerged, the court adjudicated in the spirit of the principle *in dubio pro reo*, favoring the accused, accepting that he acted on his military commander's orders.¹⁶⁰

The last case, which surfaced in the testimonies of Maj's deputy, Adam Bakalarczyk, was particularly brutal. In September or October 1944, three people allegedly approached the unit: two men said to be Jews and one woman named Basia. According to Bakalarczyk,

After several days, one of the men disappeared, and as a precaution our unit changed its campsite. An investigation into the woman and the man who stayed was carried out. I don't know anything about specific results. The woman and the man were shot dead by

know the defendant at all. "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Janowi Koziółowi", January 23, 1954, APW, SW, p. 45.

157 "Przesłuchanie podejrzanego Jana Koziół", June 10, 1951, APW, MBP, not paginated.

158 "Przesłuchanie podejrzanego Jana Koziół", June 23, 1951, APW, SW, not paginated.

159 Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki's personal file contains his "My Own Testimony", where he describes the fatal shooting of this woman by Koziół, without mentioning his own role in the incident, AIPN, BU 00945/170, s. 44.

160 Sąd Wojewódzki dla m.st. Warszawy, "Wyrok w sprawie przeciwko Janowi Koziółowi", March 16, 1954, APW, SW, p. 71. Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki was not called as a witness in this or in any other case, and he was never tried because of ill health. On March 29, 1954, he was expunged from the list of secret MBP collaborators.

the people assigned by Łokietek. On the subject of this elimination, there was talk in the unit that before the execution the man said he was a Jew.¹⁶¹

Jan Koziel added graphic details:

On one occasion we were camped in the woods near Skarżysko. While camping there I heard that Orkan had shot two people to death who had stayed with our unit for about two weeks. It was one "Basia", and a man (I don't know his alias). It was told that Orkan was fooling around with Basia, holding her in his lap. When she laughed loudly he shot her in the mouth with a pistol. They say that Orkan had had an affair with her before that. Basia and this man were said to be German spies, as reported by AK. Apparently, Łokietek was present during the murder of the two.¹⁶²

Zygmunt Połowniak's testimony also highlights these aspects of Orkan's criminal activity:

I have heard it said that Lt. Col. Łęcki, while relocating with his unit in the Małogoszcz-Kielce area, accepted into his unit a young woman named Basia, allegedly a member of AK. She was exceptionally beautiful, and Lt. Col. Orkan started having a closer relationship with her. After several weeks he went for a stroll in the woods with her and there he personally executed her with a short-barreled weapon. When the afore-mentioned was reproached about it, he said she was a German spy. As far as I know, his mistress Basia was not suspected of the collaboration with the Germans.¹⁶³

161 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bakalarczyka Adama", Warsaw, February 16, 1954, PG 21/99, p. 457. During the main hearing, Bugajski also mentioned a Jew, a member of Świt, ndg. "Antek"; Sąd Wojewódzki m. st. Warszawy. "Protokół rozprawy głównej", March 27, 1954, PG 21/99, p. 513. By contrast, Tadeusz Maj himself testified: "While my unit was staying in Dobieszów or its environs, a married couple arrived. The man, who was assigned to Orkan's unit, allegedly died during the attack on a bridge, whereas the woman allegedly survived until liberation and after the war apparently worked for WUBP in Kielce, then in Łódź or Tomaszów"; "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza", July 5, 1951, PG 21/99, p. 347.

162 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego", June 10, 1954, APW, MBP, no pagination. On the rumors circulating in left-wing circles concerning "Jews in the Gestapo and SS," and a supposed detachment of 2,000 Jews from ghettos (see "Meldunek o Żydach w Gestapo i SS", AAN, 191/XII3, p. 308), see also Chodakiewicz et al., *Tajne oblicze GLAL i PPR II*, p. 211: "There was no special SS detachment numbering 2000 Jews. Spreading such rumors in GL contributed to the intensification of Antisemitic attitudes in the ranks of this organization."

163 "Oświadczenie Zygmunta Połowniaka", AIPN BU00945/170, p. 26.

Ząbek's Case

As noted above, Wiślicz's *aide-de-camp* was platoon leader "Ząbek".¹⁶⁴ Jan Świttek remembered his presence by the Kotyska River at the time of the first murder. "Ząbek" was in the group that went to the execution site with Maj:

When I arrived at the camp, I saw Ząbek near the kitchen. He gave me a pair of boots [officer's boots made from thick leather], and said, "Here, take [them], you won't be walking barefoot." When I asked him where he got the boots, he replied, "Just shut your trap and walk in the shoes." I recognized the boots that Ząbek gave me; these were the same boots that "Szczęśliwy" used to wear. I wore these shoes until I was wounded in the town of Włoszczowa, during the destruction of train tracks. Ząbek was also wearing new officer's boots, which he didn't have before the Jews were brought to the woods, and also new trousers.¹⁶⁵

Jan Maj "Sęk" told the aforementioned Bugajski that "Ząbek" 'was eliminating Jews on his own,'¹⁶⁶ whereas Tadeusz Maj recalled that 'Ząbek was escorting the Jews to the headquarters and allegedly liquidated them.'¹⁶⁷ During the trial Warszawski testified that "Ząbek" 'was mocking Jews. Once, while escorting a Jew to the headquarters, he shot him to death en route.'¹⁶⁸ Jan Barszcz testified that in October or November 1944, a quarrel broke out between Maj and deputy commander Orkan-Łęcki, and it ended with some of the people, including Barszcz, leaving the unit. The mutineers went back to their homes. After his return to Rzecznów, Barszcz met with "Ząbek", who had been staying in the village with Bugajski for quite a while due to his cold and abscesses. "Ząbek" revealed to Barszcz that there was a death warrant on him (Ząbek). He guessed that "the commanders whose orders he had carried out and about whom he knew plenty, condemned him out of fear that he would betray them."¹⁶⁹ This conjecture was correct. In early November Orkan-Łęcki, accompanied by Kurek from Lipie and

164 Wiślicz: "my *aide-de-camp* Ząbek"; in: id., *Echa Puszczy Jodłowej*, pp. 272, 273, 277, 281. See also Garas et al., *Wspomnienia żołnierzy GL i AL*, p. 339 for M. RógŚwiostek's memories.

165 "Protokół zeznania świadka Świtka Jana", March 21, 1951, PG 21/99, pp. 393–394.

166 The expression "on his own" is absent from Bugajski's testimony at Jan Kozieł's trial; "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Janowi Koziełowi", January 23, 1954, APW, SW, p. 44v.

167 Sąd Wojewódzki m. st. Warszawy, "Protokół rozprawy głównej", March 27, 1954, PG 21/99, pp. 513 and 514.

168 Ibid., s. 519.

169 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Barszcza Jana", March 16, 1951, PG 21/99, pp. 387–388.

Marceli Cukierski, arrived in the village of Rybiczyna and took Barszcz and “Ząbek” to the woods near the village:

In the woods Orkan’s unit was lined up in two rows. After I arrived, I started talking with Józef Bugajski “Azja”, who served in Orkan’s unit. At that moment I heard a series of shots behind me. I turned around and saw Ząbek, killed by Orkan, lying on the ground. I was terrified by this incident, as I wasn’t sure whether I would not meet the same fate as Ząbek. Orkan told me to bury Ząbek’s body right in this place, nowhere else, and to stay put and wait for further orders. I didn’t see Orkan after that. I would like to mention that Ząbek worked in the headquarters of the 2nd AL Brigade “Świt” and was under the direct command of Wiślicz – he was his *aide-de-camp*.¹⁷⁰

Another witness to Ząbek’s execution was Bolesław Warszakowski, who testified the following:

The execution was carried out in the woods, near the locality of Borsuki. Ząbek [...] was executed in front of the unit [...] in the autumn. Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki addressed Ząbek, saying he had an order to execute him for selling firearms and committing robberies. He then fired a few shots from his automatic weapon, killing Ząbek on the spot. He told Barszcz “Grab” from the village of Rybiczyna to bury Ząbek’s body. I would like to point out that the day before Orkan carried out the sentence on Ząbek, two people came over to see our unit: [Mieczysław] Świostek “Róg”¹⁷¹ and Maj Tadeusz.¹⁷² Both of them spent a long time talking to Orkan.¹⁷³

Ząbek’s murder was probably related to the leadership’s policy changes, taking effect in August 1944, and unrelated to the murders that had been or would have been committed. When the unit was camped in Wykus in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, Wiślicz addressed his assembled troops and ‘denounced looting and

170 Ibid., p. 388. Let us note that “Przychodni”, working for the Special Commission, had more to say upon the subject. Years later they talked about it in Kielce and “Przychodni” allegedly said that “if the authorities knew about those murders, Wiślicz and Łokietek would go to prison,” s. 389.

Józef Bugajski, a witness in Jan Kozielec’s trial, confirmed the circumstances of Ząbek’s execution: “Ząbek was apprehended after desertion and Orkan killed him for the ‘betrayal of the people.’ When Orkan was asked why he had done it, he said that such were the orders from the District”; “Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko przeciwko Janowi Kozielecowi”, January 23, 1954, APW, SW, pp. 44v–45.

171 E.g. see Wieczorek, *Armia Ludowa*, p. 203; Garas et al., *Wspomnienia żołnierzy GL i AL*, pp. 294–295, 338; Garas, *Oddziały Gwardii Ludowej i Armii Ludowej*, p. 232.

172 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Warszakowskiego Bolesława”, Warsaw, April 13, 1951, PG 21/99, p. 412.

173 Ibid., pp. 412–413.

using weapons against innocent people. He stressed that those who carried out such actions would be punished by death.¹⁷⁴

Wiślicz and Sobczyński

Wiślicz's presence in the unit on the day the Jews were executed by the Kotyska River is confirmed by Jan Barszcz (sl. 383), Adam Bakalarczyk (sl. 455), and Waclaw Tracz, who testified that

Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk...arrived and gave a speech to the unit (we were all lined up in two rows). I don't remember the subject of the speech. We were also asked if any of us needed something, i.e. boots or clothes.¹⁷⁵

Members of the unit also remember Władysław Sobczyński. In addition to Maj, who keeps mentioning him most persistently, his presence among Świt members on that critical day is also confirmed by Bakalarczyk¹⁷⁶ and Koziel.¹⁷⁷ Bakalarczyk also mentioned that Maj complained to him that 'Wiślicz and Sobczyński gave him an order to execute the whole group, but he shot only two of them. They should take care of these matters themselves, as he put it.'¹⁷⁸

Throughout the entire investigation, Maj consistently insisted that he had executed the two Jews by the Kotyska River on his superiors' orders. In the final interrogation in 1953, he refers to a conversation with Orkan, which took place in Wiślicz's presence.

174 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Świtka Jana", March 21, 1951, PG 21/99, p. 396.

175 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Tracza Waclawa", Warsaw, March 27, 1951, PG 21/99, p. 401. For the version of the roll call with the participation of Wiślicz and Sobczyński prior to the execution of the Jews by the Kotyska River, see "Pismo Tadeusza Maja do Sądu Wojewódzkiego M. Warszawy", 1954, PG 21/99, s. 476, and Tracz's testimony in Sąd Wojewódzki m. st. Warszawy, "Protokół rozprawy głównej", March 27, 1954, PG 21/99, p. 515.

176 Motion filed by attorneys Aleksander Soroka and Jan Załęski to the Provincial Court in Warsaw, on March 5, 1954, which concerned calling Bakalarczyk to testify. "At that time, I don't remember the date exactly, Wiślicz [...] and Sobczyński [...] and conferred with the unit commander [...] for two, three hours [...]. Immediately after their departure, Tadeusz Maj [...] gave orders to come with him"; "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bakalarczyka Adama", Warsaw, February 16, 1954, PG 21/99, s. 454.

177 "Przesłuchanie podejrzanego Jana Koziela", June 10, 1951, APW, MBP, no pagination: "Before roll-call, Sobczyński and Wiślicz came to see our unit and conferred about something with Łokietek and Orkan-Łęcki."

178 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bakalarczyka Adama", Warsaw, February 16, 1954, PG 21/99, p. 457.

[In] 1946 there was a casual conversation on this subject during Tadeusz Orkan-Łęcki stay in Kielce. Having met me and Róg [-Świostek], he asked me what kind of business I had regarding the liquidation of Jews during the occupation. I replied to him that this was Wiślicz's business. He [Wiślicz] was standing next to us, and hearing my words he turned his back on us and didn't say anything.¹⁷⁹

During the last interrogation in 1953, Maj requested that Sobczyński and Wiślicz be questioned.¹⁸⁰ Sobczyński was the first called on 18 September 1953. He stated that 'in principle he did not belong to any partisan group and just moved alongside them, carrying out his special [intelligence] assignments that he had received while in the USSR.'¹⁸¹ It was not until July 1944, after the loss of his radio man who conveyed his reports to the Soviets, that he accepted 'an offer to join the command of AL Sub-district III, headed by Moczar.' He was appointed "chief of security". He added that "Świt", commanded by Wiślicz- Iwańczyk, was in this sub-district's jurisdiction. The company was divided into units, including Maj's.¹⁸² Unlike Wiślicz,¹⁸³ Sobczyński said he had never seen any group of Jews in the vicinity of the unit.

Sobczyński recalled that after the war, he spoke with Bugajski about the execution of '13 Jews',¹⁸⁴ and that he sent all the documentation to MBP. In 1951 he was investigated in connection with this case by the MBP.¹⁸⁵ He also recalls that in 1952, while on a visit to an agricultural state farm, he spoke with Wiślicz about

179 "Protokół końcowego przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza", Warsaw, May 20, 1953, PG 21/99, p. 419.

180 "Protokół końcowego przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza", Warsaw, May 21, 1953, PG 21/99, p. 421.

181 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Władysława Sobczyńskiego", Warsaw, September 18, 1953, PG 21/99, p. 429.

182 Ibid. Sobczyński mentioned Maj not carrying out an execution order of a partisan in Brody; releasing "two AK men suspected of collaborating with the Germans, killing PPR sympathizers"; and preventing the liquidation of "another German collaborator", Flis "Robur", commander of an AK unit in that area, who later switched over to AL.

183 Wiślicz said at the trial that one day when he was with Łokietek's unit, he saw "a group of Jews hanging about the unit," p. 525.

184 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Władysława Sobczyńskiego", Warsaw, September 18, 1953, PG 21/99, p. 431.

185 Because of the Special Bureau's charges of participating in the murders of Jews during AL partisan combat activity, he was removed from his post in the security agencies. On Sobczyński's antisemitic excesses as director of the Passport Bureau, see vice-director of the MBP Special Bureau H. Piasecki's report to Minister Radkiewicz, July 4, 1951, AIPN 703/1132, pp. 166–169.

Maj and the murder he had committed. ‘I noticed that Wiślicz spoke unwillingly about this subject.’¹⁸⁶ It was only in 1958 in the course of an extraordinary appeal of the sentence from five years before, that the Prosecutor General asked Sobczyński directly whether he had given Maj an execution order. Sobczyński denied this, adding that he knew about cases of liquidation of ‘people who hung around partisan units and betrayed their location.’¹⁸⁷ He did not rule out that during his stay with Świt, he expressed an opinion that such people should be liquidated. However, he suggested that ‘Maj could have shot these Jews on Wiślicz’s order.’¹⁸⁸

One month later Wiślicz was summoned for questioning. He confirmed that Maj was an insubordinate soldier, recalled his desertion in the autumn of 1944, and added that he had refused to eliminate Antoni Heda “Szary”, ‘who actively fought PPR forces by carrying out murders,’¹⁸⁹ as well as two other AK operatives. He claimed he had no idea about the murder Maj’s unit had committed by the Kotyska River; he learned about the incident only two or three weeks later from Sobczyński, who told his comrade Foremniak¹⁹⁰ that Jews had been

186 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Władysława Sobczyńskiego”, Warsaw, September 18, 1953, PG 21/99, p. 431.

187 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Władysława Sobczyńskiego”, November 12, 1958, PG 21/99, p. 644.

188 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Władysława Sobczyńskiego”, Warsaw, September 18, 1953, PG 21/99, p. 645.

189 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Eugeniusza Wiślicza-Iwańczyka”, October 16, 1953, PG 21/99, pp. 432–435. Compare this with Wiślicz-Iwańczyk’s statement ten years later: “We can’t speak of any serious fights between Szary’s unit and ours”; *Działalność organizacji “Świt” i II Brygady AL Ziem Kieleckiej na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1942–1945*. Unpublished typescript, 1968; Wiślicz-Iwańczyk’s file, AAN, 8500. See also misleading stories about Antoni Heda in Wiślicz, *Echa Puszczy Jodłowej*, 64–68. On Maj’s contacts with Szary, see also his testimony in the Communist Party Archive, PG 21/99, p. 346.

190 Jan Foremniak was a prewar communist from Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. He was appointed the first province governor of Kielce, and was shot dead by an AK soldier in 1944. He was the model for the character of Szczuka, the communist in Jerzy Andrzejewski’s film *Ashes and Diamonds*. Wiślicz’s assertions (“Protokół przesłuchania świadka Eugeniusza Wiślicza-Iwańczyka”, October 16, 1953, PG 21/99, pp. 432–435) were later denied by Sobczyński in testimony before the Prosecutor General during the extraordinary revision of the sentence against Maj; “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Władysława Sobczyńskiego”, November 12, 1958, PG 21/99, p. 644.

wandering about in the unit's vicinity and that they 'spied on this unit.'¹⁹¹ He remembered that 'Foremniak replied to this using the word "speculators" by which he meant those Jews.'¹⁹² He maintained that after some time he told Sobczyński that 'Łokietek's conduct was not to his liking either, to which Sobczyński said nothing.'

Toward the end he states categorically that 'this is complete untruth that he allegedly gave Łokietek an order to shoot the Jews,' and that he did not know 'any Kamiński from Ilża.'¹⁹³ During the trial he states: 'in all likelihood I wasn't with Łokietek's unit on the day of the murder.'¹⁹⁴ Only once will he add unexpectedly: 'On one occasion the three of us, i.e., myself, Sobczyński, and Foremniak went to see Łokietek's unit; he said to us that he had taken money from the Jews, and settled the score with those who didn't want to surrender their money.'¹⁹⁵

How the Defendant Maj Viewed His Conduct

During the initial interrogations, Maj explained his conduct as 'bourgeois influences' to which he yielded, and also in terms of being incited to crime by his superiors.

While murdering the Jews by Kotyska I was guided above all by an order...and, furthermore, I was still in the grip of prewar prejudice toward the Jews as speculators¹⁹⁶ and exploiters, which was caused by the Sanation regime propaganda. Accordingly, my

191 He repeated this at the trial; "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Majowi Tadeuszowi", March 27, 1954, PG 21/99, p. 525.

192 "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Eugeniusza WiśliczaIwańczyka", October 16, 1953, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 434.

193 Ibid., p. 435.

194 "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Tadeuszowi Majowi", March 27, 1954, PG 21/99, p. 525. In a letter to the State Council dated June 25, 1954, Tadeusz Maj's brother Franciszek said that Wiślicz "admitted that he was with the unit on that day only after he had testified in the trial, in the corridor [of the court]"; *ibid.*, p. 552.

195 Ibid., p. 525.

196 Cf. the expression "speculators" in Wiślicz's account in reference to the Jews "hanging about" the unit. See also Eugenia Maj's (Maj's wife) letter to Franciszek Józwiak, chairman of the Party Control Committee from February 21, 1953: "[O]ne of the killed jews [sic!] was the owner of a number of lime kilns in Błaziny, besides that traded grain and other goods. He was the richest capitalist in Ilża. His brother was a Jewish policeman during the occupation, he was going round the nearby villages with the gendarmes, to requisition Jewish belongings," PG 21/99, s. 90. See Chapter 5: *The Figure of the Bloodsucker in Polish Religious, National and Leftist Discourse, 1945–1946* in this volume.

attitude toward Jews was disdainful, and I believed that there was no place for the likes of them in the new Poland.¹⁹⁷

Under the influence of a bourgeois upbringing, I treated Jews as enemies of the new order and didn't want them to come into power in Poland.¹⁹⁸

Murdering these Jews by carrying out Sobczyński's orders [*sic*] without any resistance was a kind of offshoot of the antisemitic influences and nationalist upbringing and social environment in which I found myself during the war.¹⁹⁹

During the March 1954 hearing, Maj, who by then had realized the futility of blaming his superiors, tried to make allegations against the murdered Jews, saying he had in fact heard 'a subversive group was being organized by the Germans, which included also Jews' and that he 'was not certain that these Jews had escaped from a camp.'²⁰⁰ This version was also confirmed by another witness, Tracz, whose involvement in the execution was attested by everyone who testified. 'There were stories going around that the man who had been shot was a German spy,'²⁰¹ he said. 'I heard the boys say that one of the victims was a Gestapo agent.'²⁰² Bakalarczyk followed a similar path. He claimed that Kamiński, whom they had executed, was a distinctive 'man without a nose'²⁰³ and could easily be recognized.

Soon afterward, a witness from Iłża named Winiarski testified at the hearing that during the occupation he lived opposite the police station in Iłża, and often saw Kamiński enter the gendarmerie post. He was alleged to be a Jewish policeman: 'People said he had been killed because he had informed on people to the Germans. He was killed in spring 1944, when the ghetto was established [*sic*].'²⁰⁴ In view of the obvious doubts concerning said Kamiński's date of death, Winiarski's testimony failed to achieve the expected result. The case was saved by another witness, Szepietowski from Iłża. When informed by a woman liaison

197 "Protokół przełuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza", May 27, 1951, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 325.

198 See also "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza", May 26, 1951, *ibid.*, p. 322.

199 "Protokół końcowego przesłuchania podejrzanego Maja Tadeusza", Warsaw, May 20, 1953, p. 418.

200 Voievodship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw. "Protokół rozprawy głównej", March 27, 1954, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 505.

201 *Ibid.*, p. 515.

202 *Ibid.*, p. 516.

203 *Ibid.*, p. 521.

204 *Ibid.*, p. 523; a mistake made either by the court typist or the witness.

about a body found in the woods, he allegedly sent over a 'PPR secretary,' who determined that one of the people killed was 'Kamiński ... [whose] brother was a mayor; people said that the killing had been settled higher up.'²⁰⁵ The conclusion of the judgment indicates that the court ultimately rejected the thesis that these Jews were Gestapo informers.²⁰⁶

205 Ibid., p. 527.

206 This version recurred in the extraordinary appeal filed by the Prosecutor General's Office in 1958. See "Wyrok Sądu Najwyższego PRL", June 16, 1958, AAN, PG21/99, p. 574ff. The Supreme Court quashed the 30 March 1954 lower court verdict and referred the case to the Warsaw Provincial Court for renewed examination of the possibility that Kamiński from Iłża collaborated with the Germans. Prosecutor Tadeusz Miernik consulted the then director of the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH), Adam Rutkowski (s. 594). A note from October 7, 1958 states that "cit. A. Rutkowski is unable to provide material [confirming] this," although, "he does not rule out that at the time [July 1944] a Jew could have collaborated with the Germans" (s. 604). On October 14, 1958, Miernik summoned Stefan Winiarski from Iłża for questioning (p. 606). Winiarski told him a story about Kamiński ("man with a crooked nose"), whose cousin, a Jewish militiaman, was reportedly the son of Boruch, an elder in the Jewish community of Iłża. Kamiński "walked around with that militiaman," calling in at the gendarmerie station. On October 14, 1958, Miernik questioned another resident of Iłża, Marian Mąciwoda (convicted of violating art. 39 of the criminal code), who confirmed the story about Kamiński's ("without a nose") cousin, the Jewish militiaman (p. 609): the cousins "walked about together." The witness said that he had met a group of about 12 Jews, escapees from the Starachowice camp. They were all allegedly murdered by the Germans (at that time, the gendarmes burnt down a forester's cabin at Bukowiny), except for one Langer, who emigrated (p. 610). (This could be a coincidence, but Wiślicz-Iwańczyk's memoirs mention "Estera Langerowa from Iłża [currently living in the USA], who was staying with us and who was rescued by my wife and I"; see Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 85; also Wiślicz-Iwańczyk, *Echa puszczy jodłowej*, p. 213 on Langer the forester.) Miernik then questioned Tracz, who confirmed the order given to Maj by Sobczyński and Wiślicz and recalled that one of the executed victims was named Kamiński (p. 622); also one Stanisław Paździura from Iłża confirmed that Kamiński collaborated with the German gendarmerie (p. 657). The investigation concerning Maj was discontinued ("Postanowienie o umorzeniu śledztwa", November 21, 1958, p. 658) on the grounds that "the victims collaborated with the Germans," and therefore Maj was not called to account for his actions. Cf. also Waław Maj's (Tadeusz's brother) letter to President Bolesław Bierut, in which he described Kamiński as a German collaborator and "cousin of one of the victims," and therefore a person who had not been in the partisan camp PG 21/99, s. 62.

When the hypothesis about Jews as German spies fell apart, Maj resumed his efforts at self-critique, stressing that the act belies his character.

I've never been an antisemite; neither by deed nor by word did I ever manifest an anti-semitic attitude. The decision to carry out executions was influenced by an erroneous judgment based on an indifferent attitude toward the Jews, which fashioned my opinion that Jews were people of lower character. I am sure that this incident would never have occurred had it not been for the incitement on the part of Wiślicz and Sobczyński.²⁰⁷

As proof of his veracity, he reminded the court that his unit had included several Jews.²⁰⁸ In fact, from August 1944, six persons of Jewish origin served with the 2nd AL Brigade "Świt" – among others a doctor, "Adam", with his wife Irena;²⁰⁹ Basia, whose name appears earlier; as well as two men whose names remain unknown, 'a cook and a barber.'²¹⁰ Bakalarczyk also mentioned them in his testimony.²¹¹

207 Sąd Wojewódzki m. st. Warszawy. "Protokół rozprawy głównej", March 27, 1954, PG 21/99, p. 504.

208 AAN, PG 21/99, p. 317.

209 On this subject, see "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Józefa Bugajskiego", September 22, 1949, PG 21/99, p. 373. See also the testimony of Maj. Zygmunt Połowniak: "I am aware that in his [Orkan's] unit there was a married couple of Jewish nationality, a doctor-surgeon, associate professor, whom Lt.-Col. Łęcki persecuted for his ethnic origin, mocked him and kept harassing him all the time. To confirm this fact, I can name a witness, my former subordinate as Chief of Staff of the 1st AK Brigade in Kielce Region, currently Lt.-Col. Adam Kornecki at Department II of the Central Command"; "Oświadczenie", AIPN, BU 00945/170, p. 26. Tadeusz Maj mentions three other persons, whose subsequent fate is unknown. It is possible that these are the individuals I have written about in sub-section *Men and Women*.

210 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Jana Koziela", June 10, 1951, APW, MBB, no pagination. Koziel referred to them in greater detail in his testimony from June 23, 1951: "I recall that after the founding of the 2nd Brigade 'Świt', there were two Jews in our unit, one of them [was] a barber and another a cook. [...] In late August or early September they were deployed in a very difficult operation of destroying a railway bridge. That bridge was very well guarded by Germans hiding in bunkers. Both of them were killed in action – the bridge had not exploded"; "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Jana Koziela", June 23, 1951, AIPN BU 00945/170, p. 30.

211 On the barber and a bookkeeper in the unit, see Sąd Wojewódzki m. st. Warszawy. "Protokół rozprawy głównej", March 27, 1954, PG 21/99, p. 522. On the subject of two Jews employed as barber and bookkeeper in a left-wing unit, see Gershon Rosenwald's testimony: "Shortly afterward we came upon another unit of Polish partisans, who took the remainder of the Polish money from us. I recognized one of them and told him our money had been taken, and then the commander came over, gave it back to us and afterward he recruited three of us [into his group] – the bookkeeper,

Bronisław Jaworski, who had been assigned by the high command, also served with the unit;²¹² he was the only Jew who survived his stint in the AL unit “Świt”.

Col. Jaworski (Michał), weapons specialist and ordnance supplies advisor in Maj-Łokietek’s unit in the autumn of 1944, and an employee of the Ministry of Defense after the war, testified during Maj’s trial:

The AL assigned me to the “Świt” Brigade.... The accused didn’t know at first that I was of Jewish origin, he didn’t learn about that until later. The defendant’s attitude toward me changed after some time. In the beginning I was his right hand, his private advisor, and then I was sidelined. I came to the unit at the beginning of August ... at that time news was reaching me that there were allegedly robberies of Jews who were returning from the camp in Starachowice, but I don’t know who committed them. ... I was with the brigade from August to October; my prolonged sojourn in the brigade turned out to be unnecessary, because I was “unmasked” [as a Jew], so I turned to Moczar, who told me to go back to the high command. I was assigned to the brigade as an advisor to the unit’s commander. The fact that I was Jewish would have undermined his authority as an officer of the People’s Army, and after my “unmasking” I could no longer perform my duties.²¹³

The verdict in the trial of the commander of “Świt” was passed on 30 March 1954. Tadeusz Maj was sentenced to eight years in prison and three-year loss of civic rights.²¹⁴ The conclusion of the judgment was that ‘the Polish people... with the exception of a small number of traitors from NSZ and AK, did not let itself be forced down the Fascist-Nazi path and under the leadership of revolutionary organizations it fought for the freedom of all Polish citizens, regardless of denomination, ethnic origin, sex, or religion.’²¹⁵

the barber and someone else”; retrieved 5.5.2012, from www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Wierzbnik/Wierzbnik.html#Page381.

212 See Wiślicz, *Echa Puszczy Jodłowej*, pp. 259–260, on his weapon training classes.

213 Testimony of Bronisław Jaworski at the Sąd Wojewódzki m. st. Warszawy; “Protokół rozprawy głównej”, March 27, 1954, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 520.

214 “Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego dla m. st. Warszawy”, March 30, 1954, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 534. One and a half years later, on October 25, 1955, Tadeusz Maj was released on parole; “Pismo Prokuratora m.st.Warszawy do Sądu Wojewódzkiego dla m.st. Warszawy”, November 4, 1955, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 563. This was supposed to be a furlough. The motion for consent was signed by the vice director of Department III of MBP, Alicja Graff. Maj never returned to prison.

215 “Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego dla m. st. Warszawy”, March 30, 1954, AAN, PG 21/99, p. 537.

Conclusion

The resonance of the archival material dealing with murders of Jews committed by members of Świt, and subsequently the 2nd Kielce AL Brigade bearing the same name, is summed up in the words of one of the murderers. Jan Koziel said: 'Considering the executions that were carried out and the attitude of the command to these incidents, one can conclude that the attitude of the Świt unit toward the population of Jewish origin was hostile.'²¹⁶

The story of Tadeusz Maj's trial reconstructed in this article, as well as other investigations concerning murders of Jews that never came to trial, document the tensions tearing apart the fabric of the communist power apparatus, which was unwilling to search for the truth about the Holocaust. Investigations were launched in order to target political rivals, and because in the period immediately preceding Stalin's death the configuration of political forces kept changing, the relevant cases were pursued tardily and inconsistently. Józef Światło, vice-director of the Special Bureau at Department X of MBP, who supervised the case code-named "Jesion" investigating Eugeniusz Wiślicz and a group of Świt partisans, was an exception to this trend. We cannot rule out that the knowledge he gained during this investigation of the extent of wartime and prewar antisemitism may in part have led to his flight to the West.

Translated from the Polish by Jerzy Michałowicz

Postscript

The oral history collection in the personal archive of Michał Chęciński, who has recently passed away in Haifa, includes interview number 50,²¹⁷ which merits special attention. In this interview, Chęciński talks to Polish Army Colonel Adam Kornecki, who from January to November 1945 served as the first chief of the Kielce WUBP. Kornecki, a paratrooper deployed in the Kielce region in 1944, claims to have acted as an intermediary between Moczar and the Russians during

216 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Jana Koziela", AIPN, BU 00945/170, s. 32.

217 Conversation held on July 4 and 5, 1974 in Munich, where Kornecki had emigrated. The recording and its transcript are the courtesy of Michał Chęciński. Chęciński, Michał: *Teksty przepisane z taśmy dla prof. Tokarskiej-Bakir, Dr Michał Chęciński, 17, Zidqiahu St., Hifa 34409, Israel*. Unpublished typescript, pagination based on individual interviews.

Moczar's conflict with Kasman.²¹⁸ His account contains the following characteristic of Moczar from this period: 'When the partisans were collecting watches, he would pick the best watch for himself and his lover. In a word, he acted like a *batuszka*, doing what he wished. [...] It was common practice to disarm various Jewish groups in the forests. Not only would they take their weapons, but also their money, which they [the Jews, transl. note] were using to buy food. It was usual for the Polish partisans to come to a village [and] stock up on food without paying, but the Jews had to pay, because they didn't want anyone to get on their trail.'²¹⁹

'Antisemitism was already flourishing in the partisan units during the war. E.g. Łęcki, a former KBW commander, why, he did time for murdering Jews. And Łokietek – Maj, didn't he do time? They discovered a girl at a farmer's house; she was hiding there with a little boy. And this son of a bitch Łęcki brought her with him, slept with her for 8 days, and then he took her out to the forest and shot her dead himself. They were afraid of me, because they didn't know that I was Jewish. But once they discovered that someone was Jewish, they killed him.'²²⁰

'Question: Why did Sobczyński give orders to murder Jews, how did he justify that? Answer: That those Jews were Gestapo agents and that's it. That was enough, that was his excuse. So we asked: and that 12-year-old boy whom you murdered, was he a Gestapo agent, too?'²²¹

218 Chęciński, *Teksty*, p. 22. See also Kasman, Leon / Torańska, Teresa: "Konflikt z Moczarem". *Aneks* 39, 1985, pp. 86–110.

219 Chęciński, *Teksty*, p. 22.

220 Chęciński, *Teksty*, pp. 40, 41.

221 Chęciński, *Teksty*, p. 41.

Chapter 4: Ethnographic Findings on the Aftermath of the Holocaust through Jewish and Polish Eyes in the Memory of the Polish Hinterland

Comments on Methodology

The study reported in this chapter was carried out in Klimontów Sandomierski, a typical small town in central southern Poland. Oral history recorded in the Sandomierz region 60 years after the war,¹ and accounts of Jewish Holocaust survivors taken immediately after the war served as its source material.² As far as possible, this has been supplemented with preliminary archival research,³ although neither this nor the factual conclusions form the main thrust of this chapter.

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- 1 This chapter is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Sandomierz and its surrounding area in 2004–2008, partially discussed in Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: *Legendy o krwi. Antropologia przesądu*. W.A.B.: Warsaw 2008 (transl. into French by Małgorzata Maliszewska, *Légendes du sang. Pour une anthropologie de l'antisémitisme chrétien*, éditions Albin Michel, Paris 2015). The numbers in parentheses stand for two different systems of pagination of the interviews (marked N or W respectively).
 - 2 The Jewish Historical Institute Archive (Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego – AŻIH), unit 301, see also *Relacje z czasów Zagłady. Inwentarz. Archiwum ŻIH INB*, vols. 1–5. Żydowski Instytutu Historyczny [ŻIH]: Warsaw 1998–2009. Some aspects of these accounts are supplemented with contemporary memoirs in the same archive, such as those of Leib Zylberberg, cat. no. 302/37. Zylberberg's account was published as *A Yid fun Klementov dertseylt* (A Jew from Klimontów Recounts. Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna: Warsaw-Łódź-Kraków 1947), extensive excerpts of which were translated for the author of this chapter by Sara Arm. The author is grateful to Professor Feliks Tych for granting her access to this rare book, to the AŻIH staff for their assistance during her research, as well as to Sara Arm for her countless translations from Yiddish.
 - 3 This research was carried out for the author by Magdalena Prokopowicz, M.A., in the Sandomierz Branch of the State Archive in Kielce, the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – IPN), and the National Library in Warsaw. The author did supplementary research in the State Archive in Radom and Kielce.

Ethnography, the most direct examination of reality, takes a different approach to sources than history, which values them only inasmuch as they contribute to establishing facts. While ethnographic sources may be of assistance in this respect, the ethnographer looks at them, above all, through the prism of their autonomous value, seeking testimonies of *collective conceptions* – fears, aspirations, dreams, phantasms, stereotypical reactions and standards. Thus, real values are contrasted with declared values, only the fullness of which produces what sociologists call “attitudes.”⁴ In criticism of historical and sociological sources, these concepts play a vital role. Painstaking attention to the language used by the informants is of central importance to the reconstruction of these concepts; therefore, extensive citations analyzed by an appropriate set of tools are central to this chapter. In language, “there persists that which has passed, that which, because of language, cannot be discarded once and for all”;⁵ and that which, for various reasons, is lost in other historical sciences. In ethnography, such language, while apparently comprehensible, is treated like a code that needs cracking.⁶ Its manifold “incorrectness” is not considered a problem by the ethnographer; on the contrary, it presents an opportunity to pay attention to things passed over by the historian and the sociologist.

In 2005 and 2006, when the interviews cited in this chapter were recorded, people in the Sandomierz region were fairly keen to talk to anthropologists about issues from the war period, and even seemed to have been waiting for such an opportunity. However, unwillingness and barriers surfaced with respect to neighborhood murders. However, although the perpetrators themselves never wanted to talk about these cases, not even for expiation, with others – once guaranteed absolute anonymity – the desire to bear witness usually won through. During one such interview in Klimontów, Helena Tyszka, a member of

4 See Sułek, Antoni: “How Ordinary Poles See the Jews: Review and Interpretation of 1967 to 2008 Survey Results”. In Tych, Feliks / Adamczyk-Garbowska, Monika (eds.): *Następstwa Zagłady Żydów: Polska 1944–2010*. Wydawnictwo UMCS and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: Lublin 2011, pp. 853–888.

5 Arendt, Hannah / Kopacki, A. (transl.): *Walter Benjamin 1892–1940. słowo/obraz/terytoria*: Gdansk 2008, p. 65.

6 The author, head of the Ethnographic Archive at the Institute of the Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, which deals with ethnographic sources on the Holocaust, is working on a project called “Blood Libel Myths and Extermination of the Jews in Memory in the Polish Provinces”, which aims to develop an emic/etic lexicon, i.e., with both intra- and extra-textual categories, as an aid for extrapolating the hidden meanings of interviewees’ words.

the research team, heard about the murder of several Jews, including a woman in the late stages of pregnancy, 'on a roof on Sandomierska Street,' in April 1945, i.e., shortly after the Germans had been driven out of Poland.⁷ This incident was mentioned a few days later by the President of Poland, Bolesław Bierut, at a press conference in Moscow.⁸ Thus, this event, which was deep in historical oblivion for decades,⁹ resurfaced in oral history.

Research Project: "The Excluded Economy"

In a much-publicized essay, in 1945, Kazimierz Wyka wrote:

Anyone who wants to comprehend the social psychology of Polish society on the threshold of the [country's] third [period of] independence should look back at economic issues during the Occupation.... The claim that psychological effects always persist longer than the factors that caused them is well substantiated.¹⁰

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- 7 "On the night of April 16–17, unknown perpetrators staged an attack in Klimontów, where they murdered five people. The co-proprietors of the Klimontów mill were among the victims." (Probably Chil or Chaim Penczyna and his family.) Report from the Sandomierz District Authorities (*Starostwo*) Offices to the Department of Supply and Commerce, the Province Offices in Kielce (UWK), June 21, 1945; State Archive in Kielce (APK), Sandomierz Branch, Sandomierz District Offices (APK, OS SS), file no. 579. This report includes two other accounts of attacks on nearby mills, in Kleczanów and Słabuszowice. Referring to the latter, the report mentions that the group of attackers identified themselves as the "Ryś Independent White Eagle Commander Hit Squad"; Wnuk, Rafał (ed.): *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego 1944–1956*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej [IPN]: Warsaw-Lublin 2007, p. 276, mentions a group by the code-name of "Narodowcy" operating in an area nearby; it was led by Eugeniusz Majewski "Ryś" or "Huragan".
 - 8 This was mentioned in 1999 by Professor Eugeniusz Niebelski, a regional historian from the Catholic University of Lublin, whose ideas are discussed later in this chapter; and in 2001 by Radosław Januszewski, a journalist for the *Rzeczpospolita* daily newspaper and author of the article "Szkoła tysiąclecia", from which extensive excerpts are quoted in this chapter.
 - 9 "In the Sandomierz region, former members of the Home Army who have gone underground are staging pogroms, attacking villages and small towns, and murdering Jews." "Press conference held by M. Bierut at the Polish Embassy in Moscow in [sic!] April 23, 1945". *Soviet-Polish Relations. A Collection of Official Documents and Press Extracts*. Soviet News: London 1946, p. 30.
 - 10 Wyka, Kazimierz: "Gospodarka wyłączona". In: Markiewicz, Henryk / Wyka, Marta (eds.): *Życie na niby. Pamiętnik po klęsce*. Wydawnictwo Literackie: Kraków-Wrocław 1984, p. 138.

These opening sentences did not get the attention they deserved, although they pointed to a research direction crucial for the post-war period; this matter itself merits a separate analysis. The ethnographic material collected 60 years after the war near Sandomierz justified a return to the issue Wyka had pointed out. Without examining the ‘economic issues during the Occupation,’ it is impossible to understand the present-day memory of Jews in the Polish provinces and, even more so, the immediate post-war reality, with clashes of interests among players who were not always overt. This would also help to decide between two historical, mutually repudiating discourses: on the one hand, the Communist discourse viewing the entire post-war reality in terms of ‘for or against the people’s power’; and on the other, the independence discourse,¹¹ which was similar, except for a different definition of ‘the people.’¹² It is easy to see how these discourses developed another similarity. In spite of numerous declarations to the contrary by the Communists,¹³ expressed in different ways, there was soon no place for the Polish Jews who had survived the Holocaust. Based on Wyka’s approach, this chapter aims to outline, on a microhistorical scale, the causes behind the dematerialization of the Jews in Polish provincial life in the immediate post-war years.

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- 11 This chapter expresses indirect criticism of both discourses, treating both the terms “Communist discourse” and “independence discourse” as unclear and problematic. It is necessary to at least briefly mention this issue, which is fundamental to the sociology of knowledge and merits a separate study.
 - 12 See e.g. the following excerpt from an order by Mieczysław Liniarski “Mścislaw,” a senior officer in the Polish anti-Communist guerilla group, Propaganda Summary no. 14, issued by the Home Army’s Information and Propaganda Office for the Białystok District, on May 15, 1945: “We represent the entire Polish Nation. We want to create a divide between Poles and Soviets [...]. Being prepared to fight means: a) Immediately cleansing the area of all ‘narks,’ because it will be too late once the NKVD arrives [...]. b) [...] convincing society that the whole nation is with us, and that there are only Soviets and Jews on the other [side],” in Krajewski, Kazimierz / Łabuszewski, Tomasz: *Białostocki Okręg AK-AKO, VII 1944–VIII 1945*. Oficyna Wydawnicza VOLUMEN, Dom Wydawniczy Bellona: Warsaw 1997, p. 145. The Home Army was disbanded on the order of General Leopold Okulicki, the last commander, on January 19, 1945.
 - 13 For a discussion of declarations by the Communist Polish authorities, who claimed to offer equal rights to the Jews in post-war Poland, see Olejnik, Leszek: *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego: Łódź 2003, p. 351ff.

Klimontów and the Surroundings

Klimontów, near Sandomierz, was home to 3,100 Jews before the war.¹⁴ In June 1942, a ghetto was established there for some 5,000 Jews,¹⁵ including those brought in from nearby villages and 200 deported from Vienna. The Nazis began liquidating the ghetto toward the end of October 1942. One hundred sick and weak, including children, were killed on the spot, 300 were sent to Sandomierz for forced labor, and all the rest were sent on foot to Złota, and then to the railway station in Nadbrzezie outside Sandomierz,¹⁶ where they were put into cattle wagons and taken to the death camp at Treblinka.

In August 1944, the *starosta* (head of county administration) of Sandomierz reported that the Jews, 'during the bridgehead [at Baranów],¹⁷ after leaving their hiding places, mostly went to Lublin, [and] after the front moved west, they returned in greater numbers to all the small towns and hamlets.'¹⁸ In June 1945, there were 103 Jews among the residents of Sandomierz.¹⁹ Also, at about the same time, in a telling report on the situation, the *starosta* of Sandomierz states: 'Jews [...] are turning up here and there at present in order to let or sell property mostly ruined during the German Occupation.'²⁰ In June 1945, there were no

14 Data from Grynberg, Michał / Kotowska, Maria (eds.): *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945. Relacje świadków*. Oficyna Naukowa: Warsaw 2003, p. 194. The total population of the town was 4,500 in 1939.

15 Mordechaj Penczyna adds the following precise information: "During the liquidation of our settlement on October 30, 1942 [...], there were 8,000 Jews in Klimontów," Penczyna, Mordechaj: "Khurbn Klemontov" (The Extermination of Klimontów). *YIVO Bleter* 30(1), 1947, pp. 147–152. The author is grateful to Mark Web from YIVO for a copy of this article.

16 Penczyna, "Khurbn Klemontov", p. 149.

17 There was fighting for the so-called Baranów bridgehead (in August 1944; Sandomierz was liberated on August 18, 1944), and then for the Warka-Magnuszew bridgehead. An offensive launched on January 14, 1945 culminated in the liberation of the entire Kielce province.

18 APK, vol. 1336, sheet 149, quoted after: Penkalla, Adam: "Władze o obecności Żydów na terenie Kielecczyny w okresie od wkroczenia Armii Czerwonej do pogromu kieleckiego". *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 4(208), 2003, p. 558 and note 2.

19 Penkalla, "Władze o obecności Żydów", p. 559. According to AŻIH, file no. 301/4821, dated 1945 (more precise date unknown), Celina Grunszpanowa states that, "in Poland, there are around 40 [Jews] from Sandomierz: 17 in Łódź, 3 in Wrocław, 8 in Silesia, and 10–12 in Sandomierz itself."

20 APK, UWK, vol. 1336, sheet 149, after: Penkalla, "Władze o obecności Żydów", p. 560, note 16.

longer any Jews in any of the localities in the district apart from Sandomierz (see below).²¹

In November 1948, Nachman Blumental, then Director of the Jewish Historical Institute, resolved to check out this situation. Toward this end, he sent out letters to urban district *starostas*, requesting data from all the localities in their regions.²² In the Sandomierz Branch of the State Archive in Kielce, there is a list to which reports from the municipalities are attached. Some of them are worth quoting (the style reflects the original):

[Sandomierz – town, 7 December 1948]

[...] I report that: 1) in 1937 to 1939, the number of Jews was 2,391; 2) on the day of expulsion [i.e. the deportation of the Jews to the death camp], the number of Jews was approximately 4,000; 3) [...] At present, 19 people of Jewish nationality reside in Sandomierz.²³

[Samborzec, 31 December 1948]

The Municipal Council reports that 125 Jewish people resided in the territory of this municipality from 1937 to 1939 at the time of the expulsion in 1942 a total of 125 persons were expelled and at present no Jewish individuals reside in the territory of the municipality.

[Staszów, 11 December 1948]

Ad 1. In 1937 – 5,250 [Jews], 1938 – 5,350, 1939 – 5,410.

Ad 2. On the day of expulsion there were 5,410 [Jewish people] in the permanent population of the town of Staszów, plus fugitives from Western countries, larger towns, and displaced from localities around

Staszów, a total of 6,670 persons. [...] At present, in the territory of the town of Staszów no persons from the Jewish population reside.

[Klimontów, 31 December 1948]

1) In the years 1937–1939 the number of Jews in the territory of this municipality was approximately 5,000; 2) On the day of displacement approximately 7,000; 3) Date of displacement of the Jews – October 10, 1942, [and] the number of persons displaced approximately 6,000, 4). At present, there are no Jews in the territory of this municipality.

The gist of the reports from Zawichost, Dwikozy, Jurkowice, Koprzywnica, Lipnik, Łoniów, Osiek, Połaniec, Rytwiany, Wilczyce, Wiśniowa, and Strużki is similar.

21 Ibid.

22 Letter to the *starosta* of Sandomierz dated November 15, 1948; APK, OS SS, file no. 219.

23 APK, OS SS, file no. 219. Subsequent quotes from the same archival resource.

The “disappearance” of the Jews had a marked effect on the economic and real estate situation. This is apparent in the ‘Wykaz użytkowników domów żydowskich w Klimontowie,’ (Inventory of Occupiers of Post-Jewish Houses in Klimontów) from the 1950s, which lists 125 properties (houses and lots), and – in view of the dates when the sales contracts were signed, the ethnic character of surnames and reports mentioning the absence of Jews in the region – features only Polish owners.²⁴ The sixth item in the inventory form is noteworthy: ‘Is [the property] occupied on the basis of a contract and when [...] was the contract signed [?].’ With the exception of three entries from the 1950s, in 122 cases the year 1943 is specified in the inventory. Under ‘First and last name of former owner,’ there are numerous entries with the names cited later in this paper: Zylberberg and Penczyna (both twice),²⁵ as well as names of the Lederman family members, murdered in the spring of 1945 (see below).²⁶

The Story of the Four Mills that Belonged to Penczyna, Pelerman, Kupferblum, and two other Penczyna Family Members

Why did Jews who survived the Holocaust in hiding, and, as notes and archival material show, threw themselves wholeheartedly into rebuilding their lives after liberation, “disappear” from the Sandomierz area in the early post-war years? The first source used to answer this question relates to the fate of the local millers – Szmul Penczyna, owner of a mill in Trzykosy; Aron Kupferblum, owner of a mill in Gory Wysokie; Józef Pęczyna, a miller in the Chwałki district of Sandomierz; and Mordechaj Penczyna, a miller in Klimontów.

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Whatever is known about Szmul Penczyna is reported by his friend Zelman Baum, who was in hiding in this area from 1940 onward:

24 APK, OS, Klimontów Municipality Archive, file no. 82.

25 There is a Zylberberg (Mejr, Ossolińska St) listed under no. 30 on and no. 46 (Bajla-Rywka, Osiecka St.); and a Penczyna (Dawid, Osiecka St) under no. 9 and no. 12 (Henryk, a house on the market square).

26 APK, OS, Klimontów Municipality Archive, file nos. 82, 95, and 111 (Krakowska St, entry: ‘Lederman’ or ‘Zederman’) and no. 118 (Opatowska St., entry: ‘Ledeman’). The inventory also features the names of those Jews who left Klimontów before the murder, e.g., Fantuch (a house on the market square, no. 96) and Weisbrod (a lot in Opatowska St., no. 101).

Szmul Penczyna, who had a mill in Trzykosy, ceded it to a Pole [in exchange] for hiding him and his family. The peasant took the mill and shot the Jew.²⁷

Documents in the Sandomierz archive confirm the name but distort the surname of the mill owner. It is given as Szmul Pelerman in the testimonies of two people who ‘arbitrarily,’ according to other documents,²⁸ took possession of the mill: Stanisław Skrzek and his son-in-law, Edward Śliwiński,²⁹ a pre-war Polish policeman, member of the Home Army (this is mentioned in the favorable character reference given to Śliwiński by J. Jarosz,³⁰ Superintendent of the local Citizens’

27 AŻIH, file no. 301/2425. For more information about Baum, see footnote 63.

28 APK, OS SS, file no. 580, official letter from the Superintendent of the District Citizens’ Militia in Sandomierz, dated October 31, 1944, to the District National Council in Sandomierz. Attached was a contract for lease of a mill, signed on August 12, 1944 (i.e., shortly after the invasion of the Red Army, a week before the liberation of Sandomierz) by the Mayor of Koprzywnica, Edward Śliwiński and Stanisław Skrzek, as well as a copy of a document dated November 10, 1943, signed “Superintendent O.S. ‘Lampart,” who testified to the sale of “millstones from the former Jewish property in the village of Trzykosy [...] to Spółka Młyńska [sic; the Mill Company] in Bazów by Tajna Organizacja Polska [Secret Polish Organization] for the price of 600 kg of rye” (APK, OS SS, file no. 580).

29 “Prośba do Ob. Wojewody Kieleckiego” [Request to the Kielce Province Governor], November 14, 1944, APK, OS SS, file no. 580. The signatories request the annulment of the plan to nationalize the mill of which they took possession as “abandoned post-Jewish property.” Attached to the request is a statement from the Soviet military authorities, dated November 5, 1944, confirming the supply of flour to the army. On January 16, 1945, Jarosz, Superintendent of the Citizens’ Militia Station in Koprzywnica (see reference to a person of this name who according to Zelman Baum murdered Jews during the war, in Chapter 2: *The Righteous Unrighteous and the Unrighteous Righteous* in this volume), who intervened on behalf of Śliwiński and Skrzek. The correspondence on this matter continued for nearly a year, and ended with the decision by the *starosta* of Sandomierz to confiscate the mill from Śliwiński and Skrzek. The enforcement of the decision provoked “violent and resolute resistance on the part of the previous tenant.” See the official letter from the *starosta* to the Public Prosecutor at the Provincial Court in Sandomierz with respect to bringing criminal charges against Stanisław Skrzek for resistance to authority, dated July 30, 1945 (APK, OS SS, file no. 580). The same letter contains details of Śliwiński’s AK affiliation.

30 Józef Jarosz, born March 10, 1911 in Przewłoka near Koprzywnica, AIPN Ki 6/1462. See “Karta podejrzanego” from 1949: “Jarosz Jan Józef, [...] suspected of being a BCh member during the Occupation Period, and there is also reason to suspect that along with his brothers [Antoni and Piotr] they murdered five persons, in addition they were attacking Jewish populace,” AIPN Ki 6/1462, s. 4. S. 5, a note from 1950: “investigation of the above matter closed.” See also, Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna, “Social Portrait of the Kielce Pogrom”, 2 vols. (forthcoming).

Militia station), and a member of the Polish Socialist Party after the war, whom Zelman Baum, in his account cited above, accuses of murdering Jews. Śliwiński reportedly collected ‘a weekly fee from all the Jews of the town of Koprzywnica and from us privately, for not informing on the Jews.’³¹ Baum also gives a detailed account of an attack on a bunker in which Jews were hiding, incriminating Śliwiński and labeling him as the leader.

In the documents cited above, both parties, i.e., Skrzek and Śliwiński, claim that ‘Szmul Pelerman was shot dead by the Germans [*sic!*] and his family deported, and, to date, there has been no information about them.’³² However, people in Trzykosy remember the murder of Szmul’s family at Polish hands:

[406N]

[...] did he not take all his money off him? He wanted to get rid of him, because he was afraid that if they caught him, they would kill the whole family. So, so – at night, my wife saw [it] – one of them hauled the Jews out one by one and killed them with an axe. [Silence] And Szmul’s lot were lying there, someone killed them too.

2.

Of Aron Kupferblum, the owner of the second mill, which was built on the River Opatówka in Gory Wysokie, the interviewees said: ‘Kupferblum was the type that even gave to the Church [...]. He considered himself a guy who owed a lot to the Poles.’³³ They also related that when a road was built through his land, Markus Kupferblum, Aron’s father, would not allow the graves of insurgents from the January 1863 Polish Uprising located there to be destroyed [2166–2167W].

31 AŻIH, file no. 301/2425.

32 “Prośba do Ob. Wojewody Kieleckiego”, November 14, 1944, APK, OS SS, file no. 580. In other sources, they testify that the mill belonged to “former proprietor Szmul Pelerman, who died, and whose heirs went off in an unknown direction, and, until the present time, no one knows anything about their lives” (contract for lease of a mill).

33 Seweryn Małkiewicz, who is mentioned later in this chapter, recalls that he was even respected by Fr. Bastrzykowski, a regional historian (see Bastrzykowski, Aleksander: *Monografia historyczna parafii Gory Wysokie Sandomierskie*. Diecezjalny Zakład Graficzno-Drukarski: Sandomierz 1936). See [1066W]: “The Jew was a decent guy! [...] When we bought it and moved in, the servants who had worked there for Kupferblum Aron, spoke very highly of him.” See also [1217W]: “It all used to be different, they were more true to their principles, those Jews. But, for example, [...] on Christmas Eve, [...] this Jew had a Polish cook, so he said: ‘Make them a Christmas Eve dinner like all the Catholics have,’ and so they really felt brotherly concern. They sympathized with them all because they had been resettled, [...] so on his small estate, he gave them a place to live [...]. Those Poles of ours were [living in his property] for a long time.”

Some people in the area remember this to this day. People from the Kupferblum family had been members of Sandomierz Town Council for many years.³⁴

Aron Kupferblum spent the first two years of the German Occupation in prison in the Sandomierz Castle.³⁵ In 1940, he was joined there by Seweryn Małkiewicz,³⁶ a soldier from the Underground, a miller and owner of the mill in Dwikozy, who had been his business rival before the war. After his time in the castle prison, Małkiewicz was taken to Sachsenhausen, while Kupferblum, upon his release from prison, went into hiding in the country near Sandomierz.³⁷ He did not survive until the end of the war.

34 After Kotowski, Robert: *Sandomierz między wojnami*. Zarząd Miasta Sandomierza, Muzeum Okręgowe w Sandomierzu: Sandomierz 1998, pp. 78–79. On the “Lista imienna Ob. Ob. Żydów zamieszkałych i zameldowanych w Sandomierzu, będących członkami Kongregacji Wyznaniowej Żydowskiej w Sandomierzu” (List of Names of Jewish Citizens Resident and Registered in Sandomierz, as Members of the Sandomierz Jewish Religious Community), drawn up on October 15, 1947, two Kupferblums are listed as having no party affiliation: Abram (born in 1903) and Rozalia (born in 1918), both resident on 28 Basztowa St in Sandomierz. The other two with the same surname, Tanchuma (born in 1907, Chairman of the Religious Congregation in 1947) and Mała (born in 1912, address as above), are listed as Zionists; APK, OS SS, file no. 224.

35 His daughter Ziwa claims that this was due to an “inopportune expression of his views”; IPN BU, file no. 0193/2817.

36 [1044W] “When there were no Germans around, they would let me out to walk around the castle, which had a courtyard because it had formerly been a prison [...]. Once, when I was out on a walk, this Aron Kupferblum – that was his name – was standing in the doorway. Well, I bowed to him, because I was a lot younger, I was 22 then, and he was already an elderly man. We greeted each other with these exact words: ‘Mr Małkiewicz, a mutual misfortune has befallen us, we are in prison together.’ And as we had been to court over water damming, he said: ‘Those court affairs that were between us, it wasn’t me, it wasn’t me who did it, it was that stupid attorney of mine. [He laughs.] So there, we’ve had a nice little conversation!’” See Małkiewicz’s account of his time in prison in Myjak, Jozef: “Rekietowy dół”. *Ożarów. Samorządowe Pismo Społeczno-Kulturalne* 2(70), 2005, p. 1; and also the story of his meeting with Kupferblum in his own book, Małkiewicz, Seweryn: *Młynarz*. Sztafeta: Stalowa Wola 2004, p. 42.

37 Małkiewicz, *Młynarz*, p. 43, probably in Garbowice; see Małkiewicz, *Młynarz*, pp. 94–95; Ziwa Kupferblum said the following about her father’s death: “The next day [after escaping from the Zawichost ghetto on 22 October 1942], I found out about the death of my father, who was murdered in a treacherous way,” IPN BU, file no. 0193/2817. More precise information on the circumstances of Aron Kupferblum’s death (he was killed with an ax by Kazimierz Smardz): AIPN, Bu 0418/1185, vol. 1, c. 68.

[226W]

[...] Someone killed him in the pits there [...]³⁸

Who was this Kuferblum?

He was a very rich Jew. [...] under the Germans, he was in hiding, someone was sheltering him there later on. People are like that: one is like this, and one like that. Someone *took revenge* on him there.

As an example, the expression with which this informant's statement ends shows the importance of distinguishing between the Polish commonly used by ordinary people and literary Polish in analyzing interview transcripts. The difference is in the meaning of the expression, 'take revenge,' which, as the wider context of this statement shows, was used here in the sense of "be cruel to," or "torment," in the sense of taking revenge but not for wrongs committed.³⁹ Such subtle differences in shades of meaning, if they go unnoticed, could be the root of false historical descriptions. There is no evidence that Kupferblum, who Fr. Aleksander Bastrzykowski claims was 'a Jew of exceptional honesty' [1043W], had done anything wrong to anybody – on the contrary. Just as there is no evidence that Orenstein,⁴⁰ a rich Jew who survived the war and had to flee the town for fear of similar "revenge," had wronged anyone either.

[1018–1019W, Zawichost]

[**Husband:**] I remember this guy, Orenstein. Orenstein it was.

[**Wife:**] Which house? By the doctor's there...

[**Husband:**] Hang on, hang on.

[**Wife:**] It was Orenstein who did...

38 For more information about "the so-called Pits outside Dwikozy," see Małkiewicz, *Młynarz*, p. 39. See also [1174W]: "[...] the partisans took him somewhere, or some such thing.... I heard that they killed him somewhere."

39 See also the expression *mszczenie się nad dziećmi* (taking revenge on children) in [1257N], which stresses the innocence of the victims even more. This turn of phrase was used by an informant with a degree in Polish to describe the persecution of Jewish children. It is also used intransitively – without an object – with respect to the treatment of Poles: [300N] "*Niemcy mścili się.*" ("The Germans took revenge.")

40 [726N] Zawichost, interviewed by Karolina Walczak and Anna Ossowska, "This *żydek* Orenstein, he was rich, too, had a wood depot [...] came to see my father here. He really wanted [us] to take him into hiding. Well, Father [...] said: 'But where shall I hide you?' 'In that barn [...]. Hide me in that barn.' He [said]: 'Yes, but how will I, how will I then...?' All this was right during the front, and he wouldn't have survived. He wouldn't have survived. He gave [his money], all his fortune, gave it to someone or other for the children, to hide them, and that someone took the fortune, but didn't hide the children, and handed them over to the Germans afterward. Yes."

[**Husband:**] No, the one who survived. He traded in horses. The Jew. Well, they soon started treading on his heels. He found out quickly, and right away...

[**Wife:**] Vanished!

[**Husband:**] Fled.

Who started treading on his heels?

[**Husband:**] Our lot. Our lot. He'd obviously been good to some Poles too. Obviously given someone or other a hard time.

[**Wife:**] Given someone away for wanting to finish him off.

[**Husband:**] Yes. He got a warning straight away and fled quickly.

The Underground?

[**Husband, coughing throughout:**] No, no, the Underground had gone by then! This was after the liberation...this was in 1945 or 1946.

Aron Kupferblum had three children, among them a daughter, Ziwa, who, so they say in the Sandomierz area, was rescued by schoolmates from the railway ramp in Dwikozy, from where Jews were transported to the death camps.⁴¹

After the war, Seweryn Małkiewicz, freed from the camp, bought the mill from the heirs of the late Kupferblum.⁴² From the vague words of one informant, it seems they only came forward for the property when the court ordered Małkiewicz to place a notice in the newspaper.⁴³ In his book, Małkiewicz describes how the contract was signed in detail:

41 40 [563W] “[...] [Kupferblum] had three children there, one was Ziwa, a daughter my age. We were the ones who got her off the ramp [...]. She saw us [...] there. When I saw that she was standing amongst some Jews, I sort of went a bit closer [...]. But really [...] the Germans were just giving the orders, and everything was being done by Latvians [...]. They were [real] Latvians, and liked their drink. Well, we had this vodka, so we gave [...] [it] to one or two of them, and they walked off to drink it. We then had the chance to grab Ziwa and get her out of there. Because they waited for three days for wagons to be sent in.” There is no mention of this incident in Ziwa Kupferblum’s short biography, cited in footnote 45. In my personal skype interview with Mrs. Kupferblum, who lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina, she did not corroborate any help received from her classmates in Klimontów.

42 “Lista imienna Ob. Żydów zamieszkałych i zameldowanych w Sandomierzu, będących członkami kongregacji wyznaniowej żydowskiej” from October 1947 includes four other people with this surname, but does not mention either Ziwa, her brother Gerszon [Gierszon] or their sister Miriam; APK, OS SS, file no. 224.

43 [1043W] “After that I put an advertisement in the paper, because there was a court there, for interested parties to come forward. One of those who came forward was a Jew, who offered to let us buy this property. I wasn’t all that keen on taking him up on it, but my late mama accepted his offer and we bought [it] from that Jew [...].” “Could you tell us which year that was exactly?” “The year I bought it? In ’47.”

Władysław Ichnowski, the husband of the eldest daughter of the late Aron Kupferblum, [...] was the selling party. Władysław Ichnowski, who was of Jewish origin, had a different name before and changed it. [...] He was a decent man, but Gierszon Kupferblum, the son of the late Aron, I knew from 1938, and I didn't like him [...]. There were three heirs: Maria Ichnowska, Gierszon Kupferblum and Ziwa Kupferblum. She had also changed her name to Kwiatkowska. At the start of the conversation, to which Ichnowski was also a party, Gierszon asked the question: "Mr. Seweryn, which of the Garbowice people⁴⁴ killed my father?"

"People say different things, but you know that, for five whole years, I wasn't there. I was in a concentration camp. What people say is not a document. I can't and won't pass on what people say, because I don't know, and I have no proof of how it really was." Then, Kupferblum's brother-in-law spoke up: "Our father is dead, you can't raise him again. If you were to make Father come alive again, go there, find out, and hang the scoundrels. This is still an uncertain time. There's no knowing what else could happen still. Leave it."⁴⁵

No one knows what happened with Ziwa Kupferblum after the war. People recall that she wore a military uniform and held the rank of captain [2172W].⁴⁶ Someone remembered meeting Ziwa in Łódź:

44 Garbowice is a village not far from Klimontów, in Iwaniska municipality, Opatów district.

45 Małkiewicz, *Młynarz*, pp. 94–95. At the end of the transaction, Gerszon Kupferblum reserved the contractual right for "the little room upstairs with the balcony on the north-facing side... [to be] reserved for [him] every time he came to Góry." After the contract was signed, Małkiewicz came back to this point: "That's all very well, but you didn't secure yourself entry to the room, so how will it be?" We all laughed, [...]. 'Oy, Gerszon, what a lawyer you are [...]. Now you'll have to travel with a ladder and put it up to the balcony, but you'll only get onto the balcony, because Seweryn will keep the door to the balcony closed. You can't break in, because they'll punish you.' There was lots of fun because of that." His sister stated in a questionnaire that Gerszon Kupferblum then emigrated to Palestine; IPN BU, file no. 0193/2817. In "Kwestionariusz dla przedsiębiorstw przemysłu spożywczego", dated September 12, 1945 and regarding the watermill in Dwikozy (at the time owned by Małkiewicz's mother Lucyna), the fact that the mill had been owned by Jews is omitted: "The mill has been there since time immemorial – improved in 1934," APK OS SS, file no. 654.

46 The IPN archive contains a file on Ziwa Kupferblum, who was born on August 13, 1926, file no. IPN BU, 0193/2817. It indicates that in October 1944 Ziwa joined the Polish Army, where she worked as a typist in the Military Censorship Department. In December 1944, she was sent as a cadet to the Polish Army School for Political and Educational Officers (the documentation breaks off here). From Ziwa's resume, dated November 11, 1944: "Two days before the [displacement] campaign on October 24 [1942], I escaped from there [from the Zawichost ghetto], hiding in a friend's cellar.

[1661W]

There was this Ziwa Ferblum [*sic!*]. Małkiewicz bought it [the mill in Dwikozy] from them. Well, I met her after the war in Łódź, and thought I would walk up to her, “Hey, we know each other!” “No...,” she answered [assuming an unpleasant tone of voice], “I am Zosia Kowalska!” And she walked away.

We know that Ziwa Kupferblum did indeed take the surname Kwiatkowska (not Kowalska, as the informant mentions in the above testimony) and emigrated to Argentina under this name.⁴⁷ However, she visited Dwikozy twice after that.

[566W]

She was called Kuferblom Ziwa. [...] When she came to visit us here, it was from Argentina.

[When]...did she come?

Well, she came...I can't remember, but it was about '40-something... after we'd returned from expulsion [...]. It was about '49 or '50. In the '50s.

Did she come back again, or [did she] just [come]...once?

She only was here twice. Twice she saw her [property]...she knew it had been sold. [Her] father had been given money for it,⁴⁸ and she had nothing against the owner.

Would any other Jews come back here?

Only she did.

3.

The large Penczyna family, whose members left a great deal of information about the fate of the post-war Klimontów, had a mill in the Chwałki district of Sandomierz.⁴⁹ According to his wife Pesła, it was owned by Jozef Penczyna (who was killed by Poles two weeks before the Red Army arrived),⁵⁰ and by Pesła herself,

[...] I owe my survival to Jan Mikołajski, the greatest and wisest PPR (Polska Partia Robotnicza) activist in the Sandomierz region.”

47 The website of Biblioteca y Centro de Documentacion del Museo del Holocausto-Shoa in Buenos Aires contain a record of an account by Zofia Kwiatkowska, ref. ARG 39, “Testimonio nina refugiada (Testimony of a girl who escaped). Testimonio tomado por Bejla R. de Goldman. 4 pp., carpeta, adjuntos: Testimonio de la senora Ziwa Kupferblum, nombre actual Zofia Kwiatkowska.” (Testimony given by Ms Ziwa Kupferblum, present name: Zofia Kwiatkowska). To date, the author has not been granted access to it.

48 Aron Kupferblum was dead by the time the mill was sold.

49 Account of Pesła Penczyna, born in Klimontów in 1914, AŻIH, file no. 301/2927, October 21, 1947, Łódź; see also APK, OS SS, file no. 662, “Ankieta dla przedsiębiorstw przemysłu młynarskiego”.

50 Account of Pesła Penczyna, AŻIH, file no. 301/1525, July 29, 1946, Łódź, p. 10 (manuscript): “[Józef Penczyna] went back to the village of Sieprawa and stayed with a farmer, Pietrzyk. On December 31 [1944], some thugs came there at night and took him away, since he was a Jew. There were also two Soviets on the cart. They shot them together

who survived the war on Aryan papers in Wieliczka,⁵¹ and then moved to Łódź with her child.

Pesla Penczyna says that Maksymilian von Kenszycki was appointed *Treuhaender* (trustee) of their mill.⁵² He was the one to report the issue of flour outside official rations, which put Jozef Penczyna in Sandomierz prison for nine months and cost the lives of his wife's brother and two others, who were accused of being Communists.⁵³ In August 1947, Pesla, who was living in Łódź by then, met Kenszycki in Sandomierz and filed charges against him twice.⁵⁴

In her statement dated 29 July 1946, the widow gives this account of the end of the war:

I was in the manor [in Wieliczka] when the liberation [took place]. I spent another month there waiting for my husband, because I didn't know he had been killed. [...]

and buried them in the cemetery [...]. Franek Pietrzyk and Bojda Henryk were among the criminals.”

- 51 Their child, who had been placed in a village outside Kraków, also survived. This was probably Debora Hana Penczyna, whose name is mentioned in “Wykaz Żydów zarejestrowanych na terenie m. Sandomierza” (“registered before December 14, 1945”) directly below Pesla Penczyna's. The child was taken in by the Kowalczyk family from the village of Żentary near Kraków. “The child was very happy with Mrs Kowalczyk. They treated her like their own child [...]. [After the war], Mrs Kowalczyk didn't want to give up the child [...]. She said that [...] [for] 80 liters of vodka (one liter cost 1,000 zlotys), she would give the child up [...]. We gave her flour worth 30,000 zł. The little one didn't want to leave her at first, and said this to the farmers: ‘Mamma, what a Jew!’ She would say prayers under the table every day.” AŻIH, file no. 301/1525.
- 52 Maksymilian von Kenszycki features in Pesla Penczyna's account (AŻIH, file no. 301/1525) as “Kęszycki”. Mordechaj Penczyna, who also had a small mill in Klimontów, gives “Strzelnicki” as the name of the *Treuhaender*. After losing his own property, the author of this account worked in the Penczyna family mill, see Penczyna, “Khurbn Klemontov”, p. 148; “For a short time I was employed in one of the bigger mills in the town. Strzelnicki, a relocated Pole, who was the owner of a mill himself, somewhere in the Łódź province. He was sent to Klimontów from there and appointed as receiver of the mill. In accordance with the directives of the German authorities, he removed all Jews from the mill.” A similar name (“Stenszycki”) features in Lejb Zylberberg's memoir cited below.
- 53 Pesla also accused Kenszycki of taking furs from her family under the pretence of preventing their confiscation; AŻIH, file no. 301/2927 and 301/1225. Further research needs to be done on the fortunes of the *Volksdeutscher* Kenszycki.
- 54 AŻIH, file no. 301/1525, “Back then [in Sandomierz], I didn't hand Kenszycki over to the authorities because I was frightened.” A month before, in September 1947, Pesla Penczyna reported this to the Province Security Bureau in Warsaw.

I went to my husband's family in Klimontów. I stayed there until the reactionaries started murdering Jews. Two days before the Jews were murdered, I left.⁵⁵

The list of Jews registered in Sandomierz at the end of 1945⁵⁶ includes 71 people, with Pesla Penczyna as no. 30.⁵⁷ Nothing more is known about the widow and her daughter; not even whether she kept her husband's wish, 'to bring up the child in the Jewish spirit, and sell everything and go to Palestine after the liberation.'⁵⁸

4.

The last miller mentioned, Mordechaj (Motel) Penczyna, owner of a mill in Klimontów, which was plundered by the Germans who subsequently shipped the machinery to the Reich. After fleeing Klimontów on 30 October 1942, he first hid in the crypt of a collegiate church or monastery, then passed through the villages of Goźlice⁵⁹ and Przybyśławice,⁶⁰ and ultimately got help from a farmer called Rak in Śniekozy. For a year, he had been hiding out in the woods,⁶¹ and in the farmer's attic, first with his permission and then without it.

Penczyna wrote one of the most shocking accounts of the post-war fate of Klimontów's Jews. This is how it ends:

On 7 October 1944, Klimontów was occupied by the Red Army. I was still afraid to show myself there. Even after the Red Army entered, there were incidents of Jews being killed, so there would be as few witnesses as possible to what had been happening to us here. Not until the front passed and halted around Włoszczowa did I go to Klimontów. There, I met a few other Jews who had survived: Jechiel and Saul Lederman, Lejbcze [author of

55 Pesla Penczyna, AŻIH, file no. 301/1525. The murder in Klimontów is also mentioned in Sala Ungerman's account, AŻIH, file no. 301/1184; "I wanted to go to Klimontów, but on the way I met friends, and they told me not to go, because some Poles killed five Jews there after the liberation."

56 With the addendum: "registered by December 14, 1945," APK, OS SS, file no. 223.

57 Documents in the Sandomierz Archive indicate that Pesla Penczyna let the mill in the Sandomierz district of Chwałki to Waclaw Sierant and Władysław Budziński for a period of three years. In "Ankieta dla przedsiębiorstw przemysłu młynarskiego" (APK OS SS, file no. 662), however, Adolf Hlawacz is mentioned as the owner.

58 AŻIH, file no. 301/1525, 10.

59 Appears as Kozlice in [MP 149]: "I asked [a Christian friend] whether I could stay a few days. He didn't let me."

60 "A few days before the deportation, I gave Skuza, a Christian there, a lot of valuable items for safekeeping. As soon as Skuza saw me, he said: 'Get out of here fast, or I'll turn you over to the gendarmes!'" ; *ibid.*

61 "In a woodland thicket, like an animal, I dug myself a hole, where I would hide during the day"; *ibid.*

the diary] and Mojsze Zylberberg, Jechiel Gotlib, Abraham Złotnicki, Szejna Wajsbard, Pesla Goldwaser, Chaim Penczyna and his wife from Wiązownica, and others. We all lived in Fajntuch's house. I worked in our mill again, milling for the Red Army.⁶² But it was volatile – there were still incidents of Jews being killed, especially in smaller places (Połaniec and Staszów). Some people decided to move to Łódź, where we heard that Jews were settling. I stayed in Klimontów a bit longer, and then I moved to Łódź too.⁶³ Those who stayed in Klimontów were: A. Złotnicki, Ch. and Sz. Lederman, Ch. Penczyna and his wife (who was pregnant),⁶⁴ and Tobcia Stecka. On 10 May 1945, they were all murdered in a brutal fashion; they were found with arms and legs severed. Only Tobcia Stecka survived, who happened to have been sleeping at the house of some Christians that night. Afterward, she came to Łódź and talked about it all.

62 After the front passed, Penczyna recovered his mill, see APK, OS SS 1946–1946, file no. 58/262/0/325: “O przewrócenie [sic] posiadania – Penczyna Motel” [On the reversal of letters – minor spelling error in Polish changes meaning of word from the intended meaning: recovery of possession], retrieved 14.7.2008, from <http://baza.archiwa.gov.pl/sezam/index.php?l=&mode=search&word=Motel&operator=and&word2=Penczyna>. Lejb Zylberberg notes: “We worked for a Jew, Motel Penczyna, who had recovered his mill. He milled flour for the Red Army and made millions on it,” Zylberberg, *A Jid fun Klementov*.

63 The mill, whose former owners are cited in documentary sources as “Jakub Penczyna and Company”, was passed on to Stefan Grudzień to administer, APK, OS SS, files no. 324 and 580.

64 See Zelman Baum's account, AŻIH, file no. 301/2425, 34: Baum, who was born in Sandomierz, on January 20, 1924, was in hiding from 1940. At first on his own in Wiązownica, later with his family (his parents, three sisters, and brother aged 12) in the settlement of Strączkow, and subsequently with his siblings and cousins (including Chaim Penczyna) in the villages of Przywłoka, Powiśle-Chodkow, Krzcin, Postronna, and Byszewo. There he was captured by some Ukrainians and imprisoned in the castle in Sandomierz, and then in Ostrowiec, after which he was sent to the Leitmeritz camp in Bohemia. On his release, he returned to Sandomierz. He cites a conversation with a Pole he met at this point: “He told me that there had been a handful of Jews here recently, but they had finished them off. He told me about what happened in Klimontów, where they killed four Jews shortly after the liberation. Later, I found out that the people who had been killed by Poles in Klimontów were my cousin and his wife [Chaim Penczyna and his wife Rywka], and two friends we had helped find hiding places during the German Occupation [the Ledermans].” Zelman Baum's parents and brother were also killed by Poles. AŻIH, file no. 301/2425.

Lejb Zylberberg's Story

Mordechaj Penczyna's story can be adjusted on the basis of the diary of Lejb Zylberberg, a tailor.⁶⁵ The Zylberbergs, who were also known in Klimontów as the '[H]orensztajns',⁶⁶ commanded similar respect to the Kupferblums in town.⁶⁷ The author of this memoir (from which a long excerpt is quoted)⁶⁸ does not appear in the post-war register of Jews in the Sandomierz Congregation, dated December 1945. His memoir indicates that as soon as the front passed he moved to Łódź, since the atmosphere in the town was becoming increasingly tense, and many Poles were urging him to leave. The reasons for his decision may be reconstructed on the basis of the story below. It begins the day after the liberation, in Goźlice.

We went into the house of Jan Barański, a farmer we knew. He stared at us. He advised us to leave the area because things were restless. We could be killed there. We go on. [...] We enter the town. We're walking past the church, and residents of the town are coming out. I ask about my debtors [...] [and] go to the square. From a distance, I see *starosta*

65 AŻIH, file no. 302/27. Excerpt reproduced in Grynberg and Kotowska, *Życie i zagłada Żydów*, pp. 195–201. The excerpt has been translated by Sara Arm.

66 [1759W] "They used to be known as the Horensztajns [Orensztajns], but they were called the Zylberbergs. They had a wood and plank depot."

67 A story about Orensztajn-Zylberberg, as recorded in Zawichost: [242N] "My father built a house, and very soon afterward, it burned down, because [...], someone else's burned down, and his [caught fire] [...] from it [...]. This is what my father told me, a Jew was going past, a very rich Jew, and said: 'Sir, if you want wood, please come, take some, you need to repair your house [...].'"

68 From Klimontów, Zylberberg and his brother were taken to the Sandomierz Ghetto. Afterward, they were transferred to a camp in the village of Kamień, five kilometers from Sandomierz. They worked in the Metan glassworks there. Next, they were taken to Pionki, 20 kilometers from Radom, where they worked in a dynamite factory. They both managed to escape from there, along with three other men. Their escape route led through Klimontów. The next excerpt from a Sandomierz interview might be referring to Lejb Zylberberg: [203N, Winiary] "I remember one Jew [...]. He was a good tailor, I remember, he made clothes for us in our house during the Occupation [...]. Once, I went for some beetroots and I got a shock, because there was this man standing there by the door, [...]. 'No, Mietek, don't be afraid, it's me.' Aha, fine. 'Listen, I'll go in the house and tell Father you're here.' Well, we had to give him something to eat, didn't we? So Father came and took him into the house. He ate, drank, and I gave him a bit of pork fat, some bread, and onion [...]. Father said: 'Listen, as long as you can, and you're around here, drop by, [...] and you'll get yourself a bite to eat.' Well, it was a shame about him [...] because he was a good man. But he never came back."

Hejnoch [Hajnoch], with two other residents. He says, with affected joy:⁶⁹ “This is my tailor.” He shakes hands with us, asks us where we [managed to] survive this time. [...] We also had an incident with a Pole, who went up to a Russian soldier and said that the Jews had supported the Germans.⁷⁰ The next day, my brother and I went to see the Public Prosecutor Wiczorek.⁷¹ The whole family was embarrassed. The Prosecutor’s son came in and asked if we wanted dinner. I told them to give me back my jewelry and things I had left there. The Prosecutor said that he had agreed with my father that he would give the things back after the war; the main reason was that he didn’t have the things at home and couldn’t give them back to me at the time. From the Prosecutor’s house, I went to the Jewish cemetery. It was a terrible sight. The stone wall had been destroyed and stolen. Almost all the *matzevot* (gravestones) had been torn down, perhaps 20 percent remained. The ground was dug up. I went to the common graves, looking for the grave

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- 69 Earlier in the memoir: “The *Starosta* [Hajnoch] doesn’t even tell us to sit down [...]. We tell him we’ve escaped from a camp. He says that we did the wrong thing by escaping, because in the Sandomierz region, we won’t even survive for two weeks. But we answer, we’ve been free for two months now and we even just met an Underground soldier who let us go. From his look, I realized that he wasn’t pleased about this. He advised us to go back to the camp. So I said to him: ‘Should I go make weapons for the thugs who killed my parents?’ He says: ‘That’s stupid. Three million Poles are working for the Germans.’ But I said I wouldn’t go back to the camp. He said that Fligelman was dead, Szuldmann too, and also said that they had been killed by Poles. He wanted to scare us with his words. He said that there was only one wise Jew. Meloch Wejsblat [Wajsblat], who is in the camp and [does not plan to] escape. Meloch Wejsblat was the Jew who gave him [his] shop in Klimontów. He asked us what we came for. I asked him to give some money to anyone we might send. To which he answered: ‘I don’t want anything to do with Jews.’ When I asked him why, he answered: ‘Because Jews are thieves.’”
- 70 Such incidents sometimes ended tragically; see Bereś, Witold / Burnetko, Krzysztof: *Marek Edelman. Życie. Po Prostu. Świat Książki*: Warsaw 2008, p. 209: “The National Armed Forces (NSZ) had my Commander, ‘Witek’, finished off by the Russians in January 1945. Shortly after the war, when he wanted to report to the Citizens’ Militia in Częstochowa, he was captured by people from NSZ, who took him to the Russians and said he was a fascist, and [the Russians] shot him [...]” See also a similar incident described in Białowicz, Philip / Kowalik, Piotr (transl.): *Bunt w Sobiborze. Nasza Księgarnia*: Warsaw 2008, p. 226.
- 71 Earlier in the diary: “While I was with my host, I sent a letter to the Prosecutor at the court in Radom, asking him to send me money or things. He had my mother’s jewelry and my clothes. But he didn’t send me anything. When I wrote to him asking him to send my navy blue suit, his sister wrote back to me saying that I’d already collected it. I sent someone five times like that, but he didn’t give me back a grosz. After the liberation, he was arrested for being an AK member.”

of the couple killed under arrest by members of the Home Army.⁷² A Pole, the beadle for the Jewish community, showed me their grave. He told me that some bastards had dug up and stolen the *Torah* scrolls. They had used the parchment for shoe linings.⁷³ He also said that six months after the burial of 68 people shot dead on 30 November 1942, in the spring of 1943, thieves came, pulled out the bodies, searched for dollars, and pulled out their gold teeth. Czesław Nowakowski was among those who did this.⁷⁴

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- 72 Zylberberg, *A Yid fun Klementov*, p. 87. The author is inconsistent: he initially mentions AK members, later calling them NSZ: "At [...] the farmer's, there was a married couple in hiding who had left their children in a bunker in the woods. The farmer had gotten a big fortune from them: a hundredweight of pepper, cotton, and other merchandise. To get hold of the assets and get rid of them, he set fire to the barn while the couple were [inside]. They had to flee. They were in such a terrible situation that they turned themselves in to the police on May 15, 1943, the very same day that the Sandomierz Ghetto was liquidated. That evening, members of NSZ attacked the 'dark blue' [Polish] police station where the couple were being held. They wanted to take away their weapons, but the police asked them not to do this because they had an order to kill some Jews. The NSZ men said they would deal with the Jews themselves. They went [...] into their cell and killed them. This was why the farmer [...] was afraid of having anything to do with Jews."
- 73 See Sanczyna, "Khurbn Klementov": "The Rabbi of Klimontów, Reb Simche Gelernter, buried the sacred books before the deportation. When we returned to Klimontów after the liberation, we could not find the *Torah* scrolls in the [designated] place. Local farmers, who knew about everything, had dug up the *Torah* scrolls and used them as lining for shoes." See the account of Henryk Scharff, AŻIH, file no. 301/17: "Polish shops [in Sandomierz] packed goods in paper that came from the pages of prayer books and holy books." The Sandomierz *Pinkas* (Feldenkreiz-Grinbal, Eva (ed.): *Eth Ezkera – Whenever I Remember: Memorial Book of the Jewish Community in Tzoyzmir (Sandomierz)*. Association of Tzoyzmir Jews and Moreshet Publishing: Tel Aviv 1993, pp. 543, 553, 565–66) commends the assistance of Father Adam Szymański, Dean of the Religious Seminary at Sandomierz, who stored *Torah* scrolls safely. He returned them to the Sandomierz Religious Congregation after the war, a fact noted in the minutes of its first meeting in 1945; APK, OS SS, file no. 224. The author is grateful to Professor Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska for granting her access to her translations of memorial books.
- 74 There were several similar incidents in the history of Klimontów, the last one in the 1960s, when the Jewish cemetery was being liquidated to make way for a school. The gangs responsible were called "miners." See Januszewski, Radosław: "Szkola Tysiąclecia". *Rzeczpospolita* 27.10.2001. "Fr. Tomasz Zadęcki, then Parish Priest, noted in the Parish Chronicle: 'After the Jews left, a group of people, known as «miners» formed. They went with pickaxes [and] iron bars [...] at night around the post-Jewish houses and smashed walls, stoves, dug in cellars, and unearthed concealed Jewish treasures: money, textiles, leather, etc. Klimontów now started to drink and get drunk – since they could afford

When I was returning from the cemetery, an elderly Polish woman came up to me and showed me the small grave of a seven-year-old boy, Awner Diamant. Before the deportation, the child's family had been in hiding in a Pole's house. Thugs from NSZ dragged the whole Jewish family out and shot them [...]. Once, Stefan Bigos from a nearby village, came to us and advised us to leave Klimontów, because he knew for certain that NSZ people wanted to throw grenades through our window. When the front shifted on 12 January and there were fewer troops, we decided to leave the town because the atmosphere all around was increasingly tense. Many Poles were urging us to leave the town.

Toward the end of 1945, we arrived in Łódź. Chaim Penczyna and his pregnant wife were still in Klimontów. His father, Abraham Penczyna, who had been in hiding in Wiązownia with his wife, daughter, three sons and two daughters-in-law, was murdered before the liberation, along with his family.⁷⁵ Two Jewish women were murdered: Róża Bojm, and her sister, the wife of Izrael Rozenberg (who is now in Argentina), in the same village, also before the liberation.

I also found out that, on 5 September 1943, after I had left Ratkowski, in whose house I had been in hiding, Awner Wal [Wał], Joel Wajcman and Mosze Nisenbojm from Opatów, Jews he knew, came to him wanting to go into hiding. Ratkowski agreed to take them in. Then, Awner and Wajcman went to Klimontów to get their belongings from Jozef Sztenszicki [or Sztęszycki – the name may be distorted, see footnotes 51–53]. When they left his house, Sztenszicki sent thugs after them to Wiązownica, to Ratkowski's. They beat up Ratkowski and shot the three Jews in his yard. This was a group of 40 armed thugs. I have been told that by Edward Ratkowski, who buried the Jews in a shared grave near the cemetery. Mazur, in the same village, with whom we had also been staying, also got a visit from NSZ after we left, and they demanded that he show them where the Jews were hiding. They went up to the hiding place where we had been concealed. They beat the farmer up and demanded that he tell them where we were. In the end, to scare him, they wound a birch branch around his neck and strung him up. Mazur himself told us that.⁷⁶

to – a plague of drunkenness beset the young people, who now became brazen and vulgar [...].”

75 On this murder, see Zelman Baum's account, AŻIH, file no. 301/2425. This suggests that Abraham Penczyna, the author's uncle, aged 53, after escaping from the Sandomierz Ghetto with his wife Sara, aged 45, probably stayed in the village of Smerdyna near Wiązownica at Stefan Dywan's, and, thereafter, in a settlement outside the village, at Fortuna's, where they were betrayed and killed.

76 In a letter from Worth an der Donau dated March 30, 1948, Lejb Zylberberg corrects the details of the transcription of his account made by Klara Mirska: “Pp. 123/24 – also [came] to Mazur, with whom we were staying, in the same village, etc. The affair was like this: The thugs from NSZ hauled the Jew Jankiel Penczyna, who had been born in the same village, over to Mazur's [place] and demanded that he let on where we were hidden. The Jew took them to the hiding place and when they didn't find us

On 12 April 1945, the last few Jews, scared of the NSZ gangs, left Klimontów. Only five Jews stayed behind: Abraham Złotnicki,⁷⁷ the Lederman brothers, Szyja and Chil and one couple, Chaim and Rywka Penczyna. The NSZ gangs couldn't bear that. On Monday night, 16 April 1945, they came and shot these Jews.

Status of Jewish Ethnographic Sources

Although the accounts by Jews from Klimontów have an undeniable documentary value, they are rather hard to verify. The research on which this chapter is based should be treated as an initial investigation. However, it does show that the last of the accounts cited here is the most useful, complemented with a letter sent to the Jewish Historical Institute from Worth an der Donau (Bavaria), where Zylberberg lived after leaving Poland. This proves that the author of this account had an excellent memory and confirms the details he gave as accurate. Zylberberg also corrects facts that were incorrectly recorded by the clerk taking his testimony. Thanks to this and several other corroborating accounts from Pesla Penczyna, Zelman Baum, Sala Ungerman and Mordechaj Penczyna, to name a few, it is assumed that the Klimontów murder took place on the night of 16 April 1945,⁷⁸ and a total of six people were killed: Abraham Złotnicki, the brothers Szyja and Chil Lederman, and the married couple Chaim and Rywka Penczyna along with their unborn child. However, further research is needed; first and

there, they beat Mazur up, demanding that he tell them where we were. Then they did terrible things to the Jew and strung him up half-dead on a birch tree in the yard," AŻIH, file no. 301/4169, translated from the Yiddish by Sara Arm. For more about Jankiel Penczyna, see Zelman Baum, AŻIH, file no. 301/2425: "The news also reached us that Jankiel Penczyna had been murdered by the Home Army Summer Squad in Wiązownica [...]. They hanged my uncle by his feet, drove nails into the soles of his shoes, and took him down and hanged him up again, until blood spurted from his nose and mouth. They tortured him so that he would betray the family in hiding. He died a martyr's death, but he didn't grass on us."

77 The only mention of Abraham Złotnicki is in Zylberberg's account: "Some of us prepared to escape. Soon afterward, the first to escape were Abraham Złotnicki, Mietek Apelbojm, and Icze Wajsbrojt," Grynberg and Kotowska, *Życie i zagłada Żydów*, p. 201.

78 Note from *Jewish Press Agency Bulletin* (April 16/17, 1945): "On April 18 this year, five Jews were murdered in Klimontów: one woman, the Lederman brothers Saul Josek aged 35 and Chil aged 28, Penczyna aged 30 and his pregnant wife, and Złotnicki Abram aged 28. The remaining Jews in the town were forced to move to Sandomierz. After the war, seven Jews returned, five of whom were murdered." The author is grateful to Alina Skibińska for this information.

foremost, it is necessary to recover the Citizens' Militia reports and to analyze the files from the trial of the alleged murderers

A familiar paradox is associated with verification of survivors' accounts: the victims would be the only fully credible witnesses to murders committed without other witnesses. When survivors start talking, their testimony does not address the situation as a whole, but only a minor part of it, yet, as representatives of the victims, they feel qualified to generalize. Generalizations, in turn, provoke criticism. Questions arise, such as:

How are we to know that this situation actually occurred? Is it a figment of the informer's imagination? Either this situation never occurred or it did occur, in which case the testimony of the informer is false, since [...] he should have been killed [...].⁷⁹

While the historian should always verify his or her sources, the ethnographer may also examine them for their autonomous value. In some cases, however, the sources themselves show the local state of "moral consciousness," and can contribute to verifying the survivors' accounts. When informants say: [951W] "There were a lot who helped and took [people] in, but there were a lot of others who betrayed [Jews], even those who took property and then were capable of finishing the children off [...]. There were Poles who murdered Jews' – it is hard to question their memory. Wherever possible, the next thing to do is to attempt to place it in the historical context. The problem is that not all ethnographic sources can be anchored in this way, especially six decades after the war.

How does this work in practice? The above accounts of the murder in spring 1945 are based on second-hand information; they must be. With the exception of Tobcia (Toba) Stecka, who was sleeping at a Christian home on the critical night, all the Jews remaining in Klimontów after Zylberberg and the Penczynas had left were killed. Even Tobcia's account was indirect (incidentally, almost nothing is known of Tobcia herself).⁸⁰ Four of the survivors probably refer to her (Zelman

79 Lyotard, Jean-Francois: *Le Différend*. Edition Minuit: Paris 1983, p. 16.

80 For information about Tobcia, who probably worked for an SS-man called Bulion, Commander of the Sandomierz Camp during the war, see Pola Orensztajn's account, AŻIH, file no. 301/3329; see also memoir of Celina Grunszpan, who spent the war in Mokoszyń, near Sandomierz, AŻIH, file no. 302/53. Mordechaj Penczyna's account in "Khurbn Klemontov" suggests that Tobcia moved to Łódź. Research is hampered by the "cover" surname and her husband's surname she adopted. Material from Sokolniki (Sandomierz region) mentions a Polish-Jewish couple from this area: [165N] "This [Tosia? Tobcia?] came around and married him. They had a good life – he did his thing, she did hers. They worked and brought up the children, but the children took after her, went in her direction – got an education, and they were very gifted."

Baum, Sala Ungerman, Pesla Penczyna, and Lejb Zylberberg), while Mordechaj Penczyna actually gives her name. In this situation, ethnographic sources, which serve as carriers of the memory – the memory which spans six decades – of murders of Jews, and which also include the names of some of the victims, acquire fundamental significance.

The Jewish accounts cited above share characteristic features: on the one hand, their use of a particular historical idiom (Pesla Penczyna: ‘I left when the reactionaries started murdering Jews’); and, on the other, the limited information of the witnesses, who in varying degrees lacked the information available to those who had not had to hide. Hence the apparent confusion of the Home Army with the National Armed Forces, already mentioned in note 71 above, and the incompleteness of information as to the consequences of events (one account states that Zelman Baum was killed, whereas it is known that, although he came under fire, he managed to escape from the ambush). In this case, too, the “local knowledge” on the part of present-day residents of Klimontów, who remember who survived, who was killed, who they stole from and murdered, and who took Jews in, is also vital.

One fact worthy of note is the neutral language of the Jewish accounts discussed here, which is different from other testimonies in the Jewish Historical Institute Archive (see e.g. files no. 301/1276, 4830, 537, and the end of 4229) and also from memorial books that came much later.⁸¹ This distance is sometimes due to the nature of the testimony recorded by a clerk, and fades with the passage of time. As the testimonies could have provided grounds for prosecution, their rhetoric exhibited a necessary reticence that the oral personal stories and ethnographic interviews lack. On several occasions, transcripts contain notes on how difficult survivors found it to preserve this reticence (e.g., Dawid Nassan’s account, AŻIH, no. 301/3262).

Three Versions of the Polish Story

The “Polish version” of the murder discussed above may also be supplemented with ethnographic sources. In the form most frequently cited, this version features in Eugeniusz Niebelski’s 1999 monograph on Klimontów. Below is an excerpt central to this version:

81 See also e.g. “Klimontów” in *Pinkas Hakehillot. Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities, Poland, vol. 7*. Yad Vashem: Jerusalem, no publication date, pp. 505–508, retrieved 17.1.2012, from www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00505.html.

Some of them [i.e., the Jews returning to Klimontów after the front passed – author's note] immediately started collaborating with the NKVD and the new authorities, casting a shadow over all the others. Abram Złotnik, who had been taken into hiding for the duration of the war in Wola Konarska, started letting the Russians have names of people from the Underground Home Army, openly threatening that he had a whole list, waving a pistol around as he did so. Some activists and former Underground soldiers fell into NKVD hands, and a few even got sent to Siberia. Abram ignored warnings from his Klimontów friends. In March 1945, he was liquidated on Sandomierska Street. Nevertheless, there were murders of Jews in the town that were not justifiable in any way. After these tragic events, the remaining Jews moved away from Klimontów to other places, including Łódź and Sandomierz.⁸²

Radosław Januszewski, a journalist with the daily *Rzeczpospolita* who wrote a piece about the Klimontów murder⁸³ in 2001, hypothesized that the list which had cost Abraham Złotnicki his life might be the document in the Jewish Historical Institute Archive, *Wykaz Żydów, którzy zostali zabici przez bandy lub przez tych, którzy ich przyjęli na ukrycie* (List of Jews who were killed by bands or by those who were hiding them).⁸⁴ In fact, this document, which contains scores of names of victims and murderers, refers to a different Klimontów (near Proszowice).⁸⁵ It does, however, throw some light on the nature of the alleged denunciations of which Jews were sometimes accused after the war.⁸⁶ 'Letting the Russians have names of people from the Underground Home Army' falls into this category.

The question arises as to whether Polish citizens who had been victims of collaboration and were the rightful owners of plundered property should have approached the new authorities for restitution and punishment of the perpetrators, and whether such actions should be labeled as, 'collaboration with the NKVD.' The use of such terminology is often related to the stubborn refusal to

82 Niebelski, Eugeniusz: *W dobrach Ossolińskich. Klimontów i okolice*. Urząd Gminy: Klimontów 1999, pp. 67–68.

83 Januszewski, "Szkoła Tysiąclecia".

84 This is one part of an anonymous account the author identified as AŻIH, file no. 301/379 [1789].

85 The author is grateful to Magda Prokopowicz for verifying this document.

86 See e.g. Penkalla, Adam: *Żydzi ostrowieccy. Zarys dziejów*. Muzeum Historyczno-Archeologiczne: Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski 1996, p. 117: "On March 12, 1945 an attack was staged on the home of Fajgla Korngold [...]. There were rumors in the town that she had a list of Poles who contributed in various ways to the deaths of Ostrowiec Jews during the Occupation."

come to terms with⁸⁷ the fact that evil against Jews was sometimes committed by the Poles who 'had taken them in.'⁸⁸ In this context, it is also worth mentioning that in *Wykaz ludności wyznania niekatolickiego, zamieszkałej na terenie powiatu sandomierskiego* (List of non-Catholic population resident in the territory of the Sandomierz county), dated 14 February 1945, section 'Attitudes of Particular Creeds to State Affairs,' only the populations of three localities – Klimontów, Połaniec, and Wiśniowa – were characterized as 'not demonstrating loyalty' toward the new system.⁸⁹

Radosław Januszewski's interviewees in 2001 remembered both the post-war murders of the Jews and Abram Złotnik's (Abraham Złotnicki) murder differently from Eugeniusz Niebelski's description:

Ms. R. recalls her brother's story about how the Jews were killed just after the war. "The Poles did it. They stood them against the wall here, ordering them to turn around," she said, pointing to the abandoned synagogue wall, "and the rest, [were killed] behind my brother's house..." She talked of Chaskiel,⁹⁰ who was killed because he had a few dollars:

87 A similar attitude is apparent in the report of the Polish military couriers, on their return to London from Poland toward the end of August 1945: "Therefore, since the Jews benefited from going into hiding on Poles' property, which enabled over 50,000 of them to escape death, they should undoubtedly have shown...loyalty to the Poles. Yet, from the moment when the Lublin authorities entered Polish territory, the Jews immediately set about denouncing those who had previously hidden them, claiming they were blackmailed by them and money had been extorted from them. Home Army members were denounced and beatings and torture of Poles were carried out in camps run by Jews with Soviet consent." Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, Archive ref. no. A9 III 2 c/64, Report by military personnel from Poland, London, 2 October 1945, quoted after: Grabski, August: *Działalność komunistów wśród Żydów w Polsce (1944–1949)*. Trio/ŻIH: Warsaw 2004, p. 32; see Chapter 2: *The Unrighteous Righteous and Righteous Unrighteous* in this volume.

88 Six decades later, in a conversation with the *sołtys* [head of the village council] of the village of Wielowieś in the Sandomierz district, the number of Jews saved increases sixfold: see [297N]: "Thirty thousand Poles were shot by the Germans just for helping Jews, and, in Poland, 300,000 Jews were saved. In other words, [...] [by] saving them, 30,000 of ours died. You see the Germans shot every family that helped Jews. And that's how they repay us"; see Chapter 2: *The Unrighteous Righteous and Righteous Unrighteous* in this volume.

89 APK, OS SS, file no. 225.

90 Further on in Januszewski's article: "W. knows about it all from his father. He was five years old at the time. Chaskiel was roaming about the area, an 18- or maybe 20-year old lad. He'd been staying with some people, but they'd hounded him out because they were afraid. In the end, W.'s father took him in for a night. Then, the partisans came,

“We ate with the same spoon, and you want to kill me?” he [...] said to his murderer, a childhood friend. Ms. R.’s brother, an old man, but still “getting around,” was bringing in coal. At first, he doesn’t want to say much. “I didn’t see them shoot, but I saw them lying there. The partisans killed them! They got this kind of partisan gang together.” Among the dead was Abram Złotnik. Eugeniusz Niebelski mentions him as an NKVD collaborator, who disclosed the names of Home Army soldiers. Apparently, he said he would denounce them all, waving a pistol around. Other Jews were killed almost “as an aside.” Ms. R.’s brother gave a different version: “That Yabrom [Abram] ‘ad too big a mouth. ’E was young, brazen, so they took ’im out and killed ’im in a ditch.... Them as did it are still alive. I know ’em, but I ain’t tellin’ now, they’d shoot me.” Ms. R. was terrified. The interviewer told her that these are different times. “I’ve got children, they live here, the others would take revenge. He’d come here, set us on fire, send his thugs round!” Ms. R.’s brother recalled another man who killed [people] and is still alive.

The interviewees in the Sandomierz study also describe the situation in April 1945. Here is a statement from 2006:

[1218N, wife of a former Deputy Mayor]

Later, I remember this scene. After they’d hounded those Jew and taken them, well, and the Germans went away. Only Poles were left. The front moved on...and then these Jews appeared out of nowhere, a few families, even from Sandomierska Street, they came from somewhere. Well, they started to get all belligerent. Oh yes! That this was theirs! That now we’re going to show what we can do, yeah. I remember, that one Jewish woman was pregnant, and they killed her in the attic, too. In one guy’s attic.... Well, they shouldn’t have been like that, and maybe they’d have survived. I think there were four or five families. Yes, they killed them...Poles. Poles.

took Chaskiel out, and shot him. ‘It’s those sons of b...s from P!’ he shouts. W. says they killed Chaskiel in the barn.”

“I find Ms Genowefa Bednarz, from the same village, in the field, she’s weeding. When she was a child, she saw Chaskiel’s body in the field. He’d been staying the night at her father’s, but some partisans came, shooting, demanding her father’s gun that he apparently had stashed away. Her father was afraid that it could get nasty if they found a Jew in his house, so he told him to go. Genowefa and I go to where the corpse lay. It still lies there. ‘Right here, in L.’s field,’ she points to a high tuft of grass by the roadside.” The words below, recorded during fieldwork in Sandomierz, refer to Chaskiel’s murder: [the speaker is Mr G., former *wicewójt* {Deputy Mayor of a rural municipality} in Klimontów]: “It’s truly unpleasant to say, but that *żydek* [Jewboy] who stayed around here, he was 18 years old, they buried him over in Byszówka somewhere – it was in the press, of course. Somewhere out in the country, in ’45, some Poles from the Home Army killed him. The Home Army was the first force that fought, but...” “Where was it?” “Here, in Klimontów.” “Why did they kill him?” “The Klimontów Jew was kept in hiding here throughout the Occupation, the Poles hid him. He was 20-something years old, and in ’45 they came in the night and killed him.”

“But after the war?”

“After the war. Because they [the Jews] started to really... that it was all theirs, you know! That now they would show us! They started to come back at us. Well, in any case, the devil only knows how it was. Maybe they had something against them. But, in any case, there were a few families left, hidden away somewhere, but they became all brazen once the Germans had gone, and they were killed.”

“So it was like this, if I understand it correctly: these five families had survived somewhere after the war...? After the Occupation...? They came back for what was theirs. But the Poles had already appropriated it, because they thought that by then...”

“Yes, right after the war. Yes, appropriated, [and] maybe not appropriated. Well,... of course they...knew whose it was, the Poles, those here.”

“Did a lot of Jews come back? How many more or less – you say five families, but how many were there?”

“Five families, well about 10 persons, maybe 11, something like that. Persons.”

“But were they armed in any way, the Jews, or did they just come, peacefully, wanting...?”

“Well, they thought that they were sure of...”

“They’d come back to their own homes...”

“...They came back to their own homes because the Germans had gone. Well, it was a kind of revenge. Revenge or I don’t know what.”

The term “revenge” returns here first in the context of presumed grievances of the Jews (‘started to get all belligerent’; ‘This was theirs! That now we’re going to show what we can do’), and then in the context of grievances against the Jews (‘Maybe they had something against them?’). In the language of the Sandomierz interviewees, the Klimontów tragedy of spring 1945 could be described, in a rather theatrical form, as a clash of two revenge discourses: the (real) Polish discourse, and the (presumed) Jewish one.

However, this would not be an objective description. As mentioned above, there are no revenge motifs in the Jewish accounts already cited in this paper; their dominant discourse is of mistreatment, mourning, and withdrawal. Only the Polish perception of post-war reality is consistently organized around the word “revenge.” To a certain extent, this is related to the nature of the two types of sources mentioned above – unlike the Jewish accounts, which were recorded at a commission that threatened punishments for false testimony, the Polish stories, obtained by a journalist and anthropologists six decades after the war, gave license to express emotion.

The revenge motif is also clearly present in the interpretation proffered by Eugeniusz Niebelski, taken up unquestioningly from his informants’

statements.⁹¹ In this version, the murder of the Jews is explained, and subsequently justified, by the fact that one of them⁹² was allegedly an NKVD collaborator. This motif is echoed in the words of another Klimontów resident, cited by Radosław Januszewski, the author of the article ‘Szkoła tysiąclecia.’ Yet the material collected in the course of his journalistic investigation, as well as in ethnographic interviews carried out between 2005 and 2008, suggests that this angle may be a result of the complex connections attributed to the informant by other witnesses to these events.

[...] a certain P, the one that the ironic phrase, “Hand over more eggs and give up more yard birds,”⁹³ was used to refer to, lives in Klimontów too, and is the president of the local Home Army Veterans’ Club. After the Soviets came in, he went into hiding in the area – so he said. Before that, he was in the Klimontów Supply Corps. He was active in the Home Army. They were rooting out grasses. “Some of the grasses collaborated with ‘them,’” he said. “They” means NKVD. They shot one of them, it was Abram. [...] There was a pogrom, [P.] admits, but he and his men weren’t involved. He says they were in hiding in Lublin at the time. Then there were sentences, there was a trial. NKVD and UB were all in Jewish hands. He claims that the people who staged the pogrom weren’t AK people. “They were either people from the Peasants’ Battalions⁹⁴ or non-allied individuals. It was for looting. Don’t listen to what people say. It was a group of looters. Perhaps they’d asked for what they’d left with the farmers when they’d gone into hiding.” But he did have dealings with the court in the case of the murder of the Jews. In 1961, he was a witness in the Provincial Court in Radom, about the killing of this Jew. They found the

91 David Engel in his review of Marek J. Chodakiewicz’s book *Po Zagładzie* parodied a similar practice with his apt quotation from the musical Chicago: ‘They had it coming!’, in *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, 1, 2005, p. 326.

92 Although there is only a mention of one Jew, the sentence is in the plural form: “Some of them [i.e., the Jews returning to Klimontów after the front passed – author’s note] immediately started collaborating with the NKVD and the new authorities, casting a shadow over all the others,” Niebelski, *W dobrach Ossolińskich*, p. 66.

93 Variation on the AK (*Armia Krajowa*, Home Army) abbreviation in keeping with the original Polish “*A Kury, A Kaczki*” as in Januszewski, “Szkoła tysiąclecia”: “And the chickens? And the ducks?” laughs the young man who has just delivered the coal. That’s how they’re known here. The irony comes from the fact that all that their Underground guerrilla warfare [according to some farmers – editor’s note] boiled down to stealing chickens from farmers.”

94 This information is confirmed in the investigation files quoted below. In Klimontów they still say that the same group (including J.P. and D.S.) murdered and robbed a female Home Army liaison officer (information from reports for 2008). The following is a quotation from one of the statements: “They not only murdered Jews, but also a female Home Army liaison officer [...] with a suitcase full of dollars.” Email information sent on October 24, 2008.

murderer, who got eight years. This guy G. from Klimontów.⁹⁵ The court asked why he did it. Because his brother had been an officer in Lviv and the Jews had tortured him to death. Poured tar and hot water from a balcony as the army was marching underneath, after the capitulation. P. is convinced that's gospel truth. The things the Jews are capable of! He claims that he didn't see G. actually killing [the Jew]. He boasted about it afterward. He testified to having heard it. He was in prison himself at the time. He was arrested – so he says – for irregularities in the municipality cooperative, but the prosecutor mostly asked him about that murder case. He got a mild sentence afterward.⁹⁶

The discourse of revenge permeating the Polish memory of the post-war murders of Jews in Klimontów, is reinforced here by the anecdotal thread of 'Jews pouring tar and hot water [on the heads of Polish officers];' returning again and again to the concept of "Judeocommunism" (*żydokomuna*). This concept, which is firmly rooted in the popular thought of the Polish provinces, was based on the assumption of a "natural" link between Communism and the Jews. This theory diverted the antipathy surrounding Communism toward Jews. This antipathy in some parts of the Polish provinces could serve as a sort of declared standard,

95 See IPN, file no. 896/228; the material from this investigation, such as that relating to J.P. himself, will be dealt with in another article.

96 Not everyone in Klimontów shares the same view of P's distinction. In June 2008, the Institute of National Remembrance and the Jewish Historical Institute received a letter that reads as follows: "I enclose, as a reminder, a photocopy of the article about the murder of the Jewish people in Klimontów. Editor Januszewski was right on the scent of the suspects who came into contact with those acts, in tackling the name of P. – J.P. to be precise. He was a member of NSZ [National Armed Forces, a third Underground armed force during the Second World War – author's note], and never dirtied his hands fighting the Germans, according to witnesses. In dark alleys, in deathly silence and fear, one can hear about the exploits of that 'guerrilla' to this day. Although over 60 years have elapsed, there is some kind of strange fear of talking about this subject. Investigations into the matter by the law failed to bring appropriate outcomes. Both P. brothers bought or built tenements – where did they get the money, I ask? They are people without trade or qualifications. J.P. appointed himself chairman of the Home Army. Passersby look at the plaque by the memorial bearing his name and rank of lieutenant, with disgust and contempt [...]. The parishioners go out of their minds at the sight of him entering the church with the standard [...]. The facts revealed in the article and heard from witnesses who are still alive and their descendants cry out for vengeance. God, where are you?" Anonymous letter, dated June 11, 2008, signed "Righteous among the Nations," sent to the addresses of the Institute of National Remembrance and the Jewish Historical Institute, copy in the author's archives.

regardless of real behaviors and sympathies.⁹⁷ The reasoning, in this case, took the form of the following syllogism: we hate Communism, there are many Jews among the Communists,⁹⁸ so we hate Jews. As the Communist terror intensified, the above implication radicalized. The Jews who came out of hiding would settle in the vicinity of Citizens' Militia stations for safety, or maintained contacts with Red Army soldiers, militiamen and the security forces⁹⁹ for similar reasons, and

97 Distinction between “cultural norm”/ “behavioral pattern” after Jan Mukařovský. See Mukařovský, Jan et al.: *Wśród znaków i struktur. Wybór szkiców*. PIW: Warsaw 1970, p. 69, as cited in Tomicki, Ryszard: “Norma, wzór i wartość w życiu seksualnym tradycyjnych społeczności wiejskich w Polsce”. *Etnografia Polska* 20(1), 1977, pp. 43–72. Determining the actual attitudes of Poles to Communism still requires further research.

98 This is often described in the categories of “over-representation of Jews in the Ministry of Security systems.” It begs the question of whether this fixation on the variously interpreted “over representation” (see, for example, differences in approach between authors such as Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa*, p. 394 and note 221; and Kopciowski, Adam: “Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie w pierwszych latach po drugiej wojnie światowej”. *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały* 3, 2007, p. 183), in effect a consequence of the post-war “equal rights for Jews,” is not a symptom of the actual disagreement with these equal rights, similar to that which came to the fore in the form of the pre-war calls for the *numerus clausus* [the restrictions on number of Jews admitted to certain professions, universities, etc. – translator’s note]; see Žižek, Slavoj: *Lacan*. Kutyla, Julian (transl.). Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej: Warsaw 2007, p. 84: “While we are prepared to accept the Jew [...], there is always some detail that annoys us [...]. This [...] makes them alien, irrespective of how much they attempt to behave in a similar way to us.” The involvement of some Jews in Communist State systems was an attempt to gain influence on the country’s politics after the Holocaust experience. In time, it transpired that, in the overall account, they would be judged for this far more harshly than ethnic Poles. See Grabski, *Działalność komunistów*, pp. 33–34 and notes 24–27.

99 See e.g. information from the Jewish Committee in Opatów about the attack on the Jewish aid point there on August 10–11, 1945, prevented by “the deterrent of a Soviet soldier on patrol outside the elementary school building,” Urząd Wojewódzki w Kielcach II 1242. This is followed by information about the murder of the Herckowiczes, a married couple, on September 9, 1945 in Opatów, and of Majer (?) Zylberberg on September 5, 1945. See also the report of the District Jewish Committee in Radom, dated August 31, 1945, which includes information about attacks on: the “Praca” Labor Cooperative in Radom (August 11, 1945), a Jewish shelter there (during the night of August 28/29, 1945), a flat in Radom belonging to a Mr Lewental (August 29, 1945), and Jewish laborer Aron Łęga in the Prędocinek sawmill in Glinice (August 30, 1945). Another report by the same Committee, dated October 25, 1945, describes how “almost every day, unknown individuals break windows in the same [Jewish] shelter, and even stage attacks” and the request for a designated patrol outside the shelter; and

also joined the Citizens' Militia and the army, thus providing the most accessible symbolic representation of Communism.

Fourth Version of the Polish Story

Finally, these versions of the events of April 1945 in Klimontów are compared with excerpts from the interrogation records of the murder suspects in the IPN archives. Although inconclusive, they provide insights into the social climate surrounding the murder, in effect, undermining Eugeniusz Niebelski's heroic version of the killing. A special verification mechanism is used on the ethnographic source: the language of participants in the events, although distorted by the interrogation report, enables the scholar to discern their intentions and form an opinion about the circumstances of the murder far more rapidly than would be possible on the basis of the language in other documents.

The Fourth Version of the Polish Story

Let us now compare the versions of the Klimontów events from April 1945 cited above with excerpts from interrogations of the suspected perpetrators discovered in the IPN Archive. Although they are inconclusive, they allow us to discover the social climate at the time of the murder, and in effect undermine the heroic version of the murder presented by Eugeniusz Niebelski. This is a specific

the positive response to this by the Commanding Officer of the Citizens' Militia, on November 3, 1945. Following the next attack, on February 15, 1946, there is a request for "the issue of one automatic pistol and ten hand grenades for our shelter." After the next attack on the Committee, on February 22, 1946, there was a request for a guard to be posted outside the building, addressed this time to the Province Citizens' Militia Headquarters in Kielce; and, three days later, a renewed request for the allocation of an automatic pistol, one machine gun, and ten grenades, State Archive in Radom (APR), file no. 20. See also Jakow Chaszkes, AŻIH, file no. 301/2592: "On Saturday, May 15, 1945, at 6.00 in the evening, a Home Army gang, consisting of 50 people in military uniforms, drove into the town and disarmed the police station. They then drove in our direction, and asked: 'Whereabouts do the Jews live?' Seeing what was happening, all the Jews, around 50 people, gathered in an attic on Ciechanowska Street and started shooting at them and throwing grenades through the windows. Immediately after the liberation, we procured ten machine guns and ten grenades. The shootout lasted three hours. I was wounded in the arm and one woman was killed. By chance, a few vehicles carrying Soviet soldiers from Bielsko to Warsaw appeared. Noticing them, the gang withdrew. We were saved by a coincidence. The day after this event, some military vehicles came and took us to Bielsko."

mechanism of verification by the use of an ethnographic source: the language used by those involved in these events, albeit distorted in interrogation transcripts, enables us to realize their intentions and form an opinion about the circumstances of the murder faster than the language used in any other documents.

The picture of the investigation that emerges from these testimonies is reminiscent of a decrescendo: as time went on, the investigating authorities showed decreasing determination to find and prosecute the suspects, who remained at large.¹⁰⁰ As a result, none of them were convicted. Also, in the course of the proceedings, none of them pleaded guilty. They gradually retracted certain elements of their accounts, claiming they had been obtained under duress. The nature of their statements also changed, and they evidently consulted with one another. Telling details are gradually removed from the initially graphic descriptions, until the testimonies ultimately become misleading laments on the prosecutors' violence.¹⁰¹

Below is an excerpt from the testimony of Stefan Wyrzykowski "Siła", without party affiliation, given at the Regional Military Prosecutor's Office in Kielce, on 4 July 1950 (the style reflects the original):

A few days later, I went to Klimontów to the shoemaker and the pharmacy. After finishing my errands, I went to Batorski's restaurant – I don't know his first name – to eat dinner. [...] Batorski offered me vodka. [...] While in the square, I also saw Jan Markot, Szymański Stanisław, Białowąż Bolesław and Kalita Władysław. When it was dark, Batorski joined me, gave me a machine gun with a sawn-off barrel and butt, and

100 IPN, file no. Pr II 390/50, IPN, file no. Ki 30/542, Władysław Kalita's file, arrest warrant from September 29, 1950, "From March to April 1945, Kalita Władysław, together with others armed with unidentified firearms in Klimontów, Sandomierz county, murdered four Polish citizens of Jewish nationality." The warrant was issued in view of "a justified fear that the accused will go into hiding." Kalita and Bolesław Białowąż, both in hiding, were arrested together with other suspects, including Stefan Wyrzykowski, Stanisław Szymański, Jan Markot, and Stanisław Adwent. They were all released in January 1951. Among Adwent's case documents is a motion from his wife requesting the release of her husband, dated January 17, 1951.

101 Testimony of Stanisław Adwent "Śmieszny", November 8, 1950: "[...] I signed this record because I feared being beaten, as the man who questioned me shouted at me," IPN, file no. Pr II 371/50; IPN, file no. Ki 30/529. IPN, "Notatka urzędowa" dated November 8, 1950, signed by Jerzy Lichacz and investigating officer Jerzy Jaskólski: "Jaskólski Jerzy declared that suspect Adwent Stanisław retracted his testimony given on September 14, 1950, because [...] the testimony has been obtained under duress. To my question as to whether he had been beaten at that time, for he was questioned in my presence, he stated that he had not been beaten, and had testified in accordance with the truth and the [...] facts."

told me to stand on the street and keep watch. [...] After about an hour, Batorski came to me again, took the machine gun off me and told me to go home, and I left. Before, when he gave me the machine gun, I saw Jan Markot and Szymański Stanisław walking along the street, [but] did not see any weapons on them. One of them turned to the left side of the street, and the other to the right, while I stood with that KBK machine gun in the street. At that time, I heard ten or more shots from the direction where Szymański and Jan Markot had gone, after which I left and went home. The next day, I found out from people, I no longer remember from whom, that some Jews had been killed in Klimontów, although how many, they did not say. I was not there at that murder [scene], but Kalita Władysław, Batorski and around 10 people from Łownica went...”

After the murder of the Jews, what was looted from them and where were those things taken?

What was looted from those Jews after their murder, I don't know. Walking home, I heard a cart going there, but whether it was [loaded] with things looted from those Jews or not, I don't know. I myself received nothing from that attack. According to my understanding, Batorski was the commander and organizer of the entire operation. After that event, I did not see either Stanisław Szymański or Jan Markot at all, and where they went, I do not know...¹⁰²

Testimony of Stanisław Szymański “Gołąb”, resident of Mała Wieś, Wiśniowa district, member of the Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza – PZPR), given at the Regional Military Prosecutor's Office in Kielce, on 23 May 1950:

In March 1945 (I don't remember the exact date), when I was in Klimontów, in the Sandomierz county for one evening, I was in possession of a 'seven'-system pistol, which I was given by Batorski, his first name I do not know, and where he lived I do not know, which I gave back to the same Batorski.

With what aim and why did this Batorski give you a 'seven'-system pistol?

[He describes how on the critical day, he went with a friend to Klimontów, to a restaurant owned by one Szcześniak or Sośniak, according to the sign outside]. While we were both sitting at the table, some individuals suddenly started coming into our room, among whom I recognized Stefan Wyrzykowski, a resident in the village of Domaradzice, and I knew Adwent Stanisław from the village of Mała Wieś, in the Wiśniowa district, and Kalita Władysław from the village of Pęslawice, and there were five of them I did not know at all. We all together drank vodka there. [There is a description here of an accident with the gun, caused by Stanisław Adwent, as a result of which someone sitting at the table dies. The people gathered there take the body to the cemetery, and the witness gets a gun from Batorski; after which they return by cart to Klimontów – author's note] [...] We went in the cart along one of the streets in Klimontów, what the name of that street was I don't know, and we stopped outside

102 IPN, file no. Pr II 312/50, IPN, file no. Ki 30/503.

one house, where there were shots inside. [...] After a moment, they started throwing clothes, linen, shoes out of that apartment, which I, together with the others, packed into the cart. After taking those things, Batorski came up to me, ordered me to give him back the pistol, which I gave him, while he designated several of the others to take those things to an arranged place, but where they went with those things I do not know.... There, at that site, in that house, three Jews were shot dead.... But exactly how many Jews were killed I do not know, as for Stefan Wyrzykowski, Adwent Stanisław and Kalita Władysław, what they did in connection with the murder I could not see, because it was a dark night.

What was your aim and with whom did you go to Jan Szcześniak's restaurant the second time?

The [second] time, I went to that restaurant in order to meet with the restaurateur, so that he would give me some of the things taken from the murdered Jews. But at the time, there were a lot of people and he didn't want to talk to me [...]. In the end, I did not receive anything from the attack and did not go back to him again.

What happened to those murdered Jews later?

What happened to those murdered Jews later, I do not know. In any case, we left them as they were, shot, in the apartment.¹⁰³

Testimony of Kalita Władysław "Wisła", born on 1 June 1912, member of the Peasants' Battalions], resident of Kolonia Pęcławaska, given at the District Office of Public Security in Sandomierz, on 30 September 1950:

On arriving to the Soviet Union army site, I asked Witold [Commander of the Peasants' Battalions unit – author's note] what to do now, and he answered that anyone who wanted to should start work in a [suitable] job.... I told Witold I was joining the Citizens' Militia (MO) and he answered, that as long as you have the skills you can work in the MO. [...] I joined MO and worked as Station Superintendent in Jurkowiec for about four months. I was released on my own request. [...] As for the Jews, I shall explain how I did not know that, in fall 1943, the Jews were taken in carts by a group from the Peasants' Battalions in Pęcławice Górne, and I did not take part and I do not know who took them. I want to state that, in the spring of 1945, I was not in Klimontów and I did not take part in the murder of the Jews. [...] I was in hiding because I heard from people I did not know, at the market in Klimontów, in the spring of that year, that the Office of Security and the Militia were arresting all partisan soldiers [...].¹⁰⁴

In spite of proof that Kalita Władysław was in Klimontów on the critical day, the Investigating Officer from the Regional Military Prosecutor's Office in Kielce decided to discontinue the investigation against him and not to question any

103 IPN, file nos. Pr 311/50, and Ki 30/502.

104 IPN, file no. Ki 30/502.

more witnesses.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the cases against the five other suspects – Stanisław Szymański, Stefan Wyrzykowski, Bolesław Białowąs, Stanisław Adwent, and Jan Markot – were also dismissed.¹⁰⁶

“The Excluded Economy”: A Picture of the Ethnic Cleansing

The discourse of revenge, recoding “antisemitism” as “anti-Communism,” provided justification for the violence experienced by the Jews returning to Klimontów after the Occupation. It was an attempt to disguise something that is impossible to conceal: the gains that some residents in the Sandomierz provinces made from the “disappearance” of the Jews. This is clearly evident in this small town where 125 properties passed into “Polish hands,” along with all the local mills. The murder of Aron Kupferblum and three members of the Penczyna family, Józef, Chaim, and Rywka, at Polish hands, and the subsequent rapid departure of their potential successors, effectively rendered the local mill industry “Judenrein” once again, this time for good.

It would be expedient to consider whether this spontaneous “nationalization” of one branch of local industry, which preceded the official nationalization in 1953 and which, on the surface, looked like a chain of unrelated events did not constitute ethnic cleansing. While a series of individual occurrences apparently does not constitute such process, it is often the end result of an explosion of deeply rooted resentments and tensions ignited under certain circumstances. Only the effects of this process – fear and flight – reveal its intentional nature. Events snowball so that the escalating violence and demonstrative bloodshed provoke panic among the persecuted group and push them to flee. Sometimes, a chain reaction is set in motion by the presence of “ethnic entrepreneurs” (a term coined by David Maybury-Lewis, i.e., provocateurs and beneficiaries of the process). Sometimes, actors on the sidelines unwittingly assume this role.

105 Decision dated January 25, 1951; see also “Notatka urzędowa” by the Investigating Officer from the Regional Military Prosecutor’s Office in Kielce regarding the decision by the Head of Section III at the District Office of Public Security in Sandomierz not to question “witnesses [who could] provide evidence in the case of Stanisław Szymański and others,” dated January 26, 1951, IPN, file no. Pr II 371/50, IPN Ki 30/529.

106 IPN, file no. Pr II 313/50 IPN, file no. Ki 30/530. The investigation concerning J.P. (IPN, file no. Zh. Ko 393/91.) and M.G. (IPN, file no. 896/228) will be discussed separately.

All the Jewish accounts cited above testify to the presence of fear, variations of which are the subject of one of the books by Jan Tomasz Gross.¹⁰⁷ Lejb Zylberberg, Sala Ungerman, Mordechaj Penczyna and Zelman Baum saw the murders in the spring of 1945 as confirmation that their decision to leave was right. The murders took place at a point when Klimontów was already almost entirely “cleansed”; nevertheless, in the context of the wider Kielce region, it may be seen as one of the “triggers” of the process that reached its climax a year later in the Kielce Pogrom.

If this hypothesis is correct, the context of the above phenomenon should be broadened to include the following elements, derived from various systems of reference and correlated with the “disappearance” of Klimontów’s Jews:

1. The most important was the systematic extermination of the Jews by the occupying forces. This dramatically reduced the number of Jews in the Polish provinces, depriving them of the critical mass necessary for self-defense.
2. The wartime deprivation¹⁰⁸ of the rural areas around Sandomierz in connection with the removal of legal protection for the Jews, and, if they managed to go into hiding, with their dependence on their neighbors, was a key factor. As various accounts cited in this chapter show, this proved to be an extremely fragile guarantee of survival.¹⁰⁹

107 Gross, Jan T.: *Fear. Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation*. Random House Trade Paperbacks: New York 2006.

108 In writing about “wartime deprivation,” the author is certainly not claiming that anomie behaviors of Christians with respect of their Jewish neighbors did not occur also before the war. This issue is discussed in detail, with regard to the dynamic relation between anti-Judaism and antisemitism, in my book *Legenda o krwi*, p. 59 ff, and also in Chapter 2: *The Unrighteous Righteous and the Righteous Unrighteous* in this volume.

109 See AŻIH, file no. 301/2425, Zelman Baum on the reaction of Jews to the German announcement of an “amnesty” for those who escaped from the Sandomierz ghetto: “Seeing that the Poles were robbing and murdering them, [the Jews] returned to Sandomierz [...]. Over 10,000 Jews from the surrounding villages gathered together.” See e.g. the account by Dora Soberman, who witnessed the attacks by local farmers as a child; and the accounts of Basia Goldsztajn, AŻIH, file no. 301/2793, Chaja Szafran, AŻIH, file no. 301/3084, and Henryk Scharff, AŻIH, file no. 301/17; see also the statement of Lejb Zylberberg, who walked from Zwoleń [85 km to the north of Sandomierz – translator’s note] to Klimontów: “In the Sandomierz county our situation got worse. The farmers didn’t even want to give [us] a little water,” Zylberberg, *A Yid fun Klementov*, op. cit.

3. The Kielce region was the operating platform for the largest formation outside the Lublin region of the National Armed Forces (NSZ), so called District 5, which, on the pretext of 'cleansing the territory of subversive and criminal gangs from hostile minority formations,' gave a higher priority to killing Jews, as well as Russians and Ukrainians, than to fighting the Occupying Forces.¹¹⁰ From the moment that NSZ was incorporated into the Home Army, which put equal effort into eliminating Communist organizations and the Volksdeutsch,¹¹¹ this tendency was certainly reinforced, especially among rank-and-file soldiers.¹¹²

110 Order by Col. "Czesław Oziewicz," NSZ Commander-in-Chief, date unknown; Hillebrandt, Bogdan: "Brygada Świętokrzyska NSZ": *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* 9 (1/30), 1964, pp. 117–118, quoted after: Drabik, Rafał J.: *Wydarzenia pod Borowem z 9. sierpnia 1943. Rzeczywistość i oblicze polityczno-propagandowe*. Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II [KUL]: Lublin 2002, p. 7. For information on NSZ policies regarding Jews, see Chodakiewicz, Marek J.: *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne. "Ząb" przeciw dwu wrogom*. Fronda: Warsaw 2005, pp. 89 and 319–320, and note 204, in particular.

111 "Every worker, peasant, and intellectual who succumbs to Communist propaganda, collaborates with the Communists, becomes a traitor today, just like a *Volksdeutscher* [...]. Poles must not be Communists, lest they cease to be Poles." "Biuletyn Informacyjny [of the Home Army]"; no. 38 (193), November 23, 1943, quoted after: Nazarowicz, Ryszard: *Drogi do wyzwolenia. Koncepcje walki z okupantem w Polsce i ich treści polityczne 1939–1945*. KiW: Warsaw 1979, p. 361.

112 See Chapters 3 and 9 of the present volume for more evidence of its occurrence. See also Szapiro, Marek / Tych, Felix: *Nim słońce wszędzie... Dziennik pisany w ukryciu 1943–1944*. ŻIH: Warsaw 2007, p. 505 for Szapiro on the union of the Home Army with NSZ: "To me it is incomprehensible how NSZ could be incorporated into the Home Army. If one is to believe the organs of the People's Party, at least until March [1944], they were an instrument of tacit collaboration in eliminating peasants, Jews, etc. [...]" See also Urbański, Krzysztof: *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej: Kraków 2004, pp. 231–232. See, in this context, Basa, Michał: *Opowiadania partyzanta*. Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza: Warsaw 1984, p. 128, 167.

On the differences in attitudes to Jews between rank-and-file Underground soldiers and the Home Army leadership, see the account of Henryk Scharff from the Koprzywnica area, AŻIH, file no. 301/17: "The commanders of units subordinated to the Home Army, the Union for Armed Struggle [Związek Walki Zbrojnej], and the Peasants' Battalions, in spite of the guidelines from the Polish Underground authorities, carried out death sentences on Jews they caught." See also Salomon Reis' account, AŻIH, file no. 301/1791; the reaction of two Home Army partisan soldiers on meeting two Jewish fugitives in a wood near Pionki: "'What, you are Jews? We'll finish you off before the day is out.' They bound us up with cords and led us off. We

This had a critical impact on the morality in the rural Sandomierz region, effectively providing “patriotic” license and pretext to murder Jews.

4. Among the circumstances intensifying local antipathy toward Jews, it would not be out of place to mention that Charles de Prévôt’s paintings in the Sandomierz Cathedral – legends of the Jewish desire for Christian blood (blood libel) – had a particularly strong effect.¹¹³ In the context of the Kielce pogrom, Krystyna Kersten aptly called these factors ‘social dynamite.’¹¹⁴ The force of such dynamite was apparent with almost every pogrom in post-war Poland.

were sure we were going to our deaths, and we tried to convince them that our death would be of no value to them, that we had gold hidden far away [...]. Two officers, a lieutenant and a second lieutenant, came up to us [...] ‘Huragan’ was the pseudonym of the lieutenant, Commander of the unit. They called us over, and the Company Commander...said: ‘The Polish government in England doesn’t pay us for Jews. So if you want to look after yourselves, you can stay, and we won’t do you any harm.’ After that, they received us well, gave us food, and work in the kitchen [...]. About 10 km from Pionki, there was another group of partisans, Marion. They didn’t accept Jews, and explained to our Commander that they shouldn’t be keeping us, that these [Jews] are people who should be annihilated. Their Commander, Marian, said: ‘Give them to me, I’ll do them in.’ The doctor [who later turned out to be Dr. Julian Aleksandrowicz; and on parting from the author [Salomon Reis], asked him ‘not to tell anyone he’s a Jew, because they’d be sure to kill him’] stood up for us and cited higher authority.” See also Zawadzka, Halina: *Uciezka z getta*. Fundacja Karta: Warsaw 2001, p. 121; Aleksandrowicz, Julian: *Kartki z dziennika doktora Twardego*. Wydawnictwo Literackie: Kraków 2001, pp. 61–70; and Abraham Furman’s account, AŻIH, file no. 301/4716. On the role of the Peasants’ Battalions and the “Lotna” unit of the Home Army in the murder of Sandomierz Jews in hiding, see Zelman Baum’s account, AŻIH, file no. 301/2425; see also Bańkowska, Aleksandra: “Partyzantka polska lat 1942–1944 w relacjach żydowskich”. *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały* 1, 2005, pp. 148–164.

- 113 See the account of Rózia Unger (AŻIH, file no. 301/3699), who was taken in by peasant farmers near Sandomierz: “I was afraid to go back to the Jews; whenever I played with children I was always told that Jews murder children to make matzos (unleavened bread).” Likewise, the account of nine-year-old Ludwik Jerzycki (AŻIH, file no. 301/2755), “I cried, I didn’t want to go to the Jews, because they’d told me that Jews kill children.”
- 114 Krystyna Kersten’s introduction to Szaynok, Bożena: *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946*. Bellona: Warsaw 1992, p. 21. Both successful and unsuccessful attempts at inciting unrest on the basis of ritual murder rumors occurred, among other places, in Kraków (August 11, 1946), Kalisz (July 22–23, 1946), Lublin (September 18–19, 1946), Kolbuszowa (September 24, 1946), Mielec (October 25, 1946), and Szczecin (autumn 1946). Rumors of children disappearing that did not provoke pogroms were

5. In comparison with the factors mentioned above, this one seems marginal, but it too had its place in the chain of circumstances surrounding the purge. It is the memory of Polish-Jewish rivalry and the fight for trade in the 1930s, which was particularly intense in the Central Industrial Region,¹¹⁵ as well as the glaring reminder in the shape of the Jewish tenement houses.

It is unlikely that anyone in Klimontów planned a “final solution to the Jewish question,” the desire was merely to exploit a situation created by others – the Nazis, the partisan formations, and common thugs – to secure a beneficial outcome in the rivalry with the Jewish millers and tenement owners that had been simmering since pre-war times. In the feverish few months after the liberation, people simply failed to notice that, in the course of the war, the ground rules had shifted. Thus, the evident gains from economic victory were necessarily accompanied by other less tangible losses in the moral sphere. These were such that by taking advantage of the effects of thuggery and the decline in moral standards, the popular enfranchisement, through the avilment of Jewish property, and the “Polonization” of Klimontów’s mill industry, became irrevocably implicated in the aftermath of the Holocaust in the Sandomierz region.

Toward a Macrohistorical Perspective

Klimontów is just one of many small towns and villages in central Poland where Jews were murdered after the Germans were expelled from the region. In his book, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944–1947* (Warsaw: IPN, 2008), Jan Marek Chodakiewicz writes that these murders were often closely linked to the cooperation of Jews with the Communist authorities. In this chapter, the author has shown the benefits that may be accrued from leveling such charges, which, in effect, provide justification for the murders and looting. Similar

also reported in places, including Otwock (Skibińska, Alina: “Powroty ocalałych 1944–1950”. In: Engelking, Barbara et al. (eds.): *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*. Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk: Warsaw 2007, p. 569), in Chełm and Zamość (Kopciowski, “Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie”, pp. 182–183). See also my book *Legends of blood. Antropologia przęsądu*. Wydawnictwo WAB: Warsaw 2008, on the blood libel motive behind the post-war Polish pogroms.

- 115 See Kotowski, Robert: “Obraz Żyda w społeczności małomiasteczkowej na przykładzie Sandomierza”. *Dialog dla przyszłości. Ten Inny w pamięci zbiorowej*. LGD Lot Partnerstwo Ziemi Sandomierskiej: Sandomierz 2007, pp. 31–32.

situations are described in testimonies by witnesses from other regions in Poland. Take, for instance, this account from Wąchock:¹¹⁶

After the Occupation, my cousin Binsztok Chaim and I, along with five friends, came out of the woods. We went to live in our hometown of Wąchock. There, three weeks later, a few Home Army soldiers came to our house: Kolczyński [Kolczyński, Kołczyński] Czesiek, Szafranski Witek, Kwieczynski [Kwieciński] (it was on 10th [month omitted – author's note] 1945). They came in, armed with guns. Chaim Binsztok and Kornwaser fled when they noticed they had guns. Seven people were left in the room. They started talking to us. They asked how many of us there were. We answered that there were nine. They counted only seven, and asked where the others were. We made the excuse that they had gone out for water. I said that so I could go outside and see what was going on. I noticed that there were lots of armed assailants, there might have been about eight, all around the house. I didn't have the heart to escape, because there were still people in the house. I went back to our assailants and talked to them again. Again, they asked where the others were, so I said I couldn't find them. They demanded their return, because they wanted to murder all nine of us, so that there would be no trace of us left. I told them to come back tomorrow, and then they would find the other two as well. They said tomorrow would be too late. I went hot and cold when I heard their words. I winked at my [friends] to go out one by one. They did. The thugs didn't stop them. I stayed there alone with them. When there were none of my friends left, I made my escape too, and they took everything from the house. Lots of valuable things. After that event, on 12 March 1945, I moved to Łódź and rented an apartment. Eight days later, on 19 March, I went back to Wąchock for my friends. That same evening, we had a second break-in, by the same assailants. Two people, Josef Wajsblum and Mendel Brit, who had just returned from Auschwitz, were shot dead. Josef Wajsblum was 32 years old, a merchant before the war, lived in Wąchock, and all of his family had perished in Auschwitz. Mendel Brit, aged 23, lived with his parents before the war, studied in a yeshiva [Talmudic academy], and also lost everyone during the Occupation. After the murders, we left the town and moved to Łódź. Chaim Binsztok still had to go back to Wąchock to repossess the house, which belonged to both of us. While he was in Wierzbnik, eight kilometers from Wąchock [for] eight days, he referred his case to the court. The case was to be heard on Friday, 30 May 1945 in Wierzbnik. Chaim wanted me to come to Wierzbnik. I arrived in Wierzbnik on Tuesday, 27 May at five in the morning, and went to some Jews who lived in Wierzbnik and asked after my cousin Chaim Binsztok. They told me that he had gone to Wąchock on Tuesday at one [pm], to collect files from the municipality offices to present in court. On the same day, at five [pm], he wanted to get back to Wierzbnik, because he was afraid to stay in Wąchock. He went to the station to go to Wierzbnik. His murderers were already waiting for him, and they shot him dead at the station. They also wounded a Christian, a railway worker, Polowiec [Polowiec]. After the first bullet, which

116 Testimony of Efraim Wajnsztajn, Łódź, April 4, 1945, ŻIH, file no. 301/215, b. in Wąchock, July 16, 1909; translated from Yiddish by Sara Arm.

wounded him, Chaim Binsztok tried to escape, but he couldn't run far. The murderer went up to him and killed him on the spot.

The reception that Jews experienced on returning to their hometowns is also illustrated by the following excerpt from a memoir of post-war Izbica:

Shortly after we arrived, a few residents started walking behind us. They didn't say anything, just followed us step by step, as if they wanted to test us. With every minute, the crowd grew denser and we were overtaken by increasing unease. [...] I went toward the cemetery. As I came close to the hill with the path leading to an open gate, I noticed one of my former schoolmates running toward me. He was holding a revolver in his right hand. [...] I started to run as fast as I could toward the police station, which was half a kilometer way. [...] I expected it would now be the Russian military authorities' headquarters.... We told the Russian officer on duty that we had survived the war and now couldn't walk around our town safely. The officer explained that he wasn't in a position to help us [...]. "Go to a big city. It will be safer there. No one will recognize you there." He gave us a few grenades and showed us how to use them. In the end he put us on a Russian truck and told the driver to take us to Lublin.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

Asked today why the Jews left their town shortly after their return to it, the Klimontów residents answer:

[Former Deputy Mayor] What [were they supposed to stay] for? They didn't have family. But, on the other hand, the thing was that some Poles just didn't accept the Jews after the war.

To understand what this really means, one needs to go back to 1943. In his notes from the Occupation years, Marek Szapiro cites an article from the Underground press: 'Rodzi się nowe oblicze Polski' (The New Face of Poland is Emerging). This article gives some insight into the hope that the "disappearance" of the Jews would provide the solution to the 'switched-off economy' problem:

The decline in the number of Jews will fundamentally change the mood in our commerce, crafts, and small industry. Many people who previously jostled for small scraps of land will now find new areas of work after relatively short periods of vocational training.¹¹⁸

117 Białowicz, *Bunt w Sobiborze*, p. 228. The author describes a similar attitude to returning Jews in Zamość.

118 Szapiro, *Nim słońce wzejdzie*, op. cit., pp. 576–577.

As early as in 1942, the Polish Underground authorities began to predict that there would be problems if the Jews returned en masse to their abandoned establishments.¹¹⁹ Ethnic Poles felt relief at their “disappearance,” seen as deserved compensation for the suffering associated with the Jews ‘outstaying their welcome.’ Great ingenuity was invested in making the return of the Jews impossible. In Żywiec, for instance, at the turn of 1945/1946, the town’s former *de non tolerandis judaeis* (no Jew is permitted to reside or stay over) law was evoked.¹²⁰ Sometimes there were attempts to designate specific places where Jews could settle.¹²¹ The measures designed to prevent this indicate a great deal about the provincial authorities’ mentality: in Sanok, the Population Statistics Department of the District Citizens’ Militia Headquarters issued Jews with temporary identification cards bearing the letter “Ż” (*Żyd* stands for Jew in Polish), modeled on the German Kennkarte (basic identity document during the Third Reich period) marked with the letter “J.” The Municipal National Council in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski ordered the Jewish Committee to send Jews to work in the mine.¹²² Likewise, a delegate from Białobrzegi to the Conference of Jewish Committees, held on 14 May 1945, reported that seven Jews had been drafted to work in the mine there. At the same Conference, ‘Ostrowiec [Municipal] Officials said that German regulations were binding in relation to Jews.’ The nature of attitudes in

119 “Across the country there is a situation, quite separate from any critical points, whereby the return of Jews to their establishments and workshops is quite out of the question, even in significantly reduced numbers. The non-Jewish population has taken the place of Jews in large and small towns, and, for the most part, this fundamental change is absolutely final. The en masse return of Jews would be considered by the population not as a restitution, but as an invasion, against which they would defend themselves, even physically”; Knoll, Roman: “Uwagi o naszej polityce zagranicznej nr 1”, Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), file no. 202/XIV-9, 135, quoted after: Steinlauf, Michael C.: *Pamięć nieprzyswojona. Polska pamięć Zagłady*. Cyklady: Warsaw 2001, p. 46. Roman Knoll (1888–1946) was a high-ranking diplomat before the war, and a high-ranking official in the Government Delegation for Poland during the Occupation (see his life story in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. XIII).

120 AAN, MAP, file no. 218, “Sprawozdanie ze zjazdu starostów powiatowych województwa krakowskiego”, held January 17, 1946, quoted after: Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa*, op. cit., p. 382.

121 Dęblin-Irena, Biała Podlaska, after: Kopcowski, “Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie”, p. 204.

122 Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa*, op. cit., p. 382, see also Penkalla, “Władze o obecności Żydów”, p. 563. The information in the next two sentences is from the same source.

the provinces may be deduced from the advice given to Lublin Jews – not to talk loudly in Yiddish, not to go around the town in groups,¹²³ and not to rush to re-adopt their original names (Otwock).¹²⁴

Anti-Jewish outbreaks were common across the country, like those in Lublin, Zamość, Ostrowiec, Jedlińsk, and Radom,¹²⁵ where Jews were immediately banned from leaving the town boundaries. The campaign terrorizing Jews on trains increasingly spread to different parts of the country.¹²⁶

There were many explanations as to why property plundered from the Jews should not be returned, from the formalistic (the property rights imposed by the Germans) to the ochlocratic, such as the following excerpt taken from a report by the Mayor of Częstochowa, in July 1945:

Polish society is unable to understand the Jewish minority's attempts to increase material possessions, and, in this regard, tends not to take account of the facts in existence since 1939. This minority only stresses its own suffering during the war years. Conversely,

123 Kopciowski, "Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie", p. 179, see the end of Dora Soberman's account, AŻIH, file no. 301/3743: "We told everyone we were going to get christened, because that is what daddy advised us [...] although the Russians were here, daddy didn't trust our farmers. So a year passed. We were about to get christened, but then our aunt came [...] and took us to Kraków, to a children's home."

124 See Gross, *Fear*, p. 72; Skibińska, *Powroty ocalałych*, p. 515. See also [361W] "The war had only just ended, so the Poles did not know exactly whether to be afraid or not to be afraid, of having hidden Jews, because it had not been announced yet..."

125 Penkalla, "Władze o obecności Żydów", p. 570. See also the letter dated January 21, 1946 from the district Jewish committee in Radom to the county *starosta's* offices in Radom (signed by Dr. Seweryn Kahane, inter alia, who perished six months later in the Kielce pogrom) reiterating that representatives of the Committee had twice attempted to contact the addressee of the letter regarding the matters connected with the safety of local Jews, following the publication of anti-Jewish leaflets in Radom: "After a wait of two hours, the delegation was informed that time was up and told to come back the next day [...]. Despite [...] requesting to be seen, the next day they were told by the secretariat that citizen *starosta* had gone away, and seeing him was out of the question," APR, file no. 20.

126 See AŻIH, file no. 301/1357, the account given by Mordko Berger, Dawid Grinbaum, and Sara Grinbaum to the Historical Commission in Kraków, concerning an attack on a train carrying repatriates from Lviv. The attack took place in Tarnów; there was a robbery and the Jewish conductor was thrown off the train. There is mention of the defense mounted by the Citizens' Militia in Bochnia and the indifference at Płaszów station. The attitudes of Polish passengers were varied. See also Kopciowski, "Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie," pp. 195–197 ff.

this minority often fails to realize the psychological changes wrought by the Occupation years in Polish society...¹²⁷

Analysis of documents collected by scholars, such as Adam Penkalla and Alina Skibińska, demonstrate that post-war Poland was built on an alliance between the Communists and “the people,” who benefited from the Holocaust. In the Sandomierz region, there is one explanation reflecting the attitude in the provinces to the Communists, who in some smaller towns and villages were prepared to accept yesterday’s murderers and burglars into their ranks, in return for turning a blind eye to appropriation of Jewish properties.¹²⁸ Taking account of the new environment, the post-war looting and killing of Jews was justified as ridding society of its ‘masters.’

[1037W]

When those people suddenly disappeared [the Jews who had come back to Klimontów after the war and who were killed], an explanation had to be found for it, didn't it? How was it explained?

Well, it was explained by the fact that the system had changed, that Russia came over, Russia came for the second time [with] the Soviet Army, socialism came about, and the Soviet system came about, and quite simply, all the masters were removed. Because, you see, they came from the world of gentry. In any case, to be honest, the Jews were gentry, because they were all rich.¹²⁹

There were supposed to be no more Jews, so as soon as they came back, all the stereotypes were set in motion, from the most incomprehensible to the empirically entrenched, which were harder to correct. The blood libel legends, which justified

127 Quoted after: Penkalla, “Władze o obecności Żydów”, p. 568.

128 See Kopciowski, “Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie,” p. 204; Skibińska, *Powroty ocalałych*, p. 573; see also Samuel Goldberg’s account, AŻIH, file no. 301/1251 about how a farmer from Korycin, who was unwilling to return a house, hired some militiamen to get rid of the Jewish owner, paying them with two liters of vodka; and about the murderers of Jews working “in [the Office of] Security in Kraków,” AŻIH, file no. 391/1908; likewise AŻIH, file nos. 301/379 [1789]; 301/3054; 301/1945, 301/2425, and 301/1908.

129 See Kumor, Andrzej: “Interview with Jerzy Robert Nowak”, retrieved 26.5.2008, from <http://glosrydzyka.blox.pl/2008/05/Czy-w-pana-zylach-plynie-zydowska-krew.html> (minor Canadian antisemitic periodical, *Głos*): “Some Jewish circles look upon Poland as the Jews’ European anchor, a jumping-off place should the situation in Israel come under intense threat; Poland is the one country to which the Jews could return, settle, reclaim their lands [...], in the role of ‘gentry,’ [since they] have connections and capital.”

hatred of the Jews with their murderous tendencies, were among the former while Judeocommunism – blaming the Jews for Communism in Poland – was among the latter. Both deflected Polish attention from an issue that was more difficult to accept: how much certain people in the Polish provinces had enriched themselves with Jewish property. Although these crimes were committed in the name of patriotism, divisions arose in the political preferences of Poles, many of whom saw in Communism, with all its ambivalence and upheaval, the chance of a lifetime.

Chapter 5: “Our Class”, in Klimontów Sandomierski

A historian reviewing pre-war class registers in Klimontów Sandomierski archives can observe the universality of a Polish historical image that Tadeusz Słobodzianek draws on by placing his drama about Jedwabne in a classroom.

Marking sheets from Elementary School No. 1 in Klimontów, dating from 1922–1939, contain almost all the names relevant to our story. School year 1931/32 includes the report card of Aron [Abram] Złotnicki (born 16 March 1924, son of Herszl, a merchant¹), who will be killed by Poles² on the night of 16–17 May 1945 in a house on Sandomierska Street.

Years later, a local historian will accuse Abram of disclosing proscription lists containing names of Polish patriots³ to the NKVD. However, Klimontów residents interviewed by a journalist⁴ and several ethnographers⁵ will not corroborate this, recalling ‘Jabrom’ as someone who had ‘a big mouth’, and ‘would always speak his mind’, expecting the Poles to vacate Jewish properties after the war.⁶ Five other people will die with him in the house on Sandomierska Street:

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- 1 State Elementary School in Klimontów (PSPK), file no. 3, no pagination. Research in the school archive was conducted by Magdalena Prokopowicz.
 - 2 A short note from *Biuletyn Żydowskiej Agencji Prasowej* 16/17, April 1945: “This year on April 16 in Klimontów, 5 Jews including 1 woman were murdered: brothers Lederman Saul Josek, aged 35 and Chil, aged 28, [Chil] Peczyzna, aged 30, his pregnant wife [Rywka] and Złotnicki Abram, aged 28. Other Jews remaining in the town were forced to move to Sandomierz. 7 Jews returned after the war, 5 were murdered.” Meducki, Stanisław (ed.): *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały II*. Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe: Kielce: 1994, p. 59: “The attackers were: Nowakowski Zenon, Karwacki Kazimierz, Przybylski Józef, Przybylski Tadeusz, Gadulski Władysław, Kilarski Tomasz, Witaszek Jan, Smaguła and Bara Dzidek,” [i.e. Bohdan], AAN MAP 786, p. 17–21. See also: AIPN, Ki 016/4, c. 71.
 - 3 Niebelski, Eugeniusz: *W dobrach Ossolińskich. Klimontów i okolice*. Urząd Gminy w Klimontowie: Klimontów 1999, pp. 67–68.
 - 4 Januszewski, Radosław: “Szkola Tysiąclecia”. *Rzeczpospolita* 27.10.2001.
 - 5 The Ethnographic Archive team conducted its fieldwork in Klimontów twice: in 2005–2006, during the Sandomierz Land research (supplementary fieldwork was mainly done by Helena Tyszka in winter 2006), and also in 2009–2010, when the information was chiefly collected by Łukasz Konopa.
 - 6 Januszewski, “Szkola Tysiąclecia”, 2001.

Szyja⁷ Lederman, aged 35; his brother Chil, 28, owner of a mill;⁸ and Chaim and Rywka Pęczyna, a couple expecting a child, whose names do not appear in the school registers.

However, the registers do include the marks of their Polish friends/murderers. From this point of view, school year 1931/1932 seems the most interesting. In that year, classrooms in Klimontów were so overcrowded they numbered as many as fifty pupils. Besides the Zylberbergs (this is the family of Lejb Zylberberg, author of a diary *Żyd klimontowski opowiada* [Stories of a Klimontów Jew]; his report card is included in Class VI, school year 1928/1929, where he is referred to as Lejbcze Zylberberg, born 2 September 1921, son of Chaskiel) and the Pęczynas (after the Zylberbergs and the Ledermans, the third most popular surname in Klimontów), Class III.B included Waław Witaszek, born in 1921, son of a Klimontów carpenter, later a cabinet-maker himself, and during the war a member of AK, with *noms de guerre* Feliks Dubiel and Rzymianin.⁹

His brother Jan Witaszek¹⁰ “Lipa” (a friend of Abram Żłotnik’s, and according to one testimony a member of the so-called “Lotna”, a group operating as part of NSZ¹¹, but according to another testimony a member of a group with the same name within AK¹²), was accused of committing atrocities in Cembrze, Kielce province; these included ‘gouging out eyes, cutting off ears, ripping out

7 Zylberberg, Lejb: *A Jid fun Klementow dertcsejlt*. Central Jewish Historical Committee: Warsaw-Łódź-Kraków 1947.

8 Penczyna, Mordechaj: “Churban Klementow”. *YIVO Bleter* 30(1), 1947, pp. 147–152 (transl. for the purpose of this text by A. Geller and Sara Arm); mentioned in PSPK; Zylberberg, *A Jid fun Klementow dertcsejlt*, 1947: “We wanted to go to Goźlice, near Klimontów, where Chil Lederman from Klimontów was being sheltered at a farmer’s.”

9 Więckowski, Jerzy W. / Fitowa, Alina: *Podobwód Armii Krajowej Klimontów „Czeremcha”*. *Zarys dziejów*. Staszowskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne: Kraków 2009, pp. 46, 47, 91, 128–131 etc.

10 Jan Witaszek “Lipa” (born January 8, 1917), son of Władysław and Bronisława *née* Skórska, res. in Byszowce near Klimontów, and during the war at 40, Sandomierska Street; AK corporal, after the war a member of the PPS (after: file no. AIPN Ki 022/130, p. 39), he joined a gang of robbers led by Jan Batorski, owner of the restaurant from which the group that shot the Jews had set out for Sandomierska Street. He became a cabinet-maker. Sentenced to 7 years of imprisonment for robbing the State Trade Headquarters in 1946, the MO station in Klimontów, and private individuals; after the war, he took over the house at 56 Sandomierska St.

11 File no. AIPN Ki8/1241, profile of Jan Witaszek, Sandomierz, October 13, 1952.

12 Więckowski and Fitowa, *Podobwód Armii Krajowej*, 2009, pp. 207, 251, 418, 422.

tongues.¹³ After the war, both brothers joined a gang of robbers (or, according to Jerzy Władysław Więckowski, an underground resistance ‘post-AK squad’¹⁴), led by Jan Batorski “Orzech” (death sentence in 1947), owner of the restaurant from which the group that shot the Jews had set out for Sandomierska Street. This very group was in 1945–1946 infamous for its robberies of co-operatives and MO stations in Klimontów and the surrounding area. The whole group was arrested and convicted; however, the sentence was based solely on its attacks on the militias, as the murder of Jews from April 1945 was excluded from the indictment due to an incompetently conducted investigation. To this day, the windows of the house on Sandomierska Street display apotropaic devotional symbols, as if someone still wished to keep away the spirits of the Jews.

The case files of the murder in Sandomierska Street contain allegations that the Witaszek brothers committed the crime together with the Sierant and Przybylski brothers, who became part of the town elite after the war. These individuals, as we can read in a poorly formulated militia report, as active members (...) of the organization [AK] were suspected by local inhabitants of pillaging and looting after the expulsion of Jews [...], along with Przybylski Józef [“Granat”]¹⁵ and Przybylski Tadeusz.¹⁶ This is what

Father Tomasz Ządęcki, the then priest [in Klimontów], wrote in the parish chronicle about this topic: “After the departure of the Jews [he means the dissolution of the ghetto], a group of people, the so-called miners, was formed. At night, they walked around the post-Jewish houses with mattocks, iron bars [...], breaking walls, tile stoves, digging in basements and pulling out concealed Jewish valuables: money, textiles, leather, etc. The whole of Klimontów has now started to drink, to get drunk – after all, they had the

13 File no. AIPN Ki 8/1241 (SR-57/53) DVD, p. 50.

14 Więckowski and Fitowa, *Podobwód Armii Krajowej*, 2009, p. 381; the author calls it a “post-AK squad and military organization.”

15 Jerzy Więckowski states that the Przybylski brothers were members of NSZ, see Więckowski and Fitowa, *Podobwód Armii Krajowej*, 2009, p. 101, cross-referencing Matusak, Piotr: *Ruch oporu na ziemi opatowsko-sandomierskiej w latach 1939–1945*. Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej: Warsaw: 1976, pp. 227, 229; the *nom de guerre* of Józef Przybylski in Więckowski and Fitowa, *Podobwód Armii Krajowej*, 2009, p. 444; his name is listed in the school documents of PSPK, in 1931/1932 class registers: born on 3 April 1923, son of Józef, a bricklayer. See also: file no. AIPN BU 0041818/587, p. 19.

16 File no. AIPN BU 0041818/587, p. 19. Listed in class registers from 1931/1932 as born on May 5, 1925, father Józef, a bricklayer.

funds – the plague of drunkenness started to prevail among the youth, who have now become arrogant and rude...”.¹⁷

From all the Sierants mentioned in the documentation regarding the murder on Sandomierska Street, Damian, son of a farmer from Klimontów, receives the most frequent mention; his behavior in the school year 1931/1932, in Class II.B was evaluated as excellent. The Przybylskis were represented by Józef, son of a bricklayer, from Class II.A, whose behavior was also evaluated as excellent, even though he barely managed to pass his Religion class. Like most participants on both sides of the incident, both of them were 20 years old in 1943.

Eight years later, Daniel Sierant “Sikora” became a secret collaborator of the Ministry of Public Security, and it is because of this that we have detailed information about his life: ‘I did my electrician’s traineeship at the beginning of the occupation with Milsztajn the Jew [...] without demanding any remuneration for the work as a trainee’¹⁸. After the war, WUBP were also interested in the other ‘boy from the woods’, Józef Przybylski “Granat”. In 1945, just after the murder in Sandomierska Street, the militia were chasing Przybylski; they even shot him in the neck and in the arm during the chase.¹⁹ It was actually him and his brother who were the subject of all the anonymous letters sent to the police station in Klimontów, the Israeli Embassy, the Institute of National Remembrance, and the Jewish Historical Institute from 1991 to 2008. The letters alleged that ‘by harassing Jews, [the Przybylskis] made a large fortune.’ All the letters ended with warnings such as: ‘We do not sign the letters, as these people remain dangerous to this day’; ‘they control everything around here.’²⁰

In the 1990’s, this case became the subject of yet another investigation, just as negligent as all the previous ones. Information was sought on Józef Przybylski as

17 Januszewski, “Szkoła Tysiąclecia”, 2001; Więckowski and Fitowa, *Podobwód Armii Krajowej*, 2009, p. 81: “In the evening of January 16, 1943 the Jędrusie group took over a warehouse (in a synagogue) in Klimontów, where the Germans had gathered the goods robbed from the Jews during the dissolution of the ghetto in this town on October 29, 1942. [...] The items transported from the warehouse (e.g. leather, fabrics) were used for organizational purposes, and also allocated ‘to the families of the imprisoned and for helping the poor.’”

18 “Życiorys”, AIPN Ki 005/1696, p. 6.

19 Więckowski and Fitowa, *Podobwód Armii Krajowej*, 2008, p. 376.

20 File no. AIPN Ki 53/3703, p. 1–27.

a presumed perpetrator of the murder of Klimontów Jews. However, it was only ascertained that

as if in return for accepting the role of a UB informer, he was not going to be held accountable for this crime. As an informer, he allegedly caused problems to many residents of Klimontów. – Currently, he has “reinvented” himself in the political and ideological sense, which is expressed by a very ostentatious and zealous participation in religious ceremonies, e.g. being a standard-bearer in Church processions.²¹

Another anonymous letter, delivered to the authorities in 2008, complements this picture with information that ‘Józef Przybylski appointed himself the AK chairman.’²²

A Klimontów resident, referred to as ‘grandma Lasotowa’ (daughter of Jan and Janina – the school files include also her report cards) by the interviewees, said that besides the murder victims in Sandomierska Street, Sierant and Przybylski also killed their schoolmate, Chaskiel Lederman, a Jewish boy from the neighborhood, whom Lasotowa was trying to shelter during the war. When she was widowed and could not provide an appropriate ‘cover’, nevertheless having to bring up two little daughters,

she asked this boy to find another hiding-place. Unfortunately, he was caught. And not even by Germans, but by Poles. They killed him in the woods [at Byszówka], even though the boy was appealing to their friendly affections – because they used to play together.²³

‘We ate with one spoon, and you want to kill me? – he allegedly said to his murderer, a childhood friend.’²⁴ Checking the class registers of the Elementary School in Klimontów, we find Chaskiel Lederman, son of Majer and Cypa, born in 1926; he definitely attended the same class, VI.A, as Damian and Bogusław Sierant, and also Tadeusz, a relative of the Witaszeks. He was not a very good student. There is a note next to his name: ‘poor knowledge of the Polish language, poor mental capacities, and on top of that lazy, negligent, and dirty.’²⁵ Only his behavior was graded as excellent.

21 ‘Zapisek urzędowy’ by the Kielce Provincial Court judge Andrzej Jankowski, from the beginning of the 1990s, file no. AIPN Ki 53/3703, February 5, 1992.

22 An anonymous letter to the Institute of National Remembrance and the Jewish Historical Institute, dated June 11, 2008.

23 An e-mail sent from Klimontów to the author, October 24, 2008.

24 Januszewski, “Szkoła Tysiąclecia”, 2001.

25 PSPK, registers, t. 10.

Another Klimontów school pupil from Class II.A, whose behavior was likewise evaluated as excellent, was Szmul Pęczyna (born in 1923,²⁶ son of a merchant), before the war owner of the mill in Trzykosy, which he ceded to a Pole in exchange for a hiding-place. According to the testimony of his nephew, Zelman Baum, and other local residents, ‘the neighbor accepted the mill, but shot Szmul dead all the same.’²⁷ The register of post-war owners of mills originally belonging to Jews lists Stanisław Skrzek and his son-in-law Edward Śliwiński²⁸ as owners of Szmul’s mill. Before the war, Edward Śliwiński was a policeman; after the war, he joined the Polish Socialist Party. This was the person whom Zelman Baum, in his testimony mentioned above, accused of murdering the Jews. Śliwiński was allegedly taking ‘a weekly payment from all the Jews in the town of Koprzywnica and privately from us for not turning Jews in.’²⁹ Baum, who describes him as his ‘best friend before the war,’ gives a detailed account of his attack on a bunker that served as a hiding-place for Jews. Śliwiński allegedly said to the besieged: ‘There are only two of you, and after all, I’m your old friend, I won’t hurt you, you can trust me.’³⁰

In the school year 1922/1923, class VII (parallel to that of Szmul Pęczyna) includes also Pesła Pęczyna, daughter of Jankiel, a Klimontów merchant, the heir-ess of a mill in Sandomierz-Chwałki. Two days before the murders of the Jews took place, she had decided to leave town.³¹ Half a year earlier, 2 weeks before the Red Army marched in, Pesła had lost her husband Józef, who was murdered by the Poles who were sheltering him.³² Józef was killed together with two Soviet soldiers – we will return to this incident later – and was succeeded at the mill by Waław Sierant – a familiar figure – who rented it from Pesła Pęczyna.³³

Jugoszów

In 1933 and 1934, also Józef and Marian Osuch, born in 1918 and 1917 respectively in Nowa Wieś, municipality of Jurkowice, graduated from Klimontów Elementary School. They both made careers in the underground movement as

26 PSPK, registers, t. 5.

27 See Chapter 4: *The Aftermath of the Holocaust in the Jewish Relations and the Memory of the Polish Hinterland* in this volume.

28 See “Prośba do Ob. Wojewody Kieleckiego” dated November 14, 1944, APK, OS SS, file no. 580, quoted in Chapter 4.

29 AŻIH, file no. 301/2425.

30 See Chapter 4 above, p. 83.

31 See Chapter 4, p. 86.

32 Ibid.

33 See Chapter 4, footnote 42.

members of BCh and AK, whose “Lotna” units were merged just before the end of the war. The level of antisemitism among the troops is shown in a shocking book published in the 1990s by Włodzimierz Gruszczyński,³⁴ one of the Sandomierz “Lotna” fighters.

Józef Osuch “Rydz” was the mayor of Obrazów and the BCh District commander [komendant gminny] during the war. ‘In September 1943 [...] the BCh Special Unit, numbering 15 fighters under the command of Waclaw Tutak “Brzoza”, started operating in Obrazów and the surrounding area; in April 1944, they were incorporated into the BCh unit “Lotna” [commanded by Mieczysław Wałek “Salerno”³⁵].³⁶ The war-time atmosphere of the Klimontów countryside is reenacted in the memories of the activity of BCh members in the area of Obrazów, especially the actions of Józef and Jan³⁷ Osuch, Józef Tutak, and Mieczysław Wałek

34 Gruszczyński, Włodzimierz: *Lotna sandomierska. Dzieje oddziału partyzanckiego*. Milla: Warsaw 2002, pp. 25–36: “[The Jews] went down in history as betrayers of the Polish nation,” *ibid.*, p. 64, a quote from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*; see the description of unmasking the bunker in which the Jews are hiding, with the following commentary (*idem*, 58, footnote): “AK was therefore an ethnically Polish organization. It only rarely included Jews [sic], who took [sic] shelter from the German persecution in AK.” About the two Jews in the Jędrusie unit, see *ibid.*, p. 226: “They were not eager to, or rather, they deliberately avoided taking part in the fight for the common cause.” Immediately after the liberation, the Jędrusie unit was accused of “shooting Jews.” This gave Hipolit Duljasz, first chief of the local PUBP, a reason to arrest Józef Wiącek, the unit commander, in 1945. The story of how Jerzy Bette, Wiącek’s former subordinate of Jewish origin, interceded on his behalf in Łoniów (“Thanks to ‘Jędrusie’ I have survived the war without hiding in holes or dark rooms.”), was described in Korczak, Mieczysław: *Życie na włosku*. Staszowskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne: Staszów 1997, p. 155–156.

35 “Within the boundaries of the Sandomierz *obwód* (*obwód* is the occupation term for a District) there were two partisan groups under the same code name ‘Lotna’. One was a part of AK and the other one a part of BCh. There were about 40 people in the AK ‘Lotna’, and on 12 June 1944 it merged with ‘Jędrusie’. The BCh ‘Lotna’ unit was larger, in the peak period it had over 100 members, led by Mieczysław Wałek ‘Salerno’, and intermittently by Mariusz Zembruski ‘Jacek’. The AK ‘Lotna’ was led by Stefan Franaszczuk ‘Tarzan’, later ‘Orlicz.’” Józef Korczak “Gerwazy”, retrieved 7.5.2012, from www.kapustowie.info/goniec/2011-0102.pdf.

36 Retrieved 7.5.2012, from www.obrazow.pl/index.php/zarys-historii.html; by Józef Myjak, Sandomierz 2007.

37 Jan Osuch, born 6/2/1921 in Gnieszowice. Special inspection by the Minister of Justice Aleksander Bentkowski from May 28, 1990 reveals information about the sentence issued by the Provincial Court in Kielce on 18 May 1951, file no. Act VI K33/51 (this act has not been found yet), in the case against Józef Nasternak, Marian Ćwiertnia, Mieczysław Piątkowski, Jan Osuch, Władysław Szczudłowski, and Bronisław Różycki,

“Salerno”. The following is an account given by Bolesław Pyszniaak, who in 1950 was interviewed as a witness in the case against Stanisław Szwarz-Bronikowski, commander of an underground resistance unit based in Jugoszów³⁸ (an investigation regarding the murders of Soviet paratroopers, not the murders of the Jews):

Wacław Tutak “Brzoza”, he was a man with a low level of morality, simply a bully and a racketeer [...] he got married in Jugoszów, municipality of Obrazów [...] and that’s where a number of murders of soldiers who ran away from the Red Army, and of individuals of Jewish nationality were committed, and these murders have not been solved to this day [...] And so at Jawiak Franciszek’s in Jugoszów, three Polish citizens of Jewish nationality were in hiding, along with two Red Army soldiers, who had escaped from Nazi captivity and in 1943, I don’t remember the exact date, they were murdered [...] [he enumerates those present at the time of the murder]. Also at Jurkowski Józef’s in Jugoszów, there were a few individuals of Jewish nationality hiding there, who were murdered in 1944³⁹ [...] I think that the local BCh commander, Osuch Józef, who was the mayor of Obrazów during the occupation, should be suspected of these murders⁴⁰. Also, as far as I know, in the village of Bilcza, municipality of Obrazów [...] in the autumn of 1943 [...], [some Jews were killed] by an unknown underground resistance group, which was supposed to include Dąbrowski Wiktor from Bilcza. This murder was

accused of the murder of Sruł Kofman in the village of Gnieszowice. The minister states in his report: “Józef Nasternak as well as the remaining members of his group were only present during the series of actions connected with the takeover of witness B. Kalicińska’s property, and they subsequently returned to their homes. [...] Furthermore, the defendants did not realize that they were escorting Sruł Kofman, and therefore they could not have known about his subsequent murder,” file no. AIPN BU 724/1/CD, p.1–5, March 4, 1947. Józef Osuch signed a cooperation agreement, file no. AIPN Ki 0024/256, pp. 1–7. The circumstances of Sruł Kofman’s death were recorded in the investigation files regarding the gang led by Jan Batorski, who was in fact also related to Wacław Tutak, mentioned in Pyszniaak’s account: “During the winter of 1943 [no date given], BCh members Grombala Marian, Abram Jan and Twaróg Stanisław, upon an order from their superiors, took away citizen Kofman Sruł from citizen Stanisław Ziemnicki’s, res. in the village of Gnieszowice, municipality of Koprzywnica, where they subsequently looted Sruł’s property, after which, in the aforementioned Ziemnicki’s yard, Kofman Sruł was shot dead by Jan Abram,” file no. AIPN Ki 022/130, p. 38.

38 See a short biography in Więckowski and Fitowa, *Podobwód Armii Krajowej*, 2008, pp. 408–412. See also Kuks, Henryk: *Jędrusiowa dola*. P.Z. Polmark: Warsaw 1991, p. 38.

39 Zylberberg, *A Jid fun Klementow dertcsejlt*, 1947: “9 Jews, owners of an oil mill, were in hiding at farmer Jurkowski’s house in the neighboring village of Jugoszów. And it was he himself with another one, Stanisław Marzec from Kozia Góra that killed them. The 9 Jews lie buried in Jugoszów next to the chapel.”

40 A different version of the death of the Jews hiding at Jurkowski’s is given by Zylberberg, see the last footnote in this chapter.

committed on a Saturday night near the school in Bilcza. Three persons, Jewesses, were murdered, and one Jew ran away and was hiding, wounded, in the meadows near the village of Zalaszków, municipality of Obrazów. The perpetrators brought the murdered Jewesses to the road leading to Zdanów, and laid them down at the statue. The following day, perpetrators unknown to me arrived at the surroundings of Zdanów on bicycles and committed the murder of that Jew who was wounded and hiding. I heard that this Jew was finished off by Wojna [...] from the village of Żuków near Goźlice, municipality of Klimontów [...]. Also, another murder of Jews was committed at Bogdański Marcełi's in the village of Krobielice, municipality of Klimontów [...], these Jews were brought to be hidden there by Bajur Władysław from the village of Szymanowice, municipality of Jurkowiec⁴¹ [...], the Jews, on the other hand, were supposed to come from Opatów. I don't exactly know who committed this murder, but I think it was committed by Bogdański Marcełi. This murder was committed in the spring of 1943. After this murder, partisans started to visit Bogdański, asking him to give back the belongings of the murdered Jews. But then Bajur Władysław from Szymanowice, as commander of the AK organization in this area, told the partisans to stop bothering Bogdański Marcełi, as he is Bogdański's brother-in-law, and so Tutak Waclaw's ["Burza" in BCh] fighters stopped visiting Bogdański Marcełi. [Gives names of witnesses present at the time of the murders.] In the village of Krzeczkwice, municipality of Klimontów [...] a Polish citizen of Jewish nationality was murdered and there was word that there were more victims at Osmala Błażej's, whose sons were members of the underground resistance troops⁴² [...] They buried the Jew whom they had murdered in Bociek Wincenty's field near Nasławice, municipality of Klimontów [...] Bociek dug this Jew up and brought him on his horse to Osmala's yard, where he said: "You took the property, so take the body, too." Osmala Błażej and his son are responsible for this murder. I also know that at Greda's and his son-in-law's, Czerwiński's, [...] residing in the village of Piekary, municipality of Obrazów, a murder of Polish citizens of Jewish nationality was committed, but how many were murdered there and by whom, I don't know that. I also know about the subversive activities of a BCh unit under the command of Wałek Mieczysław, also known as Salerno⁴³, who got married in Ryłowice, municipality of Klimontów [...] this Wałek came to my house in person, with the troops he commanded, asking to hand over

41 Władysław Bajur, born on June 27, 1917 in Szymanowice, son of Wincenty and Rozalia née Bekas, was the commanding officer of an AK Sub-district, see file scan, file no. AIPN Kr 010/1839.

42 This refers to Marian Osmala, a member of NSZ and AK during the war (file no. AIPN Ki8/120/1DVD, p. 42, 57), after the war the commanding officer of the SN post in Goryczany, whose name came up during the SN trial in 1946; file no. AIPN Ki 8/120/1 DVD, p. 80.

43 The fact that the AK unit "Lotna" and the BCh unit "Lotna" were persecuting Jews in the region of Klimontów was confirmed by Zelman Baum in his account, which I have analyzed in Chapter 2: *The Unrighteous Righteous and the Righteous Unrighteous* in this volume, pp. 170–215; and in Chapter 4: *The Aftermath of the Holocaust*, see above.

the sheltered Jews. When I told him that I did not keep Jews in hiding, as indeed [I did not], he afterward, together with the partisans he commanded, completely demolished my household, and then he ordered me to give him post-Jewish property. When I told him that I didn't own such property, he robbed me of everything in my house and beat me up in a brutal way, breaking my ribs, and he was torturing my children in order to get at the Jews, but they didn't find any Jews. They went to see mayor Chuchnowski, he had no Jews either. Salerno was with: Mordka, I don't know his first name, resident in Krzeczkwice, Płaza Henryk and another Płaza, I don't know his first name⁴⁴, res. in Krzeczkwice, Żuber⁴⁵, I don't know his first name, currently res. in Górki, Paciura, I don't know his first name, res. in Krzeczkwice, and Kwasek Stefan from Janowice, municipality of Klimontów [...]. This happened on June 27, 1943.

In his account, Pysznik refers to Jews in hiding as if they were goods which are traded⁴⁶. You can 'bring them' to someone's house – like to a junk-shop – as was allegedly done by AK Sub-district commander Waclaw Bajur, who brought them into his brother-in-law Bogdański's house, and subsequently protected him from the BCh fighters, hungry for the 'Jewish gold' squeezed out of them.

44 For Bolesław Płaza "Płot", see Więckowski and Fitowa, *Podobwód Armii Krajowej*, 2008, p. 87 and Gruszczyński, *Lotna sandomierska*, 2002, p. 80.

45 There was a [NSZ] squad in Sandomierz, led by Marian Żuber, Więckowski and Fitowa, *Podobwód Armii Krajowej*, 95, 101, 217. After the merger, Żuber did not acknowledge AK, but remained with NSZ. For Żuber, see also file no. AIPN Ki 013/ 1960.

46 The account of Zelman Baum, AŻIH, file no. 301/2425, p. 3: "[Police officer] Morgen wanted more money, just so that Czarnecki would expel those 14 people he was sheltering. They had already found a place for them, the family wanted to leave the farm] but Czarnecki did not want to part with such good 'clients' and decided to keep 7 of them at his house. At around that time, an AK squad was created. The squad found these seven people, drove them to the police station, and handed them over to the Gestapo." See interview with Tomasz Sulima from Obrazów (Sandomierz interviews, 2005): "*Why did [people] shelter [Jews]? – You know – for gold, for money. For all that. – Were the Poles greedy? – What do you think?? [annoyed] Greedy, yes, but the Germans punished people with death [in the sense: Poles took money for risking their lives]. How many families perished? Everyone, they burned the whole house, everything, if they were sheltering Jews. – Were they doing it only to get rich? They shouldn't have done it? – Yes, to get rich. There probably were such families, you see, which took in Jews, killed them, but took the payment all the same. Here, in Lenarczyce, there was a wedding, here, in the neighboring village. And there were probably Jews there, in the barn; the wedding was at the neighbor's. And that guy burned his barn and the Jews, he was scared, there was a wedding, many people – everyone was running away. But they [the Jews, transl. note], where could they run to? They burned in the barn.*"

This constitutes an unexpected reversal of the figure of the Bloodsucker, a role which was usually attributed to Jews.⁴⁷

This narration shows that ‘keeping Jews’ was a “seasonal” activity, somewhat akin to keeping animals. It was supposed to last as long as there were conditions for it: for as long as the Jews had money or for as long as one was brave enough to face the risk. The Jews were then killed in a “farm fashion” (with a pitchfork⁴⁸ or an axe⁴⁹); alternatively, the killings were delegated to specialists – the partisans or the militia (like in Lejb Zylberberg’s testimony⁵⁰).

Furthermore, these narratives show the completely declassified status of Jews in rural culture during the war. This is illustrated by the fact that their remains were buried beyond the *orbis interior* – ‘wherever – under a tree, at the roadside, in the woods,’⁵¹ or left at the statue, on the crossroads, i.e. in places where unchristened individuals and suicide victims would traditionally be interred. The ploughing of Jewish cemeteries belongs to a similar category of events; this – as we know from Michał Rudawski’s account⁵² – was taking place already during the war. Such activities, albeit abominable, are not devoid of cultural meaning. They show how after hundreds of years during which the Poles and the Jews were living alongside each other, the rural culture has reorganized itself in the new

47 See Chapter 6: *The Figure of the Bloodsucker in the Polish Religious, National, and Left-Wing Discourse, 1945–1946* in this volume.

48 Aron Kupferblum, agronomist and owner of a 30-hectare farm, died in 1942, stabbed with a pitchfork by a Pole who was sheltering him in Doły near Dwikozy; based on a letter from David Kupfer to the author, August 16, 2011. See also previous chapter, p.122.

49 Szmul Pęczyna died this way, see Chapter 4.

50 Zylberberg, *A Jid fun Klementow dertsejlt*: “Another time, he [my host] told me that 9 Jews, owners of an oil mill, were in hiding at farmer Jurkowski’s house in the neighboring village of Jugoszów. And it was he himself with another one, Stanisław Marzec from Kozia Góra that killed them. These 9 Jews lie buried in Jugoszów, next to the chapel. And at this very same Stachu Marzec’s house, 3 Jews were sheltered: Jankiel Apelbojm, Mosze Tencer, and Jankiel Grynsztejn [Grynsztajn], and he and his friends blackmailed them to the point that they were forced to leave. They were persecuted so much that at the end of March 1943 they got caught, as a result of denunciation by Tadeusz Brzozowski from Klimontów. They were caught in the village of Konary. They were brought to the town. The Germans, before killing them, had paraded them round Klimontów. Brzozowski followed them and shouted: ‘But you are strong!’ They were taken out of town and shot. The Germans gave Brzozowski a rifle and he was shooting at them too.”

51 See e.g. Rudawski, Michał: *Mój obcy kraj?* Agencja Wydawnicza TU: Warsaw 1996, p. 161.

52 Rudawski, *Mój obcy kraj?*, pp. 161–163.

post-occupation conditions. They also reveal the extent of the changes that have taken place in this culture as a result of the revocation of the rights of Jews and of their abandonment by the Polish intellectual and spiritual elites.

Fig. 1: The house in Sandomierska Street in Klimontów, summer 2010. Photograph by Łukasz Konopa



Chapter 6: The Figure of the Bloodsucker in Polish Religious, National and Left-Wing Discourse, 1945–1946

In East Africa and South Asia, ethnic clashes often erupt when a majority group feels that it is literally being “consumed” by a minority.¹ The myth of the Jewish bloodsucker, widespread in Central and Eastern Europe in the twentieth century is an obvious parallel to this phenomenon. The bloodsucker is one of the archetypal metaphors activated by critical situations.² At its core lies the image of a sorcerer-vampire who insinuates himself into a community and feeds off its life substance, leaving empty shells of flesh behind (Mary Douglas).³ The universal character of this figure stems from its simplicity. As a minimal structure, it is essentially a forbidden movement across the guarded boundary between inside and outside, frequently expressed by the action of pricking or blood-sucking.

A number of more or less innocuous applications of this metaphor have recently appeared in Polish political discourse. In 2007, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk used a related phrase to describe Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of the Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*), claiming that ‘PiS, like a vampire, feeds on the fear and evil inherent in us all.’⁴ A year later, the trope was used by Janusz Kurtyka, head of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), when he described Jan Tomasz Gross, the author of *Fear: Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz*, as a ‘vampire of Polish historiography.’⁵

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- 1 Horowitz, Donald: *The Deadly Ethnic Riots*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles 2001, p. 6.
 - 2 See Kurkowska-Budzan, Marta: *Antykomunistyczne podziemie zbrojne na Białostocczyźnie*. Towarzystwo Wydawnicze “Historia Iagellonica”: Kraków 2009, p. 41.
 - 3 Douglas, Mary: *Natural Symbols. Explorations in Cosmology*. Routledge: London and New York 2003, p. 118. See Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: *Legendy o krwi: Antropologia przesądu*. W.A.B.: Warsaw 2007, p. 156 (transl into French by M.Maliszewska, *Légendes du sang. Pour une anthropologie de l'antisémitisme chrétien*, éditions Albin Michel, Paris 2015).
 - 4 Gadomski, Witold / Kurski, Jarosław: “Donald Tusk: Nie będzie koalicji z PiS Kaczyńskiego”. *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1.9.2007.
 - 5 Kurtyka, Janusz: “Gross to wampir historiografii”. *Gazeta Wyborcza* 10.1.2008. At least since the mid-1960s, serial killers have been referred to as vampires in Poland; see e.g.: “Wampir pożywa radio za wampira”. *Gazeta Lublin*, retrieved 17.1.2012, from http://lublin.gazeta.pl/lublin/1,35640,7746531,_Wampir_pozywa_radio_za_wampira_Chcce_pol_miliona.html.

In this chapter, I focus on the genealogy of the figure of the bloodsucker and its role in shaping the imagination of Polish people in the first two years after World War II.

The figure of the Jewish bloodsucker revealed its murderous potential in the wave of pogroms that swept across Poland in 1945 and 1946. The first pogrom, sparked by rumor of Jewish ritual murders, took place in Chełm, where in late March and early April 1945 the local militia accused certain Jews of “squeezing the blood out of a Christian boy” and tortured one of the suspects. Later on, the blood libel appeared in Rzeszów; the cause of riots (June 14–15, 1945) was an unsolved murder of a little girl, and the local rabbi was accused of committing the crime. Two months later (on August 11) the rumor appeared in Kraków, where a mob attacked Jews after a Christian boy rushed out of a synagogue located in Miodowa St. shouting that there were corpses of Christian children inside. Similar insinuations appeared in June 1945 in Przemyśl, and in August in Kielce, Radomsko, Łódź, Zwoleń, Bydgoszcz, and then again in Chełm. The largest-scale riots fueled by allegations of ritual murder occurred in Kielce, where a total of 42 Jews were killed on July 4 and 5, 1946. After reaching its apogee, the pogrom rumor did not subside. Instead, it swept across more Polish towns, affecting Tarnów, Kraków once again, Częstochowa, Radom, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, Białobrzegi, Dęblin, Łódź again, as well as a dozen or so other localities.⁶

1. Three Incarnations of the Bloodsucker

Three variations on the figure of the bloodsucker can be detected in the postwar history of Poland: religious, national, and left-wing.

The first incarnation of the bloodsucker archetype, the **religious** figure, took in the Early Modern era the form of the Other, usually a Jew (although this role was sometimes played by a Christian “heretic,” such as a Hussite,⁷ a Protestant,⁸

6 Cała, Alina: *Żyd- wróg odwieczny? Antysemityzm w Polsce i jego źródła*. Nisza: Warsaw 2012, p. 456.

7 Compare the use of traditional anti-Jewish rhetoric directed at Hussites in a 1443 Silesian painting from Brzeg, *Vir Dolorum*; see Fig. 64 in Dobrzeński, Tadeusz: *Catalogue of the Medieval Painting*. National Museum in Warsaw: Warsaw 1977, p. 227–228.

8 See the accusation of ritual murder, interpreted in the context of Reformation disputes about the Eucharist, Sochaczew 1558; see e.g. Śleszkowski, Sebastian: *Odkrycie zdrad złośliwych... Georgii Schonfels: Braniewo 1621; Guldon, Zenon / Wijaczka, Jacek: Procesy o mordy rytualne w Polsce w XVI–XVIII wieku*. DCF: Kielce 1995, p. 86.

or a Uniate.⁹), being an antagonist of the Catholics, stealing and mutilating their sacraments, the host, or a Catholic child.

Here the Jew was a bloodsucker in a literal sense, as he would kidnap a child and then use his or her blood to make *matzah* for the Passover holiday. Along with the desecration of the host, this particular mythical motive constituted a basic component of the so-called blood libel.¹⁰ Its narrative scheme can be expressed with the following sequence:

Villainy – Struggle – Victory/Exposure of the Villain – Retribution.

“Villainy” here indicates the abduction of a Christian child whose blood is needed to make *matzah*. “Struggle” refers to the torture of the child by the villain, as well as to attempts to conceal the crime, which nevertheless comes to light in the “victory/exposure” segment, thus leading to retribution against the Jews.¹¹

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the religious figure of bloodsucker in secular and ecclesiastical literature acquired metaphoric contexts connected with the Jewish usury, corruption of Christian morals, and the Jewish innkeepers’ encouraging people to drink. The figure underwent a real renaissance with the advent of Jewish assimilation into European society in the nineteenth century and the appearance of modern antisemitism. The invasion of a foreign element into the Social Body was suggested by increasingly Völkisch images of Jews assaulting national values and traits, which were represented in terms of biological categories such as physique, health, and pure blood. Jews were likened to insects and organisms encroaching on physical boundaries in an invasive way – fleas, lice, and bedbugs – and to the infections they carried. Other variants of the bloodsucker included Jew as parasite, the Jew as tumor, plague (typhoid, cholera, Black Death) or gangrene.¹² An important role in this

9 For example, associated with Infant Gabriel in contemporary Orthodox propaganda; see Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: “Raport z badań podlaskich 2007”. *Societas/Communitas: Polityki pamięci*, 8(2) 2009, pp. 35–94.

10 A folkloristic motif: in Thompson’s index motif V361; Thompson, Stith: *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folk-Tales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fables, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1955–1958.

11 See Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi*, p. 328.

12 See an article in the *Rodzina Polska* quarterly, July 1926, ed. by the Pallottine Fathers, Wadowice–Kraków “Na Kopcu”: “[The Jew] has abandoned his own land, [and] taken up vagabondage, having resolved to live at the expense of others. Like a louse, bedbug, locust, typhoid germ, bacillus of cholera and pestilence.... He demanded equal rights and “tolerance,” [that is,] the surrender of Christendom to the Jewish onslaught, and

discourse was also played by the figure of convert – more specifically, a converted Jew [Polish, *przechrzta*] – popularized by the Polish romanticist culture, as in Zygmunt Krasiński's novel *Nie-Boska Komedia* (*The Un-Divine Comedy*), where a masked villain¹³ insidiously penetrates the community's body to poison it with its venom.¹⁴

then abdicated, Christian – renounce your faith, nationality, your land and the heaven – give back what you have amassed – burn the Holy Scripture, overthrow the Papacy, change your churches into synagogues, grow sidelocks, don 'tsetsele,' and turn into a Jewish lackey. [...] Whole legions of traitors of their own country, loyal to Judaism heart and soul, have for dozens of years been committing the incessant crime of disavowing their nation. [...] This whole horde of brigands of the worst sort has an influence on the nation's masses." I would like to thank Tadeusz Markiel for a copy of this text. The argument in *Rodzina Polska* shows stylistic and reasoning analogies with publications by the Rev. Józef Kruszyński, discussed in the section An Elitist Discourse: The Clergy and the Hierarchs.

- 13 See e.g. Didier, Stanisław: *Rola neofitów w dziejach Polski*. Myśl Narodowa: Warsaw 1934; Tworowski, Stanisław: *Polska bez Żydów*. Stronnictwo Narodowe: Warsaw 1939, Chapter 7: "A baptized Jew is the most dangerous kind of Jew. Baptism in fact facilitates such a Jew's infiltration into society. It paves him the way to posts, offices, helps penetrate into cultural centers; in a word, the Jew, playing the hypocritical part of a Christian, lulls the society into a false sense of security, and carries his goals out more easily." For an extensive analysis of the figure of [Jewish] convert [to Christianity], see Janion, Maria: "Mit założycielski polskiego antysemityzmu". In: id. (ed.): *Bohater, spisek, śmierć. Wykłady żydowskie*. W. A. B.: Warsaw 2009, pp. 77–113.
- 14 In Poland, the image of an internal enemy is itself much older, dating to the Early Baroque period. It can already be found in Mojecki, Przechwał: *Zydowskie okrucieństwa, mordy y zabobony*. Jakub Siebeneicher: Kraków 1598. It was also included by Bazyli Wągliński (Vagličius) in his *Swawola wyuzdana Zydowska* (no place of publication or publisher specified, 1631), p. 3: "I camme across, having comme over, only one Jewishe house at Oleszyce, & verry quiet, that one; now that there is already foureteen land-lordes, & more, and of chylderen, there are like the swarme in Egyth, who, having leassed their dwellings from Burghers in corner & othere superior market-place houses, have depployed their usuryous webes like ugly spyders against the poore bees of Your Grace, so that those, once entangled by the conveniency's perfidious helpfulness, may be sucked-out & damaged, and afterward, without a bargain & payment, their worke & estates may be possessed." Seventeenth-century Polish picaresque literature compared the Jews to e.g. "a maggot in a beautiful trunk, a moth in an expensive vestment" (Jurkowski, Jan: "Poselstwo z Dzirkich Pól". In: id.: *Dziela wszystkie: Utwory panegiryczne i satyryczne*, Mayenowa, Maria Renata (ed.) Ossolineum: Wrocław 1958, p. 266; quoted after: Augustyniak, Urszula: *Koncepcje narodu i społeczeństwa w literaturze plebejskiej od końca XVI do końca XVII wieku*. Ossolineum: Wrocław 1983, p. 62. Aristocratic

However, it was only in the twentieth century, during the interwar period, that the bloodsucker discourse was replaced by a *national* discourse; until then national elements had been used only incidentally. The bloodsucker, hitherto almost always a Jew (although in rare cases a Hussite, Protestant, or Uniate), now became incarnated as the bloodsucking Jew. The identification was so absolute that one signified the other. This is clearly seen in a 1926 article from the quarterly journal *Rodzina Polska*,¹⁵ published by the Pallottine Fathers in Wadowice: 'If the Jew is a vampire – then, to describe a goy in the Jew's service, the lexicon offers no expression whatsoever.'¹⁶ The passage dubs the Jewish bloodsucker a vampire, but beyond that, it mentions his most repulsive companion, a non-Jew who breaches the ban on contacting Jews.¹⁷

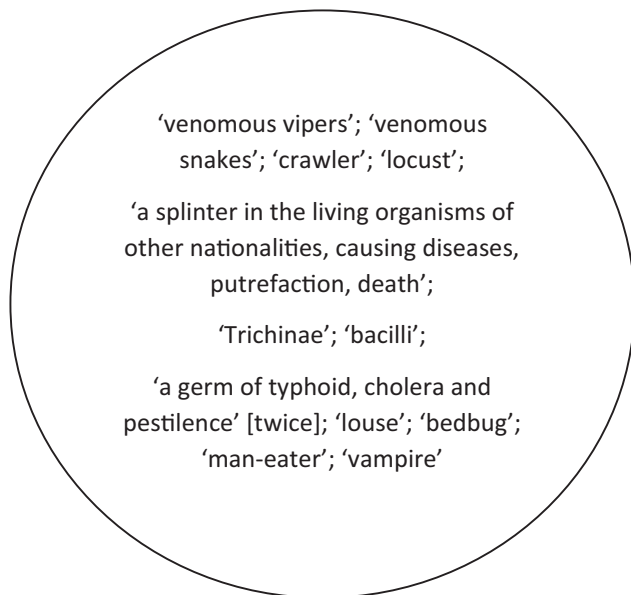
The article from which the passage quoted above is taken is typical of the Polish variety of antisemitism – an ideological derivation evoking, as a rule, Western European examples. The piece is cast in the form of a lecture that, citing classical, early modern and modern writers, introduces the provincial reader to the world of European antisemitic thought. The author quotes Diodorus, Tacitus, Luther, Voltaire, Goethe, Napoleon I, Victor Hugo, Schopenhauer, Franz Liszt, Eugen

authors of the period portrayed Jews as leeches, lice, and moths, asking what 'that sly snakes family/[which] rakes gains illegitimate most greedily, oppresses the poor with their ruthless usury' was in fact doing in Poland (Klonowic, Sebastian-Fabian / Syrokomla, Władysław (transl.): *Roksolania*. Józef Zawadzki: Vilnius 1851, pp. 78–9, after: Augustyniak, *Koncepcje narodu*, p. 69). See also Augustyniak's discussion of Janusz Tazbir's contention that "the notion of internal enemy was not yet known" in the Baroque period – *ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

- 15 Adamski, Franciszek: "The Jewish Question in Polish Religious Periodicals in the Second Republic: The Case of "Przegląd Katolicki"". *Polin* 8, 1994, pp. 129–145; Landau-Czajka, Anna: "The Image of the Jew in the Catholic Press during the Second Republic". *Polin* 8, 1994, pp. 146–175; Napiórkowski, Stanisław Celestyn (ed.): *A bliźniego swego... Materiały z sympozjum „Św. Maksymilian Maria Kolbe – Żydzi – Masoni”*. Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego: Lublin 1993; Forecki, Piotr: "Chrześcijańskie motywacje antysemityzmu na łamach „Rycerza Niepokalanej"". In: Kosman, Marcei (ed.): *Na obrzeżach polityki I*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe INPiD UAM: Poznań 2002, pp. 113–129; Forecki, Piotr: "Polityczny charakter treści antysemitycznych na łamach „Rycerza Niepokalanej"". In: Kosman, Marcei (ed.): *Na obrzeżach polityki I*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe INPiD UAM: Poznań 2002, pp. 53–69.
- 16 See the expression "Jewish lackeys" discussed in the section Soldiers and Officers of the Underground.
- 17 See Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi*, pp. 389–392.

Dühring, and Bismarck.¹⁸ The second part of the article discusses *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. The figure below shows all the metaphorical descriptions of Jews appearing in the texts mentioned above.

Fig. 1: *The national Bloodsucker, based on Rodzina Polska quarterly, the Pallottine Fathers, Wadowice 1926*



In fact, all the metaphors used in this text (apart from the 'man-eater') tend to denote a forbidden movement within the guarded interior/exterior boundary. As such, they meet the minimum requirements for the assignment to the blood-sucker trope.

Besides the religious and nationalist discourse, the third variety of bloodsucker is the variant that appears in leftist Marxist ideologies.¹⁹ The example, to which

18 Bismarck, as the last figure mentioned in the list of quotations, establishes a *terminus post quem*, making it possible to date the source used by the Pallottine father.

19 For an extensive account of the dynamics of left-wing antisemitism, see: Lustiger, Arno: *Stalin and the Jews: The Red Book. The Tragedy of the Soviet Jews and the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*. Enigma Books: New York 2003. Antisemitic excerpts from the works of Karl Marx are cited e.g. in Johnson, Paul: *A History of the Jews*. Harper Perennial: New York 1988, p. 373.

I shall limit myself, comes from “*Vampirn*” (“The Vampires”), a song from 1930 in Yiddish and Russian and recorded in writing by Mosze Beregovsky in Uman, Ukraine. The “bloodsucking exploiters” referred to in the song are the capitalists, including Jewish capitalists. As a reflection of its time, this figure appeared in the title of the poem *The Bedbug* by Vladimir Mayakovski (1929). As is the case with religious metaphor, the bloodsucker may (but does not have to) be a Jew; similarly, not every single Jew is a bloodsucker. Contemporary interpretations tend to approach this category in terms of the so-called dead metaphor, which constitutes a spore with an easily-awakened dormant meaning.²⁰

20 The left-wing version of the bloodsucker figure was manipulated by the Communist authorities after the Kielce pogrom in 1946: “On July 11, a joint conference of PPR [Polish Workers’ Party] and PPS [Polish Socialist Party] took place in Kielce. At that conference, it was decided to start arresting parasitic elements and to close down the entertainment establishments, giving the premises thus emptied to the workers. Our agitators and those from PPS all agreed that restaurant-keepers and [their] associates [?] are public offenders. At all rallies, the people redirected their indignation from the Jews to parasitic elements in general. The campaign was a huge success, as it corresponded with the incensed sentiments of dissatisfied people. They finally became convinced that the Party [PPR] is indeed seeking out the public wrongdoers and punishing them.”

“Sprawozdanie instruktorów KC PPR z pobytu w województwie kieleckim od 4 do 15 lipca 1946”, in Meducki, Stanisław / Wrona, Zenon (eds.): *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały I*. Urząd Miasta Kielce and Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe: Kielce 1992; Meducki, Stanisław (ed.): *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały II*. Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe: Kielce 1994, 142. For a more extensive account of this issue, see the section Jews in Official and Left-Wing Discourse (1945/1946).

Fig. 2: Lyrics of the song *Vampirn* (in Yiddish, Ukrainian, and English), as recorded in 1930 in Uman, Ukraine.

8. VAMPIRN / вампіры / וואַמפֿירן

Yiddish: trad. / English: Daniel Kahn / Russian: Psoy Korolenko

Music: trad. Collected by M. Beregovski in Uman, Ukraine SSR, 1930

? וואַמפֿירן די וואַמפֿירן די וואַמפֿירן? וואַס ווילן די הערשער? וואַס ווילן די וואַמפֿירן? vos viln di hersher, vos viln di vampirn?
 זיי זאָפֿן פֿון דעם אַרבעטער דאָס לעצט בליט זיי זאָפֿן פֿון דעם אַרבעטער דאָס לעצט בליט zey tsapn fun dem arbeter dos letst blit blut
 און דאָן וועט איר וויסן וואַס הייסט עקספּלאַטירן און דאָן וועט איר וויסן וואַס הייסט עקספּלאַטירן un dan vet ir visn vos heyst explatirn
 אַ בעסערן לעבן צו זוכן זיך פֿאַר אייך אַ בעסערן לעבן צו זוכן זיך פֿאַר אייך a besern lebn tsu zukhn zikh far aykh

דעם אַרבעטערס קאַמף גייט ווייטער און ווייטער dem arbeters kamf geyt vayter un vayter
 שטעל זיך אין קאַמף פֿאַר דעם אַרבעטער-קלאַס shtel zikh in kamf far dem arbeter klas
 און דאָן וועט איר וויסן וואַס הייסט עקספּלאַטירן און דאָן וועט איר וויסן וואַס הייסט עקספּלאַטירן un dan vet ir visn vos heyst explatirn
 אַ בעסערן לעבן צו קעמפֿן זיך פֿאַר אייך אַ בעסערן לעבן צו קעמפֿן זיך פֿאַר אייך a besern lebn tsu kemfn zikh far aykh

Злодеи, тираны, убийцы, вампиры the villainous vampires, the masters & tyrants
 Последнюю кровь из рабочих сосут. they suck from the workers the last drop of blood
 Вперёд, убогий, нищий и сирый, & then you'll know just what they call exploitation
 Сейчас тебе откроется суть! so search for a better life for you & your class

Вперед, рабочий, выше и выше, the worker will struggle for ever & ever
 Вступай в борьбу за трудящийся класс so join in the fight for we all must unite
 Весь мир узнает, весь мир услышит & they you'll know just what they call exploitation
 О нём, о тебе, обо мне и о нас. so fight for a better life for you & your class

The table below describes the three incarnations of the figure of Bloodsucker in more detail:

Table 1: The bloodsucker figure in religious, national, and left-wing discourse

Type of discourse	Definition of the aggressor and the meaning of his action	Definition of the victim	Description of the acts of aggression
Religious	Literal term: bloodsucker (e.g. Jew)	Christian child	Kidnapping children to obtain blood, to make <i>matzah</i> with; pricking children to extract blood
National	Metaphoric terms: the bloodsucking Jew, vampire	Poles, the nation	Louse, bedbug, locust, typhoid, cholera, or plague germ
Left-wing	Metaphoric terms: vampire, bloodsucker (e.g. Jewish capitalist), exploiter	working class	Economic exploitation

2. Poland 1945–1946: The Bloodsucker as the Social Glue of a Fragmented Community

The aversion for the “Jew-Bloodsucker” – a figure proving comprehensible for all the addressees: Catholics, nationalists and communists – became after WWII

the binding agent of the Polish imagined community (Benedict Anderson). Abhorrence of Jewish bloodsuckers was one of the few emotions that could, under the new conditions and on the grounds of a diversely interpreted concept of patriotism, unite Catholics and nationalists associated with the National Armed Forces (NSZ), the hard-line Home Army, and the Communist People's Guard (GL) resistance militias. It was a novelty that this idea was quickly embraced also by those Communists who combined nationalist rhetoric with a left-wing critique of the capitalism.

This process was due to a rapid literalization (symbolic equation, to use Hanna Segal's terminology – see below) of the bloodsucker metaphor in this period, involving two shifts in meaning:

1. From the end of the nineteenth century, the religious meanings of this figure was shifting continually toward its national meanings.
2. During the postwar years, the leftist semantic field associated with the figure began to drift rapidly in the direction of national associations. This took place, in part, under the influence of the nation-state concept propagated by Stalinism.²¹ The consequence was that the figure of the Jew, previously relegated to the background, now moved to the center.

21 Ossowski, Stanisław: "Na tle wydarzeń kieleckich". *Kuźnica* 38, 1946, p. 5, as reprinted in: *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 1, 1987, p. 54: "A few days before the Kielce events, *Mysł Współczesna* [monthly, 2 (July 1946), 202] published an article by Emil Stanisław Rapaport, 'Polska jako państwo jednonarodowe', ['Poland as a single-nation country']. As part of his initial remarks, the author readily expressed his view that, 'from now on, as international and inter-state relations having taken shape after World War II, the notions of «Pole» and «Polish citizen», both for us internally and for foreigners outside, are indisputably synonymous, as regards Poles residing in this country on a permanent basis.' 'For the time being,' the author continues, 'we have to accomplish the single task of using any and all means to bring the actual status of ethnic homogeneity in the Polish state to a possibly maximum intensification.'"

See also an article by Przygórski, Stanisław: "Przeciw potędze ciemnoty". *Odrodzenie* 22.7.1945 (a response to Mieczysław Jastrun's article "Potęga ciemnoty", a reaction to the Kraków pogrom): "In democratic Poland, the Jew has acquired his due rights and enjoys them justly. We go through thick and thin together, we work side by side, we jointly create the new Poland in whose political system there is no room for minority issues, artificially construed by pro-fascist brainwashing," quoted in: Meducki, *Wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 49. See also: Kwiek, Julian: *Żydzi, Łemkowie, Słowacy w województwie krakowskim w latach 1945–1949/50*. Księgarnia Akademicka: Kraków 2002, pp. 5–6. Moreover, see Kersten, Krystyna: "Polska – państwo narodowe. Dylematy i

Fig. 3: *The semantic field of “Bloodsucker” tends to incline toward national categories, 1945/1946*

Bloodsucker: religious associations



Bloodsucker: national associations



Bloodsucker: leftist associations

I will illustrate these two shifts by analyzing the

1. Popular discourse, including letters mentioning instances of ritual murder, confiscated by the military censorship service in 1945;
2. Elitist discourse, featuring references to ritual murder in the statements of Polish Catholic clergy and underground officers;
3. Official and semi-official discourse, including the reports of *starostas* and provincial governors regarding the Jews. These reports from 1945 and 1946 contain repeated mentions of Jews as parasites and exploiters, often via the use of the term “capitalist bloodsuckers.”

Popular Discourse: Letters Intercepted by the Censors

Letters intercepted by the Military Censorship Service in August 1945 offer a view of the blood libel that circulated in Poland at that time.²² Their punctuation, style, spelling, and vocabulary indicate that their authors were rather poorly educated.

Blood libels have always described the ritual murder victim as a Christian or Catholic child. Analysis of the relevant sources has shown that this phrase is gradually fading in the language of ethnic Poles (unlike Jewish people).²³ In the

rzeczywistość”. In: Kula, Marcin (ed.): *Narody. Jak powstawały i jak wybijały się na niepodległość*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe: Warsaw 1989, p. 476.

22 “Specjalne doniesienie dotyczące zajęć antyżydowskich w Krakowie”, Institute of National Remembrance Archive (AIPN), MBP 3378; quoted after: Zaremba, Marcin: “Mit mordu rytualnego w powojennej Polsce. Archeologia i hipotezy”. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 2, 2007, pp. 104–105.

23 See e.g. the account of Józef Wulf: “The mob said that the Jews had murdered a Christian child [...]”; Wulf, Józef: “Dialog polsko-żydowski”. *Wiadomości* 12, 1965; quoted after: Kwiek, *Żydzi, Łemkowie, Słowacy*, p. 63. Also, see Kaczmarek, Krzysztof:

letters quoted below, it is replaced by the term “Polish child.” I have italicized the terminology of religious blood libel discourse and bolded the modernized national vocabulary.

Letter 1: Kraków

In our town, there are skirmishes with Jews [a reference to the Kraków pogrom], 'cause, can you imagine, *the Jews have gone so far as to kill Polish children* to get blood from them, tricking them into carrying their suitcases to the synagogue. They would pay them 100 zł [złoty] each, and you know that children are greedy, especially boys. It turned out that one [boy] was brave and, approaching the synagogue, he heard children cry and without waiting for the other five [who were with him], he ran off and reported it to the militia. The militia found a few corpses in the synagogue cellar. This instantly spread across the town, and *the Poles, wherever they came across a Jew* they beat him and smashed their stalls at the second-hand market. There was even a horrible shooting and there were several victims [,] I don't know exactly who it was.

Letter 2: Brzesko-Nowe, near Kraków

Let me describe to you one more incident in Kraków, which took place in the district where I presently live [i.e. in Kazimierz]. Children had been perishing for some time until, on 8/11, a fourteen-year-old boy with cut veins on his arm escaped from the Jews. The Jews would let blood from the *Catholic children's* hands and legs, and what for? We'll find out soon. Such things happened in Rzeszów [the Rzeszów pogrom] but the press said that it was impossible. So now it turns out that it's really true. People attacked and demolished the synagogue and they lynched the Jews they met in the street. The Jews put up an armed struggle, but the army stepped in and there was a clash. Nobody, the press included, will now deny that the *yevreys* [Russian/colloquial for “the Jews”] did those things.

Letter 3: Kralka (municipality of Niedźwiedź near Kraków)

[...] we've got news here i.e. in Kraków – *the Jews have murdered a dozen-or-so Polish children*. Barrels of blood have been found. The Polish and Soviet armies are handling the matter.

Letter 4: Kraków

There have been skirmishes with Jews in Kraków [on account] that the Jews catch little children and draw blood from them for the Jews returning from camps.

“Pogrom którego nie było. Rzeszów 11–12 czerwca 1945. Fakty, hipotezy, dokumenty”. *Glaukopis* 11–12, 2008, pp. 92–97.

Letter 5: Kraków

Perhaps you've learned from newspapers what was on in Kraków on Nov. 8 1945. What the Hitlerite Jews were striving for, and what they did. They've been caught and now they are gone.

Letter 6: Okocim

I'm reporting to you the adventures in Kraków, *the Jews have tortured 17 Polish children to death* [and] all that came out as a 12-year-old girl fled with her arms and mouth broken, screaming and raising hell. *The Jewry started shooting at Polish soldiers* from the windows and you could not walk down [that] street. A few *Polish* soldiers were killed.

Letter 7: (only the soldier's name and his unit number are quoted):

The Jews have again killed many Polish children in Kraków and drunk their blood. *The Polish soldiers killed many Jews*, well, they were protected by NKVD.

These statements can be categorized, in terms of the phraseology, as religious or national. They clearly demonstrate that *the discourse field at the time was shifting from strictly religious areas into one of national connotations*.

Only Letter 2 can be classified as a religious statement that adduces the Jewish-Catholic dichotomy. The other examples see the conflict in national terms:

- Letter 1: 'Jews'/'Polish children';
- Letter 3: 'Jews'/'Polish children'; 'Jews'/'Polish and Soviet army';
- Letter 6: 'Jews'/'Polish children'; 'Jewry'/'Polish soldiers' (twice);
- Letter 7: 'Jews'/'Polish children'; 'Jews'/'Polish soldiers'.

Elsewhere, the description of the victims ('little children') bears no trace of any precise mention of national identification (Letters 4, 5). The other blood-libel lexical elements known from the religious discourse, such as 'to get blood from'/'letting blood'/'barrels of blood'/'cut veins on the arm'/'the Jews have tortured to death'/'synagogue cellar' remained unaltered.

Notably, the *motif of revenge/punishment* appears in all the examples but one:

- Letter 1: '[the Poles] beat the Jews' and 'smashed their stalls';
- Letter 2: 'the Jews put up a struggle'; 'the army (no specification which army) stepped in';
- Letter 3: 'the Polish and Soviet army are handling the matter';
- Letter 5: 'they have already been caught and now they are gone';
- Letter 6: allusion to the armed defense of Jews against an attack of 'Polish soldiers';
- Letter 7: 'Polish soldiers killed many Jews, well, they were protected by NKVD'.

The blood libel pattern includes the motif of revenge/punishment of the Jews in every narrative that might be assigned to the blood libel category. As I have mentioned, the basic pattern of blood libel can be reduced to the sequence of four storyline functions:

Villainy – Struggle – Victory/Exposure of the Villain – Punishment.

All the plots referred to in the letters are built, first of all, upon the belief – so characteristic of the blood libels – that Jews kidnap children ‘to obtain blood.’ Second, they are based upon the blood libel scheme.²⁴

Letter 1 clearly displays the writer’s expectation that the situation will develop in line with the classic blood libel. It also features details characteristic of the genre, such as ‘the Villain’s trickery’ and ‘the exposure of the Villain.’ The former is known from the popular story about Baba Yaga, where the children are lured with gingerbread.²⁵ The narrative about Simon of Trident (†1475), as reported by Rev. Piotr Skarga, offers another example:

[Tobias the Jew] gave him some money and berries and other childish dainties, so the child went silent, until he came up to Samuel’s door and pushed the child inside.²⁶

In Letter 1, this segment of the narrative appears as

tricking them into carrying their suitcases to the synagogue. They would pay them 100 zł [złoty] each, and you know that children are greedy, especially boys.

In blood libel narratives, the villain is often discovered thanks to miraculous lights, portents such as a bleeding wall,²⁷ or when a victim’s voice is heard coming

24 It shows in the relief expressed by the author of Letter 2: “Now it turns out that it’s really true.”; “Nobody, the press included, will deny now that the *yevreys* did those things.”

25 Alina Cała presents a contamination of the two fables: “Initially, [he] was kept in a cellar, fed with nuts, and then put into a barrel and tortured.” Cała, Alina: *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego: Warsaw 2005, p. 48.

26 Skarga, Piotr: *Zywoty Świętych Starego y Nowego Zakonu, na każdy dzień przez cały rok*. A. Piotrkowczyk: Kraków 1610, p. 262, for March 30 (24): “Męczeństwo pacholęcia Szymona Trydenckiego od Żydów umęczonego pisane od Doktora Jana Maciejja Tybaryna do Senatu Brygji”. In Propp, the function is marked η¹.

27 See narrative 40M by Rudolf of Schlettstadt in my book *Legends o krwi*: As the Jews were piercing the abducted host, “it sounded as if a small boy emitted a wail.” The recurrence of this sound attracts local Christians to the place and they discover that the sacrament has been desecrated. See the bleeding wall motif in a Paolo Ucello painting – the praedella of the Corpus Christi Order altar, Galleria Nazionale della Marche, Palazzo Ducale.

from a cellar. In the examples above, a brave boy manages to flee the synagogue and alert the police. In the example of letter 2, a boy with less foresight, the fourteen-year-old with ‘cut veins on his arm’ is mentioned, just as Letter 6 offers, instead of a boy, ‘a twelve-year-old girl, [who] fled with her arms and mouth broken, screaming.’

In a religious blood libel, each of the adversaries – the kidnapped Hero and the kidnapper Villain – have helpers. They appear as the Christian and Jewish collectives, which provide individual assistance. They likewise appear in many of the examples provided:

- The Villain’s (i.e. the Jews’) Helper is NKVD (Letter 6);
- The Hero’s (i.e. the ‘Polish childrens’) Helper is the ‘Polish Army’ (Letters 3, 6, 7) and the ‘militia’ (Letter 1).

Often the army appears as an arm of the people administering justice. This reflects the social sentiments of the first postwar months when even a Catholic periodical such as *Rycerz Niepokalanej* in an article entitled ‘The Polish Army: A Pearl among Military Forces!’ described the army as ‘our own’ and ‘longed-for.’²⁸

A morphological version of the blood libel,²⁹ a modernization of the classical form, can be seen in Letter 5. In the classic legend, the blood of Christian children is used to make *matzah* for Passover. In the modern version, the blood of Christian children becomes less magical. It is no longer necessary for a religious rite but rather a medical procedure and presented as a transfusion. (The idea that Jews might need transfusions of Christian blood for medical reasons may have originated in popular conceptions about blood types that circulated during the early postwar years. The Jewish-Polish microbiologist Ludwik Hirszfild played a major role in their discovery.)³⁰ In his notes from 1946, Hugo Steinhaus recalled what he had heard from a professor who had just returned from Kraków:

28 *Rycerz Niepokalanej* 1, 1946, p. 10; after: Zaremba, “Mit mordu rytualnego”, p. 106.

29 See Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi*, p. 446.

30 Ludwik Hirszfild (1884–1954), physician, microbiologist, immunologist, director of the State Institute of Hygiene in Warsaw. From 1907 to 1911, he worked at the Institute for Cancer Research in Heidelberg, Germany, where together with the German physician E. van Dungern he laid the foundations of the theory of blood groups, discovered blood group inheritance mechanisms, and introduced a marking system for them.

[S]ome of the so-called intelligentsia believe in an modernized ritual murder with which they explain the Kielce incidents; as is known, transfusion (invented by Hirszfeld, a Jew) of a child's blood is needed to rescue the emaciated Jews from Russia.³¹

The morphological version of the legend seems to be a consequence of the replacement of the religious discourse with a national discourse. Just like the so-called sausage version,³² it flourished in the times of shortage and hunger soon after the war.

I would like to point out one more wandering thread (*Wandersagen*): Letter 6 mentions 'Jews shooting out of the windows' at Polish soldiers in the street. This situation, where shooting is sometimes replaced by pouring boiling water or hot vinegar on the victims, has been in circulation in Poland at least since 1939.³³ The topos reappears in the justifications given for the Kraków and Kielce

31 Steinhaus, Hugo: *Wspomnienia i zapiski*. Zgorzelska, Aleksandra (ed.) Aneks: London 1992, p. 354.

32 On the day the pogrom in Kielce took place, a rumor was circulating about the disappearance of a boy, who was subsequently found in Ostrów Wielkopolski. "The boy was allegedly killed by some Ukrainian who was said to export the meat or make sausages of it. Crowds of people started gathering in one of the streets. [...] The rumors were growing increasingly fantastic, namely, that there were four, eight, or even twenty-four of those boys. One woman, who had not been apprehended and her account was not verified, said that she had seen fourteen little heads of children and the meat had been exported by the ukrainians [*sic*], or possibly, the soviets [*sic*] to make sausages, while the blood was drunk by the Jews."; "Sprawozdanie grupy trzech towarzyszy wyslanych przez Komitet Wojewódzki do Kalisza 10/7 dla przeciwdziałania ewentualnym wystąpieniom antysemitycznym", *Archive of New Records (AAN)*, Bolesław Bierut – the archive, 254/III-6, p. 77; after: Zaremba, "Mit mordu rytualnego", p. 118. Also in "Plotki o kielbasach z mięsa ludzkiego". *Dziennik Powszechny* 22.3.1945, a Radom and Kielce newspaper; after: Zaremba, "Mit mordu rytualnego", p. 109. Other testimonies date to late August 1946: in Przemyśl, the police recorded that the brother of a certain girl had reported on "Jews who kidnapped her to get meat, and he will murder the Jews for it." Zaremba, "Mit mordu rytualnego", p. 118. See also: AAN, KC PPR section, 295/VII-53, p. 35, after: Olejnik, Leszek: *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego: Łódź 2003, p. 388.

33 See: Turek, Menachem: *Życie i zagłada Tykocina w czasie okupacji hitlerowskiej*, *Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (AŻIH)* 301/1971. This author describes the "wild rumors", in circulation in 1939, "whereby according to an old tale, the Jews in Grodno and other places poured boiling water on the heads of Polish soldiers." Also, see an account of the so-called railway operation of 1948(?): "As we were on our way back, having crossed the border to the Polish side, can't remember the locality [']s name], our transport was stopped in a forest. Initially, we didn't know the reason why. Maybe,

pogroms, as well as in the so-called railway operation – i.e. hunting for Jews on trains, which took place in 1945–1946.

Elitist Discourse: The Clergy and the Hierarchs

That the belief in the reality of blood-oriented murders was shared by some of the lower-ranking clergy³⁴ is obvious from the report regarding the pogrom of July 4, 1946, which the Rev. Roman Zelek, canon and rector of the cathedral in Kielce, wrote for the Diocesan Curia. The relevant passage reads as follows:

Błaszczyk, Henryk, son of Walenty, aged 9, living at his father's house in Kielce, 6 Podwalna St, was hired on July 1, around 11:00 am, by one gentleman to carry a suitcase to the house at 7 Planty Street, where Jews only were the residents. Having arrived at that house, the aforesaid boy was offered some beverage, after which he fell asleep and woke up on July 3, around the evening, in a cellar. With the help of Jewish children playing in front of the house, he got out of the cellar and returned to his father.³⁵

This story is a typical beginning of the blood libel legend, analogical to the one reported in the letters discussed above. Little Henryk was as lucky as the brave boy in Letter 1 who escaped the clutches of Jews, and even luckier than those children who had fled wounded. The motive of the suitcase used to trick the boy

to shoot us off? Soldiers came up to us, a Lieutenant, or maybe Second-Lieutenant, can't remember exactly, he came up just by our wagon and asked if there are any Jews among us. As he heard that no there aren't, he only then took his cap off and shows [= showed] his head. For he says that if they, Jews, were in a separate wagon, then we [= the soldiers] would order that wagon of theirs to be disconnected, and we would destroy all of them. Because, says he, ladies and gentlemen, have a look. Then he took his cap off again. As we were in Gdansk in 1939, we were walking down the streets, the Jews poured hot vinegar onto our heads out of the windows." Genowefa Małczyńska's account in Marciniak, Edward: *Jedwabne w oczach świadków*. Wydawnictwo Duszpasterstwa Rolników: Włocławek 2001, p. 69. Also, see Steinhaus, *Wspomnienia i zapiski*, p. 272.

34 Members of monastic orders were also said to have believed in the blood libel; see "Raport dekadowy za okres od 7 VII do 17 VII, MBUP w Częstochowie", AIPN in Katowice, b. 203, in: Zaremba, "Mit mordu rytualnego", p. 127 (footnote 143).

35 "Raport o zajściach kieleckich w dn. 4/07/1946" ["Report on Kielce incidents of 4/07/1946"], signed by the Rev. Roman Zelek, 1946, "Materiały zarekwirowane przez UB podczas rewizji w Katedrze Kieleckiej w dn. 1/1/1952" ["Materials requisitioned by the Security Office (UB) during the search at the Kielce Cathedral on January 11, 1952"], after: Cała, Alina / Datner-Śpiewak, Helena (eds.): *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce 1944–1968. Teksty źródłowe*. Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: Warsaw 1997, pp. 53–55.

reappears (the villain's deceit), reinforced by the figure of magic potion, which sent the boy into a two-day slumber.

Did high-ranking officials in the Church really believe, in the first years after the war, that Jews killed for blood? I will answer by comparing statements made by two bishops. One of them is a private letter from 1998³⁶ written by Bishop Wacław Świerzawski of Sandomierz in response to a written inquiry regarding the display of paintings depicting a putative Jewish ritual murder at the Sandomierz Cathedral. The bishop first asserted that 'there is a hypothesis among those inquiring into this issue that there once existed a sect in Judaism whose followers, based on Talmud teaching, committed the ritual murder crime as charged against them.' He then wondered 'whether this issue will ever be clarified.' Subsequently, he added that 'the Jewish nation as a whole must certainly not be accused of such crimes.' Bishop Świerzawski in fact echoed the position voiced on July 17, 1946 by Stefan Wyszyński, then bishop of Lublin, who mentioned 'old and new Jewish books' that had been produced at the infamous blood libel trial of Menachem Mendel Beilis in Kiev in 1911. On the strength of the evidence contained in those books, he said, 'the blood issue has not been sorted out as yet.'³⁷

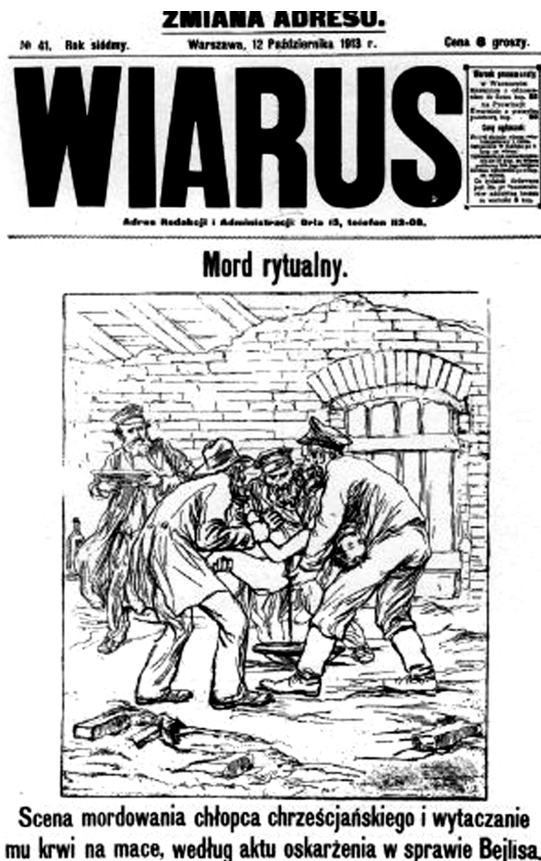
But he also, without realizing it, rehearsed a much older contention that had appeared 152 years earlier in a weekly newspaper, *Przyjaciel Ludu*. It reported that a starving mother of several children had consented to hand over one of her children to a Jew who had been badgering her to do so. ('The deed in my story is factual,' the weekly's correspondent maintained.) The Jew was subsequently seen entering 'the town of Dąbrowa [Tarnowska] with a big basket. After that, the trail of the child went cold.' The mother was tried and she blamed the Jew.

36 Bishop's letter from 6 April 1998 to Prof. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, Ph.D., kindly made available to me by the recipient.

37 This statement is documented in various sources – see, for example, "Odpis sprawozdania z audjencji u biskupa Stefana Wyszyńskiego ordynariusza lubelskiego delegacji Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydów w Lublinie" from October 10, 1953, signed by M. Szyldkraut and S. Służny (verified against the original version by Grzegorz Smolar); in: Meducki, *Wydarzenia kieleckie II*, pp. 116–117. Also, see a note from seven years earlier, "Sprawozdanie członków delegacji WKŻP w Lublinie z audjencji u bp. Stefana Wyszyńskiego", Lublin, July 17, 1946; after Żaryn, Jan: "Hierarchia Kościoła Katolickiego wobec relacji polsko-żydowskich w latach 1945–1947. In: Żaryn, Jan / Kamiński, Łukasz (eds.): *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Kielce 2006, p. 96: "In the discussion on inciting the mob, the false legend about the necessity to use Christian blood for matzos, the Rev. Bishop explains that even as recently as at the Beilis trial, many old and new Jewish books had been collected in which the blood issue has not been sorted out as yet."

The court cleared both of them of all charges. Yet the news of the perpetrated crime has reverberated throughout Jewry. The belief that Jews need Christian blood for certain rituals is common among our people.'

Fig. 4: The cover of a biweekly magazine *Wiarus*, issue 41/1913, Warsaw (the caption above reads: 'Ritual Murder.' Below: 'The scene depicts the murder of a Christian boy and the drawing of his blood to make matzah, according to the Beilis case indictment.')



The article in *Przyjaciel Ludu* offered more information:

In Ostroróg, Volhynia, a barrel studded with blood-covered nails is on display in the cathedral. They have preserved this proof of an atrocious superstition, together with an account of the whole event and the official files describing the crime and its culprits. *The*

Jewish religion should nowise be inculpated for such a barbaric crime, but it is certain that there was a sect of ardent fanatics amongst them, thirsting for those savage offerings.³⁸

The position expressed by *Przyjaciel Ludu*'s correspondent in the year 1846 and echoed one-and-a-half century later by Bishop Świerzawski is best referred to as the 'topos of an ardent sect of fanatics.'³⁹ Bishop Świerzawski's letter, along with subsequent statements made by Catholic Church officials in the Sandomierz area in 2005,⁴⁰ testifies to the motive's functionality in the popular worldview of Polish Catholics in provincial areas.

The issue of whether the postwar clergymen really gave credence to the blood libel came up again in the polemic surrounding Gross's book *Fear*, in which he discussed antisemitism and violence against Jews in the postwar Poland. The question seems moot given that the works of Rev. Piotr Skarga⁴¹ were required reading for Polish clergymen-in-training in the 1930s and 1940s. Skarga's *Lives of the Saints* offers a full account of the torture of Simon of Trident. It was last reissued – without commentary – by the Jesuit order in Kraków in 1933. So instead of asking whether Polish bishops in 1945–1946 could believe that Jewish ritual murders actually occurred, the question should rather be whether they could possibly think otherwise. The durability of the worldview of the Polish Church in the postwar period becomes apparent from a reading of works published after the war by a number of bishops,⁴² and by closely examining the associates of successive primates.⁴³

38 Leon Haber's article in *Przyjaciel Ludu* 20, 1846, p. 159; quoted after: Kolberg, Oskar: *Lud. Jego zwyczaje, sposób życia, mowa, przysłowia, obrzędy, gusła, zabawy, pieśni, muzyka, tańce. Tom 48: Tarnowskie-Rzeszowskie*. Instytut im. Oskara Kolberga: Wrocław-Poznań 1961, pp. 17–18.

39 Tokarska-Bakir, *Legends o krwi*, pp. 72, 73, 85, 86, etc. For 19th century use of this motive, see: Wodziński, Marcin: *Oświecenie żydowskie w Królestwie Polskim wobec chasydyzmu. Dzieje pewnej idei*. Cyklady: Warsaw 2003, pp. 77, 76, 149–151, 179–181, 262.

40 Tokarska-Bakir, *Legends o krwi*, p. 424.

41 The ritual murder scenario included in Skarga's *Żywy Świątych*, based on the life of St. Simon of Trent (†1495), and copied from Tabarin, a doctor who examined little Simon's corpse, first appeared in Polish in the first edition of *Żywy Świątych* (1579) and most recently, to date, in Skarga, Piotr: *Żywy Świątych Starego y Nowego Zakonu na każdy dzień przez cały rok*. Wydawnictwo Księży Jezuitów: Kraków 1933.

42 Radoński, Karol: *Święci i błogosławieni Kościoła Katolickiego. Encyklopedia hagiograficzna*. Księgarnia św. Wojciecha: Poznań 1947; therein, see e.g. the life of Werner of Oberwesel, Simon of Trent, etc.

43 See e.g. one of the most important individuals in Bishop Wyszyński's entourage – the Rev. Józef Kruszyński, postwar Rector of the Catholic University in Lublin. The

Soldiers and Officers of the Underground

Less obvious than the question about the clergy seems to be the question whether the blood libel could have been given credence by soldiers and officers in the WiN (Freedom and Independence) militia⁴⁴, or other covert groups that put out bulletins, leaflets, and reports for the government-in-exile in London. My research shows that texts published by WiN display particularly strong anti-semitism.⁴⁵ In publications put out by this group, the idea of a Jewish plot is an obsession, as in the following piece:

The primary goal of the Jewish World Government with its seat in Palestine is to create a single worldwide state under their [the Jews'] hegemony. This government represents the capitalist West and the Communist East – all in order to implement the common postulates of Jewish policy. To subdue the world is their shared objective. Certain circles

following is a selection of his pre-war works: *Żydzi i kwestia żydowska*. Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1920; *Dążenia żydów w dobie obecnej*. Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1921; *Polityka żydowska*. Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1921; *Żargon żydowski*. Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1921; *O narodowy język żydów*. Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1921; *Żydzi a Polska*. Drukarnia Robotników Chrześcijańskich T.A.: Poznań 1921; *Religia żydów współczesnych*. Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1923; *Dlaczego występuję przeciwko Żydom?*. Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1923; *Rola światowa żydostwa*. Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1923; *Niebezpieczeństwo żydowskie*. Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1923); *Antysemityzm, antyjudajizm, antygoizm*. Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1924; *Żydzi a świat chrześcijański*. (Księgarnia Powszechna i Drukarnia Diecezjalna: Włocławek 1924; *Stanisław Staszic a kwestia żydowska*. Drukarnia Udziałowa: Lublin 1925; *Talmud co zawiera i czego naucza*. Drukarnia Udziałowa: Lublin 1925. Also, see: Libionka, Dariusz: “Księdza Kruszyńskiego spojrzenie na Zagładę”. *Gazeta Wyborcza Lublin* 26.1.2008; id.: “Obcy, wrodzy, niebezpieczni. Obraz Żydów i ‘kwestii żydowskiej’ w prasie inteligencji katolickiej lat 1930. w Polsce”. *Kwartalnik Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 3, 2002, pp. 318–338.

44 See: Tokarska-Bakir Joanna, *The Polish underground organization ‘Wolność i Niezawisłość’ and anti-Jewish pogroms, 1945–6*, “Patterns of Prejudice”, 2: 2017, 111–136.

45 On antisemitic documents of WiN origin, see Kwiek, Julian: “‘Ogień’ wobec mniejszości narodowych.” In Kowalski, Robert (ed.): *Wokół legendy ‘Ognia’. Opór przeciw zniewoleniu. Polska-Malopolska-Podhale 1945–1956*. Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne: Nowy Targ 2008, p. 244. Also Kwiek, *Żydzi, Łemkowie, Słowacy*, op.cit.

of Jewish government support the revolutionary efforts of Communist Jewry, aiming to ensure that the privileged positions in those political systems would be held by Jews.⁴⁶

These writings routinely adduce the religious-national figure of the bloodsucker and often evince sincere belief in ritual murder. Except for the leaflets, most of the passages quoted below are taken from reports written by the WiN Intelligence Brigades.⁴⁷ The first of them is identified as a “reconnaissance report of the Kraków-Rzeszów District of the Armed Forces Delegation for Poland.”⁴⁸ The topos of ‘an ardent sect of fanatics’ emerges in these texts, proving all the more interesting as it is associated with Hassidism.⁴⁹

The blood libel’s shift from the religious to the national sphere is more evident in reports and orders from the underground. Religious terminology such as reference to Christian or Catholic children is entirely absent, and its place is taken by a national vocabulary that speaks of Polish children.⁵⁰ Even when religious language is used – with terms such as rabbi, Hasidim, and ritual murder – they have national associations, as in the first passage below. (The relevant items in the texts below are placed in boldface.)

Text 1

[Reconnaissance Report by the Armed Forces Delegation for Poland (?)] Rzeszów
Ten days ago, a hideous Jewish crime was uncovered in the Rzeszów area, committed against sixteen **Polish children** who were ritually killed to provide blood for use in Hasidic practices. The crime provoked a strong reaction in the community, so a

46 State Archive in Kraków, section *Zrzeszenie Wolność i Niezawisłość*, 9, b. 72: *Mniejszości narodowe*; after: Kwiek, *Żydzi, Łemkowie, Słowacy*, pp. 243–257.

47 Krzysztof Kaczmarek remarks that the name referred to the political unit (the so-called Defense) of the pre-war State Police. During the occupation, the Brigades “were part of the Military Departments’ Security Squads structure, affiliated with ZWZ-AK (Union of Armed Struggle/Home Army) Districts. Until the end of 1944, Rzeszów Intelligence Brigades reported to the ZWZ-AK District headquarters and were thereafter subordinated to NIE and, from May 1945 on, to the Armed Forces Delegation. From September 1945, they formed a parallel and independent intelligence network associated with WiN,” see Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 295 (footnote 20). See also Nawrocki, Zbigniew: “Brygady Wywiadowcze (1940–1946) – zarys problematyki”. *Zeszyty Historyczne WIN-u* 18, 2002, pp. 33–48; id.: *Zamiast wolności. UB na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1944–1949*. Instytut Europejskich Studiów Społecznych: Rzeszów 1998, pp. 140–146.

48 Kaczmarek, “Pogrom, którego nie było”, p. 104.

49 For more on the Chasidim being associated with blood libels in the 19th century, see Wodziński, *Oświecenie żydowskie*, p. 150.

50 The religious vocabulary has survived, however, in the testimonies and reports of Jews.

considerable number of Jews have fled to Tarnów, giving excuses such as drawing the blood for transfusion (whereas a flask of blood was found during the search).⁵¹

Text 2

[Intelligence Brigades Report, autumn 1945] In a **Jewish rabbi's cellar** at Tannenbauma St. [in Rzeszów], the rabbi was caught in blood-stained overalls next to a dead girl hanging upside-down. A passing militia patrol was alerted and discovered other body parts belonging to sixteen individuals. The rabbi, after they put the screws on him, broke and admitted that these were the remains of sixteen children. However, he claimed that those were not ritual murders, but that the **Jewish nation** had incurred great losses and many of its most outstanding individuals must be fed with human blood as well, which is acquired in this way. Having learned of the above incident, people attacked the **Jews**, carrying out a pogrom. Meanwhile, NKVD and UB [Security Office] intervened. It [apparently, both organizations] came to the Jews' defense.⁵²

Text 3

[A WiN report, autumn 1945:] "On May 11 [1945], in a **Jewish cellar** in Rzeszów, on Tannenbauma Street, a rabbi was caught in a blood-stained overall by a dead girl hanging upside down (Bronisława Mendoń, **daughter of a Polish worker** who had been hiding **Jews** from the Germans at his house for 3 years).⁵³ The MO [Citizens' Militia] patrol passing by discovered other body parts belonging to 16 individuals. After they put the screws on him, the rabbi broke and admitted that those were the remains of 16 children. However, he claimed that those were not ritual murders, but the **Jewish nation** had incurred great losses and many of its most outstanding individuals had to be supported with human blood! The blood is acquired in this very

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- 51 Out of this interesting collection of reports (dated 1945–1946), this particular document is the only one that contains the mention of a ritual murder: "Różne raporty i sprawozdania za okres maj-lipiec 1945", b. 109, University of Warsaw Library, Microfilm Reading Room, mkfm 8614, b. 109. Krzysztof Kaczmarek, who also quotes this text, believes that it is a "Kraków-Rzeszów [?] District of the Armed Forces Delegation for Poland Reconnaissance Report", see Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 104.
- 52 "Załącznik do raportu Okręgu Rzeszowskiego Brygad Wywiadowczych", 15 (?) September 1945, AIPN Rzeszów, 122/312, b. 218; in: Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 142, doc. 33. WiN documents include a set of lexically similar texts, which contain similar data (e.g. sixteen victims) and elaborate on this variant.
- 53 Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 294: "This information was not confirmed by Franciszek Mendoń, son of Stanisław, in his conversation with the author. He admitted, though, that the Jews were assisted by his uncle, Stanisław's brother Władysław Mendoń, residing in Słowackiego St. Cf. AIPN, 944/64, The file of the case against Ł. Ciepłiński et al. (4th Central Board [ZG] of WiN), 'Sprawozdanie z zajęć antyżydowskich w Rzeszowie z dnia 11/6/1945', p. 459; oral testimony by Franciszek Mendoń from April 3, 2008."

way! Having learned of the above incident, people attacked the **Jews**, beating them. Meanwhile, NKVD and UB interfered. They protected the Jews [...] ⁵⁴

Text 4

[Lublin, a leaflet marked 'Polish Anti-Communist Military Organization', April 1945:] **Jews**, you have lived through the period of Hitler's persecution. Each of you has survived, escaped with your life thanks solely to **the Poles**. Now that the Red Army has arrived, you have come out of your hideouts only to haunt the **real Poles**, your saviors. You are exposing those who have held out their hand to you in the most critical hours. **Jews!** You have turned out to be the enemies of **Poles**.⁵⁵

Text 5

[Reconnaissance Brigades, June 26, 1945(?):] Antisemitic sentiments caused by the **Jews** cooperating **with the Soviets** and the Lublin Government, instigated by a ritual murder, have grown to the dimension of riots.⁵⁶

Text 6

[Kraków, an anonymous appeal issued after the pogrom of August 1945:]
PPS [= Polish Socialist Party]: the army and lackeys of Jews!
Jews the murderers – down with you!
PPS: organizes leeches of **Polish blood!**
PPS: creates a corps for the protection of Jews!
We shall avenge the murderers of **Polish children!**
PPS: the lackeys of Jews!⁵⁷

Text 7

[Kraków, an anonymous leaflet issued after the pogrom of August 1945:] The Jews, our eternal enemy, have murdered **Polish children** at the synagogue in Miodowa Street. How many children have died? This is not known. After Rzeszów and Tarnów,

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- 54 "Załącznik do sprawozdania Zrzeszenia WiN na temat zająć antyżydowskich w Rzeszowie", autumn 1945; after: Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 143 (doc. 34). Another lexically similar document is the WiN Association paper on the PPR ethnic policy; after: Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 162 (doc. 43, second half of 1946).
- 55 Quoted after: Gutman, Yisrael / Krakowski, Shmuel: *Unequal Victims. Poles and Jews during World War Two*. Holocaust Library: New York 1986; Kopciowski, Adam: "Zajęcia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie w pierwszych latach po drugiej wojnie światowej". *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały* 3, 2007, p. 183 (footnote 20).
- 56 Report of the Intelligence Brigades, Rzeszów District, June 6, 1946; after: Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 109 (doc. 19).
- 57 Anonymous leaflet disseminated in Kraków after the anti-Jewish incidents of August 11, 1945; Central Military Archive (CAW), ref. no. 767/322, p. 96; after: Cichopek, Anna: *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945 r.* Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: Warsaw 2000, p. 227 (doc. 59).

Kraków has become the scene of Jewish murderers. The facts speak for themselves. (...) Given the facts from Tarnów and Rzeszów, the murder is comprehensible and is synonymous to the **Jewish nation's** attitude to anything we hold dear. And so, Poles – the German is our enemy, the same goes for the Bolshevik, and the **Jew** is the third one. And now the street incidents are clear to us, where the Bolsheviks were keeping the Jews under 'their protective wings', smacking the Poles in their faces and shooting at the Nation which stood up for the Polish officer[s]. There is no room in Poland for the German, the Bolshevik and the Jew. **POLAND to THE POLES.**⁵⁸

Text 8

[Kraków, 1945, leaflet dated August 12, 1945, signed "Odwet" O.Z.N. {*Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*, Camp of National Unity}, fragment:] "Beat the Jews! For the **Polish children** murdered at the synagogue in Starowiślna St."⁵⁹

Text 9

[Lublin, leaflet signed 'Cień' {Thorn}, 1945(?):] **Jews!** The time of your wellbeing has come to an end, partly when the Germans were murdering you on a mass scale, the rest of the wrecks surviving from the pogrom will be done in by us. There is no room for you in **Poland**, your weapons will be of no use to you. You just wait a little more, and you will find out that these are no empty words. There were the Germans, and you were betraying the Poles; there are others [now] – and you're doing the same thing. Enough of your rule. Your place is either in the ground, or in Palestine.⁶⁰

Text 10

[Kraków province, an anonymous leaflet, 1945:] 60,000 *Jews* arrived in Łódź from Russia – those who in 1920 and '21 were pouring boiling water [on] and shooting at the *Polish army*. Beautiful factories, industrial facilities are being given to them, militia and a security service – the Polish NKVD – are being established. Our homeland's best sons are perishing in dungeons, while the bosses of those agencies are well paid by the Soviets and the international Jewry. (...) We have recently received a message that every Jewish woman giving birth to a son receives 25 thousand and for a daughter, 20 thousand from the Kachal [= Kahal], the Kachal receiving a subsidy from the Government, while we pay the taxes.⁶¹

58 Anonymous leaflet disseminated in Kraków after the anti-Jewish incidents of August 1945; Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, pp. 197–198 (doc. 49).

59 Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 93 (footnote 107), without identifying the Underground group.

60 The State Archive in Lublin, "Ulotki wydawane po wyzwoleniu" ['Leaflets issued after the liberation'], ref. no. 120, c. 20; in: Kopcowski, "Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie", p. 182 (footnote 17).

61 Anonymous leaflet disseminated in Kraków Region, concluding with the slogan: "Long live the Polish Government in London!!", Kraków, 1945; after: Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, pp. 232–233 (doc. 61).

Text 11

[Proclamation signed 'Ogień' to employees of the *Bezpieka* {secret service}, excerpts; italicized items contain major spelling errors in the original:] "DEATH TO THE SECRET SERVICE AND THE MONSTROUS JEWS!!!!!! Ask your own heart, how much harm, sufferings and *pain* you have *caused* to your brothers. Today *they are moaning* in gaols [to] which you have led [them] and gave them away into the butchers' hands. Remember all the mothers, wives and orphans who are pouring their *bitter* tears and crying to heaven for vengeance, so that the murderers may perish as quickly as possible, those who in a barbaric way abuse their brothers. But *who* is a greater murderer? The one who is torturing or the one who betrays and detains? Oh you *disloyal* son! Oh you wicked dog! Why are you shooting for peanuts your brother who is fighting for a better lot? Why are you abusing them like a wild beast? What are you serving, and for whom are you working? For the communist regime and the *Jew*!!!!!! *Shame* on you soldier of the conscription [orig., *chorowa* – an incomprehensible word] service that is called *bezpieka* [see above]. Raiding the villages of *real Poles*, in the first place you take the last slice of bread away from *Polish children* and steal whatever you can lay hands on. (...) *Polish Brothers!* The time has come for us to be ruthless and implacable. Every *Jew* (a leech [sucking] the *Polish blood*) will be killed) [.] PPR (paid *Russia's lackeys*). [...] This is the last time that we appeal to the people of Nowy Targ to improve and to persist in *the Polish spirit*. Do away with betrayal, your own gain, help us out and we shall free and liberate you.⁶²

These texts offer a dichotomous image of two mutually hostile, extremely ethnicized ideas, inscribed in the following oppositions:

- bloodsucker/victim
- Judeo-Communists/ Polish nation
- villain/hero
- villain's helper/hero's helper
- aggression/martyrdom
- strangeness/familiarity
- brutality/humaneness
- criminality/innocence
- ungratefulness/gratefulness
- theft/loss

62 Quoted from a facsimile copy published in: Kwiek, 'Ogień' wobec mniejszości narodowych, p. 257.

Bloodsucker/Victim: Literalization of Metaphors

The authors of WiN reports and the leaflets believed that Jews were growing stronger by imbibing the blood of Polish children. Text 2 outlines the modernized blood libel variant in more precise terms. It seems to refer not to a ritual murder but rather the extortion of blood needed as supplemental nourishment for recovering Jews. The rabbi who explains the situation serves as a mouthpiece for the WiN soldiers so that they can update the blood libel legend and render it more realistic. The text described in the footnote⁶³ renders the plot in the most neutral way. It refers to a girl who “died from the loss of blood taken for transfusion purposes.” The alleged Jewish perpetrators are described as ‘NKVD informers.’ The odium of such a “transfusion crime” is transferred here to police institutions: UB and NKVD and the Soviets. All these are depicted as accessory bloodsuckers, collectively the helpers of the villains. In the opinion of one author, the PPS and the army are also part of this group.

Astonishingly enough, the role of the hero’s helper features a Communist militia that has been alerted. The blood libel logic makes this act part of the victory/exposure of the villain, a role typically played in the older, religious version of the blood libel myth by shepherd boys or pious Christians. Another report from the underground states that⁶⁴ the patrol that discovered the crime was abducted.

63 Brochure *Dość kręctw sowieckich*: “[t]his year on June 6 in Rzeszów, where the remains of 9-year-old Bronisława Medoń have been found. She died as a result of loss of blood that had been taken for transfusion purposes.” The text then goes on to inform that those responsible for the Rzeszów murder have been captured. They were allegedly four NKVD informers – Jews, who were subsequently released after a few days upon request from the NKVD. “And so the murder, even if not committed upon request from the NKVD, was definitely approved by NKVD,” AAN, KC PPR, 295/VII-203, s. 57; after: Kwiek, Julian: “Wydarzenia antyżydowskie 11 sierpnia 1945 w Krakowie”. *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 1 (193), 2000, pp. 83–5. I would like to thank Prof. Julian Kwiek for giving me access to his articles and for his help with the bibliography.

64 See the Intelligence Brigades report: “The whole MO [Citizens’ Militia] patrol that had carried out the initial investigation were detained and disappeared without trace. Those who had witnessed the cellar incident were also arrested. The rabbi himself was detained at the Rzeszów UB prison, where he openly confessed to the murder, both to fellow Polish political prisoners and the UB officers. A few days later, following orders from the Ministry of Security, he was transferred from the Rzeszów prison and the case was closed.”; “Sprawozdanie z zajęć antyżydowskich w Rzeszowie z dnia 11/6/1945”, AIPN, 459, pp. 944/64; in: Kaczmarski, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 302 (footnote 80). This rumor about the vanished patrol was taken up by certain historians; finally, however, based on the recovered investigation files, it was shown to be false. See *ibid.*:

The structure of the myth has a place for such an event in its scheme. For example, in the Poznań Host legend (1399), it corresponds to the shepherd being imprisoned in the municipal dungeons after discovering the Jews' crime.⁶⁵ The fact that the underground reports refer to militiamen in a positive way indicates that, unlike UB or NKVD, which defended the Jews, the underground did not view the authorities personified by the militiamen as completely evil or alien. The popular dichotomy between the Polish and Soviet armies, referred to in private letters, is replaced in leaflets and military reports by the militiamen versus UB/NKVD.

All convey a modernized version of the blood libel. What they share in emotion is a conviction that the biological survival of the Polish nation is under threat. The danger is expressed by the figure of the kidnapped and murdered child, which in the blood libel legend is a synecdoche of the national body. The killing of a child is an assault on the group's vital interests. The bleeding of victims to death is a step toward the literalization of the bloodsucker, and catalyzes violence against the perpetrators.⁶⁶ In cases in which the perpetrators are portrayed as leeches⁶⁷ or 'Jewish bedbugs',⁶⁸ the violence is symbolic. The situation changes in the moment a real Jew appears in a specified 'Jewish rabbi's cellar,'

"In the personal files of the militiamen known to have supervised or participated in the searches and arrests of the Jews (Jan Grzeszek, Maria Bzura, Franciszek Kaszuba, Jan Łukasz, Marcin Opiekun, Jan Siatko, Władysław Niedzielski, Zygmunt Stachura), there is no information whatsoever about them being detained or discharged from service in connection with this matter. Likewise, there is nothing to confirm the information that Rabbi Thorn was arrested by UB"

65 Narration 59M by the Rev. Treter, in Tokarska-Bakir, *Legends o krwi*, p. 312. This motive reappears in all the conspiracy theories about pogroms. E.g. a certain Antoni Nijaki, thirteen years old, was said to have disappeared in Kraków; he had shouted that the Jews wanted to kill him. See WiN document "Sprawozdanie z antysemickich zajęć w Krakowie", State Archives in Kraków (APKr), WiN section, 31, pp. 43–432; after: Kwiek, *Wydarzenia antyżydowskie*, p. 83. Kwiek reports that Antoni Nijaki was released from prison on October 22, 1945 (*ibid.*, footnote 15).

66 See Segal, Hanna / Dybeł, Paweł (transl.): *Marzenie senne. Wyobraźnia i sztuka*. Universitas: Kraków 2000. The process of literalization, or symbolic equation in Hanna Segal's terms, consists of a pathological "equation (identification) of a symbol with the object it represents. As a result of this process, a real object with a (hidden) symbolic meaning ceases to be recognized by the individual as something it actually is [...], but it literally transforms into what it symbolizes," Kossowski, Zbigniew: "Freud i Polityka". *Wysokie Obcasy / Gazeta Wyborcza* 7.2.2004 (interview with Hanna Segal).

67 See Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda*, p. 52: "the suckers of our blood."

68 Kwiek, *Żydzi, Lemkowie, Słowacy*, p. 74.

wearing ‘a blood-stained overall, next to a dead girl hanging upside-down.’⁶⁹ We even learn the rabbi’s alleged name: Leib Thorn.⁷⁰

Polish versions of the blood libel myth often included a barrel studded with spikes as the tool with which the victims were bled to death (as shown in one of the Sandomierz Cathedral paintings by Charles de Prévot). The image of a barrel was at times replaced by the “ritual slaughter” topos, with the practice of Jewish *rzezaks* (ritual slaughterers/circumcisers) fresh in the memories of their Polish neighbors. In the interwar period (1918–1939), the practice of ritual slaughter fascinated domestic “experts” on Jewish matters.⁷¹ With this practice, the blood libel was modernized and shifted from the religious to the national sphere.⁷² Confirmation of this thesis can be found in the phraseology used by the interwar religious press, where references to the ‘slaughter of the Polish Nation’ occur.⁷³ Such “slaughter” is described in three shocking reports of underground soldiers. The image of Bronia Mendoń being tortured by ‘a rabbi wearing a blood-stained overall’ serves as a symbol of the slaughter of the Polish nation underway as the

69 This description must have been a strong folkloristic topos as it was recorded as recently as in 2005 during ethnographic fieldwork in Sandomierz Land. It occurred in a so-called memorate, that is, a story told from memory by a person relating a personal experience – in this case a person who, during the visit to a Jewish home, saw a “Pole in a wardrobe,” hanging upside down.

70 For a short biography of Rabbi Leib Thorn, who resided at 12 Tannenbauma St and was for some time a military chaplain in Warsaw, see Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 78. For more on Leib’s later days – a few days after the pogrom, he is said to have visited Rzeszów – see: Gross, Jan T.: *Fear: Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz*. Random House: New York 2006, pp. 79–82.

71 A measure of the extent of this obsession is the appearance of spontaneously formed citizens’ committees to address Jewish ritual slaughter (see e.g. “Protokół zebrania organizacyjnego przedstawicieli ludności chrześcijańskiej miasta-uzdrowiska Otwocka, odbytego 25 II 1936 roku w Otwocku w sprawie walki z rytualnym ubojem na terenie miasta i uzdrowiska Otwocka”, retrieved 22.3.2010, from <http://dziedzictwo.polska.pl/katalog/index,Zydzi,cid,1477.htm?sh=61>. See also: Trzeciak, Stanisław: *Ubój rytualny czy mechaniczny – Opinia rzeczoznawcy wypowiedziana na posiedzeniu komisji Administracyjno-Gospodarczej Sejmu Polskiego w dn. 5 marca 1936, pod przewodnictwem Pana Posła Kazimierza Duchy*. Publisher N/A: Warsaw 1936.

72 See e.g. an utterance recorded near Sandomierz in 2005 (Transcript 1349) regarding Charles de Prévot’s painting in the Sandomierz Cathedral: “[T]his particular ritual, connected with killing kosher animals, is shown here as regards the killing of a child.” Tokarska-Bakir, *Legends o krwi*.

73 Libionka, *Obcy, wrodzy*, p. 203.

result of an invasion of Judeo-Communists. The literal and metaphorical meanings tend to oscillate and incessantly replace each other.

How does the image of slaughter differ from the image of making children bleed to death in a barrel? The difference lies in the dehumanization of the victim. The dead girl becomes Poland,⁷⁴ which is depicted as an animal prepared for slaughter. A slight alteration in the use of symbols reinforces the desire for a completely real retaliation.⁷⁵

74 For the image of Poland as a woman/young girl, see e.g. Todorov, Tzvetan / Sawicka, Paula (transl.): "Skazani na heroizm". [‘Condemned to Heroism’] *Gazeta Wyborcza* 18.4.1998.

75 It is foreshadowed in an article from summer 1946, published in an underground magazine *Honor i Ojczyzna*: "The public opinion in the country has again been shaken by the terrible crime committed on Poles by people in uniforms. We emphasize: Jews on Poles, because there were decidedly racial overtones in the bestial murder, committed on helpless members of the former AK, among them one of the most talented painter of the young generation Kazimierz Markwart, whose father, by the way, was tortured to death by the Gestapo. The background to the case looks as follows: the Jews had received permission from the security authorities to "execute" more than a hundred Poles in retaliation for Kielce. The crime was committed in cells. People were being hanged on butcher hooks. [...] We categorically demand: that the matter of Radom and also other activities of Jews in Poland be discussed by elements responsible for the murderous aspect of the [Jewish? – K. K.] community in the community. Let the Jewish clergy take a stand, let scientists, artists and writers make a statement, just like the Poles have done regarding the Kielce matter. Let them speak and distance themselves from the thugs in uniforms. Otherwise we will be forced to blame all the Jews in Poland as a whole that is hostile to us for the committed crimes. We are not antisemites, but we put the interests of our own nation above all else," *Honor i Ojczyzna* 9–10, 1946; quoted after Kersten, Krystyna: *Polacy, Żydzi, komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939–1968*. Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza: Warsaw 1992, p. 131.

Table 2: *The bloodsucker: The migrating meaning of “slaughter of the Polish nation,” 1945/1946.*

Literal meaning	Metaphorical meaning	Literal meaning
Jew as ritual slaughterer, bleeding the animals to death	Slaughter of the Polish nation	Jew as murderer of Polish children, one victim being Bronia Mendoń from Rzeszów (see footnote 74)
Jew as bloodsucker from religious blood libel	Jew, offered a hideout by Poles, as tormentor of Polish children from whom he had been taking bread away for five years (see below)	Jew as murderer of Polish officers (Katyń)⁷⁶

Judeo-Communists/Polish Nation

The consciousness displayed by the authors of such reports and leaflets testifies to the success of an undertaking announced in an order issued by Mieczysław Liniański (whose *nom de guerre* was Mścisław), a leader of the post-AK underground movement: ‘We represent the entire Polish nation – we want to distinguish the Poles from the Soviets, ...to persuade this society that the whole nation is with us, with only Soviets and Jews remaining on the other [side].⁷⁷

The identification of Jews with Communism, commonplace in the leaflets, is expressed in the figure of Judeo-Communism/ists [Polish, *żydokomuna*].⁷⁸ This

76 See the report by militiaman Michał Kołacz, Rzeszów, June 12, 1945, the second day of the Rzeszów pogrom: “Around one in the afternoon, as I was crossing the market, I could hear a conversation about the murder that had been discovered, which went as follows: ‘See this, the woman says, [...] we were giving them food, we were hiding them, and in return, now they are murdering our children. And what about Katyń, the other one says, this is our poor children’s Katyń right here, tortured as they were for over five years. Ah, should my own kid have been killed like that, I’d scratch out those Hebes’ eyes, even the militia would be of no use to them,’” after: Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 70.

77 15 April 1945; after: Krajewski, Kazimierz / Łabuszewski, Tomasz: *Białostocki Okręg AK-AKO, VII 1944–VIII 1945*. Bellona/Volumen: Warsaw 1997, p. 145. Also, see Steinhilber, *Wspomnienia*, p. 312: “June 9, 1945. [...] I have learned that AK was ordered to treat PPR as *Volksdeutsch*.”

78 See Grabski, August: *Żydowski ruch kombatancki w Polsce w latach 1944–1949*. Trio: Warsaw 2002, p. 35ff. See id.: *Działalność komunistów wśród Żydów w Polsce (1944–1949)*. Trio: Warsaw 2004, p. 30ff. Michlic, Joanna: “Żydokomuna, Anti-Jewish Images and Political Tropes in Modern Poland”. *Jahrbuch des Simon Dubnow-Institut* 4, 2005,

essay approaches the *żydokomuna* category as a cliché, that is, a rhetorical figure that functions by masking a certain state of affairs, which is equivalent to forgery inasmuch as a certain state of affairs is being masked, knowing that revealing it would not lead to a choice corresponding to the intentions of the individual using the cliché.⁷⁹

The figure of Judeo-Communism masks the mass participation of ethnic Poles in the implementation of communism in Poland. The figure of the Judeo-Communist is founded upon intertwining Jews and Communism in such a manner as to make their simultaneous appearance inevitable. It purports to name a hidden order in the world, the true nature of Jews as well as of Communism. This process is an instance of mythification in the Barthesian sense of the term.⁸⁰ It is useful to several groups, as it:

- allows anti-Communists and/or antisemites to kill Jews as Communists;
- enables national Communists or nationals aspiring to pursue Communist careers to express their anger at Jewish Communists who have usurped Poles in positions of authority;
- directs the attention to Jews' aspirations for Communist posts, thus diverting it from Poles aspiring for the same.

The syllogism upon which the *Judeo-Communism* figure is founded – “since there are Jews among the Communists, all Communists are Jews” – made the possibility of both an ethnic Polish Communist and a non-Communist Jew inconceivable. The community whose opinion was expressed through the leaflets and reports considered them to be a background noise, off-category dirt,⁸¹ systemic error, a non-fact, and non-existent. Recognizing the validity of the term “Judeo-Communist” is only a step away from legitimizing the reverse slogan

pp. 303–329; id.: *Poland's Threatening Other. The Image of the Jew from 1888 to the Present*. University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln and London 2006.

79 Robin, Régine: “Badanie pól semantycznych: doświadczenia Ośrodka Leksykologii politycznej w Saint-Cloud”. In: Głowiński, Michał (ed.) / Arnold, Joanna et al. (transl.): *Język i społeczeństwo*. Czytelnik: Warsaw 1980, p. 295.

80 Roland Barthes defines mythification as a process whereby the position of nature and culture is shifted; the historical represents itself as the eternal, the constructed as the natural, and the casual as the necessary. See Benedyktowicz, Zbigniew et al.: “Antropologia kultury w Polsce – dziedzictwo, pojęcia inspiracje”. *Polska Sztuka Ludowa* 1, 1989, pp. 47–48.

81 Dirt in Mary Douglas' sense – see id.: *Purity and Danger*. Routledge and Kegan Paul: London 1967.

claiming “Communists are Jews.” This, in turn, is but one step away from the syllogism, **‘if a Pole is a Communist, s/he thereby ceases being a Pole.’**⁸²

This was precisely what was suggested in the order issued by Liniarski “Mścisław.” The reasoning delineated above proved an efficient instrument of social control. The Communist authorities took it seriously.⁸³ The evolution of those authorities’ attitude toward Jews – from equal rights granted to the minority to increasingly overt antisemitism – was dictated by the will to recover the national legitimacy they had been denied.

The leaflets dismiss ethnic-Pole Communists as ‘Jewish lackeys.’⁸⁴ One refers to a ‘goy in the Jew’s service,’⁸⁵ a notion considered more scandalous than the ‘Jewish bloodsucker’ itself by the author of a 1926 issue of *Rodzina Polska* cited above. The lackey was perceived by Poles as a traitor, just as the Jews viewed converts from their faith as defectors. In the classification systems that formed

82 The tacit premise here is the assumption of ideological affiliations: Communist ideology inborn to Jews versus the anti-Communist ideology innate to Poles.

83 Kula, Marcin: “Lewicowy intelektualista wobec pogromu kieleckiego”. In: id.: *Uparta sprawa. Żydowska? Polska? Ludzka?*. Universitas: Kraków 2004, p. 154: “The establishment really wanted to get rid of the ‘Judeo-Communists’ label. They remained quite convinced of being surrounded by strong antisemitism. As they wanted and indeed were to rule the country, they preferred to mitigate this part of the conflict. In any case, some Communist leaders felt awkward due to their own Jewish descent. Their desire was to forget about their roots and to make the Jewish issue disappear from Poland – be it through emigration of the remaining Jews or through leaving things unsaid.”

“May 1, 1946 [...] Jews continue to be murdered. On Easter Sunday, five were killed as they were returning from the [concentration] camps. Neither the democrats nor the PPR can find an appropriate tone with regards to the matter. For the PPR preaches social equality, religious freedom in Poland, etc., yet it simultaneously conceals all the Jews working there and at the *bezpiera* through the use of Polish surnames, fearing disapproval of its own lower ranks.” Steinhaus, *Wspomnienia*, p. 346. See also: Kwiek, *Żydzi, Lemkowie, Słowacy*, p. 4.

84 This invective was used against Gabriel Narutowicz, the first president of the Republic of Poland. Maciej Rataj, speaker of the Sejm, recorded the following scene from December 9, 1922 in his memoirs: “I was walking around and observing groups of people who were roaming around, freely staging protests and hunting for Jews. A scene from Wiejska [St]: some man in an expensive fur coat is loudly talking to a caretaker: ‘They’ve elected Narutowicz, a thief and a Jewish lackey, for president,’” retrieved 15.4.2010, from www.przk.pl/nr/historia/tragiczny_los_przypadkow_cz.html. An alternative epithet used after the war was “Moscow’s lackeys”, see e.g. Ciernik, Ryszard: *Ciosanie*. Publisher N/A: Warsaw 1965, p. 16.

85 See the section Three Incarnations of the Bloodsucker.

the basis of the relations between Christians and Jews and subsequently between Polish nationalists and Zionists, both of them constituted an anomaly, an impurity. In the postwar period, the phrase ‘Jewish lackey’ enriched the range of epithets, or rather invectives, each with its own historical pedigree, among them ‘Shabbes goy,’ ‘Jewish aunt/uncle,’⁸⁶ ‘Jewish crony,’⁸⁷ ‘[female] guardian of Jews,’⁸⁸ ‘[female] Jewish lover,’⁸⁹ ‘Jewish Wojtek’ [diminutive of Wojciech, a first name; also with the same meaning, ‘Jewish frying pan’].⁹⁰ These referred to those who have breached the ban on contacts with Jews; for various reasons, this ban was supported by both communities.⁹¹

Strangeness/Familiarity; Brutality/Humaneness

The alien nature of the Jews, both ethnically and ideologically, is underlined in the leaflets by the claim that the Jews had been sent over from Russia along with the Soviets (Text 10). The Jewish influx and the exploitation they engaged in (‘beautiful factories, industrial facilities’), the leaflets claimed, surely took place with the approval of the state, the Soviets, ‘Kachal,’ and ‘international Jewry.’

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- 86 This expression was used for Poles who were hiding Jews, e.g. in Rzeszów; see the following description of the situation during the Rzeszów pogrom of June 1945: “There were cases of Jews popping in to their Christian acquaintances’ places in order to hide, but the civilians obstructed that and cast a torrent of abuse [on them], such as ‘Jewish uncle.’” “Sprawozdanie z przebiegu zajść antyżydowskich w Rzeszowie 12/6/1945”, drawn up by the Board of the Rzeszów Jewish Religious Community for the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (CKŻP): after: Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 94.
- 87 See Markiel, Tadeusz / Skibińska, Alina: *Zagłada domu Trinczerów*. Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów: Warsaw 2011; see also the testimony of Zygmunt Talgor from Husów, June 19, 1950, AIPN Rz 06/23: “Szpecht asked me for a piece of bread and as a reaction to that, Lew Wojciech res. [resident] in Husów called me: ‘you fucking Jewish crony.’”
- 88 “Protokół rozprawy głównej przed Wojskowym Sądem Rejonowym w Kielcach”; after: Meducki and Wrona, *Wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 273.
- 89 Ibid.; after: Meducki and Wrona, *Wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 279.
- 90 This phrase referred to Christians who at a specific time, i.e. on Sabbath or on festive days, would light the stove in a Jewish house. See Kotula, Franciszek: *Tamten Rzeszów, czyli wędrówka po zakątkach i historii miasta* Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza: Rzeszów 1965, p. 383. “A Jewish Wojtek [pronounced ‘voytek’] appears in folk tales and proverbs, such as: ‘Each Jew has his Wojtek, each Pole has his Jasek.’”
- 91 Tokarska-Bakir, *Legends o krwi*, p. 389. See also Text 9 above.

One claim consists of the statement, ‘Jews are insects; insects multiply; Jews are multiplying like insects.’⁹² This is the same syllogism upon which prewar ethnic panic in Germany was founded.⁹³ Its traces can also be followed in the postwar Poland. In July 1946, a report from Jędrzejów stated that, ‘a rumor has spread around the town today that a few thousand Jews from the USSR are to flood Jędrzejów very soon.’⁹⁴ Bitterness, hubbub, excitement, nervousness, aggravation.⁹⁵

Similar rumors were circulating in Kalisz and other towns,⁹⁶ reinforced by talk of a sky-high Jewish birth rate, allegedly supported by the government. The amount of 20,000 złoty referred to in one text doubled, if not tripled as the rumors spread across the country.⁹⁷ Births of Jewish children were presented as a threat to biological existence of the Polish nation, almost equivalent to the murder of Polish children. The following reasoning is then applied: the number of Polish children decreases as they are killed by the Jews = the Jews are growing in number

92 See the bedbugs figure in the leaflet signed “Ogień” (no. 11). See also: Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda*, p. 50: [Urzejów, Przemysł Province] “Jews, once they multiply to a certain number in the world, then pogroms happen.”

93 See Kooz, Claudia: *The Nazi Conscience*. Harvard University Press: London 2003, p. 201, etc.

94 Steinhaus, *Wspomnienia*, p. 322: “July 29, 1945: ‘I have learned that in its agreement with the Soviets, Poland has been granted the right to bring back all the Polish citizens of the Polish and Jewish nationality from before 1939. It is obvious then that Russia is now applying the tsarist notion of pushing Jews out of Russia.’”

95 “Pismo Kierownika Powiatowego Oddziału Informacji i Propagandy do Naczelnika Informacji i Propagandy w Kielcach na temat Żydów”, AAN, MSiP, ref. no. 924, p. 103; in: Meducki, *Wydarzenia Kieleckie II*, p. 146.

96 See UB agents’ reports to the Headquarters regarding social sentiments prevailing in Kalisz, Dęblin and Łódź in July 1946: “[Kalisz:] Subsequently, they started spreading a rumor that the whole of Łódzka Street would be emptied of Poles, with thousands of Jews coming in to replace them”; after: Andrzej Paczkowski, “Raport o pogromie”. *Puls* 50, 1991, p. 107.

97 “As Comrade Buczyński ordered the Pińczów district action group to hold mass meetings regarding the Kielce incidents, one of the District Committee comrades opposed: ‘How can you ask peasants to defend the Jews if Jewesses get 40 thousand zł[otys] each for delivering a child?’” “Sprawozdanie instruktorów KC PPR z pobytu w województwie kieleckim od 4 do 15 lipca 1946”; after: Meducki, *Wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 140. See also Łódź, 1946: “The workers going on strike make use of the following antisemitic arguments: ‘A pregnant Jewess receives 60 thousand zł, and what about me?’” Paczkowski, *Raport*, p. 72.

(as the government subsidizes their arrival from Russia and their birth-rate) = Poland is threatened = a Polish child is endangered.

All the elements of the above argument can be reordered and combined, as testified to by the cries recorded in June 1945 during an assault on a group of Jews standing in the market in Zamość: ‘You Jewish sons of bitches ... I will slaughter you all, you’ve come here from Russia to kill our children.’⁹⁸

Ungratefulness/Gratefulness

The leaflets use similar means, i.e. repetitions and paralogisms, to inform their readers of the Jewish bloodsucker’s affinities. He is characterized as a criminal, a *Volksdeutsch*, and an SS-man,⁹⁹ as indicated in Letter 5’s reference to ‘Nazi Jews.’ Texts 3 and 9, mentioning the ungratefulness of Jews who had hid during the war with the help of Poles, and who then embarked on killing their saviors and collaborating with the Soviets, refer to the hoary equivalence Jew = traitor. An overlooked part of this syllogism is the ‘Judas’ premise:¹⁰⁰ **Judas betrayed Christ the Savior; Judas was a Jew; therefore, Jews are traitors and ingrates.**

The motive of betrayal is mythically developed in the already discussed topos of ‘Jews shooting at Polish soldiers’ and ‘pouring boiling water on their heads’ (Text 10), which extends as far back as the year 1921 (Text 10). Threats hurled at

98 “Akta w sprawie Edwarda Hubala i inni, wystąpienia antyżydowskie”, State Archive in Zamość, District Court of Zamość, 1918–1950, ref. no. 987; after: Kopciowski, *Zajścia antyżydowskie*, p. 182.

99 See document signed “Polish Independence Movement and the Political Command of the Polish Nation,” mentioning a Jewish-initiated ruling system “worthy of the Gestapo methods – the only difference being that it is sophisticated, disguised and fabricated using as its tools the Polish criminal elements, such as can be found on the margin of any society.” State Archive in Kraków (APKr), WiN section, 41, p. 166: “Do Żydów w Polsce” [“To the Jews in Poland”], in: Kwiek, *Ogień*, p. 245. See also a leaflet signed “Ogień”, 1945(?), of unknown provenance: “Jewry, whose goal is to eradicate the genuine Polish element, has no right to exist. [...] The real partisan troops are not out for the blood of their brothers, nor are they driven by greed, but instead, they fight to improve the conditions of our [or possibly, “for the masses”] existence oppressed [as we are] by the USSR and the Jewry. [...] based on the intelligence and PDP evidence, it has been concluded that UBP consists of SS-men, *Volksdeutsch*, criminals, bandits and thieves, with Jews and Bolsheviks at the forefront [...]” (AAN), Ministry of Information and Propaganda unit, ref. no. 823; after: Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 32.

100 See Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: *Rzeczy mgliste. Eseje i studia*. Fundacja Pogranicze: Sejny 2004, p. 73.

Jews, being part of the ‘punishment’ function, are expressed in pre-war slogans ‘beat the Jews’ (Text 8) and ‘Poland to the Poles’ (Text 7), or by presenting a choice ‘emigration or death’ (‘Your place is either in the ground, or in Palestine’ – Text 9).

Jews in Official and Left-Wing Discourse, 1945/1946

The left-wing version of the bloodsucker figure can be seen in 1945 and 1946 used by village elders, province governors, and other public officials, along with inspectors sent over to Kielce Province right after the Kielce pogrom. Sincerity is not a common virtue of official texts. Precisely for that reason, any sign of hostility toward Jews discerned through official rhetoric should be attended to – and all the more so as it is, in fact, not difficult to find.

Jews are depicted as parasites, swindlers, or exploiters. In other words, they are the capitalist bloodsucker known from leftist phraseology in its varying forms. Despite the damage done to the Jews during the war, they continue to hold huge resources amassed from profiteering, governmental subsidies, or German compensation payments.¹⁰¹ Yet the Jew always wants more. The charges against Jews are expressed with patriotic and progressive terminology. These accusations are replete with sarcasm, ethnic resentment, opposition to equal rights for Jews, and reluctance to return their property to them.

Report 1:

[Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk, former governor of Kielce Province, *Wspomnienia* [*Memoirs*], 1950s (?)]

The errors in the carefree conduct of the Kielce Jewish Community, consisting of a glaring difference between [their] higher living standard without production-oriented labor,¹⁰² while the workers were literally starving, and the fact that people of

101 Gossip about them circulated in Poland in 1945; see Steinhaus, *Wspomnienia*, p. 325: “August 15, 1945. [...] Stark also told us of a legend that was in circulation, that each Jew returning from a camp had 10,000 dollars.”

102 For the living standard of Jews returning from hideouts and camps, see letters from the Jewish committees of Radom, Szydłowiec, and Jedlińsk to the Provincial Jewish Committee of Kielce, as quoted in Adam Penkalla, “Władze o obecności Żydów na terenie Kielecczyny w okresie od wkroczenia Armii Czerwonej do pogromu kieleckiego”. *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 208, 2003, pp. 557–578.

Jewish origin had multiplied in the executive posts of the security and Party apparatus, were taken advantage of by the provocateurs of the reactionary underground.¹⁰³

Here, in the Party's Provincial Committee, they [the Jews] had their tribesmen. The post of the First Secretary of the Committee was held by Comr. Józef Kalinowski who, despite holding children at Holy Baptism in a Catholic church (e.g. when he had been invited to this ceremony by Comr. Słoń, Lord Mayor of the town of Kielce), didn't actively conceal his Jewish descent, a fact known to everyone.¹⁰⁴

The small Jewish community in Kielce became quite visible as their living standard in financial terms was much higher than that of the Polish neighborhood pauperized in the course of a lengthy war. [Their] [e]xpensive suits, gold wedding rings on their fingers, large amounts of money, and evident reluctance to take any job that was unprofitable at the time could not remain unnoticed by the Polish community.

Report 2:

[Mayor of Częstochowa,¹⁰⁵ *Starosta* of Częstochowa¹⁰⁶]

Polish society cannot possibly understand the Jewish minority as the latter endeavors to increase its material wealth, in this respect most frequently neglecting the facts that have come to existence since 1939 and when this minority emphasizes that it was only they who incurred losses during the war. Conversely, the Jewish minority not infrequently has no understanding of the psychological transformations that Polish society underwent during the occupation years, and of the current needs, which should be understood by Jewish society – that in free and democratic Poland, nobody has or can have the privilege of enjoying material comfort without making significant contributions to the society and the state. Besides, objectively, it should be stressed ... that the state's interest requires the Jewish minority to thoroughly rethink their hitherto prevailing attitude toward the society, when it comes to financial matters.¹⁰⁷

Report 3:

[Mayor of Częstochowa, July 9, 1945]

A specific trigger of anti-Jewish activity is the fact that on June 18, in the [clay] pits of Helman's Brick Factory, the remains of fifteen-year-old Krystyna Woźniak were found; she had been strangled and thrown into the clay pits. Arrested on charges of murdering the girl, Chil Teper, tailor, res. at 15 Wolności St., was handed over to the

103 Wiślicz-Iwańczyk, Eugeniusz: *Wspomnienia*, AAN, personal file no. 8500, pp. 443–468; in: Meducki, *Wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 83; also Penkalla, *Władze*, p. 569.

104 Both excerpts from Meducki, *Wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 81.

105 APK, UWK/II, ref. no. 1283, pp. 114–117.

106 "Sytuacyjne sprawozdanie miesięczne za miesiąc lipiec 1945 r., przygotowane przez starostę w Częstochowie", APK, UWK/II, ref. no. 1337, p. 329.

107 APK, UWK/II, ref. no. 1283, pp. 114–117.

public prosecution authorities and put in prison. The autopsy did not indicate defloration or any other bodily harm, apart from signs of strangulation.¹⁰⁸

Report 4:

[*Starosta* of Opatów, 2 December 1945]

As it emerges from the Jewish Committee's demands, the Jewish people expected from the National Council of Ostrowiec [Świętokrzyski] that they would simply be continually provided for by social welfare assistance, despite having adequate resources, they maintain quite a good living standard, e.g. they consume white bread, deli meats, and they engage in trade.¹⁰⁹

Report 5:

[Report of KC PPR (Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party) inspectors who visited Kielce Province on 4–15 July 1946]

A few hundred Jews in Ostrowiec are not working, either. Most state-owned health resorts are patronized by wealthy Jews and Polish reactionaries.... The discontented masses feel injured, would like to find the culprit and take out their outrage on him. [It is] enough for the reactionaries to point out to the crowd some irregularities, such as certain Jews living without working, abuse of power by PPR members or the state authorities, to turn the crowd against the PPR or against the government.¹¹⁰

Report 6:

The evidence of antisemitism within party ranks will be clear from the following examples. At the rally in Ostrowiec, Comrade Kasior Józef (PPR) delivers a speech against the Jews, "So what's that all about, we work here like horses and the Jews in Ostrowiec live as snug as bugs in a rug, they buy butter and hens. Where were they when we were fighting our partisan battles?" So says a comrade who has been through party training, regional and central training.¹¹¹

Report 7:

[Head of the First Regional Department of UB, Lieut. Srokowski in Kielce, to the Provincial Governor of Kielce, 9 October 1945]

Normally, society's attitude to the Jewish population is characterized by aversion, partly stemming from Hitlerite propaganda and activity during the occupation. The disfavor and adverse attitude are expressed in complaints that stress the fact that Jews hold high positions in the administration and in the state. Rumors of allegedly enormous state subsidies enjoyed by Jews are widely spreading among the Polish

108 APK, UWK/II, ref. no. 1242.

109 Penkalla, "Władze o obecności Żydów", p. 561.

110 "Sprawozdanie instruktorów KC PPR..."; in: Meducki, *Wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 138.

111 Ibid. Similar opinions from Ostrowiec and Pińczów are quoted below.

population. Moreover, the fact that Jews have been retaking possession of their pre-war property causes a kind of distaste among people.¹¹²

The language of these reports suggests that their authors – the village elders and *starostas* and province governors – mostly tend to agree with the opinions they quote. The Jews are depicted as a self-segregating group, or one that remains at bay and detached and avoids getting involved in political transformations. Contradicting this, they are also charged with being careerists, ‘coming to high positions.’

A motive that appears only twice in these texts, but is known¹¹³ for having triggered the fiercest resentment, relates to the Jews reclaiming their property. The whole statement of the mayor of Częstochowa is devoted to this issue. Combining elements of a Marxist rhetoric with old prejudices (the Jews’ attitude toward the society when it comes to financial matters), it paints a gloomy picture of the overly anxious¹¹⁴ local Jewish minority. In conjunction with a crime ascribed to a Jewish tailor, the mayor suggests that the community is responsible for the deterioration of its situation. The *starosta* of Opatów, a town where the situation of local Jews was as difficult as in Częstochowa,¹¹⁵ evinces a similar attitude toward the Jews. Reluctant to provoke the masses despite their use of antisemitic

112 Penkalla, “Władze o obecności Żydów”, p. 572; also, Zaremba, “Mit mordu rytualnego”, p. 111.

113 See: Kopciowski, “Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie”, p. 204; Penkalla, “Władze o obecności Żydów”, p. 259; for murders accompanying the restorations, see e.g. Kopciowski, “Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie”, pp. 188–189. For difficulties in reclaiming property, see: Olejnik, *Polityka*, p. 358. See Skibińska, Alina: “Powroty Ocalałych”. In: Engelking, Barbara et al. (eds.): *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*. Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów IFiS PAN: Warsaw 2007, pp. 505–600.

114 Penkalla, *Władze*, p. 268 – November 15, 1945: “Some representatives of the Jewish community suggest [...] that certain elements on the part of the Polish people endeavor to eliminate, by way of physical violence, the more vigorous Jewish individuals from the trade and the industry. I don’t think that this supposition is right.” See Penkalla, *Władze*, p. 568. That the Częstochowa region was an area of particularly intensified violence against the Jews in 1945, including a pogrom atmosphere, see: Penkalla, *Władze*, p. 268.

115 APK, UWK/II, ref. no. 1242 has the following records of assaults on Jewish establishments in Opatów in 1945: August 23 – an assault attempt; August 11–12, and August 12 in the evening – a robbery; August 22 – a shooting at the Jewish center on 4 Młyńska St; September 10 – a military vehicle stopped in front of the local Jewish Committee: Committee member Zylberg was shot dead, another one, Erlichman, was seriously injured. October 19: the Opatów district *starosta* says in a memorandum that “the investigation has produced no positive outcome.”

stereotypes to justify what amounted to the nationalization of Jewish property, the authorities invoked popular sovereignty.¹¹⁶ Jews, viewed as ‘snobs’,¹¹⁷ were being denied the right to reclaim their property. According to Julian Kwiek, when in 1945 the Jews took away the gold buried in a cellar in Działoszyce, the locals suggested that the gold should be nationalized.¹¹⁸ These are just a few of the examples available.

Iwańczyk, governor of Kielce Province during the pogrom,¹¹⁹ portrays the Jews as grist for the mill of the anti-Communist underground movement, another instance of linking the Jews to reactionary forces (the reference to Jews vacationing in sanatoriums). The phrase “higher living standard without production-oriented labor” does not just refer to mere idleness but also imposes on the Jews the Marxist stigma defining anyone who is not a production worker (including, among others, all the services provided by Jewish craftsmen) of being a freeloader. The idea of Jews as “non-production-oriented” was the Marxist equivalent of the prewar stereotype widely held by Polish peasants, according to which merchants and craftsmen were worthless because they did not perform agricultural work – the only form of work worthy of its name from a peasant’s point of view. Such reasoning might be dismissed as simply a sign of the times had it not been adopted by the government. As Leszek Olejnik writes:

One response on the part of the authorities to the Kielce pogrom was the Resolution of the Council of Ministers from July 2, 1946, which established the Government Commissariat for the Productiveness of Jewish Population, led by Ignacy Wrzos. It was no surprise that this hasty decision was made without consultation with the CKŻP [Central Committee of Polish Jews], or with representatives of the PPR in the Jewish

116 As Stanisław Ossowski put it (*Na tle wydarzeń*, p. 51): “When one person’s misfortune benefits another, those who have benefited often display a tendency to convince themselves and others that the misfortune was morally justified. Such an attitude is perceptible among the owners of shops formerly owned by the Jews, or among those who were once bothered by Jewish competitors.”

117 Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi*, p. 551.

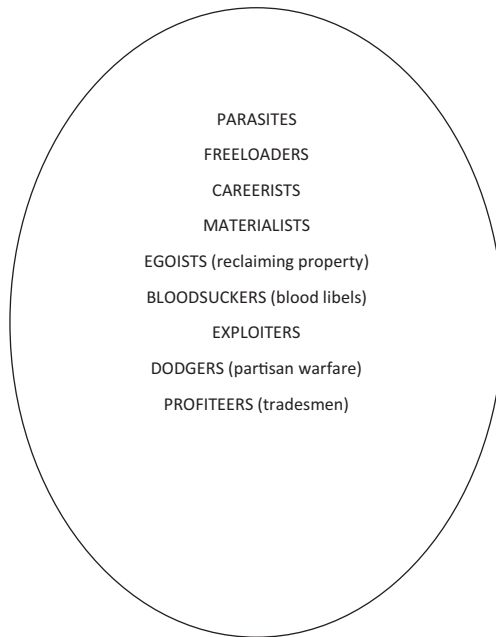
118 Kwiek, *Żydzi, Łemkowie, Słowacy*, p. 73.

119 Adam Kornecki on Wiślicz-Iwańczyk: “The way it worked [in Kielce] at that time can be attested by the following: the Kielce voivode opened a shop, selling clothes, pots, everything he had taken from the Jews. [Michał Chęciński’s question:] I don’t see what you mean, could you clarify that? [Answer:] He opened up a flat disputed by Poles and Jews, and took everything to Warsaw: furniture, pots, everything. That was the Kielce voivode.” After: Chęciński, Michał: *Teksty przepisane z taśmy dla prof. Tokarskiej-Bakir, Dr Michał Chęciński, 17, Zidqiah St., Hifa 34409, Israel*. An unpublished typescript, p. 17 (pagination based on individual interviews).

organizations. Even Dr. M. Szuldenfrei, who held a high-ranking post with the Presidium of the KRN [State National Council], learned that the Governmental Commissariat had been set up only after the decision had been made. He stated he was astonished that such a department had been established after the Kielce incidents – “as if there was nothing else that could be done...” Apparently, the decision to establish this department indirectly meant that the Government had admitted that the notion of the low productivity of Jews, so widespread in the society, was valid.¹²⁰

Verbally, the left-wing image of the Jew-bloodsucker *de facto* supports the charges against Jews expressed as part of the national and religious discourse. It creates a semantic field composed of the following characteristics:

Fig. 5: The national-leftist version of the Bloodsucker; based on reports by District and Province Governors of Kielce, Opatów and Częstochowa, 1945/1946



Almost identical notions of Jewish laziness, affluence, and undeserved promotions are contained in a secret report of the chief of the Organization and Instruction

120 Olejnik, *Polityka*, p. 390.

Section of the Polish Army Political Education Board, regarding the soldiers' attitude to antisemitism:¹²¹

Until [the] year '39, all the wealth and factories rested in the Jewish hands and now, it will be the same (Private Bielski, Polish Army First Mechanized Signals Regiment).

Before the war, the Jews used to say: our buildings, your streets. And now, the country is heading that way again. Almost all of Łódź's industry is in Jewish hands (Seventh Motor Vehicle Engineering and Construction Brigade).

You cannot bear a grudge against the Jewish people for national reasons, but only because the Jews manifest their endeavors through profiteering, looking for lighter labor (Corporal Sieniowski, Third Infantry Division).¹²²

Jews always occupy better positions, even in the military. There were only a few individuals [of Jewish origin] on the front, the others remaining in the headquarters, storehouses, and hospitals (Rifleman Mankowski, First Infantry Division).

There are many Jews holding high-ranking positions in Poland, and they do not care for the public welfare, so there will be no peace and quiet in Poland as long as Jews are here" (Officers, Ninth Infantry Division).

These views must also have been common in leftist milieus outside the army, as anti-Jewish slogans were chanted even during the May Day parade in Warsaw

121 "Meldunek szefa Oddziału Organizacyjno-Instruktażowego Głównego Zarządu Politycznego Wychowania Wojska Polskiego o stosunku żołnierzy do antysemityzmu", AAN, KC PPR section, ref. no. 295/VII/166, pp. 171–173; quoted after: Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 229–231. Similar opinions were recorded in other areas as well, e.g. in Tarnow region: "The Jews coming back to the area of Tarnów are fighting for special privileges such as special food rations, assuming the top positions in the State administration, the most profitable positions, even though the Jews form a minimal percentage of the whole [nation]. [...] As it stems from the leaflets you come across on the town's walls, from the resolutions adopted by political parties and statements made by the leaders of these parties, there is a wish common to the whole of the Polish society that Poland's independence is reality, for as long as there is an army of a foreign country – albeit of an ally – in our territory, it can't be called freedom or real independence at all. The Jewry is commonly considered a bridge between the Soviet Union, its economic and political system, and the Polish state, where, allegedly contrary to the general will of the Polish nation, the same rules are being introduced." See "Wyciąg ze sprawozdania Referatu Społ.-Politycznego Starostwa Tarnowskiego", APKr, WUiP section, 38, p. 199; after: Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 65.

122 After: Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 105.

in 1945.¹²³ Anna Cichopek reports that manifestations of antisemitism within the PPR were discussed three times that year at board meetings (7 June 1945; 5 and 19 July 1945):

There is ferment in the Party against the Jews. (...) One has to bear in mind that filling positions with Jewish comrades triggers objection on the part of the Poles. (...) In UB, you cannot see the bottom of the cesspool. It is common knowledge that the leading PUBP [District Public Security Office] officials are Jews.¹²⁴

The minutes of the PPR Central Committee meeting from August 16, 1945, record the words of Roman Zambrowski:

Antisemitic sentiments exist even within the progressive part of the working class. (...) We have not even eradicated antisemitism from our government institutions.¹²⁵

Julian Kwiek also mentions antisemitic opinions voiced by the working-class Party members in Kraków. In the borough of Grzegórzki, they criticized the authorities, claiming that too many Jews were holding high-ranking positions in the ministries and the security apparatus.¹²⁶ In a lecture given in autumn 1945 at the Civil Militia Provincial Headquarters School for investigation officers, organized by the Central Political Education Board, the Party instructor complained about

an extremely low political level of the students. Their statements in the discussion, with which they interfered in my lecture, were of the following sort: 'As long as Jews will be holding posts in Poland, it's going to be bad'; 'We are being wronged by the Jews, for the low salaries that we and the workers get, the Jews are to blame, it's their policy'; 'Jews ought to be exterminated and deported'; and whispers could be clearly heard, 'Down with the Jews!'; 'Chase the Jews out of the *Bezpieka*!'; etc.¹²⁷

On March 13, 1946 during a local party unit conference in Kraków, PPR members accused those PPS members that 'the latter are scheming [to create] a 17th republic

123 "Notatka Frakcji PPR przy CKŻP"; after Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 51.

124 APKr, KW [Regional Committee of] PPR, "Egzekutywa", ref. no. 1/VI/1, pp. 7–12; after: Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, pp. 61–2. For antisemitic sentiments in the PPR – in the regions and among local authorities, see: Kwiek, *Żydzi, Łemkowie, Słowacy*, pp. 56, 57, 68–71.

125 Archive of New Records (AAN), PPR, ref. no. 295/VII-1, pp. 67–69; in: Meducki, *Wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 54.

126 APKr, PPR, 9, p. 21; "Protokół z posiedzenia egzekutywy Komitetu Wojewódzkiego PPR w Krakowie z 5/7/1945"; after: Kwiek, *Żydzi, Łemkowie, Słowacy*, p. 68.

127 Quoted after: Janusz Kochanowski, "Do raportu!". *Polityka* 7, 2000, p. 72; after: Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 103.

[referring to the concept of Poland as a 17th Soviet socialist republic] and to collaborate with Jews¹²⁸. At a July rally in Dęblin, held by the PPR after the Kielce pogrom, official speeches were interrupted with exclamations ‘Down with the Jews’; ‘They’ve come over to defend the Jews, shame’; ‘The Jews murdered thirteen Polish children, and they have come here to defend them’; ‘Bierut will not dare sentence them [= those who took part in the pogrom] to death’; ‘You defend your Jews, and me, how am I supposed to survive with my 900 zł per month?’; ‘The Jews at the forefront of UB’; ‘We want democracy, but without Jews’¹²⁹.

Similar opinions were voiced in the milieu of peasant activists. Roman Zambrowski recalled peasantry rallies, including the one in Wola Żelichowska, at which an antisemitic resolution was adopted.¹³⁰ In Bochnia, in turn, a speaker whose name is unknown was met with applause as he,

referring to [Władysław] Kiernik’s¹³¹ report, which stated that Poland should be an ethnically homogenous state, proposed that Jews be expelled from Poland as well,¹³² remarking on this occasion that Hitler should be thanked for having exterminated the Jews.¹³³

128 Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 169; “Protokół z plenum Komitetu Miejskiego odbytego 9/1/1946”; after: Kwiek, *Żydzi, Łemkowie, Słowacy*, p. 69.

129 Cała and Datner-Śpiewak, *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, p. 71. On the day the Kielce pogrom perpetrators were to be executed, all the Łódź factories reportedly went on strike: Steinhaus, *Wspomnienia i zapiski*, p. 359. Likewise, “the workers in a brewery in Radom opposed the anti-pogrom resolution. The cooperative and the State Forests Board also opposed the resolution condemning the Kielce crime.” “Sprawozdanie instruktorów KC PPR z pobytu w województwie kieleckim w czasie od 4 do 15/7/1946; after: Meducki, *Wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 138; see also Kopciowski, “Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie”, p. 198.

130 Archive of New Records (AAN), PPR, ref. no. 295/VII-1, b. 67–69; after: Meducki, *Wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 54.

131 W. Kiernik was a peasant movement activist, leader of the Peasants’ Party “Roch”, Minister of Public Administration in Edward Osóbka-Morawski’s Government; cf. “Notatka złożona przez Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich wicepremierowi Władysławowi Gomułce dotycząca rozmów przedstawicieli CKŻP przeprowadzonych w Ministerstwie Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, w Ministerstwie Sprawiedliwości i w Ministerstwie Administracji Publicznej”, September 30, 1945; after: Meducki, *Wydarzenia kieleckie II*, pp. 61–62.

132 Cf. also: “Wyciąg ze Sprawozdania Referatu Społeczno-Politycznego Starostwa Tarnowskiego”, APKr, WUiP unit, APKr, 38, b.199; after: Kwiek, Julian: “Dzieje ludności żydowskiej w Tarnowie po II wojnie światowej”. *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 3(215), 2005, p. 361.

133 “Pismo Starosty pow. bocheńskiego do Urzędu Wojewódzkiego w Krakowie”, August 28, 1945; in: Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 62.

In an official interpellation to the Regional National Council in Rzeszów, a similar opinion was expressed by Adam Popowski, a representative of the Supreme Chamber of Control of the Republic of Poland, who stayed in Rzeszów after the pogrom. He decided that the authorities ought to treat the Jews 'like Ukrainians'.¹³⁴

It would be of a greater benefit to both nations to take advantage of organizational and political capabilities of Polish Jews in the territory of Germany, as they have a command of the German language and thus are able to gain control of the press, the radio, and the important domains of economic as well as political life. Rumor has it that it's no-one else but the Jews who are the only nation that could, with adequate support, contribute to a complete pacification of Germany, and to directly collect their compensation due on account of the losses, moral as well as material ones.¹³⁵

This statement clearly shows that it was the "Jewish question" that provided an opportunity to bring the leftist and the national phraseologies closer to each other. To a careful reader of pre-war proclamations of the National Radical Camp (ONR), which postulated an agricultural reform and nationalization of industry,¹³⁶ this affinity is nothing new. The novelty, however, lies in the strength of the impact of those ideas in the post-war Poland which was being communized.

134 "Pismo Zygmunta Kratki, dyrektora departamentu Polityczno-Wychowawczego w Ministerstwie Informacji i Propagandy do Biura Kontroli Państwa w sprawie interpellacji pracownika Biura, Adama Popowskiego": "In his opinion as a control functionary, it should have been mentioned that it was the Jews who have committed the crime, that there's no room for them here, that they ought to be treated like Ukrainians, etc."; after: Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 116 (doc. 22).

135 "Pismo Adama Popowskiego, inspektora Biura Kontroli Państwa przy Prezydium KRN, do Prezydium WRN w Rzeszowie", June 14, 1945; after: Kaczmarek, *Pogrom, którego nie było*, p. 84.

136 See "Program Obozu Narodowo-Radykalnego". *Sztafeta* 14.4.1934: "The Movement [i.e. the Movement of the Young, from which ONR has stemmed] has once succeeded to cleanse, in student press, the youth life of Jewish influences and, acting as the Great Poland Camp, to embrace masses of peasants, workers, townspeople and intellectuals, blur the class and communal differences, making the young generation more Polish in blood and spirit."

"The right to own Polish land rests with the Polish peasant in the first place. The State should strive for producing as many small and medium-sized farms as possible, through parcellation of large farming areas – the *"latifundia"*. The Jewish intermediation in produce trading, the source of poverty in Polish rural areas, has to be eliminated. The incessant diminishment of national property by international capital ought to be discontinued through the expropriation and nationalization of companies of national importance, as well as of large mining and metallurgical enterprises and power plants based on foreign capital."

All these opinions have been bluntly summarized by a certain woman aboard a lorry transporting passengers from Sosnowiec to Katowice, who invoked the triple figure of Bloodsucker thus:

The Jews don't work, what they do is they **suck blood out of the nation**, they should be put into Majdanek and Oświęcim [Auschwitz] again, as the Germans used to do, they murdered children in Kraków, in Katowice they've already murdered a couple of children too. (...) I would flay the Jews myself.¹³⁷

Conclusion

According to Jan Vansina, author of the classic work on oral tradition as a historical source,

Rumors that are not contradicted survive and become part first of the store of oral history, later also of oral tradition.... Rumor is a process by which a collective historical consciousness is built. The collective interpretations resulting from massive rumors lead to commonly accepted interpretations of events, non-events, or sets of events. Hence a tradition based on rumor tells us more about the mentality at the time of the happening than about the events themselves.... Such sources should be recognized, and not summarily dismissed as physical impossibilities and hence useless embellishments of some later age. Their very survival in tradition means something in terms of historical consciousness and of contemporary mentalities and ideologies.¹³⁸

It might seem absurd that a country surrounded with real enemies fabricates symbolic enemies and directs its forces against them. However, what might seem irrational to individuals is not so in the logic of imagined communities. Poland had a centuries-old tradition of fighting internal enemies, and this was reinforced after World War II by the intensification of national feeling caused by the German and Soviet invasions. Polish leaders and citizens felt a desperate need to restore the social cohesion so disrupted by recent events. In the face of the changes brought about by the war and the subsequent liberation of the country by the Red Army, the imagined community responded as one might expect – by closing ranks. Unfortunately, one of the means chosen for doing so was the invocation of the image of the bloodsucking Jew in three types of discourse: religious, national, and left-wing/political. After World War II, when Polish sovereignty

137 Earlier, she was shouting in a lorry transporting people from Katowice to Sosnowiec; in: Zaremba, "Mit mordu rytualnego", pp. 107–108.

138 Vansina, Jan: *Oral Tradition as History*. James Currey Publishers: London 1985, pp. 6–7.

was under serious challenge, all these converged under the banner of defending Polish freedom.

The mechanism that triggered anti-Jewish violence, including all but one post-war pogrom, was the demetaphorization/literalization of the bloodsucker figure. The Jew, regarded as a metaphoric vampire feeding on the blood of the nation, was transformed back into a kidnapper and murderer as known from religious blood libels through the dissemination of the rumors about kidnapped children. As Krystyna Kersten has noted, it was this particular literal figure, rather than reports of Jewish tormenters in UB, that sent rioters into the streets.¹³⁹

It was only at the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s that the Catholic Church banned the message of Jewish ritual murder from its teachings. Arieh Kochavi, who analyzed the position taken by the Vatican after the Kielce pogrom,¹⁴⁰ has demonstrated the belief that the blood libel was true and was certainly not limited to the Polish folk Catholicism. It would thus be erroneous to perceive it as a “normal superstition” shared by unmodernized Eastern Europeans.¹⁴¹ The belief in blood libel myths among bishops, intellectuals, and underground officers is generically different from such inert religious residues as the lucky rabbit’s foot or an unlucky black cat.

Poles of all stations believed that Jews were bloodsuckers. The belief was not limited to common people but rather extended to the ruling elites, including the ecclesial hierarchy, underground army officers, and even the Citizens’ Militia officers and some of the Communist officials. Without the awareness of this issue, one can understand neither the postwar exodus of Jews from Poland nor the evolution of the Polish version of Communism, which began with the perceived participation of so many Jews and endured in a country in which hardly a Jew remained.

139 Kersten, “Polska – państwo narodowe”, p. 90.

140 Kochavi, Arieh: “Polscy biskupi, Watykan i Żydzi polscy w czasie przejmowania władzy przez komunistów na podstawie brytyjskich raportów dyplomatycznych”. *Zagłada Żydów/Holocaust. Studies and Materials* 5, 2009, p. 159. It concludes that “the British understood that the Vatican fully accepted the anecdote of a Kielce child, who was named ‘Erico Baszozzyk’ (the boy’s real name was Henryk Błaszczyk), who had been kidnapped in order to draw his blood.”

141 For pogroms occurring as a result of the blood libel in Hungary and Slovakia, see e.g. Kersten, “Polska – państwo Narodowe”, p. 134; she mentions the pogrom in Topolčany, where “the crowd attacked with knives a Jewish doctor who was inoculating children.”

Chapter 7: Pogrom Cries

Judging from the popularity of conspiracy theories regarding the postwar Polish pogroms against the Jews,¹ Polish historians are less interested in the overt aspects of these pogroms than the hidden ones. For instance, very few studies have explored the character and the conditions of the aggression against the

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- 1 Among Polish researchers of postwar pogroms, those who argued that these events were incited by the “blood libel legend” were in a decisive minority. The most important figure was Krystyna Kersten, who called this legend a “social dynamite”; id., *Polacy, Żydzi, komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939–68*. Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza: Warsaw 1992. The legend was also discussed in the same vein in Cichopek, Anna: *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945 r.* Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: Warsaw 2000; Szaynok, Bożena: *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946*. Bellona: Warsaw 1992; and Zaremba, Marcin: “Mit mordu rytualnego w powojennej Polsce. Archeologia i hipotezy”. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 2, 2007, pp. 91–135. Their reasoning did not arouse special interest. Instead, journalists such as Kąkolewski, Krzysztof: *Umarły cmentarz. Wstęp do studiów nad wyjaśnieniem przyczyn i przebiegu morderstwa Żydów w Kielcach dnia 4 lipca 1946 roku*. Wydawnictwo Von Borowiecki: Warsaw 1996; priests, e.g. Śledzianowski, Jan: *Pytania nad pogromem kieleckim*. Jedność: Kielce 1998; and numerous historians kept looking for proofs of a conspiracy. Verification of the conspiracy thesis was attempted in the twelve-year long investigation by the IPN (Institute of National Remembrance), summarized in two volumes: Żaryn, Jan / Kamiński, Łukasz (eds.): *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Kielce and Warsaw 2006, see particularly pp. 478, 471–472, etc.; id.: *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Kielce and Warsaw 2008. Stalin’s file was also perused for any signs of an NKVD conspiracy: Materski, Wojciech / Paczkowski, Andrzej (eds.): *NKWD o Polsce i Polakach. Rekonesans archiwalny*. Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN: Warsaw 1996; Cariewskaja, Tatiana et al. (eds.): *Teczka specjalna J. W. Stalina. Raporty NKWD z Polski 1944–1946*. Rytm: Warsaw 1998. Józef Orlicki suggested the involvement of Zionists; id.: *Szkice do dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich 1918–1949*. Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza: Szczecin 1983. A similar hypothesis, albeit not restricted to Zionists, is elaborated in Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek’s “Raport biskupa Czesława Kaczmarka przekazany ambasadorowi USA w Warszawie Arthurowi Bliss Lane’owi”, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 191. Others, e.g. Krzysztof Kaczmarski, employee of the IPN in Rzeszów, seem to have been persuaded by a modernized version of the blood libel, which ascribes to the Jews the desire to “feed on” the blood of “Polish children” after the war; Kaczmarski, Krzysztof: *Pogrom którego nie było. Rzeszów 11–12 czerwca 1945. Fakty, hipotezy, dokumenty*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Rzeszów 2008.

Jews, despite its obvious manifestation.² In this chapter, I would like to use hitherto overlooked source material characterized by immediacy. The immediacy of sources appears in historical discourse when instead of paraphrasing the utterances of the participants, they are simply allowed to speak. A paraphrase is always anachronistic, whereas live speech recorded in sources is a kind of a fossil that transmits the voice of an era.

This chapter, inspired by Victor Turner's anthropology of performance,³ analyzes a particular aspect of this voice: the cries of the mob gathered along the route taken on 12 June 1945 by the militia escorting Jewish tenants of the house at 3 Tannenbauma St.; the mob gathered on 11 August 1945 at 27 Miodowa St. in Kraków; as well as that at 7 Planty St. in Kielce on 4 July 1946.⁴ I will treat these cries as a source for the study of mentality. They allow us to view the three analyzed pogroms as a kind of a spectacle, which Turner calls "social drama". Thanks to particular performative features, Pogrom Cries reveal, in historical events,

the "taxonomy" of social relations between actors (their family relationships, structural positions, social classes, political status), their current relationships and conflicts of interest and friendship, the network of personal relationships and informal relations.⁵

Let us examine what those cries say about the nature of the pogrom mobs, about their agenda, and about the accusations they level against Jews.

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- 2 One could mention here the publications listed in the first part of footnote 1; however, only Marcin Zaremba's study is entirely devoted to the issues in question. See also, Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna, "Social Portrait of the Kielce Pogrom", 2 vols. (forthcoming).
 - 3 Turner, Victor: *From Ritual to Theatre: On Human Seriousness of Play*. PAJ Publications: New York 1982, p. 110. Also Turner, Victor: *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*. Manchester University Press: Manchester 1957; id.: *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Actions in Human Society*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London 1974.
 - 4 Sources: Żaryn, Jan / Kamiński, Łukasz (eds.): *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Kielce and Warsaw 2006; id. (eds.): *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Kielce and Warsaw 2008; Meducki, Stanisław / Wrona, Zenon (eds.): *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały I*. Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe: Kielce 1992; Meducki, Stanisław (ed.): *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały II*. Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe: Kielce 1994; Łoziński, Marcel: *Materiały z filmu "Świadkowie"*. Video transcript, unpublished typescript, p. 44; Więcek, Tadeusz (ed.): *Zabić Żyda! Kulisy i tajemnice pogromu kieleckiego 1946*. Oficyna Wydawnicza: Kraków 1992; Blus-Węgrowska, Danuta: *Pogrom kielecki*. (master's thesis) Uniwersytet Warszawski: Warsaw 1994.
 - 5 Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 9.

While some Polish researchers⁶ have already explored this issue, it still remains quite ambiguous. Although it has been established that all but one (Przedbórz) postwar Jewish pogrom in Poland began with a blood libel rumor, to most researchers – as noted first by Marcin Zaremba⁷ – it is, in a sense, invisible. Even such an inquisitive sociologist as Jan Tomasz Gross questions the social ontology of *blood libel*, calling it a mere “pretext” or “excuse” for the pogrom violence. He argues that as Jewish aggression toward ‘Christian children’ is out of the question, the belief in ritual murder could not have been the cause of the explosion of collective anti-Jewish phobia.⁸ Otherwise one would have to assume a complete dissonance between social experience and collective action. “Jews could not have been perceived as a threat by their neighbors for their alleged vampirism,” Gross writes. According to him, the desire to wipe the Jews off the face of the earth was not a manifestation of parental love and despair in response to the perceived Jewish threat. “[...] assaulting the Jews would not visibly promote one’s children’s welfare.”⁹ Therefore, concludes the historian, it was not the belief in ritual murder that had triggered the pogroms.

I believe, similarly to Jan Gross, that the ritual murder legend has, since its appearance in Europe, functioned as a justification of anti-Jewish violence, motivated e.g. by economic or political reasons; however, under no circumstances can I agree that its instrumentalization was tantamount to the accusers’ disbelief in the *blood libel*. This is contradicted not only by historical sources, but also by traces of the blood legend still noted in Polish provinces.¹⁰ The fact that they are still present in contemporary Poland also meets with general disbelief. The situation has been aptly summarized by Marcin Zaremba: “The myth of Jewish

6 See footnote 1.

7 Zaremba, “Mit mordu rytualnego”, p. 91.

8 Marcin Zaremba states: “It is symptomatic that a very similar position, which diminishes the significance of the ritual murder myth, can be found in Catholic historiography. In one of his articles, Jan Żaryn [‘Hierarchia kościoła katolickiego wobec relacji polsko-żydowskich w latach 1945,’ in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, pp. 94–97], addressing the criticisms directed at the Church in Poland for its lack of a strong reaction from the bishops to the spread of ritual murder stories after the war, on the one hand pointed to those who invented the rumors and created a ‘certain psychosis,’ and on the other admitted that in the Catholic Church there was a ‘tradition that could not have been taken lightly.’”

9 Gross, Jan T.: *Fear. Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz*. Princeton University Press: New York 2006, pp. 245–246.

10 See Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: *Legenda o krwi. Antropologia przęsądu*. W.A.B.: Warsaw 2008, pp. 411–454.

vampirism does not fit the dominant picture of Polish-Jewish relations immediately after the war.”¹¹

Based on an analysis of pogrom Pogrom Cries, I once again propose to examine the above issue, this time focusing on the nature of the pogrom mobs in Rzeszów, Kraków, and Kielce, the character of the aggression toward the Jews, and the role of *blood libel* in inciting these pogroms.

Four features of a mob

When we analyze pogrom cries from the aspect of their form, we find three types of utterances: statements, slogans,¹² and exhortations.¹³ The first category comprises observations, complaints, and voices of indignation,¹⁴ which – albeit audible to the persons standing close to the speaker – did not reach the status of collective apostrophes as did the more abstract slogans and exhortations. Whereas statements are always connected with the personal context of the

11 Zaremba, “Mit mordu rytualnego”, p. 92. See also Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, komunizm*, p. 118: “Even politicians from the former ONR [Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny, National Radical Camp] milieu understood that [...] the blood murder rumor could not demonstrate that the Polish nation did not want communism, but only show the terrifying ignorance of the Poles.”

12 “A slogan is a brief, apt formula, easy to repeat, polemical and most frequently anonymous, aimed at persuading the masses to perform some action and does so both through style as an element of self-justification, emotional or intellectual, that it includes,” Reboul, Olivier: “Kiedy słowo jest bronią”. In: Głowiński, Michał (ed.): *Język i społeczeństwo*. Czytelnik: Warsaw 1980, p. 299 ff.

13 A slogan (e.g. the title of Marcel Déat’s article “Mourir pour Danzig?” *Oeuvre* [August 1939]) is true or false by virtue of a statement it must necessarily include, whereas an exhortation (e.g. “Forward!”), does not, in principle, contain such a statement; see Reboul, “Kiedy słowo jest bronią”, 307. Manipulating the truth status of a statement, however, often blurs the difference between an exhortation and a slogan.

14 Statement of a civilian KW MO [Komenda Wojewódzka Milicji Obywatelskiej, Citizen’s Militia Provincial Command] employee, Rzeszów: “I would shoot all of them”; “Sprawozdanie z przebiegu zajęć antyżydowskich w Rzeszowie 12/6/1945, sporządzonego przez zarząd Żydowskiej Gminy Wyznaniowej w Rzeszowie dla CKŻP”. In: Kaczmarek, *Pogrom którego nie było*, 94; see also *ibid.*, p. 97: “We now know from experience what the attitude of our defenders is should the Jews find themselves in a critical position; it can be expressed with the words one militia man addressed to a Polish acquaintance: ‘We can’t do anything to them as long as the Soviets are [here]; I would shoot 100 myself.’”

speaker, slogans¹⁵ and exhortations¹⁶ can function independently of the speaker, thus making it possible to incite the crowd, particularly with auto-hypnotic, repetitive formulas.

Elias Canetti writes about four features of a crowd/mass, irreducible to the individuals who make it up.

1. It wants to grow constantly.
2. There is equality within the mass, 'absolute and undisputed [...]. People turn into a mass due to this equality.'
3. Mass has a proclivity for thickening, 'it is never too dense.'
4. Mass needs a direction. 'It is in motion and moves toward something definite. The direction common to all its members reinforces the sense of equality.'¹⁷

If by "direction" we mean the identity gradually created by a pogrom mob, this criterion can be considered superior to all the other ones. It enforces the internal "equality" of the crowd, and as a result of the expulsion of alien elements, it also influences its "density". Furthermore, the "growth" of a mob depends on the attractiveness of the mob's identity to the bystanders, and – what is important in the case of the events described here – to the security services deployed to pacify the mass. We can use these four criteria to synthetically describe all three pogrom crowds.

Re 4 and 3: Direction and density

All of these pogrom mobs gained their "direction" from the exhortations of revenge against the Jews. In Kielce, the mob was activated by a rumor about the abduction of Henio Błaszczak, which had been in circulation for a few weeks. I refer those who think that the mob did not believe the slogans it exclaimed, or that they were a mere cynical provocation, to Chapter 5: The Figure of Bloodsucker in Polish religious, national and left-wing discourse in the years 1945/1946. Genuine belief in the blood libel is manifest in the most common cries of the Kielce pogrom:

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- 15 "They export coal to the Soviets, and from there [bring] carloads of Jews," example from "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Władysława Sobczyńskiego, 7/8/1946". In: Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, p. 319.
 - 16 For example, "Beat the Jews!" in the Rzeszów pogrom; Leib Kaplan's testimony quoted in Kaczmarski, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 76.
 - 17 Canetti, Elias / Borg, Eliza / Przybyłowska, Maria (transl.): *Masa i władza (Masse und Macht)*. Czytelnik: Warsaw 1996 [1960].

- ‘down with the Jews, kill them, because they catch Polish children and torture them cruelly’¹⁸
- ‘give our children back’¹⁹
- ‘Jews, where are our children, what have you done with our children?’²⁰
- ‘my dear baby ... they killed him/her here [a woman moaning in front of the building at 7 Planty St.]’²¹
- ‘where [are] our murdered children, we’ll take revenge on you’²²
- ‘oh, oh! our Polish children [have been] murdered’ [a woman at 7 Planty St.]²³
- ‘down with the Jews! they murder our children! we don’t need them [the Jews]!’ [Biskupska St.]²⁴
- ‘beat them for our children’²⁵
- ‘the Jews are in power and that’s why they murder our children!’ [Biskupska St.]²⁶
- ‘it must be true that our children have been tormented to death!’; ‘and look! and look!’ [a nun]²⁷
- ‘the Jews have murdered children’ [workers from the Ludwików steel mill]²⁸

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- 18 “Protokół zatrzymania, 4/7/1946”. In: Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 114.
- 19 Nurowska; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 62.
- 20 “Zeznanie w WUBP w Kielcach Marii Welfman”, July 6, 1946, as cited in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 161.
- 21 Kaczmarek, Czesław: “Raport biskupa Czesława Kaczmarka przekazany ambasadorowi USA w Warszawie Arthurowi Bliss Lane’owi”. In: Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 191.
- 22 “Zeznanie w WUBP w Kielcach Marii Welfman”, July 6, 1946, as cited in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 161.
- 23 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzaney Antoniny Biskupskiej”, July 5, 1946 as cited in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 129.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Ryszarda Sałapy”, July 24, 1946 as cited in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 216.
- 26 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzaney Antoniny Biskupskiej”, July 5, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 131.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 10. “An employee of the foundry [Ludwików steel mill] [...] ran around the plant departments with a metal bar in his hand [...] saying a Polish boy whom the Jews wanted to kill for matzo had escaped from a Jewish home,” “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Mariana Nogaja” October 15, 2001, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 122.

- ‘the Jews have murdered 14 of our children, and all mothers and fathers should gather and kill all the Jews’²⁹

Similar cries can be found in the files documenting the earlier pogroms in Rzeszów:

- ‘murder of several dozen children by the Jews!’ [a newspaper seller’s cry]³⁰
- ‘criminals and murderers of Catholic children!’ [mob gathered in Tannenbauma St.]³¹
- ‘sons of bi..., you want to get Poland, [so] you are murdering [people]!’³²

and in Kraków:

- ‘help, people, [the Jews] were trying to murder me!’ [cry of a 13-year-old Antoś Nijaki, rushing out of the synagogue in Miodowa St.]³³
- ‘we did not raise our children to have them now murdered by the Jews!’ [a judge’s wife at the so-called Tandeta, a market in Podgórze, a district of Kraków]³⁴
- ‘you lousy kike [woman], you murdered two Polish children, you’re going to die in jail’³⁵ [Gendarmerie Corporal Jan Podstawski, militiamen Edmund Bartosik and Czesław Hynek to Stanisława Saletnik, taken for a Jewess]
- ‘that’s the one murdering in the prayer house’ [militiamen Bolesław Skrzypek and Józef Bednarczyk about Hilel Kleiner]³⁶

29 “Protokół przesłuchania Mojżesza Cukiera” July 6, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, pp. 113–114.

30 “Notatka kpt. Braude”, in Kaczmarek, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 134. Also “Sprawozdanie w sprawie wypadków zaszłych w Rzeszowie w dniu 12 czerwca 1945, Wojewódzka Żydowska Komisja Historyczna”, June 16, 1945, in Kaczmarek, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 100.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

32 *Ibid.*

33 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Antoniego Nijakiego w WUBP”, August 14, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, pp. 150–151.

34 “Akt oskarżenia przeciw 25 uczestnikom pogromu w dn. 11 sierpnia”, September 5, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 212. Cf. a similar cry in Kielce: “whose children are we going to raise, etc.”; testimony of Tadeusz Kociałkowski, a barber, after Blus-Węgrowa, *Pogrom kielecki*, p. 53.

35 “Postanowienie o pociągnięciu do odpowiedzialności karnej Podstawskiego Jana i Bartosika Edmunda”, July 22, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 81.

36 “Przesłuchanie Hilela Kleinera – agenta towarzystwa ubezpieczeniowego”, quoted in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, pp. 82, 157, 211.

The pogrom mob might give the impression of an amorphous jumble, but eventually a clear collective identity emerges within the crowd. The mob's actions – particularly acts of violence – are irrevocable, and therefore determine its identity and further conduct to a very high extent.³⁷ Thus emerges a collective *Wirbewusstsein*,³⁸ a feeling of “who we are“, who can become “one of us” (*unsereiner*)³⁹ and who is an outsider. Typically, every process of creating an identity begins with determining the latter.⁴⁰ During a pogrom, identity markers are expressed in exhortatory cries, which function as performatives programming the behavior of the crowd. Not all cries catch on,⁴¹ as they must fit the expectations of the mass. The cries with which the mob identifies trigger the process of its thickening, of segregation into “us and them”, of specifying who is who and what liberties one can take with them. The following are the examples of such cries from Kraków:

- ‘kike [women], kike [women]!’ [street urchins to Hanna Zajdman and her girlfriend]⁴²
- ‘those lousy kikes’ [an employee of the city council in Kraków]⁴³

37 See Appadurai, Arjun: *Fear of Small Numbers. An Essay on Geography of Anger*. Duke University Press: Durham and London 2006, p. 6: “Violence can create a macabre form of certainty and can become a brutal technique (a folk discovery-procedure) about ‘them’ and, therefore, about ‘us’”

38 Vansina, Jan: *Oral Tradition as History*. Routledge and Kegan Paul: London 1985, p. 92.

39 Shachar, Isaiah: *The Judensau. A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and Its History*. Warburg Institute: London 1974, p. 3.

40 This can be supported with what we know about the importance of difference in the emergence of collective identities; see Obrębski, Józef: “Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia”. *Przegląd Socjologiczny* 3(4), 1936, pp. 414–447; Barth, Frederic: *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Little, Brown: New York 1969.

41 Thus e.g. during a PPR rally to condemn the Kraków pogrom of August 1945, the crowd did not follow the exhortation “To the University!” that was to direct “people’s anger” at the professors of the Jagiellonian University, accused by the communist authorities of having organized the pogrom. See Kochański, Aleksander (ed.): *Protokoły posiedzeń sekretariatu PPR 1945–1948*. ISP PAN: Warsaw 2001, p. 97: “The exhortation ‘To the University!’ was not taken up by Drobner [deputy chairman of the Supreme Council of PPS]; instead, he dissolved the rally. The workers were furious [...]”

42 “Protokół spisany z ob. Zajdman Hanną, ur 1930 w Warszawie”, August 20, 1945, AŻIH, 301/1582.

43 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Artura Silbera”, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 165.

- ‘beat the Jews’ [caretaker Franciszek Bandys]⁴⁴
- ‘a kike [woman]? If she’s a kike, beat her’ [a WP Gendarmerie corporal and two militiamen]⁴⁵
- ‘kill, because it’s a Jewish child’ [political and educational officer of the 1st WP Command running after a five-year-old girl]⁴⁶
- ‘what do you care, you son of a bitch, it’s a Jewish child’ [a militiaman to a member of KRN [*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*, State National Council], who was trying to stop him]⁴⁷
- ‘it’s scandalous for a Pole not to have the civil courage to hit an unarmed man’ [a railroad worker beating a wounded Jew in hospital]⁴⁸
- ‘this crooked kike [woman], they made a real mess of her’ [a nun in a hospital to a wounded Hanna Zajdman, taken for a gentile]⁴⁹
- ‘the mob shouted that I should be arrested because I’m a Jew’ [Dawid Ruber]⁵⁰
- ‘fuck it, why do you work for those fucking Jews!’⁵¹ [militiaman Franciszek Kucharski to a girl in a Jewish shop]⁵²

The following are the cries from the Kielce pogrom belonging to the same category:

- ‘A Jew! Hit him!’⁵³
- ‘hit’, ‘Jew’ [a young man having checked Abram Moszkowicz’s ID]⁵⁴

44 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Franciszka Bandysa w MUBP”, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 138.

45 “Postanowienie o pociągnięciu do odpowiedzialności karnej Podstawskiego Jana i Bartosika Edmunda”, August 22, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 81.

46 “Postanowienie o pociągnięciu do odpowiedzialności karnej sierż. Jedynowicza Stanisława”, August 22, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, pp. 83, 209.

47 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Drzewieckiego Michała, posła do Krajowej Rady Narodowej”, August 21, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 83.

48 “Protokół spisany z ob. Zajdman Hanną, ur 1930 w Warszawie”, August 20, 1945, AŻIH, 301/1582.

49 Ibid.

50 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Dawida Rabera w MUBP”, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 135.

51 “Zeznanie współpracownika MUBP Edmunda Łukawieckiego o zachowaniu milicjanta Kucharskiego”, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 136.

52 Ibid., p. 206.

53 Kalicki; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 86.

54 After: Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 119.

- ‘hit [her]! It’s a kike [woman]’ [women in Planty St.]⁵⁵
- ‘you kike [woman]’ [to Jadwiga Najgeburska]⁵⁶
- ‘a man was walking by, they said he was a Jew, so I hit him. An officer said that it’s forbidden to hit him, that he is not a Jew. If I’d known, I wouldn’t have hit [him].’⁵⁷

An attack on a Polish woman with a Semitic appearance is regarded as a mistake.⁵⁸ Similarly a civilian is left in peace, saved by his wife’s or relative’s words: ‘Don’t hit him, he’s a Pole.’⁵⁹ WP soldier Maks Erlbaum finds himself in a different situation:

[Testimony of an employee of the Kielce PUBP (*Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, District Office of State Security)]

I saw some sergeant draw a revolver from that Jew’s holster. Then the soldier shouted [at the defendant, 2nd Lieutenant Marzęcki], “Lieutenant [‘I’m Polish’ – the witness added these words later in the interrogation], please defend me” and showed him his military identity card. The lieutenant examined the identity card, returned it to the soldier, and ordered the sergeant to return the seized pistol, which is what the sergeant did. Then some woman shouted: “Let me through, I’ll identify him” and started to open the fly on his trousers. At that moment I took the soldier away and brought him to Division Headquarters. [...] Some school kid, who was standing next to Lieutenant Marzęcki, said: “Erlbaum is a Jewish surname.”⁶⁰

Maks Erlbaum, the victim, gives a different version:

As I was approaching the end of the street, all of a sudden the defendant Manecka grabbed me by the wrist and demanded to see my [identity] documents. [...] Then some lieutenant arrived, I approached him and asked him to help me, showing him my military identity card. The lieutenant glanced at the card and returned it to me saying:

55 Drożdżeński; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 29.

56 Morawski, Pytlakowski; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 104.

57 Testimony of Julian Chorążak, a locksmith; “Protokół rozprawy Najwyższego Sądu Wojskowego na sesji wyjazdowej w Kielcach przeciw Antoninie Biskupskiej i współoskarżonym”, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 163.

58 Morawski, Pytlakowski; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 104.

59 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Ryszarda Sałaj”, July 24, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 214. A similar story regarding “citizen Pardoła” is told by Antoni Sałaj on July 5, 1946; quoted in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 117.

60 “Protokół rozprawy głównej przed Wojskowym Sądem Rejonowym w Kielcach”, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 287.

“there’s no mention of [your] religion here”. When the crowd started to press on me, I grabbed Lieutenant Marzęcki’s belt with both hands, entreating him to help me. The lieutenant threw my hands back in an effort to withdraw. [...] The crowd, seeing that the lieutenant is not helping me began to pull on my clothes ... A UB sergeant saved me from the hands of the crowd. Who was pulling my pants down I don’t know.⁶¹

Author Andrzej Drożdżeński describes a similar scene in his memoirs. ‘That’s a Jew!’, some men were said to have shouted, referring to a man in uniform.⁶² The mob tells him to recite “Our Father” and sing *Kiedy ranne wstają zorze*, a religious hymn. A soldier cries: ‘I know him, he’s a Jew from UB (State Security). Hit him, but take off his uniform first.’⁶³ The mob starts the beating.

Both in the above descriptions and in the following cries, we can see recurring patterns of wartime behavior toward the Jews. In an example above, ‘some school kid’ demonstrated his cultural competence from the occupation period (‘Erlbaum is a Jewish name’). In the following, it is used by adults:

- ‘Jew, your [identity] documents’⁶⁴
- ‘then I wanted to hide at Zieliński the baker’s, but he shouted: “get out!” and slammed the door in my face’ [Hersz Gutman’s testimony]⁶⁵
- “‘you son of a bitch, take [your] shoes off!’ I took [my] shoes off’ [Mojżesz Cukier, a tailor, recounting a soldier’s or militiaman’s actions]⁶⁶

61 “Protokół rozprawy głównej przed Wojskowym Sądem Rejonowym w Kielcach”, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 288.

62 Drożdżeński; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 30.

63 Drożdżeński; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 30. According to witness Sobański, the words “Do not tarnish the uniform” were allegedly uttered by an unknown boy scout, and the witness allegedly repeated them; “Protokół rozprawy głównej przed Wojskowym Sądem Rejonowym w Kielcach”, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 289.

64 Kalicki; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 86; see also Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 121. Cf. Władysław Sobczyński’s testimony from July 11, 1946: “Groups of civilians wandered around town searching for the Jews and checking documents,” quoted after Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 317.

65 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Hersza Gutmana”, July 5, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 121.

66 “Protokół przesłuchania Mojżesza Cukiera”, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, pp. 113–114.

- ‘we’ll murder you all, because Hitler didn’t murder you’ [Ewa Szuchman, a tailor residing at 7 Planty St. quoting a soldier]⁶⁷
- ‘you had it coming, they should’ve wiped you all out’ [militiaman Marian Antonkiewicz to the wounded in the hospital, after they had been searched and robbed]⁶⁸
- ‘and Hitler should have a golden monument raised in his honor, because he has taught us to beat the Jews!’⁶⁹
- ‘since Hitler didn’t finish you off, we will finish you off’⁷⁰
- ‘the Germans didn’t do away with you, so we will do away with you’ [militiaman Władysław Błachut to Ewa Szuchman]⁷¹
- ‘surrender all you got, surrender your dollars’ [a militiaman to Regina Fisz and Abram Moszkowicz]⁷²
- ‘whack it’ [militiaman Mazur to a colleague about Regina Fisz’s child]⁷³
- ‘Tkaczyk Adam observed that the defendant’s bayonet is covered with blood [...] and asked defendant Kołpacki [a WP soldier] why his bayonet was red, and Kołpacki replied: “I don’t know, I was in the square, and there was work,”⁷⁴ and when Tkaczyk admonished him [...] the defendant explained that a Jew

67 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Ewy Szuchman”, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 112.

68 “Wyrok Wojskowego Sądu Rejonowego w Kielcach w sprawie Mariana Antonkiewicza”, March 28, 1947, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 239. See also “Wyrok Wojskowego Sądu Rejonowego w sprawie Antoniego Apajewskiego, Czesława Chojnackiego, Stefana Palczyńskiego, Józefa Kanasa, Zenona Kołpackiego, Jana Pompy i Ludwika Nowaka” (all were Polish Army soldiers) from December 3, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, pp. 202–203.

69 Łoziński, *Materiały z filmu “Świadkowie”*, 17.

70 Testimony of Waclaw Ziółek from 26 April 1990; quoted after Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 114.

71 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Ewy Szuchman”, quoted in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 112.

72 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Abrama Moszkowicza”, July 6, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 119.

73 “Protokół rozprawy Najwyższego Sądu Wojskowego na sesji wyjazdowej w Kielcach przeciwko Antoninie Biskupskiej i współoskarżonym”, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 172.

74 “I have some work to do,” said Nowakowski, one of the killers of Regina Fisz and her little son. “The items [belonging to] that killed Jewess were taken by Nowakowski, among them: money, 17 dollars, and three rings.” “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Stefana Mazura”, July 7, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 132.

was lying [on the ground] still alive, in terrible pain, and I have a [sensitive?] conscience, so I can't look at [someone's] suffering, and I finished him off with a bayonet.⁷⁵

- 'Nowakowski said that there was a Jewess and a Jew and the flat must be closed and we have to do our thing' [Stefan Mazur, a PPR/AL member, functionary at the militia station at 12 Sienkiewicza St.]⁷⁶
- 'I took things from a Jewish home, because I saw that everyone was doing it and I supposed it was legal [...]'⁷⁷
- 'When the caretaker asked who would pay her for all that, I told her: "everything is all right, you can take things because the Jews aren't coming back."⁷⁸

Analogous wartime *skaz*⁷⁹ or idiom used when speaking to the Jews and about the Jews in postwar Poland appears in sources referring to the Kraków pogrom.

75 "Wyrok Wojskowego Sądu Rejonowego w sprawie Antoniego Apajewskiego, Czesława Chojnackiego, Stefana Palczyńskiego, Józefa Kanasa, Zenona Kołpackiego, Jana Pompy i Ludwika Nowaka", (all Polish Army soldiers) from December 3, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 203.

76 "Protokół rozprawy Najwyższego Sądu Wojskowego na sesji wyjazdowej w Kielcach przeciw Antoninie Biskupskiej i współoskarżonym", July 9, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 170.

77 "Protokół przesłuchania Eugeniusza Krawczyka, Kielce", July 27, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 130. "Krawczyk Eugeniusz [aged 15, referred to in the sentencing document as an 'MO functionary'], a liaison at the WKMO in Kielce [...] ran to 7 Planty St, where he pushed his way through a crowd of people, put 5 kg of rice, 2 shirts, 2 towels, 7 packs of tea, 1 pair of underwear, a blanket, a shaver, some dried apricots and walnuts in a suitcase he had found. Having packed it into the suitcase, he carried [it] to Sienkiewicza St, entered a shop, sold the rice, the tea, and the apricots for 1,150 zlotys. At the market, he sold one towel for 30 zlotys to a random trader, and exchanged the other one for a bottle of lemonade and a cigarette. He took the rest of the things to the barracks, and sold the shaver. Having returned to the market, he noticed some militiamen leading a man of Jewish origin, whom he hit [...]" after Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 250.

78 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Stefana Mazura", July 7, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 132.

79 *Skaz* (Rus.), which carries the "forgotten voice of those times" is a term used by Henryk Grynberg to describe Bohdan Wojdowski's writing; Grynberg, Henryk: *Prawda nieartystyczna*. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy: Warsaw 1994, p. 263. Grynberg has borrowed this term from Russian folklore studies; see Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: "Skaz antysemityzmu". *Teksty Drugie* 1–2, 2009, pp. 302–317.

One of the most active pogrom participants was the caretaker of the shelter at 26 Miodowa St., Kazimierz Bandys.⁸⁰ Of the two of his cries, one refers to the blood libel legend ('you are on Polish soil and still you murder Polish children')⁸¹ and the other one is a threat ('you old whores, if Hitler couldn't finish you all off, we will')⁸². During the pogrom, Bandys behaves like a man going into regression. He reverts to the occupation period behavior patterns: hunting for the Jews and looting (*szaber*). When interrogated, he says:

[...] [the soldiers] asked me to help them with looking for Jews ... I said I wanted high boots, but he [a Jew called Ptasznik] did not want to give them [to me] and only with a soldier's help did we [manage to] force him to take them off. Those boots I took for myself, they are the ones I'm wearing [...] I was holding a revolver and an axe.⁸³

At the climax of the Kraków pogrom, 'the interior of the [Kupa] synagogue was burned down, and the perpetrators took the Torah scrolls out into the street, put them in a heap, which was set on fire according to the German method.'⁸⁴

Re 1 and 2: Crowd growth and equality

Thus far, we have discussed the direction and the density of the pogrom mass. Another one of its tendencies is constant growth. The cries below, produced by the Kraków mob, allow us to determine the function that the threats directed at the Jews had in the growth and self-organization of the mob:

- 'we'll cut all your heads off' [4 militiamen and civilians to Jews in the shelter in Miodowa St.]
- 'shut up or I'll cut your head off' [a militiaman to a resident of the shelter]⁸⁵

80 According to the indictment, he had contacts with NSZ [*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*, National Armed Forces]; after Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 75 (footnote 27 with a quote from the indictment).

81 After id., p. 206.

82 Ibid.

83 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Franciszka Bandysa w WUBP", August 15, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 163.

84 "Sprawozdanie CKŻP o zajęciach antyżydowskich w Krakowie w sobotę dnia 11 sierpnia 1945", in Kwiek, Julian: "Wydarzenia antyżydowskie 11 sierpnia 1945 w Krakowie". *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 1(193), 2000; also Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 88.

85 Witness statements of Sara Stern and Renata Hiller at the Jewish Committee from 13 August 1945; after Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 140.

- ‘we will prevail over you all’⁸⁶
- ‘that railroad worker cried that they will be shooting a Jew’ [a Soviet soldier who saved Hilel Kleiner’s life]⁸⁷
- ‘we’re from AK, there are eighteen of us armed, we’ll kill you all’ [militiamen and other attackers, breaking into a Jewish shop]⁸⁸
- ‘they want communism, so I’ll give them communism’ [militiamen]⁸⁹
- ‘Jews are Bolsheviks’ [militiamen]⁹⁰
- ‘enough of our blood’ [militiamen]⁹¹

The Rzeszów mob organized itself in a similar manner:

- ‘beat the Jews!’⁹²
- ‘kill them, stone them!’⁹³
- ‘the Germans didn’t finish you off, we will!’⁹⁴

And the Kielce mob likewise organized itself in this manner:

[testimony of Edward Jurkowski, a musician]

I drank a quarter of a liter of vodka and had something to eat and, somewhat tipsy, I too joined the crowd, and also shouted that we must murder the Jews, if they murder our people, and shouted, ‘forward, men.’ I was also standing next to a WP ensign and shouted at him that if he’s a hero, he should go and beat the Jews. I was running around like crazy among the people and kept shouting that Jews had to be beaten. On the way

86 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Franciszka Bandysa w MUBP”, August 11, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 138.

87 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka, Ilji Chorowoja [Red Army soldier]”, August 11, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 134.

88 After Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 194 and “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Franciszka Kucharskiego w WUBP”, August 30, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 79.

89 “Postanowienie o pociągnięciu do odpowiedzialności karnej sierżanta Jedynowicza Stanisława”, August 22, 1945, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 83.

90 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Hilela Kleinera”; after: Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie* p. 82.

91 Ibid.

92 “Protokół zeznania świadka Leiba Kaplana w sprawie wypadków w mieście Rzeszowie”, in Kaczmarzski, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 76.

93 “Sprawozdanie z przebiegu zająć antyżydowskich”, in Kaczmarzski, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 93.

94 “Sprawozdanie w sprawie wypadków zaszłych ...”, in Kaczmarzski, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 102.

with the crowd I kept telling people that we should go and see, and even if 20 or 30 of us fall, we should show that we can fight.⁹⁵

The growth of the mob is combined with a radical equality established within it. Although it signifies the loss of individuality,⁹⁶ in return the individuals are infected with a feeling of the mob's power, combined with an impression of merging into something larger than oneself, which at the same time frees them from any responsibility. At the expense of submission, every member of the collective takes on the mob's attributes: its infallibility, fearlessness, and inviolability. Precisely for this reason, the collective identity of the pogrom crowd is attractive to the onlookers and the security forces.

This is not the only cause of the mutual attraction between those groups. As we know, in Kielce, Kraków and Rzeszów, the affinity between the security forces and the mob prevented the former from doing their job. The unfolding of this process is apparent from the documents about the Kielce pogrom. In the cries of the mob gathered at 7 Planty St., there gradually emerges an alliance of the militia and the army with the mob.

- [mob to soldiers]: 'Finish the Jews off'⁹⁷
- 'Having approached the door, one of the gendarmes hit a Jew, which raised a storm of applause and the cry: "Long live our army!"'⁹⁸
- 'Long live our army and MO!'⁹⁹

95 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Edwarda Jurkowskiego", July 5, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, pp. 122–123.

96 Freud, Sigmund / Reszke, Robert (transl.): "Psychologia zbiorowości i analiza ja". In: id.: *Pisma społeczne*. KR: Warsaw 1998, p. 74.

97 "Protokół przesłuchania oficera Informacji WP Józefa Lewartowskiego", January 6, 1994, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 234.

98 "Raport funkcjonariusza PUBP w Kielcach Henryka Rybaka do szefa PUBP", July 4, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 150. "The soldiers were walking around the entire square and the street, mixing with the instigated crowd and ultimately yielded to the crowd's agitation, e.g. a soldier hitting a Jew in the face stirred great enthusiasm among the crowd, which shouted: 'Long live the Polish Army!'" from "Raport Jana Jurkowskiego i Henryka Gutowskiego, pracowników Departamentu II MBP, będących na wyjeździe służbowym w Kielcach 4/7/1945 dla Ministra BP, Radkiewicza", in Blus-Węgrowska, *Pogrom kielecki*, pp. 62–63.

99 "Sprawozdanie zastępcy szefa PUBP Alberta Grynbauma z przebiegu zajęć antysemitycznych w Kielcach", Kielce July 6, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 117.

- ‘Bravo militia!’¹⁰⁰
- ‘The people shouted: “Long live the Polish Army!” although there were many militiamen among the troops, and then one could notice satisfaction among the soldiers and great zeal in dragging out the Jews’¹⁰¹
- ‘I didn’t react because I saw that besides civilians, MO functionaries and soldiers are also involved in the murder, and I didn’t want to undermine the favorable opinion the army and MO held with the mob, which shouted “Long live the Polish Army!”; “Soldiers, beat the Jews for our children!”’ [a militiaman].¹⁰²

The cries demonstrate that the anti-Jewish alliance is based on the *Wirbewusstsein*, the worldview unity of both groups, virtually undistinguishable, if we take into consideration what we know about the circumstances of recruitment into the militia and the army.¹⁰³ Both formations were not only ‘ready to believe the rumors about murders of children committed by the Jews,’¹⁰⁴ but the militia men and the soldiers were certain that they had been brought in to defend the murderers of children.¹⁰⁵ The analysis of trial documents, memoirs, and witness statements leads to a conclusion that at the scene of the pogrom in Planty St., one

100 “Protokół przesłuchania w WUBP świadka Jury Mojżesza”, July 6, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 159–160.

101 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Ryszarda Sałapy”, July 25, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, pp. 218–219.

102 Ibid.

103 Zaremba, “Mit mordu rytualnego”, pp. 96, 100, 102, 107 etc. Majer, Piotr: *Milicja Obywatelska 1944–1957: geneza, organizacja, działalność, miejsce w aparacie władzy*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego: Olsztyn 2004, pp. 23–272.

104 Kersten, Krystyna: *Pisma rozproszone*. Szarota, Tomasz / Libionka, Dariusz (eds.) Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek: Toruń 2006, p. 290. See also “Sprawozdanie inżynierów KC PPR z pobytu w woj. kieleckim w czasie od 4 do 15 lipca 1946” in Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 137: “The militia and the army were not under control. Instead of quelling the riot, they mixed with the crowd and yielded to the influence of the crowd.”

“[D]emands were made to withdraw the army and MO, which had identified with the agitated crowd,” after Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 149. See also Blus-Węgrowska, *Pogrom kielecki*, pp. 62–63.

105 “But the greatest influence on the course of the pogrom was the mindset of the militiamen and soldiers sent to defend; the conviction that they had been ordered to defend the Jews who had murdered Polish children,” Kersten, *Pisma rozproszone*, p. 276.

could hardly find anyone able to resist the hypnotic influence of this fantasy.¹⁰⁶ If such a group did exist, it was composed of those whom the rumor was threatening. They might have been Jews or – to use Krzysztof Kaczmarek's peculiar term – "Soviets".¹⁰⁷ The Jews did not believe the blood libel legend because they were perfectly aware of its function and its manifestations. The "Soviets" (who included communists of various ethnic backgrounds, particularly those who had spent the war in the Soviet Union) had been subjected to atheist indoctrination, which might have undermined their established religious belief in the veracity of the blood libel legend. But not all of them benefited from the indoctrination: the fear of Jews, which had for centuries been part of the education of Polish children, was too strong.¹⁰⁸ Also some of the Kuybyshev NKVD school graduates did

106 The particle "niby" [supposedly] or the adverb "rzekomo" [allegedly], appear very seldom in interrogation transcripts; see the statement of Albert Grynbaum, an employee of the Kielce WUBP: "I heard that the Jews had supposedly killed Polish children," from "Protokół przesłuchania świadka ppor. Alberta Grynbauma, pracownika PUBP w Kielcach", August 2, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 342. This particle is not to be found in a number of statements in which we would expect to find it, e.g. in the account of Kazimierz Golczewski, who was a prosecutor in Kielce: "I don't remember [...] if I have already heard at the time [...] that a child had been detained by the Jews in the basement of a house in Planty St, to use his blood to 'make matzah.' The child survived, I don't remember how. This, as I remember, was the cause of those incidents." "Protokół przesłuchania prokuratora WPR w Kielcach, Kazimierza Golczewskiego", March 10, 1992, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 243. See also "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Władysława Sobczyńskiego", August 7, 1946: "Kuźnicki replied that one would have to examine what the matter looks like, because they did have information that the Jews had killed [someone]," after: Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 322.

107 See Kaczmarek, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 35.

108 "To children of kindergarten age [...] in the villages, towns and suburbs, the word 'Jew' brought associations of a man in a black gabardine stretching to the ground, in a black hat or cap, with a sack on his back, and an obligatory cane or umbrella in his hand. The cane, or rather a kind of stick, was sometimes used by this black[-clad] man to chase away dogs, which were particularly fierce toward him [...] When such a figure appeared, a shout was usually heard: 'There goes a Jew with a sack!'; to which shout groups of children vanished from the streets like frightened sparrows. [...] How many times have I heard it said to me or to others: 'You'll see! A Jew will kidnap you and put you in a sack.' Or: 'You'll see, I'll sell you to a Jew, and he'll put you in a sack.'" Kotula, Franciszek: *Tamten Rzeszów czyli wędrówka po zakątkach i historii miasta*. Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza: Rzeszów 1985, p. 379.

not want to cease to be those “children”, especially since the Jews stood in their way to better communist posts.

This can best be exemplified by an excerpt from a report written three days after the pogrom by a Rzeszów militiaman Michał Kołacz,¹⁰⁹ a graduate of the Kuybyshev NKVD school:

It is to the great disgrace of the government, what impression it makes and what the attitude of the population is in a free, independent and democratic Poland, where the government above all privileges the Jews, perpetual exploiters, capitalists, persecutors of the faith in Christ, murderers of the Polish nation.¹¹⁰

Kołacz’ statement combines three versions of the Bloodsucker figure discussed in the previous chapter: left-wing, religious and national. The report continues in this vein, thus attesting to the failure of the communist instruction, and demonstrating the palpability of the fear that the Jews were inspiring:

Anger and hatred for Jews continue to be felt among the civilian population, in connection with the detected murder. [...] The Security say it is just one girl, but where are all the other missing children, women from the country, who had gone into town with provisions and disappeared without a trace. How come there were human skulls there, clothes, shoes that still had feet in them. There’s no way such a thing will be hushed up, this terrible massacre of Polish children and the making of sausages, several kilograms of which were also found in the chimney. They say it should be in every Pole’s interest and he should avenge the innocent Polish children. [...] They say that the [State] Security is leaking provocations, blaming it on Hitler’s fascists [sic], but they are thoroughly mistaken and they should stop fooling around because even during occupation [even] the worst of the Nazi enemies did not torment Poles so much when killing them, because he asked him to lie down and then he shot him from the back, and they [the Jews] cut the head off when [the person is] still alive, gouge the eyes out, cut the veins, and the person slowly expires, it is very brutal, and if the matter goes unpunished, it will just make things worse, will cause unrest among the population and lead to civil war.¹¹¹

The image of feet protruding out of the shoes belonging to the kidnapped children and women, along with the “sausage version of the blood libel legend” included in this account give Kołacz’s report a distinctly plebeian, Rabelaisian character. Unlike in Rabelais however, these images are not ironic: they represent the literalization of metaphor, or – to use Hanna Segal’s term¹¹² – a symbolic

109 See a biographical entry in Kaczmarek, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 69.

110 “Raport sytuacyjny Michała Kołacza”, June 14, 1945, in Kaczmarek, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 81.

111 Kaczmarek, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 81.

112 See Chapter 6 in this volume.

equation, which could have fatal consequences in Poland. In another one of Kołacz' reports, written on the second day of the Rzeszów pogrom, the figure of Bloodsucker undergoes a similar transformation, manifesting itself in a particular Jew – a militiaman.

I personally know one woman who has a Jewish tenant – a militiaman. This Jew said that he had come to Poland in order to spill Polish blood.¹¹³

The alliance between the militia, the army and the people (mob equality) is sealed by the following assurances of Kielce soldiers: 'Don't be afraid, we won't shoot at our own people.'¹¹⁴ The extent to which the people's regime amalgamated with the "people" is demonstrated in another statement, also from Kielce:

[...] the militiamen from the MO precinct in Sienkiewicza St. were the worst. They walked between the civilians in the crowd, saying: "Poles, don't be afraid". One of the soldiers shouted that he had seen 4 dead children in lime, and a militiaman by the entrance to the house shouted that his child was dead and was in that house.¹¹⁵

That is what witness Zbigniew Niewiarowski says about the early stages of the incident:

At the beginning of the incident, the building was actually guarded by MO functionaries. But this did not last long, because the Kielce municipal commander, Markiewicz, who was on the spot when the crowd, instigated by various dark elements, was shouting and yelling: "Let us in, and we'll deal with them", while giving out various cries: "Down

113 Kaczmarek, *Pogrom którego nie było*, p. 70.

114 "Relacja kanclerza Kurii Diecezjalnej Kieleckiej ks. Henryka Peszko na temat pogromu kieleckiego, 1981", in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, pp. 210–211. Jerzy Daniel (*Żyd w zielonym kapeluszu. Rzecz o pogromie 4 lipca 1946*. Scriptum: Kielce 1996, p. 78) noted a characteristic interpretation of the issue in a proclamation signed by the Kielce Province Governor Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk and Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek: "Not a shot was fired at the people [i.e. at non-Jews]." For a comment, see Gross, *Strach*, p. 189.

115 "Raport funkcjonariusza PUBP w Kielcach Henryka Rybaka do szefa PUBP", July 4, 1946, quoted in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 151. Similar false testimonies were given by soldiers in Kraków. A report by Soviet security services informs about the following incident with the involvement of the militia: "[T]hey introduced themselves as soldiers of the Kraków Military District and gave their names: Wasilewski Jan, Perzek Tadeusz, and Gacek Roman. They stated that they had witnessed the four Jews they had brought in murder Polish children in the synagogue," Sergiej Kriwienko, "Raporty z Polski". *Karta* 15, 1995, pp. 31–32; "30/08/1945, Soobszczenie Seliwanowskogo NKWD SSSR Berija", p. 98 (336–337a), in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 73.

with the Jewish lackeys”, “Long live our army”, “Down with the Russian [state] security, which protects the Jews”, etc. Major Markiewicz, issuing no orders, roamed around among the crowd, and later told the mob: “Come on, go inside and see for yourselves, and search everywhere”.¹¹⁶

Other witnesses also state:

[...] defendant Furman [an MO functionary] was instigating the crowd, shouting: “Look for the children!”¹¹⁷

Some of the accounts show that the attack on the Jewish shelter was carried out jointly by the militia and the army.¹¹⁸ It was accompanied by gunshots from the mob standing outside the building, interpreted as Jews’ defending themselves with firearms.¹¹⁹ This is reflected in the following cries:

116 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Zbigniewa Niewiarowskiego”, July 5, 1945, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 113.

117 “Postanowienie Najwyższego Sądu Wojskowego w sprawie skarg i wniosku rewizyjnego na wyrok uniewinniający Jana Rogozińskiego, Ludwika Pustułę i Franciszka Furmana”, March 12, 1947, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, pp. 250–251.

118 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Zbigniewa Niewiarowskiego”, July 5, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 116.

119 This was testified to by Franciszek Jonkisz: “[T]he crowd gathered outside the Provincial Jewish Committee at 7 Planty St. was throwing the Jewish people living at 7 Planty St. out of the windows, of the mezzanine, while others, shouting that the Jews with grenades and automatic weapons were getting ready for a fight with the people gathered outside the building, were immediately killing the Jews that had been thrown out. Personally I can state, which is in concordance with facts, that from the building, i.e. on the part of the Jewish population, there were no shots, and most shots came from MO and the army,” from “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Franciszka Jonkisz”, July 7, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 115.

See a contradictory second-hand account in the testimony of the Kielce Province Governor, E. Wiślicz- Iwańczyk, quoted in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 273. On the subject of Jews firing shots see also the testimony of Ryszard Sałapa: “Witnessing the raging crowd murdering Jews, I was so excited that I considered it a kind of honor, telling Wróbel that I was still in the building and next to me they were shooting at the Jews lying in bed, and on the other hand saying that the Jews also were shooting at us,” from “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Ryszarda Sałapy”, July 25, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, pp. 218–219.

A similar rumor triggered a wave of violence during the Kraków pogrom. The shooting was interpreted according to individual views on the nature of the clashes. The

- ‘Gentlemen! The Jews killed a Polish officer!’ [a civilian fleeing from 7 Planty St.]¹²⁰
- ‘The Jews killed your lieutenant, beat them’ [women to WP soldiers]¹²¹
- ‘[militiaman Szymkiewicz] told me to shoot a kneeling Jewess. When I replied that she had done nothing and I wouldn’t shoot her, defendant Szymkiewicz told me that I was not a good Pole, and added that the “whore” had shot a Polish officer.’¹²²

The turning point in the Kielce pogrom was probably the moment when the militia and the army began fighting with the Public Security forces,¹²³ possibly deployed in order to cause the withdrawal of the militia, whose appearance in the “Jewish home” in order to carry out a search constituted a spark that set off the pogrom.¹²⁴ Pogrom cries enable us to reconstruct this process. The mob stands in defense of MO against UB.¹²⁵ From mere exhortations of ‘beat the Jews’ (at around 9 o’clock,¹²⁶ also at 12.30¹²⁷), it moves to an attack on the ‘UB men’, identified as ‘defenders of Jews’.

Jewish Press Agency informed that the army and the militia had been fired at twice, without specifying by whom. NKVD claimed that soldiers had fired a few shots for the sake of provocation, although there were rumors that it was the Jews that had fired the weapons. Among those who believed that the Jews were to blame, the dominant view was that the Jews had fired shots from the rooftop. The news echo the Grodno *Wandersagen* of 1920, September 1939 and August 1944, mentions shooting together with the pouring of hot water or hot vinegar (see Chapter 6: *The Figure of Bloodsucker in Polish religious, national and left-wing discourse in the years 1945/1946* in this volume). According to WiN sources, the Jews were to have fired from pistols or even a heavy machine gun from the neighboring houses.

- 120 Drożdżeński; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 28.
- 121 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Tadeusza Lisa”, Kielce, July 4, 1946, quoted in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 116.
- 122 Testimony of Bronisław Tchórz in “Protokół rozprawy głównej przed Wojskowym Sądem Rejonowym w Kielcach”, quoted in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 285.
- 123 Antoni Kręgliński’s statement: “The crowd began to gather during the clash between the UB functionaries and the militiamen,” Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 121.
- 124 On animosities or even hostility between the militia and UB in 1944–1946, see e.g. Majer, *Milicja Obywatelska 1944–1957*, pp. 60–75. Also Blus-Węgrowska, *Pogrom kielecki*, p. 57, etc.
- 125 Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 452.
- 126 Kalicki; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 69.
- 127 Kalicki; *ibid.*, p. 80.

Whoever stands in their defense becomes threatened as well:

- ‘what, you’re defending the UB men?’¹²⁸
- ‘security men, Jewish lackeys, they defend Jews’¹²⁹
- ‘Jewish lackeys gave weapons to the Jews, but we’ll take them away and murder the Jews’¹³⁰
- ‘In a conversation with one woman [...] in which the woman said that a couple of days earlier those Jews had murdered some Polish children, so I asked whether she had actually seen it, and precisely at that time a Polish captain standing by turned to me with these words: “[You] Jewish lackey, I’ll shoot you in the head,” then he kicked me and called the soldiers to take me away, but I was already gone’ [Czesław Konarski, a Kielce WUBP functionary]¹³¹

Whoever defends the enemy becomes an enemy himself (cries of the Kraków mob):

- ‘Fuck you, you side with the Jews’ [a militia man to a PUBP employee]¹³²
- ‘They defend the Jews, and only Jews do that’ [a militiaman, a WP sergeant]¹³³

The same is apparent from the following cries that “thicken” the Kielce mob. They contain segregation syllogisms:

- ‘he defends the Jews because he’s a Jew himself’ [the mob about Jurkowski, a UB agent]¹³⁴
- ‘all Jews are *ubowce* [UB employees]’¹³⁵

128 Drożdżeński; *ibid.*, p. 28.

129 “Zeznanie kpt. Jana Muchy, kierownika Wydziału II PUBP w Kielcach”, August 3, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 351.

130 Testimony of Zdzisław Sitek in “Protokół rozprawy Najwyższego Sądu Wojskowego na sesji wyjazdowej w Kielcach przeciw Antoninie Biskupskiej i współoskarżonym”, July 9, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 250.

131 “Protokół przesłuchania Czesława Konarskiego”, Kielce, July 4, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 122.

132 “Zeznanie współpracownika MUBP Edmunda Łukawieckiego o zachowaniu milicjanta Kucharskiego”, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 136.

133 Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 83. See also “Akt oskarżenia przeciwko 25 uczestnikom pogromu w dniu 11 sierpnia”, in *ibid.*, p. 214.

134 “Protokół przesłuchania funkcjonariusza Departamentu III MBP Henryka Gutowskiego”, August 9, 1996, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 386.

135 Drożdżeński; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 28.

- ‘The Jews are UB. UB are the Jews’¹³⁶
- ‘Jews are Bolsheviks’¹³⁷

The mob shifts its aggression from UB onto other institutions, such as the ‘Jewish government’:

- ‘Poland is ruled by Jews!’¹³⁸
- ‘Down with the Jewish government!’¹³⁹
- ‘All this is happening because we have a Judeocommunist dictatorship!’¹⁴⁰
- ‘Down with the Jews! Down with the Jewish troops!’¹⁴¹
- ‘Beat the Jews, we have a Jewish-Russian government, but we don’t have a Polish one, down with the Jewish threat’¹⁴²
- ‘they want communism, so I’ll show them communism’¹⁴³

In this context, the statement of Stanisław Rurarz – a mentally challenged person – is symbolic:

[...] some woman said that we had three governments: Polish, Russian, and Jewish. Perhaps I said quite unwittingly in the street that there were three governments: Polish, Russian, and Jewish. The passers-by were asking me what that meant, and I replied that I didn’t know. I explained that it had just crossed my mind then, and that’s why I shouted that.¹⁴⁴

136 Nurowska; Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 60.

137 Kraków, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Hilela Kleinera”, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 82.

138 Kielce, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Jana Mańturza”, July 7, 1945, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 116.

139 Kielce, “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzaney Antoniny Biskupskiej”, July 5, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 131.

140 “Raport funkcjonariusza PUBP w Kielcach Henryka Rybaka do szefa PUBP”, July 4, 1946, quoted in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 150.

141 Kielce, “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzaney Antoniny Biskupskiej”, July 5, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 131.

142 “Raport funkcjonariusza PUBP w Kielcach Henryka Rybaka do szefa PUBP”, 4/7/1946, quoted in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 150.

143 Kraków, “Postanowienie o pociągnięciu do odpowiedzialności karnej sierżanta Jedynowicza Stanisława z dn. 22/8/1945”, in Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie*, p. 83.

144 Earlier: “I can explain that the blood on my clothes came by splashing off on me from the Jew [beaten],” from “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Stanisława Rurarza”, July 5, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, pp. 124–127.

This testimony can be dismissed in the same manner as one discredits the testimonies of drunken people or children. While twisting facts, the statements of people like Rurarz nevertheless truly reflect the sick logic of a society and its paranoid schemata.¹⁴⁵ Another one of Rurarz' statements even more clearly expresses the concept of "vengeance"¹⁴⁶ as an aberrational rendering of revenge for a *non-event*. From the linguistic point of view, a better example of projectional inversion can hardly be found:

I was showing [that] to people, saying: 'blood stains on [my] jacket and trousers', expressing that it was the blood [spilled to] avenge the murdered Polish children. The blood spurted from the Jew I was beating.¹⁴⁷

Although it declares itself against the Judeocommunism, the crowd – be it in Kielce, Rzeszów or Kraków – for the most part refrains from crossing the line and instigating a real anti-communist guerrilla. The primary objects of assault are the Jews. Even though the mob is "nationally inspired", the cries sometimes contain left-wing overtones. They are accepted as long as they are legitimized by being antisemitic. This can be illustrated with the cries quoted by two witnesses, Janina Safian and Edward Brandenburg:

In the crowd there was an individual [Stefan Franczak of Ostrowiec¹⁴⁸] who shouted: "Beat the Jews! Murder the Jews!" [...] The individual further shouted that the PPR didn't want the Jews and said that the following day he would be in jail for this. She further adds that she heard the individual shout: "Long live the PPR!"¹⁴⁹

145 Girard, René: *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde. Recherches avec Jean -Michel Oughourlian et Guy Lefort*. Grasset: Paris 1978, p. 171.

146 See Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi*, p. 579 ff.

147 Testimony of Stanisław Rurarz in "Protokół rozprawy Najwyższego Sądu Wojskowego na sesji wyjazdowej w Kielcach przeciw Antoninie Biskupskiej i współoskarżonym", July 9, 1946, in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 166.

148 See a short biography in "Protokół rozprawy głównej przed Wojskowym Sądem Rejonowym w Kielcach", quoted in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 263.

149 Testimony of Janina Safian, corroborated by Edward Brandenburg in "Protokół rozprawy głównej przed Wojskowym Sądem Rejonowym w Kielcach", in Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 285. Another form of cries: "Down with the Jews! We don't want Jews in Poland! Death to the PPR men! Long live Sanation Poland!" is cited by Stanisław Rurarz, quoted after Blus-Węgrowska, *Pogrom kielecki*, p. 86.

Conclusions

This text combines a case study (a comparative analysis of three pogroms) with a methodological study (anthropology of performance). The combination of these elements allows us to formulate preliminary hypotheses and point out the direction for further research.

A preliminary analysis of pogrom cries shows structural similarities between the three collectives in question. What has been referred to as conspiracy theories (the sequence: rumor about a child murdered “for blood” – aggression of the mob endeavoring to punish the perpetrators – attempt made by security forces to control it – decomposition of those forces, which in part join the mob) is in essence a spontaneous process, whose repetitive character suggests that pogrom crowds enacted conflicts around the emergent postwar state authorities, including conflicts within the communist milieu, characterized by a growing hostility between communists of Jewish and non-Jewish origin.

On the one hand, the pogrom crowds *performed* the wartime past – the killing of Jews and the plundering of their property by the Poles that accompanied the Holocaust – and on the other hand, they tried to prevent the anticipated future connected with a sudden change of the status of the Jews after the war.

This chapter was based on Elias Canetti’s concept of the crowd as a mass striving for unrestrained growth and homogenization. The next chapter describes the pogroms using a somewhat different theory, which postulates that homogenization is but a mask worn by social dramas which take an exceptionally violent course.

Chapter 8: *Communitas* of Violence. The Kielce Pogrom as a Social Drama

The Kielce pogrom is one of the best documented events of Polish postwar history, described not only in official documents filed in communist and ecclesiastical archives (the former have been declassified after 1989, while the latter are still largely inaccessible), but also in various personal testimonies of both Poles and Jews. Reports from Warsaw were also wired by foreign diplomats to their governments, e.g. by Ambassador Victor Cavendish-Bentinck to the British Foreign Office¹ and Ambassador Arthur Bliss-Lane to the US Department of State.² Arieh Kochavi has researched the correspondence between the latter institution and the Vatican, showing that blood libel rumors which preceded all Polish pogroms were taken seriously in the ecclesiastical state³.

The tabooization of the pogrom by Communist authorities resulted in a multitude of conspiracy theories, of which the following three were the most important:

- The official theory, claiming that the pogrom was started by the anti-Communist underground.
- The second theory, claiming it was a deliberate provocation by Communist security forces, which in cooperation with NKVD tried to diminish foreign sympathy for Poland, and to draw attention away from the rigged referendum.⁴

1 Kochavi, Arieh: *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945–1948*. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill 2001, p. 161.

2 Bliss-Lane, Arthur: *I Saw Poland Betrayed: An American Ambassador Reports to the American People*. Bobbs-Merrill: New York 1948.

3 Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, p. 181: “The Vatican’s version of the causes of the Kielce pogrom reveals that there was little or no difference between Vatican antisemitism and that of the Polish bishops. A Vatican memorandum stated, among other things, that the ‘influx of [Russian] Jews into Poland coincided with the mysterious vanishing of Christian children. The Vatican totally accepted the fabrication that the child in Kielce had been kidnapped to draw his blood and expressed doubts only as to the number of Jewish victims in the pogrom.’”

4 See e.g. Perkal, Jakub [Andrzej Paczkowski]: *Życie polityczne w Polsce 1944–1948*. Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza Nowa: Warsaw 1983, p. 25; also see Kersten, Krystyna: “Kielce – 4 lipca 1946 roku”. In: id.: *Pisma rozproszone*. Szarota, Tomasz / Libionka, Dariusz (eds.), Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek: Toruń 2006, p. 273.

- The third theory, viewing the pogrom as a Zionist attempt to initiate a mass Jewish emigration to Palestine.⁵

It seemed that once the archives were declassified, the issue would instantaneously be clarified. However, it was not so. After 1989, researchers found large quantities of archival material, which was nonetheless inconclusive.⁶ After reviewing the documents, experts Krystyna Kersten and Andrzej Paczkowski asked in surprise why “none of the documents produced by the Polish Workers Party authorities contained at least a broad analysis of the causes of this pogrom.”⁷ Consequently, an official investigation intended to answer such questions was initiated in the 1990s. One decade later, the investigators produced two tomes of sources⁸ and concluded that they had found nothing that could confirm the provocation hypothesis.⁹

Historians, relieved of the weight of conspiracy theories, transferred their efforts to the field of historical sociology. Researchers started to explore the social aspect of the pogrom, analyzing connections between nationalism and Catholicism,¹⁰ and also the mythological background of the blood libel.¹¹

5 Orlicki, Józef: *Szkice z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich 1918–1949*. Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza: Szczecin 1983.

6 Suggested volumes of sources include: Meducki, Stanisław / Wrona, Zenon (eds.): *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały, vol. I*. Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe: Kielce 1992; Meducki, Stanisław (ed.): *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały, vol. II*. Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe: Kielce 1994; Szaynok, Bożena: *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946*. Bellona 1992; Blus-Węgrowska, Danuta: *Pogrom kielecki*. (master’s thesis) Uniwersytet Warszawski: Warsaw 1994.

7 After: Rubin, Arnon: *Facts and Fictions about the Rescue of the Polish Jewry during the Holocaust, Vol. VI: The Kielce Pogrom: Spontaneity, Provocation or a Country-wide Scheme*. Tel Aviv University Press: Tel Aviv 2004, p. 144.

8 Żaryn, Jan / Kamiński, Łukasz (eds.): *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Kielce and Warsaw 2006; id. (eds.): *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Kielce and Warsaw 2008.

9 “Postanowienie o umorzeniu śledztwa w sprawie pogromu kieleckiego”. In: Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, pp. 441–483.

10 Gross, Jan T.: *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści*. Znak: Kraków 2008.

11 Zaremba, Marcin: “Mit mordu rytualnego w powojennej Polsce. Archeologia i hipotezy”. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 61(2), 2007, pp. 91–135.

In this chapter, I continue in this line of research, inscribing the Kielce pogrom into the structure of Victor Turner's social drama.¹² The hypothetical chronology of the Kielce events presented here simultaneously constitutes an interpretation¹³ of the causes of the pogrom and its contextualization in time.

Social Drama – Field and Arena

Turner uses this term to describe “isolable and minutely describable units of social process,” manifesting themselves in “public episodes of tensional irruption,” when the interests and attitudes of various groups are in obvious opposition.¹⁴ Social drama is a process that undermines social paradigms;¹⁵ as Kurt Lewin puts it, this occurs in the non-harmonic phase of the social process,¹⁶ which usually involves a multitude of changes. In accordance with the Freudian principle that inversions and disorders give us a greater insight into the social reality than its direct study, social drama reveals a usually inaccessible normative foundation.

The period of the introduction of communist rule in Poland, spanning the years just after the end of the war, can be viewed as a series of social dramas playing out in different arenas¹⁷ and in different fields.¹⁸ The square in front of the Jewish shelter at 7 Planty Street in Kielce became one of these arenas. The

12 In this chapter, I use concepts derived from Turner, Victor: *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Actions in Human Society*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London 1974, pp. 32–45, 78–79; id.: *Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life*. Manchester University Press: Manchester 1957).

13 On the basis of subsumption and reduction. Following Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur, Paul / Drwiega, Marek (transl.): *Krytyka i przekonanie [La Critique et la Conviction]*. KR: Warsaw 2003), I take subsumption to mean the exemplification of a rule, i.e. a way of explaining in which fact is subordinate to a rule; whereas reduction stands for explanation by reference to the level below.

14 Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 33.

15 *Ibid.*, 17.

16 As appearing in Turner's reference to Lewin, Kurt: “Action Research and Minority Problems”. *Journal of Social Issues* 2(4), 1946, pp. 34–46.

17 “‘Arenas’ are the concrete settings in which paradigms become transferred into metaphors and symbols with reference to which political power is mobilized and in which there is trial of strength between influential paradigm-bearers,” Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 17.

18 “[...] ‘fields’ are the abstract cultural domains where paradigms are formulated, established, and come into conflict. Such paradigms consist of sets of ‘rules’, from which many kinds of sequences of social action may be generated but which further specify what sequences must be excluded,” Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 17.

character of the drama played out here was determined by two factors: spectacle and violence. Their combination often compels people to engage in what Clifford Geertz calls “deep play,” a situation whereby – just like in a Balinese cockfight – one plays “out of his league,” putting all the eggs in one basket.

During deep play [...] one at the same time plays for something more than just material gain; it is the social esteem, honor, dignity, and respect – to sum it up [...] the status.¹⁹

The full social analysis of this field needs to be postponed until the conclusion of the research into the personnel files of the militiamen based at the 45 Sienkiewiczza Street station and of the State Security officers on the municipal, district, and provincial levels. However, an analysis from the political point of view is possible based on Turner, who has analyzed the Mexican Revolution in a similar manner.²⁰ Based on Turner, the political field of this event will be defined as “an entirety of relationships between actors aspiring to identical rewards or values”. The relationships that bind the actors include values, meanings, or resources. They compel the actors of the drama to (1) compete for prizes and/or shared resources; to (2) safeguard a particular distribution of resources; and to (3) uphold or undermine a particular normative order. Turner terms these three aspects of activity “orientation.”²¹

In the case of the Kielce pogrom, orientation mainly refers to a broadly conceived territoriality²² (to use a term derived from ethological discourse). It manifested itself in a confrontation between three groups with differing ideas about security and the right to defend oneself (crucial in the context of the attackers’ conviction that children were being endangered by Jews), and also about the right to punish those who pose a threat. At the beginning of the pogrom, before officers from these institutions regrouped (some of them joined the mob), the crowd was competing for this right with the representatives of the authorities, namely the Citizens’ Militia (MO), State Security (UB), and the Polish Army (WP).

19 Geertz, Clifford: *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Basic Books: New York 1973, p. 433; id.: “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”. *Daedalus* 101, 1972, pp. 1–37.

20 Turner, Victor: “Hidalgo: Story as Social Drama”. In: id.: *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, pp. 98–155.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

22 See e.g. Wikipedia: *Territoriality*, retrieved 2.6.2012, from http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Animal_Behavior/Territoriality.

The Jews were the object of the mob's grievances. The designation of this group ("the Jews") should be put in quotation marks due to its extreme mythologization in the eyes of the attackers.²³ The relationship between the Kielce mob and the Jews was strikingly asymmetrical (the Jews did not realize this), and at the same time illusory, as it appealed to irrational primal fears: rivalry over children, which the Jews had allegedly abducted in order to use their blood to recuperate after the sufferings endured during the Holocaust.²⁴

Another aspect of the asymmetrical relationship was the rivalry with Jews over "scarce resources," rooted in demographic, social, and financial status issues. This rivalry was also exacerbated by the lack of food. Jews returning from concentration camps were being subsidized by the government, UNRRA, and the Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee),²⁵ and were therefore viewed as rich. Let me quote two contradictory descriptions, which might help the reader form an opinion about the group inhabiting the Jewish shelter at 7 Planty Street in Kielce, and about their neighbors' perceptions of them:

It was a dreary, horribly dreary, austere house, with people dressed in dark, dressed in grey, well, very sad. Sad and shocking. I can recall to this very day that as I came out of that house I gave such a sigh of relief, as there was.... How should I explain that ambience of that house to you? The house was, kind of, as if after a funeral, you know, like when a lot of people gather together when the funeral is over. Sad ones, depressed, despondent. Well, such was, such was the impression you could get of that house. ... They looked like a group that's all the time awaiting something, that they'll go somewhere, find someone somewhere, and later start a normal life somewhere. It was a kind of temporary shelter.²⁶

The second opinion comes from a Kielce resident, who as a teenage girl was seeking help in the Jewish shelter for her mother, who had been arrested:

23 "It is symptomatic that Jews as real people and as a concept appear in the underground material exclusively as a hostile element [...]. Although of the 3 million Jews, a mere 10 percent survived, the greater part of 20 million Poles continued to believe in dark and hostile Jewish power," Kersten, Krystyna: "Rozważania wokół podziemia 1944–1947". *Krytyka* 25, 1987, pp. 78–79.

24 This variant of the blood libel is usually called "morphological"; as opposed to the classic religious one, where blood was supposed to be used for the production of the Passover matzah (unleavened bread).

25 Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 23.

26 Łoziński, Marcel: *Materiały z filmu "Świadkowie"*. Video transcript, unpublished typescript, p. 44.

- [...] they [disgusted] me... I didn't even go upstairs to hang the laundry to dry, but preferred to hang it in the back yard....
- **But why was that so repulsive?**
- How should I know why?
- **Were they so poor, then?**
- Poor they were not, as they had everything aplenty, as they were getting [things] from America. They were getting various parcels; they had things to eat. Various... even – you could say – gourmet ones too ... such as fruit or ... anything, chocolate, they had everything....²⁷

Viewing the six-hour pogrom as a failed intervention by the security forces, the rivalry between the Citizens' Militia and the State Security becomes very important for our understanding of how the drama unfolded. They constitute the third, sharply divided pair of actors, competing as they were for social influence, funding, and a position in the hierarchy of power.

Part 1. The Unfolding of the Pogrom

Historians have reconstructed the unfolding of the pogrom as follows:²⁸

1. A few weeks before July 4, 1946, news about missing children started spreading in Kielce. Leaflets appeared with announcements about the search for these children²⁹ and priests were reading them out loud at mass. Four decades later, the son of a duty officer of the Kielce fire department, who was a teenager at the time, recalls:

27 Ibid., p. 52.

28 Based on Krystyna Kersten (Kersten, "Kielce – 4 lipca 1946 roku", op. cit.), enhancing her account with research findings published in the last two decades. These include, inter alia, Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, op. cit.; Chęciński, Michał: *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Antisemitism*. Karz-Cohl Publishers: New York 1982; Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, op. cit.; Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I and II*, op. cit.; and Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I and II*, op. cit.

29 According to Włodzimierz Kalicki, Henio's father allegedly posted three such announcements himself; after Więcek, Tadeusz (ed.): *Zabić Żyda! Kulisy i tajemnice pogromu kieleckiego 1946*. Oficyna Wydawnicza: Kraków 1992, p. 66. See also Rev. Canon Roman Zelek's July 1946 report for the Diocesan Curia in Kielce, which states that a few weeks before the pogrom, "private announcements about missing children were posted on walls of buildings or on telephone poles, giving their age, clothes, description, and – in case they are found – entreating [the person] to bring them to the address indicated below," after: Datner-Śpiewak, Helena / Cała, Alina (eds.): *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce 1944–1968. Teksty źródłowe*. Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: Warsaw 1997, p. 53.

Then I come to school and suddenly I learn that “And y’know, y’know ... Antek Wawszczyk has been taken for matzos... Gienek Bieńkowski has been taken for matzos.... A few, several, ten [kids] have disappeared.... I think no less than ten boys. In a poor working family, postwar times, right – the boy isn’t home, so what, he’s run off somewhere, God knows where he’s gone, the usual. A day or two before the events, before this thing that happened, maybe a couple of days, they started coming back. What did they say to their Daddies, what did Gienek say to his Daddy? “They took me to this house and there they beat me and turned me around in a barrel studded with nails for matzos, because they were taking my blood for matzos. And then they let me go.” [...] That’s the legend of kidnapping for matzos at Passover; tell me another, in July, [...] for Passover! – knuckleheads, but who would have known?³⁰

The testimony of a priest from Kielce shows that in the 1980s, the blood libel still retained much of its former charm:

[T]here have been rumors, well, in medieval times there might have been some such attitudes somewhere, here and there, maybe really – nowadays there are blood transfusions – in the olden days it could be, right, that different nations, the weaker ones, would use that blood, right, that of another man, right. This is about children’s blood, to fill up on it a little. But it might have been some time in those mediaeval times, in more ancient history....³¹

2. The event that sparked the pogrom was the disappearance of nine-year old Henryk (Henio) Błaszczyk, son of a Kielce tailor. Returning home on July 3, after he had been missing for two days, he told his parents that he had been held in a cellar, from which he had managed to escape. An investigation later revealed that he had gone to the village of Pielaki, twenty-five kilometers away, in order to bring cherries offered by an acquaintance. The neighbors³² who were listening to the conversation immediately suggested that the boy had been abducted by Jews, and they convinced his father to report it to the militia. He did so at about 11 p.m., and was told to come back the following day. On July 4 at around 8 a.m., Walenty Błaszczyk and his son set out for the Citizens’ Militia station on

30 Łoziński, *Materiały z Filmu “Świadkowie”*, pp. 15–17; account of the son of a firefighter on duty in Kielce.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

32 These were Antoni Pasowski, the owner of the house where the Błaszczyks lived, and his relative Jan Dygnarowicz. Pasowski took over two Kielce houses that had belonged to Jews. Fearing he might lose his newly acquired property in case of reclamation, he himself did not favor Jews. In his testimony deposited in the 1990s, Antoni Kręgliński claims that Pasowski was a UB officer; Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 301.

45 Sienkiewicza Street. On their way, they passed by the house at 7 Planty Street, which in addition to housing the Jewish Committee, a religious congregation, and an Ihud Party kibbutz served as a home to the majority of the hundred or so Kielce Jews, mainly repatriates from the USSR. A neighbor that had come along with the Błaszcyks suggested to the boy that this was indeed the house where he had been held. The child identified one of the inhabitants of the house, Kalman Singer, an Orthodox Jew, as the person who had lured him in.

3. The evaluation of the situation by Edmund Zagórski,³³ the commanding officer of the militia station at 45 Sienkiewicza Street, was of fundamental importance in determining the course of events. He ordered his subordinate to bring in the person identified by little Henryk. He sent a patrol of six militiamen to accompany the father, the son and their neighbor to Planty Street; on their way there, they were telling people that the Jews had kidnapped the boy. The space in front of the shelter started filling with people. Singer was arrested despite the involvement of Dr. Seweryn Kahane, chairman of the Jewish Committee, who had personally intervened at the militia station. Deputy Provincial MO Commander Kazimierz Gwiazdowicz, who had been informed about the matter, ordered Singer to be interrogated; at the militia station, Singer was beaten up.

Zagórski's next step caused an escalation of anti-Jewish emotions and the mob started to grow. He ordered the investigating officer, Stefan Sędek, to send out another patrol in order to establish from which cellar the boy had run away, and to bring in the owner of the house and the cellar (despite Dr. Kahane's explanation that there was no cellar in the house at 7 Planty Street, built on the banks of a small river, Sinica). The patrol of about fourteen militiamen, some uniformed and some in plain clothes, set out for Planty Street accompanied by the Błaszcyks. On their way there, the officers again announced that they were going to surround the Jewish shelter, which they intended to search for murdered children. Once there, they found out that the house indeed had no cellar. The boy started changing the details of his story, now claiming to have been held

33 Zagórski's version (corroborated by a note in "Notatki do raportu", written by Adolf Berman (see: Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna, "Social Portrait of the Kielce Pogrom", 2 vols., forthcoming) see Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 310) says that it was not him, but the investigating officer Stefan Sędek (who came from an antisemitic family – his brother Jan, a member of ONR and later of NSZ, was serving a term in jail in Mokotów, according to Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 51), who allegedly was the first to give credence to the Błaszcyks' story, sending a patrol to 7 Planty Street on his own initiative. Dr. Seweryn Kahane was alleged to have called him and asked not to send the militiamen over; see Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 77.

“in a shed,”³⁴ then “in a kennel.” The building was surrounded and they started the search. By that time (about 9.30 a.m.), more than fifty people had already assembled in the square. Another patrol sent out by Gwiazdowicz was ordered to disperse the crowd and bring in the persons spreading the rumor about the children murdered by Jews. After his arrival at the station, Commander Gwiazdowicz personally took command of the Citizens’ Militia activities.

4. At 9 a.m., Władysław Sobczyński, head of the Provincial Office of Public Security (WUBP), refused to send troops out to Planty Street to protect the Jews.³⁵ He became involved in the operation only half an hour later, when he was informed by the Ministry of Public Security officials that MO had surrounded the shelter and were searching it. Concluding that “the matter is [of] political [nature], it is a provocation,”³⁶ and therefore falls under the jurisdiction of the State Security, he ordered Gwiazdowicz to cede command to him, to send Singer and the Błaszcyks over to the WUBP, and to recall the militiamen from the building. (Colonel Shpilevoy from NKVD – the Soviet consultant at the WUBP – likewise asked MO to halt its operation.) As Gwiazdowicz refused to submit to his authority, Sobczyński sent out his own officers, instructing them to protect the shelter together with the militia. Guards were posted at all three entrances to the building.³⁷

However, the Citizens’ Militia and State Security soon had a conflict about the jurisdiction. On October 4, 1995, Antoni Kręgllicki, a witness in the IPN investigation into the Kielce pogrom, testified that while the militiamen were trying to assess the situation in the Jewish shelter, two Willys jeeps full of State Security officers arrived and attempted to “stop the militiamen by force”. “This resulted in mutual brawling and beating. They even managed to apprehend about 3 officers and put them in the vehicles.”³⁸ The crowd that had gathered there came to the defense of the militiamen, shouting: “Don’t touch the militiamen, who want to find the bloodsuckers [assaulting] our children!” and attempting to turn over the vehicles. The UB officers left almost immediately, bringing the arrested militiamen with them. Other witness statements show that the MO patrol commanding officer objected to escorting the Błaszcyks to the WUBP. As a result, all the

34 “Notatki do raportu”, in Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 310.

35 Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 38; Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 171.

36 Rubin, *ibid.*

37 Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 38.

38 Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 301.

militiamen, except a plainclothes investigator, were detained and taken to the WUBP together with the Błaszczyks.³⁹

Meanwhile the mob, which supported the militiamen in their conflict with UB, had grown to about 150 individuals, including a number of women lamenting the fate of lost children.⁴⁰ UB officers who argued that the rumor was a mere provocation met with open hostility from the crowd. According to the report written by two MBP (Ministry of Public Security) officials, Jan Jurkowski and Henryk Gutowski, the mob answered with political exhortations: “Down with the Jewish lackeys, down with the Security, down with the communist government.”

The material gathered by the Episcopal Curia shows that the crowd reacted to the officers’ statements that they had found no traces confirming the presence of any Polish children with cries such as: “Go away, let us civilians in, we will do the search, because the militia and the army are Jewish lackeys.”⁴¹ Since the situation was becoming critical, two UB officers, Jan Mucha and Albert Grynbaum, asked Sobczyński to send in the army.⁴² Sobczyński passed this request on to the Internal Security Corps (KBW) Headquarters and to the Commander of the 2nd Warsaw Infantry Division, Colonel Stanisław Kupsza, who replied that the troops were on maneuvers and he could therefore send only forty soldiers; it took them some forty minutes to reach Planty Street. Under the circumstances, Sobczyński stopped insisting on the Citizens’ Militia’s retreat and asked Gwiazdowicz to send in more men.⁴³

5. The first military troops (about 100 soldiers from various divisions) arrived at Planty Street between 10 and 10.30 a.m. According to Grynbaum’s testimony, the soldiers had received no instructions specifying the purpose of their intervention, and could therefore have presumed that they were supposed to join in the search for the children. As a result, “the military troops became confused, surrounded the Jewish Committee building, leaving the unruly mob intact.”⁴⁴

39 Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 39.

40 The motive of women losing and finding their children again was elaborated in Roman Przybyłowski’s deposition dated August 16–22, 1996; Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 380.

41 Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, p. 352.

42 Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 171.

43 Ibid.

44 Albert Grynbaum’s report, cited in Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 40.

At about 10 a.m., stones began hitting the windows of the Jewish house.⁴⁵ Seeing the passive attitude of the army and the militia, people came closer to the building, shouting: “Long live our army and the MO.” Emboldened, they started to bang on the door. As a result, at about 11.30 a.m., Major Markiewicz, commander of Kielce, entered the house together with the MO and KBW troops and the 2nd Division gendarmerie, and started the search. Civilians forced their way in along with them.⁴⁶ This is how one of the witnesses recalls that moment:

At the beginning of the incident, the building was in fact protected by MO officers. But this didn't last long, as the commander of the town of Kielce, Markiewicz, was present when the mob provoked by various suspicious elements was shouting and screaming, “Let us in, we'll make them pay for it ourselves,” [then] various things like, “Down with the Jewish lackeys,”⁴⁷ “Long live our army,” “Down with the Russian security that protects the Jews,” etc. Major Markiewicz, not giving any orders, was roaming around among the crowd, and then told the mob, “Well, go in, and see for yourselves, and look everywhere.”⁴⁸

Probably the first victim was Berel Frydman, a tinsmith,⁴⁹ who was thrown out of a window. The first shots rang out from the second floor, which was initially accessible only to the army.⁵⁰ The Chairman of the Jewish Committee, Dr. Seweryn

45 Szaynok, *ibid.*, p. 42; Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 171; see also Drożdżeński, Andrzej: “Świadek pogromu kieleckiego mówi: Kielce, 4 lipca 1946”. *Polityka* 14.7.1990, as cited in Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 185.

46 Report by Major Kazimierz Konieczny, deputy commander of the Second Warsaw Infantry Division regarding political matters: “After the militiamen entered the building, the crowd made its way in,” Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, p. 63.

47 Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, p. 351.

48 “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Zbigniewa Niewiarowskiego”, July 5, 1945, as cited in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 113. See also Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 46.

49 Chęciński, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Antisemitism*, p. 23; see also Kaczer-giński, Szmerek: “Di levaye fun di keltser kdushim”. *Dos Naje Lebn* 12.7.1946: “The first victim was Berel Frydman, a tinsmith, who had his head smashed with an iron bar. Consequently, a few dozens of Jews barricaded themselves at the premises of the Ichud kibbutz. The hooligans wearing militia uniforms claimed they had come to help the Jews, and asked all the people that had barricaded themselves to come out into the yard. And when the Jews opened the door, the hooligans made their way in and dragged everyone out,” translated from Hebrew into Polish by Sara Arm.

50 Albert Grynbaum's deposition, Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, p. 342; deposition of Jechel Alpert, vice-chairman of the Jewish Committee in Kielce, *ibid.*, p. 63.

Kahane, immediately telephoned Mieczysław Kwaśniewski from UB, asking him to inform Provincial Governor Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk (who was on sick leave that day) and Kielce Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek (who was out of town). Kahane was offered safe passage from the building, but he refused and was shot dead at 11 a.m. while on the phone with Kwaśniewski,⁵¹ by an unknown Polish Army lieutenant.⁵²

Jews allegedly also fired shots in their own defense, although eyewitness testimonies are not unanimous on that point. One thing is certain: the army and the militia not only took part in the pogrom, but – as most Jewish and Polish testimonies show – played the role of its catalyst:

The militiamen, together with the army, were the first to force their way into the Jewish house. The militia were dragging the Jewish victims out of the house, and passing them on to the mob.⁵³

The conduct of militiamen from the station in Sienkiewicza Street was the worst. They were mixing with the civilians and saying, “Poles, have no fear.” One of the soldiers was shouting that he had seen corpses of four children in quicklime, and the militiaman [Ludwik Pustula⁵⁴] at the entrance door screamed that his child was dead and in this house.⁵⁵

An MO officer “Furman was provoking the mob by shouting, ‘Look for the children!’”⁵⁶ The soldiers were likewise inciting the crowd with their conduct.

51 Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, pp. 351–356.

52 Israel Terkieltaub’s deposition (after: Chęciński, in Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 104); he continues: “I have never been called [as a witness] either by the prosecution or the court to testify in the case of Dr. Kahane’s death and to identify the murderer,” Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie II*, pp. 104, 105; Chęciński, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Antisemitism*, p. 28. “Notatki do raportu”, in Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 310: “Gajewski and Arendarski from UB enter Dr. Kahane’s room. Two soldiers say [something] to Gajewski; they shove both of them aside, barge into Kahane’s [room], Kahane gets killed.”

53 In the instructors’ report from their stay in the Kielce Province, Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 40.

54 Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 251.

55 ‘Raport funkcjonariusza PUBP w Kielcach Henryka Rybaka do szefa PUBP’, July 4, 1946, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 151.

56 “Postanowienie Najwyższego Sądu Wojskowego w sprawie skarg i wniosku rewizyjnego na wyrok uniewinniający Jana Rogozińskiego, Ludwika Pustulę i Franciszka Furmana”, March 12, 1947, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, pp. 246, 250–251. “Pamiętnik Jerzego Fijałkowskiego”. *Słowo Ludu* 3.8.1981: “The crowd was looking for the imprisoned children and ritual torture instruments used for bleeding

A PUBP (Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, District Office of Public Security) officer Albert Grynbaum⁵⁷ remembers that WP troops, along with a Polish woman with a small boy, forced their way in to a room with forty Jews squeezed inside.⁵⁸ When he tried to stop them by saying: “No provocation, take this woman away somewhere,” one of the soldiers aimed a submachine gun at him and threatened him, “Shut up or I’ll shoot you like a dog!”⁵⁹

WUBP commander Sobczyński and Soviet consultant Shpilevoy arrived at Planty Street only at half past ten, dressed in plain clothes.⁶⁰ No steps were taken to stop the massacre. Sobczyński soon returned to WUBP headquarters, where he repeatedly tried to organize reinforcements. Without appropriate command, the security forces acted chaotically,⁶¹ which reproduced the animosity between the provincial MO commander, the WUBP commander, and the commander of the 2nd Infantry Division. At about 11 a.m., following the intervention of provincial MO commander Colonel Wiktor Kuźnicki, the 2nd Infantry Division commander Colonel Stanisław Kupsza ordered a unit to deploy in Planty Street. One of the witnesses said: “It was tragic that a Jew, Major [Kazimierz] Konieczny, was the commanding officer of this unit. He was running around, shouting and whistling at the soldiers to stop shooting the Jews, but nobody listened to

the victims, especially the legendary barrel studded with nails on the inside,” after: Więcek, *Zabić Żyda*, p. 37.

57 Albert Grynbaum, head of the Kielce PUBP, was at the scene at 7 Planty Street from 9.30 a.m. During the most intense part of the pogrom, he was trying to save the inhabitants of the shelter, barricading himself with them on the first floor; Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 41. Attacked by the mob, he was saved by a colleague from the PUBP, Jan Rokicki; see Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 386. He was taken away from Planty Street by WUBP officer Edmund Kwasek (Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, p. 344). During the trial, they both accused their superior Władysław Sobczyński of passivity. Grynbaum, a key witness in the trials of soldiers and militiamen, died in early August 1946 in a mysterious ambush by an anti-communist guerrilla unit. See Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 70; Skwarek, Stefan: *Na wysuniętych posterunkach*. Książka i Wiedza: Warsaw 1977, p. 325.

58 See Albert Grynbaum’s testimony: “Being on the first floor, I assembled about 40 Jews in one room, preventing the military from entering by telling them that their role was to maintain order in the street rather than search the building. [...] A few minutes later two Jews came up to me [...], saying that the military was killing the Jews and looting their property,” Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 172.

59 Ibid.

60 Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 412.

61 Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 173.

him.”⁶² Also around 11 a.m. the fire department (which Sobczyński had tried to call in twice) arrived on the scene, but because of the attitude of the people assembled, water was not used to disperse the crowd;⁶³ according to other witness statements, the firefighters’ hoses had been slashed.⁶⁴ Konieczny’s troops finally managed to ensure the protection of the building. After a while, militia cadets sent over by Gwiazdowicz arrived and dispersed the crowd.

Thanks to momentary calm, it was possible to take some of the injured to hospital. However, the unrest had spread to other parts of town. Jews dragged out of their houses or seen on the streets were beaten and robbed. Many of the pogrom perpetrators were drunk. Some of them, fatigued by their murderous deeds, went to have a drink, after which they came back to join the unrest.

An assault on a Polish woman with a Semitic look was deemed a mistake,⁶⁵ just like the assault on a Jewish woman who looked like a Pole.

When I heard shouts and that the crowd is going to Planty 7, I stepped out to the balcony. Not just me, but also many other people were out on the balconies, watching what was going on. I saw the crowd rolling through the street. In the street, Mrs. Dejbuch was walking with her little girl. The crowd surrounded her. They started to shout “Jewess!” and to attack her. Luckily, the child had fair hair and did not look like a Jewess. She started to cry that she was not a Jewess, and then somebody said, “Look at her child, this is not a Jewish child.” And that’s how she saved herself. But in that moment, I was

62 Deposition of Eta Lewkowicz-Ajzenman; Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, vol. II, 106; also Chęciński, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Antisemitism*, p. 29. On Major Konieczny’s ambivalent conduct, see also Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, pp. 416–417. According to Jerzy S. Mac’s information (id.: “Kto to zrobił?” *Kontrasty* 11, 1986), Konieczny in his testimony assigned a part of the blame for instigating the pogrom to the Jews: Hotel Polski on Sienkiewicza St nearby Planty St, was owned by the Preis family. The hotel restaurant was run by Mr Jablko (formerly Apfel). “In this restaurant – says Kazimierz Konieczny, resident in Warsaw, who served in Kielce from February 1946, and was a retired colonel in 1986 – one good dinner cost the equivalent of my monthly officer’s salary. In spite of that, it was always full. At the same time, most of the inhabitants of Kielce lived in dire poverty. It was a town full of poor, dumb people, exploited by a group of profiteers, such as the Kahane brothers, who had the most beautiful house in town and a licence for trading used military vehicles, Liwshyc, who was selling plaster from Jędrzejów, or Koprowski, the richest attorney in town, who represented Jews in property reclamation matters.”

63 Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 47.

64 Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie*, pp. 313–318; Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 48.

65 Morawski, Jerzy / Pytlakowski, Piotr: “Mroczne Stany”. *Przegląd Tygodniowy* 32(228), 1986, p. 10; after Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 104.

recognized, and I heard [a cry], “A Jewess on the balcony!” Where? All raised their eyes looking for the Jewess on the balcony. I was saved by a sudden instinct: I did not run away from the balcony, but started to look around too, searching for the Jewess.⁶⁶

Intense violence is conducive to collective regression. Wartime behavior patterns toward the Jews returned: denunciations and verifications of circumcision, a habit among the *szmalcownik*s. Once again, the “right looks” determined someone’s life or death, along with the knowledge of Catholic hymns and prayers and of the Polish version of the shibboleth.⁶⁷

Many witnesses testified to the odd indifference displayed by the Kielce UB commander Sobczyński.⁶⁸ During the pogrom, he was initially in Planty Street, where he took no action, and then at the UB headquarters. Edmund Kwasek, a PUBP employee, testified:

I saw two people, probably Jews, and the mob running after them [...] they were brought to the front of the Division building, and then I noticed that Major Sobczyński came out to the balcony with the commander of the [2nd] Division [of the Polish Army, Colonel Stanisław Kupsza], and did not react at all to the people shouting “Beat the Jew!”⁶⁹

6. A renewed attack on the Jewish shelter took place after 12.30 p.m., when about 600 workers from the Ludwików Foundry arrived armed with bats, crowbars, and stones. The workers had allegedly been recruited by little Henio Błaszczyk’s uncle, who worked as a watchman in the foundry.⁷⁰ There were shouts of “Jews murdered

66 Shtokfish, David (ed.): *About Our House Which Was Devastated: Memorial Book of Kielce*. Kielce Societies in Israel and in the Diaspora: Tel Aviv 1981, p. 200.

67 The idiom stems from the Hebrew word *shiboleth*, and its use in the Biblical story (Judges 12:5–6) about the inhabitants of Gilead, who attacked the Ephraimites, whose dialect lacked the phoneme “sh.” Ephraimite survivors trying to escape across the Jordan River were identified by sentries asking them to say the word *shiboleth*; according to the Hebrew Bible, 42,000 Ephraimites were thus caught and killed. See another version of the shibboleth in the testimony of a Holocaust survivor talking about the victims of the so-called railway action: “when the [attackers] got hold of Meir Schneider, because they had lit a torch and realized that he was Jewish. They started hitting him with a butt-end. Meir started shouting that he was Polish. They made him repeat the word ‘zorca’, he pronounced it incorrectly, so they kept beating him, and then they took him away. After 20 minutes, so difficult to endure, they [finally] allowed the train to leave,” after: Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 43.

68 E.g. Henryk Gutowski’s testimony; Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 387.

69 Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 47.

70 Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 78; Datner-Śpiewak and Cała, *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, p. 53.

Polish children, the militia is shooting the people.”⁷¹ Information that the workers were about to leave the foundry was given to the WUBP chief by the director of the foundry.⁷² Sobczyński again reacted belatedly, not sending out the WUBP cadet troops that had been assembled in front of the UB building since 12.30 p.m. Instead, he sent two UB officers to the foundry, urging the secretary of the PPR Provincial Committee to call a meeting and address the crowd. This was ineffective. Sobczyński also faced resistance at the meeting held in the secretary’s office with the deputy governor of the province and the PPR Provincial Committee’s human resources director. The list of excuses is long: “[PPR Secretary] Kalinowski didn’t want PPR to be accused of defending the Jews, [Deputy District Governor] Henryk Urbanowicz was worried that he looked Jewish, [and Director of Human Resources] Julian Lewin – because he really was a Jew.”⁷³

In the meantime the workers broke through the army cordon and forced their way into the building. According to Grynbaum’s testimony, “When the workers from the Ludwików Foundry arrived, the murdering and the looting started anew. As a result, about fifteen [in fact twenty] people were killed.” An eyewitness, whose testimony was found at the Episcopal Curia, stated:

The workers ran into the courtyard and the lynching started for the second time, [and again] as they started killing the Jews. In the crowd of workers from the Ludwików Foundry, there was the father of [an allegedly] missing child, who kept shouting in despair, “For the innocent blood of my son,” as he split [open] a Jew’s skull with a large wrench.

They were joined by soldiers and militiamen, provoked by a new rumor, this time about the “killing of a Polish officer”.

Intense rioting lasted for more than an hour. It was ended by the arrival of army troops (fifty of Lieutenant-Colonel Pollak’s soldiers). After firing a few rounds in the air, they managed to remove the people from the courtyard and the street. With their aggression turning against the commander, shouts of “soldiers, shoot him in the head, because he’s a Jew” were heard.

71 Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 10. See also “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Mariana Nogaja”, October 15, 2001, in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 122: “a [Ludwików] foundry employee [...] was running around the departments, carrying an iron bar [...] he said that a Polish boy, whom the Jews had wanted for matzah, had escaped from a house belonging to Jews.”

72 Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 173.

73 Ibid.

7. The army and the militia surrounded the building again. The wounded and the dead started to be taken away. At about 3.30 p.m., army troops from the vicinity of Warsaw arrived in Kielce and a curfew was imposed.

Investigation and Trials

An investigation into the pogrom was launched the following day, eventually leading to the arrest of the UB (Sobczyński) and the MO (Kuźnicki, Gwiazdowicz) commanding officers. However, their trials did not reveal the magnitude of the conflict between the institutions.

Numerous witnesses accused Sobczyński of lack of initiative and antisemitism, but the death of Albert Grynbaum at the beginning of August 1946 effectively changed their minds. Just like after the Kraków pogrom in August 1945, similarly involving both the army and the militia, the authorities had no intention of investigating the extent of individual soldiers' crimes. This was also influenced by Grynbaum's inability to testify. The circumstances of Seweryn Kahane's death were not clarified either, as is apparent from Izrael Terkieltaub's account cited above; indeed, he was not even called in to give a statement. Negligence also manifests itself in the number of unidentified bodies (five unidentified females, thirteen unidentified circumcised males,⁷⁴ and – probably – two unidentified uncircumcised males⁷⁵) of the pogrom victims.⁷⁶

74 For discrepant lists of victims quoted in Polish and Jewish sources, compare Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, pp. 172–181 and Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, pp. 205, where thirty-six individuals are identified, while one individual, with Auschwitz prisoner number 2969B, remains unidentified (no such number is found on the *Auschwitz prisoners list*, retrieved 2.6.2012, from http://pl.auschwitz.org/m/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=97).

75 See Soviet consultant Shpilevoy's report, saying that the two Poles who were killed had been "PPR members who expressed their sorrow about the bestial treatment of Jews," Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 156. See also US Ambassador Arthur Bliss-Lane's report from Warsaw to the US Department of State, July 8, 1946, mentioning "a Polish civilian who died in an attempt to confront the mob," and also the deaths of "a number of militiamen and soldiers," in Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 164; on the other hand, three Polish casualties are mentioned in an unknown UB officer's "Notatki do raportu" in Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 312.

76 This could partially be blamed on the fact that "the murderers, before or after the murder, took the victims' clothes and shoes off; there were no identity cards [on the bodies of the victims]," Kaczerginski, "Di levaye fun di keltser kdushim", op. cit. However, to gain an insight into the degree of negligence, it is sufficient to compare the official list of the victims with the one given in Jewish testimonies.

The investigation was run by a special MBP commission, chaired by Grzegorz Korczyński.⁷⁷ During the first days of the inquiry, dozens of people were arrested, including militiamen from both patrols, MO station commander Zagórski, WUBP head Sobczyński, MO commander Kuźnicki, his deputy Gwiazdowicz, and also Henio Błaszczyk's father and neighbor. According to the accounts of Jewish pogrom victims, even UB officers of Jewish origin were discouraging them from testifying against the militia and the army.⁷⁸ At the Supreme Court Martial trial, which opened promptly on July 10, the defendants included eight random individuals from the crowd (all but one were men) and four individuals who had murdered Regina Fisz and her little son. The social status of the defendants is reflected in their occupations: a barber, a janitor, a paver, a locksmith, a tailor, a baker, a guard, a professional petty officer, and a housewife. The pogrom victims were not allowed into the courtroom,⁷⁹ and none of them were called as witnesses.⁸⁰ The prosecution did not allow one of the witnesses to testify about the troops' conduct;⁸¹ this aspect was earmarked for separate proceedings, never reaching a conclusion. Nine death sentences were handed down and carried out the following day.

Between August 1946 and March 1947, nine further trials of thirty other pogrom participants were held at the Provincial Court in Kielce. However, the judicial proceedings did not aim to find the real murderers; instead, the investigation

77 Grzegorz Korczyński was a commander of the Gwardia Ludowa partisan troops in the Lublin area. A 1950s investigation showed that he had ordered nearly 100 Jews to be shot dead in the vicinity of Ludmiłówka. He was sentenced to life imprisonment for his conduct, but the sentence was quashed in 1956.

78 Jechiel Alpert's testimony: "On the following day, on Friday at 11, I got a visit from a UB officer – Albert [Grynbaum], a Jew, who told me that a group of American journalist was going to arrive at the hospital any minute, and asked me to meet with them but to keep quiet about the involvement of the military and the militia in the pogrom, in order to keep the reputation of the Polish government untarnished," Shtokfish, David: *About Our House Which Was Devastated*, pp. 253–257, YVA-03/2985, cited in Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 181.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 182.

80 Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 262.

81 "The prosecutor states that [this] trial is only a fragment, that the whole matter shall be independently clarified and [asks] the defense to refrain from pursuing the issues of the military, as the investigation of this matter has not been concluded as yet due to a lack of time," "Protokół rozprawy Najwyższego Sądu Wojskowego na sesji wyjazdowej w Kielcach przeciw Antoninie Biskupskiej i współoskarżonym" in Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 183.

concentrated on minor details, such as petty theft,⁸² but no attempt was made to identify those responsible for the deaths of specific individuals. According to historian Krzysztof Persak, this was a tendency within the communist judiciary:

As far as crimes against Jews were concerned, the judiciary worked mechanically, displaying an extreme lack of interest and indifference – because Jews were alien. This indifference is apparent, for instance, in that neither the courts nor the prosecution had bothered to identify the victims. The files largely contain general descriptions such as a Jewess, a group of Jews. The superficiality of the proceedings is striking. Nobody was interested in clarifying the matter.⁸³

All the indictments were based on the officially declared version that the pogrom was the outcome of an underground conspiracy. However, there were no show trials in the wake of these statements, despite the July 26, 1946 arrest of Jerzy Franciszek Jaskólski “Zagończyk”,⁸⁴ one of the most important figures of the post-AK militant underground in the Kielce region. In spite of information about Walenty Błaszczyk’s membership in the National Armed Forces (NSZ) (disclosed by the first WUBP chief in Kielce, Adam Kornecki⁸⁵), none of the defendants in the Kielce trial was accused of being a member of a paramilitary group.

Part II. Victor Turner’s Social Drama

Social drama consists of a succession of four distinct phases:

Proceeding from breach of some relationship regarded as crucial in the relevant social group, which provides not only its setting but many of goals, through a phase of rapidly mounting crisis in the direction of the group’s major dichotomous cleavage,⁸⁶ to the

82 See e.g. a detailed investigation of the theft of a tin of food, some lard, and two pairs of men’s warm underwear; Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*, p. 203.

83 Interview with Krzysztof Persak; Jędrzejczyk, Agnieszka / Ollender, Barbara: “Rekonstruowanie prawdy”. *Tygodnik Powszechny* 29.1.2012.

84 See Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, pp. 41, 49, 177–179. See also Turlejska, Maria (ed.): *Z walk przeciwko zbrojnemu podziemiu 1944–1947*. Min. Obrony Narod.: Warsaw 1966, p. 262; Skwarek, *Na wysuniętych posterunkach*, pp. 161–170.

85 Michał Chęciński writes about it in his book; see id., *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Antisemitism*, p. 26. An investigation by the IPN has not confirmed this information.

86 Turner derives his concept of “dominant cleavage” from Max Gluckman, according to whom the sources of sudden outbursts of violence can be found in the violations of dominant cleavages, i.e. in the relations between the main blocks of society. Gluckman, Max: *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand*. (Rhodes Livingstone Papers, no. 28). Humanities Press: New York 1958.

application of legal or ritual means of redress or reconciliation between the conflicting parties which compose the action set. The final stage is either the public and symbolic expression of reconciliation or else of irremediable schism.⁸⁷

Let us inscribe the events of the Kielce pogrom into the above sequence.

1. BREACH. The breach came with the decision of Edmund Zagórski (possibly involving also his deputy, Stefan Sędek), commander of the Citizens' Militia Station at 45 Sienkiewicza Street, to consider the Błaszcyks' story a criminal case. Investigation into child abduction perpetrated by Jews legitimized the blood libel and as such constituted a breach of normative behavior. The mob that attacked the shelter in the crisis phase took its cue from the militiamen's lead.

Meanwhile, the investigators sent over to 7 Planty Street picked up the signal and started spreading the rumor around the town. The attitude of the militiamen manning the 45 Sienkiewicz Street station toward the Jews hardly differed from that of the authors of a leaflet issued after the Kielce pogrom by the underground organization Freedom and Independence. This leaflet speaks of "a nine-year old boy, who by a miracle wrenched himself out from Satanic-Communist-Jewish hands on July 1, after three days of being starved, on the day he was about to be murdered."⁸⁸

2. CRISIS. Additional militiamen accompanying the Błaszcyks around town and setting off the pogrom with inflammatory rumors were the emissaries of the crisis. Sobczyński, commander of the Kielce WUBP, made a fruitless attempt to avert the conflict (Turner places such an attempt at the very beginning of the crisis) by arguing that this was "a political provocation," subject to his jurisdiction. However, Gwiazdowicz from the MO Province Headquarters insisted on his definition of the case. A skirmish between the militiamen and the WUBP officers ensued. The mob protected the militiamen and accused UB of "protecting the Jews." This was how the fundamental opposition in the conflict was created: with UB, meaning "the Jews," on one side and MO, meaning "the Poles", on the other. To satisfy the mob, municipal military commander Markiewicz allowed civilians to enter the shelter so they could see for themselves that there were no children.

Turner explains that the crisis phase "exposes the pattern of current factional intrigue hitherto covert and privately conducted, within the relevant social group."⁸⁹ This covert factional intrigue is represented by the conflict between MO and UB, and its exposure would have had a negative impact on the public image

87 Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 78.

88 Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 29.

89 Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 38.

of communist authorities. As a result, the breach has a tendency to widen, extending until it corresponds to a certain dominant cleavage in a set of social relations relevant to conflicting groups.⁹⁰

A volume of collected sources on the Kielce pogrom, published in 2008, includes Arnon Rubin's overview of *Notatki do raportu*, written by Adolf Berman, an eminent Jewish activist in Poland. This series of notes contains cries of the mob emitted just before it forced its way into the shelter. "Twelve of our children have been murdered there!"; "You lousy Jews, you brought Jesus Christ to Golgotha, now we'll teach you!"⁹¹ These two cries represent a sort of a shortened syllogism,⁹² given that according to the blood libel legend, the way of killing the children was supposed to be a replication of Christ's sufferings. This impression is intensified by exclamations known from other sources, such as, "Did Christ's blood taste good to you?"⁹³ and "Blood for the blood of our children."⁹⁴ Turner argues that in social dramas,

[p]eople consciously, preconsciously or unconsciously take on roles which carry with them, if not precisely recorded scripts, deeply engraved tendencies to act and speak in suprapersonal or representative ways appropriate to the role taken, and to prepare the way to a certain climax to approximate the nature of the climax given in a certain central myth of the death or victory of a hero or heroes [...] in which they have been deeply indoctrinated or socialized or enculturated in a vulnerable or impressionable year of infancy, childhood, or latency [...]. Another way of putting it would be that collective representations had displaced individual representations.⁹⁵

Incursion of religious symbolism signals the upcoming culminating point of the pogrom: uncovering the dominant cleavage in its most archaic version: "Jews – Christians." The pogrom recaptures what could be called, following Freud, a

90 Ibid.

91 Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, pp. 310–313.

92 The term "shortened syllogism" refers to a kind of deductive reasoning, in which one of the premises has been omitted – sometimes due to its obviousness, but more often due to the fact that the protagonists are not conscious of the premise. Consequently this premise is often false and baseless. Shortened syllogisms are a frequent cause of capital mistakes, and the revelation of omitted premises constitutes an important way of identifying logical fallacies, and at the same time a way of accessing ideology. See Kurkowska-Budzan, Marta: *Antykomunistyczne podziemie zbrojne na Białostocczyźnie. Analiza współczesnej symbolizacji przeszłości*. Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Historia Iagellonica": Kraków 2009.

93 Shtokfish, *About Our House Which Was Devastated*, p. 201.

94 Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 415; cf. Matthew 27:25.

95 Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 123.

“primal scene” of Christianity.⁹⁶ The script the Catholics in the mob and the Catholics in the army and the militia were re-enacting was the Passion. The Jews had clear-cut roles in it, unalterable even by the fact that they themselves were the victims. The mob fought in defense of the children, but in fact it defended Christ.⁹⁷

In the emerging Passion *communitas*, asymmetrical relations become egalitarian (crowd – people in uniforms), while the egalitarian ones become asymmetrical (UB vs. MO and WP). This can be illustrated with an example of WP soldiers threatening a UB officer, Albert Grynbaum, with a submachine gun.⁹⁸ This is corroborated by Jechiel (Chil) Alpert’s testimony:

A young woman was standing there, shouting: “You had it coming! You killed Jesus, and now you’ll pay for this. You have drunk our blood long enough!” I asked her to leave, but a soldier approached and told me, “Leave her alone, otherwise you’ll have to deal with me.”⁹⁹

Ethnicity is the nominal marker of the *communitas* that is created. However, the defining agent of the dominant cleavage is not pure, if “purity” is actually relevant

96 Cf. the scenes from the suppression of the second Warsaw uprising in 1944 by the Dirlewanger Brigade: “They were dragging a doctor with a noose around his neck. He was wearing some rags, red, maybe with blood, and a crown of thorns on his head.” Nowak, Włodzimierz / Kuźniak, Weronika: “Mój warszawski szal”. *Gazeta Wyborcza* 23.8.2004.

97 Marcin Kula writes: “The perception of the new authority as alien (imposed by the Soviets) converged with the perception Jews as aliens. Poles of non-Jewish origin who supported it, and those Jews who did not, received far less attention. [...] To this day, whenever the Jewish issue is discussed in Poland, it is stated that Jews as members of the Stalinist political police used to torment the Polish nation. The individuals raising this issue in a debate do not say that agents of the new system were tormenting people. They do not say that such and such person was tormenting another – instead, they say that ‘Jews tormented [them].’” See Kula, Marcin: “Dyskusja o Jedwabnem czy o Polsce”. In: id.: *Uparta sprawa. Żydowska? Polska? Ludzka?* Universitas: Kraków 2004, p. 134. The expression “Jews tormented them” is a sign of a religious narrative, shaping the national psyche of the Poles in the postwar period. It is a story about rivalry between the Christological figure of the “Polish nation” and the “Jews”, endlessly repeating the Christian founding murder. Jews from the NKVD still play the role of Christ’s tormenters at Golgotha.

98 Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 43; Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 201.

99 Jechiel Alpert and Pinchas Ziterman’s testimony, in Shtokfish, *About Our House Which Was Devastated*, pp. 253–275, Yad Vashem Archive, O.3/2985; cited after Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 180.

here at all. Given the stigmatization and gratification it implies, the classification marker always creates a semantic surplus. All those who “defend the Jews” become “Jews” themselves. Where the Jew is an enemy, the enemy becomes a “Jew.”

Turner argues that the longer the yearning for the *communitas* has been subdued, the more fantastic forms it takes in its fulfilment phase. People “are mad to establish the kingdom (or republic) of heaven on earth, and they proceed compulsively to eliminate whatever they feel represents the obstacle to their desire”.¹⁰⁰ Turner emphasizes that revolutions and other overwhelming social movements are characterized by etiology and acceleration, which are impossible to explain in the categories of functional analysis. They are supposed to resemble the overwhelming desire for climax and culmination known from Gestalt psychology.¹⁰¹ This is the source of the feeling of “inevitability” and of the contagion of the process, which spreads to other groups. This results in what can be called – borrowing a term from the title of a book by David Nirenberg¹⁰² – *communitas* of violence. Due to the contagion of violence, this *communitas* spreads easily, which is apparent in the conduct of militia officer Błachut, one of the few officers sentenced after the pogrom. At first, he was removing civilians from the Jewish premises, but when he saw soldiers beating the Jews, he too started beating them.¹⁰³ The very rumor about the kidnapped children was just as contagious, as shown in Andrzej Drożdżeński’s diary:

[Jurkowski, 40, musician]:

[...] [I heard], “Jews have killed the children.” I say, “That’s impossible.” They tell me, “Well, you’ll see, you’ll see.” My blood boils, and I start shouting like them, “Men, go get the Jews, go get the Jews!”¹⁰⁴

100 Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 111.

101 “Primary processes, like revolutions and other kinds of compelling social movements, seem to have an etiology and momentum of their own, which cannot be adequately explained in structural functionalist terms, and that such processes have the Gestalt-like character of tending toward appropriate and exhaustive closure and climax,” *ibid.*

102 Nirenberg, David: *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*. Princeton University Press: Princeton 1996.

103 See Władysław Błachut’s deposition in Sobczyński’s file; after: Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 49.

104 Drożdżeński, Andrzej: “Świadek pogromu kieleckiego mówi: Kielce, 4 lipca 1946”. *Polityka* 14.7.1990; after: Więcek, *Zabić Żyda!*, p. 25.

Scenes falling into Goldhagen's category of a "carnavalesque glee"¹⁰⁵ were being played out in the background:

Szyling Piotr, a prison guard in Kielce, having arrived at the scene of the incident and seeing a woman of Jewish origin run across the square, started hitting and kicking her until she fell to the ground. Seeing this, the assembled crowd started throwing Szyling in the air, shouting "Long live!" and the woman who was lying on the ground seized the opportunity and ran away.¹⁰⁶

3. MEANS OF REDRESS. Turner claims that in the phase of crisis, the true state of affairs reveals itself with such force that it is impossible to pretend any longer "that there is nothing rotten in the village".¹⁰⁷ This is when attempts at redressive action appear, constituting the next phase of the drama. Formal mechanisms (bringing in additional army troops, militiamen, and fire-fighters) and informal mechanisms (Sobczyński's attempts to contact the commanding officers of the Russian garrison,¹⁰⁸ the mayor of Kielce, PPR First Secretary Jechiel Alpert, or Governor Wiślicz-Iwańczyk, and telephone calls to Kielce clergy¹⁰⁹) are put in motion in order to stop the murder. Turner claims that escalation is still a possibility in this phase, which in this case was manifested by the second attack on the shelter after the arrival of the Ludwików Foundry workers around 1 p.m.

The redressive phase of social drama consists of a series of ineffectual moves to stop the violence, renewed until the low point of the drama is reached. This seems to be embodied by a symbol-laden shibboleth scene¹¹⁰ – the identity check of Polish Army soldier Maks Erlbaum, whom his brother in arms refuses to help. Erlbaum begs, "Lieutenant, I am a Pole, save me," to which the officer, looking at the military identity card, replies, "There is no religion [marked] here." Thanks to the advantages of performativity, which directly manages to express the most inaccessible cultural scripts, we can hereby observe a spectacular clash

105 Goldhagen, Daniel: *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. Alfred Knopf: New York 1996, p. 388.

106 Meducki and Wrona, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie I*, p. 252.

107 Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 39.

108 Jechiel Alpert also called Shpilevoy asking for help, which was refused because the troops did not have any Polish uniforms available, and the commander did not want to risk the appearance of Soviets killing Poles; Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, pp. 172, 181. Alpert's attempt to contact the Episcopal Curia was also fruitless, *ibid.*, p. 181.

109 According to Bliss-Lane's report, the Rev. Canon Danilewicz confirmed that he had received a telephone call from Governor Wiślicz-Iwańczyk at around 2 p.m.; Żaryn and Kamiński, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego I*, p. 165.

110 See footnote 67 above.

of two meanings of Polishness: the civic, introduced by the Lublin Government in 1944; and the traditional, based on confessional criteria. Assuming that the pogrom, a form of ethnic cleansing, was an attempt to defend the traditional dominant cleavages, it can be considered an emblematic conflict. *Communitas* of violence is thus a form of revenge for the Communist attempt at appropriating “Polishness”.¹¹¹

4. REINTEGRATION. According to Turner, the final phase of social drama consists in the reintegration of the disturbed group, or on the acceptance and legitimization of the schism.¹¹² If we admit that the “disturbed group” responsible for the outbreak of the Kielce pogrom corresponds to the milieu of Kielce militiamen, it seems that the fourth phase of the social drama in Kielce consisted of both possibilities. Among the outcomes of the pogrom was a *seeming reintegration* or rather re-socialization of the militia; however, in reality it amounted to a *progressive legitimization* and normalization of the politics of a rebellious faction, which would in 1956 culminate in a hostile takeover of communism by national communism. Although the MO commanders were dishonorably discharged and imprisoned after the pogrom, their *modus operandi* had been passed on to other repressive institutions. In the case of Kielce this was already apparent from the conduct of WUBP commander Sobczyński. It was not a conscious intention on the part of the authorities, but rather a result of the conformist mentality of

111 See the take on this issue in a famous article by Rapaport, Emil S.: “Polska jako państwo narodowe. Szkic analityczny ściśle polskiego składu ludności III Rzeczypospolitej”. *Mysł Współczesna* 1(3/4), 1946 (National Library in Warsaw, microfilm no. 65732): “A Polish nation on an exclusively Polish ethnographic territory, governed by a Polish people’s government – this is the most concise characteristics of the Polish state after WWII. Among so many painful, tragic shadows that still hang over Poland, tortured in the preceding period of Nazi genocide, the single nation is a ray of light that will allow the Third Rzeczpospolita to escape the abyss of war with the least harm. The new situation will remove all the controversial issues of ‘ethnic minorities’, their autonomy or claims of lack of thereof, and the various justified or unjustified nationalist aspirations stemming from this background. The new situation allows the ethnically homogenous, post-war People’s Poland to adopt a decidedly pacifist stance regarding its neighbors, and to become a pioneer and defender of permanent peace in Europe and in the whole world. The new situation, its homogenous ethnically Polish and Slavic background notwithstanding, has nothing to do not even with a semblance of some kind of racial Polonism or Slavophilism. On the contrary, this Poland is decidedly against any special criteria [designating] the autochthony and particular religious views of a modern Pole.”

112 Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 41.

politicians accustomed to local antisemitism; historical conditions; intra-party conflicts¹¹³; and the demoralizing tactics of “turning a blind eye.” Communist striving for legitimacy was a dominant part of this process, and the greatest hurdle was posed by being labeled a “party that defends Jews.”

Although the pogrom had been quelled, the eruption of violence in Kielce effectively paralyzed the local authorities. The following day saw the arrival of PPR instructors, who noted, “When Comrade Buczyński and Comrade Chełchowski arrived in Kielce, the situation looked as if the [PPR] Provincial Committee was packing its bags, preparing to flee.”¹¹⁴ The scope of the outburst had horrified the central government and forced it – if not to change its ethnic policy of creating an ethnically homogeneous Poland – then at least to accelerate its implementation. This necessity, which had been apparent for quite a while, was confirmed by the “difficulties” with the organization of meetings in factories, where the assemblies would not only refuse to condemn the perpetrators of the Kielce pogrom, but would also issue their own antisemitic statements.¹¹⁵ Since then, any complaints about antisemitism filed by Jews were hushed up, and the phenomenon itself was classified as “anti-democratic banditry.” Not only did the authorities not treat the Kielce incident as a symptom of problems in their own ranks, but they also canceled measures that had been planned earlier. For example, the Decree on Antisemitism, which was supposed to be issued in the autumn of 1945, fell through.¹¹⁶ Instead, it was substituted by the establishment of the post of commissioner for issues related to the productivization of Jews, a consequence of

113 The conflict in the milieu of Polish communists was incited by the animosity between “[t]hose who spent the war on Polish soil and who now formed the core of the PPR and those who spent the war in the USSR and were to return to Poland with or in the footsteps of the new Polish Army.” See Schatz, Jaff: *The Generation: The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland*. University of California Press: Berkeley 1991, pp. 180–181. This was aggravated by a different ethnic makeup (note that it is hardly relevant to speak of the Jewishness of communists who, having distanced themselves from their religion and their families, no longer identified with being Jewish) of the two groups. While there were virtually no Jews among the “home-grown” communists after the Warsaw ghetto uprising, they constituted a large part of the “Muscovites”.

114 Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie II*, p. 140.

115 Gross, *Fear*, p. 121ff.

116 Decree on antisemitism, draft in Meducki, *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie II*, pp. 161–162.

accepting the Marxist interpretation of antisemitism as a class problem.¹¹⁷ Hilary Chelchowski ends his Kielce report by saying:

In the future, we should avoid this system of organization concerning the Jews, who concentrate in one area and do not undertake productive work, but still have an excellent standard of living; they devote themselves to various kinds of speculation, very often to the detriment of the government, and elements hostile to us take advantage of all this.¹¹⁸

The memoirs of Joseph Tennenbaum, who visited Poland in the spring of 1946, contain a mention of a question that he put to President Bolesław Bierut, wondering about the complete absence of show trials against antisemites in Poland. As a response, Bierut cited legal difficulties, but it was clearly just an excuse. The communists did not want to end up like Fousiwe, a South American leader, about whom Pierre Clastres writes, “He saw himself deserted by his tribe for having to thrust on his people a war they did not want.”¹¹⁹

Minister of Security Stanisław Radkiewicz responded even more forthrightly to a similar question asked by delegates from the Central Committee of Jews in Poland. “Do you want me to exile 18 million Poles to Siberia?”¹²⁰

In the spotlight of Turner’s theory, some distinct features of the local Polish political scene become clear.

1. After entering Poland in the tow of the Red Army, communist authorities started implementing policies that Jan Gross calls the privatization of state.¹²¹ This resulted in demoralization in the MO and UB ranks, manifesting itself in universal looting of property, which was called “post-Jewish” long before the

117 See also W. Śliwiński’s report on a work-related trip to Kielce Province, 7–12 September, 1945, in order to carry out an information campaign aimed at preventing anti-Jewish disturbances. Śliwiński claimed in this report that the Jews themselves were responsible for anti-Jewish sentiments (reprivatization of Jewish factories and the Jewish origin of Kielce mayor Zarzycki and the WUBP commander Kornecki). “It has been established that one Jew from Kielce, who wanted to emigrate to the West, had been spreading antisemitism, posting slogans ‘Down with the jews [sic]’” Archive of New Records, 295/VII-149.

118 Kersten, Krystyna: “Rok pierwszy”. In: id., *Pisma rozproszone*, p. 309.

119 Clastres, Pierre: *Society against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*. Zone Books: New York 1989, p. 201.

120 Krystyna Kersten’s introduction to Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach*, p. 19.

121 Gross, Jan T.: *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland’s Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia*. Princeton University Press: Princeton 2002, pp. 118–119.

legitimate owners ceased to claim it. Local governments were based on cronyism and *zblatowanie* – a particular exchange of favors, often between nominal political opponents.

2. Despite the slogans on the banners waved by communist authorities, the officials within the Kielce MO, as well as within UB and WP (judging by the number of rank-and-file officers who had been sentenced), shared similar social and religious antisemitic views.
3. This interdependence meant that in spite of the continuous presence of the Soviet Army in Poland, local communist authorities largely remained hostage to public opinion. Respecting the ban on using weapons to protect the Jews, they normally preferred to sacrifice the latter instead of their own minimal authority.
4. The Kielce experience taught the central government that whereas Poles could accept such ideological categories as social justice, communist forms of social and economic life, “dictatorship of the proletariat,” etc., they would not accept internationalism, meaning equal rights for Jews and subordination of national independence to relations with the USSR. This resulted in a policy that was at first silent regarding the true causes of the Kielce pogrom and later tried to silence the Jews themselves, encouraging mass emigration and abolishing all forms of Jewish social and religious life in Poland after 1948. Finally, when this continued to prove ineffectual, it started using official antisemitism as a self-legitimizing tool. This led to successive waves of Jewish emigration from Poland, the final one in the form of expulsion in 1968.

Primary Process and Secondary Processes

Analyzing the Mexican Revolution, Turner (based on Freud) distinguishes a primary process and secondary processes in social activities. The former is supposed to stem from deep collective needs, the realization of which has for a long time been censured or blocked by secondary processes, responsible for “the homeostatic functioning of institutionalized social structure,”¹²² and managed by social and political elites. Its inveteracy in essential needs gives the primary process “urgency and momentum, which usually sweeps away persons and groups who attempt to curb its excesses by the application of ethical and legal sanctions based on established principles”. This also gives it an impetuous course, marked with outbursts of violence (or creativeness), in which “a whole hidden social

122 Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 111.

structure, richly clothed in symbols, may be suddenly revealed.¹²³ The Kielce pogrom can thus be considered an emblematic example of the eruption of the primary process, exposing a little-known aspect of the *communitas*, as well as violence in general¹²⁴ (definitely even more rarely discussed¹²⁵ in anthropology). As part of the pogrom mob, Communists and anti-Communists confronted the Jews together; AL soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder with NSZ members; and communist militiamen with the underground opposition soldiers. The emerging *communitas* defined itself as a protest against what it considered Judeo-communism. Antisemitism became a social cause that united Communists and anti-Communists alike.

Inspiration for the process that manifested itself in postwar Polish pogroms did not lie in the rejection of communism, but in the desire to cleanse Poland of “aliens”, as the definitive establishment of “ourness” in a country whose identity had for centuries been defined by its opposition to Jews. Of course, communist authorities encountered defiance in Poland but, as Krystyna Kersten notes, in practice this defiance was mitigated by a realistic assessment of its chances and an overwhelming desire for normality. This conflict found a convenient solution in turning the aggression toward Judeo-communism, which can be viewed as an exemplary manifestation of myth as a tool for the reduction of contradictions (Claude Lévi-Strauss). The painful conflict between defiance and acceptance was accompanied by a previously unencountered “visibility” of Jews – including those who as Communists did not consider themselves Jewish anymore – manifesting itself by their posts in the administration, police, and the army.¹²⁶

This visibility of Jews, resulting from their equal rights guaranteed by the PKWN Manifesto (July 20, 1944), undermined the traditional Polish dominant cleavages that assigned the Jews an inferior position. Their postwar promotion

123 Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, pp. 110–111.

124 See Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, p. 219, on ritual that is exclusive and seeks to sunder rather than to bind.

125 I cannot elaborate on this point here, as it merits a separate article, in which it would be possible to take into account the one-sided reading of a *communitas* situation in Turner, but also e.g. in the work of James C. Scott.

126 See for example comments to this effect by Leśniak (first name unknown), a PSL member from Limanowa, at a meeting on August 19, 1945: “We live in Poland, but not the kind of Poland we were missing. We have Poland, but [it is] a Jewish Poland. Jews are in all the important posts.” After: Rabbi David Kahana’s Collection, Tel Aviv University, Carter Library, Document No. 6, as quoted in Rubin, *Facts and Fictions*, p. 23.

likewise violated the general idea about what postwar Poland was supposed to be like, which showed what kind of country it had actually been before the war. The conflict between defiance and acceptance, from which Poles were suffering in the postwar years, meant that the implication “Communists Jews” fell on fertile soil in the form of the Jewish bloodsucker¹²⁷ image common to all of Eastern Europe.¹²⁸ All this meant that the Jews as a nation that had been almost completely annihilated in the Holocaust did not have a chance to enjoy the capital of social compassion in Poland.

Conclusions

It is difficult to help the impression that certain aspects of the Kielce pogrom have overtones over-reaching the framework of local history. It is connected with the traits of the legitimization process, shown in the above analysis. To clarify, allow me to cite an example of South American indigenous peoples, researched by Pierre Clastres, the author of *Society against the State* (1987) and *Archeology of Violence* (1980). They clearly show the relationship between *chiefship*, *legitimization*, and *authority*.

The structure of a small group is a result of repetitive relations of a small number of personae or types: the chief, the enemy, the prophet, the warrior. These figures, some of them purely negative, are defined by their mutual animosity. Thus the chief is defined by a complete lack of authority in the sense of coercion, the right to use violence; chiefship is therefore located outside the sphere of the use of political power. From the functionalist point of view, this rule seems absurd (how can chiefship and power be separate?), but in practice it works very well. The society entrusts the chief, a sort of unpaid civil servant, with certain tasks, essentially assuming its will to appear as a single entity, meaning a deliberate effort on the part of the community to affirm its unity, distinction, specificity, and independence from other communities.¹²⁹ In fact the chief, who speaks in the

127 Anti-Jewish pogroms erupted in Topolčany in Western Slovakia in September 1945 and elsewhere, followed by a second wave of pogroms in Slovakia in August 1946 and in Hungary, where the worst one occurred in Kunmadaras in May 1946 (3 victims) and another one in Miskolc. Other pogroms occurred in Lviv, Kiev (Ukraine), and in Bratislava, Komárno, and Nové Zámky (Slovakia). In Slovakia, anti-Jewish feeling ran so high that the government was forced to suspend a decree calling for the restoration of Jewish property to its rightful owners. After: Chęciński, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Antisemitism*, p. 16.

128 See Chapter 6: *The Figure of Bloodsucker ...* in this volume.

129 Clastres, *Archeology of Violence*, p. 165.

name of the group, is its most controlled prisoner, representing the community “only inasmuch as this exteriority is interiorized.”¹³⁰

The second one on the list is the Enemy, a stranger, a foreigner. This useful figure stands in opposition to the collective “us,” thus giving the group an opportunity to affirm itself by excluding him in a violent way; the enemy dies to ensure the continuity of the group.¹³¹

The antithesis to the Chief and the Enemy is the Prophet, who assumes a slightly different role than the latter. Instead of affirming the identity, he tempts the group with a vision of religious autotranscendence, actually representing its aspiration to something that is completely different (the *ganz Andere* or the “wholly Other” divinity concept). Accomplishment of this ideal would in fact paradoxically result in the group’s demise. The more the Prophet confronts the Chief, the more the latter tries to shed the control of the group, seizing transcendent power to which he is not entitled. In fact, in archaic societies researched by Clastres, authority is complemented by chiefship only in time of war.¹³²

The picture is completed by the Warrior, an enemy unto himself, “destroying himself for the pursuit of glorious immortality.”¹³³

Although this analogy may sound metaphorical, these four figures can easily be identified in the Kielce drama. The Communist Party is the Chief, Jews are the Enemy, the Church is the Prophet, and the pogrom mob is the Warrior. Wishing to change the country, the Chief manipulates the dominant cleavages, the roots of which lie in Church teachings. The Warrior exhausted by battle postpones the rebellion. He cannot, however, fail to protect the children from the Enemy. The violence is, as usual, very productive: the Enemy is defeated, the Prophet and the Warrior gain in strength. However, the one who has to change the most is the Chief, who after resocialization ardently strives to become similar to his people.

It is sometimes said that a people produces a tyrant. In the context of the changes in Polish communism, we should rather speak of a tyrant who unsuccessfully tried to produce a people.

130 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s introduction to Clastres, *Archeology of Violence*, p. 42.

131 *Ibid.*, p. 272.

132 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

133 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Alina Skibińska, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir

Chapter 9: “Barabasz” and the Jews. Chapters from the History of the Home Army Unit *Wybranieccy*¹

In January 1990, the department of The Righteous Among the Nations at the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem received a letter from Zvi Zelinger, an Israeli citizen residing until 1939 in Kielce, Poland. In this letter, he describes the circumstances of the death of his twelve-year-old sister Dina (Danusia) and their aunt Zofia in 1944. Together with some other Jews from Kielce, they were hiding in the village of Zagórze near Daleszyce with the help of Stefan Sawa, a Pole whose friendship with Zofia Zelinger dated to the times before the war. The author of the letter only learned about the circumstances of their death in 1989, when he had finally managed to travel to Poland and talk to the surviving witnesses of the tragedy in Zagórze. The following is an excerpt from his letter to the Yad Vashem:

At the beginning of February 1944, Stefan Sawa came by the house [of his relatives in Kielce] and said the partisans from the Home Army underground had searched the house and found the Jews. The members of the underground resistance ordered him to clear the Jews out of the house within two weeks. When he asked them why they were threatening him, they answered that if the Germans were to come and find them there, they would raze the village to the ground, which they were trying to avoid. These were the last words he said to his sister-in-law: If they come again, we will bribe them with money and beg them for mercy and some more time, since at that time it was already clear that the war was nearing to its end and that the Russians might invade within a few days, and he was hoping to buy some time. The *nom de guerre* of the member of the underground movement, which committed this deed, and who was their commander, was Barabasz from the Home Army underground.²

The *Wybranieccy*, also called *Barabasze*, were one of the most famous partisan troops in the Polish resistance movement during WWII. According to their commander Marian Sołtysiak, this name indicates the extraordinary nature of

1 This chapter has been co-authored by Alina Skibińska.

2 Yad Vashem, Department of the Righteous Among The Nations, the file of Stefan Sawa, decorated with the medal of the Righteous *in memoriam* in 1991; translated from Hebrew by Zuzanna Radzik.

the unit, which gathered people who were “chosen, in a sense”³ [*wybraniec*, Polish for “chosen one”]. The selection criterion is specified in the unit chronicle: “Soldiers of Polish ethnicity serve in the *Wybranieccy* unit”⁴. According to Henryk Pawelec, commander of a cavalry reconnaissance group, the unit’s name was based on the institution of elite infantry [Pol. *piechota wybraniecka*] during the reign of king Stefan Batory⁵. One of the schools in the Kielce Land has been named in honor of the *Wybranieccy*⁶, while another has been named after the unit’s commander, Marian Sołtysiak “Barabasz”⁷. Students are acquainted with his biography as part of educational projects⁸. Members of the parliament refer to “Barabasz’s” partisans in their speeches in the Sejm⁹, and numerous monuments and memorial plaques in the Kielce Land remind everyone of their achievements¹⁰. Everyone ignores what Zvi Zelinger writes about – the murders of Jews committed by the *Wybranieccy* during WWII. This article is a reconstruction of the how some of these events unfolded.

Most sources and publications state that the *Wybranieccy* unit was founded in late February/early March 1943¹¹. It was formally recognized as a diversion unit on March 22, 1943 by the order of Józef Włodarczyk “Wyrwa”, commander

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- 3 Sołtysiak, Marian: *Chłopczy “Barabasza”*. PAX: Warsaw 1965, p. 5.
 - 4 Chronicle of the *Wybranieccy* division, 1943–1944. Manuscript by Bolesław BoczarSKI “Jurand”; typescript made by the Koło Pokoleniowe „Rodzina Wybranieckich” in May 1998. Unpublished (a copy in the authors’ possession).
 - 5 Pawelec, Henryk / Pawelec, Zbigniewa: *Na rozkaz serca*. Stowarzyszenie im. Jana Karskiego: Kielce 2005, p. 132.
 - 6 The AK *Wybranieccy* Unit Interschool in Wzdol Rządowy.
 - 7 Col. Marian Sołtysiak “Barabasz” Elementary School in Daleszyce.
 - 8 Among others, Racing in the footsteps of Colonel Marian Sołtysiak “Barabasz” from the *Wybranieccy* Division – an educational project involving multiple schools, and a nature/history trail named after the *Wybranieccy* in Cisów.
 - 9 See MP Maria Zuba’s (PiS) speech from November 21, 2008; retrieved 5.5.2012, from www.sejmometr.pl/wypowiedz/glXnl.
 - 10 E.g. memorial plaques in the parish church in Cisów and Daleszyce; a memorial at the location where “Barabasz’s” unit was encamped in the Cisów forests on the slope of the Stołowa hill; Górnika’s unit memorial in Łagów; *Wybranieccy* monument/memorial pantheon at the Partisan Cemetery in Kielce. One of the streets in Kielce is called *Wybraniecka*.
 - 11 Borzobohaty, Wojciech: “Jodła”. *Okręg Radomsko-Kielecki ZWZ-AK 1939–1945*. PAX: Kielce 1984, pp. 39, 182–184.

of the Kielce Subdistrict¹². From the beginning, Marian Sołtysiak, initial *nom de guerre* Sokół, later Barabasz¹³, served as the unit's commander. Marian Sołtysiak (1918–1995) was born in Gnojno, Stopnica district. His father was a steward on the Łuniewski estate in Gnojno, but the family later relocated to Piła, the only part that remained after the dissolution of the estate. He was one of nine children. When only a teenager, he became a member of the National Radical Camp¹⁴. He published his literary pieces in the magazine *Młodzi idą*, edited by Józef Ozga-Michalski, and together with friends – who included Gustaw Herling-Grudziński – he co-edited the monthly student magazine *Goloborze*. He also took part in the boy-scout movement. After graduation, he took a one-year reserve cadet course. In 1939, he was assigned to the 4th Legions' Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Armored Division. He was taken prisoner of war near Zamość, but he escaped. In the first phase of the occupation, he was active in the right-wing, nationalist Lizard Union; after being sworn in by Wojciech Lipczewski from Kielce on November 22, 1939, he became a member of Union of Armed Struggle/Home Army. Until 1943, his role was to distribute press, set up conspiratorial cells, provide military training, and look for weapons. He reported to Wojciech Lipczewski and Adam Bolrowicz. In 1943, he was named commander of Kedyw in the Kielce Subdistrict, and in February/March of that year, he became the leader of a diversion group consisting of seven members. The group included: “Andrzej” (Henryk Pawelec), “Bogdan” (Stanisław Kozera), “Dan” (Stefan Fąfara), “Orlicz” (Stanisław Łubek), “Madej” (Jan Śniowski), “Roch” (Stanisław Lutek) and “Jurand” (Bolesław Boczarowski). The nature of the unit was described by Boczarowski in the following way: “Our purpose is to eliminate betrayers-informers, spies, who pose the greatest danger to the Polish Nation, Germans [*sic* – AS, JTB] and to spread awareness and prepare the society for the revenge for all the crimes committed against the Polish Nation”¹⁵. The unit's first large-scale operation was the taking of Chęciny in April. They were planning to eliminate a Gestapo informant, Mayor Baran (this plan failed, and Baran was shot dead during another operation in June), and to liberate prison

12 See the end of the chapter for short biographies of the members of the *Wybranieccy* partisan unit mentioned in the text, as well as of other AK members in the Radom-Kielce District.

13 See a short biography in Massalski, Adam: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, t. XL, PAN and PAU: Warsaw and Kraków 2000–2001, pp. 454–457; also Marian Sołtysiak's own testimony, AIPN, GK 306/24.

14 Pawelec / Pawelec, *Na rozkaz serca*, p. 54.

15 Chronicle of the *Wybranieccy* Division, op. cit.

inmates (which was successful). From July 3, 1943 the unit was stationed in the forest, in a camp consisting of wooden huts. They were erected at a locality called Kwarta in a forest near Cisów. The initial members of Sołtysiak's unit came from the municipality of Bodzentyn, but also from Suchedniów and its vicinity, and from Kielce itself, where Sołtysiak had many school friends. In September of the same year, Sołtysiak was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. During this period, various subversive operations took place, such as executing informants, burning archives in about a dozen municipalities and dairies (the purpose being to complicate the collection of taxes), ambushing gendarmes and cash escorts, and disarming German patrols. In July, a group led by "Dan" attempted to assassinate the leader of an informer network Franz (Hans) Wittek¹⁶ in Kielce.

By autumn 1943, the number of the *Wybranieccy* members had grown to about 90 individuals and "Barabasz" decided to divide them into five groups, which were to spend the winter in various villages of the Kielce region. To the west of Kielce, in the region of Zagnańsk, especially in the vicinity of Chęciny, Oblegorek, Gałezice, and Mostow, Edward Skrobot "Wierny" operated. The group of Bolesław Boczański "Jurand" was stationed in the vicinity of Bodzentyn, to the north-east of Kielce, near the villages of Ciekoty, Brzezinki and Klonów. On the border of the Jędrzejów county, in the area of Morawica, the cavalry reconnaissance group under the command of Henryk Pawelec "Andrzej" operated. They mostly stayed in Kuby Młyny and Dębska Wola. To the south east of Kielce, in the area of Daleszyce, extending all the way to Rakow, Władysław Szumielewicz "Mietek" operated. Lieutenant Stefan Fąfara "Dan" was based with his subversive group (referred to as "urban section") in the vicinity of Kielce. Communication was ensured by the use of contact boxes maintained at various outposts. Until the spring of 1944, the individual groups were therefore operating independently, maintaining regular contact with the commander and meeting at least once a month at the so-called troop build-ups. "Barabasz" himself spent the first winter mostly in Kielce, at the house of his fiancée and future wife, Renata Nowak.

All the events described in this chapter took place in this very period: from the autumn of 1943 to the spring of 1944. The chronology of the *Wybranieccy*

16 A successful assassination attempt on Wittek did not take place until July 15, 1944 under the command of Kazimierz Smolak "Nurek" (he was killed in action). To retaliate, the Germans arrested more than 200 persons, out of which 180 were executed, and the rest was sent to a concentration camp. See Michalczyk, Maria: *Diabeł „Piątej kolumny”*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza: Warsaw 1986. One of the hitmen taking part in earlier, unsuccessful assassination attempts on Wittek was Henryk Pawelec, commander of the *Wybranieccy* cavalry reconnaissance group.

operations, compiled by Jerzy Kotliński¹⁷, does not include any of these events; however, it mentions other achievements of the unit, such as the attack on military warehouses in Jędrzejów; executions of informers in Kielce; the taking of Daleszyce (January 1944); an ambush on a train carrying German soldiers on leave; sabotage operations consisting in the destruction of telegraph lines and of German property; yet other instances of burning municipal documentation; the attack (in March 1944) on a gendarmerie station in Bieliny, in which five Germans were killed; and a number of clashes, during which the unit secured weapons and supplies.

The *Wybraniecy* were reunited at the end of March 1944. While the unit was initially reporting to Kedyw in Kielce and it was its duty to perform any and all operations ordered by the Central Command of the Underground Resistance, its character changed after its re-integration – the unit became a typical partisan group, the nucleus of the future 4th Legions' Infantry Regiment of AK. It had 127 members at the time, and until the summer was the largest organized partisan unit in the Radom-Kielce Sub-district of AK. It was initially divided into three, and later four platoons. Their commanders were: “Górnik” (Czesław Łętowski), “Bogdan” (Stanisław Kozera), “Dan” (Stefan Fąfara), and “Edward” (Edward Kiwer). Sub-lieutenant “Wierny” (Edward Skrobot) became Sołtysiak's deputy. “Andrzej” (Henryk Pawelec) was the commander of the cavalry reconnaissance. In August, the unit joined the 4th Legions' Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Armored Division of AK¹⁸ under the command of Major Józef Włodarczyk “Wyrwa”¹⁹, who was replaced by Lieutenant Maksymilian Lorenz “Katarzyna” in October. Sołtysiak became the commander of the 1st platoon, which was part of the 1st battalion. As part of Operation Burza, the division was marching on Warsaw and engaged in battle with German troops, among others in a day-long battle of Antoniów on August 21, 1944, where about 200 Germans perished. The second large clash with the German troops took place on September 26 in Radków. Before the unit reached Pilica, the order to march on Warsaw had been revoked. A partial dissolution and demobilization of the unit took place in the forests

17 Kotliński, Jerzy: *Wybraniecy w Lasach Cisowskich*. Wrocław 1993, pp. 135–138.

18 The 4th Legions' Infantry Regiment of AK consisted of *Wybraniecy*, Wilk's, Gryf's and other companies, see Idzik, Aleksander: *Czwarty pułk piechoty 1806–1966*. Koło Czwartaków: London 1963.

19 Sołtysiak was from the beginning subordinated to “Wyrwa”, commander of the AK Kielce Sub-district. This Sub-district was divided into a number of smaller units: Bodzentyn, Piekoszów, Daleszyce, Sucheniów. *Wybraniecy* operated on the territory of all these.

near Włoszczow; “Barabas” returned to the forests around Cisow and continued the demobilization from there. The return journey was peppered with numerous clashes with the genarmes and ambushes staged by them. The unit was disbanded in the village of Ciekoty-Wilków, and the weapons hidden at [Stefan] Sito’s. The chronology of the *Wybraniecy* in the period of 1943–1944 includes more than sixty operations and battles.

When Sołtysiak was staying in Kielce in January 1945, he received an order to dissolve the Home Army²⁰. Shortly after the Red Army invasion, he left Kielce for Kraków for fear of arrest; benefiting from the financial support of the underground, he went into hiding under a false name (he still had identification documents from the occupation period, using the alias Mateusz Sobczak). In July 1945, he managed to escape to Western Europe via Czechoslovakia (Nuremberg, Frankfurt, Paris, London), where he only remained for a short period, returning to his homeland in October 1945. Immediately after his return, he disclosed his identity and became the chairman of the Home Army Dissolution Committee in the Kielce District. In 1946, thanks to the support of Major Jan Sobiesiak (“Maks”, during the war the commander of People’s Army Paratroopers Brigade Grunwald), he joined the People’s Army of Poland in the rank of captain. He submitted a “self-critique” – a detailed curriculum vitae, in which he had distanced himself from his past – to the head of the Personnel Department at the Ministry of Defense, Gen. Stanisław Zawadzki, and was demobilized a year later. He settled in Lower Silesia, changing jobs a number of times; in 1948, he moved to Wrocław, worked at the Provincial Office, and started studying law. On September 18, 1949 he was detained by UB in Wrocław and placed under arrest; after a two-year investigation, he stood trial (details below) on September 14, 1951 at the Provincial Court in Kielce, after which he was sentenced to 7 years in prison. On August 27, 1953 the court ordered his early release on parole; note that other soldiers of his were still serving their sentences²¹. Initially, he started work in Koszęcin at the State Agricultural Farm; later, he worked in Kielce at the Provincial Cultural Center and in a managerial position in a factory producing knitwear. In the 1960s, he served as a board member of the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy and as Secretary of the Central Committee for the Contact with Polish Diaspora. Thanks to Mieczysław Moczar’s help (SFFD Board Chairman at the time), he settled in Warsaw and started working on the history

20 AIPN, GK 306/24, Interrogations of Marian Sołtysiak on October 6, October 10 and October 19, 1949.

21 AIPN Kr 425/542/CD, Central Prison in Montelupich Street in Kraków. File of inmate Sołtysiak Marian 1950–1955.

committee within this organization. In 1965, the PAX Association published his book of memoirs called *Chłopcy Barabasz* [Barabasz' Boys]; he also wrote articles for the press (*Katolik, Slowo Ludu, Ziemia Kielecka, Za Wolnosc i Lud*). When Moczar lost his post of Minister of Interior in 1971, Sołtysiak took an early retirement. In September 1944, he had been awarded the Cross of Valor by the central command of the Home Army, whereas the Communist government had awarded him, among other honors, the Silver Cross of the War Order of Virtuti Militari in 1965.

Most of "Barabasz's" troops were the so-called *spaleni*²² – young people around twenty, who due to various war circumstances had been separated from their families and forced to live in the forests and the so-called *meliny* [hideouts for criminals and stolen goods]. To quote Sołtysiak, they were mostly "people from middle-class families, scouts, pupils whom the war had given 'never-ending holidays'"²³. Today, it is difficult to assess whether this reflects the actual situation, or whether it creates an elitist legend: we know that individuals from various backgrounds and with different life stories joined the division. Questionnaires filled out by the *Wybrani* who were interrogated in the 1950s show that almost all of them, including Sołtysiak, claimed to be of "peasant origin". The *Wybrani* unit included members of bands of robbers, which besides peasants (e.g. Józef Przygodzki "Czarny" from Korytnica²⁴) accepted also sons of a teacher (e.g. the Wesołowski brothers from Korytnica, "Orzeł" and "Strzała"); bandits who had been sentenced to death both by the Home Army and the National Armed Forces (e.g. Władysław Dziewór, *noms de guerre* Burza and Skazaniec – see a short biography at the end of this chapter), soldiers from the organization *Miecz i Plug* [Sword and Plow] (the Wesołowski brothers, Józef Przygodzki, Grzegorz Świerczyński "Grześ") and from the National Armed Forces (e.g. Zygmunt Bokwa "Smutny"). Undeniably, however, the unit also included individuals of impeccable reputation, such as Henryk Pawelec or Władysław Szumielewicz, just to mention a few. The former – commander of the cavalry reconnaissance group and a person best recalled by the witnesses – is the embodiment of an ideal Polish officer. The latter was commended for his exceptional moral values not

22 This category gave a name to one of the partisan units; see Ropelewski, Andrzej: *Oddział partyzancki „Spaleni”*. Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza: Toruń 1999. Sołtysiak wrote: "They were village boys, mostly wanted by the police, hence the *spaleni*. They could only live within the unit," in id., *Chłopcy Barabasz*, p. 23.

23 Ibid.

24 For more on this topic, see: AIPN Ki 025/88/D Józef Przygodzki; see also a short biography at the end of this chapter.

only by his commander and co-fighters²⁵, but also by the judge convicting him of murder²⁶. Szumielewicz's "integrity, ambition and credulity" are also testified to by "Mewa", an anonymous UB secret informer who was following him in the coastal area of Poland three years before his trial²⁷.

The activities of the *Wybraniec*y are generally described in superlatives, which is not surprising at all, since the majority of publications have been written by the participants themselves²⁸. It is therefore all the more important to consider the statement of Ryszard Maj "Ryś I", one of "Barabasz's" soldiers, who left his unit for the Miechow forests in 1944:

"Barabasz" liked to drink and he seldom spent time with the group, and he mostly showed up at the build-ups, with women²⁹.

This opinion may seem to reflect personal animosities; however, it is not an isolated one. Contrary to the claims that are usually made, leaving the unit was at times neither easy nor possible. This is confirmed by the statement of Lieutenant Antoni Świtalski "Marian"³⁰, who was transferred to "Barabasz's" unit after being unmasked during an assassination attempt at the head of an *Arbeitsamt*, and who subsequently, upon his own request, joined Antoni Heda's ("Szary") unit:

Barabasz ordered to do away with Pantera³¹ because he had refused to return to the unit. They threw his body into the river through an ice-hole.
When Świtalski was leaving Barabasz' unit, Mietek³² was jealous and almost cried because he had to stay with Barabasz³³.

25 Sołtysiak on Szumielewicz: "He is an honest man with a straightforward and flawless character, he never lies, what he testifies to is definitely true," Katarzyna (AIPN GK 306/44, "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Władysławowi Szumielewiczowi", p. 147).

26 AIPN GK 306/44, "Wyrok Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach", p. 167–168.

27 AIPN BU 0418/4691, t.2, Abstract from the report of informer "Mewa", p. 21.

28 E.g. Kotliński, „*Wybraniec*y w Lasach Cisowskich, op. cit.; Pawelec, Henryk et al.: *Wybraniec*y. Koło 4 PP Leg. AK: Kielce 1993.

29 Ryszard Maj's testimony recorded on September 9, 1957 in Sopot by Andrzej Ropelewski, two pages in longhand, copy in the authors' archive. See Chapter 10 in the present volume.

30 Commander of a combat group within Zakłady Przemysłowe in Kielce.

31 Tadeusz Sotkiewicz.

32 Władysław Szumielewicz "Mietek".

33 The testimony, written down on August 14, 1957 by Andrzej Ropelewski, ends with an explanation: "Notes from my conversation with a *cichociemny*, Major Bolesław Jackiewicz, in the presence of A.Świtalski «Marian» in his flat in Sopot. Andrzej Ropelewski".

The “Mietek” who “almost cried” was Władysław Szumielewicz, the leader of the execution squad in Daleszyce (this execution will be discussed below).

Lucyna Wrońska “Ewa”, who served as the unit’s liaison officer in the period from autumn 1943 to summer 1944, is an important witness who criticizes Sołtysiak. Wrońska mentions two reprimands “Barabasz” received from the Kielce Sub-district Home Army command: the first for the murder of a teacher by the name of Wituszyński in Checiny at the beginning of 1944, the other for the robbery at Countess Zofia Mycielska’s estate in Sitkowska and for punishing her by flogging for her alleged contacts with the Germans (see footnote 109 concerning Zofia Mycielska)³⁴. Wrońska also recalls an incident in Machocice, where Jerzy Waclawik was executed without a trial³⁵. The circumstances have never been properly clarified, but the execution most probably happened due to Sołtysiak’s jealousy of his future wife Renata³⁶, with whom Waclawik “maintained close social relations”³⁷. After her expulsion from the “Barabasz” unit in July 1944, Sołtysiak accused Wrońska of “spying” and received reprimands from the Sub-district command – thus putting Wrońska herself in danger. “I met up with a unit member called “Marian” [Antoni Świtalski] (...), who told me that the “Barabasz” group had issued a death warrant on me”³⁸. She was saved by the intervention of the head of AK Inspectorate.

“Barabasz” described himself and his Sub-district commander as complete opposites: “He [Józef Włodarczyk “Wyrwa”] – always patient, composed, firmly believing in the magic of an order; I – easily flaring up, explosive, full of enthusiasm”³⁹. Animosity between him and his superiors is also reflected in the way he describes a conflict with Lieutenant Maksymilian Lorenz “Katarzyna”, the future commander of the 1st Battalion of the 4th Legions’ Infantry Regiment of AK. In his memoirs, which clearly show his political agenda (the last part of the memoirs *Chłopcy Barabasza* is full of complaints about the AK command), he attributes the rift to “Katarzyna’s” former allegiance to the National Armed Forces, as well as to his pre-war political views. He claims to have in fact

34 AIPN, GK 306/24, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej”, p. 222.

35 Ibid., p. 228, see also “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bolesława Boczarskiego”, (AIPN GK 306/24, p. 95).

36 The wedding ceremony took place on May 15, 1944.

37 AIPN, GK 306/24, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej”, p. 228.

38 Ibid., p. 228–229, “«Żor» [Józef Mularczyk, head of the AK Inspectorate] assured me he would take care of this matter by issuing a warning to «Barabasz» and in case of my possible murder [he] will take full responsibility”.

39 Sołtysiak, *Chłopcy Barabasza*, p. 192.

expelled Lucyna Wrońska from the unit precisely because of “Katarzyna”⁴⁰. In effect, “Żor” (Lieutenant-Colonel Józef Mularczyk, an AK inspector) suspended the payment of the soldier’s pay to the unit. The tensions had to be significant, since the *Wybranieccy* were even plotting Katarzyna’s murder⁴¹. Sołtysiak was aware of his extraordinary position; he has written about himself that he was “the supreme commander of the unit with virtually absolute power, but of some undefined kind. (...) It was a special kind of power. (...) Here obedience was absolutely tangible”⁴². Jerzy Kotliński (“Wojtek”, “Halny”) corroborates “Barabasz’s” immense authority among the partisans and dislike among his superiors⁴³.

According to Henryk Pawelec’s notes,

Barabasz, vetted while in exile by *dwójka*⁴⁴, namely Captain [Włodzimierz] Ledóchowski⁴⁵, could not disembarass himself from the Jewish issue in Daleszyce and the issue with Countess Mycielska [see Part V: Izaak Grynbaum, March 3/4, 1944], who also ended up in Paris. They also found a Jew who as an AK soldier took part in the Warsaw Uprising, the brother of those killed in Daleszyce⁴⁶.

Due to the “Jewish issue”, Sołtysiak’s vetting by emigration authorities did not yield the best results: just two months after crossing the green line, he found himself back in Poland.

Let this part be concluded by another statement – this time from, Bolesław Jackiewicz, a *cichociemny* who came across the *Wybranieccy* unit after one of his airdrops:

Had the war ended differently (meaning had the London government won), Barabasz would definitely have been put on trial. I would definitely take this matter to court⁴⁷.

40 Ibid., p. 94: “When I found out that the unit liaison brings double letters from Kielce, one for me, another for «Katarzyna», on that very day I fired her and assigned her to «Żor’s» disposal.”

41 Ibid., pp. 93–94.

42 Ibid., p. 48.

43 Kotliński, „*Wybranieccy*” w *Lasach Cisowskich*, p. 60.

44 *Dwójka* is a colloquial term for Section II in AK organizational structure, which specialized in intelligence and counter-intelligence.

45 Sołtysiak in his testimony to UB confirmed that in the summer of 1945, he met with Ledóchowski in Paris (AIPN GK 306/24, p. 128).

46 Pawelec, Henryk: *Barabasz*, unpublished typescript, p. 1 (courtesy of the author).

47 For the whole of Ryszard Maj’s testimony and the story of its reception, see Chapter 10: *Suppresio veri, suggestio falsi* in this volume.

Five or six cases

Extensive material which we have compiled – academic publications, archival documents (consisting principally of investigation, trial and prison files), published memoirs, and oral testimonies⁴⁸ – is divided into six sections describing what we have managed to ascertain. The most important material documenting what has so far been omitted from the historiography of the *Wybraniectwo* includes the documentation from three criminal trials at the Provincial Court in Kielce; all of them took place in autumn 1951. The first ones to be put on trial on September 13, 1951 were Władysław Szumielewicz and Stanisław Lutek, together with Władysław Marasek⁴⁹. One day later – on September 14, 1951, the same court held a separate trial against Marian Sołtysiak⁵⁰. Two months later, on November 23, 1951, three other “Barabasz” partisans were sentenced: Edward Skrobot, Józef Molenda and Władysław Dziewiór⁵¹. The main hearing in the latter trial took place on October 17, 1951, meaning the sentencing had for unknown reasons been deferred. In the two previous cases, the court announced the sentences on the day of the hearing. The defendants in one trial served as witnesses in the two other trials. The indictments for all of these individuals were signed by the same investigative officer from the Provincial Bureau of Public Security in Kielce, Józef Baniak. The first two trials, separated by one day, were presided over by the same judge, T. Bielski; the sentencing in the case of Skrobot and others was passed by Judge A. Koziński. All the defendants were represented by attorneys of their choice: Andrzej Płoski, Okończyc, Göttinger, Winiarski, and Chojnicki.

The arrest, indictment, and sentencing were preceded by a relatively long (only in Sołtysiak’s case prolonged) investigation. The authorities started compiling material and statements from AK partisans and the witnesses immediately after the transfer of power in January 1945. The first interrogations of Sołtysiak’s subordinates, which have been preserved in his file, are dated as early as January 1945⁵²;

48 This refers to Joanna Tokarska-Bakir’s interviews with the former members of the AK partisan troops in the Kielce Land, among others Henryk Pawelec and Andrzej Ropelewski, as well as to testimonies from former partisans collected by A. Ropelewski himself. Among the latter, we consider the testimony of Ryszard Maj to be the most important; on this topic, see Chapter 10: *Suppresio veri, suggestio falsi* in this volume.

49 AIPN, GK 306/44.

50 AIPN, GK 306/24 and 25.

51 AIPN, GK 306/48.

52 AIPN, Ki 027/236-1.pdf (microfilm scans). Testimony of Feliks Sobon “Smyk” from February 2, 1945.

other ones are from the following years up until Sołtysiak's arrest in a street in Wrocław on September 15, 1949. The search of his Wrocław flat effectuated on the same day did not yield any results; only the search of the house belonging to his brother, Piotr Zbigniew Sołtysiak, yielded the *Wybraniec* archive, including the unit chronicle, which had been hidden there⁵³. Undoubtedly the most serious testimony incriminating Sołtysiak was given on June 20, 1949 by Wiktor Zygmunt Bokwa "Smutny". Both the chronicle and the testimonies by Bokwa and numerous other witnesses allowed the investigators from UB to clarify the circumstances under which the so-called eliminations – executions – were taking place, carried out on the basis of underground court sentences or an order from the commander himself. During the investigation, Sołtysiak faced a confrontation with Bokwa (on January 9, 1951), during which Sołtysiak denied the accusations made against himself. A confrontation partially corroborating Szumielewicz's testimony also took place between Szumielewicz and Sołtysiak (February 2, 1951). All in all, the "Barabas" trial files still contain twelve records of his interrogations. The first is dated to October 6, 1949. By the end of the year, he had been interrogated a few more times, after which there comes a break of almost one year, as the following interrogation did not take place until October 14, 1950. A series of other interrogations of both Sołtysiak himself and the witnesses culminates in the arrest of the remaining suspects in January 1951 and Sołtysiak's indictment (the document was not dated; the defendant filed a complaint about this) written prior to March 15, 1951.⁵⁴ On April 27 and 28 of the same year, the investigative officer Józef Baniak wrote the remaining two indictments. The hearings at the Kielce Provincial Court took place half a year later. All the individuals were accused of violating Article 1 Point 1 of the Decree from July 31, 1944 "about the execution of punishment on fascist-hitler [*sic*] criminals guilty of murder and crimes against civilian population"⁵⁵ and Article 225 Point 1 of the Penal Code: "Anyone who kills a human is subject to a prison term no shorter than 5 years to life, or to the death penalty"⁵⁶. The sentences handed down in these cases will be discussed below.

53 Ibid., Interrogations of Piotr Zbigniew Sołtysiak from October 25 and 26, 1949.

54 AIPN GK 306/24, Letter from Marian Sołtysiak to Chairman of the Provincial Court in Kielce, in which he complains– among other things – that the indictment served to him on March 15, 1951 did not have a date on it.

55 Journal of Laws no. 69 from December 15, 1946, item 377.

56 The Penal Code from 1932 was formally valid until the end of 1969, although many crimes were at the same time also subject to special regulations (e.g. the Little Penal Code from 1946).

I. Trackman Stanisław Błachucki, October 1943

We include this case only *pro memoria*. It concerns Stanisław Błachucki, a trackman from Chęciny. Witness testimonies show that he was hiding Jews in his home: three of them were killed and another three survived, among them Leon and Berta Kanarek⁵⁷. We indirectly learn that they know about this case from the statement of Maria Mistachowicz, a witness in the trial against Edward Skrobot “Wierny”, who was accused of the murder of Izaak Grynbaum in Chęciny. Mistachowicz testified the following:

“Besides that, I heard people in Chęciny say that in the village of Czaj, four Jews had been shot dead; who committed this murder I don’t know. There were others killed at the trackman’s. (...) three Jews: a man, a woman, and a small child. Three Jews from that family are alive and can provide a better testimony (...) [Berta Kanarek, who] was present at the time the bandits were shooting those Jews”⁵⁸.

We do not know whether trackman Błachucki would meet the criteria qualifying him for the title of Righteous. We are not familiar with the circumstances of the death of the Jews hiding at his home. We only know how Stanisław Błachucki himself met his end. It is detailed in the testimonies of a number of witnesses and his family members⁵⁹, and also of the commander of the *Wybraniiecy* himself, Marian Sołtysiak. Błachucki was brought into Stanisław Karoliński’s flat, where he was interrogated about “why he denounced two guys to the German gendarmerie”⁶⁰. Witnesses Władysław Koziel and Władysław Kumański state that Błachucki (blindfolded) was brought in by Stanisław Tatarowski “Kalif”, a

57 After the war, they lived in Dzierżoniów, at 13 Stalina St. We do not know whether the Berta mentioned here was his wife or sister. The record of Leon Kanarek’s testimony (he testified solely in the case of Icek Grynbaum’s murder) says that he was born in 1923 in Chęciny, had a wife and two children, was the son of Alter Kanarek and Eltera nee Romankiewicz (see AIPN Ki 027/236-347/III-pdf, slides 120–121). In the Central Register of Jews Who Survived the Holocaust, there remains the registration card of Berta Kanarek. She was born in 1923 in Kraków; Kanarek was her maiden name, she was registered as Wendrowicz. Father Benjamin, mother Zofia nee Monheit. After the war she also moved to Dzierżoniów, and subsequently to Legnica. She might have been a cousin of Berta and Leon from Chęciny. (AŻIH, CKŻP. Department of Registry and Statistics. Central Register, Registration card of Berta Wendrowicz nee Kanarek).

58 AIPN, GK 306/48, Testimony of Maria Mistachowicz, slide 7.

59 AIPN Ki 027/236-347/III-pdf, klatki 286–301, Testimonies of Władysława Koziel, Maria Błachucka (wife), Barbara Baran, Antoni Stefańczyk, Wiktor Kolasa and Stanisław Błachucki.

60 AIPN GK306/24, “Protokół przesłuchania Stanisława Karolińskiego”, p. 192.

member of the *Wybranieccy* unit. After an interrogation that lasted for about an hour and was interrupted by beatings, he was tied up, taken somewhere, and killed⁶¹. The way Błachucki died is described exclusively in Sołtysiak's testimony, in which he admits that his people (he did not give any names) did in fact kill the trackman. The death warrant signed with a codename was allegedly shown to Sołtysiak by "Roman" (N.N.), head of Section II in the AK Sub-district.

This sentence was carried out (...) somewhere in a forest near the village of Brynica. I cannot tell whether this trackman was a German collaborator, as these matters were the responsibility of AK's Section II (...) The decision read: 'for the betrayal of the Nation and cooperation with the Germans'⁶².

There is one more small lead in the trackman's case (however, it is not entirely certain that it concerns the same person). Julian Jasicki testified that on an autumn evening in 1943, when he was at Piotr Wójtowicz's house in Wymysłów, municipality of Zajączkow, two armed people appeared in the farmyard. He recognized one of them, Wiktor Gruszczyński, who together with an unknown man was trying to find out where Wójtowicz was hiding the Jews. There were no Jews at the farm anymore. Once, says Jasicki, he was sleeping in Wójtowicz's barn together with AK members Stanisław Piotrowski, Bonifacy Gruszka, and Wiktor Gruszczyński:

The above-mentioned were talking together and they started relating the fact of murdering four citizens of Jewish ethnicity, who were hiding, as I recall, at trackman Niewygod'a's [?] house. In their talk they started laughing about how they had begged them to spare their lives. I was threatened by Sierdzan Jan, also known as "Żbik" not to speak to anyone about the above-mentioned fact I had heard about [sic], otherwise I would get shot in the head⁶³.

It is possible that the discovery of the documentation of the filed investigation of Bolesław Stępniewski from 1950⁶⁴ will make it possible to link these testimonies. Most of the names mentioned here will also appear in another part of this chapter, in the description of the death of Izaak Grynbaum in Chęciny.

61 *Ibidem*, "Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Kumańskiego", p. 210.

62 AIPN GK306/24, "Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka", pp. 165–166.

63 AIPN GK 306/24, "Protokół przesłuchania Juliana Jasickiego", p. 185.

64 Investigation no. 3S 211/50 of Bolesław Stępniewski, which was closed by the Office of Province Prosecutor in Kielce, is mentioned in: AIPN GK306/48, "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Edwardowi Skrobotowi, Władysławowi Dziwiorowi, Józefowi Molendzie", p. 219.

II. Michał Ferenc from Zajączków, November 1943?⁶⁵

Zygmunt Bokwa's biography says:

We carried out a death sentence on a secretary in Chęciny and 9 others (...) and there was also a death warrant issued for a professor/teacher in Chęciny⁶⁶, for Janosik in Gałęzice, for the head of the Blue Police, and earlier also for the council secretary in Zajączków⁶⁷.

Edward Skrobot "Wierny" confessed in the course of the investigation to have issued, in October 1943, his subordinates with an order to execute a council official (not a secretary, contrary to Bokwa's statement) in Zajączków, Kielce county, a certain [Michał⁶⁸] Ferenc, of Jewish ethnicity. Ferenc was eliminated on the grounds of being "a German collaborator". As part of the same operation, Zajączków municipal records were burned, cash from the municipal treasury was taken, and Mayor Wincenty Bełtowski was punished by flogging. Skrobot stated:

Regarding that incident [Ferenc's execution], I hasten to add that having received a death warrant from my superiors I was required to execute it regardless of the [person's] origin⁶⁹.

It could not be established from whom or when Skrobot had learned that Ferenc was Jewish (Skrobot claims to have received this information from Mayor Bełtowski, who categorically denies that) or which authorities had issued the alleged death warrant. All this notwithstanding, Skrobot had personally verified the suspect's ethnic origin by ordering him to take his trousers off. The purpose of verifying the Jewish origin was not clarified during the legal proceedings. It was allegedly Stanisław Tatarowski "Kalif" who reportedly assured Skrobot that Ferenc was a German collaborator as he had personally seen letters he had written, addressed to the Gestapo in Kielce. Although Skrobot himself had not seen

65 See Kotliński, „Wybraniacy” w lasach Cisowskich, p. 136: “August [1943] Destroying of the documentation in [the following] municipalities: Chęciny, Korzecko, Zajączków, Piekoszów i Snochowice.”

66 “Barabas” was reprimanded for this murder. AIPN, GK 306/24, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej”, p. 222.

67 AIPN BU 0418/368, t.3, p. 16, Biography [of Wiktor Bokwa, manuscript with no date or place].

68 AIPN BU 0418/368, t.3, “Raport specjalny do Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Warszawie”, p. 85.

69 AIPN, GK 306 /48, Edward Skrobot's testimony, p. 66.

this correspondence, he refers to it as “tangible proof”. He explains that it had been sent

to Section II in Kielce together with a request for a death warrant⁷⁰.

After the execution, Skrobot gave an order to take off the dead man’s fur coat, clothes, and shoes. The clothing of the executed person

was according to the usual routine confiscated and distributed among the members of the execution squad⁷¹.

The fur coat was given to Władysław Dziewiór “Burza”, the remaining things were appropriated by “Staszek”. Ferenc’s execution by shooting was said to have been carried out by “Kalif” and “Cios” (Stanisław Klimontowicz); the body was buried between the river Wierna and the rail track approximately 1 kilometer from the village of Zajączków⁷².

Let us return to the question of the purpose of verifying Ferenc’s Jewish origin, given that this official was sentenced for alleged collaboration. It would have made sense only if, in the absence of the proof of guilt, the Jewish origin itself was its proof. This idea is inadvertently suggested by Bolesław Boczarski, who had heard “Wierny” himself say that he

had identified him before the killing based on his penis, which was circumcised, and shot him dead on this basis⁷³

Skrobot would repeatedly quote similar reasoning regarding his actions. The night Skrobot and his troops arrived to Zajączkow, Ferenc was not in his office. He was brought there while the troops were ordered to confiscate his belongings from his house, i.e. the fur coat and clothes (a coat, “two shirts and two long johns”⁷⁴). During Skrobot’s trial, the witnesses described Ferenc’s behavior in the municipality as follows:

[He] did not look like a scared, persecuted Jew in hiding⁷⁵.

As an official “imposed by the Germans” he was not very popular. When German officials were visiting the municipality,

70 Ibid., p. 54.

71 Ibid., “Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach” from November 23, 1951, p. 250.

72 AIPN BU 0418/368, t. 3, Skrobot Edward’s interrogation record, p. 49.

73 AIPN GK 306/24, Bolesław Boczarski’s interrogation record, p. 99.

74 AIPN, GK 306/48, “Protokół przesłuchania Skroboty Edwarda”, p. 21.

75 Ibid.

they would sit in a separate room with him and have long and casual conversations in German⁷⁶.

He was also said to often take work-related trips to Kielce. It seems that these conversations and journeys had actually caused people to suspect that Ferenc was a German collaborator and/or a Jew. They also allow us to doubt the existence of the “denunciation letters”. Would someone who had frequent meetings with the German officials choose such a risky contact method as sending information by post controlled by the underground? Skrobot’s testimony is questionable also because he benefits from the unverifiable testimonies of deceased individuals. Blaming the deceased – both “Kalif” and “Cios” died only a month after this incident during an ambush on a cash transport near Jaworzna – constituted a typical defense strategy in post-war trials based on the August Decree. It is particularly often used by Edward Skrobot, who – in spite of being a group leader – keeps emphasising his subordination to the fearsome Section II agents “Kalif” and “Górnik”. Another deceased individual implicated by Skrobot in this murder is “Cios”. In spite of Bokwa’s testimony stating that the death sentence was carried out by Władysław Dzięwó (a co-defendant in Skrobot’s trial), after Skrobot changed his testimony during the main hearing, the Court ruled that

Dzięwó, following Skrobot’s orders, was [only] assisting in case help was needed, and the death warrant was executed by the deceased “Cios” on his own. At the same time, the Court did not take into consideration the testimony given by Mayor Bełtowski, who had stated that Dzięwó

himself led Ferenc Michał on a leash with his hands tied, to be shot dead⁷⁷.

III. A Bunker near Mosty, February/March 1944(?)

The third point of the indictment against Edward Skrobot and Józef Molenda charges them with

involvement in a racially-motivated murder by shooting of three Polish citizens of Jewish ethnicity with unknown names and surnames⁷⁸.

The Jews were hiding in a forest bunker near Mosty, the municipality of Chęciny. The victims were robbed of the possessions they had probably kept in

76 Ibid.

77 AIPN BU 0418/368, t. 3, “Raport specjalny do Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Warszawie”, p. 85.

78 AIPN, GK 306/48, “Akt oskarżenia” from April 28, 1951, p. 97.

suitcases⁷⁹. The Court did not doubt that the AK unit under the command of “Wierny” had committed this crime; however, it had difficulties with proving specific individuals guilty, given that “as usual” the main defendant Edward Skrobot kept changing his testimony and blaming others. Skrobot again accused the late “Górnik”, attributing the actual execution of the sentence to him. It was “Górnik” who supposedly showed “Wierny” the sentencing document of the underground court and organized the execution. His statement contains all the ritual forms of absolution: an order from the Directorate of Civil Resistance, approved by the AK intelligence unit, but also the pressure and bullying by the fearsome Section II agent from Piekoszów:

Górnik took me and the gamekeeper aside, after which he took the sentencing document out of his pocket and handed it to me. The sentence was written on a piece of paper the size of a sheet, where it was written in copying pencil: “Directorate of Civil Resistance”, underneath that there was a date, I remember it said something like mid-February 1944, and in the middle, in spaced-out print, the order said: “To destroy the bunker with Jews located in the forest next to Checiny”, the second line read: “Based on the order from the Home Army Central Command, number, date”⁸⁰.

There are blatant formal mistakes in this statement: on July 15, 1943 the Directorate of Civil Resistance had ceased to exist, and was replaced with the Directorate of Underground Resistance, which reported directly to the commander of the Home Army. The expression “Home Army Central Command” is also a mistake, as it was called Home Army Central Headquarters, not Command. To set the matter straight, let us add that during its existence, KWC was subordinate to the Government Delegation for Poland, not to the Home Army. The leader involved in a murder refers here to an order; however, he does not know what order it was, and there is no date given in his statement. This makes it impossible to identify the order and verify the formal reasons for its issuing.

Even allowing for the negligence on the part of the UB officer taking the deposition, or of the court stenographer recording it, it is impossible to ignore the accumulation of mistakes in the most important excerpt of the text. It says that on his way to the forest, “Górnik” allegedly simply took the order out of his pocket, while he, Wierny, meekly agreed to its execution and simply gave him

79 Ibid., Bogusław Piotr’s testimony, p. 14. The witness (a forest worker) saw the disrobed bodies of the murder victims. He also saw “running individuals with suitcases”. In Piotr’s opinion, there were two bunkers: in one of them the Jews were hiding their property, while they were using the other one as sleeping quarters.

80 AIPN GK 306/48, “Protokół przesłuchania Skrobota Edwarda”, p. 34.

some people to do it. Ten partisans took part in this operation⁸¹. They were lead into the forest by the gamekeeper, Tadeusz Kuchta (the case files do not contain a record of his interrogation), in fact a member of the *Wybraniec* unit. Skrobot confessed solely to surrounding the forest valley. He claimed not to even have gone inside the bunker, as “Górnik” allegedly entered it accompanied only by “Sten”, emptying a whole magazine into it.

He shot dead all the Jews present in that bunker;

there were allegedly three of them⁸². Skrobot took a Nagant revolver that Lech had brought him from the bunker. Despite no previous mention of any of the individuals hiding to have come, the statement contains a sentence about “throwing them back into the bunker”. The following day, Kuchta the gamekeeper ordered some forest workers to bury the remains of the three individuals that had been shot dead⁸³. In the sentencing document, the court recapitulates Skrobot’s line of defense, in which he stubbornly claimed not to have been directly involved in the murder⁸⁴. According to his own words, he took part in the execution solely due to the consequences with which Górnik had allegedly threatened him. Skrobot explained the contradictions between the statements he gave at the hearing and those he had given during the investigation as resulting from “a certain [degree of] coercion used during the investigation”. The judge accepts the explanation given by the defendant:

The political power in Skrobot’s unit was held by a Section II officer Górnik, who, as we can see, let’s say just from the facts established in this case, was a ruthless man, whose threats were not to be taken lightly.

This singular representation of Górnik is in stark contrast with how former “Barabas” soldiers portray him in their memoirs. He is described as an outstanding leader, perfect and brave, “a very nice and popular man”⁸⁵. Let us also note that

81 AIPN, GK 306/48, “Protokół przesłuchania Skrobota Edwarda”, p. 18.

82 Ropolewski, Andrzej: *Wspomnienia z AK*. Czytelnik: Warsaw 1957, p. 47: “I have also heard of cases when a number of people were executed at once. It happened for example allegedly near the village of Mosty near Chęciny, where in a dug-out at the edge of the forest, they shot dead a Jewish family who had been hiding there.”

83 AIPN, GK 306/48, “Akt oskarżenia” from April 28, 1951, p. 99.

84 *Ibid.*, “Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach” from November 23, 1951, p. 252. The defendant Molenda did not confess to anything and was found not guilty due to lack of evidence.

85 Kotliński, „*Wybraniec*” w *lasach cisowskich*, p. 89; see also a short biography of Czesław Łętowski “Górnik” at the end of this chapter.

the date he joined the unit is not quite certain; “Barabasz” himself first mentions the name Górnik in a passage dated March 1944, which says that “he has recently joined the unit”⁸⁶. Górnik had probably been a member of the *Wybranieccy* somewhat earlier than that; Boczarski dates it to the end of January 1944.⁸⁷

IV. Roman Olizarowski “Pomsta”, day after the Mosty incident?⁸⁸

Another incident was described by Andrzej Ropelewski in 1957:

A deeply tragic vein runs through the case of “Pomsta”. This was a pseudonym used by one of the soldiers from AK forest units in the Kielce Sub-district. When after some time it transpired that Pomsta is a Jew, he was shot dead by his former brothers in arms⁸⁹.

The topic of Pomsta’s identity inspires contradictory statements in relevant publications. For example, Michał Basa claims that “Pomsta” was a member of a unit which protected the radio station at the AK District Headquarters, serving under second lieutenant inspector Jan Kosiński “Jacek”, commander of the Bodzentyn Sub-district⁹⁰. After the destruction of the unit and Jacek’s death, “Pomsta”, along with Basa, joined *Wybranieccy*⁹¹, and was allegedly later killed by NSZ⁹².

86 Sołtysiak, *Chłopcy Barabasza*, p. 71.

87 Boczarski, Bolesław: *By ojczyzna była wolna... Wspomnienia partyzanta z Gór Świętokrzyskich*. Unpublished typescript, 1961, p. 108 (a copy in the authors’ archive).

88 This is how the main defendant, Edward Skrobot, dates Olizarowski’s murder (AIPN, GK 306/48, Edward Skrobot’s testimony, p. 59).

89 Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, p. 47.

90 Chlebowski, Cezary: *Pozdrowcie Góry Świętokrzyskie*. Czytelnik: Warsaw 1993, pp. 262, 308.

91 The suggestion of treason, found in Skrobot’s testimony, is an insinuation: “At the accommodation, [“Górnik”] took out the verdict [document], which was supposed to prove «Pomsta’s» guilt, which mentioned that «Pomsta» betrayed «Jacek’s» unit, due to what [sic] «Jacek’s» unit was destroyed.” (AIPN GK306/48, “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Skroboty Edwarda”, p. 38). The circumstances of the destruction of “Jacek’s” unit have been described in detail in M.Basa, *Opowiadania partyzanta*, Warsaw 1984, p. 126 ff.

92 Basa, Michał: *Opowiadania partyzanta*. Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza: Warsaw 1984, pp. 167, 200.

On the other hand, Cezary Chlebowski thinks that Pomsta's name was Jan Kwiatkowski and that he died during an attack in Wykus on October 28, 1943⁹³. He was allegedly a Jew from Warsaw, assigned to the unit by the AK Radom-Kielce District Command. His pseudonym was supposed to represent "a symbol of revenge for his family murdered in the Warsaw ghetto"⁹⁴.

In his monograph on the ZWZ-AK Radom-Kielce District, Wojciech Borzobohaty does not mention "Pomsta" at all. While on the basis of a mention in Edward Skrobot's statement and also in other sources we can conclude that the information about Pomsta's transfer from Jacek's unit to the *Wybraniec*y is correct, neither the attribution of his murder to NSZ, nor the above-mentioned name are right. During Szumielewicz' investigation and trial, Bolesław Boczarski "Jurand" talks about Pomsta's mother, who, searching for her son after the war, showed his photograph to partisans. It is most likely that until then, they did not know his real personal details. In his testimony, Boczarski claims that Pomsta's name was Roman Olizarowski; however, absolute certainty is only established by the testimony of Jadwiga Olizarowska, mother of the killed partisan⁹⁵. Roman did indeed come from Warsaw, from a Polish-Jewish family. His almost fifty-year-old mother was already a widow when making her statement in 1948. As she said, "[my] husband was from a Jewish family" (however, we know nothing about the circumstances of his death, and not even his first name), and the son "looked like a Jew and that's why they shot him dead". Olizarowska had only learnt this from "Jurand". In his version, the blame falls on Henryk Pawelec "Andrzej"; however, on the basis of all the collected material we now know that this accusation was unfounded. Among others, it was Edward Skrobot who talked about the identity of Pomsta's murderers. Obviously, it was none other than "Górnik", who allegedly one day informed "Wierny" that there was a Jew in the division and that he needed to be eliminated immediately. According to Skrobot's testimony, he used the following words:

We need to clean one more stain, when I asked him what stain, he then stated that it was necessary to eliminate a member of my group with the pseudonym "Pomsta", as he was a Jew and he had a death warrant on him⁹⁶.

93 Based on Michał Basa's memoirs, we can rectify this information: "The little Jew «Pomsta» threw a grenade, ran away, fell into the bushes; he lay there for a few hours, he was probably considered dead," *ibid.*, p. 128.

94 Chlebowski, *Pozdrówcie Góry*, p. 310; see also p. 321.

95 AIPN, Ki 027/236-1.pdf. Jadwiga Olizarowska's testimony, p. 48–49.

96 AIPN, GK, 306/48, Edward Skrobot's testimony, p. 37–38.

Górnik allegedly showed him this sentence in writing in the presence of several other persons. Skrobot also adds shocking details:

[This warrant] was issued by the Directorate of Civil Resistance in Kielce, while he also showed me an order issued by the AK Central Headquarters, which talked about the elimination of all the Jews, no matter if it was an AK member or someone hiding from the Germans⁹⁷.

Skrobot's testimony continues as follows:

Not believing that "Pomsta" is a Jew, I assembled the whole group and under the pretext of a venereal disease check-up I examined all the AK members. During the check-up, on the basis of the examination of his penis, I realized that "Pomsta" was really a Jew. After finishing the check-up, we went to our quarters and there I said to postpone the execution of the sentence on the person of Jewish nationality, AK member "Pomsta" until "Barabaszs'" troops build-up, but "Górnik" insisted it should be done. In the evening of that day, "Górnik", "Stasiek" [Stanisław Litewka], and "Lech" [Henryk Żytkowski] brought "Pomsta" with them to a forest near the village of Mosty and shot him there.⁹⁸

Skrobot defended himself at court by explaining that he was signaling to "Pomsta" to run away. He added that

in Pomsta's death warrant, it said that "(...) it has been mentioned that Pomsta [had deserted from] Jacek's unit, to which he used to belong"⁹⁹.

According to the post-war testimony of one of the unit members (Ryszard Maj), "Pomsta" was shot dead by someone else, allegedly Józef Przygodzki "Czarny", formerly a member of the organization *Miecz i Pług* and of a group of robbers headed by one Piłat. Przygodzki also had other executions on his conscience; one of them is mentioned by Władysław Dziewiór during an interrogation¹⁰⁰. When describing what happened, Skrobot uses a strategy similar to the one he had used in the case of Michał Ferenc, killed in Zajączków. On the one hand, he uses the

97 AIPN, GK 306/48, Edward Skrobot's testimony, p. 59.

98 Ibid., Edward Skrobot's testimony, p. 37–38.

99 Ibid., "Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach", p. 252. The suggestion of treason, made in this statement, is an insinuation.

100 AIPN BU 0418/368, t.3, "Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Dziewióra", p. 6. A clue to Przygodzki's involvement in the murders of the Jews is also found in the report of a UB agent "Pies", who recounts his meeting with Przygodzki in 1948 in the village of Tunel near Miechów. At the time, Przygodzki was allegedly approached by an unknown man, with whom he had a quiet conversation. To the question "What was that about?" the target allegedly answered "Nothing special, it was about one Jew". (AIPN Ki 025/88/D (microfiche), Copy of agency report "Pies", Prudnik, March 3, 1953).

conviction of alleged desertion and the violence from an alleged Section II agent “Górnik” to justify his actions; on the other hand, he additionally verifies the alleged treason the way he had been taught: *b y e x a m i n i n g g e n i t a l s*¹⁰¹. This gesture shows much better than any other testimonies the racial motivation for the murder. This is neither the first nor the last such incident involving Edward Skrobot. From Stanisław Lutka’s testimony, we learn e.g. that another member of the unit, Jerzy Matysiak “Braszkó”, told him after the war that

Skrobot “Wierny” wanted to eliminate him, suspecting that he was a Jew, as a result he had a lot of explaining to do, and on top of that he had to undergo an examination of his genitals and show [him] his birth certificate. (...) he thought he would do the same as he had done with the Jews during the occupation¹⁰².

However, despite Pomsta’s Jewish origin providing a direct opportunity for the murder, its motive probably lay somewhere else. We learn about it thanks to Ryszard Maj’s testimony:

After shooting the Jews near Mosty (Wierny), which was described as a “serious shootout”, Pomsta asked, in the presence of soldier Witek (and others), how they can shoot those Jews. So Witek said: “We’ll see who else is a Jew around here”, and went away. He came back with Grot¹⁰³ and they said an examination of the genitals had been ordered out of fear of venereal diseases. “Pomsta” [Roman Olizarowski] was the first one to be examined. He was arrested immediately and soon afterward Czarny shot him dead on the hillside with two shots¹⁰⁴.

The mention of Marian Wilczyński’s (*nom de guerre* Grom) participation in this incident explains why he actually gave an alibi to the group leader:

Witness M. Wilczyński’s “Grom” testimony shows that the behavior of defendant Skrobot in the critical time was completely passive. The whole operation was realized by “Górnik”: he namely ordered the unit to assemble and to perform a cleanliness check, and it was also him who ordered Pomsta to come to the forest with him, after which Pomsta did not return to the unit¹⁰⁵.

In reality, according to Maj, Pomsta’s real direct killer was “Czarny”, i.e. Józef Przygodzki.

101 “Circumcised, therefore a traitor” – it would be hard to find a better exemplification of the belief in “the treacherous nature of Jews”; see Janion, Maria: *Bohater, spisek, śmierć. Wykłady żydowskie*. WAB: Warsaw 2009, pp. 54, 62 etc.

102 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Stanisława Lutka”, p. 113.

103 A spelling error, in fact it was “Grom” (ibid., p. 140), Marian Wilczyński from Chęciny.

104 See Chapter 10: *Suppresio veri, suggestio falsi* in this volume.

105 AIPN, GK, 306/48, “Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach”, p. 252.

Roman Olizarowski's mother did not know to which organization her son had belonged. He left his home in Warsaw and in late August 1943 he arrived in Kielce. He was in contact with his mother by correspondence until January 1944. When he got wounded, he spent some time at a *melina*. Jadwiga Olizarowska learned that her son had been killed in March 1944 from Bolesław Boczański "Jurand". Although her testimony is included in the case files, for unknown reasons Jadwiga Olizarowska was not called on to testify in Edward Skrobot's trial.

V. Izaak Grynbaum, March 3/4, 1944

Izaak Grynbaum was a cousin of Lili Szynowłoga, who was a ten-year-old girl in 1944. Two years earlier (in August 1942), Lili and her mother Guta escaped from the Warsaw ghetto¹⁰⁶ and took refuge with relatives in Chęciny. Thanks to a tip-off from Countess Zofia Mycielska¹⁰⁷, all three of them (Izaak, Guta, and Lili) managed to narrowly avoid deportation by leaving the little town. In Guta's diary, Mycielska is referred to as the good "princess Michelska". Izaak, Guta, and Lili wandered around the area for quite a while; they went through a number of hiding places in peasant homes. They finally found a safe haven at gravedigger

106 Leon, Guta Latrowska-Szynowłoga's husband and Lili's father, remained in the Warsaw ghetto; see Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, Guta: *Życie w grobowcu*. Wydawnictwo Ypsilon: Warsaw 2002, p. 6. A part of Guta's memoirs (a typescript in Yiddish) is preserved in AŻIH, 302/174.

107 Zofia Mycielska nee Karska, holding the Polish coat-of-arms Jastrzębiec, AK *nom de guerre* Hreczka (1898–1978): married Michał Mycielski in 1922, and until 1939 they lived at the Gałowo estate in Szamotuły district. In 1939, her husband emigrated together with the Polish army and government. On her own, Mycielska rented a part of the Sitkówka estate near Chęciny (close to an estate belonging to her brother Szymon). She worked for charity; among other things, she served as President of the Central Welfare Council branch in Chęciny. She was a member of AK, and she made two journeys to Germany in order to bring instructions for the Polish underground. In 1943 ("after a number of bands attacked Sitkówka"), she moved to Warsaw. Pursuant to the land reform decree, all the Mycielski property was taken over by the government in 1945. Mycielska managed to leave the Communist Poland in 1946, and together with her husband and two daughters, they settled in England. See Gapys, Jerzy: *Postawy społeczno-polityczne ziemiaństwa w latach 1939–1945 (na przykładzie dystryktu radomskiego)*. Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe and Akademia Świętokrzyska: Kielce 2003, p. 224; short biographies of Michał Mycielski and Zofia Mycielska in Arkuszewski, Antoni: *Ziemiaństwo polscy XX wieku. Słownik biograficzny*, t. 5. DiG: Warsaw 2000, pp. 98–103.

Karol Kiciński's¹⁰⁸ house, where he lived together with his daughter Janina. Together, they built a hideout right underneath the gravedigger's house, which stood next to the Jewish cemetery, on the outskirts of Chęciny. Izaak, Guta, and Lili spent more than 17 months there, living on the proceeds from the sale of their family property, deposited with some inhabitants of Chęciny. This livelihood was provided by Izaak, who was the only one of the three who would go out of the hideout and bring food bought from the farmers. After his death and the theft of the remainders of the property by the "Barabasz" soldiers (see below), the mother and daughter almost died from hunger. They survived thanks to Karol Kiciński's begging; in the most difficult times, he would hunt stray dogs in order to get food¹⁰⁹. After the war, the mother temporarily placed Lili in the Jewish Orphanage in Otwock. The girl made a statement there:

The second winter came about. We had no money or provisions left. [My] cousin went to town. But there the *akowcy* [AK soldiers] caught him and told him to give away where rich Jews were. But [my] cousin did not want to give us away and they shot him dead in the middle of the marketplace, and buried him at the cemetery where we had been hiding. Mummy sat up all night waiting for [my] cousin and did not sleep. Only on the third day did we learn about the tragedy and we cried so much. Mummy was very weak and I was little, and there was nobody to take care of us. We would have died of hunger if it wasn't for that dear old man¹¹⁰.

Thanks to the diary of Lili's mother, Guta Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, we can add a number of details to Lili's testimony. We are especially interested in what concerns the days preceding Izaak Grynbaum's death in the marketplace in Chęciny. A few days later, Szynowłoga-Trokenheim talked to Mieczysław Nowak, Countess Mycielska's stableman. From this dialogue, we learn about the circumstances of Izaak's arrest by "Barabasz's" partisans:

Mietek [the stableman] said that at about 11 in the evening [according to Guta's notes, the incident took place on the night of March 3/March 4, 1944 – AS, JTB], he was in the stables with a colleague. Suddenly they heard shouts from the outside, someone was apparently being beaten. Mietek heard someone yell: "Jew, where are your goods?" They heard the sound of beating again, and a voice asking: "Lieutenant, why are you beating

108 Thanks to the efforts of Guta and Lili Szynowłoga, Karol Kiciński and his daughter Janina were in 1983 decorated with the Medal of the Righteous Among the Nations; see Libionka, Dariusz et al. (eds.): *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata*, t. I. *Yad Vashem* and Instytut Studiów Strategicznych: Kraków 2009, p. 292.

109 Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, p. 71.

110 AŻIH 301/5521. Lili Szynowłoga's statement.

me?” “Where is your cousin?” – a male voice was asking. After that, Mietek recognized the voice of Izaak, who was pleading: “Marian, help me”¹¹¹.

We are already familiar with Marian from Pomsta’s case: it was Marian Wilczyński “Grom II”, a stonemason from Chęciny¹¹², one of “Barabaszs” soldiers, who is mentioned in Guta Szynowłoga’s diary as Izaak’s friend¹¹³. They met in Sitkówka a few days previously and on that occasion the partisans let Izaak go¹¹⁴. Wilczyński will testify at the post-war trial of the commander, Edward Skrobot, one of the two lieutenants in the unit; the other one was the repeatedly mentioned Czesław Łętowski “Górnik”. One of them must have been beating Izaak at the time. Wilczyński blames neither his commander nor his colleagues. He does not confess to any involvement in Grynbaum’s murder. The following part of Guta’s story tells us that on the critical night, Nowak the stableman was ordered to bring horses round to the front of countess Mycielska’s mansion. Looted goods were loaded onto three wagons; the countess was beaten. The attackers also wanted to kill Jan, the steward, who had already been brought to the pond in his night clothes:

But they let him go once he had proven that he was not a Jew¹¹⁵.

The verification for Jewishness can be considered a particular “signature” of Edward Skrobot, as practices of this kind are not found in materials regarding any other group of the *Wybraniec*.

Nowak and Grynbaum, blindfolded, were subsequently taken to the partisan camp, which was located a two-hour ride away by cart¹¹⁶. In the camp, they were given food.

In the morning, they told Izaak to take his clothes off, gave him a uniform and a cap with a symbol of the Polish army, but they did not issue him with a weapon. Then they asked

111 Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, p. 94.

112 See the mention of stonemason Wilczyński from Chęciny in: AIPN, BU 0418/368, “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Wiktora Zygmunta Bokwy”, p. 27.

113 During an earlier encounter, Izaak said to “Barabaszs” soldiers: “Gentlemen, I have a friend in your group. His name is Marian Wilczyński,” see Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, p. 83.

114 *Ibid.*

115 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

116 More or less the distance of Sitkówka from Daleszyce, where the unit was stationed in the first few days of March 1944.

him to describe to them in detail what he had been doing since the day of the deportation of the Jews from Chęciny¹¹⁷.

He was interrogated for the whole day. When Nowak was being taken back to Sitkówka in the evening, Grynbaum was being treated in the camp as a member of the unit¹¹⁸. It was a trick that was supposed to induce him to reveal the places where he kept his property, as well as the hideout where Guta and Lili were hiding. There are known instances of the use of this trick by the members of either AK¹¹⁹ or AL in the Kielce region¹²⁰. After robbing them of money and property, the Jews would be shot dead. The moment of Grynbaum's capture remained in the memory of AK soldiers¹²¹. We have one more indirect testimony from *Wybraniectwo* about this incident. In this testimony, Bolesław Boczarski recounts the version he had allegedly heard from the commander, Edward Skrobot:

Wierny started telling me that they had learned from the locals that a Jew was hiding on Countess Mycielska's premises, so "Wierny" and his group went to Countess Mycielska's and caught that Jew [sic!]. After being caught, the Jew [sic!] said he had left gold and jewelry with Countess Mycielska, so "Wierny" and his group entered the Countess' house again and then he demolished her house. Afterward "Wierny" told me that they had shot the Jew [sic!] dead and added that Bokwa Zygmunt "Smutny" was with him.¹²²

Let us now give voice to the residents of Chęciny. Tadeusz Mistachowicz remembers that after the deportation of the Jews from Chęciny

many times in the evening I happened to notice walking down the street across the town of Chęciny a Jew I had known since youth: it was Grynbaum Icek¹²³.

117 Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, p. 96.

118 Grynbaum's last moments are described in a similar way in Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, p. 47.

119 See Skibińska, Alina / Libionka, Dariusz: „Przysięgam walczyć o wolną i potężną Polskę, wykonywać rozkazy przełożonych, tak mi dopomóż Bóg”. Żydzi w AK. Epizod z Ostrowca Świętokrzyskiego”. *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały* 4, 2008, pp. 287–323; Skibińska, Alina: *Żydzi w AK i AL. Dwa epizody z Ostrowca Świętokrzyskiego*. Unpublished typescript; id.: „Dostał 10 lat, ale za co?” *Analiza motywacji sprawców zbrodni na Żydach na wsi kieleckiej w latach 1942–1944*. In: Engelking, Barbara / Grabowski, Jan (eds.): *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*, Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów: Warsaw 2011.

120 See Chapter 3: *Trial of Tadeusz Maj* in this volume.

121 Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, p. 47.

122 AIPN GK 306/24, “Protokół przesłuchania Bolesława Boczarskiego”, p. 100.

123 Ibid., “Protokół przesłuchania Tadeusza Mistachowicza”, p. 172.

Mistachowicz recounts that on one winter's night in 1944, a group of a dozen or so armed people dressed in fur coats entered the town. They forcefully entered the house of the witness, and shouting:

Janicki, return the gold that the Jew Icek Grynbaum had brought to your house!

they started beating his brother. They had Grynbaum with them; he was bare-foot, in his underpants, with his hands tied in the back with a wire.

I noticed traces of beating on his face, as he had a hole in his cheek, blocked with a piece of very bloody cotton wool.

The brother's explanation that he was not Jasicki¹²⁴ (that night he was not at home, see below) was not taken into account, and a brutal search was carried out:

Seeing that, Icek addressed all the members of the household: "Bolek Stępniewski betrayed me." From this statement I concluded that Bolesław Stępniewski¹²⁵ had taken part in his capture¹²⁶.

This incident was also witnessed by Maria Mistachowicz¹²⁷. She testified that there was a person in the group referred to as "lieutenant". Undoubtedly it was either the group leader Edward Skrobot, or "Górnik", assuming that he really was in Chęciny at the time, as Skrobot claims. Bolesław Stępniewski, whose name Grynbaum shouts, was one of the first homeowners to shelter this Jewish family in hiding (Guta with her daughter and Izaak). They entrusted him a part of their property, which was gradually being cashed¹²⁸. Stępniewski, who in Guta Szynowłoga's testimony plays the role of a friend, and is happy to see the end of the suffering of the Jews¹²⁹, threatens the family of Anna Jasicka in 1949, saying that

if [my] husband talks about Grynbaum's murder, he will shoot us all dead, and if he doesn't manage to do that, Szymek Gruszczyński or other partisans will take care of that¹³⁰.

124 Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, pp. 20, 35 etc.

125 For Bolesław Stępniewski, who was initially sheltering Grynbaum, Guta, and Lili Szynowłoga, see Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, pp. 22–24, 138–139.

126 AIPN GK 306/24, "Protokół przesłuchania Tadeusza Mistachowicza", p. 172.

127 AIPN GK 306/24, Maria Mistachowicz's testimony at the main hearing, p. 61.

128 Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, p. 139.

129 "Just think of it! You are free! – said Bolek – the war is over. [...] In Bolek's house, his wife prepared a nice meal for me. I was enjoying a rich consomme with noodles and a portion of chicken," Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, p. 138.

130 AIPN GK 306/24, "Protokół przesłuchania Anny Jasickiej", p. 179.

The threats were allegedly made in the presence of Jasicka's husband and his two brothers, Czesław and Julian. Jasicka then talks about the murder of three Jews in the forest near Chęciny called Gaj¹³¹.

Jasicka (sister of the two Mistachowiczs) was staying at the house raided by the *Wybranieccy*. She also knew Izaak Grynbaum from before the war. She recalled that he was living with his father, a butcher. One night in March 1944, he was dragged over by an armed group of 10–15 persons. Stępniewski's name also comes up in her testimony:

(...) as [my] husband told me, Stępniewski Bolesław from Chęciny has a death warrant on him issued by NSZ for being a Communist¹³². (...) These individuals' behavior in my house was more brutal than that of the Gestapo, who came to get my husband, and, verbally abusing me in various ways, [they] asked me to give them the gold that was allegedly in my possession¹³³.

In fact, no gold was found during the search; however, the partisans got interested in "plush bedspreads"¹³⁴ and Stefan Mistachowicz's sheepskin coat. They had prepared the loot they wanted to take, when suddenly Izaak Grynbaum started screaming

Stasiu my dear – he shouted – Bolek Stępniewski caught me, Bolek betrayed me, I am dying because of Bolek!

131 It is possible that this is the matter referred to in Bernard Zelinger's testimony under the heading August 10, 1944: "As we were waiting for our people, we did not leave anyone behind to keep watch. All of a sudden we heard a cry: «Hands up!» [...] «Ryba» was holding me separately, and other «soldiers» were surrounding my detained colleagues, butting them, they were trying to learn where they had hidden [their] money and other valuable things. Besides me, they caught Monek Żyto, Szlamek Strawczyński, Izaaka Garfinkiel and Wolf Bojgen [...]. We marched for about 30 minutes. When we were close to the narrow gauge railway embankment, one of the «soldiers» came up to «Ryba» and asked quietly: «Here or further on?». I did not hear the answer, the question was enough for me. [...] Without hesitation, I shouted in Jewish at the boys: «He's going to kill us! Save yourselves! Run!» [...] Kozubek and Czerwiec [persons to whom the author owes his life] informed us after some time that all those who had been detained with me were murdered". Quoted after: Urbański, Krzysztof: *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej: Kraków 2004, p. 232.

132 Compare with AIPN GK306/24, "Protokół przesłuchania Juliana Jasickiego", p. 182.

133 AIPN GK 306/24, "Protokół przesłuchania Anny Jasickiej", pp. 177–178.

134 For more on "plush bedspreads", which were a fast-selling product before the war, see the Sandomierz interviews in Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: *Legends o krwi. Antropologia przesądu*. WAB: Warsaw 2008.

The comparison of information about Stępniewski shows that he was a two-faced man. Guta Szynowłoga keeps mentioning him in the last part of her memoirs. Another survivor also writes about him enthusiastically; however, the sentence

He was a liaison between all the Jews in hiding. If I for example wanted to see someone, when I was in hiding, he would arrange this meeting for me in his house¹³⁵

sounds alarming, given what we know about his activities. It seems that Stępniewski was indeed helping the Jews in hiding; on the other hand, however, he must have been making a large profit from the contacts he had so effectively monopolized. Witness' testimonies show that he indeed could have played a part in the deaths of some of the persecuted persons.

Let us return to the unfolding of the events in Chęciny on the night of March 3/ March 4, 1944. Members of the armed group gagged Grynbaum, shoved him out of the house and the bedspreads were not taken. Among the attackers, Anna Jasicka recognized Józef Molenda from Bolmin. Jasicka is the second witness to point to him. It was him who was shoving Grynbaum through the door while hitting him

on his back and head with some iron piece he had in his hand¹³⁶.

Stanisław Jasicki, Anna's husband, did not spend the night of March 3/March 4, 1944 at home. He was staying the night at a friend's, who lived in a small house on the corner of the marketplace in Chęciny. He testified that he had heard voices in the street at night:

stomping of people walking in the street. I went over to the window and through the window I recognized the defendant Molenda and Wiktor Gruszczyński¹³⁷ (...). The persons were dragging a man along the street. Some time after that I heard shots in the marketplace. (...) In the morning, Mistachowicz Maria came over and said that Icek Grynbaum was lying in the marketplace, murdered (...) he was lying in underpants and a shirt. When they were dragging the man toward the marketplace I saw that he was dressed in white. During the occupation, I was helping Jews hide. (...) e.g. Berta

135 AYV, 03.3390, Testimony of Abraham Ring from Chęciny, p. 15.

136 From the next comment, we learn that Molenda, after the war a resident of the Reclaimed Territories (in the years 1945–1946 he served as a militiaman in Zgorzelec), was the son-in-law of Wiktor Gruszczyński's mother; more below.

137 Gruszczyński and Molenda were brothers-in-law.

Kanarek¹³⁸, Mordka Kenigsztajn¹³⁹. (...) Gruszczyński threatened to kill me if I said that the Jew was killed. (...) People said that Wierny's group went from house to house, demanding gold. (...) That night [those] individuals came not only to my house. (...) The night of the third to the fourth of March the was bright, moonlit¹⁴⁰.

Jasicki's brother recognizes Bolesław Stępniewski among those leading Grynbaum¹⁴¹. He also testifies that all three of them were supposed to be locally reporting to Jan Sieradzan "Żbik" from Chęciny. That night, the thugs forcefully entered the houses of other inhabitants of Chęciny as well: they went to Marian Klusk's, to the Banasińskis', to Aleksander Kubicki's, and to Mieczysław Wiśniewski's¹⁴². The latter will testify at the trial of Skrobot and his people. Wiśniewski was also providing storage for Izaak Grynbaum's property; however, his testimony shows that he had already considered it his own. During the night raid, the partisans agreed with him on that point, and decided not to take "the hard skins", appropriating only the "plush bedspreads"¹⁴³. When Wiśniewski offered them vodka, they showed a willingness to compromise. It is not surprising, then, that as opposed to Mistachowicz and Janicki, Wiśniewski did not recognize any of the nocturnal visitors. He would not confirm that Grynbaum's hands were tied either, although other witnesses concurred on that point.

Let us now give voice to the perpetrators. The version presented during his trial in 1951 by the group leader Edward Skrobot "Wierny" starts with an order from Section II, delivered to him by "Barabasz". The order from the AK intelligence unit said that

in [the homes of] certain residents of Chęciny (...) there are post-Jewish things, which things I am supposed to take¹⁴⁴.

A few aspects of Skrobot's testimony stand out. He says the crimes had been committed on the authority of the intelligence unit and his commander. As usual, he identifies those who are already dead as direct perpetrators (Stanisław Litewka "Stach", Czesław Łętowski "Górnik") – he can accuse them with no

138 See footnote 57.

139 Compare Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim*, p. 224, who writes that Jasicki was sheltering Berta Witenberg (nee Kanarek), Pesla Zelcer, and Morda Kenigstein in his basement from 1942 to 1945.

140 AIPN, GK 306/48, Stanisław Jasicki's testimony at the main hearing, p. 66.

141 AIPN GK306/24, "Protokół przesłuchania Juliana Jasickiego", p. 182.

142 AIPN GK 306/24, "Protokół przesłuchania Anny Jasickiej", p. 179.

143 Besides leather goods, bedspreads were a profitable capitalization on the property that the Jews were leaving with their Christian neighbors for storage.

144 AIPN, GK 306/48, "Protokół przesłuchania Skroboty Edwarda", p. 47.

consequences. The logic is clear: when those who are robbed are being accused of treason (just like countess Mycielska, and then each of the murdered Jews), loot ceases to be loot¹⁴⁵. It becomes something between a punishment and a patriotic duty; profits are tactfully overlooked¹⁴⁶. According to an unwritten partisan rule, property belonging to those who were killed was automatically confiscated, benefiting the unit. Skrobot knows that “unjustified” robberies and murders can land him a death sentence, and so he testifies that he did not find anything in the places identified by Grynbaum. However, contradicting himself after a while, he mentions handing in clothes acquired in Chęciny to the commander, and also an “envelope and two mechanisms from a golden watch”. This watch, which allowed them to survive many months by being pawned with countess Mycielska, is described in detail by Guta Szynowłoga in her diary¹⁴⁷.

It is not clear why Skrobot calls Grynbaum Jankiel in his testimony, nor why he gives a different chronology of the crimes perpetrated than transpires from the remaining testimonies. This might be a part of the *Wybraniectwo*'s trial strategy, designed to confuse the interrogators, who must prove not so much the identity of the victim as such, but rather his or her Jewish ethnicity if the defendant is to be tried pursuant to the August Decree. On this very basis (the anonymity of the victims), forty-five years later the Chairman of the Supreme Court, Stanisław Rudnicki, will in radically challenge the 1950s court judgment in Skrobot's case, as well as the judgment from 1993 in which the Provincial Court dismissed the case for overthrowing the judgment from 1951. The statement of grounds reads:

The plaintiff likewise argued that the file contains no evidence whatsoever that would allow one to surmise that the persons to which the judgment applied [those hiding in the forest and then killed by Wierny's group in a bunker near Mosty – AS, JTB] “were Polish citizens of Jewish origin [at all]” or that “they were hiding in the forest due to racial persecution.”¹⁴⁸

The Supreme Court did not delve into who the hiding individuals in that case might have been, and ignored the testimony of the defendant from 1951, who

145 Similarly Sołtysiak: “There existed at that time an order from the Sub-district commander, instructing the unit to appropriate the property that had belonged to the executed [person]”; see GK 306/24, “Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka”, p. 144.

146 According to the rules issued by underground courts, it was allowed to confiscate the property of those executed for treason for the benefit of a fund “for fire victims”.

147 Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu...*, pp. 48, 69.

148 AIPN GK 306/48, “Rewizja nadzwyczajna od postanowień Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach”, October 18, 1993, p. 4.

confessed that they were Jews. At the trial in 1951, Skrobot does not state any other motives for the crime besides the necessity to obey an “order”.

After the war, the matter of the murders of Jews committed by Edward Skrobot's group had two outcomes, at home and abroad. When Countess Mycielska, battered and robbed by Wierny's people, emigrated to London, she intervened with the leader of the AK, gen. Tadeusz Bor-Komorowski. Komorowski allegedly promised to look into the matter; however, he abandoned the idea due to the Communist authorities' smear campaign against AK¹⁴⁹.

Case files from the trials of “Barabasz's” people convey the strange atmosphere prevailing in the Kielce courts in 1951. It was a period of raging Stalinism and persecution of the former AK members; however, the justification of an unusually lenient sentence Skrobot received from Judge A. Kozielowski can easily be mistaken for a eulogy¹⁵⁰. It says that he had taken into consideration the fact that

[Skrobot] has since the beginning shown himself to be a perfect, disciplined soldier, and an enlightened partisan and [that] he has been awarded the cross *Virtuti Militari*¹⁵¹.

We also learn that Skrobot was held in high esteem not only in his own milieu,

but also among the leaders of leftist partisan groups, for whom he was always ready to do a favor, showing that essentially, his deepest convictions actually are closer to the ideology of these groups /leftist/ than to the group to which he had formally belonged, but with whose ideology he often disagreed (...). Likewise, his attitude toward the Jews, in cases when he was able to make his own decisions, was not negative at all.

It is even more surprising that in the statement of grounds of the judgment from 1951 (!), some of the murders committed under Skrobot's leadership were described as

149 Information provided by Henryk Pawelec; recorded by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir in Kielce in May 2009.

150 A visibly favorable attitude of the judge toward the defendants is attested by the vicissitudes of the *Wybraniec* chronicle, confiscated immediately after Marian Sołtysiak's arrest and returned to him years later by post. We can read about this in the text of the *Chronicle* published by *Rodzina Wybranieckich*: “When in 1956, after leaving the prison walls, Barabasz took up residence in Sienkiewicza Street in Kielce, one of the judges anonymously sent to this address the *Chronicle* stolen from the case files. Barabasz later obtained the information about the sender of the *Chronicle* from attorney A. Płoski.”

151 AIPN, GK 306/48, “Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach”, November 23, 1951, pp. 249–253. It is unclear whether the information about the *Virtuti Militari* is correct. If it were, it would mean that Edward Skrobot was decorated with the highest award twice – first by the AK command, and again by the Communist authorities.

service activities undertaken in the interest of the Polish nation as part of paramilitary activity (AK), whose combat merits are beyond doubt.

Witness statements incriminating Skrobot and Molenda were questioned and deemed not trustworthy. The judge, favoring the defendants, tried to establish how the rooms where the events had taken place were lit, and despite the certainty of the witnesses questioned the possibility of identifying the defendants in such conditions; he concentrated on petty inconsistencies in witness statements while overlooking blatant contradictions in the statements of the defendants. The court accused Maria Mistachowicz of a tendency to lie, because she said her brother-in-law was hiding Jews, while he himself testified that he was only helping them hide. The court also showed understanding for the appropriation of Jewish property by the defendants (in court files always “post-Jewish”¹⁵²).

[It] was definitely for the purpose of raising funds necessary for the organization

– says the special report on the matter for the Ministry of Public Security¹⁵³. The fact that the witnesses of the prosecution changed their statements, and also the content of these statements imply that these witnesses had most probably been threatened.

The case against Bolesław Stępniewski was closed¹⁵⁴, Józef Molenda was cleared of all charges, and Edward Skrobot was cleared of all charges except being accessory in murder of the individuals hiding in the bunker near Mosty¹⁵⁵. He was sentenced to 5 years and 1 month in prison, and loss of his honorary

152 For more on this term, see a comment in Gross, Jan T. / Grudzińska-Gross, Irena: *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust*. New York: Oxford University Press 2012, p. 29, n. 40: “While still alive the Jews were treated as temporary custodians of “post-Jewish” property. This neologism appears in the Polish language only in three versions as ‘post-Jewish,’ ‘post-German,’ and, more rarely, ‘post-manor’ property [...]. Due to historical circumstances, in Poland, there were two cases of massive appropriation of other people’s property in the twentieth century: following the expulsion of the German population after the war and after the extermination of the Jews [...]. But because murder or expulsion does not transfer ownership to anything, and especially to the possessions accumulated by generations, ‘post-Jewish’ is only a *façon de parler* and does not define ownership.”

153 AIPN BU 0418/368, t.3, “Raport specjalny do Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Warszawie”, p. 110.

154 Besides the files from this investigation, we are also looking for the investigation files in the case against Wiktor Gruszczyński “Kruk”.

155 AIPN, GK 306/48, “Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach”, November 23, 1951, pp. 249–253.

public and civic rights for 2 years. The court applied article no. 5 of the August Decree on extraordinary mitigation, arguing the minimum penalty “will be a just penalty”. Skrobot was released on parole in 1954. From the 1960’s, he was an active member of the ZBOWiD branch in Suchedniów, whose president and vice-president were his colleagues from the “Barabas” group – Boczarski and Szumielewicz. In 1971, he was decorated with the *Virtuti Militari* cross, which, as ill-natured people said, was enough for him to start taking part in May 1 marches under the banner of ZBOWiD¹⁵⁶. In 1979, he founded Koło Rodziny „Wybranieckich” [Circle of the *Wybranieccy* Family], which is active to this day. In 1993, Provincial Court dismissed the case for annulment of the judgment from 42 years ago. The Supreme Court in its extraordinary appeal in 1995 challenged the judgment, ruling in favor of Edward Skrobot, and ordered the retrial of the case. The final verdict was passed in 1996. The court quashed the guilty verdict from 1951, thereby acknowledging that “Skrobot’s conduct was not only detrimental to the German occupying forces, but that his deed was an activity undertaken for the sake of the independent existence of the Polish State.”¹⁵⁷

VI. Stefan Sawa and the Zelinger family, Zagórze near Daleszyce, February 14/15 (or 15/16), 1944

The Zelingers were a respected Jewish family from Kielce¹⁵⁸, related to the Frajzygers, the Lewis and the Fleszlers. Jerzy Fleszler died in Katyn. Herman Lewi was chairman of the Judenrat in the Kielce ghetto. Salomon (Szłomo) Zelinger, father of Henryk and Danuta, headed the Organizational Unit of the Jewish Military Union and was the owner of the Hotel Polski at 32 Sienkiewicza St. before the war¹⁵⁹. He managed to get his family out of the Kielce ghetto after its closure, entrusting his daughter Danusia, her aunt Zofia, and other relatives to the care of a Kielce-born Pole Stefan Sawa. Zelinger moved his son Henryk, along with

156 AIPN BU 0418/368, t.2, “Analiza kwestionariusza ewidencyjnego nr 1903 prowadzonego na Witolda Skroboty zam. w Suchedniowie”, p. 25.

157 AIPN, GK 306/48, “Postanowienie Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach”, October 23, 1996, p. 88.

158 Urbański, Krzysztof: *Kieleccy Żydzi*. Pracownia Konserwacji Zabytków: Kielce n.d., p. 112. See also Zelinger, Bernard: *Into Harm’s Way*. Vantage Press: New York 2004.

159 Żaryn, Jan / Kamiński, Łukasz (eds.): *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego II*. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: Kielce and Warsaw 2008, p. 18 mentions Salomon Zelinger as owner; *ibid.*, p. 26 mentions that the hotel was overtaken by the German gendarmerie during the war.

other relatives, to safe locations¹⁶⁰, while he himself made his way to Warsaw. He joined AK (he used the *nom de guerre* Zielony or Zielonka¹⁶¹), and fell while fighting in the Warsaw Uprising. Henryk (Zvi) Zelinger was initially staying with his father in Warsaw, but then he was sent to Zagórze; however, he was not received well, and thus he returned to Warsaw. They lived in Aleje Jerozolimskie. He managed to survive the Warsaw Uprising under a false identity. His mother Róża (Lea, Rozalia¹⁶²) and sister Hanka, who “remained near [Zagórze] with fake identification”, also survived¹⁶³. In his letter to YV, already quoted at the beginning of this text, Zvi writes that he was brought to the house/hideout (it had double walls and attic) by his father’s acquaintance, a member of AK.

I was there for a few days and got to know all its inhabitants. Lodzia, a Polish woman [before the war a maid at the household of his uncle, Hajnoch Zelinger, a dentist; she also lived in Zagórze] was opposed to my staying there and was trying her best to kick me out of that house. Without any explanation, she handed me over to the man who had brought me, and he put me on a train to Warsaw, back to father. (...) When father had not received any news from that house for a long time, he started to worry. Through the Warsaw AK underground he contacted the underground in Kielce and he finally learned that the house had been burnt down and nobody survived¹⁶⁴.

However, at that time he did not learn who had done it. This was not ascertained until a dozen-or-so years later by his son Zvi. In his letter to Yad Vashem, he lists

160 The story of Frajna (Frymusia) Frydman’s brother Dawid, born in 1932 and sheltered by the Śliwiński family in Niwki Daleszyckie, is told by Leon Śliwiński; Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich: *Wywiad z Leonem Śliwińskim*, retrieved 5.5.2012, from <http://www.sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/family/519,rodzina-sliwinskich/article=1087,wywiad-z-leonem-sliwinskiem>; see also Leon Śliwiński’s testimony, AYV, a-5013. Maria Michalczyk states that Bolesław Śliwiński, a pre-war PPS activist, married Leonia, nee Barent, a Jewish woman who was the subject of intelligence collected during the war by AK espionage; Michalczyk, Maria: *Gdy każdy dzień był walką*. Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza: Warsaw 1982, p. 89. Leon Śliwiński: “My parents also had to hide from the Germans.”

161 Henryk Zvi Zelinger’s statement in the Yad Vashem Archive 03/10792, 6.1.1999; an interview made by Michał Sobelman.

162 Born in 1905, no other data available (AŻIH, CKŻP, Department of Registration and Statistics. Central Registry, Registration card of Rozalia Zelinger).

163 Urbański, Krzysztof: “*Wokół progromu kieleckiego*”. In: Żaryn / Kamiński: *Wokół progromu kieleckiego II*, p. 41; Zvi Zelinger’s letter, see footnote 2.

164 Yad Vashem, Department of the Righteous Among the Nations, file of Stefan Sawa, who was awarded the Medal of the Righteous in 1991; translated from Hebrew by Zuzanna Radzik.

the names of the six Jews who fell victim to the attack of the AK unit: Danusia (Dina) Zelinger¹⁶⁵ – his sister, Zofia Zelinger¹⁶⁶ – their aunt, Moniek (Mojżesz) Rozenberg, Edek Proszowski (owner of a power plant in Kielce) and his wife with an unknown first name, as well as Frejna (Frymusia) Fridman (she was the sister of Dawid¹⁶⁷, who was saved by the Śliwiński family). However, he knows that on the crime scene, the remains of “more than ten bodies, which were officially recorded”, were found. In addition to Stefan Sawa, there were probably also Halina Cukierman and Lidia Sadowska¹⁶⁸.

Stefan Sawa was the secretary of the District Court in Kielce. According to his mother’s testimony, during the occupation he got engaged to Zofia Zelinger, whom he had already known before the war. When the Zelingers were put in the ghetto, he would bring them food. In order to hide his fiancée and her family, in May 1942 he rented an unfinished house from Stanisław Grzegolec in Zagórze just next to the Daleszyce forest¹⁶⁹. Grzegolec testified about celebrating the completion of the building financed by Sawa. The celebration was also attended by his

fiancée Leokadia [a mistake, Sawa’s fiancée was Zofia Zelinger] and one man who looked like a Jew¹⁷⁰.

During the year 1943, Grzegolec was invited a number of times for lunch.

In the house, I would usually see his fiancée and an elderly woman called Jadwiga¹⁷¹, who was supposed to be his cousin,

165 Born on December 4, 1931 in Kielce; see The Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names (a database of the Holocaust victims available on the Yad Vashem Institute website).

166 She was 25 years old at the time of her death; see The Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names (a database of the Holocaust victims available on the Yad Vashem Institute website).

167 Born in 1933, parents Efraim and Rywka (AŻIH, CKŻP, Department of Registration and Statistics. Central Registry, Registration card of Dawid Fridman).

168 Urbański, Krzysztof: *The Martyrdom and Extermination of the Jews in Kielce during World War II*. Krzysztof Urbański: Kielce 2005, p. 160, with reference to H. Zelinger; see http://www.kielce.org.il/media/books_articles/TheMartyrdomandExterminationoftheJewsInKielceDuringWWII.pdf.

169 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania Stanisława Grzegolca”, p. 2.

170 Ibid.

171 Henryk Zwi Zelinger states that there was also a Polish woman, Lodzia/Leokadia living with those sheltered by Sawa; however, Grzegolec claims that it was the elderly woman who was called Jadwiga, and Leokadia was the name of Sawa’s fiancée.

he says.

Besides them, I would also see two little girls aged about 12 to 14 and a tall man by the surname of Konkol [Kąkol?]; he was supposed to be a cousin of the elderly woman.

Grzegolec knew that the people living with Sawa were Jews. This was also suspected by the neighbors, and fearing that the information could get to the Germans, he had to “deny that they are of Jewish origin”. In late autumn, a resident of the house called Jadwiga told him of a supper in the middle of the night, which they had given to unknown partisans. Władysław Szumielewicz testifies that together with the group members (he names only Władysław Marasek, who knew Stefan Sawa from before the war) he once went for a dinner in Zagórze. However, it was not in late autumn 1943, but in January 1944:

On the way to the build-up I entered the village of Zagórze, where I performed the reconnaissance of a flat where [some] Jews were hiding (...). In this flat (...) there were two men, three women, and a child; we ate the dinner which they had offered us at that time. (...) While talking to the inhabitants I came to the conclusion that these individuals were hiding from the Nazi authorities¹⁷².

Stefan Sawa made his living by trade, and would therefore often travel to Kielce. Thanks to this he was able to become more closely acquainted with his neighbor, Józef Zabrowski, a forest worker from whom Sawa's fiancée got milk every day.

It was a young girl, of medium height, with brown hair¹⁷³.

Zabrowski did not take her for a Jewess, “as it was impossible to tell from her speech, and in her behavior she did not reveal the habits of that ethnicity”; neither did he take for a Jewess the elderly woman whose name is not mentioned in the testimony. After some time, Zabrowski realized that many more people were living with Sawa. For example, the milk was sometimes collected by “two little girls aged between eight and ten”¹⁷⁴. On another occasion, when the inhabitants of the house were running into the nearby forest in fear of the Germans, he managed to observe that those girls are living in the house with their mother, and besides them and the two women mentioned in the beginning (Leokadia and

172 AIPN GK 306/44, Władysław Szumielewicz's testimony at the main hearing, p. 130; *Ibid.*, Władysław Szumielewicz's testimony, p. 56, 66.

173 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Józefa Zebrowskiego”, p. 13.

174 Henryk Pawelec also heard about the two girls living in Sawa's house; a conversation in Kielce in May 2009. There were rumors that one of them, hidden in the attic, survived the fire. There was a similar rumor about Stefan Sawa himself, e.g. Jan Grzegolec told Sawa's brother that Sawa had allegedly survived.

Jadwiga) there were also “two men, two women, and two girls aged between 15 and 16”¹⁷⁵. Eleven inhabitants of the house, which were counted by Zabrowski, is the number which corresponds to the number of victims which will be given to Lucyna Wrońska by “Marysia from the post office” in Daleszyce (more below). This is also the number of victims given by a Citizens’ Militia constable Corporal Marian Skrybus in his report from November 14, 1950, describing the investigation carried out among the residents of Zagórze. The militiaman also notes the rumors and hearsays about Sawa which were circulating in the neighborhood. The general opinion was that he had allegedly taken advantage of the Jews, murdered them himself, having earlier taken their money and gold, after which he “made off” to America¹⁷⁶. For the authors of the rumors, it was unimaginable that he would risk death with his protégés.

In her post-war testimonies, Sawa’s mother explains that she knew her son’s fiancée and was aware that with Stefan’s help, she was hiding in Zagórze. “I on my part had no objections against the wishes of my son”¹⁷⁷. Sawina remembers that with them, there was “a little girl, Danusia Zelinger”. Procuring the food in Kielce, the son would often come to see his mother. One day he confessed that he was in trouble, “as Pociewicz Stanisław, council secretary in Daleszyce¹⁷⁸ often comes to his house, demanding a loan”¹⁷⁹. The mother was aware that some partisans allegedly kept calling on him with the same demand. Sawina learned about the death of her son from the landlord’s daughter, Grzegolcówna, who was sent over with the news of the tragedy. When she arrived to the site of the fire herself, she was met by the German gendarmerie. She identified her son’s remains by a medallion and a lighter that had been found on him. The remains of most of the victims were so charred that she collected them into one casket and buried it at the cemetery in Kielce. The Germans showed her traces of horses that had been tied to trees in the forest, and also traces of a wagon. They claimed that the attack was a robbery (“a band”). Four years after the war, in a field near Kielce, Sawina met Florentyna Kobylecka, aunt of Władysław Marasek, *nom de guerre* Brzózka,

175 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Józefa Zabrowskiego”, p. 12.

176 AIPN Ki 027/236 347/III (a microfilm scan), Interview with M. Skrybus from November 14, 1950, pp. 188–189 of 369.

177 Ibid., “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Michaliny Sawy”, p. 18.

178 Maybe Michalina Sawa did not remember his name correctly, as Kotliński states that Mieczysław Gołkiewicz was the council secretary in Daleszyce; see Kotliński, „Wybraniectwo” w lasach cisowskich, op.cit., p. 7. Michalczyk claims his name was Sołkiewicz; see id., *Gdy każdy dzień*, p. 145.

179 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Michaliny Sawy”, p. 18.

a partisan from “Barabaszs” unit. The woman started talking to her, and hearing about the cause of her sadness, she confessed that Marasek (her sister’s son) had taken part in the murder. Stefan Sawa allegedly recognized Marasek and just before his death begged him: “Władziu, spare our lives”. During interrogation, Kobyłecka confirms Sawina’s words and adds new details about the incident:

The following day Sawa Stefan’s mother [...] brought the remains of [her] murdered son Stefan and the bones of the rest of the murdered persons of Jewish nationality to her house in Kielce in a casket. It was at about that time that Marasek Władysław [a “Barabasz” partisan, one of the members of the execution squad in Zagórze] came into the apartment, and in my presence started telling his mother Maria, that Sawa Michalina had collected the Jewish bones, brought them home in a casket, lit candles, and was now praying over them.¹⁸⁰

The houseowner in Smyków, where Szumielewicz’s unit came immediately after the “execution” in Daleszyce, was Jan Dygas¹⁸¹. He testifies that besides the commander, he also received Władysław Marasek – Brzózka, Ludwik Szarowski – Adolf, an unknown man – Piorun, Aleksander Stępnik – Most, and an unknown man – Wyrwa¹⁸². Piorun boasted before Dygas that “[he] was shooting them himself”. Everything seems to indicate that the residents of the house in Zagórze were killed with a small weapon by Władysław Marasek – Brzózka, Włodzimierz Ołtarzewski – Kordian, Stanisław Lutek – Roch and an unknown member of the unit, Piorun. They brought with them a wagon filled with “men’s and women’s clothes, men’s and women’s underwear”. It was actually in Dygas’ house that the party on the night after the execution must have taken place, as described by Ryszard Maj: “After the shooting of the Jews near Daleszyce, the diamonds that

180 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania Florentyny Kobyłeckiej”, pp. 29–30. Michalina Sawa’s windows were visible from the windows of the Maraseks’ house. During the confrontation with Kobyłecka on January 23, 1951, Marasek denied everything (ibid., p. 80).

181 Dygas was a member of AK; see Michalczyk, *Gdy każdy dzień był walką*, p. 38; AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Jana Dygasa”, p. 32.

182 This may be a mistake on the part of the court stenographer, as there was nobody with the pseudonym “Wyrwa” in the unit. The involvement of “Kordian” and “Piorun” (they both died during the war) in the execution is also confirmed by Bolesław Boczański (AIPN GK 306/44, Record of the interrogation of Bolesław Boczański, p. 39). In another testimony, Boczański also mentions that “Adolf” was involved in the execution (Ibid., p. 26). On the other hand, Władysław Marasek denies being present in Zagórze during the incident; however, he gives the pseudonyms “Adolf”, “Kogut”, “Wojtek”, “Kula”, “Zygmunt”, “and two more” (Ibid., “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Władysława Maraska, p. 89).

the Jews had sewn into their belts, wrapped in tissue paper, were split between the men (who were then drunk).¹⁸³ The next day the men were visited by “Barabasz” himself, to whom Szumielewicz gave a report about the execution of the order.

Marian Sołtysiak said during interrogation that he had arrived to Jan Dygas’ house in Smyków from Daleszyce, where he was talking to “Marysia, who was living at the post office”¹⁸⁴. This is one of the so-called Three Marias, from a *Section II* branch in Daleszyce, which was managed by Maria Michalczyk, *nom de guerre* Wyrwicz. “It was actually through a talk with this “Marysia from the post office” that the liaison Ewa Wrońska, *nom de guerre* Ewa, learned about the crime in Zagórze. “Maria from the post office” at that time told “Barabasz” that Szumielewicz was staying in Smyków. Sołtysiak claims that in Jan Dygas’ house, he only came across Mietek and Kordian, and he does not remember other names. He also mentions that it was actually Kordian who gave him “one pocket watch that used to belong to the murder victims”¹⁸⁵. At the trial, he modifies his testimony: “I took a ring, a chain, and a watch, which I passed on to higher authorities”¹⁸⁶ – allegedly into the hands of the AK Sub-district commander in Kielce, Wyrwa. At the court, he never mentions what he said during the investigation: that in 1948 he sold the golden chain and the ring “in one of the shops in Wrocław”¹⁸⁷.

The commander of the execution squad, Władysław Szumielewicz, claims that he had received a direct order to carry out the execution in Zagórze from his commander during the concentration in Bączków in January or February 1944. The alleged witnesses of the event were Pawelec, Skrobot and both Fąfars – Jan and Stefan¹⁸⁸. Szumielewicz assigned Adolf, Włodek, Staszek, Brzózka, and Roch to carry out the operation, whereas Sołtysiak additionally gave him someone from Dąbrowa¹⁸⁹. On the way to Zagórze, in front of the shop in Leszczynach,

183 Ryszard Maj’s testimony recorded on September 9, 1957 (see Chapter 10 in this volume).

184 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka”, p. 35.

185 Szumielewicz says something else: “I handed over the looted jewellery to him [Sołtysiak], of which «Barabasz» gave me one ordinary wristwatch and also one diamond ring to «Kordian», who had asked him for it, (AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza”, p. 47).

186 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka na rozprawę główną przeciwko Władysławowi Szumielewiczowi”, p. 145.

187 AIPN GK 306/24, “Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka”, p. 170.

188 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza”, p. 44.

189 The anonymous “Piorun” came from Dąbrowa.

“Barabasz”, riding a horse, caught up with him, reminding him once again about the necessity of carrying out the order¹⁹⁰. The group arrived in Zagórze on the evening of February 4, 1944. The horses were tethered at the edge of the forest¹⁹¹. “After arriving there I had the flat surrounded [Kogut and Adolf; in another testimony, he mentions Wojtek and Włodek, remembering Staszek and Kogut as those who were operating the machine gun, while Adolf had been sent to the village of Smyków to get a wagon for the looted goods¹⁹²] and myself together with Marasek Władysław – “Brzózka”, Lutek Stanisław – “Roch”, [Władysław Ołtarzewski] – “Kordian” and that man whose name or pseudonym I do not know, who came from Dąbrowy [“Piorun”] (...) we entered the flat. After entering the flat Marasek Władysław (...) told me that Stefan Sawa recognized him¹⁹³, so all four of us fired from the weapons we possessed on Sawa Stefan, who was in the kitchen, killing him instantly, and then we fired on two Jews, whom we also killed. From the kitchen we went into the room, where there were three women and a child of Jewish ethnicity, whom we also shot dead. After shooting dead all the persons staying there, we searched the whole flat and took men’s and women’s clothes, which had been placed in the wardrobe, men’s and women’s shoes, and in the wardrobe we found jewelry, that is one golden necklace [“a golden chain 2 mm wide”], rings, how many I cannot recall at the moment [three, plus a men’s signet ring¹⁹⁴], one golden watch [a men’s pocket watch¹⁹⁵ “brand-name Omega”¹⁹⁶] and two ordinary watches. We loaded the looted goods onto the wagon, which had been brought by Lutek Stanisław – Roch, but who drove that wagon I do not know. After loading the looted goods, in order to destroy the evidence, we set [the house] on fire¹⁹⁷. In later testimonies, Władysław Szumielewicz adds drastic details to this description. He says that after entering the house, he asked Sawa to assemble all the men of the household in the kitchen. The door leading into the room where the women were located were closed¹⁹⁸. They started talking “about

190 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Władysława Szumielewicza”, p. 45. Repeated in the interrogation from April 2, 1951, *Ibid.*, p. 58.

191 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

192 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

193 The record of the final interrogation of the suspect states that Szumielewicz “at that time thought he [i.e. Sawa] was a Jew” (AIPN GK 306/44, p. 64).

194 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

195 *Ibid.*, p. 68.

196 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

197 *Ibid.*, pp. 45–46.

198 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

the topic of partisan activity”, and Władysław Marasek talked to Sawa on his own. He then told Szumielewicz that Sawa had recognized him¹⁹⁹. Szumielewicz says that after that he ordered the men in the kitchen to turn face to the wall, and gave an order to shoot by waving his hand. The shooters were Marasek-„Brzózka” (who denies everything during the trial), Ołtarzewski-„Kordian”, Lutek-„Roch” and N.N. „Piorun”. “I did not shoot any of [those] persons”, claims Szumielewicz²⁰⁰. Afterward, he ordered the door into the room open; the women present there “were sitting motionless”, huddled “in a corner near the bed”. In his opinion, the child was about 4 or 5 years old. The victims were searched thoroughly (see the narrative of Ryszard Maj quoted above: “Jews had [diamonds] sewn into their belts, wrapped in tissue paper”). Let us turn our attention to the motive of the wagon, which was waiting in the forest (it had been brought by Władysław Ołtarzewski, „Adolf”). Szumielewicz (and also Marian Sołtysiak) explains this behavior as a habit of partisan units: “There were orders from higher authorities and from “Barabasza”, to take some of the more precious of the things that used to belong to those killed on the basis of the death warrant. We took the clothes and golden items”²⁰¹.

One of the accused, Władysław Marasek, who denies taking part in the execution, adds that the members of the execution squad, with whom he allegedly met up only afterward in Jan Dygas’ cottage, where he had arrived with the commander, “were still soaked in blood”. Corroborating the testimony of Ryszard Maj (see footnote 29) he adds, however, that besides “dresses, men’s clothes, caps, shoes”, the looted things also included some kind of “belts”²⁰². When he asked Kogut what they were doing in the neighborhood, he got an answer that “they shot Jews dead and burnt the house”²⁰³. In a confrontation between him and Szumielewicz on April 14, 1951, Marasek again denies his involvement in the execution, as well as having ever been to Stefan Sawa’s house before²⁰⁴. He claims that Szumielewicz accuses him out of revenge, as he did not carry out the order due to an sickness. He attributes aunt Kobylecka’s damning evidence

199 Ibid., p. 109.

200 Ibid., p. 67.

201 Ibid., p. 130. In a different testimony (ibid., p. 111), he enumerates: “one golden pocket watch by Omega [sic], two ordinary wristwatches, quite a thick golden chain, one mens golden signet ring, three womens rings with precious stones.”

202 AIPN GK 306/44, “Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Maraska”, p. 89.

203 Ibid., p. 92.

204 Ibid., “Protokół konfrontacji pomiędzy Władysławem Szumielewiczem i Władysławem Maraskiem”, p. 95.

to a family conflict. During the trial, both Jan Dygas and Szumielewicz retract their testimonies which incriminate Marasek. The way Szumielewicz does this is unintentionally humorous: "I claim with utmost certainty that I was present at the execution in Zagórze, when it comes to [my] co-defendants I may be wrong". Also the second co-defendant, Stanisław Lutek, categorically denies that he had been present in Zagórze, and he also denies it during his confrontation with Szumielewicz²⁰⁵. Oblivious to the fact that the commander's testimony incriminates him as well, he makes assurances, however, that Szumielewicz "is so honest, unimpeachable, and truthful, that what he says is definitely true". During the trial, the unit's commander Bolesław Boczarski makes an attempt to give him an alibi²⁰⁶.

The sentencing of the residents of the house in Zagórze allegedly took place a few months before. In a testimony from February 1, 1951 Szumielewicz says that in October 1943 he received "from the AK intelligence cell attached to the Daleszyce branch a report about Jewish persons hiding at Stefan Sawa's in Zagórze, together with the description of the building and a situation plan"²⁰⁷. The following day, he adds: "I received this report from the commander of the AK branch in Daleszyce, with the pseudonym Orkan, I do not know his name"²⁰⁸. He elaborates on it in April 1951, testifying that at that time, via the Daleszyce branch, he received a dispatch addressed to him, i.e. "the commander of the unit Kielce-East", which said that "in the village of Zagórze, persons of Jewish ethnicity are hiding [in one of the subsequent testimonies, he will not remember whether the origin of the housemates in Zagórze was mentioned in the dispatch], who are suspected of cooperation with the German gendarmerie station in Bieliny (...) and that these persons are to be executed"²⁰⁹.

Sołtysiak "remembered" the accusation contained in the execution order differently: "in the vicinity of Daleszyce, pow. Kielce a group of people is staying, sent by Gestapo agent Witek with the goal of terrain reconnaissance"²¹⁰. Having read the dispatch, Szumielewicz sent it with liaison Władysław Marasek to the

205 Ibid., "Protokół konfrontacji pomiędzy Władysławem Szumielewiczem i Stanisławem Lutkiem", p. 112.

206 AIPN GK 306/44, "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Władysławowi Szumielewiczowi et al.", p. 151.

207 Ibid., "Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza", p. 98. "This order was binding for me as a leader. Also Barabaszk told us to obey such orders" (ibid., p. 129).

208 Ibid., p. 107.

209 Ibid., p. 55.

210 Ibid., "Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka", p. 170.

commander “together with a monthly report”²¹¹. Already at the beginning of December 1943, he allegedly received from him via a female liaison, whose “pseudonym he does not recall”, an execution order confirming the sentence. At the trial, Szumielewicz claims he does not remember who brought that order, whether it was Marasek or the female liaison. The conclusion of the judgment even quotes the wording of Barabasz’s order: “I order that the execution be carried out as commanded.”²¹² An order from *Section II* was also allegedly attached. As the permanent unit liaison was Lucyna Wrońska, *nom de guerre* Ewa, with whom we are already familiar, the fact that she was not aware of the existence of such a sentence is astounding²¹³. During the investigation, Wrońska said plainly that “(...) this matter was a certain form of a crime, not a heroic deed, of which the Sub-district command was definitely not aware. I also suspect that Barabasz committed this murder on his own hook”²¹⁴. Likewise, from the above-mentioned conversation between Wrońska and one of the “Three Marysias”²¹⁵ from the Daleszyce branch (Maria Nachowska) it is not evident that the execution took place based on an order or at least with the knowledge of *Section II*. On that occasion, she allegedly informed Wrońska that “in the village of Zagórze, «Barabasz», together with Mietek’s group, murdered 11 Jews and burned a house”. In the conversation recounted by Wrońska, expressions such as “informers”, “sentence”, or “execution”, which would have appeared in it had the initiative actually come from the *Section II* in Daleszyce, are entirely absent.

The problem lies in the fact that Maria Nachowska denies having ever spoken to Wrońska about such an incident²¹⁶. We do not know which one of them is not telling the truth; we only know that Lucyna Wrońska had until the end of her life

211 Ibid., “Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza”, p. 98.

212 Ibid., “Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach”, p. 163.

213 The head of *Section II* at the AK Sub-district Headquarters was from October 1942 until the spring of 1944 Roman Zarębski “Zaw”; see Borzobohaty, „*Jodła*”, p. 178.

214 AIPN, GK 306/24, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej”, p. 226.

215 “Three Marysias”, sometimes also called “Three Marias”, were Maria Michalczyk “Wyrwicz” / “Doliński 1” – head of intelligence at the Daleszyce branch, employee of the forest inspectorate in Daleszyce; Maria Nachowska “Turek” – employee of the post office in Daleszyce; and Maria Cedro-Fabiańska “Siba” – a council employee; see Michalczyk, *Gdy każdy dzień był walką*, pp. 56, 58 etc.; id., *Diabeł Piątej Kolumny*, pp. 156, 189–190.

216 When interrogated by UB, Maria Nachowska answers in one sentence: “I have never discussed the topic of the murder and arson of a Jewish family in the area of Zagórze in the municipality of Daleszyce with Barabasz’s liaison Wrońska Lucyna pseudonym Ewa” (AIPN Ki 027/236, “Protokół przesłuchania Marii Nachowskiej”, p. 197).

been ostracized by the veterans' milieu and the ZBOWiD, although they all testify to her heroism during the war years and to the affection *Wybraniec* had for her²¹⁷. Could it have been caused by the growing influence of Marian Sołtysiak, who in 1960's became "the right hand of Mieczysław Moczar"²¹⁸? Wrońska subsequently tried to discuss the murder in Zagórze with Jurand's soldiers, but "the members of the unit, if they talked at all, [spoke] very carefully and in such a way as if they were afraid of someone"²¹⁹. She therefore only learned that before being shot dead, the Jews allegedly put all the valuables on the table. There must have been many, as the expression "a suitcase [full] of jewelry" appears here. Let us once again recall Ryszard Maj's statement about "the diamonds that the Jews had sewn into their belts, wrapped in tissue paper" (see footnote 29).

Another ambiguity in Szumielewicz's testimonies appears in the protocol of the final interrogation from April 23, 1951, when he clarifies that he had received the execution order "by the agency of the AK branch commander, pseudonym "Orkan" via his courier"²²⁰ adding that "the order was written in pencil on a piece of paper". At the main hearing, he uses the wording: "by the agency of the liaison from the *Section II* branch in Daleszyce"²²¹. Earlier, he claimed that he had received it "via the branch in Daleszyce". It is difficult to believe. The commander of the *Section II* in that locality was the already mentioned Maria Michalczyk, who in the autumn of 1943 took command of the whole area from "Orkan", who was mentioned by Szumielewicz. She explicitly states that as Orkan "was overworked", he completely left the intelligence work and allegedly devoted himself to organizing a combat unit in the area. At the main hearing, Szumielewicz once again categorically repeats that the execution order came from Orkan, the commander of the *Section II* in Daleszyce²²². Szumielewicz's testimony is corroborated at the hearing by Sołtysiak: "I know that the *Section II* branch in Daleszyce was interested in the execution". Without mentioning the pseudonym Orkan, Sołtysiak testifies: "In the Daleszyce Sub-district (...) the post of *Section II* agent

217 See e.g. an entry in the *Wybraniec* chronicle from July 19, 1943: "We all love her like a mother."

218 Migala, Marcin: "Wojna domowa Wybranieckich". *Magazyn Słowa Ludu*, 11.7.2001. See also Sołtysiak, Marian: *Czym jest ZBOWiD?* Kronika: London 1965.

219 AIPN, GK 306/24, "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej", p. 224.

220 AIPN, GK 306/44, "Protokół końcowego przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza", p. 65.

221 *Ibid.*, "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Władysławowi Szumielewiczowi et al.", p. 129.

222 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

was held by a tall, dark, long-faced individual (...). This individual will be known to a girl called Maria (...) at the time of the Occupation, she worked at the post office, [and] lived in the same building where the post office was located. I mention this girl because this *Section II* agent spent most of [his] time at her place". There is no mention of such an order in any of Maria Michalczyk's books. There is, however, a telling mention of the injustice of the oblivion into which Lucyna Wrońska was cast – as we can remember, she was the only one to claim that the murder in Zagórze was "Barabasz's" own undertaking.

It is not difficult to believe that Szumielewicz doubted that the sentencing of the housemates in Zagórze was justified. Reporting this matter to "Barabasz" in Bęczków, he said:

"on the way to the concentration I made a reconnaissance of Stefan Sawa's house and found out that it is the hiding place of two men, three women, and one child of Jewish ethnicity, who have nothing to do with the German gendarmerie, [and] this matter should be reconsidered. To my words, «Barabasz answered that I must carry out the order, as such are the orders of the AK *Section II*"²²³.

Szumielewicz tried to buy some time, arguing that he had never carried out the execution of women, and that there was a lack of suitable people in his unit for this type of task (juvenile unit members were not assigned with carrying out executions). The only thing he achieved was that "Barabasz" gave him three people from Boczarski's group: "Roch", "Kordian", and "Piorun".

By comparing the defense strategies chosen during the investigation and the trial by Szumielewicz and his commander Sołtysiak, we conclude that, unlike in most trials of this type, these strategies were only partially agreed upon and not adhered to on the part of Sołtysiak. Although "Barabasz" essentially corroborated Mietek's testimony, he would at times, mostly during his own hearing, delicately question Szumielewicz's line of defense: "He mentioned some Christian pictures in that house, which would indicate that they were not Jews. He also said that there was a woman. Whether he mentioned a child – I do not remember. I doubt if Szumielewicz put forth any suggestions as to not carrying out the order, as knowing him I know that he would not have dared to do this"²²⁴. Meanwhile, the way Szumielewicz modified his own testimony shows that he consistently pinned the whole blame on himself, and was trying to protect both his colleagues

223 Ibid., Record of the interrogation of Władysław Szumielewicz, p. 57.

224 AIPN GK 306/25, "Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Marianowi Sołtysiakowi", p. 9.

and the commander²²⁵. He claimed that “Barabasz” did not give him the order himself, only asked him to comply with *Section II*’s sentence. He corroborates the words of Sołtysiak, who at the trial testified: “I know that the *Section II* branch in Daleszyce was interested in the execution”. “Not carrying out the sentence was punishable by death”²²⁶ – explains Szumielewicz. “I am not familiar with any instruction which would permit not to carry out an order if one was not certain if someone was guilty”²²⁷. Henryk Pawelec has a different opinion on this topic: “This sometimes happened. Very rarely. For this you would be court-martialed. I took part in such a trial. The sentences were simple: freedom or death. What would have awaited Mietek had he spared the child – I don’t know (...) And what would have happened with the spared child?”²²⁸.

At Szumielewicz’s hearing, “Barabasz” testifies in such a way as to help his subordinate as much as possible without incriminating himself: “Sometimes during retaliations, whole families with children would be executed for cooperation with the Germans. We were an army and did not analyze the orders. Mietek was trained to strictly comply with the orders. In my unit I am not aware of instances when orders would be questioned”²²⁹. As we know from trackman Błachucki’s case, this statement is not true. It also contradicts the testimony of another *Wybraniec* commander, Bolesław Boczarski, *nom de guerre* Jurand, who at the same hearing testified that “at one of the briefings «Barabasz» gave instructions that when the soldier is not absolutely sure about the guilt of an execution target or also when he is sure of his innocence, he is allowed not to carry out the order” and he refers to a case when he himself decided against carrying

225 We know from other sources that his whole life, he struggled with the feeling of guilt for the crime in Zagórze; see Karolczak, Jadwiga: “Duchy i upiory”. *Słowa Ludu* 1474, 1993, pp. 1–6.

226 As Szumielewicz writes in his December 27, 1954 request for pardon addressed to the Council of State, the final order to carry out the execution in Zagórze gave him a 48-hour deadline. “The fact that the unit commander Barabasz arrived at the place of the execution and the place where I was staying shows that it was an obvious inspection of whether I had carried out this order. Refusal to obey or further delay on my part amounted to a death sentence for me, as it often happened in such cases” (AIPN GK 306/44, p. 193).

227 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

228 After: Karolczak, “Duchy i upiory”, *op.cit.*

229 AIPN GK 306/44, Sołtysiak’s testimony at the main hearing in the case against Władysław Szumielewicz et al., p. 145.

out the execution²³⁰. Boczarski also speaks disdainfully about “*Section II* [which] was off the mark and often made mistakes”²³¹. Regardless of whether this witness was telling the truth, note that a similar opinion about the legislation of the Second Republik (Dziennik Ustaw RP, no. 91, item 765) was expressed during the trial by judge T. Bielski: “A soldier, even when he was carrying out an order from his superior, was committing a crime and was responsible for it if he committed an act constituting a crime or a misdemeanor (article 9 of the Polish Army Penal Code)”²³². Moreover, Sołtysiak himself describes a situation when, questioning *Section II*’s sentence solely on the basis of his own opinion (“The faces of those people did not attest to their guilt”), he freed two persons he did not know from accusation and hid them in the unit, and where else but in Górnik’s platoon²³³. They allegedly showed merit. This story contradicts the decided statements of the defendants that sentences and orders were never questioned.

Sentences passed in all three criminal trials of the *Wybraniec*y partisans were lenient. We have already discussed the outcome of Skrobot, Dziewiór, and Molenda’s trial. On September 13, 1951 Władysław Szumielewicz was sentenced to a prison term of 6 years and 6 months, Stanisław Marasek to 6 years and Stanisław Lutek to 5 years of imprisonment²³⁴. The court took into account the extenuating circumstances in Szumielewicz’s case: “his young age and exceptionally sincere confession of guilt, and on the other hand [the fact] that he was a unit commander”. This was deemed a basis for filing a request for pardon. However, one year later at an appeals trial on May 20, 1952 the Supreme Court changed this lenient sentence, increasing Władysław Szumielewicz’s term to 12 years, and those of Władysław Marasek and Stanisław Lutek to 8 years²³⁵. Petitions by Szumielewicz’s wife and by himself had been denied for a number of years. Only on February 5, 1957, four years after the release of Sołtysiak and three after the release of Skrobot, the Province Provincial Court in Kielce released him on parole. Marasek and Lutek, sentenced in the same trial, were also released before

230 AIPN GK 306/24, “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bolesława Boczarskiego”, p. 105. “For failing to carry out this execution I was reprimanded by «Barabasza».”

231 AIPN GK 306/44, Bolesław Boczarski’s testimony at the main hearing in the case against Władysław Szumielewicz et al., p. 152.

232 Ibid., “Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach”, p. 172.

233 Sołtysiak, *Chłopcy Barabasza*, pp. 87–88.

234 Ibid., The conclusion of the judgment by the Provincial Court in Kielce from September 13, 1951, p. 160–161.

235 Ibid., Supreme Court verdict from May 20, 1952, pp. 201–204.

their prison term had been served²³⁶. The last act of this drama is the judgment from October 7, 1991 (based on a law from February 23, 1991²³⁷) passed by the Provincial Court in Kielce, which overrules both of Władysław Szumielewicz's guilty verdicts.

His commander, Marian Sołtysiak, was sentenced one day after the verdict was passed on his subordinate. At a separate hearing the following day (September 14, 1951), "Barabasz" was sentenced to 7 years of imprisonment. He was found guilty of being accessory in the murder of Jews near Daleszyce. The court found that the order which the defendant was referring to was a crime, as the accused must have known that they were Jews threatened with extermination, and not people suspected of collaboration, and therefore should not have carried it out²³⁸. In a testimony at the main hearing, Sołtysiak probably revealed one of the motives for the crime: "since the area of Zagórze was designated for parachuting Dan according to the orders from *Section II* was supposed to discuss the matter of execution with me"²³⁹. He added that initially someone else was meant to carry it out, "he did not remember", however, why in the end he gave the order to Szumielewicz. The Supreme Court at the appeals trial on May 7, 1952 upheld the guilty verdict. Already on July 16, 1953, and therefore at the time when all of his subordinates were still in prison, Sołtysiak, due to ill health, was granted a furlough, and on August 27, 1953 the court ordered his release on parole. On September 14, 1965, having already served as a ZBOWiD official for a number of years, Sołtysiak petitioned the Provincial Court in Kielce for the expungement of his sentence and of his criminal record²⁴⁰. The files do not contain the answer or the decision of the court. The last judgment in this matter was passed on July 26, 1992, when at a hearing at the Provincial Court in Kielce it was decided to nullify the judgment from September 14, 1951 – just like in Szumielewicz's case, also here the legal basis was the Statute invalidating guilty verdicts issued on persons prosecuted for activities undertaken for the sake of the independent existence

236 Marasek was released on parole on December 30, 1956, whereas Stanisław Lutek on January 15, 1957.

237 Statute invalidating guilty verdicts issued to persons prosecuted for activities undertaken for the sake of the independent existence of the Polish State (Dziennik Ustaw 1991, no. 34, item 149).

238 AIPN, GK 306/25, "Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach", October 14, 1951, p. 73.

239 AIPN, GK 306/44, Marian Sołtysiak's testimony at the main hearing, p. 188.

240 AIPN, GK 306/25, p. 118.

of the Polish State. We do not know whether any of these individuals filed for compensation on this basis – the files do not contain documents on this topic.

Justice under the reign of terror

Murders of these Jews were committed in the context of an operation against informers, one of the core duties of “Barabasza’s” unit. Lieutenant-Colonel Wojciech Borzobohaty “Wojan”, a historian specializing in the Radom-Kielce AK and Chief of Staff at the “Jodła” District headquarters during the occupation, writes that the number of executions of the German collaborators recruited from among the Polish populace reached its peak in the second half of 1943 and in the spring of 1944 in connection with Operation Kośba, initiated by AK’s Central Headquarters.

It was intended as a sudden attack on Gestapo agents and informers. Dozens of persons collaborating with the occupant in order to harm the Polish nation were at that time executed within the [Radom-Kielce] Sub-District. (...) Combatting the spies and informers, as well as persons displaying excessive curiosity while they were not supposed to know too much, was supposed to ensure the safety of [our] organization and of the society²⁴¹.

Collaboration of some Poles with the German authorities must have really grown to vast proportions, given that already one year earlier, in a conversation at the Sub-district headquarters Sołtysiak effectively convinced the leadership (Commander “Wyrwa” and Head of Intelligence “Zawa”) of the necessity to use terror against a certain part of the population.

In Kielce and the surrounding area, we shot dead twenty five traitors. We did it in a ruthless, often demonstrative way. Unfortunately, we did not avoid mistakes²⁴².

Since the *Wybraniec*y justify all the above-mentioned murders with orders from Section II, in this text we attempt to set apart any such mistakes from pre-planned efforts.

Generally, the procedure of punishing informers worked as follows: Polish citizens could be executed on the basis of a legal court sentence. For this purpose, Special Court Martials (WSS) and Special Civilian Courts (CSS) were created. WSSs were established by the Committee for State Matters in a resolution from April 16, 1940, while the generally accepted date of establishing CSS is

241 Borzobohaty, „Jodła”, p. 181; see also Kotliński, *Wybraniec*y w lasach cisowskich, p. 11: “Snitches were eliminated ruthlessly and with utmost resolution.”

242 Sołtysiak, *Chłopcy Barabasza*, p. 21.

November/December 1942²⁴³. According to the procedure specified in the resolutions, the chief justice of a WSS would send the verdict together with the case files to the appropriate AK commander for execution. The commander of the territory who had the jurisdiction could either approve or reject the sentence – in the latter case, the matter would be reviewed again by another panel of judges, whose judgment was not subject to further approval²⁴⁴. The safety of combat units as well as the necessity to make quick decisions so this safety would be maintained justified the so-called preemptive executions.

In case of a sudden threat to the organization or its members, it was allowed to carry out executions at one's own discretion, but these needed to be justified with a report, sent together with the evidence to the public prosecutor associated with a WSS within 3 days of the date of execution²⁴⁵.

Kedyw units could also be asked to carry out CSS sentences, although generally civilian institutions were supposed to have their own executive branches. These regulations and procedures were valid in all areas where the Polish underground state ran operations. So much for the theory. What was the practice like? We do not have access to the archive of Section II at the AK Kielce District²⁴⁶, or that of the Special Court Martial associated with the Kielce Inspectorate, and therefore cannot answer the question how the underground justice system worked in practice in the AK Radom-Kielce District. To gain insight into the material and documentation constituting the basis for underground court judgments, let us use analogous documentation from the Jedrzejow Sub-district within the same AK District²⁴⁷. Let us consider a document titled "List of persons from the territory of

243 The earliest known verdict of the first CSS was passed on January 12, 1943; see Gondek, Leszek: *Polska karząca 1939–1945. Podziemny wymiar sprawiedliwości w okresie okupacji niemieckiej*. PAX: Warsaw 1988, p. 63.

244 Gondek, *Polska karząca*, pp. 86–87.

245 Witkowski, Henryk: „Kedyw” *Okręgu Warszawskiego Armii Krajowej w latach 1943–1944*. Instytut Wydawniczy Związków Zawodowych: Warsaw 1985, p. 185.

246 There is a chance that such material exists in private collections belonging to former members of the underground; e.g. Maria Michalczyk, head of the Section II branch in Daleszyce, claims to have original reports in her possession. Some of the documentation from this branch was part of the archival collection at the Military Institute for Historical Research (WIBH). During the writing of this book, however, access to these documents was not possible due to the moving of all the WIBH collections to the Central Military Archive in Rembertów.

247 See Ropelewski, Andrzej: *W służbie wywiadu Polski Walczącej*. Marpress: Gdańsk 1994.

the Jedrzejow Sub-district actively collaborating and suspected of collaboration with the occupant as informers, agents, and informants²⁴⁸. There are 252 persons on this list. The character of their offences is described in terms such as: “a Gesta-po agent”, “a G-po informer”, “a G-po informant”, “a G-po snitch”, “a gendarmerie informant”, “a German snitch”, “anonymous letters”, “suspected of informing”, but also with phrases such as “contacts with Germans”, “a Germanophile”, “a railway informant”, “an informant of his superiors”, or even in a really enigmatic term “suspect”. The terminology used is so imprecise that in order to separate valid accusations from the groundless ones, a large archive and a team of people would be required. The branch staff in Daleszyce, code name “Dolno”, who cooperated with “Barabasz’s” unit, consisted of “Three Marias”, a mole at the Blue Police station and at the sawmill, agents in a few villages (they were usually mayors) and a few liaison officers²⁴⁹. A department such as the one Jedrzejow, in comparison with the Kielce department, was regarded as “moderately active” and was said to involve 80–100 individuals²⁵⁰. Given that there were neither means nor possibilities to properly verify the material and evidence (except in the most important cases²⁵¹), the matter must have often been based on the concept of *mala fama*²⁵², known from pre-modern judiciary.

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- 248 It was drawn up by the AK intelligence unit in the area of Jędrzejów, typescript, n.d., signed “Gruby” and “Mir”. It was probably created in autumn 1944 by Stanisław Wiśniewski “Gruby”/“Jarko”, head of Section II at AK Jędrzejów Sub-district Headquarters, and Kacper Niemec “Mir”, Sub-district commander. Copies of the unpublished original, located in the National Archive in Kielce, are the courtesy of prof. Andrzej Ropelewski. Transcript of the document in: Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu*, p. 78.
- 249 Pyzik, Kazimierz: *Sylwetki nieznanych bohaterów. Podobwód AK „Sowa” w obwodzie kieleckim 1939–1945*. Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen: Warsaw 1994, pp. 78–79.
- 250 Borzobohaty claims that in 1944, in the whole Radom-Kielce District, the intelligence unit numbered about 2000 individuals (including agents working in the Reich), out of which about 750 were women; Borzobohaty, „*Jodła*”, p. 67.
- 251 Such as assassination attempts on Nazi officials, or executions of soldiers from own ranks; see the execution of the Gestapo agent Lieutenant Jerzy Wojnowski “Motor”, who was a liaison officer in the AK partisan unit of Jan Piwnik “Ponury”: Chlebowski, *Pozdrowcie góry Świętokrzyskie, passim*.
- 252 *Mala fama* – Lat. for ‘infamy’. The suspect’s reputation was an important criterion for his/her indictment in pre-modern criminal law, e.g. in the *Carolina* penal code and other, earlier ones; see Salmonowicz, Stanisław: “Wizerunek kodeksu: Constitutio Criminalis Carolina”. *Roczniki Nauk Prawnych* 13(1), 2003, pp. 53–66.

Were there instances when this notion would be referred to to decide if someone would live or die? The question is usually addressed with polished statements about the infallibility of underground courts.

None of the judgments [passed] by the courts of underground Poland was effectively undermined, not even in the political climate of the first decade after the war, favorable to such phenomena²⁵³

– states the author of the first monograph on the underground judiciary.

The verdicts of the Special Court Martial of Underground Poland were faultless. Judgments were passed by excellent, meticulous lawyers. Based on facts. I held these verdicts in my hand. All the t's were crossed and i's dotted²⁵⁴

– so, in his turn, says a soldier who himself was carrying out the sentences.

A contemporary historian needs to be more critical. It is worth to closely examine the way in which the underground courts operated, and also the relationship between the decisions of these courts and preemptive elimination orders issued by the commanders of combat units. We know that in certain circumstances, the judgments of the Special Court Martial were passed *post factum*²⁵⁵; however – despite evidence to the contrary – Eugeniusz Adamczyk “Wiktor” denies this, claiming that execution had to be based on a verdict²⁵⁶. Andrzej Ropelewski has found an interesting document among the Jędrzejów Sub-district files: it records as many as fourteen preemptive eliminations, which undermines Adamczyk's statement²⁵⁷. Adamczyk, who served as head of counterintelligence at the Jędrzejów Sub-district and from December 1941 worked as AK counterintelligence mole in Kriminalpolizei²⁵⁸, provides us with an insight into the occupation reality in another one of his statements:

253 Gondek, *Polska karząca*, p. 14.

254 Testimony of Henryk Pawelec, after: Karolczak, “Duchy i upiory”, pp. 1–6.

255 For the so-called preemptive eliminations, see Gondek, *Polska karząca*, p. 42.

256 Eugeniusz Adamczyk “Wiktor”, *Moja działalność niepodległościowa*, pp. 10–14, quoted after: Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu Polski*, p. 77.

257 A. Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu Polski*, p. 85. Under a report about fourteen executions, dated July 20, 1944 and signed by the commander of Jędrzejów Sub-district Kacper Niemiec “Mir-Niemirski”, there is a note addressed to the AK Inspectorate in Kielce: “The applications are ready and after completion I will send [them] to WSS immediately.”

258 See Borzobohaty, „Jodła”, p. 209.

When undertaking decisions about the execution of a traitor, we based them on the assumption that the more Gestapo informers get eliminated, the less Polish names will find their way into the Gestapo files²⁵⁹.

Even though this reasoning may be valid, the problem lies in the certainty whether traitors really were traitors. Historical studies on this subject, instead of verifying the evidence – at least in controversial cases, often adopt the view expressed in the sources. E.g. Leszek Gondek refers to the executions as “an unpleasant, but unfortunately necessary activity”; in a similar way, he brushes aside the objections raised by experts, e.g. Leon Nowodworski, Head of the Department of Justice at the Government Delegation for Poland, against the fast-track trials denying the accused the right to defend themselves²⁶⁰. The basis for branding someone an informer and a traitor is shown e.g. in report no. 20 from 1942, written by the above-mentioned Eugeniusz Adamczyk, and sent to Section II in Jędrzejów:

I have received information from the area of Sędziszów, that «Pistolet»²⁶¹ maintains close contacts with Młynarski the Jew, who resides next to the local train station. Whenever «Pistolet» comes to Sędziszów or passes through, he always calls on the above mentioned Jew.

On this basis, it is possible to state with utmost certainty [emphasis AS, JTB] that Młynarski is working for the Gestapo²⁶².

This accusation, a kind of logical fallacy²⁶³, is all the more surprising, given that it is made by a man who himself is on the Kripo payroll and if he were to be judged by the same standards as Młynarski, he would have to be considered an informer as well.

The collection of documents from the Jędrzejów Section II also contains another dispatch relevant to our topic. This time it regards a WSS sentence that

259 Adamczyk, *Moja działalność niepodległościowa*, p. 77.

260 Gondek, *Polska karząca*, pp. 43, 59–60; see also Korboński, Stefan: *W imieniu Rzeczypospolitej*. Instytut Literacki: Paris 1954, pp. 114–115.

261 Konstanty Kapuścik, until September 1939 a non-commissioned officer of the Polish Army, and later a *Volksdeutsch* called Helmut Kapp, an interpreter at the local Gestapo.

262 Czaplarska, Izabella / Mielniczuk, Bolesław: “Wiktor, Jarko Granat meldują II”. *Słowo Ludu*, 10.8.1968. We would like to thank prof. Andrzej Ropelewski for granting us access to this article.

263 A logical fallacy leading to wrong conclusions occurs e.g. when an observation that two phenomena occur together is further interpreted in an empirically unjustified way, e.g. mistaking when simple correlation is mistaken for causal relationship.

was not carried out. The convicted person was Bonawentura Rutecki “Ali”, a subversion commander in the Jędrzejów Sub-district (an analogous post in the Kielce Sub-district was held by “Barabasz”), accused of numerous armed robberies of estates, and also of murdering Jews in the municipality of Sobków. Alina z Kuleszów Ziemkiewiczowa, during the war residing on the Łukowa estate in the municipality of Sobków, says in her testimony:

One day [1943] a Jewish woman came over who used to teach the Grabowieckis’ children in Dębska Wola. She seemed to have been scared by something. After some time, I don’t remember when, some armed people came to get her. They robbed us, and took the Jewish woman away and murdered her in the village of Łukowa. Immediately after the war, a Jew from Wałbrzych came to see us, asking about Genowefa Mikołajczyk, murdered in Łukowa, who had a large amount of dollars in her possession. She was said to be the daughter of rich Jews from Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski²⁶⁴.

The execution of Genowefa Mikołajczyk, daughter of rich Jews from Ostrowiec, who was teaching the children of Zygmunt Grabowiecki “Sęp”, was allegedly carried out by Rutecki’s subversion group²⁶⁵. According to one version,

Grabowiecki was said to have made passes on that woman, who ran away from Dębska Wola to avoid his advances. According to another (...) he reportedly let his tongue slip before the woman about his involvement in the underground, and when it transpired that she was Jewish, he decided to eliminate her as a Soviet spy²⁶⁶.

264 Recorded in Warsaw on January 10, 1985 (a copy of the testimony courtesy of prof. Andrzej Ropelewski). He himself said about the same person: “[...] I learned that near the village of Łukowa, one morning, farmers found the body of a young woman, hastily covered with soil and weeds. The shooting victim – which was evident from the characteristic traces of bullets – was identified as a Jewish woman, who had been hiding somewhere in the village from the Nazi thugs. Later there were rumors going around that she had been finished off by a Home Army sabotage unit. It was certainly not done by the Germans, who had not been seen in the village for quite some time, neither during the day, nor at night,” Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, p. 46.

265 Commander of the subversive unit in AK Sub-district no. 1 “Klin” in Dębska Wola (Ropelewski, Andrzej: *W Jędrzejowskim Obwodzie AK*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe: Warsaw 1986, p. 63; see also id., *W służbie wywiadu*, p. 138).

266 Ropelewski, Andrzej: *Sprawa mordowania Żydów przez ludzi z AK*, unpublished typescript dated February 28, 2008, courtesy of the author. For other murders of Jews in the vicinity of Raków and Łścin, including the murder of the Rakowski family by the AK subversive unit, see Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, pp. 45–46.

A Section II report from the turn of the years 1943/1944 also states that:

Soldiers from his [Rutecki's] unit even steal from AK soldiers. They often shoot, attack women, they do not even spare children²⁶⁷.

It took the AK leadership six months to decide what to do with Rutecki, whose entire family was also working for the organization. In the end, a WSS passed a verdict, but a report dated June 30, 1944 shows that the sentence was not carried out:

Ali, a former subversion commander in the Jędrzejów Sub-district – sentence not carried out. The Jędrzejów Sub-district commander has not issued such an order [of execution] yet, hoping he could mend his ways²⁶⁸.

Analysis of Section II material from Jędrzejów leads to a number of conclusions. Firstly, it shows the great general authority wielded by Section II and the subversion commanders, who were *de facto* deciding who was an informer and whose sentence would be executed. Secondly, it illustrates to what extent

the work of Section II (...) [was] dependent on the work of informants, whose [abilities] varied.

The author of this authoritative opinion is Józef Kurek “Halny”, the Jędrzejów AK Sub-district Deputy Commander²⁶⁹. Thirdly, it exposes the real mechanism and circumstances of making execution decisions, not only at the WSS, but also at the subversive unit commander level. Fourthly, it proves that not even a WSS sentence automatically resulted in an execution (as it was subject to approval), and that an execution order was not necessarily based on a verdict. This therefore allows us to postulate the existence of other criteria for approving or halting the executions.

Let us mention only the two most important criteria here. The first one is the differentiation between the citizens of Polish and non-Polish ethnicity in

267 Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu Polski*, p. 138. For the topic of “an even greater horror,” which was the death of Srul Rakowski’s sixteen-year old daughter, see a brief mention in a letter from February 23, 1992, written by Ryszard Barańczyk to Andrzej Ropelewski [a copy in the authors’ possession]. There is a brief mention of Srul (Szumil) Rakowski in Tadeusz Simlat’s testimony (he was a courier reporting to “Hardy”): “Did you hear anything about the murder of Rakowski, who was hiding at Rusiński Teofil’s, res. in Wólka, municipality of Mierzwin?” Simlat stated that he had not heard anything about that murder (AIPN Ki 025/88/D (microfiche) “Protokół przesłuchania Tadeusza Simlata”, Raków, February 3, 1952).

268 Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu Polski*, p. 88.

269 A letter from Józef Kurek “Halny” to Andrzej Ropelewski from January 11, 1988; quoted after: Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu Polski*, p. 44.

the minds of the AK underground soldiers during WWII²⁷⁰. The significance of ethnic differentiations is shown in underground judicial regulations. According to *Przepisy materialne z maja roku 1940*, the threat of a death penalty applied exclusively to those who

in an inhumane way, contradictory to the natural sense of justice, persecute or hurt the Polish populace²⁷¹.

These regulations obviously did not pertain to ethnically non-Polish citizens of the Polish Republic²⁷². Those are mentioned in the context of “failing the duty of being faithful to the Republic”²⁷³, and also in making a statement that the occupant will not manage to do to the Poles “what [he] has managed to do with the Jews”²⁷⁴. The Jews were taken into consideration in the *Citizen’s Code of Morality* (1941)²⁷⁵, and also when appointing the Committee for Evaluating Possible Actions Contradicting the Honor of a Pole and of a Polish Citizen (1942)²⁷⁶, but they had already been forgotten when the so-called Pole’s Code (1940)²⁷⁷ was being formulated. The topic definitely merits a more detailed analysis in a separate study.

When one ponders over the causes for using double standards on citizens with Jewish and Polish ethnicity during the occupation, it is impossible to ignore the situation in the Kielce Land, in what was still a completely free Poland. In

270 Here it would be worth recalling an earlier quote from the *Wybranieccy* chronicle. The veracity of this statement is supported by our earlier conclusions: “Soldiers of Polish ethnicity serve in the unit.” The *Wybranieccy* chronicle, 1943–1944 (unpublished).

271 After: Gondek, *Polska karząca*, p. 14, 152.

272 Compare two sentences from *Przepisy materialne z maja 1940*: “The crime of denunciation is committed by a Polish citizen who before the government of a foreign country accuses of or brings a case for prosecution for an act against a foreign country. Who in an inhumane way, contradictory to the natural sense of justice, persecutes or hurts the Polish populace with an action or regulation, commits the crime of inhumane persecution and wrongs the Polish populace,” after: Gondek, *Polska karząca*, p. 152.

273 *Rzeczpospolita Polska*, no. 4 from May 10, 1941; *Biuletyn Informacyjny* from May 23, 1941; “Zarządzenie Delegata Rządu RP na Kraj pt. Wobec przestępstw względem Narodu i Państwa Polskiego”; after: Gondek, *Polska karząca*, p. 157.

274 “Oświadczenie Delegata Rządu RP”; *Rzeczpospolita Polska*, no. 18 from October 13, 1942; *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, no. 40 from October 15, 1942; after: Gondek, *Polska karząca*, p. 158.

275 Gondek, *Polska karząca*, p. 65.

276 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

277 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

the 1930s, the relations between the communities of ethnic Poles and Poles-Jews were increasingly becoming reminiscent of apartheid conditions. A researcher analyzing war-time murders of Jews should not disregard the ideological content disseminated in the 1930s by the representatives of two institutions endowed with the highest public authority: parliamentarians and clergy. Due to lack of space, let us use only two examples here²⁷⁸. The first one is the speech of Col. Zygmunt Wende, member for Kielce Land, given in 1939 in the Polish Sejm, just after the sentences for the pogrom in Przytyk were announced:

We are only waiting for orders, and we will clean out our national, ancestral cottage²⁷⁹.

The second example is the report by the Kielce district *starosta* to the Province Council from November 1934, regarding the retreat organized five years before the war by Marianist Father Marian Wiśniewski in Daleszyce, i.e. the place where the Zelinger family were murdered:

In the Kielce district, the campaign for boycotting Jews is promoted in the churches and from the pulpits by father Marian Wiśniewski from Warsaw.(...) Together, we need to boycott jews [sic] as the enemies of Christianity (...) He argued that in the boycott campaign, there must be great solidarity within the Christian community and one should keep an eye on another in order not to buy from Jews, and Catholics exiting Jewish shops with goods should be secretly marked with green stickers on their backs, depicting a swine. He promised to distribute such stickers among the participants after the retreat. Moreover, father Wiśniewski called for fighting the socialist party and other ones, in which the freemasonry concentrates²⁸⁰.

This note could be disregarded, just like the manifestations of an economic boycott are usually disregarded. It is difficult to do so in the context of what we learn about father Wiśniewski's views from studies by Michał Jagiełło, Anna Landau-Czajka and Alina Cała:

Jews, as a deicidal nation, corrupted by the greatest madness and crime in the world, to a greater extent than Christians, and even than pagans who live according to the laws of nature, have become blinded and corrupted, and therefore as a seedbed of evil they

278 More on this topic in the work of Monika Marcinkowska and Jerzy Gapys from the Jan Kochanowski University of Humanities and Natural Sciences in Kielce; see e.g. Gapys, Jerzy / Markowski, Mieczysław B.: "Konflikty polsko – żydowskie w województwie kieleckim 1935–1936. Wybór tekstów źródłowych". *Biuletyn Historyczny Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 4 (192), 1999, pp. 41–95.

279 *Gazeta Kielecka*, no 1: 1939; after: Urbański, *Kieleccy Żydzi*, p. 106, footnote 82.

280 Starosta's report regarding the retreat in Daleszyce on November 18, 1934 courtesy of Monika Marcinkowska from the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce.

should be prevented from living with other nations and carefully separated [from them]²⁸¹.

Father Wiśniewski's evangelization allows us to answer the question of how its addressees had been prepared for the test embodied by the war-time extermination of Jews, perpetrated in front of their very eyes.

“Barabasz” and the Jews

Interrogations of “Barabasz’s” soldiers often feature a question (common in such investigations) about his attitude toward the Jews. Two unit commanders remember a meeting in which Sołtysiak spoke about this subject. The following is Edward Skrobot's testimony:

When it comes to persons of Jewish ethnicity, in the month of October 1943 (...) at a troop build-up in the Cisów forest, Kielce county, attended by Pawelec Henryk “Andrzej”, Boczarski Bolesław “Jurand”, Szumielewicz Władysław “Mietek” and myself, at that time Sołtysiak Marian “Barabasz” said that jews [sic] encountered in the forest should be done away with quietly, i.e. without a trace.²⁸²

During that build-up in the forest near Cisów, when we were supposed to disperse over the area with our respective groups, as one of the commanders (...) asked Barabasz what to do with persons of Jewish ethnicity encountered in the area, then Barabasz looked up and afterward pointed to the ground with his finger. I understood this look and pointing the finger to the ground to mean that these persons should be done away with quietly, i.e. that after killing they [should be] buried in the ground²⁸³.

Bolesław Boczarski's testimony:

At briefings, which used to take place within the unit with section or group commanders, Sołtysiak Marian would give instructions and orders to eliminate communists in the field, the Red Army soldiers regardless of the kind of soldiers they may be, whether escaping from captivity or others, they should be eliminated, just like regarding persons of Jewish ethnicity, he would also give instructions and orders to eliminate them²⁸⁴

Marian Sołtysiak denies all these accusations²⁸⁵.

281 See Wiśniewski, Marian: “Rozwiązanie sprawy żydowskiej w świetle rozumu i wiary”. *Pro Christo* 9, 1933; quoted after: Jagiełło, Michał: *Próba rozmowy. Szkice o katolicyzmie odrodzeniowym i „Tygodniku Powszechnym” 1945–1953*, t. 1–2. Biblioteka Narodowa: Warsaw 2001.

282 AIPN BU 0418/386, t.3, “Protokół przesłuchania Skrobota Edwarda”, p. 25.

283 AIPN GK 306/24, “Protokół przesłuchania Skrobota Edwarda”, p. 120.

284 Ibid., “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bolesława Boczarskiego”, p. 93.

285 Ibid., “Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka”, p. 147.

In each case, the accused adopted an identical line of defense: they invoked the necessity to carry out the orders and sentences, which were allegedly issued either by the Directorate of Civil Resistance (KWC) or by Section II, AK's intelligence and counter-intelligence department. We have already discussed KWC – in the period when the murders were committed, KWC did not exist anymore, not to mention the fact that it never handed down any sentences. This was done by underground courts, civilian or military, as has likewise already been mentioned. Moreover, AK's intelligence department had completely different tasks and prerogatives and it was not entitled to issue any judgments whatsoever. The most important tasks of the intelligence department included observing the movement of enemy military units; observing objects of military interest and camps of all kinds; collecting information on the topic of arms production of any kind; establishing the identities of informers and collaborators; warning people who were in danger; intercepting information and wire-tapping²⁸⁶. The work of intelligence cells was regulated by documents (instructions) in the form of orders issued by the local ZWZ/AK authorities. Intelligence therefore consists, above all, in tedious, very exhausting and dangerous constant observation and gathering of information, which is then relayed on in the form of messages and period reports by liaisons or a network of contact boxes. The reports, in line with the instructions, contained “bare facts”: precise information about troop movements, German and Blue Police stations, contents of wiretapped communications of German officers, official regulations and their implementation. The everyday work of a *dwójkarz* has been described by the frequently mentioned Maria Michalczyk, and her memoirs have been complemented by Kazimierz Pyzik's („Niezlomny”) book²⁸⁷. Pyzik served from January 1944 as the head of intelligence in the “Sowa” AK Sub-district, which also included the Dolno branch in Daleszyce. To quote Pyzik:

The intelligence apparatus (...) besides working on German army units stationed in our Sub-district, was overseeing the security of the forest units, field organizations, and individuals in danger.²⁸⁸

286 See Piątkowski, Sebastian: “Wywiad ZWZ-AK w Okręgu Radomsko-Kieleckim (1940–1945) ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem obwodu radomskiego”. In: Massalski, Adam / Meducki, Stanisław (eds.): *Materiały z sesji naukowej*. Kieleckie Towarzystwo Nauk: Kielce 1999, pp. 71–85.

287 Pyzik, *Sylwetki nieznanych bohaterów*, op. cit.

288 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Pyzik, similarly to Michalczyk, recounts the particulars of how they would receive anonymous tips at the post office in Daleszyce, unmask the collaborators and eliminate them with the help of “Barabasz’s” unit. None of these publications include even the slightest mention either of the house at the edge of the forest, the Jews hiding in it, or the threat they allegedly posed to the Home Army.

A common line of defense used by all the accused *Wybranieccy* was a claim that they had, without questioning, obeyed orders issued either by the KWC (the obvious flaws in depositions regarding this matter have already been discussed above) or by Section II. Let us therefore emphasize that the AK intelligence/counter-intelligence was not authorized to hand down any sentences. It was created solely to pass on information. Another important indicator for the evaluation of what happened is the actual inconsistency in undertaking elimination decisions. On the one hand, there were the underground courts, whose very existence was creating a semblance of law and order; and on the other hand, Kedyw leaders were issuing elimination orders on their own hook, as part of the so-called vital defense. As the execution log of the AK Kielce Sub-district does not survive, we can use another surviving document of this kind, the execution log of the AK Wysokie Mazowieckie “Lew”²⁸⁹. It shows that in the period from January 1943 to June 1944, Kedyw executed at least 220–240 individuals in the area, and this list still does not include Germans or the victims of subversive/sabotage operations. According to the author of the publication, “the District WSS did not, it seems, have any control over the above-mentioned cases. He only received elimination reports from the District commander (...)”²⁹⁰. In the same period, i.e. in 1942 and 1943, the Special Court Martial in the AK Białystok District handled a total of 24 cases, out of which only four resulted in death penalties. The sentences would therefore in a clear majority be handed down *post factum*, and their real issuers and at the same time executors were the commanders themselves, who had made such decisions and given orders. The commander of this Sub-district, Tadeusz Westfal “Karaś”, was at the same time an intelligence official, a Kedyw commander and commander of the partisan unit that carried out the sentences. A similar cumulation occurred also in “Barabasz’s” case – in January 1943, he became the Kedyw commander in the AK Kielce Sub-district. It is possible that the Kielce Sub-district worked in a similar way.

289 See Łabuszewski, Tomasz: “Wybrane aspekty bezpieczeństwa na przykładzie Inspektoratu Podlaskiego AK (Obwodu Wysokie Mazowieckie)”. In: Grabowski, Waldemar (ed.): *Organy bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego*, IPN: Warsaw 2005, pp. 127–137.

290 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Elimination orders issued in this manner would be difficult to justify before a post-war court. We can therefore advance a hypothesis that the necessity to carry out the sentences based on external orders – in each case from either deceased or unidentifiable individuals, in all cases alleged Section II officers – had been agreed on by *Wybranieccy* as the least damaging trial strategy. The Provincial Court in Kielce generally allowed the defendants' explanations based on the above strategy. Statements of grounds of judgments read:

Regarding the order to eliminate the individuals staying in Zagórze, in the opinion of the Court there is no doubt that such an order had really been issued by Section II and its execution assigned to Barabasz's unit. (...) Exactly how Barabasz and Szumielewicz received the order from Section II is difficult to ascertain due to contradictions in their testimonies. (...) In any case, such an order did exist and came from the intelligence²⁹¹.

Regarding the order from the *Section II*, in the opinion of the Court such an order did exist. (...) As the Court knows from other trials, almost all sentences were handed down by Section II, which either carried them out via their own executive, or delegated them to the units²⁹².

The defendant, being a commander of a subversive unit, was actually bound to carry out the sentence. Defendant Skrobot was not required and neither was he allowed to verify whether the sentence was justified²⁹³.

In this last case, the defendant Skrobot testified that "Górnik" pulled out three sentences, which had already been carried out, and told him to sign them, which the defendant refused.

"Górnik" signed these sentences and put them in an envelope²⁹⁴.

When in 1995 the Supreme Court represented by its Chairman Stanisław Rudnicki formulated the theses undermining the validity of Edward Skrobot's guilty verdict, they included an argument about the ignorance of the court that had issued the judgment, as it lacked basic historical knowledge on the topic of the Home Army, Directorate of Civil Resistance, and the jurisdiction of Civilian Special Courts, etc. Any search for historical specialist reports in the case files is

291 AIPN, GK 306/44, "Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach", September 13, 1951, p. 181.

292 AIPN, GK 306/25, "Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach", September 14, 1951, p. 72.

293 AIPN, GK 306/48, "Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach", November 23, 1951, p. 250.

294 *Ibid.*, Edward Skrobot's testimony, p. 64.

fruitless. However, it would be interesting to find out whether they were used by the Supreme Court to challenge the judgments issued in the 1950s.

The essence of the events described in this chapter was best expressed in the autumn of 1951 by the Provincial Court in Kielce:

Orders to eliminate individuals of Jewish origin, (...) were mostly masked by claims that these persons collaborate with the Germans, in order to conceal the real intention of racial elimination²⁹⁵.

Undoubtedly, the uncomfortable truth about the *Wybraniec* will hardly take root anytime soon in the Kielce Land that has been thoroughly changed by the new historical policy. It is a bitter irony that so far only a judgment issued in Stalinist Poland had the courage to call a spade a spade when it comes to their deeds.

Short biographies²⁹⁶

Bogdan Boczarski “Roman” / “Jurand” (1916–1968): born in Wzdół Rządowy, of “peasant origin”. Before the war, he served in the 4th Legions’ Infantry Regiment in Kielce, and then in the 2nd Armored Battalion near Przemyśl. He fought in the September campaign near Lviv, and escaped from German captivity. Member of the Union of Armed Struggle (ZWZ) from 1941. After losing his family, he was arrested by the Gestapo and consequently accused of collaboration with the Germans. Due to ignoring an order to refrain from contacting them he was sentenced to death, but the execution was canceled. He subsequently changed his *nom de guerre* to Jurand. Member of the “Barabas” unit from April 1943, later group leader. Among others, Boczarski’s group included Stefan Sowiński “Niedźwiedź” from Kielce; Stanisław Lutek “Roch” and his brother, both from Klonow; and Tadeusz Sitarski “Tadek” from Kielce. Boczarski was also the unit’s chronicler. From May 1944, he served as commander of the platoon guarding the “Skala – II” radiostation on Bukowa Góra. In 1944, he was promoted to sub-lieutenant and decorated with the Cross of Valor. He wrote his memoirs after the war²⁹⁷. In 1964, B. Boczarski became the chairman of ZBOWiD in Kielce.

295 AIPN BU 0418/4691, t. 2, “Wyrok Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach”, p. 92.

296 Written on the basis of archival material quoted in this chapter, testimonies, memoirs and publications.

297 Boczarski, Bogdan: *By ojczyzna była wolna... Wspomnienia partyzanta z Gór Świętokrzyskich*. Unpublished typescript: Kielce 1961.

Zygmunt Wiktor Bokwa “Smutny” (1916-?): “lower middle-class origin”, elementary education, a bricklayer. In 1937, he served in the 20th Uhlan Regiment in Brzozów. Member of ZWZ from 1941. He was transported to a concentration camp near Hannover, from which he escaped. After arriving in Kielce, he served in the Krótki unit of NSZ. From June 1943, he fought with the *Wybranieccy* as a member of Skroboń’s group. According to his own words, he was dishonorably discharged on January 1, 1944; according to Szumielewicz’s testimony, “due to a bad attitude toward the populace”. Bokwa himself clarifies that this was due to his joint responsibility for the death of “Kalisz”, head of intelligence, during an operation near Piekoszów on December 15, 1943. Bokwa’s resentment made him one of the most fervent accusers at “Barabasz’s” trial; however, his words were not given credence. After the war, he worked as a bricklayer foreman.

Kazimierz Chmieliński “Janosik”: there were (false) rumors that he was Jewish and that he was executed by Henryk Pawelec. Chmieliński’s execution was probably carried out by Tadeusz Masio “Matros”.

Władysław Dziewiór “Burza”, later “Skazaniec” (1910-?): illiterate (?), completed three years of elementary school, of “peasant origin”. After the war, a member of the PPS, a brickyard employee and figurative sculptor. He was involved in illegal meat trade during the war, for which he was imprisoned for 8 months. After release, using the *noms de guerre* Stodoła and Burza, he served in the Kłos unit of NSZ in Opatowskie (?), under Sub-Lieutenant Józef Kempiański “Krótki”. Dziewiór was sentenced to death by NSZ’s Section II for the murder of his commander’s wife and for manor house robberies. He joined the “Barabasz” unit in August 1943, and was given a *nom de guerre* Skazaniec. He was also sentenced by AK. In November 1943, upon the request of Section II, Dziewiór was discharged from the “Barabasz” unit and returned to the village of Marzysz in the Kielce county. He committed more armed robberies, and was consequently sentenced to death by commander “Barabasz”: “To carry out the sentence, «Barabasz» sent «Jędrzek» [Andrzej Pawelec], but he only wounded Dziewiór Władysław and his lover Polcia, who both managed to escape. Given that Dziewiór Władysław was wanted by AK organization, he came to Kielce and in April 1944 joined NSZ under the command of Gajda Zygmunt «Krzemień».”

Stefan Fąfara “Dan” (?-1944): born in Wzdół Rządowy; before the war a career soldier, corporal in the Polish Army. In July 1943, he became the leader of a group formed in Kielce, which was tasked with eliminating Gestapo officer Franz Wittek. During the war, he was arrested and transported to the Gross-Rosen

concentration camp, where he probably died (The Gross Rosen Museum does not have the custody of any documentation referring to his death).

Wiktor Gruszczyński “Kruk”: born in Chęciny. He was a member of a sabotage group in Chęciny led by Jan Sieradzan “Żbik”.

Bonifacy Gruszka “Sprytny”: member of a sabotage group in Chęciny led by Jan Sieradzan “Żbik”.

Stanisław Klimontowicz “Cios”: died on December 21, 1943 in an ambush on a cash transport near Jaworzna.

Tadeusz Kuchta “Jurek”: born in Bolim. He was a gamekeeper.

Stanisław Litewka “Staszek”: born in Ojców in the Kraków Province, he allegedly died near Niestachów in July 1944. A member of Skrobot’s group. According to Skrobot, “All those who came from Kraków joined Barabasz in June or July 1943. There were rumors in the group that they used to work in a station snack bar there”.

Maksymilian Lorenz “Katarzyna”: initially an NSZ member under the *nom de guerre* Adam. In early July 1944, he became the commander of the 1st Battalion of the 4th Legions Regiment of AK, into which *Wybranieccy* had been incorporated. After the war, he emigrated to England.

Stanisław Lutek, “Roch” (1911-?): born in Klonów. Before the war, he worked as a lumberjack at the forest inspectorate in Zagnańsk. From 1932 he served in the 17th Infantry Regiment in Rzeszów. During the September campaign, he fought near Dęblin, was taken prisoner of war but escaped in Radom. A member of ZWZ from 1942. In March 1943, he joined “Barabasz’s” unit, serving in Boczarski’s group. He was wounded on May 25, 1944 by Bohun’s NSZ group in Klonów. “He did not recognize any authority, he felt on par with Jurand or even with Barabasz”.

Czesław Łętowski “Górnik”: sub-lieutenant and a reserve officer, originally a mining engineer. He fell near Antoniów on August 20, 1944, and was posthumously decorated with the Cross of Virtuti Militari. The *Wybranieccy* website (www.wybranieccy.pl – now taken down) says: “He was the head of AK intelligence in the Piekoszów Sub-district; simultaneously, he was supplying partisan units with explosives and complementary equipment from the stock in quarries

where he used to work. After his cover was blown in February 1944, he joined Wierny's group (...). Together with this group, he came to the March troop build-up in the Cisów forests, where he was named commander of the 3rd Platoon in April 1944 after the reorganization of the unit [as part of the *Wybranieccy* Company]. A great leader and a friend to the partisans, he was beloved by all his subordinates. «Górnik» and his platoon took part in all the unit's operations and battles taking place since April 1944. Among others, on June 22, the platoon fought a 40-strong gendarmerie unit near Chmielnik in order to protect the unit; on July 8, it engaged in combat in Niestachów; and from August 4 to 10 in combat in Daleszyce. Together with the whole platoon as part of the troop build-up for Operation Burza, he was integrated into the 1st Company of the 4th Legions Infantry Regiment of AK. On his way to help struggling Warsaw, he fell near Antoniów on August 21, 1944."

Hieronim Ryszard Maj "Ryś I" (1925–1998): an economist. During WWII, he was working undercover for AK at the post office in Kielce, intercepting letters from informers. One of the *spaleni*. He initially served in "Barabasz's" unit (Jurand's group), then transferred to the Miechów forests. After the war, he got a degree from the Higher School of Naval Trade in Sopot. He received his doctorate in 1966. In 1949–1970, he was the head of the Institute of Sea Fishery in Gdynia, and in 1964–1969 the editor-in-chief at the *Tygodnik Morski*. He then became Fishery Adviser at the office of the Commercial Attache at the Polish embassy in Peru. In 1985–1998, he was the chairman of the National Council in Sopot. Among other awards, he was decorated with the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. A short biography in *Encyklopedia Gdyni* ed. by M.Sokołowska, Gdynia 2006, p. 426.

Władysław Marasek "Brzózka" (1922-): "peasant origin". He served in "Barabasz's" unit from July 1943 to September 1944, then in Dan's and Bogdan's platoons in Szumielewicz's group. One of "Barabasz's" three aides-de-camp (besides Eugeniusz Jakóbek "Wacek" and Jan Ogrodnik "Jasiu"). He was arrested by UB on January 23, 1951.

Tadeusz Masio "Matros": from Zambrów.

Jerzy Matysiak "Braszkó": just like Roman Olizarowski "Pomsta", he transferred to the *Wybranieccy* from Jacek's unit.

Maria Michalczyk “Wyrwicz” / “Doliński I” (1913–1989): throughout the war, she served as the head of intelligence at the Daleszyce branch, which was – according to Borzobohaty – one of the best in the Radom-Kielce Sub-district. Author of three memoirs: *Gdy każdy dzień był walką*, Warsaw 1982; *Diabeł „Piatej Kolumny”*, Warsaw 1986; *Egzamin z życia: lekarze, sanitariuszki, partyzanci 1939–1945 (z dziejów podziemnej służby zdrowia w Okręgu AK „Jodła”)*, Kielce 1999.

Józef Molenda “Iskra” (1916-?): from Bolmin; a police officer before the war. He joined ZWZ in 1940, and served with “Barabas” from August 1944. After the war, he joined MO and was assigned to the PKMO in Zgorzelec, where he was working in the investigation department until his discharge in March 1946. He helped Henryk Pawelec and others with their escape over the so-called porous border.

Zygmunt Mołędziński “Sten”: from Warsaw. He “transferred in January 1944 from Ponury’s unit”.

Stefan Obara “Szatan” / “Walek”: from Bieliny. Initially commander of the sabotage unit at the Bodzetyn Sub-district Headquarters; he was tasked with eliminating informers and carrying out operations, e.g. on the route of a narrow-gauge railway. Obara’s name also appears on the list of the *Wybraniiecy* unit members. Decorated with the Cross of Valor for the battle of Antoniów, in which he fell on July 20, 1944.

Władysław Ołtarzewski “Kordian”.

Henryk Pawelec “Andrzej” (April 6, 1921–2015): from Wzdół Rządowy. Before the war, he served as a career non-commissioned officer. Initially a member of Ignacy Robb-Narbutt’s GL group, he then joined an AK sabotage unit in Wzdół Rządowy, also dubbed “a special assignments man in the Kielce-Radom AK District”. Wounded on March 13, 1943 during an assassination attempt at the Gestapo officer Franz Wittek. From March 20, 1943 a member of “Barabas” unit, serving as commander of the cavalry reconnaissance group. During Operation Burza, he was commander of the cavalry reconnaissance group with the 4th Legions’ Infantry Regiment of AK. In 1945, he chaired the NIE / WiN merger committee. After crossing the so-called porous border (the circumstances were described by A. Ropelewski in: *Z życia akowców w Polsce Ludowej*, Gdańsk 1997, pp. 98–99) he joined the II Corps commanded by Gen. Anders. Exiled in Great Britain, he was decorated with the Silver Cross of the Order of Virtuti Militari in London on November 11, 1948. He returned to Kielce in 1992, In 2012 excluded from the World Association of the

Home Army Soldiers for revealing crimes against Jews committed by *Wybraniec*. Author of memoirs: *Życie, śmierć, życie. Z Henrykiem Pawelcem rozmawia Jadwiga Karolczak*, Wydawnictwo Jedność, Kielce 1999; idem (together with his wife, Zbigniewa), *Na rozkaz serca*, Kielce 2005.

NN “Piorun”: came from Dąbrowa in Kielce district, fell near Kunów.

Józef Przygodzki or Przygocki “Czarny” / “Szary” (1918 -): son of a peasant from Korytnica. In 1937, he came to Warsaw to look for work; according to his own words, he joined PPS, worked in a bakery, but was sent for forced labor in the Reich (he was in Leipzig). He escaped in 1941 or 1943 and was hiding in his native Korytnica, where he also joined BCh. Before joining “Barabas”’s unit, he was a member of a group of robbers called Miecz i Pług and of Piłat’s unit; he was robbing manor houses. “I received an order from BCh to join a forest fighting squad; the fighting squad turned out to be AK”²⁹⁸. It was most likely him who executed Roman Olizarowski “Pomsta”. After the war – until July 1945 – he was a member of Trupia Czaszka, attacking MO stations under the command of Leszek Wesołowski “Strzała”. He later moved to the so-called Reclaimed Territories, and settled in Rudniczka, municipality of Prudnik. In 1946, he joined ORMO and PZPR. He worked at the State Agricultural Farm, probably also at the Municipal National Council, finally as a warehouse worker at the GS. The matter of his recruitment as a secret collaborator was concluded by the Powiat BP Office with a request to transfer it to the committee of party control at KW PZPR in Opole.

Andrzej Ropelewski “Karaś” (1923–2012): born in Warsaw, he spent the occupation period in the Jędrzejów Province. While in the underground, he completed an officer training course and attended the Reserve Officers’s Training Center. In the summer of 1944, he served with the 1st Battalion of the Jędrzejów AK Infantry Regiment. Arrested in 1945; together with a group of other prisoners, he escaped from the prison in Jędrzejów. He appeared before the AK Dissolution Committee in September 1945. After graduating from law school, he worked at the Institute of Sea Fishery in Gdynia from October 1949. At the same time, he was a research assistant at the Higher School of Naval Trade in Sopot. Doctorate in 1960, habilitation in 1967, title of professor in 1974. Chairman of the PRON City Council in Gdynia during the martial law. From 1984 head of the Institute of Sea Fishery.

298 AIPN Ki 025/88/D (mikrofiche), Józef Przygodzki’s curriculum vitae written in his own hand on March 4, 1953.

Author of more than 20 historical and specialist publications regarding AK partisan groups and the post-war vicissitudes of AK soldiers. His *Wspomnienia z AK* (1957) was one of the first books on this topic after the October “thaw”. For his work *Oddział partyzancki „Spaleni”* (1987), he received the Polityka Award. A short biography in *Encyklopedia Gdyni*, Gdynia 2006, p. 678.

Bonawentura Rutecki “Ali”: sabotage commander at the Sobków branch in Jędrzejów county, sabotage commander in the Jędrzejów Sub-district. Sentenced to death for robberies, murders, and insubordination, but the execution of the sentence was canceled.

Piotr Sarna “Wierny” / “Orkan”: former ensign with the 4th Legions’ Infantry Regiment, in September 1939 a defender of Modlin. He escaped from a POW transport, and in June 1941 became the regional head of Section II for Daleszyce, Górnio, Cisów, and Szczecno. He was later replaced at this post by Maria Michalczyk in the autumn of 1943.

Jan Sieradzan “Żbik”: sergeant major, until September 1939 a career non-commissioned officer with the 4th Legions’ Infantry Regiment in Kielce, commander of the AK sabotage unit in the Chęciny area. He was subordinated up to “Zryw”, commander of the Spaleni unit.

Edward Skrobot “Wierny” (1915–1996): from Suchedniów, “peasant origin”, secondary education (trade college). Before the war, he worked in an ammunition factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna, after the war as an accountant in Sosnowiec. In 1934, he joined WP as a volunteer, and until 1935 he trained at the Reserve Officers’ Center with the 39th Infantry Regiment in Jarosław. During the occupation period, he worked on a farm with his parents in Suchedniów until 1943. He joined AK in May 1943. A long-term deputy commander of the *Wybraniec*, leader of the largest group, later platoon commander and from August 1944 commander of the 2nd Company of the 4th Legions’ Infantry Regiment of AK. Skrobot’s group consisted of Zygmunt Bokwa “Smutny” from Kielce, Władysław Dziewiór “Skazaniec” from Kielce, Marian Wilczyński “Grom II” from Chęciny, his brother Zdzisław Wilczyński “Wicher” from Chęciny, Wiesław Sokołowski “Sokół” from Chęciny, Tadeusz Masio “Matros” from Kielce, Józef Molenda “Iskra” from Bolmin, Tadeusz Kuchta “Jurek” from Bolmin, Stanisław Szumielewicz “Kryspin” from Stalowa Wola, Piotr Rzewuski “Kotwica” from Chęciny, and Jan Wojtasiński “Lew” from Chęciny. Decorated with the Cross of Valor, Grunwald Badge, the Medal of Victory and Freedom and in 1971 with the Silver Cross of the

Order of Virtuti Militari. “He was a very nice man, always smiling cordially and genuinely, but very resolute in his actions. He was also a perfect organizer – and just like Barabasz, he was a natural leader. Officer «Wierny» is a humanist and an honest man, courageous and decisive – a model soldier and officer”. The story about the death sentence handed down to Skrobot in early March 1944 “upon orders from the Kedyw”, issued at the meeting in Cisów for “maltreatment of people from NSZ and carrying out an execution without an order” is recounted by Michał Basa (*Opowiadania partyzanta*, op. cit., pp. 167–168). According to the author, the execution was thwarted due to a mutiny in the unit. According to Sołtysiak, at the turn of 1943/1944 there was “a certain lack of discipline in the section which consisted of older partisans [in Wierny’s group], and in relation to whom the local people had many justified grudges. There were cases of drunkenness and misuse of weapons”. After the war a member of PZPR. He was arrested on January 20, 1950 and sentenced on the basis of the August Decree to 5 years and 1 month imprisonment. He was serving his sentence in a coal mine. On June 26, 1992 the Provincial Court in Kielce declared the conviction void. After retiring in 1979, he founded Rodzina Wybranieckich, bringing together former members of the “Barabasz” unit. After the founding of the World Association of Home Army Soldiers, he served as a board member and the honorary chairman of the 4th Legions Infantry Regiment of AK in Kielce.

Ludwik Szrowski “Adolf”: from Cieszyn; his father was a stone grinder. In June 1943, he joined the unit by accident when he was looking for a job and was recruited as an attendant by Mitropa [Mittel-europäische Reisebüro, a German travel agency]. His work consisted of attending to guests in sleeper and restaurant carriages. He did not have a secondary school diploma – but instead a certain savoir-faire in a somewhat dubious sense. (...) He was a typical example of a young man who could be molded to one’s «image and likeness»“.

Mieczysław Szumielewicz “Szumilas” / “Mietek” (1921–2007): “peasant origin”, with ZWZ from December 1939, initially a press distributor. Sołtysiak’s school friend (they already knew each other at the Żeromski Middle School in Kielce), from April 1943 with “Barabasz’s” unit as a cook. From October 1943 until the end of the war, he served as a group leader. It consisted of Ludwik Szarowski “Adolf” from Cieszyn, Jerzy Pietruszka “Włodek” (or “Włodek”) from Grudziądz, Józef Droźniak “Kogut” from Miechowskie, Stanisław Litewka “Staszek” from Ojców, Jerzy Kisiel “Tadek” (Tadek II?) from Kielce, Zygmunt Wójcikowski “Zygmunt”, Aleksander Nowak “Olek” from Kielce, Władysław Ołtarzewski “Korian” from Kielce, Jan Sadło “Kula” from Kielce, Tadeusz Sowiński “Tarzan”

from Brudzów near Morawica, NN “Wojtek” from Chęciny (?), and Władysław Marasek “Brzózka” from Kielce. In 1966, M. Szumielewicz became vice-chairman of the ZBOWiD in Kielce.

Wiktor Szwengler “Witek”: a “weapons specialist”.

Stanisław Tatarowski “Kalif”: from Łosienko near Piekoszów. He died on December 21, 1943 in an ambush on a cash transport near Jaworzna.

Wiesław Wesołowski “Orzeł” and Leszek Wesołowski “Strzała”: sons of a teacher from Korytnica; they were incorporated into Piłat’s gang robbing manors in Jędrzejowskie. Together with Józef Przygodzki (Przygocki) “Czarny”, they both later transferred to the “Barabasz” unit and to Spaleni. In 1945, both Wesołowski brothers were members of a group called Trupia czaszka led by “Strzała”. On July 16, 1945, Leszek Wesołowski turned the group in to MO in Jędrzejów; however, its members did not give up all the weapons in their possession. On February 16, 1946, the Garrison Court Martial in Kielce sentenced Wiesław Wesołowski (together with three other individuals) to 9-year imprisonment. The files do not contain Leszek Wesołowski’s verdict.

Lucyna Wrońska “Ewa” (?-1969): liaison officer for the AK Kielce-Radom District, until June/July 1944 delegated to liaise with the “Barabasz” unit. She later became the warder of the District radio, which she kept in her own house. Bolesław Boczarski “Jurand” was delegated from the *Wybraniec* unit to supervise its security. Wrońska’s house in Kielce served as a consultation place for a number of groups plotting assassination attempts on the famous Wittek with Zerembski “Zaw”. “She was an exceptionally brave, smart liaison with a presence of mind. She often visited the Three Marysias in Daleszyce [Maria Michalczyk, Maria Fabiańska-Cedro, and Maria Nachowska]. It was their shared pseudonym, made up by us. The Marysias worked for the intelligence under the supervision of Maria Michalczyk “Wyrwicz-Doliński”. Ewa was a good friend and a good soldier”. In her book (*Gdy każdy dzień był walką*), Maria Michalczyk wonders why Lucyna Wrońska was not buried at the partisan cemetery in Kielce: “A quiet, modest funeral – why not at the partisan cemetery?” Her relation of the funeral speech, given probably by Bolesław Boczarski, chairman of the ZBOWiD branch in Suchedniów, is also telling: “It was probably some kind of misunderstanding – the speaker went on – that not until twenty five years later was there a willingness to recognize the contribution made by Ewa the soldier; actually, three days before her death, I was appointed by ZBOWiD to hand over the verified Silver Cross of

Merit with Swords, which she had been awarded in 1943. Receiving it, she said: “Bolek, so they did recognize it.”

Marian Wilczyński “Grom II”: a stonemason from Chęciny. He was also connected with Sub-Lieutenant Jan Sieradzan’s (“Żbik”) unit. Another member of the “Barabas” unit was likewise using the *nom de guerre* Grom: this was Antoni Synowiec from Kielce.

Józef Włodarczyk “Wyrwa”: major. Commander of the Kielce District from May 1942 to July 1944, later commander of the 4th Legions’ Infantry Regiment of AK. In October 1944 he was succeeded at this post by Maksymilian Lorentz “Katarzyna”.

Henryk Żytkowski “Lech” / “Leszek”: from Bolmin near Kielce; a member of Skrobot’s group.

Chapter 10: *Suppressio veri, suggestio falsi*. The History of Ryszard Maj's Testimony

Ever since the historians' recognition of the cognitive value of oral sources, establishing the distinction between history and past-oriented cultural anthropology has become increasingly difficult. Notwithstanding the resistance to this development, perceptible in Polish public opinion, anthropology concerned with the past is gradually undergoing historicization, whereas history – anthropologization. However, it can be assumed that some borders between these disciplines will never disappear. Historians will remain specialists in archival research; anthropologists, on the other hand, will emphasize the crucial importance of theory in description.

A researcher attempting to define the distinction between history and anthropology is compelled to generalize, and such attempts are easily undermined by examples of historians-anthropologists or, conversely, anthropologists with historical inclinations.

Therefore, the characteristics shown below should be treated as a list of topics for discussion, rather than a model of established differences.

- Compared with history, anthropology is a more recent field of research, shaped by its contrast with history. Unlike history, which subscribes to ideals of cognitive absolutism, it has been formed on the basis of cultural relativism and its critique. From the interwar period onward, it has been shaped in opposition to various types of historicism, which constitutes a framework yet to be overcome, not only within the Polish tradition of scientific research into the past. This tradition, either due to its isolation from the international academia, or to the changing research paradigms, is generally averse to profound methodological reflection: it favors the “language of bare facts”.
- Historical anthropology attempts to avoid the extremes of relativism and positivism; that is, it accepts that it is possible to gain an increasingly better knowledge of the past¹, but at the same time it assumes that the real truth about the events, being a compromise between various perspectives, is a sort of a limit value, which can only be aspired to.

1 LaCapra, Dominick: *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London 2001; Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: “Historia jako fetysz”. In: idem, *Rzeczy mgliste*. Fundacja Pogranicze: Sejny 2004.

- It has been said that anthropology concentrates not as much on facts as on what individuals say about the facts². Admittedly, it uses people's comments to paint its own picture of the events verified in the course of field research. This is not a sign of relativism, but rather of sensitivity to the social mechanism of generating knowledge and the dependence of perception on social and cognitive biases³.
- The anthropologist's expertise in understanding people's comments about events, the methods for suppressing certain things from memory, their blurring and obscuring, supports what the historians call the critique of sources. Being familiar with how individual contributors present certain facts makes it possible to elucidate them⁴. However, this requires knowledge of the principles of social perception, the select rules of narration – constructing stories about the past, and of the rules of social discourse.
- When embarking on field research, anthropologists bear in mind the existing historical narrative, yet prepare to recognize voices which are unknown, unfamiliar, and which do not conform to the socially established version. They listen to gossip, interjections, and jokes; detect tensions, omissions, and points where the narrative breaks down. Afterwards, they endeavor to archive the comments, snippets of memories, distortions and omissions collected in the field. Anthropologists do not reject that which cannot be verified. Often these particular elements lead to a reconstruction of attitudes that are not apparent when using the method of direct interviews, not to mention quantitative⁵ or archival research.
- Anthropologists tend to quote their sources more extensively than historians, who sometimes know all too well what it is they are looking for in them. An overly expressive narrative leads to the censoring of texts, from which “useless elements” are eliminated, only because the historians do not know the purpose they could serve⁶. The highest value in historical research rests within the immediacy of sources that transmit the voices of the past. This immediacy

2 Maria Janion's preface to Tokarska-Bakir, *Rzeczy mgliste*, p. 5.

3 *Vorurteile* in Gadamerian hermeneutics.

4 Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: *Legendy o krwi. Antropologia przysądu*. WAB: Warsaw 2008.

5 See Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: “How to exit the conspiracy of silence? Social sciences facing the Polish-Jewish relations”. *East European Politics & Societies* 25(1), 2011, pp. 129–152.

6 See the questionable strategy of Ośrodek Karta, i.e. the abridged publication of Zygmunt Klukowski's *Dzienniki* (2007), or Stefan Dąbbski's *Egzekutor* (2010).

appears in historical discourse when instead of paraphrasing the event's participants, they are simply allowed to speak for themselves. The paraphrase is always anachronistic, whereas live speech recorded in the sources constitutes a sort of a fossil, transmitting the voice of an era⁷.

Suppressio veri

British historian Perry Anderson asserts that in contemporary historiography, *suggestio falsi*, i.e. blatant suggestion of untruth, is comparatively rare. Much more common, Anderson claims, is *suppressio veri*, i.e. the presentation of truth in a way that prevents objections. "Representations [are] omitted rather than misrepresentation committed"⁸.

This view directly relates to historical and anthropological studies of the Holocaust. Given the lack of the most important testimonies – indeed, the Holocaust studies sources face such a predicament – one can only resort to *suppressio veri*. We "suppress the truth" in thousands of testimonies, since – given the absence of millions of witnesses – we are unable to verify them scientifically⁹. The use of plural is in this case intentional, as anthropologists also strive for scientific verification of testimonies. However, only anthropologists, unlike historians, ask questions about what happens with the collective memory when certain crucial, but too inadequately attested fragments of the past, cannot be verified scientifically. What is it like to live in a world where historians – out of necessity – avoid topics in the context of which it is not possible to acquire verifiable knowledge, or not even approximate one? Since, as the saying goes, nature abhors a vacuum, what is the nature of that which fills this vacuum? When Jan Tomasz Gross postulated "a new attitude toward sources" in his *Sąsiedzi*, he undoubtedly meant taking into account the moral consequences of such a situation¹⁰.

7 See also Chapter 7: *Pogrom Cries* in this volume.

8 "Historians select rather than deform the way in which the past is represented," Anderson, Perry: "On Emplotment: Two Kinds of Ruin". In: Friedlander, Saul (ed.): *Probing the Limits of Representation*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge 1992, pp. 64–65.

9 On problems with the *Testis unus, testis nullus* rule in the context of Holocaust research, see Ginzburg, Carlo: "Just One Witness". In: Friedlander, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, 1992, pp. 82–96. See also the conversation between a witness and prosecutor: "Unfortunately, Mr. Zawacki, snow is not evidence for the judge, especially the snow that had melted 25 years ago," Ida Fink, short story "Stół". In: id.: *Ślady*. WAB: Warsaw 1996.

10 Giorgio Agamben has talked about this, demanding that "the testimony of a survivor be truthful and have a right to exist only if complemented by those who cannot testify,"

In Poland, the Grossian postulate of “a new attitude toward sources” has initiated a search for and the rehabilitation of hitherto ignored sources, which could lead to diminishing the gaps in our most recent history. Only after the publication of *Sąsiedzi* has the local historical discourse embraced the notion that oral history, and the way common people remember the past, is not necessarily in opposition to academic history¹¹. In fact, Gross was instrumental in disseminating the view that the relation between truth and memory, between oral history and history without an adjective, can in fact differ from the one we are accustomed to.

The power of oral history is in its brutality. Licensed historical discourse is based on the logic of paraphrase and the description of sources. The historian’s role is that of a translator. The risk associated with translation is epitomized in an Italian expression *traduttore traditore*. By paraphrasing the facts, historians – often unintentionally – deform them, decontextualize them and endow them with an obviousness alien to them. For nothing is as ephemeral and historically changeable as obviousness.

Compared with the paraphrase, there is a completely different energy enclosed in a quotation, a tool used in oral history/historical anthropology. Thanks to a quotation, it is possible to almost physically touch the past¹²: to observe it in the lexis and syntax, to independently consider the choice of certain words and the rejection of others, to notice the omissions and the cases of *non sequitur*. Oral history also makes available something that is rarely included in the Holocaust discourse: the voice of the perpetrators¹³. However, in order to not get entangled

in Agamben, Giorgio / Królak, Sławomir (transl.): *Co zostaje z Auschwitz*. SIC!: Warsaw 2008, p. 151.

11 Gross, Jan T.: *Sąsiedzi. Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*. Fundacja Pogranicze: Sejny 2004. Gross’s suggestion regarding oral history has been criticized, among others, by Tomasz Szarota. When Gross claimed that to learn about the murder in Jedwabne, it was sufficient to visit local pubs, Szarota in an interview replied with “You cannot write history hanging around bars,” Sabor, Agnieszka / Zajac, Marek: “Jedwabne bez stereotypów”. *Tygodnik Powszechny* 29.4.2001. Gross’s response was, “It’s a pity that ‘you cannot write history hanging around bars,’” id.: “Trochę szkoda, że ‘nie pisze się historii, chodząc po barach...’”. *Tygodnik Powszechny* 5.5.2002.

12 On wartime vocabulary preserved in provincial language of the Sandomierz region, see my “Skaz antysemityzmu”. *Teksty Drugie* 1/2(115), 2009, pp. 302–317.

13 According to Harald Welzer, certain things would not be believable if not told directly – by the people who had taken part in the events. See Welzer, Harald / Kurkowska, Magdalena (transl.): *Sprawcy. Dlaczego zwykli ludzie dokonują masowych mordów*. Scholar: Warsaw 2010.

in a myriad of details and in immediacy, anthropology needs history just as much as the latter needs the former. Only by supporting one another do they stimulate their potentials.

The Social Organization of Perception

Let us now focus on the exemplification of Anderson's thesis on *suppressio veri*, i.e. such a way of organizing perception that silences the narratives challenging the established view of the past¹⁴. Similar selective experience is connected with what is in social sciences referred to as social conditioning of knowledge. As a shield protecting the group¹⁵ from the consequences of cognitive dissonance, researchers sometimes use an overly critical attitude and procrastinate with the verification of inconvenient testimonies¹⁶. The role of the manager of collective perception is also played by literature, where the taste of the era privileges certain narratives and genres. Collective memory works in a similar way, expressing itself in stories that are the focus of narratology. Some types of narratives (heroic, such as exclamation or apologia) or martyrological (such as threnody or lament) give a strong direction to remembering, eliminating the parts that do not fit into the picture¹⁷. Likewise, in the image of everyday reality, characteristic of the *Alltagsgeschichte* and its use of micronarrative, its aspect of a personal diary or idyll, everything that does not pertain to the subject, is not personal or idyllic, will be omitted¹⁸.

There are also more obvious, political reasons why historians ignore the uncomfortable elements of the past. In the course of the past few decades, historical

14 See Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna: "Zmowa społeczna. Socjologia i antropologia zaprzeczania". In: Kosiewski, Piotr et al. (eds.): *Przebyta droga 1989–2009. Dla Aleksandra Smolara*. Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego: Warsaw 2010, pp. 261–280.

15 On the phenomenon of intellectual groups, see Fleck, Ludwik: *Powstanie i rozwój faktu naukowego*. Wydawnictwo Lubelskie: Lublin 1986, pp. 56, 68 etc.

16 Inspired by Dominick LaCapra, I have written about the "methodological armor" worn by historians with this very aim in my "Historia jako fetysz"; see Tokarska-Bakir, *Rzeczy mgliste*, op. cit.

17 Olick, Jeffrey K.: *Politics of Regret. On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*. Routledge: New York and London 2007.

18 Jacek Leociak discussed the odd, selective image of the Warsaw ghetto in the diaries of Polish wartime intellectuals. Likewise, Feliks Tych described the peculiar lethargy, or analgesia, with which the Polish authors of war memoirs reacted to Holocaust; Tych, Feliks: *Długi cień Zagłady. Szkice historyczne*. Żydowski Instytut Historyczny: Warsaw 1999.

politics has wreaked havoc in Poland. The researchers involved in it have ignored the question of how the interests of academic and political history¹⁹ differ. Historical politics sometimes presents itself under the guise of defense of universal values; however, its euphemistic strategies²⁰ express the interests of a particular group. A problem emerges when the euphemism of historical politics is directed against groups excluded from collective memory. It is therefore legitimate to call it a “black”²¹ euphemism, i.e. a euphemism that on the cognitive-linguistic level creates a mechanism that amalgamates the negative consequences of the past and participates in the elimination of its traces²².

Ryszard Maj’s testimony

I have been involved in historical anthropology and the issue of Jewish genocide in the memory of Polish hinterland for ten years. After the publication of a book based on ethnographic testimonies from the countryside²³, I decided to expand my target group of interviewees by including partisans of the Home Army. These also include individuals with a bad conscience for covering up for colleagues or superiors responsible for the murders of Jews. It is possible that some of them, influenced by their experiences in exile or simply the hardships life, have only

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- 19 If, as Krzysztof Michalski claims based on Friedrich Nietzsche (in his book *Płomień wieczności. Eseje o myślach Fryderyka Nietzschego*. Znak: Warsaw 2007), “history is just one more name for the world we live in,” then historical politics would be the politics of the world we live in, therefore simply politics. Historical politics is thus regular politics that is trying to dominate history.
 - 20 A euphemism presupposes “the substitution of an appropriate expression describing something we in reality do not want to hear about, by another expression in a more delicate or altered form,” Agamben, *Co zostaje z Auschwitz*, p. 80.
 - 21 That is the expression Katarzyna Kuczyńska-Koschany uses to describe a “particular kind of mitigating expressions, formulations, phrases, and paraphrases in the Nazi ideological, totalitarian language (LTI), related to the topic of the Holocaust, which pertain to the designates placed in the sphere of (totalitarian or quasi-totalitarian) taboo,” Kuczyńska-Koschany, Katarzyna: “Wymazywanie. Eufemizm wobec Zagłady (preliminaria)”. In: Meller, Katarzyna / Trybuś, Krzysztof (eds.): *O historyczności*. Wydawnictwo Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne: Poznań 2006, pp. 281–292.
 - 22 Lyotard, Jean-François / Michel, Andreas / Roberts, Mark S. (transl.): *Heidegger and «the jews»*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis and London 1997, p. 23.
 - 23 Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi*, op. cit.

recently started calling these crimes by their proper name. Others, in spite of the time elapsed, still do not describe them as such²⁴.

Some authors started writing about similar events quite early on. Andrzej Ropelewski, when clarifying the motives of his work, referred to Colonel Jan Rzepecki's suggestion to "show everything I encountered during the occupation, the peaks and the valleys of the underground resistance"²⁵. The author has described them in his book *Moje wspomnienia z AK*, published as early as in 1957²⁶. Despite positive reviews²⁷, due to the passages about crimes committed on Jews

24 See Włodzimierz Gruszczyński's book full of antisemitic passages; id.: *Odwet- Jędrusie. Próba monografii*. Staszowskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne: Staszów n.d. [1990s], e.g. pp. 141–142.

25 Letter from Andrzej Ropelewski, 4.6.2007. See also another quote from Rzepecki, which A. Ropelewski refers to in his *Oddział partyzancki "Spaleni"*. Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza: Toruń 2000, p. 86: "Those who have experienced war know that its essence is a long-term, ineffectual but obstinate physical and mental effort, privation, hunger, dirt, etc., and not glamorous outbursts – rare, but demanding even additional expenditure of will and a spirit of sacrifice. Only romantics aged 10 to 80 consider war to be a series of Samosierras."

26 Ropelewski, Andrzej: *Wspomnienia z AK*. Czytelnik: Warsaw 1957. See e.g. pp. 45–47: "From what I have learned, I was inclined to think that those acts were in certain cases the result of a desire to possess the property of the unfortunate victims. This can be shown by an example that one of the Barabasz soldiers told me about. It was, I think, in 1943, when rumors started circulating that the owner of a small manor Sitkówka near Chęciny – a Polish woman – was reportedly maintaining good relations with the Germans, and even got a letter from one of the German officers, allegedly from Hitler himself. Nobody knows how much of it was true. When the matter became widely known, an AK unit operating in the forest went to the manor. During the requisition of various things and provisions they had found there, they came across a man in hiding, who turned out to be a Jew from Chęciny. They took him with them, to Gałęzice it seems, where they treated the unfortunate man very well for two or three days, and promised him various things – thus they made him give them information about the hiding places of various precious objects belonging to Jews from Chęciny. Once the objects had been found – the Jew was shot."

I have found a testimony recorded by Izaak Grynbaum's cousin, with whom he was hiding at the cemetery in Chęciny; see Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, Guta: *Życie w grobowcu*. Wydawnictwo Ypsilon: Warsaw 2002. Thanks to her it is possible to reconstruct Izaak's last moments. He was tortured and killed on the square in Chęciny by a group led by Edward Skrobot "Wierny", a partisan belonging to the "Barabasz" unit. For more details, see Chapter 9: *Barabasz and the Jews* in this volume.

27 E.g. Klimowicz, Adam: "Kartka z historii najnowszej". *Nowe Książki* 15, 1957, pp. 935–936.

the book was not received well²⁸ in the milieu of AK veterans. Consequently, Ropelewski did not speak out for decades, and the events he had described were ascribed a status of non-events, a category of forbidden knowledge that everyone knows of, but never talks about it.

Thanks to the names that have surfaced during my interviews, together with Alina Skibińska I was able to research in the IPN archives the post-war trials regarding the murders of Jews by AK partisans of the *Wybraniec* Unit under the leadership of “Barabasz”²⁹, and also the revision of these judgments after the fall of communism. There were more than a dozen of such murders. They include executions of whole groups of Jews hiding in forest bunkers (e.g. at Mosty near Gałęzice³⁰). These murders were explicitly racist, preceded by a humiliating “verification of Jewishness” of Jews working under false identity for the local government (Michał Ferenc from Zajączków, see below), or Jews – colleagues from the *Wybraniec* Unit (the case of Roman Olizarowski “Pomsta”³¹). There is also the case of the shooting of a family of six, which along with his fiancée

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- 28 “Things included in the above-mentioned chapter of my book had become the cause of animosity that I have experienced from the AK veterans’ milieu, including some of my close friends. I was accused of disrespect and betrayal, hate mail about me was being sent to Borzobohaty, but nobody publicly accused me of making it up. Due to this disagreeable experience, my later publications about ZWZ-AK did not contain a single word about the elimination of Jews by AK members,” letter from Andrzej Ropelewski, dated July 4, 2007.
- 29 The *Wybraniec* Unit started out in the summer of 1943 as a small group, which was rapidly expanding and by the end of 1944 already contained about 110 members. Its leader was Marian Sołtysiak “Barabasz”; see his *Chłopc* *“Barabasza”*. PAX: Warsaw 1965, etc. In the 1960s, Sołtysiak found a protecting figure, Gen. Mieczysław Moczar, who nominated him to the ZBOWiD committee and named him the Secretary of the Central Committee for the communication with expatriate Poles. This alliance caused profound dissonance in the veterans’ milieu. This dissonance intensified in the 1990s, when Henryk Pawelec, one of the most important soldiers of the unit, returned to his homeland. See his *Życie, śmierć, życie. Z Henrykiem Pawelcem rozmawia Jadwiga Karolczak*. Wydawnictwo Jedność: Kielce 1999, pp. 59–64.
- 30 Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, p. 47: “I have also heard of instances when they eliminated a few people at a time. This supposedly happened in Mosty near Chęciny, where in a dugout at the edge of the forest they shot dead a Jewish family that had been hiding there.” For more details about this event, see Chapter 9: “*Barabasz*” and *the Jews* in this volume.
- 31 See Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, p. 47: “The greatest tragedy is connected with the fate of “Pomsta”, which was the pseudonym of a soldier belonging to one of the AK units operating in a forest near Kielce [Roman Olizarowski “Pomsta” served in Skrobot’s

Zofia Zelinegówna had been led out of the ghetto by Stefan Sawa, and hidden in his house in Zagórze near Daleszyce; he was posthumously awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal³². With the exception of the murder of Izaak Grynbaum in the center of Chęciny³³, “Barabaszs” partisans charged with the above murders blamed them on the commands from Section II, ordering them to shoot alleged spies and to confiscate their property.

I was introduced to the key testimony about these events by the already mentioned Andrzej Ropelewski, who has been trying to bring it to the attention of historians and publicists since the late 1990s. The narrative of the late Ryszard Maj “Ryś-I”³⁴, a member of the “Barabaszs” unit³⁵ and postwar editor of the *Tygodnik Morski*, was recorded by my correspondent in Sopot in 1987.

It reads as follows:

“R. Maj, 9/9/1957. After the shooting of the Jews near Daleszyce, the diamonds that the Jews had sewn into their belts, wrapped in tissue paper, were split between the men (who were then drunk)³⁶.”

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- group in the “Barabaszs” unit]. When, after a certain time, it transpired that Pomsta was a Jew, he was shot dead by [those who had] until then been his brothers-in-arms.”
- 32 On this crime, see Karolczak, Jadwiga: “Duchy i upiory”. *Słowa Ludu* 1474, 1993, pp. 1–6.
- 33 See Chapter 9: “Barabaszs” and the Jews in this volume.
- 34 See Kotliński, Jerzy: *Wybrani w Lasach Cisowskich*. Wrocław 1993, p. 144.
- 35 I have not managed to ascertain any details about Ryszard Maj’s other experiences during the war. Andrzej Ropelewski has only informed me that “in 1944 he went to the forests near Miechów.” For a short biography of Ryszard Maj, see appendix to Chapter 9 in this volume.
- 36 During the night of February 15/16, 1944 in Zagórze near Daleszyce, a group of the *Wybrani* under the command of Mieczysław Szumielewicz killed six members of the Zelinger family along with Stefan Sawa, who was hiding them in a rented house. Sawa, a trainee judge from Kielce, posthumously awarded the title of the Righteous Among The Nations, led his fiancée, Zofia Zelinger, her aunt Dina, and relatives Mojżesz Rozenberg, Lidia Sadowska, Adam Icek Pruszkowski, Halina Cukierman, and a 5-year-old Frymusia Frydman, out of the ghetto. Mieczysław Szumielewicz’s testimony: “After entering the house, Marasek Władysław “Brzózka” told me that Stefan Sawa had recognized him, so all four of us started shooting from our guns into Stefan Sawa, who was in the kitchen, killing him outright, and then we fired into two Jews whom we killed, also in the kitchen. From the kitchen we went to a room with three women and a child of Jewish ethnicity, whom we also shot dead. After killing all the people there we went through the whole apartment and helped ourselves to men’s and women’s clothes, which were in the wardrobe, men’s and women’s shoes, and in the wardrobe we found some jewellery, that is one golden necklace, rings, but now I can’t

After shooting the Jews near Mosty (“Wierny”³⁷), which was described as a “serious shootout”, “Pomsta” asked, in the presence of soldier “Witek”³⁸ (and others), how they can shoot those Jews. So “Witek” said: “We’ll see who else is a Jew around here”, and went away. He came back with “Grot”³⁹ and they said an examination of the genitals had been ordered out of fear of venereal diseases. “Pomsta” [Roman Olizarowski] was the first one to be examined. He was arrested immediately and soon after “Czarny”⁴⁰ shot him dead with two shots on the hillside.

He confirms Gałęzice and Chęciny [sentence underlined]⁴¹.

“Barabasz” liked to drink and he spent little time with the unit, mostly he was there at the troops’ buildups, with women. (...) ⁴²

[another excerpt from A. Ropelewski’s notes] 14/9/1957 (Wednesday). I talked to Major Bogusław Jackiewicz⁴³ in the presence of Mr. Antoni Świtalski “Marian”.

Opinion on “Barabasz” – [Jackiewicz:] had the war ended differently (had the London government won), “Barabasz” would certainly have been brought to trial. I would have definitely taken this to court, no matter what the result.

Świtalski – “Barabasz” ordered to do away with “Pantera”⁴⁴ because he had refused to come back to the unit. They threw his body into the river through an ice-hole.

remember how many, one golden watch and two ordinary watches. We packed our loot onto a farmer’s wagon brought along by Lutek Stanisław “Roch”. (...) After packing we set the apartment on fire in order to cover the traces.” “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Władysława Szumielewicz”, WUBP in Kielce, January 31, 1951, catalogue number IPN BU 0118/4691 part 2, pp. 69–70. See Chapter 9: “*Barabasz*” and the Jews in this volume.

- 37 Edward Skrobot, group leader in the “Barabasz” unit. “He was a very kind man, always smiling cordially and sincerely, but very decisive in his actions. He was also a perfect organizer – and, similarly to «Barabasz», he was a born leader. Lieutenant «Wierny» was a humanist and a righteous man, brave and decisive – an ideal soldier and officer,” Kotliński, *Wybraniecy w Lasach Cisowskich*, p. 8.
- 38 Wiktor Schwengler; *ibid.*, p. 145.
- 39 A spelling error, in fact it was “Grom” (*ibid.*, p. 140), Marian Wilczyński from Chęciny.
- 40 Józef Przygodzki from Korytnica (*ibid.*).
- 41 This is about the murder of Izaak Grynbaum in the marketplace in Chęciny. Ropelewski uses the expression “confirms”, since he had written about these events himself. See Chapter 9: “*Barabasz*” and the Jews in this volume.
- 42 The sentence I have left out: “The NSZ brigade set out on the evening of January 13, 1945 to the west from Giebułtów, where its command was based.”
- 43 About the parachute drop of *Cichociemny* B. Jackiewicz, see Kotliński, *Wybraniecy w Lasach Cisowskich*, p. 51.
- 44 Tadeusz Sotkiewicz; see *ibid.*, p. 143.

When Świtalski was leaving the Barabasz unit⁴⁵, “Mietek”⁴⁶ was jealous and almost cried because he had to stay with “Barabasz”.

Notes from my conversation with Major Bolesław Jackiewicz, a *Cichociemny*, in the presence of A. Świtalski “Marian”, in his flat in Sopot.

Andrzej Ropelewski⁴⁷

Non event

Professor Ropelewski only decided to make Ryszard Maj’s testimony available to historians at the turn of the 21st century, after the publication of Jan Tomasz Gross’ book *Sąsiedzi* (2000). The letters he had received in response constitute a unique source, which allows us to study what Eviatar Zerubavel calls the conspiracy of silence⁴⁸.

Anonymization of the letters is an obvious condition for this analysis – they are a contribution to collective, not individual history. Only the voice of a poet, Jerzy Ficowski, Andrzej Ropelewski’s friend from university, will be treated differently due to its additional contribution that surpasses its historical value. The key passage is the one where he answers the question whether Ryszard Maj’s testimony should be made public.

“I have often thought about the things you’re asking about. I myself am not very active or “eager” anymore, but I remember my long-gone conversations and quarrels from the PRL era. Among others, ages ago my friend and peer asked me if he should publish the story mentioned earlier, about various atrocities committed by certain AK soldiers-partisans-rebels. My answer was: no. It was a story about a Ukrainian crucified on a fence in Warsaw during the uprising. Aha! They had set fire underneath him... About

45 “At that time, “Barabasz” dismissed officer cadet “Marian” [Antoni Świtalski] from the unit; he was transferred, upon his own request, to the “Szary” [Antoni Heda’s] unit,” pp. 54–55.

46 Władysław Szumielewicz (see *ibid.*, p. 142), commander of the execution squad in Zagórze near Daleszyce.

47 Ryszard Maj’s testimony, recorded on September 9, 1957 in Sopot by Andrzej Ropelewski, two handwritten pages, copy in author’s archive (letter from AR to JTB from February 23, 2010). Andrzej Ropelewski was sending out other testimonies as well, e.g. that of Alina Ziemkiewiczowa, nee Kulesz, about the murder of a daughter of rich Jews from Ostrowiec; and Genowefa Mikołajczyk, who was hiding on the estate in Dębska Wola, teaching the children of Zygmunt Grabowiecki “Sęp”, commander of the AK Sub-district No. 1 – Klin. Nr 1 AK group “Klin”.

48 Zerubavel, Eviatar: *Elephant in the Room. Silence and Denial in Everyday Life*. Oxford University Press: Oxford 2006.

a German placed on an AK barricade as a “living shield”. Etc., etc. About the murder of a Jewish family in the Warsaw ghetto by the AK members. My fellow AK member was turning to me – an AK member. I thought that in the situation of terror and repression in our country, we mustn’t join the authors of communist propaganda, and support the persecution and smear campaigns. Not even by disclosing true information, which – and that was not difficult to predict – would be generalized and incorporated into the multitude of allegations. But now? In a Poland that’s stupefied and rotten, but free? All this time I keep thinking of the crimes against humanity, [against] “thy neighbor”. Is it permissible to write about it? – you ask rhetorically. It is necessary. No silence shall cover it up – that is my deep conviction. It has stopped covering it up already.”⁴⁹

Historian 1 reacted in a vein similar to Ficowski’s:

“I think that we should write about these things, and that we should firmly oppose all those who would like to prevent the uncomfortable facts from entering the collective consciousness. Maybe washing the dirty laundry would be damaging in communism, but these days?”

Historian 2 added:

“For me, the most depressing thing is the atmosphere that makes one, even after 60 years, afraid of an open discussion on this subject. On the other hand though, the archives have been opened and more and more information about the events from those or the postwar times can be found in the latest publications. Quite often they circulate only among a few specialists; but, as the debate about Jedwabne shows, they increasingly leak into the media, and through them into the general public opinion. Nowadays you can’t expect that embarrassing issues will remain secret forever.”

All the correspondents of Professor Ropelewski were touched by what they had read, although the information they had received was hardly news to some of them. “I have read it with concern”, “heartbreaking attachments”, “all the elements are horrifying”, “the issue is really dramatic” – they write. In essence, all but one (whose letter follows) expressed an opinion that “this [matter] should be clarified”. As far as I know, none of them, however, has taken up this topic; moreover, none of the AK historians from that milieu has done so either. This was probably due to the inconstancy of the author’s position since, being well aware of the consequences he had to face after the 1957 publication, he strove to remain anonymous⁵⁰.

49 Letter from Jerzy Ficowski to Andrzej Ropelewski from 2000.

50 As many as four of his correspondents have suggested that he reveal his identity in order to give credibility to his records. Initially, the holder of the testimonies also had reservations about the date of their publication.

Only one of them (Historian 3) had some reservations about publishing the testimony. This is his formulation:

“I have encountered the matter of the murders of Jews by AK elsewhere – my father, an AK member from [...], told me about the issuing of a specific order (it is not really clear by whom) and killing, in the spring of 1944, certain Jews who had been hiding for almost 4 years. So I know that there were such instances. Unlike Jerzy Ficowski, however, I shall not – at least not now – write about this topic. These matters raise strong emotions, and in my opinion, it is necessary to wait with their analysis. AK currently constitutes a kind of a myth or symbol. Another issue is the conceptualization of this problem: an article concentrating only on this type of issues will present a distorted picture, suggesting it was a dominant phenomenon. The matter is too controversial to be addressed without serious consideration. It also seems to me that publishing an article about this issue in a newspaper would be quite unfortunate, since the journalists, above all, crave a sensation, and they would gladly emphasize these details, which are particularly sensational, in order to increase sales. Meanwhile, this is an issue that needs to be given tranquil consideration in a professional journal.”

Two “phrases of obligation”

The question is: how is it possible that the testimony of Ryszard Maj, known to so many historians, has still not found its way into such a journal? The anthropological part of the answer could be based on Eviatar Zerubavel’s theory of social conspiracies⁵¹ and Jeffrey Olick’s cultural constraints⁵². However, the data we have can much better be explained by a simple, imaginative concept described in Jean-Francois Lyotard’s classic, *Le Différend*⁵³.

Lyotard argues that there are particular “phrases of obligation”, encoded in each cultural tradition. The Jewish tradition uses certain phrases, while the non-Jewish, or as Lyotard puts it, the “Aryan” tradition, uses different ones⁵⁴. Those phrases, which accentuate distinct values upheld in particular societies, give a voice to the “I” of the Kantian transcendental subject. By articulating a phrase of obligation, the transcendental subject not only imposes a certain

51 See Tokarska-Bakir, “Zmowa społeczna”, op. cit.

52 Olick, *Politics of Regret*, op. cit.

53 I discuss it based on Glowacka, Dorota: *Disappearing Traces: Holocaust Testimonials, Ethics, Aesthetics* (Stephen Weinstein Holocaust Series). University of Washington Press: Seattle 2012.

54 Lyotard, Jean-François: *Le Différend*. Minuit: Paris 1983, pp. 156, 160.

norm of behavior, but conforms to this norm⁵⁵. While the Jewish obligation is epitomized, according to Lyotard, by the exclamation *Zakhor!* (Hebrew for ‘remember’), the “Aryan” one is expressed in the “obligation of beautiful death”⁵⁶. This obligation is also one of the most important ones in the Polish cultural tradition⁵⁷. Much has been written about this ideal and its consequences by Maria Janion⁵⁸. It is the basis of the ethos of war, and all the veterans of every partisan unit in Poland take pride in it, *Wybranieccy* likewise⁵⁹.

If we place the testimony of Ryszard Maj in the context of the Polish “phrase of obligation”, we can gain an insight into the reasons why, in spite of repeated

55 Głowacka, Dorota: “Wysłuchując się w ciszę. Estetyka pamięci o Zagładzie wg. Jeana-François Lyotarda”. *Teksty Drugie* 1–2 (103–104), 2007, pp. 47–48.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 48. I use the quotation marks to indicate symbolic designata, imagined communities such as “Jews”, “Poles”, alternatively “Aryans”, not constituted by real persons, but by ideas of behavior ascribed to certain people. It is therefore a distribution type set (set of contents), not a collective one (set of individuals). Thus I use the category “Jews” with the meaning close to Lyotard’s in his *Heidegger and “the jews”*, *op. cit.*

57 In Greek thought, “beautiful death” was a transition between the finite (*eschaton*) and the eternal (*telos*). Eternal life could only be achieved through death by choice, which constitutes deliverance from death. Those who die for something that surpasses them – homeland, religion, country, nation – gain glory and eternal life. See Lyotard, *Le Différend*, pp. 149–150, and also Vernant, Jean-Pierre: *Mortals and Immortals*. Zeitlin, Froma I. (ed.). Princeton University Press: Princeton 1991, p. 50–75. One of the classic descriptions of the “Aryan beautiful death” in its Polish variation is connected with the death of Władysław Jasiński “Jędrus”: “Those who have seen a mortally wounded eagle; an image of a wounded lioness, carved into stone in ancient times; or a statue of a dying Celtic warrior, can understand the dramatic depths of mortal struggles in moments when there are still so many important things to do, but the strength is leaving too soon due to the blows. They will also understand, though, that other eagles will fly high in the sky, scores of lions will come out in the fields, and new warriors will join the struggle.” Gruszczynski, *Odwet-Jędrusie*, p. 112. The cult of “beautiful death” entails contempt for death that is un-beautiful, dishonorable, passive, see *ibid.*, p. 51: “Great numbers of Jews walked meekly, with minimum pressure from the Germans. How miserably they looked, those marches of doleful figures, with an omen of death in their eyes, gliding passively [...]”

58 Janion, Maria: *Bohater, spisek, śmierć. Wykłady żydowskie*. WAB: Warsaw 2009 (chapter *Śmierć godna i niegodna*).

59 “The core of the whole battalion are *Wybranieccy*, who constitute the 1st *Wybranieccy* Unit. It is a core of steel, formed by people with crystal-clear characters, with a great power of spirit and strong will to fight without rest until Victory,” Pawelec, Henryk et al.: *Wybranieccy*, Koło 4 PP Leg. AK: Kielce 1993.

efforts to publish it, such a testimony remains something unrevealable, something that cannot cross the boundary of social visibility (*non event*). This is due to a rare concentration of transgressions and reversals it contains.

- The most prominent one is that it is not the Jews but Poles, two esteemed AK veterans, who are fulfilling the “Jewish” obligation of remembering. Despite great personal costs⁶⁰, they demand that the truth about the murders be revealed.
- In the narrative they pass on, it is a Pole, not a Jew, that plays the role of a traitor – someone who kills in an un-beautiful way. He kills his fellow fighter – Roman Olizarowski “Pomsta”; Michał Ferenc, a Jew hiding under a false identity, working at a local government post in Zajęczków⁶¹; a Jewish family in a bunker near Mosty; Izaak Grynbaum in Chęciny; and also seven people hidden near Daleszyce.
- Moreover, those who die (un?)beautifully, at any rate a martyr’s death, are not ethnic Poles. They are Jewish, like Roman Olizarowski “Pomsta”, Michał Ferenc from Zajęczków, Izaak Grynbaum from Chęciny, the Zelinger family from Daleszyce, and the one in the bunker near Mosty.
- The only Pole that accompanies the Jews in their “(un?)beautiful death” is Stefan Sawa⁶². Shot dead by the Poles, he becomes a victim of the “Polish-Polish war over Jews”⁶³, a war that is usually referred to as exclusively Polish-German.
- There are more victims of this war. One of them is Sawa’s mother Michalina, who arrives at the ruins of the house near Daleszyce and, to the indignation of her neighbors, buries Polish and Jewish remains in one coffin⁶⁴. This act

60 On the price paid by the whistleblowers, see Zerubavel, *Elephant in the Room*, p. 56. On the price paid by Henryk Pawelec, who dared to confirm the crimes against the Jews committed by his detachment Wybranieccy, see p. 344.

61 For more on Michał Ferenc, see below.

62 There are also other Righteous ones in the background, e.g. “Grandpa” Kiciński, the guard at the Jewish cemetery, who provided a hiding place for Izaak Grynbaum’s family in a pit underneath his house. Their story is described in Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, op. cit.

63 See Chapter 2: *The Unrighteous Righteous and the Righteous Unrighteous* in this volume.

64 “The next day, Stefan Sawa’s mother [...] brought the remains of her murdered son Stefan, and the bones of the other murdered individuals of Jewish ethnicity to her apartment in Kielce in a coffin,” “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Florentyny Kobyłeckiej”, WUBP Kielce, January 22, 1951, IPN GK 306/44, p. 29.

of a bereaved mother who, having accepted her son's choice, does not segregate the dead either, is without precedent from the Polish, as well as from the Jewish viewpoint⁶⁵. The neighbors laugh at Sawina, who "lights candles" every day, praying over "Jewish bones"⁶⁶.

- The reversals are completed by information from other sources about Salomon Zelinger, the father⁶⁷ of Zofia Zelinger, who fought as an AK soldier in the Warsaw Uprising half a year after the murder of his family by AK⁶⁸.

Analyzing the event in Daleszyce, mentioned in the first sentence of Maj's testimony, it is evident that in relation to the respective phrases of obligation, all the symbolic positions have been reversed: the Poles are "Jews", the Jews – "Poles".

65 Compare the testimony about the posthumous separation, by Polish neighbors, into two different graves the remains of the Righteous ones from Podkarpacie, the famous Ulms from Ciepielów, from the Jewish family they had been sheltering. See Henryk Scharf's testimony, AŻIH 301/17 on the Sandomierz rabbi's requesting the [German] gendarmes to separate the graves of Jews and non-Jews after execution.

66 "It was at about that time that Marasek Władysław [a "Barabasz" partisan, one of the members of the execution squad in Zagórze] came into the apartment, and in my presence started telling his mother, Maria, that Sawa Michalina had collected the Jewish bones, brought them home in a casket, lit candles, and was now praying over them," "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Florentyny Kobyłeckiej", WUBP Kielce, 22/1/1951, IPN GK 306/44, k. 29–30.

67 See Karolczak, *Duchy i upiory*, op. cit.

68 Henryk Cwi Zelinger's testimony at Yad Vashem on January 21, 1990, attached to the file of Stefan Sawa, the Righteous among the Nations: "In the middle of 1943, it has become increasingly difficult for my father to take care of me in Warsaw, and he tried to have me moved into that house, where I would be able to hide. He sent me to Kielce by train, and I was collected from the station by a man from the AK underground, of which my father also was a member. I don't remember that man's surname. He had been hiding me in his house for a few days, until he found a way of transporting me to the safehouse. I stayed there for a few days, and got to know all its inhabitants. But a Polish woman called Lodzia was against my stay there, and she tried to make me leave. Without any explanation, she sent me back to the man who had brought me, and he put me on a train to Warsaw, to go back to my father. It seems that being kicked out of that house saved my life. Nobody wanted to keep me. Even the man with whom my father was in touch couldn't. And so I remained in Warsaw. The fire happened on February 16, 1944. At that time, my father and I were in Warsaw. After not receiving any news from that house for quite a while, my father started to get worried. With the help of the Warsaw AK underground, he contacted the AK underground in Kielce, and got to know that the house had been burned and nobody had survived".

In the “Polish” phrase of obligation, the element of loyalty and treason is the most important one. It constitutes a construction axis of the ideal of beautiful death, and at the same time, the easiest, ritual explanation of all the un-beautiful killings. Only treason can justify the killing of a brother-in-arms, a child, or a woman⁶⁹. That is why it is so often used to justify the killings:

- Stefan Sawa, who had been blackmailed for sheltering Jews by, among others, a municipal council official in Daleszyce⁷⁰, was shot dead by an AK unit on the charges of being a Gestapo informer⁷¹. The sentence, the existence of which

69 See the recurring motif of Gruszczyński's *Odwet-Jędrusie*, p. 71, original spelling: “The national minority of the creed of Moses, which constituted almost 11% of the population, showed a decidedly hostile attitude toward Poles and our struggle [...] [author gives the evidence: cooperation with the Soviets, organization of transports, “anti-Polish propaganda, and anti-national activities”, etc.] Those jews who had emigrated shirked from their civil duties [...] [he lists: evading service in the Polish military, desertions from the Anders Army, “estrangement and disloyalty”]. In the territory of Generalna Gubernia, they routinely betrayed the Poles to the Germans. Serving the German police to the detriment of the Polish population [...] were organizations such as: Towarzystwo Wolnych Żydów – led by Capt. Lontski, Żydowska Gwardia Wolności ”Żagiew” – led by Adam Szajna, the ”Zemsta” troops in Lubelskie”. On the “sabotage intelligence organization ‘Żagiew’, sometimes using the name ‘Żydowska Gwardia Wolności,’” see also Wilamowski, Jacek: *Honor, zdrada, kaźń. Afery Polski Podziemnej 1939–1945*. CB: Warsaw 1999, pp. 117, 119. On the harmfulness of such rumors, spread also by e.g. GL, see Chodakiewicz, Marek J. et al.: *Tajne oblicze GLAL i PPR II*. Burchard Edition: Warsaw 1997/1999, pp. 211–212.

70 ”One time, when [my son] was at my house, he told me that [...] Posiewicz Stanisław, a council official in Daleszyce, often came to his house and asked him to lend him money,” that ”partisans armed with various weapons often come over, asking for money, protection money it seemed,” “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Michaliny Sawy”, WUBP Kielce, December 9, 1950, IPN GK 306/24, k. 57.

71 Henryk Pawelec: “One thing is clear: there must have been an informer in that house,” cited in Karolczak *Duchy i upiory*, op. cit.

is doubted by some⁷², was supposed to be issued by the Kielce branch of the Special Civilian Court⁷³.

- Edward Skrobot on Pomsta's murder: "In the month of February 1944 (...) I was stationed together with my whole AK group in the village of Mosty, Korzec municipality [in fact Konecko], Kielce county. At that time a member of AK – "Górnik" – from my group came up to me and said there was one more piece of dirt that needed cleaning up. When I asked what kind of dirt it was, he told me that a member of my group, "Pomsta", had to be eliminated, as he was a Jew and had been sentenced. "Górnik" showed me the judgment in the presence of Wilczyński Marian "Grom", alternatively in the presence of Molenda Józef "Iskra", or Masio Tadeusz "Matros". Not believing that "Pomsta" is a Jew, I assembled the whole group and under the pretext of a venereal disease check-up I examined all the AK members. During the check-up, based upon the examination of the penis, I realized that "Pomsta" was a Jew⁷⁴. "(...) In Pomsta's death sentence [...] it said that "Pomsta" [had deserted] Jacek's unit, to which he had formerly belonged"⁷⁵.

72 "In a way, this matter was a crime, not a heroic deed, and I'm sure the Sub-district command didn't know about it. I also think that "Barabasz" committed this murder of his own accord," "Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej", WUBP Kielce, December 9, 1950, IPN, GK 306/24, k. 226. L. Wrońska "Ewa" was from the autumn of 1943 until July 1944 a member of the "Barabasz" unit, acting as a liaison officer with the Sub-district command of AK. See Sołtysiak, *Chłopcy „Barabasza”*, p. 45. She is also mentioned by e.g. Michał Basa "Mściciel", a *Wybraniec* fighter; see his *Opowiadania partyzanta*. Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza: Warsaw 1984, pp. 153, 191 etc.

73 Marian Sołtysiak: "I got the order to eliminate the group of people in Zagórze in autumn 1943 from the execution centre of Section II. There was a note attached to the order, saying that I could get more information from the local order issued by Section II," Sąd Wojewódzki w Kielcach, "Protokół rozprawy głównej", September 13, 1951, IPN GK 306/44, k. 143.

74 "Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Edwarda Skroboty", January 24, 1951, IPN BU 0418/368, t. 3, k. 49.

75 "Sentencja Wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach", 23.11.1951, catalog number IPN BU 0418/368, t.3, k. 107. The suggestion of treason in this statement is pure insinuation. The memoirs of Michał Basa (*Opowiadania partyzanta*, pp. 128, 138–141, 167), who mentions "Pomsta" several times, show that he belonged to the radio station protection unit led by second lieutenant Jan Kosiński – inspector "Jacek", Sub-district commander from Bodzentyn (see Chlebowski, Cezary: *Pozdrówcie Góry Świętokrzyskie*. Czytelnik: Warsaw 1993, p. 262). After their commander's death and the dissolution of the unit, Basa, along with "Pomsta", joined *Wybraniec*.

- Edward Skrobot on the murder of Michał Ferenc in Zajączków: “Then, during the course of our talk with the mayor, I got to know that Ferenc was a Jew. Still not believing that, I took Ferenc to a separate room, where I examined his penis, and it turned out that Ferenc really was a Jew. After examining Ferenc, I started asking him if he was a German collaborator, and Ferenc explained that he wasn’t, but the man known as “Kalif” (...) kept assuring me that he was a German collaborator. After Kalif’s statement I ordered the sentence to be carried out on Ferenc.”⁷⁶

The confession of Władysław Szumielewicz is very telling, relating that upon arrival at the place of execution in Daleszyce, the unit brought with them a peasant wagon, on which they piled up the post-Jewish possessions⁷⁷. The way Skrobot talks about the allegations against Olizarowski and Ferenc unmasks him to no lesser degree than the testimonies of his colleagues do⁷⁸. It questions not only the thoroughness of carrying out orders, but also the alleged orders themselves.

It has never been clarified what, if any, were the orders of Section II in the cases mentioned above, although the defendants referred to it even in the situations of evident looting (Chęciny and Sitkówka⁷⁹). Let us now read Henryk Pawelec’s statement cited in the footnote⁸⁰, about the “infallibility of the provisional courts”⁸¹. Let

76 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Skroboty Edwarda”, Kielce, January 24, 1951, catalogue number IPN BU 0418/368, t. 3, k. 49.

77 “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Władysława Szumielewicza”, WUBP Kielce, IPN GK 306/44, k. 46. Concerning the expression *pożydowskie*, see Gross, Jan T. / Grudzińska-Gross, Irena: *Złote żniwa. Opowieść o obrzeżach Zagłady*. Znak: Kraków 2011, p. 146, footnote 131.

78 ”I have heard about this murder from “Wierny”, that he had recognized him [about Michał Ferenc] by his penis, that he was circumcised,” “Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bolesława Boczarskiego”, WUBP Kielce, January 16, 1951, IPN GK 306/24, k. 104.

79 See e.g. ”At that time, as a group leader I decided to carry out the orders issued by Section II, which had been passed on to me by “Barabasz”, the unit commander, and the order was that certain inhabitants of Chęciny, whose last names I don’t remember, have some post-Jewish things, which things I was supposed to collect,” “Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Skroboty Edwarda”, March 14, 1951, AIPN GK 306/48, k. 18.

80 Henryk Pawelec: ”The sentences [handed down] by the Special Military Court of Underground Poland were faultless. They were issued by great, scrupulous lawyers. Based on facts. I’ve seen these sentences. They dotted all the i’s and crossed all the t’s,” quoted in Karolczak, *Duchy i upiory*, op. cit.

81 Based on “Przepisy materialne z maja roku 1940”, the provisional courts put on the death row solely persons who, “in an inhumane way, contradictory to the natural

us consider the function of such a belief. The reason why it was useful to Henryk Pawelec, during the war a member of an execution group, is clear. But how does it serve contemporary historians, who still defend those judgments tooth and nail⁸²?

It is connected with the question of the social conditioning of knowledge, specifically, to whom and what should a contemporary Polish historian be loyal? The year 2010 saw the publication of Stefan Dąbmski's renowned book *Egzekutor*⁸³. The book, written by a member of a special assignments group that carried out the death sentences of the provisional AK courts, constitutes a warning against "laudable violence", against killing upon order, which had destroyed the author's life. This is its message:

"These days, nobody wants to accept the responsibility for the complete fiasco of our wartime activities; the current "activists" prefer to falsify history and bleach everything in an unbelievable way, rather than to shed light on real events and to warn the next generations against making a similar mistake. (...) When a child is taught from its early years that Homeland is the most important thing, and that we should fight for it with our enemies until death or victory, that child, when it grows up, will fight when ordered to and shoot anyone who has different opinions or is of another nationality."⁸⁴

A completely different conclusion is drawn from Dąbmski's narrative by the historian who answers a journalist's question "Can this book hurt the image of AK?" with: "Dąbmski's story (...) confirms the immense discipline of the underground army. In the vast majority of murders he committed, he was carrying out orders, undoubtedly based on an underground court sentence. Anarchy was exceptional. (...) If other underground executioners were indeed just as disciplined, we can be proud of AK."⁸⁵

feeling of justice, persecute or harm Polish people" (quoted in Gondek, Leszek: *Polska karząca 1939–1945. Podziemny wymiar sprawiedliwości w okresie okupacji niemieckiej*. PAX: Warsaw 1988, p. 152). Clearly, these regulations did not pertain to "citizens of Poland with other than Polish ethnicity."

82 "None of the sentences of the underground Poland have ever been effectively challenged in court, not even in the favorable political atmosphere of the first post-war decade," Gondek, *Polska karząca 1939–1945*, p. 14.

83 Dąbmski, Stefan: *Egzekutor*. Ośrodek Karta: Warsaw 2010.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

85 Lipiński, Piotr: "Przemoc chwalebna. Z Dariuszem Stołą rozmawia Piotr Lipiński". *Duży Format* 31.10.2010, retrieved 18.1.2012, from http://wyborcza.pl/2029020,75480,8570820.html?sms_code.

Did this historian read the same book? Did he peruse the descriptions of rapes on Ukrainian women, murders “for fun”⁸⁶, with a shocking commentary⁸⁷ of the author? Being proud of a situation in which the author’s troubled entity almost disintegrates in front of the reader’s eyes begs the question as to what this historian draws satisfaction from. What and who does he have to – even inside himself – neglect, ignore, silence, in order to feel such “pride”? On behalf of whom does he speak when he says “we”? How does that relate to the explicit warning in the book against “the things that a human – a young, patriotically brought-up European from a good family – is capable of in times of war”⁸⁸? If even such a book as *Egzekutor* does not shatter neither the historian’s wellbeing, nor his faith in the proper functioning of “*Polska karząca*”, can anything at all do?

In his *Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant described pathos as an element that unites, edifies and elevates the subject. In his *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, Jean-Francois Lyotard challenged this interpretation, perceiving it as somehow against the letter of the German philosopher. In certain conditions pathos works as an element that disturbs the architectural construction of reason, and causes “rupture inside the subject”⁸⁹. I am thinking of this rupture when – in the context of Dąbmski’s book – I read of being proud about the discipline inside AK, or when I juxtapose the sentence “drunk, we were splitting the diamonds” from Maj’s narrative with an educational project “On the Trail of Colonel Barabasz” implemented in the Kielce Land⁹⁰.

Pride and pathos are the elements of high style, which is not conducive to the history of weighted arguments. A story written in this style is in literary science called a *redemptive narrative*⁹¹. It seeks the feeling of togetherness rather than the ideal of historical truth. The closure in such a story is reached by marginalizing

86 Dąbmski, *Egzekutor*, e.g. pp. 80–85.

87 “We were bound to blind obedience, connected with innate patriotism [...]. But in reality, as long as he was alive, [the person] often murdered everyone who wasn’t on his side or didn’t agree with his ideas – with the full approval of our command,” *ibid.*, p. 104.

88 *Ibid.*

89 Głowacka, “Wysłuchując się w ciszę”, p. 44.

90 See *Szlakiem pułkownika «Barabasza»*. *Międzyszkolny projekt edukacyjny*, retrieved 18.1.2012, from http://spolozno.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=364:rajd-szlakiem-pukownika-mariana-sotyasiaka-barabasza-&catid=38:imprezy&Itemid=119...

91 For the topic of redemptive narrative, see Goldberg, Amos: *Redemptive Narratives*, retrieved 18.1.2012, from http://yad-vashem.org.il/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203870.pdf.

certain groups, and sacrificing voices “on the altar of the cause”. Until Polish historians become aware of the various social loyalties they serve by eliminating testimonies – such as that of Ryszard Maj – they will mechanically reproduce the Polish redemptive narrative. Doing that, they stand guard to schematic and false “phrases of obligation” that only they could disavow.

List of previously published papers

Chapter One

This chapter was first published in English as “The Polish underground organization *Wolność i Niezawisłość* and anti-Jewish pogroms, 1945–6” in *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 51(2): 2017, pp. 111–136, DOI: 10.1080/0031322X.2017.1304689.

Chapter Two

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Chapter Three

This chapter was first published in English as “An AL Unit and Its Attitude toward Jews: The Trial of Tadeusz Maj,” in *Yad Vashem Studies* 40(1): 2012, pp. 75–118.

Chapter Four

This chapter was first published in English as “Ethnographic Findings on the Aftermath of the Holocaust through Jewish and Polish Eyes,” in *Jewish Presence in Absence: The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland, 1944–2010*, Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (eds.), Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 2014, pp. 897–946.

Chapter Six

This chapter was first published in English as “The Figure of the Bloodsucker in Polish Religious, National and Left-Wing Discourse, 1945–1946: A Study in Historical Anthropology,” in *Dapim. Studies on the Holocaust*, The Institute for the Holocaust Research, University of Haifa (Israel), vol. 27: 2013, pp. 75–106.

Chapter Seven

This chapter was previously published in English as “Cries of the Mob in the Pogroms in Rzeszow (June 1945), Krakow (August 1945), and Kielce (July 1946) as a Source for the State of Mind of the Participants,” in *The Holocaust in Occupied Poland: New Findings and New Interpretations*, Jan Tomasz Gross (ed.), Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2012.

Chapter Eight

This chapter was first published in English as “*Communitas* of Violence: The Kielce Pogrom as a Social Drama,” in *Yad Vashem Studies* 41(1): 2013, pp. 23–62.

Appendix

Chapter 1. The Polish Underground Organization *Wolność i Niezawisłość* and Anti-Jewish Pogroms, 1945–1946.

WiN, file 7, c. 205, scan 3717–3721

“X. [October] 45. Informer No. 2¹

2. National minorities: repatriation

One of the things that the USSR does is to take advantage of national minorities for political goals. Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians in the East, Czechs and Slovaks in the South, Germans in the West and Jews in our own country are being turned against us. In the first three cases, the goal is to shift our borders to take away our land, set us against our neighbours (Czechs and Slovaks), with whom we have every possibility of conducting international affairs, against nations that have been integrated with our country for centuries and whose separateness harks back only to the time of Catherine II's intrigues. The Soviets intend to undermine our legal position concerning the Regained Territories in western Poland by acting in a two-faced manner towards the Germans. Finally, they wish to spread chaos within the country by using Jews, by provoking and exploiting [anti-Jewish] incidents against our nation and on the international scene. While we would like to be understanding towards the Jews and while we have no interest in fuelling antisemitism, we cannot turn a blind eye to what is, to say the least, a dishonest and destructive attitude on the part of the Jews in our society. During the German occupation, the Jews constituted the majority of G[esta]po's informers. Today, Jews also make up the core of the informers of the NKWD and its affiliate, the UBP [Office of Public Security], holding executive positions in both organizations. Jews take the filthiest of jobs, work for our enemies and occupy well-paid positions in commerce and industry, thus ruining the economy. They spread confusion and wreak havoc in all spheres and even go so far as to commit brutal murders, since they are confident that the almighty NKWD will defend them if need be.

On 11 June this year [1945] in a Jewish rabbi's cellar in Tannenbaum Street in Rzeszów, the rabbi, dressed in a bloodstained white smock, was caught red-handed

1 This document has been translated by Bartłomiej Sokół, Patrick Fox and Maciej Rataj.

next to the body of a girl (Bronisława Madoń [that is, Bronisława Mendoń²]) who was hanging upside down. Alarmed by the scene, a MO patrol passing by also discovered body parts belonging to sixteen people. When interrogated, the rabbi admitted that the body parts were remains of sixteen children. However, he claimed that he had not committed transfusion murder, but that the Jewish nation had suffered great loss and thus many of its prominent members needed to be nourished with human blood that could be obtained by this means. Having heard what had happened, other people attacked the Jews: they carried out the pogrom. Meanwhile, the NKWD and UB became involved in the affair. The Jews were defended, gathered in one place and transported westwards with a convoy. The entire MO patrol that conducted the first investigation was arrested and disappeared without trace³. The witnesses of the incident in the cellar were also arrested.

The NKWD used the chance discovery of the transfusion murders in Rzeszów as an opportunity, once again, to exploit anti-Jewish feeling. Hence, the NKWD staged incidents in Kraków (on 11 August [1945]), which were preceded by others in Tarnów (beating up Jews passing through a railway station) and Rabka (throwing a grenade into a Jewish orphanage⁴). These actions were aimed at: a) proving to other nations that the presence of Russian [Soviet] security forces on Polish soil was necessary; and b) forcing [the Polish government] Jews to leave Poland. The incidents [in Kraków] unfolded as follows. The first news of the children's bodies came from a boy who had run out of the aforementioned synagogue,⁵ crying that Jews were murdering children. Interrogated at a MO station the boy testified that a stranger had told him to deliver a parcel to the

2 Bronia Mendoń- a nine-year-old girl whose body was found in the cellar of the house at 12 Tannenbaum Street in Rzeszów (currently named Okrzeja Street. The body bore traces of having been raped, which gave rise to the rumor of an alleged ritual murder committed by Jews. The rumor triggered the Rzeszów pogrom, which took place on 11–12 June 1945. See: Jan Tomasz Gross, *Fear*; Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga* and investigation documents in Krzysztof Kaczmarski, *Pogrom, którego nie było*.

3 The names of the officers in the patrol are available in the investigation documents published in Kaczmarski, *Pogrom, którego nie było*. Thanks to partially preserved archived files of the investigation, it is possible to reconstruct the story of at least some of the officers involved.

4 The claim that these events were staged by the NKWD is false. For details, see Karolina Panz, “Dlaczego oni, którzy tyle przecierpieli i przetrzymali, musieli zginąć? Żydowskie ofiary zbrojnej przemocy na Podhalu w latach 1945–1947”, *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały*, no. 11, 2015 (Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów 2015), 33–89.

5 The wording suggests that the text is a compilation of several reports: no synagogue in Kraków had been mentioned previously. In the text, there are also contradictory views

synagogue at 27 Miodowa Street. Having been given the parcel, he delivered it to the address indicated, and that was where he found the body. The boy disappeared without trace,⁶ and presumably so did all the reports written unwisely by police agents who were unaware of what was going on, reports that showed Bielecki in a bad light. On the other hand, the reports that appeared in *Dziennik Polski* on 12 August [1945] indicated that the incidents were provoked by the Reichsdeutsch [German citizen living within the German Reich] Schulze and Volksdeutsch [ethnic German] Michniok; however, this version was completely ignored by the provincial UBP commander Major Bielecki. Bielecki made up a different version and, at the request of Minister Rabanowicz,⁷ told the press that a group of thugs had thrown stones at the synagogue, which gave rise to the subsequent incidents. On 11 August [1945], the forensic investigators did not attend the scene of the incident, and were not informed about the incident until 15 August. When an officer from the Military Prosecutor's Office went to see Major Bielecki, he was told to leave. It was only after a few days that the investigating authorities made enquiries about the incident at the headquarters of the MO and security [UB]. They had not yet begun an investigation into the affair, which remained entirely in the hands of the NKWD and the security service.

On the critical day, at around 4 p.m., at the time when Miodowa Street had been completely cleared of passers-by, peddlers and onlookers, and when it was closed to traffic, a fire broke out in the aforementioned synagogue. This is how the absurd rumours about ritual murders gained credence, and all evidence of the alleged incident was destroyed. The order to use military forces on that day was given by Lt. Artishin (Soviet officer of the MO and [reinforcement] in⁸ the DOW [Donskoy Military District]; it was sent to the commander of the 56th Infantry Regiment and to the commander of the Officer School. In addition, the 1st Motorized Regiment of Internal Troops was mobilized. According to a statement by Lt. Artishin, he was asked to issue the mentioned order by Major Bielecki. There were contradictory orders and, thus, contradictions in the operation of

on the existence of the so-called "ritual murders". This in turn is further evidence that the text is a compilation of different reports.

- 6 The boy's name was Antoś Nijaki, and he was interrogated by the MO, see the interrogation report of the witness Antoni Nijaki at the Provincial Office of Public Security in Kraków, 14 August 1945, in Żaryn, Bukowski and Jakonwski (eds.) *Wokół pogrom kieleckiego*, vol. 2, 361; see also Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945*.
- 7 Jan Rabanowski was Minister of Communication in Provisional Government of National Unity (1945–1947).
- 8 I have not managed to decipher details of Artishin's military rank.

particular organizations. On that day, the MO commander Major Gruda gave two orders: 1) to arrest the Jews and use arms if they tried to run away or actively resist; 2) to protect the Jews, arrest the demonstrators, and do as above if they ran away or actively resisted. Officers of the Red Army defended the Jews and forbade the police from shooting at them, while ordinary soldiers behaved aggressively towards Jews, both civilians and police, by beating and injuring them: near the synagogue, for example, they stabbed a Jewish police officer with a knife.

On 11 August, at around 8 p.m., a lecture by Prof. Walery Goetel, entitled *Berlin i konferencja poczdamska* [Berlin and the Potsdam Conference] was interrupted by Minister Bieńkowski⁹, who poured scorn on the incidents of that day as examples of antisemitism, stupidity and barbarism, placing the blame on the citizens of Kraków. Bieńkowski also said that the issue would reverberate not only in Poland but also abroad. What needs to be explained at this point is that such a firm public statement made by a government member was neither based on the findings of the investigation nor consistent with the first statement given to the press by the WUBP [Voivodship Office for Public Security], according to which the crime had been perpetrated by two Germans. The statement could not have been based on the opinion of the Provincial Governor since, until 14 August, no authority officially informed the Provincial Office about the incidents that had taken place on Saturday (around noon on 11 August, the Provincial Office received a phone call from a rabbi asking for help). Bieńkowski's statement was not a private statement either; hence it must have been prepared in advance. Another statement released by four political parties, which condemned the 'antisemitic incidents' of 11 August and was published in the press, on flyers and on posters – which was, for the same reasons as those mentioned above, neither factual nor even an expression of the opinions of all or even the majority of the members of those parties – was also ordered from above. Likewise, the protest rallies were staged, and Major Bielecki did not hesitate to contact unions, universities and youth organizations and order them to issue their own statements condemning the 'antisemitic incidents' of 11 August 1945.

The events began with incidents in Rzeszów, Tarnów, Rabka and Kraków. Here, a rumor about ritual murder was spread by a boy, and the anti-Jewish 'hate campaign' was hugely exaggerated. It involved the military and biased, thinly disguised 'explanations' by Bieńkowski, Rabanowicz, Bielecki, Putrament, Frueling and Balicki. The prosecutor and forensic investigators were not permitted

9 Władysław Bieńkowski had no ministerial function in the Provisional Government of National Unity 1945–1947.

to attend the scene of the incident. Evidence was destroyed and inconvenient witnesses removed, the main links to the staged incidents, behind all of which loomed the shadow of the NKWD. Lt. Józef Bilek (pseudonym 'Sitacz', family name Izaak Feiler, resident in Kraków, 4 Batory Street), a WUBP officer, declared that the incidents of 11 August during that year had been staged and ordered by the NKWD. The order was executed by the WUBP and the Jews serving in the NKWD. The date of the action was chosen so that it would coincide with the American Jewish Congress in Washington, D.C. According to Feiler, the goal was to influence public opinion abroad to facilitate the Jews' emigration from Poland. The provocation was organized carelessly enough for traces of the murder of children to be discovered at the synagogue in Miodowa Street. Apart from the aforementioned testimony given by the boy, the same was confirmed by a 'board' consisting of two doctors (a man and woman from the Soviet Union), who were at the scene before the synagogue was burned. The female doctor told one of the Soviet soldiers that there had been bodies of children in the synagogue but she was not able to report that because the leadership of the NKWD were all *Yevreys* [Russian for 'Jews']. Moreover, on 14 August [1945] a Jewish woman by the name of Kleinbergowa confessed to Stanisław Dobrowolski, the owner of a shop selling electrical goods at 5 Stradom Street, that 'bodies of children' had indeed been at the Synagogue, but they had been left there by Poles. Kleinbergowa repeated her claim several times. Dobrowolski was ready to testify to that effect under oath. On 17 August [1945], around 10 p.m., Dobrowolski's apartment was raided by a group of men wearing Soviet uniforms who were later described by witnesses as 'having Jewish-looking faces'. Dobrowolski himself was shot and grievously wounded. Transported to the hospital in a serious condition, he did not regain consciousness and died the following day. Meanwhile, an unknown Jewish-looking man arrived at the hospital and enquired about Dobrowolski's health.

The provisional authorities also tried to incite riots in smaller places. Posters and flyers provoking anti-Jewish aggression appeared in many towns. For example, it was discovered that the Head of the National Office for Propaganda in the Jasło District ordered the inconspicuous hanging of posters that threatened Jews with repression unless they left the district as soon as possible.¹⁰ This provocation, like all the others, was aimed at underground organizations. Alarmed by the events, Jews addressed the provisional authorities, though it was in vain, and,

10 Similar posters were notoriously put up, for example, in Jedlińsk, Białobrzegi and Radom.

following the incidents in Kraków, they presented 'Der Bericht'¹¹ [a report] to two Jews from 'Jodut'¹² (its main office in the United States), written by the Provincial Jewish Committee in Kraków. The deceitful 'Bericht' was written in German and described the incidents as Major Bielecki described them: 'Unarmed and armed police, soldiers, railway workers and scouts first attacked the Jewish shelter at 26 Miodowa Street and the Jewish Student Dormitory at 23 Przemyska Street. Both houses were inhabited by Jews who had returned to Kraków from concentration camps over recent weeks. Those poor people were severely beaten up, and their belongings were stolen.' The was seen by several eye-witnesses: Schmerl Landau, Sara Landau, Tema Landau, Samuel Pinkholz, Israel Duka, Izrael Dukatenaehler, Meschulem Markus, Hela Lederman, Sala Selwer, Cesia Warm, Miriam Sack, Baruch -Langleben, Simon Bochner and Renia Hiler, residing at 26 Miodowa Street. The witnesses Henoeh Meiteles, residing at 27 Józef Street in Kraków, Doctor Emil Rozezweig residing at 30 Starowiślana Street Apt. 10 in Kraków, and Henryk Kwaśniewski residing at 21 Kawaleryjska Street Apt. 22 in Kraków, all testified that they had been threatened with revolvers and axes by an angry mob who kept shouting: 'Hands up! We will cut all everyone's heads off!' However, they did not decapitate anyone: all they did was to rob, and demand vodka, sausage, pickles, tea and cigarettes. 'Der Bericht' went on to describe incidents that took place in the countryside. 'The witness Efaim Pollak, residing in Niepołomice, said that, on Sunday 12 August, railroad guards at the train station Podłęże asked for his identification papers and hew was consequently late for his train. The last two Jewish families in Niepołomice were robbed. One of the Jews, called Efarim Pollak, lived with his aunt Hudessa Nussenbaum. Two weeks before, he had returned from the concentration camp in Theresienstadt (Czechoslovakia) and the following week he had been robbed of all his belongings, i.e. a suitcase with its contents and 800 zlotys. Another Jew, called Mordka Feig, had his apartment broken into and pillaged. The culprits were unarmed and said they were so-called 'boys from the woods.' Hence they were probably members of the Home Army, which was being tracked down by the authorities. Berta Weg, Head of the Jewish Committee of Gorlice, testified as follows: 'She purchased 1,000 kg

11 *Bericht* (German for 'report'), a text entitled "Report from Anti-Jewish Incidents in Kraków on August 11th and 12th": National Archives in Kraków, WiN 42, c. 33–34. The document is labeled in the archives as "Appendix 5", and was probably compiled by someone from the Jewish Historical Commission after the pogrom in Kraków and possibly passed on to a foreign delegation.

12 Possibly the name of the American Joint (Joint Distribution Committee), wrongly deciphered from the quoted report.

of wheat flour for a Jewish dining hall in Gorlice. The flour had been bought by Izaak Wild on her behalf, who had also kept it at his place. At, Wild was arrested by Security Office officers, who appropriated the flour and refused to give it back to its rightful owner despite pleas on the part of the Starosty Head and the War Commander of Gorlice. Izaak Wild was 'released after four days'. Despite lacking substantial evidence, the Jews described the 'anti-Jewish' movement in Poland in a naively malicious manner. Written by the Provincial Jewish Committee in Kraków and handed to the delegates from 'Jodut', without informing or consulting the Polish administrative authorities, 'Der Bericht' was effective. Jews were allowed to emigrate (20,000 people at first) and received money and advice. In their place, 280,000 Jews arrived from Russia, including four convoys of 2,400 people who arrived in Poland in the last days of August (...)"

1. Lejb Zylberberg, A Jew from Klimontów tells his Story,¹³ first translated from Yiddish into Polish by Sara Arm.
2. Mordechaj Pencziner, The Slaughter of Klimontów,¹⁴ first translated from Yiddish into Polish by Aleksandra Geller.
3. Arele Sztarkman, Opatów, My Experience from 1939 to 1945,¹⁵ first translated from Yiddish into Polish by Sara Arm.
4. Henryk Zvi Zelinger's testimony, deposited at Yad Vashem in 1993, first translated from Hebrew into Polish by Zuzanna Radzik.

1947, Łódź

A Jew from Klimontów tells his Story; selected excerpts

Chapter 4. Jewish police

p. 25 –

On 25 December 1941, the Germans issued an order demanding that Jews hand over their furs. These orders stated that failure to hand over furs was punishable by death.

13 Lejb Zylberberg, *A Jid fun Klementov dercejlt* [A Jew from Klimontów tells his story], Warsaw/Łódź, 1947. In all the texts included in the Appendix, original spellings have been retained, except in cases where names have evidently been distorted.

14 *YIVO Bleter*, vol. 30, 1 (1947). This testimony is also held in the Yad Vashem archive, YV, File M-1/E.1115.

15 Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, file no. 302/87.

Immediately, the Jewish police, together with Kozłowski, the same Polish policeman who had robbed some Jews, attacked Mosze Terkeltojb, ripping his furs off his back before badly beating him up. The same day, the chairman of the Judenrat, Szuldman, together with Pająk, the commander of the Polish police, ordered the Jewish population to gather in the yard of the synagogue. Both demanded that the Jews hand over their furs.

Chapter 5. It begins

pp. 47–48

On Saturday 31 October 1942 a Jew who had escaped transportation came running over together with another Jew, Berisz Bojm, who had managed to escape from the village of Złota near Sandomierz. They told us that the Germans were organizing transportations of Jews throughout the area. Berisz Bojm then hid amongst the Polish population until Polish Home Army (AK) soldiers found out about him. They demanded that he show them where he had hidden his goods and machinery. They shot him after he had handed everything over to them.

[...]

p. 48

[...] We were made to work sorting Jewish possessions that the Germans then sold cheaply at an auction. The urban and rural Polish populations ended up engaging in fierce competition to ensure that the villagers did not buy the better-quality items. The Germans issued an order forbidding entry into Jewish homes. A Polish woman from the village of Konary who entered a Jewish home was shot dead on the spot by the German gendarme Tajzer.

Some of us started preparing to escape. The first to escape were Abraham Złotnicki, Mietek Apelbojm, and Icze Wajsbrod. Mietek Apebojm returned after two days because he had found nowhere to hide [...] He left the block at night. He was given shelter by a girl, a Gentile. He married her and is alive.

Chapter 6. In Sandomierz

p. 50 –

[...] In the block there were Jews who were hiding from deportation. Among them was a lost young boy named Alter[ek].

His parents had been sent to the camp in Mielec. Before they left they handed their child over to some Poles.

Regardless of the fact that they had received a significant fortune from the boy's parents, they nevertheless brought him back to the Ordnungspolizei

headquarters). The child tried to save himself. As soon as he heard the gendarmes coming, he would hide under the bed. Then he would return to us late at night.

p. 51

[...] The firemen in Sandomierz were actively searching for Jews who were in hiding. If they found anyone, they would shoot on sight.

Chapter 7. Ordnungspolizei

p. 61 –

[...] Those of us who remained in the ghetto continued to plot our escape. Some younger people decided to acquire weapons. They got in touch with a Pole whom they sent to Staszów to get weapons for them. It was this Pole who then turned them in to the German gendarmerie.

p. 64 –

[...] Genia Kłos from Sandomierz was loved by the whole town. She helped Jews who were hiding in various villages, while bringing money and letters to others. She was on good terms with the peasants. She got many Jews jobs in Polish workplaces. Her father was a farmhand. She came from a family of ordinary rural folk. One day a Polish policeman, who was responsible for the loss of many Jewish lives, recognized her and shot her dead.

Chapter 10. Pionki

p. 76 –

[...] Suddenly two Poles appeared before us in the forest, one was older and the other younger, thirteen years old. He said to us, 'Are you from the ghetto? (the Poles called our camp the ghetto). It was obvious that there was no point in denying it because Jews were not allowed to move freely outside the camp. In order to mollify him, we suggested that he could guide us in return for a reward. He demanded 3000 zlotys and said that if we didn't want to accept his assistance then he would show us the easiest place to get through the barbed wire but for this he didn't want anything from us. Meanwhile, the three Jews who had been accompanying us fled. They got through the wire and escaped. We were left alone with the Poles. As we became aware of this fact we immediately approached the wire fence and started clambering up it.

From a distance, already standing on the wire fence, I saw the light from a flashlight and noted that someone had reached the barbed wire. Simultaneously, I heard a shot, followed by four more. I jumped off the fence.

My brother and I had found ourselves in a tricky situation. We feared returning to the camp because they would ask us where we had been before making us

responsible for the disappearance of those three Jews. We were afraid of fleeing through the barbed wire because of the gunfire. So we decided to go to the factory rather than return to the camp.

The factory was three kilometers away from the barbed wire fence. If anyone were to encounter us along the way, our lives would be in danger. But there was no alternative. We approach the porterhouse. There are two guards there who ask where we are from. My brother came up with an excuse that he had gone into the forest to answer the call of nature, while the group of Jews left for the camp and he was thus abandoned. The guard did not believe a word my brother had said, but he was not too harsh either, and punished us by making us sleep all night on the grass rather than return to the camp.

As it turned out, one of the three escapees, Herszł Szperlak, went to the high school building in Sandomierz, where he was staying illegally. The other two, Nuske Rajchman and Herszł Rajchman, were captured near Sandomierz by Polish policemen, who killed them.

Two weeks have passed and I am again starting to think about organizing an escape from the camp. Some of the Jews worked outside the camp. We reached an agreement with the group leader to take us on for such work, but this Pole got cold feet at the very last moment.

I ask the Pole who worked with me on the rollers to lead us through the barbed wire. He agrees to do it for 1000 zlotys. But he pulls out the next day because he is scared. The only option left is to try to go it alone without anybody's help.

p. 78 –

On one occasion, when five Jews escaped, they were recognized by a Pole who worked in the factory. He reported this to the Polish police who handed over the Jews to the factory guards, who, before shooting the Jews to death, tortured them, breaking their arms and legs. Only one of the five, a thirteen year-old boy, was not shot. Instead he was placed on a bench and beaten.

Chapter 11. Our escape

p. 79 –

At 11 p.m. I escape together with my brother and three other men from the camp. We succeeded.

p. 80 –

We spent the whole day lying down. We left once it started getting dark and continued our journey. Along the way we asked a peasant how far it was to Pionki. He told us that it was six kilometers, and when we asked whether we were heading in the right direction, he told us that we were (he understood that we are

Jews). We ask him if he had any bread but he had nothing. He showed us which way to go. We bade him farewell and carried on. We passed through the village and reached the forest. At the edge of the forest we see the silhouettes of two people. We approach them. It turns out that they are a peasant man and woman from the village returning from the harvest. We continued on together. Meanwhile, the Jew from Sandomierz who looked like a Pole disappeared.

We continued part of the way together with the peasant couple. Then they showed us which way to go. And this is how we reached a large village. After passing through the whole village we entered a house belonging to an old peasant man and woman. We ask them for directions to **Zwoleń**. We asked him for something to eat. He gave us some bread and milk, refusing to take any money for it. We learn that this village is called **Męciszów** and continue on our way. We lose our way in the forest for several hours, we start to make our way back as we realize that we cannot find our way out of the forest. We go back and arrive in the same village. We knock on a peasant's door and ask him about the way to Zwoleń. He starts giving us directions and when we ask him to show us a way that would see us avoid passing through the town, he tells us to go through the field by the Jewish cemetery. Beyond the cemetery, he says, is the village of Zielońska, which is already the other side of Zwoleń. He told us that on the hill with the hornbeam there is a little house, where a widow lives and we should ask her to show us the way from there.

We follow his directions. We reached the little house and ask for directions. The widow says that the village of Jedlanka is close by. In Jedlanka we ask a peasant for more directions. He replies that we should keep left for the road to Karszówka and as we bid him farewell we see a cherry orchard by his house. We ask if we could have a few cherries and he replies, 'help yourself'. He must have taken us for partisans. We carry on toward Karszówka. [...]

pp. 82–85

And so we went until we had passed beyond the peat bogs. We carry on through the fields and suddenly, as if he had just risen out of the ground, a thirteen year-old boy appears before us and says: 'Are you from the camp?' He was honest, showed us the way to Zielonka and we followed his directions. We reached a radish field. We ate radishes all the way to the village. And the lights are shining in the village, people are laughing, talking. My brother enters and asks for directions to Zielonka. They show us the way. We reach Zielonka.

There we ask for the way to Jasieniec. My brother and I wanted to go to Goźlice, near Klimontów, where Chil Lederman of Klimontów was being hidden by a peasant. So we ask a peasant for directions to Jasieniec. We also ask him for

some food. The peasant woman explains that she can't invite us in because we are Jews. She brought us a large pan of milk and rye bread, enough for everyone. Saying goodbye, when I asked how much we owe her, she wished us well and wanted no money. I thanked her warmly and we left.

We pass through Zielonka and then enter the forest. Beyond the forest is the hamlet of **Bartodzieje**. We knock on a cottage, an old peasant woman emerges, tells us the way, gives us a piece of bread and we go on.

We reach the village of Jasieniec. There is a gentry estate there. We reach a peasant cottage and ask the peasant for directions to Wola Solecka. We ask him for milk and he replies that he has no milk. My brother blurted out 'but there must be some'. The peasant got frightened. He thought that we were partisans and gave us some milk – pure cream; he asked if we wanted more. Of course, we did not decline. The peasant took no money for the milk and we carried on. We reached Wola Solecka. We were received kindly in Wola Solecka, Dziurków, and Słuszczyn. Near Słuszczyn, resting in the forest, we saw eight gendarmes galloping on horses. My brother and the rest were asleep. They did not notice us. We lay there in the forest until dusk. We started moving again at night.

We were close to the small town of Tarłów. A peasant gave us some bread and showed us how to avoid the town.

[...]

We reached a village. We asked for the way to Ożarów. We were given no bread. There was thunder and lightning. It started to rain.

We could see nothing. We were soaked to the bone. Only the lightning lit our path. This is how we reached a point two kilometers outside Ożarów. We approached a small cottage, knocked, a widow lived there. We bought some milk and eggs from her and asked how to steer clear of Ożarów. She showed us a way through the fields to steer clear of the town. We reached the village of **Grochocice**. We entered a peasant's house. He gives us bread and milk and shows us the way to go. We arrived in the village of **Pielaszów**. I had an acquaintance there, someone from our area who got married in this village.

We went to his place and asked him to let us in at dawn. He said that that was impossible because he is the mayor of the village and lives with his in-laws. This is why we went to the forest and hid there during daytime.

[...]

I have dark thoughts. We are on our way to the village of **Gołębiów**. There I reach a cottage and ask where my acquaintance lives. I ask him for a bit of food. He refuses.

Our situation takes a turn for the worse in the Sandomierz District. The peasants did not want to give us even a drop of water. Leaving a village we hear drunken singing. We lay down in the wheat and when it was silent again we took the main road leading to Klimontów.

We soon reached Goźlice. There we went to the house of the peasant where our acquaintance was hidden. We knocked. The peasant answered unwillingly. We ask about the Jew, he tells us that he had left because the night before

p. 86 –

the gendarmerie had been in the village and arrested two bandits. The Jew got scared and left. It turned out, however, that the peasant had lied to us. The Jew was still at his place. He gives us milk and bread. We ask him to let us spend the night at his place but he doesn't want to. We carried on.

We go to another peasant in the same village. He also tells us the story about the gendarmerie and he doesn't want us there even for a single day. We are forced to spend the whole day in a field. We are stricken with fear during daytime because they are harvesting the grain; at dusk we go back to the peasant who is hiding the Jew. The peasant gives us some soap and a razor, so, at night, we shave.

The following day we head into the field. We spend the entire day in the wheat field. It is the third night in a row that the peasant refuses to let us in because, he says, his sister has come to visit. We leave the village and carry on. We go to the next village where our good acquaintance lives. We enter his house. I compare their situation to ours. They sleep in beds, while we are hounded out like dogs. He is a rich peasant. He gives us something to eat but refuses to let us stay for even one day.

We go to a peasant in another village. This peasant once promised my brother that he would give him shelter. The village where this peasant lives is two kilometers from Klimontów. We come to him at night. His wife calls out, 'Who is it?', we reply: 'The tailor from Klimontów'. She tells us that her husband is not at home and she will not open up. The peasant woman begins to cry, saying that her husband doesn't know any Jews and she will not open up.

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The reason for her receiving us like this was the fact that on a neighboring farm, in another peasant's house, a married couple were hiding, having left their children in a bunker in the forest. That peasant received a large fortune from them: a meter of pepper, cotton, and other goods. In order to claim this fortune and get rid of them, he set fire to the barn where the couple were hidden. They had to flee. Those people found themselves in such drastic circumstances that they

reported themselves to the police on the very day that the Sandomierz ghetto was being liquidated, i.e. 15 May 1943.

That very evening NSZ fighters [Narodowe Siły Zbrojne/ National Armed Forces – PV] attacked the Polish police station where this couple was being held. The fighters wanted to take the weapons. The Polish police asked them not to do so, arguing that they had received an order to kill Jews. The NSZ fighters replied that they could deal with the Jews themselves. The fighters entered the couple's cell and killed them. That is why the peasant we went to was scared of having anything to do with Jews.

We learned of this later on. Before this couple surrendered to the police, they wrote a letter to their children (they believed that their children were safe in the high school). In the letter they apologized to their children, writing that they had done everything they could to stay alive but had not succeeded. I was told about this letter after the liberation of Poland by a certain Lederman, who was at the high school.

We went to try our luck elsewhere. In another village we came to the house of an acquaintance but he shouted: 'Run away now because the police are coming.'

His wife passed us a small piece of bread through a window vent. We had been on the road for two weeks. We are walking with no idea of where to rest. We pass the cottage which we would later be permitted to enter and where we would see the liberation. We avoid this house and carry on. On one occasion we reached the fields of an estate. It was a hot day. We lay down stretched out and didn't move an inch.

In the evening we went to another village – Gasłowice [Gnieszowice?]. A peasant we knew lived there and he had once promised me that he would shelter us if his wife agreed. The village is unfamiliar to us. We ask for this peasant. We pass by destroyed houses without windows and doors. We are in no doubt that Jews lived here. We come to the peasant and knock. He asks who's there. He tells us to wait, that he's opening up. We wait for him on the street. We wait a long time and knock again. He has obviously fled. In the end he opens up. We ask him to give us shelter and that we will reward him for his trouble, of course. When he heard that we had been asking about him in the village he said that he was now scared to shelter us at his place. So we came to an agreement with him that we would move on at dawn and if nobody inquired about us during the day then we would return to him at night. He sold us some raw eggs and bread. We went to the wheat field. We lay there the whole day before returning at night. Some food had been left for us. We hoped that through him we would be able to get hold of our goods that we had left with the Poles. He promised us that he would make us an underground shelter. He led us into his barn for the night.

For the first time since escaping the camp we fell asleep in humane conditions. We were given very little food here.

The next day our host came to see us in the barn and asked when we would go to fetch the goods. Not knowing the price of textiles, I told him that I would bring him ten meters of material for a suit. I estimated its value at 2000 zlotys. But in fact it was worth 4000. He demanded that we bring the goods immediately and that we should also bring him some material for a good suit. I hold back leaving because I wanted to rest. At the same time, I decided that I would not return to him.

On Friday evening we say that we are going to fetch the goods. We bid him farewell. It was raining outside. Again we are looking for somewhere to stay. We knew a peasant in the village of **Postronna**, which had become an attractive option. We go there. We enter the village and ask for the peasant. It is a large village. By the time we had found out where he was, it was daylight. We knock on the cottage door. His wife answers saying he's not home. We jog her memory, letting her know who we are, but it is no use. She makes an excuse saying that because her husband is out she is scared to let us in. We can see that the situation is hopeless so we head elsewhere. By now the village is coming to life. There was no grain left in the fields. We had nowhere to hide. Since I was not quite sure where the other peasant lived, I returned to the first peasant woman in order to get directions again. I suddenly see the peasant woman leaving the house. Clearly her husband had sent her to call us back.

We entered a small kitchen. The woman gives us milk and bread. He comes out to see us. He was happy to see us. He agrees to let us stay for a day. He leads us up to a loft lined with hay and gives us a blanket to cover us. During the day they feed us better than at a guesthouse. In the evening we say that we do not want to go out into a Saturday night in order to avoid being on the road on a Sunday. He lets us stay another day. They give us plenty of food. He tells us that other villagers had informed him that two people were asking about him. When we suggest that he give us shelter, he says that he can't. The gendarmerie are coming for their crop quota. We ask his wife how much we owe her for the two days. She says 150 zlotys. The food that they gave us was worth more than 150 zlotys. The man also gives us a piece of bread for the road and we leave.

We had a Polish acquaintance in Wiązownia, Edward Ratkowski, who visited us in the ghetto and promised to help us. We knew that several Jewish families were hiding in this village. We went there. Along the way we went to a village where a peasant family that we knew lived. We knock – a peasant woman comes out. And when she sees us, frightened, she starts shouting: 'Go, go'. She did not

let us stop even for a minute and we left. It was still a long way to Wiązownia. We realized that we would not reach the village that night.

We decided to enter the forest and stay there for the day and then set off the next night. And that is what we did... At night we go on. In a village before Wiązownia we knocked on a peasant's door asking for food. He thus gave us some bread and refused to take any money. We carried on, passed by another village, someone noticed us. The dogs were set on us.

Chapter 12. Looking for shelter

We finally reach Wiązownia. We decided not to make enquiries about the peasant but instead to ask for the teacher who lived at his place. We knock on the cottage but his mother says that her son is out. We ask her for a slice of bread and she replies that she doesn't have any.

Meanwhile, her two sons, who had been sleeping in the barn, emerge. They have two sticks in their hands. But when they saw us they shook our hands and told us to have a lie-down in the loft. We wait a long time for food in the morning. Eventually a boy comes. He brings some bread and two eggs, but no hot food because his mother didn't want to feed us. She thought that we wanted feeding for free. We gave the boy 500 zlotys. And that helped. The next day I invited him up to the loft and asked him how much he wants a month to shelter us. He demanded 4000 a month. That was a lot of money in those days. My sources of income were the following: we had hidden fabric with several Poles. One of them had been the head of the Sandomierz district before the war, another a prosecutor at the court in Radom, the third the secretary of the court, and the fourth a nurse in Klimontów.

A few days before our expulsion we had arranged with the district governor for him to come to us and collect our goods. He was accompanied by a peasant. I took down a sack of fabric. It probably weighed some 80 kg. He came to us on a Monday morning. During the war, a Jew handed over his shop to him. I itemized everything that was in the sack. I asked him to send us bread if we should write to him informing him that we had been taken to a camp. But if he should learn that we have been killed then he should donate the goods to antifascist causes. He said, 'very well'. I felt a certain coldness in his 'very well', but I tried to suppress any doubts that came to mind, since he had been very popular among the Jews before the war. Now I wrote him a letter and asked him to pass on 2000 zlotys through the boy. He gave him the money and asked where we were. The boy replied that we are at the high school building.

I asked Ratkowski about our Jewish acquaintances Matis and Joel Fajnkuchen, who were also in the same village. He tells us that they are struggling, they are

walking around barefoot, scruffy, penniless and are constantly pestering the peasants. When I ask about Sara Rozenberg he replies that Sara Rozenberg had been at his place with two other girls for a while. In the spring, they went to the forest together with several young men. The chief forester saw them in the forest and informed the gendarmerie. The gendarmes surrounded the forest and three of them were shot dead, including Sara Rozenberg, a woman of 20. Three of them escaped. I considered whether he might possibly have been involved in this because Rozenberg had been living at his place. That is why I also ask him for a meeting with the brothers, Matis and Joel Fajnkuchen. Days go by and he still does not bring the Jews to see me. Until Saturday 14 August 1943, that is. I am still uneasy for the very same reason. Around 10 a.m. I hear the mother shout: 'Edek, Zygmunt'. Her voice indicates that she is alarmed. She runs around the house. It is clear that something has happened. A few minutes later Zygmunt storms into the loft and shouts: 'Get dressed quickly because the gendarmerie are in the village'. He demands that we leave and advises us to head toward the cemetery. The other boy comes to the cemetery to check that we are well hidden. We decided to hide in two separate places. We spend the whole day lying there. Each minute felt like a year. At 11 p.m. Zygmunt appears at the cemetery and leads us back up to the loft. He tells us that the Polish police from **Osiek**, who shot dead two Jews, the mother of the murdered Sara Rozenberg and a boy from Staszów [?] – Gerszt, had been in the village. We had been in the loft for half an hour when we hear shots. We are overcome with fear.

Edek enters and says: 'Are you scared?' I ask what has happened and he replies that partisans have entered the village and are shooting for fun. That reassured us that they were not going to betray us. However, we would still have liked to see those two Jews. Zygmunt arranged it for me. He promises to bring them to us. I implore him to prepare a hiding place for us. He made a double wall for us under the roof and that was our shelter. A few days later the two Fajnkuchen brothers, Matis and Joel, came. We ask about Sara Rozenberg. They tell us exactly the same as Ratkowski had said. They say that Ratkowski is an honest man. We were put completely at ease.

The Fajnkuchen brothers were in a terrible situation: they were penniless, barefoot, and in rags. We shared our food with them. They came to us from time to time and stayed over on Saturday nights. This kept their spirits up because they spent the rest of the week in the woods.

And this is how we spent five weeks there. On Sunday 5 September, with the four of us sitting in the loft, some friends came to visit the boys. One of the friends approached the stable and heard snoring. One of the brothers was asleep. So the

friend understood that someone must be sleeping in the loft. He climbed up. I was shaving at the time. I look and see a head looking at me. The boy climbed down immediately and approached Edek, asking: 'Who've you got up there? Give us some vodka!' Edek convinced him that he must have seen Matis, who often wandered around the village. When they left, Edek came up to us and told us everything. We decided to go into our hiding place, while Edek would fetch the boy who saw me and show him that Matis and his brother had been in the loft. Edek spoke to Matis in front of the boy, who then left. But I no longer had peace of mind after that. And when Matis and his brother were climbing down, I asked him to find a new place for us. Matis promised that he would do what he could for us. At the same time, Edek came to us and asked us to leave his premises for two weeks because he is afraid of the boys [his acquaintances].

We left his place at dusk for another hiding place that Matis and his brother had shown us in the same village. They spent the first night there with us. Our new host entered in the morning and told them not to be around his property during the daytime. During the day we sat in the barn before being led at dusk into the new hiding place, where some Jews had previously been hiding. It was located in the barn beneath the hay. There were some poles which were covered with hay. It was tight. It was impossible for two of us to lie down. It was terribly cold at night. We had nothing to cover us. We couldn't move. Once it was dark we only went out to answer the calls of nature before the peasant packed us in under the hay. We entered the hiding place through a hole.

On Sundays the two Jews came to visit us, but we would sit on the hay then. The peasant brought us money from the acquaintances who were looking after our goods.

Winter was approaching and we had no suitable clothes. We decided to visit our debtors in order to take some clothes or collect some money. On 20 September we said goodbye to our hosts and went to Klimontów. We used side roads. It was dark. We went through forests. It started raining. We were soaked to the bone. From time to time my brother would ask me for a rest. We rested.

We started to go astray. In the end my brother says that he cannot go on, that he has a heart pain. He suggests that I go to the village of Wólka and hire a cart there to bring us to the village of **Postronna**, to the peasant we had stayed with three days previously. He had told us then that he cannot shelter us because a penal expedition was coming to the village to collect quotas. I told my brother to try to reach Postronna.

With great difficulty and pain we dragged ourselves to Postronna. We reached the peasant's cottage. We knocked. He did not answer. His wife spoke, saying

her husband is out. We made extended pleas and were eventually let inside. The peasant told us that he would not allow us to stay with him even for a day because they were expecting the German penal expedition at any moment as a result of failing to deliver their quotas. No amount of begging helps. My brother cries that he cannot go on. The peasant says that there are some haystacks nearby where we can hide. He leads us out onto the street and shows us which way to go. The fields have been ploughed. My brother cannot walk. Meanwhile, it starts getting light and my brother tells me to leave him behind, that I should imagine that he too is among all the loved ones that I have lost. I started crying. I carried him on my back and dragged him to a haystack.

Day had broken completely by then. I made an opening in the haystack and dragged him in. We were cold, soaked, and the wind was blowing. We could not afford to move. We were frozen still with cold. We leave the haystack at night. My brother still could not walk although he was feeling better. Our clothes dried off during the day and we go back to the peasant in **Postronna**.

We started losing our bearings. We passed by various villages before we reached the peasant. But he refuses to let us in. He is scared. We ask him to sell us something to eat. He sold us some eggs and bread. Then we ask him to allow us in just for two hours. He lets us in but after half an hour his wife runs in and says that day is breaking and we should leave. We go to the haystack again. We create something akin to a grotto in the haystack. It is hard work. Our hands start bleeding from tearing the hay. We also felt insecure because the peasants could come to collect the hay. We entered the hiding space, masked the entrance and lay down. At night we went out again and went astray again. We come to the peasant in **Postronna** for a third time. We tell him that we are leaving and ask him only to give us something to eat. He leads us to the cowshed because a female acquaintance is visiting him at home. After two hours he leads us into the living room, gives us supper, and we leave.

That was on Thursday 23 September. My brother suggests that we go to our acquaintance Polit, a peasant in the village of Goźlice. I was unwilling to go to him because I knew that he would not shelter us. I knew that he would not be interested in making any money because he was already very rich. He had over twenty morgens of the best quality Sandomierz soil, while I had no intention of going to his property simply for food. My brother would not give up and pestered me the whole way, insisting that we go to Polit. We passed through the village of **Ossolin**, half a kilometer from Polit's place. We were oblivious to the danger that we had avoided, since a unit of the Ukrainian industrial guard was stationed in Ossolin, guarding the distillery. We had passed through the village

and are walking along the edge of the fields. The path is heavy-going and my brother says again:

‘How about we go to Polit’s place?’

Seeing how determined he was, I agreed. We approached the cottage. We want to enter. There is an angry dog in the yard that jumps up onto the fence. We knock on the window. We shout: ‘Andrzej, open up!’ He’s sound asleep. Only his wife heard us. She asks: ‘Who’s there?’ I say: ‘The tailor from Klimontów.’ She comes out to let us in. She cannot deal with her own dog. It wakes up their son, Wacek. He comes out and they lead us in. They are very pleased to see us and she says that she is going to make us something to eat. I ask her to stay. She doesn’t listen to me. She brings six boiled eggs, an iron mug with brewed coffee and sugar. She gives us bread. Her old man asks us constantly about how we escaped, while his missus tells him:

‘Give them a break, let them rest.’

Before I had even finished the first mug of coffee she was giving me another. I take a look at the clock and see that it is half past midnight. The wife looks at us and says: ‘My poor boys.’ We think that she is about to tell us to leave, but she says to us:

‘Come on, I’ll show you where you’ll be sleeping.’

She leads us to the loft of the cowshed, lays down some straw and takes all the coats from the house and covers us. In the morning a young boy, eleven years old, enters and leads out seven cows that are standing in the cowshed. His mother enters and tells us to come in to have a wash. We are scared to come down but she convinces us that no strangers come here. We come down into the cowshed. We wash ourselves with homemade soap and return to the loft. She comes up to the loft and asks us what we would like to eat. She brings us potatoes and borscht. In the evening, we prepare to depart.

That same evening we reached the house of the peasant in **Goźlice** who was storing our shoes, linen, and other smaller items. We wanted to take these things to the district governor for safekeeping. We come to the peasant’s house but he’s not in. Only his mother is home. We sat down in the orchard and waited for him to return. The peasant enters the barn and brings us our rucksacks, but one third of what we had left him is missing. I ask the peasant where my belongings have gone and he says that he left the rucksacks with a Pole in Sandomierz for a while and they must have been swapped there. He gave us 200 złotych, some dried pears and said that when we are passing by again he will give us more. We left him and went to the peasant’s place where a Jew was being hidden.

When we got close to the door I heard the Jew saying to the peasant: 'Go to sleep now'. We knocked. The peasant lets us in. We enter the house. We ask him how the Jew is doing. The peasant says that he's not there. And I say: 'Don't talk nonsense, I want to see him.' He goes to the stable and brings the Jew. I ask the Jew how he is getting on here. He had been in hiding here with the peasant for nine months already. His brother had been at the high school building. He escaped after the high school was liquidated and was already on his way to his brother. The Jew won't give me an answer when I ask how they treat him here. But there was probably no better place in all of Poland. The childless peasants sheltering him cared for him and later for his brother as if they were their children. The peasant woman shared every bite to eat that she had with them. She washed their undergarments, cut their hair. Her husband, Teofil Polit, was later killed by a landmine. The Jews living with them had no money. The couple were not making any money from them. We said farewell and carried on.

We went to the peasants who had received us so warmly. They were also called Polit. We laid ourselves down in the cowshed again. In the morning the wife entered and asked if we had got our things back. I lied to her and said that we had.

At dusk we went to the district governor, who lived in **Pęchów**. His shop, the one he had taken over from a Jew, was in Klimontów. It was already dark. The old man Polit asks if we will be returning. We say that we will. We are heading toward Pęchów. We had to pass through the village of **Zakrzów**. We see couples sitting by each house. Everyone knows us but nobody says a word to us.

We carry on. There is a crossroads at the end of the village. A peasant we know passes us by. He says nothing. Suddenly they shine a light on us from behind and somebody shouts:

'Who's there?'

I reply:

'A friend.'

The unknown man asks:

'Where are you coming from?'

My brother speaks:

'From Sandomierz', immediately adding, 'we're coming from the camp.'

The unknown individual orders us to stand still, shines a light in our eyes and when I can get a good look at him I can see that he is wearing a gendarme uniform and is aiming a gun at us. At first I thought that he was a military gendarme but I immediately realized that he is a partisan. Since my brother had said that we were from the camp, the man understood that we are Jews, since Sandomierz only had a camp for Jews. He asked: Yids, eh?

He starts asking where we are coming from, who we're going to. We say that we are going to Klimontów. We say that we have no one sheltering us but we are going to the town to sell some belongings to buy some bread. He desperately wants to know who we are going to see because he had taken offense, [believing that] we had left our belongings with somebody. But we stuck to our story. When my brother suggested that he should search us to ascertain whether we had any money, the man replied:

'I don't need your money.'

He starts whistling. Most certainly he wanted to summon his comrades. But nobody appeared. He leads us to various places. My brother suggests escaping but I don't want to. My brother asks him to release us but the man says:

'Keep away from me.'

Finally, after leading us here and there and back again, he says:

'Don't go to Klimontów because there is a police unit there.'

He asks us what people are saying about the war. We reply that people are saying that the war will be over soon. Finally he asks:

'Do you smoke?'

He takes out two cigarettes, reminding us again to steer clear of Klimontów and leaves us. We carry on. We reach Pęczów.

It is still very early. From in front of a house where Jews used to live, we can hear the laughter of boys and girls. They shine a light on us. We enter the yard of the house where the district governor lives. A dog starts barking. We hear footsteps. Somebody asks:

'Who's there?'

We say that we're going to see the district governor.

'What for?'

'We've got a business to discuss with for him.'

Even before we had made it to the district governor's place, he had already been informed that two strangers were asking about him. When we knock, the district governor asks:

'Who is it?'

We say:

'The tailor from Klimontów.'

I can hear him speaking to someone. The doors open; I can see on one side the man who stopped us in the street and on the other side the district governor. It turned out that the man was the agronomist from the estate. My brother enters first and I follow him in.

The district governor does not greet us. My brother stopped by the door. I looked at him and was filled with fright. His face was full of fear. The district governor does not even invite us to sit down. It was Saturday 25 September. He had a clean house, electric lights. He is walking around the room in his pajamas, bare-foot, wearing his glasses. There are cigarettes on a small table. He does not even offer us one. His wife is washing a child. It is warm in the house. There is a book by Kaden-Bandrowski on the small table. I observe his appearance and our own.

He asks us where we are coming from. We reply that we escaped from the camp. He says that we have made a mistake escaping because we won't last a fortnight in the Sandomierz region. We reply, though, that we have been free for two months and just now we even met a partisan who released us. I could tell by the look on his face that this did not please him. He advises us to return to the camp. So I tell him:

'Am I supposed to go and make weapons for the bandits who killed my parents?'

He says:

'That's nonsense. Three million Poles are working for the Germans.'

I replied, though, that I would not return to the camp. Then he says that Fliegelman is dead, and Szuldmann, too, and that it was Poles who had killed them. He wanted to scare us with these words. He said that there is only one wise Jew. And that man is Melach Wejsblat [Wajsblat] who is in the camp and not planning to escape.

Melach Wejsblat was the Jew who handed over the shop in Klimontów to him. He asks what we have come for. I asked him to hand over some money to a man that we would send to him. He replied to this saying,

'I don't want anything to do with Jews.'

And when I ask him why, he says:

'Because Jews are thieves.'

I tell him:

'Sir, you knew my father and you know how hard working he was.'

He says again:

'I don't want anything to do with Jews. If you want, take the lot as I won't be handing it out in installments. Let it rot otherwise.'

I tell him that I will send a man to collect all the goods. We agree that I would send him a letter and he would reply saying when the goods should be collected because they are not with him currently. We asked for the money and initially he started making excuses but then he went to a cabinet and gave my brother and me 1000 zlotys each. We say goodbye and leave.

It was getting light by the time we got back to **Goźlice**.

Chapter 13. Dependent on peasants

On 26 September, the old Polit woman enters and asks if we got our belongings back. We told her about our whole experience. We hid nothing from her. My brother started crying a great deal:

‘Who will give us shelter, who will let us in?’

The woman replies:

‘Don’t cry, you’ll be with me.’

In accordance with the agreement we had signed with the district governor, stating that we would send someone for the goods, we gave the eldest son a letter for the district governor, asking him to set a date for the goods to be collected. The boy went to Klimontów and the district governor started asking why the boy was so interested in some Jew. The boy gave the necessary response and the district governor set the date for the collection of the goods.

I wrote a note authorizing the return of the property and sent out the younger brother. The district governor also started asking him where he was from. But the boy made his excuses. The district governor released only a third of the property but even that was a godsend for us. Afterward I spoke to the eldest son and suggested that they keep us at their place. He promised to speak to his father.

Two days later he came in and said the matter was settled. For keeping us I paid him with fabric rather than cash. I also promised them that if liberation comes then we will leave the rest of the goods to them. After liberation, I left them goods worth 10–12,000 zlotys.

We lived in the stable. I got dysentery. I knew that this was a highly contagious disease and I feared telling them that I was down with it because they might throw me out. And that is why I did everything I could myself. I ate nothing for a week. My brother ate my portions. Once I recovered, my brother got the same illness. He was sick for several months and then recovered, too.

On Friday 8 October 1943 a market was held in Klimontów. It was not long before my host returned, reporting that very close to the town the entire market dispersed. This is what happened:

There was a German gendarmerie unit in Klimontów and on 7 October they caught a Polish partisan. They placed him in custody. He escaped the jail and fled toward the church. The commander of the Klimontów gendarmerie, Herr Lescher, was taking a walk at that moment with two other officers. They shouted, telling him to stop, but he didn’t hear so they were shooting at him and injured him. Then Lescher approached the partisan and shot him dead. He ordered that the body be buried at the Jewish cemetery. This is what the eldest son told me on 7 October, adding: ‘you’ll see, he won’t survive!’ And so it was. The following the

day, upon his return, my host told me that a partisan had approached Lescher on the street and shot him five times, taking his gun. The partisan then jumped into a getaway car waiting for him and escaped. Following his escape to Klimontów, the gendarmerie arrived, started shooting, and killed Tadek Grudzień. My host was scared that something would happen in Klimontów. My brother and I were pleased that Lescher was dead.

We asked the old Polit man and his sons to make a hideout for us because we were scared to continue lying down like this. They kept putting it off for days on end. This went on until early November. Eventually our new home was ready on 13 November. The hideout was built in the barn. It was 175 centimeters long. It was not even a hair's breadth longer than us. It was 125 centimeters wide and 128 centimeters high. We could not even stand up in it. We could either sit or kneel. Inside it was as dark as in a grave.

When nobody was around, we went into the barn, but we spent most of the time lying down in the hideout because our hosts had guests. A cousin of theirs from Stalowa Wola, a certain Zaremba, visited regularly. He was a left-winger. He brought good news from the front and our host came by to keep our spirits up. He said:

‘The war is hanging by a thread.’

Zaremba spoke sympathetically of Russia, so the AK soldiers started looking for him and captured him. It was only thanks to our host's intervention that he was released.

Lying down up top and seeing that liberation was still some way off, I asked the son to bring me an underground newspaper because we wanted to know what was going on. He brought me the *Szlaki Chrobrego* [Chrobry's Way] gazette, then later on the bulletin of NSZ.

[...]

In winter, [the farmers] borrowed a new sewing machine from their son-in-law, who lived in another village and at night I would come out of my hiding place and sew for them. When I came to work one night, our host told me that in the village of **Sulisławice** the priest was sheltering twelve Jews but another priest informed the authorities. There was a rabbi among the twelve Jews. All of them were shot dead. Another time he told me how nine Jews, owners of an oil mill, were being sheltered by the peasant Jurowski in the neighboring village of Jugo-szów. And this peasant, together with another one, Stanisław Marzec from Kozia Góra, killed them. These nine Jews are buried in **Jugoszów** next to the chapel.

This Stach Marzec was sheltering three Jews: Jankiel Apelbojm, Mosze Tencer, and Jankiel Grynsztejn [Grynsztajn]. They were blackmailed and harassed by Marzec and his buddies so badly that they had to flee. They continued to be

persecuted and by late March 1943 they were captured as a result of denunciation by Tadeusz Brzozowski from Klimontów. They were caught in the village of Konary. They were led to the town. Before their deaths, the Germans paraded them around the town. That same Brzozowski ran after them, shouting 'But you're so strong!' They were led out of the town and shot. The Germans gave Brzozowski a rifle and he shot them too.

While I was staying with my host, I sent a letter to the prosecutor at the court in Radom, asking him to send me either money or my possessions. I had left my mother's jewelry and my clothes with him. But he sent me nothing. And when I wrote to him asking him to send me my navy suit, his sister replied saying that I had already collected it. And so I sent a messenger to him five times but he did not return a single penny. After the liberation he was arrested for being a member of the Home Army.

On 23 April 1944 my brother and I decide to go to the Jew who was being sheltered by the Polits. We arrive and we meet the second brother, who appeared there after the liquidation of the high school. We asked their hosts, who have the same surname as mine, about the latest news and they said that the Russians had started an offensive. And that was indeed the case.

The front started approaching. There was unease in the air. Our hosts started saying that we need to find a new place to hide. On 23 May we went to those Jews asking them to find us a new place but nothing changed.

We were in dire straits. On 24 May, the Cossacks, the Vlasov army, entered the village. Our circumstances deteriorated further. Cossacks were stationed all over the village. Only our place was spared, luckily. There were Cossacks at Polit's place, too. But the farmers had hidden the Jews well. Because of the Cossacks, our hosts had to keep us and they stopped pestering us to leave because stepping outside the door put our lives in danger. With each day our circumstances became even more terrible.

One day, during one Cossack's funeral, the Orthodox priest said that that Cossacks had come to do holy work – to slaughter Jews and communists. In Postronna, at one peasant woman's place, the Cossacks caught three Jews. They beat the peasant woman Niedzbiała to death, with sticks. Among the three Jews was Matis Fajnkuchen, who came to us in Wiązownia, and Zalman Baum.¹⁶

Two weeks before the liberation we were in big trouble again. Our hosts' daughter, a fourteen year-old girl, simply got sick with fear. She was scared that they would all be murdered because of us. One time, the elderly woman and

16 As we know, Zelman Baum survived. See chapters 1 and 3 of this book.

her son come to us saying we absolutely have to leave. At the same time, we can hear the sound of the front. Our pleas are futile. Then we say that we would leave only after hearing the eldest son, Waclaw, had had his say. He had the final say at home. We go to him and beg him, saying that we have nowhere else to go. And he replies:

‘What can I do if my mother is scared?’

The young boy starts crying:

‘What’ll happen if they find you, then they’ll kill us.’

We beg him:

‘Wacek, where will you send us?’

He thinks and doesn’t know what to do. The situation was complicated further by the fact that one of the sons, Maniek, was in AK. Their mother was scared that when they come looking for her son then they will find us, too. In the end Wacek said:

‘Go on, get into the hole.’

On 6 June, the second battlefield began.

[...]

Our hosts are scared to remain at home and are digging defensive and anti-aircraft trenches. We are lying on the hay in the barn. We are scared that we might pay with our lives at the very last moment. The German army keeps retreating.

One day, our host comes to our hideout. He is holding our undergarments and linen, saying:

‘boys, this belongs to you. If the barn catches fire then run away!’

On Monday 7 August the hosts went to the neighboring village, where their daughter had married. We were left behind with the dog. Only the eldest girl was tending to the cows. She came to us and felt very sorry for us. She said:

‘What will happen to you?’

She gave us some bread and left.

2.

Mordechaj Pencziner **The Slaughter of Klimontów**

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Before the start of the occupation there were around 5000 Jews in our dear little town of Klimontów in the district of Sandomierz and province of Kielce. During the war many Jews came here from Łódź and other surrounding towns and cities. Even Viennese Jews were deported to Klimontów by the Germans; and so that is how there came to be around 8000 Jews in our settlement at the time of its

liquidation on 30 October 1942. Our shtetl of Klimontów was very old. People said that Jews had been living in Klimontów for some seven or eight centuries. Some made a living as traders, others in trades. We had a Zionist organization, Hanoar Hatzioni and Hashomer Hatzair, there was a library and a reading room. In autumn 1940, the Germans removed the books from the library, took them to Sandomierz, and burned them there. The rabbi of Klimontów reb Simche Gelernter buried the holy books (the Torah scrolls) before his expulsion. When we returned to Klimontów after the liberation, we could not find the Torah scrolls in the [designated] place. The local peasants, who were well aware of everything, dug up the Torah scrolls and used them as lining for their shoes.

On the first day of the German occupation, which was Monday¹⁷ 13 September 1939, the whole town was surrounded by German soldiers. All the men aged between 14 and 60, Jews and Poles, were driven to the marketplace, where they were guarded by soldiers armed with machine guns and even tanks. A German officer told them that the German army would now march through the town. If even a single shot is fired at them then the entire population will be shot. The march lasted over three hours and we all stood in shock the entire time on the marketplace. Then we were dispersed while being beaten, insulted, and shot at. People ran in all directions. Three people were killed in all of this – two Jews and a Gentile.

The remaining days of the occupation were filled with robberies – opportunistic robberies with passing armies looting and organized robberies. The Germans took trucks to Jewish shops and collected grain and goods, while they took better furniture and clothing from Jewish houses. In return, Jews received beatings and insults.

In early October 1939 the Klimontów Jews received a demand for a contribution of one million zlotys. Immediately a list was also drawn up of ten hostages – members of the [council] of the old commune, namely: Jona Fajntuch, a wealthy local, Awremele Szor, a Hassidic Jew, Mejlech, the son of another well-known Hassid Srul Urbach, Chaim Tenenwurcel, Pencziner Hilel, and others. The Germans threatened to shoot the hostages if we did not collect the required sum. With great effort we managed to collect the whole sum, which was paid to the German authorities.

Soon afterward, an order was issued that all Jews, with the exception of small children, must wear a ten centimeter-wide white armband with the Star of David on their right arm. Furthermore, each Jew was ordered to greet each German that

17 This is what was written in the text. In reality, 13 September 1939 was a Wednesday.

he encountered. There were always some problems, though. Your armband is too narrow – get a beating; greet a German – get a beating, fail to greet a German – another beating.

Four weeks after the Germans entered Klimontów, the first Judenrat was founded. It was established by the German Landrat and comprised ten Jews. The post of Judenältester was held by Froim-Ber, a tailor; the other members included Wowcze Fajntuch, Icchok Broner, and Alter Faktter. The task of the Judenrat was to ensure German orders were put into practice.

During this period a German garrison was permanently stationed in Klimontów. It was housed in the Polish school close to the church and in the premises of the Polish preschool. The circumstances of the Jews deteriorated even further from this moment on. Jews were caught every day and sent to do the most demanding and dirtiest jobs. They were paid with beatings and insults, denied food, in the harshest winter frosts. They were also driven out of their beds at night and ordered to work. The non-Jewish population was not yet helping the Germans at this point but it was clear that most of them were pleased by our misfortune.

In January 1940, four hundred SS men took up residence in Górki near Klimontów [Górki Klimontowskie], in the Karski palace. After their arrival, the atmosphere around the Jews became even more toxic. People were quite simply scared to go out onto the streets. Each day they forced 15–20 Jews to do the dirtiest work for them, beating the Jews along the way. Even if they did give the workers dinner, this necessarily involved a degree of torment. They tied the Jews' arms behind their back, forcing them to lick food from a bowl. Anyone unable to "eat" like this faced a merciless beating before being thrown into a dark, damp cellar. That was where Pesach Pencziner was tortured. His eye was gouged out, while his body was so heavily covered black-and-blue with bruises that it was impossible to identify him. One Jew from Zimna Woda (I do not recall his surname, perhaps Godkind) died from such a beating. Jekel Ungerman from Opatów was also tortured. They were both tortured for informing on Poles from Jurkowice. This is what happened: in the commune of Jurkowice there were some 30–40 Jews. The Polish police demanded shoes and clothing from them. When the Jews refused to hand over their possessions, the Polish police suggested that the SS-men establish a Judenrat – then they would take what they wanted. So the SS men summoned the Jews, apparently for a meeting, and then they tortured them.

Because the first Judenrat proved unable to meet the Germans' demands, a second Judenrat was established in March 1940. The head of the second Judenrat was Motl Szulman, with the members including Icze Wajsbrod, Wowcze Fajntuch, Hercke Ajzenbuch, Mojsze Pencziner (son of Hercke Pencziner), Zawł Lofer, and

others. At the same time, an eight-man Jewish police unit was established. Each month, the Judenrat imposed taxes on various payments, deciding on the rate itself. It is shameful to admit it, but members of the Judenrat themselves benefited from this money. The Jewish population was already impoverished, so the Judenrat taxes were a heavy burden. The Jewish police ensured that the monthly tax would be paid. Anyone who did not pay was arrested and had his property confiscated, etc. The police also ensured that Jews would go to work. Each week a group of one hundred Jews had to go to work. A different group would go the following week.

In April 1941, the Germans opened a quarry in Międzygórz, eighteen kilometers from Klimontów. Sixty Jews had to go to work there. It was very heavy work. Sometimes the Jews were taken to work in trucks, though often they had to walk there. The Jews were usually there for a whole week. They had to meet certain targets. Anyone who failed to meet the target was beaten. On one occasion there was an accident: some small wagons tipped over and broke one Jew's leg (it had to be amputated), while three others were badly injured.

Klimontów did not have a fenced-off ghetto but the Jews were nevertheless forbidden from leaving the town. By every exit from the town there were boards stating that Jews were forbidden from crossing this point. Contravening this order was punishable by death. German police on bicycles and with dogs patrolled the roads. Three Jews were killed by firing squad for leaving the town – Aron Szulman (he was from Klimontów but he had arrived here from Łódź) and two other new arrivals whose names I don't remember. The Jews lived in unimaginable poverty. The situation was made worse by the arrival of large numbers of refugees, with space becoming more crowded and hunger more acute. A kitchen was set up to feed the homeless, while a women's committee that aimed at improving children's nourishment was also established. Serious illnesses were common because of hunger and overcrowding (typhus and dysentery). These diseases had to be hidden from the Germans because they had only one treatment for sufferers – a bullet in the brain. A hospital was set up in the small synagogue on the square by the synagogue. Later on, the construction of a house by the cemetery was completed and the hospital was moved there.

In May 1941, Jews started being taken captive and sent to work in ammunition factories in Bełżec and Skarżysko. Thirty Jews were sent to Bełżec. After three months they all returned in a terrible state, with two not returning at all (Kalmeniu, the village idiot, and another man, a son of Herszel, but I can't remember his surname). Among those captured and sent to work in Skarżysko

was a certain Mojsze Rżaziak,¹⁸ who came from Klimontów but lived in Opatów. He fled Skarżysko because of the torturous work. The police immediately received a telephone call ordering them to capture and arrest him. Rżaziak made little effort to hide and he was captured. He was caught by a Polish policeman. Rżaziak's parents, seeing that their son had been arrested, ran to the policeman begging him to show mercy and release him. The policeman refused. But in all the confusion, Rżaziak disappeared. The policeman felt ashamed so he created a report in which he wrote that he captured the fugitive and arrested him before he was surrounded by seventy Jews who attacked him and released the captive. The German gendarmerie immediately issued an order to arrest Rżaziak's entire family. Twenty two people were arrested. After three days, all of them were led along the paths leading to Górki and shot dead next to Murawski's barn. The Jewish police had to bury them. Back in the town, the gendarmerie issued an order for another forty eight people to be shot. The Judenrat delivered only thirteen Jews, who were then shot by the cemetery wall.

During the initial period of German occupation I worked at our mill, which ground grain for the Germans. If, for whatever reason, the work was not completed by the given deadline we usually received a beating so severe that we had to lie down. In summer 1941, the county governor (*Kreishauptmann*) ordered the closure of all small mills, with all machinery to be confiscated. The equipment from our mill was sent to Germany. The mill itself was turned into a grain store and I was evicted. For a short time I was employed in one of the larger mills in the town. A certain Strzelnicki, a Pole, was transferred there. He was the owner of a mill somewhere in Łódź province. He was sent from there to Klimontów, where he was made commissioner of the local mill. He followed the directives of the German authorities and removed all the Jews from the mill. Every Jew had to work, though, so I was sent to labor at the quarry in Międzygórz in Kielce province. Every Jew had to do at least one week's work there. Work there continued until October 1942.

Sad news was already reaching Klimontów from surrounding towns – Radom, Kielce, and other places. The Judenrat tried to create new posts, new jobs, believing that they could ensure their own survival this way. Jews started being sent to work in quarries in Bukówka and Jurkowice. Ukrainians served as guards there. The chief guard was a Ukrainian called Huger, a terrible sadist.

18 Transcription from the Yiddish [rżaziak], which could be rendered in Polish as either Rżaziak or Źaziak; the surname could stem from the word 'rżezak' [(slaughtering) knife –PV] – Polish translator's note.

The stories reaching the town were becoming ever more terrifying. It was with fear in our hearts that we passed on news received from Gentiles that we knew, which said that there was no trace left of Jews in many towns. People are being loaded into closed wagons and sent away. Where to? Our hearts were seized with fear. The first city that was mentioned here was Lublin. Then people started talking about Warsaw, Radom, and Kielce – ever closer to our shtetl... The Jews are nevertheless a nation of hope. People cheer each other up and still hold onto the hope that the plague will avoid our town – a town where great tzaddiks lived. The Psalms are being recited in the synagogues, while people head to the cemeteries issuing mournful cries, visiting the graves of the tzaddiks, seeking intercession from their forefathers. The Germans deceived us with their repeated assurances that nothing would happen in Klimontów.

In the early hours of Friday 30 October 1942, at 5 a.m., the city was filled with murderers – Germans and Ukrainians. An order was issued for all Jews, young and old, big and small, men and women, to assemble by 8 a.m. on the market square. The Jews headed to the marketplace crying and lamenting, hounded by armed beasts, with bundles on their backs. The crying of children, the wailing of women, and the despair of men was indescribable.

With typical German punctuality, at exactly 8 a.m., the Jews started being driven on foot to Złota, 18 kilometers from Klimontów. The old and the weak who were unable to march quickly enough were shot along the way. Over eighty dead were left on the streets of Klimontów. Five crippled Jewish women remained in the town after the march. They were brought to the market square and shot there. Jewish policemen took their bodies to the cemetery. There were another fifty Jews left in Klimontów, including the Jewish police and the Judenrat. The remaining Jews comprised what was known as the Räumkommando. They collected what remained of the Jewish property and took everything to the bes-medresh [the prayer house], from where the belongings were taken by truck to the railway station. On the day of his deportation, the well-known holy man Dawid Apelbojm hanged himself. A certain woman, Sara, wife of Mates the baker, was found hiding in a cellar. She was betrayed by a Polish woman, Rykowski's daughter. The infamous German gendarme Lescher led Sara to the cemetery and shot her there. Lescher killed Mojsze Hojcher, who had been discovered in a hideout, in the same manner.

The fifty Jews of the Räumkommando were later deported to Sandomierz, where the so-called Judenstadt was created. Four such Judenstadts were created at that time: in Sandomierz, Szydłowiec, Ujazd, and Radomsko. In the second half of 1942, once most Jews had already been “deported”, the Germans issued an appeal to all Jews who remained outside the ghettos (on the Aryan side, in the

forests, and in hiding places), assuring them that no ill fate would befall them if they reported to the Germans. At the same time, a threat was issued to the Poles who were helping Jews that they could be shot and have their property confiscated for this. Many Jews turned themselves in and they were then sent to the Judenstadts. Later on, most Jews from the Judenstadts were sent to Treblinka.

Three hundred Jews from the Räumkommando remained in Sandomierz for a longer period and they came from the surrounding towns of Opatów, Sandomierz, and Klimontów. For some time they were employed in Sandomierz on groundworks, building roads and so on. In April 1943 they were sent to various labor camps – in Skarżysko and Starachowice. Some of them survived. The Klimontów doctor Kaplan was employed as a medic in the Räumkommando. Two weeks before the liberation, in April 1945, he was shot by a German somewhere near Buchenwald during a “march” because he was already very weak and could not keep up.

The expelled Klimontów Jews spent the night of 30/31 October 1942 outdoors. In the morning they were hounded to the closest railway station at Nadbrzezie, near Sandomierz. At the station they were loaded into cattle trucks with 120 people in each and sent to the death camp in Treblinka. Over 100 people were killed in Złota during this single night. The Poles buried them in the same place they had been killed. The streets where Jews had lived in Klimontów were guarded for quite some time by Polish police and firemen. They were still searching for their “inheritance” and for Jews in hiding.

I escaped on the day of the expulsion. I hid in the basement of the church, where the crypts with the dead are. I spent over a day lying there, frightened to death. At night, once things had calmed down, I escaped to the village [of Koźlice¹⁹], to a Gentile that I knew, asking him to shelter me for a few days. He turned me down, so I carried on until I reached the village of Przybysławice. I thought that I would be able to stay there. A few days before the expulsion I gave Skuza, a Gentile from the village, many valuable possessions for safekeeping. As soon as Skuza saw me he said, ‘Get out fast, or I’ll hand you in to the military police!’ I thus went to [the village of] Śniekozy. There, a Gentile acquaintance, Rak, let me sleep in the stable loft for a few days.

I had nowhere else to go from there. I did not encounter any Jews and I feared non-Jews. All I heard was that Jews in hiding were being caught and shot. What

19 This could perhaps refer to the settlement of Kozia Górka, seven kilometers to the southwest of Klimontów, or alternatively to Kozinek, 4.5 kilometers to the northwest of Klimontów.

to do? I went to the woods. Like an animal, I dug myself a burrow in the thick of the forest, where I hid during the day. Once it got dark I dug myself out of my burrow and went to nearby villages for food. And that was how I lived for an extended period in the forest.

At some point the Germans went on a manhunt in the forest, looking for partisans. I managed to avoid capture. I went to Śniekozy again, to Rak's loft; I made a burrow there and hid for some time without him knowing. Every few days I went to Rak to ask for food but he was unaware that I was hiding on his property. Lying in the loft, I heard the screams of five captured Jews who were shot.

I was overcome with dark thoughts. In my despair, I even considered suicide, but I resisted. I begged Rak to save me and give me shelter. He agreed but his wife forbade it. I had to return to the woods. And so I went from the loft to the woods and back to the loft in fear, hungry and cold, surviving for a year until the end of 1943.

And then I was overcome with a new worry. Ukrainians who had been evacuated started arriving in our area and their main task was to find any Jews remaining in hiding and hand them over to the German authorities. The danger was great. I went back to Rak to ask him to shelter me in the dugout behind the pigsty, without telling his wife. I did not spend long in the dugout. In the village there were cases of the Ukrainians finding some Jews in hiding on a Pole's property. The Jews were shot, while the Pole had his house burned down. Rak got scared and drove me out.

Where to go? There were already some Polish partisans in the woods, the German army was all around, as were evacuated Ukrainians and local Poles – everyone had the same task: to kill the few Jews remaining in hiding. I spent the final four months hiding at Rak's place in Śniekozy. The German military was already suffering defeats by then, the war was coming to an end, so he had softened up somewhat.

On the seventh of October 1944, Klimontów was taken by the Red Army. I was still scared to show up there. Even after the Red Army had entered the town, there were still cases of Jews being murdered in order to ensure that there were as few witnesses as possible to our fate there. Only once the front had moved on and came to a halt in Włostów did I go to Klimontów. There I met a few more Jews who had been rescued: Jechiel and Saul Lederman, Lejbce and Mojsze Zilberberg, Jechiel Gotlib, Abraham Złotnicki, Szejna Wajsbard, Pesel Goldwaser, Chaim Pencziner and his wife from Wiązownica, and others. We all lived together in Fajntuch's house. I started working in our mill again, milling grain for the Red Army. Things were not peaceful, though, as there were still

cases of Jews being killed, particularly in smaller places (Połaniec and Staszów). Some decided to leave for Łódź where, so we had heard, Jews were settling. I sat in Klimontów for a while longer before also leaving for Łódź. Those who remained in Klimontów were: A. Złotnicki, C. and S. Lederman, C. Pencziner together with his wife (who was pregnant), and Tobcia Stecki. On 10 May 1945 they were all murdered in an inhuman manner: they were found with their arms and legs cut off. The only person to survive was Tobcia Stecki, who happened to be spending the night with a Gentile family. She later came to Łódź and told us everything.

Mordechaj Pencziner, born 1 February 1917 in Klimontów, Kielce province, Historical Commission in Stuttgart, 14 May 1947, recorded by D. Grejdlorf.

3.

Arele [Arele, Urele, Urele, Aharon, Aaron, Aron] Sztarkman, son of Josef Sztarkman, former inhabitant of Opatów

Dzierżoniów, 20 February 1947

My Experiences from 1939 to 1945

The Germans occupy Opatów!

Life goes on as normal for a while. The Jews move around the streets freely, they trade, everyone gets on with their work, although we sense that the Germans are our masters.

Soon the Jews are banned from trading and working in certain jobs.

Jews may not walk along the main streets.

Jews may no longer live on the main streets.

An order is issued for Jews to wear armbands of shame on their arms.

Jews are forbidden from driving cars. It is completely forbidden for them to travel between towns.

The situation gets worse with each day.

A Judenrat is established, with Mordechaj Wajsbium as the head. Jewish shops start going bust. German commissioners take over all Jewish property. Jews must work constructing roads, digging rocks in quarries. Each individual Jew is deemed worthless.

Jews are forbidden from wearing smart suits.

Jews start being treated worse than dogs.

Forced labor for Jews begins.

Chairman Wajsblum, guardian of the Jews, receives an order from the German authorities to deliver 200 men for labor in Plazów, close to the Russian border.

Chairman Wajsblum informs each man individually of the request for volunteers for four weeks of forced labor. Nobody accepts his invitation. It looks as if the president and his employees will have to volunteer for the work themselves. But no. The chairman explains to the Germans that nobody followed his order. At 5 a.m. the town is surrounded by the SS. They manage to capture 80 people, myself among them.

I was held by the Germans. They ask why I did not volunteer for work. I explained that I am alone and must provide for my parents.

They led me to the synagogue where we had all been gathered. The chairman is running back and forth trying to get a few people released. He needs them. He gives the remaining people a food package. We are closely guarded by numerous men. We can hear the shouting of Germans and the crying of mothers and children outside on the street. Trucks pull up and we are all taken to Ostrowiec, to the train. We are heavily-guarded along the route. They put us all, eighty men, into one wagon. It is sealed meticulously. We are transported for three days. No food, no drink. We are close to death. During the journey, we begin to realize what fate awaits us. The train stops briefly at one station. The wagon is pelted with stones and shot at multiple times. Before we reach Lublin, two people from our group are severely wounded. We can hear the buzz of the city and the whistles of trains. The train halts around 5 a.m. We sense that we have arrived, although we are unsure where. We hear a shout: Lublin. The bolted doors open from both sides. The SS men pile in like savages, beating and screaming 'out,' 'Jews off the train.' We do not step off but we fall out all at once. Butts of guns and truncheons are raised above our backs. We can see nothing even though it is broad daylight. There are loads of men, several thousand of them, around us. They were added during our journey. We are all led along the broad road leading to Majdanek. I turn this way and that, trying to escape this hell. Unfortunately, my thoughts and my desires cannot be fulfilled. We are accompanied by a great number of bandits, who guard us closely. I decide to accept the same fate that awaits my comrades.

We get closer. A huge gate with the words 'Labor camp' written on it opens. We start going in. Shouting erupts. They beat us to make us run faster. We collapse on top of each other at the entrance. They put down barbed wire to make us trip over onto each other. What an ordeal they have prepared for us. We were put into rows of six. Nobody was allowed to sit down. We spent a whole day and night standing like this. There is a large open space in Majdanek. The recently-installed gas furnaces were already operational. It was only in the morning that

we noticed that several thousand people had been driven out of the barracks. They were made to do gymnastics. The rules of this sport involve one Jew beating another. That was their exercise... We also saw at this point people on scaffolding carrying bricks up and down. Each person looks like a small insect. The following day at 5 a.m. they start leading us out; several thousand Jews from various shtetls. They lead us to the train station. We don't wait there long. A freight train arrives. Carrying horses and other goods. They drive us 120 at a time into each car, which they bolt shut from the outside. We travel in an unknown direction. One man says that we are going to Germany; another says our destination is unknown. We travel for several hours deep into the night. We reach a station but nobody knows where we are. The murderers drive us out of the wagons. It is night. Only the moon provides light. The murderers shout: 'Anyone trying to escape will be shot on the spot.'

We soon hear rifle fire. The murderers had killed two people so that nobody would try to escape.

We hear shouts: 'move it, faster, faster!' We have to start running. We run so quickly that we trip over each other. We throw off our rucksacks along the way to make running easier. We can hear the gunshots and the final screams of those being murdered. We keep running until we reach the large square. We are led in, one without a jacket, another without a hat, a third without his shoes, we all dropped our rucksacks along the way. That was how we looked. And then the Germans said, 'you can sleep on the floor.' We look around the get our bearings. The moon is shining bright; it seems like daytime. At 2 a.m. we see in the distance piles of people sleeping on the wet ground. We approach them. Indeed, they are people, our brothers and sisters. They have been sleeping like this on the wet ground for three or four months already. They looked like monkeys rather than humans. Unshaven, scruffy, barefoot, naked. The first thing they said to us was: 'Give us some bread.' We had come from home and were still full. Anyone who had any bread handed it over to them immediately. And they also told us that there were lots of Gypsies working in the camp, too. They also told us that they were working close to the border in a town called Bełżec. The camp commander is Amon.

We lay down on the ground beside each other and fell asleep for a while from exhaustion.

It starts getting light. The signal to get up is the sound of a bell. Everyone is already on their feet, barefoot, naked, cold. We run over to get that drop of coffee and slice of bread. We still have not been given the right to work or eat. The commander, the infamous Amon, soon approaches, with the good news that we would soon receive our coffee and bread, then we shall go to the village of

Narol, 18 km away and 2 km from the Soviet border. We start marching. We are accompanied by a dark cloud. The rain pours the whole way. We drop like flies. We have reached Narol, two kilometers from the Russian border. We are all driven into a large, ruined mill. A Jewish miller had lived there. A local told us this, a Jewish tailor. The German had left the tailor in place because he was very nice but the rest of the Jews had been shot dead. The wealthy miller hanged himself at home. His wife and two children were shot. The Germans give us two days' off to recover a bit, but they do not feed us. Each of us lies there half dead, exhausted, and soaked from the rain. On the third day they chase us out first thing in the morning. They give us coffee but no bread. We hadn't managed to finish our coffee before one of the SS men started shouting 'faster, line up.' We all run with our heads lowered to avoid getting beaten with truncheons. We walk part of the way, some two kilometers, along an unknown path through fields. At some point some red posts appear. They mark the border. When we get closer, the oberleutnant [senior lieutenant] shouts that nobody is allowed to look to the right, toward the border. Anybody who does look will be shot. They line us up one behind another and show us how we are supposed to work. A car appears in the distance. The infamous murderer Dolf appears. He is wearing civilian clothing, he is short, dark, in a white coat, always carrying his wicker cane. He comes closer and asks if we are all Jews. We say yes. Then he starts beating us with his cane. He runs along the entire row, beating each man until he bleeds. Upon finishing his work, he returns to his car and carries on his way. We are standing with spades in our hands and working. We now know how. There are German experts next to us who show us how to work. What our task actually is, we don't know. It is kept secret from us. But [the work] had to be done. Our work helped make the trenches that were being prepared for the war against Russia. That much we understood. We are working day in, day out. We are forbidden from lifting our heads while working. We are closely guarded by the SS men. There are machine guns next to us. Anyone who lifts his head during work and is spotted by an SS man gets fifty lashes on his naked body. And we have to execute the punishment ourselves; one Jew has to beat another.

And then things get even worse for us!

We come home, to the camp, and more work is waiting for us. We have to wash the floors, clean the toilets with our hands, carry stones from one place to another. Once we have done a load of work we get dinner, some water infused with leaves. Then it gets dark. Some sleep on the bare floor. Outside we can hear the wild screams of the SS. We are closely guarded and surrounded by barbed wire. The morning comes together with the savage cries of the murderers: 'Schneller, into the yard.' We don't even get to drink our drop of coffee. We go to work. It is

heavy labor, from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. We get dinner while we work. We are starving. We get 200g of bread each evening. One man rips another man's small piece of bread from his hands. And these long days drag on. We can see no way out. Many of my colleagues decide to run across the border during the morning march. One foggy morning several colleagues run across the border trenches. It is very easy to escape and from that day on somebody always did it.

Security has been increased overnight to stop people escaping. Those colleagues who had escaped cost us a great number of victims. The first punishment saw thirty people counted out who were then shot. The second punishment: two days without food and having to lie down in the trenches without moving. Anyone who did not walk straight on the way to work was killed immediately. The situation became dire. Despite this, many colleagues still escaped over the border. The German murderers killed ten people every day as a warning. But even that did not stop anyone. The escapes continued but the border had been significantly reinforced. The Russians stopped letting people through. And once we had nowhere to go, things got even worse. We were tortured, shot, made to do various gymnastic exercises: we had to crawl on our bellies through water, enter the water in our clothes, strip naked at night, and enter the cold water.

The torturers had the pleasure of torturing us in a variety of ways. During work they dressed our colleague in ten coats and ordered him to run quickly. Is it possible to run quickly when dressed in so many layers? Our colleague ran but not how they wanted him to. That is why he was shot at and killed. Another colleague was told to strip naked and go into the water. Once he was in the water, a shooting lesson was conducted using him for target practice. He was shot ten times. He lay dead in the water. The murderers had another sadistic pleasure: they ordered [a person] to run toward the border. Seeing someone approaching from a distance, the border guards killed him instantly! We had five months of such adventures with the guards.

The nights are getting longer. It is getting gradually colder. We go barefoot and naked. Winter is approaching, harsh frost. We are stretched out on the ground with nothing covering us, cuddled up to each other. We cannot sleep for the cold. We are woken for work by the murderous cold. Many of us dream of being shot in the course of this day.

They drive us to work as on any other day, but nobody knows who will come back alive. There were fewer of us with each passing day. Each day, ten people were missing. Each day we return from work no longer as living human beings but lifeless. Each day we must strip naked and bathe. The water is already freezing. We have to lie in the water, pushing one another under the surface. My colleagues write to their parents saying that they cannot withstand all the torture.

Winter is getting ever closer. We are taken to another camp. On the way already I consider escaping. I cannot take it anymore. Enough. We reach a station near Kielce. We are supposed to be transferred onto another train. I turn suddenly from the path straight into the forest. It is night. Nobody notices me. The train starts moving and rolls on. I am left alone in the forest with no idea where I am. The moon is still fairly high. It seems to be around midnight. I am very hungry, I haven't eaten for several days. I wander around the forest thinking about what to do. Lying in the forest is not the best idea, after all. I have to think about where to go next. I see a light shining quite a way off. I walk for a long time and a long way before reaching a house and knocking. They are afraid to open up. I tell them who I am but that doesn't help. They won't let me in. I ask the woman to open the door. I am told that there is another Jewish family somewhere close to the village. I carry on a short distance and, luckily, I come across the Jewish family. They immediately open the door and give me something to eat. They are a very poor family. I go to sleep and in the morning ask where I am. They tell me that we are near Kielce. I try to get home as quickly as possible.

Once I got home my parents greeted me with tears in their eyes. They thought that the Germans had shot me. Many other colleagues had also managed to escape along the way and they had told [my parents] that I was the first to escape and they then followed my example. My parents were very pleased to see me.

But that was not the end of the war. My suffering was only just beginning.

1941

I returned home from the camp in 1941.

Things are not the same at home. Life is sad in every Jewish home. Murderers are roaming the streets and capturing people to work, taking people for the whole day, to labor. Old Jews do not go out onto the streets at all. Each Jew who is caught outside has his beard cut off. Old people are made to do extra heavy labor. Jewish policemen are running about fulfilling German orders. Nobody is permitted to be on the streets after 5 p.m.

Jews are experiencing the very worst things!

There are new orders affecting Jews:

They may not live in the suburbs.

All Jews must live together.

Jews are also forbidden from living on main streets.

A separate district is declared for Jews. There are announcements declaring that Jews will be killed for going over to the Polish side. Police are stationed on each street. Men, Jews, cannot go anywhere.

The Jews have a Jewish police force with a Judenrat, a Jewish post office. The Jews do not have Jewish courts, they do not have a right to them. Other than that, the Jews have got everything. One Jew can beat another Jew. There is no punishment for that!

1942

The ghetto is established!

The streets are cordoned off with barbed wire and tall fences. Those streets are handed over to the Jews. It is difficult to describe how cramped it is. Four families are moved into a single room. Various deadly diseases emerge. People are dying every day. Hunger starts to affect almost every household. Hunger forces many people to cross outside the ghetto but death awaits them there.

And so the days and nights pass.

1942 has barely begun and we learn that deportations are taking place in the surrounding towns.

We refuse to believe it. But people are talking about it a lot.

There are rumors that people are being taken to their deaths rather than to work. The deportations get ever closer to the surrounding shtetls.

We now have to believe in our own deaths.

We learn that deportations are occurring in Ostrowiec, Klimontów, and many other small towns.

We know that at any moment we will face the same fate as Jews from Ostrowiec, Klimontów, and other places.

22 October 1942. Deportation

[People] from the surrounding towns are being pushed out to Opatów. Now we realize that we will all leave this town together. There is great panic. People are going back and forth, there is no escape. The chairman of the Judenrat uses up his final favor with the county governor. A new compulsory quota is imposed on the town. Perhaps that will help. The Jews give up more of their possessions to be able to remain in place. But this will bring relief for only a few days. The Jews volunteer to go to the camps or for heavy labor, anything to avoid being sent to death.

People are still going to various camps. But not the poor. Because you need a lot of gold and diamonds to get into a camp. The Judenrat will not have it any other way. Only wealthy Jews leave, such as Heniek Lange, a wealthy Jew, and others, also wealthy Jews. The poor must go to their deaths.

Everybody knows that either today or tomorrow others will also go. But there are still those who do not believe their own deaths are inevitable. For example Mendl Neme, Mendl Sojpe, and others.

We are well aware of where we will be going today or tomorrow.

Deportation

22 October 1942 at 5 a.m.

Rumors abound that deportation will take place tomorrow. People pack their rucksacks and prepare. They do not sleep at night. There is great panic. We spend the whole night sitting nervously on our rucksacks.

The clock strikes five and a siren starts to howl frenetically, the sound as is used for fires. But this time it is a sign that Jews must leave their homes and houses.

The siren dies down quickly.

The shouts and screams of women and children ring out.

The noise and confusion on the streets increases with every passing minute.

Orders are being issued on every street: 'Get out of your houses! Quickly. All Jews are to gather on the large marketplace. And fast!'

It is the Jewish police barking these orders.

The town is surrounded from all sides.

The gendarmerie is standing armed with machine guns.

The military police, the auxiliary police, the penal expedition, the navy-blue [i.e. Polish – PV] police, and fire brigade are all involved.

Even the firemen are participating in the death of Jews!

They appear in all corners of the town.

Military police enter each house shouting: 'Jews out, quickly.' Truncheons are now whistling past each person's head.

Jews holding small parcels are coming from all directions.

The women lead small children, carrying one, leading another by the hand, while a third comes running from behind.

Old Jewish men come with their elderly wives, barely managing to drag their feet.

Behind them, the crying of children can be heard. Women are carrying their newborn children wrapped in pillows.

From every street dark masses of people with their heads bowed shuffle out.

The panic is so great that people do not want to go far from their homes. They are shot on the spot.

Jews from all over the town had by now gathered.

On the great marketplace there are 12,000 Jews driven out from other towns.

Shooting can be heard in town, as a warning against trying to escape.

People are standing quietly on the square, although the crying of older and younger children can be heard.

The Kreishauptmann [the county governor] gives the Jewish commander, Jurk Herberg, an order to line up the Jews into rows of six and prepare them for marching off.

The entire municipal authorities have now gathered on the square and are issuing orders to Jews.

There is no longer a Judenrat nor any police. Everyone is equal in the face of death.

The murderer Helcl [?] runs between the rows, selecting men for labor. He approaches me and strikes a blow with his rubber truncheon: 'step aside, you're still fit to work.' I do not even have the chance to bid my parents and sister farewell, even though I was standing beside them. I was so fearful of getting struck again. I look at my parents for the final few minutes. I am thinking 'I will never see You again.'

I am led aside as part of a group of fifty people. From a distance we can see others beginning their march.

It is a 15-kilometer walk to the train.

Crying and screaming can already be heard. Everyone must pass through a gate guarded by a gendarme on each side who beats each person passing through regardless of whether it is a man, woman, or child.

People start dropping their packages.

People lose sight of their children.

People throw off their thick coats just to make things easier.

People tear up money along the way.

It is difficult to communicate the tragedy of this day.

There numerous bodies of those who could not walk quickly enough are strewn along the route.

The road is also lined by the corpses of those who did not want to go on. Their final words were: 'I was born here and want to die here!'

Our group of fifty young people temporarily spared stands watching full of bitterness in our hearts as our parents, sisters, and brothers march to their deaths, as they are tortured.

The square is now empty.

We stand closely guarded – we may not move until the guards give the order. We don't know what they will do to us.

The order comes for us to clear up the town, to clear up what remains of the Jews, above all the packages that the Jews had abandoned along the way. We are to clear up the corpses. We clear everything from the square. There is gold and there are diamonds that people threw off along the way, hundreds of banknotes that had been ripped up into small pieces. We collect various valuable possessions. We walk along the route that our parents had been led along and collect their dead bodies.

Night falls. We are dead tired. Each of us can barely stand.

They lead us back into the ghetto.

They are leading us back into the ghetto!

A deadly silence has enveloped the streets. The corpses of dead Jews are lying beside the houses where they once lived.

The paving stones are soaked with blood.

The only sound is that of the doors swinging on each house.

There is peace and quiet now in the ghetto.

There are no more Jews.

Only in the distance can we hear the footsteps of gendarmes. [on p. 22, in the margins, added in Sztarkman's handwriting together with two names written in a different hand: Same Sztajman (Same Sztajnman), Szmil Lilenbam (Szmuel Lilenbojm)].

They lead us all into one house. We lie down tired, exhausted. The morning comes. Our task is to find those who are hiding in basements.

Other tasks: collecting for the Germans

- Jewish property and gathering it in one room;
- nice furniture;
- nice, valuable things.

Each German selects two people and... we start searching.

In the first house we find an elderly woman. She was physically unable to walk to the deportation. A German kills her immediately. In other houses we encounter small children.

On the second day we see a child lying in a cot sucking on a bottle. The gendarme Biler, a cold-hearted murderer, picks up the child and starts playing with it.

He considers what to do with the child.

Not a single child is to survive, after all! ['He kills it.' Added in different handwriting.]

We encounter such situations in many houses.

On the third day after the deportation a different group goes on a search and finds [added in different handwriting – ‘another group together with the Germans spotted steam coming from Szmul Grinsztajn’s basement’] a basement where over forty people, the wealthiest in town, were hiding. All of them are immediately led to the cemetery; women, children, men. All of them were killed simultaneously by machine gun fire. We receive an order to clear up those who had been shot. We start digging a common grave for them.

We put them all inside in the Jewish way. The order forbade covering up the grave. Perhaps there will be more Jews, but if not, then it would be a place for those fifty people who had been kept alive!

And this is how we work each day.

During the course of a single day, a huge amount of goods are collected for the Germans.

Each day, valuable items worth millions of zlotys are taken away.

They keep a close eye on us. We are counted three times a day. No one can go missing nor can our number increase.

There was no escape for the Jews hidden in the basements.

I entered the cellar of the house we had lived in and spotted a family hiding there. They threw themselves on me, three small children, a man and a woman.

‘Save us, we’re already half dead.’

I took the eldest, the nineteen year-old son, with me immediately and tried to arrange for him to leave. I don’t know what happened to him. I could not help the family at all. I did everything I could. For ten days I gave them food and kept an eye on them.

Then they gave themselves up for death!

Our work is ending! In six weeks’ time.

The question arises: what will they do with us?

Our grave is ready.

In the meantime, I get some Aryan papers in order to go to Warsaw.

They give us advanced warning. They catch us early in the morning. They take us to the ghetto in Sandomierz. Along the way, several colleagues are shot dead trying to escape. Several do manage to escape. They are caught by the navy Police.

There are not many of us left.

An excerpt of Governor-General Frank’s order:

‘All Jews in hiding may now move about freely; nobody else will be shot!

In all of Poland, just two ghettos will be created. All Jews will work and be free. The ghettos will be Radom and Sandomierz.’

This was the perfect trap for all the Jews in hiding.

We, the living, are already in the Sandomierz ghetto. The town and the ghetto of Sandomierz has already experienced one deportation. And now, from all directions, come the Jews who have until now been hiding in basements, forests and various other hideouts.

The Germans are surprised that there are still so many. But we have already eradicated all the Jews from all towns!

Each day, the number of people grows massively. There are already 1200, counting only those who had been hiding. It is a great mystery for the Germans.

The ghetto is already overflowing. It is getting crowded on the streets. The ghetto is sealed off even more tightly with each passing day.

Nobody is allowed out of the ghetto, but anyone is welcome to come inside!

November 1942

I experience my second deportation on the streets of the Sandomierz ghetto.

A huge number of people approach from all sides. People are lying in the lofts of houses or simply on the streets. It is impossible to find a home. Everything had been destroyed in the first deportation.

A tragic day in the ghetto approaches.

There is great panic. It is crowded beyond description.

Terrible diseases are spreading through the entire ghetto.

There is great hunger. People are dying in huge numbers each day.

There is no medical assistance in the ghetto.

The authorities issue an order: a Jewish doctor must inform the authorities immediately if anyone falls ill. The sick person is then sent to be shot.

Treating the sick is strictly forbidden. Each day, a list of the sick is handed to the infamous murderer Lescher. He kills all the sick himself. The mass murderer Lescher, who slaughtered thousands of victims, is short, very fat, and always wears white gloves in order to avoid getting his hands dirty while killing.

Due to a significant epidemic in the ghetto, each day one hundred sick people are gathered who are then led to "the good place".

I am working. Together with many other colleagues I have been allocated to work for several weeks.

We can hear the screams of the sick as we load them on to carts: 'Load us carefully, our bones are hurting.' They ask where we are taking them. We respond with silence.

And so the days and nights pass in the ghetto.

After a hard days' work we return to the house. Tired, we collapse into sleep in the ghetto.

Next to you is your dead colleague's body. You had been talking and discussing things with him during the night, the night when his life came to an end.

Another terrible sickness that is sweeping through the ghetto also affects me.

I lie down in the house on a thin layer of straw and I am overcome with fever.

I know what awaits me.

My comrades soon carry me up to the loft. I can lie up there somewhat more peacefully. A guard is established to keep an eye on me and ensure that the murderer Lescher does not come to me during his hunt for the sick. I am lying calmly in the loft with a fever. My colleagues do everything to keep me alive for now. I have been there for several days now. A doctor that we know from Klementów, Kapłan, comes to me at midnight. It is impossible at any other time of day. He tells me, 'sick man, try to get better quickly. The word on the street is that the ghetto will be cleared on 15 December and it is the seventh today.'

'What difference does it make to me,' I tell him, 'whether I die here or go with the other Jews.' The doctor tells me: 'It's better to get better.'

On the thirteenth day I come down from the loft, although I am barely able to stand.

There is confusion and crying on the streets, people are trying to escape to freedom. After asking what's going on, I am told: the ghetto will be cleared on the fifteenth!

There is white snow and frost on the streets.

There are frozen dead bodies in each nook and cranny. There are dead little children. No one is interested in us. I am wandering about alone and wondering what to do. I am sick and broken, without a way out.

No!

I will not surrender to the Germans!

I will never forget that Saturday evening!

The ghetto is surrounded, barricaded from the outside. The military police and ordinary police arrive from every town. Every inch of land is within the range of a machine gun.

The ghetto uprising ['in the Warsaw ghetto the uprising is beginning' – in different handwriting] is ['already' – in different handwriting] already underway.

That is why the ghetto is guarded so closely.

On Saturday evening, people start falling like flies.

The Germans are firing into the ghetto.

The Germans are throwing incendiary bombs.

Houses catch fire.

Women commit suicide together with their children [‘the sister of the ghetto commander Herberg poisons herself and her two children’ – in different handwriting] in order to avoid deportation the following day.

* p. 1, 2.

A tragic moment that I experienced in Sandomierz during deportation.

A woman has two children taken away, a boy and a girl. The children are put on a cart that is to take them to their deaths. The woman has been spared for now. She was still capable of working. The woman grabbed hold of the cart and refused to leave her children. The German leading the blockade refused to allow her to go with her children. She was beaten and dragged away from the cart. But she did not relent. Eventually, the German’s heart softened and he allowed her to take one child. She could not decide which child to take with her and which one she should allow to be taken away. For a moment it seemed to her that she ought to take the boy, who was younger. The girl was already twelve, so she would be able to cope better. At another point she thought that she ought to take the girl because they would take the boy anyway, while she would have hope of survival as she is older.

I will never forget this scene when the mother ran wildly beside her children and could not decide which child to take – the boy or the girl.

Meanwhile, the German decided to take back both children. Not wanting to give the mother her two children, he killed her and took the children. *

On a Saturday evening!

I make one final attempt.

I climb onto the balcony facing the Aryan side and then slide down a rope. In the yard, where some Poles live, I quickly grab two buckets filled with lime and put a ladder on my shoulder and... leave the house. There are policemen and gendarmes standing guard but nobody suspects that I am a Jew!

I am on the Aryan side!

I escape that hell – there is still a world out there!

But not for Jews.

Now I face another tricky problem. Where to go? I don’t have anyone to turn to.

I have not got long to think because each stone is suspect here.

It is nice in town, people are taking walks. Life goes on but I am sentenced to death.

Night falls.

I am already outside the town. I enter a Polish house. An elderly man tells me to take a seat and immediately gives me something to eat, although he does not

allow me to stay long because he is very afraid. I ask him for advice on what to do now. He understands my terrible situation. He advises me to go into the woods. The Rakowiec woods are close by and there I will encounter Jews and partisans there. His advice cheers me up.

The old Gentile gives me directions.

I take the road leading to Raków. The forest is on the left next to the village of Stołczyn.

I enter the forest. Night has fallen already. I wander alone. I am not convinced that I will meet anyone here. Near the forest there is a small hut made of straw. I approach it. A tiny glimmer of light is visible. I consider my options. I am after all alone, which is as good being non-existent. I don't hesitate for long and climb into the cellar so that the owner doesn't notice. I am completely calm. A dog is barking a lot.

I hear the owner open the door and approach the cellar. I am overcome with fear.

He opens the little door to the cellar. His quiet voice says: 'There you go, Mosiek, supper.'

Nobody speaks.

I think that it is because of me that they are scared to speak. The owner shouts again, 'Take your supper because it'll get cold. It's cold.'

I hesitate no more and reveal myself. There are three other Jews in the basement. We share supper.

They start asking me where I have come from, how I got into the basement at night, where I escaped from, from which camp. I tell them exactly how things look. I tell them about the most recent action in Sandomierz and how it looked.

Now they tell me about their difficult circumstances:

'There were several hundred Jews in the forest. There had been no Germans here the whole time. We lived well enough, better than in the ghetto. We all went around together, only Jewish partisans. We had two machine guns. We had several [ordinary] rifles and also small firearms.

We had taken it all from Germans.

There were also plenty of Polish partisans.

We had good hiding places in the forest. There were women and children with us.

But the AK [Home Army] partisans refused to accept that we should be left alive.

AK received an order to confiscate the Jews' arms.

One fine morning the forest was surrounded by a large number of AK bandits; they order us to surrender our weapons.

They need our weapons.

The Jews can remain in the woods unarmed. They tell us that they have few weapons and that they need to go on various missions.

Our answer was that we can accompany you on various missions.

They refuse.

We understood that if we let them take our weapons then they will also take our lives.

We told them – no!

The AK men immediately responded by shooting. Many people died on our side. We also killed a few of them.

They emerged victorious.

We could no longer fire at them, we were out of ammunition.

The three of us managed to escape. They dealt with the rest of the Jews, the youths, the women, and small children.’

* These are my three colleagues that I met in the basement. All three are from Tarnobrzeg.

They escaped the town during the first deportation in 1942 in the month of August. They had spent several months alone in the forest. They were attacked by the Germans until AK eliminated the Germans.

Their names are Alte [Alter] Kojfman – Tarnobrzeg, Szlojme Mandel – Tarnobrzeg, Chil Minc – Tarnobrzeg. *

Several hundred Jews were captured by them. They took everything, ordering the Jews to dig pits for themselves before they were all shot.

Our trio managed to escape their clutches.

There are no more Jews in this forest.

What are our options for the future?

Lying in the cellar is not much of an option. The owner is scared. We pay him very well each day. We think hard about what to do.

To top it all, it is winter and the world is closed off. And on top of that, we don't know who to hide from: the Germans or AK, the partisans.

We decide that one of us will go out to establish if there are any Jews left anywhere. I am the first to volunteer and I go...

I learn that close to Sandomierz, in Mokoszyn, there is still a camp for Jews holding 300 people.

I approach the camp. It is evening. I encounter one Jew.

I am very happy that there are still Jews.

* The camp commander is Jurek Hercberg. He had also been the commander of the Jewish Police in Opatów. He is the son of Chemje [Nechemje] Hercberg and comes from Łódź.

Jurek Hercberg is shot during the liquidation of the camp.

There was no evidence of improper behavior on the part of the commander. *

I start asking if I can stay here. He tells me that there are lots of people from Opatów. The camp commander is Jurek Hercberg. There are other people that I know: Chaim Erenberg, another kind of camp commander. There is also chairman Wajsblum. I contact chairman Wajsblum but unfortunately, for now, he is unable to help me. He is no longer the chairman here but an ordinary worker. Another acquaintance comes out to me – his name is Kucze Sobol from Opatów. As usual, he is pleased to see me. He tells me about the situation here, how things are looking. I tell him about my circumstances.

He tells me that they are guarded closely. They are counted each day. There can be no more than 300 people in the camp at any one time. Manhunts for illegals take place each day. Several such illegals are killed in the camp each day. For the time being he sees no chance of me staying. I tell him that I would like to remain here at least until the spring. It is winter, cold and frosty.

There is no chance of living.

Kucze has various pieces of advice for me. For the time being, he promises me a place to sleep in a loft somewhere near the camp. There are manhunts each day; they search for people who have no right to be in the camp.

There are lots of Jews wandering about the camp.

It is winter. There is nowhere to go. As on any other day, a few “illegal” people are killed.

Circumstances become so dire that it becomes impossible to even approach the camp. I can meet my acquaintances only when they are working. They are less closely guarded then.

Evening comes. I have nowhere to go. Each of us looks for a hole to sleep in. Night is the worst time of day. We have to be brave and cautious.

The whole area is inhabited by Germans. We are not always able to sleep in the same spot. Often someone reveals them.

When night falls, all us illegals meet. Each of us looks for our own spot. A few of us meet in a dilapidated, abandoned house. This is our place to sleep. It would be good if we enjoy some peace in this abandoned house at least.

The camp in Mokoszyn.

In Mokoszyn there are 100 people doing various jobs. Women are employed in the fields on the same terms as men, working on the harvest. The hours are

from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m. Women have to do the hardest work. The rest of the people must carry on working on the road where a railway line is being built. I would agree to even the hardest work, if only I could be made a legal!

I do not even have the right to work! And so my life goes on from day to day.

There are fewer of us illegals with each passing day. We ask ourselves: what will happen tomorrow? Who is destined for death the following day?

And it is night again. We all gather again in the ruined house even though we are convinced that this house will be the end of us all.

But there is no other way out. After all, we can't sleep outside!

There is a mighty frost. There is no end of winter in sight.

We are all lying in our places. One man covers another with a handful of straw.

We are a ragtag bunch from various towns: young, old, middle-aged.

I cannot sleep!

In the hell that we find ourselves in some people still have the urge for a laugh. In order not to lose the last traces of hope.

I sense that the atmosphere is different than usual. I leave the house and go in search of a different hiding place.

I am standing some 200 meters from the house and see a car full of military police approach. The house is surrounded by machine guns to prevent anyone escaping.

I stand some distance away and see the military police running in various directions, holding flashlights. They lead everyone outside and take all their possessions.

These are their names:

Herszel [Hirsch] Sosnowicz, Chaim Fiszman, Marmurek – a girl, two cousins of the Sosnowicze, Jumele [Benjamin] Tofel, Kalme [Kalman] Orensztejn, the son of Wromale [Awrumale, Abraham] Sosnowicz from Opatów, the son of Srule [Izrael] Fiszman from Opatów, the daughter of the baker Szol [Szaul, Saul] Marmurek from Opatów, the son of Frajdla Tofel from Opatów, who had a paint shop, and the son of Iczele [Icchak, Izaak] Orensztejn from Opatów.

And many other people whose names I do not know.

Of this group, Herszl Sosnowicz managed to escape. He received a slight injury to his right arm. Joml Tofel also managed to escape as he was being led to the firing squad. He would be killed, however, in the next manhunt.

The rest are all shot.

Chaim Fiszman managed to write down a few words for anyone who survived with the order that they avenge the innocent Jewish blood that has been spilled.

And this is how the last surviving Jews are killed.

This is the end of the Jews!

* I will stop to reflect on the death of my friend Jumale Tofel, who fought so hard for his life, who always showed the way to escape German capture, who survived terrible moments in various camps, who refused to surrender to the German murderers. He was killed by the murderers as he tried to escape.

Juma Tofel from Opatów, son of Frajdla Majer!!!

Herszel Sosnowicz of Opatów – it is worth describing how he behaved in the camp, where throughout his time there he had the status of an illegal. As he escaped with many of his colleagues, he was wounded in the arm. He treats his wounded arm, experiences very tragic days and months and ... remains among the living. *

The Mokoszyn camp is transferred to Sandomierz. Now I have lost all hope. I cannot appear on the road to Mokoszyn even though so few of us are now left.

I decide to seek shelter in the area I am from, in Opatów. I begin my journey though I no longer see any sense in all my wandering; the murderers are all around.

I enter Opatów. It is evening. I take only the side streets so that I am not spotted by anyone. But this does not help. I encounter some young Polish children.

They spot an alien person, so it must certainly mean a Jew. They start shouting, 'Jew'.

I start to make my escape, but their shouts become ever louder.

I am done for!

Suddenly – silence. An elderly man, a Pole, stops the children and forbids them from shouting 'Jew' anymore...

* Chaim Erenberg from Opatów
son of Josef Erenberg.

I write about my colleague Chaim Erenberg with great gratitude. He was the first person to give me help in my difficult life. As the camp commander, he did everything that he could for me.

Chaim Erenberg was the first man who conducted illegal work in the camp, who organized the groups which escaped to join the partisans, who gathered weapons that he bought from his Polish comrades. He was an excellent commander, helping his illegal colleagues, rescuing them from death on many occasions.

Chaim Erenberg was arrested by the Germans in 1943 in the month of August. He is released together with Mordche [Mordechaj] Wajsblum, the chairman of the Opatów Judenrat. They were accused of being in possession of gold and foreign currency that they were supposed to have surrendered to the Germans.

They are released. They are transferred to another camp in Pionki. Chaim Erenberg is liberated from the camp by the Red Army. The chairman from Opatów Mordche Wajsblum did not survive, he died. *

I carry on my way and approach a house that I wish to enter. I knock. They ask who is it. This Gentile knows my name very well. They open the door and I enter. They give me not the worst of welcomes. All this comes at a price. I rewarded them well with various goods. I gave them quite enough during the six weeks that I spent here after the action.

They soon tell me all the news.

About the situation in the town.

There are no more Jews in the town.

They tell me that I can spend one night at their place. I can see for myself that things are not good here. People are coming in and out all day.

They ask me what I need. Perhaps I need money or something else.

I tell them that I don't need anything, only a place to stay.

They find no answer to this.

I go to sleep.

It has been a long time since I slept in a bed. Just one night a year like this would be enough!

The following day I ask for advice again. I can see that this Gentile wants to find a solution for me. He takes me to his close acquaintance in another settlement near Ostrowiec.

I stay for some time in the village of Kinice, serving as a shop assistant.

I feel fairly well. Nobody knows that I am a Jew.

However, it is not advisable to stay too long in one place.

People start looking at me.

Who am I?

Certain Poles start pestering me. Again I have to leave this place.

And yet again I go where they know me, to the village of Czerników. I also I have people I know there.

But there is no solution to my problem to be found here either. I can spend no more than one day with anyone I know. Each person fears death.

There is great fear in the village.

For sheltering a Jew at home – a death sentence. This is the case in each village.

Each Pole who captures a Jew gets 1000 zlotys from the Germans.

Such a high price for a Jew!

I pay a visit to many more of my acquaintances. I get dressed and carry on back to Sandomierz. I approach the camp.

I meet my colleague Kawczara [Kawaczara, Kawacza?] from our hometown of Opatów again. I tell him about my difficult circumstances, about all the places that I had already been to, and how all roads lead to death. I also tell him about how difficult it is to use the roads these days. You live in fear of each person you encounter.

He listens to me with a pained heart. For now he cannot give me any precise information.

We meet again the following day. He tells me that the situation is not good. There is a fear that the camp will be liquidated.

He informs me of a lot of other matters. There is an option of establishing contact with the partisans. I smile at this and say that this would be a good thing.

‘There are various partisans, not all of them are AK,’ he tells me. He also tells me that ‘we need to be in touch with them but there is no one among us who would go to negotiate with them. The route is very dangerous.’

I reply that I will voluntarily, personally take on this task.

He agrees and so he tells me that ‘the creator of this is Chaim Erenberg from Opatów.’

I start leading this conspiratorial work.

Meanwhile, Chaim Erenberg does everything he can to secure legal status for me in the camp. This will make it easier to conduct conspiratorial work.

I am now, with equal status, in the camp!

A few days later I receive a letter that needs to be given to the partisans. I dress differently than usual.

I hire a cart and travel without fear.

I travel completely at ease without fright.

I want to achieve my goal for the good of all my comrades.

I arrive at the designated spot close to the forest by Mydlów.

Someone is already waiting for me. It is the man whose description I have been given. He is easily recognizable. I am completely satisfied by his first words to me.

I hand over the letter to him with joy.

There is silence for several minutes.

He tells me about the situation in this village. Each day the gendarmerie conducts manhunts. Battles occur between the partisans and the gendarmerie, while there are heavy frosts to boot. It is still too early for people to be staying in the woods, particularly for women. But youths and men can come already if they want.

He tells me something else: "Things will be great if you could all only wait a little longer, since the heavy frosts mean the conditions in the forest are still unsuitable.

There is also no use counting on finding a place to stay in a house. But if any of you find yourselves in a particularly threatening situation, then you can come immediately.

When you come next time, you will be given a firearm.'

I travel home feeling encouraged. I return to the camp.

I tell Chaim Erenberg everything I know about the current circumstances. He tells me that for now we can sit still in the camp for a little while longer. He has good sources.

During this period we will prepare our weapons and keep up permanent contact with those people.

I fulfill all of his orders. For now I sit still in the camp.

The work in the camp is not that heavy. We are employed on a railway line. We do the same thing each day.

All of the ghettos have now been liquidated.

There are no more Jews!

1943

The matter of the Jews in all the ghettos is over. There are now only barrack-type outposts holding youths.

The final remaining Jews are led here from those sites. Each day a number of individuals from that group are killed.

They bring 330 people from Stalowa Wola, men, women, and small children. They have managed to survive until now. They bought their survival with money, gold, and other valuable possessions.

This did not help them, though.

The murderers kill the last Jews!

The frosts won't abate.

Every day, forty people are led to the Jewish "better place" and shot dead.

There are already 330 dead there: women, children, and men.

There is a large mound of frozen corpses. There is no way to dig graves for them.

The dead bodies lie in the open for eight days before we can bury them. A common grave is dug for all of them, all 330 people.

In our camp the situation is becoming, day by day, more threatening. Searches are conducted daily. They are looking for weapons.

They take everything that anyone has on their person.

After two days the camp is, unexpectedly, surrounded by a large number of gendarmes.

What has happened, we ask each other.

We are all done for!

They tell everyone to go down to the square and line up immediately.

The SS men select those who are sick and look unwell. Those people must stand aside.

All those who are sick and look unwell are led away in the same direction – forever.

Only the healthy are left to work. Such selections take place constantly.

I receive another order from Chaim Erenberg to again find out the latest news. Is it possible to move out of the camp yet?

I again come to the designated spot. I take some money and other valuable possessions with me to buy weapons. We talk a bit about how things are looking and what we should do next.

I tell him that we cannot wait any longer. We do not know when the hour will come but we should avoid being late. We are gradually being liquidated in the camp.

He tells me that whoever wants to come can do so. I can bring two women for a start.

He gives me a weapon. [He orders] that I should lead this task myself and not communicate with anyone about it.

I return to the camp.

I again inform Chaim Erenberg of everything.

I lead the first two people to the partisans and return again. Everything is in order.

I properly get down to work. Each day I take two packages with bedding, underwear, and clothing out of the camp. I start transporting food and various cooking pots. Everything passes through my hands. And I feel no fear.

We remain in the camp for as long as possible. I take a colleague with me again. After arriving at the designated spot [I notice] a change.

The partisans have been ordered to stop accepting Jews. He tells me that they have been dominated by AK men. There are only AK in the area, but the people under his protection will be safe. "The partisans will not know that I am hiding Jews."

He promises me that he will not change his stance on the Jews, that he will keep them for as long as possible.

In the meantime, I should not bring any more people to avoid raising suspicions about this place.

The AK men murder Jews just like Germans.

We have enough proof that AK murders Jews.

AK tried to accept a few colleagues from our camp, swearing that they would lead them to the forest, to the partisans. They ordered the Jews to take as much money and valuables with them as possible. They led our comrades outside the town. And [there] they took everything. They killed eight people and even took the clothes off their back.

Thus we are threatened from all sides.

I speak to Chaim Erenberg again.

We even fear for the people that we have already sent over. But there is no other option.

If the Polish population is also against us! Now all hope of joining up with the partisans is lost. The whole area around Kielce has been poisoned by the AK men. But for them, dozens of young people would still have a chance of survival.

Any Jew who has not been killed by a German dies at the hands of AK or other Poles.

Chaim Erenberg gives me fresh advice: to hit the road. Perhaps I will find shelter for a few people.

I take the familiar route, to the village of Mydłów.

The largest gangs roam this area. I pay no attention to this fact. I walk all day. It is evening already. From a distance I spot a small hut in a field. The hut is located in a valley. It is barely visible between the hills and valleys. I thought to myself how wonderful it would be if the peasant agreed to what I have in mind. I am overcome with joy at this thought. I approach. A dog starts barking. The owner emerges. I ask if I may come in. Yes, he says. I would like to buy something to eat. He has nothing. Not even a piece of dry bread. He has only three morgens of poor quality land, this small cottage with a barn, and a small pony. The man himself is small.

He shivers with cold. His clothes – a patchwork of patches. He has no wife, she died three years ago. He is an older man, around 50. The only person who comes to him is Marysia, a poor girl who has nowhere else to go. He also has no children.

I ask him about everything. The fact that he is poor, that he has no wife or children is all good news to me.

He tells me that if only he had a pair of trousers and shoes then Marysia would marry him.

I tell him that I am a Jew. I ask him if he would like to give me shelter at his place; not for free, I will pay him well.

He immediately responds 'yes'. Even five people, too.

Nobody comes here.

Even Marysia agrees. But she would like a dress so that she could attend church.

I can tell that the small farmer is not aware of the situation that the Jews find themselves in. He wants everything immediately.

We have no other option.

I say goodbye. I will return the following week.

I am back in the camp.

I tell Chaim Erenberg everything again. We confirm the location. I send a carpenter there, our colleague, Lajbke [Łajbke] Rozen. His task is to prepare a bunker for five people.

I take Lajbke Rozen to the location. He will use all his powers to prepare a bunker for five people.

I experience terrible moments during the expeditions to and from the camp. My life is endangered on several occasions.

Everything I do is for my comrades. I have already found shelter for several of them.

The situation in the camp gets worse with every passing minute.

We seek various solutions.

I turn to Chaim Erenberg suggesting that we abandon the camp before it's too late. He says that we should wait a bit longer.

A few days later the camp is surrounded unexpectedly.

I manage to escape.

The rest remain in the camp. Only a few people escape. Those escaping are shot at. They start looking for us in the fields.

I lie in the fields until nightfall. Then I start to move on. I reach the village of Mydłów. I come to the peasant's place in the evening. My colleague Lajbke spots me. His first words are: 'where are our other colleagues?' I reply, 'they were late. We were surrounded and captured. I and a few other others managed to escape.' He shows me what an excellent job he has done. There is a solid bunker in the barn and in the loft. Double walls. Completely undetectable.

What am I to do?!

I wanted to save them so badly!

Lajbke and I talk on many occasions about the danger we are in. We have to guard ourselves against the Polish partisans.

I go to find out the latest from our comrades. I also tell them about our difficult circumstances. We need to be very careful. I promise them: 'I will come to you regularly.'

What does our life look like at Paweł's place, in winter in the bunker?

The bunker is two meters long and 1.5 meters wide. We built one bed to avoid sleeping on the floor. It is impossible to stretch out fully. We have to stand bent over.

It is dark in the bunker, we cannot see each other.

We spend all our time in the bed.

We are completely covered by snow.

Once a day our host comes to us with food.

The entrance to the bunker is very small. There is a dog next to our bunker that guards us. We know when we need to be quiet. Quiet!

Our host starts getting wise to us. Every day he needs something else. We have dressed him properly and given Marysia nice clothes. We have got the couple married.

Partisans start roaming the village. The AK partisans pose a greater danger to us than the Germans. We are surrounded by enemies on all sides.

Our host gradually begins to understand what a Jew signifies and that he, too, should therefore be afraid.

Money has opened our Paweł's eyes.

Our host raises his head higher and higher with each day.

To this day he has never understood the situation of the Jews nor the fact that the partisans are also delivering Jews to him.

He should behave differently with us.

Marysia, his wife, is also after something but she does not know what yet.

Our host wants to buy himself a few morgens of land.

I try to explain to him that it is forbidden to buy land now; people will understand that he is hiding Jews.

We will give him something else.

We give him money.

We give him various items.

Everything that we have brought him will be his. We need nothing. Only to survive this period.

Every day he needs more money. He comes up with various things to get more money out of us.

He tells us that he wants to build a new barn for grain. We explain to him again that he cannot do this now. So, instead, he wants to save up the money for when the war is over.

Now he also wants to hide the money, for the time after the war, for the couple of morgens of land.

He wants to get every last penny out of us. That is why he is sheltering Jews.

Our host now makes clear to us the extent to which our lives are endangered.

He knows everything. And his life is endangered, too.

That means we must keep on paying money.

And we now face the question of where to find so much money.

We are, after all, lying in a dark bunker.

Marysia, his wife, is also after something but she does not know what yet.

Our host understands that he must not wear a smart suit to church on a Sunday in order to avoid raising suspicions.

But Marysia won't hear of it. On Sunday she wants to show off to her cousins that Paweł, a farmer, had bought her a pair of knee-high lace-up boots. And had also sewn her a nice dress with a flowery headscarf to go with it.

Marysia made no efforts to hide anything; she was a stupid girl and did not understand at all that it was necessary to go without something.

And so suspicions had been growing for some time.

Our life carried on, day and night, without change.

We had no idea what was going on in the house.

One Sunday some guests visited Marysia. They are surprised by the good life-style she is enjoying. They say, 'your man only has three morgens of land.' They start to suspect something, but it is impossible to know about everything all at once.

Paweł is well-known in the village. Everybody knows that he is a poor farmer. After all, Paweł goes to work for the wealthier peasants during the harvest. He could not survive on his own farm without this extra work.

The whole village knows about this, of course.

The spring approaches.

It is February 1943.

We are still lying in the dark underground bunker. Various thoughts are whirling around our heads.

We could be saved if a second front opened up. The Germans would be driven out. And we would be left alive.

Such thoughts cross our minds ten times a day.

One day passes, then the next, then a whole week is gone.

We cannot remain in the bunker any longer, we will suffocate.

Outside it is spring already. We move from the bunker to the loft. We have a very good hiding place up there.

It is getting warmer outside. The snow in the surrounding fields is beginning to melt.

Those were the first signs of the approaching spring.

It is early in the morning. But, as usual, we are already on our guard.

As a result of constantly lying in one place we could not sleep for long. We awoke each morning to assess what was going on around us when the peasants headed out to the fields. We had to be careful. God forbid we should miss this moment.

Sometimes you can talk in your sleep. Talking in my sleep is an old habit of mine. Sometimes you might shout. Someone passing by might hear it through the wooden beams.

The wooden partitions in the loft were very thin, with gaps between each beam.

The village is waking up. Our host, with his pipe between his lips, is walking around and surveying his property.

The first visitor of the day was a female acquaintance of our host, a neighbor from a few farms away. Passing by our hut, she said to the farmer: 'good morning, Paweł, look at how green our field has become overnight.' He replies, 'ah, yes, indeed, right', looking surprised, before adding that 'we'll be able to send to cows out into the field in a few days' time.'

Because it had got warmer over the last few days, the wooden planks forming our hideout in the loft had dried out and so the gaps had grown to the extent that large beams of light came into our hiding place. Our spirits were raised. We played with the sunbeams, sticking out our limbs in their direction. It seemed that more life was pouring into our frozen bones.

Through the gaps we surveyed our surroundings and noticed for the first time how beautiful the landscape around our village is

When we arrived here it was winter and the snow had covered everything.

Now everything has been revealed.

We stared and admired the beauty of the surrounding nature ... A narrow stream of water cut through the field opposite us.

There was a young forest in the distance.

The sun reflected off the small stream which was fuller because of the melting ice.

A young peasant woman was standing on a small bridge rinsing small cheese bags. The milk is turning sour already, it is time to make cheese from it, she said to herself.

Along the path that leads into the village a few farmhands are walking, leading a bull on a chain. They approach the small bridge.

‘My cows were moaning – it was terrible! They need a bull already,’ says an older peasant to the girl. He stops next to her and asks, ‘hey, Maryśka, so you still don’t want to get married. Come to me, come on. I have 20 morgens, four cows, I am the richest farmer in the village, don’t you know. You’ll want for nothing with me.’

That’s Stach.

Our farmer has already told us a lot about him.

We knew that Stach is the wealthiest man in the village and that he has already had two wives. Both of them died. Now he is coming onto Maryśka. She is the daughter of our neighbor, but she wants nothing to do with Stach. She doesn’t like him, the same as all the other residents of the village. He is a very bad man. He won’t even give a poor man a potato. We also know that he betrayed a Jew this winter. This is how it was:

One night a Jew came to him, an escapee from a train taking Jews to Treblinka. He asked Stach to allow him to get warm and have a sleep. There was frost and snow outside. Stach refused to let him in until the Jew took his money out and showed it to him, then the old pig let the Jew sleep in his barn.

Our host heard the story from his farmhand.

The next day, however, Stach locked the sleeping Jew in the stable and went to report him to the village mayor. The Germans came and the Jew was caught. He was led to the forest and shot dead. As a reward, Stach received the Jew’s shoes and 10 kg of sugar, which he used sparingly during the winter.

Our host always told us that he fears Stach the most. ‘If he ever finds out about you, we’ll all be done for.’ It is possible to strike a deal with other peasants. But Stach cannot be bought at any price. He has sold his soul to the devil.

He is ours, Polish. But he is no better than the Germans.

Stach approached Maryśka but she ran off the small bridge and began splashing him with the wet cheesecloths. The farmhands were bursting with laughter.

‘You refuse, Marysia, you refuse, but you’ll see,’ he threatened her.

Marysia replied: ‘What can you do to me, perhaps you’ll lure me in like that Jew... I’m not afraid of you.’

‘You’ll see what I’ll do to you’ – and he left.

We were pleased. What we had witnessed felt like some kind of revenge on that bad peasant.

And later on when our host brought us our breakfast, we asked him, as usual, what's new. This time he told us about Maryška. She is different to the others in the village. She is more urban. She spent a few years working for Berek [Ber], the textile trader.

She liked Jews. If Berek ever came to her she would hide him from the Germans.

Berek was a decent man. He gave her material for a dress and a headscarf before each holiday. It was a Christmas present for her.

Our host explained that he would never fear her.

If she ever found out that Jews were in hiding here she would be very pleased.

One day passed and then another. The surrounding fields suddenly sprouted and became covered in greenery. The days got warmer and more spring-like, while the smell of the eve of Passover was in the air and reminded us of home. Our calendar, which we counted out ourselves, suggested that it would be Passover in a few days. We thought to ourselves: April, May, June, one more month, and one more after that, and the war will be over.

A second front will open up. The Germans will be attacked from all sides.

Perhaps we will hold out...

In a way, we started feeling more joyful. We kept each other's spirits up.

Huddled together in a corner, quietly, we read for the umpteenth time a German newspaper with a military communiqué that our host had brought from the town a few days ago.

We read the announcement over and over again, interpreting it in various ways in order to bring solace to our hearts during our tough life in the hideout.

And the communiqué read: 'The German army has surrendered to the enemy at Stalingrad following heroic resistance.'

This was reported by the general staff itself.

And if this is the case then that means that there is a chance that the whole German army would surrender the following day?! The Russians will keep marching onward and they will reach us, so we'll be saved!

That is what we dreamed of and fantasized about!!!

We were prepared for miracles!

We managed to convince ourselves so deeply that the mood became a bit more joyful.

We forgot about everything; including about the fact that we must always remember where we are.

We had already won the war!
Suddenly the Germans appeared in the village.
MANHUNT.

Our peasant came running in quickly. He hid us well and loaded the loft with hay so that nobody could approach the makeshift wall.

We curled up [into a ball] and quiet, shush!

The Germans split up around the village and searched every house.

They were looking for young people to deport for forced labor in Germany.

Many young boys and girls were taken away. Marysia was also caught.

The neighbors were full of remorse. She would not have been taken away had she married Stach.

Stupid girl. It's her own fault.

The Germans also came to our cottage. For the first time in six months. For the first time since we arrived.

Through the gaps in the walls we saw the savage murderers in green uniforms running by. They searched and poked around everywhere. And then left.

The worst it had come to were thumping hearts.

This made us conscious of the fact that the Germans are still around and that we still need to wait and lie low in the hideout. Our time had not yet come.

Our host tries to bring us news daily:

that the partisans are looking for Jews to execute; they proclaim the death penalty for anyone hiding Jews.

Our host has forbidden me to go to get news from our colleagues. He cuts off contact between us so that we know nothing about each other. He tells us that they are dead.

They were shot by partisans.

With each passing minute our lives are in ever greater danger. Partisans now appear in the village every day. They are also fighting against the Germans. Every night they come ever closer to our cottage. Our cottage is located on the edge of the village, near a young forest. That is why they come to our host's place to get a bit of rest.

When the evening came, ten to fifteen partisans armed with various weapons started asking our host if he had not heard about some Jews that were hiding in the village. The farmer explained that if he lived in the center of the village then he might know something, but there's nobody out here. They all go to sleep and move off in the morning. Our host tells us everything, although we had heard it all ourselves.

Our host is properly scared but Marysia, his wife, refuses to be cautious. She wants to wear her new dress on Sunday and show off to the whole village.

We are less certain of ourselves now than ever before. I do not go anywhere. I am now cut off from my colleagues. We know nothing about each other.

We lie there and contemplate our dangerous situation. We had barely fallen into a deep sleep when we heard the dog getting agitated, differently than usual.

Several partisans come up to a window, shouting, 'hand over the Jews you've got. If you don't, you'll be shot!'

We are lying in the loft undressed, half-naked. We must not move, otherwise they will hear us. The situation is very bad.

The farmer tells them: 'you can search wherever you like. If you find any Jews here then shoot me.'

The partisans believe what he says. They search only the barn and nowhere else.

Along the way they tell him that this is the last time that they will spare his life. If they are forced to come a second time then he will be shot and his house burned down.

Paweł maintains a cool head. He understands what the partisans have just told him. Our host does not order us to leave. He tells us not to run away if the partisans come again. Now we see what he intends to do with us. Hand us over to the partisans. I start looking for another way out.

I start going to various villages and look for a way out.

1944

I hit the road again, but all roads still lead to death all the same. It is very difficult to walk anywhere along the roads. There is not a single Jew to be found anywhere.

The partisans are everywhere.

Huge money is paid for capturing a Jew.

I head back toward my old hiding place.

My host is pleased that I have returned with fresh cash.

I tell him that I have brought money. He is pleased by this.

We give him the first golden 10 roubles. He does not even know what this is but he says that he has heard that this is a valuable object.

He starts cheering us up, saying that we'll survive. Even if they do their very worst to him, he'll behave as required.

We use all our strength to keep ourselves together in the hiding place.

The front approaches. We can already hear artillery fire in the distance. It comes closer with each day.

We are impatient. I want to run away somewhere already. I am in great danger here. Anything to avoid being the final Jew to be condemned to death!

My colleague Lajbke calms me down: 'Be patient, you'll see. When we wake up in the morning the Russians will already be here.'

And that was indeed the case.

Our host came to us, full of joy. 'The Russkies are here, the Russkies!'

I am the first to abandon the hideout and run toward the Russians. They start asking me about everything. They tell me that I do not need to fear anymore, that I am free. An equal to other people!

After liberation

I am still behind the frontline. I go to find out first of all about the fate of my colleagues, whether they are alive. I meet them on the road.

Now we face the question: where are we to go?

Of course, as far behind the frontline as possible. Our hometowns are still in German hands. We carry on. During our march, a bullet flies past my leg and happens to wound me. And so I cannot go on. I ask the Russians' commander to send me to the hospital.

My colleagues leave me behind.

I recover after a few weeks. I decide to volunteer to join the Red Army. I am mobilized in 1944, on 15 July, and am immediately sent into a reserve regiment. I am soon sent to the front.

I fight on several fronts. I fight with distinction during battles and receive many honors.

I am heavily wounded in 1945, close to the Vistula. I spend eight months in various hospitals. I undergo some very heavy operations.

In 1946, on 9 May, I am demobilized having been classed as unfit for further military service.

This is how I spent the period following the Germans' entry into Polish territory.

4. Zvi Zelinger

Zvi Zelinger

Rechov Ha 30,

Givat HaTzarfatit,

Jerusalem 97891

to

Yad Vashem

I would hereby like to submit my testimony and pay honor to Stefan Sawa, requesting that he be entered into the book of the Righteous Among the Nations, since he sacrificed his life caring for the lives of seven Jews, sheltering them for a year between 1943 and 16 February 1944.

Since childhood, before the war already, I recall that Stefan Sawa and my aunt (my father's sister) Zosia-Sofia Zelinger were very close friends. In 1941 we were forced to move to the Kielce ghetto and we were there until its liquidation on 20.08.1942. Throughout this entire period Stefan Sawa cared for us and took great risks by bringing us and all our family members food and clothing. After the liquidation of the ghetto, we moved to a forced labor camp and stayed there until 1943. After the Germans killed 45 Jewish children inside the camp, we decided that we needed to escape. My father and I moved to Warsaw. My mother and sister Hanka remained close by, using false identity documents, pretending to be Poles, while my sister Dina and aunt Zosia-Sofia moved thanks to Stefan's help into a hiding place, which Stefan and a Polish woman called Lodzia had prepared. The hiding place was close to Kielce in the village of Brzechów in an isolated house that Stefan Sawa had built close to the forest. The house had double walls and a loft. He brought my sister Dina, my aunt Sofia, and other Jews there: Moniak Rozenberg, Edek Proszowski, and his wife (Proszowski was the owner of a power station in Kielce), Frejna Fridman (the younger sister of David Fridman, who now lives in Israel and his address is: Rehov Etsel (? רצ ״ל) 18/4, Tel Gaborim, Holon). For almost one year, Stefan Sawa cared for their lives, fed them, and clothed them.

I am in possession of the testimony of Leon Śliwiński, who currently lives in Kielce. Leon Śliwiński is the son of Bolesław Śliwiński and Leona Berent (?) Śliwińska. Bolesław Śliwiński and Leona Śliwińska hid the aforementioned Dawid Fridman in their house, while their son brought food to those in hiding. My sister Dina, my aunt Sofia, and Frejna Fridman hid, pretending to be Christians, while Stefan Sawa and the Polish woman Lodzia were of course Christians. But the Proszowskis and Rozenberg, who did not possess forged papers, were in hiding like Jews. And they managed to survive for almost a year in such conditions.

From mid-1943 it became even more difficult for my father to keep me in Warsaw, so he tried to transfer me and hide me in that house. He sent me by train to Kielce, where a man from the AK (Home Army) underground, to which my father belonged, was waiting for me. I cannot remember the man's name. He hid me at his house for several days until he found a way to transport me to the house/hiding place. I spent several days there and became acquainted with all its

inhabitants. But Lodzia, the Polish, woman was opposed to me staying there and put all her effort into having me thrown out of that house. Without explanation she handed me back to the man who had brought me there, while he sent me back to Warsaw by train to my father. It seems that this eviction from the house saved my life. Nobody wanted to shelter me. The man that my father was in contact with also could not look after me. And so I stayed in Warsaw.

The fire occurred on 16 February 1944. During this period, my father and I were in Warsaw. As my father had not received any news from the house for a long time, he became worried. Through the Warsaw AK underground army he managed to contact the underground in Kielce and thus found out that the house had burned down and nobody had survived. We learned no further details. A few months passed and in August 1944 the Polish uprising in Warsaw erupted, during which my father died in battle. From August 1944 to 16 January 1945 (the day on which the Russians entered the city) I myself was involved in battles near Warsaw under a false name. In February 1945 I returned to Kielce in order to find surviving members of my family. My mother and sister had also returned to Kielce and we met there. My mother started making enquiries about my sister and thus learned that she had died in the fire. There was still great enmity toward the Jews during this period, thus making it impossible to find out exactly who had been responsible. It was very clear, though, that it was not the Germans who had done this, but the Poles, since it emerged that the Germans had been leading an investigation into the matter. Antisemitism in Kielce was reaching its zenith, so without delay my mother sent me out of the city to a children's home in Chorzów.

My sister's fate would not let me put my mind to rest for forty years.

In September 1989, I went to visit Kielce, my hometown. I spent ten days there looking for details about my sister's case and for information about my family. It turns out that my family was well-known and respected, with people in Kielce to this day recalling members of my family with great fondness. They were mentioned in the newspapers even before I had arrived.

The journalist and radio presenter Janusz Weiss accompanied me throughout my time in Kielce and recorded all the testimonies from and conversations with people who remembered members of my family, as well as the interviews that I conducted with people who knew anything about the fire in the house with the hiding place which accompanied the attack on the residents. Having listened to Śliwiński in Kielce, he went with me to the exact spot where the house had stood. I also conducted interviews with several peasants who lived in the area and they confirmed the story of the house being set on fire. They did not know that there

were Jews hidden in the house and, they claimed, they did not understand the significance of the fire at the time. They said that after the fire was started, the Germans arrived together with the Polish police and questioned them. After an investigation, it was revealed that the remains of over ten bodies had been found and officially registered. All the bodies were buried in the same place and only the smallest, that of Frajna Fridman, remained hidden marked under her bed (???). Stefan's mother was informed of the fire and she came to the scene with a coffin. All of the remains were gathered together and buried in a single grave in the Christian cemetery bearing the name Stefan Sawa.

Through my contacts I later got in touch with members of Stefan Sawa's family: his 76 year-old sister-in-law and her daughter, who was around 50. His sister-in-law was the only person alive who still remembered the event. This is what she said:

In early February 1944, Stefan Sawa came to their family's house and told them that the partisans from the AK underground army had searched his house and found the Jews. The men from the underground warned him that he must clear his house of Jews within two weeks. When he asked them why they were threatening him they replied that if the Germans came and found the Jews then they would raze the village to the ground and this is what they want to avoid. According to his sister-in-law, these were his final words: If they do come then we will bribe them with cash again and will ask for mercy and a bit more time, since it was clear at this point that the war was coming to an end and that the Russians would perhaps enter within a few days thus he was hoping to buy some time. The pseudonym adopted by the man from the underground who carried out this deed and who was their leader was "Barabasz" from the AK underground. It worried me greatly that this was the same underground army that my father had belonged to and had died fighting for in one of its operations.

I hope that this testimony will help you to award Stefan Sawa the Righteous Among the Nations Medal and that he will be entered into the world's book of memory for his courage and love for the Jewish people.

Yours sincerely,
Zvi Zelinger.

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