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A TANGLED WEB

Polish-Jewish Relations in Wartime Northeastern Poland and the Aftermath

(PART THREE)

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Part Three: Retaliations, Conquest and Revenge

The Brigade Headquarters decided to raze Koniuchy to the ground to set an example to others. One evening a hundred and twenty of the best partisans … set out in the direction of the village. There were about 50 Jews among them … The order was not to leave any one alive … With torches prepared in advance, the partisans burned the houses, stables, and granaries, while opening heavy fire on the houses. … The mission was completed within a short while. Sixty households, numbering about 300 people, were destroyed, with no survivors.
Chaim Lazar

Immediately after the return of the Red Army to Lithuania, there was very close collaboration between the Jews and the Soviets, considered by the Holocaust survivors as their savior. Moscow trusted the Jewish survivors more than those who had been anti-Communists before the war; more than the Lithuanians who were Communists in the past but behaved in a doubtful way under the Nazis.
Aba Gefen

I know what kind of role Jewish communists played in Poland after the war. And just as I, as a Jew, do not want to shoulder responsibility for the Jewish communists, I cannot blame 36 million Poles for those thousands of szmalcownicy.
Simon Wiesenthal

1. German Measures Intended to Drive a Wedge Between Poles and Jews

Before the outbreak of the Second World War relations between Jews and Poles in the countryside had traditionally been peaceful and, by and large, were not marred by the type of violent incidents that occurred from time to time in cities and towns. As numerous German reports and Jewish testimonies confirm, during the first two years of the occupation, this relatively favourable situation prevailed in the *Generalgouvernement,* or the General Government, which was the central part of occupied Poland that was turned into a German protectorate. It is to this initial period of the German occupation of Poland that the rescue of Jews in Western Europe should be compared, if at all, and certainly not to later periods (after October 1941), when the Germans formally imposed the death penalty for any assistance rendered to Jews, something that was unheard of in Western Europe. It is high time to start levelling the playing field. Holocaust historians have argued that the most effective form of resistance for Jews while they were confined in ghettos and struggling for their very survival was smuggling of food.[1] The widespread participation of Poles in illegal trade with Jews, especially when that activity became punishable by death, is no less commendable than the transporting of Jews by Danish boatmen to Sweden, which entailed

[1] Peter Hayes, *Why?: Explaining the Holocaust* (New York and London: Norton, 2017), 193.

substantial payment and minimal risk.[2] Those who actively helped to hide Jews in Poland were, as in all countries under German control, a minority. Those who extended help in other way were far more numerous. However, all the institutions of power were stacked against them—on the side of the persecutors.

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[2] There were no specific laws penalizing non-Jews who helped Jews in Germany (including Austria) or in German-occupied France, Denmark or Italy. Since arbitrary acts carried out by the Germans beyond legislative norms for such activities were rare, the risk of punishment was negligible. In the Netherlands, where conditions were the harshest in Western Europe, if Gentiles who helped Jews were punished, usually short-term (up to six months) "protective custody" was imposed. In many cases, however, those who were caught harbouring Jews, even repeatedly, were left at liberty. Only in severe cases were offenders sent to concentration camps. There is more on the punishment for helping Jews in various countries a subsequent footnote. There is no direct correlation between the survival rate of Jews in a particular country and the rescue efforts of citizens of that country. Survival often depended on factors other than internal rescue. Forced emigration of Jews from Germany and Austria continued until 1941. For example, Jews from an aliya training group in Berlin were allowed to leave for Palestine in late 1941. See the testimony of Bracha Brosh, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.33/9105 (Item 10861882). A total of 26,093 Jews left the Czech Protectorate legally: 19,016 in 1939, 6,176 in 1940, 535 in 1941, and 93 in the following two years. Jews also fled the Protectorate illegally, above all to Poland and, after Poland was occupied, to Slovakia. It is estimated that a total of 30,000 Jews fled the Protectorate in all. See Livia Rothkirchen, "The Protectorate Government and the 'Jewish Question' 1939–1941," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 27 (1999): 331–62. Many Jews from other countries were able to flee in time or, in the case of the Soviet Union, were deported to the Gulag. In most countries, though not in occupied Poland, various categories of Jews were protected or exempted from German genocidal measures. See, for example, Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 103, 111–13, 118, 165, 168, 236, 384, 388, 389, 409–10, 448; Bob Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 332–45 (Netherlands). Once the Germans arrived, escape was more problematic but not impossible, provided there was a safe haven nearby, which was not often the case. Tens of thousand of Jews were smuggled out of danger zones by smugglers, usually for payment. However, countries of destination like neutral Switzerland often turned Jews away. In the case of Denmark, the German authorities reached an agreement with Sweden to accept Danish Jews. Danish fishermen were then mobilized to transport the Jews by boat to Sweden for hefty payments. Because of German collusion in this scheme, there was virtually no risk for the rescuers or the fugitives. Thus, the rescue or, more accurately, escape was in fact a deliberate Nazi-tolerated expulsion of Jews. It was orchestrated by the German authorities (and not in defiance of them), largely paid for by the Jews themselves, and carried out by well-compensated Danish fishermen without any real risk to their safety.

The existence of a national government (even a collaborationist one), or lack of one, made a very significant difference in survival rates throughout Europe. In Poland and the German-occupied Soviet territories, where no national governments existed, Jews had the least protection. See Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews,* 386. According to Laurence Rees, "it is a serious mistake to assume that the amount of pre-existing anti-Semitism in any country is a guide to the level of subsequent Jewish suffering under the Nazis. Other factors, such as the type of Nazi governance, the continuing presence of a functioning system of administration and the degree to which the Nazis desired to undertake anti-Semitic persecution within that specific territory all played and important role." See Laurence Rees, *The Holocaust: A New History* (New York: Public Affairs, 2017), 186. Local conditions were critical, including the preventative and punitive measures in place, the extent and duration of German control, and the commitment or capabilities of the rescuers. In the case of Poland, where the German occupation lasted the longest and was the harshest, all the cards were stacked against Jewish survival. While rescue took various forms (providing false documents, food, temporary shelter, etc.), since there were virtually no escape routes long-term clandestine shelter was the most viable survival option in Poland. However, it was undoubtedly the most demanding and precarious form of rescue. Long-term clandestine shelter was a rare occurrence everywhere in German-occupied countries. Historians have even spoken of a "saturation point" for Jews in hiding. See Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews,* 441. Long-term sheltering of Jewish fugitives was exceedingly rare in Bohemia and Moravia, with a Czech population of some seven million: "At the end of the war, it is estimated that about 424 persons survived 'underground' in Bohemia and Moravia, some hiding with Czech friends and acquaintances, and others living under assumed names or with forged Christian papers." See Livia Rothkirchen, "Czech Attitudes towards the Jews during the Nazi Regime," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 13 (1979): 287–320, at 314. In Norway, with a population of three million, only about 40 Jews survived in hiding. Almost 95 percent of those Jews who did not manage to flee the country were caught by the Norwegian police and German authorities and deported to concentration camps. Fewer than a hundred Jews survived in hiding inside Denmark, with a population of almost four million, while at least 130 Jews who remained behind after the evacuation of Jews to Sweden were betrayed. These Jews were handed over to the Germans by the Danish police and deported to concentration camps. See Moore, *Survivors,* 81, 96; Emmy E. Werner, *A Conspiracy of Decency: The Rescue of the Danish Jews During World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2002), 64, 102, 152. Citing Moore, historian Christian Gerlach writes: "But conditions could make clandestine survival almost impossible, even in countries where compatriots helped many escape abroad." See Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews,* 417 n.91. Gerlach

The Poles had no say in how the Germans ran their subjugated homeland. Germany treated the country as a colony, and the very name of Poland was erased even from the designation for the *Generalgouvernement*. Although the Germans tried to recruit some prominent Poles, such Wincenty Witos, leader of the peasant-based People's Party and thrice prime minister of Poland, to become collaborators,[3] something they succeeded in doing throughout occupied Europe, they were unsuccessful. Poles were in no way responsible for the German policies directed at various segments of the population, such as the ghettoization of the Jews. They were every bit as powerless to stop the deportation of Jews to labour, concentration and death camps as they were to stop their fellow Poles from being sent to camps and forced labour in Germany. As pointed out by Yisrael Gutman, a leading Holocaust scholar and direct eyewitness to those events,

> Poland was a completely occupied country. There was a difference in the kind of 'occupation' countries underwent in Europe. Each country experienced a different occupation and almost all had

[3] Arrested by the Gestapo on September 16, 1939, Witos was offered freedom in exchange for collaboration. Witos refused the offer. The Germans repeated their propositions in March 1940 and the spring of 1941, and again Witos declined. The claim, pushed by many historians, that the Germans did not have high-level collaborators in occupied Poland because they did not seek them out is baseless.

> a certain amount of autonomy, limited and defined in various ways. This autonomy did not exist in Poland. No one asked the Poles how one should treat the Jews.[4]

The occupation of Poland, as German historian Wolfgang Seibel explains, contrasted dramatically with the situation in Western Europe (i.e., the Netherlands, Belgium and France).

> German officials conceived of this occupation as a supervisory administration (*Aufsichtsverwaltung*) with only a thin layer of German officials at the top and the main body of national, that is, native administration and judiciary remaining entirely intact. Dependence on

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[4] Cited in *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies), vol. 2 (1987): 341. Notwithstanding this irrefutable proposition, unsupportable assertions about the alleged impact of Polish attitudes on German policies abound in Holocaust literature. Jan Gross, for example, claims that the Poles "accepted" the Nazi policies of ghettoization, as if they had any say in the matter, even though all major factions of the Polish underground condemned the anti-Jewish measures taken by the Germans. See Jan T. Gross, "Polish-Jewish Relations during the War: An Interpretation," *Dissent* (Winter 1987): 73–81. German historian Christian Gerlach concludes that, in occupied Poland, the Germans "feared neither the solidarity of an entire population nor unrest," and that therefore, "It seemed possible for them to separate from the general population this already isolated, well controlled, oppressed, deprived and nearly helpless group—a group they despised—and annihilate it." See Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews,* 251. There is no evidence, however, that German policies regarding the Jews (or the Poles) were in any way dependent on the wishes of the Polish population, who in any event had absolutely no say about such matters and did not openly protest even their own mistreatment. One gets the distinct impression that Gerlach is attempting to shift guilt away from the Germans onto others. Moreover, Gerlach does not mention the fact that the Germans felt they had to impose the death penalty on Poles in order to get them to comply with their orders, and to put a stop to widespread trading with and helping Jews. While Gerlach refers *en passant* to the fact that the Germans imposed a death penalty on "Eastern Europeans" who assisted Jews (at p. 360), with a subsequent mention of Poland, the occupied Soviet territories and Yugoslavia (at p. 441), he is either ambivalent about the dramatic difference in the treatment of rescuers in Poland and Western Europe (at p. 360) or treats this factor summarily (at p. 441). He makes no effort to gauge the extent to which the death penalty was imposed in occupied Poland (and compare it to other jurisdictions), nor does he factor the impact of the death penalty into his various discussions of conditions in occupied Poland (at pp. 242–56, 411–20). Rather, he suggests cavalierly (for example, at p. 416) that Poles could have easily sheltered tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of Jews, had they been so inclined. Gerlach also enjoys taking unwarranted swipes at the Poles (e.g., at pp. 448–49), for which he provides no empirical evidence. To say that Gerlach's treatment is skewed is an understatement. He claims that Poland was "allied with" Germany from 1934– 1939 (p. 161, in fact Poland had signed non-aggression pacts with both the Soviet Union and German), and that the ranks of Security Police and the Security Service of the SS were "replenished with Polish officers" (p. 135). Gerlach claims that the roles of non-Germans were "crucial" for the implementation of the Holocaust (p. 13), without ever stating anywhere in his study that that was not the case for ethnic Poles. Another flagrant example is the following blanket charge (found at p. 445), in which Gerlach makes no clear exception for occupied Poland (a careful reader would have to assume Poland is excluded because it was no longer a state at the time): "the measures of non-German states and the violence against Jews in their societies were of a participatory character. German persecutors needed the support of national elites to carry out their anti-Jewish policies into effect, especially the organization of deportations." In fact, this was not the case in occupied Poland. The Polish underground state was absolutely clear in its condemnation of the deportations, and the Polish police (prewar policemen were ordered to report for duty by the Germans under pain of the "severest punishment") did not play a key role in this operation. The Polish police did not take part in the liquidation of most of the larger ghettos—either in the deportations or mop-up operations, such as Warsaw, Łódź, Lwów, Wilno, Białystok, Lublin, Sosnowiec, Będzin, Kraków (Cracow), Piotrków Trybunalski, Chełm, Zamość, Tarnów, Rzeszów, Przemyśl, Grodno, and many others. (In some cases, like Częstochowa and Kielce, the involvement of the Polish police was peripheral, e.g., as escorts.) Those ghettos were liquidated with the assistance of the Jewish and other national police forces, especially the Ukrainian and Lithuanian police. The Germans were able to liquidate all of the ghettos in Warthegau and Ost-Oberschlesien, which held some 300,000 Jews, without any Polish police being present in those areas. Gerlach also avoids any mention of "problematic" matters such as the collaboration of Jews with the Soviet invaders of Eastern Poland in 1939–1941 (p. 343), the prominent role played by Jews in the imposition of Soviet rule in Poland in 1944–47 (pp. 353–54), and the widespread murder of Jews by Soviet partisans in "Western" Belarus (p. 364). Gerlach's study also contains many factual errors (at pp. 306–7, Polish partisans or the Home Army are blamed for starting conflicts with peaceful Ukrainian nationalists and Soviet partisans by killing Ukrainians in the district of Lublin in 1942 and by being ordered to attack all Soviet and Jewish partisan units in September 1943).

> indigenous human and organizational resources was thus what characterized the situation of the German occupation regime in Western Europe, in total contrast to the situation in the east.
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> This characteristic also impacted the persecution and annihilation of the Jews, which was prepared and carried out by the respective German occupation administration, relying on national agencies. … Jewish representative organizations were created in all three countries to facilitate the command and control of the Jewish communities … The members of these "councils" were responsible to the German authorities of their native collaborators for the preparation of the discrimination, expropriation, and deportation measures demanded.[5]

To the marked differences between Poland and other occupied countries we must add the presence of non-Polish police forces—Jewish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Latvian—and various German forces, such as the Gestapo and gendarmes, who palyed a large role in the carrying out Nazi genocidal measures in occupied Poland.

Despite the attempts of the mainstream Western media (and the Jews themselves) to portray Jews as the most oppressed group in Europe in the 1930s, the reality was quite different. As American historian Timothy Snyder has pointed out, it was the Soviet Union—not Nazi Germany—that undertook the first shooting campaigns of internal enemies in the 1930s, and it was the Poles who were the first and foremost victims of the national operations of Stalin's Great Terror.

> In 1937 and 1938, a quarter of a million Soviet citizens were shot on essentially ethnic grounds. … the Soviet Union in the late 1930s was a land of unequalled national persecutions. Even as the Popular Front [of the Comintern or Communist International] presented the Soviet Union as the homeland of toleration, Stalin ordered the mass killings of several Soviet nationalities. The most persecuted European national minority in the second half of the 1930s was not the four hundred thousand or so German Jews (the number declining because of emigration) but the six hundred thousand or so Soviet Poles (the number declining because of executions).
>
> Stalin was a pioneer of national mass murder, and the Poles were the preeminent victim among the Soviet nationalities. The Polish national minority, like the kulaks, had to take the blame for the failures of collectivization. The rationale was invented during the famine itself in 1933, and then applied during the Great Terror in 1937 and 1938.[6]

Nor was it at all evident, until mid-1942—almost three years after the outbreak of the Second World War—that Jews were (becoming) the most oppressed group in German-occupied Poland. During the initial period, Polish victims of Nazi atrocities far outnumbered Jewish ones. In June 1940, Auschwitz was established as a concentration camp for Polish political prisoners; the majority of the prison population did not become Jewish until 1943. In the city of Bielsko, where the Jewish population identified with the

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[5] Wolfgang Seibel, "The Holocaust in Western Europe," in Jonathan C. Friedman, ed., *The Routledge History of the Holocaust* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 222–32, here at 222–23. Denunciations of Jews played a large role in the capture of Jews in Belgium. More than 50% of the Jews arrested by the German authorities (often with the help of the Belgian police) were found either on the streets or in hiding. Ibid. 229.

[6] Snyder, *Bloodlands,* 89.

majority German population and spoke German, during the first years of the German occupation the Jewish community had its own Ältestenrat, a form of self-rule that provided various welfare services for the community, whereas the Polish minority did not enjoy any such privilege. According to Edwin Brüll, a Jewish resident of Bielsko, until 1942 the Jews were better off than the Poles.[7]

Between June 1941 and January 1942, that is, before the Holocaust got underway, hundreds of thousands of Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) were killed primarily through deliberate starvation, exposure and summary execution. (Hundreds of thousands of Soviet POWs were released from horrific open-air camps on condition that they perform auxiliary service for the Wehrmacht. These were the so-called *Hilfswillige* or *Hiwis,* "volunteer" auxiliaries.) It was only upon encountering escaped Soviet POWs near Łosice and hearing about their ordeals, that Noach Lasman first realized that the Germans were capable of mass murder.[8] Only afterwards did the Germans start to liquidate the ghettos and deport Jews to the death camps that they had Jewish workers construct.

The German invasion on September 1, 1939 came without a warning and caused great confusion among both Poles and Jews.[9] As word spread that the Germans were killing civilians, many Jews fled eastward. Tens of thousands of Christians took these Jewish refugees in and fed them without charge.[10] A Jewish

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[7] Jacek Proszyk, interviewed by Robert Bogdański, "Wyciąganie wniosków, że więcej Żydów przeżyło w obozach niż u Polaków, jest niepoważne," *Tygodnik TVP,* no. 79, May 24, 2019, Internet: <https://tygodnik.tvp.pl/42729972/wyciaganie-wnioskow-ze-wiecej-zydow-przezylo-w-obozach-niz-u-polakow-jest-niepowazne>.

[8] Noach Lasman, *Wspomnienia z trzech światów* (Poznań: Posnania, 2019).

[9] In a number of localities in central and southern Poland Jewish delegations, often led by rabbis dressed in ceremonial robes and bearing trays with bread and salt, came out to greet the German invaders, and they even erected triumphal arches. There is no record of any such greetings by ethnic Poles. See Józef Łyżwa, "Pomagałem, a potem siedziałem," *Gazeta Polska* (Warsaw), February 10, 1994 (Radom); Tomasz Strzembosz, "Zstąpienie szatana czy przyjazd gestapo," *Rzeczpospolita,* May 12, 2001 (Zaręby Kościelne, near Ostrów Mazowiecka); Eugeniusz Buczyński, *Smutny wrzesień: Wspomnienia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985), 132 (Przemyśl); Elinor J. Brecher, *Schindler's Legacy: True Stories of the List Survivors* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 56 (Kraków); Jake Gelwert, *From Auschwitz to Ithaca: The Transnational Journey of Jake Geldwert* (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 2002), 28 (Kraków); Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta: Warszawskie getto i ludzie (1939–1945 i dalej)* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1995), 242 (Łódź, Pabianice, and elsewhere); Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 315 n.167 (Janów Lubelski); Mazgaj, *In the Polish Secret War,* 16 (Janów Lubelski); Jacek Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.* (Lublin and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Lublinie, 2019), 116 (Lublin). The last known Jewish delegation to welcome the German army was probably in Międzyrzec Podlaski, on October 10, 1939, after the departure of the Red Army from that town. See Józef Geresz, *Międzyrzec Podlaski: Dzieje miasta i okolic* (Biała Podlaska and Międzyrzec Podlaski: Ośrodek Wschodni "Civitas Christiana", 1995), 299. Confirmation of these events can also be found in a report penned by a leftist Italian diplomat who was stationed in Poland: "in the first days of the conflict, numerous Jews greeted the entrance of the German armies into Polish cities with cries of joy." See Eugenio Reale, *Raporty: Polska 1945–1946* (Paris: Institut Littéraire, 1968), 204.

[10] See, for example, Ruta Sakowska, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego,* vol. 2: *Dzieci—tajne nauczanie w getcie warszawskim* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN-B, 2000), 46; Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci,* 291, 328, 339; Havi Ben-Sasson, "Polish-Jewish Relations during the Holocaust: A Changing Jewish Viewpoint," in Robert Cherry and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, eds., *Rethinking Poles and Jews: Troubled Past, Brighter Future* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 89–97; Havi Dreifuss (Ben-Sasson), *Relations between Jews and Poles During the Holocaust: The Jewish Perspective* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, 2017). Ben-Sasson (Dreifuss) points out that the more objective early portrayal of Poles in Holocaust accounts later gave way to negative stereotypes.

doctor, who was part of a group of Jews who fled from Łódź, recalled: "The peasants let us sleep in their barns, and by and large were fairly well disposed toward us."[11] A similar situation prevailed when Jews fled to the countryside by the thousands to escape executions and round-ups in later months.[12] One member of a group of four young Jewish men who set out from Ostrołęka westward towards Łomża, ultimately in vain, recalled:

> In order to hide from the Germans, we went through the Czerwoni-Bor [Czerwony Bór] Forest. In the forest, we met many escaping soldiers. We saw corpses of people and horses lying everywhere, and heard the croaking of the ravens swooping down over our heads.
>
> In the afternoon, we reached the village of Puchala [Puchały]. We stayed with a farmer woman, who was alone in her house because her husband had been drafted into the army. She was glad to put us up for the night. She cooked potatoes with onions for us. She knew that we were Jews and, therefore, did not serve us pork. … [we] left, but got stuck at the other end of the village. The farmers advised us not to leave, because the Germans were attacking in the vicinity. A goodhearted farmer let us in to his granary. We stayed there that night, during which the thunder of the bombing and shelling of the area did not stop. In the morning, we learned that the nearby village of Gac [Gać] was shelled during the night and that many people were injured or killed, among them Jews who had fled Lomza [Łomża] because of the bombing.[13]

Fearful of what the Germans might do them, many Jews fled from their homes to look for temporary refuge among Poles in the countryside. When the Germans entered Majdan Królewski, near Kolbuszowa, panic ensued. "Jews hid," a Jewish eyewitness reported. "They ran off to neighbouring villages to look for hideouts with villagers they knew. The majority of Jews did in fact find shelter in the countryside."[14] Izaak Zemelman fled from Płock with his family to nearby Sikórz, where they were warmly received by the

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[11] Edward Reicher, *Country of Ash: A Jewish Doctor in Poland, 1939–1945* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2013), 30.

[12] When Jewish men were ordered by the Germans to report in Chełm, "A few hundred Jews left for the surrounding *shtetlekh* and villages in order to hear from afar what the Germans had done with the Jews at the market. Hundreds of Jews hid with Christian acquaintances, or hid in closed up cellars, in stalls and did not appear at the market on the 1st of December [1939]." See Lazar Kahan, "The Slaughter of the Jews in Chelm," in M. Bakalczuk, ed., *Commemoration Book Chelm,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/chelm/chelm.html>, translation of *Yisker-bukh Chelm* (Johannesburg: Former Residents of Chelm, 1954), 508. When the Germans carried out round-ups of Jews in Tarłów, near Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, "few were successful. Usually, by the time the Germans were able to surround the village, local Jews had run into the fields or hid with their Polish neighbors." See Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 334. Jews who were displaced from Płock and resettled in Żarnów supported themselves by begging from the local Polish population. See Tadeusz Epsztein, Justyna Majewska, and Aleksandra Bańkowska, eds., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Kospiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego,* vol. 15: *Wrzesień 1939, Listy kaliskie, Listy płockie* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2014), 309.

[13] Yehuda Chamiel, "On the Brink of the Holocaust," in Yitzchak Ivri, ed., *Book of Kehilat Ostrolenka: Yizkor Book of the Jewish Community of Ostrolenka* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotzei Ostrolenka in Israel, 2009), 341, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/ostrolenka1/Ostrolenka1.html>.

[14] Account of Józef Barten in Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci,* 216.

villagers. In his testimony, he had nothing but praise for their helpfulness: "I consider it is necessary to mention their names and thus to express my gratitude and that of my family for their attitude towards us … They were the Stawiorski [Stawiarski] family, the Romanowski family, the Górski family, the Danielak family, the family of Adam and Anasztazja Adamski, the Kłosiński family, and others."[15] Villagers were warned not to help Jews, and even threatened with death. A Jew from Krzeszów recalled that the Germans threatened to burn down the entire village down if they found a farmer hiding a Jew.[16]

Some historians have argued that the solidarity between Poles and Jews that was demonstrated during the German takeover soon dissipated. Jewish testimonies and impartial observers, however, often (though not always) described relations between Poles and Jews in a favourable light long after that initial period. In his chronicle, Emanuel Ringelblum noted in the second half of 1940:

> I have heard of many facts of Polish customers sending parcels of food to Jewish merchants in the Łódź ghetto, as payment of debts. I heard many moving stories about that … Such facts were also noted in the Warsaw ghetto … On the first day (after the closing of the ghetto), very many Poles brought food to their Jewish friends and acquaintances: this is a general and widespread initiative. … Anybody who has the possibility comes to the ghetto and brings food articles at the same price as that outside the ghetto. … For the moment food is introduced (into the ghetto) with the help of Polish friends.[17]

On July 11, 1941, Rigelblum wrote:

> This was a widespread phenomenon a month ago. Hundreds of beggars, including women and children, smuggled themselves out of the Ghetto to beg on the Other Side, where they were well received, well fed, and often given food to take back to the Ghetto. Although universally recognized as Jews from the Ghetto, perhaps they were given alms for that very reason.[18]

Dr. Isaj (Jeszaja) Beiles, a physician on the ghetto hospital staff, reported that both Jewish adults and children expressed their gratitude for the reception they had received on the "Ayran" side: "Oh, the Poles are good; they gave me bread, soup, and even socks. I even spent the night there."[19] The American Vice-Consul in Warsaw reported in November 1941:

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[15] Yad Vashem testimony of Izaak Zemelman cited in Jan Przedpełski, *Żydzi płoccy: Dzieje i martyrologia, 1939–1945* (Płock: Fraza, 1993), 52.

[16] Account of Jozef Rosenberg in Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci,* 155.

[17] Cited in Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life,* 125.

[18] Jacob Sloan, ed., *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), 203, cited in Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust,* 141–42.

[19] Ludwik Hirszfeld, *Ludwik Hirszfeld: The Story of One Life* (Rochester, New York: Rochester University Press, 2010), 236.

> A month or so before my departure, relations between Jews and Poles in Warsaw were very good. There was a genuine sympathy among the Poles for the suffering Jews. The common suffering of Jew and Gentile alike during the siege of Warsaw brought them closer than ever before.[20]

The helpfulness of Poles, even after the death penalty was officially decreed for helping Jews, is mentioned in many Jewish accounts. Irena Borman Bakowska, then a teenager and part of a group of six Jews smuggled out of Warsaw to the countryside in August 1942, recalled:

> We entered into a single train compartment occupied already by the Christian Poles … We were greeted in a friendly manner, and the man sitting by himself moved over and sat with his four companions. … The conductor, a Christian Pole, entered the compartment to check the tickets. … we uncovered our armbands to identify ourselves. I watched the reaction of the Christian Polish passengers with great apprehension. … But the attitude of the Christian passengers was sympathetic and not at all hostile. They started talking with us, and urged us to throw away our armbands and our Jewish identity. … Those five people seemed truly to care about my survival, repeating over and over again that I could be saved and survive as a Pole. They persuaded me that all Poles did not hate us, did not wish us to perish."[21]

Such spontaneous assistance and concern extended to complete strangers should not be taken for granted. Jews expelled to Warsaw from the small surrounding towns left scathing reports regarding their treatment by the Jewish population of Warsaw.[22] There are similar reports from other places about Jews who were unwilling to help fellow Jews.[23]

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[20] T. H. Chylinski, *Poland under Nazi Rule,* November 13, 1941, 25. Chylinski goes on to report on the German campaign of inciting Poles and Jews against each other.

[21] Irena Bakowska, *Not All Was Lost: A Young Woman's Memoir, 1939–1946* (Kingston, Ontario: Karijan, 1998), 142–44. See also Irene Bessette, *Not All Was Lost: A Young Woman's Memoir, 1939–1946* (USA: Xlibris, 2012).

[22] Magdalena Siek, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego,* vol. 8: *Tereny wcielone do Rzeszy: Okręg Rzeszy Gdańsk-Prusy Zachodnie, rejencja ciechanowska, Górny Śląsk* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2012), 56–57, 212; Magdalena Siek, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego,* vol. 9: *Tereny wcielone do Rzeszy: Kraj Warty* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2012), 44. Poverty could not explain the lack of empathy for the poor driven into the Warsaw ghetto. A Jew who sorted clothes in Treblinka in the summer of 1942 reported that Jews from Warsaw brought with them enormous quantities of jewelry, jewels and currency, concealed in clothing as well as inside bread and various objects. See Ewa Wiatr, Barbara Engelking, and Alina Skibińska, eds., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego,* vol. 13: *Ostatnim etapem przesiedlenia jest śmierć: Pomiechówek, Chemno nad Nerem, Treblinka* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2013), 170. On the other hand, many reports attest to the helpfulness of Jews in small towns and of Polish villagers.

[23] After escaping from the Janowska concentration camp in December 1941 and making his way back to the ghetto in Lwów, William Koenig went from place to place in the ghetto trying to find a place to spend the night. People were afraid to take him in. He was fortunate enough to find a cousin of his mother's who took him in even though it would mean great danger for him. See the Oral History Interview with William Koenig, dated November 10, 1987, Phoenix Holocaust Survivors' Association in affiliation with the Cline Library of Northern Arizona University, Internet: <http://collections.ushmm.org/oh_findingaids/RG-50.060.0026_sum_en.pdf>.

Jews who were forced to leave their homes often turned to Christians for support. A Jew who was expelled from his hometown of Wilczyn, near Inowrocław, in March 1940, recalled how bartering soon gave way to begging from impoverished Poles as Jews ventured into the countryside.

> The wagons traveled in a single file in one long xcolumn, a peculiar sight to the Poles who stood in the streets of the villages we passed, curiously watching this endless wagon train go by. After traveling about thirty miles, we came to the small to the small city of Zagórów, which the Germans renamed Hinterberg … From the square we were taken to homes previously inhabited by Polish families. Some were empty, but some were still occupied. My family was taken with three other families and put into a two-room house. … the Germans had gathered about two thousand of us from cities across the region—including Wilczyn, Kleczew, Mogilno, Slesin [Ślesin] and Golina—and squeezed us into this ghetto. We were told we could live here … but we were not to leave the city boundaries. …
>
> Families were given food for a week, maybe two. In order to get more, we had to go into town and barter with the Polish people. And so we did. At times we fought among ourselves, stealing food from each other in order to eat. The few valuables we brought … we sold to the Polish people. When we had nothing left to trade, we were forced to beg and steal.
>
> By November 1940, we were starving, and my father decided to risk leaving the ghetto to find food. He hired a Polish man with a horse and wagon to take him to the countryside around Wilczyn, where he had Polish friends. I often accompanied him, going door to door, asking for food, and we felt like beggars, stripped of our dignity. We gladly took what they gave us—a few loaves of bread, a few pounds of rice and potatoes.
>
> I will never forget one miserable, cold and rainy day, trudging through the slush and snow on our way back to Zagórów. … We brought back enough food to feed the family for a couple of weeks, We were taking a great risk by leaving Zagórów. We would have been shot if they had caught us.[24]

After being sent to a labour camp on Rąbinek, the food quests continued. However, fewer and fewer Jews risked venturing and Poles became more reluctant to extend help because of the harsh retaliations meted out by the Germans. But no one turned the Jewish beggars over to the Germans.

> The SS lived in a nearby city and went home at night. Once we realized this, we came up with a scheme to bring in more food. … Every night two boys would sneak out, head off in the direction of Mątwy, knock on doors and beg for food. … In the beginning, things went well. The people were shocked to see us—starving, dirty boys at their doors and they were generous, offering potatoes, a little meat, whatever they had. For many weeks, we gathered scraps of food and shared it. But the Polish people began learning about the camp's existence and they were suddenly afraid they would be caught. Many no longer gave us food, but we didn't give up. We kept at it until we found a kind soul here or there who would risk helping us. …
>
> One night I was chosen to go with a boy I had known from the Zagórów Ghetto … We knocked on doors, and most people said no or were too afraid to come to the door. A few actually started

[24] Abraham W. Landau, *Branded on My Arm and on My Soul: A Holocaust Memoir* (New Bedford, Massachusetts: Spinner Publications with The Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford, 2011), 40–41.

> kissing us and calling is poor dears and lost souls. It was a good night—we had a nice bundle of food from about fifteen homes and we wanted to get back and divvy it up.[25]

Up until at least 1942, when the Germans started to enforce the death penalty for assisting Jews with alarming frequency, thousands of Jews found temporary refuge with Polish farmers and were often employed as farmhands. Thousands of Jews, very often children, went begging door-to-door and received handouts of food from Poles.[26] Most Polish policemen turned a blind eye to this state of affairs. An American Methodist missionary who lived in occupied Warsaw wrote, in September 1941,

> driven by hunger, small Jewish children went begging daily outside the ghetto for anything they could get. One day I was passing the ruins of Graniczna Street, when ahead of me appeared a group of Jewish children, each carrying a small sack of garnered booty. I watched them sneak towards a gap in the incomplete ghetto wall. Before it stood a Polish policeman; behind it, on the inside, a Jewish one. Simultaneously, the two walked away, and in a flash most of the children had disappeared through the gap into the ghetto. The policemen returned. The few little ones who were still outside receded waiting for the next opportunity. A man who had stopped beside me said, "This goes on night and day. The policemen do what they can."[27]

After escaping from the Warsaw ghetto in July 1941, without interference from the Polish policemen standing guard outside the ghetto walls, 10-year-old Szlama Jakubowicz and his older brother made their way to their hometown of Sochaczew. Along the way, they received assistance from a number of farmers whom they turned to for food and lodging. They were greeted warmly by their former neighbours in Sochaczew, and then wandered in the vicinity begging for handouts from farmers until they found jobs as farmhands on two different farms. Several other Jewish boys were working as farmhands in that particular village. They remained there until May 1943, when Szlama's brother was apprehended by the Germans and executed. Frightened by what happened, Szlama was told to leave for a distant village where he would not be known. Szlama secured positions with at least four other farmers and help from several others, thereby surviving the German occupation in that area. On his return to Sochaczew after the war, he was again received warmly by his former neighbours.[28]

A Jewish witness who frequently traversed the Polish countryside recalled the conditions he had observed in Lublin province in the first years of the German occupation:

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[25] Landau, *Branded on My Arm and on My Soul,* 50.

[26] See, for example, Aleksandra Bańkowska, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego,* vol. 6: *Generalne Gubernatorstwo: Relacje i dokumenty* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2012), 536–39.

[27] Hania and Gaither Warfield, *Call Us to Witness: A Polish Chronicle* (New York and Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 1945), 321.

[28] Testimony of Szlama Jakubowicz, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2427.

> Traveling through the Polish countryside in the summer of 1940, the uninformed observer could get the impression that life continued relatively peacefully in those small communities. Most men still wore their Eastern Jewish attire; old Jews, looking like patriarchs out of the Bible were standing dignified in front of their houses, the Star of David on their arms. This picture already belonged to the past in the big cities. It was also pleasing to notice that most Polish peasants treated the Jews in a rather friendly way. They seemed more tolerant than gentiles in the larger centers. Denunciations were exceptional.[29]

According to a diary entry from July 1942, by Jewish chronicler Avraham Lewin,

> As for the Poles in the small towns [near Warsaw] that I have listed … Their relationship to the Jews has recently—according to my informant (and the voice of the people is as the voice of God)—become better, friendly. She sensed sympathy, and a sharing of the Jews' suffering, on the part of the Polish population.[30]

Among the many measures directed against Jews as well as Poles in occupied Poland was the closure of stores and artisans' workshops. From the fall of 1939 through to October 1, 1943, 74 percent of 195,000 stores (112,100 of which were Jewish-owned) were liquidated in the *Generalgouvernement*. Only 25,000 of the former Jewish shops remained in business by the fall of 1941; and none were left a year later. In those parts of Poland annexed to the Reich, 100,000 of 130,000 stores were liquidated; the others (all of which were handed over to the Germans) generated enormous profits for the Germans.[31] These measures went hand in hand with universal food rationing and the progressive ghettoization of the Jewish population, which in turn led to the rise of illegal trade on a large scale and a black market economy.

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[29] Gary A. Keins, *A Journey Through the Valley of Perdition* ([United States]: n.p., 1985), 72–73. Another Jewish survivor describes a Jewish wedding in the village of Chorzewa, near Jędrzejów, at the beginning of 1940, which was attended by many Polish guests. Young Polish boys, who believed her to be the daughter of a rabbi, eagerly asked her to dance. See Sabina Rachel Kałowska, *Uciekać, aby żyć* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2000), 52; English translation: Sabina Rachel Kałowska, *No Place for Tears: From Jędrzejów to Denmark* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2012).

[30] Havi Ben-Sasson and Lea Preiss, "Twighlight Days: Missing Pages from Avraham Lewin's Warsaw Ghetto Diary, May–July 1942," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 33 (2005): 51–52.

[31] Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews,* 280–81. In this context, Holocaust historians generally focus on the impact of these measures on Jews, and stress the benefits created for the remaining shopowners, who were in no way complicit in these measures, and the German-appointed trustees who administered former Jewish businesses.

Despite a vibrant smuggling enterprise bringing huge quantities of food into the Warsaw ghetto,[32] the fruits of this illegal trade did not benefit everyone. The population of the Warsaw ghetto was extremely stratified. Tens of thousands who could not afford to buy food starved to death while entrepreneurs, smugglers and functionaries could afford luxuries. Jews resettled in Warsaw from the outlying towns joined the ranks of the Jewish destitute and became the vulnerable underclass of the ghetto. They were particularly prone to hunger, starvation and disease.[33] However, outside Warsaw, ghettos—especially the smaller ones—often experienced hunger, but not starvation. Thanks to their continuing contacts with Poles, with whom Jews continued to trade, food was readily obtainable.[34] Moreover, the widespread practice of Polish policemen turning a blind eye to such practices allowed illegal trade and smuggling of food to flourish. Thousands of Jews engaged in such lucrative black market activities throughout Poland, often traversing

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[32] About 80 percent of the food that entered the Warsaw ghetto was smuggled. Smuggling was carried out by individuals, including children, and by organized groups. Professional smugglers became members of the ghetto elite, living it up on their profits and patronizing the more than 60 restaurants and clubs in the ghetto. Kosher butchers from the ghettos of Miłosna, Okuniew, and Rembertów were the main source of meat for the Warsaw ghetto, supplying up to 2,000 kilograms (4,410 pounds) per month with the help of Polish smugglers. The establishment of the ghetto in Warsaw in the fall of 1940 had little impact on Polish-Jewish trade, which was tolerated by Polish policemen who were notorious for taking bribes. Wheat was smuggled into the ghetto regularly, and a significant part of the bread made in the suburb of Falenica was sent to the Warsaw ghetto. See Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos,* 1933–1945, vol. 2, Part A, 361, 369, 405, 457.

[33] It is estimated that the Warsaw ghetto had 10–30,000 wealthy people, 200–250,000 who got by, while 150–250,000 were rapidly starving. Hunger resulted not only from the inhabitants' inability to bring food in but also from many people's inability to buy it. See Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews,* 420. Of the approximately 60,000 Jews who died in the Warsaw ghetto in 1940 and 1941, the vast majority were not natives of Warsaw but had been resettled there from other towns or had sought refuge in Warsaw. See Andrzej Żbikowski, "Żydowscy przesiedleńcy z dystryktu warszawskiego w getcie warszawskim, 1939–1942," in Engelking, Leociak, and Libionka, *Prowincja noc,* 224–28. See, for example, the fate of the Jews from Góra Kalwaria, Jeziorna, and Jeżów in Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 374, 381, 382. Solidarity among Jews was not a common commodity in the Warsaw ghetto. In his diary, Chaim Kaplan notes that widespread tax evasion by the well-off residents of the ghetto seriously exacerbated starvation among the ghetto poor. See Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 262.

[34] According to Israeli historian David Silberklang' study on the Lublin District, "Yet despite the resultant overcrowding, beyond even the Nazis' plan, and despite the presence of gnawing hunger, there was little starvation in 1940 and 1941, especially outside the city of Lublin. … The Lublin District Jews' contacts with their non-Jewish neighbors … meant the Jews could procure food, some income, information, and human contact." See David Silberklang, *Gates of Tears: The Holocaust in the Lublin District* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2013), 219. Similar reports come from Częstochowa, where Jews continued to trade with Poles until the liquidation of the ghetto. See Ada Kessler-Pawlak, *Nie chcę nocy: Dziewczyna i kanibale* (Warsaw: Agencja Wydawnicza CB), 110. Similarly, several reports from Białystok fail to confirm deaths due to starvation. See Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 58, 365 n.31. For reports from smaller towns see, for example, Sakowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego,* vol. 2: *Dzieci—tajne nauczanie w getcie warszawskim*, 48 (Piaseczno, near Warsaw), 52 (Pustelnik).

considerable distances and even borders.[35] Thus, there was little incentive for Jews to remain outside the ghettos, which was forbidden and severely punished, until the Germans embarked on their liquidation.

According to reports from Rzeszów, food was more plentiful and cheaper in the ghetto than on the Ayran side.[36] Accounts from Mława, Rejowiec and Staszów state:

> Yet despite what we considered to be oppressive conditions, during the first fifteen months of Nazi occupation, the Jews of Mlawa [Mława] were more fortunate than Jews in other cities … The city remained open, and no ghetto was established … For the most part, we were permitted to continue living in our homes. Although Jews were not permitted to own businesses, those who owned merchandise were able to do business secretly. Farms surrounding our city continued to produce plentiful supplies of food, which the farmers frequently brought to the city and made available to us. Secretly, my father would personally make contact with the visiting farmers and let them know that he had merchandise for sale. He would invite those who showed interest to come to our house to complete a sale. … There was enough food available in Mlawa during that period.[37]

> The Jews of Rejowiec received ration cards, but very little food could be obtained with these pieces of paper. Instead, most Jews traded with local peasants who lived in the surrounding countryside, and people did not suffer from hunger.[38]

> As long as we lived with the Poles, we still traded with them. … [They] brought food and bought all kinds of goods … But when the ghetto [in Staszów] was sealed [in July 1942] … it became much

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[35] A testimony from Zwoleń, near Radom, states: "Despite all the dangers, the Jews of Zwolin [sic] … established trade with the Radom ghetto, exchanging goods—especially foodstuff: butter, eggs, cheese." See Chaim Sharit-Shlufman "From Radom Through Zwolin in the Concentration Camps," in Berl Kagan, ed., *Zvoliner Yizkor Bukh* (New York: New York Independent Zvoliner Benevolent Society, 1982), 45–46 (English section). See also the testimony of Israel Ber Cukerman in Israel Schweizer, ed., *Pinkas Szczekociny: Shtshekotshiner yizker-bukh: Lebn un umkum fun a yidish shtetl* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Szczekociny in Israel, 1959), translated into Polish as *Księga Pamięci Szczekocin: Życie i zagłada żydowskiego miasteczka* (Szczekociny: ReBorn Roots, 2010), 198. Many Jews made a living by smuggling goods, mainly textiles, from Reichsgau Wartheland into the *Generalgouvernement*. See Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 125. Jews from Kłobuck were able to smuggle goods across the border into the *Generalgouvernement* and trade with Poles to acquire food. Ibid., 154. For additional examples of extremely profitable transborder and long-distance smuggling see Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, *"Żydów łamiących prawo należy karać śmiercią!": "Przetępczość" Żydów w Warszawie 1939–1942* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2010), 172, 180; Paul Trepman, *Among Men and Beasts* (South Brunswick, New Jersey and New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1978), 68; Frank Stiffel, Frank Stiffel, *The Tale of the Ring: A Kaddish: A Personal Memoir of the Holocaust* (Toronto and New York: Bantam Books, 1985), 108 (purchasing gold and jewelry in Lwów for resale in Warsaw); Testimony of Jakow Balaban, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/2324 (trade between Stoczek Węgrowski and Warsaw).

[36] Franciszek Kotula, *Losy Żydów rzeszowskich 1939–1944: Kronika tamtych dni* (Rzeszów: Społeczny Komitet Wydania Dzieł Franciszka Kotuli w Rzeszowie, 1999), 81.

[37] Baruch G. Goldstein, *For Decades I Was Silent: A Holocaust Survivor's Journey Back to Faith* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 36.

[38] Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 704.

> more limited and much more difficult … Anyone who had no direct contact with Polish merchants suffered.[39]

After leaving the Warsaw ghetto, where conditions were described as abysmal for the poorer Jews, Jerry Koeing moved to the small town of Kosów Lacki where he found conditions entirely bearable: "When we arrived, we found that … things were absolutely normal there."[40] A testimony from Łochów also confirms that trade with Poles was widespread and the ghetto did not experience hunger.[41] A survivor from Sierpc, north of Płock, recalled: "We were not hungry in the ghetto. Everyone had their own farmers they knew in the villages. People sneaked out of the ghetto and arranged for food."[42]

Economic conditions for Jews in Białystok were also tolerable well into 1942. People were constantly hungry, but no one died of starvation.[43] According to a Jewish wartime report,

> The war with the Soviets left Białystok Jews in a good situation, from an economic point of view. During the Soviet occupation one could earn a good salary and save some money because there was lots of work. Besides that speculation was rampant. From the large sums they accumulated most Jews bought all sorts of goods that the Soviets kept dumping in Białystok. So that when the Germans entered Białystok, Jews had sufficient surpluses of goods and clothing, and from mid-year of the first year of the war [i.e., 1941] they would sell these things and make their living. Poles bought these things from Jews and they paid a good price for them.[44]

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[39] Sara Bender, "The Jews of Staszów, 1939–1943: History Through a Diarist's Eyes: A comparative Discussion," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 43, no. 1 (2015): 133–69, here at 145.

[40] Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust,* 119.

[41] Testimony of Helena Brzostek, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/4238.

[42] Hela Listapad-Izakowicz, "Life in the Ghetto and the Activity of the Partisans," in E. Talmi (Wloka), ed., *The Community of Sierpc: Memorial Book*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Sierpc/Sierpc.html>, translation of *Kehilat Sierpc: Sefer zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Sierpc in Israel and Abroad, 1959), 451. Hela Listapad-Izakowicz also noted: "In general, the Poles did not behave badly toward the Jews. The more intellectual Poles were also persecuted by the Germans—of course, not to the same degree as the Jews. However, they were expelled from their fine houses." For a period of 16 months she was sheltered by Celina Kokowska, a very poor Polish woman, but left on her own when the village population became aware of her presence. After her benefactor's arrest by the Germans, the information of her arrest spread and, understandably, the farmers became very reluctant to help her. See Hela Listapad-Izakowicz, "In the Sierpc Ghetto and in the Camps," in ibid., 446–47.

[43] The ghetto in Białystok, which numbered 41,000 residents in January 1943, did not suffer from starvation. See Sara Bender, "Similarity and Differences: A Comparative Study between the Ghettos in Białystok and Kielce," in Norman J.W. Goda, ed., *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust: New Transnational Approaches* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 80. According to Jewish testimonies, "Given an extremely hostile outside world and a rather tolerable existence inside the ghetto, being inside the walls was initially a source of optimism and security. When the ghetto was enclosed, the Jews were happy because they felt protected," recalled a Jewish woman. See Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 116–17.

[44] Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego,* vol. 3: *Relacje z Kresów* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN-B, 2000), 309–10.

In Grajewo, in the Białystok District, up until November 1942,

> Economically, life was not of the worst in the Ghetto. It can be said that during its existence, there was no starvation there. …
>
> The Nazi authorities permitted the peasants of the surrounding villages to bring food, peat, and wood into the ghetto. The peasants who had come to market on the specified days, would drive straight to the ghetto, without even stopping at the general market place. On these days, the streets of the ghetto would be choked with wagons as at a fair in the old days, and the Jews would buy out all the produce. This created the following paradox: The Jews who were walled-in the ghetto, completely isolated, had more essential commodities than the Polish population outside. The latter were forced to buy these essentials [at marked-up prices] from the Jews in the Ghetto.[45]

The situation was much the same in the nearby town of Goniądz:

> The Jewish population of Goniondz [Goniądz] consisted of three classes. The first were the rich who were merchants before the War and also manufacturers of such items as leather goods and shoes. They didn't have to work for a living. Most of them had hidden their goods in bunkers or among peasants they knew in the villages. From time-to-time, they would sell off a bit of goods, which were high-priced then, and buy food and other necessities. They could have existed like this for years.
>
> The second class, consisting of craftsmen, didn't have things so bad either. Their ten fingers were enough to earn a living. The peasants paid well for their work because the supply of craftsmen was limited. … Because they paid a fixed sum to the Judenrat, the craftsmen did not have to do forced labor. …
>
> The third class consisted of poor people, who had even been poor pre-war. They had it much worse than anyone else. They were the small merchants who had run the grocery stores. At one time they had had a small amount of goods, but now it was eaten up or sold during the first few months of the War. They were, therefore, part of the squeezed Jews. They did business with the peasants and bartered their Sabbath clothes, furniture which they had received as wedding gifts, tools … Since a money economy didn't exist for the peasants, a barter system was instituted. All transactions were underground, because there were huge penalties if one was caught.[46]

Despite food shortages, in the ghettos on Polish territory incorporated into the Reich, Jews were not dying of starvation. The large ghetto of Łódź was an exception. Even there, however, while starvation did pose a

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[45] Nachman Rapp, "History of Grayevo Ghetto," in George Gorin, ed., *Grayevo Memorial Book* (New York: United Grayever Relief Committee, 1950), xlii–xliii. Rapp goes on to add: "Actually, this was a well-planned maneuver of the German propagandists. They were out to convince the Polish population that the 'zhides' [Jews] take all for themselves and only when they will be wiped out, will there be enough food for the Poles."

[46] Tuviah Ivri (Yevraiski), "The Destruction of Goniondz," Part 14, in *Our Hometown Goniondz,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/goniadz/Goniadz.html>; translation of J. Ben-Meir (Treshansky) and A.L. Fayans, eds., *Sefer yizkor Goniadz* (Tel-Aviv: The Committee of Goniondz Association in the U.S.A. and in Israel, 1960), 591ff.

threat, the bulk of the population was sustained by massive smuggling of food.[47] In small towns, where Jews were not cut off entirely from the surrounding Polish population, they fared reasonably well. In Bełchatów, a town near Łódź that was incorporated into the Wartheland, trade and smuggling flourished.

> Until the German-Russian war began in 1941, the Jewish population of Belchatow [Bełchatów] was integrated into the everyday life of the town. Craftsmen and weavers continued their work illegally, and when someone was caught, he bought himself free after paying a bribe. At night smugglers transported textiles to the Gouvernement and brought back shoemakers accessories such as leather, nails, pegs, and other things, tailors accessories, cigarettes, candles, in other words everything that was not available in our town. Jews displaced from surrounding villages snuck back to their former houses and smuggled butter, eggs, meat, as well as other agricultural products for us.
>
> Thanks to the group of Jews mentioned above, the rest of us were able to survive, some by trading, some acting as middlemen. In other words, nobody was starving. The people sold everything that they possessed, willing to survive at any price. They knew that the future would be better, without fears or war, and they expected this new life and the end of the war very soon.[48]

Despite repeated German warnings, trade with the local population continued and assumed massive proportions, thus enabling Jews to survive despite the starvation food rations they were officially allotted.

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[47] In the Łódź ghetto, food rations were reduced from 1,600 calories in 1940 to 1,000 in 1942; however, this was offset by massive smuggling of food into the ghetto. In the analogous period, food rations for Poles in the *Generalgouvernement* were 736 and 400, respectively. See Grzegorz Berendt, "Cena życia—ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po 'aryjskiej stronie'," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały,* vol. 4 (Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, IFiS PAN, 2008), 110–43: 115, 118; Grzegorz Berendt, "The Price of Life: Economic Determinants of Jews' Existence on the "Aryan" Side," in Sebastian Rejak and Elżbieta Frister, eds., *Inferno of Choices: Poles and the Holocaust,* Second edition, revised and expanded (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2012), 115–65, at pp. 122, 128. According to some sources, 5,000 Jews may have died in the Łódź ghetto by June 1941, and in mid-1941, more than 1,000 Jews starved to death each month; in addition to small food rations, this was attributable to the lack of heating and hygiene, and overcrowding. See Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews,* 64, 67 (the 6,000 figure appears to be an error), 73–74. The marked pauperization of the Polish population was also reflected in the dramatic increase in the prices of various commodities which, by mid-1941, had risen 30 to 40 times from the prewar levels and continued to soar during the remainder of the German occupation. Housing costs in large cities also escalated enormously. The cost of a modest room in Warsaw increased two to threefold between 1940 and 1944, from 150 złoty to 500 złoty monthly. See Grzegorz Berendt, "The Price of Life: Economic Determinants of Jews' Existence on the "Aryan" Side," in Rejak and Frister, *Inferno of Choices,* 118, 127. Unemployment among Poles also soared; for example, in the Kraków district, employment in 1940 stood at just forty percent of the prewar level. Ibid., 117.

While Polish language schools in Łódź were closed down in December 1939, Jewish schools in the ghetto continued to function until the fall of 1941 (45 primary schools, 2 secondary schools, with almost 15,000 children in attendance), as did Jewish cultural life, something that was also the Polish population was denied. See Adam Sitarek, "Trzy miasta: Dzień powszedni w Litzmannsadt—wybrane problemy," in Chinciński, *Przemoc i dzień powszedni w okupowanej Polsce,* 471–74, 478; Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 79. Schools also existed in other ghettos, e.g., Warsaw and Wilno (in addition to Yiddish and Hebrew, Latin was taught, but not Polish). See Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 197–99, 203, 213. An elementary school and a Bet Midrash operated within the Bochnia ghetto until August 1942. See Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 489.

[48] M. [Mendel] Kaufman, "In the Years of the Holocaust," in Mark Tarkov and Abraham Mittleberg, eds., *Belchatow Memorial Book,* Internet: <http://jewishgen.org/yizkor/Belchatow/belchatow.html>, a translation of *Belchatow yizker-bukh* (Buenos Aires: Association of Polish Jews in Argentina, 1951), 463.

In Turobin [south of Lublin], one of the hundreds of Jewish towns scattered around Poland, where I had fled from the Warsaw ghetto, the strong arm of the Germans was not felt. … At the same time that so many people were dying daily in the [Warsaw] ghetto, life went on as usual in Turobin—shoemakers made boots for farmers, tailors made them coats; my Uncle Michael traveled around the village … selling notions. The Jews of the town continued to pray each morning, in their synagogue. There was poverty, but no one was starving. The Germans forced the villagers to supply them with a quantity of gold or merchandise such as leather or pelts, and threatened them if they refused—and the rich complained, but they paid. From time to time, the Germans imposed compulsory work details and later, the SS passed through the village and killed dozens of Jews for no reason, but life had somehow returned to normal. No one in Turobin, or in the many similar villages, could imagine that their days were numbered, that the Germans were going to kill all of the Jews without exception—could a normal human being imagine such a thing?[49]

Suzin, the work manager, had been a functionary in the Magistrate's Court before World War II … Now, he had become a beggar for contributions from the workers in his group. For example, the workers supplied Suzin with bread and butter, honey, cheese, and eggs. In exchange, he did not hurry them at their work, and even allowed them to leave work when they wanted. There were workers who came in the morning to register with him and afterwards they would leave for the entire day, to trade with workers from Bialystok [Białystok]. The men from Sokoly [Sokoły] traded with the men from Bialystok for food, clothing, shoes, fabrics, and leather smuggled from the Bialystok Ghetto. The smugglers would earn tens and hundreds of marks in a day from their trading.

The majority of the workers in Suzin's group did not work very much. Every one of them held a spade or a hoe in his hand on the pretext that he was working. When a "Krok" (German *gendarme*) was relieved from guard duty, they began to work energetically. Suzin himself took care not to be tripped up by the German supervisors. When he saw at a distance a German or the Grandfather, who came from time to time to supervise the work, Suzin would immediately shout, in Polish, "*Kalopczi, wada!*" ["C*hłopcy, woda!*"] ("Boys, water!"). Everyone understood that now they must work intensively for a few minutes.[50]

In November 1940, a ghetto was set up in Deblin [Dęblin]-Irena [south of Warsaw] … The ghetto was open, with no walls or gates, but Jews—other than the groups of laborers—were forbidden to leave it. Okolna [Okólna] and Santurska Streets bordered on the market square, so it was relatively easy for the Jews to purchase food from the Polish farmers. A bakery in Okolna Street continued to function and supply the ghetto a portion of the bread it needed. In October 1940, Poles who owned a grocery and food warehouse received authority to continue to employ Jewish workers, and the

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[49] Dov Freiberg, *To Survive Sobibor* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2007), 528. For a Jewish report attesting to widespread trade between Jews and peasants in the Hrubieszów area in 1941 and 1942, see Adam Kopciowski and Dariusz Libionka, eds., "Życie i Zagłada w Hrubieszowie w oczach warszawskich Żydów," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały,* vol. 3 (2007): 229–40, here at p. 231.

[50] Maik, *Deliverance,* 63.

> bakery employees were able to smuggle various foods, especially vegetables, into the ghetto. Their smuggling of food into the ghetto continued until it was finally stopped in October 1942. …
>
> Before long, a typhoid epidemic broke out [in camp for Soviet POWs] and spread to the ghetto. With the approval of the Germans, two hospitals were established in Deblin-Irena—one for the Polish population, situated in the school building on Sochatsky [Sochacki] Street, and one for the Jews, within the ghetto. The Jewish hospital suffered a constant shortage of medicines, but the Polish doctors transferred to it some medicines and other supplies that came from Warsaw.[51]

> [Łopuszno, south of Piotrków Trybunalski:] Officially, any contact between the Poles and the Jews was prohibited. However, acquaintances maintained contacts and traded with each other. The poles gave food and the Jews occupied themselves with craftsmanship.[52]

Daily life continued in this way, usually without open animosity, until the deportations to camps began in the latter part of 1942. Relations with the local population were generally favourable, much to the dissatisfaction of the Germans. Poles continued to trade with Jews, as they did before the war. Jews frequently stole out of the ghettos to sell goods and brought back food, which was often resold at a handsome profit.[53] A Jewish woman from Warsaw who took refuge in Zakrzówek, near Kraśnik, in August 1942, recalled: "There was no ghetto in Zakrzowek; the Jews lived in harmony alongside the Poles."[54]

For some Jews, smuggling became a fairly lucrative business:

> We in Stroza [Stróża], and even in Krasnik [Kraśnik], were far away from the large Jewish centers, so at first we did not feel the impact of the German policy of extermination of the Jewish people. In fact, until the end of 1941 our area remained quiet, more or less. We knew what was going on elsewhere, but for a long time, practically until December, 1941, we were in contact with businessmen from Cracow [Kraków] who continued to import food from our area. Father was the biggest exporter in this field, and the importers from Cracow used to visit us quite often. I still remember one particular Jewish businessman, dressed as a priest. He was probably our most important customer.[55]

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[51] "Deblin-Irena," in *Pinkas ha-kehilot: Polin,* vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 139–43, translated as *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00139b.html>.

[52] "Towards Extermination," *Łopuszno—the Memory Survived,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Lopuszno/Lopuszno.html>, translation of Marek Maciągowski and Yaacov Kotlicki, eds., *Łopuszno—pamięć przetrwała* (Kielce: Galeria, 2004).

[53] See, for example, Abram and Sonia Hurman, as told to Halina Birenbaum, *Pod osłoną nocy: Wspomnienia z lat 1939–1945* (Kraków and Oświęcim: Fundacja Instytut Studiów Strategicznych and Państwowe Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau w Oświęcimiu, 2007), 18, 20, 27–28; Browning, *Remembering Survival,* 56.

[54] Bakowska, *Not All Was Lost,* 146.

[55] Sam Edelstein, *Tzadikim in Sodom (Righteous Gentiles): Memoir of a Survivor of World War II* (Toronto: North American Press Limited, 1990), 20.

> Zalman Storch became a big shot and an excellent smuggler. He had been a coachman before the war and during the early period of the German occupation went on carrying passengers in his covered coach to Tarnow [Tarnów]. … He found out soon that carrying people was no business. One day Jechiel Brand, the son of Shielle Brand, asked Zalman why he wasn't carrying grain to Tarnow; Jechiel himself did not have permission to do so. Zalman agreed to carry the grain but named his price. He was as familiar with the route to Tarnow as with the contents of his own pockets. He knew exactly how to avoid the check-posts situated along the road. It worked perfectly and business flourished. But soon Zalman was fed up with sitting behind the horses, so Brand had to make him his partner. On the other hand Zalman was perfectly aware of Brand's capacity as a businessman so the partnership was a big success and both men got rich in a short period of time.
>
> Later, Zalman did not have to avoid the posts; both the Poles and the Germans were bribed and co-operated. Others who tried to do the same thing were lucky once or twice and then were caught red-handed. Their goods were confiscated and they had to run for their lives; often beaten cruelly. (After awhile they would not beat a Jew; instead they would shoot him or send him to a camp-camp). Nevertheless Jews kept on smuggling food to Tarnow because it paid well. The city of Tarnow consumed tons of flour, meat and eggs and Radomysl [Radomyśl Wielki] was one of the towns to provide those necessities. Since most provisions were sent to Tarnow, the prices of food in Radomysl went up. I had already mentioned that food was rationed there were ration-cards. Bread and sugar rations were hardly enough for one meal. The rest had to be obtained on the black market for a lot of money. Only those who were in business could afford black-market prices.[56]

The Germans were increasingly alarmed by this state of affairs and issued warnings to the population. On July 3, 1941, *Gazeta Częstochowska,* an official German newspaper published in Polish, complained: "The cases multiply, when Polish peasants, impelled by dangerous sympathy for the Jewish rabble, smuggle products into the ghetto and sell them at even cheaper prices than to their own Polish brethren. Such persons are warned of severe measures against them."[57] The county supervisor (*starosta*) of Puławy, in Lublin province, reported that "a significant portion" of the Polish population demonstrated compassion toward Jews."[58] The German county supervisor in Kraśnik remarked, in October 1941, with incensed incredulity: "according to my observations, the enforcement of this decree [i.e., forbidding the Jews to leave the Jewish quarter] is absolutely necessary because in my entire two years of duty in the East I have

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[56] Pinchas Reichman, "Life in Camp," in H. Harshoshanim, et al., ed.s, *Radomysl Rabati ve-ha-seviva: Sefer yizkor* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Radomysl and Surroundings in Israel, 1965), translated as *Radomysl Wielki and Neighborhood: Memorial Book,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/radomysl/Radomysl.html>.

[57] Cited in S. (Samuel) Mendelsohn (Shloyme Mendelson), *The Polish Jews Behind the Nazi Ghetto Walls* (New York: The Yiddish Scientific Institute–YIVO, 1942), 14.

[58] Dieter Pohl, *Von der "Judenpolitik" zum Judenmord: Der Distrikt Lublin des Generalgouvernements 1939–1944* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 64–65.

never experienced a situation where the Jews wander in such a [free] manner from one locality to another as I have observed here."[59]

In the face of such blatant disregard of repeated warnings, the German authorities decided to take decisive action to put an end to this state of affairs. Draconian measures had to be implemented to eradicate the widespread and persistent "problem" of the local population coming to the aid of Jews. On October 15, 1941, Hans Frank, the Governor General of the *Generalgouvernement*, issued an ordinance providing for the death penalty for Jews found outside the ghettos without permission and for persons offering them shelter.[60] On November 10, 1941, Governor Ludwig Fischer expanded the activities for which Poles faced the death penalty in the Warsaw District to include providing even a night's lodging, food or transportation to a Jew.[61] Even selling food to Jews was covered by this prohibition. Subsequently, the prohibition was extended to cover those failing to notify the authorities of any Jew in hiding.[62]

However, even these announced measures did not have the desired effect. In January 1942, the Nazis voiced their anger about the fact that there was no negative reaction on the part of the Polish population toward Jewish beggars in the Kraśnik area.[63] *Gazeta Lwowska,* an official German daily published in the Polish language, stated on April 11, 1942:

> It is unfortunate that the rural population continue—nowadays furtively—to assist Jews, thus doing harm to the community, and hence to themselves, by this disloyal attitude. Villagers take advantage of all illegal ways, applying all their cunning and circumventing regulations in order to supply the local Jewry with all kinds of foodstuffs in every amount …

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[59] Chodakiewicz, *Between Nazis and Soviets*, 173.

[60] Governor General Frank's ordinance is reproduced in Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations,* 632. The ordinance was subject to the following qualification: "In less serious cases the punishment may be imprisonment with hard labour or imprisonment." On November 10, 1941, in the Warsaw District, Governor Ludwig Fischer removed entirely the possibility of lesser sentences for Poles in less serious cases. Ibid., 633.

[61] Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations,* 633. For other examples of orders and proclamations, including the offering of rewards for those providing information about Jewish fugitives and Polish helpers, see Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations,* 634, 639–44. For an in-depth analysis of the laws and measures implemented by the Germans in the *Generalgouvernement* against Poles coming to the aid of Jews see Bogdan Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi…* (Poznań: Zysk, 2019). In addition to executing on the spot individual Poles suspected of helping Jews, arresting and sentencing them to prison terms, and sending them to concentration camps, the Germans sometimes imposed collective punishment on the helper's family or village. A fine of 400,000 złoty, as well as food requisitions, was imposed on the village of Daleszyce, near Kielce, where several Poles were seized for helping Jews. See Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Aleksandra Namysło, eds., *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2019), 227–28.

[62] For example, the announcement issued by the Kreishauptmann of Dębica county on November 19, 1942 stated: "The Security Police will take measures against anyone who learns of a Jew staying outside a camp without authorization and fails to notify the police." The measures for failing to notify the police of any Jew in hiding entailed deportation to a concentration camp. See Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations,* 643–44.

[63] Chodakiewicz, *Between Nazis and Soviets,* 174.

> The rural population must be cut off and separated from the Jews, once and for all, must be weaned from the extremely anti-social habit of assisting the Jews.[64]

It was only when the Germans started killing Polish transgressors more frequently and publicly, by hanging or executing them or by burning entire families alive in their homes, that the population became increasingly fearful of helping Jewish fugitives. As mentioned earlier, the Germans did not impose the death penalty on those who came to the assistance of Jews in Western Europe, and rarely used that punishment in Eastern Europe outside of the occupied Polish territories.

The Germans also punished severely those Poles who tried to assist Soviet POWs, whose fate turned out to be no better than that of the Jews. Some two million captured Soviet soldiers were starved to death between October 1941 and January 1942.[65] A Jew held in a work camp in the village of Czernice Borowe, near Mława, recalled:

> Not far from our camp was a prisoner camp for Russian soldiers, whom we saw almost every day marching in groups of tens. They looked terrible—thin, pale, barely able to stand. The Germans were letting them starve. They did get some food from some Polish farmers who were transporting stones in their wagons, to be used to pave the road. Risking their lives, the farmers managed to find ways to give these prisoners small amounts of food to eat. But two of the farmers did pay for this with their lives. When the Germans caught them they took these farmers to the nearby town of Prosnicz [Przasnysz], assembled the entire town in a place where two gallows had already been prepared, and hung them.[66]

It is little wonder, then, that—in the face of such displays of cruel punishment—acts of support for Soviet POWs dwindled.

Fugitive Jews and escaped Soviet POWs were often liquidated in tandem, and their benefactors were also executed, as was the case in a cluster of villages near Lublin—Dratów, Kaniwola, and Ludwin—in the second half of 1942.[67] A Pole employed in an anti-social setting like the German-run Blue Police could be tasked with pursuing both categories of fugitives, as was the case in Ruda-Opalin, near Chełm, where Jan Wielebski, the chief police officer at the local police station, captured Jews and Soviet POWS on the run,

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[64] Reproduced in Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations,* 638–39.

[65] Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews,* 71–72.

[66] Elya Tzala, "Pain and Suffering in the Second World War," in M. Harpaz, ed., *My Town: In Memory of the Communities Dobrzyn-Gollob,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Golub_dobrzyn/Golub_dobrzyn.html>, translation of Ayarati: Sefer zikaron le-ayarot Dobrzyn-Golub (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Dobrzyn-Golub, 1969), 368ff.

[67] Mariusz Zajączkowski, *Ukraińskie podziemie na Lubelszczyźnie w okresie okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1944* (Lublin: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Lublinie; Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2015), 98 n.95; Grzegorz Jacek Pelica, "Święci z Dratowa," *Przegląd Prawosławny,* no. 2 (212), February 2003.

and also terrorized their Polish hosts. Wielebski was himself a victim of German racial policies, having been expelled with his family from his home in Western Poland (to make way for German settlers) and forcibly resettled. His new role was hardly one that he had aspired to before the German invasion.[68]

A Jew from Mielec, where a flourishing black market developed, recalled that until March 1942 life inside the ghetto was relatively stable.

> On the surface life was almost normal and the population got used to the new rulers, and people were not worried when news about camps being built in different parts of the country reached our town. Everybody thought that if anything happened it would happen to somebody else. This feeling of security among the Jewish population was the first prerequisite in the scheme of gradual extermination. The Nazis wanted everything to be peaceful and quiet so that they could execute their plans with the least trouble.[69]

At the same time, from the outset, indiscriminate terror was directed at both the Polish and Jewish civilian population. It wasn't necessarily the case that Jews were targeted more often or more brutally than Poles. Leon Lezer recalled the following events he personally experienced in Tarnów:

> The Jews lived in relative calm at the beginning; there were only sporadic cases of bothering or beating Jews in the street, as well as the shooting of Poles. They then took Poles outside the city and snatched groups of Jews who were told to dig pits. The Poles were stood in a row and they were shot. The Jews had to bury the dead bodies. In such cases the Jews first had to lie in the pits. The Germans stood over us with loaded rifles and threatened that they would kill us and then they permitted us to go, beating us without mercy. I myself once was terribly beaten. I was grabbed for such an execution and, before being allowed to return home, was threatened with the death penalty if I dared to utter a peep about what had happened there.[70]

One must bear in mind that Poland, with its short-lived interwar independence, was already divided along ethnic lines before the outbreak of the Second World War. Once the war started, there was a complete breakdown of Poland's society into its constituent elements, with many ethnic groups seeking to be united

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[68] Jason Tingler, "Chełm's Unravelling: The Holocaust and Interethnic Violence in Nazi-Occupied Poland," *Slavic Review,* vol. 81, no. 3 (Fall 2022): 653–76, at p. 668; Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Jewish Fugitives in the Polish Countryside, 1939–1945: Beyond the German Holocaust Project* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2022), 21–29. Tokarska-Bakir makes no mention of the pursuit of Soviet POWs by someone who, after his life had been turned upside down, was thrust into an unwanted role as an equal-opportunity thug who targeted Soviet POWs and Poles, as well as Jews. This case offers no support for Toakrska-Bakir's theories of "creeping extermination" or "continuity" of Polish anti-Semitism (latent genocidal inclinations). Had Wielebski been thrust into the role of a ghetto policeman, the assessment of his behaviour would be significantly different.

[69] Testimony of Moshe Borger cited in Rochelle G. Saidel, *Mielec, Poland: The Shtetl That Became a Nazi Concentration Camp* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2012), 38–39.

[70] Abraham Komet, "The Annihilation of the Jews of Tarnow," in A. Chomet, ed., *Tarnow: Kiyuma ve-hurbana shel ir yehudit* (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Tarnow, 1954), 815, translated as *Tarnow: The Life and Decline of a Jewish City,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/tarnow/tarnow.html>.

with members of their groups who lived outside Poland's interwar borders. These various ethnicities pursued their own national agendas in isolation from each other, often riven by mutual hostilities. The ethnic disintegration was particularly pronounced in the Soviet occupation zone. Moreover, both the German and Soviet occupiers saw, and treated, Poland's multi-ethnic society as a miscellany of peoples, each of which was invited to collaborate individually.[71] Thus, there was no mutual universe of obligation shared by these various ethnic groups, including Jews. When there was solidarity, it tended to follow ethnic lines—a matter that is treated in more depth later on. Peter Hayes arrives at a similar conclusion based on more general observations:

> The key point to remember is that the Nazis created a Hobbesian world in annexed and occupied Poland, where no indigenous government existed to exert restraint and different parts of the population were constantly pitted against each other in a desperate struggle to survive. This was not fertile ground for the growth of a sense of common interest. The environment was far more conducive to preoccupation with one's own interests and taking advantage of opportunities.[72]

Hayes goes on to "call for understanding and for suspending the mutual blaming and competing claims to having suffered worst."[73] However, it should be noted that accusations of "competition" are often hurled at Poles for simply reminding the outside world, which is well aware of the Holocaust, of the extent of Polish suffering—something that is little known outside Poland.

The Germans also went out of their way to encourage and exploit friction between Poles and Jews, and to pit them against each other. The "divide and conquer" strategy was employed in a variety of ways.

In Węgrów, the Germans threatened to shoot any Pole and Jew seen in the street together. They locked up a group of Jews in the Catholic church and had them defecate on the altar. They then made Poles remove the Jews' excrement, alleging that they had committed sacrilege. The Germans reversed the roles in the town's synagogue.[74] A Jewish survivor from Wilczyn, near Inowrocław, recalled how the Germans tried, unsuccessfully, to incite the Poles by having Jews desecrate Catholic shrines.

> The Germans were inventive in tormenting us. They forced us to carry out acts of desecration against our Christian neighbors so they would turn against us. The Christians worshiped in chapels situated in the town squares. We could see small crucifixes glowing inside, circling and protecting a statue of the Madonna. Such a chapel sat in the middle of Wilczyn, where Christians went to worship and pray to the Madonna …

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[71] Jochen Böhler and Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, "Collaboration and Resistance in Wartime Poland (1939–1945): A Case for Differentiated Occupation Studies," *Journal of Modern European History,* vol. 16, no. 2 (2018): 225–46.

[72] Hayes, *Why?,* 257.

[73] Hayes, *Why?,* 256–57.

[74] Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci,* 144.

> On a cold snowy day in mid-January [1940], German soldiers were marching door to door, rounding up Jewish boys and men. I was among the recruits yet again, and I wondered what plans they had for us tonight. They ordered us to enter the chapel, remove the Madonna and roll her around the city square. We were horrified but went ahead and rolled and flipped and spun her around the square. We thought we would die of cold and exhaustion. Finally, they demanded that we take the Madonna to the beautiful home of one of the wealthiest Jews in Wilczyn and throw it through his front window. We felt such shame and humiliation when we returned home.
>
> The next day a Jewish friend told me the story of what happened after that. A German soldier went to the man's house and said, "Look, we hear you are hiding something in here." The man stood frozen, not knowing what to say. They searched his house and found the Madonna, then demanded the family bury it in the Jewish cemetery. The Poles observed all this and were stunned and confused by the incident. They knew they couldn't blame the Jews.[75]

In September 1939, the Germans forced Polish policemen in Warsaw to beat some old Jews. Afterwards, the Jews were forced to retaliate by attacking the policemen.[76] Jews were employed in executions of Poles. Rev. Roman Pawłowski, a 70-year-old priest from Chocz, was publicly shot in Kalisz in November 1939, in front of the local inhabitants who were driven to the public square to watch the spectacle.

> Agents of the Gestapo forced local Jews to tie Fr. Pawlowski [Pawłowski] to the post, after which he was shot in front of the assembled multitude. The Jews were made to kiss the feet of the corpse, unbind it, put it on a cart, and take it to the Jewish cemetery and bury it according to the Jewish rite.[77]

In the fall of 1939, both Poles and Jews were imprisoned, tortured and murdered in Górka Klasztorna, near Łobżenica, by the *Selbstschutz*, a paramilitary formation composed of ethnic Germans who were prewar residents Poland. On November 23, a rope was tied to each of Anna Jaworska's legs and two groups of Jews were ordered to pull the ropes in opposite directions until her body was ripped in half.[78] In April 1940, the Germans killed a Polish child and left the body in the Jewish cemetery, claiming that it was a ritual murder carried out by Jews.[79]

Historians Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski write:

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[75] Landau, *Branded on My Arm and on My Soul,* 34.

[76] Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci,* 143.

[77] *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in German-Occupied Poland: Reports Presented by H.E. Cardinal Hlond, Primate of Poland, to Pope Pius XII, Vatican Broadcasts and Other Reliable Evidence* (London: Burns Oates, 1941), 58, 105–106. (The American edition was published in New York by Longmans, Green & Co., 1941.)

[78] Barbara Bojarska, "Zbrodnie Selbstschutzu w Łobżenicy," *Przegląd Zachodni*, nos. 5–6, 1963, 147.

[79] Siekierski and Tych, *Widziałem anioła śmierci,* 144.

> The Nazis contrived in every way possible to provoke resentment and animosity between the national groups. For example, in February 1941 the warders for a Jewish labour camp were recruited from among Poles and Ukrainians, while early the same year the occupation authorities in Będzin employed Jews in compiling the registers of Poles liable to deportation from the town. Again, in the spring of 1942, five Jews were assigned for wholly clerical duties to the Treblinka I labour camp for Poles. Expedients like these all made for a continuous embitterment and vitiation of relations between Poles and Jews.[80]

These examples can be multiplied. For instance, in the hard labour camp for Poles in Płaszów, many functions—including hanging Polish inmates—were assigned to Jewish prisoners from the adjoining concentration camp.[81] In Auschwitz, Polish inmates were processed by Jews and vice versa.[82] Jewish workers were forced to beat Polish workers in Lwów, and vice versa.[83] Jewish prisoners of war from Lublin were employed to bury the corpses of Poles killed in mass executions.[84] Jewish forced labourers from Kosów Lacki (craftsmen, their assistants, and their equipment) formed the worker pool that undertook the

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[80] Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1963), 19.

[81] Franciszek J. Proch, *Poland's Way of the Cross, 1939–1945* (New York: Polish Association of Former Political Prisoners of Nazi and Soviet Concentration Camps, 1987), 50. The sadistic exploits of a kapo named Hesiek directed against Polish prisoners are described in testimony of Stanisław Nowak, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/3276, and in the testimony of Aleksander Dacków, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/3373. The hanging in June 1942 by Jewish policemen of 12 Poles and Jews in Płaszów is mentioned in the testimony of Fajwel Kornberg, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/4117.

[82] Jacob Celemenski, *Elegy For My People: Memoirs of an Underground Courier of the Jewish Labor Bund in Nazi-Occupied Poland, 1939–45* (Melbourne: The Jacob Celemenski Memorial Trust, 2000), 225. It was not until mid-1942 that Jews began to arrive, in any significant number, at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Prior to that time, Auschwitz contained mostly Christian Polish prisoners. Approximately 140,000–150,000 Christian Poles were sent to Auschwitz, half of whom perished. Even during the war, informed Jews in occupied Poland recognized this state of affairs. Franciska Rubinlicht, of Warsaw, wrote in a letter, dated March 21, 1943, to her family in the United States: "There is another place, in Auschwitz, where the condemned are burned. There, many of our relatives and friends, and Jews in general, have been murdered. However, it is mainly a mass-execution place for Poles." See Howard Roiter, *Voices from the Holocaust* (New York: William-Frederick Press, 1975), 117. A controversial and inappropriately named entry "Hitlerite concentration camps" ("Obozy koncentracyjne hitlerowskie") found in volume 8 of *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN* (published in 1966) claimed (at p. 89) that "5.7 million victims were killed in extermination camps" and that "about 99%" of the victims were Jews. That information is patently false. The subsequent 1968 erratum, which was in fact a new entry named "Hitlerite camps" ("Obozy hitlerowskie") that was also published in the 1970 Supplement to the encyclopedia (volume 13), contained information that was far more reliable and consistent with Raul Hilberg's research. That revised entry states (at p. 319 in the Supplement) that Jews were "sent to concentration camps and extermination centres, where they were killed in gas chambers and their bodies were burned in crematoria or on piles. It is estimated that of the approximately 5.1 million European Jews murdered by the Hitlerites, around 3 million perished in Hitlerite camps, 700,000 in ghettos, and 1.4 million were killed where they resided by Einsatzgruppen, SS, police, Wehrmacht and Hitlerite civilian authorities." The victims included 2.7 to 3 million Polish citizens of Jewish origin. So much for the alleged cover-up of Jewish victims in the latter entry, and the accuracy of the former entry.

[83] Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 3, 107.

[84] Testimony of A. Chalef, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/1467.

construction of Treblinka I, a hard labour camp primarily for Poles, and reported on their work when they would come home on weekends.[85]

The Germans also unleashed a barrage of anti-Semitic propaganda that played into the prejudices of some Poles and fostered anti-Polish feelings among Jews. Berenstein and Rutkowski comment on the scope of this divisive tactic:

> In support of their policy of persecution of the Jews in Poland the Nazi authorities mounted a vast propaganda campaign of ferocious virulence which preyed on the lowest instincts of the unenlightened sections of the population. The Nazi Polish-language gutter press … strove unremittingly to whip up the Poles against the Jews. New posters continually appeared on the walls, in trams, in railway stations and other public places vilifying the Jews.[86]

According to one Jewish survivor, "We also did not think about *why* they [the Germans] wanted to kill us. We knew that we were like rats. Their propaganda not only influenced the Gentiles, it also influenced us Jews. It took away from us our human dignity."[87] Jews played into this strategy by spreading anti-Polish propaganda in the ghettos, going so far as to claim that the Poles were inciting the Germans. A wartime report from the Warsaw ghetto spoke of the author's efforts to convince Jews "about the feelings in Polish society towards the Jews. They are inciting the occupier against the Jews, in order to save themselves by this stratagem." He also questioned the sincerity of the Polish democratic opposition and preached about the "abject baseness of behavior among the Poles."[88] Not surprisingly, Emanuel Ringelblum notes, in his wartime journal, that hatred towards Polish Christians grew in the Warsaw ghetto because it was widely believed that they were responsible for the economic restrictions that befell the Jews.[89]

Many Jews could not comprehend why it was they, rather than the Poles, who were suffering the brunt of the German brutality. Envy set it. Stories spread in the ghetto that Poles were leading "normal lives" outside the ghetto: "Everything there is brimming with life. Everyone eats and drinks until they are full. … On the other side, the houses are like palaces … there is freedom to the full … complete safety … justice

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[85] Dean, Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. II, Part A, 390; *Kosow Lacki* (San Francisco: Holocaust Center of Norrthern California, 1992), 33–35.

[86] Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945,* 19. See also Jan Grabowski, "German Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Generalgouvernement, 1939–1945: Inciting Hate through Posters, Films, and Exhibitions," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies,* vol. 23, no. 3 (Winter 2009): 381–412.

[87] Shepetinski, *Jacob's Ladder,* 45.

[88] Marian Małowist, "Assimilationists and Neophytes at the Time of War-Operations and in the Closed Jewish Ghetto," in Joseph Kermish, ed., *To Live With Honor and Die With Honor!…: Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S/" ["Oneg Shabbath"]* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), 619–34, at 631, 633.

[89] Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983), 118.

reigns."[90] A young Jew who witnessed the expulsion of the Poles after the failed Warsaw Uprising of August 1944 took pleasure from watching their misfortune:

> I must admit that we even derived a certain *schadenfreude* from seeing Poles treated like Jews, driven like cattle through the streets the way Jews had been herded, beaten down and hardly saying a word. … This was so reminiscent of when we had first been evicted from our home and forced into the crowded ghetto more than two years before. How ironic. For the first time we were equal … Poles now [sic] also had a taste of what it was like to be at the receiving end of Nazi brutality and retribution.[91]

As if Poles had not experienced mass expulsions and executions from the outset of the German occupation! A Jewish inmate of Treblinka recalled his feelings on seeing Polish famers who were required to tend to their fields near the camp:

> As we passed through the enclosed area … we would often see from a distance peasants working their fields. I looked at them, and I would feel a furious jealousy eating away at my heart. These were human beings, and I was a human being, too. But they were free and I was under guard all the time. The sky and trees were beautiful; this world was not big enough for me.[92]

The ensuing resentment many Jews—even religious ones—felt toward the Poles was widespread. Compunding the traditional views of Poles, especially peasants who were traditionally looked down upon, the alleged innate malice of the "other" now came to the forefront.

> *Ha-geir b'kirbeichu ya'aleh uleichu mailuh mailuh v'atuh sairaid matuh natuh*—The stranger in your midst will rise above you higher and higher and you will sink lower and lower." The Polish maids that cleaned Jewish houses … the illiterate drunks, who for pennies lugged packages for

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[90] Diary of Jehoszua Albert cited in Marcin Urynowicz, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Warszawie w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 563.

[91] Rubin Katz, *Gone to Pitchipoï: A Boy's Desperate Fight for Survival in Wartime* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 200–1.

[92] Wiatr, Engelking, and Skibińska, eds., *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego,* vol. 13, 193.

> Jewish travelers … the janitors, farmers, and peasants … suddenly they rose above the *Yidden* to persecute and degrade the noble nation who had sunk so low.[93]

Samuel Golfard, a perceptive Jewish observer the residing in Przemyślany, Eastern Galicia, noted in his wartime diary that the reality was quite different from the common perception:

> I am constantly writing about the martyrdom of the Jews. But I know that not only we are suffering. In the camps, the flower of the Polish nation is perishing. Millions of Poles in Germany do the work of hard labor convicts. Tens of thousands have perished in camps. Suffering and disease, the whole nation gives itself with blood for the "contribution." Children are torn away from their mothers. Fourteen-year-old girls carry on the hardest jobs as farmhands on German farmsteads. The [Polish] nation in bondage is carrying a heavy yoke. But not for a moment does the nation lose hope that freedom and the fatherland will be restored. Such hope has been taken away from the Jews, and this is why their fate is so tragic, why it is so difficult to last through every death-branded day. They envy the Poles and rightfully so. Moreover, they bear a grudge against the Poles for not being fellow sufferers in misery and brothers in misfortune. They forget that the Polish nation is defenseless. … The thing of greatest consequence is that there is general passivity dictated by weakness. No one can save his neighbor. Everyone's life is threatened. And if in a moment of great danger somebody is in a position to save the life of someone else, he cannot do so while being in ghastly fear for his own life. However, there are even such people who, endangering their own lives, hide and save Jews. …
>
> Perhaps there also are those who in the face of the massacres think, not without a certain satisfaction, that the Germans render a service to Poland by clearing it of Jews. I believe there are few such people.[94]

Golfard then compares accounts of Poles who were utterly indifferent to the sufferings of Jews, with Jews who were utterly indifferent to the sufferings of other Jews, giving several examples of the latter.[95] Golfard rejects the dialectic of Jews as victims and Poles and Ukrainians as victimizers, and alludes to the demoralization caused by Nazi policies. He comments:

> They can be found in each nation, even among the Jews, who in the past were famous for being repulsed by bloodshed. While in camp, I saw human beasts among Jewish group leaders [*grupenführerzy*], the Ukrainian militia, and the German Gestapomen. It is they who are guilty of

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[93] Devora Gliksman, *Nor the Moon by Night: Across the Treacherous Tatra Mountains, the Bobov Chassidim Seek a Haven from the War* (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1997), 184. Some rabbis went even further in their charges against the Poles. Moshe Shonfeld, an anti-Zionist Orthodox rabbi, states: "The Jews in Poland had an expression: if a Pole meets me on the wayside and doesn't kill me, it is only from laziness. … The Poles … were all fanatical Catholics, and all had unsatiable [sic] appetites for Jewish blood." See Shonfeld, *The Holocaust Victims Accuse,* 13, 16.

[94] Samuel Golfard as cited in Wendy Lower, *The Diary of Samuel Golfard and the Holocaust in Galicia* (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press/Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 63–64.

[95] Ibid., 64–65.

> letting loose man's most primitive animal instincts as the war made human life worthless and all morality a museum relic. People are embarrassed to affirm the former moral "superstitions." The day-to-day ethics of the prewar.[96]

Golfard's observations are also relevant for the earlier Soviet occupation of that region in 1939–1941.

It should also be born in mind that when there was solidarity it tended to follow ethnic lines, and did not usually extend to the "Other." Some Jews who were deported to camps from Warsaw after the failed August 1944 uprising were fortunate enough to have been saved by Jewish prisoners, who took risks for fellow Jews but not for Christian Poles.

> The Jews brought hundreds of Poles, remnants of the Warsaw uprising, to our camp in Leitmeritz [in Sudetenland]. They were placed in the death camp. Every day, scores of this group were killed. Among them were two Warsaw Jews. They came to us and asked us to save them. When we related their request to Wittman, our work leader, a Berlin Jew, he went into action immediately. The two received our work clothes, joined us and thereby remained with us until we were liberated.[97]

Of course, the Germans played it both ways. While disseminating anti-Polish propaganda among the Jews, they also claimed to be their protectors. One Jew recalled:

> I remembered the order to assemble on the lawn in front of the Judenrat headquarters in Grabowiec, the announcement that all the Jews of Grabowiec would be 'resettled' in Hrubieszow [Hrubieszów], where the SS officer had told us, the Jews would live and work together in a miniature 'Jewish state,' protected by the kindly German authorities from the wrath of the local Gentile populace.[98]

In Słonim,

> As soon as the Jews were enclosed in the ghetto, the head of the German gendarmerie … and his deputy … called all the Jews to a meeting, where they were assured there would be no more *Aktions*. They said the previous *Aktion* had been a Polish provocation, and that as long as Jews worked hard, they would survive the war.[99]

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[96] Ibid., 82–83.

[97] Isaac Landau, "Horror Journal: Years 1940–1945," in H. Rabin, ed., *Lanovits: Sefer zikaron le-kedoshei Lanovits she-nispu be-shoat ha-natsim* (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Lanowce, 1970), 76–90, translated as *Lanowce: Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Lanowce Who Perished During the Holocaust,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Lanovtsy/Lanovtsy.html>.

[98] Michael Temchin, *The Witch Doctor: Memoirs of a Jewish Partisan* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1983), 54–55.

[99] Testimony of Mordechaj Jonisz, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 302/ 141.

In view of this constant bombardment of propaganda it is not surprising that some Poles repeated such diatribes, just as some Jews resorted to anti-Polish barbs.[100]

Because warnings, anti-Semitic propaganda, and sanctions such as fines and imprisonment failed to curb Polish behaviour and isolate the Jews, which was a precondition for their annihilation, the Germans felt compelled to introduce Draconian measures to curtail contacts between Poles and Jews, to the fullest extent possible. A circular issued on September 21, 1942, by the SS and Police Chief in Radom District, outlined and justified those measures in the following terms:

> The experience of the last few weeks has shown that Jews, in order to evade evacuation, tend to flee from the small Jewish residential districts [i.e., ghettos] in the communities above all.
>
> These Jews must have been taken in by Poles. I am requesting you to order all mayors and village heads as soon as possible that every Pole who takes in a Jew makes himself guilty under the Third Ordinance on restrictions on residence in the Government General of October 15, 1941 (*GG Official Gazette,* p. 595).
>
> As accomplices are also considered those Poles who feed run-away Jews or sell them foodstuffs, even if they do not offer them shelter. Whatever the case, these Poles are liable to the death penalty.[101]

These warnings were not hollow. Adolf Folkmann recalled the scenes he had witnessed in June 1943 during the final liquidation of the ghetto in Lwów:

> After a day or so the action extended beyond the Ghetto confines into the town. S.S. and Ukrainian Militia looked everywhere for escaped Jews. The corpses of Poles who had been discovered giving shelter to Jews and the corpses of the Jews themselves could be seen all over the town, in the streets, in the squares and in all residential quarters. The extent of the terror increased. Hundreds of non-Jewish Poles who had made themselves suspect were murdered. The S.S. indulged in an orgy of blood-lust, and for three weeks no law existed in Lwow [Lwów] but their arbitrary will.[102]

At least 800 Christian Poles—men, women and children, entire families and even whole communities—were tortured to death, summarily executed, or burned alive by the Germans for rendering assistance to

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[100] A Polish woman from Chmielnik recalled one popular Jewish saying: "Gdy przyjdzie Ruski zabraknie na was powrózki," which translates roughly as: "When the Russians arrive there won't be enough rope [to hang the Poles]." See Marek Maciągowski and Piotr Krawczyk, *Żydzi w historii Chmielnika* (Kielce: F.P.H.U. XYZ, 2006), 194.

[101] Cited in Bartoszewski, *The Blood Shed Unites Us,* 40.

[102] Stefan Szende, *The Promise Hitler Kept* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1945), 168–69. These recollections were recorded in the early part of 1944, after Folkmann's escape from Poland and arrival in Stockholm in October 1943.

Jews. Hundreds more were sent to prisons and concentration camps.[103] Such harsh punitive measures, coupled with their own mistreatment at the hands of the German occupiers, naturally had an impact on the attitude of the local population. Polish peasants did not refuse to give water to thirsty Jews packed in trains headed for death camps because they were heartless and cruel, but because it was strictly forbidden to do so

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[103] Hundreds of such cases have been documented though the list is still far from complete. See the following partial lists of victims: Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 184–85; Wacław Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity: Christian and Jewish Response to the Holocaust,* Part One (Washington, D.C.: St. Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, 1987); Wacław Bielawski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane przez hitlerowców za pomoc udzielaną Żydom* (Warsaw: Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce–Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 1987); The Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Polish Nation–The Institute of National Memory and The Polish Society For the Righteous Among Nations, *Those Who Helped: Polish Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust,* Part One (Warsaw, 1993), Part Two (Warsaw, 1996), and Part Three (Warsaw, 1997). A selection from last of these publications is reproduced as Appendix B in Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation, 1939–1944,* Revised edition (New York, Hippocrene, 1997), and an extensive list of Polish victims also appears in Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 1998), 119–23. See also Anna Poray, *Those Who Risked Their Lives* (n.p.: Anna Poray, 2007), and her online publication "Polish Righteous: Those Who Risked Their Lives," compiled by Anna Poray, Internet: <http://www.savingjews.org/>. Poland's Institute of National Remembrance is presently working on a comprehensive register of Poles who were killed or imprisoned for coming to the aid of Jews. Thus far, it has published Aleksandra Namysło and Grzegorz Berendt, eds., *Rejestr faktów represji na obywatelach polskich za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2014) and Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Aleksandra Namysło, eds., *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2019). The latter publication chronicles the fate of 654 persons subjected to repressions for helping Jews.

Some Holocaust historians, who endeavour to deprecate the Poles' rescue efforts, have argued that there was essentially no difference in the penalty that the Poles and Western Europeans, such as the Dutch, faced for helping Jews. See Lucy C. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), 166. However, reliable sources belie this claim. Historian Raul Hilberg describes the situation that prevailed in the Netherlands as follows: "If caught, they [i.e., the Dutch] did not have to fear an automatic death penalty. Thousands were arrested for hiding Jews or Jewish belongings, but it was German policy to detain such people only for a relatively short time in a camp within the country, and in serious cases to confiscate their property." See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books/Harper Collins, 1992), 210–11. More recent research shows that the risk was even smaller and that people caught sheltering Jews were often not punished at all. According to a Dutch historian, "usually, if Gentiles who helped Jews were punished, they were punished with short-term Schutzhaft, or protective custody; only severe cases were sent to concentration camps in Germany." ("Schutzhaft" meant the power of the Gestapo to imprison people without judicial proceedings.) In Holland, such short-term "protective custody" entailed detention for up to six months. On May 9, 1943, 1,604 Gentiles were incarcerated for helping Jews; slightly more than a year later, the number had increased to 1,997. In many cases, however, those who were caught harbouring Jews, even repeatedly, were left at liberty. See Marnix Croes, "The Holocaust in the Netherlands and the Rate of Jewish Survival," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies,* vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 474–99. Although Dutch rescuers, if caught, could be sent to a concentration camp, this kind of punishment was not often meted out to people who only sheltered individual Jews: "supporters of Jews *on a large scale* were usually sent to concentration camps in Germany when caught … In other cases of help, people were usually sent to Vught concentration camp in the Netherlands, which had a less brutal regime. However, people *who only housed Jews in hiding* were often not punished at all. Especially in 1943 and 1944 they frequently were left alone and only the *onderduikers* were arrested." See Marnix Croes and Beate Kosmala, "Facing Deportation in Germany and the Netherlands: Survival in Holland," in Beate Kosmala and Georgi Verbeeck, eds., *Facing the Catastrophe: Jews and Non-Jews in Europe during World War II* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2011), 8, 129, 146. By way of comparison, sheltering airmen and being found with a gun carried the death penalty in the Netherlands. See Moore, *Survivors,* 227. According to historian Bob Moore, coming to the aid of the Jews was not punishable by law in occupied Belgium. See Moore, *Survivors,* 366 ("this precise 'crime' was never formally punishable under any specific legislation"). According to another source, however, a decree of June 1, 1942 warned the local population against sheltering Jews under punishment with "imprisonment and a fine." However, little is known about the extent to which these measures were enforced. See Mordechai Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust: Unholy Teaching, Good Samaritans, and Reconciliation* (Jersey City, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 2006), 131–32. If Gentiles who helped Jews were punished, they were punished with short-term Schutzhaft, or protective custody. See Robby van Eetvelde, "'Arrested for Helping, for Giving Shelter, for Giving Food': A Case Study of Individuals Arrested by the Gestapo in Antwerp for Helping and Hiding Jews in Occupied Belgium," in Dan Michman, ed., *Hiding, Sheltering, and Borrowing Identities: Avenues of*

under pain of death. Even Jews who tried to entice Poles with large sums of money were usually unsuccessful.[104] The possibility of being shot by a German or Ukrainian guard was a very real possibility, whether for a Polish helper or a Jewish jumper. Jurek Kestenberg, who was seized with his parents after the failed ghetto revolt in Warsaw and deported to Majdanek, recalled:

> The train stopped at some station. The locomotive had to take on water. We didn't have a drop of water. We begged, we cried through the windows to the Gentiles, "Bring us a bottle of water. We will give you money." A little boy wanted to give water. The Ukrainian shot him on the spot. He remained lying there with the little bottle in his hand.[105]

According to historian Arno Mayer, Poles "became indifferent to the torments of the Jews less because of any residual Judeophobia than because they, too, were being terrorized and brutalized, even if to a lesser extent."[106] One must reject, therefore, the charge that Poles were not just innocent bystanders and that they failed to act (that is, to defy the might of the Nazis!) simply because the Jews remained outside their sense or circle of moral responsibility. First of all, neither the Jewish nor Christian religion imposes a duty on someone to risk their life for another person. Secondly, most Jews considered themselves to be a nation separate from the Poles, and the Poles—as the "Other"—remained outside the Jews' sense or circle of moral responsibility. Finally, very few people in Western Europe came to the assistance of Jews even though helping Jews was not specifically forbidden by law. At worst, they could face a monetary fine or short period of incarceration for related activities.

The ability of the average Pole to extend assistance to others was also severely circumscribed by the poverty that afflicted the vast majority of the population.[107] Even before the war Poland was one of the poorest countries in Europe and its workers were among the lowest paid. The average working family occupied a one-room dwelling, usually without a toilet and running water, often without electricity, and almost never with gas. These tiny dwellings were generally occupied by five or more people. Rural poverty was widespread in the interwar period. The Great Depression hit Poland hard and the country struggled to try to attain pre-World War I economic levels. In the countryside, millions of impoverished families owned little or no land and lived in one or two-room cottages (cabins or huts by contemporary North American standards), usually covered with thatched roofs and often having dirt floors. After the German invasion, conditions deteriorated considerably. Rising prices for consumer goods, which were in short supply, and for food on the black market had a dire impact on the economic situation of most Poles. A stark indication of

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[104] Testimony of Rachela Joselson, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/870.

[105] Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds,* 111.

[106] Arno J. Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken? The "Final Solution" in History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 273.

[107] On economic conditions in interwar Poland see Derek H. Aldcroft, *Europe's Third World: The European Periphery in the Interwar Years* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), chapter 6.

the continual impoverishment of Polish society is the almost fivefold increase of the value of the US dollar on the black market from around 45 złoty in mid-1942 to over 200 złoty in the early part of 1945. Most of the Polish population thus found themselves in dire economic straits. Destitution soon became the norm for most city dwellers and, once the Germans imposed produce and livestock levies, for most farmers as well. Most Poles barely subsisted. They simply did not have enough food to share with others for any length of time. It was therefore extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the average Pole to provide the necessities for the care of a Jew for an extended duration, a point made pointedly by historian Grzegorz Berendt:

> already by 1941–1942 a major part of the society, in particular urban dwellers and people with no food surpluses, could not afford to provide gratuitous, long-term aid to Jews who, faced with the genocidal action, were escaping to the Aryan side in larger numbers than in previous years. Therefore, the real necessity to take money from the rescuees and to increase the amount in line with increasing prices.[108]

Galloping inflation in the period 1942–1944 further impacted the cost associated with sheltering a Jew. It was not unusual, therefore, for paid rescuers to demand an increase in the amount of compensation.[109]

Not all Jews seeking long-term shelter with Poles were impecunious. According to Jewish eyewitnesses, even when the ghettos were being liquidated in 1942 and 1942, many Jews still had considerable quantities of valuables.

> the expulsion of the Jews from Izbica [in October 1942] began to the train station outside of town. The expellees were commanded to sit on the wet and muddy grass. The victims sat there all day. … That situation continued until it was announced that all Jews without distinction must board the train. …
>
> The whole day of waiting, many commands were issued. Once it was commanded that all must hand over their money, and another command to hand over silver and gold, and then that all craftsmen cobblers, carpenters, tailors move to a special section. … 1200 young men who were removed from the cars. We were gathered in a field and commanded to clean the area. Gold, dollars, other currency, and jewelry could be seen spread across the territory. Afterwards, the guards faced a machine gun at us and fired for 10–15 minutes. The screams reached high heaven. Those who fell, fell and those who remained were told to return to town.[110]

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[108] Grzegorz Berendt, "The Price of Life: Economic Determinants of Jews' Existence on the "Aryan" Side," in Rejak and Frister, *Inferno of Choices,* 129.

[109] Grzegorz Berendt, "The Price of Life: Economic Determinants of Jews' Existence on the "Aryan" Side," in Rejak and Frister, *Inferno of Choices,* 132–33.

[110] Shlomo Zissmilkh, "The Dark Days," in M.S. Geshuri, ed., *Sefer Turobin: Pinkas zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Turobin in Israel, 1967), 259, translated as *The Turobin Book: in Memory of the Jewish Community*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/turobin/Turobin.html>.

It was an entirely natural expectation, therefore, that Jews should contribute to their own upkeep if they could afford to do so, as was generally the case for Jews who went into hiding in Western Europe.[111]

The advantage that farmers had over town dwellers was space, in the form of a barn and a small plot of land, and privacy, provided their farm was at the edge of or outside a village and therefore not too visible. However, as mentioned, rarely did farmers have enough food to share with others for any duration. Assistance was, therefore, generally on an occasional or short term basis. Such help was widespread and usually provided without payment. Jewish fugitives had to rely on a number of Poles to survive and often had to resort to petty theft which—unlike robbery—most farmers grudgingly tolerated:

> My father [Isaac Gamss] and uncles began taking turns sneaking out at night in search of food. In the summer, they stole plums, apples, and pears from neighbors' gardens. And they went into fields to gather carrots, radishes, tomatoes, and onions—vegetables that could be eaten raw.
>
> Besides what they picked outside, they also gathered food that sympathetic neighbors left out for them on doorsteps. Because they knew that as Jews we kept kosher, neighbors mostly set out potatoes, beans, or bread. From time to time, my father and uncles chanced knocking on the doors of casual acquaintances. Often they were turned away with angry replies, which was not surprising. Even if they were not anti-Semitic, Poles were terrified of being caught helping a Jew.[112]

> When [Jews] had neither money nor goods to exchange, they begged for food or stole it. This was the case with Szoszana Atłasowicz, who while hiding with her brothers exchanged various items with the peasants. When that source of income was exhausted, she was forced to steal. In her testimony she writes, "In the beginning, at night, the Poles would let us into their houses, and we would exchange some items of clothing and other objects for food. Later on, the Poles were afraid of a Jew as if he had been a ghost; they shut their door before us. So we stole from the basements

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[111] For example, as in Denmark (mentioned in a previous footnote), the rescue of Jews in Belgium was in large measure financed by the Jews themselves. Most often Jews themselves paid for their attempts to evade deportation (e.g. buying false identity documents, renting rooms, buying food on the black market, paying people to help them escape across the border to France and beyond). The Belgian Comité de Défense des Juifs, which represented a broad cross-range of the Jewish community, was involved in propaganda, finance, false papers, and material aid. It is believed to have helped 12,000 adults and 3,000 children, of whom 2,443 were supported financially, and was instrumental in indirectly assisting perhaps another 15,000 people. The Comité used at least 138 separate secular or religious institutions and at least 700 individual families to hide the children. These operations required huge amounts of resources and money, especially for monthly subventions to families and institutions to feed and clothe the children. It began fundraising by appealing to rich Jews and by making richer Jews pay double for services in order to subsidize the rescue of poorer Jews. The committee was able to get a loan for the sum of BFr 3 million from the Banque de Bruxelles, and monthly subventions from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, initially for SFr 20,000 and raised progressively to SFr 100,000, which were smuggled from Switzerland into Belgium. Additional funding came from other individuals and organizations. The committee's total expenditure during the occupation was estimated to have reached BFr 48 million. See Bob Moore, "Integrating Self-Help into the History of Jewish Survival in Western Europe," in Goda, *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust,* 193–208, here at 196–97.

[112] Leslie Gilbert-Lurie with Rita Lurie, *Bending Toward the Sun: A Mother and Daughter Memoir* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 47. The extended Gamss family was sheltered by Polish farmers near Urzejowicze south of Przeworsk.

> [food storage cellars] and granaries; usually turnips, carrots, potatoes. We'd bring the loot into our hideout."[113]

Even when payment was involved, something that was also widely practiced in affluent Western Europe as well as by Jewish rescuers,[114] it would be wrong to accuse all such rescuers of gouging and to reduce this to a purely economic transaction. As one Israeli historian points out,

> In any event, the act of rescue was not based exclusively on the financial aspect, since no remuneration could provide compensation for the dangers and the psychological stress that the rescuers continually faced. One should certainly not blame impoverished rescuers for accepting the money that they used to carry out the task they had taken upon themselves.[115]

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[113] Barbara Engelking, "Murdering and Denouncing Jews in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945," *East European Politics and Societies,* vol. 25, no. 3 (August 2011): 433–56, here at 437. These cases often had unusual turns. Lejb Finkielsztejn, who teamed up with a local thief and stole geese near Radziłów, was caught by a farmer and taken to the village head. The head, who had previously warned a Pole who was sheltering a Jewish woman of an impending raid, did not want to hand the Jew over to the Germans, as he was required to do, but was pressed into doing so. German gendarmes executed Lejb Finkielsztejn. After the war, both the farmer and the headman were sentenced to prison terms. See Barbara Engelking, "'Po zamordowaniu udaliśmy się do domu': Wydawanie i mordowanie Żydów na wsi polskiej w latach 1942–1945," in Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds., *Zarys krajobrazu: Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), 274–75.

[114] Sholem Kamienny, who was confined in the Warsaw ghetto, recalled:

> We used to hide there during each *Aktion.* Once a Jewish policeman noticed us there, and when during an *Aktion* he came into our hiding place, we locked him in together with us, (he agreed to this for a considerable sum of money). After the raid, we let him out. …
>
> The ghetto was still under siege and a Jew offered, for a sum of money to take me to the *Aryan side*. I paid the asked price and as was arranged I waited about midnight in a court at the corner of Nalewki and Miła Streets. The man arrived on time together with a young companion. They took me out into the street, opened the cover of the sewer and we went down, with him behind us with a revolver in his hand. We walked through the stinking sewer, now and then catching our breath at intersections. At a certain point we stopped at a signal from the street above. We again opened the cover and went up. There a Gentile was waiting for us—on Bonifratów Square. He led us all to his dwelling, gave us food and drink (me, after three days of hunger and thirst). The Jew took some food parcels and went back to bring out others (from the ghetto).

See Sholem Kamienny, "With Kałuszyn *Landslayt* in the Warsaw Ghetto," in A. Shamri and Sh. Soroka, eds., *Sefer Kaluszyn: Geheylikt der khorev gevorener kehile* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Kaluszyn in Israel, 1961), 411ff., translated as *The Memorial Book of Kaluszyn,* Internet: <https://jewishgen.org/Yizkor/kaluszyn/Kaluszyn.html>.

[115] Emunah Nachmany Gafny, *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post-Holocaust Years* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 52. Even if the payment amounted to several hundred złoty per month, given the average unofficial exchange rate of 100 złoty per U.S. dollar in 1943–1944, that would have amounted to only a few dollars. See Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 225. By way of comparison, during the initial stages of the evacuation of Jews from Denmark to Sweden, private boatmen (mostly fishermen) set their own price and the costs were prohibitive, ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 kroner per person ($160 to $1600 U.S. in the currency of that period). Afterwards, when organized Danish rescue groups stepped in to coordinate the flight and to collect funds, the average price per person fell to 2,000 and then 500 kroner. See Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry,* 261–65, 269.

The notion that Poles were eager to see the Jews being mistreated and abused by the Germans and relished in their misfortune is discredited by first-hand observers, as many Jewish testimonies attest to.[116] Most Poles were appalled at the treatment the Germans meted out to Jews. General Johannes Blaskowitz, commander of the Eighth German Army during the September 1939 campaign and subsequently Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Territories, wrote to Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch, the Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, in his report of February 6, 1940: "The acts of violence carried out in public against Jews are arousing in religious Poles [literally, "in the Polish population, which is fundamentally pious (or God-fearing)"] not only the deepest disgust but also a great sense of pity for the Jewish population."[117]

Those who dismiss or ignore what appears to be an objective assessment by a non-interested and well-informed source (a third-party observer with no interest at stake in Polish-Jewish disputes) are fond of selectively citing from, and mistranslating, an official report by General Stefan Rowecki ("Grot"), Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army, from September 1941, which allegedly reads, "The overwhelming majority of the country is anti-Semitic." The misrepresentation of this source (assuming that such sentiments can be accurately gauged) was authoritatively debunked by British historian Norman Davies decades ago in an exchange with Abraham Brumberg, a frequent commentator on Polish-Jewish issues, but unfortunately still persists in scholarly publications.

> [Abraham] Brumberg is fond of quoting a Home Army Report of September 1941, signed by the commanding office of the AK, General [Stefan] Grot-Rowecki, and containing the famous sentence, "Please accept it as an established fact that the overwhelming majority of people in the country are anti-Semitically disposed" (*Przygniatająca większość kraju jest nastawiona antysemicko*). Mistranslated by Mr. Brumberg, the quotation takes on a new slant, and might seem to imply either that Polish attitudes were based on fixed prejudice, or even that the Poles approved of the Nazis'

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[116] Chaim Kaplan, an otherwise harsh critic of Poles, acknowledged: "We thought that the 'Jewish badge' would provide the local population with a source of mockery and ridicule—but we were wrong. There is no attitude of disrespect nor of making much of another's dishonor. Just the opposite. They [the Poles] show that they commiserate with us in our humiliation. They sit silent in the street cars, and in private conversation they even express words of condolence and encouragement. 'Better times will come!'" On February 1, 1940, Kaplan wrote: "But the oppressed and degraded Polish public, immersed in deepest depression under the influence of the national catastrophe, has not been particularly sensitive to this [pervasive anti-Semitic] propaganda [which is being spread by the Germans]. It senses that the conquerors are its eternal enemy, and that they are not fighting the Jews for Poland's sake. Common suffering has drawn all hearts closer, and the barbaric persecutions of the Jews have even aroused feelings of sympathy toward them. Tacitly, wordlessly, the two former rivals sense that they are brothers in misfortune; that they have a common enemy who wishes to bring destruction upon both at the same time." See Katsh, *Scroll of Agony,* 82, 114. Abraham Lewin recorded in his diary: "I have heard many stories of Jews who fled Warsaw on that momentous day, 6 September 1939, and were given shelter, hospitality and food by Polish peasants who did not ask for any payment for their help. It is also known that our children who go begging and appear in their tens and hundreds in the Christian streets are given generous amounts of bread and potatoes and from this they manage to feed themselves and their families in the ghetto." See Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oxford and New York: Basil Black in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, Oxford, 1988), 124–25.

[117] Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Reiss, *'Those Were the Days': The Holocaust through the Eyes of the Perpetrators and Bystanders* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991), 4; Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham eds., *Nazism 1919–1945: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts,* vol. II: *Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 939.

> genocidal policies. Significantly, and very conveniently, Mr. Brumberg keeps quiet about the second half of the quotation. The original text of the report, in describing the factors influencing Polish opinion at the time, goes on to say three things: firstly, that virtually nobody approved of German actions; secondly, that Nazi persecution of the Jews was causing a backlash of sympathy; and thirdly, that pro-Jewish sympathies were inhibited by knowledge of Jewish activities in the Soviet zone.[118]

Many Jewish accounts confirm the abhorrence of German displays of persecution of Jews shown by ordinary Poles, as well as widespread pity for the victims. A Jewish eyewitness from Parczew recalled that the burial of 200 Jewish prisoners of war executed by the Germans in February 1940 "made a huge

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[118] Professor Davies explains the mistranslation, in "Poles and Jews: An Exchange," *The New York Review of Books,* April 9, 1987:

> Mr. Brumberg's mistranslation reads, "The overwhelming majority of the country is anti-Semitic," wrongly implying that anti-Semitism was a fixed attribute of the Polish population. Grot-Rowecki, however, used the phrase "*nastawiona antysemicko,*" which is rather different, implying a *nastawienie,* an "attitude," "adjustment," "disposition," or "inclination" that can change according to circumstances.

The text of the radio telegram containing Rowecki's report, dated September 25, 1941, is reproduced in Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, ed. *Polacy–Żydzi, Polen–Juden, Poles–Jews, 1939–1945: Wybór Źródeł, Quellenauswahl, Selection of Documents* (Warsaw: Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa, Instytut Dziedzictwa Narodowego, and Rytm, 2001), 197, and in Krzysztof Jasiewicz, *Pierwsi po diable: Elity sowieckie w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1941 (Białostocczyzna, Nowogródczyzna, Polesie, Wileńszczyzna)* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN and Rytm, 2001), 41–42, with one variation in wording that in no way undermines Norman Davies' perceptive analysis:

> Melduję, że wszystkie posunięcia i oświadczenia Rządu i członków Rady Narodowej, dotyczące żydów w Polsce wywołują w kraju jak najgorsze wrażenie i znakomicie ułatwiają propagandę Rządowi nieprzychylną lub wrogą. … Proszę przyjąć jako fakt zupełnie realny, że przygniatająca większość kraju jest *nastrojona* [as opposed to "*nastawiona*"] antysemicko. Nawet socjaliści nie są tu wyjątkiem. Różnice dotyczą tylko taktyki postępowania. Zalecających naśladowanie metod niemieckich prawie nie ma. Metody te wywołały odruchy współczucia, ale zmalało ono po zlaniu się obu okupacji i zaznajomieniu się przez ogół z zachowaniem się żydów na wschodzie. … [emphasis added]

Like "*nastawiona*", "*nastrojona*" connotes a "mood" or "disposition" that can change according to circumstances. (One might look for an analogy here to the mood of the American public toward Muslims in the wake of 9/11.) It is important to bear in mind that General Grot-Rowecki's report was written *before* the Holocaust got underway and that news of the widespread murder of Jews in formerly Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland in the summer of 1941 had not reached central Poland by the time this report was prepared. This fact eludes historians who continue to cite Grot-Rowecki along Abraham Brumberg's lines. For example, Alexander Prusin writes, "a report sent to London in September 1941 by the AK commander Stefan Rowecki, who explicitly stated that any positive efforts of the Polish government in regard to the Jewish question 'cause the worst impressions, [for] the country is overwhelming anti-Semitic. …'" See Prusin, *The Lands Between,* 173. According to historian Bogdan Musiał, Nazi propaganda had a hand in fostering animosity toward Jews by extensively publicizing information about Soviet atrocities in the Eastern Borderlands and by portraying Jews as partners and participants in these crimes. See his article, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na Kresach Wschodnich R.P. pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)," *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego,* vol. 34, no. 1 (1999): 103–25, here at 125.

Another document that is used manipulatively in Holocaust literature is that of the underground courier Tadeusz Chciuk ("Celt"), which contains remarks reportedly made to him by Stanisław Jankowski, the Government-in-exile's Delegate in Poland from February 1943 until March 1945. The report is cited very selectively for Jankowski's statement that the Government-in-exile exaggerates its love of Jews and that the country does not like Jews. In fact, what Chciuk reported Jankowski as saying is: "London also errs in its excessive warm-heartedness (*serdeczność*) towards Jews. It must be said that the country does not like Jews, even though it helps them, it sympathizes with them, and considers the crime perpetrated on the Jews to be one of the greatest in the annals of humanity." See Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 198–99 n.5.

impression on the population both Jewish and Polish."[119] Villagers from Wyszków, near Dolina, described "with horror" how the Gestapo murdered hundreds of Hungarian Jews in the summer of 1941.[120] When Jews in Jaworzno were rounded up for deportation, according to a Jewish eyewitness, the Polish population looked at this spectacle with sorrow.[121] According to a Jewish woman from Oleszyce, "I was standing there listening to people come in. They were discussing how they were killing the Jews, how the Jews were running away, who had been shot. It was a small city. They felt sorry for the Jews."[122] During the deportation in Mielec, "The Poles went out of their houses, many shook their heads, sighed and said, 'Yes, today you—tomorrow us.'"[123] On two different occasions, when the Germans were parading or humiliating the Jews before killing them, Bruno Shatyn observed: "The Poles lined the sidewalks, looking on in absolute silence, as though frozen in place." Also: "Poles gathered on the sidewalks, incredulous, some crossing themselves at this monstrous sight."[124]

During an *Aktion* in Sandomierz, carried out by the Germans on a Sunday morning with customary brutality, Zofia Zysman witnessed the following reaction on the part of Poles: "I mingled with the Catholics who were coming out of church. I heard them moaning, weeping and screaming. 'Mother of God.' I did not cry—the tears in my eyes had dried up."[125] Rabbi Chaim Yitchok Wolgelernter noted in his memoir that

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[119] Testimony of Nuchem Perlman, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/608.

[120] Testimony of Zania Rattenbach, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/670.

[121] Testimony of Eli Grünbaum, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/575.

[122] Testimony of Eva Galler (née Vogel), Holocaust Survivors, Internet: <http://www.holocaustsurvivors.org/data.show.php?da=survivors&di=record&ke=6>.

[123] Saidel, *Mielec, Poland,* 51.

[124] Bruno Shatyn, *A Private War: Surviving in Poland on False Papers, 1941–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), 42, 121.

[125] Testimony of Zofia Zysman, Yad Vashem Archives, file M.31.2/5901.

most Poles in Działoszyce displayed empathy, prayer, and crying as the Jews were taken by the Germans to be shot.[126] According to Rabbi Wolgelernter,

> It was easier to save oneself in the countryside. The simple peasant did not feel hatred towards us; on the contrary, he always contacted Jews eagerly and trusted them in every matter. If a Jew did not entrust his belongings to him to care for, there was no reason to harm him or do him wrong. The peasants empathized with us in our suffering and misfortune. They showed this by welcoming us with bread and water. It was true they were fearful of letting us into their homes but the reason for that was that, in every village, notices were posted warning that whoever takes a Jew in or gives him a piece of bread would pay with their life. Notwithstanding, when things quietened down a little, they let us sleep in their barns, and they even took women and children into their homes.[127]

A survivor from Radom recalled—not realizing that the Germans would sometimes order Poles to stay indoors during deportations of Jews:

> All inmates of the Szkolna Street camp [in Radom] were lined up by the Germans and ordered to march in the direction of Opoczno. The S.S. men hurried the tardy marchers along with the aid of their clubs and whips. The Jews all marched together—old men, women, children and the sick. … They passed farms and hamlets and noticed how the Polish villagers locked themselves behind their doors, hoping thus to shut out the sight of the Jewish prisoners walking and falling again toward an unknown destination. …

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[126] Chaim Yitzchok Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary: A Chronicle of Tears* (Lakewood, New Jersey: Israel Bookshop Publications, 2015), 110, 119, 181, 210. As for the mass shootings of Jews, the non-German participants were Ukrainians. Ibid., 174. Large groups of Jews were in hiding in the surrounding countryside, for significant periods of time, without being denounced. For example, over sixty Jews hid among Poles in Szyszczyce. A cave behind Tetele's field was the shelter to over thirty people, and the local Poles thought it a religious duty to bring them food and other provisions. Another group of Jews hid in a *mikveh* building. Their presence was an open secret among the Poles, and even children talked about them. Yet no one denounced them. After being warned about the common knowledge of their existence, these Jews moved to a secure location two weeks later. Ibid., 221, 234, 285–86. In contrast to historians who try to belittle the German-imposed death penalty for the slightest Polish aid to Jews, Wolgelernter, who actually went through the Holocaust, does not. Ibid., 121, 218, 221, 226, 294, 300, 367, 468. In fact, in several of the cases he sites, the Polish benefactors were so terrified by the nearby German killings of other Polish benefactors that they evicted the Jews they were hiding. To add to the terror, the Germans also threatened to burn down entire Polish villages for individual Poles hiding Jews. Ibid., 221. The Germans did not need Polish informers to find Jews. They conducted house searches for Jews in hiding among Poles. Ibid., 299. The Germans intentionally spread false rumors, about Jews being allowed to gather in certain "sanctuary towns," in order to lure Jews out of hiding. Ibid., 223. The Germans conducted *łapankas* in order to kidnap Poles for forced labour. In doing so, they often came across hidden Jews. Ibid., 226. Finally, many Jews, exhausted from living as fugitives, gave up, and turned themselves in to the Germans. Ibid., 282–83. A few Poles denounced or killed Jews they knew or suspected were stealing from them. One evening, Moshe Rederman, the butcher, instead of buying food, slipped into a Polish neighbour's storage room to get some flour. A Pole saw him, followed Moshe to his hideout, and informed the Polish police. Ibid., 234. Chaim Wolgelernter ate kosher food while in hiding, and his Polish benefactor, Biskup, supplied it. Ibid., 370. Years later, Abraham Fuhrman described how Wolgelernter reacted to food, that had, under different circumstances, been acquired by banditry, "When Chaim Yitzchok witnessed our methods of extorting provisions from the Poles, he himself was loath to eat the food, but at the same time he said to me in a fatherly way, "*mein kind, ess gezunterheit*—eat in good health, my child." Ibid., 370.

[127] Barbara Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień…: Losy Zydów szukujących ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), 52–53, translated as *Such a Beautiful Sunny Day…: Jews Seeking Refuge in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2016).

> They were marched to the railroad station to board a train; no one suspected that these were death trains speeding to the crematoria. Some of the Polish railroad men working on the wheels of the locomotive whispered to the prisoners:
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> "You poor beggars, they're taking you to Auschwitz. Save yourselves, if you can."[128]

A Jewish underground journal, *Undzere Weg,* wrote on March 1, 1942:

> The Poles, who avoided any negotiations and contacts with the Germans and who didn't want to hear anything about establishing a Polish government which would obey the Germans and their rulers, announced their sympathy for the tortured Jews on every occasion. That was the reaction from members of the Polish intelligentsia, the Polish workers and peasants; they stressed that the Poles, as a people with beliefs, a politically mature people, would not be tempted to catch the racial hook. … The occupier did everything in his power to isolate the Jews from the Poles.[129]

These accounts, and many others, contradict the selectively-chosen ones of Poles rejoicing at Jewish suffering. Jan Karski, the famed underground courier, reported, in January 1943, that the prevailing attitude of Polish society in response to German atrocities against the Jews was one of outrage and horror, as well as sympathy for the plight of the Jews.[130] A thorough review of the Polish underground press of all political stripes has not revealed any evidence of approval for the crimes of the Holocaust; on the contrary, those involved in atrocities committed against the Jews were unequivocally condemned by all political factions, including those on the extreme right.[131] Moreover, in some towns, it was strictly forbidden to observe what was happening during *Aktions.* For example, in Tarnów, streets were blocked, doors were shut, and residents were warned not to look out from windows. A young man seen glancing through a window at Jews being rounded up in the town square was fired at and shot dead.[132]

One must be cautious in attributing "indifference" to the passivity shown by most of the population (including the vast majority of the Jews themselves) in the face of relentless German terror and harsh sanctions for disobedience. Polish farmers who were ordered to bring their horse-drawn wagons to transport Jews during deportation operations, for example, were hardly in a position to defy the German

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[128] Tuviah Friedman, *Nazi Hunter* (Haifa: Institute for the Documentation of Nazi War Crimes, 1961), 97–98.

[129] As cited in Havi Ben-Sasson, "Polish-Jewish Relations during the Holocaust: A Changing Jewish Viewpoint," in Robert Cherry and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, eds., *Rethinking Poles and Jews: Troubled Past, Brighter Future* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 90. As Havi Ben-Sasson shows, the initial objective portrayal of Poles in Holocaust accounts later gave way to negative stereotypes.

[130] Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 156.

[131] Andrzej Friszke, "Publicystyka Polski Podziemnej wobec zagłady Żydów 1939–1944," in Grześkowiak-Łuczyk, *Polska, Polacy, mniejszości narodowe,* 193–213, especially at 210.

[132] Jan Bochenek, *Na posterunku: Kartki z dziejów kościoła tarnowskiego w czasie okupacji niemieckiej* (Tarnów: n.p., 1947). 90.

authorities. Janina Woińska of Brańsk, who was decorated by Yad Vashem, took issue with the charge that these Polish farmers could have helped the Jews escape because there were not that many guards escorting the convoy. The farmers did not have a chance against armed Germans no matter how few of them there were, she pointed out. She added that it is easy now to say "what if," but in order to really judge their behaviour one would have had to live through these events. Most farmers were simply devastated by what was happening, and extremely fearful.[133] As Barbara Engelking acknowledges, fear played a primary role in the unwillingness to extend help to Jews.

> Refusal of help was motivated in various ways, with fear being the most common objection. Obviously that fear was totally justified and the Poles had real reasons to feel it; they were rightfully scared and refused to help due to concerns for their own and their families' life and safety. Punishments administered by the Germans for hiding Jews, including capital punishment, were a real factor. The fear associated with helping Jews increased when an occupier used acts of terror and collective responsibility, triggered by the discovery of hidden Jews and the occupier's willingness to punish Polish helpers. Jochwed Kantorowicz recalls that after a Jewish woman in hiding had been killed and her peasant helpers had been arrested in the nearby village of Pocerany [Kocerany, north of Grójec], "our landlords were terrified and they were afraid to let us stay." At the same time in a different village, "two Jews were killed, and the Polish man who had been hiding them was clubbed to death … it was enough for our landlords to order us to go." We must admit that the landlords' fear was totally justified.[134]

Charges of indifference or passivity are simply hypocritical and unpalatable when they come from the mouth or pen of someone who has not personally demonstrated heroism or a proven record of humanitarian accomplishments. Fair-minded Jews who lived through those times eschew such generalizations. Rabbi Abraham D. Feffer, a Holocaust survivor from Drobin, wrote:

> Yet many fortunate survivors from my own shtetl, remember well and with great fondness and admiration the help of the brave Christian farmers who lived in nearby villages where we worked on cold winter days. (In Poland, hiding a Jew, or feeding him was punishable by death, usually hanging). We remember how these men and women, at great peril, opened their poor "chatkis" [cottages] to share with us warm soup, bread and potatoes.[135]

Z. Ben-Moshe from the town of Łask wrote about both named and unnamed rescuers, none of whom have ever been recognized as Righteous by Yad Vashem:

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[133] Testimony of Janina Woińska, Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project, United States Holocaust Memrial Musuem, Internet: <https://collections.ushmm.org/oh_findingaids/RG-50.488.0052_trs_en.pdf>.

[134] Barbara Engelking, "Murdering and Denouncing Jews in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945," *East European Politics and Societies,* vol. 25, no. 3 (August 2011): 433–56, here at 437.

[135] Rabbi Abraham D. Feffer, *My Shtetl Drobin: A Saga of a Survivor* (Toronto: n.p., 1990), 22.

> We must remined [sic—be mindful of] all those people, not Jews, who gave their hand to save many of our town when they escaped from the Nazi murderers. Also in Lask [Łask] there were good Christians who suffered seeing how the Jews of their town suffered. In the hard days of distress and banishment, they endangered themselves by hiding Jews and giving them from their bread. Gabrionchik and his wife from Lask [Łask]; he gave documents and food [to] two escapers: Vovtche Raichbard and Shmuel Friedman. A Christian woman emerged as a saver-angel, when they had to pass the boundary of the German protectorate [i.e., into the *Generalgouvernement*]. Heinzel, Skibinski [Skibiński]'s son-in-law, guided the two to the Polish secret organization in order to receive German documents, and hid them in his home some days. He gave them the address of Zvi Michalovitz in Grushkovitza [Gorzkowice], and did so that they would be accepted by a priest, who was the chief of the secret organization in this place. This priest, whose name is unknown, accepted them with bright face, and immediately gave them the necessary documents. The young Christian, who knew they were Jews, hid them in her parents' house, telling them these two are Polish officers from Varsha [Warsaw], who escaped from the Gestapo.
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> The Polish policeman Krakovski [Krakowski], who saved Zvi Michalovitz from the death-waggon [sic], just in the last minute, and brought him to a refuge place. The family Banashchiek, who hid him in the threshing-floor, and gave him all he needed for lessons he gave their children in the nights. … The villagers who disperse pieces of bread and turnip on the ways, for the caravans of hungry people, who went under the watching of the S.S. The villagers who gave their shoes to barefooted and weak. How can we forget the villagers who refused to give food [to] the watchers of the women-caravans who were transported from work-camp. Shraga Noiman tells about a Polish boy who worked as an electrician in Kolomna. He offered to save the whole group of Jews that worked there, and to transfer them to a secure place near Varsha. This electrician and his fellows, who acted a period of time to save Jews, were caught at last by the Nazis.[136]

Matus Radzivilover, a cantor who hails from Warsaw, stated:

> I never had the tendency to be a nationalist. I am positively devoted to my Jewish brethren and I am proud of my heritage, but I also loved the country of my birth, Poland. I loved my neighbors, the Poles I grew up with and lived with in love and peace. I never accused them of failing to help us because they were in great danger themselves. Hundreds of thousands of them were killed or deported to concentration camps. They paid their price under Nazism, too. Hitler's intentions were to exterminate the Poles after he was done with the Jews.[137]

Regarding the Poles' reaction to the plight of the Jews, Raul Hilberg, whose knowledge of archival sources is second to none, wrote:

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[136] Z. Ben-Moshe, "Respect for Jew Savers," in Z. Tzurnamal, ed., *Lask: sefer zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Association of Former Residents of Lask in Israel, 1968), 124–25.

[137] Matus Radzivilover, *Now or Never: A Time For Survival* (New York: Frederick Fell, 1979), 82.

For some right-wing Poles, who had always wanted the Jews to depart, the deportations came virtually as a wish fulfillment. The broader center, however, had more complex thoughts. Poles knew that they were not a favored group in German eyes, and the realization that the end had come for the Jews inevitably raised questions whether the Poles would be next. The reaction was observed in Volhynia, and it surfaced again in the Lublin District, where the Germans followed their roundup of the Jews with a more benign, but forcible resettlement of Poles from one zone to another.[138]

Overall, the general Polish population is not mentioned in German documents in respect of its participation as harassing Jews and helping the Germans. To the contrary; many German reports indicate that Poles felt anxiety for their own safety after the Jews disappeared. There are some German documents that mention some Poles, notably Polish police, railroad-workers and low-level employees in German offices but there was no Polish central authority collaborating with the Germans, as we find in e.g. Norway and its Quisling government or France and its Vichy regime. This was never the case in Poland.

As was the case in many European countries, there were also Polish individuals that played extortion games with Jews, but then there were also Poles that helped Jews under risk of facing death penalty from the German occupants. Both categories were relatively small in comparison to the general population, albeit one must take into consideration that most survivors made it through the war by Polish help and protection. A friend of mine, Bronia Klebanski, who is Jewish but lived on the "Aryan" side of society and was an active member of the Jewish underground in the Bialystok [Białystok] area, once told me a story of how she at a time took the train during the war, and was suddenly pointed out by a little girl who yelled "Jew!". All the Polish passengers sat quietly, and nobody said anything to instigate further interest. This account is a small example of the general practice of non-collaboration among the Poles during the war.

… In Ukraine, contrary to Poland, where the Germans built secluded death camps, Jews were often massacred on the spot. The Nazi death camps in occupied Poland such as Treblinka, Belzec [Bełżec], Sobibor [Sobibór] and Chelmno [Chełmno] were all hidden to the public.[139]

Of all the native police forces in occupied Eastern Europe, those of Poland were least involved in anti-Jewish actions. … The Germans could not view them as collaborators, for in German eyes they were not even worthy of that role. They in turn could not join the Germans in major operations

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[138] Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books/HarperCollins, 1992), 97–98.

[139] Interview with Professor Raul Hilberg, June 20, 2005, available on line at <http://www.maxveritas.com/pb/wp_1add70b0.html?0.611384753320024>. Another testimony from Białystok mentions that, when an ethnic German woman chased a Jewish escapee from the ghetto in the street, holding fast to his arm and yelling for someone to arrest him, none of the passersby responded. The woman found a German to assist hier in truning the Jew in. See Regina Grol, *Saving the Tremors of Past Lives: A Cross-Generational Holocaust Memoir* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 55. There are many Jewish accounts attesting to the fact that Poles generally did not succumb to anti-Jewish incitement. See, for example, the testimonies of Stefan Chaskielwicz, Israel Shahak, Halina Gorcewicz, Roman Solecki, George Sten, Marek Edelman, Stasia Ałapin Rubiłowicz, Zosia Goldberg, Ruth Altbeker Cyprys, Natan Gross, Irena Borman Bakowska, Zdzisław Przygoda, Hania Ajzner, and Yitzhak Zuckerman, cited in Mark Paul, *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the Poles: The Untold Story,* Internet: <http://www.kpk-toronto.org/obrona-dobrego-imienia/>.

> against Jews or Polish resistors, lest they be considered traitors by virtually every Polish onlooker. Their task in the destruction of the Jews was therefore limited.[140]

Holocaust literature has also endeavoured to turn members of the *Baudienst,* an obligatory "construction service" for young Polish men, into willing accomplices to the Holocaust. In fact, they were forced labourers and failure to report for duty meant punishment for the deliquent and his family. Informed observers, like Ludwik Hirszfeld, a renowned immunogist of Jewish origin who moved from place to place

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[140] Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders,* 92–93. The Polish police, or Blue police (*policja granatowa*) as they were popularly known because of the navy blue colour of their uniforms, was formed by the Germans in December 1939, as a continuation of the prewar Polish criminal police force, which the Germans had dissolved upon occupying Poland. (The Polish police operated only in the *Generalgouvernement,* except for Eastern Galicia, where Ukrainian police presided. Approximately 300,000 Jews held in ghettos in Łódź and Eastern Upper Silesia would not have had any contact with Polish policemen, nor did Jews in large ghettos like Wilno, Lwów, Grodno, Białystok, and others in Eastern Poland.) On October 30, 1939, Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger, Higher SS and Police Leader (*Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer*) of the *Generalgouvernement,* ordered all former Polish policemen to report for duty by November 10, 1939 under threat of the "severest punishment." Thus, participation was compulsory from the outset, and deserters and their family members were punished for desertion. The new police force was placed the supervision of the German Order Police. In order to mitigate German brutality, the Polish government-in-exile and underground structures generally encouraged the return of policemen into service. The Polish underground was thus able to infiltrate the organization to gain intelligence. About one third of pre-war Polish policemen entered the ranks of the Polish police. The strength of the force increased from 8,630 members on January 31, 1940 to about 12,500 men in 1943–1944. By mid-1943, its composition was about 70 percent Polish. The remainder was 20 percent Ukrainian and Belorussian, and 10 percent Volksdeutsche. The latter were used by the Germans in an enforcer role. Unlike the Ukrainian police, the Blue police's cooperation with the Germans was administrative, not political. The primary role of the Polish police was to maintain law and order, but additional duties were added such as enforcing curfews, assisting in the collection of food quotas and labour quotas, guarding the perimeter of ghettos, and participating in anti-partisan and anti-Jewish measures. The record of the Polish police is mixed. In 1941, the police commandant of Warsaw, Oberleutnant Alfred Jarke complained that the German police was forced into armed action in the ghetto because the Blue police remained passive. Jarke threatened them with punishment "with all the means" at his disposal if they did not initiate action before the German police did. See Paulsson, *Secret City,* 146. Individually, however, some of its members did wilfully serve the Germans for personal gain, and the Germans sometimes formed police battalions from these degenerates. About one in forty policemen in Warsaw took part in the search for fugitive Jews in 1943, and turned them over to the Germans. Some policemen blackmailed Jews, while others helped them. The most important book on the Polish police is the study by Adam Hempel, *Pogrobowcy klęski: Rzecz o policji "granatowej" w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990). A brief overview by Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, "Between the German Authorities and Polish Society: The Polish 'Blue Police,'" in found in Jochen Böhler and Robert Gerwarth, eds., *The Waffen-SS: A European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 169–79.

Ignoring this literature and the many documented cases of Polish policemen helping Jews or turning a blind eye to their illegal activities (a large selection of those cases is found in a later footnote), according to Jan Grabowski:

> In the case of the Polish Blue Policemen and the Polish firefighters …, the murder of Jews drew upon deeper layers of hatred. This hatred sprang like weeds from the toxic soil of antisemitism, which had grown deep over time, enriched and cultivated by centuries of the teachings of the Church and decades of secular, nationalistic indoctrination. Greed, opportunism, and fear were therefore powerful but secondary motivations for the Gentile killers of their own Jewish neighbors.

See Jan Grabowski's lecture, "The Polish Police: Collaboration in the Holocaust," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, April 2017. Thus Grabowski attributes wrongdoing not to an individual's particular characteristics but rather stereotypically imposes national and religious characteristics as the driving force of a disparate group of people who acted as they did for diverse reasons. Grabowski overlooks the glaring fact that rescuers also shared those exact same characteristics, and very often mentioned them as the source of their motivation for risking their lives to help Jews. And somehow, without being imbued with Polish nationalism and Catholicism, the Norwegian police were able to round up almost all of their country's remaining Jews (the ones that didn't manage to get out of Norway in time for payment) and handed them over to the Germans for deportation to their deaths. Using Grabowski's approach, a compelling linkage could be made based on fact that the Stalinist henchmen who orchestrated the massacre of more than 100,000 Poles during the Great Terror were very often Jews, who struck primarily at Poles, and not at fellow Jews.

in the Polish countryside, saw things firsthand for what they truly were: these young men were themselves victims who were traumatized by their horrendous experience.

> A young boy of twenty … told us his story. He had been mobilized as a *Junak* to work in the Baudienst [Construction Service]. He could not avoid this, because they would have taken his parents. The Germans put these young men into barracks and drilled them for several days with lectures on how the Jews were the source of all evil in this world. They were shown pictures in which the Jew was presented as a louse or bedbug. Later, they were given a large amount of vodka to drink. When they were half unconscious, they were ordered to surround the town and catch the Jews. Then they took the poor Jews out of the town where several armed Germans were waiting for them. The Jews were ordered to dig a ditch. Then the *Junaks* were ordered to grab one Jew after another by both arms and lead him toward the German. The German fired a shot, and the *Junaks* had to throw the Jew into the ditch. If the Jews was killed, it was not so bad. But some were only wounded. It was unpleasant to throw a screaming Jewess into the ditch. The worst was to throw children into the pit. One *Junak* broke down in tears. These young boys were actually still children who had been forced to play the role of hangmen. The teacher asked: "Were you not ashamed?" "Yes, at first I was ashamed and very sorry, but then I got used to it. Besides, what could I do? One fellow refused, and immediately he got a bullet in his head." The teacher's wife had tears in her eyes, and the teacher was looking at the boy with sadness and was crying inside not only because of the Jews' death but also because of the moral death of the youth of our nation. At the age of twenty, no one can carry out the tasks of a hangman with impunity; even if he is poisoned with alcohol.[141]

The Germans deployed approximately 30,000 German Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei, Orpo*) in the *Generalgouvernement,* consisting of 45 battalions, a number of mobile units, *Schutzpolizei* and Gendarmerie commands spread all over the country. These forces took part in the extermination of 1,723,277 Jews, which constitutes about 90% of all Holocaust victims that had been citizens of the prewar Second Polish Republic. Gendarmerie officers assigned to rural areas also actively persecuted, caught and killed Jews, including ghetto and transport escapees who were in hiding. Virtually all the manhunts and round-ups targeting the Jewish community were organized with the participation of the *Orpo*. Only a relatively small group of police officers refused to partake in the executions of unarmed civilians, including

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[141] Hirszfeld, *Ludwik Hirszfeld,* 280. Hirszfeld put forward the following sober assessment of conditions in occupied Poland (ibid., pp. 316–18):

> When we talk about the tragedy of Jews in hiding who found no shelter, we forget about those millions of Poles who had no opportunity to manifest their attitude toward the crime. The overall picture that the persecuted Jews must have formed was quite different. … I saw that the Jews in hiding were looking at the stand of the people from a perspective that was understandable but incorrect. A goodhearted man could save at best one or a few Jews and not for long, especially when he had no means. One evil man, a blackmailer or informer, could destroy thousands. Therefore, I believe that we must not generalize the fact and we must not rely on stories told by victims. Out of the 3.5 million Polish Jews, only several tens of thousands survived. Those survivors will, unfortunately, have a false picture of the whole when they think about the mob that persecuted them and robbed them of their last shirt. Warsaw residents who had to hide in rural areas after the uprising went through a similar Golgotha. The Polish mob [like mobs everywhere, including the United States and Britain—M.P.] has always and everywhere indulged in plunder. … But we must not condemn all society. … The guilt rests not with Polish anti-Semitism but with the German Government, which placed a certain category of people outside the law.

women and children. They were not sanctioned, but they often encountered resentment and reproach from their colleagues, and insults that they were cowards.[142]

As for the alleged eagerness of "ordinary Poles" to kill Jews, historian Christopher Browning points out that the Germans found so few Poles willing to take part in *Aktions* against Jews that they were forced to turn to other Eastern European nationalities and bring them into ethnic Polish territories for that purpose. German forces together with non-Polish auxiliaries were sufficient for the liquidation of most of the ghettos. The role of the Polish police was peripheral, and hardly mentioned by Browning.

> Unable to satisfy his manpower needs out of local resources, [Odilo] Globocnik prevailed upon [Heinrich] Himmler to recruit non-Polish auxiliaries from the Soviet border regions. The key person on Globocnik's Operation Reinhard staff for this task was Karl Streibel. He and his men visited the POW camps and recruited Ukrainian, Latvian, and Lithuanian "volunteers" (*Hilfswillige,* or Hiwis) who were screened on the basis of their anti-Communist (and hence almost invariably anti-Semitic) sentiments, offered an escape from probable starvation, and promised that they would not be used in combat against the Soviet army. These "volunteers" were taken to the SS camp at Trawniki for training. Under German SS officers and ethnic German noncommissioned officers, they were formed into units on the basis of nationality. Alongside the Order Police, they constituted the second major manpower pool from which Globocnik would form his private armies for the ghetto-clearing campaign.[143]
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> For the [deportation of] more than 5,000 Jews of Parczew, the Germans had two companies of Order Police and a unit of Hiwis, or 300 to 350 men.[144]

For greater certainty, Browing later repeats that "large units of murderous auxiliaries—the notorious Hiwis—were not recruited from the Polish population, in stark contrast to other nationalities …"[145]

Peter Black, a senior historian at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, tackles other related issues that pass for truisms in the Jewish nationalist narrative and even in popular media.

> This still begs the question, however: why did the Germans build stationary gassing centers? And why did they build them in German-occupied Poland? The answer is not that they expected killing centers for Jews to be more acceptable in a land known for its interwar political anti-Semitism, a notion that continues to survive in the popular imagination. The answer involves demographics, logistics, occupation strategy, and situational context.

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[142] Wolfgang Curilla, *Der Judenmord in Polen und die Deutsche Ordnungspolizei 1939–1945* (Paderborn, München, Wien, Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2011).

[143] Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 52.

[144] Browning, *Ordinary Men,* 95.

[145] Browning, *Ordinary Men,* 158.

> Stationary killing centers made good sense in German-occupied Poland. The SS and police had unchallenged control of the security apparatus and unchallenged authority to implement security policy. Nearly half of the Jewish civilians, who were to die in the Holocaust, lived in the region; the incremental movement of Jews from larger communities in numerous transports to killings centers in rural areas served to reduce German fears both that the Jews would successfully organize resistance and that non-Jewish Poles would become sufficiently uneasy to increase parallel resistance efforts or, worse still, to come to the aid of Polish Jews.[146]

Norman Davies, probably the foremost authority on Polish history in the West, had this to say about the state of historical writings on the subject in his seminal work *God's Playground*:

> One of the meanest of modern historical controversies surrounds the conduct of the non-Jewish population towards the Nazis' Final Solution. Some Jewish writers, whether scholars or novelists such as Leon Uris, have spread the view that the Poles actually rejoiced at the fate of the Jews or at best were indifferent 'bystanders'. … Both sides in the controversy overlook the realities of life under the Nazi Terror, which was so much fiercer and more protracted in Poland than anywhere in Europe. To ask why the Poles did so little to help Jews is rather like asking why the Jews did nothing to assist the Poles. The two sides were physically separated … Segregation precluded large-scale assistance. … stories of individual gallantry, though real enough, vastly exaggerated the opportunities for chivalry which actually existed. In a world where immediate death awaited anyone who contravened Nazi regulations, the Nazis could always exact a measure of co-operation from the terrified populace. The Polish slave doctor in Auschwitz, the Polish partisan in the woods, the Polish peasant fearful of reprisals, cannot be judged by the morality of free men in normal times, any more than one can judge the Jewish informers who sought to ransom their lives be denouncing their fellows, or the Jewish prostitutes who worked in SS guardrooms. Both Poles and Jews were victims to the Terror, and were conditioned by it. It is perfectly true, of course, that some of the partisan bands murdered fugitive Jews out of hand. It is also true that the Home Army failed to oppose the construction of the Ghettos in 1939–40 or the mass deportations of 1941–3. Yet to turn such facts into evidence of wilful neglect would seem to perpetrate a libel as vicious as any which has been levelled against the Jews themselves. In the nature of things, the Underground was notoriously suspicious about all refugees, outsiders, and strangers, not only about Jews, and protected just as many as they turned away. The Polish Underground failed to oppose not only the

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[146] Peter Black, "Holocaust by Bullets: 'Hitler's Hidden Holocaust'?," in Victoria Khiterer, Ryan Barrack, and David Misal, eds., *The Holocaust: Memories and History* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 12, 13. Peter Black goes on to explain (at p. 13) why the Germans, driven be expediency, proceeded differently in Western Europe:

> The Germans had to be even more sensitive to public opinion in Western Europe and the Reich itself. This related less to whatever identification of common cultural ground individual German occupation officials may have experienced, and even less to a sense of racial common stock with the Northern Europeans (Norwegians, Danes, Dutch, and Flemings), than to the military priority of maintaining indigenous calm and compliance sufficient to sustain total war in the East and preparation to defend against an Allied invasion of France or Italy. Moreover, the Germans were highly dependent on local bureaucracies and police forces not only to maintain order in occupied territories, but to implement "final" solution policy.

> actions against the Jews, but equally, until 1943, all the executions and mass deportations of Polish civilians. In the earlier years of the war, it was simply too weak and too disorganized to attempt anything other than local diversions. With the one exception of the Ghetto in Łódź, which survived till August 1944, the Final Solution was all but complete by the time the Underground was strong enough to take action. In the meantime, the Council of Help for the Jews (RPŻ), organized by the Government-in-Exile's Delegate, arranged for tens of thousands of Jews to be hidden and cared for. The survivors were all too few, but in the circumstances, it is hard to see how it could have been otherwise.[147]

As elsewhere in Europe, there were some Poles who betrayed, blackmailed, extorted, robbed or even killed Jews. Sometimes they acted out of fear or at the direction of the German occupiers, but too often they did so for their own dark motives and personal enrichment. Holocaust literature attributes every act of criminality committed by a Pole against a Jew as purely a manifestation of anti-Semitism, and the perpetrator as representative of the Polish population at large. However, these evil doers simply represented themselves. (To suggest that every misdeed of a Jew directed against a non-Jew is motivated by anti-goyism would be rightly rejected as anti-Semitic.) In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that destitution and lawlessness abounded during the war, with an attendant large spike in crime. Ethnic Poles were also frequent targets of such crimes. Persons who preyed on Jews usually did so because Jews were easy targets, and not because they were Jews. Unscrupulous characters were just as likely to prey on ethnic Poles. This controversial topic is the subject matter of a large and growing number of publications by historians and publicists who often take a skewed, ethno-nationalist approach to these matters by focusing almost exclusively on the misconduct of a small minority of the Polish population and drawing sweeping conclusions. There is a tendency to describe criminality directed at Jews as an ethnically engrained or conditioned trait and, based on the activities of a small minority, to ascribe to Polish society as a whole widespread or even near-universal complicity in the crimes of the Holocaust, while paying scant attention to other factors such as wartime demoralization, opportunism (easy targeting), and the widespread assistance provided to Jews by many Poles. Following that approach, collaboration with the Germans was allegedly the accepted norm and assistance for Jews broke a taboo and was therefore extremely rare and frowned upon. Passivity is treated as indifference or even approval of the fate of the Jews and, according to

[147] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), vol. 2, 264–65.

historians like Jan Gross, Jan Grabowski, and Omer Bartov, effectively a form of collaboration.[148] It has even been referred to as "communal genocide."[149] However, that approach has been rejected by well-informed and thoughtful Jews with lived experience. The Warsaw underground leader Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek") wrote in his memoir:

> I said honestly [in 1945] and I repeat it today: to cause the death of one hundred Jews, all you needed was one Polish denouncer; to save one Jew, it sometimes took the help of ten decent Poles, the help of an entire Polish family; even if they did it for money.[150]
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> And if I consider the treason carried out against me by individuals, there were just as many Jews among them as Poles. For example, when I was condemned to be executed on April 18, 1942, it was because of a Jewish denunciation.[151]

The notion that virtually all Poles treated Jews with endemic hostility and took every opportunity to strike at them for racial or religious reasons has little basis in fact. Marek Edelman, one of the leaders of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, cautioned against making sweeping generalizations about wartime conditions and urged that matters be put into their proper perspective.

> Near the ghetto one always found a crowd of Poles looking at the Jews who were going to work. After leaving the ghetto gate one of the Jews might leave the work column, remove his armband, and steal away. Among the crowd of several hundred Poles there would always be one, two, perhaps three betrayers who would apprehend the Jew … The entire crowd, however, did not act that way. I didn't know who among the crowd was a betrayer … One has to remember that there were not a

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[148] A recent example of this approach is David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–1949* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016), especially at 646–48, where the author summarily denigrates the rescue efforts of the Poles before launching into a sustained attack, in which he accuses all strata of Polish society of spending virtually all their waking hours hunting down Jews. This grotesque caricature of the Polish countryside, inspired by the writings of Jan Gross and Jan Grabowski, is reinforced elsewhere in the book. For example, even though the entire Jedwabne region had only some 1,400 Jews according to the 1940 Soviet census, and even though hundreds of those Jews were conscripted into the Soviet army, fled with the retreating Soviets, or survived the attacks carried out in July 1941, Cesarani claims that 1,800 Jews were killed in Jedwabne and Radziłów alone. Ibid., 371. Thus, the Poles managed to accomplish what the most ardent German Nazis did not even dream was possible: killing each Jew at least twice over. This strident approach to Polish-Jewish relations has a long history in North America. Jewish-American historian Lucy Dawidowicz also focused on "the widespread Polish sport of bounty hunting" several decades ago, and had little to say about Polish rescuers other than that they feared fellow Poles and faced no more by way of punishment than the Dutch. See Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians,* 106, 166.

[149] See Omer Bartov, "Communal Genocide: Personal Accounts of the Destruction of Buczacz, Eastern Galicia, 1941–1944," in Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, eds., *Shatterzone of Emipres: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 399–420, especially at pp. 403–404.

[150] Yitzhak Zuckerman ("Antek"), *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 461.

[151] Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory,* 493.

> thousand or five hundred betrayers; there were maybe five of them. It was the same way with neighbours; one didn't know if the neighbour was upright. We lived on Leszno Street and across from us there was a suspicious dwelling. Ours was also suspect. After the uprising [of August 1944] broke out, it turned out that that dwelling was an AK [Home Army] station. The mistress of the house had been afraid of us and we of her.[152]

The notion that Poles struck it rich because of the removal of the Jews by the Germans is patently false. In the eastern half of Poland, which had been seized by the Soviet Union in September 1939, the dismantling and expropriation (nationalization) of Jewish (and non-Jewish) enterprises and institutions was carried out by the Soviets. In the western half of the country, this task fell to the Germans, who carried it out with great determnination and efficiency to the point of imposing huge levies on Jewish communities in order to siphon off their wealth. By the time the ghettos were being liquidated, the vast majority of the Jewish population was destitute. Jews often sold their belongings to Poles or exchanged them for food; sometimes they gave them away or entrusted them to acquaintances; other times they hid or destroyed them. After the liquidation of the ghettos, by which time a great deal of Jewish belongings had already been disposed of by the Jews themselves privately or seized by the Germans, all the remaining property was declared to be German. Any property of value was given over to local Germans or sent to the Reich. Less valuable items—usually of little or no value—were put up for sale by auction.[153] (The Germans followed this practice in Western European countries as well.) Wooden cottages were often demolished, and the wood was sold as well. Given the shortage of basic necessities such as clothing and wood, it is not

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[152] Witold Bereś, Krzysztof Brunetko, Anna Guzik and Tomasz Fiałkowski in conversation with Marek Edelman, "To się dzieje dzisiaj: O powstaniu w getcie, Polakach, Żydach i współczesnym świecie,", *Tygodnik Powszechny* (Kraków), April 18, 1993. Having rented a room in Warsaw with Irena Adwentowicz, Helen Mahut (then Walentyna Dudekzak, passing as Helena Czechowicz) avoided the other lodger, a young woman named Danuta, "because her uncle, who frequently visited, struck me as a rabid anti-semite." She discovered later, however, that Danuta and her uncle were actually Jews. See Myrna Goldenberg, ed., *Before All Memory Is Lost: Women's Voices from the Holocaust* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2017), 142–43. Similarly, Doba-Necha Cukierman, who was passing as a Polish woman in Firlej, near Lubartów, learned that her landlady, Mrs. Smogorowicz, was helping a Jewish man who came around for food and some bedding she was safekeeping for him. Cukierman recalled: "It was ironic that my landlady and the man were whispering because they were afraid of me. I was supposedly the sister of a policeman and therefore, could not be trusted." Cukierman was posing as the sister of Lutek Melski, a Polish policeman stationed in Firlej and member of the Polish underground who had provided her and her husband with false identity documents. See Doba-Necha Cukierman, *A Guardian Angel: Memories of Lublin* (East Bentleigh, Victoria: Ester Csaky, 1997), 105, 166, 198.

[153] Michał Weichert, head of the Jewish Social Self-Help organization, witnessed this procedure closely in Kraków. See his testimony, Jewish Historical Institute Archives (Warsaw), record group 302, number 25, Part 2 (typescript), at p. 102.

surprising that buyers could be found.[154] Of course, by then, there were no Jewish shops or other business enterprises in existence for Poles to appropriate. In any event, the Germans did not promote Polish entrepreneurship. Larger Polish businesses and landed estates were also seized by the Germans.

Most Poles did not rush to take over or purchase abandoned Jewish property, nor were those who did driven by anti-Semitism. A Jewish memoir from Działoszyce memoir mentions that some Poles had approached the soon-to-be-deported Jews and offered to buy their property in advance. "We have your benefit in mind," they explained. "If you sell us your possessions, at least you'll get some money out of it." Ironically, one of the chief duties the local Jewish collaborators was to empty Jewish houses of valuables so that they could be shipped to the Reich. This was done so that the property would not get auctioned off and fall into the hands of the Poles. The German auction of the remaining belongings of the Jews of Działoszyce eventually did take place. Some local Poles attended, while others did not. The Polish farmers of nearby Szyszczyce refused to take part.[155] A Polish partisan from the Klimontów area recalled:

> Several weeks after the deportation of the Jews of Klimontow [Klimontów], the Nazis held an auction of the property left in the Jewish homes. As an eyewitness of the auction, I know for sure that no one in our village of Jeziory or in the neighboring villages bought anything at that auction. Our good people were saying, "Why should we buy Jewish property from the Nazi criminals? As soon as they liquidate the Jews, they will begin liquidating us."[156]

In Biała Rawska, abandoned Jewish homes remained empty throughout the war, and it was only with the encouragement of the Communist regime that they were occupied by the local poor after the war.[157] Similarly, in Hrubieszów no one rushed to occupy deserted Jewish homes, which were mostly slums in any event: "There was not a living soul in them. From time to time, there were some individual Polish looters rummaging through the flats, attics and cellars."[158]

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[154] Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Klucze i kasa: O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2014), 100– 102, 154, 188, 265, 266. See, for example, the case of Bodzentyn described in Ewa Kołomańska, "Polskie podziemie niepodległościowe w ratowaniu Żydów na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1939–1945," in Domański and Majcher-Ociesa, *Żydzi i wojsko polskie w XIX i XX wieku,* 234–50, here at 238; the case of Kozienice described in Alina Skibińska, "Życie codzienne Żydów kozienieckich pod niemiecką okupacją," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały,* vol. 3 (2007): 64–86, here at 83–84; the case of Częstochowa described in Franciszek Czekajewski, *Pamiętmik z okresu II wojny światowej pisany w Częstochowie (1939–1945)* (Warsaw: Kobieta, 2006), (under November 9, 1942). This phenomenon is not at all comparable to the widespread and massive-in-scale looting of new property that occurs during race riots that flare up frequently in the United States.

[155] Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary,* 161, 181, 221.

[156] Mazgaj, *In the Polish Secret War,* 58.

[157] Barbara Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych* (Warsaw: ABC, 1997), 59.

[158] Marian Turski, ed., *Polish Witnesses to the Shoah* (London and Portland, Oregon, 2010), 223–24.

Given the widespread poverty, it is not surprising that there was also a great deal of looting, even though this was a risky business as looters caught in the act could face severe punishment. Those who looted did not do so because the property belonged to Jews, but rather because it had been abandoned, as it were. It would be surprising if there had been no looting under such conditions. There is more than ample evidence that looting is a universal phenomenon during wartime and civil strife. Therefore, spontaneous—as

opposed to (state) organized—looting should properly be attributed to opportunistic greed rather than to racial motives.[159]

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[159] See Bethany M. Paluk, "Looting as a Case Against Racial Determinism," in Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Wojciech Jerzy Muszyński, and Paweł Styrna, eds., *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold?: Studies on the Fate of Wartime Poles and Jews* (Washington, D.C.: Leopolis Press, 2012), 201–14. One should not assume that looting property during the war was something only non-Jews engaged in or that only Jewish property was targeted. Jews also looted Jewish homes and properties from which Jews had fled or been expelled temporarily. See Bańkowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma,* vol. 6, 560 (Grodzisk), 650 (Pustelnik). Jews looted the property of foreign firms in Lublin in September 1939. According to a Jewish eyewitness, "Even the rich came in their carriages and drove away with the hogs inside. I went up to Shlomo Biderman: 'What has come over you?' I demanded. 'You, the richest Jew in Lublin, grabbing hogs and selling them!' … 'You,' he said in reply, 'are a fool.'" See Shiye Goldberg (Shie Chehever), *The Undefeated* (Tel Aviv: H. Leivick Publishing House, 1985), 79–80. Jews in Kałuszyn pillaged and then traded in foodstuffs and clothing stolen from a Polish military train at the Mrozy railway station. See Yaakov Zaydman, "Children in the Midst of Ruins," in Shamri and Soroka, *Sefer Kaluszyn,* 367ff., translated as *The Memorial Book of Kaluszyn,* Internet: <https://jewishgen.org/yizkor/kaluszyn/Kaluszyn.html>. Ukrainian nationalists and Jews, who had joined together to erect a triumphal arch for the German invaders, participated in looting Polish military buildings in Przemyśl. See Eugeniusz Buczyński, *Smutny wrzesień: Wspomnienia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985), 132. For conditions in the vicinity of Tarnów see Żbikowski, *Archiwum Ringelbluma,* vol. 3, 327. Emanuel Ringelblum recorded that Polish Jews were quick to seize valuables discarded by deported German Jews, who were afraid that possessing them might lead to serious repercussions at the hands of the Germans. See Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego,* 69. Mary Berg confirms that Jews also participated in looting of Polish property during the German-Soviet conquest of Poland. When she and her fellow Jews were on the move they came across a bullet-ridden house containing a dead Polish peasant. They looted his house, as she describes (October 10, 1939): "The kettle which we 'inherited' from this murdered peasant became our faithful companion on the long road to Warsaw." See Mary Berg and S. L. Shneiderman, ed., *Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary* (New York: L. B. Fischer, 1945), 14. Jewish porters in the Warsaw ghetto were notorious for stealing Jewish property (and acting as informers for the Germans), as were Jewish gravediggers. Groups of teenagers, among others, also engaged in that lucrative activity. A memoir of a participant recalled how these youngsters descended on Warsaw's burial grounds and used pliers and knives to extract gold teeth, crowns and bridges from the mouths of corpses. See Bogdan Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 299–315. The Jewish police was second-to-none in their ability to extort money and other valuables, especially during deportations from the ghetto. Looting of property left behind by Jews seized for deportation in the summer of 1942 was a common occurrence. "The fact that the Jewish mob stole mercilessly from their fellow men during such shifts only magnified the feeling of contempt for those who were perishing." Afterwards, the remaining Jews widely looted vacated premises and began dealing in such property on a massive scale. See Itamar Levin, *Walls Around: The Plunder of Warsaw Jewry during World War II and Its Aftermath* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2004), 90–91, 96, 98, 149–54; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 479, 749; Henryk Makower, *Pamiętnik z getta warszawskiego: Październik 1940–styczeń 1943* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987), 62; Calel Perechodnik, *Am I a Murderer?: Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press/HarperCollins, 1996), 104; Engelking and Libionka, *Żydzi w powstańczej Warszawie,* 279, 300, 306; Hirszfeld, *Ludwik Hirszfeld,* 234, 235; Reicher, *Country of Ash,* 122. Jerry Rawicki, one of those who looted vacated Jewish premises in the Warsaw ghetto, stated that the looters acquired the name "*szabrowniki*" because "we would take everything, up to the bare wall." They then smuggled the looted goods out of the ghetto and sold them or bartered them for food. Smuggled goods confiscated by sentries at the ghetto gate were often pilfered by Jews ("*śmierciarze*") who were employed to load the seized property on wagons to be carted away. These positions proved to be very lucrative: "They were very, very rich people." See the testimony of Jerry Rawicki, Holocaust Oral History Project, Oral History Program, Florida Studies Center, University of South Florida, Tampa Library. A Jewish woman who discovered a large cache of money (52,000 złoty) during the Warsaw uprising of August 1944 thought nothing of dividing up the loot with her sister. See Alejandro Parisi, *El ghetto de las ocho puertas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2009), 139. After the failed Warsaw Uprising of August 1944, Jews who remained in the ruins of Warsaw acquired belongings from evacuated Poles for a pittance and formed expeditions to search for valuables buried by Poles (in the hope of digging them out later) and appropriated them. See Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 251–52, 262, 270–71. Chiel Rajchman, who took refuge in bombed-out Warsaw, recalled how he and other Jews went to abandoned warehouses and homes of people who were forced to evacuate the city and "carried off a couple of hundred pounds of food and clothes." See the Interview with Chiel Rajchman, December 7, 1988, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C. Rubin Katz also engaged in the desecration of the deceased. When he lacked candles for illumination, he stole candles from a local Catholic cemetery, and hid this behaviour from his Polish colleagues." Katz, *Gone to Pitchipoï,* 231–32. After the Soviet front passed through, Jews also took part in removing

During deportation operations, Jews would often attempt to flee into the countryside from the smaller ghettos, only to return to their homes after the danger of deportation had passed.[160] It was not primarily the antipathy of the local population that drove the Jews away, but rather the Poles' fear of harsh reprisals for aiding Jews and the difficult conditions of survival in forests and moving from place to place. Lea Reisner recalled her departure and return to the ghetto in Izbica:

> Exhausted, my mother insisted that my brother and I must run away. "Go to a village; there must be some kind people somewhere; your life may be saved," she said. The moment we got to the other side of the ghetto, an SS officer saw us. He shot and killed my brother. I reached the forest all alone and found some fugitives. We spent the days lying on the ground, and at night we stole potatoes in the fields.
>
> The peasant we met were kind, but were too frightened to help us. They said, "There is a new ghetto in Izbica; you can't spend the winter here, you will die." Desperate, I returned to Izbica, but my parents were gone.[161]

A wartime diary describes why, after fleeing from the ghetto in Sokoły, near Białystok, by the hundreds to nearby forests, Jewish fugitives soon returned to the ghetto:

> Notices had been posted in all the villages—warnings to the residents that anyone hiding a Jew would be punished by death. Notices were also sent to each head of a village council (*Soltis [sołtys]*), stating that every farmer was obligated to inform the *Soltis* about where Jews could be found and to reveal the places where Jews were hiding. Anyone who handed a Jew over to the regime would be awarded a prize, and anyone hiding information about the location of Jews would be punished severely.
>
> The warnings spread panic and fear among the farmers. Even close friends who had been prepared to help the Jews in their trouble were afraid of endangering their own lives and the lives of their families.[162]

Executions of Poles caught sheltering Jews understandably instilled great fear and panic into many benefactors—fear for themselves and their families, and thus many Jewish charges were asked to leave their shelters. In extreme cases, the fear that their charges might betray them under duress if caught or do so willingly in revenge for being expelled so overpowered some rescuers that in desperation they took their

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[160] For example, the Jews who went into hiding in the forests or with Poles in the course of the deportation in early October 1942, returned to Chmielnik later that month and joined the 72 Jews who had cleared the selection and were left behind in the town. Sara Bender, "The Jews of Staszów, 1939–1943: History Through a Diarist's Eyes: A comparative Discussion," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 43, no. 1 (2015): 133–69, here at 160.

[161] Miriam Novitch, ed., *Sobibor: Martyrdom and Revolt: Documents and Testimonies* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980), 101.

[162] Maik, *Deliverance,* 114–15.

charges' lives.[163] As it happens, there exists an excellent analogy that should be borne in mind when assessing the behaviour of such terrified farmers. Hundreds, if not thousands of Jews, either individually or

[163] The brutal murder by German gendarmes of the eight-member Ulma family and their Jewish charges in Markowa, near Łańcut on March 23, 1944 (after their betrayal by a Ukrainian policeman), had a galvanizing effect. According to Yehuda Erlich, who hid in the nearby village of Sietesz, "Polish peasants who were hiding Jews fell into a terrible state of panic. The next day, twenty-four Jewish bodies were found in nearby fields. They were Jews murdered by these peasants, who had been sheltering them for the previous twenty months." See Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 152–53. However, historian Mateusz Szpytma, who has thoroughly investigated the events in Markowa, has established that this hearsay claim, which was "affirmed" by Grabowski without any verification, is unsubstantiated. Indeed, Szpytma provides several other examples that illustrate how unreliable Jewish hearsay accounts can be. Yet "affirming" such accounts without verification is a common practice of historians like Jan Gross and Jan Grabowski, who then lash out at the "nationalist" historians who expose the (many) shortcomngs of their scholarship. See Mateusz Szpytma, "Zbrodnie na ludności żydowskiej w Markowej w 1942 roku w kontekście postępowań karnych z lat 1949–1954," *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u,* no. 40 (2014): 39–66, here at n.54; Mateusz Szpytma, "Crimes Against the Jewish Population at Markowa in 1942 in the Context of 1949–1954 Criminal Proceedings," in Grądzka-Rejak and Sitarek, *The Holocaust and Polish-Jewish Relations,* 201–44; Mateusz Szpytma, *Sprawiedliwi i ich świat: Markowa w fotografii Józefa Ulmy,* 2nd revised and expanded edition (Kraków: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej and Instytut Studiów Strategicznych, 2015). Nonetheless, even when such events did occur, it is important to bear in mind that it is highly unlikely that the farmers harboured a desire to murder the Jews they had sheltered at great personal risk for as long as they did. German executions of rescuers in the immediate vicinity, sometimes coupled with the fear of betrayal by Jewish charges if captured by the Germans, triggered these tragic events by striking fear and panic among the villagers. See, for example, the cases described in Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień…,* 103–4; Tomasz Frydel, "Konstrukcja pamięci o ratowaniu Żydów na polskiej wsi: Studium przypadku Radomyśla Wielkiego i powiatu mieleckiego," in Sitarek, Trębacz, and Wiatr, *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji,* 359; Tomasz Frydel, "The *Pazifizierungsaktion* as a Catalyst of Anti-Jewish Violence: A Study in the Social Dynamics of Fear," in Frank Bajohr and Andrea Löw, eds., *The Holocaust and European Societies: Social Processes and Dynamics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 147–66; Tomasz Frydel, "The Devil in Microhistory: The 'Hunt for Jews' as a Social Process, 1942-1945," in Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttmann, eds., *Microhistories of the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 171–89; Tomasz Frydel, "*Judenjagd:* Reassessing the Role of Ordinary Poles as Perpetrators in the Holocaust," in Timothy Williams and Susanne Buckley-Zistel, eds., *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence: Actions, Motivations and Dynamics* (London and New York: Routledge 2018), 187–203. See also the superb analysis of the events in Rogów, near Miechów, which were trigerred by the capture of a Jew in the nearby village of Wierzbica, where the Kucharski family agreed to shelter the six-member Wandersman family from their village. Paweł Wandersman was captured by the Germans when he left the hideout in January 1943. He then led the Germans to the farm of the Książek family, who were sheltering two Jews, and afterwards to the farm of the Nowak family, where they found a Jew in the stable. Finally, he brought the Germans to the home of his rescuers, the Kucharski family. In addition to the Jewish fugitives, the Germans executed 15 Poles, among them children, from three families. Three members of the Gądek and Bielawski families from Wolica, who also helped the Wandersman family, were executed after being betrayed by Wandersman. See Maciej Korkuć, "'Tak, przyznaję się do winy': Zabójstwo we wsi Rogów 1 lutego 1943 r.: Studium przypadku," in Ewa Kołomańska et al. (eds.), *Wieś polska w czasie II wojny światowej,* vol. 1 (Kielce: Muzeum Wsi Kieleckiej, 2020), 56–78; Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 148–49, 201–4. Cases of Jews apprehended by the Germans betraying their Christian benefactors were frequent. See Mark Paul, *Patterns of Cooperation, Collaboration, and Betrayal: Jews, Germans and Poles in German-Occupied Poland during World War II,* Internet: <http://www.kpk-toronto.org/obrona-dobrego-imienia/>.

collectively decided to kill their own or other young Jewish children (usually infants) in order to increase the chances of their own survival.[164]

The Germans conducted endless searches and raids inside the ghettos and in the countryside—sometimes conscripting the Jewish police, the Polish police, and the local population to assist in this task—to capture Jews who had hidden or escaped during the liquidation of the ghettos.

> The liquidation of the Jewish community in Kosów Lacki began on September 22, 1942. … SS officers ordered the Judenrat and Jewish Police to gather all the Jews in the marketplace but separated off the families of the labor camp craftsmen in the building where the Judenrat met. SS and Ukrainian auxiliaries accompanied the Jewish Police on a house-to-house search for those in hiding, shooting those they found. … About 150 ghetto residents were killed trying to flee and were buried in a mass grave at the Jewish cemetery. The next day, the SS searched Polish houses throughout the town and in the surrounding countryside, killing Jews they discovered there.[165]

> … more than 1,000 Jews, including from Markuszów, [were] hidden in the Wola and Borek Forests. Joined subsequently by escaped Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) and fugitives from the deportations of the Garbów and Kamionka Jewish communities, they formed three partisan units. However, the partisans mostly were closer to Lublin in December 1942, when a group of SS and Ukrainian auxiliaries arrived to search the two forests closer to Markuszów for hidden Jews. On December 2, the first day of the search, about 400 Jews were killed. Another 600 perished before the sweep ended on January 20, 1943.
>
> … on December 10, 1942, and February 18, 1943, the Germans executed at least 14 Wola Poles for aiding Jews. Four others, similarly accused, disappeared without a trace. … After the executions, many Poles ordered Jews they were protecting to find other hiding places. Most ended

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[164] Yaffa Eliach describes how a group of Jews hiding in the attic of a barn in Raduń refused to accept her family into the hiding place because they had young children. They were finally allowed in when her father threatened to reveal the hiding place to the Germans, but only on condition that the children be held as hostages: "If any of them made a noise, they would be silenced. … Fearing [the baby] might cry loudly enough to be heard [by passing Germans] from the outside, the people who held him, smothered him." See André Stein, *Hidden Children: Forgotten Survivors of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Viking/Penguin, 1993), 59. For other examples, see Yerachmiel Moorstein, ed., *Zelva Memorial* Book (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 1992), 80; Leon Najberg, *Ostatni powstańcy getta* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1993), 61 (Warsaw); Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust,* 191; Rivka and Israel Teyer, eds., *The Red Forest: As Narrated by Izhak Shumowitz* (Raanana, Israel: Docostory, 2005?), 129; Brysk, *Amidst the Shadows of Trees,* 91; Hurman, *Pod osłoną nocy,* 31; Bill Tammeus and Jacques Cukierkorn, *They Were Just People: Stories of Rescue in Poland During the Holocaust* (Columbia, Missouri and London: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 105; *The Words to Remember It: Memoirs of Child Holocaust Survivors* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2009), 94 (Wilno); Suzanne Ginsburg, *Noike: A Memoir of Leon Ginsburg* (San Francisco: Avenger Books, 2012), 65 (Luboml); Reicher, *Country of Ash,* 120 (Warsaw); Katz, *Gone to Pitchipoï,* 73–74 (Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski); Anna Kołacińska-Gałązka, ed., *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią…,* vol. 5 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie "Dzieci Holocaustu" w Polsce, 2013), 263 (Brody); Sara R. Horowitz, "'If He Knows to Make a Child…'," Memories of Birth and Baby-Killing in Deferred Jewish Testimony Narratives," in Goda, *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust,* 135–51, especially at pp. 138–40 (various locations); Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 4, 135 (Stanisławów). See also the memoir of S. Strassler, Yad Vashem Archives, file E/253, 64 (Złoczów); Testimony of Izrael (Ignacy) Manber, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/1912 (Jaworów).

[165] Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 390.

up in the forests and fell victim to subsequent forest sweeps, including in the Borek Forest during the winter of 1942–1943, which claimed the lives of 42 Jews.[166]

The Germans also continued to search for Jews in hiding. The day after the liquidation of the Baczki and Łopianka ghettos, Gendarmes shot more than 50 Jews found in the Perlis factory. In Budziska that day, the Gendarme Hartmann shot another 10 Jews. … In September 1943, the Gendarmes shot 16 Jews in Łopianka. They also killed Jews hiding in Budziska and Jasionówka. In May 1944, the Gendarmes shot 25 Jews in Kamionna village, south of Baczki. The Germans murdered the largest number of Jewish survivors in the forest areas north of Łochów, in neighboring Sadowne. There between January and February 1943, they killed about 300 Jews and escaped Soviet POWs. In the winter of 1942–1943, the Germans also attempted to extricate hidden Jews by taking punitive measures against Poles though to be assisting them. These Aktions included an execution on January 13, 1943, of 2 Jewish women, outside of Sadowne, along with the baker Leon Lubkiewicz, his wife, and son, for having given the women bread. From March 16 to 31, 1943, the SS tortured and then executed 16 farmers from around Zarzetka (Sadowne parish), arrested about 150 others suspected of aiding Jews and escaped Soviet prisoners, stripped villagers of their livestock and agricultural stores, and then set fire to a part of Zarzetka. The number of Jews who perished in this reprisal is unknown.[167]

Forewarned by local Poles several days before Yom Kippur 1942 about German plans to liquidate Sterdyń's ghetto, the Judenrat announced the impending liquidation of their community on September 22. About 700 of the village's 1,200 Jews found hiding places in forests, villages, and estates surrounding Sterdyń. When the Germans arrived the next morning to liquidate the ghetto, they found only 500 of the village's Jews there. Those who did not seek shelter were marched, on foot by some accounts, to their deaths at the Treblinka extermination camp, located 26.3 kilometers (16 miles) northwest of Sterdyń. Over the next two days, the Germans extricated between 270 and 300 Jews from hiding places. These Jews were shot in Sterdyń and buried in a mass grave there.

Beginning in the winter of 1942–1943, the Germans embarked on a series of measures to find Jews from Sterdyń still in hiding. To discern where Jews were sheltered, the Germans planted at least one agent in the forest surrounding part of the town. Based on this information, the Germans began rounding up and executing Jews who had survived the ghetto's liquidation. In March and April 1943, for instance, the Germans murdered 1 Jewish woman and 3 Jewish children. In the autumn, the German Gendarmes executed 40 Jewish men, women, and children. The Germans simultaneously took punitive measures against Poles known to be hiding Jews from Sterdyń. The best documented of these reprisal Aktions was on February 24, 1943, at the Paulinów estate just south of Sterdyń. There the Germans shot 10 Poles suspected of providing food and shelter to Jews from Sterdyń. From March 25 to April 23, 1943, the Germans executed as many as 47 other Poles and may have arrested 140 others suspected of rendering assistance to Sterdyń's Jews. These reprisals, coupled as they were with similar punitive actions in Sadowne, near the Łochów and

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[166] Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 683.

[167] Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 397–8.

> Stoczek ghettos, provoked many Polish villagers to renege on promises of assistance they had extended to Sterdyń's Jews. Following the reprisals, some Poles [out of fear] purportedly murdered Jews they had agreed initially to protect.[168]

The following account, by a Jewish survivor from a village near Zambrów, tells how his Polish rescuer and the largely friendly or passive villagers were transformed into "Jew hunters" by order of the German authorities, who commonly took hostages in the village to ensure compliance:

> Every evening, under cover of darkness, I made my way alone to Tishke's house. At a pre-arranged time, I waited for him in a field behind the cowshed and he would bring us food, including bread, milk and other items. We wanted to pay Tishke for all the help he had given us, but he refused to hear of it.
>
> One dark night, Yudke and I decided to leave our families in the forest hideout and visit our friend Biali [Biały].
>
> When we arrived at his house he welcomed us with open arms. … We continued to make occasional nocturnal excursions to visit him, in order to wash and to obtain food. …
>
> On one of our visits Biali said that we should all come over to his house, women and children included, so that we could all wash ourselves, have a proper meal and relax. …
>
> It was getting late, when suddenly there was a knock at the door. Biali did not open it at once, he first rushed us to a hiding place, some room at the back of the house where we sat with bated breath. The unexpected visitor was Biali's neighbor. He entered the house, complaining that he had been kept waiting, and that he had something urgent to say that could not be delayed. The neighbor informed Biali that a meeting was about to take place in the house of the Commissar and that attendance was compulsory. The meeting was all about the Jews who had managed to escape to the forests and who were receiving aid from the villagers. …
>
> A few hours later he returned. It was clear from his report that the following day the Germans had arranged for a thorough roundup of all Jews hiding in the forests. This time the armed Germans would not rely on the villagers to carry out this deed, they themselves would be in charge and every effort would be made to cover all the ground; the villagers would act as their assistants. At the meeting, the villagers were warned that anyone caught helping the Jews by providing food or shelter would share their fate. We were taken aback by this information. I told Biali that I did not want him to endanger himself for our sakes, but he insisted that we were not to leave until after the roundup. …
>
> The following day the search and the roundup began. Biali, like all the villagers joined in at the command of the Germans, but before he left he made sure to hide the women and children in the potato store pit. Yudke and I hid in the hayloft. From our hiding place we were within earshot of the mayhem: the creams, the gunshots, the sound of weeping and the curses. Much thought and rigorous preparation had gone into the planning of this roundup and it resulted in many victims being killed or wounded. Those who the Germans did not kill were caught and deported.
>
> By evening, everything was completely quiet. The mission was accomplished and the villagers who aided the Germans were released. Biali came to our hiding place quaking with fear …

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[168] Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 447.

> Biali told us that he was sorry, but he could no longer give us shelter. He would continue to supply us with food as far as he was able, but it was too dangerous for him and his family to continue to let us stay in his home. He mounted his horse and went off to town to find out what had really happened.
>
> On his return, he informed us that those who were caught, and there were many, had been taken to Chervony Bur [Czerwony Bór] and were let loose there for one evening. They were free to walk around the town to make as many purchases as they wished before being deported to the work camp at Zambrov [Zambrów]. The Germans knew that they could not escape; they had nowhere to go.
>
> There was a heavy snowfall that day …[169]

Jews, and their Polish benefactors, could also be discovered in the periodic raids conducted by the Germans to apprehend young Poles for forced labour in the Reich. A Jew who was hidden in a village near Kałuszyn recalled:

> The distant roar of motors tell us the village is surrounded. People are fleeing in terror. …
>
> Suddenly huge hounds, followed by German police on bicycles … All helmeted, rifles swung over their shoulders, pistols at their side. …
>
> They went from house to house and ransacked every attic, cellar, and barn. They were looking for young men to send as forced labor to Germany. There was no hiding from them. They smashed walls and found camouflaged bunkers. They searched everywhere …
>
> This wasn't the first raid on the village. We've already lived through several dozen such searches. They always last about a day …[170]

Although one often reads stories about posses of villagers forming spontaneously to rid the area of Jews hiding in the forests, the reality was quite different. The Germans implemented an elaborate mechanism to enforce control over the rural population. The round-ups or raids (*obława*) were ordered by the Germans and, under penalty of death, the village head (*sołtys*)—who was appointed by the Germans and could not readily relinquish his post—was required to mobilize the village guard or night watch, which every village was required to have in place for that purpose. Not only was participation mandatory in the so-called *Judenjagd*, but those villagers who avoided their duty could face punishment, as could those who were

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[169] Teyer, *The Red Forest,* 103–107.

[170] Leyb Rochman, *The Pit and the Trap: A Chronicle of Survival* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1983), 96–97.

designated as hostages to ensure compliance with the German orders.[171] Jews were not the only targets of enforced round-ups. Blue policemen and firemen were also employed to round up Poles who were shipped

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[171] In November 1942, village heads in the Lublin district were required to sign a declaration whereby they undertook to ensure that there would be no Jews in their area; that they would order that all Jews in their area be apprehended and taken to the nearest gendarmes post, police station or military base; that they understood that they were responsible for fully carrying out their undertaking and that they bore full responsibility for not fulfilling it. Similar undertakings were in place in other parts of the *Generalgouvernement*. See Bogdan Musiał, "*Judenjagd*—"umiejętne działanie" czy zbrodnicza perfidia?," *Dzieje Najnowsze,* vol. 43, no. 2 (2011): 159–70, here at 168.

The topic of village heads and guards still awaits an objective scholarly treatment as the writings of historians Jan Grabowski and Barbara Engelking, mentioned later, do not meet these criteria. Revisionist historians, in competition to outdo one another, endeavour to turn these German-created structures into evidence that Poles willingly "manned" the "stations along the conveyor belt of genocide." This "genocidal infrastructure" allegedly operated effectively thanks to the cooperation and coordination of the village "self-government," the Blue Police, and the Polish underground. See Andrew Kornbluth, *The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 2021), 18, 47, 234.

Andrew Kornbluth argues that Polish crimes against Jews "bore the unmistakable hallmarks of a German-inspired, locally directed campaign of ethnic cleansing." The ideological lynchpin of this "programmatic" "agenda" aimed at "the despoliation and ethnic cleansing of the country's most hated minority" was, allegedly, the legacy of two decades of the Second Polish Republic, namely the propagation of political antisemitism by right-wing nationalist movements, most prominently the National Democrats, combined with a similar trend in the Polish Catholic Church. After the liquidation of the ghettos, local institutions such as the village "self-government," the Polish 'Blue' Police, and the underground provided the necessary "genocidal infrastructure" for its implementation. The core "mechanism" of surveillance, capture, arrest, and killing was a rural "genocidal conveyor belt" comprised of local headmen, fire brigades, and watchmen. Driven by these "extermantionist" desires, the hunt for Jews allegedly "solidarized" the entire community behind a common goal. Thus, the Germans had both "outsourced" the "remaining workaday business of genocide" and "crowdsourced" mass killing to segments of Polish society. According to Kornbluth, "Polish-on-Jewish crime, especially in the countryside, was a *solidarizing* and highly visible effort in which numerous locals and sometimes entire communities took coordinated part in full view of their neighbors." (Kornbluth's emphasis) See Kornbluth, *The August Trials,* 12–13, 18–19, 47. See also the the critical review of the book by Tomasz Frydel, *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies,* vol. 34 (2021): 262–70.

Equally questionable is Kornbluth's contention that the Jews of postwar Poland were very few and that they were voiceless, for which reason the Communist government could safely disregard them if it was so inclined. A well-documented study provides ample evidence to the contrary. Until the end of the 1940s, Jews "constituted a small but statistically significant portion of Polish society and could present their views in the wider debate on the war and occupation."

> … until the end of the 1940s, there continued to exist in Poland a fairly sizeable Jewish minority (of between 210,000 and 240,000 people, according to various estimates), which enjoyed significant autonomy and which was represented by various political parties and social and cultural organizations. Through such institutions as the CKŻP, CŻKH, and the Jewish Religious Congregation, the Jewish community was able to lobby for its own interpretation of history.

According to Kornbluth, the Communist government, eager to win over the Polish masses to communism, was deliberately and conspicuously lenient on the Polish killers of Jews. Not a shred of evidence is presented to support this charge. Even in the 1940s, International pressure already favoured fairness if not favouritism toward Jews. it was the pro-Jewish international community that the Communists felt the need to "win over."

> The Communists wanted international recognition, yet after the experiences of the Nazi era, policy towards the Jewish population was for the Western allies an important criterion when evaluating the new regimes of Central and Eastern Europe. The Polish authorities were also aware that the existence of relatively autonomous Jewish organizations was a condition of receiving foreign aid to help Holocaust survivors. Perhaps another factor that influenced the attitude of the new authorities to the Jewish minority in Poland was that those same authorities included activists of Jewish origin.

The change in the Communist Party's policy towards Poland's Jewish minority in the 1950s was Moscow driven, as was the diminished Holocaust memorialization that had been abundant in the immediate aftermath of the war. Zofia Wóycicka, *Arrested Mourning: Memory of the Nazi Camps in Poland, 1944–1950* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013), 73–74, 92, 229–30.

to Germany as labourers.[172] Thus, terror, collective punishment, and threat of death rather than voluntary collaboration were the essential components of this machinery.[173]

The following account describes conditions in the environs of Chełm, where the Germans pacified the village of Wereszczyn on May 26, 1942. After providing assistance to escaped Soviet prisoners of war, at least one of whom was in the services of the Nazis and denounced them, fourteen villagers were executed and the village was set on fire. The Germans also used this opportunity to strike at the local Jewish population.

> After the pacification of Wereszczyn the Germans still did not give us peace. They travelled to villages and caught people to ship to Germany [for forced labour]. … In the following months of 1942, the Germans carried out raids to capture Jews hiding in the forests.
>
> The manhunts for Jews looked like this. There was a German gendarmerie outpost in Cyców, and in Urszulin there was an outpost of the Polish police, the so-called "blue" police. The commander of the "blue" police in Urszulin was a certain G. [Grajek]. The manhunt was organized by the Germans, and those who executed it were the "blue" police and peasants. On instructions from the Germans the local authorities ordered the village administrators [*sołtys*] to round up peasants from the surrounding villages and have them take part in the manhunt. …

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[172] See, for example, Zygmunt Klukowski, *Zamojszczyzna,* vol. 1: *1918–1943* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2007), 313, 334–35.

[173] In *Hunt for the Jews,* Jan Grabowski offers the following flawed example as "proof" of a claim similar to that advanced by Kornbluth. First, Grabowski cites the testimony of Aleksander Kampf, who survived the war in the Soviet interior, regarding the murder of his wife and children by Piotr Bińczycki and two other policemen. Grabowski states that Bińczycki seems to have been an "average" representative of his profession, who were "rather well liked by the locals and, in many cases fine-tuned to the needs of their community." (P. 108.) From Kampf's testimony found in the Appendix (at p. 217), however, we learn that Bińczycki "killed a certain Rogosz (a Pole) from the village of Pietrowice [Piotrkowice] and other Poles as well." So much for his being "fine-tuned" to the needs of his community. But was he, nonetheless, "well liked" by the locals as Grabowski claims? Kampf's testimony doesn't seem to support that notion either:

> I have recently found out that [Bińczycki] now works for the [State] Security in Kraków. … The inhabitants of Łopatów [Opatowiec, not Opatów], the eyewitnesses of the crimes he committed, told me about it. The names of the witnesses: Stanisław Deszcz, who provided shelter to my wife, domiciled in Kraśniów; Eugniusz Miniur, domiciled in Kraków; and the Łopatów intelligentsia, who did not want to disclose their names, but if need arises I will give their surnames upon the court's request.

So not only did the locals inform Kampf about the fate of his family, but they were also willing to testify against "one of their own" who had also killed Poles and joined the dreaded Security Office.

Reviewing German historian Daniel Brewing's important monograph, *Im Schatten von Auschwitz: Deutsche Massaker an polnischen Zivilisten 1939–1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2016), Polish historian Tomasz Szarota notes that author's more insightful and balanced assessment:

> while these authors [i.e., Grabowski and Engelking] blame anti-Semitism and the desire for wealth for causing Poles to join the hunt for Jews, Brewing attributes a causative role to the occupation authorities who sought to use Polish peasants to fight all forms of resistance. In his opinion, several factors stood behind this 'cooperation' with the occupier: submission to the repeated calls from the Nazi authorities, the use of coercion, rewards offered for denouncing hidden Jews and the fear of punishment for failing to follow the occupier's orders (pp. 216–24).

See *Kwartalnik Historyczny,* vol. 125 (2018), English-Language Edition no. 2 (2018): 178–83, here at 182.

> In December 1942 German gendarmes rounded up peasants from several villages for the manhunt. They caught one Jew, and later I saw two or three more who were shot dead. Of our Jews from Wereszczyn poor Alta and his son were hiding in the forest. They sat in a stack of grain at Podstawski's farm. During this manhunt the peasant Stacho D. ran there with his pitchfork and chased out these two Jews of ours. The commander of the "blue" police in Urszulin, named G., told them to undress, remove their shoes, and then shot both of them. This was strange because that same G. had transported our Maszka [Miriam Zonsztajn, a five-year-old Jewish girl] to a grandmother named [Marianna] Kozłowska in Urszulin. First he procured a certificate for her in the name of Maria Kozłowska. … Later the Germans killed him in the Lublin Castle [which had been turned into a prison—*M.P.*]. Supposedly this was for his cooperation with the underground. In any event commander G. saved Maszka, but shot Alta and his son. …
>
> The peasant Stacho D., who hunted down Alta and his son, perished during that manhunt in December. Nobody felt sorry for him. He was a bad fellow. Earlier Stacho D. had caught a Polish boy by the name of Lolek Biernacki, who was escaping from Germans who were pursuing him. He caught him and turned him over to the Germans. A German took out his revolver and shot Lolek. He was an innocent boy. Then he hunted down Alta and his son in the stack of grain and sent them to their deaths. Finally, during the December manhunt, someone mentioned the three Soviet prisoners of war hiding in the forest. Stacho D. was so zealous that he perished while hunting them down. The Soviets were soldiers and did not allow themselves to be apprehended so easily. One of them perished, but first he had shot Stacho D., who wanted to block their escape route. Nobody felt sorry for him. And the two Soviet prisoners of war who managed to survive the manhunt escaped to [the nearby village of] Wincencin.[174]

As this account shows, both the local police and peasants were simply ordered to participate in manhunts and other activities organized by the Germans, such as digging graves. Those who refused to take part could face harsh retaliations. Historian Martin Gilbert notes that Christian conscripts from Raduń who refused to dig pits for Jews who were still alive were killed on the spot, together with the Jews.[175]

Poles pressed into service for the Germans did not usually display ardour in the tasks assigned to them. Those who did often had a grim track record in relation to the treatment of non-Jewish victims of Nazi

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[174] Ewa Kurek, *Poza granicą solidarności: Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1939–1945* (Kielce: Wyższa Szkoła Umiejętności, 2006), 221–22, translated as *Polish-Jewish Relations 1939–1945: Beyond the Limits of Solidarity* (New York: iUniverse, 2012). For more details and a description of the pacification of Wereszczyn, see pp. 218–19 (Kurek) and Adam Panasiuk, *Śladami zapomnianej historii… Wereszczyn,* Internet: <http://historia.urszulina.net>.

[175] Gilbert, *The Holocaust,* 335.

repression as well. Moreover, their deeds were generally frowned upon by the community. This was equally true for those who denounced Jews. Such persons were known to be treated as social pariahs or outcasts.[176]

Throughout occupied Poland the Jewish councils and police were utilized extensively by the Germans to carry out the "Final Solution." The Jewish police participated in public executions of Jews, in "resettlement actions," and in ferreting out Jews who tried to hide during the liquidation of the ghettos. The Jewish police was also employed in rounding up Jews in rural areas and bringing them to ghettos in towns from which they were deported to the camps.

> At the beginning of November 1942, Jewish militia men went to all the villages near Hrubieszów, and also to the small towns, in which Jews still remained, with an order to the *wójt* [village mayor] and the mayor, that all Jews must appear … in Hrubieszów. In fact, all of them appeared.[177]

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[176] In an unidentified village outside Warsaw, "A Jew who had been starving in the woods turned up one day, asking for water. The farmer called the police, who shot the Jew on the spot. This had so outraged the village that the offender had to flee to Warsaw in fear of reprisal." See Natan Gross, *Who Are You, Mr Grymek?* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001), 248–49. Władysława Słotwińska, from a family of rescuers from Bystrzyca Nowa, near Lublin awarded by Yad Vashem, recalled that a Pole who turned a Jewish woman and her two children over to the Germans was ostracized by the villagers. After the war he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. See Anna Dąbrowska, ed., *Światła w ciemności: Sprawiedliwi Wśród Narodów Świata. Relacje* (Lublin: Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka–Teatr NN," 2008), 171. While hiding in the village of Wola Komborska, near Krosno, Fela Fischbein wrote in her diary about the apprehension and execution of two Jewish children (siblings) from nearby Korczyna who had been cared for by the entire village. They were betrayed by a forester whose conduct was universally condemned by the villagers. See Barbara Engelking, "'We are completely dependent on them…': Relations between the Helpers and the Hiding as Exemplified by Fela Fischbein's Diary," *Holocaust Studies and Materials* (Warsaw), vol. 2 (2010): 128–55, here at 153; Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień…,* 66. Local Poles who took part in capturing two Jews in the village of Falkowa, near Nowy Sącz, which also resulted in the arrest of two rescuers, met with the aversion of the rural society. The ringleader of the vigilante group, Wacław Noworol, was sentenced to death by the underground Special Civil Court (*Cywilny Sąd Specjalny)* in Kraków. See Dagmara Swatłek, "For a Coat, a Suitcase, and an Apple: Crimes Against Jews Hiding in the Villages of Falkowa, Wieniec and Janowice in the Light of Post-War Trial Documents," *Holocaust: Studies and Materials* (Warsaw), vol. 2 (2010): 399–419, here at 403–6. After the war, when Antoni Zmarzły of Chrzanów was accused of denouncing a principal who hid Jews on the school premises, Zmarzły was socially boycotted by the community. See Aleksandra Namysło, ed., *"Kto w takich czasach Żydów przechowuje?...": Polacy niosący pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2009), 193–94. When a Pole from a village near Białystok by the name of Linczewski, who had betrayed a number of Jews, was struck and killed by a train, the villagers declared that this was God's punishment for what he had done to the Jews. See the testimony of Abram Manelis in Diatłowicki, *Żydzi w walce 1939 –1945,* vol. 1, 280. Local Poles were glad when a Jewish partisan killed a Polish chimney sweep in Łuków who had turned in and robbed Jews, as he was also detested by Poles. See Testimony of Lily Fenster (née Luba Skorka), November 8 and 10, 1994, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/fenster/> (sections 23 and 56).

[177] Testimony of Motel Kaufman, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2182. Reports from this area show that village heads were continually pressed and reminded of their duty to report and deliver to the police all strangers found in their village. See Adam Puławski, "'Benzyny zużyto 8 litrów': Prozaizacja Zagłady na przykładzie dokumentacji Archiwum Państwowego w Lublinie Oddział w Chełmie," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, vol. 14 (2018): 311–33, here at 324. At the beginning of November 1942, the German command ordered the complete "cleansing" of the county of Miechów. Assisted by the Jewish police as well as by some local Poles, SS forces and the German gendarmerie captured about 600 surviving Jews from throughout the county and murdered them in Chodówka forest. See Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. II, Part A, 541.

The number of Jewish policemen required for these tasks was significant. In Warsaw alone, the Jewish council recruited as many as 2,600 policemen.[178]

The role of the Jewish police in this regard was incomparably greater than that of the Polish police. The round-ups of hundreds of thousands of Jews in large the ghettos of Warsaw, Lublin, Sosnowiec, Kraków, Łódź, Lwów, Wilno, and many others were carried out not by the Polish police, but by the Jewish police, under the supervision of the Germans. The degree of involvement of German forces varied; often they relied on Ukrainian and Baltic auxiliaries. The manhunts in the countryside that followed were carried out primarily by German forces, with the Polish police participating mostly in smaller local actions.

According to historian Isaiah Trunk, "the Jewish ghetto police everywhere, to a larger or lesser degree, participated in the 'deportations' and … the horrid events that went along with them."[179]

> As we have mentioned above, the ghetto police took part in "resettlement" procedures in various ways—assisting in chasing victims to assembly places for "selections," personally carrying out "selections," assisting in executions (this, however, occurred only once so far as is known). Here are a few illustrations taken from several occupation areas:
>
> The Lublin Jewish Council announced on March 21, 1942, that the Jewish population was to report "in their own interests" to a certain street, thence to be escorted only by the functionaries of the Jewish police to assembly places. The assurance that the inmates would be escorted "only" by the Jewish police was apparently intended to calm the highly disturbed people. But not all were convinced, and some did not report. The SS interfered in their customary manner. In mates were raided in their hiding places. In the process some were shot on the spot. Others were carried directly to the trains. At this stage the ghetto police were forced to find the hiding places and call on the victims to come out from hiding. SS men and local auxiliary police squads were reluctant to risk their own lives, leaving it to the ghetto police to discover the bunkers.
>
> Diverse reactions by the ghetto police to their imposed tasks became evident from the start of the "actions" when victims were collected for "resettlement." In numerous ghettos the police were given lists of candidates for deportation that had been prepared in advance [by the Jewish council]. All those located at the address given in the lists were directly taken to the places of assembly. … From there victims were sent to trains where they were taken over by German police.
>
> Where some categories were exempted from current deportations, the ghetto police carried out control of personal identification cards of exempted individuals. Such individuals were placed in sealed-off houses, as was, for instance, the practice in Warsaw during the initial stages of the "action." The same procedure was applied in Lwów during the "action" of March 10, 1942. Thus the corrupt members of the ghetto police got a chance to trade in human lives, as already indicated above. …
>
> Ransom payments to Jewish policemen during the "resettlements" are also reported from Łódź, Lwów, Kołomyja, Lublin, Cracow, Vilna [Wilno] and other ghettos. …
>
> As a rule the "selection" of people rounded up was carried out by the German authorities. But there were also instances where the ghetto police both assembled the candidates for the "resettlement" and

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[178] Trunk, *Judenrat* (1972), 509.

[179] Trunk, *Judenrat* (1972), 508.

carried out the "selection." For example, Gens did this in Vilna as chief of the ghetto police, and so did Shamay Grayer [Greier] in the Lublin and Majdan Tatarski Ghettos. It also happened that the Germans ordered the Councils to deliver a certain number of Jews without indicating any specific category, thus leaving it to the Councils to select the victims. In such cases the ghetto police seized people who, in their opinion, were proper candidates for "resettlement." This is reported from Kołomyja, Buczacz, Lwów, Dębica, Oszmiana, Skałat, and other ghettos.

The ghetto police actively participated in uncovering hidden Jews in many ghettos. Familiar with the topography of the ghetto, the layout of the apartments, and the nooks where people might try to hide, the ghetto police were given the task of sniffing out Jews in hiding. No doubt a number of well-camouflaged places in Warsaw, Cracow, Vilna, Kołomyja, Buczacz, Skałat, and many other ghettos would not have been discovered otherwise.

It is reported from several ghettos (e.g., Zamość, Sosnowiec, and Kołomyja), where the police were unable to locate people they were after, that other family members were taken: children, parents, wives, or siblings.

To accomplish their task, the ghetto police chased Jews who, after surviving "resettlements" in other ghettos, had tried to hide in a ghetto which was still in no immediate danger. Since 100 Jews survived the "resettlement" in the Legionowo Ghetto (near Warsaw) on the last day of Sukkot 1942. However, when they tried to enter the Nowy Dwór Ghetto (Zichenau district), the Jewish police arrested them and put them in the local ghetto jail to hand over to the Gestapo.

The police in some large ghettos became such experienced "resettlement" experts that the Germans would send them to adjacent ghettos to help in the "action." Thus squads of the Lwów Ghetto police took part in the deportation of the inmates from ghettos in Jaworów and Złoczów in April 1943, and in a number of small ghettos in the vicinity of Lwów. The Jewish police of the Sosnowiec and Będzin Ghettos were dispatched to take part in "resettlements" in small ghettos in Eastern Upper Silesia, such as in Olkusz in July 1942.

A squad of Vilna Jewish policemen, some 30 strong, were issued new uniforms and dispatched to Oszmiana in October 1942, where Jews from Smorgonie, Soły, and other small ghettos in the Vilna area were assembled. They were told that their task was "to deliver certificates" to the inmates of those ghettos. They took over from the Lithuanians the task of guarding the ghetto gate. On October 23, 1942, the Jews were driven to the assembly place by the police from the Vilna Ghetto accompanied by local [Lithuanian] policemen. They "selected" 200 sick and 392 elderly people; 410 were sent off to Zielonka, some 7 or 8 kilometers from Oszmiana, in previously prepared carts. They were put to death in the presence of several Vilna Jewish policemen. According to Dvorzhetsky [Dworzecki], the Jewish policemen took part in the actual execution.

An eyewitness from the Dębica Ghetto relates that during the final "action" (on November 15, 1942) the last surviving Jews were confined in a kind of *Restgetto,* which was called *Arbeitslager.* The Jewish camp Elder ordered the ghetto police to deliver some 50 "illegal" Jews, those who had escaped and somehow made it back to the camp later on. These were detained in a room of the local Talmud Torah and killed the same night, with the help of the ghetto police ("the men of the

> *Ordnungsdienst* grabbed the hands of the victims and Gabler [apparently the *Lagerkommandant*] shot them").[180]

Hundreds of Jewish testimonies attest to the fact that such conditions prevailed throughout German-occupied Poland. As Israeli historian Aharon Weiss points out,

> However, when the waves of mass deportations began, and fears as to the fate of the deportees increased—even if the terrible truth was not known in all cases and in all places—under such conditions, continued accession to German demands, when these involved the surrender of Jews, was tantamount to willfully abetting in harmful measures against the community. This was the focal point around which behavior patterns of the different *Judenräte* revolved—there were those who absolutely refused to surrender Jews to the enemy, while others adopted the approach that by sacrificing a part of the community, others might be saved. There were also *Judenrat* members whose actions were devoid of any concern for the communal welfare, and who were motivated purely by the desire to secure their own interests.
>
> Out of a total of one hundred communities in the General Government, the Jewish Police in eighty-six of them acceded to the demands of the Germans at some stage of their activities, including participation in the round-ups for mass *Aktionen*. The distinction in the various stages in the existence and operation of the Jewish Police is important because the vast number of episodes in which the Jewish Police ceded to German demands occurred most noticeably in the final stages of the ghettos' existence, at a time when personnel changes had been effected within the ranks of the Police. Elements sensitive to public needs had either left the Police or had fallen victim to the

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[180] Trunk, *Judenrat* (1972), 511–14. Trunk goes on to comment on factors that had a deleterious effect on the condition of the Jewish police forces.

> There was yet another type of police corruption bordering on betrayal of their own people. Nihilism and lawlessness became widespread among the ghetto police, leading to far-reaching collaboration with the Germans. Little by little, more and more policemen adopted the mores and morals of the Nazi oppressor. The Germans encouraged demoralization of the Jewish policemen in order to make them willing tools in their hands. Open and secret German agents planted among the ghetto police were treated as a fifth column by the ghetto inmates. German offices that constantly competed for authority over the Jews established agencies of their own in many ghettos, often under cover of quasi-police forces with informants reporting on Jews. These unworthies terrorized the Councils and the ghetto inmates, infecting the regular ghetto policemen with poison of the deepest demoralization.
>
> The atmosphere of constant terror, demoralization, and lawlessness surrounding the ghetto police, along with their dealings with the corrupted German officials, undermined them morally and spiritually and conditioned them for the activities planned for them in Nazi extermination schemes. And let us not forget that, as already indicated, undesirable elements permeated the police ranks. They were predisposed to wrongdoing, belonged in the underground world of crime, had no moral scruples, and readily carried out German orders.
>
> Last, but not least, the ghetto police were influenced by the Council's strategy of rescue through voluntary sacrifices (see Chap. 16). The police were the very instrument fit to secure its success.

Ibid., 500–1, 510. Doubtless such factors—corruption, demoralization, infiltration of agents and undesirable elements—also set in among the Polish police force.

> Germans. The subservient policemen and commanders prevailed to the very end, although in most cases they found their death at Nazi hands.[181]

Efforts to assist Jews, which were often unsuccessful, were fraught with danger and misunderstanding. Barbara Szacka, an eminent sociologist, recalls an incident that occurred when she was twelve years of age:

> In the summer of 1942 my brother and I went to see a cousin who worked in Biadoliny, a village near the Kraków-Tarnów railway line. Trains carrying Jews and Soviet prisoners of war used to pass by. The trains stopped at the signal. People riding in the trains extended their hands through the small grilled windows of the freight wagons begging for food and water. …
>
> We wanted to help those in the train. There was one obstacle—a German. Dressed in a uniform and armed, he stood between the wagons, but was not visible to the passengers. We tried to explain with grimaces that we wanted to hand a cup of water to the thirsty. We took a step in the direction of the train. Then another step, while staring at the guard. What will he do? Will he nod his head with approval? Will he go for his rifle? He often went for his rifle, so we backed away.
>
> Those pantomimes with the guard, who was not visible to the people in the wagon, were probably seen by them as mocking them.
>
> My cousin went to the station with a pail of water and backed away when threatened with a rifle. An old Jew in the train, who did not see the entire situation, then started to curse him terribly. "And you know," said my cousin, "though I am ashamed to say it, I returned his abuse."[182]

Although some historians maintain that 250,000 Jews escaped from ghettos and roamed the Polish countryside, only to be denounced or hunted down by Poles, there is no empirical evidence to support this

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[181] Aharon Weiss, "The Relations Between the Judenrat and the Jewish Police," in Yisrael Gutman and Cynthia J. Haft, eds., *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe, 1933–1945: Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Historical Conference, Jerusalem, April 4–7, 1977* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979), 201–18, here at 212–13, 216.

[182] Barbara Szacka, "Wspomnienie," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 24, 2009.

fanciful claim.[183] Unable to find permanent hiding places or to cope with the severe conditions in the forests, many Jews who had fled before and during liquidation operations (*Aktions*) returned to the ghettos

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[183] The claim that there were 250,000 Jewish fugitives in the *Generalgouvernement* after the deportations from the ghettos is nothing but a crude guesstimate first suggested by Szymon Datner, former director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, that is premised on a ten percent escape rate, yet it is treated as a given by historians from the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research (Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów). In 1970, Szymon Datner estimated that around 100,000 Jews survived the war with the help of Poles, and that perhaps 100,000 Jews who escaped from the ghettos were caught by the authorities or were the victims of criminal acts. He stressed, however, that the entire matter still required a great deal of research. See Szymon Datner, "Zbrodnie hitlerowskie na Żydach zbiegłych z gett: Groźby i zarządzenia "prawne" w stosunku do Żydów oraz udzielających im pomocy Polaków," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego,* no. 75 (3/1970): 7–29, here at 29. In an interview published 15 years later, Datner stated that "approximately" 200,000 to 250,000 Jews fled from the ghettos, but provided no hard statistical or demographic data to back up his claim. Nor did he specify the geographical area he was referring to. In all likelihood, he had in mind areas outside the *Generalgouvernement* as well, such as the Białystok district. At least one third of these Jews would have resided on territories that were populated primarily by non-Poles. Moreover, Datner did not attribute the losses among the Jewish fugitives solely to the actions of Poles. Datner also estimated that 80,000 to 100,000 of these Jews survived. See Niezabitowska, *Remnants,* 247–48. While reducing the latter figure for survivors by half, Jan Grabowski claims that there is "agreement" among historians that some 250,000 Jews tried to escape (from the summer of 1942 onward), and that therefore the number of victims of the post-deportation hunt for Jews, known as the *Judenjagd,* could reach 200,000. See Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews,* 2–3, 173. That number keeps growing. According to a more recent publication of the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research, 300,000 Jews may have escaped the ghetto liquidations in the *Generalgouvernment* and Białystok District. See Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds., *Dalej jest noc: Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2018), vol. 1, 28. (If we were to add the Wilno, Nowogódek, Polesie and Volhynia provinces, the estimate would likely rise to 350,000, if not higher.) One historian associated with the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research, is more cautious. Based on Datner's guesstimate of 250,000, Krzysztof Persak concludes that the number of Jewish victims of the *Judenjagd* in the Generalgouvernement was at least 120,000, but states that it is not known what portion of those losses is attributable to German raids organized immediately after the liquidation of the ghettos, how many Jews returned to the remnant ghettos, how many died of hunger and disease, and how many were the victims of actions of the local population. See Engelking and Grabowski, *Zarys krajobrazu,* 26. By contrast, Peter Longerich, a leading German Holocaust historian, states, "In 1942–3 tens of thousands, possibly as many as 100,000 Jews living in Poland had managed to escape the ghetto liquidations and get away." See Peter Longerich, *The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 381. Regional studies indicate that most of these Jewish fugitives either returned to the ghettos on their own (almost 18,000 in the Radom district alone), or that they were captured or killed during the raids carried out by German forces immediately after the deportations (Aktions). Moreover, empirical research has simply not borne out these extremely high numbers. After a review of the entries in *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009) and accepting Gunnar Paulsson's findings for Warsaw (as set out in his monograph *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945*), historian Grzegorz Berendt conservatively estimates the number of Jewish fugitives at around 60,000 for the entire territory of occupied Poland. See Grzegorz Berendt, "Żydzi zbiegli z gett i obozów śmierci," in Sitarek, Trębacz, and Wiatr, *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji,* 121–58; Grzegorz Berendt, "Żydowscy uciekinierzy i tułacze w okupowanej Polsce," *Biuletyn IPN*, no. 6 (2017): 46–55, here at 54–55; Grzegorz Berendt, "Jewish Escapers from Ghettos or Death Camps," in Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Adam Sitarek, eds., *The Holocaust and Polish-Jewish Relations: Selected Issues* (Warsaw: The Institute of National Remembrance–Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, 2018), 15–52. Moreover, the research of historians who have examined Jewish testimonies and Polish court documents does not corroborate the extremely high numbers that are currently thrown about. Shmuel Krakowski, an archivist at Yad Vashem, states that there is "absolutely no way of estimating the total number of victims of these crimes in even the roughest general terms," and admits that many accounts of Poles killing or denouncing Jews cannot be corroborated. Krakowski cautions that, "Of this, the figure of over 3,000 Jews whom Poles (under varying circumstances) either murdered or turned over to the Germans can be considered reliably authenticated on the basis of the existing sources." See Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims,* 238. In a later work, historian Barbara Engelking, struggles to reach a total of 5,000 Polish-denounced and killed Jews, and yet even this modest number admittedly includes unverified (hearsay) and duplicate accounts. See Barbara Engelking, *Such a Beautiful Sunny Day…: Jews Seeking Refuge in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2016), 17–18, 318–19.

Jan Grabowski is behind another blatant manipulation regarding the participation of the Polish police in the Holocaust when he claimed: "Emanuel Ringelblum, the founder of the Oneg Shabbat, the underground archive of the Warsaw Ghetto—estimated the number of Jewish victims of Polish policemen alone in the 'hundreds of thousands.'"

once conditions stabilized.[184] Sometimes, in desperation, Jews would even turn themselves over to the German authorities.[185] But far more often, Jews were lured out of hiding by false promises of clemency. The Germans made announcements encouraging Jewish fugitives to return to the ghettos, and even created "remnant ghettos" (*Restghetto*) especially for this purpose.[186] Tens of thousands of Jews were enticed back this way. Most of the Jews who escaped from the ghetto in Sokołów Podlaski returned when conditions stabilized and they received assurances from the German aauthorities that they would be safe.[187] After the *liquidation of the ghetto in Siedlce in August 1942, the Germans set up a small ghetto in which they held 600 Jews selected for various work tasks. After issuing assurances that Jewish fugitives would be safe, the population of the ghetto soon grew to 1,500, and then swelled to as many as 3,000 as Jews from other ghettos flocked there. The Germans even formed a new Jewish council and police force. This small ghetto was then liquidated in November 1942.[188] Another remnant ghetto in the Lublin District was located in Łuków. Hundreds of Jews who had previously escaped to the forests returned to that ghetto only to be executed in November and December 1942 or deported to Treblinka in May 1943. The Germans had sufficient manpower consisting of their own forces and non-Polish auxiliaries, so-called Hiwis, to carry out these measures.*

> During this final deportation many Jews had apparently been hiding tenaciously. After the trains left, the Security Police employed a ruse to lure the surviving Jews from their concealment. It was announced throughout the ghetto that new identity cards would be issued. Anyone who reported for his card would be spared; anyone found without one would be shot immediately. Hoping at least for another brief respite between deportations, desperate Jews emerged from their hiding places and

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[184] See, for example, Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 210 (Chmielnik), 320 (Staszów), 332 (Szydłowiec).

[185] See, for example, the testimony of Abraham Berl Sokal, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2248. Jewish fugitives from Wysokie Mazowieckie, having nowhere to take refuge, reported voluntarily to the German gendarmerie and were killed.

[186] Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 267 (Opoczno), 295 (Radomsko), 302 (Sandomierz), 320 (Staszów), 330 (Szydłów), 332 (Szydłowiec), 338 (Ujazd, near Tomaszów Mazowiecki), 390 (Kosów Lacki), 401 (Łosice), 446 (Stanisławów Mazowiecki), 489–90 (Bochnia), 497 (Dąbrowa Tarnowska), 504 (Działoszyce), 553 (Proszowice), 625 (Chełm and Rejowiec), 642 (Izbica), 669 (Łęczna), 680 (Łuków), 698 (Piaski), 704 (Rejowiec), 732 (Włodawa); vol. 2, Part B, 1192 (Głębokie). The Germans expelled Poles from a newly built workers' settlement in Majdan Tatarski, on the outskirts of Lublin, to make way for Jews, and forced these Poles to relocate to evacuated lodgings in the Lublin ghetto. Believing the new remnant ghetto would be "safe," Jews came out of hiding with Poles and made their way there too. The ghetto in Majdan Tatarski was well supplied with food because of smuggling and illegal trade with Poles. Residents of the ghetto who sheltered other Jews illegally (i.e., Jews without permits) were fearful of betrayal by their Jewish neighbours. See Adam Kopciowski, ed., *Księga pamięci żydowskiego Lublina* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2011), 304–5, 310, 311.

[187] M. Gelbert, ed., *Sefer ha-zikaron: Sokolow-Podlask* (Tel Aviv: Residents of Sokolow-Podlask in Israel and in the USA, 1962), 338, translated as *Memorial book Sokolow-Podlask*,
Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokolowa_podlaski/Sokolowa_Podlaski.html>.

[188] Edward Kopówka, *Żydzi w Siedlcach 1850–1945* (Siedlce: Stowarzyszenie Tutajteraz, 2009), 161–64.

> reported. After at least 200 Jews had been collected, they were marched outside Łuków and shot on November ll [1942]. Another group was collected and shot on November 14.
>
> Faced with the constant threat of death by starvation and exposure on the one hand, or betrayal and shooting on the other, many Jews who had fled to the forests during the deportations in October and November [1942] subsequently returned to the reinstated ghettos of Łuków and Międzyrzec. The winter weather made in the forests increasingly difficult and precarious; any movement in the snow left tracks … Thus, when it appeared that the deportations had come to an end, many Jews calculated that they stood a much better chance of survival within one of the permitted ghettos than as hunted prey in the forests.
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> In fact the deportations from the county of Radzyń had ended for the moment, but life in the ghettos of Łuków and Międzyrzec was not without continuing danger. In Łuków the SS ghetto administrator, Josef Bürger, had 500 to 600 Jews shot in December to reduce the ghetto population.
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> On May 2, simultaneously with the renewed deportations from Międzyrzec by [Lieutenant Hartwig] Gnade's Second Company, SS units from Lublin, along with Ukrainian auxiliaries from Trawniki liquidated the ghetto in Łuków, deporting an additional 3,000 to 4,000 Jews to Treblinka.[189]

On November 10, 1942, Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger, Higher SS and Police Leader (*Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer*) of the *Generalgouvernement,* ordered the establishment of four "Jewish residential areas" (*Judenwohnbezirke*)—Radomsko, Sandomierz, Szydłowiec, and Ujazd, near Tomaszów Mazowiecki—in the Radom District, where Jews were to gather with the promise that their existence would be legalized and they would remain unmolested. It is estimated that, in the Radom District alone, almost 18,000 Jewish fugitives, who most likely constituted the bulk of the Jews who had fled from the ghettos, returned to these four ghettos. Most of those Jews were murdered between January and April 1943.[190]

Moreover, little is said about the role played by German gendarmes in the fate of Jewish fugitives. According to historian Sebastian Piątkowski's study of the Radom District:

> There is also no analytical study devoted to the participation of members of individual formations in the process of extermination of the Jewish population. This situation concerns, among others, the German military police (*Gendarmerie*), which had a network of permanent posts in the entire GG

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[189] Browning, *Ordinary Men,* 111, 133–34, 135.

[190] Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, "Organizacja i realizacja "akcji Reinhardt" w dystrykcie radomskim," in Dariusz Libionka, ed., *Akcja Reinhardt: Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2004), 195; Jacek Młynarczyk, *Judenmord in Zentralpolen: Der Distrikt Radom in Generalgouvernement* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 302; Robert Seidel, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Polen: Der Distrikt Radom 1939–1945* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 338, 343. See also Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2, Part A, 295 (Radomsko, which attracted over 4,000 Jews), 302 (Sandomierz), 332 (Szydłowiec, which attracted over 5,000 Jews), 338 (Ujazd, near Tomaszów Mazowiecki, which attracted almost 2,000 Jews). Regarding Radomsko, where an estimated 4,500 Jews gathered, see Simkha Hampel and Yisokhar Minski, "The Megillah of Suffering," in L. Losh, ed., *Sefer yizkor le-kehilat Radomsk ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Radomsk, 1967), 362, translated as *Memorial Book of the Community of Radomsk and Vicinity*, Internet: <http://jewishgen.org/yizkor/radomsko/Radomsko.html>.

area, located in towns and larger villages. … They have written a tragic chapter, as perpetrators of extermination activities directed at the Poles, Jews, Romanys [Romani], and Soviet POWs.

In the Radom District the *Gendarmerie* structure was based on platoons stationed in county (*powiat*) towns. … This formation had strict control over the Polish 'navy blue' police, based on a network of posts located in most communities (*gmina*) and in several so-called mobile posts …

There were 38 permanent *Gendarmerie* posts in the Radom District during the German occupation. … Each *Gendarmerie* post was usually manned by 8-12 men. The positions of commanders and their deputies were usually held by Germans from the Reich. Their subordinates included many gendarmes who had lived in the Polish Republic before the war … and have then signed the Deutsche Volksliste ('German nationality list') following the German invasion. Because of their good knowledge of the Polish language they were the ones who most frequently contacted the local population, and who acted as interpreters during interrogations and repressive actions.

Their attachment to Nazi ideology, their contempt for everything non-German, and their tendency to show off to impress their superiors in Radom, were often combined with negative personal qualities: brutality, contempt for human life, and a tendency to abuse alcohol. All this made the *Gendarmerie* (and especially the post commanders and their deputies) the 'masters of life and death' in their subordinate territories.

In the summer and autumn of 1942, *gendarmes* from all the posts in the area discussed here took part in the liquidation of the closed (Jewish) districts. … Beginning in the autumn of 1942, the *Gendarmerie* opened another chapter in the history of the extermination of the Jewish population of the Radom District. They were the principal executioners of the Jews caught in forest hideouts, arrested during patrolling of villages and roads, or brought to the posts by the Poles. Their killings continued ceaselessly, albeit at varying intensity, until the end of 1944. Poles often became witnesses to the execution of ghetto escapers.

Although most of the murders committed by *gendarmes* on ghetto escapers were not recorded in documents, surviving evidence indicates that the number of killings was significant. … As already mentioned, numerous escapers from ghettos were also murdered in cemeteries, woods, and other places.[191]

The Jews' enemies were not the Poles. The vast majority of Poles never harmed any Jew during the war, nor did they harbour any such intention. During one of the last *Aktions* in Łuków, when the Germans came to round up Jews working outside the ghetto, their Polish co-workers did not cooperate with the Germans.

A few days later, one of the women who sometimes let me stay at her house brought me a birth certificate from a Polish girl who had died. She asked me to leave and live with her as a Christian,

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[191] Sebastian Piątkowski, "The Participation of the German *Gendarmerie* in Extermination of the Jewish Population of the *General Gouvernement* (with the North-Eastern Part of the Radom District as an Example," in Grądzka-Rejak and Sitarek, *The Holocaust and Polish-Jewish Relations,* 146–61, here at 147, 148–49, 151, 156–57, 160.

> and that her priest would help me. Again, I had to say no—I didn't want to leave my *Tateh* [i.e., dad] and brothers. …
>
> In all of Lukow [Łuków] there were only four Poles who openly worked with the Germans, including one man whose wife flicked chickens at the factory. When they came to take us out, a little Jewish boy came running in and she grabbed him to cover him with her skirt. When the Germans came in and asked, "Are there any Jews hiding here?" the Poles all said no.
>
> *Tateh* was still hidden behind the crates, in an area where about eight Poles were working. Again the Germans asked if Jews were present, and the Poles said no. They never found *Tateh* and I managed to get him out later, with help from the workers.
>
> After that, the Germans closed the factory and told everyone to go to the ghetto, where, with no access to water, people were starving and suffering from infectious diseases. Many died.[192]

Conditions in the countryside continued to worsen. As the Germans became more demanding and strict in enforcing contributions of foodstuff from farmers, there was less and less to go around. This coincided with the liquidation of the ghettos and the enormous spike in Jewish fugitives fleeing to the countryside. According to historian Jan Kochanowski, "At the turn of 1942 and 1943 the burden imposed on the countryside was radically increased. Peasants were threatened with a whole range of penalties for non-compliance with 'quotas', including deportation to a concentration camp."[193] The Germans seized more grain and sugar in the *Generalgouvernement* than in occupied France, Holland, Serbia, and the Czech Protectorate and Moravia *combined*, and three times as many potatoes as in those countries.[194] Much of the Polish population was on the verge of starvation and was in no position to offer extended assistance to strangers. The goodwill of the peasants was also squandered by various partisan and forest groups who treated them as no more than a source of provisions.

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[192] Eta Wrobel with Jeanette Friedman, *My Life My Way: The Extraordinary Memoir of A Jewish Partisan in WWII Poland* (New Milford, New Jersey: The Wordsmithy; and New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2006), 75.

[193] Jerzy Kochanowski, "Black Market in the Genreral Government 1939–1945: Survival Strategy or (Un)Official Economy?," in Tatjana Tönsmeyer, Peter Haslinger, and Agnes Laba, eds., *Coping With Hunger and Shortage Under German Occupation in World War II* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 27–47, here at 29.

[194] Brzoza and Sowa, *Historia Polski 1918–1945,* 599.

2. Lawlessness and Banditry

Holocaust historians have traditionally laid the blame entirely on the Poles for confrontations between Poles and Jews during the German occupation. A careful analysis of the documentary evidence, however, does not support this one-sided view. The principal culprit was lawlessness. After analyzing scores of accounts of Jews who escaped from the death camps of Treblinka, Sobibór and Bełżec, historian Teresa Prekerowa, who was active in Żegota, the wartime Council for Aid to Jews, dismissed the notion that anti-Semitism was the driving force behind the reaction of the local population to the plight of Jewish fugitives hiding in the countryside. While denunciations and even altercations did occur, these were not the norm, but rather the activities of a relatively small number of people who were motivated by greed or involved in criminal activity. Prekerowa also notes that Jewish groups often took food and other belongings from farmers by force—this was something that no farmer would have appreciated.[195] Historian Barbara Engelking concurs: "It is understandable," she writes, that peasants "defended themselves against thefts and pillaging."[196] Over time relations between Jewish fugitives and Polish farmers turned sour largely because of increasingly frequent and violent confrontations over food and other supplies. However, one should not generalize and accuse all Jews of behaving like common robbers; nor should one accuse all Poles of innate

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[195] See Teresa Prekerowa's study "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* vol. 35 (1993): 100–14, translated as "The Attitude of the Polish Population Towards Jewish Escapees from the Treblinka, Sobibór, and Bełżec Death Camps in Light of Jewish and Polish Testimonies," in Chodakiewicz, Muszyński, and Styrna, *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold,* 97–116. Jewish accounts attesting to the seizure of possessions, especially food, from farmers by force are plentiful and numerous examples have been cited in this publication. Historians have identified many other cases that are not described in this work. See, for example, the testimonies of Tuwie Miller and Ignacy Zimmerman in the Yad Vashem Archives, files O.3/2078 and O.3/2213, respectively, cited in Grzegorz Berendt, "The Price of Life: Economic Determinants of Jews' Existence on the "Aryan" Side," in Rejak and Frister, *Inferno of Choices,* 115–65, at p. 156: "The robbers took private property as well as property of various institutions (e.g., cooperatives). In many cases private property was seized in the presence of its owners, who were held at gun point." For a Jewish account describing the activities of a "self-defence" group from Jadów, near Łochów, led by Mosze Zieleniec that robbed landowners already in 1942, see Bańkowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma,* vol. 6, 657. See also Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień…,* 56 (groups of Jews in the vicinity of Lublin invaded farms at night in the summer of 1942, stealing bread, flour, pigs and clothing), 126–27 (after Poles became fearful of allowing Jews into their homes, Jewish fugitives started to steal food from their homes, cellars, storehouses, and fields; in many cases, this was done using force or threat of force), 153 (a Pole denounced some Jews hiding in the forest after they stole his cow; for a poor farmer, the loss of a cow was disastrous), 169 (two young Jews who stole chickens were apprehended in a village in Radzymin county), 202 (Szoszana Atłasowicz, who was hiding in a forest near Łańcut, reported that farmers were "incensed" because of the "endless thefts" carried out by Jewish fugitives). It is in this context that the following quotation from Zygmunt Klukowski's diary should be placed: "There are several [*"sporo"* translates as "a lot"] Jews active with the bandits. The villages have turned against the Jews because of this [i.e., *"w obawie przed represjami"* translates as "fear of repressions"] and try to find them in the fields and forests. It is hard to believe but the attitude toward Jews is changing. There are many people who see the Jews not as human beings but as animals that must be destroyed." See Zygmunt Klukowski, *Diary from the Years of Occupation, 1939–44* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 227; Zygmunt Klukowski, *Zamojszczyzna,* vol. 1: *1918–1943* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2007), 312. Holocaust historians cite only the final sentence in Klukowski's diary entry, as allegedly showing that the Poles started to imitate the Nazis by de-humanizing the Jews, without acknowledging Klukowski's earlier observation that rampant banditry and fear of repressions gave rise to hostility toward Jewish fugitives on the part of some Poles, especially those victimized. Christopher Browning acknowledges that many of the Poles (whose own food rations had been reduced to near-starvation levels) who provided information to the German authorities concerned Jews "who had stolen food from nearby fields, farms, and villages." See Browning, *Ordinary Men,* 126.

[196] Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień…,* 128. Since Engelking does not provide any examples of what defence measures would have been acceptable, her air of objectivity in this regard appears to be *pro forma*.

hostility toward Jews. Indeed, there are many recorded cases of entire villages sympathizing with Jewish fugitives and participating in their rescue.[197] Moreover, one cannot limit the number of helpers to those recognized by Yad Vashem. (As of January 1, 2022, Poland's list counted 7,232 persons. Poles who rescued

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[197] This well-documented phenomenon goes contrary to what is often claimed in Holocaust literature. Moreover, with rare exceptions, these rescuers have not been recognized by Yad Vashem. See Ryszard Tyndorf, "Collective Rescue Efforts by Poles on Behalf of Jews in the German-Occupied Polish Countryside," in Chodakiewicz, Muszyński, and Styrna, *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold,* 153–200. Some examples follow. Emanuel Ringelblum recorded: "I heard from Jews of Glowno [Głowno] how peasants helped them during the whole of the winter. A Jew who went out to a village in search of food usually returned with a bag of potatoes … In many villages, the peasants showed open sympathy for the Jews. They threw bread and other food [through the barbed-wire fence] into the camps … located in their neighborhood." See Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978), 116. The Michalak family, who lived in in Boczki Domaradzkie, near Głowno, took in the Rajch family, who pretended to be Polish. Although the villagers suspected otherwise, no one betrayed the Jewish family. The Michalak family were recognized by YadVashem. See Józef Grabowicz, "Ryzykować życie," *Res Humana,* no. 3 (2004): 39–42; Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 4, Part 1, 508–9. Tadeusz Kalski was one of several Jewish teenagers and young men who were openly working for Polish farmers in the village of Chruślin, near Głowno. It was only when the police started to come around looking for Jews that the farmers became afraid to keep them any longer. See the testimony of Tadeusz Kalski, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2987. Hercek Cedrowski, Tojwje Drajhorm and Jankiel Borkowski wrote in 1947: "The Jews of Ozorków maintained contact with the Poles. The Polish population did not help the Germans in the liquidation of the Jews. They traded with the Jews and brought food to the ghetto. The Jews were afraid of speaking with Poles, and Poles were afraid of helping Jews, but there were no denunciations of Jews." See Grynberg and Kotowska, *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945,* 488. Isadore Burstyn, as a boy of eleven, was able to survive through the kindness of people in the village of Głupianka, near Otwock (outside of Warsaw), where he passed as a local boy and herded cows. He hid in the forest when his presence threatened the family with whom he often stayed and friends from the village would bring him food. "In my case the entire village sheltered me even though I know there were still about 20 per cent anti-Semites among them." See "Edmonton survivor returns to Poland," *The Canadian Jewish News* (Toronto), August 2, 1990, and "Return to Otwock brings back rush of memories," *The Canadian Jewish News*, August 30, 1990; Mary Kaye Ritz, "Holocaust Survivor Sees Own Childhood on Film," *Honolulu Advertiser,* January 31, 2003. See also Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 5: *Poland,* Part 2, 927. Abram Jakub Zand, a tailor from the village of Bolimów, near Skierniewice, "stole back to his village; the local peasants welcomed him back, and he was passed from house to house, working a week or two in each. … 'If I were to thank everyone, whole villages would have to visit me.'" Both he and his sister survived in this way. See Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1963), 27; Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień…,* 123–24. Shmuel Eliraz, then known as Ludwik Poznański, was born in Warsaw in 1935. Confined in the Warsaw ghetto with his parents, they arranged for their little son to be taken to safety, and entrusted him to his mother's former nanny, Maria Walewska. Walewska was unmarried, had no children of her own, and after a long service to their family had moved to the village of Nowy Kawęczyn, near Skierniewice. Shmuel became Wiesiu, Maria's nephew. When she first brought the boy home, her neighbours were distrustful and suspected that she was hiding a Jewish child. However, they eventually left them in peace. He remained in the village under Walewska's care for the rest of the war years. See Maria Walewska, The Righteous Database, Yad Vashem, Internet: <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/stories/walewska.asp>. A Polish Red Cross worker gave over to a Polish couple by the name of Kaczmarek, themselves refugees from Western Poland living in the town of Żyrardów, near Warsaw, a young Jewish girl found abandoned in an empty death train: "Many of the neighbours knew that she was Jewish, yet no one informed." See Zbigniew Pakula, *The Jews of Poznań* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 51. Ten-year-old Estera Borensztajn was sheltered by the villagers of Osiny, between Żelechów and Łuków: "the peasants arranged among themselves that each would hide a Jewish girl for a certain period so that 'everyone would be guilty and no one could inform.'" See the testimony of Estera Borensztajn, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2989, as cited in Berenstein and Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939–1945,* 27. Since she was well known in the village, Estera eventually moved on, staying with other farmers, until she reached the village of Kłoczew. She was taken in by the Pieniak family and remained with them for two years. Once again, her presence became widely known in the village. During anticipated German raids, she was sheltered by Rev. Stefan Kosmulski, the local pastor, who extended his protection to the child. See Waldemar Piasecki, "Gdzie jesteś Teresko," *Dziennik Związkowy* (Chicago), March 9, 2009; Wojtek Maślanka, "Dlaczego, Teresko… dlaczego nie chcesz się spotkać…," *Nowy Dziennik* (Garfield, New Jersey), August 3, 2015. Sara Bryn took up residence in the village of Adamów, near Łuków, with her young child, passing as a Christian by the name of Stefania Romaniuk. Although it was widely suspected that she was Jewish, and she was told as much, no one betrayed her. See Janina Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów: Słownik* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 165; Stefania Romaniuk, "Moja okupacja," *Odra,* no. 5 (1988): 24–32 , here at 30–31. After running out of money, Hanka Jeleń and her young son Stanisław wandered in the countryside near

Jews are also found on the lists of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. Non-Poles who rescued Jews in the Eastern Borderlands are listed under their respective country.)

Notwithstanding an abundance of evidence regarding conditions in the countryside, many Holocaust historians are unable to shed their ethno-nationalist biases or simply haven't done their homework. Despite adamant denials by historians such as Shmuel Krakowski,[198] it is an undeniable fact that Jewish partisans and many Jews hiding in the forests did engage in banditry and other misdeeds which, from the perspective of the peasants, were indistinguishable from other forms of violent crime that plagued the countryside. A Jewish Labour Bund report from November 15, 1943 clearly recognized the existence of this as fact: Jews who had escaped from the ghettos to the forests formed wildcat groups that were robbing in the countryside.[199] Such activities were not, of course, the exclusive or even main domain of the Jews. Common banditry by individuals and various groups of diverse nationalities, sometimes partisans but often just masquerading as partisans (usually as Home Army or National Armed Forces members), abounded and

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[198] Historian Shmuel Krakowski, Yad Vashem's former head archivist, contends: "Neither the armed Jewish units nor the individual Jews hiding or fighting in the forests had anything in common with such ordinary criminals." See Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims,* 125. See also Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed,* 15. Shmuel Krakowski, formerly a political officer (major) in the Polish People's Army until 1966, was a Communist historian known as Stefan Krakowski. He maintained the same position in 2003: "those Jewish escapees hiding in the forests … I cannot find any justification for labeling these fighting Jews as bandits." See Shmuel Krakowski, "The Attitude of the Polish Underground to the Jewish Question during the Second World War," in Zimmerman, *Contested Memories,* 103. While certainly not all Jews hiding in forests could be considered ordinary bandits, from the point of view of the peasants they robbed, they posed the same danger as robbers. Ben Shedletzky, a not untypical fugitive who took cover in villages near Warsaw, "makes no apologies for salvaging and rebuilding a discarded rifle and stealing bullets to force scared Polish farm wives into giving him food." See Ben Rose, "Discarded rifle kept family alive during war," *The Canadian Jewish News,* August 24, 1995. During the war the Bund was well aware of the fact that "wild bands" of Jews resorted to banditry to survive in the forests. See Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR,* vol. 2, 24. Shmuel Krakowski's lack of objectivity in other areas has been noted by several historians. His claim that the Polish underground press ignored the fate of the Jews and relegated them to the margins of its pages was proven inaccurate by Daniel Blatman, who concluded: "In no way can one state that the entire Polish underground press was tainted with anti-Semitic arguments." See Daniel Blatman, "'The Polish Street Fell Short in Its Relations with the Jews:' Polish Clandestine Press and the Jews (1940–1942)," in Beate Kosmala and Feliks Tych, eds., *Facing the Nazi Genocide: Non-Jews and Jews in Europe* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 107–16. John Sack notes that Shmuel Krakowski dismissed, "as a Jewish fantasy," the story of Salomon Morel, who, as a commander of postwar Communist prison camps in Poland, killed prisoners out of revenge. See John Sack, *An Eye for an Eye* (New York: Basic Books/HarperCollins, 1993), 210. Notwithstanding these obvious shortcomings, Shmuel Krakowski continues to be cited an an eminent and unbiased authority on Polish-Jewish relations.

[199] Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej,* 2nd ed., 985: "W lasach; z uratowanych z pogromów gett pewne grupy uciekły w lasy różnymi sposobami i drogami, uzbrojone lub bez broni i w lasach pędzą żywot. Z nich przeważająca część—z konieczności utrzymania się przy życiu—tworzy dzikie grup, które by żyć, grabią okolice, znikoma część przystaje do grup partyzanckich, w odnośnych terenach działających." An English translation can be found in Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations,* 745, where the word "grabią," which means robbing in this context, is translated as "looting." The translation reads: "In the forests: certain groups of those who escaped from the ghetto pogroms fled into the forests, by different ways and means, either armed or unarmed, and they continue to live in the woods. Most of them, in seeking to survive, have come to form wildcat groups which are looting the countryside, and only a few of them have joined partisan groups operating in the respective regions."

constituted a serious problem for the impoverished civilian population.[200] The Communist underground—both Soviet and native—was notorious for their robberies in the countryside. The association of Jews with these formations, who were understandably not welcomed by the population, only complicated matters for Jewish fugitives hiding in the forests.

As Jewish survivors recall, Soviet marauders and partisans preyed on both Jewish fugitives and Polish villagers:

> … a group of comrades, who had left the ghetto [in Zambrów], in order to join the partisans in the forests, came back home. This matter was kept in extreme secrecy, so that, God forbid, the news not pass to the Germans by way of an informer. One of the group was Yitzhak Prawda. The group went out of the ghetto well-dressed, shod, and provisioned with a sum of money. In the fields, they encountered remnants of the Russian army, mostly Ukrainians. The Russians and Ukrainians bat them, took away their money, stripped them naked, and barefoot, and drove them away in shame, back to the Germans.[201]

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[200] Examples of banditry by Soviet and Jewish partisans in the Wilno and Nowogródek areas have been provided earlier. Ordinary bandits were also known to pose as Soviet partisans and rob peasants. See Wołkonowski, *Okręg Wileński Związku Walki Zbrojnej Armii Krajowej w latach 1939–1945,* 158. Additional examples of Jewish banditry can be found in Chodakiewicz, *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne,* 79–86, 321 n.209; Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955,* 262–65, 327–31. Partisans sometimes posed as partisans from other formations, and forest bands as partisans. In the Szczuczyn region, a group of Poles posed as Soviet partisans when they took supplies from villagers. See the account of Zbigniew Koźliński, "Moja Czarnowszczyzna," in Jasiewicz, *Europa nieprowincjonalna,* 154–55. There are many Jewish accounts describing the activities of Belorussians. A young Jewish girl who managed to leave the Baranowicze ghetto and, with the assistance of Poles, joined up with an armed group of Jews (led by Moshe Zalmanowicz) in the vicinity of Świecie-Załuże (some 50 miles from Baranowicze), describes attacks by Belorussian bandit gangs known as "Zorkince." See Bender, *Glimpses Through Holocaust and Liberation,* 97, 99. However, another Jewish witness refers to "Zhorkintsy" as a Soviet-based partisan unit of some 25 men which included at least one Jew, Erszek Mendelbojm; that unit was later transformed into a large detachment called "Captain Chornovo." See the testimony of Mendel Szczupak, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/49. One account refers to "vigilantes" active in the vicinity of Lipiczany forest already in January 1943, who "were terrorizing the local people and forbidding them any contact with the [Soviet] Partisans. … because of the vigilantes, it was almost impossible for our scouts to enter villages or farm settlements to gather information. … They brought our operations almost to a halt, and many Partisans and their contacts lost their lives after being discovered by them. The vigilantes … were a threat especially to the Jewish Partisans." See Zissman, *The Warriors,* 127. Many Jewish sources mention the "samookhova" (*samaakhova* is Belorussian for "self-defence"), which is often confused with the local night watch that every village was required by the Germans to form to fend off partisan intrusions. The Free Corps of Belorussian Self-Defence (*Volny Korpus Belaruskai Samaakhovy*), also known as the Belorussian Self-Defence (*Belaruskaia Samaakhova*), was a volunteer force established in June 1942 for the purpose of fighting partisans. See Rein, *The Kings and the Pawns,* 295. One Jewish source refers to attacks on a Jewish family camp in January and July 1943, by groups of as many as 80 "Samokhovtses," members of Belorussian "self-defence" groups from Byteń and Iwacewicze, led by the Belorussian nationalist Zmitruchenko. The first of these raids was to secure the release of three Belorussian "collaborators" captured and executed by Jewish partisans. See Alpert, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry,* 355–57. A memorial book speaks of "a nest of Samachowcy"—"local youth who organised themselves into units in order to help the Germans fight partisans and Jews"—in the Belorussian village of Korsunki, near Jody, against whom a Jewish unit launched an attack. See Machnes and Klinov, *Darkness and Desolation,* 581–82. Attacks on Belorussian self-defence groups by Jewish partisans (this one in the early part of 1943) are noted in other Jewish sources: "We were at a strength of 250 men in the attack on the village of Khatzivka, which harbored the "Samokhovsky" force, farmers who fought against the partisans as an auxiliary army (sic) to the Germans. We attacked from all sides, and our enemies fell by the sword, and afterwards we took what remained of their guns and ammunition. In the end, we put the village to the torch, and left it in ruins." See Moorstein, *Zelva Memorial Book,* 73.

[201] Yitzhak Golombeck, "Blood, Fire, and Columns of Smoke," in Yom-Tov Levinsky, ed., *The Zambrow Memorial Book: In Memory of a Martyred Community That Was Exterminated* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2010), 72, Internet: <http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/z/zyb-01.htm>.

> … groups of Russian war–prisoners who had fled the German prison and took to the fields. They used to assault the Jews, take their armaments and any other thing they had, and chase them away. Their tactic was to show friendliness, to sit with the Jews—and Jews were attracted to them—and then to start shooting and take their belongings.
>
> I joined such a group once, but three days after we took to the field, a group of Russian prisoners approached us, behaved friendly, ate with us, then surrounded us with pointed guns, shot and wounded a young man from Miedzyrzec [Międzyrzec], took everything we had and sent our men away. They invited the girls to stay with them, but we all run back to the Ghetto.[202]

> Wanka [Vanka Smirnov] described for us the group [of Soviet partisans], some were real robbers and killers. The two worst bandits were "Grishka", who carried the heavy machine gun, and "Nicholai". Those two robbed, raped and killed all around the area of Treblinka and the rest just followed. Although some of these men were killers, others were not bad considering the circumstances. … Wanka thought that it would be best if we went to the Jews in Bransker [Brańsk] forest because some of the men from this group were real killers. When farmers would not open doors for them, refuse to give them food or inform the Germans of their whereabouts, they would kill whole families and set fire to the farm. …
>
> They [i.e., some of the Soviet partisans] told us what happened after we left the group in Hodiszewer [Hodyszewo] forest, that same night was a lot of drinking and killings. Nicholai the kolhaznik [kolkhoz labourer] saw how Grishka took from Haika her jewelry, a necklace, watch and wedding ring and then shot her and others. They then went to a polish [sic] farmer and killed the whole family. The killers were again Grishka and Nicolai the bandit and after the killings the group went to a forest near Dominowo. Polish people followed their footsteps and informed the Germans of their whereabouts. The Germans surrounded the forest and killed were the worst bandits from the group, Grishka with his machine gun, Nicholai the bandit, Nichodem and more, the rest ran away in different directions.[203]

A teenaged Jewish boy from the Warsaw ghetto who joined up with some Soviet partisans after escaping from a train headed for Treblinka recalled:

> One night we came upon a group of Jewish women hiding in a barn. The Russians ordered the Polish peasant to lay out plenty of hot, mashed potatoes, melted lard, sausages and vodka. The Jewish women, crouching with cold and fear, were invited to share in the feast. There were about

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[202] R. Bachrach, "In the Miedzyrzec Ghetto," in M.J. Feigenbaum, ed., *Sefer Biala Podlaska* (Tel Aviv: Kupat Gmilut Hased of the Community of Boala Podlaska, 1961), 452, translated as *Book of Biala Podlaska,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Biala_Podlaska/Biala_Podlaska.html>.

[203] Goldberg, *A Sparkle of Hope,* 87–88, 91. Luba Wrobel Goldberg's comments about the Belorussians living in the vicinity of Brańsk are not favourable: "Around Bransk, the villages were populated with white russian [sic] farmers. The white russian farmers completed the german [sic] orderd even more thoroughly than the polish farmers. When jews [sic] came begging for a piece of bread, they would tie them up and take them to the Germans to be killed. … the white russian villages were so unfriendly." Ibid., 88, 129. Understandably, the Home Army was not pleased with the behaviour of the Soviet partisans and came to the protection of the farmers. Ibid., 91–92.

eight of them who had escaped from nearby small-town ghettos; some came from Bransk [Brańsk], others from Bielsk Podlaski. A few wore their best fur coats. They were silent and distrustful, but they soon warmed up after glasses of vodka which the Soviets insisted they down with them.

"Let's have some fun," the soldiers repeated. "Death to the Germans."

Later, everyone buried himself in the fluffy hay in the large barn.

Food and drink filled my body and I fell asleep.

But during the night I half woke. I thought that I heard frantic whispers, accelerated breathing coming from several directions, deep moans and laughter. I even thought that I heard some Jewish voices praying and invoking God's mercy. But I was not sure.

Next morning one of the women approached me. She had deep shadows under her eyes.

"*Nu*," she said, "what's a nice Jewish boy doing with a bunch of animals—you *are* Jewish, no?"

"What do you mean, 'animals'?" I retorted. "Listen, lady,"—I tried to take on the recalcitrance of a Gentile boy addressing a second-class citizen—"better watch what you are saying; these are my friends."

"Friends? A *choliere* [cholera] should strike them," she swore in Yiddish. "You and your friends, *takie*, so now what's gonna happen when half these women get pregnant when they're on the run? *Goteniu, Goteniu*! [Dear God, my God!] Ha."

She shook her head, her sad eyes looking at me with tragic contempt. … I walked away quickly.

The Soviets left soon after that, first entering the forest in their customary *tiralliere*: each man walking several feet apart. Some two hours later, Petya and Alex, a pudgy partisan, stopped in the deep snow to relieve themselves. As Alex pulled his trousers down, he revealed his bloodstained long underwear.

"Look, brother, got laid with a Jewess. Some great fucking, those Jewish women! Son of a bitch! You got laid all right?" he asked, showing off his underthings.

"*Da*, got fucked all right," smiled Petya.

"Look at me," gloated Alex, "son of a bitch! I got to fuck three of them. Two virgins. A real doubleheader. Yippee!"

I looked away. I felt guilty and ashamed yet stirred with excitement and desire.[204]

When the Soviet partisans learned that the teenaged boy was a Jew, they ejected him from their group.

Gangs of common criminals and oulaws also victimized the population indiscriminately. Michael (Mordechai or Mordka) Goldfarb, who escaped from Sobibór, joined up with just such a gang in the vicinity of Włodawa and began to rob with them in the vicinity. The gang was led by Misha Piontek, likely a Russian or Ukrainian, given his Russian-sounding first name, but described by Goldfarb as a Pole. The gang eventually turned on its Jewish members, killing seven of the ten escapees from Sobibór in its ranks.

Our group consisted of fourteen people, ten of whom were escapees from Sobibor [Sobibór] and four Georgians who had escaped from the prison in Radom. After wandering in the forest we reached the village of Hola. We thought in this area there should be partisans and, indeed, after a short time we met a group of sixteen armed men under the leadership of a Pole, Miszka Piatek [spelled Piątek in Polish and pronounced Piontek—*M.P.*].

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[204] Joseph S. Kutrzeba, *The Contract: A Life for a Life* (New York: iUniverse, 2009), 74–75.

They took us into their group and we remained together for about two weeks. However, we didn't feel comfortable as they were common thieves and we sought a way to be rid of them. … One night Miszka told us that we had to procure food and vodka. Five of us went out on the mission: three men from Sobibor—Yehuda [Leon] Lerner, Boris [Tarabinski], and I—one Georgian and one of the men from the local group. We reached the village of Kolacze [Kołacze] and there we confiscated the food and liquor. … We returned to the forest, and at the first guard post of our camp we saw no one. We were surprised, especially when we saw that the second guard position was empty as well. We reached the camp. The fire was still burning and the people looked as if they were sleeping. We drew closer and saw that everyone had been killed. Six Jews and three Georgians were killed. Another Jew, Mendel the tailor, was wounded and asked that we kill him. We got away from the place quickly. We were afraid that Miszka was nearby and would shoot us. The local fellow who was with us disappeared immediately, and the Georgian also left us. We remained three wanderers. In the village of Kamien [Kamień], a farmer told us that nearby there was a group of Jewish partisans. … These

were the people from the Jewish partisan unit of Yechiel Grynszpan. We fought there until the arrival of the Soviet army.[205]

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[205] Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation of the Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 346–47. After the revolt in the Sobibór death camp, the Germans undertook a large-scale search and pursuit action utilizing substantial forces (SS, Wehrmacht, gendarmes, Order Police) numbering almost 1,000 men, as well as air force patrols, to capture perhaps as many as several hundred Jewish prisoners who managed to escape. The village heads were ordered to inform the residents that anyone helping the Jews would be killed. Ibid., 337, 342; Muzeum Byłego Obozu Hitlerowskiego Zagłady w Sobiborze, "Pościg," Internet: <http://www.muzeum.wlodawa.metronet.pl/index_sobibor.htm>. German historian Stephan Lehnstaedt, however, claims—without providing any hard evidence—that it was not these large German forces combing the countryside that were most effective in capturing Jewish fugitives, but rather the Polish Blue police and the local Polish population. Allegedly, the majority (sic) of Poles turned over captured Jews without any hesitation or, more often, just shot them themselves immediately upon capture. He makes no mention that dozens of Jewish fugitives were helped by Poles. Lehnstaedt identifies the "anti-Semitic" Home Army as being a particular source of danger, citing Itzhak (Icek) Lichtman's testimony, which is examined in this text. See Stephan Lehnstaedt, *Czas zabijania: Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka i Akcja Aktion Reinhardt* (Warsaw: Prószyński, 2018), 125–26; translated from the Germam, *Der Kern des Holocaust: Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka und die Aktion Reinhardt* (München: Beck, 2017). Neither German reports nor Jewish testimonies support Lehnstaedt's claims. According to the most extensive research and detailed analysis, 295 prisoners managed to escape during the revolt, 130 were detained or killed during the German manhunt (or later), and 56 are known to have been killed by non-Germans consisting of Poles, Ukrainians, "bandits," Home Army soldiers, "nationalists," and Soviet partisans. The Polish police are rarely mentioned in Jewish testimonies, and sometimes as helpful. See Marek Bem, *Sobibor Extermination Camp, 1942–1943* (Amsterdam: Stichting Sobibor, 2015), 297. Although Holocaust sources refer to Jewish escapees being turned in by the Polish population, according to prewar censuses, the population of the immediate vicinity of Sobibór (as well as to the east, across the Bug River) was overwhelmingly ethnic Ukrainian and of the Orthodox faith. According to three separate testimonies by Jewish escapees from the death camps of Sobibór and Treblinka, they "walked about the villages" where they were "known to everybody," including the farmhands and school children, without being denounced. See Teresa Prekerowa, "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* vol. 35 (1993): 100–14, translated as 110–14, translated as "The Attitude of the Polish Population Towards Jewish Escapees from the Treblinka, Sobibór, and Bełżec Death Camps in Light of Jewish and Polish Testimonies," in Chodakiewicz, Muszyński, and Styrna, *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold,* 97–116.

Apart from the former Soviet POWs led by Aleksandr ("Sasha") Pechersky, who headed eastward to join up with the Communist partisans (after taking money, gold, and jewels from the non-Soviet escapees and then abandoning them), most of the escapees headed westward to areas populated by Poles where most of them originated. In addition to those mentioned in the text, many other escapees from Sobibór survived with the help of Poles: Aida Begleiter, Fiszel Białowicz (later Philip Bialowitz), Symcha Białowicz (Fiszel's brother, later Simcha Bialowitz), Leon Cymiel (Aron Szymel), Hersz Cukierman (Herschel Zuckerman) and his son Josef, Chaim Engel and Selma (Saartje) Wijnberg (whom Chaim later married), Leib (Leon) Feldhendler, Rywka Feldman (later Regina Zieliński), Kitty "Cathy" Gokkes (Hooks, who died as a partisan), Michael (Mordechai) Goldfarb, Salomea Hannel (Hanel) or Leiner, Mosze Hochman, Moshe Honig, Zyndel Honigman, Nachum (Michał) Knopfmacher, Abram (Avrum) Kohn, Josef Kopf, Shmul (Samuel) Lerer, Yehuda (Leon) Lerner, Aron (Aharon) Licht, Eda Lichtman, Moszek Merenstein (Merenstajn), Zelda Metz (Kelberman), Shlomo (Salomon) Podchlebnik and Chaskiel Menche (Shlomo's brother-in-law, also identified as Lejb Podchlebnik and Chaim Powroznik), Lea Reisner (later married to Symcha Bialowitz), Ursula (Ulla) Stern (later Ilana Safran), Józef Szerman, Shlomo (Stanisław) Szmajzner and his two companions, Yankiel and Majer (all three found shelter with a farmer, Józef Albiniak, in Tarnawa Duża), Boris Tarabinski, Ester or Estera Terner (later Esther Raab), Judka Terner, Kurt Ticho (later Thomas), Tana Tzvekin, Abram Wang or Wank (Adam Walk), Kalmen Wewryk, Meir Ziss. See Novitch, *Sobibor,* 102 (Lea Reisner-Bialowitz), 122–24 (Moshe Hichman); Teresa Prekerowa, "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* vol. 35 (1993): 110–14, translated as "The Attitude of the Polish Population Towards Jewish Escapees from the Treblinka, Sobibór, and Bełżec Death Camps in Light of Jewish and Polish Testimonies," in Chodakiewicz, Muszyński, and Styrna, *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold,* 97–116; Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 4: *Poland,* Part 1, 491–92 (Shmul Lerer, Estera Terner, Abram Kohn), 503 (Simcha and Filip Bialowicz, Josef Szerman), vol. 5: *Poland,* Part 2, 551 (Selma Wijnberg, Chaim Engel), 624 (Kurt Ticho), 691 (Leib Leon Feldhendler, Moshe Honig); Gutman, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust: Supplementary Volumes (2000–2005),* volume II, 609 (Avraham Wang, later Adam Walk, Lejb Pochlebny and his brother-in-law, Heniek or Chaskiel Menche); Mazurek Family, The Righteous Database, Yad

After escaping from the ghetto in Włodawa, Jakob Friedmann (then Rotenberg) ran into that same gang of criminals. Misha Piontek (Piątek), who was known as an arms' dealer, invited Friedmann to join his "partisan" group. Friedmann recalls:

> I agreed to join him; I had no alternative. There were five Poles, and I was the only Jew. Piontek [Piątek] gave me a Polish military gun which had had the barrel and stock sawn off …
>
> I lived in the woods for a while with this group of Poles who were robbers rather than partisans. We began to rob people. About two weeks later when I saw a horse-drawn carriage approaching, I said, 'Let's go and hold them up.' I knew that people travelling must have some money or valuables with them.[206]

Fearful for his own life, Friedmann eventually left these ruffians and joined up with a Jewish unit affiliated with the Communist People's Guard. Friedmann learned that bandits such as Piontek (Piątek) did not discriminate among their victims. The partisans Freidman joined took action to eliminate this gang.

> We heard that this Michal Piontek [Michał Piątek], who had made a lot of money from the Jews, was giving refuge to the Russian officers who had run away, providing them with food and vodka, and then he shot them all and stole any goods they had on them.
>
> When I found this out I went with a small group of ten or twelve men to where Piontek was living. We surrounded the house and while he and his family were asleep we used bullets with phosphor tips, a kind of ammunition which would set fire to whatever it hit. We had machine guns all around the house and began firing. We heard screams but nobody could get out. No one survived.[207]

Criminal elements also posed a serious hazard for Jews hiding in the forests, but even they generally targeted Jewish fugitives for their possessions, and not because of their race or religion. These same criminal elements often preyed on Poles as well. As the following Jewish account from the vicinity of Brańsk illustrates, the conduct of those who preyed on Jews was by no means sanctioned by the local community:

> When I was working in the village of Lendowo, the people talked about Janka, that she was the village whore. She was greedy and for money she would do anything. For many years Janka had a boy friend Karik [Kazik?], who was the leader from a group of bandits who robbed and killed Jews who were hiding from the Germans. … When there were no more Jews, he organized the bandits to rob Polish farmers who were riding back with money from markets. He robbed them with a gun pretending to be Russian Partisans. Farmers recognized him …

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[206] Jakob Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier: A Jewish Partisan's Story* (Caulfield South, Victoria: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2005), 30.

[207] Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier,* 50.

> In a certain night he went to the barn of the man from Skludy [Skłody Borowe] and hung him and then he married his widow … One evening Karik's brother, Stasiec [Stasiek], came distressed to Pickutowska where Feigale was staying and he told her what he saw. He was riding back from the market in the dark, when he noticed a light was shining from the grave where the Jews were buried last week. He stopped and in the dark he quietly walked up to this place and he saw his brother Karik with Janka holding a lantern. They dug out the dead and were pulling out their teeth because they had gold fillings in them. Stasick Dombrowski [Stasiek Dąbrowski] was devastated to see how low his own brother had fallen. Stasick didn't like to upset his parents by telling them about his brother's deplorable behavior and his greed. He rather came to Pickutowska who was religious and highly respected to tell her what weighed heavy on his mind.[208]

The Polish underground was sometimes called on to take measures against those who engaged in banditry regardless of their nationality. While wandering in the Chełm area with fellow escapees from the Sobibór death camp, Dov Freiberg (also known as Ber, Berl, Berek and Bolek Fraiberg) encountered acts of kindness from poor farmers, and sometimes hostility. The sporadic violence he witnessed was generally the work of gangs of criminals lurking in the forests. Freiberg and Semen Rosenfeld (Semyon Rozenfeld)[209] met up with two brothers from Chełm, Yozhik and Monyek Serchuk, who had built a bunker for themselves in the forest. Reluctant to part with the gold coins they had taken with them from Sobibór, the fugitives resorted to stealing from local farmers and eventually joined a gang of violent Polish criminals who robbed the peasants mercilessly. In desperation, and quite understandably, some of the victims turned to the Polish underground and, separately, to the German authorities for protection. The leaders of this gang of robbers eventually met their well-deserved demise:

> Some of the people in the group had prepared supplies. I had a little bag of gold coins in one pocket and a few bullets in the other. …
>
> The four fellows bearing arms approached one of the houses. The farmer refused to open the door, but after they threatened to blow up his house, he obeyed. He gave them two big loaves of bread, some butter and some onions …
>
> The next evening, our lads returned to the farmer's house and again got more food by threatening him. …
>
> When we got to the house, we found a large-boned, middle-aged woman. When she saw us, she paled. She looked at us in shock … "You are the ones who escaped from Sobibor [Sobibór] … Good God, the Germans are searching for you everywhere. Get away from here, quickly!" … After a few minutes, three men appeared, two adults and a younger man, with pitchforks and an ax in their hands, and from a distance they cursed us and threatened to kill us if we didn't leave at once. We started to back off. … The villagers ran after us a bit, then stopped after they made sure that we were going. Semmen cursed those Poles and told us how he had gone with two of his friends a few

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[208] Luba Wrobel Goldberg, *A Sparkle of Hope: An Autobiography* (Melbourne: n.p., 1998), 80–81.

[209] Both Dov Freiberg and Semen Rosenfeld (Semyon Rozenfeld) survived. Apparently, Rosenfeld eventually took refuge in the city of Chełm, and rejoined the Red Army upon their arrival there in July 1944. See Palko Karasz, "Semyon Rozenfeld, Last Known Survivor of Death Camp Escape, Dies at 96," *New York Times,* June 5, 2019.

days ago, with weapons, to ask for food, and how the farmer and his wife had given them bread and butter and even wished them luck. "If I had a gun, I would have killed all of the people who just chased us away [but did not harm us—*M.P.*]," he said. …

We went down toward the valley and we neared the edge of the forest, where we saw a farmer plowing his field … Suddenly I saw a sack lying under a tree. The three of us walked over to it, opened it and found a big loaf of bread … It weighed about three kilos. There was also a big chunk of cheese, and next to the sack, there was a jug of milk. …We grabbed the sack and ran off as fast as we could. …

At twilight we got up and walked to the house. As we approached, we heard the farmer working in the granary. … The old man looked at us, and without asking who we were and where we had come from, said: "Don't worry. You won't leave my house hungry." He called to his wife and said, "Mother, prepare a lot of food for supper. We have three guests and they are hungry."

The farmer finished preparing food for his single cow and told us to stay in the granary until he called us. "You understand," he said, "we have to be very careful these days." After about an hour, the farmer came out of the house, strode back and forth, looking and listening, and then came over to us and invited us into the hut. It was very old and small, only one room, which was a living room, bedroom and kitchen. The roof was made of straw. We could see signs of poverty by the light of the oil lamp, which was standing on the table and lit the room …We sat down unceremoniously at the table and the woman brought us bowls of hot soup—a milk-based soup with potatoes, pieces of dough and onion. … The bowls were big and they were full, but we ate everything quickly and the woman refilled our bowls … We stayed seated and told our hosts about Sobibor, about the revolt, and about what had happened to us since we left the camp. The farmer listened closely, sat for a few moments absorbed in thought, then finally said: "The war will be over soon. The Germans are being defeated and in retreat. We have to hold out until then. I will hide you. We'll build a bunker inside the granary and you can be there during the day. I'll bring you bread. Whatever we eat, you will eat!" …

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. The three of us hid. One of the neighbors had come to announce that on the following day, the Germans would come to the village to take *das Kontigent*—the tax allocation that the Germans had imposed on the farmers. Afterward the farmer looked embarrassed and apologized, but said that he could not hide us if the Germans were coming. …

We got up to leave, but the old man asked us to stay a while longer, because they had no bread in the house at the moment and he wanted to send his wife out to borrow bread. He also sent his son out on an errand. The woman came back with two big loaves of bread, and his son brought bottles of milk. … When we were about to part, I took out some gold coins that I wanted to give the old farmer, but he refused to take them. …

The time we spent with the old farmer encouraged us, and the following days were lucky as well. We were able to get food, usually at a high price …

One day, we passed a solitary house, which appeared to be empty. When we approached it, an old couple came toward us and invited us to come in and eat. Our hosts, who seemed to be poor, didn't look like farmers. … It turned out that they were Polish refugees from Poznan [Poznań]. We stayed with them until late at night. The man taught us how to find our way at night. …

[Later they ran into another group of Jewish who had escaped from Sobibór.] At the beginning, they were a large group, but then they split up. Most of them had gone eastward, planning to cross the Bug River, and these men had gone in the direction of Chelm [Chełm], led by Shaya the

gardener, who had known the area, where he hoped they could find a hiding place in one of the villages whose farmers they knew in exchange for the abundance of money they had. On the way, they had been joined by two Dutch Jews, and by two brothers, Yozhik and Monyek Serchuk, who had been in the forest for more than a year. … Their whole family had hidden in the village with a farmer, but another farmer had informed on them and the Germans had come and taken them away. Only Yozhik and Monyek were left. Their parents had had a shop selling chicken in Chelm. …

Yozhik and Monyek had built a bunker for themselves in the woods where they could live through the winter. … When the first group from Sobibor arrived, the two brothers had given them the bunker … At night, Yozhik would buy food from the farmers for the whole group. The people from Sobibor had money, and Chaim, the jeweller, had taken a large amount of gold. Yozhik would usually go alone, but occasionally Monyek would go with him; very infrequently, they would take someone from the group to help them carry sacks of food from the villages. …

Yozhik had good connections in all of the villages. He knew every farmer and he knew who was trustworthy. He also had contacts with Jews who were hiding with farmers, including his uncle, aunt and their child, and another uncle who had been alone since the Germans had killed his family. …

Finally, we stopped not far from a large, isolated farm, a short distance from the town. Yozhik said: "I knew this farmer well before the war. He's a good man. His name is Karpiuk. You wait here I'll check out the area and quiet the dog. I'll hide you in the granary, and in the morning I'll speak to the farmer – maybe we can find a place to hide with him."

When I awoke in the morning … the farmer soon entered. He was surprised to see Yozhik and Monyek, but immediately embraced and kissed them, speaking to them warmly. …

In the meantime, Yozhik had begun to attempt to convince the farmer to let us stay under his roof until winter had passed. He suggested that we hide in the cellar under the house, but the farmer didn't agree to that. When Yozhik suggested that we build a bunker under the granary, the farmer refused that, as well. He then proposed that we build a bunker outside the limits of his farm. Finally, it was decided that we would build a bunker in the corner of the yard, near the pigpen. …

The digging of the bunker presented difficulties from the outset. It was hard to dig in the frozen ground, and after we had overcome that obstacle, we reached an upper layer of groundwater, which put an end to our attempts. Karpiuk called us together and reiterated that he would like to help us, but he couldn't keep us in his home, as he would be endangering his whole family. He suggested we find a place to hide, and from time to time we could come to his house to get food and anything else we might need. … Karpiuk brought us some food, and we took leave of him and his family on good terms and went out into the night. …

We kept walking we could distinguish a small house. … [Yozhik announced;] "Two women and a small child are living in the house. They are very poor and they have nothing to eat. I promised them that, if I stayed with them, they would eat like queens, and that from now on, they would lack for nothing. They are willing to do anything." …

As night was falling, we heard a knock on the door. … It was her brother, who had come to visit. … a tall young man in his twenties, wearing a faded leather coat and high boots, and his shoulder he carried a rifle with a short barrel and butt, which could be hidden under a coat. Yula hurried to introduce her brother, Stashek, and we shook hands …After a few glasses of vodka had been drunk … the atmosphere became lighter and conversation flowed until, at a certain moment, the guest asked us if we would be ready to join him in a small burglary that he and his friend Vladek were planning to carry out. Yozhik answered without hesitation that we would be ready to participate in

any burglary—and glasses were raised to celebrate the new partnership. … Stashek said that we would soon meet his friends, Pan Folka and Bronek, who were "great guys." The guest then told us that he had his eye on a small farm belonging to two old people and their daughter. "There isn't too much to take, but they have a pig that's not bad, and geese, and that's what we need right now. Their hut is some distance from the village, and the work will be easy, but we need a few men to carry it out—two or three can catch the pig, kill it and cur it up into pieces, and two will keep a lookout for unwanted visitors. And then, they will help us carry the pig, as it's quite a long way."

"We will be there," said Yozhik …It was agreed that on one of the following evenings, Stashek would come, accompanied by his friend Vladek, and the whole group would go together to carry out the small robbery. … After Yula's brother left, we continued to sit and drink with the two women. … Yanka and Yula were surprised that we had never heard of Pan Folka. "He's famous. He's the greatest burglar in the whole area. Even before the war, the authorities offered a large prize for anyone who could lead to his capture. He's always the commander," said Yanka enthusiastically. …

"I'll tell you about Bronek," said Yula. "That bastard was once a respected man, but he has hot blood, and when the blood rises to his head, he gets involved in brawls. Once, during the wedding in the village, a quarrel broke out. Bronek, was involved, as usual. One of the young men insulted Bronek, and Bronek doesn't like being insulted. He grabbed the young man and cut off his finger with a knife, in front of everyone. The young man who was cut belonged to a rich and powerful family, and Bronek had to leave the area for a long time. After more than half a year, when it seemed as though the incident of the finger had been forgotten, there was another wedding in the village. Bronek arrived …The young man whose finger had been cut off and his family were at the wedding, too. … But during the dancing the family of the young man whose finger had been cut off got up an attacked Bronek … they cut off three fingers of his hand. That night Bronek swore to have his revenge in the family. He waited a long time, until his wounds healed, and then bought a gun and practiced shooting … When he was ready, he set a trap in the forest, near the path leading from the village to Chelm. In the evening, by the light of a full moon, when he saw the family returning from the fair in Chelm, he killed them all—the father, the mother, two sons and the wife of one of them, and two horses. From that day, Bronek has been wanted by the police throughout the area, living in hiding … He became friendly with Folka and now, he is a thief, as well."

We weren't told very much about Vladek, the third in the group or burglars. Yula just said that the guy had been born unlucky and had never succeeded in anything he tried. When he tried to steal chickens, he was caught, beaten, and sent to prison. When he managed to rob a farmer and leave his house with the haul, he had been shot by the farmer and his leg wounded. …

… we had never dreamed that their home was a hideout for burglars and murderers. …

One evening. Stashek and his friend Vladek, who was an older man of about forty with a terrible limp, came to the house, and Yozhik, Monyek and Semmen went out with them to commit the robbery. …

The five arrived back late that night, laden with sacks on their backs … "We have geese in the sacks," said Yozhik to the women. … As it turned out, everything had gone well. They reached the farm but decided not to enter the house. Two of the guarded the house and the others entered the pigpen to kill the pig. But the pig got away from them and ran outside. … So they went into the poultry enclosure where the geese were, slaughtered them and put them into the sacks. At this point, the farmer had awakened—perhaps from the honking of the geese—and came outside to see what

was going on. Monyek and Vladek, who had been guarding the house, caught him, went into the house with him, ordered his wife and daughter out of bed and made them all lie down on the floor. The farmer was not rich. There weren't many objects of value in his house that had been worth taking. Nevertheless, Vladek and Stashek took everything they could carry—clothing, the farmer's boots, the top of a sewing machine. Stashek suggested that we divide up what they had taken, but Yozhik replied that we could do without the clothes; we would be satisfied with the geese.

The late-night feast that was served was wonderful. The organ meats of the geese were delicious. During the meal, Stashek remarked, "It doesn't matter that tonight wasn't a total success. What is important is that we are a good team and that together we cab do great things. We'll plan the next job, to steal a pig, soon, and this time he won't get away from me." Before a week had passed, Stashek and Vladek appeared again, ready for action. "Boys, we're going out on a job," said Stashek. "And this time, I picked a good farm. There are a few pigs there. One minus is that the farm is inside the village, but the village is close to the forest, and we have an easy walk." He seemed excited and added, "This time we'll need the boy." …

We reached the forest and walked along the outskirts. Stashek stopped, explained that we were close to the village and that this would be our meeting place after the job, whether we had succeeded or failed. He divided up the tasks among us: he, Vladek and Yozhik would go into the pigpen and slaughter the pig; Monyek, Semmen and I would keep guard on the house. We moved on and passed a few farms that stood at some distance from each other. Although it was still early in the evening, the village was completely silent and we didn't see the gleam of a light in any of the houses. We stopped by the house which that had been targeted, and Stashek went on ahead to calm the dog—he had a way with them—and after a few minutes he returned and sent Monyek to guard at the back of the house, placed Semmen at the door, and I was to stand at the window. Stashek, Yozhik and Vladek, armed with two rifles, entered the pigpen and we stood guard, holding only sacks in our hands. …

Suddenly I heard steps. I turned and saw someone walking toward the door, where Semmen was standing, his back up against the wall. Semmen jumped on the man with a quick movement, put the sack he had been holding over the man's head and struggled with him, grasping with both hands. … The man had freed himself, taken out a knife and stabbed Semmen in the back, luckily a superficial wound, and began shouting, "Robbers! Robbers!"

From inside the house, someone had gone up to the attic and was shouting, "Help! Robbers!" At that moment, we heard the chimes of the church. Stashek shot twice in the direction of the attic and the calls for help ceased. He told us to get away, abd we ran in the direction of the forest; behind us was the sound of bells, the shouts of people and the squealing of the pigs that had escaped the pen. …

Twice we had gone out on an important mission and twice we had failed. Getting our hands on a pig was imperative, as it would supply us with meat and oil for the rest of the winter. … All of a sudden Yozhik said, "It's not too late. I know of a rich farm, isolated, far away from the village, and there are pigs there. We could go there now. We've learned from our mistakes. I'm sure that we'll be able to get hold of a pig; we can't go home without one."

Stashek agreed without a moment's hesitation. We walked for a few more kilometers until we reached the farm. It really did appear to be prosperous. There was a family home, two stories high, its tin roof galvanized, which was a rarity in the area. The yard was very large and contained a granary, shelter for the poultry, and barns. This Vladek and Semmen guarded the house, armed with

rifles, and Monyek was with them, unarmed. I had no special job so I went back and forth between them. In the pigpen, there were five medium-sized pigs. This time, Stashek and Yozhik were able to kill a pig quickly and I was sent to bring sacks. I went into the granary, where sacks of grain were piled. I emptied the contents of one of the sacks, and I brought it to the pen, but after everything had been cut up and packed, Stashek and Yozhik decided to kill another pig. I took everything that was packed and ready to a spot some distance from the house, and I was left to stand guard while the four others returned to slaughter another pig. Unlike the first robbery, during which I had been trembling with fear, for some reason I was now calm and relaxed; even though I was guarding alone, I was not afraid. … When I heard the sudden squeal of a pig and then a return to silence, I knew that the second pig had been killed. A short time later, I saw the others coming toward me.

It was late and we still had fifteen kilometers to walk—with the heavy burden of two slaughtered pigs and a sack full of geese, we couldn't hope to get home by morning. …

We spent the next day eating until we were completely satiated. We were all happy and in good spirits. The night, which had begun as a complete failure, had ended in complete success. Stashek could not stop praising Yozhik, saying again and again that we were his best friends, and he spoke of our operations to come. … Now they decided to find me a purely Polish name … it was unanimous that I be renamed "Bolek." …

… who could have imagined that we would join a band of thieves? Robbery had always seemed to me such an act of cruelty and thieves were monsters, but I had participated in a burglary with no feeling of wrongdoing. In fact, everything had seemed simple and had even given me pleasure. …

And then, late one evening, after we had gone to bed, we heard people outside … Folka, Bronek, with his cut fingers, and Stashek had arrived by surprise … I knew who Bronek was immediately when I saw his right hand, which was missing a finger. He was in his twenties, short, with a constant smile. Pan Folka appeared to be over forty, of medium height, chubby with a small potbelly. He was dressed in a short leather coat and fine quality boots, and, in addition to a rifle, he carried a pistol under his coat. He looked serious and boastful and he gave the impression of complete authority—Bronek and Stashek looked like messenger boys next to him.

… Yozhik quickly became friendly with Folka, and the two sat together in a corner of the room and decided to go out on several robbery jobs in the coming days. …

A few days later after the meeting with Folka and Bronek, the enlarged gang, under the direction of Folka, began to go out on jobs at least once, and sometimes twice a week. The robberies were committed in a wide area … At first I was embarrassed just sitting at home and waiting for my friends to return late at night, relating their experiences and what they had taken in the robbery. Although I wasn't too enthusiastic about stealing, any my health was still bad—my leg hadn't healed, I found it hard to walk, and the scabies were al over my body—I wanted to be an equal partner with my friends in everything they did, good or bad, and not be a child who had everything done for him. So I begged Yozhik to convince Folka to let me join the band, and, in the end, he agreed.

From the first job I took part in with Folka, I could clearly see the difference in the quality of command. You could feel that an experienced man with leadership ability was directing the operation. From the moment we set out, no one felt the need to say anything. Folka led us calmly and with self-confidence. When we reached the house, he quietly gave directions to each of us; his orders were clear and unequivocal, and everything was done quickly. Folka had checked on all the details and, after surrounding the house with guards, he and Yozhik knocked at the door and ordered

the people inside to open it. This wasn't done immediately, and Folka gave a signal to Bronek and Stashek, who broke a window with the barrel of a rifle and jumped in, opening the door from the inside and hitting anyone who got in their way. The members of the family were gathered into one corner, and Bronek and Yozhik went through the rooms, checked whether anyone was hiding, returned and reported to Folka that the house was secured.

I looked at the family—a husband, wife, and four children of various ages, and one old man, huddling in the corner and trembling with fear, and a scene passed through my mind: the first days of the war. We were standing in the corner of the room—my mother, my sister, my little brother Yankele and I—huddling together; a German in a brown uniform had his pistol aimed at us, guarding us, and I was trembling with fear …

The job proceeded. The door of the cellar, which was in the floor of the room, was removed and the members of the family were forced down, one by one. Bronek took a gold ring off of the wife's finger and she burst into tears, but wordlessly went down into the cellar. Folka took the farmer aside, spoke to him quietly and abruptly slapped him twice. The farmer led Folka to the next room and the two of them returned with a package of animal skins, and Folka forced him down into the cellar, as well. Everything was done in a few minutes, with perfect organization, like well-oiled machinery. Stashek bridled the horse and hitched it to the wagon, bringing it to the door of the house, and we wandered through the house, taking everything of value, clothes, boots, processed skins, pork steaks, a sack of flour, a few chickens that we managed to catch—and we loaded everything on the farmer's wagon and left as quietly as we had come. The farmer and his family were left in the cellar. We put heavy furniture over the door in the floor. Who knew when the neighbors would discover what had happened and would discover what had happened and would free them from the cellar?

… On the way back, we stopped and Folka asked us what we wanted as our take from the haul. He knew, of course, that we had no need for the family's possessions, and we were satisfied with presents for Yanka and Yula, and with some of the pork. We parted as friends and went home.

Our band carried out one robbery after another among the area farmers. On market days, we used to set up an ambush along the road, close to the forest; when a wagon passed by, coming home from the market, we would jump out, make the people get out and take the wagon with everything in it.

One robbery that horrified me in particular was carried out against one of the richest of the farmers two days before his daughter's wedding. The house was very far and we reached it late at night, but the family in the house had not yet gone to bed. There was light in the house and we could hear the voices of people through the window. The door wasn't locked and we entered the house easily. The house was warm, with odors of freshly baked goods that had just come out of the oven. The whole family was awake, and as we burst in, their ruddy faces paled. As usual, Folka took swift control of everything. After some perfunctory blows, the family was herded into the cellar. Bronek and Stashek were in good humor. Bronek grabbed the bride, pulled her against him and tried to kiss her. The girl resisted and was slapped. The groom tried to defend her, but was also struck and then thrown into the cellar. Pan Folka stood like a proud father watching the antics of his children. Bronek dragged the bride over to a bed that stood in the corner of the room. The girl struggled and shouted, "Take everything, just leave me alone!" But Bronek hit her again, and raped her. Then Stashek raped her, as well.

Sometimes I found justification for the robberies we carried out—why should only the Jews suffer? Let these non-Jews get a taste of our suffering. I saw our deeds as a kind of retribution for

the "Polacks" who had helped to destroy the Jews [emphasis added], but I couldn't stomach the cruelty of Bronek and his friend, Stashek, and the suffering of the girl. … I began taking things out of the house, running to and fro insanely.

We emptied the house of everything that had been prepared for the wedding. We loaded crates of excellent vodka onto the wagon, along with sides of smoked meat, baked goods and sweets of all kinds, and we left in a wagon that was filled to capacity. For a long while, I kept hearing the creams and sobs of the bride and reliving the scene of Bronek with his pants pulled down.

We came home laden down with treats, but our heats were burdened with terrible feelings. We didn't exchange a word on the way home. We had shamed ourselves. We had seen our partners in the robbery at their cruellest, and we had cooperated in their horrible deeds. With what speed we had passed from one side to the other, from the robbed to the robbers! But we could think of no way to end this partnership before the summer, when we could go back to living in the forests. And, on the other hand, we were living comfortably in our present situation; we had gotten through the hard winter peacefully, in a warm house, eating our fill. And Folka, Bronek and Stashek had treated us as equals—we never heard them use the word "Jew."

The next evening Folka, Bronek and Stashek came to visit, and a party began which went on all night. …

One day, Bronek came to visit and asked Yozhik to come with him to a party he had been invited to. … Yozhik returned that night and said that when they had arrived, they had been received warmly and given drinks, but there was something suspicious in the way the guests were behaving—he noticed that they were waiting for other guests. "And my heart told me," he related, "that something was going to happen. I warned Bronek and we left. The others tried to block our way, but he threatened them with Bronek's rifle and with the knife I had, and we managed to get away."

Some time later, we found out that the Polish *Armia Krajowa*—right-wing partisans who were operating against the Germans … had had a unit operating in our area that had issued a death sentence for Bronek, and a few days later, they trapped him. They had given him a short field trial and hanged him on a tree along the main road … and posted a sign on his body announcing that he was being punished for "treason to the homeland." When we heard that Bronek had been killed, we fled into the forest. We were afraid that his murderers had managed to force him into giving information about us before he was hanged.

Two days passed—and then Stashek burst into the house and told us with tears in his eyes that Pan Folka had been killed. … he said that he had gone to meet Folka at the home of one of his mistresses, but when he had reached her village, he had been told that at dawn, policemen from the neighboring towns had arrived and had surrounded the house, calling on him to come out and give himself up. Folka opened fire on the police. There was a long battle, and at some point Folka jumped from the back window of the house and tried to get away, but the house was completely surrounded. As he ran, he was was shot, wounded and fell to the ground. He continued to fight, wounded, until he had used up his bullets—but he reserved the last bullet for himself. He shot himself in the head, and died. Four policemen had been killed. It was later said that one of his mistresses had informed on him in retribution for having left her.

We were in shock. Folka had been killed! It had only been a week since Bronek had been killed! Stashek was miserable. Folka and Bronek had been his only friends on earth. He was on bad terms with everyone in his village—everyone hated him—and now he didn't have anywhere to go. He went from village to village, took part in every brawl and got himself into every dangerous situation

> he could. … in the end, the Ukrainians caught him and threw him alive into a burning house. He was burned to death and no one cared. After Folka and Bronek had dies, Stashek had become superfluous and we, who had wanted to be rid of them all and to sever our relationship with the thieves, were freed from them all within a month. Our feeling toward them were mixed. On the one hand, they had always been fair with us … and we had even felt friendly toward them; but on the other hand, their merciless cruelty had greatly troubled us—they treated human life as if it were worthless.[210]

Kalmen Wewryk provides a fascinating description of his travails as he roamed the countryside in the vicinity of his home town of Chełm after his escape from the Sobibór death camp. His account gives us considerable insight into the mentality of the peasants, their generosity, their reaction to violent robberies, and the turmoil, suspicion, and fear that permeated everyday life under the German occupation. As Wewryk's account demonstrates, it would be erroneous to think that fugitive Jews resorted to robbing Poles, mostly impoverished farmers, at gunpoint only when they had no other means of getting provisions.

> My running brought me to a Polish hamlet. A Polish-speaking man with a gun accosted me. I started to cry. He turned out to be a decent man, however. He took pity on me, and told me where to hide. I followed his directions, went into a forest and made a hide-out. … I was there for about 2 weeks …
>
> I was, however, tormented by my intense desire to find and join the partisans, and this desire pushed me to leave that forest. … So, hiding in ditches, I left that forest refuge … I saw a farmer in a wagon driving down a dirt road, so I approached him. … I asked this farmer, "Do you know where I can find partisans?" … He said, "Go ahead over there. The hamlet is called Teryesheen [Teresin]. An old woman living in the first house will help you. Some Jews are hiding in the hamlet. …
>
> When I found the house I noticed an old woman sitting by the fire. She asked me who I was. I told her, "I'm a Jew. I've been told you can help me find the partisans. I want to join them." The house was a very primitive one and the interior reeked of poverty. The old woman asked me all about my background, my experiences. … A 16 or 17 year old girl came over to me and started to talk to me. She seemed to be a typical peasant girl, but I figured out after a while that she was Jewish. I spoke to her in Yiddish, but she answered only in Polish. She evidently refused to believe my story and, as she told me later, she thought I was a provocateur, an agent sent to ferret her out. I still had my family photos in my pocket … She now believed me. She gave me some potatoes to eat and told me that I must not be seen in that house. She led me to another area of the hamlet and hid me in an abandoned stable. She said that she would, that very night, contact her father Moishe and tell him about me.
>
> Late that night Moishe and his brother came to the stable. They told me that they were part of a family of 5 Jews in hiding. … Everybody in the hamlet knew that this family was hiding, but nobody knew where and they didn't want to know where. Moishe told me how they were loved in

[210] Freiberg, *To Survive Sobibor,* 301–77. Tellingly, after the arrival of the Soviet army, Monyek Serchuk enlisted in the Soviet-backed Polish army in order "to fight right-wing nationalist underground forces," i.e., the independentist anti-Soviet underground loyal to the government in exile, and was killed in action, while other Jewish survivors in Chełm entered the ranks of the security police. Ibid., 392, 415, 416, 426.

that hamlet—there were decent people there. Moishe gave me a roll of bread to eat and told me directly that I couldn't hide with them. They had problems enough of their own without a "*Sobiboru*" [the nickname given by the peasants to Wewryk, an escapee from Sobibór] attracting more attention to them. … Moishe wished me good luck and slipped out. … I learned that they remained alive by stealing at night, "visiting" neighboring hamlets. …

I reached a nearby hamlet and approached a house to beg for food. This was a hamlet inhabited by Baptists … So every day I went to a different peasant and begged for food. They gave me small amounts of food and begged me not tell the neighbors. Every single one of them was living in terror … Their terror was contagious—I was afraid to stay in that hamlet so I returned to Teryesheen and hid in another ruined Jewish house. At night, when I went to beg for food, I ran into somebody from Moishe's family. … He said that the peasants were only out to scare me and chase me away … They were afraid that Germans would come and burn the whole hamlet to the ground. …

As I plodded along I heard wood being cut far off in the forest. … I saw a young boy, dressed like a typical peasant lad. He looked to be around 13 or 14 years old. He became very, very frightened when I drew near. … I started to speak to him in Polish, and as I spoke I saw him becoming more and more uneasy. Then, on impulse, I switched to Yiddish; the color returned to his face and he smiled. …

The boy returned a short while later and led me to a deep hidden bunker made of wood. … There were 2 small children with her in the bunker. The boy I had found, Mendele, carried a rifle as did his 16 year old brother who was away at the time. There was ham and pork in that bunker; it was full of food. The mother told me to take whatever food I wanted; she was obviously afraid of me. She asked me very nervously how I had managed to find her son. She wanted to know if somebody had told me about this family in the woods. …

As if to show me that she was not a vulnerable woman, she told me that she had a husband nearby, named Isack. When she said that it rang a bell. He went around with a 10 or 12 man band to rob food, clothing, etc., from the area peasants. I had heard of him because many of the peasants spoke of "*Nasha Isack*" (our Isack). He used to rob the peasants white. He had a horrible reputation among them. They used to tell me: "*Sobiboru,* let Isack ask us for food—we'll give him! But why does he come with his gang and rob us like that? He's a bloody thief!" Others had told me: "Our Isack, our friend from the pre-war years—how could he come and rob us at gunpoint like that?" Isack came from that area and he was well-known to all. Whatever his gang could steal they stole. His wife, as if to justify her husband and her sons, told me that from time to time they went on punitive expeditions to area peasants who had betrayed Jews. Her older son had returned to the bunker by now, so I told him and his brother that I wanted to join them. They told me straight off that they didn't want me. … The woman told me to take as much food as I wanted. They had enough to spare, she said. I took some food from her but I didn't want to overload myself. … So I said goodbye to all of them, thanked them for the food and left. …

I found a hut in the woods. … When the food was finished I went out at night to return to the bunker. I found it easily, but it was completely deserted. … The bunker had obviously been abandoned. …

So I resumed wandering, searching for food. …

After five or six days I ran into Isack's sons in the woods. They were well armed. I told them that I had gone to look for them in their bunker and had found it abandoned and deserted. I begged them

to let me come to them from time to time, I promised that I would not abuse their hospitality … However, they absolutely refused to tell me where their new bunker was. They told me that they had abandoned the old bunker the night after I had come to it. They hadn't trusted me. This is how it was then—everybody looked out for his or her own skin. … This is what the war did to ordinary people—turned them into egotistical and suspicious animals. I begged the two boys for a gun but they laughed at me. Finally, one said that, for gold, he would give me a gun. I still had a few pieces of my wife's jewelry, so I gave them the jewelry and they sold me a rifle. When they got up to leave I wanted to accompany them but they refused to allow it.

I returned to the straw hut, spent several days there, and started to make the rounds of the hamlets where I had previously been given bread. Now that I had the rifle I even went to a hamlet where I had been refused bread. I smeared my face with black dust, as a disguise. And yet some peasants recognized me immediately. They called me "*Sobiboru*." I would point the rifle through the window but it didn't seem to bring me success. Some of the peasants laughed at me, even though the rifle was pointed straight at them. One said: "Ah, *Sobiboru,* we know you! What are you pointing a gun at us for? You wouldn't shoot us—you know that." I returned, hungry, to my hiding place.

The next night I returned, without the rifle, to that same hamlet. That peasant who had spoken to me the previous night, said: "*Sobiboru,* you're lucky! If you would have returned with that damn rifle, I'd kill you!" Here's a chunk of bread. Eat in peace. We are Baptists here and we have sympathy for a fellow human being in distress. If you come with a gun we won't give you a thing and we'll defend ourselves. But if you beg us for bread we'll give you. Even with your smeared face we knew it was you! And we know you're not a murderer. But bandit robbers we don't like. We know how to handle them." He even gave me a big glass of milk. I was very bedraggled and weak, so he had pity on me. I thanked him profusely and left.

About a week later I had a particularly settling experience. I was holed up in the straw hut, fast asleep, when I felt myself being prodded awake by a rifle butt. I looked up and saw Isack's two sons glaring down at me. The 16 year old said to me: "OK, *Sobiboru*, where's the rifle?" I told him that I had bought it from them fair and square, and I had paid for it with my wife's precious jewelry. … The two boys laughed at my pleading. I then told them that I had left the rifle with a peasant for safekeeping. They didn't believe me, and the 16 year-old said: "Mendele, search the place." It took Mendele less than 5 minutes to find the rifle while his brother kept me covered with his own rifle. They laughed when they found the gun and dashed out of the straw hut. I was once again defenseless. And the way I had been treated like that by fellow Jews pained me greatly. … Besides, I had heard that, to be accepted by partisans, one had to have one's own rifle. So that rifle represented my passport to the partisans … And now I had lost that passport. This incident left me deeply depressed. …

I saw a *Kolonia* house [loosely grouped houses] near a forest and went over to an elderly peasant standing near it. When I told him that I had come from the death camp Sobibor [Sobibór] he became very frightened … He was a poor man but he brought some bread and water … He told me that his son-in-law was a shoemaker so I showed him my ripped shoes. The old peasant took my shoes and said he would take them to his son-in-law, who lived nearby. He left and returned some hours later with my shoes repaired. I kissed him from gratitude. … [Wewryk stayed with the peasant in the attic of his cottage but looked for food to supplement his diet.]

> Every night, when I went hunting for food, I asked the peasants if they knew anything of partisans in the area. I once came into a house and there were some armed Jews there who had come for food. These armed Jews didn't want to tell me where they were hiding out. They didn't want to have anything to do with me. … I begged these armed Jews to allow me to join them; I asked for their mercy, but it was all to no avail.
>
> The peasants of the next hamlet I went to, Aleezoof [Alojzów] … gave me milk to drink and a large loaf of bread. …
>
> I moved on to a hamlet I had visited before, Aleezoof. … The inhabitants of the first house I approached told me they had no food to spare. I went to a house that was 3 houses removed from that one and a woman there gave me a piece of bread and a big glass of milk. … I asked her if she knew of partisans in the vicinity. She replied that she'd heard of a partisan band either in that hamlet or the next one—she wasn't sure, she didn't know exactly where they were.
>
> My spirits were high when I left that woman. I was close now! Revenge was near! … as I left the hamlet and made my way to a nearby forest, far away, a group of people, a mass of men. … suddenly a figure shot up in front of me and barked out: "Halt or I shoot!" …
>
> The partisans were occupying a whole house there. Some men came for me and shoved me into a small room which was heavily guarded. I was continuously interrogated and had to repeat everything … my later accounts were checked against my earlier ones for inconsistencies. All the while guns were pointed at me. After a while I learned that I had stumbled into a group of "official" Soviet partisans, under the leadership of Dadia Pyetcha [Diadia Petia].
>
> After several days a doctor came to see me. He was Jewish and spoke Yiddish. … When he "examined" me, he conversed in Yiddish with me. He was checking on the authenticity of my story. … People were very suspicious of each other at that time and these partisans were particularly wary of infiltrators.[211]

Stanisław (Shlomo) Szmajzner's group of escapees from Sobibór entered into their first farmhouse by force brandishing a gun and pretending to be partisans.[212] Other escapees also resorted to force to obtain food from farmers.[213] A few days after their escape from Sobibór, Esther Terner (later Raab), Samuel (Shmul) Lerer (Lehrer) and Avrum (Abram) Kohn chanced on a farmhouse near the forest, and approached it to ask for food. This was the first time they had done something like this. They did so with trepidation and did not let their guard down even for a minute. As they discovered, these were not prosperous farms (like those in Western Europe), and the inhabitants lived in a state of constant fear. Yet despite their initial

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[211] Wewryk, *To Sobibor and Back,* 70–71, 72–73, 76–79, 81, 83, 88–89.

[212] Szmajzner, *Inferno em Sobibor,* 286. After a run in with some bandits, Szmajzner and his two companions, Jankiel and Majer, found refuge with Józef Albiniak, a Polish farmer in the village of Tarnawa Duża, near Turobin. Ibid., 296–301.

[213] Teresa Prekerowa mentions the following testimonies: Icchak Lichtman, Salomon (Shlomo) Podchlebnik, Michał (Nachum) Knopfmacher, Hela Felenbaum, and Yehuda (Leon) Lerner. See Prekerowa, "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* vol. 35 (1993): 109.

succcess, the Jewish fugitives soon changed their ways. They simply did not trust the "primitive" peasants and did not want to take any unnecessary risks, so they resorted to terror tactics.

> The two men waited at the side of hut, while Esther knocked on the door. It was soon opened by an old farmer. "Can you help us, please?" Esther pleaded desperately.
>
> "How many are you?" the farmer asked.
>
> "Three. Two men and myself."
>
> "Did anyone see you coming here?"
>
> "No," Esther said. "We just came out of the woods nearby."
>
> The farmer looked around to see if anyone was watching. "Okay. Come inside," he said quickly. "There's no one here, but my son and I."
>
> Esther walked in and looked around the small, one-room hut. A cow stood at one end of the kitchen, and behind some curtains in the corner were the beds where the man and his son slept. The farmer led them to the table and invited the three to sit down.
>
> "You must be from Sobibor [Sobibór]," he guessed. When Esther nodded, he added, "It's incredible what you people did there. You did well. Very well."
>
> Esther, Samuel, and Avrum exchanged glances. They were surprised to discover that their host approved of their actions.
>
> "Can we have some water?" Esther asked.
>
> "Certainly." The farmer hurriedly brought a bucket full of water to the table. Esther gulped down several cups one after the other, trying to quench her overwhelming thirst.
>
> "I'd love to serve you a regular meal," the farmer said, "bur I can't right now. Today is Sunday, and my son and I always go to church. If we don't show up, there will be many questions. Let me give you some bread and milk, and my son will take you to the barn outside. When we come back, we'll bring you in here again. I'll try my best to help you then."
>
> The three could hardly believe their good fortune. Not only had they happened upon a farmer who was trul decent and kind, nut he was even offering to serve them an entire meal!
>
> The farmer gave them two loaves of bread and a bottle of milk. His son led them outside to the barn, and they sat down on a pile of straw. They quickly divided the food that the gracious farmer had provided and wolfed it down hungrily. As they munched on the bread, they heard the farmer and his son leave the farm with a horse and wagon.
>
> By midday, the two men had still not returned. The three didn't know how far the nearest church was, and they realized that the trip to the church and back could last almost an entire day. Still, as the hours passed, they couldn't help having some doubts.
>
> "Who knows if they really went to church?" Samuel said. "They may have gone to summon the Gestapo."
>
> "You're probably right," Avrum agreed. "They'll be here before long and arrest us."
>
> Although Esther realized that they might indeed be in danger, she was too tired to move. It was such a relief to lie on the dry straw after spending several days on the wet forest ground.
>
> "What will happen, will happen," she announced. "All the muscles in my body are aching, and I must rest. Besides, there *is* a slight possibility that the farmer was being truthful, and if so, I want to wait for that meal that he promised to serve. Do whatever you like, but I'm not moving anywhere. I'm staying right here."

"Perhaps you're right," Samuel said skeptically. "I'm not so sure, but I think I'll stay, too."

It was late afternoon when they finally spotted the farmer's wagon in the distance. As it came closer, the three let out a sigh of relief when they saw that it was not accompanied by any other vehicles. There were no Gestapo or Nazi soldiers following the farmer back to his house.

When they reached the farm, the two men went into their little hut. Only after it was completely dark outside did the farmer's son finally come out to fetch them. "Come on," he said amiably. "We've prepared some food for you."

When Esther, Samuel, and Avrum walked in, their mouths watered at the sight of the food that lay on the table. There was bread, milk, and a thick *borscht* that had cabbage and other vegetables in it.

"Sit down. Eat," the farmer said with a smile.

They did not need a second invitation. After the months in Sobibor and the last few days in the forest, it seemed almost incredible to be sitting down at a table and eating a meal like regular human beings. …

"Thank you. You are very kind," Esther said. "Before we go, though, I must take care of my injury." [Her face had been wounded by a German bullet during her escape from Sobibór—*M.P.*]

The farmer gave Esther a bucket of water. …

"You must put something on that gash," the farmer said to Esther … "You can't just leave it untreated. I don't have any medication, but I can give you some lard from a pig that was recently slaughtered."

"Lard? From a pig?" asked Esther, trying to hide her disgust. It was obviously used as a primitive form of treatment, but Esther was repulsed at the idea of putting some on her face.

"We use it to treat lacerations," the farmer explained. "It always works wonders."

Esther realized that she had to do something to help the cut heal. She couldn't risk letting it become infected. So stifling any words of protest, she let the farmer apply some to her would. Surprisingly, it did work remarkably well and the area never became infected.

When they were ready to leave, the farmer packed up some cheese, a couple of onions, a bottle of milk, and several loaves of bread. He gave it to the three grateful runaways and ordered his son to take them into the woods. …

The farmer's son took them some distance into the forest and wished them good luck before turning back. The three walked on for a little while, but soon they had to stop and find a hiding place to spend the day. They resumed their trek on Monday night and then again on Tuesday.

By Wednesday night they had depleted their food supply, and they decided to knock on another farmer's door and ask for food. They waited until they found a secluded farmhouse that was not surrounded by other huts. They agreed to present themselves as partisans, hoping that the farmer would be too afraid to argue with them.

Esther had a large flashlight in her pocket that she had taken with her from Sobibor. A short chain was attached to the flashlight, and it had to be pulled repeatedly for the bulb to light up. Much like a lawnmower, it made a grinding noise as it started up.

With the two men beside her, Esther knocked loudly at the door. Although her heart was racing in fear, she tried to put a ruthless, self-assured expression on her face. She kept her hand in her pocket, and when the farmer opened the door, she moved the flashlight around to make the bulge obvious. She pulled on the chain several times, frightening the man with its loud sound.

"Please, don't shoot! Don't shoot!" the farmer begged.

"We need some food," Esther said gruffly.

> "Yes, yes. Just a moment."
>
> As he handed them some bread and vegetables, Esther asked for directions, again giving the name of a village …
>
> Esther and the two men continued on their journey, trying to move as quickly as they could. …
>
> Because Esther wanted to be absolutely certain that she had come to the right place, she decided to knock on the tenant's door.
>
> Esther rapped loudly several times until a man opened it. Like before, she put her hand in her pocket and starting up the flashlight. "I'm with a big partisan group," she said harshly. "We won't hurt you. We just have something to settle with your landlord. Where is the owner? Is he at the farm across the street?"
>
> "N-No," the man stuttered. "His old mother lives there. Sh-She's senile. He comes here every two weeks to visit and bring her provisions."
>
> "Is that so?" Esther asked suspiciously. "Are you telling the truth?"
>
> "Yes, yes. I am not lying. Please believe me." He looked at her fearfully. "Wait one moment," he said, trying to placate her. "Let me bring you some bread."
>
> "When he returned with the promised food, Esther eagerly grabbed it out of his hands. The man closed the door, and she rejoined Samuel and Avrum. …
>
> After dark, Esther and the men agreed to leave the farm and scavenge for food.
>
> They left the barn and walked down the dirt road to one of the neighboring farmhouses. When they knocked at the door, it was opened by a small, elderly woman.
>
> "Please, do not hurt me," she pleaded fearfully. "Here, let me give you some bread and a bottle of milk."
>
> Esther took the food and thanked the woman. The three made their way back to the barn and again climbed up to the loft. Their mouths watered in expectation as they sat down and prepared to eat their humble meal.[214]

Shlomo Alster, who joined up with Soviet partisans after escaping from Sobibór, recalled that there was no shortage of food while he was with the partisans. The armed partisans would descend on villages and take from the farmers whatever food and possessions they required, and took in great quantities.[215] Itzhak (Icek) Lichtman, who joined up with some Jewish fugitives and partisans after escaping from Sobibór, clearly identified the sequence of events, and cause of retaliation by Ukrainian and Polish "bandits," in the vicinity of the Parczew forests:

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[214] Shaindy Perl, *Tell the World: The Story of the Sobibor Revolt* (Lakewood, New Jersey: Israel Bookshop, 2004), 167–72, 176. Esther Raab, Judka Terner, Samuel Lehrer, and Avrum (Abraham) Kohn were later sheltered by the Marcyniuk family. See Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 4: *Poland,* Part 1, 491–92; Testimony of Jan Marcyniuk, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/6814.

[215] Testimony of Schlomo Alster, Internet: <http://www.sobiborinterviews.nl/en/interviewees/2-profielen/15-schlomo-alster>.

> Life in the underground was not easy. We succeeded in buying some rifles, but we used them to frighten peasants and force them to give us food. We were always assailed by Ukrainian and Polish bandits.[216]

Not just a few, but scores of farmers were robbed, sometimes repeatedly, in any given area of the countryside. Groups of Jews encamped in forests east of Łosice teamed up with an escaped Soviet POW to raid farms in the area at night, stealing food and livestock such as pigs and goats. According to Jewish testimonies, some of the farmers were targeted because they were, allegedly, anti-Semites and collaborators.[217] In all likelihood, they became "collaborators" when they reported the robberies to the authorities, since all livestock was tagged and had to be accounted for. A Jew who was assigned to the Berek Joselewicz partisan group, which was part of the People's Guard in the Lublin District, reported that the group's principal activity was robbing food from farmers.[218] Purely Jewish gangs could be equally ruthless in pursuit of supplies. Shiye Goldberg described the escapades of a young Jew from Majdan Tatarski, in the Lublin District, who met his end at the hands of some desperate local peasants:

> This Srulik was very adventurous. He thought that, with his pistol, he would conquer the world. I couldn't go along with him. He was reckless, else he didn't know that by taking things from the farmers at gunpoint caused them to hate the Jews … The farmers, if left alone, would give you a crust of bread or at least a drink of water. They might drive you away, but not hurt you … Srulik committed so many evil acts against the farmers that they finally waylaid and killed him.[219]

According to a Polish account from the village of Janowice, just east of Lublin, in the summer of 1942, a married couple en route to Janów by horse cart were stopped by a band of Jews who shot the husband,

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[216] Novitch, *Sobibor,* 85.

[217] Marek Jerzman, "Święty człowiek," *Kurier WNET,* February 2017. Some of these Jews were sheltered by Wacław Szpura in the village of Dubicze, near Łosice, whose home served as their base. Szpura was part of a network of helpers who lived in Dubicze and Kuszelówka that rescued several dozen Jews. After the war, Jewish survivors worked with the NKVD in tracking down anti-Communist insurgents whom they would shoot on the pretext that they tried to escape. Some of the Jews joined the Security Office, which also struck at anti-Communist insurgents. (See the Jewish testimonies from Biała Podlaska and Konstantynów later in the text.) Since the Security Office Jews would visit Szpura dressed in their uniforms, not surprisingly, he was executed by unknown persons on October 12, 1945. According to Yad Vashem, Szpura was killed in the summer of 1944 (sic) simply for having helped Jews. The Home Army unit operating in this area, headed by Stefan Wyrzykowski ("Zenon"), had three Jews in its ranks, as well as 18 escaped Soviet POWs. Since they disbanded in January 1945, they could not have killed Szpura. The population in that area was not generally hostile towards Jews. After her escape from the ghetto in Łosice, Stella Zylbersztajn took shelter in several villages in the vicinity of Łosice. In total, 25 Polish families helped her survive the war. See Bartoszewski and Lewin, *Righteous Among Nations,* 287–97.

[218] Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 3, 267, based on the testimony of Marian Szarach, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/5344.

[219] Goldberg, *The Undefeated,* 145.

raped the wife (she was left unconscious in the forest), and stole their horse.[220] A nun from a displaced convent located in Łążek Zaklikowski, near Zaklików, recalled the arrival of a group of Jewish partisans who abused the nuns and priest.[221] Is it little wonder that partisans and forest dwellers developed a reputation as robbers and that the local population lived in fear of their nocturnal visits?

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[220] Account of Piotr N., dated January 18, 2008 (in the author's possession).

[221] Ewa Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach: Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Lublin: Clio, 2001; Lublin: Gaudium, 2004), 190.

Rather than ask for food, which Jewish memoirs show to have been a viable option,[222] a group of Jewish escapees from the Treblinka labour camp variously pretended to be, somewhat transparently, both "Polish partisans" and Germans in order to rob Polish peasants. They immediately threatened a farmer at gunpoint

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[222] Examples of assistance received from farmers and railway workers by escapees from Treblinka and jumpers from trains headed there are plentiful, despite the manhunts carried out by German forces and Ukrainian guards looking for Jews and the death penalty facing those Poles who extended any form of assistance to Jews. Short-term help was particularly frequent. Of the approximately 200 prisoners who managed to break out of the death camp during the revolt on August 2, 1943, about 100 were still alive at the end of the war thanks to assistance received from Poles. According to three separate testimonies by Jewish escapees from the death camps of Treblinka and Sobibór, they "walked about the villages" where they were "known to everybody," including the farmhands and school children, without being denounced. See Teresa Prekerowa, "Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich," *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu–Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* vol. 35 (1993): 100–14, translated as 110–14, translated as "The Attitude of the Polish Population Towards Jewish Escapees from the Treblinka, Sobibór, and Bełżec Death Camps in Light of Jewish and Polish Testimonies," in Chodakiewicz, Muszyński, and Styrna, *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold,* 97–116. See also Mark Paul, "The Rescue of Jewish Escapees from the Treblinka Death Camp," in ibid., 117–37; Franziska Bruder, *Das eigene Schicksal selbst bestimmen: Fluchten aus Deportationszügen der 'Aktion Reinhardt' in Polen* (Hamburg and Münster: Unrast, 2019). Polish railway workers were known to open train door during stops allowing Jews to escape, provided them with water, and supplied pliers, hammers and crowbars with which to break open doors and cut the barbed wire covering the small openings in the wagons. Poles who approached stationary trains to give Jews water or food were brutally beaten by German guards and railwaymen and threatened with deportation to the death camp. Karol Socha, a switchman, sheltered a Jewish fugitive for several days and went to Sandomierz to bring him false identity documents and money. See Franciszek Ząbecki, *Wspomnienia dawne i nowe* (Warsaw: Pax, 1977), 46–47, 49–50, 75–76. Stanisław Wójcik, a railway machinist who lived in Wólka Okrąglik with his wife, provided clothes to a naked Jewish fugitive who knocked on his door at night. See Kopówka and Rytel-Andrianik, *Dam im imię na wieki,* 426–28. Yosef Haezrahi-Bürger, one of the "operatives" of Jewish organizations who, after the war, tracked down Jewish children sheltered by Christian Poles described the fate of two Jewish teenagers who managed to escape from a train on its arrival in Treblinka and were sheltered in a village near the camp: "in one of the transports, two siblings—a boy and a girl—were among the Jews in the wagons that reached the Treblinka village railroad station before they could be moved to the extermination camp. While they were waiting, the people in the wagon broke through the wooden floor and several escaped. The guards chased and fired at them but the two children managed to reach a house in the village and hide there, terrifying the owner, whose own children were playing in the yard. When she saw the guards pursuing them, the woman directed the guards to her own house. The guards shot the woman's children, assuming that they were the fugitive Jewish youngsters who were hiding in the house. The terrified woman regained her composure quickly and decided that if this was her fate, she had no choice but to raise the Jewish youngsters. The operative did not know the source of the information about these children after the war but was told that emissaries had been sent to remove them several times, failing each time. In 1947, when he was asked to deal with their removal, the children were sixteen and seventeen years old. They knew they were Jewish but refused to leave their 'mother,' as they called their rescuer, since she had lost her own children and had saved them. The mother left the decision up to them: both persisted in their refusal and remained in the village." See Gafny, *Dividing Hearts,* 202–3, 281. Sura Bursztyn (Barbara Tyl), a native of Wołomin, was deported with her parents to Treblinka in 1942. On arrival in the camp, in the ensuing chaos, the young girl managed to escape and wandered in the vicinity until she arrived at the home of Jakub and Janina Krajewski in the village of Krajewo Budziły, near Zambrów, dishevelled, injured and hungry. The Krajewski family took her in and she remained with them until 1948. See Righteous Medal Award Ceremony, May 28, 2019, Polish Righteous, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/aktualnosci/ceremonia-sprawiedliwych-w-lazienkach-krolewskich-w-warszawie>. In spite of the death penalty for the slightest Polish assistance to Jews, local Polish peasants helped Samuel Willenberg on no less than nine separate occasions in the first days after his escape from Treblinka. See Samuel Willenberg, *Surviving Treblinka* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell in association with the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1989), 143–48. Mieczysław Grajewski (later Martin Gray), who escaped from the Treblinka death camp, recalled the help he received from peasants: "I was free. I walked to a village. … I knocked to ask for bread. The peasants looked at me in silence. 'Bread, bread.' They saw my red hands, torn jacket, worn-out slippers, and handed me some hard, gray crusts. A peasant woman, huddled in shawls, gave me a bowl of hot milk and a bag. We didn't talk: my body had turned red and blue from the blows and the cold, and my clothes, everything proclaimed *Jew!* But they gave me bread. Thank you Polish peasants. I slept in a stable near the animals, taking a little warm milk from the cow in the morning. My bag filled with bread." See Martin Gray with Max Gallo, *For Those I Loved* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1972), 178. (In her article, "The Men Who Whitewash Hitler," *The New Statestman,* November 2, 1979, historian Gitta Sereny alleged that Martin Gray was never in Treblinka.) Marian (Maniek) Płatkiewicz, a native of Płock, who escaped during the uprising, recalled that the Germans encircled the forest with troops and the majority of the escapees were killed by the Germans

and waylaid individual farmers who were transporting goods. According to Saul (Shlomo) Kuperhand, a native of Siemiatycze,

> A farmer chopping wood nearby soon spotted us. Stefan said that we should kill the farmer so he would not send the Germans after us. But [Niecheslaw] Hochko [actually, Mieczysław Chodźko] told him that killing an innocent man would accomplish nothing. In fact, Hochko went right up to the man and demanded his identification papers, which he then pocketed.
>
> "We are a group of 200 escaped prisoners," Hochko told the frightened farmer. "If we have any trouble from the Germans we will kill you and your entire family. We know who you are. We will burn your farm to the ground." …
>
> We had been without food or drink for nearly two days, since escaping from Treblinka. Only Shmulik and Hochko had the ability to confront people without arousing suspicion, so the two of them, with our one rifle, approached an isolated farmhouse.
>
> Hochko knocked on the door and began speaking to the farmer in perfect Polish, which was his native tongue. He said that he and his men were members of the Polish underground and that the farmer should not fear his [German] uniform or the rifle. … The farmer responded by giving Hochko and Shmulik food for themselves and the "soldiers" in the nearby woods. …
>
> Shmulik's leveled rifle encouraged the farmer to be generous … It occurred to us that our gangster friends would probably have murdered the farmer and his family and then taken everything they had. Perhaps their way made more sense in the hellish world we lived in?
>
> We walked for many kilometers before resting again. Hochko … assembled everyone and addressed us.
>
> "… The safest way for us to get food is by intercepting farmers taking wagons of food to the market. We will wait for an individual farmer, so we don't have to worry about several farmers putting up a fight."
>
> We all listened and then approved the plan. About four o'clock the next morning we spotted a lone farmer coming down the road in a wagon. Hochko and Shmulik stood in the middle of the road and Hochko called out to him in his excellent German: "Halt! Show me your papers!"
>
> Seeing the uniform and hearing the German orders, the intimidated farmer pulled his wagon to a complete halt. He cooperated with the interrogation, telling Hochko where he was going, where he had come from, and what he was carrying in the wagon. The farmer denied carrying contraband food for sale on the black market, but when he unloaded his wagon on the side of the road for investigation, there was bread, milk, cheese, smoked ham, salami, bacon, and even water.
>
> Hochko ordered the farmer to appear at German police headquarters at nine o'clock the next morning to pay a fine of 200 Reichmarks. He would then have his documents returned to him. If he failed to appear promptly, the police would come to him. And this, Hochko assured him, would prove to be a most unpleasant experience. …
>
> As we walked, Shloimele challenged Hochko for the rifle that Hochko had been holding. Shloimele assured us that he would get plenty of food for the five of us who remained together, but Hochko categorically refused to give him the gun. Shloimele was a street-smart thug … Hochko knew that Shloimele's efforts would bring results, but he was concerned about his methods. … Shloimele sneered at this suggestion [i.e., asking for food], saying that he knew the Polish people much better and that force was the only way to get anything from them. …

> Shloimele left us around noon and made his way to a farmhouse. Boldly he looked through the windows and then went right in. He headed straight for the hearth, knowing that farmers often smoked meat by hanging it several feet up their chimneys. Sure enough, he found armfuls of meat. He filled a sack with bread and ham. He saw a pot of soup on the stove ready for the family's lunch and poured it into a pail. He even took knives, forks, and dishes. Heavily laden, Shloimele made his way back to us in the forest. He certainly earned his bragging rights.
>
> We did not get a chance to enjoy this banquet at our leisure, however, because we suddenly heard a fusillade of German automatic weapon fire spraying the woods and coming toward us. The furious farmer must have gone right to the Nazi authorities.[223]

On another occasion, the Jewish band held a farmer hostage.[224] Given such events, and as word got around, is it surprising that Polish peasants came to see fugitive Jews as adversaries rather than merely victims? Thus started a pattern that followed the following sequence: brazen robberies *followed* by retaliation (and not vice versa). Yet Kuperhand also goes on to describe the extensive assistance he received from Polish farmers *after* leaving the group he initially foraged with.[225] Another escapee from Treblinka, Kalman Tajgman (Taigman or Teigman), was part of a group of armed Jews who stole food from Polish farmers at gunpoint.[226] Such testimonies, among many others, refute the contention, stridently voiced by historians like Jan T. Gross and Jan Grabowski, that Polish peasants simply preyed on defenceless Jews for their

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[223] Miriam Kuperhand and Saul Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 130–33. Mieczysław Chodźko alleges that this group of 13 escapees from Treblinka I paid farmers for food. He does not mention any threats or violence directed at farmers by his group, but states that other groups of escapees engaged in such activities. See Mieczysław Chodźko, *Ucieczka z Treblinki* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2004); Testimony of Mieczysław Chodźko, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 302/321.

[224] Kuperhand and Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka,* 153.

[225] Kuperhand and Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka,* 135–42. Although this book contains several derogatory references of a general nature to the Home Army, it does not mention that several members of the Leszczyński family, Miriam Kuperhand's family's rescuers, were actually Home Army members. After the "liberation" they were arrested and interrogated by the security service, but received no assistance from their former Jewish charges. See Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny,* Part Two, 179–87.

[226] Testimony of Kalman Tajgman, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/1586 (Item 3555720) , cited in Wojciech Łukaszun, "Ratunek czy niebezpieczeństwo? Obszary leśne w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie jako miejsce schronienia ludności żydowskiej," in Grabowski, *Okupowana Europa,* 132. Tajgman mentions an armed encounter near Węgrów with Home Army partisans. However, he fails to connect this skirmish to the activities of his group.

valuables or out of sheer malice, and that such behaviour stemmed from an alleged social consensus and represented a "norm" among Poles.[227]

A similar situation prevailed in the Wilno and Nowogródek regions where Jews survived in the forest by robbing farms. Armed aggression directed at peasants provoked a like response from peasants and their

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[227] See Jan Tomasz Gross and Irena Grudzińska Gross, *Złote żniwa: Rzecz o tym, co się działo na obrzeżach zagłady Żydów* (Kraków: Znak, 2011), translated as *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Jan Grabowski, *Judenjagd: Polowanie na Żydów 1942–1945: Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), translated and expanded as *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013). Grabowski writes (at p. 166): "The motivations of rescuers varied from case to case. If the helpers, however, acted out of compassion, they broke a certain consensus in their own community. Within this consensus there was no place for helping Jews." Both of these books have come under severe and devastating criticism from major Polish historians for their methodology and conclusions. See, for example, Paweł Machcewicz, "Recenzja ostatecznej wersji 'Złotych żniw': Historia zaangażowana," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 11, 2011; Bożena Szaynok, "Porozmawiajmy spokojnie," *Więź,* no. 7 (2011): 15–28; Bożena Szaynok, "Żydowskie złoto na kościelnej tacy?: Wokół nowej hipotezy badawczej Jana T. Grossa," *Więź,* no. 10 (2011): 90–97; Piotr Gontarczyk, "Jak złapią za rękę," *Rzeczpospolita–Plus Minus,* February 19–20, 2011 and "Margines czy norma," *Rzeczpospolita–Plus Minus,* March 19–20, 2011, reprinted in Piotr Gontarczyk, *Najnowsze kłopoty z historią: Publicystyka z lat 2008–2012* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2013), 282–304; Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Refleksje: Nowa praca, stare podejście" and Piotr Gontarczyk, "'Jak fakty są przeciwko nam, to tym gorzej dla faktów': O metodzie naukowej *Złotych żniw* Jana Tomasza Grossa," in Marek J. Chodakiewicz and Wojciech J. Muszyński, eds., *Złote serca, czy złote żniwa?: Studia nad wojennymi losami Polaków i Żydów* (Warsaw: The Facto, 2011), 27–64, 71–101; Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Reflections: A New Work, but the Same Old Method" and Piotr Gontarczyk, "'If the Facts Are Against Us, Too Bad for the Facts': On Jan Tomasz Gross's Scholarly Method" in *Golden Harvest,*" in Chodakiewicz, Muszyński, and Styrna, *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold,* 21–63, 70–96; Bogdan Musiał, "'Judenjagd', czyli naukowy regres," *Rzeczpospolita–Plus Minus,* March 5–6, 2011; Bogdan Musiał, "Zbrodnicza perfidia czy umiejętne działanie," *Rzeczpospolita–Plus Minus,* March 19–20, 2011; Bogdan Musiał, "*Judenjagd*—"umiejętne działanie" czy zbrodnicza perfidia?," *Dzieje Najnowsze,* vol. 43, no. 2 (2011): 159–70; Bogdan Musiał, "Odpowiedź na replikę Jana Grabowskiego: «Rżnięcie nożem, czyli polemika historyczna à la Bogdan Musiał," *Dzieje Najnowsze,* vol. 43, no. 4 (2011): 171–77; Krystyna Samsonowska, "Dąbrowa Tarnowska—nieco inaczej," *Więź*, no. 7 (2011): 75–84; Przemysław Różański, Review of Jan Grabowski's J*udenjagd*, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung,* vol. 61, no. 2 (2012): 627–30. An in-depth analysis revealed that, despite the availability of evidence, Grabowski did not identify the majority of rescuers in Dąbrowa Tarnowska county and that his treatment of sources was rather shoddy. See Mark Paul, "Another Look at Polish-Jewish Relations in Dąbrowa Tarnowska County: A Much Needed Corrective to Jan Grabowski's *Hunt for the Jews,*" Internet: <http://www.kpk-toronto.org/obrona-dobrego-imienia/>. Typical of the level of discourse on such topics in the Western media, reputable historians are summarily written off "hardline Polish nationalists" by publicists with no expertise in the area and who, in all likelihood, have never read their articles. See, for example, Jerome Taylor, "Shameful secrets in the fields of the Holocaust," *The Independent,* February 10, 2011.) A number of Polish Jews rescued by Poles spoke out against the main thesis of Gross's book: Janina Dłuska, Szewach Weiss, Samuel Willenberg, Adam Sandauer. Unfortunately, Jan T. Gross shows signs of being unbabalnced in his dealings with individuals as well. He verbally abused the journalists who exposed his photograph as fake (see below) and after a TV talk show featuring his book, he accosted one of the guest speakers, Rev. Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, yelling at him repeatedly: "You'll go to hell!" See Paweł Lisicki, "Źli ludzie idą do piekła," *Rzeczpospolita,* April 15, 2011.

A flagrant example of falsification is the photograph found on the dust jacket of Jan Gross's *Golden Harvest.* The photograph is held out to depict "a group of peasants—"diggers"—posed casually atop a mountain of ashes at Treblinka," who allegedly "searched for gold and precious stones that Nazi executioners may have overlooked" as part of "the plunder of Jewish wealth that went hand-in-hand with the Holocaust." This description of the photograph was exposed as bogus by Polish journalists Michał Majewski and Paweł Reszka. See their articles "Tajemnice starego zdjęcia" and "Dlaczego Grossowie powinni przeprosić," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 22–23, 2011 and March 20, 2011, respectively. In fact, the photograph depicts no such thing. It shows a work crew carefully tending to human remains at some unknown execution site. Other sources confirm the involvement of the Red Army in the initial blasting of holes at Treblinka in order to expose any valuables to looters. We know from survivor testimonies that Jews were among the "diggers" who returned to Sobibór to search for buried treasures. See the testimony of Saartje Engel Wynberg, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 7684 (Segments 254 and 255); Oral history interview with Selma Engel, Accession no. 1990.426.1, RG-50.030.0067, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (transcript, pp. 26-27); Oral history interview with Chaim Engel and Selma Saartje Engel, Accession no. 1988.A.0060, RG-50.549.02.0014, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (transcript, pp. 53–54); Oral history interview with Selma Engel, Accession no. 1994.A.0447.10, RG-50.042.0010, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (transcript, p. 19). We also know that in many cases what drove most "diggers" was not greed or anti-Semitism, but rather dire poverty. An academic study recognizes that "it highlights often-unacknowledged social

protectors. The following account describes the activities of a group of Jewish forest dwellers who acquired weapons and staged forays in the countryside. They were eventually "absorbed" by Soviet partisans, who had trouble finding recruits in largely Polish and Lithuanian areas.

> [In mid-July 1943:] Leiba [Kobrowski] insisted they should all move from their current location to the forest near Marcinkance [Marcinkańce], where a sizeable group of Jews from Druskieniki, Marcinkance and Pozecze [Porzecze] had gathered … They would be safer there, since the forest was much denser and access was more difficult. …
>
> Izak [Kobrowski] came to the conclusion that they had to have weapons: their money was running out and the only way to survive was to take food by force. A decision had to be made—were they to buy weapons or use the rest of that money to buy food and hope that the war would soon be over? … A young Polish peasant, Longin, a friend of Izak sold them two rifles, one sub-machine gun, grenades and some ammunition. Izak had to teach the men how to use and clean a weapon. …
>
> The 'food operations' now dominated their life. The men would pick a faraway village, as far as 40 or 50 kilometres from their camp in the forest. After arriving at their destination they would observe the activity in the village and around the target house before going in, preferably on a dark night. They surrounded the house with four men, though two of them were unarmed, and Izak, with the sub-machine gun, was the one who demanded food. They usually took flour and dried peas; potatoes were too heavy. They sometimes took a calf or a pig which they slaughtered and cut into chunks on the spot. The roundtrip took about four to five days. …
>
> Their group now comprised over 30 people. …
>
> Not far from their camp, [in the spring of 1944] they encountered a detachment of regular Red Army partisans. Well dressed in warm *foufaikas* (parkas stuffed with cotton and wool), well fed and well armed, they were supplied through air-drops. The site of the family camp was attractive to them because it was well camouflaged. The partisans gave an ultimatum: 'We are here to fight the Germans. If you want to help us in this task, you are welcome to stay. If you don't, get out of here, because you will endanger us all!'
>
> The unit was composed of some 25 men and five woman, all volunteers. The commander, comrade Finkel, was in his early thirties, a Jew from Moscow … The deputy commander was a woman. … They had all recently been parachuted into the forest in a major effort by the Red army to disorganize the thinly stretched Wehrmacht supply lines before a major attack was to begin in the summer. …
>
> Finally, after much haggling [among the Jews], Izak prevailed and Commander Finkel made him *Nachalnik Spetsyalnovo Semyeynovo Partisanskovo Otryada* [Commander of the Special Family Partisan Detachment].[228]

In his memoirs Tuvia Bielski mentions a group of Jewish stragglers whom the Soviet partisans were allegedly intent on murdering: "not far from Abelkevitz [Obelkowicze, near Dworzec], there was a farm on which there was a group of armed Jews who robbed by night and did nothing during the day. The

[228] Blumstein, *A Little House on Mount Carmel,* 335–40.

population round about were angry and complaining."[229] Their leader was Israel Kesler (or Kessler), reportedly a thief and arsonist, who ran a brothel in Naliboki before the war. After receiving an ultimatum, Kesler agreed to join the Bielski group sometime around December 1942. The following are descriptions of the so-called Kesler group:

> A native of the small town Naliboki, Kesler was a professional thief. Before the war he spent several years in prison. … Like the Bielskis, he never became a ghetto inmate. Instead, he collected a group of Jews from Naliboki and from the work camp Dworzec. Though his connections to Belorussian peasants he acquired guns and ammunition and a place to stay.[230]
>
> When Abraham [Viner, also a native of Naliboki] met Kesler he asked to be accepted into his unit, but Kesler refused, saying, "'You cannot stay with us. You are not made of the proper material. You would not be able to kill, to fight, you are not fit to be a partisan.' I left; I had no choice. I and the others were not accepted. We were of the same social background. We had no arms, nothing."
>
> Better suited for life in the forest, Kesler looked down on Jews whom he felt did not fit in. In fact, most young working-class men seemed to resent and envy those who had been their social superiors before the war.[231]

Kesler's group was able to secure a measure of autonomy during the German raids on Naliboki forest in the summer of 1943. It set up its own camp and became notorious for robbing peasants.[232] The main Bielski group was not immune from such abuses either:

> Undisciplined rough behavior was not limited to Russian partisans. When most of the Bielski people reassembled, complaints about one of their own group leader, Kaplan, were also heard. Local farmers on whose goodwill they depended accused Kaplan and a few of his men of robbery. These forcible confiscations included money and valuables. …
>
> Hersh Smolar, a prominent partisan and a member of the Soviet headquarters, knew that "the accusation was that the Jews had been robbing the peasants. They take clothes, not only bread. [General] Platon let me read the document.
>
> "It was indeed true. There were some Jewish partisans who took clothes. The partisans were not allowed to take anything but food, but the Jews did take other things."[233]

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[229] Nirenstein, *A Tower from the Enemy,* 357–58. See also Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945,* vol. 4 (1991), 509–10. For more about the exploits of the Kesler group see Tec, *Defiance,* 75–77; Duffy, *The Bielski Brothers,* 119–22.

[230] Tec, *Defiance,* 76.

[231] Tec, *Resilience and Courage,* 286.

[232] Tec, *Defiance,* 128–29, 178–79; Duffy, *The Bielski Brothers,* 184–85, 204.

[233] Tec, *Defiance,* 124–25, 151.

Both Kesler and Kaplan, as well as other partisans, were eventually executed by the Bielski brothers for their communal transgressions such as insubordination, subversion, lack of discipline, disputes over stolen property, etc.[234] There is no evidence that any Jew was ever punished for excesses committed against the local population, despite Bielski's claim to the contrary in a report he submitted to the Soviet supreme command outlining the history of the detachment.[235] In the spring of 1944, Kesler denounced Tuvia Bielski to General Dubov for financial mismanagement (misappropriation of gold, jewelry and money) and asked for permission to form a separate detachment. Fearing that Kesler was planning to usurp his authority, Bielski had Kesler arrested and put to death following a quick trial. He then denounced Kesler to the Soviet command as a "marauder" and "bandit."[236] Estera Gorodejska, who was a member of Kesler's group yet showered praise on Bielski for his efforts to save Jews, described the "power struggle" in an entirely different light:

> In 1943 Bielski surrounded himself with members of the command such as Gordon, Malbin, Fotasznik, etc. They played cards all day long and were never sober. The command ate very well when everyone else got watery soup. There was great dissatisfaction in the camp, but discipline was so strong that no one dared to say anything. Kesler went to see Sokolov (Dubov's aide) to ask his permission to organize an independent unit. When the command found out about this, they entered Kesler's *zemlianka* in a drunken state and arrested him. This was in March 1944. The next day they took Kesler out of detention and Bielski himself shot him three times. He was drunk. He said to the deceased Kesler: "You're lying down, you scum. Why don't you answer now?" He shot the corpse two more times. The command ordered some Jews to bury Kesler. They made a small mound for him. The command told them to remove the mound and wipe his grave off the face of the earth. … A report was written that Kesler was killed because he had left the unit without the permission of the command (when he had gone to see Sokolov) and for robberies on the civilian population. … A few days before we joined up with the Red Army, retreating German units wanted to cut through the forest and stumbled upon us. We engaged in combat. Eight people from our unit fell, Gordon among them. The Germans lost 40 men. The day we marched out of the forest, Bielski killed Faivl

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[234] The following executions are mentioned in the literature on this topic: Tec, *Defiance,* 125 (according to Tec, Kaplan was executed by Zus Bielski), 177–78 (Białobroda, allegedly an informer for the Belorussian police in the Lida ghetto), 182–83 (according to Tec, Kesler was executed by Asael Bielski), 200 (Polonecki); Levine, *Fugitives of the Forest,* 261 (Kesler); Duffy, *The Bielski Brothers,* 187 (Kaplan), 243–45 (Kesler and a barber—likely Białobroda—who had collaborated with the Nazis in Lida), 258 (another execution). For other examples of punishment for internal disciplinary transgressions see Duffy, *The Bielski Partisans,* 218. Semen Zorin was known to execute an 11 or 12-year-old boy for leaving the partisan base against orders. See Levine, *Fugitives of the Forest,* 264.

[235] "Jewish Units in the Soviet Partisan Movement: Selected Documents," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 23 (1993): 409: "No particularly negative aspects of fulfilling the tasks set out by the command were observed, aside from several instances of despoliation of the local population by partisans of our detachment. The command nipped these events in the bud by taking extraordinary measures, i.e., execution by shooting of two partisans."

[236] Musial, *Sowjetische Partisanen in Weißrußland,* 203–205, 214.

> Połoniecki, a Jew from Mir. I understand there was a dispute between Bielski and Połoniecki over some [stolen] clothes.[237]

Anatol Wertheim describes the antics of Semen Zorin, the leader of his Soviet-Jewish unit, who had a habit of descending on a village with a company of men, pressuring the villagers into giving in marriage a peasant girl he had taken a liking to. After nuptials and celebrations that lasted for several days, Zorin abandoned his new bride.[238] The most candid description, however, is that of Yakov Ruvimovich, who joined up with the Soviet partisans after being sheltered by a Belorussian family for over a year.

> About half of our people were Jews, but what kind of partisans were they? All they did was rob and rape. They liked taking me along with them when they went reconnoitring. "Yasha," they called, "come with us." Since I was a young boy I was afraid and did not breathe a word. They raped whomever they came across. Once I went to our leader, Romanov, and told him what I saw. "You better be quiet, you mother-fucker," he bawled me out. "Can you prove it?" I couldn't because I usually stood watch on the street. They enjoyed taking the wives of [Polish] officers. They all enjoyed that.[239]

Examples of the activities of unprincipled Jewish bands have been recorded by Jews in other parts of Poland as well:

> Thus, in Galicia, where in the absence of an organized anti-German partisan movement groups of armed Jews simply tried to survive in the forests, there were cases of fratricidal murder motivated by the urge to obtain arms. In the Bialystok [Białystok] region such a 'wild group' of Jews, as they were called, raped several Byelorussian peasant girls and stabbed to death two Jewish partisans of the Jewish Forois ["Forward"] Detachment to get hold of their rifles.[240]

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[237] Testimony of Estera Gordejska, dated August 9, 1945, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/568, reproduced in part in Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 4, 268–70. Gorodejska states that Kesler was a prewar horse trader and part of the criminal underworld, but was friendly and popular with many in the unit. Elżbieta Merchwińska attributes the murder of Połoniecki to Bielski's demands for a portion of the valuables that members of his group had buried in the forest. See Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 3, 261.

[238] Anatol Wertheim, "Żydowska partyzantka na Białorusi," *Zeszyty Historyczne,* no. 86 (1988): 148–49.

[239] Jacek Hugo-Bader, "A rewolucja to przecież miała być przyjemność," *Gazeta Wyborcza, Magazyn Gazety* (Warsaw), November 15, 1996.

[240] Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe,* 305.

[In the environs of Buczacz, Tarnopol Province:] The Jewish bandits were no better than the murderers. They fell on the Jews in hiding, on the Jews in the forests and robbed them naked. That happened to Shaul Enderman and others.[241]

To Buczacz they brought Jews from the town of Tłumacz. Among the youth from Tłumacz was a so-called band. This was a group of young, armed boys. Brave and determined for anything, they were the scourge of the Judenrat. They often rook money away from well-off Jews.[242]

A group of Ukrainian "partisans" counting Jews among their members are known to have pillaged and murdered in the vicinity of Kopyczyńce east of Tarnopol.[243]

[In Volhynia:] A group of Jewish families called "The Tenth" possessed guns and boldly raided Ukrainian farmers for food and clothes, dividing the loot among themselves. To be part of their group became a privilege with many benefits. Gershon wanted to join them, but Moishe did not. As chance would have it, Gershon found a gun without bullets. Ignoring Moishe's advice, Gershon approached the leader of The Tenth, asking to join. They turned him down.

The Tenth became a power to be reckoned. Originally thought of as an elite group of Jews, it was discovered that their acts of force were motivated by their own selfish needs and gratification. It was while hundreds of Jews were hiding in an area known as Abluva, that the true character of the Tenth was realized. The Tenth became aware that the Germans had discovered where the Jews were hiding. Instead of informing everyone of the intended raid, they left unannounced for Russia, leaving the others unprepared for the assault that followed.[244]

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[241] Account of Dr. Avraham Halfan in I. Kahan (Yisrael Cohen), ed., *Sefer Buczacz: Matsevet zikaron le-kehila kedosha* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1956), 234; translated into English as *Book of Buczacz: In Memory of a Martyred Community,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/buchach/buchach.html>.

[242] Izak Szwarc, "Buczacz: Obozy pracy w okolicach Buczacza," as cited in Ajzensztajn, *Ruch podziemny w ghettach i obozach,* 49; Testimony of Izaak Szwarc, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/327. See also the testimony of Róża Dobrecka, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2274.

[243] Szewczyński, *Nasze Kopyczyńce,* 80.

[244] Abram, *The Light After the Dark,* 95.

Use of threats and force to acquire arms and robbing peasants with the use of threats and firearms were common occurrence.[245] David Zaid (Dawid Zajd) describes the following raid on a "wealthy" farmer near Pińczów, carried out by a group of three Jews posing as "Polish partisans"—a ruse that was unlikely to fool anyone. He justifies the raid, even though there was no suspicion that this farmer had harmed anyone, by reason of the hostility Jewish fugitives faced from *some* farmers in the area.

> Mordechai [Zaif or Zajf], who had become our primary leader with the death of my father, decided that we needed to improve our situation. He knew of a very wealthy Polish farmer not too many miles away. Very calmly and deliberately we decided we would go in and rob him. There was no discussion of the "right or wrong" of what we planned. We were far beyond that point. We had been living in holes in the ground for many, many months, plagued by Poles who wanted to kill us, and who had killed many of us. We decided to go in while the farmer and his family was sleeping. If he awakened, and made a problem, we would kill him. We didn't even discuss it. We knew.
>
> "We will go in like soldiers," said Mordechai, and we did. "Out! Out of your beds!" ordered Mordechai as we stood by to do whatever was needed. The frightened farmer and his family did as they were told and we herded them into a room in the house. "Now, get down on your knees," said Mordechai, "and turn your backs to us."
>
> Again, frightened as only we had been frightened in the past, they did as they were instructed.
>
> Then Mordechai spoke to them. "We were sent by the Polish underground," he said. "You must help us with money, clothing and jewelry. If you do not, we have orders to kill you."
>
> Immediately the Poles began to cry, and to beg for their lives. Mordechai continued. "If, on the other hand, you cooperate with us, and give us what we want, we will, after the war is over, see to it that you will be paid back for helping us."
>
> They agreed, as if they had a choice, so we asked them for sacks in which to carry away the loot. We went into their bedroom and opened the closets to find furs and very expensive suits and other clothing. They said nothing as we loaded our sacks with all of this, and all the money they said they had, and we left them frightened but still alive. Somehow it seemed to me that our lives had changed, had moved in a new direction, had started upward from a long, downward spiral. The fact that we had become thieves never entered my mind, only that we had a brief moment of relief ahead

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[245] See, for example, Moshe Hoffer, "Alone in the Forests," in *Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Lezajsk Who Perished in the Holocaust,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Lezajsk/Lezajsk.html>, translation of H. Rabin, ed., *Lizhensk: Sefer zikaron le-kedoshei Lizhensk she-nispu be-shoat ha-natsim* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Lezajsk in Israel, 1970), 108ff. (use of threats to obtain a revolver from a farmer near Leżajsk), and Menachem Katz, *Path of Hope* (New York and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, and The Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, 2008), 181–85, 193–98 (Kuropatniki, near Brzeżany). The aforesaid Moshe Hoffer and his wife subsisted through a variety of means: "There were farmers who sold me food, and there were some who would give me without requesting payment. Michel Romanski of Jadszywka [?] fed us for free. There were nights when we hid with him, and he endangered himself on our behalf. For the most part, I had to obtain my food through my own powers. I broke into locked areas and stole chickens from chicken coops."

> with warm clothes and money. We seemed now to be doing something that was under our own control, even if it was robbing a fellow Pole.[246]

Nor were religious institutions spared. A Jewish-led band of eight Jews and Ukrainians (the latter may have been Jews posing as Ukrainians) invaded the convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Niżniów, near Stanisławów, in Eastern Galicia, in the early morning hours of April 16, 1944, as the German-Soviet front was advancing nearby, on the pretext of looking for German officers. After robbing the nuns, the assailants proceeded to force them into the chapel, beating them mercilessly on their heads with the butts of their guns until blood flowed. Some of the younger nuns managed to escape and hide, and the bandits directed their wrath against the elderly nuns.[247]

After leaving the ghetto in Międzyrzec Podlaski for the nearby forests, Elias Magid and several Jews formed a group that robbed farmers, threatening to shoot them if they did not provide them with food. They moved eastward after the farmers complained to the authorities and the Germans organized a raid. They came across several others Jews and "began to conduct the life of real bandits, plundering and robbing."[248] A member of another group of fugitives from the Międzyrzec Podlaski ghetto reported in a similar vein:

> One day the men came back carrying sacks with three dead sheep they took from a sheep house. We skinned them, hung the skin and cooked the flesh. This was the beginning. Later we took to go to villages, pretending we were partisans. We made a wooden pistol, painted it black, and took it to with us in case we will have to frighten someone.
>
> We prepared food in the following way. In the darkest night of the month, about 11pm, usually when it was snowing so footmarks were covered, or when it was frozen and no footmarks were left, the men went to the farms. They entered a farmer's house with the "gun" in their hand, closed the people of the house in one room, and took all the food they found. They looked especially for salt, bread and lentils. Once they brought some buckwheat; a few times they brought slaughtered sheep,

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[246] Ross R. Olney, *Danik! A Holocaust Survivor: The Amazing True Story of David ben Kalma (David Zaid), a Jew in Poland* (U.S.A.: Lulu.com, 2014). David Zaid (Dawid Zajd), together with his friends Mordechai Zaif (Mordka Zajf) and Hersz (Henryk) Radzyński, was rescued by Józef Bartela in the village of Bełk, near Pińczów, with the assistance of other farmers. Bartela also sheltered three Oks brothers (Szmul, Ognacy and Natan) from Pińczów, but did not disclose that fact to the other three Jews at the time. The raid on the Polish farm appears to have led to a visit by Polish partisans to Bartela's home, where the assailants were hiding. After the arrival of the Soviet army, David Zaid (Dawif Zajf) became a security police officer in Pińczów. The activities of the state security police in Pińczów are described by Frank Blaichman later on in the text. Mordechai Zaif (Mordka Zajf) provided the Soviet authorities with a list of Polish "collaborators." Characteristically, the literature produced by the Polish Center for Holocaust Research does not mention anything about the robberies carried out by the Jewish fugitives. See Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Bełk i nne miejsca: Opowieść o dziesiętnikach-zastawnikach," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały,* vol. 15 (2019): 138–67.

[247] Agnieszka Michna, *Siostry zakonne—ofiary zbrodni nacjonalistów ukraińskich na terenie metropolii lwowskiej obrządku łacińskiego w latach 1939–1947* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2010), 82–83.

[248] Testimony of Elias Magid, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2019, cited in Czajka, Młodkowska, and Umińska-Keff, *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz/Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue,* vol. 3, 18.

half a cow, and once they brought pig. They avoided pigs because of the noise they make when slaughtered. Apart from food, they did not take anything. Only once they took boots they needed.

Overall, the winters passed fine. There was no shortage of food, though we strongly felt the shortage of salt.[249]

Such occurrences were not unique to that area but were widespread.[250] In some cases, members of Jewish forest groups turned on each other. The following account is from the Łuków area:

> There was a 14-year-old boy in our group, Itche Meir, whose parents had owned the paint factory in Lukow [Łuków]. After explaining that his parents were dead, he confided that he knew where the family gold was buried in an old cast-iron pot. Two of our group, brothers-in-law—one a little shoemaker and the other a strapping hulk of a man who had worked in a slaughterhouse—volunteered to go with him to find the gold.
>
> After a few days, the men came back alone and told us that Itche Meir had changed his mind and run away. At first we believed them, but I soon became suspicious because of the way they were behaving. I started to worry as to what really happened to the young boy.
>
> A few days later, as I peddled my wares, one of my customers told me he'd found a fresh grave near the road. That night I took two men with me to find the grave. … Digging it up, my fears became a reality: there was poor Itche Meir's body with his head bashed in. … Returning to the camp, we found the suspected murderers. We said, "We found Itche Meir's body. Why did you kill him?"
>
> The shoemaker started crying and confessed. "I begged my brother-in-law not to kill the kid, but he didn't listen." He pleaded with us and cried. …
>
> The big guy, on the other hand, was a different story. He didn't seem to react to his brother-in-law's accusation, he just sat there with his rifle … When he finally fell asleep, however, we took his

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[249] R. Bachrach, "In the Miedzyrzec Ghetto," in Feigenbaum, *Sefer Biala Podlaska,* 456, translated as *Book of Biala Podlaska,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Biala_Podlaska/Biala_Podlaska.html>.

[250] Jankiel Grynblat (Grynblatt), who survived by working as a tailor for villagers near Żelechów, was encouraged by a Jewish acquaintance to join a forest group made up of escaped Soviet POWs and Jews who survived by robbing Polish farmers. See the testimony of Jankiel Grynblat, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/4800, reproduced in Diatłowicki and Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce,* vol. 2, 140–45. Another Jew, Majer Szulim Lewinsohn, pretending to be a Soviet with a rifle, went from house to house in a village demanding food. As the robberies increased, villagers retaliated. See Engelking, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień…,* 127, 147. Once their numbers increased, the largely Jewish group linked up with Serafim Alekseev, a Soviet officer who escaped from a German prisoner of war camp and oversaw a number of partisan groups operating in Łuków-Garwolin area. During a raid, villagers shot two Jewish partisans in self-defence. The Jewish partisan group was subsequently attacked by a Home Army unit who sought to protect the villagers from further robberies. When Jewish partisans stole a pig in the winter of 1943, which would have constituted a significant loss for the average peasant, the aggrieved farmer informed the German authorities. (The Germans meticulously counted and tagged livestock such as pigs and cows, and farmers were required to account for any missing livestock.) The Germans were able to track down the culprits as they had carelessly left a trail of blood in the snow from the slaughtered animal that led to their bunker in the forest. Seven Jews were killed including some escapees from Treblinka. In retaliation, Jewish partisans shot the Polish farmer, who was hardly a "collaborator" hunting down Jews. He was simply an innocent victim who sought protection and, in all likelihood, would never have set out to harm anyone had he not been robbed. See Diatłowicki and Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 2, 140, 144–45. (Grynblat's account appears to describe this event twice.) The activities of Serafim Alekseev's partisans are described in Sulej, *Zdrada i zbrodnia,* 19–20, 86–90, 299–302, and mentioned in a subsequent footnote.

> rifle away. The next day, one man was assigned to take him deep into the forest and execute him. Our judgment was swift, his execution just.[251]

Individual Jews were also known to murder non-Jews without provocation. Majer Rubinfeld shot and killed an unknown person he happened to run across while hiding in a forest near Rohatyn; afterwards, he stole his gun and money.[252] Rescuers of Jews could also find themselves among those robbed by Jewish forest groups:

> Another Pole complained bitterly that his household was stripped bare of its belongings by a Jewish partisan group. Learning that he was actually involved in a Jewish network, they returned some of his possessions—"but only a fraction," he said.[253]

Northwest of Lublin, a largely Jewish gang known as the "Morel" gang, but headed by a Polish bandit named Kapica, became notorious for pillaging in the countryside near the village of Garbów. Its members included Solomon (Shlomo) Morel,[254] who eventually joined the People's Guard (*Gwardia Ludowa*), the

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[251] Wrobel, *My Life My Way,* 88–89.

[252] Diatłowicki and Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 2, 204.

[253] Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: The Free Press/Macmillan; London: Collier Macmillan, 1988), 72.

[254] The Morel gang counted the Morel brothers, Shlomo (Salomon) and Icek (Yitzhak), as its members. The gang was reportedly liquidated by a People's Guard detachment under the command of Grzegorz Korczyński, but some of its members including Salomon Morel were absorbed into Korczyński's unit. According to Frank Blaichman, however, Yitzhak Morel and another member of the Markuszów group were killed while "on a mission to pick up some food from a village," and in retaliation the Jewish partisans set fire to a village and shot two or three villagers. See Frank Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting: A Memoir of World War II* (New York: Arcade, 2009), 68–69. Salomon Morel, who falsely claimed to have been imprisoned in Auschwitz during the war, later joined Chil Grynszpan's partisan unit. After the Soviet takeover, he joined the Communist security forces and worked as a guard at the notorious prison in Lublin Castle where numerous Home Army members were tortured and murdered. He was transferred to a prison in Tarnobrzeg. Afterwards he became the infamous commander of the Stalinist concentration camps in Świętochłowice and Jaworzno. Another person who headed the Jaworzno labour camp for a period was named Grossman. See Henryk Pająk, "Banda Morelów," *Nasza Polska,* April 14, 1999; Zygmunt Woźniczka, "Obóz pracy w Świętochłowicach-Zgodzie i jego komendant," *Dzieje Najnowsze* (Warsaw), no. 4 (1999): 17–36; Adam Dziurok, ed. and comp., *Obóz pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku: Dokumenty, zeznania, relacje, listy* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2002), 29; Adam Dziurok, "23 lata, 6 miesięcy i 22 dni Salomona Morela," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* nos. 6–7 (2004): 42–45; "Informacja o działalności Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w okresie 1 lipca 2003 r.–30 czerwca 2004 r.," Warsaw, January 2005 (Katowice sygnatura akt S 61/01/Zk); Adam Dziurok and Andrzej Majcher, "Salomon Morel i obóz w Świętochłowicach-Zgodzie," *Instytut Pamięci Narodowej,* July 7, 2005, Internet: <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/647,Odpowiedz-Panstwa-Izrael-na-wniosek-o-ekstradycje-Salomona-Morela-oraz-opracowan.html>, translated "Salomon Morel and the Camp at Świętochłowice-Zgoda," Internet: <http://www.academia.edu/35943326/Adam_Dziurok_Andrzej_Majcher_Salomon_Morel_and_the_camp_at_%C5%9Awi%C4%99toch%C5%82owice-Zgoda>. Adam Dziurok mentions several other Jewish partisans who became Security officers and worked as prison functionaries: Bernard Szwarc (Lublin, Białystok), Franciszek Lewin (Lublin, Siedlce), Józef Ruchelsman (Lublin, Biała Podlaska), Leon Giterman (Lublin, Biała Podlaska), Władysław Wolsztajn (Lublin, Białystok), and Sewer Rozen (the head of the prison in Barczewo). For a somewhat favourable portrayal of Salomon Morel, see Anna Malinowska, *Komendant: Życie Salomona Morela* (Warsaw: Agora, 2020).

Moscow-directed Communist underground which was later transformed into the People's Army (*Armia Ludowa*), an organization whose record of robbery and violent crimes against the civilian population and killing Jewish refugees was second to none.[255] Jewish bands were responsible for extensive plundering and murders in the Podlasie region, north of Lublin.[256] In the vicinity of Oszmiana, west of Wilno, small bands consisting of Soviets (former German prisoners of war) and Jews robbed and murdered the civilian population. The Jewish bands were known for their cruelty, especially one under the command of a Jewish woman from Smorgonie.[257]

Throughout Poland Jews connected to Communist partisan formations clashed repeatedly with the anti-Communist underground and the civilian population, and in many cases robbery came to the forefront. A Jewish unit of the People's Guard known as the "Lions," led by Izrael Ajzenman (Israel Eisenman), a prewar Communist Party member convicted prewar robber (who victimized both Poles and Jews), did little else but plunder widely in the vicinity of Kielce. The local population undertook self-defence. Incensed, following out instructions from Moscow to clear the area of "reactionaries," Ajzenman's partisans murdered seven Poles in Drzewica on January 20, 1943, and robbed their homes. Among the victims were

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[255] The Communist People's Guard (*Gwardia Ludowa—GL*), whose membership included numerous Jews, was infamous for robbing and committing violent crimes in the Polish countryside. Its members also perpetrated murders on numerous Jewish partisans and Jews hiding in the forests. Official reports of its numerical strength and military accomplishments are grossly inflated. See Chodakiewicz, *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne,* 96–98; Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR,* passim; Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* passim, especially 178–82, 245–75, 340–50, 373, 381, 397, 399–401; Chodakiewicz, *Between Nazis and Soviets,* 154–55, 179, 188, 196–98, 431; Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed,* 94. The murder of Jews in Krasnystaw by the People's Guard is mentioned in Robert Kuwałek, "Żybowski ruch oporu na Lubelszczyźnie," posted online at: <htpp://kft.umcs.lublin.pl/strona/zaglada/okres_zaglady_opr.html>. Members of the Communist underground (Polish Workers' Party) also blackmailed and robbed Jews hiding in Warsaw (outside the ghetto) and robbed Jews during the final stages of the Warsaw ghetto. See Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 212 n. 43, and Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory,* 304. The fact that they denounced Poles to the Gestapo and murdered Jews during the German occupation did not prevent People's Guard members from holding official positions, often important ones, in the postwar Communist regime, where they worked closely with Jewish Communists and former partisans in combatting the "fascist" anti-Communist Polish underground. See Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 407–420. People's Guard members generally did not face punishment for collaborating with the Nazis, nor did the Security Office shy away from employing former Gestapo agents, among them those responsible for the capture of Home Army Commnader General Stefan Rowecki. See Jacek Wilamowski, *Srebrniki Judasza: Zdrada i kolaboracja: Konfidenci niemieckich władz bezpieczeństwa w okupowanej Polsce 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Agencja Wydawnicza CB Andrzej Zasieczny, 2004), 144–46; Waldemar Grabowski, "Kalkstein i Kaczorowska w świetle akt UB," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* nos. 8–9 (August–September 2004): 87–100. Among the Gestapo agents from Pomerania employed in official positions were Alexander Arendt, Jan Szawlewski, and Heinrich Kassner who also went by the name of Jan Kaszubowski. See R. Skorowski, "Polacy, Kaszubi, Niemci i komuniści," *Głos* (Warsaw), October 22, 29 and November 5, 2005. Characteristically, a man named Matys, who became the terror of the ghetto in Izbica, received the protection of the local Gwardia Ludowa and Armia Ludowa leader whom he supplied with arms, and thus avoided the death sentence passed on him by the non-Communist Polish underground. Matys served a prison sentence for his crimes after the war and was ostracized by the community. See Piotr Rudnicki "Borowiak," "Na Lubelszczyźnie," in Stanisław Durlej and Janusz Gmitruk, eds., *Zbrodnie hitlerowskie na wsi polskiej w latach 1939–1945* (Kielce: Ludowe Towarzystwo Naukowo-Kulturalne Oddział w Kielcach, and Warsaw: Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego, 2008), 315–17.

[256] Bechta, *Rewolucja, mit, bandytyzm,* 81–100. This valuable source also describes robberies and rapes that forest Jews experienced at the hands of Soviet and Gypsy bands. Ibid., 84. For additional examples of assaults and robberies by Russian partisans in this area see Gitel Donath, *My Bones Don't Rest in Auschwitz: A Lonely Battle to Survive German Tyranny* (Montreal: Kaplan, 1999), 103.

[257] Wołkonowski, *Okręg Wileński Związku Walki Zbrojnej Armii Krajowej w latach 1939–1945,* 85; Chodakiewicz, *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne,* 314 n.149.

five members of the National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*—NSZ). At least a dozen other Poles on their hit list were spared because they fled and could not be found. As could be expected, this was *followed* by retaliation by the National Armed Forces against the perpetrators, however, Ajzenman himself eluded punishment. This was to be a major turning point in relations between the National Armed Forces and the Communist partisans. Ajzenman was sentenced to death by the People's Guard for common banditry but again escaped punishment. (After the war, Ajzenman entered the State Security Office and embellished his partisan unit's war record with fantastic claims of combat actions against the Germans. He continued to commit crimes such as robbery and rape, for which he lost his position and served a sentence of less than a month. He was employed in various positions under the assumed name of Julian Kaniewski.)[258]

In vicinity of the Wyszków forest, the Polish population was terrorized by raids conducted by Soviet and Communist People's Guard partisans. The latter included some well-to-do gravediggers who had escaped from the Warsaw ghetto alongside members of the Jewish Fighting Organization (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa—ŻOB*). According to Communist sources, the gravediggers were rapacious plunderers who even aroused the enmity of their fellow Jews to the point of the latter wanting to "get rid of them at any price and to liquidate them." According to another Communist source, one of the Jewish groups (likely the Growas group mentioned below), which contained many former ghetto policemen, broke away and behaved like bandits. It is not surprising that relations with the local population and Home Army partisans proved to be problematic. The killing of some Jewish partisans in the Wyszków forest has been attributed in Holocaust literature to the Home Army or alternatively to the National Armed Forces, even though the latter did not operate in the area. Merdek Growas' group was most probably murdered by a band of partisans belonging to *Miecz i Pług* (Sword and Plow), a radical organization that turned bandit and was later eliminated by the Home Army. However, Jewish sources do not mention that it was the Communist partisans who initiated the conflict with the Polish partisans by joining in a treacherous assault on a Home Army commander, which was followed by Polish retaliation. Another source of problems for both Jews and Poles were former

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[258] Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 95; Leszek Żebrowski, "Mord w Drzewicy: Nieznane karty komunistycznej partyzantki," *Słowo–Dziennik Katolicki,* July 1–3, 1994; Leszek Żebrowski, "Spór o mord w Drzewicy," *Gazeta Polska,* January 5, 1995; Żebrowski, *Paszkwil Wyborczej,* 99 n.1; Żebrowski, "Działalność tzw. band pozorowanych jako metoda zwalczania podziemia niepodległościowego w latach 1944–1947," in *Skryte oblicze systemu komunistycznego*, 77; Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR,* vol. 2, 124–31; Piotr Gontarczyk, "Mord w Drzewicy (22 stycznia 1943 r.): Przyczynek do badań nad rzeczywistym obrazem konfliktów pomiędzy polskim podziemiem niepodległościowym a komunistami," *Biuletyn Kwartalny Radomskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego,* nos. 3–4 (1999): 89–106; Leszek Żebrowski, "Kaniewski Julian," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2002), vol. 9, 113–15; Leszek Żebrowski, "To nie była 'wojna domowa': Jeden czerwony życiorys," *Nasza Polska,* July 29, 2003 and August 5, 2003; Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 175 n.30, 184–86, 283–84, 417; Aleksandra Bańkowska, "Polish Partisan Formations during 1942–1944 in Jewish Testimonies," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials,* vol. 1 (2008): 121. Jewish historians misrepresent the circumstances of the massacre in Drzewica (Shmuel Krakowski, for example, claims it was an assault on a German police post), and allege that it was the National Armed Forces (NSZ) who first attacked Ajzenman's detachment. They also embellish Ajzenman's wartime accomplishments. See Stefan [Shmuel] Krakowski, "Żydzi w oddziałach partyzanckich Gwardii Ludowej i Armii Ludowej na Kielecczyźnie," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (Warsaw), nos. 65–66 (1968): 55–58; Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Europe,* 426; Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed,* 107–8. There are other reports about robber bands containing Jews and Soviets such as Lebioda and Lepierz as well as purely Jewish groups engaged in robbery in the area north of Kielce. See Wojciech Jerzy Muszyński, "The Polish Nationalists: A Mainly Theoretical Anti-Jewishness," in Chodakiewicz, Muszyński, and Styrna, *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold,* 317.

Ukrainian guards from the Treblinka death camp who were recruited by the People's Guard based near Wyszków.[259] This was not a unique occurrence. Former guards from Bełżec and Majdanek were known to

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[259] The Jews who made their way to Wyszków forest (some 60 kilometres northeast of Warsaw), with the help of the People's Guard (GL), after the failed revolt in the Warsaw ghetto of April 1943, consisted of members of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) and also included the so-called Pinkert group, gravediggers who had amassed considerable wealth in the ghetto. Along with the Jewish police, they were accused of being hyenas, digging up recently buried bodies to extract gold crowns and fillings and steal jewels and shrouds. See Stanislaw Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto, 1940–1943: An Account of a Witness, the Memoirs of Stanislaw Adler* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1982), 258; Charles G. Roland, *Courage Under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 47; Itamar Levin, *Walls Around: The Plunder of Warsaw Jewry during World War II and Its Aftermath* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2004), 98; Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 102–103. Yitzhak Zuckerman states that they "also made money by roaming around the streets and abandoned buildings … even during the first days of the Uprising." See Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory,* 397–402. Some of them had allegedly collaborated with the Germans. Soon after their arrival in Wyszków, the Pinkert group became notorious for robbing and terrorizing the local population. According to Communist reports, they so aroused the enmity of their fellow Jewish partisans that the latter wanted "to get rid of them at any price and to liquidate them." See Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 103; Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL–AL i PPR,* vol. 1, 110, n.3, vol. 2, 72–84. Likely some of them were eliminated by the People's Guard. The ghetto fighters who had been incorporated into a newly formed People's Guard were armed with weapons (having brought with them 28 rifles destined for but not used in the ghetto revolt); they too carried out robberies on the local population, even though they had sufficient funds to purchase food and did not need to resort to such measures to survive. According to Zuckerman, "I supplied them with money; there was no question of money then." Zuckerman explains that their robbery was "selective": "One of the things customary with our people was not to take money or property from sympathetic villages, not to steal or use weapons to acquire things, but to pay good money. But if they came on unsympathetic villages … they behaved differently." In other words, if the partisans acted decently and paid with the money they had, the villagers were considered sympathetic; the remaining villagers—the so-called "hostile" ones—could be plundered mercilessly. See Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory,* 397–402, 477–78. See also Żebrowski, *Paszkwil Wyborczej,* 113–16; Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 102–103; Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe,* 413; Zivia Lubetkin, *In the Days of Destruction and Revolt* (Israel: Beit Lohamei Haghettaot–Ghetto Fighters' House and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1981), 259, 305; Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed,* 135–36; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej,* 2nd ed., 286; Michał Grynberg, *Żydzi w rejencji ciechanowskiej 1939–1942* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), 121–22; Roman T. Gerlach, "Ani niedźwiedzi, ani lasu ani nic: Tragedia getta warszawskiego," *Zeszyty Historyczne,* no. 150 (1996): 3–21; Aleksandra Bańkowska, "Polish Partisan Formations during 1942–1944 in Jewish Testimonies," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 103–22 at 113, 119, 120; Dariusz Libionka, "ZWZ-AK i Delegatura Rządu RP wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich," in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 97–98, 181, and ibid., 619; Testimony of Jan Załęski, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/1818 cited in Diatłowicki, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 1, 214 (Załęski accuses the break-away group led by "Ignac Gajowy" of banditry).

The People's Guard, who were desperate for recruits, also accepted into their ranks some Ukrainian guards who had deserted their posts at Treblinka; these former death camp guards became notorious for their robberies and assaults on the local population, as well as for harassing Jewish partisans and Jews hiding in the forest. When the Soviet army arrived, the Jewish partisans denounced them to a Soviet-Jewish commander and they were promptly assembled and executed. Many Jewish partisans in Wyszków forest were killed as a result of frequent German raids in the area. After taking part in a People's Guard operation against the Home Army, in which a friendly Polish (AK) commander was ambushed and killed, Communist partisans (among them Jews) faced retaliation from the AK, or more precisely by the KN–AK (*Konfederacja Narodu*), a group led by of Bolesław Piasecki which had subordinated itself to the AK. (After the war, a Jewish revenge group murdered Piasecki's teenage son, about which there is more later.) See Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 102–103; Barbara Engelking, *Na łące popiołów: Ocaleni z Holocaustu* (Warsaw: Cyklady, 1993), 159 (testimony of Irena Tarłowska); Żebrowski, *Paszkwil Wyborczej*, 110–17; Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR,* vol. 1 (1997), 108–110, 128–30, vol. 2 (1997), 72–84, and vol. 3 (1999), 79–82; Bechta, *Rewolucja, mit, bandytyzm,* 97; Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 251–52, 288. The execution of the Home Army commander was part of a pattern of treachery that the Soviet partisans, reinforced by Polish Jews in their ranks, had embarked on in the summer of 1943 in the Wilno area. Coupled with the many violent attacks on the civilian population in the course of gathering food and other provisions, open conflict developed between Jewish and Polish partisans. The conflict was not inevitable. According to one report, two young Jewish men who were passed from farmer to farmer in the village of Zdziebórz, near Wyszków, were accepted into the Home Army. See Krystian Brodacki, "Musimy ich uszanować!" *Tygodnik Solidarność,* December 17, 2004. Strangely, the claim, often repeated in Holocaust literature, that the murder of Merdek Growas's group was the work of the National Armed Forces (NSZ) came into being despite the fact that

have killed Jews after joining the Chapayev detachment of Soviet partisans in the Lublin District.[260]

Robbery—often accompanied by violence or the threat of violence—was widespread, as Jewish partisans themselves concede. This occurred even when partisans had money to acquire food and had no need to resort to brutal tactics. A partisan from the Jewish "Adolf" partisan unit, operating in the southern part of the Lublin province, provides a clear and succinct description of their activities:

> Jews from the nearby villages made up the bulk of the unit. They often fought battles, they robbed in order to gain provisions. The food was generally good, due to the energy of the partisans.[261]

In December 1942, a Jewish band came at night to rob a Polish estate in Przytoczno, near Kock, northwest of Lublin, that belonged to a landowner named Kazimierz Kuszel (Kuszell). When the landowner came to the defence of his daughter's honour, he was murdered by the robbers. The Kuszels were sheltering several Jews in their home at the time. In the environs of Kraśnik, groups of Jews attacked well-to-do Polish families. Not only did they rob their homes, but they killed some of them and made off with a few young women.

Violence begot violence. A group of Jews who escaped from Radzyń Podlaski formed a partisan group led by Yitzhak Kleinman, and lived in bunkers in a forest not far from the village of Stara Wieś. In March 1942, they robbed a small dairy processing plant located on a landowner's estate near that village and killed the German-appointed director. Containers of cheese and butter were hauled away by horse and wagon and shared with their comrades in the forest. Soon after, German gendarmes captured one of the bunkers and shot the Jews hiding there. Kleinman's group decided to take revenge on the peasant believed to have reported the bunker to the Germans. One night armed partisans descended on his home, locked everything from the outside and set it on fire. The peasant and his entire family perished in the flames.[262]

Leibl (Lejb) Goldberg, a native of Międzyrzec Podlaski, describes a pattern of robberies his Jewish forest group engaged in, pretending to be Russian partisans (unpersuasively), which sometimes descended to the

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[260] Testimony of Marian Szarach in Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 3, 268; Testimony of Marian Szarach, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/5344.

[261] Hersz Broner's testimony is cited in John Lowell Armstrong, "The Polish Underground and the Jews: A Reassessment of Home Army Commander Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski's Order 116 Against Banditry," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 72, no. 2 (April 1994): 273. Tuwie Miller, the commander of the Jewish police in Parysów, near Garwolin, used threats to obtain weapons from villagers and then forced them to supply his forest group with food. A local Home Army commander protected him nonetheless. See Dariusz Libionka, "Polska konspiracja wobec eksterminacji Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim," Engelking, Leociak and Libionka, *Prowincja noc,* 491–92.

Janusz Gmitruk, Arkadiusz Indraszczyk, and Adam Koseski, eds., *Pro Memoria (1941–1944): Raporty Departamentu Informacji Delegatury Rządu RP na Kraj o zbrodniach na narodzie polskim* (Warszawa and Pułtusk: Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego w Warszawie and Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna im. Aleksandra Gieysztora, 2004/2005), 399. See also Jadwiga Rytlowa, Story of Rescue: The Kuszell Family, June 2012, The Polish Righteous, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/stories-of-rescue/story-rescue-kuszell-family>.

[262] Tzvi Leiberson, "Radzyner Jews in Partisan Groups," in Yitzchak Zigelman, ed., *Radzyn Memorial Book,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/radzyn/radzyn.html>; translation of I. Siegelman, ed., *Sefer Radzin* (Tel Aviv: Council of Former Residents of Radzyń (Podlaski) in Israel, 1957), 306–308.

level of outright terrorization of the impoverished local population. Ocasionally, they met with defiance from peasants who were being robbed and encountered Polish partisans who came to protect the villagers from repeated raids.

> We headed toward a lone house standing in the field. A lamp was lit in one of the windows. I stopped near the house and my colleagues stood a little farther away. With feigned energy I started knocking on the door and called out [in Russian], "Open up." The window opened and a frightened voice answered, "Please, please." A woman handed two five-kilo loaves of bread through the window." I yelled, "Too little, give more." … Leaving I asked the woman whether Russians came here. She answered that they did and that people were afraid of them. Now we knew how to behave. We went away. We had 12 kilos of bread. My colleagues became bolder. We approached the next house which was also located off the beaten track. Here too I yelled [in Russian], "Open up" and knocked loudly. I entered the house first, and behind me Moshe Sztajbnerg. The rest stood sentry outside. In order to scare the residents I said in Russian, "We have automatic weapons. I'll shoot anyone who leaves the house." When the householders were sufficiently frightened, we searched the house. The house was well off. We found bread, half a metre of buckwheat, and flour. … In the same way we worked our way through five more houses. We took away full bags. Each one weighed at least 150 kilos. They were full of food with a large quantity of bread. We marched back with joy and pride. …
>
> We decided to secure coal for the entire winter. Observing the surroundings we noticed that a worker from the power station … had amassed many bricks of coal. We calculated that we needed 1,000 bricks for three months. We went to his house. … It was dark in the house … We went to the stable which was near the house, tore off the lock with a staple and entered inside. … Most of all we took potatoes and garlic and hid them not far from our hideout. I stood sentry when the others left with the potatoes. Suddenly it became light in the house. Apparently the householders had heard us. Thinking what to do now I said loudly and emphatically, "I'll at one shoot anyone who leaves the residence." It became dark in the house. My colleagues returned. … Everyone again loaded up some bricks [of coal] and we went back and forth three times. We set the bricks not far from our hideout. Standing sentry I noticed there was an opening in the stable leading to the attic. I understood that there must be something there. When my colleagues returned I said, "Moshe, climb up and see what's there." He climbed up and said that there was about a meter of onions, two down-filled pillows and some underclothes. I ordered abruptly, "Take everything down." … We took everything to that same place. …
>
> We decided to make our third round in a remote colony of the same village. We heard the sound of music in the village which was coming from one house. … Lozer [Potaż] and I looked through the window into the house while the others waited at a distance. Through the window I saw some couples dancing. … Suddenly someone left the house and started to call his dog. … The Christian became visibly frightened of us and asked us not to cause a commotion. He brought us some milk but we didn't want to drink. You could hear music from a record player in the house … I entered inside. Fear descended on all those gathered in the residence. The girls went to another room. … Moshe and Lozer also entered the residence holding their hands on their holsters to give the impression that they had weapons. I saw that it made an impression on everyone. I yelled, "Play a tango." They played a tango right away but the girls were afraid of dancing with me. The boys

pushed them toward me by force. After dancing with one for a few minutes I said, "There's something wrong with her, give me another." Moshe also wanted to dance. I gave an order, "We're leaving!"

We went to the first better looking cottage and knocked on the door. It was opened immediately. We took a sack of buckwheat and bread and left. Not far from us we heard yelling, "Hurrah, Jews, hurrah," but no one had the courage to come closer to us. We realized that it would not be good to work in this village. …

We kept returning to the village of Sitno. We felt more sure of ourselves with a rifle. Entering a house we asked the owner, "What's your name?" He answered Jan, for example. Then looking deep into his eyes, I said, for example, "No, your name is Wacław." In order to frighten him some more I took a German cartridge out of my pocket and inserted it into my Russian rifle … This always worked. The Christian in these cases would always fall on his knees in front of me and cry, "Sir, my name is Jan," and he would show me various documents to convince me. I waited precisely for that. Then I said politely, "If you are Wacław, you will live." In these situations his wife and children would also cry a great deal. When everyone was sufficiently terrified I conducted a search during which we always found some flour, grease, and buckwheat. … When the Christian saw us on the other side of his door he thanked God and bid us farewell for the road. …

Our next raid was in Sitno, for meat. I stood sentry with my rifle. My colleagues entered the cowshed and tied up a pig. Suddenly, at a distance of 20 steps, I noticed someone lighting a cigarette. I aimed the rifle in his direction but the dim light immediately disappeared. I went to my colleagues and said, "We have to be careful, they're getting something ready for us." … Suddenly I heard a voice and a shot from a pistol in my direction. I ran to my colleagues and yelled, "We have to run, they're going to shoot at us!" We left the pig that was tied up and ran away. They kept shooting at us. All of the roads were staked out. We chanced on a side road which we took in the direction of the town. Thinking that we came from the forest, they had not staked out that road. We didn't return to that village anymore. Not wanting to return home empty-handed, we made a detour from the main road to several houses and again brought back some food, grease and vodka. …

Two days later we went on another foray. We decided to start in a remoter colony of the same village. We arrived at the first cottage. They opened [the door] for us. We took some bread, some food and went to the next house. They didn't want to open [the door] for us. But when the owner looked out the window and saw a rifle he softened and opened right away. I entered the house with Moshe. Here we also took bread and meat. We heard a strange pounding. I thought that someone was in the attic and that it was the echo of their footsteps, but suddenly the peasant threw himself on his knees in front of us and yelled, "Run away, save us!" They though that Germans were coming. They were afraid that if they encountered Jews they would kill them too. But these were Polish partisans. We left. They shot many rounds of gunfire at us. They were evidently waiting for us because the previous night we had taken a pig here. We escaped through the courtyard. …

At night we went to Rogoźnica to [Lozer Potaz's] friend, a Christian. We thought we would get something more from him but he only gave us a small piece of bread, saying he didn't have more. We rested in his barn all day and at night we went out to look for bread. We knocked on [the doors of] several homes. They handed us bread through the window. We had enough for ourselves. We approached a cottage where we had been several times. As usual, after knocking, we asked for a piece of bread. The inhabitants started to yell, "These are the Jews." Immediately people appeared from all ends and started to run in our direction. We went into the grain and from there into a small

forest where there were enormous pools. We threw our sack into a ditch and ran farther. As we ran we heard a few shots.[263]

Initial friendly relations often withered away over time, as was the case in the area northwest of Lublin, where the familiar cycle was repeated. Alter Roset, who together with his family was hidden in a dug-out in the barn of a Polish farmer, recalled:

> Apart from our family which was composed of six people, there were several other Jewish families who, like us, survived the war in hideouts in Płouszowice. …
>
> In the vicinity of Płouszowice several Jews started up a partisan group under the leadership of one Mordechaj [Kiersztenbaum or Kirszenbaum], called Marcinek from Markuszów. Marcinek and his partisan group, which included Jews from Lublin, kept attacking [the cottages of] peasants and forced them to hand over arms and food. The peasants had to carry out their orders but looked for ways to get rid of him.
>
> One day when the entire partisan group came to the home of one of the peasants, that peasant sent his daughter to inform the Germans …
>
> The Germans immediately surrounded the house and started to shoot the partisans with their machine guns. Only Marcinek, the leader, managed to escape the gunfire and hide in a nearby barn. …
>
> When Marcinek saw that the Germans had left, he left the barn several hours later. Then some peasants armed with axes and scythes threw themselves at him, but, with the help of a few grenades he had on him, Marcinek killed around fifteen peasants, and forced the others to flee. Then, out of revenge, he set fire to several cottages.
>
> Fleeing from there, he came across of the members of his partisan group named Icchok, who also managed to escape the Germans' gunfire.
>
> They learned about our hideout and came to us. We hid both of them. But the peasants found out about this and wanted to force our host to turn all of us over.
>
> Our peasant did not want to turn us over, and only later when he and his family started to get threats did he tell us to leave the hideout. …
>
> We remained in the village wandering around for six weeks until the peasant took us back.[264]

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[263] Memoir of Lajbusz (Łajbł) Goldberg, December 18, 1946, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 302/95. After the war, Goldberg sought the protection of Soviet officials in order to carry out revenge against Poles who had allegedly wronged Jews during the German occupation and against members of the Polish anti-Soviet underground. See also his testimony under the name of Lejb Goldberg, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/3502, referred to later. Goldberg's colleague, Lozer Potaż, was killed in Czemierniki in unclear circumstances, together with a Jew from Radzyń Podlaski named Hershel Ponczak. See also Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 165.

[264] Alter Roset, "Grupa partyzantów spod Płouszowic," in Kopciowski, *Księga pamięci żydowskiego Lublina,* 348–50; translation of *Dos bukh fun Lublin* (Paris: Former Residents of Lublin in Paris, Paris, 1952). See also the testimony of Rubin Rosset (Alter's father), December 16, 1997, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 37105. A Polish family, the Mazurs, who sheltered 13 Jews in Płouszowice was recognized by Yad Vashem. See Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 4: *Poland,* Part 1, 501–2; The Mazur Family, The Polish Righteous, Internet: <https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/historie-pomocy/historia-pomocy-rodzina-mazurow>.

In his memoir, Samuel Gruber ("Mietek"), the leader of a Jewish partisan group in that same area, wrote:

> Why not see what we could get from these peasants?
>
> We followed Genek's suggestion with dispatch. Some of the peasants gave us a little difficulty. They belonged to the *Armja [Armia] Krajowa* … The result was that we had to administer a few good beatings to those peasants before we could get any weapons at all. But in some instances my one pistol, brandished with the proper gestures into a slow-witted peasant's face, was sufficient. Our forays into the countryside near the Garbowky [Garbów] Forest yielded us a grand total of ten rifles and about a dozen rounds of ammunition. …
>
> Not long before, we had lost another one of our group: Kaganovich. He had gone with Szengut, Tolka, and some of the Markuszow [Markuszów] men to get weapons from the Poles. They were stopped by a German patrol. … Among the dead was Kaganovich. The next morning we went into the forest to bury him. We took away with us his personal possessions, his gun, his wrist watch, his cigarette lighter and some gold coins. …
>
> Worse, the peasants in the area became increasingly hostile. … [they] did not take kindly to the idea that they should be called upon to feed Jews. More often than not, our men approaching a farmhouse would be met by ferocious dogs. Some of the peasants organized themselves into a self-defense force to keep the Jewish partisans away. [In actual fact, these measures were taken against all marauders without distinction.—*M.P.*] …
>
> One night two of our men, [Yitzhak] Morel and Shmuel Topper carrying his precious machine gun, led a small group on a food-gathering mission to a village where we had always been given a friendly reception. But this time our comrades suddenly found themselves surrounded by Poles and a pack of vicious, snarling dogs. Before they could regain their wits, Morel and Shmuel had their machine gun taken from them and found themselves forced against a wall. The Poles opened fire on them. The others in the group escaped, but Morel and Shmuel were killed.
>
> The news sent our whole camp into an uproar. We decided to take drastic action. Jaeger and I led a patrol of 20 men, including a band of Markuszow boys under Sever Rubinstein, to the village. We ordered all the villagers out of their houses and herded them together into the village square. … After we had cleared the village of its entire population, including horses, cows and birds, we set fire to the barns and houses. Within hours, the village had been reduced to a pile of rubble. On the way back to our camp, we scattered some crudely lettered on the road, telling what we had done to that particular village, and why. …
>
> And so, on February 9, 1943, … we left Drop's farm [a helpful Polish—*M.P.*] and plodded through the snow to the nearby village of Pryzcowa-Gura [Pryszczowa Góra]. There we knew several peasants who had, in fact, given us shelter on other occasions. We were in luck, for this time, too, they readily took us in for the night. …
>
> It seems that the villagers [in Pryszczowa Góra, where the Jewish partisans had killed a Polish boy whose father allegedly reported their presence to the Germans—*M.P.*] took the words of their priest [who urged the villagers to provide food to the partisans and not to report them to the Germans, as they were enjoined to, until they left the village—*M.P.*] to heart, for the next day they treated us with unusual deference and hospitality. They gave us food, clothing, and even shoes … However, this was not enough for some of our men. They went out on their own and, instead of asking peasants for what they wanted, acted the part of thieves and holdup men.

One of our boys was in the habit of going out, armed with a revolver and rifle, to hold up farmsteads in the area, demanding food, clothing and money. … But even our friends did not like being held up for what they might have given us of their own free will, and they gave us a full and angry report of his activities. …

We had made friends also with some Polish non-Jews, particularly in a hamlet called Przypisowka [Przypisówka, a village whose inhabitants were known for their pillaging—*M.P.*]. Nearly every boy from that village had, at one time or other, gone out into the woods to help the partisans. These youngsters were quite a different breed …[265]

Early in the summer of 1943 we had an unpleasant incident with the "A.K." A small group of our men, including Jaeger and myself, had gone into one of the villages [pillaging] for food … Somehow, the "A.K." unit in the area got wind of our whereabouts and they opened fire on us … We returned the fire and the shooting went on for almost half the day. … At any rate, luck was with us, and none of our men was hurt. But we wanted to find out who had put the "A.K." on our trail. We had our answer. …

We called on our Polish friends from the village of Przypisowka for help. They promptly came to our aid and before long we had flushed out all the troublemakers. The man [who had been robbed] who had caused our recent trouble with the "A.K." confessed without too much prodding. We shot him right then and there, and buried him in the woods. As for the other spies, our men tracked them down to their homes, where they made short shrift of them. …

Another time, we found that we were being followed by a group of boys on bicycles. … We gave the boys a proper grilling and proceeded to beat them up. In no time at all, they broke down and told us that they had been under orders from a German task force set up expressly for spying on partisans. They said that they were not Poles but Ukrainians. …

But at the moment these young Ukrainians who had trailed us apparently had little heart for killing. They turned tail. Yet we captured them all and shot them. Zelazny Eisenberg, who was strong as an ox, picked up one of them bodily, lifted him above his head and flung him to the ground before putting a bullet through him.

After this incident, we moved to another locality … Here, the Poles actually behaved as friends, keeping us informed of all German movements in the neighborhood. …

… Another one of our men, Issar, asked to be let loose in Markuszow, where he had quite a few friends. There, he said, he would have a field day roughing up any Germans or "A.K." members he might find. …

We took David and his wife Bela and her sister Blimka to the village of Wola-Przybyskowska [Wola Przybysławska] where friendly farmers would take care of our wounded. …

I proposed that my own small group should look for a farmstead and stop there for a rest. Before long, we saw a likely place. We knocked at the door and were invited in at once [likely by a fearful farmer—*M.P.*]

Inside we settled down to an impromptu party as we usually did after a successful operation. We always carried in our baggage a supply of sausage and vodka, obtained as gifts, or loot, from affluent farmers …

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[265] Compare with Chodakiewicz, *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne,* 138, who describes the circumstances of, and the fall-out from, an attack by the Home Army on the Communist partisan base in Przypisówka, a village known for its plundering.

> We had in our unit a young man who happened to be a cousin of Franek [Efraim] Blaichman. Somehow, this young man had got hold of a bicycle from one of the farm boys in the area, and took to riding around on it. … bicycles were not often seen about those regions during that period. … And so it happened that one of our men [Jankel Klerer], seeing Blaichman's cousin from a distance riding on a bicycle, mistook him for a Nazi spy and opened fire. Luckily, the man's aim was not accurate, and Franek Levin [Froim Lewin] was only wounded in the arm. … The wound was very serious, and Franek Levin never regained the full use of his arm. …
>
> Mietek [i.e., Communist partisan leader Mieczysław Moczar] borrowed some of our men for a special mission: to teach a lesson to a gang of Ukrainian and Lithuanian collaborators who were ambushing partisans in the village of Jamne [Jamy]. The men picked for the mission included Sever Rubinstein, Franek Blaichman and Bolek Alef [Bolkowiak] … There had been a full-scale battle, in which many of the Germans and their collaborators were killed. None of our own men had been hurt. …
>
> Some of our men volunteered to go back to our former bases west of Wieprz [River], raid some of the more affluent farmers and take the horses. … I felt they would be risking their lives for no good reason. Still, a large group of our men disregarded my advice and went out to look for horses. They took some fine saddled horses … and set out to rejoin us.[266]

Unlike Samuel Gruber, the aforementioned Franek (Frank) Blaichman, whose partisan group joined Gruber's group in June 1943, does not mention in his memoir taking part in any robberies of local farmers or the use of force to obtain arms from them (allegedly the farmers provided arms willingly). He does recall that his group was accused of such robberies by the local leaders of the Home Army, "which was fiercely anti-Semitic."[267] From his description of the encounters with the Home Army, however, one can infer that the measures taken against the Jewish partisans were in response to raids on farms, which the Home Army tried to curtail, and not because of alleged "orders from London that no Jew should be permitted to survive," which historians know never existed.

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[266] Gruber, *I Chose Life,* 52–53, 54, 55–56, 77, 83–84, 85–86, 88–89, 90, 92, 97, 100, 107, 112–13, 119. Gruber's unit eventually joined up with Chil Grynszpan's partisans in the Parczew forest and became the deputy commander, while Franek (Frank, Efraim) Blaichman was a platoon commander. Grynszpan affiliated with the People's Guard, which was later transformed into the People's Army. Grynszpan, Gruber and Blaichman were appointed lieutenants. Ibid., 128, 136. According to Blaichman, "Everyone received a job according to his ability, so we were treated very fairly, I couldn't say that we had any discrimination whatsoever." See the interview with Frank Bleichman (Blaichman), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, February 10, 1992. The shooting of Froim Lewin by Jankel Klerer is also described in Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting,* 71.

[267] Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting,* 62. Blaichman also claims that the 27th Division of the Home Army, originally formed in Volhynia, had to be warned not to attack Jews when it moved into the Parczew forest area. Ibid., 119. In fact, many Jews had already joined that formation in Volhynia. See Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews 1941–1944,* 257–68. Blaichman describes the National Armed Forces as "ultra-nationalist, anti-Communist, anti-Semitic partisans who followed Nazi orders." Ibid., 63. He accuses the NSZ of killing a group of Jewish partisans in Borów forest, south of Lublin, on September 9, 1943. Ibid., 106. In fact, the NSZ struck at a People's Guard unit composed mostly of local Polish bandits on August 9, 1943. See Rafał Jan Drabik, *Wydarzenia pod Borowem z 9 sierpnia 1943 r.: Rzeczywistość i oblicze polityczno-propagandowe* (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski—Wydział Nauk Humanistycznych, Instytut Historii, 2002), 71–73; posted on the Internet at: <http://members.fortunecity.co.uk/ak/dr/tytul.htm>; Rafał Drabik, "Wydarzenia pod Borowem," *Glaukopis*, no. 1 (2003): 115–43; Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 285–87.

> About ten days after this meeting, thirty of us were traveling from one village to another in five horse-drawn carriages. There were some trees and houses about fifty feet off to one side of the road. Suddenly, shots rang out. Someone was shooting at the lead wagon. We all jumped down, spread out, and started to return fire, though it was hard to make out where the shooters were. The exchange of fire went on for maybe a quarter of an hour. Then we waited, listening, and heard people running. We ran after them, shooting as we ran. We killed two of them—we saw their bodies sprawled on the ground as we ran—and flushed out the others, who had tried to hide behind a couple of sheds. When they saw that they were outnumbered, they dropped their guns. We had expected men. These were just young punks.
>
> Under questioning, they said that they were members of the AK, the anti-Semitic Home Army. They had been ordered to kill us because we were Jews and because we robbed farms. They said that their local leaders had received orders from London that no Jew should be permitted to survive to bear witness to the events of the war. We persuaded the punks to tell us who their leaders were. When we were done with our interrogation, we decided not to kill them because they were so young and we had suffered no casualties. We let them go, warning them that, if we caught them again, they wouldn't escape so lightly.[268]

Moreover, not all the problems the Jewish partisans experienced were occasioned by Polish partisans. One of their main foes were informers employed by the Germans as spies.[269] These informers also struck fear in the local population. Any informant who fell into the hands of the Jewish partisans was, according to Blaichman, executed after breaking down during interrogation.

> … we were raided again from the Germans, and there were 3 Polish collaborators spearheading the raid. They were walking with baskets, and make believe that they are looking for mushrooms or things like that in the forest, and looking for partisans. They didn't know that we have firearms. And the Germans were several hundred yards behind them. … we captured 2 out of 3, one escaped. … At night we began to interrogate those guys, and we uncovered from them a gold mine of information. They told us everything what we wanted to know … Those guys were recruited by the Germans, and put in place before prior to the deportations, and they were supposed to report to the Germans who is helping a Jew first, and then who is selling off illegal farm products … and then,

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[268] Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting,* 63–64. At a later point, Blaichman nuances the charge leveled against the Home Army as "a relentless campaign to kill Jews and prevent the AL [Communist Armia Ludowa] and other leftist groups from coming to power after the war." Ibid., 97. At another point, he describes how members of the Grynszpan group (among them Leon (Yehuda) Lerner) shot at him and other Jewish partisans, having mistaken them for AK. Ibid., 115. Blaichman also mentions that he accidentally shot aand killed a fellow Jewish partisan named Furman, and that Isser Rosenberg, the commander of the Kamionka group, was was accidentally killed by his best friend, Michael Loterstein. Ibid., 67, 85–86. He also mentions that the AL nearly executed, as suspected "spies," two Jews captured near Ostrów Lubelski, Joseph Cynowiec and his girlfriend Irka. Ibid., 133. Other versions of Frank Blaichman's wartime exploits can be found in an interview recorded for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., on February 10, 1992, online at: <http://www.jewishpartisans.org/pdfs/study_guide_3A.pdf>, and in Adam Dickter, "Partisans Fight for Place in History," *The Jewish Week,* April 5, 2002.

[269] The pervasive fear of spies on the part of the Soviet partisans, described in Part Two, is also found in Jewish accounts. For example, Oskar Gelles, who joined the Home Army, repeatedly refers to the Home Army being infiltrated by German spies during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. See his account in Diatłowicki and Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce,* vol. 2, 221–23.

> who's a communist. They were involved in everything. So they went undercover, they were walking around everyday to the villages, and threatening people that anybody who will help a ew will be killed on the spot with [his] whole family. They also gave us addresses for others who were working with them together. …
>
> And we captured that time as many as 8. 6 plus those 2. And we interrogate them, and we found that they all were involved in those raids, and capturing Jews, and killing Jews, and we punished them, accordingly. And from that day on, … the whole neighborhood had changed, the whole area. We … sent a message to those killers, that they cannot escape without being punished what [for] they were doing. There was a mixed reaction among the people because the Poles knew exactly who those guys were. But they were handicapped, they couldn't do nothing. They were afraid for German reprisals and things like that. We had no choice. We had to what we had to do in order to stay alive. And then we learned from this here, what's truly happening among the population. Before, when we, after we escaped, … and we were in the forest, we really couldn't understand what [was] happening. The people were chasing us away like dogs. We went to buy food in the villages, they sounded an alarm, with pots and pans … And we were running … then we understood why these things [were] happening because those people were threatening all the time, from those collaborators, and that's why they were afraid. After that, they opened up, people started to talk, start to be open more, and helping us.[270]

Another account of the exploits of the well-armed Markuszów group was penned by Shiye Goldberg, a member of the Bełżyce group also active in that same region. After an initial period of good relations with the Home Army in Jastków,[271] relations with the local farmers soured as plundering intensified and the Germans exacted harsh punishment on farmers for helping Jews.

> I found several Jews who had fled from the estate, the girl Slawa among them. They had already managed to build a bunker, where they placed the typhus victims. A huge pit was dug in the field belonging to a peasant woman. Her husband was working in France and she was at home with her two sons. The pit was dug with great skill. A tunnel led to another tunnel, large enough to wiggle through, and to a second pit, connected with the bunker by a third tunnel. No German could discover the hideout. The woman brought food to us.
>
> The occupants of the bunker were divided into three groups—people from Markoshew [Markuszów], Belzhetz [Bełżyce] and Kaminka [Kamionka]. I had to join the Belzhetz group, since, like its members, I had no weapon. The Markoshew group was armed and therefore enjoyed the role of leadership. …
>
> In the meantime the typhus was taking its toll in the bunker. Slawa went insane, ran to the Germans and told them that Jews hiding out. The Germans knew her from the camp and they believed her … They called on the Lublin military police. The police made short shrift of the

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[270] Interview with Frank Bleichman (Blaichman), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, February 10, 1992. See also Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting,* 52–55, 86–87.

[271] Goldberg, *The Undefeated,* 137, 168.

people there … They killed the peasant woman and one son (the other wasn't at home), destroyed the hogs and burnt down the house. We saw this from the second pit we had dug. …

We made contact with the villagers in the area and showed up in the villages in full daylight, armed. Some villages were friendly, as long as their possessions were not touched, but we had to show them that we were in control. In some cases we had to tear down or burn dwellings and the villagers were afraid of us. …

When we came to the village the farmers rang the alarm bells they had affixed to the roofs of their homes, so as to arouse the Germans: "The band is here!" Our commander was Jaeger, one of the prisoners of war. Seeing a farmer climbing up to the bell, Jaeger shot him in the arm and said:

"Next time the bullet will lodge in your skull." …

When we ran short of garments and footwear, we ascertained when and where a wedding was to be held. We broke into the celebration, ordered the farmers to lie on the ground, took their good boots and fur-lined coats and disappeared. The villagers from which we took nothing did not inform against us, out of fear. …

Whenever we needed meat, we would go to a farmhouse and knock on the door of the manager:

"We want two cows and two hogs."

… The animals were hit on the head and dropped dead. We carted them away on a sledge harnessed to one or two pairs of horses. … We sold the hide of the cow (plenty of customers for it), cut up the cow with hatchets. We arranged with a farmer to dig two pits to hold two barrels for storing the meat, drawing on it whenever we needed; the pit was deep enough to provide refrigeration even in the summer. …

I expected that the partisans [from Markuszów] would take me with them. They knew all my toils of the last months. … my friends took my pistol away and told me to get well without it. …

The partisans made off. For some reason they seemed to have millions of dollars with them, judging from what they gave the farmers as a gift as they took their leave, with fond embraces. I followed them.

"Where do you think you're going?" someone said to me … I said I would go along until we crossed the path of the Belzhetz group, which I would then rejoin. The others were adamant I was not wanted.

"Look," I pleaded. "I don't have any weapons, I'm weakened by typhus. I have lice all over me. You're abandoning me to die. Have pity! Take me along!"

One of the group, Seveck by name (a short time ago he died in America) came out:

"You fellows keep going. I'll take care of him." He went down to one knee and aimed his rifle at my head:

"I'm counting until three. Then I'll shoot you in the head. Believe me—that's exactly what I'll so."

I heard him begin counting in the seathly silence of the moonlit forest: "One—two—" More I didn't hear. With my last remaining strength, I returned to the farmer's hayloft. …

[After a German raid on a farmhouse in Tomaszowice where partisans were staying, villagers helped the wounded Jewish partisans.—*M.P.*]

The farmer returned with a horse and some news:

"You're only other survivor is in my neighbor's house with bullets in his thighs. I'll take you to him."

> The survivor was Janek or Yossl, a youth of 19. He was bandaged roughly as I was. The farmer harnessed the horse to cart and climbed up after us. I told him where to go, up to a certain point, and then asked him to stop and turn back. … Janek and I struggled on our feet, dragging ourselves until we came to the dugout. …
>
> New of what had happened spread quickly throughout the region. It seems that there was only one other survivor of our unit—Jankl Wayngarten. … In the shooting he was hit in the leg and dragged himself to the home of a farmer named Pietrak … Jankl crawled into the cellar of the house. The Germans spied him in the act. They threw hand grenades into the cellar and set the surrounding houses on fire. Then they lined up the entire Pietrak family and shot them. As news of the incident spread, the farmers took to the forest in fright. Why did the Germans kill Pietrak? He didn't even know about Jankl and the cellar. …
>
> We had been paying the farmer well for the dugout. The manner in which we got our money is another story. Not far from the village, at a place called Woleslavin [Wola Sławińska] there was a water mill. It was busy day and night. We told the miller that we were imposing a levy on him, since we had to have some income. Unless he paid tribute of so much per sack of flour, we would take the leather straps required for running the mill and sell them. We bargained a bit and an agreement was reached: so much per sack for so many sacks. … Our unit ringed the mill and one of us was sent to pick up the payment.[272]

The situation near the Skrzynice forest south of Lublin was described as follows by another Jewish partisan who stole food from farmers and robbed them at gunpoint:

> We knew we had to get arms at any cost if we were going to form a partisan unit … At night, the three of us went to the peasant Skulski looking for guns we heard he'd hidden. We threatened him and told him we knew about the hidden guns he denied having. We told him if he didn't give us the guns, we'd take his wife and children from the hut, shoot him, and burn everything down. The peasant still refused to give us the guns.
>
> Then the three of us took bundles of straw into the hut and set them on fire. His wife cried and begged Skulski to give us the guns, but he kept denying he knew anything about them. … I told my two friends to take the peasant's wife and children away … The house burned, and my friend raised his gun and shot Skulski dead. …
>
> We told the chieftain to inform the peasants in the village that if partisans came, they should surrender their guns, and if anyone informed or retaliated against the Jews in hiding, we'd put the whole countryside to the torch.[273]

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[272] Goldberg, *The Undefeated,* 164–66, 168–71, 174–75, 184–86. The woman who was killed by the Germans for sheltering Jews near Jastków was Zofia Wysmulska of Moszeńki. Her servant, Marianna Barszcz was also killed. The Jewish girl who ran from the bunker and reported the hideout did so because the Jews hiding there wanted to poison her because of her mental state. See Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 342–43. For another version of this story, see Gruber, *I Chose Life,* 96–97.

[273] Testimony of A.G. in Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution,* 167–74, here at 172. These Jewish partisans also shot dead another Pole who allegedly attacked and robbed Jews, but spared the Pole's partner, an escaped Soviet POW. Ibid., 173. This testimony also mentions that Polish peasants had taken pity on a group of Jewish women and children living in the forest, and that Yisruel Fingerkurz of Głusk "heads into the countryside to peasants he knows, and they always give him potatoes." Ibid., 168, 170–71.

Such violent encounters did not bode well for future relationships. When some villagers denounced the now armed Jewish forest group, they retaliated by killing more Poles and burning down their houses.[274]

Just to the west, in the forests near the village of Osmolice, armed Jewish groups had their share of encounters with Polish peasants, criminals posing as members of the Home Army, German forces, and Soviets units of various ilk, but not with genuine Polish partisans. One survivor who acted as a liaison for the various Jewish groups recalled:

> The first Jewish partisan groups with which I was connected came into being in autumn 1942. … in it there were the two brothers Nudel from Lublin, the brothers Nachman and others. … a Lublin boy whom we called Zduk [Zadok] … purchased the first revolver from the peasant Oleszka in Tyszewo [Tuszów] Majdan. Then he together with the young Srul, a stepbrother of the Nachmans, went off to other peasants and, threatening them with the revolver, took away a couple of rifles and some revolvers.
>
> With the weapons they went away into the forests. Soon more youths came to them and very quickly the group numbered twenty-odd men. Zduk was the leader. They joined up with a band which belonged to the "Armia Krajowa," or posed as a group of the "Armia Krajowa." … Together they also organized and carried out an attack on the Zabi-Woli [Żabia Wola] estate. …
>
> Two weeks after the attack, Zduk and a portion of his comrades had another meeting with the aforementioned band from the "Armia Krajowa" in order—they were told—to receive more arms. The band posed as "Armia Krajowa," but it was instead simply a group of bandits from before the war. They received the Jewish partisans, they treated them to poisoned liquor, and afterwards shot them. …
>
> Heniek Zimerman [Zimmerman] was the leader of the best organized and most active Jewish partisan group at that time. …

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[274] Testimony of Wolf Rauchwerg (from Mętów), Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/1446, reproduced in Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 3, 213–15. Although weapons were often taken by force, in some cases they were bought, and on at least one occasion, when apprehended by the Germans, a Pole from Mętów was betrayed by a Jew to whom he had sold a rifle, which resulted in the arrest and execution of Jan and Wawrzyniec Joć. See Adam Puławski, "Co robiło się na Mętowie," Internet: <http://www.ipn.gov.pl/portal/pl/374/4705/Co_robilo_sie_na_metowie.html>. Wolf Rauchwerg also describes how Polish farmers were conscripted to comb the forest looking for Jewish fugitives under the careful watch of the Germans, who executed any Jew who was apprehended. During one such raid, Maria Joć (the wife of the aforementioned Jan Joć) was in the forest with two of her children picking mushrooms, when a German patrol started to fire at anyone they encountered, killing her and wounding her daughter. More than a dozen villagers in Mętów, near Głusk, outside of Lublin, sheltered Jews. See Dariusz Libionka, "Polska ludność chrześcijańska wobec eksterminacji Żydów—dystrykt lubelski," in Libionka, *Akcja Reinhardt,* 325. The nearby village of Majdan Kozic Dolnych acquired a bad reputation because the Jews who took refuge there often took part in robberies and shared their booty with the villagers who sheltered them. See Adam Puławski, "Co robiło się na Mętowie," Internet: <http://www.ipn.gov.pl/portal/pl/374/4705/Co_robilo_sie_na_metowie.html>. In reprisal for the village guard's firing at a Jewish group who came to rob the village of Majdan Kozicki, a mixed Polish-Jewish-Soviet partisan unit set fire to part of the village and killed six villagers, among them a three-year-old. See Chodakiewicz, *Polacy i Żydzi 1918–1955,* 263; Tomasz Łabuszewski and Piotr Niewiński, "'Sprawa' Józefa Franczaka—czyli historia alternatywna," *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość,* no. 1 (37) 2021: 649–703, here at 658. For other reports about Jewish and mixed armed groups robbing and pillaging in the Lublin region, see Henryk Pająk, *Oni się nigdy nie poddali* (Lublin: Retro, 1997), 233; Temchin, *The Witch Doctor,* 84–87; Chodakiewicz, *Polacy i Żydzi 1918–1955,* 262– 63; Tomasz Łabuszewski and Piotr Niewiński, "'Sprawa' Józefa Franczaka—czyli historia alternatywna," *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość,* no. 1 (37) 2021: 649–703.

> Heniek Zimerman allegedly shot the 7 men from the band which had killed Zduk and his comrades. He took their weapons …
>
> When the peasant Balczuk at Tyszewo Majdan turned in the Osmolice Jew Yual (by the way Zduk's brother-in-law [Zduk had earlier threatened and robbed the Polish villagers—*M.P.*]) Heniek Zimerman set fire to his house. Balczuk tried to escape, but the partisans captured and shot him. …
>
> Heniek Zimerman fell in battle with a weapon in his hand. It happened thus: At the end of summer 1943 a strong German military unit surrounded the village of Majdan-Dembinski [Majdan Dębiński]. This was a punitive expedition against the village. They set fire to 12 houses, confiscated the grain, the swine. Zimerman and his group—altogether 16 men—were hiding on that very day in a barn in the middle of a field near the village. There Germans surrounded the barn, Zimerman and his comrades came out of the barn in order to make their way into the forest. A fight began, which lasted many hours … Reznik and a couple of others managed to get into the forest and save themselves. …
>
> It also happened that I met with the so-called "Khulbovtsy" as was called a band which used to attack, kill and rob everyone, Poles, Jews, Ruthenians. Their ataman [leader] was Fyodor [Fiodor]. In Fyodor's group there was also a Jew, a friend of mine, Berish Orbuz. …
>
> Through Berish, the group of Janek Kleinman and Dzisek also was supposed to join with Fyodor. But by good luck the union did not come about. Berish Orbuz was killed by Fyodor's hand. A few days later, Fyodor's band attacked Dzisek's group bear Zabewali [Żabia Wola] Majdan. In that fight fell among others Abraham Yitzhak Perelmuter and Berek's father. The others got away. Shortly after this the Soviet partisans put an end to Fyodor and his band.[275]

Further south, near Hrubieszów, Berko Finger recounted that a large group of Jews who escaped from Tyszowce and built hideouts in the forest could count on the help of the local population for food (which Jews usually bought or stole) and information, and that their greatest enemy were Soviet partisans, who chased the Jewish fugitives out of the forest.[276] Similarly, to the north, near Węgrów,

> two Soviet soldiers who escaped from the Germans are hiding in a bunker in the Wengrow [Węgrów] woods. Peasants bring them bread, milk, and cooked food. …
>
> Those two Russians have already killed a few Jews who wandered into their part of the forest. "We don't tolerate Yids," they say. A Jewish boy and girl were hiding in that vicinity. When they

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[275] "Evidence of Motl Shternblitz" [Mordechai Sternblitz], in M. Litvine, ed., *Dos bukh fun Lublin: Zikhroynes, gvieseyde un materyaln ibern lebn, kamf un martirertum fun Lubliner Yidishn yishev* (Paris: Parizer komitet far shafn a monografye vegn Yidishn yishev in Lublin, 1952), 549–52. See also Barkai, *The Fighting Ghettos,* 195–200.

[276] Testimony of Berko Finger, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2985. Finger also mentions a betrayal by a forester, without providing details. Foresters were required, under pain of death, to report the presence of fugitives to the German authorities. The presence of a large group of fugitives, like this one, was unlikely to escape the notice of the authorities for any length of time. Together with several other Jews, Finger wanted to enter a small work camp for Jews in Hrubieszów, but they were not admitted. One of the Jews in the camp hid the refugees in an attic. They later left when the continued existence of the camp was in jeopardy. They found their way to a large work camp for Jews in Kraśnik, where they would be beaten by a Jewish supervisor.

> heard about the two Russians, they abandoned their hideout to join them. Well, the Russians tore off their clothes and murdered them.[277]

Thousands of Jews sought refuge in the large forested area between Parczew and Włodawa, only to see their ranks dwindle rapidly because of frequent attacks by marauding Soviet partisans and German sweeps.[278] A group of escaped Soviet prisoners of war under the command of Lieutenant Fiodor Kovalov was particularly notorious for carrying out murders and robberies.[279] After its subordination to the Communist People's Guard, Kovalov's group became more restrained in its activities. It was joined by a group of Jewish partisans led by Chil (Yechiel or Yekhiel) Grynszpan. Grynszpan set up a camp for Jewish refugees, known as Tabor, in the forest near the hamlet of Ochoża. Initially, the Jews survived by begging: "They went out regularly on food forays to search for food. They would travel to a village and ask for whatever the farmers could spare. Often they came back with food and supplies."[280] The camp soon became a source of friction with the local population, however, as partisans associated with the camp were far more assertive in their provision-gathering activities.

> About four months after I had joined the partisans, I decided to go again to the Tabor and collect some food for the people there. I went with another two Jewish fellows to a few villages and loaded up two wagons with pigs which we slaughtered on the spot, and some cows which we tied on.[281]

Samuel Gruber explains how he intervened to attempt to restore good relations with the local farmers:

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[277] Rochman, *The Pit and the Trap,* 233.

[278] Assaults by Soviet partisans and German sweeps in the Parczew area are described in Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed,* 27–38. One Jewish partisan describes how Jewish partisans stole weapons from other Jewish partisans and even shot one of them in the process, and how a Soviet partisan named Kolka persuaded a group of Jewish partisans to go with him, stole their weapons, and killed three Jewish partisans who came looking for their colleagues. See the testimony of Nachum Knopfmacher, June 28, 1961, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/1787. Another Jewish partisan describes friendly relations with a Polish settlement near Jezioro Białe, but their forest bunker was attacked by Russian partisans, who killed two men, assaulted the others, and raped the women. See the testimony of Perczik Menasze, December 15, 1960, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/2053. By comparison, the Jews partisans' problems with Polish partisans were far less serious.

[279] Testimony of Josef Rolnik in Diatłowicki and Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 2, 65. Rolnik's testimony is found in the Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/4619, as cited in Michał Czajka, ed., *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz: Archiwum ŻIH IN-B, zespół 301, Nr. 4001–5000 / Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue: Jewish Historical Institute Archives, Record Group 301, No. 4001–5000* (Warsaw: Żydo:wski Instytut Historyczny Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy, 2007), vol. 5, 220. Rolnik's account of the 1943 assault on an estate in Piechy is inaccurate. It was not a fortified German outpost as he alleges, but defended by 3 Polish "Blue" policemen who repelled a large partisan contingent of some 40 men, mostly Jews. On the activities of the Jews in the Parczew forest see Mariusz Bechta, *Pogrom czy odwet?: Akcja zbrojna Zrzeszenia "Wolność i Niezawiłość" w Parczewie 5 lutego 1946 r.* (Poznań: Zysk, 2014), 91–137.

[280] Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier,* 39.

[281] Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier,* 39.

> Early in 1944, we had to cope with unrest in our own ranks. Chil [Grynszpan] had been getting reports from friendly peasants in the area that young boys from Camp Tabor were roaming the country, foraging for food. … He … asked me to go to Camp Tabor and give them a proper talking to. …
>
> These peasants, I explained, were plain, decent people who had frequently helped us out with food and other supplies. But if we, or the Tabor refugees, would begin to raid and loot the farmsteads, this would antagonize the peasants. Therefore, the raids and forays which the young people from the Tabor camp had perpetrated could not be permitted to continue. If we were to lose the good will of these Poles, our usefulness as partisan fighters in the area would be at an end. We were therefore going to rely heavily on the older men and women at Tabor to restrain their young people so that we would be able to keep the friendly peasants on our side.[282]

Harold Werner (Hersz Cymerman "Heniek"), who also fought with Grynszpan's Jewish partisans, describes numerous armed expeditions to secure provisions (food, clothing, weapons, etc.) from farmers for as many as 800 partisans and their families encamped in the forest. Many estates and farms were also burned to the ground by the partisans.

> We walked to the Hola woods. … We were armed. Out of fear, the villagers would give us food, and if they refused, we took it ourselves.
>
> Some nights later, we went for food in the vicinity of the village of Krupiwiec [Kropiwki?]. … If the villagers refused our requests for food, then we took it ourselves using the threat of our weapons. …
>
> The villagers had become used to our requests. … if they said they did not have any food or if they refused to open their doors, we threatened them and helped ourselves to any food we found in the house. …
>
> He denied that he had any guns, but we knew he was lying. Moishe the butcher grabbed him and with one punch knocked him to the ground. He continued to deny he had any guns. Then Moniek took a stick, told the farmer to pull down his pants, and started giving him lashes on his behind. After that the farmer decided to cooperate. …
>
> A few days later, the same group set out to find the second Mosciska [Mościska] farmer who was hiding weapons. … He also denied having any weapons. Yankale became enraged and threatened to kill the farmer on the spot if he refused to cooperate. …
>
> We sent out two or three teams, several times a week, on *bombioshkas* to gather food. These expeditions were almost always conducted at night and were directed to distant villages so as not to antagonize neighboring villages. … The farmers we approached could not resist armed partisans … The villagers were aware of our preference for pigs. … Once we found a pig, we would kill it on the farm, quarter it, and transport it to the base by wagon. …
>
> While escorting the Adampol contingent back to our base, we stopped in a village and asked the local farmers for wagons, horses, and food to take back with us. They gave it to us because we were armed. …

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[282] Gruber, *I Chose Life,* 133–34.

> During harvest time in the late summer of 1943, we focused our efforts on destroying all grain crops harvested and held for shipment to the Germans. For three weeks, we were busy burning estates and farms which had their grains gathered for shipment. … we burned and destroyed dozens of large estates which supplied or served as food storage depots for the Germans. …
>
> On one occasion, a villager from Zahajki came to us and complained that some Jewish people had come to his house and had taken not only food but clothing and household possessions that they could not use. …
>
> In the winter of 1943–44, Chiel's partisans were camping in the village of Koniuchy, about ten miles from the Ochoza [Ochoża] forest. [This Koniuchy should not be confused with the village of the same name near Rudniki forest—*M.P.*] … Six of us, including me, were assigned to go on a *bombioshka* to another village. … We expropriated a horse and wagon when we got to the village. We loaded it up with items such as meat, bread, and other foods from the estate and smaller farms.[283]

Grynszpan's forte was not fighting the Germans. Jakob Friedmann, who joined a non-Jewish partisan unit in that area, recalls: "Once Chyl's group went to cross an area to shoot some Germans. But they didn't manage to shoot a single German; they were not good shots and they lost one or two of their own people."[284] Harold Werner, as well as other partisans, also describe numerous "revenge" killings mostly of

[283] Harold Werner, *Fighting Back: A Memoir of Jewish Resistance in World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 99, 101, 120, 122, 132–33, 141, 160–61, 202, 204.

[284] Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier,* 42.

of Ukrainian but also some Polish villagers, often entire families.[285] It is also worth noting that many Poles —often entire families—were executed and sometimes villages were pacified by the Germans in this area as punishment for aiding Jews and Soviet partisans.[286]

The case of Marianka, a village that had been plundered repeatedly by Jewish partisans, was typical of the pattern and spiral of violence that unfolded in that region. When some of the villagers robbed another village, posing as Jewish partisans, the Jewish partisans retaliated even more violently for treading on their prerogative. The punishment for plundering was harsh. Later, the villagers struck back, and so did the Jewish partisans.

> The first task that I performed under Jechiel's [Chil Grynszpan] order was as following. I [A. Shenko], Hershel (Politruk [i.e., a commissar responsible for political indoctrination]), David Maseike and Simcha from Marianka were to do away with some Poles from Marianka. We had

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[285] Werner, *Fighting Back,* xvii (Zamołodycze), xix–xx (Zamołodycze), 99 (Zamołodycze), 110 (Hola), 161 (Pachole), 169 (Krzywowierzba), 176 (Zahajki), 178 (Krzywy Bór, Chmielów, Krasówka, Zienki), 179 (Zamołodycze, Kaplonosy), 185 (Kaplonosy), 187 (Ostrów Lubelski), 196 (Marianka); Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier,* 38, 40, 50, 67. Lists compiled by the collaborationist Ukrainian Central Committee confirm some of the assaults mentioned by Werner, usually with lower victim counts; however, Ukrainian historiography attributes these misdeeds to Poles. See "1944 r., sichnia 22. Spysok vbytykh ukrainskykh hromadian na Kholmshchyni i Pidliashshi v 1942–1943 rr., skladenyi Liublynskym predstavnytsvom Ukrainskoho Tsentralnoho komitetu," in Iaroslav Isaievych, ed., *Volyn i Kholmshchyna 1938–1947 rr.: Polsko-ukrainske protystoiannia ta ioho vidlunnia. Doslidzhennia, dokumenty, spohady* (Lviv: Natsionalna akademiia nauk Ukrainy, Instytut ukrainoznavstva im. I. Krypiakevycha, 2003), especially 500–502.

Yitzchok Perlow, in a far-fetched account of dubious veracity, describes how some of the villagers from Świńska Wola, in Parczew forest, terrified at the prospect of a mass reprisal, had killed some of the Jews who had suddenly "descended by night on the village in hordes … had crept into all the barns, the sheds, the haylofts, the garrets and the cellars. … had dug up unripe potatoes, carrots, radishes—everything." The villagers rounded up other Jews in a barn with the intention of delivering them to the German police. En route, these villagers were set upon and massacred by Jewish partisans and the captive Jews freed. The Jewish partisans then set fire to the village after pouring petrol on the buildings. "His entire company began to riddle the windows of the huts, barns and stables with their automatics. … Peasants, carrying buckets of water, came running out but fell victims to the hail of bullets. Isolated flames soon ignited into one great conflagration that enveloped the entire village." The local priest, whose church at the edge of the village was spared, and a delegation of reeves from surrounding villages met with the partisans soon after. The priest asked: "Why have you wreaked such misery upon our village? … Indeed, [what some villagers had done] was a gruesome crime, a terrible sin! I had warned and censured them time and again but to no avail. Still, your punishment was too severe. … Why should the women and children suffer? Or the huts and household effects. … Not everyone is guilty. There are still decent people left in the villages. There is no question but that a terrible outrage had been committed against the Jews. But you have already punished the wicked—the others are not guilty. … I have spoken the same words to villagers months on end. I held sermons and I preached the Ten Commandments." One of the reeves (village heads) stated: "In my village there are six Jews with black tunics and beards [Hasidim], from Włodawa. Our village knows about them but no one betrays them. We shelter them and feed them." Another reeve said: "And in my village there are also some Jews hidden in three or four bunkers. Not all villages are like Świńska Wola. We support the Jews although the Germans are flaying our skins. … In the meantime we are being stripped of our last quart of milk and robbed of our last pig. The Germans come and attach rings on the pigs' snouts—'Requisitioned'. Tomorrow we are to deliver our quota of hogs to the city. What shall we have left for ourselves? What shall we live on? The winter is nearly upon us." See Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance 1939–1945,* vol. 3 (1986), 298–310, reprinted from Yitzchok Perlow's book, *The Partizaner* (New York: Award Books, 1968). There is no village called Świńska Wola in the vicinity of Parczew forest, and Perlow's account appears to be very loosely based on the activities of Ukrainian villagers in Zamołodycze and Sosnowica, as described by Harold Werner. See Werner, *Fighting Back,* xv–xvii, 77, 84. For a markedly different version of the events in Zamołodycze, attributable to the same Harold (Hersh) Werner, see Gilbert, *The Holocaust,* 301.

[286] The village of Białka, near the Jewish camp in Ochoża, in the Parczew forests, was pacified by the Germans in December 1942 for sheltering a Jewish woman and aiding Jewish partisans and forest people. The German SS made a selection of 100 men from the population of that village and executed them. See Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity,* Part One, 123–24; Wojciech Sulewski, *Lasy Parczewskie* (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1970), 91.

often come to their houses and now they started plundering, in the name of the partisans, rich farmers from other villages. …

We did not catch them red-handed until one day they attacked the house of the farmer Trolzki from the village of Saheike [Zahajki] telling him that in the name of the partisans they were to take everything they needed. … It was due to this farmer that the rumors were proven and thus we executed the sentence. …

On our way back [from massacring twenty Ukrainian villagers in Zamołodycze] we also passed through Marianka. There we shot two Andaks [sic—Endeks] burning all the property for having murdered two of our people of "Tabor" [i.e., the Jewish camp which dispatched daily forays into the countryside]. …

Eight days after our action in Marianka we were told that the Andaks had killed one of our girls. … This time we killed another seven of the murderers [i.e., villagers].[287]

Another Jew who joined Chil Grynszpan's partisan group was Abraham Wunderbojm (Wunderboim), who later assumed the name of Adam Winder. Wunderbojm escaped during the final deportation of Jews from Parczew, which was carried out by the Germans and Ukrainian auxiliaries in the fall of 1942. At first he lived in the forest with a group of Jewish fugitives who simply wanted to survive. Initially, the Jews would purchase food from the local farmers. After acquiring arms, however, the Jews would simply demand food or take it by force. They placed some Jewish women and children with villagers, threatening them with death if anything should happen to them. The largest source of danger was the Ukrainian police, who staged periodic raids to capture Jews and Soviet partisans living in the forest. In April 1943, the Ukrainians caught a Jewish woman who disclosed to them the whereabouts of the Jewish bunkers. In the ensuing attack on the bunkers, more than 100 Jews were killed. The remnants of Wunderbojm's group eventually joined Chil Grynszpan's partisan group. Because of their affiliation with the Communist underground, they started to receive military supplies from Moscow with which they cut telephone wires, blew up trains, and destroyed small bridges.[288]

When the area was "liberated" by the Soviets, after brief stay in Parczew, Grynszpan's detachment received orders to go to Lublin. There they were enlisted in the service of Poland's newly installed

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[287] A. Shenko, "In a Jewish Division," Moshe Lichtenberg, whose partisan group operated near Włodawa, also demanded that recruits bring their own weapons and be physically fit for combat. See A. Shenko, "In a Jewish Division," in Shimon Kanc, ed., *Yizkor Book in Memory of Vlodava and Region, Sobibor* (Tel Aviv: Wlodawa Societies in Israel and North and South America, 1974), columns 20, 23 (English section).

[288] Testimony of Adam Winder, August 15, 1995, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 5517.

Communist rulers: "Some of the partisans joined the civilian army and some the security police."[289] Although illiterate, Grynszpan served as commander of the Citizens' Militia in Hrubieszów from January 1945 to June 1946 under the assumed name of Stanisław Dąbrowski.[290] (The postwar exploits of some of these partisans are detailed later on.)

As in other parts of Poland, the Jews (as well as Poles) had their share of problems with Soviet partisans, especially in the early period. Jewish testimonies gathered shortly after the war by the Jewish Historical Commission in Warsaw describe the brutality of Soviet partisan units, such as rape, theft and atrocious anti-Semitism in their midst.[291] Later published testimonies do likewise.

> The Russians settled near us in the village of Skorodnica forest and stayed for a few days. This was a very undisciplined group of marauding fighters. As they had done in Makoszka forest, as soon as they settled near us they started to rape the young Jewish women in our group. Although we protested, they were armed and we were not, so there was little we could do to stop them. …
>
> There were many escaped Russian prisoners concentrated in the Makoszka forest … The Jews there [in Parczew forest] had their share of problems with the Russians, however. The Russians demanded whiskey, they robbed the Jews of money and weapons, and they raped Jewish women. They lived according to the law of the jungle, especially in the beginning before the Jews organized themselves, obtained more weapons, and resisted their lawlessness.[292]

After escaping from a death train to Treblinka, Benjamin Mandelkern received assistance from random Poles. He then joined up with three cousins from Parczew and headed to the forest. There they were

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[289] A. Shenko, "In a Jewish Division," in Kanc, *Yizkor Book in Memory of Vlodava and Region, Sobibor*, column 26 (English section). Shenko became a prison warden for half a year before leaving for Israel at the end of 1946. Isadore Farbstein became a police sergeant in Lublin and served in that capacity for a year. In his testimony, he describes how Soviet and Jewish partisans plundered in the Parczew area. See the testimony of Isadore Farbstein, Shoah Foundation Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 13378. Joseph Rubin attended an NKVD indoctrination centre in Otwock, became an avowed Communist, and was stationed in Sosnowiec, Bytom and Gliwice in 1945–1946, where he arrested members of the anti-Soviet underground, many of whom were deported to the Gulag. See the testimony of Joseph Rubin, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 14075. Another Jew from Parczew, Irving Wolsk (Yitzhak Suchowolski), confirms that many Jewish partisans, including his cousin, joined the Communist security police after the "liberation." See the testimony of Irving Wolsk, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Interview code 2774. Adam Winder (Abraham Wunderboim), a member of Chil Grynszpan's partisan unit, also joined the militia in Lublin after liberation, and was transferred to Radom in early 1945. See the testimony of Adam Winder, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 5517. Many of these Communist functionaries (Isadore Farbstein, Joseph Rubin, Adam Winder) later immigrated to the United States.

[290] Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier,* 42.

[291] Aleksandra Bańkowska, "Polish Partisan Formations during 1942–1944 in Jewish Testimonies," *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 106.

[292] Werner, *Fighting Back,* 92, 104. For further examples see pp. 134, and 217. See also Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed,* 28–29; Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955,* 172.

"welcomed" by three armed Russian partisans who robbed them at gunpoint of all their possessions including their clothes leaving them naked. The Jewish fugitives then turned to Poles for help once again.[293]

Escaped Soviet POWs robbed and killed a number of Jews hiding in forests near Sokołów Podlaski.

> Two days later a young man from Sokolov [Sokołów] arrived and told us that he had been hiding out with another four Jews on the other side of the forest, when a band of escaped Russian prisoners of war, who had been wandering around the forest, suddenly fell upon their camp. They attacked the Jews, stole everything that they had and then attacked the Jews with axes and other heavy instruments and killed the four Jews. The young man stayed with us.
>
> Before long the whole band came to our bunker too. Seeing that there was a large number of us, they said that we were doing well to hide in the forest. When the band, about six persons, left us, we decided that they would probably go to get more Russians. We agreed among ourselves that we would not all twenty Jews go together, but in smaller groups. We split up and called out in loud voices, and when we were farther apart, a huge group of Russians suddenly attacked us. Two members of our group fell right away. One of them was Shloyme Kavaltshik who only two days earlier had escaped from a train to Treblinka.
>
> A fight broke out. A few of our group ran away. Shmuel Stotski hit a Russian in the head with an axe. When I saw that another Russian was lifting his axe to strike Shmuel, fast as lightning I wrestled the axe away from him. Seeing our resistance, the Russians began to be afraid of us and they ran off.
>
> We followed the "path" to get out of the forest. The Russians popped up again from someplace and attacked three Jewish women and a 16 year–old youth. One of them received a blow on his head with an iron bar and he fell dead on the spot. Then they started chasing the three women, who fled breathlessly. And when they could not chase them down they turned to pick on me. I protected myself with a sharp axe in one hand. In my other hand I was holding a bundle of dirty clothes, which I flung aside. The Russians, apparently thinking that there was some treasure in the bundle, left me alone and grabbed the bundle and held it up. I seized the moment and fled deeper into the forest.
>
> Running in the forest I caught up with my friends Nosn Gviazde and Yoel Shpandel, who was killed some time later.[294]

In May 1944, Soviet partisans killed nine Jews in Dołholiska and four Jews in Mazanówka, villages to the south of Biała Podlaska.[295]

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[293] Mandelkern, *Escape from the Nazis,* 71–72.

[294] Gedalye Vishny, "The Bedeviled Circle of Danger," in M. Gelbert, ed., *Sefer ha-zikaron: Sokolow-Podlask* (Tel Aviv: Residents of Sokolow-Podlask in Israel and in the USA, 1962), 454–55, translated as *Memorial book Sokolow-Podlask*, Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/sokolowa_podlaski/Sokolowa_Podlaski.html>. See also the testimony of Tzipora Rosen-Achron, "On the 'Aryan Side' and in the Forest," at p. 439, regarding rapes committed by members of the Kostus Kalinovsky unit under the command of General Filipp Kapusta operating in the vicinity of Białystok.

[295] Dariusz Libionka, "Zagłada na wsi w optyce polskiej konspiracji (1942–1944)," in Engelking and Grabowski, *Zarys krajobrazu,* 128 n.224.

Women who joined the Soviet partisans were also victimized and treated as sex slaves. Those who had the misfortune of contracting gonorrhea were simply shot, because there was no medication to cure their condition.[296] Bronka Chudy Krygier's testimony is particularly riveting. After her escape from the Warsaw ghetto she worked on a farm near Parczew disguised as a Pole before joining up with Jewish partisans and escaped Soviet POWs. Over the course of eighteen months, she was raped repeatedly by multiple perpetrators:

> The Russian partisans did not give a damn that we were Jews. … If it was a woman or a girl then they had to use her. A man they let him go. … I endured everything that a woman could endure, a young girl in those days. Everything. There is nothing that was no. Everything was yes, I did it. It had to be done because I could have been shot many times, killed by them.[297]

Shneor Glembotzky describes the activities of a Soviet partisan group headed by a commander code-named "Piri" operating in the Podlasie region. The same pattern of robberies of civilians by the Soviet partisans followed by Home Army protection is repeated. What started off as targeted retaliations against "collaborators" turned into a wholesale war against the "hostile" population. Allegedly, even an entire village, which is not identified, was annihilated by the Soviet partisans.

> At that time a Jewish partisan messenger came to Mezritz [Międzyrzec Podlaski] to enlist Jews with weapons and take them to the forest. Since I possessed a revolver he took me along with ten other Jews. Our troop was headed by the partisan leader known by his nickname "Piri".
>
> Our numbers increased. Many Russian prisoners … fled to the woods. Some succeeded in reaching the partisans uninjured. But there was a severe shortage of weapons. We decided to confiscate the pigs of rich peasants in nearby villages, distribute them among the poor peasants in exchange for information on which peasants had weapons. This plan worked successfully. We obtained not only guns and grenades but also machine guns. Our numbers reached 800, 300 of which were Jewish. We obtained food from the villagers in the order and amount we imposed on them. We assumed an increasingly military form. … A group of saboteurs, headed by the renouned [sic] partisan "Uncle Petya" ["Diadia Petia"], was organized to blow up bridges and destroy railroads. …
>
> But we did not only have the Germans on our hands. White Polish partisans appeared in the forests and they fought with us … We fought back and gave them the treatment they deserved. Their hatred of the Jews and Communists was boundless. Aby Jewish partisan captured was tortured to death. [This is an obvious embellisment. *M.P.*] We too killed the White partisans when we caught them. Once when our troop was returning from a sabotage operation, and passing close by a village, they shot at us from an ambush. Piri, the head of our troop, was killed. We decided to teach them a lesson and make an example of them … At night some of our troops surrounded the

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[296] Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier,* 52.

[297] Testimony of Bronka Chudy Krygier, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 29421.

village and set it on fire. Any one trying to escape was shot and killed. No one survived this village and no house remained standing.

The partisans war was a war of life and death. We took no prisoners—anyone captured was killed following interrogation. The Germans did the same when they caught a partisan.[298]

Another account from the Chełm area describes pacifications directed at what appears to be Ukrainain villagers. After a thorough interrogation, Kalmen Wewryk was accepted into a Soviet partisan unit under the command of "Dadia Pyetcha" (Uncle Petia).

> We were encamped near a small village which was known to be a pro-Nazi stronghold. When the order would be given, we were supposed to move in on the village and clean it up, that is, get rid of the Germans and their "friends." One night, our commander said he was going to reconnoiter before the attack. … According to rumors which circulated amongst us later, the commander was quite drunk.
>
> When this misfortune was reported to our High Command a short time later, our whole *Otryad* (military unit) was mobilized and we were ordered to attack the village and find our commander, dead or alive. We fought most of the night against the enemy …
>
> After we took the village we searched every single house, shed, barn and stable, looking for our commander. It was in vain—we never found him. The retreating Germans must have taken our leader with them. We burned the whole village to the ground. …
>
> Our High Command sent teams of partisans to reconnoiter a collaborationist village. This village had a terrible reputation; its Ukrainian inhabitants took please in hunting down lone and solitary Jewish survivors and other "enemies of the Reich." … The Ukrainians were taken by surprise … They retreated after a brief battle and only old people remained in the village.
>
> Our orders were strict. From Ukrainian collaborators we could take whatever we wanted. From decent villages, especially those of Baptist Ukrainians, we couldn't take anything. I went into a house and "confiscated" a pair of fine boots. … I also "borrowed" a shirt and a pair of pants. … We loaded a wagon full of "schnapps" and other goodies. We also loaded up with arms and ammunition because we found an armory in the village. We moved out of that village … I was picked with two other partisans to shepherd 14 head of cattle.[299]

On September 7, 1943, a Jewish forest group burned down eight farmhouses in Kozice Dolne, south of Lublin. They also murdered the wife and young child of a certain Kasprzak, who killed a Jewish family from Piaski who had been sheltered by the village head for some time.[300] Jewish forest dwellers (partisans) lodged a pregnant Jewish woman in a barn in Choiny, near Piaski, without permission. When the frightened farmer told them to remove the woman and her child, they threatened to kill him if he turned them in. After

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[298] Shneor Glembotzky, "From a Prisoner's Camp to a Partisan Troop," in Alufi and Kaleko (Barkeli), *"Aishishuk"; Its History and Its Destruction,* 76–77.

[299] Wewryk, *To Sobibor and Back,* 89–91.

[300] Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 175.

some time, the woman and child disappeared, likely they were killed. Two Jewish partisans gunned down the farmer.[301] (Bear in mind that Jews killed hundreds of their own newborns and infants in order not to expose themselves to unwanted risks.)

The Sokoły memorial book describes an assault carried out by a group of Jewish forest dwellers who resolved to destroy the village of Sokoły, located in Białystok area. Although Jews hiding in the forest were terrorized primarily by armed gangs of Soviet (Russian) and Polish robbers,[302] they turned their rage on defenceless villagers. The spark that ignited their wrath was the German *Amstkommissar's* decision to destroy the Jewish cemetery. Thereafter, the forest Jews, determined that no Pole should occupy a Jewish house, made repeated efforts to set the town ablaze.

> We organized a new plan of revenge. We bought a bottle of kerosene and matches. We were determined to burn down the town and not leave an inheritance for the murderers of the Jews. At midnight the next night, we went to Sokoly. I [Chaim Yehuda Goldberg] and Moshe Maik remained outside, and my brother Avrahamel went inside, into Yossel Malon's house. He piled the straw from the mattresses in high piles, and added anything that was likely to burn. From there, we proceeded to the storeroom of Tova Devora the hatmaker, and did the same as in the previous house. We poured kerosene on the piles. The next place to be set afire was the house of Masha Kaplansky. The house was occupied by Poles …
>
> Avramel quietly snuck into the nearby pigpen. Moshe and I stood ready, with weapons in our hands. Before he poured the kerosene on the flammable materials in the pen, he brought out a large saw and gave it to Moshe. He immediately set the place on fire and locked the door. From there, we hurriedly ran to Tova Devorah's storeroom and it was sufficient to throw a lit match inside; immediately, a flame of fire broke out. We locked the door there and ran to the third point, which was the most dangerous of them all, because it was next to the *gendarmia* [*gendarmerie,* the German police station]. But, since there was no strength that could stop our desire for revenge at that moment, which burned in our hearts like a large flame, we succeeded in setting a fire there as well, and when the flame broke out, we locked the door and ran like an arrow from a bow in the

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[301] Testimony of Jeanette Nestel, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/6550 (Item 3559598), at pp. 119–23 (Poplinski); Jeanette Nestel, *There is an Apple in My Freezer: A True Story* ([Toronto]: JPN Books, 2005), 106 (Poplinki). The author characterizes the farmer as an anti-Semitic "stool pigeon." Had that been his reputation, the Jewish woman would never have been placed in his barn.

[302] Maik, *Deliverance,* 117, 133, 140, 155, 190, 192–93. The farmers most inclined to help the Jews belonged to the Home Army, and even assisted the Jews to undertake expeditions to plunder abandoned Jewish homes. Ibid., 126, 133, 141–43, 163. Polish farmers who had been robbed by gangs of Christians and Jews continued to help Jews hiding in the forests. Ibid., 159. After the "liberation," two members of the forest group were arrested when the Soviet security forces raided the house of their Polish benefactor, whom they happened to be visiting. The Jews were soon released, with the help of Jews connected to the security forces, but the Pole, a member of the Home Army, was sent to the Soviet interior, where he was likely killed. Ibid., 226–28. Chaim Yehuda Goldberg, a refugee from Sokoły, recalled the following raids on his forest group in November 1942: "…we found ourselves by five young Christians. Four of them pulled out long knives. One of them, who had a grenade in his hand, ordered us, in the Russian language, to line up in a row. With his other hand, he took our watches off our arms and in addition, requested ten marks from each of us. … but they weren't satisfied and asked us to take off our boots. I looked around, and saw that the knives were aimed at me. … These were 'partisans.' The meaning of the matter was that we had no hope of joining a partisan group. … And again it happened: A Russian ran to meet us and blocked our path. … In one hand, he held a grenade, in the other he stroked a bottle of whiskey. … From a distance, he saw a young girl, and tried to run after her, but she succeeded in getting far away from him in time." See Chaim Yehuda Goldberg, "At the Height of the Decay," in Kalisher, *Sokoly*, 158ff.

direction of the slaughter-house.

From a distance, we saw how the surroundings were lit by the tongues of flame that went up to the heavens and when we got to the threshold of the building an enormous flame burst out. We fled from the place through the fields, while behind us, the fire lit up the town like it was mid-day.

Thus, we ran without stopping to the Bruszewa [Bruszewo] Forest. Here, we stopped and looked from a distance at how our town was going up in flames.

For us, this was a happy and joyful revenge. The tongues of the fire swallowed the Jewish town without Jews, occupied by the Poles who hate us, who sold their souls to the German devil and provided him with every assistance to murder Jews. … Three-quarters of the city, starting from Tiktin [Tykocin] Street, the large marketplace, and Bath Street, were completely burned down.[303]

Michael Maik, the father of one of the young assailants, reported the success of the mission in his diary with glee:

> Thank Almighty G-d, that we also have been privileged to take revenge against Troskolski, the restaurant owner, and a number of Christian shop owners, who enriched themselves from the destruction of the Jews, settled themselves in the homes of Jews and stole their shops. These despicable Poles got what they deserved and came out of the fire with their bodies, but without firm ground beneath their feet, without even a shoelace.
>
> Our heroes, excited for activity and vengeance, were not satisfied with what they had done. They already began to talk about completing the arson operation, down to the last house in Sokoly. It was clear that they had to wait "until the anger would pass" and the mood after the first arson would quiet down.[304]

Meanwhile, these young Jews posed as "Polish partisans" and robbed in the countryside relentlessly. Their guise did not escape the notice of the true partisans who, up until then, had not bothered the Jews. Understandably, some of the partisans struck back at the Jewish marauders.

> The next night, my youngsters decided to go to the nearby villages disguised as armed partisans, in order to obtain food.
>
> Monik was armed with a pistol and a supply of bullets. Avrahamel Goldberg was armed with the shortened rifle … Our "partisan platoon" also was not lacking hand grenades …
>
> At nightfall, the four boys went out. …
>
> The platoon reached some country dwellings after midnight and knocked on the door of one of the houses where the people were already asleep … Monik informed them, in the tone of an order

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[303] Kalisher, *Sokoly,* 158ff. See also Maik, *Deliverance,* 172–77, 201–202.

[304] Maik, *Deliverance,* 177. The author comments on the strategy of the Home Army. While the Home Army eliminated Polish policemen who served the Germans, they exercised caution in their dealings with the Germans so as to avoid unnecessary retaliation against the civilian population: "In the continued activities of the organization, attacks will be made against the German *gendarmerie* for the purpose of robbing them of weapons and equipment, but not kill them. The members of the organization were not interested in the Germans burning down an entire village and killing dozens of Poles in revenge for one [dead] German." Ibid., 202–203.

> but politely, that he and his companions were gathering food for 30 men, fighters for the freedom of Poland, found nearby.
>
> As soon as the residents saw that those who entered their house were armed, they immediately surrendered and fearfully gave them loaves of bread, a generous amount of fat and vessels of milk.
>
> After they passed through a number of farmhouses that night, they returned to the dugout with the booty: a number of sacks full of all kinds of food that would be enough for several weeks. …
>
> The wealthy farmers feared the Russian advance and hurried to empty their possessions from their granaries and houses. Our boys exploited the farmers' fears and made it a kind of sport for themselves to frighten them even more, thus it was easy to get whatever we needed out of them. …
>
> In this way, our boys prepared a stock of food for several months during a period of two weeks. …
>
> The boys continued to go out to the distant villages at night, even though we had a supply of food for two or three months. They wanted to obtain a stock of food for half a year. …
>
> Once, they entered a farmer's house to ask for food, apparently for their partisan comrades. By chance, they met up with a group of men from a Polish gang. They started to question our youngsters, who were they, from what political party, for what purpose were they gathering food. Coincidentally, the officer of this gang was not at the farmer's house and Monik, thanks to his ideas and courage, was not at a loss during those dangerous moments, and he found a way out of the trouble.
>
> In another place, one farmer told them that a dangerous Polish gang of *N.S.Z.* [the right-wing National Armed Forces] … had heard that four Jews were running around in the forests with weapons like Polish partisans. That gang was hunting for them and planning to catch them.[305]

Jews hiding in the forest near Sokoły also robbed fellow Jews. Rachela Kapłańska accused Hersz Trabka, Szmuel Konopiata and his sister, Perla Konopiata, of stealing coats, dresses, undergarments, silk stockings and money (50 dollars) from a Jews with who they had shared a bunker.[306] A raid on the village of Karakule, near Supraśl, that netted the "Forward" partisan group six wagonloads of food resulted in a German-led punitive assault in which a several Jews were killed.[307]

The same pattern emerged in the Siemiatycze area, where armed gangs of Jews robbed the Polish population. This, in turn, attracted the attention of the Polish partisans.

> Now there was a big problem with food. The Krynskis [Kryński, the Polish rescuers—*M.P.*] barely had enough food for themselves and for us. Therefore, my uncle [Yehoshua Kejles] and his companions [Chaim Marmur and Chazkel Rozenzweig] would go to various farmers and get some food for all of us. They decided that the three of them would join forces with some other Jews who were hiding in the vicinity and who also had the same problem obtaining food. Together, they went

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[305] Maik, *Deliverance,* 212–13, 216–18.

[306] Testimony of Rachela Kapłańska, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/1458.

[307] Szymon Datner, "Szkice do studiów nad dziejami żydowskiego ruchu partyzanckiego w Okręgu białostockim (1941–1944)," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego,* no. 73 (January–March 1970): 3–46, here at 41–42.

> to some well-to-do farmers and took all kinds of produce, with or without the consent of the owners. They would also kill some livestock, separate the edible meat from the animal's organs and bring it to the Krynskis. This procedure was repeated many times. In order to provide food for the thirteen of us.[308]

Of course, the "well-to-do" farmers were hardly wealthy people; they simply had something worth robbing. The Siemiatycze memorial book sets out numerous examples of revenge perpetrated by a forest group led by Hershl Shabbes (Herszl Szebes), who managed "through threats" to acquire some weapons from farmers in that area of mixed Catholic (Polish) and Eastern Orthodox (Belorussian) population. According to that source, this group "several times also executed partisan actions, but its chief aim was to remain in hiding and help escaped Jews." In reality, their principal activity was robbing farmers.

> Several days later the peasant was killed by a Semiatych [Siemiatycze] bullet. This was the first act of vengeance, but not the last. … the Semiatych group went to Skif [Skiwy], salvaged fifteen horses and set fire to the village.
>
> In December, 1942, a gentile from Naike [Narojki] captured three Jews … The Semiatych group later murdered the peasant's entire family.
>
> The watchman of the Malinov [Malinowo] forest betrayed many Jews who later perished. He was also responsible for the death of eighteen Jews hidden in the forest. He informed on a young Jew who revealed their hiding place after grueling Nazi torment. The Germans then surrounded the forest and annihilated all the Jews who were hiding there.
>
> Hershl Shabbes' group learned about this blood-bath by accident when they arrived in Malinove. An old gentile woman told them: "God has sent you here. It is time to repay the murderer for his deeds." Shabbes' group went after the forest watchman. He reached for his revolver, but was quickly disarmed and shot. …
>
> Plotnicki and Meyer Grushkin once saved themselves by a sheer miracle from the "A.K." [Armia Krajowa or Home Army] who attacked them and other Jews in the Yachinovke [Jasieniówka] forest. They accused Meyer Grushkin of killing a gentile and were taking him to be executed. There suddenly appeared an officer of the "A.K."—a teacher from Worchen [Wiercień], who was looking for Hershl Shabbes. The Jews said they did not know where Shabbes was, and their one desire was to survive the war. A peasant who had driven up with a wagonload of food for the Polish partisans pleaded for the mercy of the Jews and they were released.
>
> Old man Krakowski from Brike [Bryki] … was visited by a delegation of partisans from Semiatych and Drogoczyn [Drohiczyn] who told him that his son would be shot if he continued to

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[308] Sidney J. Zoltak, *My Silent Pledge: A Journey of Struggle, Survival and Remembrance* (Toronto: MiroLand, 2013), 79. The author refers to confrontations with Home Army on pp. 70, 80–81, and 84–85, without clear evidence that all of these activities were the work of the Home Army. Moreover, he is unable to see the connection between the numerous robberies perpetrated by armed Jewish bands, which could not have gone unnoticed by the Home Army, and the Home Army's retaliation. Instead, he claims that the Home Army was simply "actively engaged in killing Jews" and "eager" to take the place of the Germans, especially after the Germans were preparing for their retreat in advance of the Soviet front.

> help the "A.K." … The magistrate [of Brike] was soundly thrashed until he promised to keep quiet. … in Narik [Narojki] … the peasant's house and barn were set on fire.[309]

Shmuel Mordechai Lev of Drohiczyn describes how armed Jewish groups robbed Polish farmers in that area and punished peasants, Poles and Belorussians, who "collaborated" with the Germans:

> a group of armed Jewish partisans … were now active in the nearby forests. Most of them were from our town: Simcha Warshawsky, Ekuthiel Karshenstein, Velvel Wishna and others with the.
>
> They were after some acts of avenging the blood of their relatives, killed or delivered to be killed, by some Poles. They also held up some rich farmers and used the money to help out needy Jews in hiding. This was only one of a few groups of Jewish partisans. There were other such bands active in the vicinity. It was from such a group, whose leaders were: Pessach Katz of Semiatich [Siemiatycze], Shlomo Grude, Kalman Goldwasser and his cousin from Kadzin, that we later got a good sum of money with which to rent a "legal" bunker, whose owner also provided us with some food.[310]

According to Polish sources, Shabbes's forest group was notorious for its assaults on the local population. In March 1944, they robbed the home of the Wiliński and Siemieniuk families in the settlement of Czartajew and murdered eight members of those families including grandparents in their seventies, a pregnant woman, a 15-year-old boy and a three-year-old child. Afterwards they burned down the farmstead.[311] On the other hand, they were powerless to prevent assaults on Jews by Soviet partisans:

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[309] Tash (Tur-Shalom), *The Community of Semiatych,* xii–xiii (English section). For another Jewish memoir describing, in a sanitized way, some of the exploits of the well-armed band organized by Hershl Shabbes from Siemiatycze and the Grude ("Groody") brothers from Drohiczyn, mentioned below, see Kuperhand and Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka,* 143–66. Strangely, Saul Kuperhand does not describe the nature of "our excursions to the outside world" (p. 149) and the "close calls of our recent forays" (p. 154), though undoubtedly these involved robbery since his Polish benefactors could not afford to feed him and the other Jews they took in and demanded payment (p. 155). Typically, Saul Kuperhand ascribes to the view that "All Germans and Poles, with a few glorious exceptions, were the enemy." (P. 157.) His wife and co-author, Miriam Kuperhand charges, without providing any examples, that the Home Army "were just as bad as the Germans. When they operated clandestinely in the forests, they had never failed to kill Jewish fugitives or even Jewish partisans … these partisans often spent more energy hunting Jews than harassing the German occupiers." (P. 76.) When a division of Soviet partisans under Kolpak arrived in the area, the Jewish forest people did not join their ranks, giving as their reasons: (1) "Many of the partisans were Ukrainians who had served as volunteer guards in the death camps and forced labor camps. Sadistic Jew-haters and murderers, they could not be trusted as comrades in arms." (P. 162.) (2) "You have other reasons to live, people to live for." (P. 163.)

[310] Shmuel Mordechai Lev, "Diary of Pain and Suffering," in D. Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Drohiczyn* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1969), 42ff. (English section). A number of Polish farmers came to the assistance of Lev and his family, and Lev's account confirms that Jewish fugitives, including these, "had to beg or steal." Another Jewish fugitive, Chaim Brzeziński, who was sheltered by the Kozłowski and Kryński families, testifies to joining a group that carried out acts of revenge against "informers" both during and after the German occupation. See the testimony of Haim Bzezinsky, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/V.T/3905 (Item ID 4406521).

[311] Andrzej W. Olędzki, "Hersz Szebes: Mord w Czartajewie—marzec 1944, oraz podobne w Miłkowicach Maćkach i Kłyzówce," June 21, 1999, *Kurier Podlaski,* Internet: <https://kurierpodlaski.pl/artykul/hersz-szebes--morderstwa/399700>. See also Mirosław Leszczak, "Zagłada ludności żydowskiej w Siemiatyczach," *Studia Podlaskie,* vol. 2 (1989): 355–61, here at 358.

> On November 15, 1942, [Hershel Shabbes] had reported to the partisans about a group of twelve Jews from Siemiatycze he had found in hiding. The Russian partisan leader immediately ordered his men to find out how much gold and currency the Jews had. Shabbes warned the group of refugees about the Jew-hating partisans, and they managed to hide some of their assets under a barn. They could not hide themselves, however, and the partisans killed all twelve of them.[312]

Assaults continued in that region even after the German retreat and arrival of the Red Army. On December 5–6, 1944, a group of Jewish partisans led by the brothers Shloyme and David Grude (Gruda) murdered six people in Miłkowice-Maćki from the Bojar and Maksymiuk families, including an 11-year-old boy. Later that night they attacked the home of the Jarocki family in Kłyzówka, who had sheltered a Jewish family from Drohiczyn. The Grude band murdered two people including a 12-year-old girl and wounded two others whom they left for dead. The victims' farms were plundered and set on fire.[313] Kesil Karshenstein, whose family members had been denounced to the Germans, took revenge on the Polish farmer who betrayed them by shooting the Pole's entire family.[314] In turn, Polish partisans struck back at Jews in Siemiatycze who had close ties to the Soviet authorities.[315]

The situation in the vicinity of Brańsk in northern Podlasie followed a similar pattern:

> Gradually the Jewish group gained enough confidence to come out of their bunkers and live aboveground. With arms, hunger became less of a problem. Given their conditions, they were not scrupulous about the methods of acquiring food. They conducted raids on farmers' stores, or 'requisitioned' food at gunpoint. They also had contacts with Poles who were willing to deliver food voluntarily. The raids *led to later* acts of revenge, but the accounts stress that Poles grew much

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[312] Kuperhand and Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka,* 144.

[313] Andrzej W. Olędzki, "Hersz Szebes: Mord w Czartajewie—marzec 1944, oraz podobne w Miłkowicach Maćkach i Kłyzówce," June 21, 1999, *Kurier Podlaski,* Internet: <https://kurierpodlaski.pl/artykul/hersz-szebes--morderstwa/399700>; Waldemar Monkiewicz, "Za cenę życia: O ratowaniu Żydów w Białostockiem o okresie okupacji niemieckiej," in Dobroński and Monkiewicz, eds., *Białostoccy Żydzi*, vol. 2, 189–90; Mirosław Leszczak, "Zagłada ludności żydowskiej w Siemiatyczach," *Studia Podlaskie,* vol. 2 (1989): 355–61, here at 359. Compare with Kuperhand and Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka,* 51, 140–41 (Miłkowice).

[314] Shmuel Mordechai Lev, "Diary of Pain and Suffering," in Shtokfish, *Sefer Drohiczyn,* 42ff. (English section).

[315] Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 162, 166–67. Compare with Zoltak, *My Silent Pledge,* 99.

more respectful when they realized that the Jews who had come to negotiate with [i.e., rob] them were armed.[316] [emphasis added]

The cycle of violent robberies followed by retaliation on the part of some of the local population (in that order) perpetuated itself throughout German-occupied Poland. A band of Jews led by Shimon Deringer from Kraków as well other Jews based in the forests south of Bochnia, where villagers provided widespread assistance to Jews, became notorious for robbing and wreaking revenge on the local population.

> After the liquidation of ghetto Bochnia, [in the] summer, we lived in the forest. We were already armed with revolvers and ammunition that we found ourselves. …
>
> My cousin told me that an underground group from Krakow [Kraków] is located here. Their leader is Shimon Deringer and his wife Yustina Davidson. The members of Akiba made a bunker on the property of the Christian Michal [Michał] in Wisnicz [Wiśnicz]. These people were from the ghettos in Krakow and Bochnia. There were many people who located themselves around here among the Christians. … Many Jews were hidden at the Christians … We used to steal from one Christian and give to another. … We cooked [stolen] cattle and pig meat. …
>
> [Soon they hooked up with a notorious Polish thief:] "We want to make a deal with you. You will steal (for us) and we want to sell (the merchandise)." …
>
> They did not refer to me and my brother as partisans, but as two murderers, wild people. They were scared of us. However we went to Christians because there were so many Jews and they had nothing to eat. And from where could the people take? They had to resort to robbery. There were rich Christians.
>
> There was a case in Krolowka [Królówka] where two horse dealers lived. Janek Noiman knew exactly where they resided. Every Thursday they used to sell colts and would bring the money home. We were three people. We put on masks and at night we entered their houses with weapons. We said to them to raise their hands and to remain still. They started to attack us [i.e., defend themselves—*M.P.*] and we shot twice. Then we took from them 40 thousands [sic] Zloties [złoty]. [This was an enormous sum at the time. A teacher made around 300 złoty a month, and a petty bureaucrat around 500 złoty. *M.P.*] From that money it was possible to survive. … And there were a few places like that. The money was hidden under a painting. We gave them more severe beating. [sic] They did not recognize us [?]. There were other places, however, where the Christians did not have any food. …
>
> We mislead [sic] the Christians by telling them stories about partisans. That we are partisans and

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[316] Hoffman, *Shtetl,* 235. Hoffman cites Zbigniew Romaniuk, a regional historian, whose research discredits the charge that the Home Army and the National Armed Forces assaulted or killed Jews in this region. When the AK was implicated directly, according to Romaniuk, "it was for other reasons. He cites one episode in which the AK attacked a group of eight Soviets and four Jews, in retaliation for their violent behavior during food raids. One Jew was killed in that raid, and two Russians wounded." (In the study cited below, Romaniuk says that one Soviet was killed and two Jews were wounded.) Members of the Home Army warned Jews when their hiding places were discovered or reported to the Germans. The acts of violence that did occur were committed by bandits who used the AK as a cover; some of them were executed by the Home Army. Moreover, sympathetic local Poles including schoolteachers and a priest supplied the Jews with arms. Ibid., 237. See also Zbigniew Romaniuk, "Brańsk and Its Environs in the Years 1939–1953: Reminiscences of Events," in *The Story of Two Shtetls,* Part One, 80, 84–85. A Jewish source describes the revenge killing by Jewish partisans of a Pole named Koshak (sic), who allegedly betrayed Jews. See Trus and Cohen, *Bransk,* 354–55.

they believed us. They gave us (what we wanted). …

At that Christian [sic], the one whose son managed to escape, was a priest. Our people killed him with knives because he was a big anti-Semite. [The murder of the priest is not confirmed in Polish sources. Later on it seems that they just burnt down the church or priest's residence.—*M.P.*] …

Then we started to take revenge. We had already a group of 35 men. We knew about several peasants [who were robbed?—*M.P.*] who gave away Jews. We burned, hit and killed. We used to do it at night so people would not be able to tell who did it. [?] …

We knew that a certain Christian was informing about Jews. We struck him with a wooden stick and we buried him. We took him out of his house and buried him. There was a priest who talked about things he shouldn't have from the platform [pulpit?]. We came at night and burnt (down his church). This was our revenge. …

Later at night we went to burn a priest's residence. On that mission went Yankle Noiman and I. It was September 7th, 1944. The priest spoke from the platform, saying that there were still Jews in that area and they must be liquidated. … At night we went on this burning mission … and burnt the priest's residence. …

The 19th of January, 1945. We were liberated by the Russians. …

The A.K. [Home Army] was still killing Jews. The commander of the criminals turned out to be a Jew with the name Sawar, he is still there to this day. He was of Russian descent. Later he became the [Communist] commander of the Wisnicz prison. He indeed ordered them to gather all the Jews. Later they sent the Jews to Krakow.[317]

Polish sources also describe armed group of Jews who pretended to be partisans and robbed the local population in the Limanowa area, south of Bochnia. The "Murawa" Home Army unit, which otherwise protected Jews in hiding, executed a Jew involved in banditry in Lipnik in the summer of 1944.[318] After joining up with with partisan groups in Jędrzejów and Opoczno, armed Jewish fugitives from Pilica in Miechów county collected 100,000 złoty by invading farmers' homes and demanding a levy on "pain of death."[319] Armed Jews forced their way into homes and farm buildings in Brnik, Luszowice and other villages near Dąbrowa Tarnowska, demanding or stealing large quantities of food and threatening the

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[317] Testimony of Johanan Kalfus, September 18, 1967, Yad Vashem Archives, file 03/3284 (2777/232-F), posted on the Internet at <http://www.angelfire.com/my/heritage/ghetto_bochnia/testimonies/kalfus.htm>. According to Yustina Davidson, quite a few of the revenge actions took place before the revenge action in which Hilek Wladyslawski was seriously wounded. See also the accounts of Herman Amsterdam and Dawid Wulf which confirm the ties of Jewish forest groups with with Polish criminal elements and their extensive participation in roberies in the area, in Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss, eds., *The Children Accuse* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), 147–51, 171–79. In keeping with official postwar propaganda, the latter source alleges the culprits were members of the National Armed Forces.

[318] Marek Stoszek, "The History of Jews in Myślenice County During the Second World War," in Wierzbieniec and Rączy, *Righteous Among Nations: The Scope and Forms of Help to Jews in East Central Europe During Occupation by the Third Reich,* 51, 55–56.

[319] Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 549.

residents.[320] Jakub Künstlich and Szymon Goldberg, who were sheltered by Poles in their native village of Jadowniki Mokre west of Dąbrowa Tarnowska, obtained a rifle and used it to rob and threaten farmers in distant villages, seizing their food, chickens, rabbits and the occasional pig. Their Polish host accompanied them on their expeditions so that it wouldn't appear to be a Jewish enterprise.[321] More often, however, Jewish fugitives would steal food from fields, cellars, and pantries; sometimes they entered into barns and stables surreptitiously and took calves, pigs and chickens.[322] Understandably, this angered farmers who suffered losses, most of whom were themselves poor and struggling to feed their families.

Armed Jews hiding in the Dulcza forest, near Radomyśl Wielki, staged frequent raids on nearby farms to collect food provisions.[323] Israel Klein's description of his Jewish forest group's forays into the countryside is quite frank.

> In the summer we usually set out for the fields, however in the winter we attacked the neighbouring farms. We always chose those that were at least ten kilometres from the forest and stood out of the way. Selected members of the group, bearing arms, knocked on the door and started to speak German so that the residents would think they were dealing with German soldiers. As soon as the door was opened they immediately switched to Polish and everyone was ordered to lie down under the beds. A few members of the group always watched the residents so they would not move, and meanwhile the rest took everything that could be eaten, and sometimes also clothing. From time to time we also attacked barns where we killed lambs, cut them into pieces and took them into the

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[320] Musiał, *Lata w ukryciu,* vol. 1, 136. Tadeusz Kot, the source of this information, had hidden Jews on his farm in Brnik. His charges were friends of an armed Jewish intruder who demanded a large quantity of food and abused Kot's grandmother. Threatened, Kot had to defend himself by chasing him out of his home with an axe. Kot's charges were themselves armed and roamed in the countryside. The armed Jew who had invaded Kot's home was later apprehended when he broke into a chicken coop to steal some poultry. The farmer locked him up in the coop, as he would any common thief, regardless of nationality, and summoned the German authorities.

[321] Testimony of Adam Merc, August 15, 1995, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 36349. One of the persons they robbed learned of their whereabouts and summoned the local police. They subsequently threatened him, warning him not to do so again.

[322] This was a common occurrence. A number of examples are set out in the text. The following examples are from the vicinity of Łańcut: Michel Borwicz, *Vies interdites* (Tournai, Belgium: Casterman, 1969), 86–87; Shoshana Atlasowitz, "A Road of Torment," in M. Waltzer and N. Kudish, eds., *Lancut: Hayeha ve-hurbana shel kehila yehudit* (Tel Aviv: Associations of Former Residents of Lancut in Israel and the USA, 1963), 377ff., translated as *Lancut: The Life and Destruction of a Jewish Community,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Lancut/Lancut.html>. Jews hiding in a bunker with the help of a poor Polish woman in Łukowica, near Nowy Sącz, both begged for food and stole food from fields and chickens. See the testimony of Helen Alt, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 54678. When Ethel Moskowicz (later Wahler), who escaped from a labour camp in Zborów and joined up with a large group of Jews living in the forest, fell ill, she was taken in and cared for by Anna Niemirowska of Dunajów. After she recovered and rejoined her forest group, some of those Jews took it upon themselves to steal this woman's only cow. See the testimony of Ethel Wahler, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 54589. In the village of Niedźwiedza, near Brzesko, a farmer named Pałach caught a Jew stealing his calf. When the Jew's friends came to free him, a fight broke out and one one of the Jews was killed. After the war, the famer was sentenced to 15 years in prison. See Musiał, *Lata w ukryciu,* vol. 1, 191.

[323] Testimony of Herman Amsterdam in Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse,* 147–51; Testimony of Helena Ausserberg, dated October 5, 1945, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/1145; Testimony of Cyla Braw, dated February 1947, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2342.

> forest. Each time we would choose a farm in a different area, because we were afraid that if we harassed the locals too much this would result in raids by German soldiers.[324]

A number of Jewish testimonies from the Tarnów area mention the widespread reliance on theft and robberies by Jewish fugitives.[325] The brothers Salek and Zyga Allweiss hid in the forests during the day, and during the night took shelter in barns and obtained food from farmers in the vicinity of their home village of Jaślany, near Tuszów. After acquiring a rifle and a gun, in exchange from an accordion and bicycle they had stolen from other farmers, the brothers ambushed people on the way to the railroad station and took food and clothing from them, and stole livestock and large quantities of bread from farmers whom they threatened with their weapons.[326] Martin (Manes) List talks openly and honestly about becoming an "outlaw" in the Polish countryside and regular robberies of peasants in the vicinity of Pilzno.[327] Three armed groups of Jews, consisting of some 80 people, who were encamped in forests in the Jasło-Dębica area raided farms in the area to replenish their food supplies, thus incurring the hostility of local farmers.[328]

Morris (Moishe) Goldner and his father raided Polish farmers' fields in the vicinity of Dębica, in Mielec county, "carrying a heavy iron bar in case we needed to defend ourselves, for on several occasions we had spotted Poles patrolling their fields at night." They were once confronted by Poles with scythes who were "simply trying to protect what was theirs." As Goldner explains, "because the farmers now had an immense quota to fill for the Germans, with harsh penalties if they fell short, they did not react kindly to having their fields raided." On that occasion, Goldner managed to shatter one of the farmer's kneecaps with his metal bar and escaped with father.[329] After teaming up with a professional Polish bandit with connections to the Communist underground in 1942, Goldner describes the brazen exploits they engaged in and the fate of those farmers who resisted:

> … armed robbery was not something I had ever thought about participating in before. On the other hand, I reasoned, after the many months I had spent on my own raiding stores and fields, who was I to make moral judgments? …

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[324] Memoirs of Israel Klein, Yad Vashem Digital Collections, Item 4421352.

[325] See, for example, the testimony of Yosef Kornblit (from Toporów), Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem.

[326] Testimony of Salek Allweiss, dated March 8, 1993, Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Hills, Michigan, Internet: <http://www.holocaustcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=459>.

[327] Oral history interview with Martin List, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

[328] Testimony of Abraham Schuss, dated November 9, 1945, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/1153. Subsequently, the Germans organized a large raid to eliminate these groups in which they used the Polish police and villagers conscripted for thus purpose.

[329] Larry Stillman, *A Match Made in Hell: The Jewish Boy and the Polish Outlaw Who Defied the Nazis: From the Testimony of Morris Goldner* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 86–87.

Kopec [Kopeć] had also taken time to familiarize me with the two weapons he was carrying. One was a *Steilhandgranate,* a German-made stick grenade with a metal cylinder at the end of a long wooden handle. The other was a Russian submachine gun that never left his side. It was a Tokarev PPSh41, crude but effective, with a distinctive drum-shaped magazine that looked like a large metallic wheel. This magazine extended down just behind the barrel. …

We entered the village after midnight. It seemed that Kopec selected houses at random. He had a sense about these things, I would come to learn, honed through years of experience. The plan was to find a window that could be forced open just wide enough for me to slip through. Before the war people seldom bolted their front doors, but times changed. There were bandits about.

Once I entered through the window, my instructions were to quickly open the door so Kopec could enter. … Our hope was to get in and out without waking anyone, and at the first house we were successful. After a moment's hesitation I began taking what little food I could find—just a few paltry vegetables, no bread or meat—while Kopec searched for clothing and valuables. …

A few blocks away, in the second house we entered, the door made a loud noise as I opened it from the inside. A woman called out, "Is somebody there?" from the sleeping quarters in back.

Gun extended at his waist, Kopec bounded into the room and ordered its occupants—the woman, her husband, and a young child, as I recall—to huddle together in a corner of the room. The couple trembled with fright, but at least they obeyed. The child began to cry, but Kopec paid no attention. He handed his weapon over to me.

"Watch them while I search the house," he said to me. "If they give you any trouble, kill them."

The woman gave a soft wail and protectively sheltered her hysterical child. Her husband looked on helplessly.

… I am certain he [Kopec] was listening carefully for any signs of resistance. There were none, as it turned out. There seldom were. Many families knew the procedure well, you see, having been robbed repeatedly as banditry became almost routine. …

By the time we broke into the third house, I relaxed a bit, for I began to realize that the gun I held functioned perfectly well merely as a threat. I even rationalized that these people all had roofs over their heads, and beds to sleep on, and in most cases, a change of clothes. All of which was more than I had, more than most Jews had, and these Polish families were simply sharing their good fortune with me—albeit at the encouragement of a formidable semiautomatic submachine gun.

Deep down, however, I was not really comfortable with this justification. What's more, I was appalled at the thought that Kopec would use his weapon on innocent people without a second thought. Still, I knew I had better quickly adapt to this new way of life if I wanted to survive, so I tried to push these moral quandaries out of my mind.

After the third robbery we reluctantly left the comfort of the warm homes we had invaded and fled back into the forest. …

And during one of those robberies we had a rather close call of our own.

As was our usual practice, Kopec approached a house while I waited just out of sight, behind a tree. With no light other than that of a nearly full moon, I watched as he tried the door. It was bolted. He walked over to a window to see if he could pry it open enough for me to enter. I expected that any moment he would give me the okay to join him and enter the house.

Next thing I knew, he was surrounded by two men and a woman. All three carried rifles. And they were cautiously approaching Kopec as if they had cornered a dangerous animal, which in a manner

> of speaking, they had. *Had they been lying in wait for bandits like us?* I wondered. (*Bandits like us!* How strange to think of myself as Kopec's partner in crime.)
>
> Kopec was also armed, naturally, but with three against one, he would expect me to start shooting first. That was why we never approached a house together and why I carried the submachine gun. Even though this was the first time I had to use it, I hesitated for only the briefest moment. From my vantage point I was able to surprise the family just as they had surprised Kopec. I took them out without getting Kopec in my line of fire.
>
> At the time I convinced myself it didn't matter that I took the lives of three Poles, including a woman—even though these might have been innocent people just trying to defend their home. Killing them—perhaps orphaning children, who knows?—haunts me now, I admit it, and from the safety of my old age, I would gratefully undo it if I could. But back then I did not see a choice. Circumstances being what they were, it was them or us, and I did not hesitate to protect the man who protected me. It was a simple as that.
>
> Of course, we helped ourselves to whatever we could find in the house, then continued southward.[330]

There are a number of accounts that identify both Poles and Jews as members of the same gang who took part in robberies and killings.[331]

Lala Weintraub (later Fishman), who passed as a Pole (Urszula Krzyżanowska), worked as a bookkeeper on an estate near Radom that was supervised by a peaceful Polish manager. One day in the fall of 1944, the farm was raided by a group of Jews whose affiliation is unknown, with fatal consequences for the manager. He was taken by them, likely as a "collaborator," and never heard of again.

> There was a third force operating in the area, and there came a day when its members served notice to us that the farm was under their control and that they would no longer tolerate Janek in the role of overseer.
>
> It happened on a quiet, balmy evening in late September. We were relaxing on the veranda of the main house—Janek, his wife, the cook, and me—when there was a stirring in the bushes beside the house. A hand appeared to part the branches, and four men emerged from the hole made in the wall of foliage. They were dressed in civilian clothes but were heavily armed with an assortment of pistols, rifles, and submachine guns. We all stood in anticipation of what they might do. They had dark hair, dark complexions, and what could be regarded as Semitic features—no Slavic towheads among them. I thought they looked Jewish. They also looked tough and dangerous. Were they partisans or bandits?

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[330] Stillman, *A Match Made in Hell,* 28–30, 96–97. Goldner continued to steal after the war: "I began the familiar walk into Dębica. Along the way I stole a cow. The opportunity presented itself as I walked past a small farm just across the Wisłoka River, outside the city. … while I would not accept money as a gift, stealing in order to *get* money was another matter entirely." Ibid., 189.

[331] See, for example, Roszkowski, *Zydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 3, 91 (a sham partisan group with a Jewish member who killed two Jews after robbing them); Lauren Lior-Liechtenstein and Philippe Lior-Liechtenstein, *Remember Never To Forget: The Life Story of Israel Lior* (Bloomington, Indiana: Xlibris, 2010), 141–42 (Alter, a criminal who belonged to a gang of horse thieves in the Zambrów area; the gang was eventually caught by the Germans and sent to their deaths).

> We didn't ask, and they didn't tell us. But at first they acted like bandits. They pointed their weapons at us. "Hands up!" one of them barked.
>
> We raised our hands.
>
> "Inside the house!"
>
> We filed in through the front door.
>
> We stood in the dining room, hands over our heads. The man who was doing all the talking—presumably the leader of the band—bullied up to Janek. "Where's the money?" he shouted.
>
> Janek made a limp gesture in my direction. "She's in charge of the money," he said in a quavering voice.
>
> The leader came over to me. "Is that true?"
>
> I nodded.
>
> "Get it."
>
> "Follow me," I told him.
>
> We went into my room, and I fetched the strongbox from the file cabinet and opened it. On the removable top tray of the strongbox, there were a few cash notes and some coins mixed in with a number of receipts. The man grabbed it all and stuffed it into his pants pocket. Then, gesturing with a pistol, he ushered me out of the room. I realize that he hadn't lifted the top tray to look into the bottom compartment of the strongbox, where most of the cash was stored. I didn't mention this oversight to him. …
>
> Just then, the man said to me in a low voice, "We know who you are and we know what you are. But don't worry—your secret is safe with us."
>
> I was stunned, rooted to the spot, unable to move or speak. Was I to interpret his utterance as a veiled threat or reassurance? I stared at him. He had a stern, tired expression, but there was no hostility in his face. Reassurance.
>
> We went back into the dining room. The leader pointed his gun at Janek. "You," he snapped. "You're coming with us."
>
> Two of the partisans—for that is what they were, otherwise they would not have been so mindful of my security—seized Janek by either arm and forced him out the door. Janek didn't protest; he was powerless in their grasp and must have known that protest would only make matters worse for him.
>
> The leader warned us to remain in the house for at least five minutes after they were gone. Then the partisans slipped into the bushes whence they came, and that was the last we saw of them. And it was the last we saw of Janek, too.[332]

Jewish accounts from the Działoszyce area refer to revenge actions against Polish "collaborators" by Jewish partisans, but there is insufficient context to assess these events and the activities of the partisans.

> Desperate, we ran to the Chroberz forest. When we got there, they told us that a gentile named Krzyształ had killed five members of the Jurysta family. Some time later, Monas Rzeźnik, one of

[332] Lala Fishman and Steven Weingartner, *Lala's Story: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 256–57.

> the partisans in our area, caught the murderer and shot him "as a lesson so that others might learn and fear."
>
> Monas and his group of partisans also killed a gentile by the name of Przemysław from Dębowa Zaga [Zagaje Dębiańskie?]. For his "good deeds" collaborating with the Germans, he got his head chopped off. From that time on, the gentile murderers were fearful of Monas Rzeźnik and his partisan comrades, and they relented a bit.[333]

These Jewish partisans appear to be the same ones who "protected" Jews hiding with Polish farmers in that area, and who supplied these Jews with goods that the partisans likely stole from other farmers.

> As soon as they find out about a Jew, they come to help in whatever way they can. The first time, there were eighteen of them who came at night, understandably, riding horses. They brought all kinds of wonderful things and gave us some money, which we are using to help us along even now. The farmer [who hid them] did not lose anything because of them.[334]

As noted earlier, those who wanted to join the ranks of the partisans were carefully interrogated and Communist as well as Jewish partisans were known to execute people they were unsure of. The Germans also sent Jews into the countryside as informers and *agents provocateurs,* who proved to be another source of peril for the underground and the unsuspecting civilian population who provided them with assistance. In July 1943, the Gestapo and gendarmes in Kraśnik released a group of Jews to gather information about Poles who sheltered Jews and the Polish underground organizations operating in the area. The Polish

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[333] Fay Bussgang and Julian Bussgang, eds., *Działoszyce Memorial Book* (New York: JewishGen, 2012), 312.

[334] Bussgang, *Działoszyce Memorial Book,* 321. Another account in that book also speaks of "revenge" murders against Poles. Ibid., 323–24. David Wohlgelernter describes how even those Poles already sheltering Jews lost their nerve because of the German terror: "It was when in all the villages there were strong raids and every farmer threw out whatever Jews they were sheltering, fearing for their own lives. Even hiding among the high sheaves of grain did not help, because even there, the murderers found them. They [the murderers] went on for a certain time, sweeping through the grain day after day, and shot whomever they found. Dozens of innocent Jewish souls were murdered and left lying there until after the harvest, when the farmers buried them." Ibid., 322.

underground had to take steps to eliminate this threat, as did the Communist partisans in the area.[335] A Jewish partisan group led by Edmund Łukawiecki, which operated in the forests north of Lubaczów (Puszcza Solska), executed a young Jewish woman who had betrayed at least one family of Jews in hiding and tried to infiltrate the partisan group.[336]

Other Jewish partisan groups also took similar measures against potential collaborators, often without any verification of their story or background. As the following account by Eta Chajt Wrobel, a Jewish woman from Łuków, shows, the consequences for those who happened to be wrongly suspected were dire indeed and, understandably, could lead to retaliations against those partisans who wrongly mistreated innocent villagers.

> During my travels, I often found myself in dangerous situations. For example, one day I was on the road to Lukow [Łuków] and a young boy who recognized me from Dietz's chicken flicking factory started screaming in the street that I was a Jew … A businessman who lived in a fancy house on the outskirts of the town heard him screaming, called him over, grabbed him by the throat, and then yelled at me to run. I began running to ward the village as the man held on to the boy. … I had no idea what happened next, but that man definitely saved my life.
>
> Months later, back in that area, my men caught this same businessman when he came across our camp while walking through the woods. The men told him they would not let him leave the forest until it was dark. But he knew very well that our practice was that any non-Jew who wandered into the forest and discovered us never left the woods alive.

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[335] Both the Polish nationalist (NSZ) and Communist underground executed these Jewish agents. A Jew sheltered by Poles in the nearby village of Borów was also suspected of spying for the Germans. See Chodakiewicz, *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne,* 113–15; Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Agenci i bandy pozorowane na Lubelszczyźnie: Z dziejów okupacji niemieckiej w Janowskiem," *Radzyński Rocznik Humanistyczny,* vol. 2 (2002): 113–26, at 122. The fear of German-sent spies was not a baseless one. Two Jews, possibly *agents provocateurs*—one a refugee from Warsaw, the other a local Jew named Kelman—came to Sterdyń, near Sokołów Podlaski, with a punitive detachment of the SS and German gendarmerie to identify the Poles who had helped them in that town and on a nearby estate in Paulinów; about a dozen Poles perished in the ensuing pacification. A Jew from Wołomin named Rubin, who was captured by the Germans after joining up with a band of fugitive Soviet soldiers, betrayed numerous farmers who had helped them and continued to help them while Rubin spied for the Germans. As a result, more than a score of Poles were executed in the villages of Brzuza (also spelled Brzóza) and Zarzetka, near Łochów; some of the Polish victims were beaten and shot by Rubin himself. See Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. II, Part A, 397–98 (Zarzetka), 447 (Paulinów); Paweł Szapiro, ed., *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka: Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943–1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* (London: Aneks, 1992), 163 (Paulinów and Zarzetka); Wacław Piekarski, *Obwód Armii Krajowej Sokołów Podlaski "Sęp", "Proso" 1939–1944* (Warsaw: n.p., 1991), 25–27 (Paulinów and Zarzetka); Wacław Piekarski, *Obwód Armii Krajowej Sokołów Podlaski "Sęp", "Proso" 1939–1944,* 2nd edition (Warsaw: Efekt, 1997), 36–38 (Paulinów and Zarzetka); Wojciech Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, "Powiat węgrowski w latach okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1944," in Arkadiusz Kołodziejczyk and Tadeusz Swat, eds., *Węgrów: Dzieje miasta i okolic w latach 1941–1944* (Węgrów: Towarzystwo Miłośników Ziemi Węgrowskiej, 1991), 357–58; Wojciech Jerzy Muszyński, *W walce o Wielką Polskę: Propaganda zaplecza politycznego Narodowych Sił Zbrojnych (1939–1945)* (Biała Podlaska: Rekonkwista, and Warsaw: Rachocki i S-ka, 2000), 294–95; Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert, ed., *Polacy–Żydzi, Polen–Juden, Poles–Jews, 1939–1945: Wybór Źródeł, Quellenauswahl, Selection of Documents* (Warsaw: Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa, Instytut Dziedzictwa Narodowego, and Rytm, 2001), 267–68; Joanna Kierylak, "12 sprawiedliwych z Paulinowa," February 10, 2009, Internet: <http://www.treblinka-muzeum.eu/index.php/sprawiedliwi-z-okolic-treblinki/12-z-paulinowa>; Namysło and Berendt, *Rejestr faktów represji na obywatelach polskich za pomoc ludności żydowskiej w okresie II wojny światowej,* 348–50 (Paulinów); Grądzka-Rejak and Namysło, *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, vol. 1, 89–91 (Paulinów).

[336] Lavee (Łukawiecki), *Jewish Hit Squad,* 3–18.

> I found out that they'd caught someone when I heard a commotion from one corner of the camp. I walked over to find a man on his knees, begging for his life, promising that he would never tell anyone, even his wife, where we were. I instantly recognized him as the man who'd saved me from that vicious boy. I ordered my men to let him go immediately, knowing that he would never tell. …
>
> It came to pass that an Orthodox Jew by the name of Noach one day wandered into our camp. A saddle maker by profession, he was basically uneducated and a fright to behold. It didn't help that he was in a constant state of fury and full of hate for the *goyim* (non-Jews). He was as strong as a bull, and when he would get his hands on a Pole who deserved a beating, each blow was in the name of one of his family members: "This one is for my father. This one is for my mother. This one is for my sister. This one is for my brother," and he would name names until the collaborator or thief was beaten senseless.[337]

While this particular author did not mention any raids on farmers carried out by her forest group of Jews, which joined up with the Communist People's Army, other Jewish survivors did.[338] Lily Fenster (Luba Skórka), a Jewish woman who passed as a Pole in Łuków and the nearby countryside recalled brazen raids carried out by desperate Jews. She herself was fearful of being raped by a particularly aggressive Jewish partisan.

> You had to be afraid for your own Jews too …
>
> *Interviewer: You mean you were worried that other Jews were going to take advantage?*
>
> Yeah. They want to rape me too. A guy that was a partisan. I don't know how I run away. That was '43, I think. When I had my Kennkarte already and I was working in a store. … And that time a Jewish partisan came. He was so tall, red hair, he was looking for a particular fireman that he helped to kill the Jews and he stole everything from the Jewish people. He found him. He found him and he killed him. And he says, "That's for all the Jews." Even the Poles gave him right, they—he did the right thing, when he come to kill that [man] who cleans the chimneys … So, I begged him. I was afraid to say I'm Jewish … "Just leave me alone. I'm an orphan, leave me alone." And thanks God somebody …
>
> I will never forget it, because he had a chain of bullets, here. With his red hair, a beast, a beast. But thank God because I was afraid to say I'm a Jew, leave me alone. Because he would grab me

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[337] Wrobel, *My Life My Way,* 83–84, 90. The author, Eta Wrobel, writes: "Many people helped us without being paid … And so we spent the winter of 1943–1944 in the woods near Lukow [Łuków]. The peasants in the area continued to give us warm clothing and would let us sleep in their barns, where eight or 10 of us would huddle together for warmth." Ibid., 85, 94. Their contact with Russians hiding in the woods proved to be disastrous: "We sent two men to find their whereabouts but it turned out that these Russians were deserters. We never saw our men again." Ibid., 95. After establishing contact with the communist People's Army, their campsite was attacked by a group said to be the Home Army. Ibid., 103. On one occasion, a collaborator from Łuków was captured and was shot in each eye. Ibid., 85. On another occasion, a village was burned to the ground because someone had killed a Jewish woman and her children. Ibid., 88.

[338] On robberies carried out by armed Jewish forest groups in this area see also Czubaszek, *Żydzi z Łukowa i okolic,* 230, 246, 250; Rubin, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Communities in Poland and Their Relics Today,* volume II: *District Lublin,* 188. Polish criminals who robbed and raped, and who sometimes teamed up with Soviet groups, were also a scourge for the rural population and Jews hiding in the forest. Both the German authorities and the Polish underground took measures against criminals. A Polish gamekeeper was said to have been denounced by a Jew from Łuków named Telman. See Bechta, *...Między Bolszewią a Niemcami,* 196.

> with him to the woods. And I didn't wanna go to the woods. But they killed him anyways because he was too free he took too much advantage. They put him in, in the woods and the German had a hard time finding that man. But they burned them on the farm and Alexander called it and they burned him with a whole bunch of people in it. …
>
> *Interviewer: Maybe he was with the Communist partisans?*
>
> Communism was a bunch of Jews, still young ones, remnants and they were running from farm to farm and doing terrible things. And they—all the people went around there—every night he came to another farm. If he didn't like them, he went out … took a torch, burned the farm. How long could those Goyim take something like that? So then the Germans were looking for him …[339]

Polish testimonies confirm that Jewish forest groups carried out robberies in this area, taking not only food but also valuables from farmers.[340] However, the son of a member of an armed Jewish group in the Łuków area claims that there were no such robberies, and that the Jews "lived on meagre supplies they bought from villagers, sometimes giving them IOUs for food." He describes the reason for their "desire for revenge" thus:

> A few locals continued to tell the Nazis about families that were harbouring Jews, so Rosenbaum's father and uncle encircled their farmhouses with kerosene and lit them on fire. When they came out of their homes to escape the flames, the Rosenbaums shot them dead.
>
> "That only happened a few more times and then there were no more snitches."[341]

Sonia and Abram Hurman, who moved about in the area southwest of Łuków, where they received help (and even some weapons) from dozens of Poles, reported frequent cases of Jews taking food by force from Polish farmers. They even speak of their forest group's reluctance to accept Jews known for their "brutality" and "crimes," and note that eventually even farmers who were friendly became less generous for the simple reason that they did not have much food for themselves. In one egregious case, the Communist partisan leadership ordered the execution of a Jew and Ukrainian who wandered about and terrorized the farmers.[342] But such punishment was meted out only very rarely. Soviet partisans were more

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[339] Testimony of Lily Fenster (née Luba Skorka), November 8 and 10, 1994, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/fenster/> (sections 22, 23 and 24).

[340] Testimony of Witalis Grochowski, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/7084.

[341] Rick Westhead, "'We'd See Corpses in the Street'" [Online edition: "Holocaust Survivors Network Founder Hank Rosenbaum Recalls Horrors He Suffered to Survive the War"], *Toronto Star,* April 8, 2013. The Rosenbaum family, consisting of Zalman, his son, Yitzhak, and his wife, Sara, and their son, Chaim, as well as Chaya and Izak Epsztein and Kivel Tykocki (Zalman's grandson and Chaya's bother), were sheltered by the family of Stanisław Tomaszewski in the village of Kępki, north of Łuków. See Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 5: *Poland,* Part 2, 819–20.

[342] Hurman, *Pod osłoną nocy,* 58–59, 60, 62, 74, 88, 116. The execution of some flagrant robber partisans by People's Guard commanders is confirmed in Mirosław Sulej, *Zdrada i zbrodnia: Studium przypadku: Komuniści na terenie Podobwodu Dęblin–Ryki Armii Krajowej podczas II wojny światowej i później* (Warsaw: Volumen, 2012), 98.

inclined to administer collective punishment, as was the case near Serokomla, south of Łuków, where they wanted to torch a village whose inhabitants had helped them, after a forester informed the Germans of the presence of their partisan unit in the area as he was required to do.[343]

To complicate matters further there were also the so-called "sham units" (*oddziały pozorowane* or *grupy pozorowe*) attached to the Communist security forces. These units were created by the Soviets to fight the Polish underground and to compromise it by committing political and common murders for which the Home Army was often blamed. Though such units had been utilized earlier, they were formally mobilized into action by a secret order issued to the provincial cells by Stanisław Radkiewicz,[344] head of State Security, on December 4, 1945:

> In the last few weeks, the anti-government activity of the reactionary and conspiratorial bands [i.e., Polish insurgents] has intensified throughout the land. We are in the possession of documents proving that this action is supported by legal opposition parties and that people sympathize with it. … In conjunction with this, I am instructing the directors of the Security Service outposts to prepare in great secrecy an action aimed at the liquidation of the members of these parties and to make it appear as if it was done by the reactionary bands. For this action use the special fighting

[343] Diatłowicki and Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce,* vol. 2, 68–69. Abram Rozenman's account refers to a partisan group led by Serafim Alekseev, a Soviet officer who escaped from a German prisoner of war camp, who on this occasion was persuaded not to take revenge against the entire village. Alekseev formed or oversaw a number of partisan groups, some of them Jewish, with links to the People's Guard (*Gwardia Ludowa*). These groups were involved in widespread robberies that especially targeted estates, well-off farmers, and independentist activists, and were responsible for many murders such as that of Home Army member Kazimierz Kuszell, who attempted to prevent his daughters from being raped, and the family of Home Army member Marian Boruc. See Sulej, *Zdrada i zbrodnia,* 19–20, 86–90, 299–302.

[344] Stanisław Radkiewicz, who rose to the rank of Minister of Public Security, was an ethnic Belorussian from Polesia (Polesie). During the interwar period he had joined the *komsomol* [Communist youth] where he used the pseudonym of "Pietia" or "Pietka." See Noskowa and Fitowa, *NKWD i polskie podziemie 1944–1945,* 294; Tomasz Grotowicz, "Kaci Polaków: Stanisław Radkiewicz," *Nasza Polska,* October 18, 2000.

> squads created last summer. This action must be accompanied by a press campaign aimed against the terrorist bands on whom will fall the responsibility for these deeds.[345]

Nor did the fact that many Jews joined the ranks of the Communist partisans operating in central Poland, the People's Guard (*Gwardia Ludowa*), later transformed into the People's Army (*Armia Ludowa*), prevent that formation from killing Jews, among them its own members. The People's Guard not only engaged in widespread banditry, having absorbed criminal elements including entire gangs of robbers to bolster its numerically small ranks (as it was shunned by the vast majority of Poles), but also murdered hundreds of Jews. As early as 1942, two groups of escapees from the camp for Jewish prisoners of war on Lipowa Street in Lublin and from the Jewish labour camp in Janiszów, near Annopol, were attacked by People's Guard detachments near Kraśnik Lubelski.[346] Detachments of the People's Guard under the command of Grzegorz Korczyński (Stefan Kilanowicz), Tadeusz Maj ("Świt"), and Józef Bielenda killed scores of Jews

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[345] Cited in Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 104. The authenticity of this document has been questioned by some historians. For more on the activities of the "sham units" see: Leszek Żebrowski, "Partyjne oddziały partyzanckie: Bandy pozorowane 1944–1947," *Gazeta Polska,* November 7, 1996; Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR,* vol. 1, passim; Żebrowski, "Działalność tzw. band pozorowanych jako metoda zwalczania podziemia niepodległościowego w latach 1944–1947," in *Skryte oblicze systemu komunistycznego,* 75–90; Leszek Żebrowski, "'Bandy pozorowane'," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2000), vol. 2, 258–60; Maciej Korkuć, *Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce…: Niepodległościowe oddziały partyzanckie w Krakowskiem (1944–1947)* (Kraków: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej—Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu and Towarzystwo Naukowe "Societas Vistulana", 2002), 474–95; Adam Dziuba, "Odkrycie w archiwum IPN," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 5 (May 2003): 81; Błażejewicz, *W walce z wrogami Rzeczypospolitej,* 151, 171; Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 415; Kamiński and Żaryn, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego,* vol. 1, 35, 47, 372. For operations against the Ukrainian Insurgent Army see Eugeniusz Misiło, ed., *Akcja "Wisła": Dokumenty* (Warsaw: Archiwum Ukraińskie, 1993), 385; Zbigniew Nawrocki, *Zamiast wolności: UB na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1944–1949* (Rzeszów: Instytut Europejskich Studiów Społecznych w Rzeszowie, 1998), 182. Leszek Żebrowski points out that the Communist press attributed all sorts of heinous murders and robberies perpetrated by the "sham units" to the anti-Communist underground organizations. Tadeusz Piotrowski states that, according to German counter-intelligence, by the summer of 1944 there were 20,000 Soviet agents behind German lines, and they were increasing at the rate of 10,000 every three months. It was these agents who provided the Soviet Einsatzgruppen, the "operational groups," with the names of the Home Army members to be arrested and liquidated. See Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 104. For a description of the activities of "sham units" in the Nowogródek region see Andrzej Chmielarz, "Likwidacja podziemia polskiego na Nowogródczyźnie i Wileńszczyźnie (lipiec 1944–lipiec 1945)," in Boradyn, ed., *Armia Krajowa na Nowogródczyźnie i Wileńszczyźnie (1941–1945),* 190; and Alexandra Viatteau with Stanislaw Maria Jankowski and Youri Zoria, *Staline assassine la Pologne, 1939–1947* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), 166.

[346] Chodakiewicz, *Between Nazis and Soviets,* 155, 196 Chodakiewicz, *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne,* 96–97, 100, 116, 350 n.186, 187. For a selection of Communist archival documents detailing these incidents see Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR,* vol. 2, 43–71. Dariusz Libionka takes issue with the claim that it was the People's Guard who murdered one group of Jewish POWs who escaped from Lublin, and blames a detachment of the National Military Organization–National Army (*Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa–Armia Narodowa)* which was later incorporated into the National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne,* NSZ). See Dariusz Libionka, "Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa i Narodowe Siły Zbrojne wobec Żydów pod Kraśnikiem—korekta obrazu," *Zagłada Żydow: Studia i materiały,* vol. 7 (2011): 23–62. However, Libionka's research has been exposed as faulty, and the evidence as to who carried out the murder appears to be inconclusive. See Rafał Drabik, "Żydzi, bandytyzm a podziemie narodowe: O mordzie na Żydach w lasach zakrzowieckich (pod Kraśnikiem)," *Glaukopis,* no. 31 (2014): 95–125. Samuel Gruber, a Jewish partisan knowledgeable about this matter, appears to point the finger at the former: "Unfortunately, of the forty men of the advance guard who left [the Lipowa Street camp in Lublin] for the woods only two survived to tell of the fate that had befallen the others. After completing their work on the bunkers, the Polish underground fighters had hidden out in the woods to await the arrival of our men. When our men had filed into the bunker, the Poles, who were supposed to be their allies against the Nazis, rushed out from their hiding places, threw hand grenades into the bunker they themselves had built, and opened fire on those inside. At the time the *Armja Ludowa,* the left-wing freedom fighters, blamed the rightist partisans, the *Armja Krajowa,* and spread abroad a story of how the 'sons of the bourgeoisie' had killed forty 'heroes.'" See Gruber, *I Chose Life,* 41.

in the Lublin, Kielce and Kraków Districts, respectively.[347] Among other such occurrences, a People's Guard ("Mickiewicz") unit under the command of Leon Plichta ("Wrona") murdered Jews who unwittingly joined its ranks in the vicinity of Karpiówka, near Kraśnik, in the Lublin District.[348] Notwithstanding this overwhelming and well-documented evidence, the People's Guard is touted in Holocaust literature as having accepted Jews into its ranks, which it did, but little if anything is said about the many murders of Jews it committed.[349] It was also the case that some partisan units of the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*), National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*), and Peasant Battalions (*Bataliony Chłopskie*) killed a number of Jews. However, many of those deaths occurred in the context of the measures taken to eradicate the plague of banditry that increasingly spread throughout the Polish countryside, a topic that is canvassed later on in this study.

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[347] This topic received its first extensive treatment in Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR,* where the murders perpetrated by Tadeusz Maj are described in volume 3, at p. 14. See also Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 178–82, 346–48 (robberies perpetrated by the People's Guard are mentioned throughout this book, primarily in chapters 7, 10, 11 and 13); Piotr Gontarczyk, "Z genealogii elit PZPR: Przypadek Stefana Kilianowicza [sic] vel Grzegorza Korczyńskiego," *Glaukopis*, no. 1 (2003): 214–29; Aleksandra Bańkowska, "Polish Partisan Formations during 1942–1944 in Jewish Testimonies," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 106, 113, 120–21; Mariusz Krzysztofiński, "Dziś a nie jutro trzeba atakować wroga: 'Szlak bojowy' grupy GL 'Iskra' na Rzeszowszczyźnie," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* nos. 3–4 (March–April 2006): 59–67, here at 62–63; Mariusz Krzysztofiński, "Działalność grupy GL 'Iskra': Przyczynek do badań nad stosunkiem PPR i GL do ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie," *Glaukopis,* no. 11–12 (2008): 170–81; Janusz Borowiec, "Zbrodnie popełnione na Żydach przez oddział Gwardii Ludowej 'Iskra' w świetle dokumentów sądowych," in Edyta Czop and Elżbieta Rączy, eds., *Z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich w XX wieku* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Rzeszowie, 2009), 73–87; Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Proces Tadeusza Maja: Z dziejów oddziału AL 'Świt' na Kielecczyźnie," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały,* vol. 7 (2011): 170–210; English translation: Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "An AL Unit and Its Attitude toward Jews: The Trial of Tadeusz Maj," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 40, no. 1 (2012): 75–118. It is believed that, after his arrest by security police in Kraśnik, Yehiel (Jechiel) Rolnik was taken to Lublin where he was murdered, in mysterious circumstances, for investigating Korczyński's crimes. See Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 411 n.13; Sholem Goren, "Under the German Regime," in: David Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Krasnik* (Tel Aviv: Krasnik Societies in Israel and the Diaspora, 1973), 329, translated as *Book of Krasnik,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/krasnik/Krasnik.html>; Roman Lewaszow, "Stefania Szmit—cicha bohaterka z Kraśnika," TVP3 Lublin, August 14, 2021.

[348] Edelstein, *Tzadikim in Sodom (Righteous Gentiles)*, 38–39. Edelstein misidentifies the unit as a Home Army one. See Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR,* vol. 3, 14, 221–22. See also Rafał Drabik, "Żydzi, bandytyzm a podziemie narodowe: O mordzie na Żydach w lasach zakrzowieckich (pod Kraśnikiem)," *Glaukopis,* no. 31 (2014): 95–125. On the murders of Jewish partisans near Wola Czołnowska and Białki Górne, in the Lublin district, carried out by People's Gaurd units under the command of Władysław Sienkiewicz, see Sulej, *Zdrada i zbrodnia,* 97–103. Members of the "Grunwald" brigade of the People's Army murdered three Jews near Raków, in Kielce province, in July 1944. See Sławomir Cenckiewicz and Piotr Woyciechowski, "Szkic do biografii Sławomira Petelickiego (1946–2012): Genealogia, sowieckie korzenie i życie skrywane," *Glaukopis*, no. 28 (2013): 46–66, here at 54–56. According to Robert Kuwałek, "Żydowski ruch oporu," *Strona o Żydach lubelskich,* Internet: <http://www.jews-lublin.net>, a Communist partisan group under the command of Lieutenant Karl Herzenberg, who escaped from a German POW camp, murdered a group of Jews led by Abraham Braun.

[349] For example, even Christopher Browning, an otherwise measured historian, perpetuates the myth that, unlike the Home Army and National Armed Forces, who are accused of robbing and murdering Jews (which sometimes did occur), the Communist underground welcomed them, while ignoring the many murders of Jews by the People's Guard in the vicinity of Starachowice. Brwowning writes, "While a few partisan groups in the forest—usually those associated with the AL (*Armia Ludowa*, the Communist-oriented underground)—would accept Jews, those associated with the AK (the conservative nationalist underground Home Army) usually rejected them. More dangerously, some AK units and especially extremist units associated with the notorious National Armed Forces (NSZ) would either rob Jews, or simply kill them outright." See Browning, *Remembering Survival,* 252.

3. The Polish Underground Takes Measures Against Banditry

With the release of some 30,000 prisoners in September 1939, crimes involving violence increased precipitously.[350] As more and more fugitives, especially escaped Soviet prisoners of war, took refuge in the forests, where they were joined by groups of bandits and stray partisans, conditions became more and more menacing. War also demoralized a portion of the civilian population as prewar institutions were dismantled and social norms collapsed. Widespread lawlessness became the order of the day in much of the Polish countryside.

The response to this state of affairs was twofold: the emergence of the village guard, who were tasked with protecting their village and reporting on interlopers or face punishment from the German authorities; and the measures taken primarily by the Home Army to attempt to curtail banditry. With so many diverse groups of unknown people on the run—including escapees from POW camps, labour camps, and ghettos—who showed up unannounced and demanded food and other provisions, impoverished villagers were placed in an increasingly perilous and unbearable position. They faced retaliation for both complying—something that was strictly forbidden by law—and not complying with those demands. Most villagers simply wanted to get by, unmolested; instead; they were stuck between a rock and a hard place. The situation was not one of their making.

The claim that Home Army Commander General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, under the guise of fighting banditry, issued an order—misidentified as Order 116 of September 15, 1943—calling on Home Army units to kill Jews who were hiding in the forests from the Nazis is patently false. As historians Stanislaus Blejwas and John Lowell Armstrong have shown, the actual text of the real Order 116 makes no mention of Jews or Jewish partisans whatsoever. The impugned document is in fact Organizational Report No. 220 of August 31, 1943, which does mention measures against armed gangs, including Soviet partisan detachments and "ordinary gangs of robbers," who commit robberies and murder. There is, however, only one reference to Jews in that document: "Among the perpetrators there are not only men, but also women,

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[350] Sebastian Piątkowski, "Bandytyzm i inne formy przestępczości kryminalnej na obszarach wiejskich Generalnego Gubernatorstwa w początkach okupacji niemieckiej (październik 1939–czerwiec 1941 r.)," in Marek Gałęzowski, et al., eds., *Polska pod okupacją 1939–1945,* vol. 1 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2015), 64–121. Piątkowski argues that this continuous siege on their safety impacted the villagers' response to fugitives who later hid in the countryside. See also Robert Spałek, ed., *Porządek publiczny i bezpieczeństwo w okupacyjnej Warszawie* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2018).

in particular Jewish women …"[351] So not only do critics of the Home Army quote the wrong text, the document they do quote (and indeed misquote)—Organizational Report no. 220—does not say what they claim: it merely mentions that there were Jewish women among the bandit groups roaming the Polish countryside. This is nowhere near a direct order to kill Jews, but historians such as Shmuel Krakowski tried to get around that difficulty by asserting, "The reference to Jewish women served under the circumstances as a veiled indication that Jewish partisan units were also to be met by force."[352] As a penetrating study based on the experience of Jews who served in the Home Army concludes, there is little evidence to support the claim that commanding officers interpreted the order in the manner alleged by Krakowski. Most members had most likely never heard of the order. The Jews interviewed for the study did not recall being told to attack or to kill Jews that they encountered.[353]

The confusion of documents is fatal to Krakowski's argument. While Order 116 (the one that did not mention Jews) went *down* the chain of command to Bór-Komorowski's subordinates, Organizational Report no. 220 went *up* the chain of command to London. It was prepared for the Polish government in exile and was not as an order to the AK commanders in the field. Thus the "veiled indication" of the reference to Jewish women was never seen by the subordinates to whom it was supposedly directed, and who would have been the ones to act upon it. In short, Bór-Komorowski's order was directed against bandits and others who committed armed robbery, and not specifically against Jews or Jewish partisans, or

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[351] See Stanislaus A. Blejwas's reply in the exchange, "Polemic as History: Shmuel Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed. Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland, 1942–1944," Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies,* vol. 4 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1989), 354–69. The text of Order No. 116 (issued on September 15, 1943), in the Polish original, is reproduced in Pełczyński et al., eds., *Armia Krajowa w dokumentach 1939–1945,* vol. 6 (London: Studium Polskiej Podziemnej, 1989), 347–48. See also Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 280–81. An English translation can be found in Peter D. Stachura, *Poland, 1918–1945: An Interpretive and Documentary History of the Second Republic* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 139–40, and is reproduced below:

> Instructions Regarding the Preservation of Security in Local Areas:
> I. Security and order do not prevail in all regions or do not prevail to a satisfactory extent. The local population is subject to theft, intimidation, violence and, quite often, loss of life at the hands of gangs of various origin. The occupying power [i.e., the Germans] has failed to address this situation. In general, the occupying power represses the innocent local population, which is tormented by bandits. This situation threatens our interests and plans. The Home Army must take measures to improve the state of public security in the provinces.
> II. I instruct all regional and district commanders to take action where necessary against plundering or subversive bandit elements.
> III. Each action must be decisive and aimed at suppressing lawlessness. Action should be taken only against groups which are particularly causing trouble for the local population and the Home Army Command, that is, those who murder, rape and rob.
> IV. Action should be taken that will eliminate gang leaders and agitators, rather than entire gangs. Every action must be organised and carried out in complete secrecy …
> V. Regional and District Home Army commanders will secure the support and co-operation of the local population in the fight against banditry …

[352] Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims,* 124. Krakowski adds: "It is a proven fact, that in many units of the Home Army the order quoted was understood to define the Jewish partisans as outlaws." However, he provides no references for this claim. Another line of argument is that the reference in the report to "Soviet partisan detachments" rendered the order anti-Semitic because many Poles made a direct correlation between Jews and Communists.

[353] Amy Sara Davis Cores, *Jews in the Armia Krajowa,* Thesis (M.A.), Florida State University, April 2000, 79–80.

Soviet partisans for that matter, and spared no one—not even members of the Home Army.[354] Not only were General Bór-Komorowski's instructions not intended as a weapon to strike at Jews, but also they directed the armed underground to target groups engaged in particularly violent crimes with a view to eliminating their leaders and agitators and not the entire group. Specifically, the order to concentrate on leaders is inconsistent with any alleged intent to wipe out entire Jewish partisan units. Moreover, in many cases, the Home Army took harsh punitive measures against its own members who engaged in criminality, including crimes committed against Jews[355]; they also issued warnings to Jews caught robbing Polish farmers.[356] Purely criminal gangs were pursued vigorously.[357]

An order issued in February 1943 by General Stefan Rowecki ("Grot"), Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army, called on district commanders of the Home Army to give assistance to the Jewish underground in those ghettos where they wish to undertake armed resistance against the Germans.[358] A subsequent order issued by Rowecki, sometime before his arrest by the Germans in June 1943, helps to explain the Home Army's attitude toward Jewish partisans. That order reads in part:

> The participation of the Jews in the resistance to be as follows:
>
> 1. My order of February 1943 regarding giving assistance to Jews in ghettos wishing to fight still stands.
> 2. I allow the formation of Jewish fighting groups from elements that are disposed patriotically (Bund, Zionists). These groups are not to be used in diversionary or partisan actions, but are to be prepared for the uprising.

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[354] John Lowell Armstrong, "The Polish Underground and the Jews: A Reassessment of Home Army Commander Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski's Order 116 Against Banditry," *The Slavonic and East European Review,* vol. 72, no. 2 (April 1994): 259–76. For a more recent and nuanced treatment of this subject in Polish see Adam Puławski, "Postrzeganie żydowskich oddziałów partyzanckich przez Armię Krajową i Delegaturę Rządu RP na Kraj," *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość,* no. 2 (2003): 271–300; and Janusz Marszalec, "Polskie Państwo Podziemne wobec komunistów polskich 1939–1944," in Chinciński, *Przemoc i dzień powszedni w okupowanej Polsce,* 408.

[355] In the Radzyń Podlaski district, Home Army members who were found operating in a Polish bandit group were court martialled and shot. After being caught stealing on two separate occasions, members of another unit were flogged the first time, and then executed by firing squad in front of the rest of their unit. Stefan Łukasiewicz, a member of yet another unit, was executed in front of the other men of his unit for raping and murdering a Jewish woman. See Jarosław Kopiński, "Problem bandytyzmu wśród żołnierzy AK-WiN Inspektoratu Rejonowego Radzyń Podlaski," in Tomasz Strzembosz, ed., *Problemy bandytyzmu w okupowanej Polsce w latach 1939–1947* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2004), 141. Leon Szymbierski (*nom de guerre* Orzeł), a local Home Army commander operating near Koniecpol, was executed in June 1944 for a variety of crimes against civilians, including murdering a group of five Jewish partisans. (Initially, the NSZ had been falsely accused of this crime.) See Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 91; Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 120–21.

[356] See, for example, Schutzman, *Wierzbnik-Starachowitz,* 333ff. (David Sali), 381f. (Avraham Shiner).

[357] One of the most notorious criminal gangs was the Kiełbasa gang, which operated in the vicinity of Janów Lubelski. See Andrzej Albiniak, "Pomiędzy wsią a małym miasteczkiem: Wspomnienie i pamięć o Żydach wiejskich z Lubelszczyzny," in Sitarek, Trębacz, and Wiatr, *Zagłada Żydów na polskiej prowincji,* 401–2.

[358] Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 74, 203. The February 1943 order has been lost but it is referred to in other orders and reports.

3. I allocate money for that purpose, i.e., upkeep of Jewish groups, under the control of the central commission.
4. Arms purchased for the Jewish groups and defence of closed concentrations of Jews are to be stored in secured places, and to be provided in times of readiness.[359]

One historian has made the following assessment of the above-mentioned orders:

> Rowecki's directions, in this order, correspond with the goals and capabilities of the Home Army in 1943. Commander in Chief Rowecki issued this order before Komorowski's alleged anti-Semitic order of September 1943. It appears that the Commanders-in-Chief rather than the government-in-exile initiated both of these orders. There is no evidence I have seen to suggest that Komorowski disregarded this order or that any later orders directly countermand Rowecki's order.
>
> Rowecki's order not only contradicts the argument that the AK was anti-Semitic, but also provides evidence to suggest that the Home Army actively supported Jewish armed resistance.[360]

After a thorough investigation of the sources and conditions in German-occupied Poland, John Lowell Armstrong argues compellingly that the measures taken by the Polish underground authorities to combat banditry were entirely legitimate. Given the extent of that scourge, policing the countryside and eradicating banditry became important functions that the Home Army had to undertake to maintain a semblance of law and order. According to Armstrong,

> Therefore, it is clear from the foregoing that Order 116 [of September 15, 1943] and other Home Army Orders against banditry were fully justified in the face of rampant robberies. As a result of these orders, the AK generally tried hard to put an end to banditry and robbery, not sparing ethnic Poles or even members of its own ranks in this struggle. The question becomes, then, whether or not Jews engaged in banditry, and, if they did, how did the Home Army react to this?
>
> Most Jewish historians, Krakowski and Ainsztein included, adamantly reject any suggestion of Jewish involvement in robberies of the Polish population. In Krakowski's case, this position is so stringent that he even ludicrously accuses Emmanuel Ringelblum of being under the influence of Polish 'propaganda' when Ringelblum writes that Jews trying to survive in the forest were 'condemned to the life of bandits who have to live by robbery'. Actually, there were three ways in which Jews committed armed robbery of the Polish population during the Second World War: as members of partisan units, in spontaneously formed groups not associated with any organization in order to survive, and in mixed Polish-Jewish professional bandit gangs. … [Copious examples follow. Armstrong also cites a Bund report that expresses concern about "wildcat groups" composed of Jews "which are looting the countryside." Moreover, as we have seen in this study, there were also bandit groups made up exclusively of Jews.—*M.P.*]

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[359] Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 74, as cited in Bernard Mark, *Powstanie w getcie warszawskim: Nowe uzupełnione wydanie i zbiór dokumentów* (Warsaw: "Idisz Buch," 1963), 347–48.

[360] Amy Sara Davis Cores, *Jews in the Armia Krajowa,* Thesis (M.A.), Florida State University, April 2000, 82.

In line with its basically uncompromising stand against banditry, the AK treated Jews who robbed with the same severity as it did Poles. Specific examples of death sentences carried out on Jews for robbery are found in Polish underground documents. For example, in a report on the Home Army's diversionary activities for August 1943, Bór-Komorowski noted that 'for terrorist acts against the Polish population nine Jewish robber gangs were liquidated, killing seventy-six bandits'. Another instance of the execution of Jews for robbery is found in a summary of actions carried out during the German occupation by a BCh [*Bataliony Chłopskie*—Peasant Battalions[361]] unit in the Hrubieszów area. Here the Peasant Battalions shot a group of thirteen Jews for banditry. Certainly, these actions were severe, but they were not *a priori* anti-Semitic, as the Home Army generally treated all who robbed with the same harsh justice. …

In the final analysis, Order 116 was aimed against bandits of all types without regard to nationality, including Jewish ones and those in the AK. The order, and others against banditry, were

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[361] The Peasant Battalions were not an anti-Semitic formation as such and many Jews fought in their ranks. See Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe,* 416–17; Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej,* 2nd ed., 276–77, 280–81, 725 ("Pazura" unit operating in the Miechów area), 852; Janusz Gmitruk, *Ku zwycięstwu: Konspiracyjny ruch ludowy na Kielecczyźnie 1939–1945,* 3rd revised edition (Warsaw: Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego, 2003), 219–22; Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 5: *Poland,* Part 2, 523, 693; Aleksandra Bańkowska, "Polish Partisan Formations during 1942–1944 in Jewish Testimonies," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 116–17; Engelking and Grabowski, *Zarys krajobrazu,* 229–30; Ewa Kołomańska, "Polskie podziemie niepodległościowe w ratowaniu Żydów na Kielecczyźnie w latach 1939–1945," in Domański and Majcher-Ociesa, *Żydzi i wojsko polskie w XIX i XX wieku,* 234–50, here at 245 (Zygmunt Schenker and his son, Jacek fought in the Peasant Battalions). The commanders of the Kraków and Białystok regions issued instructions to the field to assist Jews, and such help was forthcoming. See Elżbieta Rączy, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w latach drugiej wojny światowej na Rzeszowszczyźnie," in Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 905–907; "Pomocy działaczy ludowych i organizacji BCh dla ludności żydowskiej w okolicach Białegostoku w latach 1941–1943," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego,* no. 1 (1974): 127–32, here at 132. Members of the Peasant Battalions provided food, false identity documents, and weapons and ammunition to the Jewish underground in Zawiercie, Upper Silesia. See Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. 2, Part A, 175. However, in some areas, like Kielce and Hrubieszów, the Peasant Battalions were responsible for killing several dozen Jews. Some of these Jews were caught in the act of robbing farmers. See Alina Skibińska, "'Dostał 10 lat, ale za co': Analiza motywacji sprawców zbrodni na Żydach na wsi kieleckiej w latach 1942–1944," Engelking and Grabowski, *Zarys krajobrazu,* 396–401; Zajączkowski, *Ukraińskie podziemie na Lubelszczyźnie w okresie okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1944,* 235 n.152. The record of the Polish Socialist underground (the so-called Polish People's Army or *Armia Ludowa,* not to be confused with the Communist *Gwardia Ludowa*) is uniformly favourable. See Aleksandra Bańkowska, "Polish Partisan Formations during 1942–1944 in Jewish Testimonies," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 117. *M.P.*

> fully justified by the plague of robbery raging in German-occupied Poland. Although Order 116 was draconian, it was not intended to unleash a war against Jews and did not do so.[362]

Historian John Radziłowski provides the following description of the context in which the anti-banditry measures were implemented:

> The all-consuming brutalization that engulfed this region [i.e., northeastern Poland] affected all ethnic groups and all aprtisan forces. Yet, it was the AK that by the very nature of its organization suffered the most from this problem, because it directly undermined the Poles' capacity for continued resistance by destroying, weakening, or demoralizing the rural population on which they relied for supplies and from which they recruited most of their members. The very active stance taken by the AK's main command against banditry stemmed first and foremost from practical considerations and was a quick way to gain the trust of the hard-pressed peasants, who certainly preferred to support one forest band than half a dozen.[363]

Historian Teresa Prekerowa also takes issue with the charge that the measures against banditry implemented by the Home Army were directed at Jews as such.

> Neither openly nor in a camouflaged way did the London underground authorities ever take a stand against the Jews … The Home Army commander's order against banditry was properly understood by those at lower levels. The commander [Aleksander Krzyżanowski ("Wilk")] of the Wilno and Nowogródek districts (i.e., those regions where the inhabitants felt the "economic actions" of the Jewish partisans) most severely issued orders to his units to protect the population regardless of

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[362] Armstrong, "The Polish Underground and the Jews: A Reassessment of Home Army Commander Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski's Order 116 Against Banditry," *The Slavonic and East European Review,* vol. 72, no. 2 (April 1994): 272, 275–76. Armstrong states that "cases of AK attacks on Jews, apart from the execution of Jews who robbed, were also the result of local officers and soldiers' decisions and did not result from any order from the Home Army's Central Command." In closing, Armstrong imparts important advice that Holocaust historians would do well to heed: "Conflicts between Jews in the forest and the AK, which resulted in part from anti-Semitism, seem to have occurred due to local conditions and decisions at the local level. The in-depth examination of these local conflicts, using all existing documentation, is an avenue which needs to be pursued further by historians examining the Home Army's complicated and often tragic relationship with Jews." Armstrong's impartial and penetrating analysis merits careful reading and emulation by students of this topic. Unfortunately, Shmuel Krakowski appears to have ignored this important milestone and continues to misquote and misinterpret Bór-Komorowski's order of September 15, 1943. See Shmuel Krakowski, "The Polish Underground and the Jews in the Years of the Second World War," in Bankier and Gutman, *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution,* 226. For an important discussion of the topic of banditry and its impact on relations between Jews and Poles, see Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955,* 327–47; Chodakiewicz, *Between Nazis and Soviets,* 153–55, 179, 188, 196–98, 218, 431; Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 245–75, 279–82. Banditry did not come to an end with the entry of the Soviet forces in 1944. For a discussion of that topic after the Soviet "liberation" see Wnuk, *Lubelski Okręg AK DSZ i WiN, 1944–1947,* 76–77. Jewish Communist historians such as Maria Turlejska, Bogdan Hillebrandt and Ryszard Nazarewicz endorsed wartime Communist charges that the Home Army used the struggle against banditry in general, and specifically Order 116, as a cover to attack Communists and Jews. See Armstrong, "The Polish Underground and the Jews: A Reassessment of Home Army Commander Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski's Order 116 Against Banditry," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 72, no. 2 (April 1994): 260 n.2.

[363] John Radziłowski, "Ejszyszki and Its Neighbors," *Glaukopis*, no. 1 (2003): 290.

whether "the bandits were Poles, Germans, Russians, Lithuanians, Latvians or Uzbeks." Jews were not mentioned in this list.[364]

As a parallel measure, the AK regional commander of the Wilno District, (then) Lieutenant-Colonel Aleksander Krzyżanowski ("Wilk"), issued an order in April 1944 forbidding mistreatment of the civilian population. That order explicitly included Jews as coming under the protection of the Home Army. Krzyżanowski, who after the war was recognized by Yad Vashem as a "Righteous Gentile," delineated a clear code of conduct that his soldiers were expected to adhere to:

1. The civilian population, regardless of nationality or religion (Polish, Lithuanian, Belorussian, Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox), has to be treated on the same footing and justly. There are to be no abuses directed at the civilian population. Their lives and property must be protected by the Polish Army. …
2. In the event of necessity only food staples are to be requisitioned from the civilian population, for fair payment. Food and supplies should as a rule only be acquired from nationalized estates [i.e., Polish estates seized by the occupying authorities—*M.P.*], taking only necessary items and provisions for which receipts should be issued. The deliberate destruction of property and inventory is forbidden.
3. …
4. Prisoners of war must be treated properly, in accordance with the requirements of international law. A wounded enemy must be attended to and left in the care of the local population. Any Polish soldier who mistreats a prisoner of war or an injured enemy will be punished by up to and including death.
5. Prisoners of war or those arrested for crimes committed against the Polish Army or civilian population must be brought before the Special Army Court and punished on the basis of a court verdict.
6. Every captured informer, spy, traitor, etc. must [only] be sentenced to death by the Special Army Court. I emphatically forbid lynching even on the basis of eyewitness testimony.[365]

As we have seen in Part One, Home Army commanders in other parts of occupied Poland issued orders to their subordinates to punish those who assisted the Germans in hunting down Jews and published warnings to the local population in Home Army communiqués.

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[364] Teresa Prekerowa, "Wojna i okupacja," in Tomaszewski, *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce—w zarysie (do 1950 roku),* 368. The order in question is reproduced in Andrzej Chmielarz, Kazimierz Krajewski, Tomasz Łabuszewski, and Henryk Piskunowicz, *NKWD o polskim podziemiu 1944–1948: Konspiracja polska na Nowogródczyźnie i Grodzieńszczyźnie* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1997), 203–204. For a description of some of the measures taken against banditry in the Nowogródek region and directed primarily against Soviet partisans see Boradyn, "Stosunki Armii Krajowej z partyzantką sowiecką na Nowogródczyźnie," in Boradyn, ed., *Armia Krajowa na Nowogródczyźnie i Wileńszczyźnie (1941–1945)*, 113.

[365] The entire order (no. 5), issued on April 12, 1944 by Aleksander Krzyżanowski ("Wilk"), commander of the Wilno district of the Home Army, is reproduced in Korab-Żebryk, *Biała księga w obronie Armii Krajowej na Wileńszczyźnie,* 26–27. See also Tarka, *Komendant Wilk,* 66–70. Occasionally, not only collaborators but also their family members had to be killed if they threatened retaliation. See, for example, Władysław Kołaciński, *Między młotem a swastyką: Konspiracja, egzekutywa, partyzantka w Polsce, 1940–1945* (Chicago: n.p., 1961).

Home Army reports confirm that many marauders, some Jews among them, were eliminated in the Wilno region, but those primarily pursuing the bands of robbers were the Germans and Lithuanian police.[366] As pointed out by historian Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, however, far more Poles (including Home Army members) and members of others groups were executed by the Home Army in the fight against banditry and collaborators than Jews.[367] Some critics of Bór-Komorowski tend to assume that all Jews were innocent of banditry, merely trying to survive. Many undoubtedly were innocent, but it is a matter of record that others were guilty of banditry. In his detailed study of one Polish county (*powiat*), Janów Lubelski, Chodakiewicz quotes a clandestine report of a fairly common occurrence:

> A group of 300 people, mostly Jews, roams in the environs of Kraśnik. The group is of a bandit character [and] it distinguished itself with cruelty during attacks. On May 15 [1943] the band raided a few better off families in Kraśnik, robbed them completely, tormenting the victims and kidnapping with it [a number] of young women. This fact created panic in the city, so that women do not sleep at home at night.[368]

Of course, robbery in the countryside was not the exclusive domaine of any one group. Rev. Władysław Szubarga from Pysznica, a village on San River across from Stalowa Wola not far from the Janów forest (Lasy Janowskie), endured 14 devastating raids on his rectory between May 1943 and July 1944, carried out by various groups that also plundered farmers in the area: Soviet partisans, Jewish forest bands, Peasant Battalions (*Bataliony Chłopskie*), People's Army (*Armia Ludowa*), and Soviet soldiers. Fortunately, Rev. Szubarga and his vicar, Franciszek Nicałek, managed to escape unharmed when Soviet soldiers shot at them.[369]

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[366] Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1938–1955,* 334.

[367] Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR,* vol. 2, 35; Chodakiewicz, *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne,* 321 n. 209; Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918-1955,* 334–35. For additional confirmation, see Armstrong, "The Polish Underground and the Jews: A Reassessment of Home Army Commander Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski's Order 116 Against Banditry," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 72, no. 2 (April 1994): 262, 271–72; Krzysztof Lesiakowski, "Tablica 'utrwalaczy władzy ludowej,'" *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 2 (February 2004): 58–60.

[368] Chodakiewicz, *Between Nazis and Soviets,* 155. Chodakiewicz notes that the pro-London underground may have killed about 50 Jews in Janów Lubelski county, mostly those perceived as bandits robbing Polish peasants, or as part of the Communist partisan movement.

[369] "Pysznicki proboszcz ks. Szubarga," *Sztafeta,* January 28, 2016, Internet: <http://www.sztafeta.pl/pysznicki-proboszcz-ks-szubarga/>.

The National Armed Forces and the Peasant Battalions, which also issued instructions to stamp out banditry, did not target Jews but primarily ethnic Polish bandits in their war against banditry.[370] Moreover, Soviet, Polish Communist and Jewish partisans also carried out death sentences on bandits.[371] While doubtless there were excesses on the Polish side, most of those were attributable to bandits who often passed themselves off as members of the Polish armed underground or joined the communist People's Guard.[372] Occasionally, the aggressors were members of or loosely connected to the Home Army. One such incident was mentioned earlier (in Part Two of this study). Szoszana Dezent, a young Jewish woman from Wilno, found refuge with the Raczyński family, proprietors of a small estate in Wiegielino located between the towns of Podbrodzie and Niemenczyn. On one occasion, Szoszana and her main protector, Stefan Raczyński, had an encounter with a group of looters who were perhaps associated with the Home Army. The intervention of a priest saved them and resulted in repercussions for the marauders.[373]

However, no amount of evidence of what Polish directives actually say—or of the participation of Jewish partisans in Soviet operations against Polish partisans or assaults by Jews on the Polish civilian population or Jewish accounts refuting alleged Home Army crimes—seem to have an impact on Holocaust historians who write about the activities of "White Poles." Such considerations are summarily dismissed even by moderates such as Nechama Tec, who claims matter-of-factly that, "In line with Bor-Komorowski's directive, the White Poles were using Jews as shooting targets."[374] She offers scant, if any, evidence to support her claim. Nor is she able to put forward any compelling proof of her allegation that "Unprotected

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[370] On December 1, 1942, NSZ commander Ignacy Oziewicz ("Czesław") issued instructions concerning banditry analogous to those issued by the Home Army, namely "Instrukcja Akcji Specjalnej Nr 1," and the Peasant Battalions did likewise. Neither of these instructions targeted Jew. See Mariusz Bechta and Leszek Żebrowski, eds., *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne na Podlasiu,* vol. 3: *Opracowania, wspomnienia i dokumenty* (Biała Podlaska: Rekonkwista, 2003), 15–18; Gontarczyk, *Polska Partia Robotnicza,* 281 n.13. Piotr Kosubudzki, a member of the National Armed Forces (NSZ), describes how his unit destroyed a group of bandits led by one Kwaśniewski, which had preyed on Poles pretending to be NSZ. See Piotr Kosobudzki, *Przez druty, kraty i kajdany: Wspomnienia partyzanta NSZ* (Wrocław: Nortom, 1997), 137–40. Mentioned earlier was the NSZ execution in Borów, on August 9, 1943, of a People's Guard unit composed mostly of local Polish bandits and some Jews. Mieczysław Edward Szpyra, *Moja wojna z Hitlerem, Banderą i Stalinem* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2001), 53–57, refers to a special squad of the Peasant Battalions that eliminated notorious bandits in the vicinity of Tomaszów Lubelski. For more information about the functioning of these execution squads see Wilamowski, *Srebrniki Judasza,* 52–54.

[371] See, for example, Armstrong, "The Polish Underground and the Jews: A Reassessment of Home Army Commander Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski's Order 116 Against Banditry," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 72, no. 2 (April 1994): 271 n.31, as well as the examples noted in this book (e.g., Bielski's unit).

[372] Piotr Gontarczyk's penetrating and path-breaking study, *Polska Partia Robotnicza: Droga do władzy 1941–44* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2003), provides ample evidence of this phenomenon.

[373] Account of Szoszana Raczyńska in Isakiewicz, *Harmonica,* 96. See also Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 5: *Poland,* Part 2, 656–57.

[374] Tec, *Defiance,* 153. Shmuel Krakowski, whom she refers to, simply lists a series of altercations between Polish and Jewish partisans, without more, as alleged proof that "Nearly all the Jewish partisan units of Wilno and Nowogrodek districts were at one time or another the targets of Home Army attacks." See Gutman and Krakowski, *Unequal Victims,* 131. See also Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 58, 162 n.8, for a similar point of view.

small groups of Jewish civilians in bunkers or Jews who were roaming the countryside were attacked and killed" by Polish partisans.[375] Similarly, Yehuda Bauer simply repeats—without verification—a claim found in a Jewish testimony that a Home Army partisan group led by Edward Niedźwiedzki operating near Buczacz "tried to kill" members of a Jewish resistance group. Moshe Wizinger, one of several Jews who belonged to Niedźwiecki's group, refutes that claim. In fact, that Home Army group threatened and even executed collaborators who harmed Jews.[376]

The problem of providing sustenance for Jews escaping and hiding from the Germans was one difficult of solution; indeed, there was no general solution. The role of the Home Army in providing one was rather circumscribed: it was a military organization, not a rescue organization like Żegota, the Polish underground Council for Aid to Jews. It did not provide food for Jews, but it did not provide for non-Jewish Poles on the run either. The Home Army was in the business of taking foodstuffs for its own use, not distributing them. Jewish demands that it be otherwise (such as those advanced by Adolf Berman and Leon Feiner of Jan Stanisław Jankowski, the delegate of the government in exile in the area of the *Generalgouvernement*) were generally impossible to fulfil, but the lack of success is attributed to anti-Semitism.

Jewish commentators also tend to overlook a salient fact of clandestine resistance in occupied Poland: the relations (or lack of them) between the Soviet Union and the Polish government in exile in London, to which the Home Army was loyal. At the time under discussion, late 1943 and early 1944, Stalin had already broken off relations with the London Poles, and the Soviet partisan command was moving to suppress the Home Army. For a variety of reasons, most Jewish partisans found themselves affiliated with the Soviets. In order to survive, they had to obey orders from Moscow and participate in anti-Polish actions. Years later, writing their memoirs, some former partisans found it convenient to justify their actions by vilifying Polish villagers and the Home Army.

Finally, it should be noted that robbers and looters were viewed as a scourge by everyone. Even Jews were prepared to eliminate them ruthlessly. Jakub Smakowski, who was part of a ring of smugglers in the Warsaw ghetto, reported that his group killed six Poles found looting in the ghetto in March 1943. After taking their weapons and documents, the Jewish smugglers shot the Poles and dumped their bodies in the basement of a building.[377]

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[375] Tec, *Defiance,* 152. In support, Tec refers to Shalom Cholawski, *Soldiers from the Ghetto,* 162, who claims that at the beginning of September 1943, Poles in the woods received orders to attack Jews and Russians, but as we have seen, there was no such order. Cholawski's reference to an attack on a Jewish group of partisans has been discussed earlier, and most likely refers to an attack on marauders, and not Jews who were roaming the countryside.

[376] Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl,* 107. Compare with Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 254, 348 n.27; Moshe Wizinger's account in Bartov, *Voices on War and Genocide,* 366–69.

[377] Libionka and Weinbaum, *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy, opisywacze,* 434–35 n.93, citing the unpublished testimony of Jakub Smakowski, *Życie i zmagania,* Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/145.

4. The War Against "Collaborators"

Reprisals in the Wilno and Nowogródek regions for what the Soviet and Jewish partisans perceived to be collaboration with the Germans were plentiful. Since the partisans were virtually powerless against the Germans, their rage and aggression were directed almost exclusively against the civilian population. One female Jewish partisan recalls: "We went to villages and took food. If they betrayed us, the next day the whole village was on fire."[378] A female Jewish partisan took part in killing captured Belorussian peasants suspected collaborating with the Germans:

> When they arrived at the camp, they saw all of their comrades, men and women, standing in a large circle around a ditch. The seven peasants, all men, were sitting at the edge of the ditch. Mitya was at the forefront of the ditch. "You worked for the Nazis," he said simply to the trembling peasants. "And now you shall reap what you sowed." … one of the men got up on his knees and said, "Let me pray to my God." One partisan sneered, "You'll need your prayers." Sonya suddenly took up her rifle and went to the man praying on his knees. She was crying, but the wrath of God was in her eyes. "For my parents … for my sisters and brothers … for the whole Jewish community." She ran her bayonet through the peasant's heart. One by one, the rest of the traitors were bayoneted. Bullets were too precious to waste on them.[379]

Another Jewish partisan, also a woman, openly admits: "We used to kill indiscriminately. We killed off an awful lot of people we knew that were against Jews."[380] Indeed, as another partisan concedes—and this is amply borne out in the accounts that follow, "The need for revenge was uppermost in the thoughts and blood of every Jewish partisan."[381]

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[378] Account of Aida Brydbord (Chaja Czerczewska), a member of the Kirov otriad, as cited in "Women of Valor: Partisans and Resistance Fighters," Internet: <http://www.interlog.com/~mighty/valor/aida.htm>, originally published in the *Journal of the Center for Holocaust Studies,* vol. 6, no. 4 (spring 1990).

[379] Bobrow and Bobrow, *Voices from the Forest,* 221.

[380] Testimony of Celia K. from Szarkowszczyzna, cited in Greene and Kumar, *Witnesses,* 99–100. See also Celia K. [Celia (Tsila) Kassow (Kasovsky) née Cymmer] Holocaust Testimony (HVT–36), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimones, Yale University Library.

[381] Aron, *Fallen Leaves,* 147. The author describes, for instance, an assault by Soviet partisans on the small town of Druja in the summer of 1943: "At midday the partisans were still very much occupied. They were searching for hidden Germans and arms. The Jews among them had their own special mission. They sought out German collaborators among their former neighbors who had assisted in killing Jews. The partisans found many of these and shot them openly in the street. They recovered Jewish valuables, such as clothing, silver and jewelry, which the collaborators had stolen from their victims, and loaded these items onto wagons." Ibid., 101. The potential for abuse from such self-styled, random justice is apparent.

As numerous accounts cited in this study show, seeking vengeance—often to fulfill the dying wishes of one's family members to avenge their deaths—is a *leitmotif* that permeates Holocaust memoirs.[382] According to Yehuda Bauer,

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[382] In the testimony of a survivor from Częstochowa the word *nekome* (revenge) a few dozen times, almost as a refrain, and the text ends with a repetition of the title: "Revenge is Sweet." See R. Mahler, ed., *Tshentokhover yidn* (New York: United Czestochower Relief Committee and Ladies Auxiliary, 1947), 243–46. Aba Gefen (Weinstein) writes: "The martyrs cried out from the ground to the Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs, to avenge their innocent blood, and to our minds came all our vows, during the three years of hiding, to wreak vengeance on the twentieth-century monsters for their unspeakable crimes." See Aba Gefen, *Defying the Holocaust: A Diplomat's Report* (San Bernardino, California: The Borgo Press, 1993), 71. Leon Kahn was urged by his father to seek revenge: "He made me promise to avenge the deaths of our family. 'Leibke, you must make a solemn vow that you will avenge all of us. As long as you have breath you must look for the people who killed us and destroy them. … Find Nowicki, the man who betrayed us all, and kill him!" The message was not lost on his son: "Another force had grown within me: hatred. I was consumed by hatred for those who had murdered my family and my friends. I felt a lust to kill that almost drove me out of my mind, and in the months that followed, I found myself becoming judge and executioner of any suspicious characters who crossed our group's path." See Kahn, *No Time To Mourn,* 148, 157. Eisik Rothenberg received a similar message from his father, whose parting words were: "Revenge all, for the Jewish innocent blood which was shed." See Kanc, *Yizkor Book in Memory of Vlodava and Region, Sobibor,* column 85 (English section). Indeed, the foreword to that book echoes that same theme: "The memorial book is … also a trumpet blast that cannot be silenced, calling for revenge for blood that was spilled on the lands of Poland with the active help of the Polish Nazis. … REMEMBER WHAT AMELEK HAS DONE TO YOU! This includes all the Ameleks of the twentieth century, the Poles and the Germans who murder at all times, whose lands are stained with blood …" Ibid., 5. A Jew from Wiszniew writes: "She told me that when their group was taken to be killed, my father left the line, came to her, and asked her to give me his last request, the request of all the martyred brothers, 'Revenge our blood.'" See Cheina Rabinovich, "Vishnevo during the Second World War," in Abramson, *Wiszniew, As It Was and Is No More,* 107ff. Shalom Yoran recalls his brother's words: "Our main mission is to follow Mother's last request: to save ourselves, take revenge on the murderers and their helpers, and to tell the world what happened." See Yoran, *The Defiant,* 98–99. The last words of Leon Salomon's sister were: "never forget and revenge." See the testimony of Leon Salomon, dated June 18, 1990, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan-Dearborn, Internet: <http://holocaust.umd.edu/salomon/>. A Jewish woman recalls the following exhortation before she jumped from a death train: "be a father to your only remaining child, and take revenge, *revenge for innocent blood.*" See Keila Yevreyski-Kremer, "On the Road to Treblinka," in *Our Hometown Goniondz,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/goniadz/Goniadz.html>; translation of J. Ben-Meir (Treshansky) and A.L. Fayans, eds., *Sefer yizkor Goniadz* (Tel-Aviv: The Committee of Goniondz Association in the U.S.A. and in Israel, 1960), 677ff. A Jew from Skała Podolska recalled the message his father conveyed before he was deported to a death camp: "Fear not for me, dear children. … Only promise me this: that you will save yourselves and one day you will exact revenge." See Tracy, *To Speak For the Silenced,* 107. Norman Salsitz recalls his father's dying plea: "'*Nekuma! Nekuma! Nemt Nekuma!* Revenge! Revenge! Take Revenge!'" See Norman Salsitz with Stanley Kaish, *Three Homelands: Memories of a Jewish Life in Poland, Israel, and America* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 50. Kopel Kolpantizky wrote in his memoir: "We were going to do, as much as possible and without fear or hesitation, what our parents and families would have wanted us to do: continue our revenge. … I recalled the three objectives that I had set for myself when I escaped from the Lahwah [Łachwa] ghetto: 1. Avenge the death of my family, community and people—I accomplished this objective." See Kolpanitzky, *Sentence to Life,* 182–83. Rabbi Alter Pekier of Kleck recalled: "The walls of the synagogue were covered with handwritten messages and prayers written by the Jews before the Germans had escorted them to their death. … Passages from the prayer book such as 'Our Father, our King, avenge the blood of Thy servants that has been shed!' were interspersed with heart-rendering appeals: 'World, why are you silent?' 'Dear Jews, avenge our deaths' and 'Remember! Never forget!'" See Alter Pekier, *From Kletzk to Siberia: A Yeshivah Bachur's Wanderings during the Holocaust* (Brooklyn, New York: Mensorah Publications, 1985), 118. Likewise in Kowel, exhortations calling for revenge were scrawled all over the walls of the synagogue where the Jews were locked up. See Grynberg and Kotowska, *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich 1939–1945,* 576. In a note penned in the Warsaw ghetto during the deportation of Jews to Treblinka in July 1942, Rachel Auerbach wrote: "I want to stay alive … just to be able to see the moment of revenge. REVENGE REVENGE remember." See Samuel Kassow, "The Warsaw Ghetto in the Writings if Rachel Auerbach," in Glenn Dynner and François Guesnet, eds., *Warsaw: The Jewish Metropolis* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 496. In Polish (Christian) memoirs, by way of contrast, parents usually urged their children *not* to seek revenge for wrongs inflicted on them during the war. See, for example, Marzena Michalczyk, "'Zemstę zostawiać Bogu: Rozmowa z Wiesławą Siedzik-Korzeniową, siostrą sanitariuszki AK Danuty Siedzikówny 'Inki'," *Nasz Dziennik* (Warsaw), February 8, 2002.

> The chief motivation, and the one that recurs constantly in the testimonies, was a burning desire to avenge the murders of other Jews. Jewish partisans killed, without mercy, any and all Belorussian and Polish policemen and peasants whom they knew had been part of the murder machine or had delivered or denounced hidden or fleeing Jews. … Often some or all of the family of the collaborator was executed as well, and sometimes the farmstead was burnt down, too.[383]

Polish underground courier Tadeusz Celt reported in August 1944, on statements made by Jews—rather frequently it appears—of seeking a "terrible revenge" (*straszna zemsta*) against Poles on the arrival of the Red Army, whom many Jews regarded and welcomed as their "protectors."[384] Persons driven by vengeance often act compulsively or blindly. Sometimes this revenge would take the form of ritual-like murders of captured German soldiers like those perpetrated by Moshe Sonenson of Ejszyszki, described in Part One of this study, and by Chil Grynszpan of Parczew.[385]

The war the Soviet partisans waged against "collaborators," whether real or perceived, also took the lives of hundreds, if not thousands of civilians. According to a former Jewish partisan, orders came from Moscow to eliminate "collaborators" before the arrival of the Red Amy. Lists of "collaborators" were drawn up and hit squads were established to carry out executions. Sometimes, entire families were wiped out.[386] Unfortunately, more often than not, those who fell in these reprisals were totally innocent victims and included many children, women, and the elderly. In many cases, the villagers' only crime was

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[383] Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl,* 131.

[384] Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945,* 198.

[385] Ireneusz Caban, ed., *Czas dokonany: Mój udział w tworzeniu i utrwalaniu władzy ludowej na Lubelszczyźnie* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1977), 100.

[386] Testimony of Eleazar (Eliezer) Segal in Grzegorz Berendt, "Między wrogami i sprzymierzeńcami: Opowieść poleskiego Żyda o latach 1939–1944," *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy,* no. 1 (2021): 207–68, at pp. 237–38, 256–58. In 1943, Eleazar (Eliezer) Segal was transferred to a sabotage unit of the NKGB, commanded by Kirill Orlovsky, which was was active in the regions of Baranowicze, Łuniniec and Pińsk. He remained with the unit until it was disbanded in August 1944. He knew the area and its people very well. The unit's main task was gathering information concerning German officials and "collaborators," many of whom were eliminated.

cooperating with "White Poles," i.e., Polish partisans.[387] In some cases, actual German collaborators were struck at, occasionally even fellow Jews.[388]

The following accounts relate to the activities of the Bielski partisans. All the victims appear to be Belorussians who had denounced Jewish fugitives and Jewish partisans who took part in raids on villages.[389]

> The Belorussian [from Obelkowicze, who had allegedly captured a number of Jews and handed them over to the police in Dworzec] knew he was trapped. He pleaded for mercy, then argued that after all he did only what the authorities wanted him to do. He did not make the laws—it was not his fault.
>
> Quickly his visitors shot him and the entire family. … Before they left they made a large sign and attached it to the door. In Russian it said" This family was annihilated because it cooperated with the Germans and pursued Jews, signed The Bielski Company."
>
> On the way to the Bielski otriad they eliminated another family also guilty of Nazi collaboration and the murder of Jews. There too they left an announcement that these people were shot because they had cooperated in the death of Jews.

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[387] Historian Zygmunt Boradyn estimates that some 500 people were executed by the Soviet partisans for this reason from 1942 until mid–1944 in the Nowogródek region alone. See Boradyn, ed., *Armia Krajowa na Nowogródczyźnie i Wileńszczyźnie (1942–1944) w świetle dokumentów sowieckich,* 46 n.63. For examples of revenge actions against "collaborators" in other parts of Poland, see Ben-Tzion Malik, "Avenged and Paid For," in A. A. Stein, et al., eds., *Sefer ha-zikaron le-kehilat Kamien Koszyrski ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Kamin Koshirsky and Surroundings in Israel, 1965), 122–25, translated as *Kamen Kashirskiy Book,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Kamen_Kashirskiy/Kamen_Kashirskiy.html>, which describes numerous revenge killings of civilians (one victim was decapitated with an axe) in the vicinity of Kamień Koszyrski, an area in southern Polesia (or northwestern Volhynia) populated by Ukrainians. Several cases of Jews murdered by Soviet partisans, which were not avenged, are recorded by Ben-Zion Malik, as well as by Moshe Paltieli (Plot), "The Impresssions of a Partisan," at 129–30, and Ben Tzion Karsh, "The Judenrat (The Jewish Council)," at 729–38.

[388] Isaac Kowalski, for example, describes the execution of a Jewish schoolmate of his from Wilno named Goldin, who became an informer for the Gestapo and tried to infiltrate the Jewish partisans operating in that area. See Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe,* 310–11; also reproduced in Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945,* vol. 4 (1991), 406. The killing of Natek Ring by Isser Schmidt, a Jewish Communist known as Davidovsky and special agent sent to the Soviet Jewish Brigade operating in Rudniki forest south of Wilno, is described as follows: "He took to hunting Jews who collaborated with the Germans. … In the winter of 1943, he grew suspicious of Natek Ring, a Jewish policeman from the ghetto. Ring was charged with collaborating. In the ghetto, Jews had seen him lead enemy soldiers to rooms where people were hiding. On his latest venture [to Wilno], he had moved through the city with surprising ease; some felt he was even now working for the Germans. Isser was bareheaded as he led Natek into the trees. Two shots and the birds stopped singing. Isser came back down the trail alone, wearing a fur cap and new boots." See Cohen, *The Avengers,* 121–22. At least six partisans who had previously been ghetto policemen in Wilno were executed in November 1943 as collaborators, by order of the commanders of their partisan units and the "special department" at the brigade headquarters. They included Natek (Natan) Ring, Vovek Zaltzstein, Lotek Zaltzwasser (Lutek Zalcwasser), Schwarzbard (Szwarcbord), and Szurka Kewes (Kwas). See the testimony of Abram Mieszczański, dated June 10, 1947, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2536; Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow,* 139, 166; Arad, *In the Shadow of the Red Banner,* 289–90.

[389] In one case, a revenge murder targeted a Polish family. David Goldman alleges that an unidentified neighbour, said to be a Pole, pointed out to the Germans the parents of his father's first cousins, Moshe and Dvora, upon their entry into the area in the summer of 1941. The cousins' mother (Feige), their father, and a baby sibling were shot in "Kameny Most" between Słonim and Baranowicze. After joining the Bielski brothers, the cousins returned to their village at night, barricaded the neighbor in his house, set it afire and burned him alive. See David P. Goldman, "Torture: On a Personal Note," Internet: <https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2009/05/torture-on-a-personal-note>.

The success of these undertakings led to other anti-collaborator moves. One involved the Marciniewskis. This was a large Belorussian family who for years worked in the mill that belonged to Chaja's parents in Duża [or Wielka] Izwa. … They were also actively pursuing other ghetto runaways.

One of the Marciniewski sons became a policeman. Together with his brother-in-law, a forester, he had been catching Jews … Chaja [Bielski] recalls: "The Bielski otriad reacted … one day we waited for Marciniewski, the policeman to come home. We watched the house. When he returned we killed the entire family. … This policeman's brother-in-law was a forester who searched the woods for Jews. … This forester and his family were also eliminated."

A similar fate befell the Stichkos, a Belorussian family who had worked in the Bielski mill for many years. The Stichkos had also been destroying Jews and trying to eliminate all the Bielskis so that they could become the legitimate owners of the mill. The Bielski partisans shot the entire Stichko family and left their usual notice.[390]

In March 1943, Abram Polonski was scheduled to lead a food mission in the Nowogródek region … Nine young men, Abram and Ruven Polonski, the Szumanskis and others, all good fighters, were going. Alter Titkin was the tenth. …

As planned, the Jewish partisans filled their wagons with all kinds of provisions. When they were ready to turn back they realized that darkness might give way to light earlier than expected and daylight meant danger. They were a few miles from the town of Nowogródek.

In a nearby hutor [near the village of Dobropole] the Polonski brothers had a Belorussian friend, Belorus [Belous]. They went to his place and asked if they could stay over. … The hamlet was attacked. Belorus had informed the police about the presence of partisans in his house. … They were all shot. … The only one to remain alive was Abram [Polonski] who had hidden … At once an axe wielded by one of the Belorus sons came down on his head. …

In two weeks … Asael [Bielski] was in charge of the next step. He collected twenty-four fighters …

At midnight Asael's men surrounded Belorus' house. Four went inside with Asael at the head. As soon as they entered, they announced that this was a visit to avenge the death of their comrades. Four rifles pointed in the direction of the peasant.

Belorus wrestled with the rifles, but was quickly overwhelmed. The rest of the [14-member] family had no more luck—in a few minutes all were dead. One of the fighters, Michael Leibowicz, with Asael's permission, exchanged his jacket for a coat that hung on the wall.

They freed the animals, set the entire farm on fire, and left a note explaining the reason for the attack.[391]

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[390] Tec, *Defiance,* 78.

[391] Tec, *Defiance,* 102–103. See also Tec, *Defiance,* 254 (list of victims); Nirenstein, *A Tower from the Enemy,* 362–64; Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945,* vol. 4 (1991), 511–13; Rubin, *Against the Tide,* 114, 117, 140. The latter author (Sulia Rubin), like many others, states that the message of revenge ("Take revenge for our innocent blood") was passed on to her by her father. Ibid., 120. According to another source, "on the same night other Partisans went to the farmer's aunts and uncles and burned their homes." See Lubow, *Escape,* 61.

I remember an instance when Bielski called the group of scouts which I was leading and said that there was a peasant in the village of Izveh [Izwa] who was informing the Germans where Jews and partisans were hiding. Our task was to wipe out the whole family.

We went there. Our group consisted of the Lubavitch brothers, Ben-Zion Gulkovitch and Yisrael Salanter (as he was called among the partisans). I knocked on the Christian's door. The Christian's wife opened the door. We left our horses in the forest. The Christian woman and her two children were the only ones in the house. She said that her husband wasn't home. We told her that we were good friends and that if she needed anything she couldn't get because of the war, we would bring everything for her. She replied that they wanted to build on, and that if we could bring a saw, she would give us whatever we wanted. When we bring the saw, she said, her husband would also be there and we'd have a good drink.

We said goodbye and promised to bring what she needed. We went back to the forest, got on our horses and rode to Stankevitch, to the home of a Christian. We asked him for a saw and promised to return it. He gave it to us. We got back on our horses and left.

We returned to the Gentile woman and I again knocked on the door and knocked on the windowsill with the saw. When you hit something with a saw, it makes a ringing sound. When the Gentile woman heard the sound of the saw, she quickly opened the door. Again the woman with her two children were the only ones at home.

Two of our group of partisans remained standing on the street as guards to make sure the Germans would not attack us. Four of the partisans came into the house: the Lubavitch brothers, Yisrael Salanter and myself. We told her that everything was perfectly fine, but that we'd like to talk to her husband. Seeing that everything was ready, that we brought the saw which we had promised, she opened the window and called her husband.

Each person in our group was assigned a task in advance so that we each knew what we had to do. Yisrael Salanter was to kill her husband. Michl Lubavtich was to kill his wife. I – one daughter and Zalman Lubavitch, the other daughter.

The husband came in. Yisrael Salanter went for his gun. The man was healthy and strong and began wrestling with Yisrael. They both fell down in the middle of the house. Seeing what was happening, I wanted to shoot him with my gun, but I was afraid I might kill Yisrael instead. I turned the gun over and hit him over the head with the wooden part. The wood broke. He let go of Yisrael who took out his pistol and shot him.

The woman begged us not to kill her. She would give us everything she had, but money meant nothing to us. Michl shot her. I shot one daughter who was hiding in bed, and Zalman Lubavitch shot the other daughter.

When we went out of the house, we let the horses and cows out of the stable. Then we set fire to the house and stable. We left a note: "A person who collaborates with the Germans deserves to die like this." We got on our horses and went back to our unit. Our act of revenge against that family caused a great panic in the villages. Christians were afraid to inform the Germans where the partisans were moving around. It was a little better for us; it was easier to be in the forest.

Bielski sent out a group of partisans with good guns to perform an operation, and the group carried out what they had to do. This was done during the day and they couldn't go back to their base during the day because the Germans were moving about on the roads. They (the partisans) came to a peasant's hut. His last name was Bielorus and was known to the group. This was a group

of the best men in the unit. They left their wagon in the yard. The Christian gave them a fine welcome. The group was exhausted and they lay down to rest.

The Christian's daughter asked to go out to milk the cows. They let her leave. After all, they knew the Christian and she went out. Novogrudek [Nowogródek] wasn't far away and she informed the Germans.

Germans arrived, surrounded the entire hut and killed everyone. A miracle occurred when Polanski hid in the henhouse. (Christians had big ovens, beneath which was the henhouse.) Seeing that everything had become quiet, he crawled out of the henhouse and called out to the White Russian, who was standing there alarmed, seeing everyone lying there dead.

"What do you think? We'll keep quiet about your part in this?"

As soon as he said this, the Gentile took an axe and killed him, too, the last of the group of Jewish partisans.

Not far away was Vishnievski's group, which found out about this. Bielski called together the unit and announced that we shouldn't move about in the villages.

One of Vishnievski's group came and said that he knew where the group was killed. There were the two Bielorus brothers who informed on the Jews and, on account of them, the group of partisans was killed.

The Bielorus family knew that we wouldn't keep quiet, so they moved to Novogrudek and their hut remained empty. Later, Bielorus returned to his hut, seeing that the partisans were no longer coming into the area (and that was due to Bielski's order) and fearing that their crops would die if their fields weren't cultivated because it was now summer.

Vishnievski's group found out when he came back and warned us. A group of 25 men was selected including myself. Pesach Friedberg and our commissary were in our group. Bielski's brother Asael was the leader of the group. The group had to take revenge.

On our way to the Bielorus house, we found out that a boy from Korelitz was killed when a Christian informed on him. The boy was running through the villages and stole a bucket from that Christian. The Gentile went to the ghetto in Novogrudek. They lined up the Jews and the Gentile had to identify the boy. He in fact recognized him (I don't remember the family name, but I knew they came from Korelitz [Korelicze]) and the Germans shot him. We received an order from Asael to burn down the house and kill the Gentiles. We carried out the task before going to the Bielorus house.

When we came to the Bielorus house, Bielski gave an order as to who was to go into the house and who was to keep watch to make sure that no one would attack us.

I was among those who were to keep guard on the street. When our men knocked on the door, no one answered. They forced the door open and found Bielorus. In his pocket was a letter of commendation, praising him for informing on a Jew for which he was entitled to receive a certain sum of money from the district commissary of Novogrudek. They took the letter and wrote a protocol as to why they had come and were carrying out the sentence. Then they shot the whole family and let the cows and horses out of stable before setting the house on fire.

On the way back, we left notes on all the posts explaining why we carried out the act of revenge against the two Bielorus brothers and their families. They were being paid back for having turned

> the group of partisans over to the Germans. The Christians for the surrounding places were now frightened. We instilled fear in them.[392]

> They [partisans] had gone for supplies, and, on the way back, stopped on a farm [to rob]. The peasant somehow notified the local police, and all but one of the boys was killed in the bitter, short battle that ensued. …
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> Our commanders Yelski [Bielski] vowed revenge … the partisans waited patiently for about three months until the farmer relaxed … Then the whole unit struck out; nothing was left of the farmer or his family. Even the livestock was burned. I am glad no women were allowed to go along! I couldn't face it or kill the children …[393]

> Several testimonies tell us about revenge exacted by Jewish partisans on local collaborators who were responsible for murdering Jews. This extended to the families of the collaborators as well. Thus, at an early stage, the Bielskis took bloody revenge on a Belorussian family that had betrayed two Jewish girls to the Germans; they killed all of the offender's family—approximately twelve people. In one case, reported by Haim Kravietz, Jews hid with a man called Ivan Tzwirkes, who had a Jewish wife who had converted to Christianity. Tzwirkes betrayed Jews to the Germans, whereupon the Bielskis caught him and told him to say goodbye to his wife as he was going to be shot. As a result, they squeezed the names of more collaborators out of him, and then killed most of the people he had named. Tzwirkes was permitted to return to his family (probably because of his Jewish wife).[394]

The following reports come from the mixed Belorussian-Polish area to the north and east of Wilno:

> We were driven, eager to defy death and wreak revenge. We took our revenge deliberately and thoroughly. In the vicinity of Jody we were known and feared by all those who had harmed Jews. Many of them did not survive the war, thanks to us. … while we were hiding with the farmers [near Słobodka] we learned that several local farmers had betrayed Jews and others had killed them. That night we went out and "took care" of them. We then approached another farmer who begged us not to take his horse. He revealed to us a Jew who was hiding in his barn. The Jewish man's name was Welfke and he came from the town of Braslaw [Brasław]. He told us about some neighbours who had murdered his family. We "took care" of them immediately. …

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[392] Ben-Ir, "On the Brink of Destruction," in Walzer-Fass, *Korelits,* 212ff.

[393] Rubin, *Against the Tide,* 117.

[394] Bauer, "Nowogródek—The Story of a *Shtetl*," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 35, no. 2 (2007): 57.

For Jewish partisans it was time to take revenge for the tens of thousands of local Jewish men, women and children who were slaughtered by the Nazis and their collaborators. We could not take full enough advantage of the opportunity.[395]

Each informant would, sooner or later, get caught and was shot. Often his house would be set afire with his family inside.[396]

The [Polish] farmer [in whose house we were staying] said he knew nothing about [the fate of a Jewish guard found dead at his post in the village] but that his son a partisan, came on furlough. The son, too, said that he had heard nothing of what had happened. … I asked permission to arrest the farmer a second time, and with him his wife, daughter and son.

I started to question them again … I was particularly hard on the father. I hit him, and forced him to talk. … it was found that the partisan son had gone to the watchman in the dark … the whole family was taken out and killed.[397]

During October 1942, Zalman [Katz from Dzisna] and Moishe joined a [Soviet] partisan brigade, commanded by a killer and anti-Semite by the name of Kanapelka. There were only three other Jews in Kanapelka's brigade of twenty-five, and Kanapelka never considered the Jews an integral part of his campaign at that time. … After two months with Kanapelka, they became disenchanted with him, and when they heard of another partisan brigade that was more to their liking, with more Jews, they left Kanapelka's brigade …

The new partisan brigade was a more disciplined band, run by a Russian commander called Polikov. His brigade of 125 men were primarily Jews from the surrounding ghettos …

Feverish, Zalman … arrived at the partisan camp, where he told Polikov about the betrayal of the two [Belorussian] Zurawski bothers. He requested permission to return with several men to punish the two brothers. Polikov agreed …

Zalman ordered the brothers outside. They begged for mercy, but Zalman had too much hate in him to consider anything but revenge. He pushed them against the wall of the house, moved back, turned and raised his machine gun in their direction. Cowering against the wall … he fired a short burst into their bodies. They slumped to the ground. Without looking at the bodies, he and the four partisans returned to the forest. … The death of the brothers only opened the wound for further revenge. He needed to find Joseph Juszkevitz, [the Chief of Police of Dzisna] and remove him from this world. His revenge had to be complete. …

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[395] Silverman, *From Victims to Victors,* 160, 205. Additional examples of revenge murders carried out in this area are found in Machnes and Klinov, *Darkness and Desolation,* 578–82.

[396] Account of Szmerke Kaczerginski from the Lake Narocz area, in Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945,* vol. 3 (1986), 501. See also ibid., vol. 4 (1991), 413, 475–76.

[397] Account of Zussya Solsky, in ibid., vol. 4 (1991): 452–53. This incident followed a clash between the Home Army and Kirov Brigade near Olchówka, in which, allegedly, "about 50 White Poles fell."

Zalman learned a price had been put on his head by Kanapelka for killing the Zurawski brothers. Kanapelka ordered David Pintzov, a Jewish partisan, to take several of the men and hunt Zalman down. …

Kanapelka went into Polikov's camp with eighteen men and took Polikov hostage. … The following day, Kanapelka executed Commander Polikov. …

After hearing Zalman, the commander-in-chief ordered Kanapelka's arrest. He was returned to the main camp, tried by his peers and removed from his command. As a result of his previous exploits, his life was spared, but he was demoted without rank to be a fighter and the brigade was given another commander.

After the war, Kanapelka was honoured by the Soviet government for his services as a partisan.[398]

We decided to avenge one of the two gentiles that brought the Germans to the Tzintzivi [sic] forest and caused the battle where our friend Eliyahu Alperovich was killed. We knew their names. One was the forrester [sic] Silak and the other was a polish [sic] man by the name Bovsovski [sic] that served the Germans as an informant. He lived in the village Torovishnitza. Yitzhak, some Christian partisans and I went to the Vishna [sic] village and asked where Boshovitski [sic] lives. Everyone was scared to let us know. We went to the soltis [sic, *sołtys*], the head of the village and we asked where Boshovotski [sic] lives. He answered that he left the village. Yitzkale took the Soltis to the barn and told him to tell them where he was or he would shoot him. He took a gun to his head. The daughter of the Saltis [sic] came out of the house and began begging her father's life … Yitzkale started hitting the Soltis with the rifle but he refused to talk. Finally the daughter could not take it any more and told us where Boshivski [sic] lived. We threatened them that if they would make a sound we would burn the whole village.

We approached Bovoshiski's [sic] house that was located in the center of the village. … Boshovoski [sic] became pale and begged for his life. He claimed he was not the one to take the Germans to the woods and how he helped the Kurenitz [Kurzeniec] Jews after the slaughter. Yitzhak said "bring out all the possessions you have that belong to the Jews, if you do that we will not kill you." Boshovoski [sic] started bringing out all kind [sic] of leather goods like boots and clothes. … We told him to bring out all the weapons he had. He swore he only had one gun. We hit him with the gun. … We told his family to stand near the wall with their hands up. When he saw their death was coming he reached for the table, moved it, and from under the floor he took out one rifle, two guns and ammunition. One of the partisans kept the family members inside the house, we took the weapons and bag and put it on a sled. Yitzkale took his gun and shot Boshoviski. We took their kerosene lamps and lit the house on fire but we left the rest of the family untouched.

Next we took the Soltis and his daughter to Luban where the main German headquarters was located. We beat up the Soltis and then released him saying, "Go and tell the Germans in Luban [Lubań] that the partisans were here and they are Jews from Kurenitz." …

[398] Abram, *The Light After the Dark,* 21, 24–28.

At the end of May [1944], Botziko the head of the special unit gave an order to kill the forrester [sic] Silac [sic] … We met at his house. … I won't give you the gory details but we did what we had to do and this "lowest of the low" got his punishment.[399]

The group [led by Shepsl Sheftel] knew that the peasant Lastun, from the settlement of Strizshenat, had turned Freydl Vismonski (Labata's) into the gendarme [sic]. … On January 22, 1943, the group went to Lastun at night … They took him about 300 meters from the settlement, near a wood [sic] … After he had confessed to the crime, they shot him and placed a note in his hat that anyone who turned Jews over to German hands could not avoid their proper revenge at the hands of the Jewish partisans. …

One dark night they traveled to the house of the forest watchman Butshel, who had, it was said, appeared voluntarily on the day of the big slaughter (12 May 1942) near the pits at Stonevitsh, and asked the Germans to allow him to help kill the Jews. Butshel escaped through a window and they had to be satisfied with confiscating all his possessions.

They also carried off everything that they found in Shaliapke's house, he whose hut was near the Stonevitsh pit-graves. Shaliapke himself had succeeded in fleeing. They gave the collected belongings to the Russian partisan detachment by the name of "Stalin", which promised to include the whole group in their detachment.

They confiscated the stolen Jewish possessions from the peasants and prepared for bigger acts of revenge, murder and robbery.

Later the names of the three goyim who had led the Germans to the partisans in the forest were discovered. They were brought to the detachment and shot. Their possessions were confiscated.[400]

The following reports are from predominantly Belorussian areas near Baranowicze.

On January 15 [1943], by order of the chief of staff, our group burned several houses in the village of Suchinka, homes of peasants who were German informers. Two days later, our patrol captured three carriages carrying peasants, three of whom we recognized as the biggest criminals in Byten [Byteń]. They had robbed, killed and terrorized the Jews in the ghetto. When we took them to the chief of staff, they confessed to being spies for the Germans. They were shot immediately and we were praised for our efficiency.[401]

As we walked [through the woods near Byteń], we saw the corpses of White Russian policemen who had collaborated with the Germans. Tied to trees, their tongues torn out and their genitals

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[399] Account of Zalman Uri Gurevitz in Meyerowitz, ed. *The Scroll of Kurzeniac.*

[400] Account of Meyshe Kaganovitsh in Kaganovich, *In Memory of the Jewish Community of Ivye.*

[401] Bar Oni, *The Vapor,* 89.

burned by fires, they had been treated by partisans the same way the Germans had treated captured partisans.[402]

The next morning I joined a group of partisans in an action against the German murderers in a village. I was overwhelmed with hatred and great desire to kill Germans. … It was a complete surprise attack, some of the Germans jumped from windows naked. We were able to capture a number of them, and brought them to the forest. We were overwhelmed with a consuming desire for revenge, that are actually jostled, fought each other, to get at the Germans first ….[403]

We found a small group of three German soldiers and two Polish policemen. They were moving slowly toward us, unarmed, and with their hands clasped behind their necks. … We handcuffed them to each other and some of our men took them back to our [i.e., Zorin's] camp. … As soon as those prisoners were spotted, the shouting intensified. The angry *atrad* [*otriad*] members immediately surrounded the new prisoners. …

I still remembered my mother's last words … "Tell Rochelle to take *nekome*—revenge. Revenge!" …

We didn't have either the physical capacity or the will to keep prisoners of war. Everybody was full of wild anger toward the Nazis and their Polish collaborators.

Everyone started beating them—with rifle butts, fists, boots. We beat them to mush. I remember that they were lying on the ground just barely breathing. And I … came up to one of the German officers who had his legs spread. I started to kick him again and again in the groin. …

It wasn't just me. The majority of the *atrad* members who were there participated. The Polish policemen might have received the most blows. We all knew that often the Polish collaborators had been crueler than the Germans. It felt like a mitzvah [righteous deed] for everyone to go in and give any of the prisoners a punch. To get the anger out at last.

When I think back, I'm not sorry for what I did.[404]

During the final days of the war, Russian and Jewish partisan groups in the Nalibocka [Naliboki] Forest captured some of the retreating German soldiers. But I don't think that any of the groups kept prisoners. For all of the groups, but especially for the Jewish partisans, the greatest interest

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[402] Ibid., 101.

[403] "A Ten-Years-Young Partisan," in Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945,* vol. 2 (1985), 598.

[404] Sutin, *Jack and Rochelle,* 141–43. In this poorly researched and often crudely written memoir, the authors continually refer to the Belorussian police force as being composed exclusively of Poles, whereas the vast majority of the police were in fact ethnic Belorussians, as Oswald Rufeisen points out. See, Tec, *In the Lion's Den,* 64. After the war, Rochelle Sutin's uncle, who had survived posing as the husband of a Polish woman, "was in the process of making himself a wealthy man again" by taking over a large abandoned farm and accumulating livestock seized by Russian soldiers in exchange for vodka. Ibid., 151–52. Meanwhile, Jack Sutin was able to avoid being drafted into the Soviet army by posing as a dentist in Mir ("Some of the farmers would come in and I would drill their teeth. I didn't have the slightest idea of what I was doing"), and later in Łódź (at pp. 157, 167).

was in capturing Gestapo and SS personnel. … No one felt sorry for the SS men and they were usually beaten severely and then killed.[405]

One day three young Germans were captured—indeed, very young—about 16–17 years old. They wore black uniforms and were armed. They were brought into headquarters for questioning. No one opened his mouth. No persuasion including physical persuasion worked. They were silent … Then it was decided to assemble all the Jews in the camp and conduct a public investigation together with a lynching.

Young and old consumed their anger on the first one being questioned. Little Yossi (about 3) came with his grandfather and beat the criminal with his cane, shouting: Revenge! For my mother! For my father! It was a horrible sight that embodied in one minute all the depth of the terrible holocaust of the Jewish people. The young Nazi did not surrender until the last moment. The other two who had witnessed what had happened did not beg for mercy. … As for me—I ran away because I could no longer bear the sight of another deed of vengeance.[406]

Tasks changed, the partisans were hunting the Germans and the Germans tried to sneak out. … they tasted the taste of revenge. The Germans were like hunted animals …

Four German prisoners were brought in front of the camp's commanders. Three were young and the fourth who was older, was crying. … They were executed in the camp in front of all. Bursts of anger and revenge took hold of the people; it was so overwhelming that I prefer not to describe them.[407]

Pandemonium broke out when four German soldiers were captured. After the lawyer Solomon Wolkowyski and the other commanders interrogated them in the *shtab* [headquarters], they were released into the central square of the camp.

A furious mob gathered around them. "look at us, we are Jews!" one man shouted. "Do you know what you did too us?"

Children spat and screamed about their dead parents. Wailing women slapped and cursed at them. Eighty-year-old Shmuel Pupko repeatedly struck each of the Germans with a large stick. …

The beatings went on for nearly two hours; then the Germans were thrown into an open pit. They died in a hail of bullets.

The executions proved emotionally wrenching, opening up rage that had been perhaps only barely contained. People swilled large quantities of vodka and began scouring the woods for Germans, itching to take further revenge for all that had been visited upon them.[408]

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[405] Sutin, *Jack and Rochelle,* 147.

[406] Ettinger, *From the Lida Ghetto to the Bielski Partisans,* 66–67.

[407] Samuel Amarant, "The Partisans' Company of Tuvia Belski," in Yerushalmi, *Navaredok Memorial Book,* 333ff.

[408] Duffy, *The Bielski Brothers,* 255.

> Three S.S. men had been caught … Things got out of control as women and children threw themselves at the Nazis and killed them brutally. … The sight of these three bodies was so horible, I threw up near a tree …[409]

As one Jewish woman attached to the Bielski partisans put it, "We did not take one German prisoner. They were all killed on the spot." Mikhail Treister, a Jew from Minsk who joined up with the Bielski partisans in Naliboki forest, readily admitted that all captured German soldiers were killed, often with knives and stones.[410] Another woman attached to that same unit boasted: "If there were gentiles with the Germans, they knew they had to kill them."[411] Yechiel Silber recalls the fate of three German soldiers, one of whom was wounded, who were captured by a Soviet scouting party and brought to Naliboki forest to stand trial.

> The three Germans were brought to them so that they could take revenge upon them. The commander himself gave over the three Germans to the Bielski headquarters as a present. …
>
> Bielski immediately called together the 1,500 Jews and said to the Germans:
>
> "Here are the Jews with whom you made a great error, intending that you would do to the Jews whatever you want. Now they are here, and they want to take revenge upon you."
>
> The woman Gittel Barkowski was the first to take revenge upon the German who had murdered her daughter. The other Jews carried out the sentence upon the other two.[412]

The abuse of German prisoners of war became so flagrant that, in some cases, even the Soviet command, who was not known for their humanitarianism, felt compelled to intervene.

> As soon we found Germans hiding or anything and they surendered, we don't obey the law. We would take them out in the field and kill them. … there was an order issued that the partisans are no longer to kill the Germans who are surrendering, because it's against the law. It was bring them—

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[409] Rubin, *Against the Tide,* 165.

[410] Treister's testimony was recorded in Phillip Alloy's documentary film "Interviews from the Underground: Eyewitness Accounts of Russia's World War II Jewish Resistance Movement."

[411] These statements were made in 1993 by the wife of one of the Bielski brothers and by Sulia Rubin, respectively, in the documentary film "The Bielsky Brothers: The Unknown Partisans" (Soma Productions; reissued in 1996 by Films for the Humanities & Sciences). In that film, a gloating, and even chuckling, Boris Rubin described the fate of eight to ten Ukrainians who were captured and brought into the forest. Grenades were put in the captives' hands, one by one; after one body was torn apart by the explosion, the remaining prisoners were ordered to bury it, and so on, until they were all murdered off. Another partisan added: "But no one was ever tortured. They got paid well."

[412] Yechiel Silber, "The Partisans of Sochaczew," in Sztejn (Shtayn, Stein) and Wejszman (Vaysman, Weissman), *Pinkas Sokhatshev,* 514ff.

> and a camp was started with POWs. It was sort of a defeating purpose to us, that command, but we had to obey the order.[413]

> It took ten days to free Grodno. There were many German snipers around, shooting at anything that moved. We searched for them from house to house. In one house my Jewish friends and I found three Gestapo soldiers hiding in a pile of straw. It was a pleasure to tell these Nazis, who were pleading for their lives, that they had ben captured by three Jews, and ghetto survivors at that. To our regret, we weren't permitted to kill them. Later, at the POW camp, when we were asked how our prisoners had been so badly beaten, we told our commander the Nazis hadn't appreciated being captured by Jews.[414]

The following events occurred in the vicinity of Lipiczany forest:

> I remember a particular Jewish partisan returning to the hospital after a completed food mission. He recounted the story of a German officer who had been captured and brought back to the forest. Awaiting his execution, he requested not to be killed by a Jew. The executioner tied his hands and feet, identified himself as a Jew, and proceeded to chop off the officer's head with an ax. Another similar event involved the capture and disposition of a German officer by a Jewish partisan who had lost his entire family in Nazi ghetto massacres. Bitter with rage, he tied the German to a tree, gagged him, and cut off large pieces of his flesh with a sharp knife. As he did so, he declared in Yiddish, "This slice is for my mother, this one for my father, this one for my wife, these two for my children," and so on. Within every Jew was a desire to reap vengeance for the heinous acts the Germans had committed against his family.[415]

Even bystanders were not spared. The following report is from a predominantly Belorussian area near Mołodeczno, where Jews targeted villagers who looted abandoned Jewish property (a common practice during any war or civil disturbance, even in the United States):

> Now, while he had been with the partisans, on several occasions Jewish partisans—Jewish partisans from his town—saved the lives of their commanders; the commanders had been injured and the Jews, who knew the area well, found a place for them … in short, there was a situation of personal indebtedness, and the Jews from Gorodok [Gródek] asked their commanders to come and burn down the town. A friend of my father's, from the same town, told me that when they were all rounded up to the ghetto, the neighbours came and started to loot everything: the duvets, the property, they took everything. And he said to the neighbour's son: 'If I come out of this alive, we'll come back and kill you.' And this is what they did. Thirteen people were killed in the

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[413] Interview with Harold Zissman, May 24, 1995, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

[414] Zissman, *The Warriors,* 158.

[415] Brysk, *Amidst the Shadows of Trees,* 89.

action.[416]

According to a Jewish account, Jewish partisans persuaded the leader of their Soviet partisan unit to burn down the entire town of Wiszniew, a small town near Wołożyn inhabited by Poles and Belorussians, as collective punishment for the looting of abandoned Jewish property by some of the local population and to take revenge in blood against some alleged collaborators.

> Jan Stankovicz [Stankiewicz] lived at the end of Karve Street. He was a carpenter and all his life was spent mingling with the Jews, just like the rest of the Christian neighbors. As soon as the Germans arrived they put him in charge. Immediately he changed his skin and united with the Germans in all their cruelty towards the Jews. He was the one who advised the Germans about the Satanic action near the house. When they took the martyrs to be killed, he stood with his rifle on top of the Church and shot whoever tried to escape. Such an evil man was clearly the first one who we wanted to get revenge on.
>
> Those days we would sit with the rest of the Vishnevan partisans in the forest and talk about the day of the annihilation of the Vishnevo [Wiszniew] community and the last words of Riva Bashka while she was taken to be burned. She yelled, "Brothers, may each one of you who will survive remember to avenge our spilled blood." We made a decision to fulfill her last request. We approached the head of the brigade and he responded positively. He sent a company of 200 people headed by the Vishnevan Jewish partisans with a large amount of weapons, as much as we could carry. We arrived one evening at the outskirts of the town and we sent scouts. Our aim was to first catch Stankovicz and Turinsky [Targoński] alive and bring them to the forest. We put groups of two or three people in different stations surrounding the town and started our action.
>
> I, together with Noah Podbersky and a few other partisans, entered the house of Torinsky [Targoński] at Vilna St., the old house of Elie Yakov Zusman. We checked in all the rooms but couldn't find him, but realized that he must be nearby since the bed where he slept was still warm and his clothes and boots were on a chair by the bed. It was very clear that he just left the house. We looked everywhere in every corner, but couldn't find him. Finally we went to the basement and saw him. He stood with his underwear, hiding at the entrance. We didn't wait. We hit him with the edges of our rifles and he fell to the ground. We started beating him and started getting all the pain that was inside us and we yelled, "For the blood of our fathers and dears ones you spilled." Finally when he lay there unconscious, we took him upstairs to the house of Fabish Lieberman where we all gathered. We gave him to the other partisans and returned to Karve St.
>
> I must explain that before we came to town we cut all the telephone lines so the entire town was now in our hands. Now we went to the house of Stankovicz. At first we couldn't find him in his house or his neighbor's house, but finally we found him in the attic, hidden behind a haystack. We took him down and started beating him with our rifles. When he fell unconscious, bleeding from all the beatings, we took him to our central rallying point. The third we wanted was the pharmacist, Pobol, but with him we only beat him, and when he fainted we let go. From his house we took medicine and food and continued. We went through the entire town, which now only had

[416] Tamar Fox, *Inherited Memories: Israeli Children of Holocaust Survivors* (London and New York: Cassell, 1999), 68.

Christians, living there. We took food, cows, flour, bread, potatoes, pigs, and we put it all in the wagons that we took from the yards and returned to the forest. We went to Boktova and there we rested for a day. In the evening we went to Bartinova, a village near the Berzino [Berezyna] River in the thick forest where the rest of the partisans were located. There we had a field trial and they all received death sentences and were shot. After we left the area their families came and took their bodies.

But this was not enough. The houses of Vishnevo were still standing and the Christians who hated us and had helped the killing of our dear ones lived there in their houses (taken from the Jews). The need to get revenge burned inside us and didn't let us rest, so we decided to go back to town. This was a few months later. We announced our decision to our officer by the name of Podrin. We let him know that in Vishnevo there was not one Jew and that the Christians took their homes and were collaborating with the Nazis and that their living there endangered partisans. So we wanted to do something about it, and again he agreed with us. After some consultation we organized a brigade of 300 people, and late at night we came to town. First we burned the big synagogue where they now kept their carpentry. We ordered ten people to get out of their homes and to bring hay and all other sorts of kindling and to set fire to all four sides of the town. They did as they were ordered and after two hours the entire town was on fire while all the Christians were running away half-naked. The fire could be seen from afar in the darkness. The German camp in Vojgany could see very clearly what was happening but fearing us they chose to stay in the camp. Once all the houses of the town turned to dust, in some cases along with the residents, we left the place that once was called our hometown. Before we left we took a large amount of food and we turned to the forest.

The people from Vishnevo who took part in this action was Cheina R., B-M Rubin, Zuska Podversky, Noah Podversky [Podberesky], Kokin, Daliyahu Dudman, and Yosef Pushkin from Ravzevich who was second in command to Kodrin. I must say one more thing about fear of the Germans for the partisans: one of our aims was to scare the Polish and Belorussian collaborators who served the Germans and took part in all their missions. We talked to them, and told them that if they did not stop collaborating with the enemy we would take it out on their families. One of these men was in the police in Vishnevo and lived in Vojgany [Wojgany]. Many times we warned him. When we saw that he was not listening and continued to endanger the partisans, we decided to do what we said we would do to him, so one summer night we came on horses to Vojgany. We put the horses some distance and came near his house, which was next door to the SS house. We threw a few grenades at the house, and the house was destroyed with all its occupants. In spite of the fact that the Germans saw everything, they didn't move. Only after we finished with the action and started riding our horses back to our camp did they start shooting, but we were already back in the forest.[417]

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[417] Ziska Podbersky, "Revenge," in Abramson, *Wiszniew, As It Was and Is No More*, 148–49. See also Podberesky, *Never the Last Road,* 81–87. Fortunately, in the process of torching the town, the partisans did not kill the Jewish children sheltered in the orphanage run by the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, which had accepted two Jewish foundlings, ages two and three, and a 13-year-old Jewish boy. The children were returned to their families safely after the Germans left the area. See Zofia Gutt, "Córki Maryi Niepokalanej," in *Żeńskie zgromadzenia zakonne w Polsce 1939–1947* (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 1991), vol. 6, 143–44. The dates of these various actions against Wiszniew are not given in the Jewish sources. According to Polish sources, the Targoński brothers were seized and executed on August 15, 1943. See Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej,* 276. That source records numerous killings of civilians by the Soviet partisans in this area. Ibid.

A non-Jewish eyewitness, however, provides a somewhat different description of the fate of the aforementioned Belorussian policeman from Wojgany and his family:

> Very early one morning the partisans sent members of their underground to his home in the village of Vojgany. Vojganica however, having left his house earlier that evening was safely far away looking for partisan sympathizers when the fatal knock came to his front door.
>
> Although he displayed little concern for any possible acts of retaliation, the force that was applied to the knock at Vojganica's door did alarm his wife. But certainly she couldn't have expected that outside the door, stood the men that would soon execute her and her entire family. Except for her small 2-year-old daughter.
>
> Knowing that not answering the door wouldn't even be an option, she quickly grabbed some blankets and pillows that were in her reach and spread them out to cover over her youngest 2-year-old daughter who was fast asleep in her mother's bed.
>
> The news of Vojganica's family being murdered spread quickly through the village. Neighbors heard gun fire early that morning and decided to check the neighborhood. The door to Vojganica's home was left open and that is when they discovered the murders. At the door they found his wife in a pool of blood. She was stabbed with a bayonet. Both of his sons seven and twelve were shot in the ear as they slept. A twenty years old niece was beaten and shot near the boy's bed, she was there to help with the sick grandfather. Both the grandmother and grandfather were shot in their bedroom. According to the neighbors, the grandfather was already on his deathbed when he was shot. The little two-year-old girl slept through the whole incident and survived or she was spared on purpose. The neighbors removed her to one of their homes.
>
> … When we got there we had a short distance to walk to Vojganica's home.
>
> Some of Vojganica's neighbors were already in the house when we arrived. They cleaned and dressed both bodies of the dead grandparents. Then the bodies were laid out on an evenly stacked pile of straw that was laid on the floor like a mat, covering the full length of the wall.
>
> They had the mother in a wooden tub outside, bathing her dead body. When they finished, they dressed her and placed her next to her parents. As they did this to all the bodies the men were outside building the coffins.
>
> I could feel the thick air of death around me once again. A lingering uncomfortable presence that is usually only felt where massive violence or emotional torment has occurred.
>
> Most of the bodies that mother and I saw in Vojganica's home that day, were grotesquely positioned in unnatural twisted states. As if death had frozen their bodies in the exact moment that they made the last and final attempt to fight for their lives.
>
> On the table, the partisan's left a note for Vojganica telling him that the execution of his family was an act of revenge. A result of what happens to traitors or to those that give their loyalty over to the Germans. The note went on to warn Vojganica that he would be next to die.[418]

This eyewitness reiterated in another statement:

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[418] Charles Straczynski, "The Vacation I Am Trying To Forget: A True Story," posted on the Internet at: <http://www.eilatgordinlevitan.com/vishnevo/v_pages/vstories_forget.html>.

There was no SS house next to Vojganica's house. …

There were no Germans firing at the partisans when they left. There were no Germans in the area at all with the exception of the ones that ran the train station in Vojgany and Vojganica was not at home that night. He was hunting for partisans.

He attended the funeral for his family escorted by Germans and the police. They were buried on the left side of the cemetery in the village of Bogdanovo [Bogdanowo]. Vojganica was shot later by one of his own men while hunting for partisans and was buried later with his family. …

A hand grenade or grenades were never thrown at the house. All but Vojganica's wife who was bayoneted were shot. The two boys were shot each in the ear. The older girl was shot and mutilated when they partisans tried to pull her off the large oven. The little girl survived when her mother covered her with pillows as she slept. The rest of them were shot also. I wrote about this in the old story … which was written over 50 years ago. I don't know about the rest of the story of the partisans' revenge but I can't imagine why wasn't the Vojganica story told truthfully. Maybe the partisans were ashamed that they killed that family that was innocent of wrongdoing and claim that they used hand grenades to make killing all of them, at one time, look less terrible. Vojganica was not at home but killed weeks later. I hate to dispute … I don't care what happened to Vojganica: he deserved what he got, but were the children responsible for the sins of their father?[419]

The Mołczadź memorial book describes numerous revenge actions in the predominatly Belorussian Baranowicze area:

The Maytchet [Mołczadź] partisans carried out some acts of revenge upon non-Jews that harassed Jews, robbed them, murdered them, or transferred them to the Germans. …

We already described earlier the revenge upon two partisans who joined the "Paetke."

Khonan Shmulevicz tells that his mother and other family members went to the village of Dukrowo to seek a shelter with the Shoshan group. One of the farmers captured them and transferred them to the German authorities who murdered them. Abrasha Hanelis, Asher Shoshan, Litman Litowarski and others decided to kill the farmer as a punishment. They took him from his house and shot him. Later they burnt the houses and granaries of all those in Dukrowo who worked for the Germans.

The secretary of the "Gemeine" (The Town council) and the mayor ("Woyot") and his son were capturing the Jews who escaped the slaughter in Maytchet, robbing them and transferring them to the German gendarme. The Jewish partisans in the surrounding area (survivors of the town of Maytchet and Dvorets [Dworzec], who were gathered in the Horki Forests) decided to carry out a revenge action, to kill the secretary and his family members, in order to show the farmers in the area there is a Jewish presence that takes revenge on the murderers of Jews.

The operation was carried out at night on July 25, 1942. A group of Jewish partisans approached the home of the secretary, set the home on fire and began to shoot through the windows of the

[419] Charles Straczynski, correspondence, posted on the Internet at: <http://www.eilatgordinlevitan.com/vishnevo/v_pages/vstories_gdaliyau.html>.

burning house. As a result of this revenge action, the secretary of the town as well his family members were killed. Only a 5 year old girl survived by jumping out a window.

Olasik Wola was the police commander in Horodishtch [Horodyszcze] near Maytchet. He transferred Jews for death to the Germans. On April 1942 a group a young Jewish people from Maytchet worked in farm in Wrodokowszyna between Maytchet and Horodishtch. The farm manager was Grynwecki (cousin of Olasik Wola). In the night, young Jews from Maytchet captured him and killed him and his assistant. Among the assassins were: Moshe Margolin, Feigala Boretsky, and Chana Belski.[420]

Testimonies from the mixed Polish-Belorussian area around Miadzioł and Dołhinów are particularly explicit about acts of revenge undertaken against local "collaborators," some of whom were merely looters and others who simply did not want to stand by and see their own property pilfered. Yakov Segalchick, who headed a Jewish sub-unit of the "Avenger of the People" (*Narodnyi mstitel'*) Soviet partisan detachment, describes a number of expeditions he led.

The next day, a small detachment headed by the officer Mayelnikov, went for non-military operations, meaning they appropriated food from the peasants for the atriad [otriad]. We came to the ranch [farm] of Borosky [Borowski?] in Sharkovichzina [Szarkowszczyzna] near the town of Hatzinzin [Chocieńczyce] … We confiscated many supplies; cheese and other dairy products, flour, grains, all in large amounts. We harnessed two horses to wagons and filled them with supplies. We also took five cows and a huge bull, and like that we returned to the base. We were all in a good mood and we ate as much as our hearts desired. Not only did we bring back a large amount of supplies, but we started feeling that we had gotten some revenge over an anti-Semitic landowner. …

We went back to the first farmhouse that had told us of the "partisans" who had demanded gold and money from the farmers, while threatening they would burn the houses and kill the people. Although it was 2 in the morning, we woke the farmer and asked him to identify the men. He said that only yesterday these men had threatened him … We took them out and … decided to give the men death sentences. We took them to the forest and shot them …

During the retreat [from Miadzioł] I passed by a house where a woman who we called Litovka lived. … The day the 22 young men were killed, she ran all over the streets yelling, "Now the day of revenge on the Jews has come! Let's kill them all so they won't contaminate the town!" I couldn't let it go. I turned back to her house, feeling waves of anger invading my body, preventing

[420] Mark Dvorjetski (Dvorzetsky), "Partisans and the Jews in the Forests of Maytchet," in Benizon H. Ayalon, ed., *Molchadz (Maytchet), In Memory of the Jewish Community,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Molchadz/molchadz.html>, translation of *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Meytshet* (Tel Aviv: Meytshet Societies in Israel and Abroad, 1973), 353–54. Regarding "Paetke," Hanan Shmulovitz states at p. 330: "From there we moved to the Horki forest where we found a large group of armed Jews who were organized by Asher Shoshan. We also found several Jews from Maytchet who escaped from Dvorets Ghetto. Meanwhile, two partisans, who moved from another detachment, joined Petke and started to conspire against the Jewish survivors. In a secret council we decided to eliminate them, and Meir Chaneles and Lachowicki carried out the decision."

me from following the order to immediately retreat. I yelled to open the door and she opened it. I shot her immediately. She fell at the entrance of the house, dropping in a huge puddle of blood. …

The need to get revenge on all the killers without uniforms who were running free, people who were our neighbors in yesteryear then who later became our killers, could not let go of me. So I used every free day I had to get revenge. First, I asked the commissar to let me find the killers in the village Kamyin [Kamień]. …

I took with me ten fighters, and we arrived at Kamyin around midnight, but when we knocked on the door of Ruzietski's house, only an old woman was there. … So instead we went to the Novtisky families. They were the people who took the clothes off the dead people they found in Myadel [Miadzioł]. When they opened the door we ordered them to put lights on and to return everything that they took off the dead Jewish bodies. At first they denied everything, but after we beat them, they started returning things. They brought from the storage place behind the oven clothes that were stained with blood, boots of little children, dresses of women. So we started beating them harder and harder. Three of them we found out later died from the wounds.

A few weeks later, we got revenge on the killer in the village of Dubricka by the name Ignolia. His crime was that in the summer of 1942 he encountered a young Jewish woman from Dolhinov [Dołhinów] … She had escaped from the ghetto, and when he caught her he beat her up, stole her money, tied her up and tortured her. Then he took her to Dolhinov and gave her to the Germans … In February of 1943 we knocked on the door of the killer … I ordered him to get up, but he said he was sick with typhus and could not get up. Menashe Kaye and I pulled him by his hair and David Glasser started counting while we beat him with rubber bats while I explained to him why were giving to him this punishment. The next day we found out that [the police] took the killer and his daughter to the hospital in Dolhinov but Ignolia died a day later. …

Now that I was the head of the hospital unit, I was pretty much in control and I could do whatever I wished, so I decided to take revenge on more of the killers. First on my mind was once again Jan Ruzetski in the village of Kamyin. … I took a rope and tied his hands behind his back and took him to a villager in Bakunin [Bakunik?] and asked him if he knew if this was the guy who called the Germans from Dolhinov. He and everyone else in the area said that this was the one … I said to him, "You can choose your death. If you will confess immediately we will shoot you. If not, we will cut your flesh off." He kept quiet, so we took him to the river … I gave an order to tie his legs and open his hands which were blackened by the rope. We threw the other side of the rope on the top of a pine tree and pulled it up. So now he was tied to the tree upside down. We collected some of the torn pieces of clothing taken from the Jews … We gathered some dry sticks lit them on fire. In a few minutes, he turned into a flaming torch. He was burned next to his victims' graveyard. We stuck a document to the burnt pine tree that said, "Revenge of the People."

A few days later we visited the village Parodnik [Porodnik?] near Kriviczi [Krzywicze]. … Despite the danger we decided we must take care of the killers, the brothers Mamek Skorot (or Mamek and Skorot?). Avraham Friedman, Bianish Kuzenitz. Zanka Muhammad, and Dinka Treykovski went with me. We came to the first house of the village … Immediately the door opened … They tried to deny it, we kept beating them. We only beat the two men; the women and children we left alone. …

Now we had to find the killers of the Jews of Dolhinov: Mikhail Proclowicz and the evil brothers Tarahovitz … One clear and cold night in December of 1943, Gershon Yafeh and Biyanish Kuzinitz and Dimka Traikovsky went with me on a sled. As we knocked on his window he opened his door

> … He begged us not to shoot him, but he saw that his death was coming. I asked him how many Jews had he killed and where were all the possessions that he had stolen from his victims. I ordered him to return everything, saying, "If you will return all that we want, we won't kill you. We'll just beat you up."
>
> He called his wife and told her to return all the possessions from the hideout … we found a large amount of robbed possessions about a hundred meters from the house. I became furious. … I started cursing at him violently and uncontrollably. I was crazed. "You must take responsibility and die the death due to an evil and wretched person." I shot him in his head and he dropped dead.
>
> Now it came to the most important mission, the hunt for the biggest murderers, the brothers Tarhovitz. I had a personal vendetta against them. The blood of my mother was on their hands. … At 11 at night [in the middle of February 1944] we arrived near the large home of the Taharovitz brothers [in Dołhinów]. … We ordered them to open the door … I ordered six of the troops with me to take all the livestock out of the cowshed and stable and to herd them in the direction of the forest. Four men took on the sled all the possessions in the house. … Before we left, I ordered the Taharovicz brothers to go outside. They were dressed only in their underwear and barefoot … I made them run in the freezing winter night. … we shot the two killers dead.[421]

Segalchick's memoir also illustrates the transition that occurred after the Soviet "liberation," when many former partisans became full-fledged henchmen of the NKVD, and belies the claim that Jewish consciousness was incompatible with loyalty to the Soviet state.

> I returned to my hometown of Dolhinov [Dołhinów], which was now "Free of Jews", together with a few of my fighting comrades. Most of the town had been burned and there was not one Jew left. …
>
> Alone, I walked along the ruins. … Like this we walked around, a small number of Jews, members of the partisans. The Jews who immediately returned to town were Leib Shreibman, Leibl Flant, Avraham Friedman, Gershon Lankin, and David Mirman. A few days later arrived Yitzhak Radoshkovicz and David Kazdan from Plashensitz [Pleszczenice], followed by others. Already in the first days we organized a Battalion of Punishment ["destruction battalion" or *istrebitelnye batal'ony* attached to the NKVD–*M.P.*]. I was head of it and we looked for the Nazis and their collaborators. Now it was their turn to run and hide. Leibl Flant was appointed as head of the police. Many from the gendarme and the collaborators and Gestapo people were now hiding in the forests. Originally when we recognized Gestapo people we shot them, but soon the authorities ordered us not to shoot them, telling us that we would pay dearly for such things. Now everyone had to be put through a trial, so we changed the system. In Kriviczi [Krzywicze] there was a prosecutor from the NKVD so we followed the new orders and brought the criminals and killers to trials. We had good communication with the NKVD prosecutor, which made our job easy. …

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[421] Yakov Segalchick, "Eternal Testament: Memoirs of a Partisan," in Josef Chrust and Matityahu Bar-Razon, eds., *Esh tamid-yizkor le-Dolhoinow: Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Dolhinow ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Society of Dolhinow Emigrants in Israel, 1984), 274ff.; English translation: *Eternal Flame: In Memory of Dolhinow,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/dolginovo/dolginovo.html> and <http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen. org/myadel/eternal_testament htm>. According to Jofe Gerszon, who was part of a group of 24 Jews that escaped from the Dołhinów ghetto in February 1942 and included Segalchick, their armed group immediately started to take food from the farmers by force. See the testimony of Jofe Gerszon, June 20, 1959, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/1293.

Meanwhile I continued my work with the NKVD in the town. Slowly there were ten families that returned to town. … As they came, everyone had a strong desire to leave the area to go to Poland, which was a gateway to other destinations. There was an agreement with Poland and the Soviet Union that anyone who was a former Polish citizen [actually only ethnic Poles and Jews were covered under the agreement—*M.P.*] would be allowed to now leave the Soviet Union to go to Poland, so everyone went there, but no one thought of staying in Poland. It was just a station on the way to other places. …

Until 1948 I served in the NKVD that was led by Goroshkov. I as well as other Jews were treated very fairly and with much trust by the management of the NKVD in the area as well as in Minsk (the Belarus capital). This allowed us to keep a political reputation that was squeaky clean. On the other hand, the local militia showed clear signs of anti-Semitism, but our relations with the NKVD prevented us from experiencing any direct harm from this anti-Semitism.[422]

Arye-Leybl Falant, another resident of Dołhinów, corroborates Yakov Segalchick's account.

Right after liberation I was sent through the brigade headquarters to work in the town of Myadel [Miadzioł]—to organize and run the fire department and remain there. My heart was not in it as I did not find one Jewish survivor there. I wanted to go to Dolhinov [Dołhinów], my hometown. I dreamed of finding members of my family. I also had a burning desire to take revenge! To take vengeance on all the peasants who participated in the attacks and helped the enemy exterminate Jews and slaughtered unprotected women and children and looted Jewish homes.

So I left the town and headed in the direction of my hometown. … I decided to take my battle to my hometown and take revenge on our local enemy, as much as I could. I offered my service to the NKVD in order to detain, arrest and try all those who collaborated with the Germans. The head of the NKVD in the area was in Krivitch [Krzywicze]; I went in and told my autobiography in full detail. It was good and useful for them that I was a citizen of the region and they recruited me and sent me to work in Dolhinov.

Upon my arrival in Dolhinov a peasant saw me and ran over … he told me Yakov Segalovitch was in town. I went straight to him and discussed the present situation. He pointed out that we must

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[422] Yakov Segalchick, "Eternal Testament: Memoirs of a Partisan," in Chrust and Bar-Razon, *Esh tamid-yizkor le-Dolhinow,* 274ff.; English translation: *Eternal Flame: In Memory of Dolhinow,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/dolginovo/dolginovo.html> and <http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen. org/myadel/eternal_testament htm>. Throughout the Eastern Borderlands, many Jews joined the *istrebitelnye batal'ony* or "destruction battalion," which were attached to the NKVD. See, for example, Sender Appelboim, "In the Forests and Villages with the People of Raflovka [Rafałówka] and the Surrounding Area in the Years 1942–1944," *Memorial Book for the Towns of Old Rafalowka, New Rafalowka, Olizarka, Zoludzk and Vicinity,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rafalovka/Rafalovka.html>, translation of Pinhas and Malkah Hagin, eds., *Sefer zikaron le-'ayarot Rafalowka ha-yeshenah, Rafalowka he-hadashah, Olizarka, Zoludzk veha-sevivah* (Tel Aviv, 1996), pp.48–53: "We, the boys aged 16–18, joined the "Istrabitlani [sic] Battalion". Our task in the unit was to catch those who cooperated with the Germans. They were judged and exiled to Siberia." In southeastern Poland (Volhynia and especially Eastern Galicia), many Poles, mostly teenagers, also joined these formations in order to protect Polish villagers from continuing assaults by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, whose goal it was to cleanse the area of Poles. See Tomasz Balbus, "Polskie 'istriebitielnyje bataliony' NKWD w latach 1944–1945," *Biuletyn Instytut Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 6 (2002): 77–75. See also Komański and Siekierka, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie tarnopolskim 1939–1946*, at pp. 835 and 837, which provides examples of Russians, Ukrainians and Jews as members of these formations in the Tarnopol region.

> be cautious; not to take thing into our own hands! Don't shoot! Former Christian partisans were wandering about—spying on Jews and reporting them to the authorities…I offered some advice.
>
> I put all the elements on a special list that were connected to the commissariat. At the time there was a Jewish major from the Red Army who listened to me; I told him I was serving in the NKVD and my work is disturbed as Jew by former Christian partisans. He ordered them to be mobilized to serve in the army. It was now possible for me to work freely and undisturbed. … we, Yakov Segalovitch and I "finished off" tens of bloody criminals and brought about long prison terms and exile for them.[423]

The following operations, carried out by Jewish partisans encamped in Rudniki forest, show the confusion that reigned. Chaim Lazar describes a foray in the Lithuanian village of Dajnowo towards the end of December 1943. After posting guards at either end of the village, the partisans divided into groups, entered the peasants' homes to confiscate food and loaded the wagons. Shots were heard at the end of the village and Danke Lubotski, a fellow partisan, was killed. The suspect, allegedly a Polish visitor named Andreuszkewicz [sic], but in fact a Lithuanian police informer,[424] was apprehended and taken to the camp and turned over to the Special Affairs Division of the NKVD. After an investigation he was found guilty and executed. However,

> The next day it came to light that Danke [Lubotski] was actually killed by Lithuanian [i.e., Communist] partisans. The story was as follows: a partisan unit from the Lithuanian camp, headed by Naktis, one of the pillars of the Special Affairs Division, came to the village that night to look for Učkoronis, a dangerous Gestapo agent …
>
> The Lithuanians had received information that the wanted agent was in that village and went after him. Seeing light in one of the windows they approached and peeked in. They saw people [i.e., the Jewish partisans] who did not resemble peasants at all. They decided that they were the agent and his aides, and opened fire.[425]

The attitude of Soviet and Jewish partisans toward the Home Army members did not differ substantially from their treatment of the Germans and their collaborators. According to partisan Chaim Lazar, "On the

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[423] Arye-Leybl Falant, "My Life's Struggle and Survival in Horrific Dark Years," in Chrust and Bar-Razon, *Esh tamid-yizkor le-Dolhinow,* 351–53; English translation: *Eternal Flame: In Memory of Dolhinow,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/dolginovo/dolginovo.html>.

[424] According to Lithuanian police reports regarding the alleged activities of Polish (sic) partisans, the victim was Edvardas Andriuškevičius, a Lithuanian police collaborator. He was beaten and seized by armed bandits on December 30, 1943, and his fate is given as unknown. These same partisans are said to have returned on January 16, 1944, and apprehended Edvardas Andriuškevičius's brother, Stasys, and Bolius Antulis. See Kazimieras Garšva, et al., eds., *Armija krajova Lietuvoje: Antra dalis* (Vilnius and Kaunas: "Vilnijos" draugija and Lietuvos politinių kalinių ir tremtinių sąjunga, 1999), 270, 272.

[425] Lazar, *Destruction and Resistance,* 170–71. Učkoronis was subsequently apprehended and executed after being severely beaten by Jewish partisans. Ibid., 173.

way back they took captive two uniformed and armed officers in the Polish bands. … The two Polish officers were executed."[426]

[426] Lazar, *Destruction and Resistance,* 194.

5. Civilian Massacres—The Case of Koniuchy

These were by no means the only such reprisals. Often the innocent and defenceless civilian population was targeted outright. In fact, the would-be Soviet "liberators" treated the civilian population no differently than the Nazi German persecutors. Nor did their ultimate designs differ significantly, as both occupiers wanted the complete subjugation of the population and would not tolerate non-conformity with the ideology of the totalitarian systems they represented. The first agents of the impending Soviet order were the partisans encamped in the forests. As Timothy Snyder has observed,

> The Jews who became partisans were serving the Soviet regime, and were taking part in a Soviet policy to bring down retributions upon civilians. The partisan war in Belarus was a perversely interactive effort of Hitler and Stalin, who each ignored the laws of war and escalated the conflict behind the front lines. [427]

[427] Snyder, *Bloodlands,* 250.

Israeli historian Dov Levin, who was a member of one of the Jewish partisan units operating under Soviet command, provided the following assessment of the Jewish partisan movement in Rudniki forest[428]—one that is relevant for other parts of Poland as well:

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[428] Soviet partisan activity in Rudniki forest began in the summer of 1943, when a group of parachutists set up a base in the area. The first partisan detachment ("Defenders of the Homeland") was led by Fiodor Pushakov, a paratrooper flown in from Moscow; it attracted escaped Soviet POWs but only a few locals. For lack of recruits from among the local population, the Soviet Lithuanian partisan movement initiated contact with the Jews in the Wilno ghetto. With the liquidation of the Wilno ghetto underway, primarily Jewish men of recruitment age started to escape in September 1943. They were directed by Communist intermediaries to Narocz forest (about 50 miles northeast of Wilno) and to Rudniki forest (about 30 miles south of Wilno). The first Jews to arrive in Rudniki forest were 70 members of Yehiel (Ilia) Scheinbaum's Struggle Group, who left the ghetto during the first half of September 1943. It was headed by Nathan Ring, who had been a police officer in the ghetto. They set up their base near the paratroopers, but the latter rejected their request to join them because most of the Jews were unarmed. The Jewish underground (FPO) members who left the ghetto on the day it was liquidated arrived in the forests in late September and early October. A nucleus of some 150 Jews from the Wilno ghetto were later joined by escapees from the HPK (Heeres Kraftfahrpark) and Kailis labour camps in Wilno and some stragglers from other localities living in the forest. A total of 250 men and women, mostly teenagers and young adults, reached the forest. Although they had brought guns with them when they left the Wilno ghetto, until December 1943 the Jews living in Rudniki forest were totally disorganized. They were taught survival and partisan skills by non-Jewish partisans; however, the latter also stole their boots and weapons. See the testimony of Pesia Bernstein (née Złotnik, then Schenbaum), Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/1292. (Pesia Bernstein, the wife of Ilia Scheinbaum, states that a Polish Communist underground organization in Wilno purchased weapons for the Jewish underground and assisted in transporting those weapons from the ghetto to Rudniki forest. See the testimony of Józefa Przewalska, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/3037.) Eventually, the Jewish refugees in Rudniki forest were divided into four partisan units (listed in order of formation), which were subordinated to the Soviet partisan command and incorporated into the Vilnius Brigade (sometimes referred to as the Lithuanian Brigade): "Avenger" (*Mstitel'*), under the command of Abba Kovner; "For Victory" (*Za pobedu*), led by Shmuel Kaplinsky; "Death to Fascism" (*Smert' fashizmu*), commanded by Jacob (Yaakov) Prenner; and "Struggle" (*Bor'ba*), under Aron Aronovich. The four detachments eventually grew to about four hundred partisans, necessitating the assignment of large groups of partisans to carry out "economic operations," which proved to be "hazardous," and "punitive raids against hostile villages." See Arad, *Ghetto in Flames,* 454–60; Levin, *Fighting Back,* 187–88, 196, 198, 205, 277–78; Arad, *In the Shadow of the Red Banner,* 284–91. At the outset, Abba Kovner was the commander of all four detachments, known informally as the Jewish Brigade. In mid–October 1943, Henoch Ziman ("Yurgis"), also went by his Lithuanian name Genrikas Zimanas ("Jurgis"), arrived from Narocz forest with his staff and took over the command of the Soviet-Lithuanian partisan movement in all of "southern Lithuania." Ziman issued an order to the command of the Jewish units to desist from bringing more Jewish groups into the forests, but the order was ignored by the Jewish units. The newly formed brigade had two political commissars, Alfons Stankiewicz and Witold Sienkiewicz ("Margis"), local non-Jewish Communists who were said to be sympathetic to the Jews. Abba Kovner credits the "Lithuanian-Polish command" of local Communists with enabling hundreds of Jews to survive "in a way that, in contrast to other places, was reasonable and at times even respectable." See Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow,* 165. Izrael Kronik, a member of Kovner's partisan unit, recalled the helpfulness of another Polish commissar named Szumski. See the testimony of Izrael Kronik, dated May 10, 1960, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/5721. At the beginning of 1944, the Jewish commanders were replaced by Soviet ones, though Jews continued to hold such posts as commissars and deputy commanders, and a few dozen non-Jewish partisans were added to their ranks. One of the newly appointed Soviet commanders, Captain Vasilenko, turned out to be a Jew whose former name was Vasilevsky (his father had been a Zionist activist), but was reportedly "on numerous occasions very hostile to the Jewish Partisans." See Abraham Zeleznikow, "Danke and Imke Lubotzki," in Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945,* vol. 2 (1985), 416–17. Nonetheless, as Dov Levin explains, "The detachments continued to remain Jewish both in their composition and in their nationalist and cultural character. The presence of a few dozen non-Jews among 420 Jewish partisans in the Vilna [Wilno] detachments made very little difference." See Levin, *Fighting Back,* 205. A tunnel dug out of the HKP labour camp in Wilno was betrayed to the Germans by a Jewish policeman; all those inside were killed, thereby bringing escapes from that camp to a halt. Ibid., 114–15. Anti-Semitism was said to be "rife" in Soviet detachments in Rudniki forest, and several Jews were executed for offences for which non-Jewish offenders got off leniently. At the end of November 1943, members of the Kaunas ghetto underground began arriving in Rudniki forest, and by May 1944 there were about 200 of them, grouped in three battalions of the Kaunas Brigade, primarily "Forward" (*Vperod*) and "Death to the Occupiers" (*Smert' okkupantam*). See Arad, *Ghetto in Flames,* 459; Arad, *In the Shadow of the Red Banner,* 289. Despite being also known as the Lithuanian Brigade, only a small minority of its members were ethnic Lithuanians: its make-up was largely Russian and Jewish, with just a few Poles. According to Isaac Kowalski, because of a lack of willing Lithuanians, Ziman initially recruited partisans from among the Jewish underground in the Wilno ghetto. They joined the ranks of the Soviet partisans in Narocz forest and were later

> Wide-spread social anomie … was mainly apparent in the following forms: (a) exceptional recklessness in fighting, (b) increase in violent treatment of the German prisoners of war, (c) *open hate and hostility towards the local population*, (d) total rejection of everything connected with Lithuania [and Poland] …, and (e) occurrences of depression, introversion and mass hysteria.[429] [emphasis added]

From the fall of 1943, Soviet partisan units in Rudniki forest, consisting initially of escaped Soviet prisoners of war, grew rapidly as they absorbed Jews who fled from what was left of the ghettos and labour camps in Wilno and Kaunas. Only rarely did they engage in confrontations with the Germans, rather they concentrated on sabotaging railroads and telephone polls. In order to gather supplies, groups of partisans would set out on expeditions to raid the largely destitute countryside. Villagers encountered rapacious and increasingly more hostile bands of armed plunderers who seized large quantities of food, livestock, clothing, utensils, and other provisions. Violent confrontations with villagers, and less frequently with their Home Army protectors, ensued as a result of these provision-gathering expeditions. Kazimierz Sakowicz, who penned a diary describing the massacres of Jews and Poles in the killing fields of Ponary outside Wilno, made the following notations in his diary, setting out the background to the animosity that unfolded in that region:

> More or less until this year (1943) the Jews banded together in the forest behaved correctly. Now, however, in 1943 they have become bandits, attacking individual houses in the villages and even whole villages (Zwierzyniec). They also carry out attacks on the roads. On Sunday, July 11, 1943, Jews stopped and robbed a wagon in Rudnicka Forest on the way through Rudniki. They stole shoes and food and are ruthless. The villagers escaped and begin to defend themselves, turning [marauding] Jews over to the Lithuanians. On Monday, July 12, there was a [German] manhunt in the forest near Sienodwor [Sinodwory] and Nowickiszek [Nowickiszki]. About 30–40 Jews were killed and several Bolsheviks. Several hundred people were hiding in this forest, and there were seventy to eighty Lithuanians and Germans from Ejszyszki with several submachine guns.
>
> Both the Jews and the Bolsheviks were well-armed; they had submachine guns and such like. Despite their numerical superiority the Jews and the Bolsheviks fired a few shots and escaped in panic. This can, perhaps, be explained by the fact that all those Jews and Bolsheviks were mainly escapees from Nacza Forest, where last month they were hunted down by a large number of Lithuanians and Germans from Wilno with three armored cars and several airplanes that bombed the forest. They assumed that it would be the same here, especially because the forest is small; thus they panicked and rushed to escape in several directions: (1) to Butrymance [Butrymańce], where they came upon an ambush, dying [and killed]; the majority, however, went to (2) Stryliszki, or (3) directly to Jurszyski [Jurszyszki]. Some remained here in the forest; I saw them when I was traveling that way, naturally pretending that I do not see anything, and (4) directly to Rudnicka

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[429] Dov Levin, "Some Facts and Problems About the Fighting of Lithuanian Jews against the Nazis and Their Collaborators (1941–1945)," in Emanuelis Zingeris, ed., *The Days of Memory: International Conference in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto. October 11–16, 1993* (Vilnius: Baltos Lankos, 1995), 276–77. Partisan Anatol Krakowski offers an apologetic version of the partisans' experience: "An attitude filled with moral standards drawn from Jewish traditions characterized our year with the partisans." See Krakowski, *Le Ghetto dans la forêt,* 87.

Forest.

They escaped without their caps, some even in their underwear, taking caps from those whom they chanced upon, and where possible taking their clothes from them. They also carried out robberies, escaping, among other places to Stryliszki. The manhunt occurred at about 5 in the evening. The attacks by Jews were not dictated by necessity, that is, a lack of money. No, during the manhunt the Lithuanians found considerable sums on money on the bodies.[430]

October 1943

On October 2 the band stole for a second night (October 1 and 2); they take the wagons with the merchandise and drive to the forest. This night, October 2, Polstoki [Półstoki], Wojsiaty, Jacewicze, Podborze [were robbed]. …

When the bandits came into the courtyard, they spoke among themselves in Lithuanian. Among the bandits were Bolsheviks who emphasized that they were from the wostock [*vostok*, i.e., eastern regions of the Soviet Union], and they only take food—bread, lard, that's all. But for what do they need clothing, especially women's clothing and other items, like rings? That is the way Bolsheviks steal: only food [ironically], no other stuff.[431]

October 6, 7, and 8

Three nights in a row the bandits rob the village of Strakiszek [Strakiszki]; the population is in tears. That night Stary and Nowy Miedzyrzecz [Stare and Nowe Międzyrzecze], Pilalowka [Pilatówka], Dobrowola, and Wielki and Maly Ligojn [Wielkie and Małe Ligojnie] were also robbed and several dozen wagons left for the forest with looted property and provisions.[432]

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[430] Kazimierz Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary, 1941–1943: A Bystander's Account of a Mass Murder* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 95–97. The last entry in Sakowicz's diary is dated November 6, 1943, however, according to his family, he continued to keep his diary until the day he was shot and mortally wounded while riding his bicycle from Wilno to his home in Ponary on July 5, 1944. The fate of the missing diary pages is unclear. Sakowicz may have hidden them separately from the rest, and they were never found. It is also possible that they were concealed with the other pages but destroyed when in the possession of the Jewish State Museum, or later when the diary was kept in the Central State Archives of Lithuania, the Museum of the Revolution, and the Historical Museum, all in Vilnius (Wilno). In the annotation to this edition of Sakowicz's diary, it is suggested that the pages could have been destroyed by Lithuanian or Soviet elements because they contained a severe indictment of the Lithuanians for participating in the atrocities in Ponary or against specific Lithuanians who were involved in the murders. Ibid., 143–44. This speculation seems rather unlikely. The bulk of the killings in Ponary had been completed and recorded in the extant entries. Increasingly, Sakowicz turned his attention to violent attacks on villagers by Soviet and Jewish partisans which culminated in the massacre at Koniuchy. If such descriptions had fallen into the possession of the Soviet authorities, it is more likely that they would have been destroyed for compromising the Soviet partisan movement. Portions of Sakowicz's diary were first published in Polish in Maria Wardzyńska, *Sytuacja ludności polskiej w Generalnym Komisariacie Litwy: Czerwiec 1941–lipiec 1944* (Warsaw: Mako, 1993), 133–46. The full extant diary was published in 1999 as *Dziennik pisany w Ponarach od 11 lipca 1941 r. do 6 listopada 1943 r.* (Bydgoszcz: Towarzystwo Miłośników Wilna i Ziemi Wileńskiej, 1999), and *Dziennik 1941–1943* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2014). Possibly suggesting a conspiracy of silence, Theodore Weeks claimed, in a 2013 publication, that Sakowicz's diary had never been published in Polish, even though it was cited extensively in Tadeusz Piotrowski's *Poland's Holocaust* (1998), 171–74, based on Maria Wardzyńska's *Syutacja ludności polskiej w Generalnym Komisariacie Litwy* (1993). See Theodore R. Weeks, "The Vilnius and Kaunas Ghettos and the Fate of Lithuanian Jewry, 1941–1945," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 25 (2013): 375.

[431] Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary, 1941–1943,* 126.

[432] Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary, 1941–1943,* 130.

Saturday, October 23

On Monday, October 18, 1943, Blinow, who hid from the conscription and joined the [partisan] bands, was found in the forest near Lukanc [Łukańce], shot and near death.

On Wednesday, October 20, the band surrounded the house of L. Zacharzewski in Lukanc]. They killed a woman from Madziun [Madziuny] who happened to be there and burned the house, immolating the dead woman, together with her 2 small children and the 2 small children of L. Zacharzewski, who sat hidden in the pigsty with his wife during the raid and saw everything. Zacharzewski is in hiding, since he is suspected of the killing of Blinow.[433]

Friday, October 28 [29], 1943

In the winter of 1942–43 many Jews were employed in the exploitation of the forest in the region of Gob [Goby]. near Czarnobyl. The conditions of their work were horrible. … despite this the Jews did not die of hunger, and in general looked well. Above all, this was thanks to the Gob farmers who fed the Jews. They did not hide their appreciation …

When the work in the forest was finished and the Jews (as superfluous) had already been threatened with the base, the Jews fled to the virgin forest, thanks to the farmers from Gob. About a half year has passed since that time. On October 28, at night, a band robbed the farmer Wiernakowicz [Wierchonowicz] from Gob; three pigs were taken, seven lambs, clothing, linen, flour, kitchen utensils, shoes, etc.[434]

Saturday, November 6 [1943]

Practically all of Gob [Goby], and actually all the richer farmers in Gob, were thoroughly robbed last night. Six wagons, loaded with locally slaughtered pigs, lambs, and, in addition, clothes, shoes, and the like, left in the direction of the forest. The band appeared at 6 in the evening. In addition, some of the farmers were grievously beaten and several dogs shot. It is interesting that the Bolsheviks, who that night appeared at the farms, declared at the beginning that "by order of the Soviet authorities they demand that the following be furnished immediately, etc."—after which they named, among other things, small items, such as wristwatches, and when the farmer would try to explain that he didn't have any, he was asked, "Then where is that [high quality] Cyma silver watch"?

How did they know that? Very simple: their guides were the Jews who were sawing in the forest. Now they went together openly. …

I forgot: at Wierchonowicz's on October 2, two wagons were loaded. One of the Jews told Wierchonowicz that the cow would be taken another time (he pointed to her in the pigsty); until then the cow should be fattened. Wierchonowicz is feeding the cow better now.[435]

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[433] Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary, 1941–1943,* 137.

[434] Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary, 1941–1943,* 140–41.

[435] Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary, 1941–1943,* 142–43.

Historian Kazimierz Krajewski details more of this history, as well as altercations with German forces and their Lithuanian collaborators and attacks on German outposts in the vicinity of Rudniki forest, in his important monograph on the Home Army in the Nowogródek region.[436] On September 11, 1943, a large contingent of Soviet partisans staged an attack on Polish partisans in Posolcz, killing three Home Army members including Second Lieutenant Tadeusz Brykczyński ("Kubuś").[437] A Home Army member from Bieniakonie recalled how a group of Soviet partisans invaded a cottage where they came across a woman baking bread. Despite the woman's pleas to leave some bread for her malnourished children, the partisans took everything they could lay their hands on. Later they returned and torched the house.[438] Józef Ejsmont, the headman (*sołtys*) of Porudomino was killed on November 11, 1943; the rectory in Bieniakonie was burned down. Kazimierz Orłowski, a Home Army member, was killed by Soviet partisans from Rudniki forest when they came to rob his village of Andrzeiszki.[439] A Pole from Rudniki recalled, "I counted 19 times that the [Soviet] partisans scoured the village looking to take something. Among them was a Jew by the name of Kuszka from Olkieniki who said, 'Do not take lean sheep or those with lamb.'"[440] Soviet reports mention that partisans from the Jewish units "Death to Fascism" and "Struggle" confiscated the last cows from several households, leaving the families destitute.[441] Additional examples, based on German reports and Jewish accounts, were cited in Part Two of this study.

One of the targets of the wrath of Soviet and Jewish partisans was Koniuchy, a small Polish village of several hundred people near the town of Bieniakonie, at the edge of Rudniki forest, southeast of Wilno.[442] Koniuchy was not only remote, it was also a poor village—the soil was sandy and crops and livestock were

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[436] Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej,* 430–31, 498–500. For altercations in the vicinity of Nacza forest see 434.

[437] Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej,* 430–31. According to Polish sources, thirteen Soviet partisans lost their lives.

[438] Testimony of Anna Bardzyńska ("Nowina") in Grażyna Dziedzińska, "Dziewczyna z tamtych lat," *Nasza Polska,* December 20–27, 2005.

[439] Barbara Sidorowicz, "Nigdy z pamięci," *Magazyn Wileński,* no. 11 (November 2003): 25–26.

[440] Andrzej Kołosowski, interview with Witold Aładowicz, "'Bogdaniec' z Rudnik," *Nasz Dziennik* (Warsaw), January 13–14, 2001.

[441] Šarūnas Liekis, "Koniuchy in the 'New' and 'Old' Polish and Jewish Memory," Conference Paper, "Between Coexistence and Divorce: 25 Years of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry and Polish-Jewish Relations," Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 17–19, 2009.

[442] Although some Lithuanian historians state the village was populated by Lithuanians (Rimantas Zizas) and Belorussians (Saulius Sužiedėlis), according to Edward Tubin, as well as other villagers, all of the residents, except for one Lithuanian family, were Poles. See Andrzej Kumor, interview with Edward Tubin, "Nie przepuścili nikomu…: Z naocznym świadkiem pacyfikacji wsi Koniuchy rozmawia Andrzej Kumor," *Gazeta* (Toronto), May 4–6, 2001. Poland's Institute of National Rememberance also refers to Koniuchy as a Polish village. Compare with Rimantas Zizas, "Žudynių Kaniūkuose pėdsakais," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (11), 2002: 149–65; Saulius A. Sužiedėlis, *Historical Dictionary of Lithuania,* Second edition (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 146 (no references are provided for this entry).

not abundant. But since it was situated close to the forest it became an easy target for robbers.[443] Soviet and Jewish partisans frequently raided the village stripped the inhabitants of virtually all their possessions, especially their livestock, food supplies and clothing. According to the recollections of Edward Tubin, a resident of Koniuchy,

> The first time they came it was to us alone. They told us to harness our horse … They took the keys to the storehouse and stable, they chased everyone into a corner, one of them watched us with an automatic weapon. They took everything. Then they came at the end and said that 'there'll be no mercy: If you report us, we'll come and burn you down.' … The next time more of them came. They came in the early evening and went to take, to rob in the entire village. They came to us and also ordered us to harness our horse. … When they were leaving, two of them burst into our home. There was nothing in the house. I was sleeping on the bed with my brother Leon. We were covered with a village coverlet of our own making. They burst in, saw that there was nothing, and tore the coverlet off us. My father said to them, "Comrades, the children won't have anything to cover themselves with." So one of them said using a really dirty word, "shit on your children." And they left.[444]

These descriptions are consistent with the accounts of Jewish partisans from Rudniki forest that follow. As Israel Kowalski explains, "In due time, the Jewish units became experts at foraging for themselves and the non-Jews began to envy them."[445]

> The more people we had in the partisan camp, the more pressing the matter of a food supply. … Every night groups of fighters went out on food forays.[446]

> The "zagotovki" or economic operations began. Twenty-five to thirty people were chosen. The group was directed to a selected village, distant about 25 to 35 kilometres from the base. Of course, those people were armed. There they set up watch at either end of the village, and the rest of us split up into several groups consisting of several persons. Each group went around to several houses

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[443] For a description of the difficult conditions and poverty in the nearby village of Butrymańce see Marian Butrym, "W mojej ojczyźnie, w Butrymańcach…," *Magazyn Wileński,* no. 11 (2001): 21–26.

[444] Andrzej Kumor, interview with Edward Tubin, "Nie przepuścili nikomu…: Z naocznym świadkiem pacyfikacji wsi Koniuchy rozmawia Andrzej Kumor," *Gazeta* (Toronto), May 4–6, 2001. For a description of a similar raid on the village of Korsaki see Błażejewicz, *W walce z wrogami Rzeczypospolitej,* 84. A diary in Russian was found on one of the armed partisans killed after that raid which referred to the pacification of Koniuchy. Ibid., 85.

[445] Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe,* 281.

[446] Lazar, *Destruction and Resistance,* 142. Chaim Lazar was a member of the "Avenger" detachment.

and was to requisition everything that we needed: usually potatoes, bread, flour, onions and livestock.[447]

Going into the local villages to get food, however, was another matter. We came in like bandits and, after all, we were robbing the local peasants of their livelihood, first a sack of flour, then a pig or a cow or a horse. In the early days, we were able to befriend the locals and persuade them to give us food voluntarily, but soon we would need another sack of flour and more cows, and more chickens. In addition, the number of partisans inhabiting the forests grew, as more and more people fled from the ghettos into the forests and as the Red Army moved westwards, Russian soldiers who had imprisoned by the Germans and had escaped, tried to join the partisans. …

As a result of this 'invasion' of the forests, the villages close to our base soon ran out of food; everyone was after the same source of supplies. Gradually the villagers, with whom we had at first tried to negotiate, became our enemies. We explained our needs to them and did our best not to take too much of their livestock and their crops, but there was just so much they could provide, and finally we ended up not taking just one cow but by leaving just one cow. We would arrive in the village and load up wagons, or in winter, sledges pulled by horses—which we'd also taken from them, and which we often did not return. After all, their very existence depended on their livestock. Sometimes we would even take a farmer or two with us just so they could return the horse and cart we had used to their village. This also made them less likely to alert the German police that we had been in their village and had taken their goods.

… expeditions to the villages for food took hours—and usually ran into daylight hours. A fully laden wagon train—which inevitably moved very slowly along the dirt roads—took hours and hours to reach base, and it was not uncommon to come across peasants who rushed to denounce us to the Germans who waited to ambush the wagon on the way back to the camp.[448]

Tuesday, January 11th [1944]. The group of nine are called to carry out a mission: to confiscate the weapons owned by the farmers. The commander is Leib Zaitzev, a Byelorussian Jew, and a veteran partisan. His aide is Nikolai Dushin, a former prisoner-of-war … and we were seven Jews: Shimon Eidlson, Michael Gelbtrunk, Mendl Deitch, Aba Diskant, Itzchak Lifszitz, Jankl Ratner and myself [Alex Faitelson]. Zaitzev was armed with a P.P.S.H., a submachinegun of Russian make, Dushin, with an automatic rifle of the S.V.T. type. We had pistols. The battalion did not have enough weapons to go around. If it was necessary to go out to the villages in order to get foodstuffs, there was an armed group whose task this was. Their arms had been lent to the base by the Jewish partisans from Vilna [Wilno].

It is now three days that we have been "combing" the villages deep in the enemy's hinterland. We look into and search the farmers' dwellings for hidden weapons, forcing their owners to empty their hiding places and hand over their arms. Whenever we stop, we interrogate the farmers as to who possesses arms. … In the nearest village we loaded three sleighs [of provisions] and went off to this

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[447] Testimony of Abram Mieszczański, dated June 10, 1947, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2536.

[448] Joseph Harmatz, *From the* Wings (Sussex, England: The Book Guild, 1998), 84–85. Joseph Harmatz was a member of the "For Victory" detachment.

village. It was a clear night. The moon and the snow in the fields light our way. White expanses. The horses harnessed to the sleighs prance rapidly. We are three to a sleigh. It's a wonderful feeling —being the rulers of the night![449]

Paradoxically, the battle against the Germans was easier and less dangerous than the activity of provision gathering. …

The food expeditions unfolded in general as follows: about thirty partisans went to a village located about forty kilometres from our base, passing along the way closer and non-hostile localities that we did not want to alienate. Usually, after an overnight march, when we arrived in an unfriendly village, first we occupied the house of the village head after placing guards at the outskirts of the dwellings. These operations were more dangerous that combat activities because they were accompanied by a great deal of noise, barking dogs, pigs whose throats were cut, horses that were hitched to wagons on which we loaded the products that we had just confiscated. The rule was to give to the peasants receipts for our booty so that they could later prove to the Soviets [on subsequent raids] that they "aided the partisans." The booty was restricted only to flour, oil, pork, sometimes beef. The rule was not to touch "luxury" foodstuffs like butter, milk, cheese. … Despite everything, these rules … were not always strictly observed by all the partisans with regard to bread, butter and cheese. …

We were supposed to capture a peasant denouncer in a hostile village, but he was not there when we arrived. To compensate, we put our hands on foodstuffs that were usually forbidden such as bread, cheese, vodka and some clothing.[450]

I could not stand going out on "foraging" expeditions. I was so ashamed of dropping in on a hut and demanding potatoes, flour, and especially animals—sheep and cows—from the peasants. The women cried, and the men cursed us. It happened that our men surreptitiously seized extra things belonging to the working people who supplied us—boots, clothes, even watches and money. Meetings were held in the detachment to explain to everyone that this was mere pillage, that it was wrong to steal, and that by doing this we [would be] making enemies out of the peasants. The detachment, however, contained many "underworlders," former thieves and vagrants for whom theft was the normal state of affairs. Some of them contended that they had the right to do this:

"These folks did not suffer from fascism, but our people all died. Why shouldn't they share something? …"

We were principled members of the FPO. On these expeditions we tried to make sure that nothing was taken except food, but these efforts were not always successful. Our ragged partisans … continued to plunder the peasants, who cursed and hated us. We went out "foraging" after sundown and continued long into twilight. We had to range far afield, since the close-in farms had already been fleeced. Both [Jewish] detachments had complements of up to one hundred forty men. A horde of this size required a great deal of food. In general they took potatoes, flour, cabbage, and

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[449] Faitelson, *Heroism & Bravery in Lithuania, 1941–1945,* 307. Alex Faitelson was a member of the "Death to the Occupiers" detachment.

[450] Krakowski, *Le Ghetto dans la forêt,* 58, 62–63, 69. Anatol Krakowski was a member of the "For Victory" detachment which carried out most of its activities jointly with the "Avenger" detachment.

sometimes cottage cheese for the sick. The order was given to take cattle only from prosperous peasants who had no fewer than two cows. It was forbidden to take one from a really poor peasant who had just a single cow. …

We finally got to the village we targeted and posted sentries. We ordered the owners to hitch up a cart. We loaded produce on it, tied a cow to the back, and put some confused sheep on it. We worked to the accompaniment of wails and tears on the part of the peasant men and women. We had to hurry. We went back, carefully, looking around from time to time.[451]

Our sources of sustenance were the neighbouring villages. Despite the fact conditions were hard for their own inhabitants, they shared with us what they had. On the other hand, from time to time it was necessary to turn to arguments of force, including the use of weapons. The Germans attempted to present us to the peasants in the worst possible light calling us bandits. …

In partisan parlance the food-gathering expeditions were called "zagotovka." They were carried out in the following manner. A group of partisans headed towards the vicinity of a selected village in the early evening hours. It had already been placed under surveillance earlier. In addition we would set up a guard around the village so that no one could leave the area during the operation. The peasants were ordered to gather food and load it onto carriages, to which they had to harness their horses. We took flour, potatoes, bread and pigs. … The peasants brought the loaded carriages out of the village, at which point we intercepted them … We drove the carriages to a location from which we could readily carry the supplies to our base. The horses and carriages were left in places from which the horses could make their way home alone. All of this had to be completed within a few hours, before daybreak.[452]

The myth that villages located near the bases were friendly by nature, whereas outlying villages were hostile and pro-Nazi, has been amply debunked. No village appreciated being plundered repeatedly, and, as could be expected, the villagers *became* hostile because of such relentless raids. Villagers who lived near Soviet partisan bases were simply fearful of retaliation, hence their docility; the partisans treated them with more civility because they did not want hostile villagers in close proximity to their bases. The notion that the partisans exercised restraint in their provision-gathering expeditions is, as numerous accounts have shown, equally baseless. Under the circumstances, the villagers had every right to defend themselves and their possessions from the incessant plundering and brutal treatment they were subjected to. Those who, out of desperation, turned to the German authorities for protection cannot simply be regarded as collaborators.

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[451] Margolis, *A Partisan from Vilna,* 481–82. Margolis was a member of Kaplinsky's "For Victory" detachment; the other detachment referred to is Kovner's "Avenger" detachment.

[452] Shuv (Shub), *Meever lisheme ha-ananah,* 122. See also the interview with Baruch Shub, November 5, 1993, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives. For another—more vivid—description of these raids, see Zunia Shtrom, *Hurbn un kamf (fun Kovner geto tsu di Rudnitsker velder): Zikhroynes* (Tel Aviv: Aroysgegebn fun "Farband fun partizaner, untergrunt-kemfers un geto-oyfshtendlers in Yisroel," 1990), 226–34. Shtrom writes that armed groups counting as many as 25 partisans would set out on forays and return to the base with cattle and wagonloads of products. They would block the entrances to a village and then the partisans would fan out in twos to rob individual peasants' cottages, taking virtually all their livestock. Threats and intimidation were commonly used, such as burning down their homes.

Not all expeditions were carried off as smoothly as those described above. The following account by Sara Rubinson (Ginaite), a member of the "Death to the Occupiers" detachment, describes a raid in late December 1943 which, exceptionally, was cut short because of defensive action by Polish partisans.

> Meanwhile, our detachment had been preparing for a very important and dangerous mission in a hostile district, far from our camp, to seize food. Our group of about thirty partisans also included the recently arrived newcomers from Kaunas Ghetto who had not yet had an opportunity to gain any experience in guerrilla warfare. As we all knew, experience could only be acquired by going on missions and fighting in skirmishes. We left our camp before dawn, after all the rifles and automatic weapons, and even our only sub-machine gun, had been distributed. When we reached the village of Inklerishkes [Inklaryszki in Polish, Inkleriškės in Lithuanian] at daybreak, we stopped for a short rest. …
>
> We rested in Inklerishkes until dusk when we left the village, following order to stay on high alert to potential dangers from all directions. We were heading close to the hostile village of Koletanca [Kalitańce], known for its support for the Polish White Partisans. …
>
> In order to reach the destination of our operation, we had to go through the edge of the village under their control and cross a narrow footbridge. We did this noiselessly, thinking we had not been spotted. When we reached the designated village, our group leader, Michail Trushin, used all the defensive tactics at his disposal. He positioned guards at both ends of the village and ran to the home of the village elder, ordering him to prepare horse-drawn carriages. Once again, partisans were split into small groups and assigned to houses from which to requisition foodstuffs.
>
> Zunia Shtromas [Shtrom], Boruch Lopjanski, and I looked on the window of the house assigned to us. The frightened owners lit the sapwood lamp and opened the door. Zunia demanded they brig bread, bacon, and salt. Boruch ordered them to open the door to the cowshed and bring out a cow. The farmer hesitated. Immediately, Boruch opened the door of the cowshed. He led out a cow, tied a rope to its neck and told me to lead it to the carriage. Zunia handed me a bag of salt.
>
> All I wanted was to get out of that house and get away from the plaintive, pleading looks and moans of the owners. Before long, the command was given to gather at the carriages with our booty and the train of carts started back for base camp. I proceeded to the footbridge and, though my cow bucked a little, we both made it across.
>
> One of the newcomers, Peisach Gordon, was one or two carriages behind me. He put his sub-machine gun on a cart as he went behind the carriage to try and cross the footbridge. Suddenly, a volley of machine gun fire hit us like a hurricane. The White Partisans were shooting at us from cover of the cemetery, directing their fire at the footbridge and those partisans who had not yet crossed. It cut Peisach down first. He was followed by Itzik Segal.
>
> Newcomer Masha Endlin, disappeared in the fray. I heard Trushin's command not to cross the bridge, but I was already on the other side of the river and I hit the ground, holding onto the cow. All the cows and horses began to run in a frenzy around me, taking the carriages with them.
>
> The remaining members of our group waded through the shallow river that, at this time of year, was already covered by a thin layer of ice. Leizer Zilber, Israel Goldblatt, and Misha Rubinsonas [Rubinson] all managed to cross the river, avoiding the bridge, and returned feeble fire with their pistols. Trushin slipped and fell into the river but Boruch Lopjanski managed to pull him out. Meanwhile, the sub-machine gun cartridge was lost in the river. Returning fire, we retreated into

> the woods where we halted briefly, hoping Masha Endlin would catch up. Enemy fire continued as branches and pieces of bark, clipped by bullets, fell all around us. Then everything went quiet.
>
> … Our group returned to base camp disconsolate and dispirited. We had lost three of our comrades and all the food, though I still gripped the small bag of salt in my hand. The commanders of our detachment were livid and sought out scapegoats for the disaster. They blamed the submachine gunners, the scouts, the informers and us, the fighters.[453]

Not all of this information is reliable, it turns out, as the following account of Nehemia Endlin shows. In fact, two of the three Jews allegedly killed by Poles (Masha Endlin and Itzik or Itzchak Segal), after they had been left behind by their comrades, in fact survived. It is not certain whether the Jewish raiders were repelled by partisans or by a group of vigilant villagers. Finally, it appears that the Poles fired shots not with the intention of killing the Jewish marauders, but to attempt to prevent them from leaving with their spoils.

> On December 30, 1943 a group was put together to organize food, headed by Misha [Mikhail] Trushin, a lieutenant among the prisoners of war. My wife Masha [Endlin] and Chaya Shmuelov volunteered. The road led by Vishintzi [Wisińcza], Kaletanz [Kalitańce], towards Novostrelzi [Strzelce]. On the way to Kaletanz, there was a rivulet crossed by a little bridge, close to the cemetery. On the way back, when they were laden with goods, they fell into an ambush of Polish farmers who had positioned themselves in the cemetery and opened fire in the direction of the bridge. Peisach Gordon was shot and killed, and the others scattered and crossed the stream through the water. Misha Trushin and some of the partisans opened fire at the ambush. It was of no importance because the attackers did not come out, nor did they give chase to the group. Their intention was to drive off the partisans, leaving behind them their food and animals.
>
> Shooting in the dark in the direction of the well-armed concealed attackers could have created a target for them to return fire against us. In the meantime, our people were in confusion. The machine-gunner Meishe Rubinson and his deputy, Eliezer Zilber, lost the machine-gun magazine. My wife [Masha Endlin] was left caught on a branch, and no one came to help her. Itzchak Segal got lost and threw away his SOT automatic rifle. Peisach Gordon's body was left on the bridge. A sad end to the campaign, and we returned to the base empty-handed, having lost people and weapons …
>
> The commander and the commissar vented all their anger on Meishe Rubinson and Eliezer Zilber for losing the magazines and bullets. Given the company's meager armory, this was a serious and sad blow. The two of them were sent to find the lost ammunition, which of course they were unable to do. On their return, they announced that Peisach Gordon, Masha Endlin and Itzchak Segal were dead. In this way, apparently, they wanted to prove to the commanders that they had been to the place.

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[453] Sara Ginaite-Rubinson, *Resistance and Survival: The Jewish Community in Kaunas, 1941–1944* (Oakville, Ontario and Niagara Falls, New York: Mosaic Press, 2005), 139–41. Ginaite-Rubinson accuses a group of Soviet partisans loyal to the detachment's commissar, Dimitry Parfionov, of being "directly, or perhaps indirectly, responsible for the killing of several of our very close ghetto partisan friends." Ibid., 130.

Nehemia Endlin continues:

> It was the night of Sylvester [i.e., December 31]. That evening I was on guard by the HQ dugout. In the dugout they were welcoming in the new year, and as appropriate to partisans, they were drinking home brew and having a good time, even though the day before they had lost three men and weapons. The commissar came out to me late at night and told me that Masha had died near Kaletanz [Kalitańce]. I answered that we were fighting a just war and that no one could be certain he would come out of the struggle alive.
>
> We reached the target and the commander posted a guard on both sides of the village. They were charged with letting no one in or out without a password. The action took place in the village. Everyone was warned not to take anything, even something of no value, from the farmers other than food.
>
> The food raid was crowned with success. On the way back, Meishe Rubinson wanted to show me the grave of my wife Masha. When we reached the little bridge over the rivulet by Kaletanz, we came under heavy fire from the cemetery. We did not panic, and quickly took the food and livestock across, by the bridge or through the water, while the partisans covered us by shooting in the direction of the attackers. Thanks to this exchange of fire, Meishe Rubinson was saved from the unpleasant task of finding and showing me my wife's grave …
>
> I was sent to the ghetto to bring fighters to the forest.
>
> One day Velvl Shavlan, a member of the underground fighting organization in the ghetto who worked for Liptzer in the Gestapo brigade, came to me and brought me a note he had received from a Jew who had come from the Vilna [Wilno] Gestapo brigade. The note was written by a woman called Mery Ezerhovitz to a family in the ghetto by the name of Rostovski. The handwriting had looked to Velvl to be similar to that of my wife, and he decided to bring the note to me.
>
> Masha described in brief how she had fallen into the hands of the Vilna Gestapo. When she had freed herself from the thicket by the rivulet by Kaletanz her partisan comrades were no longer around. She was caught by armed Polish farmers, who already held Itzchak Segal. The two of them claimed that they were Jews who had lost their way, when they heard the exchange of gunfire. As they were unarmed, the Poles believed them.
>
> The Poles did not know what to do with the Jews they had captured, and gave them to the Vilna Gestapo. There, they were interrogated and not found guilty of anything other than being "Jews who had gone astray"—and they were sent to a Jewish work brigade.
>
> I showed the letter to Chaim Yellin. He immediately instructed David Markovski to take the opportunity of sending my wife 500 marks and clothes. The two of us, Chaim and I, went to Liptzer. He received us as honored guests, with coffee and rolls. I asked him, as the person in charge of the ghetto on behalf of the Gestapo, to get my wife out of Vilna and bring her to Kovno [Kaunas]. We set him a stay of one month.[454]

They brought Masha Endlin to Kaunas and Nehemia Endlin took her to the forest. However, Shmuel Chananovitch, a Jew who was apprehended by the Lithuanian police after escaping from Kaunas and taken

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[454] Nehemia Endlin, *Oyf di vegn fun partizaner kamf: Zikhroynes* (Tel-Aviv: A komitet fun gev. yidishe partizaner un untergrunt kemfer fun Kovner geto, 1980), as cited in Alex Faitelson, *The Truth and Nothing But the Truth: Jewish Resistance in Lithuania* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2006), 437–40.

to the Gestapo in Wilno, where he met Masha Endlin, maintains that Masha had also been caught by the Lithuanian police in the vicinity of Kalitańce and handed over to the Gestapo. This appears to be a far more likely scenario than the one suggested by Nehemia Endlin, given the villagers' lack of contact with the Gestapo. According to Chananovitch,

> On December 30, 1943, a group of partisans from the "Death to the Occupiers" battalion, went off on a mission to get food supplies. The group was led by Lieutenant Misha [Mikhail] Trushin, a former prisoner of war. On their way back to their base with a wagon full of provisions, they met with strong fire from the west. Gordon-Shtein was killed in this incident. The partisans lost their nerve, left the wagons with the provisions and dispersed. Neither Itzchak Segal nor Masha Endlin made their way back from this mission. They were caught by the police, to whom Masha said that she had got lost in the neighborhood while looking for a place to stay during the war. The Lithuanian police handed her over to the Gestapo. Itzchak Segal's fate is not known.
>
> Masha Endlin managed to send a letter via a Jew from a working-crew employed by the Gestapo in Vilna [Wilno] who was going to Kovno [Kaunas]. Nehemia Endlin received the letter and approached Chaim about it. Chaim succeeded with Benni Liptzer's help in having Masha transferred from the Gestapo in Vilna to the Gestapo in Kovno, and from there she came to the ghetto and was taken by Nehemia to the forest.[455]

Accounts gathered by the Jewish Historical Institute in Poland shortly after the war indicate that altercations with the Home Army occurred almost always in the context of raids on villages staged by Soviet partisans. Casualties among the Soviet partisans were relatively few. Cutting telephone lines proved to be a much more hazardous undertaking than actual combat: five Jewish partisans from the "Struggle" detachment were killed in June 1944 when a mine exploded during such an undertaking.[456] The accounts also describe frequent assaults (including rape) and robberies of Jews perpetrated by Soviet partisans, and the unwillingness of both Jewish and Soviet partisans to accept unarmed Jews and women into their ranks. The commanders of a partisan unit abandoned a group of Jewish partisans who were thought to be a liability, leaving them to fend for themselves without almost any weapons. The Soviets killed a number of persons who tried to join their units as suspected "spies." The partisans even murdered some friendly Polish railway workers they had captured, fearing they would betray the location of their whereabouts, if released. After being subjected to interrogation, captured German soldiers were routinely executed.[457] However,

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[455] Faitelson, *The Truth and Nothing But the Truth,* 288–89.

[456] Testimony of Ruwen Fajkowski [Reuven Paikowski], Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/2814. The following victims are listed: platoon commander Yosef Lubotzki/Lubotski/Lubocki ("Imka" or "Imke"), Nachum Rudaszewski ("Nochke"), Nachum Galperin/Halperin, Chaim Moshe Grinberg, and Szmuel Fajkowski/Paikowski. One version has them stepping on a mine, while another version has them planting the mine when the explosion occurred.

[457] See the following testimonies in the Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw): Mania Glezer, dated June 19, 1947, no. 301/2517; Miriam Jaszuńska, dated July 15, 1947, no. 301/2530; Beniamin Brest, dated July 8, 1947, no. 301/2531; Abram Mieszczański, dated June 10, 1947, no. 301/2536. The following testimonies are reproduced in part in Roszkowski, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945,* vol. 3, 96–100 (Mania Glezer), and vol. 4, 229–32 (Beniamin Brest), 289–94 (Miriam Jaszuńska).

these same accounts are silent about the massacre of the villagers of Koniuchy. Subsequent accounts were more forthcoming.[458]

It is also worth noting that many Jewish partisans had received assistance from Poles on their way to Rudniki forest, and some had even left their children in the care of Poles.[459] Contrary to their boastful accounts, their role in the defeat of the German forces was negligible. In fact, actual military operations were few and far between and militarily inconsequential. By January 1944, the director of the military operations branch of the Wilejka Partisan Centre had secured permission to cease talks with the Home Army and to destroy the "Łupaszko" Brigade but its plans were foiled because of precautions taken by the Poles.[460]

In the fall of 1943, a handful of villagers in Koniuchy formed a self-defence unit in response to repeated "economic" operations or armed raids carried out by Soviet and Jewish partisans.[461] The villagers' meagre supply of weapons initially consisted of three rifles (one of which didn't shoot) discarded by Soviet soldiers who had fled the area in June 1941. Later they acquired a few more rifles. The armed strength of the

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[458] Mordechai Zeidel (Motka Zajdl) describes the killing of two captured Home Army partisans by Jewish partisans, as well as the burning of villages that "collaborated" with the Germans. See the Oral history interview with Mordechai Zeidel, Accession no. 1995.A.1272.177, RG-50.120.0177, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Mordechai Z. [Zeidel] Holocaust Testimony (HVT-3247), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library. (After the entry of the Soviet aarmy, Zeidel joined the NKVD in Wilno.) See also the testimony of Alexander Ryndziunski, file A.010/381 (Item 146222), Moreshet Archive (Israel); Alexsander Rindzionsky, *Hurban Vilna* (Tel Aviv: Lohamei Hagetaot & Hakibbutz Hameuchad/Ghetto Fighters' House, 1987); Testimony of Aleksander Rindyunski, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 29359. Rachel Margolis mentions the execution of the son of the commander of a peat-working camp in Biała Waka who was alleged to have mistreated the prisoners. See Margolis, *A Partisan from Vilna,* 479–80.

[459] In preparation for their escape from the Wilno ghetto, the Jewish underground had received plans of the city sewers from a Polish engineer. On their way to Rudniki forest, they relied on Polish scouts and received assistance from Polish farmers. See the testimony of Abram Mieszczański, dated June 10, 1947, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2536; Testimony of Miriam Jaszuńska, dated July 15, 1947, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2530. Efraim Plotnik and Riva Epsztajn (Rivka Epsztien) were taken in by Aleksander and Jadwiga Milewski of Wilno, who had contacts with the Jewish partisans, before joining the Jewish partisans in Rudniki forest. See Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 4: *Poland,* Part 1, 517–18. Chaim Engel (Lewin), who had worked in the Keilis factory in Wilno before joining the partisans in Rudniki forest, placed his young son with Stefania Lipska, a Polish Christian woman. See Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych,* 308; Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 4: *Poland,* Part 1, 458–59. Sara Janiska, the daughter of a fallen Jewish partisan who fought in the Rudniki forest, was sheltered Jan and Józefa Przewalski and their relatives. See Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 5: *Poland,* Part 2, 644–45. A Pole gave shelter and food to Fania Jocheles Brantsovsky after she escaped from the Wilno ghetto and guided her in the direction of the partisan base in Rudniki forest. See Dulkinienė and Keys, *Su adata širdyje / With a Needle in the Heart,* 51–52. The Szewiel family provided shelter to Joel and Nechama Milikowski in the village of Pogiry for about six months after the couple fled the Wilno ghetto in the fall of 1943; afterwards they joined the Jewish partisans in Rudniki forest. See Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 5: *Poland,* Part 2, 786. Additional examples are found in the note on Ponary.

[460] Wołkonowski, *Okręg Wileński Związku Walki Zbrojnej Armii Krajowej w latach 1939–1945,* 159.

[461] According to Soviet archives, the "Struggle" detachment targeted Koniuchy for raids from the summer of 1943. Since appeals for protection to the Lithuanian authorities fell on deaf ears, following their advice the villagers decided to form a self-defence unit consisting of some two dozen men, among them Władysław Woronis, Jan Kodis, and Stanisław Bobin. They managed to collect some rifles and guns, perhaps 20 weapons in total. A small group of men kept watch for marauders for several hours after dusk. See Piotr Gontarczyk, "Tragedia Koniuchów," *Niezależna Gazeta Polska,* March 3, 2006.

villagers, who were allegedly well equipped by the Germans, was greatly exaggerated in Soviet wartime reports and Jewish accounts that sought to provide a justification for the attack. Abraham Sutzkever, for example, claims that the village had a depot containing automatic weapons and machine guns.[462] A night watch was set up to warn residents of impending raids, but proved to be totally ineffective in the crucial test confrontation with the Soviet partisans. Koniuchy was selected by the leadership of the Soviet partisans based in the Rudniki forest for "an act of vengeance and intimidation."[463] The mission was carried out on January 29, 1944, by some 120 to 150 Soviet partisans, or possibly more according to Soviet sources.[464] Although referred to as a military operation in Jewish reports, and indeed touted as one of the greatest

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[462] Sutzkever, *From the Vilna Ghetto to Nuremberg,* 182.

[463] Lazar, *Destruction and Resistance,* 174.

[464] For a comprehensive treatment of the Koniuchy massacre see "Koniuchy: A Case Study" in Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Intermarium: The Land between the Baltic and Black Seas* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Transaction, 2012), 500–19. For an early article in Polish see Leszek Żebrowski, "Koniuchy," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2002), vol. 9, 315–20. For an early Polish-language compilation of Jewish accounts see Ryszard Tyndorf, "Zwyczajna pacyfikacja: Źródła żydowskie o zagładzie wsi Koniuchy," *Glaukopis*, no. 2–3 (2005): 376–84. For a study by a Lithuanian historian, see Rimantas Zizas, "Žudynių Kaniūkuose pėdsakais," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (11), 2002: 149–65, posted online at <http://www.genocid.lt/Leidyba/11/genocida.htm>; and an expanded Polish version of this article entitled "Pacyfikacja wsi Koniuchy (Kaniūkai)," *Biuletyn Historii Pogranicza* (Białystok), no. 4 (2003): 33–57. A more recent study was undertaken by Jewish-Lithuanian historian Šarūnas Liekis: "Koniuchy in the 'New' and 'Old' Polish and Jewish Memory," Conference Paper, "Between Coexistence and Divorce: 25 Years of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry and Polish-Jewish Relations," Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 17–19, 2009. Zizas argues that the assault on Koniuchy was part of a larger partisan operation which targeted villages that had established self-defence groups and provides examples of additional attacks carried out at that time. While providing valuable research and information about the massacre and its background, Zizas (like Šarūnas Liekis) insists that Koniuchy was a Lithuanian village despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary: some inhabitants joined the Home Army, others "repatriated" to Poland after the war, and those who still live in Koniuchy and their descendants regard themselves as Poles. Moreover, even today masses are said only in Polish in the parish church in Butrymańce. Zizas also makes use of highly questionable Lithuanian nationalist sources that claim that Poles took part in the attack on Koniuchy (though none are named), and that it was even the work of the Home Army. (A report of the commander of the 253rd precinct of the Lithuanian Protective Battalion in Bolcienniki refers to information from residents of Koniuchy who allegedly recognized some villagers from Salki Wielkie and Wisińcza. These were villages near Rudniki forest where the Soviet partisans had won over some villagers by rewarding them with plundered goods. However, it is highly unlikely that these villagers were armed.) Given that the Lithuanian Brigade, especially the Margiris detachment, contained a significant Lithuanian component and no more than a handful of Poles (at most), it more likely that a number of ethnic Lithuanians (rather than Poles) actually took part in the massacre. For a Lithuanian report which shifts the blame for the massacre onto "Polish partisans," see Garšva, *Armija krajova Lietuvoje,* 266. For another overview see Rimantas Zizas, "Raudonųjų partizanų ir Pietryčių Lieutovos kaimų savisaugos ginkluoti konfliktai 1943 m.," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (15), 2004: 138–58, posted online at <http://www.genocid.lt/Leidyba/15/genocida.htm>, and *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 2 (16), 2004: 145–61, posted online at <http://www.genocid.lt/Leidyba/16/zizas.htm>. Zizas also deals with the Soviet partisans' war against the village self-defence in his monograph *Sovietiniai partizanai Lietuvoje 1941–1944* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2014), at pp. 432–521.

The number of Poles in the Soviet partisan movement in Rudniki forest was extremely small. Some Poles are identified by name in Juchniewicz, *Polacy w radzieckim ruchu partyzanckim 1941–1945,* 287–89; however, that Communist author greatly exaggerates their strength, claiming Poles comprised as many as twenty percent of all Soviet partisans in this area. Lithuanian historian Šarūnas Liekis states that the number of Poles in the Soviet partisan movement in Lithuania was "absolutely insignificant." See Šarūnas Liekis, "Koniuchy in the 'New' and 'Old' Polish and Jewish Memory," Conference Paper, "Between Coexistence and Divorce: 25 Years of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry and Polish-Jewish Relations," Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 17–19, 2009, Internet: <http://icj.huji.ac.il/conference/papers/Sarunas%20Liekis.pdf>. According to Baruch Shub, a Jewish partisan in Rudniki forest, the Soviet units were composed mostly of Russians, Jews and Lithuanians, with only an "insignificant" number of Poles. See Baruch (Borka) Shuv (Shub), *Meever lisheme ha-ananah: Sipuro shel partizan* [Beyond the Leaden Clouds] (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, bet edut a. sh. Mordekai Anilevits', 1995), 122.

wartime accomplishments of the Jewish partisans, the assault on Koniuchy in fact bore no such hallmarks. The assault was not directed against a German military target or an outpost of their collaborators, nor even against the members of the small self-defence unit in the village, but rather it was an indiscriminate and wholesale massacre of the village's civilian population.

According to Jewish sources, around 50 to 60 partisans from the Jewish detachments of the Vilnius Brigade (of the Lithuanian Staff Partisan Movement) took part in the pacification of the village of Koniuchy. The Jewish partisan contingent was led by Jacob Prenner (Yaakov Prener), the commander of the "Death to Fascism" (*Smert' fashizmu*) detachment, and included fighters from the following detachments: "Avenger" (*Mstitel'*), under the command of Abba Kovner; "For Victory" (*Za pobedu*), under the command of Shmuel Kaplinsky; and "Struggle" (*Bor'ba*), under the command of Aron Aronovich.[465] By and large, the members of the four Jewish units of the Vilnius Brigade (sometimes referred to as the Lithuanian Brigade), who were mostly escapees from the Wilno ghetto, considered themselves to be first and foremost *Jewish* partisans.[466] The composition of the entire Vilnius Brigade was approximately 60

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[465] Chaim Lazar gives a figure of about 50 Jewish partisans. See Lazar, *Destruction and Revenge,* 174–75. According to the "Operations Diary of a Jewish Partisan Unit in Rudniki Forest, 1943–1944," in Arad, Gutman, and Margaliot, *Documents on the Holocaust,* 463–71, posted on the Internet at: <http://www.yad-vashem.org.il/about_holocaust/documents/part3/doc211.html>, 30 fighters from the "Avenger" and "For Victory" detachments, under the operational command of Jacob Prener (Prenner), took part "in the operation to destroy the armed village of Koniuchy" (entry 19). Anatol Krakowski, one of the younger Jewish partisans, states that these two units carried out their activities jointly and had, in effect, a common command. Krakowski, *Le Ghetto dans la forêt,* 57, 81. Members of the "Death to Fascism" and "Struggle" detachments have also been identified among the assailants.

[466] Arguably, they represented the high point in the Jewish-Soviet partisan movement. According to Dov Levin, "The Jews constituted a majority, at least for a certain period of time, in a considerable number of rifle and other units in the Lithuanian Division. … The existence of a large concentration of Jews within these frameworks … was almost wholly Yiddish-speaking … and whose staff was composed exclusively of Jews, at least in the intermediate and lower ranks, all contributed to the creation of a thriving Jewish existence. The Yiddish language was used predominantly in the Jews' everyday lives and also served as the official military communications language. … The Jewish soldiers' feelings of 'being at home' was also due in measure to the commanding officers tolerating not only the use of Yiddish, but also communal prayers and evenings of entertainment with songs in Yiddish and Hebrew, which not infrequently ended with dancing the *Hora*. Just as the mobilization propaganda was in its time carried out partly in Yiddish, this language was used for a particular type of propaganda inside the Division. Thus, for example, on the eve of going to the front-line, commissars and soldiers addressed meetings in juicy Yiddish, bringing forward in their speeches the terrible account that the Jewish soldier had to reckon with the German Fascists for the murder of his people in Lithuania." See Dov Levin, "Some Facts and Problems About the Fighting of Lithuanian Jews against the Nazis and Their Collaborators (1941–1945)," in Zingeris, *The Days of Memory,* 274, 276. See also Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow,* 162–63. On March 17, 1944, Abba Kovner issued a missive to the Jewish partisans in the Rudniki forest in which he underscored the Jewish character of their partisan units (they were motivated largely by revenge), and that despite recent reorganization to dilute their ranks, the Jewish partisans should continue to regard themselves as Jew partisans ("shomer"). See Abba Kovner, *A Missive to Hashomer Hatzair Partisans* (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 2002), xxi, xxiii–xxvi. When Vitka Kempner Kovner, one of Abba Kovner's partisans and his future wife, was awarded a Certificate of Honor by the Miles Lerman Center for the Study of Jewish Resistance at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in January 2001, she underscored the fact that the Jews fighting in Rudniki forest considered themselves to be Jewish, not Soviet, partisans and were instensely nationalistc: "I am proud that I was given the privilege to fight as a Jewess, belonging to a Jewish fighting unit, under Jewish commanders, in which the language spoken and orders given was Yiddish. There were many other Jewish fighters scattered among the Russian partisan groups, but they fought as Russians." See *Update: Newsletter of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, February/March 2002: 2. In an interview from 1987 she stated: "Our forest was the only place where Jews were fighting as Jews." See Aviva Cantor, "She Fought Back: An Interview with Vilna Partisan Vitke Kempner," *Lilith Magazine,* no. 16 (spring 1987): 24. The latter part of this statement is not quite accurate: the Bielski partisans, whose membership was almost exclusively Jewish, also considered themselves to be first and and foremost Jewish partisans. Part of the proud heritage of the Rusniki partisans, as evidenced by their own public statements, is their role in the massacre of the defenceless civilian population of Koniuchy.

percent Jewish, and their share in the Jewish units was overwhelming.[467] Their ranks also included a

[467] According to historian Šarūnas Liekis, the Jewish membership counted: 41 out of 60 members of the "Death to Fascism" detachment; 58 out of 78 members of the "Struggle" detachment; 106 out of 119 members of the "For Victory" detachment; and 105 out of 107 members of the "Avenger" detachment. See Šarūnas Liekis, "Koniuchy in the 'New' and 'Old' Polish and Jewish Memory," Conference Paper, "Between Coexistence and Divorce: 25 Years of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry and Polish-Jewish Relations," Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 17–19, 2009, Internet: <http://icj.huji.ac.il/conference/papers/Sarunas%20Liekis.pdf>. However, in a more recent article, Liekis gives slightly different numbers for some of these units: "The units with the largest proportion of Jews from the Kaunas and Vilnius [Wilno] ghettos were 'Free Lithuania' (54 out of 94), 'Death to Fascism' (39 out of 69), 'The Struggle' (58 out of 77), 'To Victory' (106 out of 119), 'The Avenger' (105 out of 107), and the Vladas Baronas group (11 out of 18). They were located primarily in the Vilnius district." Samuel (Shmuel) Kaplinsky was the only Jew who retained his role as commander, after the informal refugee groups from the ghettos were transformed into Soviet Lithuanian partisan units. The 19 non-Jews in the "Struggle" detachment consisted of Russians, one Pole, one Lithuanian, and one Ukrainian. The 13 non-Jews in the "To Victory" detachment consisted of Russians, a Kyrgyz, a Turk, an Uzbek, a Pole, a Lithuanian, an Estonian, and a Dutchman. According to lists from December 22, 1944, the Vilnius Brigade, under the command of Marijonas Micieka ("Gabrys"), had 340 Jews (57 percent), 132 Russians (22 percent), 47 Lithuanians (8 percent), and 76 others (13 percent). Additionally, there were three groups from the Kaunas Brigade in Rudniki forest with 359 fighters, of whom 149 were Russians (42 percent), 126 Jews (35 percent), 33 Lithuanians (9 percent), and 51 others (14 per cent). In the Troki district the ethnicity of the 425 fighters in the Trakai Brigade was: 167 Russians (39 percent), 111 Jews (26 percent), 43 Lithuanians (10 percent), and 104 others (25 percent). Thus, the expansion of the Soviet Lithuanian partisan movement was due in large part to Jews from the ghettos. See Šarūnas Liekis, "Soviet Resistance and Jewish Partisans in Lithuania," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 25 (2013): 331–56, here at pp. 340, 343.

Unfortunately, Liekis's article is seriously marred by its anti-Polish bias. This is readily apparent when one compares his treatment of the Polish underground with that of other players (pp. 344–51). While accusing the Polish Home Army of "exterminating" (sic) twelve member of the Kalinauskas unit on March 1, 1944, Liekis neglects to mention that this detachment was notorious for robbing and murdering civilians and that Soviet partisans routinely killed Polish partisans taken in battle. Tellingly, Liekis makes no mention of the Soviet partisans' extermination of scores of Polish partisans (Burzyński's partisan unit) in Narocz forest in August 1943 and other such massacres which precipitated the struggle between the Soviet and Polish partisans in this area. Although his singling out of the Polish "nationalist" underground for concerted criticism is certainly skewed, nothing can match his bizarre "charge" that "nationalist" Poles viewed Lithuanians as "nationalists, 'Pole-haters'," and "all Germans" as "'fascists,' without differentiation of the many political and ideological trends inside any ethnic group." Liekis doesn't identify the Lithuanian and German factions the Poles were supposed to have aligned themselves in their struggle against the Nazi German oppressors and their Lithuanian allies because, without making it clear to the readers, there weren't any such factions actively involved in such a struggle in this area. (If there were, there would be no obstacles to their joining the Home Army, just as many Belorussians did.) On the contrary, Liekis goes out of his way not to mention the involvement of Lithuanians in the massacre of tens of thousands of Jews and Poles in Ponary and hundreds of Poles in Święciany. Liekis manages to conceal both the nationality of the victims (Poles), and the nationality of the perpetrators (Germans and mostly Lithuanians) of the latter crime. While claiming that "anti-Semitism" played a role in the attitudes of the Polish population towards the Soviet partisans, although the Poles' attitude was in fact driven by the constant raids carried out by the Soviet partisans, Liekis does not mention that the Jews who joined the Soviet partisans, as their memoirs show, fully endorsed Soviet propaganda directed against "White" Poles, whom they branded as "Hitlerities" and "fascists." Liekis claims that the Home Army fought for "eastern Lithuania," without explaining that this area was an integral part of interwar Poland and contained only a tiny Lithuanian minority, and alleges, quite falsely, that the Home Army wanted to seize "possibly all of Lithuania," yet downplays the fact that the Lithuanians regarded the Poles as their primary enemies, along with the Soviets, and sought to incorporate territories inhabited primarily by Poles and "depolonize" them. Although altercations between Soviet partisans and German military forces were rare, Liekis claims that, unlike the Home Army, "the Soviet partisans … were engaging with" the German forces. Liekis is correct, however, in pointing out: "As a rule, the conflicts [with the Home Army] started when Soviet partisans entered territories inhabited by Poles." However, when he refers to punitive Soviet partisan expeditions against local villagers, he identifies them as "Lithuanian" settlements (p. 355), when in fact some of them, like Koniuchy, the target of the deadliest assault, were populated by Poles. Similarly, he neglects to point out that villages like Gumba and Gajdzie, in the vicinity of Rudniki forest, where the Germans and Lithuanians murdered some 50 people on April 8–9, 1944, were inhabited by Poles. Yet, despite such glaring omissions, Liekis decries the "building of nationalist narratives" (p. 356).

number of women, some of whom took part in the attack on Koniuchy.[468] The assailants also included quite a few Jewish members of the "Death to the Occupiers" detachment [*Smierť okkupantam*] of the Kaunas (Kovno) Brigade, which was composed of some 80 fugitives from the Kaunas ghetto and a larger contingent of escaped Soviet prisoners of war,[469] as well as the small "Margiris" (or "Margirio") detachment, consisting mainly of ethnic Lithuanians, and a special intelligence group, composed mostly of Russians, attached to the Lithuanian partisan movement. The "Death to the Occupiers" unit is believed to have played a key role in the assault.[470]

Jewish sources claim that some 300 villagers—mostly women and children—were slaughtered in the pogrom. According to an incomplete Polish investigation, the number of victims may have been smaller, perhaps as low as fifty, of whom 39 have been identified by name. The youngest was about a year and a

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[468] Ruzhka Korchak states most of the Jewish women attached to the partisan units in Rudniki forest took part in partisan operations: "There was almost no military or economic expedition, diversionary action or ambush in which young women would not participate." See Korchak, *Plamia pod peplom,* 324. See also Zizas, "Žudynių Kaniūkuose pėdsakais," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (11), 2002: 149–65.

[469] The "Death to the Occupiers" detachment of the Kaunas Brigade was formed in October 1943. At that time it was made up of about twenty partisans, mostly escaped Soviet POWs, and led by Konstantin (Kostia) Radionov ("Smirnov"), a Soviet paratrooper. See Ginaite-Rubinson, *Resistance and Survival,* 129. According to Israeli historian Dov Levin, who was a member of the unit, some 180 members of the Jewish underground from the Kaunas ghetto made their way to Rudniki forest and were accepted into the "Death to the Occupiers" detachment, where Jews then became the majority. See Levin, *Fighting Back,* 122, 188, 198. Alex Faitelson, another member of that detachment, states that the number of former Soviet POWs "was not large but they all occupied positions of command. … Apart from individual Russians, the rest were all rabid anti-Semites." See Faitelson, *Heroism & Bravery in Lithuania, 1941–1945,* 316. However, the statistics are not consistent or particularly reliable. According to Šarūnas Liekis, a Lithuanian historian who reviewed the Soviet partisans' personal files, of the 224 members of the "Death to the Occupiers" detachment, 93 were Russians, 79 Jews, 5 Lithuanians, and 47 others. According to Rimantas Zizas, another Lithuanian historian, in July 1944, its membership consisted of 104 Russians, 51 Jews, 3 Lithuanians, and 6 others. See Zizas, "Raudonųjų partizanų ir Pietryčių Lieutovos kaimų savisaugos ginkluoti konfliktai 1943 m.," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (15), 2004: 138–58. Some of the Jewish partisans who took part in the assault on Koniuchy are mentioned in Dmitrii Gelpern's *Kovno Ghetto Diary,* cited later on; others (for example, Mikhail Robinzon) are mentioned in Zizas, "Žudynių Kaniūkuose pėdsakais," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (11), 2002: 149–65.

[470] Zizas, "Žudynių Kaniūkuose pėdsakais," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (11), 2002: 149–65. Lithuanian historian Alfonsas Eidintas, basing himself on Rimantas Zizas, writes: "an exceptional role in the destruction of Kaniukai [Koniuchy] was played by the *Mirtis okupantams* 'Death to Occupiers' Unit. Former prisoners of the Kaunas Ghetto … were amongst the ranks of this unit, which included female partisans, who apparently had participated in this action." Eidintas offers the following untenable motivation for the attack on Koniuchy: "Quite possibly, Red partisan leadership made use of the hatred of former prisoners by attacking a village of Lithuanian policemen, which was loyal to the government. They associated such people with Lithuanian executioners, and this motivated them into enacting a brutal operation." See Eidintas, *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust,* 307.

half; other victims were as young as four, eight, nine and ten years old.[471] Another Polish source estimates the number of victims to be higher: 46 victims were buried in the local cemetery and about a score were taken by family and friends and interned in the nearby villages of Butrymańce, Soleczniki, and

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[471] A local Polish partisan leader gave the victim toll as 34. See Siemaszko, "Rozmowy z kapitanem Szabunią," *Zeszyty Historyczne,* no. 25 (1973): 146; Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej,* 512. A Polish underground report from that period stated that 34 were killed, 14 injured, and the number of persons burned alive was unknown. Of the 50 buildings in the village, only four remained. The reason given for the assault was the villagers' resistance to raids conducted by the partisans. See Jan Bańbor, "Tło wydarzeń w Koniuchach w polskich i niemieckich sprawozdaniach sytuacyjnych," *Biuletyn Historii Pogranicza* (Biaystok), no. 4 (2003): 92. Other Polish accounts simply noted that most of the villagers perished, and indicate that this was one of the impetuses for the Polish underground's decision to accept an invitation from the Wehrmacht in February 1944 to discuss a temporary ceasefire (from which the Polish side soon withdrew). See Siemaszko, "Rozmowy z Wehrmachtem w Wilnie: Luty 1944," *Zeszyty Historyczne,* no. 69 (1984): 90. Lithuanian and German reports from that period, referred to later, indicate 35–36 killed and 13–14 wounded, but do not include those deceased victims taken from the village by relatives or those who subsequently died in hospital. According to more recent accounts and a preliminary investigation by Poland's Institute of National Remembrance, the victim count may have been closer to fifty, about 40 of whom have been identified by name. Among the youngest victims were Mieczysław Bandalewicz (9 years old), Zygmunt Bandalewicz (8), Marian Bobin (16), Jadwiga Bobin (around 10), Molis (a girl around 1½), Marysia Tubin (around 4), and Marian Woronis (15). However, more cnt reports indndcate that the number of incinerated victims is unknown. See Czesław Malewski, "Masakra w Koniuchach," *Nasza Gazeta* (Vilnius), March 8–14, 2001; Czesław Malewski, "Masakra w Koniuchach (II)," *Nasza Gazeta* (Vilnius), March 29–April 4, 2001; Andrzej Kumor, interview with Edward Tubin, "Nie przepuścili nikomu…: Z naocznym świadkiem pacyfikacji wsi Koniuchy rozmawia Andrzej Kumor," *Gazeta* (Toronto), May 4–6, 2001; Jerzy Danilewicz, "Zbrodnia bez kary," *Newsweek* (Warsaw), May 15, 2005.

The Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation of Poland's Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) has been investigating the crime since February 2001, with little apparent progress over the years. The investigation was concluded as "discontinued" on May 21, 2020 due to the deaths of the leading perpetrators and the failure to identify the remaining perpetrators (*"Śledztwo zostało zakończone postanowieniem o umorzeniu z dnia 21 maja 2020 roku wobec śmierci sprawców kierowniczych oraz niewykrycia pozostałych sprawców."*) See "Śledztwo w sprawie zabójstwa w styczniu 1944 roku przez partyzantów sowieckich kilkudziesięciu mieszkańców wsi Koniuchy gm. Bieniakonie pow. Lida, woj. Nowogródzkie (S 13.2001.ZK)," Internet: <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/sledztwa/sledztwa/oddzialowa-komisja-w-lo/31491,Sledztwa-zakonczone-wydaniem-postanowienia-o-umorzeniu.html>. See also the following reports posted from time to time on the IPN website <https://www.ipn.gov.pl>: "Komunikat w sprawie wybranych śledztw prowadzonych przez Oddziałowe Komisje Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu," April 23, 2001, posted online at <http://www.ipn.gov.pl/aktual_sledztwa.html>; Anna Gałkiewicz, "Informacja o śledztwach prowadzonych w OKŚZpNP w Łodzi w sprawach o zbrodnie popełnione przez funkcjonariuszy sowieckiego aparatu terroru," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 7 (August 2001): 22; Oddziałowa Komisja w Łodzi, "Informacja o stanie śledztwa w sprawie zabójstwa przez partyzantów sowieckich, w styczniu 1944 roku, mieszkańców wsi Koniuchy gm. Bieniakonie pow. Lida woj. nowogródzkie," March 1, 2002; Oddziałowa Komisja w Łodzi, "Śledztwo w sprawie zabójstwa przez partyzantów sowieckich, w styczniu 1944 roku, mieszkańców wsi Koniuchy gm. Bieniakonie pow. Lida woj. Nowogródzkie," September 5, 2002; Anna Gałkiewicz, "Omówienie dotychczasowych ustaleń w śledztwach w sprawach o zbrodnie w Nalibokach i Koniuchach," May 15, 2003; Robert Janicki, "Investigation in the Case of the Murder by Soviet Partisans of Koniuchy Inhabitants: Investigation S 13/01/Zk, August 5, 2003"; "Informacja o działalności Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w okresie 1 lipca 2003 r.–30 czerwca 2004 r.," Warsaw, January 2005 (Łódź sygnatura akt S 13/01/Zk); "Information on the Investigation in the Case of Crime Committed in Koniuchy," September 13, 2005; Oddziałowa Komisja w Łodzi, "Śledztwo w sprawie zabójstwa przez partyzantów sowieckich, w styczniu 1944 roku, mieszkańców wsi Koniuchy gm. Bieniakonie pow. Lida woj. nowogródzkie," May 16, 2006; Oddziałowa Komisja w Łodzi, "Śledztwo w sprawie zabójstwa przez partyzantów sowieckich, w styczniu 1944 roku, mieszkańców wsi Koniuchy gm. Bieniakonie pow. Lida woj. nowogródzkie," October 12, 2007; Oddziałowa Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Łodzi, "Śledztwo w sprawie zabójstwa w styczniu 1944 roku przez partyzantów sowieckich kilkudziesięciu mieszkańców wsi Koniuchy wcześniej gm. Bieniakonie pow. Lida, woj. nowogródzkie (obecnie Republika Litewska rejon Sołeczniki)," December 21, 2009; Oddziałowa Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Łodzi, "Śledztwa w biegu" / "Śledztwa w toku" (periodic updates, sometimes several times a year, since 2010: e.g., August 2010, January 2012, October 2012, November 2013, August 2015, November 2015, February 2016, November 2018, August 2019, November 2019). Some of these reports state, incorrectly, that the "Death to Fascism" detachment was made up of various nationalities, whereas in fact its composition was Jewish. These reports and various other materials can be found in the Canadian Polish Congress dossier "The Massacre at Koniuchy" posted at <http://www.kpk-toronto.org/obrona-dobrego-imienia/> (under "Viewpoints"). According to a premature media report, the investigation was closed in 2018 because the prosecutor

Bieniakonie.[472] Some of the wounded were taken to the hospital in Bieniakonie where several of them died.[473] It is quite possible that there were more victims, especially young children and the elderly, who were simply incinerated in the inferno and never identified.

The descriptions of the slaughter by Polish eyewitnesses are horrific. People attempting to escape from their burning homes were shot, regardless of their age or gender.

> Józef Bondalewicz: "We were awoken from our sleep by the shooting and the glow of fire in our windows. It was as light as day and crawling with partisans who fired at everyone who tried to get out of their homes. The noise from the fire and crash of buildings falling apart were reminiscent of a thunderstorm. From various sides one could hear the desperate moans of people being burned alive in their homes and the groaning of animals locked in their sheds.
>
> "When I ran out of my house I saw a mother with an infant in her hands running out of the neighbouring Wójtkiewicz house. Two women whom I recognized by their voices to be Jewish, since there were no women in Soviet units, mowed her down with a series of bullets from their automatic weapons. One of them darted toward the dying woman, tore her child away, and threw it into a burning cottage. The terror and uncanny heat forced everyone who made it out of the buildings to take flight without delay. Out of breath I managed to reach friendly brushwood from where I made my way to the village of Kuże."[474]
>
> Antoni Gikiewicz: "…they surrounded the entire village and started murdering everyone, one after another."
>
> Stanisław Wojtkiewicz: "…they didn't even spare pregnant women."
>
> Stanisława Woronis [née Bandalewicz]: "…whomever the Soviets found in the bushes or in a hole in the ground, they killed."[475]
>
> "I remember that it was the 29th of January. At dawn, around 7 o'clock—it was usually dark so I could not understand where the light was coming from—my husband woke me up, pulling me sharply by the arm and screaming that we should leave our home immediately. Our house was in the middle of the village. The first farmsteads were already on fire …
>
> "On the other side of the road that crossed our village is a forest—a silent witness to these awful events. Soviet partisans often came around before. They usually made firm demands or with a revolver in hand demanded that we give them chickens, pigs and other food. Then they simply carried out robberies, just like bandits. Our men rebelled. We didn't have enough food to feed our

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[472] Wiktor Noskowski, "Koniuchy—stygmat męczeństwa," *Rozmaitości Wileńskie* (Bydgoszcz), 2002.

[473] Malewski, "Masakra w Koniuchach," *Nasza Gazeta,* March 8, 2001.

[474] Noskowski, Koniuchy—stygmat męczeństwa," *Rozmaitości Wileńskie,* 2002.

[475] Malewski, "Masakra w Koniuchach," *Nasza Gazeta,* March 8, 2001.

own children. Some villagers were so poor that they couldn't make both ends meet. When a self-defence was organized they dealt with us in a brutal manner employing both murder and fire. I could understand settling scores in a manly fashion, but the killing of innocent people—never! It was worse than war. During war you run from bullets. Those who were not hit with a bullet in Koniuchy, or were just wounded, they finished off alive.

"Together with my husband and little daughter I took shelter a few kilometres from our village with the Stackiewiczes. Although we were only humble villagers we found understanding and refuge there. Mrs. Stackiewicz was shocked that instead of a dress I wore a nightshirt and that my child, whom we covered a warm scarf (it was January and there was frost), had bare feet. They rubbed her with alcohol, wrapped her in a warm blanket, and gave her tea. She survived, but all of us suffered the consequences. I'll remember the fear and whizz of bullets behind my back for the rest of my days. Just like the burning village begging for pity in vain.

"We didn't return to Koniuchy at once. The Soviet partisans were vigilant and God help those they found. Close family members of my husband also perished that blood-filled day. Twenty-year-old Anna Woronis was renowned for beauty in the entire vicinity. I felt so sorry for the lad Antek Bobin. Young, handsome, and hardworking. He didn't live here, but worked for farmers elsewhere. He just happened to be visiting his home village. His father was taken to the hospital in Bieniakonie. But Antek died so innocently. The same was true for the Pilżys family who had moved here from Wilno and bought a house. We were not in close contact with them because they lived farther out, beyond the river. But I know that they had children. How were the children to blame? Mrs. Molis had a young daughter who was a year and a half old. She held her in her arms as she ran away. They both fell from bullets."[476]

Anna Suckiel: "The partisans murdered everyone regardless of their age and sex. People ran from their burning homes and perished from rounds of machine gun fire. Stanisława Jankowska was paralyzed and couldn't escape from her burning home. She was burned alive. Here, on this spot, where they erected a cross with the names of my deceased neighbours, partisans finished off Urszula Parwicka with stones. Miraculously I survived."[477]

"But why did they murder so many women and children? What did the little Molis daughter do to them? She was not even two years old. Or the Bandalewicz boys—one was eight and the other nine."[478]

Edward Tubin: "Automatic weapons started to go off and we see fire, it's burning. The thatched roofs were made of straw. People started to run away, they rushed into the forest, into those bushes. …

"My mother and I ran to a hollow to hide, and I see them running from the cemetery—there may

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[476] Liliana Narkowicz, "Siła w cierpieniu (z zeznań naocznego świadka)," *Nasza Gazeta* (Vilnius), March 29–April 4, 2001.

[477] A.K., "Krzyż pamięci—w miejscu zbrodni," *Tygodnik Wileńszczyzny* (Vilnius), May 27–June 2, 2004.

[478] Jerzy Danilewicz, "Zbrodnia bez kary," *Newsweek* (Warsaw), May 15, 2005.

have been twelve of them—they're shooting. Maybe if I were older I would have followed my mother, but I left her, ran across the village, to our neighbour … My [11-year-old] brother Leon was there. And Leon and I ran to the river. I saw incendiary bombs dropping. … We ran up to the river. We look and see a large alder that had grown on the other side of the river. A hole had been hollowed out. And we look and see a neighbour sitting there who had run and hidden with his family near that river. And we went there.

"We sat there and heard shots on the other side. The Pilżys family lived there. We saw how they came for them, they entered their house. They shot them. That's to say they shot the two daughters, the father and the mother. They left the house and set it on fire. They set fire to everything. Then we see how quite near us, well maybe about 50 metres away, Woronis, an elderly man, was running and fell into the water with his sheepskin coat. Two men with automatic weapons ran right behind him. They ran to the river and sprayed a series from the automatic weapons into the river. They thought they'd killed him and so they turned back. Thank God they did not look to the left, where we sat under that little hill. …

"We thought that [Woronis] had perished … We look and look, he crawled out of the water on the other side … They had wounded his hand very seriously. … The partisans killed his wife, his daughter and his son. …

"My mother had run to that hollow and fell in. They probably knew … They approached. My sister was sitting nearby with her young daughter. They sprayed her with shots from the automatic weapon. … My sister may have been around thirty. She had a young girl, four years old, in her hands. They shot at the girl in her hand and killed her. My sister sat there, and another man saw her and said that she's still alive and raised his rifle. Another fellow said to leave the woman alone … But he shot at my sister. She was sitting, and he fired at her head diagonally right in the cheek and through the jaw. The bullet ripped through her teeth and jaw. My sister fell. So that the bullet entered through her jaw and ripped out part of her breast.

"And my brother who was nearby in the bushes ran. That's how they encountered him and sprayed him on the head with the automatic weapon. His head what shattered in half. …

"Stanisław Bandalewicz was burned in his house with two sons. I myself saw him lying on the veranda with his burned bones. … His children had hidden under the stove and were burned, they had suffocated. …

"There was no difference, they killed whomever they caught. Even one woman who ran toward the cemetery to the forest, they didn't shoot her but killed her with a rock, a rock to the head. When they killed my mother, they sprayed about eight bullets in her chest.[479]

The following somewhat conflicting, at times exaggerated and often inaccurate accounts are by Jews who took part in that heinous crime. (Rather than concoct stories, Russian partisans spoke of their involvement in this massacre with great reluctance, seemingly recognizing it as a shameful and compromising event and not a show of heroism.) Contrary to what these accounts allege, there was no German garrison in Koniuchy. There were no policemen, either Lithuanian or Polish, stationed in the village. (It is alleged that one or two of the male residents of Koniuchy may have been policemen.) The nearest outpost of Lithuanian police in

[479] Andrzej Kumor, interview with Edward Tubin, "Nie przepuścili nikomu…: Z naocznym świadkiem pacyfikacji wsi Koniuchy rozmawia Andrzej Kumor," *Gazeta* (Toronto), May 4–6, 2001.

the service of the Germans was six kilometres away in Rakliszki. Nor did the village have any elaborate fortifications. A handful of men from the self-defence patrolled the village for several hours after nightfall to protect the villagers against those who came to plunder. According to villager Anna Suckiel,

> There were no Germans here with us. There was an outpost of the Lithuanian police close by in Rakliszki. … The watch was organized by Władek Woronis called Wadas [Władas]. The boys went on patrols every night, several of them from each side of the village. They were protecting their own wives, children, cows. They had enough weapons, because they were left over from the wars—in 1939 and, later, in 1941, when the Germans chased out the Soviets.
>
> After yet another robbery the boys grabbed their arms and took a short cut in pursuit of the bandits. They intercepted them and shot at them with sawed-off guns on the bridge in Gierwiszki. The partisans were scramming so fast that they almost lost their hats. They even abandoned a wagon with the loot. From then on the boys of Koniuchy guarded the village regularly.[480]

The claim that the villagers were Nazi sympathizers who organized ambushes of well-armed Soviet partisans, and that they had in captured and killed Soviet partisans, is without any merit. In the face of repeated raids, the poorly armed villagers allegedly had refused Soviet demands to disarm. They certainly had no automatic weapons or arms caches, and barely put up any resistance during the unexpected attack in the early morning hours of January 29, 1944. Overtaken by swarms of well-armed fighters, it appears that they did not even return the fire. The assailants suffered no losses. What happened in Koniuchy was a virtual bloodbath of defenceless civilians—another Lidice or Oradour. However, the perpetrators' own accounts try to outdo each other in attempting to justify the wanton butchery and vilify the victims. The hoax that, allegedly, there was German garrison in the village, which is a keystone of the Soviet narrative, is repeated in almost every account, doubtless to enhance the "military" nature of the assailants' exploits. Above all, however, it calls into question Jan Gross's "affirmative" approach to Holocaust testimonies even when there are multiple testimonies that make the same assertions. Characteristically, all of the partisan memoirs glorify their role, misrepresent basic facts, and demonize the victims.

Historians at the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, among them Rimantas Zizas, have stated authoritatively:

> … the memoirs of Jewish partisans, even some authors writing about the action at Kaniūkai [Koniuchy], are extremely subjective, and they are full of figments of imagination, things that never took place (about a "fortress" installed by the self-defence guard, excavated trenches, guard towers,

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[480] Quoted in Jerzy Danilewicz, "Zbrodnia bez kary," *Newsweek* (Warsaw), May 15, 2005. According to the Soviet archives, the shootout near Gierwiszki occurred in September 1943, after a raid on Koniuchy by members of the "Struggle" detachment. The intruders had to abandon three booty-filled wagons and, allegedly, incurred some casualties, perhaps fatal. See Piotr Gontarczyk, "Tragedia Koniuchów," *Niezależna Gazeta Polska,* March 3, 2006. Jewish sources do not describe this particular event, which undoubtedly happened, nor do the identify any alleged fatalities.

the results of the operation, all inhabitants killed, of which there were 300, with the ferocity of the Jews depicted with relish).[481]

Let us now turn our attention to some of those accounts. According to one penned in 1950 by Chaim Lazar of the "Avenger" detachment of the Vilnius Brigade:

> For some time it had been known that the village Koniuchy was a nest of bands and the center of intrigues against the partisans. Its residents, known for their villany [sic], were organizing the people in the area, distributing arms among them which they received from the Germans, and leading every attack on the partisans. The village was well fortified. Every house was a military position and there were defense trenches near every dwelling. There were watchtowers on both sides of the village, so it was not at all easy to penetrate the place. Nevertheless, the partisans chose this very place to carry out an act of vengeance and intimidation. The Brigade Headquarters decided to raze Koniuchy to the ground to set an example to others.
>
> One evening a hundred and twenty of the best partisans from all the camps, armed with the best weapons they had, set out in the direction of the village. There were about 50 Jews among them, headed by Yaakov [Jacob] Prenner. At midnight they came to the vicinity of the village and assumed their proper positions. The order was not to leave any one alive. Even livestock was to be killed and all property was to be destroyed. …
>
> Up until midnight the villagers would keep a heavy watch. At midnight they would reduce the number of guards, since it was well-known that the partisans would not begin an attack so late, as they would not have enough time to reach the forest before dawn. The villagers certainly could not imagine that the partisans would return to the forest in daylight, victorious.
>
> The signal was given just before dawn. Within minutes the village was surrounded on three sides. On the fourth side was the river and the only bridge over it was in the hands of the partisans. With torches prepared in advance, the partisans burned down the houses, stables, and granaries, while opening heavy fire on the houses. Loud explosions were heard in many houses when the arms caches blew up. Half-naked peasants jumped out of windows and sought escape. But everywhere fatal bullets awaited them. Many jumped into the river and swam towards the other side, but they too, met the same end. The mission was completed within a short while. Sixty households, numbering about 300 people, were destroyed, with no survivors.
>
> The news spread quickly throughout the area. … The next day, the Gestapo heads came from Vilna [Wilno] with large army forces. The Germans photographed the ruins and the charred corpses and publicized the photos accompanied by biting articles on the cruelty of the partisans.[482]

According to Isaac Kowalski of the Second Fighters' Group of the Vilnius Brigade:

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[481] "With Regards to the Partisan Activity of Fania Brancovskaja," signed by Teresė Birutė Burauskaitė, General Director, and Rimantas Zizas, Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, no. 14R-10, March 2, 2017.

[482] Lazar, *Destruction and Revenge,* 174–75. Chaim Lazar's description of the massacre of this village, which he concedes was obliterated "in a short while," with virtually no resistance being offered and no casualties incurred by the attackers, belies his extravagant claims that it was a well-armed fortress.

Koniuchi [sic] was the name of a big village that was some 30 kilometers from Vilna [Wilno] and 10 kilometers from the periphery of our partisan base.

The Germans convinced the wheeler-dealers of that village that if they would be obedient they would receive security, riches and peace, and they would be able to live thus through the entire war. [In fact, the villagers lived in dire poverty and the Germans took no steps to arm, fortify or protect them from marauders. *M.P.*]

All they had to do was to inform the Germans of the activities of the partisans in the region.

The villagers did the best they could to please the new occupants.

Whenever our partisans crossed in groups of five or ten men to important and dangerous missions, they met with sniper fire and always suffered casualties. [These "important and dangerous missions" were the so-called "economic" operations or, put simply, foraging in villages, since there is no evidence of any military activity by the partisans directed against the Germans. *M.P.*]

The individual commands then decided that their men should pass the village in groups of about 40 or 50, and when shot at by snipers should chase after and destroy them. The rest of the group would guard the village.

For a while the situation was so. But then the Germans supplied the villagers with rifles and machine-guns. A permanent guard was established, whose purpose was to shield the village day and night.

It became so bad that bigger groups could not be safe crossing the village on the way to an important mission, or passing the village on the way to the railroad, highway, etc. We always ended up with casualties. [There is no evidence of any such casualties inflicted by the villagers. *M.P.*]

The brigade-staff decided to remove the cancer that was growing on the partisan body.

Our base commander gave the order that all able-bodied men should be prepared in an hour to leave for an operation.

The order was that all men, without exceptions, including the doctor, the radio-telegraphers, the workers of the brigade staff, and people like myself who were working in the propaganda and printing department, be ready on time.

At the correct time all of us were ready in full battle-gear, and left for our destination.

When we were closing in on our destination, I saw that partisans were coming from all directions, from various detachments. …

Our detachment got the order to destroy everything that was moving and burn the village down to its roots.

At the exact hour and minute all partisans from all four corners of the village started pouring rifle and machine-gun fire, with incendiary bullets, into the village. This caused the straw roofs of the houses to catch fire.

The villagers and the small German garrison answered back with heavy fire, but after two hours the village with the fortified shelter was completely destroyed.

Our only casualties were two men who were lightly wounded. [These alleged casualties are not confirmed by Soviet reports. *M.P.*]

> When, later we had to go through Koniuchi we did not encounter any sniper shots, because it was like crossing through a cemetery.[483]

Interviewed in 1991, Kowalski further embellished his story:

> One time we went to … a very strong village, a big village. The Germans … give them rifles everybody and say listen, "Your task is when see going through the partisans, you have to kill them … You don't have to wait to call for the Germans to do the job. First, you will protect yourselves this way from the partisan [sic], and on the other side, if you are not going to do the way what we like, you'll get killed from us." So they didn't really have another choice, and they took the rifles from them … When we … have to go to this village, they used to apprehend us and … we have to fight with them. We have all the time a little … people were fell in battle and the Germans were very happy with their work so they give them all kind of … sugar, things, other things what there were shortage and but we decided if you are working with the Germans, then we'll give you a lesson … So one day we for fuel places [sic] and we apprehended the village and we killed a lot of people there and we destroyed the village. … all the villages around saw what happened if you take ammunition, if you take weapons from the Germans, then the partisans … will go after you.[484]

Abraham Zeleznikow, a partisan from the "Struggle" unit of the Vilnius Brigade, did not mention the attack on Koniuchy in an earlier account.[485] In a 1993 interview, however, he recalled the obliteration of this village very vividly:

> There was a Polish village, about 400 people. The village's name was Koniuchy, and it was on the way for us to go from the forest. If we would have to go around, it would be another 20 miles. And if you have to make in the night, mostly it was taking the night, you went out in the dark in the evening, and in the morning when you come back, the light, you had to be back in the forest. If not, you haven't be [sic] safe. So you had in 12 hours to make about 60–80 kilometers. If you would

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[483] Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe,* 333–34; also reproduced in Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945,* vol. 4 (1991), 390–91. Kowalski assisted Senia Rindziunski [Aleksander Ryndziuński] in producing an underground bulletin. According to Kowalski, Koniuchy was located about ten kilometres from the periphery of the partisan base, but there is no mention by him that the residents were going out of their way to hunt down Jewish or Soviet partisans. (Indeed, such conduct would have been suicidal.) Rather, whenever the partisans "crossed" or "passed" the village on their way to "important and dangerous missions" of an unspecified nature, they "were met by sniper fire." Since there was no compelling reason for the partisans having to pass repeatedly through a village ten kilometers from their base, it is apparent that these confrontations occurred during "economic" actions, i.e., raids on this village. Polish historian Kazimierz Krajewski disputes the Jewish versions. The village was not the "fortress" it is made out to be and its entire "arsenal" consisted of several rusted rifles. The sole cause of the villagers' misfortune was that they attempted to fend off relentless partisan raids. See Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej,* 511–12. We now know, as well, that the nearest German garrison or police post was six kilometres away in Rakliszki, and that there were no policemen—German, Lithuanian or any other—in the village of Koniuchy. See Malewski, "Masakra w Koniuchach," *Nasza Gazeta*, March 8, 2001; Malewski, "Masakra w Koniuchach (II)," *Nasza Gazeta*, March 29, 2001.

[484] Interview with Isaac Kowalski, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, September 21, 1991.

[485] Abraham Zeleznikow, "Danke and Imke Lubotzki," in Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance 1939–1945,* vol. 2 (1985), 416–17.

> have to make another 20 kilometers, it would take you at least another two hours if not more, and physically it would be very hard. And when we went to this village, quite a few times we had attacks from the Polish partisans, what had the support of the people in the village. So we got from Moscow that the village should be destroyed, all the village. Nothing what is alive in the village should stay alive. We are not allowed to take anything from the village. Partisans come around the village, everything was torched, every animal, every person was killed. And one of my friends, acquaintances, a partisan, took a woman, put her head on a stone, and killed her with a stone. When I asked him, how could you do it, he said they did it with my mother. Still, you see, it was, this was the atmosphere in which you have been living.[486]

Characteristically, Zeleznikow's account is also strewn with false justifications for the assault. There was no Polish partisan base in Koniuchy and the village lay off the beaten track, so there was no need to traverse it unless one was carrying out raids in the immediate vicinity.

Israel Weiss of the "For Victory" detachment of the Vilnius Brigade appears to allude to the destruction of Koniuchy in the following account:

> We succeeded in wresting considerable quantities of arms and ammunition from villages who collaborated [sic] with the Germans and were supplied with arms by them. Punitive measures were undertaken against collaborators; and one village which was notorious for its hostility to the Jews was burned down completely.[487]

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[486] Abram Z. [Zeleznikov] Holocaust Testimony (HVT–1972), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library. Zeleznikow joined the NKVD, as an "intelligence officer" traking down "perpetrators," before leaving for central Poland in 1945. Testimony of Abram Zeleznikow, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 27584; Richard Peterson, *A Place of Sensuous Resort: Buildings of St Kilda and Their People* (Melbourne: St Kilda Historical Society, 2005), chapter 5. Curiously, Abram Zeleznikow's son, John Zeleznikow, alleges that discussions about the activities of the Jewish partisans "have produced some demonstrably false claims." He attempts to illustrate this point by referring to the fact that the present work (*A Tangled Web*) states that his father did not mention the attack on Koniuchy in an earlier account, but did mention it in his 1993 interview. Since he does not dispute this information in any way, there is nothing false about it. John Zeleznikow also appears to take issue with the fact that this work states that his father was part of the "Struggle" unit, insisting that his father's group "was named 'Death to Fascism' and was commanded by Abba Kovner." However, all historical accounts agree that Kovner was the commander of the "Avenger" unit, not the "Death to Fascism" unit. John Zeleznikow then goes on to explain how his father came to rationalize the slaughter of "thirty-eight Lithuanians" (sic) in Koniuchy: "He accepted that split-second decisions needed to be made to save his and his comrades' lives. There was no time for ethical decision-making and perhaps some killings were unnecessary but enabled by an historic context of violence and desperation." However, the assault on Koniuchy was not a "split-second" decision; it was a carefully planned mass slaughter of civilians, mostly women and children, who posed no threat to the Soviet and Jewish partisans. John Zeleznikow does not comment on his father's becaming a Soviet "intelligence officer" before leaving for central Poland in 1945. Rather, he claims that given his father's "active membership of the Bund and the demise of his [i.e., Abram Zeleznikov's] father, Avram was at great risk in the Soviet Union." See John Zeleznikow, "Life at the End of the World: A Jewish Partisan in Melbourne," *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History,* vol. 16, no. 3 (Winter 2010): 11–32, here at 19–21, 30.

[487] Testimony of Israel Weiss, in Kaplinsky, *Pinkas Hrubieshov,* xiii. It appears likely that the village referred to as being "burned down completely" was Koniuchy. Both Israel Weiss and Shlomo Brand are mentioned in the list of Jewish partisans in Rudniki forest who were responsible for the massacre. See Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe,* 405–407.

Zalman Wylozni (Wylozny), who escaped from the Wilno ghetto and, with the assistance of friendly Polish farmers, made his way to Rudniki forest where he joined the "Death to Fascism" detachment of the Vilnius Brigade, provides a rather laconic description of the threats that local farmers were frequently subjected to by Jewish partisans, as well as his own role in the attack on Koniuchy.

> On 13 September 1943, I received an order to be ready to go out to the forest at six o'clock in the evening. We were a group of twenty-seven people. We left the ghetto for the price of 300 gold rubles, which we paid to the Lithuanian Gestapo commander and his driver, who took us to the Sorok Tatarow [Sorok Tatary] Forest (Forty Tatars) in his truck. … From there, a guide named Kuzminski took us to the group of fighters that had left the ghetto a day earlier. Among them was my brother, Meir. We stayed in a small grove until the next night, when we proceeded and reached the virgin forest called Puszcza Rudnicka. There we met all our groups that had left the ghetto. I remember this detail: in the forest, Russian partisans met us and asked, "Why did you come here? To hide? You worked for the Germans all the time. You Jews are cowards." We tried to explain the situation to them, that until now we did not have the opportunity to reach the forest to fight. Our main problem was weapons. We looked for ways to acquire weapons from the farmers in the area and found some in exchange for money and threats.
>
> We were 270 fighters in the forest, all from the Vilna [Wilno] Ghetto. We split into four units under the united command of the staff. Another problem arose: how to get food. In total, we had fifteen rifles and ten guns. We got food from the farmers in various ways, primarily, with the help of weapons. They would not have given us food out of good will, so they became our sworn enemies.[488]

> As a partisan I took part in many and various operations and raids. Among others I participated in the important action of the liquidation of the village of Koniuchy, whose inhabitants collaborated with the Germans [sic]. The peasants of this village did a lot of harm to the partisans in the surroundings. In retaliation, the entire village of 80 farmsteads was burned to the ground and its inhabitants were murdered.[489]

Rachel Margolis, a member of Kaplinsky's "For Victory" detachment, tells the following story:

> A Nazi garrison was stationed in Kanyuki [sic] village. It blocked the partisans' way into the region beyond it and it was very dangerous for us. The brigade high command decided to attack the garrison and send all our detachments there. Fania [Jocheles, later Brantsovsky] went on this operation with a group from the Avenger Detachment. Our guys went, too.

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[488] Zalman Wylozny, "Taking Testimony," in Ivri, *Book of Kehilat Ostrolenka,* 381.

[489] Testimony of Zalman Wylozni, December 24, 1960, and January 11 and 15, 1961, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/2272 (formerly 1503/80–01). See also Janusz Gołota, "Losy Żydów ostrołęckich w czasie II wojny światowej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego,* no. 187 (1998): 32, based on Yad Vashem Archives, 1503–80–1. The name "Zalman Wolozni" appears on the list of Jewish partisans in Rudniki forest. See Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe,* 405–407.

> In a few days they returned, bearing their wounded with them. It had been a very prolonged battle. The partisans had surrounded the garrison, but the Nazis were exceptionally well armed and beat off all attacks. They broke the flanks of the Jewish detachments, and the partisans withdrew precipitously. Then [Elhanan] Magid jumped up on a rock and yelled:
>
> "We are Jews. We will show them what we are capable of. Forward, comrades!"
>
> This sobered the men up; they ran back and won. … Everyone felt uplifted. We had returned with a victory despite the enemy's superiority in numbers. The Kanyuki garrison in Kaniuki no longer existed.[490]

As Margolis points out, the recollection of these events became a source of merriment for the Jewish partisans:

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[490] Rakhil Margolis, *Nemnogo sveta vo mrake: Vospominaniia* (Vilnius: Gosudarstvennyi Evreiskii muzei imeni Vilniusskogo Gaona, 2006), 411, as translated in Rachel Margolis, *A Partisan from Vilna* (Brighton, Massachusetts: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 484. The Polish translation of this memoir—Rachela Margolis, *Wspomnienia wileńskie* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2005)—is a considerably truncated version of the Russian edition and reads: "One day a large number of partisans were directed to the garrison in Koniuchy where Germans were stationed. The battle lasted a long time and there were wounded, but the boys returned as victors. The Germans left the garrison." See Margolis, *Wspomnienia wileńskie,* 195. In an interview with Dovid Katz on December 22, 2009, Margolis speaks of a "battle" that ensued after the villagers, who were allegedly armed by the Armia Krajowa, shot at Jewish partisans who had come around "asking" for some food. See Internet: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FP9TVxUYMzg>. Some of these characters were later transformed into phantoms. According to BBC news story aired on July 21, 2008 (Tim Whewell, "Reopening Lithuania's Old Wounds," BBC Radio 4's Crossing Continents), "Brantsovskaya insists she was not present during the raid." According to another article, "Margolis says [Fania Brantsovsky] was not even in Lithuania at the time of the attack, and was active in another partisan unit in White Russia." See Yossi Melman, "Nazi Hunter: Lithuania Hunts Ex-partisans, Lets War Criminals Roam Free," *Haaretz,* August 7, 2008. However, in her own account published in a collective memoir under the name Fania Brantsovskaya-Jocheles, she writes: "I fought in the 'Keršytojas' (Avenger), a squad of Soviet partisans of the Vilnius brigade, and took part in carrying out various tasks: destroying telephone lines, blowing up bridges and railways; I was also a signaller. There I met my future husband, Mikhail Brantsovsky." Curiously the assault on Koniuchy, a source of pride for that detachment and its largest "military action," is not mentioned. See Dulkinienė and Keys, *Su adata širdyje / With a Needle in the Heart,* 53. In yet another version, Brantsovsky was supposedly recovering from an operation at the time of the massacre. See Nick Bravin, "In Other Words: Baltic Ghosts," *Foreign Policy,* May/June 2009. While there is mention of an illness, there is nothing about an operation in the extensive interview she gave to Zhanna Litinskaya in February 2005. In that interview Brantsovsky also stated: "I became a member of a group ["For Victory" led by Kaplinsky]. I was given a rifle and then an automatic gun. I dragged it with me and took part in military missions. … We blasted trains and placed explosives in the enemy's equipment. We shot and killed them. Yes, I did, I killed them and did so with ease. I knew that my dear ones were dead and I took my revenge for them and thousands others with each and every shot." See the testimony of Fania Brantsovskaya, February 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/fania-brantsovskaya>. Since there is no evidence Brantsovskaya's unit took part in any direct assaults on German soldiers, these killings may well be an allusion to the Koniuchy massacre. In that interview, Brantsovskaya also describes how a local Polish engineer assisted her group during a bridge blasting mission on December 24, 1943, and afterwards he invited her to his home for Christmas Eve celebrations. Historian Antony Polonsky writes: "Rachel Margolis has since confirmed that her statement that Brantsovskaya participated in the attack on Kaniukai was based on hearsay and it has been accepted that Brantsovskaya did not actually take part in this incident." See Polonsky, "Introduction" to Margolis, *A Partisan from Vilna,* 50. Once Margolis realized that she had mistakenly referred to Brantsovsky's participation in the assault, however, she should have identified the female partisan who did take part but did not do so. Most recently, Brantsovskaya assured a German reporter in these words: "I was in a combat group. We did not fight against the civilian population." ("Ich bin gewen in Kampfgruppe. Mir hobn nicht gekempft gegen der Bevelkerung.") See Judith Leister, "Überlebende einer Welt, die es nicht mehr gibt," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung,* August 4, 2017. There is no doubt, however, that Mikhail Brantsovsky, Fania's future husband, did take part in the attack on Koniuchy. He was even bestowed a special order of gratitude for his participation in that action. See Lithuanian Special Archives (Lietuvos ypatingasis archyvas), LYA, f. 13, ap. 1, b. 9, 1.1.

> Fania [Jocheles, later Brantsovsky] told a very funny story about Magid, who spoke Russian poorly. As he said it, it came out, "We are Jews, we'll show them what we have." Everyone laughed, and the expression took root in our conversations.[491]

Another member of Kaplinsky's unit, Pesia Złotnik Schenbaum, attributes the fate of the villagers to their "betrayal" of the partisans:

> There was a Lithuanian village that betrayed the partisans, for which it faced a harsh punishment. The entire village was encircled at night and burned alive. No one came out of it alive, which was ensured by the guard that was mounted.[492]

Joseph Harmatz, who escaped from the Wilno ghetto and, with the assistance of a Polish acquaintance, made his way to the Rudniki forest, joined the "For Victory" detachment of the Vilnius Brigade. He recalls: "Taking food away from the peasants is not easy because they didn't have enough and they would hide it. … And some of the peasants would be angry and would alert the Germans."[493] Harmatz advances the dubious claim that Jews who had escaped from a special brigade of 80 Jewish prisoners tasked with exhuming and burning bodies at the mass execution site in Ponary outside Wilno played a particularly savage role in the pacification of Koniuchy.[494] Their wrath was directed at Polish villagers even though the Poles had nothing to do with the crimes committed in Ponary, but rather had themselves been killed in Ponary in large numbers.

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[491] Margolis, *Nemnogo sveta vo mrake,* 411, as translated in Margolis, *A Partisan from Vilna,* 484, where it is explained that this is a play on two similar-sounding, but very different, Russian verbs: umet', to be capable of, and imet', to have or possess. It is unlikely that this event, which has the ring of truth, was simply concocted.

[492] Testimony of Pesia Bernstein (née Złotnik, then Schenbaum), Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/1292.

[493] Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust,* 203.

[494] The successful escape of about fifteen Jews held in an underground bunker in Ponary is described in Arad, *Ghetto in Flames,* 444–45, and Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union,* 503; however, the date of the escape is given as April 15 or 16, 1944, which follows the massacre in Koniuchy. (The Jews were part of Commando 1005 which was responsible for opening the mass graves and removing the corpses, then stacking them in large piles and burning them.) Eleven of the escapees reached Rudniki forest where they joined the Soviet partisans. See also Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary, 1941–1943,* 123–24; Margolis, *A Partisan from Vilna,* 485–86; Aleksander Dawidowicz, "Shoah Żydów wileńskich," in Feliksiak, et al., *Wilno–Wileńszczyzna jako krajobraz i środowisko wielu kultur,* vol. 1, 273. The latter sources confirm that Poles, including those associated with the Home Army, assisted Jewish escapees from Ponary in making their way to the forest. See Margolis, *A Partisan from Vilna,* 486; Aleksander Dawidowicz, "Shoah Żydów wileńskich," in Feliksiak, et al., *Wilno–Wileńszczyzna jako krajobraz i środowisko wielu kultur,* vol. 1, 269–70. After escaping from Ponary with other members of his work brigade, Mordechi Zeitel (Motka Zajdl) and his colleagues received help and directions from a Polish peasant. See the Oral history interview with Mordechai Zeidel, Accession no. 1995.A.1272.177, RG-50.120.0177, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. A Jewish woman who survived a Lithuanian firing squad at Ponary, pulled herself out a pit full of corpses with a wound to her arm, bleeding, dishevelled and barefoot, and wandered in the direction of nearby villages where she received assistance from a number of Poles, despite their fear of German retaliation. See the testimony of Ita Straż in Tomkiewicz, *Zbrodnia w Ponarach 1941–1944,* 204.

> In the nearby village of Kanyuchi [sic], where the locals collaborated with the Germans—these newly-recruited partisans, furious at what they had seen at Ponar [sic], burned down all the houses and killed every single one of the inhabitants, shouting as they shot each one: 'That's for my mother, and that's for my father, and that's for my sister,' and so on.[495]

The eyewitness testimony of Paul Bagriansky, cited later, confirms the element of misdirected revenge described by Harmatz.

According to a popular book based on Jewish accounts,

> Konyuchi [sic] was a village of dusty streets and squat, unpainted houses. … The partisans—Russians, Lithuanians and Jews—attacked Konyuchi from the fields, the sun at their backs. There was gunfire from the guard towers. Partisans returned the fire. The peasants ducked into houses. Partisans threw grenades onto roofs and the houses exploded into flame. Other houses were torched. Peasants ran from their front doors and raced down the streets. The partisans chased them, shooting men, women, children. Many peasants ran in the direction of the German garrison, which took them through a cemetery on the edge of town. The partisan commander, anticipating this move, had stationed several men behind the gravestones. When these partisans opened fire, the peasants turned back, only to be met by the soldiers coming up from behind. Caught in a cross fire, hundreds of peasants were killed.[496]

Israeli historian, Dina Porat ties Abba Kovner closely to the assault on Koniuchy and identifies another participant, Senka Nisanelewicz. However, this version is also replete with inconsistencies as to why the village was attacked (why no mention of the incessant partisan raids that gave rise to the conflict with villagers? did the Soviet orders provide an ideal outlet for pent-up but misplaced revenge against the victims of these raids?) and inaccuracies (notably the strength of the Soviet partisan forces). After acknowledging that the partisans "raided the peasants and took food by force" and that "often the Jewish partisans did not follow orders" to take only what was absolutely necessary to survive,[497] Porat states:

> Sometimes the partisans took revenge on villages that were particularly hostile and had caused them loss of life or were the home base of the murderers of Jews in Vilna [Wilno]. For example, about twenty partisans, Jewish and non-Jewish, razed and then set fire to the village of Konyuchi [Koniuchy], having received orders from partisan headquarters in Rudniki to destroy it. … Kovner mustered his men, announced the operation had been successful, and praised the fighters who had

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[495] Harmatz, *From the Wings,* 96.

[496] Cohen, *The Avengers,* 144–45. According to this source, Koniuchy was a "pro-Nazi town on the edge of the forest. There was an enemy garrison nearby, and the Germans used Konyuchi [sic] as a staging point for sweeps and raids. They built towers around the town and organized a local militia; the militia had recently captured two partisans and tortured them to death." Ibid., 144. This latter claim, for which there is no evidence in Soviet reports, is disputed by historian Rimantas Zizas. See Zizas, "Žudynių Kaniūkuose pėdsakais," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (11), 2002: 149–65.

[497] Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow,* 158–59.

> distinguished themselves. However, he said, the partisans should do nothing that the Germans could use against them. Kovner could not be too critical because the orders had been given by the partisan general command. He later sat individually with each of the fighters, spending several hours explaining, according to Nisanelewicz, that they "were partisans but first of all Jews, and we do not kill the way the Germans do. We were angry with him again, the poet-turned-partisan, who was trying to turn us into members of Hashomer Hatzair with its ideas about morality in combat. We were young and hot-headed, we had lost everything and were eager to take our revenge on the Lithuanians. In retrospect, of course, he was right again; we had gotten carried away."[498]

Contrary to Kovner's reported admonition, the pacification of Koniuchy was every bit as brutal as any German pacification, a fact that Nisanelewicz seems to acknowledge.

The accounts of "second generation survivors" (i.e., children of Jews who lived through the Holocaust) are equally problematic. They simply regurgitate well-worn clichés and even embellish them. The following account is Michael Bart's, the son of Leizer Bart, who was a policeman in the Wilno ghetto, a group that had deservedly acquired a very bad reputation, before joining Kovner's partisans in Rudniki forest. (As Rachel Margolis noted, "The detachment … contained many 'underworlders,' former thieves and vagrants for whom theft was the normal state of affairs.") Leizer Bart, a member of the Second Fighter's Group of the Vilnius Brigade, claims to have taken part in the assault on Koniuchy. Much of what Michael Bart writes is simply fiction. No one has ever identified the two Jewish partisans who were allegedly killed by the villagers and whose corpses were on public display, or the scout who allegedly penetrated the village. It should be the simplest of tasks to do so if they in fact existed. (Ruzhka Korchak, cited later, also refers to the capture of two unnamed guerrillas from the "Lithuanian units" who were tortured to death; but she does not claim they were Jews, nor does she name them.) Besides, why would the partisans need to send a scout to check out a village they had raided several times in the past? It is not surprising, therefore, that even Soviet reports do not repeat such nonsense. The novel claim advanced in this book that only resisters were to be killed, and that the villagers were warned to leave to avoid harm, is contradicted by all reliable sources. One wonders why Michael Bart would have resorted to such concoctions, tampering with the sources he cites (Israel Weiss, Isaac Kowalski, Chaim Lazar, and Rich Cohen), unless to save face for his father and his cronies, whose vile deeds he glorifies. Interestingly, Michael Bart hastily abandons the victim count advanced by Jews over the years and, conveniently, adopts the much lower German victim count to facilitate spinning a web of deceit about the partisans' goodwill and compassion toward those villagers who allegedly agreed to leave the village and save themselves at the urging of the highly principled partisans. While this is a touching example of attempting to salvage his father's reputation, it is ultimately misguided. Any reputable historian and informed reader will see through

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[498] Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow,* 159–60. On the Home Army ("White Polish partisans"), Porat writes (at p. 159): "They also armed the peasants, fought against the Soviet partisans, and murdered scores of Jews who hid with peasants." See also pp. 167–68, for similar charges. The Home Army had no spare weapons to arm villagers, rarely fought with the Soviet partisans in Rudniki forest, and did not as a rule murder Jews in hiding. Porat also makes the bizarre claim that, when the Polish partisans joined forces with the Soviets in July 1944 to liberate the city of Wilno, "White Poles tried to convince the [Soviet] partisan command to hand over the Jewish partisans and thus prevent them from entering Vilna [Wilno] … It was obvious that the Poles, who had already drawn their guns, were planning to kill the Jews as they had during combat in the forest." Ibid., 178.

the ploy and recognize it for what it is: a deliberate falsification. Bart's book is thus discredited as a historical record, even though it received a Christopher Award in 2009—given to works that "affirm the highest values of the human spirit"—for describing his parents' "heroic efforts in the underground resistance, and their role in the liberation of Vilna."

> Abba Kovner began meeting with other Jewish, Russian, and Lithuanian partisan leaders to plan a response against the Polish villagers who had attacked them. One particular town, Koniuchi [Koniuchy], was notorious for its enthusiastic support of the Nazis against the partisans. The Germans had helped the residents fortify their village by building defense trenches and lookout towers, and organizing the men of the town into an antipartisan militia, armed with German rifles and even machine guns.
>
> One day in April [sic] a scout returned from Koniuchi. Because he looked "Aryan" and spoke unaccented Polish, he had been able to enter the village posing as a member of a pro-Nazi militia from another village. In the village he had seen the corpses of two Jewish partisans, who had been killed and afterward placed on public display.
>
> When Kovner heard this, he reported the event to the Russian partisan commander, with whom the leaders had already been discussing retaliation against hostile villages. The commander ordered an unprecedented call-up of all available fighters from the various Jewish and non-Jewish brigades in Rudnicki [Rudniki] for an attack on Koniuchi.
>
> Leizer [Bart] and the other Avengers would be part of a small army of well-armed and trained partisan fighters. They would surround the town from all sides and destroy it. No building was to be left standing. All residents who resisted in any way were to be killed. Only those who surrendered would be spared. They were not to take anything from Koniuchi—no food, no livestock, no valuables. It needed to be clear that they had come for one reason alone, to make the other villages think twice about turning them in or shooting at them as they passed by on their missions.
>
> The fighters disappeared down the path with rifles slung over their backs while Zenia [Lewinson-Bart—i.e., Leizer's wife] and others at the camp began an edgy and sleepless wait for the fighters' safe return.
>
> By dawn the strike force had surrounded the three land-locked sides of the village and taken control of the river on the forth side. Several partisans had torched houses, stables, and granaries on the outskirts of the village, while the others began riddling the town with gunfire and incendiary bullets.
>
> The people of Koniuchi returned fire from their houses and defensive positions. The straw roofs burst into flames, and within minutes the German ammunition hidden inside homes began to explode. Soon the whole town was ablaze. Half-clothed villagers, roused from their sleep, jumped out of windows and escaped across the river. Anyone in the town who surrendered was told to leave, but those who fought back or ignored calls for surrender were killed. Within two hours the mission was complete. The town had been leveled, three dozen people were dead, and another dozen had been injured.
>
> Leizer and the other Avengers came back safely from Koniuchi. All any of them had to say was that it was done and that Koniuchi would not be a problem anymore. Once other nearby villages saw the price to be paid, they would most likely not be problems either. Kovner had once said that, unlike the Nazis, the Jewish partisans didn't kill because they wanted people to die. Making an

> example of Koniuchi had been necessary for their survival, and the validity of their cause made the choice between their survival and that of the people of Koniuchi a defensible one. After the war, when recounting their exploits, Koniuchi was rarely spoken of.[499]

A recent media report provides yet another self-serving spin on the assault that no eyewitness account or official report has ever advanced:

> The Lithuanian partisans, who operated under the aegis of the Central Partisan Command of the Soviet Union, had information that there was a German garrison in the village. *After the fact, it turned out that the Germans had abandoned the place.* In the battle that ensued, 38 villagers were killed, including women and children.[500] [emphasis added]

The most fanciful accounts were published in the Soviet Union, shortly after the war. The *Black Book of Russian Jewry,* based on Jewish testimonies compiled by Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman in 1944, reported that the Jewish partisan units "Avenger" and "For Victory" carried out a "series of military operations" in the vicinity of Rudniki forest, and "helped destroy a German garrison in the heavily fortified town of Konyukhi."[501] A memoir by Dmitri Gelpern (Gelpernas) and Meir Yelin published in Moscow in 1948 speaks of a German-infested fortress equipped with machine guns. This version is at odds not only

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[499] Michael Bart and Laurel Corona, *Until Our Last Breath: A Holocaust Story of Love and Partisan Resistance* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008), 228–30. Michael Bart refers to sporadic altercations with the Home Army and villagers, though he provides no details of any fatalities, only a few casualties. Bart spins the following story (at pp. 214–15), mixing fiction with fact, about the "food missions". The notion that the Germans were available on call to protect the villagers from Soviet pillaging has little basis in fact.

> Food missions were extraordinarily dangerous—much more so than sabotage. …
>
> Food missions were another matter, for they involved farm families and villagers who were afraid of starvation and willing to protect what little they had with all the means at their disposal. A few times, shortly after their arrival in Rudnicki [Rudniki], the Jews had been able to simply promise payment after victory for supplies from a few local people wishing to help with the resistance, but even then they discovered that most villagers dislike the Jews and the Nazis about equally. However, as time passed and the peasants grew poorer and the number of partisans grew, the Avengers, like everyone else, were forced to turn to thievery and coercion to get what they needed to survive.
>
> The Jewish detachments tried wherever possible to target villages and farms that were known for collaboration with the Germans to harm Jews. For this reason, in the beginning they often went much farther afield than they would otherwise have had to, bringing back food over great distances on foot or using wagons … Once inside the forest, they had to be careful to cover their tracks back to the camp. …
>
> The time it took to bring food to the edge of the forest often gave those who had been robbed the chance to alert the Germans, and food parties sometimes had to scatter without their booty even before reaching the woods. They solved this problem either by resorting to villages or farms closer to the edge of the forest so they could escape quickly, or by taking a member of the targeted house hostage and forcing him to use the family wagon to take the supplies to the edge of the forest. The family of the hostage was told that if the Germans were sent after the departing partisans, the hostage would be shot. …
>
> By early 1944, missions to procure food, tools, and the occasional weapon and ammunition from local farmhouses had resulted in many partisan casualties … The targeted house had to be surrounded so no one could escape to alert the authorities. While some partisans went inside to handle the occupants, other stood watch. The more people who came along, the more hands could carry the booty back to the camp …

[500] Yossi Melman, "Nazi Hunter: Lithuania Hunts Ex-partisans, Lets War Criminals Roam Free," *Haaretz,* August 7, 2008.

[501] Ehrenburg and Grossman, *The Complete Black Book of Russian Jewry,* 289.

with Soviet and German reports but also with later Jewish accounts that toned down the scale of the fighting considerably.

> Having got reinforcements from Kovno [Kaunas] ghetto, [the] group "Death to Invaders" ["Death to the Occupiers"] received an opportunity to participate in large operations alongside other groups from Rudnizky [Rudniki] forest.
>
> In village Koniukhi [Koniuchy], some 30 kilometres from the partisan base a German garrison took up position. [The] Fascists followed partisans, set up ambushes on the roads. Several partisan groups, among them the "Death to Invaders," were ordered to liquidate this bandit cell.
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> At first the Germans were ordered to stop their actions and hand in weapons. When they refused to do so people's avengers decided to act according to the law: "If the enemy does not give in, the enemy should be eliminated."
>
> Having left their base in the evening and gone through marshes and forests, the partisans reached suburbs of the village by morning time. Red rocket was a signal for the start of the attack. Twenty partisans from the group "Death to Invaders", headed by unit leader Mikhail Trushin, went entered [sic] the village. Germans occupied several houses and started drum-fire from their submachine- and machine-guns. Every house had to be stormed. Incendiary bullets, hand grenades, flares were used to exterminate the Germans. Kovno partisans Dovid [David] Teper, Jankl [Yakov] Ratner, Peisach Volbe, Leiser Zodikov [Tsodikov] and others charged the enemy in the face of bullets. Strong Leib Zaiats [Zaitsev] stormed one of the buildings after using all his bullets, wrestled a rifle from a German and proceeded hitting the enemy with a butt so that the butt broke.[502]

Other members of the "Death to the Occupiers" detachment, including some women, who claim to have taken part in the assault on Koniuchy include: Hilel Aronovicz, Edvarda Bekker, Matvei (Mordechai) Brik, Pela Chas, B. Gelenina (Beila Ganelin), S. Gilis, Sara Hempel (Gempel), Khoks (Chanan) Kagan, Boris (Beryl, Beka, Dov) Kot, Faiga Kulbak (Kolbak), Misha Meyerov (Meirow), Lazar Mozas (Eliezer Mozes), Itzek (Izhak) Nemzer, Peretz Padison, Ida Pilownik (Wilencok), Mikhail Rubinson, Moshe Sherman, Lita Teper, and Eliezer Zilber.[503]

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[502] Dmitrii Gelpern (Gelpernas), *Partizaner fun Kaunaser geto* (Moscow: Emes, 1948); translated into English as *Kovnno Ghetto Diary* and posted on the Internet at <http://www.jewish.gen.org/yizkor/kaunas/kaunas.html>. The passage in question is found in Part One of the chapter "In the Open Battle." Isaac Kowalski's lists of partisans does not include the Jewish partisans fighting in the "Death to the Occupiers" unit mentioned in this source.

[503] Rimantas Zizas, "Pacyfikacja wsi Koniuchy (Kaniūkai)," *Biuletyn Historii Pogranicza* (Białystok), no. 4 (2003): 49; Piotr Gontarczyk, "Tragedia Koniuchów," *Niezależna Gazeta Polska,* March 3, 2006, 27. This information comes from the fighters' personal files found in the Vilnius archives housing the Soviet partisan movement documents. Zizas (*supra*) also lists fighters from other units: L. Žubikas from "For the Fatherland" detachment, S. Kuozis from the Margiris detachment, and A. Uždavinis from the Mickiewicz detachment.

A kindred account by Ruzhka Korchak also turns the massacre into a pitched battle and introduces allegations of the villagers having murdered Soviet partisans, a charge that is not corroborated in Soviet documents.[504]

> At the [Soviet partisan] brigade headquarters they considered what means to employ for revenge. It was obvious that if no decisive measure was undertaken, most villages could refuse to obey the brigade. If there was no reaction to the instances of the killing of partisans, all their activities could be endangered and the prestige of the brigade would be undermined. The Lithuanian village of Koniukhi [Koniuchy] was known for its actions against the partisans. Its inhabitants actively collaborated with the Germans and the Lithuanians of Plechavičius.[505] They distributed weapons they received among the neighbouring peasants and organized them [for self-defence]. The village itself was large and well fortified; the partisans eschewed coming up to the village. The inhabitants of Koniukhi organized ambushes; they captured two guerrillas from the Lithuanian [Communist] units and tortured them to death.[506] [No other account mentions this. *M.P.*]
>
> The staff of the brigade decided to carry out a great punitive expedition against the village. Šilas, the commander of one of the Lithuanian detachments, infiltrated Koniukhi pretending to be an officer of the Plechavičius army who had come to organize the watch. [Not only does this whole episode not sound plausible, but also there is an apparent *non sequitur*: either the village was well fortified at the time, or it wasn't. Moreover, no other account mentions this episode. *M.P.*] Since he was a Lithuanian and military man, he was not suspected. He studied all posts and weak points of defence. Based on his report the staff of the brigade prepared an operation. All partisan forest units contributed fighters for the operation; in total about 150 persons participated, including about 40 Jewish fighters. A Soviet officer from the Šilas detachment was appointed commander. The Jewish fighters were led by Iakov Prener [Jacob Prenner].
>
> Some partisans surrounded the village and entered it. Others, including Jewish partisans, remained outside of the village, laying an ambush, to prevent a relief force from the German garrison from arriving. The village cemetery served as the place of the ambush. Those partisans who rushed into the village were moving in from three directions. According to the plan, the central storm group was to shoot its way in, while those attacking from the flank were to set the village on

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[504] This account was constructed for the 1977 Russian edition of Korchak's expanded memoirs that were first published in Hebrew in 1946. It is based on "the testimonies of participants of the resistance," most of whom were interviewed by the author, and on documents in the Moreshet kibbutz and Yad Vashem Archives. See Ruzhka Korchak, *Plamia pod peplom* (Tel Aviv: Biblioteka-Aliia, 1977), 261. The author's name is rendered in various forms: Ruzhka Korchak (Russian), Reizl Korchak (Yiddish), Rużka Korczak (Polish), and Reuzl Korts'ak (Hebrew). Her memoirs appeared in Hebrew as Reuzl Korts'ak, *Lehavot ba-efer [tirgem mi-khetav yad ha-Polani, Binyamin Tenenboim]*, Edition/Mahad 2 (Merhavyah: ha-Kibuts ha-artsi ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir, [1946]); *Lehavot ba-'efer [targum mi-khetav ha-yad ha-Polani Binyamin Tene]*, Edition/Mahadurah 3 murhevet ([Tel Aviv]: Moreshet, bet 'edut 'al shem Mordekhai Anilevits, [1965]). The only reference in her memoir to a specific altercation with the Home Army was a chase that ensued *after* the Jewish partisans staged a raid on a village. See Korchak, *Plamia pod peplom,* 312.

[505] General Povilas Plechavičius was the commander of the collaborationist Lithuanian "defence force" in the service of the Germans.

[506] As noted earlier, there is no evidence to support this claim in Soviet reports. See Zizas, "Žudynių Kaniūkuose pėdsakais," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (11), 2002: 149–65.

fire. The Lithuanians [i.e., inhabitants of Koniuchy] opened fire as the left flank approached its target. Hand-to-hand combat commenced. Many Lithuanians succeeded in fleeing the village. They began running toward the German garrison. They were ambushed. They were slaughtered; only a few saved themselves.

Seeing that the attempt to take Koniukhi by surprise failed, the commanding officer sent couriers to the partisans manning the ambush site and ordered them to assist the fighters in the village. Two Lithuanian couriers failed to get through and then the commander dispatched another one—Pol Bagrianskii [Paul Bagriansky], who served as a liaison between the command post and the ambush spot. Bagrianskii broke through and delivered the order. Jewish partisans left the place of ambush and entered the fray. After a fierce fight the resistance of the villagers was broken. The partisans burned down one farmstead after another. Many peasants, women, and children fell from their bullets. Only very few saved themselves. The village was erased from the face of the earth.

The following day the superior Gestapo authorities from Vilnius arrived on the spot along with soldiers. The ruins and the bodies of the fallen were photographed and then the pictures were published as proof of the bestiality of the "Red bandits," who ruthlessly destroyed the peaceful population.

Both the operation and German propaganda shook everyone around. The staff of the brigade undertook damage control. Leaflets were disseminated in the villages telling the truth about Koniukhi. The leaflets also contained a warning that everyone collaborating with the enemy would meet the same end. However, those who assisted the partisans would be rewarded. One can suspect the village inhabitants were influenced not so much by admonitions, agitation, and leaflets, but by fear of revenge by the partisans. The story of Koniukhi tamed other villages of the region for a long time.[507]

The testimony of Paul (Pol) Bagriansky, who is mentioned in Ruzhka Korchak's account, however, in no way substantiates her claim of a "fierce fight" on the part of the villagers. It describes, in gruesome detail, a bloodbath with virtually no resistance. Bagriansky does, however, make unfounded claims about the villagers being "well armed," about each hut holding "thousands of German bullets," and about Koniuchy bring under the special protection of the Germans. The alleged pretext for the Soviet assault is the improbable claim that villages as far away as 20 kilometres brought their cows and hogs to Koniuchy for the night, thus depleting stock for Soviet partisans to seize. Bagriansky also alleges that the partisan headquarters issued an order to reprimand and punish those who attacked Koniuchy. No such order was ever issued. No one was ever punished for those crimes. In fact, several villagers were later charged and convicted by the Soviet authorities for having organized the local self-defence. After the bloodbath, we even learn, the perpetrators celebrated their victory.

When in April [sic] 1944 our partisans were told that we are going [to] teach a lesson to a village by

[507] Korchak, *Plamia pod peplom,* 319–21. Korchak states that the Jewish partisan command in the Rudniki forest did not permit collective punishment and that Jewish partisans targeted only actual collaborators with great effort, risk and precision in order to prevent innocent civilian casualties. The accounts gathered in this book belie that claim. Korchak also claims that the punitive operation, and the manner in which it was carried out, caused "great consternation" and that many of the fighters in the Jewish camp voiced "sharp criticism." However, there is no indication of this in the boastful accounts penned by actual participants such as Chaim Lazar, Isaac Kowalski, Israel Weiss, and others.

the name of Koniuchi [sic], I was not surprised. … Our Jewish unit of 25 men was put under the command of Jacob Prener. Other units of mixed nationalities made up another 125 partisans. A total unit of 150 men, well equipped, represented an impressive force for us. …

Before we started, the commanding officer told us briefly in Russian what our mission was about. Many villages in the radius of about 20 kilometers from Koniuchi decided to bring their cows and hogs during the night to the village of Koniuchi. Koniuchi was well armed by the Nazis and soldiers from Armia Krajowa. Partisans who went for food to the surrounding villages would find them empty. Very often the Germans would come there overnight to protect the village of Koniuchi. Therefore, the commanding officer told us, we are going to teach Koniuchi a lesson. …

We marched from midday till the late evening and stopped in a village to rest and to eat. I was appointed by our commanding officer as interpreter and messenger between various units. … I spent an hoour [sic] or two in the headquarters where we studied the map with other officers, and being there I understood that our purpose is to destroy the entire village including all the villagers. I asked why such harsh inhuman treatment? The answer was that this is what the high command had decided to do. We cannot permit such heavy armed villages to disrupt our partisan activities. This lesson will teach the other villages to think twice before they try again with Nazi's [sic] help to arm and to oppose us. …

Around 4 o'clock we started moving again and we reached our destination close to 11 at night. A specific task and territory was assigned to each unit. At midnight everybody was in his place and waited for the sign to start the attack on the village Koniuchi. Some units had the task of setting the huts on fire while the others had to close the escape routes. Exactly at midnight the village was set on fire and in a few minutes the stored ammunition started to explode. The cows and hogs as well as horses that were in their stables started to make terrible noises. A few horses succeeded to escape and they were running like mad out of the burning village. The explosions from fire of all the thousands of German bullets that were held in each hut, the terrible noises of the burning animals and the shooting of the escaping villagers made such a hell of an uproar that no human cry or voice could be heard. The first hour I was standing with the commanding officer and few of his aides on a hill watching this awful inferno. In the meantime I received an order to get in touch with my unit and to order them to take a new position. When I reached my unit I saw one of our people holding the head of a middle aged woman against a big stone and hitting her head with another stone. Each blow was accompanied by sentences like: this is for my murdered mother, this is for my killed father, this is for my dead brother, etc. He was a young man of about 22 years old and I was with him all the time in the underground. He was a friendly and quiet person, I would never have expected to see him doing what he was doing now. What brought this sudden change? I did not react and told Jacob Prener what new position he should take and return to our commander. When I was back he ordered me to go to another unit to give them their new position. … When crossing the road I saw a man escaping from the village. Probably he saw me first and shot at me [?] on the run, but missed. Realizing it, he stopped for a second to aim better with a second shot. But now I was ready and before he pulled his trigger, I pulled mine and the man's gun fell from his hand. The man descended slowly to his knees and then stretched out. He was dead. …

When I reached the unit to tell them their new assignment, I saw an awful, gruesome picture. … In a small clearing in the forest six bodies of women of various ages and two bodies of men were lying around in a half circle. All bodies were undressed and lying on their backs. The full moon was shining on them. One man at a time was shooting in between the legs of the dead bodies. When the

bullet would strike the nerve the body would react as if were alive. It would shiver, quiver for a few seconds. The women's bodies reacted much more violently than the dead bodies of men. All men of the unit were participating in this cruel play, laughing, in a wild frenzy. I was first petrified by this performance, and then started to be sickly interested. I had been standing fascinated for several minutes, when the unit commander approached me and asked if I would be interested to participate in these experiments. Only then I remembered why I was here, and told him what new position his men must take without further delay. They were not in a hurry, and only after the bodies ceased to react to the bullets, they moved to the new position.

The village by now was burning with big red flames, the explosions still continued, as did the terrible howl of the burning animals. On my way back to the command post I saw several bodies of the peasants who had been shot on their way to escape. A horse with a burning tail and mane was galloping full speed, probably to find some river or pond to ease the pain in the water. …I remembered that horses know their way around and so he was galloping full speed to reach the water. I hoped he would make it in time.

Around two o'clock in the morning the village of Koniuchi was completely burned, not one hut was visible, no sound was forthcoming. Presumably all people, including the young, the women and the men were burned, shot with their own bullets exploding from the fire or finished by our men when trying to escape from this hell. Probably a few horses escaped and survived, if they made in time to the water. It is possible that a few people succeeded to escape and to stay alive in one way or another. The village Koniuchi was now a memory full of ashes and of dead bodies. The lesson had been taught. The commanding officer assembled all units, thanked them for their well accomplished job, and ordered them to be ready to start to go back to our base. The people were tired but their faces looked satisfied and happy with the accomplished assignment. Only a very few of them realized what a terrible murder had been committed within one hour. Those few looked dejected and downcast and felt guilty. …

We reached our base late at night. I was tired and exhausted and went to sleep at once, as did most people of our unit. As we learned the next day, the other units got a heros' [sic] welcome for destroying Koniuchi and they drank and ate and sang all night. They enjoyed the killings, the destruction and most of all the drinking.

Three weeks later there was a message from the Partisan Headquarters in Moscow to reprimand and punish the people that initiated and led the destruction of the village Koniuchi.[508]

A Russian partisan from the "For the Fatherland" detachment, Anatolii Mikhailovich Kotskin vividly recalls the mission the partisans received: everyone in Koniuchy was to be killed. He paid little attention to the victims he sprayed with his automatic weapon.[509] Baruch Shub, another fugitive from the Wilno ghetto who joined the Soviet partisans in Rudniki forest, also describes the "punitive action" directed against the

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[508] Paul Bagriansky, "Koniuchi," *Pirsumim* (Tel Aviv: Publications of the Museum of the Combatants and Partisans), no. 65–66 (December 1988): 120–24.

[509] Jerzy Danilewicz, "Zbrodnia bez kary," *Newsweek* (Warsaw), May 15, 2005.

village of Koniuchy.[510] Not all Jewish partisans from Rudniki forest, however, share those recollections. Harry Reischer, a member of the "Death to Fascism" unit, does not recall any attacks on Poles or Polish villagers, but makes wild claims about his unit being surrounded by 16,000 [sic] "White Polacks" who were infamous for killing Jews and "10,000 times worse" than the Germans.[511] Similarly, Anatol Krakowski, who belonged to the "For Victory" detachment, recalls only in a general way "punitive expeditions against Nazi collaborators and those who had denounced Jews." Krakowski levels the following accusation against the Home Army: "They did not constitute any threat for the Nazis, for they killed essentially Jews and Communists." He admits, however, that the Jewish partisans steered clear of pitched battles with the Germans and incurred relatively few casualties.

Genrikas Zimanas (*nom de guerre* "Jurgis" or "Yurgis")—the Yiddish version of his name is given variously as Henrich, Henoch or Hanoh Ziman, and the Russian is Genrikh Ziman[512]—who headed the partisan command in southern Lithuania in January 1944 (his title was secretary of the "South Area" Underground Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party), oversaw the entire operation. He filed the following report with Antanas Sniečkus, First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party (from 1940 to 1974) and head of the Lithuanian Partisan Movement Headquarters, who had reportedly issued the order authorizing the assault on Koniuchy.

> The joint forces of the Vilnius [Wilno] partisan units "Death to the Occupiers," Margirio and General Headquarters Special Intelligence Group [Soviet Military Intelligence–GRU] destroyed Kaniūkai [Koniuchy], the village with the fiercest self-defence in the Eishyshok [Ejszyszki] area. Kaniūkai had not only objected to the Soviet partisans entering the village but used to organize ambushes on the roads, was attacking villages friendly to the partisans and forced villages that were neutral to the partisans to arm themselves. The [village] self-defence suffered heavy casualties. We did not have casualties on our side.[513]

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[510] Interview with Baruch Shub, November 5, 1993, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive. According to one source, Shub belonged to the "Liberator" (*Osvoboditel'*) unit of the Troki (Trakai) Brigade. See Baruch Shub Borka, Organization of Partisans Underground Fighters and Ghetto Rebels in Israel, Internet: <http://eng.thepartisan.org/document/68521,0,53.aspx>. Shub also describes the arrest of Poles in Wilno after the Soviet "liberation," and how the Jewish partisans were assigned to "reorganize" the Lithuanian prison system. His unit was sent to the infamous Łukiszki prison where he worked for a period of time. He was involved in SMERSH counter-intelligence operations directed against the anti-Communist underground.

[511] Testimony of Harry Reischer, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 21907.

Krakowski, *Le Ghetto dans la forêt,* 58, 78, 82, 86.

[512] Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe,* 270.

[513] LVOA F. 1, In. 1, File 410, p. 173.

This latter statement from an official Soviet report written at the time of the events bears repeating: "*We did not have casualties on our side.*" This statement is difficult to reconcile with reports of a pitched battle that lasted up to an hour. Some Jewish accounts, however, allege there were casualties, but do not provide details. Providing no source for his information, Lithuanian historian Alfonsas Eidintas goes even further, claiming that "Lithuanian police at the village returned the fire for about 45 minutes. … The Red partisans lost one man, and took away 3 of their seriously wounded members."[514] This claim has simply no basis in fact. There was no exchange of fire involving policemen, certainly not one that lasted 45 minutes. No report has ever identified any Red partisan who allegedly fell in battle or was injured. Furthermore, when the Soviets put on trial several members of the Koniuchy self-defence in 1947, they were not charged with murdering any Soviet partisans.[515] The conviction of those defending the village of Koniuchy, and not those who planned and perpetrated the massacre, is symbolic of the fate of Poles in the Soviet postwar era.

According to Report No. 53 of January 31, 1944, from the commander of the Lithuanian Police post in Bołcieniki to Vladas Zibas, the commander of the 253rd Lithuanian Police Battalion,

> 1944.01.29 at 6 a.m., around 150 bandits (Jews and Russians) armed with 1 heavy machine gun, 3 light machine guns, machine pistols, rifles and grenades, attacked Koniuchy village. The village was burnt down, people were killed and cattle were slaughtered. (35 were killed in action and 15 wounded.) Bandits had arrived from Daučiunai [Dawciuny] and WLK Salky [Wielkie Sałki] directions. They spent one hour there. Then they retreated in the same directions.[516]

A Wehrmacht report of February 5, 1944 confirming the massacre can be found in the Central Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych) in Warsaw. According to that report the village was burned to the ground by a group of Jews and Russians, who killed 36 residents and wounded 14.[517]

The most accurate depiction of what occurred in Koniuchy is doubtless that of Polish historian Kazimierz Krajewski, who summed up the situation as follows:

> The only "fault" of the inhabitants of Koniuchy was the fact that they had had enough of the daily —or, rather, nightly—robberies and assaults, and they wanted to organize a self-defence. The

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[514] Eidintas, *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust,* 306.

[515] Piotr Gontarczyk, "Tragedia Koniuchów," *Niezależna Gazeta Polska,* March 3, 2006, 28. After their sham trials, Władysław Woronis, Stanisław Bobin, and Jan Kodis were convicted and received sentences of 10 years in a concentration camp and confiscation of their property.

[516] LCSA F.R–666, In. 1, File 7, p. 29. See also Arūnas Bubnys, "253-iasis lietuvių policijos batalionas (1943–1944)," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 2 (4), 1998, posted online at <http://www.tdd.lt/genocid/Leidyba/4/arunas3.htm>; Rimantas Zizas, "Žudynių Kaniūkuose pėdsakais," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (11), 2002: 149–65.

[517] Alexandria Collection, T–454, Reichministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete, Reel 19, reproduced in part in Jan Bańbor, "Tło wydarzeń w Koniuchach w polskich i niemieckich sprawozdaniach sytuacyjnych," *Biuletyn Historii Pogranicza* (Biaystok), no. 4 (2003): 98.

> Bolsheviks from Rudniki forest decided to level the village to the ground in order to terrorize into submission the inhabitants of other settlements. …
>
> The murder of the population of Koniuchy, including women and children, has been described by Chaim Lazar as an outstanding "combat operation," of which he is genuinely proud. The description [of Lazar] of the village's "fortifications" is complete nonsense. It was a normal village, in which some of the men had organized a self-defence unit. Their equipment consisted of a few rusty rifles.[518]

The final episode of this sordid affair occurred after the "liberation" when Soviet officials descended on the village to investigate and interrogate the survivors regarding the "bandits" in their midst and *their* "crimes" against the Soviet partisans. A number of Poles were arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and deported to the Gulag.[519] The real perpetrators of the massacre were never brought to justice. The partisans of the "For Victory" detachment were transferred to "the organs of the militia and other organs" of newly liberated Wilno.[520] Henoch Ziman, who oversaw the assault on Koniuchy, was bestowed Poland's highest military honour, the Virtuti Militari, by its Communist rulers.[521]

Other villages in the Nowogródek region such as Szczepki, Babińsk, and Prowżały, as well as the small town of Kamień, met with a similar fate at the hands of the Soviet and Jewish partisans in the early months of 1944.[522] On April 12, 1944, Soviet partisans burnt down the village of Bakaloriškės (Bakałaryszki), near

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[518] Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej,* 511–12. This version is not only confirmed by Polish eyewitnesses, but also is consistent with German and Lithuanian reports.

[519] For example, Władysław Woronis, who organized the night watch in Koniuchy, was sentenced to 10 years in a penal camp. See Malewski, "Masakra w Koniuchach," *Nasza Gazeta*, March 8, 2001; Narkowicz, "'Siła w cierpieniu (z zeznań naocznego świadka)," *Nasza Gazeta*, March 29, 2001; Andrzej Kumor, interview with Edward Tubin, "Nie przepuścili nikomu…: Z naocznym świadkiem pacyfikacji wsi Koniuchy rozmawia Andrzej Kumor," *Gazeta* (Toronto), May 4–6, 2001; Jerzy Danilewicz, "Zbrodnia bez kary," *Newsweek* (Warsaw), May 15, 2005; Piotr Gontarczyk, "Tragedia Koniuchów," *Niezależna Gazeta Polska,* March 3, 2006. The archives of the Lithuanian KGB in Vilnius contain an enormous file with interrogation reports and statements by former partisans.

[520] "Istoriia otriada 'Za Pobedu'," Lietuvos ypatingasis archyva, Arkhiv Tsentralnogo Komiteta Kommunisticheskoi Partii Litvy, Litovskii Shtab Partizanskogo Dvizheniia, Partizanskii otriad "Za Pobedu", Vilnius, fond 11, opis 1, delo 1, listy 14–16.

[521] Levin, *Fighting Back,* 199.

[522] Krajewski, "Nowogródzki Okręg Armii Krajowej," in Wołkonowski, *Sympozjum historyczne "Rok 1944 na Wileńszczyźnie,"* 54; Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej,* 388; Gasztold, "Sowietyzacja i rusyfikacja Wileńszczyzny i Nowogródczyzny w działalności partyzantki sowieckiej w latach 1941–1944," in Sudoł, *Sowietyzacja Kresów Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej po 17 września 1939,* 277; Boradyn, *Niemen–rzeka niezgody,* 203–204. According to Polish sources, ten people were murdered in Babińsk (February 24, 1944); 12–14 villagers were killed in Prowżały in retaliation for an attempt to organize a local self-defence group (February 17, 1944); and seven families were massacred in Szczepki (June 9, 1944). According to Soviet sources, 71 people perished in Kamień on May 14, 1944.

Onuškis (Hanuszyszki), murdering eighteen people in this and neighbouring villages.[523] Another assault on a Lithuanian village that dared to defend itself in the face of continuous partisan raids is described by Yitzhak Arad (then Rudnicki):

> The last operation I participated in that winter was a punitive action against Girdan [Girdany], a large Lithuanian village on the road between Hoduciszki and Swienciany [Święciany]. The inhabitants of the village were prepared for self-defense and had been armed by the Germans. … During February when a Vilnius [Wilno] force had tried to enter the village to requisition provisions, the inhabitants opened fire and killed two partisans. Our command decided to punish them. About twenty of us went on this retaliatory mission, which would serve also as a warning to other villages. We broke into the village from two different directions, and the defenders fled after putting up feeble resistance. We took the residents out of several houses in the section of the village where our two comrades fell and burned down the houses.[524]

These were not the only murders of civilians in this area. Other settlements in the vicinity of Rudniki forest were also attacked and razed by the Soviet-Jewish partisans. A number of farmsteads were burned to the ground by Jewish partisans in Niewoniańce on April 27, 1944, and eight villagers were killed.[525] The village of Bojary, near Werenowo, was also torched and several people were killed. Entire settlements like Popiszki, after being stripped of their means of livelihood, were abandoned and became ghost towns. A

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[523] Rimantas Zizas, "Vietinė savisauga (savigyna) Lietuvoje nacių Vokietijos okupacijos metais (1941–1944)," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (11), 2002: 69–94, posted online at <http://www.genocid.lt/Leidyba/11/genocida.htm>; Rimantas Zizas, "Bakaloriškių sunaikinimas," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 2 (12), 2002: 232–46, posted online at <http://www.genocid.lt/Leidyba/12/zizas.htm>.

[524] Arad, *The Partisan,* 158.

[525] According to Polish sources, two families of Home Army members—consisting of eight people—were murdered and their farmsteads burned to the ground. See Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej,* 511. According to Moshe Okuniew, a member of the "Struggle" unit who took part in the assault, some 70 partisans surrounded the village, went around to all the houses and set them on fire. Okuniew gave two different versions for the attack on Niewoniańce. One is that it was in retaliation for the villagers having reported to the Germans on the whereabouts of Jewish partisans who had carried out raids on villages, resulting in the killing of five Jewish partisans. Another is that Jewish partisans were ambushed by Home Army soldiers as they were returning from a raid on a Polish estate. The Jewish partisans returned the fire but two of them were caught and executed at a homestead near the estate. The following night, the Jewish partisans set out to punish the residents of the homestead by burning down their houses and killing them. See, respectively, the testimony of Michael Okunieff (Okuniew), Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Interview code 13693; Yuri Okunev, "Saga of the Risen From the Ashes: To Michael Okunieff, on the 90th Anniversary of His Birth," Winter 2012–2013, Internet: <http://publications.yuriokunev.com/essays/en/saga.pdf>. While there is confirmation in Jewish sources that Jewish partisans took part in the assault, there is no indication that any Jewish partisans had been killed by the Germans or by Home Army around that time. See "Operations Diary of a Jewish Partisan Unit in Rudniki Forest, 1943–1944," in Arad, Gutman, and Margaliot, *Documents on the Holocaust,* 469. In retaliation Polish forces attacked the hamlet of Wisińcza located in Rudniki forest, a mainstay of the Soviet partisans. See Krajewski, *Na Ziemi Nowogródzkiej,* 512; Boradyn, *Niemen–rzeka niezgody,* 223; Kiersnowski, *Tam i wtedy,* 96. The local population referred to the Soviet partisan units as "Wisińcza" because their base was located between the village by that name and Lake Kiernowo. In order to lessen hostilities, the Home Army entered into negotiations with the Soviet partisans in April 1944. Areas of operation were delineated, the Poles agreed to provide food in exchange for arms in order to curtail food gathering expeditions, and Soviet partisans were allowed to pass through areas controlled by the Home Army. See Boradyn, *Niemen–rzeka niezgody,* 223–24; Stanisława Lewandowska, *Wilno 1944–1945: Oczekiwania i nastroje* (Warsaw: Neriton and Instytut Historii PAN, 2007), 47–48.

different tactic was employed to exact revenge for the self-defence undertaken by the villagers of Pirciupie (or Pirczupie), a mixed Polish-Lithuanian village on the western edge of Rudniki forest. On June 3, 1944, Soviet partisans ambushed some vehicles carrying German military personnel on a road near the village, killing between eleven and fourteen of them. The provocation resulted in a punitive operation by German and Latvian forces, who immediately descended on the village, drove the inhabitants into barns and then set the barns ablaze. The village was burned to the ground and 119 people, including 49 children, perished. Soviet partisans based nearby in Rudniki forest did nothing to protect the villagers even though the operation lasted several hours.[526] On other occasions villagers from "hostile" villages were seized for suicide missions:

> The Germans finally came up with a deadly device that should have stopped this kind of sabotage once and for all. They inserted a trip wire in each [telephone] pole, attaching it to a buried mine which was detonated when the saw touched the wire. As we always worked in the dark, we couldn't be sure which poles were mined, but we resolved this problem by recruiting men from nearby villages to cut the poles, By choosing only those who had been hostile to the partisans and to the Jews, we forced the Germans to kill or injure their own sympathizers and collaborators, while we gained extra labourers to help in the fight.[527]

Other villages, such as Gumba, were pacified by the Germans for helping the Soviet partisans.

The various Jewish accounts about the Koniuchy massacre demonstrate that even a multitude of eyewitness testimonies about one event is no assurance of the accuracy of the story. Partisan historians and publicists have only compounded the problem by resorting to various strategies in an attempt to neutralize the negative fallout of these events. This response is one mired by silence, denial, obfuscation, blaming the victims, and contempt for the messenger. Curiously, some Jewish historians and publicists have taken umbrage at the fact that events such as the massacre at Koniuchy are even being raised by Poles, imputing to them some anti-Semitic motive, although these same commentators had not shown any concern in the past when these exploits were passed off in Jewish memoirs as heroic deeds that justly targeted "vile"

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[526] Rimantas Zizas, *Persecution of Non-Jewish Citizens of Lithuania, Murder of Civilian Population (1941–1944),* International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania (Vilnius 2003), 60–61, also published in Dieckmann, et al., *Karo belaisvių ir civilių gyventojų žudynės Lietuvoje 1941-1944–Murders of Prisoners of War and of Civilian Population in Lithuania, 1941-1944*; Tomkiewicz, *Zbrodnia w Ponarach 1941–1944,* 149, 349–52. See also Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe,* 349, 351; Wiktor Noskowski, "Czy Yaffa Eliach przeprosi Polaków?" *Myśl Polska,* July 20–27, 1997; Rimantas Zizas, "Žudynių Kaniūkuose pėdsakais," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 1 (11), 2002: 149–65. According to Jewish sources, two Jewish units ("Avenger" and "For Victory") took part in the ambush on the German vehicles that precipitated the destruction of Pirciupie. See "Operations Diary of a Jewish Partisan Unit in Rudniki Forest, 1943–1944," in Arad, Gutman, and Margaliot, *Documents on the Holocaust,* 469. In *There Once Was a World,* at 641, Eliach cannot make up her mind about the villagers of Pirciupie, conceding that many of them did assist the Soviet-Jewish partisans.

The most spectacular exploit mentioned in "Operations Diary of a Jewish Partisan Unit in Rudniki Forest, 1943–1944" involves the blowing up of a train between Majtuzy and Szarkiszki, on the Wilno-Grodno line, sometime in January 1944, which allegedly killed some 200 Italian soldiers "returning from the front." While there is no record confiming this event, given the political realignment of Italy in 1943, these would haven been soldiers headed for camps in Germany as military internees. So rather than harm the German war effort, their elimination would have helped it.

[527] Kahn, *No Time To Mourn,* 134.

Poles. After all, it is not the Polish side who claimed that 300 persons were murdered in Koniuchy, but rather the Jewish partisans who have been boasting about the scale of their misdeeds for decades. The following defensive article appeared in *Forward,* a leading Jewish-American newspaper, in August 2003:

> Poland's official National Institute of Remembrance, created to investigate historic crimes of the Nazi and communist eras, is currently investigating allegations that Jewish partisans participated in a massacre of civilians in Poland in early 1944.
>
> The institute launched the investigation in February 2001 at the request of the Canadian Polish Congress.
>
> Robert Janicki, deputy commissioner for prosecution of crimes against the Polish nation, told the Forward in a written statement that the institute was interviewing witnesses, including both victims and perpetrators, and was gathering archival material from several countries, but that no date had been set for the conclusion of the investigation.
>
> Still, the institute has issued some preliminary reports, which contain allegations that some 50 to 60 Jewish partisans were part of a 120-strong Soviet partisan unit that attacked the village of Koniuchy on January 29, 1944. At least 35 civilians were killed, and the village, now located in Lithuania and called Kaniuakai [sic—Kaniūkai], was burned to the ground, according to the reports.
>
> The investigation, which has not been reported in the United States and was unknown to a series of scholars interviewed for this article, is creating unease among Jews because of its possible political motives.
>
> "It is very convenient for the Canadian Polish Congress to raise this issue instead of providing explanations about pogroms of Poles against Jews during and after the war," said Hebrew University historian Dov Levin, who was a member of one of the Jewish partisan units operating under Soviet command in that region and has written several books on the issue. …
>
> The institute is now trying to reconstruct the actual events that took place in Koniuchy, a small village at the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarus border.
>
> Severin Hochberg, a historian with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, said material he had seen suggested that civilians were indeed killed by partisans, a view endorsed by several experts interviewed for this article.
>
> "At the time, the Soviets were on the offensive and the Jews fought with them, so I believe something serious took place," he said. "But there is still a lot of research to be done."
>
> One of the issues needed to be settled is the number of deaths, which the Canadian Polish Congress puts around 300. Most accounts hover between 30 and 40. [This claim is a baseless manipulation. The figure of 300 dead originates from accounts of Jewish partisans who took part in the massacre. It was the Canadian Polish Congress who identified other, non-Jewish sources that pointed to a lower toll. *M.P.*]
>
> A spokesman for the institute, Andrzej Arseniuk, told the Forward the institute was basing its research on the lower estimate.
>
> An examination of preliminary findings summed up in several interim reports confirms that the institute is basing its research on the assumption that 36 to 50 people were killed. …
>
> Professor Levin of Hebrew University, who was a member of the "Death to the Occupants" ["Death to the Occupiers"] partisan unit, said Koniuchy was an "event."

> He refused to discuss the events further on the phone, adding that there were probably mischievous designs behind the initiative to publicize the events.
>
> A key issue facing Polish researchers will be to determine the degree of autonomy of the Jewish units in the Soviet partisan hierarchy. The units were incorporated within the Soviet command-and-control chain at the time, according to historians Hochberg of the Holocaust Museum in Washington and Israel Gutman of the Yad Vashem museum in Jerusalem. …
>
> However, Hochberg added that one could possibly speak of a "semiautonomous" situation in which the Jewish units had to fall in line with the Communist leadership while maintaining some leeway in deciding their participation in specific operations.[528]

It is perhaps understandable that Dov Levin should feel threatened by the revelations about Koniuchy, since he assiduously avoids mention of this massacre of civilians in his monograph and extensive writings on Jewish armed resistance in Lithuania, but rather subsumes it under the rubric of the fight against "Nazi collaborators":

> Concurrent with the battle against the German military and civil administration, the partisans conducted a methodical fight against Lithuanian collaborators serving in special German auxiliary units in the peasant militia in the villages, and in police forces on the forests' periphery and at strategic communication points.[529]

Among the "operations" carried out by the "Avenger" detachment, Levin lists "reprisals and punishment" which resulted in the killing of "a number of peasants who collaborated with the enemy."[530] Moreover, he fingers and chastises Polish partisans in the area for "their brutal attitude toward [Soviet] partisans in general and Jewish fighters in particular,"[531] even though the Home Army did not go out of its way to attack Soviet partisans in that area. According to Levin's own count, only fourteen Jewish partisans from Lithuania fell at the hands of "White Poles" during the entire occupation.[532] Historian Yitzhak Arad, who also fought with the Soviet partisans in this area and later joined the NKVD, speaks of "punitive raids

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[528] Marc Perelman, "Poles Open Probe Into Jewish Role In Killings," *Forward* (New York), August 8, 2003.

[529] Levin, *Fighting Back,* 182.

[530] Ibid., 197.

[531] Ibid., 277 n.4. According to his memoir Levin joined the "Death to the Occupiers" unit in March 1944 after escaping from the ghetto in Kaunas. He did not therefore take part in the assault on Koniuchy but did participate in "requisition missions" that targeted area farmers. While he does not mention any incidents of brutality on the part of Polish partisans, he complains of the "anti-Semitic virus" that infected his "non-Jewish comrades" and relates an incident which almost cost him his life (he was abandoned in a snowstorm). See Dov Levin, *With a Rifle in My Hand and Eretz Yisrael in My Heart*, Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/dovlevin1/dovlevin1.html> (updated July 28, 2005), 17–18.

[532] Levin, *Fighting Back,* 191. By comparison, the Germans and allied Lithuanian forces killed 92 Jewish partisans, while the Soviet and Jewish partisans killed 16.

against hostile villages" and blames the Home Army for instigating the conflict and killing Soviet partisans and Jews.[533] Iser Lubocki (Lubotski/Lubotzky), another Jewish partisan who took part in raids on villages, also joined the NKVD: "as a result of an attack against terrorists that he commended, he rose through the ranks to become an officer."[534] Iser Lubocki's sister, Nusia Lugocki Dlugi, who was a reconnaissance scout (gathering information about German troop movements from peasants) attached to the "Avenger" detachment, insists repeatedly that *most* of the partisans in the woods were killed by Polish partisans, not by the Germans, who, allegedly, were afraid to enter the forest.[535] (This demonstrably false perception may be attributable to the fact that Jewish partisans in the Rudniki forest avoided actual combat with German forces. Moreover, one has to wonder what kind of military intelligence could have provided by farmers living in remote areas. More likely, she was staking out villages for partisans to raid.) An excellent gauge of the alleged "viciousness" of the Polish partisans are the statistics compiled by the Soviet command itself. Out of the 722 partisans who crossed the front line or were parachuted into Lithuanian territory in 1941–1942, 141 were reported dead by May 1944. The vast majority were killed by the German army and Lithuanian police, died in accidents or as casualties of the local population; only seven of them were killed by the Home Army.[536] Despite this evidence and the Home Army regional commander's specific orders forbidding the mistreatment of the civilian population, regardless of their nationality, Yitzhak Arad claims that the Home Army was waging a war against the Jews for purely ideological and racial reasons:

> The Jewish partisans active in the forests were portrayed as gangs of robbers, who behaved brutally towards non-Jews. This picture of the Jews … was rooted in political evaluations and inherent anti-Semitism. The result was that many Jews of Vilna [Wilno] and its environs who found refuge in the forests or with farmers, as well as Jewish partisans, were murdered by bands of Polish partisans.[537]

The reaction to an investigation launched by the Lithuanian authorities in 2007 concerning Koniuchy and other allegations involving former partisans such as Yitzhak Arad and Sara Ginaite-Rubinson (the latter is the wife of Mikail Rubinson, who reportedly took part in the assault on Koniuchy), was even more shrill

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[533] Arad, *Ghetto in Flames,* 459–60. However, Arad does not mention any punitive raids in his discussion of Jewish partisans in Rudniki forest in his most recent book, *In the Shadow of the Red Banner.* Nechama Tec refers to these assaults as "anti-German military missions." See Tec, "Reflections on Resistance and Gender," in Roth and Maxwell, *Remembering for the Future,* vol. 1, 559; Tec, *Resilience and Courage,* 281.

[534] "Iser Lubotzky," The Association of Jews from Vilna and Vicinity is Israel," Internet: <https://en.vilna.co.il/ >.

[535] Oral history interview with Nusia Dlugi, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Accession no. 2009.156.18, RG-50.591.0018.

[536] Šarūnas Liekis, "Koniuchy in the 'New' and 'Old' Polish and Jewish Memory," Conference Paper, "Between Coexistence and Divorce: 25 Years of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry and Polish-Jewish Relations," Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 17–19, 2009.

[537] Arad, *Ghetto in Flames,* 249. Arad repeats these charges in his most recent book, where he refers to two attacks on Jewish marauders in Mickuny, near Nowa Wilejka, on December 14, 1943, and in Boruny, near Oszmiana, on March 24, 1944, but particulars are lacking so they are difficult to assess. See Arad, *In the Shadow of the Red Banner,* 291.

and jarring, and exhibited nothing but contempt for their accusers as well as the victims. Their "line of defence" was twofold: how dare those anti-Semites question the conduct of the Jews, and besides, the peasants murdered by the Jewish partisans had it coming to them. They were just a bunch of vicious Nazi collaborators. (In this case, the partisans project their own pro-Soviet sympathies onto the villagers, whom they accuse, without any basis, of being Nazi sympathizers.) Although she insists she was not in Rudniki forest at the time, Sara Ginaite-Rubinson states: "There were many villagers, hostile to the partisans, who were organized into armed groups, supplied by the Germans. Yes, they were villagers, but no, they were not unarmed civilians. Such a conflict was most likely the reason for the tragedy in Koniuchy."[538] In a subsequent interview, she attempts to link the villagers of Koniuchy to a raid on the village of Kalitańce that she took part in, which is described earlier on.

> The villagers in Koniuchy had a record of hostility to the partisans and attacked us whenever we passed in the vicinity of the village. They organized an armed group to fight the partisans, were supplied with weapons by the Germans, and collaborated with the Nazis and the local police. At the end of December 1943, during a food-gathering assignment in a village close to Koniuchy, we were spotted and attacked by the villagers. During the battle, two of our partisans were killed and a third was captured and handed over to the Nazi-controlled police.[539]

In fact, as we have seen, only one Jewish partisan was killed in that altercation, which was commenced by the Jewish partisans, and another two were captured by the Lithuanian police and survived.

Former partisans such as Yitzhak Arad and Sara Ginaite-Rubinson are championed by a chorus of ethno-nationalist journalists, politicians, and community leaders, who endeavour to justify the Jewish partisans' misdeeds. They rail against the anti-Semitic Lithuanians for raising the issue[540] and the "vile" peasants who, as alleged "Nazi sympathizers," had only themselves to blame for their well-deserved fate. "There is no evidence of a 'war crime' at Koniuchy," proclaims Adam Fuerstenberg, former director of Toronto's Holocaust Centre, indignantly.[541] Another pundit proffered the following "insights," based largely on sheer fiction:

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[538] Sara Ginaite, "'Investigating' Jewish Partisans in Lithuania: The Protest of a Veteran Jewish Partisan," *Jewish Currents,* September 2008: "During the events in Koniuchy, I was not in the Rudnicky [Rudniki] forest. I was on assignment to return to the Kaunas (Kovno) Ghetto … I cannot comment, therefore, on the details of the event. I can say this however: In our own interest, we tried to keep friendly relations with the villagers in the Rudnicky forest. We were never encouraged to harass or hurt them. In order to survive, we did have to collect food wherever we could, often from hostile villagers, but we tried as far as possible to seize food from German food storage areas or transports of food headed for Germany."

[539] Adam Fuerstenberg, "Lithuania Asks Partisans to 'Justify' Their Actions," *The Canadian Jewish News,* November 20, 2008.

[540] Among those who engaged in gratuitously condemning the Lithuanian authorities for mounting an investigation was *The Economist* ("Prosecution and Persecution: Lithuania Must Stop Blaming the Victims," August 21, 2008).

[541] Adam Fuerstenberg, "Lithuania Asks Partisans to 'Justify' Their Actions," *The Canadian Jewish News,* November 20, 2008.

> The investigation centered around the supposed massacre of civilians in a small village, Koniuchi [Koniuchy], near the Rudniki forest, which was controlled by Soviet partisans late in the war. Here's what seems like a probable scenario: Jewish and Soviet partisans regularly commandeered food and supplies from local villages. Nazi efforts to contain the partisans in Rudniki consisted mainly of arming villagers and local police as proxy fighters. Koniuchi was hostile to Soviet requisitioning, and contained Nazi sympathizers who organized ambushes of Soviet partisans—who organized a counterattack and put torch to the village by firing incendiary ammunition into wooden buildings. The pro-Nazi police officers made a last stand and fired back. Around thirty-five villagers, mainly men but also women and children, died in the battle. To date there is no reason to believe any of the people sought by Lithuanian prosecutors were present during this violence.
>
> Was the incident worth a criminal investigation in 2008?[542]

Writing for the Association of Lithuanian Jews in Israel in an article entitled "Falsifying History," Abe Lawre attained new heights in the realm of fantasy and laying blame on the victims of this human tragedy.

> All existing evidence points to the fact … that Kaniukai [Koniuchy] was not an innocent village but a fortified position of the German anti-partisan units and their local collaborators. They roamed the surrounding countryside hunting and killing any partisan and Jew they encountered. Had the garrison of Kaniukai won the battle not a partisan and especially not a Jew would have been spared the torture and cruel death that the locals were so adapt [sic] at.[543]

However, the Jewish partisans who actually took part in the indiscriminate massacre of the civilian population—whose only "crime" was, on occasion, defending their homes from robberies and not supposedly attacking Soviet partisans because of their alleged pro-Nazi sympathies—describe the events in the following graphic terms, without mincing words:

> *Isaac Kowalski:* "Our detachment got the order to destroy everything that was moving and burn the village down to its roots. … after two hours the village with the fortified shelter was completely destroyed."
>
> *Abraham Zeleznikow:* "Partisans come around the village, everything was torched, every animal, every person was killed. And one of my friends, acquaintances, a partisan, took a woman, put her head on a stone, and killed her with a stone."
>
> *Zalman Wylozni:* "the entire village of 80 farmsteads was burned to the ground and its inhabitants were murdered."

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[542] Geoff Vasil, "Analyzing Lithuanian Anti-Semitism: The 'Double Genocide' Theory Refuses to Quit," *Jewish Currents,* November 2008.

[543] Abe Lawre, "Falsifying History," February 20, 2009, Internet: <http://www.lithuanianjews.org.il/HTMLs/article_list4.aspx?C2014=14497&BSP=13973&BSS59=13971>.

> *Paul (Pol) Bagriansky:* "the shooting of the escaping villagers made such a hell of an uproar that no human cry or voice could be heard. The first hour I was standing with the commanding officer and few of his aides on a hill watching this awful inferno. … When I reached my unit I saw one of our people holding the head of a middle aged woman against a big stone and hitting her head with another stone. Each blow was accompanied by sentences like: this is for my murdered mother, this is for my killed father, this is for my dead brother, etc. He was a young man of about 22 years old and I was with him all the time in the underground. He was a friendly and quiet person, I would never have expected to see him doing what he was doing now. …
>
> "When I reached the unit to tell them their new assignment, I saw an awful, gruesome picture. … In a small clearing in the forest six bodies of women of various ages and two bodies of men were lying around in a half circle. All bodies were undressed and lying on their backs. The full moon was shining on them. One man at a time was shooting in between the legs of the dead bodies. When the bullet would strike the nerve the body would react as if were alive. It would shiver, quiver for a few seconds. The women's bodies reacted much more violently than the dead bodies of men. All men of the unit were participating in this cruel play, laughing, in a wild frenzy. …
>
> "Around two o'clock in the morning the village of Koniuchi was completely burned, not one hut was visible, no sound was forthcoming. Presumably all people, including the young, the women and the men were burned, shot … or finished by our men when trying to escape from this hell."

According to Ruzka Korchak, these shocking scenes caused considerable consternation among some of the partisans who participated in the massacre, though she surely exaggerates the extent of that constituency since not one participant who wrote about it openly expressed such humane sentiments.

> This punitive operation, as well as the manner in which it was carried out, caused deep consternation in the Jewish camp and sharp criticism among many fighters. … this cruel operation, prepared and carried out by the military and political leadership of the Brigade, in the course of which men, women and children were killed indiscriminately … Many of the Jewish fighters who took part in the operation returned to the camp shaken and dejected.[544]

The commentary took a rather bizarre twist at the hands of Nick Bravin, who described the enormous international campaign mounted by Jewish circles to pressure the Lithuanian authorities to stop all their investigations and, in advancing a "defence" for one of the alleged participants of the Koniuchy massacre, for which he blames the victims of the "raid," seriously undermined the value of partisan memoirs.

> The Arad case "created so much damage" for Lithuania, [Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Secretary Oskaras] Jusys said, referring to the significant diplomatic pressure imposed by the United States, the European Union, Israel, and international Jewish groups. Lithuania's foreign minister and president appealed personally to the prosecutor to drop the Arad investigation, Jusys said, and in September [1998] the case was closed. But in the meantime, prosecutors had opened investigations into several other Holocaust survivors. …

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[544] Korchak, *Plamia pod peplom,* 321.

> The most public of the ongoing investigations involves Rachel Margolis … who joined the Soviet partisans after escaping the Vilnius [Wilno] ghetto. … In Magolis's memoir, … she recounts a partisan raid on the village of Kaniukai [Koniuchy] in January 29, 1944. Facts about the raid are heavily disputed, including whether the villagers were acting in concert with the Nazis …
>
> According to Margolis's memoir, she did not take part in the Kaniukai raid, but her longtime friend and fellow partisan, Fania Brancovskaja [Brantsovky], did. …
>
> Brancovskaja met with prosecutors last May to explain that she was recovering from an operation at the time of the Kaniukai raid and had not taken part in it. Margolis sent her old friend a letter backing up Brancovskaja's account, and said her memoir should be regarded as literature, not historical fact.[545]

Remarkably, when word got out her alleged wartime exploits the American, Brirtish, Irish, Austrian, and other embassies in Vilnius started to fete Fania Brantsovsky.[546] German President Horst Köhler even bestowed an award on her.[547] British commentators wrote about "the collaboration between ordinary Lithuanians and German occupiers that was in evidence in places like Kanyuki [sic]" and "the battle … between armed pro-Nazi villagers and the [Soviet] partisans," implying that the massacre was "a legitimate partisan military operation, with inevitable civilian casualties."[548]

Some observers were more circumspect. Initially, Antony Polonsky, Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University and editor-in-chief of the journal *Polin,* offered the following matter-of-fact rebuttal—so very different from the obscene media spectacle put on by the defenders of the murderers of the Koniuchy villagers: "partisans often took actions which were quite brutal, and this applies also to Jewish partisans."[549] Further: "The same pertains to the massacre in Koniuchy and the pacification of Naliboki, and the role that Jewish partisans played in them. I have no problem in saying that these people also did

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[545] Nick Bravin, "In Other Words: Baltic Ghosts," *Foreign Policy,* May/June 2009.

[546] Dovid Katz, "'Genocide Industry' Has Hidden Agenda," *Irish Times,* May 30, 2009.

[547] "Germany Awards in Vilnius Former Red Guerrilla Featured in Mass Murder Case," Baltic News Service, www.bns.lt, October 29, 2009.

[548] Gordon Brown, "Women of Courage: Rachel Margolis," *The Independent*, March 9, 2011.

[549] *Voices on Antisemitism*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, November 6, 2008. Internet: <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/focus/antisemitism/voices/>. Professor Polonsky goes on to state: "One of the issues that we have to understand is that all of the countries of Eastern Europe were subjected to two occupations—a Nazi and a Soviet occupation. For the Poles, the Lithuanians, Latvians, the Ukrainians, they were faced with two enemies, or faced with how to choose between them. The Jews were in a different position. For the Jews, the Nazis were unequivocally enemies, whose goal was to destroy physically Jews in Eastern Europe. Soviets were potential allies. So we're talking about a very complicated situation in which two totalitarian systems are in conflict, and in which a lot of innocent people on all sides are suffering. And what we need to do is to understand the complexity of these events and show some empathy for all those people—including Jews—caught up in this tragic conflict."

very bad things."[550] Common decency is as simple as that. In subsequent pronouncements, however, Polonsky sought to justify the actions of the Soviet partisans and essentially accuses the villagers of bringing the tragedy on themselves for allegedly collaborating with the Nazis and "hampering [Soviet] partisan activity." The victims are simply written off as collateral damage of war who, rightly, had it coming to them. Polonsky refuses to acknowledge the impact of the incessant raids that the villagers endured at the hands of the partisans and stubbornly clings to the blatant fiction that there was a garrison in the village of Koniuchy and that the villagers organized ambushes on the roads and attacked villages friendly to the partisans. He dismisses those who have noted that there were many Jews among the partisans who attacked the village as "ethno-nationalists," conveniently forgetting that it was the Jewish partisans themselves who were the first to acknowledge this fact and turned Koniuchy into a central episode of their "military" accomplishments. To suggest, as Polonsky does, that Poles are not aware that Koniuchy was a Soviet-ordered pacification is simply a bizarre subterfuge designed to turn attention away from the grisly crime.

> These conflicts intensified from the end of 1943 when there was an increase in the fighting between Soviet partisans and village self-defence set by German and Lithuanian police in eastern Lithuania. During this period many encounters between partisans and the local police from the villages took place, marked by the arbitrary killing on both sides of suspect civilians. No doubt, many of these suspects were innocent.
>
> One such episode was the attack by Soviet partisan units on the village of Koniuchy (Kaniukai [Kaniūkai]), a village today in Lithuania, but largely inhabited by Poles. At the time of this attack the Soviet partisans were in a critical position and were being harassed by the local police force and its German superiors. …
>
> The action was undertaken by all the partisans in the Rudnicki [Rudniki] forest. Although subsequently, ethno-nationalists in both Lithuania and Poland have claimed that it was a 'Jewish' action, it is not possible definitively to determine the ethnicity of those who participated. … Clearly what was involved was an attack on a village which harboured collaborationist police and had hampered partisan activity. As so often happen in such incidents, there were also many innocent victims.[551]

Other ethno-nationalist historians and publicists have attempted to diminish the importance of the Koniuchy massacre and steer away from the justifiable criticisms of the Jewish partisan narrative by resorting to the rather transparent ploy of accusing Poles of focusing upon Koniuchy to draw attention

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[550] Piotr Zychowicz, "Winni i tak nie przepraszają: Z prof. Anthonym Polonskym rozmawia Piotr Zychowicz," *Rzeczpospolita,* September 20–21, 2008.

[551] Antony Polonsky, "Introduction" to Margolis, *A Partisan from Vilna,* 40–42. Polonsky repeated these charges in The Jews in Poland and Russia, vol. 3, 524–25.

away from their own atrocities.[552] (In fact, the Polish mainstream media avoid mentioning or discussing the Koniuchy massacre, and Poland's Institute of National Remembrance, allegedly a hotbed of Polish nationalism, has published no monograph or article on the topic since launching its investigation in 2001.) Yet, at the same time, they try to shift the blame for the massacre onto the villagers themselves, who allegedly were "regularly used [by the Germans] for violent attacks against local anti-Nazi partisans camped in nearby forests."[553] (How a handful of villagers could have managed to terrorize much larger and well-armed partisan bases is not addressed. In fact, there is no credible account of villagers from Koniuchy attacking Soviet partisans in the Rudniki forest.) Tellingly, these authors are also now quick to discount accounts by Jewish perpetrators that mentioned 300 victims in Koniuchy as exaggerated and take issue with Poles who refer to those numbers. This is in marked contrast to their treatment of the July 1941 massacre in Jedwabne, where they consistently refer to a grossly inflated toll of 1,600 or higher in spite of the fact that the investigation carried out by Poland's Institute of National Remembrance point established that no more than several hundred Jews perished in Jedwabne.[554] Since the perpetrators of the Koniuchy massacre openly and repeatedly boasted of their accomplishment of having annihilated the entire village of Koniuchy and murdered all of its 300 inhabitants, and vilified the villagers in the process, there is really no reason not to mention the higher victim count in the case of Koniuchy. Despite the disparate tolls, Jedwabne and Koniuchy must be treated as equivalent crimes, as both were inspired and planned by Poland's invaders—Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union and carried out with some local collaborators. Finally, the belated

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[552] John Zeleznikow, "Life at the End of the World: A Jewish Partisan in Melbourne," *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History,* vol. 16, no. 3 (Winter 2010): 11–32, here at 20.

[553] Dovid Katz, Review of Marek J. Chodakiewicz's *Intermarium: The Land Between the Black and Baltic Seas, Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs,* vol. 7, no. 2 (spring 2013): 169–75. Katz focuses on the activities of the present-day Lithuanian authorities to draw attention away from the real issue of a ghastly war crime perpetrated against a Polish village.

[554] Antony Polonsky, for example, continues to insist that more than more than 1,000 Jews were killed in Jedwabne. See Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia,* vol. 3, 422. The January 2008 issue of *History* ran a highly charged letter from Joanna Michlic and Antony Polonsky which blatantly misrepresents the findings of the prosecutor of the Jedwabne massacre investigation and historians at the Institute of National Remembrance regarding the number of victims, the respective degree of German and Polish involvement in the crime, and the participation of local Jews in the persecution of Poles during the Soviet occupation. Compare with Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego: Studia; Dokumenty* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2002), vol. 1, 17, 80, 104, 330–31. Polonsky's approach to many complex issues is equally troubling. For example, he reduces the events in Ejszyszki, where the Home Army attacked a home that harboured a Soviet counter-intelligence officer, to "the Polish AK attacking Jews," thereby unwittingly conflating Communists and Jews. See Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia,* vol. 3, 608. Joanna Michlic's standard approach is label historians whose views (and facts) she does not agree with as primitive, blame-shifting "ethno-nationalists" (read: "anti-Semites"), who "use a range of strategies to rationalize and justify early postwar anti-Jewish violence and to minimize its cruel nature." See Joanna B. Michlic, "'The Past That Will Not Go Away:' The Polish Historical Debate about Jan T. Gross's *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz* (2006, 2008) and the Study of Early Postwar Anti-Semitism," Conference Paper, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 17–19, 2009. Michlic's strategy is simply one of attempting to monopolize and control the discourse, and not tolerating any deviation from her own views. (Another example of this approach is her strident review of Gunnar Paulsson's excellent study *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945*.) On the other hand, as is to be expected of someone who sees everything through the prism of anti-Semitism, this ardent champion of Jan Gross's methodology has nothing unfavourable to say about Jews who collaborated with Soviet invaders in 1939–41 and with the postwar Stalinist regime. Although Michlic does not allude to, or concede, the possibility of "ethno-nationalist" Jewish historians, her writings are a clear indication that such historians do in fact exist.

disclosure of the true circumstances of this horrendous crime has unleashed a torrent of contempt for its victims from those who perceive it as a threat to the Jewish nationalist narrative, such as the following ill-informed remarks from an "educator."

> In Lithuania, Soviet led partisans including Jews from the Kovno and Vilnius ghettos attacked Koniuchy which was later described a pro-Nazi town from which Germans launched attacks against partisans. According to various reports several civilians [sic] were killed in the action which has led to it being described as a "massacre."[555]

The significance of the pacification of Koniuchy cannot be overstated. While Jewish partisan groups committed various acts of sabotage (train derailments, cutting down telegraph posts), carried out ambushes of local policemen, and were occasionally involved in skirmishes with small groups of German troops, they did not as a rule engage the Germans in direct military confrontations. The assault on Koniuchy was therefore played up and embellished to enhance their wartime exploits, growing into—reputedly—the largest military operation undertaken by Jewish partisans on Polish territory. The legend that it spawned underscores the following significant facts: (1) the small scale of Jewish partisan warfare; (2) the widespread grassroots conspiracy to tarnish Poles as Nazi collaborators; and (3) the unreliability of memoirs of Jewish partisans as an objective source concerning relations with the Polish population. Accounts from other areas of Poland (for example, Wyszków forest) give further support for this assessment.

As James M. Glass has demonstrated, former Jewish partisans expressed no guilt about taking from the peasants whatever they needed, and spoke of having killed Nazi "sympathizers" without remorse. Revenge was foremost in their minds, and blind hatred, which they projected onto the entire surrounding population, often overwhelmed them. They justified their misdeeds by resorting to a twisted logic. Moreover, they were intensely proud of being Jewish.[556] Therefore, their conduct cannot be simply subsumed under that of Soviet partisans, but must be judged on its own merits, as an expression of their ethnicity.

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[555] "This Day, January 29, in Jewish History by Mitchell A. Levin," Internet: <http://thisdayinjewishhistory.blogspot.com/2019/01/this-day-january-29-in-jewish-history.html>.

[556] Glass, *Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust,* 2–3, 5, 68, 97.

6. The Soviets Lay the Groundwork for Poland's Subjugation

From the summer of 1943, special NKGB (the predecessor of the KGB) sections were attached to all of the Soviet brigades operating in northeastern Poland area.[557] The recruitment tactics initiated at that time did not endear the local population to the Soviet cause:

> Our Russian "advisers" started an intensive recruiting drive among the inhabitants of the villages near us. Many Poles and White Russians were in no hurry to join a partisan unit led by Russians. Poles who had doubts about joining a partisan brigade under Russian command were given short shrift. Anyone who refused the Russians' "invitation" to join their partisan brigade was arbitrarily presumed to be an enemy of the Soviet Union and shot then and there.[558]

A special operational group of the NKVD tasked with counter-intelligence directed at the Polish underground was parachuted into the Nowogródek region in May 1944.[559] Joseph Riwash, a Jew who joined the Voroshilov brigade and was assigned to its "intelligence section," acknowledges that the "political commissars" parachuted into the area "kept a close check on the local populace and radioed its findings to Russia. Hence, when the regular Russian forces moved in, they had enough information to place 'undesirables' … under arrest at once."[560] To be effective they had to rely on intelligence agents as well as on information supplied by local partisans and a network of informants—often recruited under duress—

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[557] Boradyn, "Stosunki Armii Krajowej z partyzantką sowiecką na Nowogródczyźnie," in Boradyn, ed., *Armia Krajowa na Nowogródczyźnie i Wileńszczyźnie (1941–1945)*, 77.

[558] Riwash, *Resistance and Revenge,* 60. A Pole from Lubieszów, in Polesia (Polesie), recalls his arrest, along with more than a dozen Poles, Ukrainians and Russians, by partisans from Fiodorov's "Chernikhovskyi" group in early September 1943. Their hands were tied and they were taken to a remote barn where they were closely guarded. During a brutal interrogation conducted by two young Jews, they were psychologically abused and accused of all sorts of wrongdoing. Although none of those arrested was guilty of any crime, only six of them came out of the ordeal alive. This Pole, one of the lucky ones, was inducted into Fiodorov's Polish partisan unit. See account of Zbigniew Małyszczycki, dated November 23, 1997 (in the author's possession).

[559] Boradyn, *Niemen–rzeka niezgody,* 218.

[560] Riwash, *Resistance and Revenge,* 59. The story of one of the Polish-Jewish agents sent by Moscow to Naliboki forest to carry out "political-educational indoctrination" is recorded in Kowalski, *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939–1945,* vol. 3 (1986), 216–18. However, this account becomes evasive when describing the activities they performed upon arrival there. Another NKVD operative sent to the Soviet partisan base near Lake Narocz in February 1944, was Jan Frey (pseudonym Bielecki), reportedly a prewar Jewish Communist from Łódź. Frey-Bielecki railed against the allegedly "pro-Nazi" Home Army in Soviet propaganda publications. See Borodziewicz, *Szósta Wileńska Brygada AK,* 103 n.7; Tadeusz Paweł Rutkowski, "Frey-Bielecki Jan," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2001), vol. 6, 207. Bielecki, then a captain with the Security Office, became head of the regional Security Office in Kraków in April 1945. At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Polish People's Party in July 1945 he complained that "it is universally known that the managers of the voivodship Security Office are Jews." See Korkuć, *Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce…,* 117, 437.

among the local population.[561] Soviet reports complained that they were generally unsuccessful in recruiting Poles for this purpose.[562] Moreover, the Soviets were not always able to strike immediately and held on to the lists of "anti-Soviet elements" until after the "liberation."[563] One of the tools of the Soviet onslaught was a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign that labelled the Home Army as "fascists," "bandits," "terrorists," "capitalists," "German collaborators," "German spies," and "Gestapo agents."[564] This crude propaganda would leave an indelible mark on Holocaust memoirs.

By February 1944, the list of "anti-Soviet elements" in the district of Baranowicze alone contained 3,927 names for the NKVD–NKGB. By June of 1944, these special sections also managed to liquidate 689 people, a number that did not include those killed by the partisan formations.[565] Between July 1944 and January 1945, the Soviet security apparatus recruited 4,385 people in "Western Belorussia," including 724 agents, 141 residents and 3,517 confidants or informants. During that period the Soviets liquidated 259 "bandit insurgent" groups [i.e., the Polish underground], killing 2,900 of their members and 642 "individual bandits." They also liquidated other "bandit groups," killing 753 of their members and arresting 2,644.[566] In total, between July 1944 and the end of 1947, it is estimated that in the Wilno and Nowogródek regions, the

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[561] According to Soviet archival sources, the Nowogródek region was infested with agents and informants: "by 1 February 1944, the Baranovichi [Baranowicze] regional partisan headquarters … employed the services of 500 agents. At the same time, the 13 partisan brigades that operated in this region received information from 408 agents, who reported directly to the heads of the brigades' reconnaissance sections. In addition, another 270 agents reported to the heads of NKVD special sections, and 100 reported to various other agencies in the headquarters. Finally, 72 agents worked in the headquarters' long-range intelligence service." See Leonid D. Grenkevich, *The Soviet Partisan Movement, 1941–1944: A Critical Historiographical Analysis* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 291–93. Another source refers to more than 2,000 agents active in this area. See Boradyn, "Antyakowskie specjalne wydziały i wywiad baranowickiego zgrupowania partyzantki sowieckiej," in Polak, *Zbrodnie NKWD na obszarze województw wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej,* 265; Boradyn, *Niemen–rzeka niezgody,* 78–79. A Jewish memoir states that there was "a 'spy' left in each village." See Rubin, *Against the Tide,* 112. Village informants were often recruited under duress. See Boradyn, *Niemen–rzeka niezgody,* 211. The Polish underground also maintained their own intelligence-gathering sections aimed at penetrating the network of Soviet spies, whom they also executed. Ibid., 117. Apparently, the Home Army even had a Jewish confidant in the Lenin Brigade. Ibid., 147 n.208. The Soviets executed many Poles suspected of being Home Army "spies." Ibid., 219.

[562] Boradyn, *Niemen–rzeka niezgody,* 136. However, some Poles were also recruited. Ibid., 213–15.

[563] Ibid., 146. The chronicler of the Wilno ghetto noted, already in January 1942, reports that "the Jewish Communists from the ghetto are making a proscription list of all those who will have to be sentenced to death by the future wo[rker's] regime." See Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania,* 168.

[564] Boradyn, *Niemen–rzeka niezgody,* 220–21.

[565] Boradyn, *Niemen–rzeka niezgody,* 78; Boradyn, "Antyakowskie specjalne wydziały i wywiad baranowickiego zgrupowania partyzantki sowieckiej," in Polak, *Zbrodnie NKWD na obszarze województw wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej,* 270.

[566] Chmielarz, et al., *NKWD o polskim podziemiu 1944–1948,* 35.

Soviets killed 3,000 Home Army members, arrested 13,000 members of the Polish underground, and deported 20,000 civilians to the Gulag.[567]

As the Soviet Army was poised to re-enter prewar Polish territory in the summer of 1944, Stalin issued orders (Decree no. 220145 of July 14, 1944) calling for the open liquidation of the Polish underground forces—the Home Army—operating in that area. On July 20 field orders directed that officers of the Polish underground be directed to the organs of the NKVD–NKGB and "Smersh."[568] According to a report filed in mid-July 1944 by Colonel Ivan Serov, the NKVD regiments in the Wilno region totalled 12,000 men.[569] The Home Army was being systematically disarmed and many of its members fled to central Poland, to the forests or to their homes hoping to escape capture. This did not deter the Soviet "liberators" and their accomplices, however, from relentlessly hunting down the remnants and new recruits. By August 3, 1944 almost 8,000 Home Army members in the Wilno region were "disarmed," of whom 4,400 were interned. What this injustice and tragedy meant is vividly illustrated by Polish reports and eyewitness accounts.

Those who attempt to blame the Poles for how events unfolded in Eastern Poland are far off the mark. As American historian Timothy Snyder explains,

> Polish commanders did make local agreements with Soviet counterparts in summer 1944, but at a very heavy price. Negotiation meant leaving hiding places and revealing identities, and the Soviets exploited Polish vulnerability to the maximum. Poles who revealed themselves to join the common fight against Germans were treated as people who might resist future Soviet rule. The Soviet Union never had any intention of supporting any institution that claimed to represent an independent Poland. The Soviet leadership and the NKVD treated every Polish political organization (except the communists) as part of an anti-Soviet plot.
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> In July 1944, Polish units were allowed to assist the Red Army in attacks on Vilnius [Wilno] and Lviv [Lwów], the major cities of prewar eastern Poland, but were then disarmed by their ostensible Soviet allies. The Polish soldiers were given the choice of Soviet command or prison. After the disarmaments, the NKVD arrested everyone with a political past. Soviet partisans were allowed to take part in the victorious campaign against the Germans; Polish partisans were not. Indeed, in

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[567] Henryk Piskunowicz, "Zwalczanie polskiego podziemia przez NKWD i NKGB na kresach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej," in Andrzej Ajnenkiel, ed., *Wojna domowa czy nowa okupacja? Polska po roku 1944* (Wrocław, Warsaw and Kraków: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1998), 70. According to another source, by March 1945, more than 7,000 Polish partisans were arrested in "Western Ukraine" and more than 11,340 in the Wilno region. The number arrested in "Western Belorussia" amounted to 13,329 by March 1947. See Brzoza and Sowa, *Historia Polski 1918–1945,* 649.

[568] For additional information about the NKVD operations against the Home Army see Andrzej Paczkowski's essay, "Poland, the 'Enemy Nation,'" in Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartošek, Jean-Louis Margolin, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, Massacusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 372–75.

[569] Noskowa and Fitowa, *NKWD i polskie podziemie 1944–1945,* 40.

many cases Soviet partisans were turned against the Polish fighters. The partisan unit of Tuvia Bielski, for example, took part in the disarming of the Home Army.[570]

The search for Polish partisans who tried to escape their predestined fate was carried out with exceptional brutality. Any Home Army member was automatically considered to have been a Nazi "collaborator." A member of the "Struggle" detachment from Rudniki forest recalled the eagerness and sense of satisfaction with which Jewish partisans joined in these duplicitous operations.

> Our first meeting with the Red Army was very emotional. We received an order to join them and move towards Vilne [Wilno]. We reached a forest near Vilne and stopped there. We heard a gun battle from the city and the Soviet officers told us that there was a battle between Germans and White Poles who had surfaced to occupy Vilne before Russia got control of the city. The Russians patiently waited at the edges of the woods so both sides would attrit one another and then they [the Russians] could enjoy the fruits of victory.
>
> At the height of the battle some high ranking Russian officers appeared including the famed writer Ilya Ehrenburg. We told them what things the White Poles had committed against us and requested permission to enter the city and take revenge. We were denied. Ilya Ehrenburg told us that the actions of the White Poles were well–known, and that their day of retribution was approaching.
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> After the battling ceased we received an order to enter the city. At the entrance to the city the White Poles greeted us wearing white bands on their sleeves, holding a red–white flag, smiling and happy, as if to say, "Look! We have conquered the city." My blood boiled. I wanted to avenge the blood of my family and the blood of all Jews, but we received a strict order to not harm them.
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> After the Red Army gained control of Vilne we received an order to concentrate all the White Poles in a forest near Vilne, under the guise of enlisting them in the Wanda Wasilewska army. We fulfilled the order enthusiastically; we knew what it meant. A few thousand Poles were gathered in the woods and a large NKVD force surrounded them. The Poles began to understand that they had been set up and attempted to escape, but to no avail. They were loaded onto cars, led to the train station, placed on train cars, and sent to an unknown destination.
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> After the city was liberated I was appointed Secretary of the First Division of the militia and served as an interrogator of atrocities committed by White Poles. We captured many Poles who had hidden in the woods and pestered Soviet convoys. I did my best to retaliate, and although they begged for their life, I was fortunate to be able to take revenge.[571]

Candid Jewish sources—such as the one below, which describe conditions in Wilno and its surroundings—confirm this information:

> Those who returned from the forests, from the forced labor camps in Estonia, and from hiding places in the villages, bitter individuals and armed groups, killed more than a few Polish and Lithuanian collaborators, and those who accompanied groups of German prisoners meted out their

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[570] Snyder, *Bloodlands,* 299.

[571] Michael Dubinski, "From Partisan Unit—to the *Palmach* Brigade," in Shtokfish, *Sefer Divenishok,* 200 ff.

> own brand of justice, "as only partisans knew how," said [Abba] Kovner. "It was a terrible sight," [Vitka] Kempner told [Haim] Guri. "Our men screamed and cried out for vengeance for their mothers and sisters, and I think they simply killed them on the spot." When the Soviet government stabilized, killings by Jews stopped, at least officially.[572]

These descriptions accord with a Polish underground dispatch of July 1944 sent to the Government Delegate,

> After Grodno was occupied by the Bolsheviks, Jewish bands entered the town in conjunction with the band of Wasilewski, who is paid and armed by the Bolsheviks. Both bands conduct themselves aggressively toward the Poles; they murder [people]. The same thing has been occurring in the environs of Białystok.[573]

Wanda Lisowska, a prewar teacher from Nowogródek and a courier for the Home Army, who was arrested by the Soviets in the fall of 1944, recorded the following in 1946:

> They [the Soviets] conducted massive round-ups. It happened this way: they would arrive around two or three o'clock in the morning, surround the village and conduct house-to-house searches looking for arms and taking away the men. The prisons in the neighbouring towns of Raduń and Ejszyszki were overflowing. … The NKGB interrogations were savage: they were conducted mainly at night. The numerous informers were mostly recruited from among the Jews who occupied positions in the military, NKVD, and NKGB and worked as confidants. … Partisan [Polish Home Army] units, not wanting the civilian population to suffer on account of these denunciations, liquidated Soviet confidants. …
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> Right after the battle of Surkonty, I was arrested. I was bringing civilian clothing to the soldiers in a hideout. … They took us to Raduń. The men were locked in a stable and I, in a dark chamber. They held me for two weeks. The interrogations took place at night. On the first night I was interrogated seven times. … The interrogations were ordinary: one was beaten. Their purpose was to elicit information about AK detachments. The men were treated much worse. They were tortured, beaten, their ribs were broken, their teeth knocked out. … In towns, the prisoners were held for up to two weeks, then they were taken to Wilno or Lida for trial. Trains departed for Siberia every two weeks. …
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> In December 1944, in Wilno, the arrests were so massive that the NKVD were stationed in almost every apartment building arresting anyone who entered. In Wilno, there were sixteen prisons; in Łukiszki there was tremendous overcrowding. It was very difficult to get information about those

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[572] Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow,* 187. Porat states that Abba Kovner destroyed Gestapo files concerning Jewish collaborators, so that they would not fall into the hands of the Soviet authorities and be used against Jews. To obtain documents and pemits needed by his organization, Kovner turned to former Jewish partisans, such as Yosef Harmatz and Senka Nisanelewicz, who had been given jobs in key positions in the Soviet bureacracy. Ibid., 186–88. Kovner was able to enter Poland wearing a Polish Army uniform, which he obviously acquired illegally, with the assistance of Jews serving in the Polish Army. Ibid., 189.

[573] Referat Komunistyczny, Attachment (załącznik) no. 1, July 19, 1944, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Delegatura Rządu, file 202/II–58, 76.

arrested. They took them away and they disappeared like a rock in water. The families brought packages to all the prisons and received the same answer—"not here."

Christmas 1944 was a very sad day all over the Wilno district. On the second day of the holidays a large transport filled with Poles left for Siberia.[574]

Confirmation of Lisowska's experience can be found in the memoirs of Abraham Lipkunsky, a Jew who joined the NKVD in July 1944. Lipkunsky was part of a small group of Jews who served in a "special combat sector" of a Red Army. His unit was transferred to Raduń "to maintain order in the town and to purge the area of criminals, meaning the White Poles who hated the Red Army and the Soviet regime." Lipkunsky, who served as aide to General Mayor, head of the Security police in Raduń, readily admits that the surviving Jews "were focued at first on wreaking vengeance."[575]

I was attached to the security police, known as the NKVD, whose principal responsibility was to help the Red Army uncover White Poles and bring them to the security police to be investigated. It was an unpleasant and dangerous task. The neighborhood of Radun contained hundreds of White Poles …

As I knew the dusty lanes and paths leading to the villages around Dowgalishok [Dowgieliszki, a rural settlement near Raduń], I was attached to a Red Army unit as guide and scout. I was given a uniform of the Red Army and I would go out mounted on a small horse at the head of a company of soldiers, and lead them to the villages where there were nests of White Poles and show them how to surround the villages and cut off any possibility of entering or leaving them. After that, searches were made in the houses of the suspects. A good many weapons were confiscated and scores of suspects were taken to be interrogated. Anyone who objected, would be shot on the spot.

Despite my revulsion at the task, I was glad that I had been chosen to fulfil such a dangerous mission, for in this way I could take my revenge in some way against the murderer of my father and all the innocent Jews of Dowgalishok.

The security police in Radun were stationed in the spacious house that had formerly belonged to Berl Lipkunsky, the tailor of Dowgalishok. The many rooms were turned into interrogation cells and the enormous storeroom became a temporary prison. The prisoners were crowded into a corner of the storeroom, enclosed and fenced in like in a sheepfold and there was barely enough room for everyone to stretch out. Occasionally, I was asked to be present during an investigation and assist in questioning, which generally took place at night. Some of the methods used during these

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[574] Wanda Lisowska, "Wspomnienia 'Grażyny,'" *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), no. 36 (1976): 30–33. The participation of Jews in the repression of Home Army members was a widely held perception. According to a report from February 1945, in the Wilno and Nowogródek regions, "the NKVD with the assistance of the remaining Jews has been carrying out bloody orgies. The [Polish] population under the leadership of the AK has been resisting heroically and it trusts in the urgent assistance of the legal [Polish] government [in London]." Of course, no such help was on the horizon. See Franciszek Gryciuk and Piotr Matusak, eds., *Represeje NKWD wobec żołnierzy podziemnego Państwa Polskiego w latach 1944–1945: Wybór źródeł,* vol. 2 (Siedlce: WSRP, 1995), 24–25. Irena Chodakiewicz, a liaison officer for the Polish government in exile's Delegate's Office, was arrested by the NKVD in Wilno in June 1945. Jews were among her interrogators and torturers, who also included Soviets and Poles, in Wilno, and later in Warsaw, when she was recaptured. See Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955,* 423–24.

[575] Aviel, *A Village Named Dowgalishok,* 289–93. Another Jew who worked as an official for the NKVD was Laike Slodovnik. Ibid., 299.

interrogations are still fresh in mind. It was then that I learned that the interrogator always sat unrevealed in the darker shadows of the room, while a strong electric lamp illuminated the face of the suspect. And when the answer to the interrogator's question was not satisfactory, he would make use of an improvised whip made of supple metal wire and lash the suspect all over his body. I also learned the effect of isolation, hunger and thirst on a prisoner.

… One morning, as I was passing the large community center in the heart of the marketplace, I witnessed a sight one could not forget. Scores of bodies were lying one next to the other along the wall of the building, with their heads near the wall and their feet facing outward. The previous day, the White Poles had attacked soldiers of the Red Army and murdered seven in the most ruthless manner. In response to this act, the Red Army soldiers carried out a search in the vicinity of this incident and killed scores of White Poles by slitting their throats, placing them on public display for everyone to witness the bodies which remained there for two whole days.[576]

Similar reports—such as the one below—come from those imprisoned in Lida. Edward Dragun, who hails from the Lida area, escaped from Miedniki where the Soviets assembled the Home Army men who had just helped to liberate the city of Wilno from the Germans.

I escaped and returned home where I spent some time. Then I stayed with friends in Lida. We tried to leave for Poland, as they were already registering [Poles for this purpose]. The arrests became more frequent and the jails were full of people. I heard the tragic news that my older brother perished in a German concentration camp and another brother perished near our home. He was shot by Soviet soldiers. I didn't make it to the funeral. I was now all alone. That brother had never been anywhere and had not belonged to any organization. He was married and looked after the farm. I had had enough of everything because I had lost my entire family because of it. To live or to perish—it didn't make any difference to me. But why did my brother have to perish? Because he was a Pole?

I hid for quite some time. I was the deputy commander of the district and had only one thought—to leave for Poland. We didn't succeed; we were arrested. I was badly beaten immediately and my hands were tied with wire the entire time. We were led to Lida over 15 km away. In Lida they made a point of taking us to the place where the leader of our battalion, Lieutenant Pazurkiewicz, was left hanging. I was told that a similar fate awaited me.

Near the NKVD premises was a small home which served as the detention centre. I met a lot of acquaintances who had been there for quite some time. The interrogations lasted throughout the day and night. Everyone returned beaten and was barely able to stand on his feet. I myself was beaten on the neck with a special triangular-shaped billet and then with a rod 25 mm thick and about one-and-a-half metres long. We were hardly given anything to eat …

And for many of us our Polish patriotism came to an end. We saw that they wanted to annihilate us Poles in any way possible. They took us to the jail in groups and there we were investigated, beaten and called "fascist Polish mugs." … We were chewed up by lice and with our blood we wrote dates and names on the walls. More and more people moved about with difficulty after their

[576] Aviel, *A Village Named Dowgalishok,* 290–92. Aviel states that, unusually, he testified on behalf of a Polish farmer named Andzielewicz, who at one point had sheltered him and his father, and Andzielwicz's son, both of who were imprisoned for their connections with the Home Army. He does not know to what extent this helped them.

heavy beatings …

The jail was located on Syrokomla Street in Lida. The day came when four of us were taken before the court and our sentence was read to us: ten years and loss of rights for five years, in other words we faced exile after our jail term was over. This was the sentence for "killing and robbing people." In my final words I said, "Indicate even one person whom I have killed or whom I have robbed. And did I betray my homeland? I am a Pole so let a Polish court try me." The judge, a Jewish colonel, smiled and said that the next time I will be tried by a polar bear in Siberia.[577]

As we have seen, the net was much broader than Home Army men. Leonard Perepeczko, a Polish doctor from Szumsk, near Wilno, recalls his own arrest, on January 10, 1945, from his hospital office, by an NKVD lieutenant named Finkelstein, a Jew, for political reasons totally unrelated to Home Army activities. In Wilno, where his show trial took place and from which he was sent to a hard labour camp in Saratov without a specific verdict, he was under the watchful eyes of a Jewish militiaman named Kaplan.[578]

Field reports from Colonel Serov about the progress of this action in the Wilno area poured into Moscow, and these were passed on by Lavrentii Beria to Stalin himself.[579] A telling indicator of the extent of the oppression of the Home Army (commonly referred to as "bandits" in both Nazi and Soviet reports) is found in the research done by Lithuanian historian Arūnas Bubnys, summarized as follows:

The Soviet Union has never considered the Armia Krajowa (AK) its ally and made every effort to annihilate the armed underground movement of Poles in [the interwar Polish territories incorporated into] Lithuania. The process of the annihilation of the Polish underground movement is generally divided into three periods.

During the first period of the campaign in July 1944, the Soviets interned the AK units of the Vilnius [Wilno] and Naugardukas [Nowogródek] districts. The Soviets arrested the district commander A. [Aleksander] Krzyżanowski, a number of commanding officers and about 7,900 soldiers. Nevertheless the Polish underground movement survived and continued its activities.

During the second period between July 1944–February, 1945, the NKVD–NKGB launched regular operations against the Polish underground. The campaign reached its peak in December 1944–January 1945. At the time, the operations against armed resistance in Lithuania were directed by S. Kruglov, the NKVD assistant commissar. During this period NKVD troops transferred to and concentrated in Lithuania from other regions of the USSR and reinforced by a number of NKGB

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577 Edward Dragun, "Życie i jego ciernista droga," *Wspomnienia Sybiraków* (Warsaw: Komisja Historyczna Związku Sybiraków, 1989), vol. 1: 51–52. Among those working in the jail in Lida was Icchak Lewin, a former partisan based in Lipiczany forest. See his account in the Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2129, cited in Czajka, Młodkowska, and Umińska-Keff, *Relacje z czasów Zagłady Inwentarz/Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue,* vol. 3, 60.

578 Leonard Perepeczko, *W łagrach na "saratowskim szlaku": Wspomnienia* (Wrocław: Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze, 1993), 7, 40, 42, 254.

579 Some of these documents, only recently made public, were published by Russian historian Sergey Krivenko in the Warsaw historical journal *Karta*, no. 15 (1995): 28–51 as "Teczka Stalina: raporty z Polski"; another selection of Soviet documents describing the activities directed against the Polish underground can be found in Noskowa and Fitowa, *NKWD i polskie podziemie, 1944–45.*

> operatives handed a severe blow to the Polish underground. They arrested the executives of the AK staff and of the Government Commissioner's [Delegate's] office to the Vilnius District. Between December 20, 1944 and February 6, 1945, the NKVD–NKGB arrested 9,249 Poles. After such big losses the process of gradual abatement of Polish resistance had started. Facing the Soviet terror many Poles of Lithuania decided to repatriate to Poland.
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> During the third period from March 1945 until the autumn of the same year the AK units had finally ceased their activities, and Polish partisans persuaded by the NKVD–NKGB reported themselves to Soviet authorities. The last Commandant of the Vilnius district Wincenty Chrząszczewski ("Ksawery") was arrested on July 18, 1945. Between July 1944 and May 20, 1945 the NKGB arrested or detained 7,116 participants of the Polish underground and the activities of the AK in Lithuania were suppressed.[580]

A similar situation pertained in other Soviet-occupied territories. In the latter part of 1944 repressions openly targeted all persons with ties to the anti-Communist underground. At the beginning of October 1944 an 8,850-strong NKVD division was sent to Lublin; its activities were coordinated with the State Security Office (*Urząd Bezpieczństwa,* popularly known as Bezpieka) and counter-intelligence section of the Communist Polish Army.[581] The functionaries of the State Security Office excelled in brutality in the line of duty, and were frequently involved in "ordinary" criminal activities in the field such as plunder and robberies. Poles who collaborated with the Germans also joined their ranks and occupied important positions in other state offices.[582]

Lieutenant General Viktor Akabumov, the chief of military counter-intelligence ("Smersh") informed Beria, on November 13, 1944, about the deportation of 1,014 members of the Home Army from the Białystok region to the NKVD camp in Ostashkov, and reiterated that since the beginning of the operation 2,044 partisans had been arrested and deported. A report from November 14, 1944, by Ivan Serov, by then chief of NKVD operations in Poland, spoke of the arrest of 2,210 Home Army soldiers in the Lublin region. By December 31, 1944, the county Security Offices of Lublin province had arrested 4,954 people, half of them suspected Home Army members. According to Soviet figures, the NKVD had arrested 3,375 people

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[580] Arūnas Bubnys, "NKGB–NKVD prieš lenkų pogrindį Lietuvoje 1944 m. antroje pusėje–1945 m. pirmoje pusėje," *Genocidas ir rezistencija,* no. 2 (6), 1999, posted online at <http://www.tdd.lt/genocid/Leidyba/6/arunas6.htm>. According to an earlier study by that historian, between July 1944 and January 1945, the Soviets arrested some 11,500 Home Army members in the territory of Soviet Lithuania alone. See Bubnys, "Walka NKGB-NKWD z polskim podziemiem na Litwie w drugiej połowie 1944 r.–na początku 1945 r.," in Wołkonowski, *Sympozjum historyczne "Rok 1944 na Wileńszczyźnie,"* 205. According to another report, between August 20 and September 10, 1944, NKVD forces liquidated 14 Polish partisan groups in the districts of Baranowicze and Wilejka, then in Soviet Belorussia, killing 281 Polish partisans and capturing 103 of them. See Boradyn, ed., *Armia Krajowa na Nowogródczyźnie i Wileńszczyźnie (1942–1944) w świetle dokumentów sowieckich,* 227. It was in the context of this mop-up operation that Polish partisans struck at NKVD outposts and Soviet functionaries. Ibid., 230–44. See also Chmielarz, "Likwidacja podziemia polskiego na Nowogródczyźnie i Wileńszczyźnie (lipiec 1944–lipiec 1945)," in Boradyn, ed., *Armia Krajowa na Nowogródczyźnie i Wileńszczyźnie (1941–1945),* 171–95.

[581] Wnuk, *Lubelski Okręg AK DSZ i WiN, 1944–1947,* 35.

[582] For example, two collaborators sentenced to death by the Polish underground, a Gestapo driver named Urbański and Wierciak, became, respectively, the secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party in Lębork and an army prosecutor in Poznań. See Gondek, *Polska karząca 1939–1945,* 62–63 n.79.

and deported them to the Soviet interior. Polish historians estimate that the actual number of those arrested was closer to 20,000, of whom half were deported to the Soviet Union.[583]

Without the support of the NKVD and Soviet advisers in the Security Office and in the Communist-controlled Polish Army, the chances of local Communists winning the war against the anti-Communist Polish underground and holding onto power were negligible. The local apparatus was so ineffective that the task of keeping the Communists in power fell to the NKVD forces stationed in Poland.[584] After the defeat of Nazi Germany in May 1945, the Communist authorities embarked on anti-partisan operations which were conducted in conjunction with the Red Army and NKVD forces. The first large-scale "anti-bandit" operation directed against the anti-Communist insurgents, the so-called Augustów round-up (*obława augustowska*), was carried in the vicinity of Augustów and Suwałki between July 10 and 25, 1945. It resulted in the arrest some 2,000 partisans, of whom about 600 disappeared. With the release of secret Soviet documents, it is now known that Lieutenant General Abakumov, the head of "Smersh," ordered their execution. In addition to units of the NKVD, Security Office, Internal Security Corps (*Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego—KBW*), and Citizens' Militia (*Milicja Obywatelska—MO*), all of which had Soviet advisers in key positions, 1,739 soldiers of the Polish Army took part in these operations.[585] In December 1945, the Ministry of Public Security ordered that a plan be drawn up to eradicate totally all remnants of the underground once and for all.[586] Anti-partisan operations intensified again after the falsified national referendum in July 1946, when more than 250,000 soldiers, Internal Security Corps personnel, militiamen and Security Office functionaries were mobilized for this task.[587] In September 1946, in Operation "Lawina," 167 National Armed Forces soldiers were murdered in the forests near Opole.

A large network of agents and informers was enrolled in the field to assist the NKVD and communist security forces to accomplish these measures. As we have seen, Poles, whether suspected of being ill-disposed toward the Soviets or of anti-Semitic activities, not only were apprehended in large number but also could be, and were, executed extrajudicially with impunity. Entire Polish families were often liquidated and the perpetrators could count on the authorities turning a blind eye to such atrocities directed

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583 Ibid., 35–36.

584 Ibid., 79.

585 Ibid., 86. See also Jan Jerzy Milewski, Anna Pyżewska, and Tomasz Danilecki, eds., *Obława Augustowska (lipiec 1945 r.): Wybór źródeł* (Białystok: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Oddział w Białymstoku, 2010).

586 Wnuk, *Lubelski Okręg AK DSZ i WiN, 1944–1947,* 87.

587 Ibid., 98.

at Poles.[588] For example, in Drohiczyn, not far from Brańsk, ten Poles were murdered by local Jews in December 1944 because they were falsely suspected of killing a Jew, a crime in fact perpetrated by the Soviets.[589] While Jews were eager to take revenge against Poles, they were far less successful in going after Jewish collaborators. Benjamin Lubicz, the head of the Jewish police in Międzyrzec Podlaski, assisted the Germans in rounding up Jews and captured those hidden in ghetto bunkers. After learning that some Jewish partisans had issued a death sentence against him, Lubicz helped the German gendarmerie organize a raid in which four Jewish partisans were killed. According to a survivor,

> After the liberation, Lubicz and his wife returned to Międzyrzec in July 1944 from their hideout. The Jews convoked a court of ten people (I was among them). They resolved to kill him. I was supposed to carry out the sentence. This was two days after we had killed a Polish traitor who had betrayed Jews. The majority of our court considered it unseemly in front of Poles for Jews to kill a Jew. It was decided to take him to the ghetto and kill him there clandestinely. Lubicz found out, or perhaps someone told him, so he fled.
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> After some time more Jewish traitors returned: [Alter] Szejmel, the vice president of the Judenrat and organizer of the Ordnungsdienst [Jewish ghetto police], the policeman Topf [Szymon Tob], and others. We decided to kill all of them. At that time, however, Sommersztajn [Emil Sommerstein], the chairman of the Jewish Committee in Lublin, arrived and did not allow it. We did not carry out the sentence. Some time later I organized an investigation commission and we gathered documents and materials regarding these traitors. We gave these documents to the Central Committee [of Jews in Poland], but until this time [April 1948] they haven't been used. We handed Topf over to the state prosecutors but he bribed the entire police in Międzyrzec

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[588] An exceptional case where the Polish authorities took some action to punish a perpetrator is that of a Mr. Godlewski, who returned to Poland with the Polish Army. Having learned that his family, who had been hidden and sheltered by a local Polish farmer, was betrayed to the Germans (both Godlewski's family and the Polish farmer's perished), he took his submachine gun and killed the entire family of the informer. However, Godlewski was declared insane and soon released; he was placed as a security guard at a Jewish orphanage in Łódź, where he used to say: "Don't worry one little bit, I have my papers from the insane asylum, they can do nothing to us." See Sven Sonnenberg, *A Two Stop Journey to Hell* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2001).

[589] *Archiwum Polski Podziemnej 1939–1956: Dokumenty i materiały,* no. 2 (Warsaw, April 1994), 80. For other examples of extrajudicial killings perpetrated by Jews after the Soviet takeover see Norman Salsitz and Amalie Petranker Salsitz, *Against All Odds: A Tale of Two Survivors* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1990), 5, 37–41. Of course, Poles could also be reported to the authorities and prosecuted through legal channels. See, for example, Salsitz, *Three Homelands,* 143–44, 202, whose author, an officer in the security forces, had Polish betrayers arrested; and Verstandig, *I Rest My Case,* 221–21, whose author pursued Józef Makson, a Home Army member, for the murder of some Jews (Makson was sentenced to death). Posecutions for alleged theft of property were also not unknown. Julian and Emilia Ajzner had Norbert Krotowski prosecuted criminally for allegedly misappropriating property they left in his possession, but after witnesses testified in court proceedings that the property in question had been destroyed during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, the charges against Krotowski were withdrawn. See Barbara Engelking, "Czarna godzina: Rzeczy żydowskie oddana na przechowanie Polakom," in Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 421–22. Lesser forms of vengeance were also extacted to settle even "prewar" accounts and then some, as in the case of Norman Salsitz, who ran into someone who had harassed him as a youth in Kolbuszowa, and was a soldier in Wrocław: "Years had passed, but the idea of revenge still seemed altogether fitting … When I learned that his commanding officer was a friend of mine, a plan took shape in my mind. I instructed that officer to proceed to make life miserable for Plaza, which he did. Week after week Plaza came under mounting pressure—endless drills, laborious work assignments, leaves canceled—altogether a nightmare. … Now we were even" See Norman Salsitz, as told to Richard Skolnik, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland: Remembering Kolbuszowa* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 198.

> Podlaski and fled.[590] He was in the United States, but is now in Cuba. We also arrested Lubicz but he gave the State Security office in Międzyrzec a bribe of $300 and fled. Afraid of standing trial, Szejmel left for Belgium.[591]

There was no need to resort to extrajudicial punishment of alleged Polish "collaborators." Jews and Jewish organizations had ample recourse to the Communist state apparatus to pursue any Pole suspected of involvement in crimes against Jews during the German occupation and afterwards. Charges could be laid easily and the authorities prosecuted hundreds of such cases expeditiously. It was highly unusual for an ethnic Pole to bribe his way out. There was an abundance of Polish witnesses who came forward to testify on behalf of victimized Jews, and punishment, including incarceration and sometimes death, was meted out

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590 The fate of Szymon Tob, referred to here as Topf, is described later on. After breaking out of jail, he was tried *in absentia*.

591 Testimony of Lejb Goldberg, April 15, 1948, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/3502.

to hundreds of Poles.[592] Norman Davies described the new "legal" framework put in place to eliminate alleged Nazi collaborators and all opposition to the Stalinist regime:

> On 31 August, [1944] … [the Soviet-installed Lublin Committee, Poland's provisional government-in-waiting] passed a decree 'for the punishment of fascist-Hitlerite criminals … and of Traitors of

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[592] The Communist authorities were generally quick to take action against crimes allegedly committed against Jews during the German occupation, and often dealt with the perpetrators harshly. According to historian Alina Cała, there were many such cases:

> the most dramatic and conflict-engendering cases involving Jews and Poles were reflected in the interventions undertaken by the Legal Department of the CKŻP [Central Committee of Polish Jews], where Jewish lawyers were available to help. First of all, these cases concerned the [alleged Nazi] collaborators, who participated during the [German] occupation in the Holocaust, denouncing or murdering Jews. Basing themselves upon written denunciations of both Jewish and non-Jewish witnesses, these cases were forwarded to the courts or the UBP [secret police]. The first trials took place in 1944 in Lublin and their number was not small.

The Committee's lawyers occasionally intimidated witnesses or manipulated an investigation in their zeal to incriminate Polish defendants. See Alina Cała, "Mniejszość żydowska," in Piotr Madajczyk, ed., *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce: Państwo i społeczeństwo polskie a mniejszości narodowe w okresach przełomów politycznych (1944-1989)* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1998), 259–60. Numerous investigations and cases were brought against Poles in the Białystok and Łomża regions. See Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego,* vol. 1, 22–23, 159–271 (Jedwabne, Radziłów); Waldemar Monkiewicz, "Za cenę życia: O ratowaniu Żydów w Białostockiem o okresie okupacji niemieckiej," in Dobroński and Monkiewicz, *Białostoccy Żydzi*, vol. 2, 236 (a mentally unbalanced person who, out of fear, reported a Jew hiding in the village was sentenced to life imprisonment); Jerzy Morawski, "Kto ich zabił," *Życie Warszawy,* August 12–13, 1995 (Podosie); Anna Pyżewska, "Tragedia w Sokołach—17 lutego 1945 r.," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 12 (2005): 80 (Sokoły). For additional examples of the many prosecutions that took place throughout the country see: Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed,* 253; Grynberg, *Księga sprawiedliwych,* 236 (against a Gestapo confidant of undisclosed nationality); 444–45; Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 88; Zdzisław Biegański, "Kara śmierci w orzecznictwie Specjalnych Sądów Karnych w Polsce (1944–1946)," *Echa przeszłości* (Olsztyn: Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski, 2004), vol. 5, 197; Dariusz Libionka, "Polska ludność chrześcijańska wobec eksterminacji Żydów—dystrykt lubelski," in Libionka, *Akcja Reinhardt,* 317, 332; Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Podziemie antykomunistyczne wobec Żydów po 1945 roku—wstęp do problematyki (na przykładzie województwa kieleckiego)," and Anna Pyżewska, "Losy ludności żydowskiej w województwie białostockim w latach 1944–1949—wybrane problemy," in Jacek Wijaczka and Grzegorz Miernik, eds., *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich: Polityka, gospodarka, kultura, społeczeństwo* (Kraków: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu and Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego "Societas Vistulana," 2005), 249–95; Alina Skibińska and Jakub Petelewicz, "Udział Polaków w zbrodniach na Żydach na prowincji regionu świętokrzyskiego," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały,* vol. 1 (2005): 118–24, 136–38; Engelking, Leociak, and Libionka, *Prowincja noc,* 365, 417, 420, 438, 478; Alina Skibińska and Jakub Petelewicz, "The Participation of Poles in Crimes Against Jews in the Świętokrzyskie Region," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 35, no. 1 (2007): 1–44; Dariusz Libionka and Paweł P. Reszka, "Święto zmarłych w Rechcie," *Karta* (Warsaw), no. 46 (2005): 122–35; Martin Dean, "Poles in the German Local Police in Eastern Poland and their Role in the Holocaust," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 18 (2005): 353–66; Andrzej Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego: Żydzi na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej. Wrzesień 1939—lipiec 1941* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2006), 339; Amiram Barkat, "Poland to probe 1940s murder after Israeli meets alleged killer," *Haaretz,* April 2, 2006 (Przegaliny, near Komarówka Podlaska); Henryk Lubraniecki, who was confined in the ghetto in Krośniewice, near Kutno, declared: "I want to underline that the Poles helped us a great deal." See Dorota Sierpacka, "Postawy Polaków wobec ludności żydowskiej w Kraju Warty," in Aleksandra Namysło, ed., *Zagłada Żydów na polskich terenach wcielonych do Rzeszy* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2008), 204–5, n.59.

The following are but a few specific examples. Rozalia Borczyk of Wielkie Oczy was sentenced to prison by the military court for revealing to the Germans the hiding place of Wollf Kałman. See the account of Kazimierz Sawiński in Majus, *Wielkie Oczy,* which is also posted at <http://wielkieoczy.itgo.com/Memories/KS.htm>. A Czech who had deserted from the German army and joined the People's Army, where he took part in many daring missions against German troops, was denounced by his girlfriend after the war "for having killed Jews before joining us. He was tried by a Polish court, and served a term in prison." See Gruber, *I Chose Life,* 146. Two Home Army members who robbed and killed some Jews hiding in a forest bunker near Tomaszów Mazowiecki were sentenced to death in 1950 (the senetnce was later commuted to 15-years imprisonment). See Marcin Stelmasiak, "Mord Żydów pod Tomaszowem: IPN umorzył śledtwo," *Gazeta Wyborcza,* July 20, 2004. Jacob Silberbach filed charges against 6 persons in Kraków for having denounced his son to Germans and using their connections in the militia to organize an attempt on his life after the war, which was foiled, in order to cover up the crime. One of the denouncers, an illiterate "with imbecilic

> the Polish Nation.' Published some weeks later but put into immediate effect, this draconian decree made provision for special penal courts and for the punishment of offenders, but equally of their aiders and abettors. It listed a huge range of punishments, from the death sentence to imprisonment, hard labour, confiscation, and loss of civil rights. Most shamefully, since it made no attempt to define treason, it placed all the Committee's political opponents in the category of potential traitors. Other organs were leaving no margin of doubt over who was to be targeted. On 4 September, the Committee's main newspaper issued an article entitled. 'We warn you', which contained the chilling sentences: 'He who opposes the Polish Camp (i.e., the Lublin Committee) is the same as a member of the Nazi Camp. No third camp exists.' In other words, since an earlier decree had declared all conspiratorial organizations to be illegal, all members of the Home Army, including those fighting the Nazis, were deemed to be Nazi supporters.[593]

Meanwhile, crimes committed by Jews and others during the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland in 1939–1941 went unpunished, while crimes by Stalinist henchmen in "liberated" Poland directed at Poles were sanctioned by the regime.

To accomplish the task of stamping out the Polish underground the Soviets and their proxy regime in Poland employed local collaborators in significant number. Many Jewish partisans were drawn into this process and speak openly of their involvement. Some of them, however, are vague about the exact positions they filled and, moreover, endeavour to put a peculiar twist on the role they played at the time.

Anatol Krakowski, a Jewish partisan from the Rudniki forest, describes the reception of his fellow partisans in the "liberated" city of Wilno:

> The Soviet authorities rapidly organized the civil life in the city. They distrusted everybody, the Lithuanians as well as the Poles, for different reasons. Cleansing operations were carried out, the anti-Semitic Home Army … was dismantled. Their officers were judged and condemned. …
>
> Given the circumstances, after the liberation of Wilno, the only elements of the population in which the Soviets could have confidence were the groups of partisans who, with them and with their aid, had fought the Nazis. The rest of the population was suspected, often with good reason, of having collaborated with the Nazis and thus were excluded from any participation in the official organs of the new Soviet government. Rapidly, the confidence that the Soviets showed in us took on concrete but rather cumbersome forms. It was thus that several of my partisan friends, all around twenty years of age, found themselves mobilized in the Soviet security forces, whether in the police, the NKVD, the NKGB …, the Ministry of the Interior or others.[594]

Joseph Riwash, one of the many Jews who joined the NKVD (where his commander, Major Zoltnik was also a Jew), recalls:

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[593] Davies, *Rising '44,* 351.

[594] Krakowski, *Le Ghetto dans la forêt,* 91.

> I looked for survivors of the Vilna [Wilno] ghetto and enlisted their help in uncovering Lithuanians and Poles who had denounced Jews to the Germans. We reported these individuals to the Soviet occupation authorities, who (be it said to their credit) dealt with them swiftly and summarily.[595]

Miriam Jaszuńska, a member of a Soviet-Jewish partisan unit in Rudniki forest, stated that as soon as the Jewish partisans arrived in "liberated" Wilno, they all obtained suitable positions, started to check the identity documents of passers-by looking for "collaborators," and settled scores with former Jewish policemen. Many of the partisans, such as Beniamin Brest and Gerszon Glezer, entered the ranks of the militia and NKVD.[596]

Another Jewish partisan who left his mark is Ben Kass, though the capacity in which he worked is not at all clear.

> Ben Kass, who spent most of the war years in the forests with partisans, spoke with relish of the wrath he exacted both during and after the official hostilities. Having fought for several years with a Russian [i.e., Soviet] partisan group of eighteen thousand men and women, Ben was in Poland during the closing months of the war. He arrested many Poles from the AK who had previously murdered Jews, and handed them over to the Russian authorities for imprisonment.[597]

There can be no doubt that this version of the events is simply implausible. The Soviets made no such fine distinctions among the Home Army partisans they apprehended. Nor would their henchmen have been inclined to search out only those Home Army fighters who may have been responsible for Jewish deaths, when the Soviet partisans themselves had their own numerous Jewish victims (and others) on their conscience. As Nechama Tec points out, all Home Army partisans were affected indiscriminately by Stalin's decree.

> [The Soviets] launched a ruthless persecution of all unauthorized underground groups. Their special aim was to destroy the powerful forces of the A.K. Many people were arrested only because they had been associated with the Home Army during its anti-Nazi days. Many of those arrested had nothing to do with postwar illegal operations. Because all former A.K. members were in danger, some tried to conceal their wartime affiliations. A virtual witch hunt ensued.[598]

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[595] Riwash, *Resistance and Revenge,* 66.

[596] See the following testimonies in the Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw): Miriam Jaszuńska, dated July 15, 1947, no. 301/2530; Beniamin Brest, July 8, 1947, no. 301/2531; Abram Mieszczański, dated June 10, 1947, no. 301/2536; Gerszon Glezer, dated October 9, 1947, no. 301/2799. Jaszuńska stated that police sergeant Bernstein was killed by Jewish partisans and that Ferdman was sentenced by the Soviets and deported.

[597] Aaron Hass, *The Aftermath: Living with the Holocaust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 170.

[598] Nechama Tec, *Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 230.

Anyone caught, betrayed or handed over as Home Army member was routinely imprisoned and tortured, and then executed on the spot or deported to a remote prison camp in the Gulag. Furthermore, there would have been no way that Riwash, Kass or others like them could have identified with any certainty who the alleged Jew killers were (did they kill civilians? Soviet partisans? Soviet collaborators?), or restricted their activities on behalf of the Soviets to the arrest of "Jew killers." The Soviets would have never tolerated such niceties. Moreover, if all Home Army members were thought to have been *ipso facto* engaged in anti-Semitic activities, as many Jewish memoirs contend, logically it made no sense to make distinctions among them. All were presumed guilty.

Other memoirs are much more open about who was targeted and how these deeds were accomplished. Leon Kahn, for instance, recalls visiting a group of captured Polish partisans with his colleague, Lippa Skolsky, to see if they recognized any of the prisoners, as he had "quite a few scores to settle" with the Poles. Surprisingly, among the prisoners he came upon was Yankele Stolnicki, a young Jew who had been appointed secretary of the Communist Party when the Soviets occupied Raduń in 1939–1941. In that post, he had compiled lists of affluent Jews for the Soviets, many of whom were deported to the Gulag. After the Germans invaded, a Polish farmer sheltered Stolnicki for three years. When the Soviet front approached Raduń, Stolnicki went to hide in the forest. There he met and teamed up with another Jew. One day, they spotted a large group of Polish partisans hiding nearby and wasted no time in informing the Soviets. The Poles were surrounded and captured and then marched off to Linica accompanied by Stolnicki and his friend who were to explain to the officers in command who the prisoners were. On the way, the guards were changed and the replacements were not told of the role being played by Stolnicki and his friend, so the two found themselves imprisoned together with the Poles. Stolnicki's friend, however, was able to escape in the confusion of the arrival at the stockade. Stolnicki's pleas with the Soviets fell on deaf ears. They considered him to be one of the "treacherous" Poles who would face the firing squad. Kahn's interventions at Soviet headquarters, however, resulted in the commanding officer issuing a release order for "poor" Stolnicki.[599]

It is worth noting that interventions by Jews were effective because many Jews held high positions in the Soviet bureaucracy and military and, despite their loyalty to Communism which ostensibly championed internationalism, many of them retained their strong tribal loyalties and endeavoured to favour Jews over others. Kopel Kolpanitzky, a Jew from Łachwa who had fought with the Soviet partisans, recalled a conversation he had with a captain of the Red Army and the special treatment that he reserved for Jewish partisans whom he wanted to spare at the expense of non-Jews:

> When I went to the table, the captain filled out all the details in the documents in front of him and placed my card aside, on another corner of the table, separate from the others. He did the same with Nisel Israelevich, whose card was placed on mine, and with Yosel Meier. Yosel Meier did not like that, and he asked the captain to place our cards in the general pile. … We wanted to volunteer and continue our fight against the Germans.
>
> At dinner that evening, the captain came over and sat down with us.

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[599] Kolpanitzky, *Sentenced To Life,* 148–49.

> *'Shalom,'* he said. 'From your names, I knew that you were Jews, so I put your cards on the side. I did not want to send you to the front. I am also Jewish. I wanted to send you to work at partisan headquarters in Kiev. Why did you insist on joining the others?'
>
> 'Thank you for your well-intentioned thoughts,' we answered, 'but we want to volunteer for the Red Army. We must continue to fight.'
>
> … Among the thousands of partisans, several dozen had decided to keep on fighting. The other received discharge papers and returned home. Polish nationals were sent to Poland …[600]

Occasionally, Jews would intervene on behalf of Poles who had come to the assistance of Jews during the German occupation and were now in the grasp of the Soviet security police because of their Home Army connections. As Michael Kutz recalls,

> The Soviet authorities had begun arresting innocent citizens, such as the honourable … Mr. [Józef?] Zubowicz, who, at the beginning of the war, had risked his life and that of his children to hide, and therefore save, three Jews from Nieśwież. The Soviets had arrested Zubowicz for collaborating with the Nazis, which of course was totally fabricated. The NKVD tried to force him to sign a confession of his guilt, but he proudly refused. All of us survivors—most importantly, Jacob Lifshitz, whom he had hidden—went to Minsk to meet with the chief prosecutor and explain that Zubowicz was innocent. After spending two months in jail, Zubowicz was released. Then David Farfel and Itshe Mazin, two other Nieśwież survivors who now worked with the local NKVD, were arrested for trying to voluntarily resign from their positions. After much pressure, they too were released.[601]

Jews who remained in the Eastern Borderlands had no compunction about taking over property left behind by Poles who fled or were deported to People's Poland. A Jew who obtained the position of principal in a high school in Kobryń had his eye on a "very nice house" that used to belong to a Polish family who had left the area.

> It was not difficult for me to receive permission to occupy this house. It was a comfortable accommodation and completely furnished, including household utensils, dishes, and bedding. But the most important thing was that there was a garden in front of the house where the family had

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[600] Maurice Shainberg, *Breaking From the KGB: Warsaw Ghetto Fighter… Intelligence Officer…Defector to the West* (New York: Shapolsky Books, 1986), 124–27, 194–95.

[601] Michael Kutz, *If, By Miracle* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2013), 60–61. The Zubowicz family of Nieśwież had hidden two Jewish boys from the Rutenberg family along with the lumber merchant Jacob Lifshitz. Ibid., 34. The two Jewish boys, identified as Lolek and Witek Neufeld, were later sheltered by the Zubowicz family of Pleszewicze, a Home Army bastion, before being given over to Jewish partisans. See Kazimierz Zubowicz, "Z Pleszewicz do Warszawy i dalej," in Łucja Jakubowska, et al., eds., *Nieświeskie wspomnienia* (Warsaw: Łośgraf, 2001), 285, 328. Another example is provided by Aba Gefen (Abel Weinstein), who was an NKVD interrogator, Gefen vouched for the two sons of Mrs. Zubrowa, a Polish woman from Simnas/Simno who had helped him during the German occupation, despite their ties to the anti-Soviet underground. See Aba Gefen, *Defying the Holocaust: A Diplomat's Report* (San Bernardino, California, 1993), 76.

planted all sorts of vegetables and herbs … In addition, there was a small orchard with a few fruit trees. … Another amenity on the property was a barn …[602]

[602] Sorid, *One More Miracle,* 119.

7. Jews in Communist Uniforms Settle Scores

Once firmly in command, the Soviet forces set out to finish the job Hitler had started: the total elimination of the pro-independence (i.e., anti-Nazi and anti-Soviet) Polish underground, the so-called independentists. The Soviets found little support among the native Polish or Lithuanian population so they turned to the Jews for support. They were not disappointed. According to Aba Gefen (Abel Weinstein) states,

> Immediately after the return of the Red Army to Lithuania, there was very close collaboration between the Jews and the Soviets, considered by the Holocaust survivors as their savior. Moscow trusted the Jewish survivors more than those who had been anti-Communists before the war; more than the Lithuanians who were Communists in the past but behaved in a doubtful way under the Nazis.[603]

Numerous Jews joined in this venture and, with a solid knowledge of local conditions and under Soviet protection, went out of their way to settle old scores. They not only arrested and denounced Poles to the security forces, but also embarked on a spree of revenge killings, something some of them had already undertaken on their own even before the "liberation." Hundreds, if not thousands, of Poles were murdered. This served to further drive a wedge between Poles and Jews. Eventually, however, the Jewish henchmen also became expendable once the task of defeating the Polish independentists was in hand.

Aba Gefen, a Lithuanian Jew who survived the war hidden by numerous Lithuanians and Poles, boasted that, on the arrival of the Red Army, he promptly provided the Soviets a list of 100 Lithuanians who had collaborated with the Nazis in his small town of Simnas, thus starting his personal quest for revenge. On the first day of his militia service, he helped the Soviets round up 40 of them. According to one version, they were imprisoned; according to another, they were executed summarily. Gefen then joined the NKVD in Alytus and was appointed the principal investigator for the district. He visited the towns in the district and supervised the interrogations there, and personally interrogated those who were brought to the prison in Alytus. In this task, he was helped by local Jews:

> When I visited the town of Varena [Varėna, in Lithuanian, and Orany, in Polish], I found a group of Jewish Holocaust survivors, Leon Kaganowicz, Benjamin Rogovsky, Lippa Skolsky and Abraham Widlanski, roaming the nearby villages and hamlets and exacting revenge on the Nazi sympathizers responsible for the murder of Jews, on farmers who had betrayed Jews to the Nazis, and on the civilian officials who had collaborated with the Germans.

Doubtless, farmers who simply resisted a raid on their property by Jewish partisans fell into this category of "Nazi sympathizers." Gefen then goes on to describe extrajudicial killings and the partisans' efforts and frustrations in bringing people to "justice":

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[603] Gefen, *Defying the Holocaust,* 73–74.

> The group was executing prisoners found guilty and was sending to Alitus [Alytus] only those in whose cases there was no hard evidence of their participation in the murder of Jews. … Thus, criminals whom they had spent weeks tracking down were set free once they got to Alitus for lack of proper documentation. … We agreed that in the future they would send the prisoners to Alitus, to me personally, and I would interrogate them and document the cases before processing them. …
>
> Those were days of "partial" retribution, when not only Jewish survivors were anxious to track down the Nazi collaborators, but also Soviet officers were ready to carry out irregular activities to punish some of those who had lent their support to the Nazis. The Soviets were very willing to exact revenge on the Lithuanians … With the aid of my brother, myself, and other Jewish survivors, the Russians caught many Lithuanian collaborators, interrogated them, and judge them. Hundreds were either sent to prison for many years or faced a firing squad.

Gefen himself came under investigation because of the large number of reports he signed on escape attempts by prisoners who were shot in the process. This prompted him to leave. He and his brother obtained forged papers identifying them as Polish nationals and left for Poland with a repatriation transport.[604]

Leon Kahn, recalls how, in mid–1944, shortly before the entry of the Red Army, Jewish partisan groups descended on the Lithuanian village of Mostejki (which was allegedly responsible for the murder of hundreds of Jews from Marcinkańce who had escaped to the forest) and "selected" suspected Jew killers, who were then shot to death in the village square.[605] One of the Jewish partisans, Abraham Widlanski, befriended an orphaned Jewish boy named Hirsche who roamed the countryside exacting revenge on farmers who had betrayed Jews to the Germans. This boy accepted 5,000 rubles in order to eliminate a Lithuanian collaborator by the name of Danielewicz and his entire family. Bargains were struck with some of the farmers who committed "lesser crimes" in order to catch the big criminals (all of them Lithuanians, it seems). Their lives would be spared if they turned informer.[606] After joining the Soviet police force in Orany (Varėna, in Lithuanian), of which he would soon become the chief, Leon Kahn and his group were often helped by Aba Gefen, who was the assistant to the Soviet colonel in command in Alytus. Prisoners were interrogated and documented by Gefen before being taken to the colonel. Extrajudicial executions were routine. A Lithuanian collaborator, who was captured by Jewish policemen, met his end at their hands: "Each of us carried an automatic rifle containing seventy-two bullets, and at a signal, coldly and methodically we emptied every one of them into his body." Kahn described how he killed another Lithuanian collaborator: "I pulled out my revolver and shot the teacher between the eyes, killing him instantly." Lithuanian partisans were rounded up in droves and imprisoned (all of the examples mentioned by Kahn involved Lithuanians). "We refused them food, water, or toilet facilities," recalls Kahn, "allowing

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[604] Gefen, *Defying the Holocaust,* 74–79, 87–88; Interview with Aba Gefen, dated October 17, 2011, Israel Documentation project, Internet: <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn50728>.

[605] Kahn, *No Time To Mourn,* 123.

[606] Ibid., 172, 176, 177.

only the supplies brought by their families." After a week, the trucks arrived with armed Soviet guards to take them to Alytus.[607]

Leon Kahn's colleague, Beniamin Rogowski, stationed in Orany, also describes the activities of former Jewish partisans like himself and Jankiel Asner, Avram (Abraham) Asner, and Jankele Kowalski, who combated the anti-Communist Lithuanian underground as part of the Soviet police. Many Lithuanian partisans were killed, and many more arrested. They Jewish policemen also took revenge on Lithuanians who were suspected of collaborating with the Nazis: "We carried out enough acts of vengeance on them. … It was evident that we now took our revenge, as much as we could. The Soviet authorities helped us, though not officially, but I had connections and knew how to arrange it."[608]

Jewish partisans who returned to Werenowo (Werenów) recalled:

> After Liberation, I traveled to Voronova [Werenowo] and was accepted to be employed at the NKVD, where I tried to locate German collaborators. For whole days I sat with an NKVD commander and provided details on the actions of those people.[609]

> The Military Headquarters started to enlist Poles to send them to the frontlines, which were still active. But they resisted and there was a special military unit which had to capture them and bring to Voronova. The Russians assigned that task to the Jewish fighters.
>
> But there remained only few of us. The Jewish Partisans had gradually moved to Lida and there remained only me, Moshe Berkovitsh his son Leyzer, and Yudl (Khazn''s) Konopke.
>
> We wanted to stay here to take more revenge on our good neighbors, the murderers and their collaborators. We made a list of all the Poles who had helped murder our dear ones and passed it to the NKVD leader, our best friend. I would spend long hours at his office and he wrote everything in the protocol. We purposely emphasized in the protocols that they had murdered Russians [as well]. For Jews alone, nobody would do anything. I signed off on all the details and waited for their reaction.[610]

> We came back to Voronova [Werenowo] as [agents of] N.K.V.D. We were sent to a village about 20km from town. We were ordered to arrest two Poles who had collaborated with the Germans. With us traveled two Russians: we were 8 people. We took two peasants and their carriages with us, and we told them where to go. As we approached the forest cabin we saw one running towards the house from behind. Our alertness had waned for a moment and we hadn't noticed that one of the carriage drivers had warned his brother. I called him to stop. He didn't obey so I shot him.

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[607] Kahn, *No Time To Mourn,* 183, 186–88.

[608] Testimony of Beniamin Rogowski, March 14, 1965, Yad Vashem Archives, file O.3/2820.

[609] Eliahu Blyakher, "A Partisan's Story," in David Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Divenishok: Yad vashem le-ayara yehudit* (Israel: Divenishok Societies in Israel and the United States, 1977), 175 ff.

[610] Shmuel Kopelovitsh, "Taking Some More Vengeance," in Rabin, *Voronova,* 369–74.

> Meanwhile six or seven Poles came out against us, armed with automatic weapons, and they covered us with heavy fire. There was no choice so we jumped into a pit. A skirmish developed in which we were protected by the pit and they were better armed. We killed few of them, but we had to retreat. While retreating, one of our comrades was captured. He was the last victim that I saw in [this] war.[611]

Avram (Abraham) Asner recalled how he went on a mission to capture a Polish woman who had worked for the Polish underground. He also dutifully turned over to the Soviets, likely the NKVD, a Pole who had confided in him that he was a member of the Home Army.

> I was going to Radun [Raduń] to go to that place where I have to go to that secretary, to get her. On the way, I met a fellow with a wagon and I ask him for a ride. And he saw me. I'm with a rifle, with a pistol. And he saw me, I'm walking. And then he gave me that ride. And I sitting … He's sitting in the front and I'm sitting in the back. And he's telling me the whole story of where he was fighting. He was in the Polish AK. When he was telling me all the story, he thought that I'm Polish, I speaked in Polish. When he told me the story he was fighting in Vilna [Wilno], and they wanted to liberate Vilna then the Russian come in, they, the sound them, all them, that's, everything. And he was going home to a place not far from Lida. And when they came close to Radun he got to go to the left and I got to go to Radun. He said, "I'm going there." I said, "No, no." I said, "You're going there, to Radun. You're, you're, you're going there." He says, "No, I have to go over here. This, this is my way to go." "No, no," I said, "you got to go over here where I wanted to go." "Oh," he said, "you're from them." Finally I get him to that uh, commandant uh, post down there. And I told the story, all about them, what it, what it is. And they search him and they find some grenades, ammunition. … What happened with him I don't know because I give it to them.[612]

A particularly dangerous functionary in the service of the NKVD was Dr. Benedykt Scherman (Schermann), who went by the name of Benedykt Szymański. Dr. Szymański was a member of the

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[611] Yekutiel (Kushke) Boyarski, "A Child Partisan," in Rabin, *Voronova,* 346–51.

[612] Testimony of Abraham Asner, October 10, 1982, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/asner/>, section 37 (Partisan Missions 2).

Moscow-based Union of Polish Patriots. As a colonel in the Soviet-sponsored Polish Army in Wilno,[613] he excelled in tracking down the remnants of the disbanded Home Army in that region.[614] At the same time, as chief of recruitment for the army, Colonel Szymański—as well as other well-placed Soviet officials of Jewish origin—facilitated the departure, often through illegal schemes, of fellow Jews who wanted to leave

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[613] Poles generally regarded the Communist Polish Army as a foreign-controlled entity and Polish soldiers deserted from its ranks in droves. Between December 1944 and March 1945, 53 percent of the officer corps was comprised of pre-1939 Soviet citizens, and over one half of the (remaining) non-Soviet officers were Jews with Polish citizenship. Moreover, the most important posts in the political apparatus of the army were held by Jews. Thus, in its early stages, fewer than one-quarter of all officers of the Polish Army were actually ethnic Poles who were citizens of Poland. See Edward Jan Nalepa, *Oficerowie Armii Radzieckiej w Wojsku Polskim 1943–1968* (Warsaw: Bellona, 1995), 17; Klemens Nusbaum, "Jews in the Kościuszko Division and First Polish Army," in Davies and Polonsky, *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46,* 194–99; Rafał Wnuk, "Działania propagandowe niepodległościowe podziemia adresowane do żołnierzy Wojska Polskiego (lipiec 1944–styczeń 1947), *Dzieje Najnowsze,* vol. 34, no. 4 (2002): 57–73. As Nusbaum points out, Jews were instructed to change their names and conceal their identities and thus official Communist statistics grossly, and intentionally, understated the strength of the Jewish component. Michael Checinski, for example, describes the reception he received when he reported to the Military Counterintelligence Department in Łódź: "I met several officers there, including Lieutenant Colonel Stanislawa (Barbara) Sowinski [doubtless an assumed named—*M.P.*] … Her sister was a famous Israeli artist … I was told to fill out all kinds of forms … Then I was summoned for another conversation. This time, they tried to persuade me to change the first names of my father and other from Abram to Adam and Frymeta to Franciszka." See Michael Moshe Checinski, *Running the Gauntlet of Anti-Semitism: From Polish Counterintelligence to the German/American Marshall Center* (Jerusalem and New York: Devora, 2004), 51.

[614] Stanisława Lewandowska, *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Neriton and Instytut Historii PAN, 1997), 340. The preponderance of Jews in the political structures of the Polish Army at that time was overwhelming. According to a report from June 1944, 34 out of the 44 top officers, all of the directors, and all but one of the deputies at the division level were Jews. Jews occupied 17 out of 28 positions in the political apparatus of the divisions, and at the regiment level, 31 out of 43 positions, and so on. Most decisions were taken by Jews, and Poles had only token representation. On instructions from Major Mieczysław Mietkowski, himself a Jew, Jews were to declare their nationality as Polish even in internal documents. See the report of Major Władysław Sokołowski in Giennadij A. Bordiugow [Gennadii A. Bordyugov], Aleksander Kochański, Adam Koseski, Giennadij F. Matwiejew [Gennadii F. Matveiev], and Andrzej Paczkowski, eds., *Polska–ZSRR: Struktury podległości. Dokumenty KC WKP(b) 1944–1949* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN and Stowarzyszenie Współpracy Polska–Wschód, 1995), 75–76. The same held true for the Moscow-based Union of Polish Patriots (*Związek Patriotów Polskich—ZPP*), which was formed by Stalin in June 1943, long before the entry of the Red Army into Poland, to serve as the nucleus of the new Communist government which was to be imposed on Poland. The presidium of the ZPP consisted of 47 top individuals, of whom 24 (i.e., 51%) were Jews. Among the 35 members of the ZPP elite, 22 (i.e., 63%) were Jews. See Mirosław Szumiło, "Żydzi w kadrze kierowniczej Związku Patriotów Polskich w ZSRS (1943–1946)," in Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Aleksandra Namysło, eds., *Elity i przedstawiciele społeczności żydowskiej podczas II wojny światowej* (Kraków, Katowice and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej-Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2017), 342. Earlier, in 1941, the Comintern had drawn up a list of "Polish comrades recommended for use," consisting of 313 individuals, of whom 224 (i.e., 72%) were Jews, and only 75 were Poles (in addition to 8 Ukrainians and 3 Russians). Ibid., 341. So fully 76% of the impending Soviet-created puppet government were non-Polish. It is worth noting that none of the ZPP elitists came from a working class background, and none same from backgrounds of poverty. The Jewish ZPP elitists came from either a background of intelligentsia or handcrafts (the latter itself overlapped the intelligentsia), which belies the exculpatory myth of desperate poverty and hopelessness driving Jews to Communism. Ibid., 342, 344. Another exculpatory myth is that of Polish anti-Semitism; however, when the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Poland in 1939, it proceeded to close Jewish synagogues, abolish Jewish cultural and political organizations, deport Jews to the Gulag, and murder the prominent Bundist leaders Henryk Erlich and Wiktor Alter. Their decision to join the Communists was purely ideological and/or opportunistic.

Soviet Lithuania for Poland.[615] At the time, many Jews were employed as prison guards and even executioners. The guards were known to abuse Polish prisoners (former parisans) and stole packages and items sent to the prisoners by their families.[616]

Another vivid example of what was happening was penned by Shalom Yoran (Selim Sznycer), a Soviet-Jewish partisan operating in the vicinity of Lake Narocz and the Kotłowska forest who joined the Soviet-controlled Polish Army in Wilno in September 1944. As a trusted Soviet partisan, he was called on to draw up lists of "spies" and "counter-revolutionaries" from among Polish soldiers he scarcely knew.

> Most of the soldiers had previously been in the ruthless AK, and were patriotic nationalists who had fought against the Soviet soldiers and partisans, as well as the Nazis. …
>
> In the beginning of November 1944, the Second Polish Army finally arrived from the Soviet Union and we were united with them. … We were now an infantry regiment in the Second Polish Army … We moved for several days along the main road leading to Warsaw, then took side roads until we reached a large forest in the heart of Poland, where we set up a temporary camp. …
>
> Orders came from the Second Polish Army headquarters to expand our regiment from eight hundred to three thousand men. In order to comply with the order, we were told to draft all able-bodied men in the area from the age of eighteen. … [Yoran then describes the forced round-ups of local Poles.—*M.P.*]
>
> I was in charge of registering all those who were chosen for our company. … I grilled them about their activities during the German occupation. They were frightened, and I needed to use my intuitive skills to draw out the information, to calm them down, to play on their national patriotism …
>
> About a week after the recruitment, I was called one evening into the regimental headquarters and told to appear before the chief intelligence and security officer. … At the desk, clear of anything except a kerosene lamp and a revolver, sat an officer in Polish uniform with the rank of captain. … he was a Russian [i.e., Soviet] …

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615 Krakowski, *Le Ghetto dans la forêt,* 98–99. After their disenchantment, in order to leave their positions and dirty work behind them, Jews who had joined the security forces and militia took advantage of a network of well-placed Jews in the medical corps and clinics to feign illness and obtain certificates dispensing them from further service. The moving force behind this was Professor Rebelski, the chief of the medical corps of the Third Army. This is yet another example that being a Communist, or even holding a high position in the Communist Party, was not incompatible with retaining one's Jewish identity and espousing Jewish nationalism. Ibid., 92–97.

616 Dariusz Rogut, ed., *Przeżyliśmy łagry: Wspomnienia żołnierzy Okręgu Wileńskiego AK (1945–1949)* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2011), 54, 113, 230; Władysław Zarzycki, *Z Wilna do Workuty: Wspomnienia Komendanta Garnizonu Okręgu Wileńskiego AK* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2011), 62, 70, 77 (a Jewish executioner named Rabinowicz), 81, 92, 133, 242. Bernard Druskin, a Jew from Wilno who joined the Markov Brigade, also worked for the Soviets in an undisclosed capacity: "When the Russian army re-occupied Vilna [Wilno], they hired Druskin to work for them because he knew the streets of Vilna and was good at organizing things." See the testimony of Bernard Druskin, November 9, 1990, Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Hills, Michigan, Internet: <http://www.holocaustcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=523>. Instead of taking German soldiers as POWs, the Red Army disarmed them and handed them over to the partisans. Druskin also recounts, with great delight, how, as a partisan, he would fool the peasants into exchanging vodka for what they thought was soap, but was in fact dynamite. See Bernard Druskin, Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation, Internet: <http://jewishpartisans.org/t_switch.php?pageName=mini+bio+short+bio+1&fromSomeone=&parnum=34>.

> He told me in Russian to sit down, and came straight to the point. He knew that I had been a Soviet partisan, fighting for Stalin and the homeland, so he could speak openly to me. He lectured me about spies, traitors, and counter-revolutionaries, especially among the Poles, who should be carefully watched and distrusted, even though they were in the Polish Army fighting alongside the Soviets. He then bent toward me across the table, and, looking me straight in the eyes, said, "By tomorrow you will bring me a list and the files of all the spies and counter-revolutionaries in your company." … [Yoran then describes the intimidation and threats he said he endured after initially suggesting that there weren't any such men in his company; obviously, he couldn't be too open about having tolerated their presence.—*M.P.*]
>
> The officer was the chief of the NKVD, the dreaded Soviet Secret Police … Markh advised me to look through the files, to see if I could find someone who seemed in any way suspicious, and not to discuss my meeting with anyone.
>
> I returned to the company headquarters, went straight to the files, and started reading through each one. I worked all night. Although I didn't know these men, I agonized over each name, wondering whether the men really were staunch supporters of the Germans [sic]. I wanted to be reasonably sure before handing over their files and thus participating in their fate. By morning I had put together the names of five men who I found had been connected with the Nazis during the occupation. [How could Yoran possibly tell? Were there even any?—*M.P.*]
>
> I took their files, went to the NKVD officer, and explained that these files should be further examined. He came around the table toward me and patted me approvingly on the shoulder. "I see that you are quite a learner. If you have any further suspicions of anybody, come directly to me." I saluted smartly and left, hoping never to see the man again. I never found out what happened to the men on the list after they were taken in for interrogation.[617]

Another account was penned by Maurice Shainberg, who joined the Communist Polish Army in July 1944. In his capacity as Second Lieutenant in the Intelligence Section of the Fourth Pioneer Brigade of the Second Polish Army in 1944–1945, Shainberg, who then went under the name of Mieczysław Prużański, worked diligently under the watchful eyes of his Soviet commanders. He was rewarded for his diligence and soon rose to the rank of colonel in the Soviet-dominated Security Office. (After "defecting" and a brief stay in Israel, he eventually settled in the United States.) Shainberg did not mince words as to who his enemy and targets were:

> My section was responsible for discovering persons or groups who were hostile to the new Polish government or to the Soviets. We arrested Gestapo collaborators like members of the Polish Fascist Home Army, and we uncovered the names of individuals who had worked with the Nazis. …
>
> My duties included overseeing the work of the staff, supervising their reports, evaluating the records of people with disreputable backgrounds, and briefing intelligence officers on new assignments. … I dedicated myself to my work, seeking out Polish collaborators and Polish Fascists wherever I could find them. …

[617] Yoran, *The Defiant,* 237, 241–43, 244–45.

> On February 26, 1946, Colonel Zaitzev called me into his office and told me that we were to search out two active anti-Soviet partisan groups in the Krotoszyn region. The groups—both Fascist—were called "Bor [Bór]" and "Cien [Cień]," and their leader was named Lopazko ["Łupaszko"]. …
>
> The Intelligence Office of the Krotoszyn regiment was a Major Dvoraninov … I was dispatched to Krotoszyn to serve as Major Dvoraninov's aide. …
>
> Within two months, thanks to the undercover work of agents …, the two guerilla groups were captured and arrested, and all documents pertaining to their activities were sent to Polish KGB Headquarters at 7 Chlebinski [Chlewińska] Street.
>
> The partisans were turned over to Major Piskunov, Intelligence Chief of the Division. When I reported to his office one day to turn in my monthly report, I saw the major and Captain Ivanov beating the prisoners and holding live electric wires against their shins.[618]

After a brief stint with the Home Army, Martin Gray (Mieczysław Grajewski) joined the Communist People's Guard/People's Army and offered his services to the Soviets. As a 19-year-old recruit (then using the assumed name of Mietek Zamojski), he reported to Soviet command in Lublin in July 1944. He was soon dispatched by the NKVD to Zambrów on his first mission with these instructions: "Do your best, find us the N.S.Z., the informers, the denouncers, the collaborators, the people who don't like us." Gray recalls:

> I arrived in Zambrow [Zambrów] one morning in civilian clothes, a peasant. … I went from village to village, and mingled with the peasants … I started them talking. … I found some N.S.Z. men, and an N.K.V.D. car came and picked them up in the morning. … We had to purge the countryside; it was their turn to pay. I went from village to village, tracking them down in a pitiless, bitter spirit of revenge. …
>
> In Zambrow they were waiting for me. Some men appeared before me … Three of them were barring my way, arms outstretched … I leaped aside and made off through a cornfield … They were behind me … I gradually outstripped them. … They'd given up the chase but the warning was clear: I was no further use in the Zambrow area. The N.S.Z. had spotted me. I slept in the *Kommandatura,* revolver in hand, and the next day the captain in charge at Zambrow decided to send me back to Lublin. …
>
> At the *Kommandatura* [in Lublin], the gray-haired [Soviet] colonel called me. … He had me attached to an N.K.V.D. unit that followed up the front-line troops and moved in, behind the rocket batteries, purging Russian-occupied territory of suspicious elements. … I knew the N.S.Z. I was a Jew with a private score to be settled. To the colonel, I was a good recruit. I was given a uniform and a cap with green N.K.V.D. trimmings. This time I'd earned my ticket to Berlin.
>
> For weeks I scoured the countryside around Lublin, sometimes in uniform, sometimes in civilian clothes, collaborating with the Polish police of which I had officially become a member.[619]

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[618] Maurice Shainberg, *Breaking From the KGB: Warsaw Ghetto Fighter… Intelligence Officer…Defector to the West* (New York: Shapolsky Books, 1986), 124–27, 194–95.

[619] Gray, *For Those I Loved,* 233–38. Earlier on in his memoir, at 169, Gray had written: "Almost the whole of the village [of Zaręby, near Zambrów] supported the A.K."

Yet Mark Verstandig, another Jew who offered his services to the Stalinist State Security Office in Mielec confirms this state of events. Verstandig also insists that the Home Army "had inflicted remarkably little damage on the Germans by confining itself mainly to murdering and robbing Jews," and intensified its efforts "to finish Hitler's work—to murder every survivor, every hidden Jew" after the Soviets arrived. Allegedly this was done on "instructions" from the London-based Polish government in exile![620] Verstandig's loyalty to the Soviets knew no bounds:

> Neither did I have much faith in the local branch of the security services, the UB [Urząd Bezpieczeństwa—Security Office]. When I saw the rabble of no-hopers and local riff-raff who were their recruits, I went straight for the headquarters of the Soviet military security service, whose brief was to arrest any armed akowcy (AK members) found behind the front.[621]

The head of the Security Office in Mielec was also a Jew, Cezary Monderer-Lamensdorf, who went by the assumed name of Jan Garliński.[622]

Shneor Glembotzky, who fought as a Soviet partisan in the northern part of Lublin province, also made the transition to the Communist police. As an investigator in Biała Podlaska, he was able to hunt down Home Army members.

> When the Russians returned in 1944 and liberated Poland, I joined the regular Red Army. I returned to Biala Podleska [Biała Podlaska] and was there assigned as chief of the department of criminal offenders in the District Police. I served there for half a year till I felt I could no longer stand being in Poland. The chief of Police hinted to me that I must leave for there were many complaints about me from the personal vengeance I took on the White Poles (of the "Armia-Krayova" [Armia

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[620] Verstandig, *I Rest My Case,* 196, 179. Verstandig elaborates wildly on this theme as follows at p. 179:

> The key to the enigma … was the resolve of the government-in-exile, which they communicated to the Polish people, to create a new post-war order entirely free of Jews. Previously, the leadership in London had planned to drive the Jews out of Poland and resettle them in an autonomous enclave near Odessa. But now, with the Soviet army stationed along the old Polish border, the Polish leaders in London belatedly realised that they would be unable to get their hands on any Russian territory for this purpose. So the signal was given to finish Hitler's work—to murder every survivor, every hidden Jew. There is no documentary evidence of this policy, just as no documents have been ever been [sic] found showing that Hitler ordered the Final Solution. … the instructions to kill Jews were passed informally by word of mouth among the Poles.

Another testimony from the Mielec area makes a similar claim: "Late in the summer [1943], the Polish underground got orders from London Polish government in exile that no Jews should be left alive in Poland." See (Helen Hönig Schreiber), "The Road to Freedom," *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Mielec: Sipur hashmadat ha-kehila ha-yehudit* (New York: Mielec Yizkor Book Committee, 1979), 43ff., translated as *Remembering Mielec: The Destruction of the Jewish Community,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/mielec/mielec.html>.

[621] Verstandig, *I Rest My Case,* 205.

[622] Krempa, *Zagłada Żydów mieleckich,* 110.

> Krajowa]) and on the other anti-semitic hooligans who had showed excessive cruelty to the Jews under the German rule. I understood the hint.[623]

According to Moishe Feigenbaum from Biała Podlaska, who had survived with a group of Jews hidden in a bunker, Jews from the NKVD also offered "revenge" services to Jewish survivors.

> Jews also served in the N.K.W.D. They too looked for contact with us. They wanted to find out who were the Christians who treated us badly, and to take revenge. … We had already seen that, though the Nazis had been expelled from Poland, Nazism remained deep in the heart of the Christian population.[624]

Another account mentions the revenge killing of a Pole named Leszczuk.[625] Baruch Goldszer, a former ghetto policeman from Łomazy who joined the Security Office in Biała Podlaska, also admits to wreaking vengeance on Polish "collaborators":

> In the summer and the winter of 1944, Baruch Goldszer and additional Holocaust survivors were part of official posse teams who hunted down Polish men who collaborated with the German occupiers. The collaborators stood Court Martial, were condemned to death and executed promptly in forests west of the river Bug. A few of the collaborators were from Lomazy [Łomazy] and others were from nearby villages.
>
> In the winter of 1944, following fast Court Martials, Goldszer and his friend Leibel Hofman of the nearby village of Konstantynow [Konstantynów] Podlaski, were executing Poles who collaborated with the Germans during the war. Those collaborators hunted and murdered Jews who were in

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[623] Shneor Glembotzky, "From a Prisoner's Camp to a Partisan Troop," in Alufi and Barkeli, *"Aishishuk"; Its History and Its Destruction,* 77–78. In Polish records Glembotzky appears as Morduch Głębocki or Glembicki; he was employed by the County Command of the Citizens' Militia in Biała Podlaska as an investigator.

[624] M.Y. Feigenboim [Moishe Feigenbaum or Mojsze Fajgenbaum], "In Liberated Biala," in M. J. Feigenbaum, *Sefer Biala Podlaska* (Tel Aviv: Kupat Gmilut Hesed of the Community of Biala Podlaska, 1961), 467–68, translated as *Book of Biala Podlaska,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Biala_Podlaska/Biala_Podlaska.html>.

[625] According to another account in Biała Podlaska memorial book, upon the arrival of the Red Army Jewish survivors clamoured for revenge in blood:

> We heard that Leshtshuk [Leszczuk] was treating wounded Russian soldiers in a yard not far from the church. We went there, and saw him giving orders and care for the wounded. We started shouting, and told the officer what Leshtshuk had done, how he looked for hiding Jews and handed them in to the German murderers. We all screamed together, until the officer shouted at me (it seems that I was louder than the others): "Who is the commander here, me or you?" He asked that only one of us will speak. We told him everything, and Leshtshuk, with an ironic smile, answered: "You are Jews." The officer asked him to come with him, led him to the Ghetto, and we all followed. He took his gun out, shot Leshtshuk once, and gave us the gun so each of us could shoot him too. We undressed him, took off his boots, and left him lying. We felt some revenge seeing Leshtshuk lying there for eight days, with the hungry dogs and cats nibbling on his body, and his wife pulling her hair out.

See R. Bachrach, "In a Bunker in the Center of Miedzyrzec," in Feigenbaum, *Sefer Biala Podlaska,* 459.

> hiding and extradited others to be murdered by the Germans. Baruch, his older brother Leib, and Leibel Hofman left Poland in 1946, never looking back.[626]

Shmuel Goldring, a native of Konstantynów who survived with the help of Poles, confirms this testimony:

> The Soviets arrived on July 30, 1944. … We returned to Konstantin [Konstantynów] on August 1944 and stayed there for 8 months until March 1945. Those 8 months we used to get revenge. We took revenge from Poles who extradited Jews to the Germans. We took revenge from Poles who murdered Jews. … Romanowski, the Konstantin mailman who extradited Jews to the Germans during the war was executed. Zigmond Olecek [Zygmunt Oleczek] was executed for murdering Avram son of Simcha from Wilka.[627]

Józef Kapłan (Kapłański), who served as a Soviet partisan in that region posing as a Pole (Jews were not accepted into his unit under the command of Mikhail Sanikov), after working in the militia in Zalesie where he scoured the countryside looking for collaborators, became a jail guard in Biała Podlaska for more than a year.[628] Chil Prądek, who worked for the Security Office in Biała Podlaska, was known for torturing Polish prisoners during their interrogation.[629] Yosel Epelbaum (later Pell), who returned to his home town of Biała Podlaska in August 1944, recalled the mood and loyalties of the Jewish returnees. He also noted that the impoverished Polish population did not seize the opportunity to take control of local commerce.

> In the fall of 1944, even before Warsaw was liberated, the committee that would soon declare itself the provisional Polish government denounced anti-Semitism and even placed a number of Jews in top posts. Most of us were pleased to see this communist group, organized by Moscow, gain the upper hand. It seemed much better than the alternative, the right-wing London-based Polish government-in-Exile and its Home Army, both of which were filled with Jew-haters.

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[626] Meir G. Gover, *Ordinary Jews: The Massacre of the 1,800 Jews of Lomazy Poland on August 18, 1942* (Israel: The Second Generation, 2017), 81, 85. Baruch Goldszer makes no mention of his post-liberation activities in his two testimonies found in the Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, namely, nos. 301/167 and 301/987. According to other sources, Goldszer was a former ghetto policeman in Łomazy and joined the Security Office in Biała Podlaska. See Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 87, 100 n.76; Bechta, *Pogrom czy odwet?,* 348–50. After escaping naked from a mass execution site outside Łomazy in August 1942, Golszer encountered a random forester who have him some clothes and food, and then joined up with a group of ten fugitive Soviet POWs who raided Polish villages at night for food. Afterwards, the group crossed the River Bug and joined the Soviet partisans. Goldszer eventually settled in the United States. See Gover, *Ordinary Jews,* 75, 80–81. Other former Jewish policemen employed by the Security Office include Michał Figowy and Rubin Figowy, who were based in Sokołów Podlaski.

[627] Meir G. Gover, *Yizkor to Jewish Konstantynow Podlaski,* 4th edition (Israel: The Second Generation, 2018), 400. Also in that book: "Konstantin mailman Romanowski informed the Polish Police that Garbarz had left the Konstantin Ghetto with no permit. Moishe Garbarz was caught in Gnojno and executed there by the Polish Gendarmerie. … As a reprisal, come 1945, Konstantin mailman Romanowski was taken from his home to the forest and executed by Survivors." Ibid., 356–57. The gendarmeries, it should be noted, were staffed not by Poles but by German gendarmes.

[628] Testimony of Józef Kapłański (Kapłan), Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2532.

[629] Archiwum Państwowe in Lublin, Okręg WiN Lublin, Obwód Biała Podlaska, 55, Meldunek "Lasa," August 15, 1946, k. 60.

> … my older cousins, Sarah and Gittel, both communists, who had fled to the Soviet Union in 1939, received further indoctrination there, and now returned to Poland as mid-level functionaries in the provisional administration. They worked in another town …
>
> It was devastating enough to see what had become of the town square that had been so full of life before the war. Nearly all the shops had been Jewish-owned, and now they were vacant. Commercial life was dead.[630]

A similar situation prevailed in Włodawa where Jakob Friedmann, then Jakob Rotenberg, was second in command of the militia outpost.

> The Poles were not very sympathetic to communism. There was a minority who were, but not very many people supported it. After we met the Russian army we went to Lublin, which had been freed.
>
> The war was about to end when we arrived in Lublin. We became part of the Polish *milicja* and were given uniforms.
>
> Everyone who had fought [in the Soviet-backed partisan movement] and had had some rank was made an officer, whether or not they had been trained for it. I automatically became a lieutenant in the Polish *milicja.* …
>
> As Deputy Commander of Wlodawa, in the beginning I felt strange returning to my home town … While I had this position one of my jobs was to maintain a curfew. If somebody didn't know about the curfew we warned them, but we didn't shoot; we never shot anybody. However, there was once an incident where a man called Jankele Lederman shot a Pole in the middle of the market-place. Jankele knew he was an antisemite and decided to get rid of him. We found out about the crime but didn't do anything about it. Jankele, who left Wlodawa in a hurry and now lives in New York …
>
> I knew that Jews were still vulnerable to attack so I created a city guards unit which meant that every Jew had a gun. …
>
> The Commander-in-Chief of Wlodawa was called Alexander Russokovsky, and I was his lieutenant. He had been dropped into our area by parachute [from the Soviet Union]. I had more work ro do than he did, because he was always drunk and spending time with some woman, even though he had a beautiful wife.
>
> I was with him for a short time, then they sent me to Stargard Gubinski [Gubiński], a village in the occupied territories of northern Poland near Sztzetzin [Szczecin]. It was just a small township but I was the Military Commander there for quite a time. I had a car, an assistant, a secretary, and even a girlfriend—everything I needed in life …
>
> I was the commander not only of the city but of the whole area.[631]

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[630] Pell and Rosenbaum, *Taking Risks,* 119–21. Yosel Epelbaum (later Pell) left for Germany and eventually immigrated to the United States. Ibid., 142–43.

[631] Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier,* 68–70. Historian Mariusz Bechta established that the Pole murdered by Lederman in Włodawa with impunity was Ryszard Kossakowski, and that this occurred on April 26, 1945. See Bechta, *Pogrom czy odwet?,* 245, 365 n.56. Friedmann had no trouble being "cleared" by United States intelligence after fleeing to Germany, despite revealing that he had been a high ranking Communist officer, and emigrated to Australia. See Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier,* 75–76.

The county office of State Security in Włodawa was headed for a time by Chil Grynszpan, the partisan leader from Parczew forest. According to Friedmann, who was a partisan in the same area, Chyl was illiterate: "He couldn't even write his own name … so they taught him how to write C-h-y-l, and it took him a long time even to learn that."[632] The outcome proved to be lethal for the local population and, understandably, aroused resentment. The county supervisor (*starosta*) reported (in September 1945):

> Jews during the first months of independence were too aggressive vis-à-vis everybody else. The attitude toward other nationalities especially among those [Jews] employed in the militia and in the Security Service was openly hostile. Several months ago two Aryans [i.e., non-Jews] perished by the hand of a Jewish militiaman, and such facts do not produce harmonious coexistence in a democratic spirit. It is comforting that the number of citizens of Jewish nationality in the militia was reduced and that the rest have a somewhat more positive attitude toward everybody else.[633]

Ben Kamm, who fought as a partisan in Grzegorz Korczyński's People's Guard detachment and later in the Soviet Fyodorov Brigade, was appointed chief of police in Chełm, where he reportedly "sent forty Poles to jail for crimes against Jews." Although Kamm witnessed the murders by Korczyński's Communist partisans of Jewish prisoners of war who had escaped from a POW camp in Lublin, he did not pursue those culprits but insead targeted persons simply because they belonged to the anti-Communist underground. Attributing his postwar problems to anti-Semitism, Kamm complained bitterly, "Even after the war, when the Poles found out I was Jewish, they screamed that a Jew should not be chief of police and send Poles to jail. … After that happened, I said, 'To hell with it; I don't want to stay here.' And I left and came to America …"[634]

Eta Chajt Wrobel, who was a member of a Jewish partisan group with ties to the Communist People's Army, was appointed the first postwar mayor of her home town of Łuków. In that capacity,

> I also made sure the Russians knew who the collaborators were during the war and where AK members might be hiding.
>
> The security police force we created was of higher rank than our regular police officers and assigned to track down members of the dreaded AK. I worked with them as well. …
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> … we ran an investigation of the two plotters and discovered that they were linked to our friendly head of security police, who we discovered happened to be an undercover AK agent. A few days

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[632] Friedmann, *Reluctant Soldier,* 42.

[633] Cited in Gross, *Fear,* 62 (note).

[634] Cited in Glass, *Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust,* 92–93. See also Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation, *Study Guide,* "Ben Kamm: Determined to Fight," Internet: <http://www.jewishpartisans.org/pdfs/JPEF_Bio_Ben_Kamm.pdf> and <http://www.1939club.com/VideoTestimonyList.htm>. In the latter video recorded in 1983, Ben Kamm describes how his partisan group used intimidation tactics, such as threatening hanging, to scare farmers into giving up their weapons. He also claims, improbably, that the sole reason he was shot at and some of his Jewish colleagues were killed when they were with the militia in Chełm was because they were Jews. Kamm's testimony is replete with obvious exaggerations and often degenerates into an anti-Polish diatribe.

> later, the AK … marched more than 200 men down the main streets of Lukow [Łuków]. The Russians, however, had no problem surrounding them and forcing them into the marketplace … While a few AK troops managed to escape, the Russians immediately executed the rest. When the Russians eventually came to our offices, we informed them of the results of our investigation, but the head of the security police blew his brains out before they could arrest him.[635]

Understandably, retaliations ensued. According to Polish sources, on May 1, 1945, a Polish partisan detachment set an ambush for a truck carrying functionaries of the District Security Office and militiamen from the District Command in Łuków. Among those killed was militiaman Chil Finkielstein. Four militia funtionaries were let off, whereas five, including Mojżesz Mancarz and Chaim Kaufman were abducted. The five vanished without a trace.[636]

Bronka Klibanski, one of the five liaison women of the Jewish underground who "constituted the executive core" of the largely Jewish "antifascist committee" set up by the Communists in Białystok in May 1944, states:

> After the liberation of Bialystok [Białystok], we helped arrest collaborators who were known to have revealed the hiding places of Jews and handed them over to the Germans.[637]

Joseph Elman, who joined the Soviet partisans and returned to his hometown of Prużana with the Soviet "liberators" in 1944, worked hard to "identify … all those collaborators who didn't have a chance to

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[635] Wrobel, *My Life My Way,* 112–13.

[636] Wnuk, *Lubelski Okręg AK DSZ i WiN, 1944–1947,* 306; Adam Kopciowski, "Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials* (Journal of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research, Warsaw), vol. 1 (2008): 185.

[637] Ofer and Weitzman, *Women in the Holocaust,* 185. Two Jewish women couriers who joined the Forois ("Forward") partisan group made up of fugitives from the Białystok ghetto, which was later subordinated to the Soviet partisans, were reportedly instrumental in the betrayal of some Home Army members: "Upon special orders from Moscow to unite all the anti-fascist forces, she [Liza Czapnik] was given the task of trying to contact the Armia Krajowa, AK … which for political reasons fought against the Soviet partisans. With the help of Bronia Klibanski, several members of the AK were brought to the headquarters of the partisan brigade, joined in the fighting and were afterwards relieved of their weapons." See Tikva Fatal-Kna'ani, "Liza Czapnik," *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia,* March 1, 2009, Jewish Women's Archive, Internet: <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/czapnik-liza>. Women partisans also took part in raids on villages, as Eva Kracowski recalls: "We lived in the forest ziemlanka … We had four or maybe five shotguns … For food we went out to surrounding villages. Whenever we came close to a peasant's hut, we would make a lot of noise, talking, from the outside: 'Surround the house! Stand in rows'—we used all kinds of names [generally, Russian] of people who did not exist. We did this to give the impression that there were many of us … Two people would go in the hut. Seeing the guns, the peasants would have no choice and would hand over their provisions. … We also confiscated *wagons with horses*. We would only take food. [Why would they need wagons for just a modest amount of food for a group of ten partisans?—*M.P.*] We came to the edge of the forest with the wagons, the horses, and the provisions. The horses and the wagons would then return to their homes. … And then each of us would carry, on our backs, our supplies back to our ziemlanka. Actually, we were the poorest group in the area, with the least amount of provisions. … There was another group of Jews there whom we called 'the bourgeois.' It was a family unit. It had contacts with a Polish woman. They had money; they paid this woman for getting them provisions. And so they didn't have to go on expediyions for food." See Tec, *Resilience and Courage,* 274–75.

escape" in his new assignment with the "internal police."[638] Harold Zissman (Hersh Cukierman), a former partisan who worked as a "bookkeeper" for the NKVD in Baranowicze (the head of the finance department, Captain Trussov, was also a Jew, who allotted Zissman extra food coupons), recalled:

> While working there, within the web of Soviet bureaucracy, I attended NKVD school. I also helped round up draftees and helped pursue former collaborators, who were hiding in the same forests that once hid the Partisans.[639]

In an oral interview conducted ten years before he published his memoir, Harold Zissman was more forthcoming about his activities. He described candidly who was targeted and who received favourable treatment.

> … any roundups, I had to go [on] duty as a KGB which I was assigned with maybe two more guys and go to the houses. … So every time before a holiday was nearing, we used to have to go to search homes and search passports and different documents. Because we were told there are crime[s] going on, and there are many people who resist the Soviet system because we used to give our political speeches. And it's our job to go and turn all of these here criminals in. On one of these journeys, one day it happened I was again the head of the group, there were three of us. …
>
> So with that mission at that particular time, we were assigned to look for criminals. What was the criminal? Somebody who did not report to be inducted. That was a criminal. Everybody in their passport had to have a separate page stamped from the induction center that he's released from induction because maybe he was not fit medically—I mean physically. … on the passport if you did not have that stamp or that page proving to you that you were released from service becoming a soldier in other words, being inducted, you had to turn them in. And believe me a lot of times maybe the people have fear, did not have the documents with them, and we used to round up so much time. And then if they were questioned, they didn't find anything to hold then, they would let them out. Now, that particular night I'm knocking on the door, and I was the first to knock on the door. And I keep telling them, I said, "Make the lights. This is the KGB coming for an inspection. Everybody come out holding their passports ready for examination." In it comes a voice in Yiddish with Hebrew stating say … which translating that into English means Hebrew or Jew, keep on walking. … I went outside, closed the door, and I said—the others say, "Something going on?" I says, "Everything is in order. Everything is fine. Let us proceed to the next mission." … I feel like I must go back to that place. Find out who was that guy who was talking. … the next day in the middle of the day I'm coming there in uniform. I knock on the door, and I met him in there. … I says, "Who was the guy last night. Who was the one who said, "—"? that was a cousin. A first cousin to my wife who was also a partisan … And he was trying to beat, because the war was coming over, who wanted to be inducted? … So they were really hiding out sort of waiting all of the days until it will come to an end and the induction probably won't be here. … I tried to tell, I says, "I'm working the KGB. I hope you understand. We met now, but I can't give my head for you

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[638] Interview with Joseph Elman, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, May 19, 1998, 66–67.

[639] Zissman, *The Warriors,* 162.

> guys' hiding. At this moment, you better do what you want to do. I don't want to find you again when I come here. I really cannot protect you, so you got to do what you got to do." Which they moved away back, you know what I mean, someplace else. And you know, it so happens that neither of them was inducted. They got themselves secure jobs that they shouldn't be able to be inducted.[640]

Katriel Lashowitz, a former Soviet partisan, recalled his days as a prison guard in Brześć, now Brest in the Soviet Union:

> After several days, I was asked to assume a new position—the deputy for a shift of the prison, in which there were three shifts all 12 hours consecutively, with 24 hours of rest or relief. Together with my friend Hillel [Schneider from Baranowicze], we set up quarters in a solitary house, that had belonged to Jews, after evicting the gentiles that had been living there. Hillel's job as a policeman was to bring prisoners that had not yet been tried to court, and then return them to prison after their sentence had been passed. Hillel and I had an agreement that any prisoner that was suspected or murdering Jews or informing on Jews, would get a double dose from us, even before they came to trial, and for sure after sentence was passed. It was enough for Hillel to give me a sign, before the prisoner was brought to my office, to know how to treat the prisoner. Also a sign from the officer to the jailers was sufficient to let then know how to treat a prisoner of this type.[641]

Conditions in Volhynia, a largely Ukrainian part of interwar Poland, are described in several accounts. Ephraim Schwarzmann, a Jew from Volhynia who was conscripted by the Red Army in 1940 and spent the war years in the Soviet Union, recalls:

> I was put in charge of a special unit which was to act as a liaison between the Polish and Russian Armies. For my unit I chose Poles who had suffered at the hands of the Germans and former underworld characters. I knew what I intended to do—to be revenged at all costs.
>
> … my only inclination was to stay as close to the front as possible in order to take my revenge on the Germans and their Polish and Ukrainian collaborators. In the villages of Golova [Hołoby?], Midniovka [?] Grosovka [Gruszówka] (near Kovel [Kowel) I gave the underworld characters in my unit a free hand to deal with any collaborators and they did their work so thoroughly that I received a severe reprimand from General Headquarters. …
>
> I knew that most of the population of Western Poland cooperated with the Nazis in the extermination of the Jews. [The Jewish population of Western Poland was, for the most part, removed to the Generalgouvernement before the Holocaust got under way, and thus the inhabitants of that region did not even witness these events.—*M.P.*]
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> When the [Red] Army entered Germany the soldiers were allowed to do more or less as they pleased. Many of the Russians had cause to take revenge on the Germans but the Jews had even

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[640] Interview with Harold Zissman, May 24, 1995, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

[641] Katriel Lashowitz, "From the Memories of a Partisan," in Lashowitz, *Volkovysk,* 151, Part III of *The Volkovysk Memorial Book*.

more cause and took every opportunity to make the Germans suffer. In the early days there was hardly a German prisoner left alive. …

I heard of many acts of revenge at this period. One had only to hear that there were families of Nazis in a village and it would be burnt to the ground. A great deal of Nazi property was destroyed. There were also cases of imitating methods used by the Germans in similar circumstances.

… This was enough for the soldiers of my unit and they decided to make the women of the village pay for what their husbands had done. [642]

There are similar accounts describing the activities of former Jewish partisans in the vicinity of Rokitno and Stepań, in Volhynia.

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[642] Ephraim Schwarzmann, "With the Red Army from Stalingrad to Berlin," in Kariv, *Horchiv Memorial Book*, 73–75. Revenge directed at the Germans was widespread and brutal. In "liberated" Wilno, Germans were not permitted on the sidewalks and were required to wear distinctive armbands. Germans were even found on the street with their throats cut. Cohen, *The Avengers,* 154. Benjamin P., a Jew from Warsaw who during the last months of the war succeeded in disguising himself as a wounded SS man with a medical discharge, ended up as overseer of forced labourers on a farm in the Sudetenland: "On the 3rd of May they said that Hitler had died. People hung out black flags. People cried. … On the 8th of May the Russians entered Aussig. … And among [the Russian soldiers] was a lieutenant leading the detail. He was a Jew from Baranowicz [Baranowicze], from Poland, who … had volunteered for the [Red] Army. … In the end he saw that I am a Jew. I was there two weeks. I lived well. I became an interpreter, from German into Russian. … I took a bit of revenge on the Germans, and later on I left. For instance, I struck down a few people. Yes, killed dead. I, too, tortured a few people. And I also did the same things with the German children as the SS men did in Majdanek with the Jewish children. For instance, they took small children by the little legs and beat the head against the wall until the head cracked. I did the same to the German children, because the hate in me was so great. … In two weeks I … left for home, in Poland. … In Krakow [Kraków] I went to the Polish Committee and received help and aid, but first of all I wanted to return to Auschwitz. I [did so and] kept an eye on the people who were there, on the SS men. … I talked, and I also harassed them a little. The Russians in the camp didn't permit that they be killed, but at work one was able to harass them. … After three weeks I returned home to Warsaw." See Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds,* 133–34. Another Jew, who became chairman of the Central Committee of the Jews in Lower Silesia, instigated the Communist "governor" in Legnica to introduce measures directed against the remaining German population, namely that German homes be marked by white flags, that Germans wear white armbands on their left arms, that Germans step aside when they encounter a Jew on the sidewalk, and that Germans being repatriated to Germany be limited to sixteen kilograms of belongings. (These measures soon ceased at the intervention of the central government because of the understandable negative publicity they were attracting abroad.) This Jew also records other instances of harassment directed against Germans and the protection that Jews enjoyed: "eighteen Jews had been arrested in Rychbach (Dzierżoniów) on charges of vandalizing German homes. I telephoned the Rychbach police and asked for their release. … I gave them an ultimatum. If they did not free the Jews within two hours I would send in my Jewish militia. … Not all the survivors were angels. Some of them felt justified, in view of what they had suffered at the hands of the Nazis, to exact their own justice by vandalizing German homes and exacting physical violence. From time to time, they were arrested by the Soviets. I arranged with the Russian commander that these apprehended Jews be turned over to our committee. As soon as the police left, I would call them into my office and sternly reprimand them. … But my exhortations did not always work. … The attitude of the Soviet military authorities towards Jews in Lower Silesia was on the whole very good. Within the Soviet division stationed in Lower Silesia were many Jewish officers and soldiers and the head of the army in the district was a Jew, General Silver." See Jacob Egit, *Grand Illusion* (Toronto: Lugus, 1991), 50–53. Another memoir by a high-ranking officer, allegedly the chief of State Security in the city of Wrocław, then going by the name of Tadeusz Zaleski, notes that he "assisted in the forced removal of Germans in the Breslau [Wrocław] area back to Germany. It could not have been accidental when he ordered large groups to leave in the middle of the night, limiting them only to what they could carry." See Salsitz, *Against All Odds: A Tale of Two Survivors,* 392. The activities of the Red Army, Nazi Germany's erstwhile ally, were particularly brutal. German soldiers who surrendered were often killed on the spot; those who belonged to the SS were interrogated before their execution.

A group of Germans, unarmed and hands waving from side to side, came out. I discerned on the faded collar of one soldier an SS emblem, which upset me. I went over to him and said: *'Ich bin ein Jude.'*

His face paled. He knew his end had come. We usually did not take small groups of Germans prisoner; it wasted too much of our manpower to guard them and transfer them to regiment headquarters. This time we did not hesitate. I explained to my comrades that these were SS soldiers. 'My great day has come. … Now they were going to be killed in cold blood, just like they had done to their victims. And by whom? By Kopel Kolpanitzky, the Jewish youth who had survived the Lahwah [Łachwa] ghetto. This was my victory over the Germans. This is called revenge.' But my victory was tinged with regret; I did not have anyone to tell what I had done. …

We were glad to be in battle and searched for more and more Nazis to kill. We did not treat German soldiers who were wounded. The hatred for the Germans that each of us felt made us, and not necessarily just the Jews, brutal avengers. …

Our division took Zagan [Sagan], and our brigade remained in the city to maintain control there. Small groups of Germans surrounded the city, and we went out daily to eliminate them. In one of the battles, our platoon commander was killed. In anger, we combed the city, house by house, taking out young men and handing them over to brigade headquarters. Many houses were vacant of people, but the contents remained.

> A few days after Rokitno was liberated I came back to town. I found there three Ukrainian policemen who had served during the German occupation. I transferred them to the NKVD in Rovno [Równe] …[643]
>
> I was appointed representative of the Soviet government. I had to organize offices to deal with ongoing problems of the civilian population as well as the many passing through town. That same day I issued orders asking the population to cooperate with the authorities and to hand in any arms in their possession. It was important because we did not have enough time to take revenge on the Poles [sic] who had collaborated with the Germans. On the first night, only a few Poles were killed by Jewish partisans and that was that. The next mission was to bring the traitors to the Soviet security authorities. Some tens of Poles and Ukrainians were sent to Siberia or to prison. They were never seen again.[644]
>
> … there were several attacks of the Bandrovechim [Ukrainian insurgents, followers of Bandera] on Red Army units, and they also attacked several Jewish youths who served as volunteer policemen trying to search for the Bandrovechim … to avenge the non-Jews who abused and butchered their relatives.[645]

Regina Hader Rock, a female avenger from Rohatyn, a predominantly Ukrainian area of Eastern Galicia, joined the NKVD in search of revenge, as did Abraham Tracy (Trasawucki) in Skała Podlaska.

> After three months in the town, regaining strength, I first went to the NKVD (Russian Secret Police, now known as the KGB), to take revenge on those who killed our brothers and sisters and fellow Jews. I worked with the NKVD and turned over fifty farmers, also Dr. Melnik of Rohatyn, all who collaborated with the Nazis and the Gestapo. He received twenty years in jail. Many of the others were shot.[646]
>
> One of the things [the Soviets] did was to create a special battalion, whose task was to catch the Ukrainian partisans who had opposed them during the war. Since many of these Ukrainians had had a hand in murdering Jews, many of us were willing to join. …

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[643] Account of Asher Binder in E. Leoni, ed., *Rokitno (Volin) ve-ha-sevivah: Sefer edut ve-zikaron* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Rokitno in Israel, 1967), 339ff., translated as *Rokitno-Wolyn and Surroundings: Memorial Book and Testimony,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/rokitnoye/Rokitnoye.html>.

[644] Account of Baruch Shehori (Schwartzblat) in ibid., 358ff.

[645] Account of J. Peri, in Yitzhak Ganuz, ed., *Ayaratenu Stepan* (Tel Aviv: Stepan Society, 1977), 302ff., *Our Town Stepan,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/stepan/Stepan.html>.

[646] Regina Hader Rock, "From Hiding Place to Hiding Place," in M. Amihai, David Stockfish, and Shmuel Bari, eds., *The Community of Rohatyn and Environs,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/rogatin/rohatyn.html>; translated from *Kehilat Rohatyn ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Rohatyn in Israel, 1962), 250 ff..

> Like the others, I helped to search for as many Ukrainian traitors as I could. We arrested each one we found, and brought them to the small storage room in the community center, which served as the jail. All this was done with the consent of the Russians, and all of these men we brought in were given a fair [sic] trial.[647]

Herman Stelcer, who survived the war as a member of the Home Army, returned to his native Krosno, where he joined the NKVD to exact revenge.

> After the Russians came I joined the NKVD. I wanted to take revenge on the Poles who had denounced my siblings. I worked for the NKVD for 18 months. I liquidated members of the Home Army who had attacked Russians and Jews. While in the service of the NKVD I avenged not only my family but many other Jews.[648]

Dawid Simelman, who was passing as Józef Białek in Leżajsk, joined the Home Army shortly before the entry of the Soviets in July 1944. He promptly left and informed the NKVD about its members and where their arms were hidden.[649]

A Jew was sheltered on an estate in Żyznów, near Strzyżów, not far from Rzeszów, where many residents were active in the underground. Upon the arrival of the Soviets, he started collaborating with them. When he was killed accidentally, a list of seventeen Home Army members who had been betrayed to the Soviet security forces was found in his possession.[650]

Florian Majewski (Moshe Lajbcygier) had been sheltered by Poles and became a member of the Home Army. After the war, he was conscripted into the Polish army and was attended a military college. Upon his return, he was engaged in anti-insurgency operations directed against anti-Communist forces.

> The army made use of my experience as a partisan and gave me a unit of 25 men to command. Our first action was near Kostrzyn, close to the German border. A former nationalist sympathizer was operating as a bandit [i.e., an anti-Communist partisan]. We heard through intelligence that he was expected to visit his family, and searched his home but found nothing. I decided to wait in the house with some men in case he turned up. … Our bandit had managed to hide away in the chimney.

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[647] Tracy, *To Speak for the Silenced,* 210.

[648] Elżbieta Rączy, "Ludność żydowska w Krośnie 1939–1946," *Biblioteka Krośnieńska (Seria historia),* no. 15 (1999): 32. During the German occupation Stelcer was provided with false identity documents under the name of Henryk Pieniowski, a Polish officer. He joined a Home Army unit commanded by Edward Kurcoń. Ibid., 29–30.

[649] Witold Bagieński and Magdalena Dźwigał, eds., *Leksykon bezpieki: Kadra kierownicza aparatu bezpieczeństwa (1944–1956),* vol. 1 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu 2020), 166.

[650] Information of Piotr Szopa, a historian at the Rzeszów branch of Poland's Institute of National Remembrance. See Anna Gorczyca, "O trudnej przeszłości Polaków i Żydów," *Gazeta Polska,* March 13, 2008.

> By now it was the latter half of 1946 … Over the next year I was involved in several actions, not so dissimilar to what I was engaged in as a partisan, though in this period I did not shoot anybody and none of my group were injured. We arrested a few Germans and Ukrainians, but mostly they were individual Poles who we handed over to the [security] police.[651]

Iosif Ushomirski, who served in the Soviet army, was assigned to the NKVD where he fought Polish anti-Soviet forces. "I was so patriotic," he recalled. Ushomirski was one of many Stalinist security personnel welcomed to the United States during the "Cold War" period,[652] even though the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 excluded aliens who were members of the Communist or any other totalitarian party of any foreign state, and any section, subsidiary, branch, affiliate, or subdivision of any such association or party (section 212(a)(28)).

William Dunwill (Witold Duniłowicz, formerly Tenenbaum), who joined the Communist Polish Army after the "liberation," recalls being summoned before the State Security Office in Koszalin to answer questions about his suspected connections to the Polish underground. Tenenbaum had been provided a false identity card by a Polish friend in the Union of Armed Struggle (*Związek Walki Zbrojnej*), a predecessor of the Home Army, which enabled him to survive passing as a Pole. The director of the Security Office, Lieutenant Józef Pieczeń, and his assistant, Lieutenant Orliński, were Polish Jews who had spent the war years in the Soviet Union. On returning to Poland they offered their services wholeheartedly to the Stalinist regime and dedicated themselves to ferreting out Home Army members. Tenenbaum was accused of being involved with a fascist or pro-German organization, but was able to extricate himself by revealing that he was a Jew who had to resort to this measure to save himself. He was informed that that would have entitled him to a six-month reprieve from military service and his case was closed. Had he been a Pole, he would doubtless have been arrested and sent to the Gulag.[653]

One did not have to be a member of the Polish underground to attract the attention of the Soviet apparatus of terror. The net of undesirable Poles was cast very wide:

> Mrs. K. was from a well-to-do Jewish family … Her servant girl from before the war, the daughter of a prostitute, became her rescuer. She did everything that she could for Mrs. K., often risking her life …
>
> The girl spoke in the language and slang of her milieu, such as, "Jews are the business people." "They are the doctors." "They stick together." "You should know. You have a Yiddish head." Such phrases were often used by Jews themselves, but when used by Poles they became "anti-Semitic."

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[651] Mayevski, *Fire without Smoke,* 146. Majewski survived the war in central Poland, near Sulejów, as a member of a Home Army unit that pursued collaborators; he does not record any activities by the Home Army directed at Jews. Ibid., 81–117

[652] Zvi Y. Gitelman, "Internationalism, Patriotism, and Disillusion: Soviet Jewish Veterans Remember World War II and the Holocaust," in Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Symposium Presentations* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2005), 118.

[653] William Dunwill (Witold Duniłowicz), *Trzy kolory mojego życia* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN–B, 2000), 182–83.

The servant often meant them with love and respect for Mrs. K., or in some cases simply believed them. Her use of such phrases proved to be her downfall. …

Some weeks later [after the Soviets entered eastern Poland], Mrs. K. and the servant went to work for a Russian hospital. … There she was overheard making some of her "anti-Semitic" remarks by a Russian doctor, who happened to have been Jewish. He reported her as being a pro-Nazi and an

> anti-Semite. She was not only fired, but was sent to Siberia and, like so many others, was never heard of again.[654]

For two years Aleksandra Sadkowska had sheltered Roman Chwedkowski, a Jew with whom she had an intimate relationship. After the war, in a dispute over property coloured by jealousy, Chwedkowski's Jewish

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[654] Saul S. Friedman, ed., *Holocaust Literature: A Handbook of Critical, Historical, and Literary Writings* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 150. Another example of a rescuer from the Chełm region being falsely accused of mistreating his Jewish charges during the German occupation, this time by one of the charges who became a lieutenant in the Polish army, is noted in the account of Zbigniew Małyszczycki, dated November 23, 1997 (in the author's possession). Małyszczycki also notes the preferential treatment Jewish army deserters received from Jewish prosecutors: while Christian Poles were treated brutally, Jews were pardoned. In another case, a Jew who became a member of the security police after the war "saw to it" that his Polish benefactor would not come around for any favours. See Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych,* 41, an important book which touches on the neglected theme of lack of gratitude on the part of Jews who owed their lives to the rescue activities of Poles. This book also describes the return of a Jewish family to Kamionka, a village near Lublin, along with Red army soldiers; their benefactors were interrogated about villagers who may have harmed Jews. Ibid., 130. It also mentions the case of a Jewish woman who did not want to return to the rightful Polish owner items looted from the latter's home during the war. Ibid., 178. Cottages from which Jews had been expelled by the Germans in Biała Rawska remained vacant throughout the war; the poor people in the area were encouraged to move into them when the Communists seized power at the end of the war. Ibid., 59. For details of the shameful postwar fate of Zofia Kossak-Szczucka and Władysław Bartoszewski, both prominent members of Żegota, the wartime Council for Aid to Jews, at the hands of Jakub Berman, who exercised control over the Ministry of Public Security, see Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 132–33, 342 n. 326. Jerzy Gabrielski, a promising director who began shooting a film about the Warsaw Uprising, was denounced to the NKVD in 1946 by Aleksander Ford, the Jewish director of "Film Polski," as a "reactionary" and "anti-Semite" and was jailed and physically mistreated. See Jerzy Robert Nowak, *Zagrożenia dla Polski i polskości* (Warsaw: Inicjatywa Wydawnicza "ad astra", 1998), vol. 1, 49. Aleksander Ford was not the only Jew to advance his career at the expense of Poles. Similar allegations have been levelled against Rachela Ginsburg, who changed her name to Stefania Jabłońska after the war, joined the Security Office where she worked as a doctor in the Mokotów prison verifying the death sentences carried out on political prisoners, and usurped the position of the renowned dermatologist Professor Marian Grzybowski (she had been his assistant) after he was arrested and put to death by the security police in 1949. See Marek Wroński, *Zagadka śmierci prof. Mariana Grzybowskiego* (Warsaw: Artgraf, 2004). Jerzy Filip, a doctor in a Home Army unit in the Lublin area, who provided medical assistance to Jews hiding in a forest shelter near Józefów, was, after the war, pursued by a Jew working in the Ministry of National Defence whose life he had spared. See Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 341–42. A Pole from the village of Sąsiadka, near Szczebrzeszyn, was denounced by the Jews he had sheltered and imprisoned as being a member of the Home Army. See Czesław Stanisław Bartnik, *Mistyka wsi: Z autobiografii młodości 1929–1956* (Źrebce: n.p., 1999), 300. As a member of the Diversionary Command of the Home Army, Kazimierz Moczarski organized a cell which liquidated Nazi collaborators and denouncers of Jews and others. After the war he was tortured under the watchful eye of a Jewish interrogator (Jakub Różański) and sentenced to death for allegedly "murdering" Communists and Jews. See Henryk Pająk, *Dwa wieki polskiej Golgoty, czyli samotni wśród łotrów* (Lublin: Retro, 1999), 253–54. One of the many priests persecuted in the Stalinist era, Rev. Czesław Białek, was arrested for assisting members of a student organization branded as a "counter-revolutionary band." Although during the German occupation, as a Jesuit seminarian, he had assisted Jews in escaping from the ghetto in Nowy Sącz and even fell into the hands of the Gestapo at one point, Rev. Białek was arrested in 1953 after an anti-Semitic brochure was planted in his church. See Danuta Suchorowska, *Gurgacz: Popiełuszko lat stalinowskich i wspólnicy jego losu* (Kraków: Biblioteka Obserwatora Wojennego, 1987). Władysław Bruliński, who, as head of the Białystok Distrtict Home Army Bureau of Information and Propaganda, provided Jews with false documents and helped to shelter them, recalled that, when he was arrested in 1946, the persons who arrested him, prosecuted him, and tortured him in prison were all Jews. He was sentenced to a prison term of ten years his underground activity against the Communist regime. See Władysław Bruliński, *Czerwone plamy historii* (Warsaw: Unia Nowoczesnego Humanizmu, 1981), 51.

In Holocaust literature it has become commonplace to claim that Poles wanted to keep their rescue activities a secret out of fear of fellow Poles and postwar anti-Semitic disapproval. However, the reality was that it was prudent not to remain silent because the Communist regime associated such activities with involvement in the anti-Communist underground. As American sociologist Nechama Tec explains,

> Faced with a deteriorating situation, the Russians launched a ruthless persecution of all unauthorized underground groups. Their aim was to destroy the powerful forces of the AK. Many people arrested had nothing to do with postwar illegal operations but were targets because of former involvement with the AK. Thus some former AK members tried to conceal their wartime affiliations. In their case, to mention having shielded Jews would only stimulate interest in their other wartime activities and eventually reveal their AK affiliation.

wife accused Sadkowska of anti-Semitism after she was assaulted by Sadkowska, a charge that Chwedkowski himself did not support.[655]

Some Jews took advantage of their circumstances and started to take revenge against *random* Poles before the war had come to a close. Benjamin P., a Jew from Warsaw who during the last months of the war succeeded in disguising himself as a wounded SS man with a medical discharge, ended up as overseer of forced labourers on a farm in the Sudetenland.

> I was sent to Neuland, a village two kilometers from Aussig. In that village was a large estate with seventeen people [i.e., labouers], and I was sent out there as an overseer. These seventeen people were Ukrainians and Poles, not prisoners but civilian workers … I worked there for a month. I harassed the Poles terribly just out of hate which I still had for them from Warsaw. Because they are big anti-Semites … So they suffered a lot at work. I didn't allow them to have a free hour there. I shortened the dinner [hour] to half an hour. And the German peasant woman was on my side because I was a military man. And I also made the acquaintance there of a German girl. I went around with her, had fun, carried on a kind of love affair with her.[656]

In other cases, the motive was blind revenge disproportionate to any alleged misdeed. A Jewish teenager from Łosice remembered the demise of one her teachers with relish. Her family enlisted the support of their Soviet-Jewish protectors to accomplish this dirty deed.

> All our cash was gone, and we had none of our other prewar assets. We had only the clothes we wore. But because my dad was still remembered fondly by some of the townsfolk, and especially by some of the surrounding Polish noblemen with large estates, he soon managed to gather some money and goods that these people owed him from before the war. In addition, one kind Polish pharmacist, who knew and respected my dad, immediately offered him five hundred zlotys [złotys] (roughly $20) for food and basic necessities. The pharmacist offered more as needed, but my dad soon managed to carry the burden on his own.
>
> We had all the food we desired. Even the Red Army was kind enough to feed us occasionally, if we volunteered to peel potatoes for the soldiers … I enjoyed laughing with them and singing their beautiful songs, and I learned Russian fast. …
>
> Finally, school began again in September 1944. I was nearly thirteen and allowed to enter the third grade. I didn't care. I was thrilled. I knew that I would be a good student and would catch up quickly. I spoke Polish well and the teacher, Władysław Gołąbek, was quite sympathetic to my family. I felt alive … The Gentile kids were amazed at my courage and watched me carefully. …
>
> One day one girl was very sad and almost in tears. She told me that the tall female teacher of English and religion had told the students not to play with me because I was a Jew. The girl told me not to worry, that she would continue to be my friend. I went home crying and complained to my mother. Mom insisted that I go back to the school the very next day. Now we are equals, she said,

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[655] Hera, *Polacy Ratujący Żydów,* 101 n. 223.

[656] Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds,* 133.

> and we will fight back. She immediately reported the incident to the Soviet administrative officer. The next day he sent a secret agent to the school who arrested the teacher and sent her off to Siberia for reeducation.
>
> The Soviets [who were busy persecuting Jews in the Soviet Union at the time—*M.P.*] had no sympathy for such discrimination toward people victimized by the Nazis or Polish collaborators. Furthermore, many Russian soldiers were Jewish and empathized with us. Occasionally, one would throw out a clue such as *amcha,* a Hebrew word meaning "one belonging to your people," to signal that he was Jewish and on our side. The Red Army protected us for a while …[657]

Among the numerically large Polish underground there were also criminal elements who preyed on Jews and others. Jews were known to turn to Soviet military and secret police to square accounts with these elements. However, the Soviet net was cast wide and caught many others, thus reinforcing the notion that Jews enjoyed special protection and were above the rule of law that applied to ordinary Poles. These denunciations in turn set off retaliations as the situation spiralled out of control.

> My mother took revenge on the man who shot at my brother and almost killed him. She knew who he was. [This person was a Polish policeman in Przemyśl who had helped the boy leave the ghetto, and then chased him away when he continued to follow him on the outside—*M.P.*] She went to his house with the Russian police asking for my brother. He started to stumble in his words. He didn't know what to tell her. So she told him what he had done. The Russians arrested him and hung him. The same thing happened to one of my cousins. My uncle, the one that was in the concentration camp, had also given his daughter to a Polish woman along with a good deal of money. The woman was supposed to hide my cousin with her relatives in a small village. Instead she gave up my cousin for two kilos of sugar. After the liberation my mother went to look for her and went to the Polish woman. She said she didn't know what happened to her. She did not want to stay so she ran away. … The Russian police pressed this woman and she confessed that she turned my cousin over to the Gestapo. The Russians executed her, too.[658]

> After walking a few blocks [in Chełm], they suddenly came across several German POWs surrounded by Russian soldiers.
>
> As soon as Yeedle laid eyes on the Nazis, he suddenly went berserk. His facial features became contorted and his eyes turned wild … Overwhelmed by pain and frustration, Yeedle rushed toward the German men. He grabbed one of the wooden clogs off his foot and began beating them mercilessly with it.
>
> The Russian soldiers were startled by the attack. Yeedle looked like a frenzied madman, and they quickly tried to restrain him.
>
> "Leave him alone," Esther said to the soldiers. "This man has suffered a great deal. … Let him vent his rage."

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[657] Renée Glassner, "Life, Death, and Angels," in Martin Ira Glassner and Robert Krell, eds., *And Life Is Changed Forever: Holocaust Childhoods Remembered* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 172–73.

[658] Account of Teodora (Cesia) Zimmermann Miller in Hartman and Krochmal, *I Remember Every Day…,* 51–52.

The men stepped back and let Yeedle strike the Germans freely. …

"It's okay," Esther said. "I understand how you feel. In fact, there is one man against whom I want to take revenge. Do you remember Suski, the man who had a newspaper stand at the corner? He tormented me to no end after the invasion. Besides, he helped the Germans identify Jews, and a number of people died because of him." …

The Russians had turned City Hall into their temporary headquarters, and leaving Yeedle and Samuel on the front steps, she went directly inside.

"I would like to speak to the *Kommandant,*" she said to the first soldier she saw. …

He led her to the *Kommandant's* office and opened the door for her.

When Esther walked in, she found a tall man standing deep in thought behind a large desk. …

"Finally, a Polish Jew who is alive!" he said with emotion. …

Esther stared at him in surprise. … she hadn't imagined that he would actually be a fellow Jew who was appalled by the annihilation of the Polish Jews. …

The *Kommandant* heaved a deep, anguished sigh. "How can I help you?" he asked Esther. "Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes," she said, there's a Polish man, Suski, who has caused great suffering to many Jews. Before we were deported to the ghettos, he regularly identified Jews for the Nazis, which often resulted in their deaths. He eagerly assisted the Nazis in eliminating Jews."

The *Kommandant* clenched his fists, and his face turned bright red. "Where is this man?" he asked, gritting his teeth. …

Now he jumped at the chance to take action against someone who had maliciously harassed his people.

Curious to see what he would do, Esther hurried out after him. She met Yeedle and Samuel outside, and together the three watched as the Jewish soldier called to a wagon driver who was standing nearby. He ordered Suski to climb into the wagon and then sat down beside him.

"Take us to the prison downtown," he said to the driver. …

They waited for some time until they saw the Jewish *Kommandant* returning. This time, though, he was the only passenger in the wagon. When the horse pulled up in front of City Hall, he thanked the wagon driver and came up to where Esther was waiting with her brother.

"Don't worry. I took care of him," he said. "That man will never bother any Jews again."[659]

There were already Russians in the yard, and the captain informed that he was Jewish.

Along the way, I met the Golombiowski's son, the one who had said that a golden statue should be erected in honor of the liquidator of the Jews. He told me that the wife of the postmaster searched for me with the help of the police the day after I disappeared from her house [in the village of Rudnik, near Leżajsk]. He spoke to me with hypocrisy …

His self-righteousness nauseated me. I left him without answering. I ran to the Russians and informed the Jewish captain about who were the collaborators with the Germans. My list was complete. The Golombiowskis and the wife of the postmaster headed it.

This was my small revenge to the lowlife Polish collaborators.

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[659] Perl, *Tell the World,* 196–99.

> I don't know what they did with them. The next day the captain told me to escape from town and to flee for my life from the members of the Polish Krajowa Army terrorist organization.[660]

Aharon Moravtchik describes the activities of an informal network of Jewish avengers within the security police in Poland who used their offices to track down collaborators implicated in the destruction of the Jewish community in Dawidgródek, Polesia. These Belorussian collaborators had moved to Poland after that area had been incorporated into the Soviet Union and were posing as Poles.[661] Indeed, many Jews who held high positions in the Soviet army and security police displayed ethnic solidarity with Polish Jews by providing them with their services and with favours that they denied ordinary Poles.[662] Occasionally, Jews used their influence with high-placed Soviets and Polish Communists for the benefit of Poles to whom they owed a debt of gratitude for saving their lives during the German occupation.[663] Miriam Kolodny Goldwasser, for example, appealed to a Soviet captain, a Jew, on behalf of a Polish farmer who had sheltered her and her cousin in a village near Kamień Koszyrski. For some unknown reason the farmer had been labeled a traitor and was about to be executed summarily. She persuaded the captain by telling him that the Pole was "a friend to the Jews." The captain acknowledged, "I, too, am Jewish," and halted the execution.[664] When Bolesław Topolewski, who had sheltered Mindzia Kirszenbaum in the village of Przeradz, near Bieżuń, was arrested after the war for his underground activities, Topolewski's wife turned to Kirszenbaum for help. Kirszenbaum intervened with the Jewish intevestigating officer at the Security

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[660] Henia Kopel (nee Reich), "Among the Gentiles Who Were After My Life," in *Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Lezajsk Who Perished in the Holocaust,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Lezajsk/Lezajsk.html>, translation of Rabin, *Lizhensk,* 61–71. Henia Kopel had worked for both the Golombiowski family and the postmaster's family in the village of Rudnik, near Leżajsk, without their being aware of her Jewish origin. According to Polish sources, Bronisław Gołębiowski, a local Home Army member, was arrested by the NKVD in November 1944 and disappeared without a trace, perhaps deported to the Gulag. See "Droga na wschód część 5," Sztafeta, Internet: <http://www.sztafeta.pl/droga-na-wschod-cz-5/>.

[661] Aharon Moravtchik, "My Small Revenge for the Heinous Crime," in Norman Helman, ed., *Memorial Book of David-Horodok* (Oak Park, Michigan: David Horodoker Women's Organization, 1981), 119–29, Internet: <http:davidhorodok.netforms.com/yizkor/8a.html>. Ukrainians who had perpetrated crimes against Jews also moved to western Poland after the war, posing as ethnic Poles. Hersh Pollack describes his pursuit of Valenti Kasianchuk from Brody, who assumed the identity of Józef Petski (Pecki?). Kasianchuk had betrayed Pollack's sisters' hideout and committed other crimes. He was arrested in April 1947, tried, sentenced to death, and executed by hanging in March 1948. See Hersh Pollack, "Revenge on the Murderer," in Aviv Meltzer, et al., eds., *Ner Tamid: Yizkor leBrody* (Jerusalem: Organization of Former Brody Residents in Israel, 1994), 180–84; translated as *An Eternal Light: Brody, in Memoriam,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/brody/Brody.html>.

[662] See, for example, Naftali Dov Fuss, *The Imposter* (Jerusalem and Woodmore, New York: Gefen, 1992), 184–85 (a Jewish smuggler was given a reprieve by an NKVD officer); Goldstein, *For Decades I Was Silent,* 153–54 (Jews received economic benefits and protection from senior military officers stationed in Mława, who identified themselves as Jews; this close association of the Jewish residents with the Soviet occupying forces doubtless had a deleterious effect on the attitude of the local Polish population).

[663] A number of suc examples can be found in Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust*, chapter 9.

[664] Shoshana Goldwasser Schwartz and Azriela Jaffe, "Friend of a Farmer," in Yitta Halberstam and Judith Leventhal, *Small Miracles of the Holocaust: Extraordinary Coincidences of Faith, Hope, and Survival* (Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 2008), 112–14.

Office in Mława and was able to secure his release.[665] Shlomo Wolkowicz was approached by the wife of a Pole from his hometown of Jagielnica who had once saved his family during the German occupation. The Pole and been arrested by the Security Office in Kraków and charged with collaborating with the Germans. Although he did not know anyone in the Security Office, Wolkowicz's intervention on behalf of his ersrtwhile benefactor proved successful—a feat that few ethnic Poles could have managed.

> When I arrived, I was shown into the office of a pleasant looking young man, of about my own age. We immediately seemed to hit it off. I told him why I was there and asked what exactly Kominowski was accused of. The officer, whose name was Marian, gave me a brief account of the case. I asked permission to speak in his behalf, and to relate something of his actions in Jagielnica. …
>
> Marian kept his word and telephoned me next day. However, it was for an invitation to his home, for dinner, when we could discuss some aspects of the case further. … It didn't take me long to realize, once I was there, that Marian was a Jew. His girlfriend, who was also present, was Jewish, too, and so were his other friends. …
>
> About two weeks later, Kominowski was freed. I was delighted t have been able to help him, as he had once helped us.[666]

But many Jews who survived the Holocaust held Poles co-responsible for their misfortune and did not hide these sentiments. Sidney Zoltak, who, along with his immediate family, was rescued by Polish farmers near Siemiatycze and helped by several other Poles, wrote: "In 1947, I was angry not only towards the Germans but also the Poles. At that time, I put the two nations on same plane. Now I put the two nations into separate categories."[667] A survivor of German camps, who returned to his hometown of Sosnowiec, did not lose any opportunity to berate Poles to his Polish friends, who "opened their home to us for as long as we stayed in the city."

> One night my emotions overflowed. I raged to my friends at the indifference of our fellow Poles. "You have seen the stories and pictures the Russians published of Auschwitz and the other camps. I tell you one day history will judge the Germans and the Polish people as well for what they have done and for what they could have done and did not do. The world is not just going to forget it [if we Jews can help it—*M.P.*]. Some day when the history of this is written, it will be almost impossible for people to believe that such atrocities were committed in the twentieth century and that most of our fellow Poles did nothing to stop it. … For this reason and many others, but mainly for this reason, I will never in my life want to see this city or these people again!"

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[665] Wołosz, *Księga pamięci Żydów bieżuńskich,* 100, n.69. Topolewski was later rearrested. The Topolewski family received belated recognition from Yad Vashem in 2015.

[666] Shlomo Wolkowicz, *The Mouth of Hell* (Haverford, Pennsylvania: Infinity, 2002), 100–1.

[667] Zoltak, *My Silent Pledge,* 246.

> In this one long talk I poured out every ounce of hatred and truth that had built up inside me to the few Poles who had befriended me.[668]

Anti-Polish sentiments could take many forms. In addition to the standard charges of complicity in the Holocaust, Szlama Leszman, who joined the Socialist underground in Kraków, chose to denigrate Poles for their lack of support for the underground, even though Poland was the only occupied country that produced an underground state and had the largest underground movement in Europe. Leszman wrote:

> This was not a movement on a national scale. The loss of their liberty did not matter to the Polish nation as a whole. The Poles were accustomed to living under the rod. In addition to this, the Germans had implemented and were carrying out all that the anti-Semitic Poles had schemed to do in the depths of their hearts.[669]

Even Poles who had risked their own lives by sheltering Jews during the German occupation were suspect. Jewish soldiers looked especially for Jewish children to "rescue" from their Polish rescuers. Jewish children were remarkably easy to track down because their presence in a village was usually an open secret.[670] However, the rescuers were now treated as potential criminals. A Jewish soldier serving with the First Polish Division described the reaction of Jewish soldiers who came across three Jewish brothers in various homes in a village near Góra Kalwaria:

> We'd been camped in the village for three days and we had to move on. What should we do? How could we make sure that they'd be safe? The war was drawing to a close but the times were not quiet and there were various kinds of people in the village. Who knew what a peasant would do if something scared him? There were two other Jews in the battalion, and the three of us consulted each other. We wrote out a certificate in the name of the goy with whom two of the [Jewish] boys had been hiding: 'I, so-and-so—I provided a first name and a family name—undertake to take care of the three children…; if something bad happens to any of them, I will be responsible and face prosecution.' We forced him to sign and we took the certificate with us…[671]

Polish memoirs confirm this general picture. Denunciations by Jews were widespread. A Jewish woman sheltered by the Zajączkowski family in Włodzimierz in Volhynia betrayed their underground connections

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[668] Nathan Shapell, *Wtiness to the Truth* (New York: David MacKay Company, 1974), 175–76.

[669] Bussgang, *Działoszyce Memorial Book,* 331.

[670] See, for example, Gafny, *Dividing Hearts,* 82–83, 88, 228 (Giełczew, a village near Góra Kalwaria, and other localities).

[671] Gafny, *Dividing Hearts,* 83.

to the Soviet secret police, thereby resulting in the arrest and deportation of five Home Army members.[672] Zygmunt Turzański, a member of the Home Army active in the vicinity of Stryj, was denounced by a Jew (from Żupanie, near Skole) who survived the war posing as a Pole with false documents furnished by the Polish underground. Turzański was arrested by the NKVD and sentenced to ten years of hard labour in Kazakhstan.[673] The case of Dawid Lipnicki, a Jew who was rescued by Wacław Misiuro and denounced his former benefactor, a Home Army member, to the NKVD in 1946,[674] was mentioned in Part Two of this book. Władysław Dytel and other Home Army members from Sokołów Podlaski were betrayed by Jewish partisans with whom they had contact during the German occupation.[675] A Jewish woman from Lwów who was sheltered by Poles compiled a list of Poles which she intended to hand over to the NKVD.[676] Another Jewish woman sheltered by Poles in Siemianówka, near Lwów, threatened to lodge a complaint with the Soviets regarding farmers who were not willing to help her. One of her Polish benefactors dissuaded her from doing so, pointing out that people were afraid but were not her enemies, as none of them had betrayed her.[677] A Jew sheltered by the Korża family near Łomża denounced the head of the family to the Soviets; fortunately, he escaped captivity and survived.[678] For reasons that are unclear, the sons of a Jewish family named Kurland, who were sheltered on the farm of a Polish family named Caban on the outskirts of Częstochowa, came to their rescuers' home with Soviet soldiers in the spring of 1945 and murdered the head of the family and his two sons.[679] Indeed, many Polish rescuers recall being interrogated in the State Security Office by Jews.[680]

Witold Sągajłło, a Home Army leader in the vicinity of Opatów, in the Radom District, who was astute enough to escape capture, recalls his own face-to-face meeting with the NKVD in August 1944.

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[672] Zajączkowski, *Martyrs of Charity,* Part One, 270.

[673] Account of Zygmunt Turzański in *Na Rubieży,* no. 79 (2005): 47; Szczepan Siekierka, Henryk Komański, and Eugeniusz Różański, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie stanisławowskim 1939–1946* (Wrocław: Stowarzyszenie Upamiętnienia Ofiar Zbrodni Ukraińskich Nacjonalistów we Wrocławiu, 2008), 612.

[674] Wiktor Noskowski, "Czy Yaffa Eliach przeprosi Polaków?" *Myśl Polska,* July 20–27, 1997.

[675] Józef Górski, "Na przełomie dziejów," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materały,* no. 2 (2006): 280–91, here at p. 290.

[676] Chodorska, *Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny,* Part One, 71.

[677] Ibid., Part One, 151.

[678] Ibid., Part Two, 111.

[679] Ibid., Part Two, 10.

[680] Ibid., Part Two, 155 (Antoni Skwierczyński); S. Burza-Karlinski, "Poles Have Brave Record of Aiding Jews," letter, *The Toronto Star,* July 25, 1992 (Stanisław Burza-Karliński).

During the briefing the sentries reported that a Russian Major had come to see Raven [AK Major Kruk]. … An hour later he reappeared with a message from the Russian [Soviet] Divisional Commander inviting all the officers of the 2nd Division of the Home Army to attend a special meeting at the Russian Divisional Command Post. … [Inspector] Tench [i.e., Żółkiewski ("Lin")] decided that only Raven should go and should make any necessary excuses for refusing to join the Russians and submit to their command.

Raven asked me to accompany him. Together it would be easier for us to wriggle out of this situation and my presence would boost his morale. … I do not know why, but I agreed. After all, I spoke Russian fluently and knew something about them. We decided to take our runners with us. All were armed with sub-machine-guns. We mounted our horses and, with the Russian Major, entered the forest. Immediately we were surrounded by at least a platoon of Russian cavalry.

At about 1930 hours we arrived at the Command Post of the Divisional Commander. Two officers met us. Both were in Russian field brown uniform, both Colonels, with NKVD flashes in their collars. They apologized profusely for the fact that the Divisional Commander could not attend the meeting owing to pressure of other work. They had been authorized to speak in his name. They introduced themselves as *Politruks* of the Division. The older, a tall, stout Jew, mentioned that he was from Bialystok [Białystok] (a town in the north-east of Poland). The younger … came from Kharkov.

At once they asked Raven why it was that the other officers of the Division he commanded had not come with him. …

The conversation kept to the typical interrogation pattern of the NKVD. The elder of the two Russians was trying to pump us about the essentials: what were our numbers, equipment, ammunition, morale? …

'Would you be willing to recognize the [Soviet-installed] Lublin Committee?' asked the older Colonel. 'After all, this is now the only Polish government truly representative of the masses.'

'We do not know anything about this Committee. We obey orders from the Polish Government in London.'

'But you had orders to fight side by side with us. How can you do it without being members of General [Zygmunt] Berling's Polish Army, which is under our command?'

… On and on it went in this vein. The tension was becoming unbearable. Eventually one last question was put in a sharp tone to Raven and me:

'And if we give you an explicit order to join us, what will you do?'

'We have our orders. And if you do not mind, we have to leave you now. We have to join our men, who are already on the move.'

A heavy silence fell, broken only by the occasional explosions of German heavy artillery shells in the distance. The corner of my eye caught the slight movement of my runner's hand towards the safety-catch of his Sten. My own fingers moved delicately towards the safety catch of my Udet, sliding it into the firing position. If we have to go, I thought, at least the two of them will go first.

> The two NKVD men looked at each other in silence for what seemed like an eternity. Eventually the older one said, '*Nu, chtozh. Puskay yedut.* (Well, let them go).'[681]

The collaboration of many Jews with the Soviet regime continued unabated throughout the Stalinist era. Ryszard Kasprowicz recalled that when a group of Polish partisans was transferred from the NKVD camp in Diagilev-Riazan', where they had been imprisoned from 1944, to a "repatriation" centre in Biała Podlaska in November 1947, they were interrogated and screened by Jewish officers from the State Security Office.[682]

Shortly after the Soviet "liberation," a group of Jews, mostly former partisans (among them Abba Kovner, Chil Grynszpan, Tuviah Friedman, Yitzhak Zuckerman, and Simon Wiesenthal), formed a secret organization in Lublin known as *Nekama* or "Revenge."[683] While one can only surmise about the extent of their activities in Poland, and where they found their support (likely with Jews in the Security Office), the nature of their mission leaves little to the imagination:

> [Abba] Kovner … was overtaken by the idea of revenge; it took hold of him and his comrades until they could think of nothing else. It became the most important goal, dictating their actions: A group of survivors dedicated themselves to *nakam* (revenge), ready to pay the price, whatever it might be, and to give up everything else. They numbered about fifty men and women, mostly partisans … Most of them were from Vilna [Wilno], Rovno [Równe], Częstochowa, and Krakow [Kraków].[684]

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[681] Witold Sagajllo, *Man in the Middle: A Story of Polish Resistance, 1940–45* (London: Leo Cooper in Association with Secker & Warburg, 1984), 136–40. Contrary to the picture painted in Communist and Jewish sources, Lieutenant-Commander Sągajłło states that the Communist partisans in the vicinity of Opatów, who included many criminals in their ranks, did not actively fight the Germans and that the Germans generally left them alone; rather the two of them took turns attacking Home Army partisans. Ibid., 75–76, 79–80, 99, 113. When two groups of armed Jews made their appearance in the forest around the villages near Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski and Opatów and demanded food with threats, they were told to submit to the authority of the Home Army or else leave the area, as the farmers already had to carry the burden of supporting several partisan groups. From the Ostrowiec group only one Jew agreed to join the Polish underground, and the three who refused were ordered to leave the area. Ibid., 93. After the war, when Sągajłło attempted to hide his identity from the Communists, a Jewish lawyer from Warsaw by the name of Polikier, who had been sheltered on a Polish estate near Opatów, became the "moving spirit" behind the NKVD and security search for him. Ibid., 50, 168.

[682] His testimony is quoted in Grażyna Dziedzińska, "'Riazańczycy,'" *Nasza Polska,* July 22, 2003.

[683] Bernard Mark, the director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, disclosed the existence of such a group in a press conference held on June 13, 1960, after the capture of Adolf Eichmann, which was reported in the Warsaw daily *Express Wieczorny* the following day. See Peter Raina, *Mordercy uchodzą bezkarnie: Sprawa Bohdana P.* (Warsaw: von borowiecky, 2000), 79–82, 115. For additional confirmation of the existence of *Nekama* see Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory*, 579, and Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow,* 190–91, 211, 215, which, like most Jewish sources, refer only to its anti-German activities or, in the case of Porat, simply allude to activities carried out against Poles. According to historian Peter Raina, *Nekama* continued to be active in Poland until well into the 1950s. It may have been responsible for the murder of the teenage son of Bolesław Piasecki, the leader of ONR [*Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny*]-Falanga, an extreme right wing interwar political organization. (There is more about this murder later.) Another member of this group was Shlomo Kantorowicz Kenet, from Wilno, who mentioned some unsuccessful attempts to cause damage. See "Wilno: Shlomo Kenet," Interview résumé, Internet: <http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/wilno/16,accounts-memories/13115,shlomo-kenet/>.

[684] Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow,* 211.

On revenge directed against non-Germans historian Dina Porat writes about "secret isolated executions at night" and alludes to "conventional methods, such as shooting or strangulation, or to go on killing Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Poles who had been identified as murderers and informers, whether by survivors or by the Soviet authorities."[685] (The activities of a revenge squad based in Palestine, headed by Abba Kovner, whose activities were directed at Nazis in Germany, are described later.)

These were not the only Jews, however, bent on revenge:

> The desire for *nakam*—expressed in last wills and testaments, in words written on walls in blood, in poems and conversations—burned within Jewish hearts. Those who were the only survivors of their families or towns viewed vengeance as the only justification for staying alive: to take revenge, to pay back the murderer and the torturer in his own coin.[686]

Private revenge actions are described by a number of Jews. Some of the Jews who returned to Kurzeniec after it liberation at the end of June 1944, "took part in acts of revenge against local collaborators."[687] The following account is from a small town in the Wilno region:

> The Germans … they came and they started killing the Jews … they killed the entire town. …
>
> And I went back to my place, where I was born, and I burned the place. And I settled the account with the goyim that killed the Jews. I settled the account completely. … I am not sorry for what I did to them, I did give them justice! …
>
> I burned all of their houses. … I didn't want the goyim to use our houses. There were a few of us who remained alive and we did enough. Enough, enough.[688]

Samuel D., who is silent on his postwar affiliations, records:

> After the liberation we were motivated by a terrible hatred with respect to those Poles who had denounced Jews to the Germans and who had amassed fortunes on the backs of their victims. We squared a number of accounts with profiteers and thieves of all kinds. In the villages we burned farms, mills, houses … abandoned by the Jews before suppressing the plunderers who had appropriated the property. Our action was but a drop in the ocean but what was one to do? I think

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[685] Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow,* 215.

[686] Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow,* 211.

[687] Yehuda Bauer, "Kurzeniec—a Jewish Shtetl in the Holocaust," *Yalkut Moreshet,* vol. 1 (Winter 2003): 150.

[688] Account of Ze'ev Lerman (pseudonym) in Bar-On, *Fear and Hope,* 98–99, 101.

> that if we had had the means we would have killed more Poles in exchange for the services they had rendered to the Germans.[689]

A survivor from Biłgoraj named Vermut tracked down alleged local collaborators and turned them over to the authorities. In his acts of vengeance, he found an answer to the question of why he had survived.[690] Abram (Abraham) Tauber from Chodel survived the war with the help of Poles, among them Stanisław Wnuk, a local Home Army leader. After the arrival of the Soviets, Tauber headed the Security Office in Chodel, where he drew up lists of Poles from the underground, among them his benefactors, who were arrested and executed. After the underground issued a death sentence against him, Tauber was transferred to Szczecin. Later, he left for Germany, and then settled in the U.S.A.[691] Dawid Taśma, who was sheltered by a number of Polish villagers and established contact with the People's Army during the German occupation, volunteered his services to the NKVD upon the arrival of the Red Army in order to hand over Poles who had collaborated with the Germans. He then transitioned smoothly to a position in the Security Office in Rawa Mazowiecka, where he was engaged in combating anti-Communist forces. Several captured insurgents, who admitted to killing some Jews, were beaten unconscious, with a reminder that it was a Jew who was now exacting revenge.[692]

On December 5–6, 1944, a group of Jewish partisans led by the brothers Shloyme and David Grude (Gruda) murdered six people in Miłkowice-Maćki, including an 11-year-old boy. Later that night they attacked the home of the Jarocki family in Kłyżówka, who had sheltered a Jewish family from Drohiczyn. The Grude band murdered two people including a 12-year-old girl and wounded two others whom they left

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[689] Marc Hillel, *Le massacre des survivants: En Pologne après l'holocauste (1945–1947)* (Paris: Plon, 1985), 96.

[690] B. Vermut's account, "I have remained alive in order to take revenge," is found in Avraham Kronenberg, ed., *Khurbn Bilguray* (Tel Aviv: Hapoel Hamizrachi, 1956), 281–88.

[691] Kurek, *Poza granicą solidarności,* 222–23, 276 n.387; Ewa Kurek, "'Strach' sąsiadów—Janowi T. Grossowi do sztambucha," Internet: <https://ewakurek.com/artykuly/strach-sasiadow-janowi-t-grossowi-do-sztambucha/>; Leszek Kania, "Wymiar sprawiedliwości antykomunistycznego podziemia zbrojnego w Inspektoracie AK-WiN Lublin 1945–1947," *Studia Lubuskie,* vol. 4 (2008): 41–59, here at 56. Both Abraham Tauber and his wife Regina Sznajderman Tauber, also from Chodel, survived the war with the help of Poles. It does not appear that they bothered to nominate their benefactors for recognition by Yad Vashem. See the Testimony of Abraham Tauber, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 26589; Testimony of Regina Tauber, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 26587.

[692] Testimony of Dawid Taśma, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/2010, reproduced in part in Diatłowicki, *Żydzi w walce 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 65. After learning that the insurgents had passed a death sentence on him, Taśma fled to Tomaszów Mazowiecki. Many other Jews who joined the Polish Workers' Party were armed with rifles to assist the Security Office.

for dead. The victims' farms were plundered and set on fire.[693] Kesil Karshenstein, whose family members were denounced to the Germans and killed, took revenge on the Polish farmer who betrayed them by shooting the Pole's entire family.[694]

Mendel Korcarz, who joined the Soviet partisans and then the Red Army, recalled his return to his hometown of Żelechów after the war:

> I encountered a few known people and from them I found out about the great Holocaust that the Germans had made together with Anti-Semite Poles. I went to work at the Russian Commandeer. We arrested a lot of Polish Fascists. We went from house to house and made inspections. On some we found complete packages with Jewish things. And that told us a lot … I also found out then, which murderer had shot my mother. She was a whole year hiding with a Pole. He kept her as long as she and my younger little brother had money still. But when the money ended, the scoundrel brought Germans and they shot my mother and my little brother. I went immediately to the murderer that had delivered my mother and brother to the Germans. The murderer showed me behind his house, that my mother lies there. I didn't ask him much and with a few shots, he fell dead, next to the grave of my innocent mother …
>
> I also found out that my cousin Duvidl was killed 6 months before the liberation. It occurred in the following way: Duvidl was hiding in the forest. One time he went to look for a piece of bread, a hooligan encountered him and killed him. I searched for the murderer and he was arrested. It was very hard to show that he was the actual murderer and therefore he only received prison. He was later sent to Siberia.[695]

Isadore Hollander, a former partisan turned soldier in the Polish Army, recalled how Jews organized a vigilante death squad and roamed the countryside around Łódź settling scores with Poles who had allegedly harmed Jews:

> It was an illegal procedure [but] I had a little bit of power. I wore a [Polish] uniform and I found more Jewish soldiers already in the [Polish] army. I [also] found Jewish soldiers in the Russian army … We went out every night for a little bit of a ride. We had a list, Poles [i.e., likely the secret police] giving us lists of all those names. … We went out two, three soldiers at night. … We did use

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[693] Andrzej W. Olędzki, "Banda Herszla Szebesa: Mord w Czartajewie, marzec 1944," *Głos Siemiatycz Online,* Internet: http://box.zetobi.com.pl/glos_siemiatycz/histor_zydzi_1944.htm; Waldemar Monkiewicz, "Za cenę życia: O ratowaniu Żydów w Białostockiem o okresie okupacji niemieckiej," in Dobroński and Monkiewicz, *Białostoccy Żydzi*, vol. 2, 189–90. Compare with Kuperhand and Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka,* 51, 140–41 (Miłkowice). The Polish underground liquidated the Gruda (Grude) brothers early the following year. (Szmul Gruda was killed by the Home Army in January, and David Gruda by the NSZ in February 1945.) According to Communist sources both brothers had links to the regime. See Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 116, 127, 162, 178; Bogdan Brzeziński, Leon Chrzanowski, and Ryszard Halaba, *Polegli w walce o władzę ludową: Materiały i zestawienia statystyczne* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1970), 166.

[694] Shmuel Mordechai Lev, "Diary of Pain and Suffering," in Shtokfish, *Sefer Drohiczyn,* 42ff. (English section).

[695] Mendel Korcarz, "With Soviet Partisans," in W. Yassni, ed., *Memorial Book of the Community of Zelechow,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/zelechow/Zelechow.html>, translation of *Yisker-bukh fun der Zhelekhover yidisher kehile* (Chicago: Former Residents of Zelechow in Chicago, 1953), 271ff.

> guns … It was my commitment. … That's why I enlisted myself [in the army]. I didn't have to enlist myself to become a volunteer [in the death squad] … but I did it because of revenge. I wanted to do it and I did it. … As it went on, I felt satisfied. We didn't touch … German [civilians].[696]

A vigilante group composed of Jews and Soviet Jewish officers was also formed in Gorlice, instigated by Jakub Peller, who had survived the war in a nearby village in an attic above the stable of a kindly peasant widow. Peller became the self-proclaimed leader of the surviving Jews in that city.

> My duties as messenger boy for the Russian officers in charge of Gorlice put me in contact with some officers who were Jewish … They were particularly horrified at the complicity of some of the Polish informers … Even though these Russians had no particular authority in the matter, because there was now a newly constituted Polish government, they decided to pay a visit to a couple of these informers, including the two men Lega and Krupa.
>
> It was Peller who first told the officers about Lega and Krupa. They had been the ones responsible for the deaths of the Schiff brothers. Also, Krupa had discovered and turned in to the Gestapo the insane man who had escaped from the mass grave at Garbacz …
>
> First, Krupa denied he had ever done such things. Then, when he was beaten and almost blinded, he admitted his guilt and begged for mercy, saying he needed the money the Gestapo had given him for his family … He protested that the Russian officers had no right to beat him, that they had to go through the Polish courts and that he wanted his gentile, Christian lawyer. They kept repeating they were giving him the same justice he had given old man Menashi and many, many others. They reminded him of the deaths he was directly responsible for, one by one.
>
> … Krupa cringed when the Russians went into details. … Telling the story made the officers madder than they already were and one of the officers crippled the wretched Krupa with a blow on the head with his revolver.
>
> So that was the end of a Polish traitor. His fate didn't bring to life those he had killed, but there seemed some justice in it.[697]

As Yitzhak Zuckerman acknowledges, former partisans were known for their unruly behaviour:

> The partisan delegates expressed special difficulties in their report. … an incipient demoralization of our current Jewish life in Poland is also evident in them. Incidents happen to them … For instance, a group of partisans riding a train threw a Polish gentile off a moving train because he

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[696] Fisher, *The Persistence of Youth,* 117.

[697] Samuel P. Oliner, *Restless Memories: Recollections of the Holocaust Years* (Berkeley, California: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1986), 185–86; Samuel P. Oliner, *Narrow Escapes: A Boy's Holocaust Memories and Their Legacy* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon Books, 2000), 156–57. Krupa had denounced one of the Schiff brothers to the Gestapo; he was found in the house of his Polish lover and shot in front of her. See Oliner, *Narrow Escapes,* 125. Oliner became known as a "tough guy" in Gorlice: "I went around with a group of older boys who had survived the concentration camps … If a peasant was treating a Jew badly we turned the tables." Ibid., 156. He obtained an apartment of his own from the newly constituted Jewish Committee where his friends, who dealt on the black market, took advantage of local peasant girls. "These friends of mine included friendly Poles as well as Jews, and the girls they managed to pick up were peasants who came to town on market day with their fathers." Ibid., 157.

> insulted a Jew. They beat up a Polish *Porucznik* (lieutenant), who didn't move aside for them in the street. A cloddish force and a hooliganism bursts from them.[698]

After leaving the Red Army, a Jew who had settled in Łódź recalled:

> While working on the newspaper in Novogrudok [Nowogródek], I encountered some young Jewish guerrillas who survived the war in forests … They were bitter with the Poles for anti-Semitism in the country, and equally disdained the Germans and Russians. …
>
> I looked up the youth gang who address I had kept, but did not stay long in their company because their way of life was appallingly brutal. They were still guerrillas, five boys and a girl, who crossed the border to Germany, entered homes, stole goods, and even killed people. They brought back loot which they sold on the black market.[699]

Sometimes the road to service in the State Security Office followed a seemingly incongruous path. Stanisław Taubenschlag, a scion of a prominent Jewish family from Kraków (his father was Professor Rafał Taubenschlag, dean of the Jagiellonian University), traced the fortunes of Danek (Danko) Redlich, the son of a Jewish official from Kraków, who denounced him to the Gestapo while on a mission for the Polish underground in Warsaw.

> The news of my tribulations in Warsaw quickly spread in the circles of young people. The hunt was now on for Danek Redlich who, it transpired, had been in the employ of the Bolsheviks in Lvov [Lwów] and had betrayed several people there. When Lvov was occupied by the Germans, this professional agent, entered the service of the Gestapo. After the war he worked in the security service (UB). In the 1950s he went to Venezuela where he met his death in a car accident in Caracas.[700]

Another Jewish collaborator who changed sides was Teresa Bryk, the wife of a Polish airman who was

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[698] Zuckerman adds: "If our Movement can … not [take them firmly in hand], they are the first who are liable to turn into a terrorist gang in Eretz Israel and, even worse, God forbid, into criminals." See Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory,* 591. During this period of lawlessness robbing and throwing people off trains, whether Jews or Poles (including Communist state functionaries), was carried out by various groups, usually criminal elements, occasionally Polish partisans and also Soviet soldiers. See Marcin Zaremba, "'Człowiek drży jak liść'—trwoga przed badytyzmem w okresie powojennym," in Jerzy Eisler, et al., eds., *Niepiękny wiek XX: Profesorowi Tomaszowi Szarocie w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk and Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2010), 380. A Jewish survivor witnessed the following scene in Western Poland: "The Soviet soldiers were beating and robbing the German passengers and raping the women. One woman screamed, 'I serviced five today already!' They slapped her and threw her out of the speeding train." See William Tannenzapf, *Memories From the Abyss* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2009), 69.

[699] Weigand, *Out of the Fury,* 105–106. Eliezer Urbach obtained new identity papers under a different name from the Jewish Committee in Łódź without any problem, and through connections secured a lucrative position as a newspaper editor in Lublin.

[700] Stanisław Taubenschlag (Stanley Townsend), *To Be a Jew in Occupied Poland* (Oświęcim: Frap-Books, 1998), 57. See also Andrzej Chwalba, *Dzieje Krakowa,* vol. 5: *Kraków w latach 1939–1945* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002), 287.

killed in the Battle of Britain. During the German occupation she maintained liaisons with the Gestapo in Wyszków and Ostrów Mazowiecka. After the arrival of the Soviet army she began to work for the NKVD. She then made a career in the Communist political structures in the Pułtusk area.[701]

Although quite a few individuals who had compromised themselves during the German occupation, including Jews and Ukrainians, tried to cover their tracks by joining the apparatus of oppression during the Communist takeover of Poland after the war, the natural allies and far more likely candidates for these cadres were those who had collaborated with the Soviets under Soviet rule or had joined the Communist underground during the German occupation.[702]

The close association of Jews with the Stalinist order imposed on the unwilling Poles was not lost on ordinary Jews who lived in Poland at the time. Henry (Chaim) Dorfman, who was sheltered by a Polish family near Głowaczów, recalled:

> And the next morning the Russians were in. … You could get whatever you wanted. … they took us right away. … they knew when the first tank moved into the little village where we were. We right away jumped out … we just said, "We Jews," you know. And listen, you had to know one thing that in the Russian Army, you didn't see private soldiers Jews on the front lines. The lowest rank could be a captain. The generals, all the top was all Jews. The hospitals, the doctors, all Jews. The Jews had the biggest position in the Russian Army. And uh, they took care of Jews …
>
> We went already to a village … where his top notch people lived and there … we moved in with the army, with the Russian Army. Whatever nice place it was, that's where they took, you understand. And if they took they give us the nicest place. They give us a nicer place than the officers had because they—and the NKVD, the same thing. What do you think they wanted to know? They wanted to know—first thing, they had lists, who, who cooperated with the Germans and everything else. They wanted to know from us if this is true or not. If there was people, what they—they took away a lot of people. They knew who was who and what is what. They weren't come in dumb, you understand. And the same thing, the KGB. A lot of fine Jewish people, they, they talk Jewish. Nice people. … from there we went into the big city, we went to Lublin.[703]

Mojżesz Szuster was one of several Jews who survived the war sheltered by a Polish family near Jasionówka. He alleged that the Home Army and National Armed Forces had denounced a previous hideout of his to the Germans. After the arrival of the Soviets, he joined the Security Office in Białystok, and became its head. His stated mission was "to put all his energies into uncovering all the traitors who also

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[701] Jan Garbarczyk, "W Narodowej Organizacji Wojskowej na Ziemi Wyszkowskiej," *Glaukopis: Pismo społeczno-historyczne,* no. 9–10 (2007–2008): 67–68.

[702] For some examples from the Lublin area, see Jacek Romanek, *Kolaboracja z Sowietami na terenie województwa lubelskiego we wrześniu i październiku 1939 r.* (Lublin and Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2019).

[703] Testimony of Henry Dorfman, August 11 and 25, 1989, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/dorfman/>.

now impede the rebuilding of a new Democratic Poland."[704] The "new Democratic Poland" rewarded the loyalty by erecting an impressive monument in Białystok in 1948 in honour of the Jewish "Forojs" (Forward) partisans and the ghetto fighters. At the dedication ceremonies, the accomplishments of the Soviet Union, Red Army and Communist underground were extolled and the anti-Communist underground was vilified as Nazi collaborators.[705]

There was no shortage of Kahns, Yorans, Shainbergs, Grays, Verstandigs, Glembotzky's, Schwarzmanns, and Hollanders during the Stalinist occupation. Hundreds of Jews gave themselves over wholeheartedly to the tasks assigned to them by the Soviet organs of oppression.[706] Jews who spent the war years in the Soviet interior were also welcomed into the State Security Office. Dr. Elchanan Narkonsky (Chonon Henryk Narkuński), who escaped Soviet captivity as a Polish officer in September 1939 thanks to the intervention of the Jewish police commander of Baranowicze, joined the Security Office in Wrocław. He recalled, "Many of the workers were Jewish, in whose hearts there raged the fire for vengeance" against those believed to have committed crimes against Jews.[707] The Jewish community did not consider these Jews to be lost brethren or traitors. By and large, the Polish population regarded such collaborators, regardless of their nationalty, to be traitors. In the process, countless members of anti-Communist Polish underground organizations were liquidated. On April 12, 1945, an incident that attracted international attention occurred in Siedlce. Around 20 Poles, for the most part inactive soldiers of the underground, were kidnapped and murdered by the security police whose ranks included a number of Jews. The bodies of these Poles were

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[704] Daniel Boćkowski, Ewa Rogalewska, and Joanna Sadowska, *Kres świata białostockich Żydów* (Białystok: Muzeum Wojska w Białymstoku and Galeria Ślendzińskich w Białymstoku, 2013), 74–75.

[705] Boćkowski, Rogalewska, and Sadowska, *Kres świata białostockich Żydów,* 79–80.

[706] There were some cases where Jews declined overtures to become informants on the Polish anti-Soviet underground. For example, Jankiel Mendelson of Sterdyń refused to become an informer for the NKVD. See the testimony of Sławomir Kowalczyk, Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (Warsaw), no. 301/7192.

[707] Elchanan (Khonya) Narkonsky, "The Campaign Against the War Criminals," in *Baranovich: The Trilogy* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2012), Part III: Yitzhak Posner and Chana Bint, eds., *The Struggle to Stay Alive by the Jews of Baranovich* ([Israel]: Arieli Press, 1992), 57–73, at 61. Narkonsky states that interrogators at the security office did not spare "any beatings," that "short investigations" were often followed by "summary execution by firing squad," that witnesses were threatened to testify against the accused, and that even the lawyers of those accused were ordered to limit their defence. Ibid., 63.

put on display in the town for several days to intimidate the local population.[708] It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that some Poles—both partisans and civilians—struck back at their victimizers, whether the latter acted as state functionaries or as avengers in a private capacity.

Even ordinary, apolitical Jews contemplated exacting revenge on wrongdoers personally rather than resorting to the state's mechanisms. Feliks Tych, then a teenager, searched unsuccessfully for the person who had denounced his brother with the intention of killing him.[709] Others turned to the State Security Office or Soviet officials. Eliasz Kalb reported to the Security Office in Dąbrowa Tarnowska on scores of Poles, accusing them of all sorts of alleged wrongdoings, including suspected membership in the Home Army, which was enough to constitute a capital crime.[710] When a Jewish woman reported on a woman in Katowice who had denounced her to the Germans, a Soviet officer found the woman and shot her with a pistol.[711] The attitude of many Jews toward the non-Jewish population was—perhaps, in some cases, understandably so—hostile. Nina Morecki, a native of Lwów who survived with the help of Poles, explains:

> I continued on and eventually made my way to my beloved hometown of Lvov [Lwów] only to find it in ruins. Nothing was left of my childhood, not a person, place or thing. I searched for a year. I felt so angry with the Polish people who had survived, when my people hadn't. And I felt angry with myself. Why should I have been the one to survive?[712]

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[708] Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 135–36, 150. The death squad was led by Braun (Bronek) Blumsztajn and included Jan Emil Karpiński (Emanuel Alberg), the deputy chief of the county Security Office, Hersz Blumsztajn, Eliasz Madenfrost, Rafał Peterman, Izaak Schillinger, and Udyn Steinberg. According to one account, about twenty out of the fifty persons employed by the Security Office in Siedlce were Jews, among them, Dawid Orzeł and Marian Kirszten. The Polish underground retaliated by assassinating two security functionaries involved in the crime who were Poles; the Communist authorities transferred the security police implicated in the crime to different locations. See also Wiesław Charczuk, "Obraz i struktura Powiatowego Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Siedlcach (sierpień 1944–czerwiec 1945," *Radzyński Rocznik Humanistyczny,* vol. 5 (2007): 131–41, at 137; Wiesław Charczuk, *"Najpierw popili sobie w urzędzie…": Zbrodnia ludobójstwa komunistycznego aparatu bezpieczeństwa dokonana na członkach opozycji antykomunistycznej w Siedlcach 12–13 kwietnia 1945 roku* (Siedlce and Zbuczyn: Gminny Ośrodek Kultury, 2011). On the make-up of the security police in Siedlce see Mariusz Bechta, "Wojna rewolucyjna—sowietyzacja Podlasia przez funkcjonariuszy PUBP w Siedlcach po roku 1944 (zarys problematyki)," in Kazimierz Krajewski and Tomasz Łabuszewski, eds., *Mazowsze i Podlasie w ogniu 1944–1956,* vol. 4: *Powiat Siedlce w pierwszej dekadzie rządów komunistycznych* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej and Rytm, 2011), 303–443.

[709] "O ukrywaniu się po 'aryjskiej stronie': Rozmowa Barbary Engelking z Feliksem Tychem (autoryzowany wywiad)," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały,* vol. 2 (2006): 339–50.

[710] Maria Żychowska, "Glos do artykułu red. Grzegorza Brożka 'Pod jednym dachem' zamieszczonym w 'Gościu Niedzielnym' 15 stycznia 2012 r." Internet: <http://www.tarnowiny.info/glosa.htm>. The document in question is from March 7, 1945 and is found in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance.

[711] Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses,* vol. 2, 291.

[712] Nina Morecki, *Nina's Story: A Holocaust Odyssey from Lvov to the U.S., 1922–1945,* section 8: "Going Home (Return to Lvov, 1945)," UCSB Oral History Project, Internet: <http://www.history.uscb.edu/projects/holocaust/NinasStory/letter02.htm>; published as Nina Morecki, as told to Colette Waddell, *Through the Eyes of a Survivor* (Carpinteria, California: TopCat Press, 2007).

Some of the most egregious examples of revenge killings occurred in Izbica, where Chaim Korenfeld and his cronies, among them Heldman and Oregenwisen, struck at alleged collaborators and their families in an orgy of collective retribution. After shooting and killing a man believed to have harmed his mother, Korenfeld murdered the man's wife and daughter. They then proceeded to execute the local pharmacist, who had allegedly denounced Jews, tying him up together with his wife and two daughters and then incinerating them.[713] Such killings were carried out with impunity.

Another sordid episode of revenge killing was carried out as late as the 1950s. Bohdan Piasecki, the 15-year-old son of Bolesław Piasecki, the leader of the ONR–Falanga (*Obóz Nardowo-Radykalny*–Falanga), an extremist right wing interwar political organization, was abducted on January 22, 1957. His mutilated body was found two years later, on December 8, 1958. His head had been smashed with a blunt object and a knife with a 16 cm blade stabbed into his chest. This macabre killing showed the "traditional" signs of a ritual murder. With the complicity of the Communist authorities, the likely culprits—all of them being of Jewish origin (Mieczysław Katz, Michał Barkowski aka Robert Kalman, Adam Kossowski, Stefan Łazorczyk and others)—left Poland soon after the murder, taking refuge in Israel. Their heinous deeds were of no concern to the Israeli authorities, despite the publicity that was given to the crime in the Israeli media. Writing in the Tel Aviv Polish language newspaper *Nowiny Kurier* in 1961, David Hartem (Fajgenberg) called the murder of Bohdan Piasecki a "revenge" killing for the anti-Semitic activities of his father. On March 13, 1966, the daily *Maariv* ran an article under the heading, "The Murderers of the Son of a Polish Politician Are Living in Israel," which alleged that the two Jews who murdered Bohdan Piasecki wanted to "avenge the Jewish victims" of Bolesław Piasecki's wartime underground faction by killing his son. In response to characteristic charges of "anti-Semitism" from the international Jewish community, Poland's Communist authorities dropped the criminal charges against Ignacy Ekerling, whose taxi was used to abduct Bohdan, and the police investigation into this matter was frozen. Ekerling was also allowed to immigrate to Israel. Some documents pertaining to this murder were released belatedly to the victim's family by Poland's Minister of Justice in April 1991, after the fall of the Communist regime, but much information was withheld. By raising charges of "anti-Semitism" in the context of the prosecution of this crime and offering protection to the perpetrators, Israel and the international Jewish community took ownership of this crime, transforming it from a private act of vengeance into a barometer of the state of Polish-Jewish relations.[714]

The war against "White Poles" also spread to Palestine, where an unknown number of Poles were murdered by Jewish underground groups in the years 1945–1948, because of their anti-Communism and

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[713] Rafał Hetmani, *Izbica, Izbica* (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2021). Theses events, based on Chaim Korenfeld's Shoah Foundation testimony, are believed to have occurred in the latter part of 1944. Although Korengeld says he joined the secret police, Hetman believes it was likely the so-called destruction batallion attached to the Soviet army.

[714] On this topic see the following works by Peter Raina, a historian of Hindu origin, who marshals compelling evidence that this murder was an act of vengeance for Piasecki's wartime activities which were allegedly directed against Jews: *Sprawa zabójstwa Bohdana Piaseckiego* (Warsaw: Pax, 1989); *Sprawcy uchodzą bezkarnie: Kulisy zabójstwa Bohadana Piaseckiego w świetle akt MSW* (Warsaw: Książka Polska, 1993); *Mordercy uchodzą bezkarnie: Sprawa Bohdana P.* (Warsaw: von borowiecky, 2000). See also Piotr Zychowicz, "Mordercy Bohdana uchodzą," *Rzeczpospolita,* December 10, 2007; Krzysztof Masłoń, "Tyrmand dla dorosłych," *Rzeczpospolita,* October 2, 2010.

alleged pro-Arab sentiments. The two most famous victims, Witold Hulanicki, the former Polish Consul General in Palestine in 1936–1939, and the journalist Stefan Arnold were abducted and executed in February 1948 by Lehi ("Freedom Fighters for Israel"). The so-called Stern gang had made overtures to the Nazis in 1940–1941, but later embraced the Soviet Stalinists, who were then staunch supporters of Jewish statehood. Despite his strong record of support for the Jewish cause and personal friendship with Avraham Stern, the group's then-deceased legendary founder, Hulanicki fell victim to Soviet-directed executioners on trumped up charges of collaborating with Arabs and British intelligence. The Stalinists had found a receptive ear for the anti-Polish propaganda they spewed. According to Gideon Remez and Isabella Ginor, researchers at the Hebrew University, "Our conclusion is that what happened here was a classic case in which the Soviets either manipulated Lehi into doing their dirty work, possibly by planting evidence, or Lehi was acting to curry favor with the Soviets." These authors described the background to these events in the following terms:

> The … dwindling, Polish expatriate community in Palestine, most of which arrived after Poland fell to the Germans and Soviets at the outset of World War II, was so frequently targeted that most of the cases in which Poles were killed were never reported and were soon forgotten. …
>
> A few examples from the weeks preceding the Hulanicki-Arnold incident can illustrate how "open season" had begun against suspect Poles. The Haganah claimed that unlike the "dissident" groups, it punished these suspects only after due process. But on January 9, 1948, its men in Jerusalem executed a Polish amputee who later turned out to be merely a thief rather than an instructor of Arab irregulars, as suspected. An internal Haganah report admitted that "clearly the evidence against him was insufficient for a verdict," and he was shot only as a precaution, since he had not been blindfolded under interrogation. On January 14, in Tel Aviv, the Irgun was "credited" for killing "as a spy" a Hebrew-speaking straggler from Anders' Army who had made a living as a shoe-shine boy and dishwasher, then enlisted in the Jewish forces but crossed into Arab Jaffa. On December 19, 1947, six Lehi members including its intelligence chief in Jerusalem were arrested while attempting to abduct the editor of the locally published *Gazeta Polska*, whom "multiple sources" had denounced as a "professional informer." …
>
> As the USSR still had no official representation in Palestine, the new Polish consulates acted as the Soviets' surrogates in intelligence as well as diplomacy. By February 1947, CID reports identified an attaché at the consulate, Ephraim Sztych, "the head of Polish Intelligence in Palestine" … Except for [consul-general Olgierd] Górka, all the above were Jewish. …
>
> In any case, beyond mere spying, propaganda, and commercial interests, the frequent violence of the struggle within Poland as the first battleground of the Cold War was mirrored in Palestine well before the Hulanicki/Arnold incident. As early as October 1945, a Jewish Agency official told [Romuald] Gadomski [a prominent prewar Polish Communist who was one of the Comintern agents who had infiltrated Anders' Army and with it, Palestine] that there was "verified evidence whereby Polish reactionary circles in the Middle East were taking part in the organization, training, and political incitement" of Arabs in special camps, and served notice that "it had been decided … they would become targets for physical elimination by the Jewish organizations." In January 1946, Gadomski was reinforced with another veteran Polish-Jewish Communist, NKVD agent and Armia Ludowa partisan hero, Gershon Gutman or Frumkin, aka Col. Gustaw ("Bolek") Alef-Bolkowiak.

> The British CID, powerless to stop him, reported that Alef exhorted his "local friends" to "fight the London Poles in this country by all possible means." The new Polish consular authorities, he explained, would need the locals' help—and handed them a list of "a number of Poles living in Palestine who are … 'absolutely dangerous.'" In late April 1947, "various agents" reportedly supplied the Polish consulate in Jerusalem "with the names of Poles who are suspected of being British agents." In April 1948, the Soviets still listed "dregs of Anders' [Army]" among the "traitors and quislings from around the world" who "take part in the struggle on the Arab side" by assisting attacks on the Jews.[715]

A 1948 report, which has never been made public in full, paints a somewhat different picture of the murder of at least six Poles by the Haganah, the pre-independence army of Palestine's Jews, in 1948, without due process. The circumstances of, and reasons for, their executions remain unclear.

> Even seven decades later, the report—a detailed summary of which is being made public here for the first time—is difficult reading. The following, for example, comes from the description of the first case: "Three weeks ago, a Polish Christian was arrested in Tel Aviv and taken to Yona base [the Haganah base in Independence Park]. He was not interrogated. His guard shot and killed him. The body was taken and thrown into Hadassah Garden"—the site of today's Gan Ha'ir mall in central Tel Aviv.
>
> According to one version of this story, as recounted in the report, the Polish detainee attacked the guard, who shot him in response. "The prisoner, after the shots, was dying. Accordingly, after considerations, it was decided to liquidate him and remove him from the base," the report states.
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> A later a case involved a "Polish Christian who was arrested in Tel Aviv on KKL Boulevard" (today Ben-Gurion Boulevard). His interrogation, which was conducted "with torture," revealed him to be an underworld figure involved in robberies from an early age, and "it was clarified that he had ties with the Germans abroad." As the report puts it, "There was a suspicion that he was not sane. Executed."
>
> Two more Poles were killed in similar circumstances after being arrested near Jerusalem's Central Bus Station because "they could not explain the purpose of their presence there." The report cites different accounts regarding the circumstances of their death. According to one version, their interrogation did not lead to charges against them, but nevertheless, "they were executed." In another account, "suspicion arose that they were spying on the preparations for the convoys leaving for Tel Aviv." It also was claimed that "a letter recommending him as a German Nazi" was found among the effects of one of them, though it's not clear what was meant by this.
>
> Yet another Pole, also arrested in Jerusalem, is described as an "instructor of gangs" and a "well-known thief" who, "according to rumors," worked for the British criminal investigation department. But his execution had nothing to do with these allegations. According to the report, he was put to death mainly because it was feared that he would be able to reveal to others the address of the site where he was interrogated by the Haganah.
>
> "Since he was arrested with another two [people], who were released following a brief interrogation, and the danger existed that the police would search for him, he was moved hastily to

[715] Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, "A Cold War Casualty in Jerusalem, 1948: The Assassination of Witold Hulanicki," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs,* vol. 4, no. 3 (September 2010): 135–56, here at 135, 140, 143, 147–48.

another place and wasn't blindfolded," the report states. "For reasons related to the danger of revelations by him if he were released, and also on the basis of the material we noted it was decided to liquidate him."

The circumstances of the death of the sixth Pole mentioned in the report are not cited.[716]

Nechama Tec made the following observations about the situation of Jews in the postwar period:

> How did the Jews fit into this Polish-Russian [i.e., Soviet] confrontation? Unlike the Poles, Jews defined the Soviets as liberators, welcoming them warmly. In turn, at least initially, the Russians also treated the surviving Jews with special consideration.
>
> To consolidate their power the Soviets needed the support of the local population. They knew that for this support they could rely and trust the Jews more than the Poles. Moreover, among Jews who returned from Russia some were seasoned Communists. This last group in particular could be relied on. As a result, many of them were offered high political and police positions.
>
> Not surprisingly, this close Jewish-Russian cooperation did not pass unnoticed. When some high Jewish officials [actually, there were quite a few of them and not only at high levels—*M.P.*] became involved in the persecution of the Polish underground, all Jews [actually, many of them—*M.P.*] were blamed for it. Such persecutions were seen as proof that the Jews were in fact enemies of the Polish people. …
>
> The Russians tried to protect Jewish lives. They also treated the Jews leniently by returning large enterprises to them. This, as it turned out, was only a temporary measure.[717]

Stanisław Krajewski, a Jewish community leader in Poland,[718] confirms this picture:

> The archetype of the Jews during the first ten years of the Polish People's Republic was generally perceived as an agent of the secret political police. It is true that under [President Bolesław] Bierut and [First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, Władysław] Gomułka (prior to 1948) the key positions in the Ministry of State [Public] Security were held by Jews or persons of Jewish background. It is a fact which cannot be overlooked, little known in the West and seldom mentioned by the Jews in Poland. Both prefer to talk about Stalin's anti-Semitism (the "doctors"

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[716] Ofer Aderet, "Why Is Israel Still Covering Up Extrajudicial Executions Committed by a Jewish Militia in '48?," *Haaretz,* July 7, 2018. The examination into the killings was requested by David Ben-Gurion. "Serious complaints and accusations have reached me about disorder and lawlessness among several members of the organization [the Haganah] and the Palmach [the Haganah's elite strike force]," Ben-Gurion wrote, providing a list: "robbery of Arabs, murder of Poles and Arabs without cause or with insufficient cause, and in any case without trial, improper actions toward Jews as well, cases of theft, embezzlement of funds, torture of Arabs during interrogation and the like."

[717] Tec, *Dry Tears,* 230–31.

[718] Stanisław Krajewski is president of the Jewish Forum in Poland, co-chairman of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews, and Polish consultant to the American Jewish Committee.

plot, etc.). The machine of communist terror functioned in Poland in a manner similar to that used in other communist ruled countries in Europe and elsewhere.[719]

More recently Krajewski has stated:

> I disagree that the Jewish role in the 'communist past' was 'quite marginal'. The number and influence of Jewish communists in post-war Poland … was so important that their role was far more than marginal. … the challenge for Jews is to accept the fact that in the middle of this century Jews in Central and Eastern Europe were not only among the victims but also among the victimizers. In my view, the number and the quasi-religious character of some Jewish communists, for whom Stalin was the messiah, generate a Jewish share of moral responsibility.[720]

> Jews … were numerous and influential in the Communist elite in postwar Poland. In my view, this constitutes a moral challenge for us Jews. … Jews participated actively in the system of oppression. … those in Poland or other East European countries became functionaries of the state terror. I believe that this is a reason for Jews to feel shame. Of course, I am not saying that *only* Jews should feel morally responsible.
>
> My point is simple but rarely accepted. Communism belongs also to the history of the Jews, not only to the history of Russia, Poland, etc. In the middle of our century, in the heart of Europe, Jews were not only victims but also victimizers. To some Jews, communism was a quasi-religion.[721]

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[719] Cited in Korboński, *The Jews and Poles in World War II,* 78–79; and Michael Bernhard and Henryk Szlajfer, eds., *From the Polish Underground: Selections from Krytyka, 1978–1993* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 381. In the late 1940s, Gomułka, the leader of the Communist party until that time, together with a group of other Communist leaders who likewise had spent the war years in Poland, was accused of "right-wing nationalist deviation," removed from power and was subsequently arrested (the conditions of his arrest were rather mild). The group of Communists that consequently emerged triumphant was dominated by those who had spent the war years in the Soviet Union and included prominent Jewish party members.

[720] Stanisław Krajewski, "Reflexions of a Polish Polish Jew," *East European Jewish Affairs,* vol. 27, no. 1 (1997): 64–65.

[721] Stanisław Krajewski, "The Impact of the Shoah on the Thinking of Contemporary Polish Jewry: A Personal Account," in Zimmerman, *Contested Memories,* 300. A more comprehensive presentation of Krajewski's position is found in Stanisław Krajewski, *Żydzi, judaizm, Polska* (Warsaw: Vocatio, 1997); Stanisław Krajewski, "Jews, Communists, and Jewish Communists," in András Kovács and Eszter Andor, eds., *Jewish Studies at the Central European University* (Budapest: Central European University, 2000), 119–33. Ruta Pragier also develops this theme in a series of interviews with Polish Jewish in Ruta Pragier, *Żydzi czy Polacy* (Warsaw: Rytm, 1992), passim. See also Stefan Morawski's views in Anna Mieszczanek, ed., *Krajobraz po szoku,* 2nd edition (Warsaw: Przedświt, 1989), 20; Andrzej Wróblewski, *Być Żydem…: Rozmowa z Dagiem Halvorsenem o Żydach i antysemityzmie Polaków* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992), 181. Michael Schudrich, rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź, stated: "We Jews have to acknowledge that there were Jews in the service of the Communists, or even the Nazis, who committed crimes against the Poles, and also against other Jews. … the time has come for us Jews to feel and understand the Polish pain in order for the Poles to feel and understand our pain." See "Rabin Schudrich: Nie ma konfliktu ws. ekshumacji," *Gazeta Wyborcza,* May 23, 2001. More recently, Szewach Weiss, former Israeli ambassador to Poland, stated that when he reads the names of Jewish judges, prosecutors and Security officers who murdered Poles during the Stalinist period he asks himself "Do I have the right to criticize Poles? And how did the Jews behave towards them?" See Szewach Weiss in conversation with Robert Mazurek, "Ludzie postrzegają Żydów w Polsce jak Indian w Ameryce—kiedyś byli, ale ich zabili," *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna,* March 30, 2017.

Fortunately, there are Jews who take strong exception to the kind of history being written by former members of the Stalinist security forces who have taken refuge in the West and pass off their accomplishments with great pride and personal satisfaction. Among them is Simon Wiesenthal who stated, "I always say that I know what kind of role Jewish communists played in Poland after the war. And just as I, as a Jew, do not want to shoulder responsibility for the Jewish communists, I cannot blame 36 million Poles for those thousands of *szmalcownicy*" (i.e., blackmailers of Jews during the German occupation).[722] Unfortunately, there are not many fair-minded persons like Wiesenthal when it comes to Poles. While disowning Jewish Communists, Jews are quick to assign collective responsibility to the Poles for the actions of Polish blackmailers, denouncers and policemen, even though this tiny, unrepresentative minority also endangered Christian Poles and there were such people among the Jews themselves who endangered both Jews and Poles. Few Jews recall the fate of the unenviable Poles in the postwar period. An exception is Dora Kacnelson, who recalled with sadness, "In the years 1947–1949, I lived in Wilno and personally witnessed round-ups of innocent Polish women and men, and saw trucks loaded with AK members captured in the forests by the KGB."[723]

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[722] Interview with Simon Wiesenthal, Radio Free Europe (Munich), January 7, 1989, as cited in Władysław T. Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz* (London: The Bowerdean Press, 1990), 30. A fuller quotation follows:

> Then the war came. It is in times like these that the lower elements in society surface—the *szmalcownicy* (blackmailers) who would betray Jews for a bottle of vodka or a pair of shoes. That was one aspect. On the other hand the 30 to 40,000 Jews who survived, survived thanks to help from Poles. This I know. But on the other hand, whenever I am talking on this subject I always say that I know what kind of role Jewish communists played in Poland after the war. And just as I, as a Jew, do not want to shoulder responsibility for the Jewish communists, I cannot blame 36 million Poles for those thousands of *szmalcownicy*.

[723] Letter to the editor, *Nowy Przegląd Wszechpolski* (Lublin), no. 5–6 (1996): 39.

There are many Jewish testimonies that bear witness to the fact that many Jews were welcomed and enjoyed proper relations with their Polish neighbours in the postwar period.[724] These testimonies belie the claim of universal hostility toward Jewish survivors, an unwarranted stereotype pushed to the extreme by authors such as American sociologist Jan Gross. Mila Sandberg, who returned to her native town of Zaleszczyki after passing as Christians with the help of a number of Poles, recalled:

> Our home itself had not been demolished during the fighting, but all the wooden galleries in the back of the house had vanished, burned for fuel. We were happy to find our old tenant and friend, Mrs. Zajaczkowska [Zajączkowska], was still living there. She welcomed us with hugs and tears. We stayed with her for a few days. By some fortunate coincidence, two rooms and a kitchen on the lower floor became vacant. We promptly moved in with our bundles. … When news of our arrival spread … Our Zaleszczyki [Polish] neighbours came by to welcome us. People brought furniture, clothes and other necessities. Before leaving for the ghetto, Ecia had left many of her belongings, such as feather pillows and pots and pans, with Pawlinka. Knowing that Ecia would never return, Pawlinka gave them to us. Dziunka Nedilenko, Lola's best friend, dropped off some cutlery, dishes, glasses, and clothes. Karola gave us some cornmeal and eggs tied in her kerchief. Matykowa, who used to do our laundry, brought a bundle of food. So did Mrs. Terlecka, to whom my mother gave homemade preserves. Mrs. Zajaczkowska, our old tenant who had been living there since before the war, gave us beds and other furniture. Lola's friend Dziunka greeted us with these words: "We knew you were alive; we were expecting you."[725]

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[724] Henryk Schönker recalls that his parents, industrialists, were well received by their neighbours and the Polish community on their return to Oświęcim. Henryk, the only Jew in his high school, was well liked by his teachers, including the priest who taught religion, and had many friends among his fellow students. See Henryk Schönker, *Dotknięcie anioła* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, 2005), 292–96, 299. Josef Malczyk, a teenager who survived the war working for Poles as a farmhand, was turned away by Jewish acquaintances after the war and welcomed warmly by former Polish neighbours from Warsaw. He returned to the farm where he worked during the German occupation before registering with the Jewish Committee in 1946. See his testimony in Alina Skibińska and Robert Szuchta, eds., *Wybór źródeł do nauczania o zagładzie Żydów na okupowanych ziemiach polskich* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2010), 456–57. Helene Shefner was stopped in Zamość by an elderly Pole who asked her politely if she is the daughter of a man named Ashkenazi; Avrum Zimler of Żyrardów was greeted by a young man who told him that his mother-in-law would be very happy to see him. Menashe Opozdover describes three friendly and moving meetings with Poles upon his return to Pruszków. He was greeted by a Christian acquaintance whom he does not recognize at first, so changed is the man by his experience as a slave labourer. See Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, "Patterns of Return: Survivors' Postwar Journeys to Poland," Ina Levine Annual Lecture, September 15, 2007, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, at p. 10–11. See also the testimonies of Diana Grünbaum, Dalek Ruder, Helena Drobner, Jochwed Kantorowicz, Menasze Opozdower noted in Alina Skibińska, "The Return of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and the Reaction of the Polish Population," in Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, eds., *Jewish Presence in Absence: The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2014), 25–65; Alina Skibińska, "Powroty ocalałych i stosunek do nich społeczeństwa polskiego," in Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, eds., *Następstwa zagłady Żydów: Polska 1944–2010* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2011), 69–70. See also the following: Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 187–88; Testimony of Benjamin Fisk, Part 30, November 8, 1982, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/fiskb> (Sosnowiec); Samuel Honig, *Reunions: Echoes of the Holocaust, Pre-War and Post-War Stories* (Windsor, Ontario: Benchmark Publishing & Design Inc., 2000), 97, 140 (Kraków); Wolgelernter, *The Unfinished Diary,* 416 (in Działoszyce, "some kindhearted Polish neighbors were genuinely happy to see us").

[725] Mila Sandberg-Mesner, *Light From the Shadows* (Montreal: Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada, 2005), 94.

Alex (Joshua) Levin recalled his return to his and his brother's hometown Rokitno, in Volhynia:

> When Samuel and I and some other survivors finally gathered in Rokitno, we numbered only thirty people. …
>
> My brother and I heard the truth about our family's tragic fate and then went to visit the only people we knew in town, the Polish Wrublewski [Wróblewski] family. Our families used to be friends and as children we were sometimes invited to celebrate New Year's at their house and pick candy off the Christmas tree. Now, under the circumstances, they were as kind as they could be. They gave us food and some clothing and let us spend the night.[726]

Hinda Sarashka (Seroszko), who was sheltered by several Polish families, recalled:

> After the liberation, when we returned to Drohiczyn, the Christians greeted us very cordially. I went at once to our house. Poles were living there. I told them that they should leave my abode within two hours. At first they didn't want to, but afterwards they freed up one room. … The teacher Ruczaj came and was very happy to see me. Another teacher, Borecki also came. They brought me some clothes and something to eat and drink.
>
> I do not have any cause to complain about the Christians from Drohiczyn. They were all good to me.[727]

Hela Listapad-Izakowicz, who survived with the help of Poles among them Celina Kokowska, who had sheltered her for 16 months, recalled her return to her native Sierpc:

> The war had ended. I returned to my hometown of Sierpc. A shudder went through me as I saw the ruins left behind by the Germans/ the town was empty of Jews. I could no longer meet with my relatives, neighbors and acquaintances.
>
> My former Christian neighbor Mrs. Pataszinsko [Ptasińska or Ptaszyńska] took me in and comforted me. However, I did not want to be dependent on anyone, and, wearing my wooden shoes and linen dress, I went out to look for acquaintances.
>
> I met up with the sisters Celia Izakowicz and Eva Dygola, who had been hidden by Christians and survived by a miracle. The three of us began to do business to earn a livelihood. After a short time, we rented a dwelling in partnership and lived together …[728]

Chana Karpman-Rozenberg, who survived the war with the help of many Christians, recalled her return to Garwolin:

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[726] Alex Levin, *Under the Yellow & Red Stars* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2009), 33–34.

[727] Hinda Sarashka (Blumshtein), "Christians Treated Me Well," in Shtokfish, *Sefer Drohiczyn,* 400–4.

[728] Hela Listapad-Izakowicz, "In the Sierpc Ghetto and in the Camps," in Talmi (Wloka), *The Community of Sierpc,* 447.

> All of the Christians welcomed me warmly and were even happy that I had survived. However, they did not want to return everything we had left in their safekeeping. …
>
> The first to seek me out was Dr. Świerz. As he did for every Jew who had returned, he also provided me with medical attention. He gave me a letter of recommendation to Dr. Orłowski of the Hospital of the Infant Jesus in Warsaw so that he would not take money from me.[729]

Roman Halter returned to his hometown of Chodecz, near Włocławek, in May 1945, after surviving imprisonment in several German camps. He was warmly received by Polish family friends who were anxious to return the possessions his parents had entrusted to them.

> I decided not to call on anyone until I had first seen the Podlawskis [Podławskis] at their house … Mrs. Podlawska [Podławska] opened the door.
>
> 'Romek! Come in, come in, my boy!' Oh how thin you look!' She turned and shouted [to her husband], 'Stasiek!' …
>
> Podlawski emerged from the kitchen … He said nothing when he saw me, but only stared at me in disbelief. Then he embraced me and held me like this for a long while. There were tears in his eyes when he let me go. I was in Chodecz again, the war was over.
>
> Mrs. Podlawska embraced me too …
>
> 'Come over here, have a plate of *zur [żur]*. This was the sour soup with potatoes they ate for breakfast. …
>
> 'You know, I helped your father and Szlamek bury a bog oak chest,' said Podlawski. 'He filled it with things he bought from your Uncle Ignac and Aunt Sabina's shop … The chest is padlocked and I have the key to it.' …
>
> 'Did he tell you about the possessions your parents left with us?'
>
> 'No, I don't know anything about that.' …
>
> 'Neither my father nor my mother mentioned the clothes, so maybe they intended you to keep what they gave you to hide.'
>
> 'No!' said Podlawski emphatically. 'These things belong to the Halter family and I shall only keep what they give me.' …
>
> I asked after Mrs. Podlawska's sister, my lovely wet-nurse Mrs Lewandowska. …
>
> My knock on the door and entrance went unnoticed. I stood there looking at Mrs Lewandowska … Mrs Lewandowska peered over her glasses.
>
> 'No, I don't believe it … my little hero is back!' she shouted, and rushed towards me still holding her sewing. She pressed me to her bosom. Her glasses fell off. She kissed me on the forehead and on the cheeks and I kissed and hugged her. …
>
> The young woman got up from the table and stood close by, watching and smiling. It was Jadwiga. … She embraced me and I felt like a child beside her. …
>
> Jadwiga went to the kitchen to prepare something to eat. I followed her and we chatted there. …
>
> 'Your father and mother left some belongings with me. Your father had a false bottom made in the chest and only I know how to take it out. You will need these things to set yourself up.' …

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[729] Chana Karpman-Rozenberg, "On the Aryan Side," in Zaltsman and Shein, *Garwolin yisker-bukh,* 208–15.

> ‘You’ll never guess what’s in these,’ said Mrs Lewandowska, pointing to the chest.
>
> ‘Your family silverware, the Passover silver and the goblets, you father’s manuscripts and his collection of gold coins … and other things … they’re all in here, this innocent-looking coffer.’ …
>
> From there I went off to visit my old school … I asked a youth standing outside whether he knew Mrs Wisniewska [Wiśniewska] who used to teach there before the war. … I knocked on Mrs. Wisniewska’s door …
>
> I remembered the way she smiled the day Mother brought me to school for an interview when I was six. …
>
> ‘Romek, I’m glad you came to see me. You need my help to think out how you’re going to survive on your own.’ …
>
> I told her [Jadwiga] about my visit to Mrs. Wisniewska.
>
> ‘She let you in?’
>
> ‘Yes, why are you surprised?’
>
> ‘Because ever since the incident, she refuses to see anyone.’
>
> ‘What incident?’ I asked.
>
> After the Russians liberated Chodecz, she explained, some of the soldiers had been billeted in the teachers’ block. Mrs. Wisniewska was climbing the stairs to her flat one night when a group of drunken soldiers pulled her into their room. Mr. Wisniewski heard her screaming. He thre on his Polish officer’s jacket and ran to her rescue with their ten-year-old son.
>
> ‘All we know about what happened after that was that the soldiers killed Mr. Wisniewski and the boy. Mrs. Wisniewska hasn’t recovered yet,’ said Jadwiga. …
>
> On my way back to the Podlawskis, I decided to go and see Marysia Giewis, the local butcher’s daughter who had been in my class at school. I had promised to call on her and her family. Marysia was not home. Mrs Giewis and Jadzia, the older daughter, received me warmly.[730]

While members of the local *lumpenproletariat* were not anxious to return abandoned property they acquired during and after the German occupation, it was Roman Halter’s half-brother’s wife and her lover, a Soviet Jewish officer, who used force and threats to rob him of his inheritance.[731] Similarly, when Ewa Treunstein (Turzyńska) returned to reclaim the family pharmacy in Rozwadów, which had been left to her by her father who died before the war broke out, she found it had been taken over by her uncle, who assaulted her and then petitioned the court for the right to inherit the property based on his niece’s alleged death. Her uncle’s family also attempted to extort money from her, and even threatened to kidnap her 10-year-old son to accomplish this.[732]

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[730] Roman Halter, *Roman’s Journey* (London: Portobello Books, 2007), 224–58.

[731] Ibid., 260–61, 270–72.

[732] Ewa Turzyńska, *Sądzonym mi było żyć…* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Rigelbluma, 2009), 187–89. Ewa Treunstein had been assisted and sheltered by a number of Poles during the war, including three Catholic priests, and was greeted warmly by her Polish benefactors when she returned to Rożyszcze, in Volhynia, after liberation.

Encounters between survivors and Polish acquaintances were often marked by sympathy, as the following testimonies show:

> Sometimes the returnees are recognized first by local non-Jews. For example, in Zamość, Shefner is stopped by an elderly Pole who asks her politely if she is the daughter of a man named Ashkenazi; Avrum Zimler of Żyrardów is greeted by a young man who tells him that his mother-in-law would be very happy to see him. In other cases, the survivors have to explain to local passersby who they are. Positive encounters with non-Jews are sometimes recorded in detail: Opozdover describes three friendly and moving meetings …[733]

> [Wilczyn, near Inowrocław:] We … moved on to the home of a Polish family whose son was an old friend of mone from school. He recognized me right away, and his mother, Mrs. Tomazak, was very nice. She fed us and asked us to stay overnight. We accepted.[734]

Artur Ney, a teenager from Warsaw, recalled an encounter with a woman who used to work at his family's business:

> A woman was standing in another part of the courtyard [in the Praga suburb of Warsaw], in front of a neighbouring building, chopping wood. … I turned back toward the woman and asked her awkwardly if by some chance she knew whether anyone from the Holcman family had survived. If so, did she have any idea where they were? To my astonishment, the woman straightened up, let the huge axe slip from her hands and, after calling on every saint in Christendom, cried out, "Turek! Tureczek!"
>
> She put her arms around me and continued to cry out my name. Disoriented, I repeated my question, not recognizing the woman despite her obvious familiarity with me. She realized that I was at a loss and told me her name was Irka, that she had been one of the foreladies at the plant. … Irka invited me upstairs to her apartment to eat something and answer the millions of questions she had for me. The visit was wonderful and filled with emotion on both sides.[735]

Since he had no surviving family, Artur Ney decided to return to the Salesian Fathers, who had sheltered him during the German occupation. He stayed at their orphanage in Zielone, near Głosków, outside Warsaw, for more than a year after the war. He recalled, "The priests knew that I was Jewish but they didn't treat me any differently." In particular, he had fond memories of Fr. Henryk Ignaczewski, the director of the orphanage.

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[733] Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Patterns of Return: Survivors' Postwar Journeys to Poland,* Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007, 10. The author also mentions how Poles who lived in an apartment building in Żyrardów whose ownership was transferred to the city, hoped that the Jewish survivor who owned the building before the war would take it over again as the building now suffered neglect. Ibid., 11.

[734] Landau, *Branded on My Arm and on My Soul,* 112.

[735] Arthur Ney, *W Hour* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2014), 150.

Shiye Goldberg, who hailed from a suburb of Lublin, had some difficulty with "tenants" who had occupied his abandoned properties, but also encountered much sympathy and helpfulness along the way as he reestablished himself as a successful merchant. Among those he turned to for assistance were Home Army members:

> "Let's go and see Kzhyzhanovsky [Krzyżanowski]," I said to Yanek. Kzhyzhanovsky was the custodian of a new house on Ogrodowa Street. …
>
> Kzhyzhanovsky's wife saw me and burst into tears. She helped me wash myself and gave me a shirt. I mentioned that my wife had left her fur coat. She admitted it readily.
>
> "My daughter had it resown to fit her, but now that you're alive you can have it back." I didn't take it. We had some tea, and each of us received a jacket …
>
> They were at a loss what to do. My ownership was indisputable, but they had nowhere to go. … the housing problem was severe since most of the dwellings had been demolished by the Germans.
>
> I was finally able to be rid of the Polish squatters. …
>
> In the municipal offices I picked up the two registration books which every landlord had to keep as well as the stamp. The officials were glad to return the items to me because the mayor at that time was Kadury, one of my Gentile friends …
>
> I knew the Land Registry Office would corroborate my claim. I went to the man who sold me the lot, an upstanding Christian (a sergeant) by the name of Zolman. … He took me to Smerdlowa:
>
> "You ought to be ashamed of yourself," he chided her. "Is this how a Christian woman should act? How dare you claim that you bought the lot?"
>
> … I had the Land Registry abstract with me, and Zolman was also on hand to back up my statement. The judges ordered Smerdlowa to remove herself from the lot. It was my property.
>
> My former tenants were living there and even though they were highly-placed members of the Armya Krayowa [Armia Krajowa] (among them Pawlowsky [Pawłowski], who gave me the job in the factory), I felt that I could trust them. …
>
> My Christian friends in Stettin [Szczecin] welcomed my wife with open arms … My friends decided to send a special manager [to Lublin] to fetch me—the woman chairman of the Armya Krayowa. In her company I wouldn't be harmed.[736]

The so-called "Jewish question" was not an all-pervasive obsession and only a tiny portion of graffiti and the like touched on this issue.[737] It would, therefore, be erroneous to conclude that just because someone was part of the 200,000-strong anti-Communist underground or was opposed to the Soviet-imposed regime,

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[736] Goldberg, *The Undefeated,* 201–202, 203–204, 206, 214–15, 229–31. Goldberg fell afoul of the authorities for his involvement in illegal schemes with the military. Imprisoned in the Lublin prison, whose chief was a Jew, he was eventually released.

[737] Łukasz Kamiński, *Polacy wobec nowej rzeczywistości, 1944–1948* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2000), 29, 44, 48. For example, only 2.36 percent of graffiti made mention of Jews.

such a person was openly hostile toward Jews, let alone wanted to harm them. Jews who left their homes in the province of Volhynia, which was incorporated into the Soviet Union, were taken in by a family who were Home Army supporters when they sought refuge in Chełm, a town on the Polish side of the new Polish-Soviet border. Like most Polish rescuers, this Pole never received formal recognition from Yad Vashem.

> Our first station was Chelm [Chełm]. In Chelm, there was a Pole by the name of Zwolak who was known to be a good man since he had saved 2 Jewish sisters. He and his wife took care of these girls as though they were their own daughters. He also had a son, a young fellow who was involved with the "Armia Krayova," [sic] … but one thing was sure—he had wonderful relations with his father's Jews.
>
> For most of the Jews arriving from Russia to Chelm, the first stop was Zwolak. He had only one room, a kitchen and 3 beds, one for the Zwolak couple, one for the son, and one for the 2 sisters. Every inch of the floor was taken up by Jewish refugees. Zwolak never refused any Jew and even shared his food with them. He did not ask for any reward.[738]

Izhak Shumowitz, who ran a very profitable bakery in Czerwony Bór, near Zambrów, before the war, recalled the warm welcome he and other Jews received when they arrived in the village of Skudosze, near his hometown:

> Villagers came running up to us crying, "Scharfman, Nachman Scharfman!"
>
> We found out that these were villagers who knew Nachman well. They approached us in a state of great excitement, grabbing hold of Nachman shaking his hands and slapping him on the back, thrilled to see that he was alive. Immediately they began to question us, where had we been and how had we survived?[739]

Shumowitz traces the fortunes of three brothers from Zambrów through the Soviet and German occupations, and then in Stalinist Poland. Shumowitz also traces the fortunes of some local Jewish Communists, the Stupnik brothers from Zambrów, through the Soviet and German occupations, and then in Stalinist Poland.

> One of fellow citizens who lived nearby was a shoemaker, with many close connections with the villagers in the region. He had three young nephews in Zambrov [Zambrów] who used to visit him from time to time. In the past, these men had been fervent communists, active and gifted. In the

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[738] Esther Kramer, "The Story of Manyevitz and Our Family," in Yehuda Merin, ed., *Memorial Book: The Jewish Communities of Manyevitz, Horodok, Lishnivka, Troyanuvka, Povursk and Kolki (Wolyn Region)* (Tel Aviv: Shlomo Levy, 2004), 258.

[739] Teyer, *The Red Forest,* 195. Shumowitz describes how a Pole hiding in bunker during the German retreat turned on him with a knife when he tried to remove the Pole's food supplies. A group of Poles came to the assistance of Shumowitz. Ibid., 197–98. Schumowitz also recounts the hostile treatment he and his companion received from the NKVD, who accused the "dirty Jews" of being spies and beat them viciously to get a confession out of them. They managed to escape with the help of friendly Poles. Ibid., 204–10.

days of the Soviet regime, one of them was appointed Commissar of the Zambrov province. When the Germans arrived in Zambrov, these young men fled to their uncle in Chervony Bur [Czerwony Bór], who managed to find shelter for his nephews, each in a different place. …

This was a very moving meeting for me, for we met with no less than the three Stupnick brothers, with whom we had started collecting arms, and dreamt of forming a group that would fight for its existence. …

Each member of the group was armed with a gun supplied by the Stupnick brothers. …

The Stupnicks were in the habit of going to the pigpens of the villagers, and stealing some of the animals. They had worked out their won methods of overcoming the animals and silencing them during this operation. That night, we joined them in their operations, and we returned to the bunker at Gosk's farm with a load of meat and other food supplies. …

Our stay here [in Zambrów] was naturally of a temporary nature, our sights were set for Israel. Perhaps that is the reason why I was furious when I heard that the Stupnick brothers had returned to their communist activities. We thought of Communism and Nazism as similar evils, and even though the divide between them was great, the Soviets were in no small degree responsible for our sufferings. It was difficult to come to terms with those who try to overlook, or to forget this chapter of history.[740]

Jews frequently came forward on behalf of, and even testified in court for clemency for, members of the Polish underground who had rescued them during the German occupation and now faced punishment because of their pro-independence activities.[741] It was not unusual for Poles to face trumped-up charges of having murdered Soviet partisans and Jews, as such charges were levelled routinely against members of the Home Army and the National Armed Forces. The following example is but one illustration.

The Red Army arrived, accompanied by the NKVD, and that signalled the beginning of deportations to Russia of resistance fighters from the Polish Home Army and the National Armed Forces. One day, secret policemen from the Security Bureau in Rytwiany came to [local Home Army commander Bronisław] Rzepecki's apartment. Fortunately, he was not at home.

That was when Rzepecki tracked down Józef Mandelman, who was staying in Leżajsk with his family. Mandelman agreed to travel to Lublin to meet with Józef Maślanko, who had become a minister in the provisional government there. Maślanko heard him out, and then called in an NKVD officer and requested that Rzepecki's name be crossed off the list of people accused of having murdered Russian commandos and Jews. Mandelman told the Russian about how Rzepecki had saved his life. Rzepecki's name was removed from the list, and Maślanko wrote a letter to the Security Bureau in Busko, asking them to leave Rzepecki alone. He also wrote to the government

[740] Teyer, *The Red Forest,* 88, 169, 193, 219.

[741] For some examples see Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 187–99; Janusz Wróbel, "W cieniu Holocaustu: Odrodzenie społeczności żydowskiej w Łódzkiem po II wojnie światowej," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 11 (November 2005): 34–35; Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945,* 146 (Rev. Henryk Uchman of Michałówka), 252–53 (Rev. Jan Zarzycki, a Home Army chaplain from Rymanów).

> of Kielce province and recommended that a job be found for this good citizen of people's Poland.[742]

Not only does this phenomenon undermine the stereotypical view pushed by some historians of Polish partisans as vicious anti-Semites, but also shatters the notion pushed by those same historians that ordinary Jews were downtrodden and scorned by the authorities. Few Poles enjoyed such influence with well-placed henchmen of the Stalinist regime.

On the other hand, apart from some cases of communal social ostracism, Jews have generally overlooked the deeds of those (many) Jews who had collaborated with the Nazis to the detriment of their own people. Nor do they allow the phenomenon Jewish collaboration to affect their assessment of the conduct of the Poles because of the activities of *some* Poles. Only rarely did Jews in Poland strike out at collaborators in their midst. Yankel (Jack) Pomerantz, who fled to the Soviet zone and returned to Poland with the Soviet army, describes coming to Łódz in May 1945 to search for family members.

> As we were arriving in the city, I watched a group of Jews converge on one man. He had been a Jewish collaborator with the Nazis in a concentration camp. He had overseen the killing of children, one man joining the group told us. Now in Lodz, Jewish survivors from the camp had recognized him. They set upon him and beat him right in the street. They delivered blow upon blow until he died.[743]

There is no indication that the authorities took any action against the assailants.

Historian Piotr Wróbel has posed the following pointed questions: "But how are historians supposed to judge when such important events of the past are not resolved? How can non-Jewish bystanders be condemned for their passivity when Jewish *Kapos*, policemen, and former *Judenräte* leaders were rehabilitated? Many similar questions appear when we study the Holocaust and most of them have no satisfactory answer yet. This aspect of the Holocaust is still far from settled."[744]

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[742] Zbigniew Pakula, *The Jews of Poznań* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 42.

[743] Pomerantz and Winik, *Run East,* 158.

[744] Piotr Wróbel, "The *Judenräte* Controversy: Some Polish Aspects," *The Polish Review* 42, no. 2 (1997): 225–32. See also Gabriel N. Finder and Alexander V. Prusin, "Jewish Collaborators on Trial in Poland, 1944–1956," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 20 (2008): 122–48; Wroński and Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939–1945*, 304–305; Trunk, *Judenrat* (1996), 548–69; Idith Zertal, "Izrael wobec ofiar Holocaustu," *Gazeta Wyborcza,* February 16, 2002.

8. On a Collision Course with Poles—The Hunt for "Collaborators"

The continued presence of the Soviet military was a *sine qua non* for the Soviet-installed Communist regime—which had very little popular support—to retain power in "liberated" Poland. The NKVD was a particularly important instrument in this regard. Created especially for the task of liquidating the Polish underground, its 64th Division arrested some 17,000 people by the end of 1944. In the period from January 1945 to August 1946, more than 3,400 resistance fighters were arrested (most of whom were sent to camps), and an additional 47,000 people were detained for interrogation. Thousands of Poles were deported to the Soviet interior.[745] The bulk of the fighting carried out by pro-independence underground formations during this period was with NKVD units, not with their Polish puppets.

The scale of repressions during the Stalinist era was massive. Between 1944 and 1956, approximately 350,000 Poles passed through the hands of the Communist security forces, 150,000 received harsh prison sentences, and 8,000 death sentences were passed for political reasons. Moreover, at least 20,000 Poles were killed while in detention or during investigations and perhaps as many as 25,000 perished in various circumstances during the consolidation of Communist power. It is estimated that about 100,000 Poles, about half of them former Home Army members, were deported to the Gulag in 1944–1945.[746] It is against this backdrop that relations between Polish society and the regime and its supporters must be assessed.

The true face and grim reality of "liberated Poland" was not difficult to discern. Russell R. Johnston, who came to Warsaw in August 1945 and remained until the following April in the employ of the American Red Cross, recalled the new political reality in plain view for anyone with eyes to see:

> I've been in Warsaw just two weeks, but already I'm convinced it is a captive city—that the Russians have taken over and are here to stay. The evidence is grim and everywhere to see. … [No sooner had the Soviets entered Poland than:] … A reign of terror followed, and opposing patriotic groups and political parties were manhandled, murdered, and deported. … And, most significant and tragic, I've seen the hurried groups of white-faced citizens of the so-called upper class being hustled through the early morning streets by the Russian NKVD.[747]

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[745] Andrzej Paczkowski, "Poland, the 'Enemy Nation,'" in Courtois, et al., *The Black Book of Communism*, 374.

[746] Leszek Żebrowski, "Partyjne oddziały partyzanckie: Bandy pozorowe 1944–1947," *Gazeta Polska,* November 7, 1996; Leszek Żebrowski, "Działalność tzw. band pozorowanych jako metoda zwalczania podziemia niepodległościowego w latach 1944–1947," in *Skryte oblicze systemu komunistycznego,* 80–81; Kunert and Stolarski, eds., *"Bijące serce partii"*; Mirosław Golon, *Polityka radzieckich władz wojskowych i policyjnych na Pomorzu Nadwiślańskim w latach 1945–1947* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2001); Krzysztof Madej, Jan Żaryn, and Jacek Żurek, eds., *Księga świadectw: Skazani na karę śmierci w czasach stalinowskich i ich losy* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2003); Grzegorz Baziur, *Armia Czerwona na Pomorzu Gdańskim 1945–1947* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2003). Russian historians have arrived at lower estimates. For example, Aleksandr Gurianov believes that, between 1944–1945, the NKVD was responsible for the deportation of 39,000–48,000 Polish citizens from the territory of the truncated Polish state (i.e., without the Eastern Borderlands), of whom 17,000 were members of the anti-Nazi underground. See Aleksander Gurjanow, "Sowieckie represje wobec Polaków i obywateli polskich w latach 1936–1956 w świetle danych sowieckich," in Jasiewicz, *Europa nieprowincjonalna,* 980.

[747] Johnston, *Poland 1945: A Red Cross Diary* (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1973), 118, 159.

The systematic sacking of Poland by the Soviet "allies" was blatantly obvious. Every day, Johnston saw truck caravans going eastward, carrying looted Polish goods that included everything from bicycles to heavy machinery to farm animals. When in former East Prussia, he saw that "the Red Army soldiers stationed here have helped themselves to everything that could move." The pervasiveness of lawlessness was directly attributable to Soviet rule which bred crime: "Banditry … is on an increasing scale, and no man's belongings are safe from thieves, or from Russian soldiers."[748]

Today, historians like Jan Gross and Jan Grabowski go on and on about the "social advancement" Poles allegedly experienced, at the expense of the Jews, because a few Poles reopened small and poorly stocked shops that had been left by the Germans in a dilapidated state after having being stripped of all of their wares and inventory. (Many of these shops and all larger enterprises, whether they belonged to Jews or Poles, were soon nationalized by the Communist authorities.) However, at the time, foreign observers like Johnstob, saw matters in a completely different light. The privations of the people caused by shortages of food, housing and medical care shocked the author:

> The worst in Europe, in fact. The people on the farms especially had little or nothing to carry them through the winter. First the Nazis and then the Russians had taken about anything and everything that could be moved. Besides that, most of the fields were still planted with land mines.[749]

According to investigations by the American Red Cross, overall, over two and a half million Polish children were dangerously undernourished, five million children had inadequate food, and the infant mortality rate was a staggering 25%.[750] Conditions for Poles expelled by the Soviets from Poland's Eastern Teritories, like those Johnston witnessed arriving in East Prussia, were particularly acute:

> Those riding in boxcars will have to pay a fee of two hundred zlotys [złoty], while those who can't pay this fee must ride on open flatcars exposed to the wind and snow. The only belongings they'll be allowed to bring with them willbe what they can carry. … The poor devils on the flatcars will be living like that for days, maybe weeks—who can say? … They'll literally freeze to death … others will contract pneumonia and die later on. Polish winters can be hell."[751]

It is against this bleak background that respect for human rights of all those who found themselves on Polish territories now under the rule of the Soviet-imposed puppet government—whether Poles, Jews, Germans, Ukrainians or Belorussians—must be assessed.

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[748] Ibid., 118, 136.

[749] Ibid., 111.

[750] Ibid., 168.

[751] Ibid., 136–37.

Unlike ethnic Poles, most of whom were prevented from leaving Polish territory incorporated into the Soviet Republics of Lithuania and Belorussia,[752] Jews who found themselves in the Soviet Union rarely faced such restrictions in moving to Poland, including those who had enthusiastically greeted the Soviets in September 1939 in the Eastern Borderlands. At least 140,000 Jews returned to Poland from the Soviet Union in the first half of 1946,[753] without any apparent obstacles.[754] Of the 198,000 Polish citizens who were allowed to leave the Lithuanian SSR, 8.6 percent were Jews despite their massively depleted numbers, whereas a majority of the ethnic Poles who had opted for "repatriation" were denied permission to leave the Soviet Union.[755] A well-organized and well-financed Jewish underground network arranged, with the help of well-placed Jews in the Soviet and Polish army, for the illegal migration of hundreds of Jews who were citizens of prewar Lithuania. Although they did not speak Polish, they were furnished with bogus

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[752] Of the approximately 376,000 Poles in the newly constituted Lithuanian SSR who registered for "repatriation" to Poland (whose boundaries had shifted westward), only some 178,000 were permitted to go, whereas the number of Jews who left for Poland (almost 17,000) exceeded many times the number who had registered for "repatriation." Similar restrictions applied to the Polish population of the Belorussian SSR where hundreds of thousands of Poles who had registered were not allowed to leave. See Stanisław Ciesielski, ed., *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich do Polski, 1944–1947* (Warsaw: Neriton and Instytut Historii PAN, 1999), 24, 30–31; Alicja Paczoska, *Dzieci Jałty: Exodus ludności polskiej z Wileńszczyzny w latach 1944–1947* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2002), passim; Małgorzata Ruchniewicz, "Stosunki narodowościowe w latach 1939–1948 na obszarze tzw. Zachodniej Białorusi," and Aleksander Srebrakowski, "Zmiany składu narodowościowego w części Wileńszczyzny wcielonej do Litwy w okresie II wojny światowej," in Ciesielski, *Przemiany narodowościowe na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1931–1948,* 297–314, 342–47; A. F. [Anatol Fiodaravich] Vialiki, *Na razdarozhzhy: Belarusy i paliaki u chas perasialennia, 1944–1946 hh.: Manahrafiia* (Minsk: BDPU, 2005). Some of the obstacles put in the way of Poles are described in Jerzy Kochanowski, "Gathering Poles into Poland: Forced Migration from Poland's Former Eastern Territories," in Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, eds., *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948* (Lanham, Maryland: Bownman & Littlefield, 2001), 141–42; Krzysztof Jodczyk, "Migracje Polaków z Wileńszczyzny na powojenne terytorium Polski (1944–1955), in Zwolski, *Exodus*, 136–48; Ahonen, et al., *People on the Move,* 102–3. The Soviet authorities continued to prevent the departure of many Poles who wanted to leave Belarus during the subsequent "repatriation" in 1956–1957. See Anatol F. Vialiki, *Belarus—Polshcha u XX stahoddzi: Neviadomaia repatryiatsyia, 1955–1959 hh.: Manahrafiia* (Minsk : BDPU, 2007)

[753] Albert Stankowski, "Nowe spojrzenie na statystyki dotyczące emigracji Żydów z Polski po 1944 roku," in Grzegorz Berendt, August Grabski, and Albert Stankowski, *Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 r.* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2000), 103–51, especially at 108.

[754] Unlike Poles, Jews were generally free to leave Lithuania for Poland and did so in large numbers, with some 17,000 "repatriating" in 1945–1947. See Aleksander Srebrakowski, "Zmiany składu narodowościowego w części Wileńszczyzny wcielonej do Litwy w okresie II wojny światowej," in Ciesielski, *Przemiany narodowościowe na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1931–1948,* 346–47. According to one report, the Communist regime even interceded to facilitate the return of Bundists to Poland. See Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours,* 175–76.

[755] Krzysztof Jodczyk, "Migracje Polaków z Wileńszczyzny na powojenne terytorium Polski (1944–1955)," in Zwolski, *Exodus*, 143.

documents showing them to be Polish citizens.[756] Other Jews resorted to illegal means to expedite their departure from the Soviet Union:

> The most exciting news was about her encounter with Zionist-oriented people, who told Mother that preparations were being made to transfer illegally the survivors of the Holocaust to Eretz Yisroel as soon as the war was over. In the meantime, it was crucial to remove them from Russian-occupied territory and concentrate them in the west. It was necessary, therefore, for us to be registered as Polish citizens, if we intended to join in this exodus. …
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> Father had no problem changing the data on our registration form, stating our birthplace as the city of Breslau, Poland. …
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> Although officially the Russians permitted Poles to return to Poland, in effect they took their time about it. The Jewish leadership was aware of this and organized their own system of expediting this process, because every minute was precious and they knew that they did not have the luxury of waiting for official channels to permit the exodus. It was a credit to the ingenuity that is sometimes attributed to our people. It took about two weeks, until one evening we were told to go to the train station. About ten of us were quickly and quietly pushed into a freight car and told not to worry; we would be taken care of on the way and we must maintain silence whenever the train came to a halt. The instructions were repeated several times and the door of the freight train closed.
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> As the freight train began to move … I felt a mixture of elation and fear as the train carried us into the uncertainty of the future. … I was heading towards fulfilling my dream of living in Eretz Yisroel. The fear was … of the possibility that we would be prevented from pursuing our goal. …
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> These freight trains were carrying spoils of war into Russia that significantly bolstered her economy. They traveled empty to the west and returned to Russia with everything people could lay their hands on. … There was a special branch of the armed forces, which was in charge of these activities. From stories I later learned, the technical and administrative requirements of this branch were such that it included the talents of many Jews. These people were in a position to help in this secret exodus, as well as non-Jews who were sympathetic to our cause. There were always those who were in a position to help if the price was right. Bribes were important because it implicated them and thus purchased their silence. …
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> It was daylight when the train made its first stop. … The door was opened and we were told in Polish, by a man wearing a railway uniform, that we could get off to stretch our legs. … We also discovered that there were more people like us on the train, so there were about fifty of us milling about quietly in the rail yard. Eventually a man appeared with another small group of refugees. This

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[756] Johanan Sztul, a partisan from Rudniki forest who obtained a lucrative position in Soviet Lithuania, collaborated with Nisan Resnik, Abba Kovner, and others, in the transfer of some 500 Lithuanian Jews to Poland. Sztul supplied them with bogus documents identifying them as Christian Poles, even though many of them did not speak Polish. Once inside Poland, when their train stopped in small stations on the way to Lublin, they were able to acquire food and provisions from farmers without any problems. See Miguel Sztul, "*Janek*, el partisano"… Mi padre," *Nuestra Memoria* (Buenos Aires), no. 26 (December 2005): 217–47, here at 242–44. Zelda Nisanilvich Treger worked closely with Abba Kovner, her former partisan leader, to smuggle groups of Lithuanian Jews into Poland with forged documents showing them to be Polish citizens. See Ziva Shalev, "Zelda Nisanilevich Treger," *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia,* March 1, 2009, Jewish Women's Archive, Internet: <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/treger-zelda-nisanilevich>. For other examples of Jews from prewar Lithuanian who left for Poland using fraudulent documents, see Rhoda G. Lewin, ed., *Witnesses to the Holocaust: An Oral History* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 55; Aba Gefen, *Defying the Holocaust: A Diplomat's Report* (San Bernardino, California: Borgo Press, 1993), 88; Nancy Wright Beasley, *Izzy's Fire: Finding Humanity in the Holocaust* (Richmond, Virginia: Palari Publishing, 2008), 185–86, 257.

man was evidently in charge. Although previously everybody had kept silent, as soon as there was somebody in authority, the complaints came pouring out. … When he noticed my father, who had managed to organize a minyan, conducting the morning services in the yard, he quickly told him that such a thing was not possible in public, for the safety of the group, and that they should move to the confines of the freight car. …

The food came and was distributed as promised. We were told to get on the train and it began to move. It was evidently not in any particular hurry to reach whatever destination it was heading for. …

Some days later the train came to a halt in a large rail yard, in the city of Lublin. We expected the usual procedure, but this time we were warned to keep quiet and the doors remained closed. Unfortunately, a lady in one of the cars was in the process of giving birth, and her excruciating labor pains resulted in screams which did not escape the ears of a Russian officer, who was not party to the scheme. … Within a short time, all of us were standing under the watchful eyes of his soldiers. While the officer, angry and confused, tried to get to the bottom of this situation that had fallen into his hands.

We were forewarned that in the event of a confrontation such as this we were not to divulge any information beyond the fact that we were going home, and that this was to be done in Polish. The help of an interpreter did not advance the officer's knowledge of how we had got into these sealed freight cars. … The first sign of hope materialized when some civilians in the company of a high-ranking Russian officer and some soldiers approached the arresting officer. One of the civilians produced an official-looking paper stating that a consignment of human cargo was to be placed into his hands. These were Polish citizens who, as a reward for their contributions to Russia, were entitled to early repatriation. The new officer commended his comrade for his vigilance in executing his duty and told him that this incident would be fully noted before his superiors.

At the same time he suggested that the first officer should return to his duties of loading the train, and not waste any more of his valuable time on these civilians. While this exchange was going on, we were quickly broken up into small groups and told to follow one of the civilians, before the arresting officer could regain control and begin asking questions to satisfy his own curiosity. Within a short time we were spread out in various hiding places in the city, especially in the few Jewish homes.

On the same night, we were gathered together and put on a different train to continue our journey. …

Our trip ended several days later in the city of Katowice. There we were placed in private homes. … We were allotted a certain amount of money, by the people who brought us, for our food, and we had some rubles—which were legal tender even in Poland at the time—that we had saved in Ratno. …

The organization that took care of us obviously had financial resources. Each time it was a different person from the organization who located us and offered us money for subsistence. We had no idea who these people were or where to find them. They continually told us to have patience: they would tell us when to be ready to move at an instant's notice. …

We received new identification papers, and this time not only was our birthplace incorrect, but also our names sounded Greek to me. … Since Greeks who had been interned in concentration camps in eastern Europe would have to take the same route in order to return to their homeland, we were now their imposters. …

As ‘genuine’ Greeks, we boarded a passenger train heading for the city of Prague.[757]

While Poles continued to be imprisoned and deported to the Gulag by the tens of thousands after the “liberation,” Jews were rarely imprisoned for political reasons and few, if any, were deported to the Gulag. Especially after the events in Kielce on July 4, 1946, but even earlier, Jews were allowed to leave Poland in large numbers under a secret agreement between the Bricha (Briha, Brikha), the clandestine Jewish organization directing Jewish emigration from east to central Europe, and Poland’s Communist

[757] Laizer Blitt, *No Strength to Forget: Survival in the Ukraine, 1941–1944* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), 157–65.

authorities.[758] Jewish emigration, which was spearheaded by the Zionists

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[758] A secret agreement was reached with General Marian Spychalski, deputy defence minister, that opened the Polish border for the departure of groups of Jews under certain conditions, namely, that the crossing would be coordinated with Polish security officials; that the Bricha personnel would prevent non-Jews from leaving (especially "enemies" of the regime) and would thwart the removal of national assets such as foreign currency; and that the existence of the agreement would not be divulged. See Gafny, *Dividing Hearts,* 75; Redlich, *Life in Transit,* 156. An estimated 46,000 Jews left Poland between August 1945 and June 1946. During the spring and summer of 1946, an average of 200 Jews boarded trains earmarked for the repatriation of ethnic Germans leaving Szczecin for the British zone, and occasionally nearly the entire train was occupied by Polish Jews. See Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah* (New York: Random House, 1970), 234–46. After the Kielce pogrom, approximately 73,000 Jews managed to leave Poland in July and August 1946, and the exodus continued until the following year. Jews from other Eastern European countries also fled, though in smaller numbers. (Jews also left Bulgaria even though that country's government had spared their deportation from Bulgaria proper, though from not annexed territories, during the Holocaust.) British and American reports from that period attest to the extent of the coordination, connections, influence, web of deceit, bribery and resources required for that operation, which undoubtedly also included the collaboration of Jews within the American occupation authorities and military. According to Douglas, *Orderly and Humane,* 158–59:

> Major Frederick Boothby, commander of the British Liaison at Kaławsk (today's Węgliniec), a railhead seven miles east of the new Polish-German frontier, eyed [German] expellee train No. 165, as it pulled up to the platform on the evening of May 18, 1946, with considerable suspicion. The first curious thing he noticed was the unusually large quantity of personal effects, including "everything from commodes to double beds," that the expellees had been permitted to take with them. In contrast to most Germans arriving from Poland, they were without exception well nourished and adequately clothed. Furthermore, practically all of them appeared to be Jewish. Lacking the facilities to examine the documents of all 1,572 people on board, he sent the train onward to its destination with a request that the authorities at the point of arrival check it and its passengers carefully. The British Army contingent at the Marienthal transit camp in Lower Saxony, who did so, found that Major Boothy's reservations were amply justified. By the time it reached Marienthal the train had acquired an additional 456 passengers, presumably placed on board somewhere between Kaławsk and the frontier. The supposed expellees were accompanied by a thirty-four-year-old man named Günther Sternberg from Wrocław [Breslau], who wore a homemade UNRRA armband and whose identity papers, purporting to have been issued by a "Captain Baker, Royal Signals, U.S. Army," gave the camp authorities still more reason to question his bona fides. Field Security officers promptly placed Sternberg under arrest, but persuading the "expellees" to leave the train proved a far more difficult matter. All of them appeared "surprised to learn on arrival that they were going to be treated as refugees" and refused to cooperate. In the end, for the first time in Marienthal's history it was necessary to call out a company of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment to induce them to obey order. The soldiers had a great deal of trouble disinfecting and registering the passengers, a process that took nine hours and revealed that only 56 of the more than 2,000 persons were genuine expellees. Sternberg, under interrogation, acknowledged having forged identity papers for 180 of his charges, and having sold them seats on the train in Warsaw at a rate of five to six hundred dollars per head. The final piece of the puzzle fell into place the following morning when a Dr. Stanek of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a New York-based relief and emigration agency, put in an appearance. He explained that he had made arrangements with the American authorities for the passengers, Polish Jews, to proceed southward to Oberammergau in the U.S. zone and thence to Palestine. A freight ticket was produced showing that the train had been chartered in Poland for a fee of RM 26,152 ($2,600), which also had been paid for its complement of Polish Army guards. Unable or unwilling to pursue the matter further with thousands of additional expellees following hot on train No. 165's heels, the Marienthal officers passed the émigrés along the line and released Sternberg to continue his journey to the U.S. zone. Nine weeks later, the American authorities reported that they knew nothing of the train or its passengers, and had granted them no facilities to travel to the U.S. zone or anywhere else.
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> This intersection of expulsion and entrepreneurialism was in no respect extraordinary. Indeed, just seven weeks later, another "train No. 165"—a number seemingly particularly favored by people-smugglers—arrived at Marienthal. This transport contained seventeen hundred passengers, all of whom carried documents identifying them as expellee German Jews from the Recovered Territories and visas authorizing them to travel onward to Le Havre in France to the United States. Once again, British suspicions were raised. … The camp staff at Marienthal interviewed a cross-section of the passengers and found that "practically everyone had paid the sum of 30 U.S. dollars for the passage on this train." Once again, however, the new arrivals were sent onward for processing "as nothing could be proved that they were not genuine German [expellees] although

[759] and generously funded largely by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee,[760] was coordinated with the Security Service and facilitated by Communist officials as well as by Jews serving in the Polish

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[759] Historian Shimon Redlich writes:

> Although the Bund and the Jewish Communist Frakcja did not see eye to eye on numerous issues, they were united in their opposition to Jewish emigration from Poland. Whereas the Zionists used the Kielce events to advocate Jewish emigration, the Bund attempted to convince both its members and the Jewish population at large not to leave Poland. A national Bund convention in Wroclaw in early 1947 strongly condemned "Zionist emigrational propaganda". Organized emigration of Jews to Palestine/Israel was at the core of the conflict between the Bund and the Zionists. The Bund accused the Zionists of deliberately causing a state of panic among Polish Jews in order to encourage their exodus from the country.

See Shimon Redlich, *Life in Transit: Jews in Postwar Lodz, 1945–1950* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 184.

[760] Jewish sources often stress the impoverishment of Jews in postwar Poland without taking into account overall conditions in the war-devastated country that affected all citizens and the enormous amount of financial assistance for Jews that poured into the country. According to the records of the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC), which operated from July 1945 until the end of 1949 and employed almost 130 people in December 1947,

> AJDC's most important objective was providing aid. Food, medicine, clothing, raw materials, machinery, and other goods were obtained through foreign assistance or direct purchases abroad or in Poland. In the years 1945–1949 AJDC imported almost 600 railway car and shiploads with hundreds of tons of food and other goods. The first transport arrived in Gdynia on October 8, 1945, and contained, among other items, 5 tons of vegetable fat, 2 tons of powdered milk, and the like. The Polish headquarters of AJDC had separate departments for receipt, storage, and distribution of the enormous aid. Financial (cash) assistance was given directly to individual recipients in only a minority of cases; mostly, such funds were directed to various organizations and associations. The major beneficiaries were the Central Committee of the Jews in Poland (CKŻP) and the health care organization TOZ; for example, the Central Committee received about 3.5 billion Polish zlotys in the years 1945–1949. The Joint also supported Jewish political parties and social organizations, youth associations, and religious organizations and Hebrew schools.
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> Academic, cultural, and artistic associations were also the focus of Joint activity and interest. It supported the activity of the Central Jewish Historical Commission (which became the Jewish Historical Institute in 1947), whose major task was to collect materials related to the Holocaust. Separately, the AJDC financed the work associated with the preservation and arrangement of the Ringelblum Archives (the first parts of which were excavated in 1946) and the search for the second part of these archives (excavated not earlier than 1950). Other groups that benefited from the Joint's funding were writers' and artists' associations, publishing houses, and newspapers and magazines.
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> In economic activity, the Organization for the Development of Industrial, Craftsmen's, and Agricultural Activity (ORT), the Cooperative Bank for the Productivity of the Jews, the Solidarność (Solidarity) Cooperative Center, and other cooperatives operated under the auspices of the Joint.
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> A separate field of AJDC interest was the landsmanshafts—associations and societies of people from the same villages or towns across Poland. The landsmanshafts were organized among the repatriates, mainly those who had been displaced to the interior of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the war, but also Jews who survived the war in Poland and other European countries. They not only benefited from AJDC's financial support but also received employment assistance and loans as well as raw materials and machinery for production.

See Records of the American Joint Distribution Committee: Warsaw Office, 1945–1949, Internet: <https://archives.jdc.org/our-collections/finding-aids/warsaw/1945-1949/>.

and Soviet armies.[761] Endangered Poles had no such possibilities. Jewish organizations scrupulously complied with the authorities' orders to weed out any Poles who tried to escape by passing as Jews.[762] Naturally, this led to resentment when Poles were being hunted down with no escape routes open to

[761] Stefan Grajek describes how Abba Kovner, Vitka Kempner, Tsivia Lubetkin, and Eliezer Lidowski were arrested at the border as they tried to leave Poland in March 1945 with forged Greek documents; a Jewish officer released them and allowed them to cross into Czechoslovakia. See Stefan Grajek, *Po wojnie i co dalej: Żydzi w Polsce w latach 1945–1949* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2003), 19. Chaim Zylberklang was part of a group of twenty Jews whose departure to Czechoslovakia was overseen by a Polish army lieutenant. See Zylberklang, *Z Żółkiewki do Erec Israel*, 113. After joining the Soviet army, Shlomo Berger used his uniform and some fellow Soviet soldiers to assist the Bricha movement and Jewish Committee to transport Jews posing as Greek nationals out of Poland. See Ronald J. Berger, *Constructing a Collective Memory of the Holocaust: A Life History of Two Brothers' Survival* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1995), 96–97. A Soviet officer used a Soviet military transport truck to smuggle Jews from Szczecin (Stettin) to Berlin. See Freiberg, *Tor Survive Sobibor,* 490–91. Survivors from Siemiatycze and Drohiczyn were put on Soviet Army trucks and driven across the border into Czechoslovakia. See Zoltak, *My Silent Pledge,* 107. Only in extremely rare cases did Jews in the service of the NKVD turn against those who tried to escape. The brothers Dov and Ze'ev Avrach from Maniewicze, in Volhynia, recall one such incident: "We decided to leave Rovno [Równe]. We met with activists from the group 'Bricha,' who smuggled us to Czernowitz from where we were supposed to go on to Bucharest. To our misfortune, an informer, a Jewish dentist, told the N.K.V.D.—the internal Soviet Secret Police. I was taken prisoner and suffered months of torture and affliction, knowing that what lay in store for me, under the best of circumstances, was long detention." See Tarmon, *Memorial Book,* 52.

[762] Grajek, *Po wojnie i co dalej,* 98. Edwin Langberg, who deserted from the Polish army, was able to leave Poland in September 1945 with assistance from the Jewish Committee in Kraków: "The bulk of the passangers were Jews trying to get out of Poland and the Polish border police did not attempt to interfere. They only looked for and detained Polish escapees, presumably political opponents of the Communist regime." See Edwin Langberg with Julia M. Langberg, *Sara's* Blessing (Lumberton, New Jersey: Emethas Publishers, 2003), 175. Irena Gut Opdyke, a Home Army liaison who was wanted by the NKVD, was one of a handful of Poles who was able to leave Poland disguised as a Jew, with the assistance of some Jews whom she had rescued from the Nazis. See Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 193–94. In other cases, Poles from the underground, who had assisted Jews during the German occupation but were now themselves at risk from the Communist authorities, found that assistance from Jewish organizations came at a steep price: Stefan Nowicki, who had obtained false documents for a Jewish woman in German-occupied Warsaw, was put in touch with the secretary of an organization of concentration camp survivors in Katowice. Nowicki had to pay this Jew $100 US for very poor quality documents attesting to his "Czechoslovak" citizenship, which he then used to cross the border into Czechoslovakia. See Stefan Nowicki, *Zapiski i wspomnienia (6),* Internet: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~polclub/nowic7.htm>. When Edyta Klein arrived at a DP camp for Jews in Germany with her mother, the Jewish authorities initially refused to admit the young girl because she did not understand Yiddish and was thought to be a Christian "who wants to eat our Jewish camp food." See Marta Sztokfisz, *Księżniczka deptaku: Opowieść o Edycie Klein* (Warsaw: Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie Muza SA, 2007), 99.

them.[763] As many Jewish testimonies substantiate, Jews who often lacked the appropriate qualifications received preferential treatment in appointments to state positions, employment opportunities and admission

[763] Some historians such as Jan Gross argue that greed and resentment on account of the return of Jews and the restoration of Jewish property were pivotal factor in the violence that Jews encountered in Stalinist Poland. However, such sentiments were also prevalent in other countries such as Czechoslovakia, even though Jews barely constituted one percent of the population before the war (in Bohemia and Moravia). The Czech government in exile received alarming reports from the Protectorate that spoke of Jews "with hostility reminiscent of the post-Munich atmosphere." The Czechs were apprehensive about the government bringing back Jewish emigrés and returning their property and positions to them. According to one report, the Czechs "do not wish their return. They feel alienated from them and are pleased not to encounter them any more. … It should be taken into consideration that after the war anti-Semitism will grow substantially, and that all those who will try to ease and assist the return of the Jews will meet with opposition." Another message focused on the economic issue, anticipating the advent of the new socialist era: "Anti-Semitism will probably be the only thing we shall partially adopt from the Nazi ideology. Our people do not agree with the bestial methods of the Germans. Nevertheless they are of the opinion that most of the Jews deserve what is happening to them. After the war, in the New Republic, our people hope that the Jews will not be able to profit from our labor as they did before the war. They think that the property taken from them during the German rule should not be returned." See Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia,* 184, 303. As in other countries, the expulsions of the Jews, which were carried out with the help of Czech gendarmes, were accompanied by attacks on Jews and looting of Jewish households. The Nazi hierarchy was mindful that the local rabble would also derive material benefit. Ibid., 100, 102, 124, 127–28, 300, 337 n.24. (A reviewer of this book argues compellingly that Rothkirchen understates the extent of Czech collaboration with the Germans. See Michael L. Miller, "Czech Holocaust or Holocaust in the Czech Lands?," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 35, no. 1 (2007): 205–19.) According to Rothkirchen, hostility towards Jews and the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine did not come to a fore until the fall of 1948, after the Communist coup, when the government adopted abandoned its hitherto friendly attitude. (Previously, they had sold large quantities of arms both to the Jews and to the Arab countries in the Middle East.) Ibid., 288. However, popular anti-Semitism appear to have been more widespread than is generally acknowledged. Growing up in Prague after the war, Emil Skamene, who was not aware of his Jewish origin at the time, chased Jewish boys on the street yelling "dirty Jew," as all his other classmates were doing. See Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide,* 237. As in Poland, the Communist authorities embarked on a protracted anti-Jewish campaign on the eve of the Six-Day War. Ibid., 289–92.

to higher education,[764] while many classes of Poles were shut out. Mark Verstandig, a legal counsellor with the Security Office, boasted:

> the communist rulers went out of their way to court clever, educated Jews, whom they needed to rebuild the country's administration, The Polish intelligentsia, still waiting for the government in London to appear … kept its distance from the new regime. Jews were offered jobs and careers which surpassed their wildest expectations.[765]

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[764] Obtaining lucrative positions simply because of one's Jewish background and connections was widespread, as Samuel Sendler has candidly admitted. See Samuel Sandler, inteviewed by Teresa Torańska, "Samuel Sandler: Werbowali na ulicy," *Gazeta Wyborcza, Duży Format,* March 6, 2010. The following examples, which can be multiplied, are illustrative. Mark Verstandig, a legal counsellor with the Security Office, boasted that "Jews were offered jobs and careers which surpassed their wildest expectations." Most of his superiors and well-placed colleagues were Jews. After leaving the Security Office he moved to Wrocław where he continued to reap copious benefits from the solidarity of well-placed fellow Jews: "The city administration of Wrocław was headed by a talented young Jewish lawyer named Roman Wilk, who allocated us an empty, fully furnished, eight-room flat, with pictures still hanging on the walls. My brother got a similar flat across the road, where we also obtained well-situated premises to open a grocery. Ida, Frieda, David Haar, and friends of my brother worked in the grocery, which did very well. Through my connections in Warsaw with friends who handled provisions for government institutions, I helped to stock the grocery. I also did a bit of legal work." See Verstandig, *I Rest My Case,* 207, 218, 224, 227–28. Another beneficiary, a graduate of the faculty of law at the Stefan Batory University, reported: "I heard that an old classmate of mine from the Vilna [Wilno] gymnasium, a man named Turow, was the head of the Polish government's department of leather industries … I knew nothing about the leather industry … So after some quick basic instructions my friend arranged to have me made director of the department's division of statistics for the district of lower Slonsk [Śląsk—Silesia], where there were 13 leather factories." See Riwash, *Resistance and Revenege,* 83. Another Jew writes that his Jewish high-school friend, Jerzy Sawicki, who became Poland's attorney general, offered him a chair of surgery at the university of his choice. See Isaac J. Vogelfanger, *Red Tempest: The Life of a Surgeon in the Gulag* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 205. A high school graduate from Radom was offered "an excellent job working in the government's Commerce Department" by his Jewish sister-in-law in Łódź. See Jack Werber, with William B. Helmreich, *Saving Children: Diary of a Buchenwald Survivor and Rescuer* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 120. Roman Frister describes how he, a high school student when the war broke out, became the editor of various local editions of a large Wrocław daily: "I was in line for promotion to the post of assistant editor. It was less my talent than my being an ex-concentration camp prisoner and a Jew that had enabled me to advance so quickly. The Communist regime helped people like me to get ahead because it didn't trust the Polish-Catholic intelligentsia." See Roman Frister, *The Cap, or the Price of a Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 34, 227. Frister, who had a proclivity for short-term relationships, had no problem bedding young Christian women because of his position. Contemplating marriage at one point, he approached a priest to waive the traditional marriage bans: "The problem wasn't so much the town's Catholics as its Jews, who would hasten to tell him I didn't qualify for a Catholic sacrament." Ibid., 53. Halina Robinson admits to having attained various positions for which she had no professional qualifications. See Halina Robinson, *A Cork on the Waves: Reflections of a Turbulent Life* (Sydney: Sydney Jewish Museum, 2005; Sydney: Park Street Press, 2006). Despite his lowly background, Chiel Rajchman was made director of a large company in Łódź. See the Interview with Chiel Rajchman, December 7, 1988, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C. A Jew by the name of Łupiński got a high position in the Ministry of Labour and Social Service and assisted other Jews to secure lucrative positions. See Cesha Glazer, *Cesha's Story* (Sydney: Sydney Jewish Museum, 2011), 246–47, 251, 255, 260. Some Jews ued their connections to assist Christians who had helped them. Ibid., 280–81. Frances Dworecki acknowledges that her admission to medical school was facilitated because she was a Jew. See Frances Dworecki, *The Autobiography of Frances Dworecki,* Internet: <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/lida-district/fd-toc.htm>, chapter 19. After receiving a bad grade in Marxist ideology, Anna Helman Załuska approached her professor named Szyfman, who was Jewish. He asked her if she was a Jew and then told her that we, Jews, had to help each other. He allowed her to take the exam over again. See Anna Z. [Zaluska] Holocaust Testimony (HVT–3162), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library; Oral history interview with Anna Zaluska, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Accession no. 1995.A.1280.11, RG-50.225.0011.

[765] Verstandig, *I Rest My Case,* 227–28.

Upon his return to his hometown of Radomsko, Symcha Hampel was appointed the chief regional doctor even though his foreign medical certificate had not been officially recognized. His cousin, Izak Goldberg, a lieutenant in the army and head of supplies for the military, diverted truckloads of food and various goods to the Jewish community in Radomsko.[766] These are not isolated examples. While many Poles suffered from deprivations of food and housing, Jews with no professional skills or educational background to speak of experienced no problems in securing spacious apartments and leading very comfortable lifestyles.

While Poles who had fought for the freedom of Poland were being rounded up, imprisoned, tortured, executed or deported to the Soviet interior, those who had supported the forces that sought to enslave Poland reaped rewards and benefits. Anatol Krakowski, who had fought with the Soviet partisans in the Wilno area, was flown around Poland in official planes, which assisted him in his black market dealings, and then enrolled in the Poznań medical academy where he drew on his connections in the Soviet and Polish military to continue his illegal pursuits.[767] While Jews often were able to invoke the fact that they were Jews to obtain leniency or favours from Communist officials of Jewish origin, it was unheard of for a Pole to have such leverage by invoking the fact that he was a Pole.[768]

Amidst widespread poverty and short supplies, black market activities flourished with the help of corrupt state officials and Soviet officers with whom the black marketers became chummy. Such dealings could, and did, lead to collaboration on the political front. Wilhelm Tannenzapf, a Jew from Stanisławów, formerly southeastern Poland, who resettled in Brzeg (formerly Brieg), a town in Silesia, recalled:

> A black market soon developed, first for the supply of cigarettes to the Germans, then vodka for the Soviets, yeast for the Poles and various products for other people. I had to make a living, so I was sucked into this trade and got to know the sources of supply and places of demand. This included meeting others involved in illegal activities under the eyes of Polish government officials, who were themselves all corrupt, without exception.
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> This business involved a lot of travel to larger centres, primarily Kraków, on the insecure and disorganized transportation system. It was also essential to have good relations with captains of the

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[766] Symcha Hampel, "Życie pod knutem okupanta: 1 września 1939 r.–16 stycznia 1945 r.," Yad Vashem Archives, file O.33/950.

See, for example, Alejandro Parisi, *El ghetto de las ocho puertas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2009), 171, 183.

[767] Krakowski, *Le Ghetto dans la forêt,* 102–109. Tellingly, the author's known Jewish origins did not prejudice the outcome of his oral examinations before Catholic and nationalist ("Endek") professors, thus belying the traditional approach to Polish-Jewish postwar relations based on a stereotypical portrayal of Poles and Polish society. Ibid., 111–12.

[768] Betty Lauer (born Berta Weissburger), then Krystyna Broda, was able to exctricate herself from a denunciuation by informing Gelfand, the Jewish Security officer officer charged with the investigation, that she was Jewish. See Betty Lauer, *Hiding in Plain Sight: The Incredible True Story of a German-Jewish Teenager's Struggle to Survive in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Smith and Kraus, 2004), 422–26. Bronisława Szwajca's mother was able to secure the release of their wartime benefactor, a Pole who served in German police in Katowice, by going to the militia and invoking her Jewish origins and her husband's Communist activities. See Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses,* vol. 2, 292.

illegal trade and with Red Army officers and military truck drivers. It was dangerous, but the profit was good … I applied for a government license to buy and sell alcohol legally. … A bribe helped to get me the license. … The store was a success from the very beginning …

Among our steady customers were several Soviet majors and captains who were in charge of a large depot located one or two kilometres from the store. After some time, we got to know each other and they told me that the depot stored large quantities of valuable products that the Nazis had looted and subsequently lost to the Soviet army. They hinted they would like to sell some of those items for their personal benefit if it could be done safely and discreetly. They assured me that they trusted me and I promised to look into it. I put out cautious feelers among my black-market acquaintances and eventually found a safe, prospective buyer. I developed a scheme, negotiated with both parties separately, as requested by the officers, and firmed up an agreement on the product required by the buyer, the required quantity, the price, the timing, the procedure and my commission.

The scheme worked as follows: the black-market buyer came to Brzeg with a ten-ton truck and stopped in front of our store. He then entered the store, gave me the total amount of money for the purchase and stayed inside. I put the money away safely and got into the truck beside the driver and guided him to the depot where sentries let us in and directed us to a shack. There, my two friendly officers were waiting with a crew of soldiers who loaded the truck. Then we left, stopped in front of the store, where I got out of the truck, the buyer got in and the truck was on its way out of town. The load was made up of beautiful typing paper, which, I was told, was sold to the Polish government.

Shortly after the truck left, the two officers came to see me. Satisfied that I had the agreed-upon money … I was pleased with my considerable commission. We successfully repeated the whole procedure several more times until one day the loaded truck broke down at the city limits. The polish and Soviet police got involved and it cost the buyer and me a significant amount of money to get out of the mess unharmed. As a result, I decided not to continue with this activity. …

Two Jewish soldiers from the Polish army visited us. On one occasion, they told us that their boss, a colonel, would very much like to meet me. I went with them and was cordially received. The officer told me right away that he was a Russian ordered to masquerade as a Pole, a people he disliked. His job was to identify extreme nationalists and antisemites in the army so that they could be dealt with appropriately.[769]

Former Jewish partisans soon got together to form the Union of Jewish Partisans (*Związek Partyzantów Żydów*). Some 250 partisans attended the inaugural meeting in Lublin on November 19, 1944 and passed a resolution that can be regarded as that organization's ideological manifesto. It was unabashedly pro-Communist in its outlook and virulently opposed the independentist Polish underground, whom they accused of collaboration in the "Final Solution."

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[769] Tannenzapf, *Memories from the Abyss,* 60–63. A Jew by the name of Schenkelbach from Drohobycz, who was appointed the local police commander, provided Tannenzapf with a fraudulent official document stating that he had served meritoriously during the war of Poland's liberation, which gave him the right to any assistance he might require from any government agency. Ibid., 64, 70.

> Before worldwide opinion we must state that the Polish democracy, formed around the Home National Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*) constituted in the underground, helped the Jews and, in the most tragic moments of our nation, sheltered Jews from the Germans, armed them, and came to their relief.
>
> Before worldwide opinion we aver that the Polish reaction under the sign of the National Armed Forces and the Home Army, throughout the entire period of the German occupation, murdered Jews in hiding without any scruples, delivered them into the hands of the Gestapo, and annihilated Jewish partisans …
>
> We call on all Jews, citizens of Poland, to come together around the Home National Council and the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*) as the only guarantors of a democratic Poland.[770]

The organization's membership grew to a total of about 1,000, most of whom had served in various partisan formations (Soviet, Jewish, Polish-Communist, and mixed). It was headed by former partisans who had become officers in the Polish Army and assumed other important offices in the regime: the chairman, Gustaw Alef-Bolkowiak, formerly Alef Gutman, was part of the NKVD; Chil Grynszpan, the deputy chairman, headed the Security Office in Hrubieszów; and Mieczysław (Samuel) Gruber, the secretary, was the deputy commander of the militia for the province (*województwo*) of Lublin. There were at least 41 officers and 106 non-commissioned officers in the ranks of the Union of Jewish Partisans. The majority of its members, though openly pro-Communist in their sympathies, were not actually members of the Communist Party, although Communist Party members formed the nucleus of that organization. The Union of Jewish Partisans was accepted into the Central Committee of Jews in Poland with whom it shared an identical ideological platform, and was given two seats on that committee, one of which was on the presidium. Former Jewish partisans thus entered into the mainstream of the organized Jewish community in Soviet-dominated Poland.

The Central Committee of Jews in Poland (*Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce*—CKŻP), who spoke on behalf of virtually the entire Jewish community,[771] also emerged as a staunch ally of the Communist regime. In effect, this marked a convergence of the worst forms of Communism and Jewish nationalism. The Central Committee of Jews in Poland announced the support of the Jewish community for all three motions in the rigged referendum of June 30, 1946, which was viewed as unofficially determining whether the Polish citizenry supported or opposed the Communist regime.[772] (The vast majority of Poles were opposed.) The Central Committee also used every opportunity to lash out against the "Fascist"

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[770] August Grabski, *Żydowski ruch kombatancki w Polsce w latach 1944–1949* (Warsaw: Trio, 2002), 43–44, 191–92.

[771] On the ideological platform of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland see Grabski, *Żydowski ruch kombatancki w Polsce w latach 1944–1949,* 21–24. August Grabski, a historian with Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, points out that the Central Committee's platform was not imposed from above, but rather reflected the popular sentiments of the membership of these organizations. It also mirrored the position of the staunchly pro-Soviet Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*). The only Jewish parties, all of them tiny, without representation in the Central Committee of Jews in Poland were the Revisionists and the Orthodox. See Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours,* 172.

[772] Gafny, *Dividing Hearts,* 74.

underground, the Polish government in exile, who was accused of directing the killing of Jews, and the Catholic Church. A proclamation issued in February 1945 railed against "the criminals from the NSZ and AK, who, who served the Nazi bandits, who took an active part in murdering the helpless Jewish people, and who killed Jewish partisans. They have the blood of many Jews on their conscience. The Jewish people will never forget that those criminals were in close contact with the London government and acted in compliance with its orders." (Similar pronouncements were made at the annual ceremonies marking the Warsaw ghetto revolt.) The Central Committee called on the Communist authorities to use all their resources against those who attacked Jews (as well as "activists of democratic parties"), including carrying out more well-publicized death sentences and show trials. Their campaign also moved to the international arena where they found Jewish organizations eager to espouse their agenda and an obliging media ready to publicize it. In May 1945 the Central Committee appealed to the Federation of Polish Jews, who were holding their convention in New York, to denounce the "Polish reaction" since its "conscience was stained with the blood of hundreds of thousands [sic] of victims" and it was "carrying out its slogan of the complete extermination [sic] of the Jews in Poland."[773] The fact that these views coincided with, or were sometimes ever harsher than the official ones, does not mean that they were insincere or that they were not representative of the Jewish community at large. The sincerity of these pronouncements is beyond question. Moreover, they were not challenged by any Jewish group either inside or outside Poland. The entire Jewish press in Poland, representing diverse factions, was unanimous in its support of the new Communist regime.[774] The Bundists in the United States and Britain, who had established close relations with the Polish Socialist (PPS) exiles during the war, ultimately sided with Poland's new Soviet-imposed regime.[775] Their colleagues in Poland were all the more vociferous in opposing the Polish government in exile in London.[776] Representatives of the Polish-American Jews who travelled to Poland in 1945–1946, such as Joseph Tenenbaum, president of the American and World Federation of Polish Jews, and S. L. Shneiderman, an influential journalist, wrote enthusiastically about the new Soviet-imposed regime, and

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[773] Ewa Koźmińska-Frejlak, "Homeland or Roreign Land? The Image of Poland in Polish-Language Jewish Press in the Aftermath of the Holocaust (1945–1949/50)," Conference Paper, "Between Coexistence and Divorce: 25 Years of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry and Polish-Jewish Relations," Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 17–19, 2009.

[774] Cited in Krystyna Kersten, "Pogrom kielecki—znaki zapytania," in Grześkowiak-Łuczyk, *Polska, Polacy, mniejszości narodowe,* 165–67; August Grabski, "Kształtowanie się pierwotnego programu żydowskich komunistów w Polsce po Holokauście," in Berendt, Grabski, and Stankowski, *Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 r.,* 76–77; Grabski, Żydowski ruch komatancki w Polsce w latach 1944–1949, 21.

[775] Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours,* 166–70. After engaging in cold political calculations (euphemistically labelled as "pragmatism'), the Bund cut off its ties to the "reactionary" pluralistic Polish government in exile, condemned the "fascist" anti-Communist underground in Poland, and rallied wholeheartedly behind the "democratic" and "progressive" Soviet-installed regime.

[776] During the first national conference of the Bund in postwar Poland, on June 16–17, 1945, as described by Daniel Blatman, the following took place: "The conference … expressed full support for the Polish government in the social and economic reforms that it was planning, and voiced its opposition to the Polish government-in-exile in London, which, in the view of the committee members, represented the reactionary and anti-Semitic forces in Polish society that were spearheading the campaign of incitement against the Jews." See Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours,* 173.

disparagingly about the democratic opposition headed by Stanisław Mikołajczyk and the Polish government in exile.[777] The regime also gained the support of right-wing Jewish parties like the conservative and religious Poalei Aguda.[778] According to historian August Grabski, the Stalinist-imposed regime was widely supported by the Jewish community and the Jewish press championed the suppression of the anti-Communist insurrection.[779] A Jew from a non-Communist background makes it obvious that the pro-Soviet orientation of many Polish Jews went far beyond gratitude for the deliverance from the Nazis: "We all had great affinity for the USSR, as epitomized by the father-figure of comrade Stalin, whom we idolised."[780] According to a Jewish source, even Jews serving with the Polish forces in Britain "were generally sympathetic to the Soviet cause."[781] Thus, Jewish society placed itself squarely in a camp that the overwhelming majority of Poles rightly rejected as illegitimate and repressive.

The relationship of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland with the Communist regime developed symbiotically. For their loyalty and open support of the Communist regime, as manifested in the prominent

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[777] Robert L. Cohn, "Early Postwar Travelers on the Future of Jewish Life in Poland," *The Polish Review,* vol. 53, no. 3 (2008): 328–29.

[778] August Grabski, "Żydzi a polskie życie polityczne (1944–1949), in Tych and Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Następstwa zagłady Żydów,* 165; August Grabski, "Jews and Political Life in Poland from 1944 to 1949," in Tych and Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Jewish Presence in Absence*, 174.

[779] August Grabski, "Jews and Political Life in Poland from 1944 to 1949," in Tych and Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Jewish Presence in Absence*, 165–203, here at 175–80.

[780] Katz, *Gone to Pitchipoï,* 259. Katz then repeats the far-fetched exculpation that they were ignorant of Stalinist tyranny.

[781] Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society During the Second World War* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), 126, 140–1.

participation of its constituent members in Communist parades and rallies,[782] the Central Committee of Jews in Poland was given a large degree of autonomy and rewarded with substantial government funding for the community's political, social and even religious activities—privileges that were not accorded to any other minority.[783] Their separateness from the Poles was underscored by their committee's name: they were not Poles who happened to be Jewish, nor Polish Jews for that matter, but "Jews in Poland." Their distinct national status was by and large promoted by Jewish Communists, who are often said by Jewish apologists

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[782] Numerous Security Office reports mention that Jews participated in such events with enthusiasm and spontaneously chanted slogans in support of the Communist regime. On May Day 1945 in Walbrzych, there was a massive manifestation of Jewish support for Communism. The marchers included members of the Bund, the "Szmorzy" (Hashomer Hatzair) in uniform, and members of the Jewish Committee. They all had banners, in Polish and in Yiddish, saying "Long Live Stalin!" and "Long Live the Polish-Soviet Alliance!" No Poles could be heard chanting pro-Communist slogans. See Kamiński and Żaryn, *Reflections on the Kielce Pogrom,* 25. As historian Dina Porat notes, the Hashomer Hatzair, a Zionist Socialist pioneering movement, had a strong pro-Soviet ideology, "one that stemmed from its identification with the Soviet Union." Hashomer Hatzair supposedly backed away from this, and adopted a more conventional Zionist orientation, during the years of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939–1941), however, its love affair with Communism continued: "The crucial activity should be the formation of a Soviet-socialist regime on the ruins of the British Empire. Once such a regime was established in the Jewish communities in Europe as well as in Palestine, the Soviet Union would recognize Zionism and all problems would thus be settled." See Dina Porat, *Israeli Society, the Holocaust and Its Survivors* (London and Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), 228, 235, 343. The Soviet-imposed Communist puppet government over Poland, in which Jews played a key role, was effectively fulfilling Hashomer Hatzair's vision of "a Soviet-socialist regime … in the Jewish communities in Europe."

In fact, Communist and pro-Soviet factions were very strong in the ghettos throughout the war. Gideon Hausner, the chief prosecutor at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, wrote: "Until the German attack on Russia [in June 1941], Jewish pro-communist elements in the ghettos followed the official Soviet line; they kept propagandizing for complete cooperation with the German occupation forces." See Gideon Hausner, *Justice at Jerusalem* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 184. After surveying the Jewish underground press published in the Warsaw ghetto, historian Teresa Prekerowa noted that there were strong pro-Soviet sentiments among certain Zionist factions in Poland's capital as well. Leftist Zionists saw their future linked with the Communists, whom most Poles considered to be an enemy on par with the Nazis. Their loyalty was to the Soviet Union rather than Poland, which they often referred to as "former Poland" in their publications. The Hashomer Hatza'ir faction regarded the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, which partitioned Poland between those two invaders, to be a "wise and justified move." Mordechai Anielewicz, who became the commander of the ŻOB, was the editor of a periodical (Neged Hazerem) that openly embraced Communism over capitalism and the Soviet Union over Poland. See Teresa Prekerowa, "The Jewish Underground and the Polish Underground," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, volume 9, *Poles, Jews, Socialists: The Failure of an Ideal* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 151–53, translated from the Polish "Podziemie polskie a żydowskie," *Odra* (Wrocław), no. 4 (April 1991): 30–35; Teresa Prekerowa, "Prasa getta warszawskiego jako źródło do badań stosunków polsko-żydowskich," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów,* no. 3 (2009): 347–55. Needless to add, the Polish underground was well aware of these leanings and their contacts with the Communist underground, and was understandably less than enthusiastic when these same groups turned to them for arms and other forms of military assistance. As István Deák points out, "Why did the underground Polish Home Army offer so little help to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943? The reason, Todorov believes, is less the certainly existing anti-Semitism in the Polish ranks than the two communities' traditional isolation from each other and also the pro-Soviet position of many of the Jewish fighters. The Home Army was just as hostile to Stalin as it was to Hitler, Todorov writes; and the Hashomer organization, which was the nucleus of the Ghetto revolt in 1943, was unconditionally pro-Soviet." See István Deák, "Memories of Hell," *The New York Review of Books,* June 26, 1997, where Deák reviewed Tzvetan Todorov's *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996). As historian Timothy Snyder has observed, "Some Home Army commanders feared that arming Polish Jews would ease the spread of Soviet power. … the concern was not entirely unjustified. The Polish Communist party was part of the Jewish Combat Organization, which the Home Army had supplied with arms. The man who negotiated those arms transfers, Aryeh Wilner, was also negotiating with Communists. The Jewish representative within the Polish government department charged with rescuing Jews, Adolf Berman was also in touch with the Communists." See Timothy Snyder, "Jews, Poles & Nazis: The Terrible History," *The New York Review of Books,* June 24, 2010.

[783] Leszek Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2003), 41, 352–55, 370, 372–81, 390, 397–98.

to have shed all vestiges of their Jewishness.[784] Therefore, the widely held perception that the Jews supported the Communists in their fight against the "reactionary" anti-Communist underground was not baseless. Indeed, a historian associated with Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute, openly acknowledges the overwhelming support of the Jewish community for a regime that most Poles rightly viewed as illegitimate and oppressive.[785] While not to suggest that there was any universal ideologically based sympathy for Communism on the part of Poland's Jewry, the empirical evidence pointing to the Jewish community's collective support for the Soviet-imposed regime is compelling and undeniable. That same constituency, through its representatives, bombarded high-ranking Catholic clerics with demands—based on a very selective morality (which was unconcerned with repressive measures taken by the regime against its non-Jewish opponents)—to tow their line on Polish-Jewish relations. The Catholic Church, which had condemned anti-Jewish violence such as the Kielce pogrom resoundly without waiting for encouragement from anyone, was put in an impossible situation. Succumbing to political pressures, by giving the appearance of sharing a "common ground" with the regime, would compromise its standing with the populace. Moreover, as the Church's dealings with the Communist authorities made abundantly clear, the Communists could not be trusted. In fact, by 1948, when political opposition was largely suppressed, the Catholic Church became the Stalinist state's principle enemy and target.[786] Presenting themselves as moral arbiters of the state of Polish society, American historians Jan Gross and Joanna Michlic allege "collusion" (sometimes referred to as a "social contract") between the Poles, who superficially despised the Soviet invaders, and the Stalinist regime, with whom they were prepared to collaborate, in "getting rid of

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[784] Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960,* 41–42.

[785] August Grabski, "Żydzi a polskie życie polityczne (1944–1949), in Tych and Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Następstwa zagłady Żydów,* 157, 174; August Grabski, "Jews and Political Life in Poland from 1944 to 1949," in Tych and Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Jewish Presence in Absence,* 165–203. August Grabski, an avowed Trotskyite, views the Soviet-imposed Communist regime as an entirely legitimate expression of Polish national and political life and is a full-blown apologist for its collaborators and supporters. According to Grabski, the new regime was superior, in most respects, to the form of government favoured by the "anti-Semitic" independentists, who supported Poland's legitimate government in exile. Grabski has nothing to say about the Communist regime's policies towards the non-Communist intelligentsia. Julia Brystygier (née Prajs or Preiss), who joined the Fifth Department of the Ministry of Public Security in 1945, and between 1950 and 1954 was its director, stated: "In fact, the Polish intelligentsia as such is against the Communist system and basically, it is impossible to re-educate it. All that remains is to liquidate it. However, since we must not repeat the mistake of the Russians after the 1917 Revolution, when all intelligentsia members were exterminated, and the country did not develop correctly afterwards, we have to create a system of terror and pressure that the members of the intelligentsia would not dare to be politically active." See Czesław Leopold [Arkadiusz Rybicki] and Krzysztof Lechicki [Antoni Wrega], *Więźniowie polityczni w Polsce 1945–1956* (Gdańsk: Młoda Polska, 1981), 20.

[786] In 1947, Julia Brystygier issued instructions detailing measures, including intelligence operations, which were to be implemented against the Catholic Church and its clergy. Under her tenure as director of the Fifth Department of the Ministry of Public Security, around 900 Catholic priests and several bishops were arrested, and numerous Church organizations were destroyed. See Leszek Żebrowski, "Brystygierowa Julia," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2000), vol. 3, 191–94. No such measures were taken against Jews.

the Jews."[787] This position comes uncomfortably close to the one espoused by Moshe Shonfeld, an anti-Zionist Orthodox rabbi, who wrote:

> The Jews in Poland had an expression: if a Pole meets me on the wayside and doesn't kill me, it is only from laziness. … The Poles … were all fanatical Catholics, and all had unsatiable [sic] appetites for Jewish blood. Those cruel pythons, the Polish clergy, instigated—*after* the fall of the Nazis—pogroms of those Jews who'd miraculously survived.[788]

Jews were certainly not powerless in the postwar period, as many historians maintain, nor were they ignore by the Communist regime. They had nothing to fear from the vast majority of Poles. According to a confidential report to the United States Central Intelligence Agency, dated September 16, 1947:

> Members of the governing Jewish elite in Poland belong to one of three political parties: PPR [Polish Workers' Party], PPS [Polish Socialist Party], or SD [Democratic Party]. They dominate the PPR and its Politbiuro [sic] from which all political decisions emanate. …
>
> Although divided in their party allegiance, the Jews are politically united in their attitude toward Communism and the USSR. Led by their intelligentsia, the majority of commercial and proletarian Jews adhere to the Communist principle. They will, according to the WKB(b) (All Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks), serve as a base for future political action.
>
> The Soviet Union believes that Jews are potentially the most powerful weapon against capitalistic regimen. …
>
> The Zionist movement in Poland is carrying out the USSR concept through the Bund. Zionists and Communists visualize a Jewish state created in Palestine to conduct an inexorable fight against the British and the Arabs. …
>
> Jews have become quite active in the economic life of Poland. Donations from the Government and from Jewish communist organizations which are supported by foreign money, mainly American, have enabled the Jews to reestablish themselves economically. …
>
> The Polish film industry is almost completely controlled by the Jews. …[789]

A monument was unveiled to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, but not the 1944 Warsaw Uprsing, and a commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising took place in 1948. The fact of Jewish privileges can be generalized. As historian Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov writes,

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[787] Jan Gross first advanced these unproven claims—a reversal of the *żydokomuna* ("Jewish-communist" conspiracy) theory—in an essay titled "After Auschwitz: The Reality and Meaning of Postwar Antisemitism in Poland," in Jonathan Frankel and Dan Diner, eds., D*ark Times, Dire Decisions: Jews and Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press for the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 2004), 203, 222, and built on it in his book Fear. Both Gross and Michlic are key representatives of a school of historians who advocate the worst-possible-case scenario and do not take kindly to dissent. People who disagree with them are banned from their conferences, or are labelled as "ethno-nationalists or, worse still, "anti-Semites."

[788] Shonfeld, *The Holocaust Victims Accuse,* 13, 16.

[789] "Poland: Minorities in Poland," September 16, 1947, approved for release on March 31, 2004 (Reference Center Library, CIA-RDP80-00809A000500830093-5).

> The attitude of the authorities towards TSKŻ [Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland] was nothing if not favorable. It is worth stressing that in spite of the political conditions elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc (the trials of Communists of Jewish origin, the liquidation of Yiddish culture in the USSR), Jewish Communists in Poland had practically carte blanche in their activities within their own circles; and as mentioned above, until 1956 the Jewish community was the only ethnic minority in the Polish People's Republic to possess cultural institutions of its own such as theaters and a publishing house.[790]

As both Marek Jan Chodakiewicz and August Grabski have pointed out, only in rare cases did anti-Jewish sentiments translate into violence directed against Jews.[791] Moreover, in their pursuit of alleged German collaborators, the state authoritites focused their energies on Poles—not Jews, whom they treated with leniency. (As noted earlier, crimes committed by Soviet collaborators were ignored and their perpetrators were rewarded with plum positions.) In this regard, the Communist authorities received vigorous assistance from Jewish officials, not to mention aggrieved or vengeful Jewish individuals. A substantial number of these proceedings were simply show trials, designed by the Communist authorities to purge political opponents. The Central Jewish Historical Commission (*Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna*—CŻKH), created under the aegis of the Polish government, actively assisted the state's judicial authorities and the Polish Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes (*Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce*), supervised by the Ministry of Justice, in investigating and prosecuting suspected war criminals. The legal department of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland worked closely with Polish judicial authorities in investigating and prosecuting not only Germans but also Polish collaborators accused of persecuting and killing Jews. The August 1944 decree allowed prosecutors to issue an indictment a mere 48 hours before trial, thus severely limiting a defendant's ability to defend himself, and authorized the special penal courts to base their convictions entirely on eyewitness testimony. According to historian Alina Cała, the Committee's lawyers occasionally intimidated witnesses or manipulated an investigation in their zeal to incriminate Polish defendants. The Central Committee of Jews in Poland constituted an armed militia (guards), known as the Central Special Commission (*Centralna Komisja Specjalna*), who was charged with the task of defending Jews and gathering information about potential threats to the Jewish community.[792] Local Jewish committees compiled extensive lists of Poles who allegedly collaborated with the Germans in persecuting Jews. Not only prosecutors but also the State

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[790] Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, *A Citizen of Yiddishland: Dovid Sfard and the Jewish Communist Milieu in Poland* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020), 214.

[791] Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust*; August Grabski, "Żydzi a polskie życie polityczne (1944–1949), in Tych and Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Następstwa zagłady Żydów,* 178; August Grabski, "Jews and Political Life in Poland from 1944 to 1949," in Tych and Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Jewish Presence in Absence,* 190.

[792] Boćkowski, Rogalewska, and Sadowska, *Kres świata białostockich Żydów,* 71.

Security Office, the repressive state security apparatus, would have been interested in many of these cases. (Many of those charged were not guilty of crimes and, in some cases, they were acquitted.[793])

Allegations of collaboration by Jews were initiated by complaints from either Jewish individuals, especially former ghetto inhabitants and camp inmates, or Jewish institutions, most often the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, whereas investigations of alleged Polish collaborators could be, and often were, initiated by a complaint from an aggrieved Jew.[794] The citizens' tribunal created by the Central Committee of Jews in Poland notified Polish judicial authorities of a dozen or so defendants investigated and indicted by the Committee's lawyers but whose offences the lawyers found penal in character and, thus, beyond the tribunal's limited administrative jurisdiction. Several of these suspects eventually stood trial in Polish state courts. In comparison with highly politicized trials of alleged and real anti-communists, pressure from above does not seem to have affected judge's decisions in cases involving Jews. The outcome of one of these trials—that of Szymon Tob, a Jewish ghetto policeman—is particularly noteworthy as it shows how various levels of extrajudicial influence were at play in the broader process:

> In Jan. 1946 he [Szymon Tob] stood trial in the district court for collaborating with the Germans in the ghetto of Międzyrzec Podlaski in the Siedlce district. According to eyewitnesses, he denounced his fellow Jews to the Gestapo and participated in the liquidation of the ghetto, leading [German] gendarmes to Jewish hideouts. The majority of Siedlce's Jews perished in death camps. He vehemently denied all the accusations and accused the witnesses of scheming to eliminate him from competition in local trade. Forty-two Jews signed a petition on Tob's behalf, stating that he was 'decisively against the Germans' and that he enjoyed the trust of his countrymen. The police in Międzyrzec Podlaski, moreover, characterized him as a loyal citizen. Before the court reached its verdict, in Feb. 1946 unknown assailants attacked the police station where Tob was detained and kidnapped him along with three policemen. The trial resumed in July 1946 and Tob was tried in absentia. No verdict was reached at the time, but in Jan. 1949 the same court, disregarding the testimonies of defence witnesses, convicted Tob and sentenced him to death based exclusively on the statements proffered by Tob's [Jewish] accusers. … The CKŻP's lawyers were also interested in

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[793] For some examples of Poles who were acquitted of false charges (Szulborska, Jan Wrotnowski), see Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów,* 89.

[794] Gabriel N. Finder and Alexander V. Prusin, "Jewish Collaborators on Trial in Poland, 1944–1956," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 20 (2008): 122–48, here at 130–32, 134, 146–47. At least 44 persons who stood trial in Polish state courts on charges of collaboration in this period were Jews. They were charged with assisting the Germans in the murder and mistreatment of their fellow Jews in ghettos and camps. Thirty of the Jewish defendants were convicted, with ten sentenced to death (two death sentences were commuted); ten were acquitted. Interestingly, Poles were often called as witnesses by the defence. Unlike in trials of ethnic Poles, the Polish courts were often more lenient in accepting defences put forward by Jewish defendants. Ibid., 128, 135, 140, 148. According to the authors' information, Polish courts sentenced about 20,000 individuals for war crimes between 1944 and 1948. (The number of cases under investigation may have reached 80,000.) The bulk of the trials took place between 1944 and 1950, when special penal courts and then the district courts convicted and sentenced 16,428 defendants. German nationals constituted about one-third of this number, while the rest were either Polish citizens or residents tried for collaboration with the Germans. Close to 1,800 of these defendants were charged with crimes committed in concentration, labour, and death camps as well as in Jewish ghettos. The majority of the convicted were German—887 individuals—followed by 489 *Volksdeutsche* (of whom 198 came from Poland), 282 Poles, 59 Ukrainians, and 30 representatives of other ethnic groups. Ibid., 128.

> Tob, but they had to move the citizens' tribunal to suspend his case when they discovered that he had apparently fled to the United States.[795]

Following the Kielce pogrom a project concerning a decree to "combat anti-Semitism" was considered but shelved by the Presidium of National Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*), after its chief legal expert, Izaak Klajnerman, argued that all the requisite laws were already on the books, and that "it seems unnecessary to issue a new decree specifically devoted to combating anti-Semitism."[796]

Many Jews who had fought with the Soviet and Polish Communist underground entered the security forces and militia in Stalinist Poland. Commanders and deputies were drawn from dependable cadres such as prewar Communists and Soviet and Polish Communist partisan formations, especially the People's Army, in all of which Jews had been overrepresented.[797] In January 1945, Captain Józef Jurkowski (formerly Jungman) headed an initiative group sent to Katowice whose task was to create the structures of the Security Office in Upper Silesia. The seat of the Public Security Office was a building previously occupied by the Gestapo. Describing the beginnings of the secret police in this area, Jurkowski recalled:

> I came to Katowice in January 1945 to organize the Voivodship Security Office. I had 60 people with me taken from Rzeszów. I needed people. Zagłębie (the mining region) provided the core for me, but it was not enough. I knew there was a large People's Army guerrilla in the Kielce area, and because Połowniak was with me, I sent him to his village and he brought me about 200 barely literate but most faithful People's Army fighters.[798]

Overnight, members of the Communist anti-Nazi resistance were transformed into vicious Stalinist henchmen. Relatively few of them shunned the opportunity for "advancement," even though the consequences for refusing to do so were virtually none. As Shiye Goldberg recalls,

> Incidentally, after our liberation from the Germans, the commander of the partisans gathered his combatants and said:
>
> "I suggest to each of you to select a military rank commensurate with his education."
>
> The educated among us became officers and the others were given lower ranks. When it was my turn, I said to the commander:
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> "I was a meat handler and I shall remain one. I won't put on a uniform for a million zlotys [złotys]. …"

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[795] Gabriel N. Finder and Alexander V. Prusin, "Jewish Collaborators on Trial in Poland, 1944–1956," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 20 (2008): 122–48, here at 139, n.56.

[796] Gross, *Fear,* 154–55.

[797] Wnuk, *Lubelski Okręg AK DSZ i WiN, 1944–1947,* 185.

[798] Maciej Bartków, "Pierwszy Ubek Bytomia," Tajemniczy Bytom, Internet: <http://www.tajemniczybytom.pl/2016/11/pierwszy-ubek-bytomia.html>.

> My comrades joined the police force …[799]

Goldberg also cautioned his future wife about accepting a tempting offer from the Stalinists.

> She finally said that she would like to have my advice: She could improve her [material] situation by accepting an offer to work in the Polish Intelligence? I stared at her.
>
> "What are you saying, girl?" I cried. "Do you know what the Polish Intelligence is? First, you'll have to become an informant. … I tell you, don't you dare go to Polish Intelligence. That's the same as the NKVD in Russia, the worst in the world.[800]

John Sack attempted to get a handle on the thorny issue of Jewish collaboration with Poland's Communist regime in his penetrating exposé, *An Eye for an Eye,*[801] for which he interviewed scores of Jews associated with the Stalinist Security Office. The Jewish-American reporter writes:

> In Kattowitz [Katowice], as in Kielce, Breslau [Wrocław], Stettin [Szczecin], and some other cities, the chief of police was a Jew. Many former [Jewish] partisans who, in August, 1944, had been celebrating in Lublin when the police chief of Poland [Franciszek Jóźwiak], a Catholic, went to their rowdy quarters on Ogrodowa Street. … he made a Jew the police chief of Lublin and Jews all the precinct chiefs there. The next year, 1945, these people became the chiefs in some of Poland and Poland-administered Germany.[802]
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> Barek Eisenstein [who went by the name Bolesław Jurkowski][803] estimated that 90 percent of the Jews in the [State Security] Office in Kattowitz [Katowice] changed their names to Polish ones. …

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[799] Goldberg, *The Undefeated,* 244–45.

[800] Goldberg, *The Undefeated,* 224.

[801] John Sack, *An Eye for an Eye* (New York: Basic Books/HarperCollins, 1993). The fourth edition, published by the author in 2000, is available online at: <http://vho.org/aaargh/fran/livres7/SACKeye.pdf>.

[802] Sack, *An Eye for an Eye,* 138.

[803] At the time, Barek Eisenstein from Miechów used the Polish-sounding name, Bolesław Jurkowski. After his stint as a second lieutenant with the Security Office in Katowice, Eisenstein left for a DP camp in Germany where he engaged "voraciously in black-marketing." He immigrated to Canada in 1948 where he was known as Ben Eisenstein. There is no question that he considered himself a Jew at all times. His imprisonment in Nazi camps appears to have propelled him to "seek out collaborators and Nazis." See Bernice Eisenstein, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006), 39, 111. *M.P.*

Pinek [Paweł] Mąka,[804] the Secretary of State Security for Silesia in 1945, estimated that 70 or 75 percent of the officers in Silesia were Jews. Barek Eisenstein estimated that 75 or more percent were, Stanisław Gazda that "most" were, Adam "Krawecki" [Beniamin Kanarek?, chief interrogator at the prison in Gliwice] that 70 to 80 percent were, and Moshe Mąka that 70 or 75 percent "maybe" were. Józef Musiał, the Vice Minister of Justice for Poland in 1990, said, "I don't like to talk about it," but most officers in the Office in all of Poland were Jews. … Pinek [Mąka] estimated that two or three hundred officers worked for the Office in Silesia, and three-fourths of that would be 150 to 225.

Stanisław Gazda, who was secretary to Chaim Studniberg [Henryk Studencki], the Director of Prisons and Camps for Silesia, said there were twenty to thirty prisons in Silesia … Among the Jewish [prison] commandants in Silesia were Major [Lieutenant Colonel Mateusz] Frydman at Beuthen [Bytom], Jacobowitz [Leon Jukubowicz?] at an unidentified camp, Shmuel Kleinhaut at Myslowitz [Mysłowice], Efraim Lewin at Neisse [Nysa], Shlomo [Solomon] Morel at Schwientochlowitz [Świętochłowice], Oppeln [Opole] and Kattowitz, and Lola Potok Ackerfeld at Gleiwitz [Gliwice]. Czeslaw Geborski [Czesław Gęborski], the commandant at Lamsdorf [Łambinowice], was probably a Catholic, but I was told of no other gentile commandants.[805]

The police chief in Kattowitz was Pinek Pakanowski, and the police chief in Breslau [Wrocław] was Shmuel "Gross," who used the Polish name Mieczysław "Gross." [This was actually Samuel or

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[804] According to Polish records, Paweł Mąka was the deputy director of the First Department of the Voivodship Public Security (*zastępca kierownika Wydziału I Wojewódzkiego Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*) in Katowice from February 15, 1945, until his dismissal on October 24, 1945 for disciplinary reasons. He left Poland in December 1945. See Marek Łuszczyna, *Mała zbrodnia:Polskie obozy koncentracyjne* (Kraków: Znak, 2017). Pinek or Paweł Mąka, who later went by the name of Paul Monka, also had no difficulty immigrating to the United States with his family in 1949 despite his service with the Security Office. According to his testimony, Monka had joined the Communist *Armia Ludowa* (People's Army) in the Lublin region. After the area was "liberated," he was appointed to "highly responsible positions" by the Soviets. Monka met a Soviet general named Zavatsky and was given a position in the Security Office. He returned to his home town of Będzin and found his family in Dąbrowa Górnicza, where "they were all doing well." Monka was appointed security chief of Silesia: "He was responsible for bringing conspirators to trial, which he did effectively in accordance with strict Russian orders. … He was then instrumental in General Zavatsky's appointment as governor of Silesia." (General Aleksandr Zavatskii, an ethnic Russian from the Soviet Union, used a Polonized version of his name, Aleksander Zawadzki, as *wojewoda* of Silesia. He became the plenipotentiary of the temporary government of Opole Silesia in March 1945.) After sustaining an injury in a collision with a truck, Monka decided that he wished to devote more time to his family. He travelled throughout Europe "on special assignments and, although only twenty-four years old, gave serious thought to entering the Polish foreign service." According to the testimony provided to Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center in 1989, he was offered a consul-generalship. Clearly, Monka did not have the educational qualifications or credentials for that position so other factors came into play in his advancement. There is no indication that Monka had at any time stopped considering himself to be a Jew, first and foremost. He had wanted to go to Palestine already in 1946, but could not get there. See Joseph J. Preil, ed., *Holocaust Testimonies: European Survivors and American Liberators in New Jersey* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 90–91. Some episodes of Paul Monka's life, as penned by John Sack, do not stand up to scrutiny. Sack claims that Monka attended the Warsaw Polytechnic, where he confronted an anti-Semitic professor over a (fictitious) geometry textbook allegedly written by Monka's uncle, and that afterwards Polish students beat him with baseball bats until he passed out. See Sack, *An Eye for an Eye,* Fourth edition, 15. In an oral history interview conducted in 1989 for the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center, Monka states that he studied in Piotrków Trybunalski. See Paul M. [Monka] Holocaust Testimony (HVT–1544), Fortunoff Video Archive Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.

[805] Sack, *An Eye for an Eye,* 183. According to Natalie Sterngast, her brother, Alex Flaum (Fleischer), a prisoner of Auschwitz, vowed revenge against the Germans. After the war, he became the director of a camp that held German prisoners. See the testimony of Natalie Sterngast, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 1043.

> Mieczysław Gruber, a Jewish partisan leader from the Lublin region mentioned earlier—*M.P.*] Some other Jewish police chiefs in Poland and Poland-administered Germany were Yechiel Grynspan [Chil Grynszpan] in Hrubieszów, Ayzer Mąka in Bielsko-Biała, and an unidentified man in Żabkowice. The partisans in Lublin—two hundred men, all Jews—were in the "Chiel Group" of the Holod [Hołod] Battalion: the group commander was Captain Yechiel "Chiel" Grynspan … The police chief of Poland was Juzwak [Franciszek Jóźwiak], known as General Witold,[806] who spoke in Lublin to Captain Grynspan and Grynspan's executive officer, Captain Shmuel "Gross." "Gross" became the police chief of Lublin (and was transferred to Breslau in May, 1945) and one of his eight precinct chiefs was Sever Rubinstein. According to "Gross," eighty percent of the police officers in Lublin and fifty percent of the policemen in Lublin were Jews. Some more Jewish partisans who got assignments in 1944 and 1945 were Jacob Alfiszer as a policeman in Kattowitz, Chanina and Shimon Barbanel as policemen somewhere in Poland, Efraim [Frank] Blaichman as an Intelligence officer in Lubartów and Kielce, Yurik Chołomski as an officer in Kattowitz, Stefan Finkel as chief of Imprisonment in Cracow, Yechiel Grynspan as the police chief in Hrubieszów, Efraim Lewin as an Imprisonment officer in Lublin and Kattowitz and as the prison commandant in Neisse, Shlomo Morel as an Imprisonment officer in Lublin [where he worked at the infamous prison at the Lublin Castle—*M.P.*] and Kattowitz and as the camp commandant in Schwientochlowitz, Oppeln, Kattowitz and Jaworzno, David Rubinstein as a policeman in Hrubieszów, and Adam Winder as a policeman in Hrubieszów [actually, Abraham Wunderbojm or Wunderboim, who, as mentioned earlier, states he was a policeman in Lublin and Radom—*M.P.*]. In Breslau, the chief of the Office's section for Germans was Kleks, the chief of the Polish army's Corps of Internal Security was Colonel Rubinstein, from Lodz [Łódź], and the mayor was [Bolesław] Drobner, from Cracow, who in mid–1945 became the Minister of Labor for Poland. Some other Jews in Breslau were Nachum "Salowicz," who was known as Tadeusz Zalewski [also given as Tadeusz Zaleski, born Naftali Saleschutz, now living in the United States as Norman Salsitz—*M.P.*] and who was the chief of the Office's section for Germans for Breslau county, and Schumacher, who was the chief of Imprisonment for all of Lower Silesia.[807]

As Sack compellingly documents again and again, the primary business of these people was revenge. Apologists like Israel Bartal and Scott Ury, however, insist that, unlike Poles (about whom demeaning generalizations abound in Holocaust literature), Jews cannot be endowed with bad qualities. They attempt to dismiss all of this evidence as "the antisemitic trope of the vengeful Jew in the security forces."[808] Most of these vengeful Jews, especially those in the lower ranks, gave up their positions in the next few years

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[806] Franciszek Jóźwiak was the commander in chief of the People's Militia between 1944 and 1949, and as of 1945 he was also Vice-Minister of Public Security. From 1942 to 1956, he was married to Helen Wolińska (later Brus), who headed the department that oversaw prosecutions of persons investigated by the military. Her exploits are described later.

[807] Sack, *An Eye for an Eye,* 215.

[808] Israel Bartal and Scott Ury, "Between Jews and their Neighbours: Isolation, Confrontation, and Influence in Eastern Europe," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 24 (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012), 28.

and left for the West. After settling in places like the United States, Canada, and Australia, they integrated fully with the local Jewish communities and portrayed themselves as victims of Soviet oppression and "Polish anti-Semitism."[809] As Sack's book shows, there is no evidence that any of these former State Security officers ever regretted their misdeeds.[810]

The case of Frank (Franek) Blaichman, who describes his career with the security police, is rather typical. He even neglects to mention that from April to July 1945, as Franciszek Blajchman, he served as the acting director of the Department of Prisons and Camps of the Voivodship State Security Office in Kielce. Tellingly, the Communist security police often took over premises formerly occupied by the Nazis, whose *modus operandi* they shared in carrying out investigations. Like the Communist authorities, Blaichman conflates the anti-Communist underground with "collaborators" and "Nazi sympathizers." He recalled that

> the AL [*Armia Ludowa* or People's Army] notified us that we—the Jewish partisans and the Polish partisans—were now officially part of the Polish government. Grynszpan-Gruber's group was assigned to Lublin; [Marion] Dworecki and I were transferred to Lubartow [Lubartów] and assigned to the Polish Security Police. …
>
> Our police commander arranged for us to share a pleasant two-bedroom apartment in a two-storey building in the center of Lubartow. … Our commander also provided us with an office in a building just across the street, and two secretaries. …
>
> For the next six month—from July 1944 until January 1945—Dworecki and I were assigned to a unit of the Polish Security Police responsible for hunting down and investigating Nazi collaborators: Poles, Ukrainians, and Volksdeutsche … Our assignment was not to apprehend collaborators—only to determine their whereabouts, look for witnesses, and report what we had gathered to headquarters. Our superiors the sent out agents who made the arrests. … Each Friday, we prepared reports and sent them to the head of our department. …

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[809] Sack, *An Eye for an Eye,* 150. Among those who settled in Canada were Barek or Ben Eisenstein, a second lieutenant with the Security Office in Katowice, and Moryc (Morris or Mieczysław) Kwaśniewski, a captain in the Security Office in Kielce. Canada also welcomed Elkana Grad, a Communist and first Soviet mayor of Brzeżany in the fall of 1939, who served as a Security officer in Poland after the war. See Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews and Ukrainians, 1919–1945* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 59.

[810] Ardent champions of Jan Gross's questionable methodology (which is far too often lacking in proof), rather than citing even one example of a repentant Security officer, attempt to discredit this charge by claiming, bizarrely, that it is not provable. In her dilettante overview, Monika Rice writes: "Such a per se false statement (a necessary conclusion reached about contingent material) could only be verifiable *case by case*, but that would be impracticable, *ergo* [the] argument is unverifiable." See Monika Rice, "Resisting a Phantom Book: A Critical Assessment of the Initial Polish Discussion of Jan Gross's *Fear*," in *Polin,* vol. 22 (2010); 447 n.59. It is apparent, that apart from this pearl of wisdom, Rice has no evidence that any such officers regretted their misdeeds, and therefore no evidence with which to refute the charge. In fact, the charge is based on a thorough study of the available historical sources. These champions do not apply these same standards, however, to the sweeping charges that pepper Gross's writings (e.g., in *Neighbors*, Gross claims that the Jews did not collaborate with the Soviets, whereas the Poles collaborated with the Germans). While endorsing crude generalizations about the conduct of Poles, Rice takes umbrage at the suggestion that there is some significance in the fact that thousands of Jews collaborated with the postwar Stalinist regime. Ideologically charged writings of this kind, where the author-analyst is clearly a proponent of one view and goes out of her way to discredit other views with scant mention of their *actual* content, are of little value in understanding the true nature of the debate, let alone grasping the underpinning events under discussion and their historical context.

In January 1945, I was transferred to Kielce (Dworecki was assigned elsewhere), along with many others, and on the way there I met Sever Rubinstein. We were among the two hundred officers and one hundred security men who rode into Kielce on army trucks. … We got busy taking over and cleaning three large office buildngs thad been abandoned by the Germans.

… It was clear to us that these two upper-class women had survived the war without enduring much hardship, which meant that they must have been Nazi and AK sympathizers. …

My job in Kielce was the same as it had been in Lubartow: to find and report the whereabouts of collaborators. This was new territory, and I had to go from village to village to question farmers and other people I had never met before. What I learned very quickly was that the whole region was infested with fascists and die-hard anti-Semites.

About a month later, I was assigned to Pinczow [Pińczów], where I became the assistant to the director of the Security Police. We took over a villa that had been occupied by the Germans. Two weeks later, the head of the Polish Communist Party called me into his office to ask a favor. Without knowing I was Jewish, he told me that he had a Jewish youth who had survived in hiding. The boy's name was Szymek and he was about twenty years old. … he told me how a friendly farmer had taken him in and used him to help out with farm chores. Szymek was the only member of his family to survive. He came to work at my office. …

Szymek was originally from a village near Pinczow, and he gave me a list of names of the Jew killers in the area. We sent investigators to the villages. Using Szymek's list, they interviewed the people he had named … The collaborators were arrested, brought to Kielce, put on trial, and sentenced to prison. …

In March 1945, I was transferred from Pinczow back to Kielce. I had asked my friend Szymek to accompany me, but he said that he didn't want to. Now that he was armed, he thought he was invincible. Several weeks later, a fascist group rampaged through Pinczow, released prisoners from the local jails, and killed several policemen. One of them was Szymek.

Sever Rubinstein, who had been assigned to the Kielce police department—not the Security Police—was at this time living by himself in an apartment allotted to him by the police department. He would often have his clothes cleaned at a laundry that a Polish woman operated out of her home. One day, wearing civilian clothes, he came to pick up his laundry and found two men he had never seen before waiting for him in her apartment. They started questioning him: "Who are you? Where are you from?" and so on. Thinking that they were from the AK and fearing for his life, Sever drew his revolver. In the ensuing struggle, he hit one of the men with the butt of his gun. The two men grabbed him, arrested him, and took him for questioning to the headquarters of the Security Police, where he was savagely beaten.

Though I was working in the building, I didn't see Sever being brought in and learned only later that an AK man had been arrested. I went to check him out and found that he was not AK but a comrade of mine from the partisans and a policeman besides, and they released him. He was in pretty bad shape. …

In June, the head of the Security Police in the state of Kielce summoned me to his office. My mission was an urgent one, he said. I was given two letters to deliver: one to the head of the Security Police in Skarzysk [Skarżysko-Kamienna], a town some one hundred kilometers away [actually about 40 km north of Kielce], the other to the head of the Skarzysk police. The letters instructed them to give me all the assistance I might need to carry out my assignment and informed them that I was in charge of the operation. A group of Polish officers occupying an entire train car—

> whose number I was given—would be arriving in Skarzysk from Katowice. I was to arrest them all, and I should enlist all the manpower available from the two departments to assist me in this arrest. When the mission was completed, I was to call Kielce immediately.
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> There was no time to lose. I was ordered to leave, by car, immediately. I was not told the reason for the arrest, and, upon arriving at the station, I refrained from making the arrests myself, instructing the other officers to make them. As an officer myself, I felt uncomfortable being in charge of an operation that called for the arrest of other officers. There were maybe altogether eight or ten of them, ranging in rank from major to sergeant, and including two or three women in uniform. The arrests went off smoothly, and I made the call to Kielce, informing them that the mission had been accomplished. I was told to remain and await the arrival of the Kielce police. … The group was loaded onto a Russian truck and taken away to Kielce.
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> Later, I learned that the Security Police had received information that the officers were part of the fascist opposition. They had secured forged passes that allowed them to travel to Lublin for vacation, when, in fact, their intention was to organize an insurgency against the government. I suspected that I had been entrusted with this mission because my superiors knew that, as a Jew, I would be unlikely to have any allegiance to or connections with any fascist group. I could be trusted.[811]

Despite leading a life of privilege, Blaichman requested a discharge from the Security Police on medical grounds:

> When I returned to Kielce, I presented the sealed envelope I had picked up in Warsaw and was discharged. For reasons that were never explained to me, I would be allowed to continue to wear my uniform and carry my pistol. The colleagues in my department, 10 to 15 percent of them Jews, thought I was crazy. How could I leave a job like this, with a chauffeured car, a motorcycle, and an apartment, and with no clue as to how I was going to make a living? But my mind was made up. Since I was not asked to return my uniform or pistol, I continued to wear them; they might help open doors that would otherwise be closed. Besides, I was proud of the rank and status that I had achieved.
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> After my discharge, I went to Kraków with Sever Rubinstein. We met up with [former partisans] [Michael] Loterstein, [Sam] Finkel, and [Shlomo] Eisenberg. I told them about my plans and they said they had the same idea. Sever and I went on to Breslau [Wrocław] to visit Gruber. … There was a police department, and Sam Gruber was the head of it …

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[811] Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting,* 157, 159–60, 162–65, 167–68, 171–72. Blaichman (Bleichman) does not mention his stint in the Stalinist security forces, which he likely concealed when he applied to immigrate to the United States six years after the war, in an interview recorded for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., on February 10, 1992.

> We were reunited with Sam and his wife, Krisha, at their home. Sam was a father by this time—a family man. We had a *l'chaim*, reminisced, and told him of our plans to leave Poland. He, too, had been thinking of leaving.[812]

Blaichman did not view himself as being estranged from the Jewish community. Before leaving Poland, he married a Jewish girl in traditional wedding ceremony:

> We had decided to do everything as traditionally as possible. … The chuppah, the marriage canopy, was made out of a *tallis*, a prayer shawl, that belonged to Berek. A Jewish survivor who claimed to be a rabbi was asked to perform the ceremony. … At the end of the ceremony, in Jewish tradition, I stopped on the wineglass and we were married. Klezmer musicians played and the vodka flowed like water.[813]

It was their desire was "to raise our children with Torah, in a traditional Jewish home as part of a community of Jews."[814] Blaichman then moved to Szczecin where he came across Aron Gotz, another of Sam Gruber's partisans, who was working in the police department. He paid a Soviet driver to smuggle him and his wife into Germany. Once in Germany they were directed by the Joint to a DP (displaced persons) camp in the American zone. Blaichman was not afraid to return to Poland to try to convince a cousin to leave, taking a supply of leather to trade.[815] On his visit to Warsaw in February 2019, pushing the Jewish

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[812] Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting,* 176–77. Blaichman met up again with Sam Gruber in a DP camp in Germany and heard the following story: "He had learned that the AK planned to assassinate him because he was a Jew who held an important position, but an informant inside the AK had tipped him off, saying that as a Jew himself, he couldn't allow him to be killed. He also warned Gruber that, if he wanted to live, he should leave Poland at once." Ibid., 183.

[813] Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting,* 178–79.

[814] Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting,* 173.

[815] Blaichman, *Rather Die Fighting,* 180–85. In Germany, Blaichman immersed himself in the black market on a grand scale:

> I was soon involved in the black market, like everyone else who wanted to earn a living. American Jewish soldiers and relief workers used to come to the camps to hear the stories of the survivors, and they brought us all sorts of goods you couldn't find in German stores—chocolate, cigarettes, silk and nylon stockings, margarine, coffee, whiskey. Some of us made deals with them to bring larger quantities of goods that we could sell, and so, slowly but surely, each of us began finding customers.
>
> The soldiers also put us in touch with people who could ship in truckloads and railroad carloads of goods. I had struck up an acquaintance with a German Jew named Levy, who had somehow "organized" a Volkswagen. He introduced me to people who ran a Belgian import-export company that the Germans had taken over and that the family had now reclaimed. They had warehouses and trucks and everything we needed to bring in goods. It wasn't long before I became one of their top traders. We sold tons of coffee beans to people who would roast it, and truckloads of margarine, chocolate, and cigarettes.

nationalist narrative, U.S. Secretary of State saluted Frank Blaichman, the former Stalinist Security officer and black marketeer, as a "freedom fighter"—"a testament to the resilience of the Polish people."[816]

The victims of Stalinist oppression were overwhelmingly ethnic Poles and Jews figured prominently among the oppressors. According to the most recent and in-depth studies, their share of the top positions in the Ministry of Public Security exceeded 37 percent in the years 1944–1954, and ethnic Poles were in a

[816] "Mike Pompeo in Poland Urges the Country to Pass Holocaust Restitution Legislation," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency,* February 13, 2019. See also Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "With Friends Like These Poland Needs No Enemies," *Crisis Magazine,* February 20, 2019.

minority.[817] Thousands of more Jews served in various capacities in the State Security Office and militia which were the state's tools for suppressing the anti-Communist underground forces. Given this state of affairs, it is difficult to concur with those historians who ascribe all the problems that Jews faced in the postwar period to "Polish anti-Semitism." There is a large and growing body of literature on the role of

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[817] The number of Jews occupying senior positions in the Soviet-imposed bureaucracy and apparatus of terror is an issue that is far from clear, and one that is hotly contested, but by all credible accounts it was substantial. Jewish historians favour a document from November 1945 (a handwritten note by President Bolesław Bierut) which states that of the top 500 people, sixty-seven were Jews, i.e., 13 percent, and emphasize the fact that Jews constituted only 1.7 percent of the overall personnel in the secret police. According to Polish historian Andrzej Paczkowski, between 1944 and 1956—when Jews constituted less than 1 percent of Poland's population, out of 447 persons occupying positions of leadership in the headquarters of Poland's Ministry of Public Security, 131 (just over 29 percent) were Jews." The proportion of Jews in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was even more pronounced, and it appears that most of the Jews in senior positions regarded themselves as Jews, both ethnically and religiously. See Andrzej Paczkowski, "Żydzi w UB: Próba weryfikacji stereotypu," in Tomasz Szarota, ed., *Komunizm: Ideologia, system, ludzie* (Warsaw: Neriton and Instytut Historii PAN, 2001), 196–97; Andrzej Paczkowski, "Jews in the Polish Security Apparatus: An Attempt to Test the Stereotype," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 16 (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003), 453–64. A secret NKVD report from October 20, 1945, prepared for Beria by Nikolai Selivanovskii, the chief Soviet adviser in Poland's Ministry of Public Security, provides even higher figures: 18.7 percent of the Security Office and 50 percent of the leadership positions were occupied by Jews. Jews also occupied all the leadership positions in the intelligence department. The report goes on to note that this state of affairs, not surprisingly, "gives rise to a vehement dissatisfaction among Poles." See Tatiana Cariewskaja [Tsarevskaia], Andrzej Chmielarz, Andrzej Paczkowski, Ewa Rosowska, and Szymon Rudnicki. *Teczka specjalna J. W. Stalina: Raporty NKWD z Polski 1944–1946* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Instytut Historyczny Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, Archiwum Państwowe Federacji Rosyjskiej, 1998), 420–22. More recent investigations of personnel files undertaken by Poland's Institute of National Remembrance revealed that, during the years 1944–1954, 167 of the 450 top positions in the Ministry of Public Security, or 37.1 percent, were occupied by persons of Jewish origin. Ethnic Poles accounted for 49.1 percent, and the balance were filled for the most part by Soviet officers (Russians, Belorussians, and Ukrainians), who accounted for 10.2 percent of the cadre. Of the 107 voivodship Security Office heads and their deputies, 22 were Jews. See Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, "Żydzi w kierownictwie UB: Stereotyp czy rzeczywistość?" *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 11 (November 2005): 37–42; Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, ed., *Aparat bezpieczeństwa w Polsce: Kadra kierownicza,* vol. 1: *1944–1956* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2005). Interestingly, many historians ignore this well-documented research since it is "problematic" for their *a priori* discounting of the behaviour of a significant number of Jews as a factor in Polish-Jewish relations. See, for example, Michael Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland, 1944–50* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 161, n.20, where Fleming claims that in 1945, Jews held just 13 per cent of management positions, and goes on to state that the claim made by the Right that the Security Office was, at the highest levels, dominated by Jews and Soviets "owes more to preconceived notions than to reality." Other branches of the government such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic posts, the mass media, the censorship office, the Ministry of Justice, and the political education bureau of the army, were also inundated with Jews. On the number of Jews occupying official positions in the regime, see Korboński, *The Jews and Poles in World War II,* passim; Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 58–65, 72–86; Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960,* 395; Mirosław Piotrowski, *Ludzie bezpieki w walce z narodem i Kościołem: Służba Bezpieczeństwa w Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej w latach 1944–1978—Centrala,* 2nd edition (Lublin: Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej, 2000), 313–45; Jerzy Robert Nowak, *Zbrodnie UB* (Warsaw: Maron, 2001); Zofia Krupska, "Mniejszości narodowe i religijne na ziemiach polskich w świetle dokumentacji Centralnego Archiwum MSW (1944–1945)," in Jacek Ziemowit Pietraś and Andrzej Czarnocki, eds., *Polityka nardowościowa państw Europy Środkowowschodniej: Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji "Mniejszości narodowe i religijne w pokomunistycznej Europie Środkowowschodniej", zorganizowanej w dniach 20–22 października 1992 roku,* Part Two (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 1993), 106–17; Nawrocki, *Zamiast wolności,* 18, 26–30; Mirosław Szumiło, "'Żydokomuna' w aparacie władzy 'Polski Ludowej': Mit czy rzeczyswistość," *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość,* vol. 2 (32) (2018): 27–60. The apparatus of oppression in Łódź, for example, was dominated by Jews. Leo Hochberg and Michał Salpeter (aka Morko Meilech) handed down numerous death sentences to members of the Polish underground taken before the regional military tribunal, where Feliks Aspis served as an ardent prosecutor. Leading positions in the regional Security Office and central training school were occupied by Major Józef Czaplicki, Major Józef Krakowski, Major Bolesław Krzywiński aka Bernard Schildhaus, Mieczysław Baumac, Edward Szejnfeld, Aleksander Rozenblum, Michał Jachimowicz, Aleksander Dyrdak, Tomasz Lempart aka Dawid Fiszer, Helena Rozmaryn, Dawid Międzyrzecki, Leonard Wojciechowski (aka Jakub Szmulowicz), Mieczysław Broniatowski, and Józef Arski. See Janusz Wróbel, "W cieniu Holocaustu: Odrodzenie społeczności żydowskiej w Łódzkiem po II wojnie światowej," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 11 (November 2005): 26–36, here at 31–32. In the Olsztyn region, where no serious incidents directed at Jews were reported, three of the top seven positions in the voivodship Security Office were held by Jews, and if we count the next highest level of authority, the percentage drops to about

Jewish henchmen in the persecution and torture of Polish "nationalists."[818] Moreover, there was often an underlying racial factor as some Jewish henchmen sought to settle old scores: racist epithets were frequent —Poles were called "you Polish pig" (*"ty polska świnio"*) in the Nazi fashion, and Jewish jailers—such as Shlomo (Solomon) Morel, the commander of the Świętochłowice and Jaworzno camps—spoke openly of revenge.[819] A Polish prisoner recalled the taunt he received from his sadistic torturer Lieutenant Colonel Mateusz Frydman: "By what right do you Poles want independence for Poland?"[820] Józef Brancewicz, a member of the Home Army arrested in January 1945, recalled how, during his imprisonment in Świr, a former Jewish school mate, now serving in the Soviet militia (Jews constituted about half the militia in that town), approached him, slapped him in the face several times, ripped a chain with a medal of Our Lady of Ostra Brama from his neck, and trampled it with his feet.[821] Anatol Fejgin, head of investigations at the Security Office, talked about the need "to kill Polish pride, to shoot down patriotism."[822] Wiktor Herrer, a director in the Ministry of Public Security, warned Polish underground members: "Our task is not just to destroy you physically, but we have to destroy you morally."[823] After risking his life to protect Jews, the forester Stanisław Stankiewicz was arrested after the war for his Home Army activities under a warrant

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[818] See, for example, Tadeusz M. Płużański, *Bestie: Mordercy Polaków* (Warsaw: 3S Media, 2011). Jewish leaders of the Security Office who were notable for their sadistic cruelty included Salomon Morel (p. 62), Feliks Rosenbaum (p. 293), Józef Różański (Goldberg) (p. 293), Beniamin Wajsblech (p. 373), and Anatol Fejgin (pp. 497–98).

[819] Mateusz Wyrwich, *Łagier Jaworzno: Z dziejów czerwonego terroru* (Warsaw: Editions Spotkania, 1995), 36, 37. The camp commander answered to Jakub Hammerschmidt (later known as Jakub Halicki), the head of the prison section of the voivodship Security Office in Kraków.

[820] "Trzy dokumenty ujawniające mechanizmy przemocy i gwałtu w latach 1945–1947," *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), no. 47 (1984): 55. For Additional information about Mateusz Frydman see Jerzy Poksiński, *"TUN": Tatar–Utnik–Nowicki: Represje wobec oficerów Wojska Polskiego w latach 1949–1956* (Warsaw: Bellona, 1992), 38; Mateusz Frydman, Żołnierze wyklęci niezłomni, Internet: <http://zolnierzeniezlomni.com.pl/bestie/mateusz-frydman>.

[821] Józef Brancewicz, "Jedenaście lat na nieludzkiej ziemi," in Edward Walewander, ed., *Polacy w Rosji mówią o sobie* (Lublin: Stowarzyszenie "Wspólnota Polska", 1994), vol. 2, 190–91.

[822] Mateusz Wyrwich, "Mord w kościele," *Tygodnik Solidarność,* September 27, 2002.

[823] Czesław Leopold and Krzysztof Lechicki, *Więźniowie polityczni w Polsce w latach 1945–1956* (Gdańsk: underground publication, 1981), 8; later published as Czesław Leopold and Krzysztof Lechicki, *Więźniowie polityczni w Polsce w latach 1945–1956* (Paris: Editions Spotkania, 1984).

issued by prosecutor Kazimierz Graff; he was murdered during interrogation by the Security Bureau.[824] Lieutenant-Colonel Aleksander Warecki (Warenkopf), head of the military tribunal of the Warsaw region, used his position of authority to turn the life sentence meted out (on trumped up charges) to Jan Kaim, an underground leader, into a death sentence because of the latter's activities as a nationalist student activist in Lwów before the war. (Kaim was executed in 1949.)[825] These are just some of the numerous examples of members of the anti-Communist underground who had the misfortune of running into Jewish prosecutors and Security officers.[826]

Many, if not most, of these Jews retained a strong sense of their Jewishness. Naftali Saleschutz, who went by the name Tadeusz Zaleski, became the chief of the Security Office in Kraków and later Wrocław. Like many other Jews in positions of authority in Communist Poland, he was an ardent Jewish nationalist at heart. Saleschutz does not mince words when he describes his feelings toward Poles:

> The average Pole felt it his duty—indeed his joy, to turn in escaped Jews to the Germans.
>
> The AK [Home Army] was violently anti-Semitic. … the commandant of the AK, General Bor Komorowski … called upon the Polish underground to kill the Jews hiding in the countryside …
>
> The anti-Semitism that seemed to come with the mothers' milk flowed among the Poles unabated.
>
> It was not by accident that Hitler built his most infamous death camps on Polish soil. Compliant sympathizers to the Final Solution could be found in the general neighborhood for the asking.[827]

Mistaken for a Pole by some Jewish actors, Saleschutz heard what typically was said about Poles behind their backs:

> While we were smiling at one another, Diana Blumenfeld turned to her husband and said to him in Yiddish, "Look at that anti-Semitic, Polish face. I wonder how many Jews he has tortured. How can

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[824] Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 4: *Poland,* Part 2, 746; Helena Rembelska, Joanna Sobolewska-Pyz, Halina Szostkiewicz, eds., *Zapukali do drzwi…* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Dzieci Holocaustu w Polsce, 2011), 88–9. Kazimierz Graff, a military prosecutor, oversaw the prosecution of many prominent members of the Polish underground including the famed Witold Pilecki, who allowed himself to be imprisoned in Auschwitz from where he dispatched intelligence reports about the camp, Stanisław Sojczyński ("Warszyc"), and 12 Home Army members who were executed after a three-day trial in Siedlce. See Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, *Prawnicy czasu bezprawia: Sędziowie i prokuratorzy wojskowi w Polsce, 1944–1956* (Kraków and Wrocław: Towarzystwo Naukowe Societas Vistulana and Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2005), 308. Pilecki's investigation was overseen by Józef Różański (Goldberg), the director of the investigation department at the Ministry of Public Security, and included Józef Czaplicki (Izydor Kurc), Adam Humer, and Roman Romkowski (Natan Grinszpan-Kikiel).

[825] Leszek Żebrowski, "Kaim Jan," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam*" (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2002), vol. 9, 107–8.

[826] For some other accounts see Kamiński and Żaryn, *Reflections on the Kielce Pogrom,* 92–93.

[827] Salsitz, *Three Homelands,* 133, 155–58, 224, 231.

> they possibly expect this Pole to protect Jews. I don't put trust putting our welfare into his hands."[828]

Ironically, Saleschutz's victims of choice were Poles (the Security Office was not known for persecuting Jews), and he expressed no regrets for his actions.

Eta Chajt Wrobel, who was sent to Wrocław to organize a Communist workers' organization, while her husband received permission to open a private enterprise, a restaurant, and found them a large apartment not far from the restaurant, recalled:

> Unless people already knew, no one supposed that Henry and I were Jews. One day, Henry was getting a shave near the restaurant in a barbershop run by a Holocaust survivor. Needing to speak with my husband, I walked into the barbershop. Seeing me, the owner muttered to someone in Yiddish that I should be a *kaporah* (a scapegoat who should die for dead Jews). He wondered, out lout, about how many Jews Henry and I had killed during the war. I gave the barber a dirty look and snapped back in Yiddish, "You are the *kaporah* and, just for the record, my husband and I saved many of our people."
>
> The barber grabbed his hair and said he couldn't believe we were Jews. We became good friends until the day I had to take him to task for his boorish behavior. The barber had taken in a Jewish girl and was taking advantage of her in every way. … I ordered him to make an honest woman of her or I would take her away and put her in a safe place. He decided then and there that he would marry her. He did, and they lived together until their deaths in America 50 years later.[829]

Luckily, they were not Poles—who knows how it would have ended. Wrobel acknowledges that she had no qualifications for the various positions she was assigned to:

> While I was pregnant, the Russians liberated Lodz [Łódź], and I was sent there to help organize the town under the new Polish government. To give me added stature, they gave me a title, Minister of Commercial Development, something I knew nothing about. When I told them so, they said it didn't matter. They ordered me to "just stay there."[830]

Abraham Wunderbojm (Wunderboim) was one of many Jewish partisans from the Parczew forest who were enlisted in the militia in the summer of 1944, after the "liberation" by the Soviets. Initially, as Adam Winder, he served in Lublin for six months. At the beginning of 1945, he was transferred to Radom where he served with three other Jews until all but one of them "deserted" two years later. Their most important task was to search for Germans, German collaborators, and "Polish Fascists who were getting orders from England," that is, members of the Polish underground loyal to the Polish government exiled in London.

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[828] Ibid., 229.

[829] Wrobel, *My Life My Way,* 117–18.

[830] Ibid., 115.

Indeed, for Wunderboim, and many others like him, all Poles who were not Communists were considered to be "Fascists" and deserved what was coming to them.[831]

Tuviah Friedman (aka Towia or Tobiasz Frydman), then passing as Tadeusz Jasiński, also recalled his service in the militia in his native Radom, which he entered in January 1945, as well as his transfer to the Security Office in Gdańsk in April of that year. His goal was to exact as much vengeance as he could before leaving Poland. One thing is clear in his memoirs: neither he nor his Jewish colleagues abandoned their sense of Jewishness when they joined the Communist apparatus of repression.

> A group of Polish militia officers under the command of [Second] Lieutenant [Władysław] Adamski[832] reached Radom from Lublin to organize a local militia. Some of Adamski's men were Jews who had spent the war years as partisans in the Lublin area. Toiva [Rotstein, passing as Jan Bartodziej] and I joined the militia …
>
> Our militia force had several tough assignments. We had to restore order to Radom … we had to put an end to the anarchistic activities of the A.K. and N.S.Z. partisan groups. And, most important to me, we were to ferret out and arrest Germans, Poles and Ukrainians who had engaged in wartime activity that was "detrimental to the best interests of Poland and the Polish people."
>
> With burning enthusiasm, I embarked on this last chore. Working with several militiamen who had been placed under my command, feeling my gun securely in its holster, I arrested one known war criminal after another. …
>
> Our unit was kept busy for weeks on end, as complaints and reports of Germans, Poles and Ukrainians poured into our headquarters. In the morning my commander would call me and hand me a list of names and addresses. Within the day my men and I would find them, disarm them, bring them in to headquarters, and let the Polish judiciary decide what to do with these people. I did my work efficiently …
>
> Five of my Radom friends, hearing that I was soon to leave for Danzig [Gdańsk], volunteered to join me. Bronek, who used to be known as Benjamin, was motivated like myself, by a desire to strike back at the Nazis, to seek revenge for what had been done to our families; indeed, he and I used to talk of the future, and we both sensed that we would not remain in Poland long, that somehow, someday, we would settle in Palestine, in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. But now there was some unfinished business to be taken care of.
>
> Yankel Boiman joined our group, too. Tall, blond, a husky fellow of my age, he too had escaped from a prison camp and hidden out in the forests. Cesiek Tzeslow, and his business-minded brother-

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[831] Testimony of Adam Winder, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 5517. Winder claims that he "deserted" his militia post in 1947 because the Polish government authorities were becoming more "Fascist-mined" and "things got bad for Jewish boys." The fourth Jewish member of the Radom militia who deserted with Winder was later killed by Poles. However, Winder did not leave Poland until 1948. He set up a business in Gliwice and travelled back and forth between Poland and Germany, dealing in the black market. He would depart from Poland via Czechoslovakia, with the assistance of the Bricha movement, and would return to Poland posing as a Pole who had been deported to Germany for forced labour. After being stopped with illegal goods, he decided to leave Poland permanently, arriving in Germany in 1948. There, he registered as five years younger than his actual age so that he could qualify to immigrate to the United States as a minor. He arrived in the United States in July 1945, as Adam Winder.

[832] Dariusz Iwaneczko, et al., *Aparat represji w Polsce Ludowej 1944–1989* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Rzeszowie, 2015), 153–54.

in-law, Wolf Helcman, and a young friend of Boiman's whom I knew only as Stefan made up the rest of our group. Helcman was direct with me; he said he was going to Danzig primarily to make money, explaining that since the Germans had ruined his family's fortunes, he felt justified in taking advantage of chaotic conditions in Danzig to try to rebuild some of what he had lost. Nevertheless, he promised to do his full share as a member of our special group. My forest companion, Rotstein, stayed on in Radom. …

Next day we reported for duty to Colonel Korczynski, of the Minister of Public Security. The Colonel had been a partisan leader throughout the war. [As mentioned earlier, Grzegorz Korczyński People's Guard partisan unit was responsible for the murder of a large number of Jews.] He had brought with him from Warsaw a staff of military officers, public prosecutors and others, all of whom were to help restore law and order to Danzig …

When I presented my papers to Colonel Korczynski, indicating that my group had been sent to Danzig for the special purpose of apprehending pro-Nazi elements, including saboteurs left behind by the fleeing Germans, he greeted me warmly, saying that he had been informed of our mission and pledging us his full support. …

I was but a lieutenant in the security service. … I was assigned to Danzig's fourth precinct. The police were to arrest the Germans in our area and bring them to me for questioning. Captain Forst, an attorney from Lwow [Lwów], was named head of our intelligence section, and I was to report to him. …

I began to develop a special sense about my prisoners, and most of the time it was possible for me to determine who had been an active Nazi and who had not. … I escorted my daily batch of scores of prisoners to the huge prison building and turned them over to the prison authorities. … Sometimes my superiors had to warn me about losing my temper and striking a prisoner. Gradually I learned to restrain my actions. …

As reports of Nazi atrocities in the concentration camps began to multiply, and as I continued to wait in vain for some word of my family, I became vengeful. The German prisoners soon learned that they were lucky not to be assigned to me, because I was likely to display some of the venom I felt for the Nazis. …

I readily admit now that I probably was quite merciless with my prisoners, beating them, trying to extract the truth from them. I took a savage delight in entering a prison cell full of Germans and waiting for them to respond to my entrance. …

My heart was filled with hate. I hated them in defeat as I had hated them in their moments of victory.

Although I was happy in my work, and felt now for the first time that I was making an important contribution, I was not happy with myself. The more brutal I acted, the less I knew myself. I began to fear that my actions would change me, and that I would become one with those I sought to punish. … I was beginning to be known as the unmerciful one, who beat and who harangued his prisoners, and as one who showed little humanity to others. …

One day a group of Jews from Radom arrived in Danzig and we greeted each other joyously. … They said they had come to Danzig because I and my friends were there, and that we would surely look the other way if they engaged in possibly shady business deals. …

Captain Forst instructed me one day to arrest Cardinal Splet [Bishop Carl Maria Splett was arrested in August 1945], who was the head of the diocese of Dienst [Gdańsk] …

> There was a group of Jewish young men and women who had organized themselves into a Kibbutz near Danzig and who planned to emigrate and settle in Palestine. … From time to time I would visit them and bring with me some food and clothes … I liked these people very much, and was attracted to their ideas. When they sang nostalgically of the Valley of Jezreel, I felt a responsive chord in my heart. … The leaders of the Kibbutz had asked me to provide them with some arms … I managed to secure some guns and ammunition for the group. Little by little, I found myself drawn more and more to these youngsters …
>
> Poland had too many bitter memories for me. I despised the resentment of the people toward the pitiful handful of Jews who had survived the Hitler period, and I was sickened by the attitude of the Polish Government officials, who pretended that anti-Jewish sentiments did not exist. For me, a homeland for the Jews seemed the only possible answer. …
>
> At the Security Service offices, my request for an honorable severance from my government job was met with raised eyebrows. Some people thought I had abandoned my reason; others were more suspicious of my motives. My friends and immediate superiors tried to dissuade from my decision, but I was steadfast and determined in my desire to leave Poland, to reach Palestine, and to join with Jews from all over the world in working—and fighting—for a homeland for my people.
>
> Colonel Korczynski greeted my decision calmly, and with understanding. … He expedited my application for a voluntary resignation, which had to be approved in Warsaw.
>
> I toured the Danzig prison one evening before my final departure for Lodz [Łódź], where I was to meet with the Kibbutz leaders and await instructions for my departure for Palestine. The emigration of Jews from Poland was discouraged [at that time] by the government, and would-be Palestinians were compelled to leave the country via illegal routes.[833]

According to archival sources, Friedman was dismissed from his position in December 1945 for various transgressions.[834] Another colleague of Tuviah Friedman's in Radom was Michael (Majer) Rosenberg (b. 1926), who went by the name of Marjan Różański. After his escape from the Pionki labour camp, he was sheltered by Polish farmers. He was directed to the Citizens' Militia by the chairman of Radom's Jewish Committee, accepted by its commander Second Lieutenant Adamski, and sent for a six-week officer training course in Bydgoszcz, after which he returned to Radom as a sergeant. In addition to helping Jews recover property, he took part in tracking down Nazi "collaborators," which by definition included members of the Home Army. Those apprehended were sometimes eliminated extrajudicially. After shots were fired in his direction on the street, he was transferred as a lieutenant to Skałeczno (Mittelsteine) in

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[833] Friedman, *Nazi Hunter,* 76–77, 81, 84–85, 88–91, 93, 100, 102, 104–5. Yehuda (Leon) Lerner, an escapee from Sobibór who joined a partisan unit led by Chil Grynszpan, became the deputy commander of Security police in Radom in January 1945, at the age of 18 (sic), and remained in that position until the summer of 1945. See Jules Schelvis, *Sobibor: A History of a Death Camp* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007), 232, 236. Two other Jewish functionaries in Radom were Oswald Sznept and Hodyrko. See Józef Łyżwa "Łowicz", "Pomagałem, a potem siedziałem," *Gazeta Polska*, February 10, 1994. Another Security officer was named Den. See Zygmunt Mogiła-Lisowski, "Odbicie więzienia w Radomiu przez oddziały poakowskie WIN," *Zeszyty Kombatanckie,* no. 36 (October-November 2003).

[834] Raina, *Mordercy uchodzą bezkarnie,* 81, 116.

Lower Silesia, where he became the police chief, before "defecting" to the West.[835] In 1946, the notorious Józef Bik, later Bukar, afterwards Gawerski became the head of invesitgations in the Gdańsk Security Office. Bukar was responsible for the brutal interrogation of Danuta Siedzik ("Inka"), a member of the Wilno Brigade of the Home Army who was sentenced to death in a Communist show trial.[836] Markus Kac became the deputy head of the investigation department in the Gdańsk Security Office in 1947, where he was known for his brutality toward Polish political prisoners.[837]

The ubiquitous presence of Jews in the Stalinist apparatus is confirmed by another highly placed Polish Jew:

> In practically every little town and village the political police was Jewish. It might have been a diabolic Russian plan originating in Stalin's days to give this ungrateful task to Jews. It might also

[835] Testimonies of Michael Rosenberg, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview codes 2970 and 54355.

[836] Józef Bik's next post was deputy head of the investigation section of the Security Office in Katowice. See "Odnalazł się w Szwecji," *Rzeczpospolita,* March, 19, 2004; Tomasz Szymborski, "Do procesów raczej nie dojdzie," *Rzeczpospolita,* January 2, 2006; Zenon Baranowski, "Bił więźniów i chce za to wyższej emerytury: Oprawca domaga się rewaloryzacji," *Nasz Dziennik,* January 27–28, 2007; Piotr Szubarczyk, "Nieznane oblicza Józefa Gawerskiego," *Nasz Dziennik,* January 27–28, 2007; Zenon Baranowski, "Bukar uniknął sprawiedliwości," *Nasz Dziennik,* March 10, 2009.

[837] Kac's next post was chief of the investigation section of the Security Office in Katowice. See Tadeusz M. Płużański, "Mordy katowickiej bezpieki," *Najwyższy Czas!,* October 31, 2009.

> have been motivated by Stalin's basic suspicion of Poles. In any case, this could not have happened had there not been countless Jewish candidates for this type of post.[838]

Some, like Michael (Moishe) Checinski, embraced the new regime with the fervour typical of his milieu: former pro-Communist underground members from the Łódź ghetto. They soon made their presence felt:

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[838] Edwin Eytan, "Poland Without Jews," *Bulletin of the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles,* June 15, 1978. Some examples, of many, where Jewish Security officers (many of them assumed Polish-sounding names) oversaw and carried out interrogations and sadistic tortures of Polish political prisoners can be found in the following sources: Józef Łyżwa "Łowicz", "Pomagałem, a potem siedziałem," *Gazeta Polska* (Warsaw), February 10, 1994 (Oswald Sznept and Hodyrko in Radom)—see also Zygmunt Mogiła-Lisowski, "Odbicie więzienia w Radomiu przez oddziały poakowskie WIN," *Zeszyty Kombatanckie,* no. 36 (October-November 2003) (Den, a security officer in Radom); Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 62 (Hrubieszów); Kazimierz Moczarski, *Zapiski* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1990), 302–308 (Colonel Józef Różański aka Goldberg, Anatol Fejgin); Zbigniew Kusiak, "Różański Jozef", in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2005), vol. 16, 17–23; Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory,* 477 (Aharon Carmi, a former partisan); Piotr Kosobudzki, *Przez druty, kraty i kajadany: Wspomnienia partyzanta NSZ* (Wrocław: Nortom, 1997), 248–50 (Cebo, Frenkel, Zajdel); Krzysztof Pilecki, *Był sens walki i sens śmierci* (Bydgoszcz: Towarzystwo Miłośników Wilna i Ziemi Wileńskiej, 1998), 100 (Colonel Józef Goldberg aka Różański, Colonel Roman Romkowski); Grażyna Dziedzińska, "W trosce o zdrowie … oprawców," *Nasza Polska* (Warsaw), August 5, 1998 (Bronisław Szczerbakowski, Jerzy Łobanowski, Tadeusz Poddębski—Szczerbakowski's prosecution is on hold because of his alleged health problems); Grażyna Dziedzińska, "Rodowity chłop z Kurpiów," *Nasza Polska,* August 12, 1998 (Lieutenant Franciszek Łaszczewski, Sergeant Franciszek Kamiński—Łaszczewski repeatedly kicked and struck Józef Więcek with a wooden truncheon until he was bloodied, and for good measure smashed in his temple with a pistol); Wilhelm Tasecki, "Jabłko blisko jabłoni," *Nasza Polska,* August 5, 1998 (Leszek Krzemień); Grażyna Dziedzińska, "Zakratowane niebo," *Nasza Polska,* October 21, 1998 (Kobylec, Leon Midro); Tomasz Grotowicz, "Kaci Polaków: Menio (Mieczysław) Waksman," *Nasza Polska,* April 7, 1999 (Waksman was an investigating officer at the state security prison on Podwale Street in Wrocław, where political prisoners were forced to sit on the leg of a chair, their ears were burned with cigarettes, and sharp needles were poked into their chests); Grażyna Dziedzińska, "Jerzy Biesiadowski—wytrwały," *Nasza Polska,* June 9, 1999 (the chief of the first division of the security prison in Piotrków Trybunalski was a sadistic Jew by the name of Goldberg); Tomasz Grotowicz, "Kaci Polaków: Julia Brystygier," *Nasza Polska,* August 4, 1999 (Julia Brystygier); Tomasz Grotowicz, "Kaci Polaków: Filip Barski (Badner)", *Nasza Polska,* November 3, 1999 (Filip Badner, later Barski, oversaw the torture of Home Army KEDYW head for the Busko district)—see also Jerzy Bednarek, "Stacja Czastary," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 5 (May 2004): 58, who mentions Badner in the role of a prosecutor in Wrocław, as well as another prosecutor, Eugeniusz Landsberg; Tomasz Grotowicz, "Kaci Polaków: Zygmunt Bukowiński," *Nasza Polska,* April 19, 2000 (Major Feliks Rosenbaum); Jan Ordyński, "Sto godzin przesłuchania bez przerwy," *Rzeczpospolita,* February 5, 2002 (Lieutenant Colonel Józef Światło); "Michał Bierzyński 'Sęp'–sfingowany wyrok," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 11 (November 2002): 65–72 (Efraim-Edward Kisler, the chief executioner at the Security Office in Białystok, who was responsible for the deaths of many members of the anti-Communist underground); Tomasz Grotowicz, "Kaci Polaków: Franciszek-Efroim Klitenik," *Nasza Polska,* July 15, 2003 (Franciszek-Efroim Klitenik was a prison commander in Wrocław, Dzierżoń, and Łódź); Adam Kruczek, "Utrwalacze sowieckiego terroru," *Nasz Dziennik,* May 31, 2004 (Michał aka Mendel Dyma, a former partisan who became a lieutenant in the Security Office in Zamość); Tadeusz M. Płużański, "Ryszard Nazarewicz—partyzant, ubek, 'profesor'," *Gazeta Polska*, February 7, 2007 (Ryszard Nazarewicz, who rose to the rank of major in Łódź). A Jew from Eastern Poland by the name Żółtogorski became the commander of the Security Office in Siepc which became notorious for its repression. See the letter of Jerzy K. Malewicz, *Nowy Dziennik* (New York), January 2001. For information about the exploits of Lieutenant Colonel Józef Światło (Izak Fleischfarb), who became deputy director of the Tenth Department of the Ministry of Public Security, see Artur Górski, "Światłowstręt," *Polityka,* no. 48 (2003), and Andrzej Paczkowski, "Tak było: Trzy twarze Józefa Światły," *Rzeczpospolita,* December 20, 2003, and December 27, 2003. Chaim Lipster, who joined the Red militia in Żółkiewka in September 1939 and then left for the Soviet Union with the retreating Soviet army, entered the Security Office in Wrocław where he hunted down members of the Home Army. See Chaim Zylberklang, *Z Żółkiewki do Erec Israel: Przez Kotłas, Buzułuk, Ural, Polskę, Niemcy i Francję,* Second revised and expanded edition (Lublin: Akko, 2004), 112. Alfred Zimmerman supervised the interrogation of Albert Bil, a former Home Army member, who was tortured repeatedly; Piotr Kossobudzki was tortured by Jewish Security officers named Frenkel and Zajdel; Lieutenant Eliasz Trokenheim, who declared his nationality as Jewish, oversaw the torture of Halina Sawicka, a member of the underground, in the Security Ofice prison in Łomża; Lieutenant Colonel Jan Amons presided over the interrogation of a group of boy scouts arrested in Gdańsk who were tortured in the process. See Marek J. Chodakiewicz, "The Dialectics of Pain: The Interrogation Methods of the Communist Secret Police in Poland, 1944–1955," *Glaukopis,* no. 2–3 (2005): 99–144, here at 115–16, 128. (This latter source also refers to the activities of Colonel Różański and Lieutenant Colonel Światło.) The head of the Security Office in Lubartów was a Jew who had assumed the name of Dworecki. See Kister, *Studium zniewalania,* 84–85. A Jew by the name of Polak was the infamous and sadistic head of the Security Office in Jelenia Góra; he even employed

> Several weeks after the end of the war, more than a dozen former members of the left-wing ghetto resistance movement had returned to Lodz [Łódź]. Most of them were young men and women aged 19 to 23. Imbued with Communist fanaticism, they returned to help rebuild the country and create a new, beautiful social order, or so they believed.
>
> Our motivations did not stem from formal discipline, but from blind faith in the higher values of revolutionary principles, in placing the Party's interests over and above everything else, including personal ones.
>
> In the end we were all fanatical Communists and I was in no way an exception, maybe even a greater fanatic than most. Yet I was never ready to camouflage my Jewishness.[839]

Checinski, a former military intelligence officer, readily admits that NKVD officers charged with schooling and indoctrinating the new cadres favoured Jews as being far less susceptible to Polish nationalist deviations.[840] Other former Security officers have gone to great lengths to downplay their activities, such as Marcel Reich-Ranicki, the celebrated German literary critic, who claims ignorance about how they joined, what they did and its harmfulness, and even suggests, without a shred of evidence, that antisemitism played a part in his dismissal and that he barely escaped severe punishment.[841]

It was inevitable that such a state of affairs would place Poles and Jews on another collision course, a reality that was recognized by honest observers. A Jewish woman who worked for the Central Committee of Jews in Poland after the war confided with dismay:

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[839] Checinski, *Running the Gauntlet of Anti-Semitism,* 21, 27, 29. Checinski also contends, incredibly, that he knew nothing of Stalinist atrocities at the time. In the military counterintelligence in which he served during that darkest of eras, officers "were taught to abide by the code of officer's honor and the army ethic. No one was taught methods of torturing detainees or to engage in practices outside the legal system of the country. … the unveiling of the crimes of Beria and Stalin became a personal tragedy for many employees of the counterintelligence bodies and the security apparatus in general; they felt deceived and humiliated." Ibid., 54–55. When he joined the Łódź garrison he met Lieutenant Colonel Stanisława (Barbara) Sowińska, the sister of a famous Israeli artist, and was urged to change his father's name and his nationality to "Polish." Ibid., 51–52. Many stalwart Communists later became "fanatical Israeli patriots" when they left Poland. Ibid., 50.

[840] Checinski, *Poland,* 11.

[841] These as well as other fabrications in Reich-Ranicki's autobiography, *The Author of Himself: The Life of Marcel Reich-Ranicki* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), were exposed by Polish historian Piotr Gontarczyk, based on Reich-Ranicki's security file. See Piotr Gontarczyk, "Reich-Ranicki i fałszywy życiorys," *Życie Warszawy,* October 13, 2006.

> Please do not forget what the role of Jews was in Poland in the postwar period. [Especially] today when one is keeping count of Stalinist crimes … And I'm unable to say that Jews weren't present there. You shouldn't think that there wasn't any revenge involved. The Jews aren't angels.[842]

While interned in the Security prison in Wrocław, Jerzy Lech Rolski, a Home Army member, encountered a Jew who, before leaving for Palestine, told him that he did not want to be responsible for the crimes the Jews in the Security Office were perpetrating on Home Army members.[843] Zygmunt (Srul) Warszawer, a Jew who emerged from hiding among Polish peasants near his home town of Łaskarzew, was alarmed by what he saw around him and the inevitable harmful consequences that he could plainly foresee:

> But after the war it was handled wrong. So many Jews signed up for the police and for the secret police. I would shout at them: Why are you doing this? What do you need it for? You want to beat people up and shoot people? So go to Israel. You want to be a colonel or something in the government? Do it in your own country with your own people, but not here. There's a handful of us left and still you're pushing.[844]

The same was true of the membership of the (Communist) Polish Workers' Party [*Polska Partia Robotnicza*]. In Łuków, north of Lublin, by October 1944 they managed to enlist 18 Jews and only 13 Poles.[845]

Margot S., born in 1925, was appointed political commissar of Legnica, "a high position she was reluctant to accept." When she asked her acquaintance Aron, who had also been promised a political position, whether he wanted to be smuggled out of Poland with her to go to Palestine, he said: "You must be crazy, when could I have such a career going for me?" Margot told him that it was he who was crazy was, "you don't know the Russians, you have no business to tell the Poles how they should run their country." Aron did not listen to her, and when she ran into him later on in Munich, he was running for his life.[846]

Of this phenomenon John Sack writes:

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[842] Interview with Adina Blady Szwajgier in Anka Grupińska, *Po kole: Rozmowy z żydowskimi żołnierzami* (Warsaw: Alfa, 1991), 180; Anka Grupińska, *Ciągle po kole: Rozmowy z żydowskimi żołnierzami getta warszawskiego* (Warsaw: Twój Styl, 2000), 184.

[843] Maciej Andrzej Zarębski, ed., *Tropem zbrodni stalinowskich: Materiały ogólnopolskiego sympozjum "Zbrodnie stalinowskie wobec Polski", Chańcza, 5–7 października 1990* (Staszów: Staszowskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne, 1992), 160. During his internment, Rolski encountered many Jewish interrogators and prosecutors.

[844] Niezabitowska, *Remnants,* 125.

[845] Anna Grażyna Kister, "Członkowie nieobecni z przyczyn nie ustalonych," *Gazeta Polska* (Warsaw), February 6, 2002.

[846] Lindeman, *Shards of Memory,* 155.

> … the Office's institutions were full of Poles, 150,000 Poles from the antecedents to Solidarity. In places like Gleiwitz [Gliwice], the Poles stood against the prison wall as Implementation tied them to big iron rings, said, "Ready!" "Aim!" "Fire!" shot them, and told the Polish guards, "Don't talk about this." The guards, being Poles, weren't pleased, but the Jacobs, Josefs and Pineks, the Office's brass, stayed loyal to Stalin, for they thought of themselves as Jews, not as Polish patriots. And *that's* why the Good Fairy Stalin, the man who didn't hate the Germans but who abhorred the Enemies of the People, the Agents of Reactionary Elements, the Oppressors, Imperialists and Counterrevolutionaries, be they the Germans, Russians or Poles, had hired all the Jews on Christmas Eve, 1943, and had packed them into his Office of State Security, his instrument in the People's Republic of Poland.
>
> And now, 1945, the Poles went to war with the Office, shooting at Jews in Intelligence, Interrogation and Imprisonment, the Jews concluding that the Poles were antisemitic, the Poles contending that no, they were only anti the Office. One night in October in Kattowitz [Katowice], the Poles tossed a couple of hand grenades into Barek's, the middleweight's, apartment, the grenades going off in his kitchen, the air filling up with smoke and the walls with shrapnel. At the time, Barek [Eisenstein] and Regina, his bride, and Regina's mother were out at a Russian movie, but on their return they saw the black smoke, a shroud over all the tables and chairs, and Regina cried, "We must leave Poland!"
>
> "No, we must take revenge!" Barek said.[847]

Arguably the lowest point was reached in 1952 when, after a farcical one-day secret show trial, Judge Maria Gurowska (or Górowska, née Zand) passed a death sentence on August Emil Fieldorf (*nom de guerre* "Nil"), a legendary Home Army leader. He was falsely accused by prosecutor Beniamin Wajsblech of issuing orders to murder Communists, Soviet partisans and Jews (the Stalinist regime frequently lumped these three groups together[848]) during the war and collaborating with the Nazis. General Fieldorf headed the "Kedyw" (*Kierownictwo Dywersji*—Directorate of Diversion), which—as we have seen (in Part One)—accepted Jews into its ranks openly, and organized the assassination of General Franz Kutschera, the SS chief of Nazi-occupied Warsaw, in February 1944. Like many other Polish anti-Communist patriots, Fieldorf was now prosecuted by the Stalinist apparatus under the decree of August 31, 1944 "concerning the punishment of Hitlerite-Fascist criminals," which targeted "Fascist organizations" that "collaboarated with the Gestaspo" such as the Home Army (AK), Union of Armed Struggle (ZWZ) and National Armed

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[847] Sack, *An Eye for an Eye,* 139.

[848] See, for example, the "START" trial which began in October 1948. According to Norman Davies, "In effect, it represented an act of collective repression directed against the Home Army's former internal police unit. The prosecutors argued that the unit had been used for purely political purposes and, in particular, for killing Communists, Soviet partisans, and Jews." See Davies, *Rising '44,* 564.

Forces (NSZ).[849] On the motion of Władysław Dymant, vice-director of the Special Department of the Prosecutor General's office, his trial was held behind closed doors. The appeal was heard by three judges, Emil Samuel Merz (or Mertz), Gustaw Auscaler, and Igor Andrejew, who upheld the death sentence. They were assisted by Paulina Kern and Leon Penner, prosecutors with the Chief Prosecutor's Office. The order to carry out the death sentence was signed by Alicja Graff, the vice-director of the third department of the Chief Prosecutor's Office. Fieldorf's execution by hanging on February 24, 1954, was overseen by Witold Gatner, another prosecutor. The warrant for General Fieldorf's arrest, issued in 1950, was signed by Colonel Helena Wolińska-Brus (née Fajga Mindla Danielak), who headed the department that oversaw prosecutions of persons investigated by the military. Colonel Józef Różański (Goldberg), head of the investigations department at the Ministry of Public Security, had ordered his detention in the Mokotów prison. Tellingly, virtually all the key roles in the demise of this national hero were played by Communists of Jewish origin and many of them later emigrated to Israel. This was not mere coincidence, but symptomatic of the Soviet-imposed Stalinist regime. One of the henchmen, Helena Wolińska-Brus, took "refuge" in Britain and that country repeatedly refused requests for her extradition to Poland to face justice right up until her death in November 2008. It seems that Western democracies have a dishonourable record in dealing not just with Nazi war criminals but also Stalinist ones. Fieldorf was eventually "rehabilitated" posthumously in 1989 and

[849] Between 1944 and 1949, 16,622 were convicted people under this decree. In addition to members of the anti-Communist underground, among those punished were German war criminals, Gestapo agents and confidantes, blue policemen, persons who committed crimes against fellow prisoners in concentration camps, and persons who denounced or took part in round-ups of Jews and members of the underground. See Tomasz Szarota, *Karuzela na placu Krasińskich: Studia i szkice z lat wojny i okupacji* (Warsaw: Rytm and "Historia i Kultura," 2007), 100–1.

exonerated of all these trumped-up charges.[850] The same players, and many others like them, played a

[850] The topic of General Fieldorf has received extensive coverage since the 1990s: Maria Fieldorf and Leszek Zachuta, *Generał "Nil": August Fieldorf* (Warsaw: Pax, 1993); Henryk Pająk and Stanisław Żochowski, *Rządy zbirów 1940–1990* (Lublin: Retro, 1996), 212–15; Andrzej Przewoźnik and Adam Strzembosz, *Generał "Nil"—General "Nil"* (Warsaw: Światowy Związek Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej and Rytm, 1999); Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, *Zbrodnie w majestacie prawa, 1944–1955* (Warsaw: ABC Future, 2000), 181–84; Davies, *Rising '44,* 571–74, 582, 585–86, 604; Tadeusz A. Płużański, "Rodzina bała się 'Leny': Ciągle chodziła w mundurze," *Życie Warszawy,* October 31, 1998; Tadeusz A. Płużański, "Mordercy generała 'Nila,'" *Tygodnik Solidarność,* no. 13 (1999); Tadeusz A. Płużański, "Drwi gabinetów," *Tygodnik Solidarność,* 11 May 2001 (which details other show trials of Home Army members involving Wolińska-Brus, such as Lt. Col. Franciszek Herman, Jerzy Kirchmayer, Stefan Mossoro, General Stanisław Tatar); Małgorzata Rutkowska, "Zbrodnia," *Nasz Dziennik,* February 23–24, 2002; Jerzy Robert Nowak, "Przemilczane zbrodnie na Polakach (4)," *Nasz Dziennik,* December 2, 2002; Jerzy Robert Nowak, "Przemilczane zbrodnie (5)," *Nasz Dziennik,* December 16, 2002; Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, "Twarze bezpieki: Maria Gurowska vel Górowska vel Genowefa Danielak z domu Zand (1915–1998)," *Nasz Dziennik,* April 25, 2008; Marek Klecel, "Zbrodnia w majestacie prawa: Generał Fieldorf "Nil" przed sądami sowieckiego państwa polskiego," *Nasz Dziennik,* April 25, 2008; Agnieszka Rybak, "Za późno na sprawiedliwość," *Rzeczpospolita,* May 9, 2009. The Polish authorities charged Maria Gurowska with murder for her part in the show trial of General Fieldorf, but her death in January 1998 cut short the proceedings against her. In December 1998, the Polish courts issued a warrant for the arrest of Helena Wolińska-Brus, (she was accused of fabricating evidence that led to the execution of General Fieldorf and the wrongful arrest of 24 others), thereby paving the way for two extradition requests, in 1999 and 2001. The British authorities stonewalled Poland's request for her extradition for seven years before rejecting it on "humanitarian grounds" in the summer of 2006. In November 2007, a Polish military court issued a European arrest warrant against Wolińska-Brus, but that too has been repeatedly stonewalled by the British authorities. See Institute of National Memory, "Investigation against Ms. Helena Wolińska-Brus," posted at <http://www.ipn.gov.pl/index_eng.html>; Tadeusz A. Płużański, "Prześladowczyni 'Nila' żyje w Anglii," *Życie Warszawy,* 8 October 1998; Tadeusz A. Płużański, "Czy dojdzie do ekstradycji Heleny Wolińskiej?" *Tygodnik Solidarność,* 15 June 2001; "Brytyjczycy nie chcą deportować stalinowskiej prokurator," *Nasz Dziennik,* February 22–23, 2003; Roman Motoła, "Nie spieszą się z wydaniem stalinowskiej prokurator," *Nasz Dziennik,* January 21, 2004; "Informacja o działalności Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w okresie 1 lipca 2003 r.–30 czerwca 2004 r.," Warsaw, January 2005 (Warszawa sygnatura akt S 25/01/Zk); Zenon Baranowski, "Nie chcą ścigać zbrodniarzy," *Nasz Dziennik,* June 6, 2005; Tomasz Szymborski, "Wolińska nie stanie przed sądem" and "Helena Wolińska bez sądu," *Rzeczpospolita,* December 3–4, 2005; Zenon Baranowski, "Nie będzie ekstradycji?" *Nasz Dziennik,* December 5, 2005; Zenon Baranowski, "Brytyjczycy nie wydadzą Wolińskiej," *Nasz Dziennik,* August 1, 2006; "Anglia nie wyda Wolińskiej," *Rzeczpospolita,* August 2, 2006; Zenon Baranowski, "Wolińska i Michnik do ekstradycji," *Nasz Dziennik,* February 10–11, 2007; Robert Booth, "Widow, 88, Faces Arrest Warrant Over Death of Polish Hero," *The Guardian,* November 21, 2007; Zenon Baranowski, "Zastój w sprawie Wolińskiej," *Nasz Dziennik,* April 22, 2008; Zenon Baranowski, "Trzecie ponaglenie w sprawie Wolińskiej," *Nasz Dziennik,* August 14–15, 2008. Helena Wolińska-Brus responded that she was being made a "scapegoat" and that she did not believe that Polish courts would be objective. Obviously, she is under the impression that nothing has changed since her stint in the Stalinist "justice" system. An influential part of the British media took up Wolińska-Brus's cause with a vengeance. Writing in the *Sunday Times* (January 3, 1999), Melanie Phillips asked rhetorically "Can a Jew get justice in the country of Auschwitz, Majdanek and Treblinka?", oblivious to the fact that these were *German*-built and run enterprises in which tens of thousands of Christian Poles also perished. See, however, the balanced assessment of Anne Applebaum, "The Three Lives of Helena Brus," *The Sunday Telegraph,* December 6, 1998. The reality proved to be just the opposite of the concern expressed by Melanie Phillips: it is the British authorities who have demonstrated that Poles cannot count on getting justice from the British authorities. Helena Wolińska-Brus died in Britain in November 2008 without ever being brought to justice. See "Zmarła stalinowska prokurator Helena Wolińska," *Rzeczpospolita,* November 29, 2008. Similarly, Sweden has repeatedly refused to extradite or surrender on a warrant Stefan Michnik who, as a judge with the military tribunal, passed death sentences in show trials brought against many members of the anti-Communist underground. See Zenon Baranowski, "Wolińska i Michnik do ekstradycji," *Nasz Dziennik,* February 10–11, 2007; Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, "Sędzia Stefan Michnik: Klasowo i politycznie czujny…," *Nasz Dziennik,* February 26, 2007; Zenon Baranowski, "Wydajcie nakaz za Michnikiem," *Nasz Dziennik,* February 27–28, 2010; Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, "Czułem zadowolenie, wydając wyroki na wrogów… (Stefan Michnik, 1999)," *Nasz Dziennik*, March 6–7, 2010; Zenon Baranowski, "Szwedzi nie chcą wydać Michnika," *Nasz Dziennik,* November 19, 2010; Anna Nowacka-Isaksson, "Sąd w Szwecji odrzucił wniosek o ekstradycję Stefana Michnika," *Rzeczpospolita,* February 10, 2019. (Other notorious high-ranking functionaries who were welcomed by Sweden include Maksymilian Lityński (Lifsches), a military prosecutor, and Józef Bik-Bukar-Gawerski of the Security Office.) The Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation has also been rather lax in pursuing charges in other well-

prominent role in the show trials of many other Home Army and underground members.[851]

It is certainty that proportionately, if not in absolute numbers, Jews have more to answer for than Poles in relation to the excesses committed during the Stalinist era. In a thought-provoking passage, Władysław T. Bartoszewski addressed some of the arguments advanced by apologists for Jews who once curried favour with Poland's postwar Communist rulers:

> Most Poles particularly resent the application of this double standard to those Jewish individuals who were active in, and high ranking members of, the Communist Party, and especially of the security police. These are sometimes excused on the grounds that Communist ideology offered them hope of achieving equal status with the Gentile population and of living in a country free of anti-semitism where social justice and liberal ideals would prevail. It is also often suggested that the Jews, being more vulnerable because of their ethnic background, had no choice but to participate in the construction of the new order. This view is offensive both to the majority of the Jews who did not want to live under Communism and left Poland, and because it implies that different moral standards can be applied to judge Jewish and Gentile moral behaviour. It is also important to make a distinction here between those who supported and joined the Communist Party and even became its propagandists and activists for whatever misguided reason, and those who were directly involved in the security apparatus. The latter involved active participation in arrests and interrogations, and thus torture, deportations, and, in some instances, killing of the civilian population. One can treat the former cases with some sympathy and understanding, but it is not possible to excuse the latter. Whatever the conditions existing in Poland between 1945 and 1956, no one—Gentile or Jewish—can claim that he or (very often) she *had* to be a member of the Stalinist political police or the judiciary and, for one reason or another, had no choice but to torture

[851] The same prosecutors and judges who were responsible for Fieldorf's fate (namely, Beniamin Wajsblech, Gustaw Auscaler, Emil Samuel Merz or Mertz), and many others such as Ignacy Iserles (a judge of the Supreme Court, who emigrated to Israel in 1968) and Bendeykt Jodelis (a prosecutor), orchestrated the show trials of scores of prominent members of the "Fascist" Home Army who took part in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, among them: Bronisław Chajęcki, Władysław Cisowski, Stanisław Cybulski, Julian Czerwiakowski, Adam Dobrowolski, Kazimierz Gąsiorowski, Stanisław Getter, Halina Górecka (who had sheltered Jews), Eugeniusz Grzybowski, Leon Iwicki, Czesław Jacyna, Bolesław Kontrym, Eustachy Krak, Alfred Kurczewski, Regina Mikulska, Tadeusz Pawłowski, Wacław Pluciński, Henryk Pogorzelski, Jerzy Rosicki, Jan Rycelski, Romuald Stępowski, Stanisław Szopiński, Stanisław Warnocki, Janina Zintel, and Leonard Żaczkowski. Most of these underground fighters were tortured and many were put to death. See Marszalec, *Ochrona porządku i bezpieczeństwa publicznego w Powstaniu Warszawskim,* 325–30, 332–39, 341–42, 344–46, 354, 362–68, 372–73, 377, 381–83.

> and kill their innocent political opponents. After all, no one looks for extenuating circumstances for ex-members of the Gestapo.[852]

Some Jews attempt to disown their Jewish brethren arguing that they were not Jews at all but Communists, who just happened to be of Jewish origin.[853] (Yet if a Jew happened to have been killed during this period for whatever reason, these same persons argue, inconsistently, that he or she should be counted among the Jewish victims.) The notion that Jewish nationalism and Jewish religion was incompatible with espousing communism is simply not borne out by numerous Jewish testimonies.[854] John Sack makes short shrift of this spurious reasoning based on the behaviour of Jewish Communists from that period:

> They were "more communist than Jewish," a University of California professor wrote—they were "communists of Jewish origin." Now, I'd known these people seven years, and I'd never thought I would read that. I'd interviewed twenty-three Jews who'd been in the Office, and one, just one, had considered himself a communist in 1945. He and the others had gone to Jewish schools, studied the Torah, had been bar-mitzvahed, sometimes worn payes. In German camps, at the risk of their lives, some had made matzo on Pesach, and in 1945 they had lighted candles on Shabbas, held seders on Pesach, stood under huppas at weddings, sounded shofars on Rosh Hashanah, and fasted on Yom Kippur. By whose definition weren't they Jewish? Not by the Talmud's, certainly not by the

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[852] Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz,* 29. As acknowledged in secret reports from that era, the Communist apparatus fully appreciated the support of a broad cross-section of the Jewish population and showered them with rewards: "With regard to the Jewish issue we must take a very favourable position because the Jews are wholeheartedly devoted to us. From the funds we receive from General Staff 'S' we must assign adequate sums for the Jews who work for us and their families." This 1945 document (Instruction no. 1/26/45-Z) of the Organizational Department of Struggle (Wydział Organizacyjny Walki) of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party is found in the collection of the Sikorski Institute in London (sygnatura A.48, 4/A5, part III), and was reproduced by historian Andrzej Chmielarz in *Przegląd Tygodniowy.* The Jewish community responded in kind: "All of the Jewish [political] parties individually appealed at their conferences to the Jewish population to unite around the Polish Provisional Government." See the report on Poland in *The American Jewish Year Book, 5706 (1945–46),* vol. 47 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945), 402. More rewards followed. Up to the end of January 1946, the government had already given 92 million złoty to Jewish relief institutions: "this amount represents ten per cent of the budget for such purposes, whereas the Jews constitute only one-third of one per cent of the population." See the report on Poland in *The American Jewish Year Book, 5707 (1946–47),* vol. 48 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), 344. While orphanages for Jewish children received preferential treatment, Polish children were often left begging on the streets. See *Biuletyny Informacyjne Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego 1947* (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych, 1993), vol. 1, 92. See also Meyer, *The Jews in the Soviet Satellites,* 259–60.

[853] The following prominent cases refute the notion that Jewish Communists were not Jews. Having decisively rejected conventional religious Jewishness and having ardently embraced Communism, Isaac Deutscher came to identify his Jewishness as follows: "I am a Jew because I feel the Jewish tragedy as my own tragedy; because I feel the pulse of Jewish history; because I should like to do all I can do to assure the real, not spurious, security and self-respect of the Jews." Isaac Babel, an active Bolshevik in Russia, had an "intense consciousness" of his Jewishness. See Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 51, 54.

[854] For example, Tadeusz Iger recalls: "My father, a Communist by conviction even before the war (already then he belonged to the KPP, the Communist Party of Poland), used to tell me, 'Son, you can be proud that you belong to the chosen people, chosen by God.'" See Gutenbaum and Latała, *The Last Eyewitnesses,* 89.

government of Israel's or the government of Nazi Germany's. Had they died in the Holocaust, I'd have guessed that the world would count them among the six million.[855]

As historian Krzysztof Szwagrzyk noted, Jews who joined the Security police usually declared their "nationality" as Jewish, rather than Polish—even those in the upper echelons. Some gave their religion as

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[855] Preface to the 1995 paperback edition of *An Eye for an Eye,* ix. Indeed, one could cite many cases that belie the oft-repeated but unsubstantiated claim that Jewish Communists, especially high-ranking ones, forsook their Jewishness. In response to an appeal by a group of Jewish activists in the Czechoslovakian Politburo for help in backing the nascent Jewish state, Stalin reportedly replied: "Yes. I will help you build your new nation. Russia will be the first to recognize Israel as the new Jewish State. In exchange, please remember that we are interested in building up a big arsenal in the Middle East and in dividing the capitalistic countries. The Mediterranean must be ours. Israel can have the Suez Canal and they can use it; that will be preferable. But we will control it." See Shainberg, *Breaking From the KGB,* 216. General Wacław Komar (aka Mendel Kossoj), who was head of intelligence in the Ministry of Public Security, oversaw the military training of Hagana members in Poland and organized arms shipments to Palestine. See Leszek Żebrowski, "Komar Wacław," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2005), vol. 19, 178–80. Maurice Shainberg, who (at the age of 23) rose meteorically to the rank of major in Poland's Soviet-dominated Security Office under the assumed name of Mieczysław Prużański, also admits to having used his office to carry out a number of fraudulent schemes designed to further Israeli statehood: he recruited Jews serving as officers and soldiers in the Polish Army for the Haganah Army; he misappropriated goods confiscated by the Polish authorities from Polish marines and valued at over one million dollars to finance the smuggling of these Jewish recruits, fully armed, to Sweden and, from there, on to Israel, with the assistance of the Israeli Ambassador Barzilay; and at the instigation of the Israeli ambassador, and with the assistance of the latter's assistant Moshe Dagan, he smuggled out of Poland fourteen railway cars loaded with German ammunition. See Shainberg, *Breaking from the KGB,* 209–14. Another Jew who boasted of using his high rank in military intelligence (a captain in the Polish Army, the commandant of police in the Kraków region) and connections with other high-ranking Jews to divert food and other scarce supplies to Jewish institutions in Poland, to obtain privileged treatment for Jews, and to smuggle Jews and arms out of Poland, via Czechoslovakia, to Palestine, was Naftali Saleschutz, who at that time used the name of Tadeusz Zaleski. Two of his trusted officers were Henryk Konikowski (Heniek Reichwald from Rzeszów) and Karol Król (Karol Kruger from Zakopane). See Salsitz, *Against All Odds,* 391–92; Salsitz, *Three Homelands,* 194–95, 200, 215–16, 308, 317, 225. The fact that arms destined for Jewish partisans were being smuggled out of Poland is confirmed by Hersh Smolar, who mentions that he and another influential Jew intervened with Stanisław Radkiewicz to stay the charges against the smugglers who were apprehended by border guards. See August Grabski, "Kształtowanie się pierwotnego programu żydowskich komunistów w Polsce po Holokauście," in Berendt, Grabski, and Stankowski, *Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 r.,* 96 n.72. A member of a financially prominent Jewish family from Kraków, fled to the Soviet Union where he joined the Communist Polish Army and rose to a high-ranking position, "Adjutant to the Marshall." He settled in Warsaw and became a staunch supporter of the Soviet-imposed Communist regime, yet he used his position to help fellow Jews and took them to see the former Jewish ghetto. Suddenly, one day he disappeared without a trace, after "Agents from the right wing Jewish underground in Palestine succeeded in persuading Olek to join them in Palestine. They needed a man of his calibre. … In the Polish Army he was a leftist, but when the opportunity arose to fight for a Jewish State, everything was forgotten. He found his loyalty." Olek (or Lolek) Buchaister rose to the rank of an Israeli General and became a hero of the 1956 Suez Campaign. See Samuel Honig, *From Poland to Russia and Back, 1939–1946: Surviving the Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Windsor, Ontario: Black Moss Press, 1996), 255–56; Honig, *Reunions,* 113–18. Mark Verstandig, a legal counsellor with the Security Office—in which capacity he "got to know investigative officers (quite a few of whom were Jews) who had the power to carry out arrests and interrogations"—boasted that "Jews were offered jobs and careers which surpassed their wildest expectations." (Indeed, most of his superiors and well-placed colleagues were Jews.) He too promoted a Jewish agenda in his position. After leaving the State Security Office he moved to Wrocław where he continued to reap copious benefits from the solidarity of well-placed fellow Jews: "The city administration … was headed by a talented young Jewish lawyer named Roman Wilk, who allocated us an empty, fully furnished, eight-room flat, with pictures still hanging on the walls. My brother got a similar flat across the road, where we also obtained well-situated premises to open a grocery. Ida, Frieda, David Haar, and friends of my brother worked in the grocery, which did very well. Through my connections in Warsaw with friends who handled provisions for government institutions, I helped to stock the grocery. I also did a bit of legal work." See Verstandig, *I Rest My Case,* 207, 218, 224, 228. In some cases, the close organizational ties with the Jewish community of high ranking Communists were very pronounced. For example, Marek (Mordko) Goryń, a prewar Communist from Ostróg in Volhynia and a municipal functionary in that city under Soviet rule in 1939–1941, became the chairman of the Jewish Committee in Strzegom after the war and then the county (powiat) Jewish Committee chairman in Legnica in 1948–1951, as he continued his meteoric rise in the ranks of the Communist regime. After ten months of training in the law school for officers in Jelenia Góra (where he attained the rank of second lieutenant), he became a judge in the regional military court in Wrocław where he passed numerous sentences (including death sentences) against anti-Communist Poles in the politically motivated show trials that abounded in the Stalinist era. In 1957, he immigrated to Israel with his family. Jews in the very highest government offices identified with their Jewishness and demonstrated

Jewish (*"mojżeszowe"*), others as "non-believers."[856] Jews serving in the lower and middle ranks of the army and Security police, on the whole, retained a strong—and often open—Jewish identification.[857] A similar attitude prevailed among most Jewish officials in the middle echelons of the security and political structures of the new regime. Stanisława Ałapin and her husband Mieczysław Rubiłowicz were senior officers in the medical corps of the Ministry of Internal Security in Warsaw, where they lived a live of affluence. They did not polonize their Jewish-sounding surnames until the 1950s, were keenly aware of their Jewishness (even though they were not religious Jews), and their attitude toward Poles was markedly hostile.[858] (Although they are extremely vague about their duties as medical officers, Rubiłowicz's friend Max, who was also posted to Warsaw, became the medical director of a prison hospital where political prisoners were "interrogated."[859]) Shortly after the arrival of the Soviets, Stanisława Ałapin joined the Polish People's Army as a first lieutenant. She was sent to a special unit for training political officers, the Polish Army School for Political Education Officers near Lublin where her Jewishness was not a secret:

> I think the months I spent with that unit were really the only time in my life when I have had no sense of alienation, of otherness. I felt completely at ease with the people I was with there and with the ideology. A communist army had been my liberator and had ended my ordeal; communist theory was opposed to racism, bigotry, and injustice. And now, here at the camp, I felt as though I were at last among my own. … They were mostly young men. Some of them had been with the communist partisans or the underground fighters; others had escaped to the Soviet Union. And one of the professors was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War. … There was no sense of oppression, secretiveness, or fear. … I shared the ideas and the ideology, and I was enthusiastic.[860]

Mieczysław (Mietek) Rubiłowicz, an officer with the Kościuszko Division who pacified the countryside in the vicinity of Białystok after the "liberation," rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the medical

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[856] Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, "Nie tylko Morel," *Nasz Dziennik,* January 28, 2011. Krzysztof Szwagrzyk has produced the most detailed and reliable information on this topic. His scholarly studies are cited in this study.

[857] For example, Dov Cohen (Berl Kagan), a police superintendent in Nowogródek, took part in Jewish religious services. See Kagan and Cohen, *Surviving the Holocaust with the Russian Jewish Partisans,* 96–97. The Yom Kipur services in Chełm in 1944 were attended by "throngs of soldiers and officers of all ranks" from the Polish and Soviet armies. In particular, "A group of high-ranking Soviet officers stood out among the rest." See Freiberg, *To Survive Sobibor,* 421–22.

[858] Laskey, *Night Voices,* 146, 152, 219, 233 (although a non-believer, Rubiłowicz had "a strong feeling of being part of the Jewish people"). Stanisława Ałapin's attitude toward Poles did not prevent her from temporarily entrusting her young son into the care of Polish nuns near Łódź during a period when her life was unsettled after the war. During the war this child had been sheltered by Ursuline Sisters in Milanówek outside of Warsaw. Ibid., 66, 89–90, 95. Her first husband, Bolesław Ałapin, a Jew, had joined the Home Army in Eastern Poland as a doctor and came to identify very closely with the Polish people to the point of converting to Christianity after the war. Ibid., 147.

[859] Laskey, *Night Voices,* 169–70.

[860] Ibid., 88.

administration of the Security Office. He offered the following explanation for the disproportionately high percentage of Jews among the supporters of Communism after the war:

> "First of all, at the beginning the Polish intelligentsia did not want to participate in the building of socialism [sic]. Secondly, the new Polish state had to carry out a struggle against fascism [sic], and fascists were our [i.e., the Jews'] particular enemy. And thirdly, the truly capitalistic part of the Jewish population had either been annihilated along with most of Poland's Jews or they had left with the majority of survivors when the borders were still open [for Jews] between '45 and '48. The few who remained were mostly middle class. We were not gentry, and we were not officers from the pre-war army. Nor had we been in the police or in the government. [Nor had most ethnic Poles. *M.P.*] Because of this we could accept the new order with less difficulty [sic] than the Poles themselves, and we were more easily trusted. Also, of course, we weren't under the influence of the Catholic Church. The Polish peasants and workers themselves had no alternative but to accept the new order, and few of them were sufficiently educated to see the positive aspects of socialism."
>
> Mietek said that he knew the regime was harsh, "but at first I accepted this because the iron fist was being used against those we believed were the enemies of the Polish people [sic, in fact most Poles supported them—*M.P.*], and if we saw excesses, these were the excesses of individuals or bureaucrats. No, I wasn't surprised when Jacek [Józef] Różański was accused of maltreating prisoners. …"[861]

[861] Ibid., 158–59.

Even many high-ranking Communist officials retained a strong attachment to their Jewishness.[862] Some even manifested a virulent anti-Polish animus, as in the case of Józef Różański (Goldberg),[863] the director of the dreaded Tenth Department of the Ministry of Public Security, and his deputy, Lieutenant Colonel Józef Światło (Izak Fleischfarb),[864] who persecuted Polish patriots with a passion.

In her study *Neutralizing Memory,* Iwona Irwin-Zarecka comments on the make-up of the 150 people who attended the small, newly restored synagogue at the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto on Simhat Torah, September 29, 1983: "There are here a few Orthodox Jews. But, for the most part, people here belong to a sizeable group of old-Communists-now-disillusioned-returnees-to-Judaism …" In another context, the author adds that, "Who *are* these new-old Jews? For the most part, they are disillusioned ex-Communists and ex-fellow travelers, longing for the lost warmth of their childhood after their whole world

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[862] For example, Lieutenant Colonel Michał Friedman, the head of the garrison in Łódź in 1945, never hid that he was a Jew and organized a Pesach celebration. See the testimony of Leon Solowiejczyk, September 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/leon-solowiejczyk>. Sołwiejczyk also alleges that Colonel Subicz, who was a Jew and an anti-Semite, signed jail sentences for prewar Polish officers.

[863] Józef Różański's secretary reported that he detested Poles with a passion. See the testimony of Teofila Weintraub in Ruta Pragier, *Żydzi czy Polacy* (Warsaw: Rytm, 1992), 91. In a rare display of compassion, Różański is believed to have commuted the death sentence of Home Army leader Colonel Franciszek Niepokólczycki to a long term of imprisonment because of the latter's assistance for the Jewish insurgents during the Warsaw ghetto revolt of April 1943. See Tomasz Balbus, "Pułkownik 'Halny': Przywódca Polski Podziemnej," *Nasz Dziennik*, June 10–11, 2009. In 1981, Różański requested that he be buried in the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw, asserting that he had considered himself a Jew in 1945 as well as 1953. See Andrzej Paczkowski, "Jews in the Polish Security Apparatus: An Attempt to Test the Stereotype," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 16 (2003): 460. Obviously, in his case, the operative animus was not just Communism but Berman's Jewish background. Another credible witness, the renowned immunologist Ludwik Hirszfeld, wrote privately to Różański's brother Jerzy Borejsza (Goldberg), another high-placed Stalinist functionary, in 1947 that "Jewish nationalists loathe Poles more than Germans … The only reason I do not underscore these matters publicly is because I do not want to cause problems for the Jews and not to deepen the chasm that is being dug between Jews and Poles by Jewish nationalism." See Barbara Fijałkowska, *Borejsza i Różański: Przyczynek do dziejów stalinizmu w Polsce* (Olsztyn: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, 1995), 139. Another Jewish observer who wrote about the negative impact on Polish-Jewish relations of the Jewish Communists, especially those who worked in the Security Office and considered themselves to be Jews first and foremost, is Feliks Mantel. See his *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie: Próba analizy* (Paris: Księgarnia Polska w Paryżu, 1986), 11. General Zygmunt Berling, himself of Jewish origin, had already noted the hostility that Jewish Communists (from Poland) in Moscow displayed, as early as 1943, toward anyone they regarded as a Polish patriot. See Zygmunt Berling, *Wspomnienia: Przeciw 17 Republice* (Warsaw: Polski Dom Wydawniczy, 1991), 283–84. Knowledgeable foreign observers such as Viktor Lebedev, the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw, also remarked on the (pro-Jewish) nationalistic leanings of such leading Jewish Communist leaders as Jakub Berman, Hilary Minc, and Roman Zambrowski. See Aleksander Kochański, Galina P. Muraszko, Albina F. Noskowa, Andrzej Paczkowski, and Krzysztof Persak, eds. and comp., *Polska w dokumentach z archiwów rosyjskich 1949–1953* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Institut slavianovedeniia RAN, Federalna Służba Archiwalna Rosji, Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii, and Rosyjskie Archiwum Państwowe Historii Społeczno-Politycznej, 2000), 41–47. Jews who decried Jewish nationalism could find themselves reported to the security police. Jankiel Kulawiec states that he "never experienced any nastiness from Poles" during the Communist party's anti-Jewish campaign in 1968, but was denounced by a communist Jew, and interrogated by the security police, for saying that he did not see the difference between Jewish and Polish nationalism. See the testimony of Jankiel Kulawiec, 2004, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/jankiel-kulawiec>.

[864] Światło's second (Jewish) wife, whose surname he assumed, stated that her husband had a strong attachment to his Jewish nationality. Although already a Communist Party member in prewar Poland, he married his first wife in a Jewish religious ceremony. See Andrzej Paczkowski, "Tak było: Trzy twarze Józefa Światły," *Rzeczpospolita,* December 20, 2003, and December 27, 2003. For a detailed biographical sketch see Leszek Żebrowski, "Światło Józef," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2006), vol. 17, 92–94.

collapsed in 1968."[865] As one commentator observed, "a nonobservant Jew is still a Jew. In addition, being Jewish is not something that can be turned on, off, and on again like water from a tap. These 'new-old' Communist Jews had been Jews all along!"

The growing chasm between the sensibilities of Poles and assimilated Jews was more subtle but still very real. By and large Poles viewed the Soviet-imposed Communist regime as illegitimate. The perception was that it persecuted Poles, but not Jews, for political reasons. On the other hand, most Jews appeared to view the regime as the country's legitimate government or at least one they had no interest in actively opposing. Their communal organizations openly curried its favour if only to be able to function. So when Irena Borman Bakowska, a young Jewish woman from an assimilated family, was asked by fellow university students to join an anti-Communist underground organization she was aghast at what she heard:

> The next day when I went to the University I had a pleasant surprise. Two of my colleagues, a young, good-looking man and a pleasant woman I had noticed before, approached me and invited me for a walk between classes. …
>
> We sat on a bench and the man spoke. "We have watched you for some time and we have gotten to like you. You seem to be a serious, intelligent and responsible young woman. We would be very happy if you agreed to join our group."
>
> "Your group? You mean a students' fraternity?" I asked in joyful anticipation.
>
> "No, not exactly. We have in mind other, more serious activities. Poland needs our help. We want to chase the Russians away from our land. We want to get rid of them. We will not hesitate to plant bombs and derail the Russian trains passing through Poland," he said.
>
> The woman added a few words describing the future plans of their terrorist group. I could not believe what I had heard. I was speechless for a moment. Then I responded, "Are you out of your mind? Did we not bleed enough? Must we continue to fight endless battles we cannot win? I believe that we should heal our wounds first, get stronger, and wait for a proper opportunity to reclaim our country. I don't understand you, I don't agree with you."
>
> They looked at me calmly, said nothing, and we parted.
>
> As soon as I got home I asked my father to join my mother, Karolina and me in a serious discussion of our future.
>
> "Father," I said, "Mother's foresight when she sent me to the Pawlos to get the paper saved our lives. You did not want to leave the Ghetto, and now you don't want to leave Poland. There is a time to stay, and there is a time to move. We simply cannot live in this country."
>
> The four of us talked for a long time. My father finally agreed, albeit reluctantly, that we should all move soon.[866]

Jan Gross, in his increasingly more strident writing on Polish-Jewish relations, insists that that Jews were *not* favoured in any way by the Stalinist authorities in either Poland or any other country:

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[865] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: The Jew in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, 1989), 2, 77.

[866] Bakowska, *Not All Was Lost,* 309–10.

> Given this evolution of the political climate in the Soviet Union throughout the 1940s, and the very close scrutiny, monitoring, and consultation that went on between East European Communists and their Moscow-based "elder brothers," the thought of Jews, or Jewish Communists, receiving preferential treatment anywhere in the region must be classified as political science fiction.[867]

Notwithstanding such bald claims, the situation on the ground looked quite different, especially in the case of Poland and Hungary. In 1948, Stalin threw his support behind the pro-Moscow Jewish faction of the Polish Workers' Party (Jakub Berman, Hilary Minc and Roman Zambrowski), despite reports from Viktor Lebedev, the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw, about their Jewish nationalist leanings, over the Polish "nationalists" headed by Władysław Gomułka. The leaders of latter group (Gomułka, Marian Spychalski, Zenon Kliszko) landed in prison while the former wielded power—until after Stalin's death—in what was the most repressive era of modern Polish history. Jewish Communist "nationalists" were—because of their servility—more palatable to Stalin than Polish Communist "nationalists."[868]

The findings of two regional historians, who meticulously researched the local power structure in Kielce—where some 250 Jews, most of them refugees from the Soviet Union who hailed from other towns, settled temporarily after the war—are significant in this regard.

> According to Krzysztof Urbański and Danuta Blus-Węgrowska, until 1946 the commander of the provincial UB [Security Office] in Kielce was Major Dawid Kornhendler, aka Adam Kornecki, a trusted NKVD operative. The deputy head of the County Office of the UB in Kielce was Albert

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[867] Gross, *Fear,* 212. Another trite observation, parroted by Jan Gross as a seemingly profound and meaningful insight, is that Jews from Poland had to seek "safety among the Germans" after the war. Ibid., 67. At the time, the Germans were the most occupied and controlled people on the face of the earth, and possibly in all of history. They were taught by the Allies that Jews could exact revenge on them with impunity (liberated inmates of Nazi camps were given weapons and allowed to kill their former oppressors). Several million German women got first-hand lessons from Allied soldiers, especially Soviet ones, that they had to "put out" on demand to appease their conquerors' sexual desires. Thus the subjugation and servility of the Germans were absolute. The Germans had to refrain from displaying their deep-seated animosity toward the Jews, whom they had stopped murdering only because the Allies had subdued their country. Moreover, the Jews who fled to Germany lived in camps segregated from the German population, and no German dared to approach them there. The situation of the powerless Roma, however, was dramatically different. Open displays of continued hatred of the Roma, who were also persecuted and murdered by the Germans in large numbers during the Holocaust, were quite evident in the postwar period. As David M. Crowe records in *The Holocaust: Roots, History, and Aftermath* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2008), at pp. 394–95:

> It did not take long after the war for the prejudices and hatred that had haunted the Roma before and during the Nazi era to reappear. As the Roma returned to various towns and villages in Germany, the old stereotypical accusations against them resurfaced. Otto Pankok [a prominent German printmaker and sculptor who befriended the Roma] observed: "Hitler had sunk, but the racial hatred has remained unchanged; to those do not believe this, I recommend a walk, accompanied by a Gypsy, in the streets of a city."
>
> Police throughout Germany began to revive prewar German offices, renaming them the *Landfahrerpolizistellen* Vagrancy Police Offices). They used the vast collection of information on Roma and Sinti gathered before and during the Nazi era to harass Roma. According to Wolfgang Wippermann, the police also used this Nazi-era network, which assumed "Mafia-like" proportions, to deny small business licenses to Roma and Sinti, and to refuse their requests for "repatriation and the restoration of their German citizenship."

[868] Bogdan Musiał, "Moskwa wybiera Bermana," *Rzeczpospolita,* April 18–19, 2009.

> Grynbaum. Captain Moryc Kwaśniewski, Eta Lewkowicz-Ajzenman, and Natan Bałanowski, a physician, were also high-ranking Jewish employees of the secret police. Wolf Zalcberg held the crucial post of interpreter with the Soviet military command in Kielce. Among the civilian bureaucrats in Kielce, the following were only the most prominent Communist activists of Jewish origin: the first secretary of the Province Committee of the PPR [Polish Workers' Party], Jan Kalinowski, the town mayor Tadeusz Zarecki, and the chief of the Organization Department of the PPR, Julian Lewin. In addition, a number of Jewish Communists worked very closely with the provincial governor, who was an ethnic Polish Communist.[869]

The chief Soviet advisor to the heads of the Voivodship Security Office in Kielce was Colonel Natan Shpilevoi.

Examples are also plentiful on a less structured level. A former Jewish charge of the Sisters of the Family of Mary, who became the director of the Jewish Children's Home in Otwock after the war, used her connections in the government to obtain a supply of clothing, blankets and shoes for the nuns' home for children in Międzylesie, which was destroyed during the Warsaw Uprising, because the Communist authorities simply would not provide any such assistance to Catholic institutions.[870] The same occurred outside Poland. A Polish Jew, who bribed some Russians to smuggle him on a truck full of other Jews destined for East Berlin, was subsequently apprehended by German police when he crossed into the western zone of Germany with his family. The Germans accused them of being Russian spies, handed them over to the Americans, and the Americans sent them back across the border to the Russians. The Russians jailed them as runaway Polish spies. David G. recalls the help they received from a Soviet judge and their continued persecution by ordinary Germans refugees:

> the Russian judge presiding over the trial was a Jew and therefore sympathized with them. During the interrogation, he uttered the secret phrase *"amchu"* which literally means, "your people," with the implication, "are you one of us?" David replied that he was, and the judge put David and his sisters on a train headed for Dresden … Subsequently, they traveled to the British zone posing as German refugees. While in transit, some Germans realized that David, Esther, and Shoshana were Polish Jews and they informed the Russian soldiers escorting the train. The Russians ordered David and his sisters off the train …[871]

In another case, a Jewish woman was arrested while attempting to sneak over the border into Germany and was sent back to Poland and jailed. Two Jewish "partisans" who were involved in smuggling Jews across the border tried to trick a Polish guard into releasing her.

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[869] Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 74. Zarecki, the mayor of Kielce, was able to get away with many corrupt practices because he enjoyed the favour of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. See Joanna Michlic-Coren, "Polish Jews during and after the Kielce Pogrom: Reports from the Communist Archives," *Polin,* vol. 13 (2000): 265.

[870] Teresa Antonietta Frącek, "Ratowały, choć za to groziła śmierć," Part 6, *Nasz Dziennik,* April 4, 2008.

[871] Lindeman, *Shards of Memory,* 135.

> [They] called the Polish guard and asked him to trade some vodka for an expensive watch they had. When the guard returned with the alcohol, the partisans asked him if he would like to have a drink with them. They killed the guard when he opened the gate, and escaped to Warsaw. The Jewish Committee in Warsaw paid 100,000 Zloty [złoty] per head to get the others out of jail.[872]

As a rule, while ignoring the murders of Poles by Jews, like those described above, Holocaust historians portray all of the Jews who were killed in the immediate postwar period as innocent victims of attacks by anti-Semitic Poles. These attacks are said to have been directed indiscriminately against all Jews and are

[872] Lindeman, *Shards of Memory*, 155.

attributed to racial hatred and/or greed.[873] Conversely, the Poles killed by Jewish henchmen of the Security Office are portrayed as "anti-Semites," who "had it coming" to them. To be sure, some Jews may have been victims of anti-Semitic attacks, but that was not the norm. Jews who held positions of authority were victims of politically motivated retaliations that targeted collaborators in the service of the Stalinist

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[873] In his overview of this topic, historian David Engel departs somewhat from the usual approach found in the literature on postwar Polish-Jewish relations, offering a far more nuanced and multifaceted interpretation of events and lowering the estimated toll of Jewish victims from all causes to under 1,000. In his conclusion, he writes (at p. 85): "By the same token, it will not do to represent anti-Jewish violence simply as a continuation of ancient hatreds that the Nazi Holocaust either intensified or, at the very least, failed to uproot, without reference to the political context in which it occurred. The bands that were most heavily responsible for killing Jews would not have existed except for the circumstances of the Communist takeover; otherwise, those who carried out the attacks would not have been in a position to do so. Moreover, the civil war enabled people who simply coveted Jewish property, without any attached political motives, to justify aggression against Jews in the guise of resistance to a new foreign occupation. The postwar context thus constitutes a necessary part of the explanation of why attacks upon Jews assumed the proportions that they did … By itself, however, the context does not provide a sufficient explanation for the phenomenon." See David Engel, "Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944–1946," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 26 (1998): 43–85. See also David Engel's forthcoming book *Między wyzwoleniem i ucieczką: Żydzi w Polsce po Holokauście, 1944–1946* (Sejny: Pogranicze), translated from the Hebrew *Ben shihrur li-verihah: Nitsole ha-shoah be-Polen veha-ma'avak 'al hanhagatam, 1944–1946* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1996). Engel's study, however, far from exhausts the topic and a great deal more research of individual incidents is required before adequate conclusions can be drawn about their cause, perpetrators and significance. In response to this challenge, U.S.-based historian Marek Jan Chodakiewicz published a compelling and ground-breaking study titled, *After the Holocaust: Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 2003), in which he documented some 600 Jewish victims. Chodakiewicz's study shows that there was a multiplicity of reasons for conflict between Poles and Jews and that anti-Semitism *per se* was only sometimes the driving factor, especially in the case of legitimate partisan formations. The vast majority of victims of partisan assaults were not Jews, and a large portion of the Jews affected by partisan operations were actually state functionaries who were not targeted specifically because of their Jewish origin. Polish historian Rafał Wnuk arrived at similar conclusions in his book, *Lubelski Okręg AK DSZ i WiN, 1944–1947* (Warsaw: Volumen, 2000), 218. An examination of 1,361 partisan operations in the Lublin region in 1944–1947 indicates that anti-Jewish rhetoric found in the low echelons did not appear to have any significant impact on the activities of the armed partisan units. No more than one percent of their operations victimized Jews (in total about a dozen Jews were killed), and in several cases where state functionaries were targeted, even Jewish functionaries were released unharmed. During the period July 1944 to April 1947, Jews were killed in Lublin province, of whom 20 were employed by or informants for the Security Office. Ibid., 362, 372, 384. Wnuk also points to the existence of robber bands, some of whom passed as partisans, who continued to operate in the forests, as well as some criminals in Polish underground units who took matters into their own hands. Ibid., 76, 218. For a penetrating overview of conditions in the Kielce province which employs the empirical methodology advocated by Chodakiewicz, see Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Podziemie antykomunistyczne wobec Żydów po 1945 roku—wstęp do problematyki (na przykładzie województwa kieleckiego)," in Wijaczka and Miernik, *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich,* 249–77. Andrzej Żbikowski, a historian from the Jewish Hoistorical Institute, has accepted a lower minimum count of between 650 and 750 Jewish deaths and concedes that many of them were not anti-Semitic in nature. See Andrzej Żbikowski, "Morderstwa popełniane na Żydach w pierwszych latach po wojnie," in Tych and Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Następstwa zagłady Żydów,* 93; Andzrej Żbikowski, "The Post-War Wave of Pogroms and Killings," in Tych and Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Jewish Presence in Absence,* 94; Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga*, 584. The most recent scholarly treatment of this topic is Julian Kwiek's *Nie chcemy Żydów u siebie: Przejawy wrogości wobec Żydów w latach 1944-1947* (Warsaw: Nieoczywiste, 2021). According to Kwiek's count, 1074 Jews (possibly as many as 1121) were killed in various circumstances, including armed robberies and assassinations of Communist functionaries, between July 1944 and the end of 1947. For a critique of Kwiek's book and the shortcomiogs of his research, see Adam Kopciowski's review in *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały,* vol. 18 (2022): 659–68.

Jan Tomasz Gross has published an exceptionally strident, polemical study—Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006), in which he charged Polish society as a whole, and the Catholic Church the anti-Communist underground in particular, with waging an all-out war against Jewish survivors in the post-Holocaust period. The book, which was lauded by like-minded authors, actually adds nothing new to the scholarship on the topic. (One Jewish academic reviewer of Gross's book from Temple University in Philadelphia likened the fate of Jews at the hands of the Poles in postwar Poland to "the exterminators of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the slave traders, and the Belgian mass murderers in the Congo," arguing that the Poles had thus "separat[ed] themselves from civilization." While ignoring the long history of lynchings and pogroms of Blacks in the United States and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Palestine/Israel, she comforts her readers that, "Whatever our faults, we have never done anything remotely like this to our Jewish citizens." See Joan Mellen, "Poland's Little Holocaust After the Holocaust," *Baltimore Sun,* July 2, 2006.) Gross relies on a limited

regime.[874] If Communist officials, who happened to be Jews, were executed in the course of their duty, it was not because they were Jews but of their role in the Stalinist apparatus of terror. They were just as likely to be executed as non-Jews filling similar positions, though the latter (non-Jews) were killed in much larger numbers. When, for example, the State Security Office in Nowy Targ was attacked in the early morning hours of April 18, 1945 to free political detainees, the Polish partisans killed all four Security agents they encountered: Jan Gadowski, the head Security officer and an ethnic Pole; Władysław Kosztyło, a

[874] Secret Soviet reports from that era also make that point. For example, Serov's report to Beria about the activities of the NKVD, dispatched from Warsaw on April 16, 1945, complains of murders of "local residents, especially Jews suspected of cooperation with our NKVD operational group," as well as attacks on "the local commune militia workers, organs of the public security and members of the PPR [Communist party]." See Cariewskaja, *Teczka specjalna J. W. Stalina,* 248. The number of Jews employed in the police and other government organs of repression was especially high in the Lublin and Białystok regions, and so was the number of attacks. A study dealing with the Lublin region shows that around twenty percent of the 118 Jews murdered during the period from mid-1944 until the end of 1946 where state functionaries and their deaths were attributable to political, rather than racial reasons. Most of the remaining cases involved robberies and property disputes and are unconnected to the pro-independence underground. See Adam Kopciowski, "Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 177–205. For a brief report about Białystok see *Archiwum Polski Podziemnej 1939–1956: Dokumenty i materiały,* no. 2 (April 1994), 61. Some Jewish memoirs also acknowledge that their postwar problems were attributable not to the fact that they were Jews, but because they were suspected of being Communists. One survivor from the Lublin area recalls: "No sooner had the Nazi occupation finished, than the Communist occupation began. The people of Poland had had enough occupation of any sort, and many of them had regrouped to fight the Communists. … one day … I was ironically brought again to the point of death, this time not for being Jewish, but for being a suspected Communist. … We were detained by nationalist troops who demanded to know if we were Jewish Communists. We denied it, of course, but I had Jewish Bibles with me … The soldiers were going to kill us, but they decided at length that they would simply hold us until they inquired about our political leanings. They confiscated our documents and all our possessions and went to their headquarters to check on us. … After midnight the others returned and all was well. They accompanied us to the next village and told us never to come back or tell anyone about their outpost." See Rachmiel Frydland, *When Being Jewish Was a Crime* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 145–46.

Ukrainian; and Jan Reichel and Julian Burzyński, both Jews.[875] In Kielce,

[875] Korkuć, *Zostańcie wierni tylko Polsce…,* 240–41, 440. Józef Kuraś ("Ogień")'s independent partisan group was also responsible for the murder of Dawid Grassgrün, a Communist activist and Jewish community leader in Nowy Targ. Ibid., 440. This book provides abundant proof, however, that it was primarily non-Jewish functionaries, agents and ordinary citizens who were killed in the Kraków region for their collaboration with the Stalinist regime. Ibid., 252–62, 387–419. Relying on discredited Communist sources, Tomasz Gross claims that Kuraś "battled the regime by killing Jews who were fleeing Poland by one of the Brikha exit routes." See *Fear,* 234. The charge has been authoritatively refuted by historian Maciej Koukuć. In fact, Kuraś passed a death sentence against insubordinates who robbed and killed two Jewish merchants near the village of Zabrzeż in February 1946. See Maciej Korkuć, "Horror podmalowany," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, March 2, 2008.

[876] Kraków, and Kalisz, functionaries of the state's own militia and military led the attack against Jews.

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[876] The massacre of 37 Jews and 3 Poles—according to the most recent research of Poland's Institute of National Remembrance (see Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 r.: Analiza możliwości badawczych," *Arcana,* no. 132 (2016): 105–24)—in the town of Kielce on July 4, 1946, is widely believed to have been provoked, if not orchestrated, by the Communist security forces. It started after a young boy, Henryk Błaszczyk, spread a story that he had been held by Jews in a building that housed Jews, for the most part returnees from the Soviet Union, alleging that Christian children's blood was being used for making matzah. The story in itself was odd, in that such charges had never been a motive for violence against Jews during the interwar period. Moreover, there is strong evidence that the boy's testimony was tampered with by the authorities. See Łukasz Krzyżanowski, "Nieznane dokumenty do historii pogromu kieleckiego: Protokoły przesłuchań Henryka Błaszczyka i Gerszona Lewkowicza z lipca 1946 roku," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów,* no. 2 (2014): 388–95. The building in question also housed housing the Jewish committee and Jews who worked for the security police, but the latter were untouched during the tumult. Contrary to a widely held misconception, the pogrom was not initiated by a frenzied mob, but rather by members of the militia and military, who, after being fired on (a few policemen were shot), stormed the building housing the Jews and did most of the killing. It also appears that the three Poles who were killed outside the building were shot by soldiers inside the building. See Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 r.: Analiza możliwości badawczych," *Arcana,* no. 132 (2016): 105–24. Of the several hundred people (at most 500) who gathered in the small area in front of the building (out of a population of 50,000), most were curious onlookers and not pogromists. The Soviet and Polish forces stationed in Kielce, who numbered in the thousands, were located as close 150 metres from the scene and could have easily dispersed the crowd and put a stop to the pogrom had they wanted to. The evidence of complicity of the Communist regime, especially the security police, militia, and military, in this tragedy is thus beyond question. The Communist authorities took full advantage of the incident for propaganda purposes, in particular to cover up evidence of fraud in a recent referendum and to blame the democratic opposition (the so-called "reactionaries") and the Catholic Church for the events. For more on this topic see: the collective work, *Kielce—July 4, 1946: Background, Context and Events* (Toronto and Chicago: The Polish Educational Foundation in North America, 1996); Michael Checinski, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism* (New York: Karz-Cohl, 1982), 17–18, 21–34; Richard C. Lukas, *Bitter Legacy: Polish-American Relations in the Wake of World War II* (Lexington, Ketucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 57–59; Stanisław Meducki, "The Pogrom in Kielce on 4 July 1946," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 9 (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 158–69; Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust,* 129–42; Bożena Szaynok, "The Jewish Pogrom in Kielce, July 1946: New Evidence," *Intermarium* (Online Journal, Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University in the City of New York), vol. 1, no. 3 (1997); Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland: A Documentary History,* Revised paperback edition (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1998), 403–420; Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 74, 172ff; Stanisław Meducki and Zenon Wrona, eds., *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku: Dokumenty i materiały,* 2 volumes (Kielce: Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1992, 1994); Bożena Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946* (Wrocław: Bellona, 1992); Tadeusz Wiącek, ed., *Zabić Żyda!: Kulisy i tajemnice pogromu kieleckiego 1946* (Kraków: Temax, 1993); Krzysztof Urbański, *Kieleccy Żydzi* (Kraków: Pracownia Konserwacji Zabytków w Kielcach and Małopolska Oficyna Wydawnicza, n.d. [1993]), 190–228; Krystyna Kersten, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 r.* (Warsaw: PISM, 1996); Jerzy Daniel, *Żyd w zielonym kapeluszu: Rzecz o kieleckim pogromie 4 lipca 1946* (Kielce: Scriptum, 1996); Krzysztof Kąkolewski, *Umarły cmentarz: Wstęp do studiów nad wyjaśnienieniem przyczyn i przebiegu morderstwa na Żydach w Kielcach dnia 4 lipca 1946 roku* (Warsaw: von Borowiecky, 1996), Jan Śledzianowski, *Pytania nad pogromem kieleckim* (Kielce: Jedność, 1998); Leszek Żebrowski, "Kielecka prowokacja," in *Encyklopedia "Białych Plam"* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2002), vol. 9, 200–206; Łukasz Kamiński and Jan Żaryn, eds., *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego,* vol. 1 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006), and the abridged English version: Łukasz Kamiński and Jan Żaryn, eds., *Reflections on the Kielce Pogrom* (Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, 2006); Leszek Bukowski, Andrzej Jankowski, and Jan Żaryn, eds., *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego,* vol. 2 (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2008). See also the following incisive critiques of writings of Jan Tomasz Gross, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, and Jacek Leociak on the Kielce pogrom: Bożena Szaynok, "Utrwalanie uproszczeń," *Więź,* vol. 61, no. 2 (summer 2018): 89–100; Bożena Szaynok, "Wokół nowej książki o pogromie w Kielcach," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały,* vol. 14 (2018): 662–67; Bożena Szaynok, "Nowe ustalenia badawcze dotyczące pogromu w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 r.," and Bożena Szaynok, "Polska historiografia po 1989 r. na temat pogromów i powojennej przemocy wobec Żydów w latach 1944–1947," in August Grabski, ed., *Pogromy Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku,* vol. 4: *Holokaust i powojnie (1939–1946)* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2019), 215–38, 511–26; Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Between Thesis, Hypothesis and Literary Fiction: A Review of Joanna Tokarska-Bakir's Book *Pod klątwą: Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego,*" *Polish-Jewish Studies,* vol. 1 (2020): 744–815. Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki takes issue with Tokarska-Bakir's claim of a silent conspiracy behind the pogrom (framed variously as a

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The charge—advanced by Jewish historians—that the pogrom in Kielce was inspired by local hostility toward Jewish survivors who wanted to reclaim their property and possessions has been authoritatively discredited, as hundreds of properties were returned to Jews in Kielce without incident.[878] Moreover, there is no evidence that anyone who had to return property to Jews, or was afraid that they might have to, was behind the outbreak of the violence in Kielce. Sources from that era, including Jewish testimonies, do not even allude to that as a factor. Furthermore, a number of Jews attest to favourable relations with Poles in Kielce after the war.[879] While attempts to reclaim property sometimes met with tragic consequences, such events occurred outside the legal channels that were put in place to address the issue of property restitution. There is no evidence that any pogrom was instigated by disgruntled Poles who had lost or feared losing property to Jews. Many thousands of properties were returned to Jews throughout Poland without incident; property disputes accounted for only a small portion, perhaps several hundred cases, of the violent

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[877] Cariewskaja, *Teczka specjalna J. W. Stalina,* 421; Anna Cichopek, "The Cracow Pogrom of August 1945: A Narrative Reconstruction," in Zimmerman, *Contested Memories,* 221–38; Anna Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie, 11 sierpnia 1945 r.* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2000), 78, 81; Jan Tomasz Gross, "In the Aftermath of the Kielce Pogrom: The Special Commission of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland," *Gal Ed,* no. 15–16 (1997): 121. Gross also mentions the following localities were Jews were attacked by the authorites: Bytom, Chrzanów, Bielawa, Legnica, Strzegom, Wałbrzych, Szczecin, and Wieluń. Two Jews who returned to Wielkie Oczy in May 1945 were killed by militiamen, one of whom was later caught and sentenced to a prison term. See the account of Kazimierz Sawiński in Kazimierz Sawiński in Krzysztof Dawid Majus, *Wielkie Oczy, Vielkochi, Velyki Ochi* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 2002); this account is also posted at <http://wielkieoczy.itgo.com/Memories/KS.htm>. (The security police and militia were also responsible for the mistreatment and murder of Germans in Nieszawa.) The rioters formed a tiny percentage of the population, mostly *lumpenproletariat*, in cities where violence occurred. In Kraków, which had a population of some 300,000, several hundred persons took part in the riot in August 1945; they were poorly educated, unskilled, and unemployed. Half of those arrested were newcomers to the city and were housed in former Jewish buildings, while the other half were state functionaries. The riots were confined to the Kazimierz district and did not affect the vast majority of the thousands of Jews who resided throughout the city. Historian Anna Cichopek, cited above, inflated the Jewish toll in Kraków to five, whereas there is only one confirmed death. See Julian Kwiek, "Wydarzenia antyżydowskie 11 sierpnia 1945 r. w Krakowie: Dokumenty," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytut Historycznego,* nr 1 (2000): 77–89. Despite this correction, Jan Gross endorsed a range of "from one to five victims" in his *Fear*, 81, and the figure of five is now cited by other writers as a credible count. See, for example, Lowe, *Savage Continent,* 204.

[878] Contrary to Jan T. Gross's thesis, the fear of loss of Jewish property and a perceived threat to material gains allegedly acquired by Poles during the war was by no means a central cause of the violence directed against Jews in the postwar period. Official records from that period confirm that Jews returning to Kielce, and elsewhere, were usually able to reclaim their property without any significant difficulties. Title to hundreds of properties was recovered by Jews in Kielce alone. For the most part, they then sold these properties to Poles before leaving Poland. Historian Stanisław Meducki summarizes the findings of his research as follows: "By the strength of a special law enacted 6 May 1945 'On Abandoned Real Estates', a strongly simplified inheritance procedure was applied. Jews could recover their property: former apartments, workshops, firms, on condition that they had not been seized by the Nazis. Courts had to examine every motion within 21 days. In Kielce, Jews did not have any difficulties with recovering their own property. As a rule, every motion was settled favorably and quickly. In most cases, the property was taken over by the relatives of the former owners, whose rights were ascertained on the grounds of witnesses' testimony. Witnesses, most often Poles, neighbors or acquaintances from before the war, testified before the court willingly, without reluctance or prejudice." See Marta Pawlina-Meducka, ed., *Z kroniki utraconego sąsiedztwa: Kielce, wrzesień 2000/From the Chronicle of the Lost Neighborhood: Kielce, September 2000* (Kielce: Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2001), 202. In Kielce alone, hundreds of buildings and other real estate were returned to former owners and their heirs by mid-1946. See Urbański, *Kieleccy Żydzi,* 180–90; Krzysztof Urbański, "Żydzi w Kielcach w latach 1939–1945," in Bukowski, Jankowski, and Żaryn, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego,* vol. 2, 41–43.

[879] See, for example, Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 187; Kamiński and Żaryn, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego,* vol. 1, 360; Bukowski, Jankowski, and Żaryn, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego,* vol. 2, 44.

confrontations that Jews experienced. Far more often, Poles came forward as willing buyers of Jewish properties and as witnesses in support of property claims filed by Jewish survivors.

An estimated 425,000 Jewish survivors,[880] as well as close relatives of deceased Jews, had ample access to property restitution under a law "On Abandoned Properties" of March 2, 1945 and two successor laws—"On Abandoned and Deserted Properties" of May 6, 1945, and "On Abandoned and Formerly German Properties" of March 8, 1946—that remained in place, with extensions, until December 31, 1948. These restitution laws were introduced as a temporary measure primarily for the benefit of Holocaust survivors and their immediate families. They instituted a simplified, expedited and less expensive process with relaxed criteria than the ordinary civil procedures that governed inheritance. Under the May 6, 1945 and March 8, 1946 laws (which restricted the pool of heirs available under the March 2, 1945 law), dispossessed owners and their heirs (spouses, children, grandchildren, parents, and siblings), whether residing in Poland or abroad, could reclaim property that was privately owned at the outbreak of the war, except for property subject to nationalization by the Polish state or intended for distribution in land reform. (The former category included factories and large commercial enterprises, whose owners were eligible for some compensation; the latter category affected primarily private landowners, almost exclusively ethnic Poles, who lost their properties without any compensation.) Inheritance claims could also be pursued via the ordinary civil procedures, which were much more cumbersome and costly, before and after this date—until abandoned properties devolved to the state at the end of 1955—by the persons enumerated above, as well as more distant relatives. Under the expedited process, municipal courts (*sądy grodzkie*) were required to rule on claims within tight timeframes, with hearings to take place no later than eight days after the date of filing of the claim and rulings within three weeks, under the May 6, 1945 law, and hearings no later than 21 days after the date of filing of the claim and rulings within six weeks, under the March 8, 1946 law. Claims were processed promptly, often the same day or within days of filing the claim, and the vast

[880] Albert Stankowski, "How Many Polish Jews Survived the Holocaust?" in Tych and Adamczyk-Garbowska, *Jewish Presence in Absence,* 205–16, here at 215–16. Citing no sources, Laurence Weinbaum, a historian associated with the World Jewish Congress, claims that "except for individual cases, the Polish authorities blocked the return of Jews from DP camps," and that this prevented them from reclaiming their property. See Avi Beker, ed., *The Plunder of Jewish Property during the Holocaust: Confronting European History* (New York University Press, 2000), 101. This bald claim is contradicted by official Jewish sources and leading Holocaust historians. Moreover, property claims were not tied to residency in Poland: anyone could claim from anywhere. Yehuda Bauer estimates that about 15,000 Jews returned to Poland from camps in Germany. See Michael R. Marrus, ed., *The Nazi Holocaust: Historical Articles on the Destruction of the European Jews* (Westport, Connecticut: Meckler, 1989), vol. 9, 527. According to Central Committee of the Jews of Poland, some 36,000 Jews who had returned from German concentration camps were residing in Poland in the middle of 1946. Many of these had come from DP camps. See Michał Grynberg, *Żydowska spółdzielczość pracy w Polsce w latach 1945–1949* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1986), 17–22.

majority of claims were successful.[881] Impecunious claimants could obtain exemptions from court and legal fees from the municipal court, and financial and legal assistance was provided by Jewish organizations.[882] A great many Poles came forward as witnesses on behalf of their Jewish neighbours and acquaintances who made such property claims.[883] The criteria to prove relationship to deceased property owners were so lax that multiple and rival claims were plentiful. Although court rulings did not confer immediate ownership on

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[881] The state of the law on abandonded property is described in detail by Judge Barbara Gorczycka-Muszyńska: "Czyje kamienice?: Prawny status mienia opuszczonego w świetle prawa powojennego," in Chodakiewicz and Muszyński, *Złote serca, czy złote żniwa,* 241–49, translated as "Whose Tenements? A Legal Analysis of the Status of Former Jewish Property in Light of Postwar Polish Law," in Chodakiewicz, Muszyński, and Styrna, *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold,* 223–31. See also Lukasz Krzyzanowski, *Ghost Citizens: Jewish Return to a Postwar City* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2020), 225ff. For the text of the Decree on Abandoned and Discarded Properties of March 2, 1945, the Law on Abandoned and Discarded Properties of May 6, 1945, and the Decree on Abandoned and Post-German Properties of March 8, 1946 laws, respectively, see: <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19450090045/O/D19450045.pdf>, <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19450170097> and <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19460130087>. For a discussion of restitution in some provincial towns see Alina Skibińska, "Problemy rewindykacji żydowskich nieruchomości w latach 1944–1950: Zagadnienia ogólne i szczegółowe (na przykładzie Szczebrzeszyna)," and Łukasz Krzyżanowski, "'Chcielibyśmy, by ten dom nie pozostał w obcych rękach': Sądowa restytucja prywatnego mienia żydowskiego w Polsce na przykładzie Radomia i Kalisza 1945–1948," in Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 493–573, 575–607, respectively.

A Jew from Lublin, who was able to recover several properties with the assistance of helpful Poles, states: "At that time, there was a Minister in the Polish government by the name of Somershteyn [Emil Sommerstein, chairman of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland in 1944–1946]. Any surviving Jew whose property had been taken by others received from the Minister a confirmation of ownership to help him recover the property. … In those days a law was enacted, that any Jew who had a store before the War which passed into foreign hands could get it back." See Shiye Goldberg (Shie Chehever), *The Undefeated* (Tel Aviv: H. Leivick Publishing House, 1985), 215, 220. According to Mark Verstandig, who served as a legal counsellor with the Ministry of Security, comprehensive legislation for the restitution of private property which had been confiscated by the Nazis (this was for the most part Jewish property), was blocked by Mieczysław Mietkowski, the deputy minister, who was himself Jewish. See Verstandig, *I Rest My Case,* 218. Nationalization of private property—such as larger commercial and industrial enterprises—also took its toll. Several industrial properties reclaimed by Jews in Częstochowa were later nationalized, as were similar properties owned by Poles. See Jarosław Kapsa, "Ocalenie matki ministrów," November 10, 2012, Internet: <http://www.cz.info.pl/zdarzylo-sie-tutaj/6553-historie-jaroslawa-kapsy-opowiesc-31>.

Under a 1960 agreement, Poland paid the United States $40 million to settle all claims by American nationals for property seized and nationalized in Poland. (This is the equivalent of $350 million in 2020, a considerable sum given the value of real estate in Poland at that time.) More than 10,000 claims were received, mostly from persons of Jewish origin, and half of them were accepted. In total, $152 million was paid out under the Polish Claims Program, which was completed in 1966. See Polish Claims Program, Internet: <https://www.justice.gov/fcsc/completed-programs-poland>. Similar agreements regarding compensation for nationalized and confiscated property were concluded with France, Switzerland, Great Britain, and Sweden. In 1960, Baroness Clarice de Rothschild won an award of $250,000 from the British Foreign Compensation Commission for real estate in Poland. See "Lady Rothschild Wins Claim for Estate Nazis Seized in Poland," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency,* May 13, 1960. The Polish government, under an Act of February 20, 1997, established a Regulatory Commission to restitute Jewish communal and religious property. More than 5,500 claims were filed, including some multiple claims for compensation. Despite the payment of $177,000 to the Theological Seminary Yeshivath Chachmey in Michigan in 1964 as compensation for a yeshiva building in Lublin taken over by the state, the Jewish community in Poland advanced a further claim on that same property and secured its return in kind in 2001. When word of the double indemnity got out, the leaders of the Jewish community openly opposed the idea of returning the property and pressed on the Polish authorities to sanction this injustice. See "Jesziwa podwójnie zwrócona," *Kurier Lubelski,* September 5, 2008. Another example of unjust enrichment at the expense of the Poles was the return in 2002, to the Jewish community in Poznań, of communal properties which, before the war, were indebted to the municipality and state for several times in excess of their value. See Wojciech Wybranowski, "Oddali z nawiązką," *Nasz Dziennik*, August 28, 2002. Bogus property and compensation claims have been brought by private individuals, many of them Jews, through the courts and other channels.

[882] Anna Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond Violence: Jewish Survivors in Poland and Slovakia, 1944–48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 82.

[883] Pawlina-Meducka, *Z kroniki utraconego sąsiedztwa/From the Chronicle of the Lost Neighborhood,* 202.

someone who was not a dispossessed owner but rather legal possession, successful claimants, or their legal representatives, were nonetheless able to sell the properties immediately after such a ruling.[884]

The existence of these procedures was well known. Jewish organizations and specialized law firms throughout the world submitted thousands of claims.[885] Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of properties were reclaimed by Jews expeditiously and without incident.[886] Based on their examination of court records for several towns, historians Alina Skibińska, Adam Kopciowski, and Łukasz Krzyżanowski have concluded that "relatively many" Jews successfully reclaimed "a relatively large number of properties" under the restitution laws on abandoned properties in place from 1945 to 1948.[887] Based on close monitoring of conditions in Poland, the *American Jewish Year Book* reported at the time: "The return of Jewish property, if claimed by the owner or his descendant, and if not subject to state control, proceeded

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[884] Barbara Gorczycka-Muszyńska, "Whose Tenements? A Legal Analysis of the Status of Former Jewish Property in Light of Postwar Polish Law," in Chodakiewicz, Muszyński, and Styrna, *Golden Harvest or Hearts of Gold,* 227, 229–30.

[885] For example, Keren Kajemet Le-Israel Ltd. alone submitted 1,821 claims for restitution by July 4, 1948. See Alina Skibińska, "Problemy rewindykacji żydowskich nieruchomości w latach 1944–1950: Zagadnienia ogólne i szczegółowe (na przykładzie Szczebrzeszyna)," in Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa*, 530–31.

[886] As mentioned earlier, hundreds of properties were recovered in Kielce alone. In 1945–1948, Jews brought 291 court applications for the return of property in Zamość. See Adam Kopciowski, *Zagłada Żydów w Zamościu* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2005), 203; Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa*, 562–63. Jews submitted 240 applications in the municipal court in Włodawa, and were able to recover real estate, houses, farm buildings, livestock, carriages, and utensils. See Adam Kopciowski, "Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 188. At least one third of the approximately 210 privately owned prewar Jewish properties in Szczebrzeszyn were reclaimed by 1950, and promptly sold to Christian Poles without incident. The local municipal court accepted the vast majority of claims submitted and often processed them on the day they were filed. The case of Szczebrzeszyn appears to be "typical" of what happened in other towns. Several properties were also recovered by more distant relatives under the normal court procedure. See Alina Skibińska, "Problemy rewindykacji żydowskich nieruchomości w latach 1944–1950: Zagadnienia ogólne i szczegółowe (na przykładzie Szczebrzeszyna)," in Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 562–63, 568–69, 571. Out of a total of 894 properties in Parczew, 301 were in Jewish hands in 1945–1946, including the most valuable ones. See Bechta, *Pogrom czy odwet?,* 217. Some 855 property restitution claims were brought before the municipal court in Łowicz. See Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Jewish Sites in Germany and Poland after 1945,* Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2008), 83 n.128. The return of property also proceeded smoothly in Radom, where several hundred properties were returned to prewar Jewish owners or their heirs. See Sebastian Piątkowski, *Dni życia, dni śmierci: Ludność żydowska w Radomiu w latach 1918–1950* (Warsaw: Naczelna Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych, 2006), 268–71. Of the 351 properties reclaimed in Białystok in 1946–1947, approximately one third were returned to Jews. See Boćkowski, Rogalewska, and Sadowska, *Kres świata białostockich Żydów,* 68. For a well-documented study regarding the situation in Szydłowiec see Grzegorz Miernik, "Losy Żydów i nieruchomości pożydowskiej w Szydłowcu po II wojnie światowej," in Jacek Wijaczka, ed., *Żydzi szydłowieccy: Materiały sesji popularnonaukowej 22 lutego 1997 roku* (Szydłowiec: Muzeum Ludowych Instrumentów Muzycznych w Szydłowcu, 1997), 135–66.

[887] Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 571, 605. Historians who did not bother to look into court records (Michael Meng) or did so very selectively (Anna Cichopek-Gajraj) assert respectively, based on sheer speculation, that the number of restituted properties was "extremely small" or "small." See Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 52; Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond Violence,* 86. While admitting she has "no comprehensive statistics" on the return of Jewish properties after the war, Cichopek-Gajraj nonetheless contends that "only a small fraction of survivors, perhaps a few thousand, perhaps less, attempted to go through the trouble of restitution." Ibid., 78. As we can see, the amount of misinformation in academic sources is astounding.

more or less smoothly."[888] In addition, thousands of properties were sold or transferred to Poles

[888] *American Jewish Year Book, 5708 (1947–1948),* vol. 49 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), 390. For a similar assessment by the Australian Federation for Polish Jews of May 15, 1947, namely that the return of property was "achieved very easily," see Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond Violence,* 70. According a 1947 report compiled by the World Jewish Congress's legal section, the Polish decree and process were comparable to those put in place in Western European countries, except for property nationalized by the Communist authorities. The latter category, moreover, affected everyone regardless of their origin. See Alina Skibińska, "Problemy rewindykacji żydowskich nieruchomości w latach 1944–1950: Zagadnienia ogólne i szczegółowe (na przykładzie Szczebrzeszyna)," in Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 571–72.

uneventfully outside this process.[889] Jews who returned to Poland from the Soviet Union and settled in the territories Poland acquired from Germany received material compensation on the same basis as Polish

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[889] Examples of Jews reclaiming their property immediately after the war ended in scores of localities throughout Poland are plentiful in Jewish memoirs and accounts. Those properties were usually sold to Poles, and occasionally transferred to rescuers. See, for example: Avraham Spielman, "My Pain in Soviet Russia," E. Leoni, ed., *Ciechanowiec-mezoh Bialystok, sefer edut ve-zikaron* (Tel Aviv: The Ciechanovitzer Immigrant Association in Israel and the USA, 1964), 596ff., translated as *Ciechanowiec-Bialystok District: Memorial and Records,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Ciechanowiec/Ciechanowiec.html> (Ciechanowiec); Oscar Pinkus, *A Choice of Masks* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 6, 23, 75 (Łosice); J. Berglas and Sh. Yahalomi (Diamant), eds., *Sefer Strizhuv ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Strzyzow in Israel and Diaspora, 1969), 255ff. (Strzyżów); D. Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Drohiczyn* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1969), 42ff. (English section) (Drohiczyn); Stanisław Zabierowski, *Rzeszowskie pod okupacją hitlerowską* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975), 189–90 (Kolbuszowa); Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution,* 142 (Zarszyn, near Sanok); *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Mielec: Sipur hashmadat ha-kehila ha-yehudit* (New York: Mielec Yizkor Book Committee, 1979), 43ff., translated as *Remembering Mielec: The Destruction of the Jewish Community,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/mielec/mielec.html> (Mielec); Julius L. Baker and Jacob L. Baker, *Yedwabne History and Memorial Book* (Jerusalem and New York: Yedwabner Societies in Israel and in the United States, 1980), 98 (Goniądz); Michael Korenblit and Kathleen Janger, *Until We Meet Again: A True Story of Love and War, Separation and Reunion* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1983), 286 (Hrubieszów); Goldberg, *The Undefeated,* 204, 211–15, 220–21 (Lublin and vicinity, Kraków); Interview with Molly Muschkies (Angenicki) and Ruth Webber (Muschkies) Ruth, dated April 25, 1985, Internet: <http://www.holocaustcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=235> (Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski); Samuel P. Oliner, *Restless Memories: Recollections of the Holocaust Years* (Berkeley, California: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1986), 182 (Gorlice); ; Henry Orenstein, *I Shall Live: Surviving Against All Odds, 1939–1945* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1987), 260 (Hrubieszów); Edith Weigand, *Out of the Fury: The Incredible Odysssey of Eliezer Urbach* (Denver: Zhera Publications, 1987), 111 (Skoczów); Rachel Leizerson, *My Story* (Melbourne: n.p., 1990), 89 (Szczuczyn); Interview with Sheila Peretz Etons, April 30, 1990, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Chełm); Alexander Bronowski, *They Were Few* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 42 (Lublin); Arnold Geier, *Heroes of the Holocaust* (Miami: Londonbooks, 1993), 219 (Skarżysko); Sara Rose, *My Lost World: A Survivor's Tale* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993), 289 (Kraków); Peretz Hochman, *Daring to Live* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1994), 222 (Warsaw); Ryszard Juszkiewicz, *Losy Żydów mławskich w okresie II-ej wojny światowej* (Mława: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ziemi Mławskiej, 1994), 144 (Mława, with incidents of property claim irregularities); William Kornbluth, *Sentenced to Remember: My Legacy of Life in Pre-1939 Poland and Sixty-Eight Months of Nazi Occupation* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994), 147 (Tarnów); Elinor J. Brecher, *Schindler's Legacy: True Stories of the List Survivors* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 364 (Kraków); Denise Nevo and Mira Berger, eds. *We Remember: Testimonies of Twenty-four Members of Kibbutz Megiddo who Survived the Holocaust* (New York: Shengold, 1994), 53 (Falenica, near Warsaw); Interview with Feliks Horn, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., dated July 19, 1994 (location not specified); Interview with Braunia Sztul, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., dated May 19, 1995 (Lublin area); Mark Verstandig, *I Rest My Case* (Melbourne: Saga Press, 1995), 204, 213 (Mielec); Abram Korn, *Abe's Story: A Holocaust Memoir* (Atlanta, Georgia: Longstreet Press, 1995), 169 (Krośniewice, Lipno); Joseph Freeman, *Job: The Story of a Holocaust Survivor* Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1996), 102–103 (several properties in Radom); Doba-Necha Cukierman, *A Guardian Angel: Memories of Lublin* (East Bentleigh, Victoria: Ester Csaky, 1997), 194–95 (Lublin); Barbara Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych* (Warsaw: ABC, 1997), 142 (Chełm), 251 (Radom); Cunge, *Uciec przed Holocaustem*, 333 (Łódź); Janusz Niczyporowicz, "Ciemność z jasnością," *Rzeczpospolita,* May 20–21, 2000 (Brańsk); Jan Prochwicz, *Żydzi skawińscy* (Skawina: MK, 2000), 84 (Skawina); John Munro, *Bialystok to Birkenau: The Holocaust Journey of Michel Mielnicki* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press and Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, 2000), 13, 221–22 (Wasilków); Samuel P. Oliner, *Narrow Escapes: A Boy's Holocaust Memories and Their Legacy* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 2000), 153 (Mszanka and Bielanka, near Gorlice); Hania Ajzner, *Hania's War* (Caulfield South, Victoria, Australia: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2000), 218 (Warsaw); Dunwill, *Trzy kolory mojego życia,* 172, 184 (Siedlce); Joseph Rosenberg, *My Name is Józef Nowak: The Life and Times of Joseph Rosenberg* (Toronto: Lifestories, 2001), 56–57 (Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski); Jerzy Jacek Bojarski, ed., *Ścieżki pamięci: Żydowskie miasto w Lublinie—losy, miejsca, historia* (Lublin and Rishon LeZion: Norbertinum, Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka–Teatr NN," Towarzystwo Przyjaźni Polsko-Izraelskiej w Lublinie, Stowarzyszenie Środkowoeuropejskie "Dziedzictwo i Współczesność," 2002), 77 (Lublin); Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2002), vol. 2 (*Dokumenty*), 376–84ff. (Białystok, Łomża, Jedwabne), 943 (Radziłów); Adam Kazimierz Musiał, *Lata w ukryciu* (Gliwice: n.p., 2002), 57 (Opacionka, near Brzostek), 104 (Tarnów), 120 (Lipiny), 124 (Brnik), 125 (Brnik), 143 (Gruszów Wielki), 145 (Dąbrowa Tarnowska), 184 (large-scale sale of Jewish houses in Tarnów), 188

resettlers who had lost their property in Eastern Poland.[890] (The vast majority of post-1948 returnees from the Soviet Union originally hailed from Eastern Poland; very few of them had legitimate property claims to advance within the territories of the shrunken Polish state.) This was unlike conditions in the Eastern Polish territories seized by the Soviet Union, where all private property was nationalized.

This reality belies the notion that Jews were prevented from or were fearful of reclaiming their property, at least through legal channels. Violent confrontations with Poles over the return of property, which did occur from time to time in villages and small towns, were clearly the exception, whereas the uneventful return of large quantities of Jewish properties, often with the support of Polish witnesses, was the norm. This reality refutes the notion, advanced by Jan Gross, that Poles were generally hostile and violent towards Jews because of their repressed guilt over for having misappropriated Jewish property.[891] On the whole, Jewish testimonies do not support this notion either. As scholar Monika Rice notes,

> Another surprising finding is that the question of appropriated Jewish property, often indicated as one of the reasons why the Polish population was hostile to the returning survivors, is almost never mentioned in Jewish testimonies after the war.[892]

Moreover, Poles did not rush to take over Jewish properties, as is often alleged.[893] A number of Jews, including members of the Security Office and Central Committee of Jews in Poland, were involved in fraudulent real estate scams, that is, misappropriation of property to which they were not rightfully

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[890] Dariusz Stola, "The Polish Debate on the Holocaust and the Restitution of Property," in Martin Dean, Constantin Goschler, and Philipp Ther, eds., *Robbery and Restitution: The Conflict over Jewish Property in Europe* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007), 240–55, here at 244.

[891] According to Jan Gross, who cites no persuasive evidence to back these tropes, "there was no social norm mandating the return of Jewish property, no detectable social pressure defining such behavior as the right thing to do, no informal social control mechanism imposing censure for doing otherwise. This is why Jews who dared to pursue the matter had to resort to the courts." See Gross, *Fear,* 43.

[892] Monika Rice, *"What! Still Alive?!": Jewish Survivors in Poland and Israel Remember Homecoming* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2017), 77.

[893] In Biała Rawska, abandoned Jewish homes remained empty throughout the war, and it was only with the encouragement of the Communist regime that they were occupied by the local poor. See Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych,* 59.

entitled.[894] Those directly involved in such scams were almost always Jews.

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[894] There are quite a few documented frequent cases of individuals and groups misappropriating Jewish property by making fraudulent claims as alleged "lawful heirs" of the deceased owners. Many examples describing these fraudulent activities are found in Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 528, 532, 536–37, 595–600. In February 1948, the local committee in Radom complained to the Central Committee of Jews in Poland: "In our city, as well as probably in other cities, there are individuals who in an underhanded manner sell abandoned post-Jewish property. There are few Jews in Radom (around 100), but those involved in this shameful procedure must count a dozen or so [*kilkanaście*]." In fact, even the committee's own members were involved in property shenanigans in Radom. See Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 598–99; Łukasz Krzyżanowski, *Dom, którego nie było: Powroty ocalałych do powojennego miasta* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2016), 307. In the latter book, Kryżanowski discusses a Jewish ring of fraudsters, known as *lipiarze* ("hogwashers"), that specialized in pretending to be the valid owners of Jewish properties, and then turning around and selling these properties. The local Radom Jews were ashamed of these swindlers. Valid Jewish owners were surprised to learn that their properties had already been claimed, and even sold. They used false testimony and documents, and relied on a sophisticated network of false witnesses. If in danger of being caught, they quickly sold the property, if necessary for a low price. The *lipiarze* were broad-based and active not only in Radom but in many other towns, for example, Łuków. See Krzyzanowski, *Ghost Citizens,* 255–61. Krzyżanowski admits (at p. 215) that many Poles freely returned the Jewish belongings that had been entrusted to them.

In the Białystok region, there was even a Jewish mafia-like ring working closely with Jews in the State Security Office (Samuel Faber or Farber, Eliasz Trokenheim) that fraudulently "reclaimed" scores of Jewish properties belonging to deceased Jews (in Białystok, Łomża, Jedwabne, and elsewhere), sold them to Poles, and divided the profits among the ring members. See Jerzy Kułak, "Szaleniec i inni," *Karta* (Warsaw), no. 15 (1995): 121–22; Krzysztof Persak, "Akta postępowań cywilnych z lat 1947–1949 w sprawach dotyczących zmarłych żydowskich mieszkańców Jedwabnego," in Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego,* vol. 1, 379–87; Jerzy Kułak, "Faber i S-ka —krótka historia pewnego przekrętu," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 6 (June 2002): 80–83; Anna Pyżewska, "Losy ludności żydowskiej w województwie białostockim w latach 1944–1949—wybrane problemy," in Wijaczka and Miernik, *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich,* 289–91.

Some Jewish communal property was also restored to the Jewish community, but afterwards sometimes sold. For example, the Jewish community sold the synagogue property in Zabłudów for the sum of 130,000 złotys. A copy of the authorization for this transaction issued by the Voivodship Association of Jewish Communities can be viewed in the Internet at <www.tiac.net/users/bartman/zabludow/datner%20document>. Shiye Goldberg states: "I met a Jew from Levartow [Lubartów] who was engaged in selling synagogues, now abandoned." See Goldberg, *The Undefeated,* 227. In Warsaw, a Jewish criminal ring operated in cahoots with the Security Office searching for gold hidden away by Jews at the start of the war. See Joanna Żelazko, "Złoto dla Bezpieki," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 10 (October 2003): 66–67. In Częstochowa, the surviving Jews emptied the ghetto of large quantities of furniture that remained and sold it to the Poles. See the account of Leo Scher, Louisiana Holocaust Survivors, The Southern Institute for Education and Research, posted at <http://www.tulane.edu/~so-inst/scher.html>. A mundane example involved picking fruit and digging up vegetables from "abandoned" orchards and farms and then selling them in street markets. See Dan Porat, *The Boy: A Holocaust Story* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 140.

[895] Many Jewish properties were heavily indebted with loans and tax arrears when the war broke out in 1939, and these charges were never paid off.[896] Some Jews who came into the possession of property of other Jews or Poles did not want to return the property to the rightful owners after the war.[897] Jews also appropriated non-Jewish property in central Poland after the liberation.[898] However, such information does not fit the portrayal of Polish-Jewish relations, nor is it keeping with the myth that Poles made fortunes—both during and after the war—by misappropriating Jewish property. About six hundred returned to Poland from Palestine in the summer of 1947 and in February 1948.[899] In fact, some 14,500 Jews requested visas to

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[895] There are quite a few documented cases of individuals and groups misappropriating Jewish property by making fraudulent claims as alleged "lawful heirs" of the deceased owners. Almost all of those directly involved in known scams were Jews. See Łukasz Krzyżanowski, "'Chcielibyśmy, by ten dom nie pozostał w obcych rękach': Sądowa restytucja prywatnego mienia żydowskiego w Polsce na przykładzie Radomia i Kalisza 1945–1948," in Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 597 ("Niemal wszyscy bezpośrednio zaangażonwani w ten proceder, o których wiadomo, sami byli ocalałymi z Holokaustu."). A returnee to Kraków recalled: "To prove title, one had to obtain a death certificate and then a court order … It was sufficient to find somebody who could state that he had witnessed somebody's death in the ghetto, a concentration camp, or other place of murder. For a small fee many were ready to sign such statements, no matter whether they were truthful or not … Sometimes the presumed dead … unexpectedly came back … By then it was too late." See Henryk Vogler, *Autoportret z pamięci,* Part 3: *Dojrzałość* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1981), 7. The problem of fraudulent claims was significant enough for the American Joint Distribution Committee to write: "The Polish courts have become increasingly alerted to the 'racket' of some Jews in going around making a business of making claims for the restitution of property belonging to people they know or did know, alleging that they are relatives or that they are the persons to whom the property belongs." The Central Committee of Jews in Poland also expressed concerns about this abuse, but appears to have made little effort to stop it. At one of its meetings in August 1946, the following comment was said to have aroused "general cheerfulness": "News travels to Kraków from smaller Jewish communities that Jews started to sell houses which were not theirs. … Jews sell houses of those who live abroad." See Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond Violence,* 85. Jewish organizations outside Poland, such as the Jewish community in Stockholm (who complained to the Joint office in Warsaw), also reported abuses detected by their members when they attempted to claim property belonging to close relatives. See Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 537. An Italian historian, Carla Tonini, puts a bizarre spin on this shameful episode. Providing no hard evidence, Tonini suggests that it was Poles who instigated these scams and duped or corrupted Jewish survivors into taking part in them. See Carla Tonini, "The Jews of Poland after the Second World War: Most Recent Contributions of Polish Historiography," *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History,* no. 1 (April 2010), Internet: <http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=211>. In actual fact, as the sources cited earlier show, it was Jews who invariably initiated and drove these transactions. Christian Poles could not have succeeded in posing as Jewish owners and heirs; the Jewish community would never have tolerated it. At most, they could have acted as false witnesses for Jewish claimants. See Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 597.

[896] Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa,* 158, 163.

[897] See, for example, Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych,* 178, which mentions the case of a Jewish woman who did not want to return to the rightful Polish owner items looted from the latter's home during the war. See also Hurman, *Pod osłoną nocy,* 124.

[898] Some 800 Jews from the Łódź ghetto and newly arrived Jews "immediately took over many of the better houses formerly used by Germans and [acquired] the great quantities of supplies found there." According to Cichopek-Gajraj, "In the immediate days after liberation, such wild lootings and takeovers of German (or any abandoned) property were common among Jews and non-Jews alike." See Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond Violence,* 71.

[899] Ori Yehudai, "Displaced in the National Home: Jewish Repatriation from Palestine to Europe, 1945–48," *Jewish Social Studies,* vol. 20, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 69–110, here at 77. Poland's Communist authorities censored a newspaper report about the return to Poland of 435 Jews from Palestine in 1946. See Archiwum Akt Nowych, GUKPPi W 3, t. 1/7, k. 6: "Polska drugą ojczyzną," *Gazeta Ludowa,* October 1, 1946, as cited in Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów,* 105. For an example of a returnee, see the testimony of Alina Fiszgrund, March–August 2005, Centropa, Internet: <https://www.centropa.org/biography/alina-fiszgrund>.

return to Poland from Palestine in 1947, but these applications were effectively blocked after the intervention of the Jewish Agency.[900] A Jewish family who immigrated to Israel from Poland in 1957 returned to Poland in 1959, having encountered

> the essential silence about the Holocaust in Israel, the reluctance to speak about it. Survivors were seen as weaklings and victims, and those who had perished were referred to as "cattle led to the slaughter." Even speaking Yiddish was discouraged, as it was viewed as the language of victims. This outlook has changed by now, but it was extremely pervasive in the late 1950s.[901]

Nonetheless, the immediate postwar period was the optimal time for Jewish survivors and their heirs to have reclaimed non-nationalized property, especially since Jewish survivors were not receiving compensation from Germany at that time. The drawback was that property values were very low (according to one report, the selling price of real property in April 1948 was about ten percent of its prewar price[902]) and many buildings were badly damaged or destroyed. So many eligible Jews didn't bother to make restitution claims when they had the opportunity. It could be argued that forgoing the chance to claim restitution *then*, and advancing such claims *now,* when the value of real estate has increased due to the collective rebuilding efforts of the Polish population (and inflation), gives rise to unjust enrichment. Some authors assert that purchasing properties from Jews in the immediate postwar years was itself a form of theft because the price of property happened to be depressed. However, if the purchase of property in those times was as lucrative as this claim implies, Jews would have been scooping up properties rather than selling them off. The reality was quite different. There was enormous uncertainty about the status of private property. The Communist regime had little regard for private property, especially large estates and industrial and commercial property, which were nationalized. A large portion of Jewish-owned buildings had been destroyed during the war throughout Poland, notably in Warsaw, which was reduced to rubble. Such uncleared tracts of land had virtually no value. (As part of the emergency measures taken to rebuild Warsaw, all private immovable property within the boundaries of the prewar city was nationalized under the so-called Beirut Decree of October 26, 1945.) Since Poles received no compensation for the immense material losses they suffered during the war, it would grossly unfair for Jews, especially non-heirs, to be fully compensated by Poland for material losses incurred by the Jewish population. Rather, they should be looking to Germany for compensation, perhaps via an arrangement whereby both Poles and Jews (about 10% of the prewar population) would share proportionately in such a settlement.

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[900] In order to prevent the exit of these Jews from Palestine, and to discourage additional applicants, the Jewish Agency appears to have come to an arrangement with the Polish Consulate in Mandatory Palestine, whereby they would cause endless delays for the Jews who wanted to return so they would lose their desire to go back. See Nir Hasson, "The Untold Story of the Jews Who Left Mandatory Palestine," *Haaretz*, February 16, 2018, based on Meir Margalit's book (in Hebrew) *Returning in Tears: Emigration During the British Mandate Period.*

[901] Grol, *Saving the Tremors of Past Lives,* 76.

[902] Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond Violence,* 78–79.

The notion that heirless property should be transferred to Jewish organizations is not only inconsistent with recognized norms of law (such property devolves to the state), but also with the teachings of the Torah. One of the most important elements in deciding the rightful ownership of a lost article is the issue of *yei'ush*—determining whether the original owner despaired of ever recovering the lost article. Both Moses Maimonides in *Laws of Robbery and Lost Property,* 6:2, 11:11, as well as Rabbi Joseph Caro, in the *Code of Jewish Law, Choshen Mishpat,* 259:7, declare: "He who saves [retrieves] valuables from a lion or a bear, or from the bottom of the sea or from idolaters, they belong to him, even though the original owner stands and protests." The concept of *yei'ush,* played a significant role in determining the rightful owner of property lost during the Holocaust, as the following case illustrates. The original owner had hidden the property (valuable books) in the Kaunas ghetto, and the property had never fallen into the hands of the Nazis. After the war, he sought its return from the person who had found it and retained it.

> In his *teshuvah*, Rabbi [Ephraim] Oshry cites the Talmud (*Baba Kamma* 114a), the Rambam (*Hilkhot Gezeilah* 6:6), and the *Shulhan Arukh* (*Hoshen Mishpat* 259:7), which agree that he who snatches his neighbor's property from predatory beasts, or draws it from the bottom of the sea, or seizes it when it is being swept away by a flooding river, or rescues it from pillaging idolaters, acquires title to the property. The reason for this, as explained by Rashi, is that the owners, in the face of its apparently certain loss under such circumstances, abandoned all hope of ever recovering it. According to the Halakhah, this *yei'ush* (abandonment), together with the change in actual physical possession of the property (*shinu'i reshut*), is sufficient to transfer ownership. Hence in our case, even if there were claimants to the property from the family of those slain by the Nazis, undoubtedly they would have abandoned any hope of ever receiving it. For it was known to everyone that after the Nazis had mercilessly slain and slaughtered the Jews, they would plunder any object of value that had belonged to their victims. Whatever was left of insignificant wealth, such as the objects about which the inquiry was being made, were left *hefker*—free for everyone to take. Thus there need be no qualms about taking them. … Therefore, in the instant case, Rabbi Oshry ruled that it was certainly permissible to take the objects left behind by the martyred family. Even in the unlikely event that relatives of the deceased would appear at some future time to lay claim to the property, there would be no legal obligation to return it to them.[903]

Jews from small towns who had resettled in large cities such as Łódź, Wrocław and Szczecin, where they received furnished apartments from the authorities, often saw with their own eyes how their home towns were now in ruins. Returning to Biłgoraj in November 1948 to construct a communal grave for the

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[903] Irving J. Rosenbaum, *The Holocaust and Halakhah* (New York: Ktav, 1976), 124–25. Rabbi Rosenbaum elaborates on Rabbi Oshry's reasoning behind his ruling in favour of the finder: "Certainly, says Rabbi Oshry, the original owners of these books abandoned all hope of recovery once the Nazis had taken them. Not only their possessions but also their very lives were in the hands of the Germans to do with as they wished. Thus there is no question that there was *yei'ush*. Moreover, the *Rashba* holds that in the case of a conquering army, there is not even a need for *yei'ush*, since the conqueror acquires title to the booty under the laws of war. Anyone who subsequently acquires it from him also has a clear title according to the *Rashba*. The Germans were a conquering army." Ibid., 129.

murdered Jews, they found a town that was virtually destroyed and had the appearance of a desert.[904] A Jew who returned to Ciechanowiec for a few days in 1948, and managed to sell the lot on which his house once stood, recalled,

> All Jewish homes in the New City … up to the synagogue were torched to the ground. … I encountered a similar situation in the Old City. A whole line of Jewish homes destroyed … Not a sign was left of the synagogue or schools. All the stores and fixtures that once made up the market had disappeared.[905]

A Jew who returned to the town of Leżajsk in 1950 described what was still largely a ghost town:

> I looked around and saw nothing of what I had been used to seeing. The marketplace was empty and desolate. …
>
> I began to stroll slowly through the streets of the marketplace, between the rows of empty houses. A few of them were occupied by people who moved to here from Lemberg [Lwów] and its environs. [These were people who had to leave interwar Polish that was incorporated into the Soviet Union. *M.P.*] The rest of the houses had their windows boarded up by protruding planks, and a few were destroyed. …
>
> I reached my father's house. It was a ruin, a heap of old bricks. All the rows of houses next to it were empty, and the stores were closed. From the other side of the house of Reb Dovidel Rothman until the house of Yosef Kanner, there were only two government stores open. One was in the inn of Reb Yosele Sobel, which was now a cloth store. … The second store was in the workshop of Reb Shmelke Horowitz. It was now a vegetable store. Of all the rows of houses, only the house of Reb Bunim Zonenbilik was inhabited.
>
> In the side of my uncle Kalman Kirshenblatt, the homes of Reb Zalman Naritzienfeld, Ber Strauch, Wolf Wachs, and Meir Strauch had stood. Now there is no memory of these houses. All of them had been destroyed. The ruins had been cleared, and in its place there was a well-tended decorative garden.
>
> A store had been opened in the house of Mendel Spergel. This was the only leather store in town, and it was also government owned. The director was the youngest of the Krawociks, the youngest of three brothers who lived in a house next to the house of Reb Chaim Miller. I entered the store. Krawocik recognized me immediately and asked me to sit down. He had enough time on his hands to engage in a lengthy conversation. Purchasers did not pester him, for there were none at all. When

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[904] A. [Abraham] Kronenberg, ed., *Khurbn Bilgoraj* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1956), Polish translation: *Zagłada Biłgoraja: Księga pamięci* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz.terytoria, 2009), 233.

[905] Avraham Spielman, "My Pain in Soviet Russia," E. Leoni, ed., *Ciechanowiec-mezoh Bialystok, sefer edut ve-zikaron* (Tel Aviv: The Ciechanovitzer Immigrant Association in Israel and the USA, 1964), 596ff., translated as *Ciechanowiec-Bialystok District: Memorial and Records,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Ciechanowiec/Ciechanowiec.html>. However, this does not prevent the author from complaining that the Poles "had taken over the Jewish trade," as if commercial life was supposed to have simply ceased after the Jews had disappeared from the town. The author also noted: "Some of the Christians recognized me and outwardly acted friendly. They greeted me, tipped their hats, and even invited me to visit with them. They expressed sympathy over the loss of my family."

> I asked him about why there are no purchasers in the store, he answered me that the farmers do not come to town. Every village has its own cooperatives that supplied all their needs. …
>
> I arrived at the street of the synagogue. More than half of the street was completely destroyed. There was no remnant of the Great Synagogue, the Beis Midrash, and the kloiz of Reb Chanan Elimelechs. The new synagogue, which was built by Reb Berechel, stood intact. The Germans turned it into a flourmill. The houses from between the Hebrew School until behind the Beis Midrash were destroyed, and the empty field on that site, as well as the empty field that extended to the house of Elia Metzger served as a parking lot for the wagons of the farmers during the fairs.
>
> The homes of Leibche Beril, Yankel Zales, and Falek Goldbrenner were completely destroyed. The guesthouse was in top condition, and was inhabited by Poles who had left Lemberg (Lvov) and the surrounding area, who were transplanted to Lizhensk [Leżajsk]. The bathhouse was intact, however its windows were sealed and boarded up, and its doors were locked. …
>
> I continued on to the Street of the Train. I saw that a saloon had been opened in Potasher's house. I entered. Urbanski, from the pig market, was standing near the food and drink area. He was pouring drinks for the farmers. He recognized me and came to me, greeted me, invited me to sit down, and immediately brought a bottle of drink and glasses. He requested that I drink with him. I suspected that he wished to apologize for something, that he thought that I suspected that he himself took the belongings of Potasher. He immediately began to relate that Yechezkel Potasher leased the saloon to him, and he pays monthly rent to the lawyer Jaszowci, who was appointed by Yechezkel as a guardian of his property.[906]

Although such devastation was commonplace throughout Poland, although Poles with few exceptions suffered dramatic pauperization during the war, and although factories and commercial enterprises—to the extent they still existed—were nationalized postwar,[907] some scholars have envisioned an alternative, rosy reality for Poles in the impoverished postwar period—one based on sheer myth, or rather fairly transparent misrepresentation. According to Andrzej Leder, "a large segment of [Polish] society" enjoyed "a social promotion into the middle class," having "marched to their new social position over the corpses of murdered Jews."[908] (Is such scurrilous writing acceptable among scholars in any area other than Polish-Jewish relations?) In reality, Communist apparatchiks—among whom Jews were well represented—constituted communist Poland's new "middle class.

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[906] M. Spergel, "My Visit to Lizhensk in 1950," in *Memorial Book of the Martyrs of Lezajsk Who Perished in the Holocaust,* Internet: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Lezajsk/Lezajsk.html>, translation of Rabin, *Lizhensk,* 111–14.

[907] See, for example, Jerzy Kochanowski, *Rewolucja międzypaździernikowa: Polska 1956–1957* (Kraków: Znak Horyzont, 2017), 131–37, 330.

[908] This statement was cited with apparent approval by Larry Ray and Sławomir Kapralski, who essentially repeated it in their own words as well: "for large segments of post-war Polish society, the murder of Jews offered a chance to fill in the gaps in the economic and social space for social advancement." See Larry Ray and Sławomir Kapralski, "Introduction to the Special Issue—Disputed Holocaust Memory in Poland," *Holocaust Studies,* vol. 25, no. 3 (2019): 209–19. See also Andrzej Lederer, *Prześniona rewolucja: Ćwiczenia z logiki historycznej* (Warsaw: Krytyka Polityczna, 2014).

Most incidents involving Jews had concrete causes, and not mythical ones like blood libel charges, which were but a pretext for some of the uneducated rabble that such occurrences inevitably attract. In Rzeszów, a crowd directed their anger against the Jewish residents of a building where the mutilated body of a 9-year-old girl who had been raped was found murdered. The authorities protected the Jews likely responsible for this heinous crime and they escaped punishment, thereby reinforcing the sentiment that Jews could behave with impunity.[909] In some cases, those who had harmed Jews struck at Jews who denounced or threatened to denounce them to the Soviet or Communist authorities.[910] Many Jews were simply the victims of ordinary crime, especially robbery motivated by greed rather than anti-Semitism.[911] Some of these murders were carried out by Soviet soldiers and falsely attributed to the Polish underground.[912] In a few cases, Jews were killed in the course of robbing Poles or sentenced by the courts for killing fellow Jews. A Jew from Brańsk confided that after the war ended groups of Jewish survivors—some of them dressed in Polish military uniforms—went around robbing in the Białystok area.

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[909] Krzysztof Kaczmarski, "Pogrom, którego nie było—wydarzenia w Rzeszowie 11–12 czerwca 1945 r.: Glosa do *Strachu* J. T. Grossa," *Glaukopis,* no. 11–12 (2008): 263–307; Krzysztof Kaczmarski, "Pogrom, którego nie było," *Nasz Dziennik,* June 27, 2008; Krzysztof Kaczmarski, *Pogrom, którego nie było: Rzeszów 11–12 czerwca 1945 r. Fakty, hipotezy dokumenty* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Oddział w Rzeszowie, 2008).

[910] Yechiel (Henry) Eisenberg, who worked in a flour mill at the time, recalled the background to an attack on Jews that took five lives in Klimontów in April 1945:

> Before the war a Jewish man had owned the mill, but during the occupation Polish people ran it. The son of this man had been sheltered from the Germans by Poles, and when the Russians took over, he reclaimed the mill. He got into trouble because he kept on threatening to expose some anti-Semites once the war was over. And for this he was murdered in his shop.
>
> One day a Jewish woman who was married to a Gentile told us that some anti-Semitic Poles were planning to kill the Jews who lived in the town because a Jew had exposed them to the Russians. That night about 5 Jews were murdered …

See Yechiel Eisenberg, "My Life in Poland (1922–1949)," *The Ivansk Project e-Newsletter,* Issue Number 16, January–February 2006, 16. See also Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 161.

[911] Zbigniew Romaniuk documents the murder of three women and a man in Brańsk where the motive was robbery. He also mentions a Jewish testimony which refers to a Jew who was killed for stealing a peasant's cow, a vital possession for a poor farmer to survive. See Romaniuk, "Brańsk and Its Environs in the Years 1939–1953: Reminiscences of Events," in *The Story of Two Shtetls,* Part One, 89–90, 102. Examples of robbery in the Kraków voivodship can be found in Julian Kwiek, *Żydzi, Łemkowie, Słowacy w Województwie Krakowskim w latach 1945–1949/50* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 1998), 25. Five out of nine Jews killed in Radom were the victims of robbery, and a political motivation may have been involved in the other deaths. See Krzyżanowski, *Dom, którego nie było*. See also Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga,* 350–51, which mentions the activities of a criminal gang who killed both Poles and Jews in Piotrków Trybunalski.

[912] For example, the murder of four members of the Berger family in Połaniec, near Staszów, in April 1945 is wrongly attributed to the Home Army; in fact, it was the deed of drunken Soviet soldiers, a fact covered up in the official incident report. Interestingly, the commander of the State Security Office in nearby Sandomierz, which had carriage of the investigation, was a Jew named Captain Hipolit Duliasz. See Dovid Schnipper, "My Town Plontch," in Elhanan Erlich, ed., *Sefer Stashov* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Staszów in Israel and in the Diaspora, 1962), 633ff., translated as *The Staszów Book,* Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/staszow/sta633.html>; compare with "Odpowiedź na apel Mariana Wojciechowskiego z USA w sprawie stosunków polsko-żydowskich w Połańcu, a szczególnie w sprawie okoliczności śmierci żydowskiej rodziny Bergerów w kwietniu 1945 r.," *Zeszyty Połanieckie: Czasopismo Towarzystwa Kościuszkowskiego w Połańcu* (2005): 6–23. Another Jew describes the murder of a family acquaintance who was caught looting in Lower Silesia and shot by the Russians. See Bolesława Proskurowska, "Memories," in Mizgalski and Sielski, *The Jews of Częstochowa,* 346.

Just before the front advanced a special unit of the NKVD, with whom a few local Communists and Jewish partisans who knew local conditions well cooperated, undertook a reconnaissance of the Polish underground. …

Even those [Jews] who did not attain higher positions [in the government] had connections in those institutions. This allowed many of them to make large sums of money in dealings with property left behind by their co-religionists. …

It was beneficial to have friends in the security office because for some of the Jewish partisans, banditry became second nature. After the war they continued to engage in robberies and no one was ever charged on that account. On the other hand, on the basis of Jewish testimonies many charges were laid against Poles and Belorussians who collaborated with the Germans in the Holocaust. In the rush, a number of entirely innocent people were falsely charged.

Only a small number of Jews were engaged in banditry. … Jankiel Kac [Rubin] recalls: "A few months after the liberation, my cousin and another man, Icek B. [Broida], went to steal two cows from some peasants. The farmers caught them. My cousin managed to escape but Icek was killed. I did not go out to steal. … I could not understand how it was that they (my cousin and his friends) always had so much meat. … My cousin tells me that they go around stealing. They ask me to join their group. 'We'll go and steal a calf from a Pole. Niomko, Wolf and I are going.' … I go to steal for the first time. After a while I tell them that I'm going back. … After a few hours they returned with a calf."

Jankiel Kac [Rubin] further recalls that, "In 1945 we lived on Kupiecka Street in Białystok. One night someone knocks on the window. It was my cousin Pejsach Brojcman, who now lives in Australia, and Josif, on their bikes. Their knapsacks were full of clothes and shoes. Brojcman was dressed in the uniform of a Polish corporal and wore an army cap. I ask them where they're coming from. 'We went on a small assignment near Knyszyn where we robbed a teacher.' I thought to myself: when they lived in the forest and went to steal that was something else, because they wanted to live. But why do they continue to steal after the war? If Icek [Broida] had not gone to steal he would still be alive. They did not have to rob."[913]

Arnold Feinreich was the leader of a criminal gang that robbed and killed Poles and Jews in a number of localities. On December 13, 1947, in Sopot, his gang murdered 76-year-old Anna Górska, a Jewish survivor, and raped the family's 16-year-old Polish nanny. Feinrich and a Pole were eventually caught by the authorities and executed.[914]

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[913] Piotr Szczepański (Zbigniew Romaniuk), "Pogromy, mordy i pogromiki," *Kurier Poranny,* April 12, 1996 (no. 87/1691), edition AB. See also Zbigniew Romaniuk, "Brańsk and Its Environs in the Years 1939–1953: Reminiscences of Events," in *The Story of Two Shtetls,* Part One, 29, 90; Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 115–16. Characteristically, a Jewish survivor turns these Jewish robbers into victims of the Polish Home Army: "Josl's brother Itchale, was a happy seventeen year old teenager. … They both survived the war but soon after Itchale Broida got killed by polish [sic] AKA, Josl was no more the same man. He left Poland with a curse on his lips …" See Goldberg, *A Sparkle of Hope*, 171. For examples of Jews who returned to rob or denounce their Polish benefactors after the Soviet entry, sometimes in their new capacity as Communist militia, see Tadeusz Bednarczyk, *Życie codzienne warszawskiego getta: Warszawskie getto i ludzie (1939–1945 i dalej)* (Warsaw: Ojczyzna, 1995), 308–309.

[914] Grzegorz Berendt, "Wykolejeni," *Biuletyn Insytutu Pamięci Narodowej,* no. 11 (November 2010): 85–90.

Zygmunt Klukowski was a physician and Home Army member who lived in the small town of Szczebrzeszyn, near Zamość. During the war he penned a detailed diary that has come to be cited frequently by Holocaust historians as a model of objectivity. Ignored by those historians, however, is Dr. Klukowski's diary describing conditions in Poland after the country's "liberation" by the Soviet army.[915] It presents a shocking picture of a world turned upside down. Rather than a return to law and order, as was the case in Western Europe, a wave of new repression on par with the Nazi occupation descended on the country. The vast majority of the Polish population rejected the legitimacy of the new order, and many opposed it with arms. Social ills that came to the forefront under Nazi rule deepened. Assaults and robberies by criminal elements were frequent occurrences. Killings were committed by various factions including the NKVD, Soviet soldiers, the military, the Security police, and the People's Militia. Despondency and demoralization also set in among the partisans, who continued to hide out from the oppressive arm of the Stalinist regime. They carried out desperate acts of retaliation and sometimes engaged in common banditry, which the underground, fighting for its very existence, was powerless to deal with. A formerly upstanding citizen, "Podkowa," known to Klukowski, robbed a church, tearing up the floor to locate a hidden valuable. Klukowski writes:

> During the last several days there have been many cases of robbery in our region. There seems to be a direct connection between the demoralization evident in the circles of former underground soldiers and the robberies. Some of them cannot sit still without any action, and without ongoing military discipline they look to robbery for both excitement and fulfillment of their daily needs.
>
> The fight against banditry is very difficult. Today's authorities are helpless. The underground tolerates the situation and is not involved in any actions to eliminate the guilty parties.

Klukowski's diary shows that Jews generally perished in the same or similar circumstances as Poles during that period—sometimes at the hands of unknown persons and in circumstances that remain very murky. The striking difference is that Jews were not victimized by the new regime, which they generally supported and in whose structures they were overrepresented. While under arrest, Klukowski repeatedly encountered Jewish Security agents and functionaries.

> *August 14, 1944*
> The situation there [in Zamość] is getting worse. On Saturday the NKVD arrested "Kabel." … Yesterday in Zwierzyniec, Mr. Szuszkowski from the Zamoyski Estate, and a few others, were arrested. … The NKVD are still searching for "Adam," "Podkowa," and "Grom." The "Borowka" [Borówka] situation has become even stranger. Two days ago he went to a meeting at the NKVD office and never returned.
>
> *August 29, 1944*

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[915] Zygmunt Klukowski, *Red Shadow: A Physician's Memoir of the Soviet Occupation of Eastern Poland, 1944–1946* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland, 1997), especially 12–122.

We have received information of new arrests. A couple of weeks ago in Tomaszow [Tomaszów Lubelski] the NKVD arrested a local physician, Dr. Jablonski [Jabłoński]. He is now behind the wire in Majdanek. In Jozefow [Józefów] "Zagloba," [Zagłoba] and in Nowiny "Selim" have been arrested.

September 7, 1944

The NKVD and Berling Army agents are very much interested in Szczebrzeszyn. Against they have been searching for "Wrosz" and "Mlot" [Młot].

September 22, 1944

Tonight members of the PPR [Polish Workers' Party] killed two men of the Home Army; "Bur," commandant of the post in Latyczyn and a former school teacher, and "Ryzy" [Ryż], an older man who was a retired policeman and most recently lived on a small farm near Radecznica.

October 2, 1944

Again more people were arrested. … A few days ago, as revenge for the murder of "Bur" and "Ryz," several members of the PPR were killed. One of them was the secretary of the commune Radecznica, Szczerba. In the forest near Osuchy the remains of Inspector "Kalina" were found.

October 10, 1944

Late in the evening on Sunday, Soviet troops encircled the village of Maszow [Tomaszów]. Going from house to house, they arrested approximately three hundred men, all of draft age, and transported them to the military barracks in Zamosc [Zamość]. It seems that this is the new way of forcing enlistment in the so-called Polish army under Russian command. Until now, voluntary recruitment has been a complete fiasco.

October 16, 1944

Somewhere near Zamosc [Zamość] a Jew, Sawicki, was killed. He had been a leader of the Zamosc Communists. We have been receiving more and more information concerning cases of desertion from the Berling Army. Soldiers are fleeing with their arms and uniforms, sometimes in organized units.

November 14, 1944

In Zamosc [Zamość] two Soviet officers were killed … Because of this, we expect severe repercussions.

November 19, 1944

New regulations have been posted. It is legal to walk on the streets only between 7:00 A.M. and 7:00 P.M. It is illegal to allow anyone to stay overnight without permission from the militia post. Window blackouts will be strictly enforced. All typewriters must be registered with city hall. Anyone who does not obey these regulations will face a military court. Now we are under a new occupation. It reminds us of the times under German occupation.

November 21, 1944

Yesterday evening around six two bandits with hats pulled low over their eyes and scarves covering their faces, armed with handguns, entered my quarters. A third one stayed out in the corridor. Within a moment of entering they began terrorizing us, ordering us to lie on the floor. The leader beat and kicked me while ordering me to pay him 100,000 zlotys [złoty]. I gave him all I had, approximately 45,000 zlotys. He then went to my wife's room and together with his companion began taking everything that had any value. They stole my wife's jewelry, three watches, almost all of my underwear, shoes, and suits. Within half an hour they had taken money and items worth over half a million zlotys. … The leader kicked and beat me once again. He told me that this was punishment for the ill treatment of his soldiers, which began in 1939 and continued until a few months ago. …

I was physically hurt by the beating and kicking, but more than that mentally hurt by the false accusations. In 1939 I had given up everything to organize help and treatment for the wounded soldiers. The same was done during the occupation and also after the disarmament of the Home Army. …

It is becoming very popular to explain the robberies as patriotic acts and acts of punishment. What happened to me is a sad example of the demoralization among the soldiers of the underground movement. …

We have troubles of other kinds. Our best people are perishing one after another. …

December 14, 1944

Our situation is terrible, almost hopeless. Terror is growing. In Zamosc [Zamość], during the interrogations, the NKVD began beating the prisoners.

December 20, 1944

Last evening was very bloody. At around seven o'clock several people were killed, the hatter Milaraski and his wife, the shoemaker Hojda, his wife, and his mother-in-law, old Hojda who was visiting, and also the metal worker Zbik [Żbik]. Letter carrier Golen [Goleń] and his wife and his wife were taken to an undisclosed location. He had been a known Communist even before the war, and during the eight days of Russian occupation in September 1939, he had been a member of the Red Police. He has probably since been liquidated. Everyone who has been killed was believed to be a Soviet confidant. After the killings every valuable item was taken from the houses. The killing of those people at exactly the same time was a big surprise in town. Those who are truly NKVD informers are scared to death.

December 23, 1944

The few people who still carry on [as partisans] are left to themselves. Many times their decisions are wrong. Banditry is spreading, and no one tries to stop it. Propaganda does not even exist. I have not received any illegal newspaper from the region or district for quite some time. The authority and importance of the organization diminishes day by day.

Many young men who refuse to be drafted are hiding out in the small villages and are trying to organize their own units. It is impossible to keep them in line.

January 10, 1944

A few days ago in Zwierzyniec, young Podczaski of the "Podkowa" unit was killed by a militiaman. The history of the Podczaski family is very tragic. Both parents died in the Bilgoraj [Biłgoraj]

prison, tortured during interrogation. One Podczaski was killed during Home Army action against the Germans.

January 26, 1945

On the walls of many buildings [in Zamość] are numerous announcements. Near the entrance to the city hall is a sign that reads, "Down with the bandits of the Home Army."

January 27, 1945

But today a detachment of Polish soldiers, probably from the security in Zamosc [Zamość], arrived and began arresting people. Supposedly more than ten people were transported to the Zamosc prison, or to the NKVD post in Klemensow [Klemensów].

February 3, 1945

In the Zwierzyniec security service a Jew named Bolerman [Dawid Biberman[916]] is very active. He also knows many people.

February 5, 1945

Tonight the following persons were arrested …

Yesterday during a search in Kawenczyn, Berling soldiers killed a teenager, Mazur. But the most important event is the liquidation of Bolerman [Biberman], the new militia commandant in Zwierzyniec. He was shot at ten in the morning as he entered his office.

February 13, 1945

I learned that Bolerman [Biberman] was liquidated by "Sten" Niedzwiecki [Niedźwiecki] and "Huzar" Jozwiakowski [Jóźwiakowski].

March 2, 1945

"Podkowa" says that an internal fight against banditry is beginning. People involved in it have been warned to stop, otherwise they will be shot. … "Sten" Niedzwiecki, who was unable to refrain from banditry, was shot by Lieutenant "Czarny." "Czarny" is now very active in diversion activities.

March 26, 1945

I was in Zwierzyniec. There is a feeling of hopelessness, and spirits are extremely low. People cannot accept the thought that the electoral process does not exist any more. …

At around nine in the evening heavy gunfire was heard. After a short while the local militia commander, Miroslaw [Mirosław] Pinda, was brought in wounded. At the same time over a dozen bolsheviks appeared, led by an NKVD major.

March 28, 1945

In Radecznica two soldiers who came to collect quota deliveries [i.e., mandatory requisitions of grain, produce and animals from farmers—M.P.] have been killed.

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[916] Adam Kopciowski, "Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 184–85.

In Skierbieszowo [Skierbieszów] militiamen and the head of the village council were killed and their bodies burned. From all directions we receive news about attacks on militiamen and members of security. Desertions are on the rise also.

April 1, 1945

He related to me the details of "Wir's" latest action. He had organized a massive attack on a prison camp, but a couple of hours earlier the prisoners had been deported to an unknown location. So they disarmed the two hundred soldiers, guards, and officers, among them a Jewish major who was probably the camp commandant. Some were interrogated, gave important testimony, and were shot.

April 5, 1945

Among them "Sten" and "Piorun" (Ryzner). It so happens that they had carried out a score of robberies. Also, Ryzner was accused of seventeen rapes and "Sten" of a dozen or so. There was no other solution, they had to be liquidated because warnings and reprimands did not work.

May 14, 1945

Today I have encountered an example of how the forest, alas, sometimes causes a breakdown of morality and produces bandits. … the son of the brewery manager in Zwierzyniec. As the father could not control him in Zwierzyniec, he sent the boy to Lozic [Łozice] where he was supposed to attend the gymnasium … But the young man organized a gang anyway and carried out several assaults. He robbed the municipality … and also attacked the gymnasium manager, killing him and severely injuring a five-year-old girl. The boy is lost; he finally will be liquidated.

May 15, 1945

The war with Germany is over; the people are free in many countries, but we still live in difficult conditions, exposed to violence, terror, and barbarian attacks from our so-called friends who are in fact no better than the occupying Germans. … The curfew has been moved to 10:00 P.M., but when it is dark, nobody goes on the streets for fear of meeting the "comrades," who are known to be robbers. … [Their attitude] has become more hostile, you can even hear open threats, especially when the Russians are drunk.

May 21, 1945

The mood is gloomy in Zamosc [Zamość]. Some second lieutenant from security has been killed. There are many "fresh baked" second lieutenants in the streets. They do not look like officers. They are young boys with not-too-intelligent faces who convey an unpleasant, strange feeling. In any case, such a corps of officers is not at all a credit to the army.

June 8, 1945

Some days ago a bolshevik informer was abducted into the forest in Zamosc [Zamość] along with his wife and daughter. The young Zienkiewicz, the son of the brewery manager in Zwierzyniec, was killed in an attack by bandits in Lazamiec [?].

June 17, 1945

I noticed that the years of conspiracy, the underground life, and specific conditions of their work have left a peculiar stamp on these men. They live mostly in a relatively limited world, they only see underground fighting, they are removed from normal social life … They regard themselves as idealistic messengers, ready to despise and push around anyone who is not part of their conspiracy. They are ready to act, fanatics of a kind, ready to fight out solutions to problems, people of dulled sensitivity toward the acts of violence and illegality they command, for instance, various expropriations, decisions regarding the liquidation of dangerous people, etc. At the same time, they are people willing to sacrifice, risking their lives, being pursued, persecuted, and searched, without a home of their own for years, leading a wandering existence, often dirty and lice-infested, without shelter. They have but one aim in view, the final victory, in which they believe fanatically. There are many things about them that shock and irritate me, but in spite of that I feel better than anywhere else among these crazy partisans, people of the forest and the underground.

June 20, 1945

Last night a young girl, Stasia Olszewska, close cousin to Romanowski, was taken from her flat and liquidated. Much valuable information was extracted from her during the interrogation, including her participation in composing a new list of people to be arrested.

June 21, 1945

The young Sawicowna [Sawicówna] has been liquidated in Szperowka [Szperówka]: she was the daughter of the former Communist assistant general.

June 28, 1945

Yesterday in Zwierzyniec, boys from the forest appeared at dinnertime at the home of Szymanski [Szymański], a miller, and severely beat a controller of the mills from Zamosc [Zamość] as well as an important official in charge of the mills from the estate administration.

July 8, 1945

Some weeks ago a Jew, Luft, the son of the new brewery manager was liquidated in Zwierzyniec. That same day old Luft was on his way to Zamosc [Zamość] in a country wagon, carrying 217,000 zloty. Along the way he and his driver were stopped by boys from the "forest." They took care of Luft their way and the driver was set free.

January 12, 1946

At five o'clock on Tuesday morning, January 8, I was awakened by knocking at the door. After opening I saw a line of officers and soldiers from security. …

I was taken to the militia post. There were many security men present. In the commandant's office three officers lolled carelessly on the settee; one of them was wearing a Polish military coat with a glistening silver star of a second lieutenant on the epaulets, but he was also wearing a Russian fur cap with a Soviet red star instead of the Polish eagle. …

Around seven in the morning we were loaded onto a truck already packed tightly with security men. After traveling in this unpleasant, cramped way, we arrived at Zamosc [Zamość] and stopped in front of the security office located in the house of Czerski, near the collegiate church. The Gestapo had kept a post there during the German occupation. …

That afternoon … Finally the door was unlocked and my name called. The jailer took me to the security building … where the "inquisitorial prosecutor" sat. No one else was present. I sat at the table facing him. As I learned later, he was an Ukrainian, Second Lieutenant Leluch. He took a sheet of paper and wrote identifying remarks about the interrogation. …

May 11, 1946

Last night a group of Soviet soldiers attacked the house of a young farmer, Ochmanski [Ochmański] ("Wrzask"), in Brody Duze [Duże]. They robbed the house, and as they left they fired a series of shots at "Wrzask," who was lying on the floor, and killed him on the spot. The same night the Soviets robbed a warehouse of the Rolnik [farmers'] cooperative.

May 19, 1946

Today "Hak" (Grudzinski [Grudziński]) was killed in Radecznica by security agents … They beat him before he died; his hands and legs were broken.

May 22, 1946

The town as well as neighboring villages are deeply saddened. Last evening women leaving the river where they had been washing linen, found the body of "Kawka" in a willow brake. … he had been arrested at night by two men in civilian clothing. … The examination showed twelve gunshot wounds, mostly into his back, back of the head, and sides. Also, his right thigh was fractured and there were numerous indications of a beating by clubs, such as was done to "Hak" in Radecznica some days ago.

June 7, 1946

Among other events, the militia post has been disarmed in Radecznica. The commandant of the post, Zalewski, was killed. Prisoners have revolted in Bilgoraj [Biłgoraj], and many have managed to escape.

June 25, 1946

I am writing this on toilet tissue in the security in Zamosc [Zamość]. I came back home from Bilgoraj [Biłgoraj] yesterday to immediately resume my numerous activities at the hospital. Suddenly, around half past six in the evening, I was summoned from my flat by two men; Second Lieutenant Skorek from security wanted to see me. Both of them were in civilian clothing. They told me they had been ordered to bring me to security in Zamosc immediately … I was finally loaded onto a large truck. I was accompanied by three young Jews, Skorek, and another gentile. It was easy to see that Skorek was a secondary person there. The Jew who had come with Skorek to arrest me was the important one. And he was the only one to sit in the cab.

We arrived in Zamosc at seven thirty. In the security room I met the president of the district PSL [Polish Peasants' Party], Denkiewicz, and a young village boy. We were not allowed to talk. I sat for two hours in that room, and then one of the Jews who had accompanied me took me to the office on the fourth floor where a secretary wrote down my personal details. … When the Jew left for a moment the secretary began talking to me. … That short talk was helpful for me because when the Jew returned and wanted to take me down to the cells, she told him to place me somewhere else, namely in an empty, third-floor room near the flat of a Soviet captain.

August 18, 1946

Arrests happen often in our area, and they are difficult to evade as they are made by men in civilian clothing. By that method they captured the popular regional commander … Those whom it might concern were very interested in the death of a well-known security agent, Second Lieutenant Skorek. … He had been a treacherous man. He had been commandant of the security post in Szczebrzeszyn for some time. He was the one who arrested me with the help of a Jew from Zamosc [Zamość] in June.

September 8, 1946

The underground movement in our area has been regenerating itself also. My personal feeling is that a new period in the history of the underground in Poland begins, that we enter a new stage in the fight for independence.

Far more Poles than Jews fell victim to banditry and politically motivated murders in the volatile period following the Soviet entry.[917] Violence and lawlessness were encouraged by the conduct of the Soviet occupiers and their illegitimate puppet regime. Conditions were exacerbated by the breakdown of societal norms after almost six years of wartime turmoil, the abundance of weapons available to criminal elements, the disintegration of the anti-Communist underground, and the lack of social and political stability in the aftermath of the war. To reduce the situation of Jews in this complex political reality to one of victimhood due to alleged near universal Polish anti-Semitism is a perversion of the historical record. To accuse Poles in general of killing or attacking Jews simply because they were Jews is a racist trope. As Polish historian Krystyna Kersten has argued, and Marek Jan Chodakiewicz has demonstrated in his study *After the Holocaust*, it was most often the case that attacks on Jews were not motivated by the mere fact that they were Jews.[918] Moreover, the vast majority of Poles did not take part in attacks on Jews and and often remained on amicable terms with Jews they knew.[919] Likewise, the vast majority of Jews did not directly

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[917] Zbigniew Romaniuk documents numerous cases of robberies, assaults and murders perpetrated on Poles by criminal groups, including Jewish ones, the security police and Red Army soldiers in the Brańsk region during this period. See Romaniuk, "Brańsk and Its Environs in the Years 1939–1953: Reminiscences of Events," in *The Story of Two Shtetls,* Part One, 89–98. In the small town of Czyżew, nine Poles and nine Jews were killed in retaliations against Communist collaborators in March and May 1945. See Kazimierz Krajewski and Tomasz Łabuszewski, "W odpowiedzi 'damom'," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 6 (June 2006): 103.

[918] Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule in Poland, 1943–1948,* 216. For an informative overview of the scholarship on this topic see Grzegorz Berendt, "Violence against Jews in Poland, 1944–47: The State of Research and its Presentation," in Antony Polonsky, Hanna Węgrzynek, and Andrzej Żbikowski, eds., *New Directions in the History of the Jews in Polish Lands* (Boston: Academic Studies Press and POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, 2018), 442–51.

[919] In a private letter sent by a Jewish woman in Poland to an acquaintance in the West, the author wrote in May 1946: "In the so-called Aryan society there are very many people who help Jews, [and] defend them…" See Zofia Borzymińska, "'I ta propaganda zapuszcza coraz nowe korzenie…' (Listy z Polski pisane w 1946 roku)," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów,* no. 2 (2007): 227–34.

experience violence at the hands of Poles.[920] But, it would have been surprising had Jews *not* also been killed in the civil strife that consumed an estimated 100,000 victims in 1944–1947. Since Jews—at one point as many as 250,000 of them (the numbers fluctuated as Jews kept arriving from the Soviet Union and leaving for the West)—constituted more than one percent of the country's population, one would expect them to account for at least 1,000 of those killed during that period. (What is surprising is that the same authors who bemoan the Jewish deaths have scarcely anything to say about the other 98 percent of the victims of that period.) The single largest—and most *feared*—persecutor in Soviet-dominated Poland was the Security Office, and its leadership was to a large degree Jewish. Since many Jews aligned themselves with the Communist rulers, it is not surprising that they would have experienced problems on that account. Moreover, as the statistics compiled by historian Marek Jan Chodakiewicz suggest, it is an open question whether numerically more Poles suffered at the hands of Jews, than vice versa, in that period.

The vast majority of Jews who lost their lives in the postwar period were not killed by members of the Polish armed underground, but by individual malfeasants acting on their own initiative.[921] Many, if not most, of the Jews killed by the underground were functionaries of the Communist regime, but these executions are generally attributed to anti-Semitism in Jewish sources.[922] It is also worth noting, however, that Jewish or Polish Security personnel who fell into the hands of Polish insurgents were not routinely eliminated. It depended on their past behaviour and local conditions. For example, when the head of the Łomża Security Office, Eliasz Trokenheim, who declared his nationality as Jewish, was apprehended and disarmed by a unit of the nationalist National Armed Forces-National Military Union (NSZ-NZW), Captain Bolesław Kozłowski, the deputy commander of the Białystok region, ordered his release. When members of that formation later fell into the hands of the Security Office shortly after, they were released by

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[920] A Jew who returned to Węgrów, his home town, opened a restaurant that was patronized by Poles and prospered. When he was assaulted by a security policeman (a customer), "The restaurant grew quiet. The patrons advised me to go to the commanding officer and tell him what happened. The man had assaulted me for no reason. They even offered to testify on my behalf." See Shraga Feivel Bielawski with Louis W. Liebovich, *The Last Jew from Wegrow: The Memoirs of a Survivor of the Step-by-Step Genocide in Poland* (New York, Westport, Connecticut, and London: Praeger, 1991), 156.

[921] According to a survey of survivor accounts in the archives of the Jewish Historial Institute in Warsaw, of the 54 recorded attacks on Jews only ten or so indicated that the attackers were members of the Polish armed underground. The survey also found that the violence against the Jews reached its highest intensity in the first half of 1945, and that the attacks subsided around the end of 1945, which raises issues as to why a pogrom occurred in Kielce in July of 1946, which was clearly unconnected to the Polish underground, despite Communist and Jewish claims to the contrary. See Magdalena Siek, Aleksandra Bańkowska, and Agnieszka Jarzębowska, "Morderstwa Żydów w latach 1944–1946 na terenie Polski na podstawie kwerendy w zbiorze 301 (Relacje z Zagłady) a Archiwum ŻIH," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów,* no. 3 (2009): 356–67.

[922] For example, the killing in July 1946 of Chaim Nachum Przenice (Henryk Pszenica), the local commander of the State Security Office or Citizens' Militia in Kałuszyn, is attributed solely to his being a Jew. Although serving in the Stalinist apparatus of terror, by his own admission, Przenice longed to leave Poland and live among his fellow Jews. His death elicited the following comments, which underscore the identification of Jews with the Soviet-imposed regime: "The Nazi beast was not dead. It survived in the hearts of the Polish underground, the fascist anti-Semitic bands who licked one's fingers with the blood of six million murdered Jews, and were still not satisfied. They grit their teeth and lay in ambush in every corner." See Golda Goldman, "Henryk Przenice," Talmi (Wloka), *The Community of Sierpc,* 477–78.

Trokenheim. Before leaving Poland in 1968, Trokenheim paid a visit to Bolesław Kozłowski and their wives later started up a correspondence.[923]

Painting a dire picture of the postwar fate of all Jews, even death camp survivors, Martin Gilbert writes:

> Liberation did not always bring allies or safety: on 2 April 1945, on the liberated soil of Poland, Leon Feldhendler, one of the leaders of the Sobibor [Sobibór] death camp revolt in 1943, was murdered by Poles. … on March 19, [1946] one of only two survivors of the death camp at Belzec [Bełżec], Chaim Hirszman, gave evidence in Lublin of what he had witnessed in the death camp. He was asked to return on the following day to complete his evidence. But on the way home he was murdered, because he was a Jew.[924]

Polish historians paint a different picture of these events. The handful of Jews from Lublin who lost their lives, out of thousands who took up residence there, were, for the most part, connected to the Security Office. Leon (Leibl or Leib) Feldhendler has become a symbol of those murdered by Poles "as Jews." However, there is no record of Feldhendler's death in the extensive Lublin police archives from that period, and the date and circumstances of his death are rather murky. According to historian Adam Kopciowski, he

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[923] Konrad Kozłowski, "Wspomnienie o ojcu," *Glaukopis,* no. 7–8 (2007): 169–70.

[924] Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, 789, 817.

was likely shot in an armed robbery gone bad.[925] Chaim Hirszman was not killed on the street because he was a Jew; rather he was liquidated in his home by a small group connected to Freedom and Independence (*Wolność i Niezawiłość*—WiN), a pro-independence underground organization, because he was an "active and dangerous functionary" of the Security Office in Lublin. Jewish sources state that, after he joined the

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[925] The lack of police records and investigation, typically found in other cases, is surprising given Feldhendler's profile and connections. In addition to the many versions of his death given by Jewish survivors and cited by Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 164, 179 (the perpetrators are identified as "AK," "NSZ" or "mobs of anti-Semtic Poles"), Yad Vashem historians attribute Feldhendler's death to "local nationalists." See Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations,* vol. 5: *Poland,* Part 2, 691. According to Dov (Berek) Freiberg, an escapee from Sobibór, Feldhendler went to a village near his home town to negotiate the return of some possessions left with a farmer. When he did not return to Lublin that same day, his friends went out to look for him and found him dead at the side of the road, not far from the village. See Freiberg, *To Survive Sobibor,* 419. Philip Bialowitz, an escapee from Sobibór, states that that Feldhendler was killed in his tannery in Lublin, together with another young Jew who was asleep there, in broad daylight, simply because he was a Jew. See Philip Bialowitz, as told to Joseph Bialowitz, *Bunt w Sobiborze: Opowieść o przetrwaniu w Polsce okupowanej przez Niemców* (Warsaw: Nasza Księgarnia, 2008), 235. In the English version of his memoir, however, Bialowitz does not mention the circumstances of Feldhendler's death, or that there was allegedly another victim, but simply states: "He has been shot by unknown assailants. Nobody knows the motive for the murder. … we guess that Leon has been murdered because he was a prominent Jew who was helping other Jews to live [by employing them in his leather factory]." See Philip "Fiszel" Bialowitz with Joseph Bialowitz, *A Promise at Sobibór: A Jewish Boy's Story of Revolt and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 155. Miles (Shmoil or Meelek) Lerman, Feldhendler's business partner at the time, states that Feldhendler was killed in his home by "Polish extremists," but the motive is unclear. See Interview with Miles Lerman, dated July 17, 2001, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Historian Shmuel Krakowski states that Feldhendler was killed in June 1945 in his Lublin apartment on 4 Kowalska Street by "a Polish anti-Semitic gang". See Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed,* 249. Chaskiel Menche, who shared the premises at 4 Kowalska Street, states that Moishe Blank's son was executed there by the Home Army but that no one else was harmed. Feldhendler was shot, allegedly by the Home Army, afterwards when he was living with Esther, Moshe Blank's son's former girlfriend; he managed to jump out the window and was taken to a hospital where he died. See the interview with Chaskiel Menche, 1983, Internet: <http://www.sobiborinterviews.nl/en/search-interviews?miview=ff&mizig=317&miaet=14&micode=804b&minr=1412836> (Menche makes the bizarre claim that the Polish underground chopped off the feet of a Jew in a Lublin hospital. That claim is discredited in Adam Kopciowski, "Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 186.). Another Jewish source places the attempt on Feldhendler's life, allegedly by the Home Army, on April 3, 1945. See Jules Schelvis, *Sobibor: A History of a Death Camp* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007), 182, 234. According to Feldhendler's wife (girlfriend?) Esther, who was present at the time but was not harmed, Feldhendler was shot in their apartment on 6 Złota Street on April 2, 1945, and died in hospital three days later. The hospital records, however, give his date of death as April 6, 1945. She provides no information about the identity of the culprits or the motive for his murder, but seems to have known them. According to a police report, a Polish woman named Hanna Gil was killed at the same time, possibly Feldhendler's housekeeper. However, her death is not mentioned in Jewish sources, which is a sad commentary on the value placed on the loss of Polish lives.

In a radical departure from an earlier claim (that Felhendler was shot at the same time as Hersz Blank—see Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 179), Polish historian Adam Kopciowski acknowledged that Feldheldler dealt in gold and and that robbery may have been the motive for his demise. However, it does not appear that anything was stolen from his apartment. See Hanna Krall, *Wyjątkowo długa linia* (Kraków: a5, 2004), 114–16, 131; Adam Kopciowski, "Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 190–91; Paweł P. Reszka, "Gdy życie ludzkie straciło wartość," *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Lublin), January 17, 2008. Kopciowski reiterates the information that Feldhendler was a gold dealer in a later publication and identifies the source of that claim. See Adam Kopciowski, *Lejba (Leon) Feldhendler: Szkic biograficzny* (Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2018), 21. It is not entirely clear, however, where the gold came from. After the entry of the Soviets, Jewish survivors returned to Sobibór to dig up money and gold that had been buried there. Jewish survivors were also known to have fought over the spoils and stolen from one another. See the testimony of Saartje Engel Wynberg [Wijnberg], Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Interview code 7684 (Segments 254 and 255); Oral history interview with Selma Engel, Accession no. 1990.426.1, RG-50.030.0067, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (transcript, pp. 26-27); Oral history interview with Chaim Engel and Selma Saartje Engel, Accession no. 1988.A.0060, RG-50.549.02.0014, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (transcript, pp. 53–54; at p. 135, we learn that Jewish partisans stole the valuables the Engels gave to their Polish rescuers); Oral history interview with Selma Engel, Accession no. 1994.A.0447.10, RG-50.042.0010, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (transcript, p. 19; at p. 13, Selma states all the Jewish men who escaped from Sobibór, except her husband, abandoned their girlfriends there; she also states that Polish Jews were not nice to foreign Jews). According to Chaim Zylberklang, Feldhendler traded with Russians and even travelled

Communist partisans, he was recruited by the Soviet NKVD and reappeared in Lublin after the liberation working for the Russians. In fact, he was an investigator with the Department of Combating Banditry, whose mandate was the liquidation of the armed anti-communist underground.[926] Another example of the liquidation of a Communist collaborator is Hersz Blanke (Arie Lajbl Blank), who was sentenced to death by the Polish underground. As an agent of the dreaded Security Office in Lublin, Blanke is believed to have been responsible for the deaths of many Home Army members.[927] Chaskiel Ajzenchand ("Kośka"), who actively cooperated with the NKVD and Security Office in arresting Home Army members in the Żelechów area, was also liquidated by the Polish underground on April 11, 1945.[928] The execution in Parczew, on February 5, 1946, of four state functionaries—three Jews and one Pole—by a WiN unit is referred to as a "pogrom" in Jewish literature, even though the Jews were targeted as Security and militia officers.[929] A

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[926] A brief account of Hirszman's assassination, on March 19, 1946, by one of the participants (based on court records) is provided in Henryk Pająk, *Konspiracja młodzieży szkolnej 1945–1955* (Lublin: Retro, 1994), 130–31. See also Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 135, 149 n.12. For confirmation that Hirszman was a member of the Security Office, a fact that Jewish sources generally pass over in silence, see Alina Cała and Helena Datner-Śpiewak, eds., *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce 1944–1968: Teksty źródłowe* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1997), 43; Dariusz Libionka, "The Life Story of Chaim Hirszman: Remembrance of the Holocaust and Reflections on Postwar Polish-Jewish Relations," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 34 (2006): 219–47; Adam Kopciowski, "Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 184–85. Libionka suggests that the principal motive for the assault on Hirszman was the desire to obtain weapons. For a source based on Jewish evidence that acknowledges Hirszman's Soviet ties, see Robin O'Neil, *Belzec: Stepping Stone to Genocide: Hitler's Answer to the Jewish Question,* Chapter 10 (under "Escapes"), Internet: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/belzec1/belzec1.html>.

[927] Five Home Army members were arrested soon after, sentenced to death and executed in connection with Blanke's execution on November 4, 1944. Five other Jews who shared the same premises at 4 Kowalska Street in Lublin, including Toivi Blatt and Stanisław Szmajzner, were not harmed. There is still some uncertainty among historians as to who was behind this execution, as well as the motive. See Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 134, 149; Zofia Leszczyńska, ed., *Straceni na Zamku Lubelskim: Dokumenty procesu 11 żołnierzy AK (kwiecień 1945)* (Lublin: Czas, 1995); Zylberklang, *Z Żółkiewki do Erec Israel,* 49–50 n.123; Adam Kopciowski, "Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 183–84. Some sources claim Blanke was imprisoned in Sobibór, but he is not listed among the known survivors. See Schelvis, *Sobibor,* 168; Hanna Krall, *The Woman from Hamburg and Other True Stories* (New York: Other Press, 2005), 64–65, 81–83. At least two other escapees from Sobibór joined the Security Office after "liberation": Toivi Blatt, who assumed the name Stankiewicz, and Yehuda (Leon) Lerner, who, at the age of 18 (sic), became the deputy commander of police in Radom in January 1945 (until the summer of that year), after a stint in a partisan unit led by Chil Grynszpan. See Schelvis, *Sobibor,* 232, 236. Both Toivi Blatt and Stanisław Szmajzner went looking for the person who had initially sheltered Blatt and then turned on him and left him for dead. Not finding him at home, Szmajzner wanted to kill the Pole's daughter, but Blatt prevented Szmajzner from shooting her with his gun. See "Ucieczka z piekła—z Tomaszem Blattem rozmawia Marcin Wroński," *Gazeta Petersburska,* 2010. Internet: <http://www.gazetapetersburska.org/pl/node/880>.

[928] Sulej, *Zdrada i zbrodnia,* 186.

[929] Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust,* 138–40; Wnuk, *Lubelski Okręg AK DSZ i WiN, 1944–1947,* 357; Bechta, *Pogrom czy odwet?*, 241–73; Dariusz Magier, "Pogrom ubeków," *Najwyższy Czas!*, February 14, 2004. As Mariusz Bechta points out, some 40 Jews from Parczew, mostly former partisans, were allowed to set up a "defence militia" which was utilized by the security police to strike at the anti-communist underground. See Bechta, *Pogrom czy odwet?,* 169–70. On Parczew see also David Engel, "Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944–1946," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 26 (1998): 70–72. Several Jewish police officers, former partisans of Grynszpan, deserted their posts after this incident.

number of militiamen, both Poles and Jews, and some Jewish civilians were killed in Kosów Lacki when the NSZ blew up the citizen's militia building and executed the militiamen.[930]

Indeed, many Jews perished in the service of the Stalinist regime, though not as Jews.[931] Jewish sources, however, appear to be unable to appreciate the difference and count these fallen Stalinist henchmen as victims of anti-Semitism.[932] Some Jews who served in the Security Office still pretend they do not know why they were targeted, and suffer from amnesia regarding their stint with the Security police. Philip Bialowitz, then Fiszel Białowicz, a military censor with the local Security Office in Zamość, states: "When

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[930] Dean, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945,* vol. II, Part A, 391; Artur Ziontek, ed., *Żydzi Kosowa Lackiego* (Kosów Lacki: Miejsko-Gminny Ośrodek Kultury w Kosowie Lackim, 2016), 101. Jewish sources refer to this as a "pogrom," keeping quiet about the circumstances and the non-Jewish casualties.

[931] For additional cases of Jewish functionaries who were killed by the anti-Communist underground which are not mentioned in Chodakiewicz's *After the Holocaust,* see: Błażejewicz, *W walce z wrogami Rzeczypospolitej,* 150–51 (Patoki, Narewka); Pietrzak, et al., *Rok pierwszy,* 155 (Henryk Deresiewicz, a Security officer in Lublin), 290 (Ignacy Cymerman, a Security officer in Chełm); Ryszard Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, "Podziemie antykomunistyczne wobec Żydów po 1945 roku—wstęp do problematyki (na przykładzie województwa kieleckiego)," in Wijaczka and Miernik, *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich,* 255, 262 (Roman Sznajfeld, a Security officer in Kielce; Bolesław Gaut, a police investigator in Radom; Dawid Cale, a militiaman in Rusinów; Albert Grynbaum, a senior Security officer in Kielce, previously stationed in Skarżysko-Kamienna; Henryk Ochin, a PPR official); Adam Kopciowski, "Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II," in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 184–86 (Dawid Biberman, a militia commander in Zwierzyniec; Mordka Honig, a militia platoon sergeant; Junak Milsztajn, a militiaman from Lublin, and others). Adam Kopciowski estimates that about 20 percent of the 118 killings of Jews in the Lublin region between the summer of 1944 and autumn 1946 were politically motivated; the rest were likely attributable to robberies, property disputes or anti-Semitism. Ibid., 204. Among the Jewish functionaries killed in and near Siedlce were Jakub (Jankel) Trzemielina, Abram Garbarz, Szymon (Wolf) Garbarz, Mendel Cyn-Cynkowski (Mieczysław Cynkowski), Kalman Orzeł (Dawid Orzeł), and Srul Szulmajster. See Mariusz Bechta, "Wojna rewolucyjna—sowietyzacja Podlasia przez funkcjonariuszy PUBP w Siedlcach po roku 1944 (zarys problematyki)," in Krajewski and Łabuszewski, *Mazowsze i Podlasie w ogniu 1944–1956,* vol. 4, 303–443, which provides important backround information about the so-called pogroms in the villages of Mordy and Mokobody in March 1945 and the "revenge" killings by Jews of an innocent Polish family (Kotuń) in the village of Żelków. (The actual Polish and Jewish culprits were never punished.) The Kałuszyn memorial book states that Shmul Lev was killed because he was a Jew who wanted "to bring to account those who spilled Jewish blood." In fact, both Shmul Lev (Lew Szmul) and Jankiel Komorowski, who were killed on April 12, 1945, were Communist Party (PPR) members. See Yosef Kermish, "Instances of Passive and Active Resistance," in Shamri and Soroka, *Sefer Kaluszyn,* 338ff., translated as *The Memorial Book of Kaluszyn,* Internet: <https://jewishgen.org/Yizkor/kaluszyn/Kaluszyn.html>; compare with "Kałuszyn," Internet: <http://www.sztetl.org.pl>.

[932] For many Jews, the treatment they experienced in their new roles as henchmen of the Communist regime has remained baffling, up until the present day. The only explanation they can offer is endemic anti-Semitism on the part of the Poles. Harold Werner, for example, writes: "The newly created Polish government offered the Jewish partisans jobs in the government administration in Lublin. We were also given positions in local police forces. However, in these jobs we quickly experienced resentment and hatred directed at us by our anti-Semitic Polish coworkers. In some cases, we were attacked in public by gangs of former Army [sic] Krajowa units. … In Lublin, mobs of anti-Semitic Poles killed a number of Jewish survivors. Among those killed in Lublin were Leon Feldhendler … a young man, named Blank, from the town of Izbica. … Anti-Semitic Poles broke into his house at night and shot him. Even Chiel Grynszpan was the target of this type of violence. He had taken a job as a policeman in Hrubieszow [Hrubieszów] … An Army Krajowa group sent him a package of flowers containing a bomb. … He suffered injuries from the blast but luckily survived." See Werner, *Fighting Back,* 232–33. As noted ealier, it is most unlikely that Feldhendler was killed by Poles, and Blank or Blanke was killed as a Secutity Office agent. Werner's book contains photographs of Jewish partisans dressed in militia uniforms after the war: Chanina (Henry) Barbanel, Leon from Warsaw, Velval Litwak, and Harold (Hersh) Werner. Typical of nationalist Jewish historians, Paweł Śpiewak adamantly insists that every Jew who perished in the immediate postwar era was an innocent victim of anti-Semitic Poles: "there is no doubt that Jews died not because they had anything at all to do with communism or belonged to some kind of government formation, but only because they were born as Jews." See Paweł Śpiewak, *Żydokomuna: Interpretacje historyczne* (Warsaw: Czerwone i Czarne, 2012), 196.

we were in Zamość someone threw a grenade through the window of a house occupied by Jewish survivors."[933] Similarly, like Yaffa Eliach with respect to assault on her parents' home in Ejszyszki, described in Part One, the authors of a biography of Eli Zborowski do not see any connection between the presence of a Soviet commander in the Zborowski home in Żarki and the ensuing assault by the Polish underground:

> In addition [to the Zborowski family], the officer commanding the Russian troops asked to sleep in the Zborowski house. He was apprehensive staying with Poles, but felt secure with Jews. It was not east to determine the allegiance of Poles and Ukrainians. …
>
> With no apparent provocation, one day grenades were thrown into the house through the window. Zisel [Zborowski] decided it was no longer safe for them to stay there, so she packed up the children and left for Sosnowiec. …
>
> After the Zborowski family left, the Russian commander was, in fact, killed by Poles.[934]

In some cases, however, retaliations may have been too sweeping and harsh.[935] Similarly, Poles could find themselves fired on by Jews for no good reason. Some Jews who had hidden in the ruins of Warsaw shot at Poles who brought news of their "liberation" by the Red Army:

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[933] Małgorzata Szlachetka, "Relacja powstańca z Sobiboru," *Gezeta Wyborcza* (Lublin), October 16, 2008. An escapee from Sobibór who was sheltered by Polish farmers near his home town of Izbica, Philip Bialowitz (Fiszel Białowicz) was enlisted with the Security Office from January 1, 1945 until June 15, 1945. According to official records, he was arrested in May 1945, strangely on suspicion of belonging to the Home Army, and severely beaten during interrogation. See Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, BU 0193/157 (162/V). These episodes are missing from his memoir: Philip "Fiszel" Bialowitz with Joseph Bialowitz, *A Promise at Sobibór: A Jewish Boy's Story of Revolt and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), published in Polish as Philip Bialowitz, as told to Joseph Bialowitz, *Bunt w Sobiborze: Opowieść o przetrwaniu w Polsce okupowanej przez Niemców* (Warsaw: Nasza Księgarnia, 2008). According to Jewish sources, two Polish officials from the Security Office killed Dudl Safian (Rabaleh), a mill operator. "In order to cover up their act, they carried out an arrest of a group of young Zamość Jews, and brought out a libel that they had, so to speak, sold weapons to the 'AK.' The Jews remained in jail for several weeks. Among them Yidl Safian, a brother of the murdered man, Mordechai Goldberg … After an intervention in Warsaw, at the Security service, they were set free." See Beryl Eisenkopf, "Residents of Zamość in a Fight for Life During the Hitlerist Occupation," in Mordechai V. Bernstein, ed., *The Zamosc Memorial Book: A Memorial Book of a Center of Jewish Life Destroyed by the Nazis* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Jacob Solomon Berger, 2004), 592. In his Shoah Foundation testimony (Interview code 32788), Philip Bialowitz describes how he informed Soviet soldiers about a Polish family in Krasnystaw who allegedly killed 200 Jews, as having killed Soviet POWs. In retaliation, the soldiers set fire to the family's house.

[934] George and Rochel Berman, *A Life of Leadership: Eli Zborowski: From the Underground to Industry to Holocaust Remembrance* (Jersey City, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, in association with Yad Vashem Publications, Jerusalem, 2011), 79, 81.

[935] In Raciąż, according to a Jewish woman who spent the war there with her mother passing as Christians (a ruse widely known to the townspeople), the heavy-handed deeds of a Jew called Szymek, who appears to have joined the security police or the NKVD, led to an assault on a house occupied by this Jewish official and other Jews; as luck would have it, Szymek was away and thus avoided punishment, while innocent blood was spilt. See Helena Bodek, *Jak tropione zwierzęta: Wspomnienia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1993), 149–50. On the other hand, Shalom Yoran, who also returned briefly to that same home town, has no recollection of any of these complicating factors. According to what he had later heard, six young Jewish men who had returned to Raciąż were simply "taken out of their house at night, and disappeared. They were most likely killed." See Yoran, *The Defiant,* 253.

> When we were going down into the sewer, two Christians saw us and said "You are Jews, Jews with weapons? You are already liberated." We thought that they were the ones who tapped on the bunker and that they were German agents. We shot one of them. We were all hardened and suspicious.[936]

> On the third night Little Jacob, Masha Claitman's husband, had crawled out. Near the bunker he had met two Poles and covered them with his machine gun.
>
> They had shouted to him, "What are you afraid of? Why are you still buried? You have been free for three days."
>
> He had refused to believe them, had opened fire, wounding one of them, and had "escaped."[937]

Unlike Jewish transgressions, which—as has been shown—generally went unpunished, Polish ones directed at Jews were readily punished by the authorities. In fact, members of the anti-Communist underground were arraigned and punished for a host of crimes directed against the Stalinist regime including murdering Jews even absent any evidence that they had targeted or harmed Jews.[938] As we have already seen, among the Jews who came forward to betray members of the Home Army were even those who had been rescued from the Nazis by Poles.

A case well worth noting, because of its anti-Polish dimension, is that of the father of American novelist Jerzy Kosinski of *The Painted Bird* fame. The Kosinski family was sheltered by Polish villagers in Dąbrowa Rzeczycka, near Sandomierz, where they lived openly even though their Jewish origin was no secret. Jerzy's father, Moishe Lewinkopf, who went by the name of Mieczysław Kosiński during the occupation, joined the ranks of the Soviet invaders and turned in the very Poles who had put their lives on the line by accepting his family in their village.

> With much of the village again retreated to the woods, Mieczyslaw Kosinski and his family stayed, along with the red partisans, to greet the Russians. They bore welcoming red banners and hammer-and-sickle emblems—and Henryk Kosinski, now all of four years old, wore a Red Army uniform complete to field cap with red star and an automatic pistol carved out of wood. … The NKVD officers traveling with the front-line unit … were aware of Mieczyslaw Kosinski's sympathies, and made use of him as a translator. … When it came to organizing a civic administration under Soviet rule, it was natural that they should turn to this established PPR [Polish Workers' Party] member … The PPR, gaining the upper hand under the umbrella of the Red Army, began carrying out reprisals against the Home Army, while the Soviet political officers undertook the task of rooting out future

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[936] Pninah Papier, "In the Warsaw Ghetto and in the Wyszkow Forests," in Aryeh Shamri and Dov First, eds., *Pinkas Novi-Devor (Pinkas Novy-Dvor)* (Tel Aviv: The Organizations of Former Novy-Dvor Jews in Israel, the United States, Canada, Argentina, Uruguay and France, 1965).

[937] Bernard Goldstein, *The Stars Bear Witness* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), 275.

[938] The following examples are found in the court records reproduced in Szwagrzyk, *Golgota wrocławska 1945–1956,* 106, 137, 150–51. It is worth noting that those charged were not only identified by their citizenship but also by their nationality as "Poles", and that Jewish state functionaries played a prominent role in their trials. Ibid., 115, 117, 153.

> opponents of the regime. Among those targeted were Andrzej Warchol [Warchoł], the Kosinskis' landlord, and Jozef Stepak [Józef Stępak], the administrator [village reeve] from Kepa [Kępa] who had faced down Fuldner and hidden the Kosinskis in his hayloft. …
>
> Official arrests soon followed, on charges of collaboration or hoarding, with the Home Army partisans as primary targets. As a man whose work had given him detailed knowledge of commerce in the village … Mieczyslaw Kosinski was a central informant in the Soviet "cleansing."[939]

Although the Home Army ordered the execution of Moishe Lewinkopf, it was not carried out as he had left the village before the partisans arrived at his home. The rest of the family who remained behind was not harmed in any way. Jerzy Kosinski eventually immigrated to the United States where he made a career for himself maligning his benefactors, and garnered rave reviews from the intellectual elite.[940] The singular ruthlessness he demonstrated in carrying this out (he even enlisted the help of his obliging mother), was justified by a quotation from the Talmud his father had passed on to him: "Your life is more important than

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[939] James Park Sloan, *Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography* (New York: Dutton/Penguin, 1996), 49, 53. The author also goes on to describe (at 59) another "close call" Kosinski's father, now a state "apparatchik," had after he relocated to Jelenia Góra. Apparently, "White" (i.e., anti-Communist) guerrillas stopped his car when he was travelling to Warsaw in the company of the father of Jerzy Urban, another Jew from his home town of Łódź. Urban would eventually become the hated spokesman for General Jaruzelski's martial-law regime and more recently, as founder and publisher of the weekly gutter tabloid *NIE!,* Poland's biggest pornographer.

[940] This charade continued to gather momentum in North America and captivate the Holocaust education market for over two decades, despite the fact that the story had been exposed as a slanderous hoax by Janina Dembowa, a Jewish woman, as early as June 1968. See Bartoszewski and Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej,* 2nd ed., 534–37. In fact, as late as 1992, Kosinski published an autobiographical essay claiming that while passing as a Christian child in occupied Poland, he never confessed to a priest that he was Jewish because he was afraid that his true identity might be revealed to the Germans. See Jerzy Kosinski, *Passing By: Selected Essays, 1962–1991* (New York: Random House, 1992), 159. It was not until Joanna Siedlecka, a Polish investigative journalist, published her stirring exposé of Kosinski, *Czarny ptasior* (Gdańsk: Marabut; Warsaw: CIS, 1994), translated as *The Ugly Black Bird* ([Washington, D.C.:] Leopolis Press, 2018), followed two years later by a British Broadcasting Corporation documentary, *Sex, Lies and Jerzy Kosinski,* that the bubble burst. When James Park Sloan picked up on the story for the *New Yorker* ("Kosinski's War," October 10, 1994, 46–53), public reaction (largely Jewish) was predictable: "Why should we listen to all those good Polish witnesses in preference to him?" (letter, November 14, 1994). Tellingly, on April 21, 1996, the *New York Times Book Review* ran a review by Louis Begley—a form of damage control—of Sloan's biography with the highly suggestive title, "True Lies." It even turns out, according to one literary critic, that Kosinski's untrue rendition allegedly may well be better (sic) than the truth: "In exercising what Cynthia Ozick calls 'the rights of fiction,' Kosinski uses narrative rhetorically to shock his reader, to defamiliarize reality in order to obtain a truth perhaps truer than history, if we only allow ourselves to see it." See Sharon Oster, "The 'Erotics of Auschwitz': Coming of Age in *The Painted Bird* and *Sophie's Choice*," in Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer, eds., *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 90–124, here at 105. For more on this controversy see Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry,* 55–57. See also the entry "Jerzy Kosinski" in Wikipedia, Internet: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerzy_Kosi%C5%84ski>. Later in life (1988), Kosiński appeared to have had a change of heart. He decried rampant anti-Polish sentiment within the Jewish community, arguing that Poles—overwhelmed by fear for their own and their families' safety—had no obligation to protect Jews during the war, given the consequence of death for doing so. See Barbara Tepa Lupack and Kiki Kosinski, eds., *Oral Pleasure: Kosinski as Storyeller* (New York: Grove Press, 2012), 215–16. Kosinski's novel was resurrected in a 2019 Czech film adaptation as a thinly disguised portrayal of the essence ("dark soul") of generic "Slavic" peasants with little, if any, connection to the Nazi German occupation.

your neighbour's."[941] Even after all this came into the open, the United Statres Holocaust Memorial Museum—employing the affirmative approach to Jewish narratives championed by Jan Gross—continued to endorse *The Painted Bird* as an "autobiographical" novel about "the wartime wanderings of a young boy through peasant villages in Poland … The graphic descriptions of the brutality and inhumanity facing the boy at every turn paint a picture of [the Poles'] absolute human depravity."[942]

That retaliations against Soviet agents and informers in these circumstances may have encompassed some innocent civilians is, unfortunately, a hazard of war which, as a cruel reality, generally consumes more innocent civilian victims than military and Security personnel. The so-called liberation of Poland by the Red Army did not usher in a time of peace. On the contrary, the "liberators" declared war on the pro-independence Polish underground, whom they treated as common "bandits,"[943] thus provoking horrendous civil strife that lasted for several years and took the lives of approximately 100,000 victims, a tiny percentage of whom were Jews. The Poles who were imprisoned, tortured, and executed by the Soviet security forces and their local henchmen were no more guilty of wrongdoing than the Jewish civilian victims.

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[941] Sloan, *Jerzy Kosinski,* 225, 16. In order to round out his portrayal of Poles as vicious anti-Semites, Kosinski concocted an alleged incident in his New York apartment in which Polish goons, whom he skillfully fended off, threatened to beat him with lengths of steel pipe. Ibid., 244–45. Needless to say, this story, like all the others, was eaten up unquestioningly and regurgitated by American literary critics. More recently, it was reported in *Dziennik Łódzki* (May 10–11, 2008) that Kosinski's alleged trip to the Soviet Union, which was the basis for his first book *The Future is Our Comrade: Conversations with the Russians,* published in 1960 under the pseudonym Joseph Novak, was likely a fabrication as well.

[942] U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Fifty Years Ago: Revolt Amid the Darkness—1993 Days of Remembrance* (Washington, D.C., 1993). Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* is one of a string of American novels—written almost exclusively by Jewish authors—that unfairly denigrate Poles; others include Leon Uris's *Mila 18*, Herman Wouk's *Winds of War*, Gerald Green's *Holocaust,* and William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*. A fascinating analysis of this topic is found in Thomas S. Gladsky, *Princes, Peasants, and Other Selves: Ethnicity in American Literature* (Amherst: The University Press of Massachusetts, 1992), 163–76, 190–213. French-Jewish historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet has decried "the sort of primitive anti-Polish sentiments that too often characterize those whom I shall call 'professional Jews'." See Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Jews: History, Memory, and the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 182. Other prominent examples of that genre of writing are Alan M. Dershowitz and Elie Wiesel. "As for the Poles," Wiesel in 1968, "it was not by accident that the worst concentration camps were set up in Poland, worse than anywhere else." Elsewhere, this Nobel Peace Prize laureate wrote:

> You may at times, be seized by rage. We had so many enemies! … the Poles betrayed them. True, here and there a "good" citizen was found whose cooperation could be bought [sic] with Jewish money. But how many good-hearted, upright Poles were to be found at the time in Poland? Very few. And where were the idealists, the universalists, the humanists when the ghetto needed them? Like all of Warsaw they were silent as the ghetto burned. Worse still: Warsaw's persecution and murder of Jews increased once there was no longer a ghetto … Who most earns our outraged anger—the murderers, their accomplices, the *szmalcownicy*—the blackmailers or the common citizenry pleased in their hearts that Poland will be rid of her Jews."

See the Introduction to Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 3–4.

[943] As Norman Davies points out so eloquently in his monumental book *Rising '44,* Poland's Western Allies raised no objections to the Soviet takeover or the depradations of the NKVD in their First Ally's homeland. Given the chance, the Soviets demonstrated amply that they would have treated the British in much the same way, as is illustrated by the "Freston story," which was carefully concealed at the time. See Davies, *Rising '44,* 447–51.

To refer to the fate of one group selectively, in isolation from and to the exclusion of the other, as a purported, accurate reflection of Polish-Jewish relations in that turbulent period, is simply unacceptable. It is not only a crude distortion of history but also demonstrates contempt for the non-Jews, whose fate is conveniently ignored or maligned. On that basis alone, one-sided accounts like Yaffa Eliach's versions of the events in Ejszyszki, as presented in *U.S. News & World Report,* the *New York Times,* and the Public Television Service (PBS), would surely have been rejected for publication or broadcasting and denounced as racist if the roles of Poles and Jews had been reversed.

Part Four: Some Closing Observations

Conclusion

Writing in the *New York Times,* Yaffa Eliach let it be known that the moral stakes involved in getting at the truth of what happened in Ejszyszki are high. She made it abundantly clear who the victims were and where all of the blame lies.

> The truth never has many friends, and unpleasant truths are especially friendless. … It is painful and outrageous that it is still difficult for some Poles to accept the facts about the terrible fate of Poland's Jews. It was precisely such a refusal to treat Jews with decency and honesty that contributed to the catastrophe. … When the truth about Eishyshok is denied, more Eishyshoks are likely.[944]

Leaving aside the fact that such platitudes are, for the most part, an exercise in wishful thinking (witness the events of recent years in Bosnia and Rwanda), in this case, they try to pass for blatantly hypocritical "political correctness." The tragic truth is that many Jews became willing accomplices in the Soviet-ordered liquidation of the Polish anti-Nazi underground launched stealthily in mid–1943. By mid–1944, the Soviets were quite open about their agenda. That fact was planely evident ecen then for anyone who cared to see. That there are still those who can't seem to comprehend that reality today, even with Soviet archives opened and with the benefit of hindsight, attests to a partisanship that is neither scholarly nor honest.

Jewish-American investigative journalist John Sack's *An Eye for an Eye* bears out all too poignantly the role that Jews played in Stalin's apparatus of terror. That book, which deals with the area of Upper Silesia, concludes, on the basis of evidence supplied by Jewish participants, that in 1945 every single commander but one and three-quarters of the local agents of the State Security Office were of Jewish origin; that ex-Nazi camps and prisons were refilled with totally innocent people, among them Polish (and German) civilians as well as members of the Polish Home Army; and that torture, starvation, sadistic beatings, and murder were routine.

That there was a racial component, in addition to an ideological (political) one, in such actions is beyond question. The accomplices were all too often Jews who mocked and spoke contemptuously of Poles, and the victims were almost exclusively Poles. In other words, Jews were not always victims of Poles. "In this light," notes British historian Norman Davies, "it is difficult to justify the widespread practice whereby the murderers, the victims, and the bystanders of wartime Poland are each neatly identified with specific ethnic groups."[945] Moreover, casting the focus of the debate on Polish-Jewish relations in terms of "Polish anti-Semitism" brings with it its own perils. As Davies explains,

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[944] Eliach, "The Pogrom at Eishyshok," *New York Times,* August 6, 1996.

[945] Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1022–23.

> I have come to wonder whether the concept of anti-Semitism, which tends to dominate modern discussions, is entirely adequate to its task. … The main defect of anti-Semitism as a conceptual tool lies undoubtedly in its dialectical nature. Like all other products of dialectical thought, from the "anti-Americanism" and "anti-Sovietism" of the McCarthy era to the inevitable "Class Warfare" of the Communist debate, it demands a bipolar, conflictual vision of the world, where all contending elements are reduced to "friend or foe," to "us and them," to "right and wrong." Intelligent gradations are discounted; honest differences cannot always be respected; one-sided prejudices are encouraged. In my view, the science of dialectics, the fascinating but false philosophy of opposites, does not provide a very fruitful means for exploring the complexities of Christian-Jewish history.[946]

Poles were not mere bystanders to the various waves of terror that swept over their country in 1939–1947. Indeed, many Poles suffered during the war and in its immediate aftermath on account of Jews. Jewish victims represented perhaps two percent of the tens of thousands who were killed in Poland in 1944–1947, not by the Nazis but, for the most part, by the Soviet "liberators." Until we acknowledge and remember *all* of the victims of the cataclysm that befell Poland as a result of World War II, as long as that truth is denied, to paraphrase Eliach, more cataclysms like this are likely.

There is no point in attempting to deny that aspect of recent history, painful as it might be for many to admit. But that is precisely what *U.S. News & World Report,* the *New York Times,* and the Public Broadcasting Service do by attributing all murders of Jews during the period in question to virulent anti-Semitism on the part of Poles, and nothing more, and by ignoring everything else in that complex, multi-faceted picture that does not suit their purpose. It is another matter—and one which must never be lost sight of—that neither the Poles nor the Jews who may have been become victimizers at one stage in this conflagration were truly representative of their respective communities. These were marginal, criminal elements that were numerically small in relation to the victimized mainstream.

It is most unfortunate that Eliach's family suffered casualties and she deserves our sympathy on this account. But, at the same time, didn't her father expose the family to such risks by joining the NKVD and giving lodging to Soviet henchmen? What civil war or strife—that in the Occupied Territories among them—has not seen its share of gruesome civilian casualties, often occasioned, in part at least, by racial or religious motives? More importantly, who better than Eliach, a pioneering Holocaust oral historian, should know the pitfalls of placing undue reliance on the account of a seven-year-old child, which is inconsistent with other testimonies and archival documents, without making the slightest effort to put it in its proper historical context? There are no easy answers.

Testimonies are inherently problematic and must be treated with great caution, even "fact based" ones, taking into account such factors as focus, power of recollection over time, bias, etc. Wherever possible, tesimonies should be checked against other sources, preferably independent ones. A few words from the

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[946] Norman Davies, "The Jewish Strand in European History," in Sławomir Kapralski, ed., *The Jews in Poland,* Vol. II (Cracow: Judaica Foundation Center for Jewish Culture, 1999), 89–90.

wise might shed some light on this whole affair. As early as 1950, writing in *Jewish Social Studies,*[947] Samuel Gringauz, himself a survivor who is cited by Raul Hilberg,[948] cautioned that survivors' testimony is "judeocentric, lococentric and egocentric." For him, most of the memoirs and reports were "full of preposterous verbosity, graphomanic exaggeration, dramatic effects, overestimated self-inflation, dilettante philosophizing, would-be lyricism, unchecked rumors, bias, partisan attacks and apologies."[949] Shmuel Krakowski of Yad Vashem Institute stated that "over half of the 20,000 testimonies from Holocaust survivors on record at Yad Vashem are 'unreliable' and have never been used as evidence in Nazi war crimes trials."[950] A careful reading of Holocaust memoirs and testimonies discloses that most of them are full of factual inaccuracies. Historian Lucy Dawidowicz described the tedium entailed in the process of "separating the documentary wheat from the epitaphic chaff."[951] Dawidowicz writes:

> Many thousands of oral histories by survivors recounting their experiences exist in libraries and archives around the world. Their quality and usefulness vary significantly according to the informant's memory, grasp of events, insights, and of course accuracy. Also important in determining the quality of the account is the interviewer's ability to pursue lines of inquiry that elicit information that has been subconsciously or deliberately suppressed or that supplements an already accumulated body of information on a given subject or place. The longer the time elapsed, the less likely that the informant has retained freshness of recollection or can offer new information. The transcribed testimonies I have examined have been full of errors in dates, names of participants, and places, and there are evident misunderstandings of the events themselves.[952]

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[947] Samuel Gringauz, "Some Methodological Problems in the Study of the Ghetto," *Jewish Social Studies,* vol. 12, no. 1 (January, 1950): 65–72, here at 65.

[948] "Recording the Holocaust," *Jerusalem Post (International Edition),* June 28, 1986.

[949] In the worst cases, some accounts such as Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Child* (New York: Schoken Books, 1996) have proven to be outright forgeries. As in case of Kosinski's *The Painted Bird*, Wilkomirski's book was also greeted with the customary rave reviews in the *New York Times Book Review, The Nation,* and many other journals, and reaped a number of honours, including the National Jewish Book Award in the United States and the Prix Mémoire de la Shoah in France. Wilkomirski also toured the United States to deliver lectures in major cities sponsored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. See Doreen Carvajal, "Memory or Holocaust fantasy?" *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), October 15, 1999, based on the New York Times Service.

[950] Barbara Amouyal, "Doubts Over Evidence of Camp Sutvivors," *Jerusalem Post (International Edition),* August 17, 1986. Jewish testimonies were often rejected or found to be contradictory in Jewish postwar honour court trials. See, for example, Gabriel N. Finder, "Judenrat on Trial: Postwar Polish Jewry Sits in Judgment of Its Wartime Leadership," in Laura Jockusch and Gabriel N. Finder, eds., *Jewish Honor Courts: Revenge, Retribution, and Reconciliation in Europe and Israel after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2015), 97–98.

[951] Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 438.

[952] Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians,* 176–77.

Raul Hilberg, the dean of Holocaust historians, concurs with this criticism: "A great percentage of the mistakes I discovered in my own work could be attributed to testimonies."[953] Furthermore, according to Hilberg, "there is a major problem methodically. Even the diaries are problematic because some are filled with hearsay. Great caution is indicated."[954] A great many memoirs of Polish Jews, for example, report with relish that the Polish army was defeated within a week, even though Warsaw did not surrender until September 27, 1939, and Polish forces engaged the Germans in battle from October 2 through 5, 1939 in Kock. How free from bias and reliable can such accounts be in their assessment of the Poles?

It is quite understandable, therefore, that historian Christopher Browning—as did Polish leading historians like Tomasz Strzembosz and Tomasz Szarota—took exception to sociologist Jan T. Gross's call for accepting survivors' testimonies at face value, without verification, and pointed out serious deficiencies in his methodology.

> The pitfalls concerning the use of survivor testimony when the emotional desire to believe has been allowed to eclipse the normal critical approach that should apply to any source has, of course, been demonstrated in two public debacles. The early lionization of the Wilkomirski pseudomemoirs only slowly gave way to skeptical investigation … And the conviction of John Demjanjuk in an Israeli court as "Ivan the Terrible" of Treblinka, on the basis of the testimony of Treblinka survivors, had to be overturned by the Israeli Supreme Court …
>
> More recently, in his book *Neighbors*, Jan Gross has argued for a default position in favor of survivor testimony. … In a situation in which the logical corollary of a German policy of total extermination was to have no survivor witness whatsoever, and when in so many cases, there is only a handful of survivors, this is a tempting proposition. But however tempting, this default position still strikes me as too low an evidentiary threshold.
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> From studying large numbers of survivor testimonies, we do know that there are certain tendencies and recurring patterns. I think that uncorroborated survivor testimony must always be seen in this light as a possible corrective. For instance, Gross argues that "there were no reasons whatsoever for Jews, in their recollection of Shoah episodes they experienced and witnessed, to attribute to Poles those crimes that were in reality perpetrated by the Germans." This is seemingly logical, but from my experience it is empirically incorrect. On the contrary, survivors tend to remember—with greater vividness, specificity, and outrage—the shattering and gratuitous acts of betrayal by their neighbors more than the systematic acts of anonymous Germans. If recognition of such a tendency is combined with the unequivocal documentation that it was explicit German policy at that time to incite local pogroms without leaving any trace of German involvement, the evidence that Gross has worked through would probably render a somewhat less emphatic and more cautious conclusion concerning the relatively minimal German role at Jedwabne that he portrays. While Gross has found much corroboration of the survivor accounts in the testimony of both bystanders and perpetrators [the latter consist of confessions given to the Stalinist security officers

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[953] Cited in Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry,* 82. See also See also Raul Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust Research: An Analysis* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001).

[954] Quoted by Marilyn Henry, "Holocaust 'micro-history' can mislead," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 18, 1999.

> under torture and are *ipso facto* suspect and of little, if any, evidentiary value—*M.P.*] for the decisive Polish role in carrying out the massacre of Jedwabne's Jews, I suspect that the German role was not just one of granting permission for the massacre but rather one of active instigation, orchestration, and participation.[955]

Citing the large number of Jewish survivors who "remember" encountering Mengele even though it is unlikely or impossible that they had actually done so, researchers have coined the "Mengele Effect." David Marwell writes,

> The vast majority of people who encountered Mengele on the ramp shortly after arriving at Auschwitz did not survive. … There are some who recall a confrontation with Mengele but are mistaken, having confused him with another SS doctor or simply having assumed it must have been Mengele who carried out the monstrous deed that left them alive while taking so many they loved. Historian Zdenek Zofka notes that many survivors recall Mengele speaking to them in Hungarian, a language he did not speak … "Often Mengele would be described as tall and blond, when he was only 5ft 8½ inchhes tall and dark-haired." "Almost all inmates" at Auschwitz, according to Zofka, maintain that they had been selected by Mengele.
>
> Hermann Langbein, a former Auschwitz inmate and author of the authoritative *People in Auschwitz*, wrote of this phenomenon, which he deemed the "Mengele Effect," a particular form of "memory displacement": … "More than once I heard survivors say that Mengele did this or that to them, even though Mengele had not yet arrived in Auschwitz at the time."[956]

Marwell continues,

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[955] Christopher R. Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 42–43. Despite these reservations, and those expressed in his 2010 study *Remembering Survival,* where he points out that memories may become degraded by overexposure to "Holocaust tropes" (p. 11), Christopher Browning based his assessment of Polish-Jewish relations—during the interwar period, under German occupation, and postwar—exclusively on Jewish accounts without any effort to verify them against Polish sources. Browning did so notwithstanding the prevalence of negative stereotypes in many testimonies (p. 175) and the following admission: "I am also faced with conflicting and contradictory—in some cases, clearly mistaken—memories and testimonies. In some instances, differing memories and testimonies simply should not and cannot be reconciled, and critical judgments must be made." (P. 7.) As for interwar relations, "A very distinct minority of survivors remembered Poles and Jews as getting along fairly well"—likely those who maintained relations with Poles. "Far more prevalent are bitter memories of a widespread anti-Semitism in Wierzbnik"—generally those who had little to do with Poles. (P. 21.) Browning also noted a trend in more recent testimonies "in which the portrayal of Poles increasingly bordered on that of co-perpetrators and not just unsympathetic or hostile bystanders." (P. 50.) One myth Browning perpetuates, due to the shortcomings of his research and knowledge of Polish sources, is that unlike the Home Army and National Armed Forces, who are accused of robbing and murdering Jews (which sometimes did occur), the Communist underground welcomed them. See Browning, *Remembering Survival,* 252. As noted earlier, the People's Guard (later the People's Army) murdered scores, if not hundreds, of Jewish refugees, including many in the area on which Browning's study focused. See Chodakiewicz, *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR,* vol. 3, 14, and Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Proces Tadeusza Maja: Z dziejów oddziału AL 'Świt' na Kielecczyźnie," *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i materiały,* vol. 7 (2011): 170–210.

[956] David G. Marwell, *Mengele: Unmasking the "Angel of Death"* (New York: Norton, 2020), 77–78.

> Doris Bergren, describing the work of Israeli historian Na'ama Shik, wrote about the "so-called Mengele Effect," noting that survivors' accounts decades after the fact could be shaped by what "they have read and heard in the meantime."
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> Geoffrey Hartmann, who wrote extensively on survivor testimony, observed that "every Auschwitz survivor seems to have gone through a selection by Mengele, as if he manned his post 24 hours a day."

This further confirms the fact that Holocaust survivors often graft-in, into their memory, things that they have heard from others, but had not experienced themselves. Marwell takes this further. He comments,

> "Similarly, historian Christopher Browning [*Remembering Survival*, p. 236], in describing witness testimony about a selection by Mengele that was proved never to have occurred, called such an encounter with the Angel of Death on the ramp in Auschwitz "one of the most broadly recognized archetypical episodes of the Holocaust, widely disseminated in both books and films."[957]

Tom Segev explains why the practices adopted by Yad Vashem, and followed by other institutions that simply record survivor's testimonies, cannot provide scholarly assurance of the authenticity of those testimonies:

> The Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Act of 1953 gave Yad Vashem the status of official historian by stating that among the institution's tasks was "to gather, investigate, and publish all evidence of the Holocaust and Heroism." The first historical effort made by the institution was, in fact, recording interviews with survivors. These interviews have a certain historical value, but the interviewers did not press their subjects with questions and did not demand proof or confront the survivors with existing information that might contradict their testimony. For witnesses, telling their stories was a holy obligation to the dead, and sometimes also a release for their personal stress, a kind of testimonial therapy. Yad Vashem simply recorded what they had to say.[958]

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[957] Marwell, *Mengele,* 78–79.

[958] Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 462.

Unfortunately, these observations hold true for all too many memoirs and accounts published without much, if any, quality control.[959] The resultant portrayal of Poles is all too typical of the double-standard that permeates much of Holocaust literature: Polish collaborators are in the forefront, whereas Jews who collaborated with the Soviets and Nazis are nowhere to be seen. Moreover, the problem appears to be

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[959] Raul Hilberg bemoaned, "How come we have no decent quality control when it comes to evaluating Holocaust material for publication?" Quoted in Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry,* 60. The following memoirs, with hoax stories, are illustrative of this phenomenon. After their rescue by the Home Army in December 1944, Yitzhak Zuckerman, Marek Edelman and other ghetto fighters, lived in Grodzisk, a small town outside of Warsaw, under the protection of the Home Army, who even delivered secret mail to them from overseas. The charlatan Roman Grunspan takes credit for, among other obvious fabrications, the task of locating Yitzhak Zuckerman in a Warsaw bunker after the Red Army "liberated" that city in January 1945. Grunspan's memoirs parade around under the deceptive title, *The Uprising of the Death Box of Warsaw: A Documentary Book about Jewish and Christian Lives under Nazi Rule in the Warsaw Ghetto and in the Non-Jewish Region of Warsaw* (New York: Vantage Press, 1978), 201. Grunspan also claims to have been part of a three-member hit squad called "Parasol" (Umbrella) who assassinated the notorious henchman General Franz Kutschera, who headed the SS and the police for the District of Warsaw, on "Aleja sucha" (sic) in Warsaw. The book even contains a photograph showing a crude superimposition of a hand holding a machine gun with the following caption: "To the right you can see the punishing hand of the author with the machine gun that gunned down the Nazi lunatic." (Ibid., 172, 177.) However, that well-known operation carried out by the Home Army bears little resemblance to Grunspan's tale: "On February 1, 1944, after weeks of planning, a platoon of Pegasus [*Pegaz*], commanded by twenty-year old Bronisław Pietraszkiewicz, attacked Kutschera's car on Ujazdowskie Avenue. In an operation lasting scarcely a minute, Kutschera and several other Germans were killed, but four of the attackers, including, Pietraszkiewicz, were killed." See Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust,* 92; Davies, *Rising '44,* 197–98.

Avrom Feldberg is another survivor of the Warsaw ghetto who spins a tale of heroism along the same lines. Allegedly a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization who joined up with unnamed Polish partisans, Feldberg claims to have headed a team of five Polish partisans who executed the unnamed chief of police on the Aryan side in the Fall of 1942. See Alvin Abram, *The Light After Dark II: Six More Stories of Triumph After All Hope Had Gone…* (Toronto: AMA Graphics Incorporated, 2000), 132. (Interestingly, he also states that he later met a Jewish woman who told him that the police chief was sheltering her in the basement of his house.) However, the execution of the "Blue" police chief Aleksander Reszczyński, who cooperated with the Home Army's counter-intelligence and who was not looked on favourably by the Germans, was carried out on March 5, 1943 by a four-member squad of the People's Guard (Gwardia Ludowa) in circumstances that bear little resemblance to those given by Feldberg. See Hempel, *Pogrobowcy klęski,* 321–23, 383–87.

Another blatantly charlatan memoir is that of Maurice Shainberg, who allegedly descends from "a family of prominent rabbis." Shainberg claims to have been the guard of ŻZW leader Paweł Frankel yet knows little about how that organization started and how it interacted with ŻOB; gets the date of the creation of the Warsaw ghetto wrong by a year; carries out all sorts of daring missions (e.g., the bombing of a Nazi conference in the spring of 1941 in which 38 German police are killed); participates in a meeting with the Polish underground in a non-existent church; thinks that Żagiew, a Jewish collaborationist organization, was "three pro-German Polish groups," and makes the fantastic claim that ŻZW killed about 600 (sic) "members of these anti-Semitic organizations"; does not know that the Jewish police took part in the great deportation of the summer of 1942 and thinks that it occurred in the spring of 1943; claims that it was not the Jewish police and Jewish Gestapo agents, but rather "Poles…watched over our every step, keeping the Germans informed about our activities and hiding places." After the Soviet "liberation" Shainberg claims that he joined the intelligence section of the Polish army, quickly rose to the rank of major, and became the personal aide of Colonel Zaitsev, the Soviet military intelligence head in Poland. In that latter role, he allegedly penetrated Zaitsev's secret diary containing detailed information about the Katyn massacre and entrusted the pages he copied from the diary to a Resurrectionist priest in Poznań by the name of Kwiatkowski. See Maurice Shainberg, *Breaking from the KGB: Warsaw Ghetto Fighter…Intelligence Officer…Defector to the West* (New York, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv: Shapolsky, 1996), 70–99, 165–74. Shainberg is not mentioned in Chaim Lazar Litai's detailed monograph about the ŻZW, *Muranowska 7: The Warsaw Ghetto Rising* (Tel Aviv: Massada–P.E.C. Press, 1966). It has been established that there was no Rev. Kwiatkowski in Poznań at the time and, although Shainberg claims to have attained the rank of major before April 1944 (p. 155), the photograph of a Polish military certificate from May 1946 gives his rank as second lieutenant ("podporucznik"). Several of the photographs reproduced in the book appear to contain superimposed images. Furthermore, Shainberg's assumed named (Mieczysław Prużański) does not appear in the Ministry of Public Security's personnel files for 1944–1947 under any rank. See Andrzej Krzysztof Kunert and Rafał E. Stolarski, *"Bijące serce partii": Dzienniki personalne Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego,* vol. 1: *1945–1947* (Warsaw: Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa, and Adiutor, 2001), 235ff.

Another blatant forgery is Jacob Bierman's racist tract, *The Penalty of Innocence: From the Diary of Yakoiv Zeiv Weiler* (New York, Washington and Hollywood: Vantage Press, 1973), which is "Dedicated to Truth and Justice" and, of course, purports to be "a true story." Yakoiv, who supposedly worked closely with the Communist Polish People's Party, claims to have "thrown quantities of weapons, ammunition, hand grenades [sic] … over the high ghetto fence,"

escalating as increasingly more strident and, at times, outrageous views find their way into books published by respected publishing houses and scholarly periodicals published by reputable institutions. The impact on how Polish-Jewish relations are portrayed in North American is particularly deleterious.[960] In the opinion of historian István Deák, "No issue in Holocaust literature is more burdened by misunderstanding, mendacity,

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[960] See, for example, David Cymet, "Polish State Antisemitism as a Major Factor Leading to the Holocaust," *Journal of Genocide Research,* vol. 1, no. 2 (June 1999): 169–212, which charges that Poles were the co-authors of the Holocaust and inspired the Germans to attack Jews on Kristallnacht. The author uses no Polish-language sources, despite the fact that the actions of the Polish government are his main concern. See the critical review of this article by Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Upside-Down History," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 14 (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), 377–80. On the alleged Polish inspiration for the Nazis to attack Jews on Kristallnacht, see also John and Carol Garrard, "Barbarossa's First Victims: The Jews of Brest," *East European Jewish Affairs,* vol. 28, no. 2 (Winter 1998–99): 3–47, especially 13. For an attempt to compare antisemitism in pre-war Poland with that in Nazi Germany, see William W. Hagen, "Before the 'Final Solution': Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Antisemitism in Interwar Germany and Poland," *The Journal of Modern History,* no. 68 (June 1996): 351–81. Hagen's theories have been endorsed in Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 240, where we learn that "all the major components of the post-Pilsudski Polish polity adopted exclusionary, violent ideologies … In this environment the physical removal and even destruction of ethnic groups who violated the desired harmony of the national body was acceptable." In actual fact, the United States with its racial policies (legislated segregation, institutionalized discrimination, pogroms, lynchings, church burnings, medical experimentation on and day-to-day harassment of Blacks and Native Indians) shared far more in common with Nazi Germany than Poland did, and unlike the citizens of totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union, the average American citizen, who democratically elected their government and endorsed its policies, cannot shrug off this legacy of oppressing poor, powerless minorities who posed no threat to the state. These examples can be multiplied and include recent books such as Leo Cooper's *In the Shadow of the Polish Eagle: The Poles, the Holocaust and Beyond* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2000), which historian David Engel trashed in no uncertain terms: "The book is thus worse than useless; it is a step backward in a field that has made much progress." See *Slavic Review,* vol. 61, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 140–41. Nor is it surprising that Reuben Ainsztein, the author of the most vicious sustained attack on the Polish underground, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe*, penned an equally hostile and racist memoir —*In Lands Not My Own: A Wartime Journey* (New York: Random House, 2002)—branding all Poles as anti-Semites and natural allies of the Nazis. (A far more telling barometer of a predilection for Fascism is the fact that, in 1938, 10,000 out of Italy's 47,000 Jews, in other words almost all the adult male Jews in that country, were card-carrying members of the Fascist party. See Nicholas Farrel, "It Happened in Italy Too," *The Spectator,* December 7, 1996. The Jewish Revisionist movement continued to flirt with Mussolini's Fascists until at least 1938. See Dan Tamir, *Hebrew Fascism in Palestine, 1922–1942* [Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018].) For a critique of Ainsztein's book see M.B. Biskupski, "Poles, Jews and the Second Polish Republic, 1918–1945: Memoir As Indictment," *The Polish Review,* vol. 48, no. 1 (2003): 101–108. Another example is John Weiss, who postulates in his *The Politics of Hate: Anti-Semitism, History, and the Holocaust in Modern Europe* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), 192: "We can never know, but it seems likely that without the alliance with the West and the murderous policies of the Nazis toward the Poles, a *majority* of Poles would have been willing participants and not simply indifferent bystanders during the Holocaust." (John Weiss is an emeritus professor at Lehman College and the Graduate Center of the City University in New York.**)** Omer Bartov, an Israeli-American Holocaust historian, suggests that World War II was a disguised blessing for the Poles because they allegedly struck it rich as a result of grabbing Jewish property (in fact, most Jewish property was seized by the Germans): "the very term 'bystander' is largely meaningless. The majority of the non-Jewish population profited from the genocide and either directly or indirectly collaborated with the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Even if at times the non-Jews also resisted the occupation for their own reasons, only a minority was involved in rescue and feared the vengeance of the majority. In this sense no one was passive or indifferent." See Omer Bartov, "Much Forgotten, Little Learned," *Yad Vashem Studies,* vol. 35, no. 2 (2007): 276. Emboldened by strident writing of the ilk of Jan Gross, Joanna Michlic and Omer Bartov, Rachel Feldhay Brenner, of the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, writes tediously of joint German-Polish complicity in the Holocaust: "the prevailing majority of Poles subscribed to the German racial view of Jews as sub-human species and therefore legitimate objects of extermination; and many voluntarily collaborated with the perpetrators, blackmailing and denouncing the Jews on the 'Aryan' side of the city. The cooperation between the Poles and the Germans effectively dehumanized the Jews; they became grotesque creatures who lost their human image. … the 'Aryan side' … became an arena of Polish persecution of the Jews. The prevailing agreement of the Poles with the German treatment of the Jews created compatibility between the occupier and the occupied … The ideological horizon of the extermination of the Jews that the majority of the Poles shared with the German occupier precluded the voice of humanism." See Rachel Feldhay Brenner, "The 'Poor' Polish Writers Look at the Ghetto: A Struggle with Self and History, The Case of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz," Conference Paper, "Between Coexistence and Divorce: 25 Years of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry and Polish-Jewish Relations," Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 17–19, 2009. An

and sheer racial prejudice than that of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II."[961] There has thus developed an enormous gap between the ever-growing Holocaust literature and the relatively small corpus of genuine scholarship on the Nazi Holocaust.[962] And that is why we rely on historians, honest ones, to analyze the sources critically and put them into their proper perspective.

American historian John Radziłowski has signaled and underscored the attendant dangers of the polarized debate in his excellent critique of Eliach's book *Their Once Was a World* where he stated:

> At the same time debate over Polish-Jewish history in the Holocaust era has been increasingly politicized. Charges once confined to the darker recesses of the popular media now appear in scholarly journals; for example, charges that Poles were the co-authors of the Holocaust or inspired Germans to attack Jews on Kristallnacht. The appearance of such flawed scholarship tests the ability of Western Holocaust scholars to police their field through rigorous peer review, but they have focused more intensive attention on confirmed or alleged cases of Poles killing Jews … The causes of these incidents are ascribed to vicious and unreasoning Polish antisemitism if not an outright desire to assist the Nazis in exterminating Jews. These explanations are rarely given careful scrutiny.
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> The best known case in this regard is that of the town of Ejszyszki (Eishyshok) raised by Yaffa Eliach first in numerous articles and interviews in the mass media and later in her book *There Once Was a World: A 900-Year Old Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok.* The author has enjoyed unlimited access to the popular media in the United States, and the book was promptly nominated for a National Book Award. … Criticism of the author has been largely absent from the press, and serious scholarship has been slow to catch up. …
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> In examining the recent cases and claims that have been raised of Poles attacking Jews during the war, some larger points of context need to be kept in mind. Almost all of the controversial and publicized cases known in the West come from areas of Poland that were occupied by the Soviet Union from the final months of 1939 to June 1941. This crucial constant, thus far overlooked in the West, suggests that either Poles in this region were somehow different from Poles elsewhere or that some events occurred in these areas to alter the situation dramatically. These lands had a particularly complex ethno-religious history, a fact unappreciated by most scholars narrowly focused on one set of events in a limited time period. This is not merely a matter of just Poles and Jews, but a multidimensional problem. …
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> The constant of Soviet occupation should spark greater interest than it has, and there are still those who seek to excuse or downplay what was done by the Soviets and their local collaborators, the scale of the Soviet crimes, and the effect they had on subsequent tragedies. Although cracks have begun to appear in the cherished mythology of Second World War Soviet exploits, on the crucial question of Soviet complicity in the mass murder of Jews (directly or indirectly), Poles, and others, and in sparking serious ethnic conflict, little has been said even by scholars who should

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[961] István Deák, "Memories of Hell," *The New York Review of Books,* June 26, 1997.

[962] For the distinction between the two, see Norman G. Finkelstein and Ruth Bettina Birn, *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), part one, section 3. See also generally Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry,* 41–78.

> know better. Of Eliach's account of the history of Ejszyszki little good can be said, and the damage she has done to Polish-Jewish relations will take a long time to heal, if it ever does. *There Once Was A World*, her film, and her journalistic accounts demonstrate the pitfalls of turning history to the service of politics.
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> Over-politicization of the profession has taken its toll. Historians like Eliach have fallen into the trap of believing history is merely a Darwinian struggle of the interests of one group against another so that evidence may be tailored to fit the interests of one's own group at that moment. All research is reduced to a crude residue of one group justifying its own actions and condemning the actions of the others.[963]

In recent years, the trickle has turned into a veritable flood with half-baked, highly speculative and even absurd theories being advanced by seemingly rational, well-versed historians.[964] Moreover, there is a growing tendency toward excessive "moralizing," where the conduct of the Poles is subjected to intense and one-sided scrutiny, often ahistorically, in order to advance a particular interpretation of events that is

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[963] Radziłowski, "Ejszyszki Revisited, 1939–1945," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 15 (2002): 454–55, 467–77.

[964] A case in point is Jewish-American sociologist Jan T. Gross, whose role in legitimizing the dissemination in American historical discourse of the crudest prejudices about wartime Polish conduct cannot be overstated. Gross postulates a non-dynamic view of Polish-Jewish relations predetermined by various degrees of anti-Semitism. He advances, without any serious research or evidence, sweeping claims about Poles, while at the same time becoming an apologist for Jewish conduct under the Soviet occupation and in the postwar period. He maintains, for example, that "it is manifest that the local non-Jewish [i.e., Polish] population enthusiastically greeted entering Wehrmacht units in 1941 and *broadly engaged in collaboration* with the Germans, up to and including participation in the exterminatory war against the Jews"; and that "in the process of Communist takeover in Poland after the war, the natural allies of the Communist Party, on the local level were people who had been compromised during the German occupation." See Gross, *Neighbors,* 155, 164. A great defender of Jews who greeted the Soviets *en masse* in September 1939, Gross does allow the Poles, who were severely oppressed by the Soviet invaders, the luxury of choice he gave to the Jews to prefer the Germans, whose rule they had not yet experienced and who were advancing in an orderly fashion. Polish historians have taken Gross to task in the past for his unwarranted generalizations based on scant research. For example, Andrzej Friszke takes issue with Gross's baseless charge that the Polish underground press was, with few exceptions, opposed to the Jews. See Andrzej Friszke, "Publicystyka Polski Podziemnej wobec zagłady Żydów 1939–1944," in Grześkowiak-Łuczyk, *Polska, Polacy, mniejszości narodowe,* 212. For a devastating critique of Gross's recent scholarship by well-versed scholars see: Bogdan Musiał, "Tezy dotyczące pogromu w Jedwabnem: Uwagi krytyczne do książki 'Sąsiedzi' autorstwa Jana Tomasza Grossa" in *Dzieje Najnowsze*, no. 3 (2001): 253–80, an English version of which, "The Pogrom in Jedwabne: Critical Remarks about Jan T. Gross's *Neighbors,*" is found in Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds., *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 304–343; Alexander B. Rossino, "Polish 'Neighbours' and German Invaders: Anti-Jewish Violence in the Białystok District during the Opening Weeks of Operation Barbarossa," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry,* vol. 16 (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003), 431–52; Wojciech Roszkowski, "After *Neighbors*: Seeking Universal Standards," *Slavic Review,* vol. 61, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 460–65; Anna M. Cienciala, "The Jedwabne Massacre: Update and Review," *The Polish Review,* vol. 48, no. 1 (2003): 49–72; Dariusz Stola, "Jedwabne: Revisiting the Evidence and Nature of the Crime," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies,* vol. 17, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 139–52; Marek J. Chodakiewicz, "Ordinary Terror: Communist and Nazi Occupation Policies. Jedwabne 1939–1945," *Glaukopis*, no. 1 (2003): 266–76; Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *The Massacre in Jedwabne, July 10, 1941: Before, During, and After* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 2005). Many publicists have been quick to espouse Jan T. Gross's efforts to substitute one myth, that of "Judeo-commune," for an equally perverse one: "endeko-fascist-commune." Writing in the September–October 2002 issue of *Foreign Affairs,* in an article entitled "Poles and Jews," Abraham Brumberg offered these rambling and internally contradictory views on the Nazi and Stalinist occupation: "The ruling Communist Party became, its formal ideology notwithstanding, the heir to the National Democrats in its vehement nationalism and obeisance to Moscow as the guarantor of Polish security (an article of faith in Dmowski's writings). … Still another writer, Jerzy Sławomir Mac, rebutted the smug assertions that Poland, unlike other occupied countries, produced no collaborationists, no traitors, and no quislings. On the contrary, said Mac, quite a few Poles actually served the Nazi cause, and others were ready to serve. It was only 'Hitler's decision that he could do without Polish allies' that put an end to their hopes."

favourable to the author's select group (whose conduct is seemingly beyond reproach).[965] This study, as well as the forthcoming *Neighbours on the Eve of the Holocaust,* endeavours to show that a radical reappraisal of wartime Polish-Jewish relations is long overdue. It must of necessity include the Soviet Union as a factor on an equal footing with Nazi Germany, a *sine qua non* for a proper understanding of Poland's wartime fate. Furthermore, Jews cannot be viewed simply as passive players in the Polish-German-Soviet Russian paradigm. The existing treatment of Poles as observers (with a growing tendency to move them into the camp of Nazi perpetrators), Jews as victims, and Soviets as liberators must be discarded once and for all. Although no one can deny that perhaps as many as 2.8 million of Poland's 3.3 million Jewish population perished in the Holocaust, Jews were active participants in the events that overtook Eastern Poland in 1939–1941, and once again made their presence felt from 1944 on.

[965] Another proponent of this approach is Brian Porter, who views the role of historians in the following terms: "it is our task to show how specific worldviews emerge in specific times and places, and how those worldviews, shape social reality and individual actions." See Brian Porter, "Explaining Jedwabne: The Perils of Understanding," *The Polish Review,* vol. 27, no. 1 (2002): 26. This approach goes hand in hand with the author's penchant for focusing almost exclusively on the conduct of the Poles when assessing Polish-Jewish relations, and by judging that conduct against present-day standards.

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