Introduction to the set of sources (characteristics, relation to other sources and scope of the project): https://uczycsiezhistorii.pl/artykul/zrodla-do-relacji-polsko-zydowskich-antysemityzmu-gett/

A set of sources for 18 selected locations, assigned to ten narrative themes: memoirs, accounts (including oral history recordings), archival documents and photographs were used – collected by members of the consortium of the project "Education against anti-Semitism.
Multimedia Educational Kit" project consortium – as of 21 February 2026.

Narrative themes – initially, nine were formulated in the project (here marked from A to I), and now a tenth theme has been added, "Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic" (marked as 0), referring to non-hostile Polish-Jewish relations, issues of Jewish culture and identity**:**

0) Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic
A) Anti-Semitism in everyday life in pre-war Poland
B) Anti-Semitism in schools and universities in pre-war Poland
C) The role of the Catholic Church in fuelling anti-Semitic beliefs in the interwar period (1918–1939)
D) Anti-Semitism as a political weapon in the Polish press in the interwar period (1918–1939)
E) Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories – the Holocaust stage
F) The Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti – (sources on this topic have **not** yet been provided)
G) Examples of anti-Semitism in Poland after World War II (the relationship between historical anti-Semitism and contemporary anti-Semitism)
H) Educational initiatives aimed at combating anti-Semitism
I) Remembrance of World War II and the Holocaust

List of towns in alphabetical order:

1. Białystok:

- **Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic:** Felicja Raszkin-Nowak recalls how Hanukkah was celebrated in her home around 1928.
- **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Description of the "Thursday massacre", the burning of the Great Synagogue and the brutal resettlements during which Polish hooligans looted the property of defenceless women and children in 1941.
- **Examples of anti-Semitism in Poland after World War II:** Benjamin Midler describes the hostile reception he received upon his return to the city, when Poles on the bus shouted: "Are you Jews still alive? Why are you coming back, you damned Jews?" and reports of murders on the roads.
- **Memories of World War II and the Holocaust:** Mordechaj Canin documents the devastation of Jewish cemeteries in Bagnówka and on Sosnowa and Miła Streets.

2. Bochnia:

- **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Henryk Schönker's detailed account of life in the ghetto, registration at the Emigration Office to Palestine, and his father's unusual relationship with Commander Müller, who wanted to save the family.

3. Chełm:

- **Topic A (Anti-Semitism in everyday life):** Chaim Lender recalls pre-war boycotts of Jewish craftsmen and the "Don't buy from Jews" campaign.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Jacek Bocheński describes the atmosphere of wartime hatred and mockery of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, but at the same time tells the story of the rescue of one person from the ghetto in Chełm.

4. Grodno:

• **Topic 0 (Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic):** Krystyna Gaponik recalls the harmonious coexistence of three nationalities in Grodno and her curiosity as a child about the Jewish burials she observed and the rules associated with the Sabbath.

• **Topic B + C (Anti-Semitism in everyday life and schools):** Albina Kiziukiewicz recalls the anti-Semitic atmosphere before the outbreak of war on 1 September 1939. Statistical data on Jewish schools and secondary schools before the war.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Description of the situation of education in Grodno after 1 September 1939, as well as the confinement of the community in the ghetto and their subsequent deportation to Treblinka. Krystyna Gaponik talks about how she helped a Jew in hiding during the war. Albina Kiziukiewicz talks about the fear of helping Jews in the ghetto.

5. Hrubieszów:

• **Topics A and B (Anti-Semitism in everyday life and in schools):** Abraham Silberstein recalls pickets of students with posters reading “Go get what’s yours from your own people”.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** School chronicles describing the occupation of Jewish homes for educational purposes and mass executions in the Jewish cemetery and fields behind the barracks.

• **Theme I (Memory):** Zipora Nahir's account is a record of her personal memories of the Holocaust, showing the spectrum of human attitudes – from heroism and selfless support in villages to the cruelty and indifference of the urban crowd.

6. Kolomyia:

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Marcel Najder's shocking descriptions of starvation (eating crows and dogs), corruption in the Judenrat, the functioning of the Order Service and mass deaths.

7. Krakow:

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in occupied Polish territories:** The construction of the camp in **Płaszów** on the site of Jewish cemeteries and the brutal liquidation of the ghetto in March 1943, including the "death march" of elderly people.

8. Lublin:

• **Topics A and B (Anti-Semitism in everyday life and in schools):** Moshe Handelsman recalls a marked increase in anti-Semitic attitudes after the death of Marshal Piłsudski in 1935, whom the Jewish community saw as a guarantor of their security.

• **Topic C (The role of the Church):** Cipora Borensztejn points to the religious sources of anti-Semitism.

• **Topic D (Anti-Semitism in the press):** Henio Dejczer recalls how passers-by derive their "knowledge about Jews" from the national democratic press organ Głos Lubelski.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Memoirs of of Czesława Waksman and Maria Dorfsman-Arbus a place surrounded by barbed wire, where "every day

people were taken away to their deaths." Streets "littered with the corpses of beautiful young girls" and children. Escape from the ghetto and hiding in the countryside.

• **Topic G (Post-war anti-Semitism):** Adam Adams recalls how, after the war, Jews returning to their homes were met with hostility by new tenants who refused to let them in or return their property. He also recalls cases of Jews returning to their hometowns after the war being murdered.

• **Topic H (Education against anti-Semitism):** The activities of the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Centre, which collects oral history accounts and reconstructs the fates of specific individuals, such as Henio Żytomirski and Henio Dejczer.

9. Łomża:

• **Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic:** Reports on the Makabi women's sports movement show a desire to rebuild the nation through the physical education of "the broadest masses of Jewish women" before the war, which today is part of the memory of the rich social life of Jews in Poland.

• **Topic A (Anti-Semitism in everyday life):** Accounts from the memorial book about the feeling of danger on the streets, exclusion from social organisations, hostility after Piłsudski's death, barriers to medical care.

• **Topics B and C (Anti-Semitism in schools and the role of the Church):** Account from the memorial book about the beating of Jewish students with the consent of teachers and priests. Nachman Podróżnik mentions the requirements for Jews at the Polish teacher training college, which were very high, higher than for non-Jews.

10. Łódź:

• **Topic B (Anti-Semitism in schools):** Roman Kent describes the necessity of going to school in groups for fear of fights with Polish peers.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Selected photos from the Miastograf.pl portal

11. Mordy near Siedlce:

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in occupied Polish territories:** Various accounts of the liquidation of the ghetto in the market square, the heat and thirst of the children, and the killing of the sick in their homes – collected in KARTA publications.

12. Orla:

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Rabbi Halperin describes the creation of the ghetto, the burning of the synagogue and the deportation to Bielsko, and then to Białystok.

• **Topic G (Post-war anti-Semitism):** Mordechaj Canin describes anti-Semitic jokes made by Poles on a train about the "smell of Jews" at the station in Orla.

13. Otwock:

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Calek Perechodnik reports on the process of closing the ghetto, the bloody executions of engineer Rotblit and doctors, and the widespread looting of property by Polish neighbours.

14. Sejny:

• **Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic:** Memories of Polish-Jewish friendships published in the Sejny Almanac Sejny Almanac.

• **Topic A (Anti-Semitism in everyday life):** Excerpts from a contribution to the history of Sejny, describing stereotypes and prejudices, economic boycott, police actions, violence and demonstrations.

• **Topic B (Anti-Semitism in schools):** Excerpt from a contribution to the history of Sejny on the incident at St. Casimir's Secondary School in Sejny (1936).

• **Topic C (The role of the Church):** Excerpt from a contribution to the history of Sejny on the role of Cardinal Hlond's pastoral letter of 1936.

• **Topic D (Anti-Semitism in the press):** Excerpt from a contribution to the history of Sejny on the role of calendars, e.g. the Polish Calendar of National Self-Defence for 1936.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Max Furmański recalls the displacement of Jews from Sejny.

• **Topic I (Memory):** Excerpts from the Sejny Almanac on the massacre near Łoździeje and the rescue of Jews. Dvera Okuniewicz Kowalska talks about naming traditions in Judaism. Lucyna Saunina, trying to find traces of her grandfather's house, the cheder, recalls the interior of the synagogue.

15. Siedlce:

• **Topic A (Anti-Semitism in everyday life):** Accounts from the memorial book about economic struggle, uniformed picketers in front of shops, and horse-drawn carriages with the inscription "Christian carriage".

• **Topic I (Memory):** Photographs by Tadeusz Castelli documenting crimes committed at the Jewish cemetery, used as evidence in the trials of criminals.

16. Warsaw:

• **Topic A + B (Anti-Semitism in everyday life and schools):** Wacław Kornblum recalls anti-Jewish student pickets, and Warsaw resident Larissa Cain recalls the pogrom in Częstochowa.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Mietek Pachter, Larissa Cain, Marian Berland, Jan Nowik, Alois Eisenhändler, Konrad Charmatz, Bronisław Anlen, Wacław Micuta, Chaim Icel Goldstein – in memoirs, Mary Berg – in a diary, Emanuel Ringelblum – in a chronicle on various issues, including bunkers, smuggling (including by tram), and work in the Schultz and Toebbens shops.

• **Topic G (Post-war anti-Semitism):** Larissa Cain, George J. Elbaum, Anna Bikont on peer violence against Jewish children in schools and orphanages after the war.

• **Topic I (Memory):** Wiktor Woroszylski on the dispute over the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising

17. Vilnius:

• **as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Aleksandra Sołowiejczyk-Guter recalls the forced resettlement in September 1941, the brutality of the Lithuanian guards and the herding of Jews towards the prison in Łukiszki. Teme Kac (a teacher from Vilnius) presented a shocking picture of Jews being driven out of basements, the sight of scattered property on the streets, and the uncertainty and fear of those being driven to prison.

• **Topic I (Memory):** Herman Kruk's accounts of saving books (the Paper Brigade). Testimony intellectual resistance offered by the Vilnius intelligentsia (Herman Kruk, Teme Kac) in their efforts to preserve memory and culture for future generations.

18. Zamość:

• **Topic A (Anti-Semitism in everyday life):** Włodzimierz Korsak recalls pre-war "jokes" involving the destruction of the tents of Jewish orchard guards.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Various accounts, including a letter from Halinka Edelsberg to her grandfather (probably Chuna Edelsberg) from Lviv (2 January 1941), recollections of Mendel Garfinkel, Heddy Arnold, a doctor from the ghetto, including on the death march and the "liquidation"

the ghetto in Zamość, a letter from Ruth Bauernschmiedt to her parents (16 June 1942), an account of the placement of typhus patients in special barracks in the ghetto instead of in the city hospital.

SELECTION OF SOURCES ADDED TO THE MAP ON THE www.uczycsiezhistorii.pl PORTAL (as of 21 February 2026):

1. Białystok

• **Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic:** The Jewish Heritage Trail in Białystok can serve as an introduction to the topic: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Szlak_Dziedzictwa_%C5%BBydowskiego_w_Bia%C5%82ymstoku and walks around Białystok: www.spacerybialystok.pl Felicja Raszkin-Nowak recalls how Hanukkah was celebrated in her home around 1928.

Hanukkah

“After the performance, they gave us little packages with sweets and it was very cheerful, because it was the first day of the Hanukkah candle, which Daddy lit at home when it got dark. At first there was only one, and from then on, every evening for eight days, he lit one more, until they all stood evenly and burned beautifully. It was a holiday commemorating the miracle in Jerusalem. A very, very long time ago, when the Maccabees defeated the Greeks. There was only a little oil left in a tiny jug in the Temple, but it was enough to burn in the large candlestick for eight days. Our candlestick was very pretty and Miss Stasia cleaned it. She also lit candles in the kitchen, but not in the candlestick, only on the green Christmas tree. I wanted to take it to my room because it smelled so nice, but Daddy wouldn't let me. He said it was only for Stasia because she has her own holiday. Mummy put a present under the Christmas tree, even though it wasn't Christmas or my birthday, but for the little boy in the picture that hung above my bed. I got the most presents on my third candle, because that was when my birthday was, my fourth one.

Felicja Raszkin-Nowak, *Moja gwiazda* [My Star], Białystok 2008, p. 15.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:**

The ghetto in Białystok existed in the Białystok District from 26 July 1941 to August 1943. Approximately 40,000-60,000 Jews from the city and surrounding areas were placed there. Source: https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/miejscowosci/b/397-bialystok/116-miejsca-martyrologii/44607-getto-w-bialymstoku. Description of the transfer to the ghetto after the "Thursday massacre", the burning of the Great Synagogue, and the brutal resettlements, during which Polish hooligans looted the property of defenceless women and children. Felicja Raszkin-Nowak's recollection of wearing the Star of David. You can read about the massacres of Jews in Białystok in the summer of 1941 can be read, among other places, here: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masakry_%C5%BByd%C3%B3w_w_Bia%C5%82ymstoku_latem_1941_roku Outside the ghetto, the Nazis organised various forms and places of terror in Białystok: Stalag No. 316 prisoner of war camp, July 1942– June 1943, prisons (heavy Nazi prison) – 2 forced labour centres – forced labour camp for Jews https://war.dekoder.org/de/map/pow_camps/

Transfer to the ghetto

Białystok, 25 July 1941

“On the Sabbath of 24 July, Jews began to leave their homes. Several of them managed to arrange for carts to move their belongings, but this did not protect them from theft. A large percentage of the Jews were now women and children, carrying their heavy packages on their already burdened shoulders. Thousands of them had husbands and brothers who had been burned in the Great Synagogue or shot in Pietrasze during the memorable massacre on Thursday and Saturday. Many of the men who survived were afraid to show themselves on the streets. They feared death, torture or immediate conscription into forced labour.

Polish hooligans took advantage of the situation. They attacked defenceless Jewish women and children. As soon as a Jew dropped his bundle, the hooligans immediately appropriated it. If Jewish boys
resisted the hooligans and got into a fight with them, the Nazis sided with the thugs. It was a common sight to see a poor Jewish boy dragging himself, half dead, back to the ghetto.

The Nazis guarding the ghetto were completely devoid of compassion. They harassed and mocked Jewish women and children, who were bent under the weight of the bundles they carried on their backs. They humiliated them further by taking photographs of them
that violated their dignity. The Jewish relocation lasted almost a week, and such heart-wrenching scenes were repeated every day.

Rafael Rajzner, *Losy nieopowiedziane. Zagłada Żydów białostockich 1939-1945* [Untold Stories: The Extermination of the Jews of Białystok 1939-1945], Warsaw 2013, pp. 48-49.

Relocation to the ghetto

"It was a hot summer day, but my father lit a fire in the fireplace and began throwing our most precious belongings into the flames – souvenirs, photographs, letters, family heirlooms, things we were not allowed to take with us and did not want to fall into the wrong hands. We stood in a semicircle around the fireplace. My father put on khaki winter clothes, riding boots and a wide leather belt. He was now even more than
He had always resembled Garry Cooper, and my mother always teased him gently about this resemblance. The yellow Star of David that we had to wear on our clothes made him look even more like a sheriff from the Wild West in my eyes.

– These are our last moments in our home, he said. We don't know when we'll be back. We don't know who will move in after us. Each of us is allowed to carry only one suitcase, which means we can only take the bare essentials. We have to leave everything else behind.

– "But, Dad," I protested. "What about my bike? And my live ones? And my stamp collection? And my..."

– You can't take bikes. Your toys will be useless. As for your stamp collection, take it with you. Maybe we can trade something for food. But that's all.

Father, unchanging, without any sign of emotion, threw one thing after another into the fire. He also took the bouquet of artificial white flowers that always stood in his parents' bedroom. And if not at the wedding, it stood together under the wedding canopy.

– "This bouquet..." he began, his voice trembling. "Anyway, I'm throwing it here, into the flames, as we stand together by the fireplace to immortalise it. When Frieda gets married," he stroked my sister's head, "we'll buy her a new bouquet.

Father put his arm around Mother. "Helaina," he said (I remember being frightened by the solemn tone in his voice when he said her full name; I had always heard him call her Hela). "It's time for us to go.

We took our suitcases and left the house."

Samuel Pisar, *Z krwi i nadziei* [Of Blood and Hope], Białystok 2023, pp. 36-37.

Star of David

On 8 July [1941], an order was issued requiring Jews to wear yellow patches. They were in the shape of a six-pointed Star of David with a diameter of 12 cm. They were worn on the left breast and right shoulder blade. Now
it was easier to recognise us. We were stigmatised. If the patches were not sewn on tightly enough or pinned on, the punishment was a fine, supplemented by a beating. Curfew was in force from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.

We were not allowed to walk on the pavement, only on the road. Once, when I was going to work early in the morning, I broke this rule. A young German stopped me and hit me hard in the face. It was a difficult moral experience for me, more painful than the blow itself, and I remember it well.

Felicja Raszkin-Nowak, *Moja gwiazda* [My Star], Białystok 2008, p. 85.

• **Topic G (Post-war anti-Semitism):** Benjamin Midler describes the hostility he encountered upon returning to the city, when Poles on the bus shouted: "Are you Jews still alive? Why are you coming back, you cursed Jews?" In the Book of Remembrance of the Jewish Community in Sokoły, we read accounts of murders on the roads.

Return after the war

“I took a military train from Brest-Litovsk to Białystok and arrived there in the late afternoon. It didn’t seem to me to be the same city I had left just a few years ago.
Everything in Białystok had changed: when I left, the city was full of Jews, and now my city had been abandoned by Jews because they had died in the Holocaust. I took a bus from the railway station to my home. On the bus, several young Poles shouted:

"Are you Jews still alive?"

"Didn't Hitler wipe you out?"

"Why are you coming back, you damned Jews?"

That was the first "warm" welcome I received in my homeland. When I arrived at my former home, I found only ruins. Where I used to live, my parents and brothers were murdered by
Germans or Poles. I didn't even know where they were buried, or if their remains had been found at all. Most of my family members had disappeared without a trace. But it was definitely the work of those damned Poles.
Even after my arrival, they continued their shameful deeds, killing Jews who had miraculously survived and returned to Białystok.

I immediately sensed that my life was in danger, even though I had to stay in Białystok to see if anyone in my family was still alive. Where could I go now? A man passing by
He looked Jewish. I asked him in Yiddish if he knew whether my family was alive. He looked at me
as if he had seen a ghost; he replied in Polish, warning me not to speak Yiddish, as it could put me in danger. This frightened me even more. I knew that if Jews returned to Białystok, they would be rounded up and segregated in a special part of the city called the "Jewish Quarter".

Benjamin Midler, *The Life of a Child Survivor*, 1989, pp. 89–90.

Murder of Jews

“Russian and Polish troops camped in Białystok to prevent gangs of Polish murderers and robbers from running amok and committing their wicked deeds. Thanks to this, our brothers felt safer there than in small towns. However, it did not take long for the plague of looting to spread to this city as well. The murderers' goal was to sow fear and panic in the Jewish community, everywhere. One morning, a Jewish woman was shot dead as she was going shopping at the market. Another incident took place on Aleja Białostocka, which led to Jewish shops. Two soldiers in Russian army uniforms entered one of the shops and, without a word,
shot the owner of the Ptak shop in Rutki. Ptak was seriously injured. The second bullet was aimed at Ptak's wife, who died on the spot.

After liberation, there was another case of mass murder. A group of Jews were travelling south by car on the road between Białystok and Jasionówka. Thieves disguised as traffic police stopped them on the way, allegedly to check their documents. They were pulled out of the car and lined up, then all of them were shot. And here another Jew went to his town to
sell his house and was murdered there, not far from where he was born.

Incidents such as these and similar ones caused panic and fear among the remaining Jews, even in large cities. Now there was no one to trust and no one to believe. Those who protected us and whom we considered our friends were the ones behind the events that were to destroy us. Going out in the evening or at night was dangerous, and every movement of the shutters made Jews tremble at the thought that murderers disguised as police had arrived. There were many Poles who robbed Jews during the occupation and enriched themselves on

taking their property. These Poles were interested in spreading panic so that Jews would leave and never regain their property. Simply put, they wanted to eliminate Jewish heirs."

Memorial Book of the Jewish Community in Sokoły, Łomża 2025, pp. 135–136.

• **Theme I (Memory):** Mordechaj Canin documents the devastation of Jewish cemeteries in Bagnówka and on Sosnowa and Miła Streets.

Jewish cemeteries

"The Poles treated Jewish holy sites the same way the Germans treated living Jews. They completely devastated the old cemetery on Sosnowa and Miła Streets. They stole the matzevot, dismantled the fence, and trampled and demolished the graves. They trampled paths through the cemetery to shorten their way between streets. They destroyed and robbed the old
cemetery in Bagnówka was destroyed and robbed. Matzevot, which had no material value for them, were simply smashed and ground into dust so that no trace of them remained. Here, too, they made shortcuts between the streets.

Mordechaj Canin, *Through Ruins and Ashes: A Journey Through One Hundred Destroyed Jewish Communities in Poland*, Warsaw 2018, p. 259.

2. Bochnia

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** The ghetto in Bochnia existed in the Krakow District of the General Government from March 1941 to September 1943. After the ghetto was dissolved
and deportation to Bełżec and Auschwitz, the number of interned Jews was approximately 15,000. In addition to the ghetto in Bochnia, there was also a forced labour camp for Jews. (source: https://war.dekoder.org/de/map/ghettos/). Account by Henryk Schönker, an Israeli and Polish engineer and writer, about life in the Bochnia ghetto, registration at the Emigration Office to Palestine, and his father's unusual relationship with Commander Müller, who wanted to save the Schönker family.

"The car started and after a short time we left Tarnów. I felt as if a part of me had remained in the ghetto. I was moved and tears came to my eyes. The monotonous drive began to make me sleepy and soon I fell asleep. I don't know how long I slept. I was awakened by my father's loud words:

"This is Bochnia, after all! My father is here!" And after a moment: "Tell the driver to stop at the gate of the ghetto. We'll get out there."

Someone shouted this to the driver in German. Shortly afterwards, the car stopped. We got out at the gate of the ghetto, my mother and father, and me with Luśka. There were only two Ordnungssoldaten there. They let us enter the ghetto without any obstacles. The night was cold; we stood on the street. One of the policemen approached us and told us to go to the post office, because new people arriving in the ghetto were gathering there. At that time, in January 1943, the ghetto in Bochnia was already very overcrowded.

He explained to us how to get to the post office and said that there was a large hall there where we could stay until we found something permanent. We walked to the post office with mixed feelings. We did not know what awaited us there.

Later, our father told us that when he realised we were passing through Bochnia, something prompted him to get off here. Perhaps it was nostalgia for our grandfather Józef, whom he had not seen for a long time. We knew that he was in the ghetto in Bochnia, where he had arrived from Krakow.

My father's sudden decision saved our lives. There is no doubt that we would not have survived in the Płaszów camp. Later, it turned out that if we had stayed in the Tarnów ghetto, we would have died too. [...]

At one point, Müller told my father that if he had any personal requests, he could turn to him. My father replied that he would like to ask him for advice because he had *an affidavit* for Palestine and did not know whether to register, as he was afraid of where we would be sent. Müller replied that if my father had any foreign papers, he should register as soon as possible.

Then something astonishing happened. Müller rose from behind his desk and began pacing nervously around the room. With reproach in his voice, he said that he was surprised by these questions, because they showed that my father did not realise the situation he was in. He then asked, "Are all Jews so naive? After all, only extermination awaits you in the ghetto." He himself had no influence over this. The orders came from above. Every day could bring a new deportation.

– What kind of question is that, whether it is worth leaving the ghetto with foreign papers? After all, it is your only way to salvation! he exclaimed.

– But... but there were various rumours, explained my father.

– I know, I heard about it. I don't know what happened there, but I know what happens now after registration. Everyone is gathered in a special camp for interned foreigners and waits there for the formalities to be completed the formalities. Then these people will be able to leave the country via Switzerland or Sweden.

– But I only have a photocopy, I lost the original.

– It doesn't matter whether you have the original or a photocopy. The only thing that matters is whether they want to accept you in Palestine or not. We also have German citizens there. There will probably be an exchange, or maybe you will get there some other way.

Müller gave the impression that he wanted to help my father. At one point, he stood in front of him, pointed his finger at him and shouted:

– This is your only and perhaps last chance for salvation, don't you understand that?

Seeing his agitation, the father replied obediently:

– I understand.

– Well then, have a safe journey, said Müller with a smile and shook his father's hand goodbye.

Henryk Schönker, *Dotknięcie anioła* [The Touch of an Angel], Ośrodek KARTA, Warsaw 2016 (series: "Żydzi polscy" [Polish Jews]).

3. Chełm:

• **Topic A (Anti-Semitism in everyday life):** Chaim Lender recalls the pre-war boycotts of Jewish craftsmen and the "Don't buy from Jews" campaign.

Anti-Semitism in pre-war Chełm

Not only did I feel Jewish, but the Poles emphasised that I was Jewish. Even if you didn't want to feel Jewish, they told you that you were Jewish. Anti-Semitism already existed before the war. I remember that there were no Polish bootmakers in Chełm, so the anti-Semites brought in one Polish bootmaker, but no one, not even [among] the Poles, wanted to go to him, and he returned to his place. People weren't really anti-Semitic. If they hadn't been incited, there would have been no anti-Semitism in Poland. They just started putting people around Jewish warehouses and didn't let Poles in, they started agitating. Well, that bears fruit. I felt Jewish. Maybe I wouldn't have felt [so Jewish] if it hadn't been [emphasised].

Oral History Programme Archive, "Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN" Centre.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** The ghetto in Chełm existed in the Lublin District from 30 October 1940. After its dissolution, the Jews were deported to Bełżec, Sobibór and shot. The number of interned Jews was approximately 11,000. In addition, Chełm was home to a forced labour camp for Jews, Stalag No. 319 from March to April 1944 and Dulag No. 110 in September 1944. Source: https://war.dekoder.org/de/map Jacek Bocheński describes the atmosphere of wartime hatred and mockery of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, but also the rescue of one person from the ghetto in Chełm.

Anti-Semitism among the inhabitants of Chełm during the Holocaust

“[In Chełm, I felt] very bad, very bad. It was a shock for me to encounter this world. Perhaps I would add here: I encountered the terrible anti-Semitism of the time.
Anti-Semitism, which was expressed, among other things, in the fact that I heard with my own ears many times repeated as a cliché already adopted from others and mindlessly repeated. "Well, Hitler deserves a monument for freeing us from the Jews."

But there were all sorts of people in Chełm. Some of my stepfather's business partners used to come there stepfather, who worked, for example, in a company called "Społem". There was a food cooperative, I think it was called "Społem". It existed before the war, but it operated in the General Government, i.e. under German occupation. And I remember that there was constant contact with them and various people came and visited, sometimes for dinner, because I was called in to help with something – because I worked in the office and heard various things.

I heard these idiotic conversations that took place. I heard accounts mocking the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Because at that time, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising broke out. “The Jews... Oh dear, the Jews are fighting.” Because Jews were supposedly incapable of fighting. They were cowardly people in this anti-Semitic stereotype. In
Unlike the chivalrous nation of soldiers and heroes, we Poles are not at all capable of chivalrous craftsmanship. And it was they who waged war on the Germans here, ha ha ha, right. I have also heard such accounts.
.

But that's not all, because at the same time, one of the employees of this plant was saved. When the ghetto was liquidated and all the Jews were deported from Chełm, she was hidden and then taken away. And she survived. Because when I arrived, she was already gone, but after the war she came to thank us for saving her.
everything is so mixed up, that's how it looks and that's the truth, that was the reality at the time. Of course, you can't draw conclusions about the whole based on a fragment, and you don't have to force these fragments into a stereotypical whole.”

Oral History Programme Archive, Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Centre.

4. Grodno:

• **Topic 0 (Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic):** Krystyna Gaponik recalls the harmonious coexistence of three nationalities in Grodno and her curiosity as a child about Jewish burials and the rules associated with the Sabbath.

“There were three nationalities and no one hurt or insulted anyone, we lived in harmony. And now, where the Belarus Hotel stands, where it is now, we lived near the Jewish cemetery, now there is a stadium, that big stadium, that’s where it is... And it was a Jewish cemetery, a very large cemetery. So when
buried Jews, we would climb onto the wall and we were very curious about how they buried them. Because they carry them in a coffin and they say that they plant them, they plant them in a sheet, and that their family doesn't cry, they read there, because some cry and some still read there, what, well, there - My darling, my darling there - well, they sing like that. So, they hire such people, they hire such mourners who are there the whole time.
They almost read our life story, we used to go to that wall and look. [...]

And my husband, for example, says, because he also lived in that neighbourhood, only he lived closer to the Neman River, he says that when he walked there, sometimes... And they even walked with the boys through the Jatki district on purpose, because, he says, the Jews always treated us to something there. And I say, why did they treat you? And because, for example, their Sabbath is Saturday, ours is Sunday, but theirs is Saturday, but for them... Well, for us, people cook dinner on Sunday, so something...

KG: Sunday is Sunday, you don't do anything too strenuous, but if dinner isn't cooked, then you cook dinner. And among Jews, for example, you weren't even allowed to light a match, not even a match, and there weren't any electric lighters back then. So he says, let's go, boys, and a Jewish woman comes out and says, "Boy, boy, come here," and you go up to her and say, "What do you want?" "Please come

light a match for me. Light a match, everything is already laid out here. Just light a match and put it to the paper, light the stove. And she'll definitely give you some chocolate or something like that."

https://audiohistoria.pl/wyszukiwanie/wyniki?q=getto%20w%20grodnie&category=all

• **Topic B + C (Anti-Semitism in everyday life and schools):** Albina Kiziukiewicz recalls the anti-Semitic mood before the outbreak of war on 1 September 1939. Statistical data on Jewish schools and gymnasiums before the war.

Albina Kiziukiewicz:

"We came here to Grodno from there in 1938. I was already in first grade in the village. Our teacher was Ms Mikiciówna, who was still a young lady, not yet married. The thing is, when the Germans were here , they took the intelligentsia hostage, her whole family, her brother, sister, children, they took them all to Łomowicze, to that ford, and shot them. We had a doctor named Łozowski, he was also destroyed by those Germans, that was life.

When we came here to Grodno, I went to that school for the first year, near the tobacco factory. You know, I have little education, I only finished one class in the village, and here I only passed from the second class to the third, and on 1 September we got up, it wasn't morning yet, but on Sunday I already heard a bang, whether it was thunder or something else. It was very hot on 1 September and they went out, gathered together, this neighbour came out and that one, and they said: What is it, what is that bang, I think it's going to rain. And then they realised it was war.

At that time, we didn't even have an adapter, because they brought the flat from the countryside, my mum didn't have a job yet, and my dad only had a casual job. There wasn't much, but when I was studying at that school near the tobacco factory, you know how it was: Don't buy from Jews, beat Jews! And the Orthodox Christians were also handing out leaflets, saying that they were waiting for the Bolsheviks, they knew that the Bolsheviks would come from there, just as the Germans would come from here, to such an extent. And the war caught us like that, I didn't go to third grade because the war started on 1 September.

https://audiohistoria.pl/wyszukiwanie/wyniki?q=getto%20w%20grodnie&category=all

“[…] Grodno was the second largest pre-war city in the Białystok Province. According to the second census of 1931, the Grodno County had […] 213,105 inhabitants, including 49,669 in Grodno. In light of statistical data on native languages, there were 34,354 Jews in this area – 16% of the population, including 23,458 in Grodno – 47% [...]

The following schools existed in Grodno: […] two Jewish secondary schools and several public primary schools (Polish and Jewish) of the third degree. Within the municipalities, there were public primary schools of the first, second and third degrees, with a predominance of the first degree, i.e. four grades, most often with one teacher. In larger settlements, such as
Krynki, there was a 7-grade public primary school of the third level. There was also a Jewish school there. Education in the Grodno district was subject to the Vilnius School District Board in Vilnius.”

Grodno and the Grodno district [in] Maria Kolendo, *Secret teaching during the Nazi occupation (1941-1944) in the Grodno district*, typescript of a paper, 1980, State Archives in Białystok.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:**

The ghetto in Grodno existed in the Białystok District from November 1941 to March 1943.
Two separate ghettos were established in the city, approximately 2 km apart. Ghetto No. 1, intended for people useful to the economy of the Third Reich, was established in the central part of the city around the synagogue – approximately 15,000 Jews were placed there.
area. Ghetto No. 2 was established in the suburban area of Slobodka (between the present-day Kosmonautów, Lidzka and Antonowa Streets), where 10,000 Jews deemed unfit for work were confined. Source:
http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/grodno%20ghetto.html

- Ghetto A in Grodno (site of mass executions): Ghetto A stretched between Wilenska and Zamkowa Streets. During "Operation 10,000" in January 1943, hundreds of Jews, including 100 infants, were killed in the streets of Ghetto A during the "cleansing" of the ghetto orphanage. Many Jewish people were also killed in Ghetto A during "Operation 5,000" in February 1943. More information: Yad Vashem;
- Ghetto B in Grodno (site of mass executions): Ghetto B was located between Skidelska Street (now Kosmonavtov Street) and Legionowa Street (now Belusha Street). The two ghettos, Ghetto A, the main one, in the central part of the city, and Ghetto B, in the Slobodka district of Grodno, were definitely the main places where Jews from Grodno were murdered. Four operations were carried out to deport Jews from Grodno (in November 1942 – deportation from Ghetto B to Auschwitz; in January 1943 – the so-called "Aktion 10,000" – deportation from Ghetto A to the extermination camps in Treblinka and Auschwitz; in February 1943 – "action 5,000" – to the same places; and in March 1943, when the last Jews from Grodno were deported to the ghetto in Białystok, and the ghetto in Grodno was liquidated. Each action in the Grodno ghetto was accompanied by killings in the city. The Germans killed Jews who tried to avoid deportation and whom they found in makeshift shelters they had built in the ghetto, as well as those who were too weak to reach the assembly point, and others. There were also accidental killings. During "Aktion 10,000," hundreds of Jews were killed in the streets of Ghetto A. Many Jews also died in February 1943 in Ghetto A during "Aktion 5,000." For more information: Yad Vashem

Outside the ghettos, there were other places of Nazi terror in Grodno:

- The Second Fort in Grodno (site of mass executions): in July 1941, a group of Gestapo officers arrived in Grodno. They took 80 members of the Jewish intelligentsia (teachers, lawyers, rabbis, musicians and several other people), all men, out of the city and shot them near the village of Naumovichi. Although the exact location of this crime is unknown, it was most likely in the vicinity of the Second Grodno Fort, not far from the village of Naumowicze. It was was there, in the ditches near the fort, that in the summer of 194 the Nazis shot their political opponents. Later, the Germans established a prisoner-of-war camp in the vicinity of the fort. According to some accounts, the Germans continued to use this area to carry out small-scale executions of Jews and other victims as late as 1943. More information: Yad Vashem
- Stalag No. 324/Z from August 1941 to November 1942 and Stalag No. 316/Z in the period up to March/June 1943

Source: https://war.dekoder.org/de/map

Description of the situation of schools and education in Grodno after 1 September 1939, as well as the closure of the community in the ghetto and their subsequent deportation to Treblinka:

After the outbreak of the Polish-German war on 1 September 1939, some schools in Grodno were opened at the beginning of September despite the unrest caused by mobilisation and subsequent fighting on the Narew River. On 14 September 1939, the army and state offices were evacuated from Grodno, and shortly afterwards, schools were closed. On 17 September 1939, the Red Army crossed the Polish border, and on 20 September, Soviet troops entered Grodno. [...]. When relations in Grodno normalised under the new political conditions, the Soviet authorities approved the running of schools according to the existing Polish education system. The only instruction was to remove Polish religion, history, geography and literature from the school curriculum. In January 1940, an education reform was introduced in the schools of the Grodno district. Combined secondary schools and gymnasiums with elementary schools were transformed into 10-year comprehensive secondary schools and 7-year incomplete secondary schools . Four-year schools (Naczalnyje Uczyliszcza) were established in the municipalities. Among the 10-year schools organised by the Soviet authorities in Grodno and the municipalities were schools with Polish, Russian, Belarusian and Jewish languages of instruction. […] The outbreak of the German-Soviet war on 22 June 1941 marked a new period in the history of Grodno.

Grodno became a staging post where German troops replenished their ranks and arrived from the Eastern Front to rest. The troops were stationed in school buildings, which had been adapted for this purpose.

The Jewish population from the entire district was confined to the Grodno ghetto. When the ghetto was liquidated, some of its inhabitants were transferred to Białystok in 1942, and in 1943 the remaining Jews were transported to the Treblinka camp.

Grodno and the Grodno district [in:] Maria Kolendo, *Secret teaching during the Nazi occupation (1941-1944) in the Grodno district*, typescript of a paper, 1980, State Archives in Białystok.

Albina Kiziukiewicz talks about the fear of helping Jews in the ghetto:

"And the Jews, I don't remember in which month, they were taken from the ghetto to Folusz, where there was a military unit, and next to it they built a labour camp and surrounded it with barbed wire. There were dugouts there and they took them there. The younger ones were dressed normally, but the old Jewish women had holes cut in their quilts and
on themselves, because it was already winter and they were walking wrapped up in blankets. You couldn't even throw them a piece of bread, because if you did and they bent down to pick it up, they would inevitably be shot. It was awful. fragments were very difficult to watch at a young age. And then, when the Soviets drove the Germans away, they weren't so kind either, but they would have lost the war if they hadn't treated those they took prisoner [Russian: into captivity] so harshly, then Germany would have won,

but apparently God decreed that such a thing was necessary. I saw a lot at a young age, such experiences were witnessed by a child, but everything has passed."

https://audiohistoria.pl/wyszukiwanie/wyniki?q=getto%20w%20grodnie&category=all

Krystyna Gaponik talks about how she helped a Jew in hiding during the war:

KG: Even I remember that when we were here, at the cemetery, they even hid their own. If someone had tombs or something, they hid in the cemetery. And I came and said, and somehow we ate, I don't remember what we ate, but we ate something and... Well, potatoes, mostly in their skins, and I think - We
at least we have potatoes in their skins here - and I saw that... Well, anyway, there were us, that gentleman, I don't remember his name, that gentleman who had a butcher's shop, we used to go to him for meat sometimes
We used to go there, before the war. I say, I saw him at the Jewish cemetery and I say, he definitely has nothing, and I tell my mum, "Give me four potatoes, two are mine and I'll take two to that man." No one paid any attention to children there, you could take something if there was something and everyone did that. I was still a small child, so I don't remember if you bought meat or if it was given away. You bought it, because he had his own little shop and he sold meat.

MS: And he was hiding in the cemetery?

KG: And he was hiding in the cemetery. But then the Germans caught him, someone must have betrayed him, because I only saw them leading him down Grandzicka Street with his hands tied behind his back with a rope, and that rope was dragging him along.

https://audiohistoria.pl/wyszukiwanie/wyniki?q=getto%20w%20grodnie&category=all

5. Hrubieszów:

• **Topics A and B (Everyday life and schools):** Anti-Semitism in pre-war Hrubieszów – memories of student pickets with posters reading "Go get what's yours from your own people".

Abraham Silberstein, born in 1914; Wyszków:

"Hrubieszów was a quiet town, but there was one day when people were being drafted into the army, so they came to Hrubieszów, because there was a second cavalry regiment there, and it was not far from us, so when they were conscripting people,

who had come from the area that day, they drank vodka and then went and beat up Jews on the street while drunk. It was one day when everyone locked themselves in.

Later, in the years when Hitler rose to power [you could feel signs of anti-Semitism]. He had not yet been elected, but he had influence over the population in Poland. In secondary school, my friends and I sat on the same bench, it was already in 1932, 1933, they would go after school with posters saying: "Don't buy from Jews", "Go to your own people for your purchases"... Five minutes earlier, they were sitting with me, and when school ended, they went to the shops in front of the Jews and stood there with those signs. It was the National Democratic Party, Hitler's influence was already in Hrubieszów. Personally, I didn't feel anything because I was the school painter, I was the best in the school. I did all the decorations. There was a school theatre organisation, so I was recognised as the school painter and I also did the decorations. And I personally didn't feel any discrimination."

Date and place of recording: 20 September 2009,
Tel Aviv Interviewer: Tomasz Czajkowski
Transcription: Kamil Dudkowski
Edited by Maria Radek
Copyright © Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN"

- **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:**

The ghetto in Hrubieszów existed in the Lublin District of the General Government from May 1942 to May 1943. After its dissolution, Jews were transported to Sobibór and Budzyn, and some were murdered on the spot. The number of Jews interned was approximately 10,000. Outside the ghetto, there was a forced labour camp for Jews in Hrubieszów. Source: https://war.dekoder.org/de/map. School chronicles describe the occupation of Jewish houses for educational purposes and mass executions at the Jewish cemetery and in the fields behind the barracks.

A picture of life in a multi-ethnic town in school chronicles supplemented by the voices of Hrubieszów students.

Edward Szczech, headmaster of Public School No. 3, in the school chronicle:

The school received an old wooden shack formerly occupied by Jews* on Narutowicza Street [outside the ghetto]. The building had three "rooms". […] The school had about three hundred Polish Roman Catholic children. On Narutowicza Street, in the occupied house, there was a large room in the attic, once inhabited by a Jewish family, now converted into a school office. […] A year ago, a poor tailor named Izaak lived here. He had a workshop and a private flat behind a partition in what is now the school hall. These two rooms are now one small hall. All that remains of the tailor is a large tiled chimney and a stove."

Hrubieszów, September 1940

* The Germans established a ghetto in the centre of Hrubieszów in June 1940. After the start of Operation Reinhardt in early June 1942, the vast majority of Jews from Hrubieszów and the Hrubieszów district were deported to the extermination camp in Sobibór. The rest were sent to the labour camp in Budzyń, and between July and September 1943, the ghetto was finally liquidated.

Chronicle of Public School No. 3 in Hrubieszów 1934–1972, in the collection of the library of Primary School No. 2 in Hrubieszów, in: "Karta" 105/2020, Katarzyna Suchecka, *Hrubieszów 1939–44.*

Zipora Nahir

"I read books during the day. Not at night, because we weren't allowed to turn on the lights. […] I simply immersed myself in those books. My father found them in every house he cleaned*. Whatever he found, he brought to me. I read books for children and adults, crime novels, romances and others. I read everything I could find. They were books in Polish. I never read anything in Yiddish."

Hrubieszów, autumn 1940

*The Germans used Jews who had been transferred to the Hrubieszów ghetto to search for valuables in abandoned Jewish homes.

Zipora Nahir, Oral History Programme Archive of the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Centre, account recorded by Tomasz Czajkowski in 2017, in: Karta 105/2020, Katarzyna Suchecka, *Hrubieszów 1939–44.*

Katarzyna Bajurka, pupil at School No. 2

“We studied in one house, because the Germans had taken all the Jews away [moved them to the ghetto]. These were Jewish houses, stripped of everything; you could see from the walls that someone poor had lived there. We studied standing up, but there was a blackboard.”

Hrubieszów, April 1941

Katarzyna Leokadia Bajurka, Digital Archive of Local Tradition at the Municipal Public Library in Hrubieszów, account recorded by Katarzyna Suchecka in October 2018, in: "Karta" 105/2020, Katarzyna Suchecka, *Hrubieszów 1939–44.*

A pupil at School No. 2 wrote in his diary

“Almost all streets in Hrubieszów have been given German names. Piłsudskiego Street has been renamed Bahnhofstrasse. […] The Germans are rounding up Jews at night and deporting some of them. At the same time, a ban has been imposed
entering deserted houses.” Hrubieszów, 2

June 1942

“Bulletin of the Hrubieszów Regional Society”, No. 2/1966, Hrubieszów, in: “Karta” 105/2020, Katarzyna Suchecka, *Hrubieszów 1939–44.*

A pupil of School No. 2 in his diary

“The Germans are catching and shooting local Jews who managed to hide. [3] There are several corpses lying in front of almost every Jewish house. An official announcement orders Poles to report to the employment office to take over the positions [jobs] left by Jews, under threat of being deported to Germany.

A notice has been posted ordering that any Jews encountered be taken to the police station and prohibiting the provision of assistance to Jews and entry into Jewish homes.”

Hrubieszów, October 1942

[3] Between 7 and 9 June 1942, as part of the liquidation of the ghetto, 3,049 Jews from Hrubieszów were transported to the extermination camp in Sobibór.

“Biuletyn Towarzystwa Regionalnego Hrubieszowskiego” [Bulletin of the Hrubieszów Regional Society], No. 2/1966, Hrubieszów, in: “Karta” 105/2020, Katarzyna Suchecka, *Hrubieszów 1939–44.*

Emilia Schuster in the chronicle of School No. 2

The Jewish population was completely exterminated [4] . […] Many women and children were shot at the trench [Jewish cemetery], forcing them to dig their own graves. Many were shot in the fields behind the barracks. Blood-curdling scenes took place. Once the Jewish population had been exterminated, the systematic destruction of Poles began. Not a day or night passed without arrests, and every knock caused fear and terror.

Hrubieszów, October/November 1943

[4] This refers to the final phase of the ghetto's liquidation. The main liquidation of the ghetto took place in June 1942. After that, there were still about 600 Jews left, who were then placed in a labour camp in Hrubieszów. In September 1943, the camp was liquidated and the Jews were transported to a labour camp in Budzyń near Kraśnik.

Chronicle of Public School No. 2 in Hrubieszów 1918–1949, in the collection of the library of Primary School No. 2 in Hrubieszów, in: "Karta" 105/2020, Katarzyna Suchecka, *Hrubieszów 1939–44.*

• **Theme I (Memory):** Zipora Nahir recalls the complicated and tense Polish-Jewish relations in Hrubieszów during the German occupation. The author outlines a clear contrast between the rescue of Jews by courageous Polish families, who sometimes fraternised with the occupiers for the sake of appearances, and the painful cases of fugitives being handed over for profit and public consent to crime. This testimony sheds light on the tragic lack of trust during that period, while pointing to specific
examples of survivors, such as the Rotenberg family, who survived thanks to local help. This account is a documentation of personal memories of the Holocaust, showing the spectrum of human attitudes – from heroism and selfless support in the villages to the cruelty and indifference of the urban crowd.

Zipora Nahir, born 1930; Hrubieszów:

"I met several families who were saved by Poles in Hrubieszów. They knew them and hid them... From the moment they entered the ghetto until the end of the war, they hid a family of five. I know of another such case, and I am sure there were more. But these are truly the righteous among... And very often such people appeared to be friends with the Germans on the outside. And maybe even deliberately
because they kept Jews at home all the time, guarded them and gave them everything they could. And because they were friends with the Germans... They weren't Volksdeutsche and they weren't party members, but let's say they were friends so that the Germans wouldn't come and search their homes.

I don't know of any such cases, but I've heard that Poles turned in a lot of Jews. They turned in a lot of Jews from hiding places where Jews had hidden. I don't know if there were many cases, but I know from other places that
They handed over their entire fortunes to Poles, even to their neighbours. And the latter took all their possessions and later turned the Jews in. It didn't matter whether they were children or adults, there were many such cases. In any case, I know one thing: there was no trust in the Polish population when it came to exposing oneself in order to hide someone for at least a short time. Not in cities, not in towns. I know from the accounts I have received, which do not belong to Hrubieszów, that people really enjoyed watching these rows of Jews walking to the trains or to the training ground. They stood on the pavements, laughing and enjoying the sight. They were not indifferent. On the contrary, they were very supportive of the fact that Jews were being sent to their deaths. Yes. But that was in public.

But on the other hand, I know that people who walked in the woods, and there were a lot of woods in our area, very often helped a single Jew they met. If they didn't take him home, they at least gave him something to eat, drink and something for the road. And they certainly didn't hand him over to anyone. If he was just passing through, a stranger. But publicly, they were very happy that Jews from the towns were being killed. In our area, at least. I remember only one family that was saved. Their name was Rotenberg. I know about this one family very well because I even visited them right after the war. They were all saved by Poles in our town. After the war, they stayed in Hrubieszów for some time, and
Then they left. I don't even know where. But they left Poland. But they stayed in Hrubieszów for at least another year or two. No, not a year or two, because when we were there, they were no longer there. I was in Hrubieszów after my liberation, a friend came and took me to his place, to Hrubieszów, a Jew. But that was still in 1944. And then I met this family, whom we knew before the war, the Rotenbergs, who were saved by Poles in our town. But that was all in 1944, 1945. When I arrived in Hrubieszów with my parents, there was not a single Jew left. I mean, they had apparently left for some big city. Or maybe even outside of Poland."

Date and place of recording: 4 November 2017,
Lublin Interviewer: Tomasz Czajkowski
Transcription: Marta Tylus
Edited by Maria Radek
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6. Kolomyia

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** In early April 1942, during Passover, the German security and order police organised a mass deportation of Jews from Kolomyia to the extermination camp in Bełżec. On 4 and 6 April, in an attempt to speed up
To evict Jews from their homes and force those in hiding to leave their hiding places, German police officers set fire to houses in the second ghetto, in the vicinity of Mokra Street, and in the third ghetto, bordering the the Młynówka River. Many Jews burned alive in their homes, and those who tried to escape were shot or pushed back into the flames. Several hundred people from Kolomyia died in the flames or were shot in the ghetto. During the murder operation on 4 November 1942, the procedure of
of setting fire to the remains of the Kolomyia ghetto was repeated. Again, several thousand people died in the flames or were shot by German security and order police officers and Ukrainian auxiliary policemen. Source: Yad Vashem / https://war.dekoder.org/de/map .

Marcel Najder's shocking descriptions of starvation (eating crows and dogs), corruption in the Judenrat, the functioning of the Order Service, and mass deaths.

The following excerpts are taken from published memoirs:

Marceli Najder, *Rewanż* [Revenge], Ośrodek KARTA, Warsaw 2013 (series: "Żydzi polscy" [Polish Jews]):

"Rumours began to spread about the ghetto [in January 1942], about this strange Jewish district, which set European culture back 500 years, which smelled of the Middle Ages and the Inquisition. [...] Among the new restrictions was the obligation to leave the main streets and squares, and later – a ban on going to the post office. A post office was set up at the
postal agency was set up in the kahal. There was a letterbox there, stamps were sold, and mail was collected in person.

Huge posters warning against Jews as carriers of typhus are hung around the city. Jews are not admitted to the infectious diseases hospital or other sanitary institutions. It was necessary to create our own clinics, our own hospital, health centre and pharmacy. […]

February marks the beginning of efforts to allocate streets to the ghetto. Committees are elected, and perhaps it will be possible to include a few more streets, a few blocks, a district. […]

March 1942. There is a plan to incorporate the synagogue district (the area around the Great Synagogue) into the ghetto. Nowy Świat, Mokre, Mały Rynek – this street is included, that street is excluded – behind the scenes. Apparently, there are people in the kahal who already know everything, while the general public is afraid of moving, afraid of the ghetto, afraid and that's it. […]

An announcement appears on the walls of the kahal to report to the volunteer security guard (militia)1. By order of the county authorities, it is to be created with a force of up to 200 people. They were specifically looking for intellectuals; it was the first sign of the approaching ghetto.

[memoir notebook, 1943] [...]

"The next day, on Monday evening, posters announcing the creation of a Jewish district appear. There is also a motivation – because Jews are harmful, they steal, they buy up food, they are dirty and... they have a bad cultural influence
. The ghetto will enable isolation and prevent their harmful influence. The second poster defines the boundaries of the area and the manner of moving to the ghetto.

Houses in the ghetto will be administered by the kehilla. Jewish owners will be expropriated, and Aryan owners will receive compensation in the form of property left behind by Jews in the city. The rest of the property, not used for compensation, will be handed over to the municipal authorities. Rent in the ghetto will be collected by the kehilla, which will decide on everything. The deadline is 24 hours – until Tuesday, 26 March; from 6 p.m., the first zone is to be free of Jews.

The intended method of relocation was interesting. Everyone could take 25 kilograms with them and had to go to a checkpoint; in all districts, such a checkpoint was designated in a large premises – a cinema hall or a factory hall. It was there that they were to be assigned flats. A separate checkpoint was designated for
craftsmen. They had to show up with their entire families.

What was this supposed to be? Did they want to carry out an operation before the ghetto? A selection? A pogrom? Deportation? No one knows anything. The Kahal members look mysterious and order everyone to go to these assembly points.

The posters brought a new wave of people moving out on their own during the evening and night, and Tuesday morning found the entire Jewish population of Kolomyia on their feet. Everyone is moving out – whether they belong to the first zone or the second, which has until tomorrow.

The Germans wanted to do this while maintaining order, but the Jews instinctively avoided it, and it seems that these assembly points were nothing more than traps. Hardly anyone showed up there. The head of the Gestapo and the district administrator rode around the streets on horseback, observing the resettlement movement, and were present at the assembly points. There they found a few risk-takers – so they dismissed them, telling them to go freely and look for accommodation themselves. These were mainly people who did not have a place to live and thought that this way they would get one. […]

Craftsmen – on the orders of the district authorities – were to be concentrated on one street (Wałowa); if not them apartments, at least workshops. The old tenants of this street, even though it was in the ghetto, had to leave their homes – they were crammed elsewhere, several families together. Those who had "protectors" had a better location.

The street of craftsmen will be open to anyone who needs their work – otherwise, entry to the ghetto will be forbidden – that's what we were told at the beginning.

OD had the most work with housing interventions. Complaints, fights, squatting – that's what we heard all day long. Putting one, two, three more families into an already occupied room. Movement, shouting...

[…]

The moving deadline was not strictly adhered to. It lasted two or three days longer, despite the announcement of the death penalty if a Jew was found in the Aryan part after the deadline. Apparently, at the request of the kehilla (due to bad weather?), it was extended by one day, and the Jews added another day themselves.

This meant that the move could be carried out much more calmly – so much property would not be wasted. Because often, in the rush, many things were given away, lost or stolen. Many things were destroyed when it was not possible to take them with you; furniture was chopped up for firewood because it was easier to transport that way. Often, when something was left behind in the rush, after an hour the rooms were ransacked by the dregs of society (and also by helpful Aryan neighbours). Cooking hobs were ripped off, windows, kitchen grates, cupboards, door handles – everything was removed, which later meant that Jews had destroyed the flats in anger so that Aryans could not use them – while every Jew was so afraid that some even swept up after themselves. The most damage was done to detached single-family houses.

An order was issued warning Aryans that if they did not vacate the Jewish district on time, they would be considered Jews and subject to the Nuremberg Laws. Many Aryans were unwilling to leave their homes, despite the prospect of compensation, cursing the Germans as much as they could.

[…]

Not all Kolomyia residents have homes; hundreds of them are still staying with friends, others are camping in squares and gardens, and some have temporarily found shelter in synagogues and other shelters. Those who had protection in the kahal, who paid, who knew the kahal leaders, had better and faster accommodation, while the poor were forced to stay in mass quarters in synagogues or, seeing the hopelessness of waiting for something better, packed themselves into attics and sheds.

According to the plans, the synagogues were to be mass accommodation, but they became breeding grounds for typhus and stench. The intention was to build a kitchen in each synagogue and to partially divide the synagogue halls with walls into smaller quarters, but this remained only in the plans. […]

The ghetto was closed off by strong Ukrainian and German police posts. On the streets outside the ghetto, every Jew was stopped and searched, regardless of whether they were carrying a package or not. Workers carrying packages from their workplaces were harassed. Those who exchanged items of clothing for food found it difficult to bring it into the ghetto. This was often done at the risk of one's life. There were cases where someone was caught buying food from an Aryan – they were shot on the spot or taken to the Schupo, from where they never returned, not having enough money to ransom themselves.

Food outside the ghetto was difficult to obtain with money, but easier to obtain in exchange for goods. However, where could a displaced person from the provinces, who was rushed along the road to Kolomyia at night with a single bundle in their hand, get such goods?
Displacement – resettlement – starvation – death – these were the stages of martyrdom for provincial people.

Hundreds of strangers passed through the ghetto – they slept in sheds, attics, hallways and storerooms. Almost no one took care of them. The kehilla had no time, because it had to satisfy the appetites of the Germans, and private individuals were so
They were so overwhelmed that they rarely had time to take care of the displaced persons, so all the help they could offer was alms and a bowl of thin soup in the Joint kitchen. Beggars, vagrants, tramps – a whole carousel of characters and types. People who had left their granaries in villages and towns full of grain were dying here for a spoonful of food or a handful of potato peelings. About 10–15 thousand displaced persons passed through Kolomyia.

I can still see those long lines of people, the doors simply would not close. […] Until then, it had been a cliché: "the doors wouldn't close" – here, this cliché became tragic, because on average 80–100 people could pass through one flat a day, and sometimes there were more. They did not accept money, or rarely did, preferring a spoonful of food. They often asked for a pot of hot water because they hadn't eaten or drunk anything warm for weeks.

Food was delivered to the ghetto only by those who went to work; others were not allowed to leave (unless they had special "day passes", but only ten such passes were issued per day, no more). Those who left the ghetto could only take with them as much as they could fit under their clothes. Grain was smuggled (
in small bags carried on their backs, stomachs, trouser legs or long johns). Milk was carried in 100 and 200 gram flat bottles – also under clothing. Each worker could therefore carry food for a maximum of two people.

[memoir notebook, 1943] [...]

"During this period, escapes from the ghetto began. They took place at night, and in many cases I helped fugitives. This assistance consisted of "scouting" the area in front of the ghetto fence (to make sure there were no Ukrainian police) and throwing the fugitives' modest luggage over the fence or helping them climb over it. [...] I never took anything in return for this assistance, and even if I had been offered something, I would have refused.

I do not recall receiving any remuneration from the kehilla. We received bread – about 200 grams a day – and coffee for breakfast, and soup with 50 grams of meat (initially) and later without meat for lunch […]. The OD began to impose more and more unpleasant duties – removing the starving... [...]
We were instructed to collect the dying and dead from the streets. The ordnungsdienstler[1]began to be sent refusing to go to forced labour or evading the orders of the kahal. Somehow, the OD commander never issued such orders to me or to others with higher education. Nevertheless
These matters led to several conflicts between myself, several others, and the commander.

Due to the new duties imposed on the Security Service, which were contrary to the original assumptions, in July 1942 I submitted a request to be dismissed from this service. After a few days, I received a negative response. The following month, I reapplied for the same thing. Despite several reminders, I did not receive a response at that time.

[memoir notebook, 1950s] [...]

"I will remember that boy for the rest of my life, sitting for several days on the path in the garden on Rycerska Street. He was sitting because he couldn't walk. His legs were swollen and covered with huge blisters – the size of my fist. Hunger. For several days, he cried and begged for food. Then he just moaned, finally sat quietly, and after a few days he disappeared – they probably took him away in a kahal cart. And how many were lying along the road in the third district and by the second wachstuba [guardhouse]! Alms could do nothing here, because 50 per cent of the ghetto was starving, 20-30 per cent of them hopelessly.

Everyone had so many worries of their own that it is hardly surprising that people passed by the poor beggars lying on the ground with indifference. Day after day, dozens of reports of deaths from starvation reached the OD. But what could be done when this was exactly what the Germans wanted?

[memoir notebook, 1950s] [...]

"Those who had something to exchange traded it for next to nothing. A new sheet was worth 1.5-2 kilograms of wheat. For men's clothing in good condition, 20 kilograms of wheat (at the old price of 3.60 zlotys) was given, at

the cost of such clothing being at least 60-80 zlotys. Those who wanted to pay 50 zlotys per kilogram of grain or bread did so.
Prices rose 200-fold (before the war, bread cost 18–20 groszy per kilogram). It was worth seeing this bread – sticky, heavy, black – only good for filling your stomach. So how much did the average Jew have to work to buy bread when a day's work paid 1.20 or 1.70 zlotys?
Laughter. For a whole day's work, he could afford 30 grams of bread. People went to work out of fear of the consequences and because, when they left, they could exchange things. And what was a
exile from the provinces, who came with literally nothing? What was a fire victim from Kolomyia supposed to do when the Germans burned down 150 houses, or nearly 500 family farms, while organising the ghetto in the Pesach operation? [2]

So, day after day, 30-50 people died of hunger. All day long, the kahalna cart, stinking of carbolic acid from afar, roamed the ghetto districts, collecting corpses from gardens, sheds, stables, and ditches along the ghetto roads. Two or three times a day, it drove around all the streets and alleys. Swollen, terrible corpses. Blue, changed by the immense pain – hunger that had been twisting their guts for weeks. The corpses were laid on top of each other until a mountain was formed, a sheet was thrown over them, and off they went to the cemetery. Someone who was still alive in the morning was on the cart in the afternoon. It drove slowly, and from under the sheet, the arms and legs of some unfortunate soul dangled in the air. Or perhaps a lucky one. Because for him – despite his great desire to live – it was all over.

I entered a shop in the ghetto. An elderly Jewish woman followed me in and asked the shopkeeper for 200 grams of potatoes. This is an amount that would never have been considered before the war, when 100 kilograms of potatoes (1 metre) cost 4–5 zlotys; the smallest amount sold at that time was 5 kilograms – for 25
groszy, so 200 grams could cost 1 grosz. In the ghetto in the summer of 1942, those 200 grams cost 3.20 zlotys, which is 320 times more expensive.

I will be haunted for the rest of my life by these images of misery, these rows of poor people sitting exhausted in the street behind the kahal, these masses begging for potato peelings or pulling old bones out of the rubbish bins to gnaw on. How many dogs disappeared in the ghetto, only to reappear a few days later as veal? In the third district, I saw a rope maker who lived there, returning from work, brought a beautiful gift from his German boss – two young shot crows; luck – two crows.

In our garden, at the beginning of June, all the green apples that had barely formed were picked,
and weeds were pulled out to make soup. It is surprising that in the ghetto, where 25 per cent of people cooked such filth, there had been no typhus or dysentery so far. However, there were those who spent 50 or 100 zlotys on sweets and cigarettes in the shop. Oh, Jewish misery! 200 grams of potatoes and 50 zlotys on
sweets or cognac! These were the ones who hung around the Hungarian army, speculated in gold and currency, and sold other people's belongings.

Morning. Long lines of people with pots are forming. These are the residents of the Jüdische Hilfskomitee. They are given black
unsweetened grain coffee. Hundreds of them are waiting here – those who cannot afford to light a fire under the kitchen stove and drink something warm.

Night. Bang! Bang! We run towards the noise. They are breaking fences, smashing other people's toilets and sheds, dismantling houses – as long as the roof is still standing. Often, the roof collapses too, because the bindings have been cut. Stealing boards from fences is our daily bread. Dozens of people are constantly caught doing this. It's forbidden! But is it allowed to die of hunger? Is it allowed to have nothing warm to eat, not even soup made from weeds? The floors in synagogues and
synagogues, doors were removed from their frames, and window frames and windows were taken away. Everything was used for fuel. At least the houses of God gave the poor this benefit.

Night. We leave the central guardhouse. Opposite, next to the hospital, are the ruins of a small-calibre shooting range. Suddenly, we hear terrible moans coming from there. A piercing howl! The hair on our heads stands on end, we feel uneasy. A few of us go to check it out. A man is lying on the ground, writhing and howling like an animal. Hunger. He dragged himself here, thinking they would take him to the hospital. But it was overcrowded, so the hospital orderlies carried him out on a stretcher to the ruins – let him die here; let him not frighten the other patients. He doesn't tell us this because he can no longer speak. I find out the next day while conducting an investigation. What to do with him? Where to put him? One is helpless. Maybe load him onto a cart and take him to the cemetery, because there is no place for him here, no salvation. He stays in the ruins

for another day. And the next night, those heart-rending moans can still be heard, finally falling silent on the third night. On the third day, he was taken away in a cart – to the same place as hundreds before him.

Only now am I beginning to realise how much we, the militiamen, saw that was invisible to others. We looked into corners that no one but us looked into, no one but us reached...

The displaced persons from Zabłotów are coming. Some Aryan civilians are calling on our militiamen to go out to meet them, because several of them have fallen into a ditch from exhaustion. A emaciated group of old men and women, a few children, are walking, while the adults have been detained for labour. They are being herded like cattle. All around them are Ukrainian policemen with rifles slung over their shoulders and whips in their hands, driving them on. They are walking without food, without water, without belongings. They were not allowed to stop along the way, because the whip was already whistling above them. They were beaten until they fell.

Another group arrived, somewhere from beyond Gwoździec. They were driven over 30 kilometres, with the Ukrainians sitting on horses that trotted along, and the poor wretches had to run at the same pace. They were not allowed to stop, because the guards had long whips in their hands. German executioners have talented students.

Afternoon; August 1942. Policeman Samuel Rath is standing at the gate on Mendelsohn Street. The gate is closed because only a water tanker for the Joint kitchen is allowed to pass through. On the fence, maybe 15 metres from the gate, the silhouette of a boy appears, who falls to the ground with a scream. It's nothing – it was the Ukrainian policeman Semakowski who stabbed him in the backside with his bayonet because he found him carrying 3-4 kilograms of grain.
He ordered him to stand on the fence and then struck him. After three days of torment, the boy died.

Wałowa Street 3 – Mühlstein's house. Before the war, he was the owner of a coal and wood warehouse. Now, under the Germans, he works for the Kriminalpolizei as a handyman: he washes the stairs, cleans the door handles, helps translate from
German into Polish. Apparently, he even got on well with these criminals. When the "registration" came on 7 September 1942, he was not afraid of it. After the inspection, the Gestapo chief sent him to the "good" side. Then the deputy chief, Gestapo officer Knackendörfer, appeared, called him over and sent him to the "bad" side. Mühlstein begged him – Knackendörfer hit him on the head with a whip and ended the discussion. Two days later, Knackendörfer appeared at the flat and found his wife, sister-in-law, young son and father-in-law there
father-in-law. He had asked Mühlstein about his wife and son in the square, but they were not there; they had hidden.

The house at Wałowa 3 also housed our OD border post. Zygmunt Prinz was on duty at the time. Several shots were heard in the flat – the Mühlstein family had been killed. After a while, Knackendörfer came out, wiping his hands and adjusting his revolver. He stopped in the gate, took out a bottle of cologne, splashed it on his hands and uniform, and threw the bottle into the corner. As he left the gate, he ordered that the kahal be notified. A few hours later, the bodies were taken away, and the next day Knackendörfer arrived with several carts belonging to the Volksdeutsche, onto which he loaded the Mühlsteins' furniture and possessions. He supervised the loading himself, sorting and selecting – a typical scene, ending with the scent of "California Poppies"
or "Lila".

[memoir notebook, 1943] [...]

"All residents of the ghetto, from three districts, were to report on 7 September to the square opposite the park on Wolności Avenue, next to the military barracks. This was a major operation, known as the "main registration". There had been vague rumours about this operation for a week; those who worked for the Germans said that something was brewing – some Germans warned us directly in quite clear terms. In every house, including the one where I lived on Kopernika Street, people began digging shelters. I dug for two nights, mainly helping to carry soil away
places where it would not give anything away.

On the day of the operation, when we were ordered to go out into the square, I hid almost all the residents of the house who wanted to hide in this shelter – about 18–20 people, including my wife. They could only sit there, huddled together. Then I closed the shelter, camouflaged it well, and went out to the assembly point, taking a large dose of morphine with me. I left a similar dose for my wife, in case the shelter was discovered.

[memoir notebook, 1950s] [...]

“While we were still being segregated in the square into the so-called sides of life and death, some members of the OD, including myself, were ordered to march to the third district, already depopulated, which lay on the outskirts of

the city – to secure the houses against possible looting by local residents from outside the ghetto.

[...] I do not know what happened after we left the square. In the evening, when the others had relieved us, my group was instructed to go to the railway station to collect the bodies of those killed while being loaded into wagons, or those who had been suffocated in the crush and thrown out of the carriages. Together with another member of the OD, I collected five or six corpses. […]

The next day, I and about 25–30 others were informed that we were being released from the OD due to the reduction of the ghetto. This group consisted almost exclusively of older people and, like me, a few younger ones who had previously had some disputes with the commander or his deputy. We were assigned to cleaning work in the third district. About 40–50 people remained in the actual OD, who began to be popularly called "szwoleżerzy" (light cavalry), as they were supposed to be the chosen and trusted ones.

[…] Many began to escape from the ghetto at night through this abandoned district. They came to work during the day, They would then hide in abandoned houses and continue their journey at night. I helped many of them, for example by bringing them food and showing them the best routes. I also thought about escaping from the ghetto, but even though I knew all the villages, forests and surrounding mountains very well (from my scouting trips), I could not bring myself to take this step. Firstly, I did not know anyone trustworthy who could take me in and hide me. Secondly, the majority of the Ukrainian population caught fleeing Jews and handed them over to the German authorities. There were few cases of Ukrainians providing shelter, as the vast majority had been agitated against Jews by extreme nationalists. Thirdly, I did not have enough money to pay for shelter, food or smuggling to Romania.

[…] Seeing no possibility of escape for the time being, in November my wife and I secretly moved into one of the abandoned and already cleaned-up houses in the third district. We set up a makeshift household in the attic, using items taken from other flats. We only cooked at night, and my wife did not leave the house at all. […]

There, two former members of the OD, Zygmunt Prinz and Abraham Sperber, became acquainted with Andrzej Śliwiak, an employee of the municipal market, while guarding a warehouse located on the outskirts of the city. the municipal market. He often helped them exchange small items – dishes or clothing – for food from their farmer friends. These items were taken during house clean-ups and not returned to German warehouses. After some time, Śliwiak asked them why they did not escape. They gave similar reasons to those that had prevented me from taking this step.

Then Śliwiak offered to take them to an abandoned lignite mine in Myszyn, where his brother-in-law, who lived there, or he himself, would be able to supply them with food.

[memoir notebook, 1950s] [...]

Footnotes:

[1] Jewish Order Service (*Ordnungsdienst*) – established by the Germans to maintain order in the ghetto.

[2] During Passover, 3–5 April 1942, the Germans carried out an "action" in Kolomyia, during which the ghetto was set on fire and about 5,000 Jews were transported to the extermination camp in Bełżec.

7. Krakow

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** Construction of the Płaszów camp on the site of Jewish cemeteries and the brutal liquidation of the ghetto in March 1943, including the "death run" of elderly people.

Construction of the camp on cemetery grounds

"The Płaszów camp was built on the site of two Jewish cemeteries: at 3 Abrahama Street and Podgórski cemetery. The construction involved the brutal desecration of the place of worship – Polish and Jewish workers levelled the area, digging up valuable gravestones (including those made of black marble), and the barracks were erected

directly on the burial ground. Engineer Jakub Stendig initially deluded himself that the barracks could be a cleaner alternative to the cramped ghetto, but SS documents clearly defined Płaszów as a "forced labour camp and concentration camp" (Judenlager).

Liquidation of the ghetto (13–14 March 1943)

The final liquidation of the ghetto took place in two stages, marked by extreme brutality:

• 13 March: Liquidation of Ghetto A (working people). Thousands of people were herded to Płaszów under the supervision of Amon Göth, who personally shot prisoners and beat them with a riding crop. There were horrific scenes of families being separated; children were brutally torn from their parents, and those who showed no signs of being able to work were sent to the Kinderheim.
Some mothers, wanting to save their children, gave them sleeping pills and attempted to smuggle them in backpacks.

• 14 March: Bloody liquidation of ghetto B (unemployed, elderly, sick). The Germans murdered the sick directly in their hospital beds, and children from the orphanage were thrown out of windows or shot.

The "death run" of the elderly

During the liquidation at Zgody Square, the SS organised a so-called "death run", aimed mainly at people around 60 years of age. They were forced to run fast, mocked that their lives depended on their pace.
The SS men praised those who ran fast for their "good condition," then ordered them to turn around and shot them in the back of the head. Only a few, considered fit for work, were added to groups of younger prisoners."

The new reality of the camp

After the liquidation of the ghetto, it became "deserted" and littered with corpses, which special cleaning groups (*Säuberungskollone*) had to strip naked and be transported to mass graves in Płaszów. For the survivors, Płaszów was a "completely foreign world" – barren land surrounded by barbed wire, where they were stripped of remnants of Jewish dignity and privacy were taken away, replaced by the misery of the barracks and the constant threat of death. Many prisoners felt that the ghetto, despite the suffering, was a "paradise" compared to the new camp
a "paradise".

Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

Jakub Stendig, civil engineer, head of the Judenrat's construction department**:**

"I did not understand the significance of the repeated visits by SS dignitaries to the cemetery at 3 Abraham Street in 1942, at a time when the Jewish community [...] was expanding the cemetery and preparing it to receive 800-1,000 deceased in the coming year. The mortality rate in the ghetto, together with deliveries from Pomorska Street – the Gestapo headquarters – was 50–60 deaths per month, and burials took place only at this cemetery. [...]

One day, when I arrived by bicycle to inspect the concrete works – we were building kerbs at the cemetery to demarcate the grave plots – the triangular gable wall of the first barrack emerged above the upper edge of the western cemetery wall. built just behind the cemetery wall, outside the cemetery, at the junction of two walls: the northern and western ones. Since this was happening outside the cemetery, I did not pay much attention to it at first. When, in the following days, these gables multiplied and began to merge into roofs, intrigued and curious, I climbed up and asked the workers about it. There I learned that the work was being supervised by Deutsche Wohn und Siedlungsgenossenschaft, headed by engineer [Rudolf] Lukas. Lukas's office at 5 Pijarska Street is bustling with activity. On the table of one of the German engineers lies a plan with the heading: "*Barackenlager für Juden in Krakau* 1:1000" [Barracks camp for Jews in Krakow 1:1000].

Everything becomes clear to me at first glance. But the *Barackenlager* itself is not dangerous. It is possible that the City Council needs the several dozen houses we occupy in the ghetto to meet the urgent housing needs of the constant influx of Germans. It is not out of the question that we will live better in the new barracks, which are clean and free of bedbugs, than in the cramped and rather

dirty ghetto flats, where six to eight people lived per window. In fact, such barracks complexes were being built throughout Krakow for workshops, warehouses and even for Germans to stay in.

In my naivety, I tried to persuade the design manager to install several toilets and a small washroom in each barrack instead of one central latrine and one central washroom. […] Perhaps he thought to himself: you're right, but it won't be comfortable for the Jews.

I am horrified to discover on the plan that a few barracks have also been sketched onto the cemetery itself, at 3 Abraham Street. This is too much. We are not going to live together with the dead in the cemetery, among the graves. I ask for a moment to speak with Lukas. He seats me in a comfortable, soft armchair.

[…]

– Mr Lukas, on behalf of the Jewish community, which I currently represent as the construction manager for that community, I would ask you to abandon the plan to build barracks in the cemetery itself. If you are already anticipating growth, there are many other areas available besides cemeteries. After all, next to the Podgórski cemetery, which is already closed for use, you have a third of an unpopulated, flat and straight field. We will move the western wall of the cemetery to the line of graves, and you will have a large area suitable for the construction of barracks.

Lukas fell into a momentary reverie and after a while said:

– Perhaps you are right, Mr Stendig, perhaps we should do that.

In the evening, I take advantage of a moment when I can talk to my superior, Commissioner Gutter, and report to him what I saw behind the cemetery wall on Jerozolimska Street and in Lukas's office, and what I asked him for. […] Gutter waves his hand. "Calm down […], this is not a camp for Jews." I saw the sign with my own eyes: *Judenlager*, and he continues to deny it, claiming that he has other information.

The Krakow Ghetto, autumn 1942

Jakub Stendig, *Płaszów. The Last Station of Krakow Jewry*, ed. Monika Bednarek, Krakow 2020, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Passage to the Cemetery*, "Karta" 114/2023.

Tadeusz Pankiewicz, pharmacist, owner of the Eagle Pharmacy**:**

“Every day, dozens of Polish workers are employed in levelling the ground. Over time, Jews were also assigned to this work. The more valuable gravestones, especially those made of black marble, are dug up and set aside. Construction timber is brought in for the barracks, sewage systems are installed and a well is drilled. [...] People begin to wonder who these barracks will be for. The ghetto is once again awash with rumours and speculation. The most "reliable" German sources assure that they are for Poles, others say that they are for Jews from France and Hungary, and still others say that they are for all young men from Krakow, who will be quartered there.

Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Pharmacy in the Krakow Ghetto*, Krakow 2005, Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Passage to the Cemetery*, "Karta" 114/2023.

Mila Hornik, construction worker:

The construction of barracks in Płaszów, outside the Jewish cemetery, began. Jewish labourers were sent from the ghetto to do this work. […] At the beginning of January 1943 […] it was announced that the following day, two institutions: *Ostbahn* [Eastern Railway] and *Luftgaukommando* [Air District Command] would be quartered in the barracks on Jerozolimska Street and that they should take their belongings with them – underwear, bedding – because in the morning, instead of going to work, they would be going to the camp. […] I went with my mum […]. The first impression was awful: a cemetery, gravestones and a funeral home all around, and a few barracks above it. We were terribly depressed, saying: “There is no coming back from the cemetery”. […] We were drafted into *the* newly formed *Baukommando* […]. It was very difficult for me […] and I ran away to the ghetto. I did it when we went there for delousing.”

ZAL Plaszow, end of January 1943

Mila Hornik, Jewish Historical Institute Archives, ref. no. 301/188, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], “Karta” 114/2023.

Comparison of the camp with

the ghetto Lejb Lejzon:

“Although life in the ghetto was difficult, it resembled the familiar world. Yes, we were crammed like sardines in these overcrowded houses, but these houses were similar to ordinary residential buildings. There were also streets and pavements in the ghetto, and you could hear the sounds of the city behind the wall. Płaszów, on the other hand, was a completely foreign world. The camp was built on the site of two Jewish cemeteries, which the Nazis had desecrated and destroyed. It was barren, gloomy and chaotic land. Stones, rubbish, barbed wire, dangerous dogs and even more dangerous guards – and hectares of shabby barracks stretching to the horizon. Hundreds of prisoners in rags, driven from one job to another by German and Ukrainian guards with rifles.

The moment I found myself in Płaszów, I became convinced that I would not leave there alive.

ZAL Plaszow

Leon Leyson, *The Boy on Schindler's List*, translated from English by Jarosław Skowroński, Warsaw 2014, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

The contrast between the ghetto and the “free world”

Felicja Bannet:

“We are walking... Our path leads along the main road, turning to the right. We pass under a viaduct, a train passes by, people lean out of the carriage windows. Around us, normal life, residential houses, curtains in the windows, sometimes the sound of a radio, music from a gramophone, [...] behind the windows, in normally furnished flats, women bustle about their household chores, on the street you can see people rushing about on various errands, which seem so trivial to us at the moment: women are walking with shopping bags, someone is carrying coal to the cellar, a woman is pushing a pram; a pink, delightful baby is babbling and smiling at its mother. I close my eyes, the contrast is unbearable. Here, thousands of mothers have been ordered to be emotionless machines, their hearts torn out along with their children.

Krakow, 13 March 1943

On the third anniversary of the destruction of the Krakow ghetto (13 March 1943 – 13 March 1946), Krakow 1946, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

Lejb Lejzon, fourteen years old:

When I left the ghetto, surrounded by a wall topped with gravestones, and walked through the streets of Krakow, I was amazed at how little life there had changed since I had arrived in the ghetto. It was as if time had turned back... or as if the ghetto was on another planet. I looked at the clean, neatly dressed people rushing to their activities. They looked so normal, so cheerful... Did they know what we were suffering just a few streets away? But how could they not know? How could they not do something to help us? A tram stopped nearby, people got off and on. They showed no interest in who we were, where we were going or why. For them, our misery, captivity and suffering seemed to be of little importance. It's hard to understand.”

Krakow, 13 March 1943

Leon Leyson, *The Boy on Schindler's List*, translated from English by Jarosław Skowroński, Warsaw 2014, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

The liquidation of the ghetto – the brutality of Amon Göth and Symche Spira

Natan Marek, aged 15:

“Göth issued an order that all workers, with their belongings, were to report by
6 p.m. at the main gate, for resettlement to the camp. The unemployed and children are to be at ghetto B at 6 p.m. There was incredible panic and turmoil. Poor parents who had children in the Kinderheim [a facility for Jewish children] hurried to get them out of there while there was still time, because they sensed the danger hanging over their heads.

[...] People were running away from something, hiding in houses and gateways, while the more courageous stopped to see the cause of the panic. I was on the street, having just left my house, when a wave of terrified people passed

behind me. Out of curiosity, I stopped and saw a huge monster […] with a riding crop in his hand, accompanied by two Scharführers, coming from the entrance to the ghetto. It was Göth. He looked around the street mockingly, fortunately not seeing the wave of fugitives; in a drunken voice he shouted: *"Los, los, schneller, alles heraus!"* [Faster, faster, everyone out!]. From the houses, you could hear the lamentations of family members parting; no one had any comfort for anyone else, everyone was preoccupied with their own fate.

When Göth disappeared from the street, people with bundles appeared, hurrying towards the main gate. Some carried crying children in their arms, surely still hoping for mercy from their tormentors. Others hurried with their children towards Ghetto B, saying, "What happens to you will happen to me."

Krakow Ghetto, 13 March 1943

Natan Marek, Jewish Historical Institute Archives, ref. no. 301/4669, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

Anna Rettig:

"[Göth] stood on the corner of Józefińska and Węgierska Streets, a haughty ruler, lord of life and death, looking down on thousands of people who were hurriedly lining up in groups of four. The street was narrow, people were rubbing against each other, getting in each other's way. From time to time, someone dared to call out loudly for their mother or sister who had been lost in the crowd – but immediately the nudges of their neighbours standing in line reminded them that the master was standing nearby, that he might get angry, and then woe betide them. "You don't know who Göth is yet," whispered the "faithful" Odemani to our ears. And the man stood and watched, squinting his eyes and smiling ironically.

Krakow Ghetto, 13 March 1943

Anna Rettig, Jewish Historical Institute Archives, ref. no. 301/4565, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

Pola Neiger, bathhouse employee:

"When we were lined up, I went with my husband and left the children in the care of a girl whom I was hiding in my home without an identity card and without registration, which was tantamount to a death sentence. After a moment, I realised what I had done and went looking for my children like a madwoman. At the same time, Göth started shooting into the crowd. I entered the gate and found my children there – and then we decided to stay with them and never be separated again. We went to the OD together. I approached [OD commander Symche] Spira and begged him to save my children, but he kicked me so hard that I fell over. […] There were many mothers in the OD who were going mad with despair. I myself suffered a nervous breakdown. Doctor [Wilhelm] Armer gave me injections twice."

Krakow Ghetto, 13 March 1943

Pola Neiger, Jewish Historical Institute Archives, ref. no. 301/2401, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

Liquidation of the ghetto – the

fate of children Tadeusz

Pankiewicz:

"Exhausted people rush into the pharmacy to get Luminal for their children, to put them to sleep and carry them away in backpacks as luggage or take them to a hiding place, unwilling or unable for various reasons to go to the barracks. We distribute the medication."

Krakow Ghetto, 13 March 1943

Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Pharmacy in the Kraków Ghetto*, Kraków 2005, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Passage to the Cemetery*, "Karta" 114/2023.

Hollendrówna:

We all lined up according to our workplaces. I held my child tightly to me; my brave little one did not cry, he just looked at the badge on his coat, which showed that he was needed and that he was a worker. Suddenly, I saw the cruel Schupo [Schutzpolizei, preventive police] in helmets segregating people and pulling out all the children. What, even the big ones and those considered necessary? What is this? So with this

The children's work was a vile trap, [...] so that they could be killed after all. […] They coldly and cruelly stripped the children of any signs of work. Suddenly, I feel tiny arms embracing me. […] What can I do, have mercy! I have no one else, don't kill him! […] I stand and watch as the little ones are taken away from their poor mothers, who are not allowed to move. […]

One of the Jews respected in our community is leading seven small children. I run up to him and ask.

– What are you doing with your relatives?

– I'm hiding them in a bunker, and on Monday we'll come here to work from the camp, I'll take them away in a basket and send them to the countryside to Aryan friends.

– Sir, I beg you, take my Edziu, I have some money with me, I'll give it to you, I still have things at home, take them and save my child.

He disagreed because he was afraid to hide so many children. I fell to my knees before him and, kissing his feet, begged:
"Save my child!" He took it from me and I followed him to the hiding place [...]. Edzio bravely agreed to part with me.

Krakow Ghetto, 13 March 1943

Hollendrówna, Jewish Historical Institute Archives, ref. no. 301/4595, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

Attempt to save Stella

Müller's child:

The ghetto, empty and deserted, makes a spooky impression. Sometimes you can hear the desperate howling of a dog left somewhere in a flat. We walk on the pavement, not on the road as we should. Shadows slip out of the gates and join the line, and Daddy [Odeman] quickly arranges them into a group. He leads us very slowly, constantly looking around like a thief. At one point, he pushes a child, a little smaller than me, between Mummy and me. […] I feel a trembling figure under Mummy's coat. I am carrying one suitcase, Mummy is carrying the other. […] Daddy is already standing by the gate, we are walking in fives, the guards are counting us. After passing the gate, they order us to stop. They stand with their rifles ready to fire. At the front, some Kraut is cackling. What is he saying? Mummy explains that he is warning us not to try to escape, because they will shoot. Dad moves freely along the line, passing by us, letting us know that it worked, they signed the list, they didn't notice anything. It's raining, mud squelches underfoot. We set off, only the echo of our footsteps can be heard.

Krakow Ghetto, 13 March 1943

Stella Müller-Madej, *The Girl from Schindler's List: Through the Eyes of a Child*, Krakow 2001, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Passage to the Cemetery*, "Karta" 114/2023.

Liquidation of Ghetto B – "death run"

Tadeusz Pankiewicz:

“On Józefińska Street, the Germans begin liquidating the Kinderheim. Wagons arrive and the children are loaded onto them – the small ones are thrown into baskets and carried to the wagons several at a time. The older ones are led out to the square and shot at the corner of a dead-end street. […]

The SS men begin to form a crowd facing the exit, separating women from men, taking children away from their mothers. They do all this brutally, inhumanely. Beating and murdering seems to irritate their senses, they are hungry for new emotions. They organise a death run. It takes place right in front of my windows. In the square, they pull certain people out of the line and gather them into groups. They are mostly people around 60 years of age. They order them to run fast, as fast as they can. This will decide their life or death. Amidst jeers and laughter, these poor people run first individually, then in groups. The SS men shoot at them. Those who ran fast survived for the time being. The SS men approach them, pat them on the shoulder, praise them for running fast, for their good condition and endurance, and then order them to turn around and shoot them in the back of the head. […]

However, there were many whose running saved their lives. They were deemed fit for work and joined the group of young people. Lined up in fours, they were to be transported to the barracks in Płaszów. Some of them

left immediately after the shutdown, others remained at the discretion of the authorities. They were detained at the OD until everyone was deported from ghetto B [...]. The moment of departure is approaching. We can tell by the collection of belongings. Everyone must leave everything they have with them. This time, the Germans leave people with no illusions about their fate. […] The SS men brutally take even handbags and throw them onto a pile. Here and there, someone shouts that their personal papers are in their handbag or wallet. For a moment, people succumb to the illusion that perhaps they will live, that they will need their papers.

Krakow Ghetto, 14 March 1943

Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Pharmacy in the Kraków Ghetto*, Kraków 2005, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Passage to the Cemetery*, "Karta" 114/2023.

Erwin Zahler:

"The sick people staying at the hospital on Józefińska Street were murdered, as were the doctors and nurses who did not leave for Płaszów in time […]. The elderly (in the nursing home) and children did not fare any better. These innocent little creatures, just because they were Jewish, were thrown out of the third floor into the courtyard [...] or thrown directly against the wall like balls. "It's a waste of a bullet for such a trifle," said the SS men. […] The stormtroopers, with the help of the blue and black (Ukrainian) police, searched every corner of the ghetto for people still in hiding. They did so with great thoroughness, because each victim they brought in earned them a reward – vodka."

Krakow Ghetto, 14 March 1943

Erwin Zahler, Jewish Historical Institute Archives, ref. no. 301/5301, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

Natan Offen, aged fourteen:

"I was chosen to collect corpses, load them onto trucks and horse-drawn carts, and take them to Płaszów. […] Meanwhile, they were liquidating the hospital across the street from the mikveh on Józefińska Street, where small children were taken and thrown out of the window. I saw an SS man who grabbed a newborn by the feet and banged its head against the cot. They did this to all the small children."

The Krakow Ghetto, 14 March 1943

Bernard, Natan and Samuel Offen, The Jeff and Toby Herr Oral History Archive, ref. no. 1993.A.0089.19, audio recording made by Sidney M. Bolkoski in 1987, excerpt translated from English by Justyna Avcı, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

The brutality of the liquidation of Ghetto B:

Tadeusz Pankiewicz:

After the last German troops left the ghetto, the Jews who had been released and detained were ordered to strip the murdered bodies naked, stack them in the doorways of houses, and then load them onto platforms and take them away. I saw old and young, women and men being stripped. Clothes were pulled off babies. Bodies were piled haphazardly on top of each other. How many times did sons recognise their parents among the dead, and parents had to undress their children with their own hands! Platforms arrive at the ghetto. Naked human corpses are thrown onto them. […] It was not uncommon for wounded people to be thrown onto carts full of corpses. I saw […] a platform full of corpses, and among them a woman who was clearly raising her hands to her face. The moans of the seriously wounded could be heard as they passed the exit gate of the ghetto. Before leaving the ghetto, the platforms, loaded to the brim, were covered with blankets – and so, dripping with the blood of the murdered, they rushed like slaughter trucks through the narrow streets towards Płaszów. There were several accidents on Wielicka Street, where corpses fell out on the uneven cobblestones of the bumpy road.

Krakow, 14 March 1943

Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *Apteka w getcie krakowskim* [The Pharmacy in the Krakow Ghetto], Krakow 2005, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery],
"Karta" 114/2023.

Account of a Polish witness from outside

Juliusz Czerwic-Dzierzymirski, resident of Krakow, forester:

“In the early evening, I was riding my motorbike from downtown Krakow along Wielicka Street towards Płaszów and Prokocim. On the section of Wielicka Street, I saw several Jews, both men and women, who had been shot recently, lying on the pavements or in the gutters. In the alley where tram line number 6 ends, I encountered a Jewish woman still twitching in agony, her blood dripping into the gutter. Passers-by informed me that a “kibitka” had passed by in the direction of the Płaszów camp.

I continued in that direction and came across a horse-drawn platform carrying about thirty dead children, women and men, with guards standing at the side of the platform – Ukrainians with rifles ready to fire. Then came rows of people, perhaps two or three hundred, mostly old people and women with children – not only small children led by the hand, but also six or eight mothers carrying babies in their arms. At that moment, I stopped my motorbike and, under the pretext of repairing it, watched this parade of death. The column was surrounded on both sides by Ukrainian guards. The procession was then led into the Jewish cemetery next to a small, old building, probably an old pre-burial building. […]

These people entered the funeral parlour one by one and came out completely naked. Between the building and the quarry – the lime kilns – a huge ditch had been dug in the sand. Several guards in black uniforms with rifles and bullwhips in their hands lined up along this line, and naked people ran one by one from the building towards this guard, fell into the ditch – and then all that could be heard were shots. From time to time there were double shots, from which I concluded that either the first shot was inaccurate or the mother was leading her child by the hand. I turned off my motorbike, sneaked up to the lime kilns and crawled to the border between the camp and the lime kilns, where there was a Postenkette [camp guard cordon]. I was hidden behind a rock so that I had a view of the death pit from above.”

Krakow

The trial of the genocidal Amon Leopold Göth before the Supreme National Tribunal, Warsaw 1947, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz* [Passage to the Cemetery], Karta 114/2023.

The reality of the camp

Zwi Helmut Steinitz, sixteen years old:

“Despite the catastrophic circumstances, the ghetto allowed people a certain intimacy, or at least some could still enjoy what privacy they had left. […] The camp, however, took everything away. The remnants of Jewish dignity were gradually destroyed. […] On the last night, husband and wife still slept under the same roof, in their own bed, but on the next night, they slept in separate barracks, on hard wooden bunks. Our last human rights were brutally taken away – without them, people became prisoners behind barbed wire. […] The miserable ghetto now resembled paradise – so terrifying was the new reality.”

ZAL Plaszow

Zwi Helmut Steinitz, *Als Junge durch die Hölle des Holocaust*, Warsaw 2006, excerpt translated from German by Anita Szkarłat, in: Justyna Avcı, Anita Szkarłat, *Przejście na cmentarz*, “Karta” 114/2023.

8. Lublin

• **Topic A and B (Anti-Semitism in everyday life and schools):** Moshe Handelsman recalls a marked increase in anti-Semitic attitudes after the death of Marshal Piłsudski in 1935, whom the Jewish community saw as a guarantor of their safety. He recounts how he experienced aggression from his Polish peers on his way to school – for example, Polish children would hit him on the head with their satchels because they recognised his Jewish origin from the markings on his school cap.

Moshe Handelsman, born in 1925; Lublin:

“I remember well when Piłsudski died. Jews liked him very much, how can I put it, they held Piłsudski in high regard. The entire Jewish nation held Piłsudski in high regard. So much so that when I was a child, I think Jews believed that without Piłsudski, they would not be well. It turned out to be true. Their thinking was accurate. When Rydz-Śmigły replaced Piłsudski, everything changed in terms of

[to] Jews. At that time, anti-Semitism reared its head and those who gave my father [leaflets] saying "Don't buy from Jews" – all this happened after Piłsudski died.

It turned out [that] what the Jews thought [was] true. Of course [I felt anti-Semitism]. There was no way not to feel it. For example, when I was walking to or from school, children, not adults, children
hit me on the head with their satchels. They saw the sign, there was a sign on my cap. They knew I was a Jew and I always had to run away from [them]. I saw the boys coming here, I crossed to the other side [or] ran. It wasn't so good for us."

Date and place of recording 17 November 2006, Rishon LeZion
Interviewer Tomasz Czajkowski
Transcription Joanna Rycerz Editing
Maria Radek
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• **Topic C (The Role of the Church):** Cipora Borensztejn points to the religious origins of anti-Semitism.

Cipora Borensztejn, born in 1918; Lublin:

"I want to tell you something, it's not about that. I always ask questions because I have a grudge against Poles. I like it, I am objective. I want to say something. I also ask questions. How many Jews would be willing to save a Pole? At the moment when he is in, as they say, he must take into account that he is bringing misfortune upon himself and his family. I don't know how many Jews would be willing to do so. I am objective.

Of course, anti-Semitism also stems from ignorance and a raison d'être. Because Poles said that Jews take everything, Jews trade and so on. And also religion. I now have a book that I bought, "The Contract with the Jews" ["Kontrakt. Życie za życie" by Joseph S. Kutrzeba]. A priest from Germany wrote it. It's a very interesting book, extraordinary. In our country, Jews were not allowed to talk about Jesus. If I said in Poland that Jesus was a Jew, they would kill me.

I wasn't that close to [Poles]. I had friends, children play like children do. Anti-Semitism in children comes only from home. Everything comes from home, because all children who are born are all the same.

Date and place of recording: 19 December
2006, Haifa Interviewer: Tomasz Czajkowski
Editor: Maria Radek
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• **Topic D (Anti-Semitism in the press):** Henio Dejczer recalls how passers-by draw their "knowledge about Jews" from the national democratic press organ Głos Lubelski.

"A group of passers-by stands in front of the editorial office of the local National Democracy newspaper, Głos Lubelski. The printed sheets scream with false, disgusting, inflammatory headlines. They are absorbed by two secondary school students, an old woman, a worker and two men who, judging by their briefcases, are civil servants. They read quickly, eagerly, with excitement. It becomes clear that this is where they often get their news about Jews, that they believe the words printed here, that this inevitably awakens in them hatred towards Jews and everything Jewish."
Henryk Dejczer, *A Walk Around Lublin (reportage from spring truancy)*, in *Mały Przegląd,* no. 18, 6 May 1938, p. 2

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:** The Lublin Ghetto was located in the Lublin District from 20 March 1941 to 15 April 1942. At the very beginning of its existence, 34,000 Jews and an unknown number of Roma were imprisoned in the ghetto. Practically all of them perished. Most of them – about 30,000 – were murdered between 17 March and 11 April 1942 in the Bełżec extermination camp (some of them had previously been held in the Piaski ghetto). The remaining 4,000 people were

first transferred to the ghetto in Majdan Tatarski (the second ghetto established in the suburbs of Lublin) and murdered there or transported to nearby Majdanek. The last of the former ghetto inhabitants were killed in executions at Majdanek and in the camp in Trawniki, where on 3 November 1943, Operation
"Harvest Festival" (Aktion Erntefest) operation was carried out on 3 November 1943.

Source: Jack Fischel, *The Holocaust*, 1998, p. 58

Czesława Waksman, Lublin:

"Mummy returned to Lublin and obtained permission to collect the furniture she had sold. She settled in Lublin. I came to live with her. She obtained a flat on Grodzka Street and earned a living for the whole family by sewing and trading.

Meanwhile, a ghetto was being created in Lublin. We were fenced in with wire on all sides. Every day, people were taken away to their deaths. We lived from day to day, if you can call it living. I often travelled to Siedliszcze. But later it was no longer possible, because Jews were not allowed to leave the ghetto.

Don't you remember, Jew, how you stood behind bars, longingly gazing at the freedom that lay beyond the wire? Didn't you think about how beautiful the world is, and how you want to live, oh, to live, but they won't let you? Don't you remember how you woke up and wondered what the next day would bring? Didn't every Jewish mother tremble for her child?

There were fewer and fewer Jews, more and more space in the ghetto. Until March came. The world was cheerful. Spring was coming to life. I was sleeping with my mother in bed when suddenly crying and screaming woke us up. We got up, terrified. I ran out into the street with my mother. The sight was terrible. There were corpses everywhere. The street was littered with the bodies of beautiful young girls, children separated from their mothers. Pain was frozen on all their faces.

I saw my friend Dorka from afar, who cried and said that they had taken her whole family away and she was left with her father. She was supposed to come to me later, but I never saw her again. My faithful friend, whom
whom I had been inseparable from for ten years. I often remember her terrified eyes when she ran up to me, because I never found another friend like her in my life.

My mother and I dressed in whatever we could find. My mother managed to get out of the ghetto, but I couldn't pass because the Ukrainians were guarding us. Then my mother approached a Ukrainian and said that her daughter was Aryan and went to a seamstress living in the ghetto to pick up the fabric she had given her to sew. The Ukrainian let me out, thinking I was Polish. My mother and I went to the station and from there we travelled to Siedliszcze to my father and siblings. Everyone in the town was amazed at how we had managed to escape from that hell."

Czesława Waksman, *My Diary*, Łódź 1955. (From the collection of Brama Grodzka)

Maria Dorfsman-Arbus, Lublin:

"On that terrible and unforgettable evening, male voices could be heard on the stairs shouting in German to open the doors. Germans burst into the flat. German soldiers urged
everyone to leave their homes quickly. In panic and agitation, Lea took a number of essential items and threw them into a sheet, which she tied into a bundle. Throwing it on her back, she took her children by the hand and left the apartment, urged on by the Germans, who repeated hatefully: Raus!

Lea and her children, as well as other families, were driven out of Lubartowska Street to Grodzka Street, which was located in the old town. Grodzka Street was turned into a ghetto, fenced off and closely supervised by
the Germans. Lea and the girls entered a room filled with people. From then on, this room was to be their home.

Lea continued to work at the distillery under German supervision. She had a pass, which she used to identify herself and on the basis of which she left and returned to the ghetto. During their mother's absence, the girls stayed with people they did not know and slowly got to know and get used to them. The only doll Lusia had was disabled because it had no eyes, but it filled all her hours of the day.

Holding the doll, she dreamed of playing in the playground with children her age, of going for walks with her parents, her grandmother Roza and Felusia. How much would she have given to eat a bar of chocolate? And anyway, why was she imprisoned in this crowded room?

During the day, the girls missed their mother in her absence. The hours dragged on and seemed like a year until their mother returned from work. When she came back, Lea prepared meagre meals in difficult conditions to keep herself and her children alive.

The nights were a nightmare because the conditions in which people slept were unbearable. They lay side by side, covered with whatever they had brought with them. At that time, no one could have imagined the devastating disaster that the coming days would bring. In that crowded, stuffy room

room, there was an unpleasant atmosphere. People were hostile towards each other. Jealousy was aroused by better food and better places to sleep. All questions about the situation these people found themselves in remained unanswered.

The year was 1940. Night-time raids began. Waking adults and children from their sleep to check their documents was an act of humiliation, as well as a victory for the Germans over the poor and defenceless population. These raids were merciless and unscrupulous. They were conducted by SS men with
animalistic looks.

Grodzka Street, or the ghetto, was teeming with people walking in pairs in complete, exhausting silence and heavy fear. Fear paralysed everyone. A table was set up in the middle of the street, behind which an SS officer sat. People approached quietly, presenting their identity cards. German soldiers stood on both sides of the street, holding leather truncheons in their hands. Those who lingered due to lack of strength, or simply did not have identification, those who fell asleep standing up and slowed down the procession, were struck hard on the head and various other parts of the body with batons, depending on the position in which the poor, completely physically exhausted person was found.

After such a night-time operation, people returned to their temporary homes to rest a little and gather their scattered thoughts. Pain and hatred raged in people's minds. How their beaten bodies and broken hearts cried out for revenge! They prayed, asking God for salvation. These night-time escapades became more and more frequent.

On one such night, walking in silence, Lusia dozed off, walking like a sleepwalker, holding her mother's hand. Suddenly, she heard an SS officer's baton fall and, opening her eyes, saw Felusia writhing in pain and heard moans, because crying out loud was forbidden.

Lusia was usually spared the batons because she was able to dodge the victorious executioner. Lea suffered in silence. The girls and their fate were the most important thing to her. She did not think much about herself, nor did she care. One of the nightmarish days in the ghetto, there was a raid on Grodzka Street. The Germans set themselves the task of gathering a certain number of people and sending them to one of the concentration camps. Among those people were Felusia and Lusia. Their mother was at work at the time. Hearing heavy footsteps and shouts in German on the stairs, Felusia pulled Lusia along with her.
Frightened by the movement of the order, she forced her to take refuge under one of the beds. All the flatmates were forcibly dragged out of the room. After violent shoving and cursing, the door suddenly closed and silence fell. The surviving girls did not dare to come out from under the bed, fearing another raid by the Germans.
Germans. After a tiresome wait for their mother to return, they suddenly heard steady footsteps on the stairs and, accompanied by the sounds of spasmodic crying, Lea ran in, mad with despair. Fela and Lusia jumped out of their hiding place like hares, straight into her arms. There was no end to the crying and laughter. Kissed by their mother, the girls, exhausted by the extraordinary events of the day, fell asleep.

Escape from the ghetto

The next day at dawn, the girls were torn from their sleep and informed by Lea that they would soon be leaving the apartment. It was Sunday. Lea ordered the girls to hold hands as they walked in front of her.
at a safe distance. In case they were stopped by Germans they encountered, they were not to turn their heads back, but to keep walking. This was a direct order from Lea. The task was beyond their strength, but their mother's command
did not tolerate any opposition. The risk was great, but not too great compared to the desire to live. The word "go, go, further and faster" echoed in their heads. This escape from the ghetto, planned by Lea, was a heroic deed in Lusia's eyes. Lea, walking through the ghetto on her way to and from work, had found

a place from which it was easier to leave without being noticed by the guard. To do this, one also had to have Aryan looks. Sunday morning turned out to be a warm spring day. People dressed festively
They hurried to church for morning mass. Felusia, holding Lusia by the hand, walked at a fairly brisk pace, as if hurrying to church, silently pulling her little sister along. Lea, walking behind, knew that whatever happened to her, the children might manage to escape, and this gave her comfort. Moving further and further away
further and further from the ghetto and the city, they reached a foggy stretch of road. The fog lingered over the meadows, wet from the rain of the previous days, and the tall black trees were submerged in it up to their tops. In their damp depths
, a bird sang. In the distance, something creaked, knocked by the wind. Then the creaking and the bird's song stopped. Lusia was absorbed in thoughts of how much she would like to be a little mouse, sitting in a burrow,
invisible to everyone.

She was torn from these thoughts by the sound of a choir singing from a nearby church, as well as prayer. Lusia felt the urge to join in the prayer. Although she did not know how to pray, she began to whisper hurriedly:

- Dear God, help me, my mother and my sister. Give us plenty of food, drink and sweets. The organ fell silent and the priest's voice could be heard: *Dominus Vobiscum*. As they walked further and further away, they moved away from danger.

Silence fell. After several hours of walking, Lea stopped with the children in front of a gloomy building with a red roof. She timidly entered the vestibule, where she told the children to wait until she returned. Lea entered the strangers' apartment to inquire about the possibility of staying the night. Physically exhausted, they were unable to continue their journey. After a while, the children, led by their mother, found themselves in a gloomy room that smelled musty. The darkness and safety of the room made Lusia feel as if she were in an enchanted castle. Behind a table in the room sat a bearded man sipping a drink from a cup. His gaze was not very friendly. Lea's crying and pleas for help apparently had an effect, because the man allowed them to stay until the next morning. He was also a Jew who had not yet been caught by the Nazis. He lived with his wife and two children in these buildings. Lea and her children spent the night sitting, as there was nowhere to lie down. With difficulty, after many requests, my mother managed to buy some provisions from the gravedigger. At dawn the next day, they left the room with mixed feelings – fear and anxiety about the unknown.

Maria Dorfsman-Arbus, *Lost Childhood*, July 1997. (From the collection of Brama Grodzka).

• **Topic G (Post-war anti-Semitism):** Adam Adams recalls how, after the war, Jews returning to their homes were met with hostility by new tenants who refused to let them in or return their property. He also recalls cases of Jews returning to their hometowns after the war being murdered.

Adam Adams, born in 1923; Lublin:

“After the war, I did not encounter any anti-Semitism. Absolutely none. After the war, I learned here in England, let's say, about one town... It was in a Polish newspaper. There is a Polish daily newspaper here. There was one town where they arrived, and I think they killed one or two people there. And after the war, I heard here and there that when those who had survived arrived, they entered their homes and someone was living there and they didn't want to show them their homes, and they didn't want to let them into the house. This was especially the case in small towns. It was worse than in big cities. In big cities, it wasn't so bad. In big cities, they showed them their flats. But in small towns, they didn't want to.

Date and place of recording: 6 June 2011, London
Interviewer: Tomasz Czajkowski
Transcription Magdalena Kożuch
Editing Maria Radek
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• **Topic H (Education against anti-Semitism):** The activities of the "Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN" Centre, which collects oral history accounts and reconstructs the lives of specific individuals, such as Henio Żytomirski and Henio Dejczer (BIOGRAPHY OF H. ŻYTOMIRSKI, BIOGRAPHY OF H. DEJCZER and ARTICLE BY H. DEJCZER).

9. Łomża

• **Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic:** Sports activities as an element of identity. Reports on the Makabi women's sports movement show a desire to rebuild the nation through the physical education of "the broadest masses
Jewish women" before the war, which today is part of the memory of the rich social life of Jews in Poland.

Report on the Makabi women's sports movement in Łomża (1934)

"(...) The task of an instructor in our organisation is not only to lead groups, as is usually the case, but also to create and organise these groups – in other words, it is not enough to fulfil the duties of a physical education instructor, but one must also become a social worker in organising physical education among women. It is understandable that this takes up a lot of time, somewhat to the detriment of the instructor's actual work.

The women's section of our club has 76 active members, in addition to a mixed children's group (21 people), and is divided into sections: gymnastics, athletics, sports games and table tennis. The latter won first place in both the individual and team competitions in the city championships.

In winter, exercises take place in the hall, twice a week for each group, and in summer, three times a week at the stadium. We also conduct rhythmic exercises once every two weeks. The number of women associated with us is very impressive for Łomża. It should be taken into account that there are five Jewish clubs in our town.

We owe this large number of members to our effective propaganda. From time to time, we organise demonstration lessons in the hall or at the sports stadium (during Sports Day, Maccabi Week, etc.).
We also conduct propaganda outside Łomża. After consulting with sister organisations, we visit them, give a demonstration lesson preceded by a presentation, and try to organise a Women's Section on the spot. Of course, the most difficult thing is always to overcome the arguments of the "opposition", which always arises.
It takes a long time to explain that the Women's Section is not about breaking up the club or creating a "state within a state". (...)

We work hard, and our work is constantly guided by the idea of physical education for the broadest masses of Jewish women, which is to be a building block in the reconstruction of our nation."

The History of Jews in Poland. A Selection of Source Texts 1918-1939, edited by Rafał Żebrowski, Warsaw 1993, pp. 135-136.

• **Topic A (Anti-Semitism in everyday life):** based on entries from *the Memorial Book of the Jewish Community in Łomża*, the following can be noted:

- Feeling of danger on the streets: Jews could not safely go out on the streets of the city in the evening for fear of being attacked.

- Exclusion from social organisations: an example is the Volunteer Fire Brigade in Łomża, which in 1939 introduced a rule that only Christians could be members, forcing Jewish firefighters (even those with 30 years of service) to give up their uniforms.

- Hostility after Piłsudski's death: after Józef Piłsudski's death, some groups (e.g. firefighters) claimed that his passing would "spell the end for the Jews".

- Barriers to medical care: although the Polish hospital in Łomża was theoretically accessible to everyone, Jewish patients avoided it due to the strongly Catholic character of the facility (crosses, holy images, the presence of priests) and the lack of kosher food.

Łomża:

"In addition to state and social prohibitions and bans, as well as the shameful persecution by the government aimed at taking bread from the mouths of workers, there were also attacks. Jews could not go out on the streets in the evening. Pupils in Polish schools were instructed to beat Jews mercilessly. Once, a Polish pupil stabbed a Jewish pupil at a public school. Teachers and classmates defended the Pole, he was not punished at all, and the priest,

the school's religion teacher, forgave him his sin, because the attacker's intention towards the boy was carried out in the name of heaven...

The Book of Remembrance of the Jewish Community in Łomża, ed. Jom-Tow Lewiński, Łomża 2019, pp. 74–75.

When Prime Minister Józef Piłsudski died, the firemen issued a special mourning order. One of my Christian colleagues Christians blurted out: Grandfather (a nice nickname for Piłsudski) has died – and now the end will come for the Jews. Several Jewish firefighters took offence and reported their anti-Semitic colleague to the disciplinary committee. The team commander called the firefighters to a special review. In the presence of all
his colleagues, he informed them of what had happened and proposed to the one who had said it: either he apologises and takes back his words, or he returns his uniform and leaves the team. Returning the uniform was tantamount to dismissal from the organisation. He chose to return his helmet and clothes and leave the team. All his colleagues saw him off with cat music. That's how it used to be."

The Book of Remembrance of the Jewish Community in Łomża, ed. Jom-Tow Lewiński, Łomża 2019, p. 259.

In recent years, anti-Semitism has emerged within the fire brigade, and if there was one person who made an anti-Semitic remark after Piłsudski's death, it was in 1939, more precisely on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the fire brigade, the team's command unanimously decided to establish an "Aryan" section in the volunteer fire brigade organisation. A decision was made to introduce a point in paragraph 8 of the regulations
stating that only Christian citizens could be members of the fire brigade. All Jewish firefighters were to return their helmets, uniforms, badges, etc. within a week. Thus, Jewish citizens who had devoted their strength and energy to the development of the fire brigade for 30 years or more left its ranks.
A few older members were allowed to remain, but only as passive members who paid dues. We do not know whether they agreed to these conditions and remained in the brigade. And so, an end was put to the wonderful and dedicated active participation of Jews in firefighting.

Memorial Book of the Jewish Community in Łomża, ed. Jom-Tow Lewiński, Łomża 2019, p. 260.

Medical care:

"The Polish Holy Spirit Hospital was funded from the budget of the municipal office and the county council. However, it is understandable that taxes paid by Jews constituted a significant part of the hospital's budget.
According to the law, it was a general hospital, accessible to people of all religions and all citizens, without exception. Indeed, sick Jews were also admitted there without difficulty, especially in severe cases and those requiring surgery, as the hospital employed several specialist doctors and
it was equipped with good medical devices. At that time, a London doctor who was a converted Jew, as mentioned above, also worked there. For many years, his portrait hung on the wall in the office. Several sisters of mercy worked at the Polish hospital – nuns who were specialists in nursing and, for the most part, treated all patients very well. Jews also came to the outpatient clinic for doctor's appointments, minor surgical procedures and dressings. However, most Jewish patients avoided staying in this hospital because it was a Catholic facility; there were pictures of saints and crosses hanging in every room and corner. There were also rumours about Jewish patients that before
When death was imminent, a priest was brought in for confession, and the patient died with a cross in their hand or on their heart. The issue of food was also burdensome for Jewish patients. Although in many cases doctors
allowed food to be brought in from outside, but this obviously applied to patients in the surgical ward. However, Jews suffering from internal diseases were forced to defile themselves with hospital
(non-kosher) portion of food, which was very difficult for them. That is why there were few Jews among the patients."

The Book of Remembrance of the Jewish Community in Łomża, ed. Jom-Tow Lewiński, Łomża 2019, pp. 243-244.

• **Topics B and C (Anti-Semitism in education and the role of the Church):** Reports of Jewish pupils being beaten with the consent of teachers and priests. In Polish teacher training colleges, the requirements for Jews were very high, higher than for non-Jews.

Physical violence and consent to it

"In addition to state and social orders and prohibitions, as well as the shameful persecution by the government to take bread from the mouths of workers, there were also attacks. Jews could not go out on the streets in the evening. Pupils in Polish schools were instructed to beat Jews mercilessly. Once, a Polish pupil stabbed a Jewish pupil at a state school. Teachers and classmates defended the Pole, he was not punished at all, and the priest,
the school's religion teacher, forgave him his sin, because the attacker's intention towards the boy was carried out in the name of heaven...

The Book of Remembrance of the Jewish Community in Łomża, ed. Jom-Tow Lewiński, Łomża 2019, pp. 74–75.

Access to education

"I was a gymnastics teacher. That was my life. I attended a Polish school, a Polish teacher training college. In the entire history of Poland, 10 people, 10 Jews, graduated from this school, including me and my brother. The academic requirements were very high. When we started our six-year course, there were 60 people in our year, but by the end there were only three left who hadn't dropped out along the way. Three. The teachers liked me.
My friends accepted me.

Nachman Podróżnik, *Pozorowana tożsamość. Historia przetrwania pod okupacją nazistowską* [Fake Identity: A Story of Survival under Nazi Occupation], Warsaw 2020, p. 21.

10. Łódź

• **Topic B (Schools):** Roman Kent describes the need to go to school in groups for fear of fights with Polish peers.

Roman Kent

"Every now and then, I encountered various obstacles on my way to school. To get to the Jewish Secondary School, you had to walk past the state school for non-Jewish pupils. We usually went to school in groups, which made the time pass more quickly and made it less likely that the boys from that school would pick a fight with us. It was always obvious that we were going to the Jewish Gymnasium because our uniforms were different and stood out in the crowd. Skirmishes were rare, but when they did occur, we usually came out of them unscathed. The worst that could happen was a bloody nose,
a few bruises or torn clothes. In such situations, our teachers would step in and deal with the matter directly with the administrators of the other school.

Roman Kent, *Jedynym wyjściem była odwaga* [The Only Way Out Was Courage], Łódź 2020, p. 29.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:**
The Łódź ghetto was located in the Wartheland, an area incorporated into the Third Reich. It existed from 8 February 1940 to 29 August 1944. After the "dissolution" of the ghetto, the Jews were transported to the extermination camps in Chełmno nad Nerem and Auschwitz-Birkenau. The number of Jews interned was approximately 200,000.
A comprehensive article on the Łódź ghetto is available on the website of the Jewish Historical Institute:
https://www.jhi.pl/artykuly/lodzkie-getto-najwiekszy-oboz-pracy-niewolniczej,253
Selected photos from the Miastograf.pl portal and the Bundesarchiv archive:



Speech by Chaim Rumkowski, head of the Łódź Judenrat, at Plac Strażacki / Wikipedia



The Łódź ghetto. Traffic on a section of Oststraße (Wschodnia Street – formerly Józefa Piłsudskiego Street) that no longer exists. In the background, the Alte Szil Synagogue (no longer in existence). Bundesarchiv, Bild 137-051639A / CC-BY-SA 3.0 / Wikipedia



The Łódź ghetto area, 1940-1944. View of the footbridge over Zgierska Street, allowing residents to cross from one side of the street to the other. The street was separated from the ghetto because a tram ran along it, which could only be used by Poles and Germans travelling towards Doły or Zgierz, etc., source: https://miastograf.pl/asset/188



A photograph by Ignacy Płażewski taken before 1951, showing the eastern side of the former Litzmannstadt Ghetto, where Staromiejski Park was built. In the background, you can see the palace of Izrael Kalmanowicz Poznański and factory buildings. This part of the city, which was most severely damaged during World War II, was inhabited mainly by the Jewish population before 1939
Further demolition took place after 1945, and it was decided to establish a city park on the empty square that was created. Staromiejski Park was built between 1951 and 1953 according to a design by engineer K. Chrabelski, and is commonly
as Herring Park. This name is associated with the functioning of a
. No copyright restrictions. Please indicate the Museum of the City of Łódź as the owner of the object and provide the author's name and surname.
also for using the work in a manner that infringes on the author's personal rights. Object inventory number: MHMŁ/I/4711/3 Objects from the collections of the Museum of the City of Łódź after digitisation as part of the "Digital Culture" project, task: "Digitisation and popularisation of photographs from the Museum of the City of Łódź collection", source: https://miastograf.pl/asset/3858

11. Mordy near Siedlce

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories – stage of the Holocaust:** The ghetto in Mordy existed in the Warsaw District of the General Government from November 1941 to August 1942. After the ghetto was dissolved, the inhabitants were transported to Treblinka (source: https://war.dekoder.org/de/map/ghettos/). Accounts of the liquidation of the ghetto in the market square, the heat and thirst of the children, and the killing of the sick in their homes from the KARTA collection.

Janina Przewłocka, daughter of Karolina and Henryk, owners of the estate in Mordy:

We were deeply affected by the fate of the Jews. Once, on our way to a course in Hruszniew in August 1942, we were passing through Łosice. We realised that something terrible had happened there because everything was

open, ransacked, with pieces of broken glass and other items scattered everywhere. And it was so empty... On the way to Mordy, the ditches were littered with the bodies of the murdered, mainly old people. That was the first time I saw dead bodies. I saw old men with white beards lying in the ditches. A lot of people died there. We were terrified. It was the same in Mordy. Everything was destroyed, looted, empty.

On the same day, my father drove to Siedlce. On his way back, he met a whole column of Jews being driven from Łosice and Mordy on the road. They surrounded my father: "Sir, please save us!" And there were Germans all around. Nothing could be done. Andrzej was returning with my father at the time and later told me that he was so surprised that he didn't tell them to run away. But there was nowhere to run.

Dad came back looking pale. Only then did he say: "Listen, I think they're really leading them to their deaths." It was only then, in 1942, that we realised

that this was no longer harassment or persecution, but that all Jews were being led to their deaths.

Mordy, 22 August 1942

House in Mordy, "Karta" 52/2007.

Irena Ostaszyk, resident of Mordy:

“More and more Jewish families were arriving at the market square. […] In the end, even the Jewish police appeared at the market square. It was a sign that all the people had left the ghetto, urged on by their own police.

The market square was swarming with German military police in multicoloured uniforms – green, black, and, I think, yellow. Poles were not allowed to enter the market square. The entire market square was surrounded by Germans, Jewish police and Jewish people.

Slowly, 11:00 a.m. was approaching. The market square was getting noisier and hotter. That day, as if to mock us, the sun poured fiery rays of heat from the sky. The hot stones and sand of the market square were becoming increasingly unbearable for people. Children were crying, "We want to drink," but their mothers did not have a drop of water, because in their rush to leave their homes, they had lost their bearings. [...] Children fainted in the market square from thirst. Seeing this, Polish women took out bread and water, some fruit, from under their aprons and secretly threw it to the edge of the market square, from where

Jewish children took them and divided them among themselves. […]

At around 11:00 a.m., peasant carts began to arrive at the market square on the orders of the Germans. Elderly people and small children sat on these carts. After loading, around 12 noon, the entire procession was directed towards the Siedlce road, surrounded by gendarmes and dogs. The crowd was filled with the lamentations of mothers, the cries of children and the buzz of human voices. […]

Soon, the remaining residents came out to the market square and stood there with stony faces, pale as the wall, saddened, pondering what had happened. There was little conversation between people that day. Everyone was mentally broken, aware of the misfortune that could not be prevented.

The town became as deserted as a grave. The few military policemen who remained went from Jewish home to Jewish home, shooting the remaining sick and elderly people who did not have the strength to go out to the market square with their families. For several more hours, shots could be heard here and there in Jewish homes, killing people.

Mordy, 22 August 1942

Irena Ostaszyk, *Okruchy Podlasia: opowiadania i legendy* [Fragments of Podlasie: Stories and Legends], vol. 2, Mordy 2005, in: *Dom w Mordach* [The House in Mordy], Karta 52/2007.

Elżbieta Przewłocka:

“The Germans began expelling Jews from the town. On the last evening before the operation, my friend Dziunia Majówna, the daughter of our teacher, came running to my house. They lived in the same house as the Kafebaums, who had a one-and-a-half-year-old child. They asked us to save the little one. They themselves did not want to flee anywhere. They said that they were very tired of what was happening, that they wanted to go with their entire nation.

I took the girl wrapped in a black shawl in my arms, Dziunia took a bag with her things, and we ran through the hedges, then around the church, behind the community building, and crouched behind the statue of St. John, opposite the manor gate. We had to check that there was no one on the road we had to cross to get to

our house. A few drunks staggered past us. We ran into the courtyard. In a few seconds we were home.

My parents accepted me and the child without a word. However, they told me to spend all day with little Hania in the park. I only came home with her at night. There was no guarantee that no one would report us. A Jewish child could cost the lives of everyone in the household.

So I 'lived' with her near our swings – I fed her, changed her nappies, played with her. Next to us, on the lawn, one of the German officers walked his mare for hours, and a big boxer dog ran wild around him. Perhaps it was my being with Hania almost 'in the lion's den' that saved me.

Mordy, 25 August 1942

House in Mordy, Karta 52/2007.

Janina Przewłocka:

“After three days, our aunt Verena Czapska arrived. She took the girl to Warsaw and handed her over to a shelter run by Mrs Strzałecka, a great social activist who saved many Jewish children.”

Mordy, 25 August 1942

House in Mordy, Karta 52/2007.

Elżbieta Przewłocka:

“The first floor of our house was occupied by the German headquarters. Officers, adjutants and orderlies were constantly milling around. Despite this, for a good month after the Jews were "expelled" from the town, a five-year-old boy would come every day with a mess tin, which was filled in the kitchen, and then he would disappear. One day he didn't come. Those bandits beat him to death somewhere. Such a small, defenceless little thing. Abramek..."

Mordy, autumn 1942

Elżbieta Cielecka, *Memoirs*, Warsaw 1999, in: *Dom w Mordach* [The House in Mordy], "Karta" 52/2007.

12. Orla

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories – the Holocaust stage:**

The ghetto in Orla existed in the Białystok District from July 1941 to November 1942. After the dissolution of the ghetto, the inhabitants were deported to Bielsk Podlaski (source:

the ghetto, the Jews were transported to Bielsk Podlaski (source: https://war.dekoder.org/de/map/ghettos/). Rabbi Halperin describes the creation of the ghetto, the burning of the synagogue and the transport to Bielsk, and then to Białystok.

Elijahu Noach Halperin, the last rabbi of Orla:

"On the second day of the month of Nisan [20 March 1942], the mayor issued a decree establishing a Jewish district and ordered all Jews to move to Koszelowska Street and part of Kleszczelowska Street within a few hours. Military police stood on street corners and stole the best items from the gathering crowds. Every day
400 Jews went to work, for which they received no pay, and were forced to perform humiliating tasks.

In the winter of 1942, Jews worked in the old cemetery [directly behind the synagogue], where they had to remove the matzevot themselves and clear the square, which had been sown in the summer. The day after the move to the Jewish quarter, in the middle of the night, a fire broke out and reduced the ghetto by a few more houses. The Judenrat asked the mayor to allocate other houses, because the cramped conditions in the ghetto were unbearable. The mayor replied that if it was too crowded, he would evacuate 500 Jews to Pruzhany. This word struck fear into the hearts of the local Jews.

With great effort and an even larger bribe, they managed to have the order cancelled and buy back from him [the mayor] materials from two Christian houses that had been built in the Jewish part of town. The victim of the fire was young Zejdl Rudny, who was accused of extinguishing the fire too slowly and was shot the day after the fire.

In addition to the Judenrat, the Jews also had a Jewish security service, whose main task was to provide workers, furniture, tools... Due to overcrowding, the mortality rate in the ghetto, especially among children and the elderly, was high. The economic situation was still relatively good. Christians had to use the services of Jewish craftsmen. It was easy to exchange things – clothes and the like – for food.

Later, frequent harassment began to fall upon the people, which had unpleasant consequences and destroyed the "normal" life to which they had become somewhat accustomed. For example, in the summer of 1942, several young people went to a nearby village to exchange goods for food. At that time, the Germans were persecuting partisans in the forests and when they found Jews in the village, they shot them after brutally torturing them.

As punishment, the town's residents had to report to the police three times a day for two weeks.

One man, wanting to communicate with his wife in Bielsko, tried to climb over a fence. A military policeman noticed this, and as punishment, the man had to report to the military police and, after being subjected to many humiliations, such as crawling on his knees, sitting down and standing up, he was flogged. It was only thanks to bribes of various kinds given to the authorities that conditions did not worsen and only the punishments described here were imposed.

We did not foresee what was going to happen, or more precisely, the liquidation of the town in November 1942. On Monday, 2 November, the Jewish district was surrounded. We were told that we would be taken to work on the Black Sea or in the Caucasus. There was no point in regretting the homes and possessions we were leaving behind. We would find the same there, left behind by the evacuated inhabitants of those areas. It even came to the point where some of the women who had been hiding in the Christian part of the town volunteered to go. On 3 November, 1,450 of us were taken away on peasant carts to the ghetto in Bielsko, which was also surrounded. There, the truth about the evacuation became clear to us. Until then, we had still believed in the fairy tale about the Black Sea.

On Friday, 1,450 Jews from Orla were herded to the railway station and brutally beaten. They were crammed into freight wagons, 150 people per wagon. Although we had been sitting in them since morning, the train did not depart until 10:00. It arrived in Białystok at 3 p.m., but we were kept imprisoned all night without water, food or heating. The conditions in the carriages were indescribable. We breathed a sigh of relief when we were driven to the camp. On the way there, twelve elderly men and women who were unable to keep up were shot.

Białystok, 1 February 1943

Translated from Yiddish by Anna Szyba, Manuscript *My Memoirs* of Rabbi Halperin, Yad Vashem, Białystok Ghetto Archive Team (Cwi Mersik – Mordechaj Tenenbaum Archive), ref. no. M.11, 50.

Dawid Duksin, Elijachu Noach Halperin, *Sztetl Orla*, Karta 108/2021.

• **Topic G (Post-war anti-Semitism):** Mordechaj Canin describes anti-Semitic jokes made by Poles on a train about the “smell of Jews” at the station in Orla.

Mordechaj Canin:

"The train passes the Orla station. Smoke from the locomotive comes in through the open windows. One of the Poles jokes that
station still smells of Jews. This smell, he says, can be recognised from afar. Everyone in the compartment smiles when they hear this "joke". I pretend not to understand and ask how many Jews there were in the place we are passing through. My closest neighbour bursts out laughing. It's obvious, he says, that I'm a foreigner and I don't have
I had no idea what was here. This summer resort – Orla – I am told – used to be full of Jews. They were everywhere. But the Nazis liquidated them all. They did the dirty work.”

Mordechaj Canin, Through Ruins and Ashes: A Journey Through One Hundred Destroyed Jewish Communities in Poland, Warsaw 2018, pp. 242–243.

13. Otwock

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories – stage of the Holocaust:** The ghetto in Otwock existed in the Warsaw District of the General Government from December 1939 to August 1942. After the ghetto was dissolved, the Jews were deported to Treblinka and Auschwitz. The estimated number of interned Jews was 15,000.
(source: https://war.dekoder.org/de/map/ghettos/). Calek Perechodnik recounts the process of closing the ghetto, the bloody executions of engineer Rotblit and doctors, and the widespread looting of property by Polish neighbours.

The following texts are excerpts from published memoirs:
Calek Perechodnik, *Confession*, KARTA Centre, Warsaw 2018 (series: "Polish Jews").

The process of closing and isolating the ghetto

"Summer passed, November arrived, and announcements were made that from 1 December 1940, ghettos for Jews would be created, where Jews would have the right to take all their property, would have a Judenrat, their own police, and would be able to leave the ghetto and walk around the Polish district, except on Sundays, etc. Almost everyone was taken in by these innocent promises, and only a very small percentage of Jews did not go to the ghetto. Even Jewish women, wives of Poles, moved into the ghetto with their children. How easy it was to enter, but there was no way out! [...]

The ghetto began quite innocently, it was not fenced off, it was allowed to leave, the area was quite large, there was no shortage of housing or food. Gradually, however, a fence was erected around the ghetto, Jews were forbidden to leave the ghetto under threat of death, but in reality the ban initially existed only on paper. Barter trade continued. Jews sold their belongings. Admittedly, in May or June 1941, a whole suit could be exchanged for three metres, and sometimes two metres, of potatoes, but somehow people managed to survive.

18 August – Tuesday. A sunny, beautiful day. The city was calm when suddenly, at one o'clock in the afternoon, panic broke out, women were running and shouting "hide the little children"...

I hurry to the police station, where almost all the officers are present. What happened? It turned out that Major Brand, apparently the commander *of the Umsiedlungsbataillon*, had arrived in Otwock earlier and demanded a plan of the Otwock ghetto. At the same time, completely unlawfully in the opinion of the naive Jews, he also appointed Kronenberg as president of the Judenrat, even though such matters are the sole responsibility of the Kreishauptmann.

He then ordered that within 24 hours, the brick houses be demolished, the bricks dismantled and the ghetto walled in, all to be done during the day. Afterwards, Brand inspected the site designated for the carpenter's workshop, took the plans and left the ghetto.

The mood in the city became extremely depressing. Although no one takes the order to wall off the city seriously, as it is impossible to carry out, everyone knows that the deportation will take place
will take place, but it is not known when. How will it be carried out? Will it be partial? And who will be doing the segregation?

Motivation to join the Ghetto Police, moral dilemmas:

Seeing that the war was not ending and in order to avoid being rounded up and sent to the camps, I joined the ranks of the Ghetto Police in February 1941. One good thing about the ghetto, according to the understanding at the time, was that the Germans did not hang around the ghetto, and the looting and requisitions had ceased. If they needed something, they turned to the Judenrat, which provided them with everything, so I withdrew my belongings from Alchimowicz and omnia mea mecum habeam
in a small room, where I spent the winter and summer of 1941 in relative peace, caring for and raising my little Alinka. [...]

20 August in the Otwock ghetto. We are coming back from the square, we are coming back home. Really? Does a Jew need a home?

I remember how we walked: me, Zygmunt Wolfowicz, his brother Tadek and Rubin Grynkorn. We lived on this the same street, we lost our families and now we are returning home, instinctively clinging to each other.

Are we afraid of the deserted ghetto? Are we afraid of loneliness? No, we are afraid of being alone before such a hostile and omniscient judge as our own conscience.

This is what we fear, although none of us realise it. We return slowly, saying nothing, because we are still unable to think. We do not understand that our wives, children and sisters are now in cattle trucks and that soon only ashes will remain of them.

We do not understand that we will never see them again, never hear them again, that we ourselves are also condemned to death, and that the date is unknown. We understand nothing, we are not even able to cry. Everyone is just terrified of one thing: entering the flat alone.

The liquidation operation in the ghetto –

the fate of Tola Kronenberg

"18 August – Tuesday. A sunny, beautiful day. The city is calm, when suddenly, at one o'clock in the afternoon, panic breaks out, women are running and shouting 'hide the little children'...

I quickly go to the police station, where almost all the police officers are present. What happened? It turned out that Major Brand, apparently the commander of the Umsiedlungsbataillon, had arrived in Otwock earlier and demanded a plan of the Otwock ghetto. At the same time, completely unlawfully in the opinion of the naive Jews, he also appointed Kronenberg as president of the Judenrat, even though such matters are the sole responsibility of the Kreishauptmann. [...]

Meanwhile, a queue is forming at the police station. All the policemen's wives, children, close and distant relatives. Only one woman in the whole of Otwock keeps her head, Kronenberg's wife, Tola, who orders her father-in-law to stand in line, while she herself sits at the telephone in the police station as a telephone operator. Her husband had previously given Major Brand two gold watches, so she remains where she is. The other wives, like their husbands, do not even realise that she is not in the queue.

Engineer Rotblit – creator of the sheds:

The Jews are stunned, they do not understand anything at all, they are not hiding, they are ready to line up, after all, everyone has a paper and a certificate in their pocket stating that they are not subject to deportation, so why are the Germans shooting? By what right?

Engineer Rotblit (I'm not sure of his surname) approaches the SS officers – he is the creator and founder of the workshops in Otwock, a personal friend of Kreishauptmann. With a proud smile, he hands over his papers, the officer takes them with one hand and shoots him in the head with the other. Engineer Rotblit falls, and the German, instead of looking through the papers of the man he has killed, prefers to search the pockets of the dead man, take his money and remove the crowns from his teeth. [...]

Engineer Rotblit! With your connections, wealth and passes, you had the best chance of saving yourself, so why did you die, you naive man?

Dr Glikmanowa – the "first victim" of the liquidation operation:

"The first victim was Dr Glikmanowa, who lived right next to the Warsaw barrier. She was a kind, beautiful dentist and mother of two children. She calmly went out into the street to show the Ukrainians that she was a dentist in general and to the Jewish police in particular. With a friendly smile, she held out her hand with
According to witnesses, she was shot in the head and died instantly.

Oh, happy woman! You died when you least expected it, unaware that your beautiful little children were also condemned to death along with you.

Polish-Jewish relations

Calek Perechodnik presents these relations as multidimensional – ranging from neighbourly help to extreme exploitation and hostility.

- Before and during the existence of the ghetto:

"I also lived in the ghetto at 14 Podmiejska Street, in a room I rented from the wife of our cinema ticket seller, Głazek. I sold my furniture and kept my more expensive belongings at Alchimowicz's, who had moved and was living in my father's villa, where he had also been given a flat along with our
furniture. I stocked up on food for the winter and plenty of fuel. We cut down several pine trees in the cinema for this purpose, much to the amazement and indignation of Deputy Mayor Czarnecki, who said that I, a citizen of
from Otwock, an agricultural engineer, was destroying my own trees, it was the same, he said, "as pulling out healthy teeth".

[...]

Almost no one thought about the fact that the simplest and only way was to leave the ghetto, obtain a Kennkarte, or in the worst
case, a birth certificate, and to live officially in a Polish district – almost no one thought about this. Of course, I am thinking here of women and men with the right appearance. As for obtaining, at all costs,
No one thought about paying the price in arms and selling their lives and the lives of their loved ones at a high price.

Unfortunately, three years of captivity had taken their toll. As for leaving the ghetto and settling in a Polish district, Jews did not take up this opportunity for two reasons. I am disregarding the fact that no one realised the horror of the situation; on the one hand, the military police had instilled in the Jews the belief that leaving the ghetto was tantamount to a death sentence, and on the other hand, there was a panic-stricken fear of Poles, that is, the fear that in a Polish neighbourhood they would be robbed and handed over to the military police.

This was how most people reasoned: you can hide from the military police, avoid them, after all, there aren't many of them on the streets, but how can you hide from Poles, who can easily distinguish Jews from Poles?

- During the liquidation (looting and indifference):

“[…] Tuesday. In the morning, I leave my summer coat at Wolfowicz’s place, as it is too heavy for me to wear. An hour later, I return to find the entire flat demolished. It was the Poles who destroyed it completely. In general, the entire ghetto is still surrounded by a Polish mob, who jump over the fence every now and then, open the doors with axes and rob everything. Sometimes they stumble over corpses that are still warm, but that doesn't matter. People fight over the corpses, snatching pillows or suits from each other.

And the corpse? Well, like a corpse – it lies quietly, says nothing, doesn't bother anyone and doesn't appear in anyone's dreams! So the Poles have a clear conscience. "We didn't kill them, if we don't take them, the Krauts will."

Poles who, after a few days, received a pass to enter the ghetto, especially the newly appointed guards, also caught and brought in Jews. Of course, they did not forget to take all the money the Jews had on them first, searching not only their pockets, but even tearing the belts worn by women. "Where
Do you have any money? Give it to me, because the Germans will take it from you anyway.” Finally, after a thorough search, they were taken to prison. […]

Part of the ghetto was already sparsely inhabited by Poles. Polish women were calmly cleaning up the flats where the corpses were still lying, peeling potatoes in front of the flats, and the Jews saw it all. It was the last image that remained in their minds before they died. Their
fellow Polish citizens were starting a new, carefree life, occupying their flats, inheriting their property, and they, the Jews, with all this before their eyes, this new, beautiful world being built, had to die (after all, they are Jews, aren't they?), they had to lie down on their stomachs and wait for the "saving bullet" in the back of their necks to satisfy their aching hearts.

- After the liquidation (carefree and "inheritance"):

"But you had to have nerves of steel to walk around the ghetto itself.

Empty streets, all flats wide open, windows smashed, doors broken down, shelters carelessly covered with sand, human bones scattered here and there, gnawed by dogs or birds.

Only four things could be found on the street and in the flats: 1) feathers, flying everywhere,
2) old food ration cards, 3) photographs and identity cards of Jews, 4) Jewish holy books. Apart from that, everything was merchandise – broken chairs, rags of the worst quality, broken pots, even coat hangers. All of this found Polish enthusiasts who carried their spoils of war day and night.

Poles are now calmly wandering around the former ghetto. There is nothing left to loot, so they come to buy. They are ready to buy everything from the remaining Jews, but only for next to nothing. When they see a policeman wearing a decent suit, they want to rip it off him by force: "What do you need it for? We need paper clothes in the camp, and we'll pay you for this one." I can
say that I personally did not make any transactions with any dealers. I simply could not do it; I would have gladly strangled them rather than sell Jewish items whose owners had to die such a tragic death."

Calek Perechodnik, *Confession*, KARTA Centre, Warsaw 2018 (series "Polish Jews").

14. Sejny

- **Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic:**

Warakomska:

"Jews hired Poles to work. Where there is now a pharmacy and a delicatessen, there used to be a huge mountain and people who didn't have jobs would gather there. A Jew would come and take them, saying, for example, 'You will come and chop wood and saw'. For

chopping, sawing and stacking a metre of wood, they paid a zloty, which wasn't even enough to buy a kilogram of sugar. There were Jewish shops everywhere, although some Jews had farms, but Poles worked there."

M. Dzimido:

"I also remember Jews living in the town before the war. We got along well with them. We bought various items from them. We also borrowed things from them. Jews gave Poles jobs."

M. Degući:

"I often played with Jewish children. I was even friends with two of them. Their names were Berko and Chaim. And because their parents owned shops, they sometimes treated me to ice cream or sweets."

Katarzyna Radziwiłko, *Anti-Semitism and Polish-Jewish friendship. A contribution to the social relations of the inhabitants of Sejny*, in: Almanach Sejneński 2006, 2007, 2008, pp. 189-203, here: p. 193.

"The first anti-Jewish sentiments were recorded in Sejny in the 1920s. Poles considered any issue pointing to the shortcomings of Jews to be an attack on them. In 1924 (10 March), a report was drawn up according to which the president of the Board of Jewish Merchants in Sejny
Abram Rozental brought charges against an officer of the County State Police for wrongful accusation made by the police officer on 16 February. In his report, the officer accused Abramowicz of
of covering the pavement with ash, for which he had already received a fine of twenty zlotys from the district authorities. Another Jew, Epsztejn Ałter, was accused of not cleaning the pavement, as was Szynel Jedwabny in the square under the pillars before the start of trading, and Josel Płoński for scattering straw on the pavement. The last complaint concerned a certain Lejba Mutterpel, according to whom the report drawn up by the policeman was distorted and concerned an unsigned price list, which he had personally signed.

What might seem trivial today, during the period of anti-Jewish agitation, it rose to the level of persecution of Jews by Polish representatives of local law. These were some of the first
official persecution of Sejny residents recorded in the interwar period, and for the other side, a sign of growing anti-Semitism. Should these facts really be viewed in these terms? Perhaps it would be better to look at it differently and, leaving aside the Jewish question, take into account the generally accepted
system of order. It was not only Jews who were subject to punishment, but all residents of the town. Complaints against them may have had such an impact, but they did not necessarily have to be the result of growing hostility towards them as a national minority.

Sejny Almanac 2006, 2007, 2008, p. 194.

• **Topic A (Anti-Semitism in everyday life):**

- Stereotypes and prejudices:

“Under the influence of agitation, stereotypes arose in Polish circles, for example, of the cunning Jew, causing harm and siding with the enemies of the Polish nation. Anti-Jewish attitudes were often found in Old Polish literature. The Jews depicted there were classic examples of foreigners, and various stories portrayed them in an extremely negative light, among other things as a threat to the nation. It was said that Jewish children were born blind, and that the cure for this was the blood of Christian infants.
This nation was also attributed with an unpleasant odour due to their consumption of large quantities of onions and garlic. According to the law of the Commonwealth, autonomy led to them being treated as a separate class. This fact was emphasised by the 17th-century preacher Szymon Tarowolka, for whom they were not, in accordance with the stereotype, people of honour or bearers of knightly virtues.

Almanach Sejneński 2006, 2007, 2008, p. 190.

- Economic boycott:

"The most obvious form of anti-Semitic behaviour was social boycott, which manifested itself in
refraining from contact with members of the Jewish community in Poland and was intended to emphasise their foreignness and separate Poles from their allegedly bad influence. It also included avoiding Jewish shops and not giving orders to craftsmen. Private anti-Semites did not use violence or incite it. However, they used slogans such as: "Don't buy from Jews" and "Beat Jews!"

Almanach Sejneński 2006, 2007, 2008, p. 196.

- Violence and demonstrations:

“Other demonstrations also took place in Sejny, such as marches organised by anti-Jewish organisations through the town centre, with participants shouting obscene slogans. According to Ms Warakomska, children bribed with sweets took part in these marches, carrying placards with appropriate slogans. Here is
an excerpt from her memoirs: “And when there were Jewish Kuczki, he gave money to children and encouraged them to throw milk bottles filled with ashes or feathers through the thatched roof.” Mrs Auronowa recalls: “And he persuaded my brother to go and march with a banner. God, what was happening to us. Every now and then, a Jewish woman would come running, because they all knew my mummy well, and lament: 'Zosia, your Bolek is walking the streets with signs! Zosia, Boluś is marching and shouting: Down with the Jews!'. He got such a beating then. He would never do it again for all the riches in the world.

After agitation and attacks on the Jewish population, the time came for political reckoning. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, in June 1939, repressions against the Jewish population took place in connection with municipal elections, in which they allegedly did not support the government's lists, voting for left-wing lists[3]. This deviation was subject to "appropriate reaction
by the authorities." A letter from the Provincial Office in Białystok was sent to the County Office in Suwałki, containing recommendations regarding possible persecution. The document was to be sent to Sejny and apply to the local population. The county governors were ordered to apply severe
repression against disloyal citizens of Jewish origin and their families. Councillors and political, social, religious, economic and, above all,

pro-Zionist organisations. The repressive measures were described in detail in nine points and only the starosty had the right to apply them. These included, among others: sanitary and order supervision in shops and other industrial establishments; industrial law regulations, issuing cards to craftsmen,
granting concessions, labour law; supervision of Jewish associations and religious communities; credit restrictions, employment control, passport law regulations; labour market protection; real estate transactions in the border zone.

Sejny Almanac 2006, 2007, 2008, pp. 197–198

- **Topic B (Anti-Semitism in education):**

Incidents at St. Casimir's Gymnasium in Sejny (1936)

“After Hitler came to power, articles began to appear in the Polish-language Jewish press on the fight against economic anti-Semitism and the economic boycott of Poles under the slogan: ‘Don’t buy from Jews’. The press raised the issue of ritual slaughter as a matter of great importance.
7 February 1936, a bill to abolish it was submitted to the Sejm. In March, city councils attempted to implement it. However, this sparked numerous protests in Poland.

The issue of ritual slaughter also had a wide resonance among the inhabitants of Sejny. In the Gymnasium
On 27 March 1936, anti-Jewish sentiment was growing in St. Casimir. Polish youth began to react negatively to the fact that the company kitchen was buying meat from the butcher Szymański. An act of
of protest against the situation was the creation of three anti-Jewish leaflets. Here is a quote from the description of the leaflets written by the author of the school chronicle: "One of them showed the factory at the top and two Jews at the bottom: the Sejny butcher Szymański and Icek with a slaughtered calf. Caption: 'Nu Icek, take this carcass to the monastery for the priest, so that these boys have something else (...)'.

This is just one of the leaflets. Another one depicted the borders of Poland, which were covered with a spider's web created by a large fat spider with the head of a Jew. The leaflet was signed as follows: "Poles! Free your country from the spider's web!... Polish shops and businesses. Poland for Poles. However, the most telling was the third leaflet, whose drawing has survived to this day. It depicted Poland as a woman in a crown, caught in the claws of a cuttlefish. On the right side of the drawing was
the following caption: Poles! The Jewish cuttlefish is sucking your blood. Let each of us fight it persistently by buying from Poles. Our own to our own for our own."

These leaflets, and above all the captions on them, testify to the deep aversion of Polish youth towards the Jewish population, which was, after all, not an isolated social group, but often lived with the families of these students in the neighbourhood. This situation was primarily a reflection of the political game that was being played in the press and also appeared in officially adopted anti-Jewish propaganda.

Almanach Sejneński 2006, 2007, 2008, pp. 194-195.

“In Sejny, the attacks did not take place until 1936. The first aggressive behaviour was recorded on 22 April 1936. It was perpetrated by the same group of students who had distributed anti-Jewish leaflets a month earlier. This time, they staged a demonstration. As described by the aforementioned author of the chronicle of St. Casimir's Gymnasium, the entire incident took place in the evening in the school courtyard, where the youths attacked Szymański, a Jew who was arriving at the plant with meat. They attacked the man, throwing old books, shoes, etc. at him. The frightened butcher drove away with a boy shouting loudly towards the town. In addition, the students threw the slogan "Take this carrion with you" at him in protest. However, the anti-Jewish actions in Sejny did not end there, as a few days later a similar situation occurred
a similar situation occurred, with the only difference being that instead of books, stones were thrown at Szymański. The third grade class was accused of the incident, in particular three students whose parents were summoned to the school by the headmaster to explain their "misunderstood anti-Semitism."

Sejny Almanac 2006, 2007, 2008, p. 197.

• **Topic C (The role of the Church in anti-Semitism):**

Cardinal Hlond's pastoral letter from 1936

The Catholic Church was the main proponent of anti-Jewish measures in Poland. The first decisions on these matters were made at the Wrocław Synod in 1267, where the idea of the first ghettos was formulated. Even then, according to the Church, the Jewish population should be isolated from Christians and only be allowed to live in designated districts. During the deliberations, the synod also decided to introduce special badges to distinguish Jews from the rest of society (this idea was used by the Nazis when they returned to creating ghettos). It also prohibited Jews from holding public office.
This synod is considered to be the first official opposition of the Polish population to the followers of Moses.

Almanach Sejneński 2006, 2007, 2008, pp. 189-190.

The Catholic Church also played a role in anti-Semitism, but its attitude towards the equality and assimilation of Jews was not clear-cut. Anti-Semitic sermons that appeared in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century only encouraged the persecution of Jews. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, they were denied the right to attend Christian funerals. The Church played a major role in anti-Semitic activities during the interwar period. On the one hand, it condemned attacks on Jews, but on the other, it believed that boycotting them was permissible in the light of Catholic ethics. "In commercial relations, it is good to give preference to one's own people over others, to avoid Jewish shops and Jewish stalls, fairs, but it is not permissible to ransack Jewish shops or destroy Jewish goods" (from Cardinal Hlond's pastoral letter in: WDN 1936 No. 82 of 23 March, p. 2).”

Almanach Sejneński 2006, 2007, 2008, pp. 196-197.

• **Topic D (Anti-Semitism in the press):** calendars, e.g. the Polish Calendar of National Self-Defence for 1936

"The atmosphere was heated up by printed calendars. Among other things, they contained The Protocols of the Elders of Zion with an interpretation of the Jewish takeover of the world. Here is an excerpt from the text published in The Polish Calendar of National Self-Defence for the year 193, which is still in the possession of one of the residents of Sejny: "(...) the protocols are a plan for the Jews to take over the world, secretly taken from the entire book of protocols of the Zionist Congress held in Basel in 1897. The origins of the plan set out in these Protocols... date back to ancient prehistoric times, 929 years before Christ. It was then Solomon and all the Jewish sages of that time devised a political plan for the peaceful conquest of the world."

Sejny Almanac 2006, 2007, 2008, p. 196.

"The 1930s were also a time of struggle against communism. Many Jews were accused of collaborating with its supporters. The term itself was often referred to as a great Jewish deception." The Jews were supposed to have created a Judeopolonia, or a Polish-Jewish state. Persecution often appeared in the local press, and slogans as additions or interludes in calendars. Between 1919 and 1939, thirty Jews living in Sejny were accused of communism. Their average age was between 21 and 30. There was only one woman among them; the rest were men, including ten merchants, four tailors, two farmers, a watchmaker, a baker, a hairdresser, a shoemaker, a hatter, a tanner, a potter, a student, a miller, and two people living with their parents. It is not known what consequences were imposed on them. In 1939, a list of people of Jewish origin was also published, whose correspondence was to be closely monitored by the police. Among the suspects were four Jews from Sejny.

Sejny Almanac 2006, 2007, 2008, p. 198.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories – the Holocaust stage:**

The displacement of Jews from Sejny

"[…] As we were packing, the Germans kept warning us in the streets that the deadline was final. Not a single Jew could remain in the town. Anyone who stayed at home would be shot immediately.

I think that no one actually remained. When we left Sejny in the evening, we encountered a long convoy of carts on the road, the entire Jewish community of the town. Those who had not fled earlier with the Russians were now leaving the town at the hour of exile.

There were about six hundred souls, anoszim noszim watof. This happened in the first days of the month of Cheshvan, 5700, at the end of October 1939. [...]

To this day, I do not know whether the German command actually issued such wildly contradictory orders, or whether the infamous Nazi methods of demoralisation were already being used on us at that time. What is certain is that on the third night, we were in the depths of despair.

Our gentile friends didn't want to hear anything more, they went home and left us alone. Only then, when fear and desperation reached their peak, did the Germans finally order us to load
everything back onto the carts and drive to Suwałki. […]

So there were eight of us left: parents, grandmother and grandfather, and four children. The farmer gave us a place to stay for the night, but not at his place. In the end, he was afraid, even though he could expect generous payment from us. How
interestingly, we understood his fears. How quickly we adapted to the mentality of the persecuted,
pariahs who are not allowed into the house! We gratefully accepted the offer to spend the night in a hut that the Russians had built for him in a field next to the lake, and in a nearby stable, where we lay down on hay, among horse manure. The next morning, we went to Suwałki. The sewing machines were already at the farmer's house.

Max Furmański, *Wyjście z piekła* [Escape from Hell], trans. Arkadiusz Brudło, Fundacja Pogranicze, Sejny 2025.

• **Topic I (Memory of the Holocaust):**

Excerpts from the Sejny Almanac about the massacre near Łoździeje and the rescue of Jews. Dvera Okuniewicz Kowalska talks about naming traditions in Judaism. Lucyna Saunina, trying to find traces of her grandfather's house, the cheder, recalls the interior of the synagogue.

"With the arrival of the Germans in Sejny, this particular national minority was subjected to complete extermination, deportations, including the mass murder that took place in the forest near Łoździeje in 1941. However, going back to the time of World War II, we should not forget about the help
the residents of Sejny provided to fleeing Jews. There are known cases of Poles rescuing them. One of them is the story told by Mrs Auronowa about her family keeping Żydziuk (a Jewish baby) in their care. In times of crisis, Poles were able to show compassion and help people in need. This also shows how strong the human bond between neighbours was.

For more details, see the interview with Mrs Auronowa, published in: Co pamięta Sejna [What Sejna Remembers], edited by Bożena Szroeder.

Sejny Almanac 2006, 2007, 2008, p. 199.

Dvera Okuniewicz Kowalska, born around 1920:

"Their son Abram, together with his wife and youngest child, eventually returned to Sejny (before emigrating to America in 1922), but I am not sure whether Dvera and Israel survived the war. I do not know where they died or where they were buried.

When I was born, my mother wanted to name me after her grandmother (her mother's mother). She did so, and also gave me the middle name Dvera, because her mother asked her to name me after her beloved grandmother, Dvera Okuniewicz Kowalska.

In Jewish tradition, it is believed that naming a child after a beloved deceased relative brings that person's soul back to Earth. Although I bear her name and her soul, unfortunately, this is the only photo that was brought out of Poland. I cherish it very much, and the memory of her is a blessing to me."

Lucyna Saunina, visiting Sejny in 2005, trying to find traces of her grandfather's house, the cheder, and recalling the interior of the synagogue (blue walls, golden bimah):

"In front of the synagogue, there was a narrow street, behind which the cheder was located. On the first floor, there was a religious school, a beit midrash. My uncle, my father's brother, who taught at the cheder, was named Meselewski and came from Baranovichi. Opposite was my grandfather's house, I don't know if it's still standing. And here, everyone came to get water from the pump. It was here, behind the street, behind the synagogue.

Opposite the synagogue was a cheder, and upstairs was the everyday synagogue, where prayers were held three times a day, because the shul was a temple that was only visited on major holidays. Now everything has changed. As we were driving here, I saw a map with Giby marked on it – that's where we usually spent the summer with the whole family. Next is Posejny. Oh, how we laughed at those who came from Posejny!

In the footsteps of the Borewicz and Lev grandparents. Meeting with Lucyna Saunina from Israel, pp. 487-497, here: 488.

15. Siedlce:

• **Topic A (Anti-Semitism in everyday life):** Economic struggle, uniformed picketers in front of shops and horse-drawn carriages with the inscription "Christian carriage".

"The economic struggle against Jews, their elimination from the Polish economy in Siedlce, as in other towns, took on serious forms. Special uniformed picketers loitered on Jewish streets and around shops, preventing Christians from entering Jewish shops to buy goods. When a Christian customer approached a Jewish shop, a "picket" would come out to meet him and lecture him that by not buying in a Polish shop, he was undermining the Polish economy. It is easy to imagine that this kind of agitation led to the almost complete ruin of the impoverished Jewish population in Siedlce. Customers
Christians stopped appearing in Jewish shops, and Christian shops began to flourish. They took advantage of loans and other privileges granted to them by the Polish authorities.

The economic struggle also spread to other areas of life. In November of the same year, Christian cab drivers appeared in Siedlce with the words "Christian cab" written on their caps. This
phenomenon ruined the source of income that dozens of Jewish families had been relying on for a hundred years. Over time, Siedlce also became hungry for an Aryan association of doctors. The National Democratic lawyer Chrzanowski also submitted a petition signed by all Christian lawyers, with the exception of three. It demanded that Jews be removed from the bar. The aforementioned anti-Semitic lawyer was the son of Aleksiej Chrzanowski, a liberal and friend of the Jews (...).

The local authorities set about eliminating Jewish trade in Siedlce with great energy. On 16 August 1938, a decree of the Siedlce municipal authorities came into force, which took away the jobs of 27 Jewish merchants, owners of stalls in the municipal market hall. They were ordered to leave their stalls because the market hall was allegedly going to be renovated. At the same time, it was announced that all traders who owned stalls, booths or tables in the market square had to leave their places by 1 October 1938 because the municipal authorities were going to "reform" trade in the market square. All stalls selling food products were to be located in the hall, while special stalls were set up for the sale of other types of products.

They moved from economic anti-Semitism to hooliganism. Beating Jews on the streets of Siedlce became
a frequent occurrence. On 1 June 1937, a group of Poles armed with clubs and rods lined up in side streets and beat up any Jew they encountered. The following people were beaten: Jakow Krojta, Ester

Tarnhejm, Hersza Jabłonia, Bialeszklo, M. Zilberberg, Icchak Heller, and two yeshiva students whose names remain unknown.

From then on, attacks on Jews became a regular occurrence. Jews were afraid to leave their homes in the evening and barricaded themselves in their apartments as soon as night fell. The city garden, usually filled with Jews strolling, where celebrations and mass demonstrations were organised, became deserted of Jews, because entering it was dangerous; anti-Semites lay in wait for Jews walking there and beat them.

The Book of Remembrance of the Jewish Community in Siedlce, Łomża-Siedlce 2024, pp. 130-131.

• **Theme I (Memory):** Tadeusz Castelli's photographs documenting the crimes committed in the Jewish cemetery, used as evidence in the trials of the perpetrators. Tomasz Gleb, in his text *Spojrzenie* [The View], Karta 38/2003, presents the story of a photograph of a boy from the Siedlce ghetto.



Tomasz Gleb:

“Siedlce, August 1942. A cart carrying the bodies of Jews murdered during the liquidation of the Siedlce ghetto enters the Jewish cemetery. A boy emerges from under the sheet covering the bodies. He screams and moans. The Germans herd a group of Poles to cover up the traces of the crime and bury the bodies. Among them is Tadeusz Castelli. He takes a photo of the boy, but notices the Germans approaching and leaves, hiding his camera. He hears a shot. The moans cease.

The author handed over the photograph of the boy, along with several others, to the then Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in 1946. They are currently in the collections of the Institute of National Remembrance. It has not been possible to explain why Tadeusz Castelli took these photographs. Was it by chance that he had his camera with him at the time? Or did he go to the cemetery specifically to document the Nazi crime? This is what the widow of the author of the photographs, Iwona Castelli, believes. Her husband, a member of the Home Army (under the pseudonym "Biber"), had a photographic laboratory at home during the war and took, among other things, a series of photographs documenting the unloading of transports of displaced persons from the Zamość region.

After the war, Tadeusz Castelli testified in Nazi trials – his testimony and photographs were the main evidence in the trial of Wille Richter, the "liquidator" of the Siedlce ghetto.

Tomasz Gleb, *Spojrzenie*, Karta 38/2003

Noach Lasman, a Jewish prisoner, on the work of Siedlce ghetto residents in a German construction company:

“Lichtenfeld’s [a Jewish functionary from Łosice] duties included maintaining contact with the management of the company [Wolfer und Goebel]. He was unable to change the food rations, but he did convince the management to allow the workers to leave the camp for a few hours on Sundays and visit the Siedlce ghetto as a reward for their good work. This was particularly attractive to those who had family or friends there. The outing was to be collective, under the supervision of an Aryan representative of the company, because Lichtenfeld had only obtained permission for group passes. The Polish supervisors accompanying the group were to be remunerated. A fee of 5 zlotys per person was agreed for the outing. […]

Permission for a collective trip to the Siedlce ghetto encountered difficulties from a completely unexpected source. The Company's management agreed on condition that the Judenrat in the Siedlce ghetto would guarantee that everyone would return to the camp. However, the commander of the local Jewish police, Bresler, was not willing to make such a statement. There was always the possibility that some of these guests would hide in the ghetto. […] The local police demanded a collective deposit, which would be forfeited if any of the camp inmates remained in the ghetto.

Zaluś arranged a meeting for Lichtenfeld with the chairman of the Siedlce Judenrat, Dr Henryk Loebel. At first, Loebel claimed that nowadays everything that is not necessary is superfluous. The Germans shoot people for no reason, let alone if someone really does not return. However, he was persuaded by the argument that people had been in the camp for many months, far from their loved ones, and that those who had relatives or friends in the local ghetto could be helped with a little goodwill. Everyone will be asked for the address of their relatives or friends, and it will be known where to look for them. Lichtenfeld promised Loebl that for each person leaving for the ghetto, a colleague who would remain in the camp would act as a guarantor. Loebel demanded that the details of those leaving be thoroughly checked, as he did not want to bring additional misery to the ghetto. However, he gave up on the deposit. […] Since everyone was interested in leaving, Lichtenfeld was in trouble, because the Company agreed to let only 50 people leave at a time, and there were several hundred applications. […] Lichtenfeld also dealt with a more serious matter in the management: one- or two-day passes home for people from nearby ghettos.

Noach Lasman, *Firma*, Karta 93/2017

16. Warsaw

• Topic A + B (Anti-Semitism in everyday life and education):

Anti-Jewish student pickets, pogrom in Częstochowa in 1936

“I had no Polish friends, everything revolved around the Jewish world. But I remember once when I was coming back from school and on Komitetowa Street I got a very severe beating from a few Jewish boys. They thought I was a gentile. I came home in tears. I also remember anti-Jewish student pickets. Before the war, there were many bookshops selling school textbooks on Świętokrzyska Street, and at the beginning of each school year, young people would flock to the streets with their parents to buy books. I remember students on Świętokrzyska Street with sticks tipped with razor blades chasing people away, saying:

"Don't buy from Jews.

They stood in front of Jewish shops and wouldn't let anyone in."

Wacław Kornblum, *Memoirs. My Version*, Warsaw 2021, pp. 70-73.

My aunt Zosia and her husband Zanwel also live with my grandparents. Zosia is my mother's younger sister, a very elegant woman. She is very kind to me. Uncle Zanwel often goes away on business and Zosia stays alone. That is why they live with my grandparents. Uncle Aleksander, my mother's younger brother, and other family members also visit us. They bring me presents and clothes. My grandmother dresses me from head to toe to help my parents, who are not wealthy.

One day in the autumn of 1936, after leaving the shop where my grandmother bought me a nice green coat for the winter, we hear a terrible noise coming from the neighbouring streets. My grandmother grabs my hand:

- Quick, let's go home.

I slow down because I'm out of breath, but my grandmother pulls me to make me run even faster.

- Why are you running like that, Grandma?
- It's a pogrom. Hooligans are attacking Jews.
- What have we done to them?
- Nothing, but they want to kill Jews. Run faster so they don't catch us.

We reach the house. Grandmother quickly closes the wooden shutters. Outside, there are screams and clattering, and stones bounce off the windows.

We made it! Grandma breathes a sigh of relief. The next day, I forget my fear because my grandparents are throwing a real party for my fifth birthday. The whole family comes, and there are a lot of them! I have many cousins. I get piles of presents. But the highlight of the programme is a lottery for the invited children. Each child draws a piece of paper folded in four. Uncle Zanwel reads out the number written on it
. We pull the prizes out of a blanket rolled up into a cone. All numbers win. Everyone feels like it's their celebration too.

Larissa Cain, *The Girl from the Closed City*, Warsaw 2024, p. 15.

• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories – the Holocaust stage:**

The Warsaw ghetto existed in the Warsaw District of the General Government from October 1940 to May 1943. After the ghetto was dissolved, Jews were transported to Treblinka and Majdanek. The number of interned Jews was approximately 450,000.
Source: https://war.dekoder.org/de/map/

We present extensive materials on, among other things, bunkers, smuggling (including by tram), and work in the Schultz and Toebbens shops.

The attitude of Poles towards Jews, 1939

Meanwhile, the town was taken over by the Germans. These criminals immediately went looking for rich or bearded Jews, on whom they organised horrific orgies. As soon as they appeared on our street, we were immediately honoured with their visit, with little [Polish] boys acting as their guides. They [were] intoxicated
with love and sympathy for us Jews. Even as a child who could barely say "daddy, mummy", his second word was instilled in him by his parents: "Jew". Learning does not go to waste; as soon as he could walk, he was already shouting: "Zidzie palszywy" (fake Jew). The Krauts appeared, surrounded by a crowd of kids from the whole street. My father managed to slip away unnoticed at the last moment. And from that moment on, the round-ups began. The Germans already knew the addresses of the Jews and came whenever they wanted to take them away for labour or orgies. We never felt safe, especially since the district was Aryan and Jews were highly sought after. Several times, my father was taken away for forced labour, where he worked hard for several hours. My older brother and I were also taken to work, but we managed to cope, we almost never worked until the end, we always managed to escape. The soldiers, emboldened by all kinds of laws, roamed the streets looking for victims, in
They were very inventive in this area. For example, they would walk in pairs a dozen or so metres apart and the first ones would beat those who took off their hats, saying: "Bist du mein Kamerad?" When a frightened man no longer took off his cap in front of the next ones, they would beat him again because he did not take off his cap in front of them. They walked around with large sticks and beat anyone they met. They organised much larger orgies with Jews who wore beards, setting their beards on fire and often pulling them out, with great sadism painted on their faces. The Poles laughed and clapped their hands, they were happy, some looked out of the windows, enjoying our misfortune. I admit that there were exceptions among them, but there were so few that I cannot call it a good whole, because even among them there were many who, deep down, enjoyed these orgies very much, but did not show it. The human soul is unfathomable, and in every such soul there is a great deal of sadism. Not every person derives pleasure from it, but in the Polish nation, many people do. I will not
I did not divorce them or judge them, but I have great resentment towards these people among whom I was raised and constantly surrounded. However, the war showed me their terrible side, revealed something very animalistic, which is why my resentment is so great. I will give various examples of their insensitivity and
brutality. For now, I will move on to the topic.

The news that we had to wear "Schandeband" armbands came as a bolt from the blue. For the first few days, I did not wear the armband at all, as I could not bear to look at my former colleagues or acquaintances, who,
I felt their hearts singing a triumphant hymn at the sight of the armbands. I will never forget those ironic smirks.

Mietek Pachter, *Umierać też trzeba umieć* [You Have to Know How to Die], Warsaw 2015, pp. 26-27.

Isolation and stigmatisation

One day, my mum is getting ready to go out and I see her putting a white armband on her sleeve.

Why are you putting that on, Mum?

Since Warsaw was occupied, there are no longer any Polish authorities. Now the Germans rule everything. They said that all Jews must wear a special armband. They want it to be clear that we are different from other people.

Why are they doing this? How are we different from others? We are not. All people are similar. The Germans from the Nazi party believe that all Germans belong to a special "race" that should rule over other people. According to them, Poles are an "inferior race" and should work for the Germans. The Nazis hate Jews.
They tell lies about us, persecute us and hurt us.

Mum adds:

"But you won't wear the armband, you're not even ten years old yet."

The armband is not entirely white; it has a blue six-pointed star in the middle – the Star of David*.

I am outraged. Although I don't have to wear it myself, I see it as an injustice to my parents, their friends, and Krysia. I tell Lenka about it in the yard. Her parents are not Jewish, so they don't have to wear armbands.

Nothing is the same as before. I don't go to school in the morning. I have to stay at home.

Mum, why am I not going to school? The Germans have forbidden Jewish children from going.

to school. Now Krysia will give you lessons. Lenka can also study with you if she wants to.

Of course she wants to! from all the other schools. She comes to us every morning, and Krysia gives us exercises and assigns lessons.

I'm really starting to read. I lie on my stomach on my rug by the window and transport myself to another world. When I read, I forget what's going on around me. I like reading Little Lord Fauntleroy the most.
book has pictures. It's a story about how a brave little boy made his grandfather, who had never loved anyone before, love him. I really like the Little Lord, whose name is Cedric, and I read
the book several times.

* At the end of 1939, the German administrative authorities ordered the closure of Jewish schools and the removal of Jewish children, young people and teachers.

Larissa Cain, *The Girl from the Closed City*, Warsaw 2024, pp. 27–28.

The creation of the Warsaw ghetto

"Our life is not what it used to be. Before, Dad was always in a good mood and joked around. Mum sang and laughed with me. Now neither of them laughs and I can sense their anxiety. I often hear the word 'ghetto' in their conversations.

Mummy, what is a ghetto?

It's a district where the Germans are locking up Jews. Why are they doing

that? They want to separate us completely from the rest of the Poles. Will

they lock us up there? Apparently so, replies my mother after a moment's

silence.

So we'll have to move?

I don't know yet, but don't worry ahead of time. The Germans lock us up in the ghetto on Saturday, 16 November 1940. We don't have to move. Our house belongs to the ghetto. But Lenka is moving out. Polish Catholics cannot stay together with Polish Jews. Lenka's family has to live outside the ghetto. Will we ever see each other again? My heart is heavy. Jadzia is Jewish, so she's staying. She's a year older than me.

I walk with my dad to the end of our street. We are surrounded by a three-metre wall, with barbed wire on top. Many people have to move to the ghetto. It is very difficult to find a flat to rent.

Larissa Cain, *The Girl from the Closed City*, Warsaw 2024, p. 29.

Living conditions

"My parents' room is bigger than mine, and six of our friends sleep on the floor there. Three people occupy the kitchen – a small, narrow room. When someone gets up at night, they have to navigate a veritable maze to avoid tripping and falling on the sleeping people.

At first, we live quite well. In the morning, we try our best to tidy up the beds so that we can walk around the flat. We wash ourselves one by one over a bowl in the kitchen. We eat our meals together. Everyone brings what they can. We don't lack food at that time. I am not hungry yet. My parents work in their small shop. However, no goods are reaching the ghetto. We are cut off from the rest of the city and the whole country. The other people staying in our flat have no work. They live on their savings and sell everything they have.

Dad and Mum talk about the fact that a House Committee has been set up in our building. The people from the Committee have set up a soup kitchen for people who have nothing to eat.

Larissa Cain, *The Girl from the Closed City*, Warsaw 2024, p. 29.

The year 1941 in the ghetto

“[...] However, disease and hunger lie in wait for us. Dad contracts typhus, a disease spread by lice. He is very ill, has a high fever and is covered in boils. He has to be isolated so that he does not infect our little community. He occupies my old room. The others move to the second room and the kitchen. Pola and Ryszard move out, not only because of the cramped conditions, but also for fear of infection.

We have to disinfect the flat and the people. In the kitchen, we constantly boil laundry in a large pot to kill germs. We are running out of soap. The doctor says we must maintain hygiene and prescribes aspirin for Dad aspirin. It is very difficult to obtain and costs a fortune. It is impossible to get medicine in the ghetto. Mum, who is a midwife, takes care of Dad herself and manages the household.

I am afraid for Dad. I no longer want to go out into the yard, even though Mum would like me to spend as much time outside as possible. I pick up a book, but I don't understand what I'm reading; my thoughts are elsewhere. I sit down on the floor next to Jerzy. Toothed postage stamps take us on a journey to unknown lands. [...]

In our second year in the ghetto, our food supplies run out. At first, we manage to get by thanks to my parents' shop. We have biscuits and sweets, my parents sell some of their goods and buy bread, potatoes and a little meat and milk for me on the black market*. Later, my parents exchange chocolate for bacon and sausage. They keep a supply of biscuits for us. [...]

On the black market, people buy and sell things without the proper permits. For example, you can buy food without ration cards, but at very high prices.

Larissa Cain, *The Girl from the Closed City*, Warsaw 2024, pp. 30-34.

Mary Berg in her diary:

Typhoid fever is rampant. Yesterday, the number of deaths from this disease exceeded two hundred. Doctors are simply
are throwing up their hands in despair. There is no cure, and all hospitals are overcrowded. New beds are constantly being added to wards and corridors, but this does not solve the problem; the number of victims is increasing day by day.

Warsaw Ghetto, 29 July 1941”

Mary Berg, *Diary from the Warsaw Ghetto*, translated from English by Maria Salapska, Warsaw 1983, in: Małgorzata Sopyło, Against Death, Karta 112/2022

Emanuel Ringelblum in his chronicle:

“Apart from hunger, typhus has become the most important issue preoccupying the entire Jewish community. It is currently the most pressing matter. The typhus curve continues to rise. For example
Now, in mid-August, there are 6–7 thousand patients in their homes and about 900 in hospitals. The disproportion between the number of patients in hospitals and private homes can be explained by the fact that hospitals, which for a thousand reasons have lost their therapeutic character, have become, as Dr Milejkowski put it, "murder houses".
The sick are dying of starvation there, because apart from soup and meagre rations, they get nothing else.

Warsaw Ghetto, 26 August 1941

Ringelblum Archive. Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, vol. 29: Writings of Emanuel Ringelblum from the ghetto, ed. Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, Warsaw 2018, in: Małgorzata Sopyło, Against Death, Karta 112/2022.

Forced labour Larisa Cain:

"My parents have to work at the Többens factory, where they sew uniforms for German soldiers. It is located in several connected tenement houses on our street. In the Warsaw ghetto, as in all ghettos in Poland, the Germans set up factories where they force Jews to work. Work continues uninterrupted seven days a week. There are day and night shifts. My parents go to work together or separately. If they leave together, they take me to a hiding place in the basement. At the beginning of the war, during German air raids, the basement served as a shelter. I always have a bag with toys ready, and at the last
I add the book I am currently reading. There is a barrel of water and a ladle in the cellar. I have some bread with me, and when I get too hungry, I drink a cup of water. Actually, I am constantly hungry. I know
that I have to be quiet. Sometimes I sit all alone in the basement lit by a light bulb. Sometimes there are other children with me. Then I feel safer and time passes more quickly. We don't feel like playing. We whisper about food."

Larissa Cain, *The Girl from the Closed City*, Warsaw 2024, p. 37.

Marian Berland:

“We walk along Waliców Street to Grzybowska Street, then along Ciepła Street to Ceglana Street. Here we come across a small district, enclosed by Ceglana, Ciepła, Pańska and Żelazna Streets, inhabited by Jews. This small Jewish district has retained the name of a small ghetto.

Why was this small section of the ghetto not included in the deportation? For some time now, the Germans had established a large sewing workshop for clothes and uniforms in the former gymnasium of the Merchants' Association on Prosta Street. Several hundred tailors work here on their own machines. They sew thousands of uniforms, clothes, sweatshirts, overalls and coats for the German army. Every day, flatbed trucks loaded with bales of fabric arrive at the workshops on Prosta Street and take away piles of finished products. There is no end to the war in sight, the soldiers' clothing is constantly being destroyed, and therefore the sewing workshops on Prosta Street are being maintained for the time being as kriegswichtige. Jewish employees are allowed to live in the surrounding deserted houses. The workshops are working at full speed, the machines are rattling, and people would sew anything to survive. Several thousand people live in this centre. The profits from this huge enterprise are reaped by Mr Walter C. Toebbens. We remember him from Umschlag.

Jan Nowik:

After several months of constant fear of raids and selections, we had to move from Elektoralna Street to Nowolipie Street. I remember standing with Ewa Cyprys at the window, watching people walking down the street. She was no more than three years old at the time. She enjoyed seeing people scatter when she shouted loudly, "Roundup!". Ruta Cyprys, her mother, my mother's friend, got my mother a job in Schultz's shed [on Nowolipie Street]. Michał Nowik worked in the Judenrat distributing food. They both had Ausweises. […]

Early in the morning, I would come to Schultz's shed. Suddenly, the big doors would open and a crowd of dirty, screaming women, speaking mainly Yiddish, would try to push their way inside. I didn't understand them, except for a few words, especially those signifying danger. Anything could be a source of panic. Fear was widespread, sometimes for no apparent reason, unknown even to those who were thought to know everything because they received direct orders from the authorities – German or Jewish. Yiddish and German are very similar, which may be why the Jews were so obedient to the orders issued by the Germans.

Usually hidden under skirts, I had no trouble passing through the gates. In the shed, Ewa and I often hid under a large round table where our mothers sewed furs. Most of them were furs recently confiscated from Jews. In the shed, they were being made into fur uniforms for German soldiers and pilots fighting on the Eastern Front. Under the table, buried under a pile of furs, in the very dim light that barely filtered through the seamstresses' legs, I sewed on buttons, trying to remain unnoticed by the supervisors. […] It was hot under the mass of furs. Sitting among many legs, I had to behave in such a way that no one could hear or see me. Nevertheless, I felt good sewing for hours. […] When the shift ended, those few children sitting under the tables where their mothers worked squeezed their way through the women, who knew very well that they were protecting the children. Once on the street, even on the short 150-200-metre stretch to our home, we were in danger again. Any Jewish policeman or soldier in a green or black uniform could stop us for any reason. If we started to run away, those soldiers would take great pleasure in shooting us like ducks. From the gate of the shed on Nowolipie Street, without looking back, I ran into the house at 56 Nowolipie Street and rushed up the stairs to the flat that was our temporary shelter.

Jan Nowik, *Attempt to Escape,* Karta 94/2018

Deportation (liquidation): from 22 July to 12 September 1942, approximately 300,000 people were transported from Warsaw to the Treblinka extermination camp.

Larissa Cain:

“On 22 July 1942, deportations began in the Warsaw ghetto. Posters announced that Jews were to be transported to the east. No one knew where. It was a period of round-ups and mass arrests. The Germans took away the weakest, the poorest and the oldest. Every day, Germans, Ukrainians, Latvians and Lithuanians surrounded the tenement houses and blocked all exits. They brutally dragged out terrified people.

They are driven through the entire ghetto to the assembly point, the Umschlagplatz, where the trains depart.

Then they come up with a way to avoid having to search for people in their homes. They put up posters. Anyone who volunteers to be deported will receive three kilos of bread and a kilo of marmalade. The hunger is so terrible that there is no shortage of volunteers.
My friend Jadzia says she is leaving in two days. Her parents no longer have any way of obtaining food for her numerous siblings and have decided to volunteer.

- We will have bread, Jadzia rejoices.

- The Germans said they wouldn't separate families.

- Jadzia, you mustn't believe them. They lie, everything they say is untrue.

- My parents are already getting ready to leave. You can take fifteen kilograms of luggage per person.

- Don't leave, Jadzia.

I try to convince her not to go, but she won't listen to me. My parents are not fooled by the promise that we will get bread. I know that you can't believe what the Germans say.

The deportation continues unabated; the Germans want to empty the entire ghetto. They are taking people from their homes.

I am sick, suffering from diarrhoea and fever. There is no medicine left. My parents and friends are doing everything they can to make me some chicken soup. I am lying in bed, very tired, falling asleep. Suddenly, I hear the order: "Raus, raus!"

In German, "Get out, get out!" I have the impression that a terrible, guttural scream is coming from all sides. The Germans are in the courtyard of our building at 14 Prosta Street. I am trembling with fear, my mother is sitting next to me.

"Don't be afraid," she says and takes my hand. We are in our flat on the fourth floor. The footsteps and shouts are getting closer. We don't say anything. Mum doesn't have to remind me to be quiet. Round-ups take place almost every day when some of the residents are at work at the Többens factory. There are hiding places in the cellars, but you have to get there in time. Those who go to work never know what they will find when they return. This time, the Germans don't make it to the fourth floor. In the evening, my dad finds me and my mum at home.

Larissa Cain, *The Girl from the Closed City*, Warsaw 2024, pp. 39–41.

Ring:

“All those without certificates are loaded onto trucks and taken to Umschlagplatz, which has been turned into an island of Jewish suffering, misery and death. Empty freight cars are already waiting there, into which 120–200 people are packed, and off they go. Where to? No one knows. Brest, Bobruisk, Smolensk... These are only guesses. But anyone who knows the history of Chełmno and Trawnik knows how these unfortunate people die: machine guns, gas, electric current – these are their saviours from suffering. Then mass graves for 1,000–1,500 people.

Every day, SS officers come to Umschlagplatz. Just to have some fun. Their fun usually costs the lives of at least 100 people. They shoot whoever they want. Most often the elderly, the sick, the disabled and children. […]

The hunger in the ghetto is terrible. Nothing can be bought. If possible, you pay 50 zlotys for a kilogram of bread, 25 zlotys for a kilogram of potatoes. A bunch of carrots for 10–12 zlotys, a head of cabbage for 8–10 zlotys. Because of the suffering and hunger, people go to Umschlagplatz themselves. The community has put up posters saying that anyone who comes voluntarily will receive 3 kilograms of bread and a kilogram of marmalade. There are those who believe that it is easier to die from a bullet than from hunger. So they go to meet their death.

There is great panic. People are afraid to walk the streets, and they are not safe in their homes either, because at any moment there could be a raid – a blockade – and you are trapped.

Warsaw, 31 July 1942

Ring I/1450, translated from Yiddish by Sara Arm, in: Izrael Lichtensztajn, Naprzeciw śmierci [Facing Death], Karta 56/2008.

KL Warschau (Gęsiówka):

after the destruction of the ghetto, a concentration camp was established on its ruins, where prisoners (including those from Greece, Hungary and France) had to work on demolishing houses and burning corpses.

Alois Eisenhändler, a Jewish prisoner from Berlin:

“There were several thousand Jews in the camp on Gęsia Street, brought from Germany, Hungary, Greece, France and various other camps. In addition, Polish specialists were employed on a freelance basis, because it was necessary to dismantle the remains of factories, machines, household appliances... We established contact with these workers through an underground group of

German communists (Jews). The main goal of our group was mutual assistance. The Polish workers we made contact with provided us with underground newspapers, among which were both right-wing and left-wing publications. This is how we found out what was happening in the world.

Every morning, we went out in groups to specific areas of the ghetto, guarded by armed SS men. They themselves did not enter any burnt-out houses, let alone the bunkers, of which there were hundreds, maybe thousands. They were afraid because, until the end of 1943, there were groups of armed Jews in the destroyed ghetto who camped among the rubble, slept in bunkers and even made forays outside in search of food."

Alois Eisenhändler, Jewish Historical Institute Archives, ref. no. 301/5422, in: Jeremi Galdamez, *Odbicie Gęsiówki [The Reflection of Gęsiówka],* Karta 99/2019

Konrad Charmatz:

"Jews from Hungary and the Netherlands arrived at the camp. They quickly broke down physically and mentally; they lost hope of being saved almost immediately. Jews from Poland, Russia, Lithuania and Yugoslavia did not give up so quickly, as they were used to a hard life. They fought to keep their spirits up. The more
"sophisticated" Jews gave up and died quickly. They also had a much harder time in the camp because they did not know Yiddish, German or Polish – the three languages of the camp. No one could understand them or communicate with them."

Konrad Charmatz, *Nightmares: Memoirs of the Years of Horror Under Nazi Rule in Europe, 1939–1945*, Syracuse, New York 2003, excerpt translated from English by Anna Zaranko, in: Jeremi Galdamez, *Odbicie Gęsiówki,* "Karta" 99/2019

Bronisław Anlen:

"The worst off were foreign Jews who did not know Polish and wore striped uniforms that stood out. A group of several German Jews who stayed together and spoke German among themselves were treated as Germans dressed in striped uniforms and shot. […] Alongside beautiful, moving scenes of the insurgent soldiers' cordial attitude towards the liberated Jews, there were also very unpleasant anti-Semitic incidents and anti-Jewish violence on the part of some insurgent soldiers. Sometimes, there was no reaction from the commanders.

I remember the handsome boyish face of a young second lieutenant or lieutenant, an invalid without his left arm, who, upon seeing the liberated prisoners, exclaimed in a tone that I would describe as contemptuous and angry: "What, only Jews?" And after a moment he shouted: "Are there no communists among you?"

5 August 1944

Bronisław Anlen, *From the memoirs of a prisoner of Pawiak and Gęsiówka during the Warsaw Uprising*, "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" [Quarterly Journal of Jewish History] No. 1/2003, in: Jeremi Galdamez, *Odbicie Gęsiówki [Reflection of Gęsiówka],* "Karta" 99/2019

See Wacław Micuta:

"After the battle, tired and bruised from the tank's jumps, I went for a solitary walk to the captured part of the camp. To my amazement, I found two rows of prisoners standing in perfect military order on a large square. At the head of the unit stood a prisoner who, with a correct command, brought the unit to attention and reported to me:
"Lieutenant, Cadet (or Second Lieutenant?) Henryk Lederman from... – here he mentioned the name of the infantry regiment – reports that the Jewish battalion is ready for battle." My astonishment turned into emotion and admiration for these people, whom German brutality had not only failed to break, but who had managed to organise themselves in the conditions of a concentration camp and be ready to fight at the first opportunity.

5 August 1944

Wacław Micuta, *Jews from "Gęsiówka" during the Warsaw Uprising*, Jewish Historical Institute Archives, ref. no. 301/6665, in: Jeremi Galdamez, *Odbicie Gęsiówki [The Recapture of Gęsiówka],* "Karta" 99/2019

Chaim Icel Goldstein, Jewish prisoner from Warsaw

"Here I am on Miodowa Street, in the first days of the uprising. We are building barricades. People are pulling stones out of the pavement, dragging doors and old scrap metal; everyone is doing what they can. They say the Germans are approaching from Krakowskie Przedmieście. We cannot let them through. The entire local population: women, men, children, everyone – regardless of their views and attitude towards the uprising – are now united in a common struggle against the Germans. We, Jews liberated from the camp, run in our striped uniforms, pulling and carrying enormous weights with enthusiasm and incredible strength. In our striped uniforms, we are a symbol of slavery breaking free. The local population treats us with sympathy.

With me on the barricade was a Jew from France, David Edelman, who would later die heroically in battle. We were together in Auschwitz and then in Warsaw. Now we both wanted to see which of our campmates had been wounded or killed. Twenty-odd men in camp uniforms took part in the fighting. But before we could even approach the place where they were sitting, we suddenly heard a shout:
“Jews, Jews, damn them!”, followed by the sound of a gunshot, then another – two Jews fell.

Two men with revolvers stood over them and shouted: "We don't need Jews! Shoot them all!" – and looked around for more victims. We were shaken. We wanted to rush at them, but we were surrounded on all sides by Poles and almost forcibly dragged into a nearby house. The two men, along with others who had joined them, began murdering Jewish fighters on the barricade. For a long time, the cries of the murderers – “Death to the Jews!” – mingled with shouts of joy at the expulsion of the Germans.

Chaim Icel Goldstein, *The Bunker*, translated from Yiddish by Sara Arm, KARTA Centre, Warsaw 2011, in: Jeremi Galdamez, *Reflection of Gęsiówka,* Karta 99/2019

• **Topic G (Post-war anti-Semitism):** peer violence and intolerance towards Jewish children in schools and orphanages after the war.

Larissa Cain:

“After doing our homework, we have various activities at our orphanage. We run a wall newspaper, in which I occasionally describe events from our life together.

I also write about a surprising event. In the morning, we discover that all the clothes we had laid out at the foot of our beds the night before have disappeared. Once the initial shock has passed, we wonder what we are going to wear to school. In the clothing warehouse, where all the clothes are stored because we don't have our own clothes, there is complete panic! Each of the children, who are of different heights and sizes, needs to be fitted with reasonably suitable clothes. I put a lot of effort into finding the thieves, suspecting the kitchen staff and the gardener, but to no avail. The night-time disappearance of our clothes remains an unsolved mystery.

[...] Edy Stern's hostility makes my situation increasingly difficult. I am thinking of leaving after
After only six months, I want to leave the children's home. Yes, leave this home where I wanted to put down roots and where I am not loved.

Larissa Cain, *The Girl from the Closed City*, Warsaw 2024, pp. 78–79.

Black Notebook, Częstochowa, 19 August 1946

I already have a fountain pen, a pencil and a watch. I was promised it a long time ago, and I got it today.

The situation of Jews in post-war Poland is difficult. Anti-Semitic gangs have formed, attacking Jews on trains and on the roads. They raid Jewish orphanages.

On 4 July 1946, in Kielce, an attack was carried out on 150 Jews who had survived the camps. Around forty people died in the pogrom.

In Poland, Jews feel as if the war has not ended. Persecution continues. In this terrifying void that has formed around Jews, every survivor thinks only of finding someone from their family or friends. Everyone wants to live in safety, to have a roof over their head.

One day, Uncle Zanwel takes me aside.

– I have something important to tell you. I
am overcome with fear. Have I done something
wrong?

– We are leaving Poland, and you are coming with us.

Phew, I breathe a sigh of relief, it's not me.

– Where are we going?

– To France, we still have family there. Alter, your grandfather's only surviving brother, lives in Nancy. He has a wife, Zelda, and a daughter named Lili.

– Are we going to visit them? Are we going to live with them?

– I don't think the four of us will be able to stay with them.

– When will we leave?

– As soon as we get the paperwork sorted out. Don't tell anyone we're leaving. It's a secret.

Larissa Cain, *The Girl from the Closed City*, Warsaw 2024, p. 92.

“Everyone knew I was Jewish. I was beaten regularly at school. I remember two sisters who beat me so badly that I was bleeding and had to have stitches. My dad said, ‘I can’t fight for you, you have to learn to fight for yourself. When I went to school, I took a small knife with me. Once, some children brought some hay and set my legs on fire. I encountered anti-Semitism everywhere, at school, at work."

Anna Bikont, *Cena. W poszukiwaniu żydowskich dzieci po wojnie* [The Price: In Search of Jewish Children After the War], Wołowiec 2022, p. 167.

A few days or weeks later, I experienced an equally strong but painful feeling. I was playing in our yard with a neighbour when he called another friend a "filthy Jew". I considered myself a Catholic, as I had been raised that way by the few families I had lived with, but apparently, even at the age of seven, I already had strong liberal inclinations – I countered my playmate's insults by saying that there are good and bad Jews, just as there are good and bad Poles, i.e. Catholics. He disagreed with my opinion to such an extent that it led to a loud exchange of words, which then turned into a fight. As it happened, my mother saw part of the incident. Later, she asked me about it and decided that it was the right moment to make me realise that we were both Jews, just like the rest of our family, who had not survived the war because of this. I couldn't believe it! I didn't know what to say or think... I burst into tears! It was only much later that I was able to admit to myself that, in my belief in justice, I was willing to defend Jews, but I didn't want to be one of them!

George J. Elbaum, *No Yesterday, No Tomorrow: Snapshots of Childhood During the Holocaust*, Warsaw 2017, p. 57.

Thursday, 14 April 1983

“I stood in a relatively short queue at the fish shop on Krakowskie Przedmieście and bought almost 2 kilograms of cod. Behind me stood two elderly men who commented: 'The Jews have come to their Auschwitz, there are fish in the shop'. The presence of several hundred Jews from Israel and elsewhere who had come for the 40th anniversary of the ghetto uprising seems to be quite exciting for the people of Warsaw. There is a lot of talk about this, not only at the level of fish in the shop. For example, there is talk of removing Arabs from the Forum and other hotels, of changing the teams of whores in these hotels (?) and other things. One is free to assume that the whores followed their clients if they were moved, say, from the Forum to the Europejski.

Wiktor Woroszylski, *Stan zawieszenia* [Suspended State], Karta 94/2018

• **Topic I (Memory):** Disputes over commemoration.

Wiktor Woroszylski describes the conflict surrounding the 40th anniversary of the ghetto uprising in 1983. Marek Edelman refused to participate in the official committee, claiming that celebrating in a country ruled by a regime (martial law) was an act of cynicism.

Wiktor Woroszylski, in his diary:

Monday, 17 January 1983:

“On Saturday, Father [Wiesław] Niewęgłowski called me and invited me to have tea with the Primate [Józef Glemp] today at 6 p.m. […] There were about thirty of us. The Primate was accompanied by a fairly young priest (his secretary?) whom I did not know, and Father Niewęgłowski was the host. […]

The 'tea party' dragged on and finally came to an end well after 9 p.m. I rushed out, a little embarrassed because I knew that guests were waiting for me at home. […] I rushed into the house, out of breath, and found the guests still eating and drinking – Basia-Prokurator [Szwedowska], Marek [Edelman] and the Mirks [Paula and Mirosław Sawicki]. […]

Marek and I, increasingly drunk, sat there for quite a long time, even though I was tired and wanted to sleep, but I couldn't spoil Marek's evening. His sudden arrival in Warsaw is probably related to a new idea concerning [imprisoned] Jacek Kuroń, whose fate is very close to his heart. He talked a lot about him, considers him a great man (“in another country, under different circumstances, he would be a great political figure” – I doubt that, I think that his stature, which I do not deny, is connected precisely with Poland), he even uses the term “genius”. […] In addition, there was talk of Markowa's refusal to participate in the 40th anniversary of the ghetto uprising. He asked me to help him draft a statement on the matter – I promised that I would do so tomorrow, when I am sober.

Tuesday, 18 January 1983

I wrote him the text of the statement he wanted (and accepted): “I was asked to participate in the Honorary Committee for the 40th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. I would like to briefly explain why I refused. Forty years ago, we fought not only for our lives – we fought for a life of dignity and freedom. Celebrating our anniversary here, where social life is today burdened by humiliation and enslavement, where words and gestures have been completely distorted, is a betrayal of our struggle, it is participation in something completely contrary to it, it is an act of cynicism and contempt. I will not participate in this – and I will not accept the participation of others, wherever they come from and whatever they want to legitimise themselves with. Far from the manipulated celebrations, in the silence of graves and hearts, the true memory of the victims and heroes, of the eternal human impulse towards freedom and truth, will survive.

Wiktor Woroszylski, *Stan zawieszenia* [Suspended State], Karta 94/2018

17. Vilnius

- **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:**

The Vilnius ghetto existed in the General Commissariat of Lithuania (Generalbezirk Litauen) of the Commissariat Reichskomissariat Ostland from 6 September 1941 to September 1943. According to various sources, between 9,000 and 11,000–12,000 people were crammed into the “small ghetto”, most of them elderly people, women and children, the sick and those unable to perform physical labour. Initially, 29,000–30,000 Jews were placed in the "large ghetto." After gradual deportations, the final liquidation of the ghetto resulted in transports to the extermination camps in Majdanek and Sobibór or executions in Ponary. 7,000 Jews capable of working for the Third Reich were transported to labour camps in Latvia (including the KL Riga-Kaiserwald concentration camp, established in March 1943) and Estonia. It is estimated that 1,200 Jews from the Vilnius
ghetto were saved thanks to the director of the HKP 562 labour camp, Major Karl Plagge,
Righteous Among the Nations. Source: https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/miejscowosci/w/1044-wilno/116-miejsca-martyrologii/52573-getto-w-wilnie

Aleksandra Sołowiejczyk-Guter:

"On Saturday (6 September [1941]), from dawn onwards, women, children and elderly people, bent under the weight of packages loaded onto their backs and shoulders, trudge through the streets of the city. They hang the bundles around their necks, pull them on handcarts, wrap themselves in blankets and quilts. Their faces and eyes are red and swollen from the effort.

They are almost out of their minds. The Germans allowed them to take only as much as each person could carry. What to choose as the only possessions from a full flat, where everything was acquired through many years of work, where everything is so familiar, necessary, and beloved. They say "only the most necessary things," but in the end, there are so many of these most necessary things that it is overwhelming. How can a person live without warm clothes for the winter, without a change of underwear, without a pillow and a duvet, without a pot, a knife and a spoon? And what about work tools? Something is constantly being added to the bag, something is constantly being taken out with a heavy heart – just this, it doesn't weigh anything. [...]

Above all, I am afraid to look at the grey, haggard faces of my loved ones, and a strange thought occurs to me for the first time, one that will often come back to me later, that perhaps I would be better off if I were alone. Because although the presence of a loved one is a comfort and gives encouragement in suffering, it is harder to watch helplessly as a loved one suffers than to suffer alone.

Together with a group of other Jews, they rush us along the cobblestones of the road. "It's not far," Z. reassures me, bent almost to the ground under the weight of a suitcase full of surgical instruments. After a few metres, I am already sweating from the effort, my neck hurts, and my arms are going numb. At the corner of Gdańska Street, instead of heading towards Vilnius, the Lithuanian guards turn towards the Łukiskis prison. A murmur of anxiety ripples through the crowd, which after a moment turns into terrible certainty – they are taking us to prison. Next to the Lithuanians, Germans appear with revolvers in one hand and whips in the other. They are so drunk that they can barely stand on their feet. *"Schneller, schneller, du verfluchter Jude!"* From all sides of the black night, terrifying figures emerge, cursing and wielding whips. People run over the cobblestones, bent over under the weight of their packs, dripping with sweat, barely alive from exhaustion and terror. Every crack of the whip is answered by a quiet moan. I would like to throw off all my packs, let me be left with nothing; I have no strength left, I can't go on... But they won't let me throw the packs away. After all, it will be easier for them to take everything away later than to collect it scattered on the street.

Yad Vashem Archives, ref. no. E/285, in: *Ponary. Zbrodnia pod Wilnem 1941–44 [Ponary. The Crime near Vilnius 1941–44],* "Karta" 89/2016

Teme Kac:

“Late on Saturday night, we went out onto the streets of the ghetto and barely made it alive to the courtyard at 14 Straszuna Street. There were lots of people in the courtyard. It was drizzling and everyone was looking for a hiding place for themselves, their children and their loved ones. My husband, son, two daughters and I went into a basement and dozed off, huddled together. When I heard a lot of noise in the courtyard, we left the basement. We realised that everyone was getting ready to leave. The Lithuanians were driving us out!

We took our belongings and set off. We could see that they were rushing us back to the city. We left Niemiecka Street and only then did we realise that we were heading towards Łukiszki. Various groups of Jews, surrounded by soldiers, were marching down the entire street. We saw traces of a terrible catastrophe – scattered, torn packages and suitcases blocked the street. The middle of the street was littered with bedding, underwear, shoes, and the remains of discarded or looted property. We couldn't understand the individual figures we saw huddled in doorways, sitting on packages or on the ground. They looked at us with fear, unsure whether to envy us or feel relieved that they were not with us... They seemed to be beginning to understand something, but they were not yet sure. In any case, they apparently decided to keep their distance. […]

Although it was only dawn, we could already see groups being herded in the opposite direction, probably to the ghetto. At Łukiszki, we were separated. My husband and son stayed with the men, while I and my two daughters (Fajga, 17, and Mina, 10) remained with the women. The courtyard was already filled with thousands of Jews who had been brought here from Lidzka, Makowa and other streets. What will they do with us here? Sooner or later, we will return to the ghetto – no one dared to think otherwise...

Teme Kac – a teacher from Vilnius, taught in schools under the patronage of the Jewish Central Education Committee. After escaping from Ponary, she returned to the ghetto in Vilnius, where she worked as a laundry manager. During the liquidation of the ghetto, she was deported to Estonia, where she died. Herman Kruk listened to her account in the Vilnius ghetto on 15 October 1941 and wrote it down on 30 March 1942 in his diary, which was a chronicle of the Vilnius ghetto.

• **Theme I (Memory):** Herman Kruk's accounts of saving books (the Paper Brigade). A testimony to the intellectual resistance of the Vilnius intelligentsia, who sought to preserve memory and culture for future generations.

Herman Kruk (1897–1944) was born in Płock into a Jewish family. During World War I, he worked as a photographer. In 1920, he joined the Bund, a left-wing, anti-Zionist Jewish party; he was involved in cultural and educational activities in Jewish trade unions and Cukunft, the Bund's youth organisation. He worked as a librarian, organised travelling libraries, and from 1930 was the director of the Central Jewish Library in Warsaw. After the German invasion of Poland, he fled to Lutsk and then to Vilnius, where he became press officer for the Society for the Protection of Jewish Health in Poland and worked in Vilnius libraries. After the Germans entered Vilnius, he remained in the city, and from the autumn of 1941 in the Vilnius ghetto, where he was chairman of the local Bund committee. He was a member of the Einsatzstab des Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg (an operational staff named after one of the Nazi ideologues), on whose behalf he was to select valuable library collections and hand them over to the Germans. He collaborated with the Jewish Scientific Institute (JIWO). He organised a library in the ghetto, whose collections reached 100,000 volumes. He also kept a diary and a chronicle of the ghetto, copies of which have survived.

Herman Kruk, *Papierowa brygada* [The Paper Brigade], Karta 101/2019

23 June 1941:

Young people take off their leather clothes and "Europeanise" themselves. Everyone looks each other in the eyes, as if one wanted to ask the other: "What are we going to do? Where are we going to go?" There are lots of people standing in front of the gates, just looking out into the world. You can see people running, this one is running, that one is running.

[…] Finally, I make up my mind: I surrender to God's will – I'm staying. And I immediately make a definitive decision: if I am indeed to stay and be a victim of fascism, I will take up my pen and write a chronicle of the city. […] My chronicle must see, must hear, and must become a mirror and conscience of this great catastrophe and these difficult times. I decide to write a chronicle of events in Vilnius."

Herman Kruk, *Togbuch fun wilner getto*, YIVO 1961, translation of an excerpt from Yiddish by Sara Arm, in: *Ponary. Zbrodnia pod Wilnem 1941–44 [Ponary. The Crime near Vilnius 1941–44],* "Karta" 89/2016

"25 December 1941

Today, taking stock of this past [since the outbreak of the German-Soviet war] sad period, we already know that Jewish Vilnius has been consumed. Instead of 65,000 Jews, there are now 13,000 of us – and those 13,000 are in the ghetto, probably in conditions unlike any other ghetto in Poland. […]

The second ghetto has been definitively closed and none of us has any access to it anymore. All expeditions in search of museum artefacts, further transfers of books from the Straszun Library and the like – all this is now forbidden. Just recently, the Straszun Library was sealed by the authorities.

Mrs Šimaitė, who visited me recently, says: Burakas says that everything Jewish in the second ghetto belongs to the Germans – and no one is allowed to touch anything there. Anna Šimaitė is an elderly Lithuanian woman and a long-time social activist. She often visits her Jewish friends in the ghetto. This time, she visited the library (she herself is a librarian at Vilnius University) and the museum's treasures.

[…]

A Jew comes along, some intellectual, he has a manuscript, nowhere to put it. If he lives and survives, he would like to have it intact; if he does not survive, he would like the manuscript to remain in safe hands. Where to go with it? He asks me. I took it and promised. Maybe one of us will live to see it...

People come to me and complain: "I'm going crazy. There's nowhere to go. Give me a job. I don't want money. Let me help you in your important work." In this way, I already have 20 volunteers working for me. New ones come, and old ones often leave. They are writers, journalists, doctors and intellectuals

. They bring books. Where to put them? Let them stay with you. At least they won't be burned at your place. Maybe some of them will survive?"

Herman Kruk, *Papierowa brygada* [The Paper Brigade], Karta 101/2019

18. Zamość

• **Topic A (Everyday life in the Second Polish Republic):** Włodzimierz Korsak recalls pre-war "pranks" involving the destruction of Jewish orchard guards' tents.

Włodzimierz Korsak, born in 1928; Lubartów:

"Jews wore long caftans or long coats, and they usually had skullcaps with
a small visor. Some Jews, I don't know if I'm saying this correctly, the so-called Hussites, had sidelocks. I don't know why they dressed like that. Jewish women usually wore long skirts, as far as I remember, and I never saw a Jewish woman with her hands uncovered. It was characteristic that you could always smell onions and garlic on them, perhaps because that was how they protected their bodies. For us, it was something new to smell garlic on someone's breath. Jews traded in whatever they could.
I remember that sometimes a Jew would lease fruit trees by the road and guard them so that no one would steal from them. He had a tent made of straw mats. Sometimes my friends would persuade me, saying:
"We're going to go and tear down his tent." I say, "Well, what good will that do you?" "And the Jew will run away." I say, "Don't do that, because the Jew will chase you, you'll run away," so they gave up, but some didn't pay attention and did such things. I mean, I would say it wasn't anti-Semitism, just some stupid jokes. Just like at a Jewish funeral, there are mourners who follow the funeral procession and say prayers, as if they were crying, and some people would mock them. In my opinion, it's not fair, it's not right, it shouldn't be like that. It's someone's funeral, those are the traditions and you have to respect them or look away.
But people's mentalities vary, especially young boys, teasing someone, doing something out of spite, but I think it stems from the environment of the person in question. I found that in most
cases, it was boys from the so-called working class who usually did it, because others were either ashamed or didn't want to do it. Among others, I believed that this was not the right thing to do. Just as there will be a Catholic funeral, and they will disturb the funeral again. There are always two sides to every story. But
some people cannot be made to understand this until they understand it themselves.

Date and place of recording: 10 May 2019,
Lublin Interviewer: Agnieszka Piasecka
Transcription: Aleksandra Drewniak Editing:
Maria Radek
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• **Ghettos as a tool of Nazi policy in the occupied Polish territories:**

The ghetto in Zamość existed in the Lublin District of the General Government from April 1941 (the final resettlement date was set for 1 May 1941) until 16 October 1942. After staged deportations and the final liquidation of the ghetto, transports to the extermination camps in Bełżec, Sobibór, KL Majdanek and the transit ghetto in Izbica took place. The estimated number of interned Jews included thousands of people –
apart from the inhabitants of Zamość, there were refugees and deportees from cities in Poland, Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic, among others; in the final period (September 1942), there were about 4,000 people in the so-called residual ghetto. Source: https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/miejscowosci/z/17-zamosc/116-miejsca-martyrologii/53030-getto-w-zamosciu

The following sources are used in the scenario for teachers entitled *Local Context of the Holocaust through Accounts and Memories* by Marek Kołcon and published on the website www.uczycsiezhistorii.pl.

The Edelsbergs lived in Zamość at 15 Zamenhofa Street. Józef, born in 1900, was a merchant. The tenement house at 15 Zamenhofa Street was owned by his father, Chuna Edelsberg. Józef married Sala, née Golberg, born in 1907 in Radom. They had two daughters. Halina (Kalina) was born in 1932 and Elżbieta in 1938. In October 1939, like many Jews from Zamość, the Edelsbergs fled from the Germans
and the Soviet occupation to Lviv. They all perished in the Holocaust. The Yad Vashem collection includes a letter from Kalinka to her grandfather (probably Chuna Edelsberg), written in Lviv on Thursday, 2 January 1941.

"Dear Grandfather! I go to school in Lviv, I am only in the second grade because they moved the whole school down one grade. I study diligently. We have winter holidays from 31 December until 13 January. There are performances and matinees at school. I am having a very pleasant time. The only thing that bothers me is that I am not with Grandpa. I am learning to play the piano. I will get ice skates from Aunt Rachel. I am very sad.
without daddy, because he only comes to visit us on Sundays. Thank God, Elusia is healthy and feeling well. How are you all doing? Greetings and kisses to everyone, especially grandpa. Kalinka"

Mendel (Memek, Mieczysław) Garfinkiel was born in Zamość on 29 April 1899. He was the son of Sanel and Blima née Wiślicka. His father was a merchant, owner of an estate in Dańczypol near Grabowiec and the "Livonia" brewery on Listopadowa Street.

Memek graduated in law from the University of Warsaw. After completing his studies in 1928, he was a trainee solicitor in Zamość and Lublin. In 1931, he became a barrister and opened a law office in Tomaszów Lubelski. He closed it after a few months and moved to Warsaw, where he practised at 23/4 Śniadeckich Street. After
When war broke out in autumn 1939, he became president of the Judenrat in Zamość. He held this position until the liquidation of the ghetto in October 1942. His younger brother Dawid was head of the Jewish Order Service (Jewish police). After the war, Mieczysław Garfinkiel left for Great Britain. He died in 1990 at the age of 91. Immediately after the war, he wrote his memoirs, entitled "Monografia miasta Zamościa" (Monograph of the City of Zamość). In it, he described the years 1939-42.

"As a characteristic detail, I must mention that during this period of the worst occupation and burning anti-Jewish terror, thinking and striving for a better Jewish future, we were able and willing to pay off even a mortgage debt of several tens of thousands of zlotys from pre-war times for
unpaid contributions to the Social Insurance Institution on the beautiful building of the Jewish Gymnasium in Zamość and to cancel this mortgage. Unfortunately, we did not manage to repay and cancel the second mortgage debt owed to the Social Insurance Institution in Warsaw. This proves the vitality and optimism of life, which, regardless of the worst of times, characterised the Jewish community at that time.

"Since even in their darkest thoughts, none of the Jews could have imagined what awaited us at the beginning, we wanted to use this time somehow for the young people who were wasting away without education –
we organised dressmaking and sewing courses for girls. The courses were run by Mrs Berta Mandeltort from Zamość with the help of Miss Hana Liberman, a refugee from Krakow, and others. These courses were successful
and continued as long as there was hope that a Jewish community would remain in Zamość. After the arrival of the first transport of Czech Jews, these courses began to produce artistic items
, as there were several graduates of the Higher School of Artistic Industry among the Czech Jewish women. In this regard, I would like to emphasise once again how thoroughly and in good faith the Czech and German Jews prepared for their resettlement to the east and the start of a new life there. Most of them, and
especially young people, underwent special preparatory courses before being displaced to Poland, and almost everyone had some kind of skill that they had managed to master to a greater or lesser extent.

Hedda Arnold, née Rubinson, worked as a doctor in the Zamość ghetto. She survived the war. In 1956, she wrote her memoirs. They have not yet been published. The typescript is in the collections of the Jewish Historical Institute:

Memoirs from the ghetto

"At that time, there were many people in Zamość from other Polish cities, especially from areas annexed to the Reich: Włocławek, Koło, Poznań, etc. In addition, there were many people from Warsaw, where food was harder to come by, and a whole host of Jews from outside Poland: Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany, Hungary, etc. Access to schools

was closed to Jewish youth. Young people studied a little at home, worked a little, and above all wasted their time and waited longingly for the end of the war. Everyone did what they could. [...] We had long political discussions. [...] Doctors gathered at Dr Rosenman's flat and played bridge. I did my best to distract Mietek from this company and we would talk for several hours, until curfew. After the infectious diseases hospital was closed down, in order to find a good job, I started working, initially on a voluntary basis, at the SS camp in Janowice near Zamość, located behind the railway station.
At first, I worked there with a colleague from Prague, Dr Hesski. He was a good colleague, nice, cultured, very musical, and in addition to medicine, he had graduated from the Conservatory. He was the son of a doctor from Prague. His parents remained in Terezín, from where he was brought to Zamość along with other young, intelligent
Czech Jews. […] I remember my birthday on 1 July in Janowice as if it were today. Dr Hesski, Georg Basz, Walter Lang and lawyer Reinisch were in the clinic at the time. We thought then that we would survive the war. I was planning to go to Czechoslovakia, but now everyone except me is dead.

Death march on 16 October 1942, “liquidation” of the ghetto in Zamość.

Four thousand Jews still remaining in the ghetto were forced to march in a "death march" to the transit ghetto in Izbica, 20 kilometres away. From there, they were transported to the extermination camps in Bełżec or Sobibór.

"I will never forget that road of death. We walked in groups of four, surrounded by rows of Gestapo officers and military police, driven on and pulled by dogs. Those who did not walk quickly and remained in the last row lost their lives.
A Gestapo officer would simply pull them by the arm into a ditch and shoot them in the back of the head. This is how young Ziuta Inlender died before my eyes. Some tried to escape. Lejka Szeps, then a young married woman, was shot near the barracks, while others were caught later.

I threw both suitcases away. A German soldier walking next to me said: "Throw everything away, don't regret it, just save your life. Try to get to Izbica. The most important thing is your life."

And this young German soldier, in his own words, saved my life on the road to death.

Introduction to the memoirs

Today marks 14 years since the day I was supposed to die in the gas chamber in Bełżec. 14 years of life is a long time. During this time, I was able to return to my real name, complete my studies at the Faculty of Medicine in Warsaw, which had been interrupted by the war, get married and have a child, specialise in eye diseases and leave Poland for England. It was here that I decided to put my experiences down on paper so that I would not
having to give the same answer to everyone who asks, "How did you survive the war?" I prefer writing to talking, because when I talk, I get upset and relive those terrible moments. My little daughter starts crying and says, "Mummy, don't talk about it," even though I often speak in languages she doesn't understand: English, French, Russian, German and Yiddish. Despite everything, I decided to describe my experiences in Polish, because it is the easiest language for me to use.

I am writing this diary for myself, for my memory, for my child, so that she may understand how
difficult her mother's life was, so that she learns to love people all over the world regardless of their nationality, because there are good and bad people in every nation, you can find true friends in every nation, and that is why humanity should desire peace.

On 3 May 1942, a transport of 791 German Jews from Dortmund arrived in Zamość. Among the deportees were the Bauernschmidt sisters: Ruth, born on 25 July 1915, Rose, born on 27 January 1920, and Lore, born on 7 June 1925. In Dortmund, they lived at Lessingstrasse 67. The youngest of the sisters was 8 when Hitler came to power.
years old when she was deported to Zamość – 17. The sisters were registered at 4 Hrubieszowska Street. On Tuesday, 16 June 1942, the eldest of them, Ruth, wrote a letter to her parents:

“Zamość, 16 June 1942

Beloved Parents, Siefried and All My Dear Ones!

Today I have the opportunity to write to you at length.

I want to describe everything from the beginning. After leaving you, until Thursday [30 April] at noon, we lay next to each other, having lost hope of returning and glad that the terrible ordeal was behind us. The journey was terrifying, we were only able to drink twice, once in Leszno and then again later. We travelled for many hours, until Sunday morning [3 May] at 7:00 a.m. Then we were unloaded in Zamość. Leaving the train went very quickly, in the blink of an eye we were outside. The surroundings we were travelling through were gloomy, just one wasteland after another, then a swamp. And our mood matched the surroundings.

With our rucksacks and bread bags, we set off for the camp. Thank God it was not far, only three minutes away, so we could carry our rucksacks, as we had lost a lot of our provisions.

Besides, many people helped us carry them. They had arrived during the night from Prague, i.e. from

the Czech Republic. The barracks were clean and free of vermin, although there is plenty of vermin

around here. […]

The very next day, we were sent to work, and that was our luck, because only a working person has value. All three of us work in the same place.

Rosel checked in with us, and she did well, because after 14 days of our stay together in the camp, those who worked were separated from those who did not. You can imagine the horror and lamentation. Some of the men were separated from the women, children from their parents. We thank God that you, dear Mum, are with Dad and the three of us are together. We workers were sent back to the city and temporarily housed in a school.

We were hired for gardening work and had to clean up and develop an old cemetery, where vegetables and other edible seedlings are now being planted.

In the meantime, we were employed at the Zamość Labour Office, together with both Lippmanns and Senta Wolf. We have pleasant work and are treated well. People are decent to us. We had to sew pillowcases and pillows, which is a job that suits us. Currently, we are planing parquet floors. We are happy
to be here, thanks to which we can write this letter.

After 14 days of sleeping in the school, naturally on the bare floor, we were given our quarters.

It is difficult to describe what we experienced there. It was hard to call it a room or a flat – it was infested with bedbugs, lice and who knows what else. […] Thanks to the good reputation we had built up at the Employment Office, people took an interest in helping us find new accommodation, but this proved very difficult.

We spent one night in a barracks we didn't know at all, together with Gitta Hertz, and the next morning we didn't know what to do with our things, but everything worked out in the meantime. We, Gitta, the three of us, are together with six other people in a large room, including Ernst and Liesel Meyerhoff from Marsberg. Aunt Lina certainly knows them.

[…] They are very nice people, we stick together. Outside the room, we have a kitchen where we can cook whatever we have at hand. […]

You can imagine how little we have. You must send us money so that we can buy something extra. […] You can imagine our great joy when your first parcel arrived. […] We need everything: soups, groats, oatmeal. We have constant diarrhoea, so we need medicine for headaches and diarrhoea, as well as pudding and maybe powdered milk. We can buy whole milk here. Anything that contains vitamins is needed.

We have all lost at least 10 pounds and are constantly hungry. The bread here is not good and costs 15 German marks.

We miss your cooking very much, dear Mummy. […] Everything can be bought, but you need money. We lack warm underwear, stockings, shoes, scarves and hoods, etc. It is constantly cold and rainy here."

Placing typhus patients in special barracks in the ghetto instead of in the city hospital:

Zygmunt Klukowski:

“21 December 1941

[…] Typhus continues to rage here. New patients keep arriving. My quartermaster Adamski somehow managed to recover with great difficulty, but now the hospital housekeeper, Helena Osipowiczówna, has fallen ill. Because of this, the hospital's administration is in complete disarray.

A few days ago, I went to Zamość for an X-ray. The hospital in Zamość is full of patients, many of them with typhus, but Jews are not admitted to the infectious diseases ward. They are placed in special barracks in the Jewish quarter.

Zygmunt Klukowski, *Zamojszczyzna 1918–1959*, KARTA Centre, Warsaw 2017

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