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### ***‘Turning Jews Over’ – the Participation of ‘Blue’ Policemen in Deportations of Jews Illustrated with the Example of the Radomsko County***

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## **‘Turning Jews Over’ – the Participation of ‘Blue’ Policemen in Deportations of Jews Illustrated with the Example of the Radomsko County**

The history of the Polish police (*Policja Polska*, also known as ‘blue’ police [*policja granatowa*]) during 1939–1945 still requires careful historical research, with particular attention paid to previously unused source materials. Until the 1990s there were only articles, which discussed this topic in a fragmentary fashion. Adam Hempel’s 1990 book *Pogrobowcy klęski. Rzecz o policji „granatowej” w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945* (Children of defeat. ‘Blue’ Police in the General Government, 1939–1945), did not exhaust this topic either, particularly that it focused largely on the situation in the Warsaw District.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the author’s main objective was to present the policemen’s participation in the Polish resistance movement. Nevertheless, Hempel’s study does include a chapter about the engagement of the “Polish Police in the occupier’s operations towards the Jewish and Gypsy populations,”<sup>2</sup> where the author shows the attempts made “by the Nazi authorities to create an anti-Jewish front” and to enlist the cooperation of the Polish Police organs in that field. The enigmatic statement that those efforts brought “identical results as in the cross-section of the entire society” is supported with a footnote, as lengthy as it is vague, according to which “the Polish nationalist camp condemned the anti-Jewish actions of the occupier.” At the same time, the author clearly expressed his own attitude to the “Jewish question” by writing that “it was difficult to expect that the Polish policemen would engage in it ideologically as their attitude to the Jewish population had been shaped during the interwar period.”<sup>3</sup> While discussing their issue of patrol service on the territory of the Warsaw ghetto Hempel argued that participation in smuggling, though connected with a desire to make a profit (low salaries) purportedly stemmed also from a sense of civic duty (!).<sup>4</sup> “Aside from isolated [...]

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Hempel, *Pogrobowcy klęski. Rzecz o policji „granatowej” w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945* (Warsaw: PWN, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 169.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 172. Here, the author quotes an opinion of an underground activist, Tadeusz Kur, who went as far as stating that “in the sphere of trade, if there was no blackmail, obtain-

cases of Polish policemen's individual collaboration with the Nazis [the Polish Police of the General Government] was not directly involved in the liquidation operations." According to Hempel, to conduct such operations the occupier used the Jewish police and formations of other ethnicities.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of the subject of this text, particularly important are Sebastian Piątkowski's articles devoted to the history of the Polish Police in the Radomsko County and based, for instance, on the files of the Radomsko County Polish Police Headquarters.<sup>6</sup> These studies only sporadically discuss the issue of the participation of 'blue' policemen in the extermination of the Jewish population and most often (which as I think does not depart from the truth) this participation is presented as fulfilment of orders, predominantly those given by the gendarmerie, to which the Polish Police was directly subordinate. Concurrently with this statement Piątkowski makes clear that even though 'blue' policemen were indeed used by the occupier to execute the 'final solution', they only guarded the outside borders of ghettos or pursued escapees.

Without entering into a fundamental polemic in this thesis, with the use of hitherto unknown and unique source materials, I wish to present the circumstances and describe the participation of Polish policemen in the occupier's campaigns to liquidate Jewish population centres on the territory of the occupation-period Radomsko County.

These materials come from the *Gemeinderverband in Radomsko* (Union of [Jewish] Communities in Radomsko)<sup>7</sup> fonds, highly diverse in content, which have survived in the State Archive (*Archiwum Państwowe*) in Piotrków Trybunalski. It contains bills, orders, tickets, cashier's reports, and reimbursements for burial of homeless individuals and treatment of paupers at the expense of the Community. A significant proportion of the documents are road tax and cess-pit payment records and files containing lists of taxpayers from individual villages and accounting records of 1940–1944. As the Polish Police was financed by the

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ment of financial benefits may be regarded as beyond reproach, particularly as the policemen risked their lives by engaging in those activities."

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 174.

<sup>6</sup> Sebastian Piątkowski, "Policja polska tzw. granatowa w Radomiu i powiecie radomskim (1939–1945)," *Między Wisłą a Pilicą. Studia i Materiały Historyczne* 2 (2001): 107–128; idem, "Między obowiązkiem a kolaboracją. Policja „granatowa” w dystrykcie radomskim w latach 1939–1945," in *Z dziejów policji polskiej w latach 1919–1945*, ed. Edyta Majcher-Ociesy (Kielce: Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2010), pp. 163–186.

<sup>7</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim [State Archive in Piotrków Trybunalski, later: APP], fonds 949, *Gemeinderverband in Radomsko* [Union of Communities in Radomsko]. The fonds comprises 53 archival units amounting to 1.4 MB. The materials analysed are stored in files 31, 32, 33, and 41. The documents are not paginated, which makes it impossible to provide page numbers. It should also be noted that files 34 and 36 in this fonds contain payrolls of Jews who performed forced labour at road works in the Radomsko County.

local government, the fonds includes payrolls with the names of Polish policemen from Radomsko and the Radomsko county as well as policemen's applications for reimbursement for additional duties such as travel on official duty, for instance, when convoying prisoners, and for delegation to 'Jewish campaigns' (to use the nomenclature of the original), which is the subject of this analysis.

Ample in volume, most of the sewn files entitled "Rozchody" (expenditure) contain documents from one month, but it is not a rule. Expenses were reimbursed with a significant delay – ones incurred during travel on official duty in September 1942 could be reimbursed as late as in, say, November. All these materials probably survived by accident as most of such accounting and remuneration records were rejected in the 1970s.

The 'blue' police in the Radomsko County had approximately 2,000 officers.<sup>8</sup> On the territory of the Union of Communities in Radomsko the largest number of them worked, of course, in Radomsko, where, for instance, in April 1942 the number of officers in service amounted to 37, with Major Mieczysław Gaspenas as the chief constable.<sup>9</sup> In April 1942 his salary was 645 zlotys, his deputy earned 360 zlotys, a sergeant 240 zlotys, a platoon leader 215 zlotys, and a corporal 190 zlotys. Those were gross sums before deduction of taxes and health insurance contributions. In his article, Piątkowski gives the prices of basic food products during that period: a loaf of bread cost 7 zlotys, a kilogram of potatoes 1.50 zlotys, and a kilogram of fatback 38 zlotys. A man's shirt and leather shoes cost 90 and 450 zlotys respectively. As one can see, police salaries were relatively modest. They were sufficient to buy rationed food products but purchase of other products might have been difficult.<sup>10</sup>

Aside from monthly salaries the Union of Communities paid out per diem allocations and reimbursed the policemen for travel expenses incurred during special operations. The accounting records of November and December 1942 and early 1943 contain documents concerning reimbursements of 20 policemen directly engaged in duties connected with at least 30 'Jewish campaigns'. The set of documents on the basis of which a policemen was reimbursed consisted of three copies of "Dziennik Czynności" (daily report) forms filled on both sides with "Adnotacje o zameldowaniu i wymeldowaniu" (annotations on reporting for duty and dismissal) on the back, "Dokument Podróży" (travel document) with "Zestawienie kosztów podróży" (list of travel expenses), and "Kostenrechnung" (calculation of costs) with "Reisekostenrechnung" (travel expenses calculation).

<sup>8</sup> Krzysztof Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej, 2004), p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> Data based on the payrolls (*Gehaltsliste für polnische Polizisten*) stored in a sewn file originally described as "Memoriał od 1 lipca do 30 września 1942 r. Miesiąc lipiec, sierpień, wrzesień 1942 r." [Ledger from 1 July to 30 September 1942. Months of July, August and September 1942] (APP, Gemeinderverband in Radomsko, 30, n.p.). "Poln[ische] Major" in the original document.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Piątkowski, "Policja polska...", p. 117.

The forms were certainly prepared and printed during the war, with blank spaces for the year (194...).

"Dokument Podróży" and "Dziennik Czynności" were Polish language forms filled in by hand by the delegated policeman. By contrast, the calculation document was printed and filled in German, usually by hand and in several cases with the use of a typewriter. "Dokument Podróży" had a heading stamp of the "police office" and it specified the date of issue, the full name and rank of the delegated policeman, the date of the delegation, and the name of the institution, which ordered it, and the destination and objective of the mission. The document was signed by the delegated policeman as well as stamped and signed by the director of the institution, which issued the document. The reverse of the form listed the expenses, the precise date and time of the beginning of the journey, the number of per diem allocations to be paid, and the cost of transport and accommodation. The reimbursement was confirmed with a signature of the director of the unit. In several of the documents the expenses were corrected in red pencil. Most of the time the corrections were made in the amount of per diem allocations, which depended on the rank of the policeman and, probably, also on the number of days spent away from his station. The allocation for one day was nine zlotys, but after seven days it decreased to eight zlotys. A policeman could receive six or four zlotys for daily accommodation. In order to be reimbursed for travel expenses a policeman needed to specify the ticket prices or submit, for instance, a receipt for a horse-drawn wagon ride. According to the surviving materials, the most popular means of transport was the bicycle. Sometimes the policemen covered even a few dozen kilometres overnight, going from one place of performance of official duties to another. The rate for one kilometre was 20 groszes. It shall remain unknown to what extent the distances specified reflected the truth and to what extent increasing the number of kilometres was a way to derive additional profits from a mission. "Dokument Podróży" had the day stamp of the Radomsko County Polish Police Headquarters with the date of the submission of the document and its number.

"Dziennik Czynności" stated the date and time of departure from one's place of residence or police station, the date and time of arrival at the destination, the "time and character of the official duties," the date and time of return, and the means of transport. The reverse listed the date and time of "departure" and "return" and the date and time of "report of arrival" and "report of departure" (stamped by the Polish Police stations and confirmed with a signature of the officer on duty). It also included the "document holder's declaration" of the travel expenses (by train, bicycle, or horse-drawn wagon). This side of the document was also signed by the delegated officer.

The last document necessary for delegation reimbursement was a form in German – a bill listing all travel expenses. It also contained the data of the policeman and the person who or the institution that ordered the delegation. Moreover, it included detailed information on the date and time of the beginning and end

of the journey, means of transport, official duties, and on the reverse there was a list of per diem allowances as well as the cost of accommodation and transport, if incurred. The expenses listed were summed up, checked, and corrected. The delegating institution was usually the German Gendarmerie and only in three instances was it the Superintendent of the Polish Police of the Radomsko County. The forms were stamped and signed by those who confirmed the sums to be paid out, that is, *Polnischer Polizei-Major und Komendant der polnischer Polizei des Kreises Radomsko* Mieczysław Gaspenes (several documents were signed by his deputy) and the Radomsko Town Governor Nebert<sup>11</sup> or the person he authorised, named Kreisich (*Der Kreishauptmann. Im Auftrage*). The documents were also signed by the policemen who confirmed the receipt of the money.

Undoubtedly the most valuable element of these accounting documents are the precise dates (sometimes even the exact time) of the deportations conducted in the localities on the territory of the Union of [Jewish] Communities in Radomsko. They make it possible to supplement and sometimes even correct the information that appears in the literature on the subject.

According to Adam Rutkowski's estimates, in March 1940 the Radomsko County in the Radom District had a population of more than eleven thousand Jews. That number increased by more than two thousand refugees mostly from the neighboring territories incorporated into the Reich.<sup>12</sup> The largest centres of the Jewish population were in Radomsko, where a ghetto was established as early as in late 1939, Koniecpol, Przyrów, Gidle-Pławno, Mstów, and Żarki, with smaller ones in Aurełów, Gomunice, Janów, Kłomnice, and Olsztyn.<sup>13</sup>

The deportations of the Jewish population from the Radomsko County were closely connected with the preparations for the total extermination of Jews in the General Government. Consequently, they were a part of the large-scale Operation 'Reinhardt'. The first stage was resettlement of Jews from smaller localities to ghettos. As Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk remarked, in many places in the Radom District the Germans did not establish Jewish quarters, and "the 'ghettoisation' took place as late as during Operation 'Reinhardt'."<sup>14</sup> This statement is confirmed

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<sup>11</sup> This surname appears in the documents stored in this fonds. In literature one may read that the county governors were: Arnold Kobelt (until December 1939) and Kurt Driesser (until January 1945) (Markus Roth, *Die deutschen Kreishauptleute im besetzten Polen – Karrierewege, Herrschaftspraxis und Nachgeschichte*, (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009), p. 446). The name and photo of Nerbert as the German commissioner of Radomsko appear in an album titled *W okupowanym Radomsku. Fotografie z lat 1939–1945* (Radomsko: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne Koło w Radomsku, 2009), p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Rutkowski, "Martyrologia, walka i zagłada ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie radomskim podczas okupacji hitlerowskiej," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 15/16 (1955): 76.

<sup>13</sup> Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim*, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, "Organizacja i realizacja „akcji Reinhardt” w dystrykcie radomskim," in *Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, ed. Dariusz Libionka (Warsaw: IPN, 2004), p. 184.

in the police documentation, which contains descriptions of deportations of Jews from small localities in the county.

The first campaign with participation of 'blue' policemen was conducted in Rędziny, approx. 30 kilometres from Radomsko. There was no ghetto and the Jewish inhabitants of Rędziny, similarly to those in the nearby villages of Rzeki, Kruszyna, Konary, Garnek, and Rudniki, were subordinate to the Jewish Council in Aurełów and the Aurełów-Kłomnice Branch of the Jewish Social Self-help (*Delegatura Żydowskiej Samopomocy Społecznej*).<sup>15</sup> On 17 September 1942 Corporal Michał Pietrzyk from Mykanów, a policeman from the Chorzenice station, was delegated to Rędziny, approx. 50 kilometers from Chorzenice. Performed "by order of the Częstochowa Gendarmerie Station," his duty on that day began at 4.30 a.m. To quote his daily report, his duties consisted in "loading Jewish property and Jews onto horse-drawn wagons in Rędziny and then transporting them to Radomsko and turning them over at 3 p.m. Rest from 3 to 5 p.m." The Corporal was entitled to a daily allowance in the amount of 9 zlotys plus 15 zlotys' reimbursement for the distance covered by bike (77 kilometres).

On 25 September the same policeman participated in another campaign, that time in nearby Mstów. Pietrzyk was accompanied by Platoon Leader Józef Śledziński from the police station in Mykanów and Platoon Leader Leon Kotas from the police station in Aurełów. The deportation affected six hundred Jews staying in Mstów. Aside from Mstów inhabitants that group also included Jews from Plock deported in March 1942 (35 people).<sup>16</sup> According to Adam Rutkowski and *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*,<sup>17</sup> those Jews were deported to Radomsko in August. But the documents, which I have analysed, indicate the need for a verification of this date because in as many as three cases the date is 25 September. This seems all the more probable as Rutkowski's research is based on data of the Jewish Social Self-help and post-war information obtained from the Communal National Council in Wancerzów (Mstów's neighbouring village). According to the surviving daily reports, all three policemen left their home towns early in the morning: Michał Pietrzyk and Józef Śledziński at 3.00 and Leon Kotas at 4.30. Kotas provided a concise description of his duties performed between 5.30 a.m. and 3.20 p.m.:

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<sup>15</sup> Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, later: AŻIH], Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna [Jewish Social Self-help, later: ŻSS], 190, pp. 10–11; *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, part A, ed. Martin Dean, cooperation Mel Hecker (Bloomington–Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012) (later: *Encyclopedia*), pp. 259–260.

<sup>16</sup> According to the data from the materials of the Jewish Social Self-help, in 1941 Mstów had a population of 670 people, including those deported from the territories incorporated into the Reich (AŻIH, ŻSS, 707, p. 5).

<sup>17</sup> Rutkowski, "Martyrologia...", p. 144; *Encyclopedia*, p. 258.

"I was on duty with the gendarmerie in connection with a deportation of Jews."<sup>18</sup> He returned to his home town of Aurełów at 4.40 p.m. and was entitled to 14.20 zlotys: a daily allowance to the sum of 9 zlotys plus 5.20 zlotys for the distance of 26 kilometres covered by bicycle. Corporal Pietrzyk gave a more detailed account of his duties: "[From] 5.00 I was on duty with the gendarmerie at a deportation of Jews and then at sealing of the flats they had vacated." He applied for only half of the per diem allowance fee (4.50 zlotys) and a flat rate for the distance of 24 kilometres covered by bicycle. Platoon Leader Śledziński proved even more specific: "From 5.10 a.m. on 25 September 1942 I was on patrol duty during the deportation of Jews from Mstów.

Escorting the Jews from Mstów to Radomsko between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. on 25 September 1942. Turning the escorted Jews over in Radomsko from 3 to 6 p.m." He claimed to have covered a distance of 82 kilometres by bike, that is, from Mykanów to Mstów (12 kilometers), from there to Radomsko (35 kilometres), and back to Mykanów (35 kilometres). Apparently, Śledziński escorted the column of Jews by bicycle. Just two days later, at 5 p.m. on 27 September, the Platoon Leader departed by bicycle from Mykanów to Kruszyna and then went to Prusieki,<sup>19</sup> where he "was on duty at deportation of Jews until 11 p.m., when [he] escorted the Jews to Kruszyna and then to Kłomnice." Leon Kotas arrived at Kłomnice from nearby Aurełów at 5 a.m. on 28 September. Until 10 a.m. he was "on duty in Kłomnice with the gendarmerie at a deportation of Jews. At 10.30 departure with the deported Jews from Kłomnice to Radomsko," where he arrived at 1 p.m. on 30 September. The next time that Michał Pietrzyk was on duty "at loading of Jewish property and Jews onto horse-drawn wagons," it was in Aurełów. Having "turned the Jews over" in Radomsko and taken some rest, he returned to Mykanów. The distance he covered by bicycle on that day (Mykanów – Aurełów – Radomsko – Mykanów) was 64 kilometres. Of course, one could ask if Leon Kotas, a policeman from the local police station, was on duty that day. As he was not entitled to any additional remuneration, there is no surviving documentation to confirm such suspicions.

Literature dates the deportations from smaller localities in the county to the ghetto in Radomsko, which constituted the last stage of the concentration before the deportations to the death centre in Treblinka, during August and September 1942. Those resettlement campaigns were even said to have been concluded on 28 September 1942.<sup>20</sup> But apparently, that happened with at least a two-day delay.

The largest number of 'blue' policemen was delegated to the deportations of the largest Jewish centres in the county, that is, to Żarki and Koniecpol and to

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<sup>18</sup> In the primary sources the word 'Jew' does not begin with a capital letter.

<sup>19</sup> The correct name of the locality is Prusicko. In February 1942 there were 37 Jewish families "deported from the Reich." They were in the care of the Jewish Council in Aurełów (AŻIH, ŻSS, 190, p. 63).

<sup>20</sup> *Encyclopedia*, p. 294.



Radomsko itself. Żarki had the largest Jewish population after Radomsko. Before the war, when the locality was part of the Będzin County, it had more than 2,600 Jewish inhabitants.<sup>21</sup> After the outbreak of the war that number increased to 3,200 and in February 1942 Żarki received refugees and exiles. In late September a rumour spread in the Żarki ghetto that the local peasants were obliged to ready their horse-drawn wagons for 6 September. As a result of the panic that ensued, most of the people fled, but approx. 800 remaining Jews were assembled on 6 October on the market square while the SS, gendarmerie, and 'blue' police units searched their homes. The 23 people found hiding were executed on the spot. Of the 800 people assembled on the market square 30 were retained to perform forced labour, while the rest were escorted to the railway station in Julianka, from where they were deported to Treblinka.<sup>22</sup>

The Koniecpol ghetto was another relatively large local ghetto to liquidate, for which the Nazis certainly needed reinforced army and police ranks. In March 1941 it had 1,182 Jewish residents, including 512 deportees from the territories incorporated into the Reich.<sup>23</sup> In mid-September several hundred Jews from surrounding localities were brought to Koniecpol. The final liquidation was scheduled for 6 and 7 September. *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* includes a detailed description of the deportation. On 6 October the German and Ukrainian detachments surrounded Koniecpol and the son of the *Judenrat* Chairman was ordered to inform the ghetto residents to assemble on the market square the next morning. On 7 October 1,600 Jews were escorted to a railway station, where they were included in a transport from Częstochowa headed for Treblinka.<sup>24</sup>

Before the war Radomsko had 6,500 Jewish inhabitants. The local ghetto received several hundred refugees from Łódź, Płock, and Ozorków. According to reports prepared for the Jewish Social Self-help, in mid-1941 the number of Jews was approx. 7,200.<sup>25</sup> Shortly before the beginning of the liquidation of the Radomsko ghetto, the Germans assembled there the Jews from the surrounding localities – according to Rutkowski's estimates, in October 1942 there were more than 14,000 Jews in Radomsko.<sup>26</sup> The liquidation of the ghetto began on 9 October with a selection at the local stadium.<sup>27</sup> The next day 5,000 people were deported to Treblinka, while on 12 October another 9,000 Jews shared their fate. 150 craftsmen and *Judenrat* members remained in the ghetto to clean the area. There were also Jews in hiding, some of whom joined the cleaning group. Most of them were captured and executed. On 29 October 170 Jews were deported

<sup>21</sup> "Martyrologia...", p. 144.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 144; *Encyclopedia*, p. 350.

<sup>23</sup> Rutkowski, "Martyrologia...", p. 144.

<sup>24</sup> *Encyclopedia*, p. 244.

<sup>25</sup> AŻIH, ŻSS, 869, pp. 38, 58.

<sup>26</sup> Rutkowski, "Martyrologia...", p. 143.

<sup>27</sup> Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim*, p. 184.

to the labour camp in Skarżysko-Kamienna and 150 Jews were retained on the spot in a 'secondary ghetto'. By the end of the year it took in approx. 4,000 Jews captured in the forests near Żarki, Wodzisław, Pilica, and Radomsko, plus those who voluntarily left their hideouts tempted by a promise of a peaceful life in the Jewish quarter. That group was deported to Treblinka during 5–6 January 1943.<sup>28</sup>

The liquidation campaigns in Żarki, Koniecpol, and Radomsko were closely interrelated. They were conducted by German gendarmes and soldiers aided by 'blue' policemen from the local and other stations. The descriptions of their duties, though laconic, can significantly supplement our knowledge on those events. The total number of policemen delegated to Żarki and Koniecpol amounted to 13. Most of them went to Żarki in gendarmerie cars from the station in Radomsko and several arrived directly from their localities. The policemen delegated from Radomsko to the deportations of Jews from Żarki and Koniecpol were: Marek Sokołowski, Wacław Sobański, Kazimierz Wojalski, and Józef Paternus. They were on duty for two days and received only two per diem allowances plus reimbursement for accommodation (24 zlotys). A few policemen remained on duty for a few or even a few dozen days.

Corporal Jan Korbut, the Chief Constable of the Polish Police station in Janów, went to Żarki by bicycle at 8 p.m. on 5 October to participate in a "campaign to deport Jews." "After arrival at Żarki we followed the orders of the Commander of the Gendarmerie Station in Żarki until dismissal." The dismissal order was given at 8 p.m. on 13 October and Korbut returned to Janów by bicycle. His per diem allowances amounted to 125.20 zlotys. Corporal Stanisław Figas, also from Janów, and Corporal Piotr Mesjasz submitted identical accounts.

Michał Pietrzyk also participated in the deportation of Jews from Żarki and Koniecpol. On 5 October he was transported from the gendarmerie station in Chorzenice to Żarki. After duty he went with the gendarmerie to Radomsko, from where he returned home by train and bicycle. The next day at 1 a.m. he went to Żarki again, where he "was involved in the Jewish campaign" until 4.30 p.m., after which he went to Koniecpol to once again "participate in the Jewish campaign" from 7 p.m. to 1 p.m. on the next day. From Koniecpol he was delegated to Radomsko. His "involvement in the campaign" ended after a month, on 6 November. Corporal Pietrzyk received remuneration in the amount of 317 zlotys, which was a substantial sum if one assumes that his monthly salary was probably about 200 zlotys.

Józef Reszka from Aurełów departed from the gendarmerie station in Chorzenice "in a free car" at 3 a.m. on 6 October. At 5 a.m. he arrived in Żarki, where "we were involved in the deportation of Jews. 3.30 p.m. departure from Żarki; 5.40 p.m. arrival at Koniecpol, where we surrounded the town and were involved in the deportation of Jews. 12.10 [on 7 October] departure from Koniecpol.

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<sup>28</sup> Rutkowski, "Martyrologia...", p. 119; *Encyclopedia*, pp. 294–295.

1.30 p.m. arrival at Chorzenice. 2.10 p.m. departure to Radomsko. 3.20 p.m. arrival at Radomsko. From 7 p.m. on 7 October to 8 o'clock on 9 October 1942 we served as guards in the Jewish quarter during the deportation of Jews." "Delegated to be at the gendarmerie's disposal regarding the deportation of Jews from Żarki, Koniecpol, and Radomsko," Platoon Leader Franciszek Rak from Strzelce Małe reached Radomsko by bicycle on the night of 5 October. From there he was transported at 2 a.m. to Koniecpol, where he "was on duty at the deportation of Jews and in the ghetto in Radomsko until 4 p.m. on 2 November 1942."

Platoon Leader Stanisław Kawa from Kobiela used full sentences in his description of his duties: "On 6 October at 2 o'clock I went by truck to Żarki with the gendarmerie from Radomsko in order to deport Jews. On the same day, after the deportation of Jews from Żarki I went to Koniecpol with the gendarmerie to deport Jews from Koniecpol. On 7 October 1942 in the afternoon I went with the gendarmerie to Radomsko, where I served in the Jewish quarter until 6 p.m. on 21 November 1942." His remuneration was 425 zlotys, with 7 per diem allowances in the amount of 9 zlotys and 40 per diem allowances in the amount of 8 zlotys. Kawa was also reimbursed for accommodation for the first 7 days of his mission. Another policeman, Corporal Piotr Kipigroch from the station in Stobieck Miejski, stuck to facts: "6 o'clock on 6 October 1942 arrival at the Polish Police station in Żarki; assistance at the deportation of Jews. Departure at 5 p.m. on 6 October 1942, Polish Police station in Koniecpol – arrival at 7 p.m. on 6 October 1942; assistance at the deportation of Jews. Departure at 12 o'clock on 7 October 1942. Arrival at the Polish Police station in Radomsko at 4 p.m. on 7 October 1942; assistance at the deportation of Jews until 1 p.m. on 21 November 1942." His remuneration amounted to 425 zlotys.

At least three policemen were delegated to Radomsko after the end of the first wave of deportations. Corporal Bolesław Klekowski from Wielgomłyny reached Radomsko (of course by bicycle) at 9 a.m. on 17 October and he remained there until 11 o'clock on 21 November, for which he was paid 339 zlotys. In his daily report he wrote that "throughout that time [he] was involved in the deportation of Jews." It is difficult to determine what he meant by that, because the final deportation from the ghetto in Radomsko during the initial wave was conducted on 29 October. Did he participate in capturing of Jews in the local forests?

Corporal Jan Waldon from Gidle served in the Jewish quarter in Radomsko for only a week (19–25 October), for which he was paid 109.8 zlotys. Corporal Jan Tkaczyk from Gidle, delegated to the "Jewish quarter" in Radomsko for the period between 25 October and 21 November, described his duties in a similar way.

The last documents connected with the duties of the Polish Police at the deportation of Jews regard the liquidation of the 'small ghetto' in Radomsko. These are forms filled by Corporal Henryk Probiarz from Rędziny and Platoon Leader Antoni Kokot from Kruszyna, who served in the Jewish quarter between 5 and 22 January 1943, for which they received 197 zlotys each.

The documentation produced by the 'blue' policemen and confirmed by their superiors and county government clerks constitutes irrefutable evidence of the 'blue' police's direct participation in the extermination of the Jewish population in the General Government. This material, however, does not enable one to estimate the number of policemen who aided the German gendarmerie during the liquidation of ghettos in the Radomsko County. Neither can one trace the process of selection of policemen for the 'campaigns' and whether it was possible to avoid that participation. One might wonder about the heightened activity of certain functionaries, but there is no ground to suspect that it was a result of, for instance, a desire to make a profit. The vocabulary used by the policemen is striking. Aside from standard expressions from the police lingo, such as, "participation in a Jewish campaign," "assistance," or "involvement in a deportation of Jews" or "service in the ghetto," the policemen wrote by hand in their forms about "loading Jewish property and Jews onto horse-driven wagons" or "turning Jews over." Of course, one might wonder whether it was just a mechanical repetition of expressions they had heard or a reflection of a certain mentality, which had its source both in the occupier's policy and in the policemen's own attitude. This does not change the fact that in the policemen's opinion the victims became a dehumanised commodity.

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Post-war files of former officers of the State Police, Prison Service (*Straż Więzienna*), Border Protection Corps (*Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*), and Border Guard (*Straż Graniczna*) stored in the State Archives of New Records (*Archiwum Akt Nowych*)<sup>29</sup> are a 'postscript' to the reflections on the participation of 'blue' policemen in 'Jewish campaigns'. Seven of the twenty policemen whose surnames appeared in this text applied to the Rehabilitation Commission (*Komisja Rehabilitacyjna*) at the Presidium of the Council of Ministers (*Prezydium Rady Ministrów*) for rehabilitation as former Polish Police officers. Those seven policemen were: Stanisław Figas, Leon Kotas, Bolesław Klekowski, Stanisław Kawa, Józef Śledziński, Wacław Sobański, and Marek Sokołowski.<sup>30</sup> A positive opinion of the Commission was necessary for recognition of one's continuity of employment and acquiring pension rights as well as for being able to work in the public sector.

<sup>29</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych [State Archives of New Records] (later: AAN), Akta byłych funkcjonariuszy Policji Państwowej, Straży Więziennej, Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza i Straży Granicznej 1946–1952 [files of former officers of the State Police, Prison Service, Border Protection Corps, and Border Guard] (fonds 1656). I wish to thank Alina Skibińska for indicating this very interesting source.

<sup>30</sup> AAN, 1656, vol. 434/102, 3–4 F, Stanisław Figas; vol. 434/112, 25–26 K, Leon Kotas; 434/111, 13 K, Bolesław Klekowski; vol. 434/111, 17–18 K, Stanisław Kawa; vol. 434/132, 14–17 S, Józef Śledziński; vol. 434/132, 18–19 S, Wacław Sobański; vol. 434/132, 20–21 S, Marek Sokołowski.

I realise that the applications and the attached testimonials, as with the other 1939–1945 documentation, were produced in peculiar conditions, which were not conducive to objectivity and truthfulness. Nevertheless, reading these documents is sometimes confusing. A constant theme of the applications for “merciful rehabilitation” are assertions that the policemen “did not act to the detriment of the Polish society” or even “rescued people endangered by the Germans.” Józef Śledziński emphasised that “during the occupation he was neither promoted nor praised.” Leon Kotas claimed that “during his service in the police during the occupation he followed the instructions of the People’s Army [*Armia Ludowa*, AL], whose member he was.” Born in 1917, Stanisław Figas was “almost forced” to join the ranks of the Polish Police in February 1942, because it was the only way for him to protect his family, which was sheltering members of the Polish Workers’ Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR) in its home. In addition, his police uniform facilitated his distribution of the underground press he received from them. Stanisław Kawa claimed that “Polish and Russian partisans” came to his private apartment and that he gave them “various pieces of information about the German army and gendarmerie.”

Most of the opinions about the policemen collected by Citizens’ Militia (*Milicja Obywatelska*, MO) headquarters and national councils confirmed the purportedly impeccable conduct of the officers. Kotas “did not participate in the roundups or manhunts for Polish partisans.” Sokołowski “did not take any part in the arrests or roundups, did not serve the Germans, and enjoyed a fine reputation in the Polish community.” Moreover, from 1942 he worked as a sergeant in the counterintelligence of the Peasants’ Battalions (*Bataliony Chłopskie*, BCH), which was confirmed by the Chairman of the People’s Party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe*, SL) in Radomsko. According to testimonials of Aleksander Ostałowski ‘Okon’ and Marian Skóra ‘Żołędź’ from the Peasants’ Battalions, Bolesław Klekowski “informed the locals about arrests to be conducted by the Germans, provided information, was not a traitor acting to the detriment of the Polish State and Nation,” and “even strived for the restoration of Poland’s independence.”

In all these documents – both those written by policemen themselves and those produced by witnesses or clerks – Jews are mentioned only once. Marek Sobański purportedly rescued “people endangered by the Germans,” and in his own home at that. Moreover, he also claimed to have helped the Jews who were sheltered after the liquidation of the ghetto by his relatives in their homes. It is difficult for me to say whether the thought about the local Jews did flash through the minds of applicants when they stated that they “had not acted to the detriment of the Polish nation” or whether those statements were an intentional lie or rather a half-truth. For the deportations of Jews disappeared from both policemen’s applications and from the testimonials of all those who gave positive or negative opinions about them.

A proof of rehabilitation has survived only in the files regarding Leon Kotas. Józef Śledziński and Marek Sobański sent their applications after deadline, Kawa

did not receive a positive opinion of the Commission due to the unfavourable testimonials about his “actions to the detriment of the Polish nation,” “participation in roundups,” and the lack of “signs of [his] Polish patriotism.” In the remaining cases there are no documents to indicate the verdict. Later court documents regarding Leon Kotas suggest that he must have been rehabilitated on the basis of fabricated evidence.<sup>31</sup> Arrested in December 1949, Kotas was sentenced to death on 21 September 1950 with a verdict of the Appellate Court in Łódź, which found him guilty of complicity in the murder of Stopnicki, a Polish policeman of Jewish origin, and in the arrest and denunciation of Polish underground activists to the Germans.<sup>32</sup> Unable to confirm which of the three policemen shot at Stopnicki (the other ones were already dead), the Supreme Court quashed the verdict of guilty for Kotas’ complicity in the murder and changed the punishment for the remaining offences to four years’ imprisonment.<sup>33</sup> Kotas served his sentence in full.

Translated by *Anna Brzostowska*

### **Abstract**

Based on previously unknown archival documents, the author discusses the Polish Police functionaries’ participation in deportations of the Jewish population from Radomsko County to the ghetto in Radomsko or to death centres. The ‘blue’ policemen participated in the “Jewish campaigns” not only as guards, but they also took a direct part in both the loading of Jews and Jewish possessions and in the stamping of Jewish property. The policemen delegated from the local police stations to assist at the deportations were paid stipends from the budget of the Union of Communities in Radomsko.

### **Key words**

Union of Communities in Radomsko, Polish Police in the General Government (‘blue’ police), deportations of the Jewish population, German gendarmerie, ‘blue’ police’s participation in the deportations of the Jewish population

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<sup>31</sup> Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej Oddział w Łodzi [Archive of Łódź Branch of the the Institute of National Remembrance], Ld PF4/5, Leon Kotas.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, pp. 56–57.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 61.