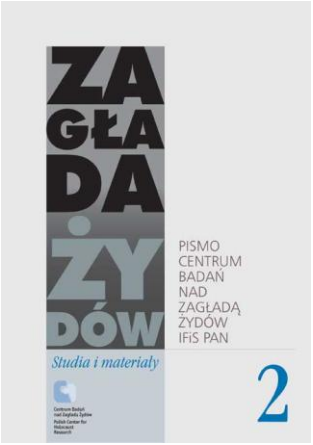


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Józef Górski, Turn of History

Józef Górski, Na przełomie dziejów

Jan Grabowski
University of Ottawa

grabows@uottawa.ca
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6916-9379

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Józef Górski

At the Turn of History

Presented below is a fragment of Józef Górski's diaries regarding the situation in Podlasie in the first years of the German occupation. It illustrates the author's view on "the final solution of the Jewish question". Górski himself says that he looked at the Holocaust as a Christian, who feels compassion for the victims, and at the same time as a Pole and a faithful follower of Roman Dmowski. From the latter point of view, he clearly welcomed the Holocaust. Józef Górski's diaries could certainly be classified as an "oddity", and as one reads them a number of painful questions arise, primarily about the scale of (silent) consent to the murder. In other words, to what extent did Górski's clear (although frightening) views fit the framework of the "ordinary people" of occupied Podlasie?

About the author: Józef Górski (family coat of arms: *Boża Wola*) was born on 17 December 1891, and died on 15 October 1961.[1] Before World War I, Górski attended Władysław Konopczyński Grammar School (*Gimnazjum*) in Warsaw, and during the war served in the French army on the Western front. For his achievements during the war he was awarded the Chevalier Cross *Légion d' honneur*. After the war he became the Polish military attaché in France. In 1922, he returned to Ceranów (district Sokołów Podlaski), where he ran his estate. During World War II, the Ceranów landowner associated himself closely with the German occupation authorities, in order to, as he writes, save the "national substance". After the war he was accused of collaboration with the Germans and espionage for England, Having served 18 months in prison he was acquitted and released. In the 1940s and 1950s he worked as a teacher and ideological personnel instructor in the Poznań region. He died childless in Ceranów. His manuscript, *Na przełomie dziejów* (At the Turn of History), written in 1960, is stored in the National Library in Warsaw (catalogue number: III 9776).

Editor *Jan Grabowski*

[1] The biographical data were taken from Józef Górski's diaries and memoirs and from *Ziemianie polscy XX wieku*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: 1994).

[page 1]

At the Turn of History

Part I

Ceranów

As I wrote in my memoirs, *Z pomroki wspomnień*, in March 1922 I returned home to Ceranów. A new stage in my life began. After eight years of war, diplomatic service, intertwined with life in the salons of Paris and London, whose brilliance and charm I took in with the greatest enjoyment, I began country life, tilling my father's land, which was to last 22 years, all my manhood, the time of my undeserved defeats. And some turn it was. Initially, I was entirely living in my memories and experiences of the recent years. I had thought I would never become accustomed to idyllic life. Still, my nostalgia for paradise lost was fully involved in the day-to-day problems of Ceranów; I was interested in everything that concerned Ceranów, I began to enjoy my landowner's and farmer's duties, and finally got to love my father's land with all my heart. This love was so great and potent that I was happy to devote to it all of myself, all my thoughts, all my native diligence and energy. My service for Ceranów became my daily pleasure, and Ceranów became an end in itself, so I gave it, with all my heart, a full 22 years of my life, a period when the curve of my earthly sojourn reached its peak. I loved Ceranów fanatically and with boundless attachment. My neighbour, Franciszek Karpiński, lived for Sterdyń; I lived for Ceranów. It never crossed my mind to put my talents to other uses, be it science, politics or diplomacy. When in 1925, Ambassador [Konstanty] Skirmunt, via Józef Lipski, offered me the post of secretary to the embassy in London, I turned down this otherwise attractive offer. I served my father's estate unreservedly. It was a voluntary sacrifice of my entire life until death, and its limits could not be delineated, as there is no limit to the demands of the land.

[page 19]

The following morning, 8 September [1939], all the villagers and my workers depart at dawn, with all their belongings, i.e. equipment and livestock, to the forest. I eat lunch with Piotr Filipiuk, the forester. Of course, there are no enemy planes, and the entire expedition turns into a rather happy picnic. In the morning I head for Sokołów to collect the due golden fleece. This time it is too late. The tax office and the entire district administration have been evacuated across the Bug River to Prużany. I lost not only the horses *in natura* but also their monetary equivalent. One official of the district administration says that the district governor instructed him to inform me that Bulgaria had declared war on Germany, and in Germany itself a revolution broke out. I shrug my shoulders and tell myself that we must be in a really difficult situation, as they need to resort to such nonsense to keep up the morale of society. But I do admire the peace and the order in the country. There is no

army, no police, the population is disarmed thanks to absurd military regulations, but public safety is perfect as it was during the best days. During the first *interregnum,* between the escape of the district governor and the first *Kreishauptmann*,[2] no robbery and no significant theft were committed in our area. The population of the Sokołów district passed this test with flying colours. Meanwhile, the latest news from the front is increasingly alarming.

They say that the Germans have crossed the Narew river near Różane. They push ahead and they brand men with numbers on the right cheek. I shrug my shoulders at such talk. But our disaster is already evident, just looking at the many deserters, mobilised not 10 days ago. This reminds me of 1920, when the table at Piętkowo was served by a flunkey who had deserted from the front. People talked about it as if it was something fairly ordinary, which does not raise any objections. An entire infantry division can be found in the Ceranów forest, and it is now being disbanded. Young non-commissioned officers in active service come to ask for civilian clothing, which I of course give them.

[page 20]

A pile of letters from arrested comrades I need to hand to their families. Tadzio Ciecierski is offered to be released on condition that he does not fight against the Germans until the end of the war. Tadzio refuses, so he stays. I return by train to Warsaw. At Nasielsk, the bridge has been blown up, so I have to cross the Narew river by ferry. In the evening I arrive in Warsaw. It is the first time I have seen the capital since the siege. From the Gdański station I go to the Hotel Saski, where I used to stay – burnt down. The Brühl Hotel – burnt down. The Hunters' Club I used to belong to – requisitioned. As I could not find a room for the night, I go to 2 Frascati St., to my aunt Antoniowa, who puts me in the servant's room, as she is having guests: Mrs Eryk Kurnatowski with her daughters Marylka and Elżbietka and her sister Mrs Jan Potocki. Nevertheless, what I find most depressing are not the ruins of Warsaw, but the sight of our soldiers, without their belts and overcoats unbuttoned, veritable beggars, playing various instruments on street corners and in the gateways, collecting money from the public in their caps.

The contrast between this defeated squalor, hunger, shabbiness and the haughtiness of the victorious Germans – well-fed and wearing spick-and-span uniforms – is so glaring that I cannot bear to look at our humiliation. After the war, these depressing sights were depicted in the film "*Zakazane piosenki*". Apparently, national dignity is alien to film directors in communist Poland as demonstrated by other post-war films: "*Ostatni etap*", "*Kanał*", "*Eroica*" and "*Przygoda lotnika*".

Several days later I return to Ceranów. Everyone, including Ciupek, greets me with joy. Only the *Ortskommendant* Hauptman Eisenhordt – *nomen omen* – said he would never release me and that I would "mit meinem Kopf antworten"[3] for anything that happened in Ceranów. . . .

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[2] District governors appointed by German occupation authorities in the General Government.

[3] answer with my own head (Ger.).

[page 22 – 23]

My policy towards the occupier

My personal experiences, however, could not affect the development of my attitude to the occupier, which should stem not from emotional reasons, but from rational and objective – not subjective – considerations. I was responsible for a vast area of Polish land, which had to be kept in Polish hands, and for a hundred Poles who worked on that land.

It was an enormous responsibility and I realized how heavy the burden was. I wanted every man associated with my estate to feel safe under my wings. I told all my employees that not a hair on their heads would be injured – over my dead body. This type of obligation required that I be conciliatory with the occupier. Obviously my intention was to be deceptive. But I told myself that I was locked in a cage with a tiger and had no choice but to co-exist with it. There were only two logical options: kill it or tame it. *Tertium non deditur*. I had been certain from the very beginning that this co-existence would last long, and I had no doubts about it. As early as 1939 I told aunt Antoniowa: "Ce sera long et dur."[4] Thus, since I was unable to kill the tiger, I decided to make it eat out of my hand. To be eaten by the tiger – I had not the slightest intention, and thought that to let the situation come to a head, to such an extreme, would be stupid on my part, and would be tantamount to lack of responsibility and failure to do my duty. What would have been easier to do than act irresponsibly and, as a result, have the *Liegenschaftsverwaltung* take over Ceranów?[5] Would it be in the national interest? I doubt that.

This attitude of mine extended beyond Ceranów and comprised all national matters. I was profoundly sceptical about the benefits and usefulness of the underground resistance movement, or all kinds of armed formations: A[rmia] K[rajowa] (the Home Army), A[rmia] L[udowa] (the People's Army), B(ataliony) Ch(łopskie) (the Peasants' Battalions) and others. The uncompromising stance of combat against the occupier, shared by an overwhelming majority of the Polish people, cost us a sea of blood and tears, and, as a result, caused irreparable losses in national property and destruction of an entire generation, but in the final analysis, failed to bring the end of the war closer by as much as one hour, and did not change its outcome, not one iota. [...]

[page 31]

My view on the Germans and Nazism

Still, apart from corruption and alcoholism, or rather the ability to consume unlimited amounts of alcohol, as I hardly ever saw drunk Germans, I noticed a lot of

[4] This will be long and hard (fr.)

[5] The Nazi administration of estates subject to requisition.

positive qualities in them, precisely those we lacked. First and foremost it was their insistence on cleanliness. Whenever they were going to requisition a flat, the requisition order was always stereotypical: "Die Wohnung soll im sauberen Zustande abgeliefert werden."[6] They presumed that the Poles would leave the flat in an untidy condition, and they were often right about it. When one military detachment moved into a rectory and occupied, among other things, the kitchen, the *feldfebel* immediately began to scrub the entire kitchen clean, which had not happened for years under Father Brudnicki. A military detachment, before it took quarter, began by building the latrines. Our or Soviet military units believed that the surrounding area could be used for that purpose.

I also admired their sense of order and their creative momentum. *Kreishauptmann* [Ernest] Gramms has done more for the town of Sokołów than the Polish district governors for 20 years. The stinking stream flowing through Sokołów was straightened, regulated and edged, some kind of embankment was built, while the Jewish cemetery was turned into a park. This same Gramms prevented the destruction of the Mazovian princes' castle on the Liwiec near Węgrów. The castle had been used a source of stones by the local peasants, who were to do their corvée duty. Thus the castle was doomed. Gramms covered the castle tower with a roof and forbade further demolition. The motivation for this, true, was that the Hitlerjugend had found some bones near the castle, which the Germans considered to be proto-Germanic, but nonetheless it is true that he did save a monument of early medieval Poland from destruction, which the Polish authorities had turned a blind eye to for 20 years.

In the spring of 1941, in a matter of several weeks, the Germans built a concrete road from Kossów to Małkinia, across meadows and marshes. Had it not been for them, that road would never have been built. In 1942, there was a project to regulate the Bug river, connect it via a canal with the Vistula river, build a hydroelectric plant on the Bug and provide electricity to the local area. A team from the Todt Organisation[7] had already arrived in Ceranów and they were assigned to do the jobs, but the defeats on the eastern front stopped this large-scale investment, which could have turned a hole in Podlasie into part of Europe.

Finally, construction of a main line from Kharkov to Calais was projected. All those enterprises resembled the scale of ancient Rome, whose legions carried the achievements of civilisation. After all, the road from Ceranów to Sokołów we owe to the Germans from the days of World War I. I believe that even the deadliest enemy ought to be shown respect when deserved.

I saw a number of positive qualities in Nazism itself.

Isn't racism, if stripped of hatred and contempt, justified to a certain extent? Do the Australian Papuans or Pygmies from the African bush have the same qualities as white or yellow people? But first and foremost, I was impressed by the Nazi "Das Erbhefgestz", the agrarian reform. It did not affect major landowners, but formed

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[6] The flat must be left in a tidy condition (Ger.).

[7] Todt Organisation – a Nazi construction and engineering organisation, utilising slave labour on a mass scale, with the workforce seized from conquered territories, including Poland. The organisation was headed by Fritz Todt (1938–1942) and Albert Speer (1942–1945).

100-hectare peasant estates; however, an inefficient farmer could be removed from such an estate. Thus understood, the land reform created extremely sound economic entities.

Major Fahrensteiner, a Junker from East Prussia, told me that Nazi legalisation forbade construction of barracks for estate labourers. Every labourer was to be given a tied house, naturally provided with a sewage system and electricity. This was, inevitably, a significant financial burden on the estate owner, but it was fair from the point of view of social legalisation and welfare. Nazism reduced the standard of living of the possessors, but, at the same time, enhanced the well-being of the working class.

[page 33]

Subsequently, Nazism drew the attention of the entire world to the threat of international Jewry as a seedbed of demoralization in the Aryan environment. Finally, the NSDAP, which made it possible for the son of Emperor Wilhelm to drink beer in a Munich beer hall "Bürgerbrankeller" next to a prole, "*Parteigenosse*",[8] [thus] laid the foundations for a true democracy, if not political, then, in any case, social.

I came to the conclusion that a European federation under German hegemony would be far more beneficial than the current political Balkanisation, which is a product of an exaggerated concept of sovereignty of individual countries. A Balkanised Europe would not be able to compete with the giants emerging in other parts of the world.

It is a pity that apart from those great virtues, the zoological nationalism of the Germans, denying other nations, particularly weaker ones, the right to exist, made any co-existence or co-operation impossible.

Hitler did a great deal for Germany until he crossed its borders.

On the European arena, he failed completely. His ambition was to unite Europe under his hegemony, like Charlemagne or Napoleon, but he was unable to become a European, and remained a possessive and bloodthirsty Teutonic Knight until the end.

His military strategy of total destruction of the enemy could bring results in the Blitzkrieg, but was doomed to fail in the East, as soon the lightning war did not succeed. A drawn-out campaign called for a different method: military operations should have been supported by a wise policy towards the nations liberated from communist serfdom. This Hitler failed to understand. . . .

[page 56 – 57]

The morale of the people

The highest-level agencies – state, military and ecclesial – had left the country. There was no authority of our own left.

[8] Party comrade (Ger.) Form of addressing NSDAP members.

At the same time, disloyalty to the occupier and sabotaging its decrees became, obviously, a patriotic duty. What used to be a crime, according to previously [accepted] standards, i.e. cheating the government, turned into merit. This collapse of ethical norms vis-à-vis the government could not have failed to bring about a relaxation of morals between individual human beings. I had ample evidence.

Until 22 June 1941, the Bug river had been the border of two occupation zones. In the winter of 1939/1940, refugees from the Soviet-occupied Polish territories crossed it continually, on ice and under fire. Right on the Bug river lies the village of Długie Kamieńskie. The local villagers specialized in capturing refugees before they were arrested by the *Zollgrenzschutz*[9], and robbing them of everything they had. Such considerations as the fact that these were their countrymen or unfortunate fellow human beings meant nothing to the peasants of Długie Kamieńskie, with their obdurate hearts and minds.

"Since these refugees have so many valuables on them, they would better land in my hands than be seized by the Germans." Such was their philosophy.

But divine retribution did come. In February 1940 the village of Długie Kamieńskie was consumed by fire, which burnt all the buildings and all the property.

In the Sokołów district a peasant accused his son before the German administration of having hidden weapons in a well. The gendarmes arrived, indeed found the weapons, took his son and shot him.

It was only at that point that his father realised what he had done. He put his hands on his head and whined: "What have I done! What have I done!" Generally, denunciation was common. The Gestapo said that they did not need to put anyone under surveillance, as they already knew everything from the Poles themselves anyway. The Sterdyń forest inspectorate organised a conference with the gamekeepers. The forest inspector reprimanded one of the gamekeepers for neglecting his duties, i.e. for not watching the forest. "I will have to fire you," he said. "What will you do then? Where will you go?" "I," said the gamekeeper in cold blood, "will go to the Gestapo."

Some peasants hid Jews and were paid large sums of money. Later on, when the constant danger they were exposed to became too much of a burden for them, they cut the Jews' heads off with an axe. There is a village of Wólka Okrąglik near Treblinka. The local peasants would send their wives and daughters to [see] the Ukrainian camp guards, and were beside themselves with rage when those women failed to bring enough rings or other Jewish valuables obtained in return for their personal services. This type of business was naturally very profitable: thatched roofs were replaced by metal plate, and the entire village looked European, as if moved to this hole in Podlasie. Such was the morale of the peasants, with which, reportedly, "heaven was paved." At the same time, the younger generation went to the woods and displayed heroism and ultimate sacrifice. Was this, perhaps, an antinomy between the two generations? Thus, concluding these general considerations, I return to the chronology of the most important events. [...]

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[9] German border guards, also responsible for customs. During the war, it was deployed on occupied territories outside the Reich.

[page 69 – 73]

That year (1942) was marked by the liquidation of the Jewry. This is how it started: in April an SS-man came to me and placed an order for a large shipment of timber, stressing that this was a priority order as it was "eine reichswichtige Angelegenheit."[10] I had no idea what he had in mind or why it was so urgent. It was only later that I found out that my timber was used to build the gas chambers at Treblinka, where millions of Jews were to die.[11] Mass extermination began at Sterdyń on 22 July. Jews were shot at like rabbits. It was different at Siedlce. Apart for some sporadic killings, the Jews were hoarded onto Piłsudski Square and told to sit down, and that is how they spent the next two days. Those who fainted were revived by water from a fire pump, and those who moved were shot at. That's not all. Torture was supplemented with derision. A tax inspector arrived in the square and said the following to the Jews: "Meine jüdische Bürger! Ich muss ihnen danken für die rechtzeitig eingezahlte Steuer."[12] They were then marched to the railway station, loaded onto freight cars, with their insides whitewashed with lime, transported to Treblinka and gassed. The behaviour of the Jews was quite characteristic. As they were approaching their destination, i.e. starting more or less from Kostki, when all hope of salvation had vanished, they tore bills of exchange and banknotes they had. Bits of these papers lay scattered along the tracks, and were greedily collected by the local population. Thurm told me that during one hunt they bagged 13 hares and 5 Jews. Even the kind-hearted Stenzel wandered in the woods with a shotgun to kill a few Jews. The German people submitted to mass hypnosis as a result of inborn spiritual discipline. Just like the Japanese, who after their surrender declared that as of midnight they would love the Americans, because the Mikado had told them so. Similar symptoms can only be found in totalitarian systems, where collective, uncritical obedience to authority is the supreme expression of *raison d'etat*.

How did the Jews behave in such a tragic situation? One might say that it was totally inconceivable for an Aryan and a Christian. Jewish policemen dragged their infirm and ill parents and handed them over to their oppressors. Jukel Zręczny from Kossów [Kosów], our long-time timber dealer, told me that one Jew from Siedlce, who managed to jump out of a railway car near Kossów Lacki, hid in his place and was going insane because he had saved his life while his family were on their way to Treblinka. The Jews would address their executioners with: "bester Herr."[13] One characteristic manifestation of this mentality was the behaviour of Lewin, the chairman of the *Judenrat* in Sokołów [Podlaski]. He was the the main supplier to the *Kreishauptmann*, whom he provided with everything he needed. When his people were being exterminated, he eagerly helped the executioners during the pogrom. When it

[10] Matter important for the Reich (Ger.)

[11] According to cautious estimates, around 850,000 people were killed at the Treblinka II death camp.

[12] My Jewish citizens! Thank you for paying [your] taxes on time! (Ger.)

[13] Gracious, dear Sir (Ger.).

was all over, he threw a booze-up at his place for them. The Germans gobbled up the most sophisticated dishes and boozed on luxurious liquor. At the end of the feast, or rather of this macabre funeral banquet, the chief of the *Sonderkommando* stood up and thus addressed the host: "Herr Lewin, Sie haben sich änstandig benommen und uns in der Erfüllung unserer Aufgabe geholfen. Wir wollen Ihen danken. Sie werden nicht wie ihre Volks-genossen sterben, sondern mit einem ehrenvollen Tod. Also an die Wand und Hände hoch."[14] Lewin obediently stood against the wall and died from a "Genickschuss"[15]. It is difficult to decide whose cynicism was greater – the host's or the guests'? Father Jan Rostworowski thus explained this incomprehensible mentality to me: "This is because they know not Christ."[16] One Jew told Prelate Kamiński: "All our current suffering is because of your Christ." The realisation that after two thousand years the self-afflicted curse upon the Jews materialised: "His blood be on us, and on our children."

As for me, I looked at the extermination of the Jews from two different points of view, between which there was an abysmal antinomy: as a Christian and as a Pole.

As a Christian I could only feel compassion for my fellow human beings. Sometimes I thought about what these unfortunate people felt when they were marched to the gas chambers.

In order to delay, as much as possible, the execution of the Kossów Jews, among whom I had the most acquaintances, I arranged for the entire Jewish population of Kossów to harvest root crops. Hundreds of them came, with their women, children, gear and luggage. Every corner was packed with Jews, and Ceranów turned into a veritable Jerusalem. The Jews worked in the field supervised by their own overseers, as they could not keep up with the Polish workers. Deputy *Kreishauptmann* Herrmann told me: "Ich weiss nicht aus welchen christlichen Gründen oder sonst anderen Sie bemühen sich um diese Juden, aber ich muss Sie warnen, dass Sie Ihren Kopf risquiren."[17] The entire operation merely delayed what was bound to happen. At the end of November the gendarmes arrived and deported all of them to Kossów, from where they were transported to Treblinka. Before their departure the Jews handed me a letter saying that I had acted as "[their] brother in faith." I was glad that our long-time timber and grain dealers – Jukel and Chaskel Zręczny – had died of natural causes.

As a Pole, I looked at these events differently. Being a follower of Dmowski's ideology, I perceived the Jews as an internal partitioner, always hostile to the coun-

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[14] Mr Lewin, you behaved admirably and helped us a great deal in our task. We wish to thank you. You won't die as your fellow Jews, but with honour. So up against the wall and hands up.

[15] A close-range shot, fired from behind at the base of the victim's skull (Ger.)

[16] Father Jan Rostworowski (1876–1963), a Jesuit, born in Zielonki near Cracow. Studied at Freiburg, Cracow (theology) and Nowy Sącz (philosophy). Editor of Jesuit periodicals: *Sodalis Marianus* (1908–1911 and 1920–1924), *Wiara i życie* (1921–1924), *Posłaniec Serca Jezusowego* (1921–1922), *Głosy katolickie* (1921–1923), *Moderator* (1929–1930) and *Przegląd Powszechny* (1933–1936). By 1939 he had written over 200 articles. Some of them concerned "the Jewish question". I am indebted to Dr Dariusz Libionka for the information.

[17] I don't know why you care for these Jews, for Christian reasons or other, but I must warn you that you are risking your life and limb (Ger.).

try the diaspora inhabits. Therefore I could only feel satisfied that we were getting rid of this occupier, not with our own hands, but with the hands of the other, external partitioner. After all, the Jews had for centuries enjoyed unlimited freedom due to our own inborn tolerance and gentleness. Unlike other countries, pogroms never happened here. Anti-Jewish actions, e.g. at Przytyk, where a few windows were smashed in Jewish shops, were fairly innocuous games when compared with what happened, for example in 13th-century England or in Spain under Isabella of Castile, not to mention tsarist Russia or Nazi Germany. So they wanted to greet the [invading] armies – in 1795 the Prussians, in 1806 Murat, in 1812 Alexander, in 1912 the Germans, in 1920 the Bolsheviks, and in 1939 Hitler's army – in the same manner; but their cheering and demonstrations of loyalty were met with a different attitude. When in 1941 the Germans were marching into Łuck, some Jewish woman gave a welcome speech and handed flowers to a non-commissioned officer, but he threw the bouquet on the ground and kicked it. When the Polish Sejm did not adopt the motion of the Jewish Club which demanded that the Sabbath be declared an official holiday, the member of parliament Grunbaum [Icchak Grünbaum] said from the Sejm rostrum: "Gentlemen. You have just lost Grodno and Vilna." Poland had become Judeo-Poland, where a 15 per cent minority owned most capital, rural real estate, industry and trade. Only land remained in Polish hands. Hence the agrarian reform aimed at destroying the strongest mainstay of Polishness, i.e. the large estates. As for the peasants, who were economically weaker, the Jewry expected to be able to defeat them more easily. We still remember these Jewish catchphrases: "Your streets, our houses", or "The big landowners have land, the Jews have money; big industry has factories, the Jews have money; big trade has goods, the Jews have money." Getting rid of this burden was like squaring the circle, as in the case of a mass emigration of Jews, their capital would also leave the country, which would cause too great an economic shock. Apart from this economic aspect, equally important was the moral dimension. The Jews in the diaspora were the seedbed of depravity, whereas in their own country they are moral and pro-state. In the inter-war period, every gang involved in the slave trade, pornography, money forgery or communist propaganda was headed by a Jew. But, first and foremost, the Jews hated us. There were many examples during the occupation. Since time immemorial Całka, a glazier, had lived in Sterdyń. He was hiding in Ceranów with various peasants. He was finally exposed and a blue policeman took him to the gendarmerie station in Ceranów. On the way Całka was shaking his fist at the village of Ceranów, shouting that he would give away all those who gave him shelter to the Germans. The policeman shot the Jew on the way under the pretext of attempted escape. "Was I going to let them burn the entire village because of one ragamuffin?" he explained to me. In 1943 the Germans shot one overseer and several workers from the Paulinów estate, which was part of the Sterdyń estate, for hiding Jews, who gave away their benefactors.

Until 22 June 1941 the border between the two occupation zones ran between Małkinia and Czyżewo. Someone who was travelling on an eastbound train from Małkinia told me that as soon as they entered the Soviet-occupied zone, a Jewish woman in the same compartment began dancing with joy, shouting: "Zdies Rosija".

In Czyżewo, a Jew asserted in front of a crowd: "Polsza – eto mrzionka". Four years later, I met in prison a Jew who had done very well for himself as an owner of a carpet shop in Siedlce. During the war he landed in Kamczatka. When I asked him why he had returned, he said: "To revenge myself on the Poles." The prison governor, Grobelny, who was listening to the conversation, shouted: "Ah, you Jewish rat!" Grobelny disappeared for a week. As it turned out he was summoned to Warsaw, where he spent 7 days in the pen.

The commandant of Treblinka was Haupsturmführer von Eupen,[18] a wild beast with a pockmarked face and restless eyes. One evening in the winter of 1942/1943 I heard shouts at the door. It turned out that von Eupen had arrived and he immediately berated my servant Janek for meeting him with his hands in his pocket. Eupen had come to exchange rotten potatoes, which could be used in a distillery, for fresh, edible ones. During our conversation I asked him what he did all day. He replied: "Acht Stunden Schlafe ich, acht Studen saufe ich und acht Stunden schlage ich die Juden."[19] Indeed, he walked around the camp with a thick oak club, beating Jews on the head when they came his way. In 1943 a large group of Jews escaped from Treblinka to my forest, where they were welcomed like brothers by A[rmia] K[rajowa] (Home Army) units. After the Bolsheviks came, the same Jews gave away their partisan colleagues together with all those who offered any support to the Home Army. My neighbour Władysław Dytel was one of many denounced by Jews and arrested; he was subsequently deported to Russia and died in a camp near Moscow.

Today's propaganda presents Jews as part of the Polish nation and claims that the Germans murdered 6 million Poles. This is just another lie among the many we are fed. The Jews have never been Poles. For centuries they have been a polyp on our organism, which, due to our impotence, we have been unable to get rid of. This operation was carried out by Hitler, murdering 4 million Polish Jews. Apart from them, 2 million Poles died during the occupation. Thus, altogether – 6 million Polish citizens. If put this way, this will be true. I could not hide my satisfaction when I passed our Jew-free towns and when I saw that the shabby, atrocious ruins with their typical iron stoves had ceased to be an eyesore. When asked by Thurm, "Sehen die Polen die Befreiung vom dem Juden als ein Segnen an?"[20] I replied, "Gewiss,"[21] certain that I expressed the opinion of the overwhelming majority of my fellow countrymen. In the inter-war period, before the "ballot miracles" of the Piłsudski era, the Siedlce–Sokołów–Węgrów constituency elected all of its 4 members of parliament from the National Party (*Stronnictwo Narodowe*), as did Łomża and Poznań. In 1922, Wincenty Krysiak, Sterdyń commune head, ran for parliament as a National Party candidate. When he appeared in Ceranów at a rally, he was not given a chance to utter a word and his first words drowned in the shouting: "We don't want a Jew, we don't want a Jew!" In vain did Krysiak, a serious and sedate

[18] Captain Theodor von Eupen, the commandant of Treblinka I labour camp (1941–1944).
[19] I sleep eight hours, I drink eight hours, and eight hours I kill Jews.
[20] Do the Poles see the liberation from the Jews as victory?
[21] Certainly (Ger.)

farmer, try to pacify the crowd: "People! Come to your senses! Am I a Jew?" But his words drowned in the shouts of the crowd: "We don't want a Jew!" Thus the voters expressed their conviction that only the National Party would oppose Jewish domination in Poland. *Vox populi*. . . .

Edited by *Jan Grabowski*