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"Why did they who had suffered and endured so much have to die?" Jewish Victims of Armed Violence in the Polish Tatra Highlands during 1945–1947

„Dlaczego oni, którzy tyle przecierpieli i przetrzymali, musieli zginąć". Żydowskie ofiary zbrojnej przemocy na Podhalu w latach 1945–1947

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"Why did they, who had suffered so much and endured, had to die?" The Jewish victims of armed violence in Podhale (1945–1947)

I can't find the title
of a memory about you
with a hand torn from darkness
step on fragments of faces
soft friendly profiles
frozen into a hard contour

Zbigniew Herbert *(Three poems by heart*, translated from the Polish by John and Bogdana Carpenter)

For the last ten years I have lived in Podhale, a region at the foothills of the Tatra Mountains, researching the fate of the Jewish population of the town of Nowy Targ during the Holocaust. A small number of survivors returned to the town in 1945 in an attempt to rebuild there their Jewish way of life. In a short time, a number of them were killed. What I had found researching the circumstances of their deaths enabled me to grasp the actual scope of anti-Jewish violence in Podhale between 1945 and 1947 – a time when the region witnessed a major escalation of the fight – launched by the communist authorities – against members of the partisan unit 'Błyskawica' led by Józef Kuraś, nom de guerre 'Ogień'. The most striking element of my findings was the way in which the Jewish victims of those violent acts were referred to: they remained anonymous and were described in mass terms. Their deaths were, and still are, rationalised with the stereotype of 'Judaeo-Communism'.[1] In my paper, I wish to challenge this approach by focusing

[1] The article "Kto walczy z 'Ogniem'" by Andrzej Gwiazda is a typical example of such thinking (www.niezalezna.pl, access 15 April 2015). A similar strain can be found in the writings of Bolesław Dereń. (idem, *Józef Kuraś „Ogień" partyzant Podhala*, Warsaw: Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego, 2004, p. 184) or the IPN historian, Maciej Korkuć (idem, "Horror podmalowany," www.tygodnik.onet.pl, access 15 April 2015). A notable exception in this context is the work of Julian Kwiek, particularly his most recent paper (idem, "Zabójstwa ludności żydowskiej w Krakowskiem w latach 1945–1947. Fakty i mity," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 4 (2013): 679–695).

on the victims of those crimes – by restoring their identities and retracing their steps wherever it is possible.

Murder for robbery

The first documented murder of Jews in Podhale after the war was committed on 11 May 1945. The chief of the Nowy Targ County's [*powiat*] police[2] – sent to his superiors a notice regarding "Murders for Robbery by N.N. [unidentified] perpetrators":

> I report that, on 11 V 1945 around 10 p.m., four unidentified individuals armed with (automatic) guns entered the home of Andrzej Ostachowski, a farmer from the village of Maniowy, Nowy Targ County, with whom there were Jews, namely 1) Wilhelm Reich, 2) Karaś Leon, 3) Boruch Fejfe, 4) Kałman Miler. After entering the room where the aforementioned jews[3] were, the individuals shouted in loud voices "hands up," then demanded that they [the Jews – *transl*.] hand over all money, such as dollars and the like, and parcels they had on them. After taking the money and suitcases, the individuals ordered them to follow them outside. Reich, along with another jew, however, declared that they would not leave, so the bandits started firing inside the room, killing two jews. Then the others went out into Ostachowski's yard, where they were likewise shot and killed. The bodies of those murdered have remained at the crime scene. Having committed the criminal act, the bandits, unrecognised by anyone, fled in an unknown direction.[4]

The Investigation Division of the County Department of the Citizens' Militia [*Powiatowa Komenda Milicji Obywatelskiej*, PKMO] in Nowy Targ investigated the case.[5] In a short time, the identities of the victims were established more accurately.[6]

Wilhelm Reich (born in Odrowąż, 15 July 1904), a resident of the village of Maniowy, was a farmer. He had a wife, Cila; his son Moritz was born in 1940.[7]

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[2] The official name of the state police, formed in 1944, was 'Citizens' Militia' (*Milicja Obywatelska*, MO) – *transl*.

[3] Here and hereafter written in lower-case to agree with original spelling in citations – *transl.*

[4] Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej Oddział w Krakowie [Archive of the Kraków Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance, later: AIPN Kr], 0125/181, file 16, Pismo PKMO w Nowym Targu do szefa Wydziału Śledczego przy WKMO w Krakowie [Letter of the County Citizens' Militia Department, PKMO] in Nowy Targ to the chief of the Investigation Bureau in the Provincial Department of the Citizens' Militia [WKMO] in Kraków, 12 May 1945, p. 485.

[5] AIPN Kr, 056/1/1, On-site report no. 6, The Investigation Bureau in the Provincial Department of the WKMO in Kraków, 25 May 1945, p. 15.

[6] AIPN Kr, 0125/181, file 16, Letter of the PKMO in Nowy Targ to the chief of the Investigation Bureau of the WKMO in Kraków, 12 May 1945, p. 487.

[7] Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie [The National Archive in Kraków, later: ANKr], 29/208/4, Register of the Jewish residents of Nowy Targ County, 1940/1941, n.p.

Baruch Feit (b. 18 March 1911), son of Josef (a local peddler) and Genandla; during the war, he and his parents were deported from Czarny Dunajec to the Nowy Targ ghetto. Baruch had worked in a sawmill in Czarny Dunajec.[8] Various documents I have analised, have led me to believe that 'Kałman Miller' mentioned in the report was in fact Chaim Blauder (b. 5 April 1913), who lived in Czarny Dunajec with his wife, Rosa, and his small daughter, Amalia, born in late 1941. He worked in the sawmill. One of the sawmill's employees, a Pole, remembered Blauder standing at the gate of the sawmill and parting with his wife and child on the day Jews were deported from Czarny Dunajec.[9] Blauder himself stayed behind, because he was an excellent stableman. Another Polish sawmill worker testified after the war, "as far as I know, he had survived until the end of the war, but was later shot and killed by partisans who operated in the Podhale region after the war."[10]

The murder is mentioned in a brief passage in Józef 'Ogień' Kuraś's journal, a copy of which is kept in the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance: "23 June, 4 jews [*sic*] were executed in Maniowy. Lew [Jan Goleniowski – K.P.], Boguś [Bogusław 'Herkules' Szokalski], Kruk [Kazimierz Kuraś]. Five pairs of shoes and some undergarments were seized."[11] Notably, the date mentioned in the excerpt is different from the one indicated in the police report. The date "June 23" (rather than May 11) appears for the first time in a summary record chronicling activities of the band of 'Ogień' from 11 April 1945 until February 1947.[12] It is not known which came first, the journal or the summary. For this reason, I do not consider the alleged journal of Kuraś a reliable source for the reconstruction of events in postwar Podhale.

In regard to the murder in Maniowy, Bolesław Dereń cites the account of Władysław Kordeczka, alias 'Brzytwa',[13] which contains information that the men were killed because they were most likely PPR members with ties to the [Citizens'] Militia who were gathering intelligence on partisans.[14] This seems

[8] Ibidem.

[9] AIPN Kr, Okręgowa Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu [District Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation, later: OKŚZpNP] in Kraków, S31/12/Zn, Zeznania Stefana Maciaszka [Testimony of Stefan Maciaszek, 9 December 1975, p. 65.

[10] Ibidem, Zeznania Franciszka Harbuta [Testimony of Franciszek Harbut], 28 September 1971, p. 37. I was not able to find any information about the fourth victim, Leon Karaś, born 17 April 1911 r. in Czarny Dunajec (AIPN Kr, 0125/181, file 16, Letter of the PKMO in Nowy Targ to the chief of the Investigation Bureau in the WKMO in Kraków, 12 May 1945, p. 48.

[11] AIPN Kr, 06/1/14, A copy of the journal that was found in 'Ogień's' military satchel, 21 February 1947, p. 9.

[12] AIPN Kr, 06/1/2, Historia działalności „Ognia" [Account of 'Ogień's' activities], presumably March 1947, p. 44

[13] Władysław Kordeczka alias 'Błyskawica' a member of the First Company of the AK Partisan Unit 'Błyskawica', subordinate of Józef 'Ogień' Kuraś.

[14] Dereń, *Józef Kuraś „Ogień"…*, p. 235.

highly improbable, considering that all four were Jews from the Podhale region and lived there during the occupation and returned there from the camps after the war.[15]

"It would do no harm to chase away Jewish colonies"

The renowned pre-war resort town of Rabka attracted visitors from all over the country, of whom Jewish patrons constituted a substantial proportion. About five hundred Jews lived there permanently. During the war the SS set up a notorious police training school in Rabka.[16]

Nearly half of the residents of the town accepted so-called 'Goralenvolk cards' during the occupation.[17] It was them whom Władysław Krzeptowski addressed in his speech concerning this joyous time of driving back the ancient enemies from Podhale. He delivered it on 30 August 1942, the very day, when the deportation of Jews from Nowy Targ County was being carried out.[18]

In February 1945, only a few weeks after the war had ended, a plan was developed to set up a health and care center for Jewish children in Rabka. It was likely an attempt to improve the extremely arduous conditions in the facility of the Provisional Committee for Aid to the Jewish Population, located in Kraków at 38 Długa Street. The Committee ran an orphanage there, for children returning from camps,[19] along with a transitional centre, a registration point, an

[15] Julian Kwiek arrives at similar conclusions in the aforementioned essay.

[16] For an outstanding account of the extermination of Rabka Jews and the role of *Schule der Sicherheitspolizei und SD im GG*, see Michał Rapta, Wojciech Tupta, and Grzegorz Moskal, *Mroczne sekrety willi Tereska* (Wadowice–Rabka–Zdrój: Grafikon and Fundacja Rozwoju Regionu Rabka, 2008).

[17] Mieczysław Jasiński, "Kenkarty z literą „G". Ile ich było?," *Tatry* 3 (2014): 111.

'Goralenvolk' [Highlander nation] was a code name for a Gemanization operation carried out in the Nowy Targ County (Kreis Neumarkt) area, 1939–1944. A poll was conducted in one of its phases, in which 'Aryan' residents of Podhale could choose between the Polish card and the Goralenvolk card (sometimes the "choice" was enforced). Those who had chosen the latter thereby accepted belonging to the Goralenvolk (Goral nationality). The number of cards stamped with the letter 'G' differed greatly between different municipalities of the county (for more on the subject, see, e.g. Wojciech Szatkowski, *Goralenvolk. Historia zdrady* (Zakopane: Kanon, 2012).

[18] Yad Vashem Archive (later: YVA), O.3/3226, Relacja Frani Tiger, październik 1966 [Testimony of Frania Tiger, October 1966], p. 15; Artur Kołodziej, "Zagadka, którą kryje willa „Krzywoń" – czyli rzecz o rabczańskim Goralenvolku," http://historiarabki.blogspot.com/, access in March 2015. Frania Tiger's testimony – as well as other testimonies collected in Yad Vashem – point out a notable inhospitality of the wartime Rabka toward those who tried to survive on Aryan papers.

[19] ANKr, UW II 69/05, Pismo Tymczasowego Komitetu Pomocy dla Ludności Żydowskiej w Krakowie do Wydziału Wyżywienia Zarządu Miejskiego w Krakowie, 26 II 1945 [Letter of the Provisional Committee for Aid to the Jewish Population in Kraków to the Food Department of the Minicipal Aministration in Kraków, 26 February 1945], p. 37

administration office, a kitchen, a clinic and a sick ward. Close to one hundred children stayed in the building, together with some two hundred and fifty adults. The conditions there were dire: sick and ill-nourished charges of the committee slept on the floor "without any mattresses or straw."[20]

Realising the objective of creating a Jewish orphanage in Rabka was not an easy task; the town functioned as one "colossal hospital" and there was a shortage of available buildings.[21]

The Jewish Committee likewise could not count on the support of local authorities. Their attitude is – effectively – summarised by a letter sent by the Work and Welfare Department of the Provincial Office in Kraków to the Rabka municipality. The letter stressed in strong terms the necessity of organising a health clinic for Jewish children.[22]

Eventually, the orphanage in Rabka for seriously-ill children opened at the end of June and the beginning of July 1945. It consisted of three buildings that altogether accommodated one hundred children, coming from Kraków, Warsaw, Łódź and other cities.[23] The villas – Stasin, Juras, and Niemen – where the children lived, were situated less than 100 metres from a building that only a few months earlier had housed the SS police school. Also close-by were the Rabka post of the Security Office [*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, UB] and barracks of a Red Army unit.

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[20] Ibidem, Pismo Tymczasowego Komitetu Pomocy dla Ludności Żydowskiej w Krakowie do Prezydium Miasta Krakowa, 5 II 1945 [Letter of the Provisional Aid Committee for the Jewish Population to the Executive Committee of the Minicipal Aministration in Kraków, 5 February 1945], p. 12. The report, written at the end of 1945, contains the following description of the dreadful conditions: "The most serious problem was posed by sick children, mainly tubercular ones; it was a serious challenge to place them in hospitals, either because those hospitals were overcrowded or, to some extent, because of the attitude that medical and other health care staff had toward Jewish children (Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, later: AŻIH], Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich [Central Committe of Polish Jews, later: CKŻP], Wydział Organizacji i Kontroli [Organization and Monitoring Department], 303/II/75, Sprawozdanie z działalności Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Krakowie, 1 II–31 X 1945, [Report on the activity of the Jewish Provincial Committee in Kraków, 1 February – 31 October 1945], p. 214.

[21] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Oświaty [Department of Education], 303/IX/1186, List przewodniczącego Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Krakowie do Centralnego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Warszawie, 2 V 1945 [Letter of the chairman of The Jewish Provincial Committee in Crakow to the Central Committe of Polish Jews [*sic*] in Warsaw, 2 May 1945], p. 15. It should be stressed here that many of Rabka villas were owned by Jews before the war.

[22] Ibidem, Wydziału Pracy i Opieki Społecznej w Krakowie do Zarządu Miejskiego w Rabce, 26 III 1945 [Letter of the Work and Welfare Department in Kraków to the Rabka municipality, 26 March 1945], p. 34.

[23] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Organizacji i Kontroli [Organization and Monitoring Department], 303/II/75, Sprawozdanie z działalności Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Krakowie [Report on the Activity of the Jewish Provincial Committee in Kraków, 1 February – 31 Octorber 1945], p. 214.

The roll of the minors living in the orphanage in the summer of 1945 listed 116 names of children who had gone through hell.[24] Among them was twelve-year-old Aleksander Bober, who had escaped from the Warsaw ghetto and had roamed the streets selling cigarettes and sleeping in tram depots.[25] Nachum Bogner had survived in forest bunkers in the vicinity of Przemyśl; both his parents died in 1943.[26] Ten-year-old Mira Bram, who had also lost her parents, had survived on the Aryan side hidden by *Volksdeutsche*.[27] Eight-year-old Benek Brander had been helped by two Poles; his mother had died in front of him when they were hiding in cellars in the city of Przemyśl.[28] Overwhelmed by despair, the parents of Ludwik Rympel (b. 1935) attempted to take their own – and their son's – lives; what had saved the boy's life was that blood had not flown from his cut veins.[29] Jerzy Cyns survived the German concentration camps in Płaszów, Gross-Rosen, and Auschwitz, where he was subjected to medical experiments and tattooed three times; the gravely ill seven-year-old was sent to the health centre in Rabka.[30]

Róża Silberberg, ten at the time, remembered the ride from Kraków to Rabka. For security reasons, children were transported in trucks covered with a tarpaulin. She was awed by the amount of food in Rabka, and that they could take second helpings. They finally had their own clothes as they received parcels sent by the Joint.[31] She received a dress and a pair of shoes, and she felt pampered. Just then the assault occurred.[32]

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[24] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Oświaty [Education Department], 303/IX/1405, Wykaz imienny dzieci przebywających na leczeniu, sierpień 1945r. [Roll of names of the children being treated at the sanatorium], August 1945.

[25] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Oświaty [Education Department], 303/IX/86, Karta Dziecka [Child's Record]: Aleksander Bober, c. September 1945, p. 75.

[26] Ibidem, Karta Dziecka [Child's Record]: Nachum Bogner, c. September 1945, p. 77.

[27] Ibidem, Karta Dziecka [Child's Record]: Mira Bram, c. September 1945, p. 87.

[28] Ibidem, Karta Dziecka [Child's Record]: Benek Brander, c. September 1945, p. 89.

[29] AŻIH, Relacje Ocalałych z Zagłady [Testimonies of Holocaust Survivors], 301/626, Relacja Ludwika Rympela, 1945 [Testimony of Ludwik Rympel, 1945], p. 10.

[30] USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Visual History Archive, Jerzy Cyns, Interview 635, 1995, www.vhaonline.usc.edu, access 20 April 2015. Healthier children were sent to Zakopane, to the rented Villa Leśny Gród [Forrest Stronghold], a comfortable, three-story building, surrounded by the large garden (AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Oświaty [Education Department of the CKŻP], 303/IX/1186, List przewodniczącego Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Krakowie do Centralnego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Warszawie [Letter of the chairman of the Jewish Provincial Committee in Kraków to the Central Committee of Polish Jews [*sic*] in Warsaw, 4 June 1945], p. 18). At the time, the headmaster of the children's home created there was Lena Kuechler (then, Leontyna Relicz).

[31] Joint, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) – a relief organization founded in the United States in 1914.

[32] USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Visual History Archive, Rose Silberberg-Skier, Interview 33261, 1997, www.vhaonline.usc.edu, access 20 April 2015.

An order issued by the Minister of Public Security reflects the atmosphere that prevailed in the summer of 1945:

> The anti-Jewish provocation in Rzeszów is followed by new goading displays incited by National-Democratic and Home Army fascists. […] They urge assaults on jews, expulsion of jews from towns, and so on. […] The purpose of the provocation is clear: to send a blow to Poland's Democracy and Its Government of National Unity. Unfortunately, even leading cells of the Citizen's Militia were successfully drawn by the reactionaries into this nasty work […].[33]

In Kraków, a pogrom broke out on 11 August; the attack on the orphanage in Rabka came the following day.[34]

Anna Górska, a Pole who was working in the Villa Stasin as a kitchen helper, came to Kraków on August 13 to give an account of what had happened the previous night before the Provincial Jewish Committee [*Wojewódzki Komitet Żydowski*, WKŻ]. There were 96 children in the villas Stasin, Niemen, and Juras, when unknown perpetrators threw a hand grenade through the window into the Villa Niemen. In the morning, Górska saw the results of the explosion:

> There was a hole in the floor, 10 to 15 cm in diameter, windowpanes were smashed, wall damaged, medical instruments broken, a couch in the room flipped upside down; undergarments that had been left on the couch were strewn about the room. The children are in a panic, and rightly so. The police were not present at the scene, nor were any other authorities.[35]

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[33] ANKr, Zrzeszenie Wolność i Niezawisłość [Freedom and Independence Union, hereafter WiN], 7, Rozkaz nr 46 o tępieniu wystąpień antysemickich, 13 VIII 1945 [Order no. 46, On quelling anti-Semitic unrest, 13 August 1945], p. 41.

[34] The Kraków pogrom was written about by, among others: Anna Cichopek, see: *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945 r.* (Warszawa: ŻIH, 2000) and Julian Kwiek in: *Żydzi, Łemkowie, Słowacy w województwie krakowskim w latach 1945–1949/50* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2002), p. 62–70 and in the paper: "Wydarzenia antyżydowskie 11 sierpnia 1945 r. w Krakowie," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 1 (2000).

[35] Archiwum Beit Lochamej ha-Getaot [The Ghetto Fighters' House Archives, later: GFH], Holdings Registry, 1399, Wojewódzka Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Krakowie [Provincial Jewish Historical Committee in Kraków]. Sprawy antysemityzmu, Napad na sierociniec w Rabce [Anti-Semitic issues; raid on the orphanage in Rabka, n.d.], p. 13. The documents concerning the events in Rabka, which I found in the Beit Lochamej ha-Getaot, are not dated and do not contain any information about where they were created. They are only stamped with the the seal of the Provincial Jewish Historical Commission in Kraków [*Wojewódzka Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Krakowie*]. However, a report I found among the documents of The Freedom and Independence Union, "Sprawozdanie z zajść antysemickich w Krakowie 11 i 12 sierpnia 1945 r." [Report on anti-Semitic incidents in Kraków on 11 and 12 August 1945] (ANKr, WiN, 42, pp. 33–34) contains similar information. Marked as "attachment No. 5", the report has been translated from German. The WiN „Bulletin" no. 2 comments on its content as follows: "Jews have described the 'anti-Jewish movement' in Poland with naïveté lacking important evidence, but still in a malignant and biased manner. 'Der Bericht', prepared by

The same day, a headmistress of the orphanage, Halina Landsberg, confirmed Górska's account and added, asking for assistance, that the local authorities seemed utterly helpless in this regard and could not guarantee that attacks would not happen again.[36] Likewise, the Polish workers of the facility and the food suppliers were also intimidated.

> Local personnel gave notice and declared that they would not come to work. The personnel returned to work only when threatened with being reported to the authorities. To justify their behaviour, they said that they had acted under a threat of head shaving.[37]

Additionally, the WKŻ in Kraków was also given a number of letters that the children – wanting to leave Rabka as soon as possible – wrote to their parents. One of the children wrote:

> It is impossible to stay here any longer. Those who attacked today threaten us with more attacks. The police are implicated in the whole affair. Anyone who can, flees from the institution – caretakers, nurses, children; they head directly to Kraków at the first opportunity, because it is v[ery] dangerous here.[38]

The available documents show that the attack was carried out by students and teachers of the Dr. Jan Wieczorkowski's Private Sanatorial Gymnasium for Men.[39] A cell of the Home Army Resistance [*Ruch Oporu Armii Krajowej*, ROAK], led by Jan 'Adam' Stachura began to operate there in February 1945, immediately after the gymnasium had been reopened. The students involved in this organisation (less than twenty in all) were members of a patrol [*drużyna*] of scouts.[40] Father

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the Prov[incial] Jew[ish] Com[mission] in Kraków without any consultation with, or notification of the administrative authority, and passed on to delegates of 'Jodut' did its job [most probably – Joint; I owe the suggestion to Joanna Tokarska-Bakir and Natalia Aleksiun – K.P.]. Jews have been given leave to emigrate (so far 20,000 people), money and instructions (ANKr, WiN, 7, Mniejszości narodowe – repatriacja, październik 1945 [Minorities – repatriation, October 1945], p. 205).

[36] Ibidem, The raid on the orphanage, n.d., p. 6.

[37] Ibidem, Podburzanie do bojkotu [Incitement to boycott], n.d., p. 8.

[38] Ibidem, Excerpts from the children's letters, author unknown, n.d., p. 14.

[39] Most of the testimonies come from the trial (held in the district military court in Kraków) of Fr. Józef Hojoł and Edmund Chodak, who were arrested in the fall of 1950 on the charge of anti-state activity (AIPN Kr, 110/4239/2, Postanowienie o pociągnięciu do odpowiedzialności karnej, 25 X 1950 [Decision to prosecute], 25 October 1950], p. 81.

[40] AIPN Kr, 110/4239/1, Protokół przesłuchania Józefa Hojoła, 8 II 1950 [Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Hojoł, 8 February 1950], p. 86. It was Władysław Sikorski Scouting Team, the so-called Yellow Second (*Żółta Dwójka: II Drużyna Harcerzy im. Gen. Władysława Sikorskiego w Rabce-Zdroju 1945–1948. Ludzie, czasy, zdarzenia*, Rabka-Zdrój: Handel i Usługi ATK. Anna Klimińska. Sklep Filatelistyczno-Numizmatyczny, 2005; I am grateful to Julian Kwiek for making this publication available to me).

Józef Hołoj[41] was its leader, spiritual and otherwise, supported by Edmund Chodak, a teacher.[42] A resident of Rabka, Anna Bala, testified in 1950: "Fr. Hołoj Józef was idolised in Rabka. People in the area had great confidence in him, he was highly regarded at the gymnasium […] He ran a Catholic organisation […] and scout troop [*hufiec*]."[43] He had clear and definite views – he used to say about the then-political system that it persecutes religion, that freedom of religion is not respected, and that Jews rule Poland.[44] He was the presumed author of threatening letters that Mieczysław 'Kot' Kempka, a key member of the scout organisation in the Wieczorkowski's gymnasium, covertly delivered to the orphanage administration. In the letters, Hołoj wrote that if the children did not leave the orphanages and the entire Rabka area, repressive measures would be employed against them. "This threat was carried out as Fr. Hojoł gave the order to members of the illegal organisation [operating] in the Wieczorkowski's gymnasium […]."[45]

Eighteen-year-old Stanisław 'Bimber' Wróbel learned of the intended attack from Mieczysław Kempka and his deputy Władysław Śmietana at school, during a break. The attack was to be carried out on Sunday, around 11 p.m. An hour earlier, they were all supposed to gather near the ski jump inrun on Grzebień Hill. On its slopes, were located the buildings of the orphanage.[46] Wróbel and

[41] Father Józef Hojoł (1910–1996) became a curate in the St Mary Magdalene Parish in Rabka in 1945. He worked as a catechist in the Wieczorkowski's gymnasium. On 5 October 1946, he was arrested for the first time, because: "during the most difficult pre-election time, he acted in hostility to the [socialist] system." He was sentenced to half-a-year's imprisonment. Soon, in February 1947, he was recruited. As a secret security agent, Fr. Józef Hojoł assumed the codename 'Y'. He was supposed to have provided information on the goings-on in his region, as well as deliver copies of letters and instructions from the metropolitan curia; I did not locate any of his reports (AIPN Kr, 00100/173, Teczka Józefa Hojoła, Raport o dokonanym werbunku, 23 IV 1947 [File of Józef Hojoł, Recrutiong report, 23 April 1947], p. 8). He "categorically withdew his commitment" in 1948. The same year he was arrested again and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for saying Mass for fallen members of the detachment 'Wiarusy' (AIPN Kr, 110/4239/2, Zapytanie o karalność, 27 I 1950 [Criminal record inquiry, 27 January 1950], p. 60).

[42] AIPN Kr, 110/4239/1, Zeznania własne Stanisława Wróbla, 30 III 1950 [Testimony of Stanisław Wróbel, 30 March 1950], p. 187 and 191; ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Stanisława Wróbla, 18 I 1950 [Minutes of the interrogation of Stanisław Wróbel, 18 January 1950], p. 206–207.

[43] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Anny Bali, 11 IV 1950 [Minutes of the interrogation of Anna Bala, 11 April1950], p. 338–339.

[44] Ibidem, Zeznanie Stanisława Pyki, 24 VII 1950 [Testimony of Stanisław Pyka, 24 July 1950], p. 270. Stanisław Pyka was a student at the Wieczorkowski gymnasium and member of the detachment of 'Groźny'.

[45] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Stanisława Wróbla, 31 III 1950 [Minutes of the interrogation of Stanisław Wróbel, 31 March 1950], p. 253.

[46] Mass graves of victims of the SS police school in Rabka were found on the slopes of this hill.

his companion waited there for nearly three hours, but no one came. Later, it turned out there had been a miscommunication regarding the assembly point. They only heard some shots and the exploding grenade. "The next day, at the school, Klempka told to [*sic*] us […] that […] while passing the Jewish orphanage on his way back home […] he had shot a gun at a window of the orphanage and thrown a grenade in through a window not knowing what followed."[47] There were no victims. One thirteen-year-old sick girl in the isolation ward could consider herself extremely lucky: the grenade exploded near her bed and she fell to the floor but did not sustain any serious injuries.[48] The day after the attack the Kraków WKŻ sent a group of ten armed men to the orphanage – Jewish soldiers commanded by 2d Lt. Zając[49] – to provide protection. It was likely also at that time that four soldiers from the unit of the Red Army that garrnisoned nearby likewise volunteered to protect the children. Those men did not speak Yiddish, nor did they know anything about the religion, but they felt themselves to be Jews and they delighted children at the orphanage.[50]

The second assault happened the following Sunday, August 19. This time attackers racked all buildings with bullets from hand and machine guns; they also threw grenades.[51] Fr. Hojoł described a meeting that took place at the home of Klempka's family, probably immediately following the attack,

> Mieczysław 'Kot' Klempka […], a gymnasium student, son of Władysław Klempka, […] reported on the course [of events] immediately […] after the assault […], how they had carried out the assault […] throwing grenades, how the electrical [system] was damaged; the terrible scream of the children, nurses running around with candles, then we [sic!] retreated because the soldiers of the Soviet Army were advancing on us; Władysław Klempka […] criticized his son's activity […], to which I […] responded […] saying that it would do no harm to chase away Jewish colonies [*skupiska*],

[47] AIPN Kr, 110/4239/1, Zeznanie Stanisława Wróbla, 18 I 1950 [Testimony of Stanisław Wróbel, 18 January 1950], pp. 206–207.

[48] AIPN Kr, 0125/207, t. 2, Protokół oględzin miejsca przestępstwa], 1 IX 1945 [Crime scene inspection report, 1 September 1945], p. 10.

[49] Ibidem, Zeznanie Bronisława Roznera, 1 IX 1945 [Testimony of Bronisław Rozner, 1 September 1945], p. 7. The text also contains another version of the name of the group leader, Zahac. The necessity of arming Jews and allowing them to defend themselves was discussed during the meeting of the CKŻP on August 14: "We need to be very careful, as the action organized in Kraków may mark the beginning of a country-wide operation. We should put forward a demand to the authorities to arm Jews, so the latter can be of help to the security services in eliminating anti-Semitic incidents" (AŻIH, 303/I/7, Protokół posiedzenia Prezydium CKŻP, 14 VIII 1945 [Minutes of the session of the CKŻP's Executive Committee, 14 August 1945], p. 119).

[50] USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Visual History Archive, Rose Silberberg-Skier. Interview 33261, 1997; www.vhaonline.usc.edu, access 20 April 2015.

[51] AIPN Kr, 110/4239/1, Zeznania Anieli Łąckiej [Testimony of Aniela Łącka], 23 VIII 1950, p. 130.

> providing there are no accidents […], I commended those deeds […]. Next, I shared the news with Professor Chodak […]. Out of my personal conviction, I, Józef Hojoł endorsed the assault on the Jewish orphanage, organised with the approval of Professor Chodak, too.[52]

The day after the second assault, the Nowy Targ County Department of the Citizens' Militia sent the eleven-man-strong unit to protect the orphanage. Antoni Kamiński was placed in command of the unit.[53] One of the policemen, Józef Jama of Krościenko, recollected years later:

> the children would take walks under our protection. We became […] good friends; when they picked wild flowers on our walks they would offer them to us, the way children do – all at the same time; these were very joyful moments […], [the children] came to us almost every day to share with us their thoughts and troubles. Those stories – expressed in simple words and [out of childish] imaginations – were of the sort that sometimes we had to clench our teeth to hold back our tears at their plight. The gratitude of those little creatures was great […], it touched us deeply.[54]

Everyone expected another night attack. As the buildings had big windows, the children slept in the corridors. And an attack came – on August 27, Monday early morning.

This time Klempka requested permission from the commander of the Rabka ROAK, Józef 'Tygrys' Makuła to use weapons and ammunition belonging to Makuła's detachment and asked for support of his men. At first Makuła did not consent,[55] but he changed his mind when he learned that the idea for the attacks had been authored by Fr. Hojoł.[56] According to Stanisław Wróbel's testimony, the plan had also been approved by Captain Jan 'Adam' Stachura, the commander of the ROAK of Nowy Targ and Limanowa district. Thirty-two men altogether participated in the assault.[57] Their objective was (in Andrzej Palarczyk's words)

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[52] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Józefa Hojoła, 4 IV 1950 [Minutes of the interrogation of Józef Hojoł, 4 April 1950], p. 104. Anna Bala, who had been present at the meeting, described it in the same way (Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Anny Bali, 11 IV 1950 [Minutes of the interrogation of Anna Bala**,** 11 April 1950], p. 339).

[53] AIPN Kr, 0125/207, t. 2, Zeznanie Antoniego Kamińskiego, 1 IX 1945 [Testimony of Antoni Kamiński, 1 September 1945], p. 8.

[54] AŻIH, 301/7149, Relacja Józefa Jamy, 1 II 1985 [Testimony of Józef Jama, 1 Febrary 1985], p. 2–3. Antoni Kamiński's recollections published in *Echo Krakowa* under the title of "Wydarte z piekła po raz drugi" were similar in tone; a handwritten copy exists in the operational files related to the 'Ogień's' group (AIPN Kr, 06/1/28, pp. 41–42).

[55] AIPN Kr, 110/4239/1, Zeznanie Stanisława Wróbla, 18 I 1950 [Testimony of Stanisław Wróbel, 18 January 1950], p. 208.

[56] Ibidem, Zeznanie Stanisława Wróbla, 31 III 1950 [Testimony of Stanisław Wróbel, 31 March 1950], p. 253.

[57] They were members of Klempka's group active in the Wieczorkowski's gymnasium. Klempka and Wróbel were members of the group as well as Jan Czyszczoń, Edward Górny,

"to frighten the Jewish children in Rabka."[58] They were armed with two LMGs (light machine gun), one Panzerfaust grenade launcher, fifteen rifles, two 10-shot repeating rifles, some five PPsh-type submachine guns, four handguns, one case of grenades, and one case of ammunition.[59] After obtaining instructions from Fr. Hojoł, Klempka took command. With a shot from the Panzerfaust, he gave the signal to take the buildings under fire. Andrzej Palarczyk, a member of the Rabka ROAK, testified:

> After we had gathered on Grzebień Hill, a brother of mine, Edward Palarczyk, together with Mieczysław Kempka, mustered our whole band at 1 o'clock. They distributed weapons between three groups: the first group went towards the Villa Stasin, the second group went towards the Villa Niemen, and I went to the Villa Juras with the third group [...].[60]

Stanisław Wróbel used up three hundred machine-gun rounds.[61] Stanisław Pyka was firing from a rifle at the Villa Stasin.[62] Jerzy Łączyński aimed at the Villa Juras: "I was firing a rifle at the windows [...], knowing that I might cause a murder, because bullets were going into the villa, but I paid no mind and was shooting regardless of that."[63] The fire lasted two hours. During that time, six men from the orphanage security[64] were in the Villa Juras. Three other men Antoni Kamiński had placed on guard in the Villa Niemen, two privates, whom

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Henryk Kręcioch, Zbigniew Lisowski, Edward Liszka, Jerzy Łączyński, Andrzej Palarczyk, Adam Półtorak, Stanisław Pyka, Franciszek Śmietana, Władysław Śmietana, Marian Topór, and 'Lot', a nephew of Fr. Hojoł. (Ibidem, Zeznanie Stanisława Wróbla, 18 I 1950 [Testimony of Stanisław Wróbel, 18 January 1950], p. 208; Andrzej Palarczyk mentioned the same persons: AIPN Kr, 110/4235, Zeznania Andrzeja Palarczyka ps. „Komar", 4 VIII 1950 [Testimony of Andrzej 'Komar' Palarczyk, 4 August 1950], p. 37–38). In addition to the students of the gymnasium, some members of the local ROAK unit participated in the attack, among them Mieczysław Blacharczyk, Franciszek Janowiec, Jan Karkula, Stanisław Kramarczyk, Mieczysław Mlekodaj, Edward Piwowarczyk, Stanisław Skowroński, Jan Świder and his cousin (name unkown). 'Tygrys' sent his deputy Edward Palarczyk with them (Ibidem, Zeznania Andrzeja Palarczyka ps. „Komar", 4 VIII 1950 [Testimony of Andrzej 'Komar' Palarczyk, 4 August 1950], p. 37–38). Stanisław Pyka mentioned also Jan Osiecki and Teofil Papierz (Ibidem, Zeznania Stanisława Pyki, 14 VIII 1950 [Testimony of Stanisław Pyka, 14 August 1950], p. 93).

[58] Ibidem, Protokół rozprawy głównej, 16 XI 1950 [Transcript of the trial proceedings, 16 November 1950], p. 89.

[59] Ibidem, Zeznania Andrzeja Palarczyka ps. „Komar", 4 VIII 1950 [Testimony of Andrzej 'Komar' Palarczyk,4 August 1950], p. 37–38.

[60] Ibidem.

[61] AIPN Kr, 110/4239/1, Zeznanie Stanisława Wróbla, 31 III 1950 [Testimony of Stanisław Wróbel, 31 March 1950], p. 253.

[62] AIPN Kr, 110/4235, Zeznania Stanisława Pyki, 16 VIII 1950 [Testimony of Stanisław Pyka, 16 August 1950], p. 90.

[63] Ibidem, Zeznania Jerzego Łączyńskiego ps. „Maciek", 28 VIII 1950 [Testimony of Jerzy 'Maciek' Łączyński, 28 August 1950], pp. 83–84.

[64] Five policemen and one rifleman of the PUBP in Rabka.

he had sent on patrol that afternoon, did not return to their posts.[65] It is unclear how the members of the Jewish self-defence, who were then under Liberman's command, were positioned.[66]

Antonina Naprawa, who was on duty at the Rabka telephone exchange that night, testified: "I recall that [someone from] the Jewish camp called that night around 2.15 a.m. and asked to be connected to the local MO station which did not answer. A moment later [someone from] the local security office called asking to be connected to the MO station in Rabka, got through and talked."[67] When he heard gunfire, the MO deputy chief came out in front of the building and ascertained that shots were fired in the vicinity of the Soviet army's ammunition depot and the UB post. Both buildings were situated next to villas Juras, Stasin, and Niemen. Józef Mlekodaj, a policeman on duty at the Rabka station at the night of 26 August testified:

> I heard the phone ring around 2.30 a.m., when I answered it I was made to believe, that it was a call from the PUBP [*Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*; Public Security County Office]. I heard on the phone the following words: "we have been raided by the bands, the jews and the UBP [*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, Public Security Office, also known as UB]", I asked should we come to help you, but the answer was "what the hell for[?] To be slaughtered here[?], but he asked, how many of us were there, at the station, and I answered that – four, and then he said: Watch yourselves, so they don't raid you.[68]

According to the testimony of Andrzej Palarczyk, member of the ROAK, the shots that came from the direction of the UB's and the Red Army unit's buildings were fired only after the attack on the orphanage had ended:

> after the attack, Mieczysław Klempka called a muster down the slope from those villas, and while we were marching [there] we heard shots fired in our direction by the attacking MO, UB and Soviet military [men] […], but we put up resistance and opened fire on those charging at us […]. After a brief fight, however, we were forced to flee; I fled to my home and Klempka […] together with the whole band went to the bunker on Luboń Hill.[69]

On August 27, a couple hours after the attack, the PKMO in Nowy Targ prepared a "Special Report" for the Department of Political Education of the

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[65] AIPN Kr, 0125/207, file 2, Zeznanie Antoniego Kamińskiego, 1 IX 1945 [Testimony of Antoni Kamiński, 1 September 1945], p. 8.

[66] First name unknown (ibidem, Zeznanie Bronisława Roznera, 1 IX 1945 [Testimony of Bronisław Rozner, 1 September 1945], p. 7).

[67] Zapiski dochodzenia, 29 VIII 1945 [The investigation notes, 29 August 1945], p. 3.

[68] Zeznanie Józefa Mlekodaja, 29 VIII 1945 [Testimony of Józef Mlekodaj, 29 August 1945], p. 4.

[69] AIPN Kr, 110/4235, Zeznania Andrzeja Palarczyka ps. „Komar", 10 VIII 1950 [Testimony of Andrzej 'Komar' Palarczyk, 10 August 1950], p. 40.

Voivodship Headquarters of the Citizens' Militia in Kraków, which stated: "[Neither] the staff of the police station in Rabka, nor officers of the local post of the UB participated in repelling the attack on the orphanage. An investigation is underway as to the reasons the local MO station did not take part in the fight."[70] The investigation also concerned two policemen sent by the PKMO to protect the children. One of them, Władysław Mlekodaj, was a Rabka resident. According to their testimonies, they had happened upon members of "the band" in the forest, who disarmed them. During the attack they lay in some ditch; after being released, they went to drink vodka. They returned to the Villa Juras at dawn.[71] Testimony of Stefan Rybicki, an emissary of the U.S. government, who would later help Mieczysław Klempka (among others) leave the country illegally, sheds some light as to the conduct of the Rabka police. "Hojoł told me, that they had to coerce financial support […], I asked what did the Militia have to say about that, to which he replied that the platoon commander of the Militia was at their service, which later turned out to be true."[72]

On 28 August 1945, the orphanage in Rabka was closed down. Those children who still could, returned to their parents, some were sent to children's homes in Otwock and Bielsk. Those in the worst condition, or those without guardians, were sent to the orphanage in Zakopane. Living in constant fear had caused the children to lose weight; their health deteriorated.[73] Seven-year-old Oleś Aronowicz described those events thusly.

> There were constant shootings in Rabka. Sister Gusta sent us under our beds, and under our beds over and over again, but we didn't want to. One night, they used up 2400 bullets; one sergeant who was defending us told me this. One time the Germans [Oleś believed the attackers to be Germans – K.P.] threw a grenade into a room, where a sick girl had been sleeping, and her bed landed somewhere outside, and she – on the top of a wardrobe. There might have been three attacks in Rabka. I do remember the second. When they threw grenades at our villas 'Stasia' and 'Niemno' [prop. Stasin and Niemen – K.P.], they made big holes in the walls. Later, these villas got machine guns for [self-]defence. Then our home in Rabka was closed down, and we went to Zakopane. One of the soldiers I knew told me that we were leaving because Poles are about to take over all of Rabka. Things were better in Zakopane, were the bestest. Because in Rabka, if we

[70] AIPN Kr, 0125/207, file 2, Raport specjalny nowotarskiego komendanta powiatowego MO, 27 VIII 1945 [Special report by the chief the Nowy Targ County Department of the MO, 27 August 1945], p. 16.

[71] Zeznania Władysława Mlekodaja, 1 IX 1945 [Testimony of Władysław Mlekodaj, 1 September 1945], p. 9.

[72] Zeznanie Stefana Rybickiego, 4 IV 1950 [Testimony of Stefan Rybicki, 4 April 1950], p. 279.

[73] GFH, Holdings Registry, 023135, Uwagi o Olesiu Aronowiczu, 1946 [Remarks on Oleś Aronowicz, 1946], p. 10.



Seven-year-old Oleś Aronowicz, who gave an account of the assaults on the Jewish orphanage in Rabka. Zakopane, 1946 (© GFH)

went even for a moment to the woods to play, someone would tell us right away: "Hey you! I'll show you! Want to get your head smashed in?" There was no freedom in Rabka…[74]

The indictment against Fr. Hojoł and Edmund Chodak states that students [of the Wieczorkowski's gymnasium], being under the influence of the cleric and acting with the approval of their teacher, conducted three assaults on the Jewish children's camp in Rabka.[75] In the sentencing, however, this charge was not taken into account.[76] In turn, one of the counts of the indictment against Palarczyk,

[74] The story of Oleś Aronowicz, written down by Lena Kuechler in France, 1946, p. 7.

[75] AIPN Kr, 110/4239, t. 2, Akt oskarżenia ks. Józefa Hojoła i prof. Edmunda Chodaka, 25 X 1950 [Indictment against Rev. Józef Hojoł and teacher Edmund Chodak, 25 October 1950], p. 92.

[76] Fr. Józef Hojoł was convicted of anti-state activity and sentenced to twelve years of imprisonment (he was released after he had served four years), Edmund Chodak, sentenced to

Łączyński and Pyka reads, "In the month of August, 1945, in the town of Rabka, together with some thirty other members of the band, he carried out a violent armed assault on MO and UB officers guarding the camp of the Jewish children [*sic*]."[77] This position, formulated for the first time by the Military District Court in Kraków, and denying that the Jewish children were the real target of the attacks, has prevailed to the present day.[78] In 2011 a plaque commemorating the anti-communist activities of Fr. Hojoł was mounted in the Rabka church of St. Mary Magdalene. No one mentions his complicity in organizing the attacks on the Jewish children.

"Died a tragic death [at the hand] of true Poles"

Dawid Grassgrün[79] was a Nowy Targ farmer and a fiacre driver. He and his wife Regina had five children: Chana, Filip, Samuel, Abraham and Emanuel. "Questionnaire regarding the registration of war losses", filled by Grassgrün on 16 August 1945, specifies the loss of his wife[80] and two sons.[81] His house, farm equipment, fiacres, and animals were lost as well.[82] Being sixty-one years old in 1945, he was the oldest survivor amongst the Nowy Targ Jews and the only to have survived the mass execution carried out in the Jewish cemetery in Nowy Targ on the day the local Jewish community was liquidated. He was able to save himself because – having leased the field adjacent to the cemetery before the war – he knew of a small gate in the fence. Tadeusz Czubernat, a member of the Baudienst [labour battalion] and a witness of the execution, wrote in the late of 1970s: "Grassgrün managed to shove the Gestapo officer who was about to shot him with such force, that [the officer] fell to the ground. [Grassgrün] escaped

five years of imprisonment, remained at large due to the amnesty (ibidem, Wyrok w sprawie ks. Hojoła i prof. Chodaka, 10 I 1951 [Sentence in the case of Fr. Hojoł and teacher Chodak, 10 January 1951], pp. 319–321).

[77] AIPN Kr, 110/4235, Akt oskarżenia Andrzeja Palarczyka, 19 IX 1950 [Indictment against Andrzej Palarczyk, 19 September 1950], p. 172.

[78] Interview with Maciej Korkuć: "Partyzant nie nadstawia policzka," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 36 (2006).

[79] Dawid Grassgrün was born in Krościenko in 1884; he moved to Nowy Targ in 1910. (Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie Oddział w Nowym Sączu [The National Archive in Kraków, the Nowy Sącz Branch, later: ANKr ONS], 31/102/86, Dowód rodziny Dawida Grassgrüna [The residence card of Dawid Grassgrün's family, 20th century, the second half of the 1930s.], p. 204).

[80] Regina, who had earned a living before the war by selling vegetables and fruit, and driving people, died in Bełżec (YVA, O.3/2975, Testimony of Chana Hornung, October 1966, p. 6).

[81] Emanuel was shot to death in Nowy Targ cemetery on 30 August 1942. Filip died in Nowy Sącz, the circumstances of his death are unknown (ibidem).

[82] ANKr ONS, Starostwo Nowotarskie [Nowy Targ Starosty, later: St NT], 155, Kwestionariusz dotyczący rejestracji szkód wojennych Dawida Grassgrüna, 16 VIII 1945 [Questionnaire regarding the registration of war losses of Dawid Grassgrün, 16 August 1945], n.d.

through a hole in the fence and ran toward the airport into the forest, and he found shelter in Slovakia."[83] His earlier ventures had made this possible. Grassgrün had collaborated with the Nowy Targ Jews, who, after their escape to Slovakia in the autumn of 1939, had set up a people-smuggling ring in Kieżmark.[84]

His daughter Chana, interviewed in Israel in the 1960s, recollected that her father had known every inch of the ground in the close – and the not-so-close – vicinity. He made use of his knowledge to smuggle Jews and Poles across the border in 1941–42. Among the Poles had been many officers who would stay overnight at Grassgrün's home before setting off on their way. Chana did not know her father's smuggling contacts; she knew only that he had had some, and that he used to get people across the border in the village of Stara Wieś.[85]

One of those contacts had certainly been Józef Engländer. His three daughters remember very clearly the night when Grassgrün sat at the table in their house in Kieżmark, clad in rags and stinking, and talked about what had happened in the Nowy Targ cemetery and how he, naked, had escaped death. Their father found him shelter in the Slovak Red Monastery; he survived there tending to horses.[86]

He had presumably been among the first Jews to return to Nowy Targ, and he certainly was the oldest of them. Perhaps that was why he took it upon himself to rebuild Jewish life in the town. As a representative of the Jewish Religious Association in Nowy Targ, he signed death certificates.[87] He was also making efforts to restitute the synagogue's building which had been converted into a cinema in December 1940 and, after the war, had been taken over by the Bureau of Propaganda and Information. On 1 February 1946, the Provincial Office in Kraków sent a letter to the Provincial Bureau of Propaganda and Information:

> A group of Jewish citizens from Nowy Targ has filed a petition to the Min[istry] of Public Administration, requesting the return of the synagogue's building in Nowy Targ to the local Jewish community for worship purposes; [the building] in question had been appropriated by the Bureau of Propaganda without consultation with the County Authorities, to set up a community theatre (cinema) there. Said building remains in the hands of the TZP.[88] It is to be emphasised that, according to the State Adminis-

[83] AIPN, OKŚZpNP in Kraków, S4/75, Pismo Tadeusza Czubernata do Okręgowego Sądu Pracy i Ubezpieczeń Społecznych, 6 II 1978 [Letter of Tadeusz Czubernat to the District Labor and Social Insurance Court, 6 February 1978], p. 543.

[84] It was roganized by Benzion Kalb, who together with his collaborators saved several hundred lives (YVA, O.7.SL/130).

[85] Commentary to the testimony of Chana Hornung, October 1966, p. 28.

[86] USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Visual History Archive, Paula Golden, Interview 48314, www.vhaonline.usc.edu, access 20 April 2015; ibidem, Rosalie Gelernter, Interview 21371, www.vhaonline.usc.edu, access 20 April 2015; Lydia Hughes, interview by author, December 2013, transcript in my possession.

[87] Death certificate of Emanuel Singer, 20 August 1945, n.d.

[88] Tymczasowy Zarząd Państwowy – a state-run Provisional Administration Agency.

> tration for Religious Affairs [*Państwowy Zarząd Wyznaniowy*], all assets – movable as well as immovable – remaining of f[ormer] Jewish religious communities, must be allocated to Jewish associations – charitable, cultural, et al.[89]

According to Grassgrün's daughter, it was his efforts to recover the Nowy Targ synagogue, which brought about his death.[90]

Late in the evening of 10 February 1946, the police station in Nowy Targ received notification of the robbery and the murder. In her testimony given the following day, Anna Grońska, who had been renting a room from Grassgrün and had witnessed his death, quoted of the victim and his murderers:

> at nine o'clock, while at Dawid Grassgrün's home, I heard crackling sounds [coming] from the corridor by the door and then from the yard by the gate. Startled, I immediately asked , whether he'd closed the hallway doors, to which Dawid Grassgrün replied that he had closed all the doors and told me to check what was there. I peered out the window and saw that someone had broken down the gate to the yard. Suddenly, before I'd even stepped away from the window, two individuals in plain clothes, with guns, entered the room calling out, "hands up", and they said, "you son of a bitch, give us your gun." Dawid Grassgrün, however, replied that he had no gun, "you, gentlemen, can look for one and if you find any, you can do to me what you'd like." Then, those individuals said [to us] to lie face down on the floor, so we lay face down on the floor, but I don't know whether Grassgrün did. While I was lying there, those individuals were gathering and taking out all [our] things. After they had taken the belongings, they demanded that he hand over to them the 200 dollars he had, to which he replied, that he had no dollars as he did not trade in dollars, and then said, "you can look for them, gentlemen, if you find any, take them", but they said, "what is better to you: [your] life or dollars", to which he replied. "but what if I don't have any dollars?" When he said these words, one of the individuals fired his gun twice, shooting Grassgrün in the head.

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[89] ANKr, UW II 1066, Pismo Urzędu Wojewódzkiego w Krakowie do Urzędu Propagandy i Informacji w Krakowie, 1 II 1946 [Letter from the Provincial Office in Kraków to the Bureau of Propaganda and Information in Kraków, 1 February 1946], p. 187. The letters show that the dispute over the synagogue continued through 1948, even though no Jews remained in Nowy Targ at that time. I did not find any final decision regarding the building. The cinema is located there to this day.

[90] "I found my father [at home] when I returned from the camp. Unfortunately, in February 1946, the AK [partisans] murdered my father and plundered the house. […] I can explain it. Because the shul in Nowy Targ had been converted into a cinema, my father wrote a letter to the Ministry in Warsaw. He described the situation, [explained] that the shul had been converted into a theater. The ruling was sent by the Ministry to the municipal council that the shul had to be returned to the Jews immediately. But despite several orders from the Ministry, the synagogue has not been returned. My father has been murdered (YVA, O.3/2975, Relacja Chany Hornung, październik 1966 [Testimony of Chana Hornung, October 1966], pp. 4–5).



Removal of the body of the murdered David Grassgrün. His son Samuel is third from the right. Nowy Targ, 1946 (© YVA)

> When they were leaving, they told us – that is, me and Mroźny known as 'Psiaga', who was there when the whole thing happened – not to move. So [we] lay there a good half-hour and then left.[91]

A special report prepared by the KP MO on 13 February 1946 states that the attackers took clothing and 7,580 zlotys in cash from Grassgrün's home. Moreover, "while the aforementioned individuals were plundering the flat, others took two horses and a pig from the Grassgrün's stable, which they killed on the spot and then loaded on a sleigh, readied for this purpose in front of Grassgrün's house; the loot secured, the perpetrators departed."[92]

In May 1946, Grassgrün's son sold his father's house – a wooden construction with one room, a kitchen and hallway, and a brick barn - standing on a three-hundred-square-metre lot.[93] The perpetrators of the murder were not found, but the men of 'Ogień' were suspected.[94]

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[91] AIPN Kr, 06/1/1, Zeznanie Anny Grońskiej [Testimony of Anna Grońska], 11 II 1946, pp. 115–116.

[92] AIPN Kr, 0125/182, file 12, Raport specjalny nr 4, KP MO w Nowym Targu do KW MO w Krakowie [Special report no. 4 by the KP MO in Nowy Targ for the KW MO in Kraków], 13 II 1946, p. 571.

[93] ANKr ONS, Repertorium Antoniego Celewicza nr 265/1946 [Repertory of Antoni Celewicz, no 265/1946], 16 May 1946, n.p.

[94] AIPN Kr, 074/12/2, Karta na czyn przestępczy, 30 XII 1972, [Crime report, 30 December 1972], p. 87. Among the archival materials concerning Freedom and Independence [WiN] in the section „Current activities of the UBP – assassinations" [Działalność bieżąca UBP – mordy skrytobójcze], I have found the following note: „The Chairman of the Jewish Committee,



The funeral of Dawid Grassgrün. His children standing over his grave: Chana (third from left) and Samuel (second from left). Nowy Targ, 1946 (© YVA)

In early March Czesława Polaczyk, Józef 'Ogień', and Kuraś's fiancé, were arrested on a charge of posting illegal leaflets. She testified in the Nowy Targ PUBP on 9 March 1946:

> I posted leaflets of anti-Jewish content on 'Ogień's' order. My sister Janka would obtain those leaflets, I don't know from whom. The first leaflets I received from Janka, [bore] the titles *Dawid Grassgrün*, *Yids and yidlets* [Żydzi i żydzięta], later on *For the brave and Persevering* [Za dzielną i Wytrwałą], *The Terror of Yids* [Terror Żydów], and *Security Services* [Służby bezpieczeństwa; in fact, the last two titles refer to the same leaflet, entitled *Terror of Yids and security services* – K.P.], and the last ones handwritten in red pencil, "Do not participate in the rally" [Nie brać udziału w wiecu], signed NSZ.[95]

Dawid Gringrass [*sic*] was murdered in Nowy Targ in March '46. The National Armed Forces [*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*, NSZ] were held responsible, although the Jewish Central Committee has evidence that the murder was committed by Jews because of a feud from the time of the occupation" (ANKr, WiN, 27, Dział bezpieczeństwa. Działalność bieżąca UBP, czerwiec 1947 [Security section. Current acctivities], June 1947, p. 118).

[95] AIPN Kr, 06/1, t. 3, Zeznanie Czesławy Polaczyk, 9 III 1946 [Testimony of Czesława Polaczyk, 9 March 1946], p. 137. The indictment of the persons who – along with Polaczyk – were involved in posting the leaflets reads, "Jan Pawlikowski's task was to promote the activity of the criminal band and to rouse people against the authorities, the system, and jews by distributing and circulating the leaflets. [...] Gabor [...] circulated the said leaflets with Pawlikowski [...] in the period from February to 7 March 1946, the date on which both were detained, when they had posted the leaflets several times. The leaflets called for the murder of jews, boycott

In the Archive of the Kraków Provincial Office I discovered copies of the leaflets relating to the murder of Grassgrün.

Due to their purport, as well as to demonstrate the context for events that took place in Podhale during the months that followed, I am quoting them in their entirety[96]:

Dawid Gras[s]grün
Blessed, died a tragic death [at the hand] of true Poles, who no longer suffered the rotten leech to suck Polish blood.
May God allow to wipe out the dirty rotten plague in Poland.
He died [punished] for his miscreant and treacherous work.
Each and every yid and yidlet will die to honour his blessed memory.
So that our country and Her sons could work freely
and peacefully.

Yids and yidlets
You wanted to take the whole country,
To destroy Poles and Polish children,
We will set you such a blissful paradise,
that the Jewish scab will break up.
The heart bleeds for the death of Gras[s]grün,
For his faithful work, treacherous cunning,
We call [him] by name, where [is] the dirty pig,
He sold his peddler's skills to the Devil.
He will try for the rest of the yidlets, so they can come to him happily and in good health,
He will enjoy the hoard of piglets,
When they meet one another in Hell.

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of governmental activities, and aimed to infect the public with hatred of the government and governmental bodies, and to spread racial hatred (AIPN Kr, 111/322, Akt oskarżenia, 11 IV 1946 [Indictment, 11 April 1946], p. 28).

[96] *Dawid Gras[s]gr*ün: Błogosławiony zginął śmiercią tragiczną,//od prawdziwych Polaków, którzy nie pozwolili//dłużej ssać krwi polskiej parszywej pijawce.//Oby Pan Bóg pozwolił jak najprędzej wytępić//brudną i parszywą zarazę w Polsce,//Zginął za swą szubrawską i zdradziecką pracę.//Każdy jeden żyd i żydziątko zginie//ku czci jego świetlanej pamięci.// Aby nasz kraj i jego synowie mogli swobodnie//i spokojnie pracować. Żydzi i żydziątka: Chcieliście opanować cały kraj,//Zniszczyć Polaków i polskie dzieci,//My Wam przygotujemy błogi raj,//Aż parcha żydowska się rozleci,//Żal serce ściska za śmierć Gras[s]grüna,//Za pracę wierną, chytrość zdradziecką,//Wołamy po imieniu, gdzie brudna świnia,//On sprzedał diabłu swą zdolność kupiecką.//Będzie się starał o resztę żydziaków//Aby szczęśliwie i zdrowo poszli do niego,//Miło mu będzie w gronie prosiaków,//Gdy pozna w piekiełku swój swego,//Uchodźcie żydki póki czas,//Palestyna to wasz kraj,//Inaczej zabierzemy wszystkich w las,//I tam będzie błogi raj.//Skończyła się wolność złota,//Za Gras[s]grünem przyszedł czas,//Uciekajcie, bo u nas wielka ochota,//Bić, mordować i strzelać was…

Flee yids, while there's still time,
Palestine is your country,
Or we'll take you all to the woods,
Where there'll be blissful paradise.
It's the end of the golden freedom,
Time to [follow] Gras[s]grün,
Run, as we have a great urge to beat you, murder and shoot you…[97]

"Many Jews had lived in Zakopane before the war, and they didn't want any Jews there anymore"

Leaflets were also dropped off at an orphanage for Jewish children in Zakopane.[98] The orphanage had been organised at the same time as the institution in Rabka, in the Villa Leśny Gród. Lena Kuechler was the orphanage supervisor[99] and, as authors of the report on activities of the Kraków WKŻ put it, she was able to achieve something extraordinary:

> Nearly all children arrived at the Home with severe traumas, with fear in their eyes, wary, withdrawn, disheartened, and sad or overconfident. They were children, who had survived alone in a wardrobe for two and a half years (as Marysia Zung had from the age of three to six), who had been walled-in or living under a bed for one and a half years, like ten-year-old Dawid Jakubowicz. They were children who had lain in some locker in an attic like little Awrum, a three-year-old with no surname, or like thirteen--year-old Izydor Lermer, who was taken out of some dark hole in an attic[100] only a few weeks before, and who had stayed there for two and a half years. [They were children] who couldn't walk or talk, who did not know what a bed was, a fork, or a toilet […]. There also were some children, who had been through seven camps, who had suffered through every [liquidation] action of Jewish towns and settlements, [who had been] hounded

[97] ANKr, UW II 248, duplicates of leaflets concerning Dawid Grassgrün, presumably February 1946, p. 31. The pamphlet entitled *Terror [spread] by Jews and the security service* reads, "Jewish louses and public security service thugs prowl the Nowy Targ County area […]. [You are like] the pox! Spotted thyphus, insatiable leeches, soon crows will enjoy [this] tasty carrion. Rustlers shall fight and shoot until the last Jewish dog and security man [perishes]. (AIPN Kr, 06/1, t. 14, Ulotka *Terror żydów i służby bezpieczeństwa*, III 1946 [Leaflet *Terror [spread] by Jews and the security service*, March 1946], p. 85).

[98] Voices of the Holocaust. Transcript of David P. Boder's interview with Józef Ferber, 7 September 1946];_www.voices.iit.edu, access in February 2015.

[99] Lena Kuechler retained her Aryan name, Leontyna Relicz, at the time. Alternative spellings of her real name are Kuchler or Kichler; I have chosen the form appearing in the most sources which concern her.

[100] The boy had been hidden by a Polish family who, in fear for his life and frightened of their neighbors, only allowed him to leave the hideout eight months after the end of the war// after the war had ended. (GFH, Holdings Registry, 29671, Izydor Lermer's testimony, 1946).

> and hunted, cold and hungry, driven through fields and woods, children [who had been] blackmailed by police and homegrown civil extortionists in bigger cities or ten-year-olds, young partisans armed with guns – all of these children have left their childhoods far behind. These children required psychological treatment, and an atmosphere of fervid love that could thaw […] their numbed souls. *The Children's Home in Zakopane fully lived up to the task* [original emphasis – K.P.].[101]

This was achieved despite enormous difficulties – one of which was the hostility of the Polish populace.

Already at the time of the attacks on the children in Rabka, there was a fear that the wave of anti-Jewish violence could affect the Zakopane orphanage. In 1946 Lena Kuechler recalled,

> I decided to brace for all that and to organise forces for our defence. I went to the security authorities and the Polish police […]. I got ten men assigned to defend us […]. We installed a machine gun on one of the verandas. In addition I had an alarm siren, I had floodlights, a telephone. […] [It was] just like in a concentration camp […]. Those who were assigned to defend us split into two camps, the [regular] policemen got into a fight with the policemen from the security services, they were throwing grenades at one another, at the home, in front of the children. Such defenders I had. […] I decided to find Jews who could defend us, and obtained a gun licence myself. And sure enough, there was an attack on us, but we repelled it.[102]

According to a report from the MO station in Zakopane, on the night of 28 August, the orphanage came under fire from four machine guns. There were no casualties.[103]

At first the children of the Villa Leśny Gród attended school together with their Polish peers, who beat them, called them names, and threw stones at them.[104] Edith Zierer, a girl who had survived the camps in Płaszów and Skarżysko-Kamienna, and later after the war was – by her account – rescued by Karol Wojtyła[105], recollects:

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[101] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Organizacji i Kontroli [Organization and Monitoring Department], 303/II/75, Sprawozdanie z działalności Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Krakowie, 1 II–31 X 1945 [Report on the activities of the Jewish Provincial Committee in Kraków, 1 February – 31 October 1945], p. 216.

[102] Voices of the Holocaust. Transcript of David P. Boder's interview with Lena Kuechler, 8 September 1946; www.voices.iit.edu, access in February 2015.

[103] AIPN Kr, 0125/207, t. 8, Sprawozdanie z działalności PKMO w Nowym Targu 11 VIII–20 IX 1945 [Report on activities of the PKMO in Nowy Targ from 11 August to 20 September 1945], p. 83. On the day of the assault, a group of children from the closed orphanage in Rabka was brought to the Children's Home in Zakopane.

[104] Voices of the Holocaust, Transcript of David P. Boder's interview with Lena Kuechler, 8 September 1946; www.voices.iit.edu, access in February 2015.

[105] Karol Wojtyła as a young priest spotted her, dying among the people who had left the camp. He walked several kilometers to the train station, carrying her on his back, and then



Lena Kuechler with the children in front of the Villa Leśny Gród 1945 (© Private Archive of Janet Singer Applefield)

"Poles beat us. Many Jews had lived in Zakopane before the war, and they didn't want any Jews there anymore. The teachers wouldn't do anything about it; at times the principal intervened. The principal cussed them out, but they didn't care."[106]

Finally, the Kraków Board of Education had to grant the school run by the sanatorium the same status that public schools had.[107]

Kuechler felt that she had to fight for everything. Local officials responsible for food supplies were refusing her provisions. When she walked down the street she would hear anti-Semitic slurs. In late October 1945, two armed individuals assaulted her – she was thrown to the ground and mugged.[108]

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he took her to Kraków. *My 100 Children*, a movie by Amalia Margolin i Oshra Schwartz, Izrael, 2003.

[106] Voices of the Holocaust. Transcript of David P. Boder's interview with Edith Zierer, 8 September 1946; www.voices.iit.edu, access in February 2015.

[107] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Organizacji i Kontroli [Organization and Monitoring Department], 303/II/75, Sprawozdanie z działalności Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Krakowie, 1 II–31 X 1945 [Report on activities of the Jewish Provincial Committee in Kraków, 1 February –31 October 1945], p. 217. A political report by the WiN indicates, "There is a Children's Home in Zakopane, a well-appointed school for Jews, under the special supervision of the board of education" (ANKr, WiN, 7, Political Report for October 1945, p. 37).

[108] AIPN, 824/580, Akta przeciwko N.N. sprawcy napadu rabunkowego na szkodę Leontyny Relicz [Files of the case against N.N., a perpetrator of the mugging of Leontyna Relicz (Lena Kuechler)], October 1945.

Józef Ferber, the self-defence chief of the Zakopane orphanage recalled, "Poles would drop off leaflets [at the orphanage], they threatened to kill us, just as they had killed a leader of the Jewish community in neighbouring Nowy Targ. They wrote that all people who lived there would meet the same fate."[109] The head of the UB in Zakopane refused to take responsibility for the safety of Leśny Gród.[110]

Under the circumstances, the decision was issued in mid-March 1946 to close the Children's Home. The Ministry of Public Security made the head of the WUBP in Kraków directly responsible for its safety until the closing date.[111] The charges – there were 92 in February 1946 – were to be sent to the children's homes in Otwock, Kraków, and Gieszcz Pusty (Głuszyca).[112]

The night of 17 March 1946, Kuechler wrote a letter to the Office of the Child Care Services at the CKŻP.

> I am writing at 2 in the morning, after a very hard day's work, so let me get to the point. I am going abroad with almost all my children and staff. We are leaving [the country] *legally* [original emphasis – K.P.], in conditions which are comfortable even to the youngest children. I can see no safe environment for the children either in Zakopane or in any other town, and I believe that after the hell they have been through, we have no right to expose them to danger, or to fight for democracy at their expense. Therefore I shall take them to a safe place where they will have the same home, with the same group of children and the same staff, [living] in perfect freedom and safety. […] I realise that the Committee cannot provide them now with the conditions needed for their unrestricted growth, which is, in my opinion, the most important right of any free man.[113]

That same day the staff organised a Purim party for the children, "the most splendid of all their parties", with a gypsy orchestra and a performance. The

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[109] Voices of the Holocaust. Transcript of David P. Boder's interview with Józef Ferber, 7 September 1946; www.voices.iit.edu, access in February 2015.

[110] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Oświaty [Board of Education], 303/IX/1628, List Centralnego Wydziału Opieki nad Dzieckiem do Ministerstwa Oświaty, 14 VII 1946 [Letter of the Central Department of Child Care Services to the Ministry of Education, 14 July 1946].

[111] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Organizacji i Kontroli, [Organization and Monitoring Department] 303/II/10, Protokół posiedzenia plenum Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Krakowie, 14 III 1946 [Minutes of the plenary session of the Jewish Provincial Committee in Kraków, 14 March 1946], p. 179.

[112] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Oświaty [Board of Education], 303/IX/1628, Raport inspektor Klimy Fuswerk, dotyczący wyjazdu 60 dzieci wraz z personelem z Domu Dziecka w Zakopanem, 29 III 1946 [Report of Inspector Klima Fuswerk on the departure of 60 children and the staff of the Children's House in Zakopane, 29 March 1946], pp. 27–28.

[113] Ibidem, List Leontyny Relicz do Referatu Opieki nad Dzieckiem przy CKŻP, 17 III 1946 [Letter by Leontyna Relicz (Lena Kuechler) to the Office of Child Care Services at the CKŻP, 17 March 1946], pp. 23–25.

majority of the children were asked to pack enough things for a three-day trip. Some children were to stay; they were told they would go on a trip the following week. On 18 March 1946 after breakfast the children together with the staff and a few soldiers boarded a truck. They crossed the border into Czechoslovakia via Cieszyn. The children who had remained – 22 half-orphans or children who had guardians – travelled together with one caregiver to Kraków. The workers of the Kraków WKŻ were taken aback by the escape; they felt that the supervisor of the Zakopane orphanage had betrayed their trust: "There is no doubt that the safety of the children's home in Zakopane was highly questionable. Nevertheless, it is an indisputable fact that Cit[izen] Relicz [Kuechler – K.P.] took advantage of the situation to implement *a long-planned* [original emphasis – K.P.] departure of the children."[114]



Children of the Zakopane orphanage. Zakopane, 1946 (© GFH)

In her book written twenty years later, Kuechler detailed the circumstances in which the plan to take the children abroad had emerged.[115] The escapees were aided by Vaad Hatzalah, an Orthodox organisation that bought them Greek passports.[116] Furthermore, Lena's brother Nesonel Kichler, who was head of the Provincial Branch of Military Censorship in Kraków, also supported her.[117] The children had stayed for a short time in Czechoslovakia before arriving in France, where they spent close to two years. They arrived in Israel in 1948.[118] A few days after the children had left Podhale, a meeting took place between

[114] Ibidem, Raport inspektor Klimy Fuswerk, dotyczący wyjazdu 60 dzieci wraz z personelem z Domu Dziecka w Zakopanem, 29 III 1946, [Report of Inspector Klima Fuswerk on the departure of 60 children and the staff of the Children's House in Zakopane, 29 March 1946], pp. 27–28.

[115] Lena Kuchler-Silberman, *My 100 Children* (London: Pan Books, 1961), p. 154.

[116] Voices of the Holocaust, Transcript of David P. Boder's interview with Józef Ferber, 7 September 1946, www.voices.iit.edu, access in February 2015.

[117] AIPN Kr, 140/2, Wyciąg z rozkazu personalnego nr 253, 29 IX 1945 [Excerpts from personal order no 253, 29 September 1945], p. 141; ibidem, Wyciąg z rozkazu personalnego nr 187, 14 VI 1946 [Excerpts from personal order no 187, 14 June 1946], p. 295.

[118] Kuchler-Silberman, *My 100 Children*, pp. 201–202.



Children of the Villa Leśny Gród with their teachers and members of the Jewish self-defence. Zakopane, 1946 (© GFH)

Władysław Czyż, an investigating officer of the UB, and 'Ogień'. One of 'Ogień's' preconditions to any further negotiations with the authorities was "the expulsion of all Jews from Nowy Targ as soon as possible; otherwise, [he] shall root them out mercilessly."[119]

"Listen up! They killed Jews on Waksmundzka Street on the other side of the bridge"

Salomon (Lonek) Lindenberger and Louis Herz both came from wealthy families. Lonek's father Elias had owned the biggest colonial store in Nowy Targ Market Square, which the Germans confiscated in December 1939.[120] Since then he and his son had worked for the new owners, doing manual labour without pay. They supported themselves by selling off their belongings in exchange for food.[121] Lonek's parents were killed in Bełżec in late August 1942. His teenage sister Nina tried to hide with a Polish family; she lost her life in autumn of 1942.[122] After a selection carried out in Nowy Targ stadium on 30 August 1942,

[119] AIPN Kr, 06/1/16, Meldunek specjalny WUBP w Krakowie do Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, 27 III 1946 [Special dispatch of the WUBP in Kraków to the Ministry of Public Security, 27 March 1946], pp. 47–48.

[120] ANKr ONS, 31/603/321, Popieranie przemysłu i handle [Industry and Trade Promotion], p. 720; Dowód osobisty rodziny Lindenbergerów, lata trzydzieste XX w. [The identity card of the Lindenberg family, 1930s], p. 80.

[121] USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Visual History Archive, Joseph Linden, Interview 1840; www.vhaonline.usc.edu, access 14 May 2012.

[122] AIPN OKŚZpNP w Krakowie, S 4/75, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Mariana Kubiaka, 16 X 1973 [Typescript of interrogation of witness Marian Kubiak, 16 October 1973], n.p.

twenty-one-year-old Lindenberger was sent to a labour camp run by the SS police school in Rabka.[123]

In the "Questionnaire regarding the registration of war losses" completed in 1945, twenty-year-old Ludwik Herz wrote that his family had suffered losses in Nowy Targ, Zakopane, and Kraków. "[They] took the furniture. Murdered the parents. Pulled down the villa in Zakopane."[124] The Herzes were evicted from their house in Zakopane, they also lost their land and their legal practice; they were robbed of antique furniture and valuable paintings. In 1941 and 1942 the Herz family was made to pay a forced contribution amounting in total to ten thousand zlotys. Ludwik was compelled to do forced labor in Nowy Targ working for an Austrian company, Moritz.[125] Salomon Geller, a former inmate of the camp at the SS police school in Rabka, testified:

> Once, I remember, I along with others, was loading gravel onto a truck. Among us sent to load that gravel was a young boy by the name of Ludwik Herz from Nowy Targ [who likely ended up there after the liquidation of the Jews in Nowy Targ in August – K.P.]. Herz had no experience in loading gravel with a shovel onto a truck, so that each time he threw a shovel-load, the gravel landed on the other side of the truck or fell short of it, with the result that Badura [a man supervising the trucks – K.P.] beat him severely, even though Herz was crying and explaining that he had had no experience in loading gravel and he couldn't do it as skillfully the others did.[126]

In Spring 1943, Lindenberger and Herz were deported from Rabka to Płaszów. It is not known how and when they joined the group of Jews employed by Oskar Schindler in the labour camp of Brunnlitz. Herz, prisoner number 68866, worked as a painter. Lindenberger, number 68997, worked as a toolmaker's helper.[127] 21 October 1944 is noted in the Gross-Rosen camp's files as the day of their arrival. 8 May 1945 is given as the last day of their imprisonment and the date of their release.[128]

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[123] Ibidem, Zeznania Adama Szoskiego, 21 VI 1981 [Testimony of Adam Szoski, 21 June 1981], p. 534.

[124] ANKr ONS, St NT, 155, Kwestionariusz dotyczący rejestracji szkód wojennych Ludwika Herza, 13 VIII 1945 [Questionnaire regarding the registration of war losses of Ludwik Herz, 13 August 1945], n.p.

[125] Ibidem.

[126] AIPN OKŚZpNP in Kraków, DS 6/70, t. 25, Zeznanie Salomona Gellera, 23 III 1948 [Testimony of Salomon Geller, 23 March 1948], p. 69.

[127] List of workers of the factory in Brunnlitz, Czechoslovakia, written by Izaak Stern, 18 April 1945, http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/krakow/kra_schindler.htm, access in March 2015.

[128] International Tracing Service, Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen, 1.1.11.5/68997, Record of Leon Lindenberger; Ibidem, 1.1.11.5/68866, Record of Ludwik Herz.



Ludwik Herz on the balcony of his house. Nowy Targ, 1946 (© Private Archive of Janet Singer Applefield)

Their names are among thirty-seven others on the "List of persons registered in Nowy Targ."[129] Ludwik Herz was a member of the Board of the County Jewish Committee in Nowy Targ.[130] On August 1945, he notified the Provincial Jewish Historical Committee in Kraków that "the unveiling ceremony of a commemorative plaque honouring the memory of the Martyr Jews, brutally murdered by Hitlerite barbarians three years ago, shall be held on the mass graves at the local Jewish cemetery on September 2."[131] It is not known when they both decided to leave Nowy Targ. Like many other Nowy Targ Jews, they might have been compelled to leave by Grassgrün's death. Or perhaps by the murder of Józef Oppenheim, the pre-war head of Tatra Volunteer Search and Rescue [*Tatrzańskie Ochotnicze Pogotowie Ratunkowe*, TOPR], who, on 29 January 1946, was shot and killed by Karol Lasak and Tadeusz Murańka, claiming to be members of the AK.[132] Between February and March, Lindenberger and Herz were recognised as the only heirs of their families' properties. They had also appointed a mutual representative

[129] Registration and Statistical Departament, 303/V/583, p. 69.

[130] ANKr ONS, St NT, 12, Pismo Zarządu Powiatowego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Nowym Targu, 13 VII 1945 [Letter of the County Board of the Jewish Committee in Nowy Targ, 13 August 1945], p. 393. There were twenty-three Jews living in the Nowy Targ County in July 1945 (ibidem, Pismo starosty nowotarskiego do Wydziału Administracyjnego Urzędu Wojewódzkiego w Krakowie, 21 VII 1945 [Letter of the Nowy Targ starosta to the Administration Departament of the Provincial Office in Kraków, 21 July 1945], n.p.).

[131] AŻIH, CKŻH, 488, Pismo Powiatowego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Nowym Targu, 10 VIII 1945 [Letter of the Nowy Targ County Jewish Committee, 10 August 1945], p. 9. The plaque did not survive to this day.

[132] The scope of this paper does not allow me to describe Józef Oppenheim and circumstances of his death in further detail; there being little I could add to the accounts given in Julian Kwiek's study (idem, "Zabójstwa ludności żydowskiej…," p. 686) and the book of Bartłomiej Kuraś and Paweł Smoleński (*Bedzies wisioł za cosip. Godki podhalańskie*, Kraków: Znak, 2010, pp. 120–138), as well as the discussion with the authors, initiated by Wojciech Szatkowski (idem, *Głos w sprawie Józefa Oppenheima*, www.archiwum.watra.pl, access in March 2015).

who was supposed to sell the properties on their behalf[133]. Władysław Czerwiński recalled that Lindenberger had visited a pre-war friend of his mother's and had left her a suitcase filled with food, telling her that he was going abroad.[134]



Józef Oppenheim 'Opcio', the head of Tatra Volunteer Search and Rescue from 1914 to 1939, murdered in Zakopane on 27 January 1946 (© Tatra Museum in Zakopane)

Jakub Schneider says in his testimony:

> It happened on Saturday, the second day of Passover. I was staying with Mrs. Polaczyk [mother of Czesława, the wife of 'Ogień']. I went downstairs, I wanted to go into town, but then a group of [men] in Polish uniforms came in, [armed] with pepeshas [PPShs]. I recognised one of them, who had gone with me to school, and he talked to me and told me that he was in the AK and 'Ogień' was their commander.
>
> So they had come back because they were looking for people from the security [service]. Then, a car drove up from the direction of Zakopane, Lonek Lindenberger and Ludwik Herz sat in the car with two other persons, a woman and a man from Kraków. I stopped them and asked them where they were going. They said that to Kraków. So I wanted to go with them. "Boys, I want to go with you because the AK has only just been here." [But] they hadn't told me the truth – that they were heading to the Slovakian border – otherwise I would have warned them, but instead they said they were on their way to Kraków. I went upstairs to grab my coat. I'm coming down, looking around – they'd disappeared. I was very upset, I thought: see, what friends they are! I said I wanted go with them and they drove away. So, I was just lying on the bed. About a half-hour later, some Polish acquaintances banged on the door. They say: Listen up! They killed Jews on Waksmundzka Street on the other side of the bridge. So, I went there, I am looking around, the car is standing there, and they, in the ditch next to the road, murdered.[135]

The event Schneider describes took place on 20 April 1946, the day local Catholics celebrated Easter Saturday. A man approached Henryk Hałgas, a chauffeur, who had parked his car in front of the post office in Nowy Targ (located in a building that belonged to Herz) and booked a ride to Czorsztyn. Shortly after they departed, they were stopped by armed soldiers on Waksumundzka Street:

> After stopping us, the soldiers […] surrounded the car and ordered us to keep our hands up – checking our IDs at the same time. When they got to my ID, one person set off running towards the field. Shots were fired after

[133] ANKr ONS, 31/19/220, Sąd Grodzki [Magistrate's Court] in Nowy Targ, n.p.
[134] Notes of the conversation with Władysław Czerwiński, June 2013, in my possession.
[135] YVA, O.3/3723, Jakub Schneider's testimony, 25 June 1972, p. 8–9.

> the escapee. When they had checked my identification, they ordered me to keep on my way. They detained those people. I'd cleared about 50–80 meters when I heard the sound of a dozen or so shots from where I was standing.[136]

They killed Ludwik Herz, age 22, Lonek Lindenberger, age 24, Beniamin Rose, age 33, Ruth Joachisman, age 21,[137] and Henryk Unterbuch, age 42.[138] The cause of death was the same for all, save one: "entrance hole from a small-caliber bullet visible in the back of the head at ear level."[139] The victims were made to stand on the side of the road and then were executed. Henryk Unterbuch was the one who – according to the testimony of the driver, Henryk Hałgas – tried to escape. He was shot in the head and chest. The victims were robbed. Right after the murder, another car was stopped, a bus full of people, among them a policeman as well as a sergeant of the border guard unit stationed in the town of Nidzica. After an identification check all passengers were released.[140] [The soldiers] also stopped a truck driven by Wojciech Rapacz, who was transporting petrol for the District Car Service Office in Nowy Targ.

> After they checked our IDs, they forced us to turn the car around and drive in the opposite direction. They took with them the second lieutenant of the District Supply Unit [Rejonowa Komenda Uzupełnień]; later I saw that he had been released. They stopped me when the incident was already over. Lots of them got into my car, I couldn't say how many. I saw that they stopped a second car, a military one with two soldiers inside, that they made turn around, and lots of them got into that one, too. They ordered that these two cars should carry them, [but] didn't say where to. When we arrived in the village of Waksmund, they stopped the cars, got out and ordered us to return to our homes.[141]

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[136] AIPN Kr, 111/1440, Zeznanie Henryka Hałgasa, 20 IV 1946 [Testimony of Henryk Hałgas, 20 April 1946], p. 7.

[137] One of WUBP's notes contains information that Ruth Joachisman had been pregnant (AIPN Kr, 0154/82, Pismo WUBP w Krakowie do Komisji Kwalifikacyjnej przy Powiatowej Radzie Narodowej w Olkuszu, 31 I 1948 [Letter of the WUBP in Kraków to the Selection Board at the County's National Council in Olkusz, 31 January 1948], p. 12), information has not been confirmed by another source.

[138] AIPN Kr, 111/1440, Zapiski dochodzeń, 21 IV 1946 [Investigations notes, 21 April 1946], p. 26.

[139] Ibidem, Protokół oględzin zwłok, 20 IV 1946 [Autopsy report, 20 April 1946], p. 10.

[140] Ibidem, Zeznanie Franciszka Piszczka, 23 IV 1946 [Testimony of Franciszek Piszczek, 23 April 1946], p. 6.

[141] Ibidem, Zeznanie Wojciecha Rapacza, 20 IV 1946 [Testimony of Wojciech Rapacz, 20 April 1946], p. 32. According to the dispatch sent by the DOW Kraków [Kraków Military District Command], a group of partisans stopped and checked IDs of encountered military men – all of whom were released. They also stopped a car belonging to the Nowy Targ Section Command, carrying an MMG [medium machine gun], mortars, and mines. When they identified it as a military vehicle, they released it without conducting a search.



Lonek Lindenberger (first on the left) and Ludwik Herz (in the middle). Killed in Nowy Targ, 20 April 1946. Nowy Targ, 1946 (© Private Archive of Janet Singer Applefield)

Another man was killed that afternoon, but his identity was established only the following day; twenty-year-old Zygmunt Byczek, a security officer of the PUBP in Nowy Targ, who had been picked up while on his way to a pharmacy to purchase medication.[142]

That his body was not identified until 21 April can be regarded as further proof that other officers of the Nowy Targ security service had not been in town (or were otherwise indisposed). This is likewise confirmed by the testimony of Ignacy Stotter,[143] who had reported the murder but had then waited in vain for their response. Karol Święty, a resident of Waksmundzka Street, had also wanted to report the murder but was redirected to the PKMO in Nowy Targ.[144] Most of the security officers had departed to attend the funeral of a PPR activist[145] in Zakopane, and those who had stayed were unable to take any action. Chief of Staff of the Fifth Military District, Lt.-Col. Chiliński wrote to the head of the WUBP in Kraków:

> The patrol leader has found the corpses lying without any protection, clothing, or shoes. It hasn't been possible to obtain any details on the attack on account of the intoxication of the staff members of the UBP in Nowy Targ and the other military institutions. For this, by order of the Commander of the District, those culpable must be held fully accountable.[146]

In the light of these findings, a report the Kraków WUBP had sent to Lt.-Col. Józef Czaplicki, Director of the Third Department of the UB, sounds particularly bizarre:

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[142] AIPN Kr, 0154/82, Pismo WUBP w Krakowie do Komisji Kwalifikacyjnej przy Powiatowej Radzie Narodowej w Olkuszu, 31 I 1948 [Letter of the WUBP in Kraków to the Selection Board at the County National Council in Olkusz, 31 January 1948], p. 12.

[143] AIPN Kr, 111/1440, Zeznanie Ignacego Stottera, 20 IV 1946 [Testimony of Ignacy Stotter, 20 April 1946], p. 4.

[144] Ibidem, Zeznanie Karola Świętego, 20 IV 1946 [Testimony of Karol Święty, 20 April 1946], p. 1.

[145] AIPN, 2241/74, Piotr Jaśko, account no 113, 20 December 1978, p. 15.

[146] AIPN Kr, 06/1/16, Pismo Wydziału Operacyjnego Sztabu Wojska Polskiego do szefa WUBP w Krakowie, 23 IV 1946 [Letter of the Operations Division of the Polish Army's Staff to the head of the WUBP in Kraków, 23 April 1946], p. 63.

> As the bandits began to robbing the car, one of the passengers fired. In response, the bandits opened fire and brutally murdered everyone. Then they robbed them of everything, taking gold, dollars, and money. The bandits then took the car along with the chauffeur. The fate of the chauffeur is thus far unknown. The military and UBP forces immediately carried out the operation, and the next day the group came upon the band in the village of Paksmut [Waksmund], but withdrew from contact because of cowardice [shown] by the commander of the WBW [*Wojska Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrzego*, Internal Security Forces] un[it] (investigation of the above is pending). […] According to [our] informant intelligence, the above murder had been committed under the personal leadership of 'Ogień'.[147]

Janina 'Stokrotka' Polaczyk testified in 1947: "As to the killings that my brother-in-law 'Ogień' had committed, I know that 'Ogień' had murdered six Jews near Nowy Targ [five victims of Jewish descent and the security officer – K.P.]."[148] Bronislaw Polaczyk, father-in-law of Kuraś, was also among the partisans who that day had come down from the mountains to the town;[149] several former policemen were recognised in their midst.[150]

In July a request was submitted to refer the case against Franciszek Pierwoła, Józef Kowalczyk, and Polaczyk to the Military Prosecutor's Office in Kraków.[151] Franciszek Pierwoła, the only suspect questioned in the case, testified that he had not participated in the murder on 20 April 1946. He was to secure a camp in the forest near to the village of Ostrowsko at the time: "I found out about the killing of those people only after the members of the band had returned. […] I do not know which of the members committed this crime, as about forty of them were there at the time of the murder of these civilians."[152] The investigation was terminated in December 1948.[153]

On 21 April 1946, the day after the assassination, 'Ogień' married Czesława Polaczyk in the church in Ostrowsko. Stefania Hreśka recalled their wedding, "He was getting married […] openly, publicly, in the church [that was] filled to

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[147] Ibidem, Notatka z rozmowy telefonicznej, 30 IV 1946 [Note of a telephone conversation, 30 April 1946], p. 70.

[148] AIPN Kr, 110/3481, t. 2, Zeznanie Janiny Polaczyk, 1 II 1947 [Testimony of Janina Polaczyk, 1 February 1947], p. 122.

[149] AIPN Kr, 06/1/15, Raport specjalny PUBP w Nowym Targu, 26 IV 1946 [Special report by the PUBP in Nowy Targ, 26 April 1946], p. 69.

[150] AIPN Kr, 111/1440, Zeznanie Kazimiery Jarkiewicz, 2 V 1946 [Testimony of Kazimiera Jarkiewicz, 2 May 1946], p. 31.

[151] Ibidem, Wniosek Prokuratury Sądu Okręgowego w Nowym Sączu, 16 VII 1948 [Request of the Prosecutor's Office at the District Court in Nowy Sącz, 16 July 1948], p. 41.

[152] Ibidem, Zeznania Franciszka Pierwoły, 4 IX 1948 [Testimony of Franciszek Pierwoła, 4 September 1948], p. 46.

[153] Ibidem, Postanowienie wojskowego prokuratora rejonowego w Krakowie, 1 XII 1948 [Decision of the Military District Prosecutor, 1 December 1948], p. 55.



The funeral-manifestation for the victims of 20 April 1946 assassination, Kraków, 1946 (© Private Archive of Singer Applefield)

capacity. He – in an officer's uniform, she – in an everyday dress. A beautiful Roman Catholic ceremony, with a mass. We all wished them well."[154]

The funeral of the five victims was held in Kraków on 23 April 1946. Like Kuraś's wedding, the funeral was a declaratory display;[155] a unit of demobilised soldiers in uniform followed a wreath adorned with a ribbon inscribed in Polish and 'Jewish': "From the Jewish people to the victims of reactionary forces", after came the casket bearers, then walked the representatives of the rabbinate, family members, and representatives of Polish and Jewish parties and authorities. Kibbutz youth formed a double file.[156] Preserved photographs show hundreds of people attending the funeral.[157]

Several days after the funeral Mania Glauzowa, Henryk Unterbuch's sister, and Felicia Sznapowa, Beniamin Rozse's cousin, wrote to the delegate of American Jews (likely, Dr. Ignacy Schwarzbart[158]). They begged him to help them to leave Poland. They had both lost their husbands, children, parents, and siblings during

[154] Kuraś, Smoleński, *Bedzies wisioł za cosik...*, p. 72.

[155] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Organizacji i Kontroli [Organization and Inspection Departament], 303/IV/10, Pismo Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Krakowie do CKŻP w Warszawie, 13 V 1946 [Letter of the Jewish Provincial Committee in Kraków to the CKŻP in Warsaw, 13 May 1946], p. 138.

[156] Ibidem, Protokół posiedzenia Zarządu WKŻ w Krakowie, 22 IV 1946 [The Board of the WKŻ in Kraków, Meeting minutes, 22 April 1946], p. 146.

[157] Julian Kwiek indicates in his review of Anna Cichopek's book that she mistakenly attributed the photographs as those of the funeral of the victims of the August events in Kraków (idem, "Recenzja książki Anny Cichopek," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 2 [2001]: 260).

[158] "Following the war, Schwarzbart headed the organizational department of the World Jewish Congress in New York" – David Engel, "Schwarzbart, Ignacy," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews*

the Holocaust, and Henryk and Beniamin, who had survived the war in the Soviet Union, were their only living relatives.

> We had gone to Nowy Targ, kissed their poor, lacerated bodies, but there was nothing we could do, just as we could not when our little ones […] were taken from us. But then there was Hitler and the terrible, cruel war. Today, however, […] there is peace in the world […] Why did they, who had suffered so much and endured, had to die, and we, who had already sacrificed so much and so many, had to sacrifice once again.[159]

"The deceased look as if of the Jewish faith"

There was nothing ceremonious about the funeral of the next Jewish victims killed several days later. On the morning of 30 April 1946, the MO station in Jurgów submitted a report to the PKMO in Nowy Targ:

> on 30 April 1946 at night, unknown assailants murdered 5 women and 2 men. The deceased are lying on the road […] halfway between the village of Białka and the village of Groń. 1 deceased is lying in the field, 50 meters from the main road. The corpses have been partly robbed; a ticket from Kraków to Zakopane, dated 29 April, was found on one of them. The deceased have bloodied heads and are lying face-down, only one [is lying] face-up. The murder was committed by firing an automatic weapon since several unfired rounds from a PPSh weapon [submachine gun] and 2 intact bullets have been recovered. I request further instructions. Postscript: The deceased look as if of the Jewish faith, so supposedly the murders were politically motivated.[160]

That night about 11 p.m., four men knocked on the door of the house of a village leader of Groń; his wife recognised a certain Władysław Skiba among them. As she was home alone, she did not let them in. They said they would go sleep in the barn. They knocked again around 5 a.m. Skiba was not with them this time and the village leader Kazimierz Rabiański, who had already returned home, allowed them in:

> one, I worked out, was of the Jewish faith. During our conversation they'd told that they had escaped death only by miracle, and asked me to show them the shortest way to the railway station in Szaflary. In the talk that followed, one of them disclosed that he was a son of Kiessen

in Eastern Europe, 2010; http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Schwarzbart_Ignacy, access 22 May 2017.

[159] YIVO Achive, RG 732, box 2, g. 23, Letter of Mania Unterbuch-Glauzowa and Felicja Sznapowa, 29 April 1946, not numbered. I want to thank Dariusz Libionka for making the document available to me.

[160] AIPN Kr, 18/1365, Meldunek komendanta Posterunku MO w Jurgowie do KP MO w Nowym Targu, 30 IV 1946 [Dispatch of a commander of the MO station in Jurgów to the KPMO in Nowy Targ, 30 April 1946], p. 38.

> from Ludźmierska Street in Nowy Targ,[161] and he asked me to give them a lift to the railway station in Szaflary. As it was sowing time, I refused to lend them my horse wagon. But I explained and showed them the way, and as my servant girl, Aniela, was going to Szaflary at that time, these individuals went with her. […] they explained to me that when they had been walking along the road from Nowy Targ towards Białka, lagging behind a wagon with women of their party, they had miraculously escaped death. In Białka, [the wagon] was stopped on the road by some unknown individuals, and they heard voices and shouts, "get off the wagon". On hearing this cry, […] they fled. While fleeing, they heard shots being fired. After their departure, I, being the village leader, went to the site of the act, intending to check whether there were a ny corpses in my locality due to this shooting. I reached the boundary between Groń and Białka villages, when I spotted several people standing about a half a kilometre [further] in the Białka locality's territory. I approached them and saw seven corpses. Seeing that it was outside of my locality, I went back home.[162]

The lack of any IDs, coupled with the victims' relatives' fear of the consequences of smuggling of foreign currency, impede the identification of the victims.[163] Ultimately, those killed on 29 April 1946 are identified as: Blima Krebs (age 32), Beila Gold (age 43), Frida Salzberg (age 48), Feiga Schwerdszarf (age 48), Chaskel Świecznik (age 30),[164] and Sara Dornberg (age 40) with her fourteen-year-old son, Solomon. The autopsy report affirms that everyone except for the boy was killed by a shot to the head. Salomon died of two shots to the back – probably while attempting to escape.[165]

I could find only fragmentary records of this murder, relating mainly to the return of the money and effects found on the murdered women. The bodies of the victims had been partially robbed – both by the perpetrators as well as by locals. A resident of Białka testified:

> When I was [there] first in the morning without the police, two pairs of shoes were missing from the corpses, but later, when I went there with the

[161] I was not able to find more information about him.

[162] AIPN Kr, 18/1365, Zeznania Kazimierza Rabiańskiego, 6 V 1946 [Testimony of Kazimierz Rabiański, 6 May 1946], p. 47.

[163] Ibidem, Zeznania Chaima Kalfusa, 28 V 1946 [Testimony of Chaim Kalfus, 28 May 1946], p. 58.

[164] AIPN Kr, 06/1/16, Pismo Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydowskiego w Krakowie do WUBP w Krakowie, 4 V 1946 [Letter of the Jewish Provincial Committee in Kraków to the WUBP in Kraków, 4 May 1946], p. 72.

[165] AIPN Kr, 18/1365, Protokół oględzin zwłok, 1 V 1946 [Autopsy report, 1 May1946], p. 43. His body was found on the field about 50 m off the road (see ibidem, Meldunek komendanta Posterunku MO w Jurgowie do KP MO w Nowym Targu, 30 IV 1946 [Despatch by the commander of the MO station in Jurgów to the KPMO in Nowy Targ, 30 April 1946], p. 38).

> Militia, [I saw that] in the time I'd been at home someone had pulled off two more pairs of shoes. Who took them, I do not know.[166]

In 1947, Leib Gold, Blima's husband and Józef Dornberg, husband of Sara and father of Solomon, strove to recover the items kept by the Prosecutor's Office in Nowy Sącz. As far as Blima Gold was concerned, recovery of the deposit did not constitute much of a problem – all items were kept in a sealed package: 25 gold coins, 652 US dollars, 13,080 marks issued by the Allied powers, 19,195 German marks, 105 Polish zlotys, together with one brooch of yellow metal [set] with seven small pink stones and one train ticket from Kraków to Zakopane, stained with blood.[167]

Józef Dornberg recovered his due deposit only in 1948, after the decision of the District Court in Kraków. The justification of the decision stated that:

> the disputed money had been found in Fryda Salzberg's shoes, whereas the plaintiff demands its restitution claiming that the money was not found in the shoes of Fryda Salzberg, but in the shoes of his wife, Sarah.
>
> The plaintiff, being questioned [...] before he was shown the deposited money, testified and described in detail not only the varieties of the money, but also which bills were more or less worn, to what extent they were worn and how they were worn. [...] For example, before the deposit was shown to him, the plaintiff had stated that one hundred-dollar bill was stained with red ink, two ten-dollar bills were worn, and one of them had been pierced by a needle because it had been sewn into an item of clothing. The plaintiff's testimony was confirmed by a witness, Leib Gold, who testified that the plaintiff's wife had, in his presence, sewed dollar bills into her blouse, and the plaintiff, who had also been present then, told him that his wife had hidden gold coins in a heel of her shoes. [...] For these reasons, it should have been concluded that at the time of the robbery, the plaintiff's wife Sarah had been in possession of the disputed money, not Fryda Salzberg, who, as the witness testified, was actually poor, and the plaintiff had given her one twenty-dollar bill before their departure.[168]

The funeral of the seven victims was held in Kraków on 2 May 1946 at 7 p.m.[169] That same hour, a truck was heading towards Podhale, carrying twenty-six Jews who had also decided to make an attempt to depart from Poland illegally. Among them were the Gallers from Kraków.

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[166] Ibidem, Zeznania Jana Nowobilskiego], 8 V 1946 [Testimony of Jan Nowobilski, 8 May 1946], p. 53.

[167] Ibidem, Pismo Prokuratury Okręgowej w Nowym Sączu do Kasy Sądu Okręgowego w Nowym Sączu, 22 IV 1947 [Letter of the District Prosecutor's Office in Nowy Sącz to the Cashier's Office of the District Court in Nowy Sącz, 22 April 1947], p. 89.

[168] Ibidem, Wyrok Sądu Okręgowego w Krakowie w sprawie nr I.C.588/48, 20 X 1948 [Judgement of the District Court in Kraków in the case no I.C.588/48, 20 October 1948], pp. 107–108.

[169] Pismo Wojewódzkiego Komitetu Żydowskiego in Kraków do WUBP in Kraków, 4 V 1946 [Letter of the Jewish Provincial Committee in Kraków to the WUBP in Kraków, 4 May 1946], p. 72.

"Then, after we had checked them all, I gave the order to shoot them."

Józef Galler, the second child of Maria and Izrael, was born in late August 1934 in Kraków. His sister Rena was three years older than he was. The Gallers had awaited children for a long time; Maria gave birth to their daughter at the age of forty. She was a homemaker. Izrael, six years younger than his wife, a veterinary doctor by profession,[170] was responsible for providing for the family. Before the war, they had lived in Nowy Targ.[171] Eleven-year-old Józef described their wartime experiences in his account given to the Kraków Jewish Historical Committee. The clerk who was recording his words added a one-sentence remark: "The boy [is] anxious, it's hard to exact something from him in an orderly way."[172]

When the war broke out, the Gallers moved to Kraków; they were forced into the ghetto in March 1941. They managed to obtain Argentinian passports and, in March 1943 – two days before the slaughter of the Jews of Kraków, they fled through a window overlooking the Aryan side of the city.[173] Later, as citizens of Argentina, they lived in a Catholic home in Bochnia. They remained there until the Germans set up a transportation in August 1943:

> Mama was told that [the transportation was] to Sweden, but we wound up at Bergen-Belsen. First, we had been at the Montelupich prison; we were told there that those who looked out of a window would get a bullet to the head. We went [to Bergen-Belsen] in pig wagons [cattle wagons], there was little water on the way there. We were given 1 kg of bread for the entire two-day journey.[174]

They ended up in a section of the camp designated for persons with foreign passports.[175] Józef remembered having lived on one litre of water with beets and three decagrams of bread per day. He witnessed selections and murders. He watched people taken from transports to the crematorium while still alive, and later, from his bunk, he stared at fire and smoke rising from the crematorium night after night. His bright memories from Bergen-Belsen were associated with the person of SS-Scharführer Otton: "[he was] so good; when nobody watched he

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[170] ANKr, Urząd Zdrowia [Health Office], 410, Księga urodzin [Birth register], 1934, vol. 1, not numbered.

[171] ANKr ONS, 31/102/85, Dowód rodziny Izraela Gallera [Identity card of Izrael Galler's family], 1938, not numbered.

[172] AŻIH, Relacje Ocalałych z Zagłady [Testimonies of Holocaust Survivors], 301/1137, Relacja Józefa Gallera, 7 XI 1945 [Testimony of Józef Galler, 7 November 1945], p. 2.

[173] Ibidem.

[174] Ibidem.

[175] The family of Henryk Schönker went through the same process (they had Palestine papers). He described in detail life in that part of the camp in his book (idem, *Dotknięcie anioła*, Warszawa: Ośrodek Karta, Dom Spotkań z Historią, 2011).

would bring flowers for the children and cigarettes for the men."[176] The SS-man let them even run around with banner to celebrate Simchat Torah. The Gallers, together with 2,500 others were put on a train that got stuck on the front line for several days. Finally, the liberation came for them on 13 April 1945, while they were in Farsleben:

> Suddenly I heard a rumble. I ran out and saw green tanks with white stars, they were American tanks. The Americans fed us well and let us drink. The change from water with beets, to which I had grown accustomed, was too great and I got ill.[177]

We do not know when the Gallers returned to Poland. For certain the boy was still a patient in the hospital in Hillersleben at the end of May 1945.[178] When they returned to Kraków, they moved into the building of the headquarters of the Jewish Committee at 38 Długa Street. The record of children in the care of the institution mentions the names of Józef and Rena,[179] while their mother's name is on the list of the sick and unfit for work.[180]

Jakub Finkelstein, who was in charge of the Jewish Committee dependents, was behind the illegal escape abroad.[181] It was probably he who obtained documents confirming that the twenty-six persons, whose names were recorded on three lists, were Austrian citizens on their way home from the Ravensbrück camps. The Czech visas were stamped in Warsaw on 30 April 1946. The Gallers's names were on one of the lists.[182] A special report, prepared by the Nowy Targ PUBP on 3 May 1946, mentioned those documents in a separate paragraph:

> [Passengers] headed toward the Czech border to cross it illegally despite having official documents issued by the Czech embassy in Poland that allowed them to cross the aforementioned border. The reason for the illegal border crossing while in possession of legal documents is, unfortunately, unknown, but presumably the reason being that cros-

[176] AŻIH, Relacje Ocalałych z Zagłady [Testimonies of Holocaust Survivors], 301/1137, Relacja Józefa Gallera, 7 XI 1945 [Testimony of Józef Galler, 7 November 1945], p. 2.

[177] Ibidem, pp. 5–7.

[178] There is a record in the ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen, confirming that Józef Galler was a patient in the hospital in Hillersleben on 31 May 1945.

[179] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Ewidencji i Statystyki [Registration and Statistical Departament], 303/V/583, Wykaz dzieci z zakładu przy Długiej 38, 1946, [List of children in the institution on 38 Długa Street, 1946], p. 4.

[180] Ibidem, Wykaz starców, chorych i niezdolnych do pracy mieszkających przy Długiej 38, 1946 [List of the elderly, sick and unfit for work living on 38 Długa Street, 1946], p. 9.

[181] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Protokół przesłuchania Icka Holanda, 3 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of Icek Holand, 3 May 1946], p. 79. Jakub Finkelstein as well as the others of the departing group had ties to the Kraków chapter of 'Gordonia'. I am grateful to Jerzy Wójcik for making this information and confirming it documents available to me (Alter Ajzenberg, "Nie dożyli," *Słowo Młodych. Pismo Młodzieży Chalucowej „Gordonia"* [Łódź], June 1946: 12).

[182] Ibidem, Zaświadczenie PCK, 29 IV 1946 [PCK certification, 29 April 1946], p. 237.

> sing a border illegally provides an opportunity to take out assets such as foreign currency, securities, and gold, while if they were to cross the border legally, they would have had to turn over those possessions to the Treasury of the Polish State. Based on this assumption [...] a certain group of people [...] had decided to rent a private truck in Kraków to take them across the Polish-Czech border into the territory of the Czechoslovak State.[183]

The rented truck belonged to the Węglarz brothers of Szczawnica; Stanisław Zachwieja was the driver.[184] Besides him, two others, Adolf Gabryś and Stanisław Stec[185] (both of Szczawnica), also rode in the truck's cab, as well as Jan 'Łazik' Wąchała who told them to stop on the boundary of Kraków and loaded his motorcycle onto the trailer.[186]

They left at 5 p.m. and were heading toward Nowy Sącz, "seeking to avoid an encounter with the bands."[187] Finkelstein had on him a document certifying that they were going on a two-week vacation to Krościenko.[188] At approx. 7 p.m., they stopped in front of a tavern in Mszana Dolna. The driver and Gabryś with Stec went into the tavern. In that time "Łazik" drove to his home in Zabrzeże. According to the testimony of his wife, Maria Wąchała: "He left the house after dinner telling me that he would be back in two hours."[189] She even heard the sound of his departing motorcycle. The truck stopped again, just before [entering] Krościenko. The driver told the passengers that they had to keep absolutely quiet, or otherwise they could attract a band, and that they were six kilometres from Krościenko. In fact, they were no more than one kilometre from

[183] AIPN Kr, 06/1/16, Raport specjalny PUBP w Nowym Targu], 3 V 1946 [Special report by the PUBP in Nowy Targ, 3 May 1946], p. 75.

[184] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Zapiski dochodzeń, przesłuchanie Stanisława Zachwiei, 25 V 1946 [Investigation notes, the interrogation of Stanisław Zachwieja, 25 May 1946], p. 126.

[185] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Protokół przesłuchania Stanisława Zachwiei ps. „Wiwer", 8 VIII 1947 [Minutes of the interrogation of Stanisław 'Wiwer' Zachwieja, 8 August 1947], p. 157; AIPN Kr, 009/6573, Pismo PUBP w Nowym Targu do naczelnika Wydziału III WUBP in Kraków, 30 I 1950 [Letter of the PUBP in Nowy Targ to the head of the III Department of the WUBP in Kraków, 30 January 1950], p. 32.

[186] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Protokół przesłuchania Stanisława Zachwiei ps. „Wiwer", 8 VIII 1947 [Minutes of the interrogation of Stanisław 'Wiwer' Zachwieja, 8 August 1947], p. 157; AIPN Kr, 009/6573, Pismo PUBP w Nowym Targu do naczelnika Wydziału III WUBP in Kraków, 30 I 1950 [Letter of the PUBP in Nowy Targ to the head of the III Department of the WUBP in Kraków, 30 January 1950], p. 32.

[187] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Zapisek o przyjęciu ustnego zawiadomienia o przestępstwie, 3 V 1946 [Note about an oral report of a crime, 3 May 1946], p. 74.

[188] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Jakuba Orensteina, 4 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jakub Orenstein, 4 May 1946], p. 98.

[189] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Marii Wąchały, 4 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Wąchała, 4 May 1946], p. 116.

the village.[190] Flares appeared in the sky.[191] Gabryś and Wąchała drove away on the motorcycle to check the area.[192] Stec allegedly went to ask for directions; Zachwieja stayed in the cab.[193] The next day, Maria Galler testified:

> The motorcycle with these two individuals didn't return, but the civilian – the one who had joined us on the way, but I don't know where, because he had gotten in into the truck cab – returned. I believe that this individual brought the band, being one of them. About an hour into the stopover, the band surrounded us and I heard their first words: who are these people riding [in the truck], we should check their IDs; and they did it.[194]

Izrael Galler said in his testimony given on 4 May 1945:

> they told us to get out of the car, saying that they were the security service[195] and they wanted to check our documents. They inquired about weapons, and when they did not find any, they lined us up and, after a brief whispered exchange, […] opened fire on us from several directions at once when we were stood in the ditch. Hearing the shots I began to run, as well as the others did. I was shot in my left forearm while escaping.[196]

His fifteen-year-old daughter Rena also tried to run away: "they lined us up and, after a short while, fired at us from all directions at the same time. Seeing that the people around me were collapsing, I attempted to hide […] between the corpses, even though I was wounded in both legs."[197] When the IDs were being checked Mary and her son Józef were allowed to remain in the truck:

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[190] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Leiba Wygody, 5 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Leib Wygoda, 5 May 1946], p. 100. Like other victims of the assault, Leib Wygoda strongly stressed this inconsistency**.**

[191] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Stanisława Zachwiei ps. „Wiwer", 8 VIII 1947 [Minutes of the interrogation of Stanisław Zachwieja 'Wiwer', 8 August 1947], p. 157. Young men, civilians, fired some flares to celebrate the Third of May (Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania of Jana Batkiewicza, 9 VIII 1947 [Minutes of the interrogation of Jan Batkiewicz, 9 August 1947], p. 24; AIPN Kr, 110/5224, Zeznania Mieczysława Pyzowskiego, 23 I 195 [Testimony of Mieczysław Pyzowski, 23 January 1953], p. 26.

[192] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Protokół przesłuchania Adolfa Gabrysia ps. „Bobek", 8 VIII 1947 [Minutes of the interrogation of Adolf Gabryś 'Bobek', 8 August 1947], p. 158.

[193] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania [Minutes of the interrogation of Maria Galler, 3 May 1946], p. 75.

[194] Ibidem.

[195] Fourteen-year-old Chaja Holand remembered that while they were getting off the truck, the attackers told them that "they would not do us any harm, and that some band wanted to raid us but they would not allow it" (AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Protokół przesłuchania Chai Holand, 4 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of Chaja Holand, 4 May 1946], p. 92).

[196] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Izraela Gallera 4 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of Izrael Galler, 4 May 1946], p. 90.

[197] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Reny Galler, 4 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of Rena Galler, 4 May 1946], p. 91.

> A few moments later I heard shots, then two individuals in [Polish Army] uniforms and with automatic weapons approached the car together with this civilian, who threw me and my son out of the car. One of the uniformed individuals shot my son, Józef, hitting him in the head. They threw me to the ground shooting at me twice, but they missed both times.[198]

Mieczysław 'Żbik' Pyzowski was among those who were shooting at the lined up people. His weapon jammed after firing thirteen shots,[199] and then he noticed, "how Ćwiertniewicz alias 'Długi', who had stayed in the car, was shooting at these women and a child. And then I saw Ćwiertniewicz alias 'Długi' fire his handgun at the little boy, who begged not to kill him and his mommy."[200]

Maria Galler testified that Józef had survived the first shot: "Lying on the ground, I heard them talking among themselves about my son: this kid is groaning a lot, hit him again, and [he] shot him in the head a second time."[201]

The perpetrators of the murder moved among their victims with flashlights, finishing them off. Then they started looting. One of the injured, Regina Symela, testified:

> When I came to, I was lying on the ground, and I heard a conversation between individuals, who were saying that anyone who was alive needed to be finished off […]. Lieutenant 'Leń' and 'Szary' were mentioned in their talks, and [that] any better shoes should be pulled off along with wallets and documents, which they did immediately. At that time I heard a few more shots, they were finishing off the wounded, I suppose. They took away my shoes, watch, ring, a bag of food and about 500 zlotys.[202]

Maria Galler was searched by the civilian, who had earlier pulled her and her son out of the truck. Later she heard the perpetrators talking about 'Śmigły', she also heard them talking to the driver, Zawieja, "chauffeur, why were you afraid, don't be afraid, let's [clear off? – *illegible word* – K.P.]. They all got in the car and drove off with our belongings to Krościenko."[203] Rena Galler remembered:

> After the bandits had departed, a peasant of about sixty, medium height, wearing a dark suit, barefoot, a cap on his head, turned up from a nearby village, approached us, asking if we were alive and should he shoot us, and

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[198] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Marii Galler, 3 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of Maria Galler, 3 May 1946], p. 75.

[199] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Mieczysława Pyzowskiego, 7 VIII 1947 [Minutes of the interrogation of Mieczysław Pyzowski, 7 August 1947], p. 156.

[200] AIPN Kr, 110/4488, Zeznania Mieczysława Pyzowskiego, 29 XI 1950 [Testimony of Mieczysław Pyzowski, 29 November 1950], p. 41.

[201] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Protokół przesłuchania Marii Galler, 3 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of Maria Galler, 3 May 1946], p. 75.

[202] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Reginy Symel, 3 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of Regina Symel, 3 May 1946], p. 76.

[203] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Marii Galler, 3 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of Maria Galler, 3 May 1946], p. 75.

> he was pulling our boots off. Then he said: be quiet, or [he threatened] he would shoot us. I need to mention here, that apart from this civilian another individual in uniform had stayed; he was tramping through the bushes, lighting [his way] to make sure that nobody had hidden there.[204]

The schoolbag was taken from Józef's killed body, in which, beneath the cardboard lining, documents were hidden. His stamp collection was also in the bag, several foreign coins of no account, silk shirts, clothing, and photographs. A pair of binoculars was taken from Izrael together with medical instruments, his stethoscope, syringes, prayer items, his medical diploma, a cigarette case, and boots. From his wife – a gold watch, a ring, three pairs of earrings, dresses, and a few pairs of shoes.[205]

At dawn Maria went to the presbytery in Krościenko, but she was chased away.[206] Then she went on foot to Nowy Targ.[207] The wounded were provisionally attended on the spot,[208] and then hospitalised in Nowy Targ several hours later. Among them were fifteen-year-old Rena Galler with four gunshot wounds to her legs,[209] fourteen-year-old Chaja Holand with two gunshot wounds to her hand,[210] sixteen-year-old Chaja Abramowicz with gunshot wounds to the

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[204] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Reny Galler, 4 V 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of Rena Galler, 4 May 1946], p. 91. Mieczysław 'Żbik' Pyzowski testified: "Józef 'Długi' Ćwiertniewicz and Krzaczyk (who is presumably dead) stayed in Krościenko and informed the local people about the murder, and the people came running, taking the clothing and other things off the corpses" (AIPN Kr, 110/4488, Zeznania Mieczysława Pyzowskiego, 29 XI 1950 [Testimony of Mieczysław Pyzowski, 29 September 1950], p. 41). On May 3, the PUBP in Nowy Targ sent a special report to the WUBP in Kraków, which stated: "The execution was followed by a looting of possessions of the mass-murder victims. Absolutely everything the passengers owned has been stolen" (AIPN Kr, 06/1/16, Raport specjalny PUBP w Nowym Targu, 3 V 1946 [Special report of the PUBP in Nowy Targ, 3 May 1946], p. 74). However, the WiN information report for the month of May 1946 stated: "Ten Jews and two policemen were killed near Krościenko on May 3. Later, in the hospital in Nowy Targ, a small bag of diamonds was found on one of the dead, a jewish woman. Contrary to what the press wrote, the killed had not been robbed" (ANKr, WiN, 4, Sprawozdanie informacyjne za maj 1946 r. Teren krakowski [Information report for the month of May 1946. The Kraków Area], not dated, p. 106).

[205] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, List Izraela Gallera, 29 I 1947 [Letter of Izrael Galler, 29 January 1947], p. 142.

[206] Ibidem, p. 141.

[207] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Protokół przesłuchania Marii Galler, 3 V 1946 [Minutes of questioning of Maria Galler, 3 May 1946], p. 75.

[208] Ibidem, Rachunek za przewiezienie dr. Wernera, 3 V 1946 [Invoice for the transport of Dr.Werner, 3 May 1946], p. 117.

[209] Ibidem, Historia choroby Reny Galler wydana przez Szpital Powszechny w Nowym Targu, 3 V 1946 [Patient record of Rena Galler issued by the General Hospital in Nowy Targ, 3 May 1946], p. 104.

[210] Ibidem, Historia choroby Chai Holand wydana przez Szpital Powszechny w Nowym Targu, 3 V 1946 [Patient record of Chaja Holand issued by the General Hospital in Nowy Targ, 3 May 1946], p. 105.

chest and arm,[211] Izrael Galler (age 49) with wounds in his chest and arm,[212] and Izrael Piniuński (age 46) – who died in the Nowy Targ hospital from the sustained injuries on 5 May.[213] Two days after the murder, on 4 May 1946, Jan Fryźlewicz, an investigative officer of the PKMO in Nowy Targ, filed a request at the Municipal Court to "Carry out the autopsy of twelve corpses kept in the headquarters of the Jewish Committee on Długa Street in Nowy Targ."[214] Roman Rynkiewicz, a prosecutor of the District Court in Nowy Sącz, personally came to Nowy Targ; he was the one to supervise the investigation.[215] Izrael Holand identified the body of his wife, Tema (age 44), and his daughter, Rachela (age 14). Both of them had died of gunshot wounds to the head. Rachela Piniuńska (age 54) was identified by her son Mojżesz. She had died from blood loss after having been shot in the back. Leib Wygoda identified his mother Dwojra (age 48) who had died of bleeding and his father Abraham (age 48) who had been shot in the head.[216]

Ten-year-old Gerszon Flam identified his brother Izrael, age 19 – a bullet had mutilated his forehead. Rachela Szapiro (age 19), Liba Szapiro (age 49), and Jakub Finkelstein (age 27) were also identified among the dead. At first two corpses were left unidentified. The following day, one of them, a man of about forty, was identified by his wife as Jan Wąchała.[217] Maria Galler identified the body of her twelve-year-old son Józef: "[There is] a round wound on the left side at the base of the nose that presents itself like a bullet's entry. […] A small round wound on the left side of his lower lip. A round wound behind the ear lobe, the skull bone inside it [is] shattered."[218] The shot by the left ear area caused "significant brain damage and death".

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[211] Ibidem, Historia choroby Chai Abramowicz wydana przez Szpital Powszechny w Nowym Targu, 3 V 1946 [Patient record of Chaja Abramowicz issued by the General Hospital in Nowy Targ, 3 May 1946], p. 106.

[212] Ibidem, Historia choroby Izraela Gallera wydana przez Szpital Powszechny w Nowym Targu, 3 V 1946 [Patient record of Izrael Galler issued by the General Hospital in Nowy Targ, 3 May 1946], p. 106.

[213] Ibidem, Stwierdzenie zgonu Izraela Piniuńskiego, 7 V 1946 [Death certificate of Izrael Piniuński, 7 May 1946], p. 108.

[214] Ibidem, Pismo PKMO w Nowym Targu do nowotarskego Sądu Grodzkiego, 4 V 1946 [Letter of the PKMO in Nowy Targ to the Nowy Targ Municipal Court, 4 May 1946], p. 85.

[215] Ibidem, Fonogram od prokuratora Sądu Okręgowego w Nowym Sączu, 4 V 1946 [Recording from the Prosecutor at the District Court in Nowy Sącz, 4 May 1946], p. 89.

[216] Ibidem, Protokół oględzin zwłok sporządzony 4 V 1946 r. w obecności wiceprokuratora mgr. Romana Rękiewicza, lekarza biegłego sądowego dr. Józefa Spiesznego, komendanta PKMO por. Banaszka i protokolanta J. Strakosza [Autopsy report prepared in the presence of Deputy Prosecutor MA. Roman Rękiewicz, the physician expert witness Dr. Józef Spieszny, Commander of the PKMO, Lt. Banaszak and a clerk J. Strakosz on 4 May 1946], pp. 93–96.

[217] The list of the Austrian citizens suggests that it was Mosze Szmulewicz, born 1905.

[218] Ibidem, Protokół oględzin zwłok, 4 V 1946 [Autopsy report, 4 May 1946], p. 94.



The Galler family at the grave of twelve-year-old Józef. Kraków, 1946 (© USHMM Archive)

On May 5 two trucks sent by the Provincial Jewish Committee in Kraków took the survivors, the wounded and the killed from Nowy Targ[219]. The same day at 6 p.m., the funeral of the twelve murder victims was held at the Jewish cemetery in Kraków.[220]

Maria, Izrael, and Rena Galler arrived at the displaced persons camp in Ulm in the American occupation zone at the end of June.[221] Two months later, they were registered in the Jewish refugee camp in Bensheim.[222] From that camp, Izrael Galler sent his first letter to the Nowy Sącz prosecutor's office, in January 1947. He wrote:

[219] Ibidem, Sprawozdanie PKMO z przeprowadzanych dochodzeń, 16 V 1946 [The PKMO's report of the conducting inquiries, 16 May 1946], p. 119.

[220] AŻIH, Żydowska Agencja Prasowa, Biuletyn 49/169, 8 V 1946, [Bulletin of the Jewish Press Agency, 8 May 1946], p. 10. The thirteen victim of this murder, Regina Schlosser, died in Kraków on 11 May 1946 (Jerzy Wójcik, *Oddział. Między AK i UB – historia żołnierzy „Łazika"*, Warsaw: Wielka Litera, 2016, s. 232; YVA, The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names: Regina Schlosser, yvng.yadvashem.org, access 3 March 2017).

[221] ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen, Certyfikat pobytu Marii Galler nr 108086 [Certification of stay of Maria Galler, no 108086].

[222] Ibidem, Karty rejestracyjne Izraela Gallera, Marii Galler i Reny Galler, DP Camp Bensheim [DP Camp Bensheim, registration cards of Izrael Galler, Maria Galler, and Rena Galler].

> There were rumours circling us abroad, that the investigation had been called off and the entire matter forgotten. As the father of the murdered twelve-year-old Dawid Józef, I demand and request that you take up a vigorous investigation to apprehend the perpetrators [...]. The testimonies we gave to the police [officers] in Krościenko and Nowy Targ some time ago clearly indicated the perpetrators.[223]

He ended the letter with the words, "I will not rest until those guilty of the death of my son are found and properly punished."[224] The preserved documents show that the rumours and Galler's fears were entirely justified.

On 7 May 1946, the policemen from the MO Station in Nowy Targ received an order from their county superiors to investigate Zachwieja (the truck driver).[225]

Already by 6 June 1946, however, the Prosecutor's Office at the District Court in Nowy Sącz had decided to discontinue the investigation on the grounds that the perpetrators were unknown.[226] The justification of the decision states:

> The perpetrators of the attack have not been identified [...], the investigation did not provide grounds to assume that Stanislaw Zachwieja [interviewed on May 25] had assisted the perpetrators. He explained that he had stopped the car upon seeing a fired rocket of the kind the partisans usually used, and that they had even beaten him for transporting Jews. He received a favourable testimonial from the Cit[izen'] M[ilitia].[227]

The Minister of Justice, the prosecutor of the Court of Appeals in Kraków, and the prosecutor of the Supreme Court in Warsaw all received copies of Galler's letter. In March 1947, in connection with Izrael Galler's letter, the Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Appeals in Kraków asked the prosecutor of the District Court in Nowy Sącz to be notified of "results of any further investigations into the robbery and mass murder of persons of Jewish nationality."[228] The letter, written in the DP camp, contained a lot of information including the aliases and names that Franciszek Kowalczyk – himself involved in smuggling – gave to Galler while still in the Nowy Targ hospital. Questioned in May 1947, Kowalczyk testified:

> About a week after [those events], while I was bringing a cow that partisans from the 'Śmigły's' group had confiscated and ordered me to bring it to them, I heard some partisans talking among themselves and [what

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[223] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, List Izraela Gallera, 29 I 1947 [Letter of Izrael Galler, 29 January 1947], p. 140.

[224] Ibidem, p. 142.

[225] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Pismo Sekcji Śledczej MO w Nowym Targu, 24 V 1946 [Letter of the Investigation Division of the MO in Nowy Targ, 24 May 1946], p. 120.

[226] Ibidem, Postanowienie o umorzeniu śledztwa, 6 VI 1946 [Decision to discontinue the investigation, 6 June 1946], p. 139.

[227] Ibidem.

[228] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Pismo Prokuratury Sądu Apelacyjnego w Krakowie, 7 III 1947 [Letter of the Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Appeals in Kraków, 7 March 1947], p. 143.

> they said] led me to believe that it was they who committed the murder of the Jews. There was one among the partisans, a man from Nowy Targ [who went] by the alias of 'Żbik', who said that he had taken part in the murder of the Jews and had his machine gun not jammed he would have shot them all.[229]

Mieczysław 'Żbik' Pyzowski, mentioned by Kowalczyk, was not interrogated until three months later. He had been living in Nowy Targ since he turned himself in in April 1947.[230] In his testimony, Pyzowski revealed the names and aliases of the people who together with him had taken part in the murder. They were: Jan 'Leń' Jarosz, Józef 'Czarny' Dyda, Józef Krzoczyk and Józef Ćwiertniewicz (all from Krościenko) and 'Szary', whose name neither Pyzowski nor the others interrogated recollected. Jan 'Śmigły' Batkiewicz was their commander.[231]

Batkiewicz's questioning took place two days after the interrogation of 'Żbik' at the PKMO Station in NowyTarg, where he had been living since having turned himself in. Among other things he testified:

> On 2 May 1946, I received an order from 'Ogień' to go to Krościenko, where some citizens of Jewish nationality were to arrive, intending to illegally cross the border of the Polish state into Czechoslovakia, and whom I was to liquidate. […] At around 10 p.m., we saw a car that approached from the direction of Nowy Sącz, stopped and turned off its lights. […] We sent 'Długi' out to see who was coming, who returned at once and said that there were civilians in the car, but he didn't say who they were. In the meantime, a motorcycle drove up, which we stopped, and when we checked ID it turned out that 'Łazik' was riding the bike. […] Our order from 'Ogień' had been that 'Łazik', if encountered, should be shot dead. Then I gave the order to two [men] to go aside and liquidate 'Łazik' […]. When I approached the car I asked the chauffeur, whose name I don't know, whom he was driving, to which the chauffeur replied that he was driving vacationers going on summer vacation. We set about checking IDs and as it turned out they were citizens of Jewish nationality. After we had checked their identities we aligned them by the car. I saw that some of them escaped, but it was dark, so we didn't [try to] stop them. Then after we had checked them all, I gave the order to shoot them. […] After I had given the order everybody was shooting at the aforementioned citizens of Jewish nationality. […] One burst of rounds was fired from the LMG [light machine gun] which jammed after, so the rest of [men] started shooting PPshes and then they were finishing off with handguns. We weren't taking any documents, just food that was in the car and items of clothing. Then

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[229] Ibidem, Zeznania Franciszka Kowalczyka, 19 V 1947 [Testimony of Franciszek Kowalczyk, 19 May 1947], p. 152.

[230] Ibidem, Zapisek urzędowy wiceprokuratora Romana Rękiewicza, 7 VIII 1947 [Official note of Deputy Prosecutor Roman Rękiewicz, 7 August 1947], p. 159.

[231] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Mieczysława Pyzowskiego, 7 VIII 1947 [Minutes of the interrogation of Mieczysław Pyzowski, 7 August 1947, p. 156.

> we took the chauffeur with us […]. We loaded the car and took [the things] to the camp. We got out of the car in Ostrowsko and went to our camp.[232]

The matter of why subordinates of 'Ogień' had liquidated Wąchała still needs to be explained. Maciej Korkuć maintains in his article "Horror podmalowany," that it was retribution for the murder of two Jewish merchants. In fact, the victims of 'Łazik' – Antoni Wiekiera of Nowy Targ – and Ignacy Gronowski of Kraków were Poles, but Elżbieta Wiekiera, wife of the former stated, according to the crime report, that they had been suspected of [belonging to] 'the Jewry'.[233] Their bodies were found in April 1946. Wąchała committed this murder together with Jan Kurnyta and Władysław Bulanda who were convinced that they were killing Jews: "they have been murdered for being yids [*żydkowie*], and also because they were to have a larger sum in cash."[234]

The testimonies of Batkiewicz and Pyzowski played a role in the case against Józef 'Czarny' Dyda. According to the decision of the District Prosecutor's Office in Kraków, dated 16 September 1947, Dyda should be brought to justice for, among other things, the murder committed near Krościenko.[235] In his response to the charges, Dyda had testified:

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[232] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Jana Batkiewicza, 9 VIII 1947 [Minutes of the interrogation of Jan Batkiewicz, 9 August 1947], p. 24.

[233] AIPN Kr, 110/3883, Protokół przesłuchania Elżbiety Wiekiera, 6 III 1946 [Minutes of the interrogation of Elżbieta Wiekiera, 6 March 1946], p. 80.

[234] Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Jana Kurnyty, 27 X 1949 [Minutes of the interrogation of Jan Kurnyta, 27 October 1949], p. 101. There were others involved in the murder: Józef Węglarz (resident of Szczawnica, co-owner of the truck in which the victims rode to Krościenko) and two policemen, Władysław Dybiec and Jan Klag, who handed the victims over to Wąchała. The murdered were robbed. Władysław Dybiec, a policeman convicted in the case, wrote in the 1960s: "As a police officer, I received an order from the then-commander of the MO Station, Gargul (still living) […] to go with another policeman, Klag, to the village of Zabrzeże and check IDs and search two allegedly suspicious individuals, who were armed (probably jews) […]. Our inquiry showed that all the documents of the aforementioned individuals were all right (they were not even jews), they were not armed […]. Because of incompetence, the section had not solved the case, and it had dragged on for next four months. The case became even more complicated when Wąchała was shot to death by the band of 'Ogień'. He ['Ogień'] had been conducting an investigation on his part, too, as the murdered had turned out to be residents of Nowy Targ and had probably worked for him. 'Ogień's' revenge was swift; 'Łazik' as a perpetrator of the above murder was shot to death on the same road. The other perpetrators wanted by 'Ogień', such as Bulanda […] and Kurnyta […], escaped from our area. Only after the UBP agency in Nowy Targ had liquidated 'Ogień', they turned up [in] our area. As the wives of the murdered had refused to give up, still seeking [justice] for their harm, the UBP agency reopende the investigation. The living perpetrators were captured, and we were arrested on charges of complicity, as well." (Ibidem, Wniosek o rehabilitację Władysława Dybca, 15 III 1965 [Application for exoneration of Władysław Dybiec, 15 March 1965], pp. 702–703).

[235] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Postanowienie o pociągnięciu do odpowiedzialności karnej, 16 IX 1947 [Decision to bring the case before the court, 16 September 1947], p. 169.

> I admit that I was involved in seizing movables of twenty-six citizens of Jewish nationality. It was in May 1946. There were six of us, all armed. 'Śmiały' ['Śmigły' – K.P.] was our commander. We checked the IDs of those citizens, and then others shot at them; I didn't shoot because my gun was broken. How many people were shot dead at that time, I didn't know. We took things that were in the car and drove to the camp, where 'Śmigły' gave them to 'Ogień'.[236]

According to one of fourteen paragraphs of the judgment in the case against 'Czarny': "[he] took movables with larcenous intent to the harm of 26 persons of the Jewish nationality."[237] For this offence Dyda was sentenced to death. Later, under an amnesty, this sentence was mitigated to a fifteen-year prison sentence.[238] In the end, other charges have sealed his fate, among them the charge of complicity in the murder of Marian Makucha, a commandant of the MO station in Krościenko. The death sentence was carried out on 25 November 1947.[239]

Although Pyzowski and Batkiewicz had admitted complicity in the crime in their testimonies, they remained at large. In August of 1947, the chauffeur Stanisław Zachwieja was arrested as well as Adolf Gabryś, the man who had been travelling from Kraków to Krościenko in the cab of the truck and then had gone on the bike with Wąchała to survey the area.[240] On 12 September 1947 the investigation into their case was discontinued.[241]

Subsequent letters the Gallers wrote demonstrated their determination in bringing the perpetrators of the Krościenko murder to justice.[242] They succeeded

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[236] Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Józefowi Dydzie, 9 X 1947 [Transcript of the trial proceedings in the case of Józef Dyda, 9 October 1947], p. 185.

[237] Ibidem, Wyrok w sprawie Józefa Dydy, 13 X 1947 [Sentence in the case of Józef Dyda, 13 October 1947], p. 189. Batkiewicz confirmed his testimony regarding the jammed PPSh (ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Jana Batkiewicza, 9 VIII 1947 [Minutes of the interrogation of Jan Batkiewicz, 9 August 1947], p. 24).

[238] Ibidem, Wyrok w sprawie Józefa Dydy, 13 X 1947 [Sentence in the case of Józef Dyda, 13 October 1947], p. 190.

[239] Ibidem, Protokół wykonania kary śmierci, 25 XI 1947 [Report of the execution, 25 November 1947], p. 207.

[240] Postanowienie Prokuratury Okręgowej w Nowym Sączu, 11 VIII 1947 [Decision of the District Prosecutor's Office in Nowy Targ, 11 August 1947], p. 167.

[241] Ibidem, Postanowienie o umorzeniu śledztwa, 12 IX 1947 [Decision to discontinue the investigation, 12 September 1947], p. 168.

[242] Certainly, there were at least a few of them in February 1949; the Ministry of Defense sent a request to the Chief of the WSR [Polish acronym for 'Military District Court'] asking for the files of Józef 'Czarny' Dyda and stating that "one of the injured parties in the case was to be Izrael Galler" (ibidem, Pismo MON Departament Służby Sprawiedliwości do szefa WSR w Krakowie, 5 II 1949 [Letter of the Department of Justice Services at the MON to the WSR in Kraków, 5 February 1949], p. 224). A letter dated 10 February 1950 is mentioned in the files of the case against Jan Batkiewicz and Mieczysław Pyzowski; I have not been able to locate it

only in 1950.[243] Izrael Galler sent one of his letters from Pardes Hanna in Israel; he signed it with the alias 'Ostry'. In the letter he described the story of a certain family from Kraków:

> relatives of ours. They have lived here for a few years. A terrible misfortune had befallen them before they left Poland […]. Our relatives' son, a 12-year-old boy […] died at his mother's feet… The poor child,who had survived the Nazi hell. […] The family is heartbroken; they cannot come to terms with the thought that such a crime would go unpunished. They know that these murderers are still at large – content and in good health. And here are their names: Jan Batkiewicz, Mieczysław Pyzowski, Jan Jarosz, Czesław Karaś,[244] Stanisław Zachwieja, Adolf Gabryś.[245]

It is unclear why Galler had written his letter in the third person. A comparison of this letter with the one sent in 1947 shows that both were written by the same person.[246] In late September 1950, the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office sent a letter to the military district prosecutor in Kraków, calling for an immediate prosecution of the perpetrators:

> As is apparent from the […] case files [of Józef 'Czarny' Dyda], while being interrogated as suspects by a deputy prosecutor at the District Court in Nowy Sącz, Pyzowski and Batkiewicz confessed that they had participated in the indicated assault and murder, further, they revealed a number of names and aliases of other accomplices in the crime. The content of these minutes is accurate and is complemented by statements given at the UBP by all those whom Cit[izen] Galler has named in his request […]. Moreover, the statements indicate that they all […] turned themselves in to the Amnesty Commission at the PUBP in Nowy Targ in 1947 and confessed

(AIPN Kr, 110/4488, Pismo Naczelnej Prokuratury Wojskowej do wojskowego prokuratora rejonowego W Krakowie, 30 IX 1950 [Letter of the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office to the Military District Prosecutor in Kraków, 30 September 1950, p. 5). An excerpt of Maria Galler's letter dated 23 January 1951 has been preserved in the file of the secret service informant 'Sport' (alias of Mieczysław Pyzowski). AIPN Kr, 009/6573, Excerpt of Maria Galler's letter, 23 January 1951, p. 10.

[243] AIPN Kr, 009/6573, Charakterystyka kandydata, 14 XI 1958 [Candidate's profile], p. 11.

[244] Intended name was that of Czesław Kieres. It is unknown why he brought up Kieres (wrongly so) – the victims had heard someone mentioning his alias 'Szary', but in reference to other person, as Kieres did not join 'Śmigły's' group until later (AIPN Kr, 010/9414, Protokół przesłuchania Czesława Kieresa, 3 I 1951 [Minutes of the interrogation of Czesław Kieres, 3 January 1951], p. 78; ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Edwarda Czarneckiego, 31 XII 1953 [Minutes of the interrogation of Edward Czarnecki, 31 December 1953], p. 157).

[245] Ibidem, Letter of Izrael Galler, 31 May 1950, p. 101.

[246] The account of the events given in Galler's later letter contains some superimposed details – Galler uses the expression 'NSZ bands', mentions a young girl who had her tongue cut out. The report of the postmortem examinations of the victims does not confirm this detail; a description of Salcia, who had her tongue cut out by 'Ogień's' men, was first found in a journal of 'Ogień' forged by Władysław Machejek.

> to a number of crimes […], but none confessed his participation in the assault and murder [committed] near to Krościenko. We are to be informed that the order is carried out. The petitioner, Izrael Galler, is likewise to be notified of how the case is resolved.[247]

In October 1950, the Military District Prosecutor's Office in Kraków sent to the PUBP in Nowy Targ a warrant of arrest for Pyzowski, Kieres, Jarosz, and Batkiewicz. Later, the name of the last was crossed off the list because he had already been serving a life sentence. The Military Prosecutor's Office noted, "suspect Jan Batkiewicz is now serving life imprisonment in Wronki, but the Military District Court in Kraków has not convicted him of participation in the murder of Polish cit[izens] of Jewish nationality committed near Krościenko."[248]

The court sentenced Batkiewicz on 12 March 1948,[249] a few months after he had testified and confessed to having issued the order to shoot the civilians. Jarosz a.k.a. 'Leń' managed to avoid capture. Kieres a.k.a. 'Szary' was released, as it was shown that he had not yet been a member of 'Śmigły's' unit in the spring of 1946, and that a different man of the same alias had participated in the murder. Only Mieczysław Pyzowski was arrested in autumn 1950.[250]

Batkiewicz, while questioned in 1951, withdrew his testimony given in 1947. He stated that partisans had been under the command of 'Szary', whose name he "did not remember," and who had ordered the checking of the passengers'ID and the shooting of the Jews.[251] Pyzowski in turn testified that he had "fired shots

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[247] AIPN Kr, 110/4488, Pismo Naczelnej Prokuratury Wojskowej do Prokuratury Rejonowej w Krakowie, 30 IX 1950 [Letter of the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office to the Military District Prosecutor in Kraków, 30 September 1950], p. 5. It might be useful to mention here the content of a letter that had been sent by the Military Prosecutor's Office to the Legal Department of the CKŻP a year earlier. The Chief of Procuratorial Supervision Department, Maj. Mieczysław Dytry wrote, „With reference to your letter dated 23 August [19]49, I inform that […] a detailed investigation has been carried out of the issue raised by Cit[izen] Galler. As a result of the investigation of the case, perpetrators of the assault have been judged by the Military District Court in Kraków and sentenced." (AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Prawny [Legal Department], 303/XVI/110, Pismo Naczelnej Prokuratury Wojskowej do Wydziału Prawnego CKŻP, 12.IX.1949 [Letter of the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office to the Legal Department of the CKŻP, 12 September 1949], p. 4). I would like to thank Alina Skibińska for making this document available to me.

[248] AIPN Kr, 110/4488, Pismo Wojskowej Prokuratury Rejonowej do Naczelnej Prokuratury Wojskowej, 12 XII 1950 [Letter of the Military District Prosecutor's Office to the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office, 12 December 1950], p. 28.

[249] Ibidem, Pismo Wojskowej Prokuratury Rejonowej do Naczelnej Prokuratury Wojskowej, 7 XI 1950 [Letter of the Military District Prosecutor's Office to the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office, 7 November 1950], p. 23.

[250] AIPN Kr, 010/9414, Pismo WUBP w Nowym Targu do WPR w Krakowie, 16 XI 1950 [Letter of the WUBP in Nowy Targ to the WPR in Kraków 16 November 1950], p. 104.

[251] AIPN Kr, 110/4488, Zeznania Jana Batkiewicza, 16 I 1951 [Testimony of Jan Batkiewicz, 16 January 1951], pp. 43–44.

into the air."[252] Both were convicted and sentenced to death in 1951; later, the sentences were commuted to 15 years' imprisonment.[253] They were released under an amnesty in 1956.[254] Pyzowski began to work for the authorities as a secret informer under the alias of 'Sport'. His written profile contains the following:

> Due to a complaint filed by Jewish citizens who had managed to escape the assault on them in 1946 […], the candidate is arrested in 1950 along with others […], after a short time, however, he is released from prison and returns to Nowy Targ […]. He keeps in close contact with Jan Batkiewicz. The two often travel together outside the Nowy Targ area, […] often go into the mountains, they are very close.[255]

Jan 'Leń' Jarosz was arrested in late November 1952.[256] At the time he was a car electrician; he had belonged to the ZMP [*Związek Młodzieży Polskiej*[257]] since 1949. He did not confess to his participation in the Krościenko assault.[258] In September of 1953, he was placed into a psychiatric hospital. His illness began some time after his imprisonment; its first symptoms became visible during his interrogation on 23 January 1953 and during the main proceedings [in the courtroom] in July of the same year. The trial has not been completed.[259]

Who exactly was Stanisław Stec, mentioned in the letter of the Nowy Targ PUBP to the WUBP in Kraków, remains unclear. The letter implies that Stec was one of the civilians who traveled in the cab of the truck. Maria Galler in her testimony suggested that he was a man who had brought the men of 'Śmigły' in and, later, pulled her and her son down from the truck. Yet, the UB report describing the course of events cited Stec's testmony and concluded that he

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[252] Ibidem, Protokół rozprawy głównej, 18 IV 1951 [Transcript of the trial proceedings, 18 April 1951], pp. 76–78.

[253] Ibidem, Wyrok w sprawie Jana Batkiewicza i Mieczysława Pyzowskiego, 19 IV 1951 [Sentence in the case of Jan Batkiewicz and Mieczysław Pyzowski, 19 April 1951], pp. 80–81.

[254] AIPN Kr, 009/6573, Raport o zezwolenie opracowania kandydata na werbunek w charakterze informatora, 14 XI 1958 [Report for [*sic*] an approval of screening of the candidate for recruitment as an informant, 14 November 1958], p. 9.

[255] Ibidem, Charakterystyka kandydata, 14 XI 1958 [Candidate's profile, 14 November 1958], p. 11.

[256] AIPN Kr, 110/5224, Nakaz uwięzienia, 27 XI 1952 [Arrest warrant, 27 November 1952], p. 8. As his case files show, at the time of the attack on the orphanage in Rabka, he had been one of the guards in the UB station located next to the Jewish children's home (ibidem, Zeznania Jana Jarosza, 26 XI 1952 [Testimony of Jan Jarosz, 26 November 1952], p. 9).

[257] The Union of Polish Youth, a communist youth organization established in 1948 – *transl*.

[258] Ibidem, Zeznania Jana Jarosza, 4 II 1953 [Testimony of Jan Jarosz, 4 February 1953], p. 18.

[259] Ibidem, Orzeczenie sądowo-psychiatryczne, 21 XII 1953 [Forensic psychiatric evaluation, 21 December 1953], pp. 84–86.

had not recognised any of the bandits.[260] I have not found any minutes of Stec's interrogation.

There was a sequel to the story of the Korścienko murder. On 15 June 1992, the Provincial Court in Craców (presided over by Judge Zenon Martyniak) declared the conviction of Batkiewicz invalid. The opinion of the court stated:

> the late Jan Batkiewicz was a member of the underground organisation 'Błyskawica' and 'Ogień', the mission of which was to bring about the independence of the Polish State. […] The organisation to which he belonged […] operated under the banner of the Home Army. From there arose the baseless accusation that Jan Batkiewicz had been involved in the murder of several persons of Jewish nationality. Jan Batkiewicz pleaded not guilty to this charge and made clear that he had not participated in the massacre. With this in mind, the Court has found that the activities of Jan Batkiewicz were a result of the pursuit of independence of the Polish State.[261]

Clearly, none of the judges had read the testimony given by Jan Batkiewicz in 1947.The judges of the Provincial Court in Kraków (under the chairmanship of Judge Witold Korycińskiego), however, took the testimony into consideration during the hearing of the petition of Mieczysław Pyzowski. In 1996 they rejected his request to render his conviction invalid:

> If – in light of the findings of the Military District Court in Kraków – we assume that Mieczysław Pyzowski belonged to the group that had carried out the massacre of Jewish citizens, and that then he had been involved in the taking of the belongings of the murdered – as well as those who had survived – then the acts with which the petitioner has been charged were purely criminal, repugnant; [they were] detrimental to the greatest good that is human life and as such not only did they not serve the struggle for independence, but were even harmful to the cause.[262]

Pyzowski appealed to the Court of Appeals, stating that "[he] does not feel guilty of the acts of complicity, which have been levelled against him as a result of malicious slander by another member of the organisation."[263] The Court of Appeals ruled:

The Provincial Court has rightly proclaimed such act as purely criminal. It is the only framework within which we can and should judge it, while emphasising

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[260] AIPN Kr, 009/6573, Pismo PUBP w Nowym Targu do naczelnika Wydziału III WUBP w Krakowie 30 I 1950 [Letter of the PUBP in Nowy Targ to the Head of the Third Department of the WUBP in Kraków, 30 January 1950], p. 32.

[261] AIPN Kr, 110/4488, Postanowienie Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Krakowie, 15 VI 1992 [Decision of the Provincial Court in Kraków, 15 June 1992], p. 234.

[262] Ibidem, Postanowienie Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Krakowie, 19 III 1996 [Decision of the Provincial Court in Kraków, 19 March 1996], p. 213

[263] Ibidem, Postanowienie Sądu Apelacyjnego w Krakowie, 13 VI 1996 [Decision of the Court of Appeals in Kraków, 13 June 1996], p. 215.

that by generally applicable, universal standards of any civilised society, it results in the greatest degree of condemnation – for legal as well as ethical, and moral reasons.[264]

In February 2012, however, the District Court in Kraków (presided over by Judge Artur Szymański), having examined a request from the Minister of Justice to render void the judgement of the case of Józef Dyda, stated: "The acts with which Józef Dyda was charged [if] judged in alternate historical and political context, would serve as proof of his patriotism, the struggle to regain sovereignty of the nation. For this reason, one should consider [them] as being related to his activities toward the independence of the Polish State."[265]

Preposterous – is truly the only word to describe this line of reasoning.

The murders committed in Podhale between April and May, 1946 did not go unnoticed. On 4 May 1946, Chief of the PKMO in Nowy Targ, Lieut. Stefan Banaszek, wrote to his superiors at the provincial level that the number of victims from the past days is "absolutely too high, even in the post-war circumstances."[266] He also harshly criticised the work of the UB forces: "Security bodies are confused [...] and are trembling with fear of bandits, who must not be few in number to have committed so many crimes in the span of only one month."[267] He also commented on the attitude of the local population, "which, if not supports them, at least turns a blind eye on the bandits' excesses." However, "the local population responded to the last three instances of mass murders of jews with aversion and condemnation of such abhorrent acts of the forest bands since the recent incidents can only be attributed to them."[268]

The events that had taken place in Krościenko provoked a fierce debate at the meeting of the CKŻP held on 9 May 1946. Salomon Fiszgrund of the Bund argued that the Zionists, who were organising illegal emigration, were co-responsible for the deaths [of the escapees] and should suffer the consequences. Mendel Kosower of Ichud found this stand outrageous: "You cannot blame anyone of being reckless in sending people to their deaths. These people went toward the border of their own accord and initiative."[269] Icchak Cukierman pointed out that he had already called for the Jews to move to bigger towns,

[264] Ibidem, Postanowienie Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Krakowie, 19 III 1996 [Decision of the Provincial Court in Kraków, 19 March 1996], p. 215–216.

[265] AIPN Kr, 110/1892, Uzasadnienie postanowienia Sądu Okręgowego w Krakowie, 8 II 2012 [Justification of the decision of the Distric Court in Kraków, 8 February 2012], p. 259.

[266] AIPN Kr, 140/592, Sprawozdanie z działalności Powiatowej Komendy Milicji Obywatelskiej w Nowym Targu, 4 V 1946 [Report on activities of the County Department of the Citizens' Militia in Nowy Targ, 4 May 1946], not numbered.

[267] Ibidem.

[268] Ibidem.

[269] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Prezydium i Sekretariat [Department Presidium and Secretariat 303/I/15, Protokół posiedzenia Prezydium CKŻP, 4 V 1946 [Minutes of a session of the Presidium of the CKŻP, 9 May 1946], p. 18–19.

and Paul Zelicki of the PPR proposed that the information about the killing of twenty-four persons in Podhale should be circulated within two weeks to the Polish Jews. Nevertheless, one thing is sure: the events from between April and May 1946 put an end to any efforts to rebuild Jewish life in Podhale. Also, no further attempts were made to escape from Poland by crossing this stretch of the border with Czechoslovakia.

"Wykaz morderstw i napadów rabunkowych dokonanych przez bandę «Ognia» i bandę «Wiarusy»" [Register of murders and robberies committed by the band of 'Ogień' and the band of 'Wiarusy'], held in the IPN Archive, contains following paragraph:

> October 1946. In the town of Podczerwone, Nowy Targ County, the band of 'Ogień' assaulted a group of sixteen persons of Jewish nationality who were most probably on their way to the CSRR. They all were murdered and robbed of their possessions. Among things stolen were a 2.5 kg bar of gold, seven gold watches, a dozen or so gold rings, and a considerable amount of dollars in gold [coins]. Józef 'Biały' Kościelniak, among others, had participated in the assault and murder, transferring all looted items and gold to 'Ogień'.[270]

I did not find any primary source confirmation of this information, which leads me to believe that such an incident did not occur.

"Sabotage assassination"

The last victims of the anti-Jewish violence in Podhale died in the summer of 1947. The partisan attack was directed at six people of the Cyns and Goldstein families, who were vacationing in Rabka.

Jerzy Cyns, son of Julian and Sabina, was born on 13 May 1938 in Kraków. He had an older brother, Henryk. The Cynses lived in the Kraków ghetto during the war; later they were deported to the camp in Płaszów. From there Henryk, along with other children, was deported to Auschwitz in May 1944. Jerzy survived the selection by hiding in a trunk full of underclothes of German soldiers infected with venereal diseases. Someone had fed him with crumbs of bread and given him water through a tube. In Płaszów, he was afraid of dogs more than anything else. Everyone chased him away. Then, he was sent to Gross-Rosen together with his father and, later, when he was a six-year-old, to Auschwitz-Birkenau. He was tattooed three times, tied with a cable so he would not run away. Jerzy remembered the injections, after each his entire body had become swollen. His mother had made him a knitted cap, [but] he was not able to pull it over his

[270] AIPN Kr, 06/1/20, Wykaz morderstw i napadów rabunkowych dokonanych przez bandę „Ognia" i bandę „Wiarusy" w latach 1945–1950 [Register of murders and robberies committed by the bands of 'Ogień' and 'Wiarusy' from 1945 to 1950], no date, p. 135.

swollen head.[271] He was one of a group of children liberated by the Red Army in January 1945. He is listed in the Auschwitz files under the name Jurek Cinek, because the barely-seven-year-old boy had introduced himself in this way. After the liberation, he was admitted to a hospital in a serious condition. Later was among the children who stayed in the headquarters of the Jewish Committee on Długa Street in Kraków. There he was found by his mother's brother, Zygmunt Goldstein.[272]

Sabina Cyns and her older son were deported from Płaszów to Auschwitz in May 1944. Henryk died in a gas chamber, and Sabina was taken to a labour camp. Later she was sent to Ravensbrück, then to Leipzig, where she was liberated on 8 May 1945. In July, she returned to Kraków, and there she found her younger son Jerzy.[273] Her husband, Julian, was deported from Birkenau to the concentration camp Mauthausen-Gusen,[274] and later to the sub-camp of Mauthausen, Ebensee. Liberated by the Americans in May, he then arrived at a hospital in Austria. There he learned that his wife and son had survived. He returned to them to Kraków in the summer of 1945. That summer, seven-year-old Jerzy spent in the Rabka orphanage, where he was being treated[275] and where he "survived an incident – a grenade thrown into the children's room."[276] After the second attack on the Rabka orphanage on 20 August 1945, he was sent back to Kraków.[277]

Sabina's brother, Zygmunt Goldstein, tried to get a job in the Security Office (UB) in April 1945. He wrote on his application that, at that time, his name was Zygmunt Kozik.[278] Born in Krakow in 1914, a graduate of the Kraków Academy of Economics [Akademia Handlowa], before the war he had worked as a clerk in a forwarding office and at the same time had been active in left-wing workers' organisations. As a soldier of the Polish Army, he was arrested by Germans in Jaroslaw in 1939, but managed to escape from the transport and returned to

[271] USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Visual History Archive, Jerzy Cyns, Interview 635; vha-online.usc.edu, access 20 April 2015.

[272] Sławomir Pastuszka, "Dorota i Jerzy Cyns – wspomnienia," *Jesteśmy. Biuletyn krakowskiej społeczności żydowskiej* 3 (2014): 6.

[273] Ibidem.

[274] Ibidem; see also www.straty.pl, based on transport records to KL Mauthausen-Gusen.

[275] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Oświaty, 303/IX/1405, Wykaz imienny dzieci przebywających na leczeniu w Domu Leczniczo-Wychowawczym w Rabce, sierpień 1945 [Roll of names of children treated in the Childcare Center in Rabka, August 1945], p. 1.

[276] YVA, O.33/932, Życiorys Jerzego Cynsa spisany przez Juliana Cynsa, niedatowany [Biographical note of Jerzy Cyns, written by Julian Cyns, not dated], p. 2.

[277] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Oświaty, 303/IX/1405, Wykaz imienny dzieci przebywających na leczeniu w Domu Leczniczo-Wychowawczym w Rabce, sierpień 1945 [Roll of names of children treated in the Childcare Center in Rabka, August 1945], p. 1.

[278] Zygmunt Goldstein received his name-change approval on 28 July1945 r. He received it as "an acting director of the Sixth Section of the First Department, on account of requirements of the service" (AIPN Kr, 140/2, Wyciąg z rozkazu personalnego nr 181, 28 lipiec 1945 [Excerpts from personal order, no. 181, 28 July1945], p. 96).

Kraków. From the Kraków ghetto, he was sent to the labour camp in Płaszów. He fled again while being transported to the camp in Szebnie and made his way through Slovakia to Hungary. On two later occasions, he himself helped Polish Jews escape across the border. He joined the Stalin Partisan Brigade and fought the Germans in Czechoslovakia; he was wounded twice.[279] In the "Assesment of the combat readiness of Cit[izen] Zygmunt Goldstein," his superior wrote, that he "proved himself to be a brave partisan, courageous and devoted to the fight against German fascism."[280]

Goldstein was hired. From 25 April 1945, he held the position of the acting director of the Sixth Section of the WUBP in Kraków, and as a "conscientious, diligent, and moreover intelligent, energetic, and bright"[281] employee, he was later appointed the Head of the field office of the Kraków WUBP.[282]

On 4 July 1946, the day of the Kielce pogrom, he was arrested on a charge of misappropriation of a deposit taken from Jews detained in connection with black market currency trade. He escaped ten days later and made his way to Czechoslovakia; then he brought his wife, Dora and their newborn child there.[283] They lived off aid given by the Czechoslovak partisans' union. When after some time Goldstein had (again) crossed the Polish border, he was immediately arrested.[284] On 26 April 1947, he was sentenced to six years of imprisonment;[285] on that same day he tried to commit suicide.[286] In May his appeal was sustained, and he left prison in late June 1947.[287] On 4 July of the same year, he was dismissed from the UB.[288] His work was then evaluated as follows:

> He did not show any progress during the time of his work in the security bodies. A demoralised drunk, undisciplined, of a v[ery] low intellectual

[279] AIPN Kr, 057/830, Życiorys Zygmunta Goldsteina, kwiecień 1947 [Biographical note of Zygmunt Goldstein, April 1947], p. 47.

[280] Ibidem, Charakterystyka bojowa Goldsteina Zygmunta, 1945 [Assesment of the combat readiness of Cit. Zygmunt Goldstein, 1945], p. 48.

[281] Ibidem, Charakterystyka Kozika Zygmunta, 29 I 1946 [Profile of Zygmunt Kozik, 29 January 1946], p. 26.

[282] Ibidem, Pismo Wydziału Personalnego WUBP w Krakowie do Biura Personalnego MBPw Warszawie, 17 I 1946 [Letter from the Personnel Divison of the WUBP in Kraków to the Personnel Bureau of the MBP in Warsaw, 17 January 1946], p. 23.

[283] In her testimony concerning her husband's case, Dora Goldstein *née* Rotenberg gave the name Bronisława Kozik. At the time of the assault, in August 1947, she had on her the ID issued in the name of Bonisława Balicka.

[284] AIPN Kr, 110/983, Zeznania Zygmunta Kozika, 8 XII 1946 [Testimony of Zygmunt Kozik, 8 December 1946], p. 79.

[285] Ibidem, Wyrok w sprawie Zygmunta Kozika, 26 VI 1947 [Sentence in the case of Zygmunt Kozik, 26 April 1947], p. 147.

[286] Ibidem, Notatka urzędowa, 26 IV 1947 [Official note, 26 April 1947], p. 151.

[287] AIPN Kr, 110/983, Zeznania Zygmunta Kozika, 8 XII 1946 [Testimony of Zygmunt Kozik, 8 December 1946], p. 79.

[288] AIPN Kr, 057/830, Karta zwolnienia, 4 VII 1947 [Record of dismissal, 4 July 1947], p. 18.

> level. His political orientation [is] unclear. Deserted the Public Security Force on 14/07/46. He was wanted and captured, put in prison for three years. Released under the amnesty.[289]

Sabina and Julian Cyns came to Rabka to rest and receive treatment for their nine-year-old son Jerzy. Together with them came Dora and Zygmunt Goldstein, and their one-year-old son Ludwik.[290] A telegram dated 10 August 1947, sent by the PKMO in Nowy Targ to the WKMO in Kraków contained the information that twenty-two unknown men in uniforms of the Polish Army had attacked the Villa Batory the previous day and had murdered three persons. There is a handwritten annotation on the telegram: "sab[otage] ass[assignation]."[291] A special dispatch sent by the Kraków WUBP to the Ministry of Public Security provides additional details:

> On 8 August 1947 at 10 p.m., two individuals entered the apartment of Cit[izen] Goldstein in Rabka. [...] After entering the apartment, these individuals demanded that [those present] put their hands up, which those in the apartment did; moreover, while performing a body search of Julian Cejsn [Cyns], the individuals demanded who had a gun.
>
> Then the individuals asked those present who they were, what they did and what was their nationality; and when Julian Cejsn replied that they were of Polish [nationality], one of the individuals took him to the bathroom. At this time the second individual shouted: "this one is running away" so the individual who had left with Julian Cejsnem returned to the apartment. His escortee, seizing the opportunity, ran into another room where his nine-year-old son was and hid together with him under the bed.[292]

Jerzy Cyns recalled in his account to the Shoah Foundation:

> I was lying under one bed, my father under the second. They were speaking Polish. My father shouted [at my mother] to hide under a duvet. They started shooting; they shot her. She jumped out of the window, and they finished her off. Rounds were flying around the room. [...] My aunt held her son in her arms. Fortunately, they did not kill him, but shot him in the leg. She got [a bullet] in the face and fell down.[293]

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[289] Ibidem, Charakterystyka chor. Goldszteina, 12 VII 1947 [Profile of WO Goldsztein, 12 July 1947], p. 16.

[290] USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Visual History Archive, Jerzy Cyns, Interview 635; vhaonline.usc.edu, access 20 April 2015.

[291] AIPN Kr, 0125/182, vol. 3, Telefonogram PKMO w Nowym Targu do WKMO WKMO w Krakowie, 10 VIII 1947 [Telegram from the PKMO in Nowy Targ to the WKMO in Kraków, 10 August 1947], p. 120.

[292] AIPN Kr, 06/1/2, Meldunek specjalny WUBP w Krakowie do MBP, 9 IX 1947 [Special dispatch by the WUBP in Kraków for the MBP, 9 September 1947], p. 60.

[293] USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Visual History Archive, Jerzy yns, Interview 635; vhaonline.usc.edu, access 20 April 2015.

Sabina Cyns died that night, so did her brother, Zygmunt Goldstein, and his wife Dorothy.

The Nowy Targ MO's report for the month of August of 1947 stated that two investigators had been sent there the morning after the murder. Their investigation showed that the attackers were uniformed. One had a pepesha and the other one – a handgun. The investigators were not able to establish their names.[294] Meanwhile, on 12 August 1947, the PUBP in Nowy Targ wrote to the WUBP in Kraków:

> 'Pucuła', [a man] by the name of Józef Świder of Rdzawka village carried out those sentences together with a member of this band of his, by the name of Andrzej Świder alias 'Harcerz' of Ponic village […]. Five members of this band secured the building during the murder. […] At that time, an operational group stationed in Rabka[295] was busy ambushing 'Pucuła's' band in the village of Rdzawka. The second group was on patrol duty in Rabka-Zdrój; hearing the shots that had been fired at murdered citizens, they started in pursuit, but the band went another way so the perpetrators still have not been caught.[296]

After the death of 'Ogień', 'Wiarusy' – the unit of 'Pucuła' Świder (who had used the alias 'Mściciel' since 1947) – was the strongest and most active group of the armed underground in the Kraków Province. Its members came mostly from Kuraś's formation 'Błyskawica'. Dawid Golik, author of the study on the 'Wiarusy' unit, wrote:

> Increase in number of its members significantly influenced activity of the 'Wiarusy' unit in the summer of 1947. Partisans led by 'Mściciel' carried out more and more requisitions [of resources] and liquidations of collaborators of the secret police (the UB) in the area of the Nowy Targ County.[297]

The Kraków WUBP sent a dispatch to the MBP, informing: "As we are working out [are trying to expose – *transl.*] 'Pucuła's' band, our informant network is

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[294] AIPN Kr, 140/590, Sprawozdanie z działalności MO powiatu nowotarskiego w sierpniu 1947 [Report on activities of the Nowy Targ County Department of the MO in August 1947, not dated], n.p.

[295] It was a KBW (Internal Security Corps) platoon commanded by Lt. Szczygielski (AIPN Kr, 0125/182, file 3, Wspomnienia ppor. Stefana Szafrana, 18 III 1974 [Memoirs of 2d Lt. Stefan Szafran, 18 March 1974], p. 143).

[296] AIPN Kr, 057/830, Meldunek specjalny PUBP w Nowym Targu do WUBP w Krakowie, 12.VIII.1947 [Special dispatch of the PUBP in Nowy Targ to the WUBP in Kraków, 12 August 1947], p. 11. The dispatch of the Kraków UB mentions an officer of the WUBP sent to Rabka after the murder. He was to establish that the group lead by Jan 'Pucuła' Świder had been responsible for the death of the victims (AIPN Kr, 06/1/2, Meldunek specjalny WUBP w Krakowie do MBP, 9 IX 1947 [Special dispatch of the WUBP in Kraków for the MBP, 9 September 1947], p. 60).

[297] Dawid Golik, *Z wiarą w zwycięstwo… Oddział partyzancki „Wiarusy" 1947–1949* (Kraków: IPN, 2010), p. 7. Golik's book does not mention the murder of three persons of Jewish descent of which 'Mściciel' has been accused.



The mass grave of the victims of the Spring wave of violence. The Jewish cemetery in Kraków (© Karolina Panz)

aimed to a quick liquidation of this band."[298] 'Pucuła' alias 'Mściciel' was killed by the KBW [men] in February 1948.[299] In July of the following year, the secret police liquidated the 'Wiarusy' unit.[300] In October 1949, the PUBP in Nowy Targ obtained from the Kraków WUBP some records concerning the murders to which the members of the 'Wiarusy' band had not confessed during the investigation.[301] The records concerning the murder committed in Rabka in August 1947 were supposed to be among the files but I could not find them.

Jerzy Cyns recalled years later:

> we immediately left [Rabka]. We buried them all at Miodowa Street [at the Jewish cemetery in Kraków – K.P.]. I could not attend any school. I could not cope. It happened in 1947; learning became hard for me afterwards. Somehow I finished a vocational school. I was struggling with myself, I was working hard and trying, so I could earn [a living].[302]

Jerzy suffered from an anxiety disorder and had difficulty maintaining attention for the rest of his life (which is why his father wrote down Jerzy's war and post-war experiences for him). In them he wrote that Ludwik, the son of Dora and Zygmunt, lived with them after his parents had died, and departed to Israel in 1959.[303] Julian and Jerzy Cyns lived the rest of their lives in Kraków.[304]

"Let's not let the fallen perish"

Thirty-four people of Jewish descent were killed in Podhale in the period immediately after the war.[305] Twenty-seven people were killed within several months – from late January to early May 1946. Among those victims were Jews from the Podhale region, who tried to rebuild there their lives which had

[298] AIPN Kr, 06/1/2, Meldunek specjalny WUBP w Krakowie do MBP, 9 IX 1947 [Special dispatch of the WUBP in Kraków for/to the MBP, 9 September 1947], p. 60.

[299] Golik, *Z wiarą w zwycięstwo…*, p. 10.

[300] Ibidem, p. 17.

[301] AIPN Kr, 06/1/31, Pismo WUBP w Krakowie do PUBP w Nowym Targu, 4 X 1949 [Letter of the WUBP in Kraków to the PUBP in Nowy Targ, 4 October 1949], p. 30.

[302] USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Visual History Archive, Jerzy Cyns, Interview 635; vhaonline.usc.edu, access 20 April 2015.

[303] YVA, O.33/932, Życiorys Jerzego Cynsa spisany przez Juliana Cynsa [Biographical note of Jerzy Cyns, written by Julian Cyns, not dated], p. 2.

[304] Pastuszka, *Danuta i Jerzy Cyns…*, p. 6.

[305] "List of the murdered by the reactionary underground in the years 1945–1950" contains 221 names altogether (AIPN Kr, 041/42, file 4, not dated, p. 259). The number of 33, to which I've referred, does not include people of Jewish descent, who were functionaries in the government apparatus at the time of their death. Zygmunt Goldstein was no longer a member of the UB at the time of his death. A clerk who compiled the list of UB officers and policemen killed by the underground provided the Goldstein's name, with the comment: "is out, dismissed, sentenced to six years in prison" (ibidem, p. 128).

been destroyed by the Holocaust: the men killed in Maniowy and young Lonek Lindenberger, Ludwik Herz and Dawid Grassgrün who had wished to revive the Jewish community in Nowy Targ, Józef Oppenheim whose activities had inextricably linked his name to the history of Zakopane. They were men, women, and children from other parts of the country who, similarly to the victims of Białka and Krościenko, had gone through hell in concentration camps, or had been exposed to war-time life in the Soviet Union, and who had not wanted to (or could have not) live in Poland after the war. And also those who had not intended to depart from Poland died as did Sabina Cyns and the Goldsteins. The perpetrators did not kill them just to rob them. Instead, they died for being Jews, and the Jewishness of their victims justified, in the eyes of the perpetrators, the utter lack of scruples. The opportunity to loot increased their willingness to kill, as the case of the Poles who were murdered in Łąck because they were "suspected to be Jews" illustrates very well. The attacks on the orphanage in Rabka instigated by the Catholic priest, the intimidation of children from the Villa Leśny Gród, and the murders committed by 'Ogień's' subordinates successfully completed the German idea of rendering Podhale "free of Jews".



The monument commemorating the partisans of the 'Ogień's' group (© Karolina Panz)

The monument in memory of the soldiers of Józef 'Ogień' Kuraś's units, unveiled by President Lech Kaczyński in Zakopane in August 2006, bears the inscription: "Let's not let the fallen perish."[306] Written by famous Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert, the words are taken from the same poem as the quotation with which I have opened my paper. At the unveiling ceremony of the monument, Andrzej Przewoźnik, then Secretary of the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites [*Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa*] said: "Communists wanted to kill 'Ogień' twice: to kill him and to kill the memory of him. Today we reinstate him to the pantheon, the national hall of fame. We cannot return them ['Ogień' and his soldiers] to life, but we can restore the memory of them and their honour."[307]

[306] Zbigniew Herbert, *Three poems by heart*, in idem, *The Collected Poems: 1956–1998*, trans. Alissa Valles (New York: Ecco, 2007), p. 6.

[307] Polska Agencja Prasowa, *W Zakopanem odsłonięto pomnik Józefa Kurasia „Ognia"*; www.pis.org.pl, access in April 2015.

It is hard to resist the impression that restoring the fame and memory of the "cursed soldiers", in this case of 'Ogień' and his subordinates, is often done at the expense of the memory of their victims and of the consequences of the harm they have inflicted.[308] Looking at the Zakopane monument, one must have before one's eyes the parents of twelve-year-old Józef Galler standing petrified with pain over his grave in Kraków.[309] One must hear Jerzy Cyns' sobs as he retells of his mother's death. One must read the accounts written by relatives of Henryk Unterbuch and Beniamin Rose. One must include them in the pantheon of our national memory, too.

Translated by *Karolina Dmowska*, *Elżbieta Olender-Dmowska*

[308] Some examples show that a different approach is possible. The Białystok Branch of the Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation [*Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu*] posted on the Internet an unusual message about the final findings of the investigation No. S28/02/Zi, regarding killings of 79 Belarusians in late January and early February of 1946. The killings had been ordered by Romuald "Bury" Rajs, the commander of the 3rd Wilno Brigade of the National Military Union [*Narodowe Zjednoczenie Wojskowe*]: "There is no evidence that the people, who had lost their lives, had participated in any activities conducted by the apparatus of the communist state, or that any of their activities had been aimed at breaking up this underground organization. Therefore, the assertion of a potential threat was purely hypothetical and did not permit actions to their physical eradication. This position shall not be changed by the assumption that these events occurred during a unique period when, in the eyes of many, life had lost its value, or that the cruelties of the recently-ended war had warped psyche of many people. Moreover – taking into account both fundamental and higher legal norms, of which the most important goal is to defend human life as the most important value – it [the assumption] can never decide on or justify such measures. Neither the struggle for independence of the Polish State should, in any case, justify what had occurred. On the contrary, the actions carried out by 'Bury' against residents of Podlasie villages benefited the apparatus of communist power, chiefly by lowering the prestige of the underground organisations, [and] by providing propaganda arguments about the partisans' banditry (Information on the final findings of investigation no S28/02/Zi, regarding the taking of life of seventy-nine persons, residents of the Bielsk Podlaski County, including thirty cartes, that took place in the forest near Puchały Stare during the period between 29 January and 2 February 1946; http://ipn.gov.pl/pl/dla-mediow/komunikaty/9989,Informacja-o-ustaleniach-koncowych-sledztwa-S-2802Zi-w-sprawie-pozbawienia-zycia.html, access in April 2015). The same outlook at the history of the cursed soldiers is given in a book by Paweł Rokicki which, among other things, recounts the bloody revenge the 5th Wilno Brigade of the AK commanded by Zygmunt 'Łupaszka' Szendzielarz took on the Lithuanian civilian population. The author states: "it is equally important to building the proper moral framework of every society, that both the war crimes that targeted the members of the society, as well as those that were perpetrated by the members of the given society be examined." (idem, *Glinciszki i Dubinki. Zbrodnie wojenne na Wileńszczyźnie w połowie 1944 roku i ich konsekwencje we współczesnych relacjach polsko-litewskich*, Warsaw: ISP PAN and IPN, 2015, pp. 12–13).

[309] Photograph from the collection of the USHMM.

Abstract
This article discusses the armed anti-Jewish violence and the events connected with it, which occurred in the Polish Tatra Highlands (southern Poland) during1945–1947. The number of Jewish victims exceeded thirty, including children from Jewish orphanages. Among the perpetrators of those acts of terror were partisans from the group commanded by Józef Kuraś 'Ogień' – one of the most important symbols of anti-communist resistance. This article is a results of several years of research and is based on highly diverse sources. Its main purpose is to recreate those events, with particular attention given to the victims of those acts of violence.

Key words
post-war period, Polish Tatra Podhale, anti-Jewish violence, murders of Jews, Jewish orphanages, anti-communist partisans, Józef 'Ogień' Kuraś