

Studies

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“Barabasz” and the Jews: From the history of the “Wybraniecki” Home Army Partisan Detachment

In January 1990 Zvi Zelinger (Israeli citizen, domiciled in Kielce until 1939) sent a letter to the Righteous among the Nations Yad Vashem department in Jerusalem, in which he described the circumstances in which his 12-year-old sister Dina (Danusia) and aunt Zofia had died in 1944. The two women were hiding in the village of Zagórze near Daleszyce together with a few other Jews from Kielce. A Pole, Stefan Sawa – Zofia Zelinger’s friend from before the war – was helping them. Zelinger learnt about the circumstances of their death only in 1989, when he finally managed to come to Poland and talk to the living witnesses of the tragedy in Zagórze. A fragment of his letter to Yad Vashem:

At the beginning of February 1944 Stefan Sawa came to them [his family in Kielce – A.S., J.T.-B.] to their house and told them that the Home Army [*Armia Krajowa, AK*] underground partisans had searched the house and found the Jews. The underground members warned him that he had to rid his house of the Jews in two weeks’ time. When he asked why they were threatening him, they said that if the Germans came and found them, they would destroy the whole village and that they wanted to avoid that. According to the sister-in-law, the following were his last words: If they come again, we will bribe them with money and ask for mercy and a little more time, for then it was obvious that the war was about to end soon and that the Russians would arrive in a few days and he hoped to buy some time. The pseudonym of the commander of the detachment that committed the crime is “Barabasz” – an AK underground member.¹

The “Wybraniecki” detachment (whose members were also referred to as “Barabaszes”) is one of the most famous partisan detachments of the Polish resistance during World War II. According to commander Marian Sołtysiak, the name suggests the special character of the unit whose members were “in a way

¹ Yad Vashem, Righteous Among the Nations Department, Files of Stefan Sowa, who was awarded a Righteous among the Nations medal in 1991 (in Hebrew, trans. into Polish by Zuzanna Radzik).

chosen” [*wybierać* – Polish “to choose”].² The detachment chronicle specifies the selection criteria: “service in the ‘Wybraniecki’ detachment is undertaken by soldiers of Polish nationality.”³ According to mounted reconnaissance troop commander Henryk Pawelec, the name of the detachment alluded to the “chosen” infantry tradition during King Stefan Batory’s reign.⁴ A school in the Kielce region⁵ has been named after the detachment. Similarly, detachment commander Marian Sołtysiak “Barabasz” has become a school patron.⁶ The pupils study his biography within the framework of educational projects.⁷ The MPs talk about the “Barabasz” partisans from the Sejm tribune,⁸ while numerous monuments and commemorative plaques in the Kielce region are a reminder of their achievements.⁹ Nobody discusses the issue mentioned in Zvi Zelinger’s letter, i.e. the murders of Jews committed by the detachment during World War II. This article reconstructs the circumstances of some of those events.

According to most sources and studies, the “Wybraniecki” detachment was created at the turn of February and March 1943.¹⁰ It was officially created as a sabotage detachment on 22 March 1943 by order of Kielce Region commander Józef Włodarczyk “Wyrwa.”¹¹ Marian Sołtysiak “Sokół” (later on “Barabasz”)¹² had been

² Marian Sołtysiak, *Chłopcy “Barabasza”* (Warsaw: PAX, 1965), 5.

³ Kronika oddziału “Wybranieckich” [“Wybraniecki” Detachment Chronicle], 1943–1944. Rękopis Bolesława Boczarskiego “Juranda” i maszynopis przygotowany przez Koło Pokoleńniowe “Rodzina Wybranieckich” w maju 1998 r. [The manuscript of Bolesław Boczarski “Jurand” and typescript prepared by the “Wybraniecki’s Family” Generation Circle in May 1998], no pagination (the authors are in possession of its copy).

⁴ Henryk and Zbigniewa Pawelec, *Na rozkaz serca* (Kielce: Stowarzyszenie im. Jana Karckiego, 2005), 132.

⁵ “Wybraniecki” Home Army Detachment Complex of Schools in Wzdół Rządowy.

⁶ Colonel Marian Sołtysiak “Barabasz” Elementary School in Daleszyce.

⁷ For example the inter-school educational project called Hike Following the Trail of Colonel Marian Sołtysiak “Barabasz” from the “Wybraniecki” Detachment and the “Wybraniecki” nature-historical trail in Cisów.

⁸ See: speech of Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) MP Maria Zuba, 21 November 2008, <http://www.sejmmometr.pl/wypowiedz/glxnl>, retrieved 31 August 2011.

⁹ For example the commemorative plaques in the parish churches in Cisów and Daleszyce, the monument on the site of the “Barabasz” detachment’s camp in the Cisów forest on the slope of the Stołowa Mountain, the monument of the “Górnik” detachment in Łągów, the monument-pantheon commemorating the “Wybraniecki” detachment at the Partisan Cemetery in Kielce. One of the streets in Kielce has been named after the “Wybraniecki” detachment.

¹⁰ Wojciech Borzobohaty, *“Jodła”. Okręg Radomsko-Kielecki ZWZ-AK 1939–1945* (Warsaw: PAX, 1984), 39, 182–184.

¹¹ See the short biographies at the end of the text of the “Wybraniecki” detachment members and of other members of the Radom-Kielce AK Region, who are mentioned in the text.

¹² See the biographical entry by Adam Massalski in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 40 (Warsaw-Cracow: PAN, 2000–2001), 454–457 and Marian Sołtysiak’s testimonies in the Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance] (later: AIPN), GK, 306/24.

its commander from the very beginning. Sołtysiak (1918–1995) was born in Gnojno in the Stopnica county (*powiat*). His father was a manager of the Łuniewskis’ estate in Gnojno and then the family moved to the Piła residence. One of eight siblings, he became associated with the National-Radical Camp (*Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny*, ONR)¹³ while still in junior high school. His texts were published in *Młodzi Idą* edited by Józef Ozga-Michalski. Alongside Gustaw Herling-Grudziński and some other schoolmates he co-edited the school monthly *Gołoborze*. He was a scout. After his high school finals he completed a year-long military training for officer cadets. In 1939 he was called up to the 4th “Legions” Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, later he was taken captive near Zamość but managed to escape. At the beginning of the occupation he was active in the Lizard Union Military Organization (*Organizacja Wojskowa Związek Jaszczurczy*). He took an oath before Wojciech Lipczewski from Kielce on 22 November 1939 and became active in the Armed Combat Union-Home Army (*Związek Walki Zbrojnej-Armia Krajowa*, ZWZ-AK). Until 1943 he distributed the press, created underground cells, conducted military training and sought weapons. He was Lipczewski and Adam Bolrowicz’s subordinate. In January 1943 he was appointed commander of the Kielce Home Army Sabotage Directorate (Kedyw), while in February/March that year he became commander of a seven-person sabotage group. The group members were: “Andrzej” (Henryk Pawelec), “Bogdan” (Stanisław Kozera), “Dan” (Stefan Fąfara), “Orlicz” (Stanisław Łubek), “Madej” (Jan Śniowski), “Roch” (Stanisław Lutek) and “Jurand” (Bolesław Boczarski). This is what Boczarski wrote about the detachment’s profile. “[O]ur task is to liquidate the informers, snoops [that were] the most harmful to the Polish Nation, the Germans and to educate and prepare society to avenge all the crimes committed against the Polish Nation.”¹⁴ Taking control of Chęciny in April was the unit’s first major action. The plan was to liquidate the Gestapo informer Mayor Baran (the operation failed and Baran was shot during another operation in June) and to release prisoners from jail (this part of the plan succeeded). On 23 June 1943 the detachment was stationed in a forest camp. The camp huts were erected in Kwarta section of the Cisów forest. The first members of Sołtysiak’s detachment came from the Bodzentyn municipality, from Suchedniów and its vicinity and from Kielce, where many of Sołtysiak’s schoolmates lived. In September that year Sołtysiak was promoted to a lieutenant. During that period the detachment conducted various sabotage operations. It executed informers, burnt files in about a dozen municipalities and dairies (mostly to hinder levy collection), set up traps for gendarmes and escorts transporting money and disarmed German patrols. In July in Kielce the “Dan” group unsuccessfully tried to assassinate Franz (Hans) Wittek,¹⁵ who had organized an informers’

¹³ Pawelecs, *Na rozkaz serca*, 54.

¹⁴ “Wybraniecki” Detachment Chronicle.

¹⁵ Wittek was assassinated on 15 June 1944 under command of Kazimierz Smolak “Nurek,” who died during that action. As an act of revenge the Germans arrested over 200 people,

network. By autumn 1943 the detachment had as many as about 90 members and "Barabas" decided to divide it into five squads, which were to "den up" for the winter in various villages of the Kielce District. Edward Skrobot "Wierny" operated west of Kielce, in the area of Zagnańsk, mainly near Chęciny, Oblęgorek, Gałęzice and Mostów. The Bolesław Boczański "Jurand" squad was quartered near Bodzentyn northeast of Kielce, in Ciekoty, Brzezinki and Klonów. A mounted reconnaissance troop under the command of Henryk Pawelec "Andrzej" was active on the border with the Jędrzejów area, near Morawica. The units were usually quartered in Kuby-Młyny and Dębska Wola. Władysław Szumielewicz "Mietek" was active southeast of Kielce: near Daleszyce and as far as Raków. Lieutenant Stefan Fąfara "Dan" with his sabotage squad, which was called a city section, was quartered near Kielce. The squads communicated using contact boxes located at various posts. Until spring 1944 the squads acted individually while maintaining constant contact with the commander and meeting at least once a month during the so-called concentrations. There were five of them in total. "Barabas" himself spent the first winter mostly in Kielce at the home of Renata Nowak – his fiancée and future wife.

All the events described in this text took place during that very period: autumn 1943 – spring 1944. Jerzy Kotliński's chronology of the "Wybraniecki" detachment's actions¹⁶ does not include any of them. But it provides information on other achievements of the detachment, such as: an attack on army warehouses in Jędrzejów, execution of death sentences on informers in Kielce, taking control of Daleszyce (January 1944), an attack on a train transporting German soldiers on leave, sabotage operations to destroy telegraph lines and German estates, in successive operations to burn official files of municipalities the attack on the Bieliny gendarmerie station in March 1944 in which five Germans died, and numerous skirmishes the detachment engaged in to obtain weapons and supplies.

The "Wybraniecki" detachment reunited at the end of March 1944. Previously, the detachment had been a unit at the Kielce Kedyw's disposal and had to carry out all the operations commissioned by the Directorate of the Underground Combat. After the reunion, however, the detachment's character changed – it became a strictly partisan detachment and a germinating seed of the future 4th Infantry Regiment of the Home Army. At that time it had 127 members and until summer it was the biggest partisan unit in the Home Army Radom-Kielce Region. It divided into three and then four platoons, commanded by "Górnik" (Czesław Łętowski), "Bogdan" (Stanisław Kozera), "Dan" (Stefan Fąfara) and

180 of whom were executed while the rest were deported to a concentration camp. See: Maria Michalczyk, *Diabeł "Piętej kolumny"* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1986). Henryk Pawelec, commander of the "Wybraniecki" mounted recon troop, a participant of the unsuccessful assassination attempt on Wittek.

¹⁶Jerzy Kotliński "Wojtek" – "Halny", *"Wybranieccy" w Lasach Cisowskich* (Wrocław: Media-profit, 1993), 135–138.

“Edward” (Edward Kiwer). Second Lieutenant “Wiorny” (Edward Skrobot) became Sołtysiak’s deputy. “Andrzej” (Henryk Pawelec) was the commander of the mounted recon troop. In August the detachment was incorporated into the 4th “Legions” Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division¹⁷ under the command of Major Józef Włodarczyk “Wyrwa,”¹⁸ who was replaced in October by Lieutenant Maksymilian Lorenz “Katarzyna.” Sołtysiak became commander of the 1st platoon of the 1st battalion. The division marched toward Warsaw participating in the Operation Tempest. It fought the German detachments including the day-long battle at Antoniów on 21 August 1944, during which about 200 Germans perished. Another major battle with a German detachment took place on 26 September at Radków. Before the division reached the River Pilica, the order to head toward Warsaw had been cancelled. The detachment’s partial deconcentration and demobilization took place in the Włoszczowa forests. “Barabasz” returned to the Cisów forest and continued the demobilization there. The way back was marked with numerous skirmishes and round-ups conducted by the gendarmerie. The detachment dissolved in the village of Ciekoty-Wilków. The weapons were hidden at farmer Stefan Sito’s premises. The history of the “Wybraniecki” detachment during 1943–1944 includes the total of over 60 actions and battles.

When Sołtysiak came to Kielce in January 1945 he received the order that the Home Army had been dissolved.¹⁹ Fearing arrest, soon after the arrival of the Red Army he left Kielce for Kraków. Due to the underground’s financial aid he was hiding in Kraków under an assumed name (he had kept the occupation-period documents issued to Mateusz Sobczak). In July 1945 he went to the West via Czechoslovakia (Nuremberg, Frankfurt, Paris, London), where he stayed for a short period of time only to return to Poland in October 1945. After his return he immediately came out and became the head of the Liquidation Commission of the Home Army Radom-Kielce Region (*Komisja Likwidacyjna AK w Okręgu Radomsko-Kieleckim*). Due to Major Jan Sobiesiak’s support (pseudonym “Maks,” war-time commander of the People’s Army “Grunwald” parachute brigade) he joined the communist Polish Army as a captain in 1946. He submitted his self-critique – detailed biography in which he distanced himself from his past – into the hands of General Stanisław Zawadzki – Ministry of Defense HR department head. He was demobilized a year later. He settled in Lower Silesia, changed his workplace a few times, moved to Wrocław in 1948, worked in the Provincial

¹⁷ The 4th AK “Legions” Infantry Regiment was made up of the “Wybraniecki” partisan detachment and the detachments commanded by “Wilk,” “Gryf” and others. See Aleksander Idzik, *Czwarty pułk piechoty 1806–1966* (London: Koło Czwartaków, 1963).

¹⁸ From the very beginning Sołtysiak was subordinated to Włodarczyk “Wyrwa” – Kielce AK District commander. The district was divided into a few sub-districts: Bodzentyn, Piekoszów, Daleszyce, and Suchedniów. The “Wybraniecki” detachment was active in all those sub-districts.

¹⁹ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka z 6, 10 i 19 X 1949 r. [Marian Sołtysiak’s interrogations on 6, 10 and 19 October 1949].

Office and started to study law. On 18 September 1949 he was apprehended by the Security Office in Wrocław and arrested. After two years of investigation he was tried before the Provincial Court in Kielce on 14 September 1951 (details later) and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. On 27 August 1953 the court granted him early parole. Incidentally, the other soldiers were still in prison.²⁰ Initially he worked in Koszęcin on a state-owned farm, then in Kielce at a Provincial Culture Center and later as a manager of a knitwear manufacturing company. In the 1960s he was a member of the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (*Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*, ZBoWiD), in which he was the secretary of the Main Commission for Contacts with the Polish Diaspora (*Główna Komisja Łączności z Polonią Zagraniczną*). Due to the help of Mieczysław Moczar (the-then chairman of the ZBoWiD Management Board) he moved to Warsaw and became an employee of that organization's historical commission. In 1965 the PAX Association (*Stowarzyszenie "Pax"*) published his memoir entitled *Chłopcy "Barabasha"*. He also published articles in periodicals such as *Katolik*, *Słowo Ludu*, *Ziemia Kielecka* and *Za Wolność i Lud*. After the 1971 dismissal of Moczar (Minister of the Interior) Sołtysiak took early retirement. In September 1944 he was awarded the Cross of Valour (*Krzyż Walecznych*) by the Home Army command. In 1965 the communist authorities awarded him, among other decorations, the Silver Cross of the Virtuti Militari Medal (*Krzyż Srebrny Orderu Virtuti Militari*).

The "Barabasz" detachment members were mostly "burnt" (*spaleni*)²¹ – young people of about twenty years old separated for different reasons from their families during the occupation and forced to live in the forest and in various safe houses. Sołtysiak writes that they were mostly "people from intelligentsia families, scouts and students, whom the war gave a 'permanent vacation.'"²² Today it is difficult to say to what extent that opinion reflected the reality and to what extent it helped create the elitist legend. For it is known that the backgrounds and biographies of the detachment's members differed. Almost all the members of the "Wybraniecki" detachment interrogated in the 1950s, including Sołtysiak, stated in the questionnaires that they had a "peasant background." Some of them were members of robbery gangs, to which peasants (e.g. Józef Przygodzki

²⁰ Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej Oddział w Krakowie [Archive of the Cracow Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance] (later: AIPN Cracow), 425/542/CD, Centralne Więzienie przy Montelupich w Krakowie. Teczka więźnia Mariana Sołtysiaka 1950–1955 [Central Prison on Montelupich Street in Cracow. Prisoner Marian Sołtysiak's Files 1950–1955].

²¹ That category lent its name to one of the partisan detachments, see Andrzej Ropelewski, *Oddział partyzancki "Spaleni"* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 1999). Sołtysiak wrote: "There were boys from the countryside, usually wanted by the gendarmerie, which meant that they had been burnt. They could live only within the detachment." (idem, *Chłopcy "Barabasha"*, 23).

²² Ibidem.

“Czarny” from Korytnica²³) were drawn as often as sons of teachers (e.g. the Wesołowski brothers from Korytnica – “Orzeł” and “Strzała”). Some members were bandits sentenced to death both by the AK and the NSZ (e.g. Władysław Dziewór “Burza,” “Skazaniec” – see biographical notes at the end of the text) or soldiers of the Sword and Plough Movement (*Ruch Miecz i Pług*) (the Wesołowski brothers, Józef Przygodzki, Grzegorz Świerczyński “Grześ”) or the NSZ (e.g. Zygmunt Bokwa “Smutny”). Undoubtedly, some members enjoyed a spotless opinion (Henryk Pawelec and Władysław Szumielewicz, to name just two). The former, who was mounted advance guard commander and whom the witnesses remembered best, embodied the Polish cavalry ideal. The latter was praised for his exceptional moral fiber not only by his commander and companions,²⁴ but also by the judge, who sentenced him for manslaughter.²⁵ “Mewa” (surname unknown, secret UB collaborator), who had spied on Szumielewicz three years before the trial in Pomerania,²⁶ also confirmed his “righteousness, ambition and credibility.”

The activity of the “Wybraniecki” detachment is usually highly praised, which is not surprising since most authors of the texts about the detachment were the events’ participants.²⁷ This is why the statement of Ryszard Maj “Ryś I” (“Barabasz” detachment soldier, who left his detachment in 1944 and went into the Miechów forest) deserves utmost attention. “‘Barabasz’ liked drinking and he spent little time in the detachments, and he came mostly for the concentrations, accompanied by women.”²⁸ This opinion might seem an expression of personal animosity but in fact it was not an exception. Contrary to what one usually reads, sometimes it was neither easy nor possible to leave the detachment. The state-

²³ More information on him in Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej Oddział w Kielcach [Archive of the Kielce Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance] (later AIPN Ki), 025/88/D, Józef Przygodzki, see also the biographical entry at the end of the text.

²⁴ Sołtysiak on Szumielewicz: “He is a righteous man of straightforward and spotless character, he never lies, his testimony must be true” (AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Władysławowi Szumielewiczowi [Typescript of the main hearing against Władysław Szumielewicz], p. 147).

²⁵ Ibidem, Wyrok Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 13 IX 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 13 September 1951], pp. 167–168.

²⁶ AIPN, 0418/4691, file 2, Wyciąg z doniesienia informatora “Mewa” [Excerpt from informer “Mewa” Report], p. 21.

²⁷ For example Kotliński, *“Wybranieccy” w Lasach Cisowskich; Wybranieccy*, ed. “Andrzej” Henryk Pawelec, Anna Szumielewicz-Michta, and Stanisław Piotrowicz (Kielce: Koło 4. PP Leg. AK w Kielcach, 1993).

²⁸ Relacja Ryszarda Maja spisana 9 IX 1957 r. w Sopocie przez Andrzeja Ropelewskiego, dwie strony pismem odręcznym, kopia w archiwum auterek [Ryszard Maj’s testimony written on 9 September 1957 in Sopot by Andrzej Ropelewski, two hand-written pages, the authors are in possession of its copy]. See Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *“Suppressio veri, suggestio falsi”. Dzieje relacji Ryszarda Maja*, in eadem, *Okrzyki pogromowe. Szkice z antropologii historycznej Polski 1939–1946* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2012).

ment of First Lieutenant Antoni Świtalski “Marian”²⁹ confirms that. After his exposure during the assassination of the Employment Office (*Arbeitsamt*) head, he was assigned to “Barabasz.” Then at his own request he transferred to the Antoni Heda “Szary” detachment. “Barabasz ordered ‘Pantera’ [Tadeusz Sotkiewicz] to be liquidated because he did not want to return to the detachment. They threw his body into the river through a hole in the ice. When Świtalski left Barabasz’s detachment, [Władysław Szumielewicz] ‘Mietek’ envied him and he was close to tears because he had to be in Barabasz’s detachment.”³⁰ The man who “was close to tears” is Władysław Szumielewicz “Mietek” – commander of the executioners near Daleszyce (the incident will be discussed later). Lucyna Wrońska “Ewa” is another important witness negatively disposed to Sołtysiak. She was the detachment’s messenger from fall 1943 until summer 1944. Wrońska recalls two reprimands “Barabasz” received from the Home Army Kielce Region Command. The first one was for killing teacher Wituszyński in Chęciny at the beginning of 1944, while the other one regarded robbery of Countess Zofia Mycielska’s Sitkówka estate and the lashing she got for her alleged contacts with the Germans (see footnote 108).³¹ Wrońska also recalls the execution of Jerzy Waclawik³² in Mąchocice conducted without a judgment. Most probably it was occasioned by Sołtysiak’s jealousy of his future wife Renata (the circumstances remain unexplained),³³ with whom Waclawik “maintained close social relations.”³⁴ After her expulsion from the “Barabasz” detachment in July 1944 Sołtysiak accused Wrońska of being a “snoop” which resulted in reprimands from the district command – now Wrońska herself was in danger. “I met detachment member pseudonym ‘Marian’ [Antoni Świtalski] [...] who informed me that the ‘Barabasz’ group had sentenced me to death.”³⁵ She survived due to the AK Inspectorate head’s intervention. “Barabasz” described himself and his district superior as two opposites. “He [Józef Włodarczyk ‘Wyrwa’] – always patient, composed, always obeying orders, me – easily excited, impulsive, enthusiastic.”³⁶ The animosity between him

²⁹ Commander of the combat group in the Ludwików Steelworks in Kielce.

³⁰ Testimony written down on 14 August 1957 by Andrzej Ropelewski, which ends with the following explanation, “Notes taken during my conversation with special force paratrooper Major Bolesław Jackiewicz in the presence of A. Świtalski ‘Marian’ in his Sopot apartment. Andrzej Ropelewski.”

³¹ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej [Typescript of interrogation of witness Lucyna Wrońska], p. 222.

³² Ibidem, p. 228, see also AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bolesława Boczarskiego [Typescript of interrogation of witness Bolesław Boczarski], p. 95.

³³ The wedding took place on 15 May 1944.

³⁴ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej [Typescript of interrogation of witness Lucyna Wrońska], p. 228.

³⁵ Ibidem, pp. 228–229: “‘Zor’ [Józef Mularczyk, AK Inspectorate chief – A.S., J.T.-B.] assured me that he would take care of it and issue a warning into the hands of ‘Barabasz’ and that if I am killed [he] will answer for it with his own head.”

³⁶ Sołtysiak, *Chłopcy “Barabasz,”* 192.

and his superiors is also visible in the manner he reports on the conflict with First Lieutenant Maksymilian Lorenz “Katarzyna” – future commander of the 1st Battalion of the 4th “Legions” Infantry Regiment. In his memoir, the political influence of which is only too visible (the ending of *Chłopcy “Barabasz”* is full of complaints about the AK command), he states that the conflict stemmed from Lorenz’s earlier membership in the NSZ and the officer’s pre-war political views. He claims that Lucyna Wrońska was expelled from the detachment because of Lorenz.³⁷ Consequently, “Żor” (Lieutenant Colonel Józef Mularczyk, AK inspector) suspended the detachment’s pay. The tension must have been significant for the detachment members even planned to kill “Katarzyna.”³⁸ Sołtysiak was aware of his own special position. He wrote that he himself was “the detachment’s sole superior, whose power was almost absolute, yet of some unspecified type. [...] It was a unique kind of power. [...] Here the discipline was absolutely real.”³⁹ Jerzy Kotliński (“Wojtek,” “Halny”) confirms that “Barabasz” enjoyed great authority among the partisans and that the superiors did not like him.⁴⁰

Henryk Pawelec wrote “abroad ‘Barabasz’ was spied on by *dvoyka*⁴¹ by Captain [Włodzimierz] Ledóchowski⁴² and the issue of the Jews near Daleszyce and of Countess Mycielska, who also went to Paris, followed him [see part V: Izaak Grynbaum, 3/4 March 1944]. There was also a Jew who participated in the Warsaw Uprising as an AK soldier, a brother of those murdered near Daleszyce.”⁴³ Because of the “Jewish issue” the surveillance of Sołtysiak carried by the emigration authorities did not go too well – he was back in Poland less than two months after his illegal crossing of the border. One may conclude this part of the text with one more quotation, this time of special force paratrooper Bolesław Jackiewicz,⁴⁴ who came into contact with the “Wybraniecki” detachment after his airdrop.⁴⁵ “[I]f the war had ended differently (i.e. with the victory of the

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 94: “When I noticed that the detachment messenger brought double mail from Kielce, for me and for ‘Katarzyna,’ I dismissed her the same day and sent her to be at the disposal of ‘Żor.’”

³⁸ Ibidem, 93–94.

³⁹ Sołtysiak, *Chłopcy “Barabasz,”* 48.

⁴⁰ Kotliński, “*Wybraniecy*” w *Lasach Cisowskich*, 60.

⁴¹ *Dvoyka* is a common name for Directorate II in the AK organizational structure, which was in charge of intelligence and counterintelligence.

⁴² In his testimony before the UB Sołtysiak confirmed that he had met Ledóchowski in Paris in summer 1945 (AIPN, GK, 306/24, p. 128).

⁴³ Henryk Pawelec’s typescript entitled “Barabasz,” 1 (courtesy of the author).

⁴⁴ Bolesław Jackiewicz, “Łabędź,” “Rys” (1914–1982), soldier of the 1st Autonomous Parachute Brigade in Great Britain, jumped on 8/9 April 1944, assigned to III Directorate of the Kielce AK Region as detachment commander, during the Operation Tempest he was a Kielce AK Corps operational officer, see Jędrzej Tucholski, *Cichociemni. Historia legendarnych spadochroniarzy* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2010), 204, 233, 393 – photo and biographical entry.

⁴⁵ See Kotliński, “*Wybraniecy*” w *Lasach Cisowskich*, 53.

Polish government-in-exile) 'Barabasz' would certainly have been put on trial. I would certainly have brought the case before court."⁴⁶

Five or Six Instances

A plethora of materials has been assembled: reference books, archival documents (mostly investigation, trial and prison files), published memoirs and oral testimonies.⁴⁷ The materials shall be divided into six sections while reporting on the findings. The files of the three criminal trials held in autumn 1951 before the Provincial Court in Kielce are some of the most important materials that document what has been omitted in the historiography of the "Wybraniecki" detachment. Władysław Szumielewicz, Stanisław Lutek and Władysław Marasek⁴⁸ were the first ones to be sentenced (13 September 1951). The next day, on 14 September, a separate hearing of Marian Sołtysiak⁴⁹ was held before the same court. Two months later, on 23 November 1951, the court passed a sentence regarding three other members of the "Barabasz" detachment – Edward Skrobot, Józef Molenda and Władysław Dziewiór.⁵⁰ The main hearing of that last trial was held on 17 October 1951 and for reasons unknown the sentence was pronounced with a delay. In the other two cases the court passed a sentence on the day of the hearing. The accused from one trial testified as witnesses in the other two. The indictment against all those people was signed by the same investigating officer of the Kielce Provincial Security Office (*Wojewódzki Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, WUBP) – Józef Baniak. The first two hearings were held with a day's interval and the sentences were passed by the same judge – T. Bielski, while the sentence regarding Skrobot and the others was passed by Judge A. Kozielski. All the accused were defended by defense counsels: Andrzej Płoski, Okończyc, Göttinger, Winiarski and Chojnicki.

The arrest, indictment and sentence were preceded by a quite long investigation (only the one regarding Sołtysiak dragged on). The Public Security Offices (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, UBP) began to collect the materials and testimonies of the AK partisans and witnesses immediately after the communists' assumption of power, i.e. in January 1945. The earliest typescripts of the

⁴⁶ Written down by Andrzej Ropelewski, Sopot, 14 August 1957, copy of the note courtesy of the author.

⁴⁷ We are talking about Joanna Tokarska-Bakir's conversations with ex-members of the partisan AK detachments in the Kielce region, including the conversations with Henryk Pawelec and Andrzej Ropelewski and the former partisans' testimonies written down by Andrzej Ropelewski himself. In the latter group of texts Ryszard Maj's testimony is considered to be the most important, more on it in Tokarska-Bakir, "*Suppressio veri, suggestio falsi!*" *Dzieje relacji Ryszarda Maja*.

⁴⁸ AIPN, GK, 306/44.

⁴⁹ AIPN, GK, 306/24 and 25.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

interrogations of Sołtysiak’s subordinates that have survived in his files originate from February 1945.⁵¹ The interrogations continued until 15 September 1949 when he was arrested on a street in Wrocław. The search conducted on that day in his Wrocław apartment proved fruitless. The “Wybraniecki” detachment archive, including the detachment’s chronicle, was found only during the search in the house of his brother Piotr Zbigniew Sołtysiak.⁵² There is no doubt that the most important testimony incriminating Sołtysiak was given on 20 June 1949 by Wiktor Zygmunt Bokwa “Smutny.” The chronicle and the testimonies of Bokwa and many other witnesses inclined the UB investigating officers to investigate the circumstances of the so-called liquidations – executions conducted by virtue of underground court’s sentences or by commanders’ orders. During his 9 January 1951 confrontation with Bokwa conducted in the course of the investigation Sołtysiak denied the accusations made against him. The confrontation between Szumielewicz and Sołtysiak, which partly confirmed the former’s testimonies, was held on 2 February 1951. A dozen typescripts of Sołtysiak’s interrogations have survived in his trial’s files, the first being dated 6 October 1949. By the end of that year he was interrogated a few more times. The next interrogation took place almost a year later – on 14 October 1950. The series of further investigations of both Sołtysiak and the witnesses ended with arrest of the remaining suspects in January 1951 and the indictment against Sołtysiak being formulated before 15 March 1951 (it had no date, about which the defendant lodged a complaint).⁵³ Investigating officer Józef Baniak wrote the remaining two indictments on 27 and 28 April that year. The hearings before the Provincial Court in Kielce were held six months later. All the defendants were indicted under article 1, item 1 of the Decree of 31 August 1944⁵⁴ on the punishment of fascist-hitlerite criminals guilty of murder and ill-treatment of civilian population and of prisoners of war, and on the punishment of traitors to the Polish Nation and under article 225, paragraph 1 of the Penal Code (“Whoever kills a man, shall be subject to a penalty of imprisonment for a period no shorter than 5 years, life imprisonment or death penalty”).⁵⁵ The sentences passed in those cases shall be discussed later.

⁵¹ AIPN Ki, 027/236-1.pdf (scans of a microfilm), Zeznanie Feliksa Sobonia “Smyka” z 2 II 1945 r. [Testimony of Feliks Sobon “Smyk” of 2 February 1945].

⁵² Ibidem, Przesłuchania Piotra Zbigniewa Sołtysiaka z 25 i 26 X 1949 r. [Piotr Zbigniew Sołtysiak’s interrogations on 25 and 26 October 1949].

⁵³ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Pismo z 21 III 1951 r. Mariana Sołtysiaka do przewodniczącego Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach [Marian Sołtysiak’s Letter of 21 March 1951 to the Chairman of the Provincial Court in Kielce], p. 195. He complains in it, among others, that the indictment delivered to him on 15 March 1951 had no date.

⁵⁴ *Dziennik Ustaw* 1946, no. 69, item 377.

⁵⁵ The 1932 Penal Code was formally binding until the end of 1969, but many crimes and offences were at the same time subject to special regulations (e.g. the “small” penal code of 1946).

I. Station agent Stanisław Błachucki, October 1943

We discuss the first instance only for the sake of memory. It regards station agent Stanisław Błachucki, who lived near Chęciny. According to the witnesses' testimonies, the man was hiding Jews at his home. Three of the Jews were killed while three of them survived, including Leon and Berta Kanarek.⁵⁶ We know their testimony regarding the murder indirectly from the testimonies of Maria Mistachowicz – a witness in the trial of Edward Skrobot “Wierny” for manslaughter of Izaak Grynbaum in Chęciny. Mistachowicz testified as follows, “Moreover, I heard from the people in Chęciny that four Jews had been shot in the village of Czaj; who committed that murder I don’t know. Some died at the station agent’s too. [...] three Jews, a man, woman and a baby. Three Jews from that family are alive and they can provide more details [...] [Berta Kanarek, who] was present when the bandits were executing the Jews.”⁵⁷ We do not know if station agent Błachucki would qualify for the Righteous among the Nations title. We do not know the circumstances of death of the Jews he kept. We only know how Stanisław Błachucki died. A few witnesses and members of his family⁵⁸ and “Wybraniecki” detachment commander Marian Sołtysiak talked about it in their testimonies. Błachucki was escorted to Stanisław Karoliński’s apartment where he was interrogated and asked, “Why he had given the two boys into the hands of the German gendarmerie.”⁵⁹ Witnesses Władysław Kozieł and Władysław Kumański testified that blindfolded Błachucki was brought over by “Wybraniecki” detachment member Stanisław Tatarowski “Kalif.” Błachucki was

⁵⁶ After the war they lived in Dzierżoniów, at Stalina Street No. 13. It is not known whether Berta was his wife or sister. According to the transcript of Leon Kanarek’s testimony (he testified only regarding the manslaughter of Icek Grynbaum), he was born in 1923 in Chęciny, had a wife and two children and was a son of Alter Janarek and Eltera née Romankiewicz (see AIPN Ki, 027/236-347/III-pdf, frames 120–121). In the Central Register of the Jews who survived the Holocaust there is Berta Kanarek’s registration card. She was born in 1923 in Kraków. Kanarek was her maiden name. She was registered under the surname of “Wendrowicz.” Her father’s name was Benjamin, her mother’s name was Zofia, née Monheit. After the war she too moved to Dzierżoniów, and then to Legnica. She could have been a cousin of Berta and Leon from Chęciny (Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute] [later: AŻIH], Central Commission of Polish Jews (*Centralna Komisja Żydów Polskich*, CKŻP), Census and Statistics Department (*Wydział Ewidencji i Statystyki*), Central Register of the Jews in Poland 1946–1950 (*Centralna Kartoteka Żydów w Polsce 1946–1950*), Karta rejestracyjna Berty Wendrowicz z domu Kanarek [Registration Card of Berta Wendrowicz née Kanarek]).

⁵⁷ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Zeznanie Marii Mistachowicz [Maria Mistachowicz’s Testimony], p. 7.

⁵⁸ AIPN Ki, 027/236-347/III-pdf, frames 286–301, Zeznania Władysławy Kozieł, Marii Błachuckiej (żony), Barbary Baran, Antoniego Stefańczyka, Wiktora Kolasy i Stanisława Błachuckiego [Testimonies of Władysława Kozieł, Maria Błachucka (wife), Barbara Baran, Antoni Stefańczyk, Wiktor Kolasa and Stanisław Błachucki].

⁵⁹ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Stanisława Karolińskiego [Typescript of Stanisław Karoliński’s interrogation], p. 192.

beaten up during the interrogation, which lasted about an hour. Then he was taken somewhere and killed.⁶⁰ The only information on Błachucki's death comes from the testimonies of Sołtysiak, who admitted that his people had killed the station agent. He did not, however, specify who the perpetrators were. Allegedly, “Roman” (surname unknown) – AK sub-district *dvoyka* chief – showed Sołtysiak the sentence signed with a codename. “The sentence was executed [...] somewhere beyond the village of Brynica in a forest. I cannot say if the station agent had been a German collaborator because the AK *dvoyka* took care of such matters... he was sentenced ‘for betrayal of the Nation and collaboration with the Germans’”⁶¹

There is one more faint trail regarding the station agent case (but it is uncertain whether it regards the same person). Julian Jasiński testified that one evening in the autumn of 1943, when he was in Piotr Wójtowicz's house in Wymysłów in the Zajączków municipality, two armed men came to the farmyard. Jasiński recognized one of them as Wiktor Gruszczyński. The two men were trying to find out where Wójtowicz was hiding the Jews. But the Jews had left the farm. Jasicki claimed that he had once slept in Wójtowicz's barn with AK members: Stanisław Piotrowski, Bonifacy Gruszka and Wiktor Gruszczyński.

The above-mentioned men began talking about the murder of those four citizens of Jewish nationality, who were hiding at, as I can now recall, station agent Niewygoda's house [?]. During the conversation they made fun of the way the Jews had begged them to spare their lives. Jan Sieradzan pseudonym “Żbik” forbade my talking about the above-mentioned fact, which I heard, I couldn't tell anybody or otherwise I'd end up with a bullet in my pate.⁶²

Perhaps it would be possible to connect the two testimonies if the materials from the 1950⁶³ discontinued investigation against Bolesław Stępniewski are found. Most of the surnames mentioned here will reappear later during the discussion on Izaak Grynbaum's death in Chęciny.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Kumańskiego [Typescript of Władysław Kumański's interrogation], p. 210.

⁶¹ Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka [Typescript of Marian Sołtysiak's interrogation], pp. 165–166.

⁶² Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Kumańskiego [Typescript of Władysław Kumański's interrogation], p. 210.

⁶³ The 3S 211/50 investigation against Bolesław Stępniewski discontinued by the Provincial Public Prosecutor's Office in Kielce is mentioned in the following document: AIPN, GK, 306/48, Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Edwardowi Skrobotowi, Władysławowi Dziewiórowi, Józefowi Molendzie [Typescript of the main hearing against Edward Skrobot, Władysław Dziewiór, Józef Molenda], p. 219.

II. Michał Ferenc from Zajączków, November 1943?⁶⁴

Zygmunt Bokwa's biography reads: "we executed the sentences on the secretary in Chęciny and nine other people [...] and there was a sentence on a professor teacher in Chęciny,⁶⁵ on Janosik in Gałęzice, on a Blue Police constabulary and earlier on the Zajączków municipality secretary."⁶⁶

In the course of the investigation Edward Skrobot "Wierny" admitted that in October 1943 he ordered his subordinates to shoot a Zajączków municipality clerk (and not a municipality secretary as Bokwa claimed) in the Kielce county. The clerk was of Jewish nationality and his name was [Michał]⁶⁷ Ferenc and he was liquidated as a "German collaborator." During the same action the Zajączków municipality files were burnt, the cash from the municipality treasure was taken and village official Wincenty Bełtowski was lashed. Skrobot's testimony: "As for that incident [Ferenc's execution] I add that having received the sentence from the superior authorities I was forced to execute it regardless of the origin [of the convict]."⁶⁸ It remains uncertain from whom and when Skrobot learnt that Ferenc was a Jew (Skrobot claims that he received the information from village official Bełtowski, who strongly denied it). We do not know either what superior authorities passed the alleged sentence. Anyway Skrobot checked the suspect's origin himself by ordering him to take off his pants. The court proceedings did not explain why he wanted to check whether Ferenc was a Jew. Allegedly, it was Stanisław Tatarowski "Kalif" who assured Skrobot that Ferenc was a German collaborator and that he had seen letters, which Ferenc wrote and sent to the Kielce Gestapo. Even though Skrobot did not see the correspondence, he calls it "concrete evidence." He explains that they were sent to "*dvoyka* in Kielce with a request for a death sentence."⁶⁹ After the execution Skrobot ordered the victim to be stripped of his sheepskin coat, clothes and shoes. The victim's clothes "were confiscated and distributed among the executive detachment's members as was usually done."⁷⁰ Władysław Dziewiór "Burza" took the sheepskin coat while "Staszek" took the remaining items of clothing. Allegedly, Ferenc was executed by "Kalif" and "Cios" (Stanisław Klimontowicz). The body was buried be-

⁶⁴ See Kotliński, "*Wybraniec*" w *Lasach Cisowskich*, p. 136: "August [1943] Destruction of the files in the Chęciny, Korzecko, Zajączków, Piekoszów and Snochowice municipalities."

⁶⁵ "Barabasz" received a reprimand for that manslaughter (AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej [Typescript of interrogation of witness Lucyna Wrońska], p. 222).

⁶⁶ AIPN, 0418/368, file 3, Życiorys Wiktora Bokwy [Wiktor Bokwa's Biography] [manuscript, no date or place], p. 16.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, Raport specjalny do Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Warszawie [Special Report to the Ministry of Public Security in Warsaw], p. 85.

⁶⁸ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Zeznanie Edwarda Skroboty [Edward Skrobot's Testimony], p. 66.

⁶⁹ Ibidem, p. 54.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 23 XI 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 23 November 1951], p. 250.

tween the River Wierna and a railway track about one kilometer from the village of Zajączków.⁷¹

Let us return to the question as to why Ferenc’s Jewishness was checked even though he was sentenced for alleged collaboration. It would have made sense only, if in the absence of evidence of his guilt, his Jewishness alone would prove it. The idea was inadvertently explained by Bolesław Boczarski, who heard from “Wierny” himself that he “*identified him before the killing when he saw that he was circumcised and that he executed him on that basis.*”⁷² Similar reasoning will frequently reappear in Skrobot’s behavior. The night when Skrobot came to Zajączków with his squad, Ferenc was not at the office. He was escorted there after being ordered to take his possessions, i.e. a fur coat and other clothes (jacket, “two shirts and two pairs of long underwear”) from the house.⁷³ This is how during Skrobot’s trial the witnesses described Ferenc’s behavior in the municipality office: “[he] did not look like a frightened, persecuted and hiding Jew.”⁷⁴ The locals did not like him because he was a clerk “imposed by the Germans.” When the German authorities came to the municipality office, “they had long and casual conversations in German with him in a separate room.”⁷⁵ Allegedly, he was often sent to Kielce. It seems that those conversations and trips were the reason why he became suspected of being a German collaborator or/and a Jew. They are also the reason why one may doubt whether he really sent the “denouncing letter.” Would somebody who often met with German authorities risk sending a denunciation via mail, which was controlled by the underground? Skrobot’s testimonies are not credible also because of the advantage he took from the fact that it was impossible to verify the deceased persons’ testimonies. Blaming the dead was a typical defense strategy during the post-war August decree trials (both Stanisław Tatarowski “Kalif” and Stanisław Klimontowicz “Cios” died less than a month after the incident during an attack on a cash transport near Jaworznia). Edward Skrobot used that strategy particularly eagerly. Even though he was a squad commander he often stressed that he had been pliable toward two menacing *dvoyka* employees: Tatarowski “Kalif” and Czesław Łętowski “Górnik.” Klimontowicz was another dead person whom Skrobot accused of that manslaughter. Even though Bokwa testified that Władysław Dziewiór (co-defendant in Skrobot’s trial) had carried out the sentence, after Skrobot had changed his testimony during the main hearing, the court stated that “by Skrobot’s order Dziewiór [only] assisted to provide help if necessary” and that the sentence was

⁷¹ AIPN, 0418/368, file 3, Protokół przesłuchania Edwarda Skroboty [Typescript of Edward Skrobot’s interrogation], p. 49.

⁷² AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Bolesława Boczarskiego [Typescript of Bolesław Boczarski’s interrogation], p. 99 (our emphasis – A.S., J.T.-B.).

⁷³ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Edwarda Skroboty [Typescript of interrogation of suspect Edward Skrobot], p. 21.

⁷⁴ Ibidem.

⁷⁵ Ibidem.

carried out by the late “Cios.” Thereby, the court disregarded the testimonies of village official Bełtowski, who claimed that Dziewiór “himself [had] escorted Michał Ferenc to the execution on a rope and with his hands tied up.”⁷⁶

III. Bunker near Mosty, February–March 1944?

In the third point of the indictment against Edward Skrobot and Józef Molenda the two men were charged “with participation in the racial murder of three unidentified Polish citizens of Jewish nationality who were shot.”⁷⁷ The Jews were hiding in a forest bunker near the village of Mosty in the Chęciny municipality. The possessions of the victims, which they probably kept in suitcases, were stolen.⁷⁸ The court was absolutely certain that the crime was committed by the AK squad commanded by “Wierny.” It found it difficult, however, to prove the defendants guilty because the main accused Skrobot kept changing his testimonies and blaming others, which was his common strategy during the trial. Skrobot accused the late Czesław Łętowski “Górnik” again, claiming that it was he who had executed the sentence. Skrobot claimed that Łętowski showed him the alleged sentence of an underground court and that he organized the execution. His statement features all of the ritual formulae of absolution: he mentions the order of the Leadership of the Civil Struggle (*Kierownictwo Walki Cywilnej*, KWC) confirmed by the AK intelligence as well as the pressure exerted by lawless and dangerous *dwoyka* employee from Piekoszów:

[Łętowski] “Górnik” took the gamekeeper and me aside and then took the sentence out of his pocket and handed it to me. The sentence was written on a sheet of paper, which said “the Leadership of Civil Struggle” (*Kierownictwo Walki Cywilnej*, KWC) in indelible pencil in the upper left corner, and there was a date under it, as far as I can remember it was dated about mid-February 1944, in the middle there was the order in spaced-out print: “To liquidate the bunker with the Jews in the forest near Chęciny,” and the second line read: “By order of the Home Army Headquarters, number, date.”⁷⁹

The formal mistakes in the testimony are striking. The Leadership of Civil Struggle ceased to exist on 15 July 1943. It was replaced with the Directorate of the Underground Combat (*Kierownictwo Walki Podziemnej*) subordinate directly to the Home Army commander. There was also no such thing as the AK

⁷⁶ AIPN, 0418/368, file 3, Raport specjalny do Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Warszawie [Special Report to the Ministry of Public Security in Warsaw], p. 85.

⁷⁷ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Akt oskarżenia z 28 IV 1951 r. [Indictment of 28 April 1951], p. 97.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, Zeznanie Bogusława Piotra [Bogusław Piotr’s Testimony], p. 14. Witness Piotr (forest worker) saw the stripped bodies of the victims. He also saw some “individuals running away with suitcases.” According to Piotr, there were two bunkers. The Jews hid their things in the first one and slept in the other one.

⁷⁹ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Protokół przesłuchania Edwarda Skroboty [Typescript of Edward Skrobot’s interrogation], p. 34.

Headquarters – there was only the High Command of the Home Army (*Komenda Główna AK*). Let us also note that the KWC had been subordinate to the Office of the Delegate of the Government in Exile (*Delegatura Rządu na Kraj*) and not to the Home Army. Commander Skrobot, who participated in the killing, refers to an order, but he neither knows what order it was nor gives a date in his testimony. Hence, it is impossible to identify the order or establish its formal bases. Even if one considers the possible influence of the UB officer who conducted the interrogation or of the recording clerk, it is difficult to disregard the accumulation of mistakes in the most important part of the text. According to the interrogation transcript, Łętowski simply took out the order from his pocket on the way to the forest, while Skrobot acquiescently agreed to execute it and gave him some people. Ten partisans participated in the action.⁸⁰ Gamekeeper Tadeusz Kuchta (also a member of the “Wybraniecki” detachment; the case files do not include his investigation’s transcript) escorted the men to the forest. Skrobot confessed only to guarding the forest valley. He claimed that he had not even entered the bunker and that Łętowski had gone there only with Zygmunt Molędziński “Sten” and that the former had emptied the whole magazine into the bunker. “He shot all the Jews in that bunker.” Allegedly there were three persons of Jewish nationality.⁸¹ Skrobot took the revolver (Nagant), which Henryk Żytkowski “Lech” had brought him from the bunker. Even though earlier there was no mention of the Jews leaving the bunker, the testimony features a sentence about “their being thrown back into the bunker.” The next day gamekeeper Kuchta ordered the forest workers to bury the corpses of the three executed men.⁸² The court sentence recapitulates the line of defense of Skrobot, who stubbornly denied his direct participation in the killing.⁸³ According to Skrobot, he participated in the liquidation only because he feared the consequences Łętowski had threatened him with. Skrobot explained that the discrepancies between the testimonies given during the investigation and during the trial were caused by “a certain deal of coercion used in the course of the investigation.” The judge accepted the defendant’s explanations. “[T]he political authority in Skrobot’s detachment was in the hands of *dvoyka* officer [Łętowski] ‘Górnik,’ who, as we may suspect if only on the basis of the facts determined during the trial, was a ruthless man, and so his threats could not be disregarded.” This negative image of Łętowski is in sharp contrast with the one emerging from the memoirs published by former soldiers

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁸¹ First Lieutenant Andrzej Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1957), 47: “I also heard that sometimes a few persons were liquidated at the same time. For instance, it happened near the village of Mosty near Chęciny, where a Jewish family was shot in the dugout at the edge of the forest, where they had been hiding.”

⁸² AIPN, GK, 306/48, Akt oskarżenia z 28 IV 1951 r. [Indictment of 28 April 1951], p. 99.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 23 XI 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 23 November 1951], p. 252. Accused Molenda denied everything and was acquitted due to insufficient evidence of his guilt.

of “Barabasz.” They recall him as a great, outstanding and brave commander and a “lovable man whom everybody liked.”⁸⁴

Let us also note that the date of Łętowski’s joining the detachment is unclear. Sołtysiak himself mentions Łętowski for the first time in the part on March 1944: he writes that “he has recently joined the detachment.”⁸⁵ It is probable that Łętowski had joined the “Wybraniecki” detachment earlier. According to Boczarowski, it happened at the end of January 1944.⁸⁶

IV. Roman Olizarowski “Pomsta,” the day after the Mosty incident?⁸⁷

In 1957 Andrzej Ropelewski wrote about another incident. “The case of [Olizarowski] ‘Pomsta’ is the most tragic. It was the pseudonym of a soldier of an AK Kielce Region forest detachment. After some time it was discovered that ‘Pomsta’ was a Jew and then his brothers in arms shot him.”⁸⁸ The authors’ opinions on Olizarowski’s identity differ. For example Michał Basa writes that he was a member of a detachment protecting the AK Region Command radio station under the command of Second Lieutenant Jan Kosiński “Jacek” – sub-district commander from Bodzentyn.⁸⁹ After the destruction of the detachment and Kosiński’s death Olizarowski and Basa transferred to the “Wybraniecki”⁹⁰ detachment. Basa blamed the NSZ for Olizarowski’s death.⁹¹ In turn Cezary Chlebowski claims that “Pomsta” was Jan Kwiatkowski and that he died during the manhunt in Wykus on 28 October 1943.⁹² Allegedly, he was a Warsaw Jew transferred to the detachment by the AK Radom-Kielce Region Command. He was to have assumed the

⁸⁴ Kotliński, “Wybranieccy” w *Lasach Cisowskich*, 89; see also the biographical entry of Czesław Łętowski “Górnicy” at the end of the text.

⁸⁵ Sołtysiak, *Chłopcy “Barabasz”*, 71.

⁸⁶ Bolesław Boczarowski “Jurand,” “By ojczyzna była wolna... Wspomnienia partyzanta z Gór Świętokrzyskich” (Kielce, 1961), 108 (typescript, the authors are in possession of its copy).

⁸⁷ Date of Olizarowski’s execution given by main suspect Edward Skrobot (AIPN, GK, 306/48, *Zeżnanie Edwarda Skroboty* [Edward Skrobot’s Testimony], p. 59).

⁸⁸ Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, 47.

⁸⁹ Cezary Chlebowski, *Pozdrówcie Góry Świętokrzyskie. Reportaż historyczny*, 6th revised and extended edition (Warsaw: Tomasz Chlebowski, 1993), 262, 308.

⁹⁰ The suggestion of treachery in Skrobot’s statement is an insinuation: “At the quarters [Łętowski] took out the sentence, which supposedly confirmed [Olizarowski] ‘Pomsta’s’ guilt, which stated that ‘Pomsta’ had exposed the ‘Jacek’ detachment, as a result of which [*sic*] the detachment was liquidated” (AIPN, GK, 306/48, *Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Edwarda Skroboty* [Typescript of interrogation of suspect Edward Skrobot], p. 38). The circumstances of the breakup of the “Jacek” detachment were discussed in detail in Michał Basa, *Opowiadania partyzanta. Wspomnienia żołnierza AK i BCh* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1984), 126ff.

⁹¹ Basa, *Opowiadania partyzanta*, 167, 200.

⁹² On the basis of Michał Basa’s memoirs one may correct this information. “Kike [Olizarowski] ‘Pomsta’ threw the grenade, ran away, fell down in the bush; he lay like that for a couple of hours, perhaps they thought him dead” (*ibidem*, 128).

pseudonym (*pomsta* means vengeance in Polish) “as a symbol of vengeance for his family murdered in the Warsaw ghetto.”⁹³ Wojciech Borzobohaty does not mention “Pomsta” at all in his ZWZ-AK Radom-Kielce Region monograph. Even though Edward Skrobot’s testimony and other sources suggest that the information on Olizarowski’s transfer from Kosiński’s detachment to the “Wybraniecki” detachment is true, it is not true that Olizarowski was killed by the NSZ and that his name was Jan Kwiatkowski. During the investigation and Szumielewicz’s trial Bolesław Boczarski “Jurand” mentioned Olizarowski’s mother, who showed the partisans her son’s picture during when she was looking for her son after the war. Most probably they had not known his true identity until that very moment. According to Boczarski’s testimony, “Pomsta’s” name was Roman Olizarowski. But it is only the testimony of Jadwiga Olizarowska (the shot partisan’s mother) that gives us absolute certainty.⁹⁴ Roman was indeed from Warsaw and was a son of a Polish-Jewish married couple. In 1946 when Jadwiga Olizarowska gave the testimony she was a fifty-year-old widow. She said that her “husband was from a Jewish family” (we know neither the circumstances of his death nor his name) and that the son “looked like a Jew and that was why they shot him.” Olizarowska learnt about it only from Boczarski, who accused Henryk Pawelec “Andrzej.” But on the basis of all the collected materials it is established that the accusation was groundless. Edward Skrobot was one of the persons who spoke about the identity of Olizarowski’s killers. Of course it was Łętowski who allegedly notified Skrobot that there was a Jew in his detachment and that he should immediately be liquidated. According to Skrobot, Łętowski said the following: “we need to get rid of one more scum, and when I asked him who the scum was, he told me that the member of my group by the pseudonym of ‘Pomsta’ needed to be liquidated because he was a Jew and that he had a sentence against him.”⁹⁵ Allegedly Łętowski showed him the written sentence in the presence of a few other people. Skrobot also adds some shocking details:

[The sentence] was passed by the Leadership of the Civil Struggle in Kielce, and he also told me about the order of the High Command of the Home Army to liquidate all Jews regardless of whether [they were] AK members or they were hiding from the Germans.⁹⁶ [...] Not believing that “Pomsta” was a Jew, I gathered the whole group and under the pretence of a check of all AK members for STDs I performed a check. On the basis of seeing [his] penis during the check I concluded that “Pomsta” was in fact a Jew. After the check we went to the place where we were quartered and I suggested postponing the execution of the sentence on the person of

⁹³ Chlebowski, *Pozdrowcie Góry Świętokrzyskie*, 310, see also p. 321.

⁹⁴ AIPN Ki, 027/236-1.pdf, *Zeznanie Jadwigi Olizarowskiej* [Jadwiga Olizarowska’s Testimony], frames 48–49.

⁹⁵ AIPN, GK, 306/48, *Zeznanie Edwarda Skroboty* [Edward Skrobot’s Testimony], pp. 37–38.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

Jewish nationality – AK member pseudonym “Pomsta” – until the concentration of the “Barabasza” AK detachment, but [Łętowski] “Górnik” insisted on executing the sentence. In the evening of that day “Górnik,” [Stanisław Litewka] “Stasiek” and [Henryk Żytkowski] “Lech” took “Pomsta” to the edge of the forest near the village of Mosty and executed him there.⁹⁷

Skrobot defended himself before the court claiming that he gave Olizarowski signs to run away. He added “the sentence on [Olizarowski] ‘Pomsta’ [...] mentioned that ‘Pomsta’ [left] the ‘Jacek’ detachment, to which he had belonged.”⁹⁸ According to the testimony of detachment member Ryszard Maj, Olizarowski was killed by somebody else – supposedly by Józef Przygodzki “Czarny”⁹⁹ – a member of the Sword and Plough Movement and robbery gang of a certain “Piłat.” He was also implicated in other executions one of which was mentioned by Władysław Dziewiór during interrogation.¹⁰⁰ Skrobot describes the events in a similar way to the manner in which he discussed the murder of Michał Ferenc in Zajęczków.

That is on the one hand he brings up a sentence for alleged treason and violent behavior of “Górnik” (allegedly a *dvoyka* man). But on the other hand he also verifies the suspicion of treason in the way he was caught, that is *by checking the suspect’s genitalia*.¹⁰¹ It is a better proof that the murder was motivated by racism than his companions’ testimonies. It is neither the first nor the last time Edward Skrobot did something like that. For instance, one learns from Stanisław Lutek’s testimonies that another member of the detachment, Jerzy Matysiak “Braszko,” told him after the war that “Skrobot ‘Wierny’ wanted to liquidate him on the suspicion of his being a Jew. Consequently, Matysiak had to explain everything at length, and even show his birth certificate and genitalia. [...] he thought that

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 37–38.

⁹⁸ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 23 XI 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 23 November 1951], p. 252. The suggestion of treason in that statement is an insinuation.

⁹⁹ In the “Barabasza” detachment there was another soldier by that pseudonym – Teofil Cigan. See Kotliński, “*Wybrani*” w *Lasach Cisowskich*, 25, 74.

¹⁰⁰ AIPN, 0418/368, file 3, Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Dziewióra [Typescript of Władysław Dziewiór’s interrogation], p. 6. We can also find some information about Przygodzki’s participation in the killings of the Jews in the report of UB agent “Pies,” who reports on his meeting with Przygodzki in 1948 in the village of Tunel near Miechów. Allegedly, Przygodzki was approached by a stranger and the two men had a silent conversation. Asked, “What was it about?” Przygodzki allegedly said, “Nothing special, it was about a Jew” (AIPN Ki, 025/88/D, microfiche, Opis doniesienia agenturalnego “Psa” [Description of Report of agent “Pies”], Prudnik, 3 March 1953).

¹⁰¹ “If he’s circumsised, then he’s a traitor” – the best example of the belief in “the Jews’ treacherous nature.” See Maria Janion, *Bohater, spisek, śmierć. Wykłady żydowskie* (Warsaw: W.A.B., 2009), 54, 62 and other pages.

he would do what he did with the Jews during the occupation.”¹⁰² Even though Olizarowski’s Jewish origin was used as a direct *justification* to kill him, the *motive* for the murder was perhaps different. We learn about it from Ryszard Maj’s testimony:

After the execution of the Jews near Mosty, which was referred to as a “serious shooting,” [Olizarowski] “Pomsta” asked in the presence of soldier [Witold Szwengler] “Witek” (and others) how they could shoot those Jews like that. And “Witek” replied, “we’ll see who’s a Jew here,” and he ran. Then he came with “Grot”¹⁰³ and they said that a genitalia check was ordered due to an STD threat. [Olizarowski] “Pomsta” was the first one to be checked. They arrested him right away and immediately afterwards “Czarny” shot him on the hill with two shots from a Vis.¹⁰⁴

The mention of the participation of Marian Wilczyński “Grom II” in the incident explains why it was he who provided the detachment commander with an alibi: “According to the testimonies of witness M. Wilczyński pseudonym “Grom,” commander of the squad to which [Olizarowski] “Pomsta” belonged, Skrobot remained totally passive during the critical time. [Łętowski] “Górnik” conducted the whole action, that is he ordered a squad gathering and a “purity” check and he ordered “Pomsta” to go with him to the forest, and “Pomsta” did not return to the detachment afterwards.”¹⁰⁵ In fact, according to Maj, Józef Przygodzki “Czarny,” was the one who killed Olizarowski.

Roman Olizarowski’s mother did not know to what organization her son had belonged. He left his home in Warsaw and went to Kielce at the end of August 1943. He carried on a correspondence with his mother until January 1944. Wounded, he spent some time in a safe house. Olizarowska learnt from Bolesław Boczarski “Jurand” that her son had been killed in March 1944. Even though the investigation files include her testimony, for some unknown reasons she was not summoned to appear as a witness during Edward Skrobot’s trial.

¹⁰² AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Stanisław Lutek [Typescript of interrogation of suspect Stanisław Lutek], p. 113.

¹⁰³ Typo. It is Marian Wilczyński “Grom II” from Chęciny.

¹⁰⁴ See Tokarska-Bakir, “*‘Suppressio veri, suggestio falsi.’* Dzieje relacji Ryszarda Maja.”

¹⁰⁵ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce], p. 252.



Roman Olizarowski “Pomsta” first on the left, kneeling Bogdan Boczarski “Jurand” – squad commander.¹⁰⁶ The photo probably taken outside the mansion in Dębska Wola before Olizarowski’s transfer to Edward Skrobot’s squad.

V. Izaak Grynbaum, 3/4 March 1944

Izaak Grynbaum was a cousin of Lili Szynowłoga (nine years old in 1944). The girl and her mother Guta escaped from the Warsaw ghetto in August 1942¹⁰⁷ and found shelter with their family in Chęciny. Due to the information from Countess Zofia Mycielska¹⁰⁸ all three of them (Izaak, Guta and Lili) managed to escape

¹⁰⁶ The editorial staff would like to thank Henryk Pawelec for the permission to publish the photo.

¹⁰⁷ Leon, Guta Latrowska-Szynowłoga’s husband and Lili’s father, remained in the Warsaw ghetto, see Guta Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu* (Warsaw: Ypsilon, 2002), 6. A fragment of Guta’s memoir (typescript in Yiddish) has survived in the AŻIH, 302/174.

¹⁰⁸ Zofia Mycielska née Karska, Jastrzębiec coat of arms, AK pseudonym “Hreczka” (1898–1978), married Michał Mycielski in 1922. They lived on the Gałowo estate in the Szamotoły district until 1939. In 1939 her husband was abroad with the Polish Army and the government in exile. Mycielska herself rented the Sitkówka residence near Chęciny (near her brother Szymon’s estate). A social activist, she was, among other roles, head of the Chęciny branch of the Central Welfare Council (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*, RGO). An AK member, she went to Germany twice to carry instructions for the Polish underground. In 1943 (“after numerous attacks of the bands on Sitkówka”) she moved to Warsaw. The state took over the Mycielskis’ estates in 1945 under the agrarian reform decree. Mycielska managed to leave communist

from the town before the deportation. In her memoir Guta refers to Mycielska as kind "Duchess Michelska." Izaak, Guta and Lili wandered around for quite a long time and found shelter in some cottages. They found a permanent haven only in gravedigger Karol Kiciński's cottage,¹⁰⁹ where he lived with his daughter Janina. Together they built a hideout right beneath the house neighboring on the Jewish cemetery in the Chęciny suburbs. Izaak, Guta and Lili lived there for over 17 months selling off the family property kept by a few Chęciny inhabitants. Izaak organized the means of support, as he was the only one of the three, who went out of the hideout. He brought food he bought from local peasants. After his death the "Barabasz" men stole the rest of the property (more about it later) and the mother and daughter found themselves on the verge of death by starvation. They survived due to Karol Kiciński, who begged and hunted for stray dogs to get food when the two women were in the most difficult circumstances.¹¹⁰ After the war Lili's mother put her for some time in a Jewish children's home in Otwock. This was where the child gave her testimony:

A second winter came. We had no money or supplies. The cousin went to the town. But the AK members captured him there because they wanted him to show them hideouts of rich Jews. But the cousin did not want to give us away and they shot him in the middle of the market square and they buried him in the cemetery where we were hiding. Mommy waited awake for the cousin for the whole night. Three days later we finally learnt about the tragedy and we cried our eyes out. Mommy was so weak, and I was little and there was nobody to take care of us. We would have starved to death if it had not been for that old man.¹¹¹

Due to the memoir of Lili's mother (Guta Szynowłoga-Trokenheim) we can greatly expand Lili's testimony. The information regarding the days before Izaak Grynbaum's death in the Chęciny market square is of particular interest to us. A few days later Guta talked with Countess Mycielska's groom – Mieczysław Nowak. From that conversation one learns in what circumstances Izaak was locked away by the "Barabasz" partisans:

Poland in 1946. She settled with her husband and two daughters in England, see Jerzy Gapys, *Postawy społeczno-polityczne ziemiaństwa w latach 1939–1945 (na przykładzie dystryktu radomskiego)* (Kielce: Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe and Akademia Świętokrzyska, 2003), 224; Michał Mycielski's and Zofia Mycielska's biographical entries by Hanka Mycielska in *Ziemiańskie polscy XX wieku. Słownik biograficzny*, vol. 5, ed. Janina Leskiewiczowa (Warsaw: DiG, 2000), 98–103.

¹⁰⁹ Due to Guta and Lili Szynowłoga's efforts Karol Kiciński and his daughter Janina were awarded with Righteous among the Nations medals in 1983, see *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust in Poland*, ed. Israel Gutman, Sara Bender, Shmuel Krakowski, vol. 1 (Yad Vashem Publications, 2007), 292.

¹¹⁰ Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, 71.

¹¹¹ AŻIH, 301/5521, Relacja Lili Szynowłogi [Lili Szynowłoga's Testimony].

Mietek [the groom] said that about 11 p.m. [according to Guta, the whole thing happened in the night of 3 to 4 March 1944 – A.S., J.T.-B.] he had been with a friend in the stable. Suddenly, they heard shouting from the outside, apparently somebody was being beaten up. Mietek heard somebody shout, “Jew, where are your goods?” They heard the sounds of beating again and a voice asking, “Lieutenant, why are you beating me?” “Where is your cousin?” a male voice asked. Then Mietek recognized the voice of Izaak, who begged, “Marian, help me.”¹¹²

“Marian” is Marian Wilczyński “Grom II”, whom we know from Olizarowski’s case. He was a stone-mason from Chęciny¹¹³ and a “Barabasz” soldier. In Guta Szynowłoga’s memoir one reads that Wilczyński was a friend of Izaak.¹¹⁴ They had met in Sitkówka a few days earlier and at that time the partisans let Izaak go.¹¹⁵ Wilczyński testified in the post-war trial of commander Edward Skrobot, who was one of two lieutenants in the detachment, the other one being Czesław Łętowski “Górnik,” who has already been mentioned many times. One of them must have beaten up Izaak then. Wilczyński accused neither the commander nor his companions and he did not confess to his participation in Grynbaum’s killing. According to Guta, on the critical night groom Nowak was ordered to bring horses to Countess Mycielska’s mansion. The loot was loaded onto three wagons and the Countess was beaten up. The assailants wanted to shoot estate manager Jan, who was even escorted to the pond in his pyjamas. “But they let him go when he proved that he was not a Jew.”¹¹⁶ The practice of checking people’s Jewishness may be regarded as a kind of “signature” of Edward Skrobot, as the materials that regard his “Wybraniecki” squad are the only ones to mention such practices.

Blindfolded Nowak and Grynbaum were then taken to the partisan camp located two hours’ ride by wagon away.¹¹⁷ The two men received food in the camp. “In the morning they ordered Izaak to undress, they gave him a uniform and a cap with the Polish army emblem, but he got no weapon. Then they ordered him to tell what he had been doing since the deportation of the Jews from Chęciny.”¹¹⁸ His interrogation lasted the whole day. Nowak was taken back to Sitkówka in the evening and Grynbaum was being treated in the camp like a de-

¹¹² Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, 94.

¹¹³ See the mention of stone-mason Wilczyński from Chęciny in AIPN, 0418/368, Protokół przesłuchania Wiktora Zygmunta Bokwy [Typescript of Wiktor Zygmunt Bokwa’s interrogation], p. 27.

¹¹⁴ This is what Izaak said to the “Barabasz” soldiers during the previous meeting: “Gentlemen, I have a friend in your group. His name’s Marian Wilczyński,” see Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, 83.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 83.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 95.

¹¹⁷ More or less the distance from Sitkówka to Daleszyce, where the detachment was quartered at the beginning of March 1944.

¹¹⁸ Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, 96.

tachment member.¹¹⁹ It was a trick to make him reveal the location of the property and Guta and Lili’s hideout. The Kielce region AK¹²⁰ and AL members¹²¹ did sometimes resort to such a measure. The soldiers used to execute the Jews after stealing their money and possessions. The moment of Grynbaum’s capture stayed in the memory of the AK soldiers.¹²² We have one more indirect testimony of a “Wybraniecki” soldier: Bolesław Boczarski repeats the version he supposedly heard from commander Edward Skrobot.

[Skrobot] “Wierny” started telling me that they found out from the locals about a Jew hiding on Countess Mycielska’s estate, and then “Wierny” went with his people to Countess Mycielska and they captured that Jew. After the capture, the Jew said that he had left gold and jewelry at Countess Mycielska’s, then “Wierny” and his men entered Countess Mycielska’s apartment and ravaged it. Then “Wierny” told me that they executed that Jew and then he added that Zygmunt Bokwa pseudonym “Smutny” had been with him.¹²³

Let us give the floor to the Chęciny inhabitants. Tadeusz Mistachowicz recalls that after the deportation of the Jews from Chęciny, “in the evening one could often see a Jew walking on the street. I had known him since I was a boy, it was Icek Grynbaum.”¹²⁴ Mistachowicz says that one night in winter 1944 a group of about a dozen armed men in sheepskin coats came to the town. They stormed into his apartment screaming, “Jasicki, give us the gold the Jew Icek Grynbaum brought you,” and they beat up his brother. They brought Grynbaum with them. The bare-foot Jew was wearing long underwear and had his hands tied up with a piece of wire on his back. “I saw that he had been injured – the hole on his cheek was stuck with a piece of bloody cotton.” The men did not believe the brother that his

¹¹⁹ Andrzej Ropelewski describes the last moments of Grynbaum’s life in a similar way in his book *Wspomnienia z AK*, 47.

¹²⁰ See Alina Skibińska, Dariusz Libionka, “Przysięgam walczyć o wolną i potężną Polskę, wykonywać rozkazy przełożonych, tak mi dopomóż Bóg”. Żydzi w AK. Epizod z Ostrowca Świętokrzyskiego,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008): 287–323; Alina Skibińska, “Żydzi w AK i AL. Dwa epizody z Ostrowca Świętokrzyskiego” (typescript); eadem, “Dostał 10 lat, ale za co?”. Analiza motywacji sprawców zbrodni na Żydach na wsi kieleckiej w latach 1942–1944,” in *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*, ed. Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), 313–444.

¹²¹ See Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, “Tadeusz Maj’s Trial, From the History of the People’s Army ‘Świt’ Detachment in the Kielce Region,” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 7 (2011): 171–210.

¹²² Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, 47.

¹²³ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Bolesława Boczarskiego [Typescript of interrogation of witness Bolesław Boczarski], p. 100.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, Protokół przesłuchania Tadeusza Mistachowicza [Typescript of Tadeusz Mistachowicz’s interrogation], k. 172.

surname was not Jasicki,¹²⁵ (he was not at home that night; compare later) and a brutal search began. "Seeing that, Icek spoke to all members of the household, 'Bolek Stępniewski has betrayed me.' I gathered from what he said that Bolesław Stępniewski¹²⁶ participated in his capture."¹²⁷

Maria Mistachowicz¹²⁸ witnessed the same incident. She testified that one of the men was addressed to as "Lieutenant." It could have been detachment commander Edward Skrobot or Łętowski provided that the latter was in Chęciny at that time as Skrobot testified. Bolesław Stępniewski, whom Grynbaum was calling, was one of the first farmers to provide hiding to the Jewish family – Guta, her daughter and Izaak. The Jews gave him some of their possessions, which he was gradually selling.¹²⁹ Stępniewski, whom Guta Szynowłoga described in her testimony as a friend content with the end of the Jews' plight,¹³⁰ threatened Anna Jasicka's family in 1949: "[I]f [my] husband says anything about Grynbaum's killing then he'll shoot all of us and if he doesn't do it then Szymek Gruszczyński or some other partisans will."¹³¹ The threats were allegedly made in the presence of Jasicka's husband and his two brothers – Czesław and Julian. Then Jasicka discusses the killing of three Jews in the Gaj Forest near Chęciny.¹³²

Jasicka (sibling of the two Mistachowicz brothers) was in the house attacked by the "Wybraniecki" soldiers. She too knew Izaak Grynbaum from before the

¹²⁵ Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, 20, 35ff.

¹²⁶ More on Bolesław Stępniewski who initially provided hiding to Grynbaum, Guta and Lili Szynowłoga see Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, 22–24, 138–139.

¹²⁷ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Tadeusza Mistachowicza [Typescript of Tadeusz Mistachowicz's interrogation], p. 172.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, Zeznanie Marii Mistachowicz na rozprawie głównej [Maria Mistachowicz's testimony during the main hearing], p. 61.

¹²⁹ Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, 139.

¹³⁰ "Just think of it! You're free, madam!" said Bolek, 'the war's over.' [...] Bolek's wife made a good meal for me at their place. I took delight in the fat chicken soup with noodles and a piece of chicken" (*ibidem*, 138).

¹³¹ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Anny Jasickiej [Typescript of Anna Jasicka's interrogation], 179.

¹³² It might be the case discussed in Bernard Zelinger's testimony entitled "10 August 1944." "Because we were waiting for our men, we did not leave anybody to keep guard. Suddenly, we heard somebody shouting, 'hands up!' [...] 'Ryba' kept me separate and the other 'soldiers' were circling my apprehended companions beating them with the butts and trying to find out where their money and other valuables were hidden. Apart from me they apprehended Moniek Żyto, Szlamek Strawczyński, Izaak Garfinkiel and Wolf Bojgen [...]. We marched for about 30 minutes. When we were close to the narrow gauge railway embankment, one of the 'soldiers' approached 'Ryba' and silently asked, 'Here or further?' I did not hear the answer, the question was enough. [...] Without hesitation I shouted to the boys in Yiddish, 'He's leading us to death! Save yourselves! Run away!' [...] Kozubek and Czerwiec [the persons to whom the author owes his life] informed us after some time, that all those apprehended with me had been murdered." Quoted in Krzysztof Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Naukowe AP, 2004), 232.

war. She recalled that he lived with his father who was a butcher. One March night in 1944 a group of 10–15 armed men dragged Grynbaum over. The surname of Stępniewski appears in her testimony too. “[...] as my husband told me, Bolesław Stępniewski from Chęciny had the sentence the NSZ passed on him for his being a communist. [...]”¹³³ The individuals in my house were more brutal than the Gestapo, who came for my husband, and making various threats they ordered me to give them the gold I allegedly had.”¹³⁴ The partisans found no gold but they were interested in the “plush bedspreads”¹³⁵ and Stefan Mistachowicz’s sheepskin coat. They prepared the loot to be taken but then Izaak Grynbaum began to shout, “‘Dear Staś,’ he shouted, ‘Bolek Stępniewski’s captured me, Bolek’s betrayed me, I’m going to die because of Bolek!’”

The analysis of the information on Stępniewski shows that he was a person with two faces. At the end of her memoir Guta Szynowłoga writes about him without any reservations. Another survivor also made enthusiastic comments on him, but the following sentence sounds alarming in the light of what we know about his activity. “[H]e was a link between all those Jews who were hiding. For example, when I wanted to see somebody while I was in hiding he would arrange the meeting at his place.”¹³⁶ It seems that Stępniewski did help the hiding Jews, but at the same time he must have profited from the contacts he so successively monopolized. According to the witnesses’ testimonies, he could have significantly contributed to the death of some of the persecuted.

But let us return to the events in Chęciny on the night from 3 to 4 March. The armed group gagged Grynbaum and threw him out of the apartment but the men did not take the bedspreads. Anna Jasicka identified one of the attackers as Józef Molenda from Bolmin. She is the second witness to identify him. It was he who threw Grynbaum out while beating him “on the back and on the head with some iron he was holding.”¹³⁷ Anna’s husband, Stanisław Jasicki, did not spend the night from 3 to 4 March 1944 at home. He was staying in his friend’s single-storey house on the corner of the Chęciny market square. He testified that he heard some noise on the street at night: “footsteps on the street.”

¹³³ Cf. AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Juliana Jasickiego [Typescript of Julian Jasicki’s interrogation], p. 182.

¹³⁴ Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Anny Jasickiej [Typescript of Anna Jasicka’s interrogation], pp. 177–178.

¹³⁵ More on “plush bedspreads,” which were a hot commodity before the war, see the Sandomierz interviews in Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi. Antropologia przęsądu* (Warsaw: W.A.B., 2008), 466.

¹³⁶ Yad Vashem Archive (later: YVA), O3/3390, Relacja Abrahama Ringa z Chęciny [Testimony of Abraham Ring from Chęciny], p. 15.

¹³⁷ One learns from another comment that Molenda, who lived on the Recovered Territories after the war (he was a Citizens’ Militia functionary in Zgorzelec during 1945–1946) was Wiktor Gruszczyński’s mother’s son-in-law (more on Wiktor Gruszczyński later).

I approached the window and I recognized defendant Molenda and Wiktor Gruszczyński [...].¹³⁸ The individuals were dragging a man along the street. Some time later I heard shots on the market square. [...] Marta Mistachowicz came in the morning and said that Icek Grynbaum was lying dead on the square [...] he lay in his long underwear and a shirt. At night I could see that the man who was being dragged toward the square was dressed in white. During the occupation I helped some Jews hide. [...] e.g. [I helped] Berta Kanarek,¹³⁹ Mordka Kenigsztajn.¹⁴⁰ [...] Gruszczyński threatened me that they'd kill me if I said anything about the killed Jew. [...] The people said that Wierny's group had been walking from house to house looking for gold. [...] That night the individuals visited other houses too. [...] The night from 3 to 4 March was bright, it was full moon.¹⁴¹

Jasicki's brother recognized Bolesław Stępniewski as one of the men who were dragging Grynbaum along.¹⁴² He also testified that all three of them were local subordinates of Jan Sieradzan "Żbik" from Chęciny. That night the bandits also stormed into the houses of other Chęciny inhabitants. They came to Marian Klusek, the Banasińskis, Aleksander Kubicki and Mieczysław Wiśniewski.¹⁴³ The latter appeared as a witness during the trial of Skrobot and his people. Wiśniewski also kept Izaak Grynbaum's things, but according to his testimonies he already regarded them as almost his own. During the nighttime visit even the partisans regarded the things to be his property. Consequently, they did not take the "hides" and they made do with the "plush bedspreads."¹⁴⁴ When Wiśniewski gave them some vodka, they turned out to be willing to compromise. And so it is not surprising that contrary to Mistachowicz and Jasicki, Wiśniewski did not recognize any of the nighttime guests. He also did not confirm that Grynbaum's hands were tied even though the others claimed so in their testimonies.

Let us give the floor to the perpetrators. The version presented by squad commander Edward Skrobot "Wierny" during his trial in 1951 begins with Sołtysiak handing him an order passed by *dvoyka*. The AK intelligence order stated that "certain Chęciny inhabitants had [...] some post-Jewish property, which I had to

¹³⁸ Gruszczyński and Molenda were brothers-in-law.

¹³⁹ See footnote 56.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Urbański, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie radomskim*, 224. Urbański writes that Jasicki kept Berta Witenberg (née Kanarek), Pesla Zelcer and Morda Kenigstein in his basement from 1942 until 1945.

¹⁴¹ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Zeznanie Stanisława Jasickiego na rozprawie głównej [Stanisław Jasicki's testimony during the main hearing], p. 66.

¹⁴² AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Juliana Jasickiego [Typescript of Julian Jasicki's interrogation], p. 182.

¹⁴³ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Anny Jasickiej [Typescript of Anna Jasicka's interrogation], p. 179.

¹⁴⁴ Not only hides but also bedspreads were a convenient way to capitalise the property the Jews had left for safekeeping at their Christian neighbors'.

take.”¹⁴⁵ A few things in Skrobot’s testimony attract attention. He claims e.g. that the intelligence and his commander gave the orders. As usual, he attributes direct perpetration to the dead (Stanisław Litewka “Stach” and Czesław Łętowski “Górnik”) for he can blame them without consequences. The logic is obvious: when the victims of robbery (Countess Mycielska and each of the killed Jews) are accused of treason, robbery ceases to be robbery.¹⁴⁶ It becomes something halfway through punishment and a patriotic duty, while the profits are tactfully not spoken of.¹⁴⁷ It was an unwritten partisan practice that the property of the persons killed “by order” was confiscated for the benefit of the detachment. Skrobot knows that he himself might be sentenced to death for “unjustified” thefts and murders. Hence, he testifies that he did not find a thing in the places indicated to him by Grynbaum. But a moment later, he contradicts himself and says that he returned to his commander the clothes seized in Chęciny together with “a golden watchcase and two mechanisms of a golden watch.” Guta Szynowłoga writes at length about that watch, which they pawned while at Countess Mycielska’s to survive a few months.¹⁴⁸ We know neither why Skrobot called Grynbaum “Jankiel” in his testimony nor why he described the chronology of the crimes differently than the others. Perhaps it was an element of a certain game played by the “Wybraniecki” detachment members during the trial. They might have been trying to confuse the interrogators, who had to not so much establish the victims’ identity as to prove their Jewishness so that the accused could be tried under the August decree. On this very basis (the victims’ anonymity) forty-five years later Supreme Court Chief Justice Stanisław Rudnicki radically overrode the sentence passed on Skrobot in the 1950s and the 1993 sentence in which the Provincial Court dismissed the petition to deem the 1951 sentence null and void. The substantiation reads:

The defendant also said that no evidence regarding this case suggests that the persons whom the sentence regarded [i.e. those hiding in the forest killed by the “Wierny” detachment in the bunkers near Mosty – A.S., J. T.-B.] “were Polish citizens of Jewish origins [at all]” or that “they were hiding in the forest from persecution on the ground of race.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Protokół przesłuchania Edwarda Skroboty [Typescript of Edward Skrobot’s interrogation], p. 47.

¹⁴⁶ Sołtysiak says a similar thing: “at that time there was the District commander’s order saying that the property of the executed was to be requisitioned for the detachment,” see AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka [Typescript of Marian Sołtysiak’s interrogation], p. 144.

¹⁴⁷ As per the regulations of courts martial, the property of those executed for treason could be taken and then allocated to a “fire victims” fund.

¹⁴⁸ Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu*, 48, 69.

¹⁴⁹ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Rewizja nadzwyczajna od postanowień Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 18 X 1993 r. [Extraordinary Appeal to the Kielce Provincial Court Judgement of 18 October 1993], p. 4.

The Supreme Court did not try to identify the persons hiding in the bunkers and it disregarded the 1951 testimony of the accused, who confirmed that the victims were Jews. During the 1951 trial Skrobot did not reveal any other motives of the crime besides the obligation to carry out the “order.”

After the war the case of the murders of the Jews committed by Edward Skrobot's squad had both a domestic and a foreign finale. Beaten and robbed by Skrobot's people, Countess Mycielska emigrated and settled in London, where she intervened with AK commander General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski. Allegedly, Komorowski promised to attend to it, but later he gave up the idea due to the communist authorities' anti-AK propaganda action.¹⁵⁰ The files of Sołtysiak's people's trials are a testimony to the strange atmosphere in the Kielce courts in 1951. It was a period of rampant Stalinism and persecution of former AK members. Yet the extraordinarily lenient sentence passed on Skrobot by Judge A. Kozielewski could be mistaken for a laudation.¹⁵¹ According to the sentence, the judge took into consideration the fact that Skrobot “was known as an excellent disciplined soldier and open-minded partisan and that he had been awarded the *Virtuti Militari* medal.”¹⁵² We also learn that he commanded respect not only in his milieu but also “among leftist partisan detachment commanders, whom he helped as much as he could, proving that in fact his deepest convictions were closer to the ideology of those (leftist) groups than to the ideology of the group he formally belonged to but whose ideology he so often disagreed with [...]. Also his attitude toward the Jews in the instances when he could make decisions on his own was far from hostile.” Even more surprising is that the 1951 (!) sentence substantiation describes some of the murders committed under Skrobot's command as “official duties carried out for the benefit of the Polish Nation within the framework of (the AK) paramilitary activity, whose veterans' rights are undeniable.” The testimonies of the witnesses who accused Skrobot and Molenda were deemed incredible. The judge, who was sympathetic toward the accused, asked about the lighting in the rooms where the events took place and even

¹⁵⁰ Information from Henryk Pawelec recorded by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir in Kielce in May 2009.

¹⁵¹ The “Wybraniecki” Detachment Chronicle's history confirms the judge's clearly favorable attitude toward the accused. The Chronicle was confiscated after Marian Sołtysiak's arrest and returned to him via mail many years later. One may read about it in the Chronicle published by the “Wybraniecki” Family: “After ‘Barabasz’ had left prison and moved to Kielce to Sienkiewicza Street in 1956, one of the judges anonymously sent the Chronicle stolen from the court files to that address. Later on ‘Barabasz’ obtained information on the sender from bar-rister A. Płoski.”

¹⁵² AIPN, GK, 306/48, Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 23 XI 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 23 November 1951], pp. 249–253. It is not known if the information on *Virtuti Militari* is true. If it were then it would mean that Edward Skrobot was awarded the highest decoration twice: the first time by the AK command, and the second time by the communist authorities.

though the witnesses persistently claimed otherwise he doubted whether it had been possible to identify the accused in those conditions. He also pointed out minor inaccuracies in the witnesses' testimonies. At the same time, however, he disregarded major discrepancies between the testimonies of the accused. The court accused Maria Mistachowicz of lying because she said that her brother-in-law had been hiding Jews, while he himself testified that he had only helped them hide. The court showed understanding for the appropriation of Jewish property by the accused (in the case files the property was always called “post-Jewish”¹⁵³). “[It] was necessary in order to collect funds needed by the organization,” says the special report on that case to the Ministry of Public Security (*Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*).¹⁵⁴ The testimonies of the witnesses for the prosecution and the changes introduced into those testimonies suggest that the witnesses had been threatened. The investigation against Bolesław Stępniewski was discontinued,¹⁵⁵ Józef Molenda was cleared of charges, Edward Skrobot was acquitted of all charges with the exception of complicity in the murder of the persons hiding in the bunker near Mosty.¹⁵⁶ He was sentenced to five years and a month of imprisonment and two years' deprivation of public, civil and honorary rights. The court used the August decree article 5 on extraordinary commutation of sentence stating that the minimum sentence “would be fair punishment.” Skrobot was released on parole in 1954. In the 1960s he became an activist of the Suchedniów circle of the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBoWiD). His friends – Boczarski and Szumielewicz – were the chairman and deputy chairman of the branch respectively. In 1971 he was awarded the Virtuti Militari Cross, which, according to malicious persons, was enough for him to start participating in the Labor Day communist parades with

¹⁵³ More on that expression see Jan Tomasz Gross and Irena Grudzińska-Gross' comment in their *Golden Harvest: Events on the Periphery of the Holocaust* (Oxford University Press, 2012), footnote 131. The authors express their view as follows: Even when still alive, the Jews were treated, so to speak as temporary holders of “post-Jewish” property. This neologism appears in Polish only in two variants: “post-Jewish” (*pożydowski*) and “post-German” (*poniemiecki*). Words such as “post-French” or “post-English” would be treated as a direct borrowing from Russian, a linguistic error, committed by someone who would rather say something else. Due to the historical developments in the 20th century, two processes of mass appropriation of someone else's property took place, namely after the German population had been forced to leave and the Jews had been murdered. But the fact that someone was murdered or forced to leave the country does not entitle anyone to anything, including their work accumulated for generations in objects, so the term “post-Jewish” can only be *la façon de parler*, but no property whatsoever.

¹⁵⁴ AIPN, 0418/368, file 3, Raport specjalny do Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Warszawie [Special Report to the Ministry of Public Security in Warsaw], p. 110.

¹⁵⁵ Besides those investigation's files, the files of the investigation regarding Wiktor Gruszczyński “Kruk” are also sought.

¹⁵⁶ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 23 XI 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 23 November 1951], pp. 249–253.

a ZBoWiD banner.¹⁵⁷ In 1979 he set up the “Wybraniecki” Family Circle (*Koło Rodziny “Wybranieckich”*), which has operated ever since. In 1993 the Provincial Court dismissed the petition to nullify the sentence passed 42 years earlier. During the 1995 extraordinary appeal the Supreme Court appealed against the sentence in favour of Edward Skrobot and ordered a re-examination of the case. The next and final sentence was passed in 1996. The court nullified the 1951 sentence stating that “Skrobot’s activity was not only not detrimental to the German occupier but it was for the benefit of the Polish State’s independence.”¹⁵⁸

VI. Stefan Sawa and the Zelinger family, Zagórze near Daleszyce, 14/15 (or 15/16) February 1944

The Zelingers were a respected Kielce Jewish family¹⁵⁹ related to the Frajzyn-gers, Lewis and Fleszlers. Jerzy Fleszler was killed at Katyń. Herman Lewi was the Kielce ghetto Judenrat chairman. Salomon (Szlomo) Zelinger, father of Henryk and Danuta, was head of the Organizational Section of the Jewish Military Union (*Żydowski Związek Wojskowy, ŻZW*) before the war. He also owned the Polski Hotel at Sienkiewicza Street No. 32.¹⁶⁰ After the Kielce ghetto closure he managed to move his family to the “Aryan” side. Zelinger entrusted his daughter Danusia, her aunt Zofia and other relatives – the Rosenbergs – to Stefan Sawa from Kielce. His son Henryk and his other relatives were put in safe hideouts.¹⁶¹ Upon reaching Warsaw, he joined the AK (pseudonym “Zielony” or “Zielonka”¹⁶²) and died fighting in the Warsaw Uprising. Initially, Henryk (Zvi) Zelinger was with his father in Warsaw and then he was sent to Zagórze. Unfortunately, he

¹⁵⁷ AIPN, 0418/368, file 2, Analiza kwestionariusza ewidencyjnego nr 1903 prowadzonego na Witolda Skrobotą zam. w Suchedniowie [Analysis of Register Questionnaire No. 1903 of Witold Skrobot Domiciled in Suchedniów], p. 25.

¹⁵⁸ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Postanowienie Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 23 X 1996 r. [Kielce Provincial Court Decision of 23 October 1996], p. 88.

¹⁵⁹ Krzysztof Urbański, *Kieleccy Żydzi* (Cracow: Małopolska Oficyna Wydawnicza, no publication date), 112. See also Bernard Zelinger, *Into Harm’s Way* (New York: Vantage Press, 2004).

¹⁶⁰ Krzysztof Urbański, “Żydzi w Kielcach w latach 1939–1945,” in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 2, ed. Leszek Bukowski et al., (Warsaw: IPN, 2008), 18; mention on Salomon Zelinger – the owner; on page 26 it says that during the war the German gendarmerie moved into the hotel.

¹⁶¹ Leon Śliwiński on Dawid – Frajna (Frymusia) Frydman’s brother, born on 1932 and kept by the Śliwiński family in Niwki Daleszyckie: <http://www.sprawiedliwi.org.pl/pl/family/519,rodzina-sliwinskich/article=1087,wywiad-z-leonem-sliwinskiem>; see also YVA, a-5013, Relacja Leona Śliwińskiego [Leon Śliwiński’s Testimony]. Maria Michalczyk writes that Bolesław Śliwiński, pre-war PPS activist, married a Jewess – Leonia née Berent. The AK intelligence intercepted letters incriminating her sent during the war. Maria Michalczyk, *Gdy każdy dzień był walką* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1982), 89; Leon Śliwiński: “My parents also had to hide from the Germans.”

¹⁶² YVA, 03/10792, Relacja Henryka Zvi Zelinger [Henryk Zvi Zelinger’s Testimony], 6 January 1999, conversation conducted by Michał Sobelman.

was not allowed to stay there so he returned to Warsaw. The two men lived on Jerozolimskie Avenue. Henryk managed to survive the Warsaw Uprising under a false name. So did his mother Róża (Lea, Rozalia¹⁶³) and sister Hanka, who “stayed near [Zagórze] on forged papers.”¹⁶⁴ Zvi wrote in the letter to Yad Vashem quoted at the beginning of this text that he had been brought to the house/ hideout (it had extra thick walls and an attic) by his father’s acquaintance, an AK member.

I stayed there for a couple of days and I became acquainted with all of its residents. But the Polish woman Lodzia [before the war she was a maid in the house of his uncle dentist Hajnoch Zelinger and she also lived in Zagórze] did not want me to stay there and did everything to throw me out. Without any explanation she handed me back to the man who had brought me there and he sent me back to Warsaw by train, back to my father. [...] My father had not received any news from that house for a long time, he began to worry. He contacted the Kielce underground by the agency of the Warsaw AK underground and then he found out that the house had been burnt down and that nobody had survived.¹⁶⁵

But he did not find out then who had burnt it. It was only his son Zvi who found out about it decades later. In his letter to Yad Vashem he enumerated six Jewish victims of the AK detachment’s attack: his sister Danusia (Dina) Zelinger,¹⁶⁶ aunt Zofia Zelinger,¹⁶⁷ Moniek (Mojżesz) Rozenberg, Edek Proszowski (owner of a Kielce power station) and his wife (name unknown) and Frejna (Frymusia) Fridman¹⁶⁸ (Dawid’s sister saved by the Śliwiński family). But he knew that “more than ten officially registered bodies” were found at the crime scene. Probably besides Stefan Sawa there was also Halina Cukierman and Lidia Sadowska.¹⁶⁹ Stefan Sawa was a secretary in the Kielce Regional Court. According to his mother’s testimony, during the occupation he became engaged to Zofia Zelinger, whom he knew from before the war. After the Zelingers had been put in the ghetto he brought them food. In May 1943 he rented an unfinished house from

¹⁶³ Born in 1905, no other data available (AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Ewidencji i Statystyki, Kartoteka Centralna, Rozalia Zelinger’s Registration Card).

¹⁶⁴ Urbański, “Żydzi w Kielcach,” 41; Zvi Zelinger’s letter, see footnote 1.

¹⁶⁵ Yad Vashem, Righteous Among the Nations Department, File of Stefan Sowa, who was awarded with a Righteous Among the Nations medal in 1991 (in Hebrew, trans. into Polish by Zuzanna Radzik).

¹⁶⁶ Born on 4 December 1931 in Kielce, see the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names (available on the Yad Vashem website).

¹⁶⁷ At the time of death she was 25, see *ibidem*.

¹⁶⁸ Born in 1933, parents’ names: Efraim and Rywka (AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Ewidencji i Statystyki, Centralna Kartoteka, Frejna Fridman’s Registration Card).

¹⁶⁹ Krzysztof Urbański, *The Martyrdom and Extermination of the Jews in Kielce during World War II* (Kielce, 2005), 160. He refers to Henryk Zelinger, see http://www.kielce.org.il/media/books_articles/TheMartyrdomandExterminationoftheJewsInKielceDuringWWII.pdf.

Stanisław Grzegolec. The building located in Zagórze near the Daleszyce forest was to be a hideout for his fiancée and her family.¹⁷⁰ In his testimony Grzegolec described the celebration of the end of the construction financed by Sawa. His “fiancée Leokadia [it is a mistake for Sawa’s fiancée’s name was Zofia] and a man who looked like a Jew”¹⁷¹ participated in the celebration. Grzegolec was invited to that house for lunch a few times in 1943. “In the house I most often saw his fiancée and an elderly woman named Jadwiga,¹⁷² who passed as his cousin. Besides them I also saw two young girls 12–14 years of age and a tall man named Konkol [Kąkol], who allegedly was the elderly woman’s brother,” testified Grzegolec. Grzegolec knew that the people living with Sawa were Jews. The neighbors also suspected that. They feared that the news would reach the Germans and Grzegolec had to “deny their Jewish origin.” In late autumn Jadwiga, a resident of the house, told him about a late night dinner they served to some unknown partisans. Władysław Szumielewicz testified that he once had dinner in Zagórze with the other members of the squad (he mentioned only Władysław Marasek, who knew Stefan Sawa from before the war). But it was not in the late autumn of 1943 but in January 1944: “On the way to the concentration I stopped in the village of Zagórze, where I checked the apartment where some Jews were hiding... In that apartment [...] there were two men, three women and a child, we ate dinner they gave us. [...] While talking to the inhabitants of the house I came to the conclusion that the persons mentioned were hiding from the Nazi authorities.”¹⁷³

Stefan Sawa was a merchant so he often went to Kielce. Consequently, he became closely acquainted with his neighbor and forest worker Józef Zabrowski, to whom Sawa’s fiancée came for milk every day. “It was a young girl, medium height, brown hair.”¹⁷⁴ Zabrowski did not think her a Jewess, “because she spoke perfectly normally and there was nothing typical of that nationality in her behavior.” The older woman mentioned in the testimony also did not look like a Jewess to him. After some time Zabrowski noticed that many other persons were living with Sawa. For example, “two little girls from eight to ten years of age” sometimes came to get milk.¹⁷⁵ Some other time, when the inhabitants of the house

¹⁷⁰ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania Stanisława Grzegolca [Typescript of Stanisław Grzegolec’s interrogation], p. 2.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷² Henryk Zvi Zelinger claims that a Polish woman (Lodzian - Leokadia) lived with the Jews whom Sawa was hiding. In turn, Grzegolec says that the elderly woman’s name was Jadwiga and he calls Sawa’s fiancée Leokadia.

¹⁷³ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Zeznanie Władysława Szumielewicza na rozprawie głównej [Władysław Szumielewicz’s testimony at the main hearing], p. 130; *ibidem*, Zeznanie Władysława Szumielewicza [Władysław Szumielewicz’s Testimony], pp. 56, 66.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Józefa Zebrowskiego [Typescript of interrogation of witness Józef Zebrowski], p. 13.

¹⁷⁵ Henryk Pawelec also heard about the two girls living in Sawa’s house, conversation in May 2009 in Kielce. There were rumors that one of them survived the fire hiding in the attic.

were running from the Germans to the forest, he noticed that the girls were living in the house with their mother, and that “two men, two women and two girls aged 15–16” were also living there apart from the other two women mentioned at the beginning (“Leokadia” and “Jadwiga”).¹⁷⁶ Zabrowski counted eleven people living in the house. The number matches the number of the victims given to Lucyna Wrońska by “Marysia from the post office” in Daleszyce (more on this follows). The same number of victims appeared in the 14 November 1950 report from the interrogation of the Zagórze inhabitants conducted by Daleszyce MO policeman Corporal Marian Skrybus. The MO functionary also mentioned the gossip about Sawa going round in the area. It was generally believed that he exploited the Jews, that he murdered them himself after taking their money and gold and that he had “scoted” to America.¹⁷⁷ It was unimaginable for those spreading the gossip that he would risk dying with “his” Jews.

In her post-war testimonies Sawa’s mother claimed that she knew her son’s fiancée and that she was aware that the woman was hiding in Zagórze with Stefan’s help. “I did not oppose my son’s plans in any way whatsoever.”¹⁷⁸ Sawina remembered that “a young girl, Danusia Zelinger” had been with them. Sawa often visited his mother when he came to Kielce to buy food. One day he confided in her that he was in trouble “because Stanisław Pociewicz, the Daleszyce municipal secretary”¹⁷⁹ often came to his house to ask for a loan.”¹⁸⁰ The mother knew that some partisans also came to him for the same reason. Sawina learnt about her son’s death from the house owner’s daughter, Miss Grzegolec, who was sent over with the news about the tragedy. Sawina arrived at the fire site, where she saw the German gendarmerie. She identified her son’s body by the holy medal and lighter found on the body. Most of the bodies were so charred that she buried them in one coffin in the Kielce cemetery. The Germans showed her some harness marks on the trees and wagon ruts. They claimed that it was an attack of a robbery “gang.” Four years after the war Sawina met Florentyna Kobyłecka (aunt of “Barabasz” detachment partisan Władysław Marasek “Brzózka”) in

There was a similar rumor about Stefan Sawa. For example, Jan Gorzelec told Sawa’s brother that Stefan Sawa had allegedly survived.

¹⁷⁶ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania Józefa Zabrowskiego [Typescript of Józef Zabrowski’s interrogation], p. 12.

¹⁷⁷ AIPN Ki, 027/236 347/III (microfilm scan), Wywiad Mariana Skrybusa z 14 XI 1950 r. [14 November 1950 Marian Skrybus’ Report], frames 188–189.

¹⁷⁸ Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Michaliny Sawy [Typescript of interrogation of witness Michalina Sawa], p. 18.

¹⁷⁹ Perhaps Sawina inexactly remembered his surname. Jerzy Kotliński says that Mieczysław Gołkiewicz was the Daleszyce municipality secretary, see Kotliński, *“Wybraniec” w Lasach Cisowskich*, 7; According to Maria Michalczyk, his surname was Sołkiewicz, see Michalczyk, *Gdy każdy dzień*, 145.

¹⁸⁰ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Michaliny Sawy [Typescript of interrogation of witness Michalina Sawa], p. 18.

a field near Kielce. The two women started talking and when Kobyłecka found out why Sawina was in mourning she confessed that Marasek (her sister's son) had participated in the murder. Stefan Sawa allegedly recognized Marasek and begged him right before his death, "Wads, spare us." During the interrogation, Kobyłecka confirmed Sawina's words and provided new details of the event.

The next day Stefan Sawa's mother [...] brought a coffin with the body of her murdered son Stefan and the bones of the other victims of Jewish nationality to her apartment in Kielce. It was then when Władysław Marasek came to the apartment and told his mother Maria in my presence that Michalina Sawa took the Jewish bones and brought them home in a coffin, that she was praying and burning candles.¹⁸¹

Jan Dygas was the farmer in Smyków to whom the detachment came straight after the "execution" in Daleszyce.¹⁸² He testified that he was visited by the commander, Władysław Marasek "Brzózka," Ludwíg Szarowski "Adolf," "Piorun," (name unknown), Aleksander Stępnik "Most" and "Wyrwa" (name unknown).¹⁸³ "Piorun" boasted to Dygas that "he had personally shot them [the Jews]." In all likelihood, the inhabitants of the house in Zagórze were killed with handguns by Władysław Marasek "Brzózka," Włodzimierz Ołtarzewski "Kordian," Stanisław Lutek "Roch" and a certain "Piorun" (detachment member, name unknown). They brought a wagon filled with "women's and men's clothes, women's and men's underwear." The feast described by Ryszard Maj must have taken place at Dygas' the night after the execution. "After the Jews had been killed near Daleszyce, the drunken men distributed among themselves the diamonds the Jews had sewn into their belts, wrapped in tissue paper."¹⁸⁴ The next day Sołtysiak himself came there and Szumielewicz reported to him that the order had been carried out.

¹⁸¹ Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Florentyny Kobyłeckiej [Typescript of Florentyna Kobyłecka's interrogation], pp. 29–30. One could see the windows of Michalina Sawa's house from the windows of the Marasek's house. Marasek denied everything during the confrontation with Kobyłecka on 23 January 1951 (ibidem, p. 80).

¹⁸² Dygas was an AK member, see Michalczyk, *Gdy każdy dzień*, 38; AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania Jana Dygasa [Typescript of Jan Dygas' interrogation], p. 32.

¹⁸³ It might have been a mistake of the recorder, because there was no "Wyrwa" in the detachment. Bolesław Boczański too confirmed that Ołtarzewski "Kordian" and "Piorun" had participated in the execution (both died during the war) (AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania Bolesława Boczańskiego [Typescript of Bolesław Boczański's interrogation], p. 39). In his other testimony Boczański mentions that Szarowski "Adolf" too had participated in that execution (ibidem, p. 26). In turn Władysław Marasek denies his participation in that incident in Zagórze and he mentions Szarowski "Adolf," Droźniak "Kogut," "Wojtek," Sadło "Kula," Wójcikowski "Zygmunt" and "and two other men" (ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Władysława Maraska [Typescript of interrogation of suspect Władysław Marasek], p. 89).

¹⁸⁴ Relacja Ryszarda Maja zapisana 9 IX 1957 r. [Ryszard Maj's Testimony written on 9 September 1957] (see footnote 28).

During the investigation Marian Sołtysiak said that he had come to Jan Dygas' house in Smyków from Daleszyce, where he had talked with “Marysia from the post office.”¹⁸⁵ It was one of so-called Three Marias from the *dvoyka* post in Daleszyce headed by Maria Michalczyk “Wyrwicz.” It was from a conversation with that “Marysia from the post office,” that Lucyna Wrońska “Ewa” learnt of the murder in Zagórze. “Maria from the post office” told Sołtysiak then that Szumielewicz was quartered in Smyków. Sołtysiak claimed that he met only Szumielewicz and Ołtarzewski at Jan Dygas'; he did not recall any other names. He also remembered that it was Ołtarzewski who gave him “a pocket watch taken from the murdered.”¹⁸⁶ He modified his testimony during the trial: “I took a ring, chain and watch, which I then handed to the higher authorities”¹⁸⁷ (allegedly directly to AK Kielce Region commander Włodarczyk “Wyrwa.”) In court he did not repeat what he said during the investigation, i.e. that he sold the chain and ring “in a shop in Wrocław” in 1948.¹⁸⁸

Execution detachment commander Władysław Szumielewicz claimed that he received the direct order to conduct the execution in Zagórze from his commander during the concentration in Bączków in January or February 1944. Pawelec, Skrobot, Jan and Stefan Fąfara allegedly witnessed it.¹⁸⁹ Szumielewicz ordered Szarowski, Pietruszka, Litewka, Marasek and Lutek to conduct the action, while Sołtysiak assigned one more person from Dąbrowa.¹⁹⁰ On the way to Zagórze, Sołtysiak caught up with him on a horse outside a store in Leszczyny and once again reminded him about the necessity to carry out the order.¹⁹¹ The group reached Zagórze in the evening of 14 February 1944 and left the horses at the edge of the forest.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka [Typescript of Marian Sołtysiak's interrogation], p. 35.

¹⁸⁶ Szumielewicz testifies differently. “I handed him [Sołtysiak] the robbed jewelry, from which [Sołtysiak] ‘Barabasz’ gave me an ordinary wristwatch and he gave [Ołtarzewski] ‘Kordian’ a ring with a diamond as he had asked him for it” (ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza [Typescript of Władysław Szumielewicz's interrogation], p.) 47).

¹⁸⁷ Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka na rozprawie głównej przeciwko Władysławowi Szumielewiczowi [Typescript of Marian Sołtysiak's interrogation during the main hearing against Władysław Szumielewicz], p. 145.

¹⁸⁸ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka [Typescript of Marian Sołtysiak's interrogation], p. 170.

¹⁸⁹ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza [Typescript of Władysław Szumielewicz's interrogation], p. 44.

¹⁹⁰ “Piorun” (name and surname unknown) came from Dąbrowa.

¹⁹¹ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania podejrzanego Władysława Szumielewicza [Typescript of interrogation of suspect Władysław Szumielewicz], p. 45. Repeated during the interrogation on 2 April 1951 (ibidem, p. 58).

¹⁹² Ibidem, p. 58.

After our arrival I secured the apartment [Droźniak and Szarowski were to watch over it; in a different testimony he said that “Wojtek” and Pietruszka were guarding the house and that Litewka and Droźniak were the ones who operated the machine gun while Szarowski was sent to the village of Smyków to get a wagon to transport the robbed goods – A.S., J.T.-B.¹⁹³] and then I, Władysław Marasek pseudonym ‘Brzózka,’ Stanisław Lutek pseudonym ‘Roch,’ [Władysław Ołtarzewski] pseudonym ‘Kordian’ and that man from Dąbrowa whose pseudonym and name I didn’t know [“Piorun”] [...] we entered the apartment. After we entered the house Władysław Marasek [...] told me that Stefan Sawa had recognized him,¹⁹⁴ and then all four of us fired our firearms at Stefan Sawa, who was in the kitchen, we killed him on the spot and then we fired at two Jews, whom we killed too. From the kitchen we went to the room, there were three women and a child of Jewish nationality and we shot them too. Having executed all the people who were there we conducted a search in the whole apartment and we took the men’s and women’s clothes from the wardrobe, women’s and men’s shoes and in the wardrobe we found jewelry, i.e. a golden necklace [“a golden chain 2 mm thick”], rings, I don’t recall now how many there were [three rings and a signet ring¹⁹⁵], a gold watch [“Omega brand”¹⁹⁶ man’s pocket watch¹⁹⁷] and two ordinary watches. We loaded the loot onto the wagon brought over by Stanisław Lutek pseudonym “Roch,” but who drove that wagon I don’t know. After we had loaded the loot, we set [the house] on fire to remove the evidence.”¹⁹⁸

In his later testimonies Władysław Szumielewicz added some dramatic details to the description. After they had entered the house he asked Sawa to request all the men in the house to gather in the kitchen. The door to the room where the women were remained closed.¹⁹⁹ A conversation “on the partisan activity” began, while Władysław Marasek was talking with Sawa to the side. Then Marasek notified Szumielewicz that Sawa had recognized him.²⁰⁰ Szumielewicz testified that he then ordered the men to stand with their faces to the kitchen wall and that he beckoned the soldiers to shoot them. Marasek “Brzózka” (he denied everything during the trial), Ołtarzewski “Kordian,” Lutek “Roch” and “Piorun” (name unknown) were the ones who opened fire. “I did not shoot no-

¹⁹³ Ibidem, p. 59.

¹⁹⁴ According to the typescript of the suspect’s final interrogation, “at that time [Szumielewicz] thought him [i.e. Sawa] a Jew” (ibidem, p. 64).

¹⁹⁵ Ibidem, p. 60.

¹⁹⁶ Ibidem, p. 60.

¹⁹⁷ Ibidem, p. 68.

¹⁹⁸ Ibidem, pp. 45–46.

¹⁹⁹ Ibidem, p. 60.

²⁰⁰ Ibidem, p. 109.

body,” claimed Szumielewicz.²⁰¹ Then he ordered somebody to open the door to the room where the women “were sitting motionless” herded together “in the corner near the bed.” In his opinion the child was about 4–5 years old. The victims were thoroughly frisked (see Ryszard Maj’s testimony quoted earlier: “The Jews had [diamonds] sewn into their belts, wrapped in tissue.”). Let us take note of the thread of the wagon waiting in the forest and brought by Władysław Ołtarzewski “Adolf.” Both Szumielewicz and Marian Sołtysiak tried to justify those actions as something customary to partisan detachments. “[T]here were orders from above and from ‘Barabasz’ to take the valuables from the people killed by orders. We took clothes and gold objects.”²⁰²

Co-defendant Władysław Marasek denied his participation in the execution and stated that the members of the execution group, whom he allegedly met only in Jan Dygas’ cottage, where he came with the commander, “were still covered in blood.” But he added in concord with Ryszard Maj’s testimony²⁰³ that, aside from the “dresses, men’s clothing, hats and shoes,” among the looted goods there were also some “belts.”²⁰⁴ When he asked Droźniak what they were doing in the area, he told him that they “had executed the Jews and burnt down the house.”²⁰⁵ During the confrontation between him and Szumielewicz on 14 April 1951, Marasek once again denied his participation in the execution and claimed that he had not been at Stefan Sawa’s.²⁰⁶ He thought that Szumielewicz accused him out of vengeance because he had not executed the order due to illness. He explained that Aunt Kobyłecka gave testimonies that incriminated him due to a family conflict. During the trial both Jan Dygas and Szumielewicz withdrew their testimonies against Marasek. Szumielewicz did that in an unintentionally funny way: “I firmly state that I was present during the liquidation in Zagórze, but I might be wrong about the co-defendants.” The other co-defendant, Stanisław Lutek, also flatly denied his presence in Zagórze. He denied it also during the confrontation with Szumielewicz.²⁰⁷ Unmindful that the commander’s testimonies incriminated him too, he said that Szumielewicz “is so straightforward, flawless and truth-

²⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

²⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 130. In another testimony (*ibidem*, p. 111) he enumerates: “an Omega golden pocket watch, two ordinary wristwatches, a quite thick golden chain, a golden signet ring, three women’s rings with valuable stones.”

²⁰³ See footnote 28.

²⁰⁴ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Maraska [Typescript of Władysław Marasek’s interrogation], p. 89.

²⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 92.

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, Protokół konfrontacji pomiędzy Władysławem Szumielewiczem i Władysławem Maraskiem [Typescript of Confrontation between Władysław Szumielewicz and Władysław Marasek], p. 95.

²⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, Protokół konfrontacji pomiędzy Władysławem Szumielewiczem i Stanisławem Lutkiem [Typescript of Confrontation between Władysław Szumielewicz and Stanisław Lutek], p. 112.

ful that what he said must be true." Squad commander Bolesław BoczarSKI tried to provide him with an alibi during the trial.²⁰⁸

He claimed that the sentence on the inhabitants of the house in Zagórze had been passed many months earlier. In his testimony given on 1 February 1951 Szumielewicz said that in November 1943 he had received "a report from the AK intelligence unit of the Daleszyce post about Jewish persons hiding at Stefan Sawa's in Zagórze together with a description of the building and its general layout."²⁰⁹ The next day he added, "I was given the report by Daleszyce AK post commander pseudonym 'Orkan,' I don't know his surname."²¹⁰ He added more details in April 1951. He testified that he received a report addressed to him (i.e. "to the Kielce-Wschód squad commander") by the agency of the Daleszyce post. According to the report "in the village of Zagórze [...] there were some persons of Jewish nationality hiding there [...]" [during a subsequent testimony he did not recall if the report mentioned the origin of the Zagórze house inhabitants - A.S., J.T.-B.]. The persons were "suspected of collaboration with the Bieliny German gendarmerie station [...] and they were to be executed."²¹¹

Sołtysiak "recalled" the charge from the liquidation order differently: "near Daleszyce in the Kielce county there is a group of people sent by Gestapo functionary Witek to carry out surveillance in the area."²¹² Having read the report, Szumielewicz sent it "with a monthly report" to the commander by the agency of messenger Władysław Marasek."²¹³ Allegedly the commander gave Szumielewicz the liquidation order confirming the sentence already at the beginning of December 1943. The order was to have been brought by a female messenger, "whose pseudonym [Szumielewicz] did not recall." During the trial Szumielewicz claimed that he did not remember who had brought that order: Marasek or the messenger. The sentence even quotes the order given by Sołtysiak: "I order a liquidation as per the directive."²¹⁴ The *dvoyka* directive was also to be attached. It is interesting that Lucyna Wrońska "Ewa" – permanent messenger of

²⁰⁸ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Władysławowi Szumielewiczowi i innym [Typescript of the main hearing against Władysław Szumielewicz and others], p. 151.

²⁰⁹ Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza [Typescript of Władysław Szumielewicz's interrogation], p. 98. "That order was binding for me as a commander. Barabasz too ordered me to carry out such orders" (ibidem, p. 129).

²¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 107.

²¹¹ Ibidem, p. 55.

²¹² Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka [Typescript of Marian Sołtysiak's interrogation], p. 170.

²¹³ Ibidem, Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza [Typescript of Władysław Szumielewicz's interrogation's], p. 98.

²¹⁴ Ibidem, Uzasadnienie wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce substantiation], p. 163.

the detachment – was unaware of such a sentence.²¹⁵ During the investigation Wrońska straightforwardly said that, “[...] the case was a kind of crime and not a heroic act, and the regional command certainly did not know about it. I also think it likely that [Sołtysiak] ‘Barabasz’ committed that murder on his own initiative.”²¹⁶ The quoted conversation between Wrońska and one of the “Three Marias”²¹⁷ from the Daleszyce post – Maria Nachowska – tells us neither whether the liquidation was ordered nor whether *dvoyka* at least knew about it. During the same conversation Nachowska allegedly informed Wrońska that “in the village of Zagórze [Sołtysiak] ‘Barabasz’ and Mietek’s group murdered 11 Jews and burnt the house.” The conversation quoted by Wrońska did not feature words such as “informers,” “sentence” or “execution,” which would have been present if the initiative had indeed come from the Daleszyce *dvoyka* post.

This problem is that Maria Nachowska denied ever talking with Wrońska about such an incident.²¹⁸ We do not know which woman is lying. We only know that Lucyna Wrońska was isolated until the end of her life by the veteran and ZBoWiD milieus even though everybody admitted her heroism during the war and the love she enjoyed of the “Wybraniecki” soldiers.²¹⁹ Was it due to the increasing influence of Marian Sołtysiak, who became “Mieczysław Moczar’s right hand” in the 1960s?²²⁰ Later on Wrońska tried to talk about the murder in Zagórze with the Boczarski soldiers, but “the members of the detachment, if they did talk, talked cautiously and as if they feared somebody.”²²¹ She learnt only that the Jews allegedly put all the valuables on the table before the execution. There must have been a lot of them, since there is talk about “a suitcase

²¹⁵ Roman Zarębski “Zaw” was Chief of the 2nd Section of AK Region Command (*Referat II Komendy Obwodu AK*) from November 1942 until spring 1944, see Borzobohaty, *Jodła*, 178.

²¹⁶ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej [Typescript of interrogation of witness Lucyna Wrońska], p. 226.

²¹⁷ “The three Marysias,” sometimes called “the three Marias,” are: Maria Michalczyk “Wy-rwicz,” “Doliński 1” – Daleszyce intelligence post head, Daleszyce forest inspectorate employee, Maria Nachowska “Turek” – Daleszyce post office employee and Maria Cedro-Fabiańska “Siba” – municipality office employee, see Michalczyk, *Gdy każdy dzień*, 56, 58 and other pages; eadem, *Diabeł “Piętej kolumny”*, 156, 189–190.

²¹⁸ Interrogated by the UB, Maria Nachowska answered in one sentence: “I have never talked about the killing and burning of the Jewish family in Zagórze in the Daleszyce municipality with ‘Barabasz’ messenger Lucyna Wrońska pseudonym ‘Ewa’” (AIPN Ki, 027/236, Protokół przesłuchania Marii Nachowskiej [Typescript of Maria Nachowska’s interrogation], p. 197).

²¹⁹ See e.g. the “Wybraniecki” Chronicle entry on 19 July 1943. “We all love her like our mother.”

²²⁰ Marcin Mięgała, “Wojna domowa Wybranieckich,” *Magazyn Słowa Ludu* (11 July 2001). See also Marian Sołtysiak’s text “Czym jest ZBoWiD?” published in the London *Kronika* in 1965.

²²¹ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania świadka Lucyny Wrońskiej [Typescript of interrogation of witness Lucyna Wrońska], p. 224.

of jewelry.” Let us quote again Ryszard Maj’s sentence about “the diamonds the Jews had sewn into their belts, wrapped in tissue paper.”²²²

Another unclear thing appears in the record of Szumielewicz’s final interrogation on 23 April 1951. He specified that the order to carry out the execution was given to him “by the agency of AK post commander pseudonym ‘Orkan’ [Sarna] by the agency of his messenger.”²²³ He added that “the order was written in pencil on a piece of paper.” During the main hearing he uttered the following words: “by the agency of a messenger from the Daleszyce *dvoyka* post.”²²⁴ Earlier he claimed that he had received it “by the agency of the post in Daleszyce.” It is difficult to believe it. Maria Michalczyk, whom we have already mentioned a few times, was the head of *dvoyka* in that town. In autumn 1943 she took over the entire region from Sarna mentioned by Szumielewicz. She clearly states that Sarna was “overburdened with work” and that he quit the intelligence altogether and he was to organize a combat detachment in that region. During the main hearing Szumielewicz firmly repeated that the liquidation order came from Sarna – the Daleszyce *dvoyka* head.²²⁵ Sołtysiak corroborated Szumielewicz’s testimony during the hearing: “I know that the *dvoyka* post in Daleszyce was interested in the liquidation.” Sołtysiak testified the following, but he did not mention Sarna: “In the Daleszyce sub-district [...] the *dvoyka* head post was held by a tall, dark individual with an oval face [...]. Miss Maria will know him [...] she worked at the post office during the occupation; she lived in the same building where the post office was. I mention this girl because that *dvoyka* head visited her the most often.” Maria Michalczyk does not mention such an order in any of her books. But there is a telling mention about how unfair the oblivion Lucyna Wrońska fell into was – as we remember she was the only one to claim that the murder in Zagórze was an act of Sołtysiak’s lawlessness.

It is not difficult to believe that Szumielewicz doubted the justness of the sentence on the Zagórze house tenants. This is how he reported the case to Sołtysiak in Bęczków:

[...] on the way to the concentration I carried out surveillance of Stefan Sawa’s apartment and I noticed two men, three women and a child of Jews nationality hiding there, they had nothing to do with the German gendarmerie, we should reconsider the whole thing. Hearing my words, [Sołtysiak] “Barabas” replied that I had to carry out the order because such it had been given by the AK *dvoyka*.²²⁶

²²² See footnote 28.

²²³ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza [Typescript of Władysław Szumielewicz’s interrogation], p. 65.

²²⁴ *Ibidem*, Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Władysławowi Szumielewiczowi i innym [Typescript of the main hearing against Władysław Szumielewicz and others], p. 129.

²²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 129.

²²⁶ *Ibidem*, Protokół przesłuchania Władysława Szumielewicza [Typescript of Władysław Szumielewicz’s interrogation], p. 57.

Szumielewicz tried to buy time saying that he had never carried out liquidations of women and that his squad lacked appropriate men to do that (underage detachment members did not participate in executions). The only thing that he achieved was that Sołtysiak sent him three men from Boczarski's squad: Lutek, Ołtarzewski and “Piorun.”

The comparison of the defense strategies adopted by Szumielewicz and his commander Sołtysiak during the investigation and the hearing suggests that contrary to most such trials the strategies were only partly agreed on and they were not reciprocated by Sołtysiak. Even though Sołtysiak basically confirmed Szumielewicz's testimonies, he did sometimes gently question Szumielewicz's line of defense, particularly during his own hearing. “He mentioned some Christian paintings in that house, which would suggest that they were not Jews. He also said that there was a woman. I don't recall if he had mentioned a child. I doubt whether Szumielewicz suggested not carrying out the order, because knowing him he would not dare do that.”²²⁷ Yet Szumielewicz modified his own testimonies to take all the blame and protect both his companions and commander.²²⁸ He claimed that Sołtysiak did not give him the order – allegedly he only told him to carry out the order of *dwoyka*. He corroborated the testimony of Sołtysiak, who testified the following during the hearing. “I know that the Daleszyce *dwoyka* post was interested in the liquidation.” “Those who did not perform the sentence could be punished by death,”²²⁹ explained Szumielewicz. “I have not heard about an instruction saying that one could not carry out the order if in doubt about somebody's guilt.”²³⁰ Henryk Pawelec had a different opinion on the topic. “It did happen. Very seldom. Those who did that faced trial before the Provost Court. I participated in such a trial. The sentences were unambiguous: freedom or death. I don't know what would have happened to [Szumielewicz] ‘Mietek’ if he had saved the child. [...] And what would have happened to that rescued child?”²³¹

During Szumielewicz's hearing Sołtysiak testified to help his subordinate as much as possible and simultaneously not to incriminate himself. “Sometimes

²²⁷ AIPN, GK, 306/25, Protokół rozprawy głównej przeciwko Marianowi Sołtysiakowi [Typescript of the main hearing against Marian Sołtysiak], p. 9.

²²⁸ From other sources we know that he felt guilty of the murder in Zagórze until his death, see Jadwiga Karolczak, “Duchy i upiory,” *Magazyn Słowa Ludu* 1474 (1993): 1–6.

²²⁹ Szumielewicz wrote when he asked for pardon on 27 December 1954 addressed to the Council of State, that the final order to conduct the execution in Zagórze gave him only 48 hours to perform the order. “The fact that the ‘Barabasz’ detachment commander came to the liquidation spot and to the place where I was quartered confirms that it was clearly an attempt to check whether the order had been carried out. Refusal to carry out the order or further procrastination on my part would mean that I would be sentenced to death, just like it had happened many times in similar situations.” (AIPN, GK, 306/44, p. 193).

²³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

²³¹ Quoted after Karolczak, *Duchy i upiory*.

during retaliation actions whole families with children were liquidated for their collaboration with the Germans. We were an army and we did not analyze the orders. [Szumielewicz] Mietek had been brought up in such a way that he carried out the orders to the letter. I don't know of any instances of verification of orders in my detachment."²³² As we know from station agent Błachucki's case the statement is not true. Sołtysiak's words contradict the statement of another squad leader of the "Wybraniecki" detachment – Bolesław Boczarski "Jurand." The latter testified during the same hearing that "during one of the briefings [Sołtysiak] 'Barabasz' said that if a soldier was not deeply convinced of the guilt of a person to be liquidated or if the soldier was convinced of his innocence, then he was allowed not to carry out the order," and he referred to the time when he himself refrained from carrying out an order.²³³ Boczarski talked disrespectfully about "*dvoyka*, which had low standards and often made mistakes."²³⁴ Regardless of whether the witness told the truth, it should be noted that Judge T. Bielski expressed a similar opinion during the trial referring to the law of the Second Republic of Poland (*Dziennik Ustaw RP* 1932, No. 91, item 765). "Even if a soldier was carrying out his superior's order, he was still committing a crime and he would be held responsible for it if he committed a crime or a minor offence (article 9 of the Polish Army Penal Code [*KK WP*])."²³⁵ What is more, Sołtysiak mentioned a situation when he questioned a sentence of *dvoyka* solely on the basis of his own conviction ("Their faces did not testify to their guilt"). He then waived the charges against the two persons whom he did not know and hid them in Łętowski's detachment.²³⁶ Allegedly, they were good soldiers. This story contradicts the firm statements of the accused that the sentences and orders were never questioned.

The sentences passed in all three criminal trials of the "Wybraniecki" detachment partisans were lenient. We have already discussed the sentence passed during the trial of Skrobot, Dziewiór and Molenda. Władysław Szumielewicz, Stanisław Marasek and Stanisław Lutek were sentenced on 13 September 1951 to six years and six months, six years and five years of imprisonment

²³² AIPN, GK, 306/44, Zeznanie Sołtysiaka na rozprawie głównej przeciwko Władysławowi Szumielewiczowi i innym [Sołtysiak's testimony during the main hearing against Władysław Szumielewicz and others], p. 145.

²³³ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Bolesława Boczarskiego [Typescript of Bolesław Boczarski's interrogation], p. 105: "'Barabasz' reprimanded me for my not carrying out that order."

²³⁴ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Zeznanie Bolesława Boczarskiego na rozprawie głównej przeciwko Władysławowi Szumielewiczowi i innym [Bolesław Boczarski's testimony during the main hearing against Władysław Szumielewicz and others], p. 152.

²³⁵ *Ibidem*, Uzasadnienie wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce substantiation], p. 172.

²³⁶ Sołtysiak, *Chłopy "Barabasha"*, 87–88.

respectively.²³⁷ The court took into consideration the circumstances mitigating Szumielewicz's guilt: "his young age and extremely honest confession of his guilt, and on the other hand [the fact] that he was the detachment's commander." They were regarded as a basis for submitting an acquittal petition. But a year later during a trial in an appellate instance on 20 May 1952 the Supreme Court changed that lenient sentence and increased Władysław Szumielewicz's sentence to twelve years of imprisonment, and Władysław Marasek and Stanisław Lutek's sentences to eight years.²³⁸ For a few years the court dismissed the petitions of Szumielewicz and his wife. He was paroled by the Provincial Court in Kielce only on 5 February 1957, four years after Sołtysiak's release and three years after Skrobot's release. Marasek and Lutek, who were sentenced during the same trial, were also released before the end of their time.²³⁹ The last act of this story is the sentence of the Provincial Court in Kielce passed on 7 October 1991 (under the Act of 23 February 1991²⁴⁰), which repealed the two verdicts sentencing Władysław Szumielewicz.

His commander Marian Sołtysiak was tried the day after the passing of the verdict in his subordinate's case. During that separate hearing on the next day (14 September 1951) Sołtysiak was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. He was declared guilty of complicity in the murder of the Jews near Daleszyce. The court stated that the order to which the accused referred to was a crime, because the accused must have known that it regarded Jews doomed to extermination and not people suspected of collaboration. Consequently, Sołtysiak should not have performed the sentence.²⁴¹ During his testimony at the main hearing Sołtysiak most probably revealed one of the motives of the crime. "[B]ecause the area of Zagórze was designated for airdrops, *dvoyka* ordered [Fařara] Dan to discuss the liquidation with me."²⁴² He added that initially it was supposed to be performed by somebody else. But he "did not remember" why he ultimately gave the order to Szumielewicz. The Supreme Court upheld the sentencing verdict during the review hearing on 7 May 1952. Already on 16 July 1953, i.e. when all his subordinates were still in prison, Sołtysiak was allowed a prison leave due to health considerations. On 27 August 1953 the court decided to release him

²³⁷ Ibidem, Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 13 IX 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 13 September 1951], pp. 160–161.

²³⁸ Ibidem, Wyrok Sądu Najwyższego z 20 V 1952 r. [Supreme Court Judgment of 20 May 1952], pp. 201–204.

²³⁹ Marasek was released earlier on 30 December 1956 and Stanisław Lutek was released on 15 February 1957.

²⁴⁰ The Act annulled all judgments against persons repressed for their activity for the benefit of the Polish State's independence (*Dziennik Ustaw* no. 34 [1991]: item 149).

²⁴¹ AIPN, GK, 306/25, Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 14 IX 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 14 September 1951], p. 73.

²⁴² AIPN, GK, 306/44, Zeznanie Mariana Sołtysiaka na rozprawie głównej [Marian Sołtysiak's testimony during the main hearing], p. 188.

on parole. On 14 September 1965 a few years after he had become a ZBoWiD official, Sołtysiak filed a petition to the Provincial Court in Kielce to erase the conviction and remove his entry from the criminal record.²⁴³ The files do not include the court's decision. The last verdict regarding that case was passed on 26 June 1992. The Provincial Court in Kielce decided during a hearing to repeal the sentence of 14 September 1951. As in Szumielewicz's case the decision was based on the Act that repealed all verdicts against the people repressed for their activity for the benefit of the independence of the Polish State. We do not know if any of those persons filed for damages on the basis of the Act as the files do not include any documents regarding that issue.

Justice at Time of Terror

The Jews were murdered in the context of operations against informers, which were a basic task of the "Barabasz" detachment. Lieutenant Colonel Wojciech Borzobohaty "Wojan" (historian of the AK Radom-Kielce Region and chief of staff of the "Jodła" Region Command during the occupation) writes that the biggest intensification of liquidations of Poles collaborating with the Germans came in the second half of 1943 and in spring 1944 in connection with the "Kośba" operation ordered by the High Command of the Home Army. "It was to be a sudden blow to the Gestapo agents and informers. A few dozen people who collaborated with the occupier to the detriment of the Polish nation were liquidated in the [Kielce] Region. [...] Spies and informers and overly curious individuals who should not have known too much were liquidated to ensure security of the organization and society."²⁴⁴ The collaboration of some Poles with the German authorities must have indeed become a serious problem, since already a year earlier during a conversation in the regional command Sołtysiak successfully convinced the leaders (commander "Wyrwa" and intelligence head "Zaw") about the need to use terror against certain people. "We shot twenty-five traitors in Kielce and the surrounding area. We did it ruthlessly, often ostentatiously. Unfortunately, we did not avoid mistakes."²⁴⁵ Since the "Wybraniecki" detachment members claim that they committed all those murders by order of *dvoyka*, the task is to learn here, which murders were "mistakes" and which were elements of planned activity.

This is what the procedure of punishing informers essentially was. Polish citizens could be liquidated pursuant to legal court sentences. To this end Special Courts Martial (*Wojskowe Sądy Specjalne*, WSS) and Civil Special Courts (*Cywilne Sądy Specjalne*, CSS) were created. The former were created under the 16 April

²⁴³ AIPN, GK, 306/25, p. 118.

²⁴⁴ Borzobohaty, "Jodła", 181; see also Kotliński, "Wybranieccy" w *Lasach Cisowskich*, 11: "Snoops were liquidated ruthlessly and with all determination."

²⁴⁵ Sołtysiak, *Chłopczy "Barabasza"*, 21.

1940 Act of the Committee for State Affairs (*Komitet dla Spraw Kraju*), while the latter were established around November–December 1942.²⁴⁶ A WSS presiding judge would send the sentence to be executed together with the case files to the proper AK commander as per directives. “Territorially proper commander” could validate the sentence or not. In the latter case a new panel of judges reviewed the case and its sentence did not require validation.²⁴⁷ Preventive liquidations were allowed when it was necessary to ensure security of military detachments and when fast decisions were required. “If there was an unexpected danger to the organization or its members’ liquidations on one’s own responsibility were allowed but they were to be justified with a report sent together with the body of evidence to a WSS prosecutor up to three days after the execution of the sentence.”²⁴⁸ It was possible for the Kedyw detachments to also receive some CSS sentences to execute, but in fact the civil organs were required to have their own executives. The same regulations and procedures applied to all territories on which the Polish Underground State was active. So much about theory. How was it in practice? There is access neither to the AK Kielce Region *dvoyka*²⁴⁹ nor to the archive of the Special Court Martial of the Kielce Inspectorate so one cannot say how the underground judiciary operated in practice in the Radom-Kielce AK Region. Analogous documentation from the Jędrzejów District of the Radom-Kielce AK Region will help discover what materials and documents were the basis for the underground courts’ sentences.²⁵⁰ We shall analyze e.g. the document entitled “Wykaz osób z terenu powiatu jędrzejowskiego współpracujących czynnie i podejrzewanych o współpracę z okupantem w charakterze informatorów, agentów i donosicieli” [List of People from the Jędrzejów District Actively Collaborating with or Suspected of Collaboration with the Occupier as Informers, Agents and Informants].²⁵¹ There are 252 people on the list. The nature of their

²⁴⁶ First known judgment of the first Special Civil Court was passed on 12 January 1943, see Leszek Gondek, *Polska karząca 1939–1945. Polski podziemny wymiar sprawiedliwości w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (Warsaw: PAX, 1988), 63.

²⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 86–87.

²⁴⁸ Henryk Witkowski, *“Kedyw” Okręgu Warszawskiego Armii Krajowej w latach 1943–1944* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Związków Zawodowych, 1985), 185.

²⁴⁹ There is a chance that such materials are in private collections of former underground members. For example, Daleszyce *dvoyka* post head Maria Michalczyk writes that she has some original reports. Some materials produced by that post were in the archive of the Army Historical Research Institute (*Wojskowy Instytut Badań Historycznych*, WIBH). When writing this article the materials were unavailable because the whole WIBH archive was being moved to the Central Army Archive (*Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe*) in Rembertów.

²⁵⁰ See Andrzej Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu Polski Walczącej (na przykładzie Obwodu ZWZ-AK Jędrzejów)* (Gdańsk: Marpress, 1994).

²⁵¹ It was prepared by the AK intelligence near Jędrzejów, typescript, no date, signed by “Gruby” and “Mir.” Most probably it was written in autumn 1944 by: AK Jędrzejów District Command Section II chief Stanisław Wiśniewski “Gruby,” “Jarko” and Kacper Niemiec “Mir,” District commander. A copy was obtained of the unpublished original, which is in the State

offences is described using the following terms: “G[esta]po agent,” “G[esta]po informer,” “G[esta]po informant,” “Gend[armerie] inf[ormer],” “German informer,” “anonymous [incriminating?] letters,” “suspected] of sending incriminating letters,” “contacts with the Ger[mans],” “Germanophile,” “railway informer,” “informer of his superiors” or even the enigmatic word “suspect.” This terminology is so imprecise that it would take a vast archive and a number of people to distinguish between sound and groundless accusations. The employees of the Daleszyce post (codename “Dolno”), which the “Barabasz” detachment cooperated with, included the “Three Marias,” a “mole” at the “Blue” police station and at the sawmill, agents (usually municipality heads) in a few villages and a few messengers.²⁵² A section such as the Jędrzejów one which, contrary to the Kielce one, was thought to display “average activity,” had about 80–100 employees.²⁵³ There were no means and no possibility to properly verify the materials and evidence, with the exception of cases of great importance.²⁵⁴ Consequently, the whole thing must have often based on the *mala fama*²⁵⁵ category known from the pre-modern judicature.

Were some decisions regarding somebody’s life or death made on such premises? The question is usually answered using banal statements about infallibility of courts martial. “None of the sentences of the Polish Underground State courts was successively challenged in court, not even in the political atmosphere of the first post-war decade, which was conducive to such phenomena,”²⁵⁶ writes the author of the first monograph of the underground judiciary. “The sentences of the Special Court Martial of the Polish Underground State were error-free. Eminent and scrupulous lawyers passed the sentences. Based on facts. I had those verdicts in my hand. They were in order,”²⁵⁷ says a soldier who executed such sentences. The historians of today should be more critical. One

Archive in Kielce, from Prof. Andrzej Ropelewski. Description of the document in: Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu Polski Walczącej*, 78.

²⁵² Kazimierz Pyzik, *Sylwetki nieznanych bohaterów. Podobwód AK “Sowa” w obwodzie kieleckim 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Volumen, 1994), 78–79.

²⁵³ Wojciech Borzobohaty states that in 1944 in the whole Radom-Kielce Region there were about 2000 people who worked for the intelligence (including the agents in the Reich). 750 of them were women. Borzobohaty, *“Jodła”*, 67.

²⁵⁴ Those cases included assassination attempts on German functionaries or liquidation of Polish soldiers, see the information on the liquidation of Gestapo agent First Lieutenant Jerzy Wojnowski “Motor,” who was a liaison officer in AK partisan detachment of Jan Piwnik “Ponury”: Chlebowski, *Pozdrowcie góry Świętokrzyskie*, passim.

²⁵⁵ *Mala fama* – notoriety. The opinion about a suspect was an important premise for indictment in the pre-modern penal codes, for example in the *Carolina* code and in the previous ones, see. Stanisław Salmonowicz, “Wizerunek kodeksu: Constitutio Criminalis Carolina,” *Roczniki Nauk Prawnych* 13 (1) (2003): 53–64.

²⁵⁶ Gonddek, *Polska karząca*, 14.

²⁵⁷ Henryk Pawelec’s statement quoted after Karolczak, “Duchy i upiory,” *Magazyn Słowa Ludu* 1474 (1993): 1–6.

should closely examine the mode of operation of the underground courts and the connection between those courts' decisions and the preventive liquidation orders given by commanders of military detachments. It is known that in some circumstances the Special Courts Martial passed *post factum* sentences.²⁵⁸ Contrary to facts, however, Eugeniusz Adamczyk "Wiktor" denies that, claiming that liquidations were carried out only pursuant to sentences.²⁵⁹ Andrzej Ropelewski found an interesting document in the Jędrzejów District documentation. It enumerates as many as fourteen preventive liquidations, which contradicts Adamczyk's statement.²⁶⁰ Another statement made by Adamczyk (intelligence chief in the Jędrzejów District and an AK counterintelligence "mole" in Kripo [*Kriminalpolizei*], where he had worked since December 1941) gives us some insight into the occupation period reality.²⁶¹ "As for the decisions to liquidate traitors, it was assumed that the more Gestapo informers were killed, the smaller the number of Polish surnames in the Gestapo records."²⁶² It is difficult not to agree with such reasoning. The only issue is whether the traitors were indeed traitors.

The historical studies regarding the discussed subject matter often adopt the perspective of the sources and they do not verify the sentences, not even the controversial ones. For example, Leszek Gondek calls [preventive liquidations] an "unpleasant, but unfortunately necessary activity." In a similar vein he belittles the importance of reservations raised by specialists such as Leon Nowodworski (director of the Justice Department of the Office of the Delegate of the Government in Exile) regarding the fast track proceedings, which did not give the accused the right to defense.²⁶³ One learns about the basis for calling somebody an informer and traitor from 1942 report No. 20 to the Jędrzejów *dvoyka* written by Eugeniusz Adamczyk, who has already been quoted.

I have received information from Sędziszów that "Pistolet"²⁶⁴ has close relations with the Jew Młynarski domiciled near the local railway station. Whenever "Pistolet" comes to Sędziszów or passes through it, he always

²⁵⁸ More on the so-called preventive liquidations see Gondek, *Polska karząca*, 42.

²⁵⁹ Eugeniusz Adamczyk "Wiktor," "Moja działalność niepodległościowa" (typescript, no date), 10–14, quoted in Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu Polski Walczącej*, 78.

²⁶⁰ Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu Polski Walczącej*, 85. Below the report on fourteen executions signed by the Jędrzejów District commander Kacper Niemiec "Mir" "Niemierski" dated 20 June 1944 there is an explanation addressed to the Kielce AK Inspectorate: "The petitions have been prepared and after their drafting I will immediately send [them] to the WSS."

²⁶¹ See Borzobohaty, "Jodła", 209.

²⁶² Adamczyk, *Moja działalność niepodległościowa*, 77.

²⁶³ Gondek, *Polska karząca*, 43, 59–60, see also Stefan Korboński, *W imieniu Rzeczypospolitej* (London: Gryf, 1964), 114–115.

²⁶⁴ Konstanty Kapuściak, Polish Army non-commissioned officer until September 1939, then *Volksdeutsch* Helmutt Kapp, translator in the local ghetto.

visits the above mentioned Jew. Hence, *it is certain* [our emphasis – A.S., J.T.-B.] that Młynarski works for the Gestapo.²⁶⁵

The accusation, the so-called strong corroboration (*mocna empiria*),²⁶⁶ is all the more surprising because it is made by a Kripo employee – if one were to measure him by the same yardstick as Młynarski, one would have to think him an informer too.

The Jędrzejów *dvoyka* materials include one more report, which is of interest. This time it is about a WSS sentence, which was not carried out. The convict was Bonawentura Rutecki “Ali” – sabotage commander of the Jędrzejów District (Sołtysiak held an analogous post in the Kielce Region). He was accused of robbing numerous estates and murdering Jews in the Sobków municipality. Testimony of Alina Ziemkiewicz née Kulesza, who during the war lived at the Łukowa estate in the Sobków municipality:

One day [in 1943] the Jewess who taught the Grabowski children in Dębska Wola came to us. She seemed scared. After some time, I don’t know when, some armed men came for her. They robbed us, took the Jewess and killed her in Łukowa. Already after the war a Jew from Wałbrzych came to us asking about Genowefa Mikołajczyk murdered in Łukowa, who had a significant sum of dollars on her. Allegedly, she was a daughter of some rich Jews from Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski.²⁶⁷

The execution of Genowefa Mikołajczyk, a daughter of rich Jews from Ostrowiec and teacher of the children of Zygmunt Grabowiecki “Sęp” was allegedly carried out by Rutecki’s sabotage group.²⁶⁸ According to one of the versions, “Grabowiecki was supposedly making advances toward that woman, who escaped from Dębska Wola from his advances. According to another one [...] he supposedly spilt the beans about his membership in the underground in the

²⁶⁵ Izabella Czaplarska, Bolesław Mielniczuk, “Wiktor, Jarko Granat meldują,” part 2, *Słowo Ludu* (Kielce), 10 August 1968. We would like to thank Prof. Andrzej Ropelewski for making this article available to us.

²⁶⁶ An example of “strong corroboration” leading to incorrect conclusions: observation that two phenomena co-appear, which is interpreted in an empirically unjustified way, i.e. a simple correlation is treated as a causality.

²⁶⁷ Written down in Warsaw on 10 January 1985 (testimony copy courtesy of Andrzej Ropelewski). His statement on the woman: “[...] I learnt that one morning near the village of Łuków some peasants found the corpse of a young woman barely covered with soil and grass. The victim of an execution – the characteristic bullet holes testified to that – was recognized to be the Jewess who was hiding somewhere in the village from the Nazi thugs. Later on it was rumored that she was finished off by a Home Army sabotage detachment. It was certain that the Germans had not done it, for they had not been seen in the village for a long time, neither during the day or at night” (Ropelewski, *Wspomnienia z AK*, 46).

²⁶⁸ “Klin” AK Sub-district No. 1 sabotage detachment commander in Dębska Wola (Andrzej Ropelewski, *W Jędrzejowskim Obwodzie AK* (Warsaw: PWN, 1986), 63; see also idem, *W służbie wywiadu Polski Walczącej*, 138).

presence of that woman, and when it was realized that she was a Jewess, he decided to liquidate her as a Soviet spy.”²⁶⁹ The *dvoyka* 1943/1944 report reads: “The soldiers from his [Rutecki’s] detachment will rob even AK soldiers. They often shoot, attack women, they have no mercy even on children.”²⁷⁰ It took the AK six months to decide what to do about Rutecki, whose entire family was in the organization. In the end a WSS passed a sentence, but according to the report dated 30 June 1944 it was not carried out. “Ali, former sabotage commander of the Jędrzejów District – the sentence has not been carried out. The Jędrzejów District commander has not given such an order [of liquidation] hoping that he would improve.”²⁷¹

The analysis of the Jędrzejów *dvoyka* materials leads to a few conclusions. Firstly, it shows how great the arbitrary power of *dvoyka* commanders and sabotage commanders was – they actually decided who was an informer and whether the sentence was to be executed. Secondly, it shows to what extent the “operation of *dvoyka* [...] depended on the work of the informers, and they could not always be trusted.” The author of this credible opinion is Józef Kurek “Halny” – Jędrzejów AK District deputy commander.²⁷² Thirdly, it reveals the actual mechanism and circumstances of making liquidation decisions, which were made not only by WSSs but also at the level of sabotage commanders. Fourthly, it proves that a WSS sentence did not automatically equal liquidation (because a sentence had to be validated) and that a liquidation order did not have to be based on a sentence. Hence, one may understand that there were other factors conducive or not conducive to liquidations.

Only the two most important ones are discussed here. The first one was the distinction between Polish citizens of Polish and non-Polish ethnicity in the consciousness of AK underground soldiers during World War II.²⁷³ The second fac-

²⁶⁹ Idem, “Sprawa mordowania Żydów przez ludzi z AK”, typescript dated 28 February 2008 made available by the author. Other murders of the Jews near Raków and Liścin, including the murder of the Rakowski family by an AK sabotage group see idem, *Wspomnienia z AK*, 45–46.

²⁷⁰ Idem, *W służbie wywiadu Polski Walczącej*, 138. More on the “even greater horror” of Srul Rakowski’s 16-year-old daughter’s death was see a sentence-long mention in Ryszard Barańczyk’s letter to Andrzej Ropelewski of 23 February 1992 (the authors are in possession of its copy). A sentence-long mention on Srul (Szumil) Rakowski in Tadeusz Siemlat’s testimony (messenger commanded by “Hardy”): “Have you heard anything about the murder of Rakowski, who was hiding at Teofil Rusiński, domiciled in Wólka in the Mierzwin municipality?” The interrogated man testified that he had not heard about the murder (AIPN Ki. 025/88/D, microfiche, Przesłuchanie Tadeusza Simlata w Rakowie 3 II 1952 r. [Tadeusz Simlat’s Interrogation in Raków on 3 February 1952]).

²⁷¹ Ropelewski, *W służbie wywiadu Polski Walczącej*, 88.

²⁷² Letter of Józef Kurek “Halny” to Andrzeja Ropelewski of 11 January 1988, quoted in *ibidem*, 44.

²⁷³ It would be beneficial to repeat the already quoted sentence from the “Wybraniecki” detachment description, which our expositions have proved correct. “[T]he service in the de-

tor was whether the accused belonged to an underground organization or not. One learns about the importance of the ethnic distinctions from the regulations regarding underground judiciary organs. According to material laws of May 1940, those organs prosecuted under threat of death penalty only those who “persecuted or harmed the Polish population in an inhuman way contradictory to the natural sense of justice.”²⁷⁴ Those regulations clearly did not pertain to Polish citizens of non-Polish ethnic background.²⁷⁵

Such citizens are mentioned in the context of “betrayal of the duty of allegiance to the Republic of Poland”²⁷⁶ and to emphasize that the occupier will not do with the Poles “what he has managed to do with the Jews.”²⁷⁷ Jews were included in the 1941 Code of Civil Morality (*Kodeks moralności obywatelskiej*)²⁷⁸ and they were not forgotten when the “Commissions to Examine Cases for Acts Contradictory to Dignity of a Pole and Polish Citizen” (*Komisje do rozpoznawania spraw o czyny sprzeczne z godnością Polaka i obywatela polskiego*) were being established in 1942.²⁷⁹ But the so-called Pole’s Code (*Kodeks Polaka*) formulated in 1940 omitted them.²⁸⁰ There is no doubt that this subject matter should be discussed further in a separate study.

When one ponders why different measures of “ethnicity” were used for Jews and Poles during the occupation, one should remember what was happening in the Kielce region even before the war in the still independent Poland. In the 1930s the relations between the communities of ethnic Poles and Polish Jews began to increasingly resemble apartheid. A scholar of the wartime murders of Jews should not disregard the ideology disseminated in the 1930s by representatives of the two institutions that enjoyed the greatest public authority: MPs and priests. Due to lack of space only two examples are given.²⁸¹ The first is the statement of Kielce

tachment [...] is done by soldiers of Polish nationality” (the “Wybraniecki” Detachment Chronicle, no pagination).

²⁷⁴ Quoted after Gondek, *Polska karząca*, 14, 152.

²⁷⁵ Compare two sentences from *Przepisy materialne* of May 1940. “Any Polish citizen, who accuses before a foreign country’s government or directs the pursuit for an act against a foreign country, commits a crime of denunciation. One who persecutes or harms the Polish population in an inhuman way contradictory to the natural sense of justice through an act or directive commits a crime of inhuman persecution of and wrong-doing against the Polish population” (*ibidem*, 152).

²⁷⁶ *Rzeczpospolita Polska* 4 (10 May 1941); *Biuletyn Informacyjny* (23 May 1941), Directive of the Office of the Delegate of the Government in Exile entitled “Wobec przestępstw względem Narodu i Państwa Polskiego” quoted after Gondek, *Polska karząca*, 157.

²⁷⁷ “Oświadczenie Delegata Rządu RP,” *Rzeczpospolita Polska*, 18 (13 October 1942); *Biuletyn Informacyjny* 40 (15 October 1942) quoted after *ibidem*, 158.

²⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, 65.

²⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 64.

²⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, 65.

²⁸¹ More on the topic in the publications of Monika Marcinkowska and Jerzy Gapys of the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, see e.g. Jerzy Gapys, Mieczysław B. Markowski, “Kon-

MP Colonel Zygmunt Wende made at the Sejm in 1939 immediately after the announcement of the sentence in the Przytyk pogrom case. "We are only waiting for an order to sweep our national, native cottage."²⁸² The second example is the report written in November 1934 by Kielce province governor to the Provincial Office regarding the retreat organized five years before the war in Daleszyce (where the Zelinger family was murdered) by Marist Father Marian Wiśniewski.

An action to boycott the Jews has recently been advocated in the Kielce county churches and from the pulpits by Father Marian Wiśniewski from Warsaw. [...] Jews should be jointly boycotted as enemies of Christianity. [...] He called for great solidarity of Catholics in the organization of this boycott and one should make sure that the other one does not buy from the Jews, and green sheets of paper with a pig painted on them should be stuck on the back of Catholics coming out of Jewish stores with their shopping. He ordered such sheets of paper to be distributed to the listeners after the retreat. At the same time Father Wiśniewski called for opposition to the socialist party and other Masonic parties.²⁸³

We might disregard this report just like other manifestations of economic boycott are usually ignored. But it becomes difficult when we consider what one learns of Father Wiśniewski from the studies of Michał Jagiełło, Anna Landau-Czajka and Alina Cała. "Being the God-killing nation defiled with the greatest madness and crime in the world, the Jews, much more than Christians and even pagans, who obey the law of nature, have been blinded and contaminated, and so as carriers of evil they are to be removed and carefully separated from coexistence with other nations."²⁸⁴ Father Wiśniewski's evangelization shows how its recipients were prepared for the test, which the wartime extermination of the Jews conducted before their eyes would become.

"Barabasz" and the Jews

The "Barabasz" soldiers were often asked during the interrogations about his attitude toward Jews (which was a standard procedure in such investigations). Two squad commanders recalled a meeting during which Sołtysiak spoke on that topic. Edward Skrobot's testimony:

flikty polsko-żydowskie w województwie kieleckim 1935–1936. Wybór tekstów źródłowych," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 4 (192) (1999): 41–95.

²⁸² *Gazeta Kielecka* 1 (1939) quoted after Urbański, *Kieleccy Żydzi*, 106, footnote 82.

²⁸³ We would like to thank PhD Monika Marcinkowska for the district governor's report regarding the retreat in Daleszyce on 18 November 1934.

²⁸⁴ See Father Marian Wiśniewski, "Pro Christo. Rozwiązanie sprawy żydowskiej w świetle rozumu i wiary," *Pro Christo* 9 (1933), quoted after Michał Jagiełło, *Próba rozmowy. Szkice o katolicyzmie odrodzeniowym i "Tygodniku Powszechnym" 1945–1953*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2001).

As for people of Jewish nationality, in the month of October 1943 [...] during a briefing in the Cisów forest in the Kielce county where Henryk Pawelec pseudonym "Andrzej," Bolesław Boczarski pseudonym "Jurand," Władysław Szumielewicz pseudonym "Mietek" and I were present, Marian Sołtysiak pseudonym "Barabasz" said that the Jews encountered in the forest were to be liquidated silently, i.e. without a trace.²⁸⁵

[...] during that briefing in the forest near Cisów, when we were to disperse in groups in the area, a commander [...] asked "Barabasz" what we were to do with persons of Jewish nationality encountered in the area, "Barabasz" looked up and then pointed at the ground. I understood that glance and that pointing at the ground in such a way that those persons were to be liquidated silently, i.e. after the killing they were to be buried in the ground."²⁸⁶

Bolesław Boczarski's testimony:

[...] at the briefings held within the framework of the detachment with the section or squad commanders, Marian Sołtysiak gave instructions and orders to liquidate communists in the field, Soviet Army soldiers regardless of what soldiers they would be, or those escaping from captivity or others, they were to be liquidated too, and he also gave instructions and orders to liquidate persons of Jewish nationality.²⁸⁷

Marian Sołtysiak denied all those accusations.²⁸⁸

The defense line of the accused was always the same: they excused themselves saying that they were only carrying out orders and executing sentences and they claimed that they received them from the Leadership of Civil Struggle or from *dvoyka* i.e. the AK intelligence and counterintelligence. The KWC has already been written about, which ceased to exist before those murders were committed, not to mention the fact that it never passed sentences. As has already been said, passing sentences was a responsibility of underground civil courts or courts martial. The AK intelligence had totally different duties and prerogatives and passing sentences was never its responsibility. The most important duties of the intelligence included: observation of the enemy units' deployment, observation of objects of military importance and of camps of all kinds, collection of materials on arms production, identification of informers, warning people in danger, interception of incriminating letters and eavesdrop-

²⁸⁵ AIPN, 0418/368, file 3, Protokół przesłuchania Edwarda Skrobota [Typescript of Edward Skrobot's interrogation], p. 25.

²⁸⁶ AIPN, GK, 306/24, Protokół przesłuchania Edwarda Skrobota [Typescript of Edward Skrobot's interrogation], p. 120.

²⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, Protokół przesłuchania Bolesława Boczarskiego [Typescript of Bolesław Boczarski's interrogation], p. 93.

²⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, Protokół przesłuchania Mariana Sołtysiaka [Typescript of Marian Sołtysiak's interrogation], p. 147.

ping.²⁸⁹ The intelligence units operated as per documents (instructions) issued in the character of orders by the local ZWZ-AK authorities. Hence, intelligence is mostly arduous, exhausting and dangerous constant observation and collection of information, which was then passed further in the form of dispatches and periodic reports by the agency of messengers and through a network of dead letter boxes. As per instructions reports contained “bare facts”: exact information on troops’ movements, German and “blue” police stations, the content of listened-to conversations of German functionaries, official instructions and their performance. Maria Michalczyk, already mentioned a few times, described the everyday work of a *dvoynka* employee. The book by Kazimierz Pyzik “Niezlomny” supplements her memoir.²⁹⁰ In January 1944 Pyzik became the intelligence head in the “Sowa” AK Sub-district. The “Dolno” post in Daleszyce was one of its subordinated posts. He wrote that, “[b]esides carrying out surveillance of the German units stationed in our sub-district [...] the intelligence apparatus ensured safety of the forest detachments, field organizations and people in danger.”²⁹¹ Similarly to Michalczyk, Pyzik reports on the interception of anonymous incriminating letters at the Daleszyce post office, identification of informers and their liquidation by the “Barabasz” detachment. None of those books mentions the house by the forest, the Jews hiding there or the danger they allegedly posed to the Home Army.

As written, all the tried “Wybraniecki” detachment members used the same line of defense: they claimed that they had been obediently carrying out the orders either from the KWC (the obvious mistakes in the testimonies regarding this topic have already been discussed) or from *dvoynka*. Let it then be stressed once again: the AK intelligence and counterintelligence were not authorized to pass any sentences. They could only transfer information. The second and very important premise to evaluate what happened is the actual duality of the process of making decisions that regarded liquidations. On the one hand there were the underground courts whose very existence was a substitute for law and order. On the other hand the Kedyw commanders gave liquidation orders on their own initiative within the framework of the so-called necessary defense. The execution book of the Kielce AK Region has not survived, but a similar surviving document may be used – the “Lew” Wysokie Mazowieckie AK Region execution register.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ See Sebastian Piątkowski, “Wywiad ZWZ-AK w Okręgu Radomsko-Kieleckim (1940–1945) ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem obwodu radomskiego,” in *Armia Krajowa. Okręg Radomsko-Kielecki. Materiały z sesji naukowej*, ed. Adam Massalski and Stanisław Meducki (Kielce: Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1999), 71–85.

²⁹⁰ Pyzik, *Sylwetki nieznanych bohaterów*.

²⁹¹ *Ibidem*, 63.

²⁹² See Tomasz Łabuszewski, “Wybrane aspekty bezpieczeństwa na przykładzie Inspektoratu Podlaskiego AK (Obwodu Wysokie Mazowieckie),” in *Organy bezpieczeństwa i wymiar sprawiedliwości Polskiego Państwa Podziemnego*, ed. Waldemar Grabowski (Warsaw: IPN, 2005), 127–137.

It says that from January 1943 to June 1944 Kedyw executed at least 220–240 people in that area, but the figure does not include Germans and victims of sabotage actions. An author of a study on that topic writes that “the district WSS, as it seems, had no control whatsoever over the mentioned incidents. It only received reports of the liquidation by the agency of the region commander [...]”²⁹³ During the same period (1942–1943) the Special Court Martial in the Białystok AK Region examined a total of twenty-four cases, out of which only four ended in death sentences. Hence, the overwhelming majority of sentences were passed *post factum*, and the persons who passed and executed them were the commanders themselves as they were the ones who made the decisions and gave the orders. That region’s commander – Tadeusz Westfal “Karaś” – was at the same time an intelligence clerk, a Kedyw commander and commander of a partisan detachment that executed the sentences. There was a similar accumulation of functions in the case of Sołtysiak, who became commander of the Kielce AK Region Kedyw in January 1943. It is likely that the situation in that region was similar.

After the war it would have been difficult to defend the liquidation orders given in that mode. Hence, one can hypothesize that the “Wybraniecki” detachment members decided that the least harmful trial strategy would be to claim that they had to execute sentences following orders given by others – alleged *dvoyka* officers, who were either already dead at the time of the trial or were impossible to identify. The Provincial Court in Kielce generally accepted the explanations of the accused based on that strategy. The sentence substantiations read: “As for the order to liquidate the people in Zagórze, the Court has no doubt that the order was indeed given by *dvoyka* and sent to Barabasz’s detachment, which was to execute it. [...] Due to the discrepancies in the testimonies of the latter, it is difficult to say how exactly *dvoyka*’s order got to Barabasz and Szumielewicz. [...] But there was such an order and it came from the intelligence.”²⁹⁴ “As for *dvoyka*’s order, the Court thinks that there was such an order. [...] The Court knows from other trials that almost all sentences were passed by Department II, which either executed them through its own executive or transferred them to the detachments.”²⁹⁵ “Being a sabotage detachment commander, the accused had to execute the sentence. Accused Skrobot did not have to and even could not check if the sentence was just.”²⁹⁶ In that last case accused Skrobot testified that Łętowski took out three sentences that had already been executed and ordered him to sign them, but Skrobot did not agree. “[Łętowski] ‘Górnik’ signed

²⁹³ *Ibidem*, 131.

²⁹⁴ AIPN, GK, 306/44, Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 13 IX 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 14 September 1951], p. 181.

²⁹⁵ AIPN, GK, 306/25, Sentencja wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 14 IX 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 14 September 1951], p. 72.

²⁹⁶ AIPN, GK, 306/48, Uzasadnienie wyroku Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach z 23 XI 1951 r. [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce of 23 November 1951 substantiation], p. 250.

the sentences and put them in an envelope.”²⁹⁷ When in 1995 the Supreme Court in the person of Chief Justice Stanisław Rudnicki formulated the theses challenging the validity of the Edward Skrobot’s verdict of guilty, it argued that the court that passed the verdict was ignorant – it did not have basic historical knowledge on the Home Army, the Directorate of Underground Combat, the Special Civil Courts’ jurisdiction, etc. Moreover, the files did not contain opinions of any historians. But it should be established whether the Supreme Court, which challenged the 1950s sentences, made use of such opinions.

In autumn 1951 the Provincial Court in Kielce pinpointed the essence of the events described in this article: “the orders to liquidate the people of Jewish nationality [...] were usually camouflaged as they allegedly regarded persons collaborating with the Germans, which was done to conceal the actual objective of liquidation on racial grounds.”²⁹⁸ Transformed by the new historical policy, the Kielce Region will perhaps need some time to accept this inconvenient truth about the “Wybraniecki” detachment. It is bitterly ironic that so far only in the sentence passed in Stalinist Poland was the court brave enough to call its crimes by their true name.

Biographical Notes²⁹⁹

Bogdan Boczarowski, “Roman,” “Jurand” (1916–1968), from Wzół Rządowy, “peasant background,” before the war soldier of the 4th “Legions” Infantry Regiment in Kielce, then in 2nd Armoured Battalion near Przemyśl. Fought at Lwów during the September campaign, escaped from German captivity. Joined the ZWZ in 1941. Lost his family, arrested by the Gestapo and then accused of cooperation with the Germans. Sentenced to death because he had disregarded the order not to contact the Germans. The death sentence was not executed. Later changed his pseudonym to “Jurand.” Joined the “Barabasz” detachment in April 1943 and then became a squad commander. Boczarowski’s squad included Stefan Sowiński “Niedźwiedź” from Kielce, Stanisław Lutek “Roch” and his brother – both from Klonów, Tadeusz Sitarski “Tadek” from Kielce and others. Detachment chronicler. In May 1944 became commander of the platoon that protected the “Skafa-II” radio station on the Bukowa mountain peak. In 1944 promoted to second lieutenant and awarded with the Cross of Valour (*Krzyż Walecznych*). Wrote a memoir after the war.³⁰⁰ Became Kielce ZBoWiD chairman in 1964.

²⁹⁷ Ibidem, *Zeznanie Edwarda Skroboty* [Edward Skrobot’s Testimony], p. 64.

²⁹⁸ AIPN, 0418/4691, file 2, Wyrok Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Kielcach [Judgment of the Provincial Court in Kielce], p. 92.

²⁹⁹ Short biographies on the basis of the archival materials, testimonies, memoirs and publications quoted in the text.

³⁰⁰ Boczarowski, *By ojczyzna była wolna... Wspomnienia*.

Zygmunt Wiktor Bokwa, "Smutny" (1916-?), "petty bourgeois background," elementary school graduate, mason, in 1937 in the 20th Cavalry Regiment in Brzozów, joined the ZWZ in 1941, deported to a labor camp near Hanover, from where he escaped. He reached Kielce and joined the "Krótki" NSZ detachment. In June 1943 joined Skrobot's squad of the "Wybraniecki" detachment. He claimed to have been disciplinarily dismissed on 1 January 1944. According to Szumielewicz's testimony, he was dismissed "due to his bad attitude toward the population." Bokwa himself clarified that he was dismissed due to his being partly responsible for the death of intelligence head "Kalisz" during the action near Piekoszków on 15 December 1943. Due to grudge he bore Bokwa was one of the most persistent accusers during Sołtysiak's trial, but the court did not believe his words. After the war worked as a master mason.

Kazimierz Chmieliński, "Janosik," there were untrue rumors that he was a Jew and that he was liquidated by Henryk Pawelec. It is probable that Chmieliński was executed by Tadeusz Masio "Matros."

Władysław Dziewiór, "Burza," then "Skazaniec" (1910-1996), "peasant background," illiterate (?), graduated from a three-grade elementary school, joined the PPS after the war, brickyard worker, statue sculptor, traded meat during the war for which he spent eight months in prison. After release assumed the pseudonyms of "Stodoła" and "Burza," in the NSZ detachment of "Kłos" in the Opatów District (?) and in Second Lieutenant Józef Kempieński's "Krótki" detachment. NSZ *dvoyka* sentenced him to death for killing the commander's wife and robbing mansions. In August 1943 he joined the "Barabasz" detachment, where he was given a new pseudonym - "Skazaniec" (convict). The next sentence on him was also passed by the AK. In November 1943 by motion of *dvoyka* Dziewiór he was dismissed from the "Barabasz" detachment and he returned to Marzysz in the Kielce county. He continued to be a robber, for which he was sentenced to death by "Barabasz." "'Barabasz' sent [Henryk Pawelec] 'Jędrak' to execute the sentence, but the latter only wounded Władysław Dziewiór and his mistress Polcia, and the couple managed to escape. Wanted by the AK, Stanisław Dziewiór came to Kielce and in April 1944 joined the NSZ under command of Zygmunt Gajda pseudonym 'Krzemień.' Later on he transferred together with six NSZ members to the AK to the 'Paweł' detachment."

Stefan Fąfara, "Dan" (?-1944), from Wzdół Rządowy, regular corporal of the Polish Army before the war. In July 1943 he commanded the group created in Kielce to liquidate Gestapo functionary Wittek. He was arrested during the war and deported to the Gross-Rosen camp, where he most probably died (no documents confirming his death in the Gross-Rosen Museum).

Wiktor Gruszczyński, "Kruk," from Chęciny, member of an AK sabotage squad of Jan Sieradzan "Żbik" in Chęciny.

Bonifacy Gruszka, "Sprytny," member of an AK sabotage squad of Jan Sieradzan "Żbik" in Chęciny.

Stanisław Klimontowicz, "Cios," died on 21 December 1943 during an attack on a money transport near Jaworznia.

Tadeusz Kuchta, "Jurek," from Bolimie, gamekeeper.

Stanisław Litewka, "Staszek," from Ojców in the Kraków Province, allegedly died near Niestachów in July 1944. Member of Skrobot's squad. Skrobot's testimony: "All those who came from Kraków came to 'Barabasz' in June or July 1943. In the squad we heard that they worked in the local railway station snack bar."

Maksymilian Lorenz, "Katarzyna," initially in the NSZ under a pseudonym. "Adam," at the beginning of July 1944 he became commander of the 1st battalion of the 4th AK "Legions" Infantry Regiment into which the "Wybraniecki" detachment was incorporated. Emigrated to England after the war.

Stanisław Lutek, "Roch" (1911-?), born in Klonów, before the war a lumberjack in the forest inspectorate in Zagańsk, in 1932 joined the 17th Infantry Regiment in Rzeszów. During the September Campaign fought near Dęblin. Taken captive in Radom. Escaped from captivity. Joined the ZWZ in 1942. In Boczarski's squad in the "Barabasz" detachment since March 1943. Wounded by the "Bohun" NSZ group in Klonów on 25 May 1944. "He disregarded all discipline and felt equal to [Boczarski] 'Jurand' or even [Sołtysiak] 'Barabasz'."

Czesław Łętowski, "Górnik," second lieutenant, mining engineer by profession, reserve officer, participated in the 1939 Campaign, joined the "Wybraniecki" detachment at the beginning of 1944, posthumously awarded the Virtuti Militari Cross. Quotation from the "Wybraniecki" detachment website (www.wybranieccy.com.pl): "He was the Home Army intelligence head in the Piekoszów sub-district, at the same time he provided the partisan detachments with explosives and equipment from the quarry, where he worked. After he had been exposed in February 1944 he joined the "Wierny" group [...]. He came with that group to the March concentration of the detachment in the Cisów forest, where after the reorganization of the detachment in April 1944 he became commander of the 3rd Platoon [within the framework of the "Wybraniecki" Company]. Great commander and friend of the partisans, worshiped by his subordinates. "Górnik" and his platoon participated in all actions and skirmishes of the detachment since April 1944. For example on 22 June the platoon, covering the detachment, fought a detachment of 40 gendarmes near Chmielnik, on 8 July it fought near Niestachów, and from 4 to 10 August near Daleszyce. Within the framework of the concentration for the Operation Tempest incorporated with the whole platoon into the 1st Company of the 4th Home Army "Legions" Infantry Regiment. Perished near Antoniów on 21 August 1944 on the way to help the Warsaw partisans."

Hieronim Ryszard Maj, "Ryś I" (1925–1998), economist, during World War II worked at a post office in Kielce where he intercepted incriminating letters on behalf of the AK, "burnt," initially in the "Barabasz" detachment in the Boczar-ski squad, then went to the Miechów forest. After the war graduated from the Higher School of Maritime Commerce (*Wyższa Szkoła Handlu Morskiego*) in Sopot. Earned his PhD in 1966. During 1949–1970 director of the Maritime Fishing Institute (*Morski Instytut Rybacki*) in Gdynia, during 1964–1969 editor-in-chief of *Tygodnik Morski*. Then councillor for fishing of the commercial council office of the Polish embassy in Peru. During 1985–1998 chair of the Municipal National Council (*Miejska Rada Narodowa*) in Sopot. Awarded the Knight's Cross of the Polonia Restituta Order (*Krzyż Kawalerski Orderu Odrodzenia Polski*). Biographic entry in *Encyklopedia Gdyni*, ed. Małgorzata Sokołowska et al. (Gdynia: Oficyna Verbi Causa, 2006), 426.

Władysław Marasek, "Brzózka" (1922–1992), "peasant background," in the "Barabasz" detachment from July 1943 until September 1944, then in the platoon of Fąfara "Dan" and Kozera "Bogdan" in Szumielewicz's squad. One of three aides-de-camp of "Barabasz" (besides Eugeniusz Jakóbek "Wacek" and Jan Ogrodnik "Jasiu"). Arrested by the UB on 23 January 1951.

Tadeusz Masio, "Matros," from Zambrów.

Jerzy Matysiak, "Braszek," similarly to Roman Olizarowski "Pomsta" transferred from the "Jacek" detachment to the "Wybraniecki" detachment.

Maria Michalczyk, "Wyrwicz," "Doliński I" (1913–1989), intelligence head of the Daleszyce post during the whole war. According to Borzobohaty, that post was one of the best ones in the Radom-Kielce Region. Author of three memoirs: *Gdy każdy dzień był walką* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1982); *Diabeł "Piatej kolumny"* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1986); *Egzamin z życia: lekarze, sanitariuszki, partyzanci 1939–1945 (z dziejów podziemnej służby zdrowia w Okręgu AK "Jodła")* (Kielce: Jedność, 1999).

Józef Molenda, "Iskra" (1916–?), from Bolmin, graduated from a seven-grade elementary school, policeman before the war, joined the ZWZ in 1940, in the "Barabasz" detachment since August 1944. After the war joined the MO and was assigned to the MO district headquarters in Zgorzelec, where he worked in the investigation section until his dismissal in March 1946. Later a traffic controller in Wrocław. PZPR member. In 1945 helped Henryk Pawelec and others escape across the border.

Zygmunt Mołędziński, "Sten," from Warsaw, "came from the 'Ponury' detachment in January 1944."

Stefan Obara, "Szatan," "Walek," from Bieliny, initially commander of a sabotage detachment of the Bodzentyn Sub-district Command, which liquidated

informers and conducted operations e.g. along the narrow-gauge tracks. At the same time Obara was on the list of the “Wybraniecki” detachment members. Awarded posthumously the Cross of Valour for the battle at Antoniów, during which he died on 20 August 1944.

Władysław Ołtarzewski, “Kordian.”

Henryk Pawelec, “Andrzej” (born on 6 April 1921), from Wzdół Rządowy, before the war a career non-commissioned officer. Initially in Ignacy Robb-Narbutt’s GL group, then in an AK sabotage detachment in Wzdół Rządowy, also a “man for special tasks in the Kielce-Radom AK Region.” Wounded on 13 March 1943 during the assassination attempt on Gestapo functionary Wittek. In the “Barabas” detachment until 20 March 1943, commander of a mounted advance guard squad. Commander of the 4th “Legions” AK Infantry Regiment of the AK Legions’ mounted advance guard during the Operation. NIE and WiN detachment commander in 1945. Having illegally crossed the border (more on the circumstances see Andrzej Ropelewski, *Z życia akowców w Polsce Ludowej*, [Gdańsk: Marpress, 1997, 98–99]), he joined Gen. Władysław Anders’ II Corps. Emigrated to Great Britain. Awarded the Silver Cross of the Virtuti Militari Order in London on 11 November 1948. Has lived in Kielce since 1992. Author of memoirs: *Życie śmierć, życie. Z Henrykiem Pawelcem rozmawia Jadwiga Karolczak* (Kielce: Jedność, 1999) and – written with his wife Zbigniewa – *Na rozkaz serca* (Kielce: Stowarzyszenie im. Jana Karskiego, 2005).

“Piorun,” name and surname unknown, from Dąbrowa in the Kielce county, died near Kunów.

Józef Przygodzki or Przygocki, “Czarny,” “Szary” (born in 1918), son of a peasant from Korytnica, came to Warsaw in 1937 to find a job, claimed to have been a PPS member, bakery worker, deported to forced labor to Leipzig in the Reich, escaped in 1941 or in 1943, in hiding in Korytnica, where he was born, joined the BCh in Korytnica. Before joining the “Barabas” detachment in a Sword and Plough expropriation detachment and with “Piłat;” he robbed mansions. “The BCh ordered me to join the forest partisan unit and there it occurred that it was the AK.”³⁰¹ Most probably he was the one who shot Roman Olizarowski “Pomsta.” After the war until July 1945 in the Skull (“*Trupia Czaszka*”) organization under command of Leszek Wesołowski “Strzała,” which attacked MO stations. Then he left for the so-called Recovered Territories and settled in Rudniczka in the Prudnik county. In 1946 joined the Voluntary Reserves of the People’s Militia (*Ochotnicze Rezerwy Milicji Obywatelskiej*, ORMO) and the PZPR. Worked on a state-owned farm and probably also employed in a Municipality National Council (*Gminna Rada Narodowa*) and finally as a cooperative storeman. The

³⁰¹ AIPN Ki, 025/88/D, microfiche, Własnoręczny życiorys Józefa Przygodzkiego z 4 III 1953 r. [Józef Przygodzki’s Hand-Written Biography of 4 March 1953].

County Security Office closed the records check with a motion to send it to the party control commission of the Opole PZPR Central Committee.

Andrzej Ropelewski, "Karaś" born in 1923 in Warsaw, spent the occupation in the Jędrzejów area. Completed an officer course and graduated from an officer cadet school. In summer 1944 soldier of the 1st Battalion of the Jędrzejów AK Infantry Regiment. Arrested in 1945, escaped from jail in Jędrzejów with a group of inmates. Appeared before the AK Liquidation Commission (*Komisja Likwidacyjna AK*) in September 1945. Graduated from a Law Faculty. Then in the Maritime Fishing Institute (*Morski Instytut Rybacki*) in Gdynia since October 1949. At the same time an assistant in the Higher School of Economics in Sopot. Earned his PhD in 1960 and his postdoctoral degree in 1967. Became a professor in 1974. During the martial law period, chair of the Municipal Council of the Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth (*Patriotyczny Ruch Odrodzenia Narodowego*, PRON) in Gdynia. Director of the Maritime Fishing Institute since 1948. Author of over twenty specialist and historical books on AK partisan organizations and the post-war fate of AK soldiers. His *Wspomnienia z AK* (1957) was one of the first books on such topics since the Polish Thaw. His work "Oddział partyzancki 'Spaleni'" (1987) was awarded by *Polityka*. Biographic entry in *Encyklopedia Gdyni*, ed. Małgorzata Sokołowska et al. (Gdynia: Oficyna Verbi Causa, 2006, 678).

Bonawentura Rutecki, "Ali," commander of a sabotage detachment of the Sobków post in the Jędrzejów District, sabotage commander of the Jędrzejów District. Sentenced to death for robberies, murders and lawlessness. The sentence was not carried out.

Piotr Sarna, "Wierny," "Orkan," former chief warrant officer of the 4th "Legions" Infantry Regiment. Defended Modlin in September 1939, escaped from a POW transport, in June 1941 took over region command of AK Department II in Daleszyce, Górnio, Cisowo, Szczecno. In autumn 1943 the position was taken over by Maria Michalczyk.

Jan Sieradzan, "Żbik," master sergeant, in September 1939 became career non-commissioned officer of the 4th "Legions" Infantry Regiment in Kielce, commander of an AK sabotage detachment from the Chęciny area that was subordinate to "Zryw" – commander of the "Spaleni" detachment.

Edward Skrobot, "Wierny" (1915–1996), from Suchedniów, "peasant background," secondary education (business school), before the war worked in an ammunition factory in Skarżysko-Kamienna, after the war a bookkeeper in Sosnowiec. In 1934 joined the Polish Army as a volunteer, in 1935 began his service in an officer cadet school of the 39th Infantry Regiment in Jarosław. During the occupation worked with his parents on the farm in Suchedniów until 1943. Joined the AK in May 1943. Long-term deputy commander of the "Wybraniecki" detachment, commander of the largest squad, then platoon commander. In 1944

became commander of 2nd Company of the 4th AK “Legions” Infantry Regiment. Skrobot’s squad included: Zygmunt Bokwa “Smutny” from Kielce, Władysław Dziewiór “Skazaniec” from Kielce, Marian Wilczyński “Grom II” from Chęciny, his brother Zdzisław Wilczyński “Wicher” from Chęciny, Wiesław Sokołowski “Sokół” from Chęciny, Tadeusz Masio “Matros” from Kielce, Józef Molenda “Iskra” from Bolmin, Tadeusz Kuchta “Jurek” from Bolmin, Stanisław Szumielewicz “Kryspin” from Stalowa Wola, Piotr Rzewuski “Kotwica” from Chęciny and Jan Wojtasiński “Lew” from Chęciny. Awarded the Cross of Valour, the Grunwald Decoration (*Odznaka Grunwaldzka*), Medal of Victory and Freedom 1945 (*Medal Zwycięstwa i Wolności 1945*) and with the Silver Cross of the Virtuti Militari Order in 1971. “He was a very kind person, always with a cheerful and honest smile on his face, but very firm in his actions. He was also an excellent organizer – and similarly to ‘Barabasz’ he was a born commander. Lieutenant ‘Wierny’ is a humanist and a just man, brave and determined – a model soldier and officer.” Michał Basa described the story of the death sentence on Skrobot passed at the beginning of March 1944 “by Kedyw’s order” during a concentration in Cisów. The reason for it was that “he had tortured NSZ members and carried out an execution without an order” (*Opowiadania partyzanta. Wspomnienia żołnierza AK i BCh* [Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1984], 167–168). According to the author, the sentence was not carried out due to a mutiny in the detachment. Sołtysiak thought that at the turn of 1943/1944 there was a “certain loosening up in the section composed of older partisans [in the “Wierny” squad] against which the local population had a lot of justified grievances. There were instances of drunkenness and misuse of weapons.” After the war a PZPR member, arrested on 20 January 1950, sentenced under the August decree to five years and a month of imprisonment. Served the sentence in a hard coal mine. On 26 June 1992 the Provincial Court in Kielce annulled the verdict of guilty. In 1979 after he had retired he set up the “Wybraniecki” Family (*Rodzina Wybranieckich*) – an organization of former members of the “Barabasz” detachment. Member of the board of directors of the International Association of Home Army Soldiers (*Światowy Związek Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej*) since its creation. Honorary chairman of the 4th AK “Legions” Infantry Regiment in Kielce.

Ludwik Szarowski, “Adolf,” from Cieszyn, son of a stone grinder, joined the detachment by accident in June 1943 when “he was looking for a job and he began to work as a steward of ‘Mitropa’ [*Mitteleuropäische Reisebüro*, German travel agency]. His job was to serve the guests in sleeping and restaurant cars. He did not have a high school diploma but he had some polish, which was quite dubious, to say the least. [...] He was a typical example of a young person, who could be molded ‘in somebody’s image.’”

Mieczysław Szumielewicz, “Szumilas,” “Mietek” (1921–2007), “peasant background,” joined the ZWZ in December 1939, initially a newspaper distributor. Sołtysiak’s schoolmate (they had already met at the Żeromski junior high

school in Kielce). Cook in the “Barabasz” detachment since April 1943. Squad commander from October 1943 until the end of the war. The squad included: Ludwik Szarowski “Adolf” from Cieszyn, Jerzy Pietruszka “Władek” (or “Włodek”) from Grudziądz, Józef Droźniak “Kogut” from Miechów area, Stanisław Litewka “Staszek” from Ojców, Jerzy Kisiel “Tadek” (“Tadek II”?) from Kielce, Zygmunt Wójcikowski “Zygmunt,” Aleksander Nowak “Olek” from Kielce, Władysław Ołtarzewski “Korian” from Kielce, Jan Sadło “Kula” from Kielce, Tadeusz Sowiński “Tarzan” from Budzów near Morawica, “Wojtek” from Chęciny (?) and Władysław Marasek “Brzózka” from Kielce. In 1966 became Kielce ZBoWiD deputy chairman.

Wiktor Szwengler, “Witek,” “weapon specialist.”

Stanisław Tatarowski, “Kalif,” from Łosienko near Piekoszków, perished on 21 December 1943 in an attack on a money transport near Jaworznia.

Wiesław Wesołowski “Orzeł” and Leszek Wesołowski “Strzała,” sons of a teacher from Korytnica, incorporated into the “Piłat” expropriation band that robbed mansions in Jędrzejów area. Then the two of them and Józef Przygodzki (Przygocki) “Czarny” transferred to the “Barabasz” and “Spaleni” detachments. In 1945 the two Wesołowski brothers were members of the Skull group commanded by “Strzała.” Przygodzki was also in it. On 16 July 1945 Leszek Wesołowski exposed the group before the MO in Jędrzejów, but its members did not turn over all of the weapons they had. On 16 February 1946 the Kielce Garrison Court Martial (*Wojskowy Sąd Garnizonowy*) sentenced Wiesław Wesołowski (and three other persons) to nine years’ imprisonment. The files do not include the sentence on Leszek Wesołowski.

Lucyna Wrońska, “Ewa” (?–1969), Radom-Kielce AK Region messenger, delegated to communication with the “Barabasz” detachment until June–July 1944, then guarded the Region radio transmitter in her own apartment; its safety was overseen by Bolesław Boczarowski “Jurand” delegated from the “Wybraniecki” detachment especially to that end. A few groups of assassins of infamous Gestapo functionary Wittek consulted with Roman Zarębski “Zaw” in Wrońska’s apartment. “She was an exceptionally brave, clever messenger of [great] presence of mind. She often visited the ‘Three Marias’ in Daleszyce [Maria Michalczyk, Maria Fabiańska-Cedro and Maria Nachowska]. It was their common pseudonym, which we invented. Marias worked in the intelligence under command of Maria Michalczyk, ps. “Wyrwicz”-“Doliński.” Ewa was a good friend and a good soldier.” In her book (*Gdy każdy dzień był walką*) Maria Michalczyk asks why Lucyna Wrońska was not buried at the partisan cemetery in Kielce: “A quiet, modest funeral – why not at the partisan cemetery?” What she writes about the funeral speech probably given by Bolesław Boczarowski, head of the ZBoWiD circle in Suchedniów, is also significant: “It must have been a misunderstanding,” the speaker said, “that ‘Ewa’ – a soldier – was acknowledged only twenty-five years

after the service, for only three days before her death the ZBoWiD sent me to decorate her with the verified Silver Cross of Merit with Swords (*Srebrny Krzyż Zasługi z Mieczami*) she was awarded in 1943. Receiving it, she said, 'Bolek, they have finally recognized [my service?].'"

Marian Wilczyński, "Grom II," from Chęciny, also connected with the detachment of Second Lieutenant Jan Sieradzan "Żbik." Antoni Synowiec from Kielce was another member of the "Barabasz" detachment to use the pseudonym of "Grom."

Józef Włodarczyk, "Wyrwa," major, Kielce Region commander from May 1942 until July 1944, then commander of the 4th AK "Legions" Infantry Regiment, substituted in October 1944 by Maksymilian Lorentz "Katarzyna."

Henryk Żytkowski, "Lech," "Leszek," from Bolmin near Kielce, in Skrobot's squad.

Translated by Anna Brzostowska

Abstract

The article demonstrates hitherto not described events from the history of the Home Army partisan detachment "Wybraniecki", which was famous in the Kielce region. It was under command of the legendary Marian Sołtysiak (*nom de guerre* "Barabasz"), who was at the same time the commanding officer of the Kielce Home Army Sabotage Directorate (*Kedyw*). Initially, the detachment was a seven-person strong sabotage group. In June 1943 it already had a few dozen members and was quartered in a forest camp. In spring 1944 it was transformed into a partisan detachment, which belonged to the 4th Infantry Regiment of the Home Army Legions and which participated in the Operation Tempest. The events described in the article took place between the autumn of 1943 and spring of 1944, when the detachment's squads were quartered in a few separate places and met from time to time during the concentrations ordered by the commander. At that time some Jews in hiding were murdered. Among those shot were: the group kept in hiding by the Pole Stefan Sawa (posthumously decorated with the Righteous among the Nations medal) in a cottage near Daleszyce, Michał Ferenc - Zajączków municipality clerk, Roman Olizarowski "Pomsta" - a "Wybraniecki" detachment soldier, who was liquidated after the discovery of his Jewish origin, Izaak Grynbaum from Chęciny and about three Jews hiding in bunkers near Mosty. After the war the following people stood trial: Edward Skrobot, Józef Molenda, Władysław Dziewiór, Mieczysław Szumielewicz and Marian Sołtysiak. The authors reconstruct the facts of those executions, discuss the motivations of the perpetrators and analyze them against the background of the functioning of the underground judiciary, and call into question the validity of some of

its sentences. They also discuss the methods and line of defense of the accused ex-partisans.

Key words

Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*), the Kielce Sabotage Directorate (*Kedyw*), the Kielce Region, Marian Sołtysiak "Barabasza," "Wybraniecki" detachment, Jews, murders