

Holocaust Studies and Materials
Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały

2013

ISSN: 1895-247X
eISSN: 2657-3571
DOI: 10.32927
WWW: www.zagladazydow.pl

Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów IFiS PAN
Polish Center for Holocaust Research

Post-war Police Investigations in France: An Attempt to Purge the Paris Police Prefecture during 1944–1946

Jan Grabowski

redakcja@holocaustresearch.pl

DOI: https://doi.org/10.32927/zzsim.813
Strony/Pages: 310-325

CC BY

OPEN ACCESS

Jan Grabowski

Post-war Police Investigations in France: An Attempt to Purge the Paris Police Prefecture during 1944–1946

The role that the local (non-German or *Einheimische*, as the Germans used to call them) police and armed auxiliary forces played in occupied Europe in the process of the extermination of Jews is one of many poorly or insufficiently researched topics in the Holocaust history. The files of the post-war investigations launched pursuant to the articles penalizing wartime collaboration with the enemy are especially important to Holocaust historians. Such investigations were conducted in almost all countries and the accused answered similar questions. But the political situation in Western Europe differed so much from that in Eastern Europe that scholars are prone to extreme caution while drawing conclusions from documents and while evaluating their informative value. There were significant differences in the working conditions, the scale of terror, and the degree to which the police force was independent of the occupation authorities. Even though the French, Dutch, Ukrainian, and Polish police were in constant contact with their German principals and were officially dependent on them, some of them had a significant – and often surprisingly broad – scope of autonomy.[1] In western historiography a consensus was reached years ago as to the criminal aspects of the activity of the local police. In contrast, this topic is the subject of a heated discussion conducted in Ukraine, with full polarization

[1] See several recently published works: Ad van Liempt, *Hitler's Bounty Hunters: The Betrayal of the Jews* (New York: Berg, 2005); Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941–44 (*New York: St. Martin's Press and USHMM, 1999); Laurent Joly, *L'antisémitisme de bureau. Enquête au coeur de la préfecture de Police de Paris et du commissariat général aux Questions juives, 1940–1944* (Paris: Grasset, 2011); John-Paul Himka, "The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army: Unwelcome Elements of an Identity Project," *Ab Imperio* (2010): 83–101; Yuri Radchenko, "'We Emptied Our Magazines into Them': The Ukrainian Auxiliary Police and the Holocaust in Generalbezirk Charkow, 1941–1943," *Yad Vashem Studies* 40 (1) (2013): 63–99; Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews. Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 320.

of stances and opinions.[2] Such a discussion is only beginning in Poland. It is possible that the November 2012 unveiling of the monument to "blue" policemen murdered by the Germans shall contribute to it.[3] The monument was unveiled in the former Płaszów concentration camp near Kraków, where perhaps as many as twenty thousand Jews were killed, many of them victims of "blue" policemen, who initially guarded the Kraków ghetto and then participated in removing its inhabitants from their hideouts.[4] This monument may serve as an illustration of the extreme discrepancy of stances regarding the issue of the wartime history of the Polish police.

The case of the Paris police inspector André Recton perfectly illustrates the differences in the penalization of *Judenbegunstigung* (aid to Jews) and in the police practices used in various occupied countries. In the spring of 1943 Recton decided to hide his Jewish friend Mr. Podkamiński and his wife in his apartment. At 6 a.m. on 7 July 1943 a car pulled up in front of the inspector's house. Three police officers alighted. One of them, a Jalby from Section V of the General Intelligence (*Renseignements généraux*) rang the doorbell. When Recton asked him about the purpose of that unexpected visit, Jalby explained that he came by order of the police prefect. When Recton opened slightly the door, which was secured with a chain, the second policeman showed him a badge with a swastika and announced, "Open the door! German police!" Recton managed to warn Podkamiński, who tried to escape through the back door and the garden. Unfortunately the third policeman, who was guarding the house, caught the Jew. Recton and Podkamiński were frisked and taken to the Gestapo station on rue des Saussaies. Podkamiński's pregnant wife was left alone on account of her condition. After preliminary interrogations Podkamiński was sent to the labor camp in Drancy, while Recton was released under supervision of his colleagues from the Prefecture. Less than a year later the Paris Gestapo commissioner Jodkun

[2] John-Paul Himka, "Former Ukrainian Policemen in the Ukrainian National Insurgency: Continuing the Holocaust Outside German Service," paper given during the "Lessons and Legacies" conference at the Northwestern University, Evanston, November 1–4, 2012; Aleksander Goncharenko, "The Holocaust in the Territory of Kiev," Ph.D. dissertation, Faculty of History of the Pedagogical University, Kiev, 2005; Aleksander Prusin, "The Ukrainian Police and the Holocaust in Generalbezirk Kiev, 1941–1943: Actions and Motivations," *Holocaust and Modernity: Studies in Ukraine and the World* 1 (2) (2007): 31–59.

[3] Jan Grabowski, "'Brave Associates in Murder' – Polish 'Blue' Police and the Extermination of the Jews Hiding in the Rural Areas of the Cracow District, 1942–1945," a paper given at the "Lessons and Legacies" conference, Northwestern University, Evanston, November 1–4, 2012. See also Grabowski, *Judenjagd*..., 105–119.

[4] The monument was erected on the initiative of the Police Family Association 1939 (*Stowarzyszenie Rodzina Policyjna 39*). Plenty of evidence materials about the wartime "achievements" of the Kraków "blue" police can be found in the August trials files in the Appeal Court (*Sąd Apelacyjny*) and the Circuit [(Higher)] Court (*Sąd Okręgowy*) in Kraków as well as in the testimonies of Kraków Jews in the 301 and 302 Archive Fonds of the Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (*Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*).

demanded information about "the punishment measured out to the inspector who had been hiding a Jew." He found out that Recton was deprived of a right to promotion for a year ("*Recton avait été retradé d'un an dans l'avancement de classe*").[5] Despite interventions and demands for him to be arrested again Recton remained in active duty until the liberation. Podkamiński's future fate remains unknown (members of a special commission established to "purge" the police ranks found out only that "he had been deported to Germany, from where he did not return"). Nonetheless, Recton's demand was taken very seriously after the war – he requested that the state reimburse him for the loss he had incurred. As for Jalby, who was directly responsible for the deportation of over 300 Paris Jews and who voluntarily joined the anti-Jewish section of the Gestapo, he was dismissed as per a decision of the Purge Commission and his dossier was sent to court.[6]

This story enables one to better understand the conditions, in which both the French police and the Jews had to operate, with the latter trying to escape the former's attention.

Post-war Reckoning (*épuration*) in France

The documentation of the "August trials" has been important in the research on the most recent history of Poland (especially with regard to the issue of Polish-Jewish relations, which is of particular interest to us) for the last several years. The "August trials" were criminal trials held after the war pursuant to the decree of 31 August 1944 issued by the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*) "concerning the punishment for 'fascist-hitlerite' criminals guilty of murder and ill-treatment of civilians and of prisoners of war, and also the punishment of traitors to the Polish Nation." Investigations conducted by virtue of the August decree affected over 40,000 people, including a few thousand Polish citizens charged with active persecution of their fellow citizens of Jewish origin. In occupied Poland such persecution assumed various forms: from denunciations, through looting and the physical act of escorting and handing Jews over to the Germans, to murder attempts and murders.[7]

The efforts to hold collaborators to account were not, as I have said, an exclusively Polish phenomenon. Similar processes and purges occurred in all formerly

[5] Les archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris [Archive of the Paris Police Prefecture] (later: APPP), file KB/58, Henri-Joseph Jalby, Testimony of witness inspector Recton, 20 October 1944.

[6] *Ibidem*, Investigation regarding the case of Henri-Joseph Jalby.

[7] Alina Skibińska, Jakub Petelewicz, "Udział Polaków w zbrodniach na Żydach na prowincji regionu świętokrzyskiego," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 1 (2005): 114–147; Krzysztof Persak, "Wstęp," in *Zarys krajobrazu, Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*, ed. Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), 7–31.

occupied European countries. A comparison between the Polish investigations regarding anti-Jewish activity and the analogous processes that began in Western Europe with the liberation is all the more interesting as the character of the occupation and the scale of German terror was different in each case. Nonetheless, some constant elements may be observed in the reckoning with the perpetrators of crimes committed on and against Jews, regardless of whether the trial was held in Poland or in France, which will be the point of reference in this text.

There were thousands of trials of collaborators both in France and Poland. More precisely, the French courts sentenced 49,723 people for various forms of collaboration.[8] French collaboration was in many ways different from collaboration in Poland. The most important aspect distinguishing the two countries was that the French state and its institutions continued to exist, whereas the Polish state and its institutions were completely destroyed. Regardless of its later stigmatization, in the eyes of millions of Frenchmen Vichy France was a lesser evil or even an expression of true patriotism in the face of the unprecedented defeat of the French Third Republic. Collaboration with the government and its various agencies did not automatically push anybody onto the margin of society, among the outcasts and traitors.

Three basic forms of collaboration developed in those conditions, with active collaboration based on ideological identification with Nazism being the most important. After the war tens of thousands of Frenchmen were included in that category of collaborators. They had engaged in various ways in radical right-wing movements (from *Service d'ordre legionnaire*, through *milice française*, to the French volunteers to the detachments of the SS *Charlemagne*).[9] Economic collaboration appeared slightly different. It was an everyday dilemma for the leaders of French industry and directors of major and smaller enterprises, which did not come under German management. On the one hand they had to remember the interests of the enterprises entrusted to their care and the obligations to their French employees. On the other hand they had to consider the moral aspects of cooperation with the Germans. Retailers had to face similar dilemmas. Trading with the Germans often meant a fast profit for them and they could not afford moral comfort and an uncompromising stance.

In the case of Poland these two forms of collaboration were a totally marginal phenomenon. Due to the destruction of the state apparatus and the general campaign of terror that accompanied it, hardly anybody thought of looking

[8] Katy Hazan, "Les représentations de la persécution des Juifs dans les procès de l'épuration en France," *Le Monde Juif* 52 (156) (1996): 58. See also Marc Bergère, "Comment juger la "délation" à la liberation," in *La délation dans la France des années noires*, collective work under supervision of Laurent Joly (Paris: Perrin, 2012): 287–306. The following work is particularly important: Jean-Marc Berlière, *Policiers français sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Perrin, 2001).

[9] Pierre Giolitto, *Histoire de la Milice* (Paris: Perrin and Tempus, 2002); Jean-Paul Cointet, *La légion française des Combattants* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995).

for a common ideological platform with the occupier. People such as Władysław Studnicki or Leon Kozłowski were absolute exceptions and they had no significant political support. The Germans themselves terminated potential economic collaboration when they put all major factories under direct or indirect supervision, leaving only minor factories in Polish hands. It does not mean that there was no economic collaboration in Poland. Its scale, however, was incomparably smaller than in France.

The third type of collaboration was individual cooperation, which manifested itself mostly in a wave of denunciations, which spread over occupied France.[10] These three forms of collaboration invoked the reckoning that began as early as during the war and which lasted until the early 1950s.

The issue of *épuration* ("purification") became particularly urgent after the liberation of French North Africa. General Henri Giraud and General Charles de Gaulle reached a compromise and decided to share power. In August 1943 a special Purge Commission (*Commission d'Épuration*) was established. Its task was to conduct preliminary investigations concerning high-ranking Vichy officials and politicians, who were in the liberated territories. The establishment of the Commission was connected with de Gaulle's appeal of 10 August when he called upon the French to hold "capitulators" and "traitors to the national cause to account."[11] The Commission was given significant authority and it could conduct investigations in cases regarding public servants, soldiers, employees of companies partly owned by the state, and members of professional corporations (including journalists). After the investigation the Purification Commission was authorized to call upon an appropriate ministry to impose official sanctions on the employee suspected of collaboration, who might be transferred, demoted, or dismissed. In more serious cases the Commission transferred the files to the public prosecution service and court for further investigation on the basis of the penal code. The Commission's activity was tested when it came to the case of the former Vichy minister of the interior Pierre Pucheu, who came to North Africa in 1943 with a safe-conduct upon General Giraud' invitation. The safe-conduct turned out an illusory guarantee as the Commission handed the investigation to a special military tribunal, which sentenced Pucheu to death on 20 March 1944. The sentence was carried out the same day.

As for continental France, 'kangaroo' courts began their activity even before the collaborators sat in the dock. The 'kangaroo' courts were called *ad hoc* in the

[10] The case of thousands of women tried or persecuted for wartime affairs with Germans is an example of individual collaboration. It was in that context that the French actress Arletty, who was suspected of having an affair during the war with a Luftwaffe captain, purportedly said to the judge: "My heart belongs to France but my ass is international [*mon coeur est français, mais mon cul est international*]." More on denunciations in France see for example André Halimi, *La délation sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Le Cherche Midi, 2010).

[11] Peter Novick, *L'Épuration française, 1944–1949* (Paris: Balland, 1985), 95–98.

summer of 1944 following the advance of the Allied offensive. According to preliminary post-war estimates, 80,000–100,000[12] people fell victim to that savage purge or summary cleansing (*épuration sauvage*, *sommaire*). That estimate was soon verified and lowered to 30,000–40,000 victims. In the 1950s after further, more rigorous research the figure was estimated at slightly over 5,000.[13]

Collaborators guilty of high treason were treated harshly by post-war French legislation, while the people found guilty of persecution of Jews enjoyed rather lenient treatment. First of all, while overcoming the wartime trauma, societies were reluctant to doubt the foundations of their own national ethos and to ask themselves the most painful questions about the scope and universality of collaboration with the occupier. Those who launched the investigations wanted them to apply to a rather narrow, clearly defined, and undoubtedly guilty group of traitors, whose public stigmatization and exemplary punishment would speed up the process of healing the wounds suffered during the occupation.[14] As for Jews returning from camps or emerging from hiding, most of them did not seek compensation for their wartime wrongs. They wanted to resume their normal life as fast as possible after it had been interrupted by the occupation. Consequently, the authorities of the reborn state – the French Fourth Republic – gave priority to prosecution of crimes against the state and the French nation. Established in Algiers as early as in 1943, the French Committee of National Liberation (*Comité français de la Libération Nationale*, CFLN) decided that the odium of collaboration rested primarily on those who "capitulated, violated the constitution, collaborated with the enemy, handed French laborers into the Germans' hands, or sent the French armed forces to fight the Allies." The thus defined crimes were prosecuted on the basis of the pre-war penal code, usually paragraphs 75–87, which concerned putting the state security in jeopardy. Those who contributed to persecution of Jews were punished with "national disgrace" (*indignité nationale*), which might be compared to the punishment of infamy meted out by the Polish underground civil law courts. In both cases the aim was to stigmatize the guilty person, to heap scorn on him. In the case of France, however, it did not involve the penalty of restricted liberty or seizure of property, while in Poland a person found guilty in the course of an August trial was sentenced to prison, loss of public and honorary rights for a specific time (usually shorter that the prison sentence), and mandatory loss of all property.

As for investigations regarding persecutors of Jews, French judges were extremely cautious and clearly unenthusiastic, which ceases to be surprising when

[12] Henry Rousso, "L'épuration en France: une histoire inachevée," *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire* 33 (January–March 1992): 81.

[13] Robert Aron, *Histoire de la Libération de la France, juin 1944–mai 1945* (Paris: Fayard, 1959); Henri Amoureux, *La grande histoire des Français sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Laffont, 1991).

[14] Hazan, *Les représentations de la persécution des Juifs*, 57.

one considers the judges' contribution to the enactment of the anti-Semitic Vichy legislation during 1940–1942. The judges' lack of enthusiasm also stemmed from the fact that at that time most of the French were ignorant of the fate of the Jews "deported to Germany" – a euphemism for deportation of Jews from the transition camp in Drancy to their death in Auschwitz. Post-war posters showed three silhouettes of "deportees": a laborer deported to forced labor, a prisoner of war, and a figure in a striped camp uniform. The caption read: "Do not differentiate between them. Their fate is identical."[15] The attempts at group claims based on the experiences of Jews returning from the East were treated as a *faux pas* in the best case scenario and in the worst case scenario as a challenge to the Republican and egalitarian ideals of the French Republic. The trials of collaborators were mostly intended to determine the degree of anti-Frenchness of the stance of the accused. Any actions against the *Résistance* in particular were regarded as examples of anti-Frenchness, while participation in capturing Jews and handing them over to the Germans was often classified as an "unavoidable act of obedience to the superior authorities' orders." In such cases even the least probable basis for "presumption of innocence" was enough for the accused to find himself beyond the scope of suspicion. The trials before the Seine Tribunal show that even the most improbable explanations were enough for the accused to be found innocent. This topic shall be discussed further in a while.

The Fate of Jews in the Light of the Surviving Documentation of the Paris Police Prefecture

The beginning of the national revival of France was to entail immediate cleansing of the administration of "Vichy elements." The first step was to purge the army and the state security, particularly the police. "How is the purification of your organization going?" This was one of the first questions General de Gaulle asked the temporary police prefect in liberated Paris. Removal of collaborators from the central state administration was equally important. That process was aided by a series of statutes and decrees passed or issued on the eve of the landing in Normandy or during the initial weeks after the liberation of the country. The Decree of 27 June 1944 stipulated, for example, punishment for officials guilty of any form of collaboration with the enemy. Denunciation was deemed one of the most serious crimes, whose scope – as historians unanimously claim – had been alarmingly wide. The June decree also stigmatized all clerks "who made or tried to make a financial profit as a result of the regulations introduced by the authorities after 16 June 1940."[16]

The reckoning with the occupation-period sins was usually conducted in two stages. The cleansing was first performed by professional corporations and then,

[15] Ibidem, 59.

[16] APPP, file KB/72, Raoul Marini's dossier.

if the offence was more serious – by the judiciary.[17] As has been said, the army and the state security were cleansed first and most of the time it was an internal matter, the intention being to avoid the involvement of the judiciary. As for the French police it was all the easier as there had been institutional continuity on the Seine, which was not the case with the Polish "blue" police or the Ukrainian "black" police. Former persecutors of Jews, French inspectors continued their work after the liberation in the same uniforms, offices, and often even in the same company.

The main instruments used to introduce the anti-Jewish police in France were the General Commissariat for Jewish Affairs[18] and the Department for Jewish Affairs of the Paris Police Prefecture. The latter was responsible for keeping records of 150,000 Jews living in Seine (the department encompassing Paris and its immediate suburbs) and preparing the list of names of people to be "deported."[19] The first head of the Department for Jewish Affairs was the police commissioner Jean François (his immediate superior was the Paris police and gendarmerie chief René Bousquet), who was soon promoted also to head of the transitory camp in Drancy near Paris. During the first months of the occupation various departments of the Prefecture (the Economic Department, the Department for Foreigners' Affairs) supervised the Jewish population. With time, however, the said specialized department was established to supervise, track, and arrest Jews who in one way or another violated the multiplying anti-Jewish regulations and laws. On 24 May 1941 the chief of the German police in Paris turned to commissioner François with a request to establish a unit to which a group of policemen would be delegated to deal exclusively with the "Jewish affairs."[20] During 1941–1944 the Department for Jewish Affairs of the Paris Police Prefecture became one of the most important centers of anti-Jewish operations. The policemen employed in that department worked as enthusiastically as their German colleagues from the Paris Gestapo. There is no doubt that without the logistic support of the French police (especially as the German forces were meager) the deportations of French Jews would have been impossible. The *Judenreferat* of the Paris police employed approx. 150 policemen throughout the war. During

[17] A similar process took place in Poland. The earliest attempts at reckoning with the occupation period past were made within professional corporations. It was only later that the cases ended up on the desks of public prosecutors. The process of self-purification of the milieu of the Kraków artists is a good example here. See: Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie [State Archive in Kraków], Appeal Court in Kraków fonds, 976 K 218/49.

[18] *Commissariat général aux Questions juives* was established in March 1941. Its employees often used help from the police. Nonetheless, it was a separate institution and as such it remains beyond the scope of my study.

[19] Joly, *L'antisémitisme de bureau*, 47.

[20] APPP, André Guillemenot's dossier, Letter of the Security Police and the Security Service in France and Belgium, Paris office [*Dienststelle Paris*], Section IIB-2.

the deportation operations[21] they used the help of hundreds of their colleagues working in other departments. During 1942–1944 the Department for Jewish Affairs underwent further evolution. Apart from the personnel subordinate to the said commissioner François, the unit also acquired a Judicial Police Department (*Police Judiciaire*) headed by Charles Permilleux, and Arrest Brigades (*Brigades d'Interpellation Divisionnaires*) and special squads used mostly during major anti-Jewish operations. The squads were commanded by commissioner Émile Hennequin. Finally, there was the General Intelligence (*Renseignements Généraux*), which had its own list of Jews and whose personnel often participated in their arrests.

At the end of August 1944 the Department for Jewish Affairs of the Paris Police Prefecture was dissolved and its members were transferred to other sections. At the same time a special liquidation unit was established to issue appropriate documents to victims of the 1940–1944 persecutions. Most of the police working in the liquidation unit had worked in the Department for the Jewish Affairs…[22] At the same time (that is in the autumn of 1944) a special Purge Commission (*Commission d'Épuration*) was established in the Paris Police Prefecture. It was led by the Municipal Police deputy chief Pierre Michel. The scale of the internal investigations was indeed impressive as the vetting process (*épuration intérieure*) affected 4,000 of the 22,000 Prefecture functionaries. Among those vetted by the Purge Commission there were approx. 50 functionaries of the former Department for Jewish Affairs. Vast majority of functionaries received a disciplinary punishment: they were demoted, transferred to a different position, or their salary was withheld for some time. Only in a few cases the Commission decided to hand the case over to the public prosecution service for further investigation.

Police Internal Investigations. Source Analysis

The documentation of the internal investigations in the police originates from 1944–1946. All later documents concern appeals of negatively vetted policemen; most of whom wrote regarding incorrectly calculated old age pension or wrongfully delayed promotion. A typical case file has 20–40 pages, but the dossiers bear signs of the destruction of files conducted in the 1950s. It is difficult to say now what percentage of the collected material was later destroyed but judging from the surviving pagination it was most of it. Each file begins with a document initiating the investigation and a list of unlawful acts the vetted person was suspected of. Besides the list of charges each file contains descriptions and copies of anonymous incriminating letters attached to the case files as well as typescripts of one or more interrogations of the suspects. Then come witness

[21] Such as the famous Vel d'hiv (Winter Velodrome) Operation, 16–17 July 1942.

[22] Joly, *L'antisémitisme de bureau*, 309–312.

testimonies and the outcomes of confrontations between the witnesses and the suspected policemen. Finally, there are short decisions of the Purge Commission, usually formulated in three or four sentences. The testimonies of Jewish victims of the Paris police are especially important to a contemporary researcher. As approx. 75 percent of French Jews survived the war it is no wonder that a significant number of Jews testified against the criminals in uniforms, most of the witnesses being family members (children, spouses) of the deported. The fate of the "deported" was still officially unknown in the documents of 1944 and 1945. What attracts the attention of a scholar, who knows the contents of the Polish files of the August trials, is the readiness of the French Jews to give bold, exhaustive testimony. Another thing is that this boldness is particularly visible in the case of Jews born in France and accustomed to the republican liberties.

One of the most striking and characteristic features of the files of the police investigations from the Paris Prefecture archive is the detailed knowledge that the Commission members had regarding the wartime activity of their vetted colleagues. As Laurent Joly has convincingly put it, the persecution of the French Jews was conducted on the basis of an extremely developed bureaucratic apparatus, with hundreds of thousands of French Israelites within its scope. The local and central records, advanced system of index cards, document controls, changing regulations and documents created a fine net, which resulted in the death of thousands of people deported to the extermination camps. The same fine net of regulations, instructions, and bureaucratic records was useful during the post-war investigations against the oppressors of Jews. By contrast, in Poland the investigations of the crimes of the "blue" policemen against their "fellow citizens of Mosaic faith" fell through because of the victims' anonymity. The relatively sparse investigations were launched if a letter of denunciatio was sent in. Members of the Purge Commission had many files at their disposal that documented each apprehension or interrogation of persecuted Jews. This can be illustrated by a part of an interrogation of inspector Lucien Flambart from the Paris *Judenreferat*. Inspector Flambart, who, according to the Commission members, "lacked moral fibre," also had to accept the fact that a detailed record of his wartime activities had survived in the police archive.

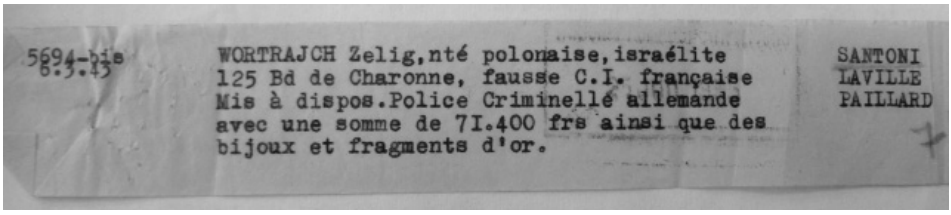
Q: "Did you make many arrests?"
A: "Several."
Q: "Damn! Several?! I can enumerate more than fifty!" [*Diable! Vous appellez ça quelques unes!? Je vous en compte une cinquaintaine!*]
A: "I was only carrying out orders of my superiors…"

The French officers and investigating officers did not have to guess in what year a given murder took place, which was the case with Polish August trials. They knew not only the arrest date, but also the names of those who made the arrest, the hour when the arrest warrant was given, the address of the wanted person, and his number in the central Paris record.

André Guillemenot was one of the directors of the Department for Jewish Affairs. He posed a danger even to his colleagues and was no less enthusiastic in his work – he sent "record of Israelites who infringed the law to the German authorities, directly and without delay."[23] He was found responsible for the deportation of a few hundred Jews to Germany.[24] A detailed record of his activity had survived in his wartime files.[25] One of the forms reads:

> Arrest No. 561, 20 February 1943, HIRSCH, Fanny, born on 17 February 1861 in Limback (Bouches du Rhône), arrested at rue des Francs Bourgeois 29 (Paris III)
> Arrest No. 562 (20 February 1943) HIRSCH, Babette, born on 28 August 1904 in Limback (B du Rhône).
> Arrest No. 284 (24 May 1944), STANISLAWSKA, Gille, born in 1898 in Poland, arrested at rue St Martin 226 (Paris III).

Similar notes, letters, and records may be found in the files of almost all investigations regarding the Paris police.


5694-bis
8.3.43
WORTRAJCH Zelig, nté polonaise, israélite
125 Bd de Charonne, fausse C.I. française
Mis à dispos. Police Criminelle allemande
avec une somme de 71.400 frs ainsi que des
bijoux et fragments d'or.
SANTONI
LAVILLE
PAILLARD

WORTRAJCH, Zelig, Polish nationality, Israelite, Boulevard de Charonne 125, fake French ID. Handed over to the German criminal police with the sum of 71,400 francs, valuables, and pieces of gold.
Record number: 5694-bis
Arrest date: 6 March 1943.
Arrest made by policeman SANTONI, LAVILLE, PAILLARD[26]

Interrogations of the policemen who had worked in the Department for Jewish Affairs of the Paris police were usually conducted in a friendly atmosphere, but from time to time tensions among the functionaries arose. The typescript quoted below faithfully depicts the atmosphere of that "internal purge."[27]

> Paris, 7 April 1945. Police inspector Jean Laparre standing before the Purge Commission.

[23] This was the term used for apprehension of Jews who were using fake IDs.
[24] A euphemism for the deportations to death camps.
[25] Commissioner Guillemenot was dismissed from the police.
[26] APPP, file KB/96, Antoine Santoni's dossier.
[27] APPP, file KB/62, Jean Laparre's dossier.

Q: You are standing before the Purge Commission to comment on the charges pressed against you. How many Jews did you arrest during the occupation?
A: I have no idea what you are talking about.
Q: About a hundred?
A: This is absurd! [*Jamais de la vie*!]
Q: Stop lying! How many?
A: Perhaps thirty. Not more.
Q: In what circumstances?
A: Following an order.
Q: Right.
A: They were on a list. I arrested them because I had no other choice.
Q: Do you think that you could not act differently?
A: If I had they would have killed me! [*Ou alors, c'était moi qui passais à la casserole*!]
Q: Do not exaggerate!
A: I saved as many I could…
Q: Didn't you arrest Mrs. Zimmermann living at rue de la Landes 4 and her four children? Does this name ring a bell?
A: Yes, I remember something but I do not agree that it was a woman with children.
Q: How many children were there?
A: I do not know. She was alone when I arrested her. I did not know that she had children.
The reporting officer read out the arrest report: "Among the arrested Israelites there is Mrs. Zimmermann, née Skaline, whose arrest at rue de la Landes 4 in Paris XIV occasioned the arrest of her husband and four children, who were hiding in Ozoir-La-Ferrière Her eldest son, who was hiding in Aveyron and who had now returned to Paris, has not heard from her."
Q: And all those people were then deported.
A: I arrested only that woman. She was alone in the apartment and that's all. I can recall this story in detail now. When we pulled up in front of that lady's tenement, which was near the Boulevard du Montparnasse, a Corsican or an Italian approached my friend and told him in Corsican that we should have called him in advance to make sure that that lady's husband was at home and to arrest him as well. My colleague then called the Department for Jewish Affairs of the police. And this is it because we were not paid to capture Jews. It was not our duty.

After the interrogation the police Purge Commission held a council. The members of the Commission had several options. The case files could be handed over to the public prosecutor's office to start normal criminal proceedings (in the French system it meant that the procedure would be taken over by an investigating judge [*juge d'instruction*]). The policeman could be dismissed or forced to retire. He could also to be fined or demoted. But in the case of Jean Laparre the Commission turned out more understanding. The case files read: "Considering

that the interrogated person did not arrest anybody on his own initiative and that he was only following the orders he could not ignore, the Commission suggests that he continues his service."

One of the best documented police investigations was the case of the Department for Jewish Affairs chief Jean François, who appeared before the Commission in late April 1945.[28] The charges pressed against him regarded mostly his supervision of the camp in Drancy. When the Commission asked him why the Jewish prisoners had to sleep on bare cement in the barracks commissioner François said the binding fire regulations recommended removal of inflammable materials (straw from mattresses) from the cells. François was also accused of prohibiting the prisoners from receiving visits and of administering severe punishments to prisoners for even the slightest violations of prison regulations. Testimonies of policemen, whom François threatened with sanctions in the workplace as late as the uprising in Paris (18–19 August 1944), were additional incriminating material. Members of the Purge Commission had significant evidence proving both the ardor and the servility of the Department chief toward the Germans. That was a source of some highly symptomatic disputes. It was known that the meticulously organized records of the French police enabled the Germans to make fast arrests of selected groups of Jews. By order of Theodor Dannecker, the chief of the Jewish section of the Paris Gestapo, the clerks subordinate to François provided the hunters with, for example, names and addresses of Jews born in Greece and naturalized in France before the war or of Polish non-naturalized Jews living in Paris. François did not negate the grounds for those charges but he claimed that the records division processed those requests with deliberate slowness, thus sabotaging the Germans' plans of blitz *razzi* (roundups).

All in all, the Commission found François co-responsible for the inhuman conditions in Drancy and responsible for deportation of thousands of "French Israelites" to the East. It also called him a militant anti-Semite.[29] Moreover, the Commission affirmed the charge that he had accepted remuneration from the German occupier for selected tasks beyond the scope of his normal duties. Several witnesses from the police force testified that after his meetings with the Germans François brought to work envelopes stuffed with money (purportedly 30,000 francs). François argued, not without reason, that he was only a cogwheel in the enormous machine of the French bureaucracy and that a multitude of Paris policemen also worked for the Germans in a perhaps less visible yet equally effective way. The Purge Commission handed the case to the Seine Department

[28] APPP, file KB/45, commissioner Jean François' case.

[29] Felix Orsini, a police inspector from the Investigation Department, described commissioner François as a fierce anti-Semite. During the first wave of arrests of Israelites many women came to Office 91 and demanded to know why their husbands had been arrested. Mr. François called the functionaries and ordered them to remove those women from the building, saying that "the Israelites are a lousy race." APPP, file KB/45, testimony of inspector Orsini.

Court for further examination. The court, however, did not notice any traits of crime in François' actions and pressed no charges against him. Consequently, François was only forced to retire and his salary was reduced. The chief of the Department for Jewish Affairs appealed against that decision for several years.

The case of Jean-Pierre Ernoult, a senior inspector in the Department for Jewish Affairs, was slightly clearer from the verifiers' point of view. Ernoult went further down the path of high treason. The members of the police Purge Commission pointed out his joining the Waffen-SS in May 1944.[30] There was evidence that Ernoult had arrested Jews on his own initiative, without clear orders from his superior and without denunciations, which usually preceded arrests. Making matters worse, the inspector was responsible for the arrest of many "native" Jews, that is French citizens, some born in France. One of the victims was Józef Garcia born in Paris and arrested by the Department for Jewish Affairs agents on 7 February 1944. He was deported on the same day to the Drancy internment camp, from where he was deported "East" a week later. The order in the Paris police archive enabled the members of the Commission to reconstruct the fate of Garcia after arrest and the role of inspector Ernoult in his case. According to the files, two inspectors contributed to Garcia's arrest: Marcel Petit and the accused Jean-Pierre Ernault. Garcia (file 71,897 in the central "Jewish" catalogue of the Prefecture) fell victim to Ernault's bureaucratic zeal. Unlike other Jews captured during 1943–1944 as a result of denunciations Garcia was arrested only due to the French functionaries' activity. Ernault was tried *in absentia* and his membership in the Waffen-SS was deemed an additional aggravating circumstance. After the investigation the Commission decided to hand the evidence over to the judiciary for further investigation, now an official one. The case of inspector Marcel Petit, Ernault's co-defendant, proceeded somewhat differently. Petit also participated in arrests of "French Israelites" but he tried to convince the Commission that he had done that only upon direct orders of his superiors or of the Germans. Petit testified:

> [D]uring my work in the Department for Jewish Affairs I arrested many Jews. The Germans provided their data to us in the form of lists of names and addresses, but nobody informed us about the reasons for the arrests. Basically, those were Jews who violated the German regulations or the French law. Mrs. Chassigneux, née Levy [one of his victims – J.G.] was arrested by order of my superior, the Paris police commissioner. Her name was on list No. 18. There was a period when we were capturing Jews, whose spouses were Aryans. We escorted them to rue des Saussaies[31] in order to verify whether their spouses were indeed Aryans.[32]

[30] APPP, file KB/41, Jean-Pierre Ernoult's files.

[31] At rue des Saussaies 11 was the address of the headquarters of the Paris Gestapo. Its Polish equivalent was Szucha Avenue.

[32] APPP, file KB/41, page 2.

Lucien Flambart, who participated in the arrest of "at least fifty Jews," tried to justify his actions saying that he was obeying orders from his superiors. Members of the Purge Commission justified the inspector's behavior through his "lack of moral fiber."[33] The case of Inspector Lievremont, "who had been delegated to the Department for Jewish Affairs during the occupation," was similar. He was found partly responsible of arrests of at least 26 "Israelites," who were then "deported to Germany" via Drancy.[34] At the same time, however, the members of the Commission observed that the "inspector had behaved in the most humanitarian way, that he did not show his own initiative" during the arrests, and that he "might have saved many an Israelite." The case of inspector Raoul Mariani had a similar finale. Even though he confessed to making "numerous arrests of Israelites" he claimed "he did that not on his own initiative but following the orders from his superiors."[35]

Conclusion

The files of the investigations conducted in the French police are a source, which is particularly interesting from the comparative perspective. Their comparison with the investigations conducted simultaneously in Eastern Europe enables one to better understand the disparate police practices, which were nonetheless all intended to accelerate the "final solution of the Jewish question." It should be stressed that the French bureaucratic machine was extremely efficient and that there were plenty of records regarding Jews, which the police was able to collect before the war (and which it continued to collect during the war) and which it was ready to hand over to the Germans. Undoubtedly the postwar reckoning affected only a small percentage of the functionaries employed in the Department for Jewish Affairs. Moreover, the vetting was conducted without enthusiasm and the investigating officers were trying to justify their colleagues' actions through direct pressure exerted by the Germans. The argument, which was used the most frequently in defense of the vetted policemen, was that there was no evidence of their acting on their own initiative. The arrests of Jews were regarded as an obvious consequence of the pressure exerted by their immediate

[33] APPP, file KB/43: "*étant de caractère faible*."

[34] APPP, file KB/69, Jean Lievremont's files.

[35] "Attendu que M. Mariani, Raoul Inspecteur à la Direction des Renseignements généraux reconnait avoir participé à des nombreuses arrestations d'israélites, sans toutefois avoir agi de sa propre initiative, sur la proposition de la Commission d'Épuration; arrête: article 1er Un blâme est infligé à M. Mariani. L'intéressé sera, en outre, affecté à la Direction de la Police Judiciaire [Inspector Mariani Raoul from the Investigation Department confessed to participation in numerous arrests of Israelites. He did not act on his own initiative though. The Purge Commission made a decision pursuant to Article 1 to subject Mr. Mariani to the punishment of infamy. The inspector is going to be transferred to work in the Police Headquarters]. APPP, file KB/72, Raoul Mariani's files.

superiors or by the Germans. The conclusion was that in both cases ordinary policemen had their hands tied. Of the hundreds of policemen responsible for the tragic fate of the French Jews the most severe punishment was administered to the director of the General Intelligence, Commissioner Lucien Ratté, who was sentenced to death and hanged in April 1945. Nonetheless, the main charge against Ratté was not his persecution of the Jews (which he was also accused of) but his activity against the French Resistance.

Translated by *Anna Brzostowska*

Abstract
After the liberation of France, French authorities decided to purge the police forces of suspected collaborators and Nazi sympathizers. The Parisian police force (numbering close to 20,000 officers and civilian employees) – by far the largest in the nation, underwent a scrutiny of the specially created Commission d'Épuration, whose mandate extended to all members of the force active during the 1940–1944 period. In all close to 4,000 officers were vetted by the Commission, and some of them stood accused of involvement in persecuting the Jews. The officers involved were usually able to deflect the accusations, quoting orders of their superiors and lack of own initiative. Harsh verdicts in these cases were rare, and the suspects were usually treated very leniently.

Key words
France, police, occupation, persecutions of Jews, Vichy, post-war reckoning