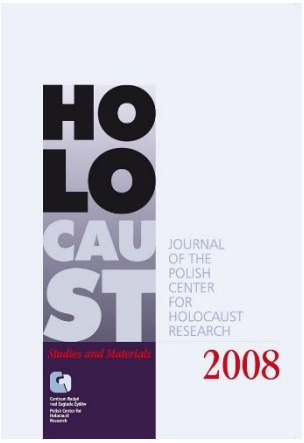



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# *A Testimony of Silence... Interview with Jerzy Lewiński, a former functionary of the Order Service in the Warsaw ghetto*

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# A Testimony of Silence ...
## Interview with Jerzy Lewiński, a former functionary of the Order Service in the Warsaw ghetto[1]

Jerzy Lewiński was born at the beginning of the previous century (in 1911) in a family of assimilated Jews. Not only did he witness the most important events of that century, but he participated in a number of them as well.[2] The youngest of five siblings, he had two step-sisters and a step-brother, from his father's (Kopel–Kacper) first marriage and brother Adolf (mother Frajndla–Franciszka). Initially, he lived in the city of Turek, from where he moved to Warsaw in 1922, after the tragic death of his father (murdered in 1920 by his business partner). Here, in 1933, he graduated from law school of Warsaw University. During his studies, he left for several months for a scholarship at the École Superieure Politique in Paris. After completing his studies in September 1934, he was referred to the Cadet School in Częstochowa and completed it a year later as a reserve officer cadet. He passed his final exam before the military commission headed by Stanisław Władysław Maczek (the certified colonel). Following his release from military service, Lewiński moved to Łódź, where he completed judge's training in the Łódź District Court. He also started his advocate's training there in 1937.

Jerzy Lewiński was an energetic political and social activist. From 1930 to 1931, he was a member of the Socialist Youth Union (Związek Młodzieży Socjalistycznej), the youth organization of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), and during 1937–1939 a member of the Progressive Intelligentsia Club. As he put it, although the PPS did not endorse Zionist ideology, Lewiński himself (observing the gradual growth of fascism in Polish social and political life) was increasingly in favour of Zionism. During his training, as well as thanks to his brother Adolf (a Warsaw barrister), Jerzy Lewiński became involved in the milieu of assimilated Jewish lawyers. During 1935–1939, he was a member of the Judge and Barrister Trainees' Association,[3]

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[1] In my research for this text and preparations for the interviews with Jerzy Lewiński, Jan Jagielski from the Jewish Historical Institute offered me priceless and comprehensive help, for which I am greatly indebted.

[2] I reconstructed Jerzy Lewiński's biography presented below based on the information received from him and the personal documents he left, currently in the Jewish Historical Institute (JHI).

[3] In Jerzy Lewiński's autobiography the Association is called the Judge and Barrister Trainees' Association; he used the same name in our interviews.

and from 1938 he was president of the Łódź branch of the Association. In 1939, he moved from Łódź to Warsaw and fought in the defence of Warsaw, where he finally stayed at his brother Adolf's place.

Jerzy Lewiński was a functionary of the Jewish Police or Order Service (Służba Porządkowa – SP) in the Warsaw ghetto since it was established, through the Deportation Action in summer 1942, until September 1942 (according to his own account), when he was first arrested and then dismissed from the Order Service. In the SP, he was administration head of Region III. After his escape from the ghetto, he stayed in Warsaw and the surrounding area under the assumed name Stanisław Manowiecki.[4] According to his questionnaire, he cooperated with the PPS, and later with the Polish Socialist Workers' Party (Robotnicza Partia Polskich Socjalistów – RPPS) during 1941–1944. In his autobiography, written as late as the 1980s, Lewiński claimed that he established clandestine contact with Colonel Witold Szulborski,[5] as well as with the PPS and RPPS underground structures.[6] In February 1945, he returned to Łódź. From 1945 to 1946, he worked in the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Special Criminal Court as a deputy prosecutor, and from 1947 to 1948 in the Public Prosecutor's Office of the District Court, holding the same post. The Minister of Justice appointed him prosecutor in the trials of Hans Biebow (administrator of the Łódź ghetto) and Walter Pelzhausen (commandant of the Radogoszcz prison). From 1947 to 1948, he was president of the Main Board of the Trade Union of Court Employees (*Zarząd Główny Zwiazku Zawodowego Sądowników*).

From 1948, he was an advisor to the president of the Central Cinematography Office. From 1956 to 1959, he headed the Cinematography Office. According to the provision of 25 February 1954, he was put on the list of barristers of the Warsaw Chamber of Advocates. In 1960, he continued to be an advocate and retired after 25 years. In 1946, he was awarded the Golden Cross of Merit, in 1955 the 10 Years

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[4] Lewiński's identity card (*Kennkarte*) under the surname Manowiecki is currently kept in the Jewish Historical Institute.

[5] Witold Stefan Szulborski (1885-1967), pseudonym "Mora." "Officer of the permanent service of the Judicial Corps of the Polish Army. Retired in 1929. Organised the Court Martial of the Command of the Defence of Warsaw during the Polish-German War of 1939 and was its chief from 22 September. With Leon Nowodworski, he prepared the text of the decree about summary proceedings, published in *Kurier Warszawski* on 11 September 1939. During the German occupation, he continued working as an advocate. In the underground, he was active in the ZWZ-AK. From March 1941, as the deputy of Colonel Konrad Zieliński (Chief of the Judiciary Service of the ZWZ-AK High Command); he was also head of the WSS of the AK High Command. In accordance with the AK plans, he was supposed to be Chief of the Judiciary Department of the Ministry of National Defence after the war. During the occupation, he hid two Jewish advocates in his flat. After the liberation, from July 1945 to March 1950, he was a legal advisor to *Czytelnik* publishing house. In November 1945, he was enlisted as army defence counsel; defended in 1947, among others, Colonel Antoni Sanojca in the WiN (Wolność i Niezawisłość, Freedom and Independence) trial at the District Military Court in Warsaw. From 1953 to 1960, he was deprived of defender's rights in military and civil courts. In 1960, relisted as army defence counsel" quoted from A. K. Kunert, *Słownik biograficzny konspiracji warszawskiej 1939–1944*, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1987), 151.

[6] See J. Lewiński's personal documents in the Jewish Historical Institute.

of People's Poland Commemorative Medal, and in 1981 the Knight's Cross of the Polonia Restituta Order. From 1948, he was a member of the Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza – PZPR).

In 1949, Jerzy Lewiński married Jadwiga Szymańska (Luba Finkelstein, daughter of Noach Finkelstein, editor of "Hajnt"[7]). They had no children, which was, as Lewiński claims in his conversations with different people, a consequence of his consistently implemented resolution taken during the Holocaust.

Jerzy Lewiński was a sport activist for most of his life until he died. From 1955, he was a member of the Polish Tennis Association. His activity was closely connected with the Military Sports Club Legia. He sat on its Board for many years. Until his death, he was cared for by people connected with the Club. He died in July 2006.

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The question of Jerzy Lewiński's participation in the Order Service was investigated into, among others, on his own application,[8] in 1948 by the Central Party Court of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). On 19 October 1948, the court decided that:

1. com[rade] Jerzy Lewiński . . . did not participate in the extermination actions against the Jewish people, carried out the by the Order Service upon orders of the German authorities.
2. . . . benefiting from the privileges awarded by his membership in the Order Service, . . . [Lewiński] also used them to help his comrades involved in underground political work, helped to transport underground publications into the ghetto and distribute them, participated in organizing social welfare for children of the street, the ill and, particularly after 22 July 1942, protected those threatened by liquidation.
3. . . . com[rade] Jerzy Lewiński made a political mistake of joining the Order Service and staying in it without any order of the underground organization until September 1942, and, at the same time, exposed himself to accusations of membership in the organization, which in some period, became criminal. At the same time . . . it is impossible not to mention his activities, enumerated in point 2, and the circumstances, i.e. that apart from this, his attitude as a citizen remained faultless.
4. . . . com[rade] Lewiński, owing to the political mistake, should without delay resign from his posts held in the Party and on behalf of the Party, and also sustain further organizational consequences imposed on him by relevant party organisations in the framework of self-critique and clearing the party

[7] Among Lewiński's personal papers there is a document granting his wife permission to change her name and surname (J. Lewiński's personal documents in the Jewish Historical Institute)

[8] According to the reasons for the judgement of the Party Court of the PPS, the Party Control Agent made a motion to consider the matter, see Jerzy Lewiński's files in the folder Citizens' Tribunals of the CKŻP, AŻIH/313, k. 35.

ranks before unification of the working-class movement in Poland following the establishment of the position regarding the very fact of membership in the Order Service in the ghetto.[9]

Władysław Szpilman[10] and Dr Edward Reicher testified that they saw Lewiński escorting a group of Jews marched by the Germans to the *Umschlagplatz*. The court contrasted those testimonies with accounts by other witnesses, who claimed that Lewiński took out from the convoy people "destined for extermination", "took active part in organising escapes from the so-called round-up". In the reasons for the judgement, it was written that: "Lewiński pursued his activity of helping people selflessly."[11] In the trial before the Party Court of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), at least several people testified in favour of Lewiński. The following fact was also highlighted in the reasons for the judgement:

although com[rade] Lewiński joined the SP and remained a member of it without a clear order from the underground, he also:

a. co-operated very closely with the Polish Socialists cell, and then with the RPPS . . .
b. transported to the ghetto underground publications and distributed them almost every day . . .
c. did not obey many decrees issued by the Germans and facilitated it for others not to obey them . . .
d. during the liquidation action, organised, with Szymon Katz, the so-called brushmakers' shop, in which he placed large groups of people, protecting them from being deported for extermination . . .[12]

Following spring 1948, Lewiński's case (who "as a deputy district commander of the SP in the Warsaw ghetto was accused of conduct unbecoming a Jewish citizen during the Nazi occupation, but acting in accordance with the occupier's intentions, he was involved in actions detrimental to the Jewish population")[13] was at the same time investigated by the Citizens' Tribunal of the Central Committee of Polish Jews (CKŻP). Contrary to Lewiński's expectations, the verdict of the Party Court of the PPS, pronouncing him not guilty, did not automatically conclude the proceedings of the Citizens' Tribunal.[14] Only in December 1949 did the Prosecution Spokesman

[9] Ibid., k. 34

[10] Later, Szpilman withdrew his accusations against Lewiński, which was also recorded in the reasons for the judgement (Ibid., k. 34). It was not the only accusation withdrawn in the course of the trial; a former waiter from the ghetto restaurants, Aleksander Jasielski, accusing Lewiński of contacting people who were known to be Gestapo informers (Hendel, Czapliński), stated that he had in fact mistaken Lewiński for Czapliński (Ibid., k. 36)

[11] Ibid., k. 35

[12] Ibid., k. 38

[13] Ibid., k. 50

[14] In the letter of 16 November 1949 to the Citizens' Tribunal handed to the Disciplinary Agent of the CKŻP, Lewiński wrote: "In connection with my account, and my subsequent letter of 1 July

move a proposal (due to lack of guilt evidence or basis on which the charge could be brought) of discontinuation of the trial.[15] The reasons for the judgment of the Citizens' Tribunal are largely based on the argumentation of the Party Court of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). Additionally, it emphasises Lewiński's participation in "organizing help for homeless children and those staying in hospitals."[16]

* * *

I met Jerzy Lewiński in August 2005. He was 94 years old and ailing at that time, but still had an agile mind. He followed political events enthusiastically. He judged the internal policy of Poland (at least in his conversations with me) from the perspective of its effects on the few Jews living in Poland. He claimed authoritatively that the Jewish community in Poland was breathing its last. He even planned to write a text about the Warsaw Jewish cemetery for the Jewish monthly *Midrasz*, presenting it as the biggest concentration of Jews in contemporary Poland. . . . He was also indefatigable in following and commenting on events in the Middle East and Israeli issues. Despite his advanced age, Mr. Lewiński was surrounded by people. During my (not that prolonged after all) visits, he answered the phone, and I know that many people came to visit him. He also accepted others' invitations, which (especially in the last period of his life, when he had trouble moving around and lived on the fourth floor in a house without a lift), required substantial organizational effort from the people who invited him. Despite all that, I had a strong feeling that Mr. Lewiński cared for meetings with me not less than I did, because he was willing to talk. . . .

However, I discovered soon enough that Mr. Lewiński would talk only as much as he planned on a given day. Hardly ever did I succeed in talking him into saying something more. Some of my questions passed unheard, some were dismissed. . . . It was his decision to present the events of his life chronologically. He soon got to the basic subject of our interview – the wartime past and his duty in the Jewish Police in the Warsaw ghetto. I intended to ask him not only about the details, but rather about his attitude to the events presented in his narration, because what I found to be missing the most in his narration was its emotional background.

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[19]48 to the Citizens' Tribunal of the CKŻP, I politely inform that immediately after receiving in Łódź the copy of the verdict of the Central Party Court, I showed it to the delegate of the Tribunal of the CKŻP in Łódź, i.e. com[rade] Grinberg. He declared that, in his opinion, the verdict including the citizen assessment, apart from the political and social ones, based on the opinion of a JHI expert delegated by the CKŻP, makes the case clear also in the light of the criteria [sic!] applied by the Citizens' Tribunal of the CKŻP. If further explanation were necessary, I was to receive a summons.

"I did not receive any summons, but two weeks later I found out by accident that the Prosecution Spokesman in the trials of the former SP functionaries had moved a proposal of discontinuation of my trial.

"I thought it to be a misunderstanding, so I appealed to the chairman of the Citizens' Tribunal and in accordance with the conversation I had, I present the copies . . ." (Ibid., k. 43)

[15] Ibid., k. 50

[16] Ibid., k. 50

I could not resist the impression that when he talked about those times, he had a particular goal – he recalled, corrected, contradicted, similarly as in the series of almost identical articles about Janusz Korczak's and Adam Czerniaków's death.[17] No doubt the Holocaust was, for him, a crucial issue, but also extremely difficult at the same time. In his interview, he was constantly vigilant not to expose himself too much; perhaps he did not want to, perhaps he just was not able to. Until the very end, he censored his words and behaviour so much that when, a few years ago, he was to see an album with the pictures of the Order Service he did not recognise himself on one of the photographs ...

Initially, we met on a regular basis, every week. The intervals between the conversations with Mr. Lewiński became longer due to his subsequent visits to hospital. The recordings were never longer than an hour; sometimes they were even shorter and lasted 15 minutes. All in all, I recorded 9 conversations, the last one in May 2006, of which every following one was a continuation of the former. The text presented below is a record of some of them. I did not manage to submit it for authorisation.[18]

Jerzy Lewiński, in a way due to his occupation, talked fluently and volubly. The well-considered construction of his utterances generally ordered them in a clear, logical sequence. Shaping them in a text required small changes that I tried to limit to the essential minimum. However, I sometimes decided to delete larger fragments, which were in part repetition of something written earlier, in a very similar or even the same context. On the other hand, I decided to retain different versions of the same events in the text, e.g. the story, repeated several times, of the meeting with the advocate Józef Herbst, crucial from the point of view of Lewiński's subsequent decisions.

What is surprising in Jerzy Lewiński's accounts is his photographic remembrance of details, which can be seen in the meticulous enumerations of important things that happened, in his opinion, day by day during the Great Action. The order maintained by him in his narration was probably the result of his returning to these events many times. He did it for other people as well, as a defendant of the Party

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[17] Jerzy Lewiński "The Death of Adam Czerniakow and Janusz Korczak's Last Journey", *Polin. A Journal*

*of Polish-Jewish Studies*, vol. 7 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers for the Institute for Polish-Jewish

Studies, 1992); Jerzy Lewiński, "Śmierć Adama Czerniakowa i ostatnia droga Janusza Korczaka", *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, Warszawa

1993, vol. 35; Jerzy Lewiński, "Ostatnie dni życia Adama Czerniakowa. W 60. rocznicę śmierci", *Słowo Żydowskie* 2002, No. 14–15 and *Słowo Żydowskie* 2002, No. 16–17; J. Lewiński, "Prawda o ostatnim dniu życia

Adama Czerniakowa", *Midrasz* 2005, No. 7–8.

[18] The only exception I included in the text is an extensive fragment of Lewiński's utterance concerning his participation in organising the Detention Chamber for the Children of the Street of Region III of the SP, published in *Midrasz* before Lewiński's death; see "Los dzieci getta nie wymaga dodatkowych barw, patosu czy mitów... Z Jerzym Lewińskim rozmawia Ewa Koźmińska-Frejlak", *Midrasz* 2005, No. 12.

Court of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the Citizens' Tribunal of the Central Committee of Polish Jews or in successive interviews.[19] However, to my mind, he did it incomparably more often for himself, preparing himself for his next speech.

I did not mean to reduce Mr. Lewiński's story of his long life merely to the period of World War II. Besides, only after a few meetings with Mr. Lewiński, the editors of *Holocaust Studies and Materials* offered to publish my interview with Lewiński, a former SP functionary in the Warsaw ghetto, in the issue concerning the collaboration. Still, the matter of the Holocaust dominated my conversations with Mr. Lewiński. The version of war events presented in them brings no novelty whether in the sphere of facts or in the sphere of comments. In a number of points, it just seems highly unlikely. There are two areas that especially raise many doubts. The first one is his co-operation with Colonel Szulborski (Lewiński's duties in the ghetto were to include, among others, reporting on a regular basis to Szulborski about the situation in the ghetto). Moreover, Lewiński claims that he was to join the SP precisely thanks to Szulborski's backing and in order to fulfil clandestine missions imposed by him.[20] Even less plausible seems the information that during the Great Action, Lewiński (with his trusted colleagues) only pretended to participate in the deportation. According to his own words, he and his colleagues, at least two days in a row, surrounded a house and pretended to the Germans that they were involved in the deportation.[21] Obviously, in a number of points the issue of accuracy of Lewiński's

[19] I compared the record of my interview with Lewiński with the interview regarding his wartime memoirs that he gave in October 1995 to Joanna Wiszniewicz for the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation (cassette in the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute) and the extensive interview which Lewiński gave Włodzimierz Susid, interrupted by Susid's sudden death in 2001 (the record of the interview in the archives of the JHI). What is interesting is that the structure of the three interviews is very similar; in all of them, Lewiński concentrates on the same events.

[20] In the reasons for the judgements of the Central Party Court such extensive cooperation from Lewiński is not mentioned; point 2 of the reasons says, among other things, that: "although comrade Lewiński joined the SP and remained a member of it **without a clear order from the underground** [emphasis by *E. H.-F.*] he also:

a.co-operated very closely with the Polish Socialists' cell, and then with the RPPS /Merencholc, Dąb/ [it concerns the testimonies in the trial – *E. K.-F.*] he facilitated underground activity for his colleagues and helped them in it . . .

b.transported to the ghetto underground publications and distributed them /Szulborski . . ., Maślanko . . ." Jerzy Lewiński's files in the folder Citizens' Tribunals of the CKŻP, AŻIH/313, k. 35.

[21] In Lewiński's earliest account about these events, i.e. the explanatory protocol presented to the Prosecution Spokesman of the Citizens' Tribunal of the CKŻP recorded on 24 November 1949, we can read that: "Our underground group, I mentioned above, decided to actively sabotage orders aiming at providing the assigned quota. Obviously, in July 1942, there were no objective conditions to armed resistance. However, we sabotaged the deportation action by protecting as many people as possible from being deported to the camp. We actively helped people escaping from the ghetto, we informed them, within the bounds of possibility, about the planned actions, etc. . . . When Lejkin issued the order that every SP functionary was obliged to deliver 5 people for deportation, even though, at that time, I had no professional contacts with the SP, having ceased even my administrative duties, I wrote to all the trusted colleagues in their SP IDs that they carried out the order (although I did not maintain professional contact with the SP by ceasing all the du-

story cannot be determined. Did Lewiński really remember those events as he told them or did he want them to be remembered that way? Perhaps he viewed himself as a guardian of the memory of those who passed away, and thus according to what he wrote in his last published text: "I lived during the Holocaust and I know this period from my own experience"; he thought that "reverence and dignity should be given back to the tormented and homicidally murdered Jewish people of Poland."[22] He thought that the picture of these events presented in his final utterances best fulfils this duty.

The expert's opinion concerning the SP, written by Henryk Wasser upon request of the Party Court of the PPS request, was attached to Jerzy Lewiński's trial files. It reads as follows:

> Theoretically, senior SP functionaries could avoid the front-line service, excusing themselves with other duties, difficult to check. It can be assumed, however, that only a small percentage of SP officers tried to combine providing safety of their own lives with avoiding stains on their honour. Such behaviour was possible in the ghetto, given the constantly changing and fluctuating reality, and chaos and anarchy, accompanying the constant diminution and narrowing of the ghetto, which made it possible not to obey German orders.[23]

Was "innocent" service really possible in the ghetto police during the Great Deportation Action? Did Lewiński retain this innocence? His utterances, written below, are in my opinion evidence of Lewiński's struggle with the problem (despite the passage of time) and this is how they should be perceived ...

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ties, even those administrative ones)." Jerzy Lewiński's files in the folder Citizens' Tribunals of the CKŻP, AŻIH/313, k. 35.

[22] J. Lewiński, "W obronie godności ofiar nazizmu", *Midrasz* 2006, No. 4.

[23] Henryk Wasser, Ekspertyza..., Jerzy Lewiński's files in the folder Citizens' Tribunals of the CKŻP, AŻIH/313, k. 35.

# INTERVIEW

**E. K.-F.:** Where were you in 1939, when the war broke out?

**J. L.:** I lived in Łódź at that time, where I was an advocate's trainee. Although I completed my training, I could not be called to the bar, because a decree was issued which de facto banned people of Jewish origin from the list.[24] As a social and political activist, I was a member of the Independent Socialist Youth Union – Związek Niezależnej Młodzieży Socjalistycznej (which was a branch of the PPS) and of the PPS itself as well. When the war broke out, I was a reserve officer, and according to the decree published at that time, reserve officers were called up because of the war for active military service and were assigned their ranks. I was a second lieutenant. I received the so-called navy blue mobilisation card. It obliged me to report to my military unit, but it was not the induction yet.[25]

The German army moved forward fast, so I and my few friends (as well as a large part of the Łódź population) abandoned the city to get to Warsaw.[26] We went on foot. On our way, we were raided from the air several times. When, three days later, we reached Warsaw, we heard Colonel Umiastowski's appeal from the loudspeakers: every man, especially of recruitment age, was to leave Warsaw immediately. My two brothers lived in Warsaw. I went to No. 12 Leszno Street, to my brother's, Adolf Lewiński,[27] who was an advocate. However, it turned out that both my brothers had left the city heading for Lublin. The only people left were my sister-in-law and her children. I decided to stay with her at her flat.

In Warsaw, I went to my brother's elder colleague, Colonel Witold Szulborski, who was appointed by Mayor Stefan Starzyński commander of the Court Martial. Szulborski was colonel of the judiciary (*pułkownik sądownictwa*) before the war, and as Piłsudski's opponent, he was transferred to the reserve early and became an advocate. He lived at No. 43 Grójecka Street, and had his office there as well.

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[24] In June 1938, the minister of justice ruled that all the lists of advocates should be closed in Warsaw, Katowice, Cracow and Vilna Districts. As Jerzy Tomaszewski writes: "the trainees who were to pass exams in the nearest future were also affected." Since then, it was the minister who announced annually the surnames of new advocates and determined their number in the given districts (J. Tomaszewski, "Niepodległa Rzeczpospolita", in: *idem* (red.), *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1993), 197.

[25] The assignment to a specific unit was effected after receiving a personal conscription card.

[26] In the interview by Joanna Wiszniewicz for the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, Jerzy Lewiński specified the date of his departure to Warsaw as 6 September and reached the capital on 8 September (tape in archives of the Jewish Historical Institute).

[27] Adolf Lewiński was entered in the list of advocates of the Warsaw Court of Appeal in 1931 *(Okrąg* [*sic!*] *Izby Adwokackiej Warszawskiej) na dzień 15 grudnia 1938 r.*, (Warszawa: Nakładem Izby Adwokackiej Warszawskiej, 1938), 32.

I helped in the Court as a lawyer and thanks to this job I could participate in the defence of Warsaw, although mine was obviously a minute participation. Immediately after the cessation of military operations, I accidentally met my friend, advocate Józef Litwin, a remarkable lawyer, who spoke many languages as well. Litwin was General Rommel's interpreter during the act of capitulation. I remember his prophetic words, which then sounded unreal, that the Jew would only be able to survive in captivity.[28]

My brothers returned, but I was determined to visit my mother, whom I had left in Łódź at the beginning of the war. Finally, with my brother, the one who was not an advocate, we went by train to Łódź. On our journey, someone constantly burst into our compartment and shouted "Juden nicht, da? Juden nicht, da?" My appearance was not that Semitic, while my brother's was absolutely Aryan, so we fortunately reached home. After a few days, the caretaker told me that the Gestapo had asked about me. Before the war I was president of the Łódź branch of the left-wing Judge and Barrister Trainees' Association.[29] I decided to come back to Warsaw to avoid being imprisoned. I departed on 15 November; I remember the date precisely, because on that day the Germans set fire to the progressive synagogue in Łódź, in Kościuszki Avenue and Zielona Street. I travelled by train as an Aryan.[30] I reached Warsaw the same day and again stayed at my brother's place. I contacted Colonel Szulborski and we agreed that I would come to him, and he would give me

[28] At that time, the Germans called the officers to go to captivity.

[29] The Judge and Barrister Trainees' Association was founded in Warsaw at the beginning of 1927. In the activity report of the Association for 1927-28 we read: "The establishment of the association stemmed from the idea dating back to 1925, to create a purely professional organisation for the trainees, free from religious limitations which used to block and are still blocking access to the long-lasting Legal Trainees' Association in Warsaw for a considerable number of trainees. The lack of such a common professional organization must have been especially severe for many judge and barrister trainees isolated from the Association because of its exclusiveness, especially when their interests were threatened by some danger. The most serious of such periods was the first quarter of the year 1927, when the case of *numerus clausus* was brought up in the legal community. The tendency, germinating for a long time and revealed then with particular force, to limit access to the legal profession of a notable fraction of the Warsaw Bar was clearly seen in the resolution of the General Assembly of the Warsaw Chamber of Advocates of 26 March 1927, regarding temporary closure of the list of advocates. It violated the rights of judge and barrister trainees, placing their future under a question mark for a long time. The need for collective, centralized defence of [our] own interests was a stimulus to create a new, common association, including those trainees who have been deprived of organizational support so far." (Sprawozdanie z działalności Stowarzyszenia Aplikantów Sądowych i Adwokackich za rok 1927/28 (Warszawa: Stow[arzyszenia] Apl[ikantów] Sąd[owych] i Adw.[okackich] w Warszawie, 1928), 3–4. Most members of the Association were people of Jewish origin. One of the members of the Audit Commission of the newly created Association was Adolf Lewiński, brother of my interviewee (ibid., 5). In October 1927, the Łódź branch of the Association, of which Jerzy Lewiński was an active member in the following years, was set up.He cooperated in actions against the Nazification of the life of the legal community (from Adolf Dąb's letter giving an opinion about Lewiński) (J. Lewiński's personal documents in the Jewish Historical Institute).

[30] The ban on Jews travelling by train was introduced in January 1940.

the News Bulletins,[31] which I would transport to my brother's flat, where different people, many advocates among them, came. The Home Army (AK) was at that time non-existent, the Armed Combat Union (Związek Walki Zbrojnej – ZWZ) was just being created, but the colonel was already playing a very important executive role in it. The underground judiciary was being established. It later sentenced the collaborators.

**E. K.-F.:** Did you have any contact with the Judenrat at that time?

**J. L.:** The ghetto was established a year later. At that time I had no contact with the Judenrat. My brother, an advocate, was an assimilator. He was in touch with the Judenrat only via Jewish lawyers, who came to see him. As far as I am concerned, I was then absolutely cured of the notion of assimilation as a solution of the Jewish question in Poland. My colleagues from Łódź visited me. I met up with them, talked to them. During this one year, before the ghetto was closed, I joined the underground work, its judiciary branch headed by Colonel Witold Szulborski himself.

**E. K.-F.:** How did you get to the SP?

**J. L.:** On 15 November 1940, the ghetto was established. Before it was closed, the advocates that came to see my brother informed me that the chairman of the Judenrat, Adam Czerniaków, had received an order that the Judenrat should form its own order service. Czerniaków wanted it to consist of decent men; he treated it as a kind of citizens' guard. All my brother's colleagues I mentioned before joined the Order Service; they also talked me into joining it. Thus, I contacted Colonel Szulborski[32] and he contacted the advocate Leon Berenson.[33] The latter was offered a place to live on the "Aryan side"; people tried to persuade him not to go to the ghetto. He was said to answer that all his life everyone had shouted that Berenson was a Jew and when the Jews were in a bad situation, he would not abandon them and he would go to the ghetto. Let us not forget that a lot of candidates applied to the Order Service, so it was difficult to join it. Moreover, the advocates who went there, apart from Nowogrodzki, and those who did not have a military rank at all,[34] were all officers.

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[31] Jerzy Lewiński told Włodzimierz Susid in his interview: "There was no formal swearing-in." In the same interview, he also said: "Colonel Szulborski also employed me to help in the underground judiciary works and providing him information from the closed district." (W. Susid's interview with J. Lewiński in the JHI)

[32] In his interview with Susid, Lewiński says: ". . . consulting my underground supervisor, advocate Szulborski, I established that I was to stay in the ghetto and hold the post of in-ghetto informer of an underground cell under command of advocate Szulborski. He heard of the decree issued by the German authorities about establishing the Jewish Order Service in the ghetto. He suggested that I should join the Service because I was able to move freely in the ghetto and therefore had easier access to information." (ibid., s. 12).

[33] Leon Berenson (1882-1941), a lawyer and diplomat, supporter of the assimilation idea; defence counsel in the PPS members' trials in 1905-1907, in the inter-war period, in the Brest [Brześć] trials.

[34] Theoretically, completed military service was one of the prerequisites of accepting a candidate to the Order Service, see B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2001), 196.

Berenson moved in to the ghetto to the advocate Zygmunt Millet's[35] place at No. 5 Ogrodowa Street. Following a conversation with me, Berenson called Czerniaków and, without any efforts, I was accepted in the Order Service, as well as Millet, who did not have a military rank. I just applied, that's all ...

As it turned out, commanders of all the Regions[36] were advocates; only Region III at No. 40 Leszno Street was not commanded by an advocate, but a captain of the Austrian army reserve – Albin Fleichman. He was advised to at least appoint an advocate as an administrative deputy. I don't remember who suggested my name to Fleichman. It was extremely convenient for me; I lived round the corner, at No. 12 Leszno Street, at my brother's place. Apart from that, the Region was just opposite the Courts, where I would meet with Colonel Szulborski.[37] This is how I joined the Order Service with the consent of Colonel Szulborski, who was a representative of the Polish Underground State. To this day, I have his letter concerning me.[38] I was

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[35] Advocate Zygmunt Millet was called to the bar at the Warsaw Court of Appeal in 1933, see *Lista adwokatów okręgu Sądu apelacyjnego w Warszawie. (Okrąg* [*sic!*] *Izby Adwokackiej Warszawskiej) na dzień 15 grudnia 1938 r.* (Warszawa: Nakładem Izby Adwokackiej Warszawskiej, 1938), 37.

[36] From 1 January 1941, the Order Service functioned in six Local Regions and Region "Judenrat", which included the Judenrat. A Region was commanded by a commander of the rank of district commander, who had two deputies: front-line and administrative. A Region included: about 150 policemen (three platoons), administrative employees (about 15 people), and clerks; apart from that, there were about 40 people on the auxiliary staff, see B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit*, 199–200.

[37] In his interview with Susid, Lewiński says: "The moment the ghetto was closed, the interest of the Home Army and the Office of the Delegate of the Government in Exile in the situation in the ghetto was enormous, but it diminished considerably in the course of time. However, Colonel Szulborski demanded an uninterrupted flow of information about the events in the ghetto and we continued to meet on designated days in the courts in Leszno Street. Sometimes he was substituted by messengers, to whom I reported. Those messengers were the people I knew personally, whom Szulborski introduced me, 2–3 people in all." (W. Susid's interview with J. Lewiński in the JHI, p. 15). In the interview with Joanna Wiszniewicz, Lewiński also mentioned that as he wore an armband, it was easier for him to transfer information about "the situation in the ghetto and the advocates' behaviour"; he was to meet Colonel Szulborski once or twice a week in that period, but sometimes only once a month (the interview by J. Wiszniewicz with J. Lewiński for the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation in the JHI archives). In the same interview, Lewiński emphasised that he did not have direct contact with the intelligence service, only indirect one – through the underground judiciary.

[38] Affidavit of 18 January 1966; the authenticity of the signature underneath it with the "elaboration made" was confirmed by the head of the Council of Barristers Office, Michał Lipko. The affidavit reads: "I, Witold Szulborski, advocate and colonel (retired) of the Polish Army, live in Warsaw, No. 22 Pustola Street, flat 20. I declare the following:

"I met Jerzy Lewiński, son of Kacper, born on 26 February 1911 in Turek, living currently in Warsaw at No. 76 Wawelska Street, flat 34 (No. 5 Korzeniowskiego Street), with his brother and my colleague, Adolf Lewiński, shot by Nazi thugs in 1943. I established closer contact with advocate Jerzy Lewiński in September 1939, when he fought in the defence of Warsaw as second lieutenant of reserve of the Polish Army, where I was performing military functions of the Chief of the Court Marital at that time. After the capitulation of Warsaw, advocate Jerzy Lewiński went to Łódź, where he lived permanently. Wanted by the Gestapo, he came to Warsaw again in mid-November 1939 and turned to me, at No. 43 Grójecka Street, where I lived at that time. We established clan-

the administrative commander of Region III. In every Region, there was a group of five or six so-called instructors; some called them district constables. They were mainly lawyers, advocate trainees, even advocates. I became a head of such a group in Region III.

**E. K.-F.:** And what were your duties?

**J. L.:** Obviously I was in no way involved in the so-called external or front-line service, in the streets of the ghetto, outside the Region. That was the duty of Fleichman's second deputy, [Mojżesz] Tomkiewicz, a reserve officer and barrister as well. He became the commander of two external platoons which were on duty in the ghetto. I was responsible for the administrative questions. All in all, the work in the Region took me three, four hours a day. I came before noon. Our job was, very generally, protection of the Jewish population, of which it was deprived after the closure of the ghetto. Admittedly, the Polish police, the so-called "Blue" police, stayed in the ghetto and had police competence, but they were reluctant to cope with Jewish affairs inside the ghetto, unless they were doing some business. Thus, the Jewish population came with their problems to us.

A few blocks behind No. 40 Leszno Street, there was a small market place, a scene of some misunderstandings. Apart from that, the administration of the Region took care of housing matters. For example, we intervened in disputes between the residents, who came to a flat with a housing assignment, and those who had already been living there. My colleagues solved these controversies,[39] initially free

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destine contact. He took radio bulletins from me, later together with underground newspapers, distributing them in Warsaw, mainly in the districts inhabited by the Jewish population, who already at that time could not move freely around the city, because of the terror of the German occupying authorities. When the ghetto was created, advocate Jerzy Lewiński kept in touch with me and, to obtain possibility to move around the ghetto more freely, he was directed to the Order Service being created by the Judenrat. From December 1940 to the beginning of 1943, advocate Jerzy Lewiński, risking his life every time, crossed to the so-called "Aryan side", took from me the underground newspapers and informed me, as a Deputy of the WSS of the AK High Command, about the German acts of terror in the ghetto, about the feelings of people who lived there and the attitude of colleagues-lawyers. On the basis of the direct contact and the information I possess, I declare that Jerzy Lewiński, during the German occupation, displayed proper civil dignity and dedication in very difficult circumstances, at the same time being trustworthy for his patriotic attitude in the struggle with the Nazi occupier." The document is kept in the Jewish Historical Institute.

[39] According to the decree issued in 1940 by Czerniaków, the duties of the SP were: "1. Not to allow the crowd to gather in the streets. 2. Regulation of the pedestrian and road traffic in the streets, especially in the busy places and crossroads. 3. Removing all obstacles from road traffic. 4. Overseeing the cleanliness of the streets and roads. 5. Supervising the order, cleanliness and proper lighting of the yards and staircases. 6. Crime prevention. 7. Maintaining order in the public offices and buildings, especially the Judenrat building and its institutions," see *Gazeta Żydowska*, 3 January 1941, quoted in B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit.*, 202–203.

The responsibilities of the Order Service presented above were formulated very vaguely. Especially, it is not possible to determine specifically how to classify mediations between parties to the conflict mentioned by Lewiński. Most importantly, however, in Czerniaków's decree, there is no record of diversification of SP functionaries' responsibilities according to their functions in the Region. Lewiński himself emphasised on a number of occasions that he was not a "front-line" SP functionary, but an administrative commander; he also describes, in his story, the activities per-

of charge, but as time went by, some people gave money that went to the Region's treasury. Basically, advocates working in the Region stayed at work two, three hours and constantly sought other sources of income.[40] I was no exception. My brother had no savings; he lived from his advocate's practice. I briefly made a profit from keeping administration of the house where my brother lived and had his office. The owner of the house was an Aryan, who had to move out of the ghetto and charged me with administering the house.

At that time, I also reported to Colonel Szulborski, also in writing, about the situation in the ghetto, advocates' behaviour and other matters. From Szulborski, but also from another source, I got to know that the advocate Józef Hertz, commander of Region I, was in contact with the PPS. It is worth emphasising that initially the Jewish Order Service was quite popular among the ghetto population until the decrees by which the Order Service deported people to the concentration camps were issued and thus escalated feelings of aversion.[41] The year 1940 was coming to an end.

**E. K.-F.:** And with what milieus in the ghetto did you keep in touch?

**J. L.:** Even before the war, my brother was chairman of the Legal Trainees' Association – Federation.[42] The Federation saw the assimilation of the Jews as the only solution to the Jewish question in Poland. Thus, I had few friends in the Jewish community of Warsaw. There was also an advocate, [Aleksander] Brewda (commander of Region IV), a very well-mannered man, rather assimilated. I did not contact a lot people from the Command of the Jewish Order Service, even from the assimilated milieus. Despite this, I know that primarily the Order Service was supposed to be commanded by a well-known advocate of Jewish origin, Maksymilian Szejba [Schoenbach], formerly a major in the Austrian Army. His name guaranteed, to a certain extent, civil and honourable service. Regardless of that, Czerniaków changed his mind, for Schoenbach convinced him that he did not know the issues well and

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formed by him and his colleagues (it can be understood as the administration of the Region), going far beyond his strictly administrative duties.

[40] During the first three or four months when the SP duty started, the Judenrat consistently refused to pay the functionaries, because of the "lack of funds". Thus, a special tax was introduced – poll tax exacted from every person (raised by the House Committees) and the taxes from shops and companies. The rate of the latter was negotiated by the owners with the SP functionaries and with the representatives of a cell specially created for that purpose – the Jewish Police Fund. After some time, the SP was also granted non-cash aid, see ibid., 201.

[41] In spring 1941, for several days the SP rounded up people and sent them to forced labour camps. Similar round-ups took place in May and June 1942. These events raised strong hostility to the SP functionaries among the dwellers of the ghetto, see ibid., 210.

[42] From the publication "Zjednoczenie. Miesięcznik poświęcony sprawie zjednoczenia Żydów z państwem i narodem polskim", which was an organ of the "Zjednoczenie" Students' Union, it appears that Adolf Lewiński was an energetic activist of the milieus, very much in favour of assimilation. He also cooperated closely with the "Zjednoczenie" Students' Union. In issue no. 1 of 1931 of the newspaper, a report was published from Adolf Lewiński's speech "Bankructwo syjonizmu" ("The bankruptcy of Zionism") made among the Lvov members of the organisation, see "Zjednoczenie" 1931, No. 1

recommended Szeryński's candidature for the post.[43] Szeryński was a high-ranking officer of the Polish Police before the war and if Czerniaków went to him (according to Schoenbach) he would take upon himself the role of the SP commander. Schoenbach, at the same time, was to become his advisor.

I was not extremely enthusiastic about a professional police officer heading the SP, although he was obviously a civilian at that time. Szeryński brought with him two Czapliński brothers[44] – converts, just like him. Another person in the SP Command was [Stefan] Lubliner,[45] a legionary and Piłsudski's supporter. I kept in touch with him, but I contacted the Command itself sporadically, and only when some opportunity arose, although there were many advocates in it. During that period, I was entirely engaged in co-operation with the judiciary of the underground Armed Combat Union (ZWZ), subsequently renamed the Home Army (AK). Colonel Szulborski became deputy head of the entire underground judiciary; he was a very important figure. The messages I received from him concerned not only the underground judiciary, as Szulborski's (staying in the strict AK commandment) relations with the intelligence service were excellent.

**E. K.-F.:** In issue 7/8 of *Midrasz* of 2005, you published a text on the last day [in the life] of the chairman of the Warsaw Judenrat, Adam Czerniaków. In this article, you demythologise information on the events preceding the suicidal death of Adam Czerniaków that are widespread in academic and journalistic circulation. You also mention there that, even before the Great Action, you co-operated with Felicja Czerniaków, the chairman's wife, in the action to help homeless children. When did the idea of such an action emerge?

**J. L.:** Practically from the very beginning of the ghetto's existence, there was the common picture of the children – hungry, barefooted, in ragged clothes. Sometimes they stood dumb and cried, sometimes they wandered around and shouted imploringly "*hot rachmunes*" ("have mercy") and waited for somebody to throw them something to eat. In the entry of 14 November 1941, Emanuel Ringelblum wrote: "The first frost came and people tremble from cold. Most frightening, though, are the freezing children; children without shoes on their little feet, with bare knees, ragged clothes, who just stand dumb and cry. Today, on 14 November, in the evening, I heard the wailing of such a three- or four-year-old tot. In the morning, his frozen body will probably be found. Even in October, when the first snow fell, in various nooks of the demolished houses and in the staircases 17 children were found frozen to death."[46]

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[43] Józef Andrzej Szeryński (Szynkman), a converted Jew, lieutenant of the Polish Police before the war, organised the Order Service in the Warsaw ghetto. For his dishonourable deeds during the deportation action, sentenced to death by the Jewish Fighting Organisation (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa – ŻOB). He survived the attempt, but committed suicide in January 1943, after the first skirmishes of the ŻOB with the Germans. See M. Fuks (ed.), *Adama Czerniakowa dziennik getta warszawskiego 6. IX. 1939–23. VII. 1942* (Warszawa: PWN, 1983), 161.

[44] In the Order Service two Czapliński brothers were employed: Stanisław (head of the Economic Department) and Marceli (Szeryński's adjutant), see B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

[45] Stefan Lubliner was the head of the SP chancery.

[46] E. Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, ed. A. Eisenbach, trans. A. Rutkowski, "Czytelnik", Warszawa 1983, p. 334.

We often observed those children with my colleagues from Region III. They were virtually [living] skeletons, crying for mercy, begging for a slice of bread. We knew that even if someone gave them food, it wouldn't solve the problem. Besides, the Jewish Order Service was obliged to arrest every person in the street of the ghetto after curfew. Basically, only the begging children did not obey the decree. Thus, a German police patrol driving by could shoot them. There was another danger as well: homeless and totally exhausted children, left for the night in the street, predominantly died. On the initiative of my few colleagues, including the advocate Hauszpigiel and the advocate trainee Braudo,[47] with Rachela Auerbach's (a famous worker for voluntary causes, who ran the people's kitchen at No. 40 Leszno Street) and the paediatrician Jan Przeborski's support, we found (with a lot of effort) a room at No. 20 Nowolipie Street, to which we could bring children found on the street during the curfew. We adopted the locale to our needs. We put some beds in, and employed a lady (I cannot remember her name), who bathed and fed the children we brought in. They recovered for two or three days. However, we did not have the conditions to run an orphanage; that was not our aim anyway. Thus, we decided to name the place the Detention Chamber for the Children of the Street of Region III of the Order Service, which protected us in case the Germans were interested. Theoretically, the Chamber was only a supplement to the service building of the Region, located somewhere else.

I immediately informed Dr Janusz Korczak about our achievements. We wanted the children fed and bathed by us to be placed in the orphanage, so as they would not come back to the streets again. Korczak praised us and (just as he had promised) from then on he helped us to relocate the children, after their two- or three-day stay in the Chamber, in the orphanages indicated by him.[48] This is how Ringelblum wrote about our initiative: "The police are said to be creating in the house at No. 20 Nowolipie Street a special institution to which children from the streets would be taken. As yet, corpses of frozen children and children's lamentations are everyday phenomena in the ghetto."[49] In the entry of 22 November there is also a note: "Today, on 22 November, I saw a barefoot boy in Nowolipki Street. He jumped from

[47] Lewiński mentioning the advocate Brojdo, meant probably Aron Braudo. Aron vel Arnold Braudo was called to the bar at the Warsaw Court of Appeal in 1921, see *Lista adwokatów okręgu Sądu apelacyjnego w Warszawie. (Okrąg* [*sic!*] *Izby Adwokackiej Warszawskiej) na dzień 15 grudnia 1938 r.*, Nakładem Izby Adwokackiej Warszawskiej, Warszawa 1938, p. 7. The surname Braudo, in any spelling, does not appear on the list of Jewish policemen in the JHI collection.

[48] Policeman Józef Rode, author of the diary kept in the JHI archives, writes the following about the Detention Chamber for the Children of the Street of Region III: "In Region III, the SP was troubled most by the homeless children. The policemen decided to create independently a transit point to which found children could be fetched, bathed, fed and then directed to a relevant institution. A patronage committee was set up, and the institution was located at No. 20 Nowolipie Street. A hygienist and helpers were employed. As the children taken from the streets had no place to go, the Detention Chamber for the Children of the Street of Region III became an ordinary boarding school for 30–40 children." See JHI archives 302/129, quoted in B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

[49] E. Ringelblum, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

one little foot to another because of the cold. The sight of naked people and children makes a shocking impression, and nothing, apart from the Chamber of Detention for children, has been done in this matter."[50] It is clear that in this way Ringelblum criticizes the Centos (the Central Organisation for Orphan Care). He suggested that the organization had money and did nothing to help people.

How did Ringelblum know about us in the first place? It is because Region III was in the same building as the people's kitchen run by Rachela Auerbach, co-worker of the underground ghetto archive Oneg Shabbat, who was also engaged in creating the Chamber. She probably passed the information to Ringelblum, who incidentally lived several houses further down the street at No. 18 Leszno St.

Czerniaków also mentions the Detention Chamber in his notes. For the first time, in the entry of 14 June 1942:

> I issued instructions for the children from the precinct detention room, organized by the Order Service, to be brought to the playground. They are living skeletons from the ranks of the street beggars. Some of them came to my office. They talked with me like grown-ups – those eight-year-old citizens. I am ashamed to admit it, but I wept as I have not wept for a long time. I gave a chocolate bar to each of them. They all received soup as well. Damned be those of us who have enough to eat and drink and forget about these children.[51]

On 26 June, Czerniaków noted that he made a speech at the opening of the Detention Chamber of the SP Region in Chłodna Street.[52] That chamber was created in the image of ours. Unfortunately, it functioned for a very short time; the Great Action started less than a month after it was opened.

**E. K.-F.:** How was the activity of the Chamber financed?

**J. L.:** The money came from donations. Besides, the SP often mediated in solving various disputes, e.g. concerning real estate. My colleagues, who helped in reaching the compromise, charged for it. The money from the collected fines was, in part, given for the functioning of the Chamber. Apart from that, I also collected donations from people, including the advocates visiting my brother, Adolf Lewiński. I presented the case and everyone gave a few pennies. The funds also came from the Region's treasury, supported by the money from married couples reconciled thanks to the SP functionaries' mediation or from the House Committees. The food was supplied by some of the shops from Karmelicka, Leszno Streets and others within the Region, often free of charge or at reduced prices.

**E. K.-F.:** From the documents preserved in Ringelblum's Archive, it appears that in the conditions of the ghetto, the children became independent and they provided for their entire families. At the same time, statistics reveal a rising number of sin-

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[50] Ibid., 338.

[51] *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron and Josef Kermisz, eds. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 1999), 366.

[52] Ibid., 292. As Józef Rode, quoted above, points out: ". . . the SP set up six Detention Chambers. About 200 children stayed in the Chambers." See JHI archives 302/129, quoted in B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

gle-parent families and, consequently, orphans. Why was the Detention Chamber created only in autumn 1941? Why then and why so late?

**J. L.:** The ghetto was closed on 15 November 1940. The winter of 1940/41 was a very severe one. The ghetto administration and the regions of the SP did not start working until the second half of November. At that time, everyone was then busy with people who were driven into the ghetto and those (i.e. the Aryans) who were resettled out of the ghetto. That is how the winter passed. Only the cold in October 1941, about which Ringelblum writes, was the direct impulse to take actions. We found the place. At that time I also met Mrs. Czerniaków, a Centos activist ...

**E. K.-F.:** Do you remember signs of the imminent Holocaust from the days preceding the Great Action?

**J. L.:** In June 1942, the news about the fate of the Jews in Lublin District, where Globocnik[53] ruled, came to the ghetto by different channels. At that time, people from the Łódź ghetto were already being deported to Kulmhof (Chełmno nad Nerem). The fate of the deported was not known; everything was done in secret.[54] After some time, however, there were people who managed to escape from there. The news from them spread that the Jews in Chełmno were simply being murdered. It was very difficult to believe in it. Czerniaków himself still in June 1942, while opening another Detention Chamber for the children of the street, expressed an optimistic opinion . . . Meanwhile, it was already a very hard time. It was still in April, I don't remember which night it was exactly,[55] that units of SS-men burst into the ghetto. They pulled chosen people out of their houses. They ordered them to run and shot them. This group consisted of various people: those involved in the Jewish underground life, publishing newspapers, but also people from the "Thirteen" office,[56] perceived by the ghetto community as collaborators. Thus, it was difficult to figure out what was the purpose of this night slaughter, but it undoubtedly raised great anxiety. Moreover, it was after that June when the Germans started to catch the hiding Jews on the "Aryan side", transport them to the ghetto, shoot them in the street and leave the bodies there. We entered the following month, July, very anxious.

Czerniaków, as we know from his diaries, which are the only reliable source, asked [Karl] Brandt (the head of the Gestapo in the Warsaw ghetto) how to explain these events. Everyone he asked answered that those were actions against

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[53] Odilo Globocnik – SS and Police Leader in the Lublin District. He commanded the "Einsatz Reinhardt" there.

[54] In his interview with Joanna Wiszniewicz, Jerzy Lewiński said that he contacted Colonel Szulborski about this matter. The AK intelligence, however (as Szulborski claimed), did not know anything about the deportees' fate. (J. Wiszniewicz's interview with J. Lewiński is in the JHI.)

[55] The night of 17 and 18 April 1942.

[56] The "Thirteen" was set up in 1940 and dissolved in July 1941 on the order of the ghetto Commissar Heinz Auerswald . It was called the Office to Combat Profiteering and Speculation in the Closed District. The founder and chief of the "Thirteen" was Abraham Gancwajch. The common name comes from the building of the office at No. 13 Leszno Street. It controlled trade and smuggling, bakeries, houses' administration as well as blackmail and extortion of money. It aspired to compete with the Judenrat. It was in fact a Gestapo agency in the ghetto.

only those who published newspapers and stirred unrest ... there was no need to worry, the ghetto was not threatened by anything – they were trying to placate us. Czerniaków felt that they could be trying to mislead him. The anxiety, which could almost be sensed in the air, made him wonder what would come next, in spite of the German assurances.[57]

It needs to be clearly stated that in the ghetto, at that time, there was no political organisation that would act systematically and in a planned manner. Neither the Zionists nor the Bund members did that. I kept in touch with the Polish underground, Colonel Szulborski and Stefan Kurowski (his true name was Warszawski[58]), who was later chief prosecutor of the Supreme Tribunal. The Polish resistance movement was interested in the Jewish question only in the broader context of the German plans concerning the occupied Polish territories. Nor did General Bór-Komorowski,[59] as I already mentioned, have any information that could worry anyone in June 1942.

The events of 22 July 1942 completely took us by surprise. It is worth mentioning that on the night of 21-22 July, a famous ghetto antiquarian, Abe Gutnajer, fell ill. Franciszek Raszeja, a well-known professor, was called to him from the "Aryan side". He applied to the Gestapo for a pass and obtained it. This event calmed the ghetto down; it seemed that if Raszeja got the pass on 21 July, it was impossible that something would happen on 22. Meanwhile, the Germans burst into Gutnajer's at night, and shot Raszeja and several people there, except for the ill Gutnajer.[60]

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[57] In Czerniaków's only entry of June 1942 that Lewiński could refer to, of 13 June 1942, we read: "In the morning with Brandt and Mende. I raised the problem of death in the Quarter and informed them that some unknown civilians were shooting not only at smugglers but also at innocent passersby. I requested that they get in touch with Auerswald to put an end to the situation." Contrary to what Lewiński claims, as it appears from the entries in the Diary, Czerniaków did not get any answer from Brandt; see *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, 366. Lewiński mentions the entry of 18 July: "In the morning with Lejkin to Brandt and Mende. A day full of foreboding. Rumours that the deportations will start on Monday evening. (All?!) I asked the commissar whether he knew anything about it. He replied that he did not and that he did not believe the rumours. In the meantime panic in the Quarter; some speak of deportations, others of a pogrom." (ibid., 381–382). Czerniaków also received reassurances on 20 July (ibid., 382–383).

[58] Stefan Kurowski (Warszawski) (1898–1959), a lawyer, activist of the workers' movement, an advocate and defence counsel in political trails, member of PPS-Left and the Communist Party of Poland (Komunistyczna Partia Polski – KPP), during the occupation from 1942 in the Polish Workers' Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza – PPR), fought in the Peoples' Army (Armia Ludowa – AL) ranks. During 1946–1948, he was the chief prosecutor of the Supreme National Tribunal; he headed the Polish delegation in the trial of two major war criminals in Nuremberg; during 1950–1953, judge of the Supreme Court; from December 1956, president of the Supreme Court. Lewiński mentions Stefan Kurowski, his second underground contact, also in the interview with Joanna Wiszniewicz. He does not explain in it either how this contact was established or what it was like in detail.

[59] Lewiński probably meant General Stefan Rowecki, the then Commander of the ZWZ-AK.

[60] In the interview given to Joanna Wiszniewicz, Lewiński said that on 21 July Raszeja was again in the ghetto, on another medical consultation in Gutnajer's case. Thus, if we assume Raszeja's permission to enter the ghetto soothed the feelings of the dwellers, the version presented to Wiszniewicz seems more plausible.

In the morning of 22 July we noticed that the whole ghetto was surrounded by the German gendarmerie and the Polish "Blue" Police, which had never happened before. We expected this surrounding to be a portent of some events. . . . Region III of the SP was not at No. 40 Leszno Street anymore, but at No. 2 Leszno, at the end of Leszno and Tłomackie Streets, closed with a barrier. I went on to the balcony to see what was going on, but shots came at me from the opposite side, and I barely managed to hide in the room. About 10 a.m., eight police cars entered the ghetto, heading for the Judenrat. The Commander of our region, Henryk Nadel,[61] telephoned the Judenrat to tell them about the cars. The ghetto was petrified. No one went onto the streets – everyone was afraid.

From Czerniaków's notes, it appears that Höfle (plenipotentiary for deportation matters), Brandt and his deputy, Mende, and several German officers from the security service and police came[62]. They entered Czerniaków's office and immediately started to dictate to him the text of the deportation decree. Reich-Ranicki, who then worked in the Judenrat, claims that because of his perfect command of German he was asked into the office.[63] Antoni Marianowicz, on the other hand, remembered (and rectified later on[64]) that Reich-Ranicki was a member of the Jewish Order Service, which the latter denied. I did not know Reich-Ranicki and I cannot say anything definitive in this case. His version seems however doubtful to me as Czerniaków did not need an interpreter. He spoke German as well as Polish; he completed his studies in Germany. Besides, Czerniaków would rather turn to his secretary, advocate [Zygmunt] Warman, who also spoke German and whose presence would be much more justified because of his position. From Czerniaków's notes, however, it is clear that he was alone then, which Warman confirmed in his subsequent conversation with me. Members of the Judenrat were absent as well; they were arrested as hostages on 21 and 22 July.[65] Thus, the Germans dictated to Czerniaków the sentence for the ghetto: the so-called deportation to the East would take place. They did not even specify which eastern city it was and Czerniaków even asked [about it], but

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[61] Henryk Nadel, an advocate called to the bar at the Warsaw Court of Appeal in 1937, see *Lista adwokatów okręgu Sądu apelacyjnego w Warszawie. (Okrąg* [*sic!*] *Izby Adwokackiej Warszawskiej) na dzień 15 grudnia 1938 r.*, Nakładem Izby Adwokackiej Warszawskiej, Warszawa 1938, p. 38.

[62] In the entry of 22 July 1942, Czerniaków wrote: "*Sturmbahnführer* Hoefle and his associates came." He does not refer to the presence, mentioned by Lewiński, of Brandt and Mende; see *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, 384.

[63] Marceli Reich-Ranicki published his memoires from the Warsaw ghetto, see M. Reich-Ranicki, *Moje życie*, (Warszawa: Muza SA, Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2000).

[64] Antoni Marianowicz (1923–2003) spent eighteen months in the Warsaw ghetto during the occupation; later, he hid in the areas surrounding Warsaw, see A. Marianowicz, *Życie surowo wzbronione* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1995).

[65] On 21 July 1942, Czerniaków wrote: "Just before noon, officers of the SP came [it is explained in the footnote that it was probably Sipo] and ordered me to detain those Councillors who were present in the Community [Judenrat – transl.] building, in my office. Additionally, they asked for a list of the remaining councillors. Soon, the members of the Council [Judenrat – transl.] in my office were arrested in groups. At the same time, the senior officials of the Provisioning Authority [Supply Section – transl.], with Gepner heading the list, were also seized." Czerniaków does not mention the arrests of 22 July in his diary. *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, 383.

then Höfle, extremely irritated, said the deportees would find out where they were upon arrival and threatened him that if he impeded the execution of the orders, his wife would pay for it. The daily quota of the deportees was set at 6,000 Jews. The Germans did not establish a date when it would be finished, and they even refused to answer Czerniaków's questions, ignoring them completely. . . . The Judenrat itself, with help of the Order Service, was to handle the deportation …

Let us return to the events of 22 July. The wife of the Judenrat chairman, doctor and Centos activist Felicja Czerniaków, left the Centos at 9 a.m. When she found out that the Germans had entered the ghetto, she went to her friend, Czarnecka (the wife of the co-owner of Sztuka café at No. 2 Leszno Street). She was aware that Czarnecka knew me, so she asked her to go and see me. Then, I was obliged to go to the Judenrat and ask Czerniaków what his wife should do in such circumstances. Czarnecka came to me.[66] As soon as the Germans left the ghetto, the streets that had been deserted before were swarming with people. Everybody wanted to know what was going to happen. Meanwhile, I went to the Judenrat to fulfil Mrs Czerniaków's request. I met the advocate Warman in the corridor and told him that I would like to speak with Chairman Czerniaków about an urgent matter. Impossible, he said, and in a few words told me about the sentence that had been passed upon the Jews just a moment before. Czerniaków sat in his office, extremely disturbed, entirely immersed in deportation issues. I informed Warman that I had come on Mrs. Czerniaków's request, which Warman told the chairman. Czerniaków came into the corridor, greeted me, but did not invite me into his office. He was very moved, but calm. I informed him of his wife's question. "Counsellor," he answered, "I would kindly ask you to tell my wife that she should immediately go home. The Germans take hostages among the councillors and, if I understand correctly, they can take my wife hostage as well. If she is not at home, they will take others, which I would not want to happen."

It was a very difficult moment. I looked at this man, in this historical, unique situation, and I was deeply touched by all this myself. I must say that Czerniaków made a great impression on me, especially his tranquillity and the emotion he displayed in our conversation. When I was on my way back from the Judenrat to the SP building, to pass the news to my colleagues, the posters were already being pasted in the city.

**E. K.-F.:** Could Czerniaków have refused to execute the deportation order?

**J. L.:** Many people wrote that Czerniaków refused to sign the decree. It is not true. The Germans did not need Czerniaków's signature at all. All the decrees he received from the Germans started with the words: "On the order of the German authorities, I inform that …" and at the bottom there was the signature "Chairman" or "Senior Councillor of the Judenrat, Adam Czerniaków." That was the format. It bore no significance for the Germans. The truth is that when Czerniaków dictated

[66] Lewiński presented the course of events in a slightly different manner in the interview with Joanna Wiszniewicz. Felicja Czerniaków, worried by the situation, was to reach her friend's flat in Żelazna Street. The daughter of the friend was supposed to come to Lewiński with Felicja Czerniaków's request to contact her husband.

the decree, he asked not to write his name under the document and put the Judenrat of Warsaw instead. The same in German. That was his form of protest, the only one that was possible at that time.

Could Czerniaków not carry out the Germans' order? As I already mentioned, at that time, there was no developed social movement or activists in the ghetto that could advise him on anything. A call for passive resistance would have been perceived by the community as a provocation. Active resistance was out of the question; there was no military organisation in the ghetto and no weapons, either. People were not prepared to die, they were determined to live. They wanted to hear from the chairman what to do to save their lives. The decree contained exceptions; those who worked were to be exempted from the deportation, so there was a hope at least for some. One could surmise that it was only about a reduction of the size of the ghetto.

On 22 July, Czerniaków was quite active. He summoned Lejkin[67] to his office. Some write that Lejkin participated in the talks with the Germans, that Höfle[68] appointed him chief of the SP. It is all untrue, also because Lejkin, after the imprisonment of Szeryński,[69] was already acting chief of the SP. Czerniaków informed Lejkin about the task awaiting the SP. The latter, I know for certain, said that he didn't have enough experience to manage the deportation and advised [Czerniaków] to turn to German authorities to release Szeryński from prison. Indeed, the Germans released Szeryński on Czerniaków's request already in the afternoon of 22 July. They realised they would have in him an eager executor of their orders. From the morning of 23 July, Szeryński was back at the head of the SP and Lejkin was his deputy.

Meanwhile, the order for the SP to deliver people to the *Umschlagplatz* was to be carried out immediately, on the same day. On the first day of the deportation, the SP had an easier task. They surrounded the prison at No. 24 Gęsia Street and poorhouses, where people were in a very bad condition. The idea of deportation to a forced labour site did not scare them. The Jews, exhausted from starvation, did not put up any resistance. They might have thought they were being deported to forced labour camps, where they could have more tolerable conditions than in the ghetto, and that their fate would improve.

**E. K.-F.:** What were you doing on this first day of deportation?

**J. L.:** At that time, in the SP structure there was no underground organisation either.[70] I know, however, that some of my colleagues kept in touch with the Polish

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[67] Jakub Lejkin, an advocate, commander of the Order Service, Szerynski's deputy. Distinguished because of his avid execution of German orders, especially during the Great Action. He died in October 1942, sentenced to death by the Jewish underground organization.

[68] Hermann Höfle – SS-Sturmbahnführer, plenipotentiary for resettlement matters, came with an entire unit from Lublin to deport the Jews from the Warsaw ghetto.

[69] Szeryński was arrested on 1 May 1942 because of the denunciation accusing him of hiding a fur on the "Aryan side", see B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit*., p. 214 [English translation scheduled for publication in 2009], see also *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, 384.

[70] According to Barbara Engelking: "In the Ringelblum archive there was preserved a memorial of an opposition group in the SP (we do not know when it was formed), whose authors call for the need for change in the functioning of the formation. They propose, among other things,

underground, including those from my Region: e.g. Mietek Dąb (brother of my good friend, Adolf, in German captivity at that time) and Marian Merenholc. Edelman claims to have worked with them. Commander of Region I, the advocate Józef Hertz, was also active in the Polish underground; he was connected with Polish socialists. When it all started, I met Hertz in Leszno Street and turned to him; the idea of the SP delivering people for deportation seemed terrifying to me …

**E. K.-F.:** And did you, at that moment, know or feel what deportation meant?

**J. L.:** I did not. I turned to Hertz to gather a few colleagues he knew (he was an advocate from Warsaw; I thought about Aleksander Brewda and others) to think the situation over. Hertz answered ironically, "My dear colleague, are you aware of the significance of the situation? Every minute of delay in carrying out German orders is a threat to the ghetto; there would be consequences, killings." He still did not know much either. He asked me if I had any constructive proposition. He thought that any, even symbolic, protest was pointless and could cause serious consequences. I was left alone with my thoughts. The telephones were still working in the ghetto (at least ours was), so I called advocate Szulborski and presented him the state of affairs.[71] I called him about 1 or 2 p.m.; the posters were already put up in the ghetto and the SP surrounded the prisons. Szulborski did not know about the fate of the deported. Nor could he express the position of the Home Army and authorities of the Underground Polish State regarding this fact. I mention that to make you realise how completely alone Czerniaków was left on 22 July. The situation of 22 July was tragic …

As I was an administrative employee, together with a few colleagues we were on duty in our Region, and we did not participate in the round-ups. . . . However, I would like to stress that we did not condemn those who did. The situation was new, we did not have a firm opinion about it yet and we did not know how to behave. . . .

**E. K.-F.:** At which point was it clear to you what "deportation" meant?

**J. L.:** Perhaps not just then … I would like to say first that as I was leaving the Judenrat, as the Germans called the [Jewish] Council, after communicating Czerniaków his wife's request … I already knew what order they had given him. I was already aware of the criminal German tactics: actions against the Jews should be carried out by the Jews themselves, wherever possible. I understood that, but there had been no deportation before and, what is more, the Judenrat was to do that with the hands of the SP. I was astonished by that …

On the second day, i.e. on 23 July, when I went out on the street, I saw the advocate Józef Hertz, commander of Region I. It surprised me that as he stood at the head of his unit, he called the dwellers of each house into the yard and there decided who had the right to stay and who did not. The picture was terrifying to me. I ap-

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limiting the number and verification of the functionaries, which would lead to *elimination of the morally tarnished or those dysfunctional due to lack of abilities and skills, which were partly accepted in the SP in the organisational period as a result of haste*" (AŻIH, Ring I, 233, quoted in B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit.*, p. 211).

[71] It appeared from the interview with Joanna Wiszniewicz that Lewiński contacted Szulborski only a few days after the Great Action began.

proached him and asked, "How can you do that?", to which he answered, asking me ironically, a bit spitefully, "And does my dear colleague have any other idea other than making comments?" Indeed, I did not have any idea at that time; I was aware that failure to carry out the German order could be very dangerous when there was no possibility of either passive or active resistance.[72] But the sight of a Jew sending other Jews to deportation was horrifying. . . .

It is false what they write, that on 23 July anybody in the ghetto knew that the Germans were to liquidate the ghetto, not reduce its size. Not to mention the *Endlösung der Judenfrage*, the solution of the Jewish question. No one knew! On 23 July, in the ghetto there was not a single gun, no Jewish resistance organization. . . . No one really knew what was going on, neither Doctor Milejkowski[73] nor Schiper.[74] Czerniaków was alone. I remember how I wondered, only theoretically, that if there even was a plan and the Jewish Order Service would refuse to deport the people, it would be a perfect pretext for the Germans to act freely, as the Jews were being disobedient. And the Germans needed five minutes to do the same thing the Jewish Order Service did, with incredible efforts struggling with every other Jew. The Ger-

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[72] From the record of my interviews with Jerzy Lewiński it may appear that in the first days of the deportation action he met Józef Hertz twice. His conversation with Hertz, according to what Lewiński said, was an experience of crucial importance to him. Most probably, however, it was only one meeting, on the second day of the deportation action. If there really was any first meeting, initiated by Lewiński, the words Hertz was to have said would deprive of meaning his speech from the following day. In his interview with Susid, Lewiński mentions only the meeting on the second day of the Action: "I would like to tell about an event which took place on the second day of the deportation, in the house at No. 18 Leszno Street. It was the house where Ringelblum had lived before he left the ghetto. A group of constables, led by Józef Hertz, appeared there . . . . The constables started to call the Jews to come downstairs to the yard and to show whether they had an exemption from deportation. I knew that Józef Hertz was active in the underground . . . . I was surprised to see him commanding a group of constables as he was an advocate older than me, highly esteemed. I also knew his attitude to what was going on in the ghetto. I approached him and asked "Józef, do you think that it is right for you to be in charge here? To call people to come downstairs?" In reply, he looked at me, put his strict face on and asked me: "And does my dear colleague have any other idea? Because if you don't, I don't want to listen to comments like that." Indeed I did not have any other idea." (unpublished record of the interview of W. Susid with J. Lewiński, p. 187–188).

[73] Israel Milejowski, a doctor and an activist for voluntary causes, belonged to a group of assimilated Jewish intelligentsia; in the ghetto, he headed the Department of Health of the Judenrat, participated in the medical courses (the so-called Zweibaum's Courses, which were in fact the clandestine Department of Medicine of Warsaw University), and organized scientific hunger research. Died in the January Action (18–21 January 1943).

[74] Ignacy Schiper, born in 1884 in Tarnów, historian, research pioneer in economic history of Polish Jews, researcher in the field of the history of the Yiddish language; member of the Polish parliament before the war, activist of the Zionist Organisation, i.e. general Zionists (the left-wing faction of Al HaMishmar). In the ghetto, he participated in social life as the head of the Welfare Committee for the Warsaw District and member of the Social Commission that tried to mediate between self-help milieus and the Judenrat; at the beginning of the deportations, he was against active defence during the meeting of political circles in the ghetto. He was shot in Majdanek in November 1943.

mans needed only five minutes to convoy 3,000 people; for 6,000 they would have needed 10 minutes. And then, it occurred to my mind that perhaps Hertz was right; we needed to do this on our own just to avoid the situation of 23 July near the *Umschlagplatz*. The Jews from other streets complained that the Jewish Order Service allowed the Germans to take action …

On the second day of the deportation the points were already emptied and the Order Service had to pick people for deportation. Conflicts between the people and the SP emerged. It was often horrifying to see a Jew struggling with another Jew outside a house and the German patrols passing by fuelling it. Once in a street, the Germans noticed Jakow Zakhajm from Łódź,[75] an officer before the war, leading a company of the SP too slowly, maybe even reluctantly. Anyway, they approached and shot him. It stirred incredible confusion – some SP functionaries simply ran back home. At the same time, there was this feeling that by refusing to take part in the deportation, they were shifting this duty onto those who stayed.

About 3 p.m. on that day, Czerniaków noted in his diary that the Jews had delivered 4,000, i.e. less than the Germans demanded.[76] Czerniaków was afraid of the consequences. And what happened then? When the Germans noticed at 4 p.m. that the quota had not been delivered, a German unit consisting of the Shaulis,[77] Latvians and Ukrainians drove near the *Umschlagplatz*. On the corner of Muranowska Street there were three huge houses. They started shooting and the scared people, just as they stood, ran downstairs. When someone wanted to show them a certificate that they worked in a German enterprise, they were whipped or shot. . . . In five minutes, screaming and shooting, the Germans rounded up about 3,000 people and drove them to the *Umschlagplatz*; as many as were needed to meet the quota. This was a new situation. . . .

Still that morning, Czerniaków talked to the representatives of the German deportation staff under Höfle's command. It seemed that he had received a number of exemptions: for the studying youth, for the wives of some of the Judenrat's employees. It seemed that he might be able to blunt the edge of the German orders.

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[75] Zakhajm was indeed mentioned as one of those SP functionaries who paid with his life for rescuing Jews during the deportation; see B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit.*, p. 216. Later on, Lewiński claims that Zakhajm was shot on the third day of the deportation; that is what he said in his interview with Susid: "The third day, 24 July 1942, started very sadly for us. I had a friend, a Polish Army reserve officer, a one-star constable, Kuba Zakhajm. He used a method of passive resistance against the deportation in the ghetto that was similar to mine. What he did differently was that he did not shut off the appointed property, but he and his people kept running around, screaming, with no intention to do anything to chase the dwellers out of the house onto the street. It was a house in Karmelicka Street. Zakhajm saw the Germans coming, so he started to yell at his constables to call the people to leave the house. But the Germans, as it turned out later, had observed his "activities" for some time and guessed that he basically did nothing to chase the people and was only going through the motions. A German officer approached him and shot Zakhajm on the spot. The news of this death and its circumstances spread in the ghetto very fast" (unpublished record of the interview of W. Susid with J. Lewiński, p. 122).

[76] According to Czerniaków, 9,000 people were to be driven to the Umschlagplatz; *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, 385.

[77] Shaulis is the name of soldiers of Latvian military formations in German service.

Leon Tyszka wrote that at 3 p.m. a Jewish SP functionary reported to him that Czerniaków had committed suicide.[78] This is not true: the last entry from the diary was written at exactly the same hour. . . . **Czerniaków was absolutely confused,** he pondered. . . . After some time, he went home. There, his wife told him that presidents of the Centos had visited her to ask Czerniaków to order the SP to save the Jewish intelligentsia. About 5 p.m., Czerniaków received a phone call from the Judenrat; the representatives of the German deportation staff (*Umsieldung*) came and demanded that he come immediately. When he left home, it was about 6 p.m. He went very anxiously, but he calmed his wife down, saying that he would return quickly. They had already waited for him in the Judenrat, as I was told precisely by the advocate Warman. They shouted at Czerniaków that there were too few people on the *Umschlagplatz*, and then (exactly then), with the help of their own people, they drove the missing 3,000 people in five minutes to the *Umschlagplatz*.[79] Before they left, the Germans ordered that the next day the Jewish Order Service was obliged on pain of death to transport to the *Umschlagplatz* not 6,000, but 10,000 people. Given those circumstances, I have little doubt about that, Czerniaków realised that his role was finished; that he could not help the Jews any more in any way. He must have thought about it earlier as he had cyanide with him. He wanted to say somehow that he protested against what was going on. He wanted to manifest his objection. What form of protest could he choose? He wrote on a sheet of paper which order he received from the Germans. He did not leave, as Tyszka writes, any letter, only jotted a few words to his wife and took the poison. It was the only way he could protest. . . . Czerniaków did not have any information about the fate of the deported, but he concluded that if the Germans could instantly fetch those 3,000 to the *Umschlagplatz* in one moment and all the notes of release meant nothing, it signified that something of enormous consequence was bound to happen.

They called from the Judenrat to Czerniaków's wife. She came when I was leaving and asked me to wait [for her][80]. After some time, she left the building. I accompanied her to her house, at Chłodna Street No. 20. She told me that her husband

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[78] Leon Tyszka (Tenenbaum), Czerniaków's personal secretary, wrote his memoirs, *Sukcesy i klęski jednego życia*, London.

[79] In this fragment, Lewiński's story is inconsistent. Earlier on, he had claimed that 3,000 missing people were brought by the Germans about 4 p.m., which meant that Czerniaków, going to the Judenrat about 6 p.m., must have known about that. It appears from the article published in the *Bulletin of the Chief Commission for the Examination of Crimes against the Polish Nation* (*Główna Komisji Badania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu*) that Czerniaków went home knowing about people driven to the *Umschlagplatz* by the Germans, see J. Lewiński, *Śmierć Adama Czerniakowa i ostatnia droga Janusza Korczaka*, *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* Warszawa 1993, vol. 35, p. 170.

[80] From Lewiński's article *Śmierć Adama Czerniakowa i ostatnia droga Janusza Korczaka* it does not appear that he was in the Judenrat at that time. He does not mention it either in the English and slightly modified version of this article published in *Polin*. However, in the text "Prawda o ostatnim dniu życia Adama Czerniakowa" published in *Midrasz*, Lewiński wrote that after 8 p.m. he got the message about the suicidal death of the Judenrat chairman. He went there to learn something more. As he was leaving, he met Felicja Czerniaków, who asked him to wait for her; see J. Lewiński, "Prawda o ostatnim dniu życia Adama Czerniakowa", *Midrasz* 2005, nr 7–8.

wrote a few words to her, very personal. She broke down completely. . . . She said that Judenrat members who were not arrested were supposed to gather soon and choose a new chairman. No one wanted to take this post, so they chose the engineer [Marek] Lichtenbaum, who was Czerniaków's deputy.

I was on my way back home, after this day full of big events and emotions, to my brother's house, at Leszno Street No. 12. It was already about 9 p.m. Near the church, which still stands, a German gendarme was standing. He stopped me and asked if it was true that the Jewish leader took his life. He must have learnt it from someone else before. I confirmed it. He was amazed that the Jews could muster the courage for such a deed! This gendarme, perhaps unwillingly (to my mind), was paying homage to Adam Czerniaków[81].

**E. K.-F.:** What were the consequences of Czerniaków's death for the ghetto?

**J. L.:** On 24 July, on the third day of the deportations, one day after Czerniaków's death, I tried to figure out in the morning whether his death in any way changed the process of the deportation action. According to the information I received, the German deportation staff was to be located at Żelazna Street No. 103, in the house called the Befehlstelle from where the German orders came[82]. The Order Service was still responsible for the deportation, but the Germans were included in it as well, although they tried to engage the SP in direct actions. When the blockades of houses were carried out, the Germans sent the SP, while they stood by and commanded. That is why people hated the SP more and more. The Germans were a constant enemy and they did not think about them. They thought only about the Jewish Order Service and the aversion, or even hatred, it aroused among them. The German tactics of shifting the responsibility was, unfortunately, a complete success.

There was no Czerniaków anymore. His deputy became chairman, engineer Lichtenbaum. The only change in the method of deportation was that the Befehstelle Germans always deployed a German unit. The Jewish units were also to report there. They went to the city together, blocked houses to find the quota of people to be delivered to the *Umschlagplatz*. Thus, Czerniaków's death at that moment passed unnoticed. Everyone was busy with their own fate. As time went by, however, to my mind, it acquired the sense Czerniaków intended – it was a form of protest.

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[81] Lewiński described the same event to Susid as follows: ". . . outside No. 14 Leszno Street, the gendarmes who patrolled the ghetto from 8 p.m. were standing. People did not appear in the street anyway, because they knew that all the unemployed would be deported to the East. They were at home, afraid to show up in the streets. Near the gendarmes, two constables stood. At some point, a German gendarme called the Jewish constable, a group commander, an intellectual, advocate trainee, I do not remember his name, and told him: "This chairman of yours committed suicide, and I thought that Jews were not people at all. He could not resist the enemy, so he killed himself." They repeated it to me later and I told it to Rachela Auerbach." (unpublished record of the interview of W. Susid with J. Lewiński, p. 130)

[82] The Befehlstelle – headquarters of the "Einsatz Reinhardt" commanded by Hermann H**öfle,** who came to Warsaw with a group of experienced SS-men on 15 July 1942, see B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit.*, p. 661.

The Jewish political organisations had just started to wonder what to do. For instance, Doctor Schiper, a well-known Zionist activist, thought that the German orders should be obeyed. His opinion was that the deportations would finish any day and the ghetto, diminished as it might be, would remain. On 24 July, the third day of the deportation, nobody had any other plans. The idea of resistance took several weeks to develop. No one ever expected the Holocaust; no one imagined that people would be sent directly to the death camps. Obviously, the "fate of the people was unknown", and I thought so as well, but I did not expect that in Treblinka they had already built the gas chambers, to where those people brought in were immediately conveyed. . . .

It was a very painful day for me, because nothing changed after Czerniaków's death and people's aversion towards the Jews from the SP rose. I sat at home and pondered what the next day would bring and how I should behave. . . .

I did not know what to do. Throw away the [SP] cap? It would not have changed anything, apart from weakening my personal position, while now I could at least move freely around the ghetto. Colonel Szulborski, whom I contacted via telephone, was also against this. He wanted me to pass him all the information I received. The Polish underground did not know where the Germans were transporting the Jews; they did not even know that Treblinka was the destination. Szulborski also declared that help from the Home Army could lead to some senseless, bloody skirmishes, so it was not possible. I wondered what to do; we had to do something, because if they found us idle in the building of the Region, they could certainly shoot us. It was then that my colleagues and I decided to pretend to participate in the deportation action. . . .

Basically, as I already mentioned, I and some of my colleagues formed an administrative group, so as to avoid front-line duty. Theoretically, I had a chance to evade taking part in deportation actions. However, the moment the deportations started, this division disappeared. There was no clientele for the Region inspectors. My colleagues from the group did not want to participate in the deportations either. If we wanted to evade it, without the criticism of others who had to do that, we (how shall I put it) went through the motions of administrative work in the Region in case someone came in. Meanwhile, on 23 July, Szeryński, released from prison, stood at the head of the SP again. On 24 July, he ordered all the functionaries of the SP (regardless of whether they were employees of the administration or not) to turn up in the SP headquarters in Ogrodowa Street. Following that order, I turned to the commander of Region III, the advocate Henryk Nadel, with the request to split Region III into two parts: he would command the entire Region, while I would command the administrative group. He was a very decent man, but, at the same time, he took the view that we should obey the German order. I got him to do that by begging and he agreed.

On 24 July, I went to the SP headquarters for a briefing. It was led by a former commander of my Region, Captain Albin Fleischman, who showed us a diagram showing which unit of the SP should go to a given place, and from which house they should deliver the [assigned] quota to the *Umschlagplatz*. I told him that the head Nadel agreed to assign an independent task for me. Fleischman assigned two

houses to me,[83] in Nowolipie Street as far as I can remember. We went there with my colleagues and the house committee came down to us. . . . The dwellers were terrified, but when they realised (I told him about that) that we would only pretend to conduct the deportation, they brought us tea and something to eat. We surrounded the houses from the outside, so that the Germans passing by could see that, and we did nothing. . . . In this manner we protected the house in which we found ourselves, at the same time pretending to participate in the deportation action. We did not take anyone. . . . The quota demanded by the Germans was to be delivered by 4 p.m. Thus, we could leave the house around 3 p.m[84]. . . . On my way back, I talked to some people. It hurt me deeply that the Germans were very efficient in shifting people's aversion and hatred onto the Jewish Order Service. And that is how 24 July passed. . . .

From the moral point of view, the situation was ambiguous. By doing what we did, we avoided taking part in the action, actually at someone else's expense. When the war was over and I was a PPS activist, Jewish communists wanted to prosecute me, because I was against the "unification" of the PPS and the PPR, and it was they who announced that I was an SP functionary. The Central Party Court of the PPS, which convened on my request, pronounced that I did not take part in the deportations. (At that time everything was described as "criminal.") Actually, I might have saved my morality, but (I still think about it) it was morally ambiguous, because what I declined to do, the others had to do for me.

On 25 July, we did the same thing as we did the day before. Meanwhile, the deportation action was taking place nearby. At one point, an SP functionary approached me, perhaps he saw I was in charge there, and told me that in the adjacent house lived (I do not remember the name, but he mentioned a Jewish literary critic or a writer[85]) and said that he was not able to turn that man in. . . . I went there and ordered them to leave the man alone … And that is how 25 July passed.

On 26 July I called Szulborski again. He already knew that the Jews were being transported to Treblinka. However, what was going on in Treblinka, he said, was not established by the intelligence service. It was only known that the trains were

[83] While telling the same story to Susid, Lewiński mentioned one house (unpublished record of the interview with W. Susid with J. Lewiński, p. 188).

[84] Lewiński told Susid how he pretended to participate in the deportation as follows: "My instructors from the administrative group from Region III of the Jewish Police, which I commanded, were people who did not want to participate in the deportation action, but at the same time they were afraid that they might lose the privilege of saving their loved ones from deportation. They were perfectly aware that I refused any possibility of collaboration with the Germans. I had been a worker for voluntary causes before the war, I was active in the underground in the ghetto and to participate in this criminal undertaking of the Germans tragic for the Warsaw ghetto population was alien to my mentality. . . . So, the constables subordinated to me knew that I could not take part in it, and having no other idea, I could not condemn councillor Hertz. . . . There were 11 or 12 of us, mostly my colleagues." (unpublished record of the interview of W. Susid with J. Lewiński, p. 186-188)

[85] In the interview of Susid a "Jewish poet" is mentioned (ibid., 190).

emptied upon arrival in Treblinka, but Polish railwaymen were not let into the village itself.

On 27 July, I found Doctor Korczak. We did not know what to do with our Detention Chamber for the Children of the Street. We could not get the food, everyone was scared and no one wanted to help us anymore. Korczak was helpless, but he placed the children from our chamber in the orphanages. That is how this day ended.

**E. K.-F.:** How would you assess the behaviour of the SP in those days?

**J. L.:** In the command of the SP there were many advocates. Only its chief, Szeryński, had been a Polish police officer before the war, while among his assistants were the Czapliński brothers and a famous journalist, Stefan Lubliner. Advocates became commanders of the individual ghetto regions (there were six of them) as well. Region III in Leszno Street, commanded by Captain Fleischman,[86] was an exception, but then I was the administrative head there. Among the advocates, there were people who behaved decently, i.e. they implemented passive resistance. But there were people who, unfortunately, were too eager.

When on 22 July the Germans ordered that the Jewish Order Service start delivering people to the *Umschlagplatz* (as the goods yard was called) at 11 a.m., I went out on the street absolutely shocked. I understood that the situation that had emerged (when a Jew sends another Jew) would trigger a colossal conflict within the community, which would not distinguish whether it was a German order or not. About an hour later, I met the advocate Józef Hertz. He started the deportation action with the unit from his Region. I approached him, astonished, and asked if he was aware of the magnitude of aversion and the consequences it would cause in the Jewish community. Hertz replied with the question: "Do you have any advice or project or are you addressing me just to offend me?" This was the answer of a man who was decent and educated (I knew he was in the PPS-Left), from a well-known Polish family. . . . At that moment I understood it would be difficult to find any other project. The people were not prepared for any resistance, neither passive nor military; the Jewish political organisations were not – one must say – very active at that time ... I knew some Bund activists, e.g. from before the war – the advocate [Maurycy] Orzech.[87] They were active to some extent. But many Zionist activists, such as [Apolinary] Hartglas,[88] had left the country. . . .

People were completely unprepared and were completely incapable of putting up any resistance – that needs to be established once and for all. Apart from that, nobody on 22 July 1942 could say that deportation equalled transport to the extermination camps. Some people write now that they knew; it is not true. The most reliable in this case is the account of General Komorowski "Bór", who wrote in the book *Polska Podziemna* published in London that we knew from the railwaymen

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[86] Earlier on, it was said that he was replaced at this post by Nadel.

[87] Maurycy Orzech (1891–1943), a Bund activist, columnist, editor of party's newspapers. Underground activist of the Warsaw ghetto, murdered by the Gestapo.

[88] Apolinary Maksymilian Hartglas (1883–1953), an advocate, columnist and writer, member of the Central Committee of the Zionist Organisation in Poland, member of the Polish parliament before the war. Died in Israel.

that people were being transported to Treblinka already in July, but that the people were being killed in the gas chambers, we found out only at the end of August.[89] This was written by a man who had no interest in dividing the Jewish community.

**E. K.-F.:** Did you consider leaving the SP in those days?

**J. L.:** I did not want to leave the police for various reasons. First, I was directed to join the SP by Colonel Szulborski, so I had certain obligations. Second, I was aware that by wearing the SP cap I could help my family; I had this on my mind, but I did not manage to do that. . . . The least significant role was that of self-preservation. . . .[90]

**E. K.-F.:** On 3 August you met Janusz Korczak …

**J. L.:** Already on 3 August, Korczak told me that he was trying to learn something about the fate of the deportees. . . . Before the war, Korczak was an officer and kept in touch with a Home Army intelligence member. He heard that they did not know any details. This was confirmed in the above-mentioned Komorowski's book. It was a well-known fact that people were being transported to Treblinka; the engine drivers informed about that. But it was not until the end of August that we found out that the people were sent almost directly to the gas chambers.

On 3 August, during the deportation, when our care for the detained children was somewhat reduced (everyone was more or less busy with their own affairs), I met Korczak in Leszno Street and asked him to take those children to the orphanages. I handed them over on 4 August and those were the children who took part in the dramatic march on 6 August, in which children from the orphanages went to the *Umschlagplatz*, led by Janusz Korczak, Stefania Wilczyńska and others. Contrary to what one reads in certain accounts, including one by a Judenrat clerk, Remba,[91] the march was very sad. Korczak was depressed, and was using a walking stick. Behind him walked Stefania Wilczyńska and those children. Later, after many years, Artur Rudnicki wrote about it. He was a young boy then and went to the *Umschlagplatz* with the bread from the Judenrat. He saw the march and knew what it looked like. Adolf Berman, on the other hand, wrote[92] that the SP functionaries took care of these children at the *Umschlagplatz*. They tried to place the children in a car where

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[89] T. Bór-Komorowski, *The Secret Army*, London 1951.

[90] In his interview with Susid, Lewiński said: "I did not want to throw the [SP] cap away. I needed the service to save myself and my family as well as to carry out my tasks for the underground. I thought that if I informed colonel Szulborski about the tragic situation in the ghetto and he would pass the message to London, there would be some response" (unpublished record of the interview of W. Susid with J. Lewiński, p. 188)

[91] Remba Nachum (1910–1943), secretary of the Warsaw Jewish Community before the war. Employee of the Schools Department and the Secretariat of the Judenrat during the war, cooperated with the underground. During the Great Action, he saved many people from the Umschlagplatz. The author of a missing work about the Umschlagplatz. Died in a camp.

[92] Dr Adolf Berman (1906–1979), member of the Centos management in the Warsaw ghetto, one of the founders of the Anti-Fascist Block. After crossing to the "Aryan side" in 1942, board member of the Jewish National Committee, Żegota's secretary. After the war, member of the KRN (State National Council), head of the CKŻP since 1947. He emigrated in 1950 to Israel, where he died in 1979.

there would not be too many people so that the children would be more comfortable. Thus, on 6 August, we did not know that the children were going to their death. The children did not know, Mrs. Wilczyńska did not know, Janusz Korczak did not know. . . .

**E. K.-F.:** And did you see the march?

**J. L.:** Yes, but only at its beginning, when they went into Karmelicka Street. Rudnicki saw the column entering the *Umschlagplatz*. The rumour that some German officer offered Korczak freedom at the *Umschlagplatz* is also a fabrication. Never did a German officer release a Jew from the *Umschlagplatz*, no one even tried. It is all made up. When the cars arrived, the children were put on the train. . . . The cruel fate of the children, led by an outstanding community worker, writer, doctor and teacher on 6 August 1942 on their last (as it turned out) path needs no additional shades of pathos or myths. Forever it will be a monument more lasting than bronze, a monument of martyrdom that the German criminals brought on a great but defenceless man and his distinguished co-workers and beloved children, only because they were born Jews.

Many wrote about what the deportation looked like when Lichtenbaum was the [Judenrat] chairman. Their descriptions are similar. I would like to talk about the participation of the SP, which was called the police or the militia. In this field, even in Ringelblum's notes, there are many inaccuracies.

When the Great Deportation Action started, the Jewish Order Service consisted of around 2,000 men. At the beginning of the Action, many of them left its ranks, not officially, they just no longer showed up in their regions for the roll-call. Some went to the shops, some just disappeared. At the end of July and in early August there were actually no more than 200 active constables in the SP. Those were the people that were responsible for the later, justified aversion of the ghetto people toward the SP. They were predominantly those who behaved reprehensibly. After six days, on Sunday 26 July,[93] the Germans took over the action. They did that in a manner which suggested that the deportation was still being carried out by the Jewish Police. One platoon of the Order Service was to appear every day at No. 103 Żelazna Street, in the building of the Befehlstelle. From there, they went into action together. It is important that the group of Jewish policemen taking part in it was small and poor in terms of quality. Those people stirred the hatred that was later aimed at the whole Order Service. No one was, however, aware of the mechanism of the German crime. The Germans were very clever ...

Even [Jan] Karski wrote that he saw in the ghetto a Jewish functionary hitting an elderly woman. It is not very plausible, because an elderly woman would not show up on the street at that time. Besides, no Jewish policeman would dare to act like that after Lejkin was shot. Karski wrote it being under the influence of this whole literature ...

**E. K.-F.:** How did the deportation take place?

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[93] From the second week of the Action, the role of the SP functionaries was limited to escorting the captured people to the Umschlagplatz, according to Barbara Engelking; see B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

**J. L.:** I have already spoken about the deportation of Janusz Korczak and the children. In some accounts it is mentioned that the Germans wanted to release Korczak. It is not true. Korczak meant nothing whatsoever for the Germans. There were many such outstanding people at the *Umschlagplatz*. It is also not true that somebody (Doctor Milejkowski or someone else from the Judenrat) turned to Korczak proposing that he cross to the "Aryan side". Everyone who knew Korczak also knew that he would not abandon his children. The Jewish functionaries, who were on duty at the *Umschlagplatz* under command of a mean man, a former boxer, [Mieczysław] Szmerling[94] (he lackeyed the Germans, always obedient to them; he was among the people who created the atmosphere in which the Jews were to blame), tried to ensure the children the best possible conditions on the train. That's how it was on 6 August. The children, Wilczyńska, Korczak left for Treblinka and died there. . . .

The deportation of the ghetto dwellers lasted until 6 September. On that day, the Germans drove away everyone (including the Jewish Order Service, with its office in Karmelicka Street) into a "kettle". They gave the Judenrat 30,000 cards, permits for further stay in the diminished ghetto. First[95] and Lejkin played a considerable role in the ghetto at that time. Szeryński had committed suicide.[96] I mean, those who did not have cards, but did not follow the German regulations, were simply hiding and turned up after the action was finished. In fact, about 70,000 people stayed in the ghetto. That is how the Great Deportation Action came to an end. For this small, remaining ghetto a new life – in some sense – started.

The accusations that the Jews did not resist are naïve. Resistance was impossible. I have mentioned Jakub Zakhajm from Łódź. I knew him personally. On the third day of the deportation, he was shot by the Germans, driving by. They saw him and decided that he was standing around idly, doing nothing, and they simply shot him on the spot. To my mind, as I wrote in my article in *Midrasz*, we cannot reproach the Jews with anything. No other nation would act differently or better. Resistance was not possible before the Jewish Fighting Organisation (ŻOB) was established. It was the organisation that, in order to shake society, issued a few death sentences (for Lejkin and First[97]), which were carried out. Thus, after September 1942, the ŻOB had a huge influence on the life in the ghetto.

**E. K.-F.:** And what were you doing when the deportation was over?

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[94] Mieczysław Szterling, deputy district commander, member of the Jewish Police Command, during the Great Action appointed the commandant of the Umschlagplatz; notorious for his mercilessness, cruelty and accepting bribes; see ibid., 216.

[95] First Izrael, born ca. 1905, in the Warsaw ghetto head of the Economic Department of the Judenrat, collaborated with the Germans. He was killed, sentenced by the underground, in the ghetto's streets in November 1942.

[96] Lewiński probably meant the unsuccessful attempt on Szeryński's life on 20 August 1942; see footnote 21. In September 1942, Szeryński was still alive; he committed suicide on 21 January 1943.

[97] An attempt on Lejkin's life took place on 29 October 1942, see B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *op. cit.*, p. 712. The attempt on First's life was carried out on 29 November 1942, see *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, 102 n.

**J. L.:** I was not formally on duty from 6 September and I went to the Werterfassung.[98] It was a unit responsible for gathering the belongings and sorting them after the action. Because some of the telephones were still working, I kept informing Colonel Szulborski what was going on in the ghetto. He was especially interested in the manner of behaviour of some advocates.

There were still some remains of the market place in the ghetto, where people gave me food, perhaps because I had helped them before when I could.[99] That's how I survived until 18 January. Earlier on, I had produced an authentic Kennkarte made on the "Aryan side", of course, on the basis of a fake birth certificate[100] in the name of Stanisław Manowiecki. Although Lewiński is not a Jewish surname, my brother was an advocate and I was well known as well, so I decided to change the surname. I crossed to the "Aryan side" for good later on.

I would like (as I wrote lately[101]) not to leave a false impression in history that the Jews were passive. . . . They behaved the way they could. Everyone wanted to live but they had no means to do that. Help from the "Aryan side" was negligible. They excused themselves that the help would not change anything. The Jews who crossed to the "Aryan side," did not have an easy life. Many books have been published about the blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*). . . . It was very difficult to find a place to live. Besides, on the "Aryan side" a group of such hooligans prowled; perhaps

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[98] Werterfassungstelle – an SS enterprise which sorted and gathered the belongings of murdered Jews. As Lewiński put it in his interview with Susid, he was expelled from the SP: "On 6 September 1942, I was arrested by the constables and imprisoned in the Judenrat jail, in the building near a small square in Zamenhofa Street. The order to imprison me was issued by the above-mentioned Izrael First. The main accusation he made was that I spitefully avoided fulfilling my assigned duties while wearing the SP insignia. . . . The news about my imprisonment spread around the ghetto very fast and my colleagues, Adler and Nadel, started to act. The SP Court gathered, headed by the advocate [Mojżesz] Maślanko. The juror in it was a high-ranking SP functionary, Stanisław Kroszczor. Adler and Nadel defended me, and the prosecutor was counsellor Nowogródzki. I hate to say it, but he did it because of his cowardice. . . . The Court decided to deprive me of my rank of an officer of the SP. I was demoted, or in fact expelled. I managed to escape death once more. I was released from prison. . . ." (unpublished record of the interview of W. Susid with J. Lewiński, pp. 204-205). According to what Lewiński testified to Wiszniewicz, on 6 September he was not a member of the 300 SP functionaries left, but he was arrested later, when he was already working in the Werterfassungstelle, for wearing the SP cap unlawfully (record of J. Wiszniewicz's interview with J. Lewinski).

[99] Probably the deportation period is meant.

[100] The version of these events presented by Lewiński to Susid seems to be much less plausible: ". . . At the end of August 1942, I went out of the ghetto to meet my underground supervisor, Colonel Szulborski, and discuss with him the issues concerning my crossing to the "Aryan side". It was then that I collected the ID card in the City Council (in Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, where Warsaw University is now located), in the name Stanisław Manowiecki, produced on the basis of someone else's birth certificate, submitted by Col. Szulborski in the Council" (unpublished record of the interview of W. Susid with J. Lewiński, p. 202). At the same time, in his interview with Wiszniewicz, Lewiński claimed that in autumn of 1942 he crossed to the "Aryan side" repeatedly, and then he took care of his and his mother's crossing to the other side of the wall. Finally, he stayed on the "Aryan side" from March 1943.

[101] J. Lewiński, "W obronie godności ofiar nazizmu", *Midrasz* 2006, nr 4.

some of them became blackmailers. They tracked where the Jews were and they did not care so much about giving them in, as about getting ransom from the Jews. Later however, they showed the Germans or Polish Blue Police who was a Jew whenever they could. . . .

I was in the ghetto on 18 January, when the Jews from the ŻOB opposed the Germans and the collaborators for the first time. Obviously, this resistance could not be as efficient as it was on 19 April. Too little time had passed to prepare everything, but it was already a serious sign. . . .

**E. K.-F.:** And do you remember anyone recognising you as a former functionary of the Order Service after the deportation finished?

**J. L.:** I did not have any trouble because of that in the ghetto. Anyway, I had a fairly good reputation, because I got into a personal conflict with First, for a number of reasons. When he was shot, they came to me to see if I was home. But I could not admit to what I had not done. Besides, there were also situations like the one during the deportation when at some point some functionaries came running to me. They knew my attitude to all that; it was about a Jewish writer or intellectual, so I took two of my colleagues and we got this man out. I would not like to be a judge of myself, but I think that nobody could write anything bad about me. However, there was a book about the Jewish Order Service published, written by two ladies. I read in it that, among other things, there was nothing about me in the file of the Citizens' Tribunal of the CKŻP, although they read in Gombiński's text that I played some part in the deportations.[102] I went to the Jewish Historical Institute and got a letter (which I still have) to confirm that my name was not mentioned there. Why they wrote it, I do not know. . . .

Immediately after the war, everything looked different. As soon as the Lublin government arrived in Warsaw, I was appointed prosecutor by the Minister of Justice; my task was to prosecute Nazi crimes. A serious problem emerged then: in the ghetto I worked under my real name, so everybody knew who Jerzy Lewiński

[102] Probably Aldona Podolska's book is meant; the author wrote: "Among the documents of the Jewish Historical Institute Archives, there is also a file with the name Jerzy Lewiński. However, it does not contain any documents. Lewiński was a member of the SP in the Warsaw ghetto. His name is mentioned several times in Stanisław Gombiński's diary. It is not known, however, whether proceedings against him were initiated. There is only general information about the rehabilitation of SP members in the file. All the former constables could report to the Citizens' Tribunal to be rehabilitated until 15 January 1947. It is difficult to establish whether Lewiński responded to this announcement. The existence of the file with his name suggests that he was well known in the ghetto and after the war, and someone was interested in his activity in the SP. It is also possible that Lewiński's trial took place and the documents were missing"; see A. Podolska, *Służba Porządkowa w getcie warszawskim w latach 1940–1943*, Wydawnictwa Fundacji "Historia Pro Futuro", Warszawa 1996, p. 95. Jan Jagielski also remembers this visit of Lewiński in the JHI. Indeed, the personal file of Jerzy Lewiński, located in the folder Citizens' Tribunals of the CKŻP, was then empty. While preparing this text, I found out, however, that it contains 58 pages closely related to the trial against Jerzy Lewiński in the Citizens' Tribunal of CKŻP in 1948. Most likely, they were lost in the mess; the documents returned to their place as a consequence of the ordering in the Jewish Historical Institute Archives materials. The mess of the trial files speaking in favour of Lewiński was certainly not good for him; it is not clear either who was to have benefited from the loss.

was. Unexpectedly, I became the most famous constable. I learnt from Doctor Adolf Berman, chairman of the CKŻP, whom I knew personally, that the minister was aware of my past. He even asked Berman about me and the latter approved of my candidacy. It caused many problems later on, but I kept performing my duties as a prosecutor.

Before the war, I was an activist of the Independent Socialist Youth Union, the youth wing of the PPS. After the war, different PPS activists asked me to continue my activity in the PPS. I agreed. However, I was against the dissolution of the PPS and the establishment of the Polish United Workers' Party. As a result, when Gomułka and Loga-Sowiński (with whom I had rather good relations) lost their power, and a list of about thirty people to be dismissed from the PPS was drawn, I was in the fourth place. I was expelled and suddenly I became a man threatened with prison or, possibly, a show trial. Fortunately, I managed to avoid it and I landed up in Film Polski (Polish Film), but that's another story. . . .

**Key words**
Holocaust, Warsaw Ghetto, Jewish Police, Deportation – Great Action, Polish Underground and Warsaw ghetto

Translated by *Jerzy Giebułtowski* and *Patrycja Rojek*