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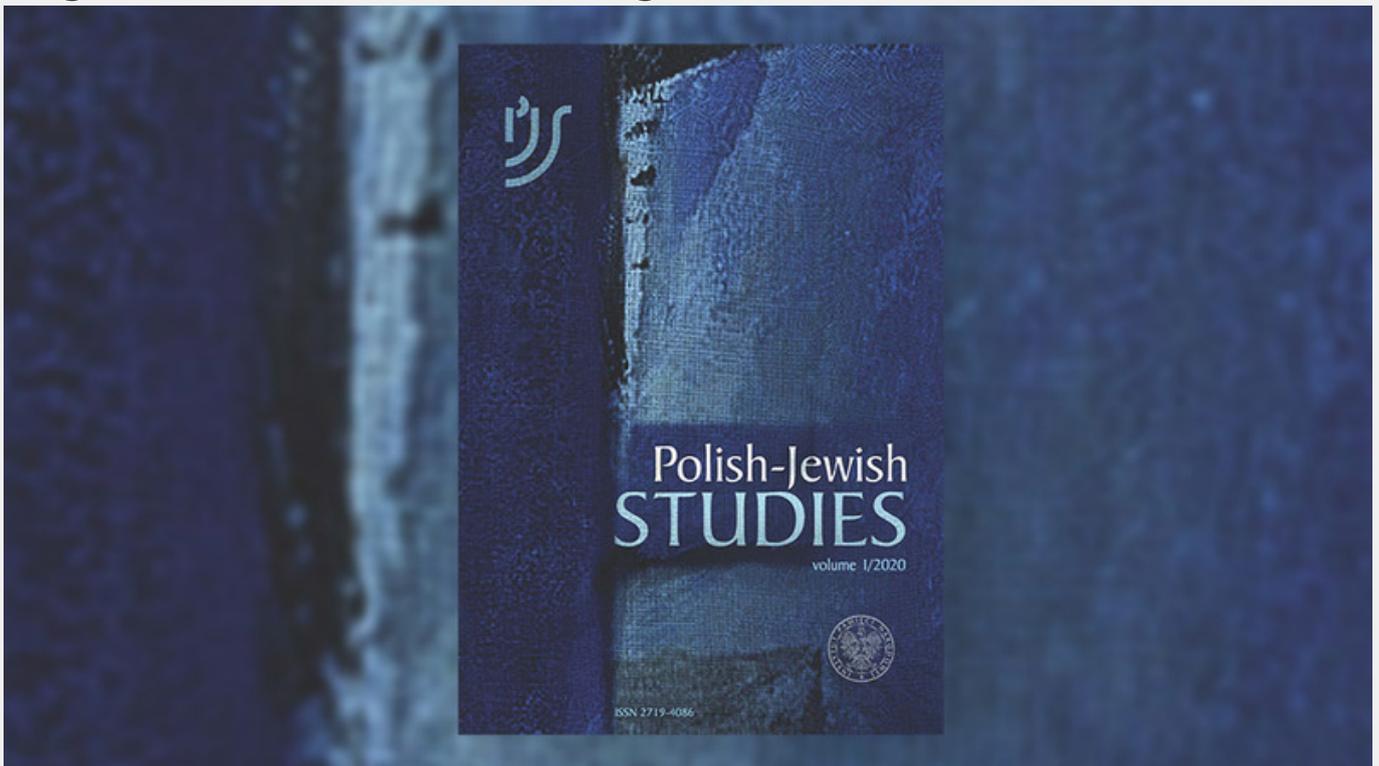
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24.04.2024, 22:09

20.01.2021

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Tomasz Domański Ph.D., "The Trial of the Polnische Polizei Functionaries from Wodzisław Accused of Crimes against Jews (held according to the regulations of the 31 August 1944 Decree)"



After the German occupiers established the General Governorate in part of the occupied Polish territories, on 17 December 1939 they appointed a police force called Polnische Polizei (Policja Polska Generalnego Gubernatorstwa, Policja Polska),<sup>1</sup> commonly known in Polish as the 'Navy Blue Police' (policja granatowa) after the colour of

their uniforms. In comparison with the pre-war State Police (Policja Państwowa) and the police forces formed in other German-occupied countries, its structures were considerably more limited. The Germans did not organise command structures at levels higher than the city and municipal police. They created the position of liaison officer at each Distrikt level. The police stations would usually be located at the same places where they had been before the war.<sup>2</sup> As a structure, the Polnische Polizei was a police formation of the German Reich, and it constituted a part of the German 'order police', the Ordnungspolizei. The Polnische Polizei did not continue the activities of the Polish State Police at all, although most of the pre-war policemen were forced to serve in it.

The tasks of the Polnische Polizei were initially no different than those performed by the pre-war police. They concerned the maintenance of public safety, enforcing law and order and containing ordinary crime. However, the Polnische Polizei officers were supposed – step by step – to implement the German occupation policy. They were instructed to fight the Polish Underground, to arrest and send people to forced labour (they also assisted in the round-ups conducted by the gendarmerie or the Gestapo), collect the mandatory quotas of agricultural produce, requisite livestock and respect all the ordinances issued by the German authorities. One of the essential tasks of the Polnische Polizei officers was to implement the German policy towards Jews. These instructions have recently become a subject of research and analysis by historians and researchers in related fields; therefore, the knowledge concerning the occupation structures and the activities

of particular Polnische Polizei officers is constantly expanding.<sup>3</sup> This article discusses the activities of the Polnische Polizei officers based in the Wodzisław police station (located in Jędrzejów district in Radom province [Kreishauptmannschaft Jędrzejów, Distrikt Radom]) towards Jews during World War II. These events will be analysed on the basis of the minutes from a post-war trial. Some minor threads concerning this matter have already been taken up by Jan Grabowski and Sylwia Szymańska-Smolkin.<sup>4</sup> The abovementioned matters were also mentioned by Michał Nowak, a regional history enthusiast. In 2004, he published a study on the local volunteer Fire Brigade (Ochotnicza Straż Pożarna). He stated that the Jews from Wodzisław “were first killed by bullets fired by Vlasov soldiers (Ukrainians in German service) and the Polnische Polizei men.” The author may have meant the collaborative formations which were commonly – in fact erroneously – called Vlasov soldiers. He further mentioned that Polish nationals had secretly contributed to the deaths of Jews by “murdering Jews for profit or out of fear of denunciation.”<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the author did not include any sources for the quoted information.

So far, the trial of two officers, Józef Machowski and Józef Klepka, who were accused of murdering Jews during World War II among other crimes, has not been analysed thoroughly. The trial was pending in the Court of Appeal in Kielce at the turn of the 1950s. The trials held under the 31 August 1944 Decree<sup>6</sup> had – in the reality of the Stalinist regime in Poland – various characters and courses (many defendants tried for other alleged crimes were also accused under the regulations of this Decree, such as the bishop of Kielce Czesław Kaczmarek<sup>7</sup>). In some cases, innocent persons were sentenced, or the degree of the accused

persons' guilt was distorted.<sup>8</sup> The text aims to analyse the trial of the police officers in question, and to assess the judicial credibility of the proceedings. Wodzisław is a small town located in Jędrzejów district. Before World War II, it was inhabited by 2838 Jews, who made up 73.2% of the population.<sup>9</sup> The German occupation authorities set up a ghetto in Wodzisław in 1940. As a result of the deportation of Jewish people from Jędrzejów, among other places, the number of citizens of the ghetto rose to almost 4000.<sup>10</sup> The prevailing conditions were profoundly challenging, aggravated by a fire at the end of 1940.<sup>11</sup> As described by Jan Grabowski: "As in so many other small ghettos, there were no walls or fences to separate the Jews from their 'Aryan' neighbours. Nor were there any Germans to speak of in Wodzisław; the forces of order were represented by the local Blue Policemen."<sup>12</sup> When quoting the abovementioned source, Jan Grabowski did not notice that the Wodzisław ghetto auxiliary police force (Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst, JO <sup>13</sup>) (13 men in strength) was the only substantial police force on the spot, and its activities are virtually unknown.<sup>14</sup>

In fact, there were no other German police units present during the German occupation of Wodzisław apart from the Polnische Polizei. The other units were stationed in Krzelów and Lubcza, whereas only a Polnische Polizei station was organised in Wodzisław, using the building used by the pre-war State Police.<sup>15</sup> Until 1943, the following functionaries served at the station in Wodzisław:

Sergeant Władysław Buczek,<sup>16</sup> Platoon Officer Ludwik Szczukocki,<sup>17</sup> Corporal Władysław Wójcikiewicz,<sup>18</sup> Corporal Wacław Malec, Police Candidate Zdzisław Węcowski,<sup>19</sup> Platoon Officer Józef Klepka and

Platoon Officer Józef Machowski. Buczek was the commanding officer of the unit until February 1943. For security reasons, the Polnische Polizei stations in Wodzisław and Nawarzyce were merged in the same year, raising the total number of functionaries to nine.<sup>20</sup>

The scarcity of background sources makes it challenging to present a broad view of the activities of the Polnische Polizei officers in Wodzisław during the German occupation. One of the elements difficult to analyse is the possible underground activity of Commandant Buczek. It is very likely that he cooperated with the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK). According to a post-war unsigned account of Kazimierz Czech a.k.a. 'Bielicki', Buczek, when threatened by Germans with arrest, escaped with his family in 1943. As he deserted, he provided information to the Underground about the weapons stored in the station's attic. Ultimately, the arrest did not take place.<sup>21</sup> After the war, Buczek did not mention his cooperation with the Home Army, but in 1967 he testified about the circumstances of his desertion in the following words: "In winter 1943, some head of a nearby village ordered a Jewish woman with her child to be brought to the police station. When I wanted to release her, a policeman named Machowski, my subordinate, informed van der Brelie, the commander of the gendarmerie in Jędrzejów, about it over the phone,<sup>22</sup> and he ordered me to shoot her. To avoid the order, I deserted from my post and hid in Warsaw under a false name until the end of the occupation. Since then I have had no connections with Wodzisław."<sup>23</sup> Another Polnische Polizei officer from Wodzisław, Zdzisław Węcowski, was described in the AK intelligence report as follows: "extremely zealous towards the occupier, and the personal and trusted spy of Oberleutnant Brelie." He was

abducted by an unknown five-member unit and hanged in 1943. The nearby German police troops tried to stop the attackers. A pursuit was launched, but the perpetrators were not caught. As a consequence of Węcowski's assassination, a large party of Schutzpolizei arrived in Wodzisław on 1 August 1943, surrounded the whole town and gathered the inhabitants in the market. A Schupo [Schutzpolizei] Commandant from Krzelów gave a speech to the assembled people. He accused them that of not being ashamed as "the bandits had stolen a policeman." He also demanded that the residents catch and kill the bandits.<sup>24</sup>

The analysis of these events needs an additional focus on the two persons charged: Józef Machowski and Józef Klepka. Machowski was born on 19 August 1907 in Dąbrówka Niemiecka (Nowy Sącz District). He graduated primary school and became a locksmith. Interrogated as a suspect in 1950, he stated that he was a milkman and whey-maker by profession. He joined the Polish State Police on 1 June 1933. Until the outbreak of the war, according to his personal card, he served only at the police station in Wodzisław, and he was assigned to the Polnische Polizei on 15 December 1939.<sup>25</sup> After 1945, Machowski worked in Tarnów and in Rzeszów at the Samopomoc Chłopska Cooperative.<sup>26</sup> Klepka was born in 1896 in Mikołowice (Busko district). After graduating from a primary school in 1910, he went to the Dąbrowa Coal Basin, where he worked in a mine until 1914. In the same year, he returned to his hometown of Mikołowice, where he was employed as a lineman. He enlisted in the Polish Army in 1920 and served in the 57th Infantry Regiment. Thereafter he joined the State

Police, and served at the police station in Brest (1 October 1923–15 March 1925) and the following stations: Sędziszów (15 March 1924–1933) and Wodzisław (1933–1 September 1939). Thereafter, he was assigned to the Polnische Polizei on 15 December 1939.<sup>27</sup> On 7 October 1943, he was released from service due to health reasons and returned to Mikołowice, where he stayed until spring 1945. After the war he worked at the Tax Office in Busko-Zdrój as a bailiff.<sup>28</sup> Klepka was reinstated by the Rehabilitation and Qualification Committee for former Polnische Polizei officers in 1946. A favourable opinion of him was issued by the Milicja Obywatelska station (the Communist criminal and public order police) in Wodzisław and the Municipality Office in Wodzisław, stating that Klepka “had not been working for the occupiers”.<sup>29</sup>

The details of Machowski’s and Klepka’s service in 1939–1942 are unknown. Probably they performed their duties towards the Poles and Jews in accordance with German orders. Machowski certainly participated in the classes on price control for policemen in March 1942.<sup>30</sup> Finally, attention should be paid to the actions taken by Machowski and Klepka against the Jews. A proper picture of Machowski’s attitude is given by Buczek and in the testimony of Ignacy Zinger, according to whom Machowski behaved “brutally towards the Jewish population. In the first years, he carried out house searches and took the property of those people.”<sup>31</sup> Another witness, Marian Pałasz, claimed that in 1941 Machowski “took away the meat and other food from the Polish and Jewish people.”<sup>32</sup> Was he the only policeman who acted in this way? Apparently not: on 15 February 1942 Commanding Officer Buczek reported: “...this police station seized 30 kg of beef

from slaughter carried out in secret by Lejzor Nawarski <sup>33</sup> in Wodzisław.”<sup>34</sup> However, Machowski’s attitude visibly distinguished itself, as he was mentioned in one of the AK’s intelligence reports as a suspected “Gestapo agent.”<sup>35</sup>

## Footnotes:

1 The text uses the German term *Polnische Polizei* as it was a police of the General Governorate, being a part of the German police force.

2 Concerning the organisational structure and the primary tasks of the *Polnische Polizei*, the monograph written by Adam Hempel is still relevant. See A. Hempel, *Pogrobowcy kłęski. Rzecz o policji „granatowej” w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945*, Warsaw 1990.

3 Among the recent scholarly publications concerning the *Polnische Polizei*, the following deserve attention: J.A. Młynarczyk, ‘Pomiędzy współpracą a zdradą. Problem kolaboracji w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie – próba syntezy’, *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2009, no. 1, pp. 113–121; R. Litwiński, ‘Komisja rehabilitacyjno-kwalifikacyjna dla byłych policjantów (1946–1952)’, *Dzieje Najnowsze* 2004, no. 1, pp. 117–134; *idem*, ‘Policja granatowa w okupacyjnej Warszawie w obronie bezpieczeństwa i porządku publicznego. Od podległości wobec okupanta do współpracy z Polskim Państwem Podziemnym’ in *Porządek publiczny i bezpieczeństwo w okupacyjnej Warszawie*, ed. R. Spałek, Warsaw 2018, pp. 89–118; *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 1–2, ed. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski, Warsaw 2018. In the last case, the authors took a biased approach towards the *Polnische Polizei*’s activities. The reader of this work may get the impression that comments considering the German provenance of this formation were deliberately not included. They used the name given by the Germans (*Polnische Polizei*, Polish Police), but frequently write it as ‘*polska policja*’, not capitalised and with no quotation marks. They did not explain the real significance of this name, which also linguistically strengthens the impression of a Polish (not German) character of this formation. T. Domański, ‘Korekta obrazu? Refleksje źródłoznawcze wokół książki „Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski”’, p. 10, <https://pamiec.pl/pa/biblioteka-cyfrowa/publikacje/33085,Korekta-obrazu-Refleksje-zrodloznawcze-wokol-ksiazki-Dalej-jest-noc-Losy-Zydow-w.html>, accessed 6 August 2019.

4 J. Grabowski, ‘The Polish Police Collaboration in the Holocaust’, [https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20170502-Grabowski\\_OP.pdf](https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20170502-Grabowski_OP.pdf), accessed 31 June 2018; S. Szymańska-Smolkin, *Fateful Decisions: The Polish Policemen and the Jewish Population of Occupied Poland, 1939–1945*, n.p., 2017, pp. 121–125.

5 M.K. Nowak, *Z nurtem i pod prąd. 100 lat OSP Wodzisław na tle historii ruchu strażackiego w regionie, Wodzisław – Cracow 2004*, p. 68.

6 The decree of 31 August 1944 on the punishment for fascist-Hitlerite criminals guilty of manslaughter and maltreatments of civilians and prisoners of war and for traitors of the Polish nation (*Dziennik Ustaw* 1946, 69, p. 377). The Decree was amended five times between 1945 and 1949; it has already been subject to numerous analyses and commentaries.

7 Wokół procesu biskupa kieleckiego Czesława Kaczmarka. Wspomnienia nazaretanki s. Izabelli Machowskiej, ed. T. Domański, D. Kozieł, Kielce 2013.

8 T. Domański, 'Z dziejów policji granatowej. Proces Edwarda Krepskiego' in 225 lat policji w Polsce. Geneza i ewolucja policji, ed. P. Majer, M. Seroka, Olsztyn 2017.

9 K. Urbański, Gminy żydowskie małe w województwie kieleckim w okresie międzywojennym, Kielce 2006, p. 170.

10 The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos during the Holocaust gives only general information on the young Jews who escaped from Wodzisław (The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos during the Holocaust, ed. G. Miron, S. Sulhani, vol. 2, Jerusalem 2009, p. 939; J. Kraemer, 'Wodzisław' in Encyclopedia of camps and ghettos 1939-1945, vol. 2, part A: Ghettos in German-occupied Eastern Europe, ed. M. Dean, M. Hecker, n.p., 2012, p. 344). Robert Seidel established that the number of Jews in the Wodzisław ghetto amounted to 3800 (R. Seidel, Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Polen. Der Distrikt Radom, Paderborn - München - Wien - Zürich 2006, p. 231, for further information on the ghetto in Wodzisław see there).

11 Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (hereinafter JHI Archive), collection Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna (Jüdische Soziale Selbsthilfe - Jüdisches Hilfskomitee, hereinafter ŻSS), 211/1115, Wodzisław, Jędrzejów district, 8 November 1940, p. 12.

12 J. Grabowski, The Polish Police..., p. 11.

13 This article uses the names introduced by German occupation authorities. Functionaries of the JO were commonly referred to as OD-Mann, OD-Männer.

14 J. Kraemer, Wodzisław..., p. 344.

15 W. Czarny, 'Ruch oporu na ziemi wodzisławskiej', Przyjaciel Wodzisławia 1986, no. 2, p. 5.

16 Władysław Buczek (born on 13 January 1894 in Bejsce), served at the following police stations: Kościelec (18 August 1920-1 August 1932), Opatowiec (1 August 1932-10 March 1934), Wiślica (10 February 1934-1 March 1939) and Wodzisław (1 March 1939-1 September 1939). He served in Polnische Polizei from 15 December 1939. Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej (Archives of Institute of National Remembrance, hereinafter AIPN), collection Der Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD für den Distrikt Radom (hereinafter KdS), 105/131, Personal Card Index [of Władysław Buczek], Wodzisław, 1 December 1941, p. 62.

17 Ludwik Szczukocki (born on 27 March 1894 in Magdalenka), served at the following police stations: Sarny (1 November 1923-31 March 1925) and in the Jędrzejów district: in Raków, Jędrzejów, Motkowice and Wodzisław (1 April 1925-1 September 1939). He served in the Polnische Polizei from 15 December 1939 (AIPN, KdS, 105/131, Personal Card Index [of Ludwik Szczukocki], Wodzisław, 1 December 1941, p. 65).

18 Władysław Wójcikiewicz (born on 19 June 1904 in Mstów), served at the police station in Sosnowiec (28 September 1928-1 September 1939). He served in the Polnische Polizei from 16 December 1939 (AIPN, KdS, 105/131, Personal Card Index [of Władysław Wójcikiewicz], Wodzisław, 2 December 1941, p. 66).

19 More detailed information concerning Waclaw Malec and Zdzisław Węckowski could not be established. Malec was born on 6 March 1916 in Słupia in Jędrzejów district. Węckowski was born on 27 July 1927 in Antonin (AIPN, 3060/27, [List of the Polnische Polizei guards in active service in Radom Distrikt], n.p., n.d., p. 65).

20 Archiwum Akt Nowych (The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw, hereinafter AAN), Collection Armia Krajowa (Home Army, hereinafter AK), 203/XIII-9, vol. 1, OdeB of the Army and paramilitary units 23 December 1942-22 January 1943, n.p., n.d., p. 20; AAN, Collection Archiwum Środowiska Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej Obwód Jędrzejów (Archives of the Circle of Home Army Soldiers in Jędrzejów Province, hereinafter AŚŻAKJ), 21, Copy of OdeB of the police, military and paramilitary forces, n.p., 29 September 1943, p. 133; AIPN, Collection Zbiór akt Policji Polskiej w Dystrykcie Radomskim (Collection of the Polish Police Records in Distrikt Radom), 3060/27, [List of the Polnische Polizei guards in active service in Radom Distrikt], n.p., n.d., p. 44; Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Delegation in Kielce (hereinafter AIPN Ki), Collection Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu - Instytut Pamięci Narodowej w Kielcach [Regional Committee for Investigation of Crimes against the Polish People - Institute of National Remembrance in Kielce] 1991-1999 (hereinafter OKBZpNP), 53/1794, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Władysław Buczek, Kielce, 7 November 1967, p. 7).

21 AIPN Ki, Collection Sąd Apelacyjny w Kielcach (Court of Appeal in Kielce, hereinafter SAK), 126/278, Testimony of Władysław Buczek at the Main Hearing, Kielce, 6 September 1950, p. 76; AAN, AŚŻAKJ, 21, Account of Kazimierz Czech alias 'Bielicki', n.p., n.d., p. 74.

22 Oberleutnant van der Brelie was the commanding officer of the German gendarmerie in Jędrzejów district (T.

Domański,A.Jankowski,Represje niemieckie na wsi kieleckiej 1939–1945, Kielce 2011, p.71).

23 AIPN Ki, OKBZpNP, 53/1794, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Władysław Buczek,Kielce,7 November 1967,p.9.

24 AAN, AŚŻAKJ, 21, Copy of Report,n.p.,n.d.,pp.85–86.

25 AIPN, KdS, 105/131, Personal Card [of Józef Machowski], Wodzisław, 3 December 1941,

p.64; AIPN Ki,126/279,Minutes of the Interrogation of the Suspect Józef Machowski, Gorlice, 7 March 1950, p. 58.

26 AIPN Ki, SAK, 126/278, Letter from Stefania Machowska to the Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Appeal in Kielce, Rzeszów, 5 July 1950, p. 24.

27 Interrogated as a suspect, Klepka said that he enlisted in the Polnische Polizei in 1940 after returning from evacuation (AIPN Ki, 127/279, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Suspect Józef Klepka, Jędrzejów, 28 October 1949, p. 21; AIPN, KdS, 105/131, Personal Card [Józef Klepka], Wodzisław, 1 December 1941, p. 63).

28 AIPN Ki, 127/279, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Suspect Józef Klepka,Jędrzejów, 28 October 1949, p.22; AAN, Collection Akta byłych funkcjonariuszy Policji Państwowej, Straży Więziennej, Korpusu Ochrony Pogranicza i Straży Granicznej (Files of former State Police, Prison Guard, Border Protection Corps and Border Guard officers,hereinafter AF),[Józef Klepka],Curriculum Vitae,Busko-Zdrój,26 June 1946,pp.271–272.

29 AAN, AF, [Józef Klepka], Certificate, Warsaw,31 December 1946,p.268;AAN,AF,[Józef Klepka],Certificate,Wodzisław,6 August 1946, p.273;AAN,AF, [Józef Klepka],Personal data,Wodzisław,3 July 1946, p.275.

30 AIPN, Collection Der Stadt-und Kreishauptmann Kielce (hereinafter SKK), 652/64,Letter to the Gendarmerie Commanding Officer in Jędrzejów district,n.p.,n.d.,p.10.

31 AIPN Ki, SAK, 126/278, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Ignacy Zinger,Katowice,2 October 1950, p.107.

32 AIPN Ki, SAK, 126/279, Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Marian Pałasz,Gorlice, 16 March 1950,p.57.

33 Presumably this refers to Lejzor Nawarski, who was then in hiding with his family, hidden by the Poles Julian Laskowski and his sister Józefa Karbowniczek ('Laskowski Julian, Karbowniczek Józefa' in Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata. Ratujący Żydów podczas Holokaustu. Polska, ed. I. Gutman, Cracow 2009, p. 391); the entry erroneously gives the place of hiding as Wodzisław Śląski.

34 AIPN, SKK, 652/64, Letter from the Commander of the Polnische Polizei Station in Wodzisław to the District Commander of the Polnische Polizei in Jędrzejów, Wodzisław, 16 February 1942, p. 32. The Kreislandwirt in Jędrzejów decided to hand out the meat to policemen from Wodzisław and Jędrzejów. A confiscation of property was also carried out at Hejnoch Ajzowicz's in Wodzisław,and the confiscated footwear was brought to the Polnische Polizei's district station in Jędrzejów (AIPN,SKK,652/64,Phonogram no.543,n.p.,n.d.,p.30;AIPN,SKK,652/64,Letter from the Kreishauptmannschaft in Jędrzejów to the Polnische Polizei's District Station in Jędrzejów, Jędrzejów, 27 March 1942, p. 66).

35 AAN, AŚŻAKJ,19,List of Persons in the Jędrzejów District Actively Cooperating and Suspected of Cooperating with the Occupier as Informants, Agents and Denunciators,n.p.,

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