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Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe

Part A

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BIAŁYSTOK REGION (DISTRIKT BIALYSTOK)

Distrikt Białystok consisted of territories mostly from eastern Poland's pre-World War II Białystok województwo (without the Suwałki region). Its borderlands also included small parts of the Warsaw, Poleskie, and Nowogródek województwa.

Szymon Datner calculated the September 1, 1939, population of the Białystok Region at 1.5 million, including 240,000 Jews, and noted the arrival of another 100,000 Jewish refugees after the region came, from September 17, under Soviet occupation. About a third of the refugees subsequently were deported to the Soviet interior. Sara Bender placed the population on August 1, 1941, the day the Distrikt officially was established, at 1.13 million, including 150,000 Jews.

On July 17, 1941, Adolf Hitler named Erich Koch, the Oberpräsident and Gauleiter of East Prussia, the Chef der Zivilverwaltung for Distrikt Białystok. The transfer to civilian administration occurred only on August 15. Even then, the Distrikt's northeastern borderlands, near Lithuania, were incorporated only on October 1. They included Grodno and the northern parts of the pre-war Grodno powiat (county).



Pre-war portrait of Erich Koch, appointed Chef der Zivilverwaltung for Distrikt Białystok in 1941.

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Before then, a military administration had governed the Distrikt. Under its tenure, the 3 largest ghettos were established in Białystok, Grodno, and Łomża and about half of the 61 provincial ghettos. The physical devastation and violence in the first two months of the war, a by-product of larger German military and strategic priorities, helped determine an irregular regional pattern of ghettoization: remnant ghettos predominated in the western borderlands near East Prussia; more traditional ghettos emerged in the north, near Grodno and Sokółka, and south, near Bielsk Podlaski; and open ghettos predominated in more devastated areas, including in the east near Wołkowysk and in the center, around Białystok.

The German invasion of the USSR on June 22, 1941, devastated some Jewish communities immediately. Hundreds perished as early morning artillery shelling set Sopoćkinie ablaze. The material devastation was greatest in the Białystok pocket, where five days of aerial bombardment leveled Wołkowysk, Wołpa, and Zelwa.

Upon occupying a locality, local German military commandant's offices (Ortskommandanturen) ordered Jews to surrender radios and bicycles and mandated forced labor. Within about two weeks, the regional military command, in Łomża, had issued to all Jews in its territories the so-called rules of conduct, including requirements to wear either yellow stars on their clothing or white armbands with yellow stars. A subsequent order, likely on July 20, 1941, required Jewish communal leaders to submit population censuses and commanded all Jews to return home, warning they were forbidden, on penalty of death, from leaving their places of census registration. The same order mandated the establishment of Jewish Councils (Judenräte).¹

During the first two months of the war, Einsatzgruppen, supported by the SS, Order Police, and Wehrmacht units, conducted small killing Aktions of suspected Communists and intellectuals in almost every Jewish community. The violence initially was most massive and rapidly accelerated in and around Białystok. On June 27, 1941, the day after the Germans had occupied Białystok, Police Battalion 309 murdered 2,000 to 3,000 Jews, including some 800 people burned alive in the Great Synagogue. A July 8 visit by Heinrich Himmler brought orders to execute 2,000 Jewish men. Police Battalions 316 and 322 killed 4,000 instead. On June 26–28, a small German unit (or perhaps units) set fire to Dąbrowa Białostocka, Zabłudów, Jasionówka, and Trzcianne, likely because their inhabitants almost all were Jewish. During the Jasionówka fire, on June 27, local Poles helped the Germans murder 70 to 150 Jews; a day later in Trzcianne, another group of locals abetted the murder of some 800 Jews.

In the west, violence accelerated after orders from Reinhard Heydrich, on June 29, 1941, for the Security Police to mobilize the local population and, on July 4, for Einsatzgruppen to clear Jews from the borderlands near East Prussia. A July 4 visit by Hermann Göring to Łomża intensified violence there, as a small Einsatzkommando from Zichenau murdered almost 2,000 Jews from July 4 to July 19. On July 5, Göring and Koch visited Kolno, as local Poles murdered 30 Jews.² The visit likely sealed the fate of the 2,350 to 3,000 Kolno Jews, executed in several stages beginning on July 15 with able-bodied men; from July 18, their parents and wives; and from late July, children, single men and women, and the elderly.³ In the meantime, in Radziłów, on July 7, and in Jedwabne, on July 10, the local population burned 1,100 to 2,400 Jews alive in two barns. By early September, parts of the local population, including the auxiliary police (*Hilfspolizei*), had engaged in anti-Jewish violence in at least 60 other localities, mostly assisting small Einsatzgruppen and police units to plunder, beat, murder, and ghettoize Jews.

Amid the war devastation and violence, the Wehrmacht issued the first orders for ghettoization. Local military commanders responded to fire devastation upon occupying Sopoćkinie and Michałowo, on June 22 and 27, 1941, by ordering the Jews into ghettos, in Sopoćkinie to secure a captive labor force, and in Michałowo, to enable the local population to expropriate the Jews' surviving houses. A remnant ghetto also was established in Jedwabne, on July 20, for survivors of earlier violence. On August 1, the military administration ordered the Jews confined to a closed ghetto in Białystok. Days later, the Łomża ghetto was established. Six of nine provincial ghettos in the Grodno region were created under the military administration. The Jews in Grodno proper were moved into its two ghettos on October 1, the day the region was incorporated into the Distrikt.

With the transfer to civil administration, on August 15, 1941, Koch delegated a plenipotentiary, Waldemar Magunia, to represent him in the Distrikt. In February 1942, Fritz (Friedrich) Brix succeeded Magunia. They supervised seven Kreiskommissare appointed to head the Kreise of Białystok,

Bielsk (Podlaski), Grajewo, Grodno (from 1942, Garten), Lomscha, Sokolka, and Wolkowysk. The Białowieża Forest, officially a part of Kreis Bielsk, was treated as an extraterritorial unit within the Distrikt, administered directly by the Reichsforstamt (Reich Forestry Office).

In Kreis Grajewo, located on the East Prussian border, large-scale killing Aktions accompanied the establishment of its four closed ghettos, all created in the first weeks of August, likely by the same Einsatzkommando from the Tilsit State Police. In Augustów and Szczuczyn, all Jewish men were imprisoned as closed ghettos were constructed, in the latter case by the local Polish population, for the Jewish community's women and children. A small number of craftsmen and medical professionals were released to the newly constructed ghetto. About 2,400 to 3,200 others were shot. Events likely followed a similar course in Grajewo. However, the sparse documentation makes it difficult to corroborate a Jewish eyewitness's suggestion that as many as 7,900 Jews perished before the ghetto was established.

In Kreis Lomscha, large-scale killing Aktions coincided with ghettoization in half of the eight ghettos established from July to September 1941. In Stawiski, in July, and in Czyżewo, in August, a total of 3,500 to 3,850 Jews were executed, and only 110 and 60, respectively, mostly male craftsmen were retained in remnant ghettos. In Zambrów, local auxiliaries helped the SS, on August 19, to choose 700 to 900 mostly able-bodied men, about a third of the Jewish community, for execution, likely the day before the ghetto was established. A remnant ghetto also was planned for Wysokie Mazowieckie, but the SS failed to arrive from Łomża as scheduled. The Jews, ordered to a ghetto in late August, lived in relative peace until November 1942. In Łomża, mass killing Aktions in August and September 1941 rid the ghetto of 700 to 2,000 "nonuseful" workers, including yeshiva students, the elderly, and those unemployed. A similar execution in Zambrów, in September, targeted 300 elderly and pregnant Jews.

Because of the mass killing Aktions, the ghettos in Kreis Lomscha and Kreis Grajewo remained small. The Jewish communities south of Śniadowo (Kreis Lomscha), including in Lubotyń, Prosenica, and Szumowo Nowe, were wiped out in the first weeks of August. As a result, the Śniadowo ghetto, established in early August 1941, was made up almost exclusively of Jews native to the town. Likely, because a warehouse was established in one of Śniadowo's two railway stations to store items plundered on the Eastern Front, the Jewish community was spared from execution to sort, repair, and repack the goods for shipment to the Reich.

Because of the violence, Kreis Lomscha and Kreis Grajewo stood apart from the other Kreise for the relatively large number of Jews, mostly survivors of violence, living illegally inside and outside of its ghettos. These individuals placed enormous pressures on the ghettos in Zambrów, Czyżewo, and Łomża. In the spring of 1942, local authorities permitted fugitives in Stawiski (and other Jews in small remnant ghettos) to work for Poles as agricultural laborers, on contracts arranged by the local Arbeitsamt, and to remain behind in



Jews move their belongings into the Grodno ghetto, ca. 1941–1942.
USHMM WS #50349, COURTESY OF IPN

Jedwabne (Kreis Lomscha) and Radziłów (Kreis Grajewo), when the ghettos were dissolved in November 1941 and June 1942, respectively. The Jedwabne Jews were expelled to the Łomża ghetto. However, the Grajewo Kreiskommissar, in the spring of 1942, ordered Jews in his Kreis, including almost all the Radziłów survivors, sent for labor in Milewo, on his estate at Milbo. About a third of the Jews in the Augustów ghetto also were deported to Milbo at about the same time, as were most Jews from tiny survivor communities. Because it was more of a labor camp than a ghetto, Milewo is not covered in this volume.

In other Kreise, the transfer to civilian administration resulted in the concentration of Jews into just a few ghettos, including in the Białowieża Forest, in Kreis Bielsk. The initial violence that accompanied the expulsion of Jews from the forest's interior in the first two weeks of August 1941 gave way by the end of the month to a less murderous expulsion drive, likely ordered by the Reichsforstamt to clear the Jewish and non-Jewish population from a wide territorial belt along the forest's periphery. A small number of Jews were retained for remnant ghettos in Narewka and Kamieniec Litewski; the rest were expelled to Prużana along with Jews from 18 other communities. The expulsions continued after the establishment of the Prużana ghetto on September 25, 1941. With the expulsion of 4,000 to 5,000 Białystok ghetto inmates there in October, the Prużana ghetto population swelled to over 10,000, making it (because of the mass killings in Łomża) the third most populous ghetto in the Distrikt, behind only the Białystok and Grodno ghettos.

The Prużana ghetto also looked different from most other ghettos in the Distrikt, because its fence was constructed of metal and brick. More typically, local German authorities, even in Białystok, ordered the Jews in closed ghettos to provide wooden construction materials for the fences and to build them. In the case of Prużana, the authorities provided the metal fencing and barbed wire, charging the Jewish Council a 750,000 rubles "fee."⁴

In Kreis Sokolka, arson in late August 1941 drove the Jews from Sidra and Kuźnica Białostocka, but when they and the Dąbrowa Białostocka Jews returned to their burned-out homes, German authorities began establishing remnant ghettos for craftsmen and road construction laborers in fire-devastated towns, including Kuźnica in October and Dąbrowa in February 1942. Almost all the rest of the Jews from the northern and western part of the Kreis, including from Sidra, Dąbrowa, and a part of the Janów Sokółski community, were consolidated in the Suchowola ghetto, established in early August 1941. Following the last expulsion in February, the ghetto population had expanded from 2,000 to around 6,000. Because of the pressures overcrowding placed on its limited resources, the Suchowola Amtskommissar consented to establish a new ghetto in March 1942. Similar consolidations occurred in the east of the Kreis, to the Krynki ghetto, established in December 1941, but began only in the early spring of 1942. In the meantime, the ghetto established in October, in Sokółka, the Kreis center, remained a small,

walled-off fortress for the native population and a small number of voluntary refugees.

In Kreis Bielsk, the establishment of the 12 ghettos outside the Białowieża Forest proceeded in stages with little violence. In August 1941, the local civil administration first ordered Jews to live apart from Christians. In large communities, including Ciechanowiec and Bielsk Podlaski, closed ghettos were established by the fall of 1941; in others, including Wysokie Litewskie, Siemiatycze, and Brańsk, open ghettos were created instead. In the spring of 1942, the newly appointed Kreiskommissar, Landrat Tubenthal, ordered all Jews in the Kreis to closed ghettos. The orders established ghettos in Orla and Boćki in March, and in Drohiczyń, Grodzisk, and Kleszczele, and also likely in Wysokie Litewskie, in May. However, the Jewish Council in Siemiatycze prolonged negotiations over the closed ghetto's future location and size and bribed local officials to postpone its establishment until August 1942.

The establishment of the provincial ghettos in Kreis Grodno likely followed a similar pattern as in Kreis Bielsk. All the provincial ghettos initially were open ghettos, including the ghettos in Ostryna and Marcinkańce, established in October and November 1941. The Ostryna ghetto was closed in April 1942, as were almost all the others, though the timing of the closure orders in Łunna, Jeziory, and Skidel is not known precisely.

Likely, because of the material devastation from war operations in Kreis Wolkowysk, almost all of the nine ghettos established in the summer of 1941 remained open. The ghettos had some of the worst material conditions in the Distrikt. In Zelwa, the Jews lived in the basements of war-devastated houses; in Wołpa, in pits dug into the ground. In Wołkowysk, 15 families crowded together in the few Jewish-owned structures still standing. Only two of the eight provincial ghettos, in Porozów and Piaski, were closed, with the first closed on September 23, 1942, and the second on September 26.⁵

Of the 10 provincial ghettos established in Kreis Białystok, likely only the ghettos in Michałowo and Gródek Białostocki were closed. The local Amtskommissar, Paul Melzer, disbanded the Michałowo ghetto upon arriving in nearby Gródek in August 1941. Several testimonies note Melzer established a closed ghetto in Gródek, perhaps in the fall of 1941. However, Szymon Datner recalls that the postwar Polish investigative team, of which he was a part, encountered difficulties charging Melzer with war crimes related to ghettoization, because documentation in the Underground Archives of the Białystok Ghetto upheld Melzer's claim that he had released Jews from ghettos rather than imprison them.⁶ The Knyszyn Amtskommissar ordered the ghetto there fenced in the fall of 1941, but local Polish health professionals intervened to suspend the closure order. It is the only known example of the local population seeking to mitigate the course of ghettoization in Distrikt Białystok.

Local authorities also did not expel Jewish returnees from fire-devastated localities, as in Kreis Sokolka. Rather, they established open ghettos, including in Trzciannie, in the fall

of 1941, and Zabłudów, in January 1942. However, the ghetto populations were small from the outset, because only a limited number of Jews chose to live in the fire-devastated ruins of their former communities.

The varying patterns of ghettoization reflected the physical conditions in the region and larger German military and strategic priorities, but the wide range of ghettos across the Distrikt also highlights the flexible and partially decentralized nature of Nazi ghettoization policies. Given the near uniformity of certain ghettos in some Kreise and the uneven patterns across the Distrikt, it appears Kreiskommissare, as in Bielsk, decided whether ghettos would remain open or be closed and when and where ghetto consolidations would occur.

The decentralization helps to explain the vast disparities in provisioning across the ghettos, including why Jews in the Rajgród and Bielsk Podlaski ghettos received no rations and starved, whereas local peasants were permitted in Grajewo and Zambrów to enter the ghetto to barter food for material possessions. The relatively large number of examples of calves being smuggled into ghettos and the many references across the entries to ritual slaughterers (*shochtim*) executed for being found outside of ghettos suggest that kosher slaughter continued, inside and outside of ghettos, and that Jews, even in provincial ghettos, had access, albeit illegally and at great risk, to food sources beyond the limited rations.

Even the most uniform ghettoization policy instituted in the Kreis, the simultaneous liquidation of the provincial ghettos, on November 2, 1942, and the establishment of five regional transit camps in which to concentrate the Jews before sending them to the extermination camps was unique to the Distrikt. Local officials also appear to have decided the level of support they needed during the liquidation Aktion. In Drohiczyń (Kreis Bielsk), SS Ukrainian auxiliaries supported local Gendarmes and auxiliaries. In Marcinkańce (Kreis Grodno), for a ghetto of likely about the same population, the local Gendarmerie commander employed a small force of about 16 German police and civilians. Local auxiliaries were not called in for support until after the Jews had fled from the deportation. The Białystok Jews also were excluded from the liquidation Aktions because Brix and Froese, the Distrikt military inspector for the ordinance industry, successfully appealed to Berlin to maintain the Białystok ghetto intact to exploit its Jewish labor to expand munitions production.

Such arguments were no longer tenable by mid-July 1943, when losses on the Eastern Front and growing Soviet partisan activity prompted the German decision to transfer Białystok's industries to Lublin and in August to liquidate the ghetto, the last in the Distrikt. On August 15–16, with all hope for survival lost, the underground launched an uprising but was soon overwhelmed. More than 100 Jews managed to escape from the ghetto and join the partisans.

SOURCES Secondary works offering at least some regional coverage of the history of the Jews in the ghettos of Distrikt Białystok include Sara Bender, *Mul Mavet Orev: Yehude Bialistok be-Milhemet ha-'Olam ha-Shniya 1939–1945* (Tel Aviv:

'Am 'Oved, 1997), now in an English translation, by Yaffa Murciano, as *The Jews of Bialystok during World War II and the Holocaust* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2008); Szymon Datner, "Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej w Okręgu Białostockim," *BŻIH*, no. 60 (1966): 3–50 plus unnumbered tables; Shalom Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorrussia during World War II* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998); Tikva Fatal-Knaani, *Zo lo otah Grodnob, Kehilat Grodnob u-sevivatab bamilhamah uva-sho'ah 1939–1943* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001); Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: HIS, 1999); Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego*, 2 vols. (Warsaw: IPN-KŚZpNP, 2002), vol. 1, *Studia*; Ewa Rogalewska, *Getto białostockie. Doświadczenie Zagłady—świadczenia literatury i życia* (Białystok: IPN-KŚZpNP, 2008); Waldemar Monkiewicz and Józef Kowalczyk, *Zagłada ludności Żydowskiej w Białymstoku* (Białystok, 1983); Mariusz Nowik, *Zagłada Żydów na ziemi łomżyńskiej* (Warsaw: Bellona, 2006); Andrzej Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego: Żydzi na kresach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej, wrzesień 1939–lipiec 1941* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2006), with chap. 5, the most pertinent chapter, in an English translation as "Pogroms in Northeastern Poland—Spontaneous Reactions and German Instigations," pp. 315–354, in Elazar Barkan et al., eds., *Shared History, Divided Memory: Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland, 1939–1941* (Leipzig: Simon-Dubnow-Institut für Jüdische Geschichte und Kultur, 2007).

Published collections of testimonies, memoirs with regional coverage or containing important information about German decision making about the region, and other primary source material include the following: R.A. Chernoglazova, ed., *Tragediia evreev Belorussii (1941–1944): Sbornik materialov i dokumentov* (Minsk: Izdatel' E.S. Gal'perin, 1997); Hajkah (Chaika) Grosman, *Anshe ha-Maheret* (Tel Aviv: Moreshet and Sifriyat Po'alim, 1965), available in an English translation by Shmuel Beeri, as *The Underground Army: Fighters of the Bialystok Ghetto* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1987); Serge Klarsfeld, ed., *Documents Concerning the Destruction of the Jews of Grodno 1941–1944*, 6 vols. (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1985–1992); Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego*, 2 vols. (Warsaw: IPN-KŚZpNP, 2002), vol. 2, *Dokumenty*; Leonid Smilovitskii, *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944gg.* (Tel Aviv: Biblioteka Matveia Chernogo, 2000); Mordecai Tenenbaum, *Dapim min ha-Deleqah* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and Bet Lohame ha-Gita'ot, 1984); and for its documentation on the deportations from Distrikt Białystok to the Auschwitz death camp, Stanisław Mączka, ed., *Żydzi polscy w KL Auschwitz: Wykazy imienne. Polish Jews in KL Auschwitz: Name Lists* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2004).

Publications used to identify smaller ghettos in Distrikt Białystok included Marat Botvinnik, *Pamiętniki genotsida evreev Belarusi* (Minsk: Belarusaia Navuka, 2000); Emanuel Ioffe, *Belorusskie evrei: Tragediia i geroizm, 1941–1945* (Minsk: Arti-Feks, 2003); U.P. Verkhas' and U.F. Shumila, eds., *Pamiats'. Historyka-dakumental'naia khronika Hrodzenskaha raiona* (Minsk: Belarusaia Entsylkapedyia, 1993); Henadz' Pashkou, ed., *Pamiats'. Historyka-dakumental'naia khronika Shchuchynskaha raiona* (Minsk: Belarusaia Entsylkapedyia, 2001); Czesław Pili-chowski et al., eds., *Obozy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945: Informator encyklopedyczny* (Warsaw: PWN, 1979); Abraham Wein, ed., *Pinkas ha-kehillot. Encyclopaedia of Jewish*

Communities: Poland, vol. 4, *Warsaw and Its Region* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1989); Shmuel Spector and Bracha Freundlich, eds., *Pinkas ha-kehillot. Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: Poland*, vol. 8, *Vilna, Białystok, Nowogrodek* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005); *Rejestr miejsc i faktów zbrodni popełnionych przez okupanta hitlerowskiego na ziemiach polskich w latach 1939–1945. Województwo łomżyńskie* (Warsaw: GKBZHWP and OKBZH-Bi, 1985); *Rejestr miejsc i faktów zbrodni popełnionych przez okupanta hitlerowskiego na ziemiach polskich. Województwo ostrołęckie* (Warsaw: GKBZHWP and IPN, 1985); Arnon Rubin, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Communities in Poland and Their Relics Today*, vol. 1, *District Białystok* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2006); and Shmuel Spector and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life before and during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem; New York: New York University Press, 2001).

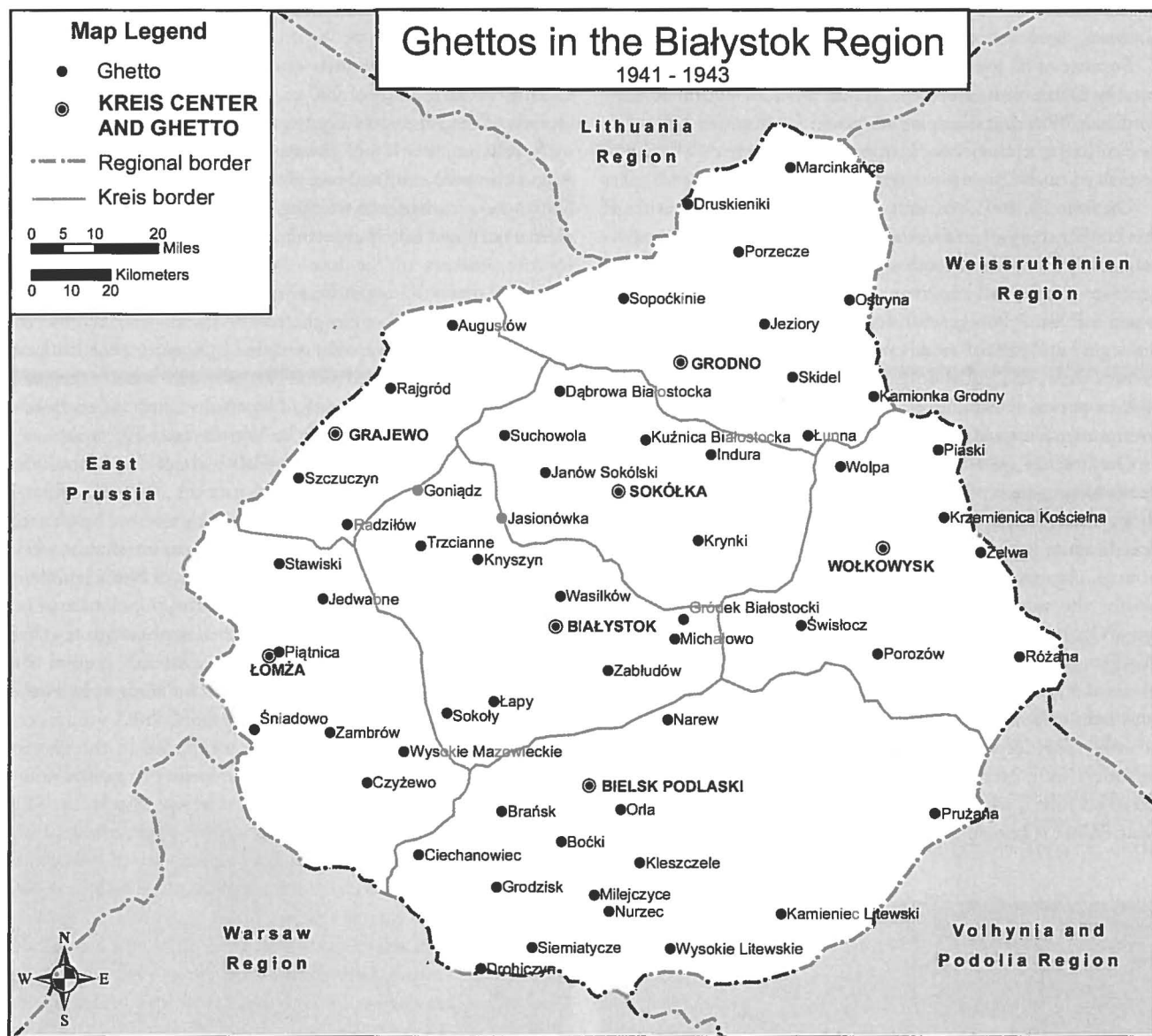
Relevant documentation can be found in the following archives: AAN; APB; APŁmż; AUKGBRBBO; AUKGBRB-GrO; AŻIH; BA-BL; BA-L; BA-MA; BLH; CDJC; FVA; GABO; GAGO; GARF; IPN; IPN-Bi; NARA; NARB;

RGASPI; RGVA; USHMM; VHAP; VHF; YIVO; and YVA.

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NOTES

1. USHMM, RG-15.079M (AŻIH), Ring I/899, anonymous testimony, Rutki[-Kossaki] refugee, pp. 1–5.
2. BA-MA, RH 26-211/84, p. 1.
3. Dinah Konceptolsky-Chludniewitz, "The End of the Kolno Community," in A. Rembah and Binyamin Halevi, eds., *Sefer zikaron le-kehillat Kolnah* (Tel Aviv: Irgun yots'e Kolnah ye-Sifriyat-po'alim, 1971), pp. 45–50; USHMM, RG-15.019M (IPN), ASG, reel 1, 2/177-78, pp. 1–2; IPN-Bi, S-1/71, pp. 1–289. See also IPN, SOŁ 130.
4. AŻIH, 301/1380, testimony of Olga Goldfajn, pp. 2–3.
5. *Informacja Bieżąca*, no. 44 (69), December 2, 1942, p. 3, in USHMM, RG-15.079M (AŻIH), Ring II/338/b [CD: # 8, 434. Ring II/338/2], p. 86.
6. Datner, "Eksterminacja," p. 68.



Borders as of 1942

Handbuch (Essen: Klartext, 2005), pp. 210–213. Also important are the relevant entries in Shmuel Spector and Bracha Freundlich, eds., *Pinkas ha-kehillot. Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities: Poland*, vol. 8, *Vilna, Białystok, Nowogródek* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), pp. 138–139 (Brzostowica Wielka) and pp. 568–575 (Krynki); and in its English-language counterpart, Arnon Rubin, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Communities in Poland and Their Relics Today*, vol. 1, *District Białystok* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2006), pp. 116–124 (Krynki). For Stanisława and Piotr Begański, honored by Yad Vashem in 1965 as Righteous Among the Nations, see Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, vol. 2, *Poland*, 2 pts. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), pt. 1, pp. 88–89.

Documents on the annihilation of the Jewish communities in Krynki and Brzostowica Wielka under the German occupation in World War II can be found in the following archives: AŻIH (e.g., Ankiety, and 301/1288, 3154, and 3600); BA-L (B 162/14498); IPN (e.g., ASG [46/85]); USHMM (RG-15.019M [IPN], 46/85, and RG-15.079M [AŻIH], II/338/a [CD: # 8, 423.II/338/1], pp. 44–45); IPN-Bi (Ko-12/89, Ko-54/89, S-48/68, S-54/67 [Polish witness depositions for BA-L (B 162/14498)], S-860/71 [Brzostowica Wielka]); VHF (# 17461, 18378, 26458, 37482, and 47393); and YVA (e.g., O-3/1327 and M-11/58, B 85). The Ringelblum archive documentation cited below also has appeared in *BŻIH*, no. 76 (1970): 49–79.

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NOTES

1. YVA, O-3/1327, cited in Andrzej Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2006), p. 343; and AŻIH, 301/1288, testimony of Chaim Wajner, pp. 1–2.
2. USHMM, RG-15.019M (IPN), ASG, reel 14, 46/85, pp. 1–2.
3. Compare VHF, # 26458; and Rubin, *The Rise*, p. 121.
4. BA-L, B 162/14498 (Urteil LG-Dü, 8 Ks 2/71), pp. 20–28; and Rabin, *Pinkas Krinki*, pp. 317–318.
5. VHF, # 18378, testimony of Steven Guzik.
6. Rabin, *Pinkas Krinki*, pp. 312–314.
7. *Wiadomości*, no. 5, January 1–6, 1943, pp. 1–2, in USHMM, RG-15.079M (AŻIH), Ring II/338/a [CD: # 8, 423.II/338/1], pp. 44–45.
8. Rabin, *Pinkas Krinki*, respectively, pp. 287 and 272.
9. VHF, # 26458, testimony of Lola Resnick.
10. See Urteil LG-Dü, 8 Ks 2/71.

KRZEMIENICA KOŚCIELNA

Pre-1939: Krzemienica Kościelna, village, Wołkowysk powiat, Białystok województwo, Poland; 1939–1941: Kremianitsa, Zel'va raion, Grodno oblast', Belorussian SSR; 1941–1944: Krzemienica Koscielna, Kreis Wołkowysk, Distrikt Białystok; post-1991: Kramianitsa, Hrodna voblasts', Republic of Belarus

Krzemienica Kościelna is located 60 kilometers (47.5 miles) southeast of Grodno in interwar Poland's Wołkowysk powiat.

It was bounded in the north by the Piaski gmina, in the east by the Zelwianka River, in the south by the Zelwa and Izabelin gminas, and in the west by the Biskupice gmina, which surrounded the town of Wołkowysk.

The Jews in the Krzemienica gmina, some 126 in number in 1921, were dispersed across its territory, living mostly as the only Jewish inhabitants in about 13 small villages. In some of the villages, including Awdziejewicze, Derkacze, and Podbłocie, they had worked the land as farmers for generations. A handful of Jews settled in Krzemienica only after it came under Soviet occupation during the first month of World War II, in September 1939. Yitzhak Resnick, for example, was ordered there to establish a medical clinic. He and his brother's family increased the Jewish population of Krzemienica village to about 23 (four families).

The Germans occupied Krzemienica at the end of June 1941. In the fall of 1941, they established the Krzemienica Koscielna Amtskommissariat on the lands of the pre-war gmina. The German presence there was small. In addition to the Amtskommissar and his family, six Germans worked as Gendarmes in a police station in Krzemienica. Another German was assigned to the Amtskommissariat as a production manager. To assist them, the Germans established a local auxiliary police force, composed mostly of Poles.

German military authorities, in July, ordered a 3-person Jewish Council (Judenrat) formed for the approximately 70 Jews in the Krzemienica Koscielna Amtskommissariat. The Judenrat was headquartered in Krzemienica but represented all of the Jewish inhabitants of the Amtskommissariat. The German authorities dispossessed the Jews of their movable property, including valuables, farming implements, and machinery. Officials in Kreis Wołkowysk revoked the leases held by Jews on farmsteads, expropriated all arable land owned by Jews, and confiscated their horses and livestock.

The Krzemienica Amtskommissar transformed every Jewish house into an open ghetto by forbidding their residents from leaving the dwellings in which they lived, except to work at forced labor. The German administration conscripted the Jews for construction work. They built a Gendarmerie post, stables, a post office, and many other structures in Krzemienica village. In spring 1942, the Jews worked on local road construction projects.

The Krzemienica Jews devised ways to soften the anti-Jewish decrees, which effectively kept them prisoner in their homes. Small gifts to the Amtskommissar and his wife, including a pair of boots and a fur coat, enabled the Judenrat to mitigate some anti-Jewish decrees. Equally important, the Germans all sought the medical services of Resnick, although it was illegal under Nazi racial laws for them to do so. The doctor exploited his illicit professional relationships with local German officials to secure for the Jews various permits that enabled them to enter the forest to gather wood for winter heating fuel, to travel occasionally between villages within the Amtskommissariat, and to gather together in Krzemienica in 1942 for Passover and High Holiday services.

The Germans expelled the Jews from the Krzemienica Amtskommissariat on November 2, 1942. Beginning at 4:00 A.M., a Gendarme, accompanied by two members of the auxiliary police, went from house to house, giving the Jews 10 minutes to dress and to pack food for three days, long underwear, and work clothes. The auxiliary police drove from their houses those Jews who took more than the allotted time. At 7:00 A.M., when all of the Jews of the Amtskommissariat had been gathered in the courtyard of the Gendarmerie post, the Gendarmes and the auxiliary police drove them to Zelwa. At the Zelwa train station, the Krzemienica Jews were transferred to the control of a large SS contingent waiting there for about 2,400 Jews to arrive from communities, including Zelwa, from the most eastern parts of Kreis Wolkowysk. The SS randomly beat up the Jews assembled at the train station and dispossessed them of the few possessions they had been allowed to bring before driving them at 2:00 P.M. onto cattle wagons, on a train destined for a transit camp, located just outside Wolkowysk on the grounds of a pre-war Polish cavalry garrison.

At the transit camp, where the SS had consolidated the approximately 20,000 Jewish inhabitants of Kreis Wolkowysk to facilitate their deportation to extermination camps, the Jewish communities from the Zelwa deportation lived together in deplorable conditions for about a month in two subterranean barracks. Several hundred deportees from a labor camp in Brzostowica Wielka also resided in the Zelwa bunkers. (Because the labor camp was located in Kreis Grodno, the deportees came mostly from there, including from the ghetto in Łunna.) The Zelwa bunkers likely also were the temporary residence of about 150 young men from the ghetto of Kamionka, brought to a labor camp in Wolkowysk in the early summer of 1942.¹ The men's numbers suggest they came from the so-called Kamionka near Grodno (Kamionka koło Grodna), which during World War II was a settlement in Kreis Grodno located about 24 kilometers (almost 15 miles), by road, west of the town of Szczuczyn.

The Krzemienica Jews were expelled from the transit camp and sent, either on November 26 or December 2, 1942, in the second Wolkowysk transport to the Treblinka extermination camp. The transport, also named the Zelwa deportation for the larger community expelled with the Krzemienica Jews, likely also included the former Brzostowica labor camp inmates and the Jewish laborers from Kamionka, though many of the latter already had perished from exposure, likely contracted at the labor camp or from diseases related to malnutrition and starvation. Whether the communities of Jałówka, Mścibów, Piaski, and Mosty were on the same transport or were sent to Treblinka on subsequent transports remains an open question. Almost all the approximately 18,300 Jews in the Wolkowysk transports to Treblinka were gassed on arrival, as the Germans are known to have held back only 60 to 70 men from the Jałówka and Mścibów transport as prisoners of the Treblinka I labor camp, with only 1 known survivor from among the prisoners.

Of the Krzemienica Jews, only Resnick and his family are known to have escaped the deportation to Treblinka. (Physicians were held back to help contain a typhus epidemic at the camp.) Resnick's brother, sister, and niece were among the last group of 1,700 to 2,000 Wolkowysk inmates sent on January 26, 1943, to the Auschwitz extermination camp. They all perished there. However, Resnick fled the transit camp, together with the Mosty physician Noah Kaplinsky, on the day of the Auschwitz deportation. The two made their way to Krzemienica, where they were sheltered by a local Christian family. Also counted among survivors are Nachum and Shimon Reznitsky, two brothers from Krzemienica, who had fled to Independent Lithuania during the Soviet occupation and immigrated from there to Palestine.

SOURCES This entry is based on the two published testimonies about the Jewish communities of Krzemienica Kościelna. The first, by Yitzhak Reznik, is summarized in "Krzemienica," in Moses Einhorn, ed., *Volkovisker Yisker-Bukh* (New York, 1949); and the second, by Nakhum Reznitsky, "Krzemienica," appears in the third Wolkowysk yizkor book, compiled by Katri'el Lashovits, ed., *Volkovisk: Sipurah shel kebilah Yehudit-Tsiyonit bushmedab ba-Sho'ab* (Tel Aviv: K. Lashovits, 1988). Both testimonies are available in English translation in the Wolkowysk yizkor book trilogy *Sefer zikaron Volkovisk. The Volkovysk Memorial Book*, trans. Jacob Solomon Berger (Mahwah, NJ: J.S. Berger, 2000), pt. 1, pp. 316–318, and pt. 3, pp. 106–107, respectively. The fate of Reznik's brother and his family at Auschwitz is covered in Izaak Goldberg, *The Miracles versus Tyranny: The Fight for Life and Death between the Jewish People and the Nazis* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1979).

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NOTE

1. Noah Kaplinsky, "Volkovysk in Its Death Throes," from *Hurban Volkovisk be-Milhemet ha-'olam ha-shehiyah, 1939/1945* (Tel Aviv: Vaad irgun yots'e Volkovisk be-Erets-Yisrael, 1946), in *Sefer zikaron Volkovisk*, pt. 2, p. 44.

KUŹNICA BIAŁOSTOCKA

Pre-1939: Kuźnica Białostocka, village, Sokółka powiat, Białystok województwo, Poland; 1939–1941: Kuznitsa, Sokulka raion, Belostok oblast', Belorussian SSR; 1941–1944: Kuznitsa, Kreis Sokolka, Distrikt Białystok; post-1998: Kuźnica, village, Sokółka powiat, województwo podlaskie, Poland

Kuźnica is located 15.5 and 56.2 kilometers (about 9.6 and 35 miles) north-northeast, respectively, of Sokółka and Białystok. Today, it lies on the Polish border with the Republic of Belarus. In 1931, the population of Kuźnica Białostocka stood at 1,428, including 556 Jews.

In World War II, Kuźnica was occupied first by the Germans, for about two weeks. They evacuated the village in the middle of September 1939 to make way for the Red Army. During the Soviet occupation, the Jewish population may

Vilna, Bialystok, Nowogrodek (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), pp. 100–102; and *Pamiats’*. *Historyka-dakumental’naia kbro-nika Shchuchynskaha raiona* (Minsk: Belaruskaja Entsiklape-dyia, 2001), with the second providing useful demographic information and a list of those from the raion who perished during the war.

Archival documentation on the Jewish community under German occupation during World War II includes AŻIH (301/748); BA-L (B 162/26286 [202 AR 2403/65]); GAGO (1-1-54, pp. 37–38, 1-1-335, p. 85); GARF (e.g., 7021-86-36, 7021-86-40, pp. 4, 56, 58); IPN (SOW 64, SWB 264-267); IPN-Bi (1/1194 [Ko-250/88], 3/129 [W-52/68], 7/575/1-2 [II-1335/KSL14808]); NARB (845-1-8, p. 31); USHMM (RG-22.002M [GARF], RG-53.004M [GAGO]); VHF (# 13477); and YVA (e.g., O-3/300, O-3/7431, M-49E [e.g., 78]).

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NOTES

1. VHF, # 13477, testimony of Vladimir Glemobotzkii (*sic*).

2. USHMM, RG-53.004M (GAGO), reel 1, 1-1-2, pp. 19, 130–131.

3. BA-L, B 162/26286 (202 AR 2403/65). Although West German investigators attributed Schaffitz and his men with the October 1941 murders, their timing suggests they more likely were the work of Ritterbusch and his platoon.

4. VHF, # 13477, identifying two policemen, Jan Lach and Jan Lachowski, but attributing the murder to Lach, and postwar Polish investigators deciding “Lach” was an alias used by Lachowski.

5. YVA, O-3/7431, testimony of Vladimir Glembocki.

6. VHF, # 13477.

7. USHMM, RG-53.004M, reel 1, 1-1-54, pp. 37–38.

8. Stanisław Mączka, ed., *Żydzi polscy w KL Auschwitz: wykazy imienne* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2004), pp. 122–125.

9. IPN, SOW 64.

10. BA-L, B 162/26286 (202 AR 2403/65).

11. IPN-Bi, 3/129 (W-52/68), 7/575/1-2 (II-1335, KSL-14808); IPN, SWB 264–267.

PIASKI

Pre-1939: Piaski (Yiddish: Piesk), village, Wołkowysk powiat, Białystok województwo, Poland; 1939–1941: Peski, Mosty raion, Grodno oblast’, Belorussian SSR; 1941–1944: Piaski, Kreis Wolkowysk, Distrikt Bialystok; post-1991: Peski, Masty raen, Hrodna voblasts’, Republic of Belarus

Piaski lies on the Zelwianka River. In interwar Poland, it was located 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) north-northeast of Wołkowysk. In 1921, 1,249 Jews lived there. In World War II, after Piaski first came under Soviet occupation, refugees from German-occupied Poland increased the Jewish population to around 1,500.

A Wehrmacht unit occupied Piaski by the end of June 1941. Its military commander likely appointed a local civilian administration, headed by Vicentii Semashko. The auxiliary police force, according to Jewish survivors, was composed mostly of

Belorussians, though Poles also were members.¹ Among the auxiliary policemen were Anton Franz, Michał and Czesław Zabołotski, and men surnamed Putilovskii and Tishevskii. A German civil administration was established in the fall of 1941 when the Piaski Amtskommissariat was incorporated into Kreis Wolkowysk in Distrikt Bialystok.

In the summer and early fall of 1941, regional German military administrators introduced a series of anti-Jewish decrees, including orders requiring the wearing of yellow markings on the chest and back, registration, prohibitions on movement beyond the place of registration, compulsory forced labor of all adult Jews, and the formation of Jewish Councils (*Judenräte*). The Piaski Judenrat was led by Rachmiel Halperin (or Galperin).

In the meantime, Piaski was flooded with Jewish refugees from war-devastated Wołkowysk.² Because the Piaski Amtskommissar was considered less willing than his counterparts in Kreis Wolkowysk to tolerate anti-Jewish violence and raids on Jewish property, some Jews subsequently fled there in the spring of 1942 from other ghettos, including from Różana.³ The refugees may have increased the Jewish population to 2,000.

The Różana refugees were surprised to discover that the Piaski Jews lived under the German occupation largely as they had before the war, working in agriculture. By early summer 1942, they remained healthy because of their ready access to food.⁴ However, Piaski Jews remember the Germans conscripting them for forced labor on road construction projects, including between Piaski and Mosty, then a village about 8 kilometers (5 miles) north-northeast by road, and at a factory, also in Mosty, to produce wooden crates for German aircraft parts. Jewish factory conscripts received flour in remuneration for their labor. The Judenrat assigned another 30 young men and women to work three-month stints at a Wołkowysk labor camp to work on railway lines.⁵

In July 1942, a ghetto was established for the Jews of Piaski, across from the residence of the Amtskommissar, in the old Jewish neighborhood, near the Jewish cemetery. One of its boundaries ended just before the Zelwianka River. The ghetto was fenced with barbed wire. The Amtskommissar forbade Jews forced to move to the ghetto from bringing anything with them from their former houses.⁶

The role played by the auxiliary police in enforcing the German decree confining the Piaski Jews to the ghetto is debated. According to a survivor, the police, longtime friends or acquaintances of almost all the Jews, humiliated and pelted ghetto inmates with stones for appealing to be released to barter with local Christians for food.⁷ Because there was just one well in the ghetto, the police also released the Jews from the ghetto daily at sundown to bring two pails of water from the river and exercised their authority by whipping the last water bearers to arrive back at the ghetto’s gate.⁸ However, another survivor has attributed lax policing with saving the lives of some Jews, particularly after local German authorities charged the police with sealing the ghetto in the last week of October 1942, and some policemen abetted the escape of

several Jews and in one instance even sheltered Jews, in anticipation of the ghetto's liquidation.⁹

The Piaski ghetto was sealed earlier than other ghettos in Distrikt Białystok because the Germans consolidated other smaller Jewish communities there. On November 2, 1942, Gendarmes and auxiliary policeman, for example, drove 360 Jews from Mosty to the Piaski ghetto. Other Jews likely were brought there from the north and northwest of Kreis Wolkowysk, as a Mosty survivor remembers 2,500 Jews from the region spending the night together in the Piaski ghetto.¹⁰

On November 3, 1942, an SS unit ordered the Jews in the Piaski ghetto on an eight-hour march to a transit camp located outside of Wolkowysk in a pre-war Polish cavalry garrison. The SS commander promised transport to those too old or too sick to move from their beds and to several women in advanced stages of pregnancy. After the other Jews had departed at noon, he ordered those awaiting transport to be consolidated together, either in a house near the Jewish cemetery or in a former school building. In one account, the SS set fire to the building as auxiliary policemen threw the elderly into the flames alive. About 20 Piaski Jews and another 3 Jews from Mosty perished in the blaze, which also destroyed a large part of the ghetto. Another account notes the Germans shot the Jews dead.¹¹

At the transit camp, the Piaski deportees joined the approximately 17,500 other Jews from Kreis Wolkowysk also driven there to facilitate their deportation to extermination camps. The Piaski and Mosty Jews were crowded together in two of six subterranean barracks constructed underneath two large dilapidated horse stables, which together formed an internally fenced-off block within the camp. The Jews from the Zelwa and Świsłocz expulsions, with the latter also encompassing the Jałówka and Mścibów communities, were assigned to the remaining barracks in the block. They lived there for about a month with little food and limited sanitation facilities. Many perished in a typhus epidemic that claimed hundreds, if not thousands, of lives.

Some sources note the Piaski (and Mosty) Jews were expelled from the transit camp, together with the Zelwa, Jałówka, and Mścibów communities, and sent on December 2, 1942, in the second Wolkowysk transport, to the Treblinka extermination camp. Other eyewitnesses remember the second transport including only the Zelwa community. They describe the Piaski (and Mosty) Jews as being on one of the subsequent transports, which left Wolkowysk for Treblinka every three to seven days, until the middle of December, when only 1,700 to 2,000 inmates, from Wolkowysk and Świsłocz, remained at the transit camp.¹² Almost all of the approximately 18,300 Jews in the Wolkowysk transports to Treblinka were gassed on arrival, as the Germans are known to have held back only 60 to 70 men from the Jałówka and Mścibów transport as prisoners of the Treblinka labor camp. There is only one known survivor from among the prisoners.¹³

A number of Piaski Jews evaded the Treblinka deportations. Ordered to help contain the typhus epidemic, Piaski physician

Eliezer Epstein was in the final group of 1,700 to 2,000 inmates sent from Wolkowysk on January 26, 1943, to the Auschwitz extermination camp and among a handful of survivors from the 350 people held back from the transport as prisoners of the concentration camp. At least 15 Piaski Jews, including Szymon Warszawski and Meir Rakhkin, escaped from the ghetto or subsequently from the transit camp and joined the Soviet Pobedka (Victory) partisan unit, a part of the A.S. Sabarov Brigade. Attacks on troop trains and supply convoys and the kidnapping and murder of scores of German officials and soldiers won the partisans in the unit Soviet military distinctions after the war. However, one former partisan, a survivor of the Piaski ghetto, has questioned the single-minded commitment to military operations of unit commander Yitzhak Atlas, a Łódź physician and Soviet-era refugee, because the activities, combined with German reprisal actions, claimed the lives of at least 80 percent of the unit's approximately 360 Jews.¹⁴

SOURCES The yizkor book *Pyesk u-Most: Sefer yizkor* (Tel Aviv: Irgun yots'e Pyesk u-Most be-Yisrael yeha-tefutsot, 1975) includes several testimonies by Piaski survivors, though at this writing none of them have appeared in the English translation of the yizkor book, available at jewishgen.org. The expulsion from the Piaski ghetto to the Wolkowysk transit camp forms a part of the contribution by Mosty physician Noah Kaplinsky, in "Wolkowysk in Its Death Throes," originally published in *Hurban Wolkowysk be-Milhemet ha-'olam hasheniyah, 1939/1945* (Tel Aviv: Vaad Irgun yots'e Wolkowysk be-Yisrael, 1946), and in English as *Sefer zikaron Wolkowysk. The Wolkowysk Memorial Book*, trans. Jacob Solomon Berger (Mahwah, NJ: J.S. Berger, 2000), pt. 2, pp. 35–42. Other accounts by Piaski survivors include Raḥel Shtilerman, *'Ayarab 'al hol* (Tel Aviv: Yesod, 1968); and Maxime Rafailovitch (or Michael Jourdan-Lichtenstein), "The End of the Piaski Community," available online at the Lida ShtetLinks homepage www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Lida-District/piaski.htm.

Other sources in English for the study of the Pobedka partisans, to which almost all Piaski survivors belonged, include the study of its commander, by Samuel Bornstein, "Dr. Yehezkel Atlas, Partisan Commander," in Jacob Glatstein et al., eds., *Anthology of Holocaust Literature* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), pp. 299–306; and the account by Moshe Slutsky, "The Partisanas," in Yerachmiel Moorstein, ed., *Sefer zikaron Zel'vach* ([Israel]: Irgun yots'e Zel'vach be-Yisrael, 1984), in an English translation by Jacob Solomon Berger, as Yerachmiel Moorstein, ed., *Zel'va Memorial Book* (Mahwah, NJ: J.S. Berger, 1992), pp. 71–76.

Also useful is the relevant entry in Shmuel Spector and Bracha Freundlich, eds., *Pinkas ha-kehillot. Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities: Poland*, vol. 8, *Vilna, Bialystok, Nowogrodek* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), pp. 525–529; and the perspective of local Belarusians provided in Natal'ia Slizh, "Zhizn evreiskoi obshchiny glazami belorusov v 1930–1940-e gg. (na primere derevni Peski Grodnenskoi oblasti)," *Diaspory* (Moscow) 4 (2003): 268–278.

Archival documentation for the Jewish community of Piaski under the German occupation in World War II includes FVA (HVT-4185); GARF (7021-86-43, pp. 5–15); USHMM (RG-22.002M [GARF], reel 13, 7021-86-43, pp. 5–15); VHF (#

13415, 15651, 19344, and 35581); and YVA (e.g., M-33 [GARF]/711, pp. 5–15). A portion of the ChGK report for Piaski also appears in Leonid Smilovitskii, *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944 gg.* (Tel Aviv: Biblioteka Matveia Chernogo, 2000), p. 191, in English translation as “Peski (Piaski),” in *Holocaust in Belarus*, at www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/belarus/bel178.html yizkor book.

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NOTES

1. VHF, # 35581, testimony of Michael Jourdan-Lichtenstein with Maxime Rafailovitch.
2. AŽIH, 301/37, testimony of Ida Mazur, p. 1.
3. VHF, # 35581.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., # 13415, testimony of Dora (Zhukovskaia-)Levina.
6. Ibid.
7. Rafailovitch, “The End.”
8. VHF, # 13415.
9. Ibid., # 19344, testimony of Itsko Zhukovskii.
10. GARF, 7021-86-43, pp. 10, 12.
11. Compare *ibid.*, pp. 5–15; and Rafailovitch, “The End.”
12. Compare, e.g., Moses Einhorn, “Destruction of Wolkovisk,” in Einhorn, ed., *Volkovisker Yisker-bukh* (New York, 1949), p. 921; and Kaplinsky, “Volkowysk,” in *Sefer zikaron Volkovisk*, pt. 2, p. 41.
13. BLH, testimony of Leib Aronzon, in an English trans. on the Jałówka homepage of the Avotaynu Web site (www.avotaynu.com), with the author remembering the expulsion of the second Wołkowysk transport occurring on December 2, 1942.
14. In English, compare Bornstein, “Dr. Yehezkel Atlas,” pp. 299–306; and VHF, # 35581.

PIĄTNICA

Pre-1939: Piątnica (Yiddish: Piontnitza), village, Łomża powiat, Białystok województwo, Poland; 1939–1941: Piatnitsa, Lomzha raion, Belostok oblast', Belorussian SSR; 1941–1944: Piatnitsa, Kreis Lomscha, Distrikt Białystok; post-1998: Piątnica, Łomża powiat, województwo podlaskie, Poland

Piātnica lies across the Narew River from Łomża, about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) northeast of the city. About 250 Jews resided there on the eve of World War II.¹

A Wehrmacht unit occupied Piātnica on June 28, 1941. The military commander invested local Poles with day-to-day authority over the village. Jan Wojewoda served as the village administrator (sołtys), and Czesław Darkowski, as the vice village administrator (podsołtys).

Christian-Jewish relations were tense. After the Germans had departed, Wojewoda and Darkowski organized a roundup of the Jews, drove them to the synagogue, and threatened to burn them alive. Gendarmes in Łomża, guarding the bridge over the Narew, heard the screams of the Jews as they were being herded into the synagogue. They rushed to Piātnica to

issue orders forbidding the Poles to murder the Jews and to drive them away from the assembled Jews.²

At the beginning of July 1941, Wojewoda and Darkowski established a ghetto for the Piātnica Jews. Leon Malek (or Malko), appointed by the Germans as the civil administrator (wójt) of the larger Drozdowo gmina, to which Piātnica then belonged, also participated in the decision to concentrate the Piātnica Jews into a small residential neighborhood. The men allowed the Jews to bring to the ghetto only what they could carry in a small bundle and ordered them to leave the remainder of their property at their former residences. The role played by the Germans in the establishment of the ghetto is unknown, but they did not intercede to forestall its emergence. Whether prohibitions were placed on Jewish movement beyond the ghetto also is unknown. Poles living in the ghetto area were not made to move. Rather, they were expected to house the Jews from the other parts of Piātnica.

Wojewoda, Darkowski, and Malek likely established the Piātnica ghetto to claim the property they had forced the Jews to abandon. The sołtys and podsołtys took ownership over the homes, workshops, and tools of the Jews. Malek received their cows and horses. The men probably enforced the ghettoization orders by turning over protestors to the German authorities. Darkowski, also an auxiliary policeman for three months at the beginning of the occupation, handed at least four Jews, including Gołda Matys, over to German authorities. The Jews were not seen again. In the middle of August 1941, the Germans liquidated the Piātnica ghetto. They ordered the Jews deported to the Łomża ghetto. Wojewoda helped the Gendarmes, presumably sent from Łomża, to round up the Piātnica Jews.

Wojewoda and Darkowski decided to hold back 12 Jews from the expulsion. They held the Jews prisoner and compelled them for three months in the fall of 1941 to remodel their houses. The prisoners included Elias Czerwonka, Nachman Markiewicz, and Fajba Żołądź. Then one day, after the establishment of a Gendarmerie post in Piātnica, likely in the early fall of 1941, the Poles marched their Jewish captives to the gmina administrative offices and handed them over to the German authorities. The Germans shot the men in the Giełczyń Forest.³

After the war, Wojewoda, Darkowski, and Malek were tried for a number of crimes, including on charges related to anti-Jewish compulsion and violence in Piātnica. Malek was charged with stealing Jewish-owned livestock.⁴ Wojewoda and Darkowski were charged with organizing a ghetto for the Piātnica Jews and serving as accessories in the deaths of 24 Jews, including the 12 men they had held captive in their homes. Although witnesses presented much evidence during the investigation to suggest the men were guilty of establishing a ghetto in Piātnica, Wojewoda and Darkowski, in February 1951, were found not guilty.

SOURCES The deposition of Cwi Baranowicz, recorded in 1967 in New York at the request of West German prosecutors investigating Nazi crimes in the Białystok and Łomża regions,

Jews were deported in the spring of 1942 to the Suchowola and Grodno ghettos.

Also useful are the relevant entries in Shmuel Spector and Bracha Freundlich, eds., *Pinkas ha-kehillot. Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities: Poland*, vol. 8, *Vilna, Białystok, Nowogródek* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), pp. 244–246 (Dąbrowa Białostocka), pp. 369–371 (Janów), pp. 444–445 (Nowy Dwór), pp. 464–468 (Suchowola), and pp. 489–490 (Sidra); and in Arnon Rubin, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Communities in Poland and Their Relics Today*, vol. 1, *District Białystok* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2006), pp. 62–65 (Dąbrowa Białostocka), pp. 85–87 (Janów Sokółski), pp. 168–170 (Sidra), and pp. 191–197 (Suchowola).

Documentation pertaining to the Jewish communities of Suchowola, Sidra, Nowy Dwór, and Korycin during the World War II German occupation can be found in the following archives: AŻIH (e.g., 301/1143, 1251, and 1847); IPN (e.g., SAB 214 and SWB 31–37); IPN-Bi (e.g., old numeration, S-6/71 and S-80/67 [Nowy Dwór], S-13/82 [Sidra], S-271/68 [Suchowola], S-433/71 [Lipsk nad Biebrzą], and S-609/71 [Korycin]); USHMM (RG-15.019M [ASG], reel 14, 46/86); VHF (e.g., # 15809 and 18378); and YVA.

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NOTES

1. Compare Lazar, *Destruction*, pp. 6–7, 8–9; and IPN, SWB 31–38, in Żbikowski, “Pogromy,” pp. 195, 197–198 (Teofilski deposition).

2. Sarah Ivri-Tikotsky, “The Shoah,” in Steinberg et al., *Sefer Subovolab*, pp. 236–238; VHF, # 18378; and IPN, SWB 31–37 and SAB 214, in Żbikowski, “Pogromy,” pp. 194–200.

3. IPN, SWB 31–37, in Żbikowski, “Pogromy,” p. 196 (Marchel depositions).

4. Note differences in ages and places of incarceration between drowning and fire victims in Ivri-Tikotsky, “The Shoah,” pp. 236–238; Lazar, *Destruction*, pp. 4–5; “Suchowola,” in Spector and Freundlich, *Pinkas ha-kehillot*, 8:489–490; and depositions, cited in Żbikowski, “Pogromy,” pp. 194–200.

5. Note ambiguity in Lazar, *Destruction*, pp. 6–7.

6. Ibid., p. 12; Ivri-Tikotsky, “The Shoah,” p. 238; and Marchel depositions, in Żbikowski, “Pogromy,” p. 196.

7. Lazar, *Destruction*, pp. 8–9.

8. Ibid., pp. 9–10.

9. VHF, # 15809, testimony of Jeanette (Chena Fajenberg) Geldwert; Lazar, *Destruction*, pp. 15–16; and Lazar testimony, in Steinberg et al., *Sefer Subovolab*, p. 518. In May 1942, the Landrat organized a similar gauntlet for the arrival of the Nowy Dwór Jews.

10. Lazar, *Destruction*, pp. 13–14; and VHF, # 15809.

11. Lazar, *Destruction*, pp. 17–19.

12. VHF, # 15809.

13. Lazar, *Destruction*, p. 18.

14. Ibid., pp. 13–14; and VHF, # 15809.

15. Lazar, *Destruction*, pp. 14–17; and IPN, SWB 36 and SAB 214, in Żbikowski, “Pogromy,” respectively, p. 196, and pp. 199–200.

16. Masha Fisher-Bagner, “The Female ‘Contact’ in the Underground,” in Steinberg et al., *Sefer Subovolab*, pp. 252–254.

17. Lazar, *Destruction*, p. 19.

18. VHF, # 15809; Lazar, *Destruction*, pp. 18–20; and Ivri-Tikotsky, “The Shoah,” pp. 240–243.

19. Ivri-Tikotsky, “The Shoah,” pp. 242–243; and Lazar, *Destruction*, p. 25.

ŚWISŁOCZ

Pre-1939: Świsłocz (Yiddish: Sislevich), town, Wołkowysk powiat, Białystok województwo, Poland; 1939–1941: Svisloch', raion center; Belostok oblast', Belorussian SSR; 1941–1944: Świsłocz, Kreis Wolkowysk, Distrikt Białystok; post-1991: Svislach, raen center; Hrodna voblasts', Republic of Belarus

Świsłocz lies 38 kilometers (23.6 miles) west-southwest of Wołkowysk.

In World War II, Świsłocz first came under Soviet occupation. Between September 1939 and October 1940, the Jewish population in the Svisloch' raion increased—from 2,700 to 3,200 (5.9 to 7 percent)—as refugees from German-occupied Poland settled there. The Jews almost all lived in Świsłocz proper. Resettlement and nationality reclassifications in this period brought a decline in the number of Poles, from 12,900 to 4,700 (28.2 to 10 percent), and an increase in Belorussians, from 29,300 to 38,700 (64.1 to 84 percent, respectively, of the 45,700 and then 46,000 inhabitants of the raion).

The Germans occupied Świsłocz on June 26, 1941. Before they arrived, several Jews had fled to the Soviet interior.¹ The German military commander appointed a local civilian administration and an auxiliary police force. Both are presumed to have been composed of Poles.² In the fall of 1941, a German civilian administration replaced the local military command. It was headed by an Amtskommissar surnamed Odenbach. A Gendarmerie post also was established.

At the outset of the occupation, German soldiers executed many Świsłocz residents accused of collaborating with the former Soviet regime. The Germans are believed to have targeted mostly Jews, in retaliation for the Świsłocz community having sheltered the parents of Herschel Grynszpan, whose assassination of Ernst von Rath, on November 7, 1938, had served as the pretext for *Kristallnacht*. (The Grynszpans had fled to the Soviet Union, where they survived the war). Some Poles also narrowly interpreted the orders to round up Communist sympathizers because they held local Jewish Communists responsible for the murder of five Polish officials before the arrival of the Red Army and Jews, more generally, for assisting the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) in deporting their co-nationals to the Soviet interior. Albin Horbin, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, sheltered several prominent Jews, including Alexander Bronowski, a lawyer and outspoken critic of Nazism.³

German soldiers in Świsłocz rounded up Jews for heavy, physical labor and plundered their property. The anti-Jewish persecution intensified with the arrival, on July 1, 1941, of a new military commander. The regional military command issued several anti-Jewish decrees, including June orders requiring

Jews to wear a white armband with a blue Star of David. (The order was changed a few days later in Świsłocz to a circular, yellow patch.) Decrees forbade Jews from contact with the Christian population and required the formation of a Jewish Council (Judenrat). Schlechter, the Jewish school director, chaired the Świsłocz Judenrat.

In July 1941, the German authorities ordered a ghetto created in the old Jewish neighborhood, in the northwest of Świsłocz. Its southern border was across from the municipal gardens, at Warsaw Street. Parts of Grodno Street, including the Jewish houses south of the Russian Orthodox cemetery, formed its eastern interior boundary. The western border ran near the Świsłocz River. In the north, the ghetto included the homes just past the Minc tannery. The date the ghetto was fenced is unknown. On the day that the Jews reported there, they were required to surrender their horses and other livestock.

The German authorities consolidated in the Świsłocz ghetto the Jews from other communities, including about 100 people from Mścibów and five families from Michałki.

The Germans continued to demand various "contributions" of the ghetto inhabitants. They usually gave the Jewish Council two hours to secure the items before entering the ghetto to beat its members and to steal whatever they desired. The Amtkommissar likely ordered the Judenrat to establish workshops to tan hides and to produce finished leather goods. The Judenrat also organized a daily quota of conscripts for forced labor. In the spring of 1942, most of the men were ordered to a labor camp, east of Wołkowysk, to widen and pave the road from Wołkowysk to Baranowicze. When the German overseers of the project beat some of the Świsłocz laborers to death, the Judenrat bribed officials to ease conditions. Unfortunately, the officials intensified their violence periodically to extract additional contributions from the Judenrat. Suffering from exhaustion and typhus, many of the men perished after they were returned to the ghetto in October 1942.

On November 2, 1942, the ghetto was liquidated. The Jews were ordered to assemble at the market square for deportation to a labor camp. They were joined there by about 500 Jews from Jałówka. The SS officer in charge sent part of the assembled Jews, including 1,200 to 3,000 from Świsłocz, by train to the Wołkowysk transit camp. At least 8 Świsłocz Jews are known to have evaded the deportation or to have fled from the transit camp. The remaining Jews were executed in the Wiśnik Forest, just outside Świsłocz. In one version, the executions targeted about 300 of the old and sick. Other accounts note that the Germans held back for execution some 1,563 Jews, including the elderly, the sick, mothers and their children, and a small group of men, ordered to collect and bury the dead.⁴ After the executions, the Gendarmes executed 10 Christians for looting Jewish property in the ghetto.⁵

At the Wołkowysk transit camp, located on the grounds of the former garrison of the 7th Polish Cavalry Brigade, the Jews sent from Świsłocz joined about 15,000 to 19,000 people from other nearby Jewish communities imprisoned there on

November 2–3, 1942. The Germans began expelling the inmates to the Treblinka extermination camp in late November. The Jałówka and Mścibów Jews were among the 3,000 to 5,000 people on the second Wołkowysk transport to Treblinka, which likely left on December 2. All but 60 to 70 men, held back as prisoners of the Treblinka labor camp, were gassed on arrival. The only survivor, Leib Aronzon, from Jałówka, fled to the Białystok ghetto after being left for dead near a mass grave outside the camp.⁶ The Świsłocz Jews were still in Wołkowysk when SS officials announced the deportation of all but 1,700 to 2,000 young, able-bodied inmates and medical personnel. About 200 Świsłocz Jews are believed to have surrendered to the Germans some hides and finished leather goods to remain in Wołkowysk. Several Jałówka-born Jews, perhaps residents of either Świsłocz or Wołkowysk, also secured dispensations. The remaining 4,000 to 6,000 Jews, including most of the Świsłocz community, were sent on two or three transports, likely between December 6 and 8, to the Treblinka extermination camp, where they all perished.⁷

On January 26, 1943, the 1,700 to 2,000 remaining Jews were deported to the Auschwitz extermination camp. Two days later, at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, the Germans gassed between 1,341 and 1,641 people from the transport and held back just 280 men and 79 women as prisoners of the concentration camp. It is impossible to determine from extant records how many of the original prisoners were from Świsłocz. Only 3 Świsłocz Jews are believed to have survived Auschwitz.⁸

About half of those known to have sought shelter closer to home also perished. Among the dead were brothers Hersz and Szmuel Lis. Cyna (or Tzeitl) Slapak, sheltered by a Pole, Wiktor Szerszenowicz, and four others, who joined the partisans, survived.

At two trials, in 1952 and 1953, in Białystok, Poland, Tadeusz Kłęk, a former Polish auxiliary policeman from Świsłocz, was found guilty of several wartime crimes, including escorting the Jews to the Wiśnik execution site. He received a death sentence, likely commuted to life in prison, and a six-year prison term.

SOURCES Alexander Bronowski, *They Were Few* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), covers the first weeks of the German occupation in Świsłocz. The Svisloch ShtetLinks page, by Nancy Holden, at jewishgen.org, contains some unique sources, including correspondence with a local Christian describing the ghetto. Also useful are Hayim Rubin, ed., *Kehilat Svislots, pelek grodna: Yizkor le-kehillat svislots* (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at 'Ole Svislots be-Yisrael, 1961); and Yerahmi'el Lifshits, ed., *Sefer Svislots 2: Mikbats te'udi, perakim nivharim, reshimat bate-av, ma'amarim, 'eduyot, temunot u-mismakhim* (Netanyah: Irgun yots'e Svislots be-Yisrael, 1984). Particularly strong for identifying the fates of Świsłocz prisoners of Auschwitz II-Birkenau is the memoir by the Wołkowysk native and Łysków survivor Izaak Goldberg, *The Miracles versus Tyranny: The Fight for Life and Death between the Jewish People and the Nazis* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1979).

The second Wołkowysk yizkor book, Moses Einhorn, ed., *Volkovisker Yisker-Bukh* (New York, 1949), includes two chapters by Abraham Ain; the first on the pre-World War I history

of the Świsłocz Jewish community, is an abbreviated version of his landmark study "Swislocz: Portrait of a Jewish Community in Eastern Europe," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 4 (1949): 86–114; and the second is about its destruction. The abbreviated form of the first and the less familiar second chapter, "The Destruction of Svislucz," appear in English translation in *Sefer zikaron Volkovysk. The Volkovysk Memorial Book*, trans. Jacob Solomon Berger (Mahwah, NJ: J.S. Berger, 2000), pp. 302–305. Świsłocz survivors' understandings of the Judenrat form a part of the discussion of the first appendix in Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 584–585. Helpful, too, is the Świsłocz entry in Shmuel Spector and Bracha Freundlich, eds., *Pinkas ha-kebilot. Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities: Poland*, vol. 8, *Vilna, Białystok, Nowogródek* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), pp. 460–465.

Archival documentation on the fate of the Świsłocz Jewish community in World War II, under the German occupation, includes AŻIH (211 [e.g., old numeration 6-7] and 301/5388); GARF (7021-86-46, pp. 24–30); IPN (i.e., SOB 4 and SWB 83); USHMM (e.g., RG-22.002M); YIVO (RG-336); and YVA (e.g., M-11/5).

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NOTES

1. VHF, # 1608, testimony of Emmanuel Goldberg.
2. Bykowski to Ruthberg, August 4, 1944, in English trans. on the Svisloch ShtetLinks page, at jewishgen.org.
3. Tadeusz Krahel, *Doświadczeni zniewoleniem: Duchowni archidiecezji wileńskiej represjonowani w latach okupacji sowieckiej (1939–1945)* (Białystok: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, Oddział w Białymstoku, 2005), pp. 45–46, 209.
4. Compare AŻIH, 210/6-7, as cited by Szymon Datner, "Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej w Okręgu Białostockim," *BŻIH*, no. 60 (1966): tab. 8; with GARF, 7021-86-46, p. 5; and AŻIH, 301/5388, testimony of Szyja Rakowicki, pp. 1–2, noting 3,000 executed.
5. AŻIH, 301/5388, p. 3.
6. BLH, testimony of Leib Aronzon, in an English trans. on the Jałówka homepage of the www.avotaynu.com Web site.
7. Einhorn, *Volkovisker Yisker-Bukh*, pp. 914–923.
8. Stanisław Mączka, ed., *Żydzi polscy w KL Auschwitz: wykazy imienne* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2004), pp. 162–163.

SZCZUCZYN (BIAŁOSTOCKI)

Pre-1939: Szczuczyn (Yiddish: Shtutshtshin), town, powiat center, Białystok województwo, Poland; 1939–1941: Shchuchin, Graevo raion, Belostok oblast', Belorussian SSR; 1941–1944: Schtschutschin, Kreis Grajewo, Distrikt Białystok; post-1998: Szczuczyn, Grajewo powiat, województwo podlaskie, Poland

Szczuczyn lies on the Wissa River 75 kilometers (47 miles) northwest of Białystok and 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) southwest of Grajewo. Its 1939 population of 5,300 included 3,000 Jews.

Shortly after occupying Szczuczyn on September 8, 1939, the Germans deported 250 to 300 Jewish men to a labor camp

in the Reich. Released in January 1940, almost four months after Szczuczyn came under Soviet occupation on September 27, 1939, the conscripts almost all perished at the border when German soldiers fired on them as they stepped off the train. About 30 returned to Szczuczyn.

On June 22, 1941, the Germans bombarded Szczuczyn, setting it afire and killing many people including a large number of Jews.¹ A Wehrmacht unit appeared briefly, on June 23. German authorities appointed a local blacksmith, Stanisław Peniuk, mayor. Kosmowski, a pre-war Szczuczyn postal worker, from Świdry-Awissa village, was named commander of an auxiliary police force.² An ongoing Polish Institute for National Memory (IPN) investigation has documented that from October 1940, Mieczysław Kosmowski (one of three brothers from the village, who may or may not have been the Kosmowski mentioned above) was a paid agent of the Security Police in Allenstein. He arrived with German forces, most likely to incite local Poles to anti-Jewish violence.³

On June 27–28, 1941, Kosmowski, his two brothers, and Peniuk organized a pogrom in which about 200 Poles plundered the houses of the richest Jewish families and brutally murdered 300 to 400 Jews.⁴ The local priest and Polish intellectuals refused to intervene in the violence. The arrival the next evening of 30 Wehrmacht soldiers enabled Jewish women to pay the unit commander soap and coffee to patrol Szczuczyn to end the collaborators' attacks.

The Szczuczyn auxiliary police made forced labor obligatory for all adult Jews. Each household was required to send one to three laborers daily to the town square to tear out grass between its cobblestones. Policemen Wincenty Rung and Antoni Gardocki used canes and clubs to bludgeon the laborers.⁵

On Monday, July 14 or 28, 1941, Polish officials, acting on the command of an SS officer, mobilized almost every adult male Pole from the Szczuczyn area to participate in anti-Jewish violence.⁶ Polish youth, armed with clubs, drove the approximately 2,500 Jews outside Szczuczyn to the Jewish cemetery. As a Polish guard, led by Gardocki, held the Jews captive, other Poles joined the SS to plunder their houses and to set fire to the new Bet Midrash on Nowy Świat and Wąsosz Streets. The fire engulfed many Jewish homes. That evening, all but 100 men were released. The captives likely were held hostage pending receipt of a payment demanded by the Germans; 3 additional men were freed; the Polish police murdered 97 others.⁷

The Szczuczyn ghetto was established the following Friday, either July 18 or August 1, 1941. That day, after the Jews had been assembled at the market square, a small SS contingent arrived to give the local police instructions. Similarities between events surrounding the establishment of the ghettos in Szczuczyn and Augustów suggest the Germans were from an operational unit of the Tilsit State Police or from its subordinate, the Sudauen (in Polish, Suwałki) border command. Four auxiliary policemen rode on bicycles to nearby villages to order Jews there to Szczuczyn. They killed a Jewish farmer in Lipnik (Szczuczyn gmina and powiat) for refusing to accompany them.⁸ Other policemen searched houses in Szczuczyn