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“Aryanisation” of Jewish Businesses

The Gestapo, the gendarmerie, the *Stadthauptmannschaft* with its officials and all other Germans and *Volksdeutschen*, who were in our city in large number, led a fine life. They were far away from the combat zone and strove to settle down as well and as finely as possible. One certain day, they set out to create shops that would only serve Germans.

The “creation of German shops” happened in a very “simple” manner - German officials, along with gendarmes, burst into a Jewish shop and drove away the employees. Afterwards, they took the owner for a brief interrogation - they desired to know where he kept the money, the merchandise and everything that belonged to the shop. The books were superficially inspected, the cash register was counted and seized, and the owner was forced to give over the keys and everything that he had. If he asked, “How can this be? Where is justice?”, he immediately received an answer which he, afterwards, remembered for a very long time. From the shop, they immediately went to the merchant’s private residence and, if they found goods there, the dwelling was requisitioned with everything that was inside. In this manner, the owner of a large shop would, over the course of one hour, be turned into an complete pauper.

The robbed shop was given over to a German or a *Volksdeutscher*. The Jewish names were torn off the signs and inscriptions in the German language appeared: “*Hier wird verkauft nur für Deutsche*” [Only Germans can buy here]. The new German merchant sold the merchandise that the Jew had left behind. He was issued a permit to requisition products from the surrounding peasantry, for which he paid very little.

At these “Aryanised” shops, the German populace received merchandise and food products at very low prices. Two kilos of bread, for example, for which the whole population paid thirty *złoty*, cost the Germans only one *złoty*; for a kilo of butter, which cost 200 *złoty*, the Germans paid six *złoty*. It was the same with all other articles.

The new “merchants” received wide opportunities to make good deals. They forcefully seized goods for low prices, sold a small part of that to the Germans, with a meagre profit, and sold the rest on the black market for very high prices.

Polish officials, seeing the German shops with the cheap goods, also fancied having such shops. They set out to open groceries but, in order to receive premises, Jews were once more thrown out of the shops and the premises were “Aryanised”. These grocery stores also received some of the food products for cheap prices.

During the “operation of Aryanisation”, one would see Germans walking about in the Jewish streets, holding pencils and notepads and noting down Jewish shops. Within the hour, the owner of such a shop, which had been noted down, would receive a notification from the *Stadthauptmannschaft* to leave the premises. The large, white boards with the blue Star of

David, in the windows and the entrance of the Jewish shops made the work of finding the Jewish premises easier. Polish *Volksdeutschen* and Poles also sought out Jewish shops and, if they had an acquaintance in the German offices, the Jewish owner was thrown out and they took over the shop.

The Jewish shops of *manufaktura* [fabrics/soft goods], ready-made clothing, linen and haberdashery were all liquidated in one stroke in the following manner - one certain early morning, all these shops were simultaneously attacked by gendarmes. The owners and the employees were driven out, the premises were locked, the windows and doors were sealed up and the keys were taken.

The shops were locked for several weeks. The tradespeople tried to get the *Judenrat* to intervene, but no one could be of assistance. After long weeks, the affair was concluded as follows:

Before the War, a Polish officer by the name of Mosiewicz had lived in our city. This officer had died, leaving behind a wife, with a son and a daughter. The family was left without means and lived in need. Mrs Mosiewicz received a lottery agency from the Polish government, but this business brought her very small earnings - and it reached a point that the woman and her two children poisoned themselves in a bid to take their own lives, but they were saved. [Then] nothing further was heard of this family.

Only when the Germans entered our city did, we start to see Mrs Mosiewicz very frequently in the company of *Stadthauptmann* Dr Wendler. It became known that the woman had roots in Germany, so she was a *Volksdeutsche*. Mrs Mosiewicz began travelling about in her own motorcar, opened two large textile shops in the city's finest neighbourhood, was given trusteeship over the largest Jewish factories, which had already been "Aryanised", and she generally became known as the *Stadthauptmann's* right-hand person. Mrs Mosiewicz would sometimes do a Jew a favour and, at times, visited the president of the *Judenrat*. Over time, the lady became the most influential person in the city.

So, after having kept the Jewish *manufaktura* shops locked for several weeks, they opened all of them up once again and began transferring all the goods, from them, to Mrs Mosiewicz's shops. For long weeks, Jewish labourers worked moving a huge array of merchandise in freight trucks under police supervision.

The Jewish merchants stood from afar, with heavy hearts, and watched their goods being taken out of the shops to the last item. They were not even permitted to come closer to their shop premises.

The emptied premises in the finer streets were given over to Germans, whereas the keys to the other shops were handed over to the *Judenrat*. The *Judenrat*, on its part, which always seized an opportunity to make money, only gave up the keys to those owners who paid a large monetary sum. A small number of merchants took back their premises for money and the larger part of the shops were auctioned off. Whoever gave more received the premises. The once large *manufaktura* shops were transformed into tiny shops selling soda water, ice, toys, buttons, cheap fruit etc.