

X

In the Claws of the Gestapo

Over a fine, new building at ul. Kilińskiego 10, a long, red flag fluttered bearing a large swastika. The flag was so big, that it seemed to cover the entire three-storey house. These were the offices of the Gestapo.

We had already heard what the Gestapo was before the War. The Gestapo men beat and murdered their political opponents, torturing them in concentration camps. They sowed Death and the insignia on their uniforms was a *Totenkopf* [skull and crossbones¹]. Each one of them was an Angel of Death².

But now we could see up closely and feel on our own skin what the Gestapo [actually] was.

One Saturday afternoon, when some of the Jews were on the street, dressed in their better clothes, Gestapo men set about chasing the women - young and old. They rounded up a large group and led them away to the Town Hall square, where construction materials were lying about - bricks, stones, clay and other things. Here, they ordered the women to cast off their winter coats or furs, lay them aside in the open square, and apply themselves to the work, which consisted in hauling the bricks and stones from one edge of the square and then back to the same place from where they had taken them.

Christian passers-by, stopping to watch the spectacle, made mockery and laughed at the women, who were being tormented and humiliated in such a brutal fashion. Only when it turned dark did the torture come to an end. Not all the women found their coats again - many of them had been robbed by the crowd.

Upon leaving the square, the Germans lined up in two lines and made the women walk between them, beating them with *Spitzruten*. The Polish crowd, all around, laughed with satisfaction and saw off the battered women with curses and insults. Thus, the Jewish women got the taste of humiliation, not just from the Germans, but also from their own local Polish townsfolk.

A similar uncouth deed was perpetrated in that same winter month, at the end of 1939, by the gendarmerie officer Ambros and his comrades.

On one occasion, at twelve midnight, these men encircled several Jewish streets and ordered all the Jews to come out onto the Nowy Rynek, threatening to shoot anyone who remained at home. Everyone went out and stood in the deep snow, in the frosty weather and the cuttingly cold wind. The tortured people stood until five o'clock in the morning - only then did the vandals lead them away to their barracks.

¹ [TN: This insignia was not specific to the Gestapo – Nazi Germany's secret police, who within the Reich wore civilian clothes – but was used by all branches of the SS.]

² [TN: God's messenger who brings death to human beings ("The Grim Reaper").]

AUFRUF an die jüdische Bevölkerung.

Auf Grund des § 3 der zweiten Durchführungsverordnung zur Verordnung vom 26. Oktober 1939 über die Eintragung der Arbeitsbücher für die jüdische Bevölkerung des Generalgouvernements (Verordnung G. G. P. Seite 246) verfügt die Behörde über die Eintragung der Arbeitsbücher der jüdischen Bevölkerung in Taschenstöcke der Geburtsjahrgänge 1914 bis inklusive 1923.

Es haben sich bereits beim Eintragsamt in Tschernochow, Eisenbahn 1, in Anzahl der Arbeitsbücher 9-15 Uhr jeweils Eintragung in der Anlangsbuchverlären A-H

am 18. März 1940 die Jahrgänge	1910	1911	1912	1913
am 19. März 1940	1905	1907	1908	1909
am 20. März 1940	1902	1903	1904	1905
am 21. März 1940	1898	1899	1900	1901
am 22. März 1940	1894	1905	1890	1897
am 23. März 1940	1891	1892	1893	

Der Stadthauptmann
(-) Dr. WENDLER.

WEZWANIE do ludności żydowskiej.

Na podstawie § 3 drugiej przystawki wykonawczych do Rozporządzenia Generalnego Gubernatora z dnia 26 października 1939 r. w sprawie wprowadzenia przymusu pracy dla ludności żydowskiej (Dziennik Rozporządzeń Generalnego Gubernatora Nr. 246) nakazuje się jęz. polski: wstąpienie do służby przymusowej w Taschenstöckach (Dziennik Rozporządzeń Generalnego Gubernatora Nr. 246) w dniach 18-23 marca 1940 r. w następującym porządku:

z dnia 18 marca 1940 r.	rodzaj 1910	1911	1912	1913
z dnia 19 marca 1940 r.	rodzaj 1905	1907	1908	1909
z dnia 20 marca 1940 r.	rodzaj 1902	1903	1904	1905
z dnia 21 marca 1940 r.	rodzaj 1898	1899	1900	1901
z dnia 22 marca 1940 r.	rodzaj 1894	1895	1890	1897
z dnia 23 marca 1940 r.	rodzaj 1891	1892	1893	

Starosta Grodzki
(-) Dr. WENDLER.

AUFRUF an die jüdische Bevölkerung.

Auf Grund des § 3 der zweiten Durchführungsverordnung zur Verordnung vom 26. Oktober 1939 über die Eintragung der Arbeitsbücher der jüdischen Bevölkerung des Generalgouvernements (Verordnung G. G. P. Seite 246) verfügt die Behörde über die Eintragung der Arbeitsbücher der jüdischen Bevölkerung in Taschenstöcke der Geburtsjahrgänge 1914 bis inklusive 1923.

Die arbeitsverpflichtigten männlichen Juden, wie auch die getauften Juden, in Taschenstock der Geburtsjahrgänge 1914 bis inklusive 1923 melden sich beim Arbeitsrat in Taschenstock, Marienallee Nr. 9, während der Arbeitsstunden 9-15 Uhr zwecks Eintragung in die Arbeitsbücher in der Reihenfolge:

- am 9. März 1940 mit den Anlangsbuchverlären A-H
- am 10. März 1940 mit den Anlangsbuchverlären I-R
- am 11. März 1940 mit den Anlangsbuchverlären S-Z

Der Stadthauptmann
(-) Dr. WENDLER.

WEZWANIE do ludności żydowskiej.

Na podstawie § 3 drugiej przystawki wykonawczych do Rozporządzenia Generalnego Gubernatora z dnia 26 października 1939 r. w sprawie wprowadzenia przymusu pracy dla ludności żydowskiej (Dziennik Rozporządzeń Generalnego Gubernatora Nr. 246) nakazuje się jęz. polski: wstąpienie do służby przymusowej w Taschenstöckach (Dziennik Rozporządzeń Generalnego Gubernatora Nr. 246) w dniach 9-15 marca 1940 r. w następującym porządku:

- w d. 9. marca 1940 z nazwiskami rozpoczynającymi się od A-H
- w d. 10. marca 1940 z nazwiskami rozpoczynającymi się od I-R
- w d. 11. marca 1940 z nazwiskami rozpoczynającymi się od S-Z

Starosta Grodzki
(-) Dr. WENDLER.

Announcements regarding forced labour for Jews

[Translation of the texts (by Andrew Rajcher):]

**SUMMONS
to the Jewish Population**

Based on No. 3 of the second provisions made to the ordinance of the General Government of October 26, 1939 on the introduction of forced labour for the Jewish population (Journal of the General Governor's Regulations, page 246), I hereby order the registration of all Jewish men in Czestochowa, men liable for forced labour, as well as **Jews baptised** from 1879 to 1913 only and from 1924 to 1927 only.

In the first instance, those required to report to the Częstochowa Council of Elders, at ul. Katedralna 7, between 9 and 18, with the aim of registering in the forced labour records:

On 18th March 1940 – those born in 1910 1911 1912 1913
On 19th March 1940 – those born in 1906 1907 1908 1909
On 20th March 1940 – those born in 1902 1903 1904 1905
On 21st March 1940 – those born in 1898 1899 1900 1901
On 22nd March 1940 – those born in 1894 1895 1896 1897
On 23rd March 1940 – those born in 1891 1892 1893

[The rest is too illegible]

Stadthauptmann Dr Wendler

**SUMMONS
to the Jewish Population**

Based on No. 3 of the second provisions made to the ordinance of the General Government of October 26, 1939 on the introduction of forced labour for the Jewish population (Journal of the General Governor's Regulations, page 246), I hereby order:

Jewish men in Częstochowa, who are subject to compulsory labour, or Jews baptized from 1914 to 1923, should report to the Council of Elders in Częstochowa, ul. N. P. Marii 9, in order to register in the record of forced labour between 9 am and 3 pm in the following order:

On 9th March 1940 – surnames beginning A-H
On 10th March 1940 – surnames beginning L-R
On 11th March 1940 – surnames beginning S-Z

[The rest is too illegible]

Stadthauptmann Dr Wendler

There, they were all ordered to strip naked. The gendarmes searched their clothes, seizing money, watches, rings and anything of value. The nude women were thrown onto the tables, by the gendarmes, to be examined intimately. These torments continued until six o'clock in the evening. It was only then that the women, humiliated and broken in spirit and in body, were thrown out of there half dressed.

The afflicted Jews and their wives came to the *Judenrat* to complain about the gendarmes, but the *Judenrat* was powerless to assist them - the *Judenrat* had only been granted the right to do anything with its Jews, so that the orders of the authorities should be carried out quickly and accurately. But it did not have any right to intervene regarding the wrongs that the Germans perpetrated upon the Jews.

* *
*

One cloudy afternoon, Gestapo officers travelled with a streetcar to ul. Garibaldiego, to a certain Jew by the name of Lenczner. Lenczner was not at home just then and the Gestapo men, first of all, ordered Mrs Lenczner to provide them with a stick. As there were no sticks in the house, the lady had to fetch one from the neighbours. In the meantime, Lenczner arrived and the Gestapo men took him and his wife into a room, from which a neighbour, through the wall, soon heard blows and screams. That was the Germans beating Lenczner over the head with the stick, which his wife had brought, and yelling, "Give us money, gold, diamonds!" The couple opened up the cupboards, took out the jewellery and all the valuables and gave them away to the bandits.

But all this was not enough for them, and they pointed their revolvers at Lenczner, ordering him to turn around to face the wall. His wife then fell at their feet, begging them to spare her husband's life - whereupon they ordered the man to strip naked and lay down on the table. Once more, they started beating him murderously and, when he was writhing with pain, they commanded the wife to hold him by the feet so that he should not throw himself about. The couple wailed and screamed horribly and their voices reached the street. But the murderers had entered into such a wild state that the more their victims wailed and screamed, the harder they beat the Jew's naked body with the stick. Lenczner's children in the kitchen wept terribly and ripped the clothes off their limbs in grief. The Jew finally lost consciousness and his wife poured water on him to revive him. [Even] when the murderers perceived that he was not moving, they still continued to beat him until his body turned black.

Before leaving, they gave his wife a few more blows and told her that, on the following day at four o'clock in the afternoon, they were to come to the Gestapo and bring their valuables with them.

Once the Gestapo bandits had gone, the neighbours set about succouring the Jew. They called in a physician, who administered injections to Lenczner and ordered him to be wrapped in moist bedsheets. After he began to regain consciousness, they began brooding on how to make it possible for him to be able to report to the Gestapo office on the following day, as the murderers had ordered before leaving.

Lenczner's family members went to the *Judenrat* and recounted what had occurred. The *prezes* of the *Judenrat* only shrugged his shoulders helplessly. What could he do against the Gestapo? They [then] approached a Jew by the name of Wajnryb, who had certain contacts inside the Gestapo and who could, for a good sum of money sometimes have a decree retracted. On this occasion, however, Wajnryb, too, just shook his head - he did not know whether he would be able to speak with the same Gestapo men, who had been in Lenczner's house, but he would endeavour to do something, if it was only possible.

On the following day, when the appointed hour was nearing, with great effort, the seriously ill Lenczner got out of bed. His wife and children dressed him, took him downstairs and stood him up in the *dorożka*³ - he was unable to sit down. His daughter held him up to prevent him from falling and, in this manner, they drove off to the Gestapo office, taking the family jewels and money with them.

Lenczner, with his injured body, barely made it up to the second storey of the Gestapo building. He was led into a room, where the two characters, who had beaten him the previous day, were sitting. One of them asked him, "Have you already dragged the gold out of the holes? And who is she?", pointing at Lenczner's companion. "This is my father," replied the daughter. "He cannot walk on his own. I helped him get here."

They set out the valuables. The two murderers carefully examined everything, taking the items of gold, diamond rings and the money. The silver candlesticks and the *menorah*, on the other hand, they returned. One of the two men wrote a note, which he lay on the table and said, "Sign this!" Lenczner signed it immediately, without reading what was written in the note. The note was read out loud and it said that, during a raid in the Jew Lenczner's house, a sum of one thousand zloty had been found, which was being confiscated for the German Reich, according to the "law" that a Jew was not allowed to possess more than two hundred zloty in cash.

With that note Lenczner went home, happy that it had ended "well", and he lay in bed for a month, until the wounds on his body had healed.

* *
*

The leader of the Gestapo was named [Friedrich-Wilhelm] Krüger⁴. Jews endured great torments from him. Immediately, upon the first day of his appearance, he commanded that the Jewish inhabitants should clean the houses and streets, under the supervision of the still functioning Polish concierges. Every morning, he personally inspected the Jews at their work and was watchful that the concierges should take good heed of how the Jews were working. Every day, he found new ways of tormenting and belittle the Jewish inhabitants. On one occasion, for instance, he ordered them to heave stones from one place to another and then back again. Another time, he would seek out a similar "job" and, in this manner, he invented new pieces of sadism each time. Jewish women were forced to clean out the common toilets in the houses, the stairways and other filthy places.

³ [TN: Aka "droshky" in English; flat-bedded horse-drawn cart.]

⁴ [TN: SS and Police Leader (SS- und Polizeiführer) of the Generalgouvernement between 1939-1943.]

In the Jewish buildings, he ordered that the concierges - who were all Poles - should move into the owners' quarters, and the owners into the flats of their concierges. Furthermore, in the Christian buildings, he would order a Jewish tenant to give up his dwelling to the concierge and to move into the latter's flat. Jews were also forced to sweep and clean his own private residence, as well as the whole building. where his quarters were located. He always went about with a *Spitzrute* made of twisted wire and lead and beat every Jewish passer-by – [even] women and children.

He would also help *Volksdeutschen*, who were appointed administrators in the Jewish buildings, collecting the rent from the Jewish tenants. He and the *Volksdeutsch* would enter a building and order all the Jews to report to them, then and there. When the Jews went down to the courtyard, the Gestapo man lined them up in a row, spearing each one with his venomous gaze and began beating everyone without distinction - men, women and children - until they were drenched in blood. After that, he gave them work - to heave stones from one place to another under the supervision of the Polish concierge.

After two hours, when the Jews were already exhausted from the work, he once more lined them up in a row, again beat them over the head, and addressed them with these words, "You dogs! You are to immediately lay out here the money that you owe until today and also for a month in advance. And from now on, you are to give the money, in advance, to this German gentleman", pointing to the *Volksdeutsch*.

Needless to say, the money immediately lay in the administrator's pocket. Others paid for the tenants who had no money for the payment, in order to be rid of these people as soon as possible.

Shortly afterwards, we read in the German newspapers that that same Krüger had been appointed chief of the Gestapo of the entire Generalgouvernement. It was only then that we suddenly realised what a "great man" we had had here.

* *
* *

The leading positions in the Gestapo were held by Germans and some *Volksdeutsch*. Poles were employed as undercover agents.

There was one individual, who before the War had been a Polish constable, under German occupation, he became a "*Volksdeutsch*". He was named Szabelski. He knew the people of our city well. From the very outset, he applied himself to Jews. He was the leader at all raids. He spoke only German and beat Jews murderously. His greatest pleasure was seeing Jewish blood. He did not leave a Jewish house, before making someone there a cripple.

* *
* *

One morning, I went out to the street. I suddenly feel a heavy hand on my arm. I swerve round and see a Polish railway official standing before me. He says to me, "Where is your armband? Clearly you are a Jew!"

I look at my right arm and notice that I have forgotten to put on my armband. The railway official orders that I be immediately led away to the police station. I tell the fellow taking me there that, today, I donned a different garment and forgot to put the armband on. But he is not interested in that - one cannot forget. "Besides," he says, "the railway official is from the Gestapo - his orders must be carried out."

We arrive at the precinct of the Polish police. The policeman on duty verifies my identity and, after I explain myself, he demands from me a small monetary fine. When I lay the money out on the table, a higher police official, who was once my friend, appears from the other room and, upon hearing our dealings, declares curtly, "Jews caught without an armband are to be sent to the Gestapo". I try to explain why I am not wearing an armband today, but my "friend" of yesterday does not even wish to hear me out properly. I am detained until the police commissioner arrives and, when he does, my former "friend" endeavours to have me sent to the Gestapo.

Under an escort of Polish police, I am taken to the Gestapo, where the constables report what my "crime" consists of. When I attempt to explain myself, I am ordered, "*Mund halten!*" [Keep your mouth shut!] and, after my pockets are emptied, I am led down into a basement and locked up in a cell.

I see that I am in a little cell one metre wide and three metres long. There is nothing there but a long, narrow bench and a bucket. The floor is stone. There is a small window in the ceiling, smeared with lime and barred. It is terribly cold here, despite the fact that it is actually sunny in the street. The hours pass slowly in hunger and in cold. I eventually hear heavy footsteps. The door is opened and I am ordered, "Out!" Once again, I am taken to the room where I was before noon. There is a man clad in civilian clothes. At that same moment, Wajnryb appears. He says, pointing to me, "This is my cousin, for whom I pleaded today." The plainclothes man turns to me crossly, "Why do you not wish to wear the band of shame, but wish to go about as a Christian?"

I notice my overcoat, which I had left at home today, lying here on a bench with the armband. I comprehend that they had my coat brought here to see if the band was there. Once more, I explain that I forgot to put the band on my arm. The plainclothes man takes a long, plaited whip out of his office desk, shows it to me and says, "If you were not Wajnryb's cousin, you would have received twenty lashes! But, if you are caught again without an armband, I will have your Jewish Star of David branded onto your forehead with a white-hot iron".

When I finally exited the Gestapo building, I breathed more easily.