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Jewish Police

The Jewish "*Ordnungsmänner*" [men of order], who at the beginning engaged in managing the street traffic, gradually broadened their activity. They grabbed Jews to work for the Germans and they were, increasingly, stricter towards Jews. The Jewish populace, which at the beginning had been happy with the activity of the "*Ordnungsmänner*", increasingly noticed that the Jewish "*Ordnungsleute*" [people of order] had been infected and corrupted by the Germans. Their tone towards their brethren began to change. Some of the better young men, who were unable to adapt to the new course [of events], resigned from their positions. Since the establishment of the ghetto, the Jewish population began calling the *Ordnungsdienst* [order service] "Jewish police". In the end, the "Jewish policemen" reached the point where they let their rubber truncheons fall on Jewish heads at every opportunity.

The commandant of the Jewish police, Herr [Maurycy] Galster, donned a cap with a white officer's band and four white stars sewn around it. His trousers were trimmed with leather, like horse-riders wear. His tall officer's boots were polished to a gloss, as if lacquered. In his right hand, he always carried a *Spitzrute* [pointed rod], with which, after every couple of steps, he dealt his boots a firm smack. When one heard this clack behind one, one already knew that the leader of the Jewish police was coming.

The lawyer Kacinel, his friend, was appointed as his general secretary. He received a police cap with three white officer's stars.

The commandant also chose other of his friends to be police officers and organised the entire make-up of the police. Once everything was ready, the Jewish police commandant, upon the orders of the German authorities, brought his men together and presented himself to representatives of the German regime. The German gendarmerie officer smiled at the Jewish police commandant - as if from one officer to another - and then he winked at his colleagues, the other German officers, with an ironic smile on his lips and, immediately, turned to the Jewish police with a serious mien and said that they were to accurately carry out all his commands. "If not," he added, pointing to a Gestapo man who was watching the spectacle, "the gentleman with the *Totenkopf* [skull and crossbones] on his cap will take care of you and all the Jews in the city".

The Jewish police left this spectacle in a not very uplifted mood. But, nevertheless, this did not hinder them from holding entertainment in honour of such an important event as the organisation of a "Jewish police", and they drank and revelled until late into the night.

Two police stations were opened - one on the First Aleja, led by Commandant Galster himself, and the other on ul. Kozia, led by Icze Landau. During the hours when Jews had the right to go about in the ghetto streets, the police stood at all the exits from the ghetto boundaries and checked whether the passes were in order. They also guarded that Jews, Heaven forbid, should not conduct any business in the street. They took their work very seriously and chased

after the poor traders, even beating them with their rubber truncheons. Only a small fraction of policemen comported themselves decently and sympathetically with the harried people.

Frequently, the Jewish Employment Office sent over lists of those who had not presented themselves for forced labour. The Jewish police would storm them at night, take them out of their beds and imprison them in the cellars of their precinct. In the morning, these people were taken to the worst jobs.

The German "*Wasserwirtschaft*" [Water Management] firm demanded, of the Employment Office, the recruiting of Jewish labourers [to work] in the *shtetl* of Gidle, Radomsko district. The firm required many labourers, but no one wished to travel there, because the working conditions were unbearable. One had to stand and work in water. The food was bad and there was no place to sleep. Anyone, who could, employed all means not to travel there. The Employment Office summoned many young men to report for the work and, when the deadline for travelling arrived, it turned out that many had not presented themselves. Therefore, every time when it was decided to send away a group, the Jewish police would grab young men in the street, several days beforehand, and hold them under arrest. The wealthier would buy their way out of it from the *Judenrat*, which always needed to have money, and only the poor were sent away to work.

The Employment Office would frequently receive demands from German firms or from the authorities to provide workers. Then, the Jewish police would go on a hunt, seal off streets, close gates and, with the rubber truncheons, round up the required number of people and deliver them to the German workplaces.

The *Judenrat* would also use the Jewish police to collect taxes from tardy taxpayers or from those who could not pay, but whom the *Judenrat* did not wish to count as poor, who were exempt from taxes. The Jewish police would also attack such people at night, take them out of their beds and bring them to the police cellars. There, they would sit for as long as it took their families to bring the required sums to the *Judenrat*. If there were "obstinate" people, who still had not settled their tax bills, they would be "softened" with blows. If this, too, was to no avail, our *Judenrat* was not ashamed to hand these people over to the German police, which had already found a way to deal with the "stubborn".

Also, the Gestapo used the Jewish police to find people, whom it desired to receive into its hands. It would turn to the Jewish police with a demand to present the wanted individuals, and the Jewish police employed all means to fulfil the Gestapo's command.

The Jewish police had the special task of driving the people off the streets. Fourteen [sic forty¹] thousand had been herded into the area of a few streets. The ghetto measured four hundred metres both in length and in width. The passers-by bumped into each other and, in the summer evenings, when the labourers returned from work and went out into street to breathe a little more freely, being unable to stay sitting in the small rooms, in each of which several families lived, they were driven into the back alleys so as not to be conspicuous.

¹ [TN: See above, p.103, in the chapter "Ghetto": "Our city was thus built, that the 40,000 Jews could not be enclosed in such a manner as to prevent the Aryan population from accessing the ghetto streets."]

The Germans were always calling to the attention of the *Judenrat* and the Jewish police the fact that the Jews were loitering about too much in the ghetto streets. When dispersing the people became difficult, particularly in the summer days, the police found a means to do this. They took those, who were walking about, to the police station and, from there in groups, to the railway or to certain factories to unload coal from the carriages all night long.

Dispersing the people from the streets was especially difficult on Saturdays and Sundays. On these two days, the Germans paid particular attention. The police, therefore, set aside a freight van and caught in it those promenading and, afterwards, took them away to work in their holiday clothes. This led people to avoid, in all ways possible, walking down the ghetto's main streets. Those, who were forced to walk there because they lived there, would sneak home quickly and unnoticed.

The Jewish police was also used by the housing office. If the bureau had issued an order to someone to move to another location and that person had not done so within the time limit, or if someone did not properly share a corner of his home with someone else, the Jewish police intervened.

Thus, the Jewish police carried out its work and felt steady and secure. The leader always went about in a good mood and was seldom sober. In the police precincts, it looked like in a real police station - just as if Jews already had an autonomy. But on one certain day, news spread in the ghetto that all the leaders of the Jewish police had been arrested and taken away to forced labour in the German *Quartieramt* [Billeting Office], where they were working on the highway.

A great crowd went over to the *Quartieramt* to see how those, who had hitherto driven Jews to forced labour, were now themselves working. Many people gathered at the fence of the *Quartieramt* and watched the spectacle.

No one knew why the leaders of the Jewish police had suddenly lost favour with the Germans. They remained at the *Quartieramt* in forced labour for several weeks. They lived in wooden barracks. After great efforts on part of the *Judenrat*, they were released - but they did not return to their posts.

The Germans gave over leadership of the two Jewish police stations to two Polish non-commissioned police officers. The Polish leaders put themselves in contact with the *Judenrat* through two Jews [who acted] as liaisons people.