

The Relations Between the Judenrat and the Jewish Police by Aharon Weiss

Among the evaluations extant as to the relations between the Judenrat and the *Juedischer Ordnungsdienst* (Jewish Police), the predominant approach views the Jewish Police as one among the numerous departments of the Judenrat, thus presuming that all the problems involved in the establishment and operation of the Judenrat were characteristic of the Jewish Police as well. This approach, which may be defined as formalistic in nature, fails to take into account the fact that the problems that the Jewish Police encountered, differed in numerous aspects from those confronting the Judenrat. The actual creation of the Jewish Police, its personnel composition, the authority vested in it, the nature of its relationship with the Germans, and the tasks imposed upon it in the course of the Nazi policy of destruction - all of these factors distinguished the Police from the other departments of the Judenrat, and they all influenced the relationship between the Police and the Judenrat, and moulded the image of the Police in the eyes of the Jewish public.

The Judenrat were officially established upon German instructions, even though they were often merely continuations of the organizational frameworks which the Jews themselves had already constructed. In the process of the organization of the Judenrat, and during the earlier phases of their activities, one may discern a noticeable continuity in personnel, and to a certain extent, a functional continuity as well - that is, the Judenrat continued to deal with the same aspects of Jewish communal life that had occupied pre-war communal Jewish institutions, such as: social welfare, self-help, health, vocational training, and mediation with the authorities on behalf of members of the community. These activities were all undertaken with full cognisance of the unfathomable differences between the past and the period of the Nazi occupation.

The Germans, intending to turn them into instruments to further their own policies, imposed the Judenrat on the Jewish communities. The Jews, on the

other hand, sought to exploit this imposed framework, and to use it to strengthen their possibilities for survival. The Jews' initiative emanated from their historical communal experience from which they had learned to successfully exploit imposed frameworks to further inherent Jewish goals.

The various Jewish communal organizations, established immediately upon the outbreak of the war and during the first weeks following the German occupation, in which many veteran local communal leaders served, dealt with the most essential problems confronting their communities, and this trend continued even when those committees were officially transformed, sometimes with changes in personnel, into Judenrat. The formal change in status, however, did not for the most part influence the public orientation of the Judenrat.

The situation with regard to the Jewish Police was quite different. The Jewish Police was a totally new phenomenon, previously unknown in Jewish communal life. Indeed, in all of the communities, the Jewish Police was established by specific orders of the Germans. One cannot point to a single community in which Jewish internal initiative led to the establishment of a Jewish Police.

It is true that, from the outset, the Judenrat were confronted by the problem of the degree to which they could carry out their programs relying only on volunteers, persuasion, good-will, and the Jewish population's sense of public responsibility. During those dark days of Nazi rule, there were in fact individuals who willingly responded to the calls of the Judenrat to implement German demands. However, reality was not such that everyone was ready, or perhaps able, to respond to economic decrees or the call-ups for forced labour. In many of the communities, the Judenrat were accused of unfairly distributing the burden.

The conflict between willing acceptance of authority, and manifestations of reserve or even opposition, is not unknown in the history of the Jewish people. During various historical periods, even when the representative bodies of the *kehillot* drew their authority from internal Jewish sources, there were struggles between the leadership and the members of the community. The use of force was thus not a novelty. Because of the difficult circumstances under which

they operated, the Judenrat were forced to design the tools with which they could concurrently fulfil German demands and implement their own programs. Operating in parallel with those departments designed to answer, at least to some degree, the needs of the Jewish population, were other frameworks to some of which fell the task of dealing with those matters which were highly oppressive to the Jewish public.

Departments were organized to gather items required to satisfy German demands. In many cases, the collection of materials and objects assumed the character of a confiscation. Other departments collected taxes, and had to deal with those who refused to pay. The labour offices of the Judenrat were responsible for supplying fixed numbers of workers for forced labour, and they employed groups of attendants to bring in those who refused, or those who tried to evade the orders.

In all of these, and other similar activities, compulsion and the use of force were necessary. Yet, the German order to establish a police force provoked many questions within the community and among the members of the Judenrat. It can be unequivocally determined that the Judenrat did not accept the establishment of a Jewish Police as a desirable means for legitimising activities involving the use of force.

What was the source of the unusual sensitivity towards the Police? Did the establishment of the Police mark a fundamental change from the situation mentioned above in which the Judenrat themselves deployed force? It would appear that the members of the Judenrat were of the opinion that as long as they themselves applied the pressure, founded in their own considerations, their actions retained the character of internal measures, even when implementing German demands. However, when the Germans gave orders to establish the Police, fears were aroused that this might mean, among other considerations, the introduction of an element which would abet in the imposition of a foreign authority upon the community.

The Jewish Police came into being some time after the creation of the Judenrat, and it is possible that during these months, the sensitivities of the Jews at large had become sufficiently sharpened so that when the matter of the Jewish Police came to the fore, they began to ponder the real aim of the

Germans. Therefore, it was only after the Germans clearly and unambiguously insisted on the implementation of the orders concerning the establishment of the Jewish Police, and these were in fact carried out, that a struggle was undertaken to safeguard its nature.

Three factors influenced the essence of the Police: the Germans, the Judenrat, and the character of the Jewish Policemen themselves. In a number of communities and in certain areas, two other factors were also influential, albeit to a lesser extent: the Jewish communal elements operating independently of the Judenrat, and the auxiliary police forces that served the Germans, e.g., the Polish and Ukrainian.

The Judenrat were aware that the Jewish Police might become a power focus, and that some highly sensitive tasks might be assigned to them, although no one imagined what would be demanded of them during the mass destruction. Thus, in Piotrkow Trybunalski, for example, when it became clear that there was no escaping the creation of a police force, a discussion was held at a session of the Council in which the city's Chief Rabbi participated. All those present emphasized the danger to the ghetto population should power and authority be vested in a group of youths lacking proper social and moral formation. In fact, the Judenrat in this community selected a special public committee which chose the candidates for the police from among the Jewish youth after examination of their social and moral background.¹ Similar procedures were introduced in other communities as well, although for the most part the Judenrat were unable to ensure the entry of trustworthy elements into the ranks of the Jewish Police. In our comprehensive study of the Jewish Police, the question is raised as to a possible correlation between the size of the community and the patterns of behaviour of the Jewish Police. We have come to the conclusion that the size of the community does not play a role in determining the pattern of behaviour of the Jewish Police² At first, the Jewish Police force was officially determined to be one of the departments of the Judenrat, and the members of the Councils actually attempted to exercise

¹ *Piotrkow Trybunalski ve-ha-Sevivah, Sefer Zikaron*, ed. Y. Malts, N. Lau, Tel Aviv, '1965, p. 789.

² A. Weiss, "Ha-Mishtarah ha-Yehudit ba-General Gouvernement u-ve-Shlezyath Ilit bi-Tekufat ha-Sho'ah," Ph.D. Dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1973; particularly the chapter: "Ha-Yahasim beyn ha-Judenrat la-Mishtarah ha-Yehudit," pp. 291-344.

their authority over it, to render it the executive arm of their policies, and to determine its functions and set the norms for its behaviour, as can be seen by the following examples.

In Skierniewice, the Judenrat selected, in August 1940, twenty-five decent, honest men for the Jewish Police. Dr. Moritz Sachs, a refugee from Lodz and member of the Judenrat, was made chief of the Police.³ The appointment of a member of the Judenrat to serve as chief of Police and the selection of decent individuals to serve in its ranks should have ensured supervision of the Police by the Judenrat and a coordinated policy. Indeed, sources point to the fact that the Jewish Police greatly assisted the members of the community. It became the central element in the smuggling of food into the ghetto, and did not collaborate with the Germans.⁴

In Zarki, the positive influence of Israel Burstein upon the behaviour of the Police was particularly noticeable. Burstein served concurrently as chairman of the Judenrat and commander of the Police.

Were we to attempt to evaluate in an objective manner Israel Burstein's activities as chairman of our Judenrat, the truth is that his nationalist education and Zionist spirit stood him in good stead, and aided him in preserving a high moral level of behaviour at all times, and his actions revealed a great dedication to others, trying as he did in each instance to save Jewish lives.... If in Zarki a Jewish policeman never raised his hand against another Jew, it was only thanks to Israel Burstein who was commander of the Police . . .⁵

In Jezierzany, the Jewish Police operated as the executive arm of the local Judenrat. The chairman of the Judenrat, Mendel Mayberger, had also been chairman of the Community Council before the war, and had earned general esteem for his concern for the well-being of the community, and he manned the Jewish Police in this spirit. During the very first *Aktion*, the Judenrat and the Police were both liquidated.⁶

In Kolomyja, while the Police was being organized, the members of the Judenrat expressed their opinions as to the nature of this framework, in the hope of preventing the infiltration of undesirable elements. During the actual

³ *Sefer Skiernievits*, ed. Y. Perlov, Tel Aviv, 1955, p. 586.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 587, 591; Testimony of Z. Drzewicki, Archives of *Beit Lohamei ha-Getaot*, no. 788, p. 6.

⁵ *Kehilat Zarki*, ed. Y. Lador, Tel Aviv, 1959, pp. 114-116; A. Brandeis, *Kez ha-Yehudim be-Ma'arav Polin*, Merhavia, 1945, pp. 11-112.

⁶ *Sefer Oziran ve-ha-Svivah*, ed. M. A. Tennenblatt, Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1968, pp. 236, 314, 487.

conscription, they attempted to direct towards it those candidates belonging to Jewish public organizations. During this initial phase, there were some members of the Judenrat who believed that the Jewish Police might be called upon to protect the Jews from attacks by the Ukrainians, and in its early stages, youths from most of the Jewish movements could be found within the ranks of the Police.⁷

In Zolkiew, a member of the Judenrat, Dr. Philip Czaczkes, was also commander of the Police. This appointment was made to ensure contact between the Jewish Council and the Police, and the supervision by the Jewish Council over the Police. The Police did in fact accept the authority of the Judenrat, and was a party to its policies. The Judenrat in this city undertook multifaceted activities to ease the oppression of the community.⁸

In Czestochowa, a framework entitled "Supervisory Body for-Traffic in the Streets" (*Inspekcja Ruchu Ulicznego* - IRU) was initially established and was shortly thereafter transformed into a Jewish Police. A member of the Judenrat, Maurycy Galster, was appointed to head the IRU, and was assisted by a supervisory committee. A number of its members concurrently served on the Judenrat. It was this body which, in the initial phase, also attempted to delineate the functions of the Jewish Police.⁹

In Andrychow, in the initial stages, before the central Judenrat in Zaglebie (Ostoberschlesien), headed by Moshe (Moniek) Merin interfered, the Judenrat maintained close ties with the Jewish Police. In 1940, Merin arrived in Andrychow, accompanied by a number of Jewish Policemen, and attempted to round up the local Jewish youths for forced labour. The Judenrat chairman, Aharon Weinzaft, secretly sought counsel with the commander of the Jewish Police, and together they decided to encourage the youths to flee the city and not present themselves for work. "Merin failed to find even one young man in the entire city."¹⁰

⁷ Testimony of M. Naider, private file of the Association of Kolomyja Jews, Tel Aviv.

⁸ G. Taffet, *Zagłada Żydów zolkiewskich* ("The Destruction of Zolkiew Jewry"), Lodz, 1946, pp. 21, 35, 43.

⁹ *Rada Starszych, Rocznik Statystyczny* ("Jewish Council Annual Statistical Report"), Yad Vashem Archives (hereafter: YVA), 0-6/8, Tom I, p. 42; B. Orenstein, *Hurbn Chenstohov*, Muenchen, 1948, p. 57.

¹⁰ *Sefer Zikaron Kehilot Vadovits, Andrychow, Kalvaria, Mishlenits, Sucha*, ed. D. Jakubowicz, Tel Aviv, 1967, p. 295.

In Biala-Podlaska, coordination and cooperation between the Judenrat and the Jewish Police prevailed for a noticeably protracted period of time - from the establishment of the Jewish Police in September 1940, until the summer of 1942. During the *Aktion* of June 6, 1942, the Germans imposed upon the Judenrat and the Jewish Police the responsibility of rounding-up the Jews, and threatened that if they did not obey "the results would be very serious."¹¹

The Judenrat did not submit to this pressure, and before the next *Aktion*, which took place on August 12, 1942, the members of the Judenrat were arrested and killed. Certain members of the Jewish Police force, under the influence of the Judenrat and sympathetic to its ideals, shared their fate.¹²

In Warsaw, the Judenrat, headed by A. Czerniakow, sought to determine the conscription procedures of the Police, and its function and patterns of behaviour. For this purpose, a public committee was created, led by Judenrat member L. Kupczyker. Paragraph Six of the "Regulations for the conduct of the Jewish Police," compiled by the Judenrat and officially ratified by the Germans, stipulated that: "The Judenrat assumes the sole responsibility for the contents of the directives issued to the *Ordnungsdienst*," and Paragraph Seven of these "Regulations" notes that "heading the *Ordnungsdienst* is a commander who is subject to the direct authority of a supervisory committee of the Judenrat."¹³ However, reality was such that the commander of the Jewish Police in Warsaw was soon able to free himself of this supervision, which wished to transform the Jewish Police into a body which would operate for the general welfare of the community.

The moment seems propitious for raising the question as to the degree to which German supervision over the Jewish Police placed in jeopardy the Judenrat control of that organ, even during the initial stages of its existence. One may note that at the beginning, the Germans were willing to recognize the authority of the Judenrat, albeit a very restricted and controlled authority. Moreover, the Germans infiltrated their own agents into the command and ranks of the Police. Many of the policemen themselves, due to personal considerations, sought to weaken Judenrat supervision. At times, this

¹¹ *Sefer Biala Podlaska*, ed. M.Y. Feigenboim, Tel Aviv, 1961, pp. 22-23.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp 21, 39.

¹³ The subject of the Jewish Police in Warsaw and the relations between the Judenrat and the Police in this city are described, with sources, in: Weiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-145.

supervision was completely nullified, the Police having developed separatist tendencies, and in a number of communities the situation developed in such a way that the Jewish Police actually rather gained control over the Judenrat. The Germans encouraged such developments, and exploited these situations in order to undermine Judenrat which opposed or rejected their policies, or which were not sufficiently subservient.

There are a number of examples of this type of situation:

Otwock - The first two Judenrat developed programs for the general communal welfare, while the alienation of the Police was clearly discernible. In the *Aktion* of August 18, 1942, the chairman of the second Judenrat, Shimon Gurewicz, was deposed, and the commander of the Police, Bernard Kroenberg, was appointed by the Germans to replace him. Both crucial positions were thus concentrated in Kroenberg's hands, and he became the sole ruler of the ghetto; until the very end, he remained subservient to the Germans and implemented all their directives.¹⁴

Nowy Sacz - The Judenrat in this community had only weak ties with the Police. A criminal underworld figure, T. Folkman, was appointed commander of the Jewish Police, and throughout his tenure was supported by the Nazis. The Germans vested power in the Police because of the trustworthiness and dedication of the Judenrat - its positive stance towards the community - in all three stages of its existence, during which time the position of the Police continued to grow stronger, especially during the period prior to the deportations of August 23, 1942. After this *Aktion*, Folkman formally became chairman of the Judenrat as well.¹⁵

Radom - the second commander of the Police, Leon Sittner, undermined the position of the chairman of the Judenrat to such an extent that he gained control of the Jewish Council.¹⁶ Fundamentally similar phenomena were also characteristic of Kielce, Tomaszow Mazowiecki, Opatow, Ostrowiec Kielecki, Piotrkow Trybunalski, Lwow, Boryslaw, Stanislawow and Tarnopol.

¹⁴ B. Orenstein, "Der Umkum fun Otvotzker, Falenitzer un Kartshever Yidntum," *Ybergang*, Muenchen, July 20, 1948, 4. Testimony of Z. Perehodnik, YVA, 0-33/426, p. 48.

¹⁵ *Sefer Sants*, ed. R. Mahler, Tel Aviv, 1970, p. 811; Trial of H. Hamann, YVA, TR-10/586, p. 296.

¹⁶ *Radom (Sefer Yizkor)*, ed. A.S. Stein, Tel Aviv, 1961, p. 254. See also the study by Weiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-195.

However, in addition to the investigation of the involvement and influence of the Germans and the Judenrat in the composition of the Jewish police and its functions during the preliminary stages, it is also necessary to assess the attitudes of the Jewish communal structures, operating independently of the Judenrat, towards the Police. In many communities, these forces stood in opposition to the Judenrat, but there were also cases, primarily prior to the mass deportations, in which even these groups recognized the fact that certain of the Judenrat undertakings were indispensable to the Jewish public. It is true that these communal bodies maintained only selective contact with the Judenrat, and these contacts did not prevent them from voicing criticism when the Judenrat acquiesced to German demands.

In contrast to this highly ambivalent attitude towards the Judenrat, those people who organized themselves into frameworks outside of the Judenrat considered the Jewish police, from its very inception, to be a foreign body implanted upon the Jewish community, composed of elements subservient to the Germans, and antagonistic to the community. In communities such as Rzeszow, Radomsko, Lwow, Radom, Czestochowa, Warsaw and the communities of the *Ostoberschlesien* region (Zaglebie), members of youth movements and political parties were forbidden to enlist in the Police. Were individuals with political backgrounds to be found within Police ranks, this could only be the result of two factors:

- a. They had joined for personal, and not ideological reasons.
- b. The Judenrat itself was composed of politically-oriented individuals, who had attempted to attract individuals personally known to them from pre-war times. Even in these cases, pre-war ties played only a secondary role. We know of one striking example in which there was an organized attempt, on the part of a political party, operating independently of the Judenrat, to have an individual of unquestionable political background appointed as head of the Police. In Warsaw, after Adam Czerniakow chose Josef Szerynski to serve as commander of the Jewish Police, a group of Bund leaders tried to have this appointment cancelled, and to convince Czerniakow to appoint Leon Berenson, a lawyer and well-known public figure, in his stead. Berenson had close ties to the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna-PPS*) and

had become famous for his defence of political prisoners before the wars and in 1918 had been among the organizers of the Jewish civil militia. Czerniakow rejected this proposition, and Szerynski's activities as commander of the Jewish Police in Warsaw is one of the bleakest chapters in the history of that community during the Holocaust.¹⁷

One may conclude that the Jewish Police remained beyond the sphere of practical interest of any of the public bodies not associated with the Judenrat, although they did voice some criticism and attempt to prevent enlistment within its ranks. No special effort was made to infiltrate the ranks of the Police with trustworthy men and to ensure thereby the possibility of influencing matters from within. Since during the period of their organization, in 1940-1941, rebellion or even armed resistance had not yet been formulated as possible alternatives, it is understandable that the possibility of using the Police as a means to further these ends did not even come under consideration. The youth movements kept their distance from the Police from the very outset, thus preventing the underground from using the Police to further their own aims. The Jewish Police was therefore almost from the very beginning an open terrain, to be exploited by other less reliable elements.

What were the practical results of the increased German intervention into the affairs of the Jewish Police and of the fairly inconsistent and half-hearted attempts of the Judenrat to determine the composition of the Police? An examination of the backgrounds of more than one hundred of the first commanders of the Police in the General Government reveals the following:

- Close to seventy per cent had not been active to any significant extent in Jewish political and public life;
- Some twenty per cent were refugees and not local residents;
- Some ten per cent had been involved in pre-war public life.¹⁸

The primary conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that a decisive percentage of the commanders of the Police was not involved in Jewish public and national life, and some were in fact totally removed from Jewish life. This situation augmented tensions between the Police and the first Judenrat, among whose members a large number of local leaders could be found.

¹⁷ I. Ringelblum, *Ksovim fun Geto, Varshe, Band II*, 1963, pp. 230-231.

¹⁸ Weiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-290.

These antagonisms surfaced in a large number of communities, particularly during the period of mass deportations to the death camps.

The Functions of the Police

The functions of the Jewish Police fall within three categories:

- a. Tasks carried out in response to German demands - either imposed directly or transmitted through the mediation of the Judenrat;
- b. Functions limited to the activities of the Judenrat, and having no direct connection with the German demands;
- c. Functions emanating from the internal needs of the Jewish population.

The first two categories encompassed activities such as: collecting fines and taxes, confiscating material goods, and at a later stage, snatching Jews to be sent to work camps or deported.

However, the exclusion of the Jewish population from the general organization of communal services and its isolation, gave rise to many problems which could well be solved by the institution of a Jewish Police of a civil internal nature. In fact, in addition to implementing German demands, the Police dealt with other matters such as: cleanliness, arbitration of differences between individuals, welfare, and criminal cases. An instructive example of these variegated tasks can be found in Czestochowa. We glean a picture of the work of the police from the notations made in its registry which show lost and found, thefts, quarrels, and even incidents in which the assistance of the Police was sought for defence against assaults by Poles. A goodly portion of these activities was undertaken upon the initiative of the Judenrat.¹⁹

These two tendencies - the attempt to mitigate the plight of the community, all the while serving the Germans and satisfying their demands, co-existed within the framework of the Police. Those Judenrat which were sensitive to the image of the Police within the Jewish community also fought against corruption within its ranks, and its exploitation for personal reasons.

Towards 1942, the relative thrust of the activities aimed at relieving the problems of the community steadily diminished. The intensification of German measures was reflected in the work of the Jewish Police which was

¹⁹ *Yoman ha-Mishtarah ha-Yehudit*, YVA, JM/2627.

confronted by two particularly difficult challenges: the snatching of individuals for forced labour (1940-1941), and the inception of the mass deportations to the death camps. This period of mass murder also placed the Judenrat in a position from which they could no longer "manoeuvre" between German directives and fulfilling community needs.

During the initial period of the Judenrat's existence, when German demands were limited primarily to the economic sphere, or even to the supply of individuals for forced labour, the members of the Judenrat believed that by acceding to German demands, they could forestall harm to their communities and increase their indispensability to the Nazis, and thus hoped to bolster the communities' ability to survive, knowing that the primary concern was to gain time.

However, when the waves of mass deportations began, and fears as to the fate of the deportees increased - even if the terrible truth was not known in all cases and in all places - under such conditions, continued accession to German demands, when these involved the surrender of Jews, was tantamount to wilfully abetting in harmful measures against the community. This was the focal point around which behaviour patterns of the different Judenrat revolved - there were those who absolutely refused to surrender Jews to the enemy, while others adopted the approach that by sacrificing a part of the community, others might be saved. There were also Judenrat members whose actions were devoid of any concern for the communal welfare, and who were motivated purely by the desire to secure their own interests.

Indeed, what was involved was not essentially a choice based on real options, but rather moral determinations - determinations which were to directly influence the relations between the Judenrat and the Jewish Police in every community. These decisions, such as the road to be followed, the stance towards the community, and the relationship with the Judenrat, were influenced by the personal considerations of the Policemen as well as by German intervention.

An examination of the relationship between the Judenrat and the Jewish Police in more than one hundred communities of the General Government reveals four typical situations, which can be summarized as follows:

a. In fourteen of the communities, the Judenrat and the Police both opposed German policies, and demonstrated their dedication to the general community welfare; b. In twenty-seven of the communities, both the Judenrat and the Police were subservient to the Germans throughout their entire tenure; c. In twenty-two of the communities, the Judenrat and the Police initially opposed the Germans, but at a later stage surrendered to them, after personnel changes had been effected in both of them; d. In thirty-seven of the communities, the Judenrat was severed from the Police, and the Police continued to increase its power until it dominated the Judenrat, or actually replaced it.²⁰

Below, we shall cite several examples to concretise the reality behind these general classifications:

In Cracow, the ties between the Judenrat and the Police were severed at a very early stage, and the latter, together with a special Jewish unit, the *Zivilabteilung*, harmed the community and the Jewish fighting underground in the city.

Much has been said about the actions of the Jewish Police in Warsaw and the gap - at times unbridgeable - between the Police and the Jewish population. In the summer of 1942, out of a total of close to two thousand policemen, in the final stage, three hundred still remained within its ranks, and these remnants actively participated in the mass deportations. The accounts with these policemen and their commanders were settled by the Jewish Fighting Organization - (*Zydowska Organizacja Bijou - ZOB*).²¹

In the area of *Ostoberschlesien*, there were pronounced stages in the activities of the Judenrat and the Police. During the earlier stage, there was a certain degree of mutual understanding between the two groups in each of the communities, accompanied by a disassociation from the policies of the central Judenrat in Sosnowiec. The unified opposition of both the Judenrat and the

²⁰ Weiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-334.

²¹ See N. Blumental, Y. Kermish, *Ha-Meri ve-ha-Mered be-Getto Varshah*, Jerusalem, 1965, p. 116.

Jewish Police in Andrychow to the directives of Merino has already been mentioned. In Wadowice, the Judenrat and the Jewish Police warned the members of the community about the transports to the forced labour camps, and the Germans and the central Judenrat in *Ostoberschlesien* were forced to import Jewish policemen from other areas to implement their orders.²²

During the second stage, Merino organized a central police force in Sosnowiec and increased supervision over local police units. In most of the communities of the region, commissars, who served as heads of the local Judenrat, were designated by the central Judenrat. During this period, the Jewish Police functioned as a loyal arm of the central Judenrat in implementing its policies, which generally implied subservience to German directives.

In Opoczno, the Germans demanded of the chairman of the Judenrat, Mordechai Wolfrydlowski, that he surrender several Jewish youths who had fled from a work camp. Wolfrydlowski resolutely replied: "I won't bring them to you; you can go and find them, but I won't have anything to do with it."²³ The Germans then activated the Jewish Police to begin to search for the escapees, and the latter did not follow the example set by the Judenrat.

In Staszow, the first chairman of the Judenrat was Yehiel Singer, "a courageous man who more than once endangered his life by standing up to the authorities as a representative of his community."²⁴ Another source records that "he fulfilled his difficult and responsible position until the very last day of the community's existence, November 8, 1942. On that day, he was the first victim to fall at the hands of the German murderers."²⁵ The Judenrat in this community did not succeed in asserting its authority over the Jewish Police, and for this it was severely censured²⁶

In Bilgoraj, the first Judenrat devotedly protected the interests of the community, and for this, Judenrat Chairman Hillel Janower paid with his life. Hirsch Zilberg was appointed to take his place, and he "never gave advance warning as to what was to take place, in contrast to his predecessor, who

²² *Sefer Zikaron Kehillot Vadovits, Andrychov, Kalvaria, Mishlenits, Sucha*, p. 187.

²³ A. Mayerovitch, *Min ha-Dlekeh ha-Hih*, Tel Aviv, 1961, p. 26.

²⁴ *Sefer Stashov*, ed. A. Ehrlich, Tel Aviv, 1962, p. 369.

²⁵ *Sefer Stashov*, p. 418.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

always transmitted the information to the members of the community so that they might be able to go into hiding."²⁷ The Jewish Police too, surrendered to German pressure, and participated in the round-ups for deportation²⁸

In Lwow, the Judenrat Chairman Yosef Parnas refused to hand over individuals for work camps and for this reason he was killed. During the last moments of his life, he is reported to have said: "As long as I serve as Chairman of the Judenrat, no Jewish policeman and no Council official will lend a hand in surrendering people to the Germans."²⁹ After his death, the Jewish Police began to snatch people to be sent to the work camps.

In Losice, the Jewish Policemen used to warn the community members of imminent *Aktionen*, and urge them to hide and escape while there was still time.³⁰

In Parysow, the close ties between the Judenrat, the Police, and the Jewish population were particularly noticeable. One of the commanders of the Police was also active within the ranks of the local partisans.³¹

In Pilica, the Judenrat and the Police worked together and established contact with the underground.³²

In Markuszow, the decisive test occurred on May 7, 1942, when news of an impending deportation was received. The Judenrat secretly informed the entire population that whoever could do so was to run and hide. These warnings were transmitted by the Jewish Police. It should be noted that, in contrast, the Jewish Policemen from Lublin appeared on the scene and began to round-up Jews for deportation.³³

We have seen a panorama of examples which serves to concretise and characterize the various typical situations prevalent in the relationship between the Judenrat and the Jewish Police. In an attempt to assess the behaviour patterns of these two frameworks, we will now return to a broader

²⁷ *Hurban Bilgoraj*, ed. A. Kranenberg, Tel Aviv, 1956, p. 303.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

²⁹ T. Zaderecki, "Gdy swastyka Lwowem wladala," ("When the Swastika Ruled Lwow"), YVA, 0-6/28, p. 121.

³⁰ *Sefer Zikaron Loshitse*, ed. M. Shenar, Tel Aviv, 1963, pp. 250, 260-261.

³¹ *Sefer Parysov*, ed. Y. Granatstein, Tel Aviv, 1971, p. 350

³² Testimony of S. Watwan, YVA, 0-16/588, p. 1. *Sefer Chenstachova*, ed. M. Shwatzman, Vol. II, Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1968, pp. 283-284.

³³ *Sefer Yizkor - Hurbanah u-Gevuratah shell ha-Ayah Markushov*, ed. D. Stockfisz, Tel Aviv, 1955, pp. 206, 355-356.

perspective. One central conclusion emerges from the data which has been amassed to date: out of a total of one hundred communities in the General Government, the Jewish Police in eighty-six of them acceded to the demands of the Germans at some stage of their activities, including participation in the round-ups for mass *Aktionen*. The distinction in the various stages in the existence and operation of the Jewish Police is important because the vast number of episodes in which the Jewish Police ceded to German demands occurred most noticeably in the final stages of the ghettos' existence, at a time when personnel changes had been effectuated within the ranks of the Police. Elements sensitive to public needs had either left the Police or had fallen victim to the Germans. The subservient policemen and commanders prevailed to the very end, although in most cases even they found their death at Nazi hands.

This data relates, as we have already noted, to the situation in the area of the General Government, but similar situations also prevailed in other areas of Nazi-occupied Europe. Although it is possible that in certain areas, such as Western Byelorussia, which became one of the most crucial centers of resistance, both in the ghettos and in the forests, or in Kovno (Kaunas), the cases in which Jewish Policemen had ties with the underground were more numerous, basically the picture was similar to that of the General Government. In any case, the data amassed concerning the Jewish Police in the General Government can well serve as a basis for a broader comparative study of the subject.

The statistical summaries relating to the Jewish Police, which underscore the woeful functions which it performed, also give us a picture as to the standing of the Judenrat, the attitude of the Germans towards the Jewish Police, and their preference for the latter as a framework which would be more subservient to them. This attitude was also a function of a situation in which many Judenrat did not live up to the expectations of the Germans who wished to employ them as a tool for the execution of their policies. In those same one hundred communities, close to seventy Judenrat, entirely or in part, did not cede to German pressure, and did not lend a hand in doing harm to their communities - even if they paid with their lives. These responses include

refusals to implement economic decrees, giving prior warnings of impending *Aktionen*, and refusing to surrender other Jews for deportation and death.

This conference has weighed and assessed the various alternatives confronting the Judenrat. Some of the lecturers emphasized that a lack of any realistic public alternative characterized the reality confronting the Judenrat: the lack of any alternative which would ensure Jewish survival, even for a part of the community, and the lack of any solution which would permit the survival of large numbers of Jews. In fact, Professor Raul Hilberg and Abba Kovner, among others, have suggested that the value of preserving Jewish honour could have served as a desirable alternative in a situation from which there was no viable escape. It does seem, on the basis of the data in our possession, that many of the Judenrat did stand up to the test of Jewish honour - perhaps even more so than is generally believed. This is not meant as an apologetic commentary; it is based on facts, and remains valid even when we apply the severest of moral criteria.

The same cannot be said of the Jewish Police, even when one bears in mind that the Jewish Policemen too, fell victim to the Nazi system. In relation to the Jewish Police, we must reiterate that it was the weakest link, and its activities proved incompatible with the community's stance.

Source: *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945 - Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Historical Conference, April 4-7 1977, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1979, pp. 201-218*