

Kurek - Jewish Ghettos from 4

The Jewish Police took over guard duties in the Warsaw ghetto in November 1940. The duties of that service included: to keep a guard at the border crossing points, to regulate the street movement, to execute the duty to work, to execute the moving from one place to another in the ghetto, and to serve against the epidemics. The Jewish police were created in all Jewish ghettos on Polish lands. Jewish policemen had to support the Jewish authorities from the Judenrat in their executions of Jewish inhabitants per German orders. The year of war, 1941, had brought together with the mentioned above constitution of the Jewish state power (Mayor's office), the further development of the Jewish institutions.

By 1942 the Germans had started the extermination of Polish Jews. The evilness of the German plans were based on being able to use the Jewish dreams about an independent autonomy in Warsaw and "a Jewish state" in Łódź. This concentration of the Jewish population in the big cities, and the obedience of the Jewish population towards the authorities of the Jewish autonomies without protest served to make the extermination process easier for the Germans.

The unthinking obedience of the Jewish population towards the authority of the Jewish autonomies, without protest, was simply used by the Germans.

In Roman Polansky's movie, "The Pianist," there is an episode when Władysław Szpilman is walking with his family to the wagon, through rows of uniformed men. It was the last road for the Warsaw Jews. The wagons would go to Treblinka. The person with no historical orientation watching this movie will pay no attention that the uniforms of the men staying close to the wagons are not German uniforms, nor Polish, but Jewish. This historical memory of the pianist Władysław Szpilman supports the notes of the Warsaw ghetto chronicler, Emanuel Ringelblum, who wrote about the extermination of 300,000 Jews: "Why only 50 of the SS-men (some witnesses say that even less) with the support of 200 Ukrainians, and about the same number of Latvians, were able to exterminate the Jews so easily? The Jewish police had a very bad reputation even before the displacement of the Jews. But the bottom of their evilness was reached during the displacement. There was not even one word of protest against their despicable function, to provide their brothers with death. The other Jewish organizations and groups (except the police) had switched to the displacement action of their own free will. The leading place in this sense belonged to the Emergency Support Service. Except for them, the Jewish community authorities were supporting the actions of the Jews moving."²²

One of the most shocking Jewish historical sources about the Holocaust are the little-known poems of Iczhak Kacnelson. With poet's susceptibility, he shows the nightmare of the crime committed on the Jews, by the Jews. In his poem "About my pain" there are these lines:

*"I am the one who had seen this, who had observed it from very close
And my hands are broken from a shy,
from shy and shame
By the hands of the Jews were killed the
Jews - disarmed Jews
On the side the German with a sly smile
had watched on them.
The German had stood far aside and
watched - he did not interfere.
He kills my Jews by the Jewish hands!"²³*

There is no doubt about the cooperation of the Jewish administration in the process of Jewish extermination, as is shown in Jewish historical sources. We must mention again, the Jewish Senator Adam Czerniaków. He was not the only one oriented in the direction of the German policy. But when Czerniaków learned that

the Jewish autonomy he had created in Warsaw, with the support of the Germans, was a trap, he committed suicide!

To return to Hannah Arendt's words, about the problem of the Jews' participation in the extermination, "The issue I had worked over was the cooperation of Jewish authorities with the committers of the "Final Solution." It was a very uncomfortable issue because it was not possible to say that those persons were traitors (they were the traitors as well, but it is not significant).

The cooperation of the Polish Jews with the Germans - from the Jewish point of view - was not a betrayal but the realization of Jewish political plans. The Poles did not give autonomy to the Polish Jews in 1918-1939, and that was why the Jews had used the first political opportunity and had built ghettos on Polish lands in 1939-1940-1941. From that point of view the authorities of the Jewish autonomies, cooperating with the Germans, might not be called traitors. They cooperated with the Germans for what they saw as a benefit for their Jewish people.

The Polish Jews did not foresee a dramatic end of the Jewish autonomy. But the Holocaust was not foreseen by anybody. In any civilized peoples' imagination (Jews, Poles and Americans) until the horrors of World War II, no one could imagine the industry of death: gas chambers, crematoriums etc.

Of one thing we are absolutely sure: the establishment, in May 1941 of the Jewish ghettos in Warsaw, and the other Jewish autonomies on the Polish lands (Łódź, Cracow, Lublin, etc.) is the key element for the understanding of the Polish Jews' Holocaust, and for a full understanding of Polish-Jewish relations during 1939-1945. And, surprisingly, even now! The sooner that the whole world understands what is documented in the Jewish historical sources that Jewish ghettos were in reality on Polish lands, the quicker the truth is known about the history of the Jews and the Poles during the World War II. It is vital that we all come to a clear understanding of all these facts and work toward erasing old rumors and lies.

Taking into account the information from Jewish historical sources during WWII, the Jewish ghettos in Poland were in reality the "Selbständige Autonomie," and Polish-Jewish relations in that time should be further researched. But at this time things can be explained as follows:

1. The Jewish "Selbständige Autonomie" were political, administrative and ethnic units not connected with Polish society. In these units the Polish Jews in 1939-1942 had their own social structure. The Poles had no influence on the social life of Polish Jews.

2. In 1939-1942, when the Polish Jews were creating the "Selbständige Autonomie", the Poles were absorbed into a creation of the Polish Underground State, where the Polish Jews had no influence.

3. When the Germans started the Holocaust of the Jewish people in 1942 there was no connection between the "Selbständige Autonomie" and the Polish Underground State.

4. The connection and cooperation between the Jews and Poles emerged at the end of 1942, during the Holocaust, and the highest form of this was "Żegota," supported by the Polish Underground State, actions created to rescue Polish Jews. The scale of "Żegota" actions and of all other similar actions was severely limited by the Germans who imposed the death penalty on any Poles who even attempted to rescue Jews.

1. H. Arendt, Reichmann w Jerozolimie, Kraków 1987., p.394

2. H. Arendt, op.cit., p.394.

3. Ibidem, Vol. II, p.572.

4. M. Balaban, Dzieje żydów w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu 1304-1868, Kraków 1912,p. XVIII-XIX

5. A. Żbikowski, op.cit., p.53

6. M. Balaban, Dzieje Żydów w Galicji, Lwów 1914, p.3

7. Ibidem, p. 121.

8. „Materiały w sprawie żydowskiej w Polsce”, red. I. Grunbaum, vol. I, Warszawa 1919, p. 6-7; „Hajnt”, Nr 198 from 27 October 1918, p. 3.

9. Sprawozdania stenograficzne Sejmu Ustawodawczego, pos. 37, 13 Maj 1919, ł. 5-6; in: Archive of Polish Parliament.

10. Sprawozdania stenograficzne Sejmu Ustawodawczego, pos. 37, 13 Maj 1919, ł. 66; in: Archive of Polish Parliament.

11. W. Bartoszewski, Warto być przyzwoitym [It Pays to Be Decent], Editions spotkania, Paryż 1986, p. 25.

12. A. Hertz, Żydzi w polskiej kulturze [The Jews in Polish Culture], warszawa 1988, p. 83-87.

13. D. Warszawski [Konstanty Gebert], Siła odrzuconych, in: „Wprost” from 20 October 2002.

14. A. Czerniaków, Adama Czerniakowa dziennik getta warszawskiego, Warszawa 1983.

15. E. Ringelblum, Kronika getta warszawskiego, Warszawa 1983.

16. Leon Hurwitz, Pamiętniki [The Memoirs], in: Kronika getta łódzkiego [The Łódź Ghetto Chronicles], Łódź 1965, p. XIII.

17. L. Dobroszycki, Kronika getta łódzkiego [The Łódź Ghetto Chronicles], Łódź 1965, p. XXI.

18. E. Ringelblum, Kronika getta warszawskiego, Warszawa 1983.

19. A. Czerniaków, Adama Czerniakowa dziennik getta warszawskiego, Warszawa 1983.

20. H. Makower, Pamiętnik getta warszawskiego [The Diaries from Warsaw Ghetto], Wrocław 1987, p. 13.

21. A. Marianowicz, Życie surowo wzbronione [The Diaries from Warsaw Ghetto], Warszawa 1995, p. 48-49.

22. E. Ringelblum, Kronika getta warszawskiego, Warszawa 1983, p. 404, 407, 410, 426-428.

23. I. Kacnelson, Pieśń o zamordowanym żydowskim narodzie, Warszawa 1982, p. 23. □

*** (First paragraph of the article) For more than twenty years with brief interruptions, I have been engaged in research regarding Polish-Jewish relations and trying to understand the puzzles of WWII and the Holocaust in Poland.

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