

# The military action of the Home Army during the rebellion in the camp of Treblinka II in August 1943 – a pre-research survey

**Alicja Gontarek**

## **Abstract**

The article presents the relationship of the Home Army with the question of Jews during the Second World War on the example of the issues connected to a particular place: the Treblinka II extermination camp which claimed around 800,000 Jewish lives. Due to the vast number of victims, the reactions and attitudes of the representatives of the Polish underground Home Army in the face of this tragedy appear extremely interesting, especially in response to the rebellion of Jewish prisoners in 1943. The author has attempted to present the armed participation of the underground in this rebellion and all the problems related to the study of this topic resulting mainly from post-war manipulation, distortion, and even forgery and missing documentation. Although the article is of an investigative nature – that is a preliminary familiarization with the issues discussed, and does not claim to be an exhaustive study – it has been possible to select a certain group of documents that indicate that the participation of the Home Army in the rebellion, specifically the Home Army High Command's Kedyw division, was a fact, thanks mainly to an analysis of various types of materials (developed sources and archival materials) that have been confronted with each other. However, this issue requires further study.

From the standpoint of Holocaust research, the borderland between Masovian and Podlasie regions, where the Treblinka II extermination camp was located, is a specific area. Around 800,000 European Jews were murdered there during the German occupation of Poland. The place is regarded as one of the most brutal camps in history.

Before the war, the village of Treblinka and the Treblinka railway station, from which the death camp took its name, were located in the commune of Prostyń in Węgrów powiat.<sup>1</sup> During the occupation, the newly built Treblinka II camp already formed part of the Kosów Lacki commune located in the pre-war Sokołów powiat. During the war, both poviats – Węgrów and Sokołów – fell within the borders of Kreishauptmannschaft Sokolow-Wengrow.<sup>2</sup> Owing to the memory of Treblinka, a site of mass killings of Jews, the wartime fate of this area represents a particularly dark and dramatic chapter of the regional and local history of the two aforementioned poviats.<sup>3</sup> Whether analysing the associations between the death camp and the history and memory of “little homelands” (Jewish and Polish alike) or studying the reactions of local Home Army structures to the mass murder at Treblinka, a number of reflections arise. In this context, it seems justified to ask how Polish underground units, particularly regional ones that were in close contact with higher military authorities, reacted to the extermination of Jews.<sup>4</sup>

### State of research

Two researchers of Holocaust studies, Dariusz Libionka and Jan Grabowski after him (Libionka, 2007, pp. 481–85; Grabowski, 2018, pp. 518–23), attempted to answer this question. Incomprehensibly, none of them reached for Józef Marszałek’s paper on intelligence activities conducted by the Home Army and Government Delegation for Poland aimed at

---

1 Detailed data on the subject for 1921 (*Skorowidz miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* [Index of towns in the Republic of Poland], 1924, pp. 113–14).

2 The location of Treblinka I and II within the administrative division is not always presented accurately, which may give rise to certain misunderstandings. For instance, in his description of Jewish survival strategies during the war within the territory of the former pre-war Węgrów powiat, Jan Grabowski mistakenly extended it to include the Treblinka II death camp, contrary to all post-war source literature. Since he declared that his account would only cover the pre-war powiat area, and not Kreishauptmannschaft Sokolow-Wengrow, Grabowski should have consistently stuck to the delineated territorial scope or else make an exception, but state the actual wartime location of the Treblinka II camp (Grabowski, 2018, pp. 454, 518–523; see also Witt, 1970, p. 226).

3 Pioneer research on the long-term social memory of the Treblinka death camp was conducted by Martyna Rusiniak-Karwat (Rusiniak, 2008).

4 This refers to the Home Army’s districts and areas – structures of the Eastern Subregion of the Warsaw Area.

reconnoitring death camps, including Treblinka, despite it being one of the very few works on the subject (Marszałek, 1993, pp. 36–52; see also: Marczevska, Ważniewski, 1968, pp. 129–164).<sup>5</sup> This omission leads to far-reaching consequences: since – as is commonly known – previous reconnaissance is a precondition for any military operation, this subject should be the point of departure for any deliberations on whether or not the Home Army had a possibility to destroy the camps. Moreover, Marszałek managed to accumulate a substantial amount of information that is worth referring to (Marszałek, 1993, p. 45).<sup>6</sup> Neither did Libionka or Grabowski cite the seemingly forgotten results of Teresa Prekerowa’s research on the attitudes of Poles towards Jews escaping from death camps, including Treblinka.<sup>7</sup>

Two other historians – Jan Gozdawa-Gołębiowski and Piotr Matusak, both belonging to the circle of researchers investigating the underground Home Army structures – wrote about Polish aid for the death camp (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1992, pp. 349–357; Matusak, 2002, pp. 506–508).<sup>8</sup>

The discrepancies between the two groups of researchers are substantial, with the axis of dispute being whether or not the Polish side provided military assistance to Treblinka. Both Libionka and Grabowski expressly question the existence of said assistance, yet resort to different argumentation in doing so.<sup>9</sup> Libionka rejects the version about a Polish

- 
- 5 Dariusz Libionka only refers to the 1968 publication, which – as he himself writes – does not include any information about whether or not Polish resistance took part in the revolt. What it does include is a number of quotations from archival sources concerning the Home Army’s reports on the operation of Treblinka II. It ought to be stated here that Marszałek’s publication likewise provides no data on the Polish underground structures’ participation in the revolt.
- 6 According to Marszałek, the Polish resistance had worked out the death camp relatively well, particularly its functional aspects. This resulted from the fact that the camp was of particular interest for underground organizations active in the Warsaw ghetto, which encouraged underground civilian structures to familiarize themselves with the process of exterminating Jews.
- 7 Prekerowa, a recognized researcher of Polish aid to Jews during the occupation, shared, for instance, certain observations about the credibility of information concerning Jewish escapees’ contacts with the Home Army included in post-war Jewish accounts held at the Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH). Having analysed all accounts from ŻIH, she reached the conclusion that their authors wrote “the initial versions under pressure from the propaganda of the time (‘the Home Army as the spittle-bespattered dwarf of reactionary forces’), and only introduced changes at a later stage.” This concerns the accounts of Jewish escapees from Sobibór and Treblinka (Hersz Cukierman, Zelda Metz and Tomasz Blatt). She added that these accounts were “unquestioningly regarded as evidence” by certain historians (Prekerowa, 1993, pp. 104–106).
- 8 The latter author makes no distinction between concentration camps and death camps. He erroneously refers to all such locations as concentration camps.
- 9 Interestingly, Grabowski’s analysis of the alleged Polish attack on Treblinka fails to refer to Dariusz Libionka’s research results. The author omits Libionka’s rich and somewhat valid reasoning, only quoting a marginally important passage from his paper: “Not all reports sent to Warsaw from Węgrów and Sokołów have

attack on Treblinka, yet accepts the validity of General Grot-Rowecki's instruction of 27 January 1943, where he ordered the Home Army Warsaw Area commander to "perform reconnaissance of the Treblinka camps and send conclusions concerning the potential for attacking the camp together with a plan of organizing such an operation" (Libionka, 2007, p. 482).<sup>10</sup> The researcher also deems it likely that Franciszek Ząbecki, nom de guerre "Jozuba", may have maintained contacts with Jews imprisoned in Treblinka. Nevertheless, in his opinion, an armed attack was impossible, because: "following through with such an operation must have been deemed unrealistic"; "it is hard to imagine that any risky operation for the benefit of other Jews [from outside the Warsaw ghetto – A. G.] would have been considered seriously"; "it is hard to believe that professional soldiers employed at the Warsaw Area Staff may have harboured any hopes for a revolt incited by prisoners of a death camp – people who were traumatized, emaciated and helpless"; there was a shortage of firearms at the time; the Home Army command had an ambivalent attitude towards Jewish Military Organization fighters rescued from the ghetto and had a low opinion of their combat value (Libionka, 2007, p. 483).<sup>11</sup> However, none of these conclusions find confirmation in any documents related to Treblinka. These are general statements backed solely by the author's views expressed based on his accumulated knowledge of the Polish underground structures' attitudes to Jews in the General Government.

Libionka concluded his deliberations by emphasizing the Home Army's alleged surprise at the uprising in Treblinka and concerns raised by the appearance of armed Jews in the area. According to the researcher,

---

survived, nor do we know who was responsible for screening the reports and filtering information to be communicated to the headquarters." Consequently, the author seems to suggest that he is tackling the subject for the first time and no other researcher of Holocaust studies had ever wondered about Polish aid for Treblinka, which is not true (Grabowski, 2018, p. 520).

<sup>10</sup> Libionka notices that the reprint of Grot-Rowecki's order in Matusak's book was not given a reference number, which makes it more difficult to find it in the archives. This has also proved impossible for the author of this paper, although it needs to be noted that she did not undertake extensive research. The historical documents were merely skimmed over and they require further analysis.

<sup>11</sup> The arguments he mentions also include a doubtful – according to Libionka – coincidence allegedly referred to by Gozdawa-Gołębiowski. After the Home Army's contact with the prisoners broke off, "Poraj" Raźmowski's unit apparently accidentally found itself in the vicinity of the camp and engaged in surprise combat with the Germans, helping captives escape. Indeed, such a version of events could be deemed hardly credible, even bizarre, but Gozdawa-Gołębiowski states no such facts. He reiterates that the Polish resistance maintained contacts with the death camp through Kazimierz Grodzicki, who was in touch with a group of Jewish prisoners planning to escape. Without determining whether the narrative about the armed struggle is true or not, according to Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, the Home Army communicated with the prisoners of Treblinka II until 2 August (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1992, pp. 355, 357; Libionka, 2007, p. 483).

the above may be inferred from an excerpt from a report drawn up by the Office of Information and Propaganda (BIP) of the Węgrów district:

After a substantial group of Jews escaped from Treblinka, many of them came to the area. Dressed well and relatively well nourished [...]. Many of them are armed (guns) and have larger sums of money or valuables on them – to their detriment, as it makes them the object of “hunts” conducted by various rural and city scum. These days one no longer encounters stray Jews. Generally speaking, all of them have already found some permanent living quarters, often having already spent several months in some narrow hole in the ground (as cited in Libionka, 2007, pp. 483–484).

In light of the quoted fragment, it would be hard to concur with the author that any surprise is meant here. Nor is there any trace of alarm about the presence of Jews – quite the contrary, the rapporteur writes that “one no longer encounters stray Jews”, which requires no further commentary. When analysing Libionka’s arguments against the Home Army circles, one cannot disregard the fact that the author not only erroneously interpreted the cited fragment, but also – for reasons unknown – failed to communicate that the same report contained information indicating more in-depth knowledge about the circumstances of the revolt. Why Libionka decided to omit it and instead quoted a much less meaningful passage, which he additionally imbued with overtones that simply were not there (surprise and alarm), is hard to say.<sup>12</sup>

Jan Grabowski presents the Home Army’s attitude to Jews and the alleged Polish military operation on Treblinka slightly differently. Grabowski is the author of a short sketch outlining the relationship between the Polish Underground State and Jews in the Węgrów powiat (Grabowski, 2018, pp. 518–523).<sup>13</sup> In it, he refers to two vital issues: the event dubbed “Akcja Treblinka” (“Treblinka Operation”; two attempted attacks) and reports of local resistance units on the situation of Jewish escapees after 1942. First of all, he regarded the armed assistance provided by the Polish underground as a story fabricated after the war based on a false account: “[this] narrative [...] has been made up, being nothing more than a piece of fiction from beginning to end” (Grabowski, 2018, p. 519). Secondly, Grabowski doubted whether Piotr Grochal, Władysław

12 The Węgrów report (AAN, AK, ref. 203/x-69, 1943, f. 215) requires in-depth analysis and will be taken up in the further part of the paper.

13 What is meant here is the six-page subchapter *Polskie Państwo Podziemne a Żydzi w powiecie węgrówskim* [The Polish Underground State and Jews in the Węgrów powiat].

Królik and Edward Podgórnjak, whom he chose to exemplify intelligence activities, indeed communicated information about transports of Jews to the Treblinka II death camp. Thereby, he rejected the credibility of both types of assistance provided by Polish resistance: armed and intelligence-related. Instead of this relatively positive picture, he painted an entirely different one: of the Home Army as hostile to Jews and indifferent to their suffering, seeing them as enemies for three reasons: groups of stray Jews represented a political threat on account of fraternizing with Polish and Soviet communists; Jews caught by German gendarmes informed on the Poles who had hidden them; and bands of Jews committing assaults and robberies. The short sketch makes the following point: the Jewish question played a marginal role in resistance actions, and rapporteurs were more interested in Jewish gold carried by the wretched escapees after the Treblinka revolt of 2 August 1943 than in their fate (Grabowski, 2018, pp. 518–523).

This assessment was formulated based on fragmentary passages from reports included in the file on the Government Delegation for Poland, including some drawn up in 1944 (AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-23, 1943; AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-41, 1944), and documents from the Home Army file (AAN, AK, ref. 203/X-68, 1943). It seems that in order to better understand the methodology that led Grabowski to arrive at such far-reaching and unjust conclusions, one ought to elaborate on the meaning of both reference numbers containing documents from 1943 and the specific data that may be inferred from them.

The documents accessed by Grabowski included a quarterly report published by the Office of Information and Propaganda (BIP) of the Home Army Warsaw Area Command, which covered the period between 15 July and 15 October 1943, and reports on “the situation in terms of the organization and operations of subversive organizations, ethnic minorities and the occupying forces” for August 1943. The August documents were drawn up by the 7<sup>th</sup> Division of the Warsaw Area Command Staff, namely the Military Division, which dealt, among others, with internal policy, security, analysing the political leanings of the society as well as political organizations and their attitude towards the Home Army.<sup>14</sup> Having learned that the aforementioned documents include no information on Polish military assistance, the researcher downright rejected the possibility of any such assistance being planned by local Home Army structures. However, one ought to state here that, first of all, similar quarterly reports did not

---

14 The principles of merging Militarized Administration, which included Military Divisions, with Substitute Administration were laid down in August 1943. This move greatly strengthened the Government Delegation for Poland, although the agreed principles were not universally observed. Military Divisions worked closely with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division (Grabowski, 2003, pp. 117–130).

usually include information about sabotage and diversion activities, so looking for such data in a document of the kind makes little sense. Secondly, what raises certain doubts is Grabowski's treatment of data collected by the Military Division as decisive and representative for the Home Army's attitude to Jewish escapees. After all, a rapporteur presents a diagnosis of the field situation in line with the profile of his organizational unit, which in this case was focused predominantly on the question of communism and minorities rather than sabotage and diversion operations. Therefore, this is merely a fragment of a certain reality which fails to convey the complex network of relationships and problems.<sup>15</sup>

What is more, Grabowski made errors when citing the names and dates of the reports in question, i.e. the "Home Army intelligence report for September 1943" and "Home Army intelligence report for August 1943" (Grabowski, 2003, pp. 117–130; Grabowski, 2018, pp. 520–521). Apart from the fact that the Office of Information and Propaganda (BIP) is not tantamount to the Home Army Intelligence Service, such reports are simply not filed under the cited reference numbers. The documents they refer to is the aforementioned BIP report covering a longer term, from 15 July to 15 October 1943, and the one drawn up by the Military Division, whose correct title is cited above (AAN, AK, ref. 203/X-68, 1943, f. 34; AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-23, 1943, f. 16).

Furthermore, when analysing the reports in question, Grabowski omitted vital fragments that directly concerned Treblinka II. Having reached them, he described said information as "much less certain" compared to data on Treblinka I. However, he fails to quote them or explain anything, so the readers are left in the dark as to what he even refers to. The historian goes on to add that "reading the reports of the Home Army's intelligence clearly shows how distant the Jewish question was" (Grabowski, 2018, p. 521). The death camp seems to be such an important subject that one ought to share what the Home Army wrote about it and indicate in what respect its data was unreliable or erroneous. The omitted passages included, for example, detailed information about building defences around the camp, new transports and the killing technique: fully incinerating bodies and transporting ashes to the labour camp. The resistance was also interested in the camp's fate following the 1943 revolt and its so-called Ukrainian crew. Evidently, none of the five, sometimes detailed mentions of the death camp made by the Military Division between July

---

15 Such juxtapositions that combined the communist problem with the Jewish question dated back to interwar Poland and are a common feature of military reports of the time. This combination often gave rise to the "Jewish communist" stereotype even in interwar reports drawn up, for instance, by voivodeship offices. Like the administration of the Second Polish Republic, separate bodies within the Home Army structures kept documentation on separate issues within their remit.

and November (AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-23, 1943, ff. 9, 24, 53–54, 94) gained the researcher's recognition, as he did not include them in his text. Without them, one could indeed get the impression that the Jewish fate was a "distant" concern for the Home Army, as Grabowski wrote in his sketch (Grabowski, 2018, p. 521).

It seems that the entire subject of the Home Army is so "distant" to the historian that it led to distorting the relationship between the Polish Underground State and Jews in the Węgrów powiat. The researcher painted an outright grotesque picture of the Home Army circles. Taking note of the concise and succinct nature of his account (six pages), what seems particularly striking is the amount of factual errors it contains: basically, each of the few pieces of information concerning the Home Army contains some sort of a mistake. The key figure in Węgrów District, i.e. the deputy commander whose name Grabowski quotes several times, was Raźmowski rather than Praźmowski (Grabowski, 2018, pp. 518–519). Moreover, the towns were wrongly classified to the relevant centres. Centre I Stoczek also included part of the town of Łochów, while Borze (Czerwonka) formed part of Centre III Korytnica. The Korytnica Centre did not include Roguszyn and Żelazów, since they are in fact one and the same town. The author also succumbed to inconsistencies when citing the seats of outposts in individual centres. For instance, according to the diagram provided by Grabowski, there was no such outpost in Centre I called Stoczek (Grabowski, 2018, p. 518), whereas it had in fact enjoyed the status of the main headquarters, from which the centre took its name (Matusak, 2005, p. 85). The code name of Węgrów District is not entirely accurate either. The only name used in 1943 was "Wilga" rather than "Smoła", a fact that may be inferred, for instance, from the Home Army documents.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the most serious error: in terms of the organization of Home Army structures in the Eastern Subregion, Grabowski wrongly situated Treblinka within the Węgrów rather than Sokołów District (Piekarski, 1997; Ząbecki, 1977, pp. 58–59).<sup>17</sup> In fact, there is no data on the territorial affiliation of the Węgrów District within the entire underground structure of the Home Army. A gap of this kind means there is no

16 See, e.g., AAN, AK, ref. 203/x-69, 1943, f. 214. While conducting source research, the author of this paper browsed through dozens of reports drawn up by underground Home Army resistance units. In all instances, the Węgrów District was referred to in 1943 using the code name "Wilga".

17 Treblinka I and II's formal placement within the Sokołów district is indicated by all archival materials, unpublished post-war accounts and the memoirs of Franciszek Ząbecki. Each of the accounts states that actions concerning the death camp were initiated by the Home Army circles active in the Sokołów centres closest to it. Their greater activity was also caused by Treblinka formally belonging to the Kosów Lacki commune situated in the Sokołów powiat. One ought to also add that Ząbecki states in his memoirs that he cooperated with a resistance cell from Prostynia, i.e. the Węgrów District.



information on any larger unit of the Polish Underground State of which the district formed part.

Grabowski's work also includes shocking omissions. The author makes not even a single mention of Franciszek Ząbecki, stationmaster of the Treblinka station. After the war, Ząbecki, who testified as witness before the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland, presented original documentation on the number of Jewish transports to Treblinka, which represented important evidence helping estimate the number of victims who perished in the death camp (Ząbecki, 1977, pp. 113–149). Nor is there any mention in the text of Władysław Rażmowski "Poraj" being the commander of a guerrilla unit of his name. This is important in that "Poraj", as he himself wrote, attacked Treblinka not as deputy commander of Węgrów District, but as commander of a guerrilla detachment that was also active in the Sokołów District, remaining at the disposal of the area commander. This is also significant in light of the preserved files documenting the Home Army's operations within this structure.<sup>18</sup> What further surprised the author of this paper in Grabowski's account is his lack of criticism when copying source information about a member of the local Home Army resistance, Henryk Oleksiak, nom de guerre "Wichura", who is depicted as chief of a "gang", which suggests that he was nothing more than a common thug.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, in his depiction of the course of the alleged attack on Treblinka, Grabowski borders on the grotesque. This is the height of the distortions to which he resorts. Instead of mentioning – in line with post-war accounts – that the Home Army members had considerable difficulties and spent a lot of time planning the possible sabotage and diversion operation to liberate prisoners, and the fact such an operation entailed enormous risk, the historian presented a mocking description of events, as if they were the result of recklessness and chance. Importantly, there

18 Guerrilla activity undertaken by the "Poraj" guerrilla unit is the subject of a publication issued by the Association of Polish Veterans in the Country (Głownia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, pp. 92–209).

19 Grabowski cited one Home Army report that featured the label "head of a gang." Nevertheless, in spite of various acts of lawlessness, he was not officially expelled from the Home Army, which is hinted at by underground reports and post-war accounts of random members of the organization who did not know him closely. There were attempts to transfer Oleksiak to the reserve, suggesting that his ill-considered actions "posed a tremendous problem in the area of 'Sęp' and 'Słownik'" (Sprawozdanie z działalności organizacji wywrotowych i mniejszości narodowych za miesiąc październik 1943 [Report on the activity of subversive organizations and ethnic minorities for October 1943]; AAN, IH PAN, ref. S/105, 1943, f. 3). What was meant here, above all, were the two attacks on starost Ernst Gramss that "Wichura" had not consulted with anyone. Consequently, in light of analysed and available sources, Grabowski's suggestion that Oleksiak was not a Home Army soldier, or that he even belonged to local thug gangs, is unsubstantiated (Grabowski, 2018, p. 519). In the terminology used by the underground the term "gang" did not necessarily stand for (and it often did not) a group of criminals.

is not a single sentence that would suggest the actions he describes ended in failure, i.e. that the adopted objectives were not met. On the contrary: Grabowski almost paints them as a success. At the time, the objective was not to approach the camp and launch fire at it, as it is described by the researcher, but to destroy the facility, i.e. fulfil a specific military goal, which did not happen.<sup>20</sup> Instead of a balanced analysis and rich argumentation, Grabowski – contrary to opinions voiced by Polish researchers of the attack on Treblinka, whose voices he ignored – presented the operations as daring, verging on reckless. His narrative fails to specify how the idea originated, who endorsed the plan, and whether the command agreed to its implementation; it is even unclear who took part in this endeavour, apart from figures arbitrarily chosen by Grabowski (such as Władysław Rażmowski and Henryk Oleksiak, nom de guerre “Wichura”). The author treated these issues as unimportant, while his entire description reads like a Wild West story, likewise highlighting the shootout to achieve greater dramatic tension (Grabowski, 2018, pp. 518–519).

Notwithstanding Libionka and Grabowski’s omissions and the latter historian’s errors, they are right in stating that the documents they analysed fail to confirm Polish armed assistance for Treblinka. Neither has it been referred to in any Jewish accounts<sup>21</sup> or wartime press sources. Consequently, researchers are justified in expressing doubts about the credibility of post-war accounts of the Polish attack on the death camp (Lewandowska, 1993, p. 124). It is worth noting that the only explored post-war account was that of Władysław Rażmowski, nom de guerre “Poraj”, which is not without reason regarded as an apocryphal work. Following

---

20 Jan Gozdawa-Gołębiowski wrote the following about “Poraj” guerrilla unit’s aid to Jewish prisoners: “This made it possible to save the lives of several hundred people. Yet this was not the fundamental goal of the planned operation. Both the Polish and Jewish side wanted, above all, to liberate all prisoners and completely destroy the camps. The death camp did not cease to operate. People were still being gassed, bodies were still being burned” (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1992, p. 357; see also Matusak, 2002, p. 506).

21 Based on numerous notes left behind by Jan Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, it may be inferred that he tried to find Jewish witnesses, but was only able to reach Stanisław Pogorzelski, a Pole from Orzeszówka (Miedzna commune) in Węgrów powiat, who hid Jews. Pogorzelski stated that four escapees from Treblinka stayed at his house during the war; they came to him on the night of 3/4 August 1943. According to his testimony, he hid them for 14 months, and in the course of long discussions the Jews: “Mentioned that someone from outside helped them by firing at the camp watchtowers during the uprising. However, they were not able to say who it was. They could only guess that it might have been Polish guerrilla fighters. This is all I know about the aforementioned matter” (Relacja S. Pogorzelskiego [S. Pogorzelski’s account], n.d.). According to letters sent to Pogorzelski by the Jews, the escapees and their rescuer maintained a very friendly relationship after the war (Listy do S. Pogorzelskiego [Letters to S. Pogorzelski], n.d.).

its author, the attack on the camp shall be further referred to as “Akcja Treblinka” (Treblinka Operation).<sup>22</sup>

In view of the doubts surrounding “Poraj” Rażmowski’s version, Polish historians researching the Home Army are also somewhat cautious about his text. While Jan Gozdawa-Gołębiowski tends to introduce small corrections to Rażmowski’s account, highlighting the chaotic nature of “Akcja Treblinka”, Piotr Matusak categorically deemed it unrealistic, doubted whether “Poraj” had indeed taken part in it and voiced his opinion that the revolt broke out without the Home Army’s knowledge. At the same time, though, he did not reject all elements of the narrative about Polish aid, only excluding an armed intervention. In fact, the historian adopted in full the version of Józef Worowski – author of the post-war account about railway workers’ assistance to Treblinka II camp that remains unknown to this day.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, contrary to Libionka’s argument, who disagreed with both Gozdawa-Gołębiowski and Matusak, the position of both Home Army specialists is not identical, but radically divergent, as they relied on two contradictory accounts: Gozdawa-Gołębiowski concurred with that provided by Rażmowski, while Matusak believed Worowski.<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, the presented state of research indicates that the question of Polish aid for Treblinka, particularly any military assistance, was depicted in a rather complicated and unclear fashion, and – in light of the rather substantial archival resources – was also fragmentary. The aforementioned historians structured their narratives based on arbitrarily selected source materials: they accepted or rejected individual post-war accounts and fragments of archive documents based on largely unspecified criteria, sometimes selectively quoting (or omitting) research results arrived at by other authors. Furthermore, Libionka’s analysis is so general that it is hard to say if the historian actually performed any in-depth analysis whatsoever. It follows that while their articles are sometimes

---

22 It was analysed in more detail in a journalistic publication. However, this paper does not refer to it, as it contains a number of claims and opinions that cannot be backed by any evidence; any critical debate on the part of a professional researcher would therefore be pointless. Still, it ought to be stated here that, paradoxically, it was this author rather than professional historians who attempted to arrive at the truth about the Polish contribution to the revolt. He classifies it as a false story, entirely discrediting the Home Army members who were allegedly supposed to be helping Jewish prisoners (Wójcik, 2018, pp. 239–254).

23 It is emblematic that no historian of Holocaust studies attempted to analyse Worowski’s version. Libionka acknowledges the existence of such memoirs, yet does not in any way refer to the facts contained therein. The reader does not know whether the key moments in the description correspond to Rażmowski’s account or on the contrary, and what are the discrepancies, if any. In the further part of the paper, this omission will be rectified by confronting both testimonies (Libionka, 2007, p. 482).

24 Libionka untruthfully wrote the following about it: “Matusak and Gozdawa-Gołębiowski failed to ask themselves whether these accounts were credible; in many ways, they are contradictory and the stories they describe are rather unlikely” (Libionka, 2007, p. 482; see also Matusak, 2002, p. 508).

half-baked, their conclusions are categorical. All of them are enveloped in a sense of helplessness caused by the lack of materials that could settle the most important question: whether or not Poles provided armed assistance to Treblinka II prisoners.

A researcher attempting to analyse the Home Army's attitude to Jews not only needs to renounce a one-sidedly positive image of this formation, but also – contrary to certain facts – avoid adopting an attitude as if the Home Army only harboured ill will and ill intentions towards Jews and manifested indifference to Jewish problems, as has been attempted especially by Grabowski in his publications. These two contradictory approaches – represented, on the one hand, by the aforementioned researchers acting as the Home Army's "prosecutors" and, on the other, by its apologists, including the deceased historian Gozdawa-Gołębiowski (himself a Home Army soldier), enthusiast of the underground structures, many of whose works on Polish resistance failed to demonstrate adequate criticism of post-war accounts he obtained and glossed over certain inconvenient facts<sup>25</sup> – naturally cause confusion. Luckily, it seems that one may go off these well-trodden "paths" and embark on a detailed analysis of surviving accounts, based on the archive resources.

Consequently, this paper will initially provide a brief outline of underground activities in the area in question, before moving to an analysis of the available accounts of the attack on Treblinka II. There are several such accounts: not only are they unknown, but sometimes also contradictory or even downright untrue. In the end, the material will be confronted with Home Army files and the problem of gaps in existing documentation will be discussed. Archive materials indicate the Home Army's relatively substantial interest in the camp, corroborating (in an original Home Army document) a Home Army attack on a camp, although the name "Treblinka" is not stated.

In terms of the cited sources, those concerning the armed operation will be presented first, and then supplemented with additional ones, shedding light on the nature of Polish aid and interest in the death camp on the part of the railway resistance. The fate of Jewish escapees after 2 August 1943 lies beyond the scope of the present paper – it deserves a separate, detailed study. Nevertheless, certain mentions of the camp operations after that date and the Home Army's armed plans concerning Treblinka II after the revolt will be cited further.<sup>26</sup>

---

25 For instance, one of the researchers noticed that the attack on a German train near the Borki-Kosy station, organized in 1944 by the Home Army Siedlce District's Kedyw and described by Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, could not have happened there, as the station was not built until 1953. Naturally, there are more discrepancies than that (Charczuk, 2011, p. 79).

26 Here it ought to be mentioned that the author of this paper shares Grabowski's opinion about the dramatic fate of Jewish escapees from Treblinka II camp. Still, the

## Organizational status of the Home Army in the vicinity of Treblinka and its main problems after 1942

The author of the present paper did not set out to discuss this entire subject in detail, yet it would be a mistake to omit it altogether – especially since new information, previously unknown or omitted, shall appear further on in the text. What is more, the perspective adopted here is not that of a researcher of underground resistance, but of a historian of the wartime fate of Jews, which entails a certain change of perception. In the context of Treblinka, none of the researchers in the field of Holocaust studies even attempted to specify which Home Army groups were active in the vicinity of the camp.

With reference to the death camp, the relevant formations are the Directorate of Diversion of the Home Army High Command (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1990; Rybicka, 2011; Witkowski, 1984),<sup>27</sup> headed by August Emil Fieldorf, nom de guerre “Nil”, and three Home Army districts: Ostrow Mazowiecka (code name “Opoczniak”), Sokołów Podlaski (“Sęp”, “Proso”) and Węgrów (“Wilga”, “Smoła”).<sup>28</sup> All districts belonged to Area I of Home Army Warsaw, and jointly made up the Eastern Subregion (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1992, p. 175).<sup>29</sup> This was due to Treblinka’s specific location

---

description put forward by this historian does not exhaust the spectrum of matters related to the Węgrów Home Army’s attitude towards Jews during the occupation. One ought to concur, however, that Home Army reports make no mention of any systemic assistance for the fugitives or any manifestations of organizing care for them. Left to their own devices, they had to manage in an unknown, often hostile rural environment, which led to some of them becoming deprived given the circumstances. From then on, in the eyes of the Home Army’s rapporteurs, they were treated as a criminal and subversive element, although only a part of the Jewish escapees was meant here. It is a shame that Grabowski omitted this fact, claiming that the underground structures took a negative stance towards all fugitives. Yet it seems that this situation could have been avoided, had a more or less efficient protective umbrella been created nationwide for Jews in rural areas. The fact they sought help and even wanted to join local organizations fighting for independence is confirmed by a short note from Węgrów district, which in November 1943 mentioned “two individuals displaced from the Poznań region, allegedly Jews, who try to establish contact with our people, and because of their reckless behaviour expose themselves to danger and may be arrested” (AAN, DRK, ref. 202/X-23, 1943, f. 58).

27 Not a lot is known about this structure, not so much because of a lack of source materials as by the fact that the original documentary legacy of the Home Army High Command’s Kedyw – apart from the set held at the Central Military Archives of the Military Historical Office – was and continues to be available to a limited circle of historians. In 2016, these materials were transferred to the Central Archives of Modern Records (AAN), yet are still not disclosed. Much more is known about Kedyw Warsaw or Eastern Subregion Kedyw.

28 None of the districts has so far been the subject of a strictly academic analysis. The original documents of Ostrow Mazowiecka District are held at the Central Archives of Modern Records (AAN), but are still being researched. Documents of the Sokołów and Węgrów Districts have not survived. The history of resistance in Węgrów was taken up by Jan Gozdawa-Gołębiowski (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1991, pp. 324–370).

29 Between July 1942 and December 1943, the subregion had the code name “Gorzelnia”.

on the borderline between three districts created by Polish resistance activists: Węgrów, Sokołów and Ostrów.<sup>30</sup>

According to available literature, Home Army members from the three centres were involved in matters concerning Treblinka II. After the war, all of those involved also recalled the High Command, which since July 1943 was headed by Tadeusz Komorowski, nom de guerre “Bór”. Between 15 January 1942 and 2 October 1944, the Warsaw Area commander was Albin Skroczyński, nom de guerre “Łaszcz”, “Klimek”, “Chrabąszcz”, and since October 1942 the Eastern Subregion was under Col. Hieronim Szczyński, nom de guerre “Dyrektor”, “Szeliga”, “Lizdejko”. The subregion’s staff, which was located in Warsaw, was not formed until autumn 1942, when transports from the Warsaw ghetto and other locations were already arriving at Treblinka (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1992, pp. 77–78, 175–176).

Starting from 1942, there were five centres within the organizational structure of the Ostrów District, and four centres each in the Sokołów and Węgrów Districts. Without naming all centres (this subject has been researched extensively) and their commanders, the focus here shall be on relating the Home Army’s organizational structure to the location of Treblinka II. During the war, the camp was located within the Kosów Lacki commune (Sokołów district), which was within the operational remit of a post with the code name “Łasica” that had its headquarters in the commune. In 1944, it formed part of the “Lis” centre, which encompassed the following communes: Chruszczewka, Kosów Lacki, Olszew and Sterdyń. In the Węgrów District, the closest centre to the Jewish mass execution site was Stoczek Węgrowski, which covered, among others, the Prostyń commune that was adjacent to Treblinka. From the north, in the Ostrów Mazowiecka District, the Brok-Małkinia centre beyond the Bug River was closest to Treblinka (Augustynowicz, Muszyński, Rękawek, 2000, p. 51; Matusak, 2005, p. 86; Piekarski, 1997, p. 59).

Apart from the aforementioned basic organization, one ought to also mention an important railway unit: mixed company no. 8 from Sokołów Podlaski, forming part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Railway Area “Podlasie”. It was composed of around 80 people (Dmowski, 1999, p. 77).<sup>31</sup> The commander of “Podlasie” was Stanisław Suszyński, nom de guerre “Wierzba”. The company was made up of railwaymen working in the Siedlce–Małkinia section, who closely cooperated with the High Command and the Sokołów District command. The Treblinka train station was the area of operations

<sup>30</sup> For instance, within the framework of the Military Division of the Warsaw Area staff, reconnaissance of Treblinka II was performed by intelligence agents from the three districts: Sokołów, Węgrów and Ostrów (AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-23, 1943, ff. 9, 24, 54, 94).

<sup>31</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> Railway Area was a unique organization on a national level. In autumn 1942, it became part of the Home Army. Before that, it formed part of the Clandestine Polish Army and then Armed Confederation.

of perhaps the most crucial figure for the subject of Treblinka, Franciszek Ząbecki, *noms de guerre* “Dawny” and “Jozuba”. Ząbecki was recruited by the man responsible for organizing the railwaymen within the Sokołów District, Robert Dąbrowski, *nom de guerre* “Zagończyk”, himself a railway employee in Sokołów Podlaski. At the same time, Ząbecki was active within the Eastern Subregion intelligence headed by Major Józef Cieszko, *nom de guerre* “Jordan”, mostly collaborating with the Sokołów District. A Kedyw (Directorate of Diversion) cell was also active in the area, headed by Waclaw Wągrowski “Gałązka” (Dmowski, 2000, pp. 99-107; Matusak, 2002, p. 230; Witt, 1982, p. 227).

Another group that plays an important role in the narrative about Polish armed assistance for the Treblinka camp were guerrilla units that united all sorts of fugitives and fighters whose underground cover was blown. The guerrillas remained at the disposal of the area commander. “Poraj” Rażmowski’s detachment, created from the forces of the three districts in question, was active in the immediate vicinity of Treblinka. It comprised three platoons commanded by Officer Henryk Małkiński, *nom de guerre* “Kulesza” (Ostrów Mazowiecka District), Second Lieutenant Henryk Oleksiak, *nom de guerre* “Wichura” (Sokołów Podlaski District) and Lieutenant Władysław Rażmowski, *nom de guerre* “Poraj”, who headed the platoon in Węgrów District (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1991, p. 361; Piekarski, 1997, p. 123).

In 1942, the most important matter, both for the commanding officers and members of the underground organization, was the consolidation campaign aimed at uniting the efforts of all underground military organizations under one name, unifying the resistance movement, training the corps, military exercises, participation in military operations and, generally speaking, preparing the corps to fight in the planned uprising. This process, while necessary, could also be deemed a political campaign. What is more, it led to conflicts that caused chaos in the field.<sup>32</sup>

These determinants are important in the context of armed assistance for Treblinka insofar as the dominant resistance forces within the Sokołów-Węgrów district until 1942 were not associated with the Union of Armed Struggle [Związek Walki Zbrojnej – zwz], the Home Army’s predecessor. Since 1939, the underground resistance was mostly represented

---

32 After the war, Rażmowski, active in the Węgrów District, provided a behind-the-scenes account of the consolidation process. In his opinion, the most serious obstacle was the Home Army’s reluctance to recognize ranks conferred by other organizations, which in May 1942 caused consternation and rifts within the Defenders of Poland Command and “Wolves” Military Organization in Węgrów. Some of the members of these organizations in the Węgrów area joined the National Military Organization (Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa) instead. This situation lasted until November 1942, when an agreement was reached (AAN, AK, ref. 203/X-71, 1943, f. 3; Głownia, Rażmowski, n.d., pp. 49-50).

by the strong “Wolves” Military Organization [Organizacja Wojskowa “Wilki”], Defenders of Poland Command [Komenda Obrońców Polski], Clandestine Polish Army [Tajna Armia Polska] and Armed Confederation [Konfederacja Zbrojna]. These groups and the Union of Armed Struggle differed in their opinions on many subjects, including political conflicts before the war, their attitude towards democracy, views on the causes of the September 1939 defeat, etc. Owing to these differences, the Union of Armed Struggle’s attempts at subjugating the remaining organizations led to controversy and misunderstandings. Still, the consolidation process launched in the early 1942 (in some cases initiated even earlier) progressed – subsequent groups in various regions of Poland saw the need for integration, yet a certain distance remained, as well as a kind of internal autonomy of individual circles even after the consolidation. There were also acts of disobedience and attempts at renouncing the organizational dependence on the part of smaller resistance groups, a phenomenon that also came to light in the area in question.<sup>33</sup>

The “Poraj” detachment was one of the units that did not stem from the Home Army roots. According to source literature, this was the unit responsible for the attack on Treblinka. In fact, the commanders of Ostrów and Węgrów Districts likewise hailed not from Home Army circles, but from the Defenders of Poland Command (Skroczyński, n.d., p. 72). It also ought to be mentioned that in May 1941, the Union of Armed Struggle in Węgrów District had rather low membership, and its command was not fully organized. In mid-1941, only 56 persons belonged to the organization.<sup>34</sup> The situation in the remaining two districts was similar.

---

33 This was the case of Henryk Oleksiak, nom de guerre “Wichura”, who hailed from the “Wolves” Military Organization and whose activity in the region was shrouded in legend. During and after the war, his courage and bravado during military operations were universally admired, but he quickly broke out of organizational discipline. For that reason, the commander of Sokołów District ordered him to stop any individual activities, or else – according to post-war accounts – he could even be physically eliminated. Nevertheless, he was tolerated by the Home Army command, which even collaborated with him. For instance, the commander of Sokołów District helped him rescue his mother from the Gestapo at a time when “Wichura” was already loosely associated with the Home Army. Józef Iwanowski recalls that “Wichura” never settled accounts when it comes to funds obtained following sabotage operations, organized attacks that he did not consult with the command and ill-considered sorties: “He wanted to satisfy his personal ambitions and become a self-reliant – independent commander. He modelled himself on [Henryk] Sienkiewicz’s Kmicic character. [...] To this end, he attempted to recruit – and partially succeeded in doing so – a certain number of people that would follow him, particularly among young people of his kind. As a result of the antics of this independent commander, the powiat became too narrow for him” (Iwanowski, n.d., pp. 2, 10–11; see also CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.3.31.33, 1943, ff. 53–54; Ryżewski, 2006, p. 545).

34 For the behind-the-scenes story of the origins of the Union of Armed Struggle’s resistance in Węgrów powiat, see: Okulus, n.d. The author was a mayor of Węgrów.



The consolidation process progressed best in the Sokołów area.<sup>35</sup> There, the aforementioned organizations joined the Home Army, increasing its numbers. Consequently, in February 1942 the Home Army in Węgrów powiat already had more than 500 members, with none other than Rażmowski made deputy commander. This decision of the Home Army command was meant as a sign of appreciation and recognition of his previous service. In June 1943, the corps kept growing in numbers – according to the Eastern Subregion report, the resistance in Węgrów already had 1,435 members (Matusak, 2005, p. 86).

It is hard to establish whether the resistance fighters were well armed.<sup>36</sup> Neither Gozdawa-Gołębiowski nor Matusak, who shed light on the subject in the Węgrów and Ostrów Districts,<sup>37</sup> referred to this topic. They merely stated that the weapons availability greatly improved in the Węgrów District compared to neighbouring structures between 1942 and June 1943. Comparing the arms situation in two districts – Węgrów and Ostrów – Węgrów had the greatest number of arms at its disposal. Therefore, had an attack on Treblinka been planned, the Węgrów forces would definitely be taken into account first (Matusak, 2005, p. 87; Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1992, p. 183).

**Table 1. Arms and ammunition in Węgrów District as at 1 June 1943**

Type of arms	Arms, pcs	Ammo, pcs
guns	113	1,332
rifles	304	55,195
light automatic rifles	4	2,450
MMG	5	6,460
anti-tank rifles	2	-
LMG	1	700
mortars	1	17
grenades	-	433
<b>Total</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>66,587 + 433 kg of explosives</b>

Source: Matusak, 2005, p. 86.

35 In June 1943, in the Sokołów District, the Home Army competed to attract the respect of the young people with the National Military Organization, trying to recruit members of the National Confederation (Sprawozdanie z stanu politycznego, społecznego i narodowościowego za okres 1 czerwca–15 czerwca 1943 roku [Report on the political, social and ethnic situation for 1–15 June 1943]).

36 After the war, Albin Skroczyński claimed that the airdrop campaign that began in spring 1942 and was ongoing in 1943 “improved the situation, providing a large number of arms sets meant to equip military platoons” (Skroczyński, n.d., p. 91).

37 Data for the Sokołów District has not survived.

To conclude, one ought to mention the fundamental matter, that is the organizational division responsible for sabotage and diversion operations. In the three discussed districts, the Kedyw was headed by: a) in Ostrów Mazowiecka, until the end of September 1943, Warrant Officer Koziej, nom de guerre “Szum” (first name unknown); b) in Sokołów, from February until 30 September 1943, Lieutenant/Captain Franciszek Pieniak, nom de guerre “Przebój”; c) in Węgrów, from May 1943 until the end of the year, Lieutenant/Captain Jerzy Lipka, nom de guerre “Leszczyc”. Interestingly, two of them were replaced right after the Treblinka revolt. Their actions in the subregion were coordinated by Adam Kompowski, who only began to organize sabotage and diversion cells in January 1943. In the course of work, it transpired that on the initiative of Inspector Lieutenant-Colonel Bronisław Patlewicz, nom de guerre “Nieczuja”, “internal sabotage and diversion cells” started being created in January 1943 in the Węgrów, Sokołów, Radzymin and Siedlce Districts, independently from the Kedyw units. The rationale behind their creation was a justified fear that Kedyw posts – owing to their low membership and lack of good orientation in the field – would fail to meet the tasks given to them. Although Gozdawa-Gołębiowski sees their creation as a positive process, which strengthened the region in military terms, it simultaneously threatened the cohesion of underground military actions and their efficiency (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1992, pp. 195–196).

### “Akcja Treblinka” (Treblinka Operation) according to Rażmowski

All researchers investigating the sources of the narrative about Polish aid for Treblinka reach for the text written by Władysław Rażmowski. As a veteran, Rażmowski became actively involved in spreading knowledge about armed assistance for the death camp, and was accompanied in this effort by Gozdawa-Gołębiowski.<sup>38</sup> “Poraj” is not only the author of an account on the subject, but he even acted as a historian: in 1969, he published

---

38 What ought to be mentioned in this context is that Rażmowski claimed that as the commander of the guerrilla unit, he decided to launch an attack on Treblinka without his superiors’ approval. Writing about himself in the third person, he clarified his conduct in the following, original way: “Yet he decided not to inform the authorities about his decision, since he believed that providing assistance to escaping prisoners did not preclude participation in a future attack on the Treblinka camp and was related to the unit’s training cycle” (As cited in Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1992, p. 355). Jan Gozdawa-Gołębiowski decided to correct this version, glossing over this act of lawlessness with a hardly credible statement that read: “Lieutenant ‘Poraj’ Rażmowski’s decision was not contradictory to ongoing preparations for an attack on the camp insofar as the main obligation vested in ‘Poraj’s’ Guerrilla Detachment was protecting the local population against the Ukrainians. Consequently, more or less numerous patrols of ‘Poraj’s’ Guerrilla Detachment relatively often found themselves in the vicinity of the camp” (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1992, p. 355).

his version of “Akcja Treblinka” in the prestigious academic journal *Dzieje Najnowsze* (which is respected to this day). The date of publishing his work is not irrelevant, as it may be associated with the author’s involvement in the anti-Semitic campaign (Rażmowski, 1969, pp. 167–182). At that time, press sources and academic journals were flooded with works that painted an exaggerated picture about the allegedly widespread Polish aid for Jews under the German occupation.<sup>39</sup> This fact alone is enough to provoke reflection on the credibility of a text that carries such connotations. Yet there are also other reservations, the main one being the lack of documents that would confirm that the operation took place. The text published in *Dzieje Najnowsze* is an abbreviated version of Rażmowski’s story contained in an unpublished typescript from 1971 held at the Central Archives of Modern Records [AAN]. The most extensive version of the narrative on the Polish aid for Treblinka II camp was contained in Rażmowski’s text published in 1991 in *Barbakan* magazine. There he included all previously unknown aspects that he took from other Home Army members.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, having at our disposal “Poraj” Rażmowski’s extensive and detailed narrative, later corroborated by Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, the key moments and circumstances of the attack on Treblinka ought to be presented in line with his version and critically assessed. The paper will focus on versions from 1969 and 1971. The later version, published in *Barbakan* magazine, is treated as a compilation of many stories “Poraj” had not been personally aware of beforehand, and as such it will not be discussed here.

Rażmowski wrote that the idea to attack Treblinka originated in the Home Army circles of the Sokołów Podlaski District, and was then analysed by the Eastern Subregion’s command in autumn 1942. However, the Area Command expressly stated that the operation could only be launched upon orders of its commander. The aforementioned Lieutenant-Colonel Bronisław Patlewicz “Nieczuja” was instructed to supervise the effort. Together with Franciszek Pieniak “Przebój”, he started training and selecting people for actions of this kind in 1943, constantly struggling with arms shortages and difficulties in reaching the vicinity of the camp.<sup>41</sup>

39 The most widely commented aspect of post-war accounts on Polish aid for Jews is the collaboration between soldiers from the “Wolves” Military Organization (oww) and the Jewish Military Union (Żydowski Związek Wojskowy) (Libionka, 2011).

40 Rażmowski’s three most important texts all contain the same information about “Poraj’s” unit’s participation in “Akcja Treblinka” (Głównia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, pp. 168–88; Głównia, Rażmowski, 1990, pp. 27–36).

41 In 1991, Rażmowski’s version about training was confirmed by another Home Army soldier, Lucjan Krajewski. In his testimony, he stated that as an officer cadet of the infantry, he took part in an underground Home Army training that involved practicing an operation on the Treblinka II camp. This was to have taken place in May 1943. The following people came to Miednik (a town in Węgrów powiat) to supervise the training: “Nieczuja”, “Poraj”, Major Zygmunt Maciejowski “Wolski”, who was the commander of Węgrów District, and his aide Jerzy Lipko, nom de guerre “Leszczyc”. The meeting ended with an exam conducted based on sketched plans of the camp.

In the end, once certain conditions had been met, for instance contact had been established with prisoners, the decision to launch actions in April 1943 was taken in the Sokołów District. The task was to be performed by Henryk Oleksiak “Wichura”. According to Rażmowski, the plan was not doomed to fail, but the Germans discovered the plot in the camp, murdered the Jewish resistance members and ordered an emergency. Nevertheless, the order to call off the operation did not reach “Wichura” in time: having concentrated his forces in the vicinity of Sterdyń, he opened fire at the camp (Głównia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, pp. 169–171). This story will be elaborated in the account given by “Wichura’s” brother Marian Oleksiak, nom de guerre “Sęp”. This testimony will also be presented, but even though the description of the action contained there matches “Poraj’s” version, the circumstances of launching the alleged attack are different.

Several months after “Wichura’s” action, another attempt was made to attack the camp, yet – according to Rażmowski – it ended in a partial success. It took place on 2 August of that year, once contact with Jewish prisoners who were able to leave the camp had been established. The operation was preceded by a reconnaissance of the camp, which involved a failed attempt at approaching it and opening fire by the deputy commander of Sokołów District and head of the local Kedyw, “Przebój” (Głównia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, pp. 174–175).

Rażmowski remembered the names and surnames of members of the camp’s resistance movement. The first one was a Jew from Kosów Lacki, Szymon Jabłonowicz,<sup>42</sup> an artist blacksmith who would go to town to get products he needed to make ornaments for the Germans, as a result of which the Home Army could establish contact with the others. Rażmowski also referred to Jewish prisoners who left the camp to cut branches used to camouflage the camp. As they would go into the forest, the opportunity arose to leave them dispatches hidden in trees. “Poraj” additionally provided personal details of leaders of the Jewish resistance within the camp; he also mentioned that after the murder of Borys Chorążycy,<sup>43</sup> the command was taken over by “Galewski from Łódź”. The inner circle included:

---

Of course, this account does not prove that the story presented by Rażmowski was true. It rather seems to indicate the long-term investigation carried out by Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, who had worked on the subject of Polish aid for Treblinka since the 1970s (Oświadczenie Lucjana Krajewskiego z 18 lipca 1991 roku [Lucjan Krajewski’s statement of 18 July 1991], 1991).

42 Oskar Strawczyński’s testimony mentions a Jewish blacksmith, Hersz Jabkowski, who came from Stoczek Węgorowski. He was placed in the labour camp in May 1942 and worked at Treblinka II in the construction of gas chambers (Protokół przesłuchania Oskara Strawczyńskiego z 7 października 1945 roku [Minutes of the hearing of Oskar Strawczyński of 7 October 1945], 1945).

43 The person meant here is otolaryngologist Julian Elias Chorążycy, and not his relative Borys. Both of them ran a medical practice in Warsaw in the interwar period, and both were otolaryngologists. The doctors are often confused with one another in a number of post-war publications (Haska, 2013, pp. 246–248).

“Ziolo-Bloch, Rusland, Ludling, Leon Haberman, Zaleberg, Markus and Gwidwicz.”<sup>44</sup>

As he neared the climax of his narrative, Rażmowski weaved the Polish Workers’ Party into the story, which seems to be the weakest point of his account. In July 1943, “Poraj” was allegedly contacted by his friend from years ago, Kazimierz Grodzicki,<sup>45</sup> who – being a communist – had maintained contacts with insurgents from the Warsaw ghetto imprisoned in the camp. This group planned to escape. Rażmowski further persuades readers that, having heard out Grodzicki’s pleas for help, he decided to act on an impulse and attack the camp:

“Poraj” knew that the Subregion’s command had been making preparations to destroy the camp for quite some time, and was scared that he would not receive permission for an independent action that could foil the main plans. He could not divulge said plans to his friend, although Grodzicki’s proposal was extremely tempting. Still, he wanted to help people who had been condemned to death, at the same time training soldiers from his unit for a larger-scale operation. “Poraj” did not think long and agreed (Głównia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, p. 175).

Rażmowski goes on to claim that from that moment on, he acted alone, without communicating with anyone, as if going deeper underground. The story about a member of the Polish Workers’ Party allegedly initiating “Akcja Treblinka” is obviously not credible, even bizarre. The moral of this tale would be that Home Army soldiers acted upon the orders and in collaboration with the communist movement, and got away scot-free. This could be interpreted as a sign of the times – the influence of propaganda spread by the People’s Republic of Poland – although it ought to be stressed that the author never backed out from this aspect of working with the Polish Workers’ Party. It was also accepted by Gozdawa-Gołębiowski.<sup>46</sup>

Having personally performed reconnaissance of the camp from the gravel pit located between the Polish and Jewish camps, “Poraj” – again on

44 “Poraj” also mentions Franciszek Ząbecki, albeit in passing. According to his account, Ząbecki was not someone who would be in touch with the prisoners. However, the railwayman informed the Home Army about goods from Treblinka transported to the Third Reich. The source of Ząbecki’s knowledge about it were shipping lists (Głównia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, p. 174).

45 Rażmowski did not provide any extensive information about him. In all likelihood, this is a fictional figure.

46 Neither of them backed out from this version, because their narrative of the attack on Treblinka hangs upon the crucial participation of the Polish Workers’ Party member in the entire operation. Grodzicki’s presence would explain what Home Army units were doing in the vicinity of the camp during the revolt. Without him, the entire story makes no sense.

his own – planned the action and sent, in agreement with the Polish Workers' Party members, a Jewish volunteer to Treblinka II. The latter introduced himself to the Germans as a father wanting to join his son. The man's task was to contact the Jewish resistance members, who were assumed to exist, and communicate the revolt date and information about the Home Army's support from outside.<sup>47</sup> This thread is also hardly credible – one is tempted to ask why someone would risk their life since, according to Rażmowski himself, Jewish workers would occasionally leave the camp. Yet leaving this irregularity aside, all stories about the Polish Workers' Party's contribution to "Akcja Treblinka" ought to be refuted, and the aspect of "Poraj's" unit contacting the prisoners should be regarded as a matter of fiction. This clumsy attempt at shedding light on the situation casts doubt on the credibility of the entire narrative, as there is no convincing explanation for the synchronicity of the Polish and Jewish struggle. And, after all, what we are dealing with here is an account of someone who had planned and executed everything almost single-handedly.

In spite of these reservations, let us continue with the story. According to plans of the attack created after but one visit to the area adjacent to the camp – so goes on Rażmowski – one of the three combat groups of the Home Army was meant to open fire, and the remaining ones were to coordinate the escape. The first group, composed of 19 men under the command of Henryk Małkiński "Kulesza", was equipped with short rifles and two automatic rifles. They were supported by units under Antoni Wróblewski "Orwid" and "Wichura". Unfortunately, once the revolt broke out and gunfire began, the crowds proved difficult to control and the ensuing chaos was only contained after a longer while (Głównia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, pp. 180–181).

Rażmowski's account further includes a description of around 200 fugitives crossing the Bug in the vicinity of Wilczogęby and Brok. The rest headed in the direction of Warsaw. Moreover, another important element of the entire operation's finale was Stanisław "Śliwa" Siwek's unit accidentally becoming involved in a skirmish with the Germans. On 2 August, his men – acting on "Nieczuja's" orders – concentrated ca. 3 km from

---

<sup>47</sup> Rażmowski described in detail how he personally cycled to the gravel pit located between the camps, from where – based on a small hill he had chosen – he could observe both camps: the Polish and Jewish one. On his way back, as he claims, he was almost executed by shooting. However, he presented a general view of Treblinka II and it seems that despite standing on a hill – assuming he had even been there in the first place – he did not see what happened inside the death camp: "The Jewish camp was located right next to the road. The barbed wire fence was surrounded with a young pine woodland, with wooded areas approaching it and stretching as far as the Orzołko forests. [...] The entire area was dominated by watchtowers surrounding the Jewish camp; on the tower platforms, there constantly were patrols of guardsmen armed with machine guns and floodlights. At lunchtime, the number of patrols circling around the camp was significantly lower" (Głównia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, pp. 177–178).

Treblinka awaiting further orders, but only managed to help a few Jewish groups cross the Bug. Nevertheless, the Germans began to chase the escapees, which led to a shooting incident. Based on the account provided by “Śliwa”, Rażmowski wrote:

Using the arms I had, I opened fire at the Germans approaching from the left bank of the Bug. Given such poor equipment, I was not able to inflict any real harm on the enemy. In any case, our unexpected appearance halted the chase and groups of the wretched men managed to cross the river, finding salvage in the forest (Głównia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, p. 186).

One of the soldiers captured during the manhunt was “Śliwa”, yet after his arrest, he managed to get the *vlasovtsy* [soldiers of the Russian Liberation Army under Andrei Vlasov – translator’s note] drunk and thus escape imprisonment. According to Rażmowski, “Akcja Treblinka” had a happy ending only for a part of the Jews, as many of them did not want to listen to the Home Army soldiers’ advice about the direction of escape and location of crossing the river, as a result of which they were caught. Rażmowski stressed that the fugitives had lost their life instinct. They were afraid to leave the forest areas they had chosen, which is why they were easily caught by the gendarmes, who knew that they would find the escapees in precisely such locations (Głównia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, pp. 184–185).<sup>48</sup>

### “Śliwa” Siwek’s account about helping escapees from Treblinka

Reports of what happened after the revolt broke out were supplemented by the testimony given by Stanisław Siwek, nom de guerre “Śliwa” (Relacja Stanisława Siwka [Stanisław Siwek’s account], 6 February 1973, 1973), who was referred to by “Poraj”. In his account, “Śliwa” also mentions the railwaymen’s plans to destroy the camp.

Siwek came to the Ostrów Mazowiecka District from Zegrze in July 1942. Using false documents issued in the name of Śliwa, he made it to Czerwińsk, where he was ordered to organize a sapper unit in charge of rail sabotage and diversion. In spring 1943, he received the order to go to Małkinia station to train dispatcher Stanisław Siwek, nom de guerre “Czardasz”, in order to prepare a railway attack on Treblinka (the two resi-

48 Leaving Rażmowski’s fabrications aside, this aspect merits attention, as the behaviour of Jewish escapees seems to have been described in a very realistic fashion. It could be that “Poraj” gained the relevant knowledge from someone who had directly participated in the events. He may even have taken part in the operation himself, although not in the role in which he chose to portray himself after the war, i.e. as the main organizer of aid.

stance members shared the same name and surname). The railwaymen were to be supported by troops from Siedlce, Węgrów, Ostrów and Warsaw. He said that at the time, contacts with Jews were maintained by Franciszek Ząbecki, who told prisoners to stay alert and wait for the attack.

In mid-July 1943, “Śliwa” was ordered by “Przebój” to concentrate, “if possible”, a unit of more than 30 men from neighbouring villages in the vicinity of Glina village. The guerrillas were equipped with five or six rifles and four guns. “Śliwa” was instructed to wait for further detailed tasks in connection with the planned attack on the death camp. He was also told to wait for a full supply of arms and each time stay with his people in a different part of the forest. However, events of 2 August 1943 took him by surprise:

I heard gunfire from the direction of the camp and [saw] smoke rising above it. I thought I had not been informed about the action. That evening I saw groups of Jews escaping across the meadows towards the Bug River. Our soldiers showed the running Jews where they could ford the river and organized passages to the right bank. The Jews were followed by the Germans who went after them. Also, on the right bank of the Bug, the Germans had made a cordon mostly [comprised] of *vlasovtsy* (Relacja Stanisława Siwka [Stanisław Siwek’s account], 6 February 1973, 1973).

“Śliwa” goes on to say that he engaged in combat with the Germans, in line with what was stated by Rażmowski:

Using the arms I had, I opened fire at the Germans approaching from the left bank of the Bug. Having checked our IDs, the *vlasovtsy* arrested me and several soldiers and escorted us to Glina village. They placed us in a small cottage [...], leaving guards in front of it. At night, local farmers got the *vlasovtsy* drunk blind. At night, the house burned down. Using this opportunity, we escaped into the potato field. 2–3 wounded men from my unit were captured by the Germans (Relacja Stanisława Siwka [Stanisław Siwek’s account], 6 February 1973, 1973).

Siwek’s account of his participation in the revolt ends at this point. There is no trace of heroism here, yet his struggle with the Germans should be qualified, above all, as an act of self-defence, which incidentally managed to help Jewish fugitives. For the purpose of this paper, the most important element of the account is the unit’s surprise at the revolt and gunfire. Of course, there is no need to negate the fact that “Śliwa” Siwek’s unit instructed the Jews as to where they should be crossing the Bug.



### The account of Marian Oleksiak, nom de guerre “Sęp”, and Franciszek Pieniak, “Przebój”, concerning attacks in spring 1943

In his account, Rażmowski mentions two attacks on Treblinka II, preceding the one of 2 August. Therefore, it is necessary to recall the circumstances of the previous incidents.

Thanks to Gozdawa-Gołębiowski’s enthusiasm as a researcher, two testimonies of first-hand witnesses of these events are now available. The first one was given in the 1970s by the brother of the aforementioned “Wichura” (Relacja Mariana Oleksiaka [Marian Oleksiak’s account], n.d.), and concerns the impromptu attack launched by that commander in spring 1943 on Treblinka II,<sup>49</sup> mentioned derisively by Grabowski in his essay.

According to Marian Oleksiak, the attempt to approach the camp which took place in spring was spontaneous and completely wilful. Consequently, this version contradicts Rażmowski’s account, stating that the attack was a part of a series of actions planned in the Sokołów District. Oleksiak’s troop, comprising 80 men, first embarked on a mission aimed at eliminating a Schutzpolizei station in the school in Sterdynia, but the ambush was not successful, even though the group dressed in German uniforms. Consequently, the unit was forced to retreat to Lebiedzie village. It was there that “Wichura” learned from a farmer about an opportunity to acquire Maxim machine guns, hidden in 1939, with 5,000 bullets. With the weapons in his possession, he decided to attack the camp. He could have devised the plan upon finding out about an action that had been planned by the Home Army, or because he knew that the entire local underground had been reconnoitring Treblinka at that time. It cannot be ruled out that, being a young man (21–22 years old), immature and eager to fantasize – as indicated by post-war accounts – he might have wanted to prove his worth in the battlefield (Relacja Mariana Oleksiaka [Marian Oleksiak’s account], n.d.).

The soldiers hoped that by attacking in the morning they would take the Germans by surprise. After seizing ten farm carts in Lebiedzie and rearming at the police station in Sterdynia, they headed for the camp. Afterwards, the action unfolded as follows:

In the morning, he opened fire with machine guns and combat rifles, and threw grenades at the main gate, killing a guardsman. The Germans illuminated the terrain with flares and reflectors, and retaliated with heavy machine gun fire. Before the action, we sawed down a telegraph pole, thus depriving the camp of their telephone connection. The fire exchange lasted for half an hour, after which we retreated in

49 The account is incomplete. It stops when Oleksiak begins to talk about the revolt of 2 August 1943.

the direction of the river Bug. We were not pursued (Relacja Mariana Oleksiaka [Marian Oleksiak's account], n.d.).

Oleksiak finishes his account with a statement that the aim of this retaliatory action as well as the others<sup>50</sup> was to defend civilians harassed by the occupier. The intention was to prove to the Germans that “the Polish Army was active and would not accept punitive actions against the civilians” (Relacja Mariana Oleksiaka [Marian Oleksiak's account], n.d.). One can sense how proud he was to fight in “Wichura's” partisan group – which is not surprising, considering that the witness is talking about his brother. Nevertheless, he does not hide the fact that these actions were not authorized by the command.

Gozdawa-Gołębiowski (according to Rażmowski), as well as “Przebój” (deputy commander of the Sokołów District) tried to conceal this act of insubordination after the war. One should be reminded that they justify “Wichura's” springtime action by claiming that the order forbidding any armed activities did not reach the commander and that was why he attacked the camp without permission. Obviously, this version is hardly believable, when compared to “Wichura's” brother's testimony (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1992, p. 353).

The story describing “Wichura's” action as a planned undertaking is all the more valuable as “Przebój” cited very similar circumstances while presenting the details of his failed attack on Treblinka II. He writes that his attack was supposed to happen in March 1943:

I led the platoon up to the camp's wire entanglements, with the intention of attacking the Jewish camp. Half an hour before the assault I received an order from the district commander, major Franciszek Świtalski, nom de guerre “Socha”, calling off the operation because the ss and the Lithuanian Shaulists had been warned by informers about our preparations and goals, and therefore combat-ready. The platoon numbered ca. 40 soldiers, mostly not very well armed, so the result of the action was difficult to predict (Oświadczenie świadka Franciszka Pieniaka z 14 lutego 1967 roku [Franciszek Pieniak's witness statement of 14 February 1967], 1967).<sup>51</sup>

50 The Kedyw report for the period, describing, among others, the sabotage of telecom lines, lists several examples of such actions. Between 20 March and 20 April, “a 1+4-strong patrol headed by Wacek cut telegraph lines between Sokołów and Siedlce.” During the night hours, the same task was completed by another group 13 km from Sokołów, between Sokołów and Małkinia (4 km before Kosów Lacki). According to accounts, “wires were cut using pliers.” Yet there is no mention of Treblinka II (CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.3.31.33, 1943, f. 9).

51 One of the most courageous actions performed in spring 1943 in the Sokołów district was an attack on the guardroom of the Rogów airport. As a result of the attack,

One should be reminded that captain “Przebój”, in another of his written testimonies collected by Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, reports that the decision to attack Treblinka II was made in the Sokołów District Command in late March or in early April. “Wichura’s” soldiers took their positions in the neighbouring woods at night, but half an hour before the planned ambush “Przebój” received from the commander an order cancelling the operation, allegedly due to the fact that the Germans, having been warned by informants about the plan, were combat-ready (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1973b, p. 17). Therefore, it is not possible, or at least it seems highly unlikely, that the two unrelated combat missions had been cancelled in identical circumstances.

Both testimonies give rise to doubts. Marian Oleksiak’s account seems more credible, as he admitted that the actions were not authorized by the command. However, no mention of the attack on Treblinka II has survived in the archives of the underground. It should be noted that at that time – in January or February 1943 – an incident took place in Treblinka, described by a reporter from “Antyk” as a “major altercation”: Jews threw grenades at Ukrainian guards, killing a few and wounding several dozen. One Gestapo officer was killed as well. The rioters abandoned their weapons and escaped. However, there is no data available concerning the participation of Home Army soldiers in this event (Sprawozdanie z 24 lutego 1943 roku [Report of 24 February 1943], 1943).

### Accounts of Home Army soldiers from Kosów Lacki Centre, code name “Łasica”, concerning the supply of arms

Another group of testimonies regards an important subject, namely deliveries of firearms to the camp by members of the Polish underground. In 1973, accounts of several members of the Home Army on that subject came to Gozdawa-Gołębiowski’s attention. They belonged to a section in charge of sabotage and diversion at the outpost (and later, centre) in Kosów Lacki (“Łasica”). Their commander was sergeant major Adam Przyborowski “Przerwa”. The accounts were given by: Stanisław Marchel “Sokół”, Mieczysław Mróz “Kac”, Adam Przyborowski “Przerwa”, Stanisław Stefańczuk “Kubeł”, as well as Marian Jakubik “Jaśmin” from Węgrów, who came up with the initiative to collect testimonies on the subject. During the war, as a young boy, he conducted intelligence operations, which was

---

four Ukrainians were killed and the barrack was burnt down. The responsible unit was 30-man-strong; some of the soldiers were dressed in field gendarmerie uniforms. At the same time, 30 men (of Polish origin) were rescued from a transport to Treblinka I, but even here one finds no mention of the action on Treblinka II (САУ, ВВН, Руч Оporу [Resistance], ref. IX.3.31.33, 1943, ff. 30, 34).

possible thanks to his work at a military police station in Kosów Lacki. It is worth mentioning that these soldiers gave laconic and concise accounts, and were not inclined to emphasize the significance of their contribution. They were tasked with reconnoitring the vicinity of the camp and supplying it with firearms. They acted on the orders of “Przerwa” (Relacja Mariana Jakubika [Marian Jakubik’s account] (handwritten), n.d.; Relacja Stanisława Marchela [Stanisław Marchel’s account], 13 September 1973, 1973; Relacja Mieczysława Mroza, [Mieczysław Mróz’s account], 13 September 1973, 1973; Relacja Adama Przyborowskiego [Adam Przyborowski’s account], 27 August 1973, 1973; Relacja Stanisława Stefańczuka [Stanisław Stefańczuk’s account], 13 September 1973, 1973).

Mróz was the first Home Army soldier from “Łasica” tasked with reconnoitring the camp. He was sent three times into the vicinity of the camp, in order to discover the procedure of delivering horses and carts to the extermination camp, because this could be used as a way of smuggling weapons into the camp’s perimeter. He explains: “The rumours that circulated among the farmers were not enough, one had to go there in person and thus establish the facts and determine the possibility of transferring the firearms” (Relacja Mieczysława Mroza, [Mieczysław Mróz’s account], 13 September 1973, 1973).

Stefańczuk’s task was to deliver the weapons. In April 1943 he received an order to ride to the camp with a horse-drawn cart as a part of so-called *Scharwerk*, obligatory for the local farmers. In order to avoid raising suspicions, he had to find an old farmer, incapable of hard work, and offer to replace him. During his first trip he smuggled in a Parabellum pistol. He describes it as follows:

When I arrived at the extermination camp, an ss man went out and ordered us to bring some gravel from a neighbouring gravel-pit. When I came back with the gravel, a dozen Polish Jews appeared in front of the gate, took the carts containing the gravel from the farmers, and drove them back into the camp. However, I managed to communicate with one of them in whispers about delivering firearms during my next trip. [...] Back in the gravel-pit, while loading gravel, I put a pistol under the bottom board and fastened it with a string lest it falls out. When I came back to the camp gate, the Jew was already waiting for me with other prisoners. I informed him that there was a weapon under the cart and that he should take it while stooping to unfasten the chain around the cesspit. The chain was fastened on both sides of the cesspit, so the Jew could always unfasten it on the opposite side from the guard, usually a Ukrainian (Relacja Stanisława Stefańczuka [Stanisław Stefańczuk’s account], 13 September 1973, 1973).

He smuggled in 11 handguns and four grenades that way. Stefańczuk mentions that also his father, Aleksander, while not a member of the Home Army, but its supporter, managed to deliver four weapons using the same method. The firearms were taken from an arsenal in Kosów Lacki, supervised by Jan Wiśniewski “Zajac”.<sup>52</sup> Stefańczuk ends his account in the following words:

I did not deliver more firearms to the camp, because it would entail too much risk. The most nerve-racking part was when I had to wait to bring the empty cart out of the camp (Relacja Stanisława Stefańczuka [Stanisław Stefańczuk’s account], 13 September 1973, 1973).

Marchel was in charge of covering the gun-smuggling actions. He fulfilled this task ca. ten times, as a member of the cart-riding team. Many years later, he shared his thoughts about that work:

Having a handgun on him, he should have used it immediately, if his colleague was in danger from a Ukrainian or an ss man while contacting a Jew. The chances to save himself would be slim, but this is still better than nothing. We were relying on the forest which reached the entrance gate to the death camp (Relacja Stanisława Marchela [Stanisław Marchel’s account], 13 September 1973, 1973).

Another account worth mentioning is the one given by the group’s commander, Adam Przyborowski. He spoke in detail about his contacts with the aforementioned artistic blacksmith from Kosów. Germans trusted Jabłonowicz and repeatedly sent him unaccompanied to the village, where he could be seen several times a week. “Przerwa” contacted him, with the consent of “Przebój”, and asked him to deliver weapons for the prisoners. At a certain point, Jabłonowicz took the initiative and informed him that Jews in the camp were preparing for battle and asked for more arms (Relacja Adama Przyborowskiego [Adam Przyborowski’s account], 27 August 1973, 1973). In his account, “Przerwa” describes in detail how many firearms were delivered by Jabłonowicz. He usually smuggled them in a bag in which he carried his tools for artistic blacksmithing; mostly handguns, but also a Sten gun, complete with two magazines. The weapons came from the weapon storage in “Łasica”, the Sokołów Centre, or were issued by corporal Czesław Mróz, nom de guerre “Chłop”. Further

---

<sup>52</sup> Jan Gozdawa-Gołębiowski also wrote down the account of Jan Wiśniewski. Wiśniewski claimed to have known who was meant to receive the guns (Jan Wiśniewski’s account, 27 August 1943).

deliveries were consulted with the commander of the Sokołów District, major Franciszek Świtalski “Socha”.<sup>53</sup> He decided that three more Sten guns and six pistols be passed to the camp. Even though the prisoners insisted on more deliveries, the Sokołów Centre did not provide them with more guns apart from the deliveries mentioned before, because their resources had been exhausted (Relacja Adama Przyborowskiego [Adam Przyborowski’s account], 27 August 1973, 1973).

The question of the planned participation of the Kosów underground in the attack on Treblinka is an especially important subject in “Przerwa’s” account. The Home Army soldiers from Kosów, acting on “Przebój’s” and “Socha’s” orders, were preparing to provide fire support to other groups using machine guns, but the “uprising” broke out two days before the agreed date. Thus one learns that the planned date was 4 August. However, Przyborowski could not explain the reasons of the early outbreak. This is the only testimony where a member of the Home Army cites a date of an operation planned by the underground (Relacja Adama Przyborowskiego [Adam Przyborowski’s account], 27 August 1973, 1973).

The quoted reports of “Łasica” soldiers do not raise any concerns. It is not clear, however, how the soldiers chose the Jews to whom they transferred the weapons. There was indeed a possibility that the firearms would fall into the hands of people who were collaborating with the Germans in the camp. Unfortunately, this question remains unanswered. Still, Gozdawa-Gołębiowski used the stories of gun deliveries to build a broader narrative that seems definitely untrue. At its centre, there are several soldiers from “Łasica” (especially Marian Jakubik “Jaśmin”), who played important, if not vital parts in the attack on Treblinka (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1973a, 1973b, 1973c). Letters exchanged by Jakubik and Gozdawa-Gołębiowski reveal that the historian was under great influence of that dynamic, spirited man (List M. Jakubika do J. Gozdawy-Gołębiowskiego [Letter from M. Jakubik to J. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski], n.d.).

However, what interfered with “Jaśmin’s” attempts to create a narrative accentuating the outstanding assistance of the Kosów Lacki outpost to Treblinka, was the commander of the “Łasica” outpost, Stanisław Rydel, nom de guerre “Janczary”, who questioned its significance in the attack. Jakubik himself writes openly about it:

He still claims that our role in defeating the camp was negligible [...]. He does not admit that officially, and he will never rectify the errors in his article. He researched Treblinka on his own and never managed to discover anything. His subordinates, “Mar” and “Jawor” [...] never let him in on

---

53 Franciszek Świtalski died in 1944.

the plans concerning the camps and gave all the information to the commanders of the powiat. So Rydel's name cannot appear in that article more than once (List M. Jakubika do J. Gozdawy-Gołębiowskiego [Letter from M. Jakubik to J. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski], n.d.).

Rydel's voice is important and must be taken into account, although one should be reminded that it concerns the entire version of events presented in Gozdawa-Gołębiowski's articles published in the *Za i Przeciw* magazine (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 1973a, 1973b, 1973c), and not just the question of the Kosów Lacki unit of the Home Army delivering firearms to the camp. The commander does not call the attack on Treblinka into question, although Jakubik's account might indicate that, as the chief of the outpost closest to the camp, he knew nothing of the operation.

Jakubik recommended another contact to Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, instead of Rydel. In his opinion, the right person was Czesław Pogorzelski "Jawor", who was in charge of counter-intelligence in "Łasica". Jakubik also adds:

He will accept everything, if you refer to me and tell him what to testify to confirm your article. He is a true Home Army soldier, despite his working-class background (his father was friends with Julian Marchlewski) (List M. Jakubika do J. Gozdawy-Gołębiowskiego [Letter from M. Jakubik to J. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski], n.d.).<sup>54</sup>

Further in that letter, Jakubik instructs the historian who and in what role should be mentioned in the article about the Treblinka II camp. These instructions are somewhat amusing, considering that none of these persons played a significant role in observing or reconnoitring the camp. Jakubik accredited them with tasks he invented himself. For instance, about Antoni Zacierka, aide to the commander of the Sokołów District, "it can be written that he was interested in Treblinka and cooperated with «Przebój»". He contacted us. He will be very happy" etc. (List M. Jakubika do J. Gozdawy-Gołębiowskiego [Letter from M. Jakubik to J. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski], n.d.).<sup>55</sup> Therefore, too many doubts arise regarding the version presented in *Za i Przeciw* to recognize it as true and conduct a detailed analysis.

54 According to Jakubik, apart from Ząbecki – whose role he could not question – the greatest service to figuring out Treblinka was rendered by: Czesław Pogorzelski "Jawor", Teodor Simiński "Mar" and Antoni Żuber "Łada".

55 See also a vivid account of the Kosów Home Army's and Marian Jakubik's own actions (Jakubik, 1973).

Undoubtedly, the Home Army soldiers from Kosów had a good understanding of what happened around the camp, not least because they were active closest to Treblinka, they met groups of Jewish workers, remained in contact with the camp staff, etc. However, it is now difficult to determine what they really did to help the extermination camp. It is highly unlikely that such a small unit was able to handle as many dangerous tasks as Jakubik boasted after the war and that they could be carried out on such a large scale. Moreover, it is regrettable that Gozdawa-Gołębiowski believed in “Jaśmin’s” version. He only verified the issue of firearm deliveries, which may also be untrue, even though it was confirmed by the commander of Home Army soldiers who transferred the weapons.

### Józef Worowski about the “Parowóz” and “Obóz” operations

The account outlining the underground activity of railway workers was drawn up in 1958 (Worowski, 1958), so it should not be associated with the publication associated with the anti-Semitic campaign (Worowski, 1968).<sup>56</sup> Worowski directly participated in meetings concerning an attack on the camp. Like in Rażmowski’s account, information about the Polish underground’s increased interest in the camp in 1942 is already mentioned at the beginning. Yet there was general awareness of the great difficulties associated with counteracting the mass murder in Treblinka:

There was one plan of action on everyone’s lips: destroying this ultimate example of human sadism. Destroying – yes, but this was not easy to execute, particularly in our circumstances, as for it to succeed, there would have to be an armed uprising in the camps (Worowski, 1958, p. 69).<sup>57</sup>

According to Worowski, the overarching goal of the underground forces was destroying the camp, particularly the gas chambers, and “liberating at least part of the Jews that had been imprisoned there to be gassed.” However, this task exceeded the possibilities of the Sokółów District, so all plans were taken over by the Home Army High Command. Unfortunately, the account in question makes no mention of the identity of decision-makers from Warsaw. Nevertheless, it provides many details about the role of local underground structures that took part in reconnoitring the area.

---

<sup>56</sup> These memoirs were used in the 1968 anti-Jewish smear campaign, possibly with the author’s consent, yet this does not depreciate their value and credibility in any way, since they were written many years beforehand.

<sup>57</sup> In his unpublished memoirs, Worowski confuses the names of the camps: he refers to Treblinka I as the death camp and Treblinka II as the work camp.



To the best of Worowski's knowledge, intelligence agents from Sokołów and Ostrów districts were involved in the reconnaissance, as well as underground railway workers. The initial assumption was that once the Jewish revolt broke out:

a wild steam engine was to be launched onto the gate via a siding leading to the camp, which was supposed to break the gate, discontinue electricity in the entanglements and cause even greater confusion and panic among the German camp guards (Worowski, 1958, p. 69).

At the same time, partisan units were to join the action, meant to enable Jews to set fire to camp equipment (gas chambers, weapon warehouses, etc.) and help them escape beyond the Bug river. Worowski, who took part in talks on the subject, states that this plan was given the code name "Parowóz" [Steam Engine]. Although it was never implemented, railway workers took part in subsequent preparatory stages, this time without Worowski's participation (Worowski, 1958, p. 69).

Further talks with higher military authorities were attended by Ząbecki, who gave Worowski a detailed account of his meetings with representatives of the Command:

In March 1943, head of the Sokołów railway troops invited him to a confidential talk to Sokołów. There, he was taken to the apartment of the man's brother, who lived in the area belonging to the sugar factory. In the brother's apartment, "Jozuba" met several men he did not know. These were representatives of the Warsaw Home Army Command. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss destroying the Treblinka death camp. For the purpose of this action, those present at the meeting planned to establish contact with Jews in the death camp and present them with our plan, including a revolt in the camp (Worowski, 1958, pp. 70–71).

During the debate, it was decided that contact with Jews would be established by "Jozuba" and a teacher working in one of the neighbouring villages, whose name is unknown (Czarkowski, 1989, p. 60).<sup>58</sup> They would

---

58 The teacher observing the camp is recalled by Ryszard Czarkowski. His interlocutor, Waclaw Jakubik, gave the following account: "My wife comes from Bolejów. At one point, her family was visited by a cousin who worked as a teacher. He was intent on seeing what was happening in Treblinka. So I took him there. We went to the forest, he was looking through binoculars, he showed me the death camp too. We did not look for a long time; we were scared of being noticed and shot" (Czarkowski, 1989, p. 60). It ought to be stressed here that none of the author's

also be in charge of drawing plans of the camps, which were soon made. Many people worked on these plans in the field, for instance “Śliwa”, who forwarded the results of his reconnaissance to Stanisław Siwek, nom de guerre “Czardasz” – train dispatcher at the Małkinia station. The preparations were supervised by Tadeusz Nogal, nom de guerre „Śmigoń”, soldier of the 8<sup>th</sup> railway company (Worowski, 1958, pp. 73, 76).<sup>59</sup>

Contact with Jewish prisoners was established when they left the camp area to work. It took a few such meetings for the Jews to accept the general plan, referred to by the Home Army as “Obóz” [Camp]. They knew that on the day of the operation, the Treblinka crew were to consume poisoned bread, milk and beer provided from Kosów Lacki. Worowski underlines that Ząbecki’s meetings with prisoners were irregular and accidental. He made four such contacts in total, and then the relationship broke off. However, the author of this testimony failed to mention when exactly these talks were held (Worowski, 1958, pp. 71–72). It ought to be mentioned that Rażmowski also stated that such contacts would break off and be re-established again. Yet this is as far as similarities go.

Worowski’s account makes no mention of an armed action. He claims the revolt in the camp broke out without the Polish underground’s knowledge. As he writes, in this situation:

it was too late to organize armed support on our part, all the more so as the fights were really short – they took about one hour. As a result of the revolt, around a thousand Jews from the working group managed to escape the camp, and then – as it was planned with “Jozuba” – they went towards the Bug river through marshes and brushwood. A great number of Jews died in combat and during the escape attempt (Worowski, 1958, p. 73).

So this is another version without an armed attack of Polish underground forces. Yet, like in Rażmowski’s account, we have “Śliwa’s” unit here. “Śliwa” accidentally found himself in the vicinity of Głina village with his men hailing from Ostrów, because he received an order from “Nieczuja” that this was where he was supposed to come to train his men in combat. According to Worowski, only then did the local Home Army unit become involved in the operation – “Śliwa” apparently received an order to capture the village and secure the Jews’ escape, yet this is not what in fact happened. According to the commander himself, he was surprised by the presence of both Germans and Jews – so he could not

---

interlocutors confirmed the Home Army’s participation in the revolt (see also: Kopówka, Rytel-Andrianik, 2011).

59 When the Treblinka revolt took place, Nogal was in KL Auschwitz.

act upon orders (Relacja Stanisława Siwka [Stanisław Siwek's account], 6 February 1973, 1973).

Worowski continues to argue that the village of Glina was crucial for the operation's success, as this was the only place where the river could be crossed. The ensuing close combat with the German troops was described in detail as follows:

Following the Jewish revolt in the Treblinka death camp, the German authorities mobilized all of their armed forces stationed in the vicinity, such as the Wehrmacht, gendarmes, Gestapo, even German railway guards from Małkinia. Judging by the strategic action of the German armed forces, one ought to assume that their main goal was to stop Jews from escaping beyond the Bug river, since they threw all their strength to fill the right bank of the river that was opposite the camp: from the village of Glina, they stretched their cordon along the river up to the forest administration region, and they also occupied a hut of a fisherman named Przeżożny, located on the left bank of the Bug. [...] "Śliwa's" unit held on to the village for three hours, until – in the face of the enemy holding an advantage, both in terms of equipment and numbers – he was forced to retreat from the village under cover of the night (Worowski, 1958, p. 75).

It is unlikely for "Śliwa's" unit to have remained on the battle post for as long as three hours; the village need not have been strategically important either. The commander himself mentioned a shooting that could not have inflicted any substantial damage to the Germans. This stage of "Treblinka Operation" is portrayed differently by Rażmowski, who underlines "Śliwa's" surprise at the events unfolding before his eyes (Głównia, Rażmowski, n.d., vol. II, p. 186).

Concluding his narrative about attempted attacks on the death camp, Worowski stressed that his perspective is narrowed down to the contribution of railway workers to destroying Treblinka, and any knowledge about Ząbecki and Siwek's activity was provided by themselves. He did not personally participate in the partisan units' preparations to attack the camp, which might explain why he gave a mistaken date of the revolt.<sup>60</sup> A side note would be in order here: in light of what is presented by Worowski, after the war "Śliwa" too tried to exaggerate the extent of his aid to Jews. However, in the 1970s he was already more careful and did not uphold the account that he gave in 1950s (Worowski, 1958, p. 76).

60 Worowski provided the wrong date of when the Treblinka revolt broke out. He claimed it started on 21 August.

## Intelligence work of Franciszek Ząbecki

Ząbecki's recollections of his involvement in plans concerning Treblinka as a representative of railway workers active in the Home Army is probably the only story of this kind that is corroborated by documents on his intelligence work, which he himself preserved and presented before the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland right after the war. He then took part in four trials of German Nazi criminals, including testifying against Franz Stangl, the commandant of Treblinka (Marczewska, Ważniewski, 1968, p. 129). In any case, the Main Commission knew about the intelligence operations of the Home Army almost from the very beginning, and Ząbecki was not its only source of information. For example, in February 1948, Henryk Mściwój Radziszewski, the "head of the Home Army intelligence for the Radzymin powiat and parts of Węgrów and Ostrów Mazowiecka poviats", presented his achievements to the Jewish Historical Institute, which cooperated closely with the Commission.<sup>61</sup>

Ząbecki wrote two accounts of his memories, which do not differ significantly in the way he presents his contacts with the Jewish resistance within the camp.<sup>62</sup> He wrote extensively and in detail about the intelligence work and the preparations for the military operation in Treblinka in the spring of 1943. He published one account in *Więź* magazine (Ząbecki, 1972), and another one in his book titled *Wspomnienia dawne i nowe* [Memoirs, old and new] (Ząbecki, 1977).

In both accounts, Ząbecki reported that he held direct conversations with an accidentally encountered Jewish prisoner, Jakub Wiernik,<sup>63</sup> although this claim has not been confirmed by any Jewish testimony. Therefore, this element of his story leaves some doubts, just as Rażmowski's revelations about Grodzicki initiating contacts with Jews. However, this single element does not depreciate the entirety of Ząbecki's account, which provides many names and details, and his intelligence work concerning transports of Jews was – as has already been mentioned

<sup>61</sup> Henryk Mściwój Radziszewski (b. 1911) stated that the Home Army intelligence prepared reports on all train traffic, except for the passenger lines. He claimed that in the case of Treblinka, the record was kept on the basis of a special command. This task was performed by railway workers: "The surveillance had to be conducted 24/7, without interruptions." Information concerning transports of people had to include data concerning departure points and the number of persons transported. Information points were located at junction and other stations. Radziszewski reported that 3 million Jews were killed in Treblinka according to the Home Army's calculations (Relacja Henryka Mściwoja Radziszewskiego [Henryk Mściwój Radziszewski's account], n.d.).

<sup>62</sup> Dariusz Libionka drew attention to some discrepancies (Libionka, 2011, p. 482).

<sup>63</sup> Jankiel Wiernik, who wrote down his own memories shortly after the end of the war, was one of the prisoners of Treblinka II (Wiernik, 1944).

– confirmed by the preserved documents (Ząbecki, 1972, p. 120; Ząbecki, 1977, p. 82).<sup>64</sup>

Aside from Ząbecki's two accounts, an opinion on the railwayman's war activity was also formulated by Franciszek Pieniak, nom de guerre "Przebój", deputy commander of the Sokołów District (Oświadczenie świadka Franciszka Pieniaka z 14 lutego 1967 roku [Franciszek Pieniak's witness statement of 14 February 1967], 1967). It was written for the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację) in 1967 and seems to be closest to the truth. Pieniak states that Ząbecki joined the Union of Armed Struggle on 1 April 1941. He imprecisely defined Ząbecki's membership in the railway workers' resistance organization describing it as "zwz-ак Railwaymen Group" headed by Robert Dąbrowski, a train station manager from Sokołów Podlaski. The actual name of that railway unit was the 8<sup>th</sup> railway company, but this detail is not important.

When Ząbecki became a traffic dispatcher at the Treblinka station on 22 May 1941, the Sokołów District ordered him to draw up a map of the extermination camp. As part of his work for the underground resistance, he was also supposed to collect all available information about the movements of German troops on the Bug river and about military rail transports. As stated by Pieniak, the railwayman personally took the reports to the head of the Fifth Department of the District Staff, Joachim Muklewicz, nom de guerre "Soplica", or to Bronisław "Wajda" Plechowski, both of whom issued instructions and orders for Ząbecki. Stanisław Kropiwnicki, nom de guerre "Biegun", was one of the couriers transporting messages between the two. According to Pieniak, the plan of the camp was used in the first attack on Treblinka, which was to have taken place in March 1943, and was used in the operation of 2 August 1943. However, Pieniak's statement does not in any way suggest that Ząbecki had any contacts with Jews. The commander focused solely on the fact of drawing up the plan and on Ząbecki's activities within the Home Army, the scope of which was not as broad as Ząbecki himself presented in his memoirs. It seems, therefore, that Ząbecki's role was mostly limited to intelligence work.

---

64 Teresa Prekerowa included Ząbecki among authors who cannot be fully trusted. Euphemistically, she wrote the following about the stationmaster's memories: "There is no doubt that [...] Ząbecki took authentic events as his starting point. However, he condensed them too much, and by removing all darker elements, painted an unlikely picture" (Prekerowa, 1993, p. 108). Indeed, his story only contains Poles who heroically helped Jews in the Treblinka area, although many Jewish accounts and the Home Army's sources contradict it. In this sense, the story he presented does not reflect the truth. Prekerowa did not comment on Ząbecki's alleged meetings with Wiernik, but noted her doubts concerning, for example, the Home Army's allegedly widespread aid actions, including helping escapees from Treblinka cross the Bug River, as well as Ząbecki's claim that numerous railwaymen and their families provided water to transported Jews.

Before discussing important documents concerning the Polish underground resistance's interest in the extermination camp, it should be noted that at the time when Dariusz Libionka (2007) was writing his work, the abundant files collected by Gozdawa-Gołębiowski were not yet available to historians. Currently, his research legacy can be found in the Central Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych – AAN). Before these archival materials were made available to the public, the results of Gozdawa-Gołębiowski's research on Treblinka II had often been met with certain scepticism, all the more so because of his habit of not disclosing his sources in writing, which was partly motivated by the trend of avoiding detailed footnotes in historical texts, which prevailed during the Polish People's Republic and in the early 1990s.

Analysis of his research legacy reveals that Gozdawa-Gołębiowski used the resources of the former Central Military Archives (Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe – CAW), copying materials kept in that collection. He also managed to obtain original Home Army documents from its former members (AAN, AGG, ref. 37, n.d., ff. 96–97; AAN, AGG, ref. 40, n.d., f. 1; AAN, AGG, ref. 41, n.d., f. 4). The material he gathered, as well as other sources, indicate that the Polish underground resistance not only showed interest in the extermination camp, but even planned to attack it. However, he had no archival materials proving that the attack had in fact taken place.<sup>65</sup>

Initiating an armed attack on Treblinka required a lot of preparation from the resistance members. They would have to not only know the area inside out, but also have detailed knowledge about the camp. Thus, the verification of sources should begin with the question of reconnaissance and planning, before the document concerning the attack itself is identified.

The most important files relative to reconnoitring Treblinka are the documents which Ząbecki submitted in 1945 to the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland. It seems that they have not been taken into account by researchers interested in this matter at all, even though they constitute evidence of the extermination process that had been in place since August 1942. They consist of the following elements: Treblinka station timetables, telegrams sent by the Railway

---

65 It should be noted that Franciszek Ząbecki himself wrote in his memoirs that many intelligence agents visited the area surrounding the camp, asking for details. One could even get an impression that he was critical of this increased interest; on the other hand, he was afraid of snoopers. Therefore, when questioned by various new people, he would answer evasively: "I did my best to avoid answering, referring to my ignorance and lack of interest in the matter, and above all, to the fact I had no opportunity to obtain such information and it involved great risk" (Ząbecki, 1977, p. 58).

Directorates to Treblinka station, lists of train carriages with Jewish transports, as well as waybills and duplicates of military waybills. In total, his collection consists of 77 documents.<sup>66</sup> Among other things, these materials were the source of the underground resistance's knowledge of the mass nature of the murders, because Jews transported to the camp never returned.<sup>67</sup>

**Table 2. Telegrams sent by the Railway Directorates to the Treblinka station (excerpt from Franciszek Zqbecki's archive)**

Railway Directorate	Telegram date	Content
Kraków	20, 22, 24 and 26 August 1942	Refer to four trains (Pkr code) from Kielce.
Königsberg	16 February 1943	Refers to the transfer of "empty carriages of the Pj.163 train, whereas the train, already as Lp. Pj. 164, is to be delivered to Grodno from where [...], as a filled train (Pj.165), it is to be directed to Treblinka."
Warsaw	18 June 1943	Refers to a train with Jews from the north-east on 19 August 1943

Source: AAN, AGG, ref. 42, n.d., unnumbered folios, 4 photocopies.

Another piece of archival material is a document of the Military Division of the Warsaw Area from the Węgrów powiat, which Grabowski omitted, although he must have read it. In the summer of 1943, intelligence agents from Węgrów noted one of the transports that arrived on 19 July. According to the reporting person, the sick and injured were shot and 600 healthy men were sent to the labour camp. Others were sent to the extermination camp. The intelligence agents also observed the camp's security and the process of incinerating bodies. These were described as follows:

- 66 The author managed to access documents of the Kedyw, an organization that had watched the camp from the very beginning, which had not been yet explored by historians. In one Kedyw report, most likely from the Warsaw division, for 22-23 August 1942, the author, who referred to himself as "Rybak" and represented the "Niedźwiedz" brigade, wrote the following in the "Important matters" section: "One of my people, who recently returned from Treblinka, received an offer of cooperation from doctor Engelhardt, a railway inspector in the Ostbahn Directorate on Chałubińskiego Street. On 28<sup>th</sup> of the month in question, I gave him an oral instruction to accept the offer and continue to notify me of any orders received. I submit this information for approval" (CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.3.29.2, 1943., f. 13).
- 67 The author relies on photocopied materials of the Main Commission for Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland from the trial of Ludwik Fischer (Proces Ludwika Fischera [Ludwik Fischer's trial], n.d.) and the Treblinka camp case (Sprawa obozu Treblinka [Treblinka camp case], n.d.). (See also: AAN, AGG, ref. 42, n.d., unnumbered folios, 4 photocopies).

Recently, work on the camp's defences has begun. The barbed wire fence was raised to the height of 8 metres and the form-work in the fence was also raised, obscuring the interior of the camp. Old and fresh corpses are currently incinerated on a special scaffolding using automatic blowers. Ashes are transferred to the labour camp (AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-23, 1943, f. 9).

Moreover, another reporting officer from the Sokołów powiat, whose report was also omitted by Grabowski, even informed about a temporary suspension of the extermination process in Treblinka, which indicates that the situation in the camp was constantly being monitored: "It has been almost closed for several months." He also reported the number of Jewish "specialists" held there, estimating the camp population to be 2,000. In addition, he observed "new pits" being dug and noted that "explosives were probably placed under the external guard post in the camp" (AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-23, 1943, f. 24).<sup>68</sup>

Even more detailed notes were made following an ordered intelligence operation focused on reconnaissance of the camp. They can also be found in the archive of Gozdawa-Gołębiowski. In a report from the Węgrów District of 3 June 1943, addressed to the Warsaw Subregion, Franciszek "Janicki" Andreas, head of the Stoczek Węgrowski unit, wrote extensively about Treblinka I and II camps as well as the possible ways of accessing them. He included information on recent transports, crews, the number of prisoners and the nature of their work, the situation in the camps, etc. He wrote the following about accessing the camps:

5 new observation towers were built in camp no. 2. There are now 10 obs[ervation] towers in total. Anti-tank barriers were placed around the camp and bound with barbed wire. The distance between these barriers and the wires is between 30 and 60 m. In addition, they're putting mines around the gates and along the railway track in front of camp no. 2. The towers in camp no. 2 consist of: 2 towers in the north, 5 towers in the south, and 3 towers inside. [...] At night, guards descend from towers to fire posts – as depicted in the sketch (AAN, AGG, ref. 40, n.d., f. 1).

In addition, Andreas reported various kinds of details. Not only did he provide information on Ukrainian guards, but also disclosed sources of the camp staff's food and beer. He learned that the camp commandant

---

68 Although the report is from August, it only contains information from July.



had been “on holiday for a week” and saw an ambulance driving from Ostrów Mazowiecka to the camp every day. He concluded the report by stating the following: “They became more watchful, so it is difficult to reach the camps. They shoot from afar” (AAN, AGG, ref. 40, n.d., f. 1). There is no doubt, therefore, that the camp’s defences were important for the reporting officers.

Regardless of the local reconnaissance, Kedyw concluded that a detailed plan of destroying the camp was required. Such plan was developed in June 1943 in the Eastern Subregion of the Warsaw Area. The document signed by Adam Kompowski, nom de guerre “Adam”, was sent to the head of the Area’s Kedyw, Franciszek Hamankiewicz. It proposed the following actions against the occupier:

Please find attached a unified plan of sabotage and diversion actions for all districts. For the upcoming months for the “Słownik” district. Information regarding actions in this district are valid, with some changes, also for other districts.

In particular, 1) for “Mewa” – a) burning the rest of wood wool and b) of the barracks occupied by the Kalmyks 2) for “Sęp” – a) burning army barracks in Sokołów and Kosów, b) destruction of the power plant in Sokołów and Kosów, c) destr.[uction] of camp no. 1 for Poles in Treblinka (on the spec.[ial] order of the A.[rea] Com.[mander]), d) destr.[uction] of camp no. 2 for Jews in Treblinka (also on the spec.[ial] order of the A.[rea] Com.[mander] [...]) (AAN, AGG, ref. 41, n.d., f. 4).

The fact that the plan entered the implementation phase is evidenced by another document which the author of this paper managed to locate in the Central Military Archives of the Military Historical Office. It was included in Kedyw materials of the Home Army High Command and is signed by “Lawina”, i.e. the Home Army commander Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski. The document in question is *Meldunek z odcinka walki konspiracyjnej za sierpień 1943 roku* [Report on the underground struggle for August 1943] prepared by the Home Army High Command’s Kedyw headed by General August Emil “Nil” Fieldorf. It was drawn up on 15 September 1943. The report covered Warsaw, Kraków, Silesia, Lublin, Białystok and Radom Regions (in the order stated in the source) and documented subsequent actions carried out by the underground resistance. The first section titled “Diversion” mentioned “an attack on guards of the Jewish camp” (*Meldunek z odcinka walki konspiracyjnej za sierpień 1943 roku* [Report on the underground struggle for August 1943], 1943).<sup>69</sup>

69 The document comes from the archives of doctor Zofia Maternowska, nom de guerre “Przemysł”, which she submitted to CAW.

Considering the date of the document and the sequence of descriptions of individual regions, this brief mention must refer to Treblinka. The laconic nature of information results from the fact that the entire report was general and condensed. After all, it concerned a large area and documented only the most important matters from August 1943. According to an added handwritten note, the information was sent to London through “Wera”,<sup>70</sup> i.e. the Home Army’s communication centre located in Bern, Switzerland. This means that it was deemed to be significant, as only the most important information relevant to the occupied country was transmitted to the UK. Thus, it is likely that the abovementioned event represented a significant underground resistance action, namely the attack on Treblinka II.

Unfortunately, the document does not contain information on the identity of those in charge of the operation in Treblinka, that is the specific Home Army High Command’s Kedyw units that participated in the operation. Was Raźmowski’s unit among them? For the time being, this question must remain unanswered. Certainly, Raźmowski did not organize the operation or plan it personally etc., as he wrote after the war. The mention in the report also confirms that Home Army soldiers only played an auxiliary role in the revolt, because there is no information about the destruction of the camp, just the attack on the watchtowers. On the other hand, this is also a proof of cooperation between Polish and Jewish resistance groups, as the presence of Home Army soldiers near the camp could not have been accidental. Firing at the guardhouse must have been agreed upon earlier with the rebels. Of course, this seemingly key report written by Bór-Komorowski does not prove the truthfulness of details contained in post-war accounts, but it confirms that there was indeed an armed attack on a Jewish camp in August 1943, and at that time, Treblinka II was the only possible target. It should be added that another Kedyw report (Z odcinka walki cywilnej za 1943 rok [On civilian resistance for 1943], 1943) contains general information that 656 prisoners were set free at that time in the course of retaliation and self-defence activities. This suggests that the number may include Treblinka II prisoners, although there is no proof of that.

It seems that the Węgrów-Sokołów underground resistance did not participate in large numbers in the Kedyw’s operation. It is possible that participation was limited only to selected individuals, perhaps “internal sabotage and diversion cells” from the area. It cannot be ruled out that “Poraj’s” soldiers were also among them. The goal was probably to maintain strict confidentiality, which is why even the Węgrów Office of Information and Propaganda (BIP) of the Government Delegation for Poland,

---

70 “Wera” or “Panorama” is the code name of the military base (Grabowski, 2003, p. 76).

part of civilian rather than military underground resistance, did not have full knowledge of the facts.

The mention of events in Treblinka II, omitted by researchers of Holocaust studies, was included in the 31 August 1943 report of the Government Delegation's Węgrów Office of Information and Propaganda. The complete description reads as follows:

#### Treblinka labour camp

On 8 August, a large group of Jews escaped from Treblinka. This escape was planned by the Jews in Treblinka, not only those who were the "patients" of the death camp, but also those who had held various permanent functions in the camp almost from the very beginning. They created two battle groups. On 8 August, taking advantage of the fact that 15 Ukrainians from the camp staff went to bathe in the Bug, they proceeded with their plan. When a sign was given, one group attacked the barrack with weapons, killing several Ukrainians. Once it was wrecked, they began to destroy the camp's equipment, setting fire to the barracks. The few Ukrainians who were on the premises of the Jewish camp at that point did not put up any resistance. Only machine gun crews on the watchtowers struck back by opening fire. A group of about 1,500 Jews took part in the escape. Many of them died during the attempt, and the rest dispersed in the surrounding area. On the very same day, a strong police force was called to the camp and a manhunt was carried out in the area surrounding Treblinka. About 120 Jews were shot dead during the operation (Sprawozdanie węgrowskiemu BIP Delegatury z 31 sierpnia 1943 roku [Report of the Węgrów Office of Information and Propaganda of the Government Delegation of 31 August 1943], 1943).<sup>71</sup>

Particularly noteworthy is the information on the existence of two centres of Jewish resistance, as well as on the course of the action – this knowledge had to come from direct witnesses. This is important because the Government Delegation's reports, which were not prepared by the local underground resistance, were inconsistent in their presentation of

---

71 As is evident, the report included two errors: the revolt broke out on 2 rather than 8 August, and Treblinka II was not a labour camp, but an extermination camp. The rapporteur uses the names inconsistently – referring to Treblinka both as a labour and a death camp. It seems that the reports drawn up by the civil authorities of the Polish Underground State should be approached with particular prudence (see also: AAN, AK, ref. 203/X-70, 1943, f. 74).

the circumstances of the revolt – information was generalized and the details concerning the existence of two groups were not provided, e.g. *Bunt pomocniczej grupy żydowskiej w Treblince* [The revolt of an auxiliary Jewish group in Treblinka] (Marczewska, Ważniewski, 1968, pp. 155–156; AAN, DRK, ref. 202/I-42, 1943, f. 65; AAN, DRK, ref. 202/I-34, 1943, ff. 171–172; AAN, DRK, ref. 202/III-7, 1943, f. 143; AAN, DRK, ref. 202/III-8, 1943, f. 217; AAN, DRK, ref. 202/III-11, 1943, f. 19; AAN, DRK, ref. 202/III-123, 1943, f. 12).

After the prisoners' escape, the camp remained of interest to the underground resistance. In September, Kedyw was informed, also by sources from the Węgrów powiat, that all construction work in the death camp had been discontinued. Grabowski did not include this in his works. As reported, according to both Germans and Ukrainians, the camp was to be closed and rye was to be sown on the area. The closing of the extermination camp was a source of worry for the "Ukrainian formations" in particular – members of the Ukrainian troops were preparing to flee. Incidentally, it was known that some of them took part in the liquidation of the Białystok ghetto in August of that year. The image of the fall of the camp was complemented by information that two Ukrainians took their lives with rifles and the deputy commandant of Treblinka I, who was also the commandant of the death camp, left the camp at the end of September, his destination unknown (AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-23, 1943, f. 53). On the other hand, a report from Ostrów informed in September that "the military unit guarding the Treblinka camp increased its alertness – sentries composed of 2 people armed with rifles and hand grenades were used" (AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-23, 1943, f. 54). The same document also noted that 24 armed Ukrainians escaped to the surrounding forests and later headed east. This information also proved unimportant for many Holocaust researchers who did not include any such mention in their work, although it indicated the Home Army's continued interest in the fate of the extermination camp even after the revolt.

The author also managed to find two interconnected documents that relate to the Polish plans to attack Treblinka after the prisoners' escape on 2 August. Information about the camp appeared in inspection reports for two districts (Sokołów and Węgrów) which were probably prepared in October 1943 for the commander of the Warsaw Area, Albin "Łaszcz" Skroczyński by an unidentified person referred to as "Pan Jelita". "Pan Jelita" visited the Sokołów and Węgrów Districts in the autumn of that year and, during the inspection, provided many instructions to be implemented by the combat forces of the districts in the event of a general uprising. At that time, considerable attention was paid to reconnoitring the newly established German training camps for Georgians and Kalmyks in Kosów Lacki and Ceranów. They contained a large number of enemy forces – about 800 soldiers in the first training camp and 600 in the second one, which, perhaps, should be linked to the escape of prisoners from Treblinka. Their presence required some changes in the distribution of

Polish forces in the Sokołów district in the event of a general uprising, which is why the abovementioned “Jelita” planned:

Therefore, several platoons should be issued a secondary order to take over or isolate these camps. The order would be carried out by platoons if Małkinia could manage without them or if the forces assigned to Treblinka were too large in relation to the enemy stationed there at the time of the uprising (CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.31.29 III, 1943, f. 25).

In the context of Treblinka, the forces in question are the ones from the best-armed Węgrów District. According to the planned division of forces in the area in the event of a general uprising, one of the main strike units, consisting of three platoons and additionally one machine-gun platoon, was to be directed to Treblinka.<sup>72</sup> These plans were of course far-reaching, and, as we know, have never been implemented. Still, they clearly show that both Treblinka camps were of interest to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Operational Division of the Warsaw Area High Command and that they were to be destroyed in the event of an uprising.

### Gaps in archival records

The analysis of the issue of Polish aid for Treblinka II proved to require examining the gaps in archival records. This is a very significant aspect, because their proper assessment is necessary to determine why documents produced in the relevant subregion and area make no mention of the Polish attack on the extermination camp.

The question of missing records is included in this article also because two researchers writing about the Holocaust in Poland (Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka) have assumed there is no data on the Polish attack on the camp, in spite of extant reports documenting the events of August of that year. This assumption is not true. Although the area documents have been preserved, the same cannot be said about the reports on sabotage and diversion activities which Kedyw of the area and subregion prepared for the relevant districts for the period of July–August 1943. The August reports of the Military Division of the Warsaw Area Staff, to which Grabowski refers in his works, are also missing. What is more, the files that have been preserved, e.g. the documents of the Office for Information

<sup>72</sup> The other strike units were located in Węgrów, Małkinia and Brok, and the remaining forces were to serve as reserve for the district commander (CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.31.29 II, 1943, f. 23).

and Propaganda (BIP) of the Government Delegation, did not come from the resistance fighters who had anything to do with the operation. As already noted above, BIP's information of September 1943 concerning Treblinka included the wrong date of the revolt (8 August instead of 2 August) (AAN, DRC, ref. 202-II-23, f. 1 and f. 36; Meldunek Adama z 17 grudnia 1943 roku [Adam's report of 17 December 1943], 1943).<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the only document that explicitly mentions the attack on the camp watchtowers is the report of the Home Army High Command's Kedyw from August (Meldunek z odcinka walki konspiracyjnej za sierpień 1943 roku [Report on the underground struggle for August 1943], 1943). Thus, it can be assumed that this was the organization which established contact with the prisoners and provided aid.

Kedyw of the subregion wrote with dissatisfaction about the aforementioned gaps in the records, which resulted from the fact that local forces stopped submitting data for the reports. This problem was first mentioned in the report on the period of 29 August–30 September, and then in the report of Folwark-Pokrzywa prepared in September 1943. In the first report, Adam Kompowski noted the following:

I have established that diversion activities have decreased recently in the Ostrów Mazowiecka, Sokołów and Węgrów Districts, or, alternatively, that they are carried out, but are not reported to Pokrzywa. Over the last two months, Adam received no reports from these districts, although, as far as Adam knows, the reports were sent to the districts from the field. The announcements in "Information Bulletin" No. 35 of 2 September this year indicate that the operations are carried out, but Adam has not received reports on their execution [...]. However, the reports on sabotage and diversion activities should, once they are approved by the district com. [manders], reach Adam, who in turn reports on the gist of the matters to the District Com. [mander] and submits a report to Pokrzywa (Raport z akcji boj. i dyw.-sab. za czas od 29 sierpnia do 20 września 1943 roku [Report on combat operations and diversion and sabotage operations for 29 August–20 September], 1943).<sup>74</sup>

73 The report for 29 August–30 September only mentions that Kedyw forces (62 people) destroyed the equipment in the collective farms (Liegenschaft) of the Sokołów district during the night of 8/9 September 1943. However, there is no information on the events taking place in the district at that time (AAN, IH PAN, ref. s/108, 1943).

74 The aforementioned issue of "Information Bulletin" contained a short text titled *Bitwa niemiecko-niemiecka* [German-German Battle] describing many successful attacks on properties managed by Germans in the Ostrów Mazowiecka District, which ridiculed the occupier (*Bitwa niemiecko-niemiecka*, 1943).

An identical text, indicating the districts of interest for this work, was included in the Folwark-Pokrzywa report (Sprawozdanie Folwarku-Pokrzywy za okres 25 lipca–31 sierpnia 1943 roku [Report of Folwark-Pokrzywa for 25 July–31 August 1943], 1943).

The lack of reports resulted from the conflict between the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Inspectorate in the Eastern Subregion of the Home Army, Bronisław “Nieczuja” Patlewicz, who became responsible for supervising first the Sokołów Podlaski District and then, in May 1943, the Districts of Ostrów Mazowiecka and Węgrów, and Adam Kompowski, the commander of Kedyw in the Eastern Subregion. Already in March 1943, Kompowski, offended by the lack of cooperation in the area of Sokołów and Ostrów, vented his anger in a report, emphasizing that:

despite the fact that the dates were set several times, I have not been contacted by the commander of the district in Sęp (Sokołów) and Opoczniak (Ostrów Mazowiecka and Małkinia), because the district commanders or other representatives of the Struga subregion (such as inspector “Nieczuja”) did not arrive at the meeting point. This kind of attitude of district commands towards meeting agreements, aside from the general unreliability and forcing me, my deputy and other people to wait unnecessarily on the spot, losing time, etc., constitutes a direct obstacle to organizing diversion posts in very risky locations of Sokołów and Małkinia and adopting a faster pace of work... [...]. Considering the situation, I am asking for issuance of ordinances (possibly, as very urgent) that are necessary for me to finally get in touch with “Sęp” and “Opoczniak” (AAN, IH PAN, ref. S/102, n.d., f. 1).<sup>75</sup>

In June 1943, “Nieczuja” wrote a several-page-long report to the commander of the Eastern Subregion, Hieronim “Dyrektor” Suszczyński, in which he explained why Kompowski’s operations were ineffective in his area. According to the report, “internal sabotage and diversion cells” were appointed independently by “Adam”, without first asking anyone for their opinion, as a response to the “expected diversion field operation”, that is, various combat operations. “Nieczuja” claimed that the above-mentioned cells were “absorbed” by his cells in “Opoczniak” and “Sęp”. Therefore, there was no need to report on subsequent operations to Kompowski, as he was not treated as a superior in this area (AAN, AGG, ref. 37, n.d., ff. 75–80; Meldunek Adama z 27 czerwca 1943 roku dotyczący

---

<sup>75</sup> Kompowski’s more emotional stance was explained by the fact that he lived under constant threat of death. As he wrote in the same report, he managed to avoid being arrested by the Gestapo several times in the winter of 1943, both at home and at work.

„wstrzymywania samowolnego wykonywania moich rozkazów przez komendantów obwodów” [Adam’s report of 27 June 1943 regarding “arbitrary suspensions of executing my orders by district commanders”], 1943). In June 1943, “Nieczuja” critically assessed the operations of the Subregion Kedyw head, both as part of the “C” campaign whose goal was to weed out collaborators and other enemies of Poland, and in the context of the “D” campaign, i.e. diversion operations:

“Adam” [...] cannot interfere in matters that require great routine, combat experience, knowledge of the terrain and purposefulness of each performed action. All the more so because in my districts the commanders of “D” [diversion] are specially chosen captains from regular military service. I believe that the “D” campaign in the subregion should be commanded by a higher-ranking officer who has district “D” commanders at his disposal, and then directs, manages and cooperates with all the districts, and knowing the area, assesses the purposefulness of the planned operation and divides it in such a way that all the districts are burdened equally, and we do not have a repeat of the last operation, with some districts getting very involved and attracting attention of the occupier’s from neighbouring poviats, such as “Sęp” and “Opoczniak”, and others doing almost nothing (AAN, AGG, ref. 37, n.d., f. 79).

There was, however, another reason why no information was sent to Kedyw from the area in question. The silence was caused by repressions against Sokołów district inhabitants introduced in the aftermath of the Treblinka revolt. Cut off from reliable information, Kompowski described the situation as follows:

There are ongoing mass round-ups in the area in the form of blockades of entire towns and cities, combined with checking identity and picking up people – for work in Prussia, through *arbeitsamts*; and in the case of elements that are uncertain or wanted by the Gestapo, and those reluctant to provide supply quotas – to the camps. In the second half of August, in “Gorzelnia”, Jadów, Sokołów Podlaski and Siedlce were also cordoned off. The losses are substantial and they cannot be underestimated, even more so as these raids and blockades are partly a form of pacification, because Germans have killed a number of people on the spot, including the mayor of Sokołów, Staniszewski [...]. These circumstances also contributed to the delay in sending monthly reports from some districts and, therefore, I will be forced



to additionally supplement the report (Raport z akcji bojowej i sabotażowo-dywerysyjnej za czas od 26 lipca do 26 sierpnia 1943 roku [Report on combat operations and diversion and sabotage operations for 29 August–20 September], 1943).

As has already been mentioned, the submission of data to the Military Division was also interrupted. Although the report for 1–31 August 1943 has been formally preserved, it contains no information on any August events taking place in the Węgrów district, and in the case of Sokołów, it reports only events from May, June, and July. It includes the list of sabotage and diversion operations from the Sokołów district but all activity ends on 15 July. It should be emphasized that there is also no information from Sokołów powiat for September, and in the case of Węgrów, the only piece of news concerns the situation in Treblinka after the revolt. A careful reading of the materials makes the August and September gap in documents very noticeable, especially when one considers that such messages were sent regularly from other poviats (AAN, DRC, ref. 202/II-23, 1943, ff. 16–54). In subsequent reports, made in the autumn, Treblinka was no longer mentioned, as it was considered to have been liquidated as an extermination camp.

One should be very careful when reading underground resistance reports, because, as can be seen in the case of the Polish attack on Treblinka, even small nuances are of great importance. In the end, it can be concluded that rather than there being no data on the Polish participation in the revolt in the Home Army documents, there is no data on the overall activity of underground resistance forces from the area in the analysed period.

## Conclusion

The question of the Polish underground resistance's aid for Treblinka has not been thoroughly studied. On the contrary, it was treated very superficially, sometimes even as a made-up story. The narrative about it was characterized by a high degree of generalization, or else, which I regret to note, distorted by manipulation. It is particularly important to note the selective use of sources, i.e. quoting only some of their fragments while omitting far more important elements, probably in order to achieve the effect desired by the authors.

Although this work leaves many questions unanswered – foremost, we still do not know who exactly helped Treblinka Jews organize and carry out the revolt – it is the first attempt to describe the Home Army's aid for Treblinka II during the 1943 revolt. Post-war accounts were confronted with period documents. The article attempted to draw special attention to inaccuracies related to the imperfect nature of human memory and

deliberate forgeries. Analysis of the available material revealed that almost every account contains some untrue elements, which renders archival records even more important. Even though these sources contain many imperfections, they indicate that the Home Army undertook extensive operations to examine the situation in the camp and to organize military support for its Jewish prisoners.

Although we have no information on the arrangements agreed upon by the Polish underground forces and the Jewish prisoners forming the resistance movement in Treblinka, and the versions presented after the war were found to be unreliable (e.g. the version of “Poraj”), doubtful (Ząbecki) or only partially credible, there are two preserved archival documents – one written by Grot-Rowecki, and the other by Bór-Komorowski – which confirm that assistance was indeed provided. The first document contains information on the planned attack, and the second notifies of its execution. The operation was not carried out by local forces, but by the Home Army High Command’s Kedyw under August “Nil” Fieldorf. It cannot be ruled out that some local Home Army soldiers took part in the attack, certainly as a necessary, but also auxiliary force. However, it is also possible that they might not have been informed about it at all, because the operation was managed and led by the Home Army High Command’s Kedyw alone.

What is more, there exist many small notes that reveal the real degree of interest in the camp – its function, defences, staff, prisoners and their fate, both during the revolt and after this event, etc. Treblinka was also included in the Home Army’s plans for a general uprising. Therefore, in light of available materials, one cannot say that the extermination camp was a “distant” concern for the underground resistance movement or that providing military aid was “impossible”.

(transl. by Natalia Charitonow)

## Bibliography

### Published sources:

- Augustynowicz, W., Muszyński, E., Rękawek, M. (eds.) (2000). *1831 dni zmagania z hitlerowskim najeźdźcą. Kalendarium działań bojowych i dywersyjnych podokręgu Armii Krajowej Warszawa-Wschód 1.09.1939–4.09.1944*. Pruszków: Ajaks.
- Bitwa niemiecko-niemiecka (1943). *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, no. 35, p. 7.
- Charczuk, W. (2011). Fakty i mity w akcji zgrupowania Kedywu Obwodu Siedlce AK na Schnellzug mit Fronturlauberteilen – „SF-Zug nr 82” pod Borkami-Kosami 29 lutego 1944 roku, *Radzyński Rocznik Humanistyczny*, vol. 9, pp. 79–90.
- Czarkowski, R. (1989). *Cieniom Treblinki*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo MON.
- Dmowski, R. (1999). Kolej wąskotorowa w Białej Podlaskiej. Zarys historii, *Rocznik Białkopodlaski*, vol. 7, pp. 61–80.
- Dmowski, R. (2000). VI Rejon Kolejowy „Podlasie”. *Kompanie 3. i 8. Zarys organizacyjny*. in: A. Kołodziejczyk, P. Matusak (eds.), *575-lecie Sokołowa Podlaskiego* (pp. 99–107). Siedlce: IH AP.

- Głownia, J., Rażmowski, W. (1990). Akcja na obóz zagłady w Treblince. Ocalmy od zapomnienia, *Barbakan. Kwartalnik Turystyczno-Krajoznawczy Mazowsza*, no. 3/142, pp. 27–36.
- Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, J. (1973a). W obozie zagłady, *Za i Przeciw*, no. 42, pp. 16–17.
- Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, J. (1973b). Spisek, *Za i Przeciw*, no. 44, pp. 16–17.
- Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, J. (1973c). Dzień buntu, *Za i Przeciw*, no. 45, pp. 16–17, 23.
- Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, J. (1990). *Kedyw „Białowieży”*. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza.
- Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, J. (1991). Powiat węgrowski w latach okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1944. In: A. Kołodziejczyk, T. Swat (eds.), *Węgrów – dzieje miasta i okolic w latach 1441–1944* (pp. 324–370). Węgrów: Towarzystwo Miłośników Ziemi Węgrowskiej.
- Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, J. (1992). Obszar Warszawski Armii Krajowej. Studium wojskowe. Lublin: KUL.
- Grabowski, J. (2018). Powiat węgrowski. In: B. Engelking, J. Grabowski (eds.), *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 1 (pp. 382–546). Warszawa: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów.
- Grabowski, W. (2003). *Polska tajna administracja cywilna 1940–1945*. Warszawa: IPN.
- Haska, A. (2013). Julian Eliasz Chorążycy (1885–1943). *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, no. 9, pp. 245–253.
- Kopówka, E., Rytel-Andrianik, P. (2011). *Dam im imię na wieki. Polacy z okolic Treblinki ratujący Żydów*. Treblinka-Oksford: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek.
- Lewandowska, S. (1993). Powstania zbrojne w obozach zagłady w Treblince i Sobiborze, *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, vol. 35, pp. 115–127.
- Libionka, D. (2007). *Polska konspiracja wobec eksterminacji Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*. In: B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka (eds.), *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN.
- Libionka, D. (2011). *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy, opisywacze. Wokół Żydowskiego Związku Wojskowego*. Warszawa: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów.
- Marczewska, K., Ważniewski, W. (1968). Treblinka w świetle akt Delegatury Rządu RP na Kraj, *Biuletyn GKBZH*, vol. 19, pp. 129–164.
- Marszałek, J. (1993). Rozpoznanie obozów śmierci w Bełżcu, Sobiborze i Treblince przez wywiad AK i Delegaturę Rządu RP na Kraj, *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, vol. 35, pp. 36–52.
- Matusak, P. (2002). *Wywiad Związku Walki Zbrojnej Armii Krajowej 1939–1945*. Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza.
- Matusak, P. (2005). Okupacja i ruch oporu w Węgrowie 1939–1944, *Szkice Podlaskie*, no. 13, pp. 57–100.
- Piekarski, W. (1997). *Obwód Armii Krajowej Sokołów Podlaski „Sęp”, „Proso” 1939–1994*. Warszawa: Efekt.
- Prekerowa, T. (1993). Stosunek ludności polskiej do żydowskich uciekinierów z obozów zagłady w Treblince, Sobiborze i Bełżcu w świetle relacji żydowskich i polskich, *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, vol. 35, pp. 100–114.
- Rażmowski, W. (1969). Akcja Treblinka, *Dzieje Najnowsze*, no. 1, pp. 167–182.
- Rusiniak, M. (2008). *Obóz zagłady Treblinka II w pamięci społecznej (1943–1989)*. Warszawa: Neriton.
- Rybicka, H. (ed.). (2011). *Oddziały i akcje Kedywu Okręgu Warszawskiego poza Warszawą. Dokumenty z lat 1943–1944*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UW.
- Ryżewski, G. (2006). *II wojna światowa*. In: G. Ryżewski (ed.), *Sokołów Podlaski – dzieje miasta i okolic* (pp. 531–556). Sokołów Podlaski: Urząd Miasta Sokołów Podlaski.
- Skorowidz miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*. (1924), vol. IV: *Województwo lubelskie*. Warszawa: GUS.
- Wiernik, J. (1944). *Rok w Treblince*. Warszawa: Żydowska Komisja Koordynacyjna.
- Witkowski, H. (1984). *Kedyw Okręgu Armii Krajowej w latach 1943–1944*. Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Związków Zawodowych.
- Witt, K. (1970). Działalność okupanta hitlerowskiego w powiecie Sokołów Podlaski w latach 1939–1944, *Rocznik Mazowiecki*, vol. 3, pp. 221–266.
- Witt, K. (1982). *Sokołów Podlaski w latach 1939–1950*. In: J. Kazimierski (ed.), *Dzieje Sokołowa Podlaskiego i jego regionu*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Worowski, J. (1968). Akcja „Obóz”, *Za Wolność i Lud*, no. 16, pp. 6–10.
- Wójcik, M. (2018). *Treblinka 43. Bunt w fabryce śmierci*. Kraków: Znak Litera Nova.
- Ząbecki, F. (1972). Rozbicie obozu w Treblince, *Więź*, no. 4, pp. 119–124.
- Ząbecki, F. (1977). *Wspomnienia dawne i nowe*. Warszawa: PAX.

## Archival sources:

## Archiwum Akt Nowych [Central Archives of Modern Records]

Akta Jana Gozdawy-Gołębiowskiego [Records of Jan Gozdawa-Gołębiowski]  
(hereinafter: AGG)

- AAN, AGG, ref. 37. (n.d.).
- AAN, AGG, ref. 40. (n.d.).
- AAN, AGG, ref. 41. (n.d.).
- AAN, AGG, ref. 42. (n.d.).
- List M. Jakubika do J. Gozdawy-Gołębiowskiego [Letter from M. Jakubik to J. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski]. (n.d.). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Listy do S. Pogorzelskiego [Letters to S. Pogorzelski]. (n.d.). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Oświadczenie Lucjana Krajewskiego z 18 lipca 1991 roku [Lucjan Krajewski's statement of 18 July 1991]. (1991). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Oświadczenie świadka Franciszka Pieniaka z 14 lutego 1967 roku [Franciszek Pieniak's witness statement of 14 February 1967]. (1967). AAN, AGG, ref. 44, f. 1.
- Relacja Adama Przyborowskiego, 27 sierpnia 1973 roku [Adam Przyborowski's account, 27 August 1973]. (1973). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Relacja Jana Wiśniewskiego, 27 sierpnia 1943 roku [Jan Wiśniewski's account, 27 August 1943]. (1943). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Relacja Mariana Jakubika [Marian Jakubik's account]. (handwritten). (n.d.). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Relacja Mariana Oleksiaka [Marian Oleksiak's account]. (n.d.). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Relacja Mieczysława Mroza, 13 września 1973 roku [Mieczysław Mróz's account, 13 September 1973]. (1973). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Relacja S. Pogorzelskiego [S. Pogorzelski's account]. (n.d.). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Relacja Stanisława Marchela, 13 września 1973 roku [Stanisław Marchel's account, 13 September 1973]. (1973). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Relacja Stanisława Siwka, 6 lutego 1973 roku [Stanisław Siwek's account, 6 February 1973]. (1973). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.
- Relacja Stanisława Stefańczuka, 13 września 1973 roku [Stanisław Stefańczuk's account, 13 September 1973]. (1973). AAN, AGG, ref. 42, unnumbered folios.

Armia Krajowa (hereinafter: AK) [the Home Army]

- AAN, AK, ref. 203/X-68. (1943).
- AAN, AK, ref. 203/X-69. (1943).
- AAN, AK, ref. 203/X-70. (1943).
- AAN, AK, ref. 203/X-71. (1943).
- Sprawozdanie węgrzowskiego BIP Delegatury z 31 sierpnia 1943 roku [Report of the Węgrów Office of Information and Propaganda of the Government Delegation of 31 August 1943]. (1943). AAN, AK, ref. 203/X-69.
- Sprawozdanie z stanu politycznego, społecznego i narodowościowego za okres 1 czerwca–15 czerwca 1943 roku [Report on the political, social and ethnic situation for 1–15 June 1943]. (1943). AAN, AK, draft no. 2, ref. X/22, f. 45.

Delegatura Rządu na Kraj (hereinafter: DRK) [the Government Delegation for Poland]

- AAN, DRK, ref. 202/I-34. (1943).
- AAN, DRK, ref. 202/I-42. (1943).
- AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-23. (1943).
- AAN, DRK, ref. 202/II-41. (1944).
- AAN, DRK, ref. 202/III-7. (1943).
- AAN, DRK, ref. 202/III-8. (1943).
- AAN, DRK, ref. 202/III-11. (1943).
- AAN, DRK, ref. 202/III-123. (1943).
- AAN, DRK, ref. 202/X-23. (1943).

Polska Akademia Nauk, Instytut Historii w Warszawie. Zakład Systemów

Totalitarnych i Dziejów II Wojny Światowej (hereinafter: IH PAN) [Institute of History Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. Department of Totalitarian Systems and History of World War II]

- AAN, IH PAN, ref. s/102. (1943).
- AAN, IH PAN, ref. s/105. (1943).
- AAN, IH PAN, ref. s/108. (1943).
- Iwanowski, J. (n.d.). Wspomnienia partyzanta z Podlasia [Memories of a partisan fighter from Podlasie]. AAN, IH PAN, ref. s/144.
- Meldunek Adama z 17 grudnia 1943 roku [Adam's report of 17 December 1943]. (1943). AAN, IH PAN, ref. A 196/69, unnumbered folios.
- Meldunek Adama z 27 czerwca 1943 roku dotyczący „wstrzymywania samowolnego wykonywania moich rozkazów przez komendantów obwodów” [Adam's report of 27 June 1943 regarding “arbitrary suspensions of executing my orders by district commanders”]. (1943). AAN, IH PAN, ref. s/103, unnumbered folios.
- Raport z akcji boj. i dyw.-sab. za czas od 29 sierpnia do 20 września 1943 roku [Report on combat operations and diversion and sabotage operations for 29 August–20 September 1943]. (1943). AAN, IH PAN, ref. s/108.
- Raport z akcji bojowej i sabotażowo-dywersyjnej za czas od 26 lipca do 26 sierpnia 1943 roku [Report on combat operations and diversion and sabotage operations for 26 July–26 August 1943]. (1943). AAN, IH PAN, ref. 196/63, unnumbered folios.
- Skroczyński, A. (n.d.). Zarys historii Obszaru Warszawskiego zwz i AK. Relacja Albina Skroczyńskiego [Historical outline of the Warsaw Region of the Union of Armed Struggle and Home Army. Albin Skroczyński's account]. AAN, IH PAN, ref. A 178/62.
- Worowski, J. (1958). VI Rejon Kolejowy AK „Podlasie” [6th Railway Area “Podlasie” of the Home Army]. AAN, IH PAN, ref. A 64/59.
- Spółeczny Komitet Antykomunistyczny Antyk (hereinafter: Antyk) [Social Anti-communist Committee “Antyk”]
- Sprawozdanie z 24 lutego 1943 roku [Report of 24 February 1943]. (1943). AAN, Antyk, ref. 228/17-6, vol. 1, f. 34.
- Sprawozdanie z działalności organizacji wywrotowych i mniejszości narodowych za miesiąc październik 1943 [Report on the activity of subversive organizations and ethnic minorities for October 1943]. (1943). AAN, Antyk, ref. 228/24, vol. 1, f. 299.
- Stowarzyszenie Polskich Kombatantów w Kraju. Zarząd Główny w Warszawie (hereinafter: SPK) [The Polish ex-Combatants Association in Poland. National executive council in Warsaw]
- Głownia, J., Rażmowski, W. (n.d.). Oddział Powstańczo-Partyzancki „Poraj” [Insurgent-Partisan Unit “Poraj”]. AAN, SKP, ref. 418.
- Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej (hereinafter: AIPN) [Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance]
- Jakubik, M. (1973). Komenda Ośrodka AK Łasica. Ruch oporu w okolicy obozów w Treblince [Command of the Home Army “Łasica” centre. Resistance in the area of Treblinka camps]. Węgrów [unpublished typescript]. AIPN BU, ref. 01335/63.
- Proces Ludwika Fischera (n.d.). AIPN, ref. GK 196/70. [Ludwik Fischer's trial]
- Protokół przesłuchania Oskara Strawczyńskiego z 7 października 1945 roku [Minutes of the hearing of Oskar Strawczyński of 7 October 1945]. (1945). AIPN BU, ref. 196, vol. 69, unnumbered folios.
- Sprawa obozu Treblinka [Treblinka camp case]. (n.d.). AIPN, ref. “Ob.” 194.
- Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (hereinafter: AŻIH) [Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute]
- Relacja Henryka Mściwoja Radziszewskiego [Henryk Mściwój Radziszewski's account]. (n.d.). AŻIH, Relacje, ref. 301/4147.
- Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe Wojskowego Biura Historycznego (hereinafter: CAW WBH) [Central Military Archives of the Military Historical Office]
- CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.3.29.2. (1943).
- CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.3.31.33. (1943).
- CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.31.29 II. (1943).
- CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.31.29 III. (1943).
- Meldunek z odcinka walki konspiracyjnej za sierpień 1943 roku [Report on the underground struggle for August 1943]. (1943). CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu, ref. IX.3.29.3, f. 81.
- Okulus, W. (n.d.). Relacja, wspomnienie z Węgrowa [Account, memory from Węgrów]. CAW, WBH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.3.49.264.

- Sprawozdanie Folwarku-Pokrzywy za okres 25 lipca-31 sierpnia 1943 roku [Report of Folwark-Pokrzywa for 25 July-31 August 1943]. (1943). CAW, WbH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.3.31.33, f. 79.
- Z odcinka walki cywilnej za 1943 rok [On civilian resistance for 1943]. (1943). CAW, WbH, Ruch Oporu [Resistance], ref. IX.3.293, ff. 88-89.