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The Extermination of the Jewish Community in Easternmost Poland in the Years 1941-1944

On 23rd August 1939 in Moscow the Soviet Foreign Affairs Commissar Viatcheslav Molotov and his German counterpart Joachim von Ribbentrop signed a non-aggression pact, complemented by an additional secret protocol about the division of influence zones in Central and Eastern Europe, stating that “in case of territorial or political changes taking place in the area belonging to the Polish State the boundary of German and Soviet interest zones will approximately run along the Narev, San and Vistula rivers.”¹

The shape of the Soviet-German demarcation line approved in the pact was corrected by giving Lithuania back to Moscow by Germany in return for the Lublin province and part of the Warsaw province. In consequence of the above decisions in the “boundaries and friendship” pact of 28th September 1939, the USSR finally gained a part of the Polish Republic’s territory, adjacent from the East to the Pisa, Narev, Bug and San rivers, comprising 201,000 square kilometres (51.5%) and populated by 13,196,000 citizens, out of which 5.3 million were Poles (40%), 4.5 million were Ukrainians and Russians (34%), 1.1 million were Jews (8.5%) and 1.2 million were Germans, Russians, Lithuanians and other nationalities (8.8%).²

In the 1939-1941 period the number of the Jewish community of Eastern Poland (divided by the Kremlin into Soviet Byelorussia, Soviet Ukraine and Lithuania, independent until 1940) increased from 1,309,000 (August 1939) to 1,655,000 (June 1941),³ however the real population of the Jews living in the area still remains difficult to esti-

mate. Consequently, the following demographic data is of extremely hypothetical character⁴:

K. Kersten, <i>Repatriacja . . . (The Repatriation . . .)</i>	1,200,000
E. Hornowa, <i>Powrót . . . (The Return . . .)</i>	1,694,000
E. Kulisher, <i>The Displacement . . .</i>	2,000,000
American Joint Distribution Committee	1,350,000
S. Krakowski, <i>Avedot Yehude . . .</i>	1,150,000
F. Friedman, <i>Zagłada . . . (The Extermination . . .)</i>	813,000
M. Gilbert, <i>Die Endlösung . . . (The Final Solution . . .)</i>	1,309,000
(with an additional 250,000 refugees from the 1939-1941 period)	

Such a great difference in the number mainly stemmed from the fact of a mass inflow of Jewish refugees from the western and central parts of Poland occupied by Germany and the deportation action of the Jews from the regions of Khelm, Hrubieshov, Lantsut, Yaroslav, and western part of Przemyśl being intensified by the German authorities.

The Soviet occupation of eastern Poland was distinguished by a wavering and excessively ambiguous policy of the authorities towards the local Jews, e.g. initially practised temporary opening and closing of the border for the refugees' waves, individual treatment of escapees, cases of the torment of arrest and deportation into inland USSR on charges of espionage.⁵ Additionally, just before the outbreak of the Soviet-German war, an organized emigration of Jews, particularly from the Vilnius area, was activated in several directions: to Sweden via Turkey and Palestine, or via China and Japan to Australia, Canada and the USA.⁶ Towards the other Jews the Soviet authorities adopted generally similar means of repression as to the other nationalities, such as private property nationalization, restriction of religious and cultural liberties (gradual liquidation of the Jewish Talmud schools, and, in the areas annexed to Byelorussia, limitation of the official use of the Yiddish language only to lower levels of administration⁷), or widespread arrests and deportations of Jewish political leaders, starting with the socialist Bund and ending with the Zionist organizations (the most famous case of this sort was the arrest and subsequent execution of the Bund leaders – Henryk Erlich and Wiktor Alter⁸).

The Soviet rule in eastern Poland in the 1939-1941 period directly contributed to an increase in anti-Semitic tendencies, what was to a certain extent a consequence of the fact of a large participation of the Jews in the VKP(b)' structures in the Ukraine⁹ and Lithuania. In

the aftermath of the annexation of the state by the Kremlin in 1940 the Jewish minority while making up 7% of the total population, composed no less than 15% of the local party functionaries,¹⁰ while in the so-called Justas Paleckis' People's Government established on 17th June 1940, which ratified the annexation, there were two ministers of Jewish origin: the Minister of Health Dr Leon Kogan and the Minister of Industry Khaim Alperovitch. They were complemented by the Deputy Minister of Trade Avraham Plakchin and the General Prosecutor Office Criminal Department chief Mordekhai Gafanovitch. As regards Lithuania, the Jews occupied almost 20% of the posts in the Vilnius Public Prosecutor's Office and a number of high positions in the local NKVD and militia (Rozovsky, Todes, Finkelstein, Slavin, Bloch, Jatsovsky).¹¹ Such widespread involvement of the Jews in the activity of the Soviet occupation machine in the Vilnius area may have been undoubtedly caused partly by remembrances of the anti-Jewish pogroms which had taken place after the takeover of Vilnius in 1939 by Lithuanians (200 victims) and a mushrooming wave of street assaults and robberies of Jewish property.

As soon as the Wehrmacht launched the invasion of the USSR, the Jewish community living in the eastern parts of Poland, occupied by the Soviet Union since 1939, faced the threat of complete destruction.

A preliminary discussion concerning the performance of the extermination action of the Jews in eastern Poland and the USSR, starting from the moment of invasion of this area by the regular German army, took place on 22nd July 1940 in the Commander-in-Chief of the Army (*Oberkommando des Heeres, OKH*), where the concept of creating numerous and fully motorized SS and police squads, tactically responsible to suitable Wehrmacht commanders but having an adequate amount of liberty in the execution of extermination tasks, was put forward for the first time. Even before the beginning of the Russian campaign a detailed discussion was aroused between the OKH and the RSHA (*Reichssicherheitsdienst Hauptamt, Reich Security Main Office*), concerning the means of co-operation between the Wehrmacht and special Einsatzgruppen squads, directly subordinate to the SS and police chief, SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler. The first written note on the subject appeared in the war diary of the Wehrmacht Commanders' Staff (WFSt) attached to the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht

(*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*) on 3rd March 1941. The written directive of the Country Defence Office (*Landesverteidigung*) chief in the Wfst, General Walther Warlimont, issued to the army commanders and submitted beforehand to the Wehrmacht Chief of Staff, General Alfred Jodel's as well as Adolf Hitler's acceptance, was an introduction to further negotiation. Adolf Hitler in one of his comments clearly emphasized that the liquidation of "the Jewish and Bolshevik intelligentsia" was too difficult a task for the army to be charged with.¹² After further consideration, then only between the OKH General Quartermaster (OKH/GenQ – *Oberkommando des Heeres/Generalquartiermeister*) General Eduard Wagner and the RSHA chief Reinhard Heydrich, on 26th March 1941 an agreement on the rules of *Einsatzgruppen* activities on the occupied was signed, stating e.g. "Sonderkommandos are entitled, within their competence, to take responsibility for mass executions of the civil population."¹³ Finally, on 19th May 1941 the OKW in its *Directives Concerning the Army Conduct in Russia* decided that the *Einsatzgruppen* were able to act as well at the rear of the army as in front operational areas of particular corps. At the same time it categorically recommended taking "a ruthless and energetic action against Bolshevik agitators, partisans, saboteurs and the Jews."¹⁴

Four *Einsatzgruppen* (A, B, C, D) were established to carry out the anti-Jewish extermination actions and the initial territorial range of the A, B and C groups was to a large extent consistent with the area of eastern Poland. Each *Einsatzgruppe* was a unit of battalion size (600-1,000 soldiers), fully motorized and was allotted to the operational area of a suitable army group. The operational formations of the *Einsatzgruppen* were the *Einsatzkommandos* and *Sonderkommandos*, each of company size. The commanding staffs of the *Einsatzgruppen* (further abbreviated: EGr) were chosen from among the Sipo and SD officers. The EGr activity commanders held the rank of SS Brigadeführer and police brigade general.

The *Einsatzgruppen* soldiers were recruited by borrowing from: *Waffen SS*, *Sicherheitspolizei – Sipo* (Security Police) and *Sicherheitsdienst – SD* (Security Service), *Ordnungspolizei – Orpo* (Order Police), *Kriminalpolizei – Kripo* (Criminal Police), *Staatspolizei* (the State Police) and *Hilfspolizei* (the Supporting Police). Experts in administration, quarter mastering, communication and contacts with local communities (it means: interpreters) composed the additional personnel

in every squad. As soon as the Wehrmacht invaded the area of eastern Poland and the USSR, added supporting formations of the Ukrainian and Lithuanian police rounded the effective force of the Einsatzgruppen. In the beginning of July 1941 the Sipo and SD commander for the area of the General Government (Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD) Oberführer Karl Eberhard Schöngarth instituted three more commandos in Cracow, soon assigned to Białystok, Lithuanian Brest, and Lvov, along with the squads formed in parallel by the appropriate SS and Police Higher Leaders: Obergruppenführer Hans Adolf Prutzmann (HSSPF Nord), Obergruppenführer Erich von dem Bach-Zelewsky (HSSPF Mitte) and Obergruppenführer Friedrich Jeckeln (HSSPF Süd). Table 1 presents detailed structure, commanders and the initial arrangement of the Einsatzgruppen operating in eastern Poland and the USSR¹⁵.

A remarkable pace of the German troops moving into the USSR in the initial period of the campaign, until November 1941, made it possible for the Einsatzgruppen squads that followed regular Wehrmacht troops to take the entire mass of the Jewish community, mainly of eastern Poland, by surprise. It is presumed that only about 300,000 Jews from that area managed to evacuate into the USSR (mainly to Uzbekistan) along with the retreating Red Army. The majority of those who had left were subject to an immediate extermination action.¹⁶ Only those categories of the Jewish community, which were of great political and economic importance to the Soviet authorities, namely state administration and NKVD employees, clerks and qualified workers, were evacuated from the area threatened by Germans. Attempts to continue the evacuation of the Jews from larger urban centres were made on a smaller scale, by Soviet offices still functioning in some places as well as by the threatened people themselves, as soon as the first impetus of the German offensive was over. In total the number of those who survived in this way amounted to about half a million people.

Terrifyingly efficient activity of the Einsatzgruppen was to a certain extent facilitated by the special and extraordinary authorization granted to the SS and police Reichsführer H. Himmler and SD Chief R. Heydrich by Hitler. Joint SS, SD and Gestapo squads, being completely supported by the Führer, were supposed to carry out a gradual liquidation of the Jewish population in the USSR (including eastern parts of the Republic of Poland), considered by the official Reich's au-

Einsatzgruppe (Sonderkommando- Einsatzkommando)	Commander	Position and area of activity in July 1941
EINSATZGRUPPE A	SS Brigadeführer Walther Stahlecker (Heinz Jost)	Pskov (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and the Vilnius area)
Sonderkommando 1a	Martin Sandberger	Riga
Sonderkommando 1b	Erich Ehrlinger (Eduard Strauch)	Dineburg
Einsatzkommando 2	Rudolf Batz (E. Strauch, Rudolf Edwin Lange)	Riga
Einsatzkommando 3	Karl Jäger	Kaunas
EINSATZGRUPPE B	SS Brigadeführer Arthur Nebe (Erich Naumann)	Minsk (Byelorussia till July 11th, 1941)
Sonderkommando 7a	Walther Blume (Eugen Steimle, Albert Rapp)	Vitebsk
Sonderkommando 7b	Günther Rausch (Adolf Ott, Karl Rabe)	Orsha
Einsatzkommando 8	Otto Bradfisch (Hans Richter, Erich Isselhorst, Hans Schindelhelm)	Baranovitche
Einsatzkommando 9	Albert Filbert (Oswald Schafer, Wilhelm Wiebens)	Vilnius
EINSATZGRUPPE C	SS Brigadeführer Otto Rasch (Max Thomas)	Zhytomier (Northern and Central Ukraine, the Eastern Little Poland – till July 11th, 1941)
Einsatzkommando 4a	Paul Blobel (Erwin Weinmann, Eugen Steimle, Karl Schmidt)	Zhytomier
Einsatzkommando 4b	Günther Herrmann (Lothar Fendler, Fritz Braune, Walther Haensch)	Tarnopol
Einsatzkommando 5	Erwin Schulz (August Meier)	Lvov
Einsatzkommando 6	Erhard Kroger (Robert Mohr, Ernst Biberstein)	Zhytomier
EINSATZGRUPPE D	SS Brigadeführer Otto Ohlendorf (Walther Bierkamp)	Piatra (Bessarabia, southern Ukraine, Crimea, Caucasus)
Einsatzkommando 10b	Alois Persterer	Khotin
Einsatzkommando 11a	Paul Zapp	Kishinev
Einsatzkommando 11b	Bruno Müller (Werner Braune, Paul Schulz)	Odessa (since Nov. 1941)
Einsatzkommando 12	Gustav Nosske (Erich Müller)	Stalino (since Nov. 1941)

TABLE 1. Einsatzgruppen operating in eastern Poland and the USSR

thorities to be “a race that combines a rare mix of barbarous cruelty and outstanding ability at lying and regards itself as especially summoned to bring all the world under bloody oppression.”¹⁷ Illustrative examples of the political and military authorities’ decisions concerning the mass extermination action of the Jews in the area were the following: special order number 1 of the Wehrmacht Chief of Staff General Alfred Jodl (19th May, 1941), SD Chief R. Heydrich’s instructions of 2nd July 1941 for high SS and police commanders assigned to the USSR (recommending carrying out immediately the execution of “the Jews serving the Party or the State” and “not taking any steps hindering the purges conducted by anti-communist and anti-Jewish elements in the newly occupied territories” to the Einsatzgruppen soldiers¹⁸), operational order number 8 issued on 17th July 1941 by R. Heydrich about “the special treatment of the nationally undesirable” and Marshal Hermann Göring’s order of 31st July 1941 to R. Heydrich (concerning preparation of a detailed plan of “the final solution to the Jewish affair”), the OKW chief Field marshal Wilhelm Keitel’s (12th September 1941), or the German 11th Army commander General Erich von Manstein’s (20th November 1941), all of them actually of similar tone.

The Course of Extermination Actions against the Jews in Eastern Poland in the June – December 1941 Period

The Administrative Division of Eastern Poland (1941) and Its Effect on the Situation of the Local Jewish Community

Just as the Wehrmacht invaded easternmost parts of Poland in the summer of 1941, the invader applied German administration, initially of military control character, and from August 1941 in the form of new civil administrative structures.

On 25th July 1941 the Vilnius area (without Vileyka and Glebokie) (51,707 square km) became a part of the General Commissariat Lithuania (Generalkommissariat Litauen), administered by von Rinteln and, along with the following parts of the General Commissariat Byelorussia (Generalkommissariat Weißrussland) administered by Wilhelm Kube: the Grodno area, the Novogoderek province, and

northern part (up to the Prypec river) of the Polesie area and additional General Commissariats Latvia and Estonia, together formed the Reich's Commissariat Eastern Land (Reichskommissariat Ostland), led by Henrich Lohse.¹⁹ Already in August 1941 the Reich's Commissar Lohse made out *The Temporary Instructions Concerning Treatment of the Jews in the Area of the Reich's Commissariat Eastern Land*, setting up tasks until the time "when in the area of general commissariats minimal remedial measures and further actions are taken in order to finally solve the Jewish affair, what then meant the registration of all the Jews from Ostland by assuming the obligation of reporting and carrying a yellow David's star as well as the establishment of Jewish councils." Those steps conclusively aimed at "clearing the Ostland province of the Jews" by gradual concentration of the Jewish population in ghettos, settled by the Nazis in most cities and towns, and mobilization of the "Jews capable of working" for obligatory works.²⁰ Also in August 1941 the civil administration of the Vilnius area (the province's Commissar Hans Hingst) seized the previous competence of the Wehrmacht operational commanders, along with duties regarding "board" and "Jewish affairs" (Franz Murer). One of the first decisions of the civil administration of the Vilnius area concerning the Jews were orders of obligatory wearing of a yellow David's star by all the Jews (regardless of age and sex) and ban on using all transport facilities, including street pavements.

The Bialystok Province (the area of 31,140 square km), established on 1st August 1941, on A. Hitler's order of 15th August 1941 was incorporated to the German province Eastern Prussia, administered by the Superior President Gauleiter Erich Koch (nominated the Reich's Commissar for Ukraine as well). Almost immediately after incorporating the Bialystok area into the Reich, the Jewish community of the province was exposed to repression and restrictions similar to those taking place in other "incorporated" regions, and the most responsible tasks in the process of the extermination of the Jews were assigned to: the Bialystok SS and Police Commander Otto Hellwig and the SS and Police Higher Commander (HSSPf) for Eastern Prussia Jakob Sporenberg.

The Polesie and the Volhynia (the southern part of Polesie province and the entire Volhynia province) (69,585 square km) became a part of the Reich's Commissariat Ukraine (Reichskommissariat Ukrainien).

The eastern Little Poland (the Lvov (to the east of the San river), Tarnopol and Stanislawov provinces) (47,100 square km) was incorporated into the General Government under the name of the Galicia District (Distrikt Galizien) on 1st August 1941, on the strength of Governor Hans Frank's personal decision.

The Anti-Semitic Propaganda of the Occupying German Authorities

The German military and political authorities considered using strong anti-Semitic tendencies appearing in the occupied areas to be a substantial help in the execution of the extermination of the Jewish community in the area of eastern Poland and the USSR. In order to gain nations of the regions mentioned above against the Jews, a considerable part of the propagandist machine then available was used (radio, movies, press, brochures, proclamations). In the area occupied by the Wehrmacht, the Jews were described as "bacteria," "Christ's oppressors," or "Orthodox Church blasphemers," and the German troops played the part of "fighters and revengers of the oppressed Christian religion freeing Russia from Jewish proprietors"²¹ and restorers of old-Russian values infringed by the Jews.

From their point of view, the 3rd Reich's authorities cared for an appropriate preparation of their own soldiers for the execution of the *Endlösung*, first of all trying to harden them to any impulses of remorse and mercy towards victims and ordering "no making hindrances to self-clearing activities of anti-communist and anti-Jewish circles in the newly occupied territories."²² An illustrative expression of the German authorities' attitude towards the matter of the extermination of the Jews in the areas of eastern Poland and the USSR were orders made out by Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler during the initial period of the Russian campaign, categorically imposing slaughter of the entire Jewish population in the occupied regions, in spite of the fact that simultaneously a model of the future organization of the German rule in the East was still in the stage of discussion between Himmler and Heydrich on one hand, and the Minister of the Eastern Areas, Alfred Rosenberg, on the other hand.²³

The Extermination Methods

The Einsatzgruppen commandos, following closely the front squads of the Wehrmacht, performed their manslaughter duties with incredible efficiency. Their large mobility and guarantees of full security granted by the regular German army were propitious for that purpose. There were also additional supporting squads, subordinate to the SS and Police Higher Commanders – North, Middle and South, participating in the so-called “cleansing actions” (particularly frequent in the first period of the Russian campaign), which consisted in liquidating remnants of the defeated Soviet troops in a certain area, local state and party clerks, and other so-called “undesirable elements” at the rear of the front.²⁴ For making the process of extermination more efficient, strictly defined rules of co-operation between EGr, the HSSPf police squads and the Wehrmacht were applied. On the basis of those regulations the EGr were provided with constant equipment complements from the army, which also carried out supporting actions of surrounding centres of the Jewish population, particularly in small towns and the countryside.

The extermination actions in the areas of eastern Poland usually consisted in encircling a Jewish community of villages and small towns by surprise, subsequently concentrating those people in forest regions, and shooting them. Those who survived were sent to larger urban centres and ghettos, created there in the summer of 1941. As regards the Jews from large cities, the situation was slightly different, though they were also partially subject to the initial extermination in the immediate aftermath of the German troops’ invasion of a certain city.

Everything depended on preliminary selection concerning the usefulness in performing obligatory works. The so-called “economically useless,” namely elderly people, the ill, women and children were often exposed to immediate liquidation.

People appointed to liquidation, after previous concentration, were transported to suburban locations, where deep rows had been prepared beforehand (usually anti-tank trenches, or craters after explosions of great-calibre shells). Just before the execution the future victims were deprived of clothes and any valuable things and then the death commandos performed stage slaughter.

There were three types of execution methods²⁵:

a) Shooting victims in a line-up, face to the row and back to the

oppressors (so-called Genick-schußspezialisten), modelled on the Soviet NKVD's practices;

- b) Mass machine gun fire from a considerable distance (method used by the Einsatzkommando 4a, commander Paul Blobel and the Einsatzkommando 4b commander Walther Haensch)
- c) The so-called sardine method (Ölsardinenmanier), consisted in forcing the first group of victims to lie on the bottom of the row, which was then killed by crossfire from the top; next group had to lie on the predecessors' bodies; the grave was buried as soon as it had been filled with 5-6 layers of bodies of the murdered.

There were also three types of reports summarizing the executions that had been carried out, as follows²⁶:

1. *Ereignismeldungen UdSSR – EM UdSSR* (Reports about events in the USSR);
2. *Tätigkeits- und Lageberichte der Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD in der UdSSR* (Accounts on the position and situation of the Einsatzgruppen in the USSR);
3. *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* (Reports from the invaded Eastern territories).

The accounts of the above types were currently prepared by suitable commando commanders, who then passed them on to the staff of an appropriate EGr, from where the reports were formally sent by radio, telex, or by a courier to the operational office of the communications officer established on 3rd July 1941 (Einsatznachrichtenfürer) in the II D Group (for Technical Matters) affiliated to the RSHA, actually to the RSHA chief's, Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich's personal bureau. The RSHA commanders also received separate detailed accounts from their representatives attached to the army groups "Nord" ("North"), "Mitte" ("Middle"), and "Süd" ("South"), along with the reports from the SS and Police Higher Leaders (HSSPf), namely personal representatives of the SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler, attached to the army groups. Finally on 26th October 1941 the task of receiving the EGr reports was assigned to the IV A1 Group (for Matters of Communism) of Sturmbannführer Joseph Vogt, subordinate to the Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei) chief, Gruppenführer Heinrich Müller.

The Introductory Extermination of the Jewish Community of Easternmost Poland (June – December 1941)

The Vilnius area. This region was inhabited by more than 100,000 Jews in 1941,²⁷ and in the region's capital, Vilnius, about 80,000 Jews lived at the time German troops invaded the city (24th June 1941).²⁸ On 25th June 1941 in the capital of inter-war Lithuania, Kaunas, the EGr A established its headquarters; since then it was supposed to operate on the following territories: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, the Vilnius area and northern Russia. In order to carry out precisely "the police tasks in Lithuania" the EGr A staff directed the EK 3 soldiers to Kaunas as well, whereas the EK 9 took over the Vilnius region for the period from 3rd July to September 1941, excluded from the EGr B.

During the first period of the German occupation (until November 1941) the Vilnius area became a region of mass extermination of the Jews, and the death toll amounted to approximately 35,000, out of which the EK 9 soldiers shot more than 5,000 people from among the Jewish community of Vilnius in nearby Ponary (Aukštieji Paneriai) until the middle of July 1941, and of further 4,160 people until 6th September 1941, the date of the establishment of the Vilnius ghetto.²⁹ The German commando squads gained a decisive support in their activities on the part of "local anti-communist and anti-Jewish groups," particularly the "Iron Wolf" ("Geležnis Vilkas") organization led by Augustinas Voldemaras; this resulted in the EGr A commander's and SS Brigadeführer Walther Stahlecker's July decisions to appoint a group of 150 Lithuanians for co-operation in "the liquidation of the Jewish community in Vilnius, where every morning and afternoon they captured and concentrated about 500 Jews, which on the same day were exposed to "special treatment."³⁰ Before the beginning of the first stage of the Jewish population concentration in ghettos by Germans, the executions were carried out either in the Vilnius area, or directly in towns inhabited by the Jews, or in above-mentioned Ponary, using a full range of humiliation and oppression methods on the victims. During the first six months of the German rule in the Vilnius area, the EGr's objectives were primarily cities with a large percentage of the Jewish community: Vilnius, Svieciany, Vileyka, Oshmiana, Nementchin, and remnants of the Jews that had survived those pogroms were concentrated in ghettos, gradually created from the early autumn of 1941.

The death toll of the executions in the Vilnius area (June – December 1941)³¹:

24th June – 16th July:	Vilnius	5,500 (4th – 20th July)
	Vileyka	150
	Svieciany	100
17th July – 31st Aug.:	Vilnius	1,444 (20th July – 31st Aug.)
	Oshmiana	700
	Vileyka	250
Sept. – Oct. 1941:	Vilnius	29,311 (from 31st Aug.)
	Svieciany	8,000 (26th Sept.)
	Nova Vileyka	1,159
	Nementchin	403
Nov. 1941:	Vilnius	1,341
Dec. 1941:	Vilnius	385

The Białystok Province. The Białystok Province, established on 1st August 1941, administratively consisted of 7 commissariats (Kommissariate): Białystok, Grayevo, Grodno, Bielsk Podlaski, Lomzha, Sokolka, and Volkovisk. According to S. Datner's estimations, 193,460 Jews lived in 80 towns of the province in 1941 (Białystok 36,000, Grodno 24,000, Lomzha 12,500, Volkovisk 10,000).³²

The main urban centre of the region – Białystok, invaded on 27th June 1941 by General Wolfgang Ditfurth's 403. Division squads (along with General Adolf Strauss' 9th Army) – became a separate administrative unit. On the day of Wehrmacht's invasion of Białystok, the German police and military police formations surrounded the Jewish district (inhabited in June 1941 by approximate 50,000 people) with a hermetic cordon of sentries, and the following day the first massacre took place (the so-called "Red Friday"), during which a major part of the district was burned, including the synagogue into which the crowd of about 1,000 Jews had been driven. It is estimated that "Red Friday" caused approximately 2,000 deaths in total. The massacre of 28th June 1941 was the first in the series of consecutive "actions" against the Jewish community of Białystok, such as shooting 300 Jewish intellectuals and political activists in nearby Pietrashe on 3rd July 1941, and a further 6,000 people on 11th and 12th July. On 26th July 1941 on the

strength of the 102nd Army Group “Middle” Rear Area staff’s order, the concentration of the Białystok Jews within the ghetto was started, and at once the extermination of this nation entered a new phase.³³ Due to serious plans of using a free Jewish labour force for Wehrmacht’s needs, in the June-December 1941 period in the Białystok province area no murders of the Jews on a scale comparable with those committed in other areas of eastern Poland were reported. In spite of that, the range of anti-Jewish actions taken by Nazis on those territories in that time should at least be mentioned³⁴:

27th June – 16th July:	Białystok	5,200 murdered
	Vonsosh	1,185 murdered
	Augustov	1,000 murdered
	Grodno	80 murdered
	Krynki and Bielsk	30 murdered each
17th July – 31st Aug.:	Augustov	1,500 murdered
Sept. – Dec. 1941:	Lomzha	3,500 murdered
	Białystok	4,500 murdered
		the poorest deported to Pruzhany in Sept. 1941

In total, during the first two months of German occupation approximately 11,000 Jews were murdered in the entire province (out of which 6,000 in Białystok).

The Novogrodek area (Reichskommissariat Ostland) and the Polesie and the Volhynia (Reichskommissariat Ukraine). During the initial decision and full impetus of the German troops’ offensive (until November 1941), a few EGr special squads passed by the above area, due to changes in the range of operational objectives of the army groups “Middle” and “South,” to which particular commandos were attached. In this way, at the beginning of June 1941 in the Novogrodek area all the EGr “B” commandos performed their extermination duties and shifted to the region of Soviet Byelorussia at the end of July. The Volhynia, on the other hand, became a region of the EGr “C” commandos’ activities, particularly Sonderkommando 4b (30th June – 11th July), Sonderkommando 4a (30th June – 8th July) and Einsatzkommando 5 (until mid-July). From mid-July 1941 the entire operational region of the EGr “B” and EGr “C” was subordinate to the Security Police and Security Service Commander in the General

Gouvernement (*Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD – BdS für General Gouvernement*), and particular commandos were assisted by “the supporting squads,” subordinate only to BdS, led by the SS and Police Higher Commander for Southern Russia (*Höhere SS und Polizeiführer Rußland – Süd*), SS Obergruppenführer Jeckeln, having 1st SS Brigade, five police battalions, police regiment “South” and staff company at his disposal. These forces, however, started their anti-Jewish activities no sooner than the Volhynia area became subordinate to the newly established institution – the Security Police and SD Headquarters (*Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*) for the General Province of Kiev, Zhitomier, Volhynia and Dniepropetrovsk.³⁵

The Novogorodek district had been a region of the lowest percentage of the Jewish community (7,8% according to the 1931 census) in Eastern Poland before the war, but this situation was subject to radical change during the Soviet occupation (1939-1941), when a large mass of refugees entered the region; the result was a considerable increase in the number of Jews in towns of the Novogorodek area: Novogorodek – 6.000 (1941), Baranovitche – 12.000 (1940), Lida – 15.000 (1941), Nesviezh – 6.000 (1940), Volozhin – 3.000 (1940), or Slonim – 12.000 (1941).³⁶

Pogroms of the Jewish community of the Novogorodek district took place almost immediately after the invasion of the EGr formations. Massacres of that time brought about virtually complete extermination of the Jewish population in small towns and villages of the region and the beginning of shutting the remnants of the population into ghettos, gradually created in larger cities, which was mainly due to protests of the Reich’s Commissar for the Eastern Land Heinrich Lohse and the General Commissar for Byelorussia Wilhelm Kube, offended by the excessive independence of the SS structures in their region and unanimously considering “the immediate liquidation of the Jews, suggested by the SD, to be a potential threat to German plans of the economic exploitation.”³⁷

The approximate range of manslaughter of the Novogorodek Jews done by the EGr until the end of 1941 is presented in the following chart³⁸:

June – July 1941:	Lida	200
	Shchutchin	1,900
	Novogorodek	50
	Baranowitche	400

July – Aug. 1941:	Volozhin	1,000	
	Slonim	1,200	
Sept. – Oct. 1941:	Lida	2,000	(28th October)
	Shchutchin	50	
	Niesviezh	5,000	(30th October)
Nov. – Dec. 1941:	Novogorodek	800	
	Volozhin	300	
	Mir	1,500	
	Slonim	9,000	

The Polesie and Volhynia districts. These districts, incorporated into the Reich's Commissariat Ukraine by Germans, in the discussed period similarly became a region of mass extermination of the Jewish community of small towns, composing a high percentage of the total population of both districts' towns already before the war – from 43.4% (11,000) in Volhynian Vlodimier, 44.3% (21,300) in Lithuanian Brest, 47.6% (13,300) in Kowel, and 48.8% (17,400) in Lutsk, to no less than 56% (23,000) in Rovne and 63.4% (21,000) in Pinsk.³⁹ Due to such density of the Jewish population, the EGr "C," assigned to operations in the Polesie and Volhynia region, right on the first day of its presence initiated a fully ruthless and cruel extermination action. It has to be mentioned that German activities in the area gained support on the part of the Ukrainian police, as Shmuel Spector proved in his monograph "The Holocaust of the Volhynian Jews": "German police and civil authorities in the Volhynia and the Polesie were relatively small and could not provide staff for all the towns and communes."

The scantiness of the German forces and opportune topographical conditions could have facilitated concealing of the Jews, but the hostility of the Ukrainians' nationalistic underground made it impossible. As a matter of fact, Ukrainians helped in capturing the Jews hiding in forests, who were then either killed directly by the Ukrainians, or handed over to Germans.⁴⁰ Apart from loose groups, the following organizations played a significant part in the Polesie and the Volhynia: the Ukrainian police, formed on 17th December 1939 in Kraków by the General Governor Hans Frank, or so-called "expedition groups," formed with the Germans' assent already after 22nd June 1941, aiming at following the Wehrmacht with special commandos and capturing Soviet political activists of Jewish origin, listed beforehand on secret

rolls.⁴¹ On the other hand, the police and military authorities being satisfied with such a state of affairs cleverly used by the German propagandist machine as well as the hostility of the Ukrainians towards the Jews.

The first period of intense pogroms of the Jewish population of the Polesie and the Volhynia lasted until October 1941, when the authorities started the action of shutting the survived in newly created labour camps (quarries, craft, railway reconstruction works) and various industrial plants taken over by new German proprietors. During those few months, the German special commandos along with supporting Ukrainian forces seriously decimated the Jewish population of the discussed areas; in some small towns the death toll amounted to 30% of the pre-war state; more than 20,000 Jews in Rovne (June – November), 11,000 in Pinsk (July – August), 5,000 in Lithuanian Brest (only in June 1941), about 1,000 in Dubno (July – August), about 400 in Yanov Poleski (June), 170 in Kobrin (24th June 1941), and no less than 5,000 in Lutsk (June/July) were murdered. The saved remnants of the Jewish community started to be concentrated in ghettos already existing in some places since the turn of September 1941, which were constantly congested due to inflow of people from the countryside.

The Galicia District (*Distrikt Galizien*) – Eastern Little Poland. The fifth district of the General Government, established on 1st August 1941, had been a region of the highest, along with the Białystok area, percentage of Jews – 12.9% of the total number of eastern Poland's inhabitants before the war. It is worth emphasizing that in the 30s about 30% of the Jews (350,000) living in Eastern Little Poland declared Polish to be their “mother tongue,” what was an additional distinguishing factor of this region. As regards the number of the Jewish minority in Eastern Little Poland, according to the 1931 census of the population of Poland, half a million Jews lived in the discussed area, to which some 150,000 refugees from central and western Poland were added in the years 1939-1941, which resulted in a considerable increase in the population of the region's cities, e.g. In Lvov from about 100,000 (1931) to about 180,000 (1941), in Stanisławów – from 24,600 (1931) to 30,000 (1939), in Tarnopol – from 14,000 (1931) to 18,000 (1939), in Kolomyja – from 14,200 (1931) to 15,000 (1939), in Drohobycz – from 13,000 (1931) to 17,000 (1939), in Strij – from 11,000 (1931) to 12,000 (1939), or in Sambor – from 6,400 (1931) to 8,000 (1939).⁴²

After the invasion of Eastern Little Poland by German troops, three provinces, later parts of the Galicia district, became a region of bloody anti-Jewish terror, constantly developed by the EGr "C" commandos operating there and supporting Ukrainian fighting squads, which held a considerable position and efficiency, being mainly recruited from the Ukrainian Nationalists' Organization – Stepan Bandera's fraction (OUN-B) and Ukrainian pacification battalions "Nachtigall" and "Roland." These latter groups, formed by Germans even before the Russian campaign, had the major duty of strict co-operation with the Wehrmacht in "clearing the occupied area from 'undesirable elements.'" The resolution proclaimed in April 1941 by the 2nd OUN-B General Congress debating in Kraków should be regarded as an incredibly valuable source material, which may at least to a certain extent explain the reasons behind the radical face of Ukrainian anti-Semitism⁴³:

The Jews from Soviet Ukraine provide the most decided support to the Bolshevik regime and consist of the vanguard of Moscow's imperialism in Ukraine. The Moscow Bolshevik government uses anti-Jewish attitudes amongst Ukrainian masses in pursuit of distracting the attention of the Ukrainians from the actual evil originators and creating an opportunity of directing the signs of dissatisfaction at anti-Jewish pogroms. The OUN fights against the Jews as the Moscow Bolshevik regime supporters, enlightening the masses of people on the fact that the major enemy is Moscow.

After the German invasion of Eastern Little Poland, a decided majority of cities, towns and villages of the Lvov, Stanislavov, and Tarnopol provinces was the arena of barbarous murders. The events that took place in Lvov, where the hunt for Jews began with street announcements calling all Jews to show up immediately in working places under threat of capital punishment, became a symbol of the tragedy of the Jews from Eastern Little Poland. In consequence of spontaneous pogroms, lasting in Lvov until 3rd July, more than 4,000 Jews died. However, soon the Germans arranged the administration in the city, which temporarily calmed the situation. Nevertheless, already on 15th July 1941 the General Governor enacted a decree on the obligatory wearing on the right arm of a white arm-band with a yellow David's star on it by all Jews, food rationing (1.1 kg of bread per week for the Jews, 2.3 kg for Poles und Ukrainians and 4.5 kg for Germans) and fixing up special trade hours for the Jews.⁴⁴ From 25th till 27th July 1941

Lvov was once again overwhelmed by a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms, this time within the so-called “Petlura’s days,” being the Ukrainian revenge on the Jews for the assassination of ataman Semen Petlura in Paris in 1926. During barely three days in July, more than 2,000 Jews were killed in Lvov. Since August 1941 the German authorities began to prepare for the division of Lvov into three separate parts: German, Polish-Ukrainian and Jewish, completed by establishing a ghetto on 11th November 1941 and the beginning of a new phase in the process of the extermination of the Jewish population.

Events, similar to those in Lvov, took place on a large scale in most centres of the district, with temporary exclusion of the Kolomya, Borshtchov, and Horodenka regions, invaded and administrated until October 1941 by Hungarian troops. During the first six months of the German occupation, the Jewish population of Eastern Little Poland (the Galicia District) to a large extent cast in their lots with their compatriots from the Volhynia, Polesie and Bialystok areas. This meant that free centres of the Jews in smaller towns of the region virtually disappeared, and the rest were gradually shifted by Germans either to ghettos in big cities, or to obligatory labour camps located within the ghettos’ area or in their close surroundings.

The general data concerning the pogroms of the Jewish population in the Galicia District (June-December 1941)⁴⁵:

Butchatch	1,500 murdered (June – Oct.)
Tarnopol	more than 3,000 murdered (July – Aug.)
Zlotchov	3,500 murdered (3,200 murdered during the pogroms of 2nd – 7th July, the others died at the end of July)
Borislav	2,000 murdered (July – Nov.)
Strij	1,500 murdered (July – Nov.)
Scalat	600 murdered (July)
Tchortkov	600 murdered (July – Aug.)
Zborov	850 murdered (July – Aug.)
Brody	250 murdered (July – Aug.)
Zaleshtchiky	800 murdered (July – Aug.)
Przemislany	1,000 murdered (Sept. – Nov.)
Bolechov	1,000 murdered (Sept. – Oct.)
Nadvorna	2,500 murdered (Nov.)
Bzhezahany	1,000 murdered (Nov.)
Kolomya	1,000 murdered (Nov.)

Horodenka	500 murdered (Nov.)
Kamionka Strumilova	500 murdered (Nov.)

Ghettos of Eastern Poland – From the Establishment to the Liquidation (August 1941 – January 1943)

The Beginning (August – December 1941)

A crucial stage on the way to, planned by the Nazis, complete extermination of the Jews, those who inhabited eastern territories of the pre-war Republic of Poland, was the establishment of ghettos. The Nazis intended the ghettos as a fragment of the inevitable time needed for technical and organizational preparation for the mass liquidation of the Jewish community. Already in the instruction issued on 21st September 1939 for the EGr squads operating in Poland the RSHA chief Reinhard Heydrich pointed out two main reasons for the creation of ghettos on the then occupied Polish territories: the first one consisting in “forbidding the Jews to live in certain districts and prohibiting to leave the allowed [districts], except cases of economical necessity,” and the second objective: “concentration of the Jews in closed districts is the primary condition of achieving the final goal (*als die erste Voraussetzung für das Endziel*) [namely the extermination of the Jewish population, P.M.’s note].”⁴⁶ In practice, ghettos were supposed to become a main tool in the additional physical and mental torturing of the future victims, primarily by way of issuing a wide range of consecutive drastic orders, e.g. of humiliating obligation of registration and carrying a yellow David’s star (decree of 15th 1941) and limitations in free migration and practicing their professions.

On the territories of Easternmost Poland the information about the action of shutting the Jewish community in ghettos, prepared by Germans, began to appear as soon as the first wave of terror on the part of the EGr had lessened, approximately from August 1941, since right on 13th August the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht – OKW*) enacted an order concerning the procedure of the forthcoming establishment of an organized system of ghettos on the territories under German control. The registration and concentration of the Jews in larger urban centres, being meticulously carried out, was supposed to serve that purpose.⁴⁷

In eastern Poland the German authorities initially started to concentrate the Jewish population in the districts inhabited by that community in certain cities, with people from the countryside being added. It led to the creation of the so-called field ghettos (*Fieldghetto*), yet without strict limitations in the freedom of migration.

The introduction to the creation of actual ghettos in Easternmost Poland were German occupation authorities' orders concerning the establishment of the so-called "Jewish Council" (*Judenrat*) institution attached to every large centre of the Jewish population, for which the basis were following: the above-mentioned R. Heydrich's brief instruction (*Schnellbrief*) of 21st September 1939 (in its second part asserting "the creation of bodies representing the Jewish population on the occupied Polish territories, their duties to the occupation authorities"⁴⁸ and the organizational structure and functions of those institutions), the General Governor Hans Frank's decrees of 28th November 1939 on "The Creation of Jewish Councils" and the order of 13th September 1940 "on the limitations of free choice of living place and stay in the General Government,"⁴⁹ whose resolutions since 7th August 1941 began to be applied in the newly created Galicia District as well.

In the Galicia District area Jewish "living districts," initially of confined character, were established; they were successively transformed into real ghettos at the turn of October 1941, which usually took place when the extermination selection of the Jews, mainly in terms of their usefulness for exploitation as a free and obligatory labour force, had been completed. Similarly, until the second half of 1941 ghettos began to appear widely in other provinces of eastern Poland, except that this time "Jewish councils" were described as "Jewish Self-government" (*Jüdische Selbstverwaltung*) or "Order Service" (*Ordnungsdienst*), and were of strictly classified character. In "Temporary Instructions Concerning The Treatment of the Jews in the Reich's Commissariat Eastern Land" (*Zeitweilige Richtlinien für die Behandlungen der Juden im Gebiet des Reichskommissariat Ostland*) of 13th August 1941, clear advice may be found, saying that "ghetto inhabitants should handle their interior businesses themselves under control of the district or city commissar, or other representative authorized by this commissar. For the purpose of keeping order amongst the Jews, the Jewish order police should be used."⁵⁰

Ghettos of eastern Poland were established by Germans mostly in the poorest and the least sanitary cities and towns, which, taking

into account additional density (sometimes 7-10 people in a single room), resulted in a drastic increase in the number of the sick suffering from alimentary system diseases and tuberculosis, and a consequent increase in mortality among the ghettos' population, particularly in big cities, where the Jews from small-town ghettos, being most quickly liquidated, were shifted to.

Already on 1st August 1941 a ghetto was established in Białystok, out of about 50,000 local Jews and those deported from Vilnius, Słonim and other places of the Białystok area.⁵¹ This ghetto soon became subordinate directly to the civil authorities of the city and the region, and the competence of "the Jewish Council," established already on 27th June 1941, was limited to keeping order within the ghetto area, along with controlling obedience to consecutively issued restrictive orders (3rd August – on permits, 15th August – ban on shopping in "Aryan" part of Białystok and order concerning food rationing, for instance, half a kilo of bread [soon 0.3 kilo] a day, to which only working people were entitled, 5th September – ban on gathering on pavements and streets⁵²).

The first year of the Białystok ghetto's existence proved to be relatively calm to its inhabitants, as opposed to other ghettos of the region. The only large repressive action on the part of the German invader was the deportation of 4,500 unemployed to Pruzhany (September 1941). This tranquillity of the situation was mainly due to the authorities' pursuit of maximal use of the local Jewish labour force for the army's purposes; in consequence of this, the utter work obligation of the Jews aged 15 to 65 was applied, followed by the extension of the employment scale in plants, craft workshops (knitting, leather, shoemaker's), or in normal exhausting labour (e.g. unloading rail transports).

On 6th September 1941 about 50,000 Jews were confined to two ghettos: "A" (30,000 people "capable of working") and "B" (10,000 people "unable to work"), whereas further 6,000 Jews were shut in prison in Lukishky. On 22nd October 1941 all the "B" ghetto and Lukishky residents were transported to Ponary and shot there, while those left in the "A" ghetto were subject to further exhausting exploitation and selection, which resulted in only 20,000 alive by the end of 1941 (in total 33,500 people were murdered and 3,500 were deported to Byelorussia⁵³).

The ghetto in Lvov was established on 11th November 1941 in the area of the poorest northeastern part of the city, becoming a place of further servitude for approximately 160,000 (180,000 according to Germans) Jews. In order to accelerate the process of Lvov Jews' extermination, German authorities established a labour camp near the village of Sokolniki as well (existing until December 1941), a camp at Janowska Street in Lvov, later of passing-camp character (*Durchgangslager*), and minor execution sites in: Borislav, Drohobitch, Yarochoy, Cossacks, Kurovitse, Latskie and Lesienitse.⁵⁴

In consequence of such utterly unprecedented economic exploitation, spreading epidemics, deportations to the camp at Janowska Street and regular executions within the Lvov area, the ghetto population melted away to 103,000 people in January 1942. Even this figure was not valid for a long time, mainly due to proceeding deportations firstly to the Janowska Street camp, and further to the extermination camp in Belzets, established on 17th March 1942, a place of the extermination of the Jews from four General Government's districts: Galicia, Kraków, Radom and Lublin.⁵⁵

The action of the ghettos net establishment proceeded in the autumn 1941 certainly also in the countryside, on the basis of similar rules applied in three cities mentioned above. Ghettos in the countryside however had a shorter time of existence, due to much smaller number of inhabitants. Their liquidation had already begun in the spring of 1942, and the population was either murdered yet in ghettos, or during the deportation to larger ghettos, or in extermination camps in Belzets (the Galicia district, the Volhynia, the Podole), Treblinka (the Białystok district, the Vilnius area, the Polesie) or Auschwitz-Birkenau.

In conclusion, the borderland ghettos from the period of the so-called first ghettoization (autumn 1941 – January 1942) were the first distinct signal of plans of the final extermination of the Jews, from Central and Eastern Europe, being prepared by the Nazis. The ghettos' character provided extremely favourable conditions for the physical and mental weakening of the Jewish community that survived the first period of the German campaign against the USSR. The main methods of persecutions and oppression of ghetto inhabitants, applied by civil and military authorities, were the open and absolute plunder of Jewish property, ruthlessly executed labour obligation (men aged 15 to 60, women aged 16 to 50) remunerated with starvation wages equal to

80% of the rate earned by unqualified workers, successive and constant lowering of food rations, and regular selections of the population for the purpose of manual labour for the Wehrmacht.

The Conference in Wannsee (20th January 1942) and So-Called Second Ghettoization – the January – December 1942 period

The process of the extermination of the European Jews, including those who inhabited Easternmost Poland, was considerably accelerated after the conference in Wannsee, near Berlin (20th January 1942), in which the RSHA chief Reinhard Heydrich, the Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller, and representatives of the RSHA (Adolf Eichmann), the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry for the Invaded Eastern Territories and SD took part.

The main objective of the Wannsee conference was co-ordination of the activities connected with the so-called “final solution to the Jewish affair” with a particular stress on defining “various kinds of possible solutions to the problem,” namely further extermination methods employed towards the Jews.⁵⁶

After the conference-briefing of officials in charge of Jewish affairs from Sipo and SD outposts on the occupied eastern territories, convened by the IV A4 B department (*Zentrallstelle für die jüdische Auswanderung – The Central Department of Jewish Emigration*) chief Adolf Eichmann on 6th March 1942, the process of the extermination of the Jews was about to enter a decisive phase.

The spring of 1942 brought the beginning of mass deportations of the Jews mostly from the southeastern part of the General Government, namely the Lublin and Galicia districts, to the extermination camps in Belzets. To illustrate, from Lvov, the capital of the Galicia district, as a result of the 20th March – 10th April 1942 “action” no less than 22,000 Jews were deported to Belzets. Mass pogroms and deportations to Belzets, Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau took place in the spring and summer of 1942 on the entire territory of Easternmost Poland:

The Vilnius area:	Glebokie	2,500 (June)
	Braslav	3,000 (3rd June)
	Oshmiana	300 (16th June)

Novogorodek area:	Baranovitche	3,000 (4th Mar.)
	Yvije	2,500 (8th May)
	Lida	18,200 (8th May, 10th June and 25th June)
	Shtchutchin	2,060 (9th May)
	Volozhin	1,000 (10th May)
	Vasilishky	2,000 (10th May)
	Slonim	10,000 (29th June)
	Niesviezh	600 (22nd July)
	Novogorodek	6,000 (7th Aug.)
Białystok district:	Volkovisk	2,000 (May)
The Polesie and the Volhynia:	Dubno	5,000 (27th May)
	Lutsk	6,000 (June and 4th July)
	Kobrin	6,000 (6th June and 25th July)
	Rovne	5,000 (14th – 15th July)
	Bereza Kartuska	1,000 (15th July)
	Kovel	24,000 (15th July)
	Kosov Poleski	1,200 (25th July)
	Drohitchin	1,700 (26th July)
	Olika	5,700 (27th – 28th July)
	Sarny	10,500 (Aug.)
	Kamien Koshirsky	2,400 (10th Aug.)
The Galicia district:	Lvov	55,000 (15th Mar. and 1st – 10th Aug.)
	Drohobitch	1,500 (15th Mar.)
	Zholkiev	700 (15th Mar.)
	Rava Ruska	3,500 (20th Mar. and 27th July)
	Rohatin	2,000 (20th Mar.)
	Tarnopol	5,000 (25th Mar. and Aug.)
	Stanislavov	8,000 (31st Mar., July and 3rd Aug.)
	Kolomya	4,000 (2nd Apr. and June)
	Kuty	1,000 (2nd Apr.)
	Tlumatch	1,200 (3rd Apr.)
	Dolina	3,000 (3rd Aug.)
	Sambor	4,000 (4th – 6th Aug.)
	Old Sambor	1,500 (5th – 6th Aug.)
	Borislav	2,000 (6th Aug.)

Turka on the Strij	5,000 (6th Aug.)
Bobrka	1,300 (12th Aug.)
Tchortkov	2,500 (28th Aug.)
Zlotchov	3,000 (28th Aug.)
Krzemienets	2,000 (30th Aug.)

An official description of the extermination action of the Jews, appearing in German documents in the spring and summer of 1942, was the term *Operation Reinhard*, named after the RSHA and SD chief Reinhard Heydrich, assassinated on 27th May 1942 by the Czech resistance movement. The most influential German official in the area of East-most Poland was Odilo Globocnik, formally only the SS and police chief in the Lublin district, yet first of all the Chief of Staff of the entire *Operation Reinhard*, exerting full control over the extermination camps in Belzets, Treblinka, Sobibor and Maydanek.⁵⁷

In October 1942 the so-called “second ghettoization” started, which mainly consisted in the transformation of the ghettos functioning in the previous form into the so-called “secondary ghettos” (*Sekundärghettos*). It must have meant another wave of mass pogroms and deportations of a substantial part of the Jewish community. The executive order that initiated “the second ghettoization” was the SS and police chief Heinrich Himmler’s resolution of 9th October 1942 concerning “the concentration of all the Jews capable of further working for the Wehrmacht” in what was described as “Jewish living districts” (*Judenwohnbezirke*), reduced parts of previous ghettos.⁵⁸

“The second ghettoization” was a virtual repetition, on a much larger scale, of previous deportation actions and pogroms and an introduction to the liquidation of those residual ghettos as well, carried out in January 1943.

I try to present below a horrifying specification of the death toll from “the second ghettoization” period (the autumn of 1942)⁵⁹:

The Vilnius area:	Oshmiana	406 (23rd Oct.)
The Novogorodek area:	Volozhin	1,000 (29th Sept.)
	Baranovitche	3,000 (17th Dec.)
	Slonim	300 (18th Dec.)
	Dvozhets	3,000 (19th Dec.)
The Polesie and the Volhynia:	Horochof	2,500 (Sept.)

	Ustsilug	2,000 (Sept.)
	Volhynian Vlodimer	16,000 (Sept. and 13th Nov.)
	Stolin	4,000 (11th Sept.)
	Dubno	3,000 (Oct.)
	Kobrin	4,000 (14th Oct.) – deportation to Treblinka
	Zdolbunov	1,000 (14th Oct.)
	Lithuanian Brest	25,000 (15th Oct.)
	Drohitchin	2,500 (15th Oct.)
	Bereza Kartuska	3,500 (16th Oct.)
	Pinsk	10,150 (28th Oct. and 23rd Dec.)
	Lutsk	500 (12th Dec.)
The Galicia District:	Berestetchko	1,000 (Sept.)
	Strij	6,500 (1st Sept., 15th – 31st Oct. and 27th Nov.) – deportation to Belzets
	Sambor	2,500 (2nd Sept. and 15th – 31st Oct.) – Belzets
	Bolechov	2,000 (3rd – 5th Sept.) – Belzets
	Khodorov	2,000 (4th Sept.) – Belzets
	Horodenka	1,500 (8th – 9th Sept.) – Belzets
	Stanislavov	5,000 (12th Sept.) – Belzets
	Sniatyn	2,000 (12th Sept.) – Belzets
	Kolomya	13,200 (13th Sept. and 3rd Oct.) – Belzets
	Kuty	800 (13th Sept.) – Belzets
	Sokal	2,500 (17th Sept.) – Belzets
	Brody	3,000 (19th Sept.) – Belzets
	Zaleshtchyki	2,000 (20th Sept.) – Belzets

Bolshovce	1,000 (21st – 22nd Sept.) – Belzets
Bzhezhany	2,000 (21st – 22nd Sept.) – Belzets
Busk	2,000 (21st – 22nd Sept. and 22nd Nov.) – Belzets
Kamionka Strumilova	1,100 (21st – 22nd Sept. and 15th – 31st Oct.) – Belzets
Podhajce	2,500 (21st – 22nd Sept. and 15th – 31st Oct.) – Belzets
Rohatin	2,250 (21st – 22nd Sept. and 8th Dec.) – Belzets
Butchatch	5,750 (24th, 15th – 31st October and 27th Nov.) – Belzets
Zborov	1,000 (26th Sept.) – Belzets
Tarnopol	1,000 (30th Sept.) – Belzets
Tchortkov	500 (1st Oct.) – Belzets
Drohobitch	2,300 (15th – 31st Oct.) – Belzets
Monastezhiska	2,500 (15th – 31st October) – Belzets
Skalat	4,100 (15th – 31st Oct. and 9th Nov.) – Belzets
Zbarazh	2,000 (15th – 31st Oct. and 8th Nov.) – Belzets
Zlotchov	2,500 (2nd Nov.) – Belzets
Lvov	13,000 (2nd and 27th Nov.) – Belzets
Komarno	2,000 (4th Nov.) – Belzets
Borislav	600 (5th Nov.) – Belzets
Zholkiev	2,500 (8th Nov.) – Belzets
Yavorov	1,500 (27th Nov.) – Belzets
Tlumatch	2,000 (27th Nov.) – Belzets

The Liquidation Action of Ghettoes from the So-Called Second Ghettoization Period (January – August 1943)

In January 1943, after the Stalingrad defeat and the mobilization of consecutive classes of German young men to the Wehrmacht, the German authorities decided on a repeated selection of the surviving remnants of the Jewish community, on the basis of which special obligatory labour camps, serving the army, were to be established. The first resolution directly striking at the Jews from Central and Eastern Europe was Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller's order of 16th December 1942, addressed to local police authorities and concerning the deportation of more than 45,000 Jewish workers to the extermination camp in Auschwitz. To a certain extent, the following resolutions were of similar tone: the General Governor Hans Frank's resolution of 20th January 1943 on opening and joining industrial plants and the decree of 6th February 1943 on the mobilization of labour force on the occupied territories of the USSR. Nevertheless, the event that had a direct impact on the further course of the extermination of the Jews in the discussed area was a conference (February 1943), convened by the RSHA chief Ernst Kaltenbrunner and the department of Jewish affairs, attached to the RSHA itself, chief Adolf Eichmann, where "concentrating the remaining Jews in concentration camps or subjecting to sterilization" and "further displacement" were approved.⁶⁰ On the basis of all the above decrees, existing concentration camps as well as newly created branches were subject to further enlargement; in this way all of them were gradually transformed into obligatory labour camps, from 20th January 1943 formally under control of the Ostindustrie Gm.b.H. – a company actually subordinate to the RSHA.

On the eastern territories of the interwar Republic of Poland the constantly high number of ghettoes, which remained after the so-called second ghettoization period, was a consequence of the need of using the Jewish labour force to the maximum in numerous farms, quarries, road construction works, and particularly in arms factories, due to the lack of local substitute labour. The process of liquidation of the existing ghettoes, or their transformation into labour camps, was in Easternmost Poland accompanied by further selective extermination in ghettoes as well as by a wave of deportations to the death camps in Treblinka, Belzets, Maydanek and Auschwitz-Birkenau. A crucial new

factor, which accidentally started to appear, were attempts at active resistance to the oppressors' activities, made by loose or more organized formations of Jewish self-defence. At this point we should direct our attention to the stand-point of the Republic of Poland's authorities, which in January 1943 established a Jewish department attached to the office of the Republic of Poland's Government Delegate to the Country, led by Witold Bieńkowski, alias "Ventski" (being simultaneously the liaison officer between the Council of the Aid for the Jews "Żegota" (Zhegota), established in December 1942) and Władysław Bartoszewski alias "Ludvik."⁶¹ A similar Jewish department (led by Henryk Woliński) had already been attached to the Home Army General Headquarters Information and Propaganda Bureau (BiP KG AK). On 7th January 1943 the National Council (functioning as a temporary Polish parliament in-exile) submitted a request to the Polish Prime Minister General Władysław Sikorski, demanding intensive bombardment of strategic German cities from the ally states, which would be a revenge for the crimes which had been and were still being committed by the Nazis on the Polish Jews. On 5th May 1943 Prime Minister Sikorski made a personal appeal to the Polish nation to "provide as great help as possible to the exhausted Jews in view of the greatest crime in the history of mankind which they are subject to,"⁶² at the same time asserting that "any direct or indirect help given to Germans in their criminal action is the greatest transgression against Poland."⁶³

The liquidation action of easternmost ghettos from the second ghettoization period mainly developed since the spring of 1943, and was preceded by consecutive waves of pogroms and deportations to extermination camps. The final executive decision on murdering previously decimated Jewish community was announced on 21st June 1943 with secret SS and police chief Himmler's order, sent to all higher SS and police commanders and the Main Economic and Administrative Department (*Wirtschaft-Verwaltungs-Hauptamt - WVHA*) chief Oswald Pohl, and Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller. According to the above order, "all the Jews from the occupied eastern territories should be deported to concentration camps before 1st August 1943, the "useless" part of the population, namely children, elderly people and some women, should be "evacuated to the East" (point no. 5), in other words wiped out, and other ghettos should be liquidated. From 1st August the Jews could only be found in concentration camps (point no. 2)."⁶⁴

The Vilnius area

The province's greatest ghetto (18,000 inhabitants in June 1943), situated in Vilnius, was firstly affected by initial greater rigour directed against "the non-working" (June 1943), and on 6th August 1943 German authorities deported more than 7,000 men and women from the ghetto to the concentration camp in Klooga (Estonia) and Kaiserwald (Latvia). Anticipating the final liquidation action soon to come, the United Partisan Organization (*Farejnikte Partisaner Organizazje – FPO*), acting since 21st January 1942 in the Vilnius ghetto area, announced full mobilization of about 5,000 men left in the ghetto on 1st September 1943 in order to prepare and conduct a defence against the deportation.⁶⁵ However, in view of arresting an essential part of the FPO commanding staff by Gestapo and the lack of agreement within the self-defence organization, the organized resistance to the Germans was not applied. On 23rd September 1943, on the strength of the region's commissar Bruno Kittel's resolution, the Vilnius ghetto was subject to the final liquidation action, and, out of the inhabitants left alive, nearly 5,000 elderly women and children were deported to the KL Maydanek, a few hundred men were shot in Ponary, 1,400-1,700 women were sent to Kaiserwald in Latvia, and approximately 2,000 men to Estonian Klooga. In total, only 2-3 thousand people, who had escaped to nearby forests or partisan squads, out of the entire pre-war Jewish population of Vilnius, witnessed the second invasion of the city by the Soviets in the summer of 1944.

Inhabitants of the other provinces' ghettos, liquidated already between July and August 1943, experienced a similarly tragic lot, when on 28th July the labour camp in New Wileyka (murder of local Jewish workers), and on 20th August the ghetto in Głębokie (more than 3,000 Jews shot during a self-defence attempt) were closed down.

In total, during the 3-year long German occupation, approximately 80-90% of the pre-war Jewish community of the Vilnius area were victims of the Nazi terror.

The Novogorodek province

The majority of the Jews who survived the "second ghettoization" pogroms were subject to final extermination no later than at the end of 1942.

On 6th February 1943 the ghetto in Peresieka, a Novogorodek suburb, among others, was liquidated. In total, out of the province's capital's 6,000 inhabitants only about 1,200 survived the war, mainly those who escaped from local labour camps with substantial help on the part of Jewish self-defence squads operating around the city (commanders: Tuvia Bielsky, Berko Joselevitch, Abraham Raruvski, Jasha Kantorovitch). On the other hand, the only people saved from the ghetto in Lida (15,000 Jews in 1941) were 300 escapees to the "Iskra" ("Sparkle") squad, led by Tuvia Bielsky. Extermination actions directed against ghettos in Słonim (80 saved out of 9,000 Jews who inhabited the city in 1939), Nieswiezh, or Baranovitche (150 saved) brought about ravages on a similar scale.

The Białystok District

From January 1943, this district's ghettos passed under direct Gestapo and SS control, enabling further acts of manslaughter and terror to take place. Already in the beginning of January 1943 small ghettos of the district were completely liquidated: 12th January – Zambrov (20,000 shot during the liquidation action), 14th January – Łomża (1,800 shot), 25th January – Yasionovka (2,120 deported to Auschwitz), and Sokółka and Krinki as well. In the period of 5th – 12th February partial liquidation of the ghetto in Białystok began (with some resistance of Elijah Boraks' group), where Germans shot 2,000 people on the site, and some further 10,000 were deported to the camps in Treblinka and Auschwitz. During 13th to 16th February 1943 the last part of 4,000 Jews from Grodno was deported to Treblinka (barely 180 survived). At the end of June 1943, during the conference of SS and police commanders from the Eastern Prussia area, which took place in Königsberg, the decision of the final liquidation of the ghetto in Białystok was made (only 900 Jews from there survived the war), which happened in the period of 13th – 20th August 1943, with casual attempts to put up resistance to German forces made by the squads led by Mordekhay Tenenbaum.

The Polesie and Volhynia provinces

From February 1943 serious SS and police forces started open hunting for the remnants of the Jews, which resulted in capturing

and subsequent murdering, only during the spring of that year, more than 37,000 Jews, out of the total of 40,000 who had been hiding in January (some died of starvation and diseases). Accordingly, the Jewish community of both provinces virtually disappeared. In the following chart I attempt to present the approximate range of the Holocaust in the discussed area⁶⁶: Lithuanian Brest – only about 200 Jews survived (the city had been inhabited by 30,000 in 1941); Dubno – about 300 saved (1939: 12,000); Yanov Poleski – about 50 saved (1939: 2,000); Kobrin – small, undefined group (1941: 8,000); Kovel – about 40 saved (1939: 17,000); Lutsk – about 150 saved (1939: 20,000); Pińsk – a group of less than a hundred people who had managed to hide on the nearby marshes (1939: 21,000); Rovne – about 500 saved (1939: 28,000); Sarny – about 40 saved (1941: 7,000); Stolin – the entire Jewish population of the town of about 500 people had been murdered Volhynian Vlodimir – hardly twenty saved people (1939: 25,000).

The Galicia District

On the announcement of the special decree on limiting the number of ghettos in the district on 10th November 1942 by the SS and Police Higher Leader for the General Government, Friedrich Wilhelm Koch, 360,000 Jews were split between 32 ghettos from the “second ghettoization” period. From the beginning of 1943 the final extermination of those residual centres of the Jewish community started in the Galicia region. For instance, only in the short period between 7th December 1942 and 10th January 1943 no less than 12,000 inhabitants of the ghetto in Rava Ruska were murdered, and a further 2,000 were deported to Belzets. In the entire Rava Ruska province more than 17,500 Jews died until April 1943, and more than 6,000 were deported to Belzets.⁶⁷

During the first six months of 1943, the SS and police forces carried out the final phase of the extermination of the Galicia District’s Jewish community to such an extent that only 8,000 – 10,000 people witnessed the second invasion of the discussed region by the Red Army⁶⁸. Small ghettos of the district completely disappeared by the beginning of the spring of 1943, and the largest in Lvov outlasted these due only to its paramount importance in the exploitation of still numerous Jewish labour force. The final period of the “Jewish living district’s” existence in Lvov similarly brought about consecutive criminal actions and de-

portations: 6th – 8th January – 10,000, 17th March – 1,100, 22nd May – 3,000 and more than 16,000 murdered or deported during the final liquidation of the ghetto on 1st – 16th June 1943.⁶⁹

At this point it is worth mentioning that, for fear of defence fights put up by Lvov's formations of Jewish self-defence after the example of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, the SS and Police Commander for the Galicia District, SS Brigadeführer Fritz Katzmann, categorically asserted that "in order to avoid losses on our side, we were bound to act ruthlessly from the beginning, burning house after house and liquidating any potential sources of resistance"⁷⁰. As a sort of complement, at this point I would like to mention the estimated range of the Holocaust of the Jews from the Galicia District, giving only examples of larger urban centres⁷¹:

Bolechov	the entire 3,500 Jewish population of the city was murdered;
Borislav	200 saved in nearby forests, next 200 people came back from the USSR after the war;
Brody	almost complete extermination of more than 10,000 Jewish inhabitants of the city;
Butchatch	only 100 people managed to survive in the city, some further 400 came back from the USSR (1941: approx. 10,000);
Tchortkov	about 100 saved (1939: 8,000);
Drohobitch	about 400 saved, escapees to Hungary or having the so-called "Aryan" documents at their disposal (1939: 17,000);
Kolomya	hardly a hundred saved (1939: 15,000);
Kozhets	approx. 50 saved (fugitives within the runaway action organized by Misha Gildenman in September 1942 (1939: 5,000);
Kuty	complete extermination of more than 3,000 Jewish inhabitants of the city;
Lvov	only 820 people survived out of the total of 150,000 (according to the State in 1941);
Podhaytse	complete extermination of more than 3,000 Jews;
Sambor	hardly a hundred saved (1939: 8,000);
Scalat	200 saved (1939: 4,800);
Sokal	hardly a hundred saved (1941: 6,000);
Stanislavov	1,500 saved (1939: 30,000);
Strij	hardly a hundred saved (1939: 12,000);
Tarnopol	approx. 350 saved (1939: 18,000);

Turka on the Strij	complete extermination (1939: 6,000);
Zaleshtchiky	complete extermination (1939: 4,000);
Zbaraz	approx. 60 saved (1939: 5,000);
Zlotchov	complete extermination (1941: 14,000).

In conclusion I would like to emphasize that in my article I have managed to present only a small and general fragment of the tragic history of the Jewish community of Easternmost Poland during World War II, which is still relatively unknown in Polish historiography, mainly due to limited, so far, availability of appropriate studies and source materials.

NOTES

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 7. N.P. Vakar, *Byelorussia. The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956) 160.
 8. R. Ainsztein, "Soviet Jewry in the Second World War," ed. L. Kochan, 282. See also: L. Hirszowicz (introduced), "NKVD Documents Shed New Light on Fate of Erlich and Alter," *East European-Jewish Affairs* 22.2 (1992): 65-85; L. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945* (London, 1977) 319; S. Redlich, "The Erlich-Alter Affair," *Soviet-Jewish Affairs* 9.2 (1979): 30.
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 12. Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung*, vol. 2, 296.
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 14. J. Noakes and G. Pridham, eds., *Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1988) 1089, vol. 3 of *Nazism 1919-1945. A Documentary Reader*.
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 16. I. Shechtman, "Sovietskoye evreystvo v germansko-sovietskoy voynie" ["The Soviet Jewry in the German-Soviet War"], *Evreysky mir* 2 (1944): 225.

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18. I. Arad, *Unichtozhenie evreev SSSR v gody germanskoj okupatsii, 1941-1944 [The Destruction of the Soviet Jews in Years of German Occupation, 1941-1944]* (Jerusalem, 1992) 4, 50, 51, 54. See also: Noakes and Pridham 1092.
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20. H. Safrian, "Massenmord und Sklaveneinsatz. Nationalsozialistische Besatzungspolitik in Wilna 1941-1943" ["The Slaughter and the Slavery. Nazi-Policy of Occupation in Vilnius, 1941-1943"], *Ess firf kejn weg zurik... Geschichte und Lieder des Ghetto von Wilna 1941-1943 [Ess firf kejn weg zurik... The History and Songs of Ghetto of Vilnius, 1941-1943]*, ed. F. Freund, F. Ruttner, and H. Safrian (Vienna, 1992) 39. See also: A. Eisenbach, *Hitlerowska polityka zagłady Żydów [The Nazi-Policy of the Destruction of the Jews]* (Warsaw, 1961) 271.
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22. H. Krausnick and H.H. Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges. Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1938-1942 [The Troops of the Ideological War. The Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and Security Service, 1938-1942]* (Stuttgart, 1981) 166.
23. A. Dallin, *Deutsche Herrschaft in Russland 1941-1945 [The German Rule in Russia]* (Düsseldorf, 1958) 41.
24. W. Orbach, "The Destruction of the Jews in Nazi-Occupied Territories of the USSR," *Soviet-Jewish Affairs*, 6.2 (1976): 18.
25. Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung*, vol. 2, 334.
26. R. Headland, *Messages of Murder. A Study of the Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941-1943* (London-Toronto, 1992) 75. In order to avoid the necessity of using the words "killing" or "extermination," the following terms were used in reports: "action," "special action," "retaliatory action," "pacification," "cleaning action," "overhauling," "freeing the area of the Jews," "special treatment," "handled appropriately," "liquidation, neutralization," "solution of the Jewish question," "procedure in compliance with the orders," "ruthless collective measures," "elimination," "extirpation."

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29. P. Konecny, "Widerstand in Wilna 1941-1943" ["The Resistance in Vilnius, 1941-1943"], *Ess firt kejn weg zurik...* 49.
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31. M. Gilbert, *Atlas of Holocaust* (Oxford, 1988), 67, 68, 76, 81, 83.
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43. Weiss 412.
44. J. Gerstenfeld-Maltiel, *My Private War* (London, 1993) 60.
45. *The Journal of the Academic Proceedings of Soviet Jewry* 1.1 (London, 1986): 911. See also: Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung*, vol. 2, 326, 521; Wiehn 1011; Arad, *Unichtozhenie evreev SSSR* 10; Gilbert, *Atlas of Holocaust* 67, 68, 76, 81, 83; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 1-16.
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50. Trunk 6.
51. M. Fuks, *Martyrologia i walka Żydów polskich [The Martyrdom and the Fight of the Polish Jews]* (Warsaw, 1988) 48.
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57. Eisenbach 310.
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59. Gilbert, *Atlas of Holocaust* 116, 124, 125, 128, 129, 131, 132, 136, 140.
60. Eisenbach 417.

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