

THE JANOWSKA HELL

The camp on Janowska street was a University of Bestiality, while Majdanek, Dachau, Auschwitz and Buchenwald were secondary schools of the same bestiality, with the primary school being German upbringing – Hitler's training.

Maksymilian Borwicz, *Uniwersytet zbirów*

Between 17th and 21st of November 2003 an international conference dedicated to the sixtieth anniversary of the tragedy of the Janowska camp in Lwów took place at the Lwów Polytechnic. It was organised by the Jewish community in Lwów with the support of the University and the Town Council. It emerged from the conference materials that the initiator of the undertaking was a former prisoner of Janowska camp, Dr. Aleksander Schwarz, one of those, whom – in a similar manner to Szymon Wiesenthal, Maksymilian Borwicz and Leon Weliczker, managed to survive. There were two major tangible traces left by the conference: an information board by the stone commemorating the tragedy of the Janowska camp, which was unveiled in 1993 near the place where once the camp gate had been located, and a brief book published in haste for the conference, which had been prepared by Prof. Jakub Honigsman under the title *The Janowska Hell*¹. Professor Honigsman had been

¹ Я. Хонігсман, *Янівське пекло. Короткий нарис історії Янівського канцтабору у Львові* (Львів: Міжнародний центр «Голокост» ім. Доктора А. Шварца, 2003).

living in Lwów since 1944. Until today it is the only, albeit modest, attempt to produce a monograph on the Janowska camp in Lwów².

In December 2007, on the occasion of his 85th birthday I brought Prof. Honigsman the first copies of his book published by the Jewish Historical Institute under the title *The Destruction of Lviv's Jews 1941–1944*³. The Polish version had been in preparation for a long time, its contents being supplemented in accordance with the Russian, Ukrainian and English versions⁴. He was very happy that the book had appeared in his native language (he was born and raised in Lublin, where he also finished elementary school). Throughout the course of a long evening conversation he said he would like not only his book to appear in Polish, but also

After several delays material was also published after the conference, but it contained only one small report with regard to the material delivered at the conference.

² An extensive history of the Janowska camp has been presented by Eliyahu Jones – see E. Jones, *Żydzi Lwowa w okresie okupacji 1939–1945* (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 1999), p. 160–182.

³ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*. Trans. A. Redzik (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2007).

⁴ Я. Хонігсман, *Катастрофа Львовського єврейства* (Львов, 1993). Translations: J. Honigsman, *The catastrophe of Jewry in Lvov* (Lviv: Solom-Aleichem Jewish Society of Culture, 1993). Я. Хонігсман, *Катастрофа львівського єврейства (1941–1944)* (Львів: Національна Академія Наук України, 2003).

In addition Prof. Honigsman published an extensive monograph under the title: *Juden in der West Ukraine. Jüdisches Leben und Leiden in Ostgalizien, Wolhynien, der Bukowina und Transkarpatien 1933–1945* (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre, 2001). Some of the more comprehensive publications in Russian should also be mentioned: *Катастрофа єврейства Західної України. Євреї Восточної Галиції, Західної Волини, Буковини і Закарпаття в 1933–1945 роках* (Львов, 1998), *Люди, годы, события. Статьи из нашей давней и недавней истории* (Львов, 1998). In Polish on the subject of the Holocaust he published: “Zagłada Żydów w mieście i powiecie Rawa Ruska w latach 1941–1944,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 2 (1977), p. 97–98 (as: Jakub Iszchułow); “Czterdziesta rocznica śmierci Maksymiliana Goldszteina,” *Fołks-Sztyme*, no. 5, (1983), p. 10, 12 (as Jakób Isz–Dwosz).

the book by Borwicz about the Janowska camp, “because beyond Borwicz there was no monograph about that hell in Poland”. We were unable to manage it. The Professor died in Lviv on 8 October 2008.

When the publisher Jacek Tokarski suggested to me that I write about the Janowska camp I thought that the very best addressee would have been Prof. Honigsman. I recalled our conversation in 2007. After further consideration I decided to write the present article, in part based on the findings of Prof. Jakub Honigsman, assembled in the most valuable part of his book of recollections, and in part based on the available literature.

* * *

In the Polish language, the published literature touching on the Holocaust in Lviv, and more widely, in Eastern Galicia, is not extensive. Immediately after the war several memoirs appeared (Leon Weliczker, Janina Heschel, Michał Borwicz and Filip Friedman)⁵ and in the ensuing years a few small diaries and historical monographs followed⁶. A few further publications appeared during the

⁵ M. Borwicz, *Uniwersytet zbirów* (Kraków: Wojewódzka Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Krakowie, 1946); *idem*, *Organizowanie wściekłości* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ogólnopolskiej Ligi do Walki z Rasizmem, 1947); F. Friedman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich* (Łódź: Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, 1945); J. Heschel, *Oczyrna 12-letniej dziewczynki* (Łódź: Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, 1946); L. Weliczker, *Brygada Śmierci. Sonderkommando 1005. Pamiętnik* (Łódź: Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, 1946).

⁶ T. Berenstein, “Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej w Dystrykcie Galicja (1941–1943),” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 67 (1967), p. 3–58; *eadem*, “Praca przymusowa ludności żydowskiej w tzw. dystrykcie Galicja (1941–1944),” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 69 (1969), p. 3–46; Z. Hoffman, “Z teki lwowskiej,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 114–115 (1980), p. 135–145; T. Jędruszczak, “Początki okupacji niemieckiej w tzw. dystrykcie galicyjskim w 1941 r.,” *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Historia*, p. 207–216.

period of the Third Polish Republic⁷. In 1999, translated from the Russian, the Polish version of the book by Eliyahu Jones appeared⁸, and in 2007 the memoirs of Prof. Honigsman⁹. In 2011

Agnieszka Holland produced the film *In the darkness* based on the memoirs of Krystyna Chiger, a child saved from destruction together with her family in the sewers of Lviv by the sewer worker Leopold Socha. In that same year the Polish version of the memoirs of Krystyna Chiger¹⁰ and her father appeared¹¹.

Of particular importance is the report of SS General Fredrich Katzmann, published under the titled *Solving the Jewish Question*

⁷ A. Krugłow, "Deportacje ludności żydowskiej z dystryktu Galicja do obozu zagłady w Bełżcu w 1942 r.," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 151 (1989), p. 101–118; B. Guttermann, *Days of Horror. Jewish Testimonies from German Occupied Lemberg 1941–1943* (Tel Aviv: The Center for the History of Polish Jewry, The Diaspora Research Institute, 1991); A. Żbikowski, "Lokalne pogromy Żydów w czerwcu i lipcu 1941 roku na wschodnich rubieżach II Rzeczypospolitej," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 162–163 (1992), p. 2–18; K. Lewin, *Przeżyłem. Saga świętego Jura spisana w 1946 roku przez syna rabina Lwowa* (Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2006); M. Anstadt, *Dziecko ze Lwowa* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2006); M. Allerhand, L. Allerhand, *Zapiski z tamtego świata* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne, 2003). 2nd edition: *Zapiski z tamtego świata. Zagłada we Lwowie w dziennikach profesora i wspomnieniach jego wnuka*, the postscript by A. Redzik (Kraków: Wysoki Zamek, 2011). There is also a noteworthy book in Ukrainian, published in Lviv: О. Бойко, *Синагоги Львова* (Львів, 2008).

⁸ E. Jones, *op. cit.* p. 293. In 2004 an English version appeared in Jerusalem, see: E. Jones, *Smoke in the Sand: the Jews of Lvov in the War Years 1939–1944* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2004), p. 393. It is also worth noting that Jewhen Nakoneczny contested Jones's theses in his published memoirs, see: Є. Наконечний, „Шоа” у Львові. Спогади (Львів: Національна Академія Наук України. Львівська наукова бібліотека ім. В. Стефаніка, 2004), p. 304, see also the review: A. Redzik, *Rocznik Lwowski* (2005), p. 268–273.

⁹ J. Honigsman, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ K. Chiger, D. Paisner, *Dziewczynka w zielonym sweterku* (Warszawa: PWN, 2011), p. 320.

¹¹ I. Chiger, *Świat w mroku. Pamiętnik ojca dziewczynki w zielonym sweterku* (Warszawa: PWN, 2011), p. 316.

in the District of Galicia. It was published for the first time in its entirety by the Institute of National Memory along with a study by Andrzej Żbikowski¹².

* * *

The German army arrived in Lviv on 30 June 1941. Despite earlier cooperation with the Germans, the Nazis did not agree to establish a Ukrainian State, although the Ukrainians proclaimed statehood and appointed a government. It mattered little. Based on the directives of the Führer given between 17 and 22 July 1941, on 1 August 1941 the area of the former province of Eastern Galicia, namely the Polish districts of Lviv, Stanisławów and Tarnopol became the so-called the District of Galicia (*Distrikt Galizien*), joined to the General Government, whereas the Ukrainian lands that had been seized were formed into the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* with its seat in Równo on 1 September 1941. One should note however that the differences in *Distrikt Galizien*, in compari-

¹² F. Katzmann, *Rozwiązanie kwestii żydowskiej w Dystrykcie Galicja*, ed. A. Żbikowski (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2001), p. 87. The original report was handed to Poland on 10 June 1948 by the Head of the International Documentation Tribunal against War Criminals in Nuremberg and is presently located in the Archive of the Central Commission for Research into Hitler's Crimes (sygn. Z. 203). Since that time Katzmann's report has been published in part or in whole several times. It appeared for the first time in a German version in 1949 – *Der Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof, Nürnberg, 14. November 1945 – 1. Oktober 1946*, Nürnberg 1948/1949, p. 391–431. Thereafter part of the report appeared in Polish translation in 1951: “*Rozwiązanie kwestii żydowskiej w dystrykcie Galicja*. Raport Fritza Katzmana.” *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce* (1951). Vol. VI, and a second fragment of the Polish translation in a collected works published by the Jewish Historical Institute: T. Berenstein, *Eksterminacja Żydów na ziemiach polskich w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej. Zbiór dokumentów*, ed. A. Eisenbach, A. Rutkowski (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1957), p. 331–338.

son to the remaining districts of the General Gouvernement, were substantial, particularly with regard to the position of the Ukrainian people. For example in *Distrikt Galizien* only the Ukrainians could join the police. From the beginning the Ukrainians also exercised control over the civil administration.

At the apex of the administration stood the Governor, Dr. Karl Lasch. *Distrikt Galizien* was divided into government districts (*Kreishauptmannstadt*) and district towns (*Kreisfreistadt*). At the head of each government district there stood the district governor (*Kreishauptmann*), at the head of each district town there was the municipal governor *Stadthauptmann*. The official language was German, although directives, orders and legal acts were also printed in the Ukrainian and Polish languages¹³.

From the moment of the publication of the directive concerning the General Gouvernement, the legislative force of all of the anti-Jewish legislation, which had been in effect in the General Gouvernement, extended over the territory of *Distrikt Galizien*. Jews were deprived of every kind of political and civil right¹⁴. It became possible to rob them with impunity, to force them to perform any kind of work, to deport them to other places, to harass and kill them. In July and August 1941, within *Distrikt Galizien* itself, nine forced labour camps for Jews were created (in Lviv, Winniki, Ostrów, Kurowica, Jaktorów [in the vicinity of Złoczów], Lacka, Pluchow, Drohobycz, Borysław)¹⁵. In September and October further six large concentration camps were established, including the Janowska camp in Lviv. Jews were forced to work there for 12–14 hours a day. They were harassed and also killed.

¹³ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*, p. 33–34.

¹⁴ F. Katzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁵ F. Katzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 19. In November 1941 in the camps of District Winniki, Kurowice, Lackie Wielkie, Pluchów, Słowita, Jezierna, Kamionka, Ławrykowice 4000 Jews were employed.

The place of those murdered was quickly filled by others, captured and arrested in street round ups¹⁶.

The forced labour camp on Janowska Street in Lviv was established on the terrain of the former factory of A. Steinhaus (The Building Company TBM, Janowska Street 134)¹⁷. Jurij Polanskyj, the district head was the first to propose that these grounds should serve such a purpose¹⁸.

Already by the autumn of 1941 the original factory buildings had been converted into a German armaments plant (*Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke* – D.A.W.). The plant was placed under the control of the SS. For a short period it was directed by SS Officer Wolfgang von Mobinkel, and thereafter by SS-obersturmführer Fritz Gebauer¹⁹.

From September 1941 onward the original plant was considerably extended. At that time new barracks were established and the area was enclosed with barbed wire. From October 1941 Jews working in the SS-controlled camp were unable to return to their homes, as Jakub Honigsman writes – in such a manner the original work site was transformed into a SS forced labour camp, a process completed on 1 November 1941 when a plaque was placed above the front gate of the camp with the inscription “Der SS und Polizei Führer im Distrikt Galizien Zwangsarbeitslager in Lemberg”²⁰.

In the early months the camp contained not only Jews, but also Poles and even Ukrainians. Bearing different identification bands – the Poles red, and the Ukrainians blue – they remained separated from each other. If they survived, the non-Jewish prisoners were set free after they had served their sentence²¹.

¹⁶ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*, p. 35.

¹⁷ *Idem*, *Янівське пекло*, p. 16; E. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

¹⁸ Я. Хонігсман, *Янівське пекло*, p. 16.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 16; E. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

²⁰ Я. Хонігсман, *Янівське пекло*, p. 16–17, E. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

²¹ E. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

In the first quarter of 1942 the camp was extended. When SS-untersturmführer Gustaw Willhaus became camp commandant on 2 March 1942, the camp was comprised of three clearly defined parts. In the first part the camp administration offices were located, along with apartments for the SS-men (including the centrally located villa of Willhaus) as well as the so-called askaris (or those “eager to help” for the most part Ukrainians and some Russians – deserters from the Red Army). The compound also contained the garages and workshops for the mechanics. Also located in this part of the camp was the so called “sorting-camp”, or the place, where selections took place of those Jews delivered to the camp; those unable to work were sent to Bełżec or liquidated in the “Sands” (outside the camp).

In the second part the so-called “real camp” was located; here lived the prisoners, enclosed and secured behind the barbed wire. Aside from the thirteen barracks with the approximate dimensions of 30–40 metres in length, 10 metres in width and a height of 1.6 metres, the main square where assemblies took place was located here, as well as the kitchens. At the back of this part of the camp, in a slight depression in the terrain, a narrow pathway with a gate was located, which led directly to the “Sands” – the primary place of mass executions. Both parts of the camp were cobbled with gravestones from the nearby Jewish cemetery²².

The third part of the camp was located close by, being – according to Eliyahu Yones – actually a separate camp, whose real commandant remained Fritz Gebauer. Here was located the German armaments plant D.A.W., part of the larger company “Herman Göring”.

In the early period of the existence of the camp the prisoners still tried to organise a cultural life, restricted though it was, meeting illegally, writing and reciting poetry, organizing lectures. For ex-

²² Я. Хонігсман, *Янівське пекло*, р. 31–32.

ample, on 31 December 1941, a literary evening took place, which had been organised by the well-known writer and scriptwriter of several famous pre-war films, the author of the lyrics of numerous pre-war hits (still widely known, such as *Umówiłem się z nią dziewiątą* [*I Have a Date with Her at Nine*], *Każdemu wolno kochać* [*Anyone Can Love*], *Sex Appeal*, *Czy tutaj mieszka panna Agnieszka* [*Does Miss Agnieszka Live Here?*], *Ja mam czas, ja poczekam* [*I Have Time, I Will Wait*], *Dobranoc, oczka zmruż* [*Goodnight, Close Your Eyes* – a Polish lullaby in the sense of “Dream Away”] and *Tylko we Lwowie* [*Only in Lviv*]) Emanuel Schlechter (1904–1943)²³. Schlechter was murdered in 1943 during the liquidation of the camp.

Prisoners also created an array of satirical songs:

And we boys good enough,
Working at Janowska camp
They make us toil, give no food
And at us they daily shoot.

As for dinner hurly-burly
Mostly water with some barley.
Then on Sunday we get grits,
You want to puke before you eat.

(Translation by Joanna Szmigielska-Michałek)²⁴

²³ Cf. A. Redzik, “Jak twórca szlagierów wszechczasów nie został adwokatem – rzecz o Emanuelu Schlechterze (1904–1943). W 110. rocznicę urodzin i 70. rocznicę śmierci,” *Palestra*, no. 1–2 (2014), p. 245–255.

²⁴ Я. Хонігсман, *Янівське пекло*, p. 25. Jacek Kuroń noted down a different version of this song: Are we not good enough / Boys from the Janowska camp / You don't know us – we can meet / Fuck off man, suck my dick. / When they get you out of line / You won't get a box of pine / In the sand you'll go to sleep, / Fuck off man, suck my dick. / Action in May and February / You have wife and kid beyond the wire / With pain at heart you're very sick / Fuck off man, suck my dick (translation by Joanna Szmigielska-Michałek). (J. Kuroń, *Wiara i wino: do i od komunizmu*, Warszawa: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1990, p. 23; *idem, Autobiografia*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2009, p. 22).

The number of prisoners as well as the scale of the murders were increasing and the original forced labour camp gradually evolved in the direction of a death camp. From the spring of 1942, or from the time that Willhaus settled into the camp as commandant, murders, elaborate executions and the brutal harassment of the prisoners became a daily event. Fritz Gebauer reigned over his own kingdom in D.A.W. Reports of his behaviour are widely varied. He was capable of strangling a man with his hands – for pleasure, but in interpersonal contact he appeared friendly. Apart from that, Gebauer and commandant Willhaus hated each other²⁵.

Since April 1942 commandant Gustaw Willhaus had two deputies – SS officers Wilhelm Rokita and Adolf Kolonka. The first one was a native of Silesia. The commandant himself – simply for the purposes of entertainment – was capable of torturing the prisoners or shooting at them from the balcony of his villa. There is a report of a young Jew by the name of Szajewicz who was unable to bear all the humiliation and struck Willhaus in the face. Willhaus involuntarily shot the prisoner, and afterwards could not forgive himself the fact that he had let Szajewicz die so easily, and therefore abused his corpse²⁶.

All of the SS personnel in the camp were terrible murderers. Well known and recalled in numerous memoirs were the deputies of Willhaus – Kolonko and Rokita. Rokita – reportedly the director of a jazz orchestra before the war – devised the most brutal tortures, murdering people during the daily assemblies as well as during the weekly visits to the bathhouse. On the initiative of Rokita, during the summer of 1942, a camp orchestra was organised, into which were gathered many famous pre-war musicians: Jakub Mund, Artur Gold, Józef Herman, Edward Steinberger, Zygmunt (Maciej?) Schatz as well as the conductor Leon (Leopold?)

²⁵ E. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

Striks. Szac composed the death tango, played frequently as groups of prisoners were led out to execution in the “Sands”²⁷. Sergeant Kolonko, who came from from the Poznań area and spoke excellent Polish, was a specialist in executions and enjoyed shooting in the head prisoners waiting for death; he also loved the game of shooting “living targets”²⁸.

Among the many brutal murderers of Janowska camp Eliyahu Jones mentions the SS-men: Bayer, Biedermann (on 18 November 1943 he personally killed 180 persons with his own hands), Schönbach, whose family roots were in Silesia (every day he liked to kill several people, simply for the pleasure), Sergeant Bittner (he adored torture and volunteered to participate in *Aktionen*), Sgt. Bethke (a *Volksdeutsche* from Hungary – an incurably cruel alcoholic, Brombauer (a maniacal murderer – especially cruel), the one armed Mons, Sgt. Hahn (also a invalid), Koller (who specialised in uncovering Jews in hideouts, exceptionally sadistic), SS Sgt. Hainen – the chief gravedigger, who particularly liked torturing and murdering Jewish women, especially those who had been caught on the Aryan side (piercing them with a sharp metal prod), Sgt. Rozanoff, Siller, Steiner (who regaled the German ladies with shooting at living targets), Martens (one of the most brutal camp murderers and butchers (always craving more and more refined methods of murder), Vöx, Birman, Wirc. Diger, Grombach, Minkus, Eppler, Hainnisch and Strauss were less brutal.

In the spring of 1942 transports of people from outside Lviv began to be directed to the camp²⁹. The fatal sanitary condi-

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 170; Я. Хонігсман, *Янівське пекло*, p. 55. Wiesenthal wrote that Schlechter was the author of the tango of death – see S. Wiesenthal, *Słonecznik. Opowieść i komentarze* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2000), p. 22.

²⁸ E. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 161.

tions were conducive to the spread of disease. In the summer an epidemic of typhus broke out, which, in actual fact, was never brought under control. The hospital, which at that time was established in the camp was unable to fulfil its function, because the primary practitioner Dr. Maksymilian Kurcrok, aside from the hospital, was also assigned to a working brigade. Besides, the sick themselves used to be shot to death³⁰.

In the winter of 1942 the camp was again expanded. At first only men were to be found within the camp, but in March 1943 a women's camp was also organised³¹.

In the summer of 1943 the administration of the camp as well as the personnel were changed. In place of the Germans previously utilised for guarding the camp

Hungarians as well as Ukrainians were brought in. Willhaus and Rokita were relocated (Rokita became the Commandant of a labour camp in Tarnopol), and Franz Warzog was appointed commandant of the Janowska camp. It was Warzog that Szymon Wiesenthal asked to kill him, to which Warzog replied that a Jew did not have the right to die on the basis of his own wish. "In fact", he said, "I decide"³². As we know fate saved this prisoner for a distinguished career as an investigator of Nazi crimes.

Together with the assumption of the position of commandant by Warzog, the liquidator of the camp in Złoczów, the liquidation of the Janowska camp commenced³³. At the same time the liquidation of the Lviv ghetto also began. In January 1943 the ghetto had been transformed into a labour camp, divided into *Julag A* (for workers) and *Julag B* (for women and children)³⁴. In June 1943 the Germans carried out the final liquidation *Aktion* in the Lviv

³⁰ Я. Хонігсман, *Янівське пекло*, p. 25.

³¹ F. Katzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

³² E. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

³⁴ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*, p. 73–74.

ghetto. Katzmann reported, that it had been prompted by the information that the Jews staying in the ghetto had gathered a considerable number of arms. The Germans, among whom the barbarous commandant Grzymek stood out, were extremely brutal and ruthless. Approximately 20 000 Jews (despite the fact that only 12 000 were registered) were captured, and moreover, approximately 3000 bodies were uncovered in hiding places, the inhabitants of which had committed suicide. Katzmann acknowledged that several Germans were killed, a dozen or so wounded and many were infected with spotted typhus and as a result of that, subsequently perished³⁵. Some Jews put up a heroic defence, like those hiding in the bunker located on Łokietka Street and a young married couple who shot down and wounded several SS-men during their escape before being burnt alive together with a building³⁶.

The scale and dimensions of the extermination ongoing at that time found expression in the written statements of Katzmann. By November 1942, 254 989 Jews had been “resettled” across Eastern Galicia³⁷. About six months later Fritz Katzmann informed that by 27th June 1943, 434 329 Jews had been displaced. During this period labour camps were located not only in Lviv, but also in Winniki, Ostrów, Kurowice, Jaktorów, Lacki, Pluchów, Kozaki, Zborów, Jeziorno, Tarnopol, Hluboszki, Borki Wielkie, Kamionka, Drohobycz, Borysław, Stryj, Skole, Bolechów, Broszniów i Niebielów. According to Katzmann’s report the camps contained upwards of 21 156 Jews³⁸.

After the liquidation of the ghetto a group of young Jews were assigned to the Janowska camp. Part of this group was joined to the brigades of workers associated with D.A.W.³⁹

³⁵ F. Katzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

³⁶ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*, p. 73–75.

³⁷ F. Katzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

³⁹ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*, p. 75–76.

At this time an underground organisation was active among the workers of D.A.W. (it was most probably in operation from the beginning of 1943). Some of its members had been in the camp from as early as 1941, e.g.: Awram Warman (Bomek), Bronisław Jakubowicz (Bronek), Yerachmiel Grün (Grin) with his wife Helena, Dawid Frankel, P. Klejnman, A. Stenberg and others. Attached to this group was Henryk Axer, known as “Rysiek”, the son of the famous lawyer Maurycy Axer⁴⁰, Michał Borwicz, Ehuda Ajsman and others, who worked in the administrative offices. Conspirators from the military workshops managed to liquidate a few traitors, who had been bribed by the Germans. It helped them begin preparations for an escape from the camp.

One of the heroes of the underground in the Janowska camp was “Rysiek”, the aforementioned Henryk Axer (1918–1943). In the beginning he was an ordinary worker, but on account of his education he shortly became a worker in the administration offices, thanks to which he was able to offer help to his co-prisoners. He also quickly established contact with the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) in Lviv and maintained, it through the physician Dr. Harlig, who visited the camp on a regular basis. Later he delivered reports to the AK through a hiding place in the camp washrooms, first on Balonowa street, and then on Szpitalna street. Among other things he gathered information about the situation in the camp, and also about the activities of the German enterprises. His aim, and that of his colleagues however, remained preparations for an uprising. Axer asked a liaison officer of a branch of the AK in Lviv for a radio station for the camp complete with operational instructions, but he did not turn up at the appointed place to collect it.. In the meantime, as a result of a betrayal among the

⁴⁰ In the literature for the most part the name of this hero of the Janowska camp is incorrectly given as Ryszard. See: Z. Andrzejewski, “Ryś,” *Nasz Przemyśl*, no. 6 (2007), p. 6–7.

conspirators, the Germans found out about the preparations and discovered the hidden weapons. Traces lead to Rysiek, as one of the organisers of the conspiracy and a commander of one of the fighting units. He was subjected to hellish torture and in the end beaten to death with clubs⁴¹. Several other conspirators also perished.

Having decided to eradicate all traces of Hitler's crimes, in the autumn of 1943 the Germans created a separate unit, Sonderkommando 1005, named the "Death Brigade", which was comprised of approximately 120 young Jews⁴². The brigade dug out from the death pits those that had been murdered and burnt them on pyres; the bones were ground into ash by a special machine and ashes scattered. Sonderkommando 1005 also disinterred the professors of the Lviv universities⁴³ murdered on 4 July 1941 and burnt them, as a former member of the brigade has described⁴⁴.

The plans for the ultimate fate of the brigade after completing its task were discovered by a number of the members of Sonderkommando 1005, and their leader, Herches. The majority decided to form a group ready to attack those Germans guarding them. Herches discussed a plan of escape with trusted members of the brigade. It was decided that in the course of the following day that, which turned out to be in the second half of November 1943, to fall upon their guards, relieve them of their guns and escape to freedom⁴⁵.

On the 19 November 1943 Herches ordered the members of the Death Brigade to gather in the workshop, in which the mate-

⁴¹ See: Z. Andrzejewski, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁴² L. Weliczker, *op. cit.*

⁴³ Cf. D. Schenk, *Noc morderców. Kaźń polskich profesorów we Lwowie i Holokaust w Galicji Wschodniej*, trans. P. Zarychta (Kraków: Wysoki Zamek, 2011).

⁴⁴ L. Weliczker, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

⁴⁵ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*, p. 76–77; T. Berenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 30; L. Weliczker, *op. cit.*, p. 114–120.

rials for burning the corpses were located. A group of the older members of the brigade received orders to observe the guards, until the rest of the group had gathered in the workshop and the meeting had finished. The brigade leader Herches explained the situation to those gathered in the workshop. He explained that presently, as soon as the brigade had finished cremating the corpses, the Germans would get rid of them, too. Therefore he proposed they fight – the only possible action, better than willingly going to one’s death. He also presented them with a plan of action. That same day a group of four boys from the brigade were to attack the guards at the gate, while another group of four were to liquidate the Germans in the vicinity of the workshops. Thereafter the escapees planned to reach the place in which a store of weapons had been located, gather them, pass through the gate and escape into the forest. Despite the fact that the plan had been thoroughly organised, it did not unfold in the manner expected by the organisers. The prisoners killed the guards, the Schutzpolizei and the SS-men and managed to escape to freedom. However the Germans gave pursuit, captured the majority of the prisoners and killed them⁴⁶. Only several of the escapees, among them Leon Weliczker, managed to find a safe hiding place with some good people. He survived and gave witness to the activities of Sonderkommando 1005⁴⁷.

After the final action in the Janowska camp on 19 November 1943 only several hundred prisoners remained⁴⁸. Efforts were made to supplement the gaps in the work force, although this be-

⁴⁶ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*, p. 76–77. More: Z. Andrzejewski, *op. cit.*; S. Głogowska, “Przyczynek do historii obozu janowskiego – Ryszard Axer.” *Przegląd Lekarski*, no. 1 (1979); P. Lisiewicz, “Największa wyspa podziemia żydowskiego we Lwowie,” *Życie Literackie*, no. 51–52 (1983).

⁴⁷ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*, p. 76–77.

⁴⁸ F. Katzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

came more and more difficult. The replenished Sonderkommando 1005 was also located in the camp. (Leon Perlman had written more widely about the activities of this brigade).

On 19 July 1944, just prior to the arrival of the Red Army in Lviv, commandant Warzog informed those Jews remaining in the camp that they would be evacuated with the Germans. They were transported to Przemyśl, where they were supposed to be treated as workers of German descent. Shortly thereafter they were moved to the camp at Płaszów in the suburbs of Kraków, and farther⁴⁹. Practically all of those few survived, among them Szymon Wiesenthal.

It is an accepted fact that up until May 1944 approximately 200 000 Jews passed through (or were interned in) the Janowska camp, the majority murdered through repeated selections, death by exhaustion or in one of the innumerable epidemics⁵⁰.

Approximately 800 Jews survived the Holocaust in vicinity of Lviv. In the course of two years of German occupation, approximately 136 000 people perished in the ghetto of Lviv; and over 200 000 were killed in the Janowska camp together with the other concentration camps located in the city. Throughout *Distrikt Galizien* approximately 550 000 Jews were murdered. Approximately 40 000 perished in prisons from hunger and illness, and over 20 000, unable to stand the unending tortures, committed suicide. Other sources indicate that on the territory of today's Western Ukraine over 700 000 Jews were murdered⁵¹.

Among those murdered were many members of the cultural intelligentsia, representatives of science, politics, numerous doctors, lawyers, musicians, industrialists, and social activists⁵². Many

⁴⁹ E. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

⁵⁰ F. Katzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁵¹ J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*, p. 77; T. Berenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 30–31; F. Friedman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich*, p. 23–24.

⁵² *Cf.*, J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich 1941–1944*, p. 77–78.

of them were murdered in the Janowska camp, among them: Prof. Maurycy Allerhand, Dr. Seweryn Rosmarin (it is possible he perished during the time of the liquidation of the *Julag*); the composers Józef Koffler, Leopold Münzer, Leopold Striks, Alfred Stadler; the musicians: Marek Bauer, Amelia Deicz (Deutsch?), Henryk Apter, Adolf Gimpel, Józef Hand, Artur Hermelin, Józef Herman, Tatiana Modlinger, Edward Steinberger; the artists Otto Hann, Leon Eber, Zygmunt Biber; the writers, men of letters and publicists: Ostap Ortwin, Tobiasz Alter, Emanuel Schlechter, Karol Anoihler, Ajzyk Akselrod, Józef Berger, Sonia Friedman and the social activists: Samuel Dimand, Jakub Wittels, Józef Schaff⁵³.

Among those who survived the Janowska camp are some now widely known: Szymon Wiesenthal⁵⁴, Leon Weliczker, Michał Borwicz, Aleksander Schwarz, Yehuda Eisman⁵⁵, Zygmunt Leiner⁵⁶, Dawid Kahane⁵⁷, and Samuel Drix. The majority of them gave testimony in their memoirs. After the war almost all of them left Lviv. The activities of Szymon Wiesenthal (1908–2005) are generally known. He created the Jewish Documentation Centre and contributed to over 1200 Nazi criminals being prosecuted by the courts⁵⁸. Michał Maksymilian Borwicz (1911–1987), writer of both prose and poetry, relocated to Paris in 1947 and pursued an academic career. Leon Weliczker (born in 1925), using the name Wells, relocated first to Germany, where he contributed to

⁵³ Я. Хонігсман, *Янівське некло*, p. 29. The spelling of the names might have been different.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*. 30–31.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*. 34–35.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*. 35–37.

⁵⁷ D. Kahane, *Lvov Ghetto Diary* (Amherst: Univ of Massachusetts Press, 1990); E. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 171. Kahane is the author of the Lviv ghetto diary.

⁵⁸ See the biography of Simon Wiesenthal on the website of the Simon Wiesenthal Center <http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=lsKWLbPjLnF&b=4441351>

the sentencing of many German criminals, including Adolf Eichmann, and then emigrated to the United States. His archive was bequeathed to Yad Vashem. Dawid Kahane (1903–1998) was after the war the Chief Rabbi of the People's Army in Poland, and afterward the Chief Rabbi of the Israeli Airforce. He left a memoir, in which he presented Greek–Catholic archbishop Andrzej Szepetycki in favourable light – the bishop hid Kahane after his escape from the Janowska camp in April 1943.

Some among those saved took care to commemorate the destruction in Lviv, and in the Janowska camp, particularly Aleksander Schwarz and Yehuda Eisman.

Aleksander Schwarz (born 1924) is the son of an engineer from Borysław. He was taken to the Janowska camp together with his father in autumn 1941. In October 1942, in front of his eyes, his father was shot by an SS-man from Hungary. By a miracle he managed to avoid execution thanks to, among others, Henryk Axer and Benjamin Oberland. After his escape from the camp he hid in the forests in the vicinity of Borysław together with a group of approximately 100 people, but as a result of a Ukrainian denunciation the majority were caught and executed. He survived the remainder of the war in a bunker together with 25 other people. After the war he studied law and economics in Wrocław, and subsequently cybernetics, the field in which he eventually received a doctorate. In the 1960s he left Poland and took up residence in the Federal Republic of Germany, firstly in Frankfurt and subsequently in Munich. In the 1990s he established the Janowska Camp Foundation, whose aim was to commemorate the victims of the camp and take a lead in organising the establishment of a monument at the site. He travelled frequently, giving lectures and raising funds. His efforts lead to the re-establishment of the society B'nei B'rith in Lviv. For his services to the Lviv Jewish community The International Centre "Holocaust", opened in Lviv

in 2000 was named in his honour. He was also the initiator of the aforementioned conference in 2003⁵⁹.

A similar effort to consolidate memories about the Janowska camp and initiate the building of an appropriate memorial were undertaken by Yehuda Eisman, a former prisoner of the camp, who managed to escape and thanks to the help of Poles survive the war. Shortly thereafter he departed for Australia, and then to Israel. In Israel he was the president of the homeland association of Lviv⁶⁰. At the beginning of the 1990s he, like Schwarz, travelled frequently to Lviv and gathered the resources to build a monument to victims of the Holocaust, as well as solicit help to Jews in Lviv. The monument to the victims of the Lviv ghetto was unveiled at a solemn ceremony on 23 August 1992. Other former prisoner of the Janowska camp participated in the unveiling ceremony – Zygmunt Leiner (born in 1922) from Żółkiew. The large family of Zygmunt Leiner was murdered during the massive round up of Jews in Żółkiew at the town stadium on the 15 March 1943. At that same time Lanier was sent to the Janowska camp as prisoner number 5640. Up until then he had been working in cooperation with the underground (probably the Home Army). He escaped with two other prisoners on 18 November 1943, digging a small tunnel under the barbed wire in the direction of the “Sands”, wherefrom, after executing a security guard, it proved relatively easy to escape. In Żółkiew he was again arrested and again managed to escape, eventually to see the entrance of the Red Army. After the war he appeared in documentary films as well as wrote on the subject of the Janowska camp⁶¹.

⁵⁹ Я. Хонігсман, *Янівське пекло*, p. 31–34.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 34–35.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 35–37. More about the Żółkiew mass murder in G. Taffet, *Zagłada Żydów żółkiewskich* (Łódź: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, 1946); C. Kramer, S. Glantz, *Wojna Klary. Prawdziwa historia cudownego ocalenia z Holokaustu*, transl. A Sak (Kraków: Znak, 2009).

Another who survived their internment in the Janowska camp was a well-known physician from Lviv, Samuel Drix, who spent one year in Janowska. His entire family was murdered, including his wife and two year old daughter. After the war he emigrated to the United States, and finally, after many years, told of his experiences in the camp including the methods of selection and murder⁶². He might have been the doctor mentioned by Prof. Karol Koranyi when writing about the death of Prof. Maurycy Allerhand in the Janowska Camp in August 1942⁶³.

* * *

The Janowska camp is little known in the Polish consciousness. Even in the multi-volume PWN encyclopaedia it is passed off as a place of death or a labour camp under the title *Janów near Lviv*, which is surprising in this sort of extensive study (see the biographical entry for Maurycy Allerhand). The book by Michał Maksymilian Borwicz superbly portrays the horror of the Lviv extermination camp. It is difficult to find a better testimony of the place through which a considerable part of Lviv's Jewish intelligentsia passed. Very few among them managed to survive.

Adam Redzik

⁶² See: S. Drix, *Witness to Annihilation: surviving the Holocaust, a memoir* (Washington: Brassey's, 1994), p. 249.

⁶³ K. Koranyi, "Maurycy Allerhand," *Państwo i Prawo*, no. 1 (1947): p. 92.