

The Extermination of Zamość Jews and their Resistance

Adam Kopciowski

The first news about massacres of the Jewish population reached Zamość in 1941, at the end of the summer. They were brought by the first people who returned from their flight from the town, in the wake of the outbreak of the war between Germany and Russia in 1939. They told about liquidations by special units under the command of the RHSA, murdering thousands of Jews in the area along Poland's eastern border, including Zamość Jews fleeing from the town.

In winter 1941 an evacuee from **Kolo**, staying in Zamość, received a postcard, sent by his relatives who had remained in the town. It told of mass murders, carried out by the Germans under the pretext of "the evacuation of inhabitants". **B.Wilder** (Judenrat member) declared that on one of the postcards sent from **Kolo** there were three words: **death, walking, gas**. At that time no one understood or realized the terrible significance of those words.

In March 1942, ominous and quite detailed reports by the council of **Lublin** Jews reached the council of Zamość Jews about Jews being transported in trains in a southeastern direction [of Poland]. They were the Jews of Lublin, evacuated in the Aktion Reinhard. The **Lublin** council wanted to verify this and find out from the Zamość council, if those transports had reached Zamość. The anxious Zamość council checked with the Jewish councils of **Komarow**, **Krasnobrod** and **Tomaszow L.and** discovered that the transports from **Lublin** were arriving at the railway station in **Zawadzie**, some 8 km. from Zamość, in the area of the former labor camp in **Belzec**. The following facts were revealed thanks to the help of [Polish] railway workers: **10,000 to 12,000 people were brought by train to Belzec every day**, but no one left. In the course of time these reports were verified.

In his memoirs, **M. Garfinkel** (chairman of the Zamość Judenrat) points out: "Within a short time shocking rumors were spreading about the mysterious murder of the Jews brought to **Belzec**". Although many facts supported these

rumors, no one wanted to believe them. Only at the end of March a few Jews, who had succeeded in escaping from the last transport from Lublin, reported that all the Jews brought to Belzec were killed by means of gas. In spite of certain doubts regarding their reports, **Garfinkel** told the **Lublin** council what was happening. At the end of March and the beginning of April 1942, news of the transports "east" reached all the Jewish centers in the area. In the course of time, more and more details became known about the fate of those "evacuees". The facts about the mass murder, soon revealed simultaneously to the Jewish and Polish populations, are mentioned in the war diaries of **Z. Klukowski** (a doctor from **Szczebrzeszyn**)

The first information about "the evacuation" appeared on March 25, 1942 in the Polish doctor's notes. Although **Klukowski** mentioned on that date that "trains with Lublin evacuees are supposedly being sent east near the border for some kind of work", already on the following day he wrote that they were being taken near Belzec to "a monstrous camp".

At the end of **April 1942** it was already known in **Szczebrzeszyn** that the evacuated Jews were being murdered, but not yet in what way. On April 8, **Klukowski** wrote in his diary: "The news that trains arrive there daily, one from Lublin and one from Lwow, are true. When the Jews got off those trains they were put behind barbed wire fences and killed by means of an electric current or poisonous gas and their bodies were burnt".

In the second half of March 1942, Jews from towns adjacent to Zamość were taken to **Belzec**. On March 24, 2,200 Jews were evacuated from Izbice and a few days later some 3,400 Jews from **Piask**. In the wake of these news, rumors spread in Zamość about the local ghetto being "evacuated east". All the Zamość Jews awaited the Aktcia with great anxiety.

On Saturday April 11, 1942 at 2 P.M., German units surrounded the whole New Town. The checkpoints surrounding the Zamość ghetto were manned by German police [including the Reiter Polizei Abteilung on horseback], military police, Szupo units [under the command of Schworhoff, the commander of the Zamość company], and members of the local S.D.

The checkpoints were set up on all roads leading out of the ghetto, no one was permitted to leave Nova Osada; on the other hand all the Jews who happened to be outside the ghetto at the time were allowed in. All of this provided clear evidence that the evacuation was soon to begin. A little later the whole command in charge of the evacuation came to the office of the Judenrat, together with almost the whole team of the local Gestapo, including the commander responsible for the Aktzia, Hauptsturmführer **Gotthard Schubert** and his deputy **Bohlman**, and the official in charge of the minorities in the district, Oskar **Reichwein**.

They all entered the community's center equipped with guns and hand-grenades. They stayed there [according to the memoirs of **J. Cwilich**] about ten minutes, during which captain Schubert declared before the whole community that 2,500 "nonproductive" Jews, i.e. those not employed in any work, would be evacuated "to the east". All those evacuees are permitted to take all their money and precious jewelry with them, as well as hand luggage of 15 kg., but no food [food would be distributed to them on the way]. The whole Jewish population was to report by 4 P.M. for "**classification**" on the northwestern side of the square in the New Town, opposite the office of the Judenrat.

The concentration of the [Jewish] population in the square was the task of the Judenrat and the members of the Ordnungsdienst, the Jewish police. If the orders were not carried out by the prescribed time, German units would go into action. According to Jewish testimonies, at the first stage of the evacuation **small groups of the Judenrat and the Jewish police** (OD.) went through the ghetto and announced to any Jews they met to come to the square for classification. The police warned the Jews that if they did not go of their own free will, the Gestapo would go into action and would shoot any Jews they found outside the square. **To calm the people and get them to come to the square, the Jewish policemen promised that after a checking of their documents, all the "productive" [those employed] would be free to return home.** The number required for evacuation was ready only at 5 P.M., but already at the time mentioned by **Schubert** [4 P.M.]

German units went into action. They went from house to house and dragged to the square those who had not obeyed the call by the Judenrat and Ordningsdienst. While doing so, many old and disabled people were murdered on the spot, among them **Hesse Goldsztajn**, aged 83, the sister of **I.L. Perc.** While the order was being proclaimed in the square, the old woman, who was deaf owing to her age, was sewing on a sewing machine and did not hear the shouting of the Gestapo. When the German tried to drag her out of the house by force, she told him she was not going anywhere and asked him to shoot her on the spot.

The daughters **Rozalia** and **Ludwika** of the well-known doctor **Jonas Szyja Perelmutter** and **Halina Stella**, his wife, were shot by the Gestapo policeman **Kolb** as they were fleeing. The other victims, shot by the Gestapo in their homes on that day, were **Izaak Szpizajzen**, **Chaim Bokser**, **Berel Dekiel** together with his family of five, and the well-known **Hersz Messer. M. Garfinkel** reported that 89 Jews were found shot dead in their homes, this number including patients in the Jewish hospital.

The people ordered to report in the town square were terrified and afraid of being sent to an unknown destination for an undetermined period of time. All this, the fear of being killed by the Germans, the pressure of time, made it very hard for them to decide what to take with them. **The moments of terror, experienced by the Jews concentrated in the square, were described in his memoirs by Mosze Frank**, aged 12 at the time:

"We packed a few packages and went to the square. There were already Jewish families there, carrying bundles, standing in lines. The SS sometimes moved around among them, straightening the lines. The make-up of the groups was changed several times or the people were sorted again. Any undesirable movement immediately provoked a reaction by the Germans, who beat people till they bled. My mother tried to shield me with her body from seeing it, but in spite of her attempts, I did see the high boots of the Germans, their dogs, the whip in their hands and their weapons. We sensed the tension, and our nerves were taut and it lasted an eternity."

The aktcia ended at 18:00. But only three hours later, at 21:00, the terrified people in the square were given the order to start walking. They were organized into groups of four and driven from the square in the direction of the Old Town, Stare Miasto, via Lwowska Street.

Because it was dark and the Germans thought that some people might exploit it and try to escape, the columns of Jews were tightly surrounded by police and military police. The people were exhausted, many of them were carrying a heavy load, and yet the Germans drove them along on the run, using whips, sticks and the bayonets of guns. Anyone who stopped for a moment or looked back was killed on the spot.

Meanwhile, in the area called Rampa Buraczana, between the streets Orlicz – Derszer and Powiatowa, a special train with 21 carriages was waiting. The columns of people, driven at breakneck speed, reached the platform after 15-20 minutes after leaving the square in the New Town, Nowa Osada.

Loading the people into the carriages took several hours.

As reported by many people, in the end dozens of bodies of people actually killed on the platform, were thrown into the loaded carriages. According to **J. Cwilich**, the trains, tightly packed in a shocking way with Zamość Jews, alive and dead, left for **Belzec** only at 4 A.M., and reached their destination in the early morning of the following day.

While the Aktion in Nowa Osada was going on, the Polish residents of the quarter were in no way inconvenienced by the Germans. **G. Keins** writes in his memoirs: *"The Germans did not touch the Poles. Nor were they asked to stay indoors. Everything took place in full view."*

Nevertheless, most of the Poles preferred to stay at home to avoid meeting the Gestapo or visits by them. Moreover, the Poles put up in the windows crosses or holy pictures to make it clear that Christians lived there. And yet the Germans did go into some of the Polish houses to make sure no Jews were hiding there. There were also a few cases of Christians brought to the square by mistake, mostly children. According to **Krolikowski**, one of the Polish children was included among the Jews being evacuated and when the "mistake" came to light, the Germans "officially" apologized to the child.

That very same night, between Saturday and Sunday, **the Germans ordered the Jewish Ordnungsdienst** and some of the members of the Judenrat, **to erase all signs of the "evacuation"**. Almost the whole area between the square and Lwowska Street and the platform was strewn with

corpses and luggage left behind. M. Frank, who succeeded in escaping while the evacuees were being loaded into the carriages, described in his memoirs his way back to Nowa Osada in the following way:

"I managed to hide in the gap between the sewer and the raised platform. I waited until the Germans started to lock the carriages and guarded the place less closely. I jumped down from the raised platform and ran along the rails in the direction of the quarter. On the way I saw scattered corpses and hand luggage and lots of pools of blood. There was blood everywhere - in the streets, on the sidewalks, and even on the walls of the buildings. I reached the main entrance to our house on the run. The entrance door was blasted. When I entered the apartment, I saw my mother's sewing machine turned over, the beds were in a mess, and all our things were strewn on the floor. I ran into the yard through the gate that had been ripped out, and there I found the bodies of a woman and a child. Next to the woman lay a basket of potatoes, spilt all around. Above it all, the moon shed its light on the surrealist horror."

The bodies were collected from the streets and the houses by the Chewra Kadisza, headed by **Eliasberg**. The undertakers drove the loaded carts to the Jewish cemetery and buried the bodies in two mass graves.

In the meantime, **groups of Jewish workers under the command of a few officials of the Judenrat, washed the blood off the streets and sidewalks, and spread sand over the stains that remained. Members of the Ordnungsdienst collected the hand luggage, scattered along Lwowska Street, and took them to Judenrat's stores. According to Eljasz Epszajn, after the aktcia of the evacuation of the Jews, the Germans demanded that the Judenrat cover all the expenses of the whole aktzia, including the cost of the bullets and the train.**

It is very hard to determine the number of victims of this aktcia and of four additional ones. The data provided by the testimonies are not precise, from 2,550 to 3,000 killed and evacuated. The testimony written in real time comes from an unknown source, and assesses the number of evacuated as over

2,600 and killed about 520. Later testimonies speak of 3,000 men, women and children.

The more precise data were provided by **Mieczysław Garfinkel**, supported by the list of the ghetto's residents, made out by the Judenrat during the first days after the aktzia. According to this source, this aktzia cost the lives of 3,150 victims, Zamość Jews "evacuated" and murdered, including 150 killed on the way to the platform and 89 in their homes.

The only official document including information about the evacuation on April 11 was published on May 9, 1942. It is a correspondence between the Jewish Self-Help Organization in Zamość – Zydowska Samopomoc Społeczna w Zamosciu - **M. Garfinkel**, and the Advisor ZSS to the governor of the Lublin District – Doradca ZSS przy Gubernatorze Dystryktu w Lublinie.

According to that document, after the evacuation, 4,056 Jews remained in Zamość. When the data are compared, we can calculate that on April 11, on the day of the aktzia, there were in Zamość 7,200 Jews. In the wake of the aktzia, the number of victims was 3,150, including a total of 2,900 murdered during the aktcia and those evacuated.

The chairman of the Judenrat, relating to the damage caused by the first aktzia, wrote: "When a new population census was carried out, the assessment was that the aktcia resulted in 3,000 victims, most of them women, 700 children up to the age of 14, and the rest men." The small number of men was due to the fact that most of them were recruited for work.

Most of the Jews remaining in the town hoped that there was no connection between the evacuation and mass extermination. These hopes were fed by rumors, spread in the ghetto, about letters that had apparently been sent by those evacuated to their families remaining in the town. Many people came to the Judenrat to ask for the addresses of their dear ones to enable them to send them parcels of food and clothes and letters.

In the meantime, on April 13, a Monday, **Lejb Wolsztajn**, aged 15, arrived at the Judenrat office. He was the son of a well-known public activist and

member of the ZSS unit, **Shlomo Wolsztajn** from **Wloclawek**. It turned out that the boy, together with his sister **Rojza**, aged 21, and his mother **Zera**, were sent two days before to **Belzec**. According to his report, the Zamość evacuees arrived in the camp on Sunday morning, April 12, 1942. After getting out of the carriages, they were put into groups of four and the men were separated from the women and children. One of the German officers, in his speech before the assembled Jews announced that before they were to continue to travel east, **all of them must undergo disinfection and take a shower, to prevent the spread of the typhoid epidemic; so they must take off all their clothes and place next to the clothes all their money and valuables.** When they heard the order, the assembled Jews understood what to expect and refused to cooperate. The camp team started to shoot at the people and beating and cursing them drove them all into the building with the showers.

The young **Wolsztajn** took advantage of the mayhem that ensued and hid in the public toilets next to the huts. He hid in the ditch with the excrement, where he remained until evening. Meanwhile **he witnessed the naked corpses being taken out of the gas chambers by a group of the death camp's forced laborers, all young Jews.**

In the evening **Wolsztajn** left his hiding place and hid near the laundry of the SS, on the edge of the camp, by the bridge over the Solokia. From there he succeeded in escaping back to Zamość with the help of a group of gypsies, passing that way, and with the help of a **Belzec** inhabitant, **Eugeniusz Gocha**. In the night the boy succeeded in making it from **Belzec** to Zamość, a distance of 40 km., and arrived in the town on Monday morning.

The shocking news the boy reported to the heads of the Judenrat was not passed on to the public in the ghetto. The terrible truth in his firsthand testimony about what was happening in **Belzec remained a secret, told only to the president of the Council of the Zamość Jews and his close friends. This brought the cooperation between a part of the Judenrat and the Germans to another heinous low!**

It should be mentioned that one of the victims of deportation on April 11 was also **Szlamek Bajler**, who had succeeded in escaping from the Chelmno death camp and in spring 1942 found refuge with his family, living in Sw.Piatka Street.

The temporary reduction in the number of Jews, compared to October 1939, was soon replenished by Jews evacuated from the Lubelszczyzna District, from the regions of the Protektorat and Rzesza. On April 30, 1942, and on May 1 and 3, three transports arrived in the town, totaling 2,800 Jews from abroad; 2,100 of them remained in the town. The Jewish population of Zamość again reached 6,100-6,200 people.

On April 28, 1942, the Germans decided to carry out in Zamość, as in other towns of the GG region, an aktcia against communists. On that day, a number of the Gestapo came to the Judenrat office, headed by the commander of the Jewish section, the sadist Robert Kolb, and demanded the addresses of 30 Jewish communists, known before the outbreak of the war. **(The list was provided to the Germans by the Polish police.)** After checking the list of addresses it became clear that most of the people on the list had left the town in 1939 together with the Red Army, and others had gone into hiding. The German Kolb was determined to carry out his task and decided to arrest the families of those he was looking for. Their fathers, brothers and cousins were dragged out of the houses. In some cases they arrested people without any connection to their families only because their names were the same. They also arrested one of the members of the Judenrat, Lejba Rozen [instead of his son]. In this way they completed the list of the 30 wanted men, brought them to the Rotunda and shot them there.

Before the second aktcia of evacuation from the Zamość ghetto, the Germans made sudden arrests, "lapankas", to catch all those not working, or the old or disabled. According to J. Cwilich, on May 17, 1942, they hung on the walls of the ghetto announcements in Polish and German, **signed by the Judenrat**, addressed to the old population, demanding that all the people whose names appeared on the poster report within two days at the Judenrat office, to be evacuated from Zamość. They were all to take with them warm clothes and

food for three days. Those who refused would be subjected to collective punishment – their families would be evacuated. Zamość Jews were furious in the wake of this announcement.

In spite of “the explanations” by members of the Judenrat that “if the old people are not evacuated, all of us will be”, the families of those old people, whose names appeared on the list, began to prepare hiding places for them. As a result, at the end of the time mentioned, only a few of the old people reported at the Judenrat, those without families.

The Judenrat members, not satisfied by the low turnout, started to look for “the evaders” with the help of the Jewish police. If they did not find the old people at the addresses mentioned, they arrested their children and tried using all means to get information from them about their parents’ hiding places. The old people they caught were put in the ghetto prison, called “koza”. **Thus the Judenrat adopted the methods used by the Germans.**

The policemen who stood out in their cruelty and “extreme diligence” and will be remembered eternally in disgrace were the following:

Szmul Feldsztajn

Stach Flajszman

Abram Arct

Lejzor Szulc

and the member of the Judenrat, **Szlomo Cibebe (Blumsztajn)**.

The second evacuation began in Zamość on Friday, during the Shavuot Festival, on May 24, 1942. Unlike the first evacuation, this one was carried out by the **civilian groups** Landratura and Arbeitsamt. The aktcia started early in the morning, at 4 A.M. The ghetto was surrounded by units of the military police, policemen and SD. **The ghetto was searched thoroughly by a “Czech” Jewish unit (composed of Jews brought from Bohemia), who also cooperated with the Germans,** and were brought in especially on that day from Izbice. The people who were caught were concentrated in the Nowy Rink next to the Judenrat office.

A "committee", made up of representatives of the labor office (Urząd Pracy) and Landratura, checked and sorted those brought to the square into those who would stay in the meantime in the town and in their workplace, and those who were to be "evacuated". Some 400-500 people marked for evacuation were transferred to huts next to the camp of the Luftwaffe by the "selek terminals", and also the old people who had been in prison in the ghetto, and some 1,000 Czech and German Jews, who had also been classified. Those marked for immediate extermination were the old and ill, unable to work, and mothers with small children.

Two days later, the group of Zamość Jews and Jews from abroad (about 1,500) were joined by Jews brought from little towns in the vicinity, **Tyszowiec** and **Komarow**. The large group created was divided into three transports that left Zamość via Chelm to Sobibor, on Monday May 27. According to **Y. Arad**, The number of people sent to their deaths in those transports reached 5,000.

Before the transports left, several SS dragged dozens of old people out of the carriages and shot them on the Rotunda, among them the father of **Y. Cwilich**. At the end of this aktzia, 4,700-4,800 Jews, including about 1,000 Czech and German Jews, remained in Zamość.

The third aktcia was carried out on August 11 by the Zamość Gestapo, under the command of the German **Robert Kolb**, who received help from the Gestapo unit of Lublin, under the command of the well-known German murderer **Amon Goethe**, a member of the command "Aktion Reinhardt". In 1944 he was appointed commander of the Plaszow camp.

According to the testimony of **Baruch Wilder** (of the Judenrat), the commander of the aktzia, **Goethe**, demanded that 2,000 Jews be handed over to him. However, this did not happen, for several reasons: The aktcia began relatively late, making it possible to give early warning, and the Jews had time to hide in places they had prepared. When the units, searching the ghetto, "only" succeeded in catching some 250 people, the commanders decided to "complement" the number by arresting groups of Jews in their

forced labor workplaces, scattered all over the town. This "action" added some 300-350 people.

For the first time, a number of members and office workers of the Judenrat with their families were included in this aktzia, among them **Icek Dawid Szlam** and his wife **Frajda**, **Stanislaw Hernhut** and also his wife **Jasza Mendelson**.

The moment the aktcia began to involve those with special status within the Jewish population, meaning members of the Judenrat, the head of the Judenrat, M. Garfinkel began to act to stop it in every way possible. **M. Garfinkel** bribed the German murderer Goethe with 30,000 zloty, a kilo of coffee and another kilo of tea, all sent to him, packed in an elegant leather bag. When **Goethe** received the bribe, he stopped the aktcia and promised **Garfinkel**, that he himself would make sure that **Garfinkel** would join the next transport to Belzec "to enable him to examine personally what was happening there". (Garfinkel had asked about the real fate of the evacuees.) The group of 300-350 Jews arrested was sent to **Majdanek**, where almost all perished within a few months.

Mordechaj Sztrygler, who in the course of time became a well-known writer and journalist, was sent a year later to **Majdanek** from the Lotofa camp, reported in his testimony that **from the first transport from Zamość only three people survived.**

During the aktcia carried out in August, a large number of people were murdered on the spot, as in the first one. **M. Garfinkel** assessed that some 70 men, women and children were shot. Among those victims was also a member of the Judenrat, the lawyer **Julian Goldsztajn**, his wife **Regina** and his 3-year-old daughter **Marysia**. **Jekutiel Cwilich** witnessed their death. In his testimony he reported:

"The lawyer **Goldsztajn** called in Polish to **Memek Garfinkel** (the head of the Judenrat), who was standing nearby, speaking to the Germans, 'Memek, save me', but Memek didn't answer. As soon the lawyer and his family sat down on the ground, a man from the Gestapo came up to them with a whip, and hitting them, ordered them to stand up. **Goldsztajn** answered that they were going to die anyway and asked the German to shoot them on the spot, as

they preferred to die in the square of their native town. When **Hans Pinkowski** of the SS, famous for his cruelty, heard him, he asked: 'Do you want to be shot? Stand by the wall.' They stood up, went to the wall of **Lejman's** former restaurant and were shot there. The lawyer **Goldsztajn** and his little daughter, whom he held in his arms, were murdered on the spot. His wife **Regina** was shot and badly wounded in the head and lost her eyesight. She died within a few days in the ghetto hospital".

On the same day the two children of the Czech journalist **Jagscha** were also killed, together with their grandmother, the daughter of the Rabbi from **Berdyczow**. All three were shot at their home by the Gestapo policeman, **Schmidt**. After this aktzia, 4,400 Jews remained in the town.

In view of the failure of the third evacuation aktzia, on September 1, the Germans ordered the Jews to move to a specific area of Nowa Osada. The Poles also living there were evacuated from there. The area where only Jews were to live was between Lwowska, Gminna, Zagloby and Mlynska streets. Also included was part of Nowy Rynek, south of Lwowska Street, including also Zarwanica, Stycznionna, Ogrodowa (from Zagloby Street up to Nowy Rynek), Spadek and Listopadowa streets. Concentrating 4,000 Jews in a limited area was to make the next aktcia easier for the Germans. But it also caused severe overcrowding of the ghetto population and turned the rest of their lives into a terrible ordeal.

The restricted area of the ghetto was not fenced off, even though in September, **on the initiative of the Judenrat, attempts were made to turn the area of the ghetto into a closed labor camp.** (Posts and barbed wire had already been brought there). But the plan was not carried out.

The fourth evacuation took place at the beginning of September. It was relatively "on a small scale", 400 people were sent to their deaths in the Belzec extermination camp. In the town there were 4,000 people left.

The final liquidation of the Zamość ghetto was carried out a month after the fourth aktzia, on Friday October 16. Suddenly, at 5 o'clock in the morning, the whole area of the ghetto was surrounded by units of the German police,

military police, the Gestapo and a regiment of mounted military police, brought in especially from Warsaw. The German units invaded the ghetto and started to catch and concentrate the Jews in the area of the rynek, next to the grocer Janicki. The Germans beat the Jews mercilessly; in particular they tortured those caught found in hiding places. Jews who worked in various places throughout the town were also brought to the square, as well as some of the forced laborers from the closed camps.

In the meantime they brought a large truck into the square, installed machine guns on it and throughout the aktcia aimed them at the people in the square. The aktcia lasted about an hour, from 9 A.M. to 10 A.M. All those assembled were ordered to start marching. They led the columns of evacuees through Lwowska, Peowiak and Lubelska streets in the direction of **Izbice**, 21 km. away from Zamość.

Several members of the Judenrat succeeding in saving themselves and their families and remain in the town officially: the head of the Judenrat, **Mieczyslaw Garfinkel, Azriel Szeps and Lejb Rozenman, also some of the members of O.D., the Jewish police.**

Besides those with special privileges, some Jews survived – they were transferred to closed labor camps: a camp next to **Zdanowska**, the Luftwaffe camp, **Karoluwka**, and **Janowice**. Also people working for the F. Zipper company, living in a house in Perec Street.

The column of evacuees, extending hundreds of meters, was surrounded and tightly packed by the Germans. The people walked in groups of five and the column was headed by some of the members of the Judenrat, who had not succeeded in buying their survival. Those too weak to keep up the fast pace required, dragged themselves along in the last rows of the column. The Germans marching alongside drove the people along mercilessly, spurred them on with dogs and shot dead all those who did not have the strength to keep walking at breakneck speed.

Behind the column, at a distance of a few dozen meters, drove the truck with the machine guns. From there they shot people who slowed down through exhaustion and were left behind. **During the march of death, lasting**

about 8 hours, about 100 people were murdered, mostly old people and children.

Before the evacuees had left Zamość, the daughter of the vice-president of the Judenrat, **Laja Szeps**, was shot dead next to the military quarters. In the Sitaniec area the paramedic **Izaak Wechter** was shot dead. Another victim of the march was **Matias Altberg**, a well-known Bund activist, called by many people "Kulawy Mietek". The well-known Zamość doctor, Dr. **Bronisława Rosenbusch-Spielgelglass**, committed suicide next to the Sitaniec Church, after poisoning her 12-year-old son **Adam**.

Those killed along the way to **Izbice** were buried by the peasants in the area in ditches along the road. A few kilometers before **Izbice**, the Germans allowed the Jews, who still had some money, to rent carts with horses from the Poles. The exhausted deportees reached **Izbice** in the evening, around 5 P.M. and found masses of Jews there, evacuated to the little town from various regions in Poland and other European countries. Before the war **Izbice** was a typical "shtetl" (little Jewish town), with a 90% Jewish population. In 1939 it contained some 4,700 Jews.

However, already in the first months of the German occupation, 3,000 Jews from **Warhegauand Lodz** were deported there. In March 1942, 2,000 Jews were brought in from the Protektorat; in April, May and June 4,000 from **Wieden**; in May 2,000 from **Slovakia**; in March and April 6,000 from Rzesza. In 1942, **Izbice** functioned as a transit camp; thousands of people from the villages and towns in the area were crammed into it before their extermination in death camps. When the Zamość Jews were brought there, Jews from **Krasnistaw, Piask, Turobin, Zolkiewski, Szczepreszyn** and **Gorzgow** also arrived. At that time there were in **Izbice** 5,000-6,000 Jews. The numbers changed constantly. The Zamość Jews were scattered in various places in the town. Those who had money, connections or family there, were able to find a little space in private houses. The rest, of course the majority, were concentrated in the market place in the open, surrounded by barbed wire. Three people ruled firmly over all the Jews concentrated in the little town: The Mayor, **Jan Schultz**; the commander of the Gestapo branch, **Kurt Engels**;

his deputy, **Ludwik Klem**, who had been an officer in the third artillery regiment in Zamość before the war. The German **Engels** stood out as a sadist murderer and according to the testimony of Izbice Jews, "wouldn't sit down to have his breakfast before shooting a few Jews".

On October 17 and 18 (Saturday and Sunday), searches in Zamość for Jews in hiding were still continuing. **The quarter was searched by members of the Ordnungsdienst, left in the town for that purpose. They were helped by Czech Jews, belonging to the Izbice police.** On Sunday October 18, a few hundred Jews found in hiding were concentrated in the Zamość market place and driven on foot to **Izbice**, like those two days before.

M. Frank tells in his memoirs:

"On October 18 we left our hiding place and reported in the square. From there we were driven on a death march in a northwestern direction to **Izbice**, 22 km. from Zamość. Many of us were shot to death, others died due to the cold and the harsh conditions. Before entering **Izbice** we heard shots. A rumor went round that the town was being evacuated. The people started to escape from the lines in the direction of the forests, in spite of the shouting and shooting by the guards. Panic ensued, in which I lost contact with my relatives. Each one ran in a different direction. I also ran to the forests to save my life. But the escape did not last long. We were all caught by the Germans who surrounded the town".

On that day the rest of the members of the Judenrat arrived in Izbice, headed by **Mieczysław Garfinkel** and **Azriel Szeps** and some of the Jewish policemen. After the last of the Zamość Jews had been deported, the town was declared "Judenrein". From that moment any Jew caught in the street or found hiding was killed on the spot. In the course of several months, they still found a Jew here and there from time to time, even in the Starowka (the old quarter). The Polish researcher, **M. Bojarczuk**, wrote: "When in 1944 the Germans drove two Jews (who had been caught) in their car, it was a special occasion, everyone came out to look at them".

Bodies of dead Jews were found in Nowe Miasto and also in Stare Miasto, some of them frozen to death. Although people heard sounds of weeping and

sighs, it was difficult to locate their source. Since Zamość had been a fortress, it contained plenty of ditches and passages where the Jews could hide and where they also froze or starved to death.

The Zamość Jews, evacuated to Izbice, had to move on again after a few days – **in spite of the false promise by members of the Judenrat** that a huge labor camp would be set up in the town, where all the Jews who could pay 1,000 zloty per person would be permitted to work. However, already on Sunday, October 18, it became clear to everyone that a new “evacuation” would take place within a few days. Their assumption was correct and on the next day, on Monday October 19, the evacuation began. The sign was the arrival in the town of a unit of the military police from **Lublin, Krasnegostaw** and **Zamość**, and also a unit of SS from **Janowice**, which was in Zamość.

Hejnoch Nobel wrote:

“Everyone expected this evacuation, so all who could, fled into the surrounding forests, but the Germans caught 5,000 of them. First they were concentrated in the marketplace. Later they were led into the field outside the town. Engels marched behind the crowd, and members of the **Izbice** Judenrat marched beside him. **Engels** was armed with an automatic rifle and from time to time shot into the terrified crowd. They reached the railway station, where 50 carriages were waiting for the Jews. There were not enough places in the carriages for several hundred people, but the Germans succeeded in pushing most of them inside. Those who remained outside for lack of room were driven back to the town, on order by **Engels**. At that point the SS started to shoot at them, as they ran. Most of them were shot to death. On that day some 700 people lost their lives. It took two days to bury them. I hid in the forest together with the children. When it became quiet after the shooting, I went back to the town. For ten days after the evacuation there was absolute silence in the little town”.

On that day almost all the Zamość Jews who had been concentrated in the town square were evacuated. The transport was divided into two: One part went to **Belzec** and the other to **Sobibor**. The next and last evacuation from **Izbice** took place about two weeks later, on November 2. It lasted two days.

The military police and members of the Ukrainian Wachman had surrounded the town on the previous night. At 4 A.M. the order was given to start the aktcia of deportation. This time all the Jews were to be deported. The Jews caught (some 1,750 people) were led to the terminal and there they were divided into two transports – to **Sobibor, Belzec** and **Majdanek**.

The few who were not included were those who had been able to hide well or managed to flee to the surrounding forests. The transport to **Belzec** included all the members of the Zamość Judenrat who had been brought to Izbice, including the deputy head, **Azriel Szeps**. The moments of the arrival of the members of the Judenrat and the transport were described by **Rudolf Reder**, who succeeded in escaping from the camp (in his memoirs he made a mistake about the date and the name of the place from where the transport set out).

“It is my duty to tell about the large transport that arrived from Zamość on November 15. On that extremely cold day, when snow and mud covered the ground, the members of the Judenrat had to stand naked in the yard, including its president (here he means the deputy, **Szeps**), who was ordered to go on standing there after the whole transport had been driven to their death by the guards. All the SS surrounded him. I don’t know his name, I only saw a middle-aged man, pale, but very calm. Then they made him stand by the wall and beat him with whips, tipped with lead. They hit him mostly on the head and on his face, and at the same time they made him jump and dance. After a few hours the victim was given a piece of bread, and he was made to eat it while being beaten. He stood there, covered in blood, apathetic, grave and silent. The SS tortured him in this way for seven hours, while laughing loud and shouting in German: “That is an important person, the President of the Judenrat”! (“Das ist eine höhere Person, Präsident des Judenrates”). Only at 6 in the evening, Schmidt of the Gestapo drove him on the run to an open grave, where he shot him in the head and kicked him into the grave on a pile of gassed corpses”.