

Areas incorporated into the Reich: Reichsgau Wartheland

Summary

The ninth successive volume of the edited materials from the Ringelblum Archive contains 56 documents pertaining to the fate of the Jewish population in Wartheland, excluding the city of Łódź. The documents were arranged in geographical order in accordance with the administrative division in force during the war. The current volume contains relatively diverse materials.

The great majority of testimonies pertains to the period of war preparations and the first days of the war, the bombing of the cities (Koło, Kalisz, Gąbin, Kutno, Włocławek, Stryków) and crimes committed by the Wehrmacht in the period of Military Administration, which governed the lands occupied by the German army until 25th October 1939. The volume also includes accounts of the first anti-Jewish directives from the period of the Civil Administration, e.g. the order to create the Judenrat (Jewish councils) and the ghettos, and descriptions of the poverty and terror therein. Much space is devoted to the forced resettlement of the Jews to the General Government (resettlement from Koło to Krasnystaw and Izbica Lubelska, from Konin to Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, from Rychwał to Izbica and Józefów). The largest centres, to which pertain the accounts found in the volume, are Koło, Kutno, Kalisz and Włocławek. Five testimonies from Koło present mainly facts concerning the resettlement of the city's residents to a village ghetto in Bugaj, organisation of its Judenrat, and the subsequent annihilation of the residents of that ghetto in the extermination centre at Chełmno nad Nerem. Six accounts relate to Kutno; they tell mostly about the crimes of an SS officer known under the nickname "Gieniek" and the creation of the ghetto on a plot of land belonging to the former sugar refinery "Konstancja" (documents no. 22–26). There is also a testimony containing much data on the earlier history of the city and its more prominent citizens (document no. 24). Accounts from Kalisz pertain mostly to the activities of the Judenrat and the Jewish Hospital, including the profiles of its staff, and the creation of the ghetto

in the Szrajen brothers' market hall (document no. 43–48). Six extensive accounts from Włocławek refer mostly to the murder of several men at Łęgska St. during the festival of Yom Kippur 1939, the fire in the synagogue and the arrest, for several days, of the Jews accused of arson, the reparations to be paid, and the activity of the city commissioner Hans von Cramer (documents no. 3, 30–35).

The volume contains also very interesting, hitherto unpublished documents concerning the operation of an extermination centre in Chełmno nad Nerem. They include data regarding three escapees from the camp: Szlomo Wiener (Winer), Mechl Podchlebnik and Abram Rój, and the annihilation of the Jewish residents of smaller ghettos in the Koło district: Dąbie, Kłodawa, Izbica, Zagórów, as well as village ghettos (documents no. 15, 17, 29).

The volume includes also correspondence, although these documents are mostly fragmentary and seriously damaged. Three letters of Tauba Różana from Gąbin should have been included, but two of them proved illegible due to damage (documents no. 8–9). The volume contains also a letter from Grabów to Szymon Józef Taube, the contents of which a repeated analysis proved to be almost identical to another letter to the same addressee, published earlier in *Listy o Zagładzie* (pp. 241–243). The only letter by Eстера Prusinowska included in this volume (document no. 38) comes from Ozorków. There are also three letters from Bronka Górna from the Pacht camp (documents no. 52–54). The remaining letters pertaining to this camp were published in *Listy o Zagładzie* (pp. 174–196).

The majority of testimonies gathered in the volume pertain to the period from the first days of the war until March/April 1942. The last descriptions refer to the events of the Bloody Purim: public executions carried out on that day in Brzeziny, Łęczyca and Zduńska Wola (documents no. 49, 51, 55). An announcement dated to 25th October 1942 regarding a reward for aiding in the capture of the perpetrators of an assault on a forester from Turzynów in the Kutno district (document no. 11) is an exception. Many documents include recollections from the pre-war period or short sketches from the history of the described cities. With respect to this, the most interesting are documents pertaining to Inowrocław (document no. 10) and Kutno (document no. 24), which bring a rich variety of information on the pre-war life of those cities and their most prominent citizens.

From the geographical point of view, the largest selection of documents originates from the Inowrocław Governorate (Regierungsbezirk Hohensalza) (documents no. 1–35), from the following cities: Ciechocinek, Nieszawa, Aleksandrów Kujawski, Gostynin, Gąbin, Inowrocław, Koło, Dąbie, Konin, Rychwał, Kutno, Krośniewice, Żychlin and Włocławek. Slightly less of them originate from the Łódź Governorate (Regierungsbezirk Litzmannstadt) (documents no. 36–55), from Bełchatów, Grabów, Ozorków, Aleksandrów Łódzki, Konstantynów Łódzki, Stryków, Zgierz, Kalisz, Zduńska Wola, Sieradz and Wieluń. Only one document, relating the resettlement of the Jewish and Polish population from the area of Poznań to the

Sochaczew-Błonie district (document no. 56), comes from the Poznań Governorate (Regierungsbezirk Posen).

An overwhelming majority of documents and testimonies published in this volume has never been published before. An account of the escape from Kalisz to the Soviet Union (signature ARG I 783) was published in the third volume of *Relacje z Kresów*, ed. Andrzej Żbikowski (pp. 3–9); three testimonies of Daniel Fligelman appeared in “Biuletyn ŻIH” (1986, no. 137–138).

Appendices include a glossary of frequently used terms, indices of names and geographical locations, and a list of documents included in the volume with their archive file numbers.