

REPUBLIC OF POLAND

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**THE MASS EXTERMINATION
of JEWS in
GERMAN OCCUPIED POLAND**

NOTE

addressed to the Governments of the
United Nations on December 10th, 1942,
and other documents



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The purpose of this publication is to make public the contents of the Note of December 10th, 1942, addressed by the Polish Government to the Governments of the United Nations concerning the mass extermination of Jews in the Polish territories occupied by Germany, and also other documents treating on the same subject.

In the course of the last three years the Polish Government has lodged a number of protests with the Governments of the civilised countries of the world condemning the repeated violations by Germany of International Law and of the fundamental principles of morality since September 1st, 1939, i.e. since Germany's aggression against Poland.

*In the Note of May 3rd, 1941, presented to the Governments of the Allied and Neutral Powers the Polish Government gave a comprehensive survey of the acts of violence perpetrated against the population of Poland, of offences against religion and cultural heritage and destruction of property in Poland. An extract of this Note, together with a large amount of corroborating material, has been published in the form of a White Book.**

Since the publication of the White Book, however, many increasingly brutal acts of violence and terror have been committed by German authorities in Poland. In recent months these persecutions have been directed with particular violence against the Jewish population, who have been subjected to new methods calculated to bring about the complete extermination of the Jews, in conformity with the public statements made by the leaders of Germany.

In the hope that the civilised world will draw the appropriate conclusions, the Polish Government desire to bring to the notice of the public, by means of the present White Paper, these renewed German efforts at mass extermination, with the employment of fresh horrifying methods.

* Republic of Poland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "The German Occupation of Poland." Extract of Note addressed to the Governments of the Allied and Neutral Powers on May 3, 1941. London and New York.

The "White Book" was subsequently translated into several languages, i.e., French and Spanish.

REPUBLIC OF POLAND

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

LONDON,

December 10th, 1942

Your Excellency,

On several occasions the Polish Government have drawn the attention of the civilised world, both in diplomatic documents and official publications, to the conduct of the German Government and of the German authorities of occupation, both military and civilian, and to the methods employed by them "in order to reduce the population to virtual slavery and ultimately to exterminate the Polish nation". These methods, first introduced in Poland, were subsequently, applied in a varying degree, in other countries occupied by the armed forces of the German Reich.

2. At the Conference held at St. James's Palace on January 18th, 1942, the Governments of the occupied countries "placed among their principal war aims the punishment, through the channel of organised justice, of those guilty of, or responsible for, those crimes, whether they have ordered them, perpetrated them, or participated in them".

Despite this solemn warning and the declarations of President Roosevelt, of the Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill, and of the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, M. Molotov, the German Government has not ceased to apply its methods of violence and terror. The Polish Government have received numerous reports from Poland testifying to the constant intensification of German persecution of the subjected populations.

3. Most recent reports present a horrifying picture of the position to which the Jews in Poland have been reduced. The new methods of mass slaughter applied during the last few months confirm the fact that the German authorities aim with systematic deliberation at the total extermination of the Jewish population of Poland and of the many thousands of Jews whom the German authorities have deported to Poland from Western and Central European countries and from the German Reich itself.

The Polish Government consider it their duty to bring to the knowledge of the Governments of all civilised countries the following fully authenticated information received from Poland during recent weeks, which indicates all too plainly

the new methods of extermination adopted by the German authorities.

4. The initial steps leading to the present policy of extermination of the Jews were taken already in October, 1940, when the German authorities established the Warsaw ghetto. At that time all the Jewish inhabitants of the Capital were ordered to move into the Jewish quarter assigned to them not later than November 1st, 1940, while all the non-Jews domiciled within the new boundaries of what was to become the ghetto were ordered to move out of that quarter. The Jews were allowed to take only personal effects with them, while all their remaining property was confiscated. All Jewish shops and businesses outside the new ghetto boundaries were closed down and sealed. The original date for these transfers was subsequently postponed to November 15th, 1940. After that date the ghetto was completely closed and its entire area was surrounded by a brick wall, the right of entry and exit being restricted to the holders of special passes, issued by the German authorities. All those who left the ghetto without such a pass became liable to sentence of death, and it is known that German courts passed such sentences in a large number of cases.

5. After the isolation of the ghetto, official intercourse with the outside world was maintained through a special German office known as "Transferstelle". Owing to totally inadequate supplies of food for the inhabitants of the ghetto, smuggling on a large scale was carried on; the Germans themselves participated in this illicit trading, drawing considerable incomes from profits and bribes. The food rations for the inhabitants of the ghetto amounted to about a pound of bread per person weekly, with practically nothing else. As a result, prices in the ghetto were on an average ten times higher than outside, and mortality due to exhaustion, starvation and disease, particularly during the last two winters, increased on an unprecedented scale. During the winter 1941-1942 the death rate, calculated on an annual base, has risen to 18 per cent., and during the first quarter of 1942 increased still further. Scores of corpses were found in the streets of the ghetto every day.

6. At the time when the ghetto was established the whole population was officially stated to amount to 433,000,

and in spite of the appalling death rate it was being maintained at this figure by the importation of Jews from Germany and from the occupied countries, as well as from other parts of Poland.

7. The outbreak of war between Germany and Soviet Russia and the occupation of the Eastern areas of Poland by German troops considerably increased the numbers of Jews in Germany's power. At the same time the mass murders of Jews reached such dimensions that, at first, people refused to give credence to the reports reaching Warsaw from the Eastern provinces. The reports, however, were confirmed again and again by reliable witnesses. During the winter 1941-1942 several tens of thousands of Jews were murdered. In the city of Wilno over 50,000 Jews were reported to have been massacred and only 12,000 of them remain in the local ghetto. In the city of Lwow 40,000 were reported murdered ; in Rowne 14,000 ; in Kowel 10,000, and unknown numbers in Stanislawow, Tarnopol, Stryj, Drohobycz and many other smaller towns. At first the executions were carried out by shooting; subsequently, however, it is reported that the Germans applied new methods, such as poison gas, by means of which the Jewish population was exterminated in Chelm, or electrocution, for which a camp was organised in Belzec, where in the course of March and April, 1942, the Jews from the provinces of Lublin, Lwow and Kielce, amounting to tens of thousands, were exterminated. Of Lublin's 80,000 Jewish inhabitants only 2,500 still survive in the city.

8. It has been reliably reported that on the occasion of his visit to the General Gouvernement of Poland in March, 1942, Himmler issued an order for the extermination of 50 per cent. of the Jews in Poland by the end of that year. After Himmler's departure the Germans spread the rumour that the Warsaw ghetto would be liquidated as from April, 1942. This date was subsequently altered to June. Himmler's second visit to Warsaw in the middle of July, 1942, became the signal for the commencement of the process of liquidation, the horror of which surpasses anything known in the annals of history.

9. The liquidation of the ghetto was preceded, on July 17th, 1942, by the registration of all foreign Jews confined there

who were then removed to the Pawiak prison. As from July 20th, 1942, the guarding of the ghetto was entrusted to special security battalions, formed from the scum of several Eastern European countries, while large forces of German police armed with machine guns and commanded by SS. officers were posted at all the gates leading into the ghetto. Mobile German police detachments patrolled all the boundaries of the ghetto day and night.

10. On July 31st, at 11 a.m., German police cars drove up to the building of the Jewish Council of the ghetto, in Grzybowska Street. The SS. officers ordered the chairman of the Jewish Council, Mr. Czerniakow, to summon the members of the Council, who were all arrested on arrival and removed in police cars to the Pawiak prison. After a few hours' detention the majority of them were allowed to return to the ghetto. About the same time flying squads of German police entered the ghetto, breaking into the houses in search of Jewish intellectuals. The better dressed Jews found were killed on the spot, without the police troubling even to identify them. Among those who were thus killed was a non-Jew, Professor Dr. Raszeja, who was visiting the ghetto in the course of his medical duties and was in possession of an official pass. Hundreds of educated Jews were killed in this way.

11. On the morning of the following day, July 22nd, 1942, the German police again visited the office of the Jewish Council and summoned all the members, who had been released from the Pawiak prison the previous day. On their assembly they were informed that an order had been issued for the removal of the entire Jewish population of the Warsaw ghetto and printed instructions to that effect were issued in the form of posters, the contents of which are reproduced in Annex. 1 to this Note. Additional instructions were issued verbally. The number of people to be removed was first fixed at 6,000 daily. The persons concerned were to assemble in the hospital wards and grounds in Stawki Street, the patients of which were evacuated forthwith. The hospital was close to the railway siding. Persons subject to deportation were to be delivered by the Jewish police not later than 4 p.m. each day. Members of the Council and other hostages were to answer for the strict fulfilment of the order.

In conformity with German orders, all inmates of Jewish prisons, old-age pensioners and inmates of other charitable institutions were to be included in the first contingent.

12. On July 23rd, 1942, at 7 p.m., two German police officers again visited the offices of the Jewish Council and saw the chairman, Mr. Czerniakow. After they left him he committed suicide. It is reported that Mr. Czerniakow did so because the Germans increased the contingent of the first day to 10,000 persons, to be followed by 7,000 persons on each subsequent day. Mr. Czerniakow was succeeded in his office by Mr. Lichtenbaum, and on the following day 10,000 persons were actually assembled for deportation, followed by 7,000 persons on each subsequent day. The people affected were either rounded up haphazardly in the streets or were taken from their homes.

13. According to the German order of July 22nd, 1942, all Jews employed in German-owned undertakings, together with their families, were to be exempt from deportation. This produced acute competition among the inhabitants of the ghetto to secure employment in such undertakings, or, failing employment, bogus certificates to that effect. Large sums of money, running into thousands of Zlotys, were being paid for such certificates to the German owners. They did not, however, save the purchasers from deportation, which was being carried out without discrimination or identification.

14. The actual process of deportation was carried out with appalling brutality. At the appointed hour on each day the German police cordoned off a block of houses selected for clearance, entered the back yard and fired their guns at random, as a signal for all to leave their homes and assemble in the yard. Anyone attempting to escape or to hide was killed on the spot. No attempt was made by the Germans to keep families together. Wives were torn from their husbands and children from their parents. Those who appeared frail or infirm were carried straight to the Jewish cemetery to be killed and buried there. On the average 50-100 people were disposed of in this way daily. After the contingent was assembled, the people were packed forcibly into cattle trucks to the number of 120 in each truck, which had room for forty. The trucks were then locked and

sealed. The Jews were suffocating for lack of air. The floors of the trucks were covered with quicklime and chlorine. As far as is known, the trains were despatched to three localities—Tremblinka, Belzec and Sobibor, to what the reports describe as “Extermination camps.” The very method of transport was deliberately calculated to cause the largest possible number of casualties among the condemned Jews. It is reported that on arrival in camp the survivors were stripped naked and killed by various means, including poison gas and electrocution. The dead were interred in mass graves dug by machinery.

15. According to all available information, of the 250,000 Jews deported from the Warsaw ghetto up to September 1st, 1942, only two small transports, numbering about 4,000 people, are known to have been sent eastwards in the direction of Brest-Litovsk and Malachowicze, allegedly to be employed on work behind the front line. It has not been possible to ascertain whether any of the other Jews deported from the Warsaw ghetto still survive, and it must be feared that they have been all put to death.

16. The Jews deported from the Warsaw ghetto so far included in the first instance all the aged and infirm; a number of the physically strong have escaped so far, because of their utility as labour power. All the children from Jewish schools, orphanages and children’s homes were deported, including those from the orphanage in charge of the celebrated educationist, Dr. Janusz Korczak, who refused to abandon his charges, although he was given the alternative of remaining behind.

17. According to the most recent reports, 120,000 ration cards were distributed in the Warsaw ghetto for the month of September, 1942, while the report also mentions that only 40,000 such cards were to be distributed for the month of October, 1942. The latter figure is corroborated by information emanating from the German Employment Office (Arbeitsamt), which mentioned the number of 40,000 skilled workmen as those who were to be allowed to remain in a part of the ghetto, confined to barracks and employed on German war production.

18. The deportations from the Warsaw ghetto were interrupted during five days, between August 20th–25th. The

German machinery for the mass slaughter of the Jews was employed during this interval on the liquidation of other ghettos in Central Poland, including the towns of Falenica, Rembertów, Nowy Dwór, Kaluszyn and Minsk Mazowiecki.

19. It is not possible to estimate the exact numbers of Jews who have been exterminated in Poland since the occupation of the country by the armed forces of the German Reich. But all the reports agree that the total number of killed runs into many hundreds of thousands of innocent victims—men, women and children—and that of the 3,180,000 Jews in Poland before the outbreak of war, over a third have perished during the last three years.

20. The Polish population, which itself is suffering the most grievous afflictions, and of which many millions have been either deported to Germany as slave labour or evicted from their homes and lands, deprived of so many of their leaders, who have been cruelly murdered by the Germans, have repeatedly expressed, through the underground organisations, their horror of and compassion with the terrible fate which has befallen their Jewish fellow-countrymen. The Polish Government are in possession of information concerning the assistance which the Polish population is rendering to the Jews. For obvious reasons no details of these activities can be published at present.

21. The Polish Government—as the representatives of the legitimate authority on territories in which the Germans are carrying out the systematic extermination of Polish citizens and of citizens of Jewish origin of many other European countries—consider it their duty to address themselves to the Governments of the United Nations, in the confident belief that they will share their opinion as to the necessity not only of condemning the crimes committed by the Germans and punishing the criminals, but also of finding means offering the hope that Germany might be effectively restrained from continuing to apply her methods of mass extermination.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my high consideration.

L. S. EDWARD RACZYNSKI.

Annex 1 :

**JEWISH COUNCIL IN WARSAW
NOTICE**

Warsaw, July 22nd, 1942.

- 1. By order of the German authorities all Jews living in Warsaw, without regard to age or sex, are to be deported to the East.**
- 2. The following are exempted from the deportation order :—**
 - (a) All Jews employed by the German authorities or German enterprises, who can produce adequate evidence of the fact.**
 - (b) All Jews who are members and employees of the Jewish Council according to their status on the day of publication of this order.**
 - (c) All Jews employed in German-owned firms who can produce adequate evidence of the fact.**
 - (d) All Jews not yet thus employed, but who are capable of work. These are to be barracked in the Jewish quarter.**
 - (e) All Jews belonging to the Jewish civil police.**
 - (f) All Jews belonging to the staffs of Jewish hospitals, or belonging to Jewish disinfection squads.**
 - (g) All Jews who are members of the families of persons covered by (a) to (f). Only wives and children are regarded as members of families.**
 - (h) All Jews who on the day of deportation are patients in one of the Jewish hospitals, unless fit to be discharged. Unfitness for discharge must be attested by a doctor appointed by the Jewish Council.**
- 3. Each Jew to be deported is entitled to take with him on the journey 15 kilogrammes of his personal effects. Anything in excess of 15 kg. will be confiscated. All articles of value, such as money, jewellery, gold, etc., may be retained. Sufficient food for three days' journey should be taken.**
- 4. Deportation begins on July 22nd, 1942, at 11 a.m.**
- 5. Punishments :**
 - (a) Any Jew who is not included among persons specified under par. 2 points (a) and (c) and so far not entitled to be so included, who leaves the Jewish quarter after the deportation has begun will be shot.**
 - (b) Any Jew who undertakes activities likely to frustrate or hinder the execution of the deportation orders will be shot.**
 - (c) Any Jew who assists in any activity which might frustrate or hinder the execution of the deportation orders will be shot.**

- (c) Any Jew found in Warsaw, after the conclusion of the deportation of Jews, who is not included among the persons specified under par. 2 points (a) to (h) will be shot.

Joint Declaration

***Announced Simultaneously on December 17th, 1942, in
London, Moscow and Washington***

“The attention of the Governments of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, and Yugoslavia, and of the French National Committee, has been drawn to numerous reports from Europe that the German authorities, not content with denying to persons of Jewish race in all the territories over which their barbarous rule has been extended the most elementary human rights, are now carrying into effect Hitler’s oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe. From all the occupied countries Jews are being transported, in conditions of appalling horror and brutality, to Eastern Europe. In Poland, which has been made the principal Nazi slaughter-house, the Ghettos established by the German invaders are being systematically emptied of all Jews, except a few highly skilled workers required for war industries. None of those taken away are ever heard of again. The able-bodied are slowly worked to death in labour camps. The infirm are left to die of exposure and starvation, or are deliberately massacred in mass executions. The number of victims of these bloody cruelties is reckoned in many hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent men, women, and children.

“The above-mentioned Governments and the French National Committee condemn in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination. They declare that such events can only strengthen the resolve of all freedom-loving peoples to overthrow the barbarous Hitlerite tyranny. They reaffirm their solemn resolution to ensure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution, and to press on with the necessary practical measures to this end.”

Extract of Statement made by the Deputy Prime Minister, M. St. Mikolajczyk, on behalf of the Polish Government, November 27, 1942, at a special meeting of the Polish National Council; and text of Resolution adopted by the National Council:—

The Polish Government, in the fullest understanding of their responsibilities, not neglecting their duty to inform the world of the mass murders and bestialities of the Germans in Poland, have done everything in their power to counteract this terror.

We are fully aware of the fact that the fundamental condition of an effective counter-action against the German programme which, in relation to Poland is best expressed by one slogan—**TO DESTROY THE POLISH NATION WIPING OUT THE TRACES OF ITS EXISTENCE**—is to shorten the time of suffering and resistance for the Poles in Poland and to defeat the enemy quickly.

THAT is why the previous appeals from Poland to open up a second front and now the appeals to hasten up, at any price, the pace of the war, are considered by us to be the fundamental principles of the policy of the Polish Government.

The persecutions of the Jewish minority now in progress in Poland, constitute, however, a separate page of Polish martyrology.

Himmler's order that 1942 must be the year of liquidation of at least 50 per cent. of Polish Jewry, is being carried out with utter ruthlessness and a barbarity never before seen in world history. Everyone of us knows the details, so I will not go into them again. . . .

From Poland there comes a protest against the murders and persecutions. The protest is accompanied by cries of pity, sympathy and utter helplessness of those who have to look on what is happening there. . . .

In the name of the Polish Government I support this protest of Poles in Poland and that of the Polish National Council. The Polish Government defends the interests of all Polish citizens of whatever religion or nationality they may be, and does it both in the interests of the state and in the name of humanity and Christianity. . . .

I can only hope and pray that the protest of the Polish Government and that of the Polish National Council which represents all the groups of Polish society, will shake the conscience of the world, will find its way to quarters where decisions speeding up military action are taken, that it will bring about an intensified help for those who are still alive, that it will strengthen on the Allied side the determination to punish the crimes and serve as

a warning to the assassins whose crimes, duly registered, will not escape a just punishment and who soon will feel the hand of justice fall heavily on their backs.

After the declaration of Mr. Mikolajczyk, the Polish National Council unanimously adopted the following resolution :—

The Government of the Polish Republic has brought the last news about the massacres of the Jewish population in Poland, carried out systematically by the German occupying authorities, to the attention of the Allied Governments and of public opinion in Allied countries. The number of Jews who have been murdered by the Germans in Poland so far, since September, 1939, exceeds 1,000,000.

From the beginning of the conquest of the territories of the Republic, the bestial occupying power has subjected the Polish nation to an appalling policy of extermination, to such an extent that by now the Polish population has been reduced by several million. Now the occupying power has reached the summit of its murder-lust and sadism by organising mass-murders of hundreds of thousands of Jews in Poland, not only the Polish Jews but also the Jews brought from other countries to Poland with the purpose of exterminating them. The German murderers have sent to their death hundreds of thousands of men, women, children and old people. Their purpose is to enfeeble the Polish nation and completely to exterminate the Jews in Poland before the end of this year. In the execution of this plan Adolf Hitler and his henchmen are using the most appalling tortures.

The Polish Government and the Polish National Council, and the Polish Nation at home, have often protested against the German crimes, and announced that a just punishment would be meted out to these offenders against mankind. Lately the Polish Government has submitted to the Polish National Council the draft of a law providing for the punishment of the German criminals.

In the face of the latest German crimes, unparalleled in the history of mankind, which have been carried out against the Polish nation, and particularly against the Jewish population of Poland, the Polish National Council again raises a strong protest and pronounces an indictment before the whole civilised world.

The Polish National Council solemnly declares :

By its heroic attitude at home the Polish nation is gathering its strength for the day of just retribution, amidst unspeakable sufferings.

The Polish National Council appeals to all the Allied nations

and to all the nations now suffering together with the Polish nation under the German yoke, that they should at once start a common action against this trampling and profanation of all principles of morality and humanity by the Germans, and against the extermination of the Polish nation and other nations, an extermination the most appalling expression of which is provided by the mass-murders of the Jews in Poland and in the rest of Europe which Hitler has subjected.

To all those who are suffering and undergoing torture in Poland, both to Poles and to Jews, to all those who are taking part in the struggle for liberation and for the preparation of a just retribution on the German criminals, the Polish National Council sends words of hope and of unshakeable faith in the recovery of freedom for all.

THE DAY OF VICTORY AND PUNISHMENT IS APPROACHING

Text of a Broadcast by Count E. Raczynski, Polish Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs (December 17th, 1942).

I am speaking to you to-night on a subject, the immensity of which I would like you to realise to the full.

I would like to make you understand how real is the tragedy which is taking place not so very far from the shores of this island, on the Continent of Europe—on the soil of Poland.

For more than three years the Germans have consistently done everything they could to hide from the eyes of the world the martyrdom of the Polish nation, the like of which has never been known in the history of humanity. But “when we would keep silence the very stones will cry out.”

After receiving from Poland reports of a further intensification of the German terror, the Polish Government considered it their duty to send a note to all interested Governments drawing their attention to the horror of the situation and reminding them that what Germany is aiming at is: to reduce the population to virtual slavery and in the end to exterminate the Polish nation.

More particularly the Polish Government communicated to the Governments of the United Nations authentic information on the mass slaughter not only of those Jews whom the Germans overwhelmed in Poland, but also of the hundreds of thousands of those whom they have transplanted from other countries and imprisoned in the Ghettoes, which they have established in our country.

The note states that according to the reports in possession of the Polish Government, of a total of three million, one hundred and thirty thousand Polish Jews, more than one-third, has already been exterminated, and ends with the appeal for "condemning the crimes, punishing the criminals and devising means offering the hope that Germany might be effectively restrained from continuing to apply her methods of mass extermination."

This morning, the Governments of the United Nations of the European Continent united their voices with those of the Powers in a solemn declaration, expressing their unshakable determination to cauterise with red-hot iron the evil which so dangerously infects the German people.

It is tragic to contemplate that this policy of extermination applied to the Jews by the German Government is being carried out with the active help or, at least, support of a considerable section of the German people, while the remaining part of that people allow it to pass in silence.

I know that in a totalitarian regime it is not easy to protest, but the occupied nations nevertheless find the means to manifest their will and their opposition to the barbarous methods of Germany.

When I think of the German nation, so powerful in its armed might and owning so gigantic a war machine, and at the same time so cowardly accepting the destruction of an entire race, the representatives of which, such as Heine, Mendelssohn and Einstein contributed so much to the glory of Germany's civilisation and, on the other hand, when I think of my own nation, which itself is being massacred and nevertheless is capable of such acts of defiance and compassion as the demolition by Polish workers of a part of the wall which surrounds the ghetto of Warsaw, *then* I cannot help thinking how small is this mighty German nation—and how measureless is its infamy.

Civilised words and remonstrances are to-day of no avail where *that* nation is concerned. The bloody crimes call out for justice without mercy, and the assurance that even now they will receive their answer in ever more telling deeds as the might of the United Nations grows and as the hour of judgment approaches apace.