



JÓZEF RODAK

Warsaw, 27 January 2002

The Archive of Modern Records
Committee for the Remembrance
of Poles Who Saved Jews
Hankiewicza Street 1
Warsaw

In response to the call issued on Puls TV on 20 January 2002 in "Wydarzenia" at 8 p.m., I am hereby offering a description of one instance which is known to me in which Jews were saved by Poles during World War Two, and of my small contribution to this cause.

Between 1942 and 1943, I stayed as a Home Army soldier in Podzamek near Krasnobród, in the Zamość region, in the country estate of Mr. Kazimierz Fudakowski, a senator of the 2nd Republic and a friend of president Ignacy Mościcki. I assumed the name of Jan Drogosz (my Home Army nom-de-guerre was "Mietek") and worked in the estate's office, as a diversion. Working with me was Mr. Henryk Eile, who had Jewish origins. He was hiding under the false name of Lewicki. I learned from Maj. Wacław Stasiewicz ("Bartosz"), my commandant, that "Lewicki" was a Polish Army colonel and had arrived in Podzamek with president Mościcki's entourage, traveling with him to Romania in September 1939. President Mościcki had personally asked Mr. Fudakowski to take good care of Col. Eile. At that time (that is, in 1942), my main task was telephone surveillance of the conversations of a German gendarmerie unit stationed in Podzamek and of their command in Krasnobród and Zamość. However, I was also tasked with protecting Col. Eile on the frequent occasions when gendarmes and Gestapo men visited the office. The main difficulty was that the office only had one door (fortunately, there were two rooms). Under these circumstances, whenever I could see the Germans approaching, I would signal to the colonel that he was to either leave the office or hide in the other room. Usually, he would go for the latter option. Often, I stepped out of the office to meet the Germans and I kept talking to them in order to keep them away from the office. I am proficient in German and I succeeded most of the time.

Also in hiding with Mr. Tadeusz Teleżyński, the estate manager, was professor Juliusz Kleiner (under the false name Jan Zalutyński), who was in touch with me and Col. Eile every day.



Professor Kleiner was also of Jewish origins. Professor Kleiner used to teach two daughters of professor Stefania Skwarczyńska, who was in Lwów, where she had returned after a brief deportation to Kazakhstan.

In September... [a line or more missing] ...and then I stayed in hospitals in Zamość, Tomaszów Lubelski, and Lwów. In the meantime, Col. Eile and prof. Kleiner moved to the estate of Tadeusz Teleżyński in Leśniczówka, near Kraśnik, where it was safer. Let me emphasize that both had clearly Semitic facial features, and the fact that they were in hiding was known to everybody in Podzamek and many people in Krasnobród. However, nobody betrayed them to the Germans, so I will never believe that a Pole could have turned a Jew over to the Germans during the war. The situation of the Poles was only marginally better than that of the Jews. These two communities shared one fate that has joined them together forever.

Toward the end of 1942, the Germans began to deport and murder the Jews in Podzamek and Krasnobród. My friend Kazimierz Becker ("Królik") sheltered the Zycer family, whom Mr. Fudakowski provided for all the way through the war, in the lumber mill in Podzamek. "Bartosz", the commandant of the Zamość district of the Home Army, told this family as well as young Jews that they could join the Home Army guerillas in the forest, where they would have been relatively safe, but they preferred to die together with their families. They were probably encouraged to do so by the Jewish elders and clergy.

During my stay in the hospital in Tomaszów Lubelski, I was visited, among others, by Maj. "Bartosz", who told me to collect intelligence concerning the extermination camp in Bełżec. I gathered this intelligence through Dr. Janusz Peter, director of the hospital and a Home Army member, and the ward nurse, both of whom had everyday contacts with the perpetrators of that camp who were patients of the hospital. They were enlisted from military units that the Germans had formed from former POWs, Soviet Union citizens (Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Latvians). They were sick from abusing alcohol. They did not want to go back to the camp, because from time to time, to cover their tracks, the Germans would kill these butchers themselves because they were witnesses to the extermination of the Jews. Some of them tried to bribe the personnel with the gold they had stolen to prolong their hospital stay. My intelligence concerning the Bełżec camp was passed on by Maj. "Bartosz" to London, via Warsaw.



I can expand on my brief note if requested. Enclosed please find

1. A photocopy of my ID, in the name of J. Drogas
2. A photo of the decrepit former office building, where Col. Eile stayed
3. A photo of the decrepit house where prof. Kleiner lived with the Teleżyński family
4. A photocopy of an article from "Przekrój" concerning the death of Col. Eile

Józef Rodak

[...]