**DOC. 79**

**On May 31 and June 3 1942 Chaim Kaplan records what he has heard about**

**the murder of the Jews of Lublin[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Handwritten diary of Chaim Kaplan, entries for May 31 and June 3 1942

May 31, 1942

We wracked our brains over Lublin:[[2]](#footnote-2) Why did the Nazi treat this city with so much greater cruelty and brutality than any of the other cities of the “*Generalgouvernement*?” Well, the veil has been lifted a little! Today’s *Warschauer Zeitung* newspaper published a letter from Lublin by some literary hooligan.[[3]](#footnote-3) You’ll find something of everything in it: reportage full of lies, fallacies, and falsified science. The entire article is a sword in the heart of Polish Jewry; all of it is poison. It’s all the nauseating prattle of some hack who doesn’t know up from down when it comes to his subject matter. Everything is based on zoological hatred that warps what’s straight and falsifies historical facts. The article in question, however, has one merit: it reveals in passing something of the reason for the Lublin deportation.

This moronic Nazi takes Lublin for the spiritual center of Polish Jewry from which a web of ideological, Talmudic, and legal ties extends to all of world Jewry. These ties endanger all Aryan peoples and therefore must be severed. And historical facts also help this Nazi to substantiate this view. The Council of Four Lands[[4]](#footnote-4) held its meetings in Lublin; *Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin*[[5]](#footnote-5) is a Talmudic academy from which thousands of students have scattered all over the world and now hold the reins of spiritual leadership throughout the Diaspora. They are, in effect, spiritual conduits that carry the pernicious spirit of the Talmud to all Jewish communities. *Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin* is indeed the fetid, stinking Talmudic well from which its students, the ideological agents of world Jewry, drink. And so it continues in this vein all the way to the end.

Therefore, get rid of this “stinking” yeshiva! Block the filthy well that quenches the entire world’s thirst with its pestilent waters.

And the Nazi has won the prize of being the one who undertakes this handiwork for the good of the world’s nations.

And the thousands who were killed, butchered, and incinerated – for what? It’s a *Teiku* – a tie!

By night – slaughter; by day – the hunt!

Two days ago, there was a hunt on the ghetto streets. The Jewish police chased down young Jews and left them like birds ensnared in a trap. No sooner than they were caught, they were put onto a Jewish bus and hauled under the strictest guard to the former military prison building, now the Jewish lock-up.[[6]](#footnote-6) Awaiting their arrival there was Auerswald, the commissioner for ghetto affairs and three Jewish doctors. Everyone who had been rounded up was examined. Those found to be healthy and strong were taken aside and sent to a labor camp. Where? People are of two minds: some say Germany and others say Estonia.[[7]](#footnote-7) And those found to be weak or ill were released. In the meantime, a new source of bribes – and of subsistence – opened up for the Jewish police.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Nazism does not recognize the individual Jew, but only the Jewish collective and its agent, the *kehilla*.[[9]](#footnote-9) When the Nazi authority needs several hundred young Jews for grueling labor, discharged after some time shattered, frazzled, and dejected, it turns to the commissioner for ghetto affairs, who turns to the *kehilla*. And the *kehilla* does a nice business with this. When the Nazi orders it to supply 400 young men, the *kehilla* goes the extra mile and hunts down 800: 400 for the Nazi and 400 for bribes. When commotion erupts, everyone wants to flee. So those who are detained are willing to give everything they have to secure their freedom. And the police aren’t too particular about it: “One gives a lot, the other gives a little!”[[10]](#footnote-10) All that matters is “*dawaj –*let’s go!” There have been cases where people were released for ten *złoty*, a sum that doesn’t even suffice to buy a whole loaf of bread. But either way, both sides get something out of it.

Long live the war!!! …

3 June 1942

Polish Jewry is heading for ruin. The *Führer’s* watchword – the total annihilation of Europe’s Jews – is steadily becoming a reality. Every day, entire communities are being uprooted from their lands and their members taken to their deaths. For these days are not like the first days. The first expulsions[[11]](#footnote-12) were notable for their cruelty and for all the terrible misery and horrible disasters that come with such a total decree – but the deportees lived! All those forced into exile had permission to go wherever their legs would carry them. They were given little time to leave, but the departure itself was unrestricted; the deportees could even choose where to live as they saw fit.

This is no longer the case: deportees are transported away in sealed and locked cattle cars under the command of Nazi henchmen and remain in the clutches of the angels of destruction until they reach the site of the gallows where they give up their souls. Many of the exiles – including mothers and their babies – are killed on the way, while the rest are taken to a hidden place that no falcon’s eye has seen.[[12]](#footnote-13) There they are escorted out of the world *en* *masse*, not individually but by the thousands and tens of thousands. This is how the Lublin community perished. Some 40,000 Jews of Lublin disappeared and no one knows where they are buried. Aryan agents fanned out across the whole *Generalgouvernement* to search for traces of them and couldn’t find a thing, as though they had plunged into mighty waters.[[13]](#footnote-14) However, there is no doubt that they are no longer alive.

Lublin was the first to drink the cup of poison[[14]](#footnote-15) to the bottom, but not the last. Since then, not a single day goes by without some Jewish town being wiped off the face of the earth. Włodawa![[15]](#footnote-16) Tłuszcz![[16]](#footnote-17) Both emptied out, down to the last Jew. The deportees were handed over to Nazi gendarmes who brought extinction upon them along the way. The Tsaddik[[17]](#footnote-18) of Radzyń was put to death.

Beautiful girls and women were all taken aside and shot dead: “Jews don’t need beautiful women!” Mounted gendarmes showed the deportees the way. With premeditation, the horsemen spurred and prodded their horses to speed up as the hundreds of deportees who followed on foot were ordered not to lag behind. The galloping horses disappeared into the distance, trailed by a mass of shopkeepers, mothers with babies, the elderly with their canes, and all the provincial small-timers who had to make their way on foot and “not lag behind.” The cruelty of it surpasses anything our history has known thus far!!

These “communities” have also disappeared, and no one knows whether those deportees are still alive.

A joke that’s been making the rounds: Rabbi Stephen Wise[[18]](#footnote-19) ordered the *El Maleh Rahamim*[[19]](#footnote-20) prayer to be recited! For the ascent of the souls of Polish Jewry. Something inside him foresaw this.

Polish Jewry is facing annihilation!!

1. USHMM, Collection 2009.212, fols. 21–23. The document has been translated from Hebrew. Published in *Megillat Yissurin: Yoman Getto Varshah* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1966), pp. 505–507. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Talmudic expression used here in the original for an unresolved problem is *teiku*, a short form of the Aramaic word *tikom*, which means “will stand.” As the answer to a question with which Talmudic sages have dealt is not known, the question “will stand,” i.e. will go unresolved. In addition, if read as an acronym ו"תיק may also stand for the Hebrew words ובעיות קושיות יתרץ תשבי, meaning the question will stand and remain unresolved until the day comes when the prophet Eliyahu HaTishbi will provide the answer to the question. (The source of the acronym and its meaning is unknown.) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Gustav Andraschko, „Lehranstalt der Weisen Lublins“ [„Lublin’s Academy of the Sages“], in *Warschauer Zeitung*, no. 127, 31 May 1942, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Kaplan is reflecting here on Lublin’s significance in the early modern era. The Council of Four Lands, also known as the Four Lands Sejm and by the Hebrew name *Va’ad Arba’ Aratzot*, was the highest-ranking institution of Jewish self-government in the four parts of Poland–Lithuania between 1580 and 1764. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Talmud–Torah Academy of the Sages of Lublin. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This refers to the so-called Gęsiówka, the Jewish Order Service’s main detention centre. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Czerniaków suspected that those arrested were deported to Babruisk in Belarus: Czerniaków, *Im Warschauer Getto*, p. 261. Ringelblum noted that they would be used as forced labourers by the Organization Todt: Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego: wrzesień 1939 – styczeń 1943*, ed. Artur Eisenbach, trans. Adam Rutkowski (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1988), p. 386. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This can also mean: for the Jewish regime, i.e. for those who were in the service of the Jewish Council. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Hebrew word for “community”; the term is used here to refer to the Jewish Council. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Reference to Berakhot 17a: “Lest you say: I engage in Torah study a lot, while he only engages in Torah study a little, so I am better than he, it has already been taught: One who brings a substantial sacrifice and one who brings a meagre sacrifice have equal merit, as long as he directs his heart towards Heaven.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Kaplan is referring to the first expulsions that occurred shortly after the occupation of Poland, namely from the annexed territories to the General Government: see PMJ 4, pp. XXX. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Reference to Job 28:7: “That path no bird of prey knoweth, Neither hath the falcon’s eye seen it” (JPS 1917). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Kaplan uses the biblical expression in the Song of the Sea, which depicts the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea after the Israelites had crossed it when the sea split and left a dry path for them. See Exodus 15:10: “Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them; They sank as lead in the mighty waters.” (JPS 1917). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Reference to Isaiah 51:17 (“That hast drunk at the hand of the LORD, the cup of His fury; thou hast drunken the beaker, even the cup of staggering, and drained it”) and 51:22 (“Behold, I have taken out of thy hand, the cup of staggering; the beaker, even the cup of My fury, thou shalt no more drink it again”) (JPS 1917). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. On May 23 and 24, 1942, the German police deported around 1,300 people from the Włodawa ghetto to the nearby Sobibor extermination camp. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. The Germans dissolved the ghetto in the small town of Tłuszcz on May 27, 1942. While women and children were transported to Warsaw by train, the men had to walk the approx. 35-km route; over one hundred of them were shot dead during the trek. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Title meaning “righteous one” for a Hasidic spiritual leader and highly respected Jewish religious scholar. This is likely a reference to the Rebbe of Radzyń, Shmuel Shloyme Layner, also Shmuel Shlomo Leiner and Szlomo Lajner (1914–1942), founder of the Sod Yesharim Yeshiva in Radzyń who urged his followers to rise up against the occupier. The Germans captured and executed him in May 1942 in front of the Włodawa synagogue. The Warsaw ghetto underground press reported in June 1942 on Layner’s feat. It was then that the poet Yitskhok Katsenelson (also Itzhak Katzenelson) composed “Dos lid vegn Radziner” (“Poem about the Radzyń rebbe”) in the Warsaw ghetto. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Stephen Samuel Wise (1874–1949), rabbi; founded the Free Synagogue in New York in 1907 and was a Reform rabbi there; contributed to the drafting of the Balfour Declaration in 1917; vice president of the Zionist Organization of America, 1918–1920, then its president, 1936–1938; president of the World Jewish Congress, 1936–1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. “God, full of mercy”: the opening words of a Jewish prayer that is recited at funerals, on the anniversary of deaths, and when visiting graves or burial sites. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)