

KUTNO AND SURROUNDINGS DURING THE YEARS OF OCCUPATION

in books and newspapers

translated from the Yiddish by Shoulamit Auvé-Szlajfer

November 24, 1939

Border posts are already installed all along the border between the area included in the *Reich* and the General Government (about the places where one could face a border post, not yet public, according to the statements of the "Warsaw Journal", we find: Kutno, Stryków, Koluszki, Klucze near Olkusz). Silver or gold, new (unused) goods of any kind, or food should not be taken out of the *Reich*.

February 22, 1940

At the moment, colonization is not going too well. An example is given in the report published today in the Łódź newspaper about the Łęczyca district. The Germans of the Baltic regions appear here as a lonely drop in the Polish ocean. Łęczyca is widely known as a town well-supplied with food. People even ask the General Government for authorizations to settle in the city. But only Poles want to come and Łęczyca needed German townspeople. Increasing the city's population is the most important task. In the whole locality there were neither German craftsmen nor German merchants. So far only two Baltic Germans have come: the district veterinarian and an engineer-architect... It is interesting to note in the report that there are hardly any local Germans who have "returned to the *Reich*": in the city of Łęczyca they are 180, compared to 3000 Jews and 11000 inhabitants in general.

February 23, 1940

For the moment, the Baltic Germans are the main group that has settled in the Polish territories included in the *Reich*.

The newspaper constantly insists on the small number of Germans in the region: for example, speaking on the occasion of the appointment of a German mayor in Kutno, it recalls that the city has 28,000 inhabitants and less than 400 Germans.

In Łęczyca, "a fire" broke out in the school, due to the filthy state it was in, of course. According to the newspaper, the firefighters only made sure that the fire did not spread to the neighboring houses.

March 4, 1940

Germanization activity does not mark a pause and, on the contrary, the results are still far from making an impression. According to a report on Kutno in the "Łódź Zeitung", "the number of Germans is increasing"; but at the moment, according to the same report, the population is 20,000 Poles, 7,700 Jews and 400 Germans.

March 29, 1940

A list of names has been published in the district of Warteghau, drawn up by the commissioner. There are 41 districts there, 27 of which are from the former province of Poznań (in its entirety except Bydgoszcz and the districts of Bydgoszcz and Wyrzysk), 10 from the province of Łódź (partly still in Polish times included in the Province of Poznań) and 4 of that of Warsaw: Gostynin, Kutno, Włocławek and Nieszawa. Not only the names of the districts of Poznań, which dated from before the First World War were Germanized, but also those of others, such as Leslau (Włocławek), Nessau (Nieszawa), Warthbrücken (Koło), Lentschütz (Łęczyca).

19 May 1940

... Jewish ghettos continue to be organized – orders to this effect have already been issued in Łęczyca.

June 13, 1940

From the recently established Łęczyca ghetto, desperate reports come about the sudden and determined shrinkage of this area and, in connection with it, the brutal expulsion of part of the Jewish population. This is of course linked to the settlement of families evacuated from Germany.

July 17, 1940

According to rumors, all the Jews of Kutno were expelled from the city and installed somewhere outside the city, in the open air; the Warsaw "Joint" asked for permission to come and help them, but their request was rejected...

July 21, 1940

I have heard rumors about what is going on in Kutno... all the businesses in Kutno are already German. The Jews were moved a few kilometers outside the city: they were installed in a sort of factory building and, as there was little space, a large part of it lays under the open sky.

August 22, 1940

About the territories included in the perimeter of the *Reich*, the newspaper reports a march of the German youth "with the martyrs of the German country road, between Inowrocław and Kutno" ("Freedom march") – again to support hatred of 'Polacks'.

September 2, 1940

About the regions included in the *Reich*, the newspapers reproduce in full the speeches of Goebbels in Katowice and of Greiser¹ in Kutno, the meeting point of

¹ TN: Arthur Karl Greiser (22 January 1897 – 21 July 1946), hanged in Poland for crime against humanity.

the "Freedom March" which must be perceived as an educational role by seeding and inciting hate.

September 22, 1940

In the news from the regions included in the *Reich*, the Jewish question can be found once in the Łódź newspaper report.

The author of the report visits the already famous ghetto in a disused sugar factory (*cukrownia*) outside the city, accompanied by a police officer, who shows him how Jews behave. They, the Germans, would have already tidied up here, but the Jews are making a bigger and bigger trash can!

(Ludwig Landau, *Chronicle of the War and Occupation Years*, September 1939, November 1940).

The months of March and April 1942 were rich in a whole series of "transfer actions"... During that period, "actions" were carried out in... Kutno. "The action" lasted from late March to late April. About 8,400 Jews were "transferred" to Chełmno...

(A. Siedlecki, on the fourth anniversary of the liquidation of the ghetto in Kutno, *"The New Life"* 1946, No. 14).

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In August 1942, a series of "transfers" and "actions" (and others) were carried out in Żychlin...

The "transferred" were taken to Chełmno, the children were killed on the spot. About 200 people were left to sort valuables. The group was shot down in March 1943...

(Documents and Materials, Volume II, "Actions" and "Relocations", edited by Dr. Y. Kermisz, pp. 15 and 30. Warsaw–Łódź–Crakow, 1946).

Speaking of camps, we must also pay particular attention to their diversity with regard to the size of their surface. Besides a camp, which covered several hundred hectares of land (Auschwitz), with several hundred barracks, we have camps, which were limited to a few buildings, up to the area of a factory (e.g., the "Konstancja Jewish Camp") – the buildings of an old sugar factory near Kutno, where about 8000 people were parked, some of whom, due to lack of space, "lived" in the open.

(Documents and materials, Volume I – "Camps", edited by Mgr. N. Blumenthal, p. 7, Łódź 1946).