

Volhynia Massacre

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Marcin Przegietka, Ukrainian (?) List of Polish Professors

In July 1941, over 40 people – Lviv professors with their families, guests and household members – were shot on the Wuleckie Hills. The perpetrators were Germans, who arrested the academics according to lists that had been prepared earlier. Who made those lists? There is some evidence that points to the Ukrainian nationalist circles of Lviv.

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union was launched on 22nd June 1941, a special operational commando (Einsatzkommando zur besonderen Verwendung) under Eberhardt Schöngarth, the commander of the Security Police and the Security Service in the General Government, based in Cracow, moved towards Lviv. This commando was formed at the order of the Supreme SS and Police Commander of Cracow, Wilhelm Krüger, with knowledge and consent of General Governor Hans Frank. Its task was to conduct an operation against Polish intellectuals in the south-east of pre-war Poland, which was to be incorporated into the General Government, and where the Gestapo was to be established.

The task was identical to the task of the operational groups of the Security Police and Security Service that entered Poland in September 1939 and carried out arrested, exiled and executed people, and carried out brutal pacifications. Several tens of thousands of Poles and Jews fell victim to such measures.

Sonderaktion Krakau continued

The Lviv operation planned for 1941 was probably a continuation of the operation that was carried out in Cracow on 6th November 1939 (Sonderaktion Krakau) which involved German Security Police and Security Service operational group officers arresting 183 professors of the Jagiellonian University. They were transported to concentration camps. International interventions for the arrested persons resulted in their release. Some of them, however, died (in the camps or shortly after they had been released) or were murdered. Hans Frank was not satisfied with the method applied at that time. The General Governor's statement of 30th May 1940 is considered an announcement of a more radical solution for the future: "It cannot be described how much trouble we had with the Cracow professors. Had we dealt with the issue on the spot, the course of action would have been totally different. Therefore, Sirs, I ask you not to direct anyone to concentration camps within the Reich, but to dispose of them on the spot or apply a punishment provided for by the regulations. Any other conduct is a burden for the Reich and an additional difficulty for us. We use totally different methods here, and we still have to apply them."

Schöngarth commando, which consisted of 250 men (SS members and Gestapo officers) reached Lviv on 2nd July 1941 as several columns. The next evening, the operation against Polish university teachers started with the help of Ukrainian interpreters and guides. 25 professors and 18 other people who were taken with them from their houses (family members, friends, servants) were

arrested. Prof. Franciszek Groër was the only person to survive among the 43. He was released when it turned out that he has German roots. The rest were murdered on the night of July 3–4 on the Wuleckie Hills.

Prior to that, operational group C (Einsatzgruppe C) under Otto Rasch, which was independent of Schöngarth's group, came to Lviv. Its members arrested Prof. Kazimierz Bartel. However, his fate was different from that of the other arrested professors – the former Polish Prime Minister remained in custody and was murdered later (26th July 1941). As opposed to the case of professors arrested by Schöngarth's commando, no members of his family and household were arrested. It is possible that the decision to murder Bartel was taken by Himmler, who had visited Lviv with Krüger five days before the professor's execution.

According to one of the accounts recorded after the war, Bartel was to be arrested "based on accusations by the Ukrainians who presented him as a 'hater of Germans'". According to the predominant opinion, however, the perpetrators' actions were due to a different motivation. Due to the fact that Bartel had been prime minister before the war, all his actions at the Lviv Polytechnic under the Soviet occupation were considered political. His visit to Moscow was seen as a meeting with Stalin (though they had not met), and there were numerous rumours that Bartel had accepted the proposal to head a Soviet-backed Polish government. It is known that these rumours reached Berlin and were treated seriously there. Bartel was considered a Bolshevik collaborator. This could be why his actions resulted in his death at the hand of the Germans.

Ukrainian trail

The case of the other Lviv professors murdered in July 1941 is different. It is known that they were arrested by members of Schöngarth's commando on the basis of the lists that had been prepared earlier, but it still is not clear who prepared those lists. In the autumn of 1939, lists used in a similar operation against Polish intellectuals in German-occupied lands that included the names of persons who were to be arrested had been prepared on the basis of local archives (e.g. organisation member list) or in cooperation with local Volksdeutsche who knew local relations and supported operational groups as guides or interpreters. In May 1942, Hans Krüger, the head of the Gestapo in Stanislaviv, told Karolina Lanckorońska, who had been arrested, that Schöngarth's commando (of which he was a member) had entered Lviv with lists of persons to be arrested that had been prepared beforehand. It is still difficult to explain why Krüger revealed this secret to the Polish woman, but it is probable that he boasted of his power over the life and death of Poles and the statement that the massacre of the professors is his "work" to intimidate Lanckorońska. He told her this because he thought she would also be murdered soon.

In the case of the crime that was committed in Lviv in 1941, it is probable that Ukrainians could have played a significant role in the preparation of the list. The list of names of Polish professors who worked at Lviv universities was supposedly prepared by members of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) – Yevhen Vretsiona and Ivan Klymiv, who stayed in Cracow prior to the German invasion of the Soviet Union. As they escaped from Lviv in 1939, the lists they presented (e.g. on the basis of the telephone directory) did not take account of changes that took place in the

two years that followed – the lists included professors who had died. After 1945, the thesis that the Ukrainian participated in the operation was willingly used by the Soviet authorities in order to discredit OUN. It was also employed in the trial in absentia of Theodor Oberländer, who was an Abwehr liaison officer in the Ukrainian Nachtigall battalion and after the war, a Federal Minister for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Victims of War in Konrad Adenauer's cabinet (Federal German Republic), which took place in the German Democratic Republic. Though, as it was determined many years later, Oberländer was not involved in the massacre of Lviv professors in any way, a Polish woman from Lviv testified in the trial in the GDR and stated that she saw him at the place of execution on 4th July on the Wuleckie Hills. This account, however, is not very credible because the witness claimed that she recognised Bartel, who was killed over three weeks later, among the murdered professors. In this case there was also clear trace of Ukrainian involvement – the deputy commander of the Nachtigall battalion was Roman Shukhevych, one of the OUN leaders and later chief commander of the UPA. Nowadays, we know that it was not the Nachtigall battalion that played the decisive role in the massacre of Lviv professors.

According to another version, the list of Polish professors had not been made beforehand in Cracow but was prepared in Lviv on the eve of the arrests. It was supposedly made by students who sympathised with OUN on Mykola Lebed's order. Arrests started soon after it had been prepared. As it is known that the perpetrators also looked for two professors who died during the war, this version is less likely – the list must have been made in advance, and its preparation must have involved people who did not have the most recent news from Lviv. Therefore the version which states that the list was prepared in Cracow seems more probable.

There is also evidence that the preparation of the list in Cracow involved a Dutchman, Pieter Nicolaas Menten, an antiquary and schemer, who entered Lviv alongside Schöngarth's command and cooperated as an interpreter. His participation in the preparation of the list seems probable due to the fact that the Gestapo officers who arrested Professor Franciszek Groër expressed their surprise with the absence of valuables such as paintings and carpets in his flat. It is also known that art was robbed by Menten after the arrests.

Some researchers draw a link between the preparation of the lists and the activity of German academics involved in the so-called Ostforschung, who cooperated with German secret police and the terror apparatus: the Abwehr, the Security Service of the Reichsführer-SS (SD), the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA). The Ukrainian office at the RSHA supposedly played the decisive role in the process. According to this version, the list must have been made in Berlin. The persons recently named in this context include Hans Joachim Beyer, who was an SD member and directed the Ukrainian office at the RSHA, and was part of a sub-unit of Einsatzgruppe C, which he entered Lviv with, as an SD advisor.

The few surviving documents and conflicting accounts by witnesses and participants will not give a clear answer to the question of who made the lists of professors that were to be murdered. The analysis of the list of people who were arrested and murdered provokes further questions. It turns out that most of the arrested professors are physicians, lawyers, and representatives of science, who could not be accused of anti-German or anti-Ukrainian attitude. What is more, a portion of

them had knowledge and skills that could be useful for the occupying power – as was the case of Professor Stanisław Pilat, the director of the Chair of Oil and Natural Gas Technology at the Lviv Polytechnic, whom the Wehrmacht officers tried to find a few days after he had been murdered. There is still no answer to the question why those professors were selected from among Lviv academic teachers, who were a few times numerous that the chosen group. They were not politically involved to any degree nor did they share their political views. The case cannot also be explained by citing robbery as a motive due to the role played by Menten – not all of the murdered professors owned artworks. This randomness may mean that there were many people involved in the preparation of the list (which in turn means that there were many motives for including a particular person) or that it was made quickly without much consideration. The attempt at answering the question *cui bono?* (for whose benefit?) does not bring any answers either. The aim, which was to remove at least a portion of Polish intellectuals from Lviv and intimidate the remaining Poles, was shared by both the Ukrainians and the Germans.

Marcin Przegiętka

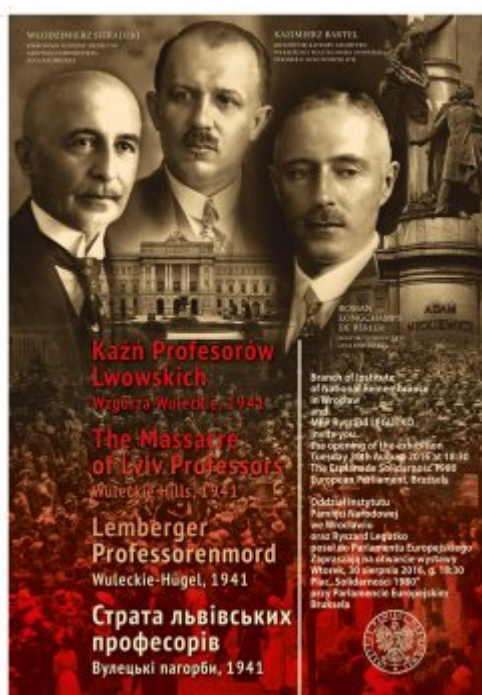


Photo gallery

