



MIKOŁAJ ŁĄCKI

On 23 May 1946 in Warsaw, deputy prosecutor Z. Rudziewicz, with a court reporter present, interviewed the person named below as a witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for giving false testimony, and of the wording of art. 106 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Mikołaj Łącki
Date of birth or age	30 October 1888
Names of parents	Paweł and Anna
Place of residence	Warsaw, Chmielna Street 25
Place of birth	Łojów [Loyew]
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Occupation	administrative employee and medical doctor
Relationship to the parties	none
Criminal record	none
Education	Medical Faculty of the Jagiellonian University and Moscow

During the war, I was in charge of the city health service; I already worked in health institutions before the war. After the German invasion, the department was supervised by authorized German doctors (*Amtsärzte*) from the German municipal administration (*Deutsche Stadtverwaltung*).

Due to the function I performed, I had the opportunity to get first-hand experience of the ghetto, insofar as health services are concerned.

Already in 1939, the Germans started to erect walls to cordon off the Jewish district, which they called the prohibited district (*Seuchen sperrgebiet*). This was ostensibly to stop the spread of the typhus epidemic. The Germans maintained that the epidemic had been caused by the Jews, who, being predisposed to contract the disease, spread it across the so-called General Governorate. This issue was the subject of a special exhibition held in 1941 in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry building. Various pictures and mock-ups showed how Jews – lousy and dirty merchants or barterers – transmit typhus, how make sausage from rats, put cockroaches into bread, etc. The entire exhibition was to vilify the Jews, their customs and behaviour. The information presented was of course biased and untrue. The exhibition was to prove that Jews and typhus are overlapping notions, and hence locking up the Jews means getting typhus under control.

From the epidemiological point of view, the causes of [the outbreak of] typhus were as follows:

1. Excessive concentration of impoverished and dirty citizens displaced from western Poland to Warsaw and their placement in synagogues, schools and other large premises. For instance, in one synagogue on Muranowski Square and in the street thus called there were [...] about 320 people.
2. Prior to their displacement, people were deprived of virtually all their belongings, which made it impossible to change underwear.
3. Due to lack of coal, flats were unheated, and because of the extreme cold, people staying at so-called “points” (houses for refugees and the poor) could not take off their clothing for the night.

Had the displaced been allowed to stay in clean and not overcrowded rooms, sleep in beds, change their underwear and bathe, the typhus epidemic might have been stopped. For all of this, the German authorities are to blame:

1. through unnecessary resettlement of civilians,
2. by imposing limits on coal, soap and underwear and linen rations
3. by keeping the Jewish population malnourished, which lowered their resistance to disease.

Jewish doctors told me that the food rations issued to the Jewish population were considerably smaller than those that the Poles were getting. To stop the epidemic, the Germans instantly ordered the disinfection of every flat in a house where a case of typhus had been reported, as well as compulsory baths for the residents of such a building and quarantine for those in the immediate environment of the sick. This was not doable in practice and was only conducive to abuses and taking bribes by the units responsible for disinfection as well as the blue and Jewish police.

In my opinion, the German doctors must have realised that the conditions in which the resettlement of Jews was being conducted as well as their living conditions in the ghetto were the cause of the typhus epidemic. This is the only case of "experimental" [triggering of a] typhus [epidemic] in the history of medicine.

Whenever I was in the ghetto, where I went to get in touch with the Jewish health service, I was struck by the extreme misery of that district. The sick and the hungry, clothed in rags, lay in the streets. The Jewish doctors repeatedly reported that the German policemen used horsewhips to hit naked people at bathing sites.

I noticed that the Jewish hospitals were grossly overcrowded. The sick were incredibly tired and starved. The Jewish hospitals received virtually no food rations, and the patients would get by on whatever their families had supplied.

I was struck by the fear of the entire Jewish population – they were afraid of everything and everybody.

Information about the ghetto and the living conditions therein can be provided by:

- 1) Col. Kon – Ministry of National Defence
- 2) Maj. Ganc-Rutkowski – Ministry of Health, Chocimska Street 24
- 3) Prof. Hirszfeld, presently in America
- 4) Mr. Kroszczor, Szeroka Street 5 – the Jewish Committee.

A group of Jewish doctors wrote a research paper on hunger in the ghetto, entitled "Hunger in the ghetto."