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"A Vile Character"

Alfons Sutter and the Kriminalpolizei in the Łódź Ghetto

Abstract

Alfons Sutter was perhaps the most notorious German police agent in the Łódź ghetto. A native of Łódź, he and dozens of other *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans) were hired by the criminal police (Kriminalpolizei, or Kripo) after Nazi Germany conquered and annexed the city. As a Kripo employee from 1940 to 1945, he took part in the arrest and torture of countless Jews. Well over a hundred accounts from the Łódź ghetto have mentioned him by name, and many others that describe the Kripo's brutality in the Łódź ghetto also suggest his presence. His disappearance after the war remained a mystery to survivors and to international authorities – until now. This article provides the first comprehensive biographical account of Alfons Sutter, with a focus on his wartime activities and how victims remembered his crimes. It is also the first publication to display his photograph and to reveal his fate after the Second World War. The sources for this work include the files of the Kriminalpolizei in the Łódź ghetto and several testimonies, both archival and published. This article will not just uncover the life of a perpetrator who escaped justice; it will also help us understand Jewish accounts of the ghetto as a world where former neighbours became deadly threats.

In 1939, Nazi Germany conquered western Poland and annexed the industrial metropolis of Łódź, which had been Poland's second largest city. This once famously multicultural home of Poles, Germans, and Jews was renamed Litzmannstadt and became an outpost of Nazi racial policies in occupied eastern Europe. Over the course of the war, some 200,000 Jews were interned in the Łódź ghetto, with most eventually dying from malnutrition, mistreatment, and deportation to the death camps. Tasked with stopping the flow of smuggled goods into the ghetto, the Kriminalpolizei (German Criminal Police, Kripo) contributed substantially to the expropriation, starvation, and murder of the Jews. The Kripo owed its lethality in particular to the many local Volksdeutsche (ethnic Germans) who made up its lower ranks. Although their Germanness was often contested, these locals used the opportunities available to them to collaborate, and they became some of the most feared agents of Nazi Germany.

Alfons Sutter was one such local collaborator and perhaps the most notorious German police agent in the Łódź ghetto. During his five years in the Kripo, he took part in the arrest and torture of thousands of Jews. Because he lived in the heavily Jewish northern part of Łódź, many Jews knew him personally before

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the war. Well over a hundred accounts from the Łódź ghetto have mentioned him by name, and many others that describe the Kripo's brutality in the Łódź ghetto also suggest his participation in raids, interrogations, and beatings. The accounts mentioned in this article include that of Oskar Rosenfeld, who contributed to the chronicling of the ghetto and perished in Auschwitz. Rosenfeld also wrote about Sutter in his private notebooks. Mendel Tron and Konstanty Wołkowski were two survivors who had known Sutter before the war and provided testimony against him after the war; Wołkowski called Sutter a "vile character" who stood out among other Kripo policemen for his cleverness.[1] Sutter also appears prominently in memoirs by M. S. Arnoni, Michael Checinski, and Sarah Bick Berkowitz. Henrietta Stein was born after the war, but she published her father's personal encounters with Sutter. Except for Rosenfeld, who had been deported to Łódź from Prague, these accounts juxtapose their authors' generally positive prewar experiences with Sutter against their encounters with Sutter as a policeman in the Łódź ghetto.

As a common point of reference for victims, Alfons Sutter provides a unique lens for understanding Jewish experiences in the ghetto. He represents not only the contrast between the prewar world and wartime suffering and, thus, a form of intimate violence; he also embodies the danger that originated from within local Polish society. Sutter's unknown fate after the war also heightened this sense of ubiquitous threat. Testimonies about perpetrators often provide conflicting information about him even though Jews in the ghetto lived in Sutter's shadow for several years. Using police records and Jewish accounts, this article is the first effort to provide an integrated biography of this notorious perpetrator. Knowing more about him and his victims can serve as a basis for future researchers who want to understand how Łódź Jews processed their ghetto experiences within their broader Holocaust narratives.

Newer research on the Łódź ghetto has profited from a wealth of studies that have appeared since the end of the war. Some have focused on the German ghetto administration (Gettoverwaltung) or the role of the Jewish Council of Elders, especially Chaim Rumkowski.[2] Recent works have begun to use a perspective "from below" to reveal the wide range of Jewish agency and survival strategies.[3] Others have compared Jewish experiences in Łódź with those of persons in other ghettos. Svenja Bethke, for example, has shown competing conceptions of "criminality" in her work on the ghetto courts, while Helene Sinnreich demonstrates

1 Konstanty Wołkowski (Wołkowicz Kałman), "Komentarze do wykazu nazwisk podanych przez ob. Wołkowskiego", addendum to interview, 8–11 October 1947, in Archiwum Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (hereafter AŻIH), Relacje 301, Folder 2838, here p. 9 (typed).

2 Polish works include Adam Sitarek, *"Otoczone drutem państwo": Struktura i funkcjonowanie administracji żydowskiej getta łódzkiego* (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2016).

3 Andrea Löw, *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt. Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten* (Wallstein Verlag, 2013).

how survival strategies were adapted to counter the devastating effects of German starvation policies.[4] Nonetheless, works on the ghetto still portray its history as separate from the city outside.[5] Local scholars Adam Sitarek and Michał Trębacz have even suggested that occupied Łódź was composed of three distinct cities: German, Polish, and Jewish.[6]

There have been attempts to overcome these siloed histories. Andrea Löw and Dorota Siepracka, for example, have observed that the ghetto was not as "hermetically sealed" from the rest of the city as was often claimed.[7] Likewise, Gordon Horwitz's Ghettostadt has examined the interrelationship between Germanisation and ghettoisation policies.[8] This article follows such approaches and uses the everyday interactions of Jews with German policemen to offer an integrated understanding of persecution and intimate violence in this city. The focus on Volksdeutsche perpetrators like Sutter, who knew their victims personally, reveals both geographical and temporal continuities.

The German Kriminalpolizei was the criminal investigation arm of the Third Reich. Despite its important role in the Holocaust, the historiography on the Kripo in the Łódź ghetto, and Nazi Germany more generally, remains thin.[9] Works that take a top-down approach to the Kripo also focus on the role of the Gestapo, which worked closely with the ghetto administration in policy questions such as those pertaining to deportations. The Kripo's remit in the ghetto was ostensibly to stop "crimes" such as food smuggling. In practice, however, the Kripo increasingly focused on finding and confiscating whatever valuables the Jews still possessed inside or outside of the ghetto. While career police-

4 Svenja Bethke, *Tanz auf Messers Schneide. Kriminalität und Recht in den Ghettos Warschau, Litzmannstadt und Wilna* (Hamburger Edition HIS, 2015); Helene Sinnreich, *The Atrocity of Hunger: Starvation in the Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków Ghettos during World War II* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

5 Imke Hansen, Katrin Steffen, and Joachim Tauber, eds., *Lebenswelt Ghetto: Alltag und soziales Umfeld während der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung* (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013).

6 Adam Sitarek and Michał Trębacz, "Drei Städte. Besatzungsalltag in Lodz", in *Gewalt und Alltag im besetzten Polen 1939–1945*, ed. Jochen Böhler and Stephan Lehnstaedt (Fibre, 2012), 299–321.

7 Andrea Löw, *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt*, 507; Dorota Siepracka, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Łodzi podczas okupacji niemieckiej", in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945: Studia i materiały*, ed. Andrzej Żbikowski (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006), 734–735; Monika Heinemann, *Krieg und Kriegserinnerung im Museum. Der Zweite Weltkrieg in polnischen historischen Ausstellungen seit den 1980er-Jahren* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 230–231.

8 Gordon Horwitz, *Ghettostadt: Łódź and the Making of a Nazi City* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

9 Works devoted to the German police forces in occupied Łódź include: Stanisław Nawrocki, *Policja hitlerowska w tzw. Kraju Warty w latach 1939–1945* (Instytut Zachodni, 1970); Mirosław Cygański, "Policja kryminalna i porządkowa III Rzeszy w Łodzi i rejencji łódzkiej 1939–1945", in *Rocznik Łódzki* 16 (1972): 27–65; Marek Ostrowski, "Policja kryminalna 'Kripo' w getcie łódzkim", in *Niemcy, Austria, Szwajcaria* 3 (2008): 291–307; Mallmann, Klaus-Michael: "'... durch irgendein schnellwirkendes Mittel zu erledigen.' Die STAPO-Stelle Litzmannstadt und die Shoah im Warthegau", in *Der Judenmord in den eingegliederten polnischen Gebieten 1939–1945*, ed. Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk and Jochen Böhler (Fibre Verlag, 2010), 148. Patrick Wagner provides a broader view of the Kripo in German history: *Hitlers Kriminalisten. Die deutsche Kriminalpolizei und der Nationalsozialismus zwischen 1920 und 1960* (C.H. Beck, 2002).

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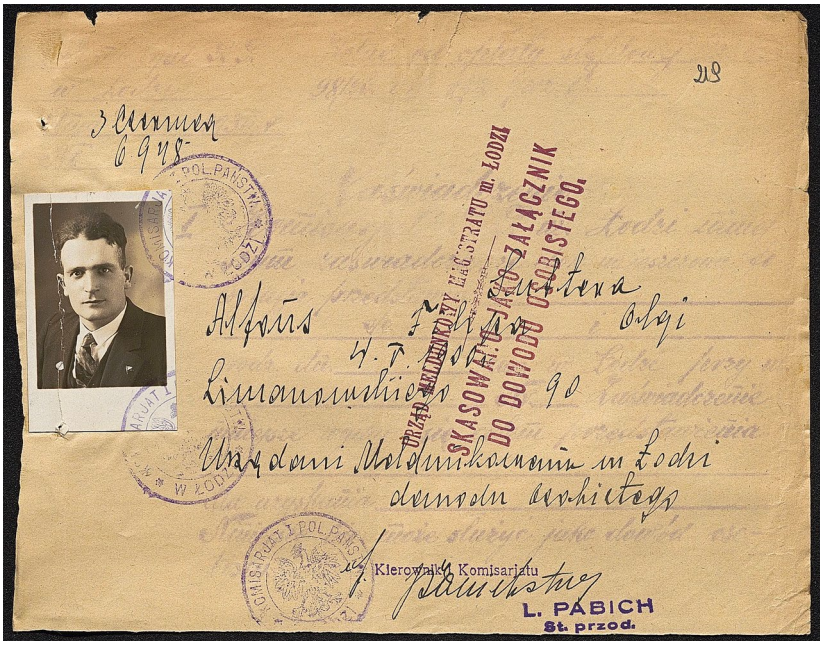

Alfons Sutter's photo and application to municipal authorities for an identification card, 1930. Reproduced with permission of the State Archives in Łódź.

men from Germany often held positions of authority, local collaborators had the right language skills and knowledge of the city. The Kripo needed men like Sutter, and Sutter needed institutions like the Kripo to prove his Germanness – even at the expense of his former neighbours. These local collaborators often escaped legal prosecution and historical scrutiny.

Introduction

Alfons Sutter was born on 4 May 1900, to a merchant family in Łódź. His father, Filip or Philipp, ran various businesses – there are records of his co-owning textile factories before the First World War.[10] He also appeared to own a shop during the war.[11] In 1926, Alfons Sutter applied for permission to start a stocking factory on Aleksandrowska 90 (now ul. Limanowskiego), in a northern district where the Sutter family now lived. In his application, Sutter claimed that he had become disabled while serving in the army, likely after Poland had regained its independence in 1918.[12] In a letter to Polish authorities in 1928, Sutter noted that the fac-

10 See folders "Sutter F. i Hiller G., Radogoszcz ul. Jasna 5, tkalnia mechaniczna", (sygn. 881. dated 1911) and "Sutter Filip i Keller J., Łódź, Mikołajewska 66, tkalnia mechaniczna", (sygn. 1186, dated 1910), Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi (hereafter APŁ), Starszy Inspektor Fabryki Gubernii Piotrkowskiej.

11 "Sprzedaż cukru przez Delegację zaprowiantowania miasta," *Gazeta Łódzka*, 30 November 1915, 2.

12 Alfons Sutter to Województwo – Wydział Przemysłowy w Łodzi, "Podanie", 7 April 1926, APŁ, Akta miasta Łodzi (hereafter AmŁ), 100413, 1. The author did not find a record of Sutter's service at the Central Military Archives in Rembertów-Warsaw.

tory began operating in July 1927 and that he had only two employees at the time.[13] In 1930, he applied for an identification card from the Łódź city government. This card contains the only picture known to exist of Alfons Sutter.[14]

The Sutters ran several businesses on the property. Eventually a large building with around twenty-five units was built in which family members and renters lived.[15] Besides Alfons's factory, his older brother Max ran a tobacco wholesale business on the premises.[16] Moreover, Max's wife Irena applied to the city to open a small grocery store on the family property on 18 July 1938. The application for the store was approved exactly one month later as "Sutter Irena: Sklep spożywczy".[17] However, this grocery store would encounter trouble later that year. In late 1938, Alfons Sutter reported in the newspaper that the store had been burgled in the early hours of 29 November, with the "unknown perpetrators" taking "colonial goods" worth 1,200 złoty.[18] Although the business was in Irena's name, Alfons appeared to be the de facto property manager in the news story.[19]

Alfons Sutter's identification with or relationship to other Polish or German-speakers is not known from extant sources. According to several accounts, however, Sutter had many Jewish friends and business associates in the interwar period.[20] These relationships are important for understanding how the Kripo operated in the occupied city and how Jews remembered their betrayal by a neighbour. Mendel Tron, who had worked in Sutter's factory, said in his post-war testimony that he used to walk arm in arm with Sutter like a "good brother".[21] Henrietta Stein pub-

13 Alfons Sutter, "Do Urzędu Przemysłowego 1-ej instancji przy Magistracie m. Łodzi", 23 August 1928, APŁ, AmŁ, 102276, unpaginated.

14 Alfons Sutter, "Do Magistratu m. Łodzi, Urząd Meldunkowy", 11 July 1930, APŁ, AmŁ, sygn. 86212, pp. 217–219. My most sincere thanks to Wojciech Stępień for finding this identification card application and making me aware of it. The identification was registered as 20146 and picked up on July 15, 1930: APŁ, AmŁ, sygn. 86601, 9.

15 Max Sutter, "Anlage zum Beiblatt LA2b Grundvermögen", 1954; and "Fragebogen zur Ermittlung von Ersatzeinheitswerten bebauter Grundstücke", 14 November 1955, Bundesarchiv Bayreuth-Lastenausgleichsarchiv (hereafter BA-LAA), ZLA/1/14037032 (Philipp Sutter), 9–10 and 11–12.

16 Heimatauskunftstelle Polen I Bereich Lodz (Litzmannstadt) to Landkreis Gandersheim, Abt. Lastenausgleich, "Feststellungsantrag der Gebrüder M.&A. Sutter" 27 August 1964, BA-LAA, ZLA/1/14037028 (Max Sutter), here 58.

17 Irena Sutter to Urząd Przemysłowy 1-ej Instancji przy Magistracie m. Łodzi, APŁ, AmŁ, 140883 – Irena Sutter 1938.

18 "Nasz reporter zanotował, *Ilustrowany Republika*, 30 December 1938, 8. Sutter was identified in the story as a *kupiec*, or merchant. The report says the theft occurred in the night of 29 November, but it is possible that the writer meant 29 December.

19 Irene (formerly Irena) Sutter did not apply for the loss of her business but for the loss of a rental property she had inherited from her grandparents. Heimatauskunftstelle Polen I Bereich Lodz (Litzmannstadt) to Landkreis Gandersheim, Abt. Lastenausgleich, "Feststellungsantrag Frau Irene Sutter geb. Kunkel", 25 June 1969, BA-LAA, ZLA/1/14037029 (Irene Sutter), here 28.

20 Konstanty Wołkowski (Wołkowicz Kałman), "Komentarze do wykazu nazwisk podanych przez ob. Wołkowskiego", addendum to interview, 8–11 October 1947, in AŻIH, Relacje 301, Folder 2838, here 9 (typed).

21 Mendel Tron, "Relacje. Zeznania Ocalałych Żydów", interview undated, in AŻIH, Relacje 301, Folder 157. The reference to being such close friends appears only in the Yiddish version (p. 23) and cannot be found in the Polish translation of the testimony (p. 62).

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lished a biography of her parents, in which her father recalled that Sutter usually socialised with Jews and often came to his family's home for dinner. At one point, Sutter even asked Stein's mother for help in finding a Jewish woman to be his wife.[22] M. S. Arnoni, whose family died in the Łódź ghetto and Auschwitz, recounted how his father had sold machinery to Sutter for his stockings factory, which Arnoni must have visited as a youth. He wrote that the factory was "*uiterst klein*" (extremely small).[23]

Sutter also appears in Michael Checinski's memoir entitled *My Father's Watch*. Checinski, who lived on the same street as the Sutter family, adds valuable insight into Sutter's prewar relations with Jews.[24] Checinski's father, Avrum, was a textile merchant and knew the Sutter family. They often chatted with the elder Sutter about business matters at a local café. Michael Checinski remembered how Avrum once admonished the elder Sutter's reluctance to treat his own son (named Hans in the memoir and with a hunchback, corresponding to some descriptions of Alfons) to a beer at the cafe. Avrum told his son Michael that the elder Sutter may have spoken Yiddish, but he lacked a Jewish heart.[25] Despite their intimate relations with the Sutters, the Checinskis and other families would be greatly harmed by Alfons Sutter during the war. Like many other collaborators who found new and better opportunities during the war, Sutter turned on his neighbours. His prewar familiarity and friendship with Jews would turn into contempt for them during wartime.

The War, the Kripo, and the Ghetto

Nazi German troops entered Łódź on 8 September 1939, and Germany annexed the city on 9 November 1939. In April 1940, the city was renamed Litzmannstadt. At the start of the war, the city had roughly 233,000 Jews, 34.7 per cent of the city's population. The German-speaking population, often referred to as *Volksdeutsche*, numbered about 67,000, or ten per cent of the population.[26] In February 1940, German authorities announced the creation of the ghetto in and around the city's northern district of Bałuty. When

22 Henrietta Stein, *Judith & Abram: Överleva minnas berätta* (Polyvalent, 2019), 47.

23 M. S. Arnoni, *Die overlevenden tellen nicht* (Meulenhoff, 1986), 107. My thanks to Dr Kim Middel for making me aware of Arnoni's works and for translating important passages for me. A German edition appears as *"Ich klage an!" Bericht über ein Leben nach Auschwitz* (Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1992), 111.

24 Michael Moshe Checinski, *My Father's Watch* (Gefen, 1994), 67, 75, 86. The city directory for 1937/1939 shows that an Abram Chęcinski lived on Limanowskiego 91, and the Sutters lived on Limanowskiego 90. See: *Księga Adresowa Miasta Łodzi i Województwa Łódzkiego, 1937–1939* (Łódź, c. 1939), 65 and 402.

25 Checinski, *My Father's Watch*, 68. Although Checinski suggests that the elder Sutter had arrested Avrum, Philipp Sutter, born in 1871, would have been about seventy years old at the time and would not have been serving in the Kripo.

26 Adam Sitarek and Michał Trębacz, "Drei Städte. Besatzungsalltag in Lodz", in *Gewalt und Alltag im besetzten Polen 1939–1945*, ed. Jochen Böhler and Stephan Lehnstaedt (Fibre, 2012), 304.

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ghettoisation was completed at the end of April, the ghetto covered 4.13 square kilometers and contained 160,000 Jews. With deportations both from neighbouring towns and from the Reich, some 205,000 Jews would be interned in the ghetto during the war.[27] German armed guards and Jewish police were supposed to make sure that the ghetto was "hermetically sealed". Nonetheless, Poles and Jews partook in the significant smuggling of foodstuffs and valuables into and out of the ghetto, even if relations between the two groups remained "complex" according to Dorota Siepracka.[28]

While the Gestapo was responsible for antiregime activity, the Kriminalpolizei was charged with "normal" crimes in the annexed city. Of course, the two spheres could never be separated in the Third Reich, especially when it came to questions of "race". By summer 1940, the Kripo in the whole of Łódź had well over two hundred employees on its roster. Although many came from other police units in the *Altreich*, more than half of the officers were from the local German and Polish population.[29] Some had been policemen before the war.[30] Like the Kripo in Germany and throughout Nazi-occupied Europe, criminal policemen played a crucial part in the persecution of the Jews and the Holocaust.[31]

On 10 May 1940, the police president of Litzmannstadt declared that the criminal police should dedicate twenty men to the fight against smuggling into the ghetto. But the Kripo at the time had no offices in the ghetto, so they had to use the facilities of the German order police, which was guarding the ghetto boundaries. On 19 May, a police official (Kriminalinspektor Bracken), proposed that the Kripo should maintain a permanent presence within the ghetto to react more quickly to incidents. He claimed that the criminal police unit that had started its work just three days prior had its hands full with counter-smuggling, especially since "the approximately 250,000 Jews living in the ghetto have more or less a predilection for crime".[32] Guidelines demanded that all

27 Israel Gutman, "Introduction: The Distinctiveness of the Łódź Ghetto", in *Łódź Ghetto: A History,* by Isaiah Trunk, trans. and ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (Indiana University Press, 2006), xlvii.

28 See Siepracka, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Łodzi podczas okupacji niemieckiej", 720.

29 One copy of a Kripo roster, presumably from around May 1940, clearly shows the hierarchy of "RD. Beamte" above "Krim. Angestellte" (which were likely all or mostly *Volksdeutsche*) and then "Polen" in the different departments. According to this roster, there were about 230 male employees, of which less than 40 per cent were Reich German civil servants, more than 40 per cent were Kriminalangestellte, and some 20 per cent were classified as Poles. There were about a dozen women, almost all of whom were clerks. See Geschaeftsverteilungsplan (Leiter Dr. Zirpins, Vertret. Dr. Kroemer), undated (c. May 1940), AŻIH, 205, Folder 69, 50–62.

30 For example, see Gustav Dedecius, the father of a renowned German Polish translator and the founder of the Deutsches Polen-Institut in Darmstadt. Gustav, however, was rehired at the lower rank of a Kriminalangestellter. See Karl Dedecius, *Ein Europäer aus Lodz: Erinnerungen* (Suhrkamp, 2006). For insight into Stanisław Weyer, a prewar Polish detective hired into the Kripo, see Michał Turski, *Vom Versuch, Biografien zu nationalisieren. Die Deutsche Volksliste in der Region Lodz: Vorgeschichte, Umsetzung und Nachwirkungen 1914–1960* (Brill Schöningh, 2026), 356–368.

31 Wagner, *Hitlers Kriminalisten*, 113–115.

32 Kriminalinspektor Bracken, "Betrifft: Sonderkommando der Kriminalpolizei im Ghetto", 19 May 1940, AŻIH, 205, Folder 155, 3–5, here 3–4. Also published in Artur Eisenbach, ed.,

persons leaving the ghetto had to be disinfected, but the construction manager expected only *Volksdeutsche* (and presumably Reich Germans, W.C.) would be able to use the facilities. The disinfection procedures and the time needed to bring suspects and detainees across the city to the Kripo's main station at Buschlinie 152 would be too onerous for the overworked criminal police.[33]

Two days later, Bracken had a solution. The Kripo would place offices and a jail in the parish house on the church square (Plac Kościelny 8–10), across from St. Mary's Assumption Church in the New Town district. Bracken wrote that the basement would be suitable for detention cells, while the rooms on the first floor would be outfitted with confiscated furniture and were big enough for doing paperwork (*Schreibarbeiten*).[34] These rooms, used as offices for the Kripo employees, would become infamous instead for torture. Jews throughout the ghetto came to call the two-story brick building the "Red House", the site of immense suffering and death, and they dreaded coming anywhere close to it.[35]

Bracken also noted that because of the early morning, late evening, and night patrols that were needed, the officers had to live near the ghetto. Bracken further stated that these officers had to make contact with informants (*Vertrauensleute*) and acquire very precise local knowledge (*genauere Ortskenntnis*) as quickly as possible.[36] Bracken detailed the provisional composition of the ghetto unit: three Reich German civil servants would serve alongside seven ethnic German employees and seven Polish employees. The actual composition was different at first. On the roster from October 1940, the Kripo's ghetto unit had a staff of sixteen: six Reich Germans along with eight *Volksdeutsche* and two Polish employees.[37] Thus, there was greater representation from Reich German officers at first, while the seven Polish helpers that Bracken envisioned was illusory – only one Pole remained on staff after a couple years. Yet local knowledge was crucial, as Bracken recognised. Thus, Łódź's *Volksdeutsche* would play an increasingly important role in the ghetto, especially as the ghetto population decreased through deaths and deportations and the police force itself became somewhat smaller.

The station, known as the Ghetto-Sonderkommissariat (12.K), was shortened to the Gettokommissariat (GK, with the designation KII/5). The Kommissariat's mandate covered a variety of "of-

Getto łódzkie. Część 1, as part of series: Dokumenty i materialy do dziejów okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce 3 (Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce, 1946), 92–94.

33 Kriminalinspektor Bracken, "Betrifft: Sonderkommando der Kriminalpolizei im Ghetto", 19 May 1940, AŻIH, 205, Folder 155, 3–5, here 3–4.

34 Kriminalinspektor Bracken, "Betrifft: Einrichtung einer Kriminalpolizei-Zweigstelle im Ghetto", 21 May 1940, AŻIH, 205, Folder 155, 6–8, here 6. Also published as "Einrichtung einer Kriminalpolizeiliche [sic] Zweigstelle im Ghetto", 21 May 1940, in Eisenbach, *Getto łódzkie. Część 1*, 94–96.

35 Konstanty Gebert et al., *Field Guide to Jewish Łódź* (Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation, 2017), 38–39.

36 Bracken, "Betrifft: Einrichtung einer Kriminalpolizei-Zweigstelle im Ghetto", 7–8.

37 Staatliche Kriminalpolizei, "Personalverteilungplan [sic], Stand 15.10.40", 15 October 1940, AŻIH, 205, Folder 69, 11.

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fenses," such as racial miscegenation (*Rassenschande*), smuggling (*Schleichhandel*), and leaving the ghetto without authorisation, as well as failing to register Jewish property and illegal currency exchange.[38] This scope gave the Kripo wide powers over the Jews and their strategies for survival, in particular trading for food. The Kripo's search for contraband would become an obsession for finding so-called "*Judengut*" hidden in the ghetto or "in the city". In order to identify targets, the Kripo policemen used various resources, including Jewish informants.[39] Rumors of hidden goods could result in a house raid or a Kripo summons.[40] According to Łódź ghetto survivor M. S. Arnoni, the Kripo also relied on the prewar phone book. It was a rich source of information since it listed people who were business owners or those who were otherwise well-off enough to have a telephone.[41]

If Kripo agents were not satisfied with a house raid, the suspects would be arrested or summoned to the Gettokommissariat for further interrogation. After being processed, Jews sat in the basement cells and were called up to the first floor (above the ground floor) offices for interrogation, which usually meant brutal beatings by the Kripo officers. Arrest records suggest that there were over five thousand detentions between the summer of 1940 and January 1945.[42]

Various policemen, both Reich Germans and *Volksdeutsche*, participated in the arrests and beatings, but the name Alfons Sutter (often spelled Suter) appears most often in recollections. How did this textile manufacturer and merchant come to join the Kripo? By the time the war started, Sutter's small stockings factory was faltering if it was still in business at all. According to a West German compensation claim submitted by Alfons Sutter's brother, Max, the impending war had diminished the company's business in 1938, and the factory was closed in the fall of 1939 when – according to Max – Alfons was recruited into the Wehr-

38 Geschaeftsverteilungsplan (Leiter Dr. Zirpins, Vertret. Dr. Kroemer), undated (c. May 1940), AŻIH, 205, Folder 69, 50–62, here 60.

39 Abraham H. Biderman, *The World of My Past* (Random House Australia, 1997), 26.

40 Sarah Bick Berkowitz, *Where Are My Brothers?* (Heilos Books, 1965), 39–45.

41 Arnoni, *Die overlevenden tellen nicht*, 112–113.

42 See Księga aresztowań Żydów, I-1943–XII-43), in Yad Vashem Archives (hereafter YVA), Record Group M.54.ZIH, File JM/1458 (ŻIH folder 34). These are microfilmed copies of folders from the Jewish Historical Institute, which catalogs the records as arrests, but they might be more properly labeled as detentions. The following folder in JM/1459-1460 (no cover, presumably folder 35) contains an incomplete log of detentions from January 1944 to December 1944. It is likely that the numbering had been continuous from 1940 to 1944. The 1940 arrests records in folder 36 indicate a few scattered detentions beginning on 15 May, but the first numbered detention was on 23 May 1940, and the last recorded detention was no. 855 on 2 December 1940. For the 1944 records, there was a one month pause in arrests after detention no. 5,252 on 18 August, coinciding with the liquidation of the ghetto. On 11 September arrests began again with detention no. 5253 for "*Getto-Plünderung*". While Poles were arrested for entering the ghetto and later for smuggling and "*Aneignung*", the Kripo also caught many Jews who had hidden from the liquidation ("*Versteckthalten vor der Evakuierung*" [sic]). Those caught hiding were often delivered to the Gestapo. The year 1944 ended with the detention no. 5,320. The arrest logbook resets the count for 1945, with a total of 28 detentions. Thus, the Kripo ghetto unit logged a total of 96 detentions after its liquidation in August 1944. The log likely includes individuals who were arrested multiple times.

macht.[43] This last detail was a clear fabrication and should have raised eyebrows among the post-war compensation authorities, especially since the claim would have meant that Alfons was over thirty-nine years old when he allegedly joined the German army.

According to a performance review from 1944, Sutter joined the Kripo on 1 November 1939. The evaluator, Wilhelm Neumann, notes that Sutter was a member of the NSDAP.[44] From Sutter's party membership registry card, he applied in May 1942 and was accepted in April 1943. The registry card also lists Sutter's profession as *Kaufmann*, or merchant – there is nothing about him being a policeman.[45] Sutter worked in the Kripo's antifraud unit in the spring of 1940, before being transferred to the Gettokommissariat, appearing on the Kripo roster starting in July 1940.[46] Like other *Volksdeutsche* and Poles hired locally, Sutter had the rank of *Kriminalangestellter*, or a contractual employee – a position he held until the end of the war. Unlike his superiors from Germany, who held the rank of *Kriminalassistent* or higher, Sutter and the other *Volksdeutsche* were not civil servants (*Beamte*) who enjoyed special employment protections and pensions.

Given his merchant background, it is likely that Sutter learned detective work and police procedures on the job. Nonetheless, he and the other local employees had valuable knowledge and skills that could not be taught by their Reich German superiors. Above all, Kripo policemen from Łódź knew their city intimately. They spoke Polish, which was vital for investigations and interrogations. Sutter spoke Yiddish fluently too, making him especially feared. Abraham Biderman noted that Sutter's "knowledge of Yiddish was instrumental in his infamous duties".[47] Because he also knew some Hebrew, Jews mistook him for being Jewish.[48] This ability to pass as a Jew on his part allowed him to go under-

43 Max Sutter claimed that forty-six people worked in the factory. See "Niederschrift, Vorladung Max Sutter in der Feststellungsangelegenheit seines Bruders Alfons Sutter", 19 September 1963, BA-LAA, ZLA/1/14037031_neu (Alfons Sutter), 37.

44 Wilhelm Neumann (Kriminalsekretär), Einstufung des Kriminalangestellten Sutter in den Grundvergütungssatz 2.520 RM, 16 January 1944, APŁ, 203, Folder 57, 9.

45 Sutter's membership registration card appears in the digitised collections of the United States National Archives. See Record Group 242: National Archives Collection of Foreign Records Seized, Series: Records Relating to Membership in the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), A3340-MFOK-W0080, 2304. See: https://catalog.archives.gov/id/603420794?objectPage=683.

46 Geschaeftsverteilungsplan (Leiter Dr. Zirpins, Vertret. Dr. Kroemer), undated (c. May 1940), AŻIH, 205, Folder 69, 50–62, here 58. Sutter appears in Department KII/5 on the July 1940 roster: Personalverteilungsplan, 25.07.1940, AŻIH, Collection 205, Folder 69, 1–6, here 3.

47 Biderman attributes Sutter's command of Yiddish to growing up with Jews and asserts that Sutter even learned Hebrew blessings and sayings from his "childhood friends". Biderman, *World of My Past*, 26.

48 Marcin Kieruzel, "Przeszedłem przez Litzmannstadt Ghetto: Marek Bleiweiss – wspomina", *Kronika Miasta Łodzi* 3 (2009): 148. See also Konstanty Wołkowski (Wołkowicz Kałman), "Komentarze do wykazu nazwisk podanych przez ob. Wołkowskiego", addendum to interview 8–11 October 1947, AŻIH, Relacje 301, Folder 2838, here 9 (typed); Konstanty Wołkowski, "Protokół przesłuchania świadka", interview by Zbigniew Piechota, 30 September 1981, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Oddziałowa Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Łodzi (hereafter IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź), S 61/07/Zn, Folder VII, 1279.

cover among Jews to listen to conversations about where property was hidden. He continued this spying until too many people found out about him and his activities were uncovered.[49] Sutter also used his knowledge about Jewish life to assess property confiscated from Jewish families. For example, he wrote a two-page report describing the meaning of the symbols and Hebrew phrases on matzah covers and how they were used during Passover.[50]

Eventually, Sutter became the face of German oppression in the Łódź ghetto. Jewish testimonies and historical works often refer to Sutter as the head of the Kripo (ghetto station) or as its deputy chief.[51] He is sometimes even misidentified as part of the Gestapo. The inaccuracies of these statements, however, only underscore the outsized role Sutter played in the Kripo in general, and in the terror experienced by the Jewish population in particular. Sarah Bick Berkowitz recalls one saying attributed to Sutter: "When Moses hit the Red Sea, his results were only dry land; but when I hit you the result is treasure. Who is holier, Moses or I?"[52]

It is not surprising that Sutter was constantly on the minds of the ghetto inhabitants. Oskar Rosenfeld had been a journalist and writer in Vienna and contributed to the chronicle of the Łódź ghetto. He also kept private notebooks in which he recorded events and collected ideas for a novel and a history of the Łódź ghetto.[53] In late January 1944, he described an incident where a woman had been summoned to the Kripo headquarters. Frightened that she would be beaten because she had nothing to give to the Kripo, she asked her neighbour for advice about what to do. The neighbour told her to buy reichsmarks to surrender to the Kripo during the interrogation so they would let her go. When she went to the Red House and immediately gave up the money to her interrogator, the surprised Kripo officer said cryptically: "Sutter doesn't give you anything to laugh about, and Rumkowski doesn't give you anything to eat."[54] Another similar saying attributed to Sutter appeared in the ghetto chronicle just two weeks before the liquidation of the ghetto, as nervous Jews wondered about their fate: "Rumkowski will leave you hungry, and the German will leave you in the dark."[55] Rosenfeld also planned to include Sutter in a

49 Elżbieta Cherezińska, *Byłam sekretarką Rumkowskiego. Dzienniki Etki Daum* (Zysk, 2008), 331 (entry for 12 July 1944).

50 Alfons Sutter, untitled memo, 21 February 1941, APŁ, 203, Folder 58, 24–25.

51 Sarah Bick Berkowitz refers to him as the "chief of the Kripo". See *Where Are My Brothers?* (Helios Books, 1965), 40. Abraham Biderman calls him the chief assistant to the commandant, Neimann (meaning Wilhelm Neumann). Biderman, *The World of My Past*, 26.

52 Berkowitz, *Where Are My Brothers*, 40.

53 Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Łódź*, ed. Hanno Loewy (Northwestern University Press 2002), entry for 28 January 1944, vii.

54 Translation from: Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto*, entry for 28 January 1944, 246–247. The German original reads was: "Sutter gibt euch nichts zu lachen und Rumkowski gibt euch nichts zu essen." See: Oskar Rosenfeld, *Wozu noch Welt? Aufzeichnungen aus dem Getto Lodz*, ed. Hanno Loewy (Frankfurt am Main: Neue Kritik, 1994), 263–264.

55 My thanks to Karolina May-Chu for this novel translation into English. Lucjan Dobroszycki has a different version: "Rumkowski won't fill your belly, and the Germans give you a belly full." See Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, trans. Richard Lourie, Joachim Neugroschel et al. (Yale University Press, 1984), 529. The German original reads:

film about the Łódź ghetto. In an entry marked with the English word "Talkie" from 13 May 1944, Rosenfeld describes Sutter raiding a dark cellar where a boy sick with tuberculosis was reading by a dim lamp. Sutter hit the boy in the face with the book so hard he fainted. In this scene, Sutter's rage stemmed from the boy's violation of a regulation that forbade turning on a light during the day.[56]

Sutter's violence, however, could go hand-in-hand with his fake chumminess with Jews who had been arrested, and he often spoke Yiddish to them during interrogations.[57] He did this particularly with his interwar friends and acquaintances. Konstanty Wołkowski related Zysman Szwarcog's arrest by the Kripo in January 1942. Sutter and Szwarcog had known each other for ten years, that is, well before the war. As supposedly friendly advice, Sutter told Szwarcog to give up whatever he had been hiding since Sutter already knew what his possessions were anyway. When Sutter did not get the information he wanted, he resorted to torture and made Szwarcog choose the kind of whip that would be used.[58] Sutter had even named the lashes.[59] Sutter's familiarity with victims, though, could also cause awkward encounters. Mendel Tron, who had worked with Sutter before the war, remembered that Sutter hid when he realised his old friend had been arrested and brought to the Kripo station.[60]

Sutter was not as shy with other former acquaintances. Michael Checinski related his family's plight in the ghetto and the suffering they endured at the hands of the man they once considered a family friend. Checinski described how Sutter encountered his father Avrum one day in the ghetto and immediately remembered Avrum's watch from their prewar café conversations. According to Checinski, Sutter returned with his son to the Checinski household and searched for valuables. Not finding the watch, they arrested Avrum for hiding contraband. Using the diminutive form of Avrum's name, Sutter cynically told Avrum's wife in Yiddish: "Frymcia … ven Avremele vet zurikku-

"Bei Rumkowski wirst Du nicht satt und beim Deutsch [sic] nicht klug werden!" See: Sascha Feuchert, Erwin Leibfried, and Jörg Riecke, eds., *Die Chronik des Gettos Lodz/Litzmannstadt*, 5 vols. (Wallstein, 2007), here *Chronik des Gettos 1944*, entry for 18 July 1944, 431.

56 Rosenfeld, *Wozu noch Welt*, 287; Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto*, 271. See also Sven-Erik Rose, *Making and Unmaking Literature in the Warsaw, Lodz, and Vilna Ghettos* (Brandeis University Press, 2025), 232.

57 Checinski, *My Father's Watch*, 101–104.

58 Konstanty Wołkowski, "Protokół przesłuchania świadka", interview by Zbigniew Piechota, 30 September 1981, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder VII, p. 1279.

59 Konstanty Wołkowski (Wołkowicz Kałman), "Relacje. Zeznania Ocalałych Żydów", interview 8–11 October 1947, AŻIH, Relacje 301, Folder 2838, here 20 (handwritten). Although Wołkowski recounts the arrest of Zysman in both interviews from 1947 and 1981, the detail about the names for whips was not present the 1981 testimony.

60 Mendel Tron, "Relacje. Zeznania Ocalałych Żydów", interview undated, AŻIH, Relacje 301, Folder 157, 22–23. The episode on friendship is only in the Yiddish version and does not appear in the Polish translation of the testimony. My thanks to Jan Grabowski for bringing this document to my attention as there was no mention of Sutter or the Kripo in the finding aid.

men vet er noch leben" (Frymcia, when Avremele comes back, he will still be alive).[61]

Sutter took Avrum to the Red House and feigned friendliness, offering Avrum food (bread and herring). When Avrum insisted that he no longer had the watch, the policemen beat him mercilessly while interrogating him in Yiddish about the whereabouts of the watch. In Michael Checinski's account, the Sutter father encouraged his son to be brutal: "Pay him Hans for the beers he used to buy you. And don't forget to reward him for his Jewish heart." Sutter then tried to force Avrum to kiss a cross, which Avrum refused to do. After five days without any success finding the watch, the father and son released Avrum, who was badly beaten.[62]

The memoir's discussion of two Sutters, father and son, presents a challenge for the historian. There is no record of a Hans Sutter or any other Sutter besides Alfons in the Kripo in Łódź. Jewish testimonies also do not mention a second Sutter in the Kripo. The second Sutter could possibly refer to another Kripo policeman, Hans Golgowsky, a Reich German from Cologne who was renting an apartment in the Sutter complex.[63] Yet such incongruities in the historical record do not undermine Checinski's overall narrative of betrayal by non-Jewish neighbours.[64] After all, the construction of a somehow corrupted son for the younger Sutter figure serves as a foil for Michael Checinski's relationship with his own father, who had always encouraged his son to be a kind and just person. The episodes about Sutter speaking Yiddish – which also was remarked on in many other accounts – clearly show how Jews were tormented by someone so familiar to them.

Many Jews died during Kripo detention. Konstanty Wołkowski recounted to Polish authorities that the above-mentioned Szwarcog saw a man named Urbach (possibly Auerbach here) die after being beaten by the Kripo. Wołkowski, who worked in a hospital, added that he saw seriously injured people as well as bodies come out of the Gettokommissariat.[65] Survivors often described the ghastly wounds that took weeks to heal, if they healed at all. Solomon Fox's father died in November 1942, only a few months after being brutally interrogated in the Red House.[66] M. S. Arnoni's father survived but was never the same again.[67] In his semi-fiction-

61 Checinski, *My Father's Watch*, 102. The English translation here differs slightly from Checinski's text.

62 Ibid., 102–103.

63 Hersz Gutman, "Relacje. Zeznania Ocalałych Żydów", interview dated 29 November 1947, Relacje 301, Folder 3068, 2. Gutman notes that Golgowsky was about forty years old.

64 The Vienna University Library categorises the German translation as a "belletristische Darstellung". Accessed 1 January 2026, https://ubdata.univie.ac.at/AC03590824.

65 Konstanty Wołkowski, "Protokół przesłuchania świadka", interview by Zbigniew Piechota, 30 September 1981, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Volume VII, 1279.

66 Solomon Fox, Interview with Randy M. Goldman, 13 April 1995, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG-50.030.0322, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn504816, here Cassette 2, 02:18:12–2:29:25.

67 M. S. Arnoni, *Moeder was niet thuis voor haar begrafenis. Verslag van een reis door een verloren vaderland. Een overlevende van Auschwitz-Birkenau terug in Polen* (De Bezige Bij, 1982), 73. The original English title is *Mother Was Not Home for Burial*, which was copyrighted in 1980 but never appeared in print. Various English and Dutch versions can be

alised memoirs, Jacob G. Rosenberg remembers how his aunt had been interrogated by Sutter. Although she initially gave up some coins and jewelry, including her engagement ring, Sutter knew that she was still hiding silver candlesticks. She did not want to surrender these since they had been in her family for generations. After being beaten and whipped for over three days by Kripo officials, she relented. Sutter took the candlesticks, and the aunt died immediately after Sutter forced her to light candles placed in them.[68]

For all his cruelty, some recalled acts of kindness by Sutter. Konstanty Wołkowski recalled a raid of his home by Sutter and other Kripo officers in September 1943, just three days after his wife had given birth to a son. Sutter was initially angry that Wołkowski and his wife were not at work, but after seeing the newborn baby he softened. Sutter also seemed to be surprised by the cleanliness of the Jewish home. Before leaving, Sutter ordered Wołkowski's adopted daughter to appear at the Gettokommissariat with an empty basket. Wołkowski accompanied his daughter to the Kripo building, and she was ordered to go upstairs. Wołkowski nervously waited outside for three quarters of an hour. When his daughter finally reappeared, the basket was packed with apples, oranges, and chocolate. The news of Sutter's gift for the new baby spread throughout the ghetto and became a "great sensation".[69] In another case, Karolina Frenkiel remembered that Sutter seemed to take a liking to her. She recalled how he had a hard time believing that she was Jewish. After she had been arrested for political activities and was imprisoned outside the ghetto for eight months, Sutter visited Frenkiel's mother several times and inquired about her.[70]

According to sources produced by survivors, Sutter was also present at the final liquidation of the ghetto in August 1944. Paula Dash had been hiding to evade the deportations, but when Sutter arrived in her neighbourhood and shot into the air to drive people to the train station, she and her family knew that they could no longer avoid their fate.[71] At the railway station, Checinski saw a German Jew, an elderly man, ask Sutter if he could have a place to sit in the train. The man explained to Sutter that he had been a

found in the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam: Archief M.S. Arnoni Papers, Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, ARCH00241, Folders 24–28.

68 Jacob G. Rosenberg, *East of Time* (University of Alabama Press, 2005), 173–175.

69 Konstanty Wołkowski (Wołkowicz Kałman), "Relacje. Zeznania Ocalałych Żydów", interview dated 8–11 October 1947, AŻIH, Relacje 301, Folder 2838, here 21. The IPN branch office in Łódź obtained a typed version of this testimony from Wołkowski's grandson, Maciej Konstanty Żelichowski, in April 2015. See Konstanty Wołkowski, "Wspomnienia z okresu okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce", IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder XXI, 4044–4077, here 4063. The 1947 details about the house search, the visit to the Kripo, and Sutter's gift are missing from Wołkowski's testimony in 1981.

70 Karolina Frenkiel (born Milichtajch, 3 July 1923), interview with Marek Pelc, 30 June 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/31974, here Tape 1, 30:00 and Tape 2, to 7:00.

71 Paula Dash, interview with Sharon Tash, 1 June 1992, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG-50.233.0017, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn509093, here Cassette 2, 31:05.

higher officer in the German Kaiser's army and showed the Iron Cross he received in the First World War. Sutter kicked the man down and taunted him. Checinski and his family members entered their cattle car and were relieved that Sutter had not noticed them.[72]

Although most of the ghetto population was deported, the ghetto still existed. Several hundred Jews remained to clean up the buildings and to tighten the fencing as the area of the ghetto decreased in size.[73] The Kripo stayed in the ghetto to help oversee these operations and to look for those who had evaded the deportations, such as Jakub Poznański's family.[74] The Kripo also arrested Poles who entered the ghetto area, probably to look for hidden goods. Sutter remained on duty until Soviet forces occupied the city. He booked the last detainee, Zygmunt Matelski, who was arrested for "*Gettoschmuggel*", on 15 January 1945, less than a week before Soviet troops captured the city.[75] According to Poznański, many Germans were caught by surprise by the quick Soviet advance. On 20 or 21 January the father of Poznański's friend Pik found and arrested Sutter, who was armed with a rifle and wearing a militia badge on his sleeve. Sutter was later taken into custody at Kilińskiego 152 (Buschlinie 152), which had been the Kripo headquarters for the city during the Nazi occupation.[76]

While the reasons for Alfons Sutter's eventual release and the date of his arrival in western Germany cannot be determined, he and his brother Max wrote in their applications for compensation (see below) that they had been expelled from Poland in November 1945.[77] Max's wife Irena, now Irene, claimed she was expelled in January 1946.[78] This time frame appears consistent with Sutter's other sister-in-law, Erna Hedwig Sutter, a war widow who moved with her daughter directly from Łódź to Engelade, today a part of the town of Seesen in the Goslar district in Lower Saxony, on 12 January 1946.[79] Sutter ended up living with Max and Irene in Langelsheim, also in the Goslar district.[80] It appears that Sutter never married or had children.[81]

72 Checinski, *My Father's Watch*, 137.
73 Jakub Poznański, *Dziennik z łódzkiego getta* (Dom Wydawniczy Bellona and Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2002), 235.
74 Poznański, *Dziennik z łódzkiego getta*, 221, 243–244, 258.
75 Dziennik ewidencji i korespondencji dotyczącej spraw getta łódzkiego, 15. V–2. XII 1940, YVA, Record Group M.54.ZIH, File no. JM/1460, Folder 36.
76 Poznański, *Dziennik z łódzkiego getta*, 267. This section about Sutter's arrest did not appear in the original version of Poznański's memoirs, published in 1960 as *Pamiętnik z getta łódzkiego*.
77 Sutter, Alfons, Antrag auf Feststellung von Vertreibungsschäden, signed 21 May 1953, BA-LAA, ZLA/1/14037031_neu, here 2–5; "Antrag auf Feststellung von Vertreibungsschäden", 17 April 1953, BA-LAA, ZLA/1/14037028 (Max Sutter), here 2–5.
78 "Feststellungsantrag Frau Irene Sutter geb. Kunkel", signed 3 March 1957, BA-LAA, ZLA/1/14037029 (Irene Sutter), here 2–5.
79 Email from Städtisches Museum Seesen to author, 3 August 2021.
80 The addresses for Alfons, Max, and Irene Sutter are the same in their compensation claims, see above.
81 Kriminalsekretär Wilhelm Neumann, "Beurteilung über den Kriminalangestellten Alfons Sutter", 16 January 1944, YVA, Record Group M.54.ZIH, File no. JM/1469, 10. This letter and several other documents are missing from the corresponding folder (57) of the Kripo

In May 1953, Sutter took advantage of the newly passed *Lastenausgleichsgesetz* (Burden Equalization Law) and applied for compensation for losses incurred as a refugee – including the stockings factory in Łódź.[82] He likely took the lead from Max, who had applied the month before. Alfons Sutter was willing to use his real name in the application, perhaps because he was already very ill. He died from lung cancer in the municipal hospital in Seesen on 20 December 1954.[83] Although this information comes too late for most survivors, Sutter's death is thus confirmed through scholarly research.

Post-war Investigations and Conclusion

Though he died less than ten years after the war, Sutter continued to traumatise those Jews whose lives he had destroyed. Writers as varied as Michael Checinski, Rachmil Bryks, and Chava Rosenfarb gave him a central role in their memoirs and autobiographical novels.[84] While survivors often recalled Sutter's brutality, authorities did little to find him. In June 1947, the Polish representative on the United Nations War Crimes Commission, Dr Marian Muszkat, submitted a charge against Sutter on behalf of Channa Auerbach, who was living in Tel Aviv. Sutter was accused of "ill-treatment resulting in death" of an unspecified number of Jews.[85]

Unaware of Sutter's fate, Israeli authorities also looked for him. In November 1964, the Investigative Commission for Nazi Violent Crimes at the Israel National Police generated a report naming twelve policemen (eight from the Kripo and four from the Gestapo). Israeli investigators pursued Sutter for beating and killing three

collections (301) in the State Archive in Łódź. The documents in the State Archive folder have been renumbered to elide the missing documents. Citing his private collections, Marek Ostrowski has published a Polish translation of this letter. See: Ostrowski, "Policja kryminalna 'Kripo' w getcie łódzkim", 303–304.

82 Sutter, Alfons, Antrag auf Feststellung von Vertreibungsschäden, signed 21 May 1953, BA-LAA, ZLA/1/14037031_neu, here 2.

83 Der Standesbeamte, Seesen, 20 December 1954, Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv/Abteilung Wolfenbüttel, Sterberegister, Nr. 219/1954: 10 Kb Zg. 2012/506 Nr. 127.

84 Rachmil Bryks, *Der Keyser in Geto* (Futuro Press: 1961), 113–114; Chava Rosenfarb, *The Tree of Life: A Trilogy of Life in the Lodz Ghetto*, Book 2: *From the Depths I Call You, 1940–1942*, trans. Chava Rosenfarb with Goldie Morgenthaler (University of Wisconsin Press/Terrace Books, 2004), 75, 124; ibid., Book 3: *The Cattle Cars are Waiting, 1942–1944* (University of Wisconsin Press/Terrace Books, 2006), 20, 25. I am citing the English versions rather than the original Yiddish version, *Der Boym Fun Lebn* from 1972.

85 United Nations War Crimes Commission, Polish Charges Against German War Criminals, Case No. 538: Sutter, Head of Criminal Police, Lodz, 26 June 1947, The Wiener Holocaust Library (London), UNWCC Archive, Reel 16, Charge File 538 (4 pages). My thanks to Michael Fleming for making me aware of this document and providing a copy. A version of this exists in the records of the Zentrale Stelle in Ludwigsburg. See Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg, B162 72537, 185–189. Undated draft versions of the document can be found in the files of the Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich, now in the archive of the Institute of National Remembrance: Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, Główna Komisja, 164/4722. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has a microfilm copy of this IPN folder: RG-15.155M, Folder 939 (Microfilm reel 49). My thanks to Tom Frydel for providing the copy from the USHMM.

men, named in the document as Cytryn, Schaj Silberschatz, and Gelkopf. Two witnesses identified as Mosche Wyszogrodzki and Mieczysław Tuchschneider supplied testimony against Sutter.[86] Copies of this charge were sent to various institutions focused on finding Nazi perpetrators at large. These included Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Central Office of the Land Judicial Authorities for Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Ludwigsburg, and the Documentation Centre of the Association of Jewish Victims of the Nazi Regime (JDZ), based in Vienna and led by Simon Wiesenthal.[87]

Soon thereafter, in February 1965, Wiesenthal sent a letter to the Main Commission for the Research of Nazi Crimes, which was located in Warsaw and served as Poland's governmental agency for finding and prosecuting Nazi German agents who harmed Poles during the war. Summarising the report from Israel, Wiesenthal shortened the list to just six policemen, including two from the Kripo (one of which was Sutter) and four from the Gestapo. The Main Commission in Warsaw passed the letter on to the Łódź branch.[88] A response does not appear in the files of the Łódź branch office of the Main Commission or in the archive of the Simon Wiesenthal Archive in Vienna.

Interestingly, there seemed to be some movement in the shadow of the Polish political crisis of 1968 and the political smear campaign against Jews. In June 1967, the Main Commission in Warsaw asked local commission prosecutors about Kripo perpetrators.[89] These local prosecutors sent a query to the Łódź state archive (dated 11 September 1967), and the archive replied in late October with very brief biographical information on three Kripo officers: Wilhelm Neumann, Alfons Sutter, and Bruno Obersteiner. The archive referred the prosecutors to more material at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.[90] The prosecutors only sent a letter to the Jewish Historical Institute in March 1968.[91] The Jewish Historical Institute then responded a couple of months later with a few references to testimonies concerning each perpe-

86 A. Edelsberg, Untersuchungsstelle für N.S. Gewaltverbrechen beim Landesstab der Polizei Israel, to Dr. Eytan Otto Liff, Oberstleutnant der Polizei, Leiter der Untersuchungsstelle für N.S. Gewaltverbrechen, Tel Aviv, "Aufklaerung von N.S. Gewaltverbrechen in Lodz (Litzmannstadt) – Polen", 25 November 1964 (received on 12 January 1965), in VWI.SWA, I.1 (Falldossiers, 1945–2005), 2397_01 (Leihgabe BJVN – Dokumentationszentrum des Bundes jüdischer Verfolgter des Naziregimes).

87 The letter in the Simon Wiesenthal Archive no longer includes the statements that were originally attached, and an initial query to the Bundesarchiv-Ludwigsburg could not locate the letter. A version of the statements can be found in Yad Vashem Archives, Record Group TR.11, File no. 223.

88 Simon Wiesenthal/Dokumentationszentrum des Bundes jüdischer Verfolgter des Naziregimes (Vienna) to Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich (Warsaw), 26 February 1965, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder I, p. 14.

89 Postanowienie o wszczęciu śledztwa, 30 June 1967, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder I, 19.

90 Memo from Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi to Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Łodzi, 24 October 1967, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder I, 20.

91 Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Łodzi to Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, draft dated March 1968, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder I, 21.

trator.[92] After the Main Commission headquarters in Warsaw sent a reminder about its query from the previous year, the Łódź branch finally responded in November 1968. The office merely repeated the information it had from sparse correspondence: the evidence on the Nazi perpetrators could be found in the local state archive and in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.[93]

The half-hearted and glacially slow investigation shows the lack of persistence on the part of local authorities. There were occasional external impulses to look more closely at Sutter and other Kripo perpetrators. In the late 1970s, for example, the Landgericht Bochum (Germany) brought charges against Helmut Georg Krizons, who served in the Gestapo and was responsible for killing several Jews in the Łódź ghetto.[94] In early 1980, the Bochum court even planned a site visit to Łódź.[95] Local prosecutors probably had an incentive to interrogate Konstanty Wołkowski, who had already given an account about his ghetto experience to the Jewish Historical Institute in 1947.[96] Yet the new deposition under oath was not as detailed as his earlier testimony, and its usefulness was minimal in the case against Krizons: Wołkowski's deposition focused on Sutter and the Kripo, not the Gestapo, and he did not mention Krizons at all.[97] In 1990, Polish authorities in the Main Commission in Warsaw showed interest in the German Order Police who had killed Jews while guarding the ghetto. They turned to the Central Office of the Land Judicial Authorities in Ludwigsburg to help assess their evidence. The Polish authorities included a copy of Wołkowski's 1981 deposition, which the Ludwigsburg office translated into German.[98] Nonetheless, the rich testimony by Wołkowski about Kripo perpetrators remained marginal to these investigations of the Gestapo and Order Police.

Local collaborators like Alfons Sutter exemplify the problem of intimate violence and trauma during the Holocaust. His disap-

92 Żydowski Instytut Historyczny to Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Łodzi, 13 May 1968, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder I, 22.

93 Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce to Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Łodzi, 10 September 1968, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder I, 23; Letter to Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości, Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce, 5 November 1968, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder I, 24.

94 See the over 500-page judgement and sentencing: Urteil vom 30. Januar 1985 gegen Helmut Krizons, Archive of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte München (IfZArch), Gb 08.18.

95 Landgericht Bochum to Hauptkommission zur Verfolgung hitlerischer Gewaltverbrechen in Polen beim Ministerium der Justiz der Volksrepublik Polen, "NS-Strafverfahren Gegen den deutschen Staatsangehörigen Helmut Georg Krizons, geboren am 11.3.1916 in Schalau/Ostpreußen", 2 January 1980, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder VII, 1235–1239.

96 Konstanty Wołkowski, "Protokół przesłuchania świadka", interview by Zbigniew Piechota, 30 September 1981, IPN Oddziałowa Komisja/Łódź, Folder VII, 1270–1287.

97 Sutter was briefly mentioned in the sentencing of Krizons: Urteil vom 30. Januar 1985 gegen Helmut Krizons, IfZArch, Gb 08.18, 92.

98 Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce/Instytut Pamięci Narodowej to Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen in Ludwigsburg, "Dotyczy: zbrodni popełnionych na mieszkańcach żydowskiego getta w Łodzi przez funkcjonariuszy hitlerowskich policji porządkowej", 21 November 1989; Konstanty Wołkowski, "Protokół przesłuchania świadka", interview by Zbigniew Piechota, 30 September 1981; Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg, B162, 42155, 4–5, translation on 6–9; 17–34, translation on 132–153.

pearance after the war made him loom larger in the memories of survivors. These neighbours who became perpetrators were a reminder to Holocaust survivors that danger emanated not simply from Germany but from within their own communities. Despite their deadly effectiveness, however, these Nazi agents were themselves peripheral to the organisations they served, allowing most to escape legal and historical scrutiny after the war. Therefore, a closer examination of the Kriminalpolizei's lower-ranking local policemen allows us to understand better how prewar continuities shaped Jewish survival strategies during the war and serve to revise prevailing views of the Łódź ghetto as hermetically sealed.[99]

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