

Response and Testimony: At the Center of the Whirlwind

Testimonies of ghetto and camp inmates are a fundamental source for interpreting responses to Nazi persecution. The following selections offer a critical departure from the previous parts that have engaged with historiographical debates and utilized both primary and secondary sources. Emmanuel Ringelblum's "Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto," Oskar Rosenfeld's "In the Beginning was the Ghetto: 890 Days in Lodz," Herman Kruk's "The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania," and Ety Hillesum's "Letters from Westerbork" illuminate the geographical ambition and coverage of Nazi control. They also highlight the variety of dissonant, defiant and resigned responses to that control at the communal and individual levels. Individually, each of the writers presented here takes the reader to a period of wartime Europe, to the ethnically rich and culturally suffused ghettos of Warsaw, Łódź, Vilna, and the transit camp of Westerbork. Collectively, they present scenes of ghetto and camp life that question the reader's conditioning to atrocity narratives. Readers of these testimonies become post-Holocaust eyewitnesses to what was intended to be a concealed project of ethnic and cultural destruction, and trespassers on intimate and pithily narrated moments of shame, humiliation and conflicts of the human condition.

Testimonies confirm that on the question of how the Jews responded to ghetto conditions, to mass psychological deception, to enforced nutritional deprivation and to a life lived between willful uncertainty and cautious but failing optimism, it is impossible to generalize. Essential as it is to provide an understanding of the historical causation of events, ideologies and actions that led to the "Final Solution," its full magnitude cannot be grasped without a sustained acquaintance with its victims' voices. The accounts collected here demonstrate how the announcement of an impending deportation list could instill fear and terror in the community, how people would consequently search in desperation to prove their value as workers, how organized illegal activity in the ghetto threatened

Gestapo control, and how people with identities and histories became nameless victims at the will of the Nazi machine.

The biographies of the authors are relevant to understand the accounts they wrote. Emmanuel Ringelblum's contribution rests in his and his group's collection of archival material and writings, known as the *Omeg Shabbos* (O5), from which the present selection "Inside the Ghetto" is extracted. Apart from being a prominent historian of Warsaw Jewry before the ghetto was established in October 1940, he became involved in other activities in the Warsaw ghetto, such as a social self-help organization which provided aid and welfare to refugees, old and sick inmates. He also assisted in the formation of an alternative leadership to the *Judenrat* comprised of civic and political leaders. Ringelblum wrote with an empathic, documentary and defiant tone, capturing the terror felt in the ghetto, the randomness of violence, the productivity impulse of ghetto inmates who wanted to survive, and inequities in the selective distribution of food, punishment and violence by the Jewish council, and their agents. The psychology of the Warsaw ghetto community is visited with admiration and despair, and with special regard for the fearlessness of the Jewish women, Chaike and Frumke, who, as couriers, travelled on false papers to smuggle goods and clandestine information between ghettos.

Ringelblum's documentary tone is continued, albeit in more complex form, in Oskar Rosenfeld's "In the Beginning was the Ghetto: 890 Days in Kodz." Rosenfeld served in the statistics department of the Kodz ghetto from February 1942 to July 1944, and was also a playwright and journalist, keeping his own notes on life and conditions in the ghetto for a fictionalized account that remained unwritten at the time of his death in Auschwitz. Rosenfeld's entries from late March to June 1943 are filled with dramatic scenes. Certain motifs recur, as if narrating a fiction that compels disbelief, although climate and time give these entries their grounding. Weather changes are sources of renewal – and anniversaries are reminders of loss. Identity becomes important through naming, and the oscillation between documentary narration of ghetto activities and its personal effect is evident when he talks about the appearance of death: "Have you ever seen a human being shortly before dying of hunger?" The personal and administrative corruption of the Jewish council leader, Chaim Rumkowski, and his tours in the ghetto, are also recalled through "The Eldest."

which had been the scholarly and cultural center of Jewish life
culture in Europe, is the focus of Herman Kruk's "The Last
of Lithuania." Kruk was an active member of the
diary chronicled resistance and leadership in
Kruk also participated actively in the

ghetto's social and welfare life, organizing and supervising its library, for example. His entries from October 1942 through January 1943, like Ringelblum's, convey a comprehensive impression of ghetto community and the labor of a population under siege from outside and within, from the combination of lack of food, the continuing threats of killing, reprisals for smuggling, and constant physical surveillance. The imminent deaths of ghetto inhabitants are juxtaposed with scenes of theater productions, youth clubs and an active press – intensifying his reference to the “last days” of this vibrant community.

Testimonies of transit carry readers in the direction of a final destination. While other excerpts focus on the fixed spaces of ghetto communities in Eastern Europe, Ety Hillesum's “Letters from Westerbork” move in the direction of Westerbork, an assembly camp in the Netherlands for Dutch Jews en route to the extermination camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Sobibor between July 1942 and September 1944. Hillesum, a highly educated and assimilated young woman, worked as a typist in a division of the Amsterdam Jewish Council. She was transported to Westerbork in June 1943, where she remained until her deportation to Auschwitz with her parents in early September 1943. The letters reprinted here capture just one week of her experience in Westerbork, but they magnify a theme common to the other testimonies: the writer as captive, and the response to this condition by the attempt to break out of the enforced entrapment. Whereas ghetto writers narrate from a “fixed” mobility, Hillesum has “passed through” that space to the verge of an anticipated travel experience – since transit camps imply temporary residence and ongoing movement. Letters themselves represent a form of transit with self and others; they suggest an active and symbolic dimension of correspondence and return journeys, much like the train that travels with empty carriages into Hillesum's space and then departs with camp inmates and their luggage. “Ten thousand have passed through this place, the clothed and the naked, the old and young, the sick and the healthy – and I am left to live and work and stay cheerful” (10 July, 1943).

Taken together, these excerpts of diaries and letters show the importance of such accounts for understanding Nazi structures of incarceration, their psychology of terror, of ghetto surveillance, and of the inter-related experiences of perpetrators, persecutors, collaborators, and accomplices. They also provide evidence that although the Nazis marked the Jews as victims, the Jews did not receive that label willingly, or without opposition, despite the horrendous conditions inflicted upon them in the multitude of ghettos and camps across Europe. As a form of testimony of community action and individuals' responses on the “edge of destruction,” diaries, notes and letters carry the reader to a torturous wartime landscape, replete with scenes of unrelenting human distress.

SUGGESTED READING

- Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone Books, 1999.
- Denise de Costa, *Anne Frank and Ety Hillesum: Inscripting Spirituality and Sexuality*, trans. Mischea F.C. Hoynick and Robert E. Chesal. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998.
- Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Geoffrey Hartman (ed.). *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.
- Geoffrey Hartman, "Testimony and Authenticity," in *Scars of the Spirit: The Struggle Against Inauthenticity*. New York: Palgrave, 2002: 85–99, 244–5.
- Samuel Kassow, "Vilna and Warsaw, Two Ghetto Diaries: Herman Kruk and Emanuel Ringelblum," in Robert M. Shapiro (ed.), *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1999: 171–215.
- Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman (eds.), *Women in the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- David Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Efraim Sicher (ed.), *Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory after Auschwitz*. Evanston: University of Illinois Press, 1998.
- James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Jews who have been driven into Warsaw to the effect that Germany has been recently flooded with illegal leaflets, so-called "circulars," inciting soldiers, workers, and intellectuals to rebel against the regime. Other evidence cited for the imminent downfall of Hitler is the four or five illegal radio stations and the very bad food situation. Letters from Germany (in code, of course) describe vast popular dissatisfaction. The final, conclusive argument for an early conclusion to the war has come from a Jew whose last name is Czerwiec [June], and from the fortuneteller, Madame M.

Czerwiec is the Jew from Nalewki Street who predicted the German attack on Russia in June. When asked what was to happen afterwards, he prophesied that the Germans would be halted in November and unable to advance a foot. So he was nicknamed Listopad [November]. Later they called him Luty [February] because he predicted that the Germans would be in dire straits in February. Now they call him Czerwiec again, because he predicts the war will be over the middle of *this* June.

Madame M. was a law student who lost her husband (a Warsaw lawyer) during the war. She knew about it eleven months in advance, but one can't avoid his fate — says she. A few months before the war began she dictated to one of her followers (another lawyer's wife) a detailed account of how the war would break out (with exact dates), and a description of the bombardment of Warsaw, the razing of the power-house, the failure of gas, water, and electricity. She is said to have foreseen later developments, as well. I know that two or three months before November, 1941, she prophesied that the German Army would be defeated in Russia in the second half of November and be unable to make any further advances. Later she predicted terrible times coming for the Jews. Now she says that in June there will be no walls left standing in Warsaw, but the Jews will be here. We will not be deported. Still, she expects very bad times. The Germans will incite the Poles against the Jews. There will be a three-day pogrom. But those who survive will be saved.

A slaughterer like that of Friday, the 18th of April [1942], took place in a number of towns in the Government General. There is news of slaughters of this kind in Cracow, Tarnow, Czestochowa, Radom, Kielce, Ostrowiec, etc. In each place there were about fifty dead. The killings took place in the street at night there too. Those killed were a varied lot. In some cities it was the returnees from Russia, who were considered Communists; everywhere the local [Jewish] authorities declared they didn't know anything about it, they hadn't prepared any lists for the Others, and so on. In some cities, at the same time as the killings took place, there were arrests of persons who were sent nobody knows whither to this day. Those arrested included Diamond, the president of the Radom Jewish Council,

Inside the Ghetto

EMMANUEL RINGELBLUM

May 8

The Ghetto has calmed down somewhat since the massacre of April 18 (when fifty-two people were shot down in the street). People have become a little more optimistic. They've begun to believe again that the war will be over in a few months and life will return to normal. This good mood has been aided by false communiqués that have become widespread with the cessation of true accounts after Friday's massacre. What is in these communiqués? Well, first we learn that Smolensk has been retaken through an airdrop of 60,000 soldiers who joined forces with the Russian Army camped west of Smolensk. The same communiqué has taken Khar'kov. Another communiqué disembarked a whole army in Murmansk, borne by 160 ships, not one of which was sunk en route. Of course, when Hitler heard this news (this was *after* his May 1 speech), he collapsed. Then, the Allies won a great victory on Lake Ilmen, where the communiqué killed 43,000 Germans and took more than 80,000 captive. This was the Nineteenth Army; the captives included two German generals. As though this were not enough, a communiqué has deposed Mussolini and made a revolution in Italy. Add to all this an ultimatum from Roosevelt to the German people giving them until May 15 to surrender. In a word, the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto aren't content merely to recite Psalms and leave the rest in God's hands; they labor day and night to lay their enemy low and bring an early peace... When will the war really end?

The Ghetto Jews can't bear it any longer, that's why we try our utmost to see the war's end as imminent. There are people who seriously believe that the situation in Germany at this time parallels that of the year 1918. They cite statements by well-known Germans and reports from German

and his representative, Merin. It was part of a general operation. During his last visit, Himmler must have issued an order for massacres to be perpetrated everywhere in the Government General of Poland in order to terrorize the Jewish populace. Probably this is in connection with the spring campaigns. They want their rear to be secure. They threw a little fright into the Jews, so the Jews would keep their heads down.

The end of April and beginning of May we lived in terror of deportation. Where this rumor emanated from no one knows. One opinion has it that the Polish merchants spread the rumor in order to persuade the Jewish populace to sell their possessions. There was even some talk of the number of deportees being from 150,000 to 200,000, the country of destination Rumania. There were rumors emanating from the Kitchen Department of the Jewish Council that "non-productive" elements would be deported, and only workers would be able to enjoy the benefits of the kitchen. This was regarded as a grave omen. However, Council circles have assured us that the danger of deportation that has been hanging over our heads has been avoided, thanks to the presence of factories in the Ghetto that are supplying the needs of the German Army. This is a tragic paradox. Only those Jews have the right to live who work to supply the German Army. The same was true in Vilna, Rovno, and dozens of other cities where there were mass slaughters of Jews. The only Jews left alive were those who directly or indirectly worked for the Germans. Never in history has there been a national tragedy of these dimensions. A people that hates the Germans with every fiber of its being can purchase its life only at the price of helping its foe to victory – the very victory that means the complete annihilation of Jewry from the face of Europe, if not of the whole world.

The Warsaw Ghetto is hard at work for the Germans. They're repairing clothing stripped from soldiers killed in battle, and are beginning to prepare such winter items as quilted trousers, vests, and overcoats. Also straw shoes, furniture, etc. The center of all this activity is the firm of Toebbens at 12 Prosta Street, where more than 1,000 workers are busy. It's typical that in the waiting room outside the office of Bauch, the man in charge of work, a number of pointed rods of various size and thickness hang. These, it would seem, are implements that no German can get along without. They're the symbols of bloodthirsty Hitlerism that one finds everywhere – in concentration camps, in work camps, in prison, and even at places of work.

The following is typical of the present attitude of Polish Jewry to philanthropy. Two years ago the Chassidic rabbi of Ruzyn wrote his disciples in Lublin to sell their furniture and give the proceeds to charity. It was his understanding that they were not doing any business and had no ready cash. His disciples disobeyed him and did not sell their furniture. Then the

Germans confiscated almost all the furniture in every Jewish home in Lublin. Later, the rabbi wrote his disciples to sell their furs and give the proceeds to charity. Again, his Chassidim disobeyed him. And again the Germans came, this time to confiscate the furs. Finally, the rabbi wrote his disciples to sell their Sabbath clothes and give the proceeds to charity. His disciples disobeyed him once more, and the Jews were deported from Lublin.

Two days ago (May 5-6) a characteristic smuggling incident took place. The corner house at 21 Franciszkańska Street that is next to the Wall is a hotbed of smuggling. A ladder is thrown over the Wall and smuggling goes on all night. But this night the smugglers quarrel among themselves, and one of them informs where it will do the most good. The police come at once and catch a whole crowd in the middle of operations. Machine guns begin shooting, one smuggler is shot dead on the spot, one or two others wounded. Then they search every apartment in the building, take away a great deal of goods, and arrest forty smugglers. For 40,000 zlotys, they return the goods and set the smugglers free. That is the sum that the police claim to have lost because the smugglers used the Wall to bring goods in, rather than taking them through the watch at the Ghetto gate, where the police get a cut. Most of the smuggling goes through the watch. It costs 100 zlotys per wagon. The driver has to know the password, or else he can't get through.

There are policemen who make 2,000 zlotys in an hour or two. The smuggling of goods past the Wall continues, resulting every day in the sacrifice of a large number of wounded and dead. Often minors and children are among the victims. There is one policeman who is renowned as a model German. Nicknamed "the gentleman," he is the soul of honesty. He permits wagons through the gates of the Wall, refusing to take a bribe. He also permits Jewish children to pass to the Other Side by the dozen to buy food, for the most part potatoes and other vegetables. Examples of his wondrous decency and honesty are recounted daily. He plays all sorts of games with the smuggler children. He lines them up, commands them to sing, and marches them through the gates.

The inspection guards can be bought, too. A short time ago, a whole wagon of contraband was "burned" (i.e., confiscated). But 200 zlotys were sufficient to persuade the inspection guards to let the wagon into the Ghetto. There is good reason for the proverb that three things are indomitable: the German Army, the British Isles, and Jewish smuggling.

They tell this story: Churchill invited the Chassidic rabbi of Ger to come to see and advise him how to bring about Germany's downfall. The rabbi gave the following reply: "There are two possible ways, one involving natural means, the other supernatural. The natural means would be if a

million angels with flaming swords were to descend on Germany and destroy it. The supernatural would be if a million Englishmen parachuted down on Germany and destroyed it.”

They are now filming the Ghetto. They spent two days shooting the Jewish prison and the Council. They drove a crowd of Jews together on Smocza Street, then ordered the Jewish policemen to disperse them. At another place They shot a scene showing a Jewish policeman about to beat a Jew when a German comes along and saves the fallen Jew.

There is a big sign in German in the cemetery ordering Germans not to visit the Jewish graveyard. Supposedly, the grounds for this ban are sanitation, but in actual fact, the reason is quite different. Crowds of Germans used to visit the cemetery to stare at the famous shed where daily the skeletons of the corpses of poor people who had starved to death in the street were heaped – candidates for mass graves. Standing there, the Germans used to discuss the “Jewish question” among themselves. Some of the Germans enjoyed the sight of the victims of Hitler’s extermination policy; others, however, expressed their revulsion at the consequences of what they named “German culture.” Apparently, these graveyard excursions left a strong imprint on the excursionists; consequently, they were halted.

Tonight, the night of May 12, 1942, there occurred an event similar to that which took place on Friday, April 18. During the course of the night four Jews were shot: Sklar,¹ Feist, Zaks (a sportsman), and Tenenbaum. Apparently these men were associated with the liberation movement. At night they were taken out of the Pawia Street prison and shot outdoors, each in a different street. This shooting of people in the streets has become a deliberate tactic since April. The aim: to terrify the populace, to terrorize them.

Two hundred thousand uniforms stripped from the bodies of dead German soldiers were brought into the Warsaw Ghetto. The uniforms were horribly lousy and blood drenched. From the number of them, one can imagine how many hundreds of thousands and millions of men fell on the Eastern front during the winter. Many of the blouse pockets contained surrender appeals dropped from Soviet airplanes that constituted a kind of safe-transit pass, identifying the bearer as a Soviet friend. Although the concealment of such appeals was subject to heavy punishment, they were discovered in a great many officers’ pockets. The pockets contained, in addition, letters from friends and family that give a glimpse into the moods of both the soldiers and those they had left behind in the hinterland. The general impression was of a terrible depression among the soldiers.

The Praga cemetery, which is more than 150 years old, is being leveled. The devils won’t even let the dead rest. They’ve done the same sort of thing elsewhere in Poland and Germany. So unimportant a thing as the

antiquity of a cemetery, its cultural and historical significance, is of no importance whatsoever to them.

The South American citizens living in the Ghetto were called to the Pawia Street prison. There they were informed that they would have to leave Warsaw by the 18th inst. for Switzerland, where they will be exchanged for German citizens. But there is still a question as to whether the newly created citizens, i.e., those who bought their citizenship for a price during the war, will be allowed to benefit from this exchange.

Here's a mystery for you: Surov, a Soviet citizen who once shared a Pawia Street prison cell with all the other Russian citizens, now moves about as free as a lark, lives on the Other Side without a special permit, is in business. How has he managed all this? What price has he paid – does he pay – for his hard-won freedom?

Often the Ghetto serves as an intermediary between two Christian merchants. This sounds paradoxical, but it is a fact. Christian merchants are fearful of dealing directly with one another, because the office of price inspection can shut down their stores. But if they buy and sell in the Ghetto, where there is no office of price inspection, they can charge whatever they want. A short time ago, I heard a story about a firm that bought 1,000 carbide lamps. These lamps were smuggled into the Ghetto and then smuggled out again to another Christian firm. Have heard the same thing about other firms. Recently, the value of hard currency [dollars] rose from 150 to 186 zlotys. The reason is said to be that since merchandise is being confiscated, the Polish merchants have decided to exchange all their money for foreign currency, which is then sent to the Other Side.

The demoralization of the Polish police and Polish secret agents is indescribable. They do nothing in the Ghetto but move about detaining wagons full of merchandise and extorting protection money. The populace shivers at the sight of them and gives them whatever they ask. They get monthly payments from each of the merchants – the secret agents from the crowd that hangs around Franciszkanska Street get 200 zlotys from every leather merchant. One of the merchants collects the protection money and brings each of the eight agents in the district his share. Anyone who wants to open up a secret grain mill has first to report to the agents and pay them off. If he doesn't, they threaten to nab him at work and fine him 2,000 zlotys. The number of grain mills is very large. There is one in almost every house where there is electricity.

They are still filming the Ghetto. Every scene is directed. E.g., yesterday they ordered a child to run outside the Ghetto Wall at the corner of Leszno and Zelazna Streets, and to buy potatoes there. A Polish policeman catches the boy and raises his arm to beat him. At that moment who

should come along but a German policeman: He grabs the Pole's arm – children are not to be beaten!

The period ending that fateful Friday, April 18, may be termed “the period of legal conspiracy.” All the political parties in the Ghetto conducted activities that were practically semilegal. Political publications sprouted like mushrooms after rain. If *you* publish your paper once a month, *I’ll* publish mine twice a month; if *you* print twice a month, *I’ll* print weekly; it finally reached the point where the bulletin of one of the parties was appearing twice a week. These publications were distributed openly, “in full view of the people and the congregation.” The political leaflets and communiqués used to be read in offices, factories, and similar public places.

The various parties used to hold their meetings practically in the open in public halls. They even had big public celebrations. At one such meeting, a speaker addressing an audience of 150 preached active resistance. I was myself present at a celebration along with 500 young people who all belonged to the same party. The names of the authors of the anonymous articles that appeared in the party newspapers were common knowledge. We had even begun to debate and insult one another, as in the good old prewar days. We imagined that anything went. Even such illegal Polish publications as *Barykada Wolności* [Barricade of Freedom] used to be printed and distributed in the Ghetto. (I haven’t checked this fact.) Everybody imagined that the Germans were indifferent to what the Jews were thinking and doing in their Ghetto. We thought that all that the Germans were concerned about was ferreting out Jewish merchandise, money, currency – that they were uninterested in intellectual matters. We turned out to be sadly mistaken. That bloody Friday, when the publishers and distributors of illegal publications were executed, proved that our political constellation is not a subject of indifference to Them, particularly when it has some connection with what is happening in the Polish, non-Jewish part of Warsaw.

The Jewish Council people have tried to exploit the bloody Friday for their own purposes: to repress completely the social and political life of the Ghetto. First they spread the rumor that Friday’s massacre was attributable to the illegal publications. And then they warned the people of the Ghetto that if these [illegal publications] were to be repeated, the fate of Lublin would be visited on Warsaw – i.e., the deportation of the Jewish population. The only question that rises in one’s mind is: Why were there similar massacres (courtyard executions by gunfire) in Radom and other places where there were no illegal publications? One body of opinion would have it that Friday’s massacre has “rehabilitated” the Ghetto

[morally]. This is the first time that Jewish blood has been spilled for reasons of political – not purely personal – activity.

Bloody Friday has had strong repercussions. The illegal press has stopped publishing. There has been a significant weakening of political activity. The interest in social undertakings has slackened. It was a hard blow to people's spirits; half the city spends the night away from home these days. Anyone who had anything at all to do with any kind of community work is terrified. Since the slaughter was the result of tattling by Jewish informers (apparently, from the Kohn and Heller firm), people tremble to speak a word. The English communiqués, which used to be so widely disseminated (some people actually made a living out of them!), have ceased appearing. However, since people are hungry for every tidbit of news, lies are fabricated out of whole cloth. Every day we have another batch of lies. After Friday's slaughter, a crew of swindlers turned up who persuaded people to part with money for the privilege of having their names removed from new lists of those doomed to slaughter. The example of Blajman, who during the weeks before the slaughter was blackmailed for 5,000 zlotys ransom money, has made people morally fearful of blackmailers. But gradually, little by little, people are beginning to straighten up again. The only thing is that what used to be a kind of "legitimate" conspiracy is now being transformed into the real thing and is going deep underground.

The Pawia Street prison has become a center of persecution, outside as well as in. Inside, the prisoners are tortured ceaselessly – a new prison guard has taken over recently. But whether the guard be old or new, prisoners are tortured. The Pawia Street prison has become the point of departure for Oswiecim. Also, a number of people have been taken from the prison and shot outside, right in the street. Lately, the prison has also become a source of misery for those on the outside – for its neighbors and those who pass by on either side of Pawia Street. The neighbors have had to cover their windows with thick black paper or black wooden slats. Night and day, windows have to be closed.

The Jewish Gestapoists are now busy looking for an alibi. They are desperately trying to look good, so as to prove that they, at any rate, are real Jews, true Jews, Jews with a sense of public interest. Gancwajch, e.g., is turning into a regular Maecenas, supporting Jewish literature, art, theater. He arranges "receptions" for Jewish writers and artists, where there is plenty of food – nowadays the important thing. A short time ago he threw an all-night party at the El Dorado night spot.... The party was opened with the dedication of an ambulance, named Miriam (after Gancwajch's wife at home). Gancwajch's business interests are flourishing. He has the administration of 100 buildings, which brings him in a pretty penny. Beside, he issues thirty certificates a month, at the rate of several

thousand zlotys per certificate; he's also a partner in various businesses. In a word, he's thriving. Gancwajch's function in the Gestapo is not completely clear. But one thing is certain: He gets nothing for nothing. He has to pay for every favor. To help them meet their Passover needs, Gancwajch sent the Jewish writers 6,000 zlotys.

One can judge the depths of poverty in the Ghetto from the fact that there are houses where everything has been sold – even pillow cases and sheets, so that people are sleeping right on the feathers of their pillows and beds. You come across beggars who are covered all over with feathers. These have sunk below the threshold of hope.

Death lurks in every crack, every little crack. There have been cases of everyone living in an apartment being fearfully tortured because someone opened a shutter. One of the tortures is to have the culprit strip naked and then roll down a pile of coke. The pain is excruciating, and every part of the body bleeds. Besides, every now and then, Jews who just happen to be passing by the Pawia Street prison are seized, tortured, and beaten. The Germans driving prisoners in trucks to the Pawia Street prison beat the passers-by on the street mercilessly. The Gestapo agent sitting in the back of the car leans out the window, reaches along the narrow Karmelicka Street, and slashes at passers-by with a long, lead-tipped stick. He overturns rickshas, and beats the ricksha drivers. At sight of the truck, people run into the nearest courtyard to hide. Often the Gestapo agents shoot. Many a man has been killed or wounded by one of these wild street shootings, which have become the thing since the 18th of April, bloody Friday.

The heroic girls, Chajke and Frumke – they are a theme that calls for the pen of a great writer. Boldly they travel back and forth through the cities and towns of Poland. They carry “Aryan” papers identifying them as Poles or Ukrainians. One of them even wears a cross, which she never parts with except when in the Ghetto. They are in mortal danger every day. They rely entirely on their “Aryan” faces and on the peasant kerchiefs that cover their heads. Without a murmur, without a second's hesitation, they accept and carry out the most dangerous missions. Is someone needed to travel to Vilna, Bialystok, Lemberg, Kowel, Lublin, Czestochowa, or Radom to smuggle in contraband such as illegal publications, goods, money? The girls volunteer as though it were the most natural thing in the world. Are there comrades who have to be rescued from Vilna, Lublin, or some other city? – They undertake the mission. Nothing stands in their way, nothing deters them. Is it necessary to become friendly with engineers of German trains, so as to be able to travel beyond the frontiers of the Government General of Poland, where people can move about with special papers? They are the ones to do it, simply, without fuss, as though

it was their profession. They have traveled from city to city, to places no delegate or Jewish institution had ever reached, such as Wolhynia, Lithuania. They were the first to bring back the tidings about the tragedy of Vilna.² They were the first to offer words of encouragement and moral support to the surviving remnant of that city. How many times have they looked death in the eyes? How many times have they been arrested and searched? Fortune has smiled on them. They are, in the classic idiom, “emissaries of the community to whom no harm can come.” With what simplicity and modesty have they reported what they accomplished on their journeys, on the trains bearing Polish Christians who have been pressed to work in Germany! The story of the Jewish woman will be a glorious page in the history of Jewry during the present war. And the Chajkes and Frumkes will be the leading figures in this story. For these girls are indefatigable. Just back from Czestochowa, where they imported contraband, in a few hours they’ll be on the move again. And they’re off without a moment’s hesitation, without a minute of rest.

May 22

Friday, the whole police force was called out. There was a big disturbance in the street. Some people were talking loudly about an imminent resettlement of the old, the sick, the unemployed. Others said that people were being impressed for the camps. It turned out that what was happening was that people with specialties were being impressed for the work camps. Specialists such as locksmiths, rugweavers, and the like were picked up at their addresses. If the person in question was not at home, his father was taken, or the nearest of kin at home at the time. Those picked up were sent to Zembrow. The misfortune is that many of those who declared themselves to be specialists during the registration are not such in reality; they purported to be craftsmen rather than figure as unemployed. Friday’s pick-up is said to be the beginning of a big operation, the aim being to pull the Jewish populace into the factories where Poles have been working until now. If this turns out to be true, the Warsaw Ghetto can be saved for the time being.

“Jews won’t work.” That’s what the German newspapers say. As an illustration of the contrary, I offer the following scene: 103 Plaza Zelazna is the place where those who work for the Germans outside the Ghetto change shifts. A truck arrives, and Jews throw themselves at it from all sides. They climb all over it. The soldiers can’t handle the mob. They beat at those nearest with their rifles, but it does no good; the mob won’t retreat. They want to get up into the truck at any cost, and there are many more than the outside work can use. The soldiers shoot in the air – but

that does no good, either; the mob won't leave. Finally, the driver backs up, the mob disperses, but not before one person is badly injured. That, finally, restores order. But why do they mob the truck? The answer is simple. People working outside the Ghetto are given two good soups and half a kilo of bread a day. That's the reason for the mob.

May 23

The Gestapo men in the Pawia Street prison have to have their daily victims. Just the way a pious Jew feels bad if he misses prayers one day, the Gestapo men have to pick up a few Jews every day and break a few arms and legs. Since the street in front of the prison empties out when the Gestapo auto drives up, and since passers-by avoid the streets around the prison, yesterday They stopped the streetcar that runs through Smocza Street near the prison, and dragged a few Jews out of the car.

The OS has passed from "poor" work (October, 1939, to May, 1940) to "good" work; since Friday, April 18th, we're back to poor work. It is necessary to save the information we have. The method: Sit down with the informant over a glass of tea, and write up the information afterward. Our luck that the OS work has been kept dark.

The Gesia Street jail now contains more than 1,300 prisoners, over 500 of them being children. Some are to be tried in the Special Court (*Sondergericht*), the rest in the Auerswald Court. The Special Court has already pronounced more than 200 death sentences, not yet executed. The posts where the condemned will be bound before execution are located in the same yard where they take their daily exercise. The conditions in the jail are indescribably crowded; the jail can accommodate 300 to 500 prisoners, and there are something like four times that number there now. The cells are terribly filthy. The professionals are confined under better conditions. The mortality in jail is very high. Nevertheless, the prisoners have succeeded in doing wonderful things for the children, who run about half-naked and tanned in the fresh air all day. The children perform calisthenics, sing Yiddish and Polish songs. Mothers come begging to have their children, who have been freed, put back in jail [!]. By the way, I saw a nine-year-old child who had been arrested. Among those imprisoned were some Gypsies, whom Auerswald terms "Gypsy-Jews." Some of the Rumanian citizens were set free. The Gypsy women are confined in a special cell of their own. The Gypsy men are in cells with Jews. We were met with hysterical weeping in the cell of the condemned. They begged us to secure better food for them, so that their nerves would be able to hold out. Shops, tailor shops, brush factories are being set up to give work to several hundred persons — this may be able to save the condemned.

A delegation from abroad that visited the jail was unable to comprehend how people could receive death sentences merely for crossing over to the Aryan side of Warsaw. This, they declared, is inconceivable. These people must have committed some crime on the Other Side. The jail was ideally clean (for the delegation!). [They were shown] a special bathroom where the prisoners were bathed and disinfected twice weekly. Most of those who were arrested were beggar children who had sneaked out to the Other Side; a number were smugglers. These were the chief criminals. The plaza that used to be covered with tile has been transformed into a flourishing garden whose fruits will bring in more than 200,000 zlotys. The garden is tended by prisoner gardeners.

May 25

This is a night that will remain in the memory of the Jews of Warsaw. Tonight the wild grass of the Ghetto was cleaned out. The biggest wheels of "the Thirteen," Levin, Mandel, Szymon[owicz] (Gancwajch's relative) and Hurwic; they couldn't find Gancwajch at home. Sztenfeld also managed to escape. It is said that the other lepers met the same fate. There are a number of reasons why "the Thirteen" was liquidated. A section of the Gestapo that used to work with Gancwajch is passing out of the picture, and it doesn't want to leave behind any of its former Jewish partners. Another surmise is that the clean-up affected the German partners of the gang, and the Germans dragged their Jewish colleagues down with them. Still a third account has it that one of the gang was imprisoned, and now he's rattling. He's telling everything, including how they blackmailed people with radios, and the like. And still other rumors would have it that they were offered the opportunity to do political espionage and refused. Naturally, that's just foolish talk. This is really just a continuation of the general program of getting rid of the undesirable Gestapo agents. — It's a program that's been carried out for several months, beginning with Anders, Milek, and others. One of the stories they tell is that, a few weeks ago, Szymonowicz threw a party for Gestapo officers that cost more than 25,000 zlotys. This is supposed to have been the last straw.

The Jewish gangster police exploit every situation to make money. Recently they invented a new swindle. The Germans are making a motion picture these days, so the police go to restaurant owners and demand food for a ball that's being filmed much bigger than necessary. A short time ago the police went to an apartment at 37 Leszno Street and stated that, since the place was going to be filmed, everyone had to leave the apartment at once. However, for 50 gold pieces they would take care of the matter.

While they were at it, one of them picked up a gold watch that happened to be lying on the table.

They steal everything in the Ghetto, even telephones. The telephone men, for a consideration, will install a telephone whose number has been stolen from someone else who already has a phone. This happened, for example, in a house at 18 Leszno Street. Dr Mesz's phone stopped ringing; it turned out that a shopkeeper on the same street had paid the telephone men to install a phone for him with the same number.

The Gestapo men today discovered a new game. They drag the Jewish musicians out of all the café houses, gardens, etc., and pull them over to the Pawia Street prison, where they are forced to entertain the company all night. They did that last night, and they're doing the same thing tonight. There is a theory that the reason why [some of] "the Thirteen" were shot was because they smuggled products worth large sums of money into the Ghetto.

Agents from the Transfer Station dressed in civilian clothing have been added to the police [stationed at the Ghetto gates]; their assignment is to watch the police. But nothing helps. They too are taken care of. They're bribed. As a result, a smuggler has to buy off four parties: Polish, Jewish, and German policemen, and now civilian agents as well. Even Napoleon wasn't able to handle smuggling, nor will the modern dictator be any more successful. The profits in smuggling are enormous. I heard about a partnership of four smugglers that made 35,000 zlotys in one week, but had to spend 19,000. The rest was profit. But the smugglers have all sorts of unforeseeable expenses. For example, if a wagon is "burned" [confiscated] and the driver is sent to prison, the smugglers maintain his family, sending it packages; they have to buy the prisoner's freedom, pay the lawyer, and so on. Besides, the smugglers support the families of smugglers who have been killed. As a rule, the smugglers are free and easy with their money. It's easy come, easy go. The smugglers' parties are famous in the Ghetto for the huge amount of food served. Smugglers love a good time, since they are never sure how tomorrow will end (with a bullet, an informer, arrest) – so it's eat, drink, and be merry. Anyway, profiteers are always free with money and food – sometimes handing them out to poor relatives, too. Smugglers come from the lowest classes – fences, thieves, porters, pimps, and the underworld in general. There are often Polish and German guests at their parties – they're the ones the smugglers work with.

Interestingly enough, the wagons that are smuggled into the Ghetto are insured. There's a special Jewish company that insures wagons against being "burned" "as of 70 Nalewski Street" – i.e., there's a base price for insurance against the merchandise being "burned" by the guards up to that point – additional insurance costs more. Keep in mind, that the

so-called *Ymakes* – i.e., the uniformed ethnic Germans in the service of the Commissar – have a free hand in the Ghetto itself. They pursue the wagons of contraband and confiscate the contents if they can catch them. Furst, from the Jewish Council (a “big operator,” the chief of the Council’s economic department) got the contraband for the Council cooperative.

A large crowd daily assembles around the loud-speakers located in the Ghetto (at the corners of Mila and Zamenhofa Streets, Gesia and Zamenhofa Streets, and Nalewki and Nowolipki Streets). The loud-speakers have been given several nicknames: Purim Noisemaker [Gager], Bonnet [Kapelush – after the shapel].

The Gestapo bear devours its own progeny. There are beasts that devour their young. Why they do so is not the subject under discussion here. But the fact is that it is a natural phenomenon. The Gestapo is destroying its Jewish agents one after another. The consequence is that the chief Jewish agents, men like Gancwajch, Kohn and Heller, and Ehrlich live in constant dread, in anticipation of the mortal blow. The reasons for this [liquidation of Jewish agents] is probably the following: First of all, the Jewish agents know too much, many “businesses” being partnerships [between the Gestapo and Jews]; the Gestapo are fearful lest the Jewish partner blab to another German, and the Gestapo lose out in a profitable undertaking. Secondly, there are rival Gestapo apparatuses. Every chief, every Gestapo department, has its own Jewish agents. When the Gestapo chiefs quarrel, each kills the other’s agents. Each of the three big Jewish operators mentioned above represents a rival Gestapo apparatus. Incidentally, Kohn and Heller refer to Gancwajch as Azef.³

Currently Kohn and Heller are the most influential, which is why Gancwajch and Ehrlich, the agents of the rival Gestapo apparatus, were caught on that calamitous Friday. Ehrlich’s partner Gurman (nicknamed “Young”) was shot, as well as Gancwajch’s close friends, shot the same night in the notorious night club Arizona, at 18 Milia Street. Before that, the well-known Gestapo agent Millek Tine was shot (there was a legend on the wall near his body that read: *Psu, psia smierc, zdech Millek Tine* [Millek Tine was a dog, and a dog’s death he died]). The same thing happened to Anders. Now in prison are the Gestapo agents Swieca and Esterowicz, who were the first to inform the Gestapo about the illegal Jewish organizations and publications. It is reported that they were shot in the Pawia Street prison ten days ago, i.e., about May 8.

At this point, it may be in order to take up the question as to whether we have more Gestapo agents than other groups [under the Nazi heel]. There are said to be about four hundred informers. But my private opinion is that the activity in the Ghetto of hundreds of illegal operations – dairies,

flour warehouses, bakeries, factories, transactions in leather and anything that's illegal – all this illegal activity could not be possible if there were that many informers. Consequently, we probably do not have more informers than any other group. For those who have been sent into the Ghetto from Eastern Europe are less fearful of every house porter [generally, in the employ of the police], of every stranger, than are those on the Other Side. My feeling is that the claim that we are more democratized than other groups is an exaggeration, particularly when you consider the straits we are in, and that we face to a considerable degree the choice between evasion of unjust laws or death from hunger. So let us not make the picture darker than it is – particularly as it is dark enough.

The informer problem, so common in Jewish history, is with us again. Unfortunately, we are afraid to resort to terrorism, lest the Occupying Forces take a bloody revenge. Perhaps the most tragic thing is that a man like Josef Ehrlich (nicknamed "Frockcoat") goes around scot free. He gets special favors from the Food Bureau, intervenes in various Jewish Council offices on behalf of his men, and everybody does whatever he wants – all out of fear that he might inform, or take revenge in some other fashion. Or take a person like Judtowa. Her claim to fame rests on the fact that during World War I she lived with a German officer who is now the commandant of Warsaw. This whore exploited her former friendship to obtain all kinds of concessions and special favors. She had the concession of the Jewish theater and was the co-owner of a couple of theaters. She was given a concession for a bakery, and, beside everything else, received several hundred zlotys from the Social Welfare Department associated with the Council. Then, she was a big shot in various Jewish Council offices, where everybody was afraid of her, apparently because of her work [for the Nazis]. But it turned out that she went too far, and one fine morning Czerniakow sent a memorandum around to all the departments of the Council notifying them that Judtowa's representations were no longer to be accepted. Now she is trying to live off blackmail – e.g., she'll assert that the person she is trying to blackmail is on one police death list or another, and if he won't pay her, she'll call the police.

The beggars crowding the streets nowadays are different from last year's crop. Most of the beggars from the provinces have died out. The newcomers are a better class of people, their breeding being obvious in their faces and manner. They speak a good, sometimes even an excellent Polish: "*Droozy panstwo, jessze dais nic mie jaldem*" ["Ladies and gentlemen, I haven't had a bite to eat today"]. Sometimes one comes across former students from the Institute of Judaic Studies, who ask for help in Hebrew. Some of the beggars are well dressed. If they didn't silently put out their hands, or ask for alms in a low voice, you would never imagine that they

were beggars. On Karmelicka Street, near the Evangelical Hospital, stands a beggar whose clothes are impeccable; he has a pretty child with him who is clean and spotless; he begs not with outstretched hand but with his eyes alone. The children constitute the majority of the beggars, despite all the institutions maintained by CENTOS. Whole choirs of children sing in the street to large audiences. In general, groups of musicians giving real concerts in the street to large, appreciative crowds are a common sight.

The thing we were so afraid of during the winter, that it would be impossible to walk through the streets because of the filth, has been luckily avoided. We – the House Committees – got after the janitors, and the pavements were cleaned up, the courtyards, the stairs, and even the apartments themselves. The only trouble is that people have no handkerchiefs, or maybe it's become dearer to wash them, because you see more and more people, even so-called "cultured people," blowing their snot into the street, and then wiping their noses with a handkerchief. Wherever you go, on the steps of houses, in courtyards, and in the streets, you come across traces of snot.

May 30

Last week was a bloody one. Almost every day saw smugglers shot. Particularly around the Small Ghetto, where a policeman who has been dubbed "Frankenstein" is on service. He was given this nickname because he looks and acts like the monster in the film of that name. He's a blood-thirsty dog who kills one or two smugglers every day. He just can't eat his breakfast until he has spilled the blood of a Jew.

Friday night, some eight or nine people were killed, *a la* Friday, the 18th of April. One of them was a man called Wilner (from 11 Mylna Street) who lay sick in bed. He could barely crawl out of bed at the command of the hangmen; he sat down on a chair, unable to move any further. So they threw him out of the second-floor window, together with the chair, shooting after him as he fell. In the same apartment three other men were shot (a brother-in-law of his called Rudnicki, his son, and another person). Reason unknown. Besides, three people from "the Thirteen's" Special Service were shot to death. This is all supposed to be a continuation of the clean-up of "the Thirteen." A few days ago, all Jews were informed via the House Committees that Gancwajch, Sztetnfeld, and both brothers Zachariajch were sought by the security police. Anyone found guilty of concealing them would be held fully responsible – together with all the residents of the house where he lived. Those shot to death yesterday (29th of May) include the notorious Juddtowa.

Yesterday also saw a big raid in the streets. People were picked up to work, ostensibly in labor camps, but actually in the German Todt⁴ organization at Bobruisk. The wagons were set aside for workers from there. Of course, it was the poor people, who didn't have the money to bribe the police, who went. The price was 5-10 zlotys, if you paid when you were picked up on the street. By the time you reached the district assembly point, the price had gone up to 100 zlotys. At the central assembly point, it was 500 zlotys. It was terrible in the street. Thousands of people stood about at the central assembly point on 19 Zamenhofa Street with packages for those who had been pressed for service. A medical commission examined those who had been picked up and on the spot decided who was to go to work.

Relief doesn't solve the problem; it only keeps people going a little longer. But they have to die in the end anyway. Relief only lengthens the period of suffering, but is no solution; for in order really to accomplish anything, the relief organization would have to have millions of zlotys a month at its disposal – and it has no such sums. The well-established fact is that the people who are fed in the public kitchens are all dying out, subsisting as they do only on soup and dry rationed bread. So the question arises whether it might not be more rational to set aside the money that is available for the sole use of certain select individuals, those who are socially productive, the intellectual élite, and the like. However, the situation is that, in the first place, the élite themselves constitute a considerable group and there wouldn't be enough to go around even for them; and, in the second place, why should laborers and artisans, perfectly deserving people, who were productive in their home towns, and whom only the war and the Ghetto existence have deprived of their productive capacity – why should they be judged worthless, the dregs of society, candidates for mass graves? One is left with the tragic dilemma: What are we to do? Are we to dole out spoonfuls to everyone, the result being that no one will survive? Or are we to give full measure to a few – with only a handful having enough to survive?

Another factor contributes to the failure of relief to solve the situation. Auerswald, the commissar in charge of the Ghetto of Warsaw, has recently taken to mixing in the internal affairs of the Ghetto. He regards the refugees as nothing more than sere leaves, bound to fall from the tree sooner or later; he maintains that such people must not be supported by public funds. His general position is that only those who work should receive community help. He keeps diminishing the number of items of produce available for relief and is responsible for the fact that soups have recently been limited to three times a week; at the same time, the price of lunch had to be raised from 70 to 90 groschen.

Still another element in the Ghetto is opposed to relief for adults – Abraham Gepner, the president of the former Merchants' Association. Now he's responsible for food supply, and in this role can dispose of significant sums of money. Gepner is a fine man, but a capricious one. His is a dictatorial nature, one which can suffer no opposition toward either his person or his opinions. The policies of Gepner's Food Supply Agency are scandalous and deserve special treatment. But Gepner, who is now childless (his children have left the country), pours out all his fatherly feelings on other children. He has become the great patron of children in the Ghetto – not of all children, however, but only of those who are lucky enough to be sheltered in the home whose patronage he has taken over. These children live, literally, in luxury – all the others may perish. His children are provided with the best of clothing, shoes, entertainment – on the other hand, the children in the refugee centers haven't the barest necessities. They die from hunger under squalid conditions. "Our children must live" is Gepner's slogan; but "our children" means only the children of his homes. Gepner is one-sided; he places every means of the FSA at the disposal of the children – though their parents may die. It does not matter if there isn't enough money for soup for the grownups – so long as everything goes to the children. He forgets that, in the best interest of the children themselves, we must see to it first and foremost that the parents live, for the worst parents are better than the best home. Certainly the children should be given priority when it comes to relief. But this can't mean the kind of travesty that's common in the Ghetto nowadays, when Gepner's satellites, who make fortunes at the expense of the common man through the FSA, curry favor with Gepner by contributing a couple of thousand zlotys to *his* homes. It's self-evident that when everything is run according to the caprice of an old gentleman, there can't be any normal relief. Let me mention still another illustration of Gepner's one-sidedness and capriciousness. Gepner, that fine and noble gentleman, who impresses many people with his civic-mindedness, his proud bearing, is typically upper middle class when it comes to taxes. He maintains that everybody must be taxed equally, so he levies taxes on ration cards for bread, sugar, and honey. However, he is categorically opposed to forcing those manufacturers and merchants who are doing wonderful business now, even better than before the war, to pay larger taxes than the rest. To apply sanctions to such people, to take them out of their beds at night and drag them off to work in the refugee centers – he regards this as an unwarranted limitation of personal freedom. Those who apply such sanctions are modern-day Robespierres, terrorists. Gepner's is a typical attitude of the Jewish Councilmen.

The children's Lag b'Omer celebrations were very impressive this year. A large children's program was presented in the big Femina Theater hall.

Children from all the schools performed. They were rewarded with sweets. Procession after procession of school children marched through the streets toward the Femina.

The Toporof⁵ has introduced a good practice. All the available free space has been distributed, each individual getting a ticket entitling him to use of a certain area.

The 12th of May, there was a big raid on the Poles at Kerceland Street [on the Other Side] and the surrounding market places. A large amount of manufactured goods was confiscated, [especially] leather, and thousands of Poles were seized for forced labor. The Jews lost a substantial sum through the raid, because most of the merchandise confiscated consisted of things that the Jews had given Christians on commission to sell on the Other Side.

The German Jews, deported here from Hanover, Berlin, etc., have brought a number of jokes with them. One of them is that they explain the emblem *Jude* [Jew] that they have to wear on their chest as being the initials of the words: *Italians Und Deutschlands Ende* [The end of Italy and Germany]. Despite all they went through in Germany, they still talk about "*unser Fuehrer*" ["our leader Hitler?"] and still believe in German victory. They are certain, despite everything, that they will return to Germany. Although it has been some time since they came to Warsaw (more than a month), they are still kept separate from the rest of the Jews. They live outside the Ghetto in special quarantine quarters. Some three hundred of them work in various outside work details. They have to wear the *Jude* emblem even when they secure permission to live in the Ghetto. The first thing they touched upon was the question of work. They were all working in Germany. The old folks can't get used to the new situation. The result is they're dying in large numbers. They're treated much better than the other refugees. There simply is no comparison between the way the Jewish Council treats the Polish refugees and its attitude to the German Jews. The latter get a quarter of a kilo of bread, soup, coffee [daily]. True, that's much worse than what they got in Germany, but compared with the usual conditions in the Ghetto, it's paradise. Demoralization is spreading rapidly through the Ghetto. While the poor become ever poorer and dress in rags, the girls are dressing up as though the war were nonexistent. There have been many cases of girls stealing from their parents, taking things from home to sell or barter for ornaments, or a hair wave – in a word, for luxury items.

In April or March Jews were forbidden to use German marks that bore the likeness of H. [Hitler]. Apparently they're afraid Jews might give him the Evil Eye!

Jonas Turkow acted this season in a Polish repertoire. The reason: There are no good plays in Yiddish. Besides, this is evidence of the marked assimilation so discernible in the Ghetto. The Jews love to speak Polish. There is very little Yiddish heard in the streets. We have had some heated discussions on this question. One explanation advanced is that speaking Polish is a psychological protest against the Ghetto – *you* have thrown us into a Jewish Ghetto, but *we'll* show you that it really is a Polish street. To spite you, we'll hold on to the very thing you are trying to separate us from – the Polish language and the culture it represents. But my personal opinion is that what we see in the Ghetto today is only a continuation of the powerful linguistic assimilation that was marked even before the war and has become more noticeable in the Ghetto. So long as Warsaw was mixed, with Jews and Poles living side by side, one did not notice it so acutely; but now that the streets are completely Jewish, the extent of this calamity forces itself upon one's attention.

NOTES

- 1 Sklar was an important Bundist, head of the Bundist kitchen located at 2 Orla Street. No exact information is available about the other three men.
- 2 There were more than 60,000 Jews in the Vilna Ghetto when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June, 1941. Most of them were massacred at that time.
- 3 Azet achieved notoriety in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century for being simultaneously the leader of the terrorist Social Revolutionary Party and a police spy.
- 4 The Todt was a German military organization that did heavy construction work, such as laying railroad tracks, using conscripted native labor.
- 5 Voluntary Ghetto institution that planted vegetables, gardens, trees, and made small parks in an attempt to improve the health conditions in the crowded Ghetto.

Notebook H

OSKAR ROSENFELD

March 31. Rain. Cold. Shower. Yesterday one thousand people taken away, only a few of them unable to work – mood of despair in the ghetto.¹

April 1. Stormy rain, cold showers – outsetlement of yesterday forgotten in the ghetto. –

April 4. Oppressive mood, following the one thousand people – outsetlement is over. Aftershock only among those who lost family members.

Reading in the ghetto: Poetry and Truth [Goethe]; Heine; *Conversations with Eckermann* and *Tasso* [both Goethe]; Shakespeare.

People are singing. An old man, old material, sings Schubert's "Unvollendete" like a drinking song.

Diseases in the ghetto. Meyers Encyclopedia, vol. 10, p. 328 H, 1907 edition, sixth printing: "Greater ability to survive corresponds with a lower tendency toward illness... This is especially true of infectious diseases like tuberculosis, pneumonia, typhoid fever... all these diseases are less common among Jews or occur in milder forms. Particularly striking is the difference when it comes to tuberculosis though the majority of Jews are housed in filthy, unhygienic lodgings, that is, were at one time (ghettos)... The cause for the relatively low receptivity of certain diseases is attributed to the strict dietary laws, the inwardly directed and pure family life, and the moderation in eating and especially in drinking (alcoholic beverages), and on the other side by contrast, the cause for a heightened disposition for other afflictions can be seen in oppressive poverty, filth and misery of the ghetto as well as the competitive struggle for existence. Even if all these factors for either greater immunity or disposition are true, they

Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto: 890 Days in Lodz*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002, pp. 181–93.

are not sufficient to explain this strange phenomenon; it is, therefore, hard not to take into account the factor of race, that is, a biological race characteristic.”

April 5. [...] *Ashkenes talkie*. Kripo comes to the house, visitation: one flight up to mother who is holding a child: “Where do you want me to aim, at the stomach or the forehead?” (Threatens with revolver.)

Names: Alphabet, Cincinnatus, Eternity, Stooljuice.

April 8. Cold, snow showers . . . Question whether there will be matzot for Pesach or rather additional rations. There’s talk about potatoes! – Today burial of Cersky-Cukier² (tuberculosis).

April 9. Excitement in the ghetto, German authorities (twenty-nine people) inspected several resorts, streets blocked off – talk of new orders, all this in stormy rain-hail weather.

Hunger continues. Question: What will today’s ration bring? Supposedly neither potatoes nor anything sweet!

Religious tradition. Mrs. Elka Schapiro (ressort worker) received canned meat. Since it isn’t kosher, she doesn’t want to eat it even though she is weak and her feet are swollen. Doesn’t want to sell it either since she couldn’t sell *treife* [Yidd./Hebr. nonkosher] meat to Jews. The canned meat is still at the resort. So still clinging to tradition. Thousands of people are sick therefore an equivalence should be set up since the sick are exempt and not bound by kashrut [dietary and hygiene laws of Judaism]. [...]

April 12. *Talkie*. During the night: Schupo [German police] talks with Jewish policemen. Two Jewish policemen are leading a man. “Whereto?” asks the Schupo. “To jail!” “So? You have a jail? What for? You are all here in a jail.”

Extermination. A woman came from Zduńska Wola, had eight children. Now her mind on only one thing, to tell her story.

Humor. “One doesn’t steal, one takes.” Meaning due to corruption some people get from their protector and thus don’t have to steal.

Religious life. Houses of prayer closed down in summer 1942, already in 1941 order to shave beards. All, or almost all, eat *treifene* soup. Kashrut does not exist. Pesach 1942, matzot for the first time made of rye flour.

Crematorium. Ozorkow near Kódź. Place where the thousand human beings are said to have been taken, see entries of March 29–30. Crematorium.

April 12. [...] *Struggle for power*. Stories about Dawid Gertler³ and Marek Kliegier⁴ – against Praeses. Revue of the “Special,”⁵ “*Dawid is*

insur Vuter, Gibt uns Brojtz” [Yidd., “David is our father, he gives us bread”]. Just as in ancient Rome when the plebeians selected some man and made him *popular*, that’s the way it is here with Gertler and Kliegier. Praetorian guards surround both: “They were privileged among the troops through higher pay, shorter service, and special insignia. In (Special Division) the course of time they gained political influence, permitting them to enthroned and dethrone a series of emperors.” Gertler and Kliegier like two consuls (*dumminat*).

The Eldest. He wants to play the role of the one who created Noah’s ark. Ghetto ark. He goes about his own way of preserving it, and if it should cost thousands of victims, he tears down everything that gets in the way, gets violent, lashes out... He has become *eved hagermanim* [Hebr., slave of the Germans]. He listens to nobody even if something good is proposed. When somebody has a plan concerning the children, he declares: “Don’t play the big savior of the children, that’s my role...” He wants to go down in history as the savior, *shomer* [Hebr., guardian], of Israel... This creates conflicts.

April 15. A few days before Pesach and still no decision about matzot or other allocations. (*Not yet decision concerning* [original English].) A bright sunshine, outright hunger.

April 16. Sun! Cold on the inside! Cooking without fat, without potatoes, without flakes... All are waiting for *deliverance*: 3 kg potatoes, 15 dlkg preserves (turnips + saccharine), and 4 dlkg margarine. [...]

April 17. Drafting *tnoyim* [Yidd./Hebr., marriage contract] (engagement). E. Hirschberg, scientific department,⁶ young Echezkiel Spiegel becomes engaged to Simrara Hirschberg. Set table. Shabbat. Havdalah [end of Shabbat ceremony]. Later signing of *tnoyim* as symbolic *mechuten* [Yidd., in-law], the father of the groom is not in the ghetto. Present are brother of the bride’s father, son of Dr. Lemberg (he is Eldest of the Jews in Zdúńska Wola, a town near Litzmannstadt), Lipschuetz (teacher at Hebrew high school in Łódź), and the artist H. Szyliś.⁷ – Brother reads *tnoyim*, makes speech, finally the father of the bride speaks, *mazel tov*, kisses, congratulations, evening meal with schnaps, meat, vegetables, babka [Pol., cake; in the ghetto made of potato peels and ersatz coffee], coffee. Going back home at midnight.

Loneliness. We live in house by house. Don’t see each other as in a big city. Part of the daily routine. As one group leaves the house at seven o’clock and comes back at five, the other leaves at seven-thirty and comes back at five-thirty; their paths never cross but run parallel to each other. Thus it happens that one doesn’t recognize a friend whom one has rarely

seen for months, that one doesn't recognize the other. When somebody says: This one? Dead! This one? Died. This one? Outsettled... No news, of course. Mail ban for sixteen months.

Matzes [unleavened bread]. In front of a grocery distribution center on Friday, April 16, people queue up who want to take matze instead of bread. All in all supposedly only 10,000 kg matzes for eighty-five thousand people. Praeses drives by. Jumps out. Chases people away. Hits Thrashes. It was his wish that only Chassidim get matze. Immediately orders cessation of matze distribution. Matzes: a symbol of Pesach. Two kilograms bread = $\frac{1}{5}$ matzes. But people are yearning for a little piece of *yontiff* [Yidd., holiday]. A crumb of matze has the magic of evoking Pesach. Great is the longing for a bit of festiveness. For a little spark of hope. For preserving tradition. Matzes: in the *ghetto*. A little piece of freedom, a little piece of being a Jew!...

Today, Sunday, [April] 18, melancholy mood, dreary day. Everybody is going to get the extra ration and bread. Twenty decagrams brown sugar, 15 dkg preserves (turnips with saccharine), 15 dkg sago, 5 fruit teas, 50 cans red beets, one piece of soap, 5 dkg powder milk, 6 dkg cheese, 3 kg vegetables... But no potatoes. The ghetto is going hungry.

Talkie, 1940. Ashkenes at the wire. Is bored, shoots at passersby. Thump, thump. On some days up to ten people... Ashkenes looks into a yard from his post. A forty-five-year-old man is sitting on the ground reading. Ashkenes aims, shoots, hits him below the ear, the man screams, blood splatters. – Ashkenes picks up stones, tosses them against an opposite window to alert people. People are coming out, hear the man screaming, bring a stretcher to take him to the hospital, the man could be saved if the blood flow was stopped. "Bring the piece of dirt over here!" Ashkenes calls out. Then it happens. Ashkenes shoots his rifle from close range, twice; dead...

Nobody dares to go into the street. The seriously sick would like a doctor. The doctor doesn't dare to come. People dig holes into the wall of the yard so that they can get next door without having to pass near the wire.

Torn-down houses. One wooden house after another is collapsing. Streets are changing. Back in 1940: "Whoever doesn't leave the Jewish district will be treated as a Jew." Still, many Poles remained. Ashkenes commissison searched the houses. Many a Pole has tears in his eyes as he is leaving: "Take care of my house, my garden, etc." Leaving the place where they and their family had been living for decades like the Jews.

Talkie. A small town. Five hundred to six hundred Jews are coming from the provinces. Clothes taken off in a big building. SS says: "Nothing

will happen to you. Just getting a bath. Cleansing. Delousing, etc." They leave. Tilted, slippery floor. Starting to slide into a sort of basin. Steam. Suffocating. *Terrible screams*. Dead.

Jews ask those who do these things: "We can't go on. Shoot us." Was no use. Have to. Or others are brought in and the resisters themselves are shot. And so it was done. – Clothes often sent to the ghetto for cleaning and the more inferior pieces left in the ghetto with permission of the ghetto administration.

April 19. *Toffi* children. Children are still calling out their candies, no longer 6 per marek but 2 per marek. They no longer sing *toffi* with the sharp double F but sing it strained, like "tovi," which is easier, less wearing on the speech muscles.

April 20. Yesterday Seder at Boruch Praszkiel's with all the trimmings as usual, even eggs, which I have neither seen nor eaten in one and a half years. Brief, quiet evening from nine to ten o'clock. The night before something like festive mood in the ghetto. However without matzot, without wine. Dreary, rainy, without hope.

April 21. *Sky bright and fair. Pleasant sunshine. Little hope of better time. Around me dark faces. Meantime great suppers at the borders of the Getto, entertainments, performances in the clubhouse – and the people hungers. One kg turnip costs 20 "Chaimki?" and I myself am not able to help.* [This and following two paragraphs in original English.]

April 22. *Passover-sensibility on the whole town. Private prays to Lord. Nevertheless no one without care for the next day. A few sidurim* [Hebr., prayer books] *at the Zionist societies, first by the youth, the past chaluzim* [Hebr., pioneers] *on the hachsharah* [Hebr., training for immigration to Palestine] *Marysin.*⁸

Hebrew songs, among these "Techzakanah" ["Make Strong"], by *Bialik*.

Talkie and realities. After the company was gone, got undressed, in bed, light turned off. Knocking on the door. What's going on?

The black hand is storming the Jewish quarter of Warsowie [Fr., Warsaw], seeking to drive them out. They resist. Hands against weapons, rifles, and tanks – exchange of fire, siege. Will help arrive? All call out. Save our souls... The city is in flames! – How will it all end?⁹ (Image of Czarist Russia.) People hide in cellars, attics, toilets, cemeteries, etc. From above, firebombs. Wild screaming and whimpering – *Shma Israel!* Does the world not want to hear? It doesn't hear. Shakespeare and Poe are silent.

April 23. One hundred twenty kilometers away anniversaries are being celebrated with revues and trite couplets, however, in Erez Israel with *tillim* [Yidd., psalms] and *tallis* [Yidd., prayer shawl]...

All waiting with dread: When will it be our turn? Does it make sense to be concerned about everyday things? The question "Where get the instruments of the hoplites [Greek foot soldiers], weapons?" preoccupies the young and the bold, *all must be prepared for the moment of the danger and the enemy's attack against us. Therefore it is necessary to cal the public opinion and not allow that the people further visite amusement and performances, on the contrary: that the whole population of the Ghetto may be prepared for the defense of life and honor* [original English].

April 25. Surprise: 5 kg potatoes, ration for two weeks. Worst kind of hunger overcome for short period. Black-market prices didn't go down.

Another surprise: huge queue at the potato distribution, but goods did not arrive.

April 26. Today, the potatoes are to be distributed, and in the kitchen "thick" soups.

Amnesty. Praeses pardoned light crimes and offenses on the occasion of Pesach!

April 27. *Hunger*. A beautiful religious service at Luzer Najman's – ninety men in the midst of a thunderstorm. See entry "Remembrances..."¹⁰ Thousands of people are standing in line for hours for potatoes – desperate... Hunger on the last day of Pesach! Despair, nervous breakdowns, general weakness... No vegetables in the ghetto.

Marysin. On the way a yellow butterfly – stork – in the meadow three goats and six sheep... grazing... Otherwise no animals in the ghetto – no dogs, no cats, no rabbits..., etc.

April 28. *Work for Ashkenes*. A cool day, lucky is he who garnered his potato ration. Half a million straw shoes ready for the Russian winter campaign.

April 29. *Face of the Ghetto*. Again, as in the year before, all around barracks, wooden houses, latrines, people at the roadside, even children, with spades and shovels (*dalka*) working the ground, nearby already a bit of greenery, even cherry-tree blossoms and almond bushes directly behind the fence... some in shirtsleeves, some wrapped in goatskins, some in loafers or wooden shoes (*trepki*)... The Jews are planting, their own vegetables expected by mid-May. Nearby wooden houses and even solid buildings are being torn down on order of Ashkenes... Mortar is flying, the

thin-leaved trees rustle, mostly birch trees... The Jews are lugging heavy beams and planks on their shoulders like beasts of burden... Small carts with their meager possessions. Discolored bedding, broken chairs, broken dishes, a soup pot tied around the waist. Where are they moving to? Maybe back to where all is being leveled or separated from the ghetto? The sun is breaking through, bright blue between gray and white. [...]

April 30. *Hemuschi*. Magnificent, cool morning after a terrible night, trouble breathing, thinking of *Hemuschi*. I'm deeply concerned since I am without news, not through Red Cross either. What is she doing, the poor darling?

The leader of the Ghetto promises us that we will have enough of nourishment, victuals, and greens. The landmen here are working in all parts of the Ghetto. One sees women and girls and children with fieldtools – the best manner of defeating the bad time and the hunger. No one can live without the for a good future [original English].

Murder in the ghetto. The murdered thirteen-year-old girl *Ella Szmal*. The murderer, the twenty-five-year-old Chaim Israel Brysz. He confesses. Sold the foodstuff in three private shops.

May 1. Visiting Marysin, over meadows, sandpits. After two years, saw cows again; belonged to the Eldest. Milk cows. – Ghetto has been sealed three years ago.

May 2. Trial of Rathner and wife – card division because of fraud with food cards. Praeses demands the death penalty. The court sentences Rathner to three years' imprisonment. Fasting every two weeks, fifty lashes every month – corporal punishment. Court: strange sentence a la ghetto, under influence of Ashkenes, since in Polish law corporal punishment does not exist. On May 2, 1940, the ghetto was established (sealed).

Tidbit. The defense lawyer in court in favor of a defendant who embezzled food cards: "In the ghetto there are four kinds of human beings:

- 1 Those who have everything in excess, the best of the best.
- 2 Those who have connections with the first and who benefit as well.
- 3 Those who don't want to bite the dust and are looking around for rations, and who, if there's no other way, will organize them for themselves.
- 4 The vast majority who die of hunger.

"My client belongs to the third class, he wants to live..."

Tidbit. Spring 1941. Ashkenes demand that the Jewish court in the ghetto impose and carry out the death penalty for certain crimes (murder,

listening to radio, smuggling). Ten judges resigned thereupon, four of them remained firm even though the Eldest had granted special protection to the judges. – Since then murder is a matter for Kripo and the German court, see entry April 30, Brysz.

May 3. Praeses demanded the death penalty for Rathner (see entry May 2) but didn't insist on it in order to avoid creating precedents. Ashkenes would insist on death penalty in similar cases in the future.

Praeses spoke on May 2 in Villa Marysin about postwar problems. He shouldn't rack his brain too much, the Zionist group is already planning for that time. – Afterward reception with bean coffee (!).

May 5. *Hemuschi*. Again troubled nights – coughing, asthma, thinking of Henuschi's care in Vienna when she went to the pharmacy at night to get medicine. *Where she might hurried to the Svog-store and brought means against caught* [original English].

May 6. *Wilma's birthday. Ghetto at once confident: because of 8kg Potatoes... Weather wet and cold like an autumn-day. When comes the happy end?* [Original English.] [...]

The Eldest. While he was living in Hospital I. Lagewnicka 34/36, orgies: looked out the window, called girls inside. At one time, the wife of a doctor. She refused. Whereupon her name was found out and the Jewish police were sent to her apartment and demolished the furnishings, floor planks ripped up, made a mess. The old man was also beaten... heckled by children who ran after the car... Ashkenes (Kripo) too gave him a few punches.

He himself has raised informers, declares: It is the sacred duty to inform the police of those who own jewelry, since the valuables pass into our hands and we will exchange them for food. Meanwhile it happened mostly that informing continued – up to Ashkenes, who then was using force and shedding blood. That didn't bother him: He has thousands of starving people and all of Marysin on his conscience. He says to himself: "We earn our income from our work and the requisitions, that is, confiscation of jewelry, furs, rugs, postage stamps, etc., shoes, featherbeds, iron, electric cooking appliances..."

May 12. Big gathering in my apartment: mood. Excited faces, but full of hope.

The Eldest wants to play an historical role for the future. Talks about leading the people out of the ghetto and marching in front of them. Has already intention of creating some kind of organization that will carry out the necessary preparations.

The Eldest. A primitive underling suddenly come into power, has only one wish: to keep himself in power. If he possessed any understanding of politics and had known the kind of partner he was up against, had he possessed the slightest diplomatic talent, had he negotiated, threatened, extorted, flattered, resisted – much would not have happened.

The others too, Dawid and Marek [Gertler and Kliegier], are totally deficient in this respect. Only in the exercise of power, without any foresight, without the slightest sense of dimensions, positions, possibilities, appraisal of the power relationships. [...]

May 21. *Talkie.* A train of inmates from Czarnickiego taken by the Jewish police to the Kripo, an abject sight as in novels by Dostoevski after Siberia... Professor Hart (with a pack on his back – laundry), “I buried my daughter yesterday...” How is it going? Better in the sun? Anything else new? Anything hope-inspiring?

Talkie.

- 1 A Polish Christian woman climbs over the wire into the ghetto. Schupo sees her. Doesn't shoot... the girl disappears. –
- 2 On the same day, three Polish smugglers with butter, eggs, etc., at the wire. Schupo lets them be.
- 3 On the same day Gestapo from the town: On the basis of denunciation, the commandant goes to Bess-Olom, grave is opened, jewelry found with the dead.

Talkie. The ghetto has gone insane: The war will last another forty days! It's interesting to note how a rumor makes its way through the ghetto. Doubts, despair, belief, faith, unconditional trust: People start using their good soap and shoe polish, start eating potatoes.

Tabit. Vegetable center. A woman lugs a sack with 2 × 15 kg potatoes. The director asks her: “Why in such a hurry? Don't you have potatoes left at home?”

She looks at him: “Because I ate the previous potatoes, I have the strength to carry *these*.” General laughter. [...]

May 23. During the celebration of the third anniversary, a toothless Jew in *trepki* [Pol., wooden shoes] says: “What can he do? Even if he slaughters us all, us here, somewhere will be Jews who will live to see his *mapule* [Yidd., downfall]... if not we, then in the United States... He won't destroy the Jewish people completely... What nobody has accomplished, he too won't succeed at, we shall live on... somewhere... we'll know what to do...”

Again *moire* [Yidd., fear] in the ghetto. A commission from over there is said to be coming. Warner Sunday. [...]

May 25. Wearing summer suit for the first time so that winter is behind me. It would be terrible having to read up May 1942... that is, outsettlement from the home in Marysin: Dr Ferler and wife, Ehrenhaft and wife, Singer and wife, Engel and wife, and to let the figures pass before me: Mmes Stein, Biedl, Rosenberg, Adler, Markus... Parkas, Baer, Barhiuch, Arent, Bellak, et al. [...]

May 26. A cool day without any special character. Supposed to ask in Czarnickiego about the execution of Brysz... Don't feel like it... strange indifference... Otherwise sensation, in the ghetto concern about food always pushes all else aside.

People are adopting children since they get rations for them, which they withhold from them. For example, five rations for a five-member family, bread, two for the couple, in addition heating material per head, this means a fivefold ration for one stove. Part of the surplus (!) is sold under the table: bread and wood coal.

May 27. [...] *Ashkenes*. Execution Brysz in Czarnickiego. Tliah set up so nobody in the neighborhood could see it. Three Jewish policemen as executioners (henchman, two assistants), then examination of body by doctor. Discretion striking in, comparison to earlier (see Herz – Cologne, February 1942). Is this a change in atmosphere? Isn't the food distribution a pure miracle? [...]

May 28. Didn't sleep all night and trouble breathing! Slept in the early morning with open window.

Henuschi. Again despair. Dreams of Henuschi, Vilma, Erich... How much longer?

Reviewing in my mind: Besides Henuschi, Vilma, Erich, Ernst: Linda, Emil Gerta, Otto, Hans, Feli, Franz, Gallia, Heim, Hans Bondy, Hans Klein, Evi, Georg, Wikinger and wife and daughter, Aunt Fanny, all the Jellineks, people in Bratislava, friends in Palestine... Lizzi Pisk, sculptor Weiss, Herta Ehrlich, Fritz Gross, Fritz Manvi Eri, Fanny Rust... Viennese friends from Astoria Beeth, de France... Prague friends: Rafael et al., people around the Hrad, Otto Schön, Herta Havr... Isi Kohn and wife, the Wolich family, Rand, Richter from Hotel Fischer, Lukanec, Dr Frankl and Noemi, Gustav Boehm, Uncle Moritz, the Stadlers, Guentfeld-Braum, Dr Spiegler, the Geller family, Stricker, Friedmann, Ella, Kolb... Dr Wiessen, people associated with advertisement (Goldf. et al.), Café Klein,

Harry Prager, Grubner, film director Halery, Agadati, Bukspan, Uri Zwi Haler, Schlonski, Kanner, Bondy, Gelber.

Talkie. Have you ever seen a human being shortly before dying of hunger? His legs hardly support him, stomach caved in, sunken temples right and left, yellowish white coloring. Dizziness: collapses on the stairs despite cane. He's quickly administered some ressort soup. Another ten hours! Too late. Dies, slowly fading away... with a sigh on his lips. Every day a dozen. To be seen in the street, through open windows. They are completely wrapped in clothing because they are freezing cold.

May 30. Cold day. Potatoes are still rolling. Excitement in the ghetto: Waiting again for half a can of canned meat. – *From abroad fair records. What will be? No one knows any sure...* [Original English.]

For the story "The Secret of the Ghetto." Not in the basement but in the yard wooden hut. Human queue into the yard... A small foyer: door, leading into Beth Midrash, half open: three long, narrow tables along the long side, flanked by benches, on the short side opposite the window high up a shelf with leather *sforim* [Hebr., Torah scrolls]... Candles... Terrible haze... sticky... moldy smell from old, rotten garments... And in all that, ecstasy. [...]

June 7. Zionist circle (Meilach Schipper) stimulates me to write memoirs. Maybe I'll start with a sketch in the next few days.

Humor. A black-and-white-spotted cow through Dworska to Baluter Ring. Everybody laughs; why? A young fellow says: "It's the first cow who made it to the Baluter Ring without protection."

June 8. [...] Something is in the air, says the ghetto... Cool day. We're waiting again. –

Humor. The Eldest as well as Gertler agree on everything except the agrarian question. The Eldest wants Gertler to lie in the ground, and Gertler wants the Eldest to lie in the ground...

June 9. [...] Ritual: A group of Jews illegally obtained food with cards from people who were deported. Didn't go out for months and had a female relative get everything for them. Meanwhile their beards began to grow – Chassidic Jews. When they were caught and taken to Czarnickiego, their beards had to be removed according to regulation. Beards in the ghetto are prohibited by German authorities for hygienic reasons. – "Shoot me, hang me, but leave me my beard..." When he saw that his plea had no effect, since the Jewish police was dragging him to the barber standing ready, he begged him to leave him at least a little bit of

hair on both sides so that a trace of his Chassidic soul remains in his countenance. [...]

June 12. Sabbath: You shall hallow the Sabbath day. Three tihs at the central prison. Execution ten o'clock in the morning carried out by the Jewish police. Two candidates went from a work camp to a village, begging Polish peasants for bread. Caught. The third one tried to escape from the ghetto. Scenes. The delinquents were screaming. No use. Order from the Gestapo. The hearse was waiting in front of the prison for Marysin. All police chiefs including Commandant Rosenblatt as well as Gertler had to be present... Pathetic Shabbath after Shavuot... Work and laughter in the vegetable patches. And then the evening to the cultural center. Revue of OS with jesting and coarse humor... (Tihs ordered on Friday evening!...) The executed are: Abraham Tondowski, thirty-one years old, Zduńska Wola; Herz Faygeles, twenty-three years old, Tomaszów; Mordka Standarowicz, twenty-nine years old. [...]

NOTES

- 1 The destination of the March 1943 deportation is unknown. Since the transport consisted mostly of sick and old people and those broken by murderous forced labor, it must be assumed that they were taken to an extermination camp.
- 2 Julian Cukier (pseudonym, Stanyślaw Cerkisi), born 1900 in Łódź. Son of Ludwik Cukier, a Łódź industrialist and prominent representative of the Jewish community. Julian Cukier was a journalist and worked, among other places, for *Republika*, a prominent liberal daily newspaper. In the ghetto he worked for the archive. He initiated and directed the writing of the *Daily Chronicle*. He died in the ghetto on April 7, 1943, of tuberculosis.
- 3 See note 10 for Notebook E.
- 4 Marek Kliegier, deputy and later successor of Dawid Gertler, the head of the Special Division of the Jewish Order Service.
- 5 After the dissolution of the cultural center and its orchestras in September 1942, and the assignment of its artists to the various work resorts, cultural activities developed on the level of the various departments and workplaces. Revue performances were especially frequent. Such revues were also performed by the Special Division (short, "Special") of the Jewish Order Service.
- 6 Rabbi Professor Emanuel Hirschberg, director of the "scientific department." The establishment of a "scientific department" in May 1942 coincided with a plan of the German ghetto administration for the establishment of a museum in Łódź as well as the branch of the Frankfurt "Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question," which was temporarily located in Łódź. The Łódź branch, for which Hirschberg apparently had to work at first, was headed by Professor Adolf Wendel, an Old Testament scholar at the University of Breslau. Little is

known so far about the work of the Łódź branch. Concerning the work of the institute in Frankfurt am Main, see Dieter Schiefelbein, *Das Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage, Frankfurt am Main. Vorgesichte und Gründung 1935 bis 1939*. Materials of the Fritz Bauer Institute, no. 9, Frankfurt am Main, 1993.

Plans by the German ghetto administration in Łódź for a museum of the “Customs and Practices of the Eastern Jews” were apparently made as early as winter 1941–2. The museum was to present, besides cult objects, paintings, and photographs, a summary of the successes of the ghetto administration and the results of ghetto production. The “scientific department” in the ghetto was set up on order of the German ghetto administration, without consultation with the Elders of the Jews and his archive, in June 1942 and was to report to Biebow directly. Meanwhile ensued a protracted controversy between the ghetto administration and Reich ministry of propaganda. The ministry rejected all plans for a “cultural exhibit.” “People should be glad that the Jews have disappeared from their lives. It was hardly desirable to arouse any interest in them.” In a reply dated August 27, 1942, to a decline of June 24, 1942, the ghetto administration tried to take the teeth out of the objections:

This exhibit is merely to be comprised of a few Torah scrolls, catfans, prayer-books, a few pictures of Jewish types, as well as images of the Jewish communal life, such as the primitive manner of excrement disposal, the dilapidated housing, and so on. Such an exhibit is in no way meant to make an interesting impression on the viewer; rather, a repelling one. With regard to exhibiting cult objects I will, of course, abide by any regulations that you will issue to me. Otherwise, the ghetto administration and its director will guarantee that those who come into contact with [the exhibit] will see the Jews and current Jewish life represented in a form that will arouse in anybody a feeling of revulsion. [Gettoverwaltung an Reichspropagandaamt beim Reichsrathalter in Posen am 27.8. 1942 (Ghetto administration to the Reich propaganda bureau at the Reich governor in Poznań on August 27, 1942), Polish State Archive.]

The “scientific department,” meanwhile, was working on the creation of a folkloristic group of figures with themes like “Chassidic Wedding in Poland” and “Candle Lighting on Shabbat,” or scenes in the synagogue as well as paintings and graphic prints (excrement transport, Jewish police, etc.).

Oskar Rosenfeld describes in Notebook 12, in carefully chosen words, the work of the “scientific department.” He writes, among other things:

The figures, or scenes, are mounted in glass cases that were made in the ghetto by trained experts, artisans. The cases are about 2 m wide, 80 cm high, 70 cm deep. The figures are the size of figures in a puppet theater. In part they have a caricature effect, in part they appear symbolic – depending on the kind of person they are supposed to represent and symbolize. The reasons for this are manifold:

1 Through the smaller scale, individual traits, like details in posture, are eliminated. Certain characteristics have to be left out, and others again, so that they still have some effect on the small scale, so that they are emphasized and made more coarse.

- 2 The massing of figures is due to the fact that one picture, one scene, has to exhaustively express the set theme. For example, the actors in an Chassidic wedding and their actions are represented in a small space.
- 3 The costumes – which in a normal figure are infused with life through the movements of the one wearing them, bending as the person walks, struts, sits, etc. – remain rigid in their miniature representation. They appear doll-like, mummylike, annoying, comical, like caricatures.
- 4 The figures are crowded together. They form a collective that in this form is not found in real life, especially since they all have to be made to fit into a cramped space.
- 5 Figures that don't belong together, which are even socially totally different, are forced to touch each other, play with each other. Figures of opposite types are put together shoulder to shoulder, which, of course, can have a grotesque effect.
- 6 Even in real life, individual figures in and of themselves have a tendency to appear comical. Exaggerated accessories, penetrating colors, pathos of gestures – motions without words – bring unconsciously to mind puppet plays and their often sappy and childish-dumb texts and plots.
- 7 The person responsible for these figure groups took into account, through overemphasis on objectivity, the taste and intention of those who are using this exhibit for their particular purposes.

In the end, the museum never materialized. Instead, a series of exhibits, with the participation of the statistics department of the Eldest of the Jews, were mounted for those particularly interested in ghetto production, customers such as businesspeople and army representatives as well as commissioners and political functionaries.

The “scientific department” was dissolved on June 24, 1943. It is possible that some of the figure groups that were in production were completed. What happened to them is unknown. A few of the figures were photographed. Contact prints are in the Polish State Archive of Łódź.

- 7 Hertz Szylis, a painter, worked in the ghetto with Israel Leizerowicz, for the “scientific department among other places.”
- 8 During the first two years of the ghetto's existence, numerous youth groups and kibbutzim, agricultural cooperatives preparing for emigration to Palestine, still existed in Marysin. Since opposition to Rumkowski was rife within these groups, they were dissolved in the spring of 1941; they continued to work as youth groups, in part tolerated, in part secretly.
- 9 On April 19, 1943, on the eve of Passover, the SS began the final destruction of the Warsaw ghetto. They met with unexpected strong resistance. Although the second deportation wave of January 18–22, 1943, had already been met with resistance by ghetto fighters, the SS had not been able to prevent the Nazis from deporting five to six thousand people. Now ensued a protracted, step-by-step annihilation action in the ghetto itself. At the start of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, the population in various areas of the ghetto was still fifty to sixty thousand. On May 16, 1943, the SS and Police General Jürgen Stroop announced: “Warsaw no longer has a Jewish residential district!”

10 Notebook 15 contains the following entry:

Tuesday, April 27. Last day of Pesach. Minyan at Luzer Najman's, Dworska. From the window wood and coal center. Jews work there. Rain, storm. Gradually the room begins to fill.

Chazen [Yidd., cantor], Praszkie, Schipper, Reingold, Schenschlini, Lublinksi, Wolkowicz, Caro, Überbaum, Freund, Rembelinski, Kleinmann, Kaufmann, Dr. Singer, and I. – *Shachris* [Yidd., morning prayer; Hebr., *shacharit*] and *musaf* [additional prayer on Shabbat and festivals]. All in tallith, small Sefer Torah, an old treasure with *kley-kojades* [Yidd., sacred objects], belongs to Boruch, who takes understandable pleasure in such things. Cantor Tafel sings beautifully [Moses Tafel was arrested on June 7, 1944, for illegally listening to the radio]. *Yizkor* (Maskit [Hebr., memorial service]...) [Hebr., memory of the dead] Wonderful atmosphere when Caro gives introduction to *Yizkor* and declares that they all passed away for Kiddush Hashem.

Especially noteworthy: "Died, slain, starved,... etc." At the end together, "Secher *tzias Mizritim*..." Only the Eastern Jews in Jewish life, magnificent how they celebrate such an improvised minyan.

*The Second Winter:
October 29, 1942–March 18, 1943*

HERMAN KRUK

October 29 [1942]

The second winter

Here in the ghetto, people are preparing for the second winter. Some say the last, really the last, because soon they will finish us off. . . . But in the meantime, we live and prepare: the ghetto is excited about winter aid. Everyone is preparing for winter. Once again people put up the iron stoves, little ones with small panes instead of big and light windows.

Everywhere, people pull out old rags. The better clothes have already been sold. From the old things, they intend to alter clothing. They patch, darn, re-knit. They make soles out of an old belt; from two pairs of torn underwear, they patch together one. Poverty now creeps into the street. The clothes, the rags – every thing shows clearly the distance from a year ago to now. All statistics show this: the lines for social aid, the distribution of free lunches – everything says that the ghetto is growing poorer. But Jews do not lose their courage. And everyone is satisfied: we are getting a winter, “they”, a disaster. And a comrade helps me:

“A nastoyashstsher brokhl. . . .”¹

Winter aid campaign

As reported in the last issue of *Geto-yedies*, a new commission was appointed to run the entire winter aid campaign. It says there that to coordinate the winter aid better, the ghetto representative appointed a special

Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939–44*, edited and introduced by Benjamin Harshav and translated by Barbara Harshav. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 391–403 and 439–51.

commission: Chairman – Engineer A. Fried, and members – chairman of the former Aid Society, Mr Milkmanowicki; director of the Department for Social Welfare, Mr Stolowicz; senior police inspector, Mr Muszkat, Mrs Dessler, and Mrs Raf.

More news about the successful and active progress of the campaign.

The center of the winter aid campaign is seething with work. Diligent women, girls, young men are numbering, assembling, and arranging the collected clothing.

The campaign is well under way. You have to figure that they will finish visiting all ghetto residents in the next four or five days. We must say that the campaign was well understood by everyone and the collectors encountered great friendliness everywhere. Aside from the ghetto districts, they will work on the Kalis blocks, where everything is not yet prepared in advance.

Now everything will be set in order and checked. Because most of the clothing must be repaired, it is given to the tailor shop and the shoe shop.

Great demand for skilled workers

Because the demand for skilled workers is so great and there are almost no unemployed male skilled workers, the demand for skilled workers is now answered by women.

In this regard, it is noted that unemployed people will not be tolerated at all in the ghetto, not only able-bodied males but also able-bodied women capable of working.

The geto-yedies warns of pass permits

Those who walk alone in the city with pass permits must join a bigger column that comes along at the first opportunity. It is even advisable to wait until a bigger column arrives.

Contrary behavior can easily lead to very great unpleasantness. At the least, it can end by confiscation of the pass permit.

Work on the isolating walls outside the ghetto

In the new ghetto, [they] are already completed. In the next days, they start building the walled ghetto gate. These works take up a lot of material, especially lime, clay, and sand. Not only that, but most of the bricks

from the ruined buildings that were demolished (almost 59,000 pieces) were used up.

To make it less complicated to take refuse out of the new district, a passage will soon be opened from the courtyard of Rudnicka 7 to Niemiecka 31 and from Jatkowa Street to Niemiecka 27.

Workshops

A New Stitching Workshop. A stitching workshop is being set up at Niemiecka 27 (entrance on Jatkowa into the new ghetto district). The workshop will be opened any day.

Ink is already produced in the technical-chemical laboratory. The ghetto's own ink will soon be on the market.

Chalk for the Ghetto Schools. The school unit appealed to the technical-chemical laboratory for chalk, which is necessary for normal teaching. The technical-chemical laboratory accepted the task.

In the Ghetto Barber Shops, 7,112 customers were served during September. Women will be employed in the new barber shop.

The Production of Washing Liquid in the technical-chemical laboratory looks good. Permission to import ashes from the municipal and government factories has already been obtained, and they will certainly be able to satisfy all orders. They predict a production of 1,100 liters a month.

Obligatory visits to the bath even for residents of apartments with bathtubs

Until now, residents of apartments with bathtubs have been exempt from visits to the bath and were given bread cards even without bath notes.

Now, according to a specially published announcement, the ghetto representative also orders all residents of apartments with bathtubs to bring bath notes in order to get bread cards.

Not only must a person go to the bath, but it is important that his clothes also be disinfected.

Walk to the right in the street

The police calls to the attention of the general ghetto population that, regardless of all previous warnings, people in the ghetto are not very careful about keeping to the right when walking in the street. Because

ghetto sidewalks are very narrow, the order to stay strictly on the right is more than justified – it is a necessity of ghetto life.

In the future, they will be stricter and will punish people for not walking on the right side.

Alfred Rosenberg speaks

All around us is blood and bloodthirstiness. Warsaw, Kielce, Radom, recently Oszmiana, and in the midst of it all, a speech by the head of the Alfred Rosenberg Institute.

A day of art was held in Düsseldorf, and the main speech of the celebration was by none other than... my boss Alfred Rosenberg. What he said there is not important. But what interests us here are his remarks on the Jewish Question:

The Jewish Question is now being brought to its last stage. We must remove Jews from all European countries so they will no longer interfere in their affairs.

Jews blink, ask, terrified, what that means – does it mean they will finish with the Jews forever?...

After Warsaw, Kielce, Radom, Cześćochowa, Oszmiana, etc., it is no wonder Jews are scared....

Święciany's turn has come

After Oszmiana, it is now Staroświeciany's turn. Most likely, this will also be carried out by Jewish hands – the hands of the Vilna Jewish police.

This evening, the older policemen, Bernstein, Levas, and Averbukh, left for this purpose.

More about Oszmiana

This evening, eight [automobiles] with things from Oszmiana came to the district commissar of the Vilna district. According to the account of the Jewish police, 410 persons were shot in Oszmiana – old people, sick people, and cripples. But children's objects and clothing, which certainly did not come from any old people, were brought to the commissar of the Vilna district. Altogether, the clothing is estimated to be much more than they told us.

The German drivers say 800 Jews were murdered there.

A typical case: the automobiles with clothing were unloaded by Jewish workers. A barefoot girl spotted a pretty pair of women's shoes and asked a German if she could take them. He told her that if she knew where the shoes came from, she would surely not want to use them, even if they were made of gold.

So the German explained. "Now," the German added, "if you want, take them."

Of course, the woman took the shoes.

Settling the new districts

The settling of some of the new districts a week ago Sunday is 80 percent completed, according to the calculation of the Housing Department. The occupation of the apartments was done in orderly fashion. All arriving residents found their names marked on the rooms assigned to them.

A week ago Sunday, about 500 residents moved into the new district. This Sunday, the second 500. Meanwhile, the courtyard of Niemiecka 21 remains completely unoccupied because the repairs have not yet been completed.

The president of the lower court of the ghetto court has died

Last Monday, the president of the lower court of the ghetto court, Attorney Yisroel Kaplan, died in the hospital at the age of 62.

Born in Leningrad, the deceased had been a well known and distinguished attorney in Vilna for many years. He had long been legal adviser of the Vilna City Council and a member of the Vilna Attorneys' Council.²

Day care center is expanded

The day care center has filled almost all 100 places, but there are many applications by those entitled to use it. Therefore, the day care center is to be expanded to 150 places, and the place will be enlarged.

According to reliable sources, 300 families were taken out of the Kovno Ghetto and sent to Riga this week...for work, they say. The families include as many as 1,100 persons.

After all, something is happening...

Amid all the dreadful and painful events, a sunbeam sometimes comes, too: In Africa, a big campaign is developing against the Germans. Almost all big Italian cities are bombed every single day.

Ciano³ has flown to Berlin. Berlin again justifies itself to the world [by saying] that England is telling lies, boasting that Germany allegedly proposed a truce.

Something is happening after all....

October 30 [1942]

It is like autumn

From outside, people bring into the ghetto what looks like “good” news – information that “something is nevertheless happening.” Eyes shine with joy and grief at the same time. The good news brings joy; Oszmiana, Michaliszki, Staróswięciany don’t let us rest....

Over my head Messerschmitts roar and search. In the ghetto, nobody knows what – rejoice? So, what is this hunting? Something isn’t calm, they say. I know that, unfortunately, this has nothing to do with us, nevertheless the roar is upsetting.

Outside, it is late autumn. I am not allowed to buy a flower in the street, although I am among the happy ones, who have the right to “pass.” So I gather beautiful golden oak leaves. Instead of a flower, a leaf, a dried, yellow autumn leaf.

It is autumn and sad in my soul....

A new means of terror

Near Podbrodzie, a new kind of forced-labor camp has recently been created. Those who have not registered “voluntarily” for work in Germany are sent there.

No one wants to be minister

Reliable sources tell that it was again suggested to the Lithuanians to create a Lithuanian government. But there is one obstacle: no one wants to accept a ministerial portfolio....

People say that such persons might be found, but they are afraid of a bullet in the head....

A mass murder of Warsaw Jews

The underground [Polish newspaper] *Niepodległość*, which appears in Vilna, tells in issue 6 of a mass murder in Warsaw.

It says that in August, 300,000 Jews were murdered in Warsaw. The murderers were Lithuanians, Latvians, and Ukrainians, who did this on the spot, in the ghetto. Some [Jews] were taken on trains to Treblinka near Malkinia, many were conveyed as far as Betz (in the Lwów district),⁴ where they were poisoned en masse with gas or killed with electrical currents in the former soap factory there.

From the "third" front

The same newspaper tells of Soviet paratroop landings: around Mir a battle occurred which lasted a few days. The "contest" was between a Soviet landing force, Germans, Byelorussians, and police... in which the Germans are said to have suffered heavy losses. The groups moved into the forest. The Germans didn't enter the forest.

In Głębokie, Szumsk, Szczuczyn, and Lida, there is unrest caused by groups of [Soviet] paratroopers. Near Varmunt [?], a train was blown up by a mine. Five train cars exploded.

October 31 [1942]

He will not say a blessing

According to the radio, the Pope has sharply condemned the slaughter of the Jews in a radio broadcast. He also said that until it stopped, he would refuse any blessing. It was supposedly a fact that a unit of Italian soldiers asked for a blessing and "His Highness" refused. Jews relate this and are satisfied. They think the conscience of the papal world is rising. Naïve people – the terror of the last bombings in Italy is rising. When you're whipped from behind, it creeps into your head!... For Jews, this is also a consolation.

Just a Rumor

We reported that an Aktion presumably took place in Staroswęciany and that our Jewish police had already been sent there for that purpose. Now I learn that it is only an empty rumor.

Guests in our panopticon

The ghetto is like a panopticon. If District Commissioner Hingst wants to show off with his Jews, he brings [visitors] into the ghetto. If guests from Berlin come to Vilna, they are taken to the ghetto. Ever since yesterday, the ghetto has been seething with a commission from Berlin.

Whose commission? What commission? Nobody even asks. Everybody repeats “commission,” and that is enough to drive people off the streets and to scrub and clean them.

Thus things were seething here yesterday from 12 to 3, and today from 9 in the morning to 1. Finally, a group of guests came. It turns out they are journalists. They strolled around here, observed, photographed the dead streets, and left.

Typically, the Jewish police paraded for the past few days, as we know, in their new uniform hats and without patches. Now, because of the Berlin guests, there was an order to doff the hats and don the patches....

Apropos hats: one of the four who rule the Ghetto, Mr Fried, apparently could not bear not getting a uniform hat, and he ordered himself a navy blue hat, similar to the uniform of the Jewish police commissars, of course without the gold insignia of rank. The ghetto laughs at him....

As the group of journalists left the ghetto, the police went home immediately to change clothes. Now they parade once again as the sole rulers in full uniform.

How does it look for the winter aid in the ghetto?

Nothing is yet to be seen. They write, classify, and calculate. The distribution of things doesn't begin until the beginning of November. Meanwhile, I have learned that there are already 10,000 collected items, mostly underwear, shoes, most of them in bad condition. There is some warm underwear. The items are now being cleaned, patched, and straightened up.

The women on the committee say that aside from that, there are already 8,000 RM [Reichmarks] in the treasury, which means 80,000 rubles.

A reflection of what is going on in Germany

The Rosenberg Task Force, which has taken over the YIVO building, has recently shifted its "activity" from cultural to practical affairs. The cellar of the library storeroom and the safe have been emptied, and they bring potatoes, wood, and such. The shelves from the library have been taken apart, carefully packed, and 700 meters of shelves have recently been sent to Germany. Similarly, 30 balls of paper left over from the YIVO publishing house have gone, along with 12 cases of periodicals, 2 cases of Bolshevik literature, and other items. Shelves from Vilna to Germany! It is truly a reflection of what need Germany is in.

More about today's visit of the German journalists

Those who know about it are satisfied and consider it a good sign: during the visit of the journalists to the workshops of the Technical Department, Murer explained that the workshops are being greatly enlarged and that he already has big orders for them.

Jews think: if the workshops are enlarged, if big orders come, this means that we are safe here. More than this, a Vilna Ghetto inhabitant doesn't demand.

Ten women out of the ghetto

A week ago Saturday, when a group of Jewish and Polish workers returned from Nowa Wilejka, 10 Jewish women were detained at the railroad station. The Christians, on whom smuggled food had been found, had been detained on the spot. From the Jews, the food had been taken and they had been released. On Thursday, the Gestapo came with a list of the 10 released women. For two days, negotiations went on between the ghetto leadership and the Gestapo about whether the ghetto itself should punish the 10 women. Nothing helped, and the ghetto had to turn over all 10 [women].

The literary-artistic meetings are continued

The meetings the Association of Writers and Artists began a year ago this winter are now being continued. An evening devoted to Judah Halevi's will take place tonight.

November 1 [1942]

Glazman arrest

This day is marked by a great sensation. The chief of the ghetto, Mr Gens, decided to arrest his friend Glazman, the current head of the ghetto Housing Department. Gens thus rebelled against his ideological colleague, the Revisionist leader Glazman.

What is going on here?

All active society has recently been against Gens. Mainly for his actions during the Aktion of old people, and recently for the Aktion of Oszmiana. For this reason, Gens called a meeting of his officers this week and then a meeting of social activists and even later a meeting of brigadiers. Everywhere he publicly raised the issue of his calculations, because in this way he saves Jewish lives.

At the assembly of brigadiers, he tried to talk about the “stinking ghetto intelligentsia” who were against him. He even said he didn’t give a damn about them. Now apparently he is setting out on a new path – to force the “stinking intelligentsia” to participate in those activities so that they too will be responsible along with him.

Yesterday Mr Gens ordered his comrade Glazman to go with him to Staroświęciany and organize the Housing Department there. Glazman argued that that was national treason, and refused. At night, the police searched and arrested him. He was taken to the prison on Lidzki, the prison he himself had set up.

The sensation preoccupied the whole ghetto and, naturally, was commented on in various ways.

Staroświęciany

Early this morning Gens left the ghetto, along with Brojdo and a few others, for Staroświęciany. So Gens is riding around to take over several places, which are to be placed under his control. So we are becoming an... empire.

Archive of court protocols in the ghetto

Attorney Milkanowicki, chairman of the high court of justice; Attorney Povisker, the chairman of the lower court of justice; Attorney Rubinow, leader of the civil court; Attorney Nussbaum, prosecutor; and Mr Kruk

have been appointed to examine the archive of court protocols and set aside for the ghetto archive only those that are socially useful.

For me, the issue is especially interesting, because here, too, is a chance to save many historically significant court protocols. I personally can observe here a new aspect of ghetto life.

Gitterman – Soloveichik

With the sad news from Warsaw, I now learn that [Yisshok] Gitterman took his own life.⁶ The Soloveichik family is alive.

They say the Warsaw Ghetto is open; it has been turned into an open neighborhood.

20 people to Virbalis

Yesterday 20 workers came from Virbalis. Today people are snatched up in the street to replace the 20 who came – [they are being taken] to Virbalis.

November 2 [1942]

The Glazman case

The ghetto cannot calm down. Everything is full of the latest ghetto sensation: Glazman. Glazman is in jail, and everyone who talks about it is dissatisfied. Everyone thinks Gens is now pulling the strings and that everything is done under the pressure of his servants.

But few know the truth of these events. We who know understand that what is at stake is not the freedom of one man. Gens wants to start a campaign against the “sinking intelligentsia” who are not with him. He wants to show them what power is.

May Gens not miscalculate. May he come to his senses and shake off his advisers....

Who are the fellow executioners of the Oszmiana purge

Only now received a list of names of Vilna policemen who were the closest assistants in the Aktion.

Those who led those condemned to the square of the execution included Brauze, Lak, Gurvich, Shapiro, and – the most horrible – Zubak, who even beat those condemned on the way to the execution.

As for who took part in the execution itself, I shall know more precisely later.

November 4 [1942]

Glazman goes into . . . exile

Yesterday morning Glazman was released and, at the same time, was dismissed as director of the Housing Department. He was also ordered to be sent for work to Sorok Tatar'y.⁷ Thus [...]
[Pages 505–506 of the diary are missing.]

Glazman's Substitute
Shots at a Jewish Policeman
Daily Obituaries
About Jewish Properties
Ghetto Life in Starosielciany Is Getting Organized
In Oszmiana, Too, a Ghetto Life Is Organized
The Chief of Police in Oszmiana
About the Shot Aimed at Schlossberg
What Belongs for the Time Being to Our Empire
A Council of Brigadiers
Also a Statute for Brigadiers
Brigadiers Are Punished, Too
A Plastic Map of the City of Vilna

By order of the district commissar, the Technical Department began working out a plastic map of the city of Vilna. For this purpose, the hall at Rudnicka 6 was divided so that the order could be filled without disturbance in the fenced-off part.

The map will be made to a scale of 1:2,500 cm and will be about 4 by 5 meters in scope.

Vocational improvement courses for locksmithing and carpentry

[The courses] are already organized and will begin soon. There are many candidates for the courses.

Second graduation of glaziers

The vocational improvement courses of glaziers held their second graduation last Tuesday. Forty-three persons graduated. Those who remain are held over for the new course that has been organized.

A new workshop for leather products

A workshop for making gloves, briefcases, handbags, purses, wallets, etc., is organized.

Police will collect library books

There are subscribers to the library in the ghetto who do not return their borrowed books. Now such "frozen" readers are put on a special list to be given to the police. The books of such subscribers are recalled by force.

In especially malevolent cases, people will be punished for keeping library books.

Ghetto administration resets the time

By order of the chief of the ghetto administration, the clock will be set back one hour, as of Tuesday, November 3, just as in the whole city, by order of the proper authorities.

So far, all work and office hours will remain unchanged.

A new play

Man Under the Bridge is now being prepared by the theater. The rehearsals are already in progress. This is a play of the European genre.

November 5 [1942]*Sad anniversaries*

Since the beginning of September, we have entered a series of anniversaries, one sadder than the other: September 6, going into the ghetto; the 7th,

the already famous story of Lidzki Street, which cost 3,000 victims. Then a series of Aktions. October 1, Yom Kippur, in Ghetto 2, two Aktions, 800 and 900 people at night, people being driven to the gate with a loss of 2,200 people. Then a year ago today, October 3 and 4, Aktions in Ghetto 2 with 200 victims; after a small sigh of relief, more Aktions on the 16th, 21st, and 24th, which cost more than 10,000 heads.

A year ago today, we were at the high tide of the river of blood. But today, a year later, it doesn't feel as if we shall ever get out of the bloody sea. We splash and splash. We drown and drown. The wave has receded from Vilna for the time being, but it will inundate Byelorussia and now floods Crown Poland.⁸

Warsaw, Kielce, Lublin, Częstochowa, and others. We drown incessantly in a sea of blood and bury one another.

May this be mentioned on one of those bloody anniversaries.

*In the work units – “booty-collection-camp of the
Luftwaffe] 7” (Benzynówka)*

This is one of the most popular labor workshops in the ghetto, but also one of the units where the work is tense and hard. Two hundred and ten Jews work there, 100 of them as transport workers and 110 as specialists, such as: locksmiths, auto mechanics, carpenters, etc. The special work departments are also run by Jewish specialists.

Up to now, they have worked 10 hours a day. But as of the 1st of the month, they work 8 hours a day.

Free bath tickets

[These] must now be distributed in larger quantities because, since there is obligatory attendance of the bath, there have been several requests to receive free bath tickets.

During the past month, a thousand free bath tickets were distributed.

Glazman goes into exile...

Glazman is released from jail, released from... his office as director of the Housing Department, and is now again released from “ghetto freedom.” The chief of the ghetto is sending him off in a provincial unit for forest work.

For not subordinating himself to an order, Glazman, his closest friend
and ideological colleague, receives – exile.

In conversation with a representative of a social group in the ghetto that advised the chief not to exile social activists for refusing to carry out social missions against their conscience, Gens again elaborated his “theory” that he calculates mathematically. That he wants to save Jewish heads. That [in] Oszmiana, only 18 people under 40 were killed, etc., etc.

“Aktion” in Grodno and environs

Rumors reach us that in Grodno and environs, Aktions are taking place. Ghetto in Grodno is presumably already liquidated.

All around blood, blood, and more blood. Mostly Jewish blood.

December 29 [1942]

“God, look down from Heaven!”

The vocabulary has become impoverished. Concepts lose their clarity. Everything that was dreadful and terrible is pale and put to shame. Words stop affecting and influencing. It reminds me of another expression of helplessness in a similar period, at the time of the persecutions in Spain:

At the time of the attacks of the Almohades on the Spanish Jewish communities [in the twelfth century], Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra wrote about his experiences:

The nation weeps, persecuted and oppressed by the slaves,
and trembles and prays “God look down from heaven!”

I remembered that poem after the events of yesterday at the gate guard. God, look down from heaven and behold our helplessness, dejection, and humiliation.

What occurred yesterday at the gate guard

As I wrote before, the major issue yesterday was whether the commissar of the gate guard, Levas, would have to go to Lukiszki or not. His arrest was not only an individual matter but concerned the entire ghetto. Levas had to appear for arrest at 6 yesterday evening.

order to search a few Jews who were within reach. In fact, what he always does in such cases. But by chance, during the search, one of the Jews lost 290 Marks. Murer noticed that and ordered all of them searched for money. Everything down to the last bit was taken.

“Jews may not and must not have any money on them....”

Three search rooms were set up (gate guard, workshop at Rudnicka 16, and office of sanitation at Rudnicka 16). Everywhere, 20–30 people were allowed in, men along with women, and told to take out all their money. Later, individuals were taken out and searched thoroughly. The ones they found money on were... whipped.

This was done in those three places. Those who were searched were forced to strip as naked as the day they were born. Men and women were forced to undress in the very same room.

All that took place under Murer's supervision. When an ashamed woman turned her face to the wall, he ordered her to turn around because, in sadistic language, you must not be ashamed in front of Jewish police.

All those on whom they found money, who had dared not to give it away, were whipped: one girl was whipped because she had dared to bring in not money but... 30 decagrams of bread. On another woman, they found... 15 pfennig. One woman who was whipped left all her clothes and ran away in her overcoat... They found 50 Marks in the shoe of an old Jew. Murer, already tired, ordered... one lash. When the police sergeant, Mr Witkowski, had done his job, he suggested to the whipped man that he thank the representative of the district commissar. Of course the whipped man thanked him. These and similar scenes occurred in those places.

Meanwhile, on the street stood a line that stretched from the gate to the Jewish hospital on Zawalna. Jewish police meanwhile enlightened the people to [give] the money to them.

[Pages 563–569 of the diary are missing.]

*The Levas Affair Is Liquidated
Children Play in “Gate Guard”*

December 31

Today is Sylvester [New Year's Eve]

[We have one page, torn up and without a number, which is certainly from the missing pages. We present that page, with additions by the editor of the Yiddish edition.]

[And what] the world will make of this is hard to say. We and the [world] are two separate conceptions. What is [Worldly] in the world is Hitlerian in our circumstances. [But] Worldly and Hitlerian are two poles.

11 in the evening, the same review will be repeated formally in the Ghetto Theater.

We members of the Blund] meet today in a small group and will make an accounting of the past year.

[To] all that we have already written about the events in the ["Galte Guard," for the sake of truth, we must add:

The [gen]eral opinion in the ghetto is that the whole story with Murer [...] was staged. People met Murer's [...] instincts, the Levass incident was played out, and... the ghetto [administra]tion did not lose anything, and nor did the ghe[lt]o pol[ic]e.

[The sheep is whole] and the wolf is full.

[In connection w]ith that sad entry, I learn that Murer [...]

They drink to Levass's "bachelorhood"

Today Levass's Wedding

*Drugi 1918 rok [A second 1918]*¹⁰

Partisans

Murer Exercises

January 1, 1943

New Year 1943

Drinkards Invite Jews

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Herman Krink

362

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that advised the chief not to exile social activists for refusing to carry out
social missions against their conscience, Gens again elaborated his
“theory” that he calculates mathematically. That he wants to save Jewish
heads. That [in] Oszmiana, only 18 people under 40 were killed, etc., etc.

“Aktion” in Grodno and environs

Rumors reach us that in Grodno and environs, Aktions are taking place.
Ghetto in Grodno is presumably already liquidated.

All around blood, blood, and more blood. Mostly Jewish blood.

December 29 [1942]

“God, look down from Heaven!”

The vocabulary has become impoverished. Concepts lose their clarity.
Everything that was dreadful and terrible is pale and put to shame.
Words stop affecting and influencing. It reminds me of another expression
of helplessness in a similar period, at the time of the persecutions in
Spain:

At the time of the attacks of the Almohades on the Spanish Jewish
communities [in the twelfth century], Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra wrote
about his experiences:

The nation weeps, persecuted and oppressed by the slaves,
and trembles and prays “God look down from heaven!”

I remembered that poem after the events of yesterday at the gate guard.
God, look down from heaven and behold our helplessness, dejection, and
humiliation.

What occurred yesterday at the gate guard

As I wrote before, the major issue yesterday was whether the commissar
of the gate guard, Levas, would have to go to Łukiszki or not. His arrest
was not only an individual matter but concerned the entire ghetto. Levas
had to appear for arrest at 6 yesterday evening.

At about 3:30, Murer showed up at the gate, entered, and gave an order to search a few Jews who were within reach. In fact, what he always does in such cases. But by chance, during the search, one of the Jews lost 290 Marks. Murer noticed that and ordered all of them searched for money. Everything down to the last bit was taken.

“Jews may not and must not have any money on them....”

Three search rooms were set up (gate guard, workshop at Rudnicka 16, and office of sanitation at Rudnicka 16). Everywhere, 20–30 people were allowed in, men along with women, and told to take out all their money. Later, individuals were taken out and searched thoroughly. The ones they found money on were... whipped.

This was done in those three places. Those who were searched were forced to strip as naked as the day they were born. Men and women were forced to undress in the very same room.

All that took place under Murer’s supervision. When an ashamed woman turned her face to the wall, he ordered her to turn around because, in sadistic language, you must not be ashamed in front of Jewish police.

All those on whom they found money, who had dared not to give it away, were whipped: one girl was whipped because she had dared to bring in not money but... 30 decagrams of bread. On another woman, they found... 15 pfennig. One woman who was whipped left all her clothes and ran away in her overcoat.... They found 50 Marks in the shoe of an old Jew. Murer, already tired, ordered... one lash. When the police sergeant, Mr Witkowski, had done his job, he suggested to the whipped man that he thank the representative of the district commissar. Of course the whipped man thanked him. These and similar scenes occurred in those places.

Meanwhile, on the street stood a line that stretched from the gate to the Jewish hospital on Zawalna. Jewish police meanwhile enlightened the people to [give] the money to them.

[Pages 563–569 of the diary are missing.]

*The Lewas Affair Is Liquidated
Children Play in “Gate Guard”*

December 31

Today is Sylvester [New Year’s Eve]

[We have one page, torn up and without a number, which is certainly from the missing pages. We present that page, with additions by the editor of the Yiddish edition.]

[And what] the world will make of this is hard to say. We and the [world] are two separate conceptions. What is [Worldly] in the world is Hitlerian in our circumstances. [But] Worldly and Hitlerian are two poles.

ghetto restaurant, at Kukulka's, and the Ghetto

11 in the evening, the same review will be repeated formally in the Ghetto Theater.

We members of the Bl[und] meet today in a small group and will make an accounting of the past year.

[To] all that we have already written about the events in the ["Ga]te Guard," for the sake of truth, we must add:

The [gen]eral opinion in the ghetto is that the whole story with Murer [...] was staged. People met Murer's [...] instincts, the Levas incident was played out, and... the ghetto [administration] did not lose anything, and nor did the ghel[et]ro pol[ice].

[The sheep is whole] and the wolf is full.

[In connection w]ith that sad entry, I learn that Murer [...]

They drink to Levas's "bachelorhood"

Today Levas's Wedding

*Drugi 1918 rok [A second 1918]*¹⁰

Partisans

Murer Exercises

January 1, 1943

New Year 1943

Drunkards Invite Jews

For not subordinating himself to an order, Glazman, his closest friend and ideological colleague, receives – exile.

In conversation with a representative of a social group in the ghetto that advised the chief not to exile social activists for refusing to carry out social missions against their conscience, Gens again elaborated his “theory” that he calculates mathematically. That he wants to save Jewish heads. That [in] Oszmiana, only 18 people under 40 were killed, etc., etc.

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the already famous story of Lidzki Street, which cost 3,000 victims. Then a series of Aktions. October 1, Yom Kippur, in Ghetto 2, two Aktions, 800 and 900 people at night, people being driven to the gate with a loss of 2,200 people. Then a year ago today, October 3 and 4, Aktions in Ghetto 2 with 200 victims; after a small sigh of relief, more Aktions on the 16th, 21st, and 24th, which cost more than 10,000 heads.

A year ago today, we were at the high tide of the river of blood. But today, a year later, it doesn't feel as if we shall ever get out of the bloody sea. We splash and splash. We drown and drown. The wave has receded from Vilna for the time being, but it will inundate Byelorussia and now floods Crown Poland.⁸

Warsaw, Kielce, Lublin, Częstochowa, and others. We drown incessantly in a sea of blood and bury one another.

May this be mentioned on one of those bloody anniversaries.

*In the work units – “booty-collection-camp of the
Luftwaffe] 7” (Benzynówka)*

This is one of the most popular labor workshops in the ghetto, but also one of the units where the work is tense and hard. Two hundred and ten Jews work there, 100 of them as transport workers and 110 as specialists, such as: locksmiths, auto mechanics, carpenters, etc. The special work departments are also run by Jewish specialists.

Up to now, they have worked 10 hours a day. But as of the 1st of the month, they work 8 hours a day.

Free bath tickets

[These] must now be distributed in larger quantities because, since there is obligatory attendance of the bath, there have been several requests to receive free bath tickets.

During the past month, a thousand free bath tickets were distributed.

Glazman goes into exile...

Glazman is released from jail, released from... his office as director of the Housing Department, and is now again released from “ghetto freedom.” The chief of the ghetto is sending him off in a provincial unit for forest work.

At about 3:30, Murer showed up at the gate, entered, and gave an order to search a few Jews who were within reach. In fact, what he always does in such cases. But by chance, during the search, one of the Jews lost 290 Marks. Murer noticed that and ordered all of them searched for money. Everything down to the last bit was taken.

“Jews may not and must not have any money on them...”

Three search rooms were set up (gate guard, workshop at Rudnicka 16, and office of sanitation at Rudnicka 16). Everywhere, 20–30 people were allowed in, men along with women, and told to take out all their money. Later, individuals were taken out and searched thoroughly. The ones they found money on were... whipped.

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Children Play in “Gate Guard”*

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Today is Sylvester [New Year's Eve]

[We have one page, torn up and without a number, which is certainly from the missing pages. We present that page, with additions by the editor of the Yiddish edition.]

[And what] the world will make of this is hard to say. We and the [world] are two separate conceptions. What is [Worldly] in the world is Hitlerian in our circumstances. [But] Worldly and Hitlerian are two poles.

So we here, under the bloody Hitlerian atmosphere in the Vilna Ghetto, in the central cemetery of Lithuanian Jewry, will take leave of the past year and greet the new.

Why write about the past year? If I get out of here, I will leaf through the press, and with time, will become familiar with it. But if I do [not] survive, others will leaf through my notes and will be able to empathize with what we have gone through and experienced here.

Today my loved ones will remember, and I, how can I forget them.

In New York, my brother, my sister-in-law, and Henryo – a lump of terrible longing.

In Warsaw – if she and her two children are still alive – but I am sure my only sister and her two children are not alive, victims of the bloodbath of Warsaw. And my wife, where will she remember me today, if in Siberia? Who knows how she is? If in central Russia, where will she remember!

Where is Felicia,⁹ where is our old friend Ber Y. Rosen, where are my dozens, hundreds, thousands of comrades and friends, with whom I spent years of friendship?

Today I will look at Sylvester in the ghetto. Here in the ghetto, New Year's Eve is noisier than outside the ghetto. Today, at 10:15, a special "New Year's Review" will be performed in three places in the ghetto. In the ghetto restaurant, at Rudnicka 13, and in the club of a unit, Rudnicka 7. At 11 in the evening, the same review will be repeated formally in the Ghetto Theater.

We members of the [Blund] meet today in a small group and will make an accounting of the past year.

[To] all that we have already written about the events in the ["Ga]le Guard," for the sake of truth, we must add:

The [gen]eral opinion in the ghetto is that the whole story with Murer [...] was staged. People met Murer's [...] instincts, the Levas incident was played out, and... the ghetto [administration] did not lose anything, and nor did the ghe[lt]o police.

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*Drugi 1918 rok [A second 1918]*¹⁰

Partisans

Murer Exercises

January 1, 1943

New Year 1943

Drunkards Invite Jews

Theater in the Ghetto
Illegal Polish Schools
Levas's Wedding
A German Asks a Favor from a Jew...

January 2, 1943

They Fraternize...
A German from the Rosenberg Task Force Describes the Ghetto
The Ghetto Starts Collecting Folklore
They Collect Exhibits for a Planned Ghetto Museum

January 3, 1943

Smiling Faces
Second Students' Concert of the Children's Music School in the Ghetto
*Attempts to Gather Potato Peels*¹¹

It has been calm for a few days, even pleasantly calm. Nothing special has happened. Better and better news comes from the front. It grows clearer by the day that a big breakthrough is coming. The Germans are running away from the Caucasus. The Stalingrad-Rostov and Rzhnev-Rostov fronts have bigger successes from one day to the next. Today, as I write these lines, the Reds are 120 kilometers from Khar'kov and a few dozen from Rostov. Leningrad is liberated [from the siege], and the Germans are driven out of Kronstadt. Today Leningrad celebrates the liberation of the city. In short, it is calm in the ghetto, even pleasantly calm.

100 from Świeciany

On Monday, 100 Jewish workers were expected from Świeciany, to join the new unit of Smorgonie and Soly Jewish workers in depot work on the Vilna railroad station of the so-called Giessler Building Group.

*In the jury committee for the newly
announced artistic competition*

The following composition is decided:

- 1 FOR THE LITERARY COMPETITION: Dr Ts. Feldstein (Chairman), B. Lubocki, and H. Kruk.
- 2 FOR THE MUSIC COMPETITION: A. Slep (Chairman), T. Hirszowicz, and Sh. Khaykin.

3 FOR THE PAINTING COMPETITION: Engineer Smorgonski (Chairman), Mrs Romm, and Engineer Rabinowicz.

The ghetto library

[It] takes pains to enlarge its number of books in all languages.

As we have written, the library has now been reorganized in two sections: (1) for children and (2) for adults. This was done to remove the great pressure at the circulation desk.

Both sections work in the same place, Strashun 6, every day (except Saturday and holidays) from 11 to 17:30.

All who have books to sell

[All] can sell books to the ghetto library. You have to present a list of the books and their prices in the library office to director H. Kruk.

In the reading room

Because of the great demand, no children under the age of 10 will be admitted. Children over 10 can enter the reading room without books, with only a notebook and pencil. [Page 570 of the diary is missing.]

January 4 [1943]

Collective Living Quarters

Tragically Perished

A Second Joke about Levas

Another Joke – NKVD

How Far Does Our Empire Reach

[...]

To govern all the places and to have complete control of them, the Vilna administration has delegated its police staff.

*Workers from the Vilna district*¹²

[They] will work here, as we have said, in “OTE,”¹³ on the railroad station. For that work, people have been brought together from the entire surrounding area. Now they are housed in collective quarters. Such resi-

dences have been prepared on Oszmiańska 4, Niemiecka 29, and Strashun 3, 8, and 15. The Technical Department is preparing 500 wooden bunks for them.

A counseling center against pregnancy

As we said earlier, a counseling center against pregnancy was set up in the ghetto. In short, they are carrying out the order that “you must not give birth in the ghetto...”

You may not carry money

Out of the ghetto, it is forbidden to carry money. Every sum that is found is taken away.

A home for girls

Following the model of child welfare (Strashun 4), a home for wayward girls is now organized. The Department of Social Welfare is busy with the selection. In the home, they will study tailoring, sewing, knitting, etc.

Outside the ghetto – a Jewish office to accept orders

With the increase of the number of workshops in the ghetto and the number of orders from the city, the district commissar ordered a Jewish office set up outside the ghetto to take orders to be filled in the ghetto. The reason for this: customers should not “stroll around” in the ghetto. The office will soon be opened right in front of the entrance to the ghetto, at Rudnicka 29.

January 6 [1943]

May it increase

Today’s radio news brings a new breath of hope along with a shudder of terror. The Bolsheviks are advancing. Victories on the Caucasian front. On the middle front, the “Reds” are advancing. The Russians are 150 km from the Latvian border. In Latvia, there are already arrests as the

Bolshevik front approaches. All this is indeed good news, and Jews wish each other: May it increase.

But a shudder quietly passes: Will they leave us?

We are numbered

Today I learn of an order that every ghetto resident will have to wear a number around his neck. I already know of such cases from the provinces. I am trying to wait for more precise information about the justification for that order.

How big is the administration of the ghetto

From statistics prepared for the authorities, I learn that the ghetto administration employs:

| | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Men | 950 |
| Women | 821 |
| Children below the age of 14 | 20 |
| Total | 1,791 |
| Police | 244 |
| Total | 2,035 |

As we see, a staff has been put together in the ghetto which could serve all Vilna, including its Poles, Lithuanians, and others.

Opening of a youth club in the ghetto

For several months, a Youth Club has existed in the Vilna Ghetto, but only today did its opening take place. For months, the building was repaired, changed from a ruin into splendid quarters, which, even if it weren't in the ghetto, would certainly remain a splendid club. Like all such institutions in the good old days, the club was built in bits and pieces with great difficulty and drudgery.

The opening consists of several performances, including "Puppets" by [M.] Gilinski and [Yankev] Trupianski, Sholem Aleichem's "Enchanted Tailor," and others. The hall is beautifully decorated with pictures of Jewish writers, a beautiful stage with wings, and — as it later turned out — splendid sets.

[*The upper part of the original page is badly torn. According to what remains, this is evidently the end of the report of the opening of the Youth Club. We present the rest of the legible parts of the page, with additions by the editor of the Yiddish edition.*]

January 8 [1943]

Like new winds

[Recently there have been [several signs indicating] that new winds are blowing in the ghetto. [You see it in the situation at the] gate and the gate guard. The incident with the 19, which the Gestapo [...] taken them; the issue of Levas; the gym[nastics in the] workshops; the entrance into the ghetto and the search for money; [the whipping of men] and women together; recently, the order about [wearing numbers; and] finally the events of today:

Today Murer came into the ghetto, stopped a group [of workers, and] ordered them to do exercises on the ground in the snow. The reason: [they] didn't greet him properly. Then he came into the workshop at [Rudnicka] 16 and ordered the women to go under the tables [...].] he slept.

As we know, outside the ghetto, not far from the ghetto gate, a so-called order place is to be opened, an office to take orders to be filled in the ghetto. Now Murer has ordered the wage lists of all the units also to go through the order place, so they can control them. Now, fresh news: the office will have control of importing into the ghetto. A German woman official already sits in that office, one of those loyal to Murer.

All this portends a change in the relationship to the ghetto. A new era seems to be coming.

They want to take our money

I learn from a reliable source that there is a plan to take from the residents of the ghetto the right to use money[.]. Instead of money, workers in the units will get scrip for food, the ghetto administration will pay... in food, etc. Meanwhile, this is a plan presented to the ghetto chief.

This information is part of that series we fear.

Arrested 6

The 19 have recently been increased by 6. Six workers of the so-called "Nachschu [...]" were arrested and sent to Kukiszki [...]. Expensive

drinks were found on the 6: wine, liquor, etc. In the [ghetto], their fate is considered serious.

Passports

There is a plan for the ghetto resident[s] to get passports, possibly soon. Simple, normal passports with "Jude" on them. The [plan] exists; it is still in the early stage.

January 10 [1943]

[Nafrole] Weinig is alive

Yesterday, lying in bed, I learn the good [news that] friend Nafrole Weinig, the Vilna Yiddish writer, is alive [...]

[*The remaining part of the page is badly damaged. From what remains, we can infer that information came from an employee of the Ghetto Theater that Nafrole Weinig was living near the Constantine Estate, not far from Vilna. The employee went to get wood and met him there. Weinig asked him to give a message to Kalmanowicz and Krusk. From other damaged entries on the page, we find the following information.*

On January 9, Krusk was supposed to deliver a lecture in the workers' auditorium of Kaplan-Kaplanski's units. The subject was to have been "From the Library Center in Poland to the Ghetto Library." Unfortunately, he could not do this because of illness.

For the same reason, he could not participate in the meeting "For People's Health." There, he was to have read the article "Hygiene of Reading." His article was read by the co-editor of People's Health, Dr Kalmen Shapiro.

A mobile library for the Zatrocze labor camp was set up.

[Pages 575-579, for January 10-15, are missing. On those days, the ghetto population was upset by events at the gate. A few times, Jews were detained with smuggled luxury items. Muren, who led that activity, also arrested two persons, including the famous singer Lyuba Lewicka,¹⁴ with some peas.]

January 10 [1943]

Because of My Illness

A Mobile Library for the Zatrocze Work Camp

Weiskopf Restored; His Grandson Does Not Appear

A Second Café Is Opened

An Assault in Kailis

Thus the ghetto chief laments to me.

Isn't there some truth in it?

[*The rest of the page is destroyed.*]

The 25th gathering of workers

We have written of the gathering at Kaplan-Kaplański's [to] talk and lecture to the workers of his unit. [Now, I learn] that back in December, that institution celebrated an important anniversary – 25 meetings.

Now, since the Brigadier Council has become a whole “[...]” in the ghetto and Kaplan-Kaplański its nominated chair[man,] the institution has turned into an everyday [...] the workers from all units. Of course, with [...] Kaplan-Kaplański [is occupied].

January 16

A year of ghetto theater

Last night's celebration of the “year of the ghetto theater” looked as we had foreseen. It [was] first of all a happy occasion not for the artists, but an evening in honor of the “operators” of [the ghetto]. All those who *gave* demanded orations, and the orations contented [them].

Two of the speeches were interesting. The first by the actor Blacher (I attach the speech), the second by the speaker of the Association of Writers and Artists. The rest of the speeches, by Yashunski, Gens, Fried, Kaplan-Kaplański, and Dr Feldstein, were pale and said nothing.¹⁶

[*The speech by Blacher is missing.*]

The artistic part was an abridgment of the first performance of a year ago and part of the last, current program. The same with the symphony orchestra – parts of the first and the last programs.

In general, the artistic part of the celebration was done without exaggerated solemnity and with a measure of intelligence. After the evening, the actors and theater activists went to a café on Rudnicka for a cup of coffee.

Why exactly the two scale models

Because of the impending construction of the two scale models mentioned above, at 7 this evening in the building of the PPV,¹⁷ an assembly was held of all engineers of the Technical Department, the whole staff of the PPV, in

January 12 [1943]

*Depression
Five of the Six Released
1 of the 19*

January 13 [1943]

*106 Furs Valued at More Than 4 Million Rubles
82 Persons Arrested
1 Order Two Scale Models
The Ghetto Industry
Quarantine in the Ghetto
The School Program
A “Reserve” Communist Party
In the Work Units – HKP*

January 14 [1943]

*The Situation Becomes More Acute
The Ghetto Police Are Also Nervous
The Ghetto Archive Intervenes
Zalmen Reizen Is Alive, Too*

January 15 [1943]

*One Year of Ghetto Theater
Visitors in the Ghetto
Gens Complains*

[Page 580 begins at the end of *Gens's complaining to Kruk*.]

[...] “Kailis has become a base for butter for Vilna. If you wanted it, you went to Kailis and got whatever you liked. Who suffered from it? Me. My prestige declined. My prestige means the respect of the ghetto, of the ghetto Jews. For example, take the fact with the six people five of whom are already free. Do they sit in prison for wanting to save themselves and bring in a kilo of bread for wife and child? No. They must be treated as disturbers and saboteurs. On the six Jews, they found no more and no less than 23 bottles of liquor and... 20,000 cigarettes. What does this mean? This means that the ghetto drinks liquor and smokes the most expensive cigarettes.

Isn't it undermining the ghetto? Isn't this a slap in the face for me, the representative of the ghetto, who constantly and incessantly complains about the bad situation of the residents of the ghetto?

Who suffers from this? First of all the masses, the 19 Jews [who] had 75 kg of flour altogether, the two poor souls [arrested] yesterday, [Lyuba] Lewicka and [Monyel] Stupel.”¹⁵