

**From Milk Cans to Toilet Paper: The Story of Jewish Resistance in the Warsaw,
Łódź, and Kraków Ghettos, 1940-1944**

By

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A THESIS

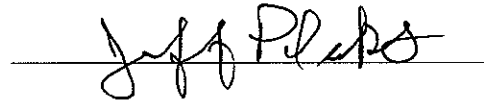
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

14 June 2017

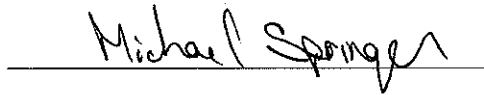
Thesis Approval

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Abstract

The fate of European Jewry was still unwritten when Adolph Hitler and his Nazi party came into power in January 1933; however, over the course of twelve years he and his followers attempted to eradicate the continent's 9.5 million Jews. Despite the high levels of death and destruction, the Jews did not submit to their oppressors like Hilberg and other scholars had claimed. To resist the Nazis, the Jews often used a pen rather than a gun. By examining the attempts to preserve Jewish history and culture in Poland's Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków ghettos, I will prove these actions constitute a form of resistance because they were an effort to save Jewish history, values, ideas, concepts, and rules of behavior and circumvent the Nazis efforts to eradicate any trace of Jewish existence.

In Warsaw, Emanuel Ringelblum established *Oneg Shabbath*, the largest underground ghetto archive. He and the highly trained O.S. staff compiled and preserved over 35,000 pages of Jewish history and culture. The members meticulously reviewed everything to ensure accuracy. The collection holds studies, monographs, and testimonies pertaining to every aspect of Jewish life from pre-war to the ghetto experience across Poland. They also gathered information about the Nazis in an effort to provide sources of the barbaric crimes. Along with the preservation, the O.S. served as an outlet to preserve the truth, voice the Jews' concerns and frustrations, and provided the members with hope that their rich and vibrant culture would not disappear.

In Łódź, the staff of the Department of Archives produced the *Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, preserved rare books and manuscripts, gathered both German and Jewish documents such as memorandums, orders, official correspondence, proclamations, and

photographs, and kept record of every department's activities. The archivists wrote original works on the history of the Ghetto, Yiddish and Hebrew literature, economic issues, questions of culture and religion, ghetto life for children, and detailed biographies on top Jewish officials and other influential ghetto inhabitants. Scholars know of these works thanks to Nachman Zonabend's preservation efforts after the war.

In Kraków, Gusta "Justyna" Draenger wrote a detailed account of the ŻOB's various courageous, creative, and audacious forms of resistance during the final months of the Ghetto while in prison. In addition to that work, she was an editor and writer for the group's clandestine publications in which she called on her fellow Jews to resist the Nazis.

The efforts and sacrifices of these Jews not only produced the foundation for the study of Jewish resistance to the Nazis, they also preserved their history for future generations. In doing so, they provided future scholars with a unique look inside the lives of the courageous people who prevented Hitler's Final Solution from succeeding.

This work is dedicated to the memory of the more than six million victims of the Holocaust. They may be gone, but their voices and stories will never be silenced.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my wife Leah for always being there for me through everything. I would have never been able to do this without her love, support, understanding, and forgiveness. I also would like to thank my late parents Jim and Cathy for instilling in me the value of hard work and the importance of education.

A special thanks to my main advisor Dr. Jeff Plaks for not only working with me to develop the idea for this project into an actual work over the last three years, but for his patience and guidance throughout my time at the University of Central Oklahoma. He helped me grow from an unmotivated undergraduate into an aspiring scholar. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee Dr. Michael Springer and Dr. Justin Olmstead for their countless hours of support and keeping me on track. These three are the best mentors a person could have and are my personal and professional role models. I would also like to thank the history department's Assistant Chair Dr. Katrina Lacher and Graduate Studies Program Director Dr. Marc Goulding for their guidance and always keeping their doors open.

I am also grateful to the current and former staff of the Government Information department, particularly, Dana Jackson-Hardwick, Jim Steincamp, Lese Salaswat, and David Hall for allowing me to bounce ideas off them and talking to me when I needed a break. A huge thanks to Traca Wolfe and the rest of the Interlibrary Loan staff at the Max Chambers Library. I literally could not have written this without them. I would also like to apologize for the hundreds of orders I made them process.

A final thanks to everyone else who helped me through this project. The list is too long to name you all. Please forgive me for the omission, but know I am grateful.

Note on Translation

For foreign names and places, I used their original spelling with the appropriate special characters such as, Łódź instead of Lodz. I did the same for foreign terms and italicized them such as, *Judenrät* instead of Judenrat. The only exceptions are locations that have a standard internationally recognized spelling, e.g. Warsaw instead of Warszawa.

Resistance is...

To smuggle a loaf of bread was to resist.

To teach in secret was to resist.

To gather information and distribute an underground newsletter was to resist.

To cry out warning and shatter illusions was to resist.

To rescue a Torah scroll was to resist.

To forge documents was to resist.

To smuggle people across borders was to resist.

To chronicle events and conceal the records was to resist.

To extend a helping hand to those in need was to resist.

To dare to speak out, at the risk of one's life was to resist.

To stand empty-handed against the killers was to resist.

To reach the besieged, smuggling weapons and commands was to resist.

To take up arms in streets, mountains and forests was to resist.

To rebel in the death camps was to resist.

To rise up in the ghettos, amid tumbling walls,
in the most desperate revolt humanity has ever known was to resist.

Haim Guri and Monia Avrahami

Flames in the Ashes

Introduction

The nightmare that became the Holocaust started in Germany, when Adolph Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi) came to power in 1933. Within ten years, the Party initiated the Final Solution to its Jewish problem, an attempt to exterminate Europe's Jewish population. Although the Nazis failed to achieve their goal, they managed to murder six million Jews, and approximately 20 million "undesirables" overall.¹ While there are many different aspects of the Holocaust for scholars to examine, the topic of whether the Jews resisted their oppressors is one of the most debated. As a result, scholars have conducted an enormous amount of research and produced a plethora of written material over the decades to defend or reject the concept of Jewish resistance.

An understanding of the events leading up to the Holocaust is vital to the complex study of resistance. When the Nazis came to power, no one could be sure what they might do to the Jews. Before the 1932 election, the Party already had initiated attacks on the German Jewish community, but tempered their hatred when it was not beneficial. Once in power, Hitler showed his intentions immediately. He fired Jews in governmental positions, enacted discriminatory laws, implemented economic boycotts, and condoned physical violence.² During these boycotts, the paramilitary *Sturmabteilung* (SA) stood outside Jewish stores and held signs that stated: "GERMANS! DEFEND

¹ The term "undesirables" refers to the other groups of people the Nazis considered unfit for the Third Reich. They include groups such as the Gypsies, mentally handicap, and homosexuals; Eric Lichtblau, "The Holocaust Just Got More Shocking," *New York Times*, 1 March 2013, accessed 18 April 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/sunday-review/the-holocaust-just-got-more-shocking.html?_r=0.

² Donald L. Niewyk, ed., *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992), 2-3.

YOURSELVES. DON'T BUY FROM JEWS.”³ The Nazis were careful not to push too hard against the Jews, because the German economy was still weak from the Great Depression and they feared prolonged boycotts would cause foreign reaction. Even with this leniency, these sanctions took the Jewish communities by surprise and revealed the seriousness of their situation.

The Nazification of Germany quickly became popular. It was widely supported by the Germans, who were weary from years of economic depression. Lydia Gottschewski, a leader of the female chapter of Hitler Youth, the League of German Girls (BDM), voiced her approval of Hitler's radical plans in *Informationsdienst*, a pro-Nazi newsletter, “We should thank God that the movement does exist and exert ourselves with words and deeds. The Jew...is a subtle poison since he destroys what is necessary to our life...we must free ourselves ruthlessly from that parasite.”⁴ The population finally had a reason to be optimistic. Hitler expanded healthcare, social security, and old-age benefits along with his public works plan. So when he disbanded labor unions, few people noticed, or cared. On 14 July 1933, Hitler declared the National Socialist Party as the sole party of Germany, eliminating any political opposition. He did not stop there, however, and passed the Law for the Prevention of Hereditary and Defective Offspring, which forced sterilization on anyone with a deformity or deemed unworthy of life.⁵

Race and politics were not the only things under attack during Hitler's reign. In 1933, Hitler appointed Bernard Rust as Minister of Science, Education, and Popular

³ Eva Nussbaum Soumerai and Carol D. Schulz, *Daily Life during the Holocaust* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 36.

⁴ Liselotte Flintermann, “Noch ein Wort über den Antisemitismus,” *Informationsdienst* 17, quoted in Clifford Kirkpatrick, *Nazi Germany: Its Women and Family Life* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co, 1938), 46-7.

⁵ Soumerai and Schulz, *Daily Life during the Holocaust*, 38-9.

Culture. This allowed the Party to begin indoctrinating the German youth with the racially based Nazi ideology. Rust used this opportunity to issue schools new textbooks and guidelines for a plethora of new racial science classes. On 10 May, under instructions from the SA, students and professors took part in burning 20,000 “un-German” books across major universities. Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels addressed the book burners at Berlin University, “The soul of the German people can again express itself. These flames not only illuminate the final end of an old era; they also light up the new.”⁶ This resulted in an international outcry, which Hitler responded to with his famous Peace Speech seven days later. His apparent sincerity was enough to silence the disapproval from abroad, but the Nazis continued to impose their agenda across Germany.

In 1935, the *Reichstag* passed the infamous Nuremberg laws, which targeted Jews in multiple ways including loss of citizenship and a ban on marriage and sexual relations between Jews and Gentiles.⁷ Before these laws, the Nazi government had not enacted a uniform policy of emigration towards its unwanted subjects, but it was encouraging them to leave. The unwillingness of other nations to accept the Jews made emigration difficult, but some were able to flee. As the requests for visas grew by the middle of the 1930s, the number issued remained inadequate. Once it became clear most Jews were not able to leave, the Nazis did everything in their power to ostracize them, from unwarranted arrests to beatings in the streets. A lull in the abuse only took place in 1936 when Germany hosted the Olympics.⁸

⁶ Joseph Goebbels quoted in Soumerai and Schulz, *Daily Life during the Holocaust*, 38-40.

⁷ Rita S. Botwinick, *A History of the Holocaust: From Ideology to Annihilation* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 118.

⁸ Botwinick, *A History of the Holocaust*, 119-20.

After 1936, the Third Reich was preparing for war and wanted to eliminate the Jewish “fifth column.”⁹ By 1938, the Nazis’ planned discrimination was in full swing. During that summer, government officials issued Jews an identification card. *Reichstag* president Hermann Goering, Hitler’s second in command, sped up the Jewish economic exclusion by forcing Jews to sell their businesses and property to Aryans for a fraction of the value. If the Jews were able to flee, the government confiscated any remaining assets. These state sanctioned seizures, or Aryanization, were legal based on a law that claimed all Jewish wealth came from cheating Aryans.

Any doubt left about Hitler’s intentions ended in 1938. On the night of 9 November, the Nazis unleashed deliberate, prearranged terror on the German and Austrian Jews.¹⁰ The Nazis brutally beat thousands of Jews, robbed and destroyed hundreds of Jewish stores, burned synagogues, and arrested thousands of Jews and sent them to concentration camps. This malicious attack was the Nazis’ response to the murder of Third Secretary Ernst vom Rath by Polish Jew Herschel Grynzpan in Paris the previous day.¹¹ The abuse did not end there. After Goering assessed the total damages, he ordered the insurance companies to pay the claims to the national treasury. He also forced the Jews to clean up the destruction caused by the SA.¹² The event known as *Kristallnacht*, or Night of Broken Glass, was the first time the Nazis sent a large number of Jews to camps. The Jews could eventually leave, but only after signing documents

⁹ Niewyk, *The Holocaust*, 3; The fifth column refers to a group of secret sympathizers or supporters of an enemy that engage in espionage or sabotage within defense lines or national borders. The Nazis used this term in their propaganda against the Jews.

¹⁰ The Nazi government peacefully annexed Austria in March 1938.

¹¹ Soumerai and Schulz, *Daily Life during the Holocaust*, 61.

¹² Botwinick, *A History of the Holocaust*, 124.

promising to depart the country. Most of them wanted to go, but still could not find a place that would allow them to take refuge.¹³

Before Hitler's invasion of Poland, on 1 September 1939, Nazi officials discussed different plans for the Jews and the other "undesirables." Early in the war, the Party considered sending the Jews to Madagascar or Siberia after defeating the Soviet Union.¹⁴ Those plans never came to fruition, because on 21 September 1939, Reinhard Heydrich issued a directive for the implementation of Hitler's racial program. The plan ordered all Jews out of the Reich and relocated to ghettos in urban areas, mainly in Poland. Once there, the occupants selected members for the *Judenrät*, or Jewish council, to carry out the Nazi's orders. The final stage included the confiscation of the remaining Jewish property and forced labor.

After the invasion of Poland, under the direction of Heydrich, the Germans carried out the order quickly and efficiently. The plan worked because 75 percent of Polish Jews lived near major cities and the non-Jewish population disliked them, which the Nazis knew and wanted to exploit. The Nazis quickly established ghettos across Poland in the weeks following the start of the war.¹⁵ The Jews remained there in uncertainty until 20 January 1942, when, at the Wannsee Conference, fifteen high-ranking Nazi officials formulated the Final Solution to the Jewish Question. The plan had

¹³ Niewyk, *The Holocaust*, 3.

¹⁴ Niewyk, *The Holocaust*, 4; Despite the 1939 Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, also known as the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, Hitler had always planned to attack the Soviet Union once he had defeated the rest of Europe.

¹⁵ Soumerai and Schulz, *Daily Life during the Holocaust*, 80-3.

one goal, the complete annihilation of every person, place, or thing they deemed Jewish, or simply – genocide.¹⁶

The key tool in the Final Solution were the infamous concentration camps, which with their satellites numbered in the hundreds. More than half of the casualties of the Holocaust occurred in these camps.¹⁷ The Nazis claimed the camps were for the re-education of the political opposition, but that was a sham. The sites became huge prisons for Nazi enemies, mainly Jews and other “undesirables.” This system of camps grew swiftly and developed three distinguishable types: death, labor, and a combination of the two. The Nazis gave the prisoners starvation rations and viewed them as renewable slave labor.¹⁸ At the death camps, the Nazis gassed most of the victims upon arrival, save for a small labor force used to discard the bodies. By the time the death camps opened, the Nazis had already executed approximately 1.6 million Jews through a number of different means, e.g. mass shootings, forced labor, and starvation. The labor camps were different; when the Jews arrived, the Nazis selected them for labor or death. It was here the Nazis preformed hideous medical experiments on the prisoners. After their deaths, the Nazi disposed of the bodies in the crematoria. At Auschwitz-Birkenau alone, the Nazis discarded over one million bodies this way.¹⁹

Historians began writing about World War II as soon as it ended in 1945. They discovered that over 1.5 million Jews fought in armies worldwide against the Axis, taking part in every major theater of the war. This figure accounted for over ten percent of the

¹⁶ Botwinick, *A History of the Holocaust*, 172; For the full definition of genocide see UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 9 December 1948, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 78, 277, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3ac0.html>.

¹⁷ Raul Hilberg, *Documents of Destruction: Germany and Jewry, 1933-1945* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), 202-3.

¹⁸ Botwinick, *A History of the Holocaust*, 152.

¹⁹ Niewyk, *The Holocaust*, 5-6.

world's Jewish population. Despite this large number, historians generally left the study of Jewish resistance to Jewish scholars, or ignored it all together.²⁰ When scholars did examine the attempted annihilation of European Jewry, they focused on the Nazis, rather than the victims, and on the forces that allowed such an atrocity to take place. Even then, there was zero effort to differentiate the victims, i.e. sex, age, nationality, or their experiences.²¹

Postwar myths about the Jews during the Holocaust such as, they did not fight their oppressors or their leadership willingly assisted the Nazis, also played a large role in this absence.²² These fallacies became a problem for the worldwide Jewish community, which had no patience for fabricated stories in the post-war years. It was difficult enough just to come to terms with losing one-third of their entire population. Survivors returned home and discovered their stories made others uncomfortable, and useless in their recovery. This resulted in an almost twenty-year silence on what happened to the Jews; however, there were a few Hebrew and Yiddish books on the topic. This was a side effect of the early stigma that only those who experienced the event could write about it.²³ To combat this stigma I will examine the resistance efforts of Jews in Poland's Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków ghettos and argue that the act of cultural preservation constitutes as its own form of resistance.

It was not until the trial of Adolf Eichmann, in the early 1960s, that the systematic investigations of Jewish resistance took place.²⁴ The writings of Raul Hilberg and

²⁰ Michael R. Marrus, "Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust," *Journal of Contemporary History* 30 (January 1995): 92.

²¹ Nechama Tec, *Resistance: Jews and Christians Who Defied the Nazi Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

²² Marrus, "Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust," 85.

²³ Marrus, "Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust," 85.

²⁴ Marrus, "Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust," 83.

Hannah Arendt were the first works, by non-survivors, broadcasted to a wider audience. Although these scholars filled the void, they caused a vicious outcry from the Jewish community, because both authors agreed with the early theories that Jews went to their deaths like sheep to the slaughter. Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, published in 1961, is widely accepted as the first comprehensive work of the Holocaust.²⁵ He maintained the Jews had not focused on resistance, and supported this by claiming they only fought back a few times, and at the last moment. He argued that armed or violent resistance was the only way to combat the Nazis. To him, the Jews submitted as soon as their attempts failed, in hopes that the Nazi drive would spend itself. When the Jewish leadership realized the Nazis were genocidal, it was too late. Hilberg blames their submissive past as the reason for not fighting and wrote, "A two thousand year old lesson could not be unlearned: the Jews could not make the switch. They were helpless."²⁶ Hilberg came under intense scrutiny, from the Jewish community and fellow historians, for his views but he stood by them and again supported them in his introduction to the 1979 work, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*.²⁷ Czerniakow was the chairman of the Warsaw *Judenrät* and kept a diary while in the ghetto. Hilberg wrote in the introduction, "He (Czerniakow) gives voice to an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and futility."²⁸ He again reiterated his view in his revised edition of *The Destruction of*

²⁵ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961).

²⁶ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 663-66.

²⁷ Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron and Josef Kermisz, eds., *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom*, trans. Stanislaw Staron and the staff of Yad Vashem (New York: Stein and Day, 1979).

²⁸ Hilberg, Staron and Kermisz, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, 70.

the European Jews in 1985.²⁹ While he thoroughly researched the work, Hilberg had not considered non-violent acts such as diary keeping or document preservation as resistance.

Arendt covered the Eichmann trial and placed the blame on the *Judenräte* in her book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, originally published in 1963.³⁰ She agreed with Hilberg's claim that the Nazis used Jewish leadership to facilitate the genocide. Even with these accusations, she recognized the existence of Jewish resistance, and discredited Eichmann's prosecutor, Gideon Hausner, who asked numerous Jewish witnesses why they did not resist the Nazis or why they got on the trains. Arendt thought those questions were foolish because, "No non-Jewish group or people behaved differently."³¹ Even with that recognition, Arendt devalued the resistance efforts of the Jews describing the attempts as pitifully small, incredibly weak, and essentially harmless.³² Like Hilberg, she depicted the Jews as helpless and ignored their non-violent forms of resistance. Although Hilberg and Arendt's works angered multiple groups, their contributions laid the foundation for the study of Jewish resistance. In 1968, Yad Vashem, the Israeli research and commemorative institution, held a conference to encourage the continuation of the study. In the opening session, historian and former member of the Vilna Ghetto underground, Meir Dworzecki urged scholars to objectively research the events of the Holocaust:

The message of the survivors to the historian is therefore: Increase your research! Train more students! Do not depict the Jews of the ghettos and camps as having been better than they were. Do not engage in apologetics.

²⁹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, rev. ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985).

³⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963).

³¹ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 10.

³² Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 60.

But do not portray them as lesser than they were. Uncover the whole truth; all facets of the truth! The historical truth!³³

The accusations by Hilberg and Arendt towards the *Judenräte* resulted in scholars questioning how much of a role the Jewish leadership actually played. Holocaust researcher Shaul Esh refuted Hilberg and Arendt's positions following their initial publications. Esh argued the overwhelming reaction to the Nazis was to preserve life in the face of death. He believed these types of actions were as vital as armed rebellion.³⁴ Due to an abundance of documents that became available after these two early works, Isaiah Trunk was able to debunk some of these claims in his 1972 publication, *Judenrät*.³⁵ Trunk challenged Hilberg and Arendt's allegations of indifference or submissiveness to Nazi authority by referring to a number of life-sustaining attempts by the *Judenräte*.³⁶ This led some historians to include a wider range of activities under the concept of resistance. He also argued that Jewish participation or nonparticipation in the deportations had no substantial influence on the final outcome.³⁷ During this time, academics began to stress the variety of situations Jews found themselves in throughout the war, which supported the expansion of the definition of resistance. Historian Michael Geyer used this change and wrote, "Resistance, includes civil courage that was mobilized for small things as well as large, communal assertions as well as genuine assaults on the structure of Nazi rule."³⁸

³³ Meir Dworkzecki quoted in Marrus, "Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust," 84.

³⁴ Shaul Esh, "The Dignity of the Destroyed: Towards a Definition of the Period of the Holocaust," *Judaism* 11, 2 (1962): 106-7.

³⁵ Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrät: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

³⁶ Isaiah Trunk, "Closing Statement," in *The Holocaust as Historical Experience: Essays and a Discussion*, eds. Yehuda Bauer and Nathan Rotenstreich (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981), 268-71.

³⁷ Trunk, *Judenrät*, xlvii.

³⁸ Michael Geyer, "Resistance as Ongoing Project: Visions of Order, Obligations to Strangers, Struggles for Civil Society," *Journal of Modern History* 64 (December 1992): S222.

Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer also disagreed with the claims that Jews went to their deaths like sheep and the *Judenräte* betrayed their people. He wrote in his 1973 book, *They Chose Life*, “When rabbis and other leaders in those days counseled against taking up arms, they were not advocating giving in to the forces of evil; they meant that the struggle should be carried on, as long as possible, by other life affirming means.”³⁹ He insisted that the Jews employed other acts of resistance. They attempted to stay alive as long as possible. He characterized the role of the council as nonviolent, lifesaving resistance.⁴⁰ Bauer continued to disagree with Hilberg’s argument in his 1979 book, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*.⁴¹ He called Hilberg out on his stance that armed resistance was the only legitimate form. He defined resistance during the Holocaust as, “any group action consciously taken in opposition to known or surmised laws, actions, or intentions directed against the Jews by the German supporters.”⁴² He used this position to argue that Hilberg’s accusations were historically inaccurate. Jews defended themselves when possible, but armed resistance was only possible under conditions most Jews did not enjoy.⁴³ In his 1982 book, *A History of the Holocaust*, Bauer strengthened his defense, “According to this view [that the *Judenräte* was an obedient tool of the Nazis], even the ‘good’ *Judenräte* leaders...those who tried by various subterfuges to protect the Jews, were aiding in the process because they simply kept more Jews alive to supply labor for the Nazis.”⁴⁴ Bauer believed the intentions of the *Judenräte* were good, but the

³⁹ Yehuda Bauer, *They Chose Life: Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1973), 33.

⁴⁰ Bauer, *They Chose Life*, 45.

⁴¹ Yehuda Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

⁴² Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, 27.

⁴³ Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, 26-40.

⁴⁴ Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: Franklin Watts, 2001), 156.

Nazis used them to continue their onslaught. In his view, the Nazis victimized the councils even more by forcing them to make impossible decisions.

While there is proof the *Judenräte* made life-preserving measures, it is difficult for scholars to agree what constitutes resistance. In 1983, Philosopher Roger Gottlieb suggested the action involves “acts motivated by the intention to thwart, limit, or end the exercise of power of the oppressor group over the oppressed.”⁴⁵ This is an important concept to consider when examining this topic. He introduced a new way to view not only Jewish resistance, but also resistance in general. Some historians use this form when examining German resistance to the Nazi regime. In this context, the only thing that matters is how the resisters viewed their actions. For historians, this requires a leap of imagination. Scholars must use the hard evidence to decipher what the Jews were thinking. To do this, one has to recognize the diversity of Jewish traditions and the circumstances forced upon them under Nazi occupation. There were major differences for Jews in Eastern Europe than those of their western counterparts. Holocaust historian Michael Marrus examined the Jewish Council in France, the *L’Union Générale des Israélites de France* (UGIF), and explained how the Jewish community had been demoralized after the Nazis occupied France and implemented anti-Jewish policies. Although disheartened, the UGIF still had access to vital resources to relieve the hardship of the Jews who had lost everything.⁴⁶ As historians examined and debated these

⁴⁵ Roger Gottlieb, “The Concept of Resistance: Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust,” *Social Theory and Practice* 9 (1983): 31-49.

⁴⁶ Michael R. Marrus, “Jewish Leadership and the Holocaust,” *French Historical Studies* 15 (Autumn 1987): 317-20.

differences, they developed a greater understanding and appreciation for how Jews responded to the Nazis.⁴⁷

Anyone who studies the Holocaust can easily see that armed resistance was difficult and rarely an option. This was often the result of widespread anti-Semitism across Europe. Most Jews did not have a trusted source to acquire weapons or lacked the funds to procure an adequate amount. If the victims were able to get the necessary materials, they were often in poor condition or completely inoperable. Jews could not stop, or even slow down, the Nazi war machine; but that did not stop them from trying. Historian Werner Rings wrote about this in his 1982 book, *Life with the Enemy*.⁴⁸ He explained the cost of violent resistance, not only in death, but also in equipment, time, and energy. In his opinion, it was not violence that counted; it was the motivation of the resister. Rings noted, “The resistance was more of an attitude of mind and profession of faith than an armed force.”⁴⁹ This sentiment shines through in a statement from Miriam Peleg-Mariańska, who did not know exactly what she was doing but knew why, “One thing was certain, what I was doing was directed towards the Germans.”⁵⁰

To understand resistance, one must assess the different types. Rings used a quarter of his book to introduce his five unique classifications: symbolic, polemic, defensive, offensive, and resistance enchained.⁵¹ Symbolic consists of gestures communicating a message of opposition, sometimes at great risk and other times not, both to occupiers and occupied. The Jews fall under this category because the Nazis triumphed militarily, but

⁴⁷ Marrus, “Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust,” 91.

⁴⁸ Werner Rings, *Life with the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler’s Europe, 1939-1945* (New York: Doubleday, 1982).

⁴⁹ Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 265-276.

⁵⁰ Miriam Peleg-Mariańska and Mordecai Peleg, *Witnesses: Life in Occupied Kraków* (London: Routledge, 1991), 16.

⁵¹ Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 153, 162, 172, 189, 229.

could not defeat the spirit of the Jewish people, who were determined to keep their identities and free will.⁵² These actions were a refusal to live in continuous terror, a way for the Jews to keep their lives as normal as possible, and a rejection to accept Nazi oppression as the new "normal." They went to synagogues, theaters, and concerts under the Jewish sponsorships in the midst of persecution. When interviewed about these actions, Eva Reichmann said, "We thought we had conquered Hitler from within ourselves." She knew it was only symbolic, but it made her and many others feel as if they were fighting back.⁵³

Rings' second category, polemic resistance, opposes the occupying power by protesting or organizing protests, even if it risks life. Resisters used this to persuade others to fight on.⁵⁴ The first part is not very pertinent, because rarely did the Jews have the means to protest or to organize one; however, some Jews, in Berlin, were able to form an underground that produced anti-Nazi propaganda until 1942 or 1943. Jews in Holland refused to accept the authority of the Jewish Council, and did not pay the special tax imposed on them, or show up to convoys to Westerbork.⁵⁵ The last part of the definition is the most useful to this discussion, because part of Jewish defiance was simply informing others of the reality of the Final Solution. The Nazis tried to mask their plans across Europe, and part of the resistance was exposing its true nature. Rings informed the reader about different underground groups that distributed newspapers, leaflets, or books. These publications informed the Jews across Europe about the Nazis' attempted

⁵² Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 153-61.

⁵³ Eva Reichmann quoted in Leonard Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain: Leo Baeck and the Berlin Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 194-6.

⁵⁴ Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 162.

⁵⁵ Marrus, "Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust," 96.

genocide.⁵⁶ Because the Nazis executed a majority of resisters, the Jewish underground writings are of extreme value to historians; they provide an insight to the resistance as it happened. Suicide was another type of protest Jews used. Some simply just gave up, while others viewed it as the ultimate act of resistance. They would end their lives on their own terms. Many historians have accepted this as a form of resistance, including Hilberg.⁵⁷

Defensive resistance, according to Rings is, “coming to the aid of those in danger or on the run, it protects them, and defends, by force if needed, the people and values endangered by the occupying power.”⁵⁸ The Jews accomplished this by creating systems to protect each other. However, making these networks took time to recruit, organize, gather resources, find shelter, and establish contacts outside direct danger. Unfortunately, time is something the Jews lacked and thus most resistance efforts never moved past the planning stage.⁵⁹ This was especially true in Eastern Europe, where the Jews faced harsher conditions from the Nazis and surrounding communities. Inexplicably, it was here that the most elaborate networks developed. Trunk discussed these in *Judenrät*, and summarized the different projects Jews preformed in the ghettos, which ranged from legal activities, such as soup kitchens, to illegal actions like smuggling and contacting the outside.⁶⁰ Jews established escape networks that ranged from hiding children to smuggling people across borders. Much of the success of these ventures relied on the

⁵⁶ Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 167-71; See also James M. Glass, *Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust: Moral Uses of Violence and Will* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 24-5.

⁵⁷ Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933-1945* (New York: Harper, 1992), 170-185.

⁵⁸ Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 172.

⁵⁹ Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 173-84.

⁶⁰ Trunk, *Judenrät*, 115-171.

attitude towards Jews in the surrounding population.⁶¹ It is difficult for historians to know if these Jews viewed themselves as resisters, because most did not write anything down, or if they had it has not survived. Scholars can, however, use these actions to support the argument that Jews did resist.

Offensive resistance involves armed combat and, to some historians, is the only way to resist. Rings described it as carrying out military operations, usually by unconventional means, singly or collectively, either underground or in partisan formations. There is no better example of this type of action than the remarkable story of the three Bielski brothers, Tuvia, Asael, and Zus. From 1942 to 1944, the brothers established a safe haven for over 1,200 escaped Jews in the Naliboki Forest, in western Belarus, and conducted numerous military style raids against Nazi forces. Tuvia, the oldest brother, insisted the group be open to all Jews and claimed, “I would rather save one old Jewish woman, than kill ten German soldiers.”⁶² It is important to note that armed resisters also organized protest, published pamphlets, and did many of the same actions as defensive resisters. This makes this category a bit deceiving, because most of the offensive resisters devoted their time to keeping the underground going. Armed combat was rare because the unevenness of the sides and the price was too high for the Jews, but also because the challenge to remain unknown until the best moment was so great. Secrecy was their greatest asset, and a premature attack would destroy it. Rings believed this is the reason most armed resistance took place near the end of the war.⁶³

⁶¹ Marrus, “Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust,” 100.

⁶² Peter Duffy, *The Bielski Brothers: The True Story of Three Men Who Defied the Nazis, Built a Village in the Forest, and Saved 1,200 Jews* (New York: Perennial, 2004), x.

⁶³ Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 189-228.

Rings' final category is resistance enchainé, which is the fight of those cut off, with no hope of survival. Rings described them as fighting for the honor and future of their people. This includes the ghetto and camp resisters, where the Jews knew they probably would not survive, but it would be their last attempts to be heard.⁶⁴ Numerous revolts occurred during the Holocaust. The first of consequence and best known is the Warsaw revolt, in April 1943, which resulted in the massacre of thousands of Jews. Historian Israel Gutman wrote, "The uprising represents defiance and great sacrifice in a world characterized by destruction and death."⁶⁵ A successful revolt took place in the Vilna ghetto in 1943, as a Jewish reaction to the mass murders taking place in the nearby town Ponary. In 1942, various groups joined to form the United Partisan Organization (FPO). The new group quickly came under the leadership of Abba Kovner, one of the first Jews to discover the Nazis' genocidal plan. Under Kovner, the group acquired weapons and committed acts of sabotage, while staying undetected.⁶⁶ Kovner and 120 others were able to escape from the Vilna Ghetto before its liquidation on 23 September to the Rudnicki forest. Among the group were Leizer and Zenia Bart, whose son Michael told their story in his 2008 release, *Until Our Last Breath*.⁶⁷ Michael wanted to refute the assertions that Jews were helpless, "This book tells a larger story than my parents own. It tells a story that is not in the end about victimization but about empowerment under unimaginable circumstances."⁶⁸ In the end, this group sabotaged German planes, railroads, and vehicles.

⁶⁴ Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 229-35.

⁶⁵ Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), xi.

⁶⁶ Karl-Heinz Schoeps, "Holocaust and Resistance in Vilnius: Rescuers in 'Wehrmacht' Uniforms," *German Studies Review* 31 (October 2008): 494-6.

⁶⁷ Michael Bart and Laurel Corona, *Until Our Last Breath: A Holocaust Story of Love and Partisan Resistance* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008).

⁶⁸ Bart and Corona, *Until Our Last Breath*, 156-180.

Similar rebellions took place at the death camps in Sobibór and Treblinka in August and October 1943 and at Birkenau in October 1944. The results were the same, although some escaped after inflicting significant damage to the camps. The *Armia Krajowa* (AK), or Home Army, developed the plan for Birkenau in summer 1944. They gave the *Sonderkommando*, a unit of Jews assigned to work in the crematoria, the task of destroying the gas chambers and crematoria.⁶⁹ Historians have been able to get a look inside what happened at Birkenau, thanks to the discovery of parts of diaries from the *Sonderkommando*, found in the rubble after the revolt. These diaries recount the chilling fear these victims had – that no one in the future would know what happened to them. The diary of Leib Langfus demonstrates the horror the prisoners lived in, “They are so lonely in the middle of the planet Earth which belongs to everyone except them, the Jews.”⁷⁰

Another significant aspect to consider is the paradoxical situation the Jews faced. Nechama Tec argued in her 2013 book, *Resistance*, that resistance is contingent on a number of circumstances.⁷¹ The first is oppression, in theory, the larger number of oppressed people would facilitate resistance but, in reality, when such a large group lacks the necessary tools, it is difficult. The Nazis knew this and specifically targeted Jewish resources to impair their ability to fight back. This leads into her next condition, cooperation. She argued this is the key to resistance itself, but again, the Jews rarely found willing aide. This resulted from a number of different reasons ranging from anti-Semitism to overall indifference. She also claimed topography, which scholars often

⁶⁹ Ber Mark, *The Scrolls of Auschwitz* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1985), 124-46.

⁷⁰ Leib Langfus quoted in Marrus, “Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust,” 104.

⁷¹ Tec, *Resistance*.

overlook, affected the results as well. The densely forested areas in the east provided havens for those lucky enough to escape and the perfect planning area for guerilla style attacks, e.g. the Bielski brothers or the FPO.⁷²

The works of Bauer and the others show that it is naïve to think Jews, as a whole, went to their death without any type of resistance. There are numerous accounts of Jewish resistance throughout Nazi occupation, ranging from armed revolts to refusing to give in and accept their horrible fate. Hilberg's assertions about armed resistance are highly unjust, because the Jews did not have the means to organize a massive revolt. The few times revolts occurred, the Nazis quickly quashed the rebellion and responded with a show of force by slaughtering the resisters along with hundreds, sometimes thousands, of innocent people. This reaction is how the Nazis punished and attempted to prevent the Jews from future rebellions. Historians now classify this action as "collective responsibility." Marrus noted in his 1987 work *Holocaust in History*, "In retaliation for the breakout, the local *Gestapo* seized the entire family of each fugitive or all who lived with him; they also seized local leaders in the vicinity, together with their families. All were shot."⁷³

The works of Bauer, Gottlieb, and Rings, along with countless others, provide a platform for scholars to comprehend the resistance efforts on a broader scale, thus allowing us to refine the concept of the Jewish struggle. These trailblazers have done a tremendous amount of work to bring the victims' struggles to the forefront of historical inquiry, yet there are still aspects that require examination, the most important being

⁷² Tec, *Resistance*, 4-5.

⁷³ Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1987), 133.

cultural preservation. Historians often overlook this vital aspect of Jewish resistance or vaguely mention it in a footnote or lump it together with a different category. This is astounding given the amount of attention on Holocaust Studies, especially when considering the Nazi's ultimate goal was to erase any trace of Jewish existence. By combining and building upon the aforementioned definitions of resistance by Bauer, Gottlieb, and Rings, this study will show how the act of cultural preservation constitutes a form of resistance. It usually involved a group that was well aware of the risks of their actions to oppose, thwart, limit, or end the power of their oppressors. At the same time, it communicated a message, protested against the Nazis' goals, protected Jewish history, and, at times, resulted in armed combat when the resisters knew they would not survive, but perhaps their culture would.

While the idea of "culture" is important to most groups of people, especially to those that are living as a minority, it is a term shrouded in vagueness. Patricia Hudelson described culture as a shared set of values, ideas, concepts, and rules of behavior that allow a social group to function and perpetuate itself.⁷⁴ Anthropologist Michael Fischer defined it as the, "relational, complex whole, whose parts cannot be changed without affecting other parts, mediated through powerful and power-laden symbolic forms, whose multiplicities and per formatively negotiated character, is transformed by alternative positions, organizational forms, and leveraging of symbolic system."⁷⁵ These two definitions make it easier to ascertain what exactly the Jews fought and often died for, their way of life or – "Jewishness." There are numerous examples of this throughout the

⁷⁴ Patricia M. Hudelson, "Culture and Quality: An Anthropological Perspective," *International Journal for Quality in Health Care* 16, no. 5 (2004): 345.

⁷⁵ Michael M. J. Fischer, "Culture and Cultural Analysis as Experimental Systems," *Cultural Anthropology* 22, no. 1 (Feb., 2007): 1.

Holocaust, but the efforts of the victims in the ghettos of Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków provide historians with the best insight.

While there were hundreds, if not thousands, of contributors, scholars are able to gain a better understanding of the genocide and how the Jews fought back because of the courageous efforts of resisters like Emanuel Ringelblum, Henryk Neftalin, and Gusta “Justyna” Draenger. Ringelblum established and contributed to an underground archive in Warsaw. Neftalin was the head of the Department of Archives in Łódź. Draenger was a member of the *Akiba* Youth Movement and documented her group’s resistance efforts in the Kraków ghetto on toilet paper while incarcerated.⁷⁶ While these individuals did not act alone, their efforts to organize the documentation of the Nazis’ atrocities and preservation of their culture make them unique. By examining the attempts to preserve Jewish history and culture in Poland’s Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków ghettos, I will prove these actions constitute a form of resistance because they were an effort to save Jewish history, values, ideas, concepts, and rules of behavior and circumvent the Nazis efforts to eradicate any trace of Jewish existence.

It is important to stress the focus of this work pertains to resistance efforts in ghettos, not concentration camps. While the ghettos served as a type of staging ground for the camps, they also, according to historian Gustavo Corni, functioned as a, “unique social structure in which elements of the traditional pre-war Jewish society continued to exist.”⁷⁷ Samuel Gringauz, a social scientist and Holocaust survivor, claimed the two

⁷⁶ Yael Margolin Peled, “Gusta Dawidson Draenger,” *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, accessed 3 March 2016, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/draenger-gusta-dawidson>.

⁷⁷ Gustavo Corni, *Hitler’s Ghettos: Voices from a Beleaguered Society, 1939-1944*, trans. Nicola Rudge Iannelli (London: Bloomsbury, 2003): 2.

areas were vastly different on multiple levels. He compares camps to prisons or penal colonies, but claims ghettos were just different. He wrote, “It developed its own social life and formed a social community...it was a form of Jewish national and autonomous concentration.”⁷⁸

In 1978, Yehuda Bauer made a compelling argument for the continuation of Holocaust research when he wrote, “Why is the Holocaust a central experience of our civilization? Is it because what happened once could happen again? Is it because we have seen how people can become enmeshed in a bureaucratic hell which leads them into negation first of themselves and then of others?”⁷⁹ While historians of the Holocaust may not agree on whether the Jews resisted or to what level, they have preserved the story. The dying fears of the victims did not come true; the world did not forget about them and their struggles. The exact opposite took place; there is an entire field centered on the Holocaust and numerous sub-sections that break it down even further. The goal of this work is to further develop and clarify the act of cultural preservation as an agent of resistance.

⁷⁸ Samuel Gringauz, “The Ghetto as an Experiment of Jewish Social Organization (Three Years of Kovno Ghetto),” *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 1 (Jan., 1949): 5.

⁷⁹ Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 3.

Chapter 1: Warsaw

Every O.S. worker knew that his slaving toil and pain, his onerous labours and hardships, the risks he took 24 hours a day while engaged in the undercover work of carrying material from place to place – was for the sake of an exalted ideal and that in days of freedom to come society would evaluate his role properly and reward it with the highest honors available in liberated Europe. O.S. was a fellowship, a monastic order of brothers, whose banner was: readiness to sacrifice, devotion to one another and service to the community.

–Emanuel
Ringelblum, *O.S.*

Before serving as the anteroom to Treblinka, Warsaw was Europe’s epicenter of Jewish life and culture, despite widespread anti-Semitism. Its prewar Jewish population of more than 375,000 accounted for roughly 30 percent of the city’s total population and was the largest Jewish community in Europe. It served as symbol of strength and creativity for the worldwide Jewish community. The city also played a vital role in the pre-war Jewish cultural renaissance, which inspired Jews to combine their old religious traditions with their new secular culture, but reject total assimilation. The decline of the Yiddish language is a prime example of this new lifestyle. Most Polish Jews embraced their “Jewishness,” but preferred the using the national language. This caused major issues within the community that intensified once the war began.

The city suffered heavy casualties after the Germans invaded on 8 September 1939. Shortly after the Poles surrendered on 28 September, Hans Frank, the governor of occupied Poland, authorized the creation of *Judenräte* to implement Nazi orders.⁸⁰ In

⁸⁰ Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman, and Abraham Margalio, eds., *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*, trans., Lea Ben Dor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 191-2.

early October, Hitler announced his plan for the annexation of Poland, which essentially divided the country into two parts, the lands immediately incorporated into the Third Reich and the section called the *Generalgouvernement*, which included Warsaw.⁸¹ Over the following three and a half months, the Germans passed a series of laws that forced the Jews to identify themselves with a blue Star of David on a white armband, closed their schools, seized their property, forced the men into labor, barred them from public transportation, and dissolved most of their religious and secular organizations.⁸² Nazi officers pulled Jewish women off the streets and forced them to clean the roads with their undergarments. After the officers grew tired of demeaning the women, they ordered them to wear the undergarments the rest of the day.⁸³ Polish schoolboys attacked Jews in the streets while the Nazis watched and laughed.⁸⁴ The life the Jews knew was now over. Despite these horrendous conditions, Warsaw continued to be the most important center for Jewish creativity and serve as a beacon of hope, thanks in large part to the efforts of Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum. Through a complex underground archive system, he and his team documented and preserved Jewish history, values, ideas, concepts, and overall culture to prevent the Nazis from achieving total annihilation of European Jewry.

⁸¹ Hitler announced his plans in two separate decrees on 8 and 12 October 1939 and they went into effect on 26 October. The western regions of *Warthegau*, *Danzig-Westpreussen*, and *Bezirk Zichenau* were the integrated lands. These areas had a sizeable ethnic German population, were closest to the German border, which led to a stronger Nazi presence. The central part of Poland became the *Generalgouvernement*; Lucjan Dobroszycki, *Reptile Journalism: The Official Polish-Language Press under the Nazis, 1939-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 45.

⁸² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Warsaw," Holocaust Encyclopedia, last modified 20 June 2014, accessed 24 May 2016, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005069>; Also see "Instructions by Heydrich on Policy and Operations Concerning Jews in occupied Territories," "Regulation for the Identification of Jewish Men and Women in the Government-General," "Ban on the Changes of Place of Residence by Jews within the Area of the Government-General," in *Documents on the Holocaust*, Arad, Gutman, and Margaliot, 173-82.

⁸³ David Wdowinski, *And We Are Not Saved* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 25.

⁸⁴ Philip Friedman, ed., *Martyrs and Fighters: The Epic of the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954), 22.

Born in eastern Galicia in 1900, Ringelblum faced turmoil early in life after the Russians invaded his homeland in 1914. He and his family fled to the western Galicia town of Sanz where they lived for what turned out to be five intellectually formative years for Emanuel. He became heavily involved with the *Poalei Tsiyon* (Labor Zionist Organization) and developed a strong interest in Yiddish literature. In November 1917, news came of Britain's promise for a Jewish homeland, in Palestine, and the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution. Both events led to heated debates amongst the *Poalei Tsiyon* over whom the Jews should side with, which ultimately led to the group's split in 1920. Ringelblum, and the left faction, argued that the combination of Zionism and communism was the only true path to Jerusalem. This sentiment was not popular, largely due to Russia's history of anti-Semitism, and the group lost most of its remaining influence by the 1930s. That did not deter Ringelblum, however, who continued to promote the movement. The most formative party influences for Ringelblum came from his development of a moral pathos, commitment to all things Jewish, and the idea that Yiddish scholars needed to work together.⁸⁵ These ideals played a major role in his development as a scholar and civil leader.

Despite his young age, Ringelblum quickly established himself as one of Poland's most prominent Jewish historians and activists by the early 1930s. He graduated from the University of Warsaw in 1927, where he, along with another student, established the *Yunger Historiker Krayz* (Young Historians Circle) of Jewish history.⁸⁶ It was at

⁸⁵ Robert Moses Shapiro and Tadeusz Epsztein, *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes-Ringelblum Archive: Catalog and Guide*, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), xvi.

⁸⁶ This group was extremely popular and its alumni include prominent Holocaust scholars like Isaiah Trunk, Joseph Kermish, and Artur Eisenbach.

university he learned the importance of class conflict and its role in Jewish history with the non-Jewish world. These lessons were immensely valuable as the Jews were, once again, under Polish sovereignty, and working to define their relationship with the Poles. Ringelblum urged his colleagues to speak out against anti-Semitic stereotypes and remind their new government that Jews fought for Polish independence and helped develop the country. Polish officials largely ignored these pleas and continued their anti-Semitic policies, e.g. *numerus clausus*, revoked citizenship of Jews abroad, and military segregation.⁸⁷ Perhaps the most shocking instance of Polish anti-Semitism occurred in prisoner of war camps, where Jewish soldiers suffered more from their Polish comrades than the Germans.⁸⁸ He also encouraged the study of women, apprentices, and beggars, or as he called them, the forgotten Jews. He had a strong devotion to preserve and share the histories of voiceless people.

Ringelblum remained dedicated to the *Poalei Tsiyon*, despite its unpopularity, and directed its cultural and educational sections. Although he stayed ardent in his radical ideals, Ringelblum was always receptive to working with his political opponents to further Yiddish culture and Jewish history. From 1927 to 1939, Ringelblum created the Jewish section at the International Historical Congress, served on the staff of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), helped establish and run Warsaw's active chapter of the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO), and organized a humanitarian relief effort for Polish Jews exiled from Germany.⁸⁹ These positions helped him develop as a

⁸⁷ Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews, 1933-1945* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), 306.

⁸⁸ Joseph Kermish, ed., *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor!...: Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S." ["Oneg Shabbath"]* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), xxii.

⁸⁹ Emanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emanuel Ringelblum*, ed. and trans. Jacob Sloan (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), x-ii; Robert Moses Shapiro and Tadeusz

leader, organizer, and mentor. They also strengthened his desire to help his people, which became even more important in fall 1939.

When the war broke out, Ringelblum had just returned from the World Zionist Congress in Geneva, but unlike most of his colleagues, he decided to remain in Warsaw. When the Germans were close to taking the city, he again chose to stay despite the pleas of his comrades and family. He continued his work at the JDC where he organized emergency relief and refugee aid. He also took part in the extremely dangerous civil defense watches. He became a leader in the *Yidische Soziale Aleinhilf* (YISA), a major Jewish aid organization and a useful source of information established in September 1939, in accordance with the Polish General Welfare Organization.⁹⁰ He also used this position to find jobs for his fellow scholars, which allowed him to help his friends and receive reliable information.

On 12 October 1940, the Nazis announced the plan for the Warsaw Ghetto, which forced the city's roughly 450,000 Jews and refugees into an enclosed three and a half square mile area of the city.⁹¹ Their goal was to isolate the Jews, take their property, force them into labor, and gradually starve them to death.⁹² On 16 November, the Germans sealed off the ghetto and, after the initial shock, the Jews settled into their captivity. While Ringelblum did not know the true extent of the Nazis' plans for the Jews at this point, he realized the danger he and the others faced. He knew Hitler's threats were more than propaganda and he would need factual evidence to show the world so he began

Epsztein, *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes-Ringelblum Archive: Catalog and Guide*, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), xvi.

⁹⁰ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, xlv.

⁹¹ "Warsaw Ghetto," Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, accessed 27 August 2016, <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/about/03/warsaw.asp>.

⁹² Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 129.

a daily journal. He could not compile all this information alone. He needed a trained and diverse staff to collect, check, and interpret data, then write as objectively as possible. His multiple positions within various aid groups allowed him to interact with the type of people he needed. He took advantage of this and began laying the foundation for what would become the *Oneg Shabbath* archive.

The *Oneg Shabbath* (O.S.), or Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archive, is a perfect example of cultural preservation.⁹³ Ringelblum's intention was to document every aspect of Jewish life, good and bad, during the Nazi occupation, while it was still fresh in the victims' minds, so that future researchers would have a comprehensive and creditable account of this era. He noted in his diary that, "We have aimed to present in our work the whole truth, no matter how bitter. Our photographs are true; they are untouched."⁹⁴ It is important to note that Ringelblum's inspiration for the O.S. did not appear in a vacuum. He was continuing a Jewish movement that began in the late nineteenth century. While there were a number of participants, the two most prominent were Simon Dubnow and Shloyme Zanvl Rappoport, better known by his pseudonym S. Ansky. Dubnow, a historian, called for Eastern European Jews to *zaml*, or collect, documents and learn about their rich history. He tasked his fellow Jews to write an objective, fact based history of their people and to use it to construct a modern identity. Ansky, a Russian-Jewish author, ethnographer, and leader of pre-war renaissance, carried the movement into the twentieth century and expanded the meaning of *zaml* to include the formation of archives.⁹⁵

⁹³ *Oneg Shabbath* was the code name for the underground archive because the members would meet on Saturday afternoons. Historians also use a variety of different spellings and names when discussing the archive such as, *Oyneg Shabes*, *Oneg Shabbat*, Warsaw Ghetto Archive, or the Ringelblum Archive.

⁹⁴ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, xxiv.

⁹⁵ Shapiro and Epsztein, *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes-Ringelblum Archive*, xv.

Along with public records, the *zamlers* gathered folklore, proverbs, jokes, and other oral Jewish traditions. Despite the movement's popularity and success, it received zero funding from governments, state archives, or universities, but that did not stop it. For Dubnow, Ansky, and later Ringelblum, the movement gave a nationless people a voice and way to share its message. In Ringelblum's opinion, it served as a bridge for scholars and ordinary Jews to come together and develop a stronger sense of community, and as a tool to destroy what he referred to as "ivory tower scholarship."⁹⁶ His desire to combine social welfare and history is essential to understanding why he constantly put himself in danger to document the Nazi slaughter of European Jewry.

Although Ringelblum formulated the idea of the O.S. in October 1939, it took him months to compile an initial staff. It was not for a lack of effort however, it was difficult to find people willing to join, or even admit they were writing. Despite these troubles, he found six men through his work with YISA to join his project, Menachem Kohn, Shmuel Lehman, Joshua Rabinowitz, L.L. Bloch, B. Sukenik, and Hirsch Wasser. Ringelblum and these men then held the first official O.S. meeting at Ringelblum's apartment on 22 November 1940.⁹⁷ Kohn, who also worked in YISA, handled the group's finances, organized its documentation process, and wrote original works for the Archive. He quickly became a leader within the organization and one of Ringelblum's most trusted colleagues. According to Wasser, Kohn was so vital to the group that, "Without him everything would burst like a soap bubble."⁹⁸ Wasser, a former political and community

⁹⁶ Samuel D. Kassow, "Politics and History: Emanuel Ringelblum and the Oneg Shabbes Archive," *Michael: On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora* (2004): 61.

⁹⁷ Hirsch Wasser, "The Ghetto Archives- The Enterprise of Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum," in *A Commemorative Symposium in Honour of Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum and His 'Oneg Shabbat' Underground Archives*, trans. Aleksandra Mahler (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1983), 35.

⁹⁸ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, xxx.

leader in Łódź, became secretary. He shared a similar prewar background with Ringelblum, who commented on Wasser's importance to the group, "His daily contacts with hundreds of refugee delegations from all over the country made possible hundreds of community monographs—the most important material in the O.S."⁹⁹

Unfortunately, historians do not have much information, or none in the case of Sukenik, on the other original members. Lehman collected Jewish folklore during both World Wars, but he and his works did not survive the war. Rabinowitz was an artist and ran a soup kitchen in the Ghetto. His death date is unknown, but according to a report from the United Fighting Underground Organizations of the Warsaw Ghetto, on 15 November 1942, he was one of the thousands of Jews deported to surrounding death camps that summer.¹⁰⁰

Although Ringelblum had gathered enough men to officially start the O.S., the group sputtered in its infancy. In summer 1940, that changed, according to Ringelblum, when he met the young historian Rabbi Simon Huberband, who was also keeping secret notes. After some persuasion, Huberband agreed to join the O.S. To Ringelblum, this was the turning point, "Already in the first months...I managed to get several persons to work with me, without too much success. But the moment I drew in the young historian... 'Oneg Shabbath' gained one of its best co-workers."¹⁰¹ Huberband, who also worked in the YISA after arriving from Piotrkow in early 1940, quickly became Ringelblum's right-hand man. The Rabbi's ability to collect and interpret information was invaluable to the O.S. He meticulously wrote everything he saw or heard and created an objective picture

⁹⁹ Ringelblum, *Notes*, xviii.

¹⁰⁰ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 48.

¹⁰¹ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, xxvii.

of the Ghetto under Nazi occupation. His objectivity vividly comes through in his notes about the dark side of Jewish life during this time, as historian Joseph Kermish describes, “He does not close his eyes to the happenings which caused him the greatest pain, such as the informers on the Jewish streets and the cases of the moral degradation of the Jewish women.”¹⁰² Sadly, the Nazis deported Huberband to a death camp, most likely Treblinka, on 18 August 1942, during the “Great Action.”¹⁰³

Ironically, the ghettoization of Warsaw allowed the archive to flourish. Early on, the *Gestapo* targeted the wealthy members of the Jewish community, giving little attention to political or social activities. In part, this “leniency” stemmed from the city falling under control of the *Generalgouvernement* and its overall distance from Germany. This by no means meant the Jews, and to some extent the Poles, had it easy, but they did have more autonomy than their western counterparts. This allowed more people to join and the amount of documents to grow. The organization even had enough “freedom” to hold writing competitions with monetary prizes.¹⁰⁴ This, however, created a new problem; more people meant it would be harder to keep the archive underground.

The O.S. had two types of workers: permanent, who dedicated their lives completely to the cause, and temporary, who contributed a single work on either their experience or that of their town or village. Some of these people became so involved they decided to join the group full time. In some instances, young people, even children, contributed to the effort by writing essays on poverty or life as an orphan. To ensure

¹⁰² Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, xxviii.

¹⁰³ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, xxviii; The Great Action was commonly used by Ringelblum and others to refer to the beginning of the mass deportation to Treblinka from 22 July to 12 September 1942.

¹⁰⁴ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 5.

secrecy, the group shunned members of the *Judenrät* and other Nazi controlled organizations. While this restricted the scope, it kept them protected. The group understood that documenting these atrocities would lead to sadistic torture and death if the Nazis discovered them, but they believed it was worth it so the world could know what had happened to them.¹⁰⁵

In early 1942, the Archive's leadership decided to summarize the two and a half years of information into four parts: general, economic, welfare work, and a section that covered culture, science, literature, and art.¹⁰⁶ The timing of this came from the amount of data the group had already amassed and from reports of the Nazis' first wave of mass executions in winter 1941-42. Ringelblum, Bloch, and Menachem Linder divided sections of the work for *Two and a Half Years of War*, the projects working title, amongst themselves and oversaw the entire project. They knew this would not fully encapsulate all the details from this period, largely due to a lack of German sources, but they understood the importance of having the events summarized by the people who experienced them. The goal was to create a detailed 2,000-paged report of ghetto life, or as Ringelblum called it, "one of the most important documents of the War period."¹⁰⁷ The leaders deliberated the outline of every topic for hours and had the contributors submit all their information and progress reports to the Archive. This allowed them to follow the progression and accumulate more documents on the Jewish experience.

Unfortunately, this goal was unattainable because life in the Ghetto was too unstable. The Jewish police and *Gestapo* randomly shot people in the street, seized them

¹⁰⁵ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 7-11.

¹⁰⁶ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 6.

for *Dynasy* (forced labor), or sent them to the *Umschlagplatz*, or deportation area.¹⁰⁸

Rabbi Huberband wrote about his experience with seizures in summer 1940, “We were walking down Targowa Street...when suddenly a Polish thug blocked our passage...They honoured us with several hefty slaps and led us off to another street where a loading truck was waiting.”¹⁰⁹ He then vividly depicted the sadistic actions of his captors, “Schultz then bellowed, ‘*Schwein*, open your trap.’ When I opened my mouth, he spat in it.” He goes on after waking up from a malicious beating, “Schultz ran over to the corner of the room, grabbed the spittoon and forced me to drink from it.”¹¹⁰ Huberband continued, “Worst of all was the ‘dog game.’ We Jews had to stand on all fours. Schultz and Krieger threw pieces of brick and plaster. And we had to catch them with our mouths. Woe to him...who failed to catch it...he was beaten murderously.”¹¹¹ He explained these types of actions occurred all day for an entire week until the Nazis released them to make room for new victims.

Hunger also played a role in daily ghetto life. Occupants had to survive on 180 grams of bread, the official daily ration.¹¹² This not only led to starvation, but also made them extremely susceptible to typhus and the other diseases that ravaged through the Ghetto. The combination of these two killed over 83,000 people, most of which were children, in the first two years of the Ghetto.¹¹³ These deplorable circumstances did not stop the writing however as Ringelblum noted:

¹⁰⁸ Ringelblum, *Notes*, xix-xx; *Dynasy* refers to forced labor for the Jews, usually in workshops for SS repairs. See Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 262.

¹⁰⁹ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 262.

¹¹⁰ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 264.

¹¹¹ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 265.

¹¹² Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, xxi.

¹¹³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Warsaw,” Holocaust Encyclopedia, last modified 20 June 2014, accessed 24 May 2016, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005069>.

The O.S. work was interrupted. Only a handful of our friends kept pencil in hand and continued to write about what was happening in Warsaw in those calamitous days. But the work was too holy for us, it was too deep in our hearts, the O.S. was too important for the community-we could not stop.¹¹⁴

Undeterred, the O.S. carried on with their work until 22 July 1942, when the Nazis introduced a new terror upon the Ghetto, mass deportations to Treblinka, the slaughterhouse of European Jewry. Even with their connections to various outside organizations, the group knew there was nothing they could do to stop, or even impede, the deportations. Ringelblum noted in his diary that the Nazis sent the rabbis of Kraków to Auschwitz after they had tried to stop the deportations.¹¹⁵ Warsaw eventually lost over 300,000 Jews to these horrific acts, including numerous Archive members, but the group continued to document the period. They tirelessly assembled eyewitness accounts of Jewish life across Poland. To ensure accuracy, the organization had the same incident described by as many people as possible. Ringelblum urged his followers to write as if the war had ended and not fear repercussions from the German or Jewish leaders responsible for the crimes against the Jews. He did this for the future tribunals, which would hold the guilty accountable, whether Jew, Pole, or German.¹¹⁶

Some residents of the Ghetto found it too difficult to write during such horrendous times. They could not bring themselves to relive the tragedy that was now their lives. An anonymous author broke their three-year silence after the bestial murder of 110 Jews from the Gęsia Street prison. The author writes, “I can no longer keep inside all that has collected in my hurting soul. My sense of self-preservation cries out and urges:

¹¹⁴ Ringelblum, *Notes*, xx.

¹¹⁵ Ringelblum, *Notes*, 127.

¹¹⁶ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 7-10.

WRITE!”¹¹⁷ It was events and resisters like this that allowed the *Oneg Shabbath* archive to not only exist, but also flourish.

The group did not just compile and preserve Jewish history. Through a complex system of resisters, they gathered material from ghettos across Poland and other Nazi occupied lands. On 1 April 1942, they published this information in the first edition of their bulletin *Wiadomości* to raise public awareness of the Nazis transition from indirect extermination to systematic annihilation. The O.S. produced two more editions over the following months that included eyewitness testimony of the Chelmno death camp and the confirmation of Hitler’s planned slaughter of European Jewry. The Polish Underground passed this information to the exiled Polish Government in London. In June, Radio London started broadcasting the Archive’s information.¹¹⁸ Ringelblum wrote about hearing this news on 26 June:

For many months we had been convinced that world was deaf and dumb to the tragedy of our plight... We blamed the bodies who were in direct contact with the Polish government for not providing information on the massacre of Polish Jews... Eventually, however, all our efforts at intervention worked... Thus, the ‘Oneg Shabbat’ group fulfilled its historical imperative, having alerted the world to our plight and perhaps saved hundreds of thousands of Jews from annihilation.¹¹⁹

On 15 November, the Polish Underground sent another report, based on O.S. information, to London, titled *The Annihilation of Jewish Warsaw*. The document

¹¹⁷ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 21-24.

¹¹⁸ Emanuel Ringelblum, Ruta Sakowska, Louis D. Levine, and Brana Gurewitsch, *Scream the Truth at the World: Emanuel Ringelblum and the Hidden Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto: Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, November 7, 2001- February 18, 2002* (New York: Museum of Jewish Heritage, 2006), 8; Kassow, “Politics and History,” 57.

¹¹⁹ Emanuel Ringelblum, “A Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto” in *The Ringelblum Archive: Annihilation- Day by Day*, ed. Marta Markowska, trans. Barbara Herchenreder (Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute, 2008), 184.

contained descriptions of the Nazis' bestial executions of Jews. The following is an account of cleaning out a Death House:

The 'grave-men' place themselves on the ramp in front of the trapdoors which open, but not one body falls out. The steam glued them all into a mass joined by their sweat. The murdered have been swirled and contorted in a macabre shape before dying; hands, legs and torsos are knotted in a solid block. In order to separate it, cold water is poured over the mass...the glue begins to dissolve and it becomes possible to pull out one body after another.¹²⁰

The resisters did not undertake this task looking for praise or glory. They did it to preserve their culture and to honor their families. Despite the dangers that came with writing, the desire to record the Nazi atrocities upon the Jews was too strong according to Ringelblum, "Everyone wrote — journalists, authors, teachers, social activists, young people, even children. Most wrote diaries in which daily events were illuminated through the prism of personal experience."¹²¹ Israel Lichtensztain, the O.S. administrative manager, wrote, "I do not ask for thanks, for memorial, for praise. Only to be remembered is what I wish."¹²² David Graber, another resister, noted that Jewish life did not wither in the Warsaw Ghetto. Undeterred by the horrendous conditions, Jewish activity grew and spread. He cited a number of different Socialist organizations and youth groups that helped people keep alive. He, Lichtensztain, and Nahum Grzywacz served as organization's Technical Committee. They were responsible for the concealment of the archive's documents. In Graber's last will, written on 3 August 1943, before concealing a cache of records, he wrote about their duty, "We sensed our responsibility. We shied from no risk. It was clear to us we were creating a piece of history and that was more

¹²⁰ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 47.

¹²¹ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, xiii.

¹²² Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 58.

important than individual life.”¹²³ All three died shortly after the burial and these short documents are the only trace of their existence.

As conditions in the Ghetto continued to deteriorate and become even more unstable in winter 1942-43, Ringelblum, after months of pleas from his comrades, finally decided to leave for the Aryan side of Warsaw. Despite finding safety on the other side, he continued to sneak back into the Ghetto to try to save Jewish children and cultural and intellectual elites. On 19 April 1943, when he was on a rescue mission, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began. Ringelblum took cover in a shop on 32 Nalewki Street, and witnessed the early days of the brutal fighting. The Nazis captured him a few days later and sent him to the Trawniki labor camp. He remained in the camp until August 1943, when Teodor Pajewski, a Pole, and Emilka Kossower, a Jewish woman, smuggled Ringelblum out. His friends Adolf Abraham and Batya Berman arranged his daring escape.¹²⁴ These few months of hard labor left part of Ringelblum broken. According to historian Samuel Kassow, when he returned to Warsaw and fellow O.S. member Rachel Auerbach informed him of Mussolini’s arrest he somberly replied, “Only with Liberation[sic] would they really begin to realize what they had endured, and then their real pain would begin.”¹²⁵

By spring 1944, Ringelblum and his family had been hiding with thirty-two other Jews in a small bunker on 81 Grojecka Street.¹²⁶ He did not like the place because it was overcrowded and most of the inhabitants were wealthy, which created even more danger

¹²³ Kermish, *To Live with Honor*, 58-66.

¹²⁴ Samuel D. Kassow, *Who will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 357-60.

¹²⁵ Rachel Auerbach, “*Varshever tsvoes*,” Tel-Aviv: *Yisra’el-bukh*, 1974, 206-7, quoted in Kassow, *Who will Write Our History?*, 360.

¹²⁶ Israel Gutman, ed., *Emanuel Ringelblum: The Man and the Historian* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010), 9.

and chance for extortion. It was here that Ringelblum wrote his final works, including his famous book *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*.¹²⁷ The group had managed to hide there for over a year before the Nazis discovered the hideout on 7 March.¹²⁸ The Germans took the group to the Pawiak Street prison where they were crammed into a small cell. The *Gestapo* brutally tortured him for information, but he refused. Other inmates tried to convince him they could smuggle him out, according to Yehiel Hirshaut, a fellow prisoner. Ringelblum, with his son Uri sitting on his lap, responded, “And what about my wife and child? I can’t leave my family.” Then pointing to his son, “Why is he to blame, this little boy? My heart is breaking because of him.”¹²⁹ The Nazis took him and the others to ruins of 19 Zamenhofa Street a few days later and shot them.¹³⁰ Orna Jagur, one of the two people who survived from the bunker, described Ringelblum during his final days:

Dr. Ringelblum did not vegetate in the bunker, unlike most of those staying there. He had a task to fulfill and the strength of will and intellect to pursue it: to transmit in his writings to future generations, the history of the annihilation of the Polish Jews and the crimes of the Nazis...Dr. Ringelblum was only physically present in ‘KRYZIA.’ His thoughts were far away from there. He did not take part in the everyday life of the bunker. He showed no excitement or involvement in moments of danger or relief. He did not take part in discussions or quarrels. His extensive work and the presence of his family were, evidently, his escape from the gray monotony of the passive existence in the bunker, which was to become the last stage of his life.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Emanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, ed. Joseph Kermish and Shmuel Krakowski, trans. Dafna Allon, Danuta Dabrowska, and Dana Keren (New York: Howard Fertig, 1976).

¹²⁸ The identity of the person who turned the group in to the Nazis is unknown, but according to Yaakov Celemenski, a member of the underground and comrade of Ringelblum, it was the girlfriend of Mieczysław Wolski, the owner of the bunker. Celemenski called her, “the angel of death of the Jews hiding in the bunker.” See Gutman, *Emanuel Ringelblum*, 16; Kassow, “Politics and History,” 80.

¹²⁹ Yehiel Hirshaut, “*Finstere nekht in Pawiak*,” Buenos Aires, 1948, 199, quoted in Kassow, “Politics and History,” 80.

¹³⁰ Friedman, *Martyrs and Fighters*, 304-7.

¹³¹ Orna Jagur, *The Hiding Place* (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 1997), 44-5; Krysia was the bunkers codename. In Polish, it is an affectionate term for woman named Kristina. It also alludes to the Polish word for a hiding place, *kryjówka*. See Gutman, *Emanuel Ringelblum*, 10.

In 1955, Meir Korzen, a former member of the Young Historian Circle, wrote that Ringelblum was more of an organizer than a scholar before the Holocaust.¹³² This claim was not false, but it did not tell the whole story. Without financial support from governments or universities, Jewish scholars needed a selfless, dynamic, and passionate figure to keep their *zaml* movement going. Ringelblum was a perfect fit for that role. He did not hesitate to sacrifice his own academic success for the preservation of Polish Jewish history. Kassow argued that the O.S. never would have occurred without Ringelblum and writes, “Ringelblum saw himself as a facilitator as well as a scholar... A Meyer Balaban or an Isaac Schiper, the most famous and accomplished Jewish historians in prewar Poland, would not have organized a collective undertaking like the Oyneg Shabes.”¹³³

Thanks to Ringelblum’s training as a historian, and desire to document the whole truth, the O.S. became the largest and most encompassing ghetto archive. Every aspect of the Jewish experience was important to the members, which is why the Archive contains over 35,000 pages of accounts of life in the Ghetto and Nazi occupied Poland. J. Winkler wrote about the adaptability and vitality of the Jews, with a particular focus on how they converted smuggled raw materials into manufactured goods to serve the Polish population on the Aryan side of Warsaw.¹³⁴ There are numerous daily depictions of Warsaw, but Peretz Opoczynski’s stand out. Opoczynski was a pre-war journalist and

¹³² Kassow, “Politics and History,” 67.

¹³³ Samuel Kassow, “Introduction,” in *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes-Ringelblum Archive: Catalog and Guide*, eds. Robert Moses Shapiro and Tadeusz Epsztein, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), xvii.

¹³⁴ Kermish, *To Live With Honor*, 535-52.

O.S. contributor, whom Ringelblum called, “the most diligent among them.”¹³⁵ Written in 1941, his works vividly depicted the horrendous ghetto living conditions, with a gruesome description of the Nazi’s murderous disinfections, or *paruvke*.¹³⁶ He also wrote about the mail service, which he worked in as a carrier, how the *Goyim*, or non-Jewish people, combated and facilitated the destruction of the Jews, the business of smuggling and how it opposed the Nazi’s attempted starvation plan, and how the entire Jewish community failed to provide adequate child welfare.¹³⁷

There are also other studies, monographs, and testimonies pertaining to topics such as: labor camps (N. Rosen, Huberband, and D. Chołodenko), clandestine publications of the Jewish and Polish Undergrounds, Nazi edicts (I. Lichtenstein and J. Grojanowski), orders from the *Judenrät* and Jewish ghetto police commander (J. Silberberg and Gitelson), economics and smuggling (D. Berliner, Tikocinski, E. Gutkovski, and Titelman), Polish-Jewish relations (Ringelblum and St. Różycki), women and children (Mrs. Slapak, Huberband, and N. Koninski), theater, art, and other cultural activities (St. Różycki, J. Turkov, H. Wasser), religious life (Huberband, Giterman, and H. Michelson), the establishment of a school system (Silberberg, E. Justman, E. Kataś, H. Brama, L. Efraymowicz, E. Gluzman, and J. Korczak), the role of House Committees and other self-help organizations (Ringelblum, Dr. C. Levine, Opoczynski, and R. Auerbach),

¹³⁵ Kermish, *To Live With Honor*, xviii.

¹³⁶ Peretz Opoczynski, “Building No. 21,” in *In Those Nightmarish Days: The Ghetto Reportage of Peretz Opoczynski and Josef Zelkowicz*, eds. Samuel D. Kassow and David Suchoff, trans. David Suchoff (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 22-30.

¹³⁷ See Peretz Opoczynski, “The Jewish Letter Carrier,” “Goyim in the Ghetto,” “Smuggling in the Warsaw Ghetto,” and “Children in the Streets,” in *In Those Nightmarish Days: The Ghetto Reportage of Peretz Opoczynski and Josef Zelkowicz*, eds. Samuel D. Kassow and David Suchoff, trans. David Suchoff (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 31-100.

and scores of other topics.¹³⁸ These thousands of pages show how Jewish life continued to flourish even in its darkest days. Ringelblum also decided to compose biographies on key governmental and community leaders, workers, scientists, writers, and other important Jewish figures that he thought deserved recognition.

The most important collection, in Ringelblum's opinion, were the monographs about Jewish communities across Poland. The majority of these were the result of Hirsch Wasser's daily contact with the thousands of refugees from every corner of the country. They depicted every stage of the war for Polish Jews, the Nazi invasion, the pogroms and other acts of violence, the German and Polish attitude towards them, community activity and social welfare, deportations, forced labor, views on the *Judenrät*, and many more. Most places have more than one account to ensure accuracy and show various perspectives on the events. Another vital source of information came from the meticulously constructed questionnaires the O.S. distributed across the Ghetto. These allowed victims to share their experiences without the risk of having a diary and provided the Archive with copious amounts of economic, social, and demographic data.

¹³⁸ Some of these works were never completed or did not survive the war. Scholars only know about them from the accounts that did make it. For descriptions of forced labor, "Forced Labor (Including Factories, S.C. "Shops") Forced Labor Camps," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 251-88; For clandestine publications, see "The Annihilation of Jewish Warsaw," and "Resistance Initiative and Uprising," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 34-54 and 584-606; For Nazi policies, see "Nazi Policy of Eradication and Total Extermination," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 680-716; For orders of the *Judenrät* and Jewish Police see, "'*Judenrät*' Policy and Social Tensions," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 289-331; For economics and smuggling see, "Economic Dynamics," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 533-84; For Polish-Jewish relations see, "Jewish-Polish Relations," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 607-44; Emanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, eds. Joseph Kermish and Shmuel Krakowski, trans. Dafna Allon, Danuta Dabrowska, and Dana Keren (New York: Howard Fertig, 1976); For women and children see, "Information on the Children's Relief and Main Activities of 'Centos' in January 1942, 9 February 1942," and "The Life and Fate of Children," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 366-8 and 370-409; For theater and arts see, "Clandestine Cultural Activities," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 433-57; For religion see, "Religious Life," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 410-30; For schooling see, "Clandestine Schooling, Secondary Schools and Universities, Jewish Youth," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 457-532. For self-help see, "The Social Self-Help and its Institutions," in *To Live with Honor*, Kermish, 332-69; Rachel Auerbach and Seymour Levitan, "A Soup Kitchen in the Warsaw Ghetto: From the Memoirs of Rachel Auerbach," *Bridges* 13, no. 2 (Autumn, 2008): 96-107.

This archive laid the foundation of the study of the Jewish experience during occupation. These works reflect the vibrant culture of Polish Jewry that did not falter in the face of Hitler's genocide. They provide historians with a unique look inside the lives of the people who resisted systematic annihilation by coming together and documenting every aspect of their situation to preserve their history for future generations. The O.S. was much more than an archive; it was a motivator, proposer of ideas, and stimulus to creativity. It was hope.¹³⁹

Unfortunately, historians have not been able to discover all the buried material of the O.S. for two key reasons. First, even though the members made several copies of each document and hid them in separate locations, only a select few knew the locations of the deposits. Thus, when those people died, so too did the knowledge about the whereabouts. Second was the almost complete destruction of the city caused by years of war, two separate uprisings, and overpopulation. The two recovered deposits however, show the amount of work the group did. Wasser, one of three members to survive the war, led the organized search for the first deposit at 68 Nowolipki Street in 1946.¹⁴⁰ Then, in 1950, after numerous failed searches, construction workers accidentally uncovered the second cache. There was a third collection, buried at 34 Świętojerska, that contained material on the Jewish fighting organization, but it remains lost despite a number of searches.¹⁴¹

The collection and preservation of the diaries, notes, periodicals, pictures, and other sources inside the boxes and milk cans, not only detail the numerous acts of resistance the Jews of Warsaw, and other cities, did, but also how the process itself is a

¹³⁹ Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 144.

¹⁴⁰ Wasser's wife, Bluma, and Rachel Auerbach were the other two survivors.

¹⁴¹ Shapiro and Epsztein, *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes-Ringelblum Archive*, xv.

form of resistance. These findings refute the claims of Hilberg and other scholars that Jews did not resist their oppressors. As a result, these discoveries helped broaden the definition of resistance to include writing; however, some scholars still ignore the act of collecting and persevering. This omission demeans the work of Ringelblum and the O.S. Their courageous acts classify as resistance, because the members defied Nazi orders and ensured the survival of their culture by preserving every aspect they could.

Oneg Shabbath members used their pens as weapons and life preservers. Their writings prove Jewish life did not falter in the face of their greatest oppression. These works fall under Rings' definition of symbolic resistance, which he describes as, "gestures communicating a message of opposition, sometimes at great risk and sometimes not, both to occupiers and occupied."¹⁴² They also fit into Bauer and Gottlieb's respective classifications because the O.S. was an intentional group action against Hitler's goal of total Jewish annihilation. The act of keeping a written record of their lives and history enabled the Jews to keep their culture or "Jewishness" alive, which is what the Nazis were ultimately trying to destroy. It also allowed them to have hope, not for their own survival, but for future generations. They hoped their efforts would educate the world and stop similar horrific events from happening again. They also provided an outlet to cope with and reflect on life in the ghetto. The documents show their authors' agony and fear, faith and despair, ingenuity and love, prosperity and poverty, but most importantly, hope.

When researching these acts, it is imperative to keep in mind the intent of the actors, not the immediate effect. It would be naïve to assume these passive acts of

¹⁴² Rings, *Life with the Enemy*, 153.

resistance would stop Hitler's attempted destruction of the Jews alone. Ringelblum and the others knew that, but it does not make their actions any less important or heroic. According to the director of the Warsaw Jewish Historical Institute Feliks Tych, the 1943 Ghetto Uprising grew from the information collected by the O.S. and their nonviolent resistance style.¹⁴³ They understood the importance of accurately recording this gruesome chapter of world history so the world would know of the Nazis' barbaric crimes against humanity. They knew it would not save them or their families, but the O.S. served as an outlet to preserve the truth, voice their concerns and frustrations, and provide sources to, eventually, bring their oppressors to justice.

These non-violent resisters' actions were not futile. They prevented the Nazis from their goal of total annihilation and succeeded in preserving Jewish culture for future generations. Thanks to Emanuel Ringelblum and the dozens of other men and women of *Oneg Shabbath*, the stories of thousands of innocent Jews have avoided slipping into oblivion and now serve as a source of inspiration and education. This was the Archive's mission according to Ringelblum, "I do not know who will survive from our group and who will be given the good fortune to be able to edit the material we have amassed. One thing, however, is clear to all; our work and our efforts, our sacrifices and the constant danger to our lives have not been in vain."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Emanuel Ringelblum, Ruta Sakowska, Louis D. Levine, and Brana Gurewitsch, *Scream the Truth at the World: Emanuel Ringelblum and the Hidden Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto: Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, November 7, 2001- February 18, 2002* (New York: Museum of Jewish Heritage, A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, 2006), viii.

¹⁴⁴ Ringelblum, "A Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto," 184.

Chapter 2: Łódź

I buried my negatives in the ground in order that there should be some record of our tragedy...I was anticipating the total destruction of Polish Jewry. I wanted to leave a historical record of our martyrdom.

– Henryk Ross, *Memory Unearthed*

At the start of the War, Łódź was the second most populated city in Poland. The roughly 233,000 Jews that lived there made up over one third of the city's population. Established in the nineteenth century, Łódź's Jewish community was relatively new, especially compared to Warsaw. Despite its infancy, the community had the largest demographic growth and number of working class citizens in Eastern Europe. While they regularly interacted with the gentile community, the Jews had their own distinctive way of life and political institutions, like the *Kehilla* and Jewish Socialist Workers Party.¹⁴⁵ They had their own schools, hospitals, theaters, sports clubs, libraries, and welfare systems for the elderly and orphans. Largely due to the considerable contributions of Jews, who served as entrepreneurs, merchants, managers, workers, artisans, and cottage industry laborers, Łódź became one of Europe's major centers for textile production in less than a century. This prosperity helped an already thriving public and cultural atmosphere for the Jews; however, this economic dependence compounded the existing ethnic tension between the city's Polish, Jewish, and German populations, which dated back centuries and reached its peak with the rise of fascism in the 1930s.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ A *Kehilla*, or *Kehillot* for plural, was an elected board of local Jewish leaders that regulated the internal affairs of the community. They were popular across Central and Eastern Europe.

¹⁴⁶ It was estimated that the Jews controlled around 70 percent of the total business life in the city; Jacob Apenszlak, Jacob Kenner, Isaac Lewin, and Moses Polakiewicz, eds., *The Black Book of Polish*

By August 1939, with war looming and anti-Semitism at an all-time high, the Jewish community teetered between fear and cautious optimism, according to Dawid Sierakowiak, a Łódź Jew. He wrote about the unsettling mood amongst the city's Jews when news came of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, "Terrible, interesting, strange news. The Germans are concluding a twenty-five year nonaggression pact with the Soviets! ...Who knows how the European situation will develop now?"¹⁴⁷ After the agreement became official on 23 August, he noted, "Although terrible scenes of farewell are taking place in the streets across the city [for the men who voluntarily enlisted in the Polish army], in our building there is a heroic calm... There isn't the slightest sign of defeatism."¹⁴⁸ These sentiments quickly disappeared, however, after the Nazis invaded Poland on the 1 September and seized control of Łódź, on 8 September, with the help of the city's large and well-organized German population.¹⁴⁹

The Jews of Łódź now lived in a state of anguish and resignation, terrified by their unknown future. Their occupiers forced them to take meaningless and degrading jobs and subjected them to random beatings and robberies in their homes, businesses, or on the streets, as well as evictions and curfews. Fear became a part of their everyday life as more and more horrific stories circulated throughout the city. Even before the Germans

Jewry: An Account of the Martyrdom of Polish Jewry under the Nazi Occupation (New York: Howard Fertig, 1982), 66; Julian Baranowski and Sławomir M. Nowinowski, eds., *Łódź Ghetto 1940-1944: Litzmannstadt Getto 1940-1944*, trans., Katarzyna Gucio (Łódź: Institute of National Remembrance, 2014), 6-10; Anna Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, ed., *Preserved Evidence: Ghetto Łódź* (Haifa: H. Eibeshitz Institute for Holocaust Studies, 1998), 23.

¹⁴⁷ Dawid Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Alan Adelson, trans. Kamil Turowski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 27.

¹⁴⁸ Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, 27.

¹⁴⁹ The majority of the ethnic Germans living in Łódź were members of either the *Deutsche Volksverband* or *Jung Deutsche Partei*, the two major pro-Nazi political parties in Poland. These groups produced propaganda and supplied personnel and information for the Nazis during the occupation; Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xxxii-iii.

occupied the city, a majority of the *Kehilla*, including chairman Jakub Leib Minberg, and other intelligentsia members fled eastward to escape persecution along with thousands of other Jews. The members that stayed attempted to regain a sense of normalcy by electing new *Kehilla* officials on 12 September, but it was short lived. The following month, the Nazis either deported or killed twenty-eight of the remaining thirty-one members. On 13 October, city commissioner Albert Leister appointed Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, one of three survivors, as the Eldest of the Jews, or head of the Council of Elders.¹⁵⁰

Although it was not apparent at the time of the selection, Rumkowski was a perfect fit for what the Nazis wanted. Holocaust scholars Alan Adelson and Robert Lapidés describe Rumkowski as, “Always ready, without discussion, to carry out orders, even those with great consequences... He was smart, and though not exceptionally intelligent, he had a great memory and ability to grasp things quickly... he was an autocrat, never forgetting someone who had done him a favor but also not forgetting if someone had opposed him.”¹⁵¹ When the Germans ordered Rumkowski to disband all the existing Jewish boards, including the *Kehilla*, and personally select members for the new group, he gladly fulfilled their demand and chose people he could control. This position also made him responsible for the Ghetto’s economic life, labor, welfare, health care, and distribution of the food supply. Although Rumkowski was 63, he was energetic, adaptable and, above all, eager for power.

¹⁵⁰ In Łódź, the Nazis referred to the *Judenrät* as the Council of Elders or *Ältestenrat*; Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xliii; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 62-3; Alan Adelson and Robert Lapidés, eds., *Lodz Ghetto: A Community Under Siege* (New York: Viking Press, 1989), 19.

¹⁵¹ Adelson and Lapidés, *A Community Under Siege*, 51.

Initially, Łódź served as the capital of the *Generalgouvernement* section of Poland and its governor Hans Frank; however, Arthur Greiser, Frank's counterpart in the *Warthegau*, wanted the city for its industrial value.¹⁵² After weeks of deliberation amongst top Nazi officials and pleas from the city's German residents, Łódź became part of the *Warthegau*, one of the three sections incorporated into the Third Reich, on 7 November 1939.¹⁵³ For the Jews, the significance of this decision exceeded its political and administrative ramifications, because the new region was initially supposed to be *Judenfrei*, or free of Jews. As a result, the city was to become "racially clean" and underwent an immediate and intensive "germanization."¹⁵⁴ Over the following months, the Nazis deported thousands of Jews and Poles to the *Generalgouvernement*, changed the city's name to Litzmannstadt, in honor of First World War general Karl Litzmann, and replaced all the Polish named streets and squares with German names. They also prohibited the use of the Polish language in newspapers, schools, theaters, and cinemas and applied the Nuremberg Laws to the *Warthegau*.¹⁵⁵ In the 1930s, the German population, or *Volksdeutschen*, grew from 60,000 to 143,000. This was the result of the Nazis' search for residents with a certain amount of German blood and the immigration of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe. Anyone who met these standards became part of the privileged race. In addition to the deportations, the Nazis evicted even more Jews, and

¹⁵² Łódź became part of the *Generalgouvernement* on 28 September 1939. Joanna Podolska, *Traces of the Litzmannstadt-Getto: A Guide to the Past*, trans. Dorota Dekiert (Łódź: Piątek Trzynastego, 2004), 10; Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, ed. and trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), xxix.

¹⁵³ Scholars also refer to the region of *Warthegau* as *Wartheland* or *Reichsgau Posen*; Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xxxiv.

¹⁵⁴ Podolska, *Traces of the Litzmannstadt-Getto*, 6.

¹⁵⁵ Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, xxxi.

Poles to a lesser extent, from their homes and businesses to make room for this influx. Almost overnight, the city transformed into the Nazis' industrial capital in the East.¹⁵⁶

Even though Łódź did not become part of the *Warthegau* until early November 1939, the Nazis and local German population had already initiated pogroms against the Jews. The first took place on 8 October, under the supervision of Reich Minister of Propaganda Goebbels. The Nazis shot into Jewish homes, dragged victims into the streets for beatings, threw babies out of windows, and burned people alive. According to journalist Jacob Apenszlak, when the head of the Jewish community, Chaim Rumkowski, pleaded with Goebbels to stop the barbaric attacks, the minister reportedly responded, "Nothing was happening except that the soldiers were having a little fun before going off to the front."¹⁵⁷ On 18 October, a group of *Schutzstaffel* (SS) men took over 100 Jews from a local café and forced the victims, who were able to secure their freedom through bribes, to dig the graves of those who could not.¹⁵⁸ The following month, the occupiers forced the Jews to destroy various Polish monuments, while groups of Poles watched. Shortly after, several synagogues burned down and Nazi propaganda claimed the arson was the Poles' response to the destruction of their landmarks. These types of horrific events soon became a part of daily life for all Jews under Nazi control. The Germans used and built upon the experience they gained in Łódź for their occupation of the rest of Poland, and, later, parts of Europe.

As previously stated, in an attempt to make Łódź *Judenfrei*, the Nazis deported thousands of Jews to the *Generalgouvernement*. They quickly discovered however, that it

¹⁵⁶ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xxiii-xxiv.

¹⁵⁷ Josef Goebbels quoted in Apenszlak, *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*, 68-9.

¹⁵⁸ The *Schutzstaffel* was a Nazi paramilitary group. Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xxxiv.

was not possible to remove all of them. On 10 December 1939, in a highly classified memorandum to top Nazi leaders, Administrative President of Łódź Friedrich Übelhör proposed, in detail, the establishment of a ghetto.¹⁵⁹ He wrote, “It is obvious that the establishment of the ghetto is only a transitional measure. I reserve for myself the decision as to when and how the city of Łódź will be cleansed of Jews. In any case, the final aim must be to burn out entirely the pestilent abscess.”¹⁶⁰ After deliberation amongst the party leaders, the Nazis officially announced plans for a temporary ghetto on 8 February 1940.¹⁶¹ That same day, Łódź Police-President Johannes Schäfer released an ordinance with detailed instructions as to how and when the Jews were to move into the designated area, a process the Nazis called *Ordnung*.¹⁶²

From February to April 1940, the Nazis forced 164,000 Jews into a 4.13 square kilometer area composed of two of the oldest, most impoverished areas of the city: Bałuty and Old Town.¹⁶³ This transitional period was chaotic and, at times, deadly. Initially, the Germans handled the transports smoothly and according to plan. They quickly realized however, that forcefully relocating such a large number of people took longer than they had expected.¹⁶⁴ To expedite the process the Nazis continued their mass

¹⁵⁹ Adelson and Lapidés, *A Community under Siege*, 23-6; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 10, 19-21; Arad, Gutman, and Margaliot, *Documents on the Holocaust*, 192-5.

¹⁶⁰ Adelson and Lapidés, *A Community Under Siege*, 26.

¹⁶¹ From a memorandum by Mayor Karl Marder, dated 4 July 1941, historians learned that the Ghetto was only supposed to last until all the Jews were removed no later than 1 October 1940; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 11-2; Adelson and Lapidés, *A Community Under Siege*, 31.

¹⁶² Along with informing the Jews of how and when they will move into the Ghetto, this second document explicitly defines the area of resettlement, what items the Jews could take, how to apply for housing, the movement of the sick, punishment for leaving the transport group, admission into the Ghetto, and housing bans; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 16, 21-6.

¹⁶³ According to Trunk, 1.5 of the 4.13 square kilometers were undeveloped and uninhabited and .22 square kilometers were designated for police use and construction work. This left only 2.41 square kilometers for the 164,000 Jews to live, or 68,000 per square kilometer. For comparison, Trunk writes the city’s population density in 1931 was only 10,248 per square kilometer; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 15-6.

¹⁶⁴ The Nazis also had to deal with relocating the Polish residents that lived in Bałuty and Old Town.

deportations until Goering ordered all resettlement actions to stop in late March 1940.¹⁶⁵ They also turned to violence as a means to accelerate the move, which resulted in what historians refer to as “Bloody Thursday.” On the night of 6-7 March, the Germans stormed into Jewish houses on Piotrkowska Street, threw the occupants into the street, and proceeded to beat, rob, and, ultimately, shoot hundreds of them.¹⁶⁶ According to Apenszlak, when Jewish leaders tried to intervene, Dr. Otto Bradfisch, chief of the *Gestapo*, stated Polish Jews lacked the self-respect to commit suicide unlike their German and Austrian counterparts.¹⁶⁷ After that night, the Jews, according to Trunk, “no longer walked, but ran in panic into the ghetto.”¹⁶⁸ In the following weeks, the Jews experienced minor harassment from angry Poles and ethnic Germans that the Nazis forced out of their homes, but overall the transition went peacefully. Then, on 1 May, the Nazis officially sealed the Ghetto’s gates along with the fate of hundreds of thousands of Jews.

Unlike the ghettos further east, Łódź, by design, was completely isolated from the outside world. The Nazis prohibited Aryans from entering and Jews from leaving, with a few rare exceptions. While this restraint was horrible, it did have one positive side effect; the Jews no longer had to face persecution from the *Volksdeutsche* or Poles, which was a relief for the Jews initially. The Germans also censored information from the outside by barring radio use, non-German newspapers, and confiscating Jewish mail. They also implemented a system of high fences and towers and ordered the guards to shoot, without

¹⁶⁵ The total number of deportations is unknown, but most scholars estimate the number reached into the thousands.

¹⁶⁶ Michal Unger, ed., *The Last Ghetto: Life in the Łódź Ghetto 1940-1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1995), 32.

¹⁶⁷ Otto Bradfisch quoted in Apenszlak, *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*, 73.

¹⁶⁸ Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 14.

warning, anyone who approached on the Jewish side. In an effort to squash any attempts of smuggling, they seized all the Jews' remaining assets and issued them ghetto currency, which was worthless on the outside. The Jews sarcastically referred to the script as "chaimke" or "rumki," in honor of Rumkowski.¹⁶⁹

Living conditions within the Ghetto were deplorable, thanks to a lack of Jewish self-help agencies and the fact that the Nazis hermetically sealed it off from the outside world. Unlike in Warsaw, where smuggling accounted for over 80 percent of the available food, the Jews of Łódź were completely dependent on the Germans and Rumkowski. In the first two months alone, the population decreased by over 8,000 due to deaths and deportations. There were roughly 32,000 apartments, of which only 725 had running water, for the 164,000 inhabitants.¹⁷⁰ Thus, the Jews had to discard their excrement and garbage into pits, but those filled up quickly and the streets soon became the new dumping ground. A majority of these structures were wooden and in danger of collapsing due to age and lack of maintenance. Most of the buildings had electricity, but the Nazis did not allow the Jews to use lights at night. These circumstances created a huge threat of fire and disease, specifically typhus. The lack of access to healthcare partially caused the latter. There were only forty-six doctors and four pharmacies in the Ghetto.¹⁷¹ Unfortunately, these issues were only the beginning for the Jews.

The first year in the Ghetto was relatively uneventful. The Nazis did not pay attention to the Ghetto's internal affairs as long as they did not have to. This was a major reason they made Rumkowski responsible for the Jews' peacekeeping, social,

¹⁶⁹ Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, xxxii.

¹⁷⁰ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xxxvii.

¹⁷¹ In 1941 alone, over 17,000 people died of typhus in the Ghetto, which was eight times higher than any pre-war year; Apenszlak, *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*, 74.

administrative, and economic activities. Rumkowski took his position seriously and used this “autonomy” to construct a gigantic bureaucratic network of various offices, councils, departments, and commissions. These sectors covered every facet of ghetto life, such as, labor, food supply, social welfare, a police force, a court system, and prisons. The Eldest of the Jews also established a social hierarchy with himself, unrivaled, at the top followed by his inner circle of the heads of various departments, the courts, workshops, and police, all of which he personally appointed. Rumkowski gave the people in this stratum the best housing, additional food rations, and protection from deportations and raids. The next level consisted of instructors and skilled and distinguished workers. This group also had access to extra food and protection, but not to the same degree. The final group encompassed the majority of the inhabitants, the regular workers and unemployed. This classification system created an unceasing state of tension amongst the Jews, because it determined the amount and quality of each person’s daily rations and housing situation. According to Holocaust survivor and historian Lucjan Dobroszycki, who lived in the Łódź Ghetto, Rumkowski, “transformed the ghetto into a sort of Lilliputian quasi-centralized state where there was practically no place for private initiative or for any sort of unsupervised public activity.”¹⁷²

Although there was a rampant amount of corruption within the Jewish administration and Rumkowski left little room for unsanctioned social activity, it operated efficiently and, early on, provided people with much needed assistance, a sense of normalcy, and, to a certain degree, structure. The Jewish leadership established secular and religious schools, soup kitchens and other social aid establishments, as well as

¹⁷² Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xlviii.

various cultural institutions like a theater and concert hall. The rabbinate observed Jewish holidays, despite having to work, and performed traditional religious ceremonies, such as marriages or circumcisions. Many of the institutions served as meeting places for various political groups, like the Bund, *Poale Zion*, or the communists. These meetings allowed the victims to voice their frustrations about the Nazis, Rumkowski, or their overall situation. At times, these gatherings developed into street demonstrations, labor strikes, or other forms of protest, but they were never successful. Shortly after a movement started, Rumkowski sent his police force in to suppress it. If that did not work, as was the case in summer 1940, the Nazis stepped in and aimlessly shot into the crowd murdering hundreds.¹⁷³ While some of these activities were only available to certain groups, they alleviated some of the suffering, if only for a short while, and gave people hope that they, or at least their culture, would survive. These actions also prove that the Jews, in Łódź, resisted the Nazis the only way they could, symbolically.

Rumkowski had numerous flaws as a person and leader. His eagerness for power caused him to come off as arrogant and make brash, near-sighted decisions, which led to his unpopularity, not just in Łódź, but also in most of the European Jewish community. After the Eldest of the Jews visited the Warsaw Ghetto in May 1941, Adam Czerniakow, the head of the Warsaw *Judenrät*, described Rumkowski as, “replete with self-praise, a conceited and witless man, and a dangerous man, too, since he keeps telling the authorities that all is well in his preserve.”¹⁷⁴ Nathan Eck, a Jew from Łódź who fled

¹⁷³ After seeing the Nazis’ response, the Jews decided to end their open street demonstrations; Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xlix.

¹⁷⁴ Adam Czerniakow, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, ed. Raul Hilburg, Stanislaw Staron, and Josef Kermisz. Trans. Stanislaw Staron and the staff of Yad Vashem (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 237.

from the Ghetto in 1942, wrote in his memoirs that Moshe Merin, the chairman of the *Judenrät* in Zagłębie, had told him, “Heaven knows what punishment this Rumkowski deserves...because he showed the Germans the way.”¹⁷⁵ Rumkowski commonly spoke to the ghetto inhabitants in a patronizingly tone, as if they were children. He also told people in both private and public that he was the only one who knew what was best for the Jews.

Despite Rumkowski’s multiple faults, organization and efficiency were two of his strengths. His gigantic bureaucratic network employed thousands of people and tracked everything that occurred in the Ghetto from business transactions to everyday life. As a result, the Nazis allowed Rumkowski to establish the Department of Archives, on 17 November 1940, to ensure the accuracy of this documentation.¹⁷⁶ Originally, the purpose of the Archive was to keep record of all the outgoing correspondence from every department and to preserve pre-war and contemporary Jewish materials, but its scope grew rapidly.¹⁷⁷ Much like Emanuel Ringelblum, in Warsaw, Henryk Neftalin, the head of all the records departments, understood the importance of documenting the Nazis’ attempted destruction of European Jewry. In a speech, Neftalin told the archivists to collect all the information they could from other departments and the Ghetto’s inhabitants, “for future scholars studying the life of a Jewish society in one of its most

¹⁷⁵ Nathan Eck, *Ha-toim be-darkhei ha-mavet: havay ve-hagahot be-yemei ha-kilayon* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1960), 13, quoted in Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, xxxv.

¹⁷⁶ This department was the fifth section, out of six, of the departments that covered population records in Łódź. The other four were the Registration Bureau, Department of Statistics, Department of Vital Statistics, the Rabbinical Bureau, and a photography workshop. Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, ix.

¹⁷⁷ Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 47.

difficult periods.”¹⁷⁸ Rumkowski ordered every agency to facilitate this preservation attempt and provide any information the Archive’s staff requested. The archivists also interviewed top Jewish administrators and kept the minutes of all the various departments’ meetings. In addition to those materials, the archivists gathered both German and Jewish documents such as memorandums, orders, official correspondence, proclamations, and photographs. They also collected rare books and manuscripts, most of which belonged to members of the Jewish intelligentsia, who had fled before the occupation or the Nazis had killed or deported. The archivists were able to expand their scope because, the Germans paid little attention to their, and the rest of the Jews’, daily activities as long as the Ghetto was operating efficiently.

Simultaneous with the archivists’ *zamling*, they also produced original works pertaining to ghetto life. They wrote books on a variety of subjects like the history of the Ghetto, Yiddish and Hebrew literature, economic issues, questions of culture and religion, and ghetto life for children. They also composed articles about workshops, other agencies, hunger, food distribution, social hierarchy, and housing disputes. Other items of value were their detailed biographies on top Jewish officials and other influential ghetto inhabitants. Their most important and comprehensive work, however, was the *Biuletyn Kroniki Codziennej*, or, as historians call it, the *Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*.¹⁷⁹

The *Chronicle* was the semi-official publication of the Archive of the Eldest of the Jews, which covered every aspect of ghetto life on a nearly daily basis from its

¹⁷⁸ Henryk Neftalin, “Speech on the First Anniversary of the Founding of the Archives,” The Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, M.C. Rumkowski Records, no. 2113, quoted in Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, x.

¹⁷⁹ The Archive also published the *Ghetto Chronicle* in German under the name *Tages-Chronik*; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 4.

inception on 12 January 1941, to its final publication on 30 July 1944, the day before the Nazis deported all but 700 of the 68,561 Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau.¹⁸⁰ The bulletins recapped each day's events, as well as, any topic the reporters deemed relevant. Over time, the latter became recurrent and had their own heading or section based on subjects. This list included events such as deportations and settlements, Jewish holidays and how to observe them in the Ghetto, the weather, shootings on the Jewish side of the fence, deaths and births, matters of public health and safety, orders by the German and Jewish administrations, actions in the various Jewish departments and workshops, cultural activities, food rationing, smuggling and other black market matters, and suicides.¹⁸¹ Similar to the other works, the *Chronicle* was a group effort. United by a common goal and unfortunate fate, the group, composed of roughly fifteen people, depending on the time, from various ages, education levels, nationalities, worldviews, languages, and professions, worked together seamlessly.

Aside from the firsthand accounts, the *Chronicle* is an invaluable collection of documents because of its authors' diversity. Josef Zelkowicz was a writer, ethnographer, ordained rabbi, and historian from Konstantynów, a small town outside of Łódź.¹⁸² He wrote in both Polish and Yiddish, but primarily in the latter. Before the war, his works appeared in newspapers and journals across Poland and a few in the United States. Much like Ringelblum, Zelkowicz was an active member in the YIVO and served on the board for its Łódź chapter. Julian Cukier, or the Plutarch of the ghetto as his coworkers referred to him, was an original member and prewar journalist from a prominent industrial family

¹⁸⁰ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xiv and 535.

¹⁸¹ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xvi.

¹⁸² Although Zelkowicz was ordained, he was never a practicing rabbi.

in Łódź. He initiated and led the project until his health forced him to stop. Dr. Abram S. Kamieniecki, originally from Słonim, became a trained scholar in philosophy and philology, with a specialization in Biblical studies, after attending universities across Europe. Before the war, he published multiple articles in scholarly journals, served as an editor for a Jewish encyclopedia in Russia, and sponsored the first edition of the *Almanac of Łódź Society*.

Dr. Bernard Heilig was a renowned historian for his works on Jewish economic history from Prostějov, in modern day Czech Republic. Dr. Oskar Rosenfeld, also originally from the Czech Republic, became a prominent Zionist writer and publicist after graduating from Vienna University. He authored multiple books and translated a number of classic and contemporary Yiddish works into German. In Austria, Rosenfeld commonly worked with Zionist Party leaders Theodor Herzl and Hugon Zuckermann. He also co-established the first Jewish theater, in Vienna, and worked as editor for the local Zionist weekly, *Die Neue Welt*. After the *Anschluss*, Rosenfeld moved to Prague and wrote for the *Jewish Chronicle* of London. Dr. Oskar Singer was a publicist, author, and playwright from Austria. He contributed to a plethora of general and Jewish periodicals and wrote the 1935 anti-Nazi play *Herren der Welt: Zeitstück in 3 Akten*. The Nazis deported all three of these men from Prague to Łódź in October 1941.¹⁸³ These men were part of the 19,953 Jews from Germany, Austria, Bohemia, and Luxembourg that the Nazis removed in an effort to make the Old Reich and Protectorate *Judenfrei* by the end of the year.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Other contributors to the *Chronicle* include, Szmul Hecht, Alicja de Bunon, Jerachmil Bryman, H. Dumnnow, Jaszkańska, M. Nowak, Dr. Halpern, Dr. Peter Wertheimer, and Bernard Ostrowski, who was the only member of the *Archive* to survive the war.

¹⁸⁴ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, lvii.

Originally, the Archive published the *Chronicle* in Polish, but after December 1942, they switched to German.¹⁸⁵ While the two publications shared the aforementioned formal and thematic structure, they had differences. Julian Cukier was the lead author of the Polish edition, with the help of Abram Kamieniecki and Bernard Ostrowski. Their version was, usually, a daily recap with the date and time listed with each covered topic in chronological order. There were occasionally, however, instances where the authors included a follow up to a past event. Oskar Singer served as the principal writer for the German bulletins with the help of Bernard Heilig, Oskar Rosenfeld, Peter Wertheimer, and Alicja de Bunon. These were strictly daily accounts unless a major event like the *Gehsperre* (curfew) or a mass deportation occurred. Compared to the Polish bulletins, these were more uniform, eloquent, and concise; however, at times, this made them seem rather detached or withdrawn. While these daily recaps are invaluable, it was the chroniclers' discursive essays and articles on recurrent topics or issues such as hunger, corruption, or selfless acts that allow modern scholars to develop a better sense of what ghetto life was like. Early on, these "Sketches of Ghetto Life" appeared sporadically, but they became a regular addition as ghetto life became more difficult, especially after the Nazis began their mass deportations to the Chełmno death camp in mid-1942.¹⁸⁶

While there are numerous cases of Jews clandestinely working together to record their experiences in ghettos and camps, Łódź is the only example where the effort was part of an official Jewish administration; however, this caveat restricted the content and

¹⁸⁵ From 12 January 1941, to 1 September 1942, the Chronicle ran under the Polish name *Biuletyn Kroniki Codziennej*, or *Daily Chronicle Bulletin*. Then, from September to December 1942, it had a Polish and German version, called *Tageschronik*, or the *Daily Chronicle*; Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xv.

¹⁸⁶ The heading, "Sketches of Ghetto Life" only appeared in the German version of the *Chronicle*. The Polish edition did not have a designated title.

overall tone of the archivists' writing. According to Dobroszycki, this created three key limitations for the chroniclers: the self-imposed censorship due to the Nazis' daily presence within the Ghetto, the authenticity and accuracy of the authors' sources of events inside the ghetto and the rest of Europe, and lastly, the restrictions caused by trying to keep Rumkowski satisfied and being a part of the official administration in general.¹⁸⁷ Although the Nazis authorized the creation of the Archive and allowed the Jews to collect and record information, they apparently did not know about the *Chronicle*. Historians have not found a single German document that indicates they knew about the project during their occupation.¹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the chroniclers knew the Nazis could uncover their work at any moment, which is why there is an absence of criticism towards their occupiers.

According to Trunk, these documents give historians an unprecedented view of the inner workings of the Łódź Ghetto, but "its attitudes and interpretations, as a semi-official publication of the Rumkowski administration, must be taken with great reservations."¹⁸⁹ On the surface, it appears the authors of the *Chronicle* were silent of any discontent and just merely recorded the available facts. They were cautious of asking too many questions, in fear of drawing the Nazis' attention. When read closely, however, their writings are full of euphemisms and impersonal descriptions that show their displeasure. Despite their best efforts to sneak the true emotions of the Ghetto into their writings, the chroniclers still had to submit their work to Rumkowski for examination.

¹⁸⁷ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xvii.

¹⁸⁸ According to Dobroszycki, there is no way to know if there was a copy of the *Chronicle* in the cache of documents the Nazis found hidden in a cemetery during the final liquidation of the Ghetto in summer 1944.

¹⁸⁹ Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 4.

Dr. Józef Klementynowski, the director of the Archives, wrote that he wanted to preserve the truth as much as possible, but he would do whatever the Eldest of the Jews ordered.¹⁹⁰ After the war, Bernard Ostrowski bluntly stated that the contents of the *Chronicle* had to pass through Rumkowski's censorship before publication.¹⁹¹

That suppression is undoubtedly the reason for the omission of any criticism towards Rumkowski, even though there are numerous private diaries, by both members of the Archive and regular Jews, which show disdain for the leader.¹⁹² The Eldest of the Jews, much like a dictator, was intransigent and only allowed the authors to refer to him, and his actions, in a positive way. He also made sure the chroniclers misconstrued the real causes of the strikes and protests as the result of a few anarchists. He considered anyone who defied him as an enemy to himself and to peace in the Ghetto. According to Dobroszycki, the *Chronicle* is, "reminiscent of the medieval chronicles written in besieged towns that were doomed to destruction and...of a censored contemporary newspaper, not to be read by anyone except those who wrote it."¹⁹³

The censorship also applied to the Jewish administration's higher officials and other members of the privileged echelon. There were gaps in the societal classes in every ghetto, and while there were fewer disparities in Łódź, the differences in living conditions between the groups were extreme. Rumkowski knew this and wanted to keep

¹⁹⁰ Dr. Józef Klementynowski, "Letter on 16 November 1940," The Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, M.C. Rumkowski Records, no. 2118, quoted in Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xxv.

¹⁹¹ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xxv.

¹⁹² See Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Łódź Ghetto*; Peretz Opoczynski and Josef Zelkowitz, *In Those Nightmarish Days: The Ghetto Reportage of Peretz Opoczynski and Josef Zelkowitz*, ed. Samuel D. Kassow and David Suchoff, trans. David Suchoff (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015); Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Łódź*, ed. Hanno Loewy, trans. Brigitte M. Goldstein (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002).

¹⁹³ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xxix.

it as hidden as possible. In a speech on 21 May 1941, after he returned from the aforementioned trip to Warsaw, he boastfully told the Łódź Jews how lucky they were to not live where starving children were begging in the streets next to corpses. He said, “What, you are starving? Go to Warsaw and you will see what starvation means. With me you have the Garden of Eden, in Warsaw... thousands drop from hunger every day. With tears in their eyes the Warsaw Jews beseeched me to stay with them to become their Eldest and take over the leadership of the Warsaw community.”¹⁹⁴ This propaganda created a rift between the chroniclers and the ordinary ghetto inhabitants, even though the authors thought they were giving the people a voice.

Although the chroniclers wanted to document and preserve everything they could, and provide the common Jews with as much information as possible, they were still at the mercy of the Germans, and Rumkowski to a lesser extent, when it came to information. The Nazis were careful to keep their genocidal plans hidden. They commonly used euphemisms in both public and private communications to camouflage round-ups, deportations, purges, and other actions. Their deception did not stop there. In the west, the Nazis politely distributed forms to the Jews to keep track of their property and origin. It was a guise to not arouse any suspicions and to make the process look legal. The Germans did this to deceive the Jews and the local populations.

Even before the Nazis arrived at the Final Solution at Wannsee in January 1942, they had already experimented with various methods of exterminating Jews. From June to December 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen*, or mobile killing units, murdered around 1

¹⁹⁴ Shlomo Frank, *Toghukh fun Lodzsher geto* (Tel-Aviv: Farlag "Menorah", 1958), 103, quoted in Gordon J. Horwitz, *Ghettostadt: Łódź and the Making of a Nazi City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 127.

million Jews in the East by firing squads. While this form was successful, it was not efficient enough for the Nazis. There was also a growing concern amongst top German officials about what to do with all the Jews in the *Warthegau*, and specifically in Łódź. *SS-Sturmbannführer* Rolf Heinz Hoppner, the head of the resettlement office in Poznań, shared his thoughts on the matter in a letter to Adolf Eichmann dated 16 July 1941.¹⁹⁵ Hoppner proposed the creation of a camp that he claimed would minimize the risk of an epidemic for the German population around the current ghettos, and require a smaller number of guards. The most shocking topic of the letter however, was what to do with Jews unfit to work. Hoppner wrote, “There is a danger of not being able to feed all the Jews this winter. Serious consideration is required on the question of whether the most humanitarian solution would not be to finish off those Jews who are unfit for work by some expedient means...that would be less unpleasant than allowing them to die from hunger.”¹⁹⁶ He also recommended the sterilization of all Jewish women so that, “the Jewish problem would be fully solved to all intents and purposes with this generation.”¹⁹⁷

While Hoppner’s memorandum did not explicitly lead to the creation of death camps, it is the first official document pertaining to the extermination of “unfit” Jews. It also shows the Nazis were clearly looking for a solution to their Jewish question, which ultimately became the infamous death camps. In October 1941, the Germans realized firing squads were not possible to do without the cover of the war. Additionally, the *Einsatzgruppen*’s barbaric actions caused rifts with leaders of the German *Wehrmacht*, or army, who were concerned about the negative influence caused by the sight of such

¹⁹⁵ Rolf Heinz Hoppner to Adolf Eichmann, memorandum, 16 July 1941, in *Documents of Destruction: Germany and Jewry, 1933-1945*, ed. Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), 87-88.

¹⁹⁶ Hoppner to Eichmann, 87-88.

¹⁹⁷ Hoppner to Eichmann, 87-88

gruesome executions on their soldiers' morale. As a result, the Nazis began experimenting with alternative means to exterminate the Jews, which led to the use of gas. Initially, the Nazis placed Jews in specially designed vans, asphyxiated their victims with exhaust fumes, then burned the bodies and buried the remains in the forest. This method was successful, but slow, which is why the Germans later began to use the infamous *Zyklon B*. Nazi Forest Inspector Heinz May recalled his first visit to Chełmno, the first death camp to employ poisonous gas, in fall 1941, in his 1945 memoir. He wrote, "I was traveling from Chełmno to Koło accompanied by the *Landrat* and *Kreisleiter* Becht. As we were driving through the forest, Becht said, 'Your trees will be growing better soon.' When I looked inquiringly at him, he replied that Jews make good fertilizer."¹⁹⁸

After the Wannsee Conference, the Germans immediately began deportations from Łódź. From 16 January to 15 May 1942, the Nazis sent 54,979 people to Chełmno. Due to the lack of communication with the outside world within the Ghetto, the authors, and the rest of the Jews, knew nothing about the camp or the fate of the deportees, during this time. Scholars are uncertain about the exact date when news of the camp reached Łódź, but most agree it was summer 1942, in the form of a letter from a rabbi from the small Polish town of Grabów. In the letter, dated 19 January 1942, the rabbi explained he had not replied to previous letters because he was not certain about what was really happening to the people in Chełmno until meeting an eyewitness. After this he wrote,

¹⁹⁸ Heinz May, "The Great Lie- Chełmno, National Socialism in a Form Unknown to the German People: A Memoir by H. May," February 1945, quoted in Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, lv; May's manuscript was unpublished because the American military authorities sent the memoir to the Warsaw Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, where it remains to this day. The third chapter, "The Mass Murder of the Jews," however, was published in the original German and in a Polish translation by Karol Marian Pospieszalski in *Przegląd Zachodni* 3 (1962), 87-105.

“Now, to our great misfortune, we know everything. An eyewitness who by chance was able to escape from hell has been to see me. The place where everyone is being put to death is called Chełmno...People are killed in one of two ways: either by shooting or by poison gas.”¹⁹⁹ He then revealed that the Nazis had already murdered thousands of Jews and Gypsies from Łódź, which is an astonishing number given the date of the letter. He closed with, “Do not think a madman is writing; unfortunately, it is the cruel and tragic truth...I am so wearied by the sufferings of Israel, my pen can write no more. My heart is breaking. But perhaps the Almighty will take pity and save the ‘last remnants of our People.’”²⁰⁰ It is unclear how the rabbi’s letter reached the Ghetto and who had read it, let alone what its impact could have been on the ghetto inhabitants at the time. While it is unknown how much the Łódź Jews knew about Chełmno that summer, they discovered the Nazis’ true intentions in the deadly first two weeks of September.

Starting in summer 1942, the Nazis began stripping Rumkowski of his power as they continued to expand the Final Solution. From 1 September to 12 September, the Germans implemented a daytime curfew for the entire Ghetto known as the *Gehesperre*. During this time, the Nazis, in barbaric fashion, went door-to-door and ripped children, the sick, the elderly, and anyone else they deemed unfit for work, from their families for transport to the death camp. The Germans not only did this as a part of the Final Solution, but also to clear out all the buildings used for social welfare to turn them into factories.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Jakub Szulman, 19 January 1942, in *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Dobroszycki, xxi; While scholars agree this letter is authentic, there is some uncertainty about whether the author’s name is Jakub Szulman or J. Silman. This confusion stems from the absence of the original document. For more information see Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xx-xxi, n32; Israel Gutman, “Introduction: The Distinctiveness of the Łódz Ghetto,” in *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, Isaiah Trunk, ed. and trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), li and 423n74.

²⁰⁰ Jakub Szulman, 19 January 1942, in *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Dobroszycki, xxi.

²⁰¹ This included orphanages, homes for the elderly, schools, prayer houses, and hospitals.

Rumkowski's "autonomy" no longer existed and survival in the Ghetto depended solely on employment.

The following year, when mass deportations temporarily ceased, the Nazis still continued to transport to Chełmno the Jews who did not have jobs, or, in certain cases, did not have their working papers on them when asked. By the end of 1943, the Łódź Ghetto had over ninety different factories employing roughly 75,000 Jews to produce war supplies for the German military. At the height of production, the workers supplied the Germans with 5,000 uniforms per week, as well as metal goods, bedding, communication devices, and other supplies. Minister of Armaments Albert Speer and other military leaders realized how important this productivity was to the war effort and urged SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler to postpone liquidation as much as possible, especially after the Soviets launched a successful offensive that summer in the East. Speer and the others were indifferent about the Jews' ultimate fate, but their requests to keep Łódź fully operational were a key reason why it was the last of the over 200 ghettos in Poland the Nazis liquidated.²⁰²

Despite the Ghetto's productivity, Himmler and Governor Greiser still wanted to close it as soon as possible. On 16 June 1944, after months of planning, the Germans finally began transporting the Jews to Chełmno under the guise of a new labor camp. The resettlement temporarily ceased a month later after the Nazis destroyed the death camp as the Soviet army rapidly approached. Although the Jews had no idea why the deportations

²⁰² Albert Speer, *Infiltration*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Macmillan, 1981), 10; Speer expressed the guilt he felt about overlooking the Nazis' exploitation and inhumane treatment of the Łódź Jews. He wrote, "I certainly could have helped at times...But I cannot claim that humane considerations stood above the interests of a wartime economy...I turned my back on the misery...back then, I generally perceived in terms of efficiency. Exploitation was in the foreground. We did not do what we might and could have done to keep those people alive!"

stopped, the entire ghetto cheered upon hearing the news; however, there was still a sense of anxiety and expectation. In a proclamation on 2 August, signed by Rumkowski, the Germans announced they were relocating the Ghetto, and its roughly 68,000 occupants, to a new location and transports would resume the next day.²⁰³ Similar announcements followed informing the Jews when they were supposed to report for the trains. Hans Biebow, the head of the Nazi administration in Łódź, and *Gestapo* Chief Bradfish made personal appeals to the Jews to listen, because the Soviets' rapid advance meant the Germans needed labor now more than ever. While this was true, the Jews knew the two men were lying after the ghetto railroad workers noticed the same railcars kept returning with hidden notes from the previous occupants that revealed the true destination of the trains, Auschwitz-Birkenau.²⁰⁴ The Jews also discovered the Russians were only 120 kilometers from the city, thanks to the few remaining operational radios in the Ghetto. With this news, the inhabitants began hiding anywhere they could in hopes of surviving until the Red Army could arrive. Unfortunately, the Nazis figured this out and began clearing out the Ghetto street by street. This went on until 28 August when the last train of Jews, including Rumkowski and his family, left for Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The Łódź Jewish community, which in total reached close to 204,000, was gone. According to survivor Nachman Zonabend, the Nazis kept 700 Jews, which included Zonabend, in the Ghetto to, “obliterate...the evidence of their crimes and of the

²⁰³ C. Rumkowski, “Proclamation on 2 August 1944,” Archives of the YIVO, New York, Nachman Zonabend Collection, no. 453, quoted in Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, lxiv; Also see *The Last Ghetto: Life in the Lodz Ghetto, 1940-1944*, ed. Michal Unger, 186.

²⁰⁴ Rachel Böhm, a member of *Hazit Hano'ar Hatsiyoni*, a Zionist Youth movement, wrote one of the few surviving notes. She documented the entire journey and listed all the train stations they passed and when trains passed them. Rail worker Manek Heitler, who was also a member of the movement, discovered the note and passed the information on to others. Heitler survived and later donated the note to the *Beit Lochamei Hagetaot*, or Ghetto Fighters' House, in Israel; Unger, *The Last Ghetto*, 184-5.

martyrdom of the former inhabitants of the Ghetto.”²⁰⁵ The Nazis also had the remaining Jews dig eight giant holes, which they knew would soon be their final resting place.

Zonabend writes, “After those last witnesses are gone, the Germans would begin systematic destruction of the Ghetto: its ruins would cover forever all traces of the enormous tragedy that has taken place there.”²⁰⁶ Luckily, Zonabend was a former ghetto postal worker who knew the city well. He was also friends with multiple members of the Archive and often attended their meetings on document preservation.

After the Ghetto closed, he joined a small group that decided to preserve as much information as they could. From October 1944 to 19 January 1945, when the Soviets finally liberated the city, Zonabend snuck around the Ghetto collecting and hiding thousands of pages of documents. His findings included a complete set of Rumkowski’s announcement from 1940-1944, various papers and notes from the Eldest of the Jews’ office, a cache of the Archive’s most valuable material, which he found in several suitcases and a trunk in the Archive’s abandoned office, and photographs and negatives from the Ghetto’s official photographers Mendel Grossman and Henryk Ross.²⁰⁷ He wisely stored his findings in different places across the city and retrieved a majority of them after the liberation.²⁰⁸ He later wrote about the whole process, “only when

²⁰⁵ Nachman Zonabend, *The Truth about the Saving of the Łódź Ghetto Archive* (Stockholm: N. Zonabend, 1991), 7.

²⁰⁶ Zonabend, *The Truth about the Saving of the Łódź Ghetto Archive*, 8.

²⁰⁷ In addition to the photos Zonabend rescued, Ross buried thousands of his photos and negatives in the Ghetto during the final liquidation. In March 1945, just two months after the Soviets liberated the city, Ross led a team to the site of the stashed documents and recovered them. For the collection, see Henryk Ross, *Memory Unearthed: The Lodz Ghetto Photographs of Henryk Ross*, ed. Maia-Mari Sutnik (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

²⁰⁸ According to Zonabend, when he returned to collect the documents, “Human hyenas were roaming the site of the Ghetto in search of possessions left behind by the Jews. They had already got hold of the trunk with graphs whose remnants...could still be seen lying around.” Zonabend, *The Truth about the Saving of the Łódź Ghetto Archive*, 8-10.

everything was safely in my flat I sighed with relief– confident that a large portion of the records from the Lodz Ghetto was saved.”²⁰⁹ He later donated his findings to the Central Jewish Historical Commission, the YIVO, Yad Vashem, and the Ghetto Fighters’ House.

Scholars know of two other discovered collections of documents pertaining to ghetto life in Łódź. Dr. Joseph Kermish, a Holocaust survivor and renowned scholar, took part in the recovery of a collection related to the Ghetto’s Fire Department. The Ghetto cemetery director Azjman preserved a third set of records, which contained reports for Rumkowski from various Ghetto departments.²¹⁰ While these collections were much smaller than Zonabend’s, they are still invaluable sources for scholars to gain a better understanding of the Jewish ghetto experience. All three of them also show that despite being shut off from the outside world, the Jews of Łódź did not give up.

While the circumstances in Łódź were unlike any other ghetto, the efforts of the archivists and Nachman Zonabend are very similar to those of Emanuel Ringelblum and the rest of the O.S. The Jews of Łódź resisted the Nazis the only way they could, with words. The chroniclers meticulously recorded every event pertaining to the Ghetto for over four years in hopes that it would survive. Not only so the world would know of the Nazis’ atrocities, but also to preserve their rich and vibrant culture for future generations. These courageous people knew they were not going to survive, but they did not stop. They understood the risks and importance of their work and did whatever they could to keep the Germans from destroying it. Their actions were intentional. They communicated a message of opposition that combated Hitler’s attempt to erase all traces of Jewish history. The members of the Archive, along with the help of Zonabend, made sure the

²⁰⁹ Zonabend, *The Truth about the Saving of the Łódź Ghetto Archive*, 9.

²¹⁰ Zonabend, *The Truth about the Saving of the Łódź Ghetto Archive*, 18-9.

world would know of their culture, the Nazis' genocidal actions, and the stories of the brave Jews who lost their lives documenting and preserving it. The importance of the Archive's work can be seen in Zonabend's response when asked why he risked his life to not only hide the documents, but also to recover them. He wrote, "What I did was simply to continue the work of my friends...I felt that I could not allow their sacrifice and effort go to waste and that it was my duty to do everything in my power to save their work of commemoration for the free world."²¹¹

²¹¹ Zonabend, *The Truth about the Saving of the Łódź Ghetto Archive*, 10.

Chapter 3: Kraków

History will never forgive us for not having thought about it. What normal, thinking person would suffer all this in silence? Future generations will want to know what overwhelming motive could have restrained us from acting heroically. If we don't act now, history will condemn us forever. Whatever we do we're doomed, but we can still save our souls. The least we can do now is leave a legacy of human dignity that will be honored by someone, some day.

– Gusta Draenger, *Justyna's Narrative*

Before World War II, Kraków was home to a thriving Jewish community. It was the third largest city in Poland and its origins date back to the eighth century, making it one of the country's oldest. Today, it is still home to one of the country's oldest Jewish communities, with records as far back as the thirteenth century. In 1495, Polish King John I Albert expelled Jews from the city and forced them to the nearby town of Kazimierz, which eventually became a district of Kraków.²¹² The area was the epicenter of European Jewish culture and learning from the Middle Ages into the early nineteenth century. Despite constant political shifting from 1815 to 1939, the city's Jewish community flourished socially and economically.²¹³ By the start of the war, Kraków was home to over 68,000 Jews, which was a quarter of the city's total population.²¹⁴ Even with their success and such a large percentage of the population, a majority of the gentile community viewed the Jews as second-class citizens and commonly referred to them as

²¹² Kazimierz officially became part of Kraków after the Austrian Empire acquired the area in Third Partition of Poland in 1795. The official ban ended in 1867. Israel Gutman, *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 829.

²¹³ Kraków and its environs were a free republic from 1815 to 1846, when Austria again took control of the area until Poland gained its independence with the Treaty of Versailles in 1918.

²¹⁴ In November 1939, a census conducted by the Kraków Judenrät counted 68,482 Jews in the city and surrounding areas. Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 31.

goście, or guests.²¹⁵ This anti-Semitic view of the Jews as eternal foreigners was common not only in Poland, but throughout Europe as well.

Even after a large number of Jews assimilated to certain Polish customs, as previously mentioned in chapter two, the Christian community still refused to accept them. This animosity strengthened during the global depression in the 1930s. The politically dominant right wing *Endecja*, or National Democratic Party, blamed the Jews, and the other minorities, for the country's economic turmoil. As a result, the *Endecja* nationalized a large number of Jewish owned businesses. They also passed a variety of anti-Semitic laws such as the prohibition of ritual slaughter of animals, barred unassimilated Jews from civil and military services, and set a quota on the number of Jews allowed to attend Polish universities. Despite the party's fervent anti-Semitic policies, the country as a whole had mixed opinions. There was still strong opposition within the government that kept Poland from mirroring Nazi Germany leading up to the war.²¹⁶ This division is a key reason the ghetto experience was not universal. While anti-Semitism was widespread, there were still Poles who risked their lives to help the Jews, see Warsaw; however, as shown in chapter three, the people of Łódź did nothing.

The Nazis seized control of Kraków on 6 September 1939, and immediately started persecuting the city's Jews. Much like in Warsaw and Łódź, the Germans looted Jewish shops and homes, beat them in the streets, and conducted roundups for labor. Many Jews fled east towards Lwów, but soon returned to the city after the Soviet Union

²¹⁵ Bernard Offen and Norman G. Jacobs, *My Hometown Concentration Camp: A Survivor's Account of Life in Kraków Ghetto and Plaszów Concentration Camp* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), xxi.

²¹⁶ Offen and Jacobs, *My Hometown Concentration Camp*, xxii-i.

invaded Poland from the east on 17 September.²¹⁷ Unfortunately, for Kraków's Jews, on 26 October, the Nazis declared Kraków as the capitol of the *Generalgouvernement*.²¹⁸ Governor Hans Frank quickly moved into Wawel, the city's medieval castle and former seat of Polish kings. From the castle, Frank issued all his anti-Jewish policies for occupied Poland. Around this time, he also announced that all Jews were subject to forced labor and ordered all Jewish educational institutions closed. In November, the Nazis discovered posters all over the city celebrating Polish Independence day.²¹⁹ When Frank heard about this, he ordered *SS-Brigadeführer* Otto Wächter, the governor of the city, to shoot one person from every building that had a poster. Wächter happily followed his order, rounded up 120 people, and executed them.²²⁰ On 5-6 December, the Nazis plundered the Jewish homes in Kazimierz in a systematic fashion. They took all the gold, silver, and anything else of value and left the Jews with no more than the allowed 2,000 *złoty*.²²¹

In early 1940, the Germans began seizing Jewish businesses and transferred them to an Aryan *Treuhandler*, or trustee.²²² The Jews also lost their personal property, bank accounts, and jobs at non-Jewish companies. In a meeting with top Nazi officials, on 12 April, Frank announced he wanted to make his capitol "the town freest of Jews in the General Government" after *Wehrmacht* generals had complained the previous day that

²¹⁷ Chris Schwarz, *Fighting for Dignity: Jewish Resistance in Kraków = Walka o godność: Żydowski ruch oporu w Krakowie* (Kraków: Galicia Jewish Museum, 2008), 16.

²¹⁸ Gutman, *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 830.

²¹⁹ Polish Independence day is celebrated on 11 November.

²²⁰ David Crowe, *Oskar Schindler: The Untold Account of His Life, Wartime Activities, and the True Story Behind the List* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2004), 144.

²²¹ Eugeniusz Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, trans. Ewa Basiura (Kraków: Wydawnictwo 'Hagada' and Argona-Jarden Bookshop, 2000), 62

²²² Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*, 31.

they had to stay in apartment buildings with Jews.²²³ When talking about provisions for the Jews and Poles Frank quipped, “I am not interested in the Jews at all. Whether they have anything to eat or not, is not a concern of mine. The Poles are the second category for me and only as long as I need them.”²²⁴ He did however acknowledge that roughly 10,000 Jews would have to stay in the city to serve the Germans.²²⁵ Initially, the Nazis encouraged the Jews to leave voluntarily, and even allowed them to choose where they wanted to move, within the *Generalgouvernement*, and take their remaining belongings. Over 30,000 decided to leave the city; however, by 15 August, the Germans grew tired of waiting and violently deported 20,000 more from the city.²²⁶ The Nazis distributed *Ausweis*, or residency permits, to the Jews they deemed useful, but there were still too many in the city. As a result, on 25 November, Wächter issued a decree that placed a ban on Jews entering the city without a permit; any illegal Jew caught would be subject to severe punishment.²²⁷ Anyone without a permit had to report to the Regional District Office for Refugees in the first two weeks of December for transport.²²⁸ By the end of the year, there were only around 10,000 Jews left in Kraków.²²⁹

In the early months of 1941, the Nazis forced the remaining Jews to clear the streets of snow, an impossible task that time of year, and other absurd jobs for their amusement. On 3 March, Wächter announced the creation of the Kraków Ghetto in the

²²³ Crowe, *Oskar Schindler*, 140-1.

²²⁴ Hans Frank quoted in Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 62.

²²⁵ Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 62.

²²⁶ Apenszlak, *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*, 79

²²⁷ Dr. Otto Wächter, “Order Expulsion of the Jews from Cracow,” in Arie L. Bauminger, *The Fighters of the Cracow Ghetto* (Jerusalem: Keter Press, 1986), 30-31.

²²⁸ Crowe, *Oskar Schindler*, 144.

²²⁹ Apenszlak, *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*, 81.

impoverished Podgórze district of the city.²³⁰ Just like his colleagues in Warsaw and Łódź, Wächter said the Ghetto was for security and health concerns. The non-Jewish residents living in the area, roughly 3,500 people, had until 20 March to move out, which was the same amount of time the Jews had to move in. On 21 March, the Nazis sealed off the Kraków Ghetto with approximately 18,000 Jews inside.

The Kraków Ghetto was much smaller than those previously discussed, largely due to the small number of Jews that remained in the city.²³¹ This limited number resulted in the absence of a large organized group like the O.S. in Warsaw or the Archive in Łódź; however, that did not stop the victims from collecting information and documenting their experiences. In Kraków, numerous Jews resisted the Germans on a smaller scale. Many kept diaries or joined underground groups that promoted various forms of Jewish resistance through their own newspapers and pamphlets.²³² One such group was the *Akiba* Youth Movement, led by Aharon Liebeskind, Shimshon (Szymek) Draenger, Maniek Eisenstein, and Gusta “Justyna” Davidson Draenger.²³³ Although their

²³⁰ The decision to place the Ghetto in Podgórze instead of Kazimierz, the city’s oldest Jewish quarter, surprised the Jews.

²³¹ Kraków had anywhere from 15,000 to 20,000 Jews when the Nazis sealed off the ghetto, whereas Łódź had 164,000 and Warsaw had 450,000.

²³² For diaries see Bertha Ferderber-Salz, *And the Sun Kept Shining* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980); Gusta Davidson Draenger, *Justyna’s Narrative*, eds. Eli Pfefferkorn and David H. Hirsch, trans. Roslyn Hirsh and David H. Hirsh (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996); Malvina Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1989); Miriam Peleg-Marianska and Mordecai Peleg, *Witnesses: Life in Occupied Kraków* (London: Routledge, 1991); Natan Gross, *Who are You, Mr. Grymek?*, trans. William R. Brand (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001); Offen and Jacobs, *My Hometown Concentration Camp*.

²³³ The *Akiba* Youth Movement was an active Zionist group with a special attachment to the traditional values of Judaism. It dates back to 1901, and had a prewar membership of over 30,000. Once the war began, the group went underground and remained active in resisting the Nazis during the war throughout Poland. Moshe Singer, “HA-NO’AR HA-IVRI-AKIBA,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, last modified 2008, accessed 11 May 2017, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/ha-no-ar-ha-ivri-akiba>; Eli Pfefferkorn and David H. Hirsch, Editors’ Introduction of, *Justyna’s Narrative*, 2-3.

numbers were small, they were one of the strongest and most active underground organizations in Kraków and throughout Poland.

From the start of the war, the *Akiba* leaders encouraged the Jews to resist the Germans any way they could and as much as possible.²³⁴ They helped the Jewish community as a whole, but focused primarily on the development and education of the youth. They financially supported the movement by producing and selling forged Aryan papers. Justyna and Szymek, which were their codenames in the organization, were instrumental to the organization's success.²³⁵ Szymek, who was rather stoic and reserved, was already an established member when Justyna joined the group as a teenager. While she was very driven, expressive, outgoing, intelligent, and had strong verbal skills, all of which led to her becoming a member of the editorial board of the *Young Pioneers*, the organization's newsletter.²³⁶ The two became inseparable even though they were complete opposites, and did whatever they could to resist the Nazis in the Ghetto and surrounding areas.

To antagonize the Jews even more, the Germans used barbed wire and symbolic Jewish monuments and tombstones to build the nine-foot high wall to enclose the area.²³⁷ Even though the Ghetto was not as large as the others were, it still had the same issues. The occupants struggled with housing, healthcare, food shortages, sanitation, and many

²³⁴ They later shifted their message to armed resistance as the Nazis began implementing the Final Solution.

²³⁵ Justyna and Szymek had a deep connection from the first moment they met during a pre-war *Akiba* meeting. They were engaged before the war and when the Nazis arrested Szymek for anti-Fascist activities on 22 October 1939, Gusta demanded they take her too. After six months in the Troppau prison camp the Germans released them thanks to bribes from their friends. The couple married shortly after their release and continued their resistance efforts. Pfefferkorn and Hirsch, Editors' Introduction of, *Justyna's Narrative*, 5; Schwarz, *Fighting for Dignity*, 96.

²³⁶ Pfefferkorn and Hirsch, Editors' Introduction of, *Justyna's Narrative*, 4.

²³⁷ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 38; Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*, 32.

other problems that most Jews across Europe experienced. Outside communication was also a major issue for the Jews. For the first five months, the Nazis did not let the inhabitants contact their families and friends. It was not until August, when a Jewish post office opened, that the Jews could send letters informing their loved ones of what was going on or if they needed help. Even then, the Nazis did not allow parcels into the Ghetto from a Jewish sender under the guise of preventing an epidemic.²³⁸ After the initial chaos, however, the Jews finally settled into the Ghetto and tried to live a normal life.

Eventually, they established orphanages, elderly homes, hospitals, a bathhouse, and an *Entlausung*, or delousing center.²³⁹ They also opened a coffee shop, a restaurant, and several small shops. Occupants published short stories and poems in the *Gazeta Żydowska*, the German approved Jewish newspaper printed in the Ghetto.²⁴⁰ The Jews continued to observe their faith and education, even though the Nazis outlawed both, by opening a number of secret schools and three synagogues. These practices were helpful tools for the Jews according to Holocaust survivor Malvina Graf. She wrote in her memoir, “Jews were becoming accustomed to the new way of life; many learned to cope, and there was no outward loss of motivation.”²⁴¹ She then discussed daily life, “Day-to-day brutality continued...Despite this difficult life, there were some optimistic Jews who believed the war would shortly end and that the Nazis and Germany would be defeated.”²⁴² Those hopes quickly vanished in the second half of 1941.

²³⁸ Apenszlak, *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*, 83; Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 66.

²³⁹ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 39; Crowe, *Oskar Schindler*, 151.

²⁴⁰ The Nazis used the newspaper for announcements and propaganda purposes. Schwarz, *Fighting for Dignity*, 25.

²⁴¹ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 40.

²⁴² Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 40.

In August, the Nazis annexed twenty-nine surrounding villages and forced the thousands of Jews living there into the Ghetto. These new refugees compounded the Ghetto's population issue. When the Germans established the Ghetto, they decided to allocate four people per window in the roughly 320 residential buildings; however, many rooms had more than one window.²⁴³ Consequently, this led to eight or more people living in a single room. In October, to combat the overcrowding, the Nazis resettled over 1,000 elderly and sick men, women, and children in the Lubelski province.²⁴⁴ This was the first deportation from Kraków, and it dramatically increased the tension within the Ghetto. Groups of Jews began secretly meeting to discuss their uncertain future. The situation in the Ghetto worsened on 28 November 1941, when the Nazis reduced the size of the ghetto, despite the recent influx of Jews.²⁴⁵ This move made the approximately 18,000 remaining inhabitants fearful that the Germans were planning for another round of deportations soon. The Nazis validated those fears with two *Aktions*, or roundups, in March 1942. The first was an *Intelligenz Aktion* that lasted from 19-24 March. During that time, the Nazis terrorized the Ghetto's intellectual class and deported fifty of them to Auschwitz. This specific *Aktion* overlapped a general one in which the Germans deported 1,500 others to the Bełżec death camp.²⁴⁶ Although the Jews did not know it at the time, this was the beginning of the Hitler's Final Solution.

²⁴³ According to Holocaust survivor and former ghetto occupant Bernard Offen, the 320 buildings used for the roughly 16,000 Jews held only 3,500 people before the war. Offen and Jacobs, *My Hometown Concentration Camp*, 8; Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*, 32.

²⁴⁴ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 42.

²⁴⁵ Apenszlak, *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*, 84; The following month, and in the middle of winter, the Germans ordered the Jews to turn in all their furs under the threat of death. Most Jews followed the order, but some decided they would rather cut their furs up and bury them than give them to the Germans.

²⁴⁶ Crowe, *Oskar Schindler*, 182; United States Holocaust Museum, "Kraków: Timeline," Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed 4 May 2017,

The following month, the liquidation of the Kraków Ghetto resumed. On 28 May 1942, the Nazis hermetically sealed off the Ghetto after they conducted a registration to figure out which of the 19,000 Jews were still useful to them.²⁴⁷ During the registration, the *Gestapo* reviewed every Jew's *Kennkarte*, or identification card, and typically stamped the cards of those with specialized trades, though bribery and favoritism played a role as well. Any Jew who did not have a stamp was subject to deportation to Bełżec. On 1 June, the Nazis and the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* (OD) went door-to-door in the Ghetto and brutally removed anyone without a stamp to the train station.²⁴⁸ The following morning, thousands of Jews left the Ghetto for Płaszów, and eventually Bełżec.²⁴⁹ On 4 June, an SS delegation arrived in Kraków dissatisfied with the results of the initial *Aktion*. The Nazi officials blamed the *Judenrät* for not complying enough. They replaced, and eventually deported, Artur Rosenzweig, the current chairman, with David Gutter and ordered an additional roundup, which the Jews later referred to as "Bloody Thursday."²⁵⁰ The Germans brought in the Polish police this time, and the two groups showed no mercy to their victims. They constantly beat the Jews on the two-mile march to the rail station and shot anyone who was too slow. The route quickly became bathed in blood and filled with bodies.²⁵¹ Tadeusz Pankiewicz, the famous pharmacist who was the only Pole the Nazis allowed to stay in the Ghetto, wrote about the gruesome scene:

<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007458>; Yad Vashem, "Cracow," The Holocaust, accessed 4 May 2017, http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205928.pdf.

²⁴⁷ At this time, there were 17,000 registered Jews and 2,000 illegal Jews in the Ghetto. Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*, 182.

²⁴⁸ The *Ordnungsdienst* were a special Jewish police force the Nazis created to assist them in ghettos. Crowe, *Oskar Schindler*, 148.

²⁴⁹ Schwarz, *Fighting for Dignity*, 53.

²⁵⁰ Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 66.

²⁵¹ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Płaszów Camp Remembered*, 43-6.

The ghetto echoed with shots; the dead and wounded fell; blood marked the German crimes in the streets. There were more and more people in the square... People, weakened by heat and thirst, fainted and fell... SS men brought valises filled with valuables taken during the searches of the deportees. They took everything from them: rings, wedding bands, gold and silver watches, cigarette cases and even lighters. Some of the unfortunates looked at those waiting their turns, resignation and apathy etched on their faces. These people were already beyond feeling.²⁵²

Two days later, the remaining Jews reported to the *Jüdische Soziale Selbsthilfe*, or Jewish Self-Help Society (JSS), office for new identification cards. The Germans issued a new policy that allowed the police to shoot anyone found without the new card on the spot. Once again, the *Gestapo* oversaw this and decided who received the *Blauschein*; however, this time the decision process was completely arbitrary and had nothing to do with work skills. Bribery was the only thing the Jews could do to try to save their lives. On 8 June, the Nazis and their lackeys took the unauthorized Jews to the stations just as they did four days earlier.²⁵³ In total, the Germans sent over 6,500 people to labor and death camps in the first eight days of June 1942, and shot hundreds more in the process.²⁵⁴ Hundreds, if not thousands, of parents voluntarily joined their children during this gruesome time. While on the surface that appears insane, it defied the Nazis' attempts to play God and decide who dies and who lives a bit longer. These deportations occurred in the middle of the period when the Final Solution reached its zenith. In Bełżec

²⁵² Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy*, trans. Henry Tilles (New York: Holocaust Library, 1987), 47.

²⁵³ The Nazis commonly used pro-Fascist volunteers from Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine during *Aktions*.

²⁵⁴ The number of deportees ranges from 5,000 to 7,000, while the number of Jews shot is anywhere from 300 to 1,000. Bauminger, *The Fighters of the Cracow Ghetto*, 27; Crowe, *Oskar Schindler*, 182-4; Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 66; Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 43-8; Offen and Jacobs, *My Hometown Concentration Camp*, 17-24; Schwarz, *Fighting for Dignity*, 53.

alone, the Nazis had already murdered over 93,000 Jews from 17 March, its opening date, to the end of June 1942.²⁵⁵

On 25 June, while Kraków's Jews were still recovering from the *Aktions*, the Nazis reduced the size of the Ghetto, again, and forced the roughly 12,000 occupants into one-third of a square mile.²⁵⁶ This created even more anguish and fear within the Ghetto as the Jews realized another round of deportations would soon follow. That September, Malvina Graf received a letter from her brother about how the Nazis had systematically liquidated the Jews in Lwów. With the news, she knew a similar event would happen in Kraków soon. While it was difficult to receive accurate information inside the Ghetto, Graf knew the cause of liquidation. She wrote, "We did not need newspapers or impartial news broadcasts to tell us that when the situations on the Russian and African fronts took a turn for the worse, or began to deteriorate, the Germans would take out their frustrations on the Jews."²⁵⁷ Graf and the others were correct. The Nazis had already planned for another *Aktion* the following month. Shortly before that though, Graf recalled someone in the Ghetto received a letter from a woman who had witnessed the Nazis' inhumane acts in Bełżec. She explained how trains full of Jews arrived to the camp almost daily. After sitting in the railcars for a few days, without food or water, the Nazis unloaded them and told them to undress for a shower. The Germans then crammed hundreds of Jews into these "showers", gassed them, and then burned their corpses. The author described the gruesome scene, "The air was thick with the odor of burning flesh, the sky dark with black clouds of smoke that could be seen from fifteen or twenty square

²⁵⁵ Yitzhak Arad, *Bełżec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 73.

²⁵⁶ Apenszlak, *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*, 84; Gutman, *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 831.

²⁵⁷ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 58-9.

miles away.”²⁵⁸ She ended her letter telling the Jews of Kraków to escape anyway they could before it was too late.

In October, the Germans ordered Gutter to compose a list of 4,000 Jews for another deportation. He refused. As a result, the Nazis responded with unrivaled cruelty and violence on 28 October, led by *SS-Unterscharführer* Horst Pilarzik, who, according to Graf, infamously shot an entire crew of Jewish workers one afternoon because he had had a boring day.²⁵⁹ The start of the roundup was similar to Bloody Thursday, but as the day progressed, their brutality increased. They realized a large number of Jews were hiding so they thoroughly searched every room in the Ghetto shooting anyone they found. Around mid-day, the Nazis went into the hospitals, orphanages, and poorhouses and immediately murdered the bedridden Jews. They threw those who could walk into the streets and beat them all the way to the rail station, while also aimlessly shooting into the crowds. By the end of the day, the Germans had murdered over 600 Jews and sent almost 7,000 to Bełżec. The *Aktions* of June and October caused a wave of suicides in the Ghetto that resulted in hundreds of more deaths as the Jews finally realized the Nazis’ true intentions and chose to face death on their own terms.²⁶⁰ Only 5,000 Jews remained in the city after that deadly summer.

While there was general mood of resignation and despair in the Ghetto after the June and October *Aktions*, there was also a sense of rebellion and revenge. On 28 July 1942, in Warsaw, the *Akiba* leaders decided to join forces with *Hashomer Hatzair* and *Dror*, the two other most prominent underground organizations in Poland, to form the

²⁵⁸ Unknown author, letter sent to unknown, quoted in Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 69-70.

²⁵⁹ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 60.

²⁶⁰ Crowe, *Oskar Schindler*, 187-90; Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 66-7.

Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (ŻOB), or Jewish Fighting Organization.²⁶¹ This was the direct result of the wave of deadly deportations from the majority of the ghettos that summer. The group soon created the *Hechalutz Halochem*, or the *Fighting Pioneer*.²⁶² They released 250 copies of this newspaper every Friday calling on Jews and Poles to resist the Nazis. They also took part in a number of other clandestine activities such as forging documents and smuggling, but their main objectives were sabotage and assassination. Initially, the ŻOB struggled to function because the groups had vastly different ideologies and lacked a reliable source for weapons. Once the deportations ceased however, the leaders settled their differences and developed a unified front. The organization then focused on how and, more importantly, when they could attack the Nazis.²⁶³

In November, the Germans reduced the size of the Ghetto to a mere four-square blocks, as they prepared for its final liquidation. That same month, they sent groups of workers to Płaszów for the construction of a new labor camp.²⁶⁴ On 6 December, the SS divided the Ghetto into two sections, “Ghetto A” and “Ghetto B.” The first was for the Jews who still had jobs, while the latter was for the unemployed and 2,000 Jews the Nazis brought in from the surrounding areas after the October *Aktion*. Graf recalled how difficult the 1942-43 winter was, “There was a pervasive sense of sadness. People counted the weeks and the days until the time would come when everyone would have to

²⁶¹ Hersh Bauminger and Bernard Halberich were the leaders of the *Hashomer Hatzair* group, and Abraham Leibowicz was the leader of *Dror*. Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 67; Pfefferkorn and Hirsch, Editors’ Introduction of, *Justyna’s Narrative*, 3.

²⁶² Pfefferkorn and Hirsch, Editors’ Introduction of, *Justyna’s Narrative*, 20; Schwarz, *Fighting for Dignity*, 96-7.

²⁶³ Yad Vashem, “Jewish Fighting Organization, Warsaw,” *The Holocaust*, accessed 4 May 2017, http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206370.pdf.

²⁶⁴ There was already a smaller labor camp in the area, the so-called *Julag* I. This camp was too small, however, for the influx of Jews the Nazis sent there. Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 67.

leave the ghetto.”²⁶⁵ She remembered most people had the same questions, “Who will go? ‘How many?’ ‘What will happen to the children?’ and ‘What will happen to the old ones?’”²⁶⁶

The chaos in Kraków provided the ŻOB with the perfect cover to strike. The organization planned a series of coordinated attacks on the *Cyganeria* and *Esplanada* cafés, the *Scala* movie theater, the *Zakopianka* officers’ club, and the casino in the National Museum, all of which were places the Nazis visited often.²⁶⁷ After months of preparation, they successfully launched their attacks on 22 December, which killed and wounded several Germans.²⁶⁸ The most successful was their bombing of the *Cyganeria* café. It resulted in the death of at least seven officers and injured several more.²⁶⁹ These attacks were the first time the Jewish underground took up arms against the Germans, in Poland.²⁷⁰ While they did not stop, or even slow down the Final Solution, they were symbolic and showed the Jews armed resistance was possible.

Unfortunately, the Nazis discovered many of the culprits in the following months, and either imprisoned or shot them. Szymek, Justyna’s husband, was one of the

²⁶⁵ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 70.

²⁶⁶ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 71.

²⁶⁷ Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 67.

²⁶⁸ According to Holocaust scholar Sheryl Ochayon, the ŻOB made the attacks look as though the Polish partisans committed them. She wrote, “The Jewish fighters hung a Polish flag on the bridge over the Wisla River... and distributed leaflets calling for an uprising against the Germans. In order to add to the chaos and panic in the city, the fire department was called from different locations simultaneously.” She then explained how successful the Jews were, “The operation was so daring that many Poles in the city were convinced that the Polish underground, or even Russian paratroopers, had executed the attack.”; Sheryl Ochayon, “Armed Resistance in the Krakow and Bialystok Ghettos,” Yad Vashem, The International School for Holocaust Studies, accessed 10 May 2017, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/newsletter/30/armed_resistance.asp#17.

²⁶⁹ The exact number of deaths is uncertain due to the lack of information about the wounded, but there were at least seven died during the actual bombing. Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 67; Pfefferkorn and Hirsch, Editors’ Introduction of, *Justyna’s Narrative*, 6, n. 6.

²⁷⁰ Ochayon, “Armed Resistance in the Krakow and Bialystok Ghettos”; Schwarz, *Fighting for Dignity*, 61.

orchestrators of the December attacks. In January 1943, the Germans arrested him and put him in the Montelupich Prison. Justyna, unable to live without her beloved spouse, turned herself in to the Gestapo once she learned where he was located. It was here she wrote one of the most important works on Jewish resistance to the Nazis. Her writings covered the various acts of Jewish resistance in Kraków during the second half of 1942. Although she shared a cell with large number of women, she knew a few of them through the underground, which was vital for her when she wrote. Each day, between sessions of interrogation and barbaric torture, her friends huddled around her as she sat in the corner composing her notes on toilet paper. Along with shielding Justyna from prying eyes, the women took turns transcribing what she said when her hands became too numb to hold the pencil.

She stated her purpose in the very first lines, “We offer our lives willingly for our holy cause, asking only that our deeds be inscribed in the book of eternal memory. May the memories preserved on these scattered bits of paper be gathered together to compose a picture of our unwavering resolve in the face of death.”²⁷¹ Her work covered a number of events, such as smuggling arms, ambushing Germans soldiers, and the experiences of forest fighters. It also gave faces to men and women who risked, and often gave, their lives to combat the Nazis. Some of the accounts were her own experiences, but a majority of them came from her husband and the other members of the ŻOB, as well as her fellow inmates, which had served as liaisons between underground groups across Poland. From January to April, Justyna produced four identical copies of her notes. She hid two in the cell and had the others smuggled out. Luckily, one set survived. She and her husband

²⁷¹ Draenger, *Justyna's Narrative*, 33.

managed to escape from the prison on 29 April and found refuge soon after in Bochnia, a small town near Kraków. The two did not know it at the time, but they left the city just weeks before its final liquidation.

In early 1943, the Nazis began liquidating ghettos across Poland, and targeted Kraków for early March. Although Himmler wanted to have most of them closed by the end of 1942, the process took much longer than the Nazis expected.²⁷² Graf described the somber and harrowing mood during those final months, “People in the ghetto knew that its liquidation was imminent, but they did not know yet when the day of the final tragedy would arrive and how it would be executed. That is how each day went— one blending into the next, each equally hopeless, and only bitterness in the future.” The *Judenrät* tried to postpone the closing, but the Nazis refused. They had already set a date for the final liquidation, 13 March 1943.

When that day arrived, the Germans removed the occupants of Ghetto A first.²⁷³ In typical Nazi fashion, this was a brutal process filled with beatings and gunshots; however, the following day saw a series of some of the most despicable and outrageous crimes the SS ever committed. On 14 March, the remaining Jews reported to the rail station in the early morning. The Nazis and their henchmen surrounded the terrified group to keep them contained. Pankiewicz described that horrific morning, “All this was being done with unbelievable cruelty and inhumanity...beatings and murders apparently

²⁷² Himmler issued a decree on 19 July 1942, that all Jews in the *Generalgouvernement* should be liquidated by 31 December 1942. See “Order by Himmler on July 19, 1942, For the Completion of the ‘Final Solution’ in the Government-General,” in *Documents on the Holocaust*, Arad, Gutman, and Margaliot, 275-6.

²⁷³ During the deportations, the Nazis ordered the parents of children under the age of fourteen to leave their children in Ghetto B, because the children’s barracks in Płaszów were not ready. When parents pleaded to stay with their kids, the Nazis did not object as long as they did not reenter Ghetto A. Sadly, some did not wait to see if the Germans would show mercy and decided to commit suicide as a family. Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 68.

stimulated their eagerness for new thrills.”²⁷⁴ The Germans, for their sadistic amusement, began placing the Jews in groups for a race, rather a death race. Soon after, they commanded the victims, most of which were elderly men, to run as fast as they could. Amid constant laughter and jeering, the Nazis shot into the runners killing most of them quickly, but some were able to flee the shots, temporarily. The SS congratulated the winners and praised their speed and endurance, then shot them in the back of the head. This was only the beginning of the Germans’ atrocities that day.

Once they were uninterested in that particular form of terror, they directed their attention to the hospitals. There they executed the handicaped immediately and randomly murdered others as they cleared the building, including Doctors Katia Blau, Jan Fischer, and Bruno Palin all of which died for refusing to follow Nazi orders.²⁷⁵ The SS then entered the *Kinderheim*, or children’s home. The Nazis took the children outside and sent anyone they thought could work to the train station. They then led the remaining kids to a nearby courtyard and shot them. At times, to save ammunition, they stood them in a line so a single shot could kill more than one. They used a similar technique with the babies, but instead of standing them up, they placed them in a baby carriage.²⁷⁶ Pankiewicz recalled as the day ended and the Nazis finished loading the remaining trucks and railcars with Jews, the Ghetto became eerily silent. He wrote, “A funereal stillness enveloped the depopulated streets...Every corner and every street were now gaping voids...Everything in the Ghetto, even the smallest memento cried out; each spot was an indelible reminder of the infamy of the Hitlerites.”²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Pankiewicz, *The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy*, 118.

²⁷⁵ Crowe, *Oskar Schindler*, 197; Pankiewicz, *The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy*, 116.

²⁷⁶ Pankiewicz, *The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy*, 119-120.

²⁷⁷ Pankiewicz, *The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy*, 121.

In total, the Germans and their collaborators murdered roughly 2,000 men, women, children, sick, and elderly, in the Kraków Ghetto, and deported another 4,000, half of which went to Auschwitz, during the final liquidation.²⁷⁸ Two days later, they shipped another 1,000 people, largely made up of those that tried to hide, to Auschwitz. Unfortunately, the Nazis were not finished terrorizing the Jews of Kraków. Similar to Łódź, the Germans kept a small number of Jews in the city to destroy evidence and clean up the empty, bloodstained, and corpse-strewn streets of the Ghetto.²⁷⁹ In an effort to humiliate and dehumanize the remaining Jews even more, the Nazis forced them to wear clothes with painted stripes and checkers to resemble medieval court jesters.²⁸⁰ The workers sorted through and undressed, thus desecrating, the piles of bodies for anything of value before loading them onto trucks.

According to Pankiewicz, the Germans commonly shot the faces of the dead leaving the carcasses with what he described as, “a gaping bloody black hole and hair matted with blood.”²⁸¹ The Jews searched the empty apartments, often filled with mired bundles, packages, and parcels of food in pools of blood, for valuables as well. They also routinely found the feeble corpses of those who died from starvation or asphyxiation while hiding.²⁸² The Germans also forced the Jews to tear down the Ghetto’s walls to

²⁷⁸ United States Holocaust Museum, “Kraków: Timeline.” Some accounts of the clearing of Kraków state the Nazis murdered approximately 1,000 Jews during the final liquidation. See Crowe, *Oskar Schindler*, 201; Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 68. While Graf claimed more than 1,500 died. See Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 77.

²⁷⁹ In Graf’s memoir, she recounts how dogs were running around the Ghetto’s empty streets. She wrote, “It was very touching to observe the dogs that remained in the ghetto after the liquidation... Many people fed them and would have like to keep them, but the dogs ate whatever was offered them and ran quickly back to their homes, waiting eagerly for masters who would never return.” Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 82.

²⁸⁰ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 79.

²⁸¹ Pankiewicz, *The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy*, 120-1.

²⁸² Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 81.

reincorporate the area back into the city as if nothing had ever happened. This lasted until December 1943, when the Nazis sent the remaining Jews to various labor or death camps.²⁸³ Kraków's Jewish community, which numbered over 68,000 before the war, ceased to exist, or as Graf solemnly wrote:

Plac Zgody [the train station] was now strangely still; the ghetto gates were closed for the last time, locking in only the dead Jews lying in the streets, their limbs contorted in the posture of their convulsive, violent deaths. Entire families had been destroyed and, with them, a tradition of Jewish life that had survived even the worst of times for Jews in the history of Poland—families whose members had, over the centuries, left a lasting impact on all that spoke of culture, all that spoke of the humanities in Poland. Their contributions had been vast in the realms of education, science, literature, music, painting, and philosophy. Their progeny now lay lifeless in the gutters of the city that had housed the world's largest single concentration of Jews since the thirteenth century.²⁸⁴

While a majority of the Jews in the Kraków Ghetto died either during the liquidations or later in camps, a small number managed to escape and continued to resist the Nazis, including Justyna and Szymek Draenger. They, along with other ŻOB members, also resumed publishing the underground newsletter to fan the flames of resistance. Even though the Nazis had already murdered millions of Jews by the middle of 1943, and continued killing tens of thousands more each day, the Jews did not give up the fight or faith in humanity. Justyna conveyed the latter in what was her last published work about the guards' behavior at the Montelupich Prison. In the *Hechalutz Halochem*, dated 20 September 1943, she wrote:

Tribal and nationalistic hatred and racial animosity are an ideological superstructure that masks a human predilection for cruelty and sadism. Though racial hatred may increase their animalism, its absence does not totally eliminate the bestiality of the jailers. It is not the German or the

²⁸³ Duda, *The Jews of Cracow*, 68.

²⁸⁴ Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Plaszów Camp Remembered*, 77.

Ukrainian who tortures the Jew or the Pole. It is the beast lodged in human form that wields the levers of power inflicting pain on us. And yet not all of them are the same, Not in all had savagery taken root so deep that they cannot occasionally suspend it. There are S.D. people who, in spite of their ideological anti-Semitism or hatred of Poles, are unable to torture or inflict pain. At times, an S.S. soldier may come your way whose voice betrays genuine regret at the sight of a bludgeoned prisoner...And one can only hope that beneath the uniform and the death's-head symbol lives a soul free of sadism who is behaving in contradiction to the laws of nature.²⁸⁵

Although these same guards had beat her for months, she still maintained her spirit and faith in humanity. It is unknown how and exactly where Justyna and her husband died, but multiple accounts claim the Nazis captured and killed them in November 1943 after a fight in the Wisnicz forest.²⁸⁶

Similar to Emanuel Ringelblum and Henryk Neftalin, Gusta “Justyna” Draenger had an acute historical consciousness. She also had the skills and desire to preserve her comrades’ heroic actions. Holocaust scholars Eli Pfefferkorn and David Hirsch explained why she risked her life to document the events, “Draenger’s intention was to erect a monument to a cohort of young Jewish men and women from a number of Jewish youth organizations who had buried ideological difference to confront a common enemy.”²⁸⁷ She also shared another quality with the aforementioned resisters according to the scholars, “Gusta was driven by the threat of oblivion— the fear that the memory of the Jewish people would vanish. Gusta wished to preserve not only that memory, but also the spirit of defiance the Jewish underground fighters cultivated against the Nazi death

²⁸⁵ Gusta Davidson Draenger, “Montelupich from the Viewpoint of Survivors,” *Hechalutz Halochem*, 20 September 1943, quoted in Pfefferkorn and Hirsch, Editors’ Introduction of, *Justyna’s Narrative*, 20-1.

²⁸⁶ Pfefferkorn and Hirsch, Editors’ Introduction of, *Justyna’s Narrative*, 21; Schwarz, *Fighting for Dignity*, 97; Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe: With a Historical Survey of the Jew as Fighter and Soldier in the Diaspora* (London: Elek Books, 1974) ,844-9.

²⁸⁷ Pfefferkorn and Hirsch, Editors’ Introduction of, *Justyna’s Narrative*, 2.

machine.”²⁸⁸ The founder of the Galicia Jewish Museum Chris Schwarz wrote about the various ways the Jews of Kraków combated the Nazis, “Every day of struggle to survive— physical, cultural, spiritual, or intellectual— was an act of resistance.”²⁸⁹ Those descriptions perfectly summarize what Justyna, and the other members of ŻOB, did and their actions are the epitome of Jewish resistance as a whole. They acted as a group that knew the risks of their actions to oppose the Nazis. They communicated a message of resistance and conducted armed combat when they had the chance. These resisters, most of which died in the process, combated the Nazis every way possible to protect their Jewish history and culture and ensure its survival.

²⁸⁸ Pfefferkorn and Hirsch, Editors’ Introduction of, *Justyna’s Narrative*, 11.

²⁸⁹ Schwarz, *Fighting for Dignity*, 25.

Conclusion

The fate of European Jewry was still unwritten when Adolph Hitler and his Nazi party came into power in January 1933; however, over the course of twelve years he and his followers attempted to eradicate the continent's 9.5 million Jews. While they did not succeed in their sadistic genocidal endeavor, they systematically murdered over six million innocent Jewish men, women and children, and destroyed the lives of millions more. The impact of their crimes against humanity still linger today as there are less than two million Jews currently living in Europe.²⁹⁰ Despite the high levels of death and destruction, the Jews did not submit to their oppressors like Hilberg and other scholars had claimed.

In Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków, the Jews resisted the Nazis immediately, and as much as they could to prevent Hitler from completing the Final Solution. For most of the Jews, this often meant using a pen rather than a gun against the Germans. As previously stated, I combined the definitions of resistance by Bauer, Gottlieb, and Rings to formulate what I believe is the proper meaning. Therefore, an act of resistance is any violent or nonviolent action, by an individual or a group, to combat, oppose, thwart, limit, or end the power of an oppressor, whether intentional or not, while also communicating a message of protest.

In Warsaw, Emanuel Ringelblum established *Oneg Shabbath*, the largest underground ghetto archive. He and the highly trained O.S. staff compiled and preserved over 35,000 pages of Jewish history and culture. The members meticulously reviewed everything to ensure accuracy. The collection holds studies, monographs, and testimonies

²⁹⁰ Arnold Dashefsky and Ira Sheskin, eds., *American Jewish Yearbook*, 2016 (n.p.: Springer, 2017), 253-332.

pertaining to every aspect of Jewish life from pre-war to the ghetto experience across Poland. They also gathered information about the Nazis in an effort to provide sources of the barbaric crimes. Along with the preservation, the O.S. served as an outlet to preserve the truth, voice the Jews' concerns and frustrations, and provided the members with hope that their rich and vibrant culture would not disappear.

In Łódź, the staff of the Department of Archives produced the *Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, preserved rare books and manuscripts, gathered both German and Jewish documents such as memorandums, orders, official correspondence, proclamations, and photographs, and kept record of every department's activities. The archivists wrote original works on the history of the Ghetto, Yiddish and Hebrew literature, economic issues, questions of culture and religion, ghetto life for children, and detailed biographies on top Jewish officials and other influential ghetto inhabitants. Scholars know of these works thanks to Nachman Zonabend's preservation efforts after the war.

In Kraków, Gusta "Justyna" Draenger and the ŻOB used both pen and gun to combat the Germans. In early 1943, she wrote a detailed account of the ŻOB's various courageous, creative, and audacious forms of resistance during the final months of the Ghetto while in prison. In addition to that work, she was an editor and writer for the aforementioned group's clandestine publication in which she called on her fellow Jews to resist the Nazis. Holocaust scholar Reuben Ainsztein called Draenger and the rest of the ŻOB, "the epitome of all that was uniquely tragic and heroic in the history of Jewish anti-Nazi resistance in Eastern Europe."²⁹¹

²⁹¹ Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe*, 849.

Despite the risks, these Jews voluntarily came together; they formed or joined organizations to communicate a message of resistance to the Nazis' genocidal plans; they protected each other when possible, and, at times, took up arms. All of these actions fall under the respective definitions of resistance put forth by Bauer, Gottlieb, and Rings; however, these classifications overlook the act of protecting and preserving history and culture from eradication, which was what the Nazis' ultimately wanted to do. The efforts and sacrifices of these Jews not only produced the foundation for the study of Jewish resistance to the Nazis, they also preserved their history for future generations. In doing so, they provided future scholars with a unique look inside the lives of the courageous people who prevented Hitler's Final Solution from succeeding.

The goal of this work is to show how the act of historical and cultural preservation is its own form of resistance and not an offshoot of another classification. The Jews were able to keep their culture or "Jewishness" alive by keeping and preserving a written record of their lives and history. This also allowed them to have hope, not for their own survival, but for future generations. The process provided them an outlet to cope and reflect on their unfathomable situation. Their invaluable documents show their authors' agony and fear, faith and despair, ingenuity and love, prosperity and poverty, but most importantly, their willingness to sacrifice themselves to ensure the survival of their history and culture. They did not want their efforts to be in vain. They wanted to educate the world about their horrific experiences under the Nazis, and prevent similar atrocities in the future. Therefore, the actions of the O.S. members, the staff of Department of Archives, and Gusta Draenger constitute a form of resistance because they were efforts to

save Jewish history, values, ideas, concepts, and rules of behavior and circumvent the Nazis' unprecedented efforts to eradicate any trace of Jewish existence.

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