

INTRODUCTION

THE CHRONICLE AND ITS AUTHORS

It was Monday, May 4, 1942. The chroniclers of the Łódź ghetto recorded the events of the day just as they had the previous day, a year ago that day, and even earlier. As usual, they began with the weather. The remaining information they treated point by point, assigning a heading to each news item. That day there were eleven items, ranging in significance from the crucial to what could, given the times, be considered minor. To take but examples of the former, on that day the *Chronicle* reported that, in the Łódź ghetto, 61 people died whereas there were no births; for reasons known only to itself, three days before, on May 1, a German medical commission stamped letters on the chests of 1,200 people; at 8 o'clock in the morning the first transport of 1,000 people, which included Western European Jews who had arrived in the Łódź ghetto scarcely six months before, departed from a sidetrack for a destination unknown to anyone in the ghetto. Baggage, knapsacks, and even hand-carried packages were being taken from the deportees; in fear of deportation, 60-year-old Julia Baum from Frankfurt am Main committed suicide by hanging herself. . . .

The *Chronicle* of the Łódź ghetto is moving in its simplicity and, at the same time, constitutes a document of immense historical significance. The wealth of information it contains, the accuracy of its record, and the systematic manner in which it was compiled make the *Chronicle* a source unparalleled among writings on the destruction of European Jews during the Second World War. Unlike many personal accounts of that time, the *Chronicle* was not only written on a day-to-day basis, but the facts and events it describes are based on first-hand information or on documents that also came into being from day to day. This was largely due to the fact that the *Chronicle* was composed by an institution which had official access, as it were, to nearly all of the ghetto's internal records, that institution being the Archives of the Eldest of the Jews in the Łódź ghetto.

The Archives—or the Department of Archives, to use its official name—was founded on the strength of a decision by Mordecai Chaim Rumkowski, the Eldest of the Jews, on November 17, 1940, as the fifth in a series of sections of the so-called departments of population records of the Łódź ghetto.¹ Aside from the Archives,

1. Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (The Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute), Warsaw (henceforth: AZIH [AJHI]), M. C. Rumkowski Records (henceforth: Rum. Records), no. 470.

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these interconnected institutions included the Registration Bureau, the Department of Statistics, the Department of Vital Statistics, the Rabbinical Bureau, and a photography workshop, which was set up somewhat later.² All these sections were headed by Henryk Neftalin, an attorney who helped organize many of the ghetto's other administrative branches and who was a confidant of M. C. Rumkowski.³

Initially, the Archives was located at 4 Miodowa Street and then was transferred, along with all the other departments of population records, to 4 Kościelny Square. In its new location the Archives occupied a sequestered room with an entrance of its own. Of course the other departments of the ghetto's Jewish administration were aware that the Archives was one of the many offices and institutions of the Eldest of the Jews: correspondence from the Archives carried interoffice stamps and seals. The German Ghetto Administration also was obviously aware of the Archives.⁴ There was, however, a tendency to keep the existence and especially the activities of the Archives hidden, particularly in order to screen its location from the German authorities and the various Nazi commissions that inspected the ghetto.⁵

The Archives was originally founded to preserve archival materials from both the former pre-war Jewish community and those offices that had arisen in the ghetto but that, for one reason or another, had ceased to function.⁶ In the course of time, however, the Archives' range of activity expanded considerably: it began to amass information for a history of the Łódź ghetto. The guiding principle in this deliberate undertaking was, as defined by Henryk Neftalin, to create a basis of source materials "for future scholars studying the life of a Jewish society in one of its most difficult periods."⁷

2. Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York (henceforth: YIVO Archives), Nachman Zonabend Collection (henceforth: Zon.), no. 733.

3. A young legal apprentice before the war, Henryk Neftalin was undoubtedly one of the most interesting figures among the high-ranking officials in the Jewish administration. A titan of work and a brilliant organizer, he was known to practically no one, apart, of course, from a sizable group of co-workers in the departments under his jurisdiction and some of the intellectuals in the Łódź ghetto, whom he attempted to help as much as he could, often by finding occupations for them or by providing them with financial aid. Jakub Szulman, a well-known figure in the Labor Zionist party in Poland before the war, described H. Neftalin in a memoir written in the ghetto: "He is a quiet, modest, industrious person. He attracted people's attention and their affection. Moreover, he was one of the few people in the ghetto whose head was not turned by high office. An honest man without pretension, he was concerned with the good of the ghetto and its people" (p. 41). The original memoir, written in Yiddish with notes in Russian, can be found in the Archives of the Ghetto Beit Lohamei Haghetot Fighters' House, Israel (henceforth: Szulman, Memoir).

4. The Archives was included in the official scheme for the ghetto, which was known to the German authorities. It is also known that the circulars and orders amassed in the Archives were sometimes put to use by the ghetto's Jewish administration for purposes that included providing duplicates to the German Department of Statistics (*Statistisches Amt*) in Łódź, AZIH (AJHI), Rum. Records, no. 2118.

5. Bernard Ostrowski, one of the archivists, characterizes the Archives as semi-clandestine in his report to the Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna (The Central Jewish Historical Commission) in Łódź in 1947, AZIH (AJHI), Report no. 2841. Ostrowski spoke more fully about working conditions in the Archives when we met in the spring and summer of 1967 in Israel.

6. The degree of continuity in the Archives' activity is evidenced by, among others, a document dated July 19, 1944, that is, less than two weeks before the final liquidation of the ghetto. This document is a listing of the accounts of the quilt and pillow workshop (*Steppdecken u. Kissen Betrieb*) for the years 1942-44, which were submitted to the Archives (YIVO Archives, Zon. no. 733). The raw materials (down and feathers) used in the workshop had been confiscated from Jews during the liquidation of Jewish settlements in *Wartheland* or upon their arrival in the death camp in Chelmo.

7. From the speech delivered by Neftalin on the first anniversary of the founding of the Archives (AZIH

To that end, the workers in the Archives were granted full authority by Rumkowski to collect materials from all agencies of the Jewish administration. In a memorandum of November 18, 1940, he instructed the agencies to furnish them with all data and documents related to the activities within their purview.⁸ The archivists also had the opportunity to conduct interviews with the Jewish administration's leading representatives, and preserved the information thus obtained in written form. Furthermore, valuable information was acquired at the conferences of the directors of the various departments, which were frequently attended by the head of the Archives, who kept the minutes of those meetings.⁹

In a little less than four years the Archives gathered materials from both the German and the Jewish ghetto administrations, including orders, proclamations, memorandums, the texts of speeches, official correspondence of every sort, statistical data, a variety of printed and mimeographed material, photographs, and other visual documentation. It also collected the more valuable books and manuscripts left behind in the ghetto by intellectuals, scholars, and rabbis (those who came from the West, as well as the local population) who had died or been resettled.¹⁰ For example, after the Jews who had been resettled in the ghetto from Germany, Luxembourg, Austria, and Czechoslovakia were deported, the Archives set up a separate file of the documents they left behind. Comprising approximately 2,370 items, this file includes manuscripts, letters, ID's, registration cards, etc., which were cataloged by the Archives—every item was arranged alphabetically, and numbered, and an index of names was drawn up for the whole.¹¹

Concurrent with the gathering and assembling of materials in the Archives, there were efforts to produce monographs. At that time the work of the Archives was divided into subjects, such as the history of the ghetto, economic problems, the life of children in the ghetto, questions of religion and culture, and Yiddish and Hebrew literature. Of the works still extant, two monographs deserve particular attention. The first, written in Polish, is concerned with the history of the Jews of Łódź from September, 1939, that is, from the outbreak of the German-Polish war, to the end of May, 1940, when the Łódź ghetto was hermetically sealed off. The second, written in German, contains a history of the ghetto from May, 1940, to the end of that year.¹² The value of these works is increased by the fact that they quote, *in extenso*, documents from the early period of the German occupation of Łódź, which have not been

(AJHI), Rum. Records, no. 2113). This was stressed even earlier by Józef Klementynowski, the first director of the Archives. In a letter he wrote to Rumkowski on November 16, 1940, on his acceptance for work in the Archives that was to be created, he stated: "I fully appreciate the far-reaching significance of this treasure house for historians of the future" (Ibid., no. 2118).

8. A certificate made out on November 25, 1940, in the name of J. Klementynowski, refers to this memorandum; see also the document of authorization, of April 15, 1941, for the other Archives workers, *ibid.*, no. 2118.

9. The minutes and reports of Rumkowski's various meetings with representatives of the Jewish administration or from the sessions of specially created committees, *ibid.*, no. 2115.

10. Cf., for example, the letter to Józef Zelkowitz authorizing him to safeguard the library of Rabbi Eliahu Treistman, June 16, 1942, YIVO Archives, Zon. no. 943.

11. AZIH (AJHI), Rum. Records, no. 2118.

12. "Historia getta Litzmannstadt (Łódź). Cześć pierwsza: Z miasta do getta" (History of the Litzmannstadt (Łódź) ghetto. Part one: From the city to the ghetto), *ibid.*, no. 2110, and, "Das Getto in Litzmannstadt" (Łódź), *ibid.*, a copy of which is in the YIVO Archives.

preserved. Another item of value is the so-called Lexicon compiled by the Archives, which provides detailed biographical data on high-ranking officials in the Jewish administration and prominent personalities in the Łódź ghetto, as well as information about the administration's agencies.¹³ Some of the Lexicon's entries contain information about various aspects of the ghetto's life, customs, and language, including the singular words that developed under the wartime conditions in a Jewish community. Of value too are articles about certain institutions and workshops, sketches and essays on selected problems of the day, such as hunger in the ghetto and the food distribution system, housing conditions, and the role of the courtyard in the closed Jewish quarter.¹⁴ And, finally, the Archives gave rise to the *Chronicle*, undoubtedly its most comprehensive project.¹⁵

The *Chronicle*, like nearly all the other work performed in the Archives, was a group effort in which everyone employed there took part. Moreover, this group of people worked well and harmoniously together, despite differences in age, education, previous profession, country of origin, and language, not to mention differences in world view. What united them was their common fate and their awareness of a common goal. Brief biographical sketches of the leading authors of the *Chronicle* follow.¹⁶

Julian Cukier (1900–43), journalist and publicist, came of a prominent, well-known family of Polish Jews. His father, Ludwik Cukier, a Łódź industrialist, was a distinguished representative of the Jewish Community and on the boards of many institutions, including the oldest charitable organization in Łódź, Gemiluth Hasadim, and the Montefiore lodge of B'nai B'rith. Until the outbreak of the war, Julian Cukier, under the pen name of Stanisław Cerski, was a contributor to *Republika*, a liberal daily paper in Łódź which was also a syndicate that published many Polish periodicals with nation-wide circulation. In the ghetto, Cukier began working in the Archives as soon as it was founded in November, 1940. Called the Plutarch of the ghetto by colleagues, he initiated the writing of the *Chronicle* and guided the enterprise until lung disease forced him to cease working. He died on April 7, 1943.¹⁷

Szmul Hecht (1923–43) was a native of Wieluń, a town to the southwest of Łódź. He was resettled to the Łódź ghetto during the total liquidation of Jewish settlements in

13. Lexicon of the ghetto, AZIH (AJHI), Rum. Records, unnumbered.

14. Essays and reportage, *ibid.*, nos. 2111–13.

15. The chronicle has been a well-known literary genre since Biblical times, but it is noteworthy that in Łódź, before the war, the *kehillah* (*Żydowska Gmina Wyznaniowa*), the Jewish institution of self-government, published a periodical in three languages (Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew) entitled *Kronika Gminy Żydowskiej* (*Khronik fun der yidisher kehile in Lodzh*, *Khronika shel ha'kehila ha'ivrit*—The Chronicle of the Jewish Community), 1930–39.

16. Biographical data about the authors of the *Chronicle* is based on published sources, the records of the ghetto Registration Bureau and the Lexicon (AZIH [AJHI], Rum. Records), the private notes of Oskar Rosenfeld, Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem, 6/106 (henceforth: Rosenfeld, Private notes), and the *Chronicle* itself. One notes with embarrassment how the authors of the *Chronicle* are all but forgotten today. The names have vanished as have the people themselves. With the exception of Zelkowicz, they are not listed in any postwar encyclopedia, although a number of them—Oskar Rosenfeld, Abram Kamieniecki, Bernard Heilig, Oskar Singer—had many accomplishments to their names long before they were incarcerated in the ghetto of Łódź.

17. In that same year, archivists and *Chronicle* contributors S. Hecht, B. Heilig, and A. S. Kamieniecki also died. Obituaries written by their colleagues appear in the *Chronicle* on April 7, June 22 and 30, and October 12.

the provinces of Łódź, Poznań, and Bydgoszcz (Pomorze-Pomerania) in the summer of 1942.

Dr. Bernard Heilig (1902–43), an outstanding scholar, was a specialist in the economic history of the Jews and the author of many works in that field.¹⁸ These included a comprehensive history of his native city of Prostějov (Prössnitz), one of the oldest Jewish settlements in Moravia, which, with the considerable participation of its Jewish population, became one of Europe's largest producers of textiles and ready-made clothing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Heilig was deported from Prague to the Łódź ghetto in October, 1941.

Dr. Abram S. Kamieniecki (1874–1943) was born in Słonim, in the Jewish Pale of Settlement of the Russian section of partitioned Poland. In addition to the religious and secular education he received in his native city, he studied philosophy and philology at universities in Heidelberg, Berlin and Berne, where he specialized in Biblical studies. Kamieniecki is the author of many scholarly works that, for the most part, were published in the Berlin *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentarische Wissenschaft*. He was also an author and one of the chief editors of the *Evreiskaia Entsiklopedia* (Jewish Encyclopedia) published in Russian by Brockhaus and Efron in St. Petersburg, in 1906–13. He was very active in the Łódź Jewish community in interbellum Poland. One of Kamieniecki's last projects before the outbreak of the war was the sponsorship of an encyclopedic publication in Yiddish entitled *Lodzher gezelshaftlekhkayt: Almanakh* (Almanac of Łódź Society), the first volume of which appeared in 1938, with a preface written by him.

Dr. Oskar Rosenfeld (1884–1944), born in Korycany, Moravia, a graduate of Vienna University, and a writer and publicist, was deported from Prague to the Łódź ghetto in October, 1941. As a youth Rosenfeld became associated with the Zionist movement, and later he worked with Theodor Herzl and Hugon Zuckermann, with whom he collaborated in establishing the first Jewish theater (*jüdische Künstlerspiele*) in Vienna. In the years 1928–38 he was the editor of the Zionist weekly in Vienna, *Die Neue Welt*; after the *Anschluss* he moved to Prague, where he was a correspondent for *The Jewish Chronicle* of London. Rosenfeld authored many books, including *Philipp Otto Runge in der Romantik*, *Die vierte Galerie* (Vienna, 1910), and *Mendl Ruhig* (Heidelberg, 1914). He also translated into German many classic and contemporary works of Yiddish literature from Mendeley Moykher Sforim, Sholom Aleichem and Isaac Leib Peretz to Joseph Opatoshu, H. Leivik (Leyvik Halpern), and Israel Joshua Singer. Rosenfeld's literary activity remained creative and varied in the ghetto, as attested to by both the essays he wrote for the *Chronicle* and his private notes, which, fortunately, have been preserved.

Dr. Oskar Singer (1883–1944), publicist and writer, contributor to many general and Jewish periodicals (among others, *Prager Tagblatt Montag*, and the Zionist magazines *Selbswehr: Jüdisches Volksblatt* and *Jüdische Nachrichten*), he was the author of the anti-Nazi play *Herren der Welt: Zeitstück in 3 Akten* (Refta-Verlag, Prague-Vienna-

18. These include, in addition to those mentioned in the *Chronicle* (see pp. 350–51), the following: *Die tschechoslowakische Konfektionsindustrie* (n.p., 1932); *Eine mährische Stadt und ihr Getto* (Brunn, 1932); *Aktuelles aus der Geschichte des Hauses Ehrenstamm, 1752–1852* (Brunn, 1934).

Zurich, 1935), the preface to which was written by Walter Tschuppik, a well-known publicist in the thirties. Like Heilig and Rosenfeld, Oskar Singer was deported from Prague to the Łódź ghetto.

Józef Zelkowicz (1897–1944), writer and ethnographer, was born in Konstantynów, a small town near Łódź. At the age of eighteen he was ordained a rabbi, by virtue of the education he had received in his very religious family home and after his graduation from a yeshivah. However, he was never a practicing rabbi. He enrolled in the Normal School, graduation from which enabled him to teach in state schools. But it was writing and the study of history and customs, not teaching, which came to constitute his central interest. At first he wrote in Polish, but from the mid-twenties on he wrote almost exclusively in Yiddish. His articles, essays, and research works were published in nearly all the newspapers and periodicals in Poland and also in the United States (including the *Jewish Daily Forward*, *Morgen zhurnal*, and the *Amerikaner*). He was also connected early on with the Jewish Research Institute, the Vilna YIVO, and served as a board member of its branch in Łódź. It was while he worked with YIVO that he wrote and published his two major scholarly works: *Der toyt un zayne baglayt-momentn in der yidisher etnografye un folklor* (Death and Its Accompanying Factors in Jewish Ethnography and Folklore)¹⁹ and *A bild funem yidish-gezelshaftlekhn lebn in a poylish shtetl in der 2-ter helft fun 19-tn y'h* (The Image of Jewish Social Life in a Polish Shtetl in the Mid-nineteenth Century).²⁰ Aside from his share in compiling the *Chronicle*, and as part of his work at the Archives, Zelkowicz wrote a series of essays, a stirring account of the deportations in September, 1942, to mention but one, that are of monumental significance for a history of the closed Jewish quarter.²¹

The following people were also employed in the Archives: Alicja de Bunon, Jerachmil Bryman, H. Dumnow, Jaszuńska, M. Nowak, Dr. Halpern, Bernard Ostrowski (an engineer), and Dr. Peter Wertheimer. Thus, the staff of both the Archives and the *Chronicle* was not large, numbering barely ten to fifteen persons, including the assistants. The staff was initially directed by Dr. Józef Klementynowski, who, after assuming another position in the Jewish ghetto administration, was replaced by Dr. Oskar Singer as Head of Archives.

Like other office workers, the archivists were permanent employees whose salaries were determined by the Jewish ghetto administration. Although they received a supplementary food allocation, the hunger that reigned throughout the ghetto decimated the ranks of the Archives' workers as well. Three of them, Cukier, Hecht, and Heilig, died in the prime of life, like many other people in the ghetto. The others shared the fate of the Jewish quarter during the total liquidation of the ghetto in August, 1944. Only one of them, Bernard Ostrowski, survived the war.

On January 12, 1941, something less than two months after the Archives was founded, the first of the *Chronicle's* bulletins was written. After that the *Chronicle* was

19. *Lodzher visnshaftlekhe shriftn* 1 (1938), pp. 149–90.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 191–215.

21. Fragments of Józef Zelkowicz's essays and reportage were published by Isaiah Trunk in *Lodzher geto* [The Łódź Ghetto] (New York: Yad Vashem—YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1962), pp. 139–41, 148–50, 195–200, 203–04, 314–27, 424–28, 440–44, 451–54; and by Lucy S. Dawidowicz in *A Holocaust Reader* (New York: Behrman House, 1976), pp. 298–316.

produced systematically with entries written nearly every day until the first half of 1944. The *Chronicle* would first be written out in longhand, then five or six carbon copies were typed on longer than standard-sized paper. All told, the *Chronicle* consists of about 1,000 bulletins ranging in size from half a page to ten or even more in length. Although, like the other material in the Archives, not all of the bulletins of the *Chronicle* have survived,²² one may safely assume on the basis of the sequence of numbered bulletins, an analysis of their contents, and their chronological order that the gaps are not great and do not exceed five to ten percent of the whole.

From January 12, 1941, to September 1, 1942, the *Chronicle* was written in Polish and called *Biuletyn Kroniki Codziennej* (Daily Chronicle Bulletin), and then, from September, 1942, to July 30, 1944, it was written in German and called *Tageschronik* (the Daily Chronicle). For a short time—from September to December, 1942—the *Chronicle* was written simultaneously in both languages, Polish and German, the former by a team of writers from Łódź, the latter by deportees from the West.²³

The principal author of the *Chronicle* in Polish was Julian Cukier, with the collaboration of Abram S. Kamieniecki and Bernard Ostrowski. This is basically a daily, though sometimes individual bulletins will describe a few days or even periods of two weeks or a month.²⁴ Every event is, however, noted under its proper date. Only in rare instances—when entries are included at significantly later dates—do the authors violate chronological order in the narrative, and those entries usually represent a continuation of some previously described incident.

As opposed to the Polish version, the German *Tageschronik* bulletins, written chiefly by Oskar Singer, with the aid of Alicja de Bunon, Bernard Heilig, Oskar Rosenfeld, and Peter Wertheimer, were strictly daily accounts: a given issue of the bulletin corresponded to a given day (with only a few exceptions, such as the entry covering December 1–19, 1942) and were consistently and consecutively numbered according to the calendar.

As a collective work, the *Chronicle* is, obviously, not uniform either in structure or style. The differences are especially apparent when the Polish and German texts are compared. The latter is more laconic and uniform and therefore more lucid, although at times, curiously enough, it also seems detached.

22. It will probably never be possible to determine what percentage of the Archives' materials is represented by those that have been found. Thus far, only two large finds are known to have survived. The first batch of materials was found and safeguarded according to instructions given by Bernard Ostrowski and passed along by Nachman Zonabend, who succeeded in evading deportation and remained on the grounds of the ghetto until its liberation in January, 1945. The second batch of materials was retrieved in October, 1946, from where it had been hidden underground in Łódź at 13 Lutomierska St., the site of the Fire Department in the ghetto. The work of unearthing the documents was performed by the Central Jewish Historical Commission of Łódź and supervised by Dr. Józef Kermisz, who at that time was the director of the archival section. It is also known that a third batch was buried at the Jewish cemetery in September, 1944, the same time that the materials were buried at 13 Lutomierska St. The Germans, however, succeeded in tracking down that batch and forced the director of the cemetery to reveal its hiding place, see Bernard Ostrowski, AZIH (AJHI), Report no. 2841; *Dos naye lebn* (Łódź), October 4, November 28, 1946. Recollections of Nachman Zonabend, with whom I had the opportunity to speak over the years in Warsaw, Stockholm, and New York.

23. The original typed text of the *Biuletyn Kroniki Codziennej* and *Tageschronik* is in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

24. A typical *Chronicle* entry began with the words: "Today, at 5:30 A.M." . . . , "Yesterday, in the evening hours" . . . , "This morning" . . . , "Around 6:00 P.M." or "A few minutes after 8:00 A.M. . . ."

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However, in both the Polish and German versions, the *Chronicle* is marked by a consistent formal and thematic structure. Individual bulletins which belong to nearly the same series relate the events of a given day and also whatever struck the chronicler as worthy of mention. Every fact and event is, as mentioned previously, entered under an appropriate title or heading. In time, those headings became fixed and were used repeatedly, their subjects necessarily recurrent. Such subjects include the weather, the temperature being noted in Celsius, births and deaths (the German version provides up-to-date and accurate population counts for the ghetto on a given day), shootings near the barbed wire fence surrounding the ghetto, suicides, the arrival of food supplies and their rationing to the inhabitants of the ghetto, prices on the black market and incidents of smuggling into the ghetto, matters of public health and disease levels in the ghetto, orders from the German authorities and inspections of the ghetto by various outside commissions, actions taken by the Jewish ghetto administration and its departments and workshops, cultural activities, Jewish holidays and customs in the ghetto, rumors, and, finally, the settling of local Jews and those from the West into the ghetto and their eventual deportation from it.

In addition to accounts of the day's events, the *Chronicle* occasionally contains more discursive articles and essays on topics unconnected to a given date, such as "Necessity is the Mother of Invention," which discusses Henryk Wosk's ideas on finding a use for frozen or rotten potatoes, or "Registration of Christians Residing in the Ghetto," which describes the reasons why this group, albeit a small one, did not leave the Jewish quarter, or, finally, a street scene entitled "*Es geyt a yeke mit a teke*" (There Goes a Yekke with a Briefcase), which depicts a local troubadour who formed a duet with a Jew resettled to the ghetto from Vienna and sang songs he himself had composed while the latter accompanied him on the zither or guitar.

While these supplementary articles and essays appeared sporadically at first and, in general, dealt with curiosities or rather incidental topics, later, during that most tragic time, the time of constant deportations to and from the ghetto, they changed character entirely and also began to appear more often. In the Polish version of the *Chronicle*, apart from a notation of place and date, these entries had no special title, while in the German version they came under the heading "Sketches of Ghetto Life" (*Kleine Getto Spiegel*) and were signed with the initials of Oskar Rosenfeld, Oskar Singer, Peter Wertheimer, or Alicja de Bunon. Both types of essay supplement each other and, along with the daily bulletins, make the *Chronicle* a more complete record of the facts, events, and moods of the ghetto.

A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE

The *Chronicle* of the Łódź ghetto, like the other works compiled in the Archives of the Eldest of the Jews, arose under singular circumstances which must be discussed if the document is to be fully understood.

The diaries, memoirs, and chronicles that were written by Jews in the German-occupied countries during World War II were single-handed efforts, usually prompted only by some inner need on the part of the authors,²⁵ or, needless to say, by the

25. I do not at all wish to belittle the significance of the appeals made by many people that the atrocities committed by the German occupier be recorded at once and that documents in that regard be

desire to transmit testimony from the age of extermination to posterity.²⁶ This type of writing, by nature highly subjective and intimate, was done in secret and would have been dangerous to the author and those around him if exposed. This very fact indicates a conscious choice and a stance by the writer toward the forces and events at work in his world. The deliberateness of the act freed the writer to express himself without constraint, although some instinctively used coded language. However, what did limit the diarist or memoirist during the German occupation was his relative lack of sources of information. Any source that was at all available was taken into account, whether it was official or clandestine in origin or derived from the secretly monitored Allied radio broadcasts.

This was not the case with the *Chronicle* of the Łódź ghetto. The fact that it was compiled in one of the offices of the Jewish ghetto administration had to entail certain limitations as far as both content and approach were concerned. There are at least three limiting factors to consider: first, the degree to which its authors were constrained by the caution dictated by the Germans' daily presence in the ghetto; second, the question of the chroniclers' actual range of knowledge concerning events in the ghetto itself and beyond its limits; third, the relations between the authors of the *Chronicle* and the Jewish ghetto administration in general and Chairman Rumkowski in particular.

The Germans were unaware that the *Chronicle* was being written—its contents leave no doubt in that regard and no document or any other evidence has been found

collected. The famous challenge hurled by Szymon Dubnow, the venerable Jewish historian, right before he was deported from the ghetto to a death camp in Riga, and the far-reaching project directed by Emanuel Ringelblum, the founder and head of *Oyneg shabes*, the clandestine archives in the Warsaw ghetto, are but two examples. The point, however, is that this was done nearly everywhere, in the ghettos and camps, by people in hiding, on the "Aryan" side, and in the forests, even without such appeals. The recording and preservation of testimony and the belief that it would some day be deciphered proved to be one of man's indestructible needs.

26. I cannot resist quoting one example here. In January, 1943, when the Jews were being deported from the Warsaw ghetto, Stefan Ernest succeeded in escaping to the "Aryan" side. It would seem that he would have then remained aloof as possible from the concerns of the Jewish quarter. He did not, however, cease to be a hunted Jew on the other side of the wall. Because of his very Jewish features he was forced constantly to be in hiding, which is where he began his history of the Warsaw ghetto, concluding it with this entry:

It's the morning of May 28, 1943. Out of close to two hundred *black* ballots signifying *death*, there happens to be one *white* one signifying a hypothetical *life* . . . Fate, chance, have permitted me to draw the *white* ballot . . . But even though I can clearly see that in my own personal situation I am hardly one of the stronger "candidates for survival" and that by virtue of my "features," means, and physical and mental strength, I have *no chance* in the final struggle on this side, I continue to write. I wish to repay fate for granting me a few weeks' extension of life and to give testimony as to how things really were. I want to believe and I do believe that my voice will not be alone in describing these events and that there are and will be others who will present evidence as well. Better, comprehensive, exact. And not only in writing but also in direct speech, when the time comes they will tell what all this was like . . . I am hiding in a cellar without any fresh air, without adequate or regular food, with no toilet facilities, with no prospect of any change in these conditions in which I vegetate and which enjoin me to value every hour I survive as if it were gold . . . I can clearly feel that I am losing strength, it's becoming harder and harder to breathe . . . The struggle to save myself is hopeless . . . Here, on this side of the wall . . . But—that's not important. Because I am able to bring my account to its end and trust that it will see the light of day when the time is right . . . And people will know what happened . . . And they will ask, is this the truth? I reply in advance: No, this is not the truth, this is only a small part, a tiny fraction of the truth . . . Even the mightiest pen could not depict the whole, real, essential *truth*. [AZIH (AJHI), Diaries and Memoirs (VII), p. 112]

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that would indicate that the German Ghetto Administration had been informed or had by its own means learned of the *Chronicle's* existence.²⁷ Nevertheless, the chroniclers, as employees of the Jewish administration, had to reckon with the possibility that their work could be uncovered at any moment. And that is the primary explanation for the very cautious tone and the absence of evaluation whenever the Germans are mentioned. Only bare facts are presented, with a certain inevitability about them. The chroniclers seemed to have adopted the following principle: since it is not possible to write about those who commit the crimes, we will speak of their victims, and in some detail. And in that manner, nearly every instance of the martyring of the ghetto's population is echoed by the *Chronicle*, even though things are not always called by name. The text is full of euphemisms and impersonal descriptions. All events seem to occur suspended in a void. The normal order of emphasis is reversed, causes and effects are transposed. The plundering of the ghetto is presented by the *Chronicle* as a "buy-up campaign" that operates "to the satisfaction of the interested parties"; people summoned to the German criminal police (*Kripo*) for unknown reasons inexplicably end up in the hospital or mortuary; the hunger rations supplied to the ghetto by the German Ghetto Administration arrive "in quantities which correspond to the quantities announced as needed"; and, finally, there are those constant resettlements of people into the ghetto and the deportations from it into the unknown. . . . It would appear that the Jews are limiting their rights themselves, persecuting and destroying each other. The occupier is imperceptible. The Germans and their policy toward the Jews are either mentioned tersely or not at all—just when the Germans are defining which ghetto dwellers will live and which ones will die! Vehicles arrive in the Jewish quarter from the city, go around to all the hospitals, load up the patients, and drive them away. Where, why? The chroniclers were not in the habit of asking too many questions. They never report what the victims think and feel about those who caused their tragedy, even when they are being sent to their deaths. There are only facts and the descriptions of events: how things really were, how the Jews lived and died in the ghetto until the Germans began deporting them one after the other to death camps.

The chroniclers knew as much as any ghetto dweller did about the nature of the resettlements and deportations—that is, next to nothing. There was a great deal of guesswork. There were efforts to puzzle out the routes the trains took and, on that basis, to establish the transports' destinations. They clutched at straws, seeking even the smallest sign that would indicate that the deportees had gone—as they had been told—to rural settlements where they would work the fields with the peasants and where they would have more to eat than in the overpopulated ghetto. People did not believe or wish to believe that all of this, from beginning to end, could be an unmitigated lie, even if things were not, in fact, as they had been presented. What could be done with that great mass of people, those hundreds of families, those people in the prime of life and their children? The belief that the Germans' plans for those people were not entirely evil was fortified, among other things, by the fact that people leaving

27. There is no way of knowing if there was a copy of the *Chronicle* among the Archives' materials uncovered by the Germans at the cemetery during the liquidation of the ghetto in 1944. (See also note 22, above, p. xv.)

the ghetto were able to exchange their ghetto money, worthless outside the ghetto, for a few German marks (*Reichsmark*) which, as a rule, Jews in the ghetto were not allowed to possess. And when that exchange was halted during the course of the deportation, it was explained by the belief that from then on the transports of deportees would not be sent to Germany or to that part of Poland that had been directly incorporated into the Third Reich after the fighting in September, 1939, but to the *Generalgouvernement*, where the Polish zloty, not the German mark, was the official means of exchange. Rumors circulated concerning postcards and letters supposedly sent by deportees to relatives and friends in the ghetto, from which it would appear that the deportees are "working under conditions that are bearable."²⁸ Practically no one, if anyone, knew at that time that the rumors about the cards and letters were circulated by the German Ghetto Administration and that the few pieces of mail that actually did arrive in the ghetto were either forged by the Gestapo or coerced from the victims before their execution.²⁹ Gestapo agents played a direct role in lulling people, especially when deportations were underway. Here is the *Chronicle's* report in connection with this campaign of misinformation:

THE FIRST NEWS ABOUT THE DEPORTEES

On April 12, a high officer of the secret police [Gestapo], who is serving as commander of the camp where the people deported from this ghetto are now located, was briefly at Balut Market. This is the first definite source of information concerning the deportees; for the record, it is worth adding that the story of their whereabouts that circulated with the most persistence has, this time, been confirmed. It has now been irrefutably established that the camp is located in the region bordering directly on the town of Kolo, now called Warthbrücken. The camp houses about 100,000 Jews, indicating that besides the 44,000 resettled from this ghetto, Jews from other cities have been concentrated in that camp. This gigantic camp was formerly a living site for Germans from Volhynia. Apparently 30,000 people had been living there. They left the barracks in perfectly decent order, and even left their furniture for the Jews to use. The food supply at the camp is, apparently, exemplary. Those fit to work are employed on the camp grounds repairing roads and performing agricultural tasks. Workshops are to be set up in the very near future.³⁰

In accordance with what seems to be their principle where Germans are concerned, the chroniclers do not comment on this information. They make no attempt even to speculate as to the reason why this least trustworthy of individuals had taken the trouble to convince the Jews in this matter. Moreover, the chroniclers refrain from drawing conclusions, even though the facts at their disposal are evidence enough

28. See below, p. 141.

29. Edward Serwański, *Obóz zagłady w Chełmnie nad Nerem* [The death camp in Chełmno on the Ner] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1964), p. 41; (see also below, p. 349). At that time, postal cards that arrived from the workers who had been recruited and sent from the ghetto to perform forced labor in Germany and in territories incorporated into the Reich were sometimes confused with cards that were supposedly sent by people deported to the death camp in Chełmno.

30. Below, p. 145.

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that the Germans spread lies about the fate of the deportees. Thus, without comment, but just for the sake of accuracy in chronicling, as they were in the habit of pointing out, they also write down this item of news:

LARGE SHIPMENTS OF BAGGAGE

have been sent to the ghetto since May 25. The people of the ghetto are tremendously puzzled by the arrival of these shipments, which contain clothes of all sorts and other things and which are transported here each day by trucks, including five-ton vehicles. The Department of Used Articles has been ordered to store all this material. The department has assigned some enormous warehouses for that purpose, namely those at 75 Brzezińska Street, 20 Marynarska Street, 93 Franciszkańska Street, and 32 Dolna Street. What is it that these large trucks are carrying? It would be difficult to enumerate the contents. One reason is the tonnage involved which, in every case, exceeds 100,000 kilograms and is perhaps even higher. Among their contents, the things most frequently encountered are improvised sacks made from rugs, blankets, sheets, and so on. This type of bundle indicates that they were not packed by their owners but by other hands. These bundles for the most part contain clothing, linen, and bedding. This latter has passed through disinfection. Among other frequently encountered items are shirts and slips rolled together, three or four at a time, and also two pairs of pants rolled up with a few pairs of unmentionables. Nearly all the jackets and coats bear traces of having been ripped along their seams . . . There are a lot of goods, for example, curtains, which are brand new. There are also a great many *taleysim* (prayer shawls). There are no knapsacks or suitcases to be seen. Documents—letters, papers, ID cards, and so on, that had been issued in Western European cities—often fall out of the bundles, but there are also a great many from Włocławek, and often there are papers that were drawn up in this ghetto as well.

A very significant percentage of the items are brand new. For the time being, these things have been placed in storage; they will be distributed to the deportees from the surrounding areas, to the residents of the Old People's Home and orphanage, and perhaps even to the Clothing Department.³¹

Indeed, in the Łódź ghetto, nothing was known about the fate of the deportees, at least during the first phase of deportation, which, with a few short interruptions, ran from January 16 to May 15, 1942. During those four months, 54,979 people were deported in 54 transports from the ghetto to the death camp in Chełmno, on the river Ner. At the time, no one was aware of the existence of the camp. It is difficult to establish when and by what means the terrible news of its existence reached the ghetto. Summer, 1942, is nearly always mentioned as the time, for it was then that a letter dated January, 1942, was supposed to have arrived from the rabbi of Grabów, a small town to the northwest of Łódź. Based on the eyewitness account of someone

31. Below, pp. 190–91.

who had succeeded in escaping from the camp, the letter provided information that the Jews from Łódź and the surrounding area were being murdered in Chelmno.³²

Grabów's letter and the means by which it reached the ghetto have never been thoroughly investigated. Our knowledge of it comes not from contemporaneous sources but from three mutually contradictory post-war accounts.³³ Without in the least denying its existence, one cannot be sure who in the ghetto had read the letter or even knew of it, much less what influence that letter might have had on the attitudes of ghetto dwellers. One thing does, however, seem certain: the real significance of the resettlements and deportations became clear to anyone with the strength and courage to face the truth only during the so-called *Gehsperre*, the daytime curfew between September 1 and 12, 1942. It was then that the Germans deported 15,685 people from the ghetto in an utterly barbaric fashion, openly conducting their roundup on the spot—in courtyards, squares, and on the street, going from house to house—selecting children, old people, the sick (or those who simply did not appear to be in good health) for the transport. The pages of the *Chronicle* for those dates leave no doubt that the ghetto had begun to realize the gravity of the situation, especially if, beside the daily bulletins, we also take into consideration Józef Zelkowicz's shocking reports on the September roundups and deportations, parts of which were incorporated into the *Chronicle* as soon as they were written.³⁴

What was a long and well-kept secret in the Łódź ghetto had been known almost

32. The full text of the letter reads:

My Dearest Ones!

I had not yet replied to your letters since I had not known exactly what was being discussed. Now, to our great misfortune, we know everything. An eyewitness who by chance was able to escape from hell has been to see me . . . I learned everything from him. The place where everyone is being put to death is called Chelmno, not far from Dąbie; people are kept in the nearby forest of Łochów. People are killed in one of two ways: either by shooting or by poison gas. This is what happened to the towns of Dąbie, Izbica Kujawska, and others. Recently, thousands of gypsies have been brought there from the so-called Gypsy camp in Łódź and the same is done to them. Do not think that a madman is writing; unfortunately, it is the cruel and tragic truth (Good God!). O Man, throw off your rags, sprinkle your head with ashes, or run through the streets and dance in madness . . . 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."

Help us, O Creator of the World!

Grabów, 1/19/42

Jakub Szulman

Dokumenty i materiały z czasów okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce, vol. 1: *Obozy* (Documents and materials from the time of the German occupation in Poland, vol. 1, The camps), ed. N. Blumental, with an introduction by Filip (Philip) Friedman (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Centralnej Komisji Historycznej, 1946), p. 233.

33. A letter to the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Łódź by M. Szwarc, *ibid.*, p. 233; I. Tabaksblat, *Khurbn Lodzh* (Buenos Aires: Union Central Israelita Polaca en la Argentina, 1946), pp. 103–4; J. Nirenberg, "Di geshikte fun lodzher geto," *In di yorn fun yidishn khurbn* (New York: *Unser tsayt*, 1949), pp. 261–62.

34. See below, pp. 248–55. I have deliberately used the words people *had begun to realize* in the text, but this does not mean in the least that people were able or willing to believe what they heard. Jakub Poznański wrote the following in his ghetto diary in an entry dated as late as September 27, 1943: ". . . persistent rumors circulate about the liquidation of the ghettos in various Polish cities. In my opinion, people are exaggerating, as usual. Even if certain excesses have taken place in some cities, that still does not incline one to believe that Jews are being mass-murdered. At least I consider that out of the question." *Pamiętnik z getta łódzkiego* (Memoir from the Łódź ghetto) (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1960), p. 102.

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from the start in Warsaw. Since January, 1942, both the Polish and the Jewish resistance movements had gradually learned about the existence of the camp in Chełmno and the fates of the Jews deported there. The first information was obtained from Polish railroad workers, local residents, foresters; later, more detailed accounts were to come from eyewitnesses—those few people who had succeeded in escaping from the death camp.³⁵ After February of that year, the clandestine press, including the newspapers published in Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew in the Warsaw ghetto, began writing about Chełmno. At first this information was presented with great incredulity and skepticism and then, increasingly, as indisputable and supported by a large number of facts. The truth about Chełmno was also transmitted to the free world—for the most part, in reports passed on by Ringelblum's Warsaw-Ghetto Underground Archives through the Polish Resistance to the Polish government-in-exile in London and its Jewish representatives, Artur Zygelbojm and Ignacy Schwarzbart. The Allied governments and the press were thereupon informed.³⁶ The news that had been sent out to the world returned by radio to occupied Poland, although not everyone was able to listen, an act punishable by death. On June 26, 1942, Emanuel Ringelblum noted in the diary he kept in the Warsaw ghetto: "This morning, the English radio broadcast about the fate of Polish Jewry. They told about everything we know so well: about Ślōnim and Vilna, Lemberg and Chełmno, and so forth. For long months we have been suffering because the world was deaf and dumb to our unparalleled tragedy."³⁷ Two months later one of the most comprehensive reports about Chełmno to come out of the Warsaw ghetto was available in English translation, in a periodical published in New York entitled *The Ghetto Speaks*.³⁸

The Łódź ghetto was far less-informed not only of Chełmno but of a great many other events occurring in the world and on the fronts. There was practically no communication between the ghetto and the city of Łódź, if one ignores, of course, that which was under German control, although even that was minimal in comparison with other ghettos.³⁹ In the Łódź ghetto people were not allowed to possess or even read the *Litzmannstädter Zeitung*, the official organ of the local occupying

35. Among them were Mordka Podchlebnik, Szymon Srebrny, and Jakób Grajowski (Blumental, *Dokumenty i materiały*, vol. 1, pp. 239–42, 244–45); the account by Grajowski, who worked as a grave digger in Chełmno in January, 1942, was on display in 1983 as part of an exhibit, *Code Name Oyneg shabes: Emanuel Ringelblum's Underground Archives in the Warsaw Ghetto, 1940–1943*, at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York.

36. What information did reach the West and what was done with it is another question entirely. The subject has recently been treated by Walter Laquer in *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth About Hitler's 'Final Solution'* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), chaps. 4–5, and Deborah E. Lipstadt, "The New York Times and the News about the Holocaust: A Quantified Study," *World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 7–14 August, 1977, Jerusalem. *Proceedings* (Jerusalem, 1980), pp. 45–73.

37. *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel [sic] Ringelblum*, ed. Jacob Sloan (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 295.

38. Published by the organization, American Representation of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland, the special issue is entitled "The First Authentic Report Received from Poland about Gas-executions of Jews" (1942), pp. 1–3; the report sent from Warsaw to London is entitled "Masowe egzekucje Żydów w pow[iecie] kolskim" (Mass execution of Jews in Kolo county). Copies of both are in the YIVO Archives.

39. Unlike Jews in other ghettos, those of Łódź were not sent to work in the city. The few exceptions are described by the *Chronicle*.

authorities.⁴⁰ The Polish clandestine press did not reach the ghetto either; in any case, in the city of Łódź that press was very small, poorly organized, and had a limited readership.⁴¹ Also, the smuggling between the "Aryan" and the Jewish parts of the city, which was so well known in other ghettos and, besides supplying the starving populace with additional food, was an excellent means of communication, was rather incidental in Łódź and played neither of those two roles there.

The Łódź ghetto truly was hermetically sealed, cut off from other Jews and non-Jews alike. Aside from a few sporadic incidents, Jews could enter and leave the ghetto once, that is, when they were resettled into it or resettled out of it. That state of affairs had little to do with the barbed wire fences around the ghetto or the German sentries who guarded the boundaries of the ghetto and shot anyone, even without formal cause, who approached those boundaries, often without issuing a warning. The presence of the German criminal police and its network of informers within the ghetto itself was not crucial here either. All those physical obstacles could have been surmounted, even if at great effort, expense, and risk. What determined the ghetto's isolation is to be sought elsewhere, primarily in the situation that had existed in the city of Łódź since the first few weeks of the German occupation.

After the conclusion of hostilities in September, 1939, and the division of Polish territory under German occupation into two parts—territories directly incorporated into the Third Reich and the *Generalgouvernement*—Łódź found itself in the latter. What's more, it had already been designated as the capital of the so-called *Generalgouvernement* and the seat of its governor, Hans Frank. That situation did not continue for very long. Łódź, and the greater part of Łódź province, was, after deliberations on the highest level in Berlin and "in accordance with the wishes of the local German population," added to the *Reichsgau Wartheland* (*Warthegau*), which, along with *Reichsgau Danzig*, West Prussia, and the former Polish Silesia constituted one of the three German administrative units incorporated into the Reich by an earlier decree issued by Hitler on October 8, 1939.

From that time on Łódź and its environs were subjected to intensive germanization. The name of the city was changed to *Litzmannstadt* in honor of Karl Litzmann, the German general who fell in battle near Łódź in 1915. All streets and squares were given German names. The Polish language had already been suppressed throughout

40. Interesting in this context is the extant correspondence among Rumkowski, the owners of newspaper kiosks in the ghetto, and *Amtsleiter* Hans Biebow, the head of the German Ghetto Administration. On June 7, shortly after the ghetto was closed, the *Litzmannstädter Zeitung* ceased delivery to the ghetto and the kiosk workers, having nothing to sell, lost their sole means of livelihood. On the 10th of the month, Rumkowski wrote to Biebow appealing for further delivery of newspapers because the populace was used to reading them and, moreover, because the lack of newspapers might provide an incentive for smuggling, especially among children. In his reply of June 14, Biebow informed Rumkowski that no newspapers could be delivered but that he was, incidentally, interested in knowing if newspapers were still making their way into the ghetto and how much a copy cost on the black market. He then ordered Rumkowski to issue a ruling concerning the punishment, not only for those guilty of possessing newspapers but for those who read them as well (AZIH [AJHI], Rum. Records, Applications; *Gettoverwaltung*, nos. 25, 382, 405). See also, Dobroszycki, *Die legale polnische Presse im Generalgouvernement, 1939-1945* (Munich: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 1977), pp. 16-18, 28-32.

41. Dobroszycki, *Centralny katalog polskiej prasy konspiracyjnej 1939-1945* [Comprehensive catalogue of the Polish clandestine press] (Warsaw: Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1962), p. 302.

the Wartheland.⁴² There was not even a Nazi press in the Polish language as there was in the Generalgouvernement, which Hitler considered, at least, to be the "home" of the Poles. The Polish language was barred from schools, theatres, and cinemas. All levels of administration and municipal self-rule, even the lowest of them, passed into German hands, and German became the sole official language. The city of Łódź had neither a Polish police nor fire department, two uniformed organizations which continued to function in the Generalgouvernement throughout the war, under German control, of course. Litzmannstadt—as Nazi propaganda slogans declared—had become a great German industrial city in the "East."

The policy of germanizing Łódź substantially altered the city's demographic structure and the topographic distribution of the ethnic population. Whereas at the beginning of the war, in 1939, Łódź included about 60,000 local Germans, the so-called Volksdeutschen, at the end of the war, in 1944, the German population had increased to some 143,000.⁴³ This was the result of Germans from the Old Reich being settled there permanently or for a term of service; of ethnic Germans coming to Łódź from the Baltic republics, Volhynia, and eastern Galicia in accordance with the German pact with the Soviet Union, as part of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement of August 23, 1939, and the other decisions issuing from it; finally, the growth of Litzmannstadt occurred as a result of Nazi efforts to discover individuals with a so-called certain percentage of German blood among the people of the city. Those meeting the standards became members of the privileged class and their names were entered on the appropriate German lists (*Deutsche Volksliste*). Any member of Łódź's old German population or person of German descent who did not share the invaders' world-view and policies was not tolerated, no matter who he was. To name but three: Robert Geyer, the descendant of a pioneer in the textile industry and the owner of one of the largest industrial plants in Łódź; Dr. Juliusz Bursche, the bishop of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church; and Oskar Seidler, leader of the German Socialist Party in Łódź. Geyer was murdered by the Gestapo in October, 1939, Bursche, placed in the Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg concentration camp, where he died in February, 1942, and Seidler, incarcerated along with his son.⁴⁴

Wartime Łódź was not only germanized but Nazified like no other large city in occupied Europe. The Polish population, whose number fluctuated from around 396,000 in 1940 to around 343,000 in 1944, was thrust into the role of pariah.⁴⁵ The city had been almost entirely pacified. This the occupiers achieved by means of terror, constant surveillance, and the expulsion of undesirable elements, and by depriving people of independent incomes and removing the Polish population from certain districts of the city, including those in close proximity to the ghetto. And thus there

42. According to the general census of 1931, in Łódź, 53,562 people indicated German as their native language and 51,159 indicated Protestant as their religion (see Alfons Krysiński, "Struktura narodowościowa miast polskich" (The national makeup of Polish cities), *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 3 (1937), pp. 268-69.

43. Some ethnic Germans were also added to the population of Łódź when the city's size was increased in 1940 by the incorporation of a few suburban communities and settlements.

44. Mirosław Cygański, *Z dziejów okupacji hitlerowskiej w Łodzi* (On the history of the Nazi occupation of Łódź) (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1967), pp. 63, 64; Bolesław Olszewski, *Lista strat kultury polskiej* (The casualty list of Polish culture) (Warsaw: S. Arct, 1947), p. 30.

45. Cygański, *Z dziejów okupacji*, p. 162.

arose a sort of no-man's-land between the Jewish quarter and the "Aryan" part of the city. Ultimately, a ghetto Jew could cross the fence but there would be no one waiting on the other side to serve him as a guide, supply him with the necessary papers, and provide him with initial accommodations, irrespective of motive or principle, for money or not. It is a fact that, apart from one very special and singular case, there is no record thus far of any Jewish family or individual surviving the war in Łódź by being on "Aryan" territory, as occurred in Warsaw, Cracow, Lwów, Lublin, and many other Polish cities.⁴⁶ The Jews in the Łódź ghetto were indeed cut off as nowhere else. Only scraps of news reached the ghetto directly from without, to be supplemented by reports derived from a few, scattered clandestine radios of varying quality.⁴⁷ Information thus obtained, real or—as is so movingly depicted by Jurek Becker in *Jacob the Liar*—imaginary, was people's only source of hope in those days. From Becker, to whom the Łódź ghetto has not been alien, I also take these words: "Well . . . it's evening. Don't ask me the exact time. Only the Germans know that. . . ."

Knowing very little of what was taking place outside the ghetto, and writing even less than they knew, the chroniclers concentrated all their efforts on the ghetto and its inhabitants, of which they were themselves an integral part. They swelled from hunger along with everyone else, even if one of them might chance upon an extra bowl of soup or a food coupon. The chroniclers always identified with the ghetto dwellers and seemed to be speaking on their behalf. But, as already mentioned elsewhere, the *Chronicle* was written in the Archives, which, in turn, was a part of the Jewish ghetto administration, which, naturally, could not be indifferent to the light in which its actions were presented by the chroniclers. When submitting a plan for the newly created Department of Archives to Rumkowski, Dr. Józef Klementynowski, its director, wrote that he would indeed make sure that the materials collected be as close to reality as possible, but hastened to add that he was willing to follow any advice from the Eldest.⁴⁸ In his account, Bernard Ostrowski said outright that the *Chronicle* could only record what had passed Rumkowski's censorship and that he, Rumkowski, received copies of the daily *Chronicle* bulletins.⁴⁹ Did he read them, did he voice any opinions on them? And if so, to whom? Who besides Rumkowski knew

46. The special case was a family I know well: Ryszard Gabriel (born in 1933) and Alfred Emanuel (born in 1934), the young sons of a mixed marriage between Henryk Olszer, an engineer, and Jadwiga Szadkowski, did not move to the ghetto in 1940 as did their parents. They remained with Jadwiga's parents, Maria and Leon Szadkowski, at 2 Centralna St. in the Marysin section of Łódź. Ryszard and Alfred hid there, never leaving the apartment, until the city was liberated in January, 1945. During the liquidation of the ghetto in 1944, Jadwiga escaped from the ghetto and joined her sons and parents. In October, 1944, Henryk Olszer was deported with the final group of 500 Jews to Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg and from there to the work camp in Königswusterhausen. After being liberated, he returned to Poland where he was reunited with his family. He died in Łódź in 1958.

47. Even what did manage to penetrate the ghetto was only rarely noted by the *Chronicle*, and, then, casually and after some time had elapsed. For example, the news of the German attack on Russia was not mentioned until the bulletin of June 26–30, 1941, and then only to say that, "In connection with the war with the Soviets, in the last ten days of June there has been a sudden increase in the price of packaged goods, which the ghetto had received mostly from the USSR" (p. 62).

48. A letter of November 16, 1940, AZIH [AJHI], Rum. Records, no. 2118.

49. AZIH [AJHI], Report no. 2841.

that the *Chronicle* was being written in the Archives, who else had access to it?⁵⁰ Neither in the *Chronicle* itself nor in any other contemporaneous source is there any mention of this subject. As far as Rumkowski is concerned, it is known that he visited the Archives many times, acquainted himself with certain of its ongoing projects, and inquired about various matters, but never the *Chronicle*. So this question, not, at bottom, a crucial one, remains unanswered. The *Chronicle* itself, and many other sources as well, provide more than adequate evidence that working in the Archives limited the chroniclers' freedom to write and the scope of their inquiry, creating an intellectual barrier that was all but insurmountable. This is most evident when the *Chronicle* deals with Rumkowski, and it is completely immaterial here if what the *Chronicle* writes about him resulted from some sort of formal censorship or the self-control the authors themselves exercised.

M. C. Rumkowski, the Eldest of the Jews, has the place of prominence in the *Chronicle*. He, his program, and his actions are not subjected to criticism. He could be described only in superlatives and with the respect accorded a good and just man. Consequently, the *Chronicle* is full of homage to Rumkowski—a pronoun referring to him is always capitalized. He is also infallible; anyone who thought otherwise, and on the pages of the *Chronicle* rarely did one dare to think otherwise, was an enemy of peace in the ghetto. Thus, the protests and defiance shown by the people, whether they be demonstrations against hunger or strikes in the ghetto workshops, are presented outside their real context. For instance, the strike in the carpenters' workshop in January, 1941, the *Chronicle* notes, "was organized by irresponsible individuals intent on disturbing the law and public order created by the ghetto authorities who watch over the peace, safety, and food supplies of the ghetto dwellers."⁵¹

The *Chronicle* suffered hindrance in other areas besides that of evaluation. The chroniclers' lack of independence is evident even in their selection of facts, especially when the attitudes and actions of those who "rule" or thought they ruled were concerned. The achievements of the Jewish ghetto administration are scrupulously noted, whereas its negative or possibly unpardonable aspects remain in the shadows or are passed over in silence. The *Chronicle* is not able to tell us much about the administration's higher officials or about the privileged stratum, which was estranged from ghetto society until one, Salomon Herberg, the commissioner of the Order Service and commandant of Central Prison, took a misstep and fell from power. Then they are able to write pejoratively even about his appearance and clothing. We learn that Herberg had been living in clover in the ghetto, that he owned three apartments and had been "the lord and master of Marysin as if he were the governor of the most beautiful section of the ghetto," that he received special commissions "in connection with the rounding-up of the ghetto's undesirable elements," and that

50. Jakub Poznański, a man generally well informed about what was happening in the ghetto and whose wife worked in an office in one of the departments of population records, that is, in a room right beside the Archives, apparently knew little about the work actually being conducted there, and nothing of the existence of the *Chronicle*. He made the following entry in his diary, dated July 26, 1943: "I still have not mentioned that in the office of population records there exists a special chamber with the high-sounding name of the Archives. Apparently, documents concerning the history of the ghetto are compiled there. The average person has little chance of getting a glimpse of those confidential records. I've had a few chances to scan one fragment or another briefly. They contain nothing but panegyrics in honor of the Chairman and statistical data." *Pamiętnik z getta łódzkiego*, p. 85.

51. Below, pp. 5, 14, and n. 23.

many times, he had "personally organized and directed night raids on apartments, as well as the raids that were carried out in broad daylight on the streets."⁵²

The chroniclers, so restrained and cautious where "their own" ghetto was concerned, were eloquent in revealing the disconcerting situations in "other peoples'" ghettos, under "foreign rule," such as the ghetto in Pabianice. Relying on accounts given by the Jews resettled to the Łódź ghetto from that in Pabianice, the authors of the *Chronicle* present an unretouched picture of the *Judenrat* and the conditions prevailing there. On the other hand, everything in the Łódź ghetto ran like clockwork, as Rumkowski once put it. Innumerable departments and workshops celebrate the anniversary of their founding in a festive mood. The Łódź ghetto is continually introducing new means for improving production. People are dying but the ghetto is developing, new and splendid buildings keep going up. When writing of such things, the chroniclers sometimes lose their sense of measure. The following example is horrendous but not isolated. In an entry dated December 14, 1941, and headed "Road to the Cemetery Under Construction," we read: "The construction of an excellent road to the cemetery has been in progress in Marysin for three weeks now. . . . The road is being built according to the latest in technical design; it will consist of three layers: a foundation of brick, an embankment, and a surface strewn with coal cinders. This road connects with the three-quarter kilometer road already built that runs along Robert Street. Moreover, Otylia Street, which leads to the factory on Mostowski Street, is also being paved. The building of exemplary roads under present conditions is a monument to the ghetto's vitality."⁵³ It should be added that more than 43,000 ghetto dwellers took that road to the cemetery.

The *Chronicle's* near total lack of cognitive inquiry and critical analysis in the wake of events is particularly evident when the authors are writing about the mood of the populace and about its relations with Rumkowski. The image of Rumkowski presented by the chroniclers does not at all correspond to what people in the ghetto actually thought of him. In the diaries and memoirs known to have been written in the ghetto, and ignoring what was written about him after the war, Rumkowski is severely criticized, frankly hated, or simply ridiculed. The authors of these personal accounts no doubt represent, to some degree, an accurate cross-section of the ghetto, even if only of those who took to writing. They were: Dawid Sierakowiak,⁵⁴ a left-leaning gymnasium student; Jakub Poznański,⁵⁵ the manager of a ghetto workshop; Shlomo Frank Frenkel,⁵⁶ an Order Service man connected to the Zionist-Revisionists, a semi-clandestine group active in the ghetto; Leon Hurwitz, an engineer and, before the war, a member of the Folkists, a Jewish populist party in Poland; Jakub Szulman,⁵⁷ a co-

52. Below, p. 137.

53. Below, p. 94.

54. *Dziennik . . .* (Diary), ed. Dobroszycki, with an introduction by Adolf Rudnicki (Warsaw: Iskry, 1960), pp. 226.

55. *Pamiętnik z getta łódzkiego*, p. 285.

56. *Togbukh fun lodzher geto* (Buenos Aires: Union Central Israelita Polaca en la Argentina, 1958); see also, a review by Dobroszycki in *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 30 (1959), pp. 152-57.

57. In his unpublished notes, Szulman coolly analyzes Rumkowski's policies during the ghetto's first year and a half, with a good many digressions about his activities in the Jewish community before the war. Without doubting that Rumkowski was, as he put it, "a man with clean hands," Szulman voices very critical views about the way he ran the ghetto, and especially about his autocratic behavior and megalomania. (Szulman, *Memoir*).

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worker of Rumkowski, a leader of the Labor Zionist party, and, in the ghetto, chief of a hospital; and, finally, for even this memoir should not be overlooked, the anonymous author who took his notes along on the way to Auschwitz, where he had been deported during the liquidation of the ghetto in the summer of 1944.⁵⁸

Probably the most critical remarks on and the greatest ridicule of Rumkowski and conditions in the ghetto are to be found in Leon Hurwitz's as yet unpublished notes, of which the following is a small fragment:

The ghetto's internal life is reminiscent of the feudal system of the middle ages, for example, that of a rich Russian boyar. The peasants, the prince's private property, are only machines to perform work. They have come into the world and are alive exclusively so that the prince might derive profit and pleasure from them. But princes—and this holds true in our case as well—love to dazzle their subjects. In this our own prince is indefatigable. He hops from one workshop to another, from one office to another and everywhere—among office workers, managers, laborers, guards, and peasants—he sows fear and dread. Although those sudden, unmotivated "inspections" were rare events, they always caused someone suffering, which should come as no surprise. An office worker would have his face slapped or be deprived of work for a very long time, until the end of the Rumkowski dynasty, unless the barbed wire around the ghetto were to disappear first. And Rumkowski was glad to perform these sadistic and insane pranks in the presence of one "minister" or another. He should tremble for his own fate.⁵⁹

It would be difficult to believe that the chroniclers were entirely uncritical in their attitudes toward Rumkowski and his administration. It can even be assumed that the panegyrics in Rumkowski's honor in the *Chronicle* were the price the chroniclers paid to be able to transmit what they wished to posterity, to history.⁶⁰ In this context, the personal notes of Dr. Oskar Rosenfeld, one of the principal coauthors of the *Chronicle*, are revelatory. Supplied with a clear warning, "Private diary, not to be read, a memoir for the future," Rosenfeld's notes suggest that Rumkowski had been subjected to the scrutiny of the workers of the Archives and that a critical view of him was not out of the question. Not many critical observations are to be found in Rosenfeld's text, but what there is is very pointed, even sarcastic, and written with great indigna-

58. "Papiery oświęcimskie" (Auschwitz papers), *Szukajcie w popiołach: Papiery znalezione w Oświęcimiu* (Search in the ashes: Papers found in Auschwitz), eds. Janusz Gumkowski and Adam Rutkowski (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1965), pp. 41–121.

59. The original diary is among Hurwitz's other papers in AZIH (AJHI), Rum. Records, no. 11; A. Wolf Jasny, the author of a monograph about the Łódź ghetto, is of the opinion, shared by others after him, that Leon Hurwitz and Józef Klementynowski, the first head of the Archives, are one and the same. The facts do not support this position. It suffices to compare the manuscripts by each man that have been preserved to confirm that they were written by two different people. Moreover, as far as Leon Hurwitz (who was supposed to have assumed the name Klementynowski in the ghetto) is concerned, there is copious extant documentation that allows one to determine his family background, place of work in the ghetto, residence, and so forth. Several of Klementynowski's documents have also been preserved. He always wrote under his own name, had a definite address, and signed his papers with his full name. See also, A. Wolf Jasny, *Geshikhte fun yidn in Lodzh in di yorn fun daytsher-oysrotung* (Tel-Aviv: I. L. Peretz Library, 1960), pp. 222, 325–26.

60. The expression "the reader of the future" is to be found more than once in the *Chronicle*.

tion. Such observations are made in the margin next to his remarks on the Jewish police in the ghetto and its brutal, Gestapo-like behavior, where he goes on to define the police as a group, and class apart, of the Eldest's followers which also served as his bodyguard, "*Schutzgarde für Chaim*," to use Rosenfeld's own words.⁶¹ Elsewhere, Rosenfeld characterizes Rumkowski as a man divided into two extreme and mutually contradictory parts: "a well-mannered man, tidy, peaceful, good, religious, a traditional Jew on the one hand and, on the other, sordid, ridiculous, ironic, slovenly, insidious, unpredictable, treacherous, murderous."⁶² It would be difficult to assume that none of the other archivists shared Rosenfeld's views. Moreover, severely critical remarks, if not directly about Rumkowski then about the ghetto's bureaucracy and police, are to be found in the essays of Józef Żelkiewicz, another coauthor of the *Chronicle*, essays which have been preserved in full. Around mid-1942, the *Chronicle* itself begins to reflect certain changes in the ghetto, not so much in its general assessments but in the tone of its entries. There are fewer apologetics for the administration, at least fewer than before, more understanding of the processes at work in ghetto society, and more reflections on the gravity or outright hopelessness of the situation.

It is not its interpretations or judgments, however, that render the *Chronicle* unique. Its value derives from the wealth of facts recorded in it day after day, when there were over 200,000 Jews living in the ghetto and when the ghetto was being emptied, also day by day, until the Jewish community had ceased to exist.

When the chroniclers sat down to record the events of the day they had no idea what tomorrow might bring. They could not have foreseen, therefore, that the ghetto's post office, literally created out of nothing at great effort, would not be able to send mail, and when, as they note, the ban on mail to the Generalgouvernement was lifted on May 10, 1944, there would no longer be any Jews in that area to receive mail. Neither were the chroniclers able to imagine that the ghetto's orphanages, homes for the aged, and hospitals, whose founding had required such effort, would soon be turned into workshops, and that their inhabitants would be evacuated, "resettled." The chroniclers also could not have known that the tramline whose construction they had so recently described in such detail, in the belief that it was a sign of some stabilization, would serve the Germans in their deportations by carrying ghetto dwellers to the railroad station in Marysin, from which they were sent to the death camps in Chełmno and Auschwitz. Indeed, as the Chroniclers themselves noted on July 15, 1944, "The ghetto [. . .] lost the habit of thinking more than a few hours ahead."⁶³

The *Chronicle* of the Łódź ghetto is a document with universal significance. On the one hand, it is reminiscent of the medieval chronicles written in besieged towns that were doomed to destruction and, on the other, of a censored contemporary newspaper, not to be read by anyone except those who wrote it. The chroniclers worked with the facts: viewing people as individuals and as members of families and society in a closed Jewish quarter, where a loaf of bread, allocated for eight days, was often

61. Rosenfeld, Private notes: "Erinnerungen, Heft D," p. 8.

62. Ibid.: "Heft G, 26.X.1942, Aufzeichnungen zur Erinnerungen, bleibt Manuskript," p. 3.

63. Below, p. 526.

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consumed the moment it was received, potato peels became a prized food item, to be issued by prescription and even then only to a few, and the only people who had the right to live were those still fit, or who had been judged fit, to work. Thus, the primary subjects of the *Chronicle* were the Jewish community, the form human relations took there, what determined whether one person went less hungry than another or was deported sooner or later than another, and how the ghetto was decimated over a period of four years. Almost everything is known about the perpetrators and their crimes, but very little about their victims. One might search in vain among the German documents, otherwise so abundant and precise, for evidence of the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of the people who, before they were destroyed, had been marked, counted, photographed, and deliberately starved and tortured both physically and morally. It is in the contemporaneous accounts of the victims that one will find descriptions of the piling up of events, the evolution of experience, and the mechanism of change, as seen through their eyes in a given minute, hour, or day.

FORTY YEARS LATER

Viewed as a source for a history of the Jewish community in Łódź during the Nazi occupation, the *Chronicle* would appear to be without a beginning, for its writing commenced on January 12, 1941, that is, 492 days after the German Eighth Army, under the command of General Blaskowitz, seized the city. The *Chronicle* also lacks any final entries, for work on it ceased on July 30, 1944, when the Germans had ordered the ghetto liquidated and all its inhabitants vacated. Four days later, with the first transport, the total deportation of the Jews from the Łódź ghetto was underway, a process that would last until the end of August. Łódź, after Warsaw the second largest Jewish community in Europe, was destroyed.

Łódź had close to 250,000 Jews before the Second World War, one-third of the city's total population.⁶⁴ If there were any place in Poland where Jews could consider themselves at home and safe, no city had more of a claim to this than Łódź. They had been there since 1793, when Łódź, with a total population of 191, was an insignificant, scarcely perceptible dot on the map of Poland.⁶⁵ Like the other people who emigrated to Łódź, the Jews came from far and wide, until that little settlement had grown into one of the major centers of textile production in Europe. Thereafter, universally known as the Polish Manchester or the city of factory smokestacks, Łódź achieved its magnitude and international importance in the course of barely a century due to the considerable contributions of the Jews, who functioned as entrepreneurs, merchants, and managers, and as workers, artisans, and cottage industry laborers. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the fact that Łódź's development as a textile city in the nineteenth century literally began from nothing, without any of the factories and large industrial plants that were to be built and owned by Dawid Lande, Abraham Prussak, Szaja Rosenblat, Moryc Zand, I. K. Poznański, Nachum Ejttingon, Uszer Kon,

64. *Concise Statistical Year-Book of Poland: September 1939–June 1941* (London: The Polish Ministry of Information, 1941), p. 17, Table 25.

65. Jan Wąsicki, *Opisy miast polskich z lat 1793–1794* (Descriptions of Polish cities, 1793–1794) (Poznań: Adam Mickiewicz University, 1962), pp. 1025–28.



Poland under German rule, 1939-1944

Street map of the ghetto of Łódź



