

CHAPTER 9

## Documenting Catastrophe

### *The Ringelblum Archive and the Warsaw Ghetto*

---

SAMUEL KASSOW

In the summer of 1943, in the Maidanek concentration camp, the noted Jewish historian Yitzhak Schiper told a fellow inmate that

Everything depends on who transmits our testament to future generations, on who writes the history of this period. History is usually written by the victor. What we know about murdered peoples is only what their murderers vaingloriously cared to say about them. Should our murderers be victorious, should *they* write the history of this war, our destruction will be presented as one of the most beautiful pages of world history, and future generations will pay tribute to them as dauntless crusaders. Their every word will be taken as gospel. Or they may wipe out our memory altogether, as if we had never existed, as if there had never been a Polish Jewry, a ghetto in Warsaw, a Maidanek. Not even a dog will howl for us.

But if *we* write the history of this period of blood and tears—and I firmly believe we will—who will believe us? Nobody will *want* to believe us, because our disaster is the disaster of the entire civilized world. . . . We'll have the thankless job of proving to a reluctant world that we are Abel, the murdered brother.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Schiper, Emanuel Ringelblum had no doubt that the world would indeed believe what had happened—as long as it had the proper evidence. Through the secret Oyneg Shabes archive that he organized in the Warsaw Ghetto in November 1940 he set out to leave a mass of evidence whose thoroughness, objectivity, and sheer scope would force those “future generations” to look the truth in the face.

The Germans thought that they would not only kill the Jews but also write their history and determine how posterity would remember them. Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto were all too aware of the Nazi film crews who roamed

---

Notes for this section begin on page 189.

the ghetto to depict Jews as filthy degenerates. All over Europe the Nazis were showing the film *The Eternal Jew* (1940) that compared Jews to rats.

Through diaries, ghetto archives, and secret chronicles, Jews underscored their determination to write their own history. One could indeed resist with pen and paper as well as guns; buried time capsules might thwart Nazi hopes to erase the memory of their Jewish victims. Through the written word, Jews did all they could to ensure that future generations would write about them on the basis of Jewish rather than Nazi sources.

In March 1944, shortly before his capture by the Gestapo, Emanuel Ringelblum and his close associate Adolf Berman sent a letter to the Yiddish Scientific Institute in New York in which they described how the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto doggedly resisted Nazi attempts to dehumanize them. The letter told an incredible story of cultural resistance and of a tough struggle that the Jews waged for their human dignity and national honor. Berman and Ringelblum mentioned the names of writers, poets, actors, intellectuals, and fighters and they recounted the determination of ordinary Jews not to let the Germans grind them down.<sup>2</sup>

But even as Ringelblum was composing this important message, he could not hide his fear that his greatest achievement—the underground archive he organized in the Warsaw Ghetto—might be lost forever. In a private letter to Berman, also written in March 1944, he worried that neither of them would survive the war. And then what would happen to the “OS”—the all-important archive? If there were no survivors, who would be able to find it?<sup>3</sup>

Ringelblum indeed had good reason to worry. Of the sixty or so collaborators whom he mobilized in this incredible project of documentation, study, and cultural resistance, only three survived the war—Hersh Wasser, his wife Bluma, and the journalist Rachel Auerbach. They pressured and cajoled Jewish leaders in newly liberated Poland to start searching for the buried documents under the ruins of what had been a school at Nowolipki 68. It was a very difficult process to find them underneath the heaps of rubble of what used to be the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>4</sup>

Finally in September 1946, searchers uncovered ten tin boxes, the first cache of the archive, which was buried in August 1942. The second cache, buried in February 1943, was found in December 1950 and the third, buried in April 1943, was never recovered.<sup>5</sup> Many documents and photographs, especially in the first cache, were lost to water seepage and mold, and it is probable that parts of the first cache vanished forever. Nonetheless about twenty-five to thirty thousand usable documents have survived.<sup>6</sup> A catalogue and reader’s guide recently published by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and Indiana University Press runs to more than five hundred pages. The value of the archive for the study of the Warsaw Ghetto becomes even greater when one remembers that Warsaw suffered enormous damage during the Jewish and

Polish uprisings and thus, when compared with other cities, fewer archives and wartime materials survived.

Thanks to the materials of the Oyneg Shabes archive we have a deeper understanding of the social and cultural history of the Warsaw Ghetto, which was, like most ghettos, not just an antechamber to the death camps but, in Gustavo Corni's words, a "unique social structure in which elements of the traditional pre-war Jewish society continued to exist."<sup>7</sup> The lives of ghetto inhabitants did not begin in 1939 or 1941, and any serious research on ghettos must frame questions that recognize not only rupture but also continuities—exactly the approach that Ringelblum and his archive took.

Indeed Ringelblum's determination to start the underground archive reflects critical continuities between his prewar activity and his wartime role in the Warsaw Ghetto. Before the war Ringelblum played three major roles: political activist, community organizer, and historian. These three roles were all intertwined. The kind of historian Ringelblum chose to be was shaped by his political involvement and his activities as a community organizer. The first major commitment that Ringelblum made was to radical, Marxist politics. He was part of a generation of Jewish youth that came of age in a time of dislocation, war, economic upheaval, and growing antisemitism. In theory they were equal citizens of the Polish Republic but in practice most felt like second-class citizens.

Ringelblum was born in 1900 in Buczacz, then in Habsburg Galicia; in 1914 his family fled to Nowy Sącz in Western Galicia to escape the advancing Russian armies. The very week that he turned seventeen, in November 1917, two major events took place that would have an enormous impact on his life. The first was the announcement of the Balfour Declaration, a promise by the British government to help establish a Jewish national home in Palestine. The second was the Bolshevik overthrow of the Russian provisional government and the establishment of a Soviet state that promised world revolution and equality for all oppressed peoples, including Jews. In interwar Poland many young Jews sought salvation through Zionism while others looked to Moscow. Ringelblum, however, embraced a movement that was convinced that Zionism and a Soviet-inspired world revolution were perfectly compatible. As a teenager in Nowy Sącz, he joined the Poalei Tsiyon Party, a movement founded and shaped by Ber Borochov, who died in 1917. Borochov had called for Jews to fight for both a territorial base in Palestine and Socialist revolution in the Diaspora.<sup>8</sup> It was in the party group in Nowy Sącz that Ringelblum would make two close friends, Raphael Mahler and Artur Eisenbach, who would also become renowned historians of Eastern European Jewry. When the party split in 1920 into a right wing and a Yiddishist pro-Soviet left wing faction, Ringelblum joined the latter, a move that would have an enormous impact on his subsequent development as a historian.<sup>9</sup>

The Poalei Tsiyon, and above all the intellectual legacy of Borochoy, affected Ringelblum in many important ways. Inspired by Borochoy's teachings about the ongoing economic marginalization of Diaspora Jewry, the party stressed the study of Jewish economic and social history. Borochoy was also a keen Yiddishist, one of the pioneers of modern Yiddish studies; his teachings made Ringelblum a passionate supporter of modern Yiddish culture. At an early age Ringelblum threw himself into the party's educational activities, which were directed at poor Jewish workers who had been forced to leave school at an early age. The party imbued Ringelblum with a devotion to the plight of the Jewish masses and this dedication to the struggle for the welfare of the Jewish poor inspired him both before the war and in the Warsaw Ghetto.

In 1930 Ringelblum began to work for the most important Jewish relief organization in interwar Poland, the American-based Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), as an editor of its monthly journal *Folkshilf*, and later as a community organizer. His activities focused on the network of almost nine hundred free loan societies—the so-called *gmiles khosed kasses*—that the JDC had organized in Poland by 1939.<sup>10</sup> Ringelblum was convinced that the “microcredit” extended by these societies to needy Jews in small towns had an impact far out of proportion to the actual amounts of money disbursed.<sup>11</sup> For beleaguered small-town Jews fighting boycotts and anti-Jewish violence in the 1930s, the *kasses* were a vital source of moral support and a reminder that they were not alone.

Ringelblum noted the critical difference between traditional charity and the ethos of self-help that the Joint was trying to develop.<sup>12</sup> The JDC expected local Jewish communities to provide half of the capital of the *kasses* eventually, a provision aimed at fostering healthy partnership rather than a destructive dynamic of handouts and charity. *Folkshilf* stressed that Jews had to fight back against Polish attempts to marginalize them economically. Vocational training, courses to teach Jews new skills and occupations, stood at the center of its message. The Joint also insisted that local Jews overcome political differences and work together. Political wrangling could not stand in the way of working for the common good. This was another lesson that Ringelblum took with him into the Warsaw Ghetto when he emerged to help lead the ghetto's most important relief organization, the Aleynhilf.

When Nazi Germany expelled seventeen thousand Polish Jews in October 1938, the JDC director Yitzhak Giterman sent Ringelblum to the border town of Zbąszyń to organize relief activities for the desperate refugees. Ringelblum showed himself to be a superb organizer, and his success in Zbąszyń led to greater responsibilities in the JDC.<sup>13</sup> His relationship with Giterman grew closer. Indeed Giterman would play a major role in the leadership of the Oyneg Shabes archive.

In addition to his political activism and to his growing stature as a community organizer, Ringelblum was also becoming an accomplished historian of Polish Jewry. In 1919, Ringelblum left Nowy Sącz and enrolled in the history faculty of Warsaw University. His historical training proceeded under the guidance of two key mentors: Professor Marcelli Handelsman of Warsaw University and Dr. Yitzhak Schiper, a well-known historian of Polish Jewry (who was not on the university faculty). Handelsman and Schiper were not only historians; they were prominent, politically engaged public intellectuals, and clear role models for Ringelblum. From the very beginning of his career as a historian, Ringelblum saw the writing of history as a personal and national mission. Historians were not just scholars. They were also fighters in a battle that Polish Jewry was waging for national dignity and equality. Even studies of the distant past were used to support or refute antisemitic accusations that Polish Jews were aliens who had weakened the country and who had stymied the development of a Polish middle class.

Jewish historians like Ringelblum felt a pressing obligation to show that Jews lived in Poland by right and not on sufferance. Their toil and sweat had helped build the country and they had fought for its welfare and independence. Ringelblum was a Marxist who rejected the idea of eternal and inevitable Polish antisemitism. Hatred of Jews, he believed, was largely the result of the manipulative capitalist system and of ignorance, and thus Jewish historians could build vital bridges between the two communities. Much of Ringelblum's historical research on various topics between 1450 and 1800 focused on Polish-Jewish relations: the deep links that bound Jews to the Polish land, and Jewish participation in Poland's battles for freedom.<sup>14</sup> This concern with Polish-Jewish relations would also play a major role in the secret ghetto archive, as Ringelblum went out of his way to collect material on Jewish participation in the war against the Germans in 1939 as well as Polish-Jewish economic collaboration such as smuggling.

In 1923 Ringelblum and Rafael Mahler, his close friend and party comrade, founded the "Young Historians Circle" (Der Yunger Historiker Krayz), which would hold monthly meetings until 1939. After 1925 the Circle played a major role in the Historical Section of the YIVO, the Yiddish Scientific Institute, which was founded in Vilna in that year.<sup>15</sup> Ringelblum, like the other historians of the Circle, embraced the unofficial motto "history for the people and by the people." History was not a monopoly reserved for scholars and specialists; indeed Jewish scholars needed ordinary Jews—dedicated amateurs—to collaborate in a effort to gather documents, record local folklore, and to photograph and study local cemeteries and synagogues.<sup>16</sup> Ringelblum was one of the founders of the Jewish *landkentnish* (know the land) society. This society encouraged Jews to hike the Polish countryside, kayak along its rivers, and ski

in its mountains, thus asserting their own ties to the country. “Engaged tourism” was a response to the fact that Polish guidebooks largely omitted Jews and Jewish sites from their purview.<sup>17</sup>

Ringelblum and other YIVO scholars hoped that the very process of historical research and “engaged tourism” would bolster a new secular Jewish sensibility and Yiddish secular culture.<sup>18</sup> “*Zamling*”—the collection of documents and folklore—would also ensure that future generations would not have to rely on gentile sources and unfriendly official documents to study Jews; it signaled the determination of a stateless people to protect their identity and their national dignity. Indeed, the secret Oyneg Shabes archive that Ringelblum organized in the Warsaw Ghetto was a direct continuation of this YIVO imperative of engaged scholarship.

Jewish historians, Ringelblum argued, also had to change the way Jews saw themselves and their own past. Jewish history was more than a story of rabbis, scholars, and businessmen. The Jewish past was not an idyllic fable of Jews, rich and poor, walking together to pray. Jewish historians had to write about ordinary Jews, the poor, women, apprentices, and beggars. They had to show that the Jewish past also saw class struggles and the battles waged by the poor for social justice. These poor Jews had been forgotten and the Jewish historian had an obligation to protect their memory and thus give them posthumous honor and recognition. One example was Ringelblum’s tribute to some obscure eighteenth-century Warsaw Jewish jesters. “These jesters,” Ringelblum wrote, “can be seen as the ancestors of Jewish actors, who in hard times did what they could to amuse the Jewish masses. At the same time they enriched and disseminated popular culture [*folkshafung*]. Therefore let us mention their names so that they will be remembered [*l’zikhroyn oylem*]”...<sup>19</sup> (When Ringelblum wrote these words he did not know that a few years later he would be doing the same for the Warsaw Yiddishist intelligentsia and the Polish Jewish masses.)

In a 1955 essay, a former member of the Circle, Meir Korzen, noted that before the war, Ringelblum was known more as an organizer than as an original thinker and historian.<sup>20</sup> Korzen was not entirely wrong, but he ignored the sociocultural context of interwar Polish-Jewish historiography. Without university or government support Jewish historians needed good organizers. Less concerned with academic fame than with encouraging the writing of Polish Jewish history, Ringelblum saw himself as a facilitator as well as a scholar. It is well that he did so. A Meyer Balaban or a Schiper, the most famous and accomplished Jewish historians in prewar Poland, would not have organized a collective undertaking like the Oyneg Shabes. Ringelblum did. He also believed that one of the major priorities of the Oyneg Shabes archive was to make it easier for future historians to do research. To that end, when the archive began in November 1940, he wanted to cast a wide net and to collect as large a variety of material as possible. There was no way of knowing at that moment, he told

Hersh Wasser, what was “important” and what was not. That was an issue for future historians to decide.<sup>21</sup>

To be sure, Korzen underestimated Ringelblum, who compiled a respectable record as a historian, all the more remarkable for the fact that his many jobs left him little time to work in archives. He published the first academic history of early Warsaw Jewry; landmark articles on Polish-Jewish relations in the eighteenth century; an important monograph on the Jewish role in the Kosciuszko Uprising; a splendid investigation of the Jewish book trade; many articles on the history of Jewish medicine in Poland; and an excellent study of discussions of the economic restructuring of Polish Jews in the eighteenth century. He did so with practically no financial help and little time. And after all, he was not yet thirty-nine when the war broke out.

While the Circle was not linked to the Left Poalei Tsiyon per se, Ringelblum himself was deeply convinced of a clear link between the party's ideology and the serious study of Jewish history.<sup>22</sup> He wanted the *Historiker Krayz* to “impart a new spirit to the writing of Jewish history. [We want] to liberate Jewish historiography from the influence of religious and nationalist attitudes. This is a pioneering circle since almost all of its members are trying to solve the problems of Jewish history from the standpoint of historical materialism.”<sup>23</sup>

Thus Ringelblum could never escape a certain tension between his political engagement and his scholarly principles. But he was committed to objective scholarship, and he stubbornly resisted calls by party radicals in the 1930s to boycott the YIVO because of its alleged devotion to its alleged fetish of “bourgeois science” and “ivory tower scholarship.”<sup>24</sup> In the Oyneg Shabes he strove to include collaborators from different political groups. The research guidelines that he prepared for the Oyneg Shabes are rigorous and comprehensive. But it would also be a mistake to discount entirely the impact of the party's ideology on his historical writings and his work in the Oyneg Shabes. The late Nachman Blumenthal went too far when he praised Ringelblum for completely transcending party biases.<sup>25</sup> In a January 1944 letter Ringelblum reiterated just how much the party's ideology meant to him.<sup>26</sup>

One does not have to look hard to see the impact of Ringelblum's political views in his wartime writings. Although he tried to involve all groups in the archive, he could not entirely mask his ingrained aversion to the Bund, his party's major nemesis in interwar Poland.<sup>27</sup> His prewar antipathy to the “Jewish bourgeoisie” emerged as a constant theme in his ghetto diary; he compared the Warsaw Judenrat to the hated kahal in Tsarist Russia that protected the interests of rich Jews by catching poor children for service in the Russian army.<sup>28</sup> He was not completely fair in his treatment of Adam Czerniaków, the head of the Warsaw Judenrat. He bitterly resented the alleged favoritism shown by Czerniaków to prominent converts in the ghetto. Ringelblum had little sympathy with the counterargument made by Czerniaków and Judenrat member

Abraham Gepner that to boycott converts like Professor Herszfeld and Józef Szeryński would be a demonstration of disloyalty to Poland in a time of national emergency. Indeed Gepner reacted angrily to Ringelblum's attacks on the Judenrat's reception of converts and accused him of lacking Polish patriotism.<sup>29</sup>

Ringelblum was pro-Soviet, but like the rest of his party, support of the Soviet Union did not blind him to unpleasant realities. He was well aware of Stalinist terror and of the ongoing decline of Yiddish culture there.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, as the war progressed, Ringelblum believed more than ever that the Soviet Union, with all its faults, represented the Jews' only hope in the postwar era.

Ringelblum came into his own when the war began. Before the war he had worked in the shadows of others, people whose mentorship he willingly accepted. But one by one, those whom he most respected and looked up to either left or were killed.<sup>31</sup> The time had come to fulfill an enormous national and human responsibility, to gather eyewitness accounts and documents of Jewish society in wartime. What Ringelblum realized was that this was a collective, not an individual enterprise. With the Oyneg Shabes archive he won his place in history.

In September 1939, Ringelblum had just returned to Warsaw from Switzerland, where he had been a Left Poalei Tsiyon delegate to the twenty-first Zionist Congress in August. Polish defenses crumbled within days, and many key Jewish leaders fled the Polish capital. Artur Eisenbach, Ringelblum's brother-in-law, begged Ringelblum to leave but he refused. Somebody had to stay, he insisted, to organize relief and to lead. As Ringelblum told the journalist Rachel Auerbach, who was planning to flee to her native Galicia, not everybody had the right to run.<sup>32</sup> He discovered during the siege of Warsaw, as did many other ordinary Warsaw citizens, that he was capable of physical courage. He stood his civil defense watches under heavy fire and carried a wounded woman to a hospital in the middle of an air raid. And every day, Ringelblum made the long journey to his office in the headquarters of the Joint Distribution Committee where he helped organize emergency relief and refugee aid.<sup>33</sup>

Two major strands of Ringelblum's prewar activity, history and social welfare, now came together. He became a major leader of the major Jewish mutual aid organization in Warsaw, the Aleynhilf, and helped coordinate aid to refugees and soup kitchens. He also helped organize an extensive network of more than one thousand house committees and tried to make them into the social base of the Aleynhilf. He and others consciously used the Aleynhilf to create posts for the Jewish intelligentsia—teachers, writers, scholars, and others who might otherwise be doomed to starvation in the ghetto. As time went on, Ringelblum began to see the Aleynhilf as a counterpoint to the Judenrat, a symbol of a “democratic” as opposed to a “bureaucratic” Jewish institution. In turn, this consciousness of representing the *real* community permeated the self-percep-



tion of the Oyneg Shabes collective. It was largely through the Aleynhilf, as well as through his contacts in the YIVO, the Joint, and the Left Poalei Tsiyon that he recruited many of the key members of the Oyneg Shabes Archive, which he organized as a formal group in November 1940.<sup>34</sup>

Through a process of trial and error, Ringelblum and his key collaborators established an effective organizational structure for the Oyneg Shabes. At the center of the archive was an executive committee that met on Saturday afternoons. The committee raised money, made decisions about strategy and research agendas, and also decided on the recruitment of personnel. The Oyneg Shabes also included writers and contributors. Some contributed only a few articles or essays while others wrote on an ongoing and frequent basis. The Oyneg Shabes also needed interviewers and information gatherers, especially to find out what was going on in the refugee centers. This was very dangerous work, since the risk of contracting typhus was high. The archive also tried to make two or three handwritten copies of each document. One of the most critical groups in the archive was the “technical staff” led by the teacher Israel Lichtenstein. Only this staff had physical possession of the materials as they flowed into the archive and only they, plus Ringelblum and a few others, actually knew the archive’s location.

Ringelblum brought together a close cadre of about sixty collaborators that included religious Jews and Communists, Bundists and Zionists, well-known prewar leaders, and obscure refugees. It would go too far to say that the Oyneg Shabes worked in complete harmony or that party differences entirely disappeared. But the Oyneg Shabes collective was imbued with a common mission—to document Jewish life under the Nazi occupation and to ensure that future historians would write on the basis of Jewish, and not just Nazi, materials. To assure secrecy, the archive mostly operated on a “need to know basis” with careful screening and tight compartmentalization. This caution exacted a price, both in terms of valuable people whom the archive chose not to involve (Yitzhak Schiper and Meyer Balaban) and materials that the archive chose not to collect. But the Gestapo never tracked down the archive. Indeed the Oyneg Shabes, as Rachel Auerbach pointed out, had more luck saving documents than people.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike the Łódź Ghetto archive, which was, one might say “semi-official,” or the Białystok archive, where Judenrat leader Efraim Barash provided Mordecai Tenenbaum with some financial support and a room, or Herman Kruk’s documentation efforts in the Vilna Ghetto, where ghetto commandant Jacob Gens would occasionally drop by to unburden himself, the Oyneg Shabes tried to keep a firewall between itself and the Judenrat.<sup>36</sup> Even more, it saw itself as part of an alternative community (to borrow a term from Lucy Dawidowicz) that supposedly represented the “real voice” of Warsaw Jewry, as opposed to the “official” and “corrupt” Judenrat. Such a stance affected the collection pri-

orities of the archive, at least until the beginning of the Great Deportation in July 1942. Over time the Oyneg Shabes pursued changing and overlapping agendas. The first, begun in 1940 was *zamling* (collecting)—the collection of testimonies, diaries, candy wrappers, tram tickets, restaurant menus, official decrees—anything that could give future historians insights into the life of the ghetto including material culture. This remained a priority of the archive right until the end.

But in 1941 the Oyneg Shabes adopted a new project: the Two and a Half Years Project, an ambitious plan to compile a sixteen-hundred-page study of Jewish life under the Nazi occupation based on questionnaires, interviews, and defined topics that included eighty different subjects, such as women, children, corruption in the ghetto, the ghetto street, religious life, Polish-Jewish relations, German-Jewish relations, and much more.<sup>37</sup> As was the case with *zamling*, this project also reflected how not only Ringelblum but most of the other members of the Oyneg Shabes executive committee had been active in the prewar YIVO, with its emphasis on social history, its populism, its concern for the collection of Jewish documents, and its encouragement of Yiddish as a scholarly language. The YIVO also stressed interdisciplinary approaches, the collaboration of scholars and ordinary Jews, the use of questionnaires and surveys to encourage the writing of “history by the people and for the people.” We also see here the keen prewar interest of Ringelblum in material culture and what later came to be called *Alltagsgeschichte*.

Each topic within the project had a team leader. Some Oyneg Shabes members supervised multiple topics. Ringelblum stressed the importance of securing multiple perspectives, for example, the views of religious and secular Jews, of young people, and so on.<sup>38</sup> Special mention should be made of the studies of Jewish women by Celia Slapakowa, the essay on children by Aaron Koninski, the reportages of Rachel Auerbach and Peretz Opoczynski, and the more than four hundred shtetl monographs that Ringelblum called the crown jewel of the Oyneg Shabes. The Oyneg Shabes tried hard to begin serious study of the economics of the Warsaw Ghetto: exports, the search for niche markets, the balance of trade, prices, the dollar-złoty exchange rate, and Polish-Jewish economic relations. Ringelblum believed that the OS enjoyed only limited success in this field, but in hindsight, he underestimated the achievements of the archive, especially in harnessing the gifted economist Jerzy Winkler to write a penetrating study of trade with the Aryan side.

This ambitious attempt to study wartime Jewish society also reflected, it might be said, the key role that Warsaw played in prewar Jewish Poland as a nodal point of contestation. More than Jewry in any other city, with the possible exception of Łódź, Warsaw Jewry was a mosaic of different groups and tribes: Hasidism, Bundists, a large working class, Litvak migrants, Galician intellectuals, a large Polish-speaking component that included much of

the middle class and professional intelligentsia, as well as the Yiddish-speaking masses. Warsaw exemplified the ongoing tensions and clashes of interwar Polish Jewry, tensions and clashes that assumed a new relevance in the Warsaw Ghetto. Warsaw was also the center of political parties and welfare organizations, it boasted the highest concentration of the Jewish professional intelligentsia, and it reflected in concentrated form the rapid cultural transformations that were changing Jewish Poland.

In an essay on the Oyneg Shabes written in late 1942 or early 1943, Ringelblum amplified some of the principles that underlay the work of the archive.<sup>39</sup> He stressed the importance of casting as wide a net as possible and writing down impressions and information immediately. Memory, Ringelblum insisted, was tricky, especially in the ghetto where changes occurred so quickly, and where those changes were usually for the worse. The war had turned days into weeks and weeks into years. By December 1939, the tough prewar days seemed like a picnic. A year later, the Jews were locked up in a ghetto and the prewar days seemed wonderful—certainly not worth writing about. And when the Great Deportation to Treblinka began in July 1942, even the terrible ghetto hell of 1941 seemed like an elusive paradise. What seemed important and significant today might be totally forgotten tomorrow. And if one put off writing today, what guarantee was there that the writer would be alive tomorrow?

Ringelblum the historian had an implicit intuition of the important difference between contemporaneous testimony and survivor memory. Had survivors written long after the war, their memoirs would have been skewed by the knowledge of the terrible disaster that engulfed everybody. It is probable that all the sketches about the microcosms of ghetto life between 1940 and 1942 would have been forgotten. Who would have cared about Peretz Opoczynski's sketches of house committees and the post office? Who would have bothered with Janos Turkow's essay on theaters in the ghetto? In one of Cecilia Slapakowa's interviews with ghetto women, we read that, "in the tragic destructive chaos of our present day life we can nonetheless observe flashes of creative activity, the slow development and birth of forces that are building a base for the future."<sup>40</sup> Could this have appeared after the war? Survivor identity would have overwhelmed who the Jew had been. The before would have been erased by the after. But like many others, even Ringelblum, for a long time, refused to believe the worst.

The massive study project was in full swing when the Great Deportation began. In the last week of July 1942 a hurriedly convened emergency meeting of the Oyneg Shabes ordered the immediate collection and burial of all documents, photographs, and artifacts.<sup>41</sup> Team leaders gave up their raw data, interview records, and questionnaires, and this unfinished material became one of the most important parts of the first cache of the archive buried in August 1942. It is important to remind ourselves that this study project began before

the Oyneg Shabes leaders learned about the full dimensions of the Final Solution. In the true tradition of the prewar YIVO, they were striving to produce engaged scholarship that somehow straddled the built-in tension—in the best Dubnovian tradition—between the quest for scholarly objectivity and nation building. It is not farfetched to infer that Ringelblum himself hoped that the Two and a Half Year project could help build what we now call a “usable past” for postwar Polish Jewry. He hoped that these lessons would include more interest in Yiddish and more cultural pride.<sup>42</sup> He wanted to discredit the Jewish bourgeoisie and expose those elites who failed to meet the test of wartime leadership, to document the resilience and resourcefulness of the Jewish masses, and to demonstrate that in a moment of trial the Jews had once again proven their loyalty to Poland.

One of the key factors that made the extraordinary work of the Oyneg Shabes possible—and especially the Two and a Half Years Project—was the fact that, compared to some of the other large ghettos, the Warsaw Ghetto had a relatively large degree of what I would call “social space.” Compared say to Łódź, the Warsaw Ghetto was less isolated and its economy, if we can call it that, was less regimented. In 1940 and 1941 the Warsaw Ghetto had developed, as has been seen, a strong “alternative community” based on more than one thousand house committees, a parliament of the house committees chaired by Ringelblum, and the critically important *Aleynhilf*—a prime example of what Yehuda Bauer has called an “intermediate organization” in the ghetto, those standing between the *Judenrat* and the underground organizations.<sup>43</sup>

The Oyneg Shabes and the *Aleynhilf* existed in a symbiotic relationship. Most Oyneg Shabes leaders, including Ringelblum, Joint Director Yitzhak Giterman, Hersh Wasser, and Menakhem Cohen, also occupied leading positions in the *Aleynhilf*. The Oyneg Shabes folded most of its operating expenses into the budget of the *Aleynhilf*, which provided employment to most of the Oyneg Shabes staff. Just as important, it was through the *Aleynhilf* that the Oyneg Shabes was able to collect information and documents while at the same time preserving secrecy. Interviews with refugees, information gathering in soup kitchens and schools, essay-writing contests targeted at specific subgroups such as young people, and study projects of social problems in the ghetto could all be labeled as *Aleynhilf* projects. Directors of soup kitchens or schools could alert the Oyneg Shabes to interesting sources of information or individuals to be interviewed. Needless to say, until the entry of the United States into the war, the *Aleynhilf* benefited from its association with the JDC, and was thus treated by the Germans with a relative degree of moderation.

A careful reading of Oyneg Shabes materials affords some valuable insight into the escalating dilemmas faced by the *Aleynhilf*. Over time initial optimism gave way to growing anxiety about the ability of Warsaw Jewry to hold out and about the ability of *Aleynhilf* to counter dwindling resources and falling morale.

By May 1942 Ringelblum was asking in his diary: what should the *Aleynhif* do? Should it try to distribute its resources equally, thus saving nobody in the end, or should it help a chosen few, an elite?<sup>44</sup>

By the same token, as we see from the writings of Rachel Auerbach and others, working for the *Aleynhif* was morally fraught. It was well and good to tell oneself, as Ringelblum, Auerbach, and the others did, that they were working on behalf of the real community, that they worked for organizations that truly represented the Jewish masses. But those very masses, starving and desperate, often saw people like Ringelblum as arbiters of life or death, who had access to jobs and food and who protected a favored few, well-connected friends and party comrades. It is to Ringelblum's credit that, for the most part, there is little evidence of censorship in the *Oyneg Shabes*, and that there is a lot of material criticizing the "alternative community" that he so fervently supported.

With the onset of mass murder of Warsaw Jewry, the *Oyneg Shabes* was decimated. The documents reflect the inhuman strain on the dwindling group of members. Per Ringelblum's own admonitions, there is an instructive difference between *Oyneg Shabes* materials and postwar memoirs. *Oyneg Shabes* materials show an incredible degree of anger directed against other Jews—who are mentioned much more than the Germans. Even close friends and co-workers turned against each other, if only temporarily.<sup>45</sup>

One might assume that once the group understood that few Polish Jews would survive the war, they would throw up their hands in despair. Incredibly, however, the work continued, now with new agendas. One was to send four detailed reports to London via the Polish Underground.<sup>46</sup> These reports included eyewitness accounts of escapees from Chełmno and Treblinka, as well as reports of eyewitnesses from other towns. Especially noteworthy was the 100-plus-page interview that Rachel Auerbach conducted with Avrom Krzepicki, an escapee from Treblinka and the eyewitness account of Chełmno by "Szlamek."<sup>47</sup>

In September 1942 Ringelblum asked the left-wing Polish Jewish writer Gustawa Jarecka to write a report of the Great Deportation that had just sent over three hundred thousand Jews to Treblinka. Jarecka only managed to finish the introduction before the Germans deported her and her two children. In December 1950, the introduction surfaced in two milk cans discovered by Polish construction workers:

The record must be hurled like a stone under history's wheel in order to stop it. . . . One can lose all hopes except the one—that the suffering and destruction of this war will make sense when they are looked at from a distant, historical perspective. From sufferings, unparalleled in history, from bloody tears and bloody sweat, a chronicle of days of hell is being composed, in order that one may understand the historical reasons that shaped the human mind in this fashion and created government systems which made possible the events in our time through which we passed.<sup>48</sup>

In her introduction, Jarecka set down many reasons to write in the face of death. Through the written word one could confront the terrible present with dignity of the past and recapture the themes and symbols of prewar culture. In the face of horror, language could simultaneously frustrate and console. To write was to assert precious individuality even on the brink of death. To write was to resist, if only to bring the killers to justice. To write was to complete the defeat of the killers by ensuring that future historians would use the victims' cries to change the world.

Like Jarecka, Ringelblum also wanted to cast a "stone under history's wheel." He was absolutely convinced that the story of Jewish suffering, no matter how terrible, was a universal story, not just a Jewish one.<sup>49</sup> And evil, no matter how great, could not be placed outside of history. However terrible their sufferings, the Jews were still part of universal history, not outside it. The archive could still become a weapon in the struggle for a better future. Even though he now knew that most Polish Jews would not survive, he still continued the Oyneg Shabes with new agendas. The Oyneg Shabes now collected all official documents and placards that recorded the mass murder; eyewitness accounts of Treblinka; studies of the rump ghetto and shops; reports to be sent abroad. In retrospect these sources, part of the second cache unearthed in milk cans in 1950, provide valuable insights into how Warsaw Jewry came to support the idea of armed resistance, a degree of mass support that was missing in Vilna and Białystok.

One of Ringelblum's most important goals was to explain for future historians the behavior of the "Jewish masses" during the war, to shield them against future charges of cowardice and fecklessness.<sup>50</sup> Before the war he had often complained that historians of Jewish society should not have to depend on gentile sources. In the face of the greatest catastrophe in European Jewish history, it became doubly important to leave markers and guideposts for future generations. During the deportation, Ringelblum kept returning to the theme of Jewish behavior, and one can see that he was anticipating the question that would merge after the war: why did they allegedly "go like sheep to the slaughter"? He was more anxious than ever to point out what he called "dos shtile heldntum funm yidishn masnmensch"—the quiet heroism of the ordinary Jew. These ordinary Jews had no money, no contacts on the Aryan side, not a chance of survival. Ringelblum wanted future historians to remember that there was much more to the ghetto than demoralization and corruption—which the archive faithfully documented. There were hundreds of thousands of ordinary Jews who worked in the house committees, struggled to support their families, helped their neighbors, looked after each other's children, and who went to their deaths without anyone to record their name or remember them. They too resisted.

When the Warsaw Ghetto uprising broke out in April 1943, Ringelblum was trapped in the fighting ghetto, caught by the Germans and sent to the labor

camp of Trawniki. There he and others in a camp resistance organization managed to establish clandestine contact with the underground Jewish National Committee. In August 1943, his party comrade Adolf Berman sent two intrepid couriers, Tadeusz Pajewski and Emilka Kossover, to Trawniki to rescue Ringelblum and bring him back to Warsaw, where he rejoined his wife Judyta and his 14-year-old son Uri in a crowded underground bunker on Grojecka 81.<sup>51</sup>

In those last months of his life, in terrible conditions, Ringelblum sat and wrote. In a kind of *apologia pro vita sua*, Ringelblum memorialized the progressive Jewish intelligentsia, and especially the murdered leaders who had done the most to shape him as a historian and as a public figure: Yitzhak Schiper, Shakhne Zagan, Yitzhak Giterman, and many others. Ringelblum rarely wrote about himself, but in these essays, he came closest to leaving his final testament. In his essay on Mordecai Anielewicz, Ringelblum paid a poignant tribute to the young commander of the Jewish Fighting Organization, who was killed in May 1943.

One of Ringelblum's last works was indeed his masterpiece on Polish Jewish relations in World War II.<sup>52</sup> As Ringelblum himself wrote, the picture that emerged, at least until the onset of the Great Deportation, was far from one-sided. There was evidence of Polish help as well as many documents showing the opposite. But the archive supports the conclusions reached by Havi Ben-Sasson and others that the real turning point in the way Jews viewed Poles came with the beginning of mass murder in 1942. Ringelblum was torn between his emotional involvement as a victim and his sense of duty, as one of the last Jewish historians left alive in Poland, to evaluate a complicated and fraught topic intelligently and objectively. Little wonder that this radical Marxist in his introduction compared himself to a *soyfer*, a scribe about to write a Torah scroll. He should purify himself in a ritual bath and he should remember that the slightest mistake would render the entire manuscript impure.

The Ringelblum study was thus a unique synthesis of the immediacy of contemporaneous testimony with the analytic perspective of retrospective historical analysis. It reflected the tension between the imperative of historical objectivity and shock of the enormous crimes that he witnessed not as a bystander but as a direct victim. Detached historians could make necessary distinctions between perpetrators and bystanders, between Polish and German antisemitism, between active complicity and indifference. For a member of a victimized people, to do so required a major effort of intellectual discipline. Ringelblum rejected blanket accusations that all Poles rejoiced in the murder of the Jews. After all, Poles had and were risking their lives to help him. He emphasized that the mass killing was instigated by the Germans, not the Poles. Furthermore the Germans were so determined to kill every last Jew that even had Poles extended more help, that would not have saved the majority of Polish Jews, only a few more individuals.

But Ringelblum also made some damning judgments. Although Jews were Polish citizens, they were abandoned by the Polish Underground and by the Underground government. They were seen as aliens, and their fate was of little concern. Why was it, Ringelblum asked, that when Germans pursued a fleeing Polish fighter through a crowded street, all they had to yell was “Catch the Jew” for someone to hand him over? Why was it that so often the last sight Jews saw from the cracks of the cattle cars were the smirks of their Polish fellow citizens? Poland, Ringelblum concluded, had failed the elemental moral test of solidarity with its Jewish population. His final verdict was harsh: “Polish Fascism and its ally, anti-Semitism have conquered the majority of the Polish people. It is they whom we blame for the fact that Poland has not taken an equal place alongside the Western European countries in rescuing Jews.”<sup>53</sup> To the very last, as this essay showed, Ringelblum remained an engaged historian, convinced that scholarship could also serve important national and political agendas. Even in the face of death, Ringelblum hoped that his *Polish-Jewish Relations* might contribute to a better Poland after the war, and improve Polish-Jewish relations in the future.

On 7 March 1944 a Polish informer betrayed Ringelblum’s hideout to the Gestapo. The Germans took all the Jews there to the Pawiak prison. Ringelblum and his son Uri sat in a separate cell with the other men. The late Yekhiel Hirschaut was a prisoner in Pawiak and wrote in his memoirs that as soon as the other Jewish prisoners learned that Ringelblum was in the death cell, they looked for ways to rescue him. They hatched a plan to attach Ringelblum to a work detail in the prison. Hirschaut sought out Ringelblum. Ringelblum told him how the Gestapo had just tried to torture information out of him. He was covered in black and blue marks, his son Uri sitting on his lap. Hirschaut outlined his plan: we can try to get you out of here. “And what about my wife and child?” Ringelblum asked. There was a long silence: Ringelblum understood and said that he could not leave his family. And he pointed to his son: “Vos iz er shuldik, der kleyner-tsulib im veytigt mir shtark dos harts” [why is the little one guilty? My heart is breaking because of him.] Hirschaut never saw Ringelblum again.<sup>54</sup> The Germans shot all the Jews they caught in the bunker as well as two of the Poles who helped them.

When searchers opened the first tin boxes of the archive that were retrieved in 1946, they found a testament written by Israel Lichtenstein, who had supervised the burial of the boxes in 1942. Lichtenstein concluded his stirring testimony with the following words: “We are the redeeming sacrifice for the Jewish People. I believe that the nation will survive. We the Jews of Eastern Europe are the redeemers of the People of Israel...”<sup>55</sup> At the very end of his life, he reaffirmed his belief in the future of the Jewish people. He did not see them as faceless victims but as a people, part of a living and resilient nation. This is an important legacy of the Oyneg Shabes archive.



If any one group of historians inherited Ringelblum's mantle and put wartime Jewish sources and archives at the front and center of their research it was what Dan Michman has called the "Israel School" of Holocaust historiography (in turn influenced by the Jerusalem School), strikingly similar to Ringelblum's approach.<sup>56</sup> This Israel school showed much more interest in studying the victims rather than the perpetrators, in researching ghettos rather than weighing in on the intentionalist–functionalist debate. Israeli historians continued where Jewish historians in postwar Poland left off, and their work included pioneering studies of individual ghettos, beginning with Yisrael Gutman on Warsaw and continuing over time with Michal Unger on Łódź, Sara Bender on Białystok, Yael Peled on Kraków, and others.<sup>57</sup> All of these studies remind us the critical importance of the wartime Jewish archives. It is doubtful that Yisrael Gutman could have written his book on the Warsaw Ghetto, for example, without the resources of the Oyneg Shabes archive. Dan Michman also reminds us that these historians saw "Jewish society as a living and active collective that must be studied with an eye on its social, economic and cultural aspects." Ringelblum would have put it exactly the same way.

## Notes

1. Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom* (New York, 1965), 211, quoted in Alvin Rosenfeld, *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature* (Bloomington, IN, 1980), 37–38.

2. The text of the letter can be found in Jacob Shatzky, ed., Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kapitlen geshikhte fun amoliken yidishn lebn in Poyln* (Buenos Aires, 1953), 545.

3. Adolf Berman Collection, Archive of Kibbutz Lohamei Ha'getaot, File 358, Letter of Emanuel Ringelblum to Adolf Berman, 1 March 1944. At the height of the Great Deportation from the Warsaw Ghetto, the Oyneg Shabes discussed the possibility that the archive might find its way to the YIVO after the war. See Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York, 1988), 141, entry of 29 July 1942.

4. Rachel Auerbach, "Vi azoy iz oysgegrobn gevorn der Ringelblum Arkhiv," *Arbeter Vort*, 27 June 1947.

5. The second cache was buried in aluminum milk cans, which preserved the documents much more effectively than the tin boxes of the first cache. It was only by accident that Polish construction workers happened upon the milk cans in December 1950 and handed them over to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. The third cache was buried under the premises of the brushmakers' shop on Swietojska 34 shortly before the outbreak of the Ghetto Uprising. Later it became the site of the Chinese embassy in Poland. That cache was never found.

6. According to Tadeusz Epstein, who has prepared the most comprehensive catalogue of the archive, cache I contained 25,540 pages of material, cache II 9,829 pages. Cache II covered the period from August 1942 until February 1943. See Robert Moses Shapiro and Tadeusz Epstein, eds., *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes-Ringelblum Archive: Catalogue and Guide* (Bloomington, IN, 2010).

7. Gustavo Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos: Voice from a Beleaguered Society, 1939-1944* (London, 2003).

8. For an excellent discussion of Borochoy, whose intellectual legacy was in fact much more complicated than the Left Poalei Tsiyon believed, see Matityahu Mintz, *Naye tsaytn, naye lider* (Tel Aviv, 1993).

9. The definitive study of the Left Poalei Tsiyon in Poland is Bina Garncarska-Kadri, *Bihipusei derekh: Poalei Tsiyon Smol b'Polin ad milhemet ha'olam ha'shniya* (Tel Aviv, 1995).

10. For more on the *kasses* see Samuel D. Kassow, "Community and Identity in the Interwar Shtetl," in *The Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars*, ed. Yisrael Gutman, Ezra Mendelsohn, Jehuda Reinharz, and Chone Shmeruk (Hanover, NH, 1989), 216; also Yitzhak Giterman, "Gmiles khased kasses in der itstiger shverer tsayt," *Folkshilf*, April 1936.

11. Sometime in late 1943 or early 1944 he wrote an essay on Yitzhak Giterman, who had been shot by the Germans in January 1943. In this essay Ringelblum devoted a great deal of attention to the *kasses* and to their significance. See Emanuel Ringelblum's journal, *Ksovim fun Geto* (Tel Aviv, 1985), vol. 2, 127.

12. Ibid.

13. Emanuel Ringelblum, "Zbanszyn," reprinted in Ringelblum, *Kapitlen geshikhte*, 500–501.

14. Indeed some scholars, such as Jacob Shatzky, believed that Ringelblum at times crossed the line that divided objective historical research from apologetics that tried too hard to score political points. For example Shatzky believed that Ringelblum exaggerated the pro-Polish stance of the Jewish masses in the Kosciuszko Uprising. See Jacob Shatzky, "Menakhem Ben Faivism Ringelblum," in Ringelblum, *Kapitlen Geshikhte*, xxxi.

15. On this circle, organized by Ringelblum in 1923, see Raphael Mahler, "Der krayz 'Yunger Historiker' in Varshe," in Mahler, *Historiker un Vegvayzer* (Tel Aviv, 1967), 303.

16. Lucjan Dobroszycki, "YIVO in Interwar Poland: Work in the Historical Sciences," in Gutman et al., *The Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars*, 496–97.

17. See Samuel Kassow, "The Jewish Landkentenish Society in Interwar Poland," in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, ed. Anna Lipphardt, Alexandra Nocke, and Julia Brauch (London, 2008).

18. See Raphael Mahler's introductory remarks to *Bleter far geshikhte* (1931); see also Ringelblum, "Fun der reaktsiye," *Landkentenish*, no. 1 (1933).

19. Emanuel Ringelblum, "Dos inveynikste lebn fun varshever yidn fun der farkerter zayt," in *Kapitlen geshikhte*, 101

20. Meir Korzen, "Emanuel Ringelblum lifnei ha-milkhama u'biyameha harishonim," *Yediot Yad Va-shem*, n. 21–22 (1959).

21. Hersh Wasser, "The Ghetto Archives: The Enterprise of Doctor Emanuel Ringelblum," in *A Commemorative Symposium in Honor of Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum and his Oneg Shabbat Underground Archives* (Jerusalem, 1983), 35–43.

22. See for example Emanuel Ringelblum, "Dr. Y. Shiper un di virthaftsgeshikhte fun di yidn in Poyln," *Vilner Tog*, n. 295 (1926). Here he points out that Borochoy's analysis of the Jewish condition encouraged and required serious research into Jewish economic history. He also stressed the interrelationship of Jewish and non-Jewish history. One could not study Jews in isolation; one could not understand Jewish history unless one understood the general historical context in which they lived.

23. Emanuel Ringelblum, "Bleter far geshikhte," *Arbeter Tsaytung*, no. 45 (1934).

24. Emanuel Ringelblum, "Der YIVO un di yidishe arbetershaft," *Arbeter Tsaytung* (August 1931).

25. Dr. Nakhman Blumental, "Der historiker-tsu der ferter yortsayt," *Arbeter Tsaytung*, n. 3 (1948).

26. Letter of Emanuel Ringelblum to Adolf Berman, 24 January 1944, Adolf Berman Collection, Archive of Kibbutz Lohamei Ha'getaot.

27. Hersh Wasser asserted in 1954 that Ringelblum invited the Bund to participate in the Oyneg Shabes but met with a refusal. Nonetheless, Wasser continued, several Bundists worked in the archive as individuals. See Hersh Wasser, "Vi iz es geven?" *Unzer Veg*, March 1954. It is interesting to note that after the war, Bundists treated Ringelblum with hostility. In 1953 a harsh attack on Ringelblum appeared in the Bundist journal *Unzer Tsayt*. The writer, Y. Hart [Sholom Hertz] lambasted Ringelblum for being a "dictator" who abused his authority in the

disbursement of relief funds. See Y. Hart, “Vegn Ringelblum’s notisn fun Varshever geto,” *Unzer Tsayt*, no. 7–8 (1953); “Nisht di khronik fun di tragishe Varshever yidn,” *Unzer Tsayt*, no. 9 (1953). One important member of the Oyneg Shabes archive was David Cholodenko, who was also a Bundist. His obituary, which appeared in *Doyres Bundistn*, totally ignored his collaboration with Ringelblum.

28. Emanuel Ringelblum, *Ksovim fun geto*, vol. 1, 335.

29. Ringelblum, *Ksovim fun geto*, vol. 1, 232.

30. Natan Ek, “Mit Emanuel Ringelblum in Varshever Geto,” *Di Goldene Keyt*, no. 24 (1956).

31. Two of Ringelblum’s most important mentors were Left Poalei Tsiyon leader Shakhne Zagan and Joint Director Yitzhak Giterman. Zagan was deported to Treblinka in 1942 and Giterman was shot in 1943.

32. Rachel Auerbach, *Varshever Tsvoes: bagegenish, akiyeftn, goyroles, 1933-1943* (Tel Aviv, 1974), 63. Ringelblum also told her that “a decision had been made to employ as many of the Jewish intelligentsia as possible in the institutions of the (Aleynhilf)—to save the cadres.”

33. Auerbach, *Vershever Tsvoes*, 42–52.

34. See Hirsh Vasser, “*A Vort vegn Ringelblum Arkhiv*,” 3, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research Archives [hereafter YIVO Archives].

35. Rachel Auerbach, *Varshever Tsvoes*, 9.

36. Emanuel Ringelblum, *Ksovim fun Geto*, vol. 2, 88.

37. Ringelblum, *Ksovim fun geto*, vol. 2, 83.

38. Ringelblum, *Ksovim fun geto*, vol. 2, 84.

39. Ringelblum, *Ksovim fun geto*, vol. 2, 76–102.

40. Archiwum Ringelbluma, Jewish Historical Institute Warsaw, [hereafter AR I], 49, 3 [I follow the system used by the Jewish Historical Institute. AR I refers to the first part of the archive found in 1946 and AR II refers to the second part. The file number is 49, followed by the page number].

41. Lewin, *A Cup of Tears*, 141, entry of 29 July 1942.

42. For example, in a diary entry of 23 March 1941 Ringelblum noted with approval an increase of interest in Yiddish in the ghetto.

43. See Yehuda Bauer, “Jewish Leadership Reactions to Nazi Policies,” in *The Holocaust as Historical Experience*, ed. Yehuda Bauer and Nathan Rotenstreich (New York, 1981), 173–89.

44. Ringelblum, *Ksovim fun Geto*, vol. 1, 365, entry of 26 May 1942.

45. See for example Israel Lichtenstein’s outburst against Ringelblum at the end of July 1942 in AR I, Pt. 1, n. 1190.

46. See Ruta Sakowska, “Archiwum Ringelbluma–Ogniwem Konspiracji Warszawskiego Ghetta,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* [hereafter *BZIH*], n. 152 (1989), n. 153 (1990), n. 155–156 (1990): 189–219; “Two Forms of Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto—Two Functions of the Ringelblum Archives,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 21 (1991); Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth About Hitler’s “Final Solution”* (Boston, 1980).

47. AR II, 299, “A mensh iz antlofn fun Treblinka.” This is Krzepicki’s account as written down by Auerbach. On “Szlamek,” the escapee from Chełmno, see Ruta Sakowska, “Szlamek-uciekniern z ośrodka zagłady w Chełmnie nad Nerem,” in *BZIH*, n. 131–132 (1984).

48. As translated in Joseph Kermish, ed., *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor: Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives “O.S.”*, (Jerusalem, 1986), 704.

49. Hersh Wasser recalled that Ringelblum once said that, “I do not regard the archive as a separate project, as a matter only of Jews, for Jews and by Jews. My whole being revolts against that concept. As a Jew, as a historian and as a socialist, I can’t agree with such an approach. In the whole complexity of social processes, where everything is interdependent, it is impossible to shut ourselves off in our narrow world. Jewish pain and Jewish liberation is part of a [wider story].” See Hersh Wasser, “*A Vort vegn Ringelblum Arkhiv*,” 15–16, YIVO Archives.

50. At the end of 1942 Ringelblum noted that one of the first questions that Poles asked fleeing Jews on the Aryan side was why they did not resist. Ringelblum, *Ksovim fun geto*, vol. 2, 401.

51. Basia Berman, "Rydzewski: Ringelblum oyf der Arisher Zayt," in *Linke Poalei Tsiyon*, 19 April 1948.

52. See Emanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, ed. Joseph Kermish and Shmuel Krakowski (New York, 1974).

53. Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, 247. As we have seen, Ringelblum had a tendency to label as "fascist" anyone whom he saw as an opponent of the progressive left. In 1934, he also called the Jewish bourgeoisie "fascist."

54. Yekhiel Hirschaut, *Finstere nekht in Paviak* (Buenos Aires, 1948), 199.

55. AR, I, 1190.

56. Dan Michman, "Is there an 'Israeli School' of Holocaust Research?" in *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements*, ed. David Bankier and Dan Michman (Jerusalem, 2008), 37–67.

57. Michal Unger, *Lodz: The Last Ghetto in Poland* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2005); Sara Bender, *The Jews of Białystok during World War Two and the Holocaust* (Hanover, NH, 2008); Yael Peled, *Jewish Krakow, 1939-193: Resistance, Underground, Struggle* [Hebrew] (Lohamei Hagetta'ot, 1993).