

of the Jewish population" — to quote the introduction to the report. That report was based on documents, official instructions, oral testimonies and formally recorded declarations of escapees, some of whom were used as grave diggers who succeeded in escaping Treblinka, and is supported by authenticated information from the province. It is one of the most important documents in the second part of the unearthed Archives.

The material accumulated there was also used for anti-Nazi propaganda in the clandestine bulletins of Oneg Shabbath that appeared from November 14, 1942 to January 15, 1943.

In the frightful days of mass deportations to Treblinka, work was speeded up on burying the collected treasure, out of the conviction that the buried Archives might be the only trace of Polish Jewry left for posterity.

The burial of the Archives, that "treasury of the Jewish people's suffering," was undertaken on August 3, 1942, by the security guard Israel Lichtensztajn and his aides, nineteen-year-old Dawid Graber and Nahum Grzywacz, 18. They also wrote their last wills and put them in the last box of material buried.

As said above, not all of the buried Archives was found after the war. But the parts unearthed attest to the widespread and ramified collecting effort and research work organized and carried out by our scholars and cultural leaders under conditions of most severe secrecy. This was done, in spite of all adverse circumstances, in a determined effort to provide a documentation and research center of that most tragic period as well as a repository of the spiritual heritage of the generations exterminated with such cruel bestiality.

1.

AR II/255

[EMANUEL RINGELBLUM]

O. S. ["ONEG SHABBATH"]

In this essay, known by the code name of "O.S." (for "Oneg Shabbath"), written in late December 1942, Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum, from a perspective of more than three years, gave his evaluation of the Secret Archives and the research carried out under the guidance of the ideological study center he directed, as well as of its workers, of their difficulties and achieve-

ments. It should be emphasized that Ringelblum did not mention (at all) any of the systematic work of collecting material conducted by Oneg Shabbath, which included compiling underground press and other clandestine publications of both the Jewish and Polish Underground; folklore of the War Period; letters written by Jews in Nazi-occupied territories; descriptions of events and incidents; round-ups and deportations; expulsions; pogroms and edicts that poured onto the Jewish population; and daily orders by the commander of the Jewish Police in the Ghetto, or the collection of orders of the German administration, and so forth.

Ringelblum valued much higher the persistence and diligence in preparing and collecting material by the members of Oneg Shabbath, both staff and temporary and occasional co-workers.

For the past 3½ years of the War, an archive was established in the Ghetto by the "Oneg Shabbath" group. This curious name stems from the fact that the group convened on Saturdays; and for reasons of secrecy, the entire institution was called "Oneg Shabbath". I laid the first brick for the archive in October 1939. At the time the mood was extremely despondent. Every day brought fresh decrees against the Jews who feared political repression and political searches, and dreaded the files of the regime-commissariat and the defence.* The fear lasted for months and, in the end, turned out to be unjustified. The Germans were not interested in individual "transgressors", but aimed at, and hit, the whole. They aimed at entire groups, entire professions, but not at individuals. During the first months of the German occupation, particularly in January 1940, there were mass-arrests and probably also mass executions of the intelligentsia. These arrests were made on the basis of lists of the several corporations (the medical association, the engineering association, etc.) and were not connected with thorough searches. In general, there was no interrogation; the Germans simply made short shrift by shooting anyone who fell into their hands.

Frequent and thorough searches did take place indeed, but for the following objectives: foreign currency, gold, diamonds, various articles, merchandise and so forth. These searches went on throughout the 3½ years of War and are still going on.

We have dwelt on the subject of searches because they had an important effect on the preservation of written documentation of the War period. During the first few months, the public was terrorized by the searches.

* defence — orig.: "defensive" — term commonly applied to the internal intelligence, and in particular to the secret police, in Eastern European countries.

During this time, everything was burnt, including innocent books to which even Hitler would not have objected. Most of the Socialist literature in libraries and in private homes was destroyed at this time, as were the works of German emigrant authors such as Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Feuchtwanger, Ludwig, etc. People were afraid to write during this period because they anticipated searches. In time, however, people calmed down. The terror kept growing stronger, but — as said — it was directed against whole groups, whole classes. What Jews did in private in their homes did not interest the Germans. So the Jews started to write. Everyone did: journalists, authors, teachers, community workers, young people, even children. Most people kept diaries where daily events were reflected through the prism of personal experience. A great deal was written, but the overwhelming majority of it was destroyed along with Warsaw Jewry in the deportations. All that remained was the material preserved in the A.G.¹

I began collecting material on contemporary times back in October 1939 when, as head of the Jewish Self-Help Society (then the Coordination Commission of the Welfare Institutions), I was in direct daily contact with life in the surroundings. I was receiving news of what was happening to the Jews in Warsaw and its suburbs, since the Coordination Commission was an offshoot of the "Joint" to which delegations from the provinces came almost every day to tell of the grave experiences visited on the Jewish population. In the evenings I noted everything I had heard during the day and added my own comments. In time, these daily notes filled a sizable volume of hundreds of closely written pages, reflecting the period. After a while, I started reworking the notes into weekly — then, later, monthly reports. This I did after the Oneg Shabbath staff had already grown considerably.

In the early months of my work on the Oneg Shabbath material I got several associates for this task. It was not very successful. Only when the young historian Rabbi Shimon Huberband was drawn to the job, did Oneg Shabbath gain one of its best co-workers. Unfortunately, however, Rabbi Huberband jotted down his notes as comments in various books so that they might appear to be annotations to the text. It was some time before he allowed himself to be persuaded that there was no danger in noting down everything and no need to write surreptitiously, as he had done in the beginning.

In May 1940, I thought it expedient to organize this highly important work as a group undertaking. I selected capable people and, as a result,

the work was set on the right course and given the proper scope. The O.S. board at the time appointed Hirsh W.* as secretary, a position he has held to this day. A refugee from Lodz, Hirsh W. has gained in the course of his past communal activities the necessary understanding for this kind of a job. His daily contacts with hundreds of refugee-delegations from all over the country made it possible to produce and amass hundreds of monographs on towns, the most important treasure of the O.S. work.

Our dear colleague Menahem K. took proper care of the finances. A rich community life began to develop in Warsaw, with readings, lectures, memorial meetings, and concerts, all of which broadened and deepened the O.S. work.

The establishment of the Ghetto, the fact that Jews were confined behind walls, provided even greater opportunity for the work of the archive. It became clear that the Germans cared very little what Jews did among themselves. Lectures were held on such subjects and with such attitudes as would have been impossible before the war. Totally unhampered, one spoke openly on whatever came to mind in every house-committee, in every public kitchen, in every community institution. The Jewish Gestapo-men were busy ferreting out wealthy Jews, warehouses with merchandise smuggled goods and so forth. Politics hardly attracted their attention. This went so far that even illegal publications of all persuasions were being issued almost freely and read almost openly in cafés; money was collected for publishing, opposing views were debated — in short, people behaved almost as they had before the War. Under this "freedom" of the people imprisoned in the ghetto it is hardly surprising that the O.S. work had ample opportunity to develop and branch out. Dozens of people joined the staff of O.S., some permanently and others only temporarily. Mountains of material piled up. The work expanded but remained clandestine. Ways were sought to give the work a legal status. With this in mind, a competition was proclaimed for dozens of writers, teachers, and intellectuals in general, with few monetary prizes. The prizes to which the Joint contributed a certain amount enriched the archives with a series of worthy works, such as a piece on the Jewish theater in war-time by T-w,** a monograph on Jewish life in Lemberg under the Russians by Esther M.*** and her husband S.R.,*** a history on a Jewish family during the war by the poetess Henrik Lazavert, a monograph on the Campinos labor-camp by Rabbi Huberband.

* Wasser

** Jonas Turkow

*** Mangel

**** apparently Schwiger

/this sentence not concluded/. In this manner, the O.S. grew. So much material was collected that we all thought the time was ripe — if not for a synopsis — then at least for a summary of the various problems and prominent phenomena in Jewish life. Had the plan been realized, it would have been an important contribution to the history of the Jews in Hitler's times. To our great regret, however, only a part of the plan was carried out. The necessary tranquility for a plan of such scope and volume was lacking. The writers who undertook to treat various chapters lacked conditions necessary to bring them to a conclusion. Several were taken away and deported (Mrs. Slopak, Rabbi Huberband, Szereszewska). More than one died from a bullet (Menahem Linder, Shmuel Breslau, Joseph Kaplan), some crossed over to the other side.

We colloquially termed this plan "*Two and a Half Years*", because it was to give an overview and summary of Jewish life in Warsaw during the 2½ years of War. The work was divided into 3 (actually 4) parts: a general section; an economic section; a section devoted to culture, science, literature and art; and a section on welfare work. The work began early in 1942 and was directed by a board consisting of this writer, Menahem Linder, and Lippe L.B.-ch.* I was in charge of the first and third sections, Linder of the economic section, and Lippe B. of the welfare section. The work was to have a semi-legal character and new talent was drawn to the task, specialists on various aspects of life. It was intended to fill over 100 sheets of print and would have been one of the most important documents of the War period. The thesis of every topic was deliberated for hours at editorial meetings. We wanted to direct the staff's attention to certain tendencies and point out the appropriate approach to any given topic, though we had no intention of dictating any given writer's specific attitude to his subject. We formulated outlines on the Ordnungsdienst (Jewish police), on corruption, demoralization in the ghetto, on community life, on education, on a poll about Jewish cultural life, creativity and art during the War, on Jewish-Polish relations, on smuggling, another poll on the situation in various economic branches and on youth, women, etc.

When we saw that it was difficult to obtain from the several writers the works assigned to them, we made it a rule that each of our co-workers was obliged to give us the raw material which he had collected in connection with his work, (for example the biographies of young people that formed the basis of the corresponding work on youth). Interesting material

on diverse aspects of our life and conditions during the War was thus amassed.

In the course of our work we gained a great deal of experience in composing this kind of papers. Many writers were already at an advanced stage of work, when midways, as the "2½ years" began to appear to be a "3-year" job, a new disaster descended on Warsaw Jewry — a disaster which cost us 300.000 victims: Deportations.

Like community and economic life as a whole, the O.S. work was also disrupted. Only a handful of writers stuck to their work during these disastrous days and kept writing about what was happening in Warsaw. The O.S. work however was too sacred, too deeply rooted in the hearts of its staff, too important a community function to be put aside. An effort was made to reconstruct the period of the deportations, of gathering materials on the slaughter-house of European Jewry — Treblinka. On the basis of accounts from people who returned from various provincial camps, we attempted to put together a picture of the Jewish experience in provincial towns during the period of the deportations. Right now, as this is being written, the work is in full swing and, if we are granted a bit more of calm time, we will be able to ensure that no important fact of Jewish life during the War will remain hidden from the world.

There were two types of O.S.-workers: *permanent* workers who devoted themselves entirely to the job, and *temporary* workers who wrote a single piece on their own experience during the War or on that of their town or village, this being all their connection with the O.S. Everyone was fully aware of the importance of his part in completing the task. They understood how important it was for future generations that evidence remain of the tragedy of Polish Jewry. Some also understood that the collected material served the present as well, informing the world of the horrors perpetrated against the Jews. Some temporary workers became so involved in the work that they stayed with us permanently.

Our permanent workers, numbering several dozens, were, on the whole, grass-roots intelligentsia, mostly members of proletarian parties. We intentionally avoided professional journalists because we did not want the writing to become hackneyed. We made a conscious effort that the course of events in every town, the experience of every Jew — and every Jew during the present War is a world in himself — would come across simply and faithfully. Every superfluous word, every literary turn of language or embellishment grates on the ear and evokes resentment. Wartime Jewish life is so rich in tragedy that it is unnecessary to enrich it with a superfluous line. Another consideration was the necessity of secrecy and one of

* Lippe Leib Bloch.

the chief literary failings, as is well known, is the inability to keep a secret. Several capable journalists might have, in time, been drawn into the work had they not been inclined to maintain relations with the Gestapo-man, Ganzweich; and though these relations were not of a "professional" character, it made it impossible for us to have any connection whatsoever with such journalists.

Our one-time co-workers were common people who had headed community organizations in their home towns. Arriving in Warsaw as part of the host of 150 thousand refugees, they continued to manage the affairs of their people in the so-called *Landsmannschaften*, organized through the central refugee committee of the Jewish Self-Help Society. After hard work all day in the committees distributing bread or extending other help, these *Landsmannschaft*-delegates spent their evenings writing the history of their towns in accordance with our outline of topics, or in telling it to our staff-members who later recorded it. This work was extremely fatiguing and difficult. As a result of the terrible crowding of the ghetto, the refugees lived in indescribable housing conditions. Maintaining conspirational work in such conditions was one of the difficulties. In the winter it was cold. Most Jewish homes had no electricity last winter. The writing was risky in any case, the hardship indescribable. It took long weeks and months of effort to receive a finished work on a town. I often had to try hard to encourage my co-workers and to stimulate them not to be daunted by all these impediments, but stick to their job. Add to this the initial fear of being discovered by Gestapo-men, and the picture is complete. Many a manuscript prepared for the O.S. was destroyed because of a house-search.

As stated, our co-workers, on the whole, were common people. There were talented people among them who, through us, were awakened to literary creativity. Had these people not perished from hunger, disease or deportation, we would have been enriched by new writing talents. Literary strength would have been injected into an area, in which we are particularly poor — memoir-writing. As mentioned above, our co-workers were generally laborers, craftsmen, and so forth, who suffered great hunger in this our city of pitiless Jews, Warsaw. The O.S., therefore, tried to save these people from starving to death by arranging distribution of food packages for them from the communal institutions.

Not only adults, but also young people and, in some instances, even children, worked for O.S. We tried to give an all-embracing picture of Jewish life during the war. Our aim was a presentation of a photographically true and detailed picture of what the Jewish population had to experience, to think and to suffer. We tried to have the same event, the history

of a community for instance, described by both an adult and a young person; by a pious Jew who is conscious at all times of the rabbi, the synagogue, the cemetery and other religious institutions, and also by a secular Jew who stresses other moments of no less importance in his account.

Typhus, which swallowed thousands of victims among the Jewish population in Warsaw, spread rapidly among our co-workers. Little wonder. Our people worked among thousands of refugees who were the bulk of the ill. Our people were in contact with those who had returned from the labor-camps, the chief carriers of typhus who spread it. Nobody was immunized against the disease because nobody had 500—600 zł. to pay for an inoculation. Typhus therefore struck Rabbi Huberband, Hirsch W., Peretz O. Other highly important co-workers perished from it. Among them was Kampelmacher, head of a Polish school for Jewish children in Grójec, one of the active community workers in his town. Mr. Kampelmacher could not find his place in Warsaw until he came to O.S. He set himself the challenging task of writing a comprehensive monograph on the Jewish experience in Grójec, starting with the pre-War situation. His early chapters were vivid and interesting. Whenever we met, Kampelmacher never failed to express his thanks for granting him the privilege to work with O.S. Now he had a goal in life, he said. He wished to devote himself wholly to his present sacred work and his only regret was the time that he had lost before he knew that this sort of work was being done. In the middle of his plans Kampelmacher, while acting as delegate for his *Landsmannschaft*, contracted typhus and never rose from his sick-bed. Other staff members perished in the same way. With trembling heart we stood at the sick-bed of the man who told the story of Mariampol and who succumbed to typhus right after our first session. The same was true of the Jewish Red Army soldier from Orsha and of dozens of others. Small wonder. Those who returned were emaciated from the trials and afflictions they had suffered and were, therefore, easy prey to the disease. Typhus, then deportations, were O.S.'s deadly enemies. They took our greatest toll of victims.

Comprehensiveness was the main principle of our work. Objectivity was the second. We endeavoured to convey the whole truth, no matter how bitter, and we presented faithful unadorned pictures. For example, with respect to conduct in the territories occupied by the Bolsheviks, we have both enthusiastic accounts furnished by supporters of the new order as well as accounts in which the Bolsheviks were presented relentlessly with all their vices. This material will supply future historians with information on the thinking of specific groups during the war.

The horrors perpetrated by the Germans on the Jewish population occupy first place in our work. Nevertheless, there is also considerable evidence of humanity on the part of Germans. In the completed theses, as well as in the oral reports, care was taken to adhere strictly at all times to the required objectivity even with respect to our deadly enemies, and to preserve an objective picture of the conduct of Germans toward Jews.

The same pertains to the conduct of Poles toward Jews. The dominant opinion among us is that anti-Semitism has risen significantly during the War; that, on the whole, the Poles are glad of the misfortune which has befallen the Jews in the towns and villages of Poland. The attentive reader of our writings, however, will find hundreds of documents which indicate the contrary. In more than one report on a village he will read of the warm treatment accorded Jewish refugees by the Polish population. He will learn of hundreds of cases in which Polish peasants hid and fed Jewish refugees from the surrounding villages for months at a time.

To ensure objectivity, to achieve as accurate and comprehensive a picture as possible of the War events in Jewish life, we tried to have the same incident described by as many people as possible. By comparing various accounts, the historian is able to arrive at the historical truth, the actual course of the event.

Our co-workers wrote the truth for another reason as well: We guaranteed that, to the extent that the material related to living people, it would not be used for present needs; it was intended primarily for historical purposes. Everyone must therefore write now as if the War had already ended. He must fear neither the Germans, nor the Jewish community leaders who may have been mentioned and attacked in a report on a given town. For this reason, the O.S. material is of great significance for the future tribunal after the War, which will hold the guilty responsible — whether Jews, Poles or Germans.

The War produced rapid changes in Jewish life in the towns of Poland. Each day was different from the next. The scene changed as quickly as in a movie. Reduced to the tiniest living space, Warsaw Jews now regard the ghetto period as a veritable paradise and the pre-ghetto period, a veritable idyll. Every month brought profound changes which fundamentally altered Jewish life. It was therefore important to capture every event in Jewish life in the heat of the moment, when it was still fresh and pulsating. Pre-deportation and post-deportation existence are as dissimilar as east and west. This is true of smuggling routes, community cultural life; even clothes worn by Jews during the various periods are different. O.S., therefore, tried to capture every phenomenon as it occurred, for every day was

comparable to a decade in previous times. With much of the phenomena this was feasible. No small part of its success here is due to the diaries kept by individual members who not only record facts and events in daily life, but also appraise various features of the ghetto which arrest their attention.

As stated, O.S. work was clandestine. Ways had to be found to disguise the collection of material. In attempting to establish contact with hundreds of refugees from the province, there was danger of stumbling upon one of several hundred agents of the "Thirteenth Bureau" who had then its "Golden Age". Fortunately, this danger was averted, thanks to the extreme caution exercised by the O.S. Our policy was to investigate a person's character, his community and political background etc., before approaching him. Only after this information had been received, was the person approached in order to learn the desired details. Very few people knew the true purpose of these conversations. Quite often, particularly in the last months before the deportation, our staff wrote what they had learned, not in the interlocutor's presence, but after the conversation. This form of note-taking detracted from the value of the material — however, there was no other choice if the work was to remain secret.

In our writing of the monographs we deceived the world by pretending that we were collecting information on the city which was indispensable to the work of the *Landsmannschaft*. Most people played dumb, feigning ignorance of the objective of our work.

Despite the broad dimensions of our work, the need for secrecy inevitably restricted its scope, considering the immense treasures of information and facts which could have, and should have been collected during the War. The O.S. slogan was: "We must work poorly". Everything must be done to avoid disclosing the rich O.S. treasure.

Thus, we shunned all contact with the community leadership, even with the honest people among it. The very community walls were saturated with Gestapo air and we were afraid of any sort of dealings with community leaders. This resulted in a dearth of official material on the community.

What type of material has been preserved in the O.S. archive? The most important treasures are the monographs on towns and villages. They describe the experience of a specific community from the outbreak of the War until its expulsion and liquidation. The monographs, written according to our outline, embraced all aspects of life: the economy, the conduct of Germans and Poles towards the Jewish population, the community administration and its activities, welfare, major events in the life of the community such as the entrance of German troops, pogroms, expulsions, acts of brutality on Jewish holidays, religious life, work and labor issues

(labor camps, compulsory labor) razzias, the community labor department, the conduct of Germans toward (Jews at work) and so forth.

This was the general plan of the monographs, though few in fact were written in accordance with it. The writers wrote in various ways, but nevertheless all the monographs expressed the tragic suffering of the Jews in the various towns of Poland. They were written sympathetically. One is often amazed at the epic calm with which the authors relate the tragic facts of their town. It is the calm of the grave-yard, a calm born of terrible suffering and subsequent resignation. Only people who know that the Germans are capable of anything, that there is no cause for astonishment in the perpetrated horrors described, can write so calmly. The monographs refer mostly to former Congress-Poland.

Other districts of pre-war Poland are poorly represented because the monographs are all written in Warsaw where the majority of refugees had originated. We began receiving information on Galicia, chiefly on Lvov, only after the outbreak of the Russian-German war, when people who had left Warsaw in 1939 returned to the capital. The same is true of Vilna, Slonim, Grodno, Rovno and other cities in the occupied Eastern territories. Here too we received information from people who returned; in particular the wave of returnees from Bialystok and its region brought back a good deal of information.

Because all these efforts were done in conditions of underground secrecy and by people who had never worked in historical research, there is no index of what the O.S. material contains. Therefore it is difficult for me to say how many monographs on towns we possess. In any case, the figure is certainly in the hundreds. On some towns there are several — even several dozen — monographs.

Apart from comprehensive monographs, we tried to obtain accounts of singular important events in the various towns. We were obtaining these accounts from people who were either directly or indirectly involved in the specific event, whether as participants, witnesses or in any other manner. To this category, for instance, belongs the report of the death of 52 Jews who lived in the house on Nalewki Street, No. 9, because of the murder of a Polish police-man by a Jewish gangster, or the report on the death of several dozen Jews in the Savoy restaurant in Lodz and other reports. We always strove to have each specific description bear the impact of immediacy of a genuine personal experience. This is why so much of the O.S. material is subjectively colored with personal accounts, often approaching the dramatic.

Nor are the monographs on the towns free of this subjective approach.

In order to encourage the writer or narrator to relate his experience naturally we would often dispense with systematization and ask that the tale be told in the person's own way. Most of these accounts bore the mark of people on the move. One such account — most shocking — tells of the death-march of 800 Jewish war-prisoners, half of whom were murdered on the way from Lublin to Biala.

Another travel-account — by a Jewish soldier in the Red Army who came from Warsaw — begins in Orsha. The entire route is marked by rivers of Jewish blood, spilt on the fields of White Russia, the Ukraine, Podolia and Galicia.

We learn of the mass-murder of Jews in the southern parts of Russia from a "wander-tale" by a young man of Warsaw who roamed as far as Mariampol in the Crimea. Red Foot-Paths would be a proper term for all these travel-accounts of men, women, and children who always set out on the road before the Germans entered their home-town and kept moving until they reached a place from which they could go no further. These Red Foot-Paths, like all Jewish history, are streaked with Jewish blood, shed by the Gestapo or Wehrmacht murderers. To this category belongs the tale of wanderings from Orsha through

One of the important subjects of the O.S. work was the labor-camps in which thousands of Jews perished. Apart from the ghettos, the labor-camps were one of the most effective means of destroying the Jewish population by robbing it of its best element, young people and men of working age. This is not the place to describe the labor-camps. Nevertheless, it can be said that, with very few exceptions, labor-camps were meant not for work but to destroy their inmates. Those who did not perish from the terrible labor-conditions and severe undernourishment, those who were not shot or tortured to death by the infamous, inhuman, notorious "*Lagerschutz*" (camp guard), mostly died shortly after returning home. A good deal of the blame for this must rest with the *Judenrats* who cared too little for the victims in the camps and did too little to support and save those who returned. Of all communities, Warsaw was the worst in its treatment of camp internees. The O.S. managed to compile a wealth of material on almost all labor-camps, the major ones, in any case. One of the most important and unmatched [report] is the minutely detailed account of the labor-camp in Campinos where over 50 young Jews were brought to burial on the notorious "Hill of Corpses", having been shot or tortured by the "*Lagerschutz*". This account, drawn up by Rabbi Huberband, is one of the most important documents on Hitlerian brutality committed on working Jews.

Like several other camps, Campinos was a part of the so-called "Water Administration" which carried out a series of regulation-works on several rivers throughout the General-Gouvernement. The work, done in more than knee-high water, without suitable clothing and on terribly scant starvation rations, resulted in various diseases, particularly typhus, and in massive, sudden deaths. The sick were dealt with easily through mass executions of both ill and well as for instance in

During and after the deportations, the labor-camps grew even worse. Two facts are worth mentioning as illustrative of these camps: the walling up alive of 2 frail Jews in Rembartow, and the bestial murder of 32 camp-workers (whole limbs were scattered over the "battle-field!"). The execution was carried out, not by patent SS. Jew-killers — but by the "Wehrmacht" who were ostensibly better than the S.S. and the Gestapo in their treatment of the Jews.

The section on experiences in prisons and concentration camps is meager, not because few Jews spent time there, but for the simple reason that, from the start, the reigning principle there was that no Jews were to come out alive. Thousands of Polish Jews were sent to Auschwitz (Oświęcim), but none returned. The only document on these victims is the telegram sent to relatives with the stereotype information that the inmate had died and his effects could be collected at some specific depot. From Dachau, I know of two returnees. One was afraid to recount the least bit of his experiences, the other — by the way a very interesting personality, described by Rachel Auerbach in her diary — died of hunger.

Moreover, those who returned from prisons feel so terrorized that they are afraid to relate any information. I did, nevertheless, manage to get two former prisoners to tell their experiences. One is Melech Steinberg, an active member of the leftist Poalei-Zion, a printer by profession who deserves great credit for his efforts of publishing the leftist Poalei-Zion Zionist workers' newspaper before the War, for which he frequently served time in Polish prisons. During the present War, he also was arrested and imprisoned in the Pawiak penitentiary for the same sins. However, fortunately for him, he managed to get out of jail by acting the fool. Steinberg perished together with his family in the deportation.

The other person whose prison descriptions have been preserved is a Soviet citizen who also perished in the same way.

The O.S. also took care to compile material on the Polish-German war of 1939. The Jewish population remembered too well the sufferings of the Jews of Germany and other occupied countries and was thus well aware of what Hitler was preparing for Polish Jewry. Consequently, Jewish

soldiers displayed exceptional courage in battle, a fact acknowledged by numerous military leaders in the Polish army. For future history, for future Jewish-Polish relations, it was highly important to collect accounts of the experiences of Jewish soldiers during the German-Polish war. The material compiled gives a picture of the crisis and of the mood of the Polish population which, for a brief period, freed itself of the curse of anti-Semitism. However, defeats on the battle-field and the necessity to find a scape-goat revived anti-Semitism. In Warsaw, for instance, it led to a renewed Jablonna, the repetition of excluding Jews from general divisions, and creating special Jewish unarmed battalions for fortification work.

This anti-Semitic disposition, which could already be felt in the last years of the Polish state, flared up and flourished in prisoner-of-war camps where Jewish soldiers suffered much more at the hands of their Polish comrades-in-arms than at the hands of German overseers. A great mass of such facts is described in the accounts of the experiences of Jewish prisoners-of-war in Germany, the best of which is by Daniel Fligelman, entitled "Die Waren in Deutschland Gefangen".

These descriptions reveal the up to now rather satisfying fact that Jewish prisoners-of-war in Germany earned a reputation for industriousness and were a desirable element. "You came to Germany as accursed Jews and are returning home as blessed children of Israel", one German pithily summarized the altered attitude toward Jewish prisoners-of-war. This may very well be the reason why the Germans released Jewish soldiers from prison, while the Poles are still held.

It is impossible to enumerate all the facets of O.S. work. They are as variegated and numerous as are the events of our life. Many themes were planned, though suitable staff could not always be found. We can say with confidence, however, that no important feature of Jewish life during the War has been omitted from the O.S. material. A phenomenon such as smuggling, for instance, which is very significant in all wars, is represented in O.S. by a work of T-n.* It portrays the overwhelming importance of smuggling in Warsaw which, as long as the Ghetto existed, saved the community of 400,000 from death by starvation. Had Warsaw Jewry been forced to live on official daily rations of 18dkg. of bread per individual, every vestige of Jewish Warsaw would have disappeared long ago. Smuggling took its daily toll of Jewish victims, and shortly before the deportation these numbered in the dozens. When Poland is liberated, a monument will have to be erected to the smuggler who incidentally saved the Polish population in many a city from death by starvation as well. T-n.

* Titelman

describes the folklore of smuggling, its jargon, customs and so forth, more than he did its economic significance, this aspect of smuggling was one which the O.S. work generally did not treat fully. Good outlines were worked out for various *economic themes* but very little resulted because of lack of suitable people. Economic analysis requires calm and quiet conditions, ample time, suitable source-materials based on comprehensive research. For all this there was neither time nor suitable working conditions. Still, several valuable works were obtained, one by W-r.* on *Wartime adaptation to altered economic conditions*. The author shows how, under unbearable Ghetto conditions, the Jews managed to develop a whole series of production branches, catering to the so-called "Aryan" side. The ingenuity displayed by the Jews in creating raw material or substitute articles attests to the immeasurable Jewish talent for finding solutions to the most difficult situations. It is evidence of the survival instinct of the Jewish population which not only created the products, but also established a smuggling network so extensive that the bulk of produced goods could be "*exported abroad*".

On the fragmentary work of the economic division, G-i's** study on *Foreign currency dealings* — another highly important War Phenomenon, is worth noting. G. succeeded in penetrating the most guarded secrets of the currency trade. He gives a picture of the economics involved, as well as the fiscal aspect, the life-style of the dealers — their language and customs. Of utmost importance is the chart of day-by-day currency fluctuations for almost the entire War period. It will be interesting for a future researcher to try to find the key to these fluctuations in international political events and in the life of the surrounding Jewish and Polish populations, as well as in other instances. Incidentally, from G.'s work we learn the following "secret": there was a mint on Pawia street where a few "hard" (gold dollars) and "pig" (gold rubles) were counterfeited. After the War, the national banks of the countries concerned will, no doubt, have to deal with this "made in the Ghetto" currency.

To the fragmentary treatment of the community administration belongs the Jewish postal service, revived after a few centuries' long slumber. One of the postmen, the journalist Peretz O-i*** describes the onerous work of a Jewish mailman and the attitude of the Jewish population toward the mailman who often had to collect from the neighbours the amount for paying the surtax on top of the duty levied by the community for correspondence and parcels.

** Winkler

* Gutkowski

*** Opoczynski

There are a few works on the sanitary situation: a study by the same journalist Peretz O-i discusses the *disinfection-columns*, one of the "Ten Plagues" which beset the ghetto. The author describes a "parówka" [steam bath] in a poor Jewish courtyard on Wolynska street. Another work by a member of the disinfection-column is in the nature of a confession. The author admits and cites facts to prove that the disinfection-columns were the carriers of typhus because of the corruption and demoralization prevailing among them. Peretz O-i. comes to the same conclusion.

This same Peretz undertook an interesting work which unfortunately was not finished. *He described the history of a Warsaw courtyard during the War*. His starting point was the history of a house committee against the background of the general situation of the courtyard and its residents. The work, initially conceived to be quite small, grew into a history of the yard and its residents, starting on the eve of the War and covering the bombing of Warsaw, the entry of the Germans, the flight to Russia and so on. This microcosm could very well serve as an introduction to the history of Warsaw, the macrocosm.

The history of the house-committee of Nalewki Nr. 23 (one of the oldest and best organized house-committees, by the way) describes the origin, the position and activity of one of the most interesting institutions of wartime Warsaw. From small cells of welfare aid, the house-committees developed into public institutions, fulfilling a whole series of administrative functions. In addition, they also played a part in communal-cultural life by organizing diverse cultural performances and entertainment. No aspect of wartime Jewish life was unconnected with the house-committee. It took care of refugees and labor-camp internees who returned, sponsored a variety of children's institutions, supervised the cleanliness of the courtyard, created constructive aid for the residents, settled various conflicts among the neighbours and, above all, bore the responsibility for the most needy residents who, as a matter of necessity, regarded the house-committee as the proper address of appeal. Dr. Celina Levin presented a picture of another long-established and one of the best organized house-committees which for months managed its own kitchen and even bought a motor-pump for its needs for a sum of 7000 zlotys during the bombardment. Writer Peretz O-i. depicts the activities of another house-committee, Leszno 24.

As for welfare, the work of authoress Rachel A-ch* on the communal kitchen at Leszno 40 is worth noting. In describing this kitchen and its clientele, the author comes to the disheartening conclusion that the Jewish

* Auerbach

public kitchen, which at times served as many as 100,000 people, i.e. one-fourth of the Jews of Warsaw — never saved anybody from starvation. This explains the frequent turnover in clientele. While one group found its place in the mass graves of the Warsaw cemetery, a new wave of customers arrived at the kitchen, among them fresh refugees or impoverished people whose only sustenance was now to be the watery soup served by the public kitchen. Of the various types who frequented the Leszno 40 kitchen, the deepest impression is left by the / name missing /, a German refugee whose health was ruined in the notorious Dachau. The 5—6 portions of soup which the kitchen manager, authoress Rachel A-ch, pushed his way every day were of no avail. Bereft of fat and other vital needs, the organism refused all further service. E. died of hunger, despite all of Rachel's endeavours. His death showed clearly that social aid has a *raison d'être* only when it can dispose of considerable finances and truly help the needy. Welfare on a small scale is a wasted effort.

A rich addition to the O.S. were the diaries. As said in another place, during the present War most people primarily wrote diaries. Some wrote in a finished form, others wrote notes to be completed after the War. Most of these diaries were destroyed in the deportations or perished together with all the other possessions left by those who thus departed. Because of the constant blockades and the constant moving from street to street, surviving writers also often lost most of their writings. The number of diaries lost must be estimated in the dozens, or even hundreds, for one must bear in mind that only a small fraction of the writers admitted that they kept diaries. Most people kept the fact as a secret.

The diary of the Hebrew writer and teacher, Kaplan, written in Hebrew, numbered thousands of pages containing a variety of information on what transpired in Warsaw every day. Kaplan's outlook was not particularly broad, but he knew what the average Warsaw Jew was experiencing at the time: his feelings and sufferings, his thirst for vengeance and so on. All this is faithfully portrayed in the diary. It is his very mediocrity which is of the utmost importance in the diary. Time and again I begged Kaplan to deposit his diary with the O.S., assuring him that it would be returned to him after the War. He reluctantly allowed the manuscript to be copied. But the task was fraught with difficulties. Only a part has remained in the O.S. archive. The entire manuscript was lost in the deportation along with the writer who was taken to the detention depot during the transports.

Another diary was written by the deceased "Hashomer Hatzair" activist, Josef Kaplan, and has apparently remained on the Aryan side. Consisting of hundreds of pages, the diary is particularly important because it covers

various periods in various areas of Poland. At the onset of the War Kaplan was in Vilna. From there he came to Poland where he was always on the move. Thus he gives a picture of Jewish life in different cities and towns in Poland. He also speaks of the work of "Hashomer Hatzair" — this was his reason for his hesitation on the question whether to permit us to copy the diary. By the time he finally agreed, it was too late.

The head of the Warsaw community, the unfortunate Engineer Czerniakow, kept a notebook concerning everything that took place in the ghetto during the period in which he presided. The diary, or rather the note-book, is no doubt interesting since Czerniakow was in daily contact with the various German authorities as well as with the Polish communal authorities and, as president of the community, he held the threads of Jewish social life in his hand.

Ludwig Berenson, the well-known advocate, splendid defender of Polish freedom fighters (chiefly Polish socialists in Russian times, renowned defender at the Brest trial, one of the sterling personalities in Polish life) kept a diary during the War. And, during the War, Berenson, who had always been remote from Jewish life, drew closer to Jewish community life while living in the ghetto and even tried to do some work for the community. He wanted to clear out the mire of corruption and demoralization in which the community was sunk. He even dreamed of replacing the gangrenous Jewish police with a "civil militia". But the idealistic dreamer soon learned that institutions established by command, must reflect the image of the occupier. He was quickly cured of his dreams and took refuge in the Jewish Self-Help Society, the focus of all community forces. As he himself told me, his diary was a true reflection of all events in Jewish life. His students and followers, who filled various positions throughout the community administration, always informed him of what was going on. Week by week, notebook by notebook, his diary was sent across to the Aryan side where it was being kept by his friends.

It is worth mentioning here that in a conversation with me, Berenson voiced his willingness to help create a juridical section in the O.S. to record the legal side (or more accurately, the lawless side) of life of the Jews during the War: the decrees concerning Jews, the legal status of communities, the courts and their attitude toward Jews, etc. Berenson died before the section could be established and our attempts in this area were unsuccessful.

Prof. Meir Balaban began writing his memoirs during the War, beginning with his earliest years. According to his son, Dr. Alexander Balaban, he has already reached the War period and has even managed to write quite a bit about it. The diary is on the Aryan side.

The renowned Polish-Jewish children's author and no less renowned educator, *Janusz Korczak* (Dr. Goldschmidt), kept a diary which is on the other side. Dr. Korczak, a master of the Polish language, has no doubt erected a memorial to the tragedy of the Jewish children, deprived by the German occupation of the right to air, sun, school and bread.

A great deal of material for a diary was collected by the well-known singer and journalist, *Kipnis*. After his death, we made attempts to obtain this material for O.S., but the widow refused consent. She was taken away to the detention depot for deportation and no trace has remained of the material.

The same fate befell the diary of journalist *Krimski*, also taken away during deportation.

My own daily — and later weekly and monthly notes have remained. These are particularly important with respect to the first year of the War because nobody kept diaries then. The weekly and monthly reports not only contain material on the major events of the period, but also an evaluation of what transpired. In view of my community activities these appraisals are valuable documents; they express the thoughts of the surviving remnants of organized Jewish society on current issues in our lives.

A valuable document is *the diary of A.L.-n*,* the author of the book "Cantonisten". The author has been keeping the diary for a year and a half and has poured all of his literary talent into it. Every sentence in the diary is measured. L. has packed the diary not only with everything he has managed to learn about Warsaw, but also with the terrible suffering of the provincial Jews. During the deportation, even as bitter misfortune struck him when his wife Luba was taken away, he continued to record in his diary under the most impossible conditions. The clean and compressed style of the diary, its accuracy and precision in relating facts, and its grave contents qualify it as an important literary document which must be published as soon as possible after the War. Prior to the deportation the diary was written in Yiddish, and later, in Hebrew.

The deportation which began on July 22, 1942, marks a new period in the history of Warsaw Jewry, affecting also the nature of the O.S. work. There was an interruption of several months in our activities. At a time when every second threatened capture and transport to Treblinka, there could be no thought of systematic collection. Only a handful of people continued to keep diaries and to record their daily experiences even during

* Avraham Lewin

the deportations. As soon as things settled down somewhat, people again applied themselves to the task. But there could no longer be any talk of monographs on towns which

The co-workers of O.S. have constituted and continue to constitute a uniform body, ruled by a single spirit, pervaded by a single idea. O.S. is not an association of scientists who compete with and oppose one another, but a single entity, a brotherhood, where all help one another and strive towards the same goal. For long months pious Rabbi Huberband, leftist Poalei Zion member Hirsch W., and General Zionist Avraham L., all sat together at the same table and worked harmoniously. O.S. showed consideration for its workers. Menahem K., with a weak but warm heart, was the devoted father and provider. It is he who saved both Hirsch W. and Rabbi Hubarband from typhus, who made provisions for E. G-ski's * sick child, who gave vital assistance to a permanent victim of hunger, writer and journalist Peretz O-ski.** That voiceless dove, Daniel Fligelman, would have perished long ago, but for the steady warm help of our dear Menahem.***

Countless times, following the bloody April night of 1942, he urged and nagged me to leave Warsaw. Every O.S. worker knew that his slaving toil and pain, his onerous labours and hardships, the risks he took 24 hours a day while engaged in the undercover work of carrying material from place to place — was for the sake of an exalted ideal and that in days of freedom to come society would evaluate his role properly and reward it with the highest honors available in liberated Europe. O.S. was a fellowship, a monastic order of brothers, whose banner was: readiness to sacrifice, devotion to one another and service to the community.

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INTRODUCTION

The following anonymous introduction, written by a socially active person, probably one of the people involved in the Oneg Shabbath work, was meant to be an explanation, or rather an attempt at justifying his

* Gutkowski

** Opoczynski

*** M. M. Kon