

Protocol of the Meeting of the Shavl (Šiauliai) Judenrat, 24th March 1943

Present: M. Leybovitsh, B. Kartun, A. Heller und A. Katz of the administration;
Doctors: Burshteyn, Blekher, Goldberg, Direktorovitch, L. Peysakhovitch and A.

On today's agenda: How to Prevent Births in the Ghetto?

M. Leybovitsh: We return again to the problem of births. The prohibition against Jews bearing children applies to all ghettos in its full severity. Recently there was a case of a birth in Kovno and the entire family was shot. In spite of that among us people make light of it and there are here still a few cases of pregnancy, against which no actions have been taken. Dr. Blekher asks if they can force the pregnant women to have an abortion? Is there a statistic regarding the pregnant women? Dr. L. informs: Since 15th August last year there have been 3 births here. He has no idea how they proceeded, for he did not assist at the births. Today in the ghetto there are 20 pregnant women, most of them in the first months, although there are a few in the 4th and 5th months, one case in the 8th month. Of the pregnant women only two will not have an abortion: one for whom this will already be her third abortion and is afraid of the danger of remaining childless and the one who is already in her 8th month. Dr. P: We must pressure them to agree to have an abortion. We must tell them what happened in Kovno and in Riga. If necessary, we must make use of a white lie and tell them that the Secret Police are looking for these cases. Dr. Burshteyn proposes forbidding all medical personnel, including midwives, from assisting at births. Dr. Bl. suggests registering every case of pregnancy and pressuring the pregnant woman to have an abortion. M. L.: We should not openly disseminate propaganda against births, since this could reach the ears of those who should not hear it. We must negotiate only with the persons involved. He suggests that we call the pregnant women to the infirmary and, in the presence of a doctor and a member of the administration, warn them and explain the entire danger which threatens them. Dr. L.: How can one carry out an abortion on a woman who is already eight months pregnant? We must understand the feelings of the mother. Surely she cannot be persuaded. And what will happen to the child if we cause a premature birth? We cannot conduct such an operation in a private home and the child cannot remain in the hospital. What will happen if the child is born alive? Should we kill it? I cannot take such a responsibility on my conscience. Dr. Bl. adds that this case is very difficult, because no doctor can take upon himself the responsibility to kill a living

child, since this is murder. Dr. P: Perhaps let the child be born and give it to a Christian? M. L.: We cannot allow the child to be born, since we are obligated to report the case of a birth. Three times already we have been asked whether there have any births. Each time we have answered that there have not. B.K.: What can we do when the ghetto is in such danger? If it were only dangerous to the family of the newborn, the responsibility could be left to the parties involved, but here there is a danger to the entire ghetto. This can have terrible consequences. We must employ all means [to ensure] that no births take place. A.K.: The matter of abortions must be conducted by doctors only. They must negotiate with the pregnant women. They must pressure them that to let them perform an abortion. But if this has no effect, they should turn the matter over to the administration which will employ sanctions against the family of the pregnant women: seize ration cards, move the family members to worse work places, give them no medicinal help and no wood etc. If this does not work then the woman must be called and given an ultimatum: if she does not have an abortion in a short time the administration will report it to the Secret Police. With regard to the case of the pregnant woman in her 8th month, no living child should be born, since if a living child is born this will be an example to others. No member of the administration shall take part in the negotiations with the interested parties, since no one should know that the administration was aware of a pregnant woman. Dr. Dir.: At first it will only be know that a doctor negotiates with the pregnant women. But later when sanctions are taken it will become clear that the administration knew about it. With regard to the case of the pregnant woman in her 8th month, this is similar to a case in which there is a danger to the mother: then the child must be killed. Dr. L.: I cannot do this! Dr. P.: A premature birth can be induced in a hospital and another doctor will participate in it. A nurse will bring about the death of the child via injection, and she herself will not know what she is doing. A.K.: A premature birth must be performed, since every day is a danger. In all cases of pregnancy all means of pressure must be employed: 1) explanation; 2) sanctions; 3) ultimatum; and threats of the Secret Police. These means are approved. It is also decided that all medical personnel should be made aware of these means. Regarding the pregnant woman in her 8th month, it is decided to induce a premature birth immediately.