

Ghetto Schools

Jewish Education in Nazi-Occupied Poland

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Drawing on education theory and sociology, this dissertation titled “Ghetto Schools — Jewish Education in Nazi-Occupied Poland” understands education in the ghettos as social action and analyzes the functions of institutionalized education for ghetto societies. The study shows the rationale and motive of educational efforts in the ghettos and how education was used to regulate social relations among the ghetto populations of Lodz, Warsaw, and Vilna. While harsh ghetto circumstances meant that children had to take on adult responsibilities, education was used as a mechanism to regulate inter-generational relationships, allowing a return to accustomed social patterns. Furthermore, education was used by the political elites to promote their ideas of Jewish belonging through an increase in Jewish subjects and agricultural training. The analysis of the relations of individuals to the Jewish leadership and the German oppressor shows a split discourse on education between the establishment and youth organizations. While the establishment favored an education that asked students to abide by the principles of calm and work they hoped would appease the Germans, youth organizations began to question this attitude and left the schools to educate themselves. They used education as a tool to subvert Jewish leadership and German oppression with the aim of preparing for resistance.

Diese Dissertation mit dem Titel "Ghetto Schools — Jewish Education in Nazi-Occupied Poland", versteht Erziehung und Bildung in den Ghettos basierend auf Erziehungstheorie und Soziologie als soziales Handeln und analysiert die Funktionen institutionalisierter Erziehung für die Ghettogesellschaften. Die Studie zeigt die Motive und Gründe für Erziehung und Bildung in den Ghettos auf und analysiert, wie Erziehung zur Regulierung sozialer Beziehungen in den Ghettogesellschaften von Lodz, Warschau, und Vilna eingesetzt wurde. Als die Ghettoisierung die Idee von Kindheit bedrohte, regulierte Schule die Beziehungen der Generationen untereinander und ermöglichte es, zurück zu den "normalen" sozialen Mustern zu kehren. Weiterhin diente Erziehung den politischen Eliten im Ghetto dazu, ihre Definition von jüdischer Zugehörigkeit durch ein vermehrtes Unterrichten von jüdischen Fächern und Landwirtschaft zu verbreiten. Die Analyse der Beziehungen zwischen Individuum und jüdischer Führung beziehungsweise deutschem Unterdrücker zeigt einen zweigeteilten Diskurs über Erziehung. Auf der einen Seite propagierte die jüdische Führungsschicht eine Erziehung, die auf den Prinzipien von Arbeit und Ruhe im Ghetto beruhte, mit denen sie hofften, die Deutschen von der Produktivität des Ghettos überzeugen zu können, auf der anderen Seite begann die Jugend diese Einstellung zu hinterfragen und verließ die Schulen, um sich in Eigenregie selbst politisch zu bilden. So richtete sich ihre Kritik zuerst gegen die jüdische Führung, um sich dann im Widerstand gegen die deutschen Besatzer zu richten.

ABBREVIATIONS

APŁ	Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi (State Archive Lodz)
AŻIH	Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute), Warsaw
Centos	Centrala Opieki nad Sierotami (Federation of Associations for the Care of Orphans)
FPO	Fareynikte Partizaner Organizatsye (United Partisan Organization), Vilna
GFH	Archive of Beit Lohamei Ha’Getaot (Ghetto Fighters House), Kibbutz Lohamei Ha’Getaot
LBI	Leo Baeck Institute, New York, NY
ORT	Obshchestvo Remeslennago i Zemledelecheskago Truda Sredi Evreev v Rossii (Society for Handicraft and Agricultural Work among the Jews of Russia)
PSŻ	Przełożony Starszeństwa Żydów Getta Łódzkiego (Elder of the Jews of Lodz Ghetto)
RG	Record Group
RING	Ringelblum Archive, parts I and II, Underground Archive of the Oyneg Shabes, Warsaw
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC
ToPoRol	Towarzystwo Popierania Rolnictwa (Society for Promoting Agriculture)
YIVO	Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut (Jewish Scientific Institute), New York, NY
ŻOB	Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Fighting Organization)
ŻSS	Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna (Jewish Social Self Help)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Context of this Study

Why should one study at all, when uncertain of the day and the moment, with no prospect of tomorrow, not knowing where one shall be, whether one shall eat and what? – How can one, in these circumstances, think of educating children or providing them with occupational training? And yet, in spite of it all, there is a universal, primordial, unquenchable drive for learning, contrary to all logic and braving obstacles. How can this be explained? Let's try to analyze what propels youth to schools, courses and learning, and bids parents to squeeze out the last penny in order to provide their children with some education, not bread alone.¹

These words stem from a report on schools in the Warsaw Ghetto. They were written by an unknown contributor to the *Oyneh Shabes* (Joy of the Sabbath), a clandestine archive created by historian Emanuel Ringelblum, whose mission it was to preserve as much information about everyday life and culture in the ghetto as possible for future historians. The question the reporter posed still puzzles us today: Whence did people in the ghettos take the strength, resources, and determination to teach and study? Why did they engage in an activity that does not seem to have an immediate purpose in a world where providing for daily necessities and planning for a future are impossible challenges. When we read descriptions about the conditions in the ghettos, it is hard to imagine that there were any time, resources, or energy left to engage in education and partake in cultural pursuits. And yet they existed. Many engaged in various forms of learning — youngsters and adults attended a wide range of schools, study groups, reading circles, and lectures. The ghetto dwellers organized kindergartens, as well as university courses, nursing, metal work and farming classes.

In a few lines, the author communicates the urgency with which students and parents pursued education in the ghetto and the utter astonishment about this urgency.

¹ AŽIH 669 Ring I 74, English translation in: Joseph Kermish, ed., *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor!... Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S." ("Oneg Shabbath")* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), 501.

Focusing on the individual, we can merely wonder about the motivation for serious intellectual work and its costs. When we change the perspective from the individual to the collective, however, patterns begin to emerge that help us to see motive outside of personal decisions.

Education is a phenomenon that exists and draws its motivations, contents, and forms from beyond the individual that engages in it. While education is experienced as highly personal, it is set in a societal and historical context. Those who engage in education, the educated and the educator, as well as the specific act of education itself, are always influenced by the people around and before them. In the context of education in the ghettos, this means that all educational activities took place in a society that pursued current interests with educating its youth while employing passed down ideas and procedures from its educational and cultural traditions.

The notion to understand education not as a singular activity, but as social action, is not new. Sociologists of education, beginning with Émile Durkheim, to Pierre Bourdieu, and Talcott Parsons, have formulated the idea that, like all social action, education and the individuals engaging in it have to be understood as embedded in societal structures. Myriads of sociological studies on different education systems and the dynamics between society and individual have been conducted since. A specialized field of history, the history of education, has taken to studying the development of pedagogical thought and form increasingly with sociological methods and concepts in mind. To apply this understanding to a historical study of education in the ghettos is therefore not surprising for educational scientists. It is, however, innovative in the field of Holocaust and specifically ghetto research, because it leads the study of a phenomenon beyond documentation to its methodical analysis.

Furthermore, education taken seriously as a pivotal point of a society's convictions, priorities, aspirations, and internal conflicts, is an excellent lens through which to analyze the fundamental issues and developments of societies. The education system as the structure that integrates the younger generation into the group stands in the ghettos at the core of the polity building process of a society that had to reinvent itself in the eye of drastically changed political, territorial, and ideological circumstances. Following the assumption of the sociability of the ghetto populations, the study of education in the ghettos thus leads us to a deeper understanding not only

of education itself and its direct participants, but of the ghetto societies in general.

Education, as any societal manifestation, is not newly invented with each generation, no matter how much the world changes and how groundbreaking the pedagogical responses to these changes might be. On the contrary, change in the education system transpires rather slowly, often following political transformation, and is bound to traditions and historically grown structures. In other words, the Jewish societies in the ghettos have a history and a history of education, and this history is important in order to understand education in the ghetto.

Recent decades have generated a universalization of the Holocaust in public and academic discourse. The German-led Jewish genocide in Europe in the 1940s is increasingly interpreted as an accident of human history from which everyone can learn to prevent future injustice. The field started therefore to cater to activists who teach the public about the Holocaust and created a new form of research that was more approachable for non-academic recipients and put the personal stories of victims in the center of attention. After the focus on technical and ideological details of German occupation and mass murder, the shift to focus on the experience of the victims was absolutely essential, not only for pedagogical reasons. Its coincidental appearance with an increased interest in the eastern European ghettos as the main arena of the Holocaust has, however, led to an emphasis of the human experience that under-appreciates the cultural and historical distinctness of the Jewish ghettoized population. This study is therefore also based on the historicity of the ghetto societies.

This study's foundation on the assumptions of sociability and historicity of the ghetto societies thus closes a gap in the study of Jewish history in Poland. While research on the ghetto societies largely omits the historical provenance of its subjects, the research on Jewish societies in Poland often ends with the German occupation, thus de-societalizing the Jewish victims of ghettoization, as if Jewish society ceased to exist in the ghettos. This dissertation can therefore illuminate the discourse on education within the ghetto societies as continued and distinct inner-Jewish discourses as well as reactions to the German attack on Jewish culture and life.

Aside from the description and analysis of education in the ghettos itself — and this already justifies a study — this dissertation contributes to the study of ghettos in Jewish perspective in general and proposes a shift in our conceptual thinking about the ghettos and the Jewish victim societies of the Holocaust.

B. Research Question and Scope

Despite studies on the role of education in the ideological struggles in Jewish society in prewar Poland and the acknowledgment of the enormous efforts invested in education in the ghettos, we know little about the contents and underlying rationale and motive of ghetto education. In its more specific scope, the purpose of this study is therefore to uncover the functions of institutionalized education for the ghetto societies. I argue that education was a tool to regulate social relations among the ghetto populations. By analyzing the school systems in the ghettos, we can make these relations visible. The four analytical chapters (Chapters 4 to 7) cover different types of relations between individuals and the group and how the school system was utilized to reach the respective objectives.

This dissertation is based on educational and sociological theory. For better legibility, the concepts underlying the arguments are explained in the respective chapters instead of in its own chapter.

As an analysis of a specific phenomenon in the ghettos and its significance for the ghetto societies, this study has some limitations that I would like to briefly address below.

This dissertation focuses on institutionalized education, whether official or clandestine, because only education that is formed by more than an individual can be representative of a broader movement. I therefore do not generally consider individual study, especially not of adults (with an exception in Chapter 4 for reasons explained there).

I generally do not cover the vast efforts in political educational activities of the various youth organizations that continued to meet in the ghettos. Only their important impact on the discourse on resistance will be discussed in Chapter 7.

I would like to emphasize that this is not a study of children, teachers, or school administrators in the ghettos. While their experiences as conveyed in their diaries, reports, and other written works play an important role as sources for the issues I discuss, I do not follow individual fates or the specific issues of these groups.

Because I analyze a phenomenon that requires in-depth understanding of the specific groups and conflicts in the respective ghettos, this dissertation can only be a case study of a few ghettos. As this study can only be conducted in ghettos that have a fairly large and developed education system with diverse agents acting in it, the

ghettos had to be chosen according to the following criteria: They had to be large enough to have a significant number of children that made the effort of establishing schools tolerable for the community. They had to exist long enough for the educational system to have time to develop. They had to be educational and cultural centers of Jewish life in Poland before the war to generate a variety of educational institutions and the specialized personnel to organize and provide this education. They had to have a society that engaged in public debate about educational and ideological issues.

To make the study in spite of its limited number of ghettos more representative, the chosen ghettos had to come from different organizational parts within the German occupation system to account for local differences in the ghettoization process and Jewish communities. After considering these criteria, three ghettos remained as optimal cases for this study: Lodz, Warsaw, and Vilna. My dissertation is therefore not representative for all ghettos. It is, however, a case study that unravels the discourse on education that is not peculiar to specific ghettos but fits into a broader pattern of early twentieth century Jewish culture in east central Europe.

This dissertation consists of two background and four analytical chapters. Chapter 2 describes the ideological and pedagogical landscape of the Jewish population in prewar Poland. Chapter 3 explains the ghettoization process and discusses the specific characteristics of ghettoized societies. Chapter 4 discusses how education regulated generational relations by reinstating the challenged notion of childhood. Chapter 5 analyzes how education was the scene to negotiate the terms of Jewish belonging and promote a nationalist, anti-assimilationist reading of Jewish loyalty. Chapter 6 shows that the education system, as the institution that allocates graduates into desired professions, was used to change the social and professional stratification of Jewish society. Chapter 7 argues that education took on two forms in the ghettos — an affirmative form to promote the survival strategy of “quiet and work” of the ghetto leadership, and a subversive form whereby the youth aimed to overturn the Jewish elites to then turn against the Germans in armed resistance.

C. Literature Review

The body of literature relevant for the particular topic of this dissertation will be discussed here. Other relevant works, especially on prewar Jewish education in

Poland, the ghettoization process, and ghettos in general, will be mentioned in the respective chapters (Chapter 2 and 3). In this review, we will focus on analyses of the ghetto societies and their approach as well as on works on education in the ghettos.

The study of ghettos began immediately after the Holocaust. In the early 1950s survivors Samuel Gringauz and Philip Friedman took to examining the ghettos from an academic standpoint. As Gringauz wrote in the introduction to his article “The Ghetto as an Experiment of Jewish Social Organization”, he attempted to conduct a sociological study of the ghetto societies, because he deemed it too early for a historical assessment. Trying to avoid “individual reportage” of the thus far published accounts describing the ghettos, Gringauz set out to “provide an insight into the inner mechanism of Jewish group life, by highlighting the historical-generalizing moments, and thus throw light on the tensions and forces of Jewish group integration.”² Regarding the ghettos as an experiment in Jewish autonomy, he was particularly interested in what he called the “transition from diffuse Jewish life to an autonomous community with the national concentration that this implies” and its effects on the cultural life in the ghettos.³ Friedman focused on the legal aspects of the establishment of the ghettos and public response.⁴ This perspective on the perpetrators should become the main interest of historians, especially in Germany, for the coming decades.

Research on National Socialist persecution of Jews covered ghettoization policy in eastern Europe but a specific analysis of the people in the ghettos was not in the realm of these studies. In the standard works on the National Socialist policy and practice of Jewish destruction by Saul Friedländer and Raul Hilberg, cultural phenomena and especially education are barely mentioned. Friedländer, showing the development to the “Final Solution”, incorporates many sources that illuminate the victims’ perspective, but he does not delve into their experience in the ghettos.⁵ Hilberg focused on economic

² Samuel Gringauz, “The Ghetto as an Experiment of Jewish Social Organization (Three Years of Kovno Ghetto),” *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 1 (1949): 4.

³ Samuel Gringauz, “Some Methodological Problems in the Study of the Ghetto,” *Jewish Social Studies* 12, no. 1 (1950): 71.

⁴ Philip Friedman, “The Jewish Ghettos of the Nazi Era,” *Jewish Social Studies* 16, no. 1 (1954): 61–88; Philip Friedman, ed., *Martyrs and Fighters. The Epic of the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York, NY: F.A. Praeger, 1954).

⁵ Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007).

and supply issues in the ghettos and the problematic position of the Jewish Councils. Cultural and educational practices were not part of his study.⁶

Since the 1970s, research on the Holocaust saw a shift from studies on National Socialist ideology and German occupation practice to victim-oriented research. A new interest in the experience of eastern European Jews brought about a number of works on the ghettos that contained large compilations of sources on specific ghettos. Benefiting from document collections that survived the destruction of the ghettos in Warsaw and Lodz, Israeli and Polish scholars published several studies and source collections on these ghettos.⁷ These studies attempted to describe the ghettos in their entirety and could therefore only be cursory on specific aspects of ghetto history. Education is usually mentioned in the context of cultural activities in the ghettos, but never further analyzed. With far fewer sources available, Yitzhak Arad undertook the first survey of the ghetto in Vilna in which he emphasized the resistance activities but also devoted a few pages to the ghetto schools in the context of the ideological struggle between Bundists and Zionists.⁸

After 1990, when the archives in Poland and other eastern European countries became much more accessible for western scholars, more historians in Germany and the United States began research on the ghettos. Several studies have dealt with the inner organization of the ghettos in Lodz⁹ and Warsaw.¹⁰ Beyond historical analysis,

⁶ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. 1–3 (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1961).

⁷ Among others: Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press: Published in association with the United States Holocaust Museum, 2006); Ruta Sakowska, *Ludzie Z Dzielnicy Zamkniętej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1975); Julian Baranowski, *Das Getto Litzmannstadt*, n.d.; Julian Baranowski, *Zur Vorgeschichte Und Geschichte Des Gettos Lodz*, n.d.; Paweł Samuś, *Fenomen Getta Łódzkiego: 1940 – 1944*, Wyd. 1. (Łódź: Wydawn. Uniw. Łódzkiego, 2006); Shemu'el Krakovski, "Getto Lodz: Formen Des Widerstands," *Wer Zum Leben, Wer Zum Tod ...": Strategien Jüdischen Überlebens Im Ghetto /* (1992): 51–64; Mikal Ünger, *The Last Ghetto Life in the Lodz Ghetto 1940 – 1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1995); Israel Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982).

⁸ Yitzhak Arad, *Ghetto in Flames: The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980).

⁹ Gordon J. Horwitz, *Ghettostadt: Łódź and the Making of a Nazi City* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008); Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto: Inside a Community under Siege*, A Penguin Book: History (New York [u.a.]: Penguin Books, 1991); Andrea Löw, *Juden Im Getto Litzmannstadt: Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten*, Schriftenreihe Zur Lodzer Getto-Chronik (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006).

¹⁰ Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2009); Markus Roth and Andrea Löw, *Das Warschauer Getto. Alltag Und Widerstand Im Angesicht Der Vernichtung* (München: Beck, 2013).

many published Polish and Yiddish sources for the first time in English translation and thus made them accessible to a broader audience.

Influenced by the history of the everyday and oral history projects, individual people and groups that shared specific experiences came to the fore of historical and public interest. The first interest in the topic of children during the Holocaust came, not surprisingly, out of educational studies. Pedagogue Solomon Goldman published an article on “The Jewish Child During the Holocaust” in 1978 in which he called the special experience of children to the readers’ attention.¹¹ George Eisen showed how the catastrophe of the Holocaust was mirrored in the play of the Jewish children.¹² Based on the testimonies of child survivors of the Holocaust, Debòrah Dwork published the first comprehensive study on Jewish children during the Holocaust in 1991.¹³ More child-focused histories followed,¹⁴ and in 2000 Ruta Sakowska dedicated a collection of child-related documents the second volume of the publication series of the Ringelblum Archive by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.¹⁵ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum held symposia on Children in the Holocaust in 2004 and 2013 and subsequently published the papers.¹⁶ Barbara Engelking-Boni’s work on children in the Warsaw Ghetto describes how children particularly suffered under starvation and persecution.¹⁷

Lisa Anne Plante offers an overview over different school types in Theresienstadt and some larger ghettos.¹⁸ She interprets the attempts at maintaining regular classes for the children as resistance, but remarks that she does not subscribe to the heroism that was

¹¹ Solomon Goldman, “The Jewish Child During the Holocaust,” *Journal of Jewish Education* 46, no. 1 (1978): 40–51.

¹² George Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games Among the Shadows* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

¹³ Debòrah Dwork, “Children with a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe” (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children’s Lives Under the Nazis*, 1st American ed (New York: Knopf, 2006); Patricia Heberer, *Children during the Holocaust*, First Edition (AltaMira Press, 2011).

¹⁵ Ruta Sakowska, ed., *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy. Tom 2 Dzieci - Tajne Nauczanie W Getcie Warszawskim* (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny IN-B, 2000).

¹⁶ Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, ed., *Children and the Holocaust. Symposium Presentations. (Washington, DC, 2004)* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004). The proceedings of the 2013 symposium are not published yet.

¹⁷ Barbara Engelking-Boni, “Childhood in the Warsaw Ghetto,” in *Children and the Holocaust. Symposium Presentations*, ed. Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, DC, 2004), 33–42.

¹⁸ Lisa Anne Plante, “Transformation and Resistance: Schooling Efforts for Jewish Children and Youth in Hiding, Ghettos, and Camps,” in *Children and the Holocaust. Symposium Presentations*, ed. Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, DC, 2004), 43–64.

ascribed to school in postwar narratives. The focus on education as resistance is also supported by Ruta Sakowska¹⁹ in her paper on secret study circles in the Warsaw Ghetto, Erica Nadelhaft²⁰ in her study on Zionist youth movements in Warsaw, and Jeffrey Glanz²¹ for the orthodox youth.

Two papers²² delve deeper into questioning this connection of education and resistance: Susan Kardos²³ studied clandestine schooling in the Warsaw ghetto. In her paper “Not Bread Alone”, she interprets education as personal resistance to maintain normality and dignity and as collective resistance to avoid the cultural annihilation of Jewry intended by the National Socialists. Kardos, however, describes “the Jews“ as one religiously and culturally homogeneous group. Joanna Michlic-Coren²⁴ asked in “Battling Against the Odds” why there was a proliferation of cultural activities in the unfavorable conditions of the ghetto and why the Jewish educational institutions continued to impart their historical, literary and artistic heritage “in the face of ethno-cultural catastrophe”.²⁵ Similarly to Kardos, Michlic-Coren argues that cultural activities served as resistance against the intended destruction, and puts her results in the larger framework of how a people reacts to genocide. She takes education not only as individual resistance to sustain emotional and psychological strength as a method to escape the nightmarish reality, and to enable people to meet their deaths with a measure of humanity, but also as collective resistance — stating that the reason was to create a collective identity to make actual (maybe even armed) resistance, or at least the cultural survival of some people, possible.

While these papers on ghetto schools provide insight into a phenomenon that is otherwise underrepresented in research on the ghetto, the interpretation of an automatic connection between education and resistance, or education as resistant

¹⁹ Ruta Sakowska, ed., “Fun Ringelblum-Arkiv. Geheyme Limudim in Varshever Geto,” *Bleter Far Geshikhte* 28 (1990).

²⁰ Erica Nadelhaft, “Resistance through Education: Polish Zionist Youth Movements in Warsaw, 1939–1941,” ed. Antony Polonsky, *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry* 9 (1996): 212–31.

²¹ Jeffrey Glanz, “Clandestine Schooling and Education Among Jews During the Holocaust,” *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 16, no. 1 (2000): 48–69.

²² Additionally to the papers I will discuss here the following papers were published on this subject: *Ibid.*, 48–69; Plante, “Transformation and Resistance: Schooling Efforts for Jewish Children and Youth in Hiding, Ghettos, and Camps,” 43–64; Engelking-Boni, “Childhood in the Warsaw Ghetto,” 33–42; Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust*; Nadelhaft, “Resistance through Education: Polish Zionist Youth Movements in Warsaw, 1939–1941,” 212–231.

²³ Susan Kardos, “‘Not Bread Alone’: Clandestine Schooling and Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Holocaust,” *Harvard Educational Review* 72 (2002): 33–66.

²⁴ Joanna Michlic-Coren, “Battling Against the Odds: Culture, Education and the Jewish Intelligentsia in the Warsaw Ghetto, 1940–1942,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 27, no. 2 (1997): 77–92.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

behavior itself, oversimplifies the matter (I will discuss this problem more thoroughly in Chapter 7). The hitherto research neither acknowledges the diversity of the ghetto inhabitants in all their different shades of religion, political beliefs, national traditions, and social stratification, nor does it explore the concepts and contents of ghetto education. The existing literature only addresses students and teachers and not the other participants who were influential in the education system and had their own agendas, such as parents, school administration, and political and religious organizations. Most importantly, none of the previous studies have reflected on what education is, its role in the lives of individuals, and how it is embedded in society. This dissertation therefore aims — besides analyzing the societal functions of education — at correcting the homogenizing depiction of ghetto societies in terms of their cultural and educational activities.

D. Sources

Due to divergent population and survivor numbers, the source bases for the different ghettos in this study vary significantly. The arbitrariness of who wrote and which documents survived means that the same aspect might be documented well in one and very little in another ghetto. Life in the Warsaw and Lodz Ghettos is in general much better documented than in Vilna. The sources are more plentiful and more diverse, allowing a more sophisticated analysis of the discourse on education and the school system. The difference lies primarily on the administrative side. While we have various documents from the school departments of the Jewish Councils and private school organizations, in Vilna these materials are missing. On the other hand, we have excellent diaries from there that allow us to learn much about education from individual perspectives.

This study bases its arguments as much as possible on sources that were produced by Jews in the ghettos. Written and video-graphed postwar testimonies proved problematic, because they did not yield much information on education and if so, were highly influenced by the postwar discourse on Jewish resistance (this will be further discussed in Chapter 7). The contemporary sources offer a great variety of material (much of which has never been used in a historical study) that affords us deeper insight into the education discourse of the ghetto societies. According to their genesis, the

sources can be sorted into different corpora, the most important ones will be briefly introduced below.

The School Departments of the Jewish Councils produced, like any administration, the associated paper trail. The documents of the School Department in Lodz contain documents about the Judenrat-organized schools in the Lodz Ghetto: budget plans, correspondence, curricula, textbooks, student notebooks, and timetables.²⁶ Further documents and publications of the School Department in Warsaw are in the Ringelblum Archive²⁷ and in the Poland collection in the USHMM.²⁸ Several archives have preserved textbooks and student notebooks from the ghetto schools that give us some idea about the contents that were taught.²⁹

Information about the attitudes of the Jewish councils in Vilna, Lodz, and Warsaw are preserved in the Ringelblum Archive, the documents of the Elder of the Jews in Lodz, and several other collections.³⁰ Rumkowski's correspondence, his announcements, statistics, and reports, give insight into his policies.³¹ The Jewish Councils had different media outlets to communicate with the ghetto populations. In newspapers, they published public announcements as well as ghetto news, articles about cultural events, opinion pieces, and various private advertisements. In Lodz, the Jewish Council published its own Geto-Tsaytung (Ghetto Newspaper).³² The *Gazeta Żydowska* (Jewish Gazette) was published in Krakow and distributed in the ghettos of the General Government.³³ The *Geto Yedies* (Ghetto News), appeared in the Vilna Ghetto.³⁴ These newspapers were published with German knowledge, but they still give an impression of some of the topics that moved the ghetto societies.

²⁶ APŁ_PSŻ; USHMM, RG-15.083M.

²⁷ AŻIH, Ring I and II. A few parts are in Yad Vashem.

²⁸ USHMM RG-15.

²⁹ GFH; AŻIH 682 Ring I 603, USHMM RG-15.083M.

³⁰ Vilna: USHMM RG-26: Lithuania. Documents of the Jewish ghetto administration in Vilna, Accession 1998.A.0073; Accession 1999.A.0105. Lodz: AŻIH Judenraty 211; AŻIH Lodz Getto 205; USHMM RG-05.008M. Warsaw: AŻIH Ring I and II. Cf. Artur Eisenbach, ed., *Getto Łódzkie*, vol. 3, *Dokumenty i Materiały Do Dziejów Okupacji Niemieckiej W Polsce* (Warszawa: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna, 1946); Joseph Kermish, ed., *Dokumenty in Materiały Do Dziejów Okupacji Niemieckiej W Polsce. Vol. 2, Akcje i Wysziedlenia* (Warszawa; Łódź; Kraków, 1946); Jüdisches Historisches Institut Warschau, ed., *Faschismus – Getto – Massenmord. Dokumentation Über Ausrottung Und Widerstand Der Juden in Polen Während Des Zweiten Weltkriegs* (Berlin, 1960).

³¹ APŁ_PSŻ; YIVO, RG 241: Nachman Zonabend Collection. A portion of the Nachman Zonabend Collection is in Yad Vashem. At least part of it was published in: Michal Unger, *Nachman Zonabend Collection* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1992).

³² APŁ_PSŻ RG 278 Geto-Tsaytung.

³³ AŻIH 1292 Ring I 702.

³⁴ Republished in: David Roskies, ed. *YIVO-Bleter*, New Series, 3 (1997).

The Statistics Department of the Jewish Council in Lodz produced a chronicle of the events in the ghetto. In daily entries, the authors included the activities of the Jewish Council, Chaim Rumkowski's (chairman) speeches, reportages on different aspects of ghetto life, announcements and orders to the ghetto population, statistics about weather, market prices, diseases, and deaths.³⁵ Rumkowski's announcements were also collected by Nachman Zonabend.³⁶ Parallel to the Chronicle, the Statistics Department worked on a ghetto encyclopedia. It covered many aspects of ghetto life and short biographies of ghetto personalities.³⁷

Also available are documents of school and welfare organizations involved in education like Centos, ToPoRol, and Jewish Self Help. These include programmatic texts as well as budgets, lists of schools and staff, and minutes of their meetings.³⁸ Members of the Ringelblum Archive produced reports on childhood and schools in the Warsaw Ghetto, conducted surveys among the youth about their experience, and collected school material.³⁹

Valuable sources about individual perspectives on education are diaries. They offer a unique insight into the specific organization the respective person was engaged while conveying passions, doubts, and conflicts of their writers regarding education. Several students left diaries in which they report on their schoolwork, their engagement in political organizations and what they thought about their teachers and the ghetto leadership.⁴⁰ Diaries of ghetto leaders,⁴¹ members of the administration,⁴² and of teachers

³⁵ The chronicle was published completely in German by Sascha Feuchert, Erwin Leibfried, and Jörg Riecke, eds., *Die Chronik Des Gettos Lodz/Litzmannstadt*, Schriftenreihe Zur Lodzer Getto-Chronik (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007). Parts (about one quarter) were published in English by Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).

³⁶ Yad Vashem O.34 Nachman Zonabend Collection, folder 100.

³⁷ AŻIH Lodz Getto 205_349.

³⁸ USHMM RG-15; AŻIH Ring I and II; AŻIH ŻSS; AŻIH Centos 200; Yad Vashem JM 3488.2.

³⁹ AŻIH Ring I and II.

⁴⁰ Lodz: Dawid Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Alan Adelson, trans. Kamil Turowski (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Diary of an anonymous girl in Lodz, published in: Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); "Les Vrais Riches," *Notizen Am Rand: Ein Tagebuch Aus Dem Ghetto Łódź (Mai Bis August 1944)*, Schriftenreihe Des Fritz Bauer Instituts, Bd. 13 (Leipzig: Reclam, 1997).

Warsaw: Mary Wattenberg: Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. Susan Lee Pentlin and Samuel Loeb Shneiderman (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007); Janina Lewinson Janina Bauman, *Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond, 1939–1945* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1986).

Vilna: Yitskhak Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto. June 1941 – April 1943*, ed. Percy Matenko (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters' House and Hakkibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1973); Mascha Rolnikaite, *Ich Muss Erzählen: Mein Tagebuch 1941 – 1945*, ed. Dorothea Greve (Berlin: Kindler, 2002).

or people otherwise engaged in educational matters⁴³ give often detailed information about the ideological struggles and administrative considerations in the education system. Furthermore, this dissertation utilizes many other materials. Among them are, just to name a few, various reports on activities of Centos, ToPoRol and other organizations, reports on the Jewish education system and its relations to the Polish government before German occupation, reports to the Polish exile government.⁴⁴ Survivor Testimonies by teachers and students were valuable to capture the school experience from an individual point of view and especially the postwar evaluation of education in the ghetto.⁴⁵ The Yizkor-Bikher (Memory Books) for Lodz, Warsaw, and Vilna contain documents and survivor testimonies from the respective Jewish communities.⁴⁶ A collection of anonymous letters from Lodz Ghetto informs about the daily life and the writer's critical view of the ghetto leadership, especially Rumkowski.⁴⁷

E. Spelling of Names and Places

Finally, a few notes about the spelling of names and places in this dissertation: For Yiddish names, I generally follow the YIVO transliteration rules, unless they are commonly known in different spelling in the English world (for instance, Isaac Leib Peretz). In some cases, in order to avoid confusion, I follow the decision of the editor of published sources even if that means spelling the same name differently for different

⁴¹ Adam Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków* (New York, NY: Stein and Day, 1979).

⁴² Lodz: Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Lodz*, ed. Hanno Loewy, trans. Brigitte Goldstein, 1st ed. (Northwestern University Press, 2012); Szmul Rozensztajn, *Notatnik*, ed. Monika Polit (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów we współpracy z Żydowskim Instytutem Historycznym, 2008); Oskar Singer, *“Im Eilschritt Durch Den Gettotag...”: Reportagen Und Essays Aus Dem Getto Lodz*, ed. Sascha Feuchert, Schriftenreihe Zur Lodzer Getto-Chronik 1 (Berlin [u.a.]: Philo, 2002).

⁴³ Warsaw: Emanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. Jacob Sloan, McGraw-Hill (New York, NY [et al.], 1958); Chaim Aron Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, ed. Abraham I. Katsh, trans. Israel Gutman (Indiana University Press, 1999); Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. Antony Polonsky (Oxford [u.a.]: Blackwell [u.a.], 1989); Josef Zelkowitz, *In Those Terrible Days* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002).

Vilna: Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939 – 1944*, ed. Binyamin Harshav and Barbara Harshav (New Haven [u.a.]: Yale University Press, 2002); Marc Dvorjetski, *Le Ghetto de Vilna* (Genève: Union Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants, 1946).

⁴⁴ YIVO, Territorial Collection Poland RG 116.

⁴⁵ AŻIH Relacje; USHMM RG–02 Holocaust Survivor Testimonies; Yad Vashem RG O.3; GFH; LBI Memoir Collection; YIVO Eyewitness Accounts of the Holocaust Period Collection.

⁴⁶ Accessible via the website of the New York Public Library:

www.nypl.org/research/chss/jws/yizkorbookonline.cfm.

⁴⁷ Arnfried Astel/Janusz Gumkowski/Adam Rutkowski (Hg.): *Briefe aus Litzmannstadt*, Köln 1967.

persons (Yitskhak Rudashevski, but Yitzhak Zuckerman). Polish names are written in their Polish original spelling (Jakub Poznański, Józef Piłsudski).

For places, notably the three cities of this study, I use the common English name. No political statement, only clarity and simplicity are intended with this decision. Lodz is in Polish Łódź, in Yiddish Lodzh, the Germans called it Lodsch and named it in April 1940 Litzmannstadt. Warsaw is in Polish Warszawa, in Yiddish Varshe, in German Warschau. Vilna is in Lithuanian Vilnius, in Polish Wilno, in Yiddish Vilne, in German Wilna.

CHAPTER 2: JEWISH EDUCATION IN POLAND 1918–1939

A. Introduction

In 1937, a special publication appeared in Warsaw: an almanac of the Jewish school system in Poland.⁴⁸ A snapshot of the different genres of school available to the Jewish population in Poland in the mid 1930s, it also featured the main issues Jewish education activists discussed at the time. In the introduction of the third volume one editor, Jakub Zineman, reflected on the objectives of this work. He posed three questions: “1. Is the Jewish school system mature enough to publish an almanac about its development and current status? 2. If it is, who should publish the almanac? 3. What character should the publication have and what contents should be covered?”⁴⁹ Clearly, the answer to the first question was “yes”, and the editors decided the second in their own favor. The answer the authors gave to the third question emerges through analysis of the content.

The volume includes a list of Jewish pedagogues, education activists and education theorists in different fields, and a catalog of Jewish secular and religious schools in Poland. These pedagogues and schools belonged to a remarkable range of organizations and pedagogical trends. The editors saw this as a problem and wondered how, if at all, the almanac could help to unify the ideologically and organizationally fragmented Jewish school system in Poland.⁵⁰

This skepticism of convinced Zionist and educational activist Zineman and his editorial colleagues stands in strange contrast to the optimistic reports of other activists and teachers like Genia Silkes or Chaim Kazdan, who enthusiastically predicted a bright future for the Jewish education movement in Poland. What led the editors of the almanac to evaluate Jewish education efforts as possibly too immature for a summarizing portrayal? Why were there doubts as to who should prepare such a publication and thus speak for Polish Jewry as a whole?

⁴⁸ *Almanach Szkolnictwa Żydowskiego w Polsce [Almanac of the Jewish School System in Poland]* (Warszawa, 1937).

⁴⁹ Jakub Zineman, “Zadania i Cele Almanachu Szkolnictwa Żydowskiego W Polsce,” in *Almanach Szkolnictwa Żydowskiego W Polsce [Almanac of the Jewish School System in Poland]* (Warszawa, 1937), 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

The Jewish education system in interwar Poland suffered from two main problems. The first was external: it lay in the conflict-prone relationship between the Jewish minority and the Polish government, as well as in the prevalent antisemitism in Polish society. The second issue was of an internal nature: The Jewish community itself displayed a variety of opinions about the best ideological-pedagogical orientation schools for Jewish children and youth. Their views reflected the diverse Polish-Jewish population and its adherence to such different trends as Zionism, assimilationism, Socialism, conservatism, secularism, religious fundamentalism, and all shades in between. Both issues had substantial impact on the organization of Jewish schooling in interwar Poland.

B. The Situation of the Jewish Minority in the Second Polish Republic

The Jewish schools were, like the Jewish minority in general, part of the Polish national state that emerged from World War I. Contrary to the intentions of the creators of the Versailles Peace Treaty, the borders of this state did not strictly follow ethnic criteria. A third of the population in this newly (re-)created Poland was not of Polish ethnicity.⁵¹ The League of Nations therefore made it a condition of sovereignty that Poland sign the Minorities' Treaty which granted Polish citizenship to all Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, and Russians who lived in the territory at the moment of commencement. All individuals of German, Austrian, Hungarian, or Russian nationality who were born to parents who had already lived in this territory, or who were born with no other than Polish nationality, were also recognized as Polish citizens. All minorities were granted the same civil and political rights without distinction as to race, language, or religion. The recognized national minorities were granted the right to establish their own charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational institutions, and to use their own language in these

⁵¹ Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), 14; Antony Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland 1921–1939: The Crisis of Constitutional Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 35–37; Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, 2nd printing, with corrections, *History of East Central Europe*, v. 9 (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1977), 34–36. The largest non-Polish nationality was the Ukrainian group (ca. 14 percent), followed by Jews (ca. 10 percent), Belarusians (ca. 4 percent), and Germans (ca. 4 percent). Brubaker states that the official count probably even overstated the relative predominance of Poles: Rogers Brubaker, “Nationalizing States in the Old ‘New Europe’ - and the New,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19, no. 2 (1996): 417.

organizations. The Polish state had to provide public primary education in their native language in areas with a “considerable proportion” of Polish nationals whose mother tongue was not Polish. Furthermore, Jewish citizens could not be compelled to perform any act that constituted a violation of their Sabbath. These regulations enabled a Jewish school system based on either religious or secular grounds.⁵² Particularly relevant for Jewish education were Articles 9 and 10.

Article 9.

Poland will provide in the public educational system in towns and districts in which a considerable proportion of Polish nationals of other than Polish speech are residents adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Polish nationals through the medium of their own language. This provision shall not prevent the Polish Government from making the teaching of the Polish language obligatory in the said schools.

In towns and districts where there is a considerable proportion of Polish nationals belonging to racial, religious or linguistic minorities, these minorities shall be assured an equitable share in the enjoyment and application of the sums which may be provided out of public funds under the State, municipal or other budget, for educational, religious or charitable purposes. [...]

Article 10.

Educational Committees appointed locally by the Jewish communities of Poland will, subject to the general control of the State, provide for the distribution of the proportional share of public funds allocated to Jewish schools in accordance with Article 9, and for the organisation and management of these schools.

⁵² Jonathan Frankel, “Die Juden Und Der Nationalstaat,” in *Handbuch Zur Geschichte Der Juden in Europa. Bd. 2: Religion, Kultur, Alltag*, ed. Elke-Vera Kotowski, Julius H. Schoeps, and Hiltrud Wallenborn (Darmstadt, 2001), 436.

The provisions of Article 9 concerning the use of languages in schools shall apply to these schools.⁵³

The Minorities' Treaty soon proved insufficient to secure Jewish interests. Nationalist circles saw the treaty as an instrument of the minorities to undermine the just recreated Polish national state.⁵⁴ The Jewish minority in particular was the target of such assaults. A series of anti-Jewish pogroms unrolled in the years after the foundation of the state. Enraged masses, partly with support from police and military, abused and murdered Jews in 1919 and 1920.⁵⁵ Physical violence against Jews decreased when the new state stabilized, but antisemitism in the population grew through the interwar period and successive governments enacted increasingly antisemitic measures.⁵⁶

After seventeen changes of government in nineteen months, Józef Piłsudski overthrew the government with army support on 12 May 1926. Although Piłsudski had claimed this coup d'état aimed against the conservative government and had initially secured support from the political left as well as from Jewish parties, his government moved more and more toward the right in the following years.⁵⁷ When Piłsudski suddenly died in May 1935, right-nationalist forces took charge and instituted an openly antisemitic agenda.⁵⁸ The new executive strengthened its position against the Sejm and Senat with a constitution change in April. Other legal changes severely constrained minorities' political rights and moved Poland toward authoritarianism.⁵⁹

The text of the Minorities' Treaty was insufficiently robust to afford Jews protection. The treaty did not define how great the ratio of foreign language to Polish-

⁵³ Polish Minority Treaty, 28 June 1919 between the Allies and Poland: *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, no. 100, pos. 728, p. 1933–1946.

⁵⁴ Paweł Korzec, "Polen Und Der Minderheitenschutzvertrag (1919–1934)," *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 22, no. 4 (1974): 517; 521.

⁵⁵ Dietrich Beyrau, "Antisemitismus Und Judentum in Polen, 1918–1939," *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 8, no. 2 (1982): 205–206.

⁵⁶ Frank Golczewski, *Polnisch-Jüdische Beziehungen 1881–1922* (Wiesbaden: Steiner Franz Verlag, 1981).

⁵⁷ Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–1939*, Studies in the Social Sciences (Berlin ; New York, NY: Mouton Publishers, 1983), 313–316.

⁵⁸ Gertrud Pickhan, "Gegen Den Strom". *Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund "Bund" in Polen 1918–1919* (Stuttgart, 2001), 295.

⁵⁹ Emanuel Melzer, "Antisemitism in the Last Years of the Second Polish Republic," in *The Jewish of Poland Between Two World Wars*, ed. Israel Gutman et al., The Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry Series 10 (Hanover, MA: Published for Brandeis University Press by University Press of New England, 1989), 126–37.

speaking citizens should be considered a “considerable proportion”. The Polish government defined this ratio in 1922 as districts in which the minority comprised at least 25 percent of the local population.⁶⁰ In interwar Poland, the three million Jewish citizens accounted for about 10 percent of the population. About 80 percent lived in urban areas.⁶¹ The “proportional share of public funds allocated to Jewish schools”, was calculated on the grounds of the general ratio of the minority to the total population of the country. Thus, even in regions with a Jewish population of more than 30 or even 40 percent the share was based on the 10 percent average over the whole country. In areas with less than 25 percent Jewish population, no contribution by the government was paid at all which was in fact a discrimination against Jewish schools.⁶²

The already meager public support Jewish schools had received on the grounds of the Minorities’ Treaty since 1919 was incrementally revoked until 1935. Then too, the government did not accredit most Jewish schools, which led to difficulties getting accepted into Polish universities. Many Jewish high school graduates attended universities abroad, although in many academic professions graduates of foreign universities had to wait five years to obtain a license to practice their profession.

In 1923, the government initiated a numerus clausus for Jewish students. International protests stopped the Sejm from passing the bill, but only after the matriculation period for the year had passed. Intimidated by the anti-Jewish policy, far fewer Jewish students matriculated in Polish universities thereafter. In the 1923-1924 academic year, 23,810 non-Jewish and 8,325 Jewish students (that is, over 25 percent of general student population) were enrolled in the five state-recognized universities. By 1937-1938, only 4,791 of the 48,168 students (roughly 10 percent) were Jewish.⁶³ That Jewish students in the 1920s were “overrepresented” in relation

⁶⁰ Eisenstein, Miriam, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–1939. Their Philosophy and Development* (New York, NY, 1950), 3–4.

⁶¹ According to the census of 1921, the following were the percentages of the Jewish population in urban centers, of interest in our study: District of Vilna – 40 percent, District of Lodz – 33.8 percent, District of Warsaw – 35 percent, City of Warsaw – 33.1 percent. The District of Volhynia even reached 59 percent, whereas the numbers in western Poland were much lower. Ibid.; Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, 7; 23–24; Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, 35; Frankel, “Die Juden Und Der Nationalstaat,” 437.

⁶² Eisenstein, Miriam, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–1939. Their Philosophy and Development*, 3.

⁶³ Harry Rabinowicz, “The Battle of the Ghetto Benches,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 55, no. 2 (Oktober 1964): 151.

to the Jewish proportion of the general population is misleading and masks the severity of the discrimination: the national ratio of 10 percent was far lower than the Jewish proportion of urban population (30-40 percent, as we have seen) that traditionally accounts for the majority of university students.⁶⁴ Universities themselves undertook antisemitic steps in the 1930s. The Warsaw Politechnikum introduced a regulation in 1935 that made it impossible for Jews to matriculate.⁶⁵ From 1937 right-wing student organizations pressed the university administrations to approve “ghetto benches” for Jewish students in the lecture halls of Polish universities. Time and again, Polish students turned violently against their Jewish colleagues, neither hindered by university administration nor police.⁶⁶

Jewish schools operating in this ever more hostile environment found a way to cope with these challenges. The state-induced difficulties that hit the Jewish school system as a whole also influenced the various responses that emerged, depending on the respective world-view, from within the Jewish community. In this situation Jews felt increasing pressure to attend Polish schools to avoid the disadvantages of Jewish schools while risking antisemitic attacks against them in Polish institutes.

C. Jewish School Landscape in Poland

In the Jewish community, a multitude of political and religious convictions were represented in different organizations. Some of these groups formed alliances, others emphasized their differences in their educational efforts. A complicated network of secular and religious primary and secondary schools developed all over Poland after World War I.

Jewish organizations concerned with education can be divided into six groups. Three large networks organized religious education for children and youth: ultra-orthodox *Agudas Yisroel*, orthodox *Mizrachi*, and local Jewish communities, which maintained schools without an umbrella organization. There were also three large secular groups: *Tsysho* (*Tsentrale Yidishe Shulorganisatye* – Central Yiddish School Organization) was founded by the two large workers parties, the *Algemeyner Yidisher*

⁶⁴ Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, 41.

⁶⁵ Monika Natkowska, *Numerus Clausus, Getto Ławkowe, Numerus Nullus, “Paragraf Aryjski”: Antysemityzm Na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim 1931–1939* (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1999), 154–155. Cf. Anna Jaskóła, *Sytuacja Prawna Mniejszości Żydowskiej W Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Wrocław: University of Wrocław, Praca licencjacka, 2010), <http://www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl/dlibra/publication/30050?tab=1>.

⁶⁶ Rabinowicz, “The Battle of the Ghetto Benches,” 152–156.

Arbeyter Bund in Lite, Poyln, un Rusland (General Yiddish Workers' Federation) called *Bund*, and the Zionist *Po'ale Tsiyon* (Workers of Zion). Marked by a wide ideological range inside the *Po'ale Tsiyon* from revolutionary-communist to social democratic, the party struggled with separatist tendencies. When at the fifth world congress in 1920 one half of the party's representatives voted for, the other half against membership in the Comintern, the party split into two opposing factions, the *Left* (for), and the *Right Po'ale Tsiyon* (against). While Left *Po'ale Tsiyon* and the *Bund* continued to support *Tsysho* schools, the Right *Po'ale Tsiyon* launched its own school organization, called *Shul-Kult* (*Shul und Kultur Farband* – School and Culture Confederation). The largest secular Jewish school network was *Tarbut* (culture), supported by the centrist General Zionists⁶⁷ and the moderate leftist Zionists.⁶⁸

All these organizations were confronted with two language problems. First, the Polish state tried to homogenize the school system and assert Polish as the language of instruction instead of the respective minorities' native languages,⁶⁹ and second, Polish Jews considered one of three languages as their native tongue: Yiddish, Hebrew, or Polish. Which should be used in Jewish schools?

The results of the 1931 census illustrate these partitions. Some 3.1 million Polish citizens stated they belonged to the Mosaic religion. Of these, 243,500 individuals declared Hebrew, and 2.49 million Yiddish as their native language. Hebrew was not, however, the native language of any significant number of people in Poland. To declare Hebrew as the mother tongue was rather a Zionist political move. That means that at least some 381,000 Jews named a language other than Hebrew or Yiddish as their first, presumably Polish. Depending on the voivodship⁷⁰ (in the East

⁶⁷ Former members of the Zionist World Congress, who after the partition in socialists and revisionists did not affiliate with either of the factions. They formed an independent party in Poland in 1931 that supported Zionism but opposed Socialism and instead favored economically conservative positions.

⁶⁸ Samuel Kassow, "Po'ale Tsiyon," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, accessed June 20, 2014, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Poale_Tsiyon; Samuel Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyne Shabes Archive*, The Helen and Martin Schwartz Lectures in Jewish Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 62; Chaim Solomon Kazdan, "The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars," in *The Jewish People, Past and Present. Jewish Encyclopedic Handbook*, vol. 2 (New York, NY, 1948), 138; Daniel Blatman, "Bund," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2013, accessed June 20, 2014, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bund>.

⁶⁹ Eisenstein, Miriam, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–1939. Their Philosophy and Development*, 78–80; Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, "Tentative List of Jewish Educational Institutions in Axis-Occupied Countries," *Supplement to Jewish Social Studies* 3 (1946): 75.

⁷⁰ Province, Polish administrative unit.

fewer, in the West more), about 10 to 30 percent of the Jewish population in Poland regarded Polish as their mother tongue.⁷¹

More important for decisions regarding languages in schools than the actual native tongue were activists' agendas. Poland's Jewish population was deeply divided between advocates of Yiddish- and Hebrew-speaking schools, and more assimilation-oriented proponents of Polish who sometimes dismissed Yiddish as "jargon".⁷² A variety of school types with different combinations of languages spoken and taught in class flowed from these demographic facts and disparities in political belief.⁷³

Secular Jewish Schools

Tsysho

Some 400 representatives from Left Po'ale Tsiyon and Bund announced the founding of Tsysho at a conference of the Yiddish-secular education movement in June 1921.⁷⁴ Tsysho soon opened coordination offices all over the country and started publishing extensive pedagogical literature to support the establishment of its new schools.

Left Po'ale Tsiyon and Bund differed considerably in their ideology. As a Zionist party, Left Po'ale Tsiyon promoted a Jewish state and therefore emphasized the significance of a Jewish national language (Yiddish or Hebrew), the Bund was strictly anti-Zionist and hoped that Jewish workers would eventually unite with the international working class. Yet both agreed on Yiddish-language instruction and on the importance of a socialist education for the children.⁷⁵

The constant financial shortages Tsysho suffered posed another major problem. As we have seen, the government refused to subsidize the Jewish school

⁷¹ Aleksander Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki, trans. Richard Lourie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 155–157; Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, 31–32; Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, 35–36.

⁷² Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, 155–157.

⁷³ Rex Rexheuser, "Das Schulwesen Nationaler Minderheiten in Estland, Lettland, Polen Und Der Tschechoslowakei Zwischen Den Weltkriegen," in *Ostmitteleuropa Zwischen Den Beiden Weltkriegen (1918–1939). Stärke Und Schwäche Der Neuen Staaten, Nationale Minderheiten*, ed. Hans Lemberg, vol. 3, Tagungen Zur Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung (Marburg, 1997), 289.

⁷⁴ Kazdan, "The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars," 135.

⁷⁵ Abraham Brumberg, "The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in the Late 1930s," in *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, ed. Israel Gutman et al., The Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry Series 10 (Hanover, NH; London: Published for Brandeis University Press by University Press of New England, 1989), 75–76; Pickhan, "Gegen den Strom". *Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund "Bund" in Polen 1918–1919*, 235–237.

system and most parents were not able to pay a tuition that would cover the costs. In addition to the modest fees families could afford, the financial backing of the schools was provided by donations from Jewish trade unions, fundraising campaigns in Poland and abroad, support from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (called the Joint) and, sometimes, subsidies from the municipalities.⁷⁶ After strong initial growth to 24,000⁷⁷ students in the late 1920s attendance shrank to a level of about 15,000⁷⁸ in the early 1930s. Student numbers grew again right before the war, probably because the parties that supported Tsysho gained adherents among Jews in the increasingly antisemitic climate. The Bund, which developed defense actions against fascist groups and organized boycotts of products from national-socialist Germany emerged as the strongest Jewish power in the elections of 1938-1939. This might have animated its voters to entrust their children to the affiliated schools.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Pickhan, “*Gegen Den Strom*”. *Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund “Bund” in Polen 1918–1919*, 224.

⁷⁷ Joshua D. Zimmerman, “Tsysho,” *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, accessed June 20, 2014, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Tsysho>.

⁷⁸ Kazdan, “The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars,” 136.

⁷⁹ Pickhan, “*Gegen Den Strom*”. *Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund “Bund” in Polen 1918–1919*, 300–305.

Distribution of Jewish Children by School Type

Table 1

	Organization	Affiliation	Number students (year)	Percentage ca. 1934
Jewish secular schools ca. 10%	Tsysho	Bund and Left Po'ale Tsiyon	22,094 (1925) ^[1]	ca. 3%
			15,486 (1934) ^[2]	
			25,829 (1921) ^[3]	
	Tarbut	General Zionists and moderate left Zionists	21,543 (1928) ^[4]	ca. 6–8%
			37,000 (1934) ^[5]	
			40,000 (1938) ^[6]	
Shul-Kult	Right Po'ale Tsiyon	4,451 (1935) ^[7]	ca. 1%	
		2,353 (1934/35) ^[8] 939 (1937/38) ^[9]		
Jewish religious schools ca. 30%	Chorev	Agudas Yisroel (ultra-orthodox) boys	73,000 (1936) ^[10]	ca. 12.5–15.5%
			71,000 (1937) ^[11]	
	Bais Yaakov	Agudas Yisroel (ultra-orthodox) girls	35,586 (1937) ^[12]	ca. 6.5–8%
			38,000 (1937) ^[13]	
	Yavneh	Mizrachi (orthodox)	12,277 (1934/35) ^[14]	ca. 2–5%
			15,923 (1936) ^[15]	
Cheder	Jewish communities/private	23,576 (1937) ^[16]	ca. 8.5%	
		40,000 (1934/35) ^[17]		
Gemina schools	Jewish communities	10,300 (1934) ^[18]	ca. 2%	
		40,000 (1934/35) ^[17]		
Polish public schools ca. 60 %	Polish public schools	Polish state	343,671 ^[19]	ca. 59%
			352,581 ^[20]	

Sources:

- [1] Kazdan, “The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars,” 136.
 [2] Eisenstein, Miriam, Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919-1939. Their Philosophy and Development, 36; Nathan Eck, “The Educational Institutions of Polish Jewry (1921-1939),” Jewish Social Studies 9, no. 1, Conference on Jewish Relations (1947): 9.
 [3] Mendelsohn, The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars, 66.
 [4] Genia Silkes, “The Jewish School System in the Ghetto, YIVO Archives, Genia Silkes Collection” (RG 1187, Folder 41, No. 35).
 [5] Mendelsohn, The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars, 66.
 [6] Silkes, “The Jewish School System in the Ghetto.”
 [7] Ibid.
 [8] Eisenstein, Miriam, Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919-1939. Their Philosophy and Development, 70.
 [9] Ibid.
 [10] Ibid. These numbers probably contain additional afternoon schools for children otherwise attending public schools.
 [11] Numbers include Yeshiva. Ibid., 81; 96.
 [12] Ibid., 96.
 [13] Silkes, “The Jewish School System in the Ghetto.”
 [14] Ibid.
 [15] Numbers of the American Jewish American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, cf. Ibid., 13.
 [16] Without Vilnius. Eisenstein, Miriam, Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919-1939. Their Philosophy and Development, 93.
 [17] Silkes, “The Jewish School System in the Ghetto.”
 [18] Ibid.
 [19] Ibid. Cf. also Kazdan, “The Yiddish Secular School Movement Between the Two World Wars,” 138.
 [20] Eck, “The Educational Institutions of Polish Jewry (1921-1939),” 4. According to Eck ca. 101,000 Jewish children attended private schools, most of them Jewish schools.

Tarbut

The Tarbut schools grew out of the Zionist movement in Poland and were ideologically and financially supported by General Zionists and moderate left-wing Zionist. Between 6 and 8 percent of Jewish children attended these schools. The Tarbut schools aimed to train youngsters for *aliyah*⁸⁰ to Palestine and adjusted the curriculum to meet the needs of a Jewish nation and life in Palestine. Tarbut placed great emphasis on Hebrew as the language of a new, secular Jewish nation. Indeed, Hebrew was the main language of communication in Tarbut schools.⁸¹

Using Hebrew as the medium of instruction was problematic in some subjects at a time when the modern Hebrew version was developing from a sacred to a quotidian language, was a second or third language for most students and teachers, and lacked even basic vocabulary. The school organizers' commitment to using solely Hebrew reflects their strong conviction. Tarbut saw its schools as multipliers of Hebrew as the old and new national language that would connect Jews in the Diaspora and Palestine. Another focal point of the curriculum lay in Jewish history and geography of Palestine. Tarbut schools were strictly secular. The Torah and other religious texts were studied only for their historical, cultural, and moral value. Overall, Tarbut schools offered a broad spectrum of humanities, including literature in Polish, German, Latin, and philosophy. The Tarbut curriculum also emphasized a thorough study of science, because of its importance for the industrial development of Palestine.⁸²

The program of the Tarbut gymnasia followed the curriculum of the Hebrew gymnasia in Palestine, as well as the curriculum for secondary schools set by the Polish Ministry of Education. According to the Ministry's regulations, all subjects related to Poland (Polish history, geography, and literature) had to be taught in Polish, which prompted complicated adjustments to the curriculum. Still, Tarbut had difficulties obtaining official accreditation of its degrees which would allow graduates to attend public universities. The Polish authorities refused to recognize most Tarbut schools,⁸³ claiming problems related to controlling schools run in a foreign language and the inadequacy of the newly developing Hebrew as language of instruction.

⁸⁰ Aliyah, "ascent", is the immigration of Jews from the Diaspora to Eretz Israel in Zionist ideology.

⁸¹ Eisenstein, Miriam, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–1939. Their Philosophy and Development*, 44.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 40–43.

⁸³ Exceptions were the Hebrew gymnasia in Pinsk and Białystok. *Ibid.*, 46.

Moreover, the government deemed the physical and hygienic state of many of the school buildings as insufficient — whether rightfully so is now difficult to establish. In part the financial straits of the schools might have played a role. Despite all these challenges Tarbut schools were rather successful and their popularity grew steadily through the late 1930s.⁸⁴

Shul-Kult

The Right Po'ale Tsiyon established its own school network, the *Shul-Kult*, in 1928. Attendance was limited; in 1935, Shul-Kult schools had less than 4,500 students.⁸⁵ The organizers intended Shul-Kult institutions as Jewish-national schools with a clear Zionist ambition. Both Jewish national languages, Yiddish and Hebrew, were used as languages of instruction. These schools were therefore trilingual, because government regulations required Polish as (a third) language of instruction. Because some of the subjects were taught in Yiddish, some in Hebrew, and others in Polish, the curriculum in Shul-Kult schools was even more complex and demanding than that of the Tarbut schools. Shul-Kult schools were popularly believed to negatively impact the psyche of those students who were not outstandingly talented. Student numbers peaked in the early 1930s; thereafter, parents and social organizations lost interest in this school type and attendance dropped to about 900 students in 1936-1937.⁸⁶

Religious Jewish Schools

Chorev/Bais Yaakov

Ultra-orthodox Jews, concerned with spreading secularization, founded *Agudas Yisroel* (League of Israel) in 1912 in Katowice (then Germany), and quickly exported their organization to Poland. Here, they claimed explicitly not to be a political party but the incorporation of the true Jewish people.⁸⁷ They focused on representing Jewish-religious interests before the government and to limiting the Zionists' growing influence. According to orthodox belief, the return of the Jews to Palestine would be initiated by the coming Messiah and not by human beings.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 46–47.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 70; Genia Silkes, “The Jewish School System in the Ghetto, Genia Silkes Collection,” RG, folder 41, No. 35 1187.

⁸⁶ Eisenstein, Miriam, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–1939. Their Philosophy and Development*, 69.

⁸⁷ Ezra Mendelsohn, “The Politics of Agudas Yisroel in Inter-War Poland,” *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1972): 47.

The *Agudah*, as the organization was often called, operated its own school system, *Chorev* for boys and *Bais Yaakov* for girls. With more than 110,000 students, it was by far the largest Jewish school initiative in Poland, even though it suffered from constant organizational problems.⁸⁸ The *yeshivot* (sg. *yeshiva*), religious secondary schools for boys, which were under the aegis of Agudah and run by *Chorev* (in Warsaw, for the area of former Congress Poland and Galicia) and by *Vaad Hayeshivoth* (in Vilna, for the Kresy) were known near and far. Even orthodox Jews from the United States sent their sons to study in one of the famous institutions. A board of rabbis made all decisions about the curriculum ensuring that it remained strictly religious and traditional. The study of Talmud and Torah as the only and eternal source of instruction for religious, moral, and practical life dominated the school day. A few progressive school organizers tried to include science or some artisan training into the program to enable yeshiva graduates to earn a living outside of religious professions or dependent on charity. But only a few schools ever incorporated these worldly subjects, because the school leaders thought they distracted the students from their godly study of the scriptures.⁸⁹

Agudas Yisroel also supported primary schools since 1916. *Chorev* organized schools for boys. Girls were traditionally educated at home in ultra-orthodox communities. Only one school for girls existed in the ultra-orthodox sector and girls had to attend public schools. Founded by Sarah Schenirer, a seamstress from a strictly religious family, the first school for girls in Krakow in 1917 sought to avoid assimilation into Polish culture and to protect girls against increasing secularization. When primary education became mandatory for all children in 1919, Schenirer initiated the *Bais Yaakov* school network for girls. This network incorporated about 300 schools by 1939 and secured the support of leading rabbis.⁹⁰

In ultra-orthodox culture, Hebrew was considered the holy language to be only used in sacred contexts. Both school networks, *Chorev* and *Bais Yaakov*, operated in Yiddish except for the study of the Torah. The pedagogy of Agudah schools was strictly religious. The creators of these schools regarded the Torah as the guide not only for moral, but also for daily practical life matters. Every question a

⁸⁸ Asaf Kanieli, "Mizrahi," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Mizrahi>.

⁸⁹ Eisenstein, Miriam, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–1939. Their Philosophy and Development*, 77.

⁹⁰ Pearl Benisch, *Carry Me in Your Heart: The Life and Legacy of Sarah Schenirer, Founder and Visionary of the Bais Yaakov Movement* (Jerusalem; Nanuet, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 2003), 11–13.

child could pose at any phase of his or her life was to be answered with knowledge gained from the Torah. Agudah schools thus raised children from early on to align their life with the holy scriptures.

When Chorev and Bais Yaakov introduced the minimum of secular subjects the Ministry of Education demanded, Agudah schools achieved state recognition in 1922. Twelve hours per week in the higher classes were henceforth spent on Polish history, mathematics, science, and a subject called “Development of Western Culture“. All these subjects had to be taught in Polish. Agudah expanded the canon of secular subjects further to maintain state recognition after major Polish school reforms in 1932. Their willingness to adjust to state regulations promoted good relations between Agudah schools and Polish government. Agudah saw itself and its schools as religious institutions in Poland and accepted government decisions as long as the latter did not impede life according to God’s commandments. Agudah’s identity was Jewish-religious. Politics and nations were “worldly,” and they defined themselves as outside of political life. Agudah felt that the secular and leftist Jewish parties in Poland put its arrangements with the state at risk. The Polish government, in turn, did not view Agudas Yisroel as a threat to the Polish national state, because the organization had nearly no political ambitions and did not battle Polish as a language of instruction in their schools. In contrast with Tsysho and Tarbut, Agudah schools did not suffer hassle and repressions from Polish authorities.⁹¹

Yavneh

The *Mizrahi* organization (from *merkaz ruhani*, “spiritual center”) tried to reconcile orthodox beliefs and traditions with Zionism and the modern world. In an attempt to bundle its efforts, Mizrahi centralized its locally sprouted schools under the patronage of its new school organization *Yavneh*⁹² in 1927. In Yavneh’s view, an individual could only vouch for Jewish emancipation if he or she understood broader society, including its historical, cultural, and economic background. Yavneh thus adopted the state-directed secular curriculum and added extensive religious instruction. While Tarbut and Tsysho schools multiplied in eastern Poland, more than 70 percent of Yavneh schools were located in central and southern Poland where

⁹¹ Eisenstein, Miriam, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–1939. Their Philosophy and Development*, 78–80.

⁹² Named after a town east of Jerusalem, the center of early Rabbinic Judaism that secured continuity of Judaism in Israel after the Romans had destroyed the temple.

assimilation with the ethnically Polish population was more advanced than in the Kresy.

Unlike Chorev and Bais Yaakov, Yavneh was not hostile to Zionism. On the contrary: Yavneh encouraged its youth to participate in the national reconstruction in Palestine. Hebrew was an integral part of the curriculum. Besides schools on primary, secondary, and even university level, Yavneh also ran afternoon schools in which children who attended Polish public schools studied religion and subjects like Jewish history and geography of Palestine.⁹³

Chederim/Gemina Schools

Less than 10 percent of Jewish children in interwar Poland still attended traditional *chederim* (sg. *cheder*, literally “room”, traditional primary school).⁹⁴ These schools were organized by private persons or local religious communities and funded mostly by the parents. A teacher, the *melamed*, taught Hebrew and Torah to boys from the age of three until their *bar mitzvah*⁹⁵ at age 13. Because of the precarious financial situation, these schools often consisted of a single poorly furnished room in which the teacher taught all classes together. In the 1920s, many *chederim* reformed their curricula and integrated general subjects. On the whole, however, they remained conservative, pedagogically traditional institutions, which may have accounted for their relative decrease in popularity. While around 1900 about 85 percent of Jewish boys in Congress Poland were educated in *chederim*, only 23 percent remained in this school form in the same area (including Chorev) thirty years later. After Chorev had thoroughly reformed its schools (see above) and adapted them to the regulations of the Polish Ministry of Education, parents henceforth preferred them over the traditional *chederim*. Thus, in the 1930s, only 8 percent of Jewish students attended these small, non-reformed schools without state recognition.⁹⁶

⁹³ Nathan Eck, “The Educational Institutions of Polish Jewry (1921–1939),” *Jewish Social Studies*, Conference on Jewish Relations, 9, no. 1 (1947): 24–25.

⁹⁴ Not including Chorev-run schools.

⁹⁵ Jewish rite of passage. The boys read a section of the Torah to the congregation.

⁹⁶ Beyrau, “Antisemitismus Und Judentum in Polen, 1918–1939,” 214.

D. Jewish Children in Public Schools and in Jewish Private Schools

No reliable statistics exist on the numbers of Jewish children of school age in interwar Poland. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee data collection for its financial aid for Jewish schools in eastern Europe estimated about 450,000 Jewish school children in Poland in 1936. The Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction fixed the number of Jewish school children in 1934-1935 at 468,309. In her report on pre-war Jewish education, Genia Silkes estimated 580,000 for the same year.⁹⁷ Similarly, all other figures vary, too. I therefore adduce the numbers next to each other. But even without exact data it is possible to see tendencies that help us understand the Jewish education system of the 1920s and 1930s in Poland. Student numbers over the course of these two decades show neither a tendency toward assimilation into Polish society nor a general secularization of Jewish education. Rather, a shift of student numbers in the secular Jewish sector is apparent. Let us examine the statistics and their implications more closely.

According to calculations by the Joint, 60 percent of Jewish children attended Polish public schools.⁹⁸ The Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction distinguished between two school forms. As shown in table 2, some 80 percent of the Jewish students went to public primary schools (seven grades).

⁹⁷ American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, *Jewish Schools in Eastern Europe* (Paris, 1937); Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, "Tentative List of Jewish Educational Institutions in Axis-Occupied Countries," 72; Silkes, "The Jewish School System in the Ghetto."

⁹⁸ American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, *Jewish Schools in Eastern Europe*.

**Distribution of Jewish Students in Poland in Public and Private Schools
(1934/35 respectively 1936/37)**

Table 2

	Primary Schools (1934/1935)	Secondary Schools (1934/1935)	Vocational Schools (1936/1937)
Public Schools	80.80% 343,671	32.20% 9,910	11.40% 1,471
Polish Private Schools	–	17.80% 5,398	28.60% 3,629
Jewish Private Schools	19.20% 81,895	50% 14,514	60% 7,821

Source:

Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction: Tentative List of Jewish Educational Institutions in Axis-Occupied Countries. Supplement to Jewish Social Studies, 3/1946, 72.

The number of Jewish students attending Polish public secondary institutions fell to about 30 percent, and vocational schools to 10 percent. At the same time, attendance at Jewish private schools increased with student age. While only 20 percent of Jewish students went to a Jewish primary school, some 50 percent of secondary and 60 percent of vocational school students attended Jewish private institutes.⁹⁹

That means that the majority of Jewish children attended Polish public schools. And, according to these numbers, as only a fraction of children went on to secondary school, most students never entered the Jewish private school system. Jewish students who did obtain secondary education were much more likely to choose Jewish rather than public schools and thus reversed the trend of primary education.

The Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction student numbers in Jewish private schools (table 2) adds up to 104,230. The data Silkes, Eisenstein, and Kazdan provide suggests more than 230,000 children in Jewish schools (Table 1) in 1936-1937.¹⁰⁰ In its statistical yearbook from 1939, the Polish state gives the number of students in Hebrew- and Yiddish-speaking schools (which

⁹⁹ Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, "Tentative List of Jewish Educational Institutions in Axis-Occupied Countries," 72.

¹⁰⁰ Table 1, the lower numbers added for 1936/1937 resp. the closest value.

corresponds relatively accurately with the number of Jewish private schools) at only about 80,000.¹⁰¹

This striking difference can be explained. First, Jewish education activists might have exaggerated the relevance of the Jewish school system. Then too, there were countless private chederim and other religious schools in the Yiddish sector that were never included in official statistics. We can safely assume that the numbers of unrepresented students in Yiddish-speaking schools go into the thousands. Polish administrators probably understated the numbers of students in Jewish private institutions on purpose to elude the responsibility of supporting these schools financially.

Another discrepancy in the statistics relates to the absolute number of all Jewish children. When adding the number of all Jewish children in all Jewish and Polish schools around 1936-1937 (Table 1) the total figure comes to more than 600,000. This sum is significantly higher than all estimates of Jewish children in Poland at this time. The difference is too great to be explained by inaccuracies or exaggerations. Rather, the problem lies in a structural characteristic of the Jewish school system in Poland at this time. Many religious Jewish schools were afternoon classes. The children went to Polish public schools in the mornings and received their religious instruction in Jewish schools in the afternoon.¹⁰² As all schools adduced their student numbers independently, thousands of youngsters were counted twice. In short, and although these numbers have to be treated carefully, the Jewish school system was much more influential than the Polish administration would admit.

A number of reasons may account for this arrangement of public school for general education and Jewish school for religious instruction. Finances certainly loom large. Jewish schools demanded fees. And, as we have seen, most schools did not receive the government financial support to which they were entitled. Although the Joint and other donors helped, parents had to pay tuition to secure the schools' funding. Many parents could not afford these fees, especially for several children. It

¹⁰¹ Główny Urząd Statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny*, vol. 10 (Warszawa, 1939), 319, table 6.. Published in: Unterrichtssprache in den Schulen, in: "Herder-Institut (ed.): Dokumente Und Materialien Zur Ostmitteleuropäischen Geschichte. Themenmodul 'Zweite Polnische Republik', Ed. Heidi Hein-Kircher," accessed June 20, 2014, http://www.herder-institut.de/startseite/dokumente-und-materialien/moduluebersicht/zweite-polnische-republik/materialien.html?tx_himmat_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=178&cHash=7bcd06a1680d80fcb72f61bd85344dcd.

¹⁰² Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, "Tentative List of Jewish Educational Institutions in Axis-Occupied Countries," 79–80.

was cheaper to send their youngsters to public schools and finance only their religious education privately. Then too, one must not underrate that many parents sent their children to public schools in order to give them a better chance on the Polish job market and easier access to Polish universities. Especially among the Jewish upper and upper middle class, Polish schools were regarded as academically superior to their Jewish equivalents. This was not correct in all cases, because some Jewish high schools offered an excellent education, but Polish diplomas were valued more highly and were, above all, state recognized. Only parents who were ideologically invested in Zionist or religious institutions sent their children to such schools.

Choice of school was, not surprisingly, also a class phenomenon. Like Jewish political parties, Jewish schools were mainly attended by the middle class. Upper and lower classes preferred Polish schools.¹⁰³ For the Jewish working class secular or religious Jewish private schools were simply too expensive. The often assimilated upper class trusted state schools, and wished to demonstrate their loyalty to a state that counteracted the nationalist ambitions of its minorities.

In towns and counties with a large Jewish population, especially in eastern Poland, the state established so called *szabasówki*, public Polish primary schools closed on Saturday — the Jewish Sabbath — instead of Sunday. Otherwise they did not differ from other public schools. The Polish curriculum was taught by mostly Polish teachers in Polish.¹⁰⁴ Jewish religion, culture, or languages were not part of the curriculum, but for religious parents these schools offered the possibility to comply with mandatory schooling for their children without having to break the Sabbath. For the Polish state, *szabasówki* were a means to reach large segments of the Jewish population and integrate them into the Polish culture and nation.¹⁰⁵

The struggle of the diverse Jewish school organizations for the right school program reflects the identity question of Jewish society in Poland in general. Each group had a different answer to the question of what it meant to be Jewish in the new Polish national state, and how the status of a Jewish national minority could be compatible with Polish citizenship. Many Jewish parents chose assimilation or acculturation and sent their children to Polish public schools. Others insisted on Jewish independence as a national minority, as was granted in the Minorities' Treaty.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 75.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 82.

¹⁰⁵ Shimon Frost, *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1998), 33.

They decided to send their children to schools in which — following for example the Bund's idea in the Tsysho schools — the main principle was to strengthen Jewish identity in Polish society. Still others preferred to work toward a Jewish state in Palestine and have their children educated according to this aim, for example in Tarbut schools.

The editors of the Jewish school almanac saw this variety of school organizations as a problem and gave their readers a perspective they thought insufficiently considered in Jewish society: The most important task of Jewish schools is not to educate children, the editors declared, but to heal Jewish life in its national, cultural, and social sense. The almanac was supposed improve the knowledge about each other, and facilitate the cooperation among the many different Jewish education initiatives. The target of all Jewish educational efforts was to strengthen the national, cultural, and social solidarity and to enforce a common Jewish identity.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Zineman, "Zadania I Cele Almanachu Szkolnictwa Zydowskiego W Polsce," 4.

CHAPTER 3: GHETTOIZATION AND GHETTO SOCIETIES

A. German Ghettoization Policy and Practice

First Phase

Poland was the first target of the Nazis' *Lebensraum* (living space) plan. This ideology stated that the Versailles Peace Treaty had left Germany as a *Volk ohne Raum* (people without space) that was now facing overpopulation. Not only were the territories lost in World War I to be regained; the Nazis believed that in order to fulfill the resource needs of its population, Germany had to expand its territory far into the east. They envisioned to deport, enslave, and kill the inferior-deemed Slavic and Baltic peoples in vast territories in eastern Europe and repopulate them with Germans.¹⁰⁷

This ideology became concrete in the *Generalplan Ost* (Master Plan East) for the colonization of central and eastern Europe.¹⁰⁸ In two stages, eastern Europe was to be Germanized and the local populations eliminated to varying degrees. With only a minority of Poles seen as "Germanizable", the Nazis planned to remove the great majority of Poles (85 percent) to make space for ethnic German settlers from outside of Germany they brought *heim ins Reich* (home to the Reich). The plan found its first materialization in the attack on Poland in 1939. From 1940 on, the Germans forcibly displaced Poles from the western Polish provinces incorporated into the Reich to the occupied General Government for the Occupied Territories (later called General Government) further east.

According to their antisemitic ideology, the Nazis considered all Jews as "racially undesirable". Not a single Jew was therefore to be tolerated in the German sphere. Hitler and chief ideologist Alfred Rosenberg envisioned the concentration and

¹⁰⁷ Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 141; Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2009), 63; Manfred Messerschmidt, "Foreign Policy and Preparation for War," in *Germany and the Second World War. Vol. 1. The Build-Up of German Aggression*, ed. Wilhelm Deist et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 551–554; Andreas Toppe, *Militär und Kriegsvölkerrecht: Rechtsnorm, Fachdiskurs und Kriegspraxis in Deutschland 1899–1940* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008), 398–399.

¹⁰⁸ The Generalplan Ost was drawn up in several stages from 1939 to 1942 by Adolf Hitler and high officers from the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Main Security Office), Dr. Hans Ehlich, and Dr. Konrad Meyer, Chief of the Planning Office of Himmler's Reichskommissariat for the Strengthening of German Nationhood.

deportation of the Jews into the far east of the occupied lands, the Lublin district, until February 1940. Because Lodz had been planned to serve as a concentration point for Jews from smaller towns before their deportation to Lublin, the Lodz chief of police now ordered a ghetto to be erected.¹⁰⁹ This so-called Nisko and Lublin Plan stipulated the erection of a Jewish reservation adjacent to a forced labor camp system. In total, the Germans deported 95,000 Jews to the Lublin district and erected camps several of which they later turned into annihilation centers (Bełżec, Sobibor, Majdanek). But its originally envisioned purpose as a “dumping ground” for the expelled Jews of Germany and its annexed provinces was soon abandoned.¹¹⁰

It turned out that this plan was impossible to execute. The Germans ran into logistical problems and Hans Frank, Governor-General of the General Government, did not want to see an influx of Jewish population in the General Government that he deemed overcrowded already. Frank believed that providing settling space for ethnic Germans in the newly acquired eastern provinces was more important than deportation of Jews from the Reich.¹¹¹ Confronted with the (compared to Germany) massive Jewish population of Poland after initial occupation, he initiated a priority shift from expelling the Jews of the *Altreich* to dealing with the Polish Jews first.

Three weeks after Germany’s invasion of Poland, on 21 September 1939, chief of Gestapo and Sicherheitspolizei Reinhard Heydrich had ordered the concentration of the Jews in larger cities. Jews from towns with fewer than 500 Jewish inhabitants had to leave their homes and most of their possessions and move to larger towns.¹¹² The Germans installed the first ghetto in Piotrków Trybunalski as early as October 1939¹¹³ and the ghetto in Lodz shortly after.

¹⁰⁹ Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Auschwitz* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 120.

¹¹⁰ Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932–1945* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 160–161, 204; Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History* (New York: Norton, 2002), 206–208; Bogdan Musial, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung Und Judenverfolgung Im Generalgouvernement: Eine Fallstudie Zum Distrikt Lublin 1939–1944*, Quellen Und Studien / Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau 10 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 126–145.

¹¹¹ Christopher R Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Labor, German Killers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6–12.

¹¹² Reinhard Heydrich’s Schnellbrief, 21 September 1939, in English: Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Persecution of Axis Criminality, ed., “The Chief of the Security Police, Special Security Letter, Document No. 3363-PS,” in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. VI (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), 97–101. In German: “The German Death Sentence against the Jewish People,” *YIVO Bleter* 30 (1947): 163–68.

¹¹³ Roman Mogilanski, *The Ghetto Anthology: A Comprehensive Chronicle of the Extermination of Jewry in Nazi Death Camps and Ghettos in Poland* (Los Angeles, CA: American Congress of Jews from Poland and Survivors of Concentration Camps, 1985), 217.

Although Heydrich laid out some of the ghetto characteristics — the newly designated Jewish settlement areas (*jüdische Wohngebiete*) had to be located near to railway junctions or train lines, and Jewish Councils had to be established, whose members would be held personally responsible for the execution of German orders in their communities — he left the details open. These “instructions and directives”, his order stated, “serve at the same time for the purpose of urging chiefs of the detail groups to practical consideration of problems.”¹¹⁴ In vague words he mentioned the “final solution” but not what that potentially implied; he called for Jewish living areas but did not explain how they should look concretely; he demanded a census of the Jewish population (indicating age, gender, and profession) but did not explain what its purpose would be. All other matters of establishing and running the Jewish settlement areas remained vague in his order. With this great margin of discretion and regional differences in administration, local officers were left to decide about most practical aspects of ghettoization. This afforded much room for individual interpretation and personal preferences.

When the plan to deport the concentrated Jews to the Lublin area was no longer in force, the local occupation authorities were confronted with a concentrated Jewish population they could not send anywhere. Faced with the fact that ghettos would be part of at least medium-term considerations of local occupation reality, the German authorities began searching for a purpose for these ghettos.¹¹⁵ “Little guidance came from Berlin, which continued to dream of deportation plans and was reluctant to confess that its schemes were not viable and that the Jews had become ‘stuck’”, historian Christopher Browning summarized.¹¹⁶ The first phase of the ghettoization process was therefore rather arbitrary. It was by no means clear what was meant to happen with the ghettoized Jewish population and different ideas emerged in the ideological center in Berlin as well as on the local level.

Dan Michman has questioned whether ghettos were an integral part of Nazi anti-Jewish policy at all, criticizing that it has become axiomatic to see them as a

¹¹⁴ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Persecution of Axis Criminality, “The Chief of the Security Police, Special Security Letter, Document No. 3363-PS,” 97.

¹¹⁵ Frank Golczewski, “Polen,” in *Dimension Des Völkermords. Die Zahl Der Jüdischen Opfer Des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Wolfgang Benz, vol. 33, Quellen Und Darstellungen Zur Zeitgeschichte (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1991), 424.

¹¹⁶ Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942*, Comprehensive History of the Holocaust (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 113.

transition to the deportation to their deaths. As Michman elaborates, research especially of recent years has found that the central authorities of Nazi Germany never elaborated a clear and unequivocal definition of what a ghetto was or should be from their point of view.

Moreover, we do not have a single major document that points to the sources of the ghetto concept, its essence, and the ways for implementing and managing it [...]. On the contrary, the German documents of the period that were written by officials involved in setting up ghettos propose varying reasons and explanations for their establishment and need — which shows that the officials themselves were not sure about the origins of the idea and its precise purposes.¹¹⁷

Unclear orders left room for conflict: Christopher Browning summarized the dispute that ensued between what he called the “attritionists” and the “productionists”: While the former saw the ghetto as a means to “die out” the Jewish population through exploitation and deliberate starvation, the latter viewed their task as minimizing the financial burden on the Reich by maximizing their economic productivity. The latter wanted to organize the ghettos as self-sufficient labor units that could potentially contribute to the war economy. “In this policy dispute”, so Browning, “the ‘productionists’ gradually prevailed over the ‘attritionists’ until Berlin intervened in favor not just of attrition but of immediate and systematic mass murder.”¹¹⁸ Between the first turmoil of setting up the ghettos in 1939-1940 until the beginning of the mass deportations to the death camps in 1942, the ghettos experienced a period of relative calm in which the population could organize their life. From this period stems the overwhelming majority of accounts about civil, cultural, and educational achievements in the ghettos.

¹¹⁷ Dan Michman, *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos During the Holocaust*, trans. Lenn J. Schramm (Cambridge [et al.]: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.

¹¹⁸ Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution*, 113. Cf. also newer works on this question: Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003); Stephen G Fritz, *Ostkrieg Hitler's War of Extermination in the East* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2011); Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010); Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

Lodz

The Polish city of Lodz, known for its thriving textile industry, surrendered (8 September 1939) to the German army which was happily greeted by the ethnic German population in the city, and feared by the Poles and Jews.¹¹⁹ Up to 60,000 Jews fled the Wehrmacht from the western borderlands into Soviet-occupied Poland or the Soviet Union,¹²⁰ among them a significant portion of the Jewish leadership, including the chairman of the Lodz *kehilla* (local Jewish communal council), Lajb Minberg.¹²¹ Consequently, the Jewish communal administrative apparatus disintegrated.¹²²

The authors of the Generalplan Ost envisioned that Lodz, now renamed Litzmannstadt, would play a vital role in the Germanization of the Wartheland. They pushed the Polish population (about 50 percent) out, gave the streets German names, and settled German people (before the war about 20 percent) in the city with its beautiful town houses, elegant avenues, and tended parks. All Jews were supposed to be expelled to the General Government. But, as we have seen before, Governor-General Frank had his own plans. Trying to make the General Government “judenrein”, he did not agree to take the Jews from Lodz. Since this made immediate deportation of the Wartheland Jews impossible, Friedrich Übelhör, regional governor of Kalisz and Lodz, set up a temporary ghetto until this disagreement was resolved.¹²³ He circulated a confidential memorandum about creating the Lodz ghetto on 10 December 1939, stating that “the formation of the ghetto is of course only a transitional measure. When and with what means the ghetto and thereby the city of

¹¹⁹ Fela Wiernik, “Wspomnienia I Przeżycia Wojenne, AŻIH 913 Ring I 482,” n.d., 10–13; Anna Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence. Ghetto Lodz* (Haifa: H. Eibeshitz Institute for Holocaust Studies, 1998), 31–32; Yakub Nirnberg, “Di Geshikhte Fun Lodzher Geto,” in *In Di Yorn Fun Yiddishen Khorbn* (New York, NY, 1948), 212; Yisroel Tabaksblat, *Khurbn Lodzh. 6 Yor Natsi-Gehenem* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-Farband Fun Poylishe Yidn in Argentine, 1946), 15.

¹²⁰ YIVO, Nachman Zonabend Collection, RG 241, folder 832, 12–13; Golczewski, “Polen,” 425; Wiernik, “Wspomnienia I Przeżycia Wojenne, AŻIH 913 Ring I 482,” 12–13.

¹²¹ Danuta Dąbrowska, “Administracja Żydowska W Łodzi I Jej Agendy W Okresie Od Początku Okupacji Do Zamknięcia Getta (8.IX. 1939–30.IV.1940),” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 45/46 (1963): 110; Tabaksblat, *Khurbn Lodzh*, 24–27. The leader of the Jewish community in Warsaw, Maurycy Mayzel, fled during the first week of the war. He went to Kowel where the Germans killed him in the fall of 1942. Cf. Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 138; Roth and Löw, *Das Warschauer Getto*, 14.

¹²² Dąbrowska, “Administracja Żydowska W Łodzi,” 111–112; Aharon Weiss, “Jewish Leadership in Occupied Poland - Postures and Attitudes,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 12 (1977): 336.

¹²³ Eisenbach, *Getto Łodzkie*, 3:26–31; Peter Klein, *Die “Gettoverwaltung Litzmannstadt” 1940 Bis 1944: Eine Dienststelle Im Spannungsfeld von Kommunalbürokratie Und Staatlicher Verfolgungspolitik* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009), 73–79.

Łódź will be cleansed of Jews — I reserve for myself to determine.”¹²⁴

Übelhör forced Lodz’s Jews (some 230,000 people or about a third of the city’s population¹²⁵) to move into the designated Jewish living area set up in the old town, the former Jewish quarter, and Bałuty, a poor neighborhood in the outskirts of the city.¹²⁶ After the Lublin Nisko Plan had been abandoned, he ordered the ghetto to be sealed off from its surroundings on 30 April 1940, still expecting that he would not have to wait long to deport the Jews from what was now the Reichsgau Wartheland.¹²⁷

Ironically, given that it had been planned to be even more temporary than other ghettos because of its location in the Reich, the ghetto of Lodz existed the longest.¹²⁸ The Germans liquidated this last ghetto in summer 1944 and deported the remaining 70,000 Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau. About a quarter of its inhabitants had perished in the Lodz ghetto by the time it was liquidated.¹²⁹

Warsaw

On the eve of the Second World War, Warsaw was a modern European metropolis with a vibrant intellectual and cultural life. After German occupation, it was part of the newly established General Government and lost its status as capital to Krakow. In this administrative entity in German-occupied Poland that had not been included into the Reich, the Polish leadership was replaced by German officers.

The German occupation authorities erected a Jewish district in the middle of the city. It contained mostly the traditional Jewish neighborhoods of Warsaw between the old city in the east, the Jewish cemetery and Wola in the west, the main train station in the south, and the Gdańsk train station in the north. This location allowed many Jewish institutions to remain for the time being. Many Jewish schools could

¹²⁴ Secret Memorandum by Friedrich Übelhör, 10 December 1939, concerning creation of a ghetto for Jews in Lodz, Artur Eisenbach, ed., *Żydzi a Powstanie Styczeniowe; Materiały I Dokumenty* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1963), 31.

¹²⁵ According to estimates for 1939 (33.8 %) and based on census data for 1921 (30.7 %) and 1931 (31.7 %). Ludwik Mroczka, “Dynamika Rozwoju I Struktura Społeczno-Zawodowa Głównych Grup Etnicznych W Łodzi W Latach 1918–1939,” in *Polacy – Niemcy – Żydzi W Łodzi W XIX–XX W.. Sąsiedzi Dalecy I Bliscy*, ed. Paweł Samuś (Łódź, 1997), 101. After the German attack, many Jews left the city, but at the same time, Jews from smaller towns came to Lodz, because they hoped for more safety in the city.

¹²⁶ A map of the distribution of the Polish, Jewish, and German populations in Lodz before the war in: *Ibid.*, 112–113.

¹²⁷ Letter from the Police President to Rumkowski, 17 April 1940 about the sealing of the ghetto and the Jewish Order Service’s responsibilities in the enclosed ghetto. Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 30–31.

¹²⁸ Klein, *Die “Gettoverwaltung Litzmannstadt” 1940 Bis 1944*, 123–133.

¹²⁹ Löw, *Juden Im Getto Litzmannstadt*, 7.

thus keep their premises and part of their equipment, if it was not confiscated or plundered. Many of the at least 350,000 Jews of Warsaw (about 30 percent of the city's population) had been living in this area before the war; thousands more joined them when Jews were expelled from smaller towns, making the Warsaw ghetto with a population over 400,000 the largest in Poland and, really, a major city in itself.

The ghetto was sealed off from the city by a wall with guarded entries on 16 November 1940. The borders of the ghetto changed constantly, closing the ghetto population in ever tighter and pressing it north toward the *Umschlagplatz* area where the Nazis gathered the Jews for deportation,¹³⁰ causing people and institutions to move and find space in other already crowded ghetto areas. Nonetheless, the period after sealing of the ghetto was relatively calm and Jewish self-administration and cultural life flourished. This short breathing period came to an abrupt halt with the beginning of the *Aktionen*, mass deportations out of the ghetto, which started in July 1942 and triggered the famous Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943. After four weeks of fighting, the Germans responded with the complete liquidation and burning of the ghetto in May 1943.

Second Phase

The second phase of ghettoization began in the middle of a turning point in German practice towards Jews and warfare alike. Hitler and his advisors attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941 to expand German Lebensraum to the east. Following the army behind the front were the *Einsatzgruppen* (task forces) with order to shoot partisans and Soviet Communist Party Commissars with the understanding that Jewish men of military age were to be regarded as partisans, and therefore dangerous to the war effort in any case.¹³¹ From the first days of the new assault, the *Einsatzgruppen* in Lithuania undertook mass executions of Jewish men, but by mid-August they had turned to shooting thousands of women and children.¹³² The systematic killing of women and children indicates a fundamental turn in the German

¹³⁰ Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 52–107.

¹³¹ Heydrich gave order to regard all Jews as partisans and therefore shoot all male Jews age 15 to 45 on 8 July 1941. Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 190–191; 230–231; Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, 207–209.

¹³² Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), 337–341; Christian Gerlach, “The Wannsee Conference, the Fate of German Jews, and Hitler’s Decision in Principle to Exterminate All European Jews,” *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (December 1998): 761–762.

attitude toward Jews. When before “only” Jewish men of military age had been targeted because of their alleged cooperation with the Soviet authorities and partisan warfare, the shooting of civilians indicated a change not only in the Germans’ warfare, but also in their occupation methods. Their new goal was now to murder all Jews in the Soviet territories, marking the shift to genocide.

That genocide was on the Germans’ minds is indicated by a series of actions they undertook in other localities: Between mid-September and mid-October 1941, the German government banned Jewish emigration; Hitler approved the deportation of German Jews to the east; and the construction of death camps at Belżec and Chełmno began.¹³³ The Nazis had begun systematic mass murder of the Jews.

There has been an intense debate among historians on what exactly happened in those few weeks at the eastern front: when, why, and how the decision for genocide was made, communicated, and implemented. The Germans based their decision for mass killings of Jews on ideology, bureaucracy,¹³⁴ logistical problems of occupation and ghettoization,¹³⁵ the war situation,¹³⁶ specific regional necessities,¹³⁷ failing of starvation,¹³⁸ economic, or interagency competition. Regardless of the reason, it influenced the ghettoization process that now began in the

¹³³ Christopher R. Browning, “The Nazi Decision to Commit Mass Murder: Three Interpretations: The Euphoria of Victory and the Final Solution: Summer–Fall 1941,” *German Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (1994): 477–478.

¹³⁴ Instead of focusing on Hitler’s plans, Hilberg described the implementation of mass murder by different levels of bureaucracy working together in the “machinery of destruction”. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews, Vol. 1* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 640, 770.

¹³⁵ Pohl attributes the radicalization in the fall of 1941 in the General Government to the ghettoization and its resulting problems: “Insbesondere die Warschauer Distriktverwaltung sah sich mit Entwicklungen konfrontiert, die sie mit der Einrichtung und Abschnürung des Warschauer Gettos selbst verursacht hatte.” Dieter Pohl, *Von Der “Judenpolitik” Zum Judenmord: Der Distrikt Lublin Des Generalgouvernements, 1934–1944*, Münchner Studien Zur Neueren Und Neuesten Geschichte, Bd. 3 (Frankfurt am Main ; New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1993), 92.

¹³⁶ Snyder argues that the Final Solution as the decision to kill each and every Jew under German control was implemented when Germany had maneuvered itself into an impossible situation and was suddenly at war with the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States on two fronts, without a possibility to win. Ideologically, Hitler bound this situation back to *Weltjudentum* (world Jewry) who in his conviction had betrayed Germany once again and provoked the world war. Jews in occupied Europe were seen as agents of the Jew-controlled allied powers and therefore dangerous. Thus all had to be killed in order for Germany to have a chance of winning the war, or at least having the satisfaction of the partial victory of killing the Jews within its boundaries. According to Snyder, the decision of annihilating the entire Jewish population was made (on the battlefields) in the east and from there traveled back to the west, where Jews lived in ghettos earlier and died in large numbers later than their peers in the east. Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 213–215.

¹³⁷ Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944*, 391–401; Browning, “The Nazi Decision to Commit Mass Murder,” 473–481.

¹³⁸ Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die Deutsche Wirtschafts- Und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 Bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 628–630.

Vilna

The ghettoization process in the occupied Soviet territories was characterized by its haste and determination. The ghetto in Vilna, now part of the Reichskommissariat Ostland, was quickly set up in early September 1941, only days after the Germans had taken control of Vilna. It had only been one day between the order to form the Vilna ghetto and its implementation, rather than it being weeks or months, as was the case with Warsaw and Lodz. From the beginning, the occupiers separated the Jews of Vilna according to their ability to work. The Germans installed two ghettos in Vilna, one for those able, one for those deemed unable to work.

The attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 came unexpectedly. The German air force began bombing Vilna, at the time capital of the Lithuanian SSR, the same day. This hit the population by surprise and without any guidance from the authorities, as offices were closed on a Sunday. About 3,000 of Vilna's 60,000 Jews fled the city into the Soviet hinterland. Many more tried but could not leave for lack of transportation. They were cut off by the Germans and had to return.¹⁴⁰

When the Germans marched into Vilna on 24 June 1941, they were greeted by many Lithuanians as liberators from the Soviets.¹⁴¹ Angry masses, incited by German propaganda and Lithuanian nationalist ideology, associated Soviet terror with Jewish influence and turned against the Jews in bloody raids, some even preceding German invasion. The arriving occupiers then terrorized the Jewish population by looting, round-ups for forced labor, and mass shootings.¹⁴²

The Germans ordered the establishment of Jewish ghettos in the old town of Vilna, the traditional Jewish neighborhood, in early September. They assigned Ghetto I to craftsmen, artisans, and workers with permit, and Ghetto II to those without permits, the sick, the orphans, and the elderly. Unlike the ghettos in Lodz and

¹³⁹ Civilian occupation regimes established in the German-occupied territories of the Soviet Union and north-eastern part of Poland replacing the initial military administration. Headed by Alfred Rosenberg's Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete (Reichs Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories), Reichskommissar Hinrich Lohse for Reichskommissariat Ostland, and Reichskommissar Erich Koch for Reichskommissariat Ukraine.

¹⁴⁰ Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 31–32.

¹⁴¹ The Lithuanian government hoped that Germany would help Lithuania to re-install their nation state. They tried to form an independent government and hoped for German approval, but that was never granted. Instead, Lithuania was part of the larger German Lebensraum plan. See *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁴² Longerich, *Holocaust*, 198–199.

Warsaw, the Vilna ghetto was from the beginning explicitly in line with the German practice of annihilation through labor. “Actions” started immediately and thousands fell victim. By October 1941 the Germans had murdered most of the people in the second ghetto and liquidated it.

Historian Yitkhak Arad identified the fifteen months that followed these initial mass executions (January 1942 to March 1943) as a period of relative calm for the remaining ghetto.¹⁴³ The inhabitants began to organize daily life, expand the administration, and establish schools and mount cultural activities, but with a majority of the Jewish population already murdered, the preconditions for these activities were very different from those in Warsaw and Lodz.

Mass deportations to Estonia in the summer of 1943 were followed by the complete liquidation of the ghetto in September. All remaining ghetto residents were sent to concentration camps or their immediate deaths in annihilation camps or the nearby mass shooting site of Ponary.¹⁴⁴

B. Ghetto Societies

The Jews of Poland and the Soviet Union were victims of the Germans’ ghettoization measures, but they were by no means passive. Notwithstanding the harsh conditions they faced every day, people still lived in social groups of families, friends, political and religious organizations, schools, and clubs. In the camps, the Germans intended to destroy these social bonds by deporting people with no regard to their families, separating men and women, old and young, and quartering the survivors of the selections in pallets with often hundreds of people sharing the same space. As Samuel Gringauz, a historian and Holocaust survivor himself, pointed out, “the concentration camp was an individual regime, the ghetto was a social regime.” In his view the ghetto “developed its own social life and formed a social community.” He explained further:

From the standpoint of Jewish sociology it was a form of Jewish national and autonomous concentration. The ghetto is a unique social experiment for sociological investigation. It was not a creative

¹⁴³ Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 273–295.

¹⁴⁴ Gerd Robel, Sowjetunion, in: Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Dimension Des Völkermords: Die Zahl Der Jüdischen Opfer Des Nationalsozialismus*, Quellen Und Darstellungen Zur Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 33 (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1991), 499–559; Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 420–460.

experiment of course, but merely an experiment sui generis. It was an observation experiment in which the conditions were imposed not in the interests of investigation but were determined by a policy of persecution, defamation and annihilation. Nevertheless the ghetto was a Jewish community set up through artificially created conditions, and thus meets the prerequisites of experiment.¹⁴⁵

After early studies by Gringauz and Philip Friedman,¹⁴⁶ historians ignored for many years the Jewish ghetto dwellers as “victim societies” passively waiting for their deaths.¹⁴⁷ In recent years, research on ghettos has undergone the challenge to describe the ghetto inhabitants as what they were: People who were made objects by the Nazis, but under these circumstances, individually and collectively, also human beings with everything that comes with it. It is therefore crucial to recognize that they indeed formed societies that followed societal rules and can be described as such. But the ghetto societies did not only share characteristics with other human societies. They were also distinct — and not just because of their ghettoization. A still mostly disregarded fact is that, while certainly changed by the Nazi assault, ghetto societies did not come out of nowhere. They had a history as Jewish communities in Poland for centuries.

For an analysis of any social phenomenon, all the more one that is as closely intertwined with different social dimensions as education, it is necessary to take a close look at its conditions and external circumstances. The following section focuses on the experiences of Jewish society during the ghettoization process and in the ghettos. It explores how the specific characteristics of the ghetto — concentration, consolidation, exploitation, and death — impacted Jewish society.

¹⁴⁵ Gringauz, “The Ghetto as an Experiment of Jewish Social Organization (Three Years of Kovno Ghetto),” 5.

¹⁴⁶ Friedman, “The Jewish Ghettos of the Nazi Era.”

¹⁴⁷ A notable exception is Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York, NY: Stein and Day, 1977).

Concentration

Jews experienced the time between the German attack on Poland and the order to form ghettos as filled with humiliations, looting, forced labor, and physical violence, but when the Germans ordered all Jews to move into a ghetto it still came as a shock.¹⁴⁸ During the first ghettoization phase, local German authorities legitimized the order to form ghettos for the Jews often with “sanitary reasons”. They surrounded the designated living areas for the Jews with signs like “Seuchensperrgebiet. Nur Durchfahrt gestattet” (Epidemic Protection Area. Only Drive Through). By playing into old prejudices against Jews as being dirty and centers of disease, these signs established an immediate boundary between former neighbors, even before the ghettos were erected.¹⁴⁹

The immediate reactions to concentration and ghettoization ranged from fear to anger to disbelief, but all, young and old, rich and poor, shared the experience that their entire world was turned upside down from one day to another. As ‘refugees’ who had been expelled from their hometowns or fled from the German army to the larger cities, many new residents of the ghettos in Poland arrived without any more possessions than they could carry, without a place to stay, and without a social network. The city residents living in the wrong neighborhoods had to move to the “Jewish living areas” as well. Chaim Kaplan observed such a mass move into the ghetto in Warsaw: “Thirty thousand Jews girded, packed, and with money in their hands, are filling the streets open to them, searching for apartments. Finding one is as difficult as parting the waters of the Red Sea. It is painful to witness the distress of these poor evicted people. Despair overwhelms them.”¹⁵⁰

As we have seen, the second phase of ghettoization two years later in the occupied Soviet territories was extremely rushed. In Vilna, policemen gave the Jewish citizens 10 to 15 minutes to gather the belongings they could carry before evicting them from their homes and sending them by foot to the ghetto.¹⁵¹ Yitskhak Rudashevski, a teenager in Vilna, described his feelings immediately following the move to the ghetto in his diary on 6 September 1941:

¹⁴⁸ Emanuel Ringelblum, Diary, 19 November 1940, in: Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 86. Chaim Kaplan, Diary, 17 November 1940, in: Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 225.

¹⁴⁹ Friedman, “The Jewish Ghettos of the Nazi Era,” 74; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 52; Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 1991, 30.

¹⁵⁰ Chaim Kaplan, Diary, 8 November 1940, Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 66.

¹⁵¹ Herman Kruk, Diary, 20 September 1941, Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 110–111.

On our street a new mass of Jews streams continually to the ghetto. [...] A bundle was suddenly stolen from a neighbor. The woman stands in despair among her bundles and does not know how to cope with them, weeps and wrings her hands. Suddenly everything around me begins to weep. Everything weeps. [...] I walk burdened and irritated. The Lithuanians drive us on, do not let us rest. I think of nothing: not what I am losing, not what I have just lost, not what is in store for me. I do not see the street before me, the people passing by. I only feel that I am terribly weary, I feel that an insult, a hurt is burning inside me. Here is the ghetto gate. I feel that I have been robbed, my freedom is being robbed from me, my home, and the familiar Vilna streets I love so much. I have been cut off from all that is dear and precious to me.¹⁵²

Simultaneously, thousands of families looked for housing. The Germans often chose the poorest neighborhoods for the ghettos. They were far too small and unsuitable to house the number of people pushed into them. In the Lodz ghetto, about 95 percent of the houses had no water pipage or sewerage.¹⁵³ In Warsaw, the quarters were quickly so congested that on average over a dozen people shared one room to sleep, cook, and live. Living space, daily routines, and privacy often had to be negotiated with complete strangers. The intense overcrowding and poor condition of many buildings led to social tensions and hygienic problems in the dwellings.

The problems intensified when the Germans sealed the ghettos from the outside world, making access to electricity, water, soap, heating materials, and other basic necessities almost impossible. With far too small allocations from the Germans, the ghetto inhabitants organized extensive smuggling activities.¹⁵⁴

The pain of leaving home and many personal things behind aside, people in the ghettos still had their private living space. They might have had to share with a lot of people, but they usually possessed a specific room that was theirs to come home to,

¹⁵² Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*, 31–32.

¹⁵³ Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 15.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 14–15; 298; Horwitz, *Ghettostadt*, 62–74; Löw, *Juden Im Getto Litzmannstadt*, 155–165; Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 92–100, 306–309; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 419–425.

possibly keys to their apartment or room, a few belongings like a bed, sheets, some cookware, clothes, and maybe some personal items that they managed to bring into the ghetto, like photographs, religious objects, books, or a few toys for the children.

The analyzed ghettos had, albeit limited, a clear separation of work and leisure time, as well as private housing. In the ghettos of the second phase, the Germans restricted the private sphere further. In Vilna, they separated the Jewish population into two groups, “fit” and “unfit” for work and placed them in respective ghettos, thus breaking up family structures. However, even in Vilna, the ghetto inhabitants enjoyed some authority to dispose over their property, time, and companionship without interference from German oppressors or Jewish administration. In all three ghettos a sophisticated cultural and political scene developed. Restricted by curfews, material shortages, and regulations about public gatherings, a private life with self-chosen activities was possible.

Consolidation

Heydrich’s Schnellbrief had demanded the creation of Jewish Councils (Judenräte or Ältestenräte) in all Jewish communities, who had to answer to the Germans and carry out their orders. In some cases, mostly in places occupied after June 1941, these Jewish Councils were appointed by the Germans; in others, the Jewish community voted or appointed public figures and notables from prewar Jewish life.¹⁵⁵ While Heydrich ordered Judenräte for communities in the General Gouvernement, he did not for the Wartheland.¹⁵⁶ Albert Leister, the new German city commissioner, created a very similar institution. The Germans dissolved the kehilla in Lodz on 13 October 1939, and Leister appointed Chaim Rumkowski¹⁵⁷ as Elder of the Jews with the task of creating a Jewish Ältestenrat (Council of Elders).¹⁵⁸ In Warsaw, the Jewish Civil Committee formed during the siege continued its work until the German-demanded Judenrat was established and took over under the leadership of

¹⁵⁵ Weiss, “Jewish Leadership in Occupied Poland – Postures and Attitudes,” 352–353.

¹⁵⁶ Heydrich, Schnellbrief, und Verordnung des Generalgouverneurs Hans Frank über die Einsetzung von Judenräten vom 28. November 1939. Verordnung über die Einsetzung von Judenräten, 28 November 1939, Verordnungsblatt G.G.P. No. 9, 72. Ibid., 343–346.

¹⁵⁷ Chaim Rumkowski (1877–1944) was the Elder of the Jews, the chairman of the Jewish Council in Lodz Ghetto.

¹⁵⁸ Commissioner of the City of Lodz, Regierungspräsident Albert Leister to Rumkowski, 13 October 1939, 14 October 1939, 16 October 1939: YIVO, Nachman Zonabend Collection, RG 241, folder 35–37. Dąbrowska, “Administracja Żydowska W Łodzi,” 110–115; Löw, *Juden Im Getto Litzmannstadt*, 74.

Adam Czerniaków.¹⁵⁹ In Vilna, the Germans selected the Judenrat and completely replaced it several times, murdering its former members.¹⁶⁰

The Councils' first task was to organize the move into the designated ghetto areas and the allocation of housing. Important tasks included the distribution of food and firewood for the needy. These emergency committees soon became much more than that: The Judenräte expanded into elaborate civil administrations with departments for food, labor, health, law courts, funerals, culture, and education, last but not least offering employment for a substantial number of people. They were organized like city council administrations with several departments and sub-departments, including school departments.¹⁶¹

German authorities only communicated with the Judenräte and only rarely with the ghetto population directly. Thus, the way the ghetto administration was set up blurred its actual responsibilities and influence for many ghetto inhabitants.¹⁶² The members of the Jewish Councils acted within the framework of Nazi oppression. In many instances, Vilna being a clear case, the Germans interfered with the composition of the councils and did not shrink from killing members who fell out of grace. Members of the Jewish leadership found themselves in the impossible situation of making decisions for the whole community and themselves while being exposed to the permanent threat of death for infuriating the German rulers. Still, while it was clear to everyone that the Germans were the overlords, great discussion simmered in the ghettos as to whether the Jewish leaders were collaborators with the Germans and made themselves accomplices to their crimes.¹⁶³

Whether the Judenräte were appointed by the Germans or elected from within the Jewish community, they played the role of a self-administration and self-government. The Germans set the outer circumstances with their walls, fences, guards, and signs, but inside the ghettos were images of other cities. The Judenräte were controlled in the issues the Germans were interested in, like labor related

¹⁵⁹ Adam Czerniaków (1880–1942), Chairman of the Jewish Council in the Warsaw Ghetto. Weiss, "Jewish Leadership in Occupied Poland – Postures and Attitudes," 340; Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 9.

¹⁶⁰ Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 104–105.

¹⁶¹ Departments and sub-departments can be seen on the organization charts of the Jewish Councils, Lodz: Dąbrowska, "Administracja Żydowska W Łodzi," 116. Warsaw: Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 174–189. Vilna: Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 274.

¹⁶² Verordnung über die Einsetzung von Judenräten, 28 November 1939, Verordnungsblatt GGP, No. 9, 72. Michael Robert Marrus, *The Nazi Holocaust. Part 6: The Victims of the Holocaust, Vol. 1* (London ; Westport, CT: De Gruyter, 1989), 448.

¹⁶³ Trunk, *Judenrat*, 528–530, 548–569.

matters or the control of the Jewish police force (especially in later periods, when the Jewish police was used for the round-ups before deportations); in many other issues, the German authorities did not interfere much.

Because of the continuities with the prewar kehilla, the Judenräte had the potential to be recognized as the rightful leaders of the ghettos. In some instances, the population indeed accepted and even appreciated the councils. The ghetto of Kaunas is such a case. Its Judenrat chairman, Elkhanan Elkes, was widely respected by the ghetto dwellers and continued to receive posthumous praise for his wise leadership in the postwar period.¹⁶⁴ In the three ghettos of this study, the Warsaw ghetto's leadership around Adam Czerniaków was probably honored over the ambitious Chaim Rumkowski of Lodz and Jacob Gens in Vilna who grabbed power with support of the Gestapo.

The plethora of German regulations concerning every aspect of Jewish life overwhelmed people and made them anxious that a wrong step would have fatal consequences. This explains, for example, why many people believed the Germans never allowed education for the ghetto children. In the three ghettos in this study, the Jewish Councils were able to attain a German permit specifically for schools in the ghettos. Until then, the schools were initially officially closed like their Polish counterparts during the military occupation, reopened after a few weeks, and then closed again for supposed fear of epidemics.¹⁶⁵ Instead of in schools, teachers and students met in informal study circles. While it was most likely was not true for the analyzed ghettos that these groups were illegal, the many other prohibitions created an atmosphere in which everything seemed to be forbidden. Ghetto dwellers based their decisions not only on actual orders and prohibitions, but also on imagined ones that seemed like they made sense in a German-ruled ghetto.

Indeed, the ghetto populations were very rumor-prone because of their lack of reliable information.¹⁶⁶ Every decision requires some sort of knowledge about the future. The crucial personal decisions like whether to appear for deportations or

¹⁶⁴ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ed., *Hidden History of the Kovno Ghetto* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1997); William W. Mishell, *Kaddish for Kovno: Life and Death in a Lithuanian Ghetto 1941 – 1945* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 1990); Avraham Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA ; London: Harvard University Press, 1990).

¹⁶⁵ Most secondary schools in Poland (Jewish or non-Jewish) were not allowed to reopen.

¹⁶⁶ Getto-Neues, in: Ghetto Encyclopedia, Zbiór Materiałów do Dziejów Ludności Żydowskiej w Łodzi 1939–1944, AŻIH Lodz Getto 205_349, 144–145.

whether to take a job in one of the labor camps, or collective decisions about how to set up and run communal institutions, demanded an assessment of the future. Theoretical options for action were thus diminished, because so many variables were controlled by others and not known to the ghetto decision makers.

A few areas of life – although narrowed to be sure – remained open to private decisions. Many daily necessities were scarce, especially food, heating material, and things that were difficult to replace when worn out, but most people still had some personal possessions and there was a functioning market (partly black) where things could be sold and bought. Within the limits of survival necessity and with the exception of forced labor, ghetto inhabitants could make personal decisions about their work place. Many people in the ghettos worked long and hard hours, but they did have the opportunity to decide what to do with their free time. Obviously, there were restrictions, too: material limits, curfews, health, forbidden activities like gatherings of many people. But ghetto inhabitants participated in larger numbers in political parties, cultural events, education, and social gatherings.

During the first weeks of occupation, the Jewish community in Poland had started to organize its own institutions to fulfill the basic needs of its population that the Germans had excluded from the limited help Polish agencies could offer. Some of these Jewish organizations had existed as welfare institutions before, but with the erection and closing of the ghettos they became more important than ever and catered to much larger proportions of the Jewish population. People who had previously owned businesses or had been employed rapidly grew poor and had to be helped from within the Jewish community, because they were denied access to non-Jewish welfare. But Jewish society stepped in and tried to uphold the idea that society should provide for basic needs if an individual is unable to do so. In Warsaw, Jewish public and private welfare organizations were struggling with the fact that this was not an individual problem but a mass phenomenon that was quickly exceeding the financial means of the community. In Lodz, the Jewish Council assumed almost the entire public welfare to leave no room for competing organizations that did not follow Rumkowski's lead.

After the German invasion of Poland a stream of refugees had arrived in Vilna, mostly composed of “politically conscious”: intellectuals, communists, political youth organizations, and yeshiva students with their teachers, who (knowing about the fate of Jews in Germany) thought they would be better off going to the

Soviet Union.¹⁶⁷ The Jewish citizens of Vilna set up a refugee committee to assist the arriving in finding lodge and board. The American Jewish welfare organization JOINT soon organized vocational training courses for all the intellectuals who were not able find a job and could not be accommodated on donations.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, when the randomly assembled Jewish Council was not quite qualified to fulfill the given tasks, other people in the city were experienced and a relief and organizing committee for the problems that should follow the German invasion in June 1941, was already functioning and continued its work in the ghetto.

Exploitation

From the first days of the occupation, Germans had randomly taken Jews from the streets and forced them to carry out various tasks such as removing rubble and sweeping streets. These tasks were routinely accompanied by beatings and humiliation. To reduce the random round-ups, the Judenrat of Warsaw organized a daily supply of workers for the Germans by setting up a labor battalion on 19 October 1939. With a decree from 26 October 1939, the occupiers introduced forced labor for all Jewish (and Polish) men between fourteen and sixty.¹⁶⁹ The Jewish community henceforth had to provide increasing quotas of workers for the occupants. Because the Germans did not remunerate these workers, the Judenrat tried to pay their wages. When their funds did not suffice anymore, the Jewish council raised a wealth-based tax to cover the costs.¹⁷⁰

At first, many unemployed Warsaw Jews and especially refugees volunteered for the labor battalion, but the terrible conditions at the work sites and a growing German demand for Jewish workers soon made the supply of volunteers insufficient. The Jewish Council therefore introduced a system by which people who were summoned to work could be released when paying substitutes. The random round-ups finally stopped when the organization of labor moved from Security Police

¹⁶⁷ In January 1940, the Lithuanian Government ordered all refugees to leave Vilna and move to the interior of the country. Although some obeyed, many people stayed in Vilna. Cf. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 18–19. According to Yehuda Bauer these measures were aimed directly against the Polish refugees in Vilna in an attempt to reduce the Polish population in Vilna they had tried to marginalize in number before. Cf. Yehuda Bauer, “Rescue Operations Through Vilna,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 9 (1973): 216.

¹⁶⁸ Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 16–17.

¹⁶⁹ Verordnung über die Einführung des Arbeitszwanges für die jüdische Bevölkerung des G.G., 26 October 1939, *Verordnungsblatt GGP*, No. 1, 6.

¹⁷⁰ Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 143.

(Sicherheitspolizei) and Security Service (Sicherheitsdienst) to the civil authorities' Labor Department in April 1940. Request for Jewish labor had to be submitted not to the Judenrat anymore but to the Department of Jewish Labor in the German Work Department.

In the summer of 1940, however, the Germans set up labor camps in the General Government, and sent more and more Jews to hard work. People ceased to volunteer once bad news spread about the working conditions and the forced recruiting started again. In the spring of 1941 round-ups in the streets became common in the now sealed ghetto and terrorized the population.¹⁷¹ In Vilna (as we have seen), the Germans divided the Jewish population into those “fit” and those deemed “unfit” for work from the beginning and sent them to different ghettos. The need to prove their “usability” was therefore right away an urgent necessity for the surviving ghetto dwellers.

During the ghettoization process, thousands of people lost their source of income, be it their businesses or employment. If they did not possess sufficient personal funds, they now relied on help from the Jewish kehilla. When, for example, all Jewish teachers in public schools were laid off and the Jewish schools closed, a whole profession was unemployed at once. In Warsaw, as in other ghettos, the Judenrat tried to keep up with paying their salaries at least partially, but costs increased for the Jewish council as less money could be raised from donors.¹⁷² For a while, these costs were covered by the kehilla, but German impoundments and “bills” for various “services” to the Jews like building the bridges that connected the separate ghetto areas in Lodz or the ghetto walls in Warsaw, were funded by the Jews, decreasing the collective funds.¹⁷³ Jewish welfare organizations experienced the same. Even before the ghettos were closed, the Jewish population soon sank into poverty.

Two weeks after the sealing of the ghetto in Lodz, Rumkowski sent a list of 14,850 skilled workers to the mayor on 13 May 1940.¹⁷⁴ Shortly after, a commission began to organize the ghetto work force. Following the Eldest Rumkowski's edict "Our only way is work", the Council set up workshops to increase the ghetto's

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 144–145.

¹⁷² A bezukh bay di umgliklike kinder, AŽIH 266 Ring II 107.

¹⁷³ Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 294. Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 58–59. Czerniaków in his diary on 13 April 1940: “We are to pay for the walls.” Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 140.

¹⁷⁴ Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 53, 148.

productivity in such crafts as tailoring, carpentry, marmalade making, upholstery, tannery, shoemaking, metalwork, and many others.¹⁷⁵ Through retraining programs, formerly untrained segments of the population were integrated into the work force giving them an opportunity to earn a little money.

Conditions were poor in these voluntary work places too. Badly lit and aired space and long hours of physically challenging tasks made the work accident-prone and exhausting. While in the beginning work was set up to sustain the ghettos without any cost for the Reich, the Germans soon realized the economic potential that lay in exploiting the ghettos' cheap labor for German industry and war machinery.¹⁷⁶ The wages the German exploitive contracts allowed (a little money and a daily soup eaten at work) barely supported the worker much less a family.¹⁷⁷

While the Jewish population suffered rapid and general pauperization, the ghetto societies exhibited a significant social stratification. Specialization was mostly in place, although many had to “change careers” to the producing sector, because there was no market for their former profession or business. Throughout the ghetto period, a proportion of the former upper classes were able to maintain a certain level of wealth whose public display (and sometimes mere existence) was often morally questioned by other ghetto inhabitants. Also “new professions” like smuggling or being a member of the Jewish Councils or the Jewish Order Services (Jewish Police functioning inside the ghettos) enabled individuals to make considerable profits. While often characterized and criticized as “the new elites”,¹⁷⁸ there are indications that these people benefited from their prewar social standing. Jewish Police members, for example, were mainly recruited from sons of better-off families with some former military personnel (no industrial workers were among the first 1,700 recruits in Warsaw), while the Jewish ghetto administrations employed mainly academics.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Adelson and Lapidés, *Lodz Ghetto*, 1991, 71–81.

¹⁷⁶ Christopher R. Browning, “Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland: 1939–41,” *Central European History* 19, no. 4 (1986): 350, 352.

¹⁷⁷ Löw, *Juden Im Getto Litzmannstadt*, 67–69; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 143–145; Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 302–315.

¹⁷⁸ Philip Friedman, “Social Conflicts in the Ghetto,” in *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust*, ed. Ada June Friedman (New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980), 150.. Lodz Ghetto Chronicle entry for March 1942: Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, 136. Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, xi.

¹⁷⁹ AŻIH Ring I 502 contains a list of the prewar professions of Jewish Order Service recruits from autumn 1940. The overwhelming majority was from higher social strata: administrative personnel (29%), merchants and entrepreneurs (23%), learned professions (17%), technicians (15%), artisans (10%), and students (6%). Cf. Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 193.

The lower classes that did not have the same financial means to survive for a while or the connections to secure employment that could support a family, dwindled into starvation.

But German occupation and exploitation soon initiated change: While some professions were still needed and could earn their livelihood, others became under the circumstances obsolete or unaffordable. Academics could not live off their specialty anymore and had to find employment. If they were not able to get an administrative position with the Jewish Council, they had to find a place in one of the workshops where other people, like trained workers, were better qualified. When the schools closed, teachers had a difficult time earning enough money through private tutoring, because most people were not able to afford this luxury for their children.

The ghetto economies were based on German approval and the requirements of survival and thus favored certain professions over others. German-speakers had better chances at higher positions, because the Occupiers communicated in German only. Who could be in leading and/or economically advantageous positions depended therefore partly on traditional competences and social background, partly on the random requirements of German occupation. The level of wealth reduced generally, due to impoverishment of the whole Jewish community, and social stratification and specialization were in part reshuffled, but they did not cease to exist.

Death

Hunger and exhaustion were soon visible everywhere in the ghettos, and reports abounded of starving children in the streets. As early as August 1940, before the ghetto in Warsaw was closed, Emanuel Ringelblum noted in his diary that many Jews were already weakened, while reports from Lodz Ghetto told of even worse hunger.¹⁸⁰ From March 1942, the Ringelblum Archives contain a heart-wrenching report about the devastating poverty of children:

At the intersection of Solna and Leszno there sits a tiny child. A pair of black eyes set in orbits full of puss, the greenish-yellow skin of the face is rightly stretched over very prominent bones. In the pale mouth black stumps of teeth are showing [...] The head is wrapped in a filthy

¹⁸⁰ Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 43, 45.

rag, has some kind of overcoat — a remnant of better days. I address the child with a few words — it does not seem to understand Polish. In Yiddish the answers make sense though: Age thirteen, lives at Ostrowska Street. I go to Ostrowska...

A low, wooden shack. In a dark, tiny little room there is a large bed at the wall. In it, under a quilt blackish-brown from dirt, on a mattress wet and rotting, six little children. Four of them, hardly reacting to anything around, lay huddled as if half-asleep, unable to move, covered with sores, hair matted. The other two--a boy, thirteen, looks like seven; and a girl, twelve. These are the breadwinners for all siblings.¹⁸¹

The ubiquitous hunger and dirt led to starvation and disease. Death rates peaked by the second ghetto year, especially during the hard winter, and in the mornings, the emaciated corpses of the homeless lay in the streets. Not taking into account the deportations from the ghettos to the annihilation camps and shooting sites, about 10 percent of the victims of the Holocaust perished in the ghettos alone.

C. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that the Germans set up the ghettos in occupied Poland not according to one central plan but rather following different motivations. Some local powers wanted to expel the Jews from the now German territories as soon as possible to separate the Jewish from the German population, others wanted the question of their destination (be it deportation to Madagascar or to a reservation in eastern Europe) solved before moving them to the General Government and thus increasing their already high number there. In this limbo, the ghettos, first intended as provisional concentration points, became long-term institutions. Until the decision to kill each and every Jew came from Berlin, the local authorities decided how to run the ghettos. With their duration came logistical problems of how to guard, govern, and feed the ghetto populations. The Germans implemented a system of exploitive labor to be organized by the Jewish councils in exchange for food rations and the chimera of security. Until the mass deportations from the ghettos to the death camps started,

¹⁸¹ Yad Vashem AR I/10–5–16, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 403.

ghetto dwellers had reason to hope that obedience and work would help them survive the war.

Many Jews perceived the shift from brutal chaos in the first months of occupation to regular work and protection from marauding bands in the ghetto areas as a promise of calmer times ahead. The constraints on material necessities and movement aside, many ghetto residents believed they just had to hold out until the end of the war, and even those who expected the ghettos to be long-term institutions in case of a German victory tried to adjust to the circumstances and set up a life. The Jewish communities made do with what they had and built the civil administration, welfare, legal, and cultural institutions we remember today.

As we have seen, ghetto populations formed societies that functioned like other societies. Analyzing them while assuming the applicability of sociological theories of education is thus justifiable and promises insights into the structures, developments, and conflicts of the ghetto societies.

The ghettos were set up and controlled by Germans. Internally, however, although they were what Hans Günther Adler called “Zwangsgesellschaften” (forced societies),¹⁸² a civil society developed and even flourished despite all obstacles. Startled by the fact that human society did not completely collapse in the ghettos, Samuel Gringauz, a historian and ghetto survivor himself, wrote in 1949:

Theoretically, therefore, such conditions should have brought about the highest measure of animalization and brutalization of human life. Nevertheless, and this is the most amazing and most interesting sociological fact, there was no complete suppression of cultural values in the ghetto. Important group decisions were made not under the pressure of pure self-preservation but because of definite religious, national and political considerations. Individual decisions in not too infrequent instances rose above the pressure of the instinct of self-preservation. The level of social and moral values did indeed decline but never to the extent warranted by such living conditions. A level of

¹⁸² Hans Günther Adler, *Theresienstadt: das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1955).

social and moral values was retained throughout.¹⁸³

Significant differences to non-ghettoized societies existed, of course. The seclusion, exploitation, and terror inflicted constant pressure that lead us to expect consequences for the ghetto societies. The challenges ghetto inmates faced individually and collectively led to specific ways in which they related to each other and to society. What Gringauz called “social and moral values” can be described without employing moral categories as the continuity and perhaps change of social interaction. We can only determine if and how ghetto societies changed if we allow ourselves to see what did not change. Therefore, ghetto populations have to be analyzed in their historical context. Polish Jews were Polish Jews; they were not history-less when they were sent to the ghettos, but brought their national, religious, and political convictions with them. When analyzing ghetto societies we must consider both the influence of the ghetto and the provenance of its inhabitants.

¹⁸³ Gringauz, “The Ghetto as an Experiment of Jewish Social Organization (Three Years of Kovno Ghetto),” 5–6.

CHAPTER 4: REINSTATING NORMALITY — THE STABILIZING FUNCTION OF SCHOOL

A. When Chaos Broke In: The Children’s Plight in the Ghettos

“Who could have ever imagined that I would start this notebook, meant to be a poetry album, under these circumstances,” Miriam Korber, a teenager from Transnistria, wrote in her diary on 4 November 1941:

On Friday people heard that we would be evacuated on Sunday. And so, the fever of evacuation set in. Crying, gloom, packing, boiling, everything in great disarray. We did not realize what the future had in store for us. On Saturday, the shops were closed and so people started to sell their things clandestinely and give them away. Just like scavengers, peasants, city dwellers, neighbors, and strangers pounced upon us and in one morning we emptied the house of the most beautiful things. [...] We had finished packing but we packed as if we were going on a trip. We could not imagine that they could have uprooted us entirely from our homes.¹⁸⁴

In the course of a few days Miriam and her family had to leave everything that was known and dear to them, move to the designated ghetto area along with many other Jewish families, and start a new and miserable life under the German oppressor with no notion of what was awaiting them. Miriam realized that something extraordinary was happening. She decided to begin a diary in order to document the events she experienced and to create a safe private space to confide in, in the midst of the suffering occurring everywhere around her. Time and again diarists reported on the confusion, fear, and grief that beset those forced into the ghettos.¹⁸⁵

Diaries like this give us an impression of how the erection of “Jewish living areas” by the German occupation forces was a violent act in itself that created obstacles in every aspect of life for their constrained inhabitants. Similarly to

¹⁸⁴ Miriam Korber, Diary, in: Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages*, 249–250.

¹⁸⁵ For example Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 46–47; Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*, 31–32.

Transnistria, but two years earlier, shortly after the Polish defeat, the Germans hurried to implement anti-Jewish laws in Poland. In a matter of weeks they ordered the Jewish population to relocate into designated areas, stripped them of most of their possessions and made them pariahs, exposing them to humiliation and exploitation by Germans as well as their non-Jewish Polish neighbors. Often families had to abandon their homes when they moved to the ghettos, relinquishing their belongings and social networks, leaving them completely uprooted. Even for the families who happened to live and work in the designated ghetto areas and could stay in their homes and keep their employment for the time being, the struggles from the beginning of the war through the closing of the ghettos were marked by confusion, uncertainties, and chaos.

Children were hit especially hard by these harsh and restrictive measures. While most adults were still going about their work in and outside the home, children lost the center of their daily life: school. This had been the place where they used to spend most of their time outside of their home; where they learned and where they socialized and created friendships. School was the place that belonged only to them.

B. Childhood versus Ghetto Reality

Adults often commented that the ghetto children “grew up too fast”. Youth, usually a time reserved for learning and play, was not possible in the ghettos. Children were given responsibilities that were thought to be too difficult for them. Many of these responsibilities entailed chores within the household such as standing in line for food, taking care of the cleaning and cooking for the working family, or out of the home by going to work, begging, or even smuggling. The harsh difficulties of ghetto life made many children precocious and mature beyond their age.

Nathan Koniński wrote about this from the standpoint of children in the Warsaw ghetto: “while their motivation for work stemmed from the desire to ease the hard lot of their family, their occupation made them prematurely grown-up and stripped them of any remnant of the grace of childhood.” Many children had not had an easy childhood in economically struggling Poland of the 1920s and 1930s and many had to help out in their families’ businesses or at home. Still, the modern notion of childhood as a halcyon time of play and carelessness served as a romanticized

image of prewar times against the grim reality of the ghetto. Now, even the children's games reflected their harsh life. Koniński was shocked by what he saw.

They eagerly played Germans who were taking Jews for labor and imitated the calls "Jude, komm zu[r] Arbeit" [Jew, come to work]; they impersonated German soldiers beating Jews with exclamations of "Verfluchte[r] Jude" [damn Jew], "Jude raus!" [Jew out], "zurück" [go back] and the like. And they imitated the implorations and lamentations of beggars, such as "warft arup a shtykele broyt" [throw down a piece of bread], and sang with obvious delight their chant "oy di bone".¹⁸⁶

George Eisen, in his study about children's play during the Holocaust, explains the paradox of play and Holocaust. In his view, the innocence of the young and their will to create a sane world, or to cope with a convoluted one, does not detract from the evil. "Rather their play helps to provide a stark contrast and illumination of its depth and complexity. It is an encapsulation of a real-life drama on the cognitive level of a child."¹⁸⁷ Eisen contrasts the notion of childhood with the cruelty of ghetto life by depicting innocent play on the background of Holocaust horrors. The example given by Koniński tells us something more; nothing about the games he describes is innocent or careless. Rather, these games mirrored ghetto life, a reflection of the insane world the children tried to turn into something they could understand by playing and replaying it, taking on different roles. Play was thus not necessarily a way to escape "real-life drama". Rather, it seemed to be a way to incorporate it within the children's realm of reality. In this way, children empowered themselves by creating their own (imaginative) space that allowed them to cope with their experiences, while affirming themselves as children in the "performance" of play.

The opportunities even for games like these were rare for ghetto children. The streets were too dangerous for play, courtyards too dirty, and apartments too crowded.

¹⁸⁶ Koniński, Nathan: *Oblicze dziecka żydowskiego* (The Profile of the Jewish Child), ca. November 1941, AŻIH 593 Ring I 47, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 375–376.

¹⁸⁷ Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust*, 6–7.

Education activists understood this and tried to help children create a space for themselves. Some schools, playrooms and even outside playgrounds were established. Following the progressive pedagogical idea of early training and practice of social responsibility and democracy, it was the children's duty to take care of the facilities under the supervision of teachers.¹⁸⁸ Here, in a protected space that was only dedicated to children and their activities, they could work through or rather play through their experience and reestablish some routine and stability.

Jewish ghetto officials as well as private groups organized schools in the ghetto even before the Germans gave formal permission. Finally, in August 1941, after unflagging efforts by chairman Adam Czerniaków's¹⁸⁹ administration, the Germans permitted Jewish schools in the Warsaw ghetto.¹⁹⁰ Ghetto officials promptly established a public school system for thousands of children to make education accessible for those who could not afford private tutoring. In Lodz and Vilna, as well as other larger ghettos, Jews endeavored mightily to provide schooling for children in an attempt to recreate a "normal" life resembling the pre-war status quo.¹⁹¹ Dawid Sierakowiak, a teenager in the Lodz ghetto, spoke for many young people when schools finally opened again: "So I'll go to school again (of course, only if I don't have some other job to do). There will finally be an end to the anarchy in my daily activities and, I hope, an end to too much philosophizing and depression."¹⁹²

This chapter demonstrates that the reestablishment of schools or the self-organization of education for Jewish youth in the ghettos served to reinstate a degree of normality by reintegrating youth and school. Schools in the ghettos provided a source of stability by reestablishing the young as students who were not done preparing for life, and adults as teachers, authorities, and protectors of children. Drawing upon sources that discuss the significance of school in a child's life within the ghetto, such as student's diaries as well as Jewish Council¹⁹³ and school organization documents, this chapter illustrates that schools in the ghettos had

¹⁸⁸ Małowist, Marian: A Preliminary Study in Teaching People during the War, Yad Vashem PH/13–2–4, English translation in: Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust*, 6–7.

¹⁸⁹ Adam Czerniaków (1880–1942) was the Chairman of the Jewish Council in the Warsaw Ghetto.

¹⁹⁰ Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*.

¹⁹¹ Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 343–358; Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 318–327; Löw, *Juden Im Getto Litzmannstadt*, 194–223.

¹⁹² Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, 83.

¹⁹³ Jewish Councils, often called *Judenräte*, were established by German orders in the fall of 1939 in every Jewish community of a certain size in occupied Poland. They had to carry out German orders and functioned as a Jewish self-administration inside the ghettos.

functions that went beyond teaching certain syllabi or providing a means of mental escape.

C. Education and Society

What do we mean by “education”? And what is its function in modern societies? Education is the process (and the result of this process) that integrates the young generation into the adult generation and enables them to be capable members of society.¹⁹⁴ According to John Dewey (1859–1952), an American psychologist and educational theorist, education in its broad, general sense is the means through which the aims and habits of a group of people lives on from one generation to the next. In its narrow sense, education is the formal process by which a society transmits resources and achievements from one generation to another. This is done by specialized institutions, for example, schools.¹⁹⁵

The education system is thus a tool society uses to pass down knowledge and skills to the next generation. It also serves as a mechanism of passing down social values and structures to the next generation, thereby recreating itself. As such, Talcott Parsons and other education sociologists emphasize (and often criticize) the disciplinary functions of the education system.¹⁹⁶ Education enables the individual not only to maneuver within the society he or she lives in, but to criticize it, too. In this sense, education functions as a vehicle of emancipation and leads the individual beyond the society of which she is a part. Education, in short, is not only a means of challenging societal structures, it also serves to stabilize them. And both of these functions operated in the ghetto.

¹⁹⁴ Manfred Fuhrmann, *Bildung* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002), 37; Martina Löw, *Einführung in Die Soziologie Der Bildung Und Erziehung*, 2nd ed. (Opladen [et al.]: Budrich, 2006), 20–21.

¹⁹⁵ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, Text-Book Series in Education (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 1–9.

¹⁹⁶ Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, New ed, Routledge Sociology Classics (London: Routledge, 1991); Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*, A Free Press Paperback (New York, NY: Free Press, 1968); Talcott Parsons, *The System of Modern Societies*, Foundations of Modern Sociology Series (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971); Niklas Luhmann, *Das Erziehungssystem Der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002); Niklas Luhmann, *Problems of Reflection in the System of Education*, European Studies in Education, Europäische Studien Zur Erziehung Und Bildung = Etudes Européennes En Science de L'éducation, v. 13 (Münster ; New York, NY: Waxmann, 2000); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Pierre Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Sage Studies in Social and Educational Change ; v. 5 (London ; Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1977); Michel Foucault, “Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,” 2nd Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

Schooling takes time. In Poland in the 1930s, children between at least the ages of six to about fourteen attended school regularly. Children went to school six days a week, about half the day; children who attended religious afternoon schools had longer hours. Schooling also requires space. In modern western societies school takes place in a designated location with a specifically designed purpose. There is thus a specific time in life for school (youth) and a specific place for children (school).

According to the pedagogue Martin Kohli, modern European societies developed an “institutionalization of the life course”. The western world adopted a life cycle norm of a phase for preparation, a phase for productive activity, and a phase of rest, thanks to pensions. Childhood/youth, adult life and seniority are commensurate to these phases. The institutionalization of life is centralized around work. Children and youth are in the preparation phase, collectively organized by the education system.¹⁹⁷ Thus, age becomes a structuring category and life and educational decisions are made according to age. This temporalization of life as a social construction is effective in structuring social reality. It influences individual biographical orientation as well as societal patterns.

While the idea of youth as a preparation stage reserved for education became more common during the 18th and early 19th centuries, the term also changed from descriptive to normative. Children were not only *usually* in school, they were *supposed* to be in school. This new norm entered into the broader Polish society in the 1920s. In Poland, school had been mandatory since 1919.¹⁹⁸ By 1939, it was generally understood that children would attend at least primary school (ages six to thirteen). Many of the Jewish children went on to attend religious, academic, or vocational high schools.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Martin Kohli, “Die Institutionalisierung Des Lebenslaufs: Historische Befunde Und Theoretische Argumente,” *Kölner Zeitschrift Für Soziologie Und Sozialpsychologie* 37 (1985): 3.

¹⁹⁸ Decree from 7 February 1919, in: Mieczysław Pęcherski and Maciej Świątek, *Organizacja Oświaty W Polsce W Latach 1917–1969; Podstawowe Akty Prawne*, Wyd. 1 (Warszawa, 1972), 118–120.

¹⁹⁹ Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, “Tentative List of Jewish Educational Institutions in Axis-Occupied Countries,” 72.

D. Schools in the Ghettos

Schools were closed during the German attack on Poland. While many Polish primary schools reopened shortly thereafter, the Germans prohibited most higher education for Polish citizens. With the implementation of anti-Jewish laws, the German occupiers also banned Jewish schools from reopening. The German occupation of Poland and subsequent ghettoization of the country's Jewish population resulted in the suspension of the status of the school as a mediator of knowledge and values in the Jewish community. The stabilizing functions of the school as an institution that defines youth as a specific phase in life and one that provides a special secure space for children in society was also interrupted. The usual stratification of society by age groups with their respective tasks and duties that was perceived as "normal" before the war, especially childhood and youth as the time for play and school, was destroyed by the ghettoization of Poland's Jewish population. Ghettoization thus caused the collapse of a core institution that regulated and defined Jewish social life and produced a clash between the notion of childhood and ghetto reality.

Many people, including Koniński reported that children were scared, disoriented and in a bad mental state in general. They attributed the youngsters' psychological condition to the war and to the cessation of schooling.

As soon as the war started, Jewish children in Warsaw lost their schools. And although some schools opened again immediately after armistice, they were ordered to close down. Thus, the multitude of many thousands of children could neither get tuition, nor obtain indispensable care and educational direction. Unavailability of schooling could not only result in the worst of consequences for those children. Left to the treacherous influences of [the] street, they could not but succumb to demoralization and degeneration. Attention must be drawn to the fact that parents, living in abnormal war circumstances, preoccupied and impatient, more often than not, could not find time for taking care of their child, paying proper attention to its needs, or seeing to its education and schooling. Because of this a catastrophe threatened the Jewish child. It was bound to grow beyond

control and lead to producing a young generation brought up in shameful neglect and deformation.²⁰⁰

Koniński considered the absence of school in children's lives to be abnormal and indeed harmful. In his view, schooling was among the most important aspects of normal life that children growing up in the ghettos lacked. He, among others, believed that the children's emotional and mental problems were triggered by their lack of schooling. The longer a child spent in such circumstances, the poorer his mental development became. The situation was worse for refugee children who, for example had to move into the Warsaw ghetto from smaller towns. They had left their homes in the fall of 1939 and had, at the time of Koniński's report in the late fall of 1941, already spent two years in the "points" (shelters for refugees) in dire poverty and without school. "Two years of abnormal existence worked so deep a change in them that they turned into juvenile beggars and thieves," Koniński observed. "They became bad, wicked, selfish and unfriendly beings. [...] These circumstances made the children suspicious and distrustful, favoring the growth of criminal instincts."²⁰¹

Two years comprised a substantial period in a child's life. For children aged six to nine it accounted for at least half of their primary school education. Parents had grown concerned about their children's school education in late 1939 when, depending on the location, it had been unsteady for months. This problem was not resolved for most children a year later. In a report about educational issues in the Warsaw ghetto in December 1940 for the underground Ringelblum Archive the engineer I. Einhorn worried:

One of the biggest discomforts of our life in Warsaw [ghetto] is the lack of education for Jewish children. For 1.5 years our children have been deprived of a school environment and a source of knowledge. The Council of Elders of the Jewish District — especially since we have now adjusted to the life in the ghetto — should undertake the task of restoring education and present it to the German administration. One can expect that since the Jewish district is closed

²⁰⁰ Koniński: *Oblicze dziecka żydowskiego*, AŻIH 593 Ring I 47, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 372.

²⁰¹ Koniński: *Oblicze dziecka żydowskiego*, AŻIH 593 Ring I 47, English translation in: *Ibid.*, 375–376.

and isolated, the Germans will grant more autonomy in terms of education to the Council of Elders (as was the case in Lodz) which will manage this issue according to our cultural and educational needs.²⁰²

E. Focus on Work: Factory Schools

Ghettoization brought drastic changes in the way people earned their living and how they saw the prospects for their future. As the few valuables that people managed to smuggle into the ghetto would not last long, nothing was left but to try to produce something to sell in exchange for food and other necessities. While exploitation of the Jews was not the main goal, it was certainly a major byproduct of the Nazi ghettoization policy. The Jewish Councils soon understood, as evidenced by the Elder of the Jews in Lodz, Chaim Rumkowski, who promoted the ghetto motto “Our only way is work”, and tried to convince the Germans of the productivity of the Jewish community. “Whenever they say, ‘Litzmannstadt Ghetto’, I answer them, ‘Das ist kein Ghetto sondern eine Arbeitsstadt’ [This is not a ghetto but a worktown].”²⁰³ Other Jewish Councils discovered, too, that the best, if not the only way to keep as many people as possible alive was to be productive and thus economically advantageous for the Germans.²⁰⁴

The Jewish Councils in the ghettos of Warsaw, Lodz, and Vilnius set up workshops, made production contracts with the Wehrmacht and other German organizations, offered the Jew’s labor to German companies, and tried to get as many people into the workforce as possible.²⁰⁵ The Jewish Council in Vilna was so concerned about this ideology of “Work to Live” that they established a Labor Police to collaborate with the Labor Department to enforce the obligation to work even in

²⁰² I. Einhorn: O nauczaniu prywatnym, doksztalującym i pozaszkolnym w obszarze żydowskim w Warszawie (About private, vocational, and extra-curricular education in the Jewish district in Warsaw), 10 December 1940, AŻIH 667 Ring I 70.

²⁰³ Speech by Chaim Rumkowski, 15 May 1941, in: Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, eds., *Lodz Ghetto: Inside a Community Under Siege* (New York, NY: Viking, 1989), 146.

²⁰⁴ *Gazeta Żydowska*, 61, July 21, 1941: “The Jewish quarter of Warsaw lacks raw materials, sufficient capital, and significant industry. The only means at its disposal is labor. If labor is properly exploited, it can serve as the sole means of export capable of balancing import, at least to some degree. Feeding the Jewish public consumes an average of 12,600,000 zlotys per month. How can the quarter, which, as we know, has no sources of capital, get its hands on this sum? Only by exporting labor.” English translation in: Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943*, 74.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 72–77.

places where the working conditions were particularly bad.²⁰⁶ In Lodz, all craftsmen, artisans, and people in technical professions had to register and work in one of the ghetto workshops. People without training in practical skills, like academics, could turn to the *Umschichtungsabteilung* (Regrouping Department) for re-training. The entry in the Lodz Ghetto Chronicle from 27 to 31 May 1941 reads:

Professional Qualification: The action of professional qualification is being extended. Its result is the target-oriented re-training of large proportions of the middle-aged population. With this action it is intended to make all people who are able to work to useful members of the ghetto society.²⁰⁷

Re-training was not solely personal matter; it was a societal issue. The Jewish administration set up welfare institutions and some organizations tried to alleviate the worst poverty, but the council's goal was to enable as many people as possible provide for themselves.²⁰⁸ In order not to have too many "unproductive elements" in the ghetto, the council undertook extensive efforts to train young people in the professions that were needed by the ghetto economy. The Lodz ghetto chronicle summarized a speech by Rumkowski in February 1941: "The program for the future plans the employment of a larger number of young people in the workshops and companies, as well as the professional training of those workers, so they would become useful and competent experts."²⁰⁹

The educational system reacted quickly to these new circumstances. A number of vocational schools were established that offered training in different professions and agriculture.²¹⁰ Although general schools still had the largest student populations, the number of young people in professional training was increasing. The School Department of the Jewish Council in Lodz was renamed the Regrouping

²⁰⁶ Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 297.

²⁰⁷ Sascha Feuchert, Erwin Leibfried, and Jörg Riecke, eds., *Die Chronik Des Gettos Lodz/Litzmannstadt*, vol. 1941, Schriftenreihe Zur Lodzter Getto-Chronik (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 154.

²⁰⁸ Helena Smolenska, *Szkolnictwo Żydowskie W Łodzi W Czasie Okupacji Niemieckiej W Latach 1939–1945 (Jewish Education in Lodz during the German Occupation, 1939–1945)* (Łódź, 1945). Yad Vashem O.6_243, 190.

²⁰⁹ Feuchert, Leibfried, and Riecke, *Die Chronik Des Gettos Lodz/Litzmannstadt*, 2007, 1941:60.

²¹⁰ Protokoł z posiedzenia Umschichtungs-Kommission z przedstawicielami poszczególnych wydziałów Resortu-Pracy, AŻIH Getto Litzmannstadt 205_408. For Warsaw: AŻIH Judenraty 221_11.

Department in September 1942, after the deportations had begun.²¹¹ This was a response to German interference with the inner ghetto affairs and insistence upon greater productivity. At the same time the leadership of this new department remained the same and continued their efforts to provide schooling for children and youth, even though it was vocational rather than general education. This reflects a shift in priorities from preparing the children for an uncertain future to giving them immediately useful skills and thus a better chance to find a position in the ghetto industry.

Students who took vocational courses were officially employees of the workshops and had to work for them. Only two hours a day were set aside for classes. The Regrouping Department discussed which subjects should be taught. They debated whether students should also receive some theoretical or even general education, and if so, to what degree. They decided to limit the general education because the students involved all already had their general school qualifications,²¹² although the questionable age of many of the students in the factory clearly questioned their rationale. Some accounts mentioned children aged nine or even younger worked in the workshops.²¹³ They certainly had not finished primary school education.

Some members of the Regrouping Department underlined the need for theoretical education and urged that special attention be given to the curriculum. But, a strong faction held against that line, arguing that the curriculum should be adjusted to the needs of the workshops. They worried that “there will be a visible lack of workforce.”²¹⁴ In fact, an anonymous letter writer from Lodz ghetto characterized the quality of the factory school education as insufficient to teach the children the trade they were working in, let alone general subjects:

The children do not go to school where they could acquire the basics in different subjects. And the new schools — the factories — are not even sufficient to make trained workers out of them. Our children learn the alphabet at work. Already from age nine there are almost all

²¹¹ Smolenska, *Szkolnictwo Żydowskie W Łodzi*, 168–167.

²¹² Protokoł, AŻIH Getto Litzmannstadt 205_408, 17.

²¹³ Janusz Gumkowski, ed., *Briefe Aus Litzmannstadt*, trans. Peter Lachmann (Köln: Middelhaue, 1967), 72.

²¹⁴ Protokoł, AŻIH Getto Litzmannstadt 205_408, 17.

assigned to work resorts and eagerly learn the alphabet there. The rabbi has been replaced by the instructor, and the prize with which the new rabbi attracts the lazy students is: soup and bread.²¹⁵

Elias Tabaksblat, initially director of the School Department²¹⁶ and, later, of the Regrouping Department, thought that arithmetic, business correspondence and Yiddish, taught by trained teachers and not master craftsmen, should be mandatory. He decided that although the children had to be integrated into the work force, the purpose of the factory schools should be broadened to provide children with some general education for their future. While arithmetic and training of writing business correspondence were commonly added to vocational training, the decision to teach Yiddish (and not German or Polish) made a statement about the ideological orientation of the program. The general subjects had to be taught without the Germans' knowledge as they had given their consent only for vocational training. Although it was contested by some department members, this decision to teach other subjects thus demonstrates the commitment to provide at least some education for the child workers, as limited as it might have been.²¹⁷

F. No Time to Lose: Urgency to Learn

In letters to the School Department of Lodz ghetto teenagers who worked in the factories expressed their ardent wish to learn. They detailed their previous academic accomplishments and interests and asked to be transferred to a vocational school program or at least a more interesting workplace so that they could learn a trade or a decent profession, and would not waste their time on boring assembly line work. They argued that their chances of finding employment after the war diminished if they did not finish their education now, and that the ghetto economy could make better use of them if they were employed in work appropriate to their talents. Most of these letters were accompanied by a handwritten note from ghetto officials recommending that the request be accepted.²¹⁸ As one Mr. Karo from the Regrouping

²¹⁵ Gumkowski, *Briefe Aus Litzmannstadt*, 72.

²¹⁶ Elias Tabaksblat. *Dzieje szkolnictwa żydowskiego w Łodzi pod okupacją niemiecką*. 8. IX 1939–28.VIII.1944 (History of Jewish education in Lodz under German occupation. 8 September 1939–28 August 1944), AŻIH Relacje 301_2847.

²¹⁷ Protokoł, AŻIH Getto Litzmannstadt 205_408, 17.

²¹⁸ Letters to the Regrouping Department from April to August 1942, USHMM RG–15.083M_1728.

Department said in a meeting: “The leading idea of the whole operation and Umschichtung was the question of teaching professions to the teenagers and preparing them for life.”²¹⁹ Tragically, despite anyone’s efforts, most students did not live long enough to use what they had learned in these courses.

The entries of teenage diarist Dawid Sierakowiak express the great wish to pursue his education in the ghetto. Time and again he wrote about the rigorous daily study program he laid on himself. When he was offered another tutoring job, Dawid weighed his priorities. Of course, he needed the money, but the job would also pull him away from his other commitments. “I just hope that I will be able to manage my entire schedule: Marysin, tutoring, organization work, political theory, language, books.”²²⁰ This urgency reflects the feeling of many Jewish youths. Deported to ghettos, they were deprived of institutionalized schooling for an extended period. To make up for the lost time and intensity compared with pre-war schooling, he organized an intellectual life for himself with reading assignments and discussion groups.

Dawid did not rely on others to help him with his education. He turned to organizing his own intellectual progress with even greater rigor. In a way, he created school, the institution he was missing, for himself. He developed his own curriculum, and assigned himself readings, essays, and newspaper projects and he completed these tasks. He even assessed his own work and noted whether he was satisfied with his achievements. He pushed himself more and more to make up for lost time. This sense of the urgency of their situation and their need to acquire an education as rapidly as possible emerges from the diaries of other teenagers, too. Yitskhak Rudashevski,²²¹ Janina Bauman,²²² Mary Berg,²²³ and Tamara Lazerson²²⁴ are only a few examples of teenagers who were academically very active. They took all the classes they could when they were offered, wrote articles for newspapers and participated in discussion groups. Yitskhak even undertook sociological studies to leave a historical record of specific aspects of ghetto life.

²¹⁹ Protokoł, AŻIH Getto Litzmannstadt 205_408, 17.

²²⁰ Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, 92.

²²¹ Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*.

²²² Bauman, *Winter in the Morning*.

²²³ Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*.

²²⁴ Tamar Lazerson-Rostovski, *Tamaros Dienorastis* (Vilnius: VAGA, 1997). Excerpts in English are published in: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Hidden History of the Kovno Ghetto*.

G. A Place to go to: School as an Institution for Children

An anonymous girl aged about thirteen kept a diary while she was incarcerated in Lodz ghetto. The abnormal living conditions she endured, the hunger, the absence of school and parental attention, and the emotional effects these caused, prompted her to wish for a person to whom to turn. In March 1942 she wrote:

Today I had a fight with my father. I swore at him, even cursed him. It happened because yesterday I weighed twenty decagrams of zacierki [roux] and then sneaked a spoonful. [...] My father started yelling at me and he was right. But since the chairman gave out these zacierki to be cooked, why can't I have some? I became very upset and cursed my father. What have I done? I regret it so much, but it can't be undone. My father is not going to forgive me. How will I ever look him in the eyes? He stood by the window and cried like a baby. Not even a stranger has ever insulted him before. The whole family witnessed this incident. I went to bed as soon as possible, without dinner. I thought I would die of hunger, because we have our meal only in the evening. I fell asleep and woke up at twelve. My mom was still working at the sewing machine. I couldn't stand the hunger, so I got up and took a piece of meal. We would be a happy family, if I didn't fight with everybody. All the fights are started by me. I must be manipulated by some evil force. I would like to be different, but I don't have a strong enough will. There is nobody I can talk to. Why isn't there anybody who would guide me, why can't anybody teach me?²²⁵

Adolescents in ordinary circumstances have emotional outbursts; they are an age-appropriate behavior. This situation was not normal, however. The girl was so hungry that she could not restrain herself. Her father, equally hungry, could not support her in her distress. The girl did not link her terrible hunger and her emotional instability. She yearned for someone to guide and teach her, and noted that there was no one. From what we can deduce from this anonymous girl's diary, she did not go to

²²⁵ Anonymous Girl: Diary, in: Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages*, 238.

work or to school. The family seemed to have been too poor to afford any schooling or tutoring. And despite the best efforts of the Jewish ghetto administration, there were not enough free places in school for every child. The girl thus spent most of her time alone at home, hungry, worried, and bored.

Trapped between the desperate desire to satisfy her hunger and the obligation to obey the family's food rationing rules, the girl longed for guidance. Her diary entry suggests that she thought that some attention to her and her problems would have helped with her coping and emotional development. She was longing for a space that was dedicated to her needs and someone who would listen to her and teach her, a responsibility her parents were unavailable to assume, as they worked long tiring hours in the workshops and were overwhelmed with their daily burden to provide physical necessities.

In his proposal for a school system in Warsaw, Einhorn had lamented "for 1.5 years our children have been deprived of a school environment and a source of knowledge,"²²⁶ thus pointing to school as a place and not just an event. When children were asked to write about their school, their texts echoed Einhorn's conception. Hanka Zaksenhaus wrote:

Our School

When I came to school for the first time, it did not yet look as it does now. In our school are three classrooms. At first, the walls were not decorated with drawings and cutouts. There were no pots with flowers in the windows. But now there are a lot of these things, all thanks to our teacher who takes such good care of us and looks to everything. Our teacher wants us to be polite, obedient, clean and well-behaved, so all will go well with us and our teacher will be satisfied that her work has not been in vain. Although, we are not always obedient and she has to be angry with us sometimes. We like school very much and attend it gladly. We play, we sing. She reads us various Yiddish magazines and time passes quickly.²²⁷

²²⁶ Einhorn: O nauczaniu prywatnym, doksztalującym i pozaskolnym w obszarze żydowskim w Warszawie, AŻIH 667 Ring I 70.

²²⁷ Zaksenhaus, Hanka: Nasza Szkoła, AŻIH 680 Ring I 350, printed in: Sakowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, 114.

Hanka's description shows the importance of school not only as a place for learning, but also as a foundational structure in the child's life. She also emphasizes the significance of a space just for children, which is set up in a way that marks it as meant for them alone. For the child-author of the text, the drawings and cut-outs (probably their own creations) and that the classroom was decorated with flowers were important. She appreciated deeply the teacher's work to create this space.

The handwriting and style point to a quite young child, probably in the first few years of primary school. Still, the content that was taught, in the eyes of the child, did not seem to follow a certain curriculum. "We play and we sing. The teacher reads us various Yiddish magazines and the time passes quickly." Although by traditional standards singing, playing, and listening to stories are not considered sufficiently educational, the child enjoys these activities and experiences school as a positive place where he or she goes willingly and, presumably, regularly. The teacher thus has an opportunity to influence the children pedagogically and train them to be "polite, obedient, clean, and well-bred" and they try to please her, thus submitting themselves to the hierarchy of school as a societal institution. Once the space for the children was created in the ghetto and they were placed in a school-like environment, however rudimentary, they willingly accepted the authority of the teacher. They returned to their role as being children and happily left responsibility to the adults. Although the situation in the ghetto deteriorated, school remained a friendly and stable place, impervious to the extraneous chaos. Many teachers confirmed the positive impact education made on their students, and child survivors recalled the hours of happiness and relief school offered them.²²⁸

Sometimes ideas about the positive impact of education on the ghetto children met challenges that could not be overcome by idealism. The childcare organization Centos²²⁹ ran soup kitchens for children in the Warsaw ghetto. The lack of public schools prompted them to turn these kitchens into "playrooms" that served educational purposes. The work reports teachers communicated to the organization's

²²⁸ For example a teacher AŽIH 228 Ring II 110, Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 476; Genia Silkes, "Der Yidishe Lerer in Varshever Geto," in *Lerer Yizkor Bukh. Di Umgekumene Lerer Fun Tsysho Shuln in Poyln*, ed. Chaim Solomon Kazdan (New York, NY: Komitet tsu fareybikn dem ondenk fun di umgekumene lerer fun di Tsysho shuln in Poyln, 1953), 559–566. and the student Nathan Friedman (with Anna Rosa Friedman): Natek, *Child of the Holocaust*, USHMM RG–02.091, 17–19.

²²⁹ Centrala Opieki nad Sierotami (Federation of Associations for the Care of Orphans).

central office reflect professional and personal resignation. As the pedagogue E. Justmanówna wrote in December 1941:

A good educator should know how to subordinate the child-material [sic] to his program; and therefore, the teacher was instructed: you have a group of children, teach them and make them play. Arouse their interest and take care of them. Create a bright playroom for them, a place that, at least for a few hours a day, will tear them away from the street, from beggary [sic] and stealing; that will pull them out of overcrowded rooms, of screams and quarrels of ever yelling, starving children.

The goal has not been achieved. The playroom has not turned into what it was meant to become. Life has played a trick on the experienced pedagogues and educators; that which appeared to be simple, proved unattainable. New, specific conditions of war in which the child found himself, had such effect on his mind and soul, that his interests and needs went in a direction different from what the educators desired.²³⁰

Educators in the refugee shelters and other Centos-run facilities came to the conclusion that there was no way of educating children before their most basic needs were fulfilled. First and foremost they tried to provide food, shelter, and clothing. An outline of pedagogical activity in some children's kitchens depicts this shift of expectation and focus: The first priority was "to succeed pedagogically and influence children", but that important task was contextualized: "Being concerned, in the first place, with the children's health, we try to develop in them, primarily, the perception for hygiene and for aesthetics." The first intellectual goal is point seven on the outline and mapped out very tentatively: "As much as circumstances permit, we try to advance the intellectual development of the child." The only other intellectual goal is

²³⁰ A Report on Work in a Children's Playroom, Bagno 1, December 1941, AŻIH 228 Ring II 110, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 476.

the next and last, and that is to implant a love for the Yiddish language and culture in the children.²³¹

A Yiddishist organization, Centos's ideological goal was important. That it formed the last point makes it seem more like an obligatory act or an echo of former times than a currently held credo. In general, the Centos playroom reports tell a sad story: Teachers resigned after a few months explaining that schooling was impossible, because the children were so hungry and worn down that they were not able to concentrate on intellectual pursuits. Even some children gave up on all activities except organizing food.

Everything else which does not result in bread cannot arouse his interest. He comes to the playroom for bread, then he must go and earn his and his family's supper. What is normally of natural interest to a child and of great biological significance – attraction to games – almost does not exist in a child of the shelter. A remark of an eight-year-old boy to his older brother who is playing in the playroom is characteristic: “Wi hostu a kop cu azelche nariszkajten” (How you keep your mind on such nonsense?). He said this, staring at his brother with irony and contempt. Such is the attitude of the majority of our children. If they play, they do it to please the teacher, not themselves.²³²

For some children, the kitchens were not solely the place where they got their much needed soup; they were also where the children played, sang, heard stories, and learned. Providing the youngsters with a school-like environment and with soup was also seen as a protection for the children who otherwise would have been exposed to the harmful influence of the ghetto streets. In contrast to the children's impoverished homes where they got little attention, the streets with their attendant dangers, and the workshops where everything (even in programs designed for children) was directed towards production, schools were clearly children's spaces and were meant to serve children in their development. And although the intellectual content taught in the

²³¹ An Outline of Pedagogical Activity in the Alimentation Points on Karmelicka St. 29, Nowolipki St. 39, and Krochmalna St. 96, Yad Vashem PH/5-4-3, English translation in: *Ibid.*, 474.

²³² Report on Work in a Children's Playroom, English translation in: *Ibid.*, 476-477.

kitchens might not have been satisfying to many teachers, and not all children could participate or appreciate lessons and games, these soup kitchens and schools played an important role for the young people who attended.

Dora Błaszka, a Warsaw ghetto child, wrote of the change over time in the children's perception from soup kitchen to school:

Then [...]

We stayed all in one room. We would come only to have a meal. We would have our meals and [immediately] would go back home. We did not have a school [...] no one checked cleanliness and everyone was [...] just as kids are, without any control. In the room there were blank walls, and kids would leave one room and enter another whenever they wanted.

Now

Today we were divided in groups. Every day, children are to stay in their assigned rooms. We all come punctually and we get our dinner on time. The teacher conducts conversations with us and reads different things and stories from Jewish literature to us. Today everyone knows that we come here not only for food, but also to spend time merrily. We learn songs and our teacher taught us neatness. We, the kids, think that it's not a kitchen, but a school.²³³

In the second part of her essay (»Now«) Dora summarized the meaning these educational activities, meager as they were, had on her and the other children: "Today everyone knows that we come here not only for food, but also to spend time merrily," and described the transformation the room underwent by dedicating it to children: "We, the kids, think that it's not a kitchen, but a school." In the end, it was the children who claimed and defined the space.

Ghetto conditions reduced and diminished everyone's life. Youngsters were affected in specific ways that undermined the domain of childhood. When schools or similar facilities, such as the soup kitchens or playrooms, were established children finally had a place to go that helped them not only to get a daily meal, but also

²³³ Dora Błaszka, AŻIH 674 Ring I 332, in: Sakowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, 90.

provided them with a routine and quite simply a place to stay during the day. With the ghetto environment hostile to the needs of children, many young people perceived schools as reliable places that they could turn into their own space, in a world where nothing else was designed for or even tolerable for them.

H. Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how school served the function of reinstating normality for children in Jewish ghettos in Nazi-occupied eastern Europe by bringing school back into the children's lives. The idea of temporalization of life around productivity led to a notion of childhood that, on the one hand, children are expected to pursue their education and, on the other, that they are exempt from gainful labor and allowed to play. The concepts of youth and education are therefore connected in the spheres of both time and space. Youth is the time that is supposed to be spent in school, and school is the space that is distinct to children.

Ghettoization challenged these norms. When the Germans ordered schools to close, Jewish pedagogues and administrative officials feared severe social and psychological problems for the children. They worried about the deleterious effects of the dire ghetto circumstances and the lack of formalized education. Children tried to come to terms with that reality by re-playing their experiences, but pedagogues in the ghettos also saw their despair and rushed to create space dedicated solely to children.

Even as the focus shifted towards economic productivity to ensure communal survival, pedagogues and other ghetto officials tried to maintain school as part of the children's lives. Although one might expect that the ghetto authorities would have subordinated the education system to productivity, they did not do so entirely. The idea of the connection between youth and education was still so influential that the factories were partly turned into schools.

Young people's urgency to learn was taken seriously by the Jewish ghetto authorities. From correspondence between ghetto authorities and youngsters in Lodz it seems as if the authorities sincerely tried to offer as many children as possible an education within the context of a work place that was necessary for survival. This did not afford sufficient solace to many young people who became increasingly concerned that they were not going to school. Several sources spoke of the time pressure teenagers felt regarding their education. When they were not able to attend

organized classes, young people sometimes turned to creating the institution they lacked.

Texts ghetto children wrote about their formal and informal educational experiences reveal that school as an institution was indeed significant to them. While the lessons of course were considered important, the youngsters also appreciated the space school provided for children. In an environment so unfavorable to children schools and playrooms were gratefully received as safe havens. Here, for a few hours, they could be children and did not have to perform tasks beyond their age. School thus went beyond teaching curricula and served as a stability mechanism — reestablishing the rights of childhood for the young and for adults as teachers, providers, and protectors. This reintegration of youth and education in a temporal and spatial way provided stability by recreating accustomed life patterns and therefore a sense of normality in abnormal circumstances. We learn from the sources presented in this chapter that as much as school is important for the knowledge that is imparted there, it is important as a structure, especially in surroundings where other structures are failing.

CHAPTER 5: JEWISH INTEGRATION — EDUCATION AGAINST ASSIMILATION²³⁴

A. Introduction

When we were in the ghetto, my mother told me a story: When she was a child, she went to a public school in the Polish eastern borderlands. She was very popular among the other girls, so when it was time for the yearly Christmas pageant, they chose her to play Mary. My mother told me that she was very happy about it, because this role was considered an honor. She wanted to accept it but was worried about what her parents would say if she participated. She never had to find out. The Polish teacher announced it would be inappropriate for a Jewish girl to play Mary and someone else was chosen.

When a child survivor told this story at a conference, everyone in the room laughed at this obvious joke. How ridiculous that the ignorant Polish teacher let the Jewish mother of Jesus not be mimed by a Jewish girl. In the ongoing conversation at the conference, this story served as an illustration of antisemitism in inter-war Poland. The function of this story in the communicative context of a Holocaust conference in the 2013 United States is palpable, but it reveals more layers when we follow the storyline back in time.

A Christmas pageant is not the historically correct imitation of an event in the Middle East 2000 years ago, it is not even a religious act; it is popular culture. In an area where nationality was mostly defined by religious belonging — Ukrainians were mostly Uniates (Greek Catholic), Belarusians Orthodox, Jews Jewish (Mosaic), and Poles Roman Catholic — participation in a Catholic pop-culture event marked national as much as religious belonging.²³⁵ When this scene occurred, Poland was a

²³⁴ Assimilation, in this chapter, is a term used by the authors of the sources, participants in the discourse on the issue of Jewish belonging in the ghettos. It is not an analytical term chosen by me. The term does not necessarily describe a reality but rather a perceived threat.

²³⁵ A newer quantitative analysis of the Polish census data from 1921 suggests that religious affiliation and ethnic belonging as well as national consciousness were indeed closely related. Jeffrey S. Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg, “Between State Loyalty and National Identity: Electoral Behaviour in Interwar Poland,” in *Jews and Their Neighbours in Eastern Europe since 1750*,

young national state with a considerable proportion of non-ethnically-Polish citizens. As an area with mostly non-Polish citizens, the eastern borderlands, especially, were a battlefield for the definitions of nation and belonging. Although the teacher was inconsiderate to the feelings of her little student, we have to understand her reaction in this context.

But the girl did not only experience the teacher's disapproval. Her first worry was what her parents would say if she participated in this Catholic play. Attending a Polish school, the girl tried to blend in with the Polishness by participating in something that was important to this group and a collective expression of belonging. Her classmates did not see a problem — they were children after all —, but the girl apparently already had a feeling that something about her desire to partake was not quite right. She seemed to have been aware of a problem with her loyalty to Jewishness. She attempted to do both: to blend in and to please her parents by marking her Otherness.

The story showcases the situation of many Jewish children, especially girls, in interwar Poland. While girls from Orthodox households did not participate in the same time-consuming religious education boys received, the out-of-house education of girls had become more common in the late 19th and early 20th century. First, families sent their girls to school to prepare them to contribute to the family income. Later, they were sent to school because the Polish government made primary school education mandatory for all children in 1919. Lacking alternatives in terms of appropriate schools and finances, most orthodox parents sent their daughters to Polish public schools. This put the girls, more than their brothers, in the situation to live in both worlds. The girls learned Polish and received a Polish education. At home they spoke Yiddish and were expected to comply with traditional gender roles.

Middle class Jewish women with Polish education became links between the Yiddish world of their families and the Polish world. They were the ones who took care of errands outside of the Jewish community and established relationships with their Polish neighbors. Some women who had received a Polish education decided to turn their backs on their upbringing and strive for integration into Polish society that

vol. 24, Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry (Oxford; Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011), 171–85.

offered opportunities beyond traditional roles as wives and mothers at home. Jewish women in general have therefore often been interpreted as agents of assimilation.²³⁶

As a grown-up in the ghetto, the mother told this story to her daughter perhaps for a slightly different reason. Faced with irrevocable proof that Jews were seen as outcasts of society and scant support from their Polish fellow-countrymen against German measures, the mother told a story of how Jews had been targets of rejection for a long time. The morale of this story in the ghetto was to not to expect solidarity or understanding from Poles. Instead, the story suggested concentrating all desires of belonging on the Jewish community. In the ghetto, her daughter had not opportunity to socialize with Poles, but apparently the mother held this conviction important enough to relate it to her daughter. Therefore, the story reads as a warning against assimilation.

Indeed, the Jewish children who had been attending Polish schools before the war (about 60 percent, see Chapter 2), who had been struggling to fit in with their Polish classmates, were now in the ghettos faced with the opposite problem. Here they suddenly had to learn how to be “Jewish” and get rid of their “Polish” markers. Scene of these adjustment problems were again the schools where teachers, following orders of the Jewish leaders or their school organizations’ ideology, asked the formerly Polish students to speak only Yiddish, follow a Jewish national study program, and integrate into the unfamiliar school culture.

Conflicts about national, cultural, religious, and social belonging were by no means limited to the youth and their educators. Teachers, political activists, and Jewish leadership discussed feverishly what it meant exactly to be Jewish, to be Jewish in the ghetto, and to be Jewish in a global and historical context. These questions had already been fundamental in the prewar period, now they had also become urgent. With the school system as the traditional go-to institution for ideological quarrels, the ghetto dwellers took to discussing these questions in the context of education.

School as the institution that prepares the next generation for life in an imagined better society was understood as the ideal place to begin political and cultural changes. Therefore, ideological leaders deemed it crucial to deal with questions of ideological foundation and curriculum development of schools in spite

²³⁶ Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History* (Seattle, WA ; London: University of Washington Press, 1995), 60, 71.

— or because of — the hopeless ghetto situation. While it was important to build a Jewish social and political life in the ghettos, educators and political activists also saw the exigency to show the future generation their place in the world as Jews.

This chapter addresses the inner-Jewish conflicts about questions of belonging during the ghetto period as they were fought within the school system. In the following, we will explore how ideologists and teachers tried to regulate the future ghetto generation's feelings and attitudes toward Judaism and Jews. As shown in the second chapter about Jewish schools in Poland before the war, the Jewish community in pre-war Poland was separated on a number of core issues. Many of them can be condensed to the question of who can be considered a Jew in Poland, namely how a Jew in Poland relates to Polish, Jewish, and other citizens religiously, politically, and nationally.

With the German occupation of Poland in September 1939 these questions shifted. Once the German rule was firmly established, Poland was divided into three parts. The west was incorporated into the Reich, the east was given to the Soviets (until the German attack in June 1941), and the middle as the General Government subordinated to the Reich. With this division, it became apparent that independent Poland had once more lost its place on the European map. Jews posed questions of belonging anew, and with increasing German persecution ever more urgently as the Germans were now their rulers and they were removed from Polish society. As a result, educators and school officials intensified their efforts to combat assimilationist tendencies among their students.

B. Integration Difficulties

A while after the classes for the ghetto youth had been established, the organizers noticed problems that had nothing to do with financial or organizational problems. Marian Małowist, who had been a teacher at several Jewish and Polish high schools before the war, reported to the Oyneg Shabes Archive about difficulties with the integration of assimilated youth into the *komplety*, the unofficially organized ghetto schools.²³⁷ These students, he explained, had lived through harder times than others. Their mode of life had undergone greater changes, because they had been expelled from their Polish schools. “They found themselves in new circumstances,”

²³⁷ Yad Vashem JM 3489.2_28; Yad Vashem PH/13–2–4.

Małowist wrote, “in an environment that was, in point of fact, alien to them, that discriminated, and, even held them in contempt. After all, they [the non-assimilated Jews] had always regarded assimilated Jews as lower and inferior to them.” Like other educators in the Warsaw and Lodz ghettos, Małowist pointed to two opposing groups in the ghetto, assimilated and non-assimilated Jews; and he denounced the assimilated youth as problematic. Like in the introductory story, these young people had learned how to be Polish and fit in with the majority at school and in society. In the ghettos they were confronted with the opposite task. According to the racist categories of the national socialist occupiers, they had been sent to the ghettos, no matter how they felt about being Jewish. They now found themselves in a purely Jewish environment and had to learn how to relate to the new majority. Małowist commented that many parents did not want to enroll their children in the clandestine study groups.

They study at home, pass to the ‘Aryan’ side from time to time, in order to take examinations there. This is an expression of the distrust with which they view the Jewish teachers; and is a very interesting manifestation of snobbery. Besides, it seems to them that Jewish school-certificates will be worthless in the future. I think, however, that the most important reason for the absence of this insignificant group is snobbery. The majority of refined, assimilated youngsters is being absorbed into our study-groups; and, after overcoming initial difficulties, they keep pace with their class-mates who had come from Jewish schools.²³⁸

The dividing issues Małowist mentions in the above quote are attitudes regarding nation, culture, language, religion, customs, education, and class.²³⁹ From Chapter 2 we already know that the Jewish population in Poland was deeply divided on many of these topics, and not only into the two groups Małowist mentions here. As citizens of a Polish nation state, Jews were expected to take a position on who they were and wanted to be in relation to the Polish state. Some saw themselves as

²³⁸ Yad Vashem JM 3489.2_28, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 497.

²³⁹ Cf. Marian Małowist, *Secondary Schools During the War*, Warsaw 1942, AŻIH 671 Ring I 604.

Polish nationals, Jewish by confession like other Poles were Catholic, others regarded themselves as part of the Jewish nation that was granted national minority status in Poland by the Treaty of Versailles, others again wanted to stay out of worldly politics altogether or saw no future for the Jewish people in Europe at all and were working on the realization of a Jewish nation state in Palestine. In the eyes of the ghetto educators, all these differences dwindled in significance compared to the perceived “assimilationist” versus “non-assimilationist” confrontation. What remained of a diverse population were two groups, one seeing the other as a danger to the Jewish cause.

Post-war historians of Jewish eastern Europe adopted this dichotomy. Ezra Mendelsohn, as an influential example, in his work on Jews in East Central Europe between the two World Wars, constructed the same opposing Jewish groups. He presented the “West European type” as a highly acculturated group that even had aspirations of assimilation to the major nationalities. According to Mendelsohn, these Jewish communities tended to be middle class from a socioeconomic point of view, and were highly urbanized. They had low birth rates and often a high rate of intermarriage. The “East European type”, says Mendelsohn, had a much lesser tendency to acculturation, let alone assimilation. They instead leaned to, if not a religious definition of Jewish belonging, then to a national one. Many of them were Yiddish speaking, orthodox, were of lower middle-class and proletarian socioeconomic background, and had high birth and low intermarriage rates.²⁴⁰ In Mendelsohn’s opinion, the implications of this typology were important to understanding the internal development of the Jewish communities in East Central Europe. He therefore placed the notion of assimilation not only on the extreme end of a dichotomy, he linked it to modernization, all the while connecting non-assimilation to pre- or non-modernity. This makes it a problematic model of a much more complicated reality.

But much more than a successful or problematic model, the distinction of assimilationists was a construct. The readership of Jewish newspapers, recruiting of Zionists clubs, donations to Jewish welfare organizations from these of assimilation accused fractions of the Jewish population showed that the segregation was certainly

²⁴⁰ Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, 6–7.

not as clear-cut as Małowist wanted his readers to believe and as Mendelsohn continued to propagate in his studies.

In this chapter, I show how the debate on Jewish loyalty the assimilationist vs. non-assimilationist conflict took prevalence over other issues of inner-Jewish discourse. Analyzing the content of the educational efforts in ghetto schools, this chapter identifies two educational campaigns, concerned with Jewish religion and language that the Jewish leadership as well as the intellectual elites propagated in a broad alliance of Jewish organizations against a feared group of “assimilationists”.

C. Education Campaigns

In the ghettos, the youth was seen, perhaps with more vigor than in peace times, as the future of the Jewish people. The ghetto communities therefore emphasized the importance of education for the children. With increasing awareness of an emerging catastrophe, admonishing voices therefore declared it as a foremost goal to instill in the children a strong sense of their Jewishness and to raise a generation that would be able to continue Jewish life after the war. Rather than focusing the limited resources on the bare minimum of reading and writing, educational activists suggested therefore elaborate school programs.

But the question of what a Jewish education should look like, was not simply answered. Emanuel Ringelblum and his colleagues from the underground archive in Warsaw conducted a survey two and a half years after the beginning of the war to find out how this experience had influenced the way people thought about the Jewish future. They asked the participants: “What national narrative will the wartime experience create?”, “What place will Jews find in a postwar Poland?” and “What kind of social order will reign after the war and what lesson can our two-and-a-half-year experience teach us to prepare for the [post-war] era. How should we educate our youth in [this regard].” An anonymous respondent [...] turned the question around: “What does it mean to be Jewish in these circumstances?”²⁴¹

In one way or another, the Jewish ghetto leaderships and different political organizations formulated concerns about the development of the Jewish consciousness of the ghetto youth. These activists continued to promote notions of

²⁴¹ Documents are published in: Artur Eisenbach, “Visnshaftlekhe Forshungen in Varshever Geto,” *Bleter Far Geshikhte* 1 (1948); Joseph Kermish, “Anshei Ha-Ruah B’geto Varsha,” *Yediot Yad Vashem* 8–9 (1955). English translation in: Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?*, 233–234.

Jewish consciousness in the traditions of their prewar educational and ideological persuasions, but as indicated before, these activities streamlined into two educational campaigns that united a remarkably broad spectrum of ideological persuasions into one force against assimilation. In these educational campaigns, we can identify two topics in particular that were concerned with the same issues of consciousness and belonging to the Jewish community as Małowist: religion and language. In the following sections, we will examine the organizations' investment in each of these categories and how they fit into the broader discourse on education in the ghettos.

Religious Education

Contrary to prewar times, it seems as if religious schools were in the minority compared to their secular counterparts.²⁴² In Lodz, the Jewish Statistics Department quantified students of religious schools at about 2,400 out of about 16,000 students in the ghetto. In Warsaw, Yavneh supported teachers and was involved in organizing some of the children's kitchens that provided schooling, Bais Yaakov continued its work on a small scale, and a seminary for religious educators functioned for a while.²⁴³ Ringelblum's diary gives evidence of a Talmud Torah School with about 700 students with rabbis serving as teachers and religious courtyard schools²⁴⁴ out of 40,000 students. There were at least two religious primary schools in Vilna (school no. 1 and 2) where the children studied Hebrew reading, Bible, and some math, and two yeshivot teaching Talmud, Mishna, and Gemara. Together, these schools had about 200 students²⁴⁵ out of about 2,000 students total.²⁴⁶

The reasons for reduced enrollment in religious schools included: Attendees of religious schools tended to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. For religious schools it was therefore even more difficult than before the war to obtain the necessary fees. At least in Warsaw, they also had difficulties to become part of the public school system with its tax-based funding. And finally, the numbers shifted

²⁴² The sources on religious education in the ghettos are scarce. This is due to the fact that the Ringelblum Archive as well as the documents of the *Ältestenrat* in Lodz were biased toward secular education, and documentation of educational goings-on in the Vilna ghetto, especially from an official perspective, is rare in general.

²⁴³ Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 411.

²⁴⁴ Ringelblum's diary entries from 27 February 1941 and 18 March 1941. Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 128; 138.

²⁴⁵ Irving J. Rosenbaum, *The Holocaust and Halakha* (New York, NY: Ktav Publishing House, 1976), 54.

²⁴⁶ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 469.

downward, because the majority of Jewish children from prewar public schools entered the school market in the ghettos and were less likely to attend religious schools. Therefore, the Jewish secular schools profited most from the sudden influx of students in the Jewish school system.

Orthodox groups regarded it important that more ghetto inhabitants begin to live by Jewish religious standards. Interpreting the ghetto as a penalty or a scrutiny from God, they tried to persuade the non-observant to turn to religion. Someone answering the aforementioned survey by Oyneg Shabes, said that there was a steep decline in religious observance in the ghetto. Sarcastically, he explained that people spoke mainly Polish to spite the Germans, and if the Germans had cared about religion and forbidden to observe the Jews would have been religious. The only real hope, he believed, had to come from within anyway. The Jews had to return to the spiritual traditions of the Jewish people.²⁴⁷

Especially the education of children into Judaism was considered crucial. Rabbi Shapiro of Warsaw said in June 1942 in a sermon that “one should not think of children, the youth of Israel, as private individuals who ‘belong to’ their parents, but as [manifestations of the principles of] creativity, renewal, as Divine revelation.”²⁴⁸ He emphasized the collective importance of raising Jewish children and asserted the community’s right to doing so.

In their efforts to convince the secular ghetto population to join their ranks, orthodox groups like the Agudah launched educational programs that informed about how to live an observant, God pleasing life. According to them, many “refugees” from out of town, had to be educated in how to keep a kosher household.

The purpose [of the educational program] was to present clearly how significant is the observance of the dietary laws in Jewish life, how forbidden foods decay the soul and body, the Jewish heart, the Jew’s entire being and how detrimental they are to man’s traits and deeds. It is obviously difficult to make sure with any certainty just how successful this educational program was, but there can be no doubt

²⁴⁷ Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?*, 236–237.

²⁴⁸ Nehemia Polen, “Divine Weeping: Rabbi Kalonymos Shapiro’s Theology of Catastrophe in the Warsaw Ghetto,” *Modern Judaism* 7, no. 3 (October 1, 1987): 260.

that it aroused some of the refugees and stimulated them to keeping kosher.²⁴⁹

In an appeal to the Jewish population for Rosh Hashanah 1940, the rabbis and sages of the Warsaw ghetto explained to all house committees how crucial the upkeep of Jewish law and Jewish education was. “By fulfilling the above obligations”, the rabbis insisted, “and obeying the said rules we shall merit Deliverance by The Almighty and be granted life and be inscribed for Favor on High on the Day of Atonement”. The appeal explained that parents “must give a religious upbringing to their children and instill in them at least the elementary principles of Judaism.”²⁵⁰

A religious school organization, the Patronage of Torah Study Groups, oversaw about one thousand Torah students. “These children”, as the organization argued in a request for financial support to Icchak Giterman, director of the Joint, are “the future spiritual leaders of the Jewish people.”²⁵¹ With this claim of educating the future leaders of the Jewish people, the patronage connected ideas of a coherent Jewish people and the claim of the religious leaders to be the true representatives of this people. Before the war, the orthodox school organizations had defined being Jewish mainly as religious belonging and had emphasized the importance of religious consciousness among their people and submitting to the Polish government. Here, we can see a glimpse of nationalist interpretation of Jewishness and its political implications.

Not large in numbers, but in this context significant, was the situation of the baptized Jews in the ghettos. The general attitude toward Christians in the ghetto populations was not favorable. Emanuel Ringelblum complained in his diary that baptized Jews received better treatment from the Judenrat,²⁵² and even among students converts were eyed with spite. Mary Berg, a teenager in the Warsaw Ghetto, wrote in her diary about her classmate:

Julia, like her parents, is a convert. She learned of her Jewish origin only when her family received the order to move out of their

²⁴⁹ The Question of Observing the Dietary Laws, report for 1941, AŽIH Ring I 190, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 417.

²⁵⁰ AŽIH 314 Ring II 171, October 1940: An Appeal to the Jewish Population, English translation in: *Ibid.*, 414.

²⁵¹ AŽIH 216 Ring II 104.

²⁵² Ringelblum, *Diary*, 18 March 1941, Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 138.

apartment on the Aryan side and take up quarters in the ghetto. This incident shook her deeply, and she has not yet resigned herself to her fate. She is constantly indignant and angry, and I have the feeling that she is more resentful against the Jews than the Nazis. She considers her lot the result of a fatal mistake, for which I and others like me are responsible.

Around her neck she wears a large silver cross, and she tries to persuade everyone that she is a faithful Christian who has nothing in common with Judaism. Once, as I listened to her talk, I remarked heatedly that Christ, too, was a Jew but was never ashamed of his origin, and then I returned to my desk. The whole classroom was silent, and Julia did not dare answer me. Apparently, she felt that I was right and that all the other students agreed with me.”²⁵³

Mary went on to characterize the Christians in the ghetto: The majority of recent converts had just tried to avoid persecution, whereas the minority of children from old convert families had been “poisoned with anti-Semitism” by their own parents, thus trying to “eradicate every trace of their Jewish origin.”²⁵⁴ Mary, herself from a family that others would call quite acculturated, reacted furiously to Julia’s display of Christian belonging. Acknowledging that the change to live in a Jewish ghetto was a more shocking experience to converts than to other Jewish children, Mary nevertheless felt personally attacked by the open performance of assimilationism and knew (whether we believe it in this absoluteness or not) the majority of the class behind her.

The criticism on Christians was bare of religious arguments and can only be understood as a critique on disloyalty to the Jewish people in a political sense, for which religious belonging is interpreted as the preferred national belonging. Even the administration (against rumors of favoritism)²⁵⁵ treated the converts rather roughly. Representatives of the Christians asked Rumkowski to introduce Catholic instruction for their children in the public schools. The chronicle reported a few days later that

²⁵³ Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 112.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁵⁵ A book on assimilated Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto will appear later this year. This should help to illuminate some of the more intricate questions. Katarzyna Person, *Assimilated Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, 1940–1943* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014).

“the request to introduce Christian religious instruction can not be answered positively, because there are no religion classes in the ghetto schools at all.”²⁵⁶ As we will see, this was not true. The chronicle did not comment on this decision or the reasons, but it fits within the general promotion of Jewish culture and religion and policy against assimilationism to regard baptized Jews as disloyal and a threat to Jewish unity.

This political take on religious instruction is even more prevalent in the public primary and middle schools in the Lodz Ghetto. A group within or connected with the school department²⁵⁷ suggested a reform of religious school instruction. Sharp critique on prewar religion classes resonates in this proposal.

The suggested programs must differ from the programs that have been taught until now in the public and private Jewish schools. Until now these programs were limited mainly to biblical stories, and the manner in which they were taught relied on legendary forms and interpretations that could have no equivalence to serious historical studies. [...] Because the content of religious education is now different, its form in regard to language had to change, because they were taught in the original Hebrew and translated or explained in Yiddish, and in consideration that the overwhelming majority of our Jewish children live with Yiddish as their mother-tongue and that Jewish education should be given in the language they speak.²⁵⁸

While the authors did not wish to get rid of religion as a subject they voted for secularizing it to a degree where it did not merely pass on biblical stories with legendary interpretations but allowed biblical studies on par with historical studies. The treatment of religious instruction in this proposal thus reads as an acknowledgment of the rootedness of the Jewish people in its biblical past even by the secular-oriented faction. It appears that religious instruction in the official ghetto

²⁵⁶ Sascha Feuchert, Erwin Leibfried, and Jörg Riecke, eds., *Die Chronik Des Gettos Lodz/Litzmannstadt*, vol. 1942, Schriftenreihe Zur Lodzer Getto-Chronik (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 68, 72.

²⁵⁷ We do not have the names of the authors.

²⁵⁸ GFH_299.

schools was neither a continuation of orthodox education nor of secular education but a compromise between the two sides.

Introducing such extensive religious instruction in the co-ed public schools meant the inclusion of girls into an education that had not been open to them for the most part before the war. The traditional religious instruction in cheder and yeshiva, as well as public performance of religion, were male-marked activities. Girls were largely excluded from religious education except for the aspects they needed for carrying out the duties of a Jewish wife and mother and to keep a kosher household, and those they usually learned in an informal setting.

When Poland introduced compulsory education in 1919, girls had to attend Polish or Jewish secular schools to fulfill the requirement. Only then did the Orthodox sector react. Fearing a rapid secularization of women, they founded religious schools for girls (see Chapter 2). Founded by Sarah Schenirer, the Bais Yaakov movement's leadership had been taken over by men and was in the 1940s headed by Rabbi Yehudah Leib Orlean, who perished in the Warsaw Ghetto.²⁵⁹

The opening of religious instruction to girls can be interpreted in two ways: On the one hand, Jewish nationalists wanted everyone to have a thorough foundation in Jewish history and a connection to the national past. On the other hand, the religious faction was interested in broadening its base in a time of dwindling attendance. What looked like a modernization and an opening of a male bastion, was a conservative move to prevent secular influence on Jewish families and ensure future support. Both movements were united in their attempt to use religious instruction to prevent assimilation of the youth.

Linguistic and Cultural Education

The second prominent educational campaign concerned the Jewish languages. Because several socialist and Zionist parties regarded Yiddish as the national language of the Jews, they had organized secular Yiddish schools in interwar Poland. But only 10 percent of Jewish children had attended those schools. Additionally, most religious schools were Yiddish-speaking, increasing the Yiddish school sector to about 35% percent of Jewish children. More than 60 percent went to Polish public

²⁵⁹ Deborah Weissman and Lauren Granite, "Bais Ya'akov Schools," *Jewish Women. A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, accessed June 20, 2014, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/bais-yaakov-schools>.

schools and a small minority to Hebrew-speaking institutions. These are the numbers for Poland overall. In Warsaw and Lodz, these numbers shift in favor of Polish schools, in Vilna, Yiddish speaking schools were far more common.

The initial study groups that were organized by teachers and parents in Warsaw right after the German occupation followed mostly the general study programs of the prewar Polish Ministry of Education,²⁶⁰ but as fewer parents could afford private tutors, prewar school organizations filled the void. Yiddish and Hebrew schools realized their chance to recruit new students.

A group of activists created a committee for propagating Yiddish in the Warsaw ghetto in December 1940. Among its founding directors was the elite of the local Po'ale Tsiyon and Bund party activists, among others Menahem Linder,²⁶¹ Szachna Zagan,²⁶² Emanuel Ringelblum, Benjamin Wirowski,²⁶³ Sonia Nowogródzka,²⁶⁴ Icchak Giterman,²⁶⁵ Israel Lichtensztajn,²⁶⁶ and Hersz Wasser.²⁶⁷ These two parties in particular had worked on establishing Yiddish as the Jewish national language in prewar Poland.

In the committee's opinion, Polish-speaking communal administrations could not satisfactorily cater to the Jewish masses. Hersz Wasser, who reported on this matter for the Ringelblum Archive, went so far as to say that "there was no question

²⁶⁰ YIVO, Genia Silkes Collection RG 1187, folder 41, no. 35.

²⁶¹ Menahem Linder, founder of YIKOR, economist, founding member of Oyneg Shabes, director of statistics department in ŻSS (Jewish Self Help). Linder was shot by Gestapo/SS during an action of party leaders and other people suspected of resistance in 17–18 April 1942. He appears on the list Ringelblum and Berman made of perished intellectuals and activists in the Warsaw Ghetto, sent to London in May 1944 (after Ringelblum's death who is also on the list), GFH_5990; AŻIH 299 Ring II 158.

²⁶² Efraim Zagan Szachna, b. 1892, member of Po'ale Tsiyon, underground fighter with ŻOB.

²⁶³ Benjamin Wirowski, pedagogue and cultural activist, Bund activist from Lodz. Wirowski also appears on the list of perished intellectuals and activists in the Warsaw Ghetto, GFH_5990; Cf. Rachel Auerbach, *Varshever Tsavoies (Warsaw Testaments)* (Tel Aviv, 1974), 253.

²⁶⁴ Sonia Nowogródzka, teacher, headed Bund schools for Tsysho, worked for ŻSS and Centos. Ibid., 254. She is listed on the list of perished intellectuals and activists in the Warsaw Ghetto, GFH_5990.

²⁶⁵ Icchak Giterman, director of Joint in Poland since 1921, supervised and organized financial support to ŻSS, member of Oyneg Shabes, helped find funding for arms for ŻOB, on 18 January 1943 shot by Germans in front of his apartment. Appears on the list of perished intellectuals and activists in the Warsaw Ghetto, GFH_5990. Cf. Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 760, 821.

²⁶⁶ Israel Lichtensztajn, principal of a Jewish school before the war, community activist, member of Left Po'ale Tsiyon, member Oyneg Shabes, He appears on the list of perished intellectuals and activists in the Warsaw Ghetto, GFH_5990.

²⁶⁷ Hersz Wasser, (1912–1980), economist from Lodz, member of Oyneg Shabes (one of only two survivors, together with Rachel Auerbach).

Rachel Auerbach listed in addition herself, Jeszajahu Braude, Chana Braz, Szlomo Gilbert, Mordechai Mazo, and Nachum Remba.

of devoted — let alone honest — service to the common people. In consequence, there was a danger of distorting the socially-inspired direction in the operation of Jewish institutions.”²⁶⁸ A truly social endeavor had to serve the people in their own language, not talk down to them in a foreign tongue. The group regarded Yiddish as the national language of the Jews in Poland and believed that forcing Jews to speak Polish in their own institutions would estrange them from their “Jewishness”.

The group’s leadership established that while it was already objectionable that communal administrations had functioned in Polish while catering to Jewish clients before the war, in a Jewish ghetto this was simply unacceptable. Therefore, they saw the ghetto as a chance to rid the Jewish community of any Polish influence they had had to succumb to before they war and turn it into a truly Yiddish community. They hoped to turn the ghetto, although “isolated by necessity and force, into a complete and fulfilled life of Yiddish”.²⁶⁹ To achieve this, they set up the Yiddish Culture Organization (Yikor) to establish Yiddish as the language of administration, education, and culture in the Warsaw ghetto. “Signs ‘We speak Yiddish’ were hung in all institutions, giving expression to the active, positive attitude toward our language.”²⁷⁰ Yikor organized lectures, theater, concerts, a library, literary and scientific competitions, and schools. Trying to cater specifically to the “assimilated” intelligentsia, they brought Polish-educated academics in contact with Yiddish literature, organized reading and discussion circles in which Jews of different political background gathered,²⁷¹ and offered Yiddish classes for everyone. “Thousands of clerks, workers among youth and outside people, passed the central and local courses for the beginners and the advanced”²⁷² they reported. If the quoted numbers are correct, they show an immense interest in Yiddish but also, that for many Yiddish was, in fact, not their native language.

Special emphasis lay on the ghetto’s children and youth. Yikor tried to educate the youth into true members of Yiddish culture by collaborating with children’s soup kitchens and schools on their educational programs. The Left Po’ale Tsiyon ran three children’s soup kitchens under the leadership of high party

²⁶⁸ Herz Wasser, Yiddish Culture Organization “YIKOR”, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 442. Unfortunately, Kermish does not provide the archive’s call number.

²⁶⁹ Wasser, “YIKOR”, English translation in: *Ibid.*, 443.

²⁷⁰ Wasser, “YIKOR”, English translation in: *Ibid.*, 444.

²⁷¹ Auerbach, *Varshever Tsavoies (Warsaw Testaments)*, 248–250.

²⁷² Wasser, “YIKOR”, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 444.

functionaries Israel Lichtensztajn, Fejga Herclich, and Natan Smolar, all of whom had been teachers before the war.²⁷³ One of these children's kitchens was located in the Tsysho-affiliated Borochov School on Nowolipki 68. This school was "the apple of the eye" of the Left Po'ale Tsiyon, recollected Adolf Berman after the war. "It was one of the model schools in the Warsaw Ghetto, and at the time when classes had to be taught clandestinely it retained a high standard."²⁷⁴ The close relations between the children's kitchens and the party become evident in this location: Apart from a Tsysho school and an alimentionation point for children, it also served as the party's underground press headquarters and as a hiding place for the Oyneg Shabes Archive.²⁷⁵

A plan for the pedagogical and didactic work in the children's kitchens of Centos emphasized the group's focus to "implant in the children a love and devotion to the Yiddish language and culture." To foster this attitude toward Yiddish, the activists suggested accordant readings. The clear focus lay on the famous Jewish writers and ardent Yiddishists Issac Leib Peretz, Sholem Aleichem, and Sholem Asch. The curriculum was widened to include a few international classics of children's literature (it does not surprise that Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin", an anti-slavery book from 1852, would have been an appealing book in the ghetto context), but no Polish author made it on the list.²⁷⁶

In general, Tsysho persisted to rid the ghetto schools of Polish influence. Genia Silkes, a Tsysho teacher in the Warsaw Ghetto, recalled later the shortage of textbooks suitable to the task to make the ghetto schools more Jewish in character and fight assimilationism:

Those types of schools that conducted their studies in Yiddish or Hebrew used the pre-war books whenever they could be gotten. [...] The biggest problems were encountered, as previously mentioned, by the Jewish communal schools and the pre-war Polish public schools

²⁷³ Israel Lichtenstein (see footnote 25); Fejga Herclich, teacher, member of Left Po'ale Tsiyon; Natan Smolar, close friend of Ringelblum, teacher, Left Po'ale Tsiyon, involved with Borochov school. Cf. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?*, 313.

²⁷⁴ Adolf Berman, *Vos Der Goyrl Hot Mir Bashervol: Mit Yidn in Varshe 1939–1942* (Beit Lohamei HaGhetaot, 1980), 192.

²⁷⁵ Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 335, 673; Sakowska, *Ludzie Z Dzielnic Zamkniętej*, 73–80; Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?*, 119.

²⁷⁶ AŽIH Ring I 204.

for Jewish children, because in this period of the Nazi occupation they had to reconstruct the entire pre-war spirit and school curriculum from assimilationist to national. The pre-war texts issued by the Polish minister of education were no longer applicable in the ghetto schools. The teaching now had to be suited to the set up of the schools and the trend Jewishly national in character.²⁷⁷

The Tsysho teachers in the Warsaw ghetto therefore prepared new textbooks. They published a reader for the third grade with texts in Yiddish in early 1942.²⁷⁸ Natan Smolar²⁷⁹ from Left Po'ale Tsiyon and Benjamin Wirowski²⁸⁰ from the Bund chose excerpts from mostly Yiddish classics (according to the above plan Sholem Aleichem, Peretz, and Avrom Reyzen)²⁸¹ and complemented them with a few readings from European classics in Yiddish translation (Maria Konopnicka,²⁸² Leo Tolstoy, Edmondo De Amicis)²⁸³ on themes like oppression and struggle, friendship, compassion, and nature. With these classic and morally instructive texts, the teachers introduced the children to Yiddish culture.²⁸⁴ The table of contents shows the range of assigned readings:

Our School, poem
 Where am I?²⁸⁵
 Leo Tolstoy, The Wolf and the Lamb²⁸⁶
 Rywka Galin, One pair of shoes²⁸⁷
 Maria Konopnicka, Franuś at the Vistula²⁸⁸

²⁷⁷ YIVO, Genia Silkes Collection RG 1187, folder 41, no. 35.

²⁷⁸ Natan Smolar, Benjamin Wirowski: Yidish-heft farn dritn lernyor, Warsaw 1942, AŽIH 682 Ring I 603. Printed in Yiddish: Sakowska, "Fun Ringelblum-Arkhiv. Geheyne Limudim in Varshever Geto," 7–60. In Polish translation: Sakowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, 304–357.

²⁷⁹ Natan Smolar, 1898–1943.

²⁸⁰ About 1900–1943.

²⁸¹ Avrom Reyzen (1876–1953), Yiddish writer and publisher, politically close to Bund. He took a strong stand for Yiddish at the Czernowitz Conference. Reyzen emigrated to the United States in 1911 and worked there for the Yiddish newspapers *Forverts* und *Tsukunft*.

²⁸² Maria Konopnicka (1842–1910) was a Polish writer associated with Polish positivism.

²⁸³ Edmondo De Amicis (1842–1908), Italian writer. His youth novel *Cuore* (The Heart) published in 1886 is one of his most popular works.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Ruta Sakowska, *Menschen Im Ghetto: Die Jüdische Bevölkerung Im Besetzten Warschau 1939–1943* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 1999), 136–137.

²⁸⁵ Humorous story for children.

²⁸⁶ Tolstoy's adaptation of Aesop's fable. Morale: Any excuse will serve a tyrant. It teaches the children: No matter what you do, the wolf will eat you. It is not your fault.

²⁸⁷ Rywka Galin, 1890–1935, author of poems and stories for children in Yiddish.

Chaim Nachman Bialik, Breaking the Ice²⁸⁹
 Mendele Mocher Sforim, Spring in the Countryside²⁹⁰
 Alphonse Daudet, La Chèvre de Monsieur Seguin²⁹¹
 Perec Markisz, Open the Door!²⁹²
 Edmondo de Amicis, In Hospital/Daddy's Nurse²⁹³
 Szymon Frug, The Croft²⁹⁴
 Mojsze Winczewski, Little Red Riding Hood
 Icaac Leib Peretz, The Legal²⁹⁵
 Sholem Aleichem, Motl, Peysi the Cantor's Son... tells how his brother
 Elijah and his colleague Pina learned to sew on a machine²⁹⁶
 The Mountain of Chelm²⁹⁷
 The Wise Judge, a folk tale
 David Hofstein, Grain is already blooming²⁹⁸
 Leo Tolstoy, A Pitcher of Water, The Great Bear²⁹⁹

²⁸⁸ Maria Konopnicka, 1842–1910, was a Polish poet and novelist who also wrote for children. She was a women's right activist and often wrote under male pseudonym. Original in Polish, *Franuś nad Wisłą*, in: Maria Konopnicka, *Czytanka dla Tadzia i Zosi*, vol. 3, Wydawnictwo M. Arcta, Warszawa 1914, 95–100.

²⁸⁹ Chaim Nachman Bialik, 1873–1934, one of the pioneers of modern Hebrew poetry, wrote primarily in Hebrew but also in Yiddish.

²⁹⁰ Mendele Moykher Sforim, real name *Shalom Yakov Abramowitz*, 1836–1917, initially wrote in Hebrew, later in Yiddish, because he recognized that only in Yiddish could the people understand his work.

²⁹¹ 1840–1897, French novelist, monarchist, antisemite. Novella by Alphonse Daudet, *Lettres de mon Moulin*, 1869. Monsieur Seguin has seven goats. Six are eaten by the wolf. The seventh goat is treated very well by its master but gets bored and decides to escape to the mountains through an open window. Monsieur Seguin realizes his mistake and closes the window. When the goat comes back it finds the window closed and cannot get back in. It returns to the mountains to be devoured by the wolf.

²⁹² 1895–1952, Yiddish writer and poet.

²⁹³ 1846–1908, Italian writer. Most famous for his children's novel *Cuore* in which he combined Italian nationalism with socialism. The story is about a boy who comes to a hospital where his father lies ill. At his bedside, he nurses and encourages him, until it is revealed that the nurse had accidentally sent him to the wrong bed. When his real father, who is well, asks him to come home with him, the boy stays for another day and night with the stranger to support him in his last hours. After the man's death the boy departs with the praise for his compassion and the blessings of the doctors and sisters.

²⁹⁴ 1860–1916, poet, wrote first in Russian, then in Yiddish and late in life Hebrew. Many of his texts talk about the persecution of Jews and their longing for Zion. A spring poem about awakening nature.

²⁹⁵ 1852–1915, famous Yiddish writer.

²⁹⁶ Pen name of Solomon Naumovich Rabinovich (1859–1916). Famous Yiddish writer. Unfinished novel in several stories about a little boy that treats serious events in a humorous manner.

²⁹⁷ A humorous story about the foolish inhabitants of Chelm, popular humorous tradition in Jewish Eastern Europe.

²⁹⁸ David Hofstein, 1889–1952, Yiddish writer. He first supported the Soviet state, but was executed for his support of the state of Israel in the Night of the Murdered Poets in August 1952. After Stalin's death Hofstein was rehabilitated.

²⁹⁹ A story about how the constellation of the Great Bear came into being, because a little girl showed kindness to others in her own utter poverty. The Yiddish translation differs quite significantly from the Russian original. It is possible that the publishers of the textbook attempted to prescind the theme of love and compassion over the details on the impact of drought on people and animals. Cf. Sakowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, 332, footnote 16.

Jehojosz, Cloud Woman³⁰⁰
Dawid Ajnhorn, The Grain Sisters³⁰¹
Kadya Molodwsky, Pantl mitn Mantel³⁰²
Eliezer Shindler, Why has the hare a harelip?³⁰³
Stories about mother Chabad³⁰⁴

Another Yiddish textbook was published by *Dror* (Freedom), a socialist Zionist organization. Because of its high recruitment from the working youth (about 85 percent), *Dror*'s youth organization supported the Yiddish school system and continued to prefer Yiddish as its language of communication in the ghetto. *Dror* member Joseph Rudavsky remembered:

When we started this extensive project, we realized that we had no textbook material for our teachers. [...] We started an extensive publication program of our own. The first new book to be published in the ghetto was put out by *Dror* [in Yiddish]: *Agony and Heroism in the History of Our People*. The book had 120 pages and was printed by means of a duplicating machine [...] We sought to give to our youth accounts of heroism and self-defense from the history of our people.³⁰⁵

The Jewish Councils went along with the trend to foster Yiddish language and culture in the schools and suppress Polish influence. In the spring of 1942, the Warsaw Ghetto's School Department decided to write new textbooks to incorporate more material on Jewish topics that would foster Jewish national consciousness in the students. Because of the deportations in July 1942, the project never came into

³⁰⁰ 1872–1927, Pen name of Shloyme Baumgarten, Yiddish poet and writer, emigrated to the United States in 1890. A poem about clouds and other weather events.

³⁰¹ Story about flowers and the course of nature.

³⁰² 1894–1975, Yiddish poet and writer. Born in a shtetl in Belarus, she received an unusual education for a girl. Her father, a melamed, taught her the Bible in Hebrew and also hired private tutors to teach her Russian. As a fervent Zionist, she worked as a teacher in a Tsysho and a Hebrew community school. Her poetic work was perceived very well in Yiddish circles. She emigrated to the United States in 1935.

³⁰³ 1892–1957, Yiddish children's writer and translator from Japanese, Greek, and Finnish.

³⁰⁴ Table of Contents, in: Sakowska, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, 304–305.

³⁰⁵ Joseph Rudavsky, *To Live with Hope, to Die with Dignity: Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos and Camps* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997), 54.

print.³⁰⁶ As an interim solution, the commission censored the books used in schools for content of Polish nationalism. All Polish national content was blackened.

Similarly, the Jewish Council in Lodz changed the curricula of its schools. While in the beginning, instruction was still taking place on the basis of the Polish school curricula and the language of instruction remained Polish,³⁰⁷ the school year of 1940/1941 started under a new motto: “Involvement of all children in schooling, even if in compulsory form, and redoubled consideration of Yiddish language and Judaic subjects in the broadest extent.”³⁰⁸ According to an anonymous report on the schools in the Lodz Ghetto, Rumkowski authoritatively manipulated the curricula.

Under pressure of external factors, there occurred a break with the previously introduced spirit and tendency of the Polish schools. There were no dictates, but the Chairman took advantage of the situation to introduce the idea long cherished by him that in a Jewish state, like the ghetto indubitably was, education [should be] conducted in a Jewish national and religious spirit, to relate to the ancient Jewish tradition and so bring up a youth aware of their nationality and human origin. He ordered instruction of Yiddish as the language of instruction, along with simultaneous deepening of Judaic learning.³⁰⁹

Accordingly, all learning materials had to be adjusted to the ideological needs of Jewish nationalism in July 1941. The ghetto chronicle described the process:

School books have been censored recently by a commission of teachers especially convened for that purpose. All passages and pages relating to Poland have been excised. All accounts of [Józef] Piłsudski the legions, and so forth have been removed from the readers, and even exercises in maths books connected with the PKO have been

³⁰⁶ Cf. Ana Natanblut, “Di Shul in Varshever Geto,” *YIVO Bleter. Shrifit Fun Yidishn Visnshaftlekhn Institut* 30, no. 2 (1947): 176.

³⁰⁷ Same in Warsaw: “The general studies programs in the complets [unofficial ghetto schools before the German permit was received] were according to those in pre-war Polish Ministry of Education elementary schools.” YIVO, Genia Silkes Collection RG 1187, folder 41, no. 35.

³⁰⁸ YIVO, Nachman Zonabend Collection, RG 241, folder 959. English translation in: Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 86.

³⁰⁹ YIVO, Nachman Zonabend Collection, RG 241, folder 959. English translation in: Ibid.

deleted. After inspection, the books are stamped Geprüft [inspected].³¹⁰

Dawid Sierakowiak experienced this change in content as a student long before the Council decided to censor the books. In October 1939, he noted in his diary: “We don’t have classes in Polish history anymore. Chapters regarding Poland are omitted.”³¹¹ In Warsaw, some schools abandoned history and geography classes altogether. It is not clear, in how far the Germans stood behind this action. Some postwar testimonies point in that direction, but no document from the ghetto times mentions any German interference in this context. However, a report from 1942 states that this “mistake was corrected later” and the ghetto schools returned to teaching history and geography, sure enough without the Polish content.³¹²

Dawid’s diary also affords us insight into the language realities in the ghetto schools. In June 1941, he wrote about an editorial meeting for the school newspaper he attended. “We composed an introductory article that I immediately translated into Yiddish. My own Yiddish article and the caricature will also appear in the first issue. [...] We are very limited by language; we need articles in German, Yiddish, and Hebrew, not in Polish, but the articles arrive in the reverse linguistic order.”³¹³ When his article appeared, he was disheartened that very few people had read it, because it was in Yiddish.³¹⁴

The transition from Polish to Yiddish as the language of instruction did not go smoothly. A group of young girls who suddenly received instruction in their sewing class in Yiddish instead of Polish complained until the decision was reversed. In fact, not only the students had difficulties with the newly prescribed language of instruction. Many teachers neither had the background to teach the new Judaic curriculum nor the language skills to teach anything in Yiddish. A report on the curriculum changes related the technical difficulties of the political change: “This reform brought with it the necessity of creating suitably prepared teaching cadres, since, despite the fact that a previously conducted survey among the teachers [showed] a significant percentage fluent in the Yiddish language, this was rather mere

³¹⁰ Entry 22 July 1941, Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, 65.

³¹¹ Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, 53.

³¹² Yad Vashem PH/13–2–4.

³¹³ Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, 97.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

home learning, entirely inadequate for teaching in schools.”³¹⁵ Therefore, the Jewish Council organized courses for about 100 teachers that introduced them to Yiddish grammar and vocabulary, literature and songs.³¹⁶

In Vilna, the struggle about the Jewish content of education was different. With a much larger proportion of the population speaking Yiddish in daily life and a more established Yiddish public and cultural life, there was no question about using Polish as the language of instruction. Conflict arose along the prewar ideological fronts between Zionists and Bundists, the former promoting Hebrew, the latter preferring Yiddish. While the Zionists promoted emigration to Palestine, the Bundists preached *doikayt* (hereeness), Jewish national life in the Diaspora.

Much of their competition in prewar Vilna had taken place in the education sector, because Jews, although comprising a little over a third of the city’s population, were marginalized politically and the education sector provided a field where ideological questions were most relevant and obvious. In the ghetto, they not only continued the struggle for influence on the education system, but actually used it to gain further influence on the ghetto in general.³¹⁷

A group of Bundist educational activists held a meeting in March 1942 to create a school commission that would organize education in the ghetto. The keynote speaker at the meeting said reportedly: “The schools should not be isolated from social life in the ghetto. The committee should provide material support for the schools, supply them with instruments, and preserve the character of each school.”³¹⁸ Around the same time, the Zionists also launched an education committee, called *Brit Ivrit* (Hebrew Union) to promote the study of Hebrew and Zionism and to diminish Bundist influence on education matters.³¹⁹

Herman Kruk, an ardent Bundist, reported how the conflict between the two parties escalated on 27 April 1942: “The police started a new fight today: schools! Gens came to the Judenrat today and demanded that because the Cultural Department had decided on two persons to direct it, there was also a need for two persons to head the Child Education Department. He demanded that two persons be appointed,

³¹⁵ YIVO, Nachman Zonabend Collection, RG 241, folder 959. English translation in: Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 86.

³¹⁶ Yad Vashem, O.6_243.

³¹⁷ Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 324, 327.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 232–233.

³¹⁹ Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 325.

specifically, that Glazman should be added to Yashunski. Another policeman!!”³²⁰ The Jewish Council decided in a vote to leave the Bundist Grisha Yashunski as only chair, but that he had to consult with Glazman, a Zionist, on every question concerning education. Yashunski announced that he would not have anyone placed over him against his will and resigned from his post.

The Bundists learned about the events in the Education Department and sent a delegation to the Council. According to Kruk, they warned the Council that the Jewish police was trying to introduce politics into the school, and that if it happened, they would make this public and “drag the politics out before the people”.³²¹ The delegation, according to Kruk, reminded the two unaffiliated members of the Judenrat, that they should not stand for such party politics and that such interventions in school issues disturbed the peace in the ghetto. They called Kruk as a mediator and apparently, the issue was resolved and Gens withdrew his proposal. When Kruk concluded in his diary “thus the school crisis concluded peacefully,”³²² he could not have been more wrong.

The German administration dissolved the Jewish Council on 12 July 1942 and made Jacob Gens the sole Ghetto Representative and Chief of Jewish Police in the Vilna Ghetto.³²³ One of his first moves was to merge the Culture and the Education Departments into one and to make Yashunski head of this new department, perhaps to secure Bundist support of his appointment, perhaps to avoid further conflict.³²⁴ New teacher committees seized the opportunity and started right away to redraft the curricula yet again to increase the portion of Jewish subjects according to their ideological preferences.³²⁵

Almost a year later, in March 1943, Gens was still not pleased with the curriculum and took action. He called a meeting of educators and asked them to include more Jewish national education and religious studies into the syllabi. In April, he finally dismissed Yashunski, who had not been in support of these Zionist changes

³²⁰ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 271.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 273.

³²² *Ibid.*, 277–278.

³²³ Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman, and Abraham Margalio, eds., *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union* (Lincoln: Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press; Yad Vashem, 1999), 438.

³²⁴ Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, 326.

³²⁵ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 424. Entry 5 December 1942: “Curriculum in the schools. In the five ghetto schools, five committees of pedagogues have been formed to work out the following curricula: 1. Yiddish and Hebrew; 2. Religion; 3. Jewish and general history; 4. Arithmetic; 5. Natural science and geography.”

to the program, from his post. Gens installed the young Dr. Leo Bernstein, a Zionist, instead, who quickly added Hebrew as well as history and geography of Palestine. Kruk was enraged:

The ghetto leadership, wanting to pull the school system in the ghetto onto a certain road, took advantage of the opportunity to drive Yashunski out of the office of director of the Cultural Department. Obviously, Yashunski wouldn't have allowed the Hebraization to be carried out. Who agreed to do it? Leo Bernstein, a young man who, under the Bolsheviks, was a professor in the people's university; a policeman in the ghetto; and later, a teacher; and is now the cultural minister who is Hebraizing Vilna. Leo Bernstein is a nationalist Jew from Klaipeda, an intellectual who writes German poetry on Jewish subjects. Now he is the one who dares to Hebraize the Yiddishist Vilna.³²⁶

Yitskhak Rudashevski, a gymnasium student, was disgruntled, too, at this new policy. He wrote in his diary: "There is no good news for us here. The G.F. [geto farshteer, ghetto leader] called together a meeting at which he declared that the youth in the ghetto is not educated in the proper national spirit. The Z. [ionists] persuaded him to do this. It hurts to think how such vulgar creatures talk about our education."³²⁷ More youngsters rebelled.³²⁸ Yitskhak was a member of a socialist youth organization. While he was concerned with Jewish national questions as evidenced in his involvement in Jewish history projects (they will be discussed in Chapter 7), the ideological struggles over Yiddish or Hebrew, Bundism or Zionism, seemed secondary to him in the ghetto where no one could leave.

³²⁶ Ibid., 535. After only two months Bernstein was asked to leave, too, because he was a member of the underground that Gens was in conflict with (see Chapter 7). From June 1943 until the ghetto's final liquidation, Yisroel Dimentman, another Zionist, held the position by grace of Gens. Ibid., 577.

³²⁷ Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*, 136.

³²⁸ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 572.

D. The School Program of the Lodz Ghetto Schools

In the previous sections we have discussed the pedagogical ambitions concerning religion and language of educational activists, but how do we know what was actually taught to the majority of the children? From most ghettos we have very little evidence as to how the curricula were planned and carried out and which subjects took preference over others. For the ghetto schools of Warsaw and Vilna we can therefore only conclude from circumstantial evidence (like student diaries or the few surviving note books) what the children studied in school. For the Lodz ghetto schools, however, the case is different. Among the documents of the School Department in the Lodz Ghetto is one source that allows us an educated guess: timetables of the ghetto schools from the school year 1940/41. This data set allows us to make some representative statements about the school programs. Comparison of the prewar curricula with the timetables from the Lodz ghetto schools reveals that the ghetto schools differed in some ways from all prewar institutions.

In Lodz, the Jewish ghetto administration managed to receive German permission to run an official school system. Chaim Rumkowski subsequently made primary school compulsory for all ghetto children. According to Rumkowski's own report from 15 May 1941, about 14,000 children attended primary schools in the Lodz ghetto and another 1,800 went to secondary schools.³²⁹ The school system comprised further summer camps in Marysin with about 1,400 attendees, and schools for deaf children and those with learning disabilities,³³⁰ but for better comparison, we will concern ourselves only with the primary schools.

For clearer analysis, only the timetables for first and sixth grade are collated. These two grades were the first and the last of the ghetto's primary schools. Because the curriculum widened gradually from class to class, these two extremes are a good representation of the official ghetto school program.

Primary schools consisted of six classes that can be roughly divided into two phases, grade 1 to 3 and grade 4 to 6. The first phase usually began with a program of Yiddish (presumably reading and writing), sometimes Hebrew, math, religion, and creative activities (art, crafts, music, sport). In fourth grade, more subjects, such as languages (Hebrew, Polish, German), science, and social studies were introduced and the creative activities reduced, thus broadening the curriculum while focusing it on

³²⁹ Yad Vashem JM 3489.43_856.

³³⁰ All following data from the timetables stems from USHMM RG-15.083M_1629.

academic subjects. In sixth grade, the program typically consisted of four languages, math, science, geography, history, often religion, and one hour each drawing and physical education.

The three to four hours math and from fourth grade the additional two to four hours science comprised together never more than 20 percent of the weekly schedule. Considering that these time tables are from Lodz where Rumkowski stood for a policy of productivity, it appears surprising that the subjects that would lead to more employability in crafts and production of goods, took such a secondary or even tertiary role after languages and religion.

Hours of Subject Instruction in Lodz Schools (1940/41)

Table 3 (Panel A)

Subject	School No. 1		School No. 4		School No. 5		School No. 6 (special needs) "schwachsinnige Kinder"		School No. 7a/b	
	Grade		Grade		Grade		Grade		Grade	
	I	VI	I	I	VI	I-II	III-VI	I	VI	
Yiddish	5	3	6	6	5	12	6	6	5	
Hebrew	4	3			5				5	
Polish		3			3		3		3	
German		3			3				3	
Math	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	3	
Science		2			3				2	
Geography		2			3				2	
History		2			2				2	
Religion			12			6	9	12	9	
Singing	1		2	2		2	2	2.5		
Drawing	2		2	2	1		2	1.5	1	
Crafts	1		2	2			4	1.5		
Phys. Ed.	1		2	2	2	6	2	1.5	1	
Overall Total	18	21	30	18	31	30	36^[1]	30	36	
Overall Total (Jewish Subjects)	9	10	18	6	15	18	15	18	23	
	50%	48%	60%	33%	48%	60%	42%	60%	64%	
Overall Total (Math/Science)	4	5	4	4	7	4	4	5	5	
	22%	24%	13%	22%	23%	13%	11%	17%	14%	
Overall Total (Singing, Drawing, Crafts, Phys. Ed.)	5	0	8	8	3	8	10	7	2	
	28%	0%	27%	44%	10%	27%	28%	23%	6%	

Note:

[1] This includes 4 hours preparation time.

Source:

Lodz Ghetto, School Year 1940/41, USHMM RG 15.083M_1629

Hours of Subject Instruction in Lodz Schools (1940/41)

Table 3 (Panel B)

Subject	School No. 8		School No. 11		School No. 12		School No. 13		School No. 14	
	Grade		Grade		Grade		Grade		Grade	
	I	VI	I	VI	I	I	VI	I	VI	
Yiddish		5		5	6	6	5	6	5	
Hebrew		5		5			5		5	
Polish		3		3			3		3	
German		3		3			3		3	
Math		3		4	5	4	3	3	3	
Science		2		2			2		2	
Geography		3		3			2		2	
History		2		2			2		2	
Religion	12	9	12	9	12	12	9	12	9	
Singing					1	2		2		
Drawing					2	2	1	2	1	
Crafts	2				2	2		2		
Phys. Ed.		1			2	2	1	2	1	
Overall Total	14	36	12	36	30	30	36	29	36	
Overall Total (Jewish Subjects)	12	24	12	24	18	18	23	18	23	
	86%	67%	100%	67%	60%	60%	64%	62%	64%	
Overall Total (Math/Science)	0	5	0	6	5	4	5	3	5	
	0%	14%	0%	17%	17%	13%	14%	10%	14%	
Overall Total (Singing, Drawing, Crafts, Phys. Ed.)	2	1	0	0	7	8	2	8	2	
	14%	3%	0%	0%	23%	27%	6%	28%	6%	

Source:
Lodz Ghetto, School Year 1940/41, USHMM RG 15.083M_1629

Hours of Subject Instruction in Lodz Schools (1940/41)

Table 3 (Panel C)

Subject	School No. 15		School No. 17		School No. 18		School No. 19		School No. 19b	
	Grade		Grade		Grade		Grade		Grade	
	I	VI	I	VI	I	VI	I	VI	I	VI
Yiddish	6	5		5	6.5	5	6	5	6	5
Hebrew	6	5		5		5		5		4
Polish	3	3		3		3		3		3
German		3		3		3		3		4
Math	4	4		4	4	2	4	3	4	3
Science		2		2		2		2		2
Geography		2		2		1		2		2
History		2		2		2		2		2
Religion	12	9	12	8	12	10	12	9	12	9
Singing	1				2		2		2	
Drawing	2			1	1.5		2	1	2	1
Crafts	1				2	1	2		2	
Phys. Ed.	1	1		1	2	1	2	1	2	1
Overall Total	36	36	12	36	30	35	30	36	30	36
Overall Total (Jewish Subjects)	24	23	12	22	18.5	23	18	23	18	22
	67%	64%	100%	61%	62%	42%	60%	64%	60%	61%
Overall Total (Math/Science)	4	6	0	6	4	4	4	5	4	5
	11%	17%	0%	17%	13%	11%	13%	14%	13%	14%
Overall Total (Singing, Drawing, Crafts, Phys. Ed.)	5	1	0	2	7.5	2	8	2	8	2
	14%	3%	0%	6%	25%	28%	27%	6%	27%	6%

Source:
Lodz Ghetto, School Year 1940/41, USHMM RG 15.083M_1629

Hours of Subject Instruction in Lodz Schools (1940/41)

Table 3 (Panel D)

Subject	School No. 20	School No. 21		School No. 24		"Taubstumm enschule"	Other Primary School		Unknown School		
	Grade VI	Grade I	Grade VI	Grade I	Grade VI	Grade VI	Grade I	Grade VI	Grade IV	Grade VI	
Yiddish	4		5	6	5			6	6	6	4
Hebrew	5		5	6	5			6	5	6	5
Polish	2		3		3	7			3	3	3
German	4		3		3				3	3	3
Math	4		4	3	3	6	4	4	4	4	3
Science	3		3		2	4		3	4	4	2
Geography	2		3		2	2		3			2
History	2		2		2	2		2			2
Religion	9	30	6			6	12	12	9	9	
Singing				1			2				
Drawing			1	1	1	3	2	1			2
Crafts						2	2				
Phys. Ed.	1		1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
Overall Total	36	30	36	18	27	34	36	43	36	36	36
Overall Total (Jewish Subjects)	22	30	21	12	14	10	24	28	21	22	22
	61%	100%	58%	67%	52%	29%	67%	65%	58%	61%	
Overall Total (Math/Science)	7	0	7	3	5	10	4	7	8	5	5
	19%	0%	19%	17%	19%	29%	11%	16%	22%	14%	
Overall Total (Singing, Drawing, Crafts, Phys. Ed.)	1	0	2	3	2	7	8	2	1	3	3
	3%	0%	6%	17%	7%	21%	22%	5%	3%	8%	

Source:
Lodz Ghetto, School Year 1940/41, USHMM RG 15.083M_1629

From the Warsaw ghetto, we have indication that there were not enough science teachers available to meet the demand, but the regularity of the time tables in Lodz, the extent of the program (up to 36 hours per week) and that science in these lower grades, because of the special circumstances, could have been taught by teachers who did not necessarily have a degree in science, shows that this was most likely a decision in favor of other subjects. As we will see, practical skills toward employment in agriculture and industry were taught in cooperation with the schools, but in addition to the academic curriculum. Therefore, they do not appear on these timetables.

In comparison to what we know about the prewar curriculum in different school types (see Chapter 2), we can even get information about changed attitudes and new preferences regarding education. On a structural level, relatively little changed compared to the prewar times. Primary schools in Lodz ghetto consisted of six classes compared to seven in prewar times. This was a concession to the dramatically reduced resources in the ghetto that could be allotted to schooling. If the conditions changed, so the plan, the program could be expanded by another grade.³³¹ The total hours of instruction remained the same even under the financial constraint the ghetto experienced. Children went to school full-time (the lower grades about 24 hours, the higher grades up to 36 hours per week), suggesting that (like in Chapter 4) the ghetto society tried to maintain normal life as much as possible and did not expect these children to work (in the beginning). The general curriculum and the number and type of subjects were more or less the same, despite shifts in what was considered more or less important we will discuss in a moment.

The following table shows the curricula of different Jewish school types in prewar Poland and the curriculum of the Lodz ghetto schools, for better comparison, where obtainable, for the sixths grade. Sometimes the exact hours are not available, but information on the percentage of, for example, Jewish studies could be obtained otherwise and allow conclusions when compared to the Lodz ghetto schools.

³³¹ GFH_299.

Comparison of Prewar and Ghetto Curricula (Sixth Grade)

Table 4

Subject	Jewish Schools in Prewar Poland						Ghetto Schools
	Tarbut	Tsysho	Shul-Kult	Yavneh	Bet Yaakov	Chorev	Lodz
Yiddish	yes	4	yes	yes	yes	together 7	5-6
Hebrew	yes	3	yes	yes	yes ^[1]		5
Polish	yes	7	yes	officially required	officially required	4.5	3
German	yes (+Latin)	?	yes (+Latin)	–	–	–	3
Math		5				2.5	3-4
Science	yes	4	yes				2-3
Geography	Jewish	2		officially required	officially required	1	2-3
History	Jewish (+general)	2	Jewish	yes	officially required	1	2
Religion	yes (+philosophy)	–	yes	22-23	likely over 20 hours	22	9 (or 0)
Singing		1				<1	
Drawing		2	yes			<1	0-1
Crafts						1	
Phys. Ed.		2				1	0-1
Activity Program^[2]		3	yes				
Overall Total		35	35			41	36
Overall Total (Jewish Subjects)	33% Bible, Jewish subjects	11 (31%)	10 (29%)			31 (76%)	23-25/14- (70%)

Notes:

[1] For sacred use only.

[2] To instill love for physical labor.

Source:

Eisenstein, Miriam. Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919-1939. Their Philosophy and Development. New York, NY, 1950.

USHMM RG 15.083M_1629

The table shows how many hours were allotted to the various subjects in the range of prewar Jewish schools in Poland. Because exact timetables are difficult to obtain, this table follows mostly Miriam Eisenstein's information and has a few gaps. The most interesting information in our context, however, the relative weight of religion, Jewish studies, and languages, is mostly available or can be estimated. Unfortunately, we do not know exactly how many hours were spent on religion classes in the secular schools except Tsysho that was strictly secular and therefore had no religion at all in the curriculum. For Tarbut and Shul-Kult schools the only hint is that we know that about a third of the time was spent on Jewish studies. As it is unlikely that the curriculum comprised more than 36 hours per week and Jewish

studies included Yiddish, Hebrew, geography, history, and religion, the 10 to 12 allotted hours had to be divided among all these subjects, probably not leaving more than 2 hours per week for religion.

Tsysho, a secular school organization about whose weekly program we have detailed information, is well-suited for comparison with the Lodz ghetto schools, as it reveals some of the most significant changes: Compared to the prewar Tsysho schools, the ghetto school time tables recorded an increase of Yiddish, Hebrew, religion (except minority of secular schools), and perhaps geography classes. At the same time there was a decrease of Polish, math, science, and creative classes.

The other school type we have fairly exact numbers about is Chorev. Compared to prewar Chorev, the Lodz ghetto schools showed a significant increase in Yiddish, Hebrew, math, and science, an hour more in geography and history respectively, a decrease in Polish and a major decrease in religion to less than half of the Chorev program. Although Tsysho and Chorev were two completely different school types, one secular, the other ultra-orthodox, one socialist and Yiddishist, the other government conform and “unworldly”, their comparison with the Lodz ghetto schools reveals that the ghetto schools differed in some ways from all prewar institutions.

Religion was part of the ghetto curriculum and took clear predominance over the other subjects, being taught 9 to 12 hours a week in a 24 to 36 hour curriculum respectively (38/33%). Only a minority of schools did not have religion at all in their program. Compared to the prewar curricula, the hours spent on religion in the ghetto’s primary schools met exactly in the middle (0-2 hours in secular schools, 22 in religious, 9-12 in ghetto schools). That the overall number of hours spent in school remained the same compared to prewar times and that there was almost no fluctuation in the number of religion classes across schools, suggests a political compromise between two very different needs.

Most schools started with Yiddish as first language, typically 6 hours a week, which included learning reading and writing. This assumes that Yiddish was the children’s mother tongue. As we know from Chapter 2, about 60% of Jewish children had attended Polish public schools before the war. Because this number is for Poland overall, we can safely assume that it was even higher in Lodz, where more people spoke Polish than in the eastern regions. That all children in the ghetto’s official school system were now learning reading and writing in Yiddish, can therefore not be

a result of the prewar conditions, it must be political choice. Polish, what the majority of children likely spoke as their first language, came third in the official ghetto curriculum. After Yiddish and Hebrew with 5 to 6 hours from first grade on (in non-religious schools as its own subject, in religious schools as part of religious instruction), Polish was usually introduced with 3 hours per week from third grade and like German (same number of hours) treated as a foreign language.

This gave Yiddish and Hebrew clear preference over the other languages. Only one school taught Polish from grade one and this exception proves the rule: In Lodz, the Jewish Education Department ran a school for the deaf. The program of that school shows a striking difference to all other primary schools: No Yiddish or Hebrew was taught, instead only Polish, and emphasis was put on other subjects instead of languages. Assuming that in a country that had had compulsory education for about twenty years at that point, it is unlikely that the sample was skewed with only Polish speaking children in this school. Contrariwise, this suggests that Polish was the actual first language for most children. Together with the relative low percentage of math and science in Lodz's ghetto schools, the high amount of language instruction and the sequence of introduced languages must be politically significant.

E. Conclusion

After ghettoization, the Jewish population of Poland found itself separated from the non-Jewish Polish majority. In prewar discourse on Jewish existence in Poland, the examination of Polish-Jewish relations and the Jewish place in a Polish national state had played a central role. As illustrated by the story about the girl who wanted to play Mary, Jewish nationalists viewed moves toward assimilation with suspicion.

This suspicion against assimilation to Polishness carried over into the ghettos. Jews in the Warsaw and Lodz ghettos used the spatial removal from Polish society and government to rid the school programs of Polish curriculum requirements like Polish language and history. Instead, they enhanced the school programs with intensified instruction in the Jewish languages, especially Yiddish, and specifically Jewish subjects like Jewish literature, history, religion, and geography of Palestine. As we have seen, the intensification even holds true for schools that had belonged to

the Jewish education sector before the war, meaning that even groups that had promoted an intense Jewish national program before, intensified their efforts in this direction in the ghettos.

Religious groups in Warsaw and Lodz expanded their influence by cooperating with the official schools. They were apparently willing to compromise on their religious program in order to cooperate with a larger proportion of the ghetto population to achieve at least a cultural appreciation of religious texts by boys and girls. Yiddishist and Hebraist movements that were mostly strictly secular used this cooperation to expand the teaching of Jewish languages and incorporated religion as cultural heritage. Groups from the whole spectrum of Jewish politics compromised on questions of religious instruction to enable a common denominator for a strengthening of Jewish loyalty versus a perceived threat of assimilation. They created a mainstream Jewish program that incorporated not only the students of the diverse prewar Jewish institutions, but also formerly Polish-educated youth.

In Vilna, the school organizers were not as concerned about fighting assimilation among the ghetto youth. This can be explained with the different situation of the Jewish population in Vilna before the war. In Vilna, the Jewish population was in general far less acculturated than in the western cities of Warsaw and Lodz. The Jewish population was just one national group of several in an area that had changed rulers several times within a few decades. Thus, there was no clear national majority in which to integrate. This did not mean more harmony among Jewish ideological opponents. The debate on the ghetto curricula in Vilna on a Yiddish or Hebrew (Bundist or Zionist) emphasis was harsher than in Lodz and Warsaw and led to several replacements of the chair of the Education Department. A compromise like in Lodz or Warsaw was never reached, because there was no common enemy of assimilation that made acting in concert necessary. However, a general investment in strengthening the national loyalty and a struggle on determining the terms of Jewish belonging can be observed as well.

In all three ghettos, the intensity of debate about the prewar issue of Jewish belonging is surprising considering the dire situation the Jewish community lived in. Did the ghettoization change that discourse? The analyzed material suggests that ghettoization did not change the content of the conversation; it changed its intensity and determination, as well as its reach. Diverse ideological groups showed willingness to compromise in favor of terms of Jewish belonging everyone could

subscribe to in order to form a common front against people suspected of disloyalty to the Jewish community. Progressive forces thereby accepted a return to conservative definitions of Judaism that was based on religion and narrow ideas of nationalism that the multi-lingual, reform-oriented schools of the interwar period had worked on transcending.

Historian Joshua Karlip's analysis of interwar Jewish nationalism sheds light on this development that he sees beginning in the 1930s.

By the second half of the 1930s, the forces of Diaspora nationalism and Yiddishism lost their attraction in favor of more radical options for Jewish national survival. These phenomena led the subjects of this book to conclude that the Jewish nation suffered from a pathology that led it to disdain its own language and culture. This dark conclusion led them to question the whole experiment of Jewish normalization and to seek a return to the exceptional conditions of premodernity in order to preserve Jewish identity.³³²

Continuing his argument into the ghetto, the project to normalize Jewish society had failed and the answer was to reach back to pre-modern seclusion and traditions to preserve Jewish identity. To the mother in the story and many of her contemporaries, the ghetto was just another proof of the impossibility of Jewish normalization. The willingness to compromise on religious issues and insist on Yiddish (or Hebrew) is therefore not a sign of change, but of continuation of prewar pessimism and conservatism.

What resonates most from the sources is their relative silence about the Germans. Although Germans confined the Jews in ghettos and subordinated them to all sorts of exploitive and abusive measures, the discourse remained very much concerned with inner-Jewish ideological questions that were not put in relation to the German assault. The educational discourse remained strictly inner-Jewish with discussion only about its Polish elements. Aggression against non-Jewish elements in school and cultural programs played out against Polish contents. Content-wise, ghetto education reacted little to the German realities of occupation and genocide. Simply

³³² Joshua M. Karlip, *The Tragedy of a Generation: The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 23.

said: Ghetto educators were concerned about assimilation while the whole building was collapsing. We will discuss this peculiarity further in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 6: CHANGING SOCIETY

A. Introduction

In an even harsher tone than about their Polishness, pedagogue Marian Małowist accused his “assimilated” students of classism. These students, he declared, did not even want to enroll in the ghetto courses, because they distrusted the Jewish teachers and the value of Jewish certificates. In order to secure diplomas that would more likely be recognized after the war, some parents sent their children to the ‘Aryan’ side to take examinations with the Polish education authorities (now underground) in the hope that the diplomas would be recognized after the war. Indeed, Antoni Marianowicz, one of the students who took their graduation exams this way, recalled later: “Someone from the Aryan side had to be authorized to examine in the ghetto. [...] I didn’t have a clue about mathematics, physics or chemistry. I think, I passed the exams thanks to ‘knowing’ somebody. For Libin [his humanities teacher], on other hand, I did well, and so I got a good grade on the certificate handed to me after the war.”³³³ The State Verifying Commission for the Legalization of Clandestine Education recognized school leaving certificates after the war.³³⁴ However, the most important reason for these youngsters’ lacking interest in the Jewish study groups in Małowist’s opinion was “a very interesting manifestation of snobbery”.³³⁵

Class had been an integral part of the discourse on assimilation since the mid-nineteenth century. The small group of Jews who promoted assimilation as an ideological program consisted mostly of members of the upper-middle class and had economic and social stake in integrating into Polish economic and political life. Apart from being hardly culturally or religiously distinguishable from ethnic Poles, disadvantages in Polish society notwithstanding,³³⁶ by the twentieth century many

³³³ Antoni Marianowicz, *Life strictly forbidden* (London; Portland, OR.: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), 35–36.

³³⁴ Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 349–350; Ruta Sakowska, “O Szkolnictwie i Tajnym Nauczaniu w Getcie Warszawskim,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 55 (1965): 80.

³³⁵ Yad Vashem JM 3489.2_28.

³³⁶ A very pessimistic take on the integration (or rather non-integration) of Jewish assimilationists into Polish society offers Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1977), 201–204.

shared also socio-economically more with their Polish countrymen than with other Jews. Assimilated Jews in Poland had been disproportionately wealthy, influential, and educated compared to their non-assimilated peers.³³⁷ Whether wealth followed assimilation or assimilation followed wealth: Class considerations were part of the discussions about Jewish belonging and only aggravated in the ghetto.

Vast differences in wealth became strikingly visible in the ghettos. While many were starving, some were initially doing well for themselves.³³⁸ These old and new elites drew criticism from the poor as well as concerned staff of relief organizations. Believing that injustices within Jewish society had just become more prevalent in the ghetto and were in their core not evoked by the Germans, educators and political activists called for change. They believed that re-stratification of Jewish society that had been ideologically desirable before the war, had become the very basis for Jewish survival. Schools and the wider education system had to attend to this need and promote and bring about social change.

Talcott Parsons, father of functional structuralism, suggested that the education system is the societal structure that regulates the distribution of members of society into different professions. While Parsons believed the education system to be meritocratic, others have pointed out that with allocation into professions schools consequently organize class affiliation.³³⁹ Through its qualification function, the school system administers diplomas and these determine who gains access to which profession and encourages to enter certain professions over others by emphasizing and rewarding desired subjects and activities. Following the idea that Jewish society

³³⁷ Polish society (educated middle class), as well, promoted Jewish assimilation in the 19th century by education into Polish culture, but with the rise of modern nationalist thought and the ideal of homogenous national society, Polish nationalists began to regard the Jewish minority on Polish territory as a problem. In the 20th century, fewer Poles believed that assimilation could be a solution to “the Jewish Question”, because Jews were now not only seen as a religious, but a national (or even ethnic) issue. Jewish integration seemed at this point neither possible nor desirable to them. Theodore R. Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The “Jewish Question” in Poland, 1850–1914*, 1st ed. (Northern Illinois University Press, 2005), 4–5. Cf. Israel Gutman et al., eds., *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars* (Brandeis University Press, 1989), 19; Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, 25–28; Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia: Volume III: 1914 to 2008* (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012), chap. 2; Stefan Kieniewicz, “Assimilated Jews in Nineteenth Century Warsaw,” in *The Jews in Warsaw: A History*, ed. Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky (Oxford [u.a.]: Blackwell [u.a.], 1991), 171–180.

³³⁸ Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 175.

³³⁹ Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*. For reproduction of strata cf. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, 2nd ed. (Sage Publications, 1990); Kathleen Lynch, “Reproduction: The Role of Cultural Factors and Educational Mediators,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 11, no. 1 (1990): 3–20; Löw, *Einführung in Die Soziologie Der Bildung Und Erziehung*, 83.

had too long favored academia, was unjust, and unable to survive on its own, the ghetto schools catered to the idea of a re-stratified Jewish society by supporting vocational and agricultural training that would motivate adolescents to seek employment in the productive sectors. The students were thus supposed to be raised into a new society in which everyone contributed equally to the survival and striving of the Jewish community during the war and in an aspired post war order. This chapter looks at how political activists and educators perceived class differences in the ghettos and how they discussed and addressed them within the education system by promoting agricultural and vocational training.

B. Class Conflicts in the Ghettos

Abraham Lewin, a high school teacher, General Zionist and member of Oyneg Shabes, observed the vast differences in wealth in the Warsaw ghetto, ranging from rich to starving. In his diary he asked how these differences should be understood:

Those who have money can get anything, from white pastries to the best fish, and the poor are dying on the streets from hunger. Who though is responsible for the indescribable misery and the vast and widening gulf of inequality in the ghetto, if not the Germans and their anti-Jewish policies?

Whether we can say with a clear conscience that ‘our hands did not spill this blood’ is a separate question which is well worth careful consideration.³⁴⁰

Although Lewin and others accredited the impoverishment in general to the ghettoization and exploitation by the Germans, they blamed the drastic social inequalities to some extent on developments within Jewish society itself.³⁴¹ An anonymous contributor of Oyneg Shabes found a more direct language. After interviewing an orphanage’s administrator Mr. Epstein on the material situation he reported the harsh answer: “Our ladies [donors] of nowadays come in elegant toilettes and bring for the hungry and emaciated, neglected and deserted children, a broken

³⁴⁰ Diary entry 23 May 1942, Lewin, *A Cup of Tears*, 91.

³⁴¹ A summary of opinions on the condition of Jewish society and Jewish behavior in the ghettos can be found in: Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?*, 233–239.

doll or two, a couple of punctured balls, two or three pencils — and with this, they get their charity settled. [...] foodstuff they keep for themselves and for their own children. As for poor children — the said ‘presents’ are quite enough.” Then Epstein showed him the destitute state of the children:

Alas, there are more than a few children like this. But how can we help them when we lack the most elementary things? Everything is being blamed on the conditions of wartime, but this is a lie. Even now there are in Warsaw still quite many moneyed households. If only there were some serious strong will and some warm, humane feeling, it would be possible to ease, in large measure, the pain and the poverty. But alas, the hearts are frozen stiff, and whatever is brought to us by the poor of Warsaw, by the proletariat, is of no use.³⁴²

Emphasizing the choice Warsaw Jewry had in his opinion, the writer ends his report with the cynical question whether the ghetto inhabitants should support this institution with what it needs or abandon the orphanage’s 500 children: “Let Jewish Warsaw, the largest Jewish community in Europe, decide this question.”³⁴³

Naturally, social differences were visible in the ghetto school system as well.³⁴⁴ Depending on their economic background students attended special classes in art and music, private classes in science and humanities, community organized schools, playrooms in soup kitchens, or no school at all. Pedagogue Nathan Koniński dedicated one section of his November 1941 report on children in the Warsaw ghetto to the better-off youth. He described the differences between prewar and ghetto life of the wealthier children. While they also suffered under the ghettoization, many were able to stay in their homes and had better nutritional and hygienic conditions than the lower class children.

Diverse courses such as art, graphic design, or violin were offered in the ghettos of Warsaw, Lodz, and Vilna. While students needed to be able to afford the fees, they also carried the financial risk of learning skills that were not applicable in

³⁴² AŻIH 266 Ring II 107, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 401.

³⁴³ AŻIH 266 Ring II 107.

³⁴⁴ AŻIH 669 Ring I 74.

the ghetto industries.³⁴⁵ As the war went on, even for these fortunate students the situation became more difficult. Mary Berg, who attended a school for graphic arts in the Warsaw ghetto, wrote in her diary on 4 July 1941:

The professors are satisfied with the progress made by the majority of the students. However, there is a great shortage of supplies; only two stores in the ghetto still sell small quantities of paper and paints at fantastic prices. A sheet of paper that cost twenty groszy before the war now costs four zlotys. India ink, brushes, and pens are nowhere to be found. Nevertheless, we manage somehow to go on with our studies. A certain number of students have been forced to drop the course because they had to take jobs in order to live.³⁴⁶

Despite the worsening situation for the better-off youth, the matter of economically advantaged “assimilationist” students remained an issue. With spite, an anonymous writer of a report on Jewish youth in Warsaw during the war condemned the attitudes of the middle-class ghetto youth. Disappointed that in his opinion the “majority of the bright, vigorous intelligent young people have gone away”, mainly to the Soviet Union, he listed the negative characteristics of what he spitefully called the “golden youth” that had replaced them.

It [the “golden youth”] is also deprived — distinct from organized youth — of any inner backbone of their own, of inhibitions, automatically absorbing Nazi morality and ethics. This youth burns with great, though humble, envy of all that is German; and this is the basis of its innermost, secret view of life. Not realizing what Nazism really means, the youth admires it with adulation and humbles itself before its evident power. Lacking not only a Marxist outlook, which can serve as the basis of the right attitude to such socio-political currents as fascism and Hitlerism, but also a deeply rooted middle-

³⁴⁵ AŻIH 664 Ring I 341.

³⁴⁶ Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 70.

class humanitarianism, this youth approves of fascism and Hitlerism, so long as it does not raise its hatchet against Jews.³⁴⁷

This quote can be read as part of the discourse about assimilation and class. Although he does not say it directly, the “golden youth” appears in this rant not only as classist (he later explains that they steal money to spend it on parties), but also as “assimilationist”, because it lacks solidarity with Jewish society. The youth he complained about was supposedly not politically organized, and admired the Germans without questioning the amorality of fascism as such, just lamenting that they were the targets. This lacking solidarity with Jewish society of the “golden youth” led in his opinion to the brutality of the Jewish Police that recruited its members mostly from “golden youth and bourgeois elements”.³⁴⁸ Also, the “golden youth” was mainly made up of refugees from Lodz that others, politically not as extreme people as he, also described as “assimilationist”.³⁴⁹ Across political camps, the middle-class youth was accused of assimilationism, thereby linking allegations of classism and assimilationism.

These accusations targeted not only the youth but also the adult middle-class. Lewin and Ringelblum in Warsaw, and the Lodz Ghetto Chronicle reported repeatedly about an unfolding conflict between intellectuals and workers. In the ghetto economy the skill set of workers and technicians was more useful than an academic degree, still, many members of the intelligentsia did economically initially better than the workers. Upon entering the ghetto, they often possessed more assets and for a while could sustain themselves without hard work. Moreover, they had better connections to business leaders and ghetto leadership and could therefore ask and give favors.³⁵⁰

Apart from their function to organize the needs of the ghetto population and communicate between the ghetto population and the German authorities, the Jewish ghetto administrations served as a place to hire otherwise unemployed academics. In

³⁴⁷ AZIH 596 Ring I 46, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 516–519.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Susan Lee Pentlin, “Holocaust Victims of Privilege,” in *Problems Unique to the Holocaust*, ed. Harry James Cargas (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 33–34.

³⁵⁰ In Vilna, the Germans murdered those ‘unfit to work’ in the first few months of occupation. Physical labor for the Germans was from the beginning reality for much larger proportions of the remaining population. That does not mean that class struggles did not exist in Vilna, but they are far less prevalent in sources compared to those from Warsaw and Lodz.

this way, the Jewish ghetto administrations were blown up far beyond what was necessary in order to bring as many people as possible into the advantage of receiving a salary and a labor card that would protect them from deportation to a labor camp.³⁵¹ The degree-holding middle-class thus became the winner of a class bias that secured them jobs in the Jewish ghetto administration and its facilities more easily than workers.

Among the working class population, this class advantage stirred up unrest. “Intellectuals” as representatives of those who did not earn a living through physical labor, became the target of complaints about unjust distribution of money, food, and other material goods according to class rather than productive contribution to the ghetto economy. Faced with rapidly deteriorating life conditions and earning the little they made under harsh working conditions, the lower strata noticed and judged class differences harsher than before the war, even though everyone lost.³⁵² In Lodz, time and again workers turned to strike to protest against Rumkowski’s policy of favoritism.³⁵³

Personal gains of elites notwithstanding, the situation of “intellectuals” was not as good as enraged workers made it out to be. The teachers, counted by Lewin and Ringelblum as intellectuals, were in a dire situation. Many had lost their jobs when they were no longer allowed to teach at Polish schools and the Jewish schools were closed. The Teacher Section of ŻSS (Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna), the Jewish Social Self Help, which supported organizations and individuals with financial aid and food rations,³⁵⁴ had several thousand primary and middle school teachers in Poland registered as unemployed in the spring of 1941. According to their numbers, there were 600 active teachers in Warsaw before the war and during the first months of war, the same number was added to by incoming teachers from the provinces and

³⁵¹ These cards granted many workers additional provisions. For a while those in possession of a labor card were exempt from deportations, which is the reason why these cards were dubbed “life certificates”. As we know, they gave their carrier false hope of survival. Entry 23 July 1942: Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 241; Michael Good, *The Search for Major Plagge: The Nazi Who Saved Jews* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2006), 36–38, 64–65; Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 385.

³⁵² Gumkowski, *Briefe Aus Litzmannstadt*, 39.

³⁵³ The critique against the Jewish leadership slowly turned into opposition against the German regime under the auspices of Communists. (see reports about the protests in the Lodz Ghetto Chronicle in May and June 1944). Cf. Löw, *Juden Im Getto Litzmannstadt*, 328–329; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 326, 333.

³⁵⁴ AŻIH ŻSS 211_1068, September 1940; AŻIH ŻSS 211_1073, March 1941; AŻIH ŻSS 211_1082, June 1941.

Lodz.³⁵⁵ With high unemployment rates among teachers before the war the Jewish community was far from being able to provide employment for all of them in the ghetto.

In Vilna, the Jewish Council created a School Commission as early as September 1941 (only days after the establishment of the ghetto) and employed 40 teachers to teach the registered 3,000 children. In murder waves of the fall 1941 the Germans targeted mainly those they deemed “unfit for work”, which dramatically decreased the number of children in the Vilna school system, so that in March 1942 only 700 children attended school and were taught by about 20 teachers. The German authorities distributed only ten teaching permits, which left many teachers unemployed. The problem was later resolved with special protection permits. “But meanwhile”, Herman Kruk wrote wearily in his diary, “dozens of teachers were gone...”³⁵⁶ The kehilla of Warsaw had tried to cover part of the teachers’ wages for a while, but with increasing financial demands from the pauperized population and German avarice, this practice had to stop soon. In Lodz, the German rulers did not allow the Polish school authorities to pay Jewish teachers. This issue was only resolved when the Jewish Council took the schools under its wings and established a minimum wage for teachers.³⁵⁷

Teachers in Lodz and Warsaw turned to private tutoring to make a living, but were soon undercut by other unemployed academics and high school graduates. As an anonymous reporter of the Ringelblum Archive pointed out, there had been an overproduction of intelligentsia among Jews before the war. Especially teachers exceeded by far the demand. Several seminaries produced each year more and more teaching candidates. “Besides”, continued the report, “each kind of high school graduate [...] could take a one-year ‘abituriencki’ [high school graduation] course after which one could become a teacher. This way, the number of qualified unemployed multiplied, especially teachers of primary schools. [...] This is the explanation for the lack of professionals in the ghetto, but also why the competition and unemployment in this profession was larger than in any other one.”³⁵⁸ Teachers therefore spiraled quickly into poverty and turned to the Jewish Councils and welfare organizations for help.

³⁵⁵ AŻIH 669 Ring I 74.

³⁵⁶ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 231–233.

³⁵⁷ Yad Vashem O.6_243, 149–150.

³⁵⁸ AŻIH 669 Ring I 74.

Pauperization was universal and was universally mourned. The “declassing” of academics, however, seems to have aroused special reactions from the ghetto’s intelligentsia. Lewin lamented the pitiful existence of former intellectuals and teachers who lost their position and the respect they were used to. “They have to suffer not only material deprivation but moral humiliation and shame. The tragedies of this kind are no less grave, pitiful and dismaying than the tragedies that are caused to us by the German vandals.”³⁵⁹ Perhaps a little overly dramatic in the spur of the moment, this comparison shows how seriously Lewin was concerned about the situation and the future of the Jewish intelligentsia. But he was not alone. Some took practical care of the matter. The Ghetto Chronicle in Lodz reported on 4 March 1941 about the intelligentsia kitchen, a soup kitchen for the academic population.

The Soup Kitchen for the Intelligentsia is a likely place to find people who once were something, who at one time held important positions, living life to the fullest, and who have today been torn away from all of that. It is only when we look at the regular customers of Kitchen No. 2 from that point of view that we can appreciate what the kitchen gives them besides food; it is there and only there that they can find even the illusion of what they had once been accustomed to: a measure of politeness in people’s behavior and in the way they are treated – they who today are *déclassé* and pauperized – a clean and well-set table, dishes that are not nicked, and, finally, pleasant surroundings and good company.³⁶⁰

Class bias is also evident in the school administration in the Warsaw Ghetto. In the fall of 1940, representatives of Jewish educational organizations united in the *Farshtendigungskomisie* (Coordination Committee), a commission of a wide range of pre-war Jewish education organizations that aimed at standardizing schools of different backgrounds.³⁶¹ So much time was already lost for the children who had been without proper schooling for a year that the commission pursued a double strategy: The *Farshtendigungskomisie* cooperated in organizing secret schooling, but

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, 28–29.

³⁶¹ Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 344.

it also hoped that education would be officially allowed at some point. The members discussed administrative as well as curricular and ideological matters in order to be ready to immediately start classes the moment a permit could be obtained from the Germans.

The commission had to wait almost another year, but when Chairman Adam Czerniaków finally received permission from the German authorities to open Jewish schools under the supervision of the Judenrat in early September 1941, a broad and differentiated private school network and effective administration were already in place underground and merely had to move up.

When Czerniaków heard about the soon-coming approval he launched a new school commission, the *Yidisher Shul-Rat* (Jewish School Council). Chair was a Dr. Stein. She invited representatives of several pre-war school organizations to be members of the Shul-Rat, namely Tarbut, Yavneh, Shul-Kult, and former gemina schools.³⁶² Members of the Farshtendigungskomisie that were not included in the Shul-Rat were Tsysho, Chorev, and Bais Yaakov.

From this exclusion arose conflict. The legalization of school was the chance to pave the way for an education according to the organizations' ideological preferences. Considering the prewar student numbers of the school organizations, the two factions (the included and the excluded groups) each represented about fifty percent of the student body, not counting the students formerly in Polish public schools. This means that the Shul-Rat excluded a significant group from their activities when education was on the verge of becoming legal in the ghetto and an opportunity arose to broaden the scope of one's influence.

After the founding meeting, the presiding commission of the Shul-Rat held a meeting with representatives of the initially excluded groups to discuss with them a possible expansion of the council. Tsysho, Chorev, and Bais Yaakov, already active in the Farshtendigungskomisie, were not interested in joining this Judenrat-influenced board. Quite the opposite: They questioned the legitimacy of the Shul-Rat that was founded later and without consulting the Farshtendigungskomisie. Instead of joining the Shul-Rat they demanded it to be dissolved and to pass on its initiative to the Farshtendigungskomisie instead.

³⁶² See Chapter 2 for descriptions of these organizations.

The presiding commission of the Shul-Rat and its member organizations did not share this opinion. They insisted that the activities of the Shul-Rat did not in any way negate the competence of the older Farshtendigungskomisie. In the minutes of the second plenary session of the Yiddisher Shul-Rat in Warsaw the secretary quoted the Shul-Rat's opinion: "The field of operations, the aims and the powers of the Education Council [Shul-Rat] are much wider, more practical and greater. The agreement between the three organizations [Tarbut, Yavneh, Shul-Kult] is an established fact; and what should be discussed is the expansion of the Education Council, not its disbanding."³⁶³ To call the cooperation between Tarbut, Yavneh, and Shul-Kult "an established fact" after one meeting, although there had been much wider cooperation before, must have been an affront for the opponents.

Although the minutes state that the Shul-Rat offered the other organizations to join, they also reveal the conditions. During a meeting that took place at the Judenrat Office with the Councilman Abraham Wolfowicz, the discussion ended with the following resolutions: "1 - that representatives of the organizations invited shall inform their parent bodies of the principles of the established Education Council [apparently non-negotiable at this point]; for this purpose the text of the accepted project shall be mailed to them; 2. - that invited organizations shall submit their proposals to the expanded Education Council [the organizations who were already members did not have to undergo such a procedure] within a short time, in order to start negotiations [only negotiations, not automatic membership]." The Shul-Rat did not wait, however, to proceed with its work, although the opinion had been raised that they should hold on until the negotiations had taken place.³⁶⁴

The program commission (in charge of curricula, learning material, and teacher training — and thereby indicating the ideological direction) — underlined the divide by recording that it would only invite specialists to cooperate who "stand in ideological connection with the organizations of the Education Council."³⁶⁵ Apparently, ideological differences were considered important enough to avoid collaboration. What were these ideological differences? Why did this conflict arise? Were these really ideological differences?

³⁶³ AŽIH 666 Ring I 345, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 465.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

The organizations represented in the Judenrat supported Shul-Rat were Hebrew-speaking Tarbut (run by General and moderate Zionists), Yiddish and Hebrew-speaking Shul-Kult (run by the Right Po'ale Tsiyon), and orthodox Yavneh (run by Mizrachi). The two school networks that the Shul-Rat excluded were Tsysho and Chorev/Bais Yaakov. Tsysho was a secular socialist Yiddish school organization that was run by the Bund and Left Po'ale Tsiyon. The Yiddish ultra-orthodox Chorev and Bais Yaakov belonged to the Agudah. What did these two have in common against the others that they were not welcome?

Most obviously, there was a split in language: The Shul-Rat represented the groups that promoted mainly Polish or Hebrew, the opposition Yiddish. While Tsysho belonged to the political far left and stood in political opposition to the Shul-Rat groups, the same cannot be said for Agudah. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the language issue was decided pro Yiddish in a broad consensus.

More than an expression of language preferences and ideology, this divide was a signal of social divide. The students and supporters of Tsysho and the Agudah schools came mostly from the lower — Yiddish speaking — classes, whereas the organizations of the Shul-Rat recruited their students mostly from the middle class that mainly spoke Polish. At least as much as on ideological or pedagogical differences, the conflict was based on social inequality and prejudice.

The Jewish Council turned the Shul-Rat into the Judenrat's Department of Schools in September 1941 after the German permission of official schooling. Chair became Abraham Wolfowicz,³⁶⁶ councilman and former headmaster of a Warsaw gymnasium. The Farshtendigungskomisie became obsolete.

While Lewin as well as the writers of the Ringelblum Archive³⁶⁷ and the Lodz Ghetto Chronicle show the consciousness and anxiety of their own deteriorating upper and middle class, they also reflected more critically about these issues and voiced their ideological concerns about the structure of Jewish society. Repeatedly, they acknowledged the overrepresentation of intellectuals vis-à-vis trained workers and farmers and discussed this fact not only in the context of the ghetto economy where it had immediate consequences, but also in the context of the future of Jewish society in Poland or elsewhere. Rumkowski was certainly not concerned with

³⁶⁶ Born 1891. His fate is unknown. Before the war, Wolfowicz was headmaster of the Chinuch Gymnasium in Warsaw, since April 1941 he was a member of the Judenrat.

³⁶⁷ Ringelblum had called for a reform of the "bourgeois education" long before the war. Cf. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?*, 37.

socialist ideas, but he supported the matter in order to create a productive ghetto industry.³⁶⁸ The proposed solution for class issues as well as current problems of ghetto life was therefore to advocate agricultural and vocational training of academics and youths.³⁶⁹

C. Education Campaigns for Social Change

The ghetto discourse renewed and augmented the prewar notion that Jewish society required professional reorganization and social re-stratification and began implementing it. Jewish Councils, School Departments, and school organizations focused their efforts on particularly two education campaigns regarding these changes, agricultural and vocational training. Zionist and non Zionist left leaning organizations as well as the more conservative Jewish Councils tried to recruit more upper and middle-class youth for vocational and agricultural training to make them employable in the ghetto workshops, but also to restructure Jewish society so it could normalize its strata to function on its own in a Jewish state. Since we have discussed vocational training already in Chapter 4 and the arguments for it were similar, we will focus here on agricultural training.

Agriculture took a prominent position in ideological debates of socialism and nationalism among eastern European Jews since the early 20th century. The discourse followed western European Zionist thought that a settlement of Palestine should be accompanied by the creation of a new society and not just be a mere relocation of Jews. Influenced by socialist ideas, the objective was to rebuild Jewish society from its foundations up and completely change its employment structure. Because Jews had long been barred from land ownership in western as well as in eastern Europe, Jewish society had a particularly low percentage of farmers compared to the gentile population. Although the agricultural sector was shrinking in the early 20th century because of the industrialization, many Zionists therefore promoted the agrarization of Jewish society.³⁷⁰

In eastern Europe, Jews discussed an expansion of farming also in the context

³⁶⁸ YIVO Territorial Collection Poland 2, RG 116, box 2, folder 18.

³⁶⁹ Lewin, *A Cup of Tears*, 149, 152, 232; Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 245–246. Ringelblum even conducted a survey on how Warsaw's Jewish intellectual class was destroyed.

³⁷⁰ Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 52–53.

of socio-economic plight of Jews especially in the Pale of Settlement. Hoping that farming would alleviate the poverty caused by anti-Jewish laws, they pushed for more Jewish involvement in agriculture for pragmatic as well as economic and ideological reasons. Anti-Zionist socialist groups like the Bund believed as well that Jewish society needed a re-stratification and more engagement in agriculture to then join the international proletariat in their struggle against bourgeois rule. Agriculture was seen as necessary to redirect Jewish productivity in order to make it possible to survive as a nation. Agricultural training for Polish Jews gained therefore significance beyond preparations for *aliyah*.³⁷¹

To increase interest, especially among the youth, organizations in the west and a little later in the east launched educational programs that combined Zionist ideological content with practical training in farming and attractive activities for youngsters. The Zionist *He'Haluts* (The Pioneer) ran several so called *hakhsharah* (training) farms to prepare their members for migration to Palestine.³⁷² Members of the *He'Haluts* and their youth organization *He'Haluts Ha'Tsa'ir* (The Young Pioneer) founded *ToPoRol* (*Towarzystwo Popierania Rolnictwa*), the Society for Promoting Agriculture, in 1933 to advance agriculture among Jews and to train Jewish agricultural workers in Poland.

In the Ghettos, *ToPoRol* greatly expanded its promotional and practical work. In cooperation with the Jewish Department of Municipal Gardens *ToPoRol* took over all agricultural and gardening activities in the Warsaw Ghetto. The work was supported by the Judenrat, the Joint, and private donations. Further funds came from loans and husbanding and tuition fees. Volunteers did most of the work under the guidance of professional agronomist instructors. For obvious pragmatic reasons, they incited the ghetto population to grow vegetables wherever possible and encouraged them to remove the gravel from all free surfaces and vegetate them with grass and flowers for better hygiene and spirit in the gray dirty courtyards and ghetto streets.³⁷³ Kenneth Helphand, Professor of Landscape Architecture, interpreted the green patches in the ghettos therefore as “defiant gardens”: “Gardens straddled the territory between the practical and the aesthetic. Given the horrific conditions of the ghettos of

³⁷¹ Israel Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization*, 0 ed. (East European Monographs, 1989), v–vii, 14–22; Howard M. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in the Modern World* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2005), 256.

³⁷² Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization*, 20–22.

³⁷³ AŽIH ARI/PH/5–3–3; AŽIH 195 Ring II 79; AŽIH Lodz Getto 205_408.

eastern Europe, a garden or park might be seen as a luxury, but the desire for some contact with the natural world and a quest for the restoration of some semblance of normalcy represented by the common landscapes of garden and park was critical.³⁷⁴ The gardens were, however, not only pragmatic and defiant, but also educational.

Building on the prewar idea that Jewish society needed re-stratification to succeed among other nations, be it in the diaspora or in a Jewish state, ToPoRol was convinced that the problem was only more prevalent in the ghetto and could be mitigated by promoting agricultural activities:

For a very long time now, one of the basic problems in the life of the Jewish people — at times in a more acute, at other times in a milder form — was how to re-stratify their social structure. In the last few years of the prewar period the intensity of the movement in this direction paralleled the drive toward emigration overseas. At present, the problem of restructuring Jewish society and redirecting its productivity has become a question of its very survival and future. Taking this as the premise, ToPoRol took it upon itself to promote agriculture among Jews.³⁷⁵

Under the auspices of the School Department, ToPoRol and ORT (Obshchestvo Remeslennago i Zemledelecheskago Truda Sredi Evreev v Rossii),³⁷⁶ the Society for Handicraft and Agricultural Work among the Jews of Russia, developed professional courses in agriculture and village husbandry for adolescents. The program aimed at providing the students with theoretical knowledge and practical professional skills for farming and gardening. Classes entailed botany, zoology, physics and chemistry, along with soil science, gardening, vegetable growing, general plant tending, ornamental gardening, apiculture, fowl breeding and

³⁷⁴ Kenneth Helphand, “Ghetto Gardens. Life in the Midst of Death,” in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, ed. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 87; Cf. also Kenneth I. Helphand, *Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2008), 60–105.

³⁷⁵ Report from spring 1940. AŽIH ARI/PH/5–3–3. English translation by Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 519–520.

³⁷⁶ Founded in the late 19th century in St. Petersburg by Nikolai Bakst (1842–1904) to promote occupational change among Jews. ORT became active in Poland in the interwar period and continued activities in the ghettos.

some others. Three days a week were allocated to practical work, four to theoretical lectures.³⁷⁷ Even a course in ornamental gardening was planned for June 1941.³⁷⁸ According to ToPoRol's report to Warsaw's Judenrat, many of the graduates of these classes were able to find employment in the ghetto and on German-run farms around Warsaw.

In cooperation with the School Departments, ToPoRol recruited thousands of school children in Lodz and Warsaw to remove the gravel and till fields and vegetable patches under the guidance of gardening instructors. ToPoRol provided the seeds and saplings for these parcels (and others held by public institutions) free of charge.³⁷⁹ In return, the students had to turn over their harvest to the Jewish community. In evaluations of the program teachers lamented the students' frustration with this practice, who, after all, had been caring for the crops and looking forward to the fruit of their work.³⁸⁰ Still, the gardening program had been successful in its educational objectives, they stated. Through gardening, the students had learned collective work, appreciation for nature, and love for working the land.³⁸¹ Even without the material gain of the harvest, the teachers supported the program as educationally and ideologically valuable.

Emphasizing the educational and social significance of agricultural training, several schools in Lodz suggested that "work in the plots can take one of the first places in the general work program at school and dominate in the education of the youth."³⁸² Finally, the feedback also contains the students' reaction that shows the success of ToPoRol's ideological goal: "The Children understood that this work results in beautiful harvests, that working in a group they can achieve much. Many of them loved this work to such a degree that they decided to devote themselves in the future to the work on the land."³⁸³

D. Conclusion

In the previous chapter (Chapter 5), we saw an alliance between politically diverse groups against "assimilationists". Advocates of a Jewish nation, be it in

³⁷⁷ AŻIH ARI/PH/5-3-3.

³⁷⁸ Whether that class was ever taught remains uncertain.

³⁷⁹ AŻIH ARI/PH/5-3-3.

³⁸⁰ In Lodz, AŻIH Lodz Getto 205_408.

³⁸¹ AŻIH Lodz Getto 205_408, 46.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 62.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 62.

Palestine or in Europe, secular or religious, agreed that “assimilationists” had to be encouraged to return to the Jewish community. Assimilationist tendencies most frequently appeared in the upper and middle classes. Besides introducing them to the Jewish languages and religion they had supposedly forgotten in the process of Polonizing, proponents of the Jewish national cause were convinced that the Jewish middle class had to be persuaded to give up class privileges and help to change the occupational structure of Jewish society. Related to questions of Jewish belonging and loyalty is therefore the discourse on the socio-economic structure of this aspired Jewish society that extended beyond socialist circles.

Foregrounded by the economic crisis of ghettoization, to socialists, the re-stratification of Jewish society was not to be further delayed and even middle-class educators and community workers understood the necessity for change if Jewish society wanted to survive the war and as a possibly independent nation after the war. In prewar Poland ToPoRol and ORT, among others, had trained their members in a politically contained effort. In the ghettos, agricultural and vocational training became mainstream, uniting political factions from socialist to conservative not only for practical reasons. Agricultural and vocational training organizations formed an alliance in their aim to educate a new generation in practical professions and thus change the middle-class youth’s attitude toward physical labor and their connection to the land, as well as restructure Jewish society now.

CHAPTER 7: APPEASEMENT AND RESISTANCE — AFFIRMATIVE AND SUBVERSIVE APPROACHES TO GHETTO EDUCATION

A. Introduction

Education has always been a cornerstone of Jewish life. Many survivors stressed the importance of study in their attempt to preserve a ‘normal’, sane existence. [...] Documenting such commitments, and what may even be considered heroic efforts, underscores not only the extent to which they sought to preserve some semblance of normality, but also illustrates how their studies constituted a basis for resistance and, ultimately, survival.³⁸⁴

With this quote from his article “Clandestine Schooling and Education Among Jews During the Holocaust”, Jeffrey Glanz represents the typical interpretation of school and education in the ghettos in historical works and memoirs. Like Glanz, many affirm that education has always been crucial to Jewish identity and culture. Also the depiction of education as a heroic act and its labeling as spiritual resistance or foundation for armed resistance pertain to the academic and public discourse on cultural and educational phenomena during the Holocaust.

In the immediate postwar era, research on Jewish resistance was concerned with proving that Jews were not passive victims of the Nazis. Fighting the common perception that Jews had gone “like sheep to the slaughter”, historians and survivors showed that Jews, too, took to armed struggle to defend if not their life then their honor. Mac Davis, for example, published a book in 1945 with the telling title “Jews Fight Too!”.³⁸⁵ Works in Yiddish, Hebrew, English, and German that appeared in the 1940s and 1950s on Jewish resistance therefore focused on topics like partisans and

³⁸⁴ Jeffrey Glanz, “Clandestine Schooling and Education Among Jews During the Holocaust,” *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 16, no. 1 (2000): 50.

³⁸⁵ Mac Davis, *Jews Fight Too!* (New York, NY: Jordon Publishing Company, 1945).

uprisings in ghettos and camps, emphasizing strength and bravery of the Jewish fighters.³⁸⁶

The following decades saw a conceptual augmentation of the term beyond armed struggle that Raul Hilberg had still described as the only (and overall negligible) form of resistance.³⁸⁷ Prominently, Yehuda Bauer disagreed on the matter. He included all concerted Jewish efforts to undermine Nazi authority in his definition.³⁸⁸ As more scholars researched Jewish reactions to the Holocaust, they incorporated involvement of (female) helpers of the fighters, spiritual resistance, resistance through withdrawal (by fleeing or suicide as ultimate flight), and eventually saving one's life as resistance against total annihilation. In his treatment of *The Spectrum of Resistance During the Holocaust: An Essay in Description and Definition*, historian Emil Fackenheim shared his thoughts after participating in the famous conversation between Yehuda Bauer and Raul Hilberg on the matter.³⁸⁹ In possibly the broadest definition, Fackenheim defined not only every action against the Nazis, but all Jewish being in the "world of the Holocaust" as resistance.

In extremity — when the Nazi logic of destruction had become the Final Solution — *kiddush ha-hayyim* revealed itself as a *unique form of resistance no longer distinguishable from life itself — whether the life meant survival for an hour, a day, a week, or even by good fortune until after the evil Umwelt³⁹⁰ was destroyed*. For to all the other resistance fighters inside and outside Nazi-occupied Europe resistance

³⁸⁶ Examples include: Szmerek Kaczerginski, *Partizaner Geyen! Fartseykhenungen Fun Vilner Geto* (Buenos Aires: Central Association of Polish Jews in Argentina, 1947); Kermish, Joseph, *Der Oyfshand in Varshever Geto: 19ter April–16ter Mai 1943* (Buenos Aires: Central Association of Polish Jews in Argentina, 1948); C. Grossman and M. Gefen, eds., *Sefer Hapartisanim Hajehudim* (Jerusalem, 1958); Melech Noy, *Hur'ban U-Mered Shel Yehude Vashah: Sefer Eduyot Veazkarot* (Tel Aviv: The Council of Workers of the General Labor Union of the Jewish Workers in the Land of Israel, 1946); Dorothy Bar-Adon and Pesach Bar-Adon, *The Jewish Partisans* (Merhavia: Wrokers Book Guild, 1958); Friedman, *Martyrs and Fighters. The Epic of the Warsaw Ghetto*; Isaac Schwarzbart, *The Story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: Its Meaning and Message* (New York, NY: World Jewish Congress, 1953); Josef Wulf, *Vom Kampf Auf Leben Und Tod Im Ghetto Warschau* (Bonn: Bundestzentrale für Heimatdienst, 1958); Bruno Baum, *Widerstand in Auschwitz* (Berlin: Kongress Verlag, 1957).

³⁸⁷ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews, Vol. 1*, 22–28.

³⁸⁸ Yehuda Bauer, "Jewish Leadership and Reactions to Nazi Policies," in *The Holocaust as Historical Experience*, ed. Yehuda Bauer and Nathan Rotenstreich (New York, NY: Holmes & Meier, 1981), 173–174.

³⁸⁹ Emil Fackenheim, "The Spectrum of Resistance during the Holocaust: An Essay in Description and Definition," *Modern Judaism* 2, no. 2 (1982): 113–30.

³⁹⁰ Non-World, a term Fackenheim uses in dependence on Martin Heidegger.

was a doing. For Jews (and semi-, quarter- or honorary Jews) caught by the full force of the Nazi logic of destruction, resistance was a way of being. [...] *In an Umwelt whose sole ultimate self-expression is a system of humiliation, torture and murder, the maintenance by the victims of a shred of humanity is not merely the basis of resistance but already part of it. [...] Here is the definition of resistance, sought after for so long.* [italics in the original]³⁹¹

Providing and attending school in a Nazi ghetto is as such, without question, commendable. Surviving such horrors while maintaining sophisticated expressions of one's culture required enormous strength and effort. The *Lerer Yizkor Bukh. Di Umgekumene Lerer fun Tsysho Shuln in Poyln* (teacher memory book of the perished teachers of Tsysho schools in Poland) commemorates the struggles of perished teachers in Polish ghettos.³⁹² While Fackenheim's broad definition is valid on a normative level, it is, however, not useful in historical-analytical research. The public and academic debate on how to morally view Jewish behavior during the Holocaust, while certainly necessary, has led the discussion of resistance to be drawn into a moral context that moved further and further away from the discourse in the ghettos. In fact, contemporary sources hardly ever mentioned education in the context of resistance.

In this chapter, I will therefore take a different approach to previous academic studies and analyze the discourse on education and resistance in the ghettos themselves by utilizing only sources from that period. In analytical, not moral, opposition to the works of Glanz, Kardos, Kostanian-Danzig, Michlic, and Rudavsky³⁹³ whose works on ghetto schools rely heavily on postwar testimonies and therefore report the postwar discourse on education rather than the ghetto discourse itself, I propose a narrower definition of resistance: Resistance in the context of

³⁹¹ Fackenheim, "The Spectrum of Resistance during the Holocaust," 127–128.

³⁹² Chaim Solomon Kazdan and [et al.], eds., *Lerer Yizkor Bukh. Di Umgekumene Lerer Fun Tsysho Shuln in Poyln* (New York, NY: Komitet tsu fareybikn dem ondenk fun di umgekumene lerer fun di Tsysho shuln in Poyln, 1953). See especially: Genia Silkes, "Der Yidishe Lerer in Varshever Geto, in: *Ibid.*, 559–566.

³⁹³ Glanz, "Clandestine Schooling and Education Among Jews During the Holocaust," 48–69; Kardos, "'Not Bread Alone': Clandestine Schooling and Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Holocaust"; Rachel Kostanian-Danzig, *Spiritual Resistance in the Vilna Ghetto* (Vilnius: Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, 2004); Michlic-Coren, "Battling Against the Odds: Culture, Education and the Jewish Intelligentsia in the Warsaw Ghetto, 1940–1942," 77–92; Rudavsky, *To Live with Hope, to Die with Dignity*.

education is a conscious act designed to undermine the Nazi system of oppression and annihilation as it is known to the actors at the respective point in time. This has, by no means, to be armed resistance. It includes acts of educating a critical attitude toward the regime that can, but does not have to, lead to oppositional action — be it armed resistance, sabotage, or otherwise deviant behavior.

In order to analyze the discourse of education and resistance in the ghettos, we have to complicate the matter by going beyond the simple question of whether or not education was resistance, taking the step from documenting to analyzing. In which cases were the discourses on education and resistance linked and in which not? Who resisted whom, why, and how? Where did the conflict lines run on the issue within Jewish society?

B. Affirmative Education

Jewish Councils as well as communal activists acknowledged the crass misery of the children. Their death rates were the highest amongst all ghetto inhabitants. Many children were sick or left by their parents as orphans, without any care and protection when those were deported or died. Thousands of young children lived and died in the streets of the ghettos. An anonymous report from the Ringelblum Archive titled “A Visit to the Most Unfortunate of the Children” stated that the word “need” was reinvented in the ghetto: “A new, special kind of need appeared recently, a need whose meaning is deeper, more moving than any meaning ascribed to need, up to now. This is the need of a poor, deserted child in Warsaw. For this need, the strongest, most empathic word is too pale for description; the most shocking term is insufficient to render it, its image daunts human imagination.”³⁹⁴ The Jewish authorities as well as several welfare organizations like the Jewish Self Help and Centos tried their best to mitigate child poverty by allotting communal resources and raising funds from the ghetto population.³⁹⁵ Czerniaków in Warsaw proclaimed the Month of the Child with massive advertisement and fundraising events to solicit

³⁹⁴ AŻIH Ring II 107, English translation in Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 397.

³⁹⁵ AŻIH Centos 200_24; AŻIH ŻSS 211_1084; AŻIH ŻSS 211_1069; APL PSŻ RG 278/1076; Geto-Tsaytung, No. 13, 20 June 1941; No. 17, 14 September 1941; Yad Vashem JM 3488.2_95; Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 41; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 317–329; Sakowska, *Menschen Im Ghetto*, 116; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 58–60.

support for the ghetto children.³⁹⁶ Also in Vila and Lodz the Jewish authorities organized supplementary meals for school children.³⁹⁷

Starvation and disease were not the only problems the Jewish authorities noted regarding the ghetto children. Soon reports surfaced in which the authors described the drastic psychological changes the children underwent because of educational neglect (see Chapter 4). In his essay on the situation of the Jewish child in the Warsaw ghetto from early November 1941, pedagogue Natan Koniński explicated the problems resulting from the children's lack of proper education. "Unavailability of schooling could not only result in the worst of consequences for those children. Left to the treacherous influences of the street, they could not but succumb to demoralization and degeneration."³⁹⁸ He explained further:

Not only diseases wasted their character and intellect. The longer the time spent by a child in such point [refugee shelter], the poorer became his mental development. [...] Two years of abnormal existence worked so deep a change in them that they turned into juvenile beggars and thieves. They became bad, wicked, selfish and unfriendly beings. Stealing was not limited to the street, even within the 'points' thefts became common. [...] These circumstances made the children suspicious and distrustful, favoring the growth of criminal instincts. Laziness and unfriendliness became another characteristic of children in the points. They would refuse to help in cleaning up the point; one had to urge and press them to bring the soup to the kitchen, and they learned to swear, to shout and scream, to answer parents and other adults insolently.³⁹⁹

As we have seen before, the Jewish Councils and majority of the elites in the Lodz, Warsaw, and Vilna ghettos believed that an orderly and productive ghetto

³⁹⁶ Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 333, 364, 385.

³⁹⁷ APL PSŻ RG 278/1076, Geto-Tsaytung, No. 16, 17 August 1941; Rumkowski's Announcement No. 67, Yad Vashem O.34 Nachman Zonamend Collection, folder 73; Rolnikaite, *Ich Muss Erzählen*, 101–102; Mark Dworzecki, *Yerushalayim de-Lite in Kamf Un Umkum (Jerusalem of Lithuania in Battle and Destruction)* (Paris, 1948), 68–87.

³⁹⁸ AŻIH Ring I 47, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 372.

³⁹⁹ AŻIH Ring I 47, English translation in: *Ibid.*, 375–376.

would be the best strategy for survival. They therefore implemented policies to pacify the ghetto populations and admonished them to work.⁴⁰⁰

As late as May 1942, when details about mass murder of Jews in the German-occupied territories was common knowledge, the leadership of Warsaw believed that removing the roaming youth from the streets would help to convince the Germans of the ghetto's productivity. Abraham Lewin passed on a report he had heard from a close friend. The Jewish administration had had a meeting with the Germans about the "removal of the Jews from Warsaw". In this meeting, Lewin reiterated, it was shown that Jews in the ghetto were productive and contributed to the German economy. During the meeting, a plan emerged to underline the ghetto's productivity. The committee decided to gather all begging children in the ghetto and bring them to a boarding school. Apparently, several Jewish businesses promised to donate to this boarding school. "As a result of this meeting it is said that the plan to remove all the Jews from Warsaw had been cancelled."⁴⁰¹ As we know now, this was an illusion.

When Chaim Rumkowski negotiated with the Germans for a permit to erect schools, he convinced them with the argument that the establishment of schools would prevent the youth from moral descent. The Germans could not care less about whether or not the Jewish children would receive a formal education, but they did care about stability and order in the ghetto. In March 1941, Rumkowski turned to the ghetto youth in his *Geto-Tsaytung* (Ghetto Newspaper): "Having come to the conclusion that the only way out for the Jews is to be represented as skilled workers in all areas, I have decided to expand the work force to unskilled persons, primarily to the youth that has to become a productive element at all costs. The work permit is our life pass." As discussed in Chapter 4, he formed a commission to organize the vocational training program for the youth.

Considering that he was not able to integrate all youngsters (over the age of 15) at once into the vocational training program, Rumkowski explained his criteria: "I will be forced to control first the intelligence, skills, education, material situation, health status of the candidate, and, most importantly, whether the candidate is a diligent and quiet element who really sees his work as a matter of his future

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. Rumkowski's program for the Lodz ghetto, APL PSŻ RG 278/1076, *Geto-Tsaytung*, No. 1, 7 March 1941. Speech by Rumkowski on 2 March 1942: "Work protects us from annihilation", English translation in: Adelson and Lapidés, *Lodz Ghetto*, 1989, 231–235; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, xxxix.

⁴⁰¹ Lewin, Diary Entry 10 May 1942. Lewin, *A Cup of Tears*, 67.

existence.”⁴⁰² In speeches to the ghetto youth, namely during his visits at the children’s colony in Marysin, orphanages, and schools, he repeatedly urged them to be quiet and obedient to his rules.⁴⁰³ Gens in Vilna held similar beliefs. He also warned the ghetto youth to remain quiet and do good work to avoid penalty from the Germans.⁴⁰⁴ In all three ghettos public schools, factory schools, and children’s soup kitchens, followed the program of obedience and work hoping this would help keep the youth out of trouble and the ghetto in the Germans’ good graces.

Administrators and pedagogues who believed in survival by obedience and work were seriously worried about youngsters who did not follow these principles. Convinced that this was the only way of survival for the group, anyone who stepped out of line, even a child, jeopardized the ghetto image presented to the Germans, and thereby the wellbeing of the group. The recurring labeling of youngsters as “demoralized” in various sources emphasizes this point.⁴⁰⁵ Demoralization generally describes a tactic to overcome the mental strength of an opponent by corrupting or subverting morale. In its use, it is often connected to subverting discipline. In this sense a person labeled to be demoralized does not act according to the group’s values anymore, which is seen as negative behavior that potentially destroys or damages the group. Demoralized members of the group are dangerous and have to be restored and reintegrated. In order to survive, ghetto educators therefore began fighting demoralization among the youth. All agreed that war circumstances and pedagogical neglect had led to demoralization of the youth and consequently to deviance, but the remedy was up to debate.

The councils, according to their task to run the ghettos and answer to the Germans, prioritized to fight the visible symptoms of demoralization, namely juvenile crime like smuggling and stealing. For the youngsters, of course, this was often not a moral choice but their means of survival. For the Jewish leadership, it interrupted the quiet in the ghetto that was so difficult to maintain, and opened the possibility of German repercussions for “criminal” acts on the part of the ghetto youth. Based on this fear, the Jewish leadership and school administration reacted with stringent measures to youthful deviance.

⁴⁰² APL PSŻ RG 278/1076, Geto-Tsaytung, No. 1, 7 March 1941.

⁴⁰³ Szmul Rozensztajn, Diary Entry 27 July 1941, Rozensztajn, *Notatnik*; Feuchert, Leibfried, and Riecke, *Die Chronik Des Gettos Lodz/Litzmannstadt*, 2007, 1942:39–40.

⁴⁰⁴ Vilna Geto Yedies, No. 4; Rolnikaite, *Ich Muss Erzählen*, 121.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. AŻIH Ring I 88; AŻIH Ring I 47; Yad Vashem PH/13–2–4; Yad Vashem JM 3489.2_28.

The Jewish Councils asked the teachers of public schools and Centos-run children's soup kitchens to keep watch of young beggars and thieves. As a first corrective measure, teachers were supposed to distract the students from their street activities and admonish them to behave according to the rules. E. Justmanówna, teacher in a child playroom in Warsaw, remembered in a December 1941 report the instructions teachers had received from the council:

A good educator should know how to subordinate the child-material to his program; and therefore, the teacher was instructed: you have a group of children, teach them and make them play. Arouse their interest and take care of them. Create a bright playroom for them, a place that, at least for a few hours a day, will tear them away from the street, from beggary and stealing.⁴⁰⁶

Initially, when this did not work, Czerniaków still believed that child thieves had to be judged differently from adults. "There are crimes enumerated in the penal codes, but there are some which no codex will contain," he explained in his address at the festive opening of the Month of the Child on 20 September 1941. "Those are crimes much too 'clean' to deserve qualification as a punishable sin,"⁴⁰⁷ he asserted, but eventually he had to do something about the young thieves many people complained about.

Czerniaków asked Jewish Police, School Department and Centos to cooperate in taking care of the problem. Together, these institutions established youth detention centers where juvenile criminals would be interned for re-education into dutiful and productive citizens. After their release, they were to be put into Centos boarding homes for supervision.⁴⁰⁸ In Lodz, representatives of the legal system and the school department founded a commission to work out how to deal with teenagers in conflict with the law. "These teenagers as well as their parents who very often provoke their children to commit crimes should be under the control of persons who have been appointed especially for this purpose," the minutes of the first meeting recorded.

⁴⁰⁶ AŻIH Ring II 110, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 476.

⁴⁰⁷ Published in English translation in: *Ibid.*, 396. Kermish noted that he found Czerniaków's speech among the documents of the Oyneg Shabes. Unfortunately, he did not note the signature.

⁴⁰⁸ AŻIH 266 Ring II 107; director of Centos, Adolf Berman, *'Im Yehude Varshah 1939–1942 (Where Fate Has Brought Me: With the Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1942)* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977), 107.

“Common prison with adults, where a part of the teenagers is sent on the basis of court sentences becomes a great school of crime.” The commission planned to take preemptive measures by caring for “demoralized children before getting on the bench [in court]”. “It will be desirable to create a special colony for juvenile criminals.”⁴⁰⁹

In order to put these ideas into action, a group of probation officers was selected. These probation officers could act upon the initiative of the ghetto court, the school department, or their own if a child was regarded as being in danger of becoming a “criminal”. The objections were: First, prevention of juvenile crime, and second, educational and reformatory care over the juvenile who have committed a prohibited act under threat of punishment. Closely monitored by the Juvenile Court and the School Department, the probation officers were to try to influence the teenagers’ upbringing through personal contact, placing [the teenager] in school if desired, and preparing [the teenager] for vocational work. A day care room for children remaining under the custody of probation officers, and detention and correction centers were established in which the youngsters had to follow an education program which was prescribed by the same institutions. These were supposed to instill in the arrested youths the will to follow the rules and become productive members of society by learning a trade.⁴¹⁰

The Council announced the establishment of a correction facility in the Ghetto Newspaper. In the same article they explained that the young offenders would be interned, lose any food allocations, and receive corporal punishment.⁴¹¹ In a preventative measure, Rumkowski ordered the 70 members of the Women’s Order Service (female branch of Jewish Police) in November 1942 to supervise children while their parents were at work and thus fight peddling of minors that would expose them to the bad influence of the street.⁴¹² In Vilna, a similar group formed. Representatives of the judicial and educational departments met to deal with juvenile offenders. The commission decided that after time in prison, the youngsters were to be put up in workshops to learn a trade.⁴¹³

The Jewish leadership of Lodz and Vilna also regarded political activities as a bad influence on the youth. It was understood that political activities meant

⁴⁰⁹ AŻIH Lodz Getto_408.

⁴¹⁰ AŻIH Lodz Getto_205_408.

⁴¹¹ APŁ PSŻ RG 278/1076, Geto-Tsaytung, No. 3, 21 March 1941.

⁴¹² Gumkowski, *Briefe Aus Litzmannstadt*, 59, 124.

⁴¹³ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 225, 407.

oppositional work and resistance, and that it put the calm in the ghetto at risk. In Vilna, the leadership, especially Gens, sought to increase their control over the school system (as discussed in Chapter 5), because they feared infiltration by those who endorsed armed resistance. Over this conflict, chair of the school department Grisha Yashunski (and Bund member) lost his position.⁴¹⁴ Among the three Jewish ghetto leaders, Rumkowski was probably most inclined to control political activities of the youth. From his contemporaries in Lodz we learn how much Rumkowski interfered with the political background of teachers and students, as well as internal affairs of youth groups.

Dawid Sierakowiak, a teenager in the Lodz ghetto who was active in a communist youth group blustered in his diary: “The sadist-moron Rumkowski is doing horrible things. He fired two teachers, Communists, from their jobs (our preceptress, Majerowicz, and Mrs. Laks).⁴¹⁵ The overt reason: they organized resistance among teachers against the installation as commissioner — Superior Principal — of Mrs. Weichselfisz. The probable reason: alleged Communist activities in the school.” Dawid was afraid of measures against the communist students as well. “We are laying low, and, following the leadership’s advice, we will not organize any meetings for a week or two. There is danger of a purge among the students, and possibly a shutdown of the school.”⁴¹⁶ He never reported about getting into trouble, but Rumkowski did evidentially interfere with other youth groups.

Several Zionist youth movements, among them Ha’Shomer Ha’Tsaïr, Gordonia, Mizrachi, and the Revisionists, ran kibbutzim in Marysin where they trained their members in farming (see Chapter 7). To collect part of the harvest and to control them politically, these kibbutzim were subject to the Department of Gardening and Plantations (later Agriculture) and subjugated to a committee consisting of members of the Jewish Councils and the youth organizations.⁴¹⁷ Rumkowski employed the kibbutzniks unpaid in other projects of the Agriculture Department, the workshops, or other departments of the ghetto administration.⁴¹⁸ The

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 271–273; Dworzecki, *Yerushalayim de-Lite in Kamf Un Umkum (Jerusalem of Lithuania in Battle and Destruction)*, 224, 235, 381.

⁴¹⁵ Estera Majerowicz (1905–1944) taught physics in the ghetto gymnasium, Rykla Laks was also a teacher there. Both were murdered in Auschwitz in 1944.

⁴¹⁶ Sierakowiak, Diary entry 15 June 1941, Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, 102.

⁴¹⁷ Rumkowski had relocated the organizations to Marysin. Tabaksblat, *Khurbn Lodzh*, 91; Trunk, *Lódź Ghetto*, 330–331.

⁴¹⁸ Trunk, *Lódź Ghetto*, 331.

ghetto chronicle reported that on 9 March 1941 Rumkowski inspected the agricultural training center for the youth. During the inspection he determined that many “inappropriate people” were employed at the center. Therefore, he said, the center’s work left much to be desired. The chairman ordered to exclude the objectionable people right away and to reorganize the center to ensure the center abode by his orders.⁴¹⁹

C. Subversive Education

Jewish youth had quite a different take on the best approach to respond to ghettoization. While it is not quite true what the anonymous Marxist author of a report on the ghetto youth in Warsaw asserted, videlicet that “it is no exaggeration to state that the only environment in which political movement still pulsates with life, in which the will to act has not utterly failed and in which action actually takes place — is that of the youth. Nobody but youth publishes and distributes illegal publications nowadays; nobody else engages in political and idealistic activity in Jewish society on a large scale,”⁴²⁰ historians have come to the conclusion that the youth was indeed a pivot of political activity and resistance in the ghettos.⁴²¹

Historian Israel Gutman attributed this to the fact that while a great share of both, the youth and the adult leadership of Jewish organizations during the German attack had fled western Poland to the eastern parts now annexed by the Soviet Union, more young activists had come back to fulfill their duties in the ghettoized Jewish communities.⁴²² They had grown up in the movements, were well-versed in their respective political programs, informed about the events of the day, devoted servants of their organizations, and therefore provided a strong foundation for their continuity.

⁴¹⁹ 10 March 1941, Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, 34–35.

⁴²⁰ AŻIH 596 Ring I 46, English translation in: Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*, 516–517.

⁴²¹ Among others: Yitzhak Arad, “The Struggle and Rescue Work of the Underground Zionist Youth Movements in Vilna,” in *Zionist Youth Movements during the Shoah*, ed. Asher Cohen and Yehoyakim Cochavi, Studies on the Shoah 4 (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1995), 213–26; Israel Gutman, “Essay: The Youth Movements in Eastern Europe as an Alternative Leadership,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 3, no. 1 (1988): 69–74; Aharon Weiss, “Youth Movements in Poland during the German Occupation,” in *Zionist Youth Movements during the Shoah*, ed. Asher Cohen and Yehoyakim Cochavi, Studies on the Shoah 4 (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1995), 227–44.

⁴²² Gutman, “Essay: The Youth Movements in Eastern Europe as an Alternative Leadership,” 69–70. Among them Mordechai Anielewicz, Zivia Lubetkin, Yitzhak Zuckerman, Yosef Kaplan and Tosia Altman. Cf. Raya Cohen, “‘Against the Current’: Hashomer Hatzair in the Warsaw Ghetto,” *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 1 (2000): 67.

While this is certainly one reason why we can find resistant activities primarily among the young, there were also ideological factors at play that we can trace.

Jewish youth had a realistic idea of political backgrounds and war developments as evidenced in their extensive underground press. Secret newspapers of several youth organizations give us details about how informed the groups were and how they interpreted the situation. The youth division of the Left Po'ale Tsiyon published a regular bulletin from August to December 1941, the *Awangarda Młodzieży. Pismo żydowskiej młodzieży marksistowskiej* (Avantgarde of Youth. Letter of the Jewish Marxist Youth), in which they circulated all news about the war they could get their hands on and ardent articles on a Marxist take on Nazism.⁴²³ Also Bund's *Yugnt Shtime* was not shy to voice their call to resolute action against the Nazis. The title page of their January 1941 edition was adorned with a picture of a fist shattering a swastika and the caption "Fascism must be smashed".

The youth organization of the Bund, *Tsukunft* (Future), reflected in its underground newspaper *Yugnt Shtime* (Voice of the Youth) on the different outlooks youth and adults held on the current situation in December 1940:

We have been encased in mighty walls. There is no way out. Every wall, as it were, mocks you as you approach it: you'll go no farther. [...] However, these walls and those who stand behind them are mistaken. [...] Things are no longer as they were many years ago, when Jews were imprisoned in ghettos. Back then, the Jews were full of submission: they thanked God for letting them live quietly and gave thanks to His Great Name for having doomed them to gray, dreary lives. ... Today, things are different. Today we know that even when they wish to isolate us, thousands of capillaries link us with all workers, with all proletarians, on the other side. Our thoughts are with them and we are fully confident that they, too, are wholeheartedly with us.⁴²⁴

⁴²³ AŻIH 1297 Ring I 697.

⁴²⁴ *Yugnt Shtime*, December 1940, printed in: Joseph Kermish, ed., *Itonut haMakhteret haYehudit beVarsha* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1980), 221. English translation in: Daniel Blatman, "The Bund and Polish Socialists During the Holocaust," in *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution*, ed. David Bankier and Israel Gutman (Oxford ; New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2009), 208.

This quote stresses, of course, the change in Jewish attitude that the Bund ascribed to socialism. As members of the international proletariat, Jewish workers could be confident that they belonged to a network that they expected to prove stronger than the Nazis. The retrospect to the ghetto of old times while eastern European Jews lived in ghettos right now, however, gives a sense of the youth's attitude towards the older generation. The parent generation that comprised the ghetto leadership and elites utilized in their view the same recipe of submission to the Germans as a survival strategy that medieval Jews in the ghettos had used. What had been meek then, appeared sheepish now. Ideology of an international supportive network aside, the youth did not believe in keeping their heads down. The quote is a warning to the Nazis and to the parent generation alike not to expect that the Jews would remain passive.

What Sara Zyskind, confined in the Vilna Ghetto as a teenager, remembered later as the attitude of the youth thinking they were stronger than their parents, is a theme that also appeared in the diaries of Yitzhak Rudashevski's (Vilna) and Dawid Sierakowiak (Lodz).⁴²⁵ Youngsters did not trust their parents to have understanding and control over the situation (as far as that was possible under German rule, Chapter 4). They voiced criticism against the Jewish ghetto administration that had emerged from the traditional leadership of local kehillot and despite German involvement in the selection process enjoyed too much support in the ghetto population in the youth's opinion. In the critique coalesced accusations of collaboration and cowardice, backwardness and naiveté.

The youth did not believe in the strategy of calm and work, and therefore did not trust the institutions that enforced these rules to them: Jewish Councils, Jewish Police, and School Departments. Many youngsters, especially those organized in political organizations, downright rejected the establishment. "Young savages are refusing help from institutions", complained Stanislaw Adler in his diary,⁴²⁶ and many questioned the morals and value of the education offered in official and unofficial schools. Was the education they received not just a prolongation of the fascist education in prewar Poland and therefore on principle not better than the

⁴²⁵ Sara Zyskind, *The Stolen Years* (New York, NY: New American Library, 1983), 91; Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*, 105; Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, 156.

⁴²⁶ Stanislaw Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto: 1940–1943. An Account of an Eyewitness* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1982), 117.

Germans?⁴²⁷ Was the education that was looking back into Jewish tradition and concerned with questions of Jewish loyalty not bickering about issues that had become utterly irrelevant in the current catastrophe?⁴²⁸

The youth organizations therefore organized their own educational and cultural programs. Ha'Shomer Ha'Tsair in Warsaw, for example, held regular seminars in which they informed like in prewar times about the idea of Zionism and practical matters about settling in Palestine. As these became increasingly politicized (influenced by Left Po'ale Tsiyon, notably Emanuel Ringelblum and Adolf Berman),⁴²⁹ they added lectures on Fascism, the organization's ideological and political position on the "second imperialist war", the ghetto, and the social and educational positions of Ha'Shomer Ha'Tsair in the current period.⁴³⁰ In these meetings they wrestled with the problem of how to act now in the ghetto, not just in some faraway future in Palestine.

The Vilna ghetto had a youth club where youngsters could meet after school and join discussion groups on topics like drama, literature, history, music, and natural science.⁴³¹ Yitskhak Rudashevski, 14 years old at the time, regularly attended the club. Academically gifted and a member of the Soviet youth movement, he was engaged in two work groups on Jewish history. One group prepared and conducted mock trials against Herod and Josephus Flavius about whether or not their actions had served the benefit of the Jewish people.⁴³² Both are highly controversial figures of ancient Jewish history, because they both rendered outstanding services to the Jewish people and they were both accused of collaborating with the Romans. While preparing the charge and defense, the youngsters reflected on legitimate and illegitimate actions in the interest of the Jewish people in general. "I accused Herod of a policy of ambiguity, of playing the role of a Roman agent, of introducing into the land Roman customs which were hostile and foreign to Jewish spirituality. I accused him of murdering the people. The defense showed Herod's positive deeds, explained that Herod had lived in a tempestuous time, that his behavior was contrary to his will,

⁴²⁷ AŽIH 596 Ring I 46.

⁴²⁸ Dina Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow: The Life and Times of Abba Kovner* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 77.

⁴²⁹ Cohen, "Against the Current": Hashomer Hatzair in the Warsaw Ghetto," 70.

⁴³⁰ AŽIH 1469 Ring I 1122; AŽIH 1470 I 1120.

⁴³¹ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 445; Rolnikaite, *Ich Muss Erzählen*, 121; Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*, 65–66.

⁴³² Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*, 109–110.

and that many of his deeds were for the benefit of the Jewish people.”⁴³³

After the performance in December 1942 in front of club members of both trials, the audience discussed parallels to the current situation and debated how Jewish leadership and population should address the ghettoization. “Various opinions were expressed. The defense had strong support. Turbovitsh,⁴³⁴ the director of the school, expressed himself in favor of Herod’s defense. It was his opinion that Herod’s deeds were in the interests of the people because the revolt against Rome would have hastened the catastrophe. Many of the experts [historians in the audience] had a vacillating attitude. The teacher Kabatshnik,⁴³⁵ the teacher Gordon⁴³⁶ supported the indictment.” After long discussions until late into the night, the verdict was pronounced, Yitskhak wrote approvingly: “Herod was declared guilty.”⁴³⁷

In the group dedicated to local Jewish history, Yitskhak and his colleagues conducted interviews with the residents of a courtyard in the ghetto about their family histories and the recent events. “Our ghetto research circle is actively at work. We hope that through our efforts we shall obtain a valuable historical study about courtyard Shavler 4. [...] We resolved to learn, to study Jewish history, and to deal with the problems in Jewish history that interest us and can have current application, especially most recent Jewish history.”⁴³⁸

In a second project, supervised by famous poet Abraham Sutzkever, the youngsters engaged in collecting ghetto folklore. “This section interested and attracted me very much”, wrote Yitskhak. “In the ghetto dozens of sayings, ghetto curses and ghetto blessings are created before our eyes; [...] even songs jokes, and stories which already sound like legends. I feel that I shall participate zealously in this little circle, because the ghetto folklore which is amazingly cultivated in blood, and which is scattered over the little streets, must be collected and cherished as a treasure for the future.”⁴³⁹ Both projects share not only their intellectual rigor, they try to give a voice to the Jewish masses, the underprivileged, the people forgotten by traditional history. These questions and methods came from the *Yidisher Visnshaflekhher Institut*

⁴³³ Ibid., 109.

⁴³⁴ Leyb Turbovitsh, director for the Vilna real gymnasium that continued to function in the ghetto. Yitskhak attended this school and regarded him highly.

⁴³⁵ Zelik Kabatshnik was a young Hebrew teacher and an active member of the club and the FPO.

⁴³⁶ Lisa Gordon-Tsukerman, a history teacher.

⁴³⁷ Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*, 109–110.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 91.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 80–81.

(YIVO, Institute for Jewish Research), founded in Vilna in 1925. The institute had been influential on a whole generation of Jewish historians in Poland and beyond, for example Sutzkever and Emanuel Ringelblum whose Oyneg Shabes staff applied the same methods in Warsaw. The Vilna ghetto youth's commitment to continue its work and the new contextualization in the ghetto ("cultivated in blood") shows the clarity with which they evaluated the political situation and tried to record the history of a disappearing people.

By February 1943 the effort to preserve had developed into the will to change the circumstances. "We, some fifteen of us, have begun a p.[ioneering] project in the ghetto. The teacher M.[ire Bernshteyn] and comrade Mu.[sye Saginor] are our leaders. We considered whether in general there was a need for such an activity in the ghetto. We reached the conclusion that there was. Our work will entail our being the vanguard of the other comrades. [...] At the meetings we shall also train ourselves, because we must prepare for the life that is in store for us. The future will require dedicated people who will have to guide the masses toward great renewal. Our first condition for such a task is discipline and conspiracy. For the first time I now sensed what it means to work in secret."⁴⁴⁰

Yitskhak's diary breaks off before he can tell more about the group's activities, but Mascha Rolnikaite, another teenager in Vilna, also attended the youth club from time to time and fills in: "Word has it that partisans are meeting at the club", she noted in her diary, "but when I ask nobody knows anything. Perhaps they know, but don't say anything? It's a secret, after all. I would love to find out. Sometimes I look at a person and think: Perhaps he is a partisan? What secrets are hidden in his head?"⁴⁴¹ She also mentioned a youth sports club in the ghetto: "The youth prepares for spring: They put the sports field (or better, the little sports field) in order. [...] They whitewashed the walls around the little square and recolored the pictures of athletes and the writings: "A healthy spirit in a healthy body!", "Be strong and firm!", "If you are hoping for better times, become a member of our sport family!". [...] Word has it, that half of the athletes are partisans."⁴⁴²

Both, Yitskhak and Mascha, as well as Dawid Sierakowiak in Lodz, were engaged in one or the other form of underground activities. Dawid Sierakowiak was a

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 131.

⁴⁴¹ Rolnikaite, *Ich Muss Erzählen*, 121.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 133; Dvorjetski, *Le Ghetto de Vilna*, 75.

member of an underground communist youth group, as we have heard. In his diary we can see how he struggled to balance his schoolwork with his ideological engagement. An excellent student, he did not want to give up the classic education he received in school. He was active in the school's newspaper for which he wrote angry articles against the school board on the basis and in the style of his ideological convictions and he went to daily meetings of the communist underground and its youth groups. We have discussed Rumkowski's inference with politically disagreeable teachers (namely Dawid's communist teacher) and students earlier, but Dawid gives us insight into the issues he had with the ideological requirements of his underground organization. Because he did not want to cut ties with his school, the organization doubted his ideological integrity and commitment and expelled him.⁴⁴³

Mascha struggled with the same issue: "For a while now I have been agonizing about who is right: those who promote culture and education in the ghetto, or those who condemn it. There are two opinions: One thinks the first group is right. They think that culture is a form of protest — not to accept one's fate, also spiritually not to resign. Others believe that culture distracts from what's important: Fight."⁴⁴⁴ And indeed, after Yitskhak had enjoyed cultural activities at the club, in January 1943 he arrived at the conclusion that "all is not in order in the club. The performances, the dramatic circle has too much influence in the club. The work of the little circles, the club has practically ceased being a place for serious work."⁴⁴⁵

Abba Kovner, a twenty-something-year-old member of HaShomer HaTsair, alleged that he and his comrades did not take part in any public or cultural activities.⁴⁴⁶ Instead, he made the jump from discussing to acting. He published a pamphlet in early 1942 that spoke of Hitler's decision to kill all European Jews and called for armed resistance. How much he actually knew and how much was intuition is not important. With no illusions about the Germans' murderous plans, the youth sprang into action. With others, Kovner founded Vilna's Jewish fighting organization, the FPO (Fareynikte Partizaner Organizatsye, United Partisan Organization).

Kovner believed that after the mass murder of two thirds of Vilna's Jews ideological differences and traditions from prewar times should take second rank. He

⁴⁴³ Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak*, 131, 161.

⁴⁴⁴ Rolnikaite, *Ich Muss Erzählen*, 122.

⁴⁴⁵ Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*, 125.

⁴⁴⁶ Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow*, 76.

pursued the goal of creating a cross party underground network.⁴⁴⁷ Many of the old guards of the various political parties were not so flexible.⁴⁴⁸ Herman Kruk gave insight into the increasing tension between young and older guard of Bundists in his diary. While the older generation (including Kruk himself) did support the youth-dominated FPO and the idea of an armed struggle against the Germans, they did agree with the ghetto leadership that any fighting within the ghetto would have fatal consequences for the whole ghetto population and had to be avoided at any cost. Expecting opposition from the Jewish Police and consequently isolation of the FPO from the ghetto population if they tried an offense, the older members of the Bund decided that an uprising was only to take place when the Germans attacked the ghetto in the attempt to finally liquidate the ghetto. In that case the Jews would pick up arms and defend their honor.⁴⁴⁹

When the FPO came in conflict with the Council about this question, Kruk called the FPO to control itself and adhere to the leadership's position.⁴⁵⁰ The Council through the Jewish Police tried to inhibit all attempts of the youth to procure weapons and go to the forest to join the partisans.⁴⁵¹ Captivated by the idea to fight, Mascha Rolnikaite was at the same time intimidated by Gens' warning to join the partisans: "He talks the people into believing that they can only avoid Ponar by obeying and good work. Should the rulers learn that there is only one partisan in the ghetto they will blow it up. People can not join the partisans, because then they accept that other people die. Therefore they are holding back."⁴⁵²

Members of youth movements brought Kovner's manifesto to other ghettos in Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus, spreading the knowledge of annihilation and the idea of resistance.⁴⁵³ Thus, youth groups in ghettos all over German-occupied eastern Europe were well-informed about the mass murder in June 1942. The exception is Lodz. We do not have evidence that this information ever reached the ghetto, most likely because the ghetto was almost completely cut off from all contact with Polish underground and other Jewish ghettos. Almost no information came in or out of the

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁴⁸ Dworzecki, *Yerushalayim de-Lite in Kamf Un Umkum (Jerusalem of Lithuania in Battle and Destruction)*, chap. 20–21; Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 516, 557, 565.

⁴⁴⁹ Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 516, 557, 565.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 557.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 494, 559, 581.

⁴⁵² Rolnikaite, *Ich Muss Erzählen*, 121.

⁴⁵³ Porat, *The Fall of a Sparrow*, 56–73.

hermetically sealed ghetto.⁴⁵⁴ This might be part of the reason why there was also never a broader discussion of the significance of the mass deportations in Lodz.⁴⁵⁵ Groups in other ghettos, however, put events in their locations in context with what they learned from elsewhere and decided that it was time to act.⁴⁵⁶

After increasing anxiety because of accumulating news on the Einsatzgruppen in the east that reached Warsaw in the fall of 1941 and Kovner's manifesto, the beginning of the mass deportations to Treblinka on 22 July 1942 triggered action in Warsaw. A group of Jews from the leadership held an emergency meeting. Yitzhak Zuckerman, a leader of He'haluts, suggested to pick up arms and defend the ghetto against the Germans. His proposal was turned down out of fear for repercussions.

A few days later, Zuckerman met only with the leaders of the youth movements Ha'Shomer Ha'Tsair, Dror, and Akiva who decided to form the *Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa* (ŻOB, Jewish Fighting Organization). Zuckerman lamented: "We wasted so much time on education. We should have thought about arms right away".⁴⁵⁷ Mordechai Anielewicz (23 years old), commander of ŻOB from October 1942, also dismissed the three years of cultural and learning activities in the ghetto as wasted. Instead, they should have trained how to use weapons.⁴⁵⁸ In light of the hopelessness of the struggle against the German Goliath, it is understandable that the fighters wished in hindsight they had spent more time on organizing weapons and training the combatants. But educational activities were important to "keep together a united cadre of people who maintained and cultivated social norms and values during a desperate time," as Gutman asserted. "Thanks to the protracted existence of the movements in the underground [...] when the time came, a consolidated and reliable nucleus stood at the disposal of the Jewish Fighting Organization."⁴⁵⁹

D. Conclusion

The ghetto leaderships executed their strategy to help the ghetto survive. It entailed that all inhabitants, including the youth, to work hard and keep calm in order

⁴⁵⁴ Almost no information from Lodz, Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, 2002, 319.

⁴⁵⁵ Gutman, Introduction, in: Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, xlvii.

⁴⁵⁶ Chaim Lazar and Galia Eden Barshop, *Destruction and Resistance. A History of the Partisan Movement in Vilna* (New York, NY: Shengold Publishers, 1985).

⁴⁵⁷ Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943*, 141.

⁴⁵⁸ Emanuel Ringelblum, "Comrade Mordechai", in: Yuri Suhl, *They Fought Back: The Story of the Jewish Resistance in Nazi Europe* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1967), 102.

⁴⁵⁹ Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943*, 144.

to prove to the Germans their productivity and therefore profitableness of the ghettos, and ensure the rulers that they did not have to fear resistance from the Jews. A lot of effort went into creating a functioning ghetto society in which they could endure the war and live in a postwar German-controlled world. At the same time, the ghetto elites wanted to ensure a cultural survival of the Jewish people in case they had to live in a ghetto long-term or for the event of a Nazi defeat and the chance to rebuild the Jewish nation after the war. As discussed in previous chapters (especially Chapter 5), the ghetto elites therefore debated how exactly a Jewish national education should look like, who should decide that, and which subjects should be taught in which intensity to achieve the goal. Focused on appeasement of the Germans and cultural conservation, we can say that they pursued an affirmative education. The discourses of education and resistance, as in: undermining the system, we might say, were not linked for most.

The youth groups took a different path: With increasing understanding of the events in Nazi-controlled Europe, they left the prescribed discourse and the established schools and organized their own classes in which they discussed the urgent political matters instead of reading Yiddish classics. The youth groups educated themselves in their respective political theory that made them able to question the whole system in which the ghettoization and genocide of Jews could take place. Because of the appeasement approach and the often more conservative political background of the ghetto leaderships, the youth began rejecting the parent generation's leadership as representatives of the old, fascist system as a whole. A new order had to be created. In the ghetto, there was no time to fight about the right way to continue a Jewish nation. Instead of back into tradition, they had to direct their attention to the present with subversive education and action.

This clash between the adult idealists who tried to conserve the past and the young realists played out differently in different ghettos. In Lodz, as we have said before, the conditions for resistance were unfavorable. Cut off from all contact with underground groups, they never reached the same level of information as organizations in other ghettos. Rumkowski's regime was furthermore successful in repressing deviant thoughts and actions to spread among the youth and convincing the ghetto population of the relative success of the strategy of calm and work. The youth opposition therefore never succeeded to convince a significant proportion of the establishment or the ghetto population. In Vilna, support among the population and

elites grew larger as time progressed, certainly because at the beginning of the ghettoization two thirds of Vilna's Jewish population had been murdered. That left little room for illusion. The conflict between the youth and the leadership was rather about when and where to fight. Because the youth could not persuade the leadership and their own older comrades to resist in the ghetto, the youth decided to leave the ghetto and join the partisans in the forests. In Warsaw, the youth opposition managed to overthrow the established leadership, form a new command, and bring a majority of the remaining ghetto population (after the mass deportations) on its side. They secured support for armed resistance and rose up against the Nazis when they tried to liquidate the ghetto. A Dr. Leńsky wrote in his memoirs:

Unfurling the banner of revolt enhanced the underground's stature in the eyes of the remaining Jews. Many who did not even know that an underground existed now saw concrete proof of its deeds. They sensed that the ghetto has an organized force other than the community council; a moral force that is fed up with the old methods which brought a holocaust down upon the Jews. This organization has chosen a new way of dealing with Nazis. Hope was rising in the hearts of the doomed.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁶⁰ As cited in: *Ibid.*, 319.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

When Samuel Gringauz called for a methodical analysis of ghetto society, he believed that it was too early for historical studies, because nobody had enough distance to the events to evaluate them objectively.⁴⁶¹ Indeed, the field was not ripe for the kind of study Gringauz envisioned. What he tried to begin was soon interrupted by the idea that documentation had to take priority. First, materials had to be secured, collected, and archived to convict the perpetrators. The next wave of research focused on Jewish resistance and aimed at proving that Jews had fought, too (Chapter 7). Finally, the need to remember the victims moved increasingly from the private to the public sphere and, thus, required appropriate materials for teaching the public about what had happened.

The postwar discourse on ghettos was characterized by a moral-documentary approach (Introduction and Chapter 7). Research on the ghettos was mainly conducted with the motivation to document the sufferings and achievements of the ghetto populations to preserve them for memory and memorialization. Scholars were invested in recording every detail and every voice they could find. They generated extensive compilations of materials covering various aspects of ghettoization from both German and Jewish perspective. These included the moral dilemma of the Jewish ghetto administration and police, cultural life, fate of the children, and resistance. To researchers of the Holocaust, these works are invaluable collections of documentary evidence.

For remembrance, the question of what the ghetto meant for the Jewish victims, how they responded to the terror, and which moral conclusions we should draw from this, is highly relevant. Academic history, especially about the Holocaust, requires documentation as well as moral discussion. Both are essential components of historical scholarship. But historical analysis also needs to *interpret* phenomena. Scholarship has to explain the provenance, causalities and motive of a phenomenon,

⁴⁶¹ Gringauz, "The Ghetto as an Experiment of Jewish Social Organization (Three Years of Kovno Ghetto)," 4.

its conflicts and relationships with other phenomena, its place in the thoughts and actions of people.

This dissertation follows Gringauz' proposition by reopening the analytical, method-based discourse he started. Taking the historicity and sociability of ghetto societies seriously, it understood education in the ghetto as social action. This study has analyzed the functions of institutionalized education for ghetto societies by drawing on education theory and sociology. It showed the rationale and motive of educational efforts in the ghettos and how education was used to regulate social relations among the ghetto populations of Lodz, Warsaw, and Vilna (Chapters 4 to 7).

Education in the ghettos mainly regulated three relations: relations of the individual to the group, between the generations, and to the Jewish leadership and German oppressor.

In the ghettos, as in prewar Poland, the Jewish political elites debated the terms of Jewish belonging and used schools to promote their particular interpretation of these terms among the younger generation and their parents. In the ghettos, the conflict between assimilationist and non-assimilationist took prevalence over other issues of inner-Jewish discourse. Relying on a broad alliance of political organizations, the Jewish leadership and the intellectual elites of the ghettos engaged in two educational campaigns to propagate a national, conservative definition of Jewish loyalty against the perceived threat of assimilation. They incorporated more Jewish subjects (Yiddish, Hebrew, religion, Jewish history and geography) while removing most Polish content from the school curricula. Administrators and teachers tried to steer the students into loyalty to Jewish society by promoting contents that emphasized Jewish distinctiveness while strictly rejecting outside influences. They appealed to the "assimilated" youth to participate in the shared culture of generations and to integrate socially into Jewish society.

As part of the campaign against assimilation, school organizers, mostly from the middle class and anxious about its decline, also adopted Zionist ideas of restructuring Jewish society. To encourage "assimilationists" to return to the Jewish flock, they believed that the social imbalance in Jewish society, namely a perceived overproduction of intelligentsia and underproduction of farmers and skilled workers, had to be solved. Middle-class "assimilationists" had to be persuaded to give up class privileges and help change the occupational structure of Jewish society to normalize its status and make it resilient enough to survive among other nations. The economic

crisis of ghettoization led ghetto educators to expedite the re-stratification of Jewish society. They launched an educational campaign to promote agricultural and vocational training to change the middle-class youth's attitude toward physical labor and working the land.

The school administration framed this orientation toward work for ideological and, because of the pauperization of the ghetto, practical reasons, pedagogically to sell it as school. Modern European societies conceptualize childhood, that should be passed free of gainful labor with school and play, as preparation for adult life. Ghettoization posed a threat to children and this notion of childhood because children took on duties not in line with their prescribed role. Agricultural and vocational training was therefore carefully integrated into general school programs or at least enhanced with some general education.

Pedagogues and school administrators worried about children who stepped out of their role and associated psychological and social problems of the children with their lack of schooling. They regarded the reestablishment of schools as a way to mitigate these problems. Several examples showed the stabilizing function of school in the lives of the children that provided (aside from teaching contents) a space where they stepped back into their role as children consigning to the authority of adults. Education in the ghettos functioned therefore as a reintegration of childhood and school that regulated the relations of the generations back to "normal" social patterns.

Not all children and youngsters complied. School departments cooperated with Jewish law enforcement in dealing with deviant youths and, through school and work programs, tried to integrate them into a ghetto society that followed the principles of calm and labor to convince the Germans of Jewish cooperation and productivity.

While younger children happily enjoyed the space schools offered them, youths protested against the affirmative education of the establishment. Based on different ideas about the appropriate reaction to German measures, leadership and elites took a different approach to education than the ghetto youth. Believing in the strategy of survival through work and quiet, the establishment favored an affirmative education that preached cultural unification and social conformation. This debate on the terms of Jewish loyalty and the promotion of Jewish unification occurred in silence on how German occupation and anti-Jewish measurements might change the framework for this discourse. Large sections of the ghetto youth left this discourse.

They thought about what Jewish loyalty could mean in the ghetto under German oppression and rejected the affirmative education of the establishment. Youth organizations saw education as a tool to subvert the German system of oppression and prepared themselves through political education to criticize the obedience of the Jewish elites and to fight against the Germans.

The results of this study starkly contrast with the literature on education in the ghettos. Furthermore, the research on education in the ghettos differs significantly from the general literature on education. These differences are significant and mark the contribution of this dissertation to the study of education in the ghettos and education in general.

Educational and sociological theories suggest that education has two main functions: an emancipatory and a disciplinary one. Emancipatory education has the potential to enable an individual to participate on his or her own in a society, to criticize the existing system, and to even conceive a new one. Disciplinary education maintains order in a society and reproduces it in its current power and economic structures by inducing the values of the group onto each member.

The research on education in the ghettos has only looked at the emancipatory aspect of ghetto education and emphasizes its role in escapism and spiritual resistance. These results come to the fore when the Germans are assumed as the basis for Jewish decisions on education. And indeed this dissertation shows that the ghetto youth, when they shifted the Germans to the center of the discourse on education, began seeing education as a tool of spiritual resistance and preparation for armed resistance. When one follows the contemporary sources of much of the discourse on education in the ghettos though, and does not assume that Jews only reacted to the Germans but had their own agendas they brought from prewar times into the ghetto, the results look rather different, as we have seen in this dissertation. In light of these results, ghetto societies, especially their leaderships and academic elites, appear quite conservative. Careful not to upset the Germans, they opted for discipline of the ghetto inhabitants and conservation of cultural traditions. Moving the Jews into the center of attention of a study makes the disciplinary aspects of ghetto education visible and a much deeper and more comprehensive analysis possible.

Based on the factual and methodical results of this dissertation, a study of the functions of Jewish education in interwar Poland is necessary. Reconsidering the

scarce literature on the Jewish school system in the 1920s and 1930s, it follows the same logic as the research on ghetto education. Written after the Holocaust, it implicitly writes toward that end. This study would profit greatly from an analysis of the prewar discourse, while the study of interwar Jewish Poland would benefit from considering the conceptual shifts proposed by this dissertation.

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Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego

AŻIH 1292 Ring I 702, Gazeta Żydowska

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AŻIH 216 Ring II 104

AŻIH 228 Ring II 110

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AŻIH 299 Ring II 158

AŻIH 314 Ring II 171

AŻIH 593 Ring I 47

AŻIH 596 Ring I 46

AŻIH 664 Ring I 341

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AŻIH 682 Ring I 603

AŻIH ARI/PH/5-3-3

AŻIH Centos 200_24

AŻIH Getto Litzmannstadt 205_408

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AŻIH Judenraty 221_11

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Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi

APŁ PSŻ RG 278, Geto-Tsaytung

Archive of Beit Lohamei Ha'Getaot

GFH_299

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Yad Vashem O.34 Nachman Zonamend Collection

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