

The Atrocity of Hunger

Starvation in the Warsaw,
Łódź, and Kraków Ghettos
during World War II

Helene J. Sinnreich



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During World War II, the Germans put Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland into ghettos which restricted their movement and, most crucially for their survival, access to food. The Germans saw the Jews as “useless eaters,” and denied them sufficient food for survival. The hunger which resulted from this intentional starvation impacted every aspect of Jewish life inside the ghettos. This book focuses on the Jews in the Łódź, Warsaw, and Kraków ghettos as they struggled to survive the deadly Nazi ghetto and, in particular, the genocidal famine conditions. Jews had no control over Nazi food policy, but they attempted to survive the deadly conditions of Nazi ghettoization through a range of coping mechanisms and survival strategies. In this book, Helene Sinnreich explores their story, drawing from diaries and first-hand accounts of the victims and survivors. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Helene J. Sinnreich is Director of the Fern and Manfred Steinfeld Program in Judaic Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is the co-editor-in-chief of the academic journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* and was the founding editor of the *Journal of Jewish Identities*. She has served as a fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. She is the editor of the book *A Story of Survival: The Łódź Ghetto Diary of Heinek Fogel* (2015).

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and Kraków Ghettos during World War II*

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In loving memory of my grandparents

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	page viii
<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	x
Introduction	1
1 The Nazi Invasion: Violence, Displacement, and Expropriation	17
2 Jewish Leadership	35
3 The Supply and Distribution of Food: Strategies and Priorities	54
4 The Physical, Mental, and Social Effects of Hunger	77
5 Hunger and Everyday Life in the Ghetto	91
6 Socioeconomic Status and Food Access	107
7 Relief Systems and Charity	126
8 Illicit Food Access: Smuggling, Theft, and the Black Market	143
9 Labor and Food in the Ghettos	169
10 Deportations and the End of the Ghettos	186
Conclusion	201
<i>Appendix: List of Kitchens and Food Distribution Sites in the Warsaw Ghetto</i>	207
<i>Notes</i>	211
<i>Bibliography</i>	268
<i>Index</i>	281

Figures

2.1 Entrance to the Kraków ghetto.	<i>page</i> 50
3.1 Jewish teenage boys push and pull a wagon loaded with bread in the Łódź ghetto.	58
3.2 A group of people gardening in a garden plot in the Łódź ghetto.	70
3.3 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto awaiting their turn in the soup kitchen.	74
10.1 A German supervises the boarding of Jews onto trains during a deportation action in the Kraków ghetto.	187
10.2 Cooking facilities in a bunker prepared by the Jewish resistance for the Warsaw ghetto uprising.	199

Tables

3.1 Daily rations of bread and horsemeat in the Łódź ghetto	page 61
6.1 Supplemental ration coupons as reported in the <i>Chronicle of the Łódź ghetto</i> on August 10, 1943	115
8.1 Black-market food prices in the Łódź ghetto in January 1941	155
8.2 Black-market food prices in January 1942	155
9.1 Daily food for workers and nonworkers in the Łódź ghetto	184

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Introduction

I finished up my loaf of bread at a space of three days, that is to say on Sunday so I had to wait till the next Saturday for new one. I was terribly hungry.... I was lying on Monday morning quite dejectedly in my bed and there was the half of a loaf of bread of my darling sister.... I could not resist the temptation and ate it up totally—which at present is a terrible crime—I was overcome by terrible remorse of conscience and by a still greater care for what my little one would eat for the next five days. I felt a miserably helpless criminal.... I suffer terribly by feigning that I don't know where the bread has gone and I have to tell people that it was stolen by a supposed reckless and pitiless thief and, for keeping up appearance, I have to utter curses and condemnations on the imaginary thief: "I would hang him with my own hands had I come across him."¹

– diary entry, May 5, 1944

This quote is an excerpt from a diary kept by an anonymous boy in the Łódź ghetto. We do not know his ultimate fate, but we can certainly speculate: The diary ends three months later, on August 3, 1944, during the final deportations from the Łódź ghetto. Written into the margins of a French novel, François Coppée's *Les Vrais Riches* (The Truly Rich), the diary records the boy's struggle with starvation. The quote tells of an unfortunately common occurrence – the boy's hunger thwarted his attempt to carefully ration his bread and drove him to finish his ten-day allotment in three days. During the early ghetto period, the same amount of bread was distributed for a five-day allotment, but over the course of the ghetto's existence, its inhabitants were forced to stretch their rations further and further. Consumed by an extreme hunger that drove him to eat his bread too quickly, the boy stole and ate his sister's bread ration. Now, neither brother nor sister had adequate food for the next five days. The sister, who tried faithfully to ration her bread, lost her supply entirely and had to suffer hunger without even that sparse amount. Despite caring about his sister, the boy resorted to a desperate survival strategy: theft. Hunger drove him to survive by any means necessary, even if it meant endangering his sister and breaking the family trust.

For the Jews incarcerated in Nazi ghettos, the lack of food subsumed all aspects of existence and transformed ghetto life and ghetto society. Hunger caused social breakdown as people tried to nourish themselves sufficiently. The Łódź, Warsaw, and Kraków ghetto populations suffered from a lack of food as a result of German racial policy, which designated Jews as “useless eaters,” undeserving of adequate food. As starvation and hunger-related diseases decimated Jewish ghetto populations across Nazi-occupied Poland, access to food became a key factor in survival. Jews had no control over Nazi race – influenced food policy, which denied sufficient food to populations throughout the Nazi occupation.² But they could – and did – attempt to survive the deadly conditions of Nazi ghettoization through a range of coping mechanisms and survival strategies.³ This book tells their story.

Factors of Survival

The question of what factors contributed to survival during the Holocaust is a significant victim-centered question of Holocaust historiography.⁴ Although survival is unrepresentative of Holocaust victim experience as most Jews under Nazi occupation did not survive.⁵ Examining the factors that led to survival allows scholars to reveal the everyday lives of Jews during the Holocaust including victims who perished and the exceptions, those who survived. This book, an *Alltagsgeschichte*, or history of everyday life, focuses on one key aspect of survival – access to food – and uses this lens to explore the daily experiences and struggles of the Jews in the ghetto as they encountered food and hunger.⁶ The examination of internal life in Holocaust-era ghettos with questions centered on victim experience continues a tradition established by some of the earliest Holocaust scholars, many of whom were survivor historians, who sought to follow a prewar practice of examining Jewish life and history.⁷ Their works recorded the experiences of Jews during the war, resistance in the ghettos (spiritual, cultural, and physical), and leadership and internal governance of the ghettos.⁸ While these works continued to be undertaken, they were eclipsed by a shift in the field of Holocaust studies, driven by scholars primarily from Europe and North America, which emphasized the motivations and actions of perpetrators. Although historians of the Holocaust were influenced by calls for history from below, they remained focused on perpetrators and their motivations; only shifting their attention from structures of power to ordinary Germans, not to the victims of the regime. It is only in recent years that historical questions that center on victims as a historical subject were no longer eclipsed by works that concentrated on perpetrator actions and motivations. This

book focuses not on the ghetto's function within the Nazi bureaucracy and genocidal plans, rather it examines Jewish life inside ghettos to present a complex picture of varying Jewish experiences with an emphasis on victim agency.⁹

By examining the socioeconomic and geographic factors that enabled individuals, households, and communities to obtain food in the ghetto, one is able to see how these factors affected or facilitated overall survival during the Holocaust. On the individual and household level, prewar socioeconomic position often played an important role in food access, although one's condition rarely remained static during the war period. Not only social standing, actual resources, and social network played a role in one's standing; intersecting factors such as gender and religion affected food access. At the communal level, there were different means of accessing food and coping with its absence. These included food distribution strategies, trading of assets, repurposing of food waste, and other means. Many factors including the location of a city within the overlaid German administrative apparatus, the city's prewar economic position, and local resources also played a role in food access.

The Atrocity of Hunger

In a world in which we have the technological ability to transport food to anywhere that needs it, modern famines are always human engineered. That is to say, there is always the option to provide food to an area unless someone actively blocks food from reaching individuals. The ghettos in Łódź, Warsaw, and Kraków, to varying degrees, served as impediments to the free movement of food. In addition to the physical barriers created by the ghettos, limitations were deliberately placed on Jews' access to food. Non-German civilian populations, particularly Jews, were entitled to less food than Germans within the German food access hierarchy. This racial worldview vis-à-vis food access ultimately allowed the Germans to deny populations throughout Nazi-occupied Europe sufficient food for survival.¹⁰ Like many other groups subjected to famine conditions during the course of the modern period, the Jews of the ghetto turned to coping mechanisms commonly used in food crisis situations. Famine studies offer theoretical frameworks for analyzing and understanding the mass starvation of the Jews of the ghettos.

The concept that starvation in the modern world is intentional comes from famine theorists. Amartya Sen, the Nobel prize – winning economist behind the economic theory of entitlements, dispelled the notion that famines were caused by crop failures or other natural disasters.¹¹ Famine scholars Jenny Edkins and Alex de Waal have further argued

that famine in the modern era must be understood within the context of violence and mass atrocity.¹² Starting in roughly the early 2000s, we see the development of scholarship on genocidal famine or “genocide by attrition.”¹³

Many historians examining famine during World War II focus on causes of starvation, particularly as it relates to Nazi policy.¹⁴ Although this book takes a historical approach, unlike other works that have dealt with hunger in ghettos or during the Holocaust, it does not focus on the reasons for Nazi hunger policy or on perpetrator motivations. Rather, it examines the impact of that starvation on the Jews in the ghetto within the context of genocide, with a recognition that hunger in the ghettos must be framed within the context of genocide and the intentionality of contemporary famine.

This work examines a society *in extremis*, one suffering from what I term the *atrocity of hunger*. Although famine situations can result in high mortality, this is not the only impact of mass hunger.¹⁵ The *atrocity of hunger* results from the intentional starvation of a group through the denial of access to food, and it includes more than just the embodied experience of starvation: The physical and mental suffering that humans undergo due to the physiological effects of starvation, as well as the transformation and breakdown of families, communities, and individuals whose lives and core beliefs are shaped by starvation. It is also the process experienced by individuals, households, and communities as they move from food insecurity to a state of starvation. The *atrocity of hunger* takes place during genocidal famine.

This book provides important insight into the individual, familial, and internal societal transformations that take place during a famine, particularly a genocidal famine. As Peter Walker notes, “there are few descriptions of famine or writings about famine by its victims. It is the most vulnerable and least powerful who suffer: a group which has little access to the written word and its dissemination.”¹⁶ In the case of the Łódź, Warsaw, and Kraków ghettos, however, the Jewish residents left behind a plethora of records both during and after the events, allowing us to view a community and its transformation during a period of mass starvation.

The famine in the ghettos offers a few unique aspects for the study that distinguish amongst those famine genocides in which we see the *atrocity of hunger*. One is the long duration of forced famine conditions. Many famines come in waves or last for a shorter period of time, during which the most vulnerable die and the least vulnerable employ coping mechanisms until recovery is possible. However, in the ghettos, there was no recovery period. In the Nazi ghettos under consideration, a cascade

effect was in place: As the marginal groups were decimated, individuals and families from other social strata became vulnerable and descended to the point of being unable to obtain adequate food resources. The forced starvation continued for years, and those who did not perish from the hunger and associated hunger diseases were largely killed by other violent means.

Another significant difference between this famine and others that have been studied in the contemporary era is the demographic makeup of those in the ghettos. Many studies of hunger during war focus on home fronts, which are largely absent of men of military age, their populations composed mostly of women and girls, along with a smaller male segment of young boys and elderly men. The hunger situation on the home front, then, gets painted as a feminine issue or associated with women.¹⁷ This was true, for example, in World War II – era Leningrad, where men were more absent due to their service as soldiers.¹⁸ Women were then associated with numerous coping mechanisms. This feminization of famine situations is not limited to urban contexts. In many agrarian famines, men leave the area in search of work as a coping mechanism, leaving women behind.¹⁹ In contrast, in the case of the ghettos, people of all ages including working-age men were present. Many tasks that are viewed as specifically feminine in famine scholarship were performed by men and women in the ghettos. This study, therefore, allows for a more nuanced view of gender and famine.

Inside a Famine: Coping Mechanisms

Famine scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds have explored famines in which individuals and societies were transformed by the lack of food. Many of those who study famines do so to assist in identifying emerging famines before they become widely life threatening; their scholarly purpose is prevention, the development of a warning system based on identifiable stages. This book relies on a great deal of this prevention research to identify the common traits of famine including economic and political factors as well as familial and societal transformations.²⁰ What many scholars view as stages or attributes of famine, however, this book recognizes as human coping methods deployed to combat hunger.

The ghetto inhabitants attempted to address starvation at the communal level, household level, and individual level through a variety of coping mechanisms. Techniques for survival in famines include asset liquidation, innovative deployment of labor, reliance on social networks, the consumption of less preferred or less nutritional foods, the sacrifice of some individuals for the benefit of other individuals, and illicit

acquisition of food.²¹ The communities, families, and individuals of the ghettos employed all of these methods.

Entitlement theory, Sen's food-access theory, posits that individuals obtain food by trading bundles of valuables for it. Those bundles can consist of labor or goods.²² Jews in the ghetto were able to obtain food by trading their labor or their valuables for food. But the ghetto conditions affected Jewish food access beyond simple economics, as scholarly interventions pointing to forced starvation as a form of violence help us understand.²³ Due to the ghetto's walls, the ability of Jews to purchase food was not based on an open economy. Jewish purchasing power was diminished in a number of ways. Prices were higher for them due to the artificial limits placed on the food available to them. The Germans made forced labor of the Jews compulsory and often mandated them to work without compensation or at very low levels of compensation, thus artificially diminishing the value of their labor. Further, the German seizure of Jewish assets and the trade of assets on the black market devalued the buying power of Jewish property.

Despite this devaluation of Jewish labor and goods, families and individuals in the ghettos sold or traded items of value to buy resources for survival, a pattern of behavior that is consistent with other famines. More notable is that the ghettos provide an example of a community attempting to trade assets and labor for food in a famine situation. At the community level, Judenräte (Nazi-mandated Jewish Councils) sought to sell off community assets or gain access to communal bank accounts to pay for basic needs. Similarly, Jewish communal leadership, adhering to Nazi demands, provided labor for the Germans. In some cases, the labor was compensated with resources to help purchase food items for the ghetto. Jewish communities also employed individuals in the creation of foodstuffs for ghetto residents. In many famine situations, individuals and households put all available household members to work to acquire food. In the ghettos this pursuit took the form of working a job, standing in food lines, begging, searching through garbage, digging for food, or other targeted activities. Writing about the Blockade in Leningrad, Jeffrey Hass has given the gender-neutral term "bread seekers" to the individuals who undertake these tasks, but he identifies them as predominantly women.²⁴ In the ghettos, in contrast, men, women, and children were all seekers of scarce resources or "bread seekers." At the individual and household level, people reached out to their extended family and friend networks for meals, job opportunities, or funds to purchase food, and food was stretched as the definition of what counted as food broadened. Even so, individual families had to make difficult choices about food

distribution to their members. At the communal level, social networks, including for instance, the American Joint Distribution Committee, were leveraged to supplement food supply for the ghettos, and types of foods that were not typically eaten before the war were processed for distribution to the community at large. This was similar to communal coping methods employed in the siege of Leningrad, where “the city’s food industry implemented the use of surrogates in the production of bread, meat, milk, confections, and canning products.”²⁵ At all levels, Jewish individuals were allotted less food than Germans, Poles, or other groups in occupied Poland, which resulted in fatal starvation or deportation for some members. Both communal leadership and individuals employed a range of strategies to acquire food illicitly. Criminal behavior such as theft became common and even at times a requirement to survive. It is not a simple situation, however, as many individuals in famine situations become “both the victims and perpetrators of food theft.”²⁶ This complexity highlights one of the other aspects of the *atrocities of hunger*: the challenge that hunger and starvation pose to core values.

Divergent Paths: Kraków, Warsaw, and Łódź

This book argues that the individual communities in which Jews were ghettoized – including the wartime Nazi administrative districts in which cities fell as well as prewar communal attributes – affected food access and survival. Ghettos were residential areas, often with some sort of enclosure and restricted entry, set up by the Nazi regime in occupied Poland to segregate Jews from the non-Jewish population. Recent scholarship on ghettos has documented multiple types of ghettos with varying degrees of openness; the level of openness of World War II – era ghettos also shaped food access.²⁷ To demonstrate this, this book compares the ghettos in three major cities: Kraków, Warsaw, and Łódź. While these three cities share the attributes of all being major Polish cities with large Jewish populations, they diverge in a number of ways, including crossing between two wartime Nazi administrative districts, level of openness, prewar economic structures and political leanings, and provide the opportunity to look at both large ghettos as well as a smaller ghetto (though still large enough to have its own internal food distribution system).

The Łódź ghetto, located in the Warthegau region, was the most sealed of the three ghettos under consideration, with the most limited food resources outside those allocated by the Germans. The Warsaw ghetto, located in the General Government (Generalgouvernement), was considered a sealed ghetto, but a significant number of individuals

were permitted to pass in and out of the ghetto on a daily basis, creating opportunities for food and additional people to pass through. The Kraków ghetto was the most open of the three ghettos, remaining relatively open to Jews passing between the ghetto and the city, either individually or in groups, until almost the end of the ghetto's existence. As a result, this ghetto experienced the least starvation.

In addition to their differing degrees of openness, communal differences were apparent in the Jewish leadership of the three ghettos. During World War II, the Germans established the Judenrat, an official Jewish communal leadership that became responsible for many aspects of local governance once the Jewish community was confined to ghettos. Different communal Judenräte, influenced by the prewar character and political leanings of the kehillah (Jewish community), adopted varying methods of internal ghetto food distribution to combat hunger inside the ghettos. The Jewish communal leadership, for at least a portion of the ghetto period, controlled certain aspects of the distribution of the food Nazis allocated to the ghetto.

Before the war, the Jewish populations of Łódź, Warsaw, and Kraków differed in political orientation, economic resources, and acculturation. Their diverse political inclinations manifested themselves in the different methods employed by the Judenräte in these cities to address the poverty of the Jewish populations that came under their purview. Łódź, a socialist-leaning city with many Yiddish speakers, contained a large poor and working-class population. In Łódź, the ghetto leader Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, although not a socialist before the war, attempted to feed the population as a whole from collective community resources. He tended to battle attempts to create free markets in the ghetto. By contrast, Kraków's acculturated and cosmopolitan if also traditionally inclined Jewish population functioned largely on a capitalist model, whereby individuals supported their own families and charitable giving was the major vehicle to support the vulnerable. Meanwhile, Warsaw's prewar Jewish population embodied a tension between an array of socialist-leaning organizations and a middle class with conservative leanings. There, the official Judenrat leadership leaned toward capitalist models to support the population, with charitable giving and some welfare-state features. Various organizations attempted to meet the needs of the impoverished. The way that prewar political leanings were reflected and perpetuated in Jewish communal responses to food scarcity significantly affected food access in individual ghettos.

This book gives an extensive history of the ghettos of Kraków, Łódź, and Warsaw, but it is not meant to be exhaustive. Many works have provided both detail and overview of the history and internal bureaucratic

structures of Łódź and Warsaw.²⁸ The material presented here aims to provide salient context for the arguments raised by this book. For example, the Warsaw ghetto uprising was a significant event in the life of the ghetto but does not feature prominently in this work, and the resistance efforts of the Kraków ghetto fighters outside the ghetto are not featured at all. These were exceptional events, whereas I am interested in the everyday albeit during an extraordinary period. The Warsaw ghetto uprising, then, is only discussed in the context of hoarding and food shortages during the turmoil. The book goes further in its presentation of new material on the Kraków ghetto, including on its Judenrat and internal structure during the ghetto period. That is because for the Kraków ghetto, unlike the other two discussed here, its definitive history has not yet been written.²⁹

At the outbreak of World War II, Poland, with 3.3 million Jews, was home to the largest Jewish population in Europe. The three cities under consideration in this volume were all major population centers in the Polish state that was created in the aftermath of World War I; thus, the Jews in these cities found themselves newly enfranchised as citizens of Poland. The three cities were affected by the Great Depression and were likewise affected by a turning point in the Polish treatment of Jews, when Polish leader Józef Piłsudski died on May 12, 1935. After this point, numerous pieces of discriminatory legislation were passed against the Jews of Poland, and violence against Jews in Poland increased. Despite their similarities as Polish cities, these three cities had divergent paths of historical development, which resulted in linguistically and socioeconomically distinct Jewish populations and affected their fates during the war.

Kraków

Kraków served as the historical capital of Poland until the end of the sixteenth century, after which it remained an important cultural capital. It had been under Austrian rule before the First World War and had a significant number of highly assimilated Jews in its populace. After World War I, Kraków was incorporated into the newly constituted Second Polish Republic. At that time, approximately 25 percent of Kraków's population were Jews.³⁰ By 1931, Kraków's Jewish population had risen to 56,515 out of a total Polish population of just over 250,000.³¹ Kraków was the fifth-largest city in interwar Poland, with a large, diverse Jewish population that comprised Orthodox Jews, Hasidic Jews, Progressive (Reform) Jews, assimilated Jews, and Jews of various political leanings, including Zionists, Bundists, socialists, and other political groups. The

Jews of Kraków were more acculturated than those of Łódź or Warsaw, with a large portion of the population speaking Polish as their native language.

In the interwar period, the Kraków Jewish communal organization, or *kehillah*, was led by the progressive assimilationist Rafal Landau. The progressive assimilationists led the *kehillah* in partnership with the Orthodox Jews. This coalition was important for maintaining control of the board because, by 1929, Zionists had begun to make some headway, gaining nine out of the twenty-five seats on the *kehillah*'s governing board.³² In 1938, the Jewish community was forced to contend with a sudden influx of Polish-born Jews who had been residing in Germany but were forced over the Polish border by the Nazi regime. When many of the refugees were resettled in Kraków, the Jewish community collected clothes and money for them.³³ The *kehillah* also set up facilities to feed the refugees, including community kitchens at Skawińska Street 2, Józefińska Street 3, Dajwór Street 3, Estera, and Miodowa Streets. There were also places for refugees to live situated on Skawińska Street 10, at the school on Podbrzezie Street, at the synagogue Znekro in Podgórze, at Thilim on Bożego Ciałastr Street, on Bocheńska Street, and on Agnieszki Street. Additional refugees were lodged in private apartments by the Jewish Housing Department.³⁴ Holocaust survivor Ben Friedman recounted his family taking in a couple of the Jewish refugees expelled by the Germans, even though they were a family of four with only two bedrooms.³⁵

This influx of refugees accounts for some uncertainty about the number of Jews living in Kraków on the eve of the Second World War. Various figures are given, ranging from a little under 65,000 to approximately 68,000.³⁶ The very large number of German Jewish refugees, including their precarious situation, would play a role during the German occupation.

Warsaw

Warsaw, the capital of Poland since the end of the sixteenth century, was the most populous city in Poland and had the largest Jewish population in Europe. It, along with Łódź, had been under Russian control prior to the First World War and had both a large upper- and middle-class Jewish population along with working-class and poor Jews.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century and through the early twentieth century, the Jewish population of Warsaw grew considerably, both in number and as a percentage of the total population. The tremendous growth was in part a result of Jews fleeing Russian pogroms

at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁷ This period coincided with the growth of Jewish institutions and places of worship. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Jews accounted for 35.8 percent of the population of Warsaw. There were a diversity of Jews in the city: secular Jews, who aligned with a variety of politically leftist organizations, ranging from communist to Bundist, and religious Jews, who banded together politically under the organization Agudat Israel, a political party that staunchly protected Orthodox Judaism.

By World War I, the number of Jews in Warsaw had grown to 337,000 people, accounting for 38 percent of the city's population.³⁸ During the war, the Jewish population of Warsaw swelled significantly due to refugees coming in from the provinces. This number declined after the war, as people returned to their homes.³⁹

After the First World War, Warsaw became the capital of the newly created state of Poland. The new state provided Jews with full civic rights. The last census conducted before the outbreak of World War II was in 1931, and Warsaw at that time had a Jewish population of 352,000, or 30.1 percent of the overall population of 1,171,898.⁴⁰ The Municipal Board of Warsaw estimated that in August 1939, there were 380,567 Jews, making up 29.1 percent of the population of Warsaw.

Łódź

Łódź, a highly multiethnic city with significant Jewish, German, and Polish populations, was a center for industrial textile production and had a large labor movement. It had a small upper-class Jewish population and a large number of Jewish working poor.

Like all Polish lands, Łódź came under a number of rulers as a result of the partitions of Poland. It was under Russian rule that Łódź developed from a village to a city, the growth spurt commencing when it was designated in 1820 as an industrial center. The transformation of the city initiated by its turn toward manufacture included a vast population increase, rapid urbanization, territorial expansion, and industrialization.⁴¹ As the city expanded, so did the Jewish population. By 1897, there were 98,677 Jews in Łódź.⁴²

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, there was tremendous political unrest in the Russian Empire. The tsarist government stirred up anti-Jewish sentiment and allowed violent outbursts against the Jews of the Russian Empire as a means of distracting from agitation for political change. These pogroms against the Jews resulted in mass death and destruction. This same period of repression saw the emergence of important Jewish political organizations in Łódź. In the face of

political inequality and physical persecution, Jewish political organizations – which were illegal, like all political organizations at that time in tsarist Russia – sought remedies for the political inequalities of the Russian Empire. Jewish socialism, which sought a broad change to create a more equal society, had its largest manifestation in the form of the Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, otherwise known as the “Bund.” The Bund was the largest and most powerful Jewish labor organization in Poland. It called for a culturally autonomous Jewish people living in a socialist state. The Bundist movement in Łódź started quite early, in 1897, with agitation beginning among Jewish weavers, but attempts to organize workers met with police resistance, and so the early efforts were primarily limited to the distribution of illegal literature.⁴³ By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the Bund was successfully organizing workers for protests. Jewish workers were at the forefront of strikes and other activities in Łódź, and they played an active role in the 1905 Russian Revolution.

The strong Jewish presence in labor movements reflected the reality that most Jews were engaged in wage labor; in Łódź, this meant employment in the textile industry. The majority of Jewish labor in the industry was skilled, and heavily concentrated in small companies or private, home-housed textile workshops. On the eve of World War II, approximately 70 percent of the Jews of Łódź lived in poverty, with over 40 percent reliant on welfare. They were particularly vulnerable to economic downturns like the Great Depression. This is evidenced by the fact that in 1937, 41 percent of Łódź Jews applied for relief, consisting of matzah and clothing during Passover.⁴⁴

By the beginning of the twentieth century, other Jewish political organizations began to emerge, with many socialist-leaning Jewish organizations as well as Zionist, assimilationist, and religious parties. There was tremendous division and tension among the various Jewish political groups in Łódź. In the early interwar period, Zionists and religious parties were strong, but toward the end of the interwar period, socialist parties rose appreciably in voter popularity. As an industrial center, Łódź had an active worker and leftist political apparatus. The Łódź Jewish community was considered to be a socialist and Bundist stronghold just before the beginning of the war.⁴⁵

With close to a quarter-million Jews before the German invasion, Łódź had the second-largest Jewish population in Poland and Europe (with Warsaw having the largest).⁴⁶ In 1931, Łódź Jewry had totaled 202,497 persons, 96,658 or 47.7 percent of whom were male, and 105,839, or 52.3 percent, of whom were female. In 1939, the Jewish community of Łódź was estimated at 222,000, making it approximately 34.5 percent of the total population of 665,000.⁴⁷

Members of the Łódź Jewish community were mostly religiously observant and lived more separately from their Christian neighbors than did Jews in more cosmopolitan places like Warsaw and Kraków. As a result of the Nazi invasion, these economically, linguistically, politically, socially, and even religiously diverse Jews were wrenched from their varied places in Łódź society and thrown together within the confines of the Łódź ghetto. The diversity of identities of these individuals, all thrown together into a common space, played a role in how this mixed group coped with their common fate.

Sources

The sources for this book encompass documents, materials, and testimonies produced by German government offices, individual Germans, members of the official Jewish leadership, non-Jewish Poles, and individual Jews. Some materials were created by people while the ghetto was in existence, while others were created at various stages, ranging from immediately after the ghetto experience to decades after the war. The documents and artifacts consulted include government documents, Jewish communal leadership documentation, legal and illegal newspapers, and artistic creations made in official, semi-official, personal, and illicit capacities: photographs, picture albums, songs, and drawings. Among the photographs examined as sources for this book were those created by perpetrators. I struggled with whether to include these, particularly images taken to emphasize the inferiority of the Jewish subjects, but I ultimately decided to reproduce some of these photographs that told an important story.⁴⁸

Maps, buildings, and objects were also examined, as were personal sources such as oral testimonies, memoirs, diaries, and poems. I have applied a variety of critical lenses to these source materials. Some of these techniques come from Holocaust studies, encompassing, for example, the examination of Holocaust testimonies, while other techniques come from fields that examine people who, due to powerlessness, illiteracy, or the destruction of archival materials, need to be observed through unconventional or atypical methods.⁴⁹

While I utilize source material from a wide range of viewpoints, I have not privileged perpetrator sources in the construction of this book. The story I wish to emphasize is that of Jewish victims' survival strategies. This monograph privileges those perspectives because by focusing on them, we can reinscribe Jewish ways of knowing as essential to understanding ghettos.

One difficulty in researching ghettos, however, is that much of our source material on them comes from elite sources: those in charge, those

in high-ranking positions, and those fortunate enough to survive and relay their stories. We have some diaries and records from the poor who died off early from starvation, but in many cases, we rely on more elite voices to bring us the story of the ghettos' poorest. Another difficulty is that the three ghettos studied vary in surviving material. Łódź was the most-documented ghetto. Thousands of pages of documents survived, including diaries, official Judenrat documentation, German materials, and postwar testimonies by a large group of survivors. Warsaw similarly had a large group of survivors as well as surviving documentation, most notably the Ringelblum Archive, a collection of diaries, writings, and other materials saved from the ghetto's destruction by a group of journalists, historians, and other activists. By contrast, only scant documentation survived the Kraków ghetto. There are few wartime diaries, only a small amount of official ghetto documentation, and very little German documentation from those with direct oversight of the ghetto. That said, we have material that predates the closing of the ghetto such as the registration forms of those applying successfully and unsuccessfully to gain admittance to the Kraków ghetto as well as the oral and written postwar testimonies of Kraków ghetto survivors.

The sources for this book came from the archives at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMMA), Yad Vashem in Israel, Bundesarchiv in Germany, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi (Łódź State Archive), Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (Jewish Historical Institute, ŻIH) in Warsaw, Beit Lohamei Ha-Getaot (Ghetto Fighters House Archive) in Israel, and Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive at the University of Southern California.

Organization of Book and Summary of Chapters

This book is organized to open with the start of the war and set the stage of hunger in the ghettos by examining the Jewish experience with hunger and violence before ghettoization. It closes with the end of the ghettos and the deportations out of the ghetto but also examines how deportations impacted food access. Between these chapters are three sections. The first portion consisting of [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#) examines communal food access. The next section, [Chapters 4](#), [5](#), and [6](#), explores the crux of the *atrocities of hunger* – physical and social breakdown. It explores the impact of hunger on the vast majority of the ghetto populations with discussion of how differing positionality mitigates or increases the impact of hunger. The last section of the book, [Chapters 7](#), [8](#), and [9](#), explores mechanisms through which food entitlement could be augmented. The book traces hunger encountered by the Jewish population of the three

ghettos from the beginning of the war to their departure from the ghettos and how they sought to cope at the individual, household, and communal levels.

Chapter 1 begins with the German invasion into the three cities and examines how early violence perpetrated against the Jewish populations, mass migrations during the early war period, and the forced pauperization of numerous Jews affected their ability to protect themselves against hunger. It depicts the hunger experienced by many before the creation of the ghettos and highlights how geographic location before and during the ghetto period affected food access.

Chapter 2 examines the Jewish leaders in each ghetto who were responsible for communal decisions about food distribution. It examines the flight of much of the prewar leadership and the violence experienced by the Jewish leadership that remained. It also outlines the physical location and attributes of each of the ghettos, the creation of each ghetto, and the ways ghettoization restricted Jewish life.

The supply and distribution of food to the three ghettos is addressed in **Chapter 3**. It looks at how the individual ghettos, based on their prewar attributes, changing German policies, and worsening situations, distributed food to residents. The chapter also examines communal strategies for increasing food supply through agricultural enterprises, and the processing of food waste and low-quality food into edible food.

Chapter 4 examines hunger's impact on the physical body, on the mental state of its victims, and on social dynamics, as well as death, the final result of starvation. It explores ways in which the Jews of the ghetto experienced and coped with these physical and physiological transformations.

Chapter 5 examines the everydayness of hunger in the ghetto including individual and household coping strategies. It looks at the leveraging of relationships for food access, as well as the ways in which individuals and households traded assets for food including foods that were not typically consumed prior to the war.

Chapter 6 explores how socioeconomic status mediated by gender and religion played a role in food access. Those who were poor before the war were most vulnerable to starvation in the early period of the ghetto. These individuals were criminalized and then subjected to the earliest deportations to forced labor and extermination camps. In turn, those who had been food secure during the early period of the war or ghetto were impoverished over the course of the ghettos' existence and ultimately, in many cases, joined the ranks of the poor. Only the ghetto elites, who dined in fine restaurants and had access to sufficient and even luxury food items, were spared extreme deprivations.

Chapter 7 looks at charity and social help in the ghettos. It examines ways in which organizations, the Judenrat, and individuals distributed and were recipients of charity. This chapter explores the strategies of some ghettos in creating welfare structures such as free or low-cost ration cards as well as others where charity was predominately done through private initiatives, ranging from private organizations establishing soup kitchens to individuals giving to beggars. Most tragically, it examines the plight of those in communal care including refugees.

Chapter 8 examines how individuals resorted to illicit means to obtain more food. Smuggling, theft, and black marketeering all supplemented the foodstuffs of Jews in the three ghettos. This chapter also looks at how war and ghetto events affected black market prices and how illicit activities shaped family relations.

Chapter 9 looks at work strategies for acquiring food. It examines how individuals strategically sought employment to meet their needs, how the Judenrat struggled to provide the labor demanded by the Germans and feed the ghetto inhabitants, and how the Germans ultimately took control of food out of the hands of the communal leadership in order to prioritize labor.

The last chapter examines deportations into and out of the ghetto. It explores how the arrival of deportees affected ghetto food supplies, how being a displaced deportee shaped individuals' ability to obtain resources in the ghetto, and what experiences were unique to Jews from Western Europe in the Polish ghettos. It also considers the deportation of Jews out of the ghettos and the use of food to lure hungry Jews to deportation as well as the chapter in which the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and food issues related to it are discussed.

1 The Nazi Invasion

Violence, Displacement, and Expropriation

Chicken soup, braided challah bread, fish, and other delicacies were being cooked by Jewish women throughout Poland in preparation for Sabbath dinner that Friday night.¹ It was September 1, 1939, and the Nazis had invaded Poland that morning. Preparations were not only being undertaken for the twenty-five hours of Sabbath rest but also for the German attack – the digging of air-raid shelter trenches; covering windows with bags of sand; and purchases like gas masks, food, and medical supplies were tucked away into bomb shelters. Still, Sabbath candles were lit in apartments with windows covered, to shield the candlelight from the German bombers, and prayers were recited as they were every Friday night in religious homes.²

In Kraków, German bombers attacked the city on the first day of the invasion. Leon Leyson, a young boy who was about to turn ten, recalled being “jolted” from sleep “in the pre-dawn hours” by the air-raid sirens.³ In Łódź, German planes dropped bombs on the city in the early morning of September 2, forcing inhabitants into air-raid shelters.⁴ In Warsaw, Hebrew teacher and diarist Chaim Aron Kaplan wrote on September 4, 1939, “we had the taste of an air raid the like of which has never taken place till now. The enemy dropped bombs, each of which deafened us, and sometimes it seemed to us that they were exploding over our heads. Women fainted, cowards hid, and little children cried.”⁵ Although this description of the invasion of Poland was written in Warsaw, it might have been written in any major Polish city after the Nazis invaded.

Across Poland, the German invasion inspired people to stock up on provisions. Gusta Rubinfeld was at the market when she heard of the invasion, so instead of buying a single kilo of barley as planned, she bought as much as she could carry home.⁶ Anna Grun recalled that the shops in Kraków were “full of people buying out everything. Shelves emptied quickly.”⁷ Others bought small luxuries. The father of Kraków ghetto survivor Lucie Brent purchased a lot of chocolates when the Germans invaded so that in the event the family had to hide in the cellar, they would have something to eat.⁸

In the days after the invasion, radios announced in cities throughout Poland that able-bodied men with the ability to take up arms should leave town to join the military defense.⁹ Men, Jewish and non-Jewish, streamed out of cities to join the fight against the invaders. Aron Grynwald, a thirty-four-year-old newlywed and wire factory owner, was one of many to take to the roads. He left his home in Kraków to go eastward and meet up with the Polish defense forces. He was intercepted by Germans, however, who turned everyone back, leaving him to return to Kraków by foot.¹⁰

Men of fighting age who rushed off to defend Poland as German bombs fell on Polish cities were not the only ones to take to the road. A flood of people, Jewish and non-Jewish, of all ages left the cities that had become war zones, heading to the countryside, other major Polish cities, or the east. For those who left the cities, there were many dangers, including aerial bombings, scarcity of food and water, and the possibility of encountering German forces on the road. Hersz Fogel, a sixteen-year-old diarist, tried to escape with a friend from Łódź to Warsaw, but plane bombardments forced him to return home. Fogel was separated from his friend, who believed him to be dead on the road, a belief he conveyed to Fogel's parents. Fogel's family was thus very relieved when he finally made it back to Łódź.¹¹

Whole families took to the road. Some traveled to cities viewed as safer, others aimed to be near family, and still others returned home from summer vacations or visits. Rachel Garfunkel, a nine-year-old girl from Kraków, fled eastward with her family. She described the throngs of people laden with bundles, pushing baby carriages and making their way east as bombs fell. She described the aftermath of a bomb falling: "you looked up and there were legs and heads and arms hanging off trees. Body parts. Blood all over. Screaming. You can't imagine."¹² Mary Berg, the fifteen-year-old daughter of a gallery owner and his American citizen wife, described her family's trek by foot and bicycle from their home in Łódź to Warsaw and noted that by September 9, they had run out of the food they had brought with them for the journey: "There was nothing whatever to be had along the way. Weak from hunger, my mother fainted on the road."¹³ Sometimes men and their families left cities but headed in different directions. Ryszard Polanski, the film director Roman Polanski's father, fled Kraków along with his unmarried brothers. They went to Lublin, but by the time they arrived, the Germans were already in place. Polanski had sent his wife, his son Roman (b. 1933), and his stepdaughter Annette to a house in the Warsaw suburbs. Polanski traveled from Lublin to Warsaw to retrieve his family and return them to Kraków.¹⁴

Many of those who left cities included communal leaders, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Among them was Rafal Landau, the head of the Jewish community of Kraków; Leibl Minberg, the president of the Łódź community board; and Maurycy Mayzel, the head of the Jewish community of Warsaw. For the Jewish communities, these departures meant that they had to face many challenges without the most seasoned of their leaders at the helm. Not everyone fled Polish cities during the invasion. The Jewish historian and activist Emanuel Ringelblum (1900–1944) was in Switzerland for the Twenty-First Zionist Conference and stubbornly insisted on making his way back to Warsaw as the war raged on. He saw it as his civic duty to be with his people to help with relief efforts as lives were torn apart by the war. He refused to follow as others left to escape the war zone.¹⁵

These early mass migrations between cities had multiple effects on families and individuals during the war. Some families ended up separated for its duration and, in a number of cases, ended up in cities without their belongings and where they might not have strong social networks. When food grew scarce, social networks would be a key factor for many individuals in obtaining adequate food or putting themselves in positions to obtain adequate food. Another factor in these migrations was that the refugees were not able to bring significant movable wealth with them. For many, material resources would play an important role in obtaining food. These migrations also created a large group of displaced people who needed support from the Jewish communities. For those arriving in a city, the local population offered assistance. Ultimately, however, the need to care for those displaced would become a major problem for the Jewish communities under German occupation, especially as their material resources were expropriated by the Germans and their ability to raise new funds was constrained by the rapid impoverishment of the population.

Those who remained in the major cities during the invasion faced many hardships. In addition to the threat of bombing, food was scarce and expensive. Warsaw suffered during the long siege both from its inability to bring in more food and from the hoarding of food, once it became apparent that an occupation would follow the invasion. Writing in his diary, Kaplan noted, “There is no bread! Long lines of several hundred people formed in order to get a loaf of bread.”¹⁶ Standing in line for bread could be risky. One survivor’s father stood in line for bread at a bakery only to have the German planes shoot at them: “Instantly the line in front of the bakery dispersed, but one man remained. Disregarding the firing, my father took his place behind him. A moment later the man was hit in the head by a bullet. The entrance to the bakery shop was

now free and my father made his purchase.”¹⁷ Desperate for food, some people traveled to the nearby countryside to harvest or purchase food. American photojournalist Julien Hequembourg Bryan observed from just outside Warsaw during the three-week siege of the capital:

Seven women had been digging potatoes in a field. There was no flour in their district, and they were desperate for food. Suddenly two German planes appeared from nowhere and dropped two bombs only two hundred yards away on a small home. Two women in the house were killed. The potato diggers dropped flat upon the ground hoping to be unnoticed. After the bombers had gone, the women returned to their work. They had to have food. But the Nazi fliers were not satisfied with their work. In a few minutes they came back and swooped down to within two hundred feet of the ground, this time raking the field with machine-gun fire.¹⁸

The result of these extreme food shortages and the dangers of obtaining food was that people took extraordinary measures to get something to eat, whether it be attacking one another or scavenging meat from animals around the city. Kaplan reported an abundance of dead horses in the city streets that were not being removed but were having chunks of their carcasses taken by the hungry.¹⁹ Berg reported that she dined on a meal of “the last swan in the pond in Krasinski Park,” a pond that was filled with rotting corpses.²⁰ Despite these issues, groups of Jews worked to provide relief during the siege, including running grassroots soup kitchens and undertaking various efforts to house both refugees entering the city and those who had lost their homes as a result of bombing.²¹

Warsaw, the capital of Poland, was the last city to capitulate during the invasion, holding on for almost a month. As the end of the siege came within sight, Kaplan wrote in his diary that there was no bread and that “meat, butter, and milk are unobtainable at any price.”²² Adam Czerniaków (1880–1942), the chairman of the Jewish community in Warsaw at the time (and the future head of the Warsaw ghetto), wrote at the end of September 1939: “For quite a while a shortage of bread. There is no meat.”²³ Writing about the last days of September 1939, after Warsaw had capitulated but just before the Wehrmacht (German army) entered the city, Rachel Auerbach (1903–1976), a prewar writer and journalist, and one of the few creators of the Warsaw underground archive code-named “Oyneg Shabbat” to survive, wrote, “It looked as if an earthquake had hit the city. The government was dead but the body wasn’t yet buried and we were the mourners for the burial.”²⁴

The Germans finally entered Warsaw on October 1, 1939. Kraków had fallen early in the morning on September 6, 1939, and by September 8, 1939, Łódź was occupied. In all of the cities, abuse of the non-German population commenced with the German entry. Jews were

especially targeted for abuse, including beatings, being dragged from the street for forced labor details, attacks in their homes, and public humiliations. Leyson recalled that in Kraków, “The German soldiers acted with impunity. One could never predict what they would do next Orthodox Jewish men were special targets. Soldiers would grab them off the street, beat them and cut off their beards and side curls, known as *payot*, just for sport, or what they considered sport.”²⁵ Holocaust survivor Eva Smugler, whose family lived close to army barracks in Łódź, reported that her father was attacked by German soldiers on the street: “They cut his beard and blood all over. He come home, he was crying.”²⁶ Not only Orthodox Jews were targeted. Pinchas Ringelblum, who was seventeen at the time, described an encounter with a German officer on the streets of Warsaw during the period before the creation of the Warsaw ghetto. He recalled that the officer: “pulled off his, his gloves, finger by finger – I just remember the way he was doing it, he put the two gloves together, handed it over to this lady that was on his side and smacked me left and right I fell over. I lost a couple of teeth. I was bleeding from my nose and mouth. It took me a while till I gained my consciousness, and equilibrium.”²⁷ This was not Pinchas Ringelblum’s first encounter with brutality at the hands of the German invaders. In the early days of the German occupation, he was captured on the streets of Warsaw and conscripted into forced labor. He recalled:

soldiers jumping out of trucks, gathering together the mensfolks and, and pushing them into the trucks ... on the first occasion, in the first week that the Germans were there, I was taken by truck to the army quarters to clean up the—whatever was left after the bombardment and prepare it for ... the German army, which I did For our effort, except for kicks in the bum and beating while you were working, we also got a piece of bread and occasionally, a spoonful of marmalade and a bit of hot water. That was it. Of course you came home late at night, and you could hardly drag your feet.²⁸

Often, tortures were incorporated into the labor duty. Kaplan in Warsaw reported that a friend was forced to carry heavy barrels up from a cellar. Unable to do the task, he was “punished” with even harder labor, and then, when he was unable to do this, the Nazi repeatedly tortured him by intimating the various ways they might kill him, including forcing his friends to dig his grave.²⁹ Similarly, a fifteen-year-old diarist in Łódź, Dawid Sierakowiak, reported that “at one place, for example, the Jewish employees were ordered to stop work, undress, and face a wall. Then they were told they would be shot. Indeed, they were aimed at with great precision. No one was hurt, but this procedure was repeated several times.”³⁰ Not everyone was fortunate enough to be unscathed physically by the poor treatment during forced labor. An anonymous

author, writing about the situation of women in the Warsaw ghetto for the Oyneg Shabes Archive, told the story of several women who were forced into smuggling because their businesses were wiped out by the occupation. Their husbands had been so brutalized while doing forced labor that they could not earn any money, leaving the families faced with starvation. One woman's husband was left "sickly and paralyzed after a street round-up for labour." The other woman's "husband was once captured for imposed labour and he was hit so severely that he suffered a concussion and was bedridden for a long time."³¹

It was not only physical and psychological torture that Jews had to endure. Under Nazi occupation, young women were vulnerable to rape. Women might be sexually abused during forced labor or rounded up specifically for the purpose of sexual abuse. One survivor from Łódź reported, "They took away Jewish young girls, twelve, thirteen years, beautiful young girls and they live with them and they do what they do and later on they shot them."³² Another report noted that in Warsaw, "In one mirror-shop in Swietojerska Street there was a mass raping of Jewish girls. The Germans seized the most beautiful and most healthy girls in the streets and brought them to pack mirrors. After the work the girls were raped."³³

The physical assaults on the street and the roundups for forced labor or other abuses made leaving one's home treacherous. This was particularly problematic for those who needed to obtain food, most often women, but no one, man or woman, was safe outdoors. Some people avoided the risk of assault by paying a non-Jew to do their shopping, thus adding another cost to obtaining food.

It was not only physically or on the streets that Jews were assaulted. The German entry into Poland commenced an economic assault on the Jewish population. In cities across Poland, including Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków, the Germans undertook numerous official and unofficial expropriations of Jewish resources. German authorities and individual Germans entered Jewish homes and apartments to appropriate whatever they wanted and looted Jewish stores and businesses. Mieczysław Pemper (1920–2011), a Kraków ghetto survivor saved by Oscar Schindler, noted, "It was open season on Jews, and even the four walls of our apartments offered us no protection."³⁴ As one Łódź ghetto survivor noted, "Every few days there would be a knock on the door and invariably there would be a German soldier, often with a *volksdeutsche* ... and they would simply come and rob: the wedding ring from my mother's finger, look in the cupboard and take whatever they wanted."³⁵ Even the highest-ranking Jews were not exempt from having things stolen from their home. Adam Czerniaków, head of the Warsaw Judenrat and a prewar Polish senator, had his apartment looted on January 29, 1940. The uniformed

men took “two bottles of oil, a leather briefcase, chocolate, tea, etc.” A week later, his apartment was again visited for “requisitioning.”³⁶

Even the official Jewish community coffers were looted of their cash on hand. This happened in Warsaw but was thwarted in Kraków.³⁷ The theft of funds from the Jewish community meant that it was less able to provide for the vast number of Jews in need of support as a result of the devastation of the occupation. Jan Najder, a non-Jewish Pole, recounted how over two days in December, German officers carried out a mass expropriation of Jewish wealth in one Jewish area of Kraków: “The aim of the search was to confiscate silver, gold and jewelry belonging to the Jews. In reality, they took everything that was valuable Every single house had to be searched; they scattered underwear, combed out cellars and attics.”³⁸ The removal of valuables from homes was an economic blow. As the ability to earn money or draw funds from the banks was increasingly curtailed under Nazi occupation, people came to rely on selling off valuables in exchange for food. Beginning in September 1939, the Nazis blocked Jewish bank accounts in Łódź and limited the amount of money Jews were allowed to possess. Jewish assets were essentially frozen. Jews were limited to 2,000 zloty or 1,000 marks as on-hand currency and were allowed to draw only 250 zloty per week from their bank accounts. In Warsaw, bank accounts were frozen in mid-October, and Jews were forbidden from having more than 2,000 zloty in cash.³⁹ The poorest Jews in Warsaw were limited to withdrawing only 20 zloty per week from their frozen accounts.⁴⁰ In Kraków, the freezing of bank accounts commenced in December 1939. This action was especially damaging to families, to those who had little on hand to sell or exchange for food, and to those who relied on support funds or pensions, which were denied to Jews under occupation. Many people, particularly families, risked starvation. Moreover, food was sometimes stolen alongside valuables during the “requisitions.” For those with limited resources, the loss of their food, at a time when food prices were rapidly rising, was particularly devastating.⁴¹

Although these home invasions were often motivated by greed for valuables, they were frequently accompanied by violence. Blanka Rothschild described a German man who came to her grandmother’s home to select items he wanted and her own shock that he could hit her grandmother.⁴² A few days after the Germans came into Kraków, a group of German soldiers came to the home of Benjamin Lesser, an eleven-year-old boy, in the early minutes of the morning and woke the family up. The soldiers pistol-whipped the family and demanded their valuables. While this was happening, the Lessers heard horrible screaming coming from a nearby apartment where Jews lived. Benjamin and his sister went to the

other apartment and saw a German holding a six-week-old baby by the legs. The soldier swung the baby's head into a doorpost.⁴³

The violence perpetrated inside Jewish homes also included sexual violence. One doctor from Warsaw stated, "One continually hears of the raping of Jewish girls in Warsaw. The Germans suddenly enter a house and rape fifteen- or sixteen-year-old girls in the presence of their parents and relatives."⁴⁴ Diarist Berg described some of the abuses suffered by her schoolmates in Łódź:

They gather five to ten couples together in a room, order them to strip and make them dance to the accompaniment of a phonograph record. Two of my schoolmates experienced this in their own home. Several Nazis entered their apartment and, after a thorough search of all the rooms, forced the two girls into the parlor, where there was a piano. When their parents tried to accompany them, the Nazis struck them over the heads with clubs. Then the Nazis locked the parlor door and ordered the girls to strip. They ordered the older one to play a Viennese waltz and the younger one to dance My schoolmates showed me the black and blue marks left on their bodies after their struggles with their tormentors.⁴⁵

Sometimes in addition to having their valuables taken away or being attacked in their own homes, Jews were forcibly removed from their homes. This displacement caused many problems. It might happen that a man in uniform would unexpectedly ring a doorbell, look around the apartment inquisitively, and then command, "You have three hours to clear out. You may take a suitcase with you. Your furniture stays here."⁴⁶ Sometimes, Jews were kicked out of their homes and not allowed to take anything with them. Kaplan, writing in his diary of the first day of German occupation of Warsaw, noted that he along with his neighbors in five buildings on Nowolipki Street were expelled from their homes. They were not allowed to take clothes or any other possessions with them. Kaplan was fortunate in that his apartment was returned to him a month later, but all the possessions had been stripped, including fixtures.⁴⁷

In addition to being limited in terms of cash and subjected to regular plundering of their homes, Jews were further subjected to economic hardship as they were systematically moved out of work. Jews were dismissed from Aryan-controlled businesses, and Jewish professionals were removed from their employment. In September 1939, Jews in Łódź were exiled from trade in textile, leather goods, and raw materials. Since a large portion of Łódź Jews were artisans in these areas, this move severely affected their employment. Jewish businesses had to be labeled as such by fall's end in 1939. The labeling of retail stores only contributed to the plundering of Jewish-owned businesses.⁴⁸

Non-German-owned businesses, including Jewish-owned businesses, began to be expropriated by the state in November 1939. The largest seizure of valuables, however, was the Aryanization of Jewish businesses. The Germans handed over Jewish-owned shops and businesses to non-Jews. As one survivor noted, "For a short time, an owner was tolerated in a shop or a company and was given the minimum wage; during that time, a trustee would learn how to manage the place." The Aryanization of businesses pauperized many Jewish families and added additional financial pressures on the Jewish community in terms of both an increased need for support and a reduction in the tax base.⁴⁹

Aryanization of businesses took an emotional toll on owners who identified with their work. William Schiff's father, a forty-six-year-old barber who owned his own shop, was extremely demoralized when he was forced to sign over his shop to one of his employees. William, who was twenty when the war broke out, described his father as crying daily.⁵⁰ Even those who did work were not always regularly paid. Due to a severe shortage of funds in the summer of 1940, the Jewish administration in Warsaw was unable to pay its workers or those sent out to do forced labor for the Germans.

Jews were not only stripped of their businesses and their occupations but they were also subjected to forced labor. While people were initially seized on the streets for such labor, by the end of October 1939, forced labor was both more organized and compulsory for Jewish men.⁵¹ Some Jews who needed the money volunteered for forced labor. The daily wage the volunteers were paid in Warsaw was enough to buy a loaf of bread but not enough to cover the cost of a dinner. Wages had to be provided by the Jewish community for the 3,000 forced laborers demanded by the German authorities on a daily basis, but when the community was short of funds, it was unable to provide the money for these workers.⁵² The work assigned was often torturous, and the workers were vulnerable to all sorts of abuses. Kaplan reported on a situation where a German forced a Jew to move ice in the middle of winter with his bare hands, resulting in so much damage that the man's hands had to be amputated.⁵³

The financial devastation of many members of the Jewish community also led to the need for social support. Stripped of their property, thrown out of their jobs, and left in dire need, Jews were also often excluded from relief efforts such as soup kitchens or thrown off of breadlines set up by the Germans for starving members of the Polish population.⁵⁴ It, therefore, fell to the Jewish community to provide a variety of services, including welfare.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, fundraising for the welfare of the Jews in the cities was often limited to the Jewish population. In the beginning, some could afford to be generous, but eventually the impoverishment

caused by the German occupation eroded the wealth of families, and many could no longer afford to donate. Shimon Huberband, who was in Warsaw in 1940 for the Jewish holiday of Shavuot (which fell in mid-June that year), noted that in the fifty days between Passover and Shavuot, the Jews of Warsaw were already beginning to suffer financially. This was indicated by the more humble holiday meals and that they no longer had the means to bring liquor for the holiday celebration.⁵⁶

The Nazi military occupation of Poland gave way to a civilian-led occupation, and a large area of Poland became a German colony called the Generalgouvernement for the Occupied Polish Territories. Hitler created the General Government by decree on October 12, 1939, with Hans Frank as its head, or governor-general, and Arthur Seyss-Inquart as deputy governor-general. Initially, Łódź was incorporated into the Generalgouvernement and chosen as the capital.⁵⁷ This was reconsidered, however, and the city was incorporated into the Reichsgau Wartheland (Warthegau) in early November 1939.⁵⁸ Kraków served as the Generalgouvernement capital. Under these civilian German governments, Jewish life was further restricted. In particular, the civilian governments expanded on attacks on Jewish religious practice that had begun during the military occupation. For example, Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) fell on September 14, 1939, while the military was still in charge. The Germans closed the synagogues for the Jewish holy days and forced Jewish store owners to keep their shops open. Diarist Sierakowiak, writing in Łódź, commented on this ordinance:

Although I am not traditionally a pious man, and every year I have considered the avoidance of prayer as a liberation, I now experience every order pertaining to the Jews with great pain because I know what faith brings to its believers; they are at least partially at peace and happy. To take away from a man his only consolation, his faith, to forbid his beloved, life-affirming religion is the most horrendous crime.⁵⁹

The German civilian governments went further, closing Jewish synagogues permanently, forbidding kosher slaughtering of animals, and closing Jewish schools. In Łódź, the synagogues were burned down in November 1939.⁶⁰

The Germans also attacked free movement. Jews could not change residence without permit and were prohibited from traveling by rail or other means of public transportation. The restrictions on transportation made it difficult for Jews to travel outside the city to obtain food, which was available at cheaper prices in the countryside, and to purchase items beyond a certain radius of their homes. Jews were forbidden in most non-Jewish public spaces, including public parks, cinemas, theaters, cafés,

and restaurants. In Łódź, Jews were prohibited from walking on the sidewalk or even walking along the main street in the city – Piotrkowska – which under Nazi occupation was renamed Adolf Hitler Street. Of this ban, Berg noted in her diary: “The new German decree has thus created great hardships for many Jews. But the Germans are profiting from it; they are issuing special permits to the Jews to walk on Piotrkowska Street at five zlotys a permit.”⁶¹ Yankl Nirenberg mentioned, however, that even these permits were not guarantees of safety: “although the Germans conducted a lucrative business of issuing permits for very high prices, this did not prevent the murderers from snatching Jews with permits and sending them to unknown destinations, from which many of them never returned.”⁶² Łódź survivor Tonia Rotkopf-Blair recalled that she learned about the law against Jews walking on the sidewalk when she was walking on a sidewalk with her father. They noticed a group of German soldiers approaching them, and “[these soldiers] screamed at my father, who looked very Jewish. They knocked him [down] They kicked him and covered him with heavy blows Eventually he was still, they left Only when he moved I realized that he was alive.”⁶³ The random abuse of Jews was another means by which Jewish movement was heavily restricted. Despite these restrictions, including for example German orders preventing Jews in the Wartheland from fleeing their place of residence, many Jews nevertheless continued to attempt to escape to places perceived to be safer.⁶⁴

In all the cities, Jews were also required to be rendered visible through the wearing of a badge indicating their Jewish identity. In Łódź, Kalisz Regierungspräsident Friedrich Übelhör issued an order on November 14, 1939, that read, “All Jews, irrespective of age and sex, must wear a distinguishing mark on their right arm, just under the shoulder. The band will be 10 cm. wide and in the Jewish-yellow color.”⁶⁵ Compulsory armbands also became required in Warsaw and Kraków, beginning December 1, 1939. The order required that all Jews over the age of ten wear ten-centimeter armbands on their right sleeve with a Star of David.⁶⁶ On December 11, 1939, shortly after the armband was instituted in the General Government, Gauleiter Arthur Greiser, the German leader of the Warthegau, amended the order: The distinguishing mark to be worn by the Jews in Warthegau (this included the Jews in Łódź) was a yellow star attached to the front and back of their clothing, instead of an armband.⁶⁷ The armband continued to be used as the distinguishing mark in the General Government. As diarist Irena Glueck noted, “Like everyone else, I wear an armband, have to ride in the back of the bus, cannot walk in the Planty [a park], or through the big market square of Cracow.”⁶⁸ This visibility also made it difficult for Jews to obtain food in cities. Not

only was it easier for proprietors to exclude Jewish patrons – who might otherwise not be easily identifiable as Jewish – but also those who did venture into the city to obtain food were easier targets for those who would torment Jews on the streets.

Not everyone in Nazi-occupied cities stayed put. Even after the Germans had conquered Poland, and despite numerous bans on free movement, there continued to be a mass migration of Jews during the early period of the occupation. Some went from place to place voluntarily, some by necessity, and others due to forced migration. In all three cities, Kraków, Łódź, and Warsaw, the Germans had devised plans to “Germanize” the city. This involved not only transforming the physical cities and their structures but also undertaking massive population transfers. The removal of Poles and Jews from these spaces was integral to the plans, and so all three cities were the site of forced mass expulsions.

In Łódź, Jews and Poles were expelled by special immigration and resettlement offices established by the Schutzstaffel (SS) to create space for German colonization, a practice that had a significant impact as early as December 1939. Ethnic Germans were moved to Łódź and the Warthegau region in vast numbers. Kraków, as the new capital of the Generalgouvernement, also sought to remove Jews to make space for the enormous number of German functionaries relocated to the city and to fulfill Hans Frank’s desire to have his capital free of Jews. Unlike most other places in occupied Poland, where individuals from the countryside and small surrounding cities fled to the big city, in the case of Kraków, the Jews were forced from the big city into the small surrounding cities and countryside during the late spring and summer of 1940. However, the need for some Jews to facilitate the war effort and to continue in their aryanized businesses prevented the Germans from removing all Jews from the city. As a result, a fraction of the Jews of Kraków were granted permits to remain. In order to stay in Kraków, one had to submit a petition requesting permission. Those who were accepted “received an Ausweis [permit] but those who were rejected had to present themselves for deportation.”⁶⁹

Many Jews ended up in the towns and villages surrounding Kraków, either by their own volition or by force. Among them was the poet Mordechai Gebürtig, who had to leave Kraków in 1940. He composed a poem on October 24, 1940, to commemorate the moment: “Farewell, my Cracow, / Farewell, / Horse and wagons are waiting in front of my house. / The wild enemy drives me out / Like one drives a dog / Without mercy away from you.”⁷⁰

After this first wave of deportations in summer of 1940, there was a second demand for Jews to register with the authorities. This second

set of registrations resulted in numerous people losing their right to continue living in the city. The second wave of deportation orders was issued in December 1940. Many Jews were deported to towns surrounding Kraków, while others continued to live unofficially in the city or left for another city of their choosing. For example, Ludmilla P.'s mother, a doctor, went to Warsaw.⁷¹

Łódź also had a series of forced migrations. Heinrich Himmler had decreed that the Warthegau region should be free of Jews, and Łódź, which had initially been part of the General Government, was incorporated into the Warthegau region shortly after this pronouncement. As a result, announcements were made in mid-December that the Jews of Łódź were to be deported. The Jewish Council offered fifty zloty per person to the poor to help them with relocation. As a result, only the poor registered for the deportation.⁷² There was also the forced migration of Jews from Łódź to Kraków, including several of the original members of the Jewish Council. In addition to these forced migrations, many Jews traveled to other cities or the countryside in hopes of improving their situation during the occupation. Others left a city to avoid ghettoization, only to end up in a ghetto later.

Food Access during the German Occupation

The German occupation also brought numerous hardships related to food acquisition. Although prices stabilized after the Germans entered the cities, food prices increased dramatically from their prewar levels. In Warsaw, in November 1939, prices were triple or quadruple their prewar prices. By February 1940, prices had risen five to ten times their prewar level.⁷³ Increased prices of food are a marker that hunger and famine are creeping in.⁷⁴ Another complication in acquiring food was that food stores did not reopen immediately after the German occupation. Instead, food was sold widely on the black market. Buying food became a major task during the German occupation.

For Jews, food acquisition was more complicated in all occupied cities due to restrictions imposed on them, violence against them, and seizure for forced labor. Jews were subjected to curfews and official restrictions on movement through certain areas of the city. Mendel Beale's mother in Łódź was pointed out on a breadline during the pre-ghetto period, when it was forbidden for her to be there due to the curfew. To compensate for the difficulties in purchasing food, she bought flour in bulk and made foods that could be kept for long periods, such as pasta, which could be dried and stored.⁷⁵ In addition to facing official restrictions on movement, Jews were fearful of encountering physical abuse or abduction for

deportation or forced labor, and this fear of violence made them apprehensive about moving through public spaces.⁷⁶ Some Jews stayed in their homes in order to avoid harassment, which left the burden of food acquisition on other family members, often specifically those family members that did not have stereotypically Jewish features; women, who were perceived to be less targeted; or children, who were not yet required to wear marks identifying them as Jews. Kraków ghetto survivor Gusta Rubinfeld was among the young Jewish women who didn't "look Jewish" and therefore were able to stand in line to obtain food during the German occupation.⁷⁷ Similarly, Anna Grun recalled being able to obtain bread from a bakery despite German soldiers examining those queuing for stereotypical Jewish features.⁷⁸ Jacob Rosenberg recalled that his mother (and not his father) traveled from Łódź to the countryside to trade items for food: "My father couldn't do a thing because there was—it was murderous for men to go out in the street So my mother plucked up some courage. And she went to the country and took a few things with her, some—I can't remember what—some garments, some clothes, frocks and things. And she exchanged it for food. And she brought home some food."⁷⁹

These food-gathering ventures were a problem for those who were recognizably Jewish and those who were pointed out as Jews by the local population and became more dangerous for all Jews once they were rendered visible through the requirement to wear an armband or a Star of David on their clothing. Those who refused to wear the distinguishing Jewish marking – the armband or stars sewn on their clothing depending on the region – were then further in danger of arrest. All these issues affected the ability of Jews to seek food. Even food successfully acquired was at risk: Germans and ethnic Germans continued to confiscate food from Jewish homes. Jews who had bought extra food in an effort to minimize going to stores might only have more food stolen for their trouble. Joseph Curzinski's family in Łódź hid their bulk food in the basement to prevent its theft by those coming into apartments.⁸⁰ In Kraków, Anna Grun's family had their pantry stripped by Germans.⁸¹

Food rationing began in December 1939 in Warsaw. At first, there was no distinction made between Poles and Jews in food rationing. However, in January 1940, distinctions between Polish and Jewish access to food were made explicit. Jewish and Polish charities were separated, and shortly afterward the Germans issued special ration cards specifically for Jews, which could only be used in Jewish shops.⁸² Czerniaków, the head of the Jewish community, was informed that "Jews are to receive smaller bread rations and no meat at all."⁸³ In that same period, food prices on the black market were four to five times higher for basic foodstuffs;

rampant inflation pushed prices higher and higher, while at the same time “a broad section of the public remains without work and without income.”⁸⁴

At the end of January 1940, the Germans in Warsaw declared that the black market sale of food was illegal, leading to the disappearance of many items from the black market, a shift that jeopardized food access for many. The food situation for Jews in Warsaw continued to deteriorate when, in September 1940, the bread ration for Jews was reduced to 750 grams, which was half the ration allocated to Poles.⁸⁵ It was also at that point that new bread ration cards were distributed, with a small payment required to register for the new cards. This produced some backlash in the community despite exemptions from payment for the poorest of residents.

The food that was available on the black market was often ersatz foods. In May 1940, Czerniaków reported that “for my breakfast today I had ‘caviar.’ It is apparently frog spawn colored black. One little can cost 3 zlotys.” He also noted that a pint of artificial tea was 3.60 zloty in May 1940.⁸⁶ In addition to food rationing that heavily disadvantaged Jews, there were bans on kosher slaughter, which made procurement of kosher meat illicit and difficult. The restrictions on movement likewise made obtaining food from the countryside more challenging. Jewish exclusion from wider food distribution made Jews more food insecure, and as food prices rose considerably, Jews had less and less legal access to money.

Glueck, who worked as a salesperson at a pharmacy in Kraków, noted some prices in her diary, which provides a sense of scale. She received a monthly take-home pay of just under nineteen zloty. A loaf of bread on the black market was two zloty.⁸⁷ Food shortages meant that many food sellers were incentivized to withhold part of their allotment and sell it under the table to those who could pay inflated prices. Many goods, including foodstuffs, required one to stand in a long line to obtain them. Survivor Jan Rozanski recalled, “With the little money in my pocket I went in search of bread. Long queues formed in front of the bakeries, the people waiting patiently, not sure if there will be any bread at all.”⁸⁸ When an item ran out, those who did not get it would be forced to go without or pay black market prices. Even those who were able to obtain the allotted rations were not able to live solely on that food. They had to resort to the black market to obtain enough food to survive.

Some people were able to use their social networks to purchase food at regular prices rather than black market prices. Glueck’s father was a physician, and one of his patients was a baker. As a result, Glueck’s family obtained bread at a “normal” price until the baker’s supply of flour was reduced and he could no longer offer this favor.⁸⁹ Even being

able to obtain food on the black market sometimes required resorting to networks. Kaplan reported that a friend asked for help in establishing a connection with a baker to facilitate his purchase of bread.⁹⁰ This was during the siege of Warsaw, but already the man had been worn down in pursuit of food. Some also resorted to supplementing their food resources through growing food. Glueck grew a bean plant on the balcony of her family's Kraków apartment. When the plant grew tall enough and produced beans, she harvested some of her crop, which her mother used to make soup.⁹¹

Ultimately, however, high food prices took their toll on those with less means. For those who were already living on the precipice of starvation, high food prices and the disrupted ability to obtain food put many in danger. For example, Kaplan recorded giving bread and other necessities to someone who had already gone days without food less than two weeks into the Nazi invasion.⁹² Although friends and neighbors helped one another, particularly in the early period, more formal methods of feeding the poor quickly arose. In Warsaw and Łódź, soup kitchens were organized by prewar political organizations. In her diary entry of July 12, 1940, Berg recorded, "Last week self-supporting popular kitchens began to function in Warsaw. One of these is close to us, at 16 Sienna Street. A meal in such a kitchen consists of potato or cabbage soup and a tiny portion of vegetables. Twice a week one receive a tiny piece of meat which costs 1 zloty 20 groszy."⁹³ Also in Warsaw, Rachel Auerbach established and ran a *folkskikh* (folk kitchen), a soup kitchen for refugees.⁹⁴ In Kraków, a folk kitchen that served two thousand people a day was located in a building that also housed a large number of refugees, the Beis Yaakov building at 10 Stanisława.⁹⁵

The running of the soup kitchens provided not only food for refugees but also a space for political activism. Kaplan noted that in the Zionist soup kitchen at 13 Zamenhof Street, Theodor Herzl and Hayyim Nahman Bialik were memorialized, with various speakers delivering talks.⁹⁶ The soup kitchen also provided an occupation for intellectuals who needed a means of support. Auerbach was penniless when she was approached by Ringelblum to run the Warsaw kitchen, but her work there, which extended into the ghetto period, provided her with access to food and kept her from starving in the ghetto. Similarly, other intellectuals were protected from hunger and given employment through the creation and running of soup kitchens.⁹⁷

This is not to say that food kitchens for refugees and the poor were not desperately needed. Approximately 90,000 refugees streamed into Warsaw between November 1939 and October 1940.⁹⁸ Many of these refugees arrived with fewer movable goods to sell off than their Warsaw

counterparts had, resulting in a diminished ability to purchase food, whether legally or on the black market, and making them more reliant on the meager official food rations. In Kraków, between September 1939 and September 1940, the Jewish community running welfare kitchens served 1,654,643 breakfasts, 1,587,930 lunches, and 184,981 suppers.⁹⁹

Jewish charities, both local and international, stepped in to provide food for the poor. Until December 1941 when the United States entered the war, for example, the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) was able to send support. For Passover 1940 it sent money and food packages with “matzah, eggs, fat, sugar, etc.”¹⁰⁰ Although the Germans continued to allow foreign aid to reach the Jews, they began instituting restrictions. In January 1940, the Jewish Social Self Help Coordinating Commission (ŻSS) was formed, establishing a separation between Jewish and non-Jewish Polish charities.¹⁰¹ All Jewish charitable organizations were dissolved in June 1940 and administered by ŻSS, which continued to receive aid for Jews but at extremely unfavorable exchange rates that benefited the Germans. On October 17, 1940, the Jewish Welfare Committee of the City of Warsaw (ŻCOM) opened as the official Warsaw branch of ŻSS.

In addition to official and organizational relief efforts, there were small-scale efforts to raise money and provide relief for those suffering food insecurity. House committees that had been formed for civil defense began to do other types of things and, in many neighborhoods, worked collectively for poor relief. Some apartment buildings collected food for the benefit of children, including, “a spoonful of sugar or two spoonfuls of flour and gruel twice a week from each tenant in a given house. Potatoes, carrots, beets, cabbage and other foodstuffs are also collected.”¹⁰² Some house committees were formed specifically to provide support for poorer neighbors. Peretz Opoczynski, in the Oyneg Shabes Archive, described this as being the origin of the house committee at Muranowska 6. Other house committees invited performers to engage in private performances to raise money. In some neighborhoods, the house committees created communal kitchens in their own buildings.¹⁰³

In most cities, public and private initiatives to acquire food persisted not only during the early occupation period but also into the early ghetto period as well. Berg noted in her August 12, 1940, diary entry that she and a group of others organized a club, Łódzki Zespół Artystyczny (Łódź Artistic Group, LZA), to raise relief funds for refugees from Łódź who were in Warsaw. The group, at the request of the Joint Distribution Committee, organized a few shows to raise funds for the refugees from Łódź. The group continued their performances during the ghetto period, with half their receipts continuing to go toward relief efforts.¹⁰⁴ Berg noted in

her diary on April 9, 1941, that “in the beginning there were many such groups, but most of them did not last long.”¹⁰⁵ The impoverishment of the population meant that many who were initially in a position to help others quickly became in need of supporting themselves. Berg noted that some of her former LZA members quickly began to suffer hunger themselves.

Conclusion

The German invasion and early occupation drained the resources of Jews and their communities even before ghettoization. Jews were severed from government assistance programs, and in many cases, international aid to individuals and communities became more challenging. The pressures placed on individuals and households left them more vulnerable to hunger and starvation, while the difficulties experienced by communities during the occupation led them to be less equipped to support those in need as conditions worsened during the ghetto period.

For communities, the loss of resources as international donation and state support dwindled – and as German expropriation increased – coupled with the increased needs for welfare due to pauperization and arriving refugees, led to extreme financial stress even before the creation of ghettos. Compounding the problem was the deficit of communal leadership due to out-migration and violence. This prewar impoverishment would later impact individual and community’s abilities to cope with decreased food access.

On the individual and household levels, many Jews were severely affected by the seizure of their assets, the inability to work, and the requirement to expend limited resources even before ghettoization in order to provide food for themselves and their families. Those who were already financially struggling or food insecure before the war were vulnerable to hunger even before the ghetto period began. Those who did have food stores or material possessions that might be useful later in the war period could lose these as a result of “requisition.” Violence during the early occupation could pauperize a family, if a key working member of the household was killed or severely injured. Migration due to the war also sometimes severed social networks or access to assets and diminished social standing, which endangered some individuals and families. Vulnerability to hunger even before the creation of the ghetto led families and individuals to be particularly susceptible to starvation once the ghettos were created.

2 Jewish Leadership

Within days of their arrival into each of the three cities, the German authorities demanded a representative Jewish Council be established.¹ The Judenrat leaders, even from the beginning, were faced with many unenviable tasks, including raising money from the local population as it became increasingly impoverished, signing up Jews to go to forced labor assignments for the Nazis, and passing along the increasingly unwelcome orders of the Germans. Jewish communal leadership during the Nazi occupation had limited power to influence how food was procured and distributed. As time went on, Jewish Councils (Judenräte), with decreasing autonomy, were tasked with carrying out German orders that affected the fate of the Jews. Prewar politics, the Jewish restrictions in a particular city, and the directives and internal politics of the German authorities were all factors in this process.

In all three cities, the Nazis looked to existing Jewish communal organizations or kehillah to supply the leadership of the new councils.² However, in cities across Poland, many members of the prewar Jewish community leadership had fled. This is not surprising, as intellectuals and leaders of many organizations were targeted for arrest in Polish cities.³ The heads of the prewar kehillah in Łódź, Warsaw, and Kraków, for example, were among those who left.⁴ In the wake of this leadership vacuum, the Nazi invaders demanded Jewish representational leadership to fill vacant positions. In Warsaw, Adam Czerniaków, a member of the prewar kehillah, became the leader of a new organization to support Jews during the Nazi siege of Warsaw. When the Germans entered, he was selected as head of the Judenrat. In Łódź, the German occupying authorities required that the remaining kehillah members convene in early September 1939 to elect new leadership.⁵ The election resulted in Avraham Leyzer Plywacki as president and Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski (1877–1944) as vice president. After Plywacki fled the city, Rumkowski was the highest-ranking member of the kehillah left and became its leader. In Kraków, Marek Bieberstein became the new head of the Jewish community.⁶

Serving in Judenrat leadership was dangerous. In many cities, members of the Judenrat leadership did not make it to the ghetto period. Many were shot or arrested. Others fled when they had the opportunity. Those who continued their leadership into the ghetto period were not out of danger. In all three cities, there were vicious purges of the ghetto leadership. Those who survived purges and did not flee were not always rewarded with favorable assessments. Many would judge these men as inadequate for the task. In his Warsaw diary, Chaim Aron Kaplan was scathing in his assessment of the Judenrat and especially its leader, writing:

The Judenrat is not the same as our traditional Jewish Community Council ... the president of the Judenrat and his advisors are musclemen who were put on our backs by strangers. Most of them are nincompoops whom no one knew in normal times. They were never elected, and would not have dared dream of being elected, as Jewish representatives; had they dared they would have been defeated.... Who paid any attention to some unknown engineer, a nincompoop among nincompoops.⁷

Rumkowski and Bieberstein were similarly derided as unknown or minor leaders by various diarists and survivors, and Rumkowski became a symbol of bad leadership after the war. In the case of Rumkowski and Czerniaków, stories circulated about how they obtained their positions, which suggested in unflattering ways that they sought their positions due to a lust for power. It is unlikely that this is the case.⁸ But all three had prewar Jewish communal leadership experience and were among the few remaining Jewish communal leaders in their cities when the Germans arrived. Rumkowski and Czerniaków both insisted that they had a responsibility to the Jews of their cities and felt obliged to stay.⁹ All three faced extremely difficult circumstances that they each handled in different ways.

The Germans did not only monitor and control the Jewish population through the Judenrat. While the Judenrat served as representatives of the German civil authorities, the Schutzstaffel (SS) and German police had their own networks that reported to them on the Jewish community and later on the internal machinations in the ghettos. Sometimes members of the Judenrat reported to both civil authorities and the German police. In other cases, individuals with varying levels of power and protection operated in the ghettos. In Warsaw, a well-known example of this shadow leadership was the so-called Thirteen. Led by Abraham Gancwajch, the organization was charged with combating profiteering in the Warsaw ghetto. In Łódź, Dawid Gertler headed the Sonderabteilung, which reported to the German police, while his deputy Marek Kliger served as an agent to the Gestapo.¹⁰ In Kraków, various leadership positions in

the Jewish police reported to the German police. Officially, these units were frequently tasked with combating smuggling or monitoring other activities that crossed the ghetto border fences. As a result, these operatives also affected food access in the ghetto. This shadow leadership was generally purged at some point in the ghetto period or as the ghetto came to an end.¹¹

The most significant turning point for the appointed Jewish leadership was the creation of the ghetto. Ghettos evolved from designated residential zones at varying rates, eventually becoming completely closed off from the rest of the city. With the creation and eventual sealing of the ghetto, the Jewish leadership went from representing a community within a city to being responsible for a district and its inhabitants. The closed ghettos, the first of which was the Łódź ghetto in May 1940, became their own cities within a city, with the Jewish leadership greatly expanding to administer the ghetto. Closed ghettos also required the German administration to monitor what entered and exited them, including the incoming food supply. The Łódź ghetto was abruptly sealed, its residents cut off from the rest of the city, while in Warsaw the process was slower. In Kraków, the ghetto was sealed in stages, with Jews able to enter and exit the ghetto as individuals, then groups, and then not at all.¹² The creation of ghettos and their eventual sealing made the Jews reliant on the Nazi authorities for access to food. The Jews of Warsaw were aware of conditions in Łódź and were keenly aware of the dangers of a closed ghetto. Diarist Kaplan, writing in Warsaw upon the announcement of its ghetto's sealing, wrote, "A closed ghetto means death by starvation."¹³

Warsaw

The prewar leader of the Warsaw kehillah, Maurycy Mayzel, fled the city when the war broke out.¹⁴ Czerniaków, an engineer by profession, had served on the prewar kehillah and was thus appointed on September 22, 1939, by Warsaw mayor Stefan Starzyński to be the new head of the Jewish Civilian Committee of the Capital City of Warsaw (*Żydowski Komitet Cywilny Miasta Stołecznego Warszawy*). Czerniaków, a Warsaw native, was fluent in German, having lived in Dresden. During the interwar period, Czerniaków had been actively involved in Jewish and Polish politics.

When the Germans entered Warsaw, they quickly established a Judenrat, ordering Czerniaków to create it on October 4, 1939.¹⁵ The new council comprised twenty-four members, who were confirmed on October 13, less than two weeks into the German occupation of Warsaw. Many of the original Judenrat members left Poland in the first few

months of the occupation.¹⁶ Others were removed for reasons ranging from being arrested to not managing their responsibilities. Those who left were replaced by others. In February 1940, the Judenrat had a number of engineers, like Czerniaków himself, including Dr. Rachmil Henryk Gluecksberg, Stanisław Szereszewski, Abram Sztolcman, and Marek Lichtenbaum, who would become the second head of the Warsaw ghetto after Czerniaków's death. Other members included prewar leaders from Agudat Israel: Ber Ajzyk Ekerman, Szylim Ber Jamier, and rabbis Dawid Szpiro and Szymon Sztokhamer. The medical and legal fields were represented by dermatologist Izrael Milejkowski, former judge Edward Elias Kobryner, and barristers Bolesław Rosensztat, Bernard Zundelewicz, and Hilary Tempel. A number of factory directors and merchants with experience in major organizations and philanthropy were on the council, including Tadeusz Bart, Bernard Zabłudowski, Jakub Berman, Abraham Gepner, and Lazarz Labeledz.¹⁷ There were also assorted others, including Józef Jaszuński, the director of the vocational training organization ORT (*Obshchestvo Remeslenava Truda* or the Organisation for Rehabilitation through Training); Chil Rozen; artisan Baruch Wolf Rozenthal; and war veteran Herman Schwartz.¹⁸

The Jewish Council had representatives from a spectrum of the Warsaw Jewish community, but it did not fully represent the Jews of the ghetto. The last elections held for the Warsaw kehillah, in 1938, had resulted in 30 percent of the seats going to Bundists, 26 percent to Agudat Israel, and 22 percent to moderate Zionists.¹⁹ The Polish government rejected these results and appointed its own board. The Judenrat put together by Czerniaków included a number of individuals who had been on the government-appointed board and a few individuals who were selected to represent the diversity of politics in Warsaw. However, most of those who served on the board were elite and assimilated Jews. One strong piece of evidence that the Warsaw Judenrat did not represent the common ghetto dweller was that Polish, rather than Yiddish, prevailed as the official language of the ghetto (as an accommodation to the Yiddish-speaking masses in the Warsaw ghetto, bureaucrats working for the Judenrat were required to be able to converse in Yiddish to keep their positions).²⁰ Another piece of evidence was the existence of parallel organizations in the ghetto, particularly Jewish socialist organizations, that continued to operate but were not well-represented in the official Jewish leadership.

The Warsaw Jewish community, like those of Łódź and Kraków, suffered in numerous ways. Unlike in other cities, however, we have a bit more insight into the workings of the Jewish communal leadership in Warsaw because Czerniaków, the leader of the Warsaw ghetto, kept a diary of his experiences. He recorded his thoughts on his position, such as:

I now find myself in a post which I did not assume on my own initiative and of which I cannot divest myself. I am not independent and I do only what is possible. Everyone can testify that I work hard, from early in the morning till late at night.... Don't think that I am driven to doing things because I am frightened. What have I to fear? Death? One dies only once, of this I am always aware, and this we must all remember.²¹

Czerniaków contended with a great number of issues. Early in the German occupation, the Jewish leadership's on-hand resources were taken by the Germans. Its bank accounts, like those of all other Jewish communal organizations, were frozen. Despite this situation, the newly formed Judenrat was responsible for the support of the Jewish community, which itself was suffering from frozen bank accounts, constant fines from German authorities, dwindling resources, and an increasing reliance on communal support. Financial difficulties drove the Judenrat to impose taxes on the community and to seek support from charitable organizations, particularly the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC). Over time, during the ghetto period, taxes would increase in a vain attempt to compensate for the shrinking tax base.

The early Jewish Council was particularly in need of resources due not only to its assets being frozen but also to the large number of refugees who arrived in Warsaw after its fall to the Germans. Exacerbating the number of refugees arriving in Warsaw was Heinrich Himmler's October 30, 1939, order to remove Jews from the Warthegau region to the General Government.²² Himmler's order was eventually canceled, but not before thousands of Jews were sent into the area. Another item that would take a toll on the community budget was the creation of the ghetto.

The ghetto in Warsaw was created slowly. The Germans announced its creation in the city in early November 1939, with Jews being given a deadline of only three days to enter it. This announcement caused panic throughout the Warsaw Jewish community. Diarist Kaplan recorded on November 8, 1939, "The ghetto decree gnaws away at our depressed world. No one had foreseen this catastrophe, even though the conqueror's treatment of the Jews in Germany was known to us."²³ The decree was eventually forestalled, but the specter of ghetto loomed for Warsaw. The Jews of Warsaw were subjected to increasing restrictions and, by January 1940, were not allowed to change their residence without permission.²⁴ Restrictions on the use of public transportation, automobiles, and other means of transit further hindered Jewish movement. The Germans began to erect wire fences and other measures to delineate the future ghetto area. Eventually, in April 1940, they forced the Jewish Council to provide the labor and funds to erect a wall around the

area of the future ghetto. In June 1940, a three-meter-high (ten-foot-tall) wall topped with broken glass was completed, surrounding the 425-acre ghetto area. By August 1940, Jews were required to leave the German district, and Jews newly arrived in the city were compelled to move into the Jewish district.²⁵

Just before the ghetto was closed off, Czerniaków, along with other members of the Judenrat leadership, was taken prisoner and, in the process of being arrested, was badly beaten. In his diary he describes his arrest: "the officer in charge set upon me, hitting me on the head until I fell. At this point, the soldiers started kicking me with their boots. When I tried to stand up they jumped on me and threw me down the stairs. Half a flight down they beat me again." Czerniaków was released, but it would not be the last time he (or other members of the Warsaw Judenrat, for that matter) would be beaten in his capacity as leader of the Jews of Warsaw.²⁶

Eventually, the Germans, seizing on an outbreak of typhus, sealed the Warsaw ghetto, claiming that a closed ghetto was necessary to prevent the spread of disease.²⁷ This tactic of justifying Jewish separateness from the rest of the population on the claim that Jews were riddled with disease was repeated in the sealing of ghettos throughout Poland. Signs were erected around ghettos cautioning against disease, and propaganda connecting Jews with disease were disseminated.

Emmanuel Ringelblum, writing in his wartime diary, noted on November 19, 1940:

The Saturday the ghetto was introduced (16th of November) was terrible. People in the street didn't know it was to be a closed ghetto, so it came like a thunderbolt. Details of German, Polish, and Jewish guards stood at every corner searching passersby to decide whether or not they had the right to pass. Jewish women found the markets outside the ghetto closed to them. There was an immediate shortage of bread and produce. There's been a real orgy of high prices ever since. There are long queues in front of every food store, and everything is being bought up.²⁸

The ghetto comprised 73 streets, 22 entrances to the city of Warsaw, and 61,295 dwellings. At the time that it was closed off, in November 1940, there were approximately 390,000 Jews in the ghetto, which meant a density of 6.4 residents per apartment. The ghetto population continued to increase in the first six months of its existence, peaking at approximately 450,000 in April 1941.²⁹ The population then began to decline again, down to approximately 400,000 in January 1942, when the ghetto was reduced from its original 425 hectares to 300 hectares in size. Thus, a population of the same size that had initially squeezed into the 425 hectares had to fit into 30 percent less space.

The Judenrat of Warsaw transformed as the needs of the Jewish community of Warsaw evolved. Numerous departments, often headed by a Judenrat member, emerged over time. Tasked with running a small city within a city, the bureaucracy of the organization expanded to fulfill many of the roles that had previously been played by the local government. Departments that dealt with ghetto finances, social welfare, care of children including the running of orphanages, health services, labor supply, manufacturing and production in the ghetto, food distribution, the registration of births/marriages/deaths, burials, sanitation, ghetto police, housing, schools, and religious affairs, among others, were formed.

The ghetto and the city remained connected to the extent that in November 1940, fifteen thousand non-Jews held passes into the ghetto to allow them to provide services ranging from water-pipe repair to factory work within the ghetto boundary, and four hundred Jews held passes to enter and exit the ghetto for various reasons.³⁰ The Warsaw ghetto, despite becoming a closed ghetto, would remain relatively porous, enabling smuggling to augment the number of calories entering the ghetto. Smuggling was not without its dangers, however. It would eventually become a capital crime enforced by the Germans. The new ghetto was policed inside by the newly formed Jewish Order Service (*Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst*). It was established in October 1940 under the command of Józef Szeryński, who before the war was a high-ranking police officer and Catholic convert. His police force answered to both the Judenrat and the Polish and German police.³¹ Ultimately, with the closing off of the ghetto, it became responsible for order inside the ghetto walls. Overseeing Szeryński on behalf of the Judenrat was Leopold Kupczykier. In December 1940, due to conflicts between the two, Judenrat member Bernard Zundelewicz took over the task of overseeing the Jewish police.

The new police force established that candidates for the Order Service were required to be: "Age, 21–40; education, six classes of secondary school; good health; height, min. 170 centimeters; weight, min. 60 kilograms; completion of military service; unblemished past (no criminal record); references from two persons known in the district," and stipulated that only those who were Jewish, no converts, were eligible.³² Despite these restrictions, diarist Mary Berg noted that the Warsaw Jewish police had many more applicants than needed, with individuals obtaining the positions in large part due to social networks and bribes.³³ In addition to the official police force, which was under the direction of the Judenrat, the organization known as the "Thirteen" (officially the Office to Combat Profiteering and Speculation) took a key role, reporting directly to the German Security Police (*Sicherheitspolizei*, a.k.a. *SiPo*).³⁴

Despite the Jewish police forces, German authorities continued to seize property from Jews inside the ghetto. Sometimes it was a surprise attack, such as the one described by Berg in her January 10, 1941, diary entry:

Last night we went through several hours of mortal terror. At about 11:00 p.m. a group of Nazi gendarmes broke into the room where our house committee was holding a meeting. The Nazis searched the men, took away whatever money they found, and then ordered the women to strip, hoping to find concealed diamonds. Our subtenant, Mrs. R., who happened to be there[,] courageously protested, declaring that she would not undress in the presence of men. For this she received a resounding slap on the face and was searched even more harshly than the other women. The women were kept naked for more than two hours while the Nazis put their revolvers to their breasts and private parts and threatened to shoot them all if they did not disgorge dollars or diamonds. The beasts did not leave until 2:00 a.m., carrying a scanty loot of a few watches, some paltry rings, and a small sum of Polish zloty.³⁵

At other times, proclamations were made that let officials into Jewish homes to seize belongings. There was a requirement that Jews hand over furs, and official searches and seizures were conducted to ensure compliance. During fur coat inspections, other valuables were seized from Jewish homes, including “sugar, flour and other provisions.”³⁶ Many impoverished Jews had no means to pay taxes owed from before the outbreak of the war. City officials empowered by the German occupiers went into the ghetto to seize assets in an attempt to collect back taxes. This resulted in many Jews being dispossessed of their last means of survival.³⁷

Łódź

The Jewish Council of Łódź was among the earliest to be formed, predating Reinhard Heydrich’s Schnellbrief of September 21, 1939, which laid out Nazi policy for occupied Poland.³⁸ On September 12, 1939, a few days after the Nazi entry into Łódź, the Jewish community leaders who had not fled the city were convened by the Nazis to select new leadership from among themselves. Jakub Lejb Mincberg, the prewar head of the Łódź kehillah, had fled. His deputy, Plywacki, remained in Łódź and was selected as the new head, with Rumkowski as his deputy.³⁹ The newly constituted Jewish communal leadership became the official liaison between the Jewish community and the Germans. This leadership configuration, however, did not last longer than a month. In the second week of October, Plywacki left Łódź for Warsaw.⁴⁰

On October 14, 1939, Rumkowski became the head of the Jewish community and the representative of the Jews of Łódź to the Germans.⁴¹ The

former director of a Jewish orphanage at Helenówek, and a Zionist representative in the Łódź Jewish community, Rumkowski was given broad powers, including power over the entire Jewish community, the ability to tax the community, and control over communal institutions. Additionally, he was authorized to select the members of his council. He selected a group of prominent Jews to serve as members of the Jewish Council, or Bierat, as it was known in Łódź. The Bierat comprised thirty-one men, a significantly higher number than the twenty-four-person maximum laid out in the Schnellbrief. Those nominated by Rumkowski were sent a letter stating:

Pursuant to the order of the Commissioner of the City of Łódź, you are hereby appointed a member of the Council of Elders (Ältestenrat) at the Jewish Community of the City of Łódź. Acceptance of the mandate is compulsory. The first meeting of the Council of Elders, to which you are cordially invited, will be held on Tuesday, the 17th day of this month at 4:30 p.m. in the premises of the Jewish Community of the City of Łódź, 18 Pomorska St.

—Ch. Rumkowski[,] Eldest of the Jews of the City of Łódź.⁴²

Those who became members of the new Jewish Council included: Abram Ajzner, Henryk Akawie, commercial court judge Edward Babiacki, Markus Bender, Dr. A. Damm, Samuel Faust (who would eventually serve as the director of the department for social aid), director Artur Frankfurt, factory owner, industrialist, social activist, and philanthropist Pinkus Gerszowski, W. Glass, Stanisław Glatter, Jakub Gutman, Dr. Dawid Lajb Helman, Jakub Hertz, Mieczysław Hertz, Szmul Hochenberg, Ignacy Jaszuński, Jakub Lando, Jakub Leszczyński, Fiszel Lieberman, Leon Mokski, Chil Majer Pick, Jonas Rozen, Leon Rubin, Dr. Jakub Schlosser, Dawid Stahl, Robert Switgal, Dawid Warszawski (who was eventually made the head of the tailoring department), Dr. Zygmunt Warszawski, Izidor Weinstein, Dawid Windman, and Maks Wyszewiański.⁴³ This new Jewish leadership configuration for Łódź did not last even a month. On November 11, 1939, all but two of the members of the Bierat were arrested and taken to Radogoszcz prison. Those arrested were tortured and, with the exception of a few survivors, murdered.⁴⁴ The attack on the early Jewish Council coincided with Łódź's incorporation into the Warthegau region and a period of terror that included the destruction of the city's synagogues. Rumkowski has been accused by some of having caused the death of members of his Bierat by complaining they did not comply with orders. This does not seem to be the case, however, as Rumkowski went to beg for the release of his fellow Jewish leaders, only to be beaten himself.⁴⁵

Rumkowski was ordered once again to form a new Jewish Council. His new council was appointed on December 6, 1939, consisting of twenty-one members, including a few who survived the first Bierat.⁴⁶ Many,

unsurprisingly, were averse to taking a position on the second Bierat after learning of the first Bierat's imprisonment, and many other prominent individuals fled the city. The result was that Rumkowski did not have a strong Jewish Council, unlike the other ghettos. He did, however, put together a group of advisors during the ghetto period that functioned similarly to a Judenrat.

Around this time, the German authorities were secretly planning for the creation of a ghetto in Łódź. The establishment of the ghetto was ordered on December 10, 1939, by Regierungspräsident Friedrich Übelhör, but unlike the Warsaw ghetto, this plan was kept secret.⁴⁷ The Łódź ghetto was not publicly announced until February 8, 1940, three months after Warsaw's was announced, but it was the first of the three ghettos to be sealed. Less than a month after the announcement of the ghetto, Jews residing within the ghetto area were no longer allowed to leave, and all those who did not yet live in the ghetto area were ordered to move into it. Jews who did not move into the ghetto by the appointed time were deported.⁴⁸

The ghetto plans underwent numerous changes from the version originally envisioned by Übelhör, which had included a sealed-off ghetto area as well as barracks for Jewish laborers within the city.⁴⁹ This latter part of the plan, which entailed having Jewish workers live outside the ghetto walls in Łódź, was short-lived. In the same secret memorandum creating the ghetto, Übelhör ordered that necessary supplies, including food, be provided by the ghetto.

It was at this point that the Judenrat became an important agency for finding space for each of the displaced Jews arriving into the ghetto area from other parts of the city. This became the purview of the housing department. To maintain the new residences, house committees were formed, just as before the sealing of the ghetto, to keep buildings neat and to manage waste removal. The duties of the house committees were soon extended to include collecting money for food rations and distributing the rations.⁵⁰

Baluty, the neighborhood announced as the location of the ghetto, was the poorest section of the city. It had only recently, during World War I, been incorporated into Łódź. In addition, Stare Miasto, an area that had previously been restricted to Jewish settlement, and Marysin, a suburb that included the Jewish cemetery, were encompassed in the ghetto area. The total ghetto area was approximately four square kilometers (or 400 hectares), surrounded by approximately eleven kilometers of barbed wire.⁵¹ The ghetto had a virtually negligible water and sewage system. Only 725 out of 31,962 apartments (2 percent) in the ghetto had running water. Slightly less than half that number, 343 apartments, had both

running water and a toilet.⁵² Most of the apartments consisted of only one room.⁵³ However, a small number (250) of so-called luxury apartments were available that had both a toilet and gas in the kitchen. These units required rent payments of 150 percent of their prewar rent. Everyone else paid 4 percent of their salary toward rent. One family described how their apartment was slowly filled with people: “first we gave the kitchen away to a family, three people, a mother, a boy and a girl. The father died or something. And then we had to give away another room. So, we were left with a room and a half. Of course then all my family moved in with us. My mother’s father and both my grandmothers.”⁵⁴

Beginning on March 1, 1940, Jews were not permitted to leave the ghetto area without permission, but the move-in process continued through April, during which time barbed wire was put up around the ghetto.⁵⁵ One particularly brutal incident, known as “Bloody Thursday,” took place on March 6 and 7, 1940: “That night, the Germans broke into the houses of Jews living in Piotrkowska Street and herded them into the ghetto amid rampant violence in which hundreds were killed.”⁵⁶ After that incident, temporary passes allowing Jews to move about outside the ghetto area were invalidated. By May 1, 1940, the ghetto was sealed. According to calculations of the ghetto’s Department of Vital Statistics, there were 163,177 persons in the ghetto on May 1, 1940, the first day of its existence.⁵⁷ With the sealing of the Łódź ghetto, more elaborate self-governing structures were needed to keep the ghetto community in order. Rumkowski was charged with responsibility for the ghetto’s order, labor, and food distribution. Over the course of the ghetto period, Rumkowski would employ a veritable army of individuals to distribute food in the ghetto. Prominent men would be put in charge of individual departments and tasks. These same individuals would then be shuffled over to other leadership positions dealing with factory production or other initiatives.⁵⁸

Like the other ghettos, the Łódź ghetto had a police force that was created to supervise the Jews. The Łódź ghetto police force was set up just before the ghetto’s sealing, with Leon Rosenblatt as its head. The ghetto police force would play a role in combating smuggling – and the lack of smuggling in the ghetto would be a factor in its high rates of starvation.

Unlike the Warsaw and Kraków ghettos, the Łódź ghetto did not have a long period of adjustment or permeability. Łódź was one of the most tightly sealed ghettos of the Nazi period. It was surrounded by barbed wire and had only one main entrance. This is in stark contrast to the Warsaw ghetto, which had many entrances. Passes to enter and exit the ghetto did exist in the first few weeks, but they were soon invalidated. Some Jews in desperation still slipped out of the ghetto. Łódź ghetto survivor Freda M.

was interned in the ghetto. She and her sister escaped to the Aryan side to get food from their former apartment. Two German soldiers followed the girls and raped them, before letting the girls go and telling them they were lucky to be able to return to the ghetto alive.⁵⁹ Others who were caught sneaking across to the Aryan side in the early days were imprisoned. The lack of people moving between the ghetto and the city ultimately had a significant impact on food access inside the ghetto.

Kraków

When the Germans arrived in Kraków they appointed Marek Bieberstein as head of the city's Jewish Council. Kraków's was among the earliest of the Jewish Councils to be formed; like the Łódź council, it even predated Reinhard Heydrich's Schnellbrief of September 21, 1939.⁶⁰ The city's first Jewish Council was called the Board of the Jewish Religious Community in Kraków, and its initial leadership was announced on September 17, 1939.⁶¹

Officially, the Board of the Jewish Religious Community in Kraków was formed by the order of the prewar vice mayor of Kraków, Stanisław Klimecki, whom the Germans appointed mayor after the prewar mayor, Bolesław Czuchajowski, fled. There are multiple, contradictory stories of how the early Judenrat in Kraków was formed, but it seems clear that the Jewish Council under the leadership of Marek Bieberstein was established on September 12 or 13, 1939, just days after the Germans entered Kraków.⁶² According to Leon (Leib) Salpeter, who was himself a member of the Kraków Judenrat (although not one of the original members):

No member of [the prewar Jewish communal leadership] remained in Kraków, nevertheless, it was necessary to create a body that would represent the Jews before the Germans. The officiating vice president of Kraków [Stanisław Klimecki] called for several Jews he had known and ordered them to create a temporary directorate of the Jewish community. That's how the temporary directorate, consisting of the twelve [*sic*] members with Marek Biberstein as the president, was constituted.⁶³

An alternative version was presented by Aleksander Biberstein, the brother of Marek Bieberstein, who claimed that SS-Oberscharführer Paul Siebert who would eventually head the Kraków gestapo's unit IVB for Jewish affairs, established the first Judenrat, just days after the Nazis occupied Kraków, by coercing Marek Bieberstein into serving as the head of the council and soliciting others to serve.⁶⁴ In that scenario, Marek Bieberstein received a written order on September 8, 1939, from Siebert to form a Judenrat that comprised himself and twenty-three others.⁶⁵ Perhaps the most dramatic version was told by Henryk Zimmerman, who claimed that two SS men burst into Marek Bieberstein's home on

September 8, 1939, and gave him two days to put together a council.⁶⁶ Several versions place the initial solicitation of Bieberstein on September 8, two days after the Germans entered Kraków. Although the identity of the person who created the council differs across these stories, what remains consistent is the element of compulsion.

The original Board of the Jewish Religious Community in Kraków was headed by chairman (*Obmann*) Marek Bieberstein, teacher, Zionist, and public activist prior to the war, and deputy chairman Dr. Wilhelm Goldblatt (b. 1879), a widower and lawyer before the war.⁶⁷ Theodor Dembitzer served as secretary of the council and headed the construction department.⁶⁸ There were numerous engineers on the Jewish Council, including Bernard Miller (b. July 1, 1879) and Wladislaus Kleinberger, a B'nai B'rith member.⁶⁹ Ferdynand (Feiweł) Schenker served as head of the taxation department, with Dr. Joachim Steinberg, a prewar industrialist who would eventually head the tax collection department, as his deputy.⁷⁰ Schenker would later serve as temporary head of the Jewish Council, following Bieberstein's arrest. Ascher Spira (b. 1875), a jeweler, headed the *Sprawy socjalne* (Social Affairs).⁷¹ Rabbi Schabse Rappaport was another Judenrat member who, like Bieberstein, would not make it to the ghetto period. The deputies were Izidor Gottlieb and Samuel Majer.⁷² The Jewish Council was expanded to include Dawid Frisch, who headed the burial department, Maksimilian Greif (b. 1883), a prewar bank vice president who headed financial matters, and Dr. Maurycy Haber, who, along with Chaim Samuel Herzog, headed sanitation and the health department.⁷³ Bernard Leinkram was in charge of resettlement; Leib (Leon) Salpeter, who survived the war, headed welfare; Rafał Morgenbesser was in charge of organizational matters and general affairs; Dr. Dawid Schlang, along with Dr. Dawid Bulwa, a prewar lawyer and Zionist, was in charge of education; Aron Schmur and Joachim Goldfluss (b. September 4, 1897, in Kraków) were in the upholstery business and were in charge of food.⁷⁴ A number of individuals were also mentioned as Jewish Council leaders either by Aleksander Bieberstein or by Salpeter, who survived the war, but not by both. These additional individuals include Dr. Samuel Lichtig, the Zionist Maurycy Taubler, Symon Nowimiast, the engineer Akiba Bucher, Izak Teichtal, and Dr. Schlachet.⁷⁵ The discrepancy between lists of Jewish Council members might reflect different time periods in its existence, as numerous members of the early Jewish Council were arrested, imprisoned, deported, or killed by the Germans beginning even before the ghetto period.

A few days after the Judenrat was constituted, it was visited by Oberscharführer Siebert and his entourage. The visit was announced ahead of time to the appointed Jewish communal leadership, who waited for the Germans at the offices at 41 Krakowska Street. According to one

survivor, "Three limousines arrived and three Gestapo officers with several armed soldiers got out of the cars."⁷⁶ The story of what happened next was reported by several survivors. Siebert set out to impress on the new Jewish leadership their exact place under German occupation. He slapped the face of the vice president of the Judenrat, Dr. Goldblatt, because no one had been waiting outside to greet the arriving Germans.⁷⁷ Siebert then informed the assembled men that the Judenrat was the only body that could represent the Jews, that "Jews are not allowed to communicate with any kind of government apart from the Gestapo [located at] Pomorska Street 2," that the Judenrat leadership was personally responsible for the activities of the Jews of Kraków, and that "the community has to organize the welfare service to help poor Jews and refugees. In order to do this, they may impose taxes on Jews." During the brief meeting, the Oberscharfuhrer also repeatedly informed them of the superiority of the Germans and the Gestapo.⁷⁸

This would not be the only time that German authorities would personally target the Judenrat leaders for abuse. During Passover of 1940, as the non-Jewish Pole Jan Najder described:

an elderly Jew was celebrating the Passover.... It was about 11 p.m. Siebert came and ordered all the Judenrat members to be summoned. My wife, my brother-in-law and I had to wake them up. It was about 3 a.m. when everyone had finally gathered in front of the house of the community. While the people were gathering, Siebert turned them, one by one, so that they faced the wall of the building, their hands above their heads. Nobody knew what would happen, but after standing two hours Siebert let them go. Nobody was killed.⁷⁹

Salpeter describes the same incident. He does not mention the religious person celebrating Passover but instead notes, "About 10 p.m. of the first night of Passover Seder, the Gestapo gathered all the members of the Judenrat in the community's meeting room. They gave a lecture on physical exercises; after that, Brandt, the chief of the Gestapo, made all the members go out onto the street, where everyone had to do exercise. They finished in the morning."⁸⁰

The Jewish leadership of occupied Kraków did not survive intact to the period of ghettoization. The Germans instituted a mass deportation of Jews out of Kraków during the summer of 1940. Many people, including future Judenrat leaders, were included among those who were forced to leave the city. In an effort to avoid these mass deportations, a number of the Jewish Council members tried to bribe Eugen Reichert, the Stadthauptmann's (mayor's) representative in the deportation commission. Reichert was an ethnic German who agreed to accept a set amount of money to reduce the number of Jews to be deported. He, Marek Bieberstein, and four other Jews were arrested in September 1940 for this corruption.⁸¹

Bieberstein was sentenced to eighteen months in prison and was eventually released back to the Kraków ghetto.⁸² After Bieberstein was arrested, the Jewish community was directed by Schenker, who served as interim leader until late November 1940. He was a Kraków native who had owned a wholesale hardware business before the war.⁸³ His role as head of the Jewish Council did not become permanent. Dr. Aron Rosenzweig, a Kraków-born lawyer, became the new Judenrat leader in late November 1940, and remained through the creation of the Kraków ghetto.⁸⁴ He was eventually arrested during the June 1942 deportations and replaced with David Gutter (b. 1905 in Munich), who was the last of the Kraków ghetto Judenrat heads. He was supported by a council of seven.⁸⁵

On March 3, 1941, the governor of the Kraków district, Dr. Otto Wächter, announced the establishment of a Jewish residential district (*Jüdischer Wohnbezirk*) in the Kraków suburb of Podgórze, which lay on the left bank of the Vistula River.⁸⁶ Jews were required to have residence permits for Kraków to be allowed to move into the ghetto. Although some Jews lived in the area of Podgórze, there was also a large Polish population that had to be moved out of the designated area. Some enterprising Jews were able to organize a swap of their prewar residence with a non-Jew who was forced out of their home, while others were able to move in with friends or family who lived in the area designated for the ghetto. Most Jews incarcerated there, however, were assigned their housing within the restricted area by the Jewish communal housing office.

In the weeks following the decree establishing the ghetto, thousands of Jews fled Kraków to avoid enclosure in the ghetto. The ghetto closed on March 21, 1941. On May 1 of that year, there were 10,873 Jews in the Kraków ghetto.⁸⁷ The population breakdown was 5,034 men and 5,839 women, with 1,782 of them being children under the age of twelve.⁸⁸ The 1931 demographics for Kraków had an age distribution of 23.4 percent being children up to the age of fourteen, 68.8 percent being adults between fifteen and sixty years old, and 7.8 percent being adults over the age of sixty. A few weeks later, at the closing of the ghetto, 13.7 percent of the population was over sixty, while children had dropped to 18.4 percent.⁸⁹ This might be because, as some survivors recalled, elderly Jews who were sick did not have to leave the city, or it might be that a large number of people over sixty were business owners and still needed to guide Germans who had taken over their businesses.⁹⁰ Another roughly 2,500 Jews were permitted to live outside the ghetto walls in the city of Kraków. This policy was short-lived, however, and in October 1941, all Jews in the city of Kraków and its vicinity were forced to move into the ghetto. As a result, by the end of October 1941, at the height of the ghetto's population, there were approximately 19,000 Jews.⁹¹



Figure 2.1 Entrance to the Kraków ghetto. Photo credit: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Instytut Pamięci Narodowej

The ghetto area was approximately twenty hectares, including fifteen streets. As one survivor described it, “It was a small ghetto. From north to south, it contained about seven streets; from east to west there were about four or five.”⁹² The ghetto contained 320 buildings with 2,436 apartments. Approximately 75 percent of the apartments were old, and some were wet and moldy.⁹³ The vast majority (76.7 percent) of the apartments were either studio units (837) or one-room apartments with kitchen (1,027). There were 440 apartments with two rooms and a kitchen, and 108 with three rooms and a kitchen. Only twenty-one apartments in the Kraków ghetto had four rooms and a kitchen, and only three apartments had five rooms and a kitchen.⁹⁴ In total, there were 3,167 rooms in the ghetto. The population density of the Kraków ghetto was 157 persons per hectare, which was three times the density of the city of Kraków. There were approximately four people per room in the Kraków ghetto.⁹⁵ This meant that a one-room apartment typically had four to five people in it, a two-room apartment had seven to eight, a three-room apartment had ten to thirteen, a four-room apartment had fifteen to eighteen, and a five-room apartment had twenty to twenty-three people living in it. Some buildings did not have toilets but rather had an outhouse that was shared by the residents.⁹⁶

A wooden fence – and later a wall evoking the look of Jewish grave markers – was erected around the ghetto. Doors and windows facing the Aryan side of the ghetto were ordered to be bricked closed. This project was not completed, as is evidenced by the fact that members of the Jewish underground were able to sneak in and out of the ghetto through a window facing the Aryan side. In addition to these illegal points of entry and exit to the ghetto, there were four official, guarded entrances to the ghetto: two entrances on Limanowski Street, the main entrance at Podgorski Rynek, and one entrance that was reserved for army vehicles. Additionally, there was an entrance at Lwowska Street as well as one at Plac Zgody. A trolley, Streetcar 3, ran through the ghetto but was forbidden to stop inside the ghetto.⁹⁷

The German administration over the ghetto included both the civil administration in the form of the Stadthauptmann and the police in the form of the Gestapo's Department of Jewish Affairs. For most matters, the Jewish Affairs Department of the German security police had sole control. This was an unusual state of affairs for ghettos. Eventually, on June 3, 1942, Hans Frank would abdicate any civilian control over the Jews in the General Government.⁹⁸ The internal Jewish administration of the ghetto was a continuation of the pre-ghetto administration, which included a twenty-four person Jewish Council. Each member of the council had an administrative oversight function, with more functions added after the closing of the ghetto. The second chairman of the Kraków Jewish Council, Dr. Aron Rosenzweig, was the leader of the ghetto during its creation and sealing.

Jewish Leadership inside the Ghetto

After the creation of all three ghettos, the tasks for each Judenrat expanded greatly. The ghettos became enclosed cities that needed to be administered, fed, policed, provided with health services, and subjected to public health measures. They needed to finance themselves and care for those who could not support themselves. The Jewish ghetto administrations ballooned in size, structure, and responsibilities after the closing establishment of the ghettos. Many would struggle and adapt to find the best ways to provide services. The leaders of the ghettos were human beings, and behaviors ranged from corruption to self-sacrifice.

The closure of these three ghettos created a situation in which the German authorities were able to exert tremendous control over what legally entered the ghettos, particularly in terms of food. In Łódź, Rumkowski quickly discovered that receiving food from the German administration was a difficult business. From the moment the ghetto was sealed,

the Provisions Department for the ghetto was made economically independent of the city, so it instituted a tax system of almost 20 percent to pay its expenses, resulting in considerably higher food prices inside the ghetto than outside it.⁹⁹ Despite this tax, the German ghetto administration rarely allocated the resources to meet even the minimum needs of its inhabitants. The Jewish ghetto administration was often refused adequate food deliveries, such as a request to buy fish for the ghetto or requests for more flour.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, the German ghetto administration prohibited ghetto inmates from receiving additional resources from outside the ghetto, strictly enforced antimuggling laws, and confiscated parcels sent to the ghetto.¹⁰¹ The amount of food received by the ghetto was often less than the amount ordered. For example, on July 29, 1941, Rumkowski complained that ninety kilograms of rye flour was missing from a flour shipment.¹⁰² The response given by the German ghetto administration on August 4, 1941, was that a 3–4 percent loss was the “normal custom,” and thus ninety kilograms was nothing that could be protested. Often, the money for a food shipment was embezzled, or the food ordered was simply not delivered.¹⁰³ There were also frequent delays in food delivery. Typical of fluctuations in the food supply is the situation with milk in January 1941. On January 19 of that year, the Łódź ghetto *Chronicle* was able to report that “the supply of milk fluctuates around 1,000 liters a day, which makes it possible to dispense portions of 200 grams to children up to the age of three and to the sick who have certificates from a physician.”¹⁰⁴ Only a week later, the milk supply had dwindled significantly, and there were two days on which no milk was available. Very often there were flour shortages. As the *Chronicle* recorded, “an event characteristic of the food supply situation last week was the resumption, after a long interruption, of flour delivery to the ghetto.”¹⁰⁵ This interruption was particularly devastating as the majority of calories for those in the ghetto were derived from bread.

The Jewish leadership cajoled, bribed, begged, and negotiated with the Nazis to get more resources, time, or reprieves for the populations they oversaw. Sometimes they were successful, but Jewish leaders in all three ghettos were subjected to extremely poor treatment at the hands of the Germans they dealt with on a regular basis. They were sometimes punished for their requests, including being imprisoned and beaten. In the case of Rumkowski and Czerniaków, they were men in their sixties. The deputy director of the Kraków Judenrat, Dr. Goldblatt, also a man in his sixties, was hit by a Nazi overseer. Various other leaders of the Kraków Judenrat and many members of the Warsaw Judenrat were subjected to physical abuse.

The leadership of all three ghettos was profoundly affected by deportations. Bieberstein was arrested for resisting deportations out of Kraków and replaced as Judenrat leader before the ghetto was created. His successor, Rosensweig, lost his life and that of his family for resisting deportations to the death camp Belzec in June 1942.¹⁰⁶ Rumkowski suffered a mental breakdown in the ghetto as a result of mass deportations that left him leader of the ghetto effectively in name only. None of the three men survived the war. Czerniaków ended his own life in protest of deportations during the ghetto period. Bieberstein was killed at Płaszów concentration camp before the end of the war. Rumkowski was put on a deportation train, along with his family, to Auschwitz, where he perished.

Conclusion

The Jewish leadership of the three ghettos reflected the prewar attributes and political compositions of their cities. Each leader also had to contend with unique attributes connected to the ways in which their ghetto was administered by the Germans. Ultimately these attributes affected the Jewish leadership's coping methods for dealing with the food supply and internal food distribution. Various factors, including the different time periods and rates at which ghettos became more closed, created divergent paths for the ghettos and their inhabitants' experiences including their individually available coping mechanisms. Preferred language, German language ability, and social networks of Jewish communal leadership, which varied between cities, also affected the ghettos' hierarchies and the ability of different groups of Jews to obtain positions in the Jewish administrations.¹⁰⁷

In all three cities, Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków, Jewish leadership inside the ghettos initially comprised the remaining prewar prominent community members. Many of these leaders remained in their home cities and took on the position due to a sense of duty to their communities. They all suffered abuse and violence from German authorities while simultaneously seeing their own power erode. All the Judenrat leaders contended with shadow leadership run by competing German administrative agencies and had to negotiate between German factions that shaped Jewish ghetto life. The Jewish leaders were often held responsible for the poor ghetto conditions by their contemporaries, who criticized their governance, lack of experience, and personalities. Ultimately all of the leaders lost power over the fate of the ghetto inhabitants and the internal life of the ghettos.

3 The Supply and Distribution of Food Strategies and Priorities

Death from starvation, although “rational” (caused by eating only one’s rations), is the worst kind of death.

– An anonymous boy, writing in 1944 in the Łódź ghetto in the margins of *Les Vrais Riches*¹

From the beginning of the occupation of Poland and the institution of food rationing, the Germans authorities exerted some control over food access. However, with the establishment of the ghettos, the mechanisms for increased regulation of food supply to the interned Jews by the German authorities were installed. The management of food supply into the ghetto varied over time and place, but ultimately, each of the three ghettos under consideration was closed off from the external food supply. For those ghettos that remained open longer, were more porous, or were granted flexibility in their food procurement, food supply in the ghetto tended to be better. For those where the German authorities determined how much food entered the ghetto – and eventually that was all of them – hunger was rampant.

In Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków, the Jewish leadership was given some autonomy to distribute the officially procured food. The Jews of the ghetto initially experimented with various means of distributing food, but the Germans eventually took over control of food entering the ghetto and gained an increasingly greater hold on the distribution of food within it. Ultimately, German authorities in all three ghettos dictated food access and distribution. During the earlier stages of ghettoization, the changing porousness of the ghettos, the changing priorities of German authorities, and the decreasing autonomy given to Jewish leadership, as well as the prewar attributes of the specific cities, affected how food was distributed within the various ghettos.

The Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków ghettos all initially had private shops and restaurants that purchased food through official food distribution networks and from smugglers and sold it to ghetto inhabitants. There were also ration coupons for food distribution, meals distributed at workplaces, and soup kitchens run by organizations and the official

ghetto administration. Warsaw and Łódź both experimented with using housing committees for food distribution. Ultimately, in Łódź, there was an attempt to give a minimum food ration to all ghetto inhabitants, while in Warsaw and Kraków, the private market dominated. Although various alternative means of food distribution, including the black market, existed in the ghetto, this chapter focuses on licit distribution to the general population.

Food Distribution in the Łódź Ghetto

When the Łódź ghetto was sealed, the Jewish community became the sole purchaser of food for the ghetto, and the majority of residents purchased their food at private shops and bakeries in the ghetto, which were supplied by the Department of Food Supply of the Jewish ghetto administration. The food for the ghetto had to be paid for in advance to the German ghetto administration (*Gettoverwaltung*) or to its Department of Food Supply and Economics (Ernährungs- und Wirtschaftsamt), headed by Hans Biebow. There was a tax on the food purchased by the German ghetto administration of approximately 20 percent.

To raise the funds for the initial purchase of food, the private food stores and bakeries supplied cash deposits. As Jakub Poznanski recorded in his ghetto diary, “every person willing to open a store was to pay between a few hundred and a few thousand marks, supposedly as a down payment for provisions: flour, meat, sugar, groats, peas[?], etc. In reality, however, these were deposits that were to serve as floating capital for the Community.”² Soon after their establishment, the private food shops were accused by the Jewish ghetto administration of taking advantage of their monopoly on food.³ It is not uncommon in food shortage situations for food sellers to use various tactics to maximize their profits on foodstuffs in short supply. Using less flour in bread was a common method to stretch the amount of food available. An order in May 1940 that bread loaves must weigh a full two kilograms indicates that bakers may have been shorting the weight of the loaves (the Warsaw ghetto also had a commission that checked the weight of bread loaves).⁴ Private stores inflated their prices, and butchers sold inferior meat at set prices while selling the choicest meat at very high prices. A similar practice was also in use during World War I, when shopkeepers in imperial Russia were accused of denying having food in stock and then selling it to the well-to-do at exorbitant prices.⁵

At the end of May, only one month into the ghetto’s sealing, a new form of food distribution was devised. Food was to be distributed through the house committees, with money for rations collected before

the food distribution. The first collection of funds for the food ration was announced on May 25, 1940, for distribution in June 1940.⁶ That summer, the sale and distribution of food items through house committees ran concurrently with distribution through private restaurants and shops. Distribution franchises with fixed prices for food items were manned by prewar food professionals – former vegetable producers distributing vegetables, and former butchers distributing meat. There were also community bakeries and private bakeries. However, that summer, the ghetto population began starving.⁷

Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski blamed this starvation on speculation and battled price gouging by various means. Diarist Poznanski, in contrast, attributed the starvation to a lack of funds on the part of the ghetto population.⁸ The German authorities had purposely set up a system of food purchase by the ghetto whereby the ghetto population, without wide-scale employment, had to pay for their foodstuffs. This was a means of drawing out the valuables of the Jews, which were believed to be hidden in the ghetto.⁹

The high percentage of the population that could not purchase food led to rioting in August 1940, but even this did not end the Nazi administration's attempt to leverage food to extract wealth from the ghetto. In September, the Nazis stopped food deliveries to the ghetto for several days to see whether this produced more of the valuables that the German authorities believed to be hidden by the incarcerated Jews. The ghetto dwellers, however, had run out of goods, money, and valuables and, without income, were unable to purchase food. This is supported by the fact that in August 1940, only 52.2 percent of the ghetto population purchased the food rations. By comparison, in October 1940 – after a system of relief had been created to provide money for the unemployed to purchase foodstuffs – 96.7 percent of the ghetto population purchased food rations.¹⁰

By the end of 1940, there were again a series of changes instituted in food distribution, with bread and food ration cards issued in December. The cards were distributed on December 15, 1940, and by December 30 food distribution through house committees had ended and food was being obtained with the newly distributed ration cards. At the same time, the Judenrat took over the running of soup kitchens, claiming that the existing ones were unsanitary.¹¹ The Department of Soup Kitchens supervised the five central (formerly “community”) kitchens, the committee-run kitchens, the twelve social kitchens, and private places to eat. Some of the kitchens took ration cards, while others allowed patrons to pay out of pocket. The community kitchens that required ration cards served 15,000 meals. The community kitchens that allowed people to

pay out of pocket, conversely, served 145,000 meals. The meals served at the soup kitchens resulted in a new vocabulary. *Kleik* (gruel) was a potato and vegetable soup, while *chlapus* (swill soup) was a thin, watery soup with potatoes and noodles deemed by Łódź ghetto writer Jozef Zelkowicz to be “suitable only for pouring out” – a criticism that was a play on the term *chlapus*, which derives from the Polish word *chlapać*, meaning to splash.¹²

The soup kitchens not only fed people but served a social function as well. Shoemakers, carpenters, and rubber-coat workshops had their own kitchens, as did police and firemen. The community-run kitchens served only one meal per day. Unfortunately, soon after the new means of food distribution was devised, accusations arose of vast corruption around the communal kitchens. Rumkowski, in a speech in December 1941, accused the managers of public kitchens of having profit, rather than food distribution, as their primary goal. He then announced a reform of the public kitchens.¹³ A few months later, in February 1942, Rumkowski announced the dissolution of collective communal kitchens.¹⁴ The stated reason was that these kitchens served the worst meals, but the move might have been a tactic to bring food distribution more firmly under the control of the ghetto administration during a period when deportations were taking place.

In January 1941, the Judenrat's Department of Food Supply was reorganized under the leadership of Zygmunt Reingold and Mendel Szczesliwy. The goal was to decentralize certain sections in order to improve efficiency in food distribution. At the same time, there was an increase in relief allowances for the month of January 1941.¹⁵ As part of this overhaul of the food distribution system, five bakeries went into operation on January 20, 1941. Four days later, bread rations for the general population were increased to 400 grams (or 40 decagrams) per day, but supplemental bread rations for workers were discontinued.¹⁶ On April 19, 1941, Rumkowski established a new, streamlined form of bread distribution, ordering that it be distributed in consistent five-day portions.¹⁷ Thus each person received a two-kilogram loaf of bread for five days, reducing the ability of bread distributors to give out unequal portions.

During that same period, in May 1941, the ration for workers was 479 grams of flour, 18 grams of fat, 60 grams of meat, 36 grams of cereal products, 750 grams of potatoes, 9 grams of coffee substitute, 450 grams of vegetables, 10 grams of sugar, and 7.5 grams of artificial honey. By contrast, the average nonworking person during the same period was entitled to 271 grams of flour, 9 grams of fat, 32 grams of meat, 36 grams of cereal products, 750 grams of potatoes, 9 grams of coffee substitute, 450 grams of vegetables, 10 grams of sugar, and 7.5 grams of artificial



Figure 3.1 Jewish teenage boys push and pull a wagon loaded with bread in the Łódź ghetto. Photographer: Mendel Grossman. Photo credit: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Arie Ben Menachem

honey per day.¹⁸ Since potato and meat deliveries to the ghetto were well below what was officially allotted, it is doubtful that this ration was met. In reality, in May 1941, an average of only 286 grams of flour, 19.5 grams of meat, 31 grams of cereals, and 218 grams of potatoes per person per day was ordered.¹⁹ The result was that the average number of calories – if food arrived in edible condition and was distributed perfectly equally – came to 1,161 calories per person per day.²⁰ Israel Tabaksblatt estimated that working Jews got approximately 1,000 to 1,200 calories a day.²¹

In September 1941, the daily bread ration was reduced from 40 decagrams to 33 decagrams; thus, a loaf of bread previously designated for five days had to last six days. Very soon afterward, in November 1941, the bread ration was further reduced, this time to 28 decagrams. The cause of the decrease was the influx of new arrivals from Western Europe.²² During the “first five weeks following the arrival of the transports from the west, the Germans did not increase food allocations to the ghetto. Consequently, the same food supply was to sustain a population which had increased by 20 percent.”²³

In addition to the reduction in bread rations, other types of food rations were also reduced. A diarist known as Esther/Minia noted on February 24, 1942, that the food ration was meant to last two weeks. She records it as consisting of “one and a half kilograms of beets, half a kilogram of sauerkraut, 10 decagrams of vegetable salad, 60 decagrams of flour, 20 decagrams of farfel, 15 decagrams of margarine, half a kilogram of sugar, and 10 decagrams of grain coffee.”²⁴ These rations were not sufficient; as one survivor explained, “the rations were issued every fourteen days and no matter how careful we were in using them, they did not and could not last longer than ten days. Yet there were the four remaining days, four days of hunger and starvation, four days of tears and trauma.”²⁵

Not every person in the ghetto received their full ration distribution. This is because more food was promised than was actually delivered to the ghetto. For example, during the entire month of November 1941, 32,000 kilograms of sugar entered the Łódź ghetto.²⁶ The following month, the ghetto inhabitants (who numbered 163,623 at the time) were promised a monthly ration of 200 grams of sugar. However, 32,000 kilograms – provided that it was *all* distributed to the ghetto population with no waste and no theft – would have supplied only 160,000 individuals with their ration. Zerkowicz, reporting in July 1943, wrote of the difficulties connected with the vegetable distribution, whereby “distribution point 1 which has 1,500 customers, has received 600 kilograms of carrots with the order to distribute half a kilogram per head.”²⁷ This left a shortage of 300 rations making it impossible for each person to receive the ration. As a result, Zerkowicz noted, only those involved in the distribution process and their friends were guaranteed to receive the ration, whereas the remainder of the population was forced to push and shove in hopes of receiving a ration before an item ran out.²⁸ To compensate for the lack of food, the distributors reduced the weight of the items being distributed. This did not go unnoticed by the population. As one diarist wrote, “There’s some weight missing in all the products issued at the grocery cooperatives: there’s 3 decagrams missing in every 30 decagram portion of sugar and 10 decagrams missing in every 1 kg of vegetables. And yet no one intervenes! Everybody is scared, and just as well!”²⁹

When a ration was received by the ghetto consumer, it was often in poor condition. An anonymous girl, writing in her diary in March of 1942, noted, “In the morning I stopped at the vegetable cooperative. They give three kilograms of beets for one ration card. But can you call them beets? They’re just manure. They stink and evaporate, and what’s

more, they have been frozen a few times.”³⁰ It was not just vegetables that arrived spoiled, Hersz Fogel noted in his diary in the summer of 1942: “the rationed sugar and flour are spoiled, flour comes in lumps, the sugar is damp and it’s difficult to break it apart!”³¹

During 1941, food in the ghetto was still dispensed by the Jewish ghetto administration, which tried to cater to a variety of food interests and religious traditions. For the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, the bakeries of the ghetto accepted cholent (Sabbath stew) for baking.³² Earlier that year, for Passover, matzah was baked and offered as an option instead of the bread ration. Additionally, three kosher soup kitchens were opened during Passover to distribute meals.³³ Passover meals served at the kosher kitchens, which consisted of two dishes, were sold for thirty pfennigs. Rumkowski allocated 30,000 marks to make relief payments and to purchase holiday allotments. However, a food shortage in early April 1941 was reflected in a meager food allocation for the Passover holidays, which resulted in high black-market prices for food.³⁴

Rumkowski attempted to allocate better rations for holiday weeks. For example, there was an increased food allotment for the holiday of Shavuot. For the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, children aged two to seven were given extra food portions and thicker soups.³⁵ Religious traditions were also taken into account when dealing with difficult questions connected to food. For example, a rabbinical decision was issued that allowed pregnant women and the sick to eat nonkosher food.³⁶

The Jewish ghetto administration did not retain control of the internal food distribution in the ghetto for the entirety of the ghetto period. In September 1942, the ghetto leader had a breakdown following the deportations of children, elderly, and the sick. At that point, Hans Biebow, the German ghetto administrator, took more direct control of the ghetto. He empowered a special unit of the ghetto police under the supervision of David Gertler (and later, Marek Kligier) to distribute food, among other functions.³⁷ An extensive system of supplemental food coupons arose (see [Table 3.1](#)).

In October 1943, Biebow announced that he would personally take over the distribution of food due to corruption.³⁸ One month later, numerous supplemental foods were canceled, including supplemental soups and special rations for privileged groups such as ghetto administrators. Instead, supplemental foods were offered as a reward for workers, with the top 10 percent of workers, for example, being offered supplemental soups.³⁹ By January 1944, Biebow was so directly in charge of the food policy that he was even signing the food distribution lists.⁴⁰

Table 3.1 *Daily rations of bread and horsemeat in the Łódź ghetto*⁴¹

Food Item	August 20, 1940	November 2, 1940	April 2, 1942	December 15, 1943
Bread	500 g	300 g	321 g	350 g
Horsemeat	50 g.	22 g.	14 g.	35.7

Provisioning the Kraków Ghetto and Food Distribution

Unlike with the Warsaw ghetto and the Łódź ghetto, very little documentation from the Kraków ghetto – including both the internal Jewish administration and the German administration – survived the war. The provisioning and distribution of food in the Kraków ghetto must be largely reconstructed from survivor testimony. Based on such accounts, it appears that the food situation in the Kraków ghetto was better than in many other ghettos in Nazi-occupied Europe.⁴² A number of factors have likely contributed to this state of affairs (or at least to its perception). The first factor might be that because few wartime testimonies exist, testimony from the Kraków ghetto mainly comes from survivors, speaking in hindsight about a ghetto experience that predated time in Płaszów or Auschwitz concentration camps, compared to which the ghetto must have seemed not so bad. Further, postwar testimony by its very nature reflects the reality only of those who were able to find sufficient food to survive in the ghetto. Those individuals who faced the worst conditions did not survive to provide postwar testimony. Finally, the Kraków ghetto dwellers were as a whole an elite group, whose experiences may very well have been qualitatively better than others in the ghettos.

Unlike many other ghettos under Nazi occupation, which accepted all Jews living in the city and often the surrounding area, the Kraków ghetto was largely limited to Jews who had been granted special permission to remain in Kraków. Only about 25 percent or less of Kraków's pre-war Jewish population was allowed to settle into the ghetto. Applications for entry included questions about employment, sources of income, and health. This meant that the Kraków ghetto generally comprised individuals in the upper class and people with work permits rather than large numbers of the poor or unemployed. Even so, hunger was certainly present in the Kraków ghetto, for some from the very beginning, and for others as they were increasingly impoverished due to selling off possessions to supplement their rations.

Halina Nelken's earliest diary entries about life in the Kraków ghetto relate her family's hunger:

I don't want it. I don't want it. I don't want my empty stomach to growl, our room to be freezing cold, and my father to be so tired, to be so terribly skinny after the last few days that his skin hangs on his bones. I don't want Mama looking gaunt, and all of us constantly hungry, cold, disheartened, and bitter. God, what can I do about it? There really is no way out of our situation. There is no way out. We are without money, without provisions, without hope of getting any appropriate paying job. And what good can my miserable salary do? It barely covers my small needs, and how could that laughably small wage of mine cover the mass of small debts and help us to live?⁴³

At the time Halina was writing, the Nelkens had not been able to work in their prewar jobs since the German invasion and had not yet secured positions in the ghetto that would allow them to survive. They already depleted their savings during the period of German occupation that preceded the ghetto.⁴⁴ They were able to run a debt at the bakery, which allowed the family to get by. Nelken's father would later get a good position in the ghetto, but even so (and even with other family members also holding jobs), they needed to continue selling off possessions in order to feed the family. Nelken related that she prepared the family's meal when her mother was sick: potato soup and noodles with beet marmalade for the main course.⁴⁵ As their circumstances continued to deteriorate, the family turned to obtaining meals from a soup kitchen, the "Kitchen for the Intelligentsia." Nelken describes a meal of "rutabaga and half rotten potatoes with mustard gravy" from this kitchen that, in her opinion, was worse than the food at the prewar "Brothers Albert shelter for the homeless."⁴⁶ Eventually the Nelken family's situation improved, however, and the family was no longer reliant on soup kitchen meals.

Food distribution in the Kraków ghetto was based on a ration card system that allowed the purchase of items at food shops in the ghetto. Kraków ghetto survivor Norbert Schlang describes the family ration card as a yellow card that was replaced monthly.⁴⁷ Food rations were only available to those who were officially registered as residents. At various points in the ghetto's history – connected with mass deportations – the *Kennkarte* (identity cards) of Jews in the ghetto became invalid, requiring an appearance before officials to obtain new documents or stamps for the old identification papers.

The food in the shops that could be purchased with ration cards was not terribly expensive but was not sufficient to meet the needs of Kraków ghetto inmates.⁴⁸ Aleksander Bieberstein lamented that ghetto residents were limited to 100 grams of bread per day and a small monthly allotment of sugar and fats.⁴⁹ The bread was described as not particularly appealing. Additionally, stores did not always have in stock the rations promised on the ration cards, which might have been due to undersupply by the

Germans or illicit diversion of the food to private buyers. This led to people queuing to make food purchases on a daily basis. Nelken in her diary notes that each day a family member left first thing in the morning to stand in line for bread or margarine.⁵⁰ In addition to purchasing food at stores, many individuals received a meal while at work. Those who did not do so brought a lunch or returned home; Nelken rushed home from work to eat a lunch of “potatoes, turnips, carrots sometimes, and so on ad infinitum.”⁵¹

Licit food distribution in the Kraków ghetto was not limited to those who could purchase it or those who received it as a benefit of working. The ghetto used a variety of means, such as a public kitchen, to provide food for those who needed it.⁵² Those who were under communal care such as orphans and the elderly received their meals through various institutions. The poor in the ghetto were served not only by the official Jewish community but also through charitable organizations. For example, CENTOS (Centralne Towarzystwo Opieki nad Sierotami or the Central Association for the Care of Orphans) operated orphanages and other childcare facilities in Kraków that distributed food to their wards. The serving of meals at childcare centers helped motivate children to attend, particularly older children, who might otherwise choose to beg or scavenge for food.

Those of less means were hindered in their search for food not only by the lack of foodstuffs but also by the lack of fuel. If one made a fire for any reason, it was optimal to also use the fire for cooking purposes. Thus, even when Kraków ghetto survivor Nelken burned the furs she had hidden (rather than give them to the Nazis), she used the fire to cook potato soup.⁵³ Another means of cooking food when fuel was scarce was an old practice in Jewish communities: bringing items to be cooked to the communal bakery. There, one handed in their food item uncooked and received a redemption ticket in exchange. Bernard Offen, for example, recalled that his family would bring a cholent to the ghetto bakery so that it could be baked during the Sabbath without the family kindling a fire and thereby desecrating the Sabbath. This prewar practice went on into the ghetto period, though Offen recalled that his family was only able to occasionally use the community bakery for this purpose.⁵⁴ Even nonreligious Jews in the Warsaw ghetto used the community bakeries to cook Sabbath stew due to the high cost of fuel.⁵⁵

Some individuals living in poverty in the ghetto spent their time roaming the streets in search of food. Mark Goldfinger recalled searching for potato peels or other food refuse to feed himself.⁵⁶ Some people begged for food from individuals or families, who sometimes provided food as a form of charity. Adolf Wolfman testified that he was always hungry in the Kraków ghetto and lived off of begging; his neighbors would give

him food and money that he used to buy bread.⁵⁷ Tola Wehrman's family provided soup for the hungry on Sundays.⁵⁸ This practice of inviting others to a private home to receive a meal was a method that many families in various ghettos employed to feed those in need and had been commonly utilized to combat food insecurity prior to the war.⁵⁹ Those who failed to get enough food starved – first swelling up from hunger and then ending up on the horse-drawn wagon that took corpses from the ghetto to be buried.⁶⁰

In contrast to the various means by which the poor received food in the ghetto, those with the funds to pay were able to obtain food at restaurants, cafés, bakeries, and candy stores. According to Tadeusz Pankiewicz, "new shops, restaurants, bakeries, dairies and eateries kept sprouting up."⁶¹ A restaurant on Lwowska Street, next to the ghetto entrance gate, served "ferfel with black pudding, Jewish-style fish and on Saturdays, cholent." A café on Limanowski Street was "famous in the ghetto for its exquisite whole bean coffee and delicious home-made cakes."⁶² Pankiewicz, a non-Jewish pharmacist who lived in the Kraków ghetto during his time running the pharmacy there, took his meals in a Jewish restaurant that was open right up until the final deportation in March 1943.⁶³ It was not only this non-Jew living in the ghetto who kept the doors of these food sellers open. There were sufficient elites in the ghetto to keep not only bakeries with sweets in business but also even a candy store run by the Wohlfeiler family. The confectionary was supplied with smuggled foods when it ran out of licitly sourced products. One of the products it sold was smuggled-in day-old pastries from a shop on the Aryan side of the city.⁶⁴

Not only were private food sellers supplied with food through smuggling but also some of the food on the black market came from the licit food supply. Shopkeepers who received items to sell to those with ration cards also sold those items under the counter to people who could pay high prices.⁶⁵ This diversion of licit or rationed food to the black market is a common practice in places where food is insecure. This occurred in other ghettos and also in other places with food shortages, such as the Russian Empire during the First World War.⁶⁶

Many in the ghetto supplemented the licit food available by obtaining food from outside the ghetto. This was especially true in the earlier period of the ghetto and was possible because the Kraków ghetto, unlike the Łódź ghetto, was not hermetically sealed. For much of the ghetto's existence, there was extensive travel between the ghetto and the outside city. Jews were able to enter and exit the ghetto for numerous reasons, predominately related to serving as a labor force in non-Jewish portions of the city. As time went on, however, there were increasing restrictions on movement in and out of the ghetto.

The openness of the Kraków ghetto and the supply of food through sources such as private shops, restaurants, and charitable groups may have been by design. It may have been more efficient to allow the private purchase of food for the Kraków ghetto than to have a provisioning division for such a small enclave. Given the lack of surviving documentation, we cannot be sure why the ghetto developed the way it did. Ultimately, however, the Kraków ghetto became more and more restricted and reliant on the supplies provided through German channels.

The Kraków ghetto went through three major stages of accessibility. The first stage spanned from the creation of the ghetto in March 1941 to the first set of deportations in June 1942. During the first stage, there was relative fluidity between the ghetto and the non-Jewish portion of Kraków, with many individuals able to obtain a pass for work and other reasons. Jews were also able to receive food packages by mail during this period. The Hollander family's letters from the Kraków ghetto were preserved by their recipient living in the United States, Joseph Hollander, who recounted the items he sent them in various food packages: coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, marmalade, rice, honey, canned sardines, bacon, canned milk, chocolate, canned foods, and soap, among other things. Initially, some of the packages failed to arrive in the ghetto. Joseph's family there informed him that the most reliable mail route in Europe, for both letters and packages, seemed to be through Lisbon. He then used that method successfully.⁶⁷

After the June 1942 deportations, it became more difficult for individuals to pass in and out of the ghetto. Work groups, however, were still sent out, and numerous privileged individuals maintained passes that allowed them to enter and exit the ghetto. Additionally, the ghetto was reduced in size following the June deportations, which meant that people had to move out of their existing housing into already crowded apartments within the new ghetto borders. The deportations of October 1942 marked another turning point; restrictions on access to the nonghetto portions of the city were increased. Eventually, in the final months of the ghetto's existence, it was split into two sections. There were tight restrictions not only on entering and exiting the ghetto but also on passing from one side of the ghetto to the other. Ultimately, the population doomed to be murdered by the Germans was denied all food access.

Provisioning the Ghetto and Distributing Food in the Warsaw Ghetto

Food for official distribution in the Warsaw ghetto was, beginning in January 1941, procured by the Judenrat through the German Transferstelle (transfer office), which opened shortly after the closing of the ghetto

on December 1, 1940.⁶⁸ The Transferstelle regulated trade between the Jewish ghetto and the rest of the city of Warsaw and was supported through a monthly charge paid by the Jewish community that effectively created a surcharge on items entering the ghetto.⁶⁹

Ration cards were distributed by a residence registration officer based on official, regularly updated lists of ghetto residents. A small amount was charged for the monthly yellow ration card. At various points in the ghetto's existence, the cost to obtain the ration card increased or fees were tacked on to it, although the poor were exempt from the tax and the added fees.⁷⁰ Once a person's residency was confirmed and they obtained a ration card, it had to be registered with a food distribution shop. Official food rations that were available through this means were quite small. The amount allocated per person per day for food purchases in the ghetto was extremely low, only thirteen groszy. Reporting in December 1941, Adam Czerniaków noted that the ghetto legally received 1.8 million zlotys' worth of food for the month.⁷¹ The meager food supply for distribution using the ration system was obtained through orders placed by the Supply Section, headed by Abraham Gepner, with the German-controlled Transferstelle. The Supply Section had to pay for the orders with foreign currency or finished goods.⁷²

Although Jewish communal leadership requested increases in food allotments through the spring and summer of 1941, the German authorities generally turned down these requests with a litany of excuses, or else agreed to them but then left them unfulfilled.⁷³ During that period, Czerniaków requested a food system as in the Kraków ghetto, where "a large part of the population has passes and shops outside the Jewish quarter." He was told in response that "Kraków is different from Warsaw and that we must carry out the orders of our immediate superiors."⁷⁴ Change, however, was forthcoming.

After struggling with high mortality rates due to starvation and an inefficient food supply, the Warsaw ghetto saw provisioning improve in the summer of 1941.⁷⁵ In July, the Jewish ghetto authorities were given permission to bypass the Transferstelle and make purchases directly from wholesalers outside the ghetto.⁷⁶ Additionally, official Jewish ghetto soup kitchens were opened under orders from the German authorities.⁷⁷ In September 1941, the Supply Section became a separate agency and officially came under the direction of the leader of the Warsaw ghetto, Czerniaków. He, for the remainder of his life, repeatedly proposed food purchasing schemes to the Germans in an attempt to increase food in the ghetto.

Just as in Łódź, the Warsaw ghetto experienced issues with the delivery of ordered items and the quality of food. To get potatoes and other

necessities delivered, Czerniaków had to grapple with German officials who were unwilling to recognize the authority of others and thus denied food deliveries.⁷⁸ The quality of the food provided to ghettos was often quite low. Benjamin Horowitz, a Supply Section worker, reported on a shipment of pickled beets sent at the beginning of the ghetto period: “The pickled beets were moldy and some of the barrels were leaking.... There was no way they could be used.”⁷⁹ Ultimately, even the free soup kitchen could not use the pickled beets. At another point, the same company that had sold the ghetto the beets used a middleman to sell the ghetto another load of inedible food. This one ended up rotting, not even suitable for animals.

In the Warsaw ghetto, the Judenrat’s Chemical and Bacteriological Institute tested food samples to assess health risks. For example, “from July to October 1941, 166 food samples were tested and 718 bacteriological analyses were carried out.”⁸⁰ Food shortages in Warsaw were also sometimes caused by food spoilage due to poor food quality or poor food storage. In March 1941, there was a loss of potatoes because the weather had been too mild to keep the buried potatoes preserved through the winter.⁸¹ During Passover that year, matzah was available using ration cards, but few other Passover-appropriate foods could be obtained.⁸² As a result, Emmanuel Ringelblum claimed that “the rabbinat is going to declare various types of beans and gourds kosher for Passover use, out of fear lest there be a shortage of matzah—and the Orthodox go hungry.”⁸³

Once food items were received by the Supply Section, they were either distributed at retail locations to those with ration cards or sent to a processing center for further distribution. Additionally, approximately 10 percent of the ghetto’s food supply was distributed in a variety of institutions in the ghetto including orphanages, hospitals, soup kitchens, and homes for the elderly.

Although the distribution of food was officially under the direction of the Jewish ghetto administration, the German authorities regularly indicated specific groups within the ghetto that were to get supplemental rations. For example, the Jewish police were entitled to large food rations, prisoners in the ghetto’s Jewish detention center were only allocated 4.5 ounces of bread per day, and in one instance, a bonus food ration for Aryan workers came out of the Jewish quarter’s bread allotment. There were some places, though, that Czerniaków had a small amount of discretion; he was given an allotment of food that he could designate personally to recipients.⁸⁴

Ration cards entitled ghetto inhabitants to a scant number of items. According to Mary Berg, writing on December 15, 1940, in the Warsaw

ghetto, "The official food ration cards entitle one to a quarter of a pound of bread a day, one egg a month, and two pounds of vegetable jam (sweetened with saccharine) a month. A pound of potatoes costs one zloty."⁸⁵ In November 1941, Czerniaków reported an increase in food rations per person, which included "10½ ounces of sugar per month, 3½ ounces of marmalade a month, 1 egg per month, 220 pounds of potatoes per year. The bread ration is to remain as before: not a chance of increasing it."⁸⁶

At various times, the ghetto authorities raised money for food by charging for the bread ration cards. In July 1941 and February 1942, the price of bread cards was increased in the ghetto. In September and October 1941, the official price of bread in the ghetto was 1.20 zloty per kilogram, while sugar was 6 zloty per kilogram. These prices included a surcharge to allow the ghetto to purchase provisions for the winter.⁸⁷ As a result, in February 1942, there was free bread and sugar distribution to reimburse the population for the surcharges in the fall. At the end of December 1941, the Jewish community raised the official price of bread. A few days later, the German authorities added to this a tax, bringing the price of bread to 90 groszy (0.9 zloty). At the same time, the Germans instituted a division between privileged and standard bread rations.⁸⁸

In addition to the paltry rations, there were repeated issues with distributors shorting the amount of foodstuffs sold and selling adulterated products. Ultimately, the food rations in the Warsaw ghetto were inadequate for sustaining the population. Most people in the Warsaw ghetto relied on other food sources for survival. These included soup kitchens, food provided at places of work, mail packages, black-market purchases, and smuggling, as well as charity offered through organizations and the official community.

The summer of 1942 and the great deportations that began at the end of July brought a major transformation in the Warsaw ghetto food supply. At the end of July 1942, the soup kitchens were converted into kitchens for workers. Rachel Auerbach, who headed the soup kitchen at 40 Leszno, noted that at this time, the kitchen transitioned from being a privately funded space to being a "shop kitchen" for workers of the German firm W. C. Többens.⁸⁹ After August 15, 1942 – and a large number of deportations, including the mass deportation or murder of the bulk of the Judenrat officials – the only function of the Judenrat was to supply the ghetto with food. This pattern continued with the Judenrat's decreasing size until the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on April 19, 1943.⁹⁰

Mail Service and Food Packages

The Warsaw, Kraków, and Łódź ghettos had mail service, at least for some period of their existence, that allowed people to receive packages including food and money.⁹¹ Unfortunately, mail service was not always consistent or reliable but was rather marked by periodic requisitioning of packages, mail stoppages, unreliable delivery, and plunder. In Łódź, at one point, Rumkowski began requisitioning food directly from food packages for the poor and sick, while money received had to be exchanged at official rates for ghetto currency, making it worth significantly less than on the black market.

In Warsaw in September 1941, the Germans seized 6000 parcels at the post office. According to Czerniaków, the contents of the parcels were sent to a shop that distributed food and other items to privileged Germans in Warsaw.⁹² In other cases, food was simply stolen from packages. In many cases, those receiving food by mail had to bribe their post office official to be given the package. For those who did receive their packages, the contents proved important to their overall nutrition. In Kraków, for example, numerous families received coffee and other items in the mail.⁹³ And, writing from Warsaw, Ringelblum noted in February 1941 that “a large number of packages have been arriving from Russia and Yugoslavia lately (2,000 a day). They’re very good: fats, coffee and the like. They are important in feeding the populace.”⁹⁴ These shipments from the Soviet Union accounted for 80 percent of packages sent to Warsaw.⁹⁵ In Łódź, roughly 4,500 food parcels per month (half of all parcels sent to the ghetto) came from the East. The number of food packages was greatly reduced with the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union in June 1941.⁹⁶

Agricultural Production in the Ghettos

In all three ghettos, attempts were made to supplement food rations by growing food, both by raising livestock and by cultivating plants. Ghetto dwellers used every available bit of space for planting: window sills, balconies, and green patches in front of buildings and in courtyards. Describing these efforts in Łódź, one survivor related, “because of the intense hunger, people began to plant things on rooftops, window sills, backyards. Each vacant spot was used for planting.”⁹⁷ In Warsaw, dedicated organizations cultivated any arable land in the ghetto, including yards and even the cemetery. Those who engaged in this project were not paid, but they got to keep the harvest.⁹⁸ In Łódź, those growing produce sometimes sold their crops on the black market.⁹⁹



Figure 3.2 A group of people gardening in a garden plot in the Łódź ghetto. Photographer: Mendel Grosman. Photo credit: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Hana Greenbaum and Shmuel Zilbar.

In Warsaw and Łódź large gardening plots were available.¹⁰⁰ In the Łódź ghetto, these plots and seeds were administered through the ghetto's Department of Agriculture, which, in March 1941, made 200-square-meter plots available for rent to those without stable incomes.¹⁰¹ However, when vegetable shortages occurred, the Jewish ghetto administration in Łódź expropriated the vegetables from the larger private garden plots. The Department of Agriculture counted plants to keep the private plot gardeners from digging up their vegetables early.¹⁰² In the early days in the ghetto, there were also *hachsharahs*, or communal garden plots, that were farmed by Zionist youth groups in both Łódź and Warsaw, and in Warsaw, the Zionist group was allowed to work fields outside the city.¹⁰³ Additionally, the Toprol Society planted food and flowers in any available patch in the ghetto. According to Warsaw ghetto diarist Ringelblum, this society planted 200 courtyards.¹⁰⁴ Just as some soup kitchens served as clandestine schools or other meeting places, gardens in the Warsaw and Łódź ghettos served as meeting places and even as educational spaces. Chawka Folman, a Warsaw ghetto underground courier, noted that the Zionist youth group Dror utilized the “gardens in the ghetto at

17 Nowolipki Street, 35 Nowolipki Street, and 12 Elektoralna Street” for natural sciences classes for their clandestine gymnasium (secondary school).¹⁰⁵ Sometimes small lots of land were used by private individuals. Kraków ghetto survivor Lucy Brent had a small garden and two live chickens in a small plot of land next to her apartment. The garden was lost when the ghetto size was reduced.¹⁰⁶ Elites in the Łódź ghetto also benefited from garden plots that grew vegetables just for distribution to them. Those who harvested the vegetables in this garden were able to keep the greens.¹⁰⁷

In all three ghettos, private citizens also held livestock, and communally held livestock was used to support the wider community. In Łódź, at the beginning of the ghetto’s existence, there was livestock both in private hands and in the hands of the community.¹⁰⁸ Warsaw had a dairy with cows, and the Toprol Society raised chickens. Individuals in both Warsaw and Kraków privately held goats, and as late as July 1942, Czerniaków was making inquiries to the Germans about raising rabbits in the Warsaw ghetto.¹⁰⁹ In addition to raising livestock for food, some turned to hunting to supplement available provisions. In Kraków, for example, pigeons were a “hunted” food source.¹¹⁰

Manufacture of Food in the Ghettos

Food processing took place within the walls of all three ghettos. This food processing ranged from individual, home-based preservation of food that arrived in poor condition to large-scale food processing such as manufacturing synthetic honey and baking bread for those inside the ghetto. The most important food manufactured inside the ghetto was bread.

Although baked bread was at times brought into the ghettos, bread was baked inside all three ghettos for their inhabitants, and all three ghettos were the site of numerous complaints about bread quality. Many tied the issue to low-quality flour or adulteration of baking ingredients, perhaps done to enable the skimming of baking products for black-market distribution. The end result, though, was poor-quality bread. Kraków ghetto survivor Nathan Nothman described the bread in the Kraków ghetto as being “like clay.”¹¹¹ Fogel, writing in his diary at the end of June 1942 in Łódź, noted, “The bread we get is horrible and impossible to eat, we need to dry it first. We have large-scale food poisoning in the ghetto because of the bread.”¹¹² In Warsaw, there were inspections of food processing in the ghetto due to food quality issues.

In addition to bread, all three ghettos produced some sort of sweetener that was distributed to inhabitants. In the Warsaw ghetto, a factory-made marmalade out of “carrots and beets sweetened with saccharine,”

and Kraków ghetto survivor Rachel Garfunkel similarly described the ghetto jam as made of red beets and saccharine.¹¹³ Ersatz honey was likewise produced in all three ghettos. In Warsaw, as Mary Berg reported, the honey was made out of “yellow-brown molasses.”¹¹⁴ A detailed record of the process for making honey was recorded in the Polish Jewish newspaper *Gazeta Żydowska* on June 24, 1942: Brown industrial sugar and water were heated in a boiler to 85 degrees Celsius (185 degrees Fahrenheit), at which point “a little hydrochloric acid is added.” The reader was assured, however, that after the two-hour process, the acid was “neutralized, that is, it becomes harmless—it is no longer a threat to health.”¹¹⁵

Some food processing in the ghetto was undertaken to salvage processed foods that arrived there. For example, 10,000 kilograms of rancid, black butter that had been determined by experts to have been sitting for at least six months was delivered to the Łódź ghetto. Rather than throw away the rotten food, the food department used “processing” facilities to wash it and produce a quantity of “relatively clean” butter that could be consumed by the ghetto population, whose “stomachs are accustomed to everything.”¹¹⁶

One of the most creative bits of food production was the Łódź ghetto “salad.” Composed of salvaged edible parts from rotten food shipments, it was served to workers and distributed to inhabitants as well. Rotten vegetables were also often “saved.” Oskar Singer describes how in one workshop, leftover scraps, bread crumbs, and the edible parts of rotten vegetables were saved and made into a salad for ghetto dwellers’ consumption.¹¹⁷ One of the “salad” ingredients was butter (perhaps the same butter that had been “salvaged”?).

It was not only the Jewish ghetto administrations that produced food in the ghetto; numerous individuals engaged in food production. Shimon Huberband, for example, noted that although industrial, ritual slaughter of chickens came to an end in Warsaw with the sealing of the ghetto, ritual slaughterers continued to butcher chickens in their own homes. The chickens were smuggled into the ghetto by children. There were also kosher butchers, who, given the impossibility of smuggling cattle into the ghetto, smuggled themselves out instead. They then ritually slaughtered an animal and smuggled in the butchered meat.¹¹⁸

Additionally, some individuals undertook small-scale commercial food production in their homes, with products ranging from candies made from saccharine to meat patties. In the Warsaw ghetto there was a man, Avrohom Otsap, who with a hand mill would “grind grain for a few groschen.”¹¹⁹ In addition to commercial food production, food preservation and other types of food processing for home use took place in homes in

the ghetto. In the Kraków ghetto, Nelken noted, “On Tuesday Mama decided to prepare provisions for winter, so we celebrated the making of sauerkraut. She took command; Mietek and I shredded cabbage with a passion worthy of a better cause, while Papa, looking like an expert, crushed the cabbage with a club in a large pot.”¹²⁰

Food Lines

Food lines were a regular feature of ghetto life, whether they were to buy basic foodstuffs, procure a meal at a soup kitchen, or gain access to a kitchen in a shared apartment or communal space. Photos, drawings, and even film footage preserve images of this ubiquitous task of standing in line for food in the ghettos.¹²¹ The lines were often unbearably long. People might spend hours waiting in line for food rations. One Łódź ghetto policeman recalled showing up for guard duty at 2 a.m. on a cold wintery night only to find a woman already standing in line for the potato distribution the next morning.¹²²

Numerous ghetto writers during and after the war recorded the miseries of the food distribution lines. Łódź ghetto survivor Lucille Eichengreen described how “long lines of hungry ghetto dwellers waited outside the food distribution centers for hours on end before they got their meager rations. Hunger upon hunger was followed by even more hunger.”¹²³ Kraków ghetto survivor Nelken described how, “One of us runs downstairs to line up for bread or maybe even margarine.”¹²⁴ Every household had a person (primarily a woman or child) whose job it was to be physically present to procure food.¹²⁵ Łódź ghetto survivor Alfred Dube writes of his four-year-old sister being forced to line up to purchase food at 5 a.m.¹²⁶

One’s ability to navigate the food lines was an important survival strategy because when food was limited, being at the end of the line could result in not receiving rations. For example, Kraków ghetto survivor Garfunkel said that when she and her father politely waited in line for soup, they might receive nothing but water or possibly a turnip in their soup.¹²⁷ To ensure they received food, people shoved and beat one another for a better place in line.¹²⁸ Sara Selver-Urbach described what happened when her mother, who was adept at jostling to keep her place in line, became ill: “We were in dire circumstances ... (because) we did not know how to force our way, a very necessary skill in those days. Somehow we always found ourselves at the tail end of the queue, and when the supply was limited, we were among those who came away empty-handed.”¹²⁹ People endured physical abuse in the food lines only to be rewarded with substandard food. As Zelkowicz wrote of the food



Figure 3.3 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto awaiting their turn in the soup kitchen. Photo credit: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Archiwum Dokumentacji Mechanicznej

lines, “All that counts is to pay the cashier, receive a coupon for the warehouse, and accept whatever the warehouseman lays in your hands as long as it is chewable, if not edible.” He also wrote of the joy of ghetto inhabitants lining up to receive two kilograms of potatoes although the produce was “spoiled and grade B.”¹³⁰

Physical altercations in food lines during famine situations are not uncommon.¹³¹ Memories of the Irish famine include tales that “the people were so famished that their compassion and consideration had left them. Healthy men used their strength to muscle past women, children, and the weak. They trampled on top of one another, everybody trying to get close to the soup pot.”¹³² The violence on the ghetto food lines was such that it is included in the *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto* that was created by Łódź ghetto archivists. The word *balagan* means to make a mess, but in the ghetto, it came to refer specifically to the chaos connected to the ghetto’s food lines. The editors of the encyclopedia note:

The word “balegan” meant the front of such a line, comprised of a whole cluster of people crowding the entrance to the distribution point or at the counter window of the ration cards collection office. Typically, a “balegan” is created in the following way: several hours before the distribution point opens,

people start gathering in front of it, hoping to pick up their rations as quickly as possible. One by one, they join the waiting line. They stand in it until so-called “tough guys” (*vide* “Mocni”) or “Usurpers” in turn, show up just before opening time. “Tough guys” push out those standing closest to the entrance or counter windows and take their places at the head of the line. “Usurpers” in turn, citing some “witnesses,” take over the best places, claiming that they had reserved them earlier. Those who have been pushed out of the line refuse to go to the end and gather around the front, thus starting to form a “balegan,” which later proceeds to storm the door of a “cooperative” or an office counter.¹³³

The targets of many food riots were often the well-to-do who could afford the high prices or ghetto elites who skipped the line, causing resentment.¹³⁴ One ghetto inhabitant was a witness to line skipping that caused a mini riot. He and his neighbor woke up at 5 a.m. and went to the bakery, where there was already a huge queue. At about 7 a.m. people started to get nervous and shouted that the baker should begin giving out bread, but he said that he had to wait for the commissioner. After a while, six people came, wearing blue hats – the same hats the Jewish police wore – and they did not stand in line but went straight to the baker, who gave them two loaves each. People expected bread distribution to begin then, but it did not. The crowd began throwing stones in the direction of the bakery. The Jewish police came and started to “clean up.” People got so angry that they started to fight.¹³⁵ This anger over line skipping and favoritism led in June 1942 to an announcement in the Łódź ghetto that each person was required to wait their turn in the food distribution lines and that no one was to receive preferential treatment.¹³⁶ However, there remained in the ghetto line-free special distribution centers for those in privileged situations. For the highest-level elites, food was delivered to their home.¹³⁷

Conclusion

Communal coping mechanisms for providing food to the ghetto inhabitants varied across cities. In Warsaw and Kraków, a combination of rations and private provisioning was in use, while in Łódź, a ration system ultimately prevailed over private food sources. These food distribution mechanisms were influenced by the Jewish leadership, the local German administration, and the relative openness of the ghettos. The seizure of mail packages to benefit the least fortunate in the Łódź ghetto demonstrates the tensions between communal survival strategies and individual survival strategies. It also sharply contrasts with the Warsaw German administration’s seizure of packages to benefit the German population. In all three ghettos, the different mechanisms for food distribution

avored different groups of individuals. In Łódź, Jewish ghetto administration officials and factory workers benefited from supplemental rations, while in Kraków and Warsaw, the private markets meant that economic position played a key role in food access. These differences reflect the structures of the ghetto as imposed by the Germans as well as prewar sensibilities of these communal leaderships.

All three ghettos employed communal coping mechanisms to supplement the scarce food resources through a variety of means. Food processing, particularly to minimize food waste, and agricultural projects were ways in which the community sought to expand food provisions. Soup kitchens and supplemental welfare payments were used to help supply food to the impoverished of the ghetto.

4 The Physical, Mental, and Social Effects of Hunger

Lack of food affects individuals both physically and mentally. The physical effects of starvation on the body are wasting, swelling (edema), susceptibility to disease, and eventually death. Mentally, individuals undergo the psychological difficulties of the transformation of the body during starvation, behavioral changes, and food obsession, all of which drastically affect social and family life. The effects of hunger and starvation on the inhabitants of the ghetto were devastating to their daily lives and existence. Ghetto dwellers were keen observers of starvation and its effects, commenting on it throughout ghetto writings. The most extreme version of this observation was an actual medical study of the effects of starvation undertaken by doctors in the Warsaw ghetto, who, faced with their fellow inmates starving to death, documented the decline of starvation.¹ These observations and medical writings from the Warsaw ghetto are among the most important sources on the effects of starvation.² Having no ability to save their fellow inmates, the doctors in Warsaw took detailed notes of their decline and deaths. Many of the doctors died of starvation as well. Warsaw was not the only ghetto studying starvation. Professor Wilhelm Caspari, a German Jewish scientist who arrived in the Łódź ghetto from Frankfurt, studied “the relationship between nutrition and disease in the ghetto.”³ He too died in the ghetto with poor nutrition as major contributor to his death. Dr. Hugo Natannsen also studied malnutrition in the Łódź ghetto.⁴ Medical professionals in Warsaw, Kraków, and Łódź undertook a variety of methods to battle the affects of starvation, with treatments ranging from prescribing potato peels to various injections. Ultimately, however, in the words of Łódź ghetto diarist Hersz Fogel, “The rations keep getting smaller and smaller, so there’s nothing to write about, it’s a real tragedy for the Jews in the ghetto, a slow death of starvation.”⁵

Physical Transformation

Victims of starvation undergo a stark transformation of the body. Faced with a lack of food, the body first consumes all its fat. This causes a

decrease in body mass. In the ghettos, many first noticed their weight loss when their clothes – or sometimes skin – began to hang loose on their bodies. Łódź ghetto chronicler and diarist Oskar Rosenfeld observed that in the beginning, “the abdomen gets loose and eventually sags ... the hand feels the restless body, finds bones, ribs, finds limbs, and discovers the self, suddenly becoming aware that not so long ago one was fatter, meatier and one is surprised how quickly the body decays.”⁶ The weight loss also results in thin faces with hollow spaces under the eyes. One Warsaw ghetto writer noted, “The people sitting here all have such long faces, not-having-eaten faces, with swollen ghetto spots under their eyes.”⁷ The weight loss could be quite substantial among those experiencing starvation in the ghetto. Reports of weight loss of forty-five to sixty-five pounds were not uncommon.⁸

Once it has used up all of its fat, the body burns muscles and eventually the organs to survive. Starvation did not just make people appear physically thin, it stunted the growth of the young, stopped menstruation, decreased sex drive, caused impotence, and turned the skin pale or even bluish. Sometimes after losing weight, starvation victims were puffy with edema.⁹ Many diaries and testimonies relate to this phenomenon. One record from the Warsaw ghetto was written by a hospital nurse:

In the entrance hall lies a boy of five, swollen with hunger. He is in the last stage, his life ending because of hunger. He came to the hospital yesterday. Eyes swollen, hands and feet puffed up like balloons. Every possible analysis is being made; maybe kidneys, perhaps heart. No, neither this nor that. The child still moves his lips, he begs for some bread. I try to feed him something, hoping he could take something down. Alas, he throat is swollen shut, nothing passes down, too late. The doctor asks him “did you get anything to eat at home?” “No.” “Would you like to eat now?” “Yes!” Some few minutes later he utters for the last time “a piece of bread,” and with this he sinks into sleep. Dead for a piece of bread.¹⁰

Many diarists pointed to edema as a sign that death from starvation was near. Numerous descriptions in ghetto diaries attest to the swollen limbs of many inhabitants, which also made movement difficult. Rachel Auerbach, the Warsaw ghetto chronicler who ran a soup kitchen at 40 Leszno Street, recorded that a German-speaking refugee from the Sudetenland, Abraham Brockmier, referred to his hunger-induced swollen hands as “pätchenhändchen (patty-cake hands).” She described his swelling as having, “progressed so far that he can’t get up. Those ‘patty-cake hands’ and legs like logs.”¹¹ Brockmier died six weeks after he could no longer make it to the soup kitchen due to his edema.

The physical effects of hunger in the ghetto made recovery from that hunger more difficult. Hunger brought low energy, preventing people

from dragging themselves to work, where they might get food or money for food, and in the end leaving them with even too little energy to make it to the soup kitchen. Starvation disease leaves those suffering from it with the need to conserve energy through resting.¹² People could not move from their beds or exert much physical effort. In his sketches of a welfare worker visiting the poor of the ghetto in daylight and finding an adult man in bed, Łódź ghetto chronicler Josef Zerkowicz answers the worker's unspoken question: "So where should an adult person be lying when he is both alive and swollen with hunger? Where, if not in a bed?"¹³ Many people experiencing hunger took to their beds, but without work to obtain more food, bed rest might lead to death. Warsaw ghetto survivor Henry Greenblatt described the summer of 1941, noting, "you see a lot of people laying in the streets, swollen from hunger. People were dying from hunger."¹⁴ In his Łódź ghetto diary David Sierakowiak wrote, "I can't walk up the stairs or even any distance in the streets. Legs are the best pointer to the starvation, exhaustion."¹⁵ Mary Berg noted that one of the models they hired for her drawing class in the Warsaw ghetto fainted from hunger: "we were compelled to carry an old man out of the classroom; he had fainted from hunger and could not even finish the bread we gave him."¹⁶

Another effect of starvation on the body was an inability to stay warm. The body needs calories to keep warm. The colder the weather, the more calories are required to maintain body temperature.¹⁷ The ghetto inmates themselves also noted the connection between cold weather and an increased need for food. The Łódź ghetto *Chronicle* notes that gravediggers working in the wintertime were unable to bury all the dead in a timely manner and attributes this inability to their poor health.¹⁸ This poor health was undoubtedly due to the lack of food available to these manual laborers, compounded with the strain of working outdoors in winter. Scientists conducting starvation experiments at the University of Minnesota noted that subjects made "use of additional clothing to compensate for the lowered heat production of the body."¹⁹ Warsaw ghetto diarist Michael Zylberg described encountering his friend Gershon Fraenkel in the Warsaw ghetto. He noted that his emaciated friend wore, "two suits and a heavy winter top coat" despite it being summer time.²⁰

In addition to transforming the body through loss of physical mass, malnutrition, and hunger left the body more susceptible to disease.²¹ The most common diseases in the ghetto were hunger diseases and hunger-related diseases. Avraham Barkai, in his article on relations between Western and Eastern Jews, notes that those diseases caused by hunger were called, "ghetto disease."²² Many so-called ghetto diseases

were related to nutritional deficiencies, even when they did not manifest as such. Researchers report that, “most hunger-related deaths are due to infectious disease rather than starvation per se: with severe malnutrition, ability to resist infection deteriorates sharply.”²³ For example, the rise in tuberculosis and lung diseases in the ghetto was attributed by ghetto chroniclers to malnutrition. Lung disease was particularly rampant among the hungry. A reduction in the number of people suffering from contagious diseases was noted in the *Chronicle* in July 1941. This was attributed to improving sanitary conditions; however, it was noted that lung diseases had increased as “a direct result of malnutrition.”²⁴ Lack of vitamins also led to diseases like rickets in children, pellagra, and anemia.²⁵

Hunger and disease further aggravated each other as, “disease impairs absorption and utilization of nutrients, raises nutritional needs and may also reduce appetite.”²⁶ One disease, however, that was surprisingly possible to survive with in the ghetto was diabetes. Several people with diabetes survived the ghettos and concentration camps of World War II. Interestingly enough, “hunger favorably affects the carbohydrate metabolism of diabetics, [so] sufferers from this disease showed few of the usual symptoms.”²⁷

These are not the only changes to the body’s chemistry as a result of starvation. It also affected digestion. Those suffering from hunger urinated frequently and had stomach problems. This manifested itself in multiple ways. One anonymous writer in the Oyneg Shabes Archive recorded, “You often see women stop in the middle of the street or courtyard, spread their legs, and relieve themselves in front of everybody. Excrement lies everywhere: on doorsteps, on staircases, on stairs, and in courtyards. It is the result of stomach problems, diarrhea, and poor nourishment. Bowels are giving out.”²⁸ Many of these physiological effects of starvation affected the brain and its functioning as well.

The Mental Effects of Hunger

Lack of nourishment had multiple effects on those suffering from hunger and those watching their fellow ghetto inhabitants waste away. The physiological effects of hunger include apathy, irritability, and other behavioral shifts.²⁹ Many testimonies and diaries bewailed the uncivil behavior of people on the streets of the ghetto.

In her immediate postwar testimony in June 1945, Łódź ghetto survivor Flora Herzberger stated that during her time in the ghetto as a result of the hunger, “even fistfights broke out.”³⁰ It was not only on the street that people were quick to anger – hunger and irritability took a toll on

relationships in the ghetto. Gusta R., writing about her hunger in the Kraków ghetto, noted that friendships were impossible to maintain when a person was hungry because they were jealous of what others had.³¹ In her Kraków ghetto diary, Halina Nelken complained about the effects of hunger on her family, noting, "Worst of all is that in our distress we harass and torment one another. The four of us, so close at one time, have stopped understanding each other, as though we were each locked in our own separate worlds."³² Thus a cost of hunger was the loss of social support and interaction.³³

The irritability, in part, came from the physical discomfort of hunger. Those who experienced hunger wrestled with the pains of their body and the rebellion of their stomachs. Yehuda Elberg recorded in his Warsaw diary, "A dybbuk has entered my belly. My belly talks, shouts, even has complaints and drives me mad."³⁴ The irritability of those suffering from hunger was commented on by many ghetto writers and in a number of postwar testimonies. It caused a strain on social and family relations. Rosenfeld described how hunger led to bickering and fighting.³⁵ An anonymous girl wrote in her diary, "I have no idea why I don't live more harmoniously with my sister. We fight all the time and scream at each other. I must cause my parents a lot of worry."³⁶ The doctors researching hunger in the Warsaw ghetto noted that victims might become aggressive, particularly at the sight of food. These conclusions have been reached by modern researchers as well.³⁷ Rosenfeld described one particular moment when an older woman was sent into a delirious, violent state by the sight of another woman eating bread and margarine. The woman was so affected that she had to be calmed with an injection.³⁸

Mental alertness is reduced in persons experiencing hunger. Scientists conducting starvation experiments at the University of Minnesota noted, "In the case of famine ... coherent and creative thinking is impaired."³⁹ They additionally cited research on the famine in Russia between 1918 and 1922, in which intellectuals noted a decrease in their mental abilities.⁴⁰ David Sierakowiak recorded in his diary, "I descend lower and lower. I find even reading difficult. I can't concentrate on anything for any length of time. I count the time from meal to meal."⁴¹ In her June 1945 testimony, Herzberger said of her time in the Łódź ghetto that she had "practically nothing to eat ... swollen from hunger and marked by death, [she was] mentally no longer alert."⁴² The doctors of the Warsaw ghetto noted that victims suffering from starvation were, "depressed, and uninterested in everything around them until they saw food."⁴³ Ultimately, extreme hunger reduced people to base, animal instincts. Scientists of hunger studies at the University of

Minnesota noted that among those suffering from famine, “the usual social amenities and graces are dropped.”⁴⁴

Food Fantasy and Hunger

In the mental life of the victims, one of the most significant manifestations of hunger was fantasies about food. Scientists at the University of Minnesota noted that “in the case of famine, food becomes the central topic of conversation and writing.”⁴⁵ For the Jews in the ghetto, their lack of food was the overwhelming concern of daily life. Victor Frankl discusses prisoners’ reactions to the lack of adequate food, noting that “because of the high degree of undernourishment which the prisoners suffered, it was natural that the desire for food was the major primitive instinct around which mental life centered.”⁴⁶ Food consumed all aspects of existence for the starving ghetto dwellers. Their thoughts, actions, and even dreams were devoted to food and its acquisition. Warsaw ghetto diarist Chaim Kaplan recorded, “Our constant song—potatoes! This word is repeated a hundred and one times at every moment. It is our whole life. When I am alone in my room for a few moments of quiet, the echo of that word continues in my ears. Even in my dreams it visits me.”⁴⁷

In trying to understand why the Jewish masses were passively going to their deaths due to hunger, Ringelblum recorded the following: “Recently I talked with one of these refugees, who had been starving for a long time. All he thinks about is food, particularly bread: wherever he goes, whatever he does, he dreams of bread; he stops in front of every bakery, in front of every window. At the same time, he has become resigned and apathetic; nothing interests him anymore.”⁴⁸ Zerkowicz noted, “when a Jew in the ghetto wakes up in the morning, he first checks to see whether anything is missing from the package of bread that he had weighed and tied up before he went to bed the night before. Only when he is convinced that even a mouse could not get to his bread, does the pounding of his heart slow down.”⁴⁹

Food fantasy and food obsession in the ghetto could be so overwhelming as to be a torment.⁵⁰ Rosenfeld wrote that the desire for food overrode all other feelings. He stated, “For the sake of bread, people turn into hypocrites, fanatics, boasters, miserable wretches. Give me bread and you’re my friend.”⁵¹ In May 1944, an anonymous boy wrote in the margins of the French novel *Les Vrais Riches*, “All I should like to have in life, at the present moment, is plenty to eat.”⁵² At the time he was writing, rations were a mere 1,132.6 calories per day.⁵³

It was not only individuals’ own hunger that had to be borne, parents had to contend with the cries of miserably hungry children. In an oral

history given after the war, a woman under the pseudonym Leah told of what it was like to be a young mother in the ghetto, “I can tell you, I pulled my hair from my head many, many, many times, on account of the children they ask for bread and there was not [*sic*] to give them anything! What could a mother do! Just to kill yourself. This was all you could do, to kill yourself.”⁵⁴ The trauma of these parents was well rendered by Zelkowicz, who recorded the visit of a social worker to the home of a woman and her daughter. The social worker inquired what means the woman had at her disposal. The woman’s response was to break into tears and ask the social worker, “My daughter is hungry.... If I owned anything that mattered to me, would I deny it to my daughter? Would I let her starve?”⁵⁵ Even so, some were so driven by hunger that they took food from their children. Caretakers for children who delivered meals at their home noted, “A meal, even handed over to a child in person in their apartment, is not always eaten by them. Guardians, middlemen, and even parents force some barley or bread away from them. This takes place in particular among younger children up to 7 or 8 years old.”⁵⁶

Zelkowicz described the small extra food rations being distributed to the ghetto of “two kilograms of potatoes, one hundred grams of sugar, fifty grams of margarine, and other commodities,” as a “treasure” – the kind of treasure that might keep ghetto inhabitants from sleeping as they waited for the morning dawn, when the food shops might open and begin distribution.⁵⁷ It was not only waiting for food distribution that kept ghetto inmates from sleeping. One diarist noted that his daughter could not sleep and cried all night from hunger.⁵⁸ Survivor Alfred Dube stated in his postwar memoir that “Hunger pains did not allow us to sleep.”⁵⁹ Some ghetto inhabitants went as far as taking sleeping pills to shut out the hunger and get some rest.⁶⁰ Leon Leyson, writing of his time in the Kraków ghetto, noted, “I was hungry, really hungry, all the time. Sleep became my only relief, the only time I wasn’t thinking about eating but frequently visions of food filled dreams.”⁶¹

Instead of eating food, people would dream about and discuss food. Rosenfeld described how, after first experiencing hunger, some Jews began to fantasize about foods they had eaten before. He noted that they “savored pleasures of the past, tasting all kinds of flavors with a parched palate.”⁶² Lucille Eichengreen discussed the people she and her family shared a room with in the Łódź ghetto: “our roommates, when not sullen, talked about food incessantly.”⁶³ Warsaw ghetto survivor Lubra Librowitz recalled that all anyone spoke about on the street was food.⁶⁴

Rosenfeld noted that diners at the soup kitchen discussed and fantasized about specialties at famous European restaurants they had eaten at in the past.⁶⁵ Nelken, writing in the Kraków ghetto, mused, “My wish is

to own a modern villa beneath the blue Italian sky—and to stuff myself with pastries as mortals do with bread! ... In vain I try with my wish of a villa under a blue sky to kill my hunger and my wish for a piece of gray wartime bread.”⁶⁶ Similarly, Dube described his experience while working: “I was assigned to a group of older people who spent the whole day talking about food and how hungry they were. They were reminiscing about what they ate at home and they exchanged recipes for their favorite foods. It made me think of how hungry I was so I realized I had to get away from them to survive.”⁶⁷ This type of fantasy was not limited to ghetto dwellers. Samuel Pizar noted that, “When I was an adolescent in Auschwitz lying on the hard shelf that was my bed and hallucinating from hunger, I would often try to recall the shape and savory aroma of the *kuchen* [cake] we used to eat at home in Bialystok.”⁶⁸

While those who were suffering from hunger fantasized about food they had eaten before the war, they also imagined the lives of others who were not suffering a similar plight. In his ghetto song, “A Policeman,” Yankele Hershkowitz fantasized that in his native Kielce district “people eat radishes with cream, carrots, beets for a few pennies, for next to nothing one can get eggs. There life is a delight. There one can gorge oneself, there is to eat.”⁶⁹ Numerous ghetto songs were about bread and about potatoes and other things to eat.⁷⁰ Another Hershkowitz song contained the lyric, “Why have you abandoned us, little bread ... you torture us constantly without pity, we are already close to death.”⁷¹

Numerous diaries and memoirs of the ghettos speak about food. In his article “Diaries and Memoirs from the Łódź ghetto in Yiddish and Hebrew,” Robert Moses Shapiro notes a “preoccupation with food in all the diaries,” including reports on the food available, prices, and preparation methods.⁷² Writing in her diary, Nelken confessed, “My life before the war seems to me as unreal as a buttered roll, a glass of real tea with lemon and sugar, or the roasted thigh of a goose.”⁷³ Food was such an important preoccupation that even devastating events were soon forgotten in the search for food. Rosenfeld reported on the Western Jews being forced to witness the hanging of a man accused of escaping from the ghetto: “for a few hours it was the main topic of conversation, by evening all was forgotten.... Talk turned to the price of bread, of margarine, of sugar.”⁷⁴

The focus on food extended to prayer. Daily prayers were adapted so that variations of prayers normally said on Jewish fast days were used in daily prayer in the ghetto.⁷⁵ Henryk Goldszmit (1878–1942, pen name Janusz Korczak), writing in his Warsaw ghetto diary, expressed his desire for food in terms of prayer, adapting the well-known Christian prayer with the notation, “Our Father who art in heaven.... This

prayer was carved out of hunger and misery. Our daily bread. Bread.”⁷⁶ Ghetto chronicler Zelkowicz, relating the tragedy of a Hassidic rebbe whose followers had abandoned him in the ghetto when times became harsh, noted of the followers: “Instead of dreaming about ‘Torah,’ they dreamed about ‘flour.’”⁷⁷ In the ghetto, even the days of the Messiah and the time of redemption were described in terms of food. Zelkowicz told the story of a religious man who watched his family wait for the delivery of their welfare money as they had once waited for the Messiah.⁷⁸ More telling was one of the ghetto fantasies of the days of redemption: “When the Messiah comes, we will eat all the bread we can.”⁷⁹

Some writers have viewed food fantasy (manifested as recording recipes and foods eaten before the war) as a type of resistance, but these fantasies were not psychologically healthy for ghetto inmates, and many ghetto writers felt that focusing on food was rather deadly. Rosenfeld recorded one woman who said, “We don’t talk about eating.... It happens frequently that people who talked themselves into the illusion that they were eating foods from which they had long abstained displayed severe nervous disorders and turned outright wild during the night.”⁸⁰ Łódź ghetto survivor Eichengreen noted that the people she and her family shared a room with fantasized about food, “and delicacies they would eat after the war. In this way, they increased both their torment and ours.”⁸¹

Humor

Only when they noticed that their clothes were getting looser, the shirts around the neck became wider, skirts, blouses, hung loose around the body, they began to turn their attention to this phenomenon—at first with cheerful, laconic laughter, showing off to each other the lack of fat and flesh; they even made fun of their bodily deformity, which had resulted from the lack of nourishment.

– Oskar Rosenfeld, *Notebook A*

One means of dealing with the stress of starvation was to face it with humor. Many ghetto dwellers made jokes about their hunger and despair. As Rosenfeld records in his Łódź ghetto notebook, during Passover 1942 a man in the ghetto said that if God had left the Jews in Egypt, they would be in Cairo drinking a Turkish coffee.⁸² In the Warsaw ghetto, jokes were made as well. Shimon Huberband, a Warsaw ghetto Oyneg Shabes chronicler, recorded numerous jokes that dealt with hunger. One was: “We eat as if it were Yom Kippur.” (Yom Kippur is a holiday on which Jews do not eat anything.) Another was that Jews “have as much bread as on Passover.”⁸³ (Passover is a Jewish festival on which the eating of bread is forbidden.)

The head of the Warsaw ghetto, Adam Czerniaków, peppered his diary with jokes overheard in the ghetto about hunger, even those at his own expense.⁸⁴ Sometimes he shared jokes told to him by orphanage director and prewar personality Janusz Korczak, who recorded some of his own ghetto jokes in his diary. One such incident he recorded was an encounter with a saleswoman: he asked her whether the meat she was slicing for him was human, as the price seemed too low for horsemeat sausage.⁸⁵

One place where humor about the lack of food was amply evident was in songs written in the ghetto. One song sung in the Łódź ghetto was a spoof of a humorous ditty about a goat in which a woman who works in a soup kitchen is cajoled for more food and reprimanded for skimming. One refrain mocks her: “Madame Wydzielaczka: You’re fat like a wash-tub, when the President gets here [h]e’ll make you a gutter-sweeper.”⁸⁶ There were also street musicians and performers who joked about hunger. One well-known “jester” in the Warsaw ghetto, Abraham Rubinsztejn, had several catchphrases including one that demanded another’s ration card: “hand over your coupon.”⁸⁷

In all of the ghettos, cabarets and satirical performances touched on hunger and other tragedies within the ghetto. At one point, members of the Provisioning Department in the Warsaw ghetto created their own performance, poking fun at their own division to an audience of people from their organization.⁸⁸

Death from Starvation

Ultimately, the most significant effect of starvation on ghetto inhabitants was death. As Łódź ghetto survivor Dube wrote, “We were sentenced to death by starvation.”⁸⁹ The high mortality rate of Jews in the ghetto from hunger and hunger disease is attested to in a number of sources. Physician Elie Aron Cohen, relying on records that indicated cause of death, calculated in a published medical treatise the approximate percentage of deaths by starvation in the Warsaw ghetto. In 1940, before the ghetto was sealed, he found approximately 1 percent of the population dying from starvation. In 1941, that number went up to 25.41 percent.⁹⁰ Similarly, an examination of the documents in the Łódź ghetto shows that over 30 percent of the causes of death for those who died in the ghetto between June 30 and August 8, 1941, were given as hunger or malnutrition.⁹¹ This, however, does not reflect the true percentage of individuals who died of hunger. In Warsaw, nearly the same number of deaths are listed with cause of death unknown. Dr. Cohen noted that in all likelihood, many of the unknown cases were also due to starvation.⁹² Zelkowicz, in a vignette recording the duties of a ghetto official (and written in direct

address, speaking to this official), spoke about the ledger entries for the cause of death of six people who died in an apartment across about as many months: “the book is official and therefore dispassionate, it does not tell you why they died. So in that place, write down that they died from an illness called ‘ghetto.’ Not from hunger, Heaven forbid! No one dies from hunger!”⁹³ In the ghetto, hunger or starvation were rarely recorded as cause of death; instead another cause was recorded. Often this was “heart failure” or “weakness” or a hunger-related disease. In a July 27, 1942 sketch, Oskar Singer recorded the shocking tale of a man who dies of hunger. At the end of his life, the doctor who has seen the man slowly die of hunger fills out the death certificate as “heart failure.”⁹⁴ In *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change*, David Arnold notes that “assessment of famine mortality is further complicated by the disease factor. In most famines the mortality from epidemic disease has greatly exceeded that from actual starvation deaths.” He cites the Irish and Bengal famines as examples of famines where diseases directly related to famine caused more deaths than did starvation.⁹⁵

Adolf Eichmann, during his interrogation by Israeli police, conceded that a man who died of a heart attack due to weakness deriving from heavy physical labor and insufficient food would be classified by the Nazis as having died of natural causes.⁹⁶ Young people whose bodies were returned to the ghetto after being tortured to death in German prisons had heart failure listed as cause of death.⁹⁷ Thirty-three-year-old Chaim Jakubowicz, who was found unconscious on the street, had his cause of death registered as a “heart attack.”⁹⁸ One reason that hunger was so often accompanied by heart failure is that when the body has consumed all its fat, it begins to draw energy from muscles and organs. The body cannibalizes the liver, spleen, and heart in an attempt to continue living. Eventually, this causes organ failure and death.⁹⁹ Individuals collapsing and dying on the street were not uncommon events in the ghetto. The *Chronicle* of the Łódź ghetto, survivor memoirs, and postwar trial testimonies all relate to the tragedy of people falling down and dying in the streets from hunger. In the Łódź ghetto, there was even a term for someone who was so emaciated he was expected to soon die – *klepsydra* – which literally means obituary.¹⁰⁰

Many of those who died of hunger eventually found their way to the street, even if they did not die there. Those with so little could not afford to pay for the burial or even the body removal so families left the body – stripped of clothes – in the street. Newspaper held down by stones was used to cover the body until it was taken away. Due to this unfortunate situation, bodies of the starved were often found in the streets of the Warsaw ghetto.¹⁰¹

Death from starvation in the ghetto affected people at different rates. Amartya Sen identified three stages of the great Bengal famine of the early 1940s, beginning with an initial stage of unrest, mass hunger, and starvation. In the second stage, starvation death was at its peak (these deaths were directly due to lack of food), but the third stage had the highest death rate (with deaths caused by starvation-induced diseases).¹⁰² High mortality rates were noted by ghetto chroniclers in the winter months. In January 1942, in Łódź, the mortality rate was so high that there was a backlog of bodies to be buried.¹⁰³ The *Chronicle* reported over two hundred deaths in the first four days of the month, with an average of forty-six deaths per day during the first two weeks. The major cause of death was hunger or hunger-related diseases.¹⁰⁴ February 1942 saw an increase in the average daily number of deaths to over sixty-seven. A further increase in mortality was noted in March.¹⁰⁵ The increase in mortality during the winter months was undoubtedly linked to the cold weather, for which insufficient heating materials were provided. The winter was so cold that people waiting for deportation from Radogoszcz train station to Chelmno death camp froze to death.¹⁰⁶ Orders forbidding ghetto residents from owning items such as fur coats and winter boots compounded the problem of protecting oneself against the cold.¹⁰⁷ The body burns twice as many calories in cold weather. Thus, the poor allotment of heating materials not only led to death from exposure but also increased the number of those dying of malnutrition.

Numerous writers, both those within the ghetto and historians writing about the ghetto, have noted that women had a higher survival rate. This observation is consistent with scholarship on famines. Kate Macintyre, in her article "Famine and the Female Mortality Advantage," explores the various biological, sociological, and cultural reasons for this phenomenon. Ultimately, however, Macintyre is unable to settle on a single reason, and she calls for further research.¹⁰⁸ One reason for the imbalance is simply that famines often have disproportionate gender demographics due to out-migration of men and are thus identified as feminine events. During wartime sieges, for example, able-bodied men have already left the area to fight, leaving behind women of all ages, children, and the elderly. In nonwar famine conditions where there is the ability to migrate out, men often leave the famine region in search of work and food. In the case of the ghettos, however, quite a number of able-bodied men remained. The ghettos thus provide an interesting space to examine female mortality alongside that of men, as a counterpoint to more generalizable cases in famine studies. In "The Status and Plight of Women in the Łódź ghetto," Michal Unger noted that "the hardest year for the Jews in the ghetto was 1942, when starvation claimed more than 18,108

victims, approximately 40 percent women and 60 percent men.”¹⁰⁹ This data, as well as other data demonstrating the high survival rate of women in the ghetto, begs the question of whether there is gender differentiation in susceptibility to famine. One factor that might play a role was that women were less likely to be assigned to hard labor, which required a great expenditure of calories. Even so, women were generally responsible for housework in the ghetto, a strenuous task that (unlike the labor detail) did not come with supplemental food, as well as tasks such as standing out in the cold in food lines, which consumed a great number of calories due to the conditions.¹¹⁰

Some have seen women’s biological need for less food as the reason for their higher survival rates in ghetto conditions. Rosenfeld noted that “the mortality among men is three times that of women,” and hypothesized that this was “since women have always been eating less than the men.”¹¹¹ There are several theories about women’s biological durability, including a higher percentage of body fat that acts as a buffer against starvation, a superior immune system, and greater physical endurance, among others. Related to these is the notion that women, in general, have a smaller physical frame than men. In the Łódź ghetto, food was rationed out in equal portions without regard to physical size or sex. For many women, then, the meager food ration was proportionally more substantial than that received by men, who were generally larger and required more calories. This reasoning, however, presupposes that women ate the entire food portion allotted to them. As Unger has pointed out, women often favored their families over themselves. She notes that the women who worked in the upholstery workshop “shared their meager soup ration with their children, thus spreading their insufficient portions among several mouths.”¹¹² Historian and Warsaw ghetto survivor Yisrael Gutman recalled, “When we were in the [Warsaw] ghetto we had to make sure Mother ate something too; otherwise, she wouldn’t eat, so that we would have more.”¹¹³ Selflessness with food was not a trait solely exhibited by women, and it did not extend only to family members. Łódź ghetto survivor Miriam Harel related:

Once, when my father was still alive, he came home from the synagogue and said, “There is a man dying on a bench.” He asked my mother to give me a bowl of soup and send me to feed the dying man. This bowl of soup was the children’s soup. I went to the synagogue. The man was really dying. I tried to feed him, holding his head with one hand and feeding him with the other. He swallowed slowly but he swallowed, he was very hungry. The next day he died. I was the last person to see him. He told me that he came from Warsaw, he had a family and was very wealthy, and if I could rescue him he would give me everything he had. And he died. When I came home my parents said to me,

“You did a big mitzvah.” From a Jewish religious point of view, maybe I did what I had to do, but believe me I was jealous of every spoonful I fed him, as I wanted to eat it myself. I was very hungry. At this moment I saw the Angel of Death in front of my eyes.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

Starvation manifested in the bodies of those who went hungry. Individuals moving through the ghetto showed signs of their hunger, whether through looser clothing or bloated bodies. The corpses of those who had succumbed to starvation littered the streets. Those living in the ghettos walked among, over, and around the signs of hunger even as they might experience it themselves. The *atrocities of hunger* is a visible as well as internally felt reality for those living in a society undergoing hunger and starvation.

The embodied experience of hunger not only has physical but also psychological impact on individuals and a community. Many testified to growing immune to others’ suffering from hunger due to coping with their own. Some tried to stave off death from starvation for loved ones and others they encountered – oftentimes without success or only in limited ways due to a recognition that they endangered their own health. Hunger did not just move people to act, it also has a physiological impact on an individual’s moods and thoughts. Manners became coarser, irritability ran high in those who were malnourished, and pains from hunger and hunger-related illnesses plagued ghetto inhabitants. This physical, mental, and social breakdown caused by starvation is key component of the *atrocities of hunger*. Ultimately, starvation caused increasing numbers of deaths. These deaths were not the result of poison gas or bullets in a ravine but nonetheless decimating the population.

5 Hunger and Everyday Life in the Ghetto

The head bursts, where shall we get everything,
Bread, potatoes, soup and salt.

– Yankele Herszkowitz, Łódź ghetto

The lack of food in the ghetto changed the way that many individuals lived their lives.¹ New social norms emerged. Diarists and chroniclers bewailed the transformation of societal norms as ghetto populations adapted to this new reality of living with hunger. Many saw these changes as moral failings. For some, stepping over starved corpses, repudiating beggars, and acting in ways that might be viewed as selfish were part of the new culture of surviving in a society without adequate food for everyone. Other behaviors that were bemoaned as the end of civility were in fact side effects of the physiological changes brought on by hunger: irritability, lethargy, and other negatively painted attributes. Still, others were products of desperation and survival: begging, stealing, and shamelessly searching for food. For the average ghetto dweller, the acquisition of food for themselves or their household became a central part of the daily rhythm of life. Faced with a food supply that was inadequate to sustain everyone in the ghetto, individuals and households employed various strategies for coping with hunger. In most cases, these strategies were multipronged and overlapping. They might include increasing the amount of food brought into the household or to the individual, utilizing social networks, and reducing the need for food.

It is important to look at coping methods employed by households because in the ghetto, family units were often given rations that had to be shared among all members. This led to difficult choices about how to divide food. Various factors played out in family units that influenced who received what amount of food, and uneven distribution was common within hunger-insecure families.² Sometimes sacrifice by family members meant that certain individuals had more food, a practice that was noble but could be dangerous, resulting in insufficient food for family members to survive. At other times, individuals were overcome by their hunger and ate more than their share of the household

food supply. An anthropologist studying a hunter-gatherer society that had been faced with extreme hunger noted that “social bonds based on kinship and marriage, cooperation, sharing, and reciprocity went by the wayside as individuals fought for their long survival against all competitors, including their own parents and children.”³ The same happened in some families in the ghetto.

Assets into Food

To cope with the inadequate food in their households, ghetto inmates employed various strategies for obtaining more food for the individual or family. Some methods included exchanging one’s assets – property or labor power – for food. Throughout famine literature, families trade their valuables for foodstuff. In the ghettos, this was an important means of acquiring food. Many households lost a great deal of wealth in the form of blocked bank accounts, seized or bombed property and businesses, or the looting of valuables from their homes during the pre-ghetto period, and some families lost income streams as well. Many began selling off possessions to safeguard against hunger even before the ghettos were created. For those with few possessions, either as a product of the Nazi invasion or due to their prewar economic status, there was often little that stood between them and food insecurity. Many families found themselves in a precarious situation.

Once in the ghettos, many families slowly sold off possessions to trade for food and other needs.⁴ Unfortunately, some valuables were illegal for Jews to own, and a glut in the market meant that prices for valuables inside the ghettos were often artificially depressed, so some risked capture or even death to trade valuables outside of the ghettos. The Ringelblum Archive contains a document written by an anonymous author that tells the story of Mrs. C, a thirty-six-year-old corset maker whose business was seized by the Nazis and whose disabled husband could not work. She sold off the merchandise she was able to salvage from her shop before it was expropriated but eventually, after her movable goods ran out, had to turn to smuggling. Once capital punishment was instituted for smugglers, though, she decided she would not risk her life.⁵ Sometimes the price of smuggled-in food was so high that in order to gain something for one’s assets, a ghetto dweller needed to go outside the ghetto. Warsaw ghetto survivor Sara Frenkel risked her life smuggling milk into the ghetto for her sick father. She lied to him about leaving the ghetto because she did not want him to be upset about the risk she took on his behalf.⁶ In the Kraków ghetto, many would leave their valuables with a trusted friend on the Aryan side who sold off the items at a better

price than could be obtained in the ghetto. With the proceeds, the family would buy food and other necessities.⁷

Eventually, however, many families ended up with few possessions and few options – particularly when misfortune struck. Food-insecure households also needed medicines and other resources besides food and, when selling the last of the family's possessions, were often faced with difficult decisions. Łódź ghetto chronicler Josef Zelkowicz recorded the story of a family where the husband had a heart attack shortly after the son had died of starvation. His wife sold her wedding ring to buy medications to save him. With the remaining money, she was then faced with the decision of whether to buy more medicine for her husband, lunch for herself, or food for either her thirteen-year-old daughter or her husband.⁸ Forfeiting one's own food in the ghetto to save a sick family member might lead to falling ill and possibly dying. Sickness was a real issue for vulnerable households. When a family member fell sick in a food-insecure home, they were likely doomed to die: there was simply not enough food for the sick person to recover. Family members could give up part of their meager rations, but that would make them, too, susceptible to illness, while not necessarily making a difference for the sick individual's chance of survival. This was a tragic situation for families in the ghetto. Survivor Dorka Borenstein remembered that the doctor warned her mother against family members' giving her tubercular brother extra food from their own rations, cautioning that although she might want to save the child, "at the same time you are depriving your other children of their meager share, and they will certainly die."⁹

In his July 27, 1942, sketch, "Dying in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto," Oskar Singer recorded the trials of a woman who forfeited her food in an effort to save her husband, Mordechai, from death by starvation. As Mordechai's body swelled from hunger, he tried to lie to his wife about the cause, but she knew the real reason. She skimmed her own food to add a little weight to his. As Mordechai began to recover, his wife deteriorated, and he realized what was happening. He confronted her, and she denied it. Eventually, he got sick again, and his wife spent their meager funds to purchase yeast for him. Singer notes that the money spent on the yeast was money not spent on food. Ultimately Mordechai died anyway.¹⁰ In these instances, when there was insufficient food entering a household to save the life of a family member, the redistributed resources meant even less available food to sustain everyone, and might not even save the person who received more than their share. Despite that reality and the hardship of sacrificing, Łódź ghetto chronicler Oskar Rosenfeld recorded in his diary that "at home mothers save small bites for their sons, sisters for sisters, indeed for distant relations ... the husband has

hunger cramps, makes his wife believe he is full, and vice versa.”¹¹ And yet, not all stories were of sacrificing family members. Zelkowicz wrote of two women who accused their father of denying their dying mother food and medical attention. When they bought food for their mother, the father ate it himself.¹²

To purchase additional food and medications, families in the ghetto sold their last possessions – blankets, beds, and other basic necessities that shielded family members from greater susceptibility to illness due to cold or other causes. Aliza Pionka told the tragic story of two sisters in the ghetto. When one fell ill, the other worked a double shift so her sister could continue to remain on the work register and receive her supplemental soup. However, when a very cold winter came, the furniture was slowly consumed for heating the apartment until the two sisters – the healthy and the ill – shared a bed. The second sister, who had been working a double shift, also fell ill, and eventually, both sisters died in the ghetto.¹³ By contrast, a family with sufficient resources could protect a family member from some of the dangers of sickness. During an epidemic in the Kraków ghetto, Norbert Schlang became sick with typhoid. Those who were found sick were being forced into quarantine. To protect his son and family from this situation, Norbert’s father, Dawid Schlang, used his position in the Kraków Judenrat to obtain ration coupons to bribe ghetto doctors not to report Norbert’s condition.¹⁴

Work was another means by which families and households increased food entitlement. Sometimes individuals sought work that compensated well or that provided additional food rations or meals as part of the job. Often, seeking better compensated work meant utilizing social networks to obtain a licit position in the ghetto, but it might also mean undertaking illicit activities such as smuggling or black-market food manufacture. This illicit work often required reliance on social networks as well – sometimes both inside and outside the ghetto. Both licit and illicit work that paid well might not, however, protect one from deportation. In the ghettos, individuals and households often had to struggle with the balance between safety and food security.

Often, utilization of labor power meant that everyone who was able to work did so, including the children and elderly. Sometimes individuals sought additional work to support themselves or family members. Leon Fruchtmann had a job in a warehouse in the Kraków ghetto shoveling potatoes. Through this work, he was able to get additional potatoes that his family desperately needed because their work making brooms did not supply enough money to buy bread.¹⁵ Bluma Rosen applied to work overtime as a shirt maker to qualify for an extra portion of soup so she could pass it on to her father. Yet she records the intense guilt she

felt when she fed her father in front of her sister's hungry children. She acknowledged that a choice had to be made. She could not divide the soup six ways and satiate everyone's hunger.¹⁶

Other types of labor power that were exchanged for food included survival sex, which often combined labor power with the utilization of social networks. Survival sex could range from direct prostitution to relationships formed for protection from hunger. Sometimes there was a progression from one type of survival sex to another. The Ringelblum Archive preserves the anonymously recorded story of a Mrs. G. who became a waitress and eventually fell into prostitution to support her family. Another story preserved by the same archive is of another Mrs. G., who took on a German lover to help provide for her family.¹⁷ It was not only in Warsaw that people entered into romantic relationships or sexual barter relationships to improve their food situation. Gusta R., writing about her hunger in the Kraków ghetto, noted that relationships could protect a person from hunger and said that if a woman did not want to be hungry, she needed a boyfriend who worked in a kitchen. But she did not have one.¹⁸ William Schiff was such a person in the Kraków ghetto: he provided for his girlfriend's family in addition to his own.¹⁹ Halina Nelken complained in her diary of the "common, plain girls whom no one would have even looked at before," whose material circumstances in the ghetto made them attractive romantic partners. She blamed one of them for ensnaring her brother.²⁰

Sometimes when individuals could not obtain more food through work or the sale of valuables, they searched for food and expanded what they were willing to consume. Ghetto residents spent a great deal of time and energy searching for food. Kraków ghetto survivor Leon Leyson reported that in the ghetto, he "spent most of [his] time focused on the critical task of finding food."²¹ Similarly, Mark Goldfinger recalled widespread hunger, poverty, and squalor in the Kraków ghetto. A man could spend a whole day in search of some bread with "a small radish and some soft cheese."²² A woman in the Łódź ghetto who had lost two children, "frantically ... wandered outdoors in search of sustenance for her remaining seven children, but her findings had been very miserable."²³ One mother who survived the war related, "I can tell you, I pulled my hair from my head, many, many, many times, on account of children they ask for bread and there was not [*sic*] to give them anything! What could a mother do! Just to kill yourself. This was all you could do, to kill yourself."²⁴

For those whose resources had run out, the search for food extended to garbage cans and alleyways, and to items once considered inedible that were discarded by those who were still food secure. As more and more ghetto residents slid into poverty and food insecurity, these ways of

survival and consumption of hunger foods were soon adopted by the vast majority of the ghetto population. For many, new foods and new ways of eating within the ghetto required a radical adjustment but soon became part of ghetto life.

Hunger Foods

The hunger of the ghetto population led them to eat a whole new range of foods. The consumption of “hunger foods” is not unusual in a famine situation.²⁵ Jenny Edkins in her work *Whose Hunger? Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid* notes that

it is not possible to read accounts of famines and the hardships and inhumanities to which people are driven during such periods without coming across accounts where things are eaten that under normal circumstances would in no sense count as food. During famines, people search the land for wild fruits, berries, etc., which serve as famine foods. If circumstances become more extreme, bark is stripped from the trees, grass is eaten, even the dirt is consumed.²⁶

In the ghetto, a whole range of items found their way into people’s diet: potato peels, tops of vegetables, and even inedible things like plaster and sawdust. Pola Süssman, whose father was a baker in the Kraków ghetto, noted that some people mixed sawdust with the flour to stretch it.²⁷ This technique of using nonfood additives in bread was also done during the siege of Leningrad.²⁸

During times of food shortage, people consume things that they would not normally consume based on their dietary customs.²⁹ Some definitions of food insecurity include not only people not having enough to eat but also people consuming things that they would not normally eat to survive. In the case of many Jews in the ghetto, a whole range of foods forbidden by kosher laws was consumed to preserve life. In addition to non-kosher foods, items that had previously been discarded became staples in the ghetto diet. Kraków ghetto survivor Amalia Bertgram recalled, “We lived in awful conditions and suffered from hunger. Children were dying one after the other. We didn’t dare to even dream of bread. We ate only stinking potato peels.”³⁰ In Łódź, potato peels became so coveted as to require a doctor’s prescription to obtain.³¹ The peels had to be processed to make them edible, and various ghetto dwellers found imaginative ways to prepare this newly precious commodity. Bella Karp, a survivor of the Łódź ghetto, described eating patties made from ground-up potato peels, while Rosenfeld recounted in his Łódź ghetto diary the strenuous effort required to turn potato peels into dumplings, including washing them and running them through a meat grinder.³²

The grinding of potato peels for use in ghetto cuisine was featured in Łódź ghetto fiction writer Isaiah Spiegel's story "Ghetto Kingdom":

A master chef has discovered that leftover potato peels washed and ground can be transformed, as if by sheer magic, into flat cutlets; this sticky, cloying delicacy is as sweet as a piece of fine cake, though the sand that hasn't been washed away by the water grates between the teeth. But who cares about that? The demon hunger renders the delicacy a savory meal to the sick and swollen, magically converting it into the wheat bread they have been dreaming of.³³

Other items that were previously thrown away, such as radish and carrot greens, and the outer leaves of cabbages, soon found their way into the diets of ghetto dwellers. Warsaw ghetto survivor Lusia Haberfeld noted, "we made spinach out of you know, the leaves of the beetroots."³⁴ A Łódź ghetto welfare worker making an inspection a few months after the closing of the ghetto learned of the new eating habits that had developed among the food insecure and that had become commonplace in all ghetto households. Her discovery was made when she inquired after the bad smell and trash in an apartment. She was told that for the poor of the ghetto who could not afford cabbages, radishes, kohlrabi, or beets, the rotting "leaves of cabbage, of radishes, of kohlrabi or beets" served, despite the bad smell, as food.³⁵

All of the ghettos contended with shipments of poor-quality food. Sometimes potatoes or other items froze. This problem was so common that the *Gazeta Żydowska*, a Jewish newspaper that circulated in the Polish Jewish ghettos, had an article in January 1942 on how to prepare items that had been frozen, such as potatoes, onions, and other sundries.³⁶ It was discovered that although frozen potatoes smelled bad when thawed, they could be redeemed by being made into a cutlet.

When food was particularly scarce, even these hunger foods commanded high prices on the ghetto black market. One anonymous Łódź ghetto diarist recorded, "There is a lot of cabbage on the Rynek Balucki, but it has gone bad. People started to fight for those rotten leaves as if they were some kind of treasure."³⁷ Łódź ghetto diarist Jakub Poznanski records paying nearly half a day's salary for ten decagrams of rotten radishes in December 1942.³⁸ Sometimes even foods that cannot be digested by humans are consumed during food shortages. Many depictions of famines reference people eating grass to fill their stomachs. Łódź ghetto survivor Flora Herzberger related how children gathered grass that was then cleaned and eaten with vinegar.³⁹ Unfortunately, the human digestive system cannot break down grass to extract any nutritional value. The only benefit of eating grass was to combat the feeling of having an empty stomach.

Numerous techniques were utilized to stretch food in the ghetto. Some techniques were likely already known to Jews who had survived shortages during World War I or who had experienced periods of food insecurity due to poverty. Others might have learned of such techniques during the pre-ghetto period, when some were already experiencing food shortages. One means of stretching food was making soup. The mother of Kraków ghetto survivor Leyson made “a variety of soups, all with water as the main ingredient.”⁴⁰ One Warsaw ghetto survivor recalled that her mother invited hungry neighbors over to their home and, to accommodate the need to feed more people, added more water to the soup.⁴¹ Sometimes soup in the ghetto was made with sparse ingredients. Historian and Łódź ghetto survivor Marian Turski recalled “so-called bread soup composed of water, a slice of bread, and a morsel of turnip.”⁴² Erna Fridman, a child in the Kraków ghetto, made potato soup in the ghetto.⁴³ Since many parents were required to work, young children were sometimes the home cooks in ghetto households.

Another food item that was popular for stretching food was stew. Many Jews before the war enjoyed stews, particularly cholent, also known as Sabbath stew. Kraków ghetto survivor Bernard Offen recalled that before the war, his family brought a cholent to the bakery so that it could be baked during the Sabbath without the family kindling a fire and thereby desecrating the Sabbath. This prewar practice of making cholent continued into the ghetto period, with many people making cholent, including many vegetarian versions of the stew. Offen recalled that his family used the community bakery for this purpose even in the ghetto, but that they did not always have the means to do so.⁴⁴ Ringelblum commented that “stew has become very popular in the Ghetto, even a proletarian cholent. Tens of thousands of them prepared.”⁴⁵ Among the papers in the Ringelblum Archive is a flyer published in multiple languages that included among the various ways to cook rutabaga a vegetarian cholent recipe using rutabaga in lieu of potatoes.⁴⁶

In addition to new food ingredients and food-stretching techniques, new ways of cooking appeared as well. Shortages of flour, meat, and even potatoes forced women to create ways of stretching their food. Sometimes it was traditional recipes with a little less of the premier ingredients. Nelken, writing in the Kraków ghetto, noted the cake her mother made for her brother's twenty-first birthday: “Mama baked a cheesecake out of potatoes and a bit of cottage cheese.”⁴⁷ *Sernik*, a Polish cheesecake, usually called for potatoes. But sometimes new ingredients were featured, such as ersatz coffee, made from grains, which became a popular substitute for flour in making cakes. A cake recipe from the Łódź ghetto calls for three potatoes, twelve to fifteen spoons of (ersatz) coffee,

two spoons of flour, ten saccharine tablets, one spoon of drinking soda, and a little salt.⁴⁸ The *Encyclopedia of the Łódź Ghetto* contained an entry for “babka” (cake). It stated:

A cake made in the ghetto from grated potatoes, a small amount of flour (alternatively with grated radish, turnips, etc.), ersatz (substitute) coffee, and sweetened with saccharin (and flavored with various additives), cooked in a double boiler for one hour or longer (à la pudding). When potatoes were in abundant supply, it was a favorite substitute for bread. At the time of famine, babka was made from potato peels or ersatz coffee.⁴⁹

A cake could be made with even fewer ingredients by adding vegetable leaves. Beet leaves, cooked and ground up, could be added to the above recipe, and a cake could be made using one less potato. This recipe had an advantage, as noted by the survivor who recorded it: the water used to cook the beet leaves could be saved and used to make soup.⁵⁰ Beet leaves could also be salted and fried and thus turned into “herring.”⁵¹

Ersatz coffee could also be used to stretch traditional dishes when ingredients were missing. For example, potato latkes, a traditional Eastern European Jewish dish normally made of flour, potatoes, and egg, were made by adding twelve to fifteen spoons of ersatz coffee to three potatoes and a little flour; less flour and less potato were needed for this coffee pancake than for the traditional potato pancake.⁵² Sometimes ersatz coffee was used to make new foods. In the Łódź ghetto, there was a cookie known as a “Lofix” (black briquettes used as kindling), which was made using “0.25 kg of ersatz coffee mixed with a tablespoon of flour and a bit of water, then fried in a pan.”⁵³ Ghetto homemakers were required to be extremely creative in stretching the food products they were given. They contrived ways of making soup out of radishes and stretching small meat allotments by mixing in vegetables.⁵⁴

The meat allotment was typically pork and horse, two foods that are not permitted to be consumed according to Jewish law. Some Jews, if they were able, refused to eat the nonkosher meat, preferring to sell it for more vegetables or other types of protein. Those with means were able to acquire kosher meat, at least in the early period of the ghetto, usually at very high cost. The Nazis frowned on Jewish religious life, including Jewish ritual slaughter (Shechitah). As a result, kosher butchers operated in secret, slaughtering live animals smuggled into the ghetto, or smuggling themselves out of the ghetto to slaughter meat and then smuggle the meat back into the ghetto. However, toward the end of the ghetto period, Shimon Huberband, a Warsaw ghetto Oyneg Shabes writer, recorded that “there is no ritual slaughter of animals. No chickens and virtually no meat or milk among Jews in the ghetto.”⁵⁵

Despite the ghetto conditions and scarcity of food, a large segment of the Jewish population remained concerned with adhering to the laws of kashrut. Only Warsaw and Łódź had official rabbinical boards functioning as part of the Judenräte.⁵⁶ In both cases, major deportations in 1942 wiped out many of the rabbis. Nevertheless, in the early part of the ghettos' existence, there was official word on matters related to Jewish food consumption and attempts by the community to provide some ritual food on a symbolic basis. For example, multiple ghettos made their own matzah, while others imported it. In 1940 and 1941, the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) provided 500,000 kilograms of matzah, which was distributed to 344 communities.⁵⁷ Kraków distributed matzah to Jewish residents via ration coupon.⁵⁸ The official rabbinate also issued dietary dispensations for Jews in the ghetto, including allowing horsemeat for the sick and pregnant and relaxing restrictions on Passover dietary rules.⁵⁹ In addition to taking guidance from official rabbis, religious individuals also continued to consult their personal rabbis if they were in the ghetto.

Numerous religious questions related to hunger arose. One such question, in the Warsaw ghetto, was whether it was permissible to hold a Passover seder when one did not have the proper food items for the ritual, such as wine or matzah. There were also many questions related to what the sick were permitted in terms of food. Could they eat on the Jewish fast day of Yom Kippur or eat nonkosher meat? Could those who were hungry break the Sabbath to purchase food?⁶⁰ In Łódź, an official rabbinical order was issued to permit the consumption of nonkosher meat by pregnant women and the sick.⁶¹ These rabbinical leniencies were of little comfort to religious Jews who had lived their lives in adherence to a specific code of food consumption. Historian Robert Moses Shapiro cites a religious Jew, Oppenheim, who reported in the diary he kept on the margins of a prayer book that he had, for the first time, eaten food that was not kosher for Passover during the holiday.⁶² Some religious parents also faced the anguish of their Jewish children eating nonkosher food to avoid starving. Zerkowicz tells the story of a religious man who was devastated because his children were eating nonkosher food in the ghetto.⁶³ Moshe Taube tried to keep kosher in the Kraków ghetto. To accomplish this, he and others keeping kosher brought food with them to work so as to avoid eating the midday stew of horsemeat.⁶⁴ For other religious Jews, the obligation to preserve their life, even if it meant eating nonkosher items, overrode strictures about religious dietary laws.

For the majority of the ghetto populations, however, consumption of nonkosher food became part of the ghetto diet. Henryk Łagodzki was a Christian who smuggled food into the Warsaw ghetto. He noted that

"I was asked to bring the pork fat, which Jews didn't used to eat. But that was the time when they started to eat everything—both the meat and the pork fat. So I used to bring it for free from time to time."⁶⁵ Horsemeat also became a widely consumed item that Jewish homemakers developed recipes for. One recipe called for making five large cutlets from 200 grams of horsemeat, which required grinding the meat, adding two shredded potatoes and some rye and flour, and seasoning with salt and pepper. The cutlets were then fried in a little oil.⁶⁶ Some ghetto residents mixed horse blood with salt and pepper and spread it on bread. Neither horse nor blood of an animal was kosher to consume, but the lack of foods meant that these items became delicacies. Sometimes eating blood was recommended for health reasons. One doctor in the Warsaw ghetto fed his patients cow blood mixed with onions and fat as a means of combating hunger edema. Unfortunately, it was not successful as a cure.⁶⁷ Another popular preparation was horsemeat meatballs. A ghetto song recounted that the horsemeat meatballs were generally made from poor-quality meat, the taste of which had to be masked by drinking saccharine-sweetened tea.⁶⁸ These horsemeat meatballs were another new food item for the ghetto Jews who had prior to the war been largely kosher observant. The changed diet created new phrases in the language, as Shapiro points out: "If a Jew in the Łódź ghetto saw someone running he might comment that 'Er est vishishtshinove ferd' [he eats racehorses]."⁶⁹ It was not only in Łódź that jokes were made about horsemeat. As one Warsaw ghetto survivor recalled, "We couldn't get any other meat except horsemeat, and that not very often. And we started buying horsemeat and eating horsemeat. And my father always used to joke, he used to walk in the middle of the pretending he is a horse."⁷⁰

Another nonkosher food item made an appearance in the ghetto diet: canned shellfish. It was initially a supplemental item but later became a standard ration. According to the ghetto encyclopedia, "Met at first with distaste, over time it grew more popular as a pleasant supplement to the ghetto diet."⁷¹

Not just cooking but serving food became important in households with food insecurity. Kraków ghetto survivor Rosa Taubman remembered her father thinly and carefully slicing bread so that each portion was equal. She also described her family struggling with willpower, as some ate their portions all at once and others set a small portion aside for the evening.⁷² Oskar Rosenfeld recorded the painful process of rationing, writing, "Those who are particularly prudent divide the loaf of bread into seven parts, one part a day. This part is then again divided into day portions. Woe to him who eats more.... Those who consume more than their ration of bread get hungry soon."⁷³

Sometimes hunger led people to skip past serving food so as to consume it directly. An anonymous ghetto inhabitant, writing in her Łódź ghetto diary on February 24, 1942, recorded, "Starvation is terrifying. People die like poisoned flies. Today I got one kilogram of parsley. My father, brother and I ate it raw."⁷⁴ Łódź ghetto survivor Alfred Dube described eating ersatz coffee dry with a spoon to try to quench his hunger.⁷⁵ Other desperate measures were taken by those who ate and even searched for food that fell to the ground. Rosenfeld described a disabled child who threw himself to the ground to lick spilled soup from the dirty snow next to a latrine.⁷⁶ The *Chronicle* writers in the Łódź ghetto related a story of a man who threw himself down and lapped up soup that had spilled out on a dirty staircase.⁷⁷ An anonymous writer whose description was preserved in the Warsaw ghetto Oyneg Shabes Archive related such a scene of desperation:

An emaciated boy walks along Grzybowska Street. He bends down, wipes up some of the mud with his hand and puts it in his mouth. A bit of boiled ersatz coffee made from grain was mixed in with the mud. He walks on, picks up something from the ground and puts it, too, in his mouth. He does not shout, does not beg, he walks on. With his head bent down, he looks for whatever the ground will allot to him.⁷⁸

This desperate searching for food by the persistently hungry in the ghetto is repeated in many ghetto diaries. Łódź ghetto writer Zelkowicz related that there were

hundreds, no, thousands of people like these ... staggering about in the ghetto. But, they do not strike. They are continually struck by the snakes that reside among them, who drive them into the streets, courtyards, and garbage dumps, where they burrow and search – For the shards of an earthen pot that can be licked. For a worn rag that, back in the good days, people used as a food wrapper and now can be sucked.... For leftovers of potatoes, beets, carrots, turnips, and so on. These people stagger about, their sizzling eyes scouting the territory, spending their last day in the garbage dumps, immersed to their necks.⁷⁹

Sometimes access to the garbage of the privileged gave those who were starving an advantage in obtaining food scraps. A Warsaw ghetto writer for the Oyneg Shabes Archive recorded the sad story of a Mrs. D. who was unable to find work in the ghetto except as a cleaning person for families who could still afford such luxuries. She was fed while she was working if she could find a full-day cleaning job, but many days it was just a few hours at each place and she did not earn enough in a day to even buy bread or a meal at a soup kitchen. The author of the vignette noted,

Mrs. D. always washes the dishes first. Before she sinks them in a bowl with hot water she closely examines each plate, mug, and pot, hoping to find a sediment of thick soup or meat sauce or an uneaten carrot, parsley or potato....

From all her cleaning duties, Mrs. D. likes taking down the trash best. It is like a real quest for the Golden Fleece. Many a time she found in it something to fill her empty stomach ... edible leftovers: pieces of cooked beetroot, carrot, chives. Whenever she finds a bone she sinks her teeth in it and sucks at it passionately.⁸⁰

The desperation of hunger led to the consumption of food that posed a danger to health. In his testimony at the Eichmann trial, Henryk Ross stated that potatoes arrived in the ghetto in good condition but frozen. When they thawed, it could be seen that they were not fit to eat. These potatoes were then doused in chlorine and buried. Children dug up the potatoes to eat them anyway.⁸¹ When oil could not be found, machine oil was used for cooking.⁸² One Warsaw ghetto survivor recalled, "I remember a situation that the smugglers, after they probably finished their business, they ate and drank and got sick in front of this tavern, and they would vomit. And within a few minutes, the beggars, the little children, ran to it and ate it up. They clean up the street."⁸³ The reasons for the consumption of these dangerous food (or nonfood) items was best articulated by Lucille Eichengreen, who wrote of herself and her family after one year in the ghetto, "We no longer cared what we ate."⁸⁴

In another incident recorded in the Warsaw ghetto, a woman committed suicide by jumping from the fifth floor of a building:

she landed on a large cooking pot in which fish were being prepared. The pot collapsed and she lay dead, her head badly smashed. Pieces of brain lay mixed with the bloody fish. "Suddenly, small children crawled out of every nook and cranny: they headed for the scene like crawling ants. They grabbed the pieces of fish covered with brain and blood and shoved them into their mouths."⁸⁵

The most extreme instances of hunger taboo consumption were the several cases of women who cannibalized their children in the Warsaw ghetto.⁸⁶ The documented cases were December 15, 1941, at 53 Sliska Street; on an unnamed date at 30 Solna Street; and on February 19, 1942, at 18 Krochmalna Street, apartment 20.⁸⁷ Adam Czerniaków, the leader of the Warsaw ghetto, recounted in his diary the second case:

I proceeded to No. 18 Krochmalna Street, apt. 20, where I found, lying on a bunk, the 30-year-old Urman, Rywka, who stated in the presence of the witnesses, Mrs. Zajdman, Niuta, the secretary of the House Committee, and Murawa, Jankiel, that she was guilty of cannibalism, involving her own 12-year-old son, Berk Urman, who had died the previous day, by cutting out a piece of his buttock.⁸⁸

The Warsaw leader concluded that the woman had lost her mind, and her cannibalism was viewed as the action of a person who was not mentally sound. To be sure, no cases of cannibalism were documented in the

Łódź ghetto or the Kraków ghetto. But cannibalism was not unknown at other points during the war among people who were quite desperately hungry, and there were multiple cases in all three ghettos where people hid dead bodies to continue receiving those individuals' rations.

Household Strategies

Many households dealt with hunger through some combination of selling possessions, maximizing employment and employment potential, expanding the types of food eaten by the household, and adopting other methods. However, other households had only one means of dealing with hunger: reducing the need for food in the household. This might take place in a number of ways. One was rationing food within the household, which might include reducing the number of meals eaten or simply very slowly doling out what little was available in the home. Sometimes this strategy could backfire, causing a member of the household, overcome with hunger, to consume more than their ration. An anonymous girl wrote in her Łódź ghetto diary entry of March 11, 1942, that she ate all the honey. She was traumatized by her own hunger and its effect on her family. Of her actions she wrote, "I am selfish. What will the family say? I'm not worthy of my mother, who works so hard.... I have no heart, I have no pity. I eat anything that lands near me."⁸⁹ In the Warsaw ghetto a man was so driven by hunger that he stole a roll his wife had hidden under her pillow. He died still clutching the roll.⁹⁰ In the Łódź ghetto, "an 8 year old boy filed a police report against his own parents, whom he charged with not giving him the bread ration due him. The boy demanded that an investigation be conducted and the guilty parties be punished."⁹¹

Another means for reducing the need for food was breaking up the household. This took many forms, including having family members move into other households that were better able to support them, having individual adults or teens leave the home, or abandoning one's children. Leaving children in orphanages or abandoning them even when the parents were still alive was a survival strategy in many places during the Great Depression. Families who were unable to properly feed a child gave that child over to family members or an institution. This practice also occurred in the ghettos, all of which had institutions for children who were abandoned. However, the ghetto orphanages and shelters for abandoned children were unable to provide sufficient sustenance to save children from death. In fact, many children arrived at the shelter in such poor condition that they did not recover. One such child shelter in the

Warsaw ghetto, the Main Shelter Home (Główny Dom Schronienia), was located first at 127 Leszno and later at 39 Dzielna Street. The conditions of the institution were such that orphanage director Janusz Korczak requested to take over its running in February 1942.⁹² A report on the shelter preserved in the Ringelblum Archive records, “Unfortunately, just like in other institutions, staying in the shelters saves the children neither from hunger nor death by starvation.”⁹³ The report noted that children were left at the shelter at high rates when food prices went up and that a large number of the children were deposited by poor refugees living in shelters. Conditions were so bad that in May 1941, a period when the overall ghetto suffered from high food shortages, 60 percent of all children who died in the ghetto were living at the Main Shelter Home. Sometimes parents abandoned their children at the refugee centers when they first arrived in the ghetto. Mordechaj Wasser, an employee at one of the refugee centers in Warsaw, recorded the story of a widower named Aszkenajzer who abandoned his children but returned to them after several days.⁹⁴

Migration is a common tactic among famine victims to find other sources of food. The nature of the ghettos was such that Jews were trapped inside their walls, but if one still had means, they could escape the ghetto and live on the other side in hopes of finding food (albeit while facing the dangers of blackmail, reimprisonment, and even death). For those without any means or social networks on the other side of the wall, escape was quite difficult. For those with no means, sometimes deportation to forced labor was an option for sustenance or at least for the survival of the rest of the household. Hunger certainly drove some to deportation trains. Later, this would be deportation to their deaths.

Conclusion

Hunger in the ghettos pervaded the daily experience of those suffering from it. It affected individuals, families, and the community at large. This everyday experience of hunger and social breakdown was a key component of the *atrocities of hunger*. Hunger drove individuals to behave in ways that challenged their core beliefs in terms of how they behaved, what they were willing to eat, and how they interacted with one another.

Famine studies provide a blueprint for how individuals and households typically cope with hunger. Individuals and households employed a variety of means to cope with hunger, much as has been done in other famine situations including engaging in various tactics of distribution and rationing of the food that was available. To increase the amount of food, individuals and families engaged in the sale of assets, labor strategies,

stretching of food through employment of hunger foods, and even theft. Many of the practices of the starving in the ghettos – such as searching through the garbage dump for food – payments were also present in the United States during times of great financial stress such as the Great Depression.⁹⁵ It was also common during other famines.

In some cases, the coping methods involved reducing household size by sending loved ones to orphanages and other support systems in the ghetto. Although limited, where possible, some engaged in migration. This last option which is exercised a great deal in normal famines was not available to most in the ghettos. It is the absence of the option for migration that created the most deadly conditions within ghettos.

6 Socioeconomic Status and Food Access

The Nazi occupation transformed the social and economic environment for Polish Jewry, particularly in the ghetto. Prewar wealth, housing, power, income, and employment might all be stripped away or radically altered as a result of the Nazi occupation. The ghetto conditions created new social and economic hierarchies, enabling some to rise economically or in prestige and power but eroding the wealth, power, and status of many others. Many found themselves in a new socioeconomic position with a significant change to their actual resources or their position within the new power structure.¹ Often power and wealth intersected with other factors such as location, gender, and religion in determining one's socioeconomic position during the ghetto period.

The socioeconomic position of individuals during the Nazi occupation was not divorced from prewar socioeconomic status. Wealth, power, and social networks, including those connected to religion and political organizations before the war, might influence one's standing during the ghetto period. Many of those in positions of power during the German occupation, particularly in the early portion of the ghetto period, were powerful people before the war. Some who had connections to these powerful people, predominately men, were able to obtain good positions in the new ghetto bureaucracies and economies. Many diaries and other testimonies relate the importance of a powerful friend or connection or bribe in obtaining even simple work. Kraków ghetto survivor Leon Fruchtmann credited his pre-ghetto connections formed as an unpaid office boy with helping him obtain a position in a potato warehouse in the ghetto.² Many skilled artisans were unemployed and impoverished without a steady income, while individuals with influential friends filled the jobs intended for tailors, cobblers, and machinists. Anatol Chari used the reputation of his dead father, Piotr Chari, to acquire positions and protect his job in the Łódź ghetto.³

While influence and power might provide income and status, actual resources were also crucial during the ghetto period. This is because socioeconomic status under the Nazi occupation was not static, and

prewar power and wealth were not enough to safeguard against impoverishment in the ghetto. Many powerful individuals were targeted directly by the Germans in early purges of Jewish leadership or roundups, or their power and status were diminished under Nazi rule. Many saw their financial standing change during the war, whether because their wealth was expropriated by the Germans or because they improved their economic situation through smuggling or other means.

However, prewar wealth or the lack thereof still often carried over into the ghetto period. Those without prewar wealth who were deprived of income capable of sustaining their households usually quickly fell into poverty, which, without adequate safety nets, rapidly led to their continued downward track. The poor and those unable to find employment were the first to suffer hunger, as they were least buffered from starvation. Individuals with money or the ability to sell items for money could afford to purchase food, pay bribes, and even pay others to work in their stead, sparing themselves from physical exhaustion and abuse. Ultimately though, once inside the ghetto, the majority of those who had been able to bring resources with them ran through their resources, becoming impoverished over the course of time. Only a few maintained sufficient socioeconomic standing to avoid suffering any food deprivation. The length of time in the ghetto and the specific ghetto one was in affected this outcome.

Impoverishment

Those who were food insecure before the war were largely among the first to die from starvation in the ghettos. This was despite the fact that at the beginning of the ghettos' existence, many resources were in place to support the poor, including official help from the Judenrat, charity from private organizations and individuals, and even social workers who visited the poor in their homes. As the poor died off, other ghetto dwellers became impoverished, having run out of resources or been unable to find a job. For many Jews in the ghetto, prewar occupations either evaporated altogether or no longer brought in a living wage. Teachers, journalists, and others found that their services were no longer needed. Warsaw ghetto diarist Chaim Kaplan was acutely aware of this. His diary entry in response to the commencement of World War II complained, "we will starve because there will be no means of livelihood. How will I support myself? The schools won't be opened for a long, long time."⁴ As a Hebrew teacher, he knew his position would disappear under war conditions. For those who could not get a job, various forms of charity were available to support them. However, the relief supplements were rarely

enough to survive. As Josef Zelkowicz noted of those on welfare, “All of them depend on those few marks—too little to keep them alive and too much to let them die.”⁵ For the poor living on relief, supplemental food from the black market, such as a kilogram of bread at the cost of eleven ghetto marks or a kilogram of potatoes at a cost of thirteen ghetto marks, were beyond reach.

In addition to those without a means of support other than welfare or charity, a class of working poor existed in the ghetto. These people did not earn enough from their work to support themselves and their families. Sometimes the impoverishment of families in the ghetto happened to those who had previously themselves been able to give charity. Mary Berg in her diary describes the impoverishment of friends who at the beginning of the ghetto period had helped her raise funds for the poor. Emanuel Ringelblum described a holiday food distribution:

There were fearful scenes in the office of the refugee organization on the eve of the Passover holiday. A crowd of 7,000–8,000 refugees gathered, waiting for matzoth and other packages generally. The whole horror of the present situation was revealed. People applied for free packages whose neighbors considered them to be persons of means, and who a short time before had been able to help others.⁶

Those who made just enough to survive might be suddenly impoverished by a tragedy from which they could not recover. That event might range from a police confiscation to a family member’s illness. Shimon Huberband recalled a pair of policemen in the Warsaw ghetto who confiscated numerous valuables and demanded money to keep people from being arrested.⁷ Chari recalled that his uncle had a job in food distribution in the Łódź ghetto, which allowed him to bring home extra food for his family. When the family received a summons for deportation to a labor camp, Chari’s uncle sold off their extra rations. Ultimately, his son was able to use his connections to remove them from the deportation list. They remained in the ghetto, but without the supplemental food, they died of malnutrition.⁸

Many who came from middle-class families before the war slowly slipped into poverty. To make ends meet, people sold off their possessions to supplement inadequate income. Survivor Erica R. reported that by the end of the first year in the Warsaw ghetto, her mother had sold everything in their home, including the bed.⁹ Henry Greenblatt, a Warsaw ghetto survivor, noted, “I remember, through the whole summer into the fall of 1941. Things were getting really harder and harder ... and things were getting to the point that people were really starving from hunger.”¹⁰ Kraków ghetto survivor Moshe Taube reported being

hungry many times in the ghetto and not having enough bread to eat.¹¹ According to Rosa Taubman, there was “continuous starvation” in the ghetto and it got “worse day by day.”¹² Many prominent and wealthy individuals entered ghettos later in their existence after being deported from elsewhere. Refugees into the ghetto often had difficulty acclimating and finding a position in ghetto society despite their prewar prominence. Their financial decline was often rapid and deadly.

Rich Ghetto, Poor Ghetto? Geographic Location and Food Access

Not all ghettos experienced poverty in the same ways. In some places, it was more widespread and visible. This is because the wealth of an individual ghetto was linked to the prewar wealth of the city’s population, the openness of the ghetto, the selection process for its population, and the longevity of the ghetto. In the prewar period, Łódź and Warsaw Jewry had a large group of citizens living in poverty. Extensive relief from the Warsaw and Łódź Jewish community and from foreign funds, such as the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC), provided much-needed income to sustain the impoverished Jews of the two cities.¹³ Soup kitchens and other means of support had been part of a large-scale relief system keeping the poor Jews of the two cities from starvation prior to the Nazi invasion. Warsaw had a large segment of affluent Jews in addition to its impoverished community, and Kraków had a large population of wealthier Jews. In addition, Kraków, unlike the other cities – where the ghettos housed Jews from across the city and the surrounding countryside – selected its ghetto residents based on application forms. It only took in about a quarter of those who had initially been in the city, and as part of the application process, prospective ghetto residents had to indicate their income and its source. As a result, Kraków had a wealthier population without as large a percentage of impoverished ghetto dwellers in comparison with Warsaw and Łódź.

The openness of ghettos also affected the rate of impoverishment for ghetto dwellers, for several reasons. In open ghettos, some ghetto dwellers had the opportunity to replenish their resources or receive help through contact with prewar non-Jewish friends and acquaintances; they were able to purchase food outside the ghetto boundaries, which was generally cheaper than inside the ghetto; and the community had the ability to increase the amount of food entering the ghetto beyond that designated by the German authorities. Bernard Offen, a Kraków ghetto survivor who capitalized on the openness of the ghetto in its early days to smuggle in food, recalled eating bread, potatoes, vegetables, and

occasionally meat or margarine in the ghetto. Eventually, however, he was unable to get in and out of the ghetto, and he began to feel real hunger.¹⁴

Also affecting the pauperization of the population was the longevity of the ghettos. The longer individuals were in the ghetto, the more likely they were to become impoverished, even if they were not impoverished before the war. Even with paid work, most ghetto residents still had to sell off some possessions to eat – and the longer they were in the ghetto, the more likely they would eventually sell all they had. Only the elite could live off their salaries or had sufficient valuables to live off the sale of their possessions without working.¹⁵ The fact that the Łódź ghetto was created early on and lasted until 1944, while the Warsaw ghetto and Kraków ghettos were in existence for a shorter period of time, significantly affected the food situation. The Kraków ghetto's short existence as a closed ghetto meant that those with some means were shielded from hunger at least in the initial period and some for the entirety of the ghetto's existence. Halina Bochnik did not experience hunger in the Kraków ghetto, noting, "In the ghetto there wasn't luxury but we didn't starve once."¹⁶ Survivor Ernest A., who worked making shoes in the ghetto, noted that they did not have fancy food or meat, but they had potatoes and bread as staples.¹⁷ In part the short existence of the Kraków ghetto was because the entire working population of the ghetto was transferred to Płaszów labor camp in the early portion of 1943. By contrast, in Łódź and Warsaw, there was a transformation of the ghetto into essentially a labor camp. Since the ghetto population remained in the same geographical space; it is linked to the ghetto period. Many of the experiences Jews had in Płaszów vis-a-vis hunger were similar to those who stayed in ghettos into the later periods when they were only inhabited by those who were working.

Affluence

Czerniaków's belly is big and round. Gulps broth and meatballs by the pound.

– A song in the Warsaw ghetto

Interconnected to the story of poverty in the ghetto was the story of those who were at the top of the socioeconomic hierarchy. Yankele Hershkowitz, a Łódź ghetto minstrel, sang, "everyone eats a bowl of groats equally," but in reality, some ghetto dwellers had more access to foodstuffs than did others.¹⁸ The existence of a privileged class of people with more access to food was common throughout ghettos.¹⁹ This access might be obtained through licit or illicit means. In most cases, the upper end of the ghetto hierarchy included members of the ghetto

administration, Jewish police, smugglers, prewar wealthy individuals who still had movable wealth, and others. This wealthy group, a small minority of the population, was largely immune to the extreme hunger and disproportionately survived the ghetto period. As a group, they were able to frequent restaurants, had access to additional food either through privileged rations or through smuggling, and even continued entertaining hosted guests in the ghetto.

Although a small number were shielded from hunger for their entire time in the ghetto, many people in this group only enjoyed their status for a portion of the ghetto period, typically the early portion. For example, numerous individuals made their income from smuggling. When that became more difficult in places like Warsaw and Kraków, their means of support dried up and their ability to ward off hunger decreased, although those who continued to smuggle despite the dangers – including capital punishment – could find themselves rewarded with even more resources. Another group that experienced privilege that might be withdrawn was those who collaborated in various ways with the Germans. If they fell out of favor, they might end up purged or sent to a concentration camp.

For those with the means, restaurants in all the ghettos served delicacies to ghetto notables. In the Łódź ghetto, there was the Adria Restaurant.²⁰ Café Hirschfeld at the corner of Sienna and Sosnowa Street in the Warsaw ghetto sold luxury food items, including, “the most expensive liqueurs, cognac, pickled fish, canned food, duck, chicken and goose ... the price of a dinner with drinks is from a hundred to two hundred zloty.”²¹ This was not the only sumptuous restaurant for those who could afford it. Berg noted in her diary that a café directed by Tatiana Epstein opened at 16 Sienna Street and featured famous musicians, including Wladislaw Spielman.²² She also noted a café for the “fashionable crowd” called “Café Sztuka [Café Art] on Leszno Street,” and she mentioned as well Café Pod Fontanna on Leszno and Bajka on Ogrodowa Street. Among the luxuries at the Bajka café was a nearby “beach” where wearing a bathing suit was required. The cost was two zlotys to sit out and sunbathe on a lounge chair. A day’s sunbathing costs as much as just over six meals in a community kitchen.²³ The Kraków ghetto had restaurants, patisseries, cafeterias, and restaurants with alcohol, dancing, and entertainment.²⁴ A coffeehouse on Limanowska Street served coffee and homemade pastries. On the same street was a restaurant that served “stuffed derma with farfel, gefilte fish and cholent on Saturdays.”²⁵ Kraków ghetto survivor Halina Nelken recorded her observations of the café on Limanowska Street as a place filled with, “the ‘new aristocracy’ ... well-fed and well-dressed wheeler dealers, informers, ill-mannered boors, all of them dishonest, newly rich scum who,

having unseated the intelligentsia, have assumed the lead in the ghetto today.”²⁶ These were not the only people at the café on Limanowska Street; Nelken herself went to cafés when the opportunity arose.²⁷

Lavish entertaining was a part of elite ghetto culture. Parties were thrown at restaurants, cafés, and private homes. In the Warsaw ghetto, for example, the chief of the Jewish police threw a party at the Sztuka café for Jewish and Polish police at a cost of 8,700 zloty.²⁸ The ability to have a party in one’s home required first and foremost that one had accommodation that was of sufficient size to host a group of people. Doctors in the Kraków ghetto received larger apartments so they could see patients in one of the rooms. Nelken attended a party in one such doctor’s apartment: “Tonight his office served as the dance floor and buffet. Delicacies were piled on the table just like before the war: canapés of sardines and ham and cheese on French bread; pastries; cheese-cake; cookies and fruit; vodka, cognac, and brandy. I felt contempt for myself because it was the food on the buffet table that interested me the most.”²⁹ She also attended parties at the apartments of friends who were closer to her age. There, alcohol too was served, but the atmosphere was less sophisticated. She described one party with copious alcohol thrown by a friend: “He has a large room with space enough for dancing. The only record, ‘La Habanera,’ played over and over again.”³⁰ In the Łódź ghetto, Chari utilized his connections to obtain his own apartment separate from his grandparents. There he hosted friends for parties, and they smoked cigarettes and played cards. He noted that alcohol was difficult to obtain but that he was part of a privileged group of police that received cigarette rations.³¹

In addition to throwing parties, those with enough food might invite guests over for tea or dinner, where delicacies might be served. Tadeusz Pankiewicz, the non-Jewish Polish pharmacist who maintained a pharmacy in the Kraków ghetto throughout its existence, hosted numerous elites for tea, meals, and drinking sessions, particularly in the aftermath of deportations.³² He described one dinner with a friend from outside the ghetto who joined him and a lady friend, Maryla Schenker, in a lavish dinner from a Kraków ghetto restaurant featuring, “fish prepared in the ‘Jewish way,’” as well as wine and brandy.³³

The ability to lavishly entertain required access to surplus food, which the elite of the ghetto had. Whether this food was attained through extra rations, the black market, packages from outside the ghetto, or food purchases in the non-Jewish areas of the city, it made entertaining possible. Gifts among the elite also supplemented food access. For example, Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski sent four bottles of wine to ghetto chronicler Oskar Rosenfeld for Passover.³⁴ The manager of food supplies of the

Łódź ghetto, Zygmunt Reingold, sent extra food to dignitaries to curry favor.³⁵ Nelken was offered chocolates and other treats by her friends of elite standing. Food was one of the means through which patronage was expressed and cultivated among those with power in the ghetto.

Those with means could purchase meat, chicken, and even carp in the Warsaw ghetto. Chicken cost twenty zloty per pound, while kosher chicken was even more expensive. Berg, writing on May 20, 1941, noted, “only those who have a large cash reserve can afford such luxuries and very few such people remain in the ghetto.”³⁶ Asparagus was for sale in the late spring for eight zloty per pound (a luxury item considering that a day laborer delivering bricks for a building project was paid ten zloty per day).³⁷ Writing about the poor who had run out of resources and who could not receive enough support from the Jewish administration to avoid starvation, Berg noted that within their sight, as they lay dying, was a shop window with white bread, cheese, and cakes. These treats were only available to those with the means to purchase them.³⁸

In the Łódź ghetto, because supplemental foods could be obtained on the black market or through special stores, the purchase price of an item in the ghetto was different for various segments of the population. Those who were permitted to purchase items in ghetto-run shops bought them at a set cost, whereas those who might have the same amount of money but were not able to purchase from the official ghetto shops could only purchase the item on the black market at an astronomically higher price.³⁹ Both Łódź ghetto head Rumkowski and Warsaw ghetto leader Adam Czerniaków had access to supplemental rations to distribute as they liked. There were also special distribution points for the elite. For example: “Cooperative B [from Bierat, an advisory council] was a food distribution point for the higherranking employees in the Jewish administration, higher police officers, workshop directors and managers in the Łódź ghetto. On the basis of lists or special coupons those entitled to use these points collected additional food allocations there in addition to the general ration.”⁴⁰

On November 9, 1943, the canceling of Allotment “B” was recorded in Jakub Poznanski’s diary. He noted that 800 families, 160 doctors, and 100 pharmacists had received this allotment. A few families continued to receive supplements, but many were left without.⁴¹

Just as falling fortunes might cause individuals to go from elite to poor in the ghetto, changes in Nazi food distribution policies caused certain groups to go from favored to deprived in terms of food access. Two groups that were initially privileged were the ill and workers, but this privilege would variously wax and wane in the ghetto period. In the early period of the ghetto, physicians could prescribe supplemental food

Table 6.1 *Supplemental ration coupons as reported in the Chronicle of the Łódź ghetto on August 10, 1943*

Type of coupon	Eligible recipients	Number distributed
R (Beirat)	Heads of administrative departments and divisions, senior technical instructors, and their families	2,236
L	Doctors and their families	191
Ph	Pharmacists and their families	389
Pol	Police (Order Service), fire brigade, and their families	1,204
B-I and B-II	Office heads, division group leaders, secretaries, clerks, and meritorious officials, and their families	1,589
CP	Permanent coupon for hardworking individuals (excluding their families)	377
B-III	Single-use or “bonus” coupons distributed by division and department heads	2,000 per ten days
CP I	Single-use or “bonus” coupons distributed by division and department heads	1,800 per ten days
F	Fecalists (removers of human waste)	250 per ten days
FI	Garbage collectors	250 per ten days

Source: Ewa Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe, 2017), 212–13.

rations for the ill, while workers were initially entitled to supplemental rations. Soon thereafter, in Łódź in 1941, Rumkowski abolished supplemental rations for workers and, according to Żelkowicz, adopted a policy of trying to save the whole of the ghetto population at the expense of the workers' health.⁴² Slowly, however, as the German ghetto administration took over control of the food supply, supplemental rations for the sick were discontinued, and emphasis was put on feeding those who were working. In March 1942, Rumkowski halted meat distribution to the sick and allocated it instead to workers.⁴³ Similarly, children and elderly were given supplemental rations in the Łódź ghetto, which, like many other ghettos made special efforts to support these vulnerable populations – but eventually not only were these supplemental rations eliminated, but the elderly and the children were largely deported to their deaths.

Ultimately, telling the stories of the privileged is a complex task, as many wartime and immediate postwar testimonies were critical of those who enjoyed food security and even luxuries amid the hunger and starvation of the ghettos. As a result, many postwar testimonies downplayed privileged status.⁴⁴ By definition, however, all postwar testimonies come

from a place of privilege of some sort: They all reflect the experiences of those who were able to access sufficient food to survive through one means or another.

Gender

It would be impossible to tell the story of food without examining gender. Although gender expectations for Central European Jews prior to the Second World War were tied to socioeconomic status and varied with geographic location and within religious traditions, gender expectations about the procurement and preparation of food were in many cases deeply entrenched in prewar European Jewish society.

For a man, one of the most central ideals was that he provide for his family whether as a business owner, factory worker, civil servant, cobbler, or other professional. An exception to this in some communities was that religious scholars were expected to be supported financially so as to devote themselves to study and prayer. In these communities, the wife or her family provided support for the scholar and his family. This was not as widespread a phenomenon as it is today, but it did exist in the prewar period and during the ghetto period. Men, in addition to financially providing for their families, were expected to form the community leadership in the prewar period. The Sejm (lower house of Polish Parliament) did include a Jewish woman member, Ruzha Meltzer of the General Zionists, but she was the only woman out of 107 Jewish deputies during the interwar period.⁴⁵ In practice, with rare exceptions, men occupied most leadership positions in the prewar period.

Women in Central European society were usually expected to be responsible for food preparation and the domestic sphere. However, gender norms were highly shaped by socioeconomic standing and geography. The Jews in the ghetto included not only urban Jews but also rural Jews and Jews from Western Europe, whose gender norms varied. Women who were highly acculturated, particularly those from the upper and middle classes, were often expected to be housewives, but some were also business owners, professionals such as doctors and lawyers, and artisans. There was also an expectation in many upper-class families that a servant does the cooking, though that servant usually was under the woman's domain. Working-class women sometimes served as providers for their family, working as laundresses, maids, and even prostitutes who were subject to a range of expectations based on their status and profession. Marital status shaped gender expectations as well. Unmarried women faced expectations of chastity and obedience to parents, and were often expected to care for family members. Women who

were married with a family faced strong ideas about the role of the self-less and caring mother. Whether these women utilized nannies and governesses (in the upper classes) or handled childrearing themselves (in the lower classes), they were first and foremost expected to be nurturing and devoted to their offspring. In the extreme conditions of the ghetto, sometimes these gender norms were challenging to uphold.

During the war, almost all leadership positions in the ghetto were occupied by men. This included the Judenrat leadership, the heads of most divisions in the ghetto, and other prominent positions. A few women in the ghettos, however, did take on leadership roles like division co-heads within organizations, and a handful even held powerful positions. Dora Fuchs, for example, was the first secretary to the Łódź ghetto leader Rumkowski. She was able to secure high-ranking positions for her family members and ensure that her own household was protected from food deprivation. Women also worked as judges and prosecutors in the Łódź ghetto. For example, Romea Byeńska was sworn in as a judge in December 1941, and Rumkowski's wife was a prosecutor in the ghetto. In both these cases, the women's husbands also held powerful positions in the ghetto. Even when given leadership roles, women often found themselves in gendered positions. In November 1942, a Female Order Service (FOS) was created in the Łódź ghetto. A subdivision of the internal Jewish police, the FOS cared for children whose parents were working and later kept children from working as street vendors.⁴⁶

Another factor that plays a role in examining gender roles in the ghettos is the context surrounding postwar testimonies. The ways in which oral testimonies, memoirs, and edited diaries disclosed ghetto experiences were often affected by the gender expectations and changing mores of the time that survivors gave their testimonies. Sometimes the interviewer in a testimony or editor of a memoir imposed their gender expectations onto a person giving testimony. At other times, and based on societal norms at the time testimony was delivered, attempts were made to conceal parts of the victim experience because individuals did not want their family's perception of them to change. For example, sexual abuse has been discussed more widely in testimonies dating since the 1990s, when rape was categorized as a form of genocide (during the prosecution of genocide in the former Yugoslavia). In religious communities, men's and women's actions that did not align with Jewish law or that created a negative image of an important religious figure might be concealed.⁴⁷ In all cases, there is a need to examine these materials with an additional lens.

One Warsaw ghetto chronicler whose writings were preserved in the Ringelblum Archive illustrates his gender expectations in a story about finding the corpse of a young girl left naked on a sidewalk. He asks about

her, wanting to find out more about the girl and her fate, and is informed, “it’s Hesias, the neighbours’ girl.... She was 14 years old.”⁴⁸ His investigation leads him to an apartment where he finds a family with seven living children. “A woman with a tragic but peaceful expression was bustling near the stove. Even though she was still young, she looked totally ruined. Her husband was standing by the window. He still looked normal, but [for] the dark circles under his huge eyes and his somehow cowardly gaze.”⁴⁹ The chronicler notes that before the war, the father was a well-known Jewish scholar who was supported by his father-in-law, but with the father-in-law dead, the family’s means of support is gone. The family sold off its possessions, sought support from relatives, and was now fed in soup kitchens. The writer berates the father in his account:

Fanatically religious, the husband had spent his whole life praying. He did not work or earn any money.... He takes no interest in the fate of his children. He takes in their starvation, diseases, and death in a thoughtless and indifferent way, without any interest, as if it were not his concern. He does not starve because “followers” bring him food, which he immediately gobbles up, refusing to share it with his family. Overtaken by carnal, uncontrollable male desire, he molests his wife every night. He does not care that she is starving, tired, and exhausted, nor that she is overwhelmed by the effort to feed their children. He produces new offspring thoughtlessly, mercilessly. He does not care about the suffering of the miserable victim, who is overburdened with supporting the children.⁵⁰

This description of a family’s inner life the day after the loss of a daughter reveals a number of issues around gender and starvation. First is the dead daughter. In many studies of famines and gender, scholars note that female children are neglected or sacrificed in food-insecure households where women hold a lower status in the pre-famine society, although there is no evidence that female children died at a greater rate than male children in the ghettos.⁵¹ The fact that the family ate their meals at the soup kitchen implies that the meals that they received as individuals were portioned out not at home but by the soup kitchen employees. These equal portions may not have been enough to keep a young woman alive. At fourteen, she was on the cusp between childhood and adulthood as defined in most ghettos. Perhaps she had aged out of some sort of supplement for “children,” often defined by Polish organizations as those up to the age of fourteen. We do not have enough information to know. We are told by the chronicler that the mother in the story “has a fixed a silent reproach at one of her younger daughters,” who inherited her sister’s clothing. From this we know there were other girls in the household still receiving care.

The author paints a picture of a woman whose life purpose was distilled into reproduction and care for children: “the wife—a mother hen, sow,

or bitch—was focused on how to feed so many children.”⁵² He does not grant her agency as a woman who wanted many children or who (through the generosity of her father) had the means to support a large family prior to the war. He does not consider that a woman whose family was the means of support might have better standing and power in a household than a woman reliant on her husband as the sole support and source of family income, or that she might have wanted all these children at a time when her family was wealthy enough to support such a household.

Instead, the author views the marital bed as a site of rape by the hypersexualized husband of his famished wife. Despite the fact that starvation reduces sexual desire in both men and women, the husband is depicted as sexually insatiable, a characterization that seems to play on prewar antisemitic tropes that painted Jewish men as sexual predators. It is unlikely that the wife of this religious man shared her intimate life with a stranger inquiring about the fate of their dead daughter. Other than the many children – whose birth predates the family’s current condition – there is no evidence presented for this claim of nightly assault. The wife is described as holding a baby in one arm but not as pregnant, implying that it has been at least a year since the family conceived a child. The document is undated but is likely from an earlier period of the ghetto, given that in the spring of 1941, many of the soup kitchen subsidies in Warsaw were gone, making the cost of a family of ten visiting a soup kitchen more than many poor laborers made in a day.

The writer who chose to record this story clearly comes from another strata of society and religious tradition than Hesia’s parents. He judges them from his own gender expectations, which place the father as provider. He projects onto the wife his own gender expectations, claiming that when the wife stated that her husband had not earned any money, she “gave him [the father] a hateful look,” implying that she holds him to blame for their financial situation.⁵³ His unsympathetic portrayal paints them as unfeeling parents who have failed in their gendered responsibilities. Despite the fact that he bullies his way into their home to interrogate them about the fate of their daughter the day after the girl’s death, he places himself as judge of their situation. Instead of seeing a family whose grief is intruded on, he reads the lack of wailing in front of a stranger as apathy. He blames the mother for failing in her duty to protect and nurture her children, writing, “There is no reply from the mother hen, who has harmed her beloved Hesia for the sake of her other children. She does not cry. She is not ashamed. She freezes, silent.”⁵⁴ He has no evidence of wrongdoing, only evidence that the impoverished family reused the clothing from the dead girl. He accuses the father of lack of care for his children. Instead of reading the dark rings around his

eyes and praying in the corner as possibly related to mourning or stress about his children, he paints the father as an unfeeling monster.

Regardless of the lens of the observer, gender norms were both challenged and enforced in the ghettos. Some scholars of famine and gender have noted that hunger conditions cause rifts in the power relations within households. In many homes that held traditional roles for men and women, the provider role fell to women during the ghetto period. In other homes, however, the men were unable to solely provide for their families, and all members had to work. Sometimes, gender duties were redistributed due to death, debilitating sickness, or abandonment. In other families, women went to great lengths to perform traditional gender roles, such as taking care of domestic matters. For example, Sela Seliger and her sister acquired permits to reside in the Kraków ghetto, but their father was denied entry. Due to the porous nature of the ghetto, the sisters were able to continue providing for their father, who was living in a nearby village. Each Sabbath, Sela and her sister made a *challah*, a traditional Sabbath bread, for their father, and then Sela's sister smuggled it to him.⁵⁵ The sisters not only brought food to their father but also baked a traditional bread for his table. And yet, during the rest of the week, the father likely had to prepare his own meals.

Another type of disruption in families occurred when individuals created romantic relationships with others who could provide for them. Sometimes it took the form of a man creating a new household with a woman with the means to support him. This might mean a father abandoning his family or a single man in a family moving out to create a new family with a woman who either herself or through her family was able to provide support. Nelken, writing in the Kraków ghetto, lamented her brother's involvement with a woman whom she felt was beneath them in class but who in the new conditions created by the war was financially well-off: "Felek has fallen into the hands of common, plain girls whom no one would have even looked at before. These girls have money now because their parents know how to make it."⁵⁶ In other households, women created romantic relationships with men who could support them and their families. This was sometimes done by married women with the knowledge and acceptance of the husband or other members of the household. These dynamics played out as individuals sought survival.

Religion

In the ghetto, a myriad of religious backgrounds influenced food access. Most numerous among the ghetto dwellers were Jews of a variety of denominations, observance levels, and beliefs. There were also non-Jews

who were defined by the Nazis as Jews but who were atheists or some variety of Christian. Additionally, many non-Jews lived in the ghettos because they were married to someone the Germans considered Jewish, worked in the ghetto, had a pass to enter the ghetto, or were interned in the ghetto by the Germans, often in a separate section. These last might include Roma and others considered undesirable.

For religious Jews, Jewish dietary law created issues with food access. Food insecurity is often understood to mean not only lack of sufficient food but also lack of sufficient food that one prefers to eat. Religious Jews in the ghettos who wished to adhere to Jewish dietary law found that food access rapidly became difficult and food insecurity became more likely. In the early period of the Łódź ghetto, religious Jews pushed to maintain kosher eating in the face of the rapidly decreasing food availability. To that end, two kosher kitchens at which individuals could obtain meals to be eaten on site or to take home were opened in November 1940 in the ghetto.⁵⁷ As food grew more scarce in Łódź, rabbinical rulings dealt with questions about nonkosher food. Toward the end of February 1941, a ruling allowed pregnant women and the sick to eat nonkosher meat.⁵⁸ One group in the Łódź ghetto, “Pe Kadosch” (Holy Mouth), called on Jews to refrain from consuming nonkosher meat, going so far as to ban those who ate unkosher food from participating in or leading prayer services. In their own words, “unclean lips, God protect us, are forbidden to pray, especially to lead prayers.”⁵⁹ This association, led by Reb Mendele Lutomierski and Reb Eliezer Gutztat, persisted until it was disbanded in the second half of 1941.

Despite the urgings of various religious authorities to avoid eating non-kosher food, it eventually became clear that preservation of life meant that most people were going to have to eat nonkosher meat. For those who did, old foodways did not disappear. Chari, a police officer in the Łódź ghetto, had a grandmother in the ghetto who was religious and who did not want to eat the nonkosher meat, such as pig parts, that they were able to obtain in the ghetto. Although the need to protect life finally overrode her insistence on avoiding nonkosher meat, she would kasher pork before she would eat it. That is, she treated it as one would treat a kosher piece of meat by salting and rinsing it to draw out any blood, whose consumption was also prohibited by Jewish law.⁶⁰

Those who were able to do so continued to obtain kosher meat. Children smuggled live chickens into the Kraków ghetto so that they could be slaughtered according to Jewish law.⁶¹ In the Warsaw ghetto, kosher meat was smuggled into the ghetto in utility company and sanitation trucks, as well as ambulances. Kosher meat was also smuggled in from a nearby village.⁶² Although it was easier to smuggle in pieces of butchered

meat, some people preferred to know with certainty that the meat was killed according to Jewish law, and they were willing to pay continually rising prices to have live cows smuggled into the Warsaw ghetto.⁶³ Cow smuggling was a tremendous feat:

In the Jewish dairy on Muranowska Street, the cows are exchanged every day. Yesterday's cow is slaughtered. This is how it works: Every day peasants come to the dairy with a new cow. They tell the watch at the Wall gate that they [accidentally] left the permit to bring the cow into the ghetto at home. They leave 700 zloty as security until they fetch the papers. Then they conveniently forget.⁶⁴

The ability to continue eating kosher meat in the ghettos required a great deal of resources. Kaplan recorded in his Warsaw ghetto diary, "because kosher meat is terribly expensive, people have relaxed their observance of the laws regarding the eating of kosher food. Not only atheists and derelicts are guilty of this, but synagogue sextons and pious men as well."⁶⁵

For those with resources, some private restaurants catered to traditional religious tastes. In the Kraków ghetto, a restaurant on Lwowska Street served traditional Sabbath stew, cholent, on Saturday.⁶⁶ In the Warsaw ghetto, Kaplan noted in April 1942 that "five kilos of matzah, a two day supply for a medium sized family costs 200 zloty today."⁶⁷ This amount of money was beyond the reach of most in the ghetto. By comparison, a kilogram of white bread on the black market in Warsaw at the same time cost sixteen to eighteen zloty.⁶⁸

Religious communities provided food to their poorest members and in some cases received funds from abroad to support these efforts. In the Warsaw ghetto, soup kitchens were run by religious communities. These same soup kitchens sometimes served as a cover for secret, sex-segregated schools. Classes – with food distribution – also took place in hidden bunkers or rooms in private homes. For example, Gutta Sternbuch, a headmistress of a secret school in the Warsaw ghetto that belonged to the Beis Yaakov movement, which educated religious girls, noted that the students who attended the classes each received a slice of bread and artificial honey. She stated, "Mothers would bring their children just because of the bread."⁶⁹

Religious men would meet in secret places to study Torah. Many times these men did not register with the ghetto authorities and as a result did not receive rations. They relied instead on donated food or food supplied by their family members. It was reported that a group of approximately 100 Ger Hasids prayed and studied in the Kraków ghetto.⁷⁰ Some of the men were brought food by their sisters at midday to sustain them and keep them hidden. In other cases, younger siblings ran food to them. In Warsaw, those studying were fed in soup kitchens

run by the organization running the school. A February 1942 letter to the head of the AJDC from the heads of the Patronage for Torah Students in the Warsaw ghetto noted that they provided for 3,000 people including 1,000 children. The letter noted that the Patronage for Torah Students kitchen served 700 lunches and 2,500 glasses of tea per day. In addition, on the Sabbath it served 1,200 meals of cholent.⁷¹

In the Łódź ghetto, a religious organization named *We'ohawta L'reacha Kamocha* (Love Your Neighbor as Yourself) served bread and coffee. Recipients ritually cleansed their hands before partaking and then prayed after eating. It functioned until bread was rationed in November 1940, at which point it continued on as a Torah and Talmud study group.⁷²

Religious events offered occasions in the ghettos for food to be served. The *Chronicle* of the Łódź ghetto recorded that “vodka, real tea, cookies and candy” were served at the circumcision ceremony for the son of Praszkie Boruch, former head of the Housing Department and at that time head of the Department for Special Matters.⁷³ Meals served at weddings in all three ghettos were memorialized, as were occasional small celebrations after a bar mitzvah. For example, Rosenfeld recorded attending the bar mitzvah of a foster child in the ghetto at Rumkowski's home in January 1944. Many dignitaries were in attendance, and “afterward a little snack: fruit, wine, some biscuits, nuts.”⁷⁴ In addition to life-cycle events, holidays were another time when food was centered.

In the Kraków ghetto, the Dzikover Rebbe, Rav Alter Horowitz, hosted a celebration of Simchat Torah that was attended by Simcha Spira, the head of the ghetto police, whose father had been a Dzikover chasid. Spira even supplied the alcohol for the celebration.⁷⁵ A sukkah was raised in several of the ghettos.⁷⁶ Rosenfeld commented on a sukkah erected in 1942, noting, “A sukkah [booth] had been put up for a dozen Chasidim.”⁷⁷ (Sukkah is a holiday when it is required to take one's meals inside the booth to fulfill the holiday obligation.) Another holiday with an essential connection to food was Passover. Matzah was offered in all three ghettos during the Passover holiday. The Łódź ghetto offered matzah as part of official food distributions as late as April 1943.⁷⁸ Rosenfeld recorded a description of the matzah, “made of dark flour, so stiff it's hard to chew and won't even soften when dipped in a hot liquid.”⁷⁹ Numerous Jews who had not been particularly devout prior to the war practiced Judaism in the ghettos. Sometimes this practice was sacrificial in nature, such as fasting on Yom Kippur, or it meant sharing a Shabbat dinner with the family. In the Łódź ghetto, the expansion of kitchens offering kosher food for Passover – from the usual one kosher kitchen to three kosher kitchens – indicates the desire, even by those who were not ultrareligious, to practice Judaism through traditional Jewish foodways.

A diverse collection of Christians also lived in the ghettos. In Warsaw, these Christians were estimated to number between 2,000 and 6,000.⁸⁰ This included Catholics, Protestants, Russian Orthodox believers, and others. Many Christians in the Warsaw ghetto had reached prominence in their fields before the war and were placed in high positions within the ghetto, including Józef Szeryński, the chief of the Jewish police force, who was a convert to Catholicism. Many doctors in the Warsaw ghetto were also Christian converts. The Catholic church in the ghetto, All Saints Church, was a haven for Catholics, offering superior housing for a small group and a garden for children. Catholics in the ghetto also received supplementary food from Caritas, a Catholic charitable organization. The perception that the Catholics were better fed in the ghetto led, in the view of some ghetto diarists, to a wave of conversions.⁸¹

In addition to Christians of Jewish origin, a whole spectrum of non-Jews with no Jewish origins lived or worked in the ghetto. Some were there voluntarily to remain with a spouse or relative, while others were engaged in some sort of work in the ghetto. This included not just Poles who worked in the ghettos but the German ghetto administrators as well. Numerous individuals entered and exited the Warsaw and Kraków ghettos for work purposes. Sometimes these non-Jews also served as customers at the numerous bars, restaurants, and cafés in the ghetto. For example, Nelken mentioned a friend whose non-Jewish boss came into the Kraków ghetto from the Aryan side and took Nelken and her friend to a ghetto café “for cakes, coffee, and chocolate(!).”⁸² Similarly, Tadeusz Pankiewicz, a non-Jewish pharmacist who lived in the Kraków ghetto during his time running the pharmacy there, took his meals in a Jewish restaurant that was open right up until the final deportation, in March 1943.⁸³ Pankiewicz also hosted Jews in his space, throwing small get-togethers where they drank and ate. It was not just a non-Jewish Pole who enjoyed small gatherings with Jews in the ghetto. Łódź ghetto survivor Eddie Klein, who was fostered by Dora Fuchs, Rumkowski’s secretary, claimed that he was fed oranges at a small gathering at Fuchs’s apartment by Hans Biebow, the head of the German ghetto administration.⁸⁴ Biebow was not the only German to be entertained in private apartments in a ghetto. Erna Fridman recalled her mother preparing dishes for a German functionary named Bosco and his mistress, who was her cousin Bronia, in the Kraków ghetto.⁸⁵ Aleksander Förster was an extremely privileged Jew in the Kraków ghetto who ran a restaurant nightclub right at the entrance of the ghetto, with his apartment above his restaurant. Förster entertained Gestapo and was on a first-name basis with many of them. One day, Förster was arrested. It turned out the arrest had been ordered by Hermann Heinrich, who had been promoted

and, during the celebrations, had received a basket and note of congratulations from Förester. The arrest was his idea of a joke.⁸⁶ Förester was released. These interactions between Jews and Germans took place among the highest level of privileged Jews in the ghetto. Nonetheless, the basket sent to Heinrich in congratulations for his promotion and Förester's ability to procure items for the entertainment of the Germans indicate that delicacies were possible to be had in the ghettos. Germans were not only entertained in homes; during deportations out of the Warsaw ghetto, the ghetto bakers had to provide the Germans with bread.⁸⁷

Conclusion

Many factors determined socioeconomic position in the ghetto, with a range of intersecting identities playing a role in one's position and access to food resources. Sometimes these factors helped one obtain food, while at other times they were detrimental to adequate sustenance. Prewar poverty could lead to food insecurity early in the ghetto period, becoming insurmountable, while wealth could provide not only funds to purchase food on the black market but also social access to those with the power to enable long-term food access. The city in which a ghetto was located could be more or less open, either allowing food in or keeping food resources out. Gender could be a barrier to the highest positions of power or benefit one through a need for less calories to survive. Religious affiliations could bring dietary restrictions or access to soup kitchens and other forms of charity.

Although some survivors have attributed survival to "luck" or "chance," in reality one's positionality was a key component in food access and thus survival in the ghettos. While gender and prewar affiliations were sometimes key items in providing access to different types of food, ultimately accessible capital and social capital remained more significant in determining one's ability to obtain food and thus survive.

7 Relief Systems and Charity

All the activities of our charitable institutions should be called death in installments, the dividing up of death into installments. We should finally realize that we cannot save anybody from death, for we don't have the means. We can only push death away, postpone it; we cannot prevent it.

– Rachel Auerbach, Warsaw ghetto

Each of the three ghettos provided assistance in some form or another for the poorest of its residents.¹ Many families and individuals relied on various means of relief including soup kitchens, special food distributions, and cash payments. The sick, the elderly, refugees, the orphaned young, and others relied on relief payments, or on relief in the form of care and food provided in orphanages, hospitals, and old age homes.

The sources of support in the ghettos varied: All three Judenräte provided support for those in need for at least a portion of the existence of the ghettos. Some of the Judenräte-supported institutions enjoyed patronage from individuals in the ghetto, who supplemented the support they received from the community as a whole. Various charitable organizations that operated in the ghetto received funds from individual or foreign donations. In addition, ghetto dwellers helped one another both individually and collectively in numerous ways.

Foreign Aid and Its Distribution

One reason that these charitable organizations could maintain their activities in this early period in the General Government was that they received support through the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC). Many prewar Polish charitable organizations had their bank accounts and resources seized. Until the United States entered the war, American organizations were able to maintain resources in Poland as representatives of a neutral country, so the AJDC acted as an umbrella organization for other charitable efforts, including the Coordination Commission of Welfare and Social Organizations (Komisja Koordynacyjna Organizacji

Opiekuńczych i Społecznych) in Warsaw. The AJDC was headquartered in Warsaw but also established offices in Kraków. Eventually, under German pressure, its Kraków operations became its headquarters in the General Government. The AJDC distributed foreign funds and foreign aid throughout the General Government until, in January 1940, Germans established the Jewish Self-Help Coordinating Commission Organization (ŻSS) as the conduit through which foreign aid was to flow. Unfortunately, since the majority of the relief funds came from the United States and were subject to the official German exchange rate, the German government was able to expropriate 80 percent of the foreign funds intended to support the Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland.² The ŻSS was headquartered in Kraków in 1940, initially under the control of Marek Bieberstein, the Kraków Judenrat leader, who was thus responsible for distributing foreign aid throughout the General Government.³ This gave this community a distinct advantage in being able to support those in need in Kraków. After Bieberstein was arrested in September 1940, the ŻSS came under the directorship of Michał Weichert, with a branch office operating in the Warsaw ghetto that remained in operation until fall 1942. After the closure of ŻSS, Weichert established Jüdische Unterstützungsstelle (JUS), which was responsible for distributing foreign aid to Jews in the ghettos and labor camps. It was able to exist due to the insistence of the Red Cross, which threatened to discontinue aid to German POWs if there was not an organization to guarantee receipt of aid to Jews in the General Government.⁴ The JUS came into conflict with Jewish underground organizations, particularly in Warsaw, as it was believed that the acceptance of foreign aid projected a false sense of normalcy to the outside world.⁵

Official Community Care for Those in Need

Charitable organizations played a more significant role in feeding the poor in Warsaw and Kraków than they did in Łódź. In Warsaw, for example, various political groups and communities provided public kitchens and other resources to combat hunger early in the ghetto period. The private charitable sector played a larger role in these efforts than did the Judenrat at this time, although the Judenrat, too, pooled a great deal of communal funds, supplemented by donations, to support vulnerable populations in the early period.⁶ Unfortunately, the Germans soon put a stop to this sort of support from the Judenrat.

In Łódź, the official Jewish Council provided food relief for the poorest of the ghetto residents. With the outbreak of war, many Łódź citizens who were already living on the brink of starvation were put in a perilous

situation. The Judenrat, prior to the sealing of the ghetto, provided some help in the form of a small-scale relief system. When the ghetto was sealed, those on relief were supplied with food stamps that entitled them to purchase food items at a below-retail price. The food stamps, along with a nominal fee, could be used to acquire food at a community-owned and community-operated food distribution point or at a number of private shops.⁷ This relief system, however, proved inadequate to support the needs of the large population suffering from lack of income, especially those without possessions to sell off in order to purchase food. These individuals were at the greatest risk of starvation and were the first to suffer, but soon even those who had been employed before the war began to suffer from lack of possessions and lack of income. Josef Zelkowitz recorded the story of Lemel and Pessia, who, before the war, were a happy couple with a decent living from taking in laundry. When their customers went away and their money ran out, they began selling off their belongings, until all that was left was the bed on which the sick wife and the three children lay, all starving and wasting away from lack of food.⁸ Their story was merely one of many such accounts.

During the summer of 1940, the ghetto population as a whole began starving.⁹ In August of that year, only 52.2 percent of the Łódź ghetto population purchased food rations. In response to this widespread hunger, food riots took place between August 12 and August 25, which ultimately resulted in a welfare system to allow the poor to purchase food. I have termed this riot the “Bakers’ Riot” because Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the Łódź ghetto leader, laid the blame for the rioting at the feet of the bakers (historically, bakers often have led food protests, and the bakers and butchers in Łódź had a long history of organization).¹⁰ Rioting broke out, and the Jewish police were ordered to break up the disturbance but were unable to control the crowds. Rumkowski claimed that the rioting was caused by the long lines at the bakeries, which he blamed on the food sellers. A ghetto song lyric reflects the riots: “Everything is up in the air, Onions, carrots, beets, salami, horseradish. Get the Jewish police to come, to combat the crowd, Just like on the First of May. We shall fight, in life and death, until you give us a bowl of soup and bread. Until you give us beets and salad to keep us alive, and to be full.”¹¹ On August 25, the riot got so out of control that the German police had to come in to suppress it. In response to the riots, the relief system in the ghetto was expanded. By October of that same year, 96.7 percent of the ghetto population purchased food rations.¹² A ration system is meant “to ensure the fair and equal distribution of food.”¹³ When part of the population cannot afford to purchase food, the ration system has failed.

In the Warsaw ghetto, official support for those in need was offered in various ways, including through free breakfasts and hot coffee for the poor, as well as support for orphanages and homes for the elderly, refugees, and others. In addition to these services, the community provided special relief packages for the poor during holidays. For Rosh Hashanah 1941, 3,000 food parcels containing “a kilogram of bread, a packet of honey, a bag of coffee, a bag of sweets and a bag of saccharine” were distributed to the poorest of the ghetto.¹⁴ From time to time, Adam Czerniaków, the head of the Warsaw ghetto, ordered the seizure of foods from the black market or from shops in town and distributed them to the poor. For example, in April 1942, Czerniaków ordered the Jewish police to seize delicacies in the windows of upscale food shops in the ghetto. The food was given to street children and orphans.¹⁵ Rumkowski did much the same in Łódź. Unfortunately, throughout the ghetto period, most of the funds collected to support the poor in the Warsaw ghetto came from taxes on basic necessities, which just made life more expensive for those who were already struggling. By mid-1941, prices for food in the Warsaw ghetto had risen considerably. Many people were running out of things to sell off and were becoming impoverished. In April of that year, nearly 29 percent of the population was exempt from paying for their rations.

While in the Łódź ghetto, Rumkowski tried to distribute food equally to all individuals, in Warsaw, Czerniaków faced tremendous pressure to distribute more food to the poor and to allow the wealthier residents of the ghetto to buy their own provisions through private markets and the black market. For example, in May 1941, Czerniaków received a request from social activists that 30 percent of the bread ration cards of the wealthy of the ghetto be given to the poor.¹⁶ This was not done. By October 1941, 35 percent of those receiving ration cards were exempt from payment, meaning that 35 percent of the ghetto population was impoverished.¹⁷ In December 1941, Czerniaków estimated that approximately 150,000 ghetto residents were receiving public assistance.¹⁸ In January 1942, Czerniaków noted that he exempted 150,000 people from paying the new bread tax imposed by the German authorities.¹⁹ The next month, he noted in his diary, “I was visited today by a delegation from the welfare shelters stating that over 20 percent of their charges died of starvation.”²⁰ The support for the poor in the Warsaw ghetto was simply insufficient to keep the poorest of the ghetto dwellers from starving to death.

In 1941, the year after the Bakers’ Riot, the Łódź ghetto was also still supporting the poor. In January of that year, in response to the high death toll, the bread ration for the general population was increased from 300

to 400 grams per day. The increase for the general population came at the expense of laborers, who saw a 33 percent decrease in their ration.²¹ Additionally, monthly relief allowances were increased. Children up to the age of 14 received seven ghetto marks; adults (ages 15–60) received ten ghetto marks; the elderly (up to age 70) received twelve ghetto marks; those from age 71 to 79 received fourteen ghetto marks; and those over the age of 80 received sixteen ghetto marks.²² According to Rumkowski, 46 percent of the ghetto was on welfare in February 1941.²³ At that time, 0.7 L of soup cost 15 pfennigs in a soup kitchen. A meal that consisted of two dishes cost between 25 and 65 pfennigs.²⁴ A simple calculation of one meal per day in a thirty-day month reveals that adults were able to buy only the cheapest meals and would have likely needed to use any extra money to pay for their children's meals. Thus even with the increase in the allowance, families on relief were not receiving enough income to ensure survival. Consequently, some family members were reluctant to take on the burden of an additional family member, even with the funds from relief.

Zelkowicz recorded the plight of an old woman and her orphaned grandson who, despite living with two of the grandmother's children, did not receive food or support from their family. The responsibility of caring for another person on the meager welfare allotment was too much for the family to bear.²⁵ In early March 1941, a 700-person-strong demonstration was organized to protest against the administration. Among the demands was an increase in relief payments, as well as decreases in the price of products, free laundries for the poor, and the establishment of bathing and disinfection facilities.²⁶ There were several responses to this demonstration. One was an article in the March 21, 1941, issue of the ghetto newspaper *Geto-Tsytung*, entitled, "You Will Not Starve!," which told about the relief for April.²⁷ A month after the protest, in April 1941, Rumkowski allocated 30,000 marks for relief payments and holiday allotments. That summer, however, catering to the poor ended. In July 1941, there was a mass registration of welfare recipients for work in the ghetto and labor details.²⁸

Charitable Organizations and Initiatives

In the Warsaw ghetto, in addition to the Judenrat and private organizations, the Office to Combat Profiteering and Speculation (also known as "Thirteen"), which fell under the direct authority of the German police, offered parallel services, including initiatives aimed at feeding the poor. This effort was part of a larger struggle for power between civil authorities and police in the General Government, a struggle ultimately between

Hans Frank and Heinrich Himmler. In an attempt to take control of the Warsaw ghetto, Abraham Gancwajch, the head of the Thirteen, promoted himself and his agency by engaging in highly publicized acts of charity, some of which included distribution of food to the poor. For example, one organization he headed offered free bread to the poor that had been seized from illegal bread-baking operations.²⁹ Similarly, the head of the Thirteen distributed coffee and bread to the poor in honor of his son's bar mitzvah. He also distributed special baskets to the poor in honor of Jewish holidays, just as the Judenrat did. For the Purim holiday, for example, he gave food baskets with "bread rolls, gingerbread, and sweets" to poor children, in honor of the anniversary of his father's death.³⁰ This type of charitable giving echoed charitable giving in the prewar period, when elites demonstrated their power and wealth through charitable distribution.

In addition, numerous private organizations, house committees, and individual donors supported the poor in the Kraków and Warsaw ghettos. One organization operating in the ghetto was the Catholic charity Caritas, which provided benefits to Christians of Jewish origin in the ghetto. Some Jews even converted to Christianity to benefit from the support of Caritas, which maintained a generously supplied soup kitchen in the ghetto. Other organizations, started after the outbreak of war, provided assistance as long as the founders were in a position to give charity. Mary Berg, along with a group of other former Łódź residents in the Warsaw ghetto, organized a club, the Łódź Artistic Group, that put on performances and then donated half its receipts to relief efforts for refugees from Łódź who were in Warsaw. Over time, many of the original troupe members became impoverished, and eventually the group disbanded. In the Warsaw and Kraków ghettos, numerous concerts, events, and even street collections were undertaken on behalf of orphans and other vulnerable ghetto populations. For example, regular collections were made for charitable organizations such as the Central Association for the Care of Orphans in Poland (CENTOS), a prewar Polish organization for children and particularly orphan aid that continued operations during the war, including inside some ghettos. Some women in the Kraków ghetto collected donations for CENTOS by standing on street corners on Sundays, and the older orphans in the Kraków ghetto made brushes to support the orphanage.³¹ In both Warsaw and Kraków, ticket sales for concerts supported orphans. In Warsaw, Niunia Czerniaków, wife of ghetto head Adam Czerniaków, was a patron of organizations raising funds, including through concerts. CENTOS successfully supplemented food resources for children by supporting food kitchens of orphanages and schools.³²

Outside of official food distribution mechanisms, the house committees in the Warsaw ghetto provided extra assistance to those in need. Certain residents in the Warsaw ghetto were more affluent than others, and they used their financial resources to provide charity for others in their immediate vicinity. For example, the residents at 24 Leszno Street provided monthly soup portions to refugees living at 19 and 23 Leszno Street.³³ In her diary, Berg noted that the house committee of her building supported Dr. Janusz Korczak's Children's Home, an orphanage located on their street. The house committee at 24 Leszno Street distributed supplemental food portions for holidays such as Passover 1941 and Rosh Hashanah 1941. In addition, the house had a Spoon Committee that, according to Berg, collected food for the benefit of children: "a spoonful of sugar or two spoonfuls of flour and gruel twice a week from each tenant in a given house. Potatoes, carrots, beets, cabbage and other foodstuffs are also collected."³⁴ In Kraków, numerous individuals recalled bringing food to orphanages.³⁵ In Łódź, in addition to the relief payments, other efforts were made to feed the poor. Kitchen no. 2 of the ghetto, a special social kitchen cofounded by Rumkowski's sister-in-law, served fifty free meals daily made up of "leftovers."³⁶ In 1943, after the majority of nonworking Jews had been deported out of Łódź, the workers created Sickness Committees, whereby they pooled funds to assist sick or exhausted workers.³⁷

Many individuals also offered charity on either a large- or small-scale basis. Some, such as Gancwajch, made grand gestures of distributing large quantities to a large number of people. After mass deportations and starvation left many children in the ghetto orphaned, Rumkowski sought guardians for minors. He enlisted prominent members of the ghetto to "adopt" orphaned children. Czerniaków also sought support from individuals to help those in need. He regularly summoned individuals to him to request funds to be distributed or utilized by entities in the ghetto.

Refugees

One specialized group that received support were the newly arrived in the ghetto. Jews from villages in the countryside and from Western Europe arrived into the ghettos. In each city, various methods were undertaken of housing and feeding the newly arrived, with the goal of ultimately integrating them into the ghetto. The issue of receiving and feeding refugees preceded the ghetto period. Due to the mass migration during the early war period, refugees were ever present and in constant need of assistance. Once the ghettos were created, Jewish arrivals from various areas continued, with the responsibility for their care being

placed on the official Jewish Council. In some cases, when the population was arriving from Western Europe, funds were forwarded from the city of origin for the refugees' care. In other cases, the ghetto had to find a way to support the newly arrived. Those arriving from surrounding areas as opposed to Western Europe tended to be in poor condition and without resources.

Jews arriving in all three ghettos were put in refugee or quarantine centers, usually in old school buildings. For those Jews arriving into the Kraków ghetto from outside, for some portion of the ghetto period, the prison fulfilled the role of quarantine center.³⁸ The fortunate were put in overcrowded ghetto housing instead of the dormitory-like settings of the refugee centers or the poor conditions of a prison. However, the conditions for refugees were usually in line with what was provided for the poorest of the ghetto, which was not enough to survive. The refugee population, like the very poor, suffered from high mortality rates connected with hunger.

Oskar Rosenfeld describes the food officially provided to the refugees:

[They] received a loaf of bread to last for one week. In the morning, black coffee like tepid brown water. For lunch a thousand people lined up with their bowls. Young women brought buckets of soup from the kitchen: warm water swimming with some green stuff, carrots and turnips. People fell over this meal, their lunch. The only meal of the day. Toward evening, again a small bowl of coffee, that is tepid brown water.³⁹

While the refugees from Western Europe generally brought some food supplies with them, these would eventually run out, and they were left trying to subsist on the officially provided food. In Warsaw, a worker in the quarantine center at 109 Leszno Street recorded that the quarantine centers did not always have bread, and the newcomers could not purchase food on the black market while quarantined.⁴⁰ Not everyone who arrived in a refugee center came with funds. Mordechaj Wasser, a caretaker in a refugee center in the Warsaw ghetto, noted that a group of "460 refugees, mostly the elderly and children" arrived from various villages around Warsaw, and further recorded that "70 percent of our wards used to be beggars."⁴¹ Unfortunately, due to the newness of the refugee center, it was not yet equipped to provide food for the new arrivals. Three days after the arrival of the newcomers, the refugee center was finally able to start feeding them. A few days later, Wasser reported, a Care Section delegation arrived at the refugee center: "our wards were asking the delegation to take mercy on them and not make them pay 10 groszy for bread. During that conversation the lady from the Care Section said that she could not understand how they could not spare 10 groszy."⁴² The next day, no bread was provided, as the center could

not gather enough funds from the refugees. The workers at the refugee center ended up asking the next delegation that came to visit to provide the money for bread.⁴³ Of a different refugee center, an anonymous writer who worked there noted, "The amount of food we can give them does not satisfy their hunger.... A line of people follows us, asking for a little more soup. Unfortunately, we have to distribute it evenly among all. We do not have enough to satiate them."⁴⁴

All the testimonies about refugee centers record horrific stories of death by hunger. One woman reported on her experience as a caregiver to children in a refugee shelter daycare center in the Warsaw ghetto: "I took over the feeding of twenty-four children, as a substitute, for the time being. Already in the first days three of them died, two of them in my arms."⁴⁵ During August 1942, an orphanage in the Kraków ghetto took in many children from the surrounding villages who arrived in poor condition.⁴⁶ A group of mentally disabled individuals with limited communication and personal care skills tragically died in the refugee center in Warsaw after not being fed. Wasser recorded their fate: "We do not bring any food to the cripples. We give their portions to the healthy children instead of sustaining the life of the incurably ill at this difficult time."⁴⁷ Throughout the ghetto period, individuals engaged in decision-making and choices about how to distribute inadequate resources. Institutional staff were among those who made these difficult decisions.

The refugee housing and quarantine centers were deadly, and finding a way out of the refugee housing situation was essential in obtaining sufficient food. In some cases, individuals with connections were able to find their own way and blend into the ghetto. Others who arrived were formally quarantined or at least placed into housing barracks until better accommodations could be found. And if disease was actually found among a transport, a group might be doomed to a longer period in quarantine. As one writer recorded, the food situation for those who fell ill with disease was terrible:

Hunger is a constant element of the isolation ward. People faint so often that we have stopped paying attention to them. The patients rebel every couple of days. Some women came to us escorted by a policeman. They said that people were fainting in their room and that they needed bread. We sliced all the bread we had and we took 100 slices with marmalade to 218 isolated patients. It was all we had.⁴⁸

The horrific food situation did little to ensure the recovery of those who were ill or suspected of being ill. With their stays prolonged each time they or someone else became ill, quarantine was a potentially deadly prospect.

In the Warsaw ghetto, a person might be released from quarantine due to overcrowding or bribery. One anonymous author recorded that their group of arrivals were asked to pay bribes to receive their luggage, to get out of the quarantine area, or even to buy someone else's luggage. This drain on resources upon arrival did not set up new arrivals for success in their fight against hunger.⁴⁹ As one anonymous writer in Warsaw recorded, "The ones sent to quarantine ... are the most unfortunate ... even if these refugees are not beggars now, they will be in a week."⁵⁰

Rosalie, a Kraków ghetto survivor who was forced into the ghetto from the surrounding countryside, was in a one-room apartment with "no windows and no heat. Mother, Lucy, Henry and I had one corner and eight other people divided the rest. Nobody had a job and it was too dangerous to go outside so everybody sat on the floor all day long crying from hunger."⁵¹ Attempts were made to help the refugees once they were let out of quarantine. Some of these were private initiatives, such as at the home of Rabbi Kalonymos Kalmish Shapira, the Piaseczner Rebbe, which served as a kosher soup kitchen for refugees in the Warsaw ghetto.⁵²

Soup Kitchens⁵³

Soup kitchens had a long history before the period of ghettoization. They served hot meals to those in need as a bulwark against starvation. With the arrival of the war, the need for soup kitchens expanded, and within the ghetto borders, the soup kitchen's importance increased. In the ghettos, soup kitchens usually served a soup or stew and, depending on availability, bread. One Kraków ghetto survivor described the allotments in the soup kitchen as bread and a free soup usually made from cabbage.⁵⁴ The community kitchens in Warsaw served what one survivor described as "a dish of soup, consisting of hot water with a potato swimming in it."⁵⁵

The Social Welfare Department of the Łódź ghetto opened a soup kitchen at 26 Zgierska early in the ghetto's existence.⁵⁶ In Warsaw, in the early ghetto period, the price of dinner at a soup kitchen was free. It slowly rose, first to 10 groszy and then, by spring 1941, to between 40 and 50 groszy for adults (children and those with special coupons paid less). By June 1941, the cost of soup had risen to 70 groszy, and most reductions in price had been abolished.⁵⁷ Eventually, bread became hard to provide in some soup kitchens and only soup was offered.

Various types of soup kitchens existed in the ghettos. Organizations, religious groups, ghetto administrations, and individual professions all had their own soup kitchens. Many groups had soup kitchens that

served their members or that targeted certain groups that had become impoverished and reliant on soup kitchens for their meals. Some soup kitchens, including those from CENTOS and Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia (the Society for the Preservation of Health, TOZ), served children or students. Jewish and Christian groups supported their members with soup kitchens: The Warsaw ghetto had a soup kitchen for Torah scholars, for example, and Caritas provided assistance for Catholics in the ghetto.⁵⁸

Soup kitchens were not solely places to obtain food. They were also important gathering spaces for underground political and religious organizations that continued to be active in the ghetto. In such cases, soup kitchens might allow secret schools to function or political meetings to take place, or serve other functions. For example, high holidays were held in Kitchen no. 2 in the Łódź ghetto.⁵⁹ The kitchens also provided work for members of the organizations that ran them, a place for members to gather, and a captive audience to influence. The Left Poalei Tsiyon, which ran multiple kitchens, used its main soup kitchen at Elektoralna 14 in the Warsaw ghetto not only to serve meals but also to hold party meetings.⁶⁰ Warsaw ghetto diarist Chaim Kaplan recorded his first Hanukkah celebration in the Warsaw ghetto, noting:

I returned from a celebration at the Zionist soup kitchen. On every holiday the guests here arrange themselves at small tables, sip tea, and nibble on some sort of baked goods. But that is not important. That is only on the outside, for the sake of appearances before strange eyes. The important thing is the presidium, which is headed by Kirszenbaum and Kaminar, to the right and left of whom sit all the leaders of Warsaw's Zionists, who speak and debate with words that go straight to your heart. This year's Hanukkah celebration was very well attended. We almost forgot that we are only allowed to go as far as the corner of Nalewki and Swietojerska streets.⁶¹

Numerous ghetto soup kitchens served intellectuals, many of whom had been impoverished by the war and ghetto conditions. Warsaw ghetto survivor Hanna Strawczynski recalled, "We used to go for a while to the Jewish writer's union ... because they had a soup kitchen."⁶² Some kitchens for the intellectual class, despite serving the same meals as the rest of the ghetto, provided a nicer atmosphere. In the Łódź ghetto, Kitchen no. 2 served the intelligentsia. Its founder and patron was Helena Rumkowska, the sister-in-law of ghetto leader Rumkowski. The *Chronicle* described it as a place where everybody used to be somebody, comparing it to Paris in the early 1920s, where one's taxi driver might be a former Russian grand duke.⁶³ Although the kitchen used the same ingredients as the other soup kitchens, Kitchen no. 2 seemed to make up for its fare with atmosphere. The *Chronicle* described it as an illusion of what

formerly famous patrons were accustomed to: “a measure of politeness in people’s behavior and the way they are treated ... a clean and well set table, dishes that are not nicked, and finally, pleasant surroundings and good company.”⁶⁴ Kitchen no. 2 also sponsored concerts, poetry readings, and other cultural events to entertain the kitchen’s patrons. Despite the fact that Kitchen no. 2 was a community kitchen, it only accommodated a limited number of people and, even with half-hour eating rotations, had a waiting list.

In addition to soup kitchens where people were served soup, communal kitchens for the poor offered ghetto dwellers a place to cook a meal. Łódź ghetto survivor Alfred Dube described the central kitchens that were created in response to a fuel crisis that left people unable to cook their meals. He wrote that lines a block long formed, with people waiting from 9 p.m. to 12 a.m. just to have a space to cook their evening meal. He described times when the public kitchen closed before his sisters managed to get to the front of the line. He also detailed the “common picture” of the line to use the public kitchen: “a mother carrying a small baby under one arm and cold, uncooked soup in the other.”⁶⁵ Some enterprising individuals rented out their kitchens for a fee.⁶⁶ If the meal managed to get cooked, it was served warm, although the *Chronicle* noted that many people in their hunger ate their meals half cooked.⁶⁷ The Warsaw ghetto also offered a central cooking kitchen. Warsaw ghetto survivor Edith Millman recalled a house committee initiative in which people without food were given a spoonful from their neighbors. She wrote, “I remember a so-called ‘spoon’ campaign where you would go from apartment to apartment and ask for a spoon of sugar, a spoon of groats, a spoon of flour.”⁶⁸ Once gathered, the food was then taken to a central kitchen to be cooked.

Ultimately, however, these measures were unsuccessful in saving most of the food insecure, leaving them vulnerable to starvation and eventually death. Warsaw ghetto survivor Rachel Auerbach, writing about her time heading a soup kitchen there, noted, “I stood at the very center of Jewish suffering, on the front lines of the struggle against hunger.”⁶⁹ Warsaw ghetto diarist Emmanuel Ringelblum noted:

The well-established fact is that people who are fed in the public kitchens are all dying out, subsisting as they do only on soup and dry rationed bread. So the question arises whether it might not be more rational to set aside the money that is available for the sole use of certain select individuals, those who are socially productive, the intellectual elite and the like. However, the situation is that, in the first place, the elite themselves constitute a considerable group and there wouldn’t be enough to go around even for them and in the second place, why should laborers and artisans, perfectly deserving people who were

productive in their hometowns, and whom only the war and the ghetto existence have deprived of their productive capacity – why should they be judged worthless, the dregs of society, candidates for mass graves? One is left with the tragic dilemma: being that no one will survive? Or are we to give full measure to a few, with only a handful having enough to survive?⁷⁰

Eventually, the soup kitchens in most ghettos were transformed into kitchens for workers as the poorest of the ghetto inhabitants were shipped to extermination camps. In May 1943, after most of the nonworking and poor had been deported from the Łódź ghetto, Rumkowski utilized the former soup kitchen for the intelligentsia to distribute “reinforcing meals” to workers. These supplemental meals, which were distributed on a rotating basis over fourteen days, had to be eaten on site so they could not be shared as they were meant to strengthen workers. By November 1943, these reinforcement meals ended, and deportations began to be conducted from these former kitchens beginning in February 1944.⁷¹

Begging

Different types of begging and giving took place in the ghettos. One means of charitable giving that existed prior to the war and was quite common in the Great Depression involved inviting impoverished individuals to one’s home and feeding them there. Other common prewar methods of charity involved the gifting of food (this method became less common as people became more impoverished) and variations on the Kraków ghetto spoon method already mentioned, in which someone in need went door to door, begging acquaintances or neighbors for small amounts of food or funds that were used to piece together a meal.

Łódź ghetto chronicler Zerkowicz recorded the story of a rebbe’s wife who, in order to feed herself and her husband, “circulates from door to door among former Hasidim and their wives and begs crumbs and grains of food that are literally not worth a cent. From those scraps the size of an olive or half an olive, she prepares those penurious fare that the Sabbath repast has become.”⁷² The door-to-door requests or requests made of a specific friend or family member were one form of begging.

Those in worse shape took to begging on the streets, which was widespread in all three ghettos. Łódź ghetto diarist Jakub Poznanski recorded in his diary that, “for a morsel of food, for a few spoonfuls of hot soup, people would stoop before anyone, look them in the eye and ask and wait for a handout.”⁷³ Kaplan, writing in his Warsaw ghetto diary, noted: “there is physical panhandling everywhere you turn. Lamed, crippled and blind people; people missing an arm or a leg; all manner of misshapen people who inspire physical repulsion; epileptics and those afflicted with

skin diseases; naked people and people dressed in filthy rags; and all of them shouting: Give! Give.”⁷⁴ Warsaw ghetto survivor Stefan Stok recalled, “There were masses and masses of people who were hungry. There were beggars everywhere, particularly in the main streets. There were beggars sitting at the side of the pavement, the beggars sitting next to the gutter.”⁷⁵ Sometimes, the begging took the form of street performing, but at other times, it involved people feigning a faint in front of a potential almsgiver.

Those who begged were driven to it by extreme hunger. As one woman wrote of her experience with begging in the Warsaw ghetto, “I did not have the wherewithal to live, so I began to beg; the best area—that was Leszno. I was often ashamed, but hunger nagged.”⁷⁶ Many diaries and oral testimonies specifically discuss child begging.⁷⁷ Henry Greenblatt described child beggars in Warsaw. They would call for food, “Can we get a small piece of bread from somebody?” and then “people would throw out of the window a piece of bread, a scrap of a potato.” Later, they begged for potato peels or anything at all. Children were not often able to beg enough to survive, as he noted: “And you could pass by maybe two, three days later. And the same children would be laying on the sidewalk already swollen. And a lot of them died.”⁷⁸ Łódź ghetto diarist Rosenfeld mentioned the child beggars who came to beg among the new arrivals from Western Europe. In the early period after arrival, some Jews in his transport from Prague did not want the soup provided, as they still had provisions they had brought with them. The young beggars would collect the food. Rosenfeld noted, “Once they get something, they come back again and again ... impossible to get rid of them. Not a flicker of shame left in them.”⁷⁹ One Warsaw ghetto diarist, Chaim Hasenfus, recorded at the end of March 1941:

There’s one young beggar in a fragile state who laughs merrily and cries despondently at the same time. Another person, ragged, dirty, and unshaven, keeps calling out the one word *Brojt* – bread – with maniacal repetition. Many are lying in the mud, listless and apathetic, but they still expect passersby to toss them a few groszy.... Any given beggar may have a proletarian background; he may be a former artisan or a merchant or occasionally even a member of the intelligentsia. One bespectacled intellectual keeps repeating in German that he is a refugee, a German Jew, in need of financial assistance. There’s one old Jew who sits in front of the courthouse on Leszno Street reading psalms and praying out loud. Whole families stand outside the courthouse for hours with their poor, pitiful children – hungry, scared people trying to move the passing crowd by calling out or showing their swollen legs.⁸⁰

One type of begging that various ghetto writers immortalized was that of the singing beggars. Many street performers lived in the ghettos

and sought handouts. In Warsaw, for example, one couple with four children sang and pushed the children in strollers until eventually all the children died off one by one, and then the husband remained, pushing his wife.⁸¹ Several street performers found renown in the ghettos. In the Łódź ghetto, a famous street singer was Yankele HersHKovitz. He sang songs that included biting political commentaries in exchange for offerings. By 1942, he could no longer survive off his street performances and got a job in the ghetto. Ultimately, in 1944, HersHKovitz was deported to Auschwitz. He survived the war and died in 1972. Before his death, he recorded many of his ghetto songs.⁸² Another well-known performing beggar was Abraham Rubinsztejn in the Warsaw ghetto, who was famous for his saying “Alle Gleich!” (all are equal). Mentioned in numerous diaries and accounts, this fixture of the Warsaw streets told jokes, sang songs, danced, and entertained to the extent that he was able in order to survive on street performances. He was even captured in a Nazi propaganda film and mentioned in the German-occupation-approved Jewish newspaper *Gazeta Żydowska*. Ultimately, although more successful than other beggars, he was in poor condition by 1942 and was reportedly deported along with other street beggars.⁸³

The Death of the Poor

Despite public and private attempts to combat hunger, none were sufficient. The vast majority of the poor of the ghetto were killed, largely through starvation and starvation-related diseases.

Most of those in the ghetto, even those working, lived on rations that were insufficient for survival. Warsaw ghetto survivor Stok noted, “official rationing was, I think, just enough to die of hunger. That was, you got some bread and some artificial honey or artificial jam and some other things, but never enough to keep you alive.”⁸⁴ In Kraków and Warsaw, the rations were supplemented by the black market, but that food was only available to those with sufficient resources to purchase it. For the poor, this additional food was outside their means.

Berg, writing in the Warsaw ghetto, noted:

A poor man enters to buy a quarter of a pound of bread and walks out. In the street he impatiently wrenches a piece off the gluey mass and puts it in his mouth. An expression of contentment spreads over his entire face, and in a moment the whole lump of bread has disappeared. Now his face expresses disappointment. He rummages in his pocket and draws out his last copper coins ... not enough to buy anything. All he can do now is lie down in the snow and wait for death.⁸⁵

In the Łódź ghetto, the rations were not sufficient to survive, and even being employed in the ghetto did not guarantee earning enough to purchase one's food rations. Łódź ghetto chronicler Zelkowicz reported on how the poor of the ghetto died. For example, he recorded that social worker Ryva Bramson found a woman, Feige, dead in her apartment on September 4, 1941. The furniture in the apartment was gone, and all the other family members had died off during the previous six months. She died alone in an apartment divested of anything of value or use.⁸⁶

Ultimately in Łódź, the poor of the ghetto were subject to deportation. In January 1942, deportees bound for Chelmno began to leave the Łódź ghetto. The poor were among the first to be deported.⁸⁷ At that point, Rumkowski began to attack those on welfare. He chastised the newly arrived Western Jews for benefiting from the ghetto relief systems without reciprocating with labor and the forfeiture of their possessions to pay the ghetto food bill.⁸⁸ Most of the Western Jews remained unemployed. This was a perilous condition for them, as work in the ghetto was linked with food.⁸⁹ In February 1942, Rumkowski announced the dissolution of the collective communal kitchens.⁹⁰ In March, he halted meat distribution to the sick and allocated it instead to workers, thus signaling an end of social care and a move toward labor as the means of survival.⁹¹ In the same month, a number of ghetto diarists and writers reported that the poor and those on welfare were largely being deported. By spring 1942, it was clear that the ghetto was largely devoid of welfare recipients.⁹²

In the Warsaw ghetto, the poor were also liable for deportation. Not only the Jewish poor were targeted in Warsaw. In April 1942, amid mass deportations of Jews, the Germans arrested a number of Roma and Polish beggars and put them in the Jewish ghetto prison. The Jewish ghetto administration was then told to delouse them and set them free in the ghetto, though Czerniaków successfully petitioned the German authorities to remove them.⁹³ However, the targeting of even non-Jewish poor was in line with the German desire to remove as many "useless eaters" as possible.⁹⁴ Similarly, in Kraków, the nonworking and poor were targeted during the June and October 1942 deportations, with the final liquidation of this group carried out at the end of the ghetto's existence, in March 1943.

Conclusion

A variety of coping methods were employed in the ghettos on the communal level with the aim of supporting the poorest of the ghetto. This tradition of supporting individuals through periods of food insecurity was not new to these communities. Rather, it was a central part of the

functions of Jewish communal organizations and private charities prior to ghettoization. They had a history of supporting large populations through various means ranging from children's homes (which accepted both orphans and impoverished children whose families could not support them), to soup kitchens, to emergency housing, to direct funds, and beyond. As recently as the Great Depression, the interwar refugee influx, and the early war period, these organizations had been mobilized to support the economically challenged. These types of communal support structures are more typical in large urban environments. If the ghettos under scrutiny were in small villages, we may see a different type of communal support that relied more on individual social networks.

Charitable groups, Jewish communal organizations, and informal networks attempted to employ many of these prewar means to support those who were most economically fragile. This charitable form was already insufficient before the war. However, during the ghetto period, the situation of the community was far more drastic than it had been in the past. Less funds were available due to the siphoning of foreign funds by the Germans and the eroded charitable base of the ghetto population, which was becoming more impoverished. Compounding the issue, the support that was able to be rendered, regardless of method, was insufficient to meet the overwhelming needs of the hungry, particularly the most vulnerable, who over time succumbed to death from starvation and associated diseases. In this situation, choices were made by charitable and communal institutions about where to allocate scant resources. Some vulnerable were sacrificed more than others. The attrition of the most vulnerable is typical of famine situations and is a salient feature of the *atrocities of hunger*. It is the longevity of the ghettos that made these attrition rates so great in number.

8 Illicit Food Access

Smuggling, Theft, and the Black Market

Raise the prices higher, higher,
Speculate with bread
Those who cannot pay a lot
Let them suffer from want.
Skin the poor, skin the paupers,
Suck the marrow from their bones
If there is still a spark of pity
Put it totally out.

– Mordechai Gebürtig, Kraków ghetto poet¹

In an economy where legal means offer insufficient food for survival, people turn to illicit means to acquire food. In the ghettos, three major means of illegal food acquisition dominated: smuggling, theft, and the black market. While nonfood items were also attained in this way – and often with the goal of providing a means to acquire food – this chapter is focused specifically on direct food acquisition.

Food Smuggling

Food smuggling in the Łódź, Warsaw, and Kraków ghettos varied in volume by geographic location. The main determinants in how expansive smuggling was were the openness of the ghetto at any given point in time and the relative strictness with which smuggling was suppressed through policing and punishment. Smugglers utilized a variety of methods, ranging from stealing through holes in walls and fences to bribing guards to allow passage of people and items through the ghetto gates. Additionally, smuggling took place at both the individual and organizational levels, with some bringing in only enough food to support their families, and others smuggling whole trucks and people between ghettos.

Smuggling in the Kraków and Warsaw ghettos was rampant, and the food brought in illicitly represented a large portion of the food available in those ghettos. By contrast, smuggling was quite limited in the Łódź ghetto. In Warsaw, although the ghetto was officially closed, a

large number of people, both Jewish and non-Jewish, held passes in and out of the ghetto for large swaths of its existence. For example, at the beginning of the closed ghetto period, over 15,000 people had passes to enter or exit the ghetto. The overwhelming majority were non-Jews who worked inside the ghetto. Over time, the number of passes was reduced, but many fake passes were produced in the ghetto as well.² Additionally, the ghetto had numerous illicit exits, which its residents exploited. Similarly, the Kraków ghetto was an open ghetto for a good portion of its existence, and until the June 1942 deportations, it was relatively easy for people in the ghetto to obtain passes to exit it, particularly as many individuals worked outside the ghetto. Even after June 1942, until October of that year, many people were able to exit the ghetto in groups that still enabled food smuggling and access to food outside the ghetto walls. The open nature of the Kraków ghetto for large portions of its existence made smuggling an important means of getting sufficient food, whether through people acting as smugglers themselves, having family members or individuals in their social networks who were able to smuggle, or having the means to purchase smuggled items on the black market. Non-Jewish workers in the Kraków ghetto also played a role in smuggling. Tadeusz Pankiewicz, the Kraków ghetto pharmacist, had three female employees – Irena Drozdzińska, Helena Krywaniuk, and Aurelia Danek-Czortkowska – who utilized their ability to pass in and out of the Kraków ghetto to smuggle in food. This became especially important after individual passes out of the ghetto were no longer easily available to residents.³ This widespread smuggling meant that in Kraków, hunger existed on a larger scale for only a short period, after October 1942.

In the Warsaw ghetto, smuggling was a significant source of food. While the official rations for the Warsaw ghetto were substantially smaller than those permitted by its Łódź counterpart, smuggling meant that far more food was available in the Warsaw ghetto.⁴ In Łódź, smuggling made a negligible impact on overall food availability, largely because it was sealed and had a transparent border. Smuggling did take place in the early days of the ghetto, when gates still opened onto the “Aryan” streets that ran through the ghetto, allowing ghetto traffic to move across these streets. On July 16, 1940, however, the head of the Schupo (Schutzpolizei) closed the gates and forced ghetto traffic over bridges.⁵ This reduced the number of entrances into the ghetto and made it harder to smuggle. Additionally, unlike the Warsaw and Kraków ghettos, which were surrounded by solid walls that could be approached, the Łódź ghetto was surrounded by a wire fence, and no one in the ghetto was permitted to walk close to the wire border. Even the Jewish police had to keep a distance of 50 m during nighttime perimeter duty. The barbed wire

of the Łódź ghetto left activities on both sides of the wall visible to the guards, in contrast to the brick wall of the Warsaw ghetto, which helped conceal illicit activity. Additionally, the borders of the Łódź ghetto were strongly enforced early in the ghetto period, and the guards surrounding the ghetto were authorized to kill those crossing the border fence.⁶ Even so, directives against smuggling were repeated many times, indicating that the practice continued for some time despite the guards and the transparent ghetto border.⁷ Eventually, the prosecution of smuggling in the Łódź ghetto came into the hands of the Judenrat.

On January 22, 1941, a case of smuggling was referred by the German authorities to the internal Jewish court system – the first time such a referral was made. That August, a meeting was held between the Jewish ghetto administration and the German ghetto administration in which it was decided that the Jewish ghetto judiciary would be empowered to prosecute crimes that had hitherto been beyond its power, including smuggling.⁸ The Jewish ghetto administration initially refused to implement the death penalty, which was the normal penalty for smuggling, but ultimately the judiciary did send smugglers to their death. The advent of the death penalty against smugglers effectively slowed smuggling. And yet, the practice was not entirely quashed. Smugglers continued to be caught throughout the ghetto period, and the border guards killed hundreds of people, testifying to the continued attempts of smugglers into the Łódź ghetto despite the risks.⁹

Smuggling in the ghettos took various forms, ranging from workers who entered and exited the ghetto for their jobs lining their pockets with a bit of extra food for their families, to professional smugglers bringing large carts of food through ghetto entrances, to children squeezing through holes in the ghetto walls. A variety of techniques facilitated the movement of food into the ghetto, including utilizing the sealed trams that ran through but did not stop in the ghettos. Smugglers would jump off the tram or throw packages from it. Also, Jews were not the only smugglers; non-Jews smuggled items into the ghetto through a variety of means.

In the early period, smuggling was common among adults who worked outside the ghetto and could enter and exit the ghetto walls licitly using ghetto passes. Multiple survivors reported that smuggling was facilitated at this time by the relative ease of movement. In this early period, they were able to supplement the food situation, staving off hunger for themselves and their families. Later, when the ghetto was sealed, the food situation became fraught. Even when movement was possible due to work permits, the workers were not supposed to bring food back into the ghetto. As a result, they were subject to food confiscation by the

ghetto guards. Aron Grynwald had a permit to leave the Kraków ghetto for work. When he came back into the ghetto, he smuggled in food for his family.¹⁰ Emanuel Ringelblum, writing on December 10, 1940, in the Warsaw ghetto, noted, "Jewish workers coming back to the ghetto from their work on the other side with more than two loaves of bread had the extra loaves taken from them."¹¹ Leon Leyson's father, and later his brother, who both worked in Oskar Schindler's Emalia (enamel) factory, would try to bring home a potato or piece of bread in their pockets. Leon's father would be surrounded by his children as he emptied his pockets at the end of the day, all of them waiting to see whether he had brought home something to eat.¹²

Some privileged Jews could enter and exit the ghetto. Max Falk's father worked for the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) during the war. As a result, he could enter and exit the ghetto.¹³ Similarly, Mary Berg's mother, an American, was allowed to enter and exit the Warsaw ghetto by showing her passport at the entrance. As a result, she could post letters overseas and get special monthly food packages from the relief office of the American colony in Warsaw.¹⁴ Marsha Jakubowicz-Loewi noted that her father and brother were able to engage in smuggling in the Łódź ghetto because her father was one of the few Jews who was allowed to remain outside the ghetto. Her brother was caught smuggling but swallowed the evidence before it fell into German hands and survived the beating meted out by the Kripo (Kriminalpolizei). After this beating, he ceased smuggling until his family began to starve again, and he then returned to smuggling despite the fear of being caught.¹⁵

In the Kraków and Warsaw ghettos, a number of non-Jews were able to enter and exit the ghetto and brought food in with them. Workers at the ghetto pharmacy smuggled in food, as did Dr. Ludwig Zurowski, the city health commissioner for Kraków, who brought in fats in particular.¹⁶ It is not possible to say how many Poles participated in such efforts, as they generally appeared in contemporary accounts only when they got caught, such as Jakub Gelkopf of Pabianice, a town bordering Łódź, or Stanisław Wisniewski.¹⁷ One fourteen-year-old non-Jewish smuggler, Zawadzki, was apprehended and put in the ghetto hospital, from which he escaped. When he was again caught, he told the Germans that he had escaped with the aid of a Jew and a bribe to an officer of the Jewish police. The officer on duty at the hospital was then questioned and tortured for two days.¹⁸

Passing through the gates of the ghetto, however, came with some risk. In the Warsaw ghetto, the gates proved dangerous, as German guards entertained themselves at the expense of those passing through by forcing them to climb walls and do difficult exercises holding bricks, and by hitting them as they tried to run past.¹⁹

It was not only those with passes who used the gates for smuggling. Sometimes people who did not have passes took advantage of the large numbers of pass-holding ghetto dwellers at the gates to illegally pass between the ghetto and non-Jewish portion of the city. Some tried to pass unnoticed, but many resorted to bribing the guard on duty, either to gain passage without a pass or to avoid the confiscation of whatever was being illicitly taken through the gate. Jewish ghetto police in the Łódź ghetto were bribed by ghetto smugglers to look the other way.²⁰ Similarly, in Kraków, ghetto police could be bribed to allow passage. William Schiff went on smuggling runs two to three times a week from the Kraków ghetto. He passed through the gate by handing the police officer money and telling the officer what time he would return. Sometimes, even when the guard he knew was not there, he would risk it.²¹

Although suppressing smuggling was among the tasks of the ghetto police, some ghetto chroniclers reported that the Jewish and non-Jewish police forces were heavily involved in smuggling and shared in its profits.²² Writing on December 20, 1940, Ringelblum noted that the cost for a smuggler to pass through the Leszno courtyard was 5 zloty. Moreover, even those passing through illicit openings such as a hole in the ghetto wall were subject to paying a bribe. Ringelblum claimed that Jewish police took 20 groschen per loaf of bread from smuggler boys.²³ Sometimes the Jewish police organized or facilitated large-scale smuggling operations.

It was not just the Polish guards at the gates or the Jewish police patrolling inside the ghetto who were accomplices in Jewish smuggling. Sometimes smuggling was arranged and negotiated between ghetto inmates and ethnic German guards – some of whom had known each other before the war.²⁴ Sometimes it was negotiated with natives of the Reich. Chaim Kaplan in his Warsaw ghetto diary complained, “A certain percentage of the ghetto population has become rich by trading on their brothers’ privations ... the Jewish leeches, who thrive on smuggling and black marketeering. I refer especially to the big-time smugglers who promote schemes in partnership with the Nazis and divide the spoils between them.”²⁵

In the Kraków ghetto, a German guard by the name of Bousko brought food into the ghetto in exchange for payment and in some cases escorted Jews out of the ghetto.²⁶ Similarly, Jacob M., a member of the fire brigade in the Łódź ghetto, recalled that “Germans who would at times come into the ghetto with 1 pound of bread or margarine would leave with a trunkful of new things.”²⁷ Berg noted in her Warsaw ghetto diary, “Sometimes a German sentry is bribed and a whole wagon full of all kinds of merchandise manages to get through the gates.”²⁸

The gates of the ghettos were not the only way to pass between the ghetto and the outside world. Trams ran through all three ghettos, and while it was forbidden for the tram to stop or people to throw things from the tram, this was nevertheless a common means of smuggling in the ghettos. Survivor Henry Greenblatt, then a child, smuggled food into the Warsaw ghetto by first smuggling himself out, buying food packages, and then throwing them from the tram that ran through the ghetto. His parents waited inside the ghetto, along the tram tracks and, as he put it: "I'd push a package through that opening. And my father would catch it on the other side."²⁹ Christians also engaged in smuggling by streetcar. Ringelblum wrote: "Christians spring off the streetcar carrying bundles, particularly at Muranow Place. There, the conductor and policeman on guard are paid 100 zlotys per trip. The conductor slows down, and they jump off with whole bags of groats or flour. A vast amount of smuggling goes through the Jewish graveyard, Christians entering the Ghetto and Jews leaving it."³⁰

Additionally, smugglers might throw a bag over a fence or, in the case of the Łódź ghetto, stow a package that could then be retrieved much later. One chronicler in the Warsaw ghetto noted, "Opposite Przejazd Street 9, smugglers have hacked a few bricks out of the wall, creating something like stairs, which help them climb the wall and smuggle goods into the ghetto. I have often seen young Polish women, perhaps from the Warsaw suburbs, and Polish smugglers handing milk cans and other goods over the wall in that spot." This same location, however, was not without its dangers. The same writer noted that he had observed a man climb up the wall and look over only to be shot dead.³¹ Other popular locations for smuggling in Warsaw were buildings entered onto both the ghetto and the Aryan side. The municipal court building, for example, had entrances for Jews and non-Jews from their respective sides of the ghetto wall. One of the most ingenious smuggling setups involved two barrels that were set into the wall of an apartment that sat between the Warsaw ghetto and Christian side of the city. One barrel was filled with grains, and the other with milk. Someone on the Christian side would fill the barrels and then give a signal, and their accomplice on the Jewish side would then open the spigot on the barrel to fill containers of milk or grain to be sold on the market.³²

Some smugglers were very brazen. William Schiff described smuggling live chickens into the Kraków ghetto. He smuggled them live so that they could be killed in a kosher manner. He wore baggy clothes with a long overcoat to conceal the items he was smuggling. His mother created a white cloth sack with holes in it that fit one chicken. He would purchase four chickens and attach two chickens to each side of his belt. He had

other pockets inside his coat to carry fruit and other items.³³ Schiff was not the only smuggler bringing in live chickens. Abraham Blim, a child smuggler, procured live chickens for the Kraków ghetto elite, including for Symche Spira, the head of the Jewish police.³⁴

Many smugglers in the ghettos were children. They were not subject to wearing a Jewish star or armband and were small enough to slip in and out of small spaces. Kaplan in his Warsaw ghetto diary commented,

there are also Jewish boys under the age of ten, who not being marked by the “badge of shame,” sometimes manage to sneak across the border.... These children are clever, and they are sent by their parents to buy food cheaply. Usually they are successful in their mission and bring home bargains. This week I got a bargain of this sort myself: a quarter-kilo of butter for six zloty, which our relative Emek brought in from the other side of the wall. God bless him!³⁵

Sometimes children just snuck under a wire fence or wall. Bernard Offen, a child in the Kraków ghetto, recalled a prewar non-Jewish family friend passing bread to him through the wire.³⁶ He also described sneaking out of the ghetto, noting,

There were secret places where you could get over the ghetto wall, especially during the early days of the ghetto. When the ghetto was cut in half, my father and mother and sister and sometimes my brothers, used to come, look out for the police, and lift up the barbed wire. Then they said, “OK now! Go!” I slipped under and headed very fast into the Podgórze hills nearby. There I traded things for food. I did that many times.³⁷

Sometimes children crossed through the gate. Erna Fridman crossed out of the Kraków ghetto and went to the stores her family had frequented before the war.³⁸ Some child smugglers in the Warsaw ghetto were observed by a chronicler, who wrote:

I was passing the gate on Nalewki Street at 7 p.m. On the corner of Sto-Jerska and Nalewki streets I saw a group of 6–7 children, about 10 years old, waiting on the Aryan side with stuffed pockets, trousers, and bags. They were scared but they must have sensed that the gendarme guarding the gate was not a bad man.... The children were indeed right, because after a while the gendarme called a Jewish policeman and told him to escort the children into the ghetto. Later I heard one of them talking to her mother. The mother and the child entered a gate and the girl removed a bag of potatoes from under her blouse. Radiant, she informed her beaming mother that she had waited for the change of guard and that now with that gendarme, she would manage to do three more “rounds.”³⁹

Josef Meszorer, a baptized child in the Warsaw ghetto, continued going to school outside the ghetto. He was met by someone who gave him food to smuggle back into the ghetto.⁴⁰ The ability to have someone outside the ghetto who assisted in smuggling operations was extremely

helpful. Esther Netzer smuggled food from the village she and her father were residing in to her mother and siblings inside the Kraków ghetto.⁴¹ Murray Pantirer's family members outside the Kraków ghetto sustained themselves in part by smuggling food into the ghetto to their uncle, who sold it. They smuggled in "flour, bread, eggs sometimes—whatever they could lay their hands on. Even sometimes a piece of meat."⁴² The smuggling was carried out by Pantirer's blond-haired and blue-eyed siblings.

Getting caught, even for a child, might come with harsh penalties. A child smuggler in the Warsaw ghetto recalled a time when he was caught and punished:

[A] policeman waited for me on the outside.... And he started to beat me up with a rubber hose. And I started to run back into the ghetto. And he kept on running after me, hitting me in the head. And by the time I got out back into the ghetto, I passed out. And I don't know how long I was laying there, but I remember it was already pretty dark when I came to myself. But there was no surprise a kid laying in the street. There were a lot of kids laying in the street. So I kind of came back to myself. And I got up. And I made my way home. It was pretty late in the evening already by the time I got there.⁴³

Henryk Łagodzki, a Christian smuggler into the Warsaw ghetto, recalled the fate of some very young Jewish smugglers trying to get from the Aryan side back into the ghetto:

Sometimes they were so loaded that they couldn't get through. And very frequently the Germans were already waiting on the other side for them. They would grab them and pull very hard through. They were smashing them. If a boy had potatoes on him then they would literally break his ribs, because they would pull him by his hands and they would smash him. Later they would grab him by his feet and shake him out.⁴⁴

Łagodzki was able to enter and exit the ghetto because his school was initially located inside its border. He brought food for his Jewish friends and visited with them. He was shocked by their rapid economic decline.⁴⁵

Child smugglers used various techniques to carry their bounty. In the Kraków ghetto, Offen smuggled food by filling his pants with it. He snuck under the wire or bribed a guard to get through the gate.⁴⁶ Smuggling food in clothing was a common technique – especially among younger smugglers. Greenblatt's mother sewed pockets into his jacket that allowed him to hide bread there, which was another common technique. Greenblatt noted that carrying two loaves of bread was heavy, but, "bringing in two breads, that was quite a[n] arrangement because I could sell one, and the other one I was able to eat with my family."⁴⁷ David Efrati did similarly, saying, "I got some clothes that I could hide food in and it just looked like I was fat."⁴⁸

A lot of smuggling involved small food items just to supplement the family's larder, but it was not limited to that. Large-scale smuggling operations also took place in the ghetto. Berg contended that Mr. Kohn and Mr. Heller acted as intermediaries for things that entered and exited the Warsaw ghetto, taking a commission on such items: "The starving people of the ghetto must all pay higher prices for bread and potatoes in order to fill Mr. Kohn and Mr. Heller's pockets."⁴⁹ Some large-scale smugglers operated whole enterprises in the ghetto. Berg noted that loads of hand-milled grain were smuggled in. The flour was sold, as was the chaff, to make a special type of black cake.⁵⁰ On December 10, 1940, Ringelblum noted, "Yesterday, a truck full of fish was driven into the ghetto, at the cost of thousands of zloty in bribes."⁵¹ Similarly, the movement of whole cows into the ghetto for kosher slaughter was an enormous enterprise.

Although smuggling was necessary to provide enough food for the ghetto to preserve the life of its inhabitants, particularly in Kraków and Warsaw, smuggling was a criminal endeavor. Punishment varied, depending on when and where the smuggling took place, and who caught the smuggler. Punishment could range from confiscation of the contraband, to beatings, to the death penalty, in all three ghettos. In addition to the threat of punishment, smugglers often had to contend with blackmailers. Mrs. C, a former corset maker who turned to smuggling after she was interned in the Warsaw ghetto, was threatened by informers, whom she had to pay off or evade to survive. After the death penalty was introduced in Warsaw for smuggling, she stopped her operations, stating, "I used to take risks to survive. But it would be nonsense to take risks to die." Unfortunately, a friend of hers, a mother of several children, continued to engage in smuggling and was caught by an informer when she did not have sufficient funds to bribe him. He turned her in, and she was sentenced to death.⁵²

After June 1942, German guards began guarding the Kraków ghetto, in place of the more lenient Polish police. As a result, prices of food inside the ghetto rose significantly. Further affecting the ability of smugglers to supply the ghetto with food, on July 28, 1942, Rudolf Pavlu, Stadthauptmann of Kraków, decreed that Jews could not buy food in the city. Nor could non-Jews purchase food in the city for a Jew. The new rule: "Only members of Jewish organizations with special permission from the city commissar were allowed to shop in the city." The new laws punished not only store owners but also ordinary people who made purchases on behalf of Jews.⁵³ The Kripo, the German police section that was initially in charge of combating smuggling, largely eradicated smuggling from the ghetto. It even began operating inside the ghetto, relying on paid

informants and information obtained in torture sessions.⁵⁴ Smuggling as a whole was heavily curtailed after the deportations in October 1942, although it did continue on a lesser scale until the end of the ghetto. Aneta Weinreich noted that her mother smuggled food into the Kraków ghetto but that when she was no longer allowed to work outside the ghetto, the family began to experience hunger.⁵⁵

Warsaw initially had less severe policing of smuggling. In fact, the Germans acknowledged to Adam Czerniaków that smuggling took place in the Warsaw ghetto and that they were looking the other way.⁵⁶ However, eventually, smuggling was more stringently policed. The death penalty for leaving the Warsaw ghetto took effect on November 6, 1941.⁵⁷ Shortly afterward, a number of people caught outside the ghetto walls were executed. The Jewish police were ordered to carry out the executions but refused, leaving it to Polish policeman to carry out the sentence.⁵⁸ Kaplan recorded, "All over the ghetto groups of Jews stand in front of wall posters signed by the ghetto commissar, Auerswald, announcing that eight Jews caught leaving the ghetto without permission had been sentenced to death. The sentence was carried out on November 17, 1941. The eight martyrs were six young women and two men."⁵⁹ Ringelblum related that many people – Jews and non-Jews alike – died trying to smuggle food. Some of the Jewish smugglers were as young as ages 5 and 6. He added: "Despite that ... the smuggling never stopped for a moment. When the street was still slippery with the blood that had been spilled, other smugglers already set out, as soon as the 'candles' had signaled that the way was clear, to carry on with the work."⁶⁰ Many others who were not sentenced to death were held in ghetto prisons for smuggling. Ultimately, in all three ghettos, smugglers were among the first to be sent on deportation trains to the death camps.⁶¹

The Black Market

"Saccharine, saccharine, saccharine.... *Ayersedmel*, *ayersedmel*. Eggs, eggs." There is a boom for saccharine today. I hear prices: 12 zlotys for 500 pieces. The today's price in stores is 20 zlotys.... The packaging looks fine.... I buy some and at home I discover that it is a cheap, bungled, and poisonous fake.⁶²

– Stanisław Różycki, Warsaw Ghetto

The black market operated in all three ghettos. It posed risks as it sold unregulated products, but it was also the main means by which those in the ghetto supplemented their allotted rations. The black market served all social classes from the very poor, who sold high-value rations for bulkier foods, to the privileged, who bought luxury food items and indulged

in better foods. What was available within the ghetto depended heavily on the relative porousness of the border between the ghetto and the Aryan side of the city. In Kraków and Warsaw, where there was tremendous movement across this border, much of the food on the black market was smuggled in.⁶³ Sometimes the smugglers themselves conducted the black-market selling, while at other times, middlemen did so.⁶⁴ In the Łódź ghetto, where far less smuggling took place, the food on the black market was predominately from official rations, items brought into the ghetto upon moving into it, or packages sent to individuals in the ghetto through the mail. In Łódź, the market was predominantly made up of the poorer segments of the population, selling high-priced items such as fat, meat, and bread in order to buy large quantities of vegetables and other low-priced items. Those from the middle class sold off their vegetables to buy items such as bread, sugar, and margarine. The community's elite, the upper 10,000 Jews – high-ranking members of the administration, including doctors – only engaged in the market to buy commodities.⁶⁵ The poor in the Warsaw and Kraków ghettos also sold rations issued to them. During the period when soup was subsidized in price in the Warsaw ghetto, some people who were eligible to purchase soup would buy a soup ticket and sell it on the black market. Auerbach wrote about one such man, an Adolf Bund, who when he became swollen with edema shunned soup and traded his soup ticket for bread or other solid foods.⁶⁶ Jacob M., a fire brigade member in the Łódź ghetto, recalled that people sometimes sold their bread so that they could get extra soup tickets and perhaps feel more full.⁶⁷ Mrs. K is a classic example of ghetto inmates who sold high-priced items to stretch their food allotment: A street vegetable seller in the Warsaw ghetto, she had owned a large fruit stand prior to the war. However, between the beginning of the war and the spring of 1942, she was heavily impoverished, to the point where she sold vegetables all day to earn between 5 and 6 zloty. With this meager income, she could not afford bread for her whole family, so she sold her and her children's rations to obtain some groats to add to potato peel soup.⁶⁸

In Warsaw and Kraków, the zloty was the internal ghetto currency as well as the currency outside the ghetto. In Łódź, the ghetto mark was the ghetto currency, and it was not in use outside the ghetto. It is therefore easier to compare prices between Warsaw and Kraków than to compare either to Łódź. However, one thing was universal in the ghettos: Many people traded valuables for food on the black market. Boots, shoes, overcoats, and other personal items were often traded for bread and other food necessities. Łódź ghetto survivor Alfred Dube described having traded "leather boots for a loaf of bread ... the next day, it was a suit, the following day, a shirt."⁶⁹

Additionally, furniture was traded for use by other families, as well as for firewood. Linens, lamp wicks, and other goods were freely traded for food. Many ghetto families traded the last of their possessions for food, medicine, or firewood but were still unable to avoid starvation. Kraków ghetto survivor Leyson's family ran through the family's savings, the secret stash of gold coins they had smuggled into the ghetto and began to sell off the father's suits.⁷⁰ Eventually, they ran out of valuables. Similarly, Kraków ghetto survivor Tola W. noted that by 1942, many other families had run through their valuables; if they did not have a gold ring or diamonds to sell, they experienced hunger.⁷¹ Kraków ghetto diarist Halina Nelken complained: "To buy food, my parents have already sold most of the jewelry they were keeping at my nanny's. They hold on to their wedding rings, as I do to my forget-me-not earrings and the gold ring with my initials that Papa gave me for my birthday in 1938. If I only knew how, I would sell the ring to buy food for Mama, who is so weak."⁷² This trading of goods for food was so prevalent that it found its way into ghetto song, such as in this lyric: "I've already sold the cabinet and my mother-in-law's bed. I'll get bread and butter and horsemeat meatballs."⁷³

Horsemeat meatballs were among many items that were made in the ghetto and sold as ready-to-eat food. Cooking fuel was an additional cost consideration in the ghetto, making already-prepared foods desirable. Pankiewicz, a non-Jewish Pole who ran a pharmacy within the confines of the Kraków ghetto, recorded his impressions in his postwar memoirs. He recalled that the ghetto had a lively "street trade" where "sandwiches and cookies sold briskly."⁷⁴ Sometimes a black-market enterprise was just the fuel or a place to cook food. Anatol Chari worked in the gas division in the Łódź ghetto and arranged for his girlfriend's family to have a gas line without a meter. Using this resource, they ran an illegal kitchen out of their home with ten or twelve gas burners that people paid to use.⁷⁵

Food Prices

Łódź

The most important item for sale in the ghetto was bread. Oskar Singer called bread the "gold value" of the ghetto.⁷⁶ The cost of a loaf of bread fluctuated throughout the existence of the ghetto: The official price set when the ghetto was sealed was 0.60 Reichsmark for a 2 kg loaf.⁷⁷ In January 1941, it might cost as much as two almost-new tablecloths and a sheet, or 6.5–11 ghetto marks.⁷⁸ The price of bread in the ghetto rose over the course of January that month. The price increase was triggered

Table 8.1 *Black-market food prices in the Łódź ghetto in January 1941*⁷⁹

Food item	Amount	Price in ghetto marks
Bread	1 kg	6.5
Potatoes	1 kg	2.5
Kasha	1 kg	12

Table 8.2 *Black-market food prices in January 1942*⁸⁰

Food item	Amount	Price in ghetto marks
Bread	2 kg loaf	19–21
Potatoes	1 kg	3.5–4
Kasha	1 kg	30
Rye flour	1 kg	16
Wheat flour	1 kg	20
Oil	1 liter	35
Margarine	1 kg	50
Butter	1 kg	120
Beets	1 kg	2
Turnips	1 kg	1.80
Horse meat	1 kg	Above 10
Saccharine	6 tablets	0.10
Marmalade	1 kg	8–10
Sugar	1 kg	10

by a reduction in supplemental bread rations for workers but an overall increase in bread rations for all individuals in the ghetto.

At the end of January 1941, new bakeries went into operation in the ghetto, and by March, bread had fallen in price to 5 ghetto marks. By June, after the invasion of the Soviet Union, prices were recorded at 12 ghetto marks. This price would remain through the end of 1941 despite two drops in bread rationing in September and November.⁸¹ That winter, the price of bread in the ghetto rose tremendously. This also coincided with ration reductions and the deportations out of the ghetto to Chelmno. In January 1942, the price of bread started at 20–22 ghetto marks and rose all the way up to 35 ghetto marks.⁸² The rise in cost was due to a combination of a devaluation of the ghetto currency, the reduction in overall rations, and deportations – when deportations occurred, the price of bread rose.⁸³

By May, bread prices skyrocketed to 350–450 ghetto marks. After the deportations subsided, the prices fell again. In June, during the lull

in deportations before they resumed in September 1942, the price of bread went back down to 100 ghetto marks.⁸⁴ Prices also rose as people arrived to the ghetto, the inflation triggered by their bringing new items to trade and reducing the food rations available. Food restrictions also affected food prices. In February 1944, after Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski announced in a speech that food distribution points would be closed during the working hours of 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., food prices on the black market rose, with the price of a kilogram of bread rising to 1,100 ghetto marks.⁸⁵

Kraków

The prices of food on the Kraków ghetto black market are more difficult to track due to the small number of diaries. The prices, though, did rise as the war went on. Irena Gluck, writing in her diary in May 1941, mentioned receiving a letter from a friend in the Kraków ghetto who informed her of the high prices of food there.⁸⁶ Writing on May 22, 1941, in her ghetto diary, Renia Knoll noted the price of several staples: One egg was 60 grosz; 1 L of milk was 2 zloty and 50 grosz; 1 kg of meat was 12 zloty; 1 kg of sugar was 24 zloty; 1 dag of tea was 3 zloty and 50 grosz; and 1 kg of butter was 35 zloty. In Kraków, 1 kg of oranges was 18 zloty.⁸⁷ By comparison, also in May 1941, a liter of milk cost between 4 and 4.5 zloty in the Warsaw ghetto, and butter was 40 zloty per kilogram.⁸⁸

Two months later, on July 7, 1941, Kroll recorded the following prices: One pair of shoes was 400 zloty; one pair of boots was 1,000 zloty; 1 kg of sugar was 32 zloty; 1 kg of flour was 30 zloty; one pair of socks was 10 zloty; 1 kg of meat was 26 zloty; one hen was 80 zloty; one cigarette was 55 grosz; and 1 L of milk was 3 zloty and 20 grosz.⁸⁹ By comparison, also in July, Berg recorded that sugar in the Warsaw ghetto was 30 zloty per pound.⁹⁰ Knoll reported from Kraków on July 15, 1941, that 1 kg of potatoes cost only 5 zloty and shoes cost 450 zloty.⁹¹

The price of food on the black market was affected by the prices and availability of food outside of the ghetto walls in the city of Kraków. Bread was rationed in the city. On December 21, 1941, Adam Kaminski noted in his diary that Poles in the city were only receiving 20 dag of bread per day. On May 1, 1942, the daily bread ration in the city was reduced to 15 dag.⁹² On February 25, 1942, Kaminski listed foods available in the city of Kraków with prices: wheat flour was 12–14 zloty; a kilogram of beans was 10–12 zloty; barley was 9–10 zloty per kilogram; a homemade loaf of bread weighing 1.4 kg was 7–10 zloty; 1 kg of sausage was 30–35 zloty; 1 kg of ham was 40 zloty; and 1 L of vodka was 90–100

zloty. By November of that year, the price of flour had risen to 16–18 zloty per kilogram on the black market in the city of Kraków.⁹³ On May 12, 1942, Kaminiski noted that a whole pack of cigarettes was not even available, and a single cigarette costs 30–45 grosz. He also discussed the price of butter in his diary. He noted that by mid-May 1942, it was difficult to find a stick of butter on the black market; later that month, the cost of butter was 90 zloty for a kilogram.⁹⁴ Inside the ghetto, it cost more than double that.⁹⁵ A few months later, in November 1942, butter outside of the ghetto had risen to 120–40 zloty per kilogram. By the end of May, bacon cost was about 1 zloty per decagram.⁹⁶ To put these prices in perspective, a Jew working in a factory in the ghetto doing piecework would make about 15 zloty per day.⁹⁷ Moreover, these were the prices on the black market outside the ghetto. Jews in the ghetto could easily pay double the price.

The higher prices inside the ghetto compensated the smuggler both for the risk taken and for the food lost in the smuggling process. It could take a long time for a smuggler to recoup their losses after seizure, jet-tisoning in an escape attempt, or degradation due to the smuggling process. For example, Sela Selinger went into the city of Kraków to obtain butter and sausage, but she could not successfully smuggle the products into the ghetto. Pressed up against her body, the butter melted and the sausage went bad.⁹⁸

Warsaw

Various ghetto diarists tracked the price of food on the black market in Warsaw. Writing at the end of November 1940, Ringelblum noted that “prices keep going up daily.... Bread is not to be gotten, costs 4 zlotys per kilo; the same high prices for flour and other items.”⁹⁹ He continued to track prices on the black market during his time in the ghetto. Kaplan, writing at the end of November 1940, noted that 100 kg of potatoes cost 100 zloty. Ringelblum noted that when the ghetto was closed off, food prices rose. For example, in March 1941, he wrote, “The last few days the price of produce has risen steeply.... Aryans have been denied access to the Ghetto and the price of bread and other items has gone up.”¹⁰⁰ During April and May 1941, food prices steadily increased, with potatoes going from 1.5 zloty for a kilogram to 3 zloty for a kilogram, while bread jumped from 7.5 zloty to 12 zloty, and milk rose to 4–4.5 zloty for a watery liter. In comparison, milk available in the Kraków ghetto, undiluted, cost 2.5 zloty per liter.¹⁰¹ At the end of May, Czerniaków noted that white bread rose from 24 zloty in the morning to 31 zloty in the evening. Around this same time, he noted in his diary that the Germans

allocated only 13 grosz per day, per Jewish person, for food in the Warsaw ghetto.¹⁰² By November of that year, Kaplan lamented that

the price of all foodstuffs is now thirty to forty times higher. Food is available but the only ones who can buy it are the lucky few who earn a good living by today's inflated standards. Because of the exorbitant prices on even essential foods, such as bread and potatoes, most families bring food home from the public soup kitchens ... a bowl of watery soup. For this one pays eighty pennies [groszy].¹⁰³

Just a few months earlier, in March 1941, soup kitchen meals were 40 groszy.¹⁰⁴

Bread prices gradually increased during the ghetto period. In November 1940, bread was 4 zloty per kilogram. The price rose quite a bit in February 1941, to 10 zloty per kilogram, then shot up during the food shortages of May 1941, to 12–16 zloty per kilogram. It lowered again in June after some initiatives were made to address the widespread hunger in the ghetto.¹⁰⁵ By May 1942, however, Kaplan was reporting bread prices as having risen to 15 zloty per kilogram.¹⁰⁶ Beginning that July, with the great deportations from the ghetto, the price of bread in the Warsaw ghetto skyrocketed to 150 zloty for a kilogram of bread.¹⁰⁷

Dangers of the Black Market

In addition to unprocessed food items, foods that had been transformed through labor were also abundant on the black market. In some places, private restaurants, some even in people's homes, served food made from smuggled items or served items directly from the black market. Sometimes people purchased processed foods on the black market, such as hot coffee, soup, or candies. A meat allowance might be made more valuable by processing it into horsemeat meatballs, or a saccharine allotment might be turned into candies. Warsaw ghetto diarist Berg observed a plethora of food vendors selling various processed food items, ranging from saccharine candies to horse-bone gelatin to fish cakes.¹⁰⁸ She noted, "The street vendors stand in the gateways, offering candy and tobacco for sale. They carry small boxes slung over their shoulders. These boxes contain a few packages of cigarettes, and a handful of candy made without a grain of sugar and sweetened with saccharine."¹⁰⁹ In the Łódź ghetto, the sale of sweets was dominated by child sellers, who disappeared after the mass deportation of children in September 1942.

Purchasing food on the black market could be a dangerous thing. As a result of it being sold illegally, there were no controls on what was being sold. Singer reported about people who were being deported and, while trying to sell their belongings for food, were being taken advantage of.

In one case, a pair of shoes was traded for 150 g of margarine. Then, “unfortunately, he discovers that what he got is a piece of rutabaga (turnip-rooted cabbage—which by the way has gone bad) covered with margarine. So he gave his shoes for 50g. of margarine and 100g. of rutabaga.” Singer cynically remarked, “the only thing that the cheater was precise with was weight.” Singer also told of a man who “exchanged his suit for a ½ kilogram of flour. Only at home he discovers that flour is mixed with baking soda.” In yet another event retold by Singer, a man bought a loaf of bread for 150 marks, only to discover that it was hollow and stuffed with paper.¹¹⁰

Even official shopkeepers engaged in unscrupulous practices. It was not uncommon during famine periods for legitimate shops to also be the sites of illicit food sales. Licit food shops often sold items “under the counter” at black-market prices rather than exchanging them for ration coupons. To obtain sufficient food for sale or to cover the shortfall when selling under the counter, food store managers sometimes short-weighted their customers’ rations. Josef Zerkowicz described meat shopkeepers in the Łódź ghetto who sold meat rations for prices higher than they were supposed to charge with a ration coupon. Additionally, in order to cover for their private sale of meat, they bought up meat coupons from those who could not afford the ration. By spring 1942, fewer Jews were being supported by the ghetto welfare system, a large number having been deported. The result was that a larger percentage of the population wanted to buy the rations they were entitled to with their meat coupons.¹¹¹ Rather than sell these rations to those holding meat ration coupons, the meat shopkeeper beat away the customers so he could continue selling the meat on the black market.¹¹² Similarly, it was widely held in all the ghettos that those engaged in distributing food were often skimming to sell products on the black market. This practice was not unique to the ghetto. During World War I, shopkeepers in imperial Russia were accused of denying having food in stock and then selling it to the well-to-do for exorbitant prices.¹¹³

The unregulated black market was dangerous not only for consumers but also for sellers. At various points, the authorities cracked down on black-market sales in the ghettos, and food was often confiscated as part of those actions. Berg’s father helped facilitate the illicit use of the bakery ovens during the night in his building in the Warsaw ghetto. The authorities sometimes conducted raids, finding “unauthorized bread” that was then seized and distributed to children’s homes.¹¹⁴ In the Łódź ghetto, there were calls to ban the black-market sale of food in December 1940, May 1941, September 1942, and at other points.¹¹⁵ In Warsaw, the German authorities ordered the liquidation of the black market in January

1942.¹¹⁶ At various points, black marketeers were arrested, and many of those imprisoned ended up on deportation trains. Despite these measures, the black market persisted throughout the existence of the ghettos.

Food Theft

Thieves are not despised who steal only to satisfy their appetite when they are hungry.

– Proverbs 6:30

In addition to smuggling and black-market purchases, theft was another important method by which individuals in the ghetto obtained additional resources to purchase food or obtained food directly. Theft was a daily occurrence in the ghetto, and it was an essential part of survival for many ghetto dwellers, as the food supply allotted by the Germans did not allow survival for all ghetto inhabitants. Theft could take many forms, from petty food stealing from individuals to large-scale embezzlement from the community. Individuals from the lowest of workers to the administration elites engaged in theft in the ghetto. Given the lack of food, and the fact that survival on the assigned rations alone was not possible, theft was a basic survival strategy in the ghettos – just as it often is during times of famine.¹¹⁷ As a popular song in the Łódź ghetto related, “No one feels shame, Everyone only wants to grab; just so his stomach will be full.”¹¹⁸ Two types of theft dominated in the ghetto, whether the target was communal resources or private individuals: (1) opportunity thefts, which were often small scale and/or unplanned, and (2) large-scale thefts that were highly planned or involved multiple actors.

One common type of opportunity theft was stealing from the carts used to transport food. Czerniaków in his diary lamented, “The hunger is so great that the poor people are snatching bread from the equally poor bread vendors. They tear the bread in two and bite into it immediately afterward—in that condition, bread can’t be sold.”¹¹⁹ Thefts from food carts were so rampant in the Łódź ghetto that on September 20, 1940, an announcement went out declaring that children must stop stealing food from transports.¹²⁰ In Łódź, a special guard had to be created that protected food transports in the ghetto from theft, and in Warsaw, the Order Service similarly had to guard bread.¹²¹ These bread guards, however, also engaged in their own food theft.¹²² Thefts from food carts could sometimes grow from a single opportunity grab into a large-scale theft born of opportunity, such as when a group of people rushed the food transport, and in some cases, individuals were even killed during such food rushes.¹²³ More often, however, such thefts were small scale and done out of desperation to survive. Alice H. recounted someone grabbing her bread rations in the Warsaw ghetto as well as little children running

up to people, stealing their bread, and eating it as they ran away, before they could be caught.¹²⁴ Berg, in the Warsaw ghetto, similarly noted:

It is not easy to walk in the street with a parcel in one's hand. When a hungry person sees someone with a parcel that looks like food, he follows him and, at an opportune moment, snatches it away, opens it quickly, and proceeds to satisfy his hunger. If the parcel does not contain food, he throws it away. No, these are not thieves; they are just people crazed by hunger. The Jewish police cannot cope with them. And, indeed, who would have the heart to prosecute such unfortunates?¹²⁵

An incident in the Łódź ghetto recorded by the *Chronicle* as typical was of a woman leaving a distribution point with two long rolls of white bread that were torn away from her. The assailant immediately consumed the rolls. In the efforts to find compensation for the woman, it was determined that the thief had already sold his food vouchers well in advance.¹²⁶ One Warsaw survivor similarly noted:

If they would see that you carry something, they would snatch it. I don't think they would be interested in anything except food. I think if it was not food, they probably would throw it or something. But if it was food, they would immediately eat it up on the spot before—even if they were beaten up. Even if people would try to snatch it back from them, they would stuff it immediately into their mouth like bread or whatever it was.¹²⁷

Sometimes the assailant grabbing the food was known to the victim. A writer in the Warsaw ghetto told the story of a twelve-year-old girl named Frania S. who purchased a roll and took a bite out of it, only to have it torn from her: “a starving adolescent scruff and beggar, the ghost of a lad, greedily and brutally snatches the roll that Frania has barely bitten into. He immediately devours it, oblivious to the crowd gathering around him and hitting him with fists and walking canes.” Frania recognized the boy as a former neighbor, fourteen-year-old Jozek Kapusta.¹²⁸ The girl was distraught to see someone she had formerly admired fall so low.

The starved ghetto inhabitants were capable of terrible thefts in their moments of desperation. Neighbors stole from one another. People would find that food was stolen during the day while they were at work or from their garden plots during the night. Estusia Joskowicz recorded that she and her sister began to notice that bits of food were missing from the bundles they created out of their daily food rations. One day they took matters into their own hands, staying home from work and hiding in a corner. The thief was a neighboring orphan, who promptly returned the food when caught and ceased stealing from them, thus solving the moral dilemma of confronting such an unfortunate.¹²⁹ Perhaps, the thief moved on to the apartment of Lucille Eichengreen, who recorded in her

memoir that bits of her family's provisions disappeared from the shelf in their apartment.¹³⁰ The Eichengreens suspected a neighbor. Neighbors were often suspected of theft, and lying in wait for a thief often revealed that it was neighbors, usually poor neighbors, who were stealing. Avraham Hasman, writing of his family's garden plot, noted that his neighbors often stole the garden vegetables during the night. He discovered this one night by lying in wait and catching a neighbor in the act.¹³¹

Heartrending examples of theft existed within homes, as well, when family members stole from one another. Hungry people left alone in the house with the meager food stores had an extraordinarily difficult time dealing with temptation and stole food from the family allotment. This caused fights and arguments as well as intense guilt. An anonymous girl noted in her diary:

I ate all the honey. I am selfish. What will the family say? I'm not worthy of my mother, who works so hard.... It appears I have no more heart. I have no more pity. I eat anything I have in front of me. Today I quarreled with my father. I verbally abused him and even cursed him for the following reason: After I weighed 20 decagram of farfel, the next day I took just a spoonful of it, and in the evening when my father came he weighed it once more and, of course, there was less. My father complained. He was right. Am I entitled to eat this individual decagram which our Chairman [Rumkowski] gave us to cook? I got excited and cursed my father. What did I do! I am sorry for what happened, but what is done cannot be undone. My father will never forgive me. I will not be able to look him straight in the eye. He stood at the window and started crying like a small child.¹³²

A more calculated theft of a family member's food was enacted by an older woman who kept house while her daughter worked. The mother had secretly made a copy of the key her daughter used to lock her food ration away. The old woman was sneaking slivers of bread, justifying it to herself on the grounds that her daughter received a soup portion at work, while she, the mother, starved at home.¹³³ It was not only blood relations who stole from one another. Zelkowicz reported that many orphaned children living with foster families had their bread rations stolen from them by their foster families. Fictionalized stories written in the ghetto also testify to the realities of low rations. In Isaiah Spiegel's story "Bread," written in the Łódź ghetto in 1943, the father of the family, overcome with hunger, eats his family's bread ration, leading his wife to accuse him, "A father, eh? A fa-ther, is it? *Murderer!*"¹³⁴ At the end of the tale, the husband is deported, and the family eats the father's bread ration.¹³⁵

Sometimes theft involved finding a way to obtain additional rations. In all the ghettos there were extensive reports about people hiding the deaths of loved ones so that they could hold on to their ration cards and

continue to collect their food allocation. After the infamous deportation of September 1942 in the Łódź ghetto, the survivors were warned that the food distribution coupons of the deported had to be turned in. Apparently, this warning went unheeded, as a few days later it was announced that those using the ration cards of the deported would be punished.¹³⁶ The practice of using the ration cards of the dead was so widespread that Yankele Herszkowitz, a street musician in the ghetto, sang of the corruption whereby people would use the ration cards of the deceased.¹³⁷

Ration card scams existed in other ghettos as well. As recalled by a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, "One Jewish family had a young child, and they kept a goat in their flat for milk for the child, and they registered this as Mrs. Goat. And they got food cards for Mrs. Goat."¹³⁸ In the Łódź ghetto, the ration card department had a criminal division responsible for prosecuting ration card abuse. A scandal occurred when Jakob Ratner, the head of this division, was prosecuted for using bread and ration cards of deported individuals and then selling the food thus obtained. He was ultimately sentenced to "3 years of prison, a biweekly day of fasting and 15 cane strokes upon incarceration." Stealing the remaining possessions of the dead was a regular occurrence in the ghettos. In the Warsaw ghetto, "an old beggar woman ... sheltered exhausted persons under the pretext of taking care of them and then waited until they passed away so she could sell their clothes."¹³⁹ Similarly, Oskar Rosenfeld reported that after deaths for which no family was present to guard over the body, neighbors would often break into the apartment and steal what remained, including the remaining food.¹⁴⁰

Sometimes people stole so that their family members could survive. Some thefts may have started out from desperation to feed oneself and one's family. Meyer Margulis took the job of fecal remover in the Łódź Ghetto. Usually, this job was taken by the most desperate in exchange for the extra food ration. Margulis, however, quickly devised an elaborate routine of petty and large-scale theft that allowed him to go from working the lowliest of professions to being able to state that "my family was never hungry in the ghetto." His "major" "job" in the ghetto became stealing food for himself and his family.¹⁴¹ In his memoirs, Margulis reported, "neither the trial nor the penalty deterred me from continuing to steal, since this was the only way to stay alive.... I never missed an opportunity to steal." In addition to participating in large-scale thefts of bread and flour from the bakery, Margulis stole food from food spills in the nearby public kitchen (the "accidental" spills were often caused by him). Additionally, he stole vegetables from garden plots, reserving the vegetables for himself and his family and selling off the leaves.¹⁴² This constant, regular theft of food

either through embezzlement or through more organized means was one of the only ways to obtain enough food to survive in the ghetto.

Dube described his job in an orphanage kitchen, from which he stole a bit of food every day. He expressed no guilt over stealing from an orphanage, noting guilt only when he had to face his starving family empty-handed, having failed to obtain that extra bit of food. Dube described a man who worked in the kitchen with him who was caught selling stolen food and, as a result, lost his job. The punishment was meant to deter others. Dube noted, however, that “nothing, not even death, could stop people dying of hunger from stealing.”¹⁴³ Zelkowicz decried the situation of a ghetto worker who was forced to steal because he did not have a minimum standard of living. He blamed this on the ghetto officialdom.¹⁴⁴

Generally, large-scale thefts were well organized and involved either the acquisition of very large amounts of food at one time or the constant “skimming” of food over a period of time. This kind of theft was usually enough to raise the thieves above starvation levels. Very often, organized or large-scale thefts took place within departments that directly handled food. At different points in the ghettos’ history, entire food departments, such as the meat provisioning departments, fell under suspicion. Whole food production sections would be involved in food theft. Margulis recorded his involvement in the theft of bread from a bakery in the Łódź ghetto. The theft was performed in cooperation with the bakers themselves. Although heavily guarded by police, who knew the number of bread loaves a sack of flour should yield, the bakers managed to come up with a way of adding more water to flour to make each flour sack yield an extra bread or two. The bakers then hid the extra loaves of bread, which were removed by Margulis when he cleaned the bakery attic. He would then smuggle the loaves to his apartment, where he divided the booty and distributed it to the bakers at their homes.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, bakers in the Kraków ghetto would skim the flour used to make ghetto bread. Then, at night, the bakers baked bread illicitly to be sold on the black market.¹⁴⁶ Berg’s father in the Warsaw ghetto was a building manager. He supported the family in part by providing entrance to their building to bakers who were illicitly baking bread at night.

This was a much smaller type of theft than the large-scale operations performed by professional thieves, such as those who might have pulled off the January 1941 theft in which ninety-one loaves of bread were stolen from a food distribution point.¹⁴⁷ If the theft of a single sack of flour necessitated the cooperation of Margulis, the bakers, and two police officers, then large-scale thefts would have involved bribery and a network of accomplices, as for example with a complicated theft of flour in

which the theft was disguised as a funeral. This theft was immortalized in ghetto song; as the song relates, the thieves were caught when the funeral wagon fell over and the three “corpses” that fell out turned out to be sacks of flour.¹⁴⁸

On a smaller scale, managers of food stores were notorious for short-weighting their customers’ rations. In fact, all dispensers of food items were accused privately or publicly of some sort of food theft. Those dispensing food in ghetto factories were also accused of giving smaller rations than required. Zelkowicz commented that the 50 g sausage ration for children working in the ghetto usually weighed 40 g.¹⁴⁹ There was even a term in the ghetto for a worker’s soup container that did not have the full allotment: *mamser’l*. It derives from the prewar term *mamser*, which means “bastard” in Yiddish, though in prewar Łódź, it also meant “a little extra.”¹⁵⁰

Kitchen theft was rampant. An anonymous girl writing in her diary recorded that her father, who was painting at a communal kitchen, reported on the sort of meals that the kitchen staff prepared for itself: “How do they get the ingredients? Of course, from our soups.”¹⁵¹ Arline T. Golkin, a scholar of hunger, notes that “stories of people in famine zones stealing food or plundering food shops are commonplace.”¹⁵² A song from the Łódź ghetto records the misdeeds of a soup kitchen worker who indulged in more than the minimum rations, relating, “Madam Wydzielaczka: You’re fat like a washtub.... For oil and for oatmeal you bought yourself a pair of silk stockings.... You’ve stolen some beets.”¹⁵³ Similarly, Cormac Ó Gráda notes the story from Irish famine folklore of two local women who were responsible for making and distributing soup during the famine. They “gave the first and thinnest part of the gruel to the people, while they kept the thicker part at the bottom of the pot for themselves.”¹⁵⁴

Ghetto officials regularly took advantage of their positions to obtain extra food rations, in ways other than directly stealing from distribution points. In many cases, these officials targeted the most vulnerable. In a speech on December 20, 1941, Rumkowski cited a scandal whereby patients and hospital staff were stealing medicines and meals from hospital patients.¹⁵⁵ One year later, on December 20, 1942, Rosenfeld recorded a sketch of a ghetto doctor who took away the bread and food ration cards of those about to die.¹⁵⁶ He was not the only official to steal ration cards from the dead: A ghetto song tells of an administration secretary who did not pass on death certificates to the authorities, withholding them so that she could live off the food and bread rations of the dead.¹⁵⁷ Accusations were also made that food was stolen from food packages sent to the ghetto through the post office. Kaplan in his

Warsaw diary even speculated: “Food packages are always minus some of their contents. Sometimes a quarter, sometimes a third, sometimes half is missing. The cynics claim that the clerks eat their breakfasts from the open parcels of their customers, but it is possible that their Aryan superiors are doing the stealing. Aryanism cannot protect one from the urge to steal.”¹⁵⁸

Prosecution of Theft and Smuggling in the Ghettos

According to a song in the Łódź ghetto, “The one who has will eat double portions, And the one who has not—will chew on a bone.”¹⁵⁹ Many of the petty thefts and smuggling operations in all three ghettos were carried out by individuals merely seeking a bone to chew on – meaning those who were doing it to stave off starvation. Often those already entitled to a double portion were engaged in larger operations, organizing large-scale thefts or smuggling enterprises. Since bribery was often key to avoiding prosecution from theft or smuggling, those who had these large operations were often not subject to punishment.

Punishments for theft and smuggling varied over time in the ghettos, and the entity capturing a person might determine their fate.¹⁶⁰ In the Warsaw ghetto, the ghetto police would sometimes deal with the thief. In one case, Moszek Goldfeder confessed to stealing a loaf of bread and consuming it out of hunger as he ran. He “apologized to his victim and promised to mend his ways.”¹⁶¹ Sometimes one of these “grabber” thefts on the streets was addressed by the surrounding crowd of witnesses with a thorough beating of the thief or an attempt to get compensation for the victim. The poorest thieves, however, had no resources to offer in compensation. Jails and tribunals in all three ghettos dealt with offenses like petty theft or smuggling.

Two cases in the Warsaw ghetto were juxtaposed in the newspaper: One was the story of Josek M., who ordered tea and bread at a cheap restaurant and then confessed he couldn’t pay. He was given the chance to repay the debt when he found work. In another case, Rubin Z. enjoyed an extravagant meal at a fancy Warsaw ghetto establishment and was unable to pay. For this offense, he was referred to the Polish police.¹⁶² In the Łódź ghetto, a Summary Court was established that was meant to end crime in the ghetto. Those who stood before it ranged from a tailor who absentmindedly took a piece of thread from his workplace to the chairman of the Summary Court himself. The tailor had some thread on his shoulder so that it would be easily available but, forgetting, put his jacket on over it. He was “caught stealing” and sentenced to dismissal from work and three months of prison and hard labor. Additionally, his

family was denied relief money and thus had to suffer with the “guilty.”¹⁶³ The end result was that workers and their families were condemned to starvation. The chairman of the Summary Court was arrested after evidence surfaced of his having taken bribes, thus ending the period of the Summary Court.¹⁶⁴

These courts also had to deal with smuggling. In the case of the Warsaw ghetto, the most famous punishments were the executions carried out in November and December 1941 for smuggling, shortly after it was declared a capital offense. These were done by Polish police after the Jewish police refused to carry out the sentence. Warsaw ghetto chronicler Shimon Huberband related in detail how the trial and executions took place. According to him, there was no real trial or anyone to represent the defense, and the smugglers who were condemned were all young people under the age of 40 who were just trying to survive.¹⁶⁵ Ultimately, in all three ghettos, the ghetto prisons filled up with smugglers and thieves who were mostly imprisoned for crimes committed from hunger. When deportations out of the ghettos began in 1942, those who were in the prisons were among the first to be deported.

Conclusion

While licit food access and sources varied across ghettos and time periods, the amount of food made available by the Germans to the Jews in the ghetto was almost always insufficient to stave off hunger. Illicit food access was a key factor in survival in the ghettos. Smuggling, theft, and the black market were all means of obtaining additional food in the three ghettos, but all of these methods were also, at various times in each ghetto’s duration, activities that could be punished in a lethal manner. Obtaining food outside of legal means was necessary to survive but potentially deadly.

Illicit food access in the ghetto created a space for survival and food access, which enabled individuals who might otherwise have been consigned to starvation to obtain food and survive. For example, through theft, individuals were able to increase their food allotment without trading capital. It is for this reason that theft was quite common across various famines. Theft in the ghetto, however, came with great risk as being caught could result in deadly punishment. In the Łódź ghetto, for example, petty thefts that were punished with deportations. It also had the ability to change the circumstances of another person who did have resources and endanger their lives. Ultimately, many took the risk, in the ghettos and in other famines, because it was the only way to avoid death by starvation.

Similarly, Jews with some resources were able to obtain much more through risking their life and engaging in smuggling outside the ghetto. While this risk taking could transform someone's circumstances, it could also lead to being subjected to violence. In the Warsaw ghetto, where food was extremely scarce, Jews crossed in and out of the ghetto illegally to obtain food. In this process, they met with beatings, imprisonment, and ultimately a death sentence was carried out on food smugglers. Various smugglers struggled with the need for food versus the risk of death. The lack of food led to a robust black market that was not static. It was affected by deportations, tightening of restrictions on food, crackdowns on illicit activity, and other measures. This meant that while an individual or family might be able to supplement their food resources early in the ghetto period, prices and access became increasingly prohibitive toward its end. The selling and buying of food resources in a community where starvation loomed is typical of famine situations. All black-market purchases resulted in someone trading their possessions for food. Those with more were able to obtain more food or better quality food while those becoming more and more vulnerable were often forced to sell better quality food items to obtain greater quantity. The black market in a sense was the embodiment of the economic disparities in the ghetto.

9 Labor and Food in the Ghettos

A red “work permit”
A yellow “Kennkarte” in hand
Grab the Kennkarte and flee with your life
If the guard will let you pass!
For there’s no life for a Jew in the ghetto,
If the right to get out is denied
If fate throws him into the ghetto
Of hunger, in no time he’ll die.¹

– Gustava Steindig-Lindberg

Labor in the ghettos was an area where communal survival strategies and individual survival strategies intersected. On the communal level, the Germans demanded that the Jewish communal leadership provide workers and keep those workers fed. The Jewish communal leadership struggled in various ways to feed the whole ghetto population while meeting German labor demands. On the individual level, ghetto inhabitants sought employment to both meet their nutritional needs and protect themselves from deportation. Unfortunately most jobs did not both protect against deportation and provide enough income to meet one’s nutritional needs. As a result, numerous ghetto dwellers engaged in strategies of changing from job to job or mobilizing households to cover both needs. Ultimately, in all three ghettos, control over food supply was removed from the Jewish leadership, and only Jewish laborers in the ghettos were deemed worthy of food. This meant that obtaining food and avoiding deportation were linked to labor.

Labor in the Three Ghettos

Labor played a different role in each of the three ghettos. In the case of Kraków, only 25 percent of the prewar Jewish population was permitted to move into the Kraków ghetto, with the remainder forced into ghettos in the surrounding region. To receive permission to stay in the Kraków ghetto, most individuals had to demonstrate that they were employed

and needed to remain in or near the city. This meant that unlike in Łódź or Warsaw, where all Jews in the city regardless of employment or ability to support oneself were forced into the ghetto, in Kraków it was predominantly workers who were permitted into the ghetto. Additionally, since a great deal of that work happened outside the ghetto, at least initially, the ghetto was not as reliant on German food supply. Residents were able to supply themselves with food from outside the ghetto.

In the case of the Łódź ghetto, the lack of smuggling and inability of the workers to leave and enter the ghetto meant that the ghetto was largely reliant on German food deliveries. As a result, the Jewish community needed to pay for the food entering the ghetto through the *Transferstelle* (transfer office) with labor and/or finished products. This forced the communal leadership, with support from the German ghetto administration, to find ways to put the population to work. Łódź, a pre-war industrial city with a large number of skilled laborers, transformed into a production behemoth. The ghetto leader Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski employed a strategy of labor in exchange for food and longevity. The Central Bureau of Factories was added to the Jewish ghetto administration in Łódź in October 1940. By December 1942, 7,000 machines were operating in the ghetto.² By 1943, approximately 80,000 ghetto inhabitants were employed, and Hans Biebow could boast of 18,000 machines.³

In the Warsaw ghetto, the *Transferstelle*, which was to supply the ghetto with its official food resources, in fact provided so little in terms of food that the ghetto population was largely fed through other means. By July 1941, the ghetto was even able to bypass the *Transferstelle* in order to obtain food. Without this pressure to trade labor to the Germans for food, the Warsaw ghetto population was not largely employed in official capacities. Although it had approximately 173,000 individuals of working age as of September 1941, only 50,000–60,000 people at the time were employed, including an estimated 15,000 people working in illicit avenues.⁴ The German authorities in the spring of 1941 began to seek ways to employ a greater percentage of the Jewish population.⁵ By June 1942, just before the Great Deportation, an estimated 80,000–95,000 people in Warsaw were employed.⁶ Only productive employment shielded Warsaw ghetto inhabitants from deportation.

Forced Labor

From the very beginning of the Nazi invasion, the Germans demanded Jewish labor. Prior to the creation of the ghettos, Jews were rounded up off the streets for forced labor. Eventually, in all three cities, labor offices

under the auspices of the Judenrat were established and made responsible for supplying labor. After the ghettos were created, the Germans continued to demand Jews to serve as day laborers and to be sent to labor camps. Those sent to forced labor for the day or the labor camps were subject to horrific conditions. Each of the three ghettos targeted those otherwise unemployed for forced labor. In part, they managed to keep track of the unemployed by requiring everyone to register for food rations and welfare benefits. A portion of those people who were unemployed were so by choice; their families were able to support them, and so they did not work. These individuals often did not have to do forced labor. Buying one's way out of forced labor was an official option in Warsaw and unofficially practiced elsewhere, with individuals paying others to go to forced labor in their stead. This meant that those engaged in forced labor were often those without resources to avoid it.

Although employment in workshops or factories might not pay particularly well or provide sufficient food, its conditions were not as terrible as those of forced day-labor assignments, which were often completed under brutal conditions and without food. Kraków ghetto survivor Henry Brauner was forced to do snow removal, chipping ice from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.⁷ Hard labor expends a great deal of calories. Forced labor was therefore particularly brutal for those who were already food insecure and most likely to be seized for this type of work. Those subjected to forced labor in the Warsaw ghetto did not receive a meal and were only paid 2.8 zloty for their day's work, an amount that was not enough to survive on.⁸ Even more difficult was outdoor forced labor during the winter as being outside in the cold expends a great deal of calories. For those who were already quite hungry, hard labor in the Polish winter might be a death sentence.

Forced labor might also be entirely uncompensated. Pauline Buchenholz recalled that her father's forced labor in Kraków was not compensated, but while working alongside train tracks he was able to collect bits of coal, which her mother sold in the ghetto.⁹ In the Kraków ghetto, numerous survivors recalled incidents where they were subject to forced labor. Halina Nelken was fortunate to be fed a small lunch while on a forced labor assignment of tidying army barracks: "a soup consisting of kasha, macaroni, and a tiny bit of meat."¹⁰ More often, however, those engaged in forced labor found themselves to be the targets of abuse.

In addition to facing official forced labor assignments – and despite the labor offices meant to prevent abuses – people were regularly rounded up off the ghetto streets for unofficial, uncompensated forced labor. Chaim Hasenfus, an accountant before the war, was accosted in the Warsaw ghetto by a German officer to do a small forced labor job. According to

Hasenfus, "I was going down Walicówa Street when a German soldier struck me on the head with his rubber nightstick and ordered me, along with several other Jews, to load gravel onto a truck. The work lasted half an hour."¹¹

In the Warsaw ghetto, the wealthy could often buy their way out of forced labor camps. In the Łódź ghetto, some people actually volunteered to go, in the belief that it might be better than the ghetto and provide more food. Łódź ghetto diarist Hersz Fogel noted, "The registration of men volunteering for work on the railway in Poznań is taking place. 200 people leave today, they had to undergo a medical examination first. There's quite a lot of volunteers. No wonder, everyone wants to escape from this hunger-stricken camp in search of luck and, most importantly, food at some job [outside the ghetto]."¹²

To stave off starvation, some individuals not only volunteered for labor camps but also took on dangerous jobs, temporarily, that provided more food. Removing waste from the Łódź ghetto was one such dangerous job that provided extra food. As one former fecalist described it:

The work of the fecalist was backbreaking and dangerous, and ultimately fatal, because we were always exposed to the germs of typhus and other contagious diseases. Yet death by starvation was such an immediate concern that it canceled out the fear of contagion and it tempted hundreds of people, even children[,] to undertake the job. A fecalist received an additional portion of soup every day and sometimes an additional food ration, which staved off death for a while.¹³

Josef Zelkowicz related a story told by a Łódź ghetto mother about the fate of her son, who "couldn't bear to watch how his mother and father were starving, how his younger brothers and sisters were starving. So he signed up for dirty labor and brought home two marks every day, Yes, two marks and a raging case of tuberculosis."¹⁴ Eventually this job became a punishment assignment meted out by ghetto courts.

Work Outside the Ghettos

With the creation of the ghettos, a greater number of Jews were put to work for the German authorities. However, in the early period of the ghettos, employers from outside the ghetto were able to keep their workers either through lodging them outside the ghetto or through having them move between the city and the ghetto to do their work. For example, the police order establishing the Łódź ghetto published in the *Lodscher Zeitung* stated that employers could petition to keep those Jews who were irreplaceable and necessary for economic reasons.¹⁵ In Kraków, the ghetto's Arbeitsamt (Labor Office) provided

stamps for the identification cards (Kennkarte) of people working outside the walls of the ghetto.¹⁶ The ability to continue working outside the ghetto had multiple benefits, including access to food at the lower, nonghetto prices.

Work outside the ghetto was short-lived in Łódź. In the Warsaw and Kraków ghettos, however, many individuals were employed outside the ghetto. Those working in such positions were given permits that gave them the ability to enter and exit the ghetto. Sometimes those working outside the ghetto were helping run their former businesses. Anna Ware's father had owned a tannery business in Kraków before the war. When Jews were no longer able to own businesses, he made an arrangement with friends who took over the business and hired Anna's father and other relatives as "essential workers." This provided Anna's family with the ability to remain in Kraków and, when outside of the ghetto for work, obtain adequate food for the family.¹⁷ At other times, Jews were able to secure jobs outside of the ghetto due to specific artisan skills. For example, Joseph Bau's mother, an expert hatmaker, worked in a shop outside the Kraków ghetto, which provided her with a pass to leave the ghetto. She used this mobility to obtain food for her family.¹⁸ Anna Heilman's father

registered as a wood carver. And as such, he got work in the German military cemetery, which was situated outside of the ghetto.... And he was able to bring from outside food, which was wonderful. We had again bread. Sometimes we had tomato, and potatoes, and whatever it is that he could. And with this pass, he was allowed to bring those things. And this helped us in terms of food.¹⁹

Additionally, many workers who worked in factories outside of the ghetto were fed a midday meal. Sylvia G., who worked at Kabelwerk, noted that the meals at the factory were better than what was available in the ghetto because there was no difference between the meals given to Jewish and non-Jewish workers.²⁰

Some positions, by virtue of what was done, required exiting the ghetto. Ziuta Grunhut's father, Mr. Grynberg, used his position in the Construction Department outside the ghetto to smuggle items in and out, including once a chicken that he brought into the ghetto by stuffing it in his pants.²¹ Those whose jobs gave them a permit to enter and exit often used it to procure food outside the ghetto at cheaper rates than inside the ghetto. Jan Rozanski had a work permit that allowed him to leave the ghetto at will, and he used it to buy fresh fruit and vegetables at shops on the Aryan side of Kraków.²²

A number of workers had positions in factories that were located outside the ghetto, particularly in Kraków. Those who had positions

outside the ghetto were able to obtain food there, either for immediate consumption or for smuggling into the ghetto. Kuba Beck worked in a factory outside the Kraków ghetto walls. He recalled, "Working outside the ghetto gave me an opportunity to smuggle some food in once in a while.... I brought in a few potatoes, some bread, a piece of cheese. It was very little but it helped."²³ Stella Müller-Madej's mother, Berta Müller, worked at a button factory that was headed by Frau Holzinger, a German who had lived with Stella's relatives the Grünbergs. Holzinger brought packages to the office that helped sustain Stella's family.²⁴ Alice Hemar, a Warsaw ghetto survivor, recalled, "We were working on the other side of the ghetto and coming back home. We had a chance to buy—to bring food to the ghetto. So I can consider myself a smuggler, and I don't mind."²⁵

Hierarchy of Work

There was a hierarchy of positions in the ghetto. Those at the very top included the high-level ghetto administration, which in Kraków and Łódź provided a salary and access to resources. In Warsaw, such positions were often unremunerated but provided protection from deportation and access to resources. Below that were positions that paid sufficiently in money and/or supplemental food to prevent starvation for an individual and their family, and that offered protection from deportation. These positions were rare in Łódź but more prevalent in Warsaw and Kraków. Beneath that were positions that either provided enough food or protected an individual from deportation – but not both. These positions might involve significant labor, which made the food supplements only sufficient to keep the individual from starving. Finally, a hodgepodge of jobs did not provide sufficient cash or food for survival and offered little protection during deportations. Those people who worked these jobs had low survival rates and had to find other, usually illicit, means to prevent death from starvation. Some of those who survived through illicit means existed in the ghetto without being officially registered, as only those who were officially registered and officially unemployed were subject to forced labor. Living in ghettos without being officially registered was a difficult and dangerous thing to do. Not only were such people ineligible for a ration card, but they were also subject to arrest and deportation if caught. As a result, for many in the ghetto, work had the dual purpose of providing protection from deportation and providing food. For those without valuables to exchange for food, it was the primary – or even, in some cases, the sole – means of getting something to eat.

Employment in the ghetto could help one obtain food in multiple ways: the income from working provided a means to purchase food, the employment sometimes meant free lunches or supplemental rations, and certain types of work came with the opportunity to obtain food. Supplemental rations or special soup kitchens were provided for many occupations in the ghetto including those employed in the Judenrat bureaucracy, particularly specialized positions like police, cemetery workers, and medical personnel as well as those who worked for workshops or factories that produced goods for German civilians and military. The ability to obtain food on the job or through opportunities provided by one's position also led to many being able to access additional food such as those who cleaned buildings or were involved in food distribution. In the case of Kraków and Warsaw, those employed by various civilian businesses outside the ghetto were often provided food at the job or the opportunity to obtain extra food outside the ghetto walls.

At different points in the existence of the ghettos, work positions determined who was eligible to stay – that is, who could avoid deportation. Sometimes positions that were among the best at the beginning of the ghetto no longer offered protections. Eventually, only those positions that served German military interests were allowed to persist. For example, in May 1942, a registration was conducted in the Kraków ghetto, during which those who had trades were given stamps on their Kennkarte, and those who were unemployed or had white-collar professions were denied the stamp. This registration was followed by a mass deportation the next month, when those without the stamp were rounded up and deported.²⁶ Jews' continued existence in the ghetto, individually and collectively, became linked with labor.

Social Networks and Jobs

Due to the importance of employment to surviving in the ghetto and often to obtaining food, getting a job was essential. A nine-year-old in the Łódź ghetto, Sarenka Lewi, drew that connection between food and a job when she petitioned the Łódź ghetto leader Rumkowski to help her mother get a job:

Good Mr. Chairman,

My name is Sarenka Lewi. I am 9 years old. My daddy works very hard, but he cannot feed our family. Aside from dried bread and soup from the soup kitchen, we do not have anything else. Dear Mr. Chairman, please put in a good word at the hat-making workshop to give my Mommy a job. Good Grandpa, have mercy on hungry Sarenka and write such a letter. I am very tired now.... I would like so much to survive the war.

Sarenka Lewi

June 8, 1941²⁷

Having the skills for a position was often not enough. Many in the ghetto mentioned the significance of having someone important who would support one's application for a position. Individuals with connections to Judenrat leadership, or to other influential people in the ghetto, used these relationships to obtain work. Kraków ghetto survivor Leon Fruchtmann used his influential connections from his work as an "office boy" to get a job in the Kraków ghetto shoveling potatoes. The benefit of shoveling potatoes was that he could get extra potatoes to help feed his family.²⁸ Sometimes people resorted to bribery to obtain a job.²⁹ Bribes could be as simple as gifting an item, making a payment, or trading a favor.

Work in the Ghetto

Community Employees: Bureaucrats, Food Service, and Police

Working for the Jewish ghetto administration was an important means of obtaining extra food rations. For all those who worked in the Judenrat bureaucracy, the pay was not very high. Even Judenrat leaders were not earning very much. In Kraków, they were paid only the equivalent of twenty loaves of bread per month, while in the Warsaw ghetto, some Judenrat leaders served without pay. One advantage the ghetto workers did enjoy, though, was work meals. All three ghettos had kitchens for employees of the community administration. In Warsaw, for example, this kitchen served meals for one zloty.³⁰ In both the Łódź and Warsaw ghettos, special stores allowed designated employees of the Judenrat to receive special distributions of items. Fogel, writing in his Łódź ghetto diary, complained that those entitled to these special rations, "received coupons for 5 marks: 1 kg of potatoes, 10 decagrams of sugar, 10 decagrams of butter, 10 decagrams of rye flakes, 15 decagrams of pork sausage. The poor worker, on the other hand, should die of starvation, since he's not entitled to anything!"³¹ Given the low salaries and the opportunities provided by their positions, it is not surprising that some Judenrat employees used their positions to supplement their incomes.

Sometimes, as in the case of food handlers, community employment meant the opportunity to eat a little extra. As one Łódź ghetto vegetable division worker noted in his diary, "It's impossible to die of hunger at the vegetable square—one can always eat a carrot here or a beetroot there. We are allowed to eat; it's only forbidden to take food home."³² Similarly, kitchen staff in the Łódź ghetto received four daily soups until May 5, 1942.³³ In addition, the staffs of the kitchens were

notorious for stealing from the kitchens.³⁴ In all the ghettos, people complained about the widespread corruption throughout the ranks of the Jewish ghetto administrations.

One group of community employees who were particularly blamed for corruption was the Jewish ghetto police force. In particular, the Warsaw ghetto police were widely accused of taking bribes. This is unsurprising because in Warsaw, unlike in Łódź and Kraków, the Jewish police worked without pay in the ghetto. However, the police in all the ghettos did enjoy many other privileges. Not only were they and their families exempt from deportations, they had more freedom of movement than did others. Marcel Grüner's father's position as a Kraków ghetto police officer entitled him to a permanent pass to go into the city of Kraków from the ghetto.³⁵ The police were also given higher rations than were the general public. In the Warsaw ghetto, in June 1941, they began receiving "Aryan" bread rations. In January 1942, they received an extra ration card for twelve kilograms of bread per month. All three ghetto police had their own kitchens.³⁶ In the Kraków ghetto, the police even supplied the black market due to their ability to enter and exit the ghetto.³⁷ Anatole Chari, a Sonderkommando member in the Łódź ghetto, noted that one of his jobs involved supervising and guarding food production. On one assignment he guarded the sauerkraut manufacturer, which discarded the outer leaves of cabbage as "waste." As a benefit of his job, he was able to take a huge duffle bag of cabbage leaves at the end of the day. He brought them to his grandparents, who turned them into sauerkraut to be eaten over the course of the winter.³⁸

Not all community positions protected against hunger. Many bureaucrats below the level of department manager did not receive sufficient food for survival. Even privileged positions like police and fire brigade did not guarantee against hunger. Jacob M., a member of the fire brigade in the Łódź ghetto, recalled that "I, too, was at one time so run down from hunger that I barely could do my duties as fireman. I was twice brought home in a state of collapse. When I looked at myself in the mirror, at times I saw death before my eyes." Jacob's inability to buy food to supplement the rations was tied to his salary. He earned three ghetto marks per day as a fireman, but "the cost of a loaf of bread on the black market [was] 1,300 marks."³⁹

In the later period of the ghettos' existence, these social and cultural services were curtailed or halted altogether. By mid-1942, Łódź began to transform into a labor camp. Only labor in factories or jobs deemed essential to the war effort could save individuals from deportation. Similarly, in Warsaw and Kraków, most support positions were no longer

available, and only work in a factory or other type of production job for the Germans protected against deportation.

Factory Work

A great deal of the work in the ghetto was in factories or workshops, which were run by either German firms or the ghetto itself. This work of creating finished products was extremely important: in both Łódź and Warsaw, the finished products produced in ghetto factories and workshops were one of the main sources of funding to purchase food for the ghetto. To that end, various attempts were made to keep workers better fed than the general population. This policy was to protect productivity against inefficient labor due to starvation. Many ghetto workshops and German factory owners with enterprises in or adjacent to a ghetto fed their workers at the place of work. In the Łódź ghetto, “at the workshops, the tailors who make sewing jobs for the military receive double rations of bread.”⁴⁰ In Warsaw, German manufacturers with operations in the ghetto requested that the Jewish ghetto administration provide meals for their workers.⁴¹ In the Kraków ghetto, when she was working as a seamstress, Gusta Rubinfeld received soup and bread at work.⁴²

In various ghetto jobs, workers were given supplemental meals as well as being fed a meal during work. Many workers would share their supplemental meals with family and smuggle home portions of the food they were given at work. Eventually supplemental meals for workers were distributed at work, and the workers were required to consume all of the food rather than take anything home to their families. Feeding workers at work also had the advantage of ensuring that the workers ate the meals themselves and had the strength to work. For example, without sufficient supplemental food, workers in the Warsaw ghetto were fainting in the workshops from hunger.⁴³

In many positions, although supplemental rations or midday meals were offered to employees, the rations provided simply were not enough to sustain the workers. An anonymous girl writing in her diary in the Łódź ghetto in February 1942 noted that her mother, brother, and sister all worked in the Saddler workshop, where “they get 15 dkg [decagrams] of bread and 5 dkg of sausage,” and additionally, “they bring 20 dkg of bread from home” to supplement their midday meal. The girl noted that “this is their food for the entire day and they work very hard.” Her father, a painter for the Construction Department, got a watery soup that he supplemented with twenty-five decagrams of bread from home. Despite the supplements that the working members of her family received, they were all hungry and losing weight.⁴⁴

Sometimes workers rebelled because the supplements were insufficient or taken away. On January 21, 1941, it was announced that supplemental bread rations for manual laborers were to be stopped in the Łódź ghetto to enable a 33 percent rise in rations to the whole ghetto population, which for the workers meant an effective reduction of 33 percent in bread rations.⁴⁵ The carpenters of the ghetto reacted with a sit-in strike, insisting that they could not perform heavy labor on the food they received and demanding more food.⁴⁶ The ghetto police were called in to disperse the strikers, but some workers erected a barricade and threw things at the police. The strike, which was broken by the Order Police resulted in many arrests and the closing of all the factories to prevent the spreading of unrest. Despite this caution, the grave diggers went on strike on January 26, 1941.⁴⁷ It is not surprising that this sort of protest occurred in Łódź, where the workers of the city were already quite organized.

Rumkowski used food to manipulate the carpenters into returning to work. Just after the strike, he offered fifty-eight decagrams of meat and two kilograms of potatoes to those who were working as an attempt to get the workers to return to their posts by the day of the distribution, one week after the start of the strike.⁴⁸ He also promised to improve the food situation of the workers to the best of his abilities. One of the promises was that Rumkowski would distribute meat and sausage, which he could only obtain in small quantities, to workers. Apparently, this had some effect as by January 29, 1941, some carpenters had returned to work. By February 1, all the carpenters decided to return to work.⁴⁹

The end of the Carpenters' Strike did not signal the end of unrest in the ghetto. Less than a month later, on February 24, 1941, as a tailor shop was being inspected, the workers began chanting, "Bread! Bread!" Rumkowski responded by closing down the shop.⁵⁰ A few weeks after that, on March 6, a seven-hundred-person-strong demonstration was organized to protest against the administration. The demonstrators' demands included an increase in rations, wages, and relief payments, decreases in the price of products, the removal of supplemental rations for high-ranking officials, free laundries for the poor, and the establishment of bathing and disinfection facilities.⁵¹ Numerous individual industries would again from time to time demand food ration increases, but the suppression of the Carpenters' Strike marked the end of large-scale demonstrations in the ghetto, especially violent resistance. Future "strikes" were often inversions of the previous food riots. For example, Jakub Poznanski recorded a strike in the tailoring workshop organized in response to the foreman who slapped and fired

four workers for little reason. As their form of protest, the strikers “refused to eat the soup due to them.”⁵²

Piecework

In addition to salaried factory work, a great deal of piecework was done in the ghettos. Unfortunately, piecework neither provided extra food (it was often done from home) nor paid particularly well. In the Kraków ghetto, Nelken described a piecework broom factory in which she briefly worked in October 1941. Each brush or broom that a worker produced earned them fifty groszy. According to Nelken, “The best, most experienced workers produce up to thirty brooms daily, about fifteen zloty, hardly the price of a loaf of bread.” Nelken only managed to finish one broom in the course of an hour.⁵³ The work, however, appears to have provided protection against unemployment, which in turn protected them from deportation or forced labor. As a result, despite the paltry remuneration, it was a sought-after occupation.⁵⁴ It was not just adults trying to obtain enough food to eat who made piecework brushes. Older children in orphanages were tasked with making brushes to help support the orphanage and supplement the charity collected on their behalf.⁵⁵

Private Employment and Supplemental Work

In addition to official positions, the ghettos had a wide-ranging private market for employment opportunities. Sometimes these were primary jobs, and at other times they were supplementary to another position. In her memoir of the Łódź ghetto, Lucille Eichengreen described her initial meeting with Shlomo Berkowicz, who worked in a lumberyard where he got an extra bowl of soup and sold items from a pushcart to supplement his income.⁵⁶ In the Warsaw ghetto, except for those in charge of wards, doctors at hospitals were not paid but rather earned money by seeing private patients. However, not all medical professionals were able to adequately sustain themselves through these side practices. One patient in the Warsaw ghetto complained that she could not stand visiting her doctor due to his complaints about malnutrition and his habit of wondering about their survival.⁵⁷ In the Łódź ghetto, which had to recruit doctors from Warsaw due to a shortage, doctors received payment and supplemental rations. Such incentives were not universal, however. People who had been medical students before the war were able to practice medicine but received a lower salary and no supplemental food rations.⁵⁸

Sometimes private employment was not just a supplement but the main means of support. Numerous individuals worked in the ghetto's private sector. Rabbinical scholars, for example, were supported by their followers or through private lessons. Privately run businesses also existed in the ghetto, including food distribution points, bakeries, nightclubs, private gambling establishments, brothels, restaurants, and goods shops.⁵⁹ Some individuals plied a trade or craft. For example, Bernard Offen's neighbor in the ghetto repaired shoes, and Leon Leyson's brother Tsalig repaired hot plates and electrical items.⁶⁰ Ultimately, however, much of the private economy disappeared after the mass deportations of nonworking Jews during 1942.

There were also domestic workers in the ghetto. Erica Ringelblum's mother tried to feed her children by washing clothes in exchange for soup in the Warsaw ghetto. This occupation was already low paying before the war and reveals the family's destitute state. It also reveals, however, that others in the ghetto had the means to spare a bowl of soup in order to avoid the labor of cleaning clothes. Erica's mother would drink some of the soup and then pass the bowl to each of her children to drink from.⁶¹ Those with means could hire others for personal tasks and errands in the private ghetto economy. Leyson ran errands from time to time for a woman in the Kraków ghetto. After he ran one errand for her, she cut him a thick piece of bread and spread it thick with butter. Leyson, recognizing the value of this payment, brought it home to his mother, who divided up that bread among all the family members: "She scraped off the butter, cut the bread into thinner slices and then spread the butter on each smaller piece. The whole family shared this rare treat."⁶² The cost of that piece of bread with a smear of butter was easily more than a single member of his family made on a given day.

One means by which individuals supported themselves in the ghettos either entirely or in part was prostitution. Prostitution was not legal in any ghetto but persisted despite efforts to combat it, for example through a vice squad in Łódź that tried to quell the practice. Jacob M., a deportee from Hamburg into the Łódź ghetto, noted that when he first arrived in the ghetto, prostitution was intense. Women would prostitute themselves for bread. He related, "we were in the ghetto. For a slice of bread they would go into a yard or somewhere."⁶³ As in other times, prostitution was employed as a full-time occupation as well as a stop-gap measure for those who needed additional funds for short-term purposes. Sometimes people prostituted themselves for supplemental food to support someone who was sick. Erna Fridman recalled her friend Yozek's mother using her relationship with men to obtain food to save her sick son.⁶⁴

The cafés that catered to the wealthiest ghetto dwellers were one of the main spaces in which prostitutes solicited business in all three ghettos. In some cases, the café staff doubled as prostitutes. There were also prostitutes who worked in brothels, were managed by pimps, or sold themselves on the streets. The rapid improvisation of Jews in the ghetto led to new populations engaging in the sex trade. As Katarzyna Person notes of the Warsaw ghetto, “with time prewar street prostitutes were being gradually replaced by middle-class girls and women who, especially as a result of the absence of male wage earners in their families, were increasingly finding themselves at the bottom of the ghetto hierarchy.”⁶⁵ The Oyneg Shabes Archive preserves the story of one young woman who turned to prostitution. Mrs. G., newly married a week before the war, was separated from her husband, who fled to the East. To support herself, she became a smuggler and a waitress. Eventually, she moved from being a waitress to a prostitute at a club to earn enough to support herself and her family. The Warsaw ghetto chronicler recording her story noted, “Now Mrs. G. makes erotic proposals to clients over a glass of vodka and she never fails to mention money. At the price of selling her body she is able to materially survive ... with her family.”⁶⁶

Hunger and Productivity

Hunger and starvation experienced by the Jews of the ghetto seriously impaired their ability to labor as these conditions led to weakness, illness, or death. Even if one’s work was inadequate, for many ghetto dwellers, it provided a means to obtain food, whether that was through payment for work, food at the place of employment, or an opportunity to obtain food. Many jobs, especially those in factories that served the Germans, provided supplemental meals during working hours.

As a result of the poor food situation, people often fell ill from work and missed days or were exhausted and came to work late. To combat this problem, supplemental rations for workers were sometimes made contingent on attendance at work. As one Łódź ghetto diarist noted, “The ration is available to everyone who was at work on July 1, the others can’t get it! So for example, someone who was absent on July 1, but got back to work on July 2, won’t receive the ration!”⁶⁷ Those workers who did not receive supplemental rations could find themselves in a deadly situation. Oskar Singer described a Dr. Edgar Fels, a fifty-year-old lawyer from Hamburg and a former officer in the army: “One day he came to work late and his boss deprived him of his soup ration as a punishment.”⁶⁸ Dr. Fels was never able to recover his strength after being deprived of his soup ration. He took to bed and died of hunger.

Adam Czerniaków, the head of the Warsaw ghetto, often tried to persuade the German ghetto administration of the need to pay workers sufficiently for their survival. He noted in his diary a conversation: "Auerswald maintains that a worker should labor at extracting bricks from the ruins all day for a bowl of soup. I remarked that he could also have a wife and children. Auerswald retorted that two bowls of soup might be made available."⁶⁹ The quote both highlights the German's belief that workers would do heavy labor in exchange for food and demonstrates a lack of understanding about the energy requirements of engaging in such labor as well as the possibility of feeding one's family as well as oneself.

In the Łódź ghetto, Rumkowski had workers cycle from their normal jobs to work in bakeries, where they could eat more and recover a bit from starvation. One survivor recalled a woman on such a temporary assignment: "In one bakery, there was a factory girl on temporary reassignment as a bookkeeper. It was a three month, rotating assignment to allow a factory worker to recoup a little bit."⁷⁰ Sometimes workers devised their own techniques for coping with hunger. A shoemaker and his son each received a soup at work for lunch. They shared one of the soups they received at work and saved the second soup to split for dinner.⁷¹

From Ghetto to Labor Camp

In all three ghettos, 1942 was a turning point during which mass deportations took the nonworking Jews to their deaths, leaving those engaged in production for the Germans and some support structures from the Judenrat to feed and police those who remained. In the Łódź ghetto, in an effort to save individuals from deportation, Rumkowski tried to place them in factory jobs. He instituted training workshops to teach the young factory skills. At one point, in June 1942, Biebow complained, "the Elder of the Jews has begun to sabotage the work systematically by removing good skilled workers from the factories ... and replacing them with children aged eight to fourteen who, of course, cannot do what is needed."⁷² After the mass deportations of nonworking Jews, the Łódź ghetto essentially became a labor camp. Even the few children left in the ghetto lived in an orphanage, with a sign reading "Home for the Young Worker."⁷³ This occurred at a time when labor needs for the Reich became acute. Nazi policy reflected this need. For example, by April 1943, the labor needs of the Reich had become severe enough that Aktion 14f13 (a murder campaign in concentration camps) was ordered to limit its killings to those prisoners who were actually insane.⁷⁴ Nazi food policy also reflected this need to preserve the

Table 9.1 *Daily food for workers and nonworkers in the Łódź ghetto*⁷⁵

	October 30, 1940	October 30, 1940	April 2, 1942	April 2, 1942	December 15, 1943
	Workers	Nonworkers	Workers	Nonworkers	Workers
Horsemeat	50 g	35.71 g	36 g	23 g	35.7 g
Fat	14.29 g	7.14 g	14 g	14 g	21.43
Sugar	21.43 g	10 g	32 g	3 g	32.14 g

labor force (see Table 9.1). Michal Unger, in her article, “The Status and Plight of Women in the Łódź Ghetto,” noted a decrease in mortality in 1943 that she attributed to a “slight improvement in nutrition.”⁷⁶

In Kraków, two deportations took place during 1942: June, which took away a large number of nonworking Jews, and October. After the second deportation, the Kraków ghetto was divided into the working (Ghetto A) and nonworking (Ghetto B) populations. The ranks of the unemployed grew when Jews in bad shape from small neighboring towns arrived without adequate clothing or material goods.⁷⁷ Ghetto B was already largely populated by poor people with nothing to live on, even before these Jews from the surrounding areas were added. Many from Ghetto B begged for food from the people in Ghetto A, across the barbed-wire fence. The Jews in Ghetto B were forbidden to leave their homes, but they were driven by hunger to seek food anyway. Eventually, the ghetto police nailed shut the doors and windows of their buildings so they could not get out. Food had to be brought in. According to Tadeusz Pankiewicz, “the OD [ghetto police] fed them like wild animals in cages. They lunged for the food and swallowed whole chunks without chewing; a second later, there wasn’t a single crumb left.”⁷⁸ In the end, the unemployed of the ghetto were deported to their deaths in Belzec, while those in Ghetto A were marched off to Płaszów labor camp.

In Warsaw, the great deportation of July to September 1942 resulted in the bulk of the nonworking population and many individuals considered to be nonessential workers being sent to their deaths. The rump remnant was essentially a labor camp. The Warsaw ghetto was transformed into a space where Jews engaged in production for the Nazis for most of the day.

Conclusion

Amartya Sen’s entitlement theory notes various forms of entitlement bundles. In the ghettos, labor was one of the most central items that

could be traded for food. Nazi policy required Jews to work but did not always provide remuneration or sufficient compensation to allow one to eat well enough to do the labor. Some jobs that did provide enough resources for food did not protect against deportation. Individuals and households used various employment strategies to meet their needs for adequate food and protection. This might mean switching between jobs, engaging social networks to obtain employment, or having a single household member obtain excess food. It was not only individuals and households that were tasked with balancing the needs of providing labor to the Germans and feeding working and nonworking ghetto inhabitants. Jewish leadership in the ghettos also used multiple techniques to balance this problem. Ultimately, however, the Germans took control of food out of the hands of the communal leadership in order to prioritize labor.

10 Deportations and the End of the Ghettos

Although not yet dead, those about to be deported had their bread and other items stolen from them by police officers.¹ Those supervising deportations stole not only from those leaving the ghetto but also from those entering the ghetto:

The train came to a halt in an open field. The coupé doors were flung open. Tired, weary, suitcase in hand, rucksack on their backs, a bundle under their arms, more than a thousand human beings dragged themselves down the running board, stepping into deep sewage, morass, water. It was autumn, a Polish-Russian autumn. Gestapo in field-gray uniforms drove them on. "Move! Run! Run" the blond, well-nourished boys shouted. Unforgettable was the one with a reddish stubble beard and reddish eyebrows, stinging eyes, a rattling voice. He yelled at the new arrivals, "Run, you Jewish swine."²

This was the way Oskar Rosenfeld, a Jewish author and journalist from Prague, described his arrival in the Łódź ghetto in October 1941, concluding that he and his fellow deportees were in such shock on arrival, "they even forgot that they had almost nothing to eat for a day and a night."³ Deportations into and out of the ghettos were significant events that disrupted life in the ghetto. Deportations into the ghetto resulted in displaced people who needed to find housing, work, and food. An influx of deportees also created strains on ghetto resources, as the Germans often did not provide additional resources to meet the needs of the newcomers. Deportations might also affect food prices on the black market and disrupt family and social connections, including changing family support dynamics. The desire to avoid deportation out of the ghetto also played a role in people's decisions about jobs, creating, in some cases, a balancing act between work that paid enough to eat and work that allowed one to avoid deportation.

Prior to 1942, deportations took place from the various ghettos to forced labor camps. The brutal conditions and poor survival rates of deportees meant that strategies to avoid deportation were developed before deportations to the death camps began.



Figure 10.1 A German supervises the boarding of Jews onto trains during a deportation action in the Kraków ghetto. Photo credit: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Archiwum Dokumentacji Mechanicznej

During 1942, all three ghettos experienced mass deportations of non-working individuals and individuals accused of being criminals to extermination camps. In each city, there were major deportations running from January 1942 to October 1942, which resulted in many nonworking individuals being sent to an extermination camp. In Łódź, the first wave of deportations ran from January to May, sending over 50,000 Jews or approximately one-third of the ghetto population to Chelmno extermination camp (Vernichtungslager Kulmhof). In Kraków, the deportation in June sent one-third to one-half of the ghetto population, nearly 7,000 Jews, to Belzec extermination camp. In Warsaw, mass deportations to Treblinka began at the end of July and ended in September, resulting in the deaths of approximately 300 thousand Jews or over 75 percent of the ghetto. After this mass deportation from Warsaw, the ghetto fundamentally transformed. The remaining population of 70,000 focused on labor for the Germans, and what remained of the Judenrat was focused on supporting labor output and feeding the population. The Kraków and Łódź ghettos followed suit, with deportations that transformed them into small, labor-focused ghettos. In September

1942, a mass deportation of over 15,000 Jews, primarily children and elderly, took place from the Łódź ghetto. Known as the Szpera, the deportation left just under 90,000 people in the Łódź ghetto and significantly affected its population and character. In October 1942, approximately half of those remaining in the Kraków ghetto were transported to Belzec. Many of the Judenrat leadership were killed or deported at that time. Shortly afterward, in the final months of the ghetto's existence, it was split into two sections, and heavy restrictions were placed not only on entering and exiting the ghetto but also on passing from one side of the ghetto to the other. In the end, people were slowly moved from the Kraków ghetto into the Płaszów concentration camp. Those not selected for Płaszów were sent to the Belzec death camp or killed. Shortly after the liquidation of the Kraków ghetto, the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto began, following a false start in January 1943 as a violent rebellion broke out, and then the Warsaw ghetto uprising of April and May. The liquidation of the Łódź ghetto came much later, in summer 1944, with deportations to Chelmno continuing until July 14 of that year, when they were halted due to the approaching Soviet Army.⁴ Deportations began again in August, this time to Auschwitz. Between August 15 and September 18, transports from the Łódź ghetto arrived in Auschwitz.⁵

Deportations into the Ghettos

Deportations of populations into the ghetto meant assimilating a large group of new people into the already crowded conditions of the ghetto and stretching food resources to feed the newcomers. Those forcibly deported from outside the city to a ghetto might face extremely difficult circumstances. New arrivals faced many hurdles when entering an established ghetto, including finding a home, a job, and a way to obtain food. Those with friends or relatives who could help them were fortunate. Those who knew no one struggled to survive and were vulnerable to being exploited. All three ghettos experienced waves of immigration, including Jews from the surrounding areas and Western Jews. New arrivals were not always able to bring with them what they wished, and a lack of valuables might leave them unable to negotiate for housing. Some became refugees in the ghettos. Warsaw ghetto survivor Edith Millman noted:

The worst off were—were the refugees from such surrounding communities because they, to start with, most of them were poor, and they could only come in with what they could carry. And they came a little bit later, so they couldn't get rooms and apartments so shelters were established. And so people were in

the shelters. And in some places, they—they couldn't even get into a shelter. So they bedded down in basements and in attics. And these people were the first ones to really die of hunger.⁶

Similarly, Mary Berg commented on the stream of impoverished refugees entering the Warsaw ghetto in June 1941, noting that they “become charges of the community, which sets them up in so-called homes. There they die, sooner or later.”⁷

Kraków also had a population influx from outside the ghetto. Rosalie and her family were among those who, newly arrived, had to find a place to live. She described the one-room apartment they found as having “no windows and no heat. Mother, Lucy, Henry and I had one corner and eight other people divided the rest. Nobody had a job and it was too dangerous to go outside so everybody sat on the floor all day long crying from hunger.”⁸ Jews coming in from outside the ghetto were often in precarious situations that could lead to starvation. For example, when it came time to deport people from the ghetto to death camps, those without housing or jobs (who were disproportionately likely to be the newly arrived) were put on deportation lists.

Western Jews

Łódź, Warsaw, and Kraków all had large contingents of German-speaking Jews. Both the Łódź and Warsaw ghettos had an influx of Western Jews, including a large number of Jews from German-speaking lands. For example, in February 1941, 8,000 Viennese Jews arrived in the Warsaw ghetto.⁹ Kraków also had a contingent of Jews who spoke German, but these were largely Jews who had been expelled from Germany prior to the start of the war.

In Łódź, the majority of the 20,000 Western Jews came from Bohemia, Moravia, Austria, Germany, and Luxembourg and were deported into the ghetto in the fall of 1941.¹⁰ Many of the Western Jews had the advantage of coming directly from their homes, where they had not experienced the serious deprivations to which their fellow ghetto dwellers had been subjected. Despite this, they endured many difficulties in establishing themselves in the ghettos. They were in need of housing, jobs, and a means to obtain food. Although many Jews from Western Europe arrived with food and valuables, these were either taken from them or in many cases consumed quickly. For example, during April 1942, Jews from Germany who arrived in the Warsaw ghetto managed to bring only small numbers of personal items and had their gold taken from them shortly after arrival.¹¹

The Western Jews who arrived in the fall of 1941 in the Łódź ghetto came with no more than 100 Reichsmarks, fifty kilograms of luggage, and the clothes on their back.¹² Many of their valuables were confiscated. The 111 tons of food collectively brought to the ghetto by the Western Jews was confiscated for the general ghetto food warehouses. The money they brought was credited to the Jewish ghetto administration's account for the purchase of food for the ghetto, and each Western Jew was given forty ghetto marks.¹³ Sometimes the items confiscated did not make their way into the ghetto administration's coffers. In his diary entry of September 26, 1941, Szmul Rozenstajn noted that during the deportation of Western Jews into the ghetto, policemen stole bread from the newcomers' packs.¹⁴

In Łódź, the finances for supporting the newly arrived Western Jews were maintained separately from the main ghetto population. Money for the support of the transports from Western Europe came out of workers' salaries and money sent from abroad. Given the disproportionately advanced age of the Western Jews in the Łódź ghetto and their professional rather than blue-collar skills, they were not as widely employed as the Polish Jews in the ghetto. Furthermore, due to the bookkeeping system for collecting support funds for the Western Jews, and the debt from earlier support, most Western Jews found the majority of their salaries withheld, leaving them very little with which to support themselves.¹⁵ To avoid having to pay two-thirds of the money they received from abroad to the communal institutions that provided them with meals, many newly arrived Western Jews in the Łódź ghetto began to give false addresses for themselves, using the addresses of Jews who had been settled in the ghetto before the arrival of the transports from the West.¹⁶

Even with additional funds for purchasing food for the ghetto, new transports meant food shortages for everyone, new and old ghetto dwellers alike:

During the first five weeks following the arrival of the transports from the West, the Germans didn't increase food allocations to the ghetto. Consequently, the same food supply was to sustain a population which had increased by 20%.... As a result, Rumkowski ordered the distribution stores to reduce the bread ration from two kilograms per six days to the same amount per week.¹⁷

The response of Western Jews to the diminished food rations was to begin to sell off their possessions in order to buy food, resulting in a radical disruption to the Łódź ghetto black market. Western Jews' purchasing power in the Łódź ghetto drove up the price of food items beyond the purchasing power of many of the working people in the ghetto.¹⁸ The *Chronicle* noted that:

From the point of view of the ghetto's previous inhabitants, this relatively large increase in private commerce has caused undesired disturbances and difficulties and, what is worse, the newcomers have, in a short span of time, caused a devaluation of the [ghetto] currency. That phenomenon is particularly painful for the mass of working people, the most important segment of ghetto society, who only possess the money they draw from the coffers of the Eldest of the Jews.¹⁹

Rosenfeld noted that in the early days of the transport, the paltry food offered in the ghetto did not yet affect the Western Jews, as many of them "still had provisions, white bread, preserves, artificial honey, canned meat, baked goods, chocolate, cakes."²⁰ After these provisions ran out, the German Jews began selling off their clothing items. Alfred Dube described the situation after they had consumed the food they had brought with them from Prague: "Hunger started to set in and prices of food on the black market started to climb! A single loaf of bread was selling for 10 ghetto marks."²¹ Additionally, what they did bring to sell did not fetch very much in return, due to both high inflation and the desperate situation of the Western Jews. Jacob M. recalled of his arrival in the Łódź ghetto from Hamburg: "I had a new suit of clothes with me for which I had paid 350 marks in Hamburg. So you see, it was quite a piece of wealth. And I got 1 kilo of flour for it. You could purchase a pair of shoes for 100 grams of margarine and you see from these prices that objects other than food or cigarettes were worth nothing."²²

Once the possessions of the Western Jews were gone, "starvation set in."²³ Yaakov Flam, a survivor from Łódź, described the tragedy of the German Jews: "They ate what they had the moment they got it; they could not make a loaf of bread last seven days, as all the others knew how, so they ate it all on the first day, and then stayed hungry. After a short time they all died."²⁴ One important factor most likely affecting the very high death rate among Western European Jews, however, in addition to starvation rations and inexperience in coping with hunger, was that they were much older on average than the rest of the ghetto population. In the end, the sojourn of the Western Jews in the Łódź ghetto was rather short, as the majority were deported from the ghetto to Chelmno in May 1942, less than a year after their arrival.

The Condemned

All three ghettos had groups who were brought in during mass deportations or just before mass deportation. In Kraków, after the ghetto had been divided into A and B, there was an influx of individuals into Ghetto B, which would ultimately be liquidated. These were "Jews from

the surrounding small towns” around Kraków.²⁵ Tadeusz Pankiewicz described them as

figures in tattered garments, barefoot, hungry, infested with lice, with faces unshaven for a long time, with dazed expressions in their eyes, terrified.... The majority of them had never been anywhere outside of the villages where they were born.... They limbered like bears in a cage, continually shuffling along the barbed wire, begging for bread from passersby on side A.... The OD forbade them to leave the building. Hunger, however, proved to be stronger than any command or threat. The OD, being unable to manage them, nailed the gates and windows shut so that no one could get out into the street. Once, sometimes twice daily, they were served food like wild beasts in cages.²⁶

Eventually these individuals were subjected to the same fate as the others in Ghetto B. Likewise, after the mass deportations from the Łódź ghetto in spring 1942, many Jews from surrounding villages were forcibly removed to the Łódź ghetto. Many would be swept up in the subsequent September 1942 deportations to Chelmno. The deportees arrived after their own ghettos had been brutally liquidated. Diarist Hersz Fogel recounted the brutal deportations from Pabianice, Brzeziny, and Zdunska Wola.²⁷ In all three places, Jews were beaten, separated from loved ones, and subjected to long periods without food. The refugees arrived in the ghetto and soon began to suffer from hunger.

Deportations Out

In the beginning, deportations leaving the ghetto sent people to labor camps. Some volunteered for these transports for the promised food and the opportunity to support their families back in the ghetto. Often, however, these labor assignments took a deadly toll, quite literally working the person to death. Due to the brutal conditions of the forced labor assignments outside the ghettos, most ghetto inhabitants sought work in the ghetto to avoid deportation. Unfortunately, not all positions that protected against deportation also provided sufficient resources to avoid starvation; some positions were entirely unpaid, save for a bowl of soup. As a result, some people cycled between positions that paid well or provided ample food and those that gave protection from deportation.

When the deportations began to head to death camps, the lists that were drawn up tended to include those who were food insecure: people without work, people who had drawn from welfare, and people who were imprisoned for smuggling food or for selling their own food rations on the black market. Those who were food insecure were also negatively affected by the process of deportation, held in deportation sites for long periods of time as they waited for transport. In Kraków, during the June 1942 deportation

actions, people were held without food and water in the square as they waited to be deported.²⁸ Pankiewicz described how Jews being held in the Kraków ghetto awaiting deportation were denied water.²⁹

Similarly, in Warsaw, Jews at the Umschlagplatz (deportation site) were held without food and water. Survivor Rachel Cymber recalled her brother-in-law going to get a drink of water while being held at the deportation point in the Warsaw ghetto, for which he was beaten by a German with a rifle.³⁰ Those who tried to avoid deportation were too frightened to go into the streets even to get food, leading to days of hunger as deportations were carried out. In all three ghettos, food ration cards were regularly reissued, and those without food ration cards were also subject to deportation. In Kraków and Łódź, the Germans reissued the identification cards before and after major deportations. Some of those who hid from deportation roundups then found themselves living in the ghetto without access to rations or other licit food sources.³¹

The deportations had the additional danger of leaving children without parents. Warsaw ghetto survivor Anna Heilman recalled, "There were children whose parents were transported out, orphans on the streets. And you could see them from day to day sitting on the streets, getting thinner and thinner, and then suddenly getting bigger. When they were in the last stage of the hunger, they were bloated. And they used to die on the street."³² Similarly, Kraków ghetto survivor Rosa Budick Taubman noted that after the deportations, "There were 7 year old children looking after 4 year old children, whose parents were taken away."³³ In the Łódź ghetto, Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski encouraged those in elite positions to adopt children orphaned by the deportations.

Sometimes those left behind were older children who could fend for themselves. Gusta Draenger, a resistance leader in the Kraków ghetto who broke out of jail and continued her underground activities, recorded in her diary that after one mass deportation,

Many houses in the Kraków Ghetto were missing some of their former inhabitants. Many young people found themselves alone in the world, without parents or siblings and with little property to their names. To increase their mobility, they had to convert their inheritance from deported parents into money or to liquidate it in some other way. As a result, a new fashion called "arranging a liquidation" came into vogue.³⁴

In one such instance of "arranging a liquidation," a group of young people met to exchange their remaining possessions with one another to meet their needs.³⁵

The food insecure were also vulnerable to the use of food as a means to coerce people into showing up for deportation. Rosenfeld noted that people volunteered for deportation because of "insane hunger."³⁶ One

reason for their hunger was that those who were on deportation lists had their food ration cards blocked. Later the authorities also blocked the ration cards of the families of individuals on deportation lists, so that the family did not have enough food to help the starving member until the threat of deportation had passed. Some items like ersatz coffee were available outside of rationing in the Łódź ghetto. In February 1944, Rumkowski banned the unrationed sale of ersatz coffee for thwarting deportation efforts, stating that people were subsisting on it to remain hidden.³⁷ Food was also dangled as a lure to bring people to the deportation sites. In Warsaw, “those who reported voluntarily would receive 3 kilos of bread and 1 kilo of jam; others would be given only 1 kilo of bread and ½ kilo of jam. This enticement was clearly intended to spare the Germans some work.... The deportations began that same day, on Tisha b’Av, a fast day.”³⁸ Warsaw ghetto survivor David Lipstadt recalled, “the hunger was unbelievable. So they offered this here bonus, three pounds of bread, for anybody who will voluntarily go to this assembly place and leave Warsaw.”³⁹ In the Łódź ghetto, a similar tactic was used. An August 19, 1944, announcement read, “If you come voluntarily to the assembly center [for deportation], you will immediately be issued your food ration,” which was then distributed at the deportation sites.⁴⁰ In the Kraków ghetto, carts of bread were baked before the deportations and wheeled into the deportation areas to be distributed to those leaving.⁴¹ In addition to feeding people at the site of deportation, the Germans tried to persuade people that they would receive work and food at their destination.⁴² They even received postcards to that effect from Jews who had been forced to write such lies to those still in the ghetto.

While in the barracks, all these people [who were about to be gassed to death at Chelmno Death Camp] had to write postcards to the ghetto, saying they fared well, had been given a good job, were well fed.... That’s how propaganda worked in the ghetto, and everyone wanted to leave for work, so that they would obtain good living conditions in their new place of work instead of the hunger prevailing in the ghetto. No one knew that this good job was a death sentence.⁴³

One such postcard, received in the Łódź ghetto by a kitchen manager, said, “we laugh at your soups!”⁴⁴ Kraków ghetto survivor Bernard Offen recalled:

The SS started saying that they wanted volunteers to go to another camp where there was good food and easy work. Anyone that goes is going to receive a large loaf of bread ... and margarine too, and some jam. And that was such a tempting offer to people who were starving that they didn’t consider anything and went. My uncle volunteered and he was taken out of the camp.⁴⁵

Jewish officials who assisted with deportations were rewarded not only with the sparing of their own lives and those of their families but also with supplemental foods. The Łódź ghetto Jewish police who engaged in deporting children and the elderly during the Szpera received one and a half kilograms of bread per day and an extra portion of sugar and sausage. Porters from Bałut Market and the Department of Food Supply volunteered for the duty for the same food ration and protection for their families.⁴⁶ In the Warsaw ghetto, the police had to turn over a certain number of people to the Umschlagplatz in order to receive a receipt that they could then exchange for food.⁴⁷ They could also get food and resources by accepting bribes from those trying to escape deportation. Fogel was captured in the Łódź ghetto and subjected to a medical commission to determine whether he should be deported. Writing on April 12, 1944, he noted that bread was 1,000 zloty but that one could bribe the medical commission with bread and be released from the deportation holding area.⁴⁸ In the Warsaw ghetto, getting out of a street roundup cost 250 zloty, while getting out of the actual deportation site – the Umschlagplatz – ranged from 7,400 zloty plus two gold watches to 100,000 zloty.⁴⁹

People sought to obtain food around the time of deportations to enable them to take food with them when they were deported.⁵⁰ Cymber recalled that a man brought a giant sack of baked farfel with him to the deportation site in Warsaw.⁵¹ In the Łódź ghetto, where food was limited and smuggling difficult, this frenzy for food buying resulted in high prices for foods on the black market. Those receiving a summons sold off their belongings and poured the remainder of their ghetto currency into the purchase of food on the black market, driving up the prices.⁵²

Prices in ghettos for food items went up with deportations not only because people wanted to buy food for their journey but also because some people decided to go into hiding and needed to stockpile food. The price of bread in the Łódź ghetto was 20–22 ghetto marks in the first half of January 1942 but rose to 30, 32, and even 35 marks in the second half of January as the deportations increased. When the deportations stopped, the price of bread fell back down to 25 marks but then rose again, back to 35 marks, on rumors of new deportations.⁵³ Rosenfeld described the deportation from the ghetto, noting that what little household effects deportees retained were sold off to buy bread for the journey. During that time, “one kilogram of garlic was 10 ghetto marks, 1 kg potatoes 3 ½.” “A good shirt could buy 1 kg potatoes,” “bread rose to 35 marks a loaf, potatoes to 6 marks, then to 10 marks, per kg, bread rose further to 70 marks.”⁵⁴ Near the central prison, where the deportees were held, the only people selling bread were the police and those who bribed them. Bread could sell for as much as 200 ghetto marks in the prison.⁵⁵ On May 2, 1942,

it was reported that the German police (Kripo) were taking away all possessions before deportation, resulting in wild trade in food. Food prices rose enormously. Bread went up to 700 ghetto marks, margarine to 1,000 ghetto marks, two cubes of saccharine to one mark, and three strings of chives to one mark.⁵⁶ Similarly, in the Warsaw ghetto, bread prices rose tremendously around deportations out of the ghetto. Prior to the great deportation, bread was trading at around 10–21 zloty per kilogram depending on whether it was rye bread or white bread. After the great deportation began, bread prices shot up to 50–100 zloty per kilogram. By August 1942, they went up to 100–150 zloty per kilogram. By September 1942, the price of a loaf of bread had risen to 1,000 zloty.⁵⁷

In order to more effectively bribe ghetto inhabitants with food to become deportee volunteers, the Germans reduced the amount of food entering the ghetto around the time of deportations. With the return of deportations at the end of February 1942, the shipments of food to the ghetto decreased. By the beginning of April, the price of bread in the Łódź ghetto had risen to 160 ghetto marks.⁵⁸ This fell down to 70 ghetto marks with the announcement of an increase in food rations and the slowing of deportations, then rose back up to 110 with the announcement that the increased food allotment was meant to last through the end of May, and dropped down again to 30 ghetto marks on April 17, when potatoes were distributed. On April 18, when it was announced that nonworking individuals would be stamped, the price jumped up to 60 ghetto marks, which persisted until April 25, 1942. The price jumped back up to 160 ghetto marks with rumors of an impending deportation at the end of April.⁵⁹ On May 2, 1942, however, when it was reported that the Kripo were taking away all possessions before deportation, bread went up to 700 ghetto marks.⁶⁰ This initial panic subsided slightly by the next day, as Singer reported bread prices of 350 to 400 ghetto marks on May 3, 1942.⁶¹ On May 10, 1942, when the baptized Jews of the Łódź ghetto were deported, food prices on the black market increased further. Soup was 28 ghetto marks, potato peels 14 ghetto marks, potatoes 90 ghetto marks, and workshop soup 30 ghetto marks.⁶² In May 1942, as these prices were so wildly fluctuating, the official rations per person per day totaled approximately 1,100 calories.⁶³ Food prices fell dramatically after the threat of deportations subsided.

Hiding from Deportation

Not everyone showed up willingly to be deported from the ghetto. In all three ghettos, individuals went into hiding to avoid deportations. While in hiding, they needed to rely on either stockpiled food or food brought

to them by others. This meant that even hiding from deportation or avoiding deportation demanded food resources that were not available to many who had already expended these resources on daily survival. Those with sufficient food resources stood a better chance of remaining in hiding. In the Kraków ghetto, after the deportations to Płaszów began, groups of people went into hiding. The Germans eventually found some of these hiding spots in attics and basements: “stocked with food and water the hidiers could live for months barring betrayal.”⁶⁴

In the Warsaw ghetto during the great deportation, houses that had been emptied of their residents became hiding places for many avoiding deportation. One Warsaw ghetto writer recorded, “They spend their days hiding in some secret place with a secret entrance, a cubby hole or a garret and only emerge in the early morning and in the evening. They have visitors—sons, brothers, sisters—people with permission to live, who bring provisions and a few words of comfort.”⁶⁵ Similarly, George Hoffman was hidden in the Kraków ghetto and relied on relatives to bring him food so he could stay in hiding.⁶⁶ Additionally, individuals hiding in ghettos searched for food left behind by others. Regina Brand, for approximately the week prior to liquidation of the Kraków ghetto, went into hiding in an attic. During this time, when it was quiet at night, the men would sneak out to search for food.⁶⁷

Final Liquidation of the Ghettos

In all three ghettos, sometime in 1942, the population was divided into workers and nonworkers, with the former to remain working in the ghetto, which became essentially dedicated to labor, and the latter killed or sent to extermination camps. In the end, however, all three ghettos were liquidated, with the inhabitants sent to labor camps or extermination camps. In Łódź, by the time of the final liquidation, over 90 percent of the population was engaged in work. At first, during June and July 1944, the Jews of Łódź were sent to Chelmno extermination camp. Then, after a brief lull, transports began in early August to Auschwitz, and to other labor camps in smaller numbers. The final liquidation was carried out by having whole ghetto factories deported, together with their families and equipment. This ruse, along with bribing people with food to come to the deportation site, was meant to lull the population into believing they would continue their forced labor at another location. In reality, most deportees were killed at a death camp.

In Kraków, the final liquidation involved transporting the working population to Płaszów concentration camp. This process of transferring people to Płaszów took place over time, with groups of workers being

moved to the new camp. The ability to remain in the ghetto and avoid deportation was heavily tied to work permits. Eventually, a hierarchy of occupations evolved. People were divided “into three categories, marking them with signs: ‘R’: Rüstung (arms); ‘W’: Wehrmacht (army); and ‘Z’: Zivil (civilian).”⁶⁸ Working for the military was perceived as providing the most protection from deportation. In October 1942, a mass deportation took much of the nonworking population to Belzec extermination camp. After that point, the ghetto was divided into Ghetto A and Ghetto B. Ghetto A inhabitants had the more secure work permits, while those in B were doomed to have their food cut off and eventually be killed. Some people in Ghetto B were able to be smuggled into A. During the final liquidation of the ghetto, those in Ghetto A were marched to Plaszów. Being in Ghetto A was not a guarantee of transfer to Plaszów, however. Many people were killed in the deportation process, en route to Plaszów, and at the camp shortly after arrival.

In Warsaw, the final liquidation of the ghetto coincided with the Warsaw ghetto uprising, which began on April 19, 1943, the first night of the Jewish holiday of Passover. The Warsaw ghetto uprising began for many Jews with a meal, the Passover seder. Many survivors reported celebrating the first Passover seder before having to find cover in a bunker. Tuvia Borzykowski recalled stumbling across a Passover seder: “The Haggadah was read by the Rabbi to the accompaniment of the incessant shooting and bursting of shells which were heard in the ghetto throughout the night.”⁶⁹ Some celebrated Passover inside the bunkers.⁷⁰ One survivor recalled, “Five men stand watch outside with weapons in hand. My father sits in the bunker conducting the Seder. Two candles illuminate the cups of wine. To us, it appears the cups are filled with blood. All of us who sit here are the sacrifice. When ‘pour out your wrath’ is recited we all shudder.”⁷¹

The uprising, which lasted until May 16, 1943, provided its own unique set of food acquisition challenges for fighters and those in hiding. For the fighters, the ghetto was divided into sectors run by different organizations, with uneven food availability. While some bunkers were well provisioned, most fighters had to “organize” their own food during the uprising or rotated between fighting and scouting for food. Survivor Sam Goodchild described breaking through the walls on upper floors to allow fighters passage between buildings and tearing out the staircases for the lower floors to prevent the Germans’ access.⁷² The fighters could then go from empty apartment to empty apartment, usually at night, to search for food left in ghetto apartments. This search for food was not without risks. Renny Kurshenbaum recalled her fear of being burned with German flamethrowers while searching for food. What they did find



Figure 10.2 Cooking facilities in a bunker prepared by the Jewish resistance for the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Image from the Stroop Report. Photo credit: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park

in ghetto apartments tended to be flour or potatoes from which they made pancakes.⁷³ In contrast, some ghetto fighters were in bunkers that had stockpiled food.⁷⁴ Marek Edelman described Mila 18 as a “luxury bunker” stockpiled with food and other necessities.⁷⁵

Not everyone was a fighter during the uprising. Some people survived the uprising in hiding and had stockpiles of food, while others in hiding had limited access to food.⁷⁶ Jerry Rawicki lived off rotten potatoes and apples in ghetto cellars during the uprising, which resulted in his getting sick.⁷⁷ Others had to abandon food stockpiles when the building in which they were hiding was burned down. The fires consumed not only bunkers with food stockpiles but also the empty apartments with food, resulting in the displaced going for days without food. The bunkers that survived often took in more people than they had initially been prepared to support, creating food shortages even in bunkers that had been well provisioned.⁷⁸ Those who were rounded up and deported during the uprising were kept under horrific conditions without food.⁷⁹ Multiple

survivors from that period also reported beatings, abuse, and (among the women) rapes by the guards at the Umschlagplatz.⁸⁰

Conclusion

Deportations into the ghettos created food security issues for the newly arrived. Refugees in the ghetto, even those arriving with wealth, often had a difficult time finding a place with sufficient food in the ghetto. Many refugees, who arrived after having been impoverished or who experienced impoverishment and hunger in the ghetto after their arrival soon found themselves back on deportation trains, this time headed to extermination camps. A large number of refugees in all three ghettos starved to death before this transport could even happen. For those in the ghettos who were hungry, whether newly arrived or original inhabitants, food was used as a lure to bring them to the trains. Many, even some who were aware of the rumors of the trains' destination, came to the sites of deportation so that they could eat. Others, those who felt their deportation was inevitable, spent the last of what they had to fill their stomachs before departure and to have sustenance at their unknown destination. Ultimately, those with the greatest food resources were able to put off or avoid deportation through bribery or hiding. Those who arrived in labor camps rather than death camps and who were nourished enough during the ghetto period had – assuming they were young, healthy, and childfree – a chance of surviving selections at their destination.

Conclusion

All I should like to have in life at the present moment is plenty to eat ... a “Gettonian” [ghetto man] when deprived of half a loaf of bread suffers more terribly than if his own parents had died.

– Anonymous boy, writing on May 15, 1944,
in the margins of *Les Vrais Riches*¹

I end with a quote from the same anonymous author with whom I began this book. This book has, above all, privileged the voice of the victims as the central focus of the text and informants of their own experience inside the ghetto walls. The terrible feelings he ascribes to a ghetto dweller – a “Gettonian” – depict the latter stages of victims of famine and famine genocide. This anonymous writer had himself lived through the *atrocities of hunger*. He knew both the pain of food deprivation and the anguish of losing a parent, having lost his father to starvation in the ghetto. Ten days earlier, hunger had driven him to steal half a loaf of his own sister’s bread.² At that time, half a loaf of bread was more than half a week’s bread ration and its loss threatened his sister’s life. He had contended with his own hunger, succumbed to temptation, and felt a deep sense of guilt born of his food theft and having to watch how his sister struggled with the hunger and suffering his actions caused. The *atrocities of hunger* in the ghetto was not just the physical and mental distress of food deprivation. It was also the anguish of losing friends and family, witnessing the starvation of loved ones, and engaging in, observing, or being victim to survival strategies that fundamentally challenged one’s deeply held values.

The anonymous writer began his diary in the margins of the novel *Les Vrais Riches* a few weeks before trains began departing to the Chelmno death camp as part of the final liquidation of the Łódź ghetto. The ghetto had been sealed four years earlier, in May 1940, making it the longest lasting sealed ghetto. Everyone who survived until the end of the ghetto’s existence – particularly those who had been there since 1940 or 1941 – had at least one attribute in common: they had somehow been able to obtain sufficient food over a period of years to avoid

death by starvation. Each had managed to obtain food in excess of what was available per individual ghetto dweller, whether through privileged work assignments, family or social connections, sufficient assets to sell off, or theft. In many cases, people drew on several or all of these methods to survive.

We do not know if the anonymous writer survived the war. His diary, which includes an entry from the ghetto dated after the last deportations from the Łódź ghetto to the death camp Chelmno, indicates that he had a chance of survival.³ However, we do know that he was starving at the time his diary ends in August 1944, which likely impaired his chance of making it past a selection at Auschwitz or surviving much longer in Łódź as one of those left behind to clean up the ghetto. Upon arriving at the remnants of the ghetto on January 19, 1945, the Red Army found only 877 Jewish survivors.

This book examines survival during the Holocaust. Obtaining sufficient food during the ghetto period before deportation was not enough to survive the war. If one could not escape the ghetto and successfully go into hiding, something that was in any case more possible in Warsaw and Kraków, it was necessary to survive in the ghetto long enough to avoid the mass deportations to Chelmno, Treblinka, and Belzec from Łódź, Kraków, and Warsaw, respectively. This meant that surviving the Holocaust required having enough food and protection to avoid those early deportations. For Jews in Warsaw, deportation after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising to Majdanek or another concentration camp required finding enough food not only during the time of the ghetto, but also during the four weeks of the uprising when no rations were distributed. Those from Kraków needed to survive until March 1943, then be selected for entry to Płaszów or Auschwitz, and then make it through the rest of the war. Those from Łódź needed to survive the ghetto until August 1944 to have been placed on a transport to Auschwitz or another labor camp instead of the death camp Chelmno.

In the case of the anonymous writer, although he is quite hungry as he relentlessly records in the margins of *Les Vrais Riches*, he was likely not starving for the entirety of the ghetto period. He was unlikely to have survived so many years with such extreme hunger. For many individuals in the ghettos, obtaining sufficient food was not possible for the full duration of the ghetto period. Instead, they slowly moved from food insecurity to starvation. This erosion in food access took place at different rates of speed in different ghettos and among different social strata whose powerful connections or positions and/or tradable assets enabled them to hold out the longest against starvation. To last as long as he did in the ghetto, the anonymous writer likely had been able to draw on material

resources that were exhausted by the last few months in the ghetto, leaving him to rely entirely on his insufficient rations. But those who avoided death by starvation in the ghettos still had to survive by one means or another through the remainder of the war after the ghetto period. Having enough to eat in the ghetto affected one's later survival not only because it ensured longevity during the ghetto period, but also because the well-fed arrived at concentration camps with a distinct advantage of at least looking more capable of work. To a significant extent, then, the story of who could have access to food in the ghettos is a critical piece of the story of who survived the Holocaust and why.

By focusing on times when Jews in the ghetto either had food or faced starvation, this book has explored how Jews and Jewish communities exercised agency and coped – successfully or unsuccessfully – with the *atrocities of hunger*. Although individual vulnerability to hunger varied, acquiring adequate food for survival usually involved the presence of several intersecting factors: real assets that could be traded for food; labor (licit or illicit) that was valued in the ghetto economy; social networks with which to secure a position and protection; illegal food acquisition; and residence in a ghetto where those attributes were useful. Usually one of these, particularly a valuable trade skill, was not sufficient alone.

In addition to providing a victim-centered history of Jewish experience during the war, this book contributes to the emerging scholarship on genocidal famine. Trading assets to obtain food is a common feature of famine genocides. Those experiencing extreme hunger will often trade away all of their assets even until they exchange items needed for their future survival. Movable wealth proved the key means to access food over the long duration of the ghettos' existence. While various factors could contribute to an individual's access to such wealth, it was unquestionably the most important means to long-term food security in the ghettos.

The buying power of assets, however, depended on location. It is in examining the differences in location that this book contributes to the variable levels of hunger and the ways in which place impacts survival. Inside the ghetto, valuables traded at a much lower value than they did outside the ghetto walls. Inside a refugee center, their value was even lower. Warsaw and Kraków provided more opportunities for ghetto dwellers to trade valuables outside the ghetto walls, where they could purchase more. Unlike the Jews in Łódź, who used the ghetto's own currency, those in Warsaw and Kraków earned money that had buying power both inside and outside of the ghetto walls. However, the currency went much further outside the ghetto. It is for that reason that as the

ability to trade outside the ghetto walls became increasingly restricted, more of the ghetto population began to experience starvation.

For most in the ghetto, however, access to adequate food over the span of the ghetto simply proved impossible. As increasing hunger led to starvation, many ghetto dwellers employed various coping mechanisms. Many of these techniques involved challenging their own and their community's core values. These transformations of individuals and society, hallmarks of the *atrocities of hunger*, ranged from acceptable foods to consume to gendered behavior to criminality to sacrificing the weakest populations.

The adaptation of expanding what can and even should be eaten in a society undergoing the *atrocities of hunger* is typical of extreme famine situations. Within the spectrum of what became tolerable, and even desirable, was a range of foods considered unacceptable before the war. In homes and in the communities at large, food waste was transformed into edible products, whether it be potato peels for a ghetto salad or homemade food patties. Ersatz coffee was transformed into cakes, cookies, and brickettes that were served as meals. Non-kosher food, a taboo for many in the population, was consumed and even became part of the standard rations. In this manner, religious Jews had another dimension added to their experience of adapting to the famine conditions. All of the starving, however, ate things that were not part of their prewar diet. Some things were not consumables at all, including grass, wall plaster, and motor oil. In the most extreme situations, a few rare cases of cannibalism took place in the Warsaw Ghetto. All of these phenomena of consuming hunger foods, eating non-foods, and even cannibalism are features in other famine genocides.

Gender roles are another area where the exigencies of ghetto life and the need to obtain adequate nutrition fundamentally challenged prewar values. Many scholars have looked to gender in famine situations to differentiate between how men and women have approached coping mechanisms and survival strategies. Non-wage earning tasks such as food preparation, food processing, and food procurement and scavenging have all been viewed as women's work during famine by various scholars. However, in the case of the ghettos, it is clear that men, women, and particularly children engaged in all of these duties. These tasks became less those of a specific gender and more the responsibility of the unemployed within a household. Whether it was cleaning, sewing, or dragging sewage through the streets, both men and women took jobs that were gender-specific before the war, because the protection from deportation that a job – any job – afforded was vital. The requirements of physical survival forced changes and

challenges to prewar gender norms with the needs for survival often overriding gendered positions within households.

Even so, the consumption of previously inedible food and the challenges to gender norms were not evenly distributed amongst the ghetto economic classes. Privileged households could maintain prewar eating habits and gender roles longer. The most elite households had some deprivations compared to their prewar life but continued to eat foods eaten before the war. And in them, a woman still tended to take care of the domestic sphere. They were insulated from many aspects of the *atroc-ity of hunger*. In their roles as witnesses, they not only recorded the metamorphoses of others. They were themselves also transformed through co-existence with the starving. Many were moved to help those who had become famished but only enough to not risk their own survival. All famines and famine genocides typically feature such a group that manages to protect itself from starvation while co-existing with those who hunger. But sometimes, after depleting their resources, they too joined the ranks of the famished.

Widespread criminality – particularly food theft and smuggling – was another means by which prewar values were transformed during the ghetto period. Whereas prior to the war these activities were deplored, the need to obtain sufficient food and avoid starvation normalized them in the ghetto. Hunger and the need for nutrition often overrode pre-ghetto morality and lead individuals to steal, prostitute themselves, and engage in other scorned and illegal behaviors. Sometimes, as was the case with the anonymous writer at the beginning of this chapter, people even committed criminal acts against their own families, even if they did so with guilt and shame. In his short story collection *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, Tadeusz Borowski, a non-Jewish Polish survivor of Auschwitz, noted of Holocaust victims, “We said there is no crime a man will not commit in order to save himself.”⁴ Certainly for the Jews of the ghettos, and those in other famines and genocide famines, illicit activity was critical for survival.

One of the biggest challenges that the *atroc-ity of hunger* posed to morality concerned the various ways it led families and communities to sacrifice the weak. In families, this could take the form of child abandonment, desertion by an adult family member to focus on their own survival, or neglect of elderly family members. While the gendered expectations that women nurture their families and men provide for them persisted, men and women alike sometimes abandoned children, stole food from family members, or left their families to survive. The drive for survival could override these expected behaviors. Conversely, these same gender norms and prewar moral expectations prevailed in some cases. In spite of their

own hunger, mothers and fathers sometimes sacrificed themselves to provide food for their families. Similarly, communities struggled to support the most vulnerable. Many began the war providing for the old, sick, and orphans. Ultimately, however, the community's survival meant sacrificing the old, the sick, and the youngest children. It is not unusual in famines and genocide famines for the youngest, oldest, and sickest to perish. This desperate form of triage whereby some of the most vulnerable individuals are sacrificed for the benefit of others is a significant feature of the *atrocities of hunger*.

As a genocide whose horrors include mass murder through bullets, gas chambers, and death marches, the Holocaust also featured another brutal form: the *atrocities of hunger*. The gruesome mass killings at death camps rendered its power as an executioner less visible, as did the evolving nature of famine. But the effects were the same. As the essence of famine genocides, the *atrocities of hunger* does not just decimate populations through starvation. It also transforms families, communities, and individuals as the need for physical survival struggles in conflict with identity markers and values.

Appendix: List of Kitchens and Food Distribution Sites in the Warsaw Ghetto

List of Boarding Houses and Orphanages:

- 16 Dzwielna Street.** (“Dobra Wola” Boarding House) Received support from CENTOS.¹
- 26 Dzielna Street.** Received support from CENTOS.²
- 39 Dzielna Street.** (“Main Shelter House”). Received support from CENTOS.³
- 67 Dzielna Street.** Received support from CENTOS.⁴
- 6/8 Gęsia Street.** Received support from CENTOS.⁵
- 36 Krochmalna Street.** (Children’s Home).⁶
- 18 Mylna Street.** Received support from CENTOS.⁷
- 25 Nowolipki Street.** Boarding and Day school for children.⁸
- 76 Nowolipki Street.** Received support from CENTOS.⁹
- 29 Ogrodowa Street.** Received support from CENTOS.¹⁰
- 16 Sienna Street.** Received support from CENTOS.¹¹
- 26 Śliska Street.** Received support from CENTOS.¹²
- 28 Śliska Street.** Received support from CENTOS.¹³
- 18 Stawki Street.** Received support from CENTOS.¹⁴
- 19 Stawki Street.** Received support from CENTOS.¹⁵
- 7 Twarda Street.** Received support from CENTOS.¹⁶
- 27 Twarda Street.** Received support from CENTOS.¹⁷
- 35 Twarda Street.** Received support from CENTOS.¹⁸
- 14 Wolności Street.** Received support from CENTOS.¹⁹

Day Cares Which Supplied Food for Children

- 3 Dzika Street.**²⁰
- 25 Nowolipki Street.**²¹
- 30 Nowolipki Street.**²²
- 76 Nowolipki Street.**²³
- 28 Śliska Street.**²⁴

Kitchens

30 Chłodna Street.²⁵

10 Ciepła Street. Kosher.²⁶

34 Dzielna Street. Apt. 8 (run by Dror).²⁷

67 Dzielna Street. (Kitchen #123). Received support from CENTOS.²⁸

13 Dziką Street. Received support from CENTOS.²⁹

22 Elektoralna Street. (Kitchen #121). Received support from CENTOS.³⁰

2 Gęsia Street. (“Lomdej Tora Kitchen,” for Talmudic students).³¹

7 Gęsia Street. (Kitchen #125). Received support from CENTOS.³²

7a Gęsia Street. (Kitchen #127). Received support from CENTOS.³³

9 Gęsia Street. (Reported as Kitchens #13 and #113 and #142 – there may have been more than one kitchen in the building). Received support from CENTOS.³⁴

11 Gęsia Street. (Reported as Kitchens #151, 154, and 157 – there may have been more than one kitchen in the building). Received support from CENTOS.³⁵

43 Gęsia Street. (Kitchen #143, and as kitchen for writers, journalists, and other literary figures). Received support from CENTOS.³⁶

12 Graniczna Street.³⁷

26 Grzybowska Street. (Kitchen for the Judenrat Employees and the Order Service).³⁸

Jezierska Street. (Kitchen #134). Received support from CENTOS.³⁹

5 Karmelicka Street. (Kitchen for writers, journalists, and other literary figures).⁴⁰

15 Karmelicka Street. (Kitchen #139). Received support from CENTOS.⁴¹

29 Karmelicka Street. (Reported as Kitchens #114, 144, 148 – there may have been more than one kitchen in the building). Received support from CENTOS.⁴²

Karmelicka Street. (Kitchen #150). Received support from CENTOS.⁴³

36 Krochmalna. (Kitchen #143; Supplemental kitchen for children).⁴⁴

14 Leszno Street. (Kitchen for writers, journalists, and other literary figures).⁴⁵

29 Leszno Street.⁴⁶

40 Leszno Street. (Kitchen for writers, journalists, and other literary figures; kitchen for convalescents; Kitchen #27; Kitchen run by Rachel Auerbach – there may have been more than one kitchen in the building).⁴⁷

42 Leszno Street. (Apt 11); (Kitchen #135). Received support from CENTOS.⁴⁸

56 Leszno Street. (Kitchen #116). Received support from CENTOS.⁴⁹

- 116 Leszno Street.** (Kitchen #3). Received support from CENTOS.⁵⁰
- 5 Lubeckiego.** (People's Kitchen).⁵¹
- 10 Majzelsa Street.** (Reported as Kitchens #144 and #149 – there may have been more than one kitchen in the building). Received support from CENTOS.⁵²
- # Muranowska Street.** (Run by Bund).⁵³
- 21[22?] Nałewki Street.** (Kitchen for Orthodox Jews).⁵⁴
- 23 Nałewski Street.** (Run by Haszomer Hazair).⁵⁵
- 37 Nałewki Street.** (Multiple kitchens in one building; reported as People's Kitchen; Kitchen #137; kosher kitchen; Bais Yaakov school location). Received support from CENTOS.⁵⁶
- 43 Nałewki Street.** (Kitchen #148). Received support from CENTOS.⁵⁷
- 15 Nowolipki.** (Kosher kitchen).⁵⁸
- 22 Nowolipki Street.** (Kitchens #123 or #132). Received support from CENTOS.⁵⁹
- 35 Nowolipki Street.** (Kitchens #118 and #114). Two schools with kitchens in the same building.⁶⁰
- 68 Nowolipki Street.** Several kitchens within this building. (Kitchen #145 on the 2nd floor) "This was a kitchen for children run by Izrael Lichtensztajn; it also offered clandestine education and functioned as a shelter for the Ringelblum Ghetto Archive." Received support from CENTOS. There was additionally Kitchens #131 and #139. Kitchen 139 which also received support from CENTOS. One of these kitchens was also a gathering space for intellectuals.⁶¹
- 27 Ogrodowa Street.** (Run by the United House Committees in Ogrodowa, Biała, and Chłodna Streets).⁶²
- 2 Orla Street.** (Kitchen and site of a meeting of the Bund on the situation in the ghetto).⁶³
- 6 Orla Street.** (Kitchen for intelligentsia).⁶⁴
- 13 Orla Street.** (Kitchens #22 and/or #28; Apartment house kitchen/public kitchen).⁶⁵
- 33 Orla Street.** (Run by Union of Jewish Craftsmen).⁶⁶
- 9 Pania Street.** (Kitchen #109). Received support from CENTOS.⁶⁷
- 8 Prosta Street.** (Kitchen #134). Received support from CENTOS.⁶⁸
- 10 Rymarska Street.** (Run by united area associations from Poznań, Gdańsk, Pomerania, and Dąbrowa Basin).⁶⁹
- 16 Sienna Street.** (Self-supporting popular kitchen).⁷⁰
- 28 Ślaska Street.** (Kitchens #148 and #138). Received support from CENTOS.⁷¹
- 36 Stawki Street.** (Kitchen #177). Received support from CENTOS.⁷²
- # Stawki Street.** (Kitchen #227). Received support from CENTOS.⁷³
- 11 Świętojska Street.** (Public kitchen; Kitchen #38).⁷⁴
- 16 Świętojanska Street.** (Kitchen #19). Food provided for Kitchen by CENTOS.⁷⁵
- 34 Świętojska.** (Kitchen 143). Received support from CENTOS.⁷⁶
- 112 Świętojska Street.** (Run by Union of Jewish Craftsmen)⁷⁷

- 11 Tłomackie.** (Kosher kitchen).⁷⁸
13 Tłomackie Street. (Two kitchens: one for writers, journalists, and other literary figures and one run by area association of Dąbrowa Basin).⁷⁹
37 Twarda Street. (Bais Yaakov School and soup kitchen).⁸⁰
9 Zamenhofa Street. (Run by Poale Zion-Left).⁸¹
11 Zamenhofa. (Kosher kitchen).⁸²
13 Zamenhofa. (Public kitchen).⁸³
21 Zamenhofa Street. (Kitchen #150). Received support from CENTOS.⁸⁴
26 Zamenhofa Street. (Kitchen #133). Received support from CENTOS.⁸⁵
22 Zamenhofa Street. (Kosher kitchen).⁸⁶
44 Zamenhofa. (Kosher kitchen).⁸⁷
15 Zielna.⁸⁸

Food Bank

- 15 Karmelicka Street.** (Food Bank #139). Received food from CENTOS.⁸⁹
28 Śliska Street. (Food Bank #139). Received food from CENTOS.⁹⁰

Food Shop

- 69 Ogrodowa.** ("F.S. Lachman Food Shop").⁹¹

Restaurants and Cafes

- 9 Dzika Street.** (Coffee Room).⁹²
21 Gęsia Street. (Coffee Room).⁹³
10 Grzybowski Street. (Coffee Room).⁹⁴
2 Leszno Street. (Sztuka Café).⁹⁵
Leszno Street. (Café Pod Fontanna).⁹⁶
10 Nowolipki Street. (Nowoczesna Café).⁹⁷
18 Nowolipki Street. (Hotel Britannia).⁹⁸
31 Nowolipki Street. (Café Bagetela).⁹⁹
Ogrodowa Street. (Bajka Café).¹⁰⁰
16 Sienna Street. (Café directed by Tatiana Epstein).¹⁰¹
14 Smocza. (Coffee Room).¹⁰²
22 Twarda Street. (Coffee Room).¹⁰³

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Hanno Loewy, Andrzej Bodek, and François Coppée, “*Les Vrais Riches*,” *Notizen am Rand: ein Tagebuch aus dem Ghetto Łódź (Mai bis August 1944)* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1997) p. 105. The quote was originally written in English in the boy’s diary.
- 2 For more on Nazi food policies, see Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die Deutsche Wirtschafts – und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944*, 2nd ed. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2000); Gesine Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics: A History of Food in the Third Reich* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017); Christian Hartmann, *Operation Barbarossa: Nazi Germany’s War in the East, 1941–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Elizabeth M. Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food* (New York: Penguin, 2013); Alex J. Kay, *Exploitation, Resettlement, Mass Murder: Political and Economic Planning for German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1940–1941* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung: Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1993); Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Vintage, 2015).
- 3 Michael Watts, “Entitlements or Empowerment? Famine and Starvation in Africa,” *Review of African Political Economy* 18, no. 51 (1991): 9–26.
- 4 Some scholarship has begun to look at how Jews survived the Holocaust, but this has come from fields outside of history. The most significant works include Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Peter Tammes, “Associating Locality-Level Characteristics with Surviving the Holocaust: A Multilevel Approach to the Odds of Being Deported and to Risk of Death among Jews Living in Dutch Municipalities,” *American Journal of Epidemiology* 188, no. 5 (2019): 896–906; Peter Tammes, “Survival of Jews during the Holocaust: The Importance of Different Types of Social Resources,” *International Journal of Epidemiology* 36, no. 2 (2007): 330–35.
- 5 Christian Gerlach notes that 6 million Jews perished but a mere 1.3 million survived, making survival the exceptional experience during the Holocaust. Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 404.

- 6 There has been some scholarship on the aesthetics of hunger in the ghetto. Notable examples include Oskar Rosenfeld, “The Łódź Ghetto and the Chronotope of Hunger,” in *The Aesthetics and Politics of Global Hunger*, eds. Anastasia Ulanowicz and Manisha Basu (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 27–56; Sven-Erik Rose, “Writing Hunger in a Modernist Key in the Warsaw Ghetto: Leyb Goldin’s ‘Chronicle of a Single Day,’” *Jewish Social Studies* 23, no. 1 (2017): 29–63.
- 7 See Mark L. Smith, *The Yiddish Historians and the Struggle for a Jewish History of the Holocaust* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2019); Laura Jockusch, “Historiography in Transit: Survivor Historians and the Writing of Holocaust History in the Late 1940s,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 58 (2013): 75–94.
- 8 For works on Jewish experience in the ghettos, see: Philip Friedman, “The Jewish Ghettos of the Nazi Era,” *Jewish Social Studies* 16, no. 1 (1954): 61–88; Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972); Zvi Arad, Rinah Klinov, and Yehudah Maimon, *he-Haluts ha-lochem: Bit’on ha-no’ar haYehudi ha-halutsi be-mahteret Krakov, Ogust–Oktober 1943* (The fighting pioneer: Organ of the Chalutz underground movement in occupied Cracow, August–October 1943) (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters’ House and the United Kibbutz Movement, 1984); Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). Gunnar S. Paulsson. *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
- 9 For works that examine ghettos to understand Nazi genocidal plans, see Christopher R. Browning, “Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland: 1939–41,” *Central European History* 19, no. 4 (1986): 343–68; Dan Mikhman, *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos during the Holocaust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Tim Cole, *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto* (Florence, KY: Taylor and Francis, 2013). For examples of this recent focus on diversity of Jewish experiences and expressions of Jewish agency in ghettos, see: Anna Hajkova, *The Last Ghetto: An Everyday History of Theresienstadt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Anika Walke, “Jewish Youth in the Minsk Ghetto: How Age and Gender Mattered,” *Kritika* 15, no. 3 (2014): 535–62; Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*; Gali Tibon, “Am I My Brother’s Keeper? The Jewish Committees in the Ghettos of Mogilev Province and the Romanian Regime in Transnistria during the Holocaust, 1941–1944,” *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 30, no. 2 (2016): 93–116; Andrea Löw, *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt: Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2013); Katarzyna Person, *Warsaw Ghetto: Everyday Life* (Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute, 2017); Svenja Bethke and Sharon Howe, *Dance on the Razor’s Edge: Crime and Punishment in the Nazi Ghettos* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021).
- 10 For more on the Hunger Plan, see Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*; Gerhard, *Nazi Hunger Politics*; Hartmann, *Operation Barbarossa*; Collingham, *The Taste of War*; Kay, *Exploitation, Resettlement, Mass Murder*; Aly and Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung*.

- 11 Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
- 12 Alex de Waal, *Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine* (Cambridge: Polity Books, 2018). See also Jenny Edkins, “Legality with a Vengeance: Famines and Humanitarian Relief in ‘Complex Emergencies,’” *Millennium* 25, no. 3 (1996): 547–75.
- 13 Frank E. Sysyn and Henry C. Theriault, “Editors’ Introduction: Starvation and Genocide,” *Genocide Studies International* 11, no. 1 (2017): 1–7.
- 14 There has been some work examining the influence of German authorities and in particular individual Nazis who were responsible for food distribution to ghettos, with a focus on variations in German policy as it operated on a local level. The most important example is Browning, “Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland.”
- 15 In fact, for some famine scholars, mortality is not even a requirement for famine. See Alex de Waal, *Famine That Kills: Darfur, Sudan, 1984–1985* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
- 16 Peter Walker, *Famine Early Warning Systems: Victims and Destitution* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 33.
- 17 Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
- 18 On Leningrad, see Cynthia Simmons, “Lifting the Siege: Women’s Voices on Leningrad (1941–1944),” *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 40, no. 1/2 (1998): 43–65; J. K. Hass, “Anchors, Habitus, and Practices Besieged by War: Women and Gender in the Blockade of Leningrad,” *Social Forum* 32, no. 2 (2017): 253–76.
- 19 Ali Mehtabunisa, “Woman in Famine: The Paradox of Status in India,” in *Famine*, ed. Bruce Currey and Graeme Hugo (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1984), 113–33.
- 20 Walker, *Famine Early Warning Systems*, 44.
- 21 See Sen, *Poverty and Famines*; Walker, *Famine Early Warning Systems*; Svetlana P. Morozovskaya, “Staying Alive in Besieged Leningrad: Motivational Factors for Survival” (MA thesis, Sam Houston State University, 2017); Mehtabunisa, “Woman in Famine”; Wendy Z. Goldman and Donald A. Filtzer, eds., *Hunger and War: Food Provisioning in the Soviet Union during World War II* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); Cormac Ó Gráda, *Eating People Is Wrong, and Other Essays on Famine, Its Past, and Its Future* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).
- 22 Sen, *Poverty and Famines*.
- 23 Arjun Appadurai, “How Moral Is South Asia’s Economy? A Review Article,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 43, no. 3 (1984): 481–97.
- 24 Hass, “Anchors, Habitus, and Practices Besieged by War”; and see Alexis Peri, “Queues, Canteens, and the Politics of Location in Diaries of the Leningrad Blockade, 1941–1942,” in Goldman and Filtzer, *Hunger and War*, 158–205.
- 25 Morozovskaya, “Staying Alive in Besieged Leningrad,” 19
- 26 Ó Gráda, *Eating People Is Wrong*, 2.

- 27 Helene Sinnreich, “Victim and Perpetrator Perspectives of World War II–Era Ghettos,” in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. Jonathan C. Friedman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 115–24; Dan Michman, *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos during the Holocaust*, trans. Lenn J. Schramm (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- 28 Notable examples include Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro, intro. Israel Gutman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Löw, *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt*; Person, *Warsaw Ghetto*; Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*. Peter Klein, *Die Gettoverwaltung Litzmannstadt 1940 Bis 1944: Eine Dienststelle Im Spannungsfeld Von Kommunalbürokratie Und Staatlicher Verfolgungspolitik*. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009)
- 29 With very few exceptions, documentation from the ghetto period did not survive the war, but a few works have dealt with various aspects of the Kraków ghetto, with research areas including children in German-occupied Kraków (see Joanna Sliwa *Jewish Childhood in Kraków: A microhistory of the Holocaust*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2021), Jewish women in Kraków (see Martyna Grądzka-Rejak, *Kobieta żydowska w okupowanym Krakowie, 1939–1945* (Kraków: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Wydawnictwo “Wysoki Zamek,” 2016); ghetto administration see Andrea Löw and Agnieszka Zajackowska-Drozd, “Leadership in the Jewish Councils as a Social Process: The Example of Cracow,” in *The Holocaust and European Societies: Social Processes and Social Dynamics*, ed. Frank Bajohr and Andrea Löw (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), and the resistance movement in the Kraków ghetto. On this last, see: Arie L. Bauminger, *The Fighters of the Cracow Ghetto* (Jerusalem: Keter Press, 1986).
- 30 Sean Martin, *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918–1939* (Chicago: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), 32.
- 31 Abraham Melezin, *Przyczynek do Znajomości Stosunków Demograficznych Wśród Ludności Żydowskiej w Łodzi, Krakowie i Lublinie Podczas Okupacji Niemieckiej* (Łódź: Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej, 1946), 66; M. Epstein, *The Statesman’s Year-Book: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1940* (London: Macmillan, 1940), 1218.
- 32 Martin, *Jewish Life in Cracow*, 43–44.
- 33 Aron Grynwald, testimony, RG 50.002*0058, US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (USHMMA), Washington, DC.
- 34 Jan Najder, testimony, May 29, 1945, RG-15.084M, Relacje Ocalałych z Holocaustu, Sygn. 301, 1945–1946, USHMMA.
- 35 Ben Friedman, interview 37025, segment 39, October 14, 1997, Visual History Archive, University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation, Los Angeles, CA.
- 36 Martin, *Jewish Life in Cracow*, 16.
- 37 Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*.
- 38 Katarzyna Person, ed., *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute, 2017), 33.

- 39 Jacob Lestchinsky, “The Jews in the Cities of the Republic of Poland,” in *East European Jews in Two World Wars: Studies from the YIVO Annual*, ed. Deborah Dash Moore (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 117.
- 40 Lestchinsky, “The Jews in the Cities of the Republic of Poland,” 112.
- 41 Wiesław Pus, “The Development of the City of Łódź (1820–1939),” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 6 (2005): 6.
- 42 Lestchinsky, “The Jews in the Cities of the Republic of Poland,” 108.
- 43 François Guesnet, “Khevres and Akhdes: The Change in Jewish Self-Organization in the Kingdom of Poland before 1900 and the Bund,” in *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100*, ed. Jack Jacobs (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 7–8.
- 44 Simon Segal, *The New Poland and the Jews* (New York: Lee Furman), 179.
- 45 Robert Moses Shapiro, *The Polish Kehile Elections of 1936: A Revolution Re-Examined* (New York: Holocaust Studies Program, Yeshiva University, 1988), 11.
- 46 Julian K. Janczak, “The National Structure of the Population in Łódź in the Years 1820–1939,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 6 (2005): 26.
- 47 Lestchinsky, “The Jews in the Cities of the Republic of Poland,” 116; Michal Unger, “The Status and Plight of Women in the Łódź Ghetto,” in *Women in the Holocaust*, ed. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 123.
- 48 Thank you to Daniel Magilow for his insights and recommended resources on publishing perpetrator photographs. For more on reprinting perpetrator photographs, see Susie Linfield. *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Marianne Hirsch, “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001): 5–37.
- 49 For scholarship that has deeply influenced my critical lens of Holocaust testimony, see: Zoë Vania Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Noah Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015). For my theoretical framework on my approach to gender in this volume see, Helene Sinnreich “Gender and Jewish Experience during the Holocaust,” ed. Natalia Aleksion and Marion Kaplan. *Cambridge History of the Holocaust*. Vol. 3 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022).

1 The Nazi Invasion

- 1 Elizabeth Mullener, *War Stories: Remembering World War II* (New York: Berkley Books, 2004), 1.
- 2 Shimon Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland during the Holocaust* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1987), 10.
- 3 Leon Leyson, *The Boy on the Wooden Box* (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2013), 46.
- 4 David Sierakowiak, *The Diary of David Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Alan Adelson, trans. Kamil Turowski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 31.

- 5 Chaim A. Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, trans. and ed. Abraham Isaac Katsch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 24.
- 6 Gusta Rubinfeld, interview 36610, segment 27, September 16, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 7 Anna Grun, manuscript, 2007.474.1, USHMMA.
- 8 Lucie Brent, interview 396, segment 19, December 4, 1994, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 9 Ziuta Grunhut, interview, RG 50.120*0260, USHMMA. Multiple testimonies mention this same radio announcement.
- 10 Aron Grynwald, testimony, RG 50.002*0058, USHMMA.
- 11 Hersz Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto, 1942–1944*, ed. Helene Sinnreich (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015).
- 12 Rachel Garfunkel, interview, RG 50.601*001, USHMMA.
- 13 Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. S. L. Shneiderman (Oxford: One World, 2007), 3. Mary Berg is a pseudonym for Miriam Wattenberg.
- 14 Roman Polanski, *Roman* (New York: William Morrow, 1984), 19–20. Ryszard Polanski was originally named Mojżesz Liebling. He changed his name after the war.
- 15 Samuel Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?* (Bloomington: First Vintage Books, 2009), 105.
- 16 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 27.
- 17 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 5.
- 18 Patricia Heberer, *Children during the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2011), 38.
- 19 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 38. This was also testified to by Adam Czerniaków; see *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, ed. Joseph Kermish, Stanisław Staron, and Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 77.
- 20 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 9.
- 21 Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?*, 106.
- 22 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 37.
- 23 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 76.
- 24 Seymour Levitan and Rachel Auerbach, “A Soup Kitchen in the Warsaw Ghetto: From the Memoirs of Rachel Auerbach,” *Bridges* 13, no. 2 (2008): 96–107.
- 25 Leyson, *The Boy on the Wooden Box*, 53.
- 26 Eva Smugler, interview 6211, segment 19, September 20, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 27 Pinchas Ringelblum, interview 37697, segment 169, October 30, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 28 Ringelblum, interview 37697, segment 176, October 30, 1997.
- 29 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 87.
- 30 Sierakowiak, *The Diary of David Sierakowiak*, 37–38.
- 31 Eleonora Bergman, Katarzyna Person, and Andrzej Żbikowski, eds., *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2017), 238, 243.

- 32 Lillian Kranitz-Sanders, *Twelve Who Survived: An Oral History of the Jews of Łódź, Poland, 1930–1954* (New York: Irvington, 1984), 38.
- 33 Jacob Apenszlak, ed., *The Black Book of Polish Jewry: An Account of the Martyrdom of Polish Jewry* (New York: American Federation for Polish Jews, 1943), 29. Numerous other testimonies of mass rapes of Jewish women in Warsaw were recorded in *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*.
- 34 Mietek Pemper, *The Road to Rescue: The Untold Story of Schindler's List* (New York: Hoffmann and Campe Verlag, 2008), 12.
- 35 Michael Etkind, quoted in Lyn Smith, *Remembering: Voices of the Holocaust* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2006), 76.
- 36 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 113, 115.
- 37 Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 140; Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 55.
- 38 Jan Najder, testimony 301.171, May 29, 1945, Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH), Warsaw, Poland.
- 39 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 37.
- 40 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 99.
- 41 See, for example, Decree 9, “Ordinance on the Provisional Settlement of Support Payments to Pensioners of the Former Polish State and Polish Self-Governing Bodies,” December 9, 1939, signed by Hans Frank, RG 27.001, USHMM.
- 42 Blanka Rothschild, interview 2273, May 2, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 43 Benjamin Lesser, interview, RG 50.882*0003, USHMM.
- 44 Apenszlak, *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*, 29.
- 45 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 24.
- 46 Pemper, *The Road to Rescue*, 12.
- 47 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 42, 67.
- 48 Julian Baranowski, *The Łódź Ghetto, 1940–1944* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi and Bilbo, 2005), 14, 16.
- 49 Leib Salpeter, testimony, RG 15.084M, Relacje Ocalalych z Holocaustu, Sygn. 301, 1945–1946, USHMM.
- 50 Diane Plotkin, “Smuggling in the Ghettos: Survivor Accounts from the Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków Ghettos,” in *Life in the Ghettos during the Holocaust*, ed. Eric C. Sterling (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 114.
- 51 Decree 11, December 12, 1939, signed by Julius Kruger, RG 27.001, USHMM.
- 52 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 144.
- 53 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 116.
- 54 Hal Elliott Wert, “U.S. Aid to Poles under Nazi Domination, 1939–1940,” *Historian* 57, no. 3 (1995): 511–24. Many diarists in all three cities mention seeing Jews thrown off breadlines.
- 55 Leib Salpeter, testimony, RG-15.084M, Relacje Ocalalych z Holocaustu, Sygn. 301, 1945–1946, USHMM.
- 56 Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem*, 64–65.

- 57 The Generalgouvernement was an administrative unit set up by the Nazi authorities to control the part of pre-World War II Poland that was not taken over by the Soviet Union or incorporated into the Reich. In 1939, Hans Frank was appointed the administrative head of the district.
- 58 The *gau* was an administrative district of the Nazi Party. Under the Nazi dictatorship, the Nazi Party officials responsible for a particular region were also made the administrative head of that same region. One such region was the Warthegau. Leaders of these regions were known as Gaultiers. Warthegau was rendered into English as “Wartheland.”
- 59 Sierakowiak, *The Diary of David Sierakowiak*, 38.
- 60 Michal Unger, “Religion and Religious Institutions in the Łódź Ghetto,” in *Remembering for the Future*, ed. John K. Roth et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).
- 61 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 23.
- 62 Yankl Nirenberg, *Memoirs of the Łódź Ghetto*, trans. Vivian Felsen (Toronto: Lugus Libros, 2003), 1–2.
- 63 Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 27.
- 64 See, for example, Mark Edele and Wanda Warlik, “Saved by Stalin? Trajectories of Polish Jews in the Soviet Second World War,” in *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, ed. Mark Edele, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Atina Grossmann (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 95–131.
- 65 Michal Unger, *The Last Ghetto: Life in the Łódź Ghetto, 1940–1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1995), 44.
- 66 “Verordnung uber die Kennzeichnung von Juden und Juedinnen im Generalgouvernement,” Kraków, November 23, 1939, Hans Frank, RG 27.001, USHMMA. The text reads: “Beginning December 1, 1939, all Jews and Jewesses who are in the Generalgouvernement and are ten years old or older are obliged to wear a white armband with a Jewish star at least 10 centimeters wide on the right sleeve of their clothing and overclothes.”
- 67 Unger, *The Last Ghetto*, 44. Robert Moses Shapiro, in his notes on his translation of Isaiah Trunk’s *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, intro. Israel Gutman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), mentions that Friedrich Übelhör issued a decree on December 12, 1939, replacing the armband with a yellow Star of David.
- 68 Irena Glueck, diary entry, May 9, 1940, RG 02.208M, file 270, USHMMA. Translation of diary by Kristine Belfoure, provided courtesy of Alexandra Zapruder.
- 69 Julius Feldman, *The Kraków Diary of Julius Feldman*, trans. William Brand (Newark, NJ: Quill Press, 2002), 18.
- 70 Gertrude Schneider, ed., *Mordechai Gebirtig: His Poetic and Musical Legacy* (London: Praeger, 2000), 153.
- 71 Ludmila Page, interview, RG 50.005*0046, USHMMA.
- 72 Sierakowiak, *The Diary of David Sierakowiak*, 70.
- 73 Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt*, trans. Ina Friedman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 25.

- 74 John R. Butterly, and Jack Shepherd, *Hunger: The Biology and Politics of Starvation* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2010), 127.
- 75 Mendel Beale, interview 33137, segment 16, June 24, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 76 Samuel Lustiger, interview 47993, segment 100, November 15, 1998, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 77 Gusta Rubinfeld, interview 36610, segment 11, September 16, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 78 Anna Grun, manuscript, 2007.474.1, USHMMA.
- 79 Jacob Rosenberg, interview 20686, September 9, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 80 Joseph Curczinski, interview 52588, segment 40–46, August 30, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 81 Anna Grun, manuscript, 2007.474.1, USHMMA.
- 82 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 37.
- 83 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 113.
- 84 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 97.
- 85 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 39.
- 86 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 151–52.
- 87 Irena Glueck, diary entries, September 29, 1940, and October 26, 1940, RG 02.208M, file 270, USHMMA.
- 88 Jan Rozanski, testimony, RG 02.079*01, USHMMA.
- 89 Irena Glueck, diary entry, September 11, 1940, RG 02.208M, file 270, USHMMA.
- 90 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 33.
- 91 Irena Glueck, diary entry, September 11, 1940, RG 02.208M, file 270, USHMMA.
- 92 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 29, 30.
- 93 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 22.
- 94 Levitan and Auerbach, “A Soup Kitchen in the Warsaw Ghetto.”
- 95 *Judische Gemeinde Krakau, Raporty dotyczące Żydowskich ośrodków opiekuńczych*, p. 31, 218/17, ŻIH.
- 96 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 174–75.
- 97 Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?*, 118; Levitan and Auerbach, “A Soup Kitchen in the Warsaw Ghetto.”
- 98 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 48.
- 99 Activities of the Judenrat (Jewish council) in Kraków, Poland, RG 15.072M, Rada Żydowska miasta Krakowa, Sygn. 218, 218/19, 27, USHMMA.
- 100 Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem*, 59.
- 101 ŻSS was the heir to the earlier coordinating committee established in Warsaw, through which Jewish organizations banded together in an effort to more effectively aid those in need. ŻSS continued to operate until 1942. For more on the history of Jewish social self-help, see Annalena Schmidt, “(Selbst-)Hilfe in Zeiten der Hilflosigkeit? die ‘Jüdische Soziale Selbsthilfe’ und die ‘Jüdische Unterstützungsstelle’ im Generalgouvernement, 1939–1944/45” (PhD diss., University of Giessen, 2015); Michael Weichert, *Jüdische alleinhilfe 1939–1945* (Tel Aviv: Menora, 1962).
- 102 Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?*, 120.

- 103 Moshe Fass, “Theatrical Activities in the Polish Ghettos during the Years 1939–1942,” *Jewish Social Studies* 38, no 1 (1976): 54–72.
- 104 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 24–25, 36.
- 105 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 47.

2 Jewish Leadership

- 1 It was likely the Einsatzgruppen that convened the Judenrat in all three cases. Michal Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), 14; Adam Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, ed. Joseph Kermish, Stanisław Staron, and Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 78–79.
- 2 Jewish communal organizations, or the kehillah, have a long history in Poland of serving as intermediaries between government authorities and the Jewish community as well as providing religious and charitable support for the community. With the emergence of the Polish Second Republic, Jewish communal organizations were incorporated into local governments, with oversight of religious institutions and activities. In theory, kehillah leadership was to be selected by enfranchised Jewish men, but at various times the Polish government stepped in to exercise control over Jewish communal leadership. In Warsaw, the elected board was dissolved and replaced in 1937 with a government-appointed council, in part as a rebuke for protesting against antisemitic legislation by the Polish state. In Łódź, the government postponed elections when faced with the possibility of a left-leaning kehillah under the control of the Bundists.
- 3 See, for example, Antoni Galinski, and Mark Budziark, eds., *Eksterminacja inteligencji Łódź i okregu łódzkiego, 1939–1940* (Łódź: Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Łodzi, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 1992).
- 4 Rafał Landau, the head of the Jewish community of Kraków, Leibl Mincberg, president of the Łódź community board, and Maurycy Mayzel, the head of the Jewish community of Warsaw, all fled their respective cities.
- 5 In Łódź and Kraków, the Germans invaded well before Reinhard Heydrich issued directives, including the Schnellbrief of September 21, 1939, on the creation and format of the Jewish Councils. The Schnellbrief laid out Nazi Jewish policy in occupied Poland. For more on ghettos that predate the Schnellbrief and the function of the Schnellbrief, see Dan Michman, “Why Did Heydrich Write the Schnellbrief? A Remark on the Reason and Its Significance,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 32 (2004): 443–47.
- 6 Please note that Marek Bieberstein’s name appears on documents from the period as Bieberstein while his brother’s last name is rendered as Biberstein and some scholars use “Biberstein” in discussions of Marek Bieberstein. For the purposes of this monograph, I have used Bieberstein for Marek unless quoting another scholar who used Biberstein.

- 7 Chaim A. Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, trans. and ed. Abraham Isaac Katsch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 215.
- 8 Helene Sinnreich, “The Chairman,” in *The Highest Form of Wisdom: A Memorial Publication in Honor of Saul S. Friedman (1937–2013)*, ed. Jonathan C. Friedman, and Robert D. Miller II (New York: Ktav, 2016), 54–78; Joseph L. Lichten, and Ludwik Krżyżanowski, “Adam Czerniaków and His Times,” *Polish Review* 29, no. 1/2 (1984): 71–89; see also Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski*.
- 9 Lichten and Krżyżanowski, “Adam Czerniaków and His Times.”
- 10 According to Yankl Nirenberg, Rumkowski had no power over Gertler or Kliger. See Yankl Nirenberg, *Memoirs of the Łódź Ghetto*, trans. Vivian Felsen (Toronto: Lugus Libros, 2003), 65. Other leading members of the ghetto leadership in Łódź, including Aron Jakubowicz, have also been suspected of reporting to the Gestapo. See Ewa Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe, 2017), 10.
- 11 Abraham Gancwajch managed to escape to the Aryan side of Warsaw prior to being arrested. Dawid Gertler was arrested and deported to Auschwitz. He survived the war. Much of the Kraków ghetto Jewish police were killed just after the liquidation of the ghetto and the transfer of the population to Płaszów. Marek Kliger, who was not purged, survived the war. He was tried in an honor court after the war. On Kliger, see Sascha Feuchert, Erwin Leibfried, and Jörg Riecke, *Letzte Tage: die Łódzer Getto-Chronik Juni/Juli 1944* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 12, 202 ff.
- 12 Not all ghettos became closed ghettos, but the three in this study did. See Helene Sinnreich, “Victim and Perpetrator Perspectives of World War II–Era Ghettos,” in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. Jonathan C. Friedman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 115–24.
- 13 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 210.
- 14 Maurycy Mayzel was killed by the Germans in 1942 in Kowel. See Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 138.
- 15 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 78.
- 16 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 138–39.
- 17 Abraham Gepner would later be in charge of the provisioning department for the Warsaw Ghetto.
- 18 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 168–69.
- 19 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 137.
- 20 It is not clear how many Jews in Warsaw spoke Yiddish as their native language. In the 1931 census, 89 percent of Warsaw Jewry declared Yiddish to be their native tongue, while only 6 percent declared Polish. The 1931 census, however, was problematic because it offered no other way to indicate Jewish national identity, a protected status under the Minority Rights Treaty. As a result, people used language as a means of identification, and it is likely not an accurate reflection of language use.
- 21 Lichten and Krżyżanowski, “Adam Czerniaków and His Times.”

- 22 Browning, *The Path to Genocide*, p. 11.
- 23 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 66.
- 24 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 38.
- 25 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 39.
- 26 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 213. Czerniaków's diary documents numerous beatings of members of the Warsaw Judenrat both before and after the establishment of the ghetto.
- 27 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 210.
- 28 Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. Jacob Sloan (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 86.
- 29 Charles Roland, *Courage under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 27.
- 30 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 149.
- 31 Katarzyna Person, *Assimilated Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto: 1940–1943* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 32. See also Katarzyna Person, *Policjanci* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2018); Svenja Bethke, "Crime and Punishment in Emergency Situations: The Jewish Ghetto Courts in Łódź, Warsaw, and Vilna in World War II – A Comparative Study," *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 28, no. 3 (2014): 1–17.
- 32 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 193.
- 33 Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing Up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. S. L. Shneiderman (Oxford: One World, 2007), 32.
- 34 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 218.
- 35 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 37.
- 36 Halina Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, vol. 1 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 124.
- 37 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 151.
- 38 The Schnellbrief of September 21, 1939, laid out Nazi Jewish policy in occupied Poland. For more on ghettos that predate the Schnellbrief and the function of the Schnellbrief, see Michman, "Why Did Heydrich Write the Schnellbrief?"
- 39 Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski*, 14.
- 40 Adam Sitarek, "Otoczone drutem państwo": *Struktura i funkcjonowanie administracji Żydowskiej getta łódzkiego* (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2015), 340.
- 41 There were numerous theories on how Rumkowski became the head of the Jewish community in Łódź. However, much of this speculation has been debunked. For more on this history, see Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski*; Sinnreich, "The Chairman."
- 42 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 23.
- 43 On Babiacki, see Szymon Rogoziński and Andrew Firestone, *My Fortunate Life* (East Malvern, Australia: Bookaburra, 2000), 54. Babiacki was also a delegate to the Polish Ministry of Industry and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry; see Paweł Korzec, *Studia i materiały do dziejów Łódzi i okręgu łódzkiego* (Łódź: Wydawn Łódzkie, 1962), 200. On Faust, see Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro,

intro. Israel Gutman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 87. On Gerszowski, who died at Auschwitz, see Andrzej Strzelecki, *The Deportation of Jews from the Łódź Ghetto to KL Auschwitz and Their Extermination*, trans. Witold Zbirohowski-Kościa (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2006), 55, 139. Dr. Helman was born on May 3, 1875, and worked as an otolaryngologist in Łódź, serving as head of the health department and deputy head of the Beirat until the sealing of the ghetto. He worked in the ghetto as a doctor until his death in November 1942; see Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 93. Pick survived the imprisonment of the Beirat and was sent on a transport to Kraków; see Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 457n92. Dawid Warszawski was present in September 1942 at Rumkowski's "Give Me Your Children" speech, where he spoke and tried to explain the German edict; see Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 242. Finally, on Wyszewiański, see Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 23; Sitarek, *Otoczone drutem państwo*, 50–51.

- 44 Samuel Faust and Dawid Windman were spared arrest; see Michal Unger, "Religion and Religious Institutions in the Łódź Ghetto," in *Remembering for the Future*, ed. John K. Roth et al., (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 335–351. Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 23. Those who were arrested but survived were Dr. A. Damm, Arthur Frankfurt, Pinkus Gerszowski, Dr. Dawid Lajb Helman, Mieczysław Hertz, Jakub Lando, Leon Mokrski, Chil Majer Pick, Dawid Warszawski, and Maks Wyszewiański; see Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 23.
- 45 Even before his days as leader of the Łódź ghetto, Rumkowski was a controversial figure. He had estranged himself from his political party, the Zionists, through battling with them on political issues in the 1930s; see Sinnreich "The Chairman," 58. Among those who accused him of organizing the execution of his first council was Leon Szykier (testimony, 301/699, ŻIH).
- 46 The second Beirat comprised Abraham Alter, Lejzer Baum, Stanisław Bęczkowski, Ber Częstochowski, Lewi Edelman, Dr. Ludwig Falk, Henryk Hersz Fein, Mosze Jehuda Friedrich, Zygmunt Goldberg, Mendel Krasucki, engineer Grzegorz Łapp, Józef Lipski, Dr. Edward Reicher, Aron Hersz Szapiro, Dr. Leon Szykier, Wolf Ulinower, Dawid Warszawski, Chaim Mordka Winawer, and Mosze Zażujer, as well as Dr. Dawid Lajb Helman and Dawid Warszawski from the first Beirat. See Sitarek, *Otoczone drutem państwo*, 53; Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*; Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski*, 19.
- 47 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: University of Nebraska Press), 192–94.
- 48 Public announcement no. 1, March 1, 1940, Gettoverwaltung Records (GV) 29211, doc. 1, Łódź State Archive (Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi), Łódź, Poland; Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 28–29.

- 49 Arad, Gutman, and Margaliot, *Documents on the Holocaust*, 192–94. The original announcement of the creation of the ghetto, dating to February 1940, included a provision that allowed Jews who were employed within the city to remain in the city, without their families, provided their employer meet their needs of food and housing.
- 50 GV 29211, doc. 5, Łódź State Archive; “Department of Groceries and Bread,” no author, n.d., box 19, folder 883, Nachman Zonabend Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York.
- 51 Lucian Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), xxxvii.
- 52 Alan Adelson, and Robert Lapides, eds., *Łódź Ghetto: Inside a Community under Siege* (New York: Viking Press, 1989), 58. Adelson puts “[sic]” next to the total number of apartments, but the number calculated is correct. Adding the total number of apartments with drains (1,338) to the total number of apartments with no facilities (30,624) results in a calculation of 31,962 apartments, the same number stated by Adelson. Before the war, 25 percent of apartments in Łódź had running water. The lack of water and sewage in the ghetto was appalling and noteworthy to its residents. However, to keep the situation in historical perspective, in 1939, only 16 percent of properties in Łódź were connected to the water and sewage systems; see Wiesław Pus, “The Development of the City of Łódź (1820–1939),” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 6 (2005): 17.
- 53 David Shavit, *Hunger for the Printed Word: Books and Libraries in the Jewish Ghettos of Nazi-Occupied Europe* (London: McFarland, 1997), 79.
- 54 Lillian Kranitz-Sanders, *Twelve Who Survived: An Oral History of the Jews of Łódź, Poland, 1930–1954* (New York: Irvington, 1984), 84–85.
- 55 Public announcement no. 12, dated April 6, 1940, GV 29211/7, Łódź State Archive.
- 56 Michal Unger, *The Last Ghetto: Life in the Łódź Ghetto, 1940–1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1995), 32.
- 57 Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, xxxviii, xxxix.
- 58 Multiple individuals headed food distribution departments and then, as the food distribution system evolved, switched to other projects. These individuals were often either connected to Rumkowski through their activism in the Zionist movement before the war or connected to other high-ranking individuals in Rumkowski’s administration. For example, Boruch Praszkiel served as head of housing, then co-organizer of kitchens, and later head of the Department for Special Matters. He was also an activist for the General Zionists before the war. His deputy at the Department of Special Matters was Dawid Gertler’s cousin Michal Gertler. The Department for Special Matters had the strongest connection between the ghetto and happenings at Chelmno extermination camp. It oversaw activities like sorting clothing from the extermination camp. Aron Dawid Najman headed milk and then vegetable distribution before retiring, after which he became director of the clothing department. Presumably, the last position was given to him to protect him from deportation. Luzer Najman headed the provisioning department and then the coal department,

while Mordechaj Lajzerowicz was in charge of the bakery and flour supplies from the beginning of the occupation through the ghetto period. It was unusual for one person to stay in a single position. It was equally unusual for someone to change departments as often as Henry Neftalin, who went from heading housing to organizing ration cards to handling supplemental rations, or Zygmunt Reingold, who headed divisions in the Ordnungsdienst, commanded the Sonderkommando, and then became co-head of the Provisioning Department. Abram Szajniak moved from the Housing Department to the Kitchen Department to the Commission of the Old Shoe Warehouse.

- 59 Freda Milstein, interview 34571, October 21, 1997, Visual History Archives, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 60 Reinhard Heydrich's Schnellbrief of September 21, 1939, laid out Nazi Jewish policy in occupied Poland. For more on ghettos that predate the Schnellbrief and the function of the Schnellbrief, see Michman, "Why Did Heydrich Write the Schnellbrief?"
- 61 Announcement to the Jewish Community, dated September 17, 1939, p. 2, signed Prof. Marek Bieberstein and Dr. Wilhelm Goldblatt, RG-15.079M 811 I786, USHMM.
- 62 There are multiple debates about the date. See, for example, Andrea Löw, and Agnieszka Zajackowska-Drozd, "Leadership in the Jewish Councils as a Social Process: The Example of Cracow," in *The Holocaust and European Societies: Social Processes and Social Dynamics*, eds. Frank Bajohr, and Andrea Löw (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 192. Some sources use Marek Bieberstein's testimony of September 13, 1940, in which he states that he had been chair of the Jewish Council in Kraków since September 12, 1939. See Marek Bieberstein, testimony, September 13, 1940, RG-15.072, file 1, p. 254, USHMM. Others use September 13, 1939, because it appears on a flyer. See Announcement to the Jewish Community, dated September 17, 1939, RG-15.079M 811 I786, p. 2, USHMM.
- 63 Leib Salpeter, testimony, RG-15.084M, Relacje Ocalałych z Holocaustu, Sygn. 301, 1945–1946, USHMM.
- 64 Loew and Zajackowska-Drozd, "Leadership in the Jewish Councils as a Social Process," 192.
- 65 Agnieszka Zajackowska-Drozd, "Krakowski Judenrat," *Studia nad Autorytaryzmem i Totalitaryzmem* 37, no. 1 (2015): 57.
- 66 Michman, "Why Did Heydrich Write the Schnellbrief?," 436.
- 67 Announcement to the Jewish Community, dated September 17, 1939, RG-15.079M 811 I786, p. 2, USHMM; Questionnaires of Jews who applied for personal I.D. cards from circa 1940–1941, RG 15.098m 109, p. 547, USHMM.
- 68 Born in 1897, Dembitzer survived the war through the intervention of Oskar Schindler. Leib Salpeter, testimony, RG-15.084M, Relacje Ocalałych z Holocaustu, Sygn. 301, 1945–1946, USHMM.
- 69 Questionnaires of Jews who applied for personal I.D. cards from circa 1940–1941, RG 15.098m 80, p. 930, USHMM.

- 70 Letter signed by F. Schenker, dated October 24, 1940, RG 15.098m 74, p. 752, USHMMA.
- 71 Questionnaires of Jews who applied for personal I.D. cards from circa 1940–1941, RG 15.098m 141, p. 125, USHMMA.
- 72 Announcement to the Jewish Community, dated September 17, 1939, RG-15.079M 811 I786, p. 2, USHMMA.
- 73 On Greif, see Questionnaires of Jews who applied for personal I.D. cards from circa 1940–1941, RG 15.098m 24, pp. 862–63, USHMMA. On Haber, see Leib Salpeter, testimony, 301.448, ŻIH.
- 74 Leon Salpeter was a druggist, born on December 20, 1897, who worked in Julius Madritsch's factory and then was at Bruennlitz with Oskar Schindler. He was the author of the letter given to Schindler by his workers to protect him, on the surrender of the German army. Salpeter wrote a forty-seven-page testimony of his wartime experience, which is part of the Jewish Historical Institute's collection of Holocaust testimonies (ŻIH 301.448). He also participated in the Zionist Congress in London after the war. See Leib Salpeter, testimony, RG-15.084M, *Relacje Ocalałych z Holocaustu*, Sygn. 301, 1945–1946, USHMMA. Rafał Morgenbesser, born October 9, 1900, was an accountant and member of Kraków Judenrat in charge of organization matters and general affairs. He was on Schindler's list and liberated at Bruennlitz, and he married Henryka Krieger, born August 11, 1904, who was sister to Dr. Alfred Krieger. Dr. Dawid Schlang, who was born on July 8, 1903 or 1905, ended up in Bruennlitz due to being on Schindler's list. He was a solicitor in Kraków before and after the war. See the Arolsen Archives, formerly the International Tracing Service archive (ITS), 32578387; Norbert Schlang, interview, 27127, segment 27, March 10, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation. Dr. Dawid Bulwa was born on March 12, 1882, and his last known address was ul Grodzka 49, Kraków, Poland; see ITS #4235385; Leib Salpeter, testimony, 301.448, ŻIH. Joachim Goldflus was arrested and transported to Auschwitz on April 5, 1941, and was given camp number 11969. His further fate is unknown. He was implicated in the Eugen Reichert affair (bribery); Activities of the Judenrat (Jewish council) in Kraków, RG-15.072 file 1, p. 251, USHMMA.
- 75 On Symon Nowimiast, see Aleksander Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie* (Kraków: Wydawn Literackie, 1986), 16; see also Leib Salpeter, testimony, 301.448, ŻIH.
- 76 Leib Salpeter, testimony, 301.448, ŻIH.
- 77 Leib Salpeter, testimony, 301.448, ŻIH. This event was also reported by Malvina Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Płaszów Camp Remembered* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1989), 10.
- 78 Leib Salpeter, testimony, 301.448, ŻIH; Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto*, 10.
- 79 Jan Najder, testimony, dated May 29, 1945, RG-15.084M, *Relacje Ocalałych z Holocaustu*, Sygn. 301, 1945–1946, USHMMA.
- 80 Leib Salpeter, testimony, 301.448, ŻIH.
- 81 Activities of the Judenrat (Jewish council) in Kraków, Poland, RG-15.072M, *Rada Żydowska miasta, Krakowa*, Sygn. 218, USHMMA. Adam Czerniaków mentions Bieberstein's arrest in his diary on September 14, 1940; see Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 197.

- 82 Löw and Zajackowska-Drozd, “Leadership in the Jewish Councils as a Social Process,” 194.
- 83 Questionnaires of Jews who applied for personal I.D. cards from circa 1940–1941, RG 15.098m 66, p. 1118, USHMMA.
- 84 Questionnaires of Jews who applied for personal I.D. cards from circa 1940–1941, RG 15.098m 62, p. 472, USHMMA. As far as I could find, the first document signed by Rosenzweig as Jewish community leader was dated November 25, 1940 (RG 15.098m 119, p. 1240, USHMMA). Prior to that Ferdinand Schenker, who noted in his own paperwork in early November 1940 that he was the interim head of the Jewish community, had been signing things on behalf of the community; see RG 15.098m 66, p. 1118, USHMMA. He last did so on November 22, 1940 (RG 15.098m 155, p. 87, USHMMA). Rosenzweig in his paperwork of November 18, 1940, mentions that he had been a solicitor but does not yet indicate his position in the Jewish community; see RG 15.098m 62, p. 453, USHMMA.
- 85 See document dated August 3, 1942, RG 15.098m 156, p. 505, USHMMA; David Gutter, registration, December 3, 1940, RG 15.098m 111, p. 1423, USHMMA. I established that this was the correct David Gutter by comparing the signature on the first of these documents (which included the official stamp of the head of the Jewish community) with the signature on his registration. Both documents render his name as David Gutter, not Dawid Gutter, the Polish spelling. Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 363.
- 86 The announcement appeared in the March 6, 1941, issue of the *Krakauer Zeitung*.
- 87 Abraham Melezin, *Przyczynek do znajomości stosunków demograficznych wśród ludności żydowskiej w Łodzi, Krakowie i Lublinie podczas okupacji niemieckiej* (Łódź: Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej, 1946), 26.
- 88 Joanna Sliwa, “A Link between the Inside and the Outside Worlds: Jewish Child Smugglers in the Kraków Ghetto,” *Zeitschrift für Genozidforschung* 13, no. 1–2 (2012): 62.
- 89 Melezin, *Przyczynek do znajomości stosunków demograficznych*, 29.
- 90 Mietek Pemper, *The Road to Rescue: The Untold Story of Schindler’s List* (New York: Hoffmann and Campe Verlag, 2008), 25.
- 91 Sliwa, “A Link between the Inside and the Outside Worlds,” 62; Melezin, *Przyczynek do znajomości stosunków demograficznych*, 26.
- 92 Diane Plotkin, “Smuggling in the Ghettos: Survivor Accounts from the Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków Ghettos,” in *Life in the Ghettos during the Holocaust*, ed. Eric C. Sterling (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 113.
- 93 Melezin, *Przyczynek do znajomości stosunków demograficznych*, 28; Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie*, 53.
- 94 Melezin, *Przyczynek do znajomości stosunków demograficznych*, 28.
- 95 Melezin, *Przyczynek do znajomości stosunków demograficznych*, 67.
- 96 Melezin, *Przyczynek do znajomości stosunków demograficznych*, 29; Rachel Garfunkel, interview 55341, segment 42, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.

- 97 Bernard Offen, *My Hometown Concentration Camp: A Survivor's Account of Life in the Kraków Ghetto and Płaszów Concentration Camp* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), 16.
- 98 Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 6.
- 99 Icchak Henryk Rubin, *Żydzi w Łodzi pod niemiecką okupacją 1939–1945* (London: Kontra, 1988), 222.
- 100 Hans Biebow to Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, April 16, 1940, box 1, folder 84, YIVO; Biebow to Rumkowski, May 30, 1940, box 1, folder 98, YIVO.
- 101 *Chronicle*, March 1, 1941.
- 102 GV 2953, doc. 13, Łódź State Archive.
- 103 GV 29454, doc. 12 and doc. 34, Łódź State Archive; “Department of Groceries and Bread,” no author, n.d., box 19, folder 883, YIVO.
- 104 *Chronicle*, January 19, 1941.
- 105 *Chronicle*, January 26, 1941.
- 106 Rosensweig was also beaten when he was relieved of his position as head of the Kraków Judenrat. See Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy* (Washington, DC: Holocaust Library, 2000), 48.
- 107 In all three locations, exceptional and native German ability were always needed by Jewish leadership. The German abilities of the leadership in a specific city, however, affected how essential or indispensable individuals could become in an administration.

3 The Supply and Distribution of Food

- 1 The chapter epigraph is from Hanno Loewy, Andrzej Bodek, and François Coppée, *Les Vrais Riches, Notizen am Rand: ein Tagebuch aus dem Ghetto Łódź (Mai bis August 1944)* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1997), 62.
- 2 Jakub Poznanski, *Dziennik z Łódzkiego getta* (Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy, 2002), 26.
- 3 “Department of Groceries and Bread,” no author, n.d., box 19, folder 883, YIVO.
- 4 Order no. 45, May 19, 1940, box 3, folder 184, YIVO; Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. Jacob Sloan (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 188.
- 5 Poznanski, *Dziennik z Łódzkiego getta*, 26; “Department of Groceries and Bread,” no author, n.d., box 19, folder 883, YIVO; Barbara Alpern Engel, “Not by Bread Alone: Subsistence Riots in Russia during World War I,” *Journal of Modern History* 69, no. 4 (1997): 715.
- 6 “Department of Groceries and Bread,” no author, n.d., box 19, folder 883, YIVO; no. 48, May 25, 1940, box 3, folder 185, YIVO; no. 52, June 2, 1940, box 3, folder 187, YIVO.
- 7 Poznanski, *Dziennik z Łódzkiego getta*, 32.
- 8 Poznanski, 32.
- 9 At the same time that the Germans were attempting to draw out Jewish wealth with food, they were forcibly removing valuables from the ghetto population. In May 1940, the Kripo (Criminal Police) established an office in the ghetto

- with the aim of expropriating Jewish property both within and outside the ghetto. They held Jews suspected of hiding valuables and tortured them to reveal these valuables' location. See, for example, Blanka Rothschild, interview 2273, May 2, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; Ester H., interview 506, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 10 "Department of Groceries and Bread," no author, n.d., box 19, folder 883, YIVO.
 - 11 Order no. 186, December 27, 1940, box 6, folder 307, YIVO; Order no. 178, December 12, 1940, box 6, folder 300, YIVO; Order no. 177, December 10, 1940, box 6, folder 299, YIVO.
 - 12 Ewa Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe, 2017), 52, 112.
 - 13 "Persons of good will need not worry about their fate. Only the unwelcome element will leave the ghetto"; speech dated December 20, 1941, box 20, folder 925, YIVO.
 - 14 Biuletyn Kroniki Codziennej, February 1, 1942, box 20, folder 927, YIVO.
 - 15 *Chronicle*, January 12, 1941; *Chronicle*, January 17, 1941. Children up to the age of fourteen received seven marks, adults of ages fifteen to sixty received ten marks, those of ages sixty-one to seventy received twelve marks, those from seventy-one to seventy-nine received fourteen marks, and those over age eighty received sixteen marks.
 - 16 Order no. 186, December 27, 1940, box 6, folder 307, YIVO; *Chronicle*, January 19, 1941.
 - 17 *Chronicle*, April 19, 1941.
 - 18 NS 19/2655/26, Bundesarchiv, Berlin, Germany.
 - 19 The calculations are based on figures given in NS 19/2655/23–29, Bundesarchiv; food permitted to be ordered, food actually ordered, and population statistics for May 1, 1941, in GV 29199/274, Łódź State Archive.
 - 20 The calculations are based on NS 19/2655/26, Bundesarchiv.
 - 21 Israel Tabaksblatt, testimony, 301/634, ŻIH.
 - 22 *Chronicle*, September 1941 summary; *Chronicle*, November 1941 summary.
 - 23 Avraham Barkai, "Between East and West: Jews from Germany in the Łódź Ghetto," *Yad Vashem Studies* 16 (1984): 290.
 - 24 Marian Turski, "Individual Experience in Diaries from the Łódź Ghetto," in *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*, ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (New York: Ktav, 1999), 118.
 - 25 And where was God?, 1960, RG-02 *127, USHMM.
 - 26 GV 29200, Łódź State Archive.
 - 27 Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro, intro. Israel Gutman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 139.
 - 28 Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro, intro. Israel Gutman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 139.
 - 29 Hersz Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto, 1942–1944*, ed. Helene Sinnreich (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015), 130.
 - 30 Alexandra Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 234.

- 31 Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto*, 110.
- 32 N. N., October 10, 1941, box 9, folder 421, YIVO. Cholent is a traditional Eastern European Jewish dish served on holidays that prohibit cooking. The dish is placed in a low-temperature oven the afternoon before the holiday and retrieved the next day for lunch. Sukkot in 1941 began on October 6, 1941.
- 33 Order no. 242, April 3, 1941, box 7, folder 359, YIVO; Order no. 248, April 13, 1941, box 7, folder 365, YIVO; *Geto-tsaytung far informatsye, farordenungen un bakantmachungen* (Ghetto Gazette for Information, Announcements, and Ordinances), nos. 1–18, Yiddish, March 7, 1941, through September 21, 1941, box 17, folder 825, YIVO. In 1941, Passover ran from April 11 to April 19.
- 34 *Chronicle*, April 1, 1941; *Chronicle*, April 4, 1941; *Chronicle*, April 5, 1941; *Chronicle*, April 10, 1941.
- 35 *Chronicle*, May 27–31, 1941; *Geto-tsaytung far informatsye, farordenungen un bakantmachungen*, nos. 1–18, March 7, 1941, through September 21, 1941, box 17, folder 825, YIVO.
- 36 “An opinion by the rabbinate in the matter of consumption of non-kosher meat,” February 27, 1941, box 15, folder 794, YIVO.
- 37 *Chronicle*, April 7, 1941: Administratively, a special section of the Order Service supervised food supplies entering the ghetto. Additionally, a section controlled food prices in the stores and on the streets and combated violations perpetuated in the official food distribution centers. The cycle of power transitions also seems to coincide with Rumkowski’s being pushed aside as actual leader of the ghetto following a mental breakdown after the September deportations of children, sick, and elderly.
- 38 Announcement by Hans Biebow, October 1943, December, 17, 1943–July, 25, 1944, box 2, folder 117, YIVO.
- 39 Order no. 401, November 3, 1943, box 11, folder 526, YIVO; Order no. 402, November 5, 1943, box 11, folder 528, YIVO; Order no. 403, November 8, 1943, box 11, folder 529, YIVO.
- 40 Announcement by Hans Biebow, October 1943, December, 17, 1943–July, 25, 1944, box 2, folder 117, YIVO.
- 41 GV 30043/157; GV 30043/137; GV 29238/295; GV 29191/22, Łódź State Archive.
- 42 See, for example, Halina Bochenek, testimony, O.3/9862, 6, Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem, Israel.
- 43 Halina Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, vol. 1 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 74.
- 44 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 75.
- 45 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 91.
- 46 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 92.
- 47 Norbert Schlang, interview 27127, segment 15, March 10, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation. Schlang’s father was a member of the Judenrat, and so the yellow card may have been either a special item or the typical card. However, this was also the color of the ration card and practice of distribution of cards in the Warsaw ghetto.
- 48 Leo Bach, interview 30751, segment 27, June 8, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.

- 49 Aleksander Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie* (Kraków: Wydawn Literackie, 2001), 58.
- 50 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 144.
- 51 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 145.
- 52 Leib Salpeter, testimony, RG-15.084M, Relacje Ocalałych z Holocaustu, Sygn. 301, 1945–1946, USHMM.
- 53 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 124.
- 54 Bernard Offen, interview 53621, segment 171, April 22, 1992, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 55 Shimon Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland during the Holocaust* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1987), 208.
- 56 Mark Goldfinger, interview 44971, June 3, 1998, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 57 Adolf Wolfman, interview 32773, September 4, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 58 Tola Wehrman, interview 55051, segment 226, October 17, 2012, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 59 Anna Reich, interview 1292, segment 35, March 7, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 60 Nathan Nothman, interview 10564, segment 30, December 26, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 61 Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, trans. Garry Malloy (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2013), 34, 35
- 62 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 80.
- 63 Tadeusz Pankiewicz, interview by Claude Lanzmann, RG-60.5014, Shoah Collection, USHMM.
- 64 Rena Birnhack née Wohlfeiler, interview, Ocalić od zapomnienia (Save from being forgotten), Historical Museum of the City of Kraków. Kraków, Poland, accessed June 27, 2020, <https://ocalicpamiec.mhk.pl/en/?portfolio=rena-birnhack-nee-wohlfeiler>.
- 65 Marcus Leuchter, interview 54896, segment 153, February 28, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 66 Engel, “Not by Bread Alone,” 715.
- 67 The letters name the companies Carlos Campos and Jose Joaquim Pires in Lisbon as having successfully reached them. Richard S. Hollander et al., *Every Day Lasts a Year: A Jewish Family’s Correspondence from Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 262, 263, 278.
- 68 This transfer of internal distribution control from the city authorities to the Jewish ghetto administration in Warsaw took place on the same date that the Jewish ghetto administration in Łódź carried out a large-scale reorganization of food distribution and moved to ration cards.
- 69 Adam Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, ed. Joseph Kermish, Stanisław Staron, and Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 218.
- 70 Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 303.
- 71 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 238, 305.

- 72 The Supply Section was initially funded with a loan from its head, Abraham Gepner. Czerniaków, 218.
- 73 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 230, 255, 263, 269.
- 74 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 239.
- 75 Christopher R. Browning argues that the decision to better provision the Warsaw ghetto was essentially made in April 1941. However, the effects of the improved food conditions were not felt in the ghetto until summer 1941, with the bypassing of the Transferstelle and the increase of soup kitchen funds. See Christopher R. Browning, “Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland: 1939–41,” *Central European History* 19, no. 4 (1986): 343–68.
- 76 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 421.
- 77 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 238. The German directive to open community kitchens in Warsaw came two days after Rumkowski visited the Warsaw ghetto.
- 78 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 221, 223.
- 79 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 429.
- 80 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 182.
- 81 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 142.
- 82 Isaiah Trunk, “Religious, Educational and Cultural Problems in the Eastern European Ghettos under German Occupation,” in *East European Jews in Two World Wars: Studies from the YIVO Annual*, ed. Deborah Dash Moore (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 160. In the Warsaw ghetto, those who were better off supported the poorest of the ghetto dwellers. The Berg family, which was in a privileged position in the ghetto, supported a children’s hospital on its street and, along with its neighbors, supported Dr. Janusz Korczak’s children’s home, located on the same street. Mary Berg noted that in her house, “a special kettle of soup is cooked every Friday for the Mattias Berson Children’s Hospital on Sienna Street.” Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. S. L. Shneiderman (Oxford: One World, 2007), 6.
- 83 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 146.
- 84 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 263, 308, 338.
- 85 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 31.
- 86 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 295.
- 87 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 254, 273, 327.
- 88 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 308, 311, 322.
- 89 Seymour Levitan and Rachel Auerbach, “A Soup Kitchen in the Warsaw Ghetto: From the Memoirs of Rachel Auerbach,” *Bridges* 13, no. 2 (2008): 96–107.
- 90 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 166.
- 91 For more on mail packages sent to ghettos, see Jan Lambertz and Jan Láníček, *More Than Parcels: Wartime Aid for Jews in Nazi-Era Camps and Ghettos* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2022). Thank you to Natalia Aleksun for alerting me to this forthcoming publication.
- 92 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 274, 286.
- 93 See, for example, “Rada Żydowska m. Kraków/Listy prywatne wysłane przez E. Waiomana do krewnego,” 218/6, ŻIH; Hollander et al., *Every Day Lasts a Year*.

- 94 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 106, 125.
- 95 Eliyana R. Adler. “Ties That Bind: Transnational Support and Solidarity for Polish Jews in the USSR during World War II,” in Lambertz and Lániček, *More Than Parcels*. My gratitude to Eliyana Adler for sharing a manuscript of this chapter prior to publication.
- 96 *Chronicle*, July 5–12, 1941.
- 97 Anna Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence: Ghetto Łódź* (Haifa: H. Eibeshitz Institute for Holocaust Studies, 1998), 235.
- 98 George Topas, interview 40322, March 24, 1998, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 99 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 204.
- 100 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 52; Order no. 36, May 11, 1940, box 3, folder 181, YIVO; “Department of Groceries and Bread,” no author, n.d., box 19, folder 883, YIVO; Łódź Ghetto newspaper, *Geto-tsaytung*, issue 5, April 4, 1941, O.34/589, Yad Vashem.
- 101 Order no. 229, March 7, 1941, box 7, folder 349, YIVO.
- 102 *Chronicle*, July 20, 1941.
- 103 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 52.
- 104 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 187.
- 105 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 347.
- 106 Lucie Brent, interview 396, segment 38, December 4, 1994, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 107 Anatol Chari and Timothy Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp: A Memoir of Privilege and Luck* (Lakeville, MN: Disproportionate Press, 2011), 66.
- 108 Order no. 41, May 13, 1940, box 3, folder 184, YIVO; Order no. 82, July 12, 1940, box 3, folder 207, YIVO.
- 109 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 379.
- 110 Martin Baral, interview 1663, segment 10, March 22, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 111 Nathan Nothman, interview 10564, segment 30, December 26, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 112 Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto*, 118.
- 113 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 51–52; Rachel Garfunkel, interview 55341, segment 43, January 1, 2007, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 114 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 51–52.
- 115 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 424.
- 116 Ghetto bulletin from July 2, 1942, reproduced in Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 138.
- 117 “The White Sea,” by O[skar] S[inger], August 20, 1942, box 19, folder 872, YIVO. Originally from Prague, Dr. Singer (1893–1944) served as director of the Łódź Ghetto Archives and chief editor of the Łódź ghetto *Chronicle*. It was under his supervision that the language of the *Chronicle* was changed from Polish to German.
- 118 Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem*, 221, 228.
- 119 Huberband, et al., *Kiddush Hashem*, 139.
- 120 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 106.

- 121 “Ghetto conditions; soup kitchen; eating in street” (film), RG-60.0722, USHMM; “Ghetto conditions; soup kitchen; eating in street” (film), RG-60.3823, USHMM; “Autobiographical drawing by Halina Olomucki of people waiting in line in the Warsaw ghetto”, 2001.122.1, USHMM.
- 122 Chari and Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp*, 66.
- 123 Lucille Eichengreen, *From Ashes to Life: My Memories of the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1994), 3.
- 124 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 144.
- 125 Michal Unger, “The Status and Plight of Women in the Łódź Ghetto,” in *Women in the Holocaust*, ed. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 133. Food shortages have long affected women in many cultures experiencing famine because women have been responsible for standing in food lines and providing sustenance for the household. For example, the role of women in coping with food shortages is noted in Bertram M. Gordon, ed., *Historical Dictionary of World War II France: The Occupation, Vichy, and the Resistance, 1938–1946* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 367.
- 126 “And Where was God?”, RG-02 *127, USHMM.
- 127 Rachel Garfunkel, interview, RG-50.601*001, USHMM.
- 128 Josef Zerkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Notes from the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Press, 2002), 198.
- 129 Lenore J. Weitzman, “Resistance in Everyday Life: Family Strategies, Role Reversal, and Role-Sharing in the Holocaust,” in *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939–Present: History, Representation, and Memory*, ed. Joanna Beata Michlic (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 46–66.
- 130 Zerkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 182–83, 184.
- 131 For examples of this in Leningrad, see Alexis Peri, “Queues, Canteens, and the Politics of Location in Diaries of the Leningrad Blockade, 1941–1942,” in *Hunger and War: Food Provisioning in the Soviet Union during World War II*, ed. Wendy Z. Goldman and Donald A. Filtzer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 175; Engel, “Not by Bread Alone,” 715.
- 132 Cormac Ó Gráda, *Eating People Is Wrong, and Other Essays on Famine, Its Past, and Its Future* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 3.
- 133 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 26.
- 134 Engel, “Not by Bread Alone,” 715.
- 135 N. N., No Title [Testimony from the Łódź ghetto]. 302/191, ŻIH.
- 136 N. N., June 27, 1942, box 10, folder 499, YIVO.
- 137 Chari and Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp*, 66.

4 The Physical, Mental, and Social Effects of Hunger

- 1 Myron Winick, ed., *Hunger Disease: Studies by the Jewish Physicians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, trans. Martha Osnos (New York: John Wiley, 1979).
- 2 For more on the physical impact of starvation, see John R. Butterly and Jack Shepherd, *Hunger: The Biology and Politics of Starvation* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2010), 55–95. There were also studies done of starvation during the siege of Leningrad.

- 3 Ewa Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe, 2017), 48
- 4 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 146.
- 5 Hersz Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto, 1942–1944*, ed. Helene Sinnreich (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015), 78.
- 6 Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Łódź*, ed., Hanno Loewy and Brigitte Goldstein (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 16.
- 7 Sven-Erik Rose, “Writing Hunger in a Modernist Key in the Warsaw Ghetto: Leyb Goldin’s ‘Chronicle of a Single Day,’” *Jewish Social Studies* 23, no. 1 (2017): 29–63.
- 8 *Chronicle*, August 4, 1941.
- 9 Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019), 49; Laurie DeRose, Ellen Messer, and Sara Millman, *Who’s Hungry? And How Do We Know? Food Shortage, Poverty, and Deprivation* (New York: United Nations University Press, 1998), 7; Charles Roland, *Courage under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 116; Anatol Chari and Timothy Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp: A Memoir of Privilege and Luck* (Lakeview, MN: Disproportionate Press, 2011), 55; State of Israel Ministry of Justice, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: State of Israel Ministry of Justice, 1992), 379.
- 10 Zoë Vania Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29; see also Joseph Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor! Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives O.S.* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), 405.
- 11 Samuel Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?* (Bloomington: First Vintage Books, 2009), 139.
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- 15 Marian Turski, “Individual Experience in Diaries from the Łódź Ghetto,” in *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*, ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (New York: Ktav, 1999), 120.
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- 26 DeRose, Messer, and Millman, *Who's Hungry?*, 4.
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- 32 Halina Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, vol. 1 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 163.
- 33 DeRose, Messer, and Millman, *Who's Hungry?*, 7.
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- 35 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 23.
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- 43 Roland, *Courage under Siege*, 115.
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- 73 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 103.
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- 80 Twenty-two reports from the ghetto by Joseph Zerkowicz [Spring to Summer 1943], box 19, folder 896, YIVO.
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- 84 Adam Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, ed. Joseph Kermish, Stanisław Staron, and Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999).
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- 91 GV 29199, Łódź State Archive. Calculated by counting the number of times *inanition* (hunger edema) or a nutritional deficiency disease such as pellagra was listed as cause of death and dividing by total number of individuals listed as having died in the ghetto during that time period.
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- 104 *Chronicle*, January 10–13, 1942.
- 105 *Chronicle*, February 1942; *Chronicle*, March 1942.
- 106 *Chronicle*, March 1942.
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5 Hunger and Everyday Life in the Ghetto

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- 3 Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).
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- 7 Norbert Schlang, interview 27127, segment 11, March 10, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; Kay Nabel, interview 34873, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
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- 20 Halina Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, vol. 1 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 89.
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- 23 Michał Unger, “The Status and Plight of Women in the Łódź Ghetto,” in *Women in the Holocaust*, ed. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, 123–42 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 129–30.
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- 33 Isaiah Spiegel, *Ghetto Kingdom: Tales of the Łódź Ghetto*, trans. David H. Hirsch and Roslyn Hirsch (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 96.
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- 36 Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 430.
- 37 Anonymous girl’s diary, 302/9, ŻIH.
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- 43 Erna Fridman, "The Long Way Home," 2010.426, USHMM.
- 44 Bernard Offen, interview 53621, segment 171, April 22, 1992, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; Richard S. Hollander et al., *Every Day Lasts a Year: A Jewish Family's Correspondence from Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); N. N., October 10, 1941, box 9, folder 421, YIVO. Cholent is a traditional Eastern European Jewish dish served on holidays that prohibit cooking. The dish is placed in a low-temperature oven the afternoon before the holiday and retrieved the next day for lunch.
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- 48 S. Glube, "Meachlim in Łódźer Ghetto," *Fun Lectn Churban: Tzytschrift fur Geshichte Yidishen Leben beten Nazi Rezim*, no. 9 (1948): 80.
- 49 Ewa Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe, 2017), 22.
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- 60 Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem*, 205, 207.
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- 66 Oral History with Henryk Łagodzki, RG-50.488.0311, USHMM.
- 67 Roland, *Courage under Siege*, 99.
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- 72 Rosa Taubman, “A Memoir Relating to Experiences in Kraków,” 1995.a.0714, USHMM.
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- 77 *Chronicle*, February 1, 1944.
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- 79 Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 195.
- 80 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 303.
- 81 State of Israel Ministry of Justice, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: State of Israel Ministry of Justice, 1992), 381–82.
- 82 Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence*, 235.
- 83 Alice Hemar, interview 17, July 18, 1994, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 84 Lucille Eichengreen, *From Ashes to Life: My Memories of the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1994), 19.
- 85 Roland, *Courage under Siege*, 99–100.
- 86 Myron Winick, *Hunger Disease: Studies by Jewish Physicians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, trans. Martha Osnos (New York: John Wiley, 1979).
- 87 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 255.
- 88 Adam Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, ed. Joseph Kermish, Stanisław Staron, and Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 328.
- 89 Unger, “The Status and Plight of Women in the Łódź Ghetto,” 134.
- 90 Roland, *Courage under Siege*, 99.
- 91 *Chronicle*, January 12, 1941.
- 92 “CV” of Janusz Korczak to the Personnel Appointments Department of the Judenrat in the Warsaw (Warszawa) ghetto, February 9, 1942, #29156, Ghetto Fighters House Archive (Beit Lohamei Ha-Getaot), Western Galilee, Israel. In this document, Korczak requests to be given responsibility

for the home for abandoned children at No. 39 Dzielna Street. The tone of the CV suggests that Korzak felt the formal application process to be a joke. In part this may have to do with his prewar fame and the fact that he asked to do this job without payment – just in exchange for a place to sleep and two meals per day.

- 93 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 135.
- 94 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 128, 136.
- 95 Levenstein, Harvey A. *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 9–23.

6 Socioeconomic Status and Food Access

- 1 I borrow here the term “socioeconomic position” developed by N. Krieger, D. R. Williams, and N. Moss to distinguish between actual resources and rank-related characteristics. See N. Krieger, D. R. Williams, and N. Moss, “Measuring Social Class in U.S. Public Health Research: Concepts, Methodologies, and Guidelines,” *Annual Review of Public Health* 18 (1997): 341–78.
- 2 Leon Fruchtman, interview 17528, segment 43, August 2, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 3 Anatol Chari and Timothy Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp: A Memoir of Privilege and Luck* (Lakeville, MN: Disproportionate Press, 2011), 52.
- 4 Chaim A. Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, trans. and ed. Abraham Isaac Katsch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 19–20.
- 5 Josef Żelkiewicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Notes from the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Michał Unger (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Press, 2002), 113.
- 6 Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. Jacob Sloan (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 154.
- 7 Shimon Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland during the Holocaust* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1987), 139–40.
- 8 Chari and Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp*, 26.
- 9 Erica R., interview 31559, segment 9, July 20, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 10 Henry Greenblatt, interview 12447, segment 74, February 25, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 11 Moshe Taube, interview 13063, segment 75, May 7, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 12 Rosa Taubman, “A Memoir Relating to Experiences in Kraków,” 1995.a.0714, USHMM.
- 13 Originally established in 1914 to save Palestinian Jews from starvation, the American Joint Distribution Committee expanded to provide assistance to impoverished Jews worldwide. They were especially active providing food kitchens, health-care and educational facilities, and cultural institutions in Eastern Europe between the world wars.

- 14 Bernard Offen, interview 53621, segment 170–77, April 22, 1992, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 15 Katarzyna Person, *Assimilated Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto: 1940–1943* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 34.
- 16 Halina Bochnik, testimony, O.3/9862, 6, Yad Vashem.
- 17 Ernest A, interview 15941, segment 7, May 7, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 18 “Hunger March,” recording, RG-91.0094, USHMMA; section epigraph is from Adam Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, ed. Joseph Kermish, Stanisław Staron, and Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 351.
- 19 In the Łódź ghetto there were several terms for these individuals: *dygnitarz* (dignitary), *jachsens* (privileged), and, more derisively, *szyszki* (fat cats). Ewa Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe, 2017), 60, 211.
- 20 *Chronicle*, June 7–8, 1941.
- 21 Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing Up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. S. L. Schneiderman (Oxford: One World, 2007), 81.
- 22 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 45–46.
- 23 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 51.
- 24 Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, trans. Garry Malloy (Washington, DC: Holocaust Library, 2000), 10; Aleksander Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie* (Kraków: Wydawn Literackie, 2001), 58.
- 25 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 32.
- 26 Halina Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!* vol. 1 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 104.
- 27 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 116.
- 28 Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 205.
- 29 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 114.
- 30 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 88.
- 31 Chari and Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp*, 54.
- 32 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 29.
- 33 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 8.
- 34 Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Łódź*, ed. Hanno Loewy and Brigitte Goldstein (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 41.
- 35 Jakub Poznanski papers, 2005.53.1, USHMMA.
- 36 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 51.
- 37 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 53–54.
- 38 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 39.
- 39 See Table 6.1 for a list of supplemental rations in the Łódź Ghetto.
- 40 Lucian Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 31ff.
- 41 Jakub Poznanski papers, 2005.53.1, USHMMA.
- 42 Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 196–97, 225; “Department of Groceries and Bread,” no author, n.d., box 19, folder 883, YIVO.

- 43 Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, eds., *Łódź Ghetto: Inside a Community under Siege* (New York: Viking Press, 1989), 234.
- 44 Chari and Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp*, 68.
- 45 Gershon Bacon, “Interwar: Poland,” *The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women*, Jewish Women’s Archive, December 31, 1999, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/poland-interwar>.
- 46 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 38, 47.
- 47 Havi Dreifuss, “‘The Work of My Hands Is Drowning in the Sea, and You Would Offer Me Song?!’: Orthodox Behaviour and Leadership in Warsaw during the Holocaust,” in *Warsaw: The Jewish Metropolis: Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky*, ed. Glenn Dynner and François Guesnet (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 467–95.
- 48 Eleonora Bergman, Katarzyna Person, and Andrzej Żbikowski, eds., *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2017), 22–23.
- 49 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 24.
- 50 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 24.
- 51 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 51. On young women in famines, see, for example, Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley, *Tears from Iron: Cultural Responses to Famine in Nineteenth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
- 52 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 24.
- 53 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 24.
- 54 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 25.
- 55 Sela Selinger, interview 6195, segment 74, November 23, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 56 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 89.
- 57 *Geto-tsaytung far informatsye, farordenungen un bakantmachungen* (Ghetto Gazette for Information, Announcements, and Ordinances), nos. 1–18, Yiddish, March 7, 1941, through September 21, 1941, box 17, folder 825, YIVO.
- 58 “An opinion by the rabbinate in the matter of consumption of non-kosher meat,” February 27, 1941, box 15, folder 794, YIVO.
- 59 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 160.
- 60 Chari and Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp*, 68.
- 61 Joanna Sliwa, “A Link between the Inside and the Outside Worlds: Jewish Child Smugglers in the Kraków Ghetto,” *Zeitschrift für Genozidforschung* 13, no. 1–2 (2012): 74.
- 62 Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem*, 229, 232. Emanuel Ringelblum also mentions this village as a source of meat but notes that the meat was transported by individuals on foot. Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 118.
- 63 Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem*, 232–33.
- 64 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 119.
- 65 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 290.
- 66 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 80.
- 67 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 307.
- 68 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 499.

- 69 Gutta Sternbuch, *Gutta: Memories of a Vanished World: A Bais Yaakov Teacher's Poignant Account of the War Years, with a Historical Overview* (New York: Feldheim, 2005), 80.
- 70 Esther Farbstein, *Hidden in Thunder: Perspectives on Faith, Halachah and Leadership during the Holocaust* (New York: Feldheim, 2007), 129.
- 71 Farbstein, *Hidden in Thunder*, 127.
- 72 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 230–31.
- 73 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 44–45.
- 74 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 285.
- 75 Rav Alter Horowitz had been in the Tarnow ghetto and, when it was liquidated, was brought to the Kraków ghetto. Yaakov Levertov, “Testimony in English,” recorded by Yanus Turkov, July 15 and 27, 1957, Rav Menashe Yaakov Levertov (website), accessed June 15, 2017, www.levertov4ever.com/testimony-in-english.
- 76 Hillel Seidman, *The Warsaw Ghetto Diaries*, trans. Yosef Israel (Jerusalem: Targum Press, 1997), 347.
- 77 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 137.
- 78 Hersz Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto, 1942–1944*, ed. Helene Sinnreich (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015), 155.
- 79 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 83.
- 80 Person, *Assimilated Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 39–40.
- 81 Person, *Assimilated Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 45; Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 113.
- 82 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 116.
- 83 Tadeusz Pankiewicz, interview, RG-60.5014, Claude Lanzmann Shoah Collection, USHMM.
- 84 Edward Klein, oral history, RG-50.030.0580, USHMM.
- 85 Erna Fridman, “The Long Way Home,” 2010.426, USHMM. Bosco’s first name is not given in the memoir, but it could be Oswald Bosco.
- 86 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 62–63.
- 87 Michael Zylberberg, *A Warsaw Diary, 1939–1945* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2005), 81.

7 Relief Systems and Charity

- 1 The epigraph is from Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 305.
- 2 Aleksandra Bańkowska, “Jewish Social Welfare Institutions and Facilities in the General Government from 1939 to 1944: A Preliminary Study,” *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* 3 (2018): 135, 137; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 304.
- 3 Bańkowska, “Jewish Social Welfare Institutions and Facilities,” 138.
- 4 Bańkowska, “Jewish Social Welfare Institutions and Facilities,” 142.
- 5 Weichert was ultimately prosecuted, first in Poland and later by a Jewish honor court. The Jewish honor court was in part created in Poland due to anger over Weichert’s acquittal in the Polish court.

- 6 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 306.
- 7 “Department of Groceries and Bread,” no author, n.d., box 19, folder 883, YIVO.
- 8 Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Notes from the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Press, 2002), 69–75.
- 9 Jakub Poznanski, *Dziennik z Łódzkiego getta* (Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy, 2002), 32.
- 10 François Guesnet, “Khevres and Akhdes: The Change in Jewish Self-Organization in the Kingdom of Poland before 1900 and the Bund,” in *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100*, ed. Jack Jacobs (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 5.
- 11 Gila Flam, *Singing for Survival: Songs of the Łódź Ghetto, 1940–1945* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 71–72.
- 12 “Department of Groceries and Bread,” no author, n.d., box 19, folder 883, YIVO.
- 13 Elizabeth M. Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 11.
- 14 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 184.
- 15 Adam Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, ed. Joseph Kermish, Stanisław Staron, and Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 345.
- 16 Czerniaków, 233.
- 17 Charles Roland, *Courage under Siege: Starvation, Disease and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 40.
- 18 Czerniaków, et al., *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 305.
- 19 Czerniaków, et al., *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 312.
- 20 Czerniaków, et al., *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 321.
- 21 *Chronicle*, January 21, 1941.
- 22 *Chronicle*, January 17, 1941.
- 23 Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, eds., *Łódź Ghetto: Inside a Community under Siege* (New York: Viking Press, 1989), 114.
- 24 *Chronicle*, January 29, 1941.
- 25 Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 113–21.
- 26 *Chronicle*, March 6, 1941.
- 27 *Geto-tsaytung far informatsye, farordenungen un bakantmachungen* (Ghetto Gazette for Information, Announcements, and Ordinances), March 21, 1941, box 17, folder 825, YIVO.
- 28 *Chronicle*, April 10, 1941; *Chronicle*, July 5–12, 1941.
- 29 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 224.
- 30 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 225.
- 31 Felicja Karay, *The Women of Ghetto Kraków*, trans. Sara Kitai (Tel Aviv: n.p., 2001), 21, originally published in *Yalkut moreshet* 71 (April 2001); Statement of Sabina Mirowska, in Maria Hochberg-Marianska and Noe Gruess, *The Children Accuse* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), 240.
- 32 For a list of CENTOS supported institutions providing food, see [Appendix A](#).
- 33 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 305.

- 34 Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing Up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. S. L. Schneiderman (Oxford: One World, 2007), 46.
- 35 See, for example, Frances Gelbart, interview 12003, segment 23, February 14, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 36 *Chronicle*, March 4, 1941.
- 37 Ewa Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe, 2017), 117.
- 38 Morris Price, interview 8072, October 29, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 39 Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Łódź*, ed. Hanno Loewy and Brigitte Goldstein (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 14.
- 40 Eleonora Bergman, Katarzyna Person, and Andrzej Żbikowski, eds., *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2017), 116, 124.
- 41 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 124.
- 42 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 125. Groszy are a Polish currency. There are 100 groszy in a zloty.
- 43 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 126.
- 44 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 118.
- 45 Katarzyna Person, “‘The Children Ceased to Be Children’: Day-Care Centres at Refugee Shelters in the Warsaw Ghetto,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 30 (2018): 343.
- 46 Sabina Mirowska in Hochberg-Marianska and Gruess, *The Children Accuse*, 242–43.
- 47 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 128.
- 48 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 121.
- 49 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 112–15.
- 50 Bergman, Person, and Żbikowski, *The Ringelblum Archive*, 118.
- 51 William Schiff, Rosalie Schiff, and Craig Hanley, *William and Rosalie: A Holocaust Testimony* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2007), 29.
- 52 Esther Farbstein, *Hidden in Thunder: Perspectives on Faith, Halachah and Leadership during the Holocaust* (New York: Feldheim, 2007), 483.
- 53 For a list of kitchens and food distribution points in the Warsaw ghetto, see [Appendix A](#).
- 54 Jack Schluskel, interview 7259, segment 64, September 28, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 55 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 51.
- 56 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 153.
- 57 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 306.
- 58 Shimon Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland during the Holocaust* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1987), 186; Roland, *Courage under Siege*, 39.
- 59 Announcement about High Holy Day services on the premises of Public Kitchen No. 2, undated, box 15, folder 791, Nachman Zonabend Collection, YIVO.

- 60 Samuel Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?* (Bloomington: First Vintage Books, 2009), 118.
- 61 Chaim A. Kaplan, *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, trans. and ed. Abraham Isaac Katsh (New York: Collier Books, 1973), 235.
- 62 Hanna Strawczynski, interview 27351, March 17, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 63 *Chronicle*, March 4, 1941.
- 64 *Chronicle*, March 4, 1941.
- 65 “And where was God?” RG-02 *127, USHMMMA.
- 66 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 77.
- 67 *Chronicle*, September 25, 1942.
- 68 Edith Millman, interview 21310, October 21, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 69 Seymour Levitan and Rachel Auerbach, “A Soup Kitchen in the Warsaw Ghetto: From the Memoirs of Rachel Auerbach,” *Bridges* 13, no. 2 (2008): 96–107.
- 70 Zoë Vania Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 30; and see Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. Jacob Sloan (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 181–82.
- 71 Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto*, 118–19.
- 72 Zolkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 82.
- 73 Marian Turski, “Individual Experience in Diaries from the Łódź Ghetto,” in *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*, ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (New York: Ktav, 1999), 121.
- 74 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 221.
- 75 Stefan Stok, interview 27507, February 17, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 76 Zoë Vania Waxman, *Women and the Holocaust: A Feminist History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 38.
- 77 Chuna T., interview 54502, August 21, 2001. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; Erica R., interview 31559, segment 10, July 20, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 78 Henry Greenblatt, interview 12447, February 25, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 79 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 15.
- 80 Michał Grynberg, *Words to Outlive Us: Eyewitness Accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto* (London: Granta Books, 2004), 29.
- 81 Grynberg, *Words to Outlive Us*, 34.
- 82 His recordings are held at YIVO.
- 83 Amos Goldberg, “A Fool or a Prophet: Rubinstein the Warsaw Ghetto Jester,” J. B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Annual Lecture at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, March 13, 2019, <https://www.academia.edu/38809091>.
- 84 Stefan Stok, interview 27507, February 17, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.

- 85 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 39.
- 86 Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 35–39.
- 87 “And where was God?,” RG-02 *127, USHMM.
- 88 *Chronicle*, January 1–5, 1942.
- 89 Avraham Barkai, “Between East and West: Jews from Germany in the Łódź Ghetto,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 16 (1984): 299–300.
- 90 *Biuletyn Kroniki Codziennej*, February 1, 1942, box 20, folder 927, YIVO.
- 91 Adelson and Lapides, *Łódź Ghetto*, 234.
- 92 Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 199–201.
- 93 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 347. For more on Nazi views of poverty, see John William Rall, “Nazi Charity: Giving, Belonging, and Morality in the Third Reich” (PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2018).
- 94 On the connection between Nazi food policy and mass killings, see Christian Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord: Deutsche Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Zürich: Pendo, 2001); Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

8 Illicit Food Access

- 1 The epigraph is from Gertrude Schneider, ed., *Mordechai Gebirtig: His Poetic and Musical Legacy* (London: Praeger, 2000), 173.
- 2 Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 150; Chaim A. Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, trans. and ed. Abraham Isaac Katsh (New York: Collier Books, 1973), 55.
- 3 Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, trans. Garry Malloy (Washington, DC: Holocaust Library, 2000), 47.
- 4 Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt*, trans. Ina Friedman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 66.
- 5 Icchak Henryk Rubin, *Żydzi w Łodzi pod niemiecką okupacją 1939–1945* (London: Kontra, 1988), 220. Schupo is short for Schutzpolizei or Protection Police. The Schupo essentially carried out regular police duties, similar to what a police officer in the present day might do.
- 6 Rubin, 220–21.
- 7 Some have held Rumkowski personally responsible for eradicating smuggling in the Łódź ghetto. While he did battle smuggling more than his counterpart in Warsaw, the German administration ultimately played the most significant role in combating smuggling in the Łódź ghetto. Rumkowski’s image as a crusader against smuggling was partially formed by antismuggling orders issued in his name by the German authorities: Order no. 77, July 6, 1940, box 3, folder 202, YIVO; July 9, 1940, box 4, folder 216, YIVO.

- 8 *Chronicle*, January 23, 1941; *Chronicle*, August 4, 1941. For more on the August meeting, see Svenja Bethke, “Crime and Punishment in Emergency Situations: The Jewish Ghetto Courts in Łódź, Warsaw, and Vilna in World War II—A Comparative Study,” *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 28, no. 3 (2014): 1–17.
- 9 Rubin, *Żydzi w Łodzi pod niemiecką okupacją 1939–1945*, 221; “Twenty-Five Live Chickens and One Dead Document,” by [Jospeh Zelkowicz], January 1942, box 17, folder 851, YIVO.
- 10 Aron Grynwald, testimony, RG 50.002*0058, USHMM.
- 11 Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. Jacob Sloan (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 106.
- 12 Leon Leyson, *The Boy on the Wooden Box* (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2013), 86.
- 13 Max Falk, interview 33414, segments 8 and 13, September 22, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 14 Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing Up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. S. L. Schneiderman (Oxford: One World, 2007), 31.
- 15 Anna Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence: Ghetto Łódź* (Haifa: H. Eibeshitz Institute for Holocaust Studies, 1998), 239.
- 16 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 29.
- 17 *Chronicle*, March 4, 1941; *Chronicle*, April 10, 1941.
- 18 *Chronicle*, August 1, 1941.
- 19 Katarzyna Person et al., *Warsaw Ghetto: Everyday Life* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2017), 20–21.
- 20 “Twenty-Five Live Chickens and One Dead Document,” by [Jospeh Zelkowicz], January 1942, box 17, folder 851, YIVO.
- 21 Diane Plotkin, “Smuggling in the Ghettos: Survivor Accounts from the Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków Ghettos,” in *Life in the Ghettos during the Holocaust*, ed. Eric C. Sterling (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 115–16.
- 22 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 197.
- 23 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 113, 145.
- 24 “Twenty-Five Live Chickens and One Dead Document,” by [Jospeh Zelkowicz], January 1942, box 17, folder 851, YIVO.
- 25 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 290.
- 26 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 74.
- 27 Donald L. Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 303.
- 28 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 32.
- 29 Henry Greenblatt, interview 12447, February 25, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 30 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 136–37.
- 31 Person et al., *Warsaw Ghetto*, 102.
- 32 Person et al., *Warsaw Ghetto*, 441–42.
- 33 Plotkin, “Smuggling in the Ghettos,” 115.
- 34 Joanna Sliwa, “A Link between the Inside and the Outside Worlds: Jewish Child Smugglers in the Kraków Ghetto,” *Zeitschrift für Genozidforschung* 13, no. 1–2 (2012): 74.

- 35 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 230. The going rate for a kilo of butter in the ghetto in December 1940 when he was writing was 30 zloty.
- 36 Bernard Offen, *My Hometown Concentration Camp: A Survivor's Account of Life in the Kraków Ghetto and Płaszów Concentration Camp* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), 58.
- 37 Bernard Offen, *My Hometown Concentration Camp*, 38.
- 38 Erna Fridman, "The Long Way Home," 2010.426, USHMMA.
- 39 Person et al., *Warsaw Ghetto*, 101–2.
- 40 Josef Meszorer, interview 1112, February 23, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 41 Felicja Karay, *The Women of Ghetto Kraków*, trans. Sara Kitai (Tel Aviv: n.p., 2001), 12–13, originally published in *Yalkut moreshet* 71 (April 2001).
- 42 Murray Pantirer, testimony, RG-50.030*0174, USHMMA.
- 43 Henry Greenblatt, interview 12447, February 25, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 44 Oral History with Henryk Łagodzki, RG-50.488.0311, USHMMA.
- 45 Oral History with Henryk Łagodzki, RG-50.488.0311, USHMMA.
- 46 Bernard Offen, interview 53621, segment 171, April 22, 1992, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 47 Henry Greenblatt, interview 12447, February 25, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 48 Lenore J. Weitzman, "Resistance in Everyday Life: Family Strategies, Role Reversal, and Role-sharing in the Holocaust," *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939–Present: History, Representation, and Memory*, ed. Joanna Beata Michlic (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 46–66.
- 49 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 105.
- 50 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 124.
- 51 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 106.
- 52 Person et al., *Warsaw Ghetto*, 243–44.
- 53 Sliwa, "A Link between the Inside and the Outside Worlds," 71.
- 54 Rubin, *Żydzi w Łodzi pod niemiecką okupacją 1939–1945*, 221.
- 55 Aneta Weinreich, interview 14405, segments 5–8, May 3, 1998, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 56 The Germans claimed to be overlooking smuggling and the Warsaw ghetto but would not tolerate Jews leaving the ghetto due to the typhus epidemic in the city. Adam Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, ed. Joseph Kermish, Stanislaw Staron, and Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 248.
- 57 Czerniaków, 296.
- 58 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 203.
- 59 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 279.
- 60 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 228–29.
- 61 *Biuletyn Kroniki Codziennej*, January 3 and 14–31, 1942, box 20, folder 926, YIVO; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 203.
- 62 Person et al., *Warsaw Ghetto*, 31.
- 63 For more on the black market in the General government, see Jerzy Kochanowski, "Black Market in the General Government 1939–1945: Survival Strategy or (Un)Official Economy?," in *Coping with Hunger and*

Shortage under German Occupation in World War II, ed. Tatjana Tönsmeier, Peter Haslinger, and Agnes Laba (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 27–47.

- 64 Joanna Sliwa, “Clandestine Activities and Concealed Presence: A Case Study of Children in the Kraków Ghetto,” in *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939–Present: History, Representation, and Memory*, ed. Joanna Beata Michlic (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 26–45.
- 65 *Chronicle*, January 8–9, 1942.
- 66 Seymour Levitan and Rachel Auerbach, “A Soup Kitchen in the Warsaw Ghetto: From the Memoirs of Rachel Auerbach,” *Bridges* 13, no. 2 (2008): 96–107.
- 67 Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds*, 304.
- 68 Person et al., *Warsaw Ghetto*, 340.
- 69 “And where was God?” RG-02*127, USHMMA. Oskar Rosenfeld, describing the same time period as Alfred Dube (they were both from the Prague transports), wrote that “One pair of shoes = one loaf of bread.” See Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Łódź*, ed. Hanno Loewy and Brigitte Goldstein (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 14.
- 70 Leyson, *The Boy on the Wooden Box*, 87.
- 71 Tola W., interview 55051, segment 219, October 17, 2012, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 72 Halina Nelken, *And Yet, I am Here!*, vol. 1 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 92.
- 73 Gila Flam, *Singing for Survival: Songs of the Łódź Ghetto, 1940–1945* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 87.
- 74 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 33.
- 75 Anatol Chari and Timothy Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp: A Memoir of Privilege and Luck* (Lakeville, MN: Disproportionate Press, 2011), 37.
- 76 Oskar Singer, *Przemierzają szybkim krokiem getto* (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 2002), 38.
- 77 Order no. 45, May 19, 1940, box 3, folder 184, YIVO.
- 78 *Chronicle*, January 27, 1941; *Chronicle*, January 12, 1941; *Chronicle*, January 21, 1941.
- 79 *Chronicle*, January 12, 1941.
- 80 *Chronicle*, January 8, 1942.
- 81 *Chronicle*, March 29, 1941; *Chronicle*, June 26, 1941; *Chronicle*, December 17, 1941.
- 82 “Bread in the Year Nineteen Forty-Two,” by [Joseph Zelkowitz], 1942 January, Box: 17, Folder: 853. YIVO
- 83 “Bread in the Year Nineteen Forty-Two,” by [Joseph Zelkowitz], January 1942, box 17, folder 853, YIVO; *Chronicle*, January 1–5, 1942; *Chronicle*, January 10–13, 1942.
- 84 *Chronicle*, May 1, 1942; *Chronicle*, May 15, 1942; *Chronicle*, June 25, 1942.
- 85 Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro, intro. Israel Gutman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 114.
- 86 Irena Glueck, diary entry, May 7, 1941, RG-02.208M, file 270, trans. Kristine Belfoure, thanks to Alexandra Zapruder, USHMMA.

- 87 Renia Knoll, diary, 302 file 197, ŻIH; RG 2.208M, 137–38, USHMMA.
- 88 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 242; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 497.
- 89 Renia Knoll, diary, 178, ŻIH.
- 90 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 78.
- 91 Renia Knoll, diary, 196, ŻIH.
- 92 Adam Kaminski, *Diariusz Poreczny, 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2001), 94, 128.
- 93 Kaminski, *Diariusz Poreczny*, 111, 194.
- 94 Kaminski, *Diariusz Poreczny*, 128, 131.
- 95 Julius Feldman, *The Kraków Diary of Julius Feldman*, trans. William Brand (Newark: Quill Press, 2002), 58.
- 96 Kaminski, *Diariusz Poreczny*, 131–32, 194.
- 97 Nelken, *And Yet, I am Here!*, 99.
- 98 Sela Selinger, interview 6195, segment 77, November 23, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 99 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 92.
- 100 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 139.
- 101 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 147, 154.
- 102 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 238, 242.
- 103 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 277.
- 104 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 252.
- 105 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 497.
- 106 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 327.
- 107 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 499.
- 108 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 80–81.
- 109 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 38.
- 110 Singer, *Przemierzają szybkim krokiem getto*, 33.
- 111 Although a family might be entitled to a food ration, they might still choose not to purchase their ration due to being unable to afford it.
- 112 Josef Zerkowicz, in *Those Terrible Days: Notes from the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Press, 2002), 199–201. Zerkowicz was so angered by the actions of a butcher who literally beat away his customers that he recorded the name of the butcher, Jakob Bornsztajn, for posterity.
- 113 Barbara Alpern Engel, “Not by Bread Alone: Subsistence Riots in Russia during World War I,” *Journal of Modern History* 69, no. 4 (1997): 715.
- 114 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 201.
- 115 Orders no. 273 and 274, May 25, 1941, and n.d., box 7, folder 389, YIVO; Order no. 393, September 13, 1942, box 10, folder 506, YIVO.
- 116 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 317.
- 117 Ancel Keys et al., *The Biology of Human Starvation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1950), 785.
- 118 Flam, *Singing for Survival*, 63.
- 119 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 141.
- 120 Order no. 124, September 20, 1940, box 5, folder 248, YIVO.
- 121 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 235.

- 122 Chari and Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp*, 49.
- 123 *Chronicle*, January 12, 1941; *Chronicle*, January 15, 1941. An eighty-year-old woman was killed during an attack on a wagon transporting rutabaga.
- 124 Alice H., interview 17, segments 12 and 13, July 20, 1994, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 125 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 110.
- 126 *Chronicle*, July 29, 1941.
- 127 Stephan Stok, interview 27507, February 17, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 128 Person et al., *Warsaw Ghetto*, 78–79.
- 129 Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence*, 228–29.
- 130 Lucille Eichengreen, *From Ashes to Life: My Memories of the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1994), 5.
- 131 Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence*, 236–39.
- 132 Marian Turski, “Individual Experience in Diaries from the Łódź Ghetto,” in *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*, ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (New York: Ktav, 1999), 120–21.
- 133 Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence*, 229–30.
- 134 Isaiah Spiegel, *Ghetto Kingdom: Tales of the Łódź Ghetto*, trans. David H. Hirsch and Roslyn Hirsch (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 77.
- 135 Isaiah Spiegel, *Ghetto Kingdom: Tales of the Łódź Ghetto*, trans. David H. Hirsch and Roslyn Hirsch (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 81.
- 136 Order no. 393, September 13, 1942, box 10, folder 506, YIVO; Order no. 394, September 17, 1942, box 10, folder 507, YIVO.
- 137 See the Aleksander Herszkowicz collection, 2002.209.1, USHMM.
- 138 Stephanie Druc, interview 6777, October 5, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 139 Bethke, “Crime and Punishment in Emergency Situations,” 10, 11.
- 140 Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto*, 154.
- 141 Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence*, 231–32.
- 142 Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, 234–35.
- 143 “And Where was God?” RG-02 *127, USHMM.
- 144 Zerkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 132.
- 145 Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence*, 231–33.
- 146 Mania Mandelbaum, interview 47118, segment 59, June 18, 1998, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 147 *Chronicle*, January 26, 1941.
- 148 Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence*, 234; Flam, *Singing for Survival*, 63.
- 149 Zerkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 187.
- 150 Ewa Wiater et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe, 2017), 135.
- 151 Alexandra Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers’ Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 235.

- 152 Arline T. Golkin, *Famine: A Heritage of Hunger* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1987), 23.
- 153 Flam, *Singing for Survival*, 140–41.
- 154 Cormac Ó Gráda, *Eating People Is Wrong, and Other Essays on Famine, Its Past, and Its Future* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 3.
- 155 “Persons of good will need not worry about their fate. Only the unwelcome element will leave the ghetto,” December 20, 1941, box 20, folder 925, YIVO.
- 156 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto*, 154.
- 157 Flam, *Singing for Survival*, 95–96.
- 158 Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 243.
- 159 Flam, *Singing for Survival*, 61.
- 160 For more on prosecution of crime in the ghettos, see Svenja Bethke and Sharon Howe, *Dance on the Razor’s Edge: Crime and Punishment in the Nazi Ghettos* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021).
- 161 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 200.
- 162 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 200.
- 163 Zerkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 136–37.
- 164 *Chronicle*, May 27–31, 1941.
- 165 Shimon Huberband et al., *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland during the Holocaust* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1987), 151–71.

9 Labor and Food in the Ghettos

- 1 Poem by Gustava Steindig-Lindberg from Felicja Karay, *The Women of Ghetto Kraków*, trans. Sara Kitai (Tel Aviv: publisher, 2001), originally published in *Yalkut moreshet* 71 (April 2001): 21, 18.
- 2 Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro, intro. Israel Gutman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 148, 150.
- 3 Christopher R. Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 43.
- 4 Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 409.
- 5 Christopher R. Browning, “Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland: 1939–41,” *Central European History* 19, no. 4 (1986): 343–68.
- 6 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 409.
- 7 Henry Brauner, interview, RG 50.029*0008, USHMMA.
- 8 Adam Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, eds. Joseph Kermish, Stanisław Staron, and Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 256.
- 9 Pauline Buchenholz, memoir, USHMMA Accession Number: 1994.A.0198.1
- 10 Halina Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, trans. Halina Nelken and Alicia Nitecki (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1986), 156.
- 11 Michał Grynberg, *Words to Outlive Us: Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 35.

- 12 Hersz Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto, 1942–1944*, ed. Helene Sinnreich (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015), 82.
- 13 Anna Eilenberg-Eibeshitz, *Preserved Evidence: Ghetto Łódź* (Haifa: H. Eibeshitz Institute for Holocaust Studies, 1998), 231.
- 14 Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Notes from the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Press, 2002), 62.
- 15 Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, eds., *Łódź Ghetto: Inside a Community under Siege* (New York: Viking Press, 1989), 31–32.
- 16 Malvina Graf, *The Kraków Ghetto and the Płaszów Camp Remembered* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1989), 38.
- 17 Anna Maxell Ware, interview, April 1–4, 1996, RG.50.030*0427, 35, USHMMA.
- 18 Karay, *The Women of Ghetto Kraków*, 7.
- 19 Anna Heilman, interview 8569, February 22, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 20 Sylvia G, interview 43386, segments 40 and 41, June 30 1998, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 21 Ziuta Grunhut, interview, RG 50.120*0260, USHMMA.
- 22 “In your Blood I Live,” RG 02.079*01, USHMMA.
- 23 Martin Ira Glassner, *And Life Is Changed Forever: Holocaust Childhoods Remembered* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 217.
- 24 Stella Müller-Madej, *A Girl from Schindler’s List*, trans. William R. Brand (Kraków: DjaF, 2006), 14.
- 25 Alice Hemar, interview 17, July 18, 1994, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 26 Graf, *Kraków Ghetto and the Płaszów Camp*, 43.
- 27 “Give Me Your Children: Voices from the Łódź Ghetto,” US Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed April 27, 2007, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/give-me-your-children-voices-from-the-lodz-ghetto>.
- 28 Leon Fruchtman, interview 17528, segments 43 and 44, August 2, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 29 Henry Tennebaum, interview 18817, segment 59, August 20, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 30 Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing Up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. S. L. Schneiderman (Oxford: One World, 2007), 51.
- 31 Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto*, 117.
- 32 Fogel, 118.
- 33 Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 141.
- 34 Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 193.
- 35 Maria Hochberg-Marianska and Noe Gruess, *The Children Accuse* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996), 51. Grüner himself has been accused of having been a Gestapo informant. See Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, trans. Garry Malloy (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2013), 38.
- 36 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 197; Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto*, 110; Ludwig Brand, interview 55049, November 10, 1992, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.

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- 38 Anatol Chari and Timothy Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp: A Memoir of Privilege and Luck* (Lakeville, MN: Disproportionate Press, 2011), 61–62.
- 39 Donald L. Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 1998), 303, 304.
- 40 Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto*, 123.
- 41 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 287, 291.
- 42 Gusta Rubinfeld, interview 36610, segment 56, September 16, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 43 Charles Roland, *Courage under Siege: Starvation, Disease and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 99.
- 44 Alexandra Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 231.
- 45 Order no. 186, December 27, 1940, box 6, folder 307, YIVO.
- 46 "The Carpenter's Strike," by J. Z., January 23 through February 2, 1941, box 17, folder 836, YIVO; Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 206.
- 47 Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 208–11, 225, 229; N. N., January 24, 1941, box 7, folder 321, YIVO. According to François Guesnet, the Jewish grave diggers in Łódź had a history of organization, having had their illegal organization uncovered by the Russian police in 1883; see Guesnet, "Khevres and Akhdes: the Change in Jewish Self-Organization in the Kingdom of Poland before 1900 and the Bund," in *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100*, ed. Jack Jacobs (New York: New York University Press, 2001).
- 48 "The Carpenter's Strike," by J. Z., January 23 through February 2, 1941, box 17, folder 836, YIVO.
- 49 Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 219, 226, 231.
- 50 "The Carpenter's Strike," by J. Z., January 23 through February 2, 1941, box 17, folder 836, YIVO.
- 51 *Chronicle*, March 6, 1941.
- 52 Marian Turski, "Individual Experience in Diaries from the Łódź Ghetto," in *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*. ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (New York: Ktav, 1999), 122.
- 53 Nelken, *And Yet, I Am Here!*, 99.
- 54 Luna Kaufman, testimony, RG.002*0010, USHMMA.
- 55 Statement of Sabina Mirowska, in Hochberg-Marianska and Gruess, 240.
- 56 Lucille Eichengreen, *Rumkowski and the Orphans of Łódź* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1998), 6–7.
- 57 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 237.
- 58 Ewa Wiatr et al., *Encyclopedia of the Ghetto: The Unfinished Project of the Łódź Ghetto Archivists* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe, 2017), 95.
- 59 Interestingly, one private business that survived until the liquidation of the ghetto was Sonenberg Lending Library. For more information on books and lending libraries in the Łódź ghetto, see David Shavit, *Hunger for the Printed Word: Books and Libraries in the Jewish Ghettos of Nazi-Occupied Europe* (London: McFarland, 1997).

- 60 Bernard Offen, *My Hometown Concentration Camp: A Survivor's Account of Life in the Kraków Ghetto and Płaszów Concentration Camp* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), 25; Leon Leyson, *The Boy on the Wooden Box* (New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2013), 89.
- 61 Erica Ringelblum, interview 31559, segment 9, July 20, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 62 Leyson, *The Boy on the Wooden Box*, 88.
- 63 Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds*, 304–5.
- 64 Erna Fridman, “The Long Way Home,” 2010.426, USHMM.
- 65 Katarzyna Person, “Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: The Case of Forced Prostitution in the Warsaw Ghetto,” *Shofar* 33, no. 2 (2015): 109.
- 66 Katarzyna Person et al., *Warsaw Ghetto: Everyday Life* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2017), 248.
- 67 Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto*, 123.
- 68 Oskar Singer, *Przemierzają szybkim krokiem getto* (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 2002), 32.
- 69 Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków*, 295.
- 70 Chari and Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp*, 56.
- 71 Chari and Braatz, *From Ghetto to Death Camp*, 65.
- 72 Summary of a meeting between Biebow and the Gestapo on June 11, 1942, as quoted in Michal Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), 49.
- 73 Andrzej Strzelecki, *The Deportation of Jews from the Łódź Ghetto to KL Auschwitz and Their Extermination*, trans. Witold Zbirohowski-Kościa (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2006), 22.
- 74 Elie Aron Cohen, *Human Behavior in the Concentration Camp*, trans. M. H. Braaksma (New York: University Library, 1953), 111.
- 75 GV 30043/140; GV 29238/295; GV 29191/22, Łódź State Archive.
- 76 Michal Unger, “The Status and Plight of Women in the Łódź Ghetto,” in *Women in the Holocaust*, eds. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J Weitzman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 127.
- 77 Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy* (Washington, DC: Holocaust Library, 2000), 203.
- 78 Pankiewicz, 205 (quoted), 202–4.

10 Deportations and the End of the Ghettos

- 1 Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Łódź*, ed. Hanno Loewy and Brigitte Goldstein (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 112.
- 2 Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Łódź*, ed. Hanno Loewy and Brigitte Goldstein (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 12.
- 3 Rosenfeld, 12. By comparison, here is the description of the arrival of Western Jews as reported by the captain of the Security Police: “The unloading was done so that in each case the Jews from six railway carriages made up one group and were escorted to the ghetto gate by two security policemen ...

- Despite the unfavorable weather and the difficulties arising from the fact that a large number of the railway carriages had only two doors ... the unloading and the transportation of the Jews to the ghetto was accomplished smoothly in a very short space of time." Dieter Corbach, *6:00 Uhr ab Messe Köln-Deutz Deportationen, 1938–1945* (Cologne: Scriba Verlag, 1999), 666.
- 4 Michal Unger, *The Last Ghetto: Life in the Łódź Ghetto, 1940–1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1995), 179.
 - 5 Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle: 1939–1945* (New York: Holt, 1990), 687–712.
 - 6 Edith Millman, interview 21310, October 21, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
 - 7 Mary Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing Up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, S. L. Schneiderman, ed. (Oxford: One World, 2007), 59.
 - 8 William Schiff, Rosalie Schiff, and Craig Hanley, *William and Rosalie: A Holocaust Testimony* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2007), 29.
 - 9 See Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. Jacob Sloan (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 129.
 - 10 For details on the deportation of Western Jews into Łódź, including lists of names, places of origin, prewar addresses, birth dates, and places of birth, see Corbach, *6:00 Uhr ab Messe Köln-Deutz Deportationen*.
 - 11 Adam Czerniaków, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, ed. Joseph Kermish, Stanisław Staron, and Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1999), 341.
 - 12 Corbach, *6:00 Uhr ab Messe Köln-Deutz Deportationen*, 665–66.
 - 13 Barkai, "Between East and West," 289–90.
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 - 16 "Persons of good will need not worry about their fate. Only the unwelcome element will leave the ghetto," December 20, 1941, box 20, folder 925, YIVO.
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 - 19 *Chronicle*, November 1941 summary.
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 - 24 Gila Flam, *Singing for Survival: Songs of the Łódź Ghetto, 1940–1945* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 93–94.
 - 25 Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, trans. Garry Malloy (Washington, D.C.: Holocaust Library, 2000), 96.
 - 26 Pankiewicz, 96–97.
 - 27 Herzs Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto, 1942–1944*, ed. Helene Sinnreich (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015), 90, 95, 142–43.

- 28 “In Your Blood I live,” RG 02.079*01, USHMMA.
- 29 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 43.
- 30 Rachel Cymber, interview 2015, segments 27–29, April 11, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
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- 33 Rosa Taubman, “A Memoir Relating to Experiences in Kraków,” 1995.a.0714, USHMMA.
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- 35 Davidson Draenger, 116.
- 36 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 71.
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- 41 Pankiewicz, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, 34, 43.
- 42 State of Israel Ministry of Justice, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: State of Israel Ministry of Justice, 1992), 380.
- 43 Shmuel Krakowski and Ilya Altman, *The Testament of the Last Prisoners of the Chełmno Death Camp* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1991), 112.
- 44 Gordon Horowitz, *Ghettostadt: Łódź and the Making of a Nazi City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 284.
- 45 Bernard Offen, *My Hometown Concentration Camp: A Survivor’s Account of Life in the Kraków Ghetto and Płaszów Concentration Camp* (New York: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), 61.
- 46 Joseph Zerkowicz, “In Those Days of Nightmare,” September 12, 1942, box 19, folder 880, YIVO.
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- 48 Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto*, 160.
- 49 Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 502.
- 50 For more on food and hiding, see Natalia Aleksun, “Food, Money, and Barter in the Lvov Ghetto, Eastern Galicia,” in *Coping with Hunger and Shortage under German Occupation in World War II*, ed. Tatjana Tönsmeier, Peter Haslinger, and Agnes Laba (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 223–47.

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- 54 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 31–32.
- 55 “Bread in the Year Nineteen Forty-Two,” by [Joseph Zelkowitz], January 1942, box 17, folder 853, YIVO.
- 56 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 104.
- 57 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 500, 502.
- 58 “Bread in the Year Nineteen Forty-Two,” by [Joseph Zelkowitz], January 1942, box 17, folder 853, YIVO.
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- 60 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 104.
- 61 Oskar Singer, *Przemierzają szybkim krokiem getto* (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 2002), 38.
- 62 Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning Was the Ghetto*, 105.
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- 72 Sam Goodchild, interview 29135, segment 15, March 14, 1997, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; David Jakubowski, interview 9898, segment 85, December 11, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 73 Renny Kurshenbaum, interview 1024, segment 17, February 16, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 74 Jack Baum, interview 20658, segment 21, October 8, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; Eddie Bachner, interview 43304, segment 103, June 26, 1998, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 75 Marek Edelman, “A Luxury Bunker in the Ghetto,” posted September 11, 2017, by Web of Stories – Life Stories of Remarkable People, YouTube vide, 3:14, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-v_HCvWFXvE.
- 76 Renia Britstone, interview 53970, segment 63, August 31, 1988, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.

- 77 Jerry Rawicki, interview 54012, segments 64–65, March 18, 2001, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 78 Erna Rosenthal, interview 20525, segment 21, October 7, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 79 Lusia Haberfeld, interview 20848, segment 19, October 13, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.
- 80 Rapes also took place during deportations from Łódź and Kraków. See Helene Sinnreich, “‘And It Was Something We Didn’t Talk About’: Rape of Jewish Women during the Holocaust,” *Holocaust Studies* 14, no. 2 (2008): 1–22; see also Lusia Haberfeld, interview 20848, October 13, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; Erna Rosenthal, interview 20525, segment 23, October 7, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; Thaddeus Stabholz, interview 12869, March 11, 1996, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; Pinchas Gutter, interview 534, segment 65, January 12, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; David Jakubowski, interview 9898, segment 87, December 11, 1995, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation; Eddie Bachner, interview 43304, segment 108, June 26, 1998, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation.

Conclusion

- 1 Hanno Loewy, Andrzej Bodek, and François Coppée, “*Les Vrais Riches*,” *Notizen am Rand: Ein Tagebuch aus dem Ghetto Łódź (Mai bis August 1944)* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1997), 105. The quote that appears as this chapter’s epigraph was originally written in English in the boy’s diary.
- 2 Hanno Loewy, Andrzej Bodek, and François Coppée, “*Les Vrais Riches*,” *Notizen am Rand: Ein Tagebuch aus dem Ghetto Łódź (Mai bis August 1944)* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1997).
- 3 The diary’s last entry was made on August 3, 1944. In it, the anonymous author indicates that deportations are taking place. Deportations to Chelmno extermination camp had ceased in July 1944. As of August, the majority of Jews remaining in the Łódź ghetto were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. A small number were sent to the Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück concentration camps and a smaller contingent remained in the ghetto, to be liberated by Soviet forces. During that time frame, sections of the ghetto were closed off. We do not know whether the unknown diarist was deported to Auschwitz, died in the ghetto, or remained in the ghetto but lost access to his diary when that section of the ghetto was closed off to Jews.
- 4 Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, trans. Barbara Vedder (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 168.

Appendix: List of Kitchens and Food Distribution Sites in the Warsaw Ghetto

- 1 Zespół Związek Towarzystw Opieki Sierotami, CENTOS (Sygn. 200), 1941–1942. RG-15.077M 200/3 USHMM. [hereafter CENTOS]

- 2 CENTOS 200/10 USHMMA.
- 3 CENTOS 200/3 USHMMA.
- 4 CENTOS 200/8 USHMMA.
- 5 CENTOS 200/3 USHMMA.
- 6 RING. II/177.
- 7 CENTOS 200/3 USHMMA.
- 8 RING. I/449. Mf. N.N., Notes from life in the Warsaw Ghetto.
- 9 CENTOS 200/8 USHMMA.
- 10 CENTOS 200/12. USHMMA.
- 11 CENTOS 200/12 USHMMA.
- 12 CENTOS 200/3 USHMMA.
- 13 CENTOS 200/12 USHMMA.
- 14 CENTOS 200/11 USHMMA.
- 15 CENTOS 200/11 USHMMA.
- 16 CENTOS 200/9 USHMMA.
- 17 CENTOS 200/3 USHMMA.
- 18 CENTOS 200/3 USHMMA.
- 19 CENTOS 200/9 USHMMA.
- 20 Archiwum Ringelbluma. Vol. 2, Warsaw. 2000, pp. 183–184.
- 21 Archiwum Ringelbluma. Vol. 2, Warsaw. 2000, p. 196.
- 22 ZIH 211A/248.
- 23 Archiwum Ringelbluma. Vol. 2, Warsaw. 2000, p. 188.
- 24 Archiwum Ringelbluma. Vol. 2, Warsaw. 2000, p. 197.
- 25 Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, “Fig. 2.50 Community Kitchens and Food-Subsidy Programs,” in *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 335–336.
- 26 RING. I/190. N.N., Report of the rabbi of Skępe for the CKU on kosher food in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941 (Kitchen Director – Feldmebel).
- 27 RING. I/178; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 28 CENTOS 200/6 USHMMA; CENTOS 200/9 USHMMA.
- 29 CENTOS 200/4 USHMMA.
- 30 CENTOS 200/5 USHMMA.
- 31 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 32 CENTOS 200/7 USHMMA.
- 33 CENTOS 200/23 USHMMA.
- 34 CENTOS 200/7 and 200/9 and 200/12 and 200/23 USHMMA; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 35 CENTOS 200/6 USHMMA.
- 36 CENTOS 200/5 and 200/12; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 37 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 38 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 39 CENTOS 200/18 USHMMA.
- 40 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 41 CENTOS 200/7 and 200/21 and 200/22 USHMMA.
- 42 CENTOS 200/5 and 200/22 USHMMA; RING. I/204. (Date unknown, Warsaw Ghetto. N.N., “Plan fun der dertsierisher arbet in di bashpaizungspunktn Karmelitske 29, Nowolipki 68, Krokmalne 36”).

- 43 CENTOS 200/19 USHMMA.
- 44 RING. I/204.; RING. II/177; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 45 The Kitchen at ul. Leszno was used for multiple celebrations and large events including performances. It was also the site of a food distribution center. RING. I/674/1. (Lb. 1688). Mf. Invitation dated 29.03.1942 to the seder celebration on 1.04.1942 at the Kitchen at ul. Leszno 14; RING. I/1112/4 (1431). (Lb. 1429). Mf. 01.[1942], Invitation to the commemorative meeting on the occasion of the 40th year of existence of the Jewish National Fund (K.K.L.), 17.01.[1942] at the kitchen at ul. Leszno 14; RING. I/1112/4 (1431). (Lb. 1429). 01.[1942], Invitation to the commemorative meeting on the occasion of the 40th year of existence of the Jewish National Fund (K.K.L.), 17.01.[1942] at the kitchen at ul. Leszno 14; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 46 RING. II/123. 5.03.[year unknown], Warsaw Ghetto, Invitation to a show on 5.03.[year unknown] organized in the premises of the public kitchen at ul. Leszno 29.
- 47 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336; RING. I/641; RING. I/654; RING. I/307/2; Report of Activity; RING. I/594/1.
- 48 CENTOS 200/5 USHMMA; RING. I/1096/2 Invitation for the opening of the Bialik Children's Home at Kitchen no. 135 (ul. Leszno 42, apt. 11), on 14.07.1942.
- 49 CENTOS 200/5 USHMMA.
- 50 CENTOS 200/21 USHMMA.
- 51 RING. I/1201 (1520) 2.07.1942, Warsaw Ghetto. Director of the C[entral] J[ail], Letter of 2.07.1942.
- 52 CENTOS 200/7 and 200/19 and 200/22 USHMMA.
- 53 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 54 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 55 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 56 CENTOS 200/5 USHMMA; Rachela Honigman with husband and Dr Rapaport lived there, see: Rachela Honigman, Testimony 301-4239, Jewish Historical Institute Archives. Location of a Beis Yakov school – See: Gazeta Żydowska 1941, Source Pages: 88/89 p.3, 111/2, III 65/2; GŻ 22, art; RING. I/190. N.N., Report of the rabbi of Skepe for the CKU on kosher food in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941; Kitchen director – Landenberg.
- 57 CENTOS 200/5 and 200/27 USHMMA.
- 58 RING. I/190. N.N., Report of the rabbi of Skepe for the CKU on kosher food in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941 (Kitchen Director – Heber).
- 59 CENTOS 200/7 and 200/19 USHMMA; RING. II/388.
- 60 There were two kitchens in the building. One for poor children run by CENTOS. A second one for wealthy children. On was managed by Genia Silkes. See CENTOS 200/5 USHMMA; Adolf Berman, *Wos der gojfr hot mir baszert. Mit jidn in Warsze 1939–1942*, Israel 1980, p. 69; RING. II/121; RING. II/384; Balbina Osser, Testimony 301-4808; Jewish Historical Institute Archives. CENTOS 200/21 USHMMA; Genia Silkes. Zeznania ocalałych Żydów. Testimony 301-6289, Jewish Historical Institute Archives; CENTOS 200/9 USHMMA.

- 61 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336; Note: Teachers and employees of the kitchen and school include: Natan Smolar and Fejga Herclich – directors, Izrael Lichtensztajn, Gela Seksztajn, Ł. Fajnsztajn, D. Perelman. CENTOS 200/5 USHMMA; Ring. I/201 (515) Letter of 1.06.1942 to Central Provisioning Commission at KOM [Komitet Opiekun'czy Miejski, Municipal Guardian Committee] in Warsaw; RING. I/777/7. (1099). Sponsors' Committee Invitation for tsholnt [czulent] on 22.11.1941; RING. I/269; RING. I/1205 (1524); Ghetto Fighters House Archive. catalogue number 5990. From the Adolf – Abraham Berman collection: A list of civic activists, artists, intellectuals, and educators, by profession. Note: memorial service for Liza Nachstensztajn held at ul. Nowolipki. Nachstensztajn was an educator.; RING. I/332. Reports of the children's council and pupils' compositions; RING. I/332. Reports of the children's council and pupils' compositions; CENTOS 200/4–5 and 200/21–22 USHMMA.
- 62 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 63 RING. I/1207 (1526). Minutes of the session of representatives of political parties in the Warsaw Ghetto. [23.03.1942?]
- 64 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 65 RING. I/777/9. (1099); RING. II/384.
- 66 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 67 CENTOS 200/7 and 200/18 USHMMA.
- 68 CENTOS 200/7 USHMMA.
- 69 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 70 Berg, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, 22. “A meal in such a kitchen consists of potato or cabbage soup and a tiny portion of vegetables. Twice a week one receive a tiny piece of meat which costs 1 zloty 20 groszy.”
- 71 CENTOS 200/4 and 200/21 USHMMA; See Letter addressed on the manager of the kitchen # 138 from CENTOS Control Department, December 14, 1941, concerning report dated December 10, 1941. CENTOS 200/5 USHMMA.
- 72 CENTOS 200/8 USHMMA.
- 73 CENTOS 200/19 USHMMA.
- 74 RING. I/1220/25. Certificate of 2.09.1940 for Basia Getler (ul. Świętojerska 36) “with meal privileges on the basis of identification no. 12034/40.”
- 75 CENTOS 200/23 USHMMA.
- 76 Ring. I/298 After 4.06.1942, Warsaw Ghetto. Sponsors' committee of the Kitchen (ul. Świętojerska 34), Letter of 4.06.1942 to Central Provisioning Commission at KOM in Warsaw; CENTOS 200/22 USHMMA.
- 77 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 78 RING. I/777/1. (1099). Date unknown, Announcement about the availability of meals at the kosher kitchen at ul. Tłomackie 11.
- 79 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336; RING. I/1098 (1417) Invitation to a commemorative meeting dedicated to Abraham Rajzen's (Raisin) fiftieth year as an author, on 22.02.1942 in the hall at ul. Tłomackie 5.

- 80 I am grateful to Ian Fuchs whose email of 12/20/2020 shared with me the address which he located in Seidman, Hillel. 1970. *Ishim she-hikarti: demuyot me-'avar qarov be-Mizrah Eropah*. Yerushalayim: Mosad ha-Rav Kuk. Thank you to Naomi Seidman for making the introduction to Ilan Fuchs.
- 81 Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 335–336.
- 82 RING. I/190. N.N., Report of the rabbi of Skępe for the CKU on kosher food in the Warsaw Ghetto in 194; Kitchen Director – Kobak.
- 83 RING. I/995 (1314). (Lb. 401). N.N., Account of the memorial meeting in memory of Chaim Nachman Bialik and Theodor Herzl at the public kitchen at ul. Zamenhofa 13 (15.06.[07?].1940).
- 84 CENTOS 200/6 USHMMA.
- 85 CENTOS 200/7 USHMMA.
- 86 RING. I/190. N.N., Report of the rabbi of Skępe for the CKU on kosher food in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941; Kitchen Director – Godzłak [?Goldszłak].
- 87 RING. I/190. N.N., Report of the rabbi of Skępe for the CKU on kosher food in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941 (Director of Kitchen: *Kozłowski*).
- 88 RING. II/19. Department of Women's Social Work, Districts IV and V. E. Secemska, Report of activity for the month of August 1940.
- 89 CENTOS. 200/4 USHMMA.
- 90 CENTOS. 200/4 USHMMA.
- 91 RING. II/383/1.
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- 101 *Berg*, 45–46.
- 102 RING. I/307/2. (Lb. 1676, 1677). Report of Activity.
- 103 RING. I/307/2. (Lb. 1676, 1677). Report of Activity.

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Index

- A., Ernest, 111
abuse. *see* [physical abuse](#); [sexual abuse](#)
access to food/acquisition of food
 in general, 29–34, 107–108, 125
 of the affluent. *see* [the affluent](#)
 food lines and. *see* [food lines](#)
 gender and, 116–20, 204–205
 German ghetto administration and, 51–52, 54, 55
 illicit. *see* [black market](#)
 of the impoverished, 108–11
 labor and. *see* [labor, food acquisition and](#)
 location of ghetto and, 108–11
 of refugees, 188–91
 religion and, 120–25
 social networks and, 31–32
 trading and, 92–96, 203–204
 during Warsaw ghetto uprising, 198–200
accessibility of ghettos
 in general, 110–11
 of Kraków ghetto, 8, 37, 51, 64–65
 of Łódź ghetto, 7, 37, 45–46
 of Warsaw ghetto, 7–8, 40, 41, 143–44
Adria Restaurant, 112
the affluent
 food access of, 111–16
 in general, 205
 entertaining and, 113–14
 in Łódź ghetto, 114
 restaurants/café and, 112–13
 smuggling and, 112
 in Warsaw ghetto, 114
 impoverishment of. *see* [impoverishment](#)
agriculture, 69–71
air raids, 17
AJDC (American Joint Distribution Committee), 33, 39, 100, 110, 126–27, 146
Ajzner, Abram, 43
Akawie, Henryk, 43
Aktion 14f13, 183
American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC), 33, 39, 100, 126–27, 146
appropriations. *see* [seizure](#)
“arranging a liquidation”, 193
atrocities of hunger, 3–5, 90, 201–206
Auerbach, Rachel
 on Abraham Brockmeyer, 78
 on Adolf Bund, 153
 on capitulations of Warsaw, 20
 running of soup kitchen by, 32, 137
 on transformation of soup kitchens, 68
Auerswald, Heinz, 152, 183
Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, 84, 188, 197, 202

Babiacki, Edward, 43
Bakers’ Riot, 128
balagan, 74–75
bank accounts, freezing of, 23
Barkai, Avraham, 79
Bart, Tadeusz, 38
Bau, Joseph, 173
Beale, Mendel, 29
Beck, Kuba, 174
begging, for food, 63–64, 138–40
Beis Yaakov movement, 122
Belzec extermination camp, 184, 187, 188, 198
Bender, Markus, 43
Berg, Mary
 on ersatz honey, 72
 father of, 164
 on food theft, 161
 on foot shortages, 20
 on fund raising, 33, 131
 on illicit use of bakery ovens, 159
 on impoverishment of friends, 109
 on Jewish police, 41
 on luxury foods, 114
 mother of, 146
 on opening of cafés, 112

- Berg, Mary (cont.)
 on refugees, 189
 on seizure of Jewish property, 42
 on sexual abuse of Jewish girls, 24
 on smuggling, 151
 on smuggling by Germans, 147
 on soup kitchens, 32
 on starvation, 79, 140
 on street food, 158
 on travel restrictions, 27
 on trek to Warsaw, 18
- Berkowicz, Shlomo, 180
- Berman, Jakub, 38
- Bertgram, Amalia, 96
- Biberstein, Aleksander, 46, 47, 62
- Bieberstein, Marek
 arrest of, 49
 criticism on, 36
 deportations and, 53
 Judenrat leadership of, 35, 46–47
 ŻSS and, 127
- Biebow, Hans, 55, 60, 124
- Bierat. *see* Judenrat of Łódź
- black market
 food on
 in general, 152–54
 availability of, 31
 cheating and, 158–59
 dangers of, 158–60
 illegality of, 31
 in Kraków ghetto, 64, 153
 in Łódź ghetto, 153
 in Warsaw ghetto, 153
 food prices
 in Kraków ghetto, 156–57
 in Łódź ghetto, 154–56, 155
 in Warsaw ghetto, 30, 157–58
 food rations cards on, 153
- Blim, Abraham, 149
- “Bloody Thursday”, 45
- Board of the Jewish Religious
 Community in Kraków. *see*
 Judenrat of Kraków
- Bochnik, Halina, 111
- Borowski, Tadeusz, 205
- Boruch, Praszkie, 123
- Borzykowski, Tuvia, 198
- Bousko (German guard), 147
- Bramson, Ryva, 141
- Brand, Regina, 197
- Brauner, Henry, 171
- bread
 challah, 120
 price of, 154–56, 157–58, 195–96
 quality of, 71
 rationing of, 156
 theft of, 160–61, 164
 “bread seekers”, 6
- Brent, Lucie, 17, 71
- bribery, of officials, 146–47, 166, 176,
 177, 195
- Brockmier, Abraham, 78
- Bryan, Julien Hequembourg, 20
- Brzeziny, 192
- Buchenholz, Pauline, 171
- Bucher, Akiba, 47
- Bulwa, Dawid, 47
- Bund, Adolf, 153
- businesses, seizure of, 24–25
- Byteńska, Romea, 117
- Café Hirschfeld, 112
- Café Pod Fontanna, 112
- Café Sztuka, 112
- cafés/restaurants, 112–13
- cakes, baking of, 98–99
- cannibalism, 103–104, 204
- Caritas, 124, 131, 136
- Carpenters’ Strike, 178–79
- Caspari, Wilhelm, 77
- Catholicism/Catholics, 124, 131
- CENTOS (Centralne Towarzystwo
 Opieki nad Sierotami), 63, 131,
 136, 207–208
- challah, 120
- Chari, Anatol
 on entertaining, 113
 on grandmother, 121
 on uncle, 109
 use of social network by, 107
 working in gas division, 154
- Chari, Piotr, 107
- charities, 33–34, 63, 130–32, *see also*
 house committees
- Chelmo extermination camp, 187, 188,
 191, 192, 197, 202
- chickens, 72, 114, 121
- children
 begging by, 139
 day cares for, 207
 of deported parents, 193
 orphanages for, 104–105, 207–208
 running errands by, 181
 smuggling by, 149–50
 supplemental food rations for, 115
- cholent, 60, 63, 98
- Christianity/Christians
 conversions to, 124
 in the ghettos, 123–24
 smuggling by, 148, 150

- Chronicle* (Łódź ghetto)
 on contagious diseases, 80
 on death toll, 88
 on food during religious ceremonies, 123
 on food theft, 161
 on grave diggers health, 79
 on increase in private commerce, 190–91
 on Kitchen no. 2, 136–37
 on milk supply, 52
 on scavenging for food, 102
 on supplemental ration coupons, 115
 collaborators, 112
 communal kitchens, *see* soup kitchens
 communities, Jewish. *see* specific cities and ghettos
 confiscations. *see* seizure
 conversions, to Catholicism, 124, 131
 cooking, communal, 63, 137
 coping strategies
 for hunger/starvation
 in general, 5–6, 91–92, 104–106, 204
 assets into food, 92–96
 breaking up the household, 104–105
 food-stretching techniques, 97–98
 hunger foods, 96–104
 migration, 105
 on community level, 6–7
 on individual level, 6
 Coppée, François, 1
 cows, 122
 criminality. *see* smuggling of food; theft of food
 Cymber, Rachel, 193, 195
 Czerniaków, Adam
 arrest of, 40
 on black market foods, 31
 on cannibalism, 103
 on communal hunger relief, 129
 criticism on, 36
 on food access of workers, 182–83
 on food availability, 20, 66
 on food prices, 157–58
 on food rationing, 30
 on hunger and humor, 85–86
 on Jewish Civilian Committee, 37
 on Judenrat, 35
 on Nazi looting, 22
 food distribution to the affluent and, 114
 on own position, 38–39
 physical abuse of, 52
 provisioning the poor by, 129
 Czerniaków, Niunia, 131
 Czuchajowski, Bolesław, 46
 daily prayers, hunger and, 84–85
 Damm, A., 43
 Danek-Czortkova, Aurelia, 144
 day cares, 207
 death camps. *see* under specific extermination camps
 Dembitzer, Theodor, 47
 demography, of ghettos, 5, 49–50, 61, 110
 Department of Food Supply and Economics (Ernährungs Wirtschaftsamt), 55
 deportations. *see* also displacements; refugees
 in general, 186–88, 200
 food as lure for, 193–94
 food prices and, 195–96
 hiding from, 196–97
 into the ghettos
 of Jews from surrounding areas, 188–89
 of Western Jews, 189–91
 Jewish officials and, 194–95
 out of the ghettos, 192–96
 in general, 141, 192–96
 to forced labor camps, 170–71, 186, 192
 of Jewish leadership, 52–53, 188
 Kraków ghetto, 141, 184, 187, 188, 192–93, 197
 Łódź ghetto, 141, 183, 187–88, 195
 Warsaw ghetto, 68, 141, 184, 187, 193, 197
 stealing from deportees, 186
 dietary laws, 99–101, 121–22
 digestion, 80
 diseases, hunger and, 78, 93
 dismissals, 24
 displacements. *see* also deportations; refugees
 in general, 17–19
 effects of, 19
 distribution of food. *see* also hunger relief systems
 by food shops, private, 55
 charities and. *see* charities
 food lines and. *see* food lines
 rationing. *see* food rations/rationing
 religious traditions and, 60, *see* also kosher foods
 soup kitchens. *see* soup kitchens
 to refugees, 133–34
 doctors, food access of, 180
 Draenger, Gusta, 193
 Drozdziakowa, Irena, 144
 Dube, Alfred
 on death by starvation, 86

- Dube, Alfred (cont.)
 on ersatz coffee, 102
 on food access of Western Jews, 191
 on food theft, 164
 on hunger pains, 83
 on trading for food, 153
 duration, of hunger/starvation, 4–5
 “Dying in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto” (Singer), 93
 Dzikover Rebbe (Horowitz, Alter), 123
- Edelman, Marek, 199
 edema, hunger, 78
 Efrati, David, 150
 Eichengreen, Lucille
 on food lines, 73
 on roommates, 83, 85
 on Shlomo Berkowicz, 180
 Eichmann, Adolf, 87
 Ekerman, Ber Ajzyk, 38
 Elberg, Yehuda, 81
 Encyclopedia of the Łódź Ghetto, 74, 99
 entertaining, 113–14
 Entitlement theory, 6
 Epstein, Tatiana, 112
 Ernährungs Wirschaftsamt
 (Department of Food Supply and Economics), 55
 ersatz coffee, 98–99, 102, 194, 204
 ersatz honey, 72
 Esther/Minia, 59
 ethnic Germans, 28
 evictions, 24
 executions, in Warsaw ghetto, 152, 167
 extermination camps. *see under* specific extermination camps
- factory work, 178–180
 Falk, Max, 146
 “Famine and the Female Mortality Advantage” (Macintyre), 88
 famines
 duration of, 4–5
 female survival advantage in, 88–89
 feminization of, 5, 88
 three stages of, 87–88
 Faust, Samuel, 43
 fecalists, 172
 Fels, Edgar, 182
 Female Order Service (FOS), 117
 fish, 101
 Flam, Yaakov, 191
 Fogel, Hersz
 on deportations, 192
 on escape attempt, 18
 on food quality, 71
 on volunteering for labor assignments, 172
 folk kitchens. *see* soup kitchens
 Folman, Chawka, 70
 food
 access to/acquisition of. *see* access to food/acquisition of food
 begging for, 63–64, 138–40
 cooking of, 63, 137, 154
 growing of, 32, 69–71
 health hazards and, 103
 hoarding of, 17
 insecurity. *see* hunger/starvation
 kosher. *see* kosher foods
 lack of. *see* hunger/starvation
 portioning of, 101
 prices of. *see* food prices
 quality of, 67, 97
 salvaging of spoiled, 72
 scavenging for, 63, 95–96, 102–103
 seizure of, 30, 145–46, 159
 selflessness with, 89–90
 serving of, 101–102
 smuggling of. *see* smuggling of food
 spoilage of, 67
 stretching techniques for, 97–98
 substitutes, 31, *see also* ersatz coffee; ersatz honey
 theft of. *see* theft of food
 trading for, 92–96, 203–204
 food banks, 210
 food fantasies, 82–85
 food kitchens. *see* soup kitchens
 food lines
 in general, 31, 73–74
 food riots and, 75
 physical altercations in, 74–75
 food packages, 65, 69, 165–66
 food prices
 on black market
 in Kraków ghetto, 156–57
 in Łódź ghetto, 114, 154–56, 155
 in Warsaw ghetto, 30, 157–58
 deportations and, 195–96
 in Kraków, 31
 in Łódź ghetto, 195–96
 in Warsaw ghetto, 114, 196
 food rations/rationing
 in general, 30–31
 condition of, 59–60
 deportations and, 193
 insufficiency of, 140–41
 in Kraków ghetto, 62–63
 in Łódź ghetto, 56–60, 61, 129–30
 meat, 99

- ration cards corruption and, 162–63
- supplemental
 - for the affluent, 114
 - for the vulnerable, 114–15
- trade in, 153
- in Warsaw ghetto, 66–68, 129
- withholding of, 182
- food riots, 56, 75, 128
- food shops, 55, 159, 210
- food strikes, 179–80
- food-stretching techniques, 97–98
- foreign aid, 126–27
- Förster, Aleksander, 124
- FOS (Female Order Service), 117
- Fraenkel, Gershon, 79
- Frank, Hans, 26, 51, 131
- Frankfurt, Artur, 43
- Frankl, Victor, 82
- Frenkel, Sara, 92
- Fridman, Erna, 98, 124, 149
- Friedman, Ben, 10
- Frisch, Dawid, 47
- Fruchtman, Leon, 94, 107
- Fuchs, Dora, 117, 124
- fuel, 63, 137, 154
- fund raising, charitable, 33–34, 55–56, 131–32
- G., Mrs., 182
- G., Sylvia, 173
- Gancwajch, Abraham, 36, 131
- gardening, 69–71
- Garfunkel, Rachel, 18, 72
- Gazeta Żydowska* (newspaper), 97, 140
- Gebürtig, Mordechai, 28, 143
- Gelkopf, Jakub, 146
- gender/gender roles
 - in general, 116–17
 - in the ghettos
 - in general, 120
 - in leadership functions, 117
 - postwar testimonies and, 117
 - starvation and, 117–20
 - survival sex and, 95, 120
- Generalgouvernement for the Occupied Polish Territories
 - anti-Jewish measures of, 26–28
 - establishment of, 26
- genocide, by attrition, 3–5, 201–206
- Gepner, Abraham, 38
- German ghetto administration (Gettoverwaltung)
 - food access and
 - in general, 51–52, 54
 - in Łódź ghetto, 55
- German invasion
 - in general, 17
 - displacements during. *see* displacements
 - effect on Jewish resources, 34
 - food shortages during, 19–20
- German police (Kripo), 36–37, 151–52, 195–96
- Germans, interactions between Jews and, 124–25
- Gerszowski, Pinkus, 43
- Gertler, Dawid, 36
- Gertler, Michal, 224
- Geto-Tsaytung* (journal), 130
- ghetto currencies, 153
- “Ghetto Kingdom” (Spiegel), 96–97
- ghetto police
 - food theft by, 190
 - Jewish
 - bribing of, 146–47
 - deportation of, 194–95
 - establishment of, 41
 - food access of, 177
 - requirements of candidates, 41
 - Warsaw ghetto, 41
 - smuggling by, 147
- ghettos
 - accessibility of, 110–11, *see* accessibility of ghettos
 - black market in. *see* black market; smuggling of food; theft of food
 - demography of, 5, 49–50, 61, 110
 - elites in. *see* the affluent
 - entertaining in, 113–14
 - German administration over, 51–52, 54
 - hunger relief systems in. *see* hunger relief systems
 - impoverishment in. *see* impoverishment
 - labor in and outside of. *see* labor, food acquisition and
 - as labor-focused ghettos, 183–84, 187
 - leadership in. *see also* Judenräte (Jewish Councils)
 - gender roles and, 117
 - liquidation of, 197–200
 - longevity of, 111
 - non-Jews in, 124–25
 - official rabbinate in, 100, 121
 - police in. *see* ghetto police
 - religions in. *see* Catholicism/Catholics; Christianity/Christians; Judaism
 - restaurants/café in, 112–13
 - songs in. *see* songs

- ghettos (cont.)
 types of, 7
 girls. *see* [women/girls](#)
 Glass, W., 43
 Glatter, Stanisław, 43
 Główny Dom Schronienia (Main Shelter Home), 104–105
 Glueck, Irena
 on food acquisition, 31
 on food prices, 31, 156
 on wearing Star of David, 27
 Gluecksberg, Rachmil Henryk, 38
 Goldblatt, Wilhelm, 47, 52
 Goldfeder, Moszek, 166
 Goldfinger, Mark, 63, 95
 Goldflus, Joachim, 47
 Golkin, Arline T., 165
 Goodchild, Sam, 198
 Gottlieb, Izidor, 47
 Greenblatt, Henry
 on child beggars, 139
 on impoverishment, 109
 on smuggling, 148, 150
 on starvation, 79
 Greif, Maksimilian, 47
 Greiser, Arthur, 27
 Grun, Anna, 17, 30
 Grüner, Marcel, 177
 Grunhut, Ziuta, 173
 Grynberg, Mr., 173
 Grynwald, Aron, 18, 146
 Gutman, Jakub, 43
 Gutsztat, Eliezer, 121
 Gutter, David, 49
- H., Alice, 160–61
 Haber, Maurycy, 47
 Habermeld, Lusja, 97
 Harel, Miriam, 89–90
 Hasenfus, Chaim, 139
 Hasman, Avraham, 162
 Hass, Jeffrey, 6
 Heilman, Anna, 173
 Heinrich, Hermann, 124
 Helman, Dawid Lajb, 43
 Hemar, Alice, 174
 Herschkovitz, Yankele
 on access to food, 111
 food fantasies in songs of, 84
 on hunger, 91
 on ration card corruption, 163
 survival and death of, 140
 Hertz, Jakub, 43
 Hertz, Mieczysław, 43
 Herzberger, Flora, 80, 97
- Herzog, Chaim Samuel, 47
 Himmler, Heinrich, 29, 131
 hoarding, of food, 17
 Hochenberg, Szmul, 43
 Hoffman, George, 197
 Hollander, Joseph, 65
 Holocaust studies, shifts in, 2–3
 Holzinger, Frau, 174
 Horowitz, Alter (Dzikover Rebbe), 123
 horsemeat, 101
 house committees
 charitable fund raising by, 33, 55–56, 131–32
 in Łódź ghetto, 44
 in Warsaw ghetto, 131–32
 Huberband, Shimon
 on executions, 167
 on holiday meals, 26
 on jokes on hunger, 85
 on policemen, 109
 on ritual slaughter, 72
 humor, hunger/starvation and, 85–86
 hunger foods, 96–104
 hunger pains, 83
 hunger relief systems. *see also under*
 specific ghettos and initiatives
 in general, 126
 charities and private initiatives, 33–34, 55–56, 63, 130–32
 failure of, 108–109, 140–41
 foreign aid and, 126–27
 before the German occupation, 110
 official communal, 127–30, 141–42
 for refugees, 32–33, 132–35
 hunger taboo consumptions, 103–104
 hunger/starvation
 in general, 77, 90, 140–41, 204
 atrocities of, 3–5, 90, 201–206
 coping strategies for. *see* [coping strategies](#)
 death from, 86–90
 diseases and, 79–80, 93
 duration of, 4–5
 heart failure and, 87
 humor and, 85–86
 mental effects of
 in general, 80–82
 food fantasies, 82–85
 physical effects of, 77–80
 productivity and, 182–83
 recovery from, 78–79
 societal norms and, 91
- illicit activities. *see* [black market](#);
 [smuggling of food](#); [theft of food](#)

- impoverishment
 - in the ghettos
 - in general, 25–26, 108–10
 - ghettos' accessibility and, 110–11
 - ghettos' longevity and, 111
 - unemployment and, 108
- irritability, 80–81
- Jakubowicz-Loewi, Marsha, 146
- Jamier, Szymon Ber, 38
- Jaszuński, Ignacy, 43
- Jaszuński, Józef, 38
- Jewish Civilian Committee of the Capital City of Warsaw, 37
- Jewish community in
 - hunger relief systems of, 32, 110
- Jewish Order Service (Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst). *see* ghetto police; Jewish
- Jewish Social Self-Help Coordinating Commission (ŻSS), 33, 127
- jobs/occupations
 - hierarchy of, 174–75, 198
 - loss of, 24, 108
 - social networks and, 175–76, 224
- Joskowicz, Estusia, 161
- Judaism. *see also* kosher foods
 - in the ghettos
 - in general, 120–21
 - food access and, 121–22
 - food during religious events, 123
 - study groups, 122–23
 - restrictions on practicing of, 26
- Judenrat of Kraków
 - establishment of, 46–47
 - hunger relief system of, 10, 32, 62–63
 - leadership of, 35
 - members of
 - abuse of, 47–48
 - deportation of, 48
 - overview of, 47
- Judenrat of Łódź
 - establishment of, 42–43
 - hunger relief system of, 8, 32, 55, 60, 110, 127–29
 - leadership of, 35
 - members of
 - murder of, 43
 - overview of, 43–44
 - prosecution of crimes and, 145
- Judenrat of Warsaw. *see also* Czerniaków, Adam
 - criticism of, 36
 - departments of, 40–41
 - hunger relief system of, 8, 32, 54–55, 110
 - leadership of, 35
 - members of, 37–38
 - political representation of population in, 38
 - workings of, 38–39
- Judenräte (Jewish Councils). *see also* under specific Judenräte
 - in general, 6, 53
 - after establishment of ghettos, 51–53
 - establishment of, 35
 - leadership of
 - criticism of, 36
 - deportations of, 52–53
 - election of, 35
 - hazards to, 35–36
 - physical abuse of members of, 47–48, 52
- Jüdische Unterstützungsstelle (JUS), 127
- K., Mrs., 153
- Kaminski, Adam, 156–57
- Kaplan, Chaim Aron
 - on air raids, 17
 - on begging, 138–39
 - on closed ghettos, 37
 - on creation of Warsaw ghetto, 39
 - criticism on Judenrat by, 36
 - on death sentences for smuggling, 152
 - on eating kosher, 122
 - on eviction from home, 24
 - on food acquisition, 32
 - food fantasies of, 82
 - on food lines, 19
 - on food prices, 158
 - on food theft from food packages, 165, 166
 - on food shortages, 20
 - on Hanukkah celebration, 136
 - on job loss, 108
 - on physical abuse of Jews, 21
 - on smuggling, 147
- Kapusta, Jacek, 161
- Karp, Bella, 96
- Kitchen no. 2, 136–37
- kitchens. *see* communal cooking; soup kitchens
- Klein, Eddie, 124
- Kleinberger, Władisław, 47
- Kliger, Marek, 36
- Klimec, Stanisław, 46
- Knoll, Renia, 156
- Kobryner, Edward Elias, 38
- Korczak, Janusz, 86

- kosher foods
 - bans on, 31
 - rationing and, 60
 - vs. non-kosher foods, 99–101, 121–22
- Kraków
 - bombing of, 17
 - food availability in, 156–57
 - food prices in, 31
 - Jewish community in. *see also* Kraków ghetto
 - in general, 9–10
 - forced migration of, 28, 48
 - freezing of assets of, 23
 - hunger relief systems of, 10, 32
 - Judenrat of. *see* Judenrat of Kraków
 - reception of refugees by, 10
 - shadow leadership of, 36
 - political orientation of population of, 8
- Kraków ghetto
 - in general, 9
 - accessibility of, 8, 37, 51, 64–65
 - black market in. *see* black market
 - demography of, 49–50, 61, 110
 - deportations into
 - in general, 189
 - of Jews from surrounding areas, 191–92
 - of Western Jews, 189
 - deportations out of
 - in general, 141, 184, 187, 188, 192–93
 - hiding from, 197
 - division of, in ghettos A and B, 184, 188, 198
 - entrance to, 50
 - establishment of, 49
 - extent of, 50
 - food distribution in
 - based on survivors accounts, 61
 - charitable organizations, 63
 - private food shops, 64
 - rationing of, 62–63
 - soup kitchens, 62, 63
 - food provisioning in
 - in general, 75–76
 - agricultural production, 69–71
 - charitable organizations, 132
 - food packages, 69
 - food processing, 71–73
 - official communal, 62–63
 - Ger Hasids in, 122
 - Judenrat of. *see* Judenrat of Kraków
 - labor inside of, 169–70
 - labor outside of, 173
 - as labor-focused ghetto, 187
 - liquidation of, 111, 184, 188, 197–98
 - longevity of, 111
 - mail service in, 69
 - population density of, 50
 - resistance in, 9
 - restaurants and cafés in, 112–13
 - smuggling into
 - in general, 64, 144, 157
 - policing of, 151–52
 - starvation in, 1–2, 63–64
- Kripo (German police), 36–37, 151–52, 195–96
- Kroll, Renia, 156
- Krywaniu, Helena, 144
- Kurshenbaum, Renny, 198–99
- Labedz, Lazarz, 38
- labor camps, 170–71, 186, 192
- labor, food acquisition and
 - in general, 25, 94–95
 - inside of the ghettos
 - in general, 169, 184–85
 - of community employees, 176–78
 - dangerous jobs, 172
 - forced, 170–72
 - hierarchy of jobs, 174–75
 - Kraków ghetto, 169–70
 - Łódź ghetto, 170, 184
 - piecework, 180
 - private employment, 180–82
 - social networks and, 175–76
 - supplemental work, 180–82
 - Warsaw ghetto, 170
 - outside of the ghettos, 170–74
- Łagodzki, Henryk, 100, 150
- Łajzerowicz, Mordechaj, 225
- Landau, Rafal, 10, 19
- Lando, Jakub, 43
- laws of kashrut, 99–101, 121–22
- leadership, Jewish. *see also* Judenräte (Jewish Councils):leadership of
 - and ghetto creation, 37
 - shadow, 36–37, 41, 130–31
- Left Poalei Tsiyon, 136
- Leinkram, Bernard, 47
- Leningrad, siege of, 5, 6, 96
- Lesser, Benjamin, 23–24
- Leszczyński, Jakub, 43
- Lewi, Sarenka, 175
- Leyson, Leon
 - on air-raids, 17
 - on father bringing home food, 146
 - on finding food, 95
 - on food-stretching techniques, 98
 - on hunger, 83
 - on physical abuse of Jews, 21
 - on running errands, 181
 - on trading goods for food, 154

- Leyson, Tsalig, 181
 Librowitz, Lubra, 83
 Lichtensztajn, Izrael, 209
 Lichtig, Samuel, 47
 Lichtenbaum, Marek, 38
 Lieberman, Fiszel, 43
 Lipstadt, David, 194
 “liquidation, arranging a”, 193
 livestock, 71, 72, 114, 121, 122, 148–49
 Łódź
 bombing of, 17
 Jewish community in. *see also* Łódź
 ghetto
 in general, 11–13
 barred from work, 24
 forced migration of Jews from, 29
 freezing of assets of, 23
 Judenrat of. *see* Judenrat of Łódź
 political organization of, 12
 restrictions on movement of, 26–27
 shadow leadership of, 36
 soup kitchens of, 32, 110
 political orientation of population of, 8
 textile industry in, 12
 Łódź Artistic Group, 33, 131
 Łódź ghetto
 accessibility of, 7, 37, 44–46
 as labor-focused ghetto, 183–84, 187
 black market in. *see* black market
 children in, 58
 communal kitchens in, 137
 death by starvation in, 86, 88
 deportations into, 189–92
 deportations out of, 141, 183, 187–88
 diary excerpts from. *see* *Les Vrais Riches* (Coppée)
 food distribution in, 55–61
 to the affluent, 114, 115
 house committees, 55–56
 rationing, 56–60, 60–61, 128–30
 soup kitchens, 56–57, 135–37
 food prices in, 195–96
 food provisioning in
 in general, 51–52, 75–76
 agricultural production, 69–71, 70
 charitable organizations, 132
 food packages, 69
 food processing, 71–73
 official communal, 8, 55, 127–30
 refugees’ impact on, 189–91
 food riots in, 56, 128
 food strikes in, 178–80
 ghetto songs from, 86
 Jewish police in, 45
 Judaism in, 123
 Judenrat of. *see* Judenrat of Łódź
 judiciary in, 145
 labor in, 170
 liquidation of, 188, 197
 longevity of, 111
 mail service in, 69
 population density of, 45
 public utilities in, 44–45
 restaurants and cafés in, 112
 smuggling of food into, 144–45
 songs from, 84, 140, 165, 166
 starvation in, 1–2, 56
 Summary Court in, 166–67
 survival in, 201–202
 wire fence around, 144–45
 Łódzki Zespół Artystyczny (Łódź Artistic Group, LZA), 33, 131
 Love Your Neighbor as Yourself (We’ohawta L’reacha Kamocho), 123
 Lutomierski, Mendele, 121
 M., Freda, 45
 M., Jacob (member of fire brigade)
 on food-stretching techniques, 153
 on hunger, 177
 on prostitution, 181
 on smuggling by Germans, 147
 on trading for food, 191
 M., Josek, 166
 Macintyre, Kate, 88
 mail service, 68–69
 Main Shelter Home (Główny Dom Schronienia), 104–105
 Majer, Samuel, 47
 Margulis, Meyer, 163–64
 matzah, 60, 67, 100, 123
 Mayzel, Maurycy, 19, 37
 meat, 101
 Meltzer, Ruzha, 116
 men
 gender norms and, 116
 ghetto leadership positions and, 117
 selflessness with food of, 89–90
 mental abilities, decrease in, 81–82
 Meszorer, Josef, 149
 migration, as coping strategy for hunger, 105
 migration, forced, 28, 29, 48
 Milejkowski, Izrael, 38
 milk, 7, 20, 52, 92, 99, 148, 156, 157, 163, 224
 Miller, Bernard, 47
 Millman, Edith, 137, 188–89
 Minberg, Jakub Lejb, 19, 42

- Mokrski, Leon, 43
 Morgenbesser, Rafał, 47
 movement, restrictions on, 26–27
 Müller, Berta, 174
 Müller-Madej, Stella, 174
- Najder, Jan, 23, 48
 Najman, Aron Dawid, 224
 Najman, Luzer, 224
 Neftalin, Henry, 225
 Nelken, Halina
 on baking cakes, 98
 on cafés, 112–13
 on effects of hunger, 81, 84
 on entertaining, 113
 food fantasies of, 83–84
 on food lines, 73
 on food rations/rationing, 61–62, 63
 on forced labor assignment, 171
 on lack of fuel, 63
 on non-Jews working in ghetto, 124
 on piecework, 180
 receiving food gifts by, 114
 on sauerkraut making, 73
 on survival sex, 95, 120
 on trading goods for food, 154
- Netzer, Esther, 150
 Nirenberg, Yankl, 27
 non-food additives, 96
 non-Jews, 124, 125, 141
 Nothm, Nathan, 71
 Nowimiast, Symon, 47
- Offen, Bernard
 on communal cooking, 63, 98
 on food as lure for deportations, 194
 neighbour of, 181
 on smuggling, 110–11, 149, 150
- Office to Combat Profiteering and Speculation (“Thirteen”), 36, 41, 130–31
- openness of ghettos. *see* [accessibility of ghettos](#)
- Opoczynski, Peretz, 33
 opportunity thefts, 160–62, 165–66
 orphanages, 104–105, 126, 129, 132, 180, 207
 Orthodox Jews, 9–11, 21, 67
 Oskar Singer, 72, 87, 93, 154, 158, 159, 182, 196
 Otsap, Avrohom, 72
- P., Ludmilla, 29
 Pabianice, 146, 192
 Pankiewicz, Tadeusz
 on deportations, 193
 employees of, 144
 on entertaining, 113, 124
 on private food shops, 64
 on refugees, 192
 on street trade, 154
- Pantirer, Murray, 150
 Patronage for Torah Students, 123
 “Pe Kadosch” (Holy Mouth), 121
 Pemper, Mieczysław, 22
 Person, Katarzyna, 182
 physical abuse
 in general, 20–22
 food acquisition and, 29–30, 73
 of Judenrat members, 47–48, 52
 during labor assignments, 21–22, 171–72
 sexual, 22, 117
- Piaszczner Rebbe (Shapira, Kalonymos Kalmish), 135
 Pick, Chil Majer, 43
 piecework, 157, 180
 Piłsudski, Józef, 9
 Pionka, Aliza, 94
 Pisar, Samuel, 84
 Płaszów concentration camp, 111, 184, 188, 197–98, 202
 Plywacki, Avraham Leyzer, 35, 42
 Poland. *see also* [under specific cities and ghettos](#)
 treatment of Jews in, 9
- Polanski, Ryszard, 18
 police. *see* [German police](#); [ghetto police](#)
 postcards, to lure deportees, 194
 potato peels, 63, 77, 96–97, 99, 139, 196, 204
 Poznanski, Jakub
 on begging, 138
 on food distribution to the affluent, 114
 on food strikes, 179–80
 on private food shops, 55
 on quality of food, 97
 on reasons for starvation, 56
- Praszkier, Boruch, 224
 private employment, 180–82
 privileged classes. *see* [the affluent](#)
 productivity, hunger/starvation and, 182–83
- property, Jewish
 seizure of
 in general, 22–23
 businesses, 24–25
 in Warsaw ghetto, 41–42
- prostitution, 95, 181–82
- quality
 of bread, 71
 of food, 67, 97

- quarantine centers, 133–34
 queuing. *see* food lines
- R., Erica, 109, 181
 R., Gusta, 81, 95
 R., Pinchas, 21
 Rappaport, Schabse, 47
 Ratner, Jakob, 163
 Rawicki, Jerry, 199
 ready meals, 154
 Red Cross, 127
 refugees
 food access of, 19, 188–91
 housing and quarantine centers for, 20, 105, 134–35
 hunger relief systems for, 32–33, 126, 131–35
 impact on food provisioning, 109, 189–91
 in Kraków, 10, 48, 192
 in Warsaw, 32, 39, 188
 Reingold, Zygmunt, 56–57, 114, 225
 religion. *see* Catholicism/Catholics; Christianity/Christians; Judaism
 restaurants/café, 112–13, 122
 Riechert, Eugen, 48
 Ringelblum, Emanuel, 67
 on closing of Warsaw ghetto, 40
 on death sentences for smuggling, 152
 on food fantasies, 82
 on food packages, 69
 on food prices, 157
 on food seizures, 146
 on food-stretching techniques, 98
 on gardening, 70
 on impoverishment, 109
 returning to Warsaw, 19
 on smuggling, 148, 151
 on soup kitchens, 137–38
 ritual slaughter (Shechitah), 72, 99
 Rosen, Bluma, 94
 Rosenberg, Jacob, 30
 Rosenblatt, Leon, 45
 Rosenfeld, Oskar, 89, 123
 on arrival in the Łódź ghetto, 186
 on child beggars, 139
 on effects of hunger, 82, 84, 85
 on food access of Western Jews, 191
 on food as lure for deportations, 193
 on food fantasies, 83
 on food for refugees, 133
 on food prices, 195–96
 on food theft, 165
 on hunger and humor, 85
 on hunger foods, 96
 on irritability caused by hunger, 81
 on physical effects of starvation, 78
 on portioning of food, 101
 on receiving food gifts, 113
 on scavenging for food, 102
 on starvation and sacrificing, 93–94
 on theft of possessions of the dead, 163
 Rosensztat, Bolesław, 38
 Rosenzweig, Aron, 49, 51, 53
 Rothschild, Blanka, 23
 Rotkopf-Blair, Tonia, 27
 Rozanski, Jan, 31, 173
 Rozen, Chil, 38
 Rozen, Jonas, 43
 Rozenzta, Baruch Wolf, 38
 Różycki, Stanisław, 152
 Rubin, Leon, 43
 Rubinfeld, Gusta, 17, 30
 Rubinsztein, Abraham, 86, 140
 Rumkowska, Helena, 136
 Rumkowski, Mordechai Chaim, 114, 115, 117, 123, 124, 130, 132, 136, 165, 170, 175
 Carpenters' Strike and, 179
 on closing times of food distribution points, 156
 criticism on, 36
 deportations and, 53
 elected to Judenrat, 35
 on food access of works, 183
 on food as lure for deportations, 194
 food distribution to the affluent and, 114
 food during holidays and, 60
 on food prices inside ghetto, 51–52
 on food riots, 128
 on food theft, 165
 hunger relief systems of, 8, 141
 Judenrat leadership of, 42–44
 on orphaned children, 193
 physical abuse of, 52
 on rationing, 190
 on reasons for starvation, 56
 sending of food gifts by, 113
 on soup kitchens, 57
 use of soup kitchens by, 138
- S., Eva, 21
 S., Frania, 161
 sacrificing
 by family members, 93–94
 of the vulnerable, 204–206
 Salpeter, Leon (Leib), 46–48
 scavenging, for food, 20, 63, 95–96, 102–103
 Schenker, Ferdinand (Feiweil), 47, 49
 Schiff, Rosalie, 189
 Schiff, William, 25, 95, 148–49

- Schlachet, Dr., 47
 Schlang, Dawid, 47
 Schlang, Norbert, 62, 94
 Schlosser, Jakub, 43
 Schmur, Aron, 47
 Schutzstaffel (SS), 28, 36–37
 Schwartz, Herman, 38
 sealing of ghettos. *see* accessibility of ghettos
 seizure, 6, 75
 of food, 30, 129, 145–46, 159
 of Jewish assets, 22–23, 34, 41–42
 of Jewish businesses, 24–25
 selflessness, with food, 89–90
 Selinger, Sela, 120, 157
 Selver-Urbach, Sara, 73
 sex, survival, 95, 120
 sexual abuse, 22, 117
 Seyss-Inquart, Arthur, 26
 Shapira, Kalonymos Kalmish (Piaseczner Rebbe), 135
 Shechitah (ritual slaughter), 72, 99
 shellfish, canned, 101
 shopkeepers, unscrupulous practices of, 55, 64, 159
 short-weighting of food, 165
 Siebert, Paul, 46–48
 Sierakowiak, David, 21, 79
 Singer, Oskar
 on bread prices, 154–56, 196
 on cheating on black market, 158–59
 on salvaging of food, 72
 on starvation and sacrificing, 93
 on withholding food rations, 182
 singing beggars, 139–40
 skimming of food, 71, 159, 164
 smuggling of food, 16, 94, 143–52, 174, 192, 205
 in general, 112, 205
 bribing and, 146–47
 by children, 149–50
 by Germans, 147
 by ghetto police, 147
 into Kraków ghetto, 64, 144, 157
 large-scale operations, 150–51
 of livestock, 148–49
 into Łódź ghetto, 144–45
 of meat, 72, 121–22
 policing of, 151–52
 punishment for, 92, 145, 150–52, 166–67
 trams and, 147–48
 into Warsaw ghetto, 41, 195
 social networks, 5, 7, 19, 31, 34, 53, 91, 94, 95, 105, 142–44
 food access and, 31–32
 jobs/occupations and, 175–76, 224
 survival and, 107
 socialism, Jewish, 12
 songs
 from Łódź ghetto, 84, 86, 140, 165–67
 humor in, 86
 soup, 17, 20, 25, 60, 64, 70, 73, 74, 76, 78, 79, 83, 86, 91, 94, 95, 98, 99, 102, 118, 119, 125, 126, 128, 130–39, 142, 153, 162, 172, 175, 176, 178, 180, 192, 194, 196
 food rations cards for, 153
 as food-stretching technique, 97–98
 ingredients for, 153, 171
 as payment, 181, 182–83
 price of, 158
 scams with, 165
 at soup kitchens. *see* soup kitchens
 soup kitchens, 135–38, *see also* soup
 in general, 32–33, 133
 as gathering places for underground activities, 122, 136–37
 in Kraków, 10, 32
 in Kraków ghetto, 62
 in Kraków ghettoin Kraków ghetto, 63
 in Łódź, 32, 110
 in Łódź ghetto, 56–57, 135–37
 transformed into kitchens for workers, 68, 138
 types of, 135–36
 in Warsaw, 32, 110
 in Warsaw ghetto, 66, 68, 73, 135, 167, 208–10
 sources, used for this study, 13–14
 Spiegel, Isaiah, 96–97, 162
 Spielman, Wladislaw, 112
 Spira, Ascher, 47
 Spira, Simcha, 123
 Spira, Symche, 149
 spoilage, of food, 67
 ‘spoon’ campaigns, 137
 Stahl, Dawid, 43
 Star of David, 27–28, 30
 starvation. *see* hunger/starvation
 Starzyński, Stefan, 37
 stealing. *see* theft
 Steinberg, Joachim, 47
 Steindig-Lindberg, Gustava, 169
 Sternbuch, Gutta, 122, 218
 stews, as food-stretching technique, 98
 Stok, Stefan, 139, 140
 street performers, 139, 140
 survival sex, 95, 120
 survival, factors of, 2–3
 Süßman, Pola, 96

- sweeteners, 71–72
 Switgal, Robert, 43
 Szajniak, Abram, 225
 Szczesliwy, Mendel, 57
 Szereszewski, Stanisław, 38
 Szeryński, Józef, 41, 124
 Szpera, 188, 195
 Spiro, Dawid, 38
 Sztokhamer, Szymon, 38
 Sztolcman, Abram, 38
- Taube, Moshe, 100, 109
 Taubler, Maurycy, 47
 Taubman, Rosa Budick, 101, 110, 193
 Teichtal, Izak, 47
 Tempel, Hilary, 38
 theft of food, 106, 160–66
 in general, 160, 167–68, 205
 from deportees, 186
 large-scale operations, 164–65
 opportunity theft, 160–66
 punishment for, 166
 theft, of possessions of the dead, 163
 “Thirteen” (Office to Combat
 Profiteering and Speculation), 36,
 41, 130–31
 Toprol Society, 70
 trading, for food, 92–96, 203–204
 Treblinka extermination camp, 187
 Turski, Marian, 98
- Übelhör, Friedrich, 27, 44
 unemployment, 108
 Unger, Michal, 88
 Union of Jewish Workers (Bund), 12
- volunteering, for forced labor, 172
Les Vrais Riches (Coppée), anonymous
 diary in margins of, 1, 54, 82,
 202–203
 the vulnerable/weak
 sacrifice of the, 205–206
 suffering of, 4–5
 supplemental food rations for, 114–15
- W., Tola, 154
 Wächter, Otto, 49
 Walker, Peter, 4
 Ware, Anna, 173
 Warsaw
 bombing of, 17
 capitulation of, 20
 connection with ghetto, 41
 food prices in, 29
 food rationing in, 30, 31
 Jewish community in. *see also* Warsaw
 ghetto
 in general, 10–11
 freezing of assets of, 23
 hunger relief systems of, 32, 110
 Judenrat of. *see* Judenrat of Warsaw
 shadow leadership of, 36
 soup kitchens of, 32, 110
 theft of funds of, 23
 political inclination of population of, 8
 refugees in, 39
 Warsaw ghetto
 accessibility of, 7–8, 40, 41, 143–44
 as labor-focused ghetto, 184, 187
 black market in. *see* black market
 communal kitchens in, 137
 creation of, 39–40
 death by starvation in, 86
 deportations into
 of Jews from surrounding areas,
 188–89
 of Western Jews, 189
 deportations out of
 in general, 68, 141, 184, 187, 193
 hiding from, 197
 executions in, 152, 167
 extent of, 40
 food distribution in
 to the affluent, 114
 house committees and, 131–32
 rationing, 66–68, 129
 sites, 207–10
 soup kitchens, 66, 68, 73, 135,
 208–10
 food prices in, 114, 196
 food provisioning in
 in general, 75–76
 agricultural production, 69–71
 charitable organizations, 130–31
 food packages, 69
 food processing, 71–73
 official communal, 65–66, 128–29
 hunger/starvation in, 2
 Jewish police in, 41
 Jewish shadow leadership in, 36, 41,
 130–31
 Judenrat of. *see* Judenrat of Warsaw
 labor in, 170
 liquidation of, 188, 198–200
 longevity, 111
 mail service in, 69
 quarantine center at, 133
 refugee center in, 133–34
 religious study groups in, 122–23
 restaurants and cafés in, 112

- Warsaw ghetto (cont.)
 seizure of property in, 41–42
 smuggling into, 41, 144, 152
 uprising in, 9, 188, 198–200, 199
- Warszawsk, Zygmunt, 43
- Warszawski, Dawid, 43
- Wasser, Mordechaj, 105, 133–34
- We'ohawta L'reacha Kamocha (Love Your Neighbor as Yourself), 123
- weddings, 123
- Wehrman, Tola, 64
- Weichert, Michal, 127
- Weinreich, Aneta, 151–52
- Weinstein, Izydor, 43
- Western Jews, 16, 79, 84, 116, 141, 188
 death rate among, 191
 deportations of, 189–91
 food access of, 189–91
- Windman, Dawid, 43
- Wisniewski, Stanislaw, 146
- women/girls
 gender norms and, 116–17
 ghetto leadership positions and, 117
 selflessness with food of, 89
 sexual abuse of, 22, 24
- work. *see* labor, food acquisition and
- workers
 in factories, 178–80
 food rations for, 57, 115, 182
 food strikes by, 179–80
 organizing of, 12
 soup kitchens for, 68, 138
- Wyszewiański, Maks, 43
- Z., Rubin, 166
- Zabludowski, Bernard, 38
- Zawadzki (smuggler), 146
- Zdunska Wol, 192
- Zelkowicz, Josef (Jozef), 115, 138, 165, 172
 on begging, 138
 on dangerous jobs, 172
 on death by starvation, 86–87, 141
 on effects of hunger, 82, 85
 on extra food rations, 83
 on food lines, 73–74
 on food rationing, 59
 on food theft, 162, 164
 on kosher vs. non-kosher foods, 100
 on living on poor relief, 109
 on parents with hungry children, 83
 on scavenging for, 102
 on selling assets for food, 93
 on short-weighting of food, 165
 on soup kitchens, 57
 on starvation, 79, 128, 130
 on starvation and sacrificing, 94
 on unscrupulous shopkeepers, 159
- Zimmerman, Henryk, 46
- Zionism, 12
- ŻSS (Jewish Social Self-Help Coordinating Commission), 33, 127
- Zundelewicz, Bernard, 38, 41
- Zurowski, Ludwig, 146
- Zylberg, Michael, 79