

S U M M A R Y

IN THE GHETTO — A Poem

Mordechai Gebirtig

Mordechai Gebirtig was one of pre-war Poland's Jewish troubadors. It was his wont to write heart-stirring folk-songs and compose the melodies for them as well. His best known song remains *Dos Shteteleh Brent* (The Town is on Fire), a most outstanding expression of the destruction that overtook the small town Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. This issue of *Yalkut* presents his last song, written shortly before his death in 1942. It describes the days in the Ghetto, dragging along like gangs of emaciated slaves.

THE 20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF EMANUEL RINGELBLUM

Professor Raphael Mahler

Dr. Ringelblum stood out among the younger generation of Jewish historians in Poland. He was born on November 21, 1900, in Buczyc, Galicia. When he was 12 years old, his mother died. On the outbreak of World War, he fled to Kolomeia and from there to Nowy Sącz, where he graduated from the *Gymnasium* in the year 1919. His abilities came to the fore when he was still a youth; yet, nevertheless he had no ambitions for any kind of career. In 1920, he arrived in Warsaw, where he enrolled in the School of Humanities at the University of Warsaw. He was the pupil of Dr. Shiper in Jewish historical research, and devoted the time left, after studies, to community activities, mainly in Left Poale Zion circles. In 1927, he was granted his doctorate, for his thesis on the history of the Jews in medieval times. He taught history in Warsaw secondary schools and at the same time carried on with his communal activity.

EMANUEL RINGELBLUM

Professor Raphael Mahler

It is now twenty years since Dr. Ringelblum was murdered by the Nazis. He has come to be known as the historian of the Ghetto, and his archive, discovered after World War II, contains a vast amount of material on the Holocaust and the Ghetto Uprising.

Ringelblum was one of those who headed the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. After it was crushed he was confined to a concentration camp by the Nazis. Rescued from the camp, he returned to Warsaw, where he was hidden away, subsequently discovered, and executed by the Nazis on March 7, 1944. (See above, *Pan Rudowski*).

In 1929, he was drawn into working for the Charity Funds (*Gemilut Hassadim*) as editor of their publication, *Folkshilf*. During that period he also embarked upon his principal undertaking on behalf of the Jewish Scientific Institute. It was Ringelblum who founded the Warsaw IVO Branch and participated in its scientific publications. From the year 1937 and thereafter, he was one of the directors of IKUF (Yiddisher Kultur Farband, i. e., Jewish Cultural Society) in Poland.

Up to the outbreak of World War II, Ringelblum had published a series of scientific research works, mainly in the field of Jewish history in Poland. He also wrote a series of monographs for the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. He stood at the head of the aid activities on behalf of the Zbonshin deportees, and it is on this subject that our author presents and reviews a group of letters from Ringelblum to himself from Zbonshin and concerning Zbonshin.

PAN RODZEVSKY

Batyah Temkin-Berman

Dr. Edward Rodzevsky was the name assumed by Dr. Ringelblum in the Underground. The Left Poale Zion operatives in the Aryan area of Warsaw, once they had reestablished connections with Dr. Ringelblum, bent all their efforts to have him transferred to the Aryan area. There were constant delays, due especially to the fact that Ringelblum found it difficult to forego his scientific work on behalf of the community's activities. Matters continued thus right up to the second *Action* (i.e., the deportation of candidates for mass destruction to the death camps) in January, 1943. Information was received that Ringelblum had been sent by the Nazis to the Trawniki Camp. Through various contacts, and by

employing the forged identity card of a railroad official, his comrades succeeded in extricating him from the camp. While at Trawniki, Ringelblum had successfully set up communications between the Underground Leadership inside the camp and the operatives on the Aryan Side. While there he also wrote a monograph on the camp. Unfortunately, this work was lost during the Uprising.

In the Aryan area, Dr. Ringelblum, together with his wife and child, lived in a bunker below the surface. Through an informer's action, this bunker was discovered on March 7, 1944, and Dr. Ringelblum was murdered after his wife and child had been shot dead in his presence.

THE RINGELBLUM LETTERS

To Professor Mahler and to Arnon Tamir

These letters are from the Zbonshin period (see below). In these letters, Ringelblum, who at that time headed the JRC's aid activities for the Zbonshin deportees, describes his work and impressions.

FROM ZBONSHIN TO PALESTINE

Dan Gelbard

Zbonshin, numbering 5,000 inhabitants, was situated on the Polish-German frontier. It achieved notoriety at the beginning of 1939 and can be said to have offered an initial warning of the holocaust about to take place.

One bright morning, Germany's Nazi government summarily deported all those of its Jewish inhabitants who held Polish citizenship. However, when these people arrived at the Polish border, the Polish government refused them entry into Poland. Military patrols cordoned off the town and denied these Jews all freedom of movement. The Joint, under Ringelblum's leadership, was able to organize some aid for the deportees in food and clothing. Their encampment was not finally liquidated until August, 1939, virtually on the eve of World War II.

The author, formerly a Zionist youth Movement disciple and today a member of Kibbutz Alonim, tells of the fortunes that befell his group, how it forced its way through the slough of despair with its hopes of *Aliyah* a beacon in the pervading darkness. The Polish Government permitted all those young Jews of Zbonshin who had registered for pre-*Aliyah* training (*Hachsharah*) and *Aliyah* to enter Poland.

The group's first stage was at the Gorochov training Kibbutz near Warsaw. Here the author describes the atmosphere in the training center, the integrational, organizational, and educational activities among these boys, designed to convert them from a herd of refugees into a consolidated social body. While the group's actual preparations for *Aliyah* were going on, war broke out. Now began an Odyssey through the ruined towns of Poland till their arrival in Vilno, shortly after its annexation to Lithuania. Again, fresh educational endeavors were made to overcome difficulties and reforge the group. Finally, in March, 1940, the younger members of the group boarded a train and after, traversing a good portion of Europe on the way arrived at Kibbutz Ayelet-Haschachar in Palestine.

The lot of the group's older members was more involved. They prepared their bundles and left for the small estate, of Ludwikowo, formerly under Jewish proprietorship. Here a diminutive Youth Republic came into being. They worked on the farm, shaped a pattern of existence, when suddenly the Red Army's conquest of Lithuania confronted these youngsters with a dilemma: should they register for admission to Soviet schools and children's institutions, as the authorities demanded, or take to the road again with the dim hope of eventual *Aliyah*.

The demonstrations waged by Jews abroad against the deportation of Polish Jews to Siberia, the intercession of Zionist leaders at Soviet Embassies, but also the aims of Lithuania's workers to defend the labor market in their country against inundation by foreign hands — all these account for the fact that the Zbonshin Youth Group was granted permission to emigrate to Palestine. After two years of wandering, they reached Palestine.

FROM THE LEGACY OF HERMAN KRUK

Herman Kruk, a Warsaw journalist and librarian, reached Vilno with the flood of refugees from Poland. Following the Red Army's entry into Vilno, he began to keep a journal with precise accounts of daily occurrences, including his own experiences as well as events in the immediate vicinity. He collected testimony on the fate of individuals, Jewish communities, and social segments. He wrote political reportages on events in the ghetto and on other subjects as well.

The Journal was the first of his writings discovered and part of it was published in New York in 1961 by the Jewish Scientific Institute (IWO) under the title *Togbukh fun Vilner Ghetto* (Vilno Ghetto Journal). The rest of this journal is now in the possession of *Moresbet*.

The following items from the legacy are published in the current issue :

1. *I Step Over Graves.* — A reportage describing an inspection trip, conducted by the author amongst the vacated dwellings of Jewish writers and cultural leaders in Vilno. The inspection was carried out on orders from the German authorities, who were interested in information about the location of Jewish books, sacred writings, and museum pieces.

The author concluded his account with the following words :

Whichever one of us at some time emerges alive from this purgatory, again encounters among the living any of those I have mentioned above, will take solace in the fact that amidst the ruins of Vilno there was one who, out of respect for them, jeopardized himself and searched for their legacy, lest it vanish...

2. *The Thorny Road of Froi Matz.* — Testimony collected from a Jewish woman, (who worked, under the assumed identity of an Aryan), in Lithuanian villages, on the fate of the Wilkowisk Jewish Community in the south-western corner of Lithuania. The Hitlerites set fire to all the town's buildings, but worse yet were the Lithuanian fascists, who slaughtered 900 of the town's inhabitants just before the transfer to the ghetto.

3. *Old People.* — A poetic — and staggering — description of the fate that overtook eighty-four aged persons who were executed in the Vilno Ghetto during one of the first *actions*.

4. Journal extracts, here published for the first time. From among these entries, we have selected two accounts, one concerning the lot of a group of Vilno UPO (United Partisan Organization) fighters, who, after having been informed upon and captured, were transported to the Kluga Camp in Esthonia, where they succeeded in organizing an underground and communicating with the Partisans.

The second account describes events in another camp, Lagdi, Esthonia, during the last days of the author's life here, when the Soviet forces were but a few kilometers distant from the camp itself. It tells of the conflict between despair and hope, between apprehensions that the camp would be liquidated before liberation and hope that liberation might come early.

In the presence of six witnesses the author buried his collected entries and writings in the camp, just a few days before he was murdered. The final copybook entry was made some hours before he was executed.

EVENTS AT TUCZIN

Shalom Cholavski

Tuczyn is a town on the left bank of the Horin (also, Gorin) River, twenty-six kilometers distant from the provincial capital, Rovno. The story of Tuczyn can serve as an answer to that nagging question: why did not the Jews escape from the ghettos into the areas beyond the barbed wire perimeter fences, to the forests, or the Aryan sections?

The series of testimonies presented in this article tells the story of an entire Jewish community that rose up against the German scheme, burned its homes, and fought for its life. Some of its members defended themselves with weapons in hand, while the great majority fled to the forests. And it was there that their fate overtook them. The local Ukrainian populace hunted them and delivered them into the hands of the enemy. Only fifteen of all the Jews of Tuczyn were saved.

Among the reasons preventing mass escapes from the ghettos, the author lists the following: strong family bonds that blocked escape, the widespread fatalistic attitude that what happened to the Jewish community as a whole would be the lot of the individual within that community. The Jew preferred to remain with kith and kin in the ghetto. Also, the ghetto inhabitants were obsessed with the fear of "collective responsibility" which the Germans were so adept at applying. The lack of arms and the absence of a partisan movement during the period of annihilation were a factor. And there was the feeling of distrust toward everything in their surroundings, in most instances well justified. Above all, the local population's animosity towards the Jews was a decisive factor in obstructing rescue operations, and in that respect the situation at Tuczyn was not unique. Thus it was in Lithuania, where Lithuanian battalions finished the German conqueror's job of annihilation. Thus it was in White Russia, in the towns of Poland, and thus, too, it was in many another European country.

Under the circumstances obtaining at Tuczyn, notwithstanding the objective wish to resort to self-defence, which was definitely not lacking, notwithstanding the fact that here, unlike other localities, the *Judenrat* did not carry out the orders of the Nazi Germans and did not toward the desire for armed resistance, the capacity for self-defence was nevertheless without much promise. Arms were exceedingly scarce. The partisan movement in the area was an embryonic one. The field was limited and the structures were wooden ones. There was all too little time for preparations. The resistance that broke out here was spontaneous. So it ended as it did.

Does not the Tuczyn chapter add yet another dimension to the tragedy of the Jews during the holocaust? Does it not render even more unfathomable than we had been wont to believe?

Budapest 1944

Rafael Benshalom

Preface: I. Kolb

At the end of June, 1944, the transport organized by Kastner and numbering 1684 people left Budapest. But it soon became known that this transport had reached Bergen-Belsen rather than Spain, as originally planned. Moshe Kraus, director of the Palestine office, found refuge at the Swiss Legation that represented, among others, British interests in Hungary. With the help of the Swiss Consul, R. Lunz, a friend of Palestine and Zionism, a "Swiss Consulate Emigration Department" was set up in the so-called "glass-house", 29 Vadas street. This soon became the centre of rescue efforts on behalf of Hungarian Jewry. The widespread activity emanating from here was organized mainly by the pioneer Zionist youth movements. The "Tiyul" (lit.: "outing", i. e. flight from Hungary to Roumania) started from here, as did the printing of false documents, papers of protection etc.

On October 15th, after Horthy's announcement that Hungary was withdrawing from the war, a rebellion took place and Szalasi, leader of the fascist Arrow Cross bands, gained power. Immediately, a frightful terror regime against Jews began. Members of youth movements, dressed in uniforms of the railway guards, or police, or the army, engaged in rescue activities. Eichmann, and with him the danger of deportation, reappeared on the scene.

However, it soon became clear that the Szalasi regime would not molest Jews with foreign papers. Again, with the help of the Swiss consul, largescale production of protection cards began. These papers contained statements to the effect that so-and-so was entitled to emigrate on collective passport and should therefore be entitled to preferential treatment as a foreigner. The International Red Cross also fulfilled an important function. 15 children's homes with some 600 children were set up, and these were protected by the IRC.

Some 120.000 false papers were thus provided. However, one day the shop where this was done was discovered by the enemy and the people who had worked there were arrested by Arrow Cross men. Tortures followed. This was immediately prior to the final Russian assault on the city (December 24th), and ultimately the boys were released against a very large sum of money paid as a bribe.

THE CROSS

Nesia Orlowitz

This chapter from a forthcoming book on the rescue of children from the holocaust. The authoress collected these children in Hashomer Hatzair children's homes in post-war Poland, and her book contains some of their stories. The present story concerns a little girl who was saved by a nunnery and the difficulties encountered in taking her out of there and returning her to the Jewish folk.

AN ORDINARY YOUNG JEW TURNED HERO

Yosef Arieli

A short episode from Jewish underground experience in France. It relates the story of an underground fighter who saved his fellow-fighters while on the threshold of death.

THE STORY OF HALINA

Yehuda Bauer

A small Jewish girl in Poland lost her parents and had to go begging for refuge in villages. After the war she was adopted into a Polish family and wanted to become a Catholic. In her testimony Halina, now a mother in one of the kibbutzim, relates how she left the Polish family and left on her way to Palestine.

EMANCIPATION AND ASSIMILATION

Yaakov Turi

This article deals with the concept of *emancipation*, which constitutes a single act, as well as a process of struggle, and is also the situation consequent upon the results of such struggle — release from restrictions. Since the nineteenth century, its connotation has been transferred from the liberation of individuals alone to the liberation of *groups* from enslavement and curtailment of rights.

The author does not accept the idea that emancipation necessarily causes assimilation. He analyzes the various levels of this concept, from

rapprochement and adaptation, to indentification, intergration, acclimatization, and disappearance.

These processes differ from period to period and place to place. The emancipation of the Jews of the United States was not contingent on the demand that they disappear as such and liquidate their group differences. On the contrary, it was based on the freedom of these differences, their defence and cultivation, on the right to be different. In England, on the other hand, political emancipation was preceded by more than a century—long process of social assimilation. The struggle for political equality was the culminating phase of this process.

In France, the problem of emancipation was interlocked with that of foregoing communal autonomy. Here, too, as well as in the neighboring countries, absolute equality was demanded only by a small minority, whereas the great majority of traditionalists at first stood aside and was more concerned with the extension of its unique privileges than with full rights (and their attendant conditions) which were not to its liking. The aspiration to divest Judaism of its national attribute constituted, in France, the *ideological basis*, for the outcome of emancipation was granted the *individual*, with the proviso that the citizen belong to one relational group alone — the State — and that there be no intermediate, multifaceted groups between him and the State. However, this concept contained the seeds of totalitarian concepts negating the natural rights of the individual as a human being and citizen. It led the Jews into a *cul-de-sac* and the crisis of the '80's, when antisemitism became rampant throughout most of the countries that had implemented the French pattern of Jewish emancipation.

REPORT ON THE CONDITION OF ITALY'S JEWS IN 1937

Daniel Carpi

The author now makes public and explains the memorandum at one time sent to the Zionist agencies in Palestine, proving that the Italian Fascist regime's policy was becoming antisemitic. From the year 1937 and thereafter the web of its political associations provided it with the proper background for putting into effect an anti-Jewish policy. The memorandum contains interesting information about the attitude of various Jewish-Italian bodies and personalities at the time of the Fascist Government's change from its previous policy towards the Jews and Zionism.

All Rights Reserved

YALKUT MORESHET

PERIODICAL

2

April 1964

PUBLISHED BY SIFRIAT POALIM — MORESHET, ISRAEL
EDITORIAL OFFICE: 4, ITAMAR BEN AVI STR., TEL-AVIV



YALKUT
MORESHET
PERIODICAL

VOL. 2, No. 2. APRIL 1964