ON RESISTANCE IN WARSAW

HIRSH BERLINSKY

Berlinsky, one of the Left Poalei Zion leaders in Warsaw, was a member of the ZOB Command. After the end of the fighting in the ghetto he esaped to the Aryan part of the city and there wrote up his notes on the events in the ghetto from the "Action" of July-September and until the end of the rebellion. By courtesy of the Warsaw Historical Institute, where the original handwriting is kept, we publish here the first part of the Berlinsky notes. Hirsh Berlinsky himself was murdered by the Nazis in Warsaw, in late 1944.

The author describes the heartsearchings of his group with the approaching summer of 1942. Events in other parts of Poland left no doubt that mass expulsions would occur in Warsaw sooner or later, and first reports about the extermination camps began to be circulated. The hungry and dejected Jewish masses could not be counted upon to initiate resistance. The political parties, driven underground, had no means of defence and no contacts with the outside world. The author claims to have been amongst those who argued that even though expulsion might not mean immediate death, experience showed that that was what it meant ultimately. The only alternative was resistance, with whatever means there were, and he believed that if the way was once shown to the leaderless masses, they would follow. A meeting at the end of March, 1942, in 2, Orla Street, discussed questions of resistance, with representatives of the Bund (Usech, Blum), L.P.Z. (Berlinsky, Azdek), Right P.Z. (Levin, Morgenstern) and Hechalutz (Zuckermann) participating. Zuckermann proposed the establishment of a united Resistance Organisation, but this was opposed by the Bund, who declared they would form their own group, connected to their Polish friends. Besides, the antifascist group (PPR) was not in attendance either. LPZ and RPZ representatives supported Zuckermann's plea for unity, but nothing came of the meeting. The author then goes on to describe the "Action". A first sign was the murder of some dozens of Jews on April 17th On July 22nd the Action began in earnest. The Jewish

Police were ardent collaborators of the Nazis. At a meeting of political leaders a Lublin Jew expressed his belief that God would save the Jews. The historian Shiffer opposed the idea of resistance because that would cause the utter destructioin of the ghetto. LPZ decided, on July 28th, to publish a leaflet explaining their attitude to the Action. Zagan, the leader of the party, was taken to the Umschlagplatz at the beginning of August. The author then goes on to describe his own escape by hiding during one search. Most of the remaining LPZ leadership found refuge in the OBW "shop". During the first half of August, LPZ joined Hashomer Hatzair and PPR in deciding to prepare individuals for joining the Paritisans. On September 5th, after finding out that Hashomer had only a small quantity of arms, LPZ members arranged to go into hiding. At the end of October, at a meeting between Hechalutz, Hashomer and LPZ representatives, it was decided to set up a Jewish Fighting Organisation. After some wrangling a political representation was set up and in November the Bund joined the Organisation as well. In December some weapons were obtained, partly through the official London Poles, with whom however a delicate situation arose as they demanded that in the event of a Russo-Polish struggle the Jews should fight with the Poles against Russia. The Left groups in the ghetto were inclined to fight the other way round.

The author then goes on to decribe the Action of January 18th and 19th. He claims that his party's groups did not receive arms, and that the Hechalutz and Hashomer groups only received them. He himself went into hiding during the action and thus survived. Only a few people used their arms, and Mordechai Anilewitz and his group fought a succesful action against the Germans. At the same time he also says that the Germans got frightened, and that because of the heroic Jewish resistance they had to conquer the ghetto stage by stage. Many groups could not fight although they were prepared for battle, because of lack of arms.

POLISH–JEWISH RELATIONSHIPS

DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Warsaw Action and the attitude of the Polish populace

E. RINGELBLUM

This hitherto unpublished fragment of Ringelblum's writings (end of 1943) has been made available to us through the courtesy of the Warsaw Historical Institute.

When the July Action started, Poles in Warsaw were overheard accusing the Jews of cowardice, though no aid was extended by Poles in arms or ammunition, and only one leaflet of the PPS appeared calling the Jews to arms. No warning was given by the Polish underground as to the true destination of the expellees. German camouflage methods were excellent, and Jews would not believe the few Treblinka escapees. The Jewish Fighting Organisation's propaganda for resistance was even taken to be a German provocation trick. Had the Poles helped, with propaganda and arms, the Germans would have paid dearly for their victory. In September the Jews recognized how terrible their mistake had been. The ZOB now killed traitors and Gestapo agents. The author then describes visits to bases of the two fighting groups, the ZOB and the ZZW. Apart from these, unorganised groups of Jews obtained arms as well. In the Action of January, 1943, 10,000 Jews were deported and 1000 killed on the spot. Resistance was effective and the Poles, especially the underground press, compared the January events favourably with the passivity of July-September. Between January and April the ZOB became to all intents and purposes the internal Ghetto Government. An interview with M. Anilewitz, the ZOB commander, is recorded. On April 18th the author was an eye-witness of the battle in Muranowska Street. Poles believed the Jews were helped by Soviet parachutists and ex-POWs. Stories about Jean d'Arc-type heroines, burning

German tanks etc. were circulated in Warsaw. In fact, many of the fighters were girls. American and British broadcasts (May 5th or 6th) appealed to Poles to extend aid to the Jews. Some cooperation with the Polish underground developed, arms were smuggled into the Ghetto and an official Polish announcement extolled the Ghetto fighters. Clashes occured in the Polish part of the city, caused by Jews crossing over from the Ghetto. The author quotes a number of discussions overheard in trams and on the streets, most of which tended to be extremely antisemitic, though mixed with awe at the struggle going on. Many were glad that the Germans had "cleaned" Warsaw of the Jews. Some expressed sympathy with the Jews. The underground Press compared the fight with the epic of the Westerplatte or even called it a "small Stalingrad". As a result of German propaganda many Poles now refused to take in Jews escaping from the Ghetto.

The author differentiates between pre-war Polish antisemitism, though it had a Fascist complexion, and the brand imported by the Germans. The Nazis saw in antisemitism the only bond between themselves and the conquered populace. German papers in the Polish language published racist propaganda, in Cracow an antisemitic exhibition opened in September (1943). The antidote in the shape of the Polish underground Press was weak indeed. Only a few of Poland's pre-war antisemites — mostly intellectuals — changed their attitude towards the Jews during the war as a result of the German mass-murder. The middle classes generally were glad to be rid of their old competitors, and no help was extended to Jews as a rule. Milliards worth of property, accumulated by Polish Jews over the centuries, passed into the hands of "Aryans". Many workers, too, refused to help, and yet on the whole the Polish working class maintained a friendlier attitude and many Jews found refuge in their homes. The author quotes a number of instances of such rescues. Polish intelligentsia were also active in this respect, especially when their own family was hit by the German plan to exterminate the Polish intelligentsia. Among the railway workers many helped, and it was they who warned the Jews about Treblinka; some of them passed information between ghettoes. The attitude of the villagers depended on the atmosphere in any area before the war. During the first years, too, it was easier to find refuge in the villages, as the farmers needed additional labour. German action later made the hiding of Jews seem very dangerous. Jewish partisans in the Lublin area threatened farmers who gave up Jews to the Germans with retaliation, and this helped. At the moment of writing it is very difficult to find refuge in the countryside.

Polish clergy was always antisemitic, and the author quotes the antisemitic attitude of the Bishop of Cracow before the war. No action comparable to that of Dutch, Belgian or French Catholics occurred in Poland. Some monasteries saved Jewish children, often for purposes of conversion,

and there were individual cases of a decent attitude. Generally speaking the clergy did nothing. Efforts were made to save Jews converted to Catholicism, who were given two churches and special privileges in the Warsaw ghetto (their food rations were higher than those of Jewish children), but of course the Nazis killed them just the same.

The Polish Sikorski Government published some declarations promising equal rights to Jews after the war. Apart from that, in Poland, the underground Government representatives did next to nothing, until April 1943, to come to the aid of the Jewish citizens of Poland. Arms were denied to the Jews, and so was any material or moral aid during the July-September 1942 Action and the January 1943 sequal. No hiding-places were provided by the underground, and Jews who hid did so through their own private connections. An ineffectual committee composed of people of good intentions with insufficient means at their disposal, the R.P.Z., was set up. Only in March was a warning issued to blackmailers that they would be punished after the war for their misdeeds. In April a call was finally issued to the Polish populace to hide Jews. Jewish partisans were rejected by the Government underground, sometimes killed, or driven to theft and robbery. Left-wing partisans accepted Jews into their ranks, however. Jewish officers were not accepted into the Government underground forces.

The author concludes that the Polish official circles did very little to help the Jews in the hour of their greatest need.

MY VILLAGE NOLCOVO

AKIVA NIR

This is a personal story about an exceptional Slovak village where, in contradistinction to most other places in occupied Europe, the local population aided their Jewish comrade. Nolcovo was an isolated, very poor village on the Vag river, without a post office or a shop, whose connection with the world was the ferry over the river. Karol, the scion of a Jewish family who had settled there two generations ago, came there from Bratislava for a few days to look for the partisans hiding out in the Liptov mountains. The villagers persuaded him to stay on for a couple of months, and then he joined the partisans together with the village head's grandson. On a visit to the village, on March 20th, 1945, Karol saw Hlinka Gardists approaching and attempted to escape by jumping through the window. He was caught and was about to be handed over to an SS Officer who had come to look for partisans. The Gardists suspected him of being a Jew. The villagers quickly surrounded the little group and an argument developped between them and the Gardists and the German. The village head declared that this was his grandson and that he had jumped out of the window in order to escape deportation to Germany. Althoug everyone knew him to be a Jew, no traitor was found to deliver Karol to the Germans.

A TESTIMONY

HANNA VERNIAK-SCHLESINGER

The witness was born in Sosnowice, and was a member of "Hashomer Hatzair" there. After 1940 a farm near Bendzin served as a meeting-place for the movement of the two towns, and members lived there. In 1943 18 members were handed over to the Germans by a Pole who had promised to bring them to the partisans. Mordechai Anilevitz visited Sosnowice in 1942, and learned there of the death of Yosef Kaplan. Movement members engaged in propaganda activities, writing letters to addresses found in telephone directories in Germany, and preparing acids and inflammable liquid for any future German deportation actions. Preparations were begun for active resistance, under the leadership of Tzvi Dunsky and Lipek Mintz. However, they were being shadowed by the Jewish police, and the Judenrat chairman, Mordechai Merin, was getting apprehensive about their activities. While on the point of disappearing from the town so as to work from a hiding-place nearby, they were betrayed by a former member of their group. The witness was arrested, along with other girls, and so was Lipek Mintz. After being tortured by the Jewish police, she found out that Tzvi had been found and caught as well. Tzvi and Lipek were then murdered by the Germans, to whom the Judenrat police had handed them over. The witness was then sent to a labour camp, where she still remained in touch with other girls who remained in touch with the Warsaw movement. One of them was killed when found out carrying arms. Ina Gelbart and Fela Katz visited the camp on occasion.

Contact was maintained with Chayka Klinger and David Kozlovsky who were in charge of movement members outside concerning plans of fleeing from the camp. On one occasion a note apparently preparing the witness to leave the camp fell into the hands of the Kapos and caused great difficulties. Conditions in the camp were bearable mainly because there were many members of the Noar Zioni youth movement there and mutual help was

practised. A German communist overseer, Lerker, was himself an active saboteur and helped the girls there. Contact was maintained with a men's camp nearby from which an escape was made good by Manek Klugmann, who later died trying to reach a partisan detachment near Bendzin. Help was extended to Russian POWs in a neighbouring camp. In January 1945 the camp, which was near Gleiwitz, was evacuated. A month's journey with very little food or water cost the lives of some 30% of the girls. They were brought to Ravensbruck and liberated on May 8th.

THE DEFENCE PLAN

YEHUDA BAUER

The facts concerning the destruction of European Jewry became known in Palestine at the end of 1942. The failure of the Bermuda Conference in April 1943 emphasized the need to do something to come to the aid of European Jews. The Jewish Agency had long been suggesting to drop parachutists into Jewish centres, but British authorities had rejected this. In 1942 four wireless instructors were sent from the Haganah to train Yugoslavs in Egypt for the ISLD service. A further Jewish plan to drop 100 fighters in the Balkans was rejected in early 1943, but an ISLD suggestion was followed to pick 14 candidates for missions in Europe. Their training in Cairo caused a number of difficulties, mainly due to their suspicion of British motives. From the summer of 1943 until the summer of 1944 they stayed in Palestine ready for their mission. In the meantime another group was being trained by another Intelligence department, the "A" Force. With the ISLD group, their general tasks came first, and their Jewish mission second, whereas the "A" Force apparently saw a natural connection between the two sides of the mission. The first parachutists were dropped in the autumn of 1943. On the Jewish side a Histadruth committee chaired by N. Peled was responsible first, and then the Palmach took over. In all, 31 parachutists were dropped, 10 by the ISLD and 21 by the "A" Force. As far as their war tasks were concerned, they were too few to leave any impression on events; due to betrayal and bad luck few of the parachutists had a practical opportunity for achieving much in the Jewish sphere. The main result of their mission was the saga they left behind of individual bravery equal to anything the chronicle of the War has to show.

In the summer of 1944 the Defence Plan was mooted. This was based on the news brought from Hungary by Y. Brandt; the Agency tried to break the barrier of British hostility or equanimity and suggest a large-scale plan to come to the aid of Hungarian and Rumanian Jewry. A base in the Voivodina

comprising 100 men recruited from the Jewish units in the British Army and from Palestinian "civilians" was to be set up, and small groups were to be sent to the surrounding countries from there. On July 2nd this plan was shown to Randolph Churchill who presented it to his father who apparently approved of it. R. Shiloah was flown from Palestine to Italy on July 9th and obtained the approval of military authorities there to a slightly smaller scheme involving the dropping of larger groups of parachutists into the Balkans area — the idea of the Voivodina base was abandoned. However, on the intervention of the Middle East commanders and politicians who feared hostile Arab reaction, the idea was finally dropped in August and the plan came to nothing. It would appear that the British were apprehensive lest such a mission might be used as a political lever by the Agency both in Europe and vis-a-vis Britain.

THE WERKLEUTE

ELIYAHU MAOZ

This is a Hebrew translation by the author of an article published in The Leo Baeck Institute Fear Book no. 4, 1959, pp. 165—182, relating the history of the German Jewish youth movement "Kameraden" in the twenties and the early thirties until they turned into the "Werkleute" movement which ultimately joined the Hashomer Hatzair.

THE JEWISH UNIT IN NOVAKY CAMP (SLOVAKIA)

YESHAYAHU YELINEK

The author sketches the general background of the development of Clerico-fascist dictatorship in Slovakia after the disintegration of the Czechoslovak republic in 1939. In 1942 some 57,000 Jews were deported to Poland. Others managed to escape to Hungary. From the autumn of 1942 until the August 1944 Slovak uprising no Jews were deported; this was partly due to tremendous money payments effected mainly by the "working-group", a number of people some of whom occupied important positions in the Judenrat of Slovakia and who attempted to save not only Slovak but European Jewry by large-scale bribery. In Slovakia, a part of the remaining Jews were concentrated in 3 main work camps, of which Novaky was one. The camp had been set up in 1941 and used as a concentration point for the deportations to Poland. Workshops were set up and the excellent quality of their production in poverty-stricken Slovakia was argument against deportations. The guarding of the camp was entrusted to the fascist Hlinka Guards, until their relief in early 1944 by the regular gendarmerie. No political or educational activities were allowed, but there were limited opportunities of contact with the outside world, mainly through the Central Judenrat. The backbone of Jewish resistance groups were young people who had somehow evaded the 1942 deportations and political prisoners who had not been deported but had been transferred to Novaky instead. In August 1944 there were 1600 inmates, working long hours at heavy work. Internal organisation was effected by a nominated Judenrat of 14.

The first resistance groups were apparently formed in the winter of 1942 and early 1943, after the true destination of the deportations to Poland became generally known. The contacts maintained with the outside were mainly with the communist underground. Very litle is known of any contacts with the so-called Czechoslovak resistance. Resistance groups were formed mainly from unmarried youngsters on a personal basis, but the predominant

groupings were the Zionist youth movements (primarily Hashomer Hatzair) and the Communist Party. Some CP members had been transferred to Novaky from prisons, some from places close to Novaky itself. The outstanding personality was apparently Julius Schoenfeld, one of V. Sikory's comrades. It is very likely that a CP cell existed in Novaky and the group turned to resistance planning probably in 1943. Hashomer Hatzair advised its membership to go into hiding during the deportation period, and many also managed to escape into Hungary. Amongst those who had landed in Novaky was A. Rosenfeld ("Ahronko") who had escaped from Poland to Slovakia in 1941. He became the outstanding personality on the Zionist side and perhaps also smuggled the first weapons in.

Membership of the resistance group was, despite its two main political components, on a purely personal co-optive basis, and the organisation was highly informal. Deep conspiracy was practiced; the inner group of commanders was tightly knit. Members of the resistance group permeated the police, the camp organisation and even the Judenrat itself. A partisan detachment in the neighbourhood was supplied with food from the camp. Arms were smuggled in. In the late spring of 1944 small groups equivalent to military units were formed and trained, first as sport groups, and then with the use of weapons. The aim was to rebel in case the Germans or the Slovaks were to decide on the liquidation of the camp and then to retreat into the mountains. When a Slovak underground movement developed, the Novaky group placed itself at their disposal. Much effort was expended to obtain weapons, both for money and from underground Slovak sources. They were smuggled in fairly easily because of the rather lackadaisical system of security and guarding at the camp. Members of the group were given false papers to move outside the camp when necessary. Money was obtained both from private sources and via the "working group". Newspapers and propaganda were usually obtained from the same source as well, often through the German Abwehr people.

Contacts were maintained with the partisans both by the Hashomer Hatzair and by the CP, but of course the latter's contacts were much closer. A partisan commander of Russian origin, Yershov, whose detachment had their headquarters at Sklavina suggested that the Novaky Jews set up a Jewish partisan detachment. Outside resistance groups also helped the Novaky group, smuggling in propaganda and Marxist literature.

The Slovak National uprising began on August 29th, 1944; it appears that come of the inner circle in Navaky had received prior warning. The gendarmes were persuaded to join the rebellion and weapons were taken out. Some 200—300 young people, partly armed, left for the centres of the revolt. The other camp inmates tried to find a place for themselves as best they could, but many had to return to Novaky because they were met with

hostility wherever they went. After some time, they too found refuge in the centres of the liberated territory.

The Novaky Jews were formed into a company which received some hasty training; there were very few people with military experience amongst them. While being trained, the company cleared the German-Slovak village of Handlova (August 30th) and the village of Skalna. German and fascist prisoners were taken to the old camp at Novaky. On August 31st the company was given the task of attacking Batovany, in order to conquer the railway station there. Insufficiently armed they were repulsed by a numerically and materially superior German unit; but held their own against the Germans until September 6th, counterattacking once. The attitude of the Slovak command to them was, they felt, unfair and antisemitic. Many Slovaks who had joined the rebellion left their units and at night the Jews were left on their own as most Slovaks went home to sleep. Ultimately the company was taken out of the line and transferred from the regular army command to partisan command on September 6th. The next day the Germans broke through the front at that point. A small Jewish artillery detachment held their ground for a few more days. The Novaky company was commended for their bravery by public pronouncement from rebellion headquarters.

After some fighting in the Hron valley the core of the company (some people left it for other units) joined the Stalin brigade under Major Yegorov of the Red Army, where they formed two of the brigade's three platoons. They fought bloody rearguard actions in the Turiac valley, and witnessed the collapse of the regular army. Retreating towards Banska Bistrica they met the three Palestinian parachutists who had been dropped by mistake in that region. After some more action in the Gadar valley the unit started on its way to Western Slovakia to join another partisan group there. A few of the Jewish members stayed behind, wanting to remain in the neighbourhood of Novaky. The rest followed the Yegorov unit westwards. The morale sank to a low point when a young Jew was sentenced to death and the unit was forced to execute the sentence because he had left his rifle for a few moments. On November 8th (or 11th) the unit was surprised by the Germans at Gapel village and after suffering heavy casualties, dispersed. Other partisan detachments fared similarly on that ill-fated day and the remnants of the Jewish unit dispersed amongst the various partisan detachments in the neighbourhood.

THE Ttemplars IN PALESTINE

TZVI EREZ

The Temple society was founded by Christof Hoffmann in Germany at the end of the sixties of the 19th century. They founded a number of colonies in Palestine; some Catholics also came here for religious reasons and so did a group from the Evangelical Church. In 1938 they all numbered some 2000, of whom ¾ were members of the Temple society. They had never accepted Ottoman citizenship, had remained loyal Germans and many of them had fought in the first world war on the German side. No special contacts had been maintained with the Weimar republic, but a first Nazi member was won in the person of Karl Rauf, in 1932. By the end of that year 14 Germans in Palestine had joined the Nazi Party. Rauf as the "Landsvertrauensmann" did not succeed in enlarging the number of Nazi Party adherents until Hitler came to power. Leadership soon passed into the hands of Cornelius Schwarz of Jaffo.

Economically, the elite of the German minority, tralers, bankers etc., maintained close and friendly contact with the Jewish community, who also bought much of the agricultural production of the German villages. It was the task of the Nazis to gain control of the German community, with its religious leadership of the Temple society on the hand, and pursue anti-semitic propaganda on the other hand. By 1935 the German Consul General, Dr. Wolf, who had little sympathies with the Nazi movement, had been ousted. His successor, Dehle, was a Nazi. Antisemitic attitudes, though economically disadvantageous to the local Germans, were insisted upon by the German Government's representatives. In 1934 a new head of the Temple Society, Wurst, was elected, much against the will of the Nazis. The educational system was slowly adapted to Nazi ways, because of the desire to have the schools recognized by German institutions, especially universities. Most teachers had to join the Nazi Party, and all of them had to join the teachers union, which was Nazi-controlled.

In 1936 there were 250 Nazi Party members in Palestine, and the community was under their control to an ever-increasing degree. Contacts with Jews were forbidden, especially land sales. The author quotes a letter of January 1936 by the local Nazi leader in Jerusalem warning a German citizen against the hiring out of a cinema to Jews. Threats of boycott and reprisals against relatives in Germany could be very effective. Successful attempts were made to overcome any remaining religious scruples still entertained by Templars against Nazism. Nazi propaganda was intensified, and the author quotes from Schwarz's letters to show what types of Nazi propaganda ("das Schwarze Korps" etc.) were introduced to Palestine.

Youth activities became a province of the Nazi Party. During the Arab rebellion in Palestine the estrangement between Germans and Jews grew; a bomb was thrown in the centre of Jewish Jerusalem by an Arab from a car owned by the German consulate: the Arab had been hired by a German Palestinian. When war threatened, the majority of adult men owing military service left for Germany. The rest were interned in their settlements, but were allowed to proceed with agricultural and other occupations. In the early stages of the war, a large number of these Germans were shipped to Australia, because their activities might be detrimental to security in the case of German advance towards Palestine. After the war, a number of Germans remained in Palestine, but most of them left before Israeli independence. A few apparently participated in the Arab invasion of the country, and the others left after 1948. The Israeli Government agreed to pay reparations for these Palestinian Nazis and their property to the West German Government.

YALKUT MORESHET

PERIODICAL

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