

#### WE CONSOLE OURSELVES WITH BUBBLES IN THE AIR

Jewish hearts rejoiced today: the Vilna radio ordered yesterday that not only are the [bomb] shelters not to be destroyed, on the contrary, they are to be cleaned and prepared for any eventualities. . . .

What [will console] us today?

Once more, Jewish hearts rejoice: the radio broadcasts that the Russian counteroffensive is moving toward Smolensk. They also say that yesterday the Russians bombed Memel and Königsberg. That and the news about the preparation of the bomb shelters warmed Jewish hearts twice today.

We console ourselves with bubbles in the air.

#### Soviet Prisoners of War

Today, on the way to work, I came upon two trucks loaded with Russian prisoners of war. The trucks stopped on [the corner of] Kijowska and Słowacki Streets. People on the street pelted the prisoners with bread, cigarettes, etc. The Germans allowed it and even helped. Their hunger for bread and cigarettes has become so great it just breaks your heart.

When the truck moved, the people in the street, incidentally only Christians, blessed them warmly.

My friends envy me: good working conditions. My fellow workers, Lithuanians or Germans (and certainly Poles) treat me very well, often even amiably. Today, the local superintendent found coveralls and a smock for me so I won't ruin my own clothes. The pity makes me nervous. But, in all, in the eight days I've worked here, several thousand kilos of iron have passed through my hands, sometimes I have been hurt and paid for it with my blood.

For whom? Why?

#### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1941

##### HOLD ON!

[In the Yiddish edition, this section and the following one are placed at the end of September 4, but Kruk's table of contents corrects the order.]

Today at work, a piece of paper was put in my hand. I read it; it was written in Polish by a Christian who works with me. Passing through with a heavy load, he thrust this at me.

I read: the Germans are taking such a beating that everything happening today around us looks like their last gasp. Hold on. We must hold out. . . .

I'm holding on, comrade; I'm holding on, friend—hold out! . . .

My friend Comrade Erna, whom I visited for a moment to find out how she was, greeted me with kisses and cried like a baby:

"I'm scared, I'm frantically scared; if you can't help me, at least stay in touch with me. Drop by. I can't move about and you can do it better. . . ."

I looked at the awful situation of the helpless person, my comrade, my close co-worker, and with a heavy heart, I assured her: I will be with her, I'll stay in touch with her.

Comrade Pati [Kremer] asks me to drop in on her. But it is risky. How can I do it? Nevertheless, tomorrow, I'll go.<sup>106</sup>

Panic. Terror. Dreadful helplessness!

Where do you get the strength to hold out? Where do you get the nerves to bear it?

Masses of Poles are fired from work. A lot of them are arrested and sent to Łukiszki. All the Polish employees of City Hall are released from their jobs.

Today a notice was issued that Jews must hand over all their property immediately to the police precinct: money, gold, silver, and valuables.

The Jews do bring a lot. Others hand in the completed questionnaires. They hold on to their property as a piece of their life, and they stay with it for the time being. . . .

#### I CONSOLE MYSELF

[My comrades] Grisha [Yashunski] and [Yoyel] Fish[man] were accidentally saved from being dragged off with the Jewish Committee.

At least a small consolation in the great misfortune.

Another consolation: my wife, who is now in the Soviet Union, released from exile, is probably enjoying the right of all interned Polish citizens. If she did not volunteer for the Polish army, she is at least granted an apartment and food.<sup>107</sup>

On English and Soviet radio [it was announced] that the arrested and interned Polish citizens were in camps maintained by the Polish Red Cross.

So, it's good that she'll have a little piece and quiet now. Good that at least she will finally be freed and saved.

#### THE FIRST MESSAGES FROM PONAR

With trembling hands, I write the words. All I have heard, all I have written here is hardly a fraction of what [ . . . ]

[Page 117 of the journal is missing.]

<sup>106</sup>. At the time, Pati Kremer lived at Węglowa 12, about half a mile from Kruk's home at Kijowska Street 4.

<sup>107</sup>. The news had reached the Vilna Ghetto that Polish citizens in Soviet camps were released, but no one knew their situation. The release was the result of the so-called Sikorski Amnesty, an agreement between the Polish government-in-exile in London and the government of the Soviet Union, stipulating that all Polish citizens be released from Soviet prisons and camps and that those who had been sent into exile in "free" villages be allowed to leave those places. (The agreement was named for General Sikorski, prime minister of the Polish government-in-exile.)

#### OUT OF THE GRAVE!

It sounds like an echo from the other world. Indeed, that is what it is. What I describe here is truly a scream from the grave. But the people we shall hear about really do come out of the grave after the execution and have reached the Jewish hospital in Vilna.

The persons I'm talking about are related to our entry of September 4—the first information from Ponar.

Through friends and efforts, I gained access to a few of the six who came from Ponar.

The 11-year-old child is Yudis Trojak of Szawelska Street 11, apartment 26. She has undergone an operation, and I find her frightened and weak on a hospital bed.

#### WHAT DOES YUDIS TROJAK TELL?

Of the whole family—mother, father, three boys, and two girls—the only ones left are our narrator Judith and her father, who works in a peat bog in Rzesza. And one brother who escaped with the Bolsheviks in time.

How did it happen?

On Sunday, September 1, there was a commotion; what the commotion was, she doesn't know; she knows only that people were talking about events on Glezer Street. The next day, she learned that not far from their house, a lot of people were taken. Everybody gathered in a neighbor's apartment and everyone brought news of the events. At about 8 in the morning, Lithuanians suddenly appeared and ordered everybody to get dressed and go down to the courtyard. There they were lined up in rows.

The janitor took everyone's keys to their apartments and then they took us from there to jail. We stayed in jail from Monday to Tuesday.

On Tuesday morning, they led us all out into the jail yard, and all were sure that we would be released. But an order came to leave all our belongings and get into the waiting trucks. Traveling in the covered trucks, a woman saw that we were riding through a forest. Later we heard shooting. A wailing arose. We didn't understand what was happening with the men because they were led away on foot.

When we got out of the trucks, we were taken to a forest, among sand hills, and there we waited.

Earlier, the child tells, the men were taken. Only Lithuanians took care of that. All day long, they heard shots. There were a lot of quarrels; people cried. "Not until 5 in the afternoon did they take the 10 of us. From there, we walked about five minutes. They blindfolded us and stood us in front of a pit." When I asked her how she could see the pit with blindfolded eyes, she laughed cunningly: "I adjusted

the cloth like this so I could see. . . . There in the pit lay a lot of dead bodies, whole mountains of them!"

[Here a few sentences are probably missing.]

She was dragged out of the grave by a woman. Five or six women gathered there, all of them wounded, all of them emerging from the mass grave. On the road, they came on a Lithuanian who asked them where they were going. They replied that they were hurrying to the city, and, scared that he would turn them in, they set off for the forest, in the opposite direction. There they came to a Lithuanian's house. Some stayed there until the next day and some went on. "I and the woman who dragged me out of the grave, and a few others, stayed there overnight. The next day, a peasant woman took us to the city." From there, she came to the hospital where she was operated on.

Now her arm is crippled and she doesn't know if she'll be able to move it.

The doctors say that her arm will heal in a few months. The bullet went into her left arm under the armpit.

#### WHAT DOES THE SECOND GIRL TELL?

The second one is Pesye Schloss, 16 years old, who lived at Strashun 9.

She tells: on September 2, at about 4 in the afternoon, the Lithuanians came to their home, ordered them to come along, and didn't allow them to take anything with them. All they permitted was a package of food. They were taken to Łukiszki. They stayed there until four in the morning. Then they were ordered to dress, ostensibly to be taken to work. They were led out to the prison yard on foot. From there, the men marched ahead, the women behind. The children were taken away and loaded onto trucks. They got to the place only at about 10 in the morning.

Few people knew that we were in Ponar, and few imagined what they were going to do with us there. But we saw it with our own eyes, as the shootings were taking place no more than 200 steps from us. The men were numbed with blows to the head and only later were they shot. There were whole mountains of people lying. They all surrendered, obeying orders. All the work was done by the Lithuanians. They were supervised by one German.

Groups of 10 people were led to the place of the executions. Early in the morning, there was a lamentable weeping. Later, people "calmed down," got used to it, and made less commotion.

The narrator came to the execution in the very last group of 10. It was already sunset. She walked to the grave with 5 relatives. They were ordered to blindfold their eyes and hold hands. Like that, in a row of 10. Then they were shot. She got a bullet in the arm, a bullet that came to her as a "legacy" from her mother. The bullet went through the mother, who held her arm behind her, as if she wanted to protect her. But the soldier noticed she was alive; he took off her shoes and put a

bullet in her foot. She thinks she lay in the grave for no longer than 15 or 20 minutes. When she woke up, she pulled herself out of her mother's arm, and then she heard talking. She saw a woman with a child. Four persons gathered. One wasn't wounded at all and went to the city right away. "The three of us," she says, "went off toward a village." There they spent the night. One Lithuanian gave them milk, another washed their wounds. The next morning, the Lithuanian woman took all three of them to the city and thus they came to the hospital.

This is the sum total: on Thursday, July 26, the Snatchers took her brother. They dragged her father away somewhat later. The continuation was what happened to her and her mother. She is left with a brother, and there is a sister she doesn't know anything about.

[Some lines are missing, which probably contain more testimony from those who had been saved from Ponar.]

[ . . . ] so far were recorded and certainly with regard to what I must record today. I don't know if I will ever live to see these lines, but if anyone anywhere comes upon them, I want him to know this is my last wish: let the words someday reach the living world and let people know about it from eyewitness accounts.

Can the world not scream?

Can history never take revenge?

If the heavens can open up,<sup>108</sup> when should that happen if not today?

The dreadful thing is hard to describe. The hand trembles, and the ink is bloody. Is it possible that all those taken out of here have been murdered, shot in Ponar?

Six wounded people, including a 12-year-old child, lie in the Jewish hospital. They all tell: they shot us with machine guns. In the ditch lay thousands of dead bodies. Before being shot, they took off their clothes, their shoes. The peasants who brought the people to the hospital tell the same thing. The fields reek with the stench of the dead bodies. . . . A few crawl out of there, and a few drag themselves to villages. Six of these few are now in the Jewish hospital. As I write these lines, a 12-year-old child is lying on the operating table, and they are taking a bullet out of her arm. The child mentions names of those she saw shot. . . .

A woman dragged herself to a peasant and asked him to take her to the Jews. After what she saw and after all her loved ones were shot in front of her eyes, she considered her life worthless. But she wanted the Jews to know, and that's the only thing that led her to the peasant.

Let the Jews know!! . . .

It is hard to find out how many were shot. We have to wait for that. Now I understand the behavior of our German<sup>109</sup> toward us, his workers. For the past two days, he has warned our leaders that we shouldn't walk around in the streets and

<sup>108</sup>. To accept our supplication. According to Jewish folklore, the heavens open once a year at the end of the holiday of Sukkoth.

that we should sleep at work. The Jewish workers have been sleeping in our center (HKP)<sup>110</sup> for two nights. Apparently he knew about the horror and didn't want us to fall victim too. . . .

How can you write about all this? How can you collect your thoughts?

If heaven is heaven, it should start pouring down lava; let all that is still alive be washed away once and for all. Let a greater world destruction than this one come—let a new world rise on the ruins!

"Arise ye wretched of the earth. . . ."<sup>111</sup>

It's quiet in my house now, as if a dead body were laid out here. In fact, a lot of dead bodies lie here; none of them weeps, nobody talks, nobody comments.

It is pitch black in the middle of the day. . . .

What is there to talk about?

Whom to complain about?

Whom to argue with?

Horror upon horror, dread upon dread!

## SEPTEMBER 5 [1941]

### THE BURIAL DEPARTMENT IS OPENED

As we know, on [September] 2, after the 16 men of the Judenrat were taken, all the rooms of the Judenrat building, at Strashun 6, were sealed, including the Burial Department.

For a few days now, corpses have been lying around and cannot be buried.

Nevertheless, after many efforts on our part, the Lithuanian Burakas,<sup>112</sup> commissioner for Jewish affairs at City Hall, came to Strashun 6 today and opened the office of the Burial Department, thus allowing the department to carry on with its work.

[Several lines are missing.]

He declared that there is in fact no [Jewish] Committee [Judenrat] now, that the entire issue is not yet clarified, and that he will make a special announcement about the situation.

<sup>110</sup>. HKP is the abbreviation for *Heereskraftpark*, one of the most important units the Jews worked in. The German management of HKP took the workers of their unit and their families out of the ghetto and lodged them in Subocz in the former "cheap houses" housing project. That unit lasted until 1944, almost until the Red Army captured Vilna, and the Jews considered it an excellent workplace.

<sup>111</sup>. The first line of the "Internationale."

<sup>112</sup>. The following item appeared in the Lithuanian newspaper *Naujoji Lietuva* (The New Lithuania), no. 19, August 24, 1941: "F. Burakas was appointed Commissioner for Jewish Affairs in Vilna. His office is in the municipal administration building, Dominikariska St. 2, Room 51" (Litho Archive, Kaczerginski-Sutzkever Collection).

All of a sudden, he was arrested, stayed in prison for several months, and in the past few weeks, was thrown out of a general cell into a Jewish one. There he died, lonely and forsaken.

Honor to his memory.

#### WHO SEEKS PROTECTION FROM WHOM

The wheel turns. There is commotion in the city. Christians are afraid of being arrested and sent to Germany to work.

Today I know of several cases of Poles asking Jewish friends to take them into the ghetto for the night.

The wheel turns.

#### IN THE WHIRLPOOL OF PERMITS . . .

Those who had pink "protection permits" had to get blue permits. Now it turns out that the blue permits will remain deposited with the Judenrat. Those who have protection permits will receive only a stamp on their permit indicating that their blue permit is in the possession of the Judenrat. What the Judenrat means by this device is not yet known.

### JANUARY 16 [1942]

#### CAN IT BE?

Lately, it has been relatively calm in the ghetto. There is a battle for Smolensk, and everywhere you hear about a retreat of the German armies. The street is alive with new hope that it can be.

And can it be?

The most awful of awful we have already. . . . Could it be behind us?

Can it be, can it be that the ghetto's days are numbered? Let us therefore round out our entries to a whole. Let us start trying to penetrate corners of our ghetto life that we have had no time or possibility for up to now.

Let us carry our notes to obtain a plausible reflection of daily life in the Vilna Ghetto.

This is what preoccupies me now. We will gather material here and, as far as possible, will record it precisely.

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE IN THE JUDENRAT  
We have mentioned the activity of this department in its first days. Now we will present some figures of its activity for December 1941:

#### I. The office distributed lunches (gratis)

	Total	Sum
A. Directly through the department	18,430	2,416.80 [Marks]
B. Through the Aid Society	4,720	627.40 [Marks]
C. Through Mr. Dessler's mediation	3,500	460.00 [Marks]
D. Children's daycare in the hospital	300	38.00 [Marks]
Total	26,950	3,542.20 [Marks]

2. Hospital treatment was given to 59 persons, 508 hospital days.

3. Ambulatory treatment and prescriptions: 43 persons.

4. Released completely or partially from rent: 57 exemptions, 161 persons altogether.

5. Acknowledged financial support for 47 exemptions, total of 306.26 Marks.

This is what the pitiful social provisions of the Vilna Judenrat looked like in December 1941.

### JANUARY 17 [1942]

JOCHELSON, DANIEL

Just yesterday we mentioned the relative calm, but today we have to record another dramatic event:

Groups of Jews work in Porubanek unpacking and sorting various weapons and ammunition. A few days ago, two Jewish workers were accidentally killed by an explosion. The incident made an obvious impression in the ghetto.<sup>108</sup>

Something even sadder happened yesterday. A group of twenty-some people went out, as every day, to the area around Porubanek to buy food for the workers and their families. Just then, the area was surrounded by a group of Lithuanians. The Jews ran away. The Lithuanians shot at them. Two escaped, but the third—Daniel Jochelson—was hit by two bullets and fell dead on the spot. Another man, Blumental, was wounded. The rest were taken to Łukiszki.

Daniel Jochelson's body was brought to the ghetto on a peasant's sled and the funeral is tomorrow, Sunday.

The man who died so tragically had been an active member of the Youth Bund, Tsukunft, in Vilna for many years.

#### FIRST CONCERT IN THE GHETTO

Today I received a formal invitation from a founding group of Jewish artists in the ghetto announcing that the first evening of the local artistic circle will be held on

<sup>108</sup>. Because it implies that they were preparing a bomb.

Sunday, January 18, in the auditorium of the Real Gymnasium at Rudnicka 6. A dramatic and vocal musical program will be presented.

I felt offended, personally offended, about this whole thing, let alone the festive evening. In every ghetto you can amuse yourself; cultivating art is certainly a good deed. But here, in the doleful situation of the Vilna Ghetto, in the shadow of Ponar, where, of the 76,000 Vilna Jews, only 15,000 remain—here, at this moment, this is a disgrace.

An offense to all our feelings.

But as we know, the real initiators of the evening are the Jewish police. Furthermore, important guests, Germans, will come to the concert. Lyuba Lewicka, the brilliant Jewish singer, is even trying to have some German songs "on hand."

In case, God forbid, a German will ask for them! . . .

You don't make a theater in a graveyard.

The organized Jewish labor mov[ement]<sup>109</sup> had decided to respond to the invitation with a boycott. Not one of them will go to the "crows' concert." But the streets of the ghetto are to be strewn with leaflets:

about today's concert:

YOU DON'T MAKE THEATER  
IN A GRAVEYARD

In this atmosphere, the ghetto will bury its victim—Daniel Jochelson. The police and the artists, along with the Germans, will amuse themselves, and the Vilna Ghetto will mourn. . . .

#### BIALYSTOK

We wrote that Dr. Goldburgt left for Białystok. Later, that he was arrested on the way and is now in Łukiszki; later still, that the news about the arrest was not certain and that he is in Białystok.

Recently we obtained some information: with the participation of that doctor, 40,000–50,000 rubles have been collected to rescue us from the Vilna Ghetto.

With tears in our eyes we rejoiced at the fine comradesly initiative.

#### CALENDAR OF THE SOVIET-GERMAN BATTLES FOR THE WAR YEAR 1941

I attach here a newspaper extract of a calendar of the Soviet battles for the war year 1941.

[The newspaper extract is missing.]

What the German soldiers look like on the Eastern Front is indicated by the aid suggested in the German and pro-German press.

I attach the extract of that suggestion.

[The extract is missing.]

109. I.e., the Bund.

#### "REDS" AND THE AID SOCIETY

We already mentioned the advice given us lately by the Zionist social activists.<sup>110</sup> Lately, they have talked to us on their own behalf and on behalf of the . . . "R[eds]."<sup>111</sup> The latter denied this at first. Recently, they came themselves and demanded the same things as their comrades . . . the "R's." However, the "R's" have negotiated with us for . . . cooperation.

Finally we reached an agreement: 3 of ours remain in the administration, the "R's" send 2 (so they, too, get 3), the Zionists send 3, and that leaves in addition 1 Trop<sup>112</sup> and 1 Berek.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, at our suggestion, the "R's" promised to create a faction within the administration consisting of our representatives and their representatives. That means a minimum of 6 out of 11, eventually 7 out of 11, including Trop.

Let us hope that the crisis of the Aid Society has thus passed and that the society is in proletarian hands for a while.<sup>114</sup>

#### JANUARY 18 [1942]

ANTISEMITISM IN POLAND, IDEOLOGICAL SLACKNESS OF THE REDS  
I have received information about Polish social activity in . . . London, Warsaw, and . . . Vilna.

In London, the Endeks<sup>115</sup> left the government.<sup>116</sup> One of the causes: their unwillingness to grant equal rights to national minorities.

Warsaw does as London and Vilna do. The Vilna comrades cannot understand why Jewish workers are seeking a connection with them:

"How can you help us?" asked the leader of the Vilna PPS, with a thin smile.

"What will that contact really give us?"

Antisemitism is blowing again from the Endeks to the PPS.

The "R's" have not learned much either. They make overtures, we are told;

110. This advice was probably mentioned in the missing pages. Apparently, it was a move to create a larger political base for the Aid Society, initiated by the Bund.

111. I.e., the Communists.

112. Trop. is Kruk's abbreviation for Fayvl Trupiański, well known Socialist-Revolutionary (SR) activist in Vilna, and brother of Yankev Trupiański.

113. Rabbi Aaron Berek, chairman of Agudat Israel (the religious Orthodox party).

114. The Aid Society was founded initially by Bundists, who administered it. Later, it became a source of interparty haggling for influence. At this point the Socialist parties (Bund, Communists, Socialist-Revolutionaries) have a majority.

115. Endek is the nickname of the ND, or Narodowa Demokracja (National democracy), an antisemitic right-wing Polish party.

116. I.e., the Polish government-in-exile.

After considering several proposals, the council decided to create a workshop for the displaced children.

#### VILNA IS INEXHAUSTIBLE

At last, as we have said, the books from the city were delivered to the ghetto warehouse. The deliverers were Jews, the leaders of the so-called Rosenberg Task Force, [whose overseers] had turned the whole job over to Jews. The leader is H[erman] K[ruk].

Today H. Kr[uk] went with Kalman[owicz] to reconnoiter in the former Ghetto 2. The result: several thousand holy books are still to be taken out, meaning weeks of work. Once again, we ascertain that Vilna has been a city of learning, an inexhaustible sea.

#### HAMAN EVENING

This is Purim week. It is the Saturday night after Purim.

Now, at midnight, I have just finished the fourth literary gathering. This time the evening was named Haman Evening. H. Kr[uk] conducted the evening. The most distinguished people of the ghetto participated.

The next evening will be devoted to the Jerusalem of Lithuania.

[There was] a Purim evening of the Hasidim.

#### MARCH 8 [1942]

#### PONAR

It gnaws like a worm. Rumors come from all sides: spring will bring new sad events for Vilna Jews. However, if the Germans have to withdraw from the area, who knows what they will do with the Jews.

Lithuanian friends advise escape. Escape because you can expect great misfortunes. A reliable person comes, a man who has good connections among highly placed persons. He says they are already digging graves in Ponar. A man with extensive acquaintances sent someone to Ponar to investigate. Meanwhile . . . the splendid spring comes and a pain gnaws in the depths of the soul and no one dares talk about it.

Where to flee? Where can you flee? . . .

Thus the Vilna Jewish masses are waiting in a line. The noose is thrown around their neck and they wait for the hangman to come and pull it. . . .

#### CELEBRATIONS AND MEMORIALS

Nevertheless, life is stronger than anything. In the Vilna Ghetto, life begins to pulse again. Under the overcoat of Ponar a life creeps out that strives for a better morning. The boycotted concerts prevail. The halls are full. The literary evenings

burst their seams, and the local hall cannot hold the large number that comes there.

Today was a little Yom Kippur for me. I couldn't control myself, my tears flowed like a spring:

The Child Education Department in the Judenrat arranged two memorial commemorations in the two schools. The first service, in the school at Szawelska 1, was held from 10 to 11; in the second school, at Strashun 12, from 11 to 12.

The commemorations are dedicated to the dead teachers Shloyme Bastomski, [his wife, Malke] Chaimson-Bastomski, Gershon Pludermacher,<sup>22</sup> and Engineer Mark Idelson.

The participants in both commemorations included the Judenrat, representatives of various institutions, writers, artists, teachers, parents, and others. Several hundred residents of the ghetto attended the commemorations.

Here, for the first time since I have been in the ghetto, I felt the children's performance as an echo of that Warsaw life of tremendous mass assemblies. I felt the breath of the Medem Sanitarium, the schools on Krochmalna, those on Karmelicka, and others.<sup>23</sup> Here, for the first time in the ghetto, I was overcome by the Ponar tones of Grieg's "Valse Triste," Chopin's "Funeral March" and . . . a hall full of people crying. It's hard to explain what it means to cry today in Vilna Ghetto. . . .

The music reopened the wounds left by tens of thousands taken away, murdered and slaughtered fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, and loved ones. The hall wept, and the tears flowed like peas. No one was ashamed of the tears. One woman speaker even said: "The schools unite us. The tears elevate and purify. And although we cannot visit the graves of our loved ones, we are joined with them in spirit and are hopeful that, although we are physically weak, we stand tall spiritually and will hold out through it all."

The children sang, recited, and read, and among other things, they read two poems created by a child of eleven who died recently. I attach the poems. [The poems are missing.]

At one in the afternoon today, a new celebration took place: the opening of a children's home at the Health Department. The air there is different. The atmosphere is like that of a Jewish community council. The children keep expressing their gratitude for the children's home. It's cold, a wind is truly blowing.

In the coming days, we shall record several biographies of the children from the home and their hymn. It's good work, nice work, but—it smacks of cursed philanthropy.

Incidentally, it is interesting to note: the home is set up in the building of the

22. The Bastomskis and Pludermacher were among the pioneers and builders of the Yiddish school system. Their biographies are in *Teachers' Memorial Book* 1954.

23. Kruk refers to the Yiddish secular schools of *tsisho* at Krochmalna 36 and Karmelicka 29 in Warsaw.

former Elyashberg Prayer House, Szpitalna Street 1. The celebration took place in the auditorium of the prayer house. The former pulpit before the Holy Ark is the lectern. The Holy Ark has not been touched, and it makes a strange impression: what the Bolsheviks didn't do with the prayer house, the ghetto Jews have managed to do.

#### KAILIS — THEY SEARCH FOR . . . CHRISTIANS

On Friday evening, the 6th of this month, a search of documents took place in the Kailis block. It seems they were looking for . . . Christians.

Lately, many Christians have been hiding, not wanting to be sent away for forced labor. . . .

#### SPRING IN THE GHETTO

An interesting contribution to the recent mood in the ghetto is the writing of poetry. The attached document, "Spring Evening, 1942," is very typical of that. [The poem can be found in the *yivo* Archive (Kaczerginski-Sutzkever Collection, no. 627).]

### MARCH 9 [1942]

#### DOES SPRING BRING — SPRING?

The same question is on everyone's lips. Everywhere the same. Everyone draws conclusions and analogies to the question: Will the spring really bring spring?<sup>24</sup> . . .

The events on the major fronts have not always had the proper impact on us. We know little about what is happening. Information here is dreadfully thin, but nevertheless it is almost clear—spring is bringing something new. New winds are blowing, new birds are bringing new songs.<sup>25</sup> . . .

Everyone is getting ready for that and making preparations. The masses live with hope and are certain that soon, in the very near future, salvation will come. The Aryan world keeps on reassuring us that the time is at hand. Others advise running away again because spring is bringing new troubles for the ghetto.

Just yesterday an appeal was circulated in the city, calling on the population to hold out because . . . liberation is at hand. Christians come into the ghetto to hide out with their friends because that is now the safest melina for them. . . . The Jewish police, who understand that spring for all doesn't bode hope for the ghetto police, are preparing melinas in the city. . . . Jewish and non-Jewish social activists are preparing melinas for the time of transition. . . .

24. Spring is a metaphor for liberation.

25. A line from a popular Socialist song.

Meanwhile, people tell, with 100 percent reliability, that at 2 o'clock yesterday morning, Wilejka<sup>26</sup> was bombed and that there was an air raid alarm in Vilna. They tell of 12 dead.

Meanwhile, the German powers are not falling behind.

The leader of the Rosenberg Task Force consoles me that I will have . . . work—the selection of Jewish books will last until August. He has time. Others suspect that this is his way of hiding out so as not to be sent off to the front.

Although the German organization is limping badly, nevertheless. . . . Nevertheless, they begin a "voluntary" collection in the Balkan countries. Not fur coats this time, but metal, brass, etc.<sup>27</sup>

How this voluntary collection will end is hard to predict.

One thing is clear—spring is ushering in a lot. May it come to pass.

#### MURER IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES

On Sunday he stood like that at the gate, stopping all those going in or out. If they were people simply going out of the ghetto, he stopped them and ordered them put in the Jewish jail and shouted at them: "Even on Sunday they want to stink up my streets." . . .

He caught several people like that.

#### BAGELS, DOUGHNUTS

As if nothing had happened. In the ghetto, you get fresh and tasty bagels and people snatch them out of your hand. A bagel costs five rubles.

Bagels like the prewar ones, fresh, well-baked, and crispy. You also get doughnuts here. Ten rubles apiece.

The ghetto does not succumb. On the one hand, people are dying for a mouthful of food; on the other, people are living in luxury.

### MARCH 11 [1942]

#### Visiting Kailis

Yesterday I went on invitation to Kailis. Kailis is tucked out toward the Jewish Scientific Institute [*yivo*] and opposite the famous Vilna radio factory. From the ghetto, I go there through Nowogródzka Street. On the way, the wood market is

26. A town not far from Vilna.

27. In the *yivo* Archive (Kaczerginski-Sutzkever Collection, no. 15) is the order from the police chief of the ghetto (no. 24, March 10, 1942) demanding that all kinds of metal—lead, copper, brass, etc.—be turned in.

• • • • •  
**APRIL 15 [1942]**

#### AUCTIONS OF JEWISH PROPERTY

The local Polish newspaper of April 14, 1942, reports that on the 15th of this month, i.e., today, there will be an auction of 14 lots that once belonged to Jews. That inheritance of Jewish property will be done in the building of the Housing Office, Zygmuntowska 16, second floor.

Thus they are already dividing Jewish real estate.

#### WITH A KNIFE IN THE LUNGS

On the 13th of this month, on Szpitalna Street, a woman stabbed her fictive husband in the lungs with a knife. The reason for the murder is jealousy.

How a woman could be jealous of her fictive husband would be hard to tell on these pages. But it is an interesting example of the circumstances and customs of ghetto life.

Thus we see that a plain fictive husband became, it seems, a real husband, and the case became one of "getting even."

The woman is in the ghetto prison.

#### A SECOND BATH IN THE GHETTO

Yesterday the formal opening of the second bath in the ghetto took place. The first bath has room for 20 people, the second for 26 people. After that formal opening, Murer himself came for a visit.

#### WHY WITHOUT A PATCH? OR A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE FISHMAN-GENS INCIDENT

A typical incident between the police chief and a member of the Judenrat, Mr. Fishman.

As we know, the chief is formally subordinate to the Judenrat. But as we have frequently mentioned, the chief often allowed himself things that went far beyond his jurisdiction. The Judenrat's fear of the chief and the chief's arrogance toward everyone consist of the fact that the chief has good contacts with the German military authorities (Murer et al.), and the Germans, seeing the brutal way the police treat the population, placed great confidence in the chief.

As a result of this (and later of something else . . .), the chief, former commissar Oberhardt, Dessler (commissar of the second precinct), and Mrs. Lili Reszarska, an employee of the police command, have become very haughty because they have special permission to walk on the sidewalk, to go without the patch, and more . . .

The ghetto would have swallowed all this. Horses wash in dirty water. But the trouble is that it is not only the ghetto that suffers; so do the ghetto inhabitants and the wretched little ghetto social life.

For example, take the Fishman-Chief incident:

[Yoyel] Fishman, member of the Judenrat, is coming home from work with his fellow workers—a group of shoemakers. Among them is a 64-year-old shoemaker carrying two bundles of wood. Levas, the famous beater at the gate, jumps on the old man for the crime of smuggling wood and beats him horribly. Fishman, intervening for his fellow worker, tells Levas that even Murer wouldn't have allowed himself to do that. For that moral reproof, the chief threatened the chairman of the Judenrat that he would go to Murer and demand the removal of Fishman because, as he says, he is not fit to be a member of the council. Naturally, the Judenrat stopped him from doing that, and the incident seems to have been settled.

• • • • •  
**APRIL 20 [1942]**

#### WE STAND ON OUR OWN

Concerning sociocultural activity.

The inhabitants of our ghetto are beginning to stand on our own. This interesting process is occurring exactly as it does with a child: in stages, slowly and cautiously. After the establishment of the Literary-Artistic Association [Association of Writers and Artists], several other corporations, as we know, were established, and each in its own area set itself more or less the same task. After the literary-artistic assemblies, the doctors began to organize similar assemblies. Every Friday these assemblies take place, featuring lectures on medical subjects. These assemblies are called medical-scientific meetings.

Every Friday, as we probably noted earlier, there is an assembly of teachers, where lectures are delivered on subjects of popular science.

In one of the local prayer houses (Jogiches Prayer House),<sup>79</sup> there are lectures on the history of the Jews, organized by the local Mizrahi.<sup>80</sup>

In the afternoon, the so-called gymnasium courses directed by Turbowicz take place (the so-called afternoon group).

The local religious circles are establishing a heder [traditional Jewish grammar school].

Two choirs have been created in the ghetto, a Hebrew one and a Yiddish one. The Hebrew one is directed by the musician [Volf] Durmashkin,<sup>81</sup> the Yiddish choir by the former director of the VILBIG choir,<sup>82</sup> Slep.

79. At 1 Szawelska Street. It was built in the first half of the nineteenth century by one of the most famous of the public leaders and wealthy men of Vilna, Yankev ben Yosef Jogiches.

80. A moderate religious Zionist party.

81. Son of a Vilna cantor. He was a director and singing teacher in the Akiva schools. In September 1944, he was killed in the Estonian camp Lagedi on Rosh Hashanah, one day before the liberation. For his biography, see *Teachers' Memorial Book* 1954:125–126.

82. VILBIG is Vilner bildungs-gezelschaft, or the Vilna Educational Society.



Chess groups are created in the ghetto. We read announcements such as this one:

The newly established chess circle wishes to buy chess sets and chess boards, even incomplete ones. Apply to Rudnicka 17 in the kitchen, from 6 P.M. until evening.

There are no chess sets in the ghetto; they even buy incomplete sets to save the situation.

In short, the ghetto is standing on its own. A sociocultural life is beginning to beat.

#### THREE MONTHS OF GHETTO STATISTICS

The Office of Statistics has already finished the first three months of statistics for this ghetto. The figures are so interesting we shall present some of them here: [*The statistics are missing.*]

#### MURER COMES TO ME . . . AS A GUEST

The Vilna Ghetto experienced two sensational events. The first was at about 6:30 this evening. Suddenly, the Jewish police started driving people off the streets, beating people murderously—sparing neither big nor small.

At about 7 in the evening, as I was walking in the street, a panting, frightened policeman caught me and said I should go with him immediately because Murer himself had asked for me. On the way to Rudnicka and Murer, there were whole groups of policemen running around looking for me. The street was glowing with excitement. . . .

“If Murer’s looking for Kruk, who knows what has happened. . . .”

At the gate of Rudnicka 6, Murer and his staff, including Colonel Kin, were waiting for me. With them was Commander Gens, his adjutant Smuilikowski, and Police Commissar Dessler.

He asks me my name; I answer. He glares at me in an interrogative way, asks me several questions, and then orders me into a room.

We all go into the chief’s private apartment. Everyone’s eyes are on me. People are sorry for me, and . . . I feel how the people in the courtyard, before whom we parade, are already mourning for me.

Behind me and around me, I feel eyes. I turn around, and behind me is Judenrat member Mr. Gukhman. He gives me a warm glance of pity, poor soul, for falling into “his” hands.

But the commander winks at me, as if to say: Don’t be scared, it’s nothing. . . .

In Mr. Gens’s room, there is an investigation in which both Murer and Kin participate. It turns out that my brigadier, who was visiting a house to take books for the “Rosenberg Task Force,” took along two Jews—on the advice of Glazman, the member of the police command—intending to take a Yiddish typewriter from

one of their apartments. As it turned out later, they not only looked for the typewriter but also . . . for something else.

Questions fly: Why did they go there? How did I allow it? Why did my brigadier allow it? Then an order: bring the brigadier. I wait and he appears. Another investigation ensues, and again it is clear that the two were sent by the member of the police command Glazman, and when Murer sends for the two, it turns out that neither is in the ghetto. The case is even more suspect, and Murer orders them to be brought to him tomorrow morning.

Thus Murer came to me, and the ghetto citizens were beaten and tortured because of it for more than an hour. . . . How this will end is not yet clear. But it is certain that I personally came out fine. Meanwhile, the most awful legends arose around me:

—The Judenrat was disbanded and Kalman[owicz] and I were appointed to a new Judenrat. . . .

—I was arrested as the vice-president of the literary association [Association of Writers and Artists].

When I came home, the door kept opening all evening. Everyone asked questions and was worried.

The second sensational event took place about an hour ago. At about 10:30 in the evening, I suddenly heard heavy airplanes. I went out and saw an airplane emitting smoke, two giant rockets fell, and I heard the roar of motors. The rockets lit up the whole city with enormous force. An alarm was heard somewhere. The airplane left, and now we all stand expectantly—it will surely come. . . .

#### WHO MAY AND WHO MAY NOT

We have often written about the dreadful scenes that are played out at the gate when groups of workers return.

Yesterday I observed it carefully. The scenes cannot be conveyed. One person carrying three kilos of potatoes was beaten and they were taken away from him, while others bringing in 20 sacks of salt were . . . kosher.

Jews curse bitterly, and the police beat sadistically and relentlessly.

#### I AM THE SUPPLIER OF THE GHETTO

The guards at the gate are amazed. I bring desks, tables, benches, cabinets, card catalogues, sleeping boards, etc., etc., into the ghetto. The Jews in the ghetto are amazed at how I obtain them, and only a few know that I’ve got a special permission in my pocket. But no one knows that under the furniture, I’m smuggling a mass of books for the ghetto schools into the ghetto. An enormous number of old prints, rare books, very valuable paintings—for example, that famous oil painting by Yankl Adler, “two soldiers” in tefillin—etc.

This [is] for the library, the schools, the future ghetto museum. I am also the contractor for the Aid Society. . . . For them, I bring in sleeping boards, straw

underworld characters. The murder [of the yeshiva student natu]rally made an enormous impression. To the place, a cellar at Szawelska 1, soon came the [chairman of the Juden]rat, the police chief, the inves[tigating judge . . . ] and others. They were led off in chains [ . . . ]

More details tomorrow.

• • • • •  
**JUNE 4 [1942]**

**THE MURDER IN THE GHETTO — A SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY**  
Early this morning the ghetto was ter[rified when people] found out about the further course of yes[terday's murder. . . .] Truly a Sherlock Holmes story:

The murderers of Yosef Gerstein [ . . . ] as many as five murderers (Yankl Polikański, [Yitskhok and Elye, the brothers] Gejwusz, Hirsh Wituchowski, and Leyb Grodzenski). [It turned out that the] murderers not only killed G[erstein but they are the heroes] of another murder they [carried out to rob] Herts[el] Lides, and they [killed him and buried him in a ce]llar at Strashun 9.

The ghetto court sen[tenced the murderers to death] by hanging. The sentence [was carried out . . . ] by Jewish policemen [in the presence of Comman]dant Gens.

The night before [the execution Gens told everyone in] Yiddish:  
*[The rest of the page, with the first words of Gens's speech, is torn off. On another page, which does not belong to the diary but which seems to be a special description of the execution written by Kruk, we found the aforementioned speech, which we present here.]*

Police, Judenrat,

Of 75 thousand Vilna Jews, 16 [thousand] remain. These 16 must be good, honest, and hard-working people. Anyone who is not will end the same way as those who were sentenced today. We will punish every such case and will even kill with our own hands.

Today we carry out an execution of six Jewish murderers who killed Jews. The sentence will be carried out by the Jewish police, who protect the ghetto and will go on protecting it. The police will carry out the sentence as its duty.

We begin!

Soon after, the police did indeed begin the execution. A few policemen surrounded each of the guilty men. The condemned men were extraordinarily calm. All of them climbed onto the hanging benches with majestic calm.

Hanged along with the five murderers was Yankl Avidon, who was accused of stabbing a Jewish policeman in the line of duty.

The execution took place on Jatkowa Street in the courtyard of the former meat market. The gallows were six former meat hooks.

In the surrounding streets of the ghetto, thousands of Jews waited for the sentence to be carried out, and thousands more breathed a sigh of relief on hearing that the six condemned men were no longer alive and that everything went peacefully. The reason for this is the sad result of a similar case in Lida, when those sentenced to prison began "squealing" with no rhyme or reason, thinking they could save themselves that way.

For an entire day, the ghetto lived under the shadow of that case of murder, considering it a great social disgrace that in these ghetto conditions, such a sophisticated murder among ghetto Jews could take place.

A few Jewish inhabitants of the ghetto appealed this morning to the chief of police, asking him to let them be the hangmen. The first was the leader of the gate guard, Levas. Another Jew brought ropes and asked to use them for the hanging. So great is the bitterness against the murderers and so great is the instinct to cleanse ourselves of the social and historical disgrace.

• • • • •  
**JUNE 5 [1942]**

#### THE GHETTO CALMED DOWN

As if nothing had happened. As if no great and tragic event had happened in our ghetto. All by itself and on its own initiative, the Jewish police hanged six Jews. The ghetto accepted the news very calmly and, to some extent, was grateful for the sentence.

There was the same feeling about the delayed sentence of Yankl Avidon, the murderer of a Jewish policeman.

Today at noon, posters were put up in the ghetto with the following announcement about carrying out the death sentence of the six murderers:

*[The announcement is not attached to the diary but is in the vivo Archive (Kaczerginski-Sutzkever Collection, no. 57). We present it here.]*

#### SENTENCE

Vilna, June 4, 1942

The court of the Vilna Ghetto, in the case against Avidon Yankl, accused in the court of an attempt to murder the policeman Greenfeld Yankl in the Vilna Ghetto, has decided:

To pronounce Avidon Yankl guilty of the attempt to murder the policeman Greenfeld in the fulfillment of his official duty in the month of November 1941 and to punish him with death. The sentence is to be sent at once to the Judenrat for confirmation.

Srolowicz

Chwojnik

Markus

#### THE OCCUPATION OF THE NEW GHETTO DISTRICT IS POSTPONED

According to an official announcement from the Housing Department, the occupation of the new ghetto district has been postponed until the 18th of this month, that is, a week from Sunday.

The issued instructions and orders to move and such are in effect.

They say that a week from Sunday, the houses will be occupied at Oszmiańska Street 4, 6, and 8, and Niemiecka 21. The courtyard of Niemiecka 21 will also be partially occupied. The remaining houses of the new ghetto district will be occupied a week later.

#### PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN THE NEW DISTRICT

In the new ghetto district, the following receive lodgings: (1) the sports unit (two big halls); (2) the school unit (a building for a new educational institution); (3) Health Department (a building for a tea house); (4) the scientific circles (two big rooms for a laboratory); (5) Food Supply Department (a building for a public kitchen); and (6) a large building for a children's clinic.

#### ONE YEAR OF PUBLIC KITCHENS IN THE GHETTO

In early October, it was the first anniversary of the public kitchens in the ghetto. The oldest kitchen, on Rudnicka 6, was a year old last Tuesday, the 6th of the month.

During the year of the existence of the public kitchens, more than 1 million lunches have been distributed. Now, about 3,500 lunches and dinners are distributed daily in the kitchens.

#### IMMEDIATE HELP FOR GHETTO WORKERS

Not waiting for the results from the winter help campaign, the Department of Social Welfare of the ghetto administration has taken concrete action: they have procured a certain number of sacks, which have been made into pants, shirts, and overalls, and distributed in the forests for the workers who most need them there.

This week, 70 pairs of clogs will be finished. The first installment will be distributed among the workers in the forest and the workers of Panemune and Virbalis.

#### APPEAL OF THE WINTER HELP CAMPAIGN

A mixed commission of representatives of the Aid Society and the Department of Social Welfare has been created, with the goal of carrying out the winter help campaign. The commission has already held a few meetings and issued an appeal to the ghetto residents to contribute to the maximum.<sup>62</sup>

A lottery has also been arranged for the same purpose.

62. The appeal of the Aid Society is in the yivo Archive (Kaczerginski-Sutzkever Collection, no. 13). It is also reproduced in Dworzecki 1948:455.

#### PAYERS OF THE HEAD TAX

Because of the obligation to pay a head tax, persons who do not receive an announcement about the head tax must come themselves to room 17, where they will be registered and given the announcement in hand.<sup>63</sup> So far, only a few people have responded.

Therefore, such persons were again warned not to neglect the issue: whoever cannot present proof by the 20th of this month that he has settled his head-tax matter will not receive a bread card for October.

#### OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE COURT

*Announcement No. 1:* The ghetto court announces that on November 2 of this year, the request of Słonimczyk Boris concerning the confirmation of the right of inheritance from his late brother Słonimczyk Meyer will be considered.

Persons who have inheritance or property claims from the late Słonimczyk Meyer can present written announcements in the ghetto court, Rudnicka 6, Room 11 (File No. 4F).

*Announcement No. 2:* Persons who have claims to the property of the late Słonimczyk Meyer or have some information about the property of the deceased must announce it to the court-appointed trustees: A. Dimitrovski and G. Refes at the address: A. Dimitrovski, Police Office.

#### MILITARY UNIFORMS OF THE LW<sup>64</sup>

This is the biggest unit of Jews working outside the ghetto, numbering about 350 persons. Of these, 147 work in the workshop of the unit and the rest in the warehouses and transport department. The unit works exclusively for the military, making new clothes and repairing old clothes.

Not only do men do this work, but so do a great many women.

The brigadier of the Jewish workers is Hugo Gronner.

#### THEATER LIFE

Theater life in the ghetto plays a big role here. We take that into consideration and present a sample review of the theater in the ghetto.

The two reviews were published in the ghetto bulletin, *Geto-yedies*, no. 8, October 11, 1942:

"YOU CAN'T KNOW A THING"<sup>65</sup>

This secret and playful, intriguing saying is the leitmotif of the new review in the Ghetto Theater. It has been performed four times now and every time to

63. On August 27, 1942, the Vilna mayor issued an order stating that the ghetto residents had to pay a head tax of 10 Marks. A reproduction of the announcement Kruk mentions is in Korczak 1946:259.

64. I.e., the unit that worked for the Luftwaffe, the German air force.

65. Several songs from "You Can't Know a Thing" are in Kaczerginski 1948.

a packed hall. The review is delightful and amusing. Most of the numbers come from our ghetto reality, present pictures of our life pleasantly and humorously, often a bit satirically exaggerated. A new one is the number "Melokhe-melukhe" [A trade is a realm], which popularizes the idea of productive work. As a first attempt, it is quite successful. But we shall have to think seriously how to find the proper manner to combine good artistic acting with the propaganda of useful ideas. If such performances are to attain their objective, they must not be boring. One must not see the white threads of agitation. Of the other numbers, no doubt the most interesting is "The Goblet"—a new adaptation of S. Frug's "The Cup," well done by Kasriel Brojdo.<sup>66</sup> Also interesting is the finale, "The Cue," where you can see how ghetto gossip is fabricated.

The cast becomes more accustomed to the roles and performs better each time. We should mention Kasriel Brojdo, the productive author of six successful numbers; Leyb Rosental,<sup>67</sup> the author of three interesting numbers; and Iser Wexler,<sup>68</sup> who created most of the music and conducted the orchestra very beautifully. Tasteful decorations were made by Uma Olkienicka, Rachel Sutzkever, and Yudl Mut. Technical production was by Shmuel Efron.

The general artistic direction is in the hands of Yisroel Segal. Our workers' crowd, which needs peace for the soul after a hard day, enjoys itself and laughs with gusto. The review has already made itself a good name.

#### "A CHAMBER CONCERT"

On Saturday, September 23, the long-awaited chamber music concert took place. The playing of the ensemble was consistent, beautiful, and noble, and you felt you were in a beautiful and fine musical atmosphere. Shimshn Khaykin (violin), Max Seiderman (cello), and Roza Nodelman (piano)—each one played with heart and gave his best.

Adolf Rumszyński sang lieder by Marsini [ . . . ], Chaninov, and others.

[ . . . ]

#### 25,000 PERMITS FOR WARSAW

After all the foggy information [that has so far come from Warsaw, we] know that the great Jewish Warsaw has acquired the right to 25,000 permits. What this

66. Born in Vilna in 1907. He graduated from the Hebrew Gymnasium and devoted himself to acting. Brojdo perished in January 1945.

67. Born in Vilna in 1916. He belonged to the famous Rosental family of Jewish printers. Author of countless songs and refrains, he also wrote creative texts for theater reviews. His sister, Khayele Rosental, popularized his songs, and the whole ghetto sang them. He perished in January 1945.

68. Born in 1907. Here Wexler, the conductor of the ghetto orchestra, is called Iser, but in Kaczerginski 1948, he is called Misha. He perished during the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto in September 1943.

means, we can appreciate properly. But we can also estimate that 25,000 permits probably means 100,000 people. Assuming that about 30,000, about 20,000 are outside the ghetto, it comes out to the wretched figure of 150,000 Jews remaining in Warsaw.

#### THREE YEARS IN VILNA

On the 10th of this month, it will be three years that I have been in Vilna as a refugee. I came here with a group of 60 writers, authors, and journalists. I spent many months here in the literary dormitory of TOZ (Sadowa 9). Later, with Pinkhes Schwartz and Ber Rosen, I moved to a private flat at Piwna 7, and later to Makowa 5. There I did a great deal of work for TSISHO, which was then in Vilna.<sup>69</sup> Wrote a book—*Three Years with the Yiddish Children's Reader*—which was scheduled for publication by TSISHO. Worked as a press representative of the Vilna OZE. Later, after the departure of my brother (Pinkhes Schwartz), moved to Kovno, from there back to Vilna, and settled at Kijowska 4 along with my brother-in-law. From there to the ghetto, where I have lived until now.

#### SIX JEWISH WOMEN KILLED

Going to trade along the railroad to Biała Waka, six women were shot.

#### UNREST IN THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES

From time to time, we have said that there is not complete calm in Lithuania. Not long ago, we told about the result of elections in Sweden.<sup>70</sup> I learn from the radio that there was unrest in Norway as a result of the fact that 700 people were arrested and 7 were shot.

Similar events take place in Denmark.

The case of Finland in general is in question. The radio talks about that often. In short, the Scandinavian countries are not at all in order.

#### OCTOBER 15 [1942]

#### GHETTO PROPERTY GROWS

An interesting fact of economic life in the ghetto. Despite all difficulties, despite the dozens and hundreds of obstacles, nevertheless it turns out that the property in the ghetto is growing constantly. Today ghetto property is worth 7,900,000 rubles, a figure which, in our conditions, is truly amazing.

69. The leaders of TSISHO, who were in Vilna as refugees in 1939–1940, carried on extensive activity, especially in publishing, until Lithuania came under Soviet control.

70. Probably noted on the missing pages.

. . . . .  
**OCTOBER 27 [1942]**

OSZMIANA

All ghetto residents are now talking about it. It is now clear. Jews were taken to Oszmiana from everywhere, especially old people, women, and children. The Jewish militia makes order there. "Order" consists of beating, prohibiting bringing in [food], etc.

The 30 Jewish police there are splendidly set up; they eat and drink the finest and spend their time with the local girls. None of the local residents believe in an Aktion—this is the major achievement of sending Jewish police there!

Not regarding the brutal treatment of the ghetto Jews there, the Jews of Oszmiana and the surrounding area consider the Jewish police as their salvation. . . .

If only it were true.

WHAT DOES G [ENS] SAY TO US

Abrasha [Chwojnik] and I went to try to get Comrade Bat'ke<sup>76</sup> out of Staroświeciany, which, we think, is threatened. In a chat, he [Gens] affirmed that nothing would happen to him [Bat'ke] because . . . he would segregate! . . . The same old song. He does this because he thinks he thus saves Jewish heads. He also says that Murer recently argued with him that there are only 15,000 Jews in the ghetto. We infer from this that this is left for us as a soap bubble, that . . . something can come out of it, and here, too, he will be the one who selects. . . .

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WARSAW

From someone who just came from Warsaw, I learn that the Aktion lasted two whole months. The Polish police were removed from around the ghetto, and their place was taken by police from Latvia and a regiment of Bolshevik deserters. The Jews from there were taken, as has been mentioned, to Belz[ec] (near Lwów) and to a forest around Malkinia. There the Jews are put into special underground entrances, poisoned, and burned.

Aktions in Otwock and Falenica. The Jews of Otwock and Falenica were shot on the spot.

The borders of the ghetto in Warsaw are Zamenhof-Nowolipki to Smocza-Gęsia and Gęsia to Zamenhof. Dzielna is included from Zamenhof to Smocza, Pawia the same. Between them is a section of Karmelicka and Nowolipki to Dzielna. The tiny Więzienna at Pawiak and the little street Nowa Karmelicka.

The Germans are now occupied with the Jewish property and take it out.

76. The teacher Motl Gilinski, known as Bat'ke. He graduated from the Yiddish Teachers' College in Vilna and then worked in the Medem Sanitarium. During the liquidation of the Świeciany Ghetto, he moved to Vilna, and when the Vilna Ghetto was liquidated, he was sent to Estonia, where he perished. For his biography, see *Teachers' Memorial Book* 1954:93-96.

KIELCE, RADOM, CZĘSTOCHOWA, LUBLIN

Aktions were carried out in all these cities and their surrounding areas. There are Jews in Lwów.

RADIO KOŚCIUSZKO ABOUT THE POLISH MILITIA IN WARSAW

The illegal Polish radio reports that the Polish militia in Warsaw has betrayed and is in the service of the power.

What would the same radio say about the Vilna Jewish police? . . .

. . . . .  
**OCTOBER 28 [1942]**

HOW JEWS DESTROY JEWS (ABOUT THE SLAUGHTER IN OSZMIANA)

After the Aktion of old people, the Vilna Ghetto is once more in an indescribable depression. Now there is the question of Oszmiana.

Whatever we may have foreseen and written about many times, it is all hardly a fraction of the actual situation.

Writing when your hair stands on end, when none of us can believe it, would mean to tell only a minimum of the factual [situation]. Let the facts speak.

Facts

As I learn from unofficial sources:

When the Jewish police from Vilna came to Oszmiana, Jews had already been gathered there from Szafrany, Solum, Smorgonie, etc. All of them brought many things, often even furniture. Learning that the Vilna Jewish police ruled in Oszmiana, the Jews were beside themselves with joy. Most of those who came were old, sick, women, and children. Up to 2,300 Jews were gathered there. All were given permits, and the Jews grew calm.

The police commissioner, Mr. D[essler], came to that Judenrat there and demanded 1,500 Jews. During the discussion he played with a revolver, not, God forbid, thinking of anybody in particular, he is just playing, as if nothing had happened. . . .

How did Mr. D. get a revolver?

How is it that the same Mr. demands that they should turn [Jews] over to him? . . .

And what are the Ipatinga from Kovno and Vilna doing here?

Why did they, too, come here?

Is Mr. D. their spokesman?

The chair[man] did not agree to turn over Jews. Mr. D. went to Vilna and returned with an answer—ostensibly bargained down to 600 . . . sick people, old people, and cripples.

### How Does It Happen?

On Monday, the 23rd of this month, an order was issued that all Jews must appear in a city square. The Jewish police were divided into three groups. One drove the Jews from houses, the second from prayer houses (where the transferees were gathered), the third was occupied in the square.

### Segregation and the End

No one suspected any threat. Nevertheless, not everyone went to the square. There the Jewish police officers themselves segregated and decided who would go right and who would go left. . . . Jews saw themselves caught in a net and started thrusting money. For example, a woman voluntarily gave away 800 gold rubles. This is how 200 sick people and 392 old people, 592 altogether, were selected, and 410 of them were sent out of town.

On the square, among the "condemned," a Jew suddenly began singing aloud "El Male Rahamim."<sup>77</sup> The whole square wept, and tears flowed from the eyes of some of the Jewish policemen.

The 410 selected people were sent out of town, where 150 peasant wagons were waiting. From there, they were sent 8 kilometers beyond Oszmiana. The execution took place in the presence of 8 Lithuanian and 7 Jewish policemen.

The leaders of the whole "enterprise" were Mr. D[essler], [Nosn] Ring, [Moy-she] Levas. All of them had revolvers.

### Postscript

A postscript after the dry report is superfluous. Nevertheless, let it be said:

1. In the few days the Jewish police spent there, the 30 policemen drank 100 bottles of brandy. There was a special "libation" among Jewish and Lithuanian police. The Judenrat furnished a roast sheep to one of the "gluttons."
2. The policemen brought whole sacks of jewelry and money to Vilna. This applies mainly to Messrs. D[essler] and Levas. They came from there with full sacks!
3. Aside from that, the Jewish police who worked in Oszmiana got special rubber truncheons. . . .
4. People tell more: when the Jewish police were already in the wagons, leaving Oszmiana after accomplishing this job, one of the heroes, our long-famous hero Drezin,<sup>78</sup> sang to the assembled Jews:

We made ourselves happy and bright,  
You, too, have yourselves a fine, good night.<sup>79</sup>

77. A prayer for the dead.

78. The identity of Drezin is unknown.

79. A couplet closing a traveling amateur show.

During the Aktion, the Jewish policeman [Ayzik] Averbukh became hysterical and had to be revived.

### Finale

When the Jewish police came back to the ghetto, in "full splendor" (uniforms and sticks), they marched into the ghetto as in a victory parade. Two days after their return, there was a police assembly in the ghetto, where Gens justified the treatment with the motive of saving Jews. Dessler spoke about everything openly and with no restraint. Most of the police ascribed to the theory of the commandant and reacted even by cheering. Policeman Friedman openly pointed out that even if you are unanimous, about such a matter, you should not clap your hands.

The mood in the ghetto is still terrified. The tragedy is that the policemen don't breathe a word about it. Nevertheless, something reaches the public, and the tragedy is that the . . . public mostly approves of Gens's attitude.

The public figures that perhaps this may really help. The Jewish police made money, and that certainly was allowed in order to corrupt them. It is quite probable that a similar Aktion must soon be performed again, and then the Jewish policemen will themselves volunteer. . . .

This is the sad summary of the sad end of the Oszmiana Jews.

### PEOPLE MOVE AND . . . PEOPLE CURSE

We have already written about the Germanization process taking place here for some time. Concerning [that], there have already been many tragic incidents, which we have unfortunately not recorded. Now, in the local press, an article appeared about it, which must be mentioned because of its cynicism.

The DNB reports that because of the transfer of Lithuanian peasants who belong to the German nation, which has been going on for some time in the Vilna area, and because certain elements have started inciting in this connection, it is officially announced:

The following districts are included in the transfer: Pobierze—327 landowners; Rudomino—6 landowners; Mejszagola—5; Rzesza—7.

Thus, only 345 Lithuanian families are transferred. The communiqué announces that everything possible will be done so that those who must leave their homes are treated properly and given suitable work. Of course, for annihilating livestock and "dead" inventories, for destroying food, etc., people will be punished even with death.

### SOMETHING IS HAPPENING AGAIN

Lately there have been many suspicions that in the big world, something is happening again. Persistent rumors come from German units, telling that peace is imminent between Germany and the Soviet Union, that negotiations are already

## NEWS FROM THOSE EXILED TO RUSSIA

I learn from a reliable source that the famous Vilna attorneys Zacks and Feldstein, exiled by the Bolsheviks to the Soviet Union, are now in Persia.

After the news from B. Singer, this is further proof that even from Russia, a lot fled abroad.

## KAILIS IN THE GHETTO THEATER

Yesterday a few hundred residents of Kailis came to the ghetto for a special performance for them. For the performance, Ghetto Chief Mr. Gens gave his subjects the gift of a meaningless speech.

• • • • •  
**MARCH 8 [1943]**

## MURER SEARCHES

For the past two weeks, Murer has not only been a frequent guest in the ghetto but has started a new course here. He wanders around the ghetto, drops in on various apartments, searches and rummages around, and very often finds and takes things not allowed in the ghetto.

Today he was in the ghetto again, sniffing in all holes. Now he drops in on some Jew, a hat maker, catches him at work, and orders a case brought against him. The same thing happened with a tin smith. He also dropped in on a pawn shop on Jatkowa. He wondered how Jews in the ghetto obtained such valuable things and ordered them confiscated. Nothing good will come to the ghetto from all this.

## RATIONS ARE "REGULATED"

For some days, the ghetto officials have been discussing that among themselves. At first, the new distribution of rations evoked a serious attitude. It looked like a fair allocation, where they took into consideration both your salary and the size of your family. Now the issue has exploded, and people joke in the ghetto: rations are distributed: (1) according to whom you know . . . ; (2) according to . . . salaries; (3) according to the size of the family. The first point is dominant. This is how the just food distribution among ghetto employees looks.

## AGAIN THE ROSENBERG [TASK FORCE]

The work the Rosenberg Task Force began a year ago should have lasted no more than four to six weeks. By now, it has lasted more than a year, and it looks as if the Rosenberg deserters themselves want to keep the shop as long as possible.

I. REDUCTION. Now they are carrying out a reduction among the Jewish workers, as they themselves say, so there will be fewer work[ers] and more work for the remaining Jewish workers. Clearly, the pretense mainly has something to do with the party deserters from the Rosenberg Task Force. . . .

2. ADDRESSES. We once attached the first specification of the cartons sent out. Now I attach the second. This specification is connected with the address of our first specification.

I also attach an instruction with a Yiddish translation. In the letter there is, first, the address of the Riga center for the occupied areas (Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Byelorussia), and for the special center, Smolensk. The letter contains the address where the transports are to be sent.

[The documents are missing.]

3. FURTHER WORK. Another order comes from them: historical and architectural descriptions of all Vilna churches, all palaces, theaters, archives, libraries, colleges, etc.

[We] undertook the work with great diligence. The answer to the query is extremely topical. To describe churches—to get a special permit to confer with priests, to get into the churches, etc. The conclusion: contacting all of them means obtaining [information about] potential melinas, literature, etc. It is worth the effort. . . .

## I TAKE MY SWEET TIME WITH THE BOOKSTORE

A year ago May, a book sale was set up in the ghetto. The purpose: morale—a bookstore in the ghetto! Second, the very fact that books are distributed in the ghetto; third, the books collected were made good use of; and above all, the ghetto administration didn't lose anything in it.

Now, because of recent events—especially the strict supervision Murer exercises over ghetto enterprises—the ghetto chief and police chief asked whether to liquidate the bookstore, or at least to hide it. We hide it, and it will be set up through a "back door" into a courtyard.

It is indeed interesting now to know what the book enterprise in the ghetto has performed so far:

From June 1942 to March 1, 1943—a period of nine months—the bookstore sold 3,396 books, 2,349 in Yiddish, 471 in Hebrew, 449 religious.

## TEXTBOOKS AND PRAYER BOOKS, ONLY IN SINGLE COPIES

Recently, the ghetto police chief ordered all ghetto inhabitants to turn all books in to the library. In private homes, there can be only a single copy of textbooks and prayer books. The books must be turned in by the 12th of this month; afterward, searches will be made of houses.

Thus is the order. The announcement made an understandable impression on the ghetto inhabitants. Who wants to part with the few books acquired in the ghetto? . . .

## JEWS MAY NOT BUY NEWSPAPERS OUTSIDE THE GHETTO

By order of the ghetto chief, ghetto inhabitants are prohibited from buying newspapers, journals, and such outside the ghetto.

#### AFTER THE PROVINCIAL CAMPS HAVE BEEN REMOVED

The rooms on Oszmiańska 10 have been disinfected, and the so-called collective home is to be set up there. First of all, families are to be located there who have to be isolated from their current apartments for cleanliness. Then the so-called single people. The homes are set up under special supervision to maintain cleanliness and internal order.

The buildings are repaired and well ordered. They have running water, plumbing, and toilets. Wooden beds are provided for all residents.

#### WHAT THE WHOLE GHETTO PRODUCES

[ . . . ]

[Pages 625–627 of the original are missing.]

*What Do They Have in Their Heads? . . .  
What Else Do They Have in Their Heads  
But What Do "They" Have in Mind*

March 11 [1943]

*The Sword of Damocles Hangs over Us  
500 Books for the Ghetto  
Gens Calls a Conference*

March 12 [1943]

*Old and New Accusers [?]*

[Page 628 begins in the middle of a debate about Jewish education in the ghetto.]

[ . . . art]ists and Jewish education, about teaching respect for your own people, love of labor, etc.

As usual, friend Kalmanowicz finds it necessary to shout that the spirit of the Jewish schools is not Jewish. Here of all places, in the ghetto, he wants to settle accounts with the former Vilna Academic Gymnasium for not teaching Hebrew. Brojdo, as always, takes the floor and fights for national Jewish . . . dances. His speech, as usual, is taken as a review number. Glazman doesn't see any danger in Yiddish. For him, it is important that it be a national spirit.

All such moods are defended by the former principal of the Vilna Yiddish Academic Gymnasium, Comrade [Leyb] Turbowicz, and the teachers: Rokhl Brojdo, Khantshe Mann, Miriam Gutgestalt, and G. Yashunski, as the director of the Cultural Department.

In the whole mess of speeches and thanks, Rabbi Jakubson also spoke. . . . He thinks not only that they should teach religion, but also that they should not teach anything that might be against religion. Typically, almost all the speakers nevertheless spoke against religion.

Finally, of course, the chief spoke. He thinks that two speakers here had integrity, that is, Wittenberg and Glazman. The first wants Bolsheviks, but in the

ghetto that is impossible. The second, with whom "he" [Gens] agrees, supports the nationalist attitude.

March 15, [1943]

#### NO COMPARISONS!

Years ago, I happened to read S. Anski's book *The Destruction of Poland, Galicia, and Bukovina*. I remember, as if it were now, how much pain and grief I experienced as I leafed through those volumes. That was how it happened then, years ago. Now I have leafed through those memoirs again.

The book is full of horrible events—race hatred, antisemitism, pogroms, victims, and such. But when I compare what is now going on around us with what I have just read, I can't figure it out: if that was destruction, what is this now? . . . I share my thoughts with friend Weinig from Vilna, who says: "If these events here are called destruction, those events in Poland, Galicia, and Bukovina were an idyll. . . ."

The pogrom in Lwów produced . . . 18 dead. So it was called the bloody pogrom of Lwów.

In one place in those books, Dr. Oder<sup>71</sup> laments: "A few Jews have suffered from the pogroms. There is no livelihood, people are being grabbed for work." In short, he says, "Jewish life is unbearable here." If it was unbearable there, what is our life?

I look for comparisons:

There are certain parallels, which can be traced through the whole chain of Jewish history: robbery, thievery and . . . annihilation. We have a lot of such parallels.

The Russian soldier, the officer, the general, sees Jewish spies everywhere to blame for their defeat. He shouts: "You, Yids, must all be slaughtered, driven out!" Today's exterminator sees us as enemy number 1—a race that undermines the existence of the world, a people that must be destroyed. They don't see Jews as spies but as partners of Roosevelt and Churchill. Who is making the war? The English-American plutocrats, for the sake of Jewish Bolshevism.

Returning to the destruction of Poland, Galicia, and Bukovina, I want to find a definition—if that was destruction, what is this?

There is really no comparison! . . .

#### RUMORS, RUMORS, AND MORE RUMORS

After all the daily rumors, a new rumor: all Jews in the surrounding camps and the entire area are rounded up and sent to Vilna. Jews begin blinking, their blood runs cold. Is last year's spring starting again? . . .

71. I.e., Dr. Oder of Tarnów. The quotation is from vol. 4 of Anski 1920–1925, in the second part of "The Destruction of Jewish Poland, Galicia and Bukovina," 176–177.



#### CONCERNING PERMITS

Concerning permits, employees of the ghetto administration must come under the same regulations as all workers of other units. They must avoid walking through the main streets, must walk fast, and must join approaching columns or individual Jews they meet in the streets.

#### GHETTO LIBRARY

Trials for not returning books from the ghetto library were recently held in the ghetto court for eight subscribers. Each was punished with one day of arrest on probation. To cover the loss of the ghetto treasure and the court costs.

**BENEFIT PERFORMANCE FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF ESTER LIPOWSKA**  
Recently, in the Ghetto Theater, for Ester Lipowska's 40th anniversary in the theater, there was a performance of "The Treasure." The hall was full.

After the second act, Ester Lipowska was congratulated by the director, Yisroel Segal, and the artists Blacher and Bergolski. The modest celebration, with its moving warmth and in the special circumstances of our Ghetto Theater, made a big impression.

#### APRIL 5 [1943]

#### RUMORS

Since early in the morning, the mood has been dreadfully unclear. The tale spreads from ear to ear that the trains from Oszmiana and Święciany were taken, along with the Jewish police, to . . . Ponar.

Nobody believes it, but they do listen. Soon come details: this morning, Gens supposedly came to the station to the Święciany train and ordered all Jewish police to get out of the railroad station immediately. He ordered the doctors and nurses summoned for that purpose to return. He himself was very upset.

#### MORE THAN 4,000 IN 83 CARS

It is afternoon. As I write these lines, the entire ghetto appears as if it were on the brink of an Aktion. As if we are about to play our last card. The last chord.

Everything we have written above is no rumor. Now it is clear: instead of going to Kovno, the trains from Oszmiana and Święciany went to Ponar . . . 83 cars with more than 4,000 Jewish victims were taken there.

#### THEY SHOOT!

As I write these lines, I know for sure that the executions are still taking place. The train cars are opened, and people are taken into the forest, one car after another.

Some run away. Shots are heard all over the area. Peasants say they are hiding Jews who tell about it all.

#### THE POLICE BACK IN THE GHETTO

At about noon, a group of police led by Gens marched into the ghetto. At the checkpoint, the column was dispersed and everyone ran home. Soon it was clear:

The group from the train with Gens experienced difficult moments. They were sure they were being taken to be shot. At night, when they saw they were in Ponar, Gens ordered the policemen to run away. He soon noticed that the train was surrounded by Lithuanians and ordered them to stand together since it was too late to run.

[On the original page is a handwritten addition: "At the railroad station, Dessler shot a Jewish boy who tried to run away."]

The leaders of the Lithuanians in Ponar asked the Jewish police to get out of the car. All were taken to the forest and from there were transported in a truck to the Gestapo. There, a good supper was waiting for them and a bed. At 6:30 in the morning, Gens was released on condition that he return soon. He ran to the train commanded by Police Chief Dessler. At 11 in the morning, an order came that Jewish police could return to the ghetto. And so at 12, the Jewish police arrived in the ghetto.

#### UNTIL WHEN?

There is no longer the slightest doubt. Everything we foresaw has been realized in a much uglier and more shameful way.

As I write these lines, the odor of more than 4,000 Jews bleeding to death is in the air. Four thousand, taken in a horrible way and deceived, lulled by promises, let themselves be taken to the sacrifice. Not only were 4,000 lives taken, but also all their goods and property, money, gold, and all they were allowed to take with them supposedly to Kovno.

The Ponar sea of blood and tears has not yet dried, and now we again bathe in laments and weeping.

Is there no end even to the curse?

Until when? How long?

#### MURER IN THE GHETTO

As if nothing had happened, at 3 this afternoon, Murer came into the ghetto; as if nothing had happened, he arrived at "his" workshops; and . . . as if nothing had happened, he asked the half-dead, beaten Gens a question: "What's new?" When Gens replied that he probably knew and asked him what he now thought about the ghetto, Murer once again, as if nothing had happened, answered coolly and calmly.

"The Vilna Ghetto is not under consideration. . . ."

The warm Jewish blood has not yet turned cold, and some already console themselves with Murer's words—the Vilna Ghetto is not under consideration.

#### THE COMMANDERS

People say that both commanders are lying in bed in their apartments. The doctor was brought twice to Dessler today. Except for Murer, Gens didn't appear for anyone.

Nothing to appear for! . . .

#### SIX ESCAPEES

Now, at 7 in the evening, there are six escapees from Ponar in the ghetto. One of the six is a wounded woman.

At about 8 in the evening, there were already nine escapees, including children between 8 and 11 years old.

#### LITTLE YOM KIPPUR IN SHOELKE'S PRAYER HOUSE

Just as the information about the new murder in Ponar was definitely confirmed, a Little Yom Kippur was declared by the Orthodox. Shoelke's Prayer House was full of Jews. They recited psalms. Jews wept horribly.

. . . . .  
**APRIL 6 [1943]**

#### WHAT HAPPENED?

After all the events of yesterday, the first half of today gives the impression of being our last hours:

Weiss suddenly showed up in the ghetto and demanded 25 Jewish policemen to go to Ponar with him to bury the dead. Everyone shuddered. Why Jews, not to mention Jewish police?

Soon an automobile slipped into the ghetto and the chief of the Gestapo, Neugebauer, drove up in front of Rudnicka 6.

What is the head of the Gestapo doing in the ghetto today? . . .

The ghetto chief received him, and he invited himself to [Gens's] office. While the two of them were together, the ghetto was on pins and needles. It was clear to everyone that Weiss was taking the ghetto police and that the purpose of Neugebauer's visit was an Aktion, if not the complete liquidation of the ghetto. The turmoil increased by the second.

Meanwhile, another event: the chief of the fourth precinct<sup>5</sup> crept into the ghetto through a melina, thus discovering how people bring flour through there. . . .

5. It is not clear who this is, but certainly he was not a Jew.

By the time the street learned what was happening, the tension had risen to the highest degree. They say that people bid farewell to one another.

But soon it became clear: Weiss assured Police Chief Dessler that it was a "simple" matter—just to bury the Jews who tried to run away during the Aktion. They are scattered over the fields and have to be cleared away. He also said that he was taking [the police] and that he would bring them back.

Neugebauer's visit: his first question was about the mood in the ghetto. When Gens explained the situation to him and said that everyone is depressed about recent events, he said he had come especially because of that. He assured him that the Vilna Ghetto is useful, and nothing threatens it. Moreover, as he said, "As a German, he had to do it; as a man he regrets it very much."

The "visit" to express condolences to the ghetto, as it were, nevertheless did not soothe. Everyone is feverish.

And what about the discovered melina? The chief has taken a bribe, and the melina can go on serving "its purpose." . . .

#### THE 30

In the ghetto, meanwhile, people are busy guessing what might be happening to the 30 policemen Weiss took. Some say that Jewish policemen are used for this same purpose in many places, but that there are also cases where, after using them, the eyewitnesses are shot. The commissars [Nosn] Ring, [Moyshe] Levas, Bernstein, and others, went with the 30.

After the Gestapo chief left, Commander Dessler went to Ponar and came back calmer: they really are collecting corpses and will come back in the evening.

#### NINE WAGONS

The Labor Office in the ghetto soon received an order to send nine wagons with 15 men to Ponar. Purpose: to bring Jewish objects from the cars?! . . .

This sounds strange. But the order was immediately carried out.

#### EVERYTHING IS DEAD

In the ghetto, it is as if everything were dead. The offices aren't open. People aren't working in the workshops. No one understands the events that have occurred. Rarely is there clear and certain information. Everything is veiled in fog. Everything looks unlikely. Every rustle is blown out of proportion. Some say the executions were carried out by Latvians. Some know that they were carried out by the 200 Ukrainians brought especially for that. People say that Hingst and Murer didn't know about the events in Ponar. The street seethes and argues incessantly. No one works, not even in the German units. The ghetto and the ghetto Jews are truly depressed. Everything is dead.

#### PEOPLE BANG THE WALLS

Late at night on the 5th and 6th, I went through the ghetto and what I encountered sounded like horrible music. From all corners echoes of hammers were heard, which, in the quiet night, in the tormented ghetto, sounded like a song of blood and tears. People are banging holes for melinas. Recent events have led to this, and now people are speeding up the work in the middle of the night.

#### THINGS ARE BAD IN THE GHETTO LIBRARY

During the previous Aktions in the Vilna Ghetto, we often reported that after every Aktion, the library was full of readers who tried to soothe themselves with books. Now the library is silent. Only a few come to exchange books. The only intensive activity is among children. The ghetto reacts completely differently now from how it did back then.

#### THREE WOMEN AND SIX CHILDREN

Now, at 5 in the afternoon, three women who were rescued from the shooting have come into the ghetto with a group from a unit. All three are from Świeciany. One of them was wounded in the arm. I was present when her arm was bandaged.

Six children, aged 8 to 11, were also brought to the same courtyard (Rudnicka 13). One of them tells that he ransomed himself from a Lithuanian for three gold coins. The six children came with a group of Jewish workers from Porubanek.

The women say that their whole carload ran away. The Lithuanians who led them into the forest to the execution whispered to them to run because . . . they were going to be shot. Everyone ran away. The three women are sisters.

#### A TWO-YEAR-OLD CHILD

One of those who came from Ponar was a two-year-old child. A Christian woman who lives not far from the execution place heard crying all night. Before dawn, she left her hut and went toward the sound of the crying. There, among a heap of corpses, she found a crying child. She took it with her and brought it to Kailis, where it was sent to the ghetto.

#### THE POLICE BACK IN THE GHETTO

Now, at 9 in the evening, the 30 policemen have come back to the ghetto. Depressed and exhausted, they say they collected corpses scattered over railroad tracks, fields, etc. Altogether, they think they gathered about 300-400 persons.

We will tell more about this later.

#### LOOT

Soon after the police, nine wagons with the 15 workers were driven into the ghetto. Eight of the wagons were full of foodstuffs: potatoes, flour, bread, etc. One

wagon was packed with clothing. Everything was turned over to the winter aid [campaign].

#### A WOUNDED PERSON AMID THE LOOT

On one of the nine wagons, a wounded young man was also brought. He was immediately turned over to the ghetto hospital. He was wounded nine times.

#### LIETUKIS ALSO TAKE AN INHERITANCE

Among the inheritance takers, the Lietukis also got 26 wagons of foodstuffs.

#### AND IN BEZDANY EVERYTHING IS FINE

Meanwhile, people say that the five wagons of Jews sent to Bezdany arrived there safely and everything is "perfectly fine."

People look at one another and don't believe it: everything is perfectly fine!

" " " " " "  
**APRIL 7 [1943]**

#### THE GHETTO CANNOT CALM DOWN

The ghetto cannot calm down. Why should it? Even the gullible don't believe the German conferences and the continuous reassurances. The irritation in the ghetto is incessant. Today the group of 30 policemen was again taken to continue their work in Ponar.

#### "LOOT"

All we have written so far about loot was only the beginning of a big "gift" the Gestapo is preparing for us.

All day today, they brought masses of things and bundles, just as they had been packed by their owners. They bring food, furniture, cutlery, and everything that was in the wagons. The inhabitants observing all this curse that the ghetto is taking it. . . . Jews stand and shake their heads, looking at the furniture:

"This is how they prepared for a life," says a Jew, watching them take a wash-tub off a truck. "Thinking," he says, "that they would arrange a life here." . . . Some women cry and cannot watch. Others think it is disgusting to look at it, that all this is a profanation. Nevertheless, scoundrels who immediately try to share in the inheritance aren't lacking either. People snatch, take advantage of opportunities, and steal—Sodom! . . .

#### WHAT THE BRIGADIER FROM PANEMUNE SAYS

A brigadier from the town of Panemunė, a railroad station beyond Kovno, spent today here. He goes to the Kovno Ghetto almost every day and is in contact with everybody there.

What does he say?

In Kovno, everyone is calm. There are 16,000 Jews in the ghetto. He says that a few days ago, Müller (the so-called Kovno Murer) received an announcement to prepare a place in the ghetto for 5,000 Jews from Vilna district. Müller did not want to take the Jews. The Jew Lipiec,<sup>6</sup> Gens's counterpart there, was of a similar opinion.

So Kovno received a letter to prepare a place for 5,000 Jews. Kovno refused.

#### THOSE WHO RETURNED FROM PONAR MUST REGISTER WITH THE GESTAPO

Today's announcement that those who came into the ghetto after the 5th of this month, in fact those from Ponar, must register with the Gestapo, once again struck like a thunderbolt.

What good are all these methods of calming anymore?

I attach the announcement about this.

[*The announcement is missing.*]

#### WHERE JEWS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO LIVE

According to a letter from the Gestapo today, Jews are not allowed to cross the threshold of the regions of Oszmiana, Święciany, Eyshishok, Jaszuny, Turgiele, Rudziszki, and others under penalty of death.

Hundreds of Jews have lived there and created a cultural life. Today, after the inveigling and killing of Jews, a "Pale of Settlement" is declared there. I attach a copy of the letter.

[*The copy is missing.*]

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**APRIL 8 [1943]**

#### THE GHETTO HAS LOST ITS BEARINGS

All who still live and walk the streets of the Vilna Ghetto are truly lost and helpless; everyone is waiting for the end—for liquidation. Most workers don't go to work. Those who do, don't really work. Nothing is in your head—anyway, it is all coming to an end! . . . This is the mood, and this is how most Vilna Ghetto residents think. Naturally, this panic is the greatest reservoir of rumors and Jewish gossip.

#### CONCERNING ZAWALNA 4

As we said, the workers and their families from Rzesza and Biała Waka were settled outside the ghetto in the building on Zawalna 4. Some come into the ghetto—people are uncontrollable.

6. His name was Liptser, not Lipiec.

#### THE GESTAPO BECOMES THE BOSS OF THE GHETTO

In the course of events, a rumor circulated that the Gestapo is taking over the ghetto. So the ghetto is being taken out of the hands of the district commissar and turned over to the Gestapo.

Is this good? Is this bad? No one can say anything about it. It is hard to judge whether the rumor is true or only a rumor.

#### THINGS, THINGS, AND THINGS

Meanwhile, the things of those killed are brought here. The ghetto warehouses are crammed with things. "Tatters" for many millions flow in here.

#### GENS AND DESSLER VISIT THE GESTAPO

In the chaos, in the horrifying shudder of events, anything seems likely. All rumors come together, and no one can deny them. A brigadier, a certain Engineer Pruzan, grabs his wife and mother-in-law and runs away from the ghetto—he won't spend another night in the ghetto. Supposedly, this very night, Zawalna and part of the ghetto will be liquidated.

Gens and Dessler, who have hardly left their homes up to now and haven't officiated or appeared for anyone, have nevertheless gone to the Gestapo, and once again reported on the rumors in a clear-cut way and requested the plain facts. The Gestapo was even offended, but once again they repeated that nothing threatens the Vilna Ghetto: if you want, you can take Zawalna 4 into the ghetto. They don't care. Once more, they gave assurances that the workers from Rzesza and Biała Waka would return to their workplaces as soon as barracks were built there. Incidentally, they said that Jewish workers were building the barracks. They also gave assurances that the camps in Bezdany and Kiena would remain as they were. The last two pieces of information are somewhat soothing. They were signs of the likelihood that this is not yet the final liquidation. Moreover, the two agents received a "reward." The announcement of the 6th, that all those who came into the ghetto after the 5th [must register], has been withdrawn. More than 10 Jews have been released from [the clutches of] the Gestapo. "Reward," "reward," and . . . "reward."

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**APRIL 9 [1943]**

#### IN ANY CASE? . . .

Despite all reassurances, despite all the soothing, despite all objective signs that danger is not yet knocking on the door, a lot of people spent the night in melinas. In some homes, people don't get undressed. All night long, they work with spades, digging melinas and underground passages. The FPO is fully prepared. The membership has increased—just in case. . . .

#### THE CASE OF GARMIZE

In any case, meanwhile, a certain Garmize, Ber, who works in one of the local hospitals, negotiated with a German to buy a revolver and the German turned him over to the Gestapo.

#### MURER IN THE GHETTO. HE TALKS AND . . . BIDS FAREWELL

Early this morning Murer came here. He went off toward Oszmiańska, to the tailors' workshop. On Strashun, terrified people began running, falling, there was shrieking and shoving. Murer noticed all this and looked on, satisfied, as the little Jews trembled at his glance.

In the tailors' workshop, he assembled all the workers and delivered a speech calming them down, speaking as a "colleague," challenging them to work well and honestly, not to steal and, in case anyone, "God forbid," noticed such things, to denounce it. He is going on vacation. He is making efforts so that the workers will be better supplied on the Jewish holidays. The workers listened to him, went back to work, and said that this was the age of the Messiah, Murer talks with them as human beings. Nevertheless, it went in one ear and out the other.

#### GESTAPO IN THE GHETTO

At the same time, Mayer—the deputy of Neugebauer, the head of the Gestapo—came to the ghetto. He strolled calmly around the empty streets of the ghetto and calmly . . . left.

#### EIGHT IN THE EVENING, A MEETING AT THE HOME OF THE HEAD OF THE GHETTO

I have been summoned to a consultation at eight this evening at the home of the ghetto chief. Apparently all department directors were summoned to the meeting, along with the police commissars and some individuals, including me. People expect that the chief will talk at length about the events.

#### THE PROVINCIALS ARE TAUGHT THE ALPHABET

The "lucky ones" from the provinces who have been safely moved to the ghetto don't yet know the local customs and flout all accepted rules. Hence an announcement was published today, teaching them the Vilna alphabet.

We attach Announcement Number 105.

[*The announcement is missing.*]

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APRIL 10 [1943]

#### THE MEETING AT MR. GENS'S

In the company of about 20 men, Mr. Gens began his speech. The mood among those present was tense: what will the chief, Mr. Gens, who was recently so horribly and so sadly exploited for the slaughter, say?

Somewhat nervously, he tells the story of the resettlement we have often written about. He knows, is fully aware, that the Germans devilishly exploited him. He also thinks that not all the German authorities who conferred with him knew about the plan.

What happened?

Murer didn't want to let new provincial Jews into the ghetto. Finally they convinced him to take in 1,000 Jews, families of 078 people who work in Vilna. Kovno got an order to take in 5,000 Jews. But neither Müller nor the Jewish leader Lipiec wanted to, and both refused at the last minute. It was at that moment that the idea of Ponar probably arose. If Vilna and Kovno had wanted to take all the Jews, the Aktion in this form would not have occurred and the resettlement would have been carried out peacefully. As proof, the chief cites the fact that the train permits for Gens and Dessler were already written out clearly: Michaliszki-Kovno and Świąciany-Kovno (incidentally, their photos were attached). Even the Polish railroad workers had the route Vilna-Kovno on their train passes. Mr. Gens tells the rest of the story just as we have already written. A railroad worker reveals the secret that the train is going to Ponar. Gens tries to telephone Weiss, and they are now in Ponar, from where they are taken to the Gestapo. So, from 1 to 4 in the morning, he was with the police in the Gestapo. Weiss then comes to him and, at the chief's request, is allowed to go to the railroad station, where Mr. Dessler is to arrive with his train, to tell him of Ponar in time. Next, Gens's description of how he comes to the railroad station. And he tells that seven cars from the Świąciany train were uncoupled, five went to Bezdany, and two, with the Judenrats of the towns, remain in Vilna. Dessler is immediately sent from Ponar to the ghetto, where he arrives at noon, and at about 1, Mr. Gens also arrives with his police.

#### ABOUT THE POLICE FOR PONAR

Civilians were demanded for burying the slain, says Mr. Gens. He was afraid of this, and he himself offered his policemen.

#### ABOUT THE PROPERTY OF THE SLAIN

Here, he considers morale and comes to the conclusion that the property must not be taken. Nevertheless, in the name of the ghetto, he argues that the ghetto inhabitants are naked and hungry, and here food and clothing are provided. How to justify the refusal? Why provoke?

Then Mr. Gens comes to another conclusion: rather than let strangers enjoy it, better that it should remain among Jews (? . . .). So he decided to take the things.

What will happen next? He cannot guarantee that there will be no more Aktionen in the ghetto. There could be an Aktion of the non-productive element; qualitatively, the ghetto has deteriorated. The most important thing is to raise our productive capacity. Everyone who can work must work! Mr. Dessler and Mr. Brojdo also spoke along these lines.

Altogether, the council didn't produce anything new. Everyone present was silent. What you think, you can't say. No one wants to condone the deal. We listened and went home depressed, because what has happened is still far from the end.

So we are once again in line.

#### A "PALE OF SETTLEMENT" IN THE VILNA AREA

On the 8th of this month, the chief of the Vilna Ghetto, Mr. Gens, received a letter from the Vilna German Security Police and SD, dated the 7th of the month, saying:

Under penalty of death, Jews are forbidden from now on to enter these areas of Vilna district: the districts of Święciany, Oszmiana, Eyshishok, regions of Jaszuny and Turgiele (Vilna district), Rudziszki, Onuškis, Aukštadvaris, Semeliškės (Troki district).

I officially request that you notify the inhabitants of the ghetto. At the same time, the Jewish Labor Office must get the proper orders to obtain my permission before they establish a labor unit of Jews in Vilna district.

#### GRISHA'S NOMINATION

Even before the meeting at Gens's house, Grisha [Yashunski] told me that a committee had been formed today to deal with the property from Ponar. Those appointed to the committee include Mr. Fried as chairman and Yashunski as vice-chairman. Now he asks me if he should accept the job. I answer that I wouldn't do it. Yashunski is satisfied with my answer, since Abrasha [Chwojnik] had given the same answer. He even says that even if there were hints of repercussions, he wouldn't accept it. I advise him in further conversations not to make threats. He promises.

#### A REPORT ON THE WORK DONE

I learn that the Gestapo telegraphed a report on the work done. The wire reported that 5,000 (!) Jews were shot, and only 7 managed to escape.

As we now know, about 3,800 Jews have been killed. Why this increase of the number of those shot and . . . decrease in the number of escapees?

The ghetto leaders want to view this as one in a series of "gifts" to the local Jews. . . .

#### "LITHUANIA UNDER RED TERROR"

Under this headline, Prof. Krėvė-Mickevičius published a series of articles in early April in the German organ *Wilnaer Zeitung*. . . .

The newspaper congratulates itself on the fact that Prof. Mickevicius, the former deputy of the prime minister and foreign minister in the Lithuanian People's Government, has reached the conclusions he has come to. If we add that the two distinguished Lithuanian professors Mickevičius and Birzyszko have completely put themselves in the service of the German occupiers, it is once more clear how much the Lithuanian intelligentsia is protecting their own skin.

#### TWO ALARMS

On Saturday the 10th, Vilna was under alarm. For hours, bomber planes were heard. Yesterday the German press told of bombings in Eastern Prussia.

Last night there was another alarm, and Russian airplanes again appeared over the city.

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**APRIL 11 [1943]**

#### WHAT DOES A POLICEMAN FROM PONAR TELL?

On Tuesday, April 6, along with 29 other policemen, following the order of the ghetto chief, he went to Ponar. Weiss and two Lithuanian military men from the Ipatinga went with the police. The police were obviously nervous. Two hundred meters before the gates of Ponar, the truck broke down and the police had to go on foot. Weiss declared that the graves had to be covered because, until now, they had been covered with a two-centimeter layer of sand. He also forbade the uncovering of the corpses. . . . Nevertheless, during the covering, some of [the police] uncovered [some] and saw a mountain of naked corpses—men, women, and children all together. The bodies were horribly shot.

Twenty-seven policemen were employed in covering the graves, and three went with Weiss to gather the corpses still scattered over the fields.

There are two big round graves there, each 5 meters deep and 8 meters in diameter. There is another grave, the biggest one, which is 6–10 meters wide and 7 meters deep. A special passage was made to this grave from the railroad station. The passage descends deeper and deeper to the grave. In the middle of the passage, people were forced to undress. Next to the round grave, near the railroad station of Ponar, there is a smaller grave, where there were 38 victims. That grave is still hardly covered at all. So much for the mass graves.

And about the gathering of the corpses? Most were lying toward the railroad, outside the barbed-wire fence. Those corpses were shot shamefully. In every one of the corpses there are a few bullets, often seven to nine shots. Most were really torn apart, with ripped-off pieces of arms and legs, ripped-up intestines, etc. Ap-

parently they were shot with dum dum bullets. They all lie here in positions as if they want to run. A woman [ . . . ]  
[Page 674 of the original is missing. The account of the slaughter in Ponar no doubt continues there.]

**Today a Public Fast**  
**What Does the Official Ghetto Publication Say about It?**

PEOPLE GO TO THE FOREST

In despair, people run to the forest. Recently this has happened not only among Jews but also among Poles and especially Lithuanians. Running to the forest is not simply an ideal—partisans, the struggle against the Nazi occupation, etc. Here it is a simple matter of first saving yourself and your own life. In the forest recently there have been not only partisans but also just groups wandering around with weapons, whose only purpose is to stay alive. Often such groups as these commit robbery, etc.

Today a group of 12 young people left [the ghetto].

MEETING OF BRIGADIERS

Today a big meeting of brigadiers and column leaders took place. Just as on Friday in Mr. Gens's home, the course of recent events was recounted there. The main speaker, Mr. Brojdo, called on the brigadiers to restore the work to what it had been until now.

. . . . .  
**APRIL 12 [1943]**

WHAT HAPPENED?

What happened? It is a shame to leave out a word of it. If we raise the question now, it is not to repeat the chronicle of events but to draw some conclusions:

First, it must be concluded that both Ghetto Chief Mr. Gens, with his popularity, and Police Chief Mr. Dessler, irrespective of their guilt in the case, let themselves be used as tools by the Gestapo.

Second, Jews, reduced to despair, will no longer let themselves be killed as before. This is seen in the preparation for struggle and the resolve of several cities and towns.

Third, a fact which must absolutely be emphasized is that the recent execution of the Oszmiana and Świąciany Jews was carried out for the first time in the open and without concealment. The Gestapo removed every veil here. By letting in the Jewish police and Jewish workers, the Gestapo turned Ponar, which had previously been covered up, into an open matter.

Fourth, all efforts to calm the Jews of the Vilna Ghetto are simply a means to

dull Jewish alertness. The Gestapo uses the soothing of the Jews as a means of carrying out its intentions. Therefore, its usual condolences and soothing words.

[The prepara]tion being made by the masses in order not to die a senseless death must be [brought out] eve[rywhere]. The duty of all those who are still alive in the ghetto is w[ar . . . ] and not to let it weaken.

All the previous decisions of our organization<sup>7</sup> also proceed in this direction, and we preach it wherever we can.

WHAT DO THE ESCAPEES FROM THE EXECUTION TELL?

Events in our ghetto have recently taken such a tragic course that there has been no time or place to linger over details that, nevertheless, express a great deal. Today, more than a week after the events, we try to decipher the collected material.

What do the broken, tormented people tell, the ones who only yesterday had families and somehow led a family life, and from whom today everything is torn away? They are alone, wretched, broken, and embittered.

What do the escapees tell?

The refugee from Warsaw, a bakery worker, lived in Widze with his wife and two children. In autumn 1942, along with all the other inhabitants (except for 72 who stayed), he left the town and came to Świąciany, where he worked as a baker.

On Sunday, April 4, Świąciany Jews were loaded in cars. From there, the train, supervised by Jewish police, moved at 10 in the morning. The car windows were shut with barbed wire and the doors were sealed. There wasn't the slightest suspicion among the passengers that anything could happen to them. "Didn't we listen to the assurances of the Jewish police?" the narrator says ironically.

At about 11 on Sunday night, the train reached Vilna, where everyone spent the night in the cars.<sup>8</sup> Not until 10 on Monday morning did the train move, and in about an hour, they suddenly saw they were in Ponar and that the train was surrounded by German and Lithuanian soldiers. The commotion was dreadful. The weeping and shouting rent the heavens.

Soon several cars were opened and shooting was heard. The narrator says that his was the fourth car and wasn't opened until about 1 in the afternoon. Until then, they saw from the window how people were driven out of the car, how some ran away, how they were shot at. . . . They saw how people threw off everything and . . . In the narrator's car, there were 52 people. When the car was opened, they were all taken toward a fenced-in space. About 20 meters before the barbed-wire fence, our narrator decided to run, and almost everyone in the group imitated him. This was perhaps the greatest miracle, since they couldn't shoot all of them at once. Probably because of this, some of them were saved. He says that two of this group are in the ghetto. The rest, he hopes, will come.

7. I.e., the Bund.

8. The distance from Świąciany to Vilna is about 50 miles, but the journey took 13 hours.

They shot at them. He went toward the forest, where he stayed until 3 in the afternoon. Until then, the shooting never stopped.

After 3 o'clock, things calmed down, and only then did he go to the village, where he spent a whole night. On Tuesday, the 6th, in the morning, he came with a peasant to Vilna, went to Kailis, and from there, in the evening, with a group of Jewish workers, he arrived in the ghetto.

Thus one man tells. The second? The second is wounded, a 16-year-old boy from Oszmiana. His name is Narob.<sup>9</sup> He came to Ponar at night on the Oszmiana train. On their arrival, the doors of the cars were opened but were later closed again. No one realized that the Jewish police weren't with them anymore. Through the window, they saw people carrying brandy. At 11 in the morning, however, they started opening the cars. From each opened car the people were taken out separately. As soon as our narrator was out of the car, he dashed toward the forest. A gendarme shot at him a few times and hit him in the leg. He threw himself on the ground. But he got a few more bullets. He could feel that he was wounded again, this time in the chin and arm, and he decided to play dead. The shooter pursued him, gave him a few more lashes with the whip, and left him alone. He lay in a swoon for a whole day and night. Not until morning did the Jewish police find him and bring him into the ghetto. The whole time, he was taken care of by a Christian woman who brought him water.

A third: the third, a 16-year-old youth, ran with a friend. Now he is in the ghetto hospital. He says: as soon as he was out of the tunnel before Ponar, he saw German and Lithuanian soldiers around the cars and noticed that the locomotive had been uncoupled from the standing train. He didn't yet understand it. He saw people let out of the first car and surrounded by several Lithuanians. Why are they being taken out? Only when there was a great commotion did he figure out in his childish naiveté that everyone was being taken to the forest, where they were being shot. His car was the seventh, and he saw how people were taken out of the previous cars. He saw how all of them were surrounded by soldiers, how a group ran and were shot at, and how they ran without stopping. Only then did the idea of running away take shape for both youngsters, to run before they came to take them. A Lithuanian guard was standing in front of the wagon, guarding it. They tried negotiating and agreed that the two would run and he [would] pretend not to see it. When he got the sum, he maintained that it was too [little]. [They all carried] quilt coats. With the elbows of the coats [they pushed away the] wire, released the window, and jumped out of the car, running toward the forest. The friend ran first and escaped; he was shot at and hit. But he dragged on a while longer. From the forest, he ran to Biała Waka and from there to Porubanek, from where he came into the ghetto with a group of workers. At the hospi-

9. Kruk uses the reverse-letter system. The name Narob probably should be read backward, as Boran. Such a name is mentioned in documents from Oszmiana.

tal, where he will spend a few days, I talked to one of his relatives, a hospital employee.

About 30 escapees all tell the same thing. Everyone just has his own version.

#### GUESTS IN PANOPTICON

Today the ghetto had guests, 18 persons led by Dr. Dietz. Since before dawn, as always, people were cleaning and scouring, [expecting] a cleaning commission, as it were. In fact, it was an outing of doctors who came to admire the Vilna Ghetto panopticon. They were very pleased with everything and left satisfied. They were most pleased with the hospital. Dr. Dietz is the director of the Health Department in Vilna.

#### MEANWHILE PEOPLE BRING IN

Murer is on vacation. The head of the Gestapo, Neugebauer, has gone away. This means that the gate guard has "relaxed," and meanwhile people bring things in like nobody's business. Everyone who can "smuggles," and so prices are reduced in the ghetto.

#### L'AFFAIRE GRISHA

The conversation between Yashunski and the ghetto chief went as I had foreseen. Grisha not only refused but also promised that he would not accept the nomination even if there were consequences. Mr. Gens, having in mind the previous incident with Yashunski back in the early autumn, did indeed make the decision that would lead to these consequences.

Now it is known that Yashunski has resigned and Leo Bernstein is taking his place.

All the cautionary measures taken in this matter by the B[und] and representatives of organizations active in the ghetto had no effect. The Reds have no desire to do even what they once did for Glazman.<sup>10</sup> The intervention undertaken in spite of it was unsuccessful.

#### 30,000 FRESH VICTIMS

From the German press, I learn that the Jews must leave 8 of the 11 Dutch provinces. This means about 130,000 fresh victims. No one knows if the Jews will be sent to Eastern Europe to work or to be killed. Now it's the turn of the Dutch Jews.

10. They defended Glazman when Gens waged war against him.



#### WE BURY OURSELVES DEEPER

The recent searches dictated transporting one arsenal all at once. Girls were recruited as carriers, young people as buriers, to bury deep underground. When everything succeeded, faces were shining—it's not a trivial thing, such an arsenal! . . .

#### THE BISHOP SPEAKS AND ŚWIT TELLS

Świt announces on the radio that the Kovno bishop spoke in the cathedral of the participation of the Lithuanians in the execution of the Oszmiana and Święciany Jews. They say he condemned their participation. At present, we do not know what is happening to the bishop.

#### AGAIN ŚWIT

The latest Świt broadcast linked its Jewish radio program to the latest anti-Jewish campaigns around the Katyń affair. They say that the Germans are trying to pin everything that happened on the Jews. They are doing this with Katyń and recently with the dam explosion in . . . Kassel.

The German press shouts that Jews had a hand in it, and Świt calls for vigilance. The Germans, the radio program claims, want to use the explosion of the dam as an excuse for a new slaughter of the last few remaining Jews. They warn and call for vigilance.

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**[MAY] 21 [1943]**

#### SHLOYME<sup>11</sup> ZYGIELBOJM (S. ARTUR)

None of the news we get here is certain. The news that my friend and comrade Artur has died struck me like the death of a close relation. Artur suffered from stomach trouble for several years. Now I learn that Artur committed suicide and left a letter accusing the Allies of indifference to the murder of the Jews in Europe. Because he was helpless, because rumors had now reached him that his wife and children had been killed in Warsaw, with his suicide he drew the attention of the world powers.

The news had a double impact on me. A friend and comrade has fallen, the Bundist Artur. He committed suicide to draw attention to the murder of the Jews. At the same time, I have learned for sure that I have lost my sister and her children.

Just as I was leaving Warsaw, in September 1939, the refugee from Łódź, Artur, moved into my apartment with his wife and children. Recently my sister and her children also moved in there. The murder of Artur's wife is like the murder of my sister. And so the whole house has been wiped out.

11. This is an error; it should be Szmul.

This struck me twice.

But we are used to looking death in the face, whether of a friend, a relative, or a stranger. We sigh, stand still a second, and . . . go back to our slavish harness.

Have I [not] already wept for my sister? Now, however, I have touched it, and it has scalded again; but I am again forced to keep going.

Isn't it the hashish of our bitterness, the drunkenness of our time. How can we do otherwise? . . .

But Artur didn't die just because he couldn't take it anymore. His death is a shout to the world, a call for help for our spilled blood and for those who are next in line.

In recent years, Artur grew immensely. A tutor in Lublin, giving lessons for his lunch, he got the "ideal" of acquiring a skill and became a glove maker and came to know the labor movement; he became an active Bundist and advanced to the big city. Starving in Warsaw, he arrived—he obtained the position of secretary of the union of metal workers and rose as a worker-activist. In 1921, he was elected a member of the Central Committee of the Bund, became the secretary of the central council of the unions in Warsaw, was later the leader of the Jewish trade unions in Poland (national council), got involved in journalism, participated in several international conferences, and when the war broke out, he escaped from Łódź to Warsaw, where he was a member of the defense committee of Warsaw. Warsaw falls and Artur plays a major historical role in the Judenrat there. He escapes from Warsaw and shows up at the International Socialist Congress, where he tells of the heroic struggle for Warsaw. He then became a member of the council of the Polish Government<sup>12</sup> and appeared often on the radio.

Now—his last act.

Artur is a child of the Jewish labor movement. His life's path is that of a martyr. His death, a hero's death.

Honor to his memory.

#### 500 FAMILIES SAVED

For several days, negotiations were held for the delivery of 500 families from Vilna ostensibly to Minsk for work. The transport was to contain some 1,500 persons. For the time being, [our representatives] have succeeded in canceling the evil; the 500 families are saved.

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**MAY 23 [1943]**

#### WARSAW

As close as we are to Warsaw, all the messages we get from there contradict one another. One thing is clear: the Warsaw Ghetto is still fighting. Poland fought for

12. In exile in London.