1 The Nazi Invasion

Violence, Displacement, and Expropriation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Nazi military occupation of Poland gave way to a civilian-led occupation, and a large area of Poland became a German colony called the Generalgouvernement for the Occupied Polish Territories. Hitler created the General Government by decree on October 12, 1939, with Hans Frank as its head, or governor-general, and Arthur Seyss-Inquart as deputy governor-general. Initially, Łódź was incorporated into the Generalgouvernement and chosen as the capital.[57] This was reconsidered, however, and the city was incorporated into the Reichsgau Wartheland (Warthegau) in early November 1939.[58] Kraków served as the Generalgouvernement capital. Under these civilian German governments, Jewish life was further restricted. In particular, the civilian governments expanded on attacks on Jewish religious practice that had begun during the military occupation. For example, Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) fell on September 14, 1939, while the military was still in charge. The Germans closed the synagogues for the Jewish holy days and forced Jewish store owners to keep their shops open. Diarist Sierakowiak, writing in Łódź, commented on this ordinance:

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

The German civilian governments went further, closing Jewish synagogues permanently, forbidding kosher slaughtering of animals, and closing Jewish schools. In Łódź, the synagogues were burned down in November 1939.[60]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Food Access during the German Occupation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The food that was available on the black market was often ersatz foods. In May 1940, Czerniaków reported that "for my breakfast today I had 'caviar.' It is apparently frog spawn colored black. One little can cost 3 zlotys." He also noted that a pint of artificial tea was 3.60 zloty in May 1940.[86] In addition to food rationing that heavily disadvantaged Jews, there were bans on kosher slaughter, which made procurement of kosher meat illicit and difficult. The restrictions on movement likewise made obtaining food from the countryside more challenging. Jewish exclusion from wider food distribution made Jews more food insecure, and as food prices rose considerably, Jews had less and less legal access to money.

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

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

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

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

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

This is not to say that food kitchens for refugees and the poor were not desperately needed. Approximately 90,000 refugees streamed into Warsaw between November 1939 and October 1940.[98] Many of these refugees arrived with fewer movable goods to sell off than their Warsaw

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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