Emmanuel Ringelblum's Warsaw Ghetto Archive and the Uprising of 1943

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Emmanuel Ringelblum’s Warsaw Ghetto Archive and the Uprising of 1943
Recognizing Passive and Active Resistance to Nazism

By
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An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation from the Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Thank you to my parents Steve and Karen Madden for loving me and supporting me in my Holocaust research for the past 6 years.

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In loving memory of the Jewish Resistors within the Warsaw Ghetto. As I share their story, may the humanity they fought for be restored.
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Abstract

Emmanuel Ringelblum was a Jewish historian who lived in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Holocaust. At the start of 1939, Ringelblum came to a realization that the history of the Jewish nation must be recorded. Within the Ghetto, he assigned himself the task of recording as much information about the Holocaust as he could. Along with a group of archivists, Ringelblum created the Oneg Shabbat (O.S.) Archive with the intention of educating future generations about what the Nazis had done. Shortly after the completion of the archive in 1943, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising occurred. This revolt lasted in the Ghetto from April to May before the final liquidation. In my research, I examined Ringelblum’s opinion of Jewish Resistance and how he viewed passive versus active resistance within the Warsaw Ghetto. My research revealed that during his work on the O.S. Archive, Ringelblum experienced a shift in thinking from opposing active resistance to accepting it. Many historians have commented to the overall accomplishments of Emmanuel Ringelblum, but few have looked at his own pieces within the Archive. My unique analysis contributes to the historiography of the Warsaw Ghetto by adding a new angle of interpretation about Emmanuel Ringelblum and the resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto. His extensive O.S. Archive and personal thoughts contributed to the progression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in multiple ways. Together, these two important acts of rebellion marked the Warsaw Ghetto as a crucial feature within the history of Jewish resistance.
Introduction

“To Live with Honor and to Die with Honor” was the title of the last letter written in March and sent in May 1944 by Emmanuel Ringelblum to London from the Warsaw Ghetto. Within the letter, Ringelblum described “the all-embracing cultural work, which kept developing and spreading reaching wider and deeper, in spite of utter terror and hunger and want, up to the martyrdom and death of Polish Jewry.” Before the concept of an Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was conceived, an archive was created to resist the Nazis on an intellectual level. Reflected in Ringelblum’s words, one can understand the importance of Jewish resistance efforts both in life and death. Through Ringelblum’s Notes, and the Oneg Shabbat (O.S.) Archive, among other sources, it can be determined that the implementation of both passive and active Jewish Resistance within the Warsaw Ghetto was necessary for Jews to restore their honor during the Holocaust.

Ringelblum is known as the most prominent Historian of the Warsaw Ghetto. He is widely recognized for his social activism and teaching in the years leading up to World War II. In 1927, Ringelblum earned a doctorate in history at the University of Warsaw after completing a riveting dissertation. Ringelblum began writing a personal journal in June of 1933 that included his thoughts about Nazi crimes against Jews in Germany. His Notes reflect on each stage of the relocation of

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4 Beyer, Emmanuel Ringelblum: Historian of the Warsaw Ghetto, 35.
Polish Jews after the invasion of Poland by the Nazis in 1939. Specifically, the diary of Ringelblum illustrated debates within the Ghetto, his advocacy of passive resistance, and thoughts about armed resistance with his ultimate decision to support it.

Written at night, each of Ringelblum’s diary entries reflected the notes he took from meeting with his colleagues during the day. He included information about everything he witnessed himself as well as eyewitness accounts from people around Poland and elsewhere. Specifically, he recorded details about daily life in the ghetto, including details about the nearby towns and villages, the ghetto, and the Uprising. He also discussed the massive deportations of Jews from Warsaw to Treblinka in 1941-1942. As a historian, Ringelblum understood the importance of recording as much detail as possible about the corrupt actions of the Nazis for future historians’ use. He also knew that memory was subjective, and worked to collect information about eyewitness accounts as they happened.

After the establishment of the Warsaw Ghetto, Ringelblum established and oversaw the creation of an underground archive in the Warsaw Ghetto, called the Oneg Shabbat. The name of the archive maintained the secrecy of their actions from Nazi officers because the name Oneg Shabbat refers to a Jewish celebration in honor of the Sabbath, translated literally as “Sabbath Delight.” Ringelblum, along with other members of the Oneg Shabbat, met in secret on the Sabbath each week to work on the archive under the innocent name.

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5 Beyer, Emmanuel Ringelblum: Historian of the Warsaw Ghetto, 46.
therefore, had no reason to question the purpose of their meetings. Ringelblum also held additional responsibilities as a teacher, writer, and archivist, among others.

The archive included a vast collection of writings by numerous authors. These authors were Jewish victims of the Holocaust, some of which only composed one piece of literature while others contributed many pieces. “Under the leadership of Dr. Emmanuel Ringelblum, its initiator, and with the help of H. Wasser, E. Gutowski, M.A., Rabbi S. Huberband, S. Winter, M. Kon, A. Lewison, a.o.” 9 thousands of papers were collected by the archivists. The types of documents included journal articles, newspapers, leaflets, photos, decrees, and other personal writings that the authors created themselves or collected from other Jews within the Ghetto. 10 In the archive, Ringelblum personally organized two parts: “the cultural and literary history of the Warsaw Ghetto and Polish Jews.” 11 When the destruction of the ghetto was near, the archivists shared their information with the Polish Underground Home Army, who in turn disclosed it with sources outside of the country. Preserved in ten metal boxes and three milk cans, part of the Oneg Shabbat collection was rediscovered on two occasions in 1946 and 1950, while the rest remains undiscovered. 12 Ringelblum’s work is said to have been a leader in the resistance against the Nazis and assisted in exposing their actions during the time and to this day. 13

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9 Ringelblum, “To Live with Honor and Die with Honor,” 764.
10 Beyer, Emmanuel Ringelblum: Historian of the Warsaw Ghetto, 81.
11 Beyer, Emmanuel Ringelblum: Historian of the Warsaw Ghetto, 82.
12 Rappaport, Beyond Courage, 86.
Ringelblum's personal diaries were also a part of the archive, and reveal a transformation in Ringelblum’s views on Jewish resistance in the ghetto. Like many other Jewish Leaders, Ringelblum first believed that submission to the Nazis was the best way to avoid problems with the Nazis. By succumbing to the horrors of the Holocaust, Ringelblum hoped to save many Jews by sacrificing a few. Over time, however, the formation of the archive and gathering of evidence contributed to a change in his thinking which is reflected in his diary and other writings. Ringelblum grew to realize the importance of active forms of Jewish Resistance in addition to passive resistance. To this day, most knowledge about life in ghettos was learned from the information recorded by Ringelblum in his journal and from the Oneg Shabbat collection.14

Along with Ringelblum’s personal records of the event are those of poet and writer Wladyslaw Szlengel. Included in the archives, his poems on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising compare the lives of Nazis and Jews during the revolt. They reveal further aspects of its significance, including the empowerment of Jews against the Nazis as well as similarities between the oppressed and their oppressors. Other personal writings, such as a letter by the leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Mordecai Anielewicz, and the diaries of SS General Jurgen Stroop and Joseph Goebbels, continue to expose the impact of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Each of these personal writings, along with newspaper articles from the Polish Underground Press, reveal just how impactful the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was for all people in Europe during WWII. The revolt was empowering for Jews

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14 Beyer, Emmanuel Ringelblum: Historian of the Warsaw Ghetto, 76.
when they themselves believed in their ultimate demise. The literature produced in the ghetto preserved the Jewish nation as they struggled to exist during a time of extreme antisemitism. Each piece of writing reveals intimate details and emotions about daily activities as well as resistance, all of which are important in understanding their will to fight back against the acts of the Holocaust. Through these acts of both passive and active resistance, Jewish honor was restored.

Recording and sharing the action of the Warsaw Ghetto led all Jews to realize their capability of resisting the Nazis and helped them understand the importance that they do so.

**Historical Context**

Among other nations, Poland suffered immensely at the hands of the Nazi regime. As one of the first countries involved, Poland was invaded on September 1, 1939. There were approximately 3,300,000 Jews in Poland before the beginning of World War II (WWII). During the war, over 2,000,000 of them came under Nazi control as they were transported to ghettos, deported to concentration camps, and subjected to other kinds of mistreatment. During the Holocaust from 1933-1945, over 1000 ghettos were established in occupied areas of Poland to temporarily contain Jews. The Nazis created a total of six death camps, located in Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Majdanek, as a part of the Final Solution. After Liberation in May 1945, the number of Polish-Jewish survivors reached a mere 45,000.
The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising proved that Jews could resist in arms against the Nazis despite the effects of the Holocaust. As the largest ghetto in Nazi-occupied Europe, the Warsaw Ghetto held 445,000 Jews at its height in 1941. Upon Himmler’s visit to the ghetto on April 16, 1943, he ordered the liquidation of the ghetto. A total of 2,842 Germans and an additional 7,000 SS men were instructed to assist in the process, which was no small army. Jewish numbers only reached 600 organized fighters as a part of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB), the organized resisting group led by Mordecai Anielewicz. One ZOB detachment alone was armed with “about 300 grenades, 8 automatic guns, 1 light, 1 heavy machine guns, and several thousand rounds of ammunition.” April 18th was the day before the beginning of the Uprising as well as the first day of Passover. On April 19th, Von Sammern led his forces into the ghetto, but retreated quickly from the might of the Jewish forces. The German forces were not able to manage the Jewish forces and brought tanks into the battle.

Jews and Nazis encountered each other through urban guerilla-like warfare throughout the month of April. Towards the end of the month, on April 22nd the entire ghetto was set ablaze by the Nazis to force Jews out of hiding. Ber Mark described the fire as “the likes of which history has not recorded since the day when Nero burned Rome.” Fires continued to burn the ghetto through April 24th. On this

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same day, the Germans shot four members of the Judenräte, a council selected by the Nazis to represent the Jewish community of the Ghetto. The very next day, a big blow was experienced by the ZOB, where they made efforts to reach the Aryan side and lost many men in the process. On April 28, the mass exodus through the sewer systems began. For the following 3 days, many fighters successfully escaped this way. May 10 ended the first phase of fighting with an uneven battle, where many more Jewish fighters were lost at the hands of the Germans.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising ended quickly and with consequence. Soviet aviators came to the assistance of the Jews from May 13-14, but their attempt to dispel the Germans proved unsuccessful. Two days later, “after four weeks of continuous fighting,” the ghetto still had not surrendered. At this point, most Jews had either been killed or evacuated by the Jews. The remaining Jews were captured and transported to nearby labor and concentration camps. May 16th marked the last day of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In the end, Jewish resisters had successfully held off the German forces for almost a full month before being compromised. A small number of Jews who had avoided capture continued to fight German soldiers from the ghetto past the official end of the Uprising.

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Literature Review

Jewish resistance during the Holocaust is a well-discussed topic among historians of Jewish and Holocaust history. Different historians have argued for both passive and active acts as true resistance efforts, whether they are organized or not. One of the most notable acts of organized passive resistance during the Holocaust included the O.S. Archive of Emmanuel Ringelblum. As one of the largest organized acts of armed resistance during the Holocaust, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising has also been a specific debated topic among historians. Typical discussion involves the significance of the Uprising, including whether it succeeded based on what actions took place or not. The influence of the Warsaw Uprising, including the ways and significance in which the Uprising affected other acts of resistance, is also a commonly debated among historians. For this paper, a definition of what should considered true acts of Jewish resistance needs to be determined first because passive and active resistance efforts need to be both differentiated and legitimized. Then the significance of the Warsaw ghetto itself can be examined, as well as its influence on other acts of resistance that occurred across Europe.

The Definition of Jewish Resistance

Historians have provided a wide range of arguments on the general definition of resistance during the Holocaust. Analysis of secondary sources suggests a scale of resistance ranging from passive to active resistance. Contemporary French historian Henri Michel argued that resistance during the
Holocaust was mainly a maintenance of self-respect. In the setting of the Ghetto, self-respect would indicate smaller, less noticeable actions against the Nazis' attempt to dehumanize their Jewish victims. Examples of maintaining self-respect included holding onto religious beliefs, experiencing positive feelings such as love or happiness, and having confidence or determination in one's self, among others.

When a Jew maintained self-respect, they also maintained their human characteristics and identity. Michel’s view identified these important and commonly forgotten aspects of Jewish resistance; simply staying alive was a form of passive, and real, resistance. Maintaining self-respect fundamentally insulted the Nazis because it hindered their plan to dehumanize Jews. Although Michel’s perspective highlights the passive acts of Jewish resistance, it falls extremely to the passive-only side of the scale and fails to consider other aspects of more aggressive resistance. He also did not identify whether maintenance of self-respect should be considered an organized type of resistance, or whether the acts were accomplished at random.

Thought to be one of the world’s most distinguished historians of the Holocaust was Raul Hilberg, a mid-twentieth century American-Australian political scientist. According to Hilberg, the only real Jewish resistance during the Holocaust was armed or physical resistance. This active type of resistance would have also been aggressive and physically violent, such as attacks made on the Nazis either through attempted fist-fighting or by using weapons acquired illegally by Jews.

Hilberg’s suggested definition of resistance recognized the second extreme opinion

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29 Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, 27.
of resistance; that all resistance was only physical and aggressive. Like Michel's, it fails to consider other types of resistance that may fall on the opposite side of the spectrum or in between extremes. Hilberg does consider an important and more obvious form of Jewish resistance. This type of active resistance was less common than passive acts because it was more challenging to demonstrate aggression without risking one's life and considered more rebellious. Although it was less common, it can be thought of as more “impactful” because some historians recognize these acts with greater respect.

Some historians, such as late twentieth century Israeli historian and scholar of the Holocaust Yehuda Bauer, consider both passive and active forms of resistance as legitimate.\textsuperscript{30} This definition is more complete because it recognizes both types of resistance, rather than leaning towards one extreme or the other. Every act from small acts of resistance such as staying alive, to more bold acts like shooting Nazis, would be included in Bauer's interpretation of what defined Jewish resistance. Bauer also specified that all group resistance against the Nazis should be a major part of the definition.\textsuperscript{31} This aspect of Jewish resistance, as an organized effort, includes the Jews that worked together to resist and were aware of their resistance. It is important to specify that Bauer only mentioned organized group resistance, and failed to identify individual acts of resistance as a part of the movement. Although group resistance seemed to have had a larger impact because of the planning and

\textsuperscript{30} Bauer, \textit{The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness}, 27.
\textsuperscript{31} Bauer, \textit{The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness}, 27.
effort, individual resistance was still important in hindering the Nazis. Spontaneous acts of resistance should not be neglected from a complete definition of resistance.

Richard Middleton-Kaplan provided a new perspective of Jewish resistance to be considered. He suggested that, “Jews resisted the Nazis whenever, wherever, and however it was possible.”32 This is an excellent definition of the type of Jewish resistance that occurred during the Holocaust. Kaplan’s opinion combines all previously discussed assertions. It recognizes all types of resistance in his statement, including passive and active, as well as organized and spontaneous. It is, however, also a vague generalization. Kaplan’s definition assumed that every Jew resisted during the Holocaust. Here he failed to recognize Jews who were given opportunities to resist, but did not. Kaplan further indicated that there was a reason for all Jews to resist the Nazis. He however did not account for Jews who were oblivious to the events of the Holocaust until their deaths, such as the victims in the beginning of the genocide. For the early victims of the Holocaust, many were not aware of the situation and therefore would have had no reason to resist. He indicated that all Jews had opportunities to resist, which they did not. It is too general for Kaplan to assume that every single Jew resisted.

Adding to Bauer and Kaplan’s definitions of resistance is that of Eve Nussbaum Soumerai and Carol D. Schulz. Both women declare that “planned and organized resistance occurred in every occupied country… although it was ineffective and limited.”33 Aspects of this statement are factual, such as the assertion

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that organized resistance occurred throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. As a movement, resistance was a collective effort against the Nazis. With their statement, Soumerai and Shultz properly acknowledge each of the many Jewish communities that participated in the continent-wide movement. In agreement with Bauer, the women also legitimize planned and organized resistance. These similar opinions indicate the authenticity of the statements. Organized resistance is thus attributed by multiple historians as a well-recognized aspect of Jewish resistance. The second part of their assertion, that Jewish resistance was ineffective and limited, is a bold statement among the historical community because it negatively questions the importance of Jewish resistance against the Nazis. It also contradicts the first part of the statement. If planned and organized resistance occurred in every country occupied by the Reich, then it was not limited as they state. It also would not have been so ineffective because it was widespread. Soumerai and Schulz provide a respectable contribution to what defines Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, but their definition is lacking and needs to be considered in cohesion with other definitions.

The interpretation of twentieth century Israeli Historian Yitzhak Arad on Jewish resistance is very specific and unique. According to Arad, Jewish resistance only occurred as a last result, if the conditions allowed it, and to restore Jewish honor.\footnote{Michael Berenbaum, Abraham J. Peck, and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. \textit{The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined} (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 594.} Specificity here is key in understanding Arad’s definition. He indicated that the only true form of Jewish resistance was the last-minute effort against Nazis
when all other hope was lost.\textsuperscript{35} In a situation like this, the conditions had to be correct for the resistance efforts to even occur. Here Arad recognized the adverse conditions and difficulty in revolting against the Nazis. For Jews, their last actions against the Nazis were in effort to fight for the honor of their people. Through this, Arad indicates a sense of community in the ghetto, for last-minute uprisings were a collective effort, with many Jews sharing the same fate. An example of such an event is with many larger uprisings, including the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Arad's interpretation about final efforts is a critical opinion to include in this investigation. Of even greater importance is another of his statements that “the Jews fought to choose the way in which they would die.”\textsuperscript{36} In their last moments, Jews decided they would rather face death fighting for their honor than submitting to the Reich. This opinion demonstrates the strength of Jewish resistance in opposition to Nazi cruelty, and couples Michel's definition of Jewish resistance as a maintenance of self-respect.\textsuperscript{37} Jewish resisters who fought in their last days were able to resist the Nazis both mentally and physically.

A final interpretation of Jewish resistance to consider is that of infamous Romanian-born Holocaust survivor, writer, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, Elie Wiesel. In the words of Wiesel, “the question is not why all Jews did not fight, but how so many of them did. Tormented, beaten, starved, where did they find the strength- spiritual and physical- to resist.”\textsuperscript{38} His opinion is critical to speculating Jewish resistance because it considers an aspect of Jewish resistance not commonly

\textsuperscript{35} Berenbaum and Peck, \textit{The Holocaust and History}, 594.
\textsuperscript{36} Berenbaum and Peck, \textit{The Holocaust and History}, 594.
\textsuperscript{37} Bauer, \textit{The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness}, 26.
\textsuperscript{38} Jack R. Fischel, \textit{The Holocaust} (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press), 101.
noted. Wiesel is one of the few historians who does not contemplate the ways in which Jewish people resisted the Nazis, but instead he considers how they were able to accomplish such feats, and the reasons why they fought back. He does not try to discredit any type of acclaimed resistance, including passive and active, or organized versus spontaneous. The significance of resistance is also recognized by Wiesel instead of posing an argument for the validity one type of resistance over the other. He highlights the impressive actions of people who were dehumanized in horrendous ways, yet still found the strength to resist the Nazis, which is a successful feat. Although Wiesel’s opinion only focuses on the how instead of the what about Jewish resistance, it adds an original and important interpretation to the historiography of the subject.

In the historiography of Jewish Resistance, many definitions have surfaced. Several of these interpretations merely consider the level of aggression of resistance efforts. They fall on a spectrum ranging from passive to aggressive actions, where some historians only accredit passive acts of resistance, while others regard active and aggressive actions as true acts of resistance. Also debated is the size and effect of resistance. Individual actions versus group actions, spontaneous versus planned efforts, and timing of the resistance efforts are also debated among historians. Essentially, all aspects of resistance are questioned by historians from different eras and countries. It is important to synthesize the assortment of opinions to develop a single definition of resistance for reference before delving into a historical analysis of Emmanuel Ringelblum, the Oneg Shabbat Archive, and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
Historiography of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

As one of the largest resistance efforts, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is a major topic of discussion among historians. The Uprising included a collective organization of events that occurred as the local Jews actively resisted their Nazi counterparts. Many varying opinions on organized Jewish resistance, and more specifically on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising itself, have been made apparent by historians. According to historian of the Holocaust Raul Hilberg, the Jews were cowards and “even collaborated with their enemies,” in reference to the Judenräte.\(^{39}\) As a respected historian of the Holocaust, his ideas should not be disregarded even if they pose an extreme view. His words merely contribute to the greater understanding of the Warsaw ghetto Uprising in connection to the work of the Judenräte within the ghetto. It should be considered, however, that his thoughts on resistance are among some of the first (and oldest) formed on the subject. Many more opinions have been stated since.

Historian Henri Michel counters Hilberg’s extreme claims. In relation to the Warsaw ghetto, Michel suggests that the conditions of the Holocaust made it hard for Jews to not become dehumanized. All Jewish resistance is thus “honorable...[and] exemplary,” which deserves respect.\(^{40}\) Michel’s opinion deserves admiration. It emphasizes the incredible effort of Warsaw against the Nazis, who fought valiantly even in the worst possible conditions. Even though the Warsaw resistance movement did not end in a “victory” over the Nazis, the effort is highly


\(^{40}\) Henry and Lang, *Jewish Resistance Against the Nazis*, 67.
admirable. Although Michel gives credit to the success of the event, he only recognizes the significance of the act. This is done instead of acknowledging any type of impact it had against the perpetrating Nazis or in inspiring other movements.

Michel also concluded that Jewish resistance typically began with small gestures and acts. He clarified that “with time, these refusals became organized and sometimes eventually led to actual battles.”41 This statement by Michel is important in the historiography of the Warsaw Ghetto. Essentially, the Jews were driven by their anger towards the Nazis, which manifested itself as small “gestures of malicious humor” which grew into larger efforts. His idea also connects with the interpretation by Yitzhak Arad, who stated that Jews waited until the last moment to surge against the Nazis. Here, the Jews of Warsaw built-up their acts of resistance, starting off with small efforts and increasing until the last moment when they would ideally battle the Nazis as a final act. With his statement, Michel further suggested that most attempts were not a part of larger collective resistance movement, but were random acts that developed over time. This concept is important because it looks at random acts of resistance as a series of events that influenced each other, rather than every act as completely independent.

Bauer expressed his opinion that all or most parts of Jewish resistance should not be considered a part of “war.”42 In the context of Bauer’s idea, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising should not be considered an act of war, no matter how

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41 Henry and Lang, Jewish Resistance Against the Nazis, 41.
42 Bauer, The Jewish Emergence From Powerlessness, 28.
similar to warfare it was or how significantly it influenced other ghettos to act in a comparable way. This opinion is common, because most acts of Jewish resistance were typically independent and not impactful or similar enough to “real” warfare. In relation to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Bauer argued that the events were not war-like but only acted as a last resort. He stated “Ghetto rebellions never took place when a hope of survival could be entertained – only when the realization struck that all Jews were going to be killed anyway.” According to Bauer, the Warsaw Uprising efforts were the last course of action taken when the inhabitants knew their lives were in peril.\textsuperscript{43} Bauer acknowledged an important aspect of the planning behind the Warsaw Ghetto. Although the Uprising was planned, a part of the strategies included waiting until the last possible moment to make their major moves against the Nazis.\textsuperscript{44} Bauer does, however, fail to recognize many more less-noticeable acts of resistance that contributed to the final acts of resistance against the Nazis.

Another view of the Warsaw Uprising is that of historian K. Shabbetai. His perspective is a fairly accurate reflection of what occurred in the Warsaw Ghetto and with the Partisan movement. In his book \textit{As Sheep to the Slaughter}, he explained that revolts typically “go underground and await a suitable opportunity, the enemy’s failure, before it bursts out.”\textsuperscript{45} His opinion that the Uprising waited for the best opportunity to attack the Nazis is believable. Other statements of his are more unique and differing within the historical debate of the Warsaw Ghetto. Shabbetai asserted that the Warsaw revolt could have never happened without the Stalingrad

\textsuperscript{43} Bauer, \textit{The Jewish Emergence From Powerlessness}, 28.
\textsuperscript{44} Bauer, \textit{The Jewish Emergence From Powerlessness}, 28.
\textsuperscript{45} Shabbetai, \textit{As Sheep to the Slaughter}, 21.
defeat, followed by the overthrow of Mussolini. He strongly believes that "all of these factors were absolutely essential for the Polish people to dare revolt against the German Army, the German people and its leaders".\textsuperscript{46} Shabbetai is unique in his historical analysis of the event because he considered the influence of actions outside of the ghetto on the Uprising. Mainly, these were political events that weakened the German state and, as he believed, provided the opportunity for the Uprising to occur. Although his claims identify a new perspective of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Shabbetai mainly focused on political and outside events influencing the timing of the Uprising, and does not consider other internal factors.

In their work \textit{Daily Life During the Holocaust}, authors Eve Nussbaum Soumerai and Carol D. Schulz provided another opinion on Warsaw that is worthy of consideration. They indicated that "Uprisings... were carefully planned over long periods of time—mostly by young people. They required contacts on the Aryan side for arms and supplies."\textsuperscript{47} Factually, this is a fair description of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It was planned far in advance, the youth of the Ghetto were leaders and members of the event, and they also smuggled weapons and other materials from outside of the ghetto, which was a huge risk in itself.\textsuperscript{48} Their opinion is mainly a reflection of the organization within the Uprising, rather than the significance of the event.

The role of smuggling within the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was brought to attention by Professor of History Herbert Druks. According to Druks, it was “the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{46} Shabbetai, \textit{As Sheep to the Slaughter}, 22. \\
\textsuperscript{47} Soumerai and Schulz, \textit{Daily Life During the Holocaust}, 217. \\
\textsuperscript{48} Rappaport, \textit{Beyond Courage}, 66.
\end{flushright}
smuggling of food and supplies...[that] inhibited the Nazi genocide plans.”\textsuperscript{49} Druks insists that these collective actions were so impactful, they actually hindered the plans of the Nazis. This opinion is unique and important within the historical community. It sheds light on the culture of smuggling within the ghetto, which was also a topic highly regarded by Emmanuel Ringelblum in his \textit{Notes}. In his book \textit{Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust}, Druks explained that because of the efforts of smuggling and resistance within the Warsaw Ghetto, the German soldiers experienced fear for the first time when dealing with their Jewish counterparts.\textsuperscript{50} As the initial act of violent resistance, the Warsaw Ghetto did impact the Nazis. Druks insinuated that this is no small fear, but that through this major act of resistance, Germans were taught “that it would no longer be easy to kill Jews...”\textsuperscript{51} With these claims, Druks introduced a new and important concept within the historiography of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; the Jews of Warsaw impactfully smuggled as a way to resist the Nazis. Druks believed that they clearly gathered enough strength and power to influence the emotions and tactics of the Nazis.

One of the most prominent opinions about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising belongs to professor of history Jack Fischel. In his book \textit{The Holocaust}, he emphasized his opinion that “the importance of the ghetto revolt was not in its numbers but in its reverberation among the remaining Jews of Poland.” Fischel gives credit to the Warsaw Uprising for starting the resistance movement across all of Poland. Because of this, he insinuated that the Warsaw revolt was the single most

\textsuperscript{49} Herbert Druks, \textit{Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust} (New York, N.Y.: Irvington, 1983), 38.
\textsuperscript{50} Druks, \textit{Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust}, 46.
\textsuperscript{51} Druks, \textit{Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust}, 47.
important Uprising to have occurred during the Holocaust. Terms like “legend” and “great historical significance” are used by Fischel to describe the Uprising. Not only was the event extraordinary in itself, but it also gave Jews a spark of hope to fight against the Germans. Before this event began the resistance movement, no real significant physical form of resistance had occurred. The Warsaw Uprising changed the course of Jewish fate; they were given the motivation to fight back and decide their own fate. Although Fischel discussed insightful and meaningful points about the Holocaust, he fails to recognize the immediate impact that Warsaw had on the Nazis plan to liquidate the ghetto. The only concept he focused on was the long-term significance of the event. Never the less, his interpretations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising made a vital contribution to the historiography of the event.

Historiography of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is as diverse as historian’s perspectives on Jewish resistance in general. According to Yehuda Bauer, Michel is one of the most renown historians of the Holocaust. He believed that the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto, including the Judenräte, conspired with the Nazis to plan their own death. This radical view is countered by more contemporary views about the Uprising. Michel recognized the exemplary effort of Jewish resistance, and how challenging physical resistance efforts were in the conditions created by the Nazis. He further explained that in his opinion, Jewish revolts began with smaller gestures that developed over time, turning into the movements noted as significant historical

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52 Fischel, The Holocaust, 96.
53 Fischel, The Holocaust, 96.
54 Bauer, The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness, 26.
55 Bauer, The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness, 26.
56 Henry and Lang, Jewish Resistance Against the Holocaust, 67.
events. Authors Soumerai and Schulz similarly considered how uprisings were planned over time, and in agreeance with historian Shabbetai, they occurred at the last minute when the Jews had nothing left to lose. Other aspects of the Warsaw Uprising included the smuggling network, identified by Druks as an important contributing factor to the planning and success of the revolt. With such effort and significance, Fischel went as far as to suggest that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was the most impactful act of resistance because of the movement it started throughout the Jewish community within Europe. Despite these coinciding opinions, Bauer believed that in general Jewish resistance should not be considered a type of warfare, but instead all acts are independent of each other. Bauer considered the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising not to be war-like, but instead an independent act and last-effort to prevent the liquidation of the ghetto.

Included in a collection of resistance essays edited by Yuri Suhl, the short essay *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* by Professor Ber Mark indicated the events of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising with incredible detail. Information on the underground’s strategies and tactics, weapon gathering and manufacturing, and other concepts of the various attacks and encounters with Germans are discussed in great specificity. His insightful analysis reveals his belief in the success of the uprising. It is also made known crucial facts, such as how the ghetto was planned to be liquidated as a birthday present for Hitler himself. Mark’s account of the Uprising was the most accurate and up-to-date in 1967 when his essay was
published in Suhl’s *They Fought Back*. From Mark’s commentary, it is clear that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was an important event from the beginning. Mark explained that the liquidation of the Ghetto was meant as a birthday present for Hitler. This was not like any other liquidation because it was connected to another event of extreme significance. Mark also revealed that there were more people in the ghetto than normal because of Passover. Both sides of the struggle experienced momentous events outside of the Uprising, which increased the stakes.

Details from Mark confirm the militaristic conduct and success of the Uprising. He suggested that Germans were fully equipped to deal with the resistance. The Germans were unaware that the Jews were “waiting to meet the enemy with active and passive resistance.” This suggests that the strength of the Jews was unanticipated by the Germans, as they were unable to easily liquidate the ghetto. After figuring out the power of the Jewish forces, Mark said the Germans sent certain people into the Ghetto first because of their fear of the Jews. The Germans fled at the first encounter, and tanks had to be brought in to fight the concentration of Jews. Mark said this increase in weaponry showed the power and might of the Jews and legitimized the battle as a war.

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Two other new and vital pieces of information further prove the legitimacy of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In his comments, Mark shared that “Von Sammern suggested that bombers be flown in from Cracow. Stroop dismissed the idea because it would humiliate and shame Germany before the whole world.” Mark brought up a crucial point with this quote, that Germany was so weak in the struggle at one point they considered calling in backup from nearby forces. Not only does this show the immensity of the Uprising, but its importance in the greater context of World War II. Further, Mark stated that “something incredible happened” when Lautz called for a thirty-minute truce to collect the dead soldiers and the Jews refused. This caused a bad reaction from Stroop; he accused them of arrogance and retaliated. Truces are an act of war, which is highlighted by Mark to emphasize the Uprising as warfare. From Mark’s comments, it is clear he believed the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising to be of foremost importance.

Influence of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

The significance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is not only found through the event alone, but in its influence throughout the Jewish community. Polish survivor and Historian of the Holocaust, Yisrael Gutman, believed that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising heavily impacted all of Poland. In “The Genesis of the Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto,” Gutman indicated that the heart of the Jewish Polish resistance movement was located in Warsaw. This statement is bold, and gives Warsaw credit

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for all Polish organized resistance. It coincides with Fischel’s previous interpretation of Warsaw, which also acknowledged the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as a historically significant event. Gutman asserted that the center of all Polish resistance was based in Warsaw. One can realize the extreme impact of this interpretation when it is compared to a physical body. If the Polish Underground Resistance were a physical body, then the Warsaw Ghetto would have been a heart that powered the entire body and resistance movement.

Avinoam Patt, a professor of Jewish History at Harvard, shared a similar opinion to Gutman on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. According to Patt, this revolt had a major impact not only on other Jewish communities within Poland, but in other areas of Eastern Europe as well. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising had a considerable influence on these other communities by inspiring them to create their own resistance events against the Nazis. Like Gutman, Patt discerned the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as one of the most important and influential resistance movements within Europe. Another proposition made by Patt was that the Warsaw Ghetto not only impacted Polish and Eastern European resistance movements, but that it also had a major impact on the ways in which Germans handled uprisings in the future. This is noteworthy because Patt suggested that the Warsaw Ghetto not only impacted other Jewish communities, but their enemies as well. It directly influenced the Nazis themselves, including how they dealt with all acts of resistance within camps and ghettos, and other aspects of Jewish dehumanization. All of these changes occurred

66 Fischel, The Holocaust, 96.
after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, indicating that it was the start of the larger Jewish resistance movement. Patt’s opinion is well thought out because it considered the influence of the Warsaw revolt on both sides of the Holocaust, including the victims and the perpetrators.67

In The Holocaust, Fischel gave a further insight on the influence of the Warsaw Ghetto. According to Fischel, Warsaw doctor Ilya Horonzitzk and Zelo Bloch, a Jewish Officer from the Czech Army, lead an uprising in the Treblinka death camp. Fischel stated that they gathered weapons and successfully warded off the Nazis for a time. It can be interpreted that part of the significance of the Warsaw Uprising spread because both Horonzitzki and Bloch carried the spirit of Warsaw to Treblinka. To Fischel, the Warsaw Ghetto influenced the Treblinka resistance movement, as its significance resounded in Treblinka as well as other death camps in the surrounding area.68 Not only did Warsaw impact other Jewish communities in Poland through individuals, but also because of the significance itself.

American scholars Michael Berenbaum and Michael Peck also noted the impact of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in France. The Yiddish Underground Press was formed in France as a major act of resistance. As a successful movement of resistance, the Press tried to expose Nazi secrets. With such ambitious intentions, the press would have been influenced by some previously successful major act of resistance. According to the two scholars, this act was the revolt in Warsaw. They connected the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising to the Yiddish Underground Press in France,

67 Henry, Jewish Resistance Against the Holocaust, 393.
68 Fischel, The Holocaust, 98.
with a section labeling the Press as an “echo of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising”. An insightful connection, Berenbaum and Peck truly revealed the significance of the Warsaw Ghetto’s resistance against the Nazis. It’s significance not only influenced Poland and other nearby Eastern European countries, but it extended across the country and reached Western Europe as well.

According to general historiography, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising had a major influence on Jewish resistance movements across Europe. As the first major instance of active resistance, it demonstrated to other suffering Jewish communities that there was a possibility of physically acting out against their enemies. Many historians connect the events of the Warsaw Uprising as inspiring local uprisings, such as in Treblinka, as well as others. It was this major event of resistance that sparked a hope for Jewish people to no longer remain victims of the Nazis.

**Historiography of Emmanuel Ringelblum**

Emmanuel Ringelblum was one of the most prominent historians of the Holocaust. Uniquely, he was active in his historical analysis of the Holocaust while it was happening. As a Jewish historian, Ringelblum experienced the Holocaust in a way that no other historian ever will. He recorded his own personal history through diaries and the Oneg Shabbat Archive. Since the end of the Holocaust and the discovery of Ringelblum’s work, other historians have added to his historiography.

Most historians have described Ringelblum and his work as an essential aspect of Holocaust history.

Jewish historian Yehuda Bauer similarly declared Ringelblum’s importance because of his work in the Oneg Shabbat. In Bauer’s book *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, he asserted in reference to Jewish resistance, “the most famous of these cultural institutions was the Oneg Shabbat group in Warsaw.”

Founded and headed by Ringelblum, it is generally agreed upon that the Archive is one of the most important artifacts from the Holocaust today. The Archive provided historians with almost all their knowledge of life in Ghettos, and Ringelblum was the one who ensured this happened. Interestingly, Bauer did not mention Ringelblum until after he explained the significance of the Archive. This shows that even though Ringelblum’s work is regarded as exemplary, not all who study the Holocaust and information from the Archives realize his contributions.

As a form of resistance, the Oneg Shabbat paradoxically countered the content of Heinrich Himmler’s 1943 speech which unveiled the Final Solution plans to the rest of the Nazi Party. Bauer explained the coincidence between Himmler’s speech and the Archive. He stated that the,

Oneg Shabbat did not know of the speech in Poznan in 1943 in which Himmler boasted that nothing would ever become known of the Final Solution. But the basic idea of Oneg Shabbat was that knowledge and documentation were forms of defiance of Nazi intent.

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70 Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, 35.
72 Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, 35.
According to Bauer, the Archive was not only significant because it empowered the Jews against the Nazis, but it also directly countered the aims of the Nazis. Himmler specifically stated that the Final Solution would never be known the world, but Ringelblum had ensured it would. From this, it can be argued that Ringelblum's archive was the most powerful form of organized resistance because it was extremely successful in its goal to educate others of the horrors of the Nazis instead of being crushed like other resistance efforts.

Near the end of the section in his book, Bauer finally recognized the importance of Ringelblum himself. He explained that from group of Jewish men who worked in Warsaw to help those in need in the Ghetto, “Dr. Ringelblum is perhaps the best known today. They very early on realized that it would be their job to fight against Nazi-imposed starvation, humiliation, and gratuitous cruelty.” Even here, Bauer does not give Ringelblum all the credit he deserves for his actions, but instead accredited, with uncertainty, Ringelblum’s fame in comparison to the others of the group. It was the outcome of Ringelblum’s contribution to assisting other Jews that Bauer recognized here, not Ringelblum himself. Bauer expressed a unique opinion of Ringelblum in *The Jewish Resistance from Powerlessness* because Bauer never truly identified Ringelblum as a person of significance himself, rather it was his work that left a mark on history.

Avinoam Patt, associate professor of Judaic studies at the University of Hartford, articulated Ringelblum and the Oneg Shabbat as a crucial aspect of the Holocaust. In his essay *Jewish Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto*, Patt stated that

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73 Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, 36.
among all of Ringelblum’s accomplishments, “his most important initiative... was the creation of the Oyneg Shabes archive—the most secret archive of the Warsaw Ghetto.” Like other historians, Patt agreed that Ringelblum provided one of the key pieces of evidence from the Holocaust by founding and guiding the creation of the Archive. Patt further noted the clandestine nature of the Archives. This is an important recognition, because it emphasizes the risk that Ringelblum and his comrades had to take in order to successfully complete the Archive and prevent it from falling into the hands of the Nazis. Ringelblum’s secretive work can be questioned as the most important form of resistance against the Nazis.

The connection between Ringelblum’s work and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising through the Archives is also described by Patt. According to him, Ringelblum and the leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Mordecai Anielewicz, were friends in the Ghetto. Patt illustrated how,

Anielewicz developed a close relationship with Emmanuel Ringelblum, as did Josef Kaplan and Shmuel Breslaw, who aided in the activities of the Oyneg Shabbes Archive before their capture in September 1942. Ringelblum and other members of the Oyneg Shabbes executive members committee joined the finance committee of the ZOB to help raise what meager fundraisers could be raised for the resistance.”

As illuminated by Patt, Ringelblum’s archive was not completely separate from the Uprising within the Ghetto. After the completion of the Archive, Ringelblum's workers worked directly with the Uprising, specifically in the

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74 Oyneg Shabbes, or Oyneg Shabbos, is the Ashkenazi Jews pronunciation of Oneg Shabbat.
75 Henry, *Jewish Resistance Against the Nazis*, 404.
area of finances. As friends, Ringelblum would have also influenced Anielewicz, and vice versa. In a subtle way, Patt accredited Ringelblum for contributing to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising through his archive and comradeship with Anielewicz.

As one of the world’s leading experts on Auschwitz, historian Robert Jan van Pelt discussed the Auschwitz prisoner Hermann Langbein and his opinion of Ringelblum in his essay about “Resistance in the Camps.” Jan van Pelt described that according to Langbein, “diary writing would... not have counted as an act of resistance unless, as with the examples of the organized effort of Emmanuel Ringelblum and his Oyneg Shabes group in the Warsaw ghetto, it aimed at a general political goal.” Langbein apparently only accredited political resistance as legitimate. It is fair to acknowledge this opinion, because only political defiance would have made a genuine impact on the Nazi regime itself. Jan van Pelt fails however, to recognize the influence that other forms of Jewish fighting made in the wake of the Nazi regime. Although other types of resistance made some impression on the power of the Nazis, even if it did not directly hit their political schemes.

Within the historiography of Emmanuel Ringelblum, there is widespread agreement that he is a significant historical figure. Many historians, like Doreen Rappaport, simply recognize Emmanuel Ringelblum as a prominent historian because of his initiatives within the Warsaw Ghetto. Nearly every historian has

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77 Henry, *Jewish Resistance Against the Nazis*, 560.
confirmed the importance of the Oneg Shabbat Archive and identified it as his most important work. For example, historian Yisrael Gutman stated that it was “a vital component in the extensive underground movement in Jewish Warsaw.” It is also agreed that the Archive is one of the most valuable historical artifacts from the Holocaust. The pattern of historiography for Emmanuel Ringelblum, however, tends to focus on his work. Emmanuel Ringelblum himself is rarely the topic of historiography. Historians do not explore the roles he played within the ghetto or his personal opinions of Jewish resistance. Ringelblum is understudied as a person because historians focus on what he produced within the Warsaw Ghetto.

From this lack of historiography on Emmanuel Ringelblum himself, this thesis seeks to provide more research and analysis in this field. It contributes to the discussion of Ringelblum by adding the new variation to the historiography by focusing on him instead of just his work. Through the creation of the Oneg Shabbat Archive, Ringelblum revealed a shift in his thinking from only conducting passive resistance in the Archive, to advocating active resistance within the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It was these two major and different acts against the Nazis that made the Warsaw Ghetto unique within the historiography of Jewish resistance.

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Analysis of Jewish Resistance

Many historical opinions of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising have been acknowledged within the context of this thesis. All are noteworthy, but none are complete. Instead of acknowledging a single form of resistance, all types of resistance should be recognized. The review of historiography suggests that Jewish resistance is defined as both passive and active thoughts and actions that were intended to counter the aims of the Nazis. Passive resistance refers to docile or quiet activities that psychologically or socially disobeyed Nazis intentions to dehumanize the Jews. Active resistance includes vigorous, noticeable, and often violent actions directed towards physically rebelling against the Nazis. Both active and passive act were important in the progress of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

For the purpose of source analysis, however, a variety of important terms and words must be clearly defined. It is important to clarify what defines each for scholars to understand the differing significance of each concept. Clarification between organized and non-organized identifies their distinct qualities. Organized resistance included specific acts that took anywhere from days to months to plan, and were planned well in advance of when the actual event would occur. This planning included but is not limited to things such as gathering of weapons, instruction of people, and setting short and long-term goals to obtain. In contrast, non-organized were not planned, but instead spontaneous. Some examples include but are not limited to spitting in a Nazis face, attempting to jump from a cattle car, or attempting to run from Nazi roundups. Both passive and active, as well as organized and non-organized forms of resistance are legitimate forms of resistance.
Other terms are not as easily defined. Success and defeat are two of those concepts. What is considered successful for one person may be considered a sign of defeat for another. In this context of this thesis, both of these terms will be vaguely defined because of this difficulty. Success is any achievement or accomplishment made by a person or group. It can be considered extremely significant or small, but it must be thought of as an achievement by at least one or more individuals. Examples include personal victories or accomplishments made by a collective group. Defeat, in contrast, includes any set-backs or acts resulting in a negative consequence. Losing fighters or weapons would be an example of such a defeat. An action must also be felt by one or more people to be considered a defeat.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising can be understood as War of Resistance. It was the first true resistance event that combined both passive and active forms of resistance. As the initial organized revolt carried out by Jews against the Nazis, the Uprising was planned and not random like most previous acts of resistance. From the militaristic planning, the Warsaw Uprising portrayed itself as a type of warfare waged against the Nazis. Jewish documents and writings, such as diary entries and letters, were collected as a part of the Oneg Shabbat Archive that preceded the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and contributed to its success. The Jews of Warsaw essentially fueled the fire of resistance across Europe. They inspired other Jews to act out against their perpetrators for the remainder of the Holocaust.
Emmanuel Ringelblum was one of the most renowned Jewish historians of Poland. Ringelblum studied economics, sociology, and history before he earned a doctorate in history in 1927 at the University of Warsaw. He accomplished many feats during the reign of the Nazis. They included a composition of his daily thoughts within his personal diary from 1940 through 1942, and founding the Oneg Shabbat (O.S.) Archive in 1942. Through this archive, Ringelblum sought to record all crimes against the Jews for future historians to utilize and study. His group of archivists worked on the Archive during their time in the Warsaw Ghetto starting in 1940. Hidden in ten metal boxes and three milk cans, the archival papers were smuggled outside of the Ghetto on three separate occasions. The first occurred in the Summer of 1942 and buried by two Jews. After that, two more sections of the Archive were buried in March and April of 1943. The hidden documents were eventually found. When, revealing the many crimes of the Nazis. Ringelblum’s perspective on many events give historians key insight to what happened within the Warsaw Ghetto.

When researching Emmanuel Ringelblum and the O.S. archive, two sources provide nearly every primary writing for eager audiences. Edited and translated by Jacob Sloan, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum* was published in 2006 in New York. The book covers all of Ringelblum’s notes from

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81 Sloan, introduction to *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, xii-xiii.
83 Shoah Resource Center, “Oneg Shabbat.” *Yad Vashem*. 
January 1940 until December 1942.\textsuperscript{84} Except for the translation of his notes into English, the Notes remains unedited which provides readers with his raw interpretation of events within the Warsaw Ghetto and other aspects of the Holocaust. Ringelblum’s diary captured his personal feelings which adequately present a fluctuation in his opinions on types of Jewish resistance and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Although this text includes a substantial collection of his writings, Ringelblum continued to write past the date that the Oneg Shabbat was hidden.

Edited by Joseph Kermish and published in 1986, \textit{To Live With Honor and Die with Honor! Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives ‘O.S.’ [‘Oneg Shabbath’]} is another crucial source about Ringelblum and his archive. Due to the extensive material in the original archive’s collection, this book only contains a selection of the most important or pertinent documents to understanding the nature of the archive and the life of Jews within the Ghetto. Many of the documents selected for the book were written by Ringelblum himself, including many of the sources included in within this research. The collection of sources includes a unique combination of notes, pamphlets, diary entries, random thoughts, and other pieces of literature written by a number of authors. Of specific prevalence are the ‘O.S.’ introduction essay, the “History of Social Aid in Warsaw During the War,” and “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” all written by Ringelblum. Despite the context of the book as a mere selection of the archive documents, it still provides readers with an idea of what was included and collected by Ringelblum and his comrades.

The Nature of Ringelblum’s Diaries and the O. S. Archive

Emmanuel Ringelblum and his Personal Notes

Ringelblum began writing in June of 1933, long before the Warsaw Ghetto was formed, to record the discrimination against Jews in Germany. initially, his writing included general thoughts about Nazi crimes against Jews in Germany prior to the invasion of Poland. In January of 1940, three months after the invasion of Poland by the Nazis, Ringelblum decided to intensify his writing. He gave himself the task of recording the “whole story of the Jewish catastrophe” for future generations in the form of a daily journal. Ringelblum’s Notes span from January 1940 until June of 1942. Before the ghetto, little is shared about Ringelblum’s thoughts of active resistance.

Passive acts of resistance are indicated within his entries. At the beginning of every entry, Ringelblum would address it as if he were writing a letter to someone. For example, “Dear Father,” “my dear,” or “My dear parents” were frequently used. His intentions were to possibly avoid initial suspicion of his actions if his journal was to fall into the hands of the Nazis. The nature of Ringelblum’s diaries

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86 Beyer, Emmanuel Ringelblum, 35.
87 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 3.
88 Sloan, introduction to Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, ix.
89 Sloan, introduction to Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, vii-viii.
90 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw, 7.
91 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw, 9.
92 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw, 14.
93 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw, 7.
before the formation of the ghetto include simple aspects of everyday life, as well as
the discrimination against Jewish people and their murders.  

Relations between the Jews and Polish were also of particular interest to
Ringelblum. In addition to his personal notes, Ringelblum explained the history of
social aid in Warsaw during the war. With his own Archive, “he wanted to document
economic, health, and social injustices that Jews suffered under the Nazis.” In his
own way, Ringelblum contributed to the social aid and health of the Jews.

**Ringelblum on Death**

Death and its normality were commonly discussed by Ringelblum throughout his first year in the Ghetto. Occasionally this was done through
illustrations of death. In his *Notes* for February 1941, Ringelblum described how
“almost daily people are falling dead or unconscious in the middle of the street. It no
longer makes so direct an impression.” According to Ringelblum, the number of
Jews dying in the Ghetto grew “from day to day.” Specifically, high mortality rates
in the streets had “grown from 150 to 500-600 a week.” From this significant
increase, Ringelblum concluded that one became accustomed to all of the death as a
part of everyday life in the Ghetto. To emphasize this point, one passage in his
journal transitions directly from the illustration of corpses sprawled naked in the

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94 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw*, 15.
97 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 130.
99 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 165
street to his thoughts about the increase in rent. As Ringelblum recorded more and more accounts of people dying or being murdered, he became indifferent to the occurrence.

Ringelblum recognized death as the ultimate sickness of the Ghetto. His fixation on death emphasized the unique normalization of it throughout the rest of the Ghetto. Specifically, Ringelblum wrote in his Notes for August of 1941 of how “there is a rare, remarkable indifference to death which no longer impresses. One walks past corpses with indifference. It is rare for anyone to visit the hospital to inquire after a relative. Nor is there much interest in the dead at the graveyard.” Ideas like this were repeated many times over by Ringelblum throughout his notes. The repetitive nature of this concept demonstrated how widespread death was, as well as emphasized the impact of death on the culture within the Ghetto.

Ringelblum even provided details on interactions between kids and death. In his Notes for May 1941, Ringelblum provided a description indicating that “the Children are no longer afraid of death. In one courtyard, the children played a game tickling a corpse.” Societal norms are often reflected in younger generations who follow rules and instructions given by their parents. If children were playing with corpses, then their parents likely had allowed them to. One can go so far as to say that because Jews were surrounded by death on a daily basis it affected their family life. It can even be argued that the normality of death is what lead many Jews to

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100 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 156.
101 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 177.
102 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 194.
103 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 174.
support active resistance against the Nazis; if they were to die anyway then they might as well die trying to regain their honor.

The Oneg Shabbat Archive

After moving into the Ghetto in the fall of 1940, Ringelblum saw the need to record the history of the Holocaust for future generations. In an essay written by Ringelblum in December of 1942, he explained how the archive was formed and what it consisted of. Ringelblum “laid the first brick for the archive in October 1939.”

It was not until May of 1940 that he realized this important task was better suited as a group effort. Ringelblum carefully selected people to join the group. This proved difficult because dozens of people wanted to be a part of the cause. Collecting literature was also challenging because people were terrified to simply write anything down from fear of being caught during a search.

Eventually, people began to work vigorously to establish and continuously expand the material within the archive. Ringelblum explained in his 1942 essay that there were two types of workers. Permanent workers “devoted themselves entirely to the job,” while temporary workers contributed single pieces of writing “on their own experience during the war or of that of their own village.” One thing was clear;

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“everyone understood how important it was for future generations that evidence remain of the tragedy of Polish Jewry.”

“We must work poorly” was the slogan of the Oneg Shabbat. The meaning behind this was to work diligently without drawing attention to the archive and risk its exposure. Temporary members of the archive worked to obtain accounts and documents pertaining to important events in various towns across Poland. It is known that about sixty “underground scholars” including “writers, scholars, rabbis, philosophers, poets, journalists, artists, and scientists” worked on the archive. Interestingly, many of the pieces prepared to be a part of the O.S. were lost or destroyed because Jews were constantly moving. For example, Dr. Cham A. Kaplan’s diaries were recorded in the archives, but only a part remained because “the entire manuscript was lost in the deportation, along with the writer.” Ringelblum’s diaries carried a higher significance. He explained in his essay on the O.S. Archive that “his own daily—and later weekly and monthly notes...are particularly important with respect to the first year of the War because nobody kept diaries then.” Overall, Ringelblum portrayed the main goal of the O.S. as a “fellowship...whose banner was: readiness to sacrifice, devotion to one another, and service to the community.” It was the brave and diligent work of this group that

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111 Ringelblum, "O.S. ['Oneg Shabbath']," 12.
112 Rappaport, Beyond Courage, 83.
113 Ringelblum, "O.S. ['Oneg Shabbath']," 18.
preserved the story of thousands of Jews for future generations to study and reflect upon.

Within the diaries and notes on life in the Ghetto, they emphasized the daily struggle of Jews. Many of the notes within the archive were written by authors currently unknown. One entry like this describes a variety of observations as they walk through the street, such as a boy scavenging for food, a baby and little girl sitting on the street, and corpses covered in paper.\(^{116}\)

Other sections of the archive focus on the Nazi policies of eradication and total extermination off the Jews. Part of the purpose of the O.S. was to collect information against the Nazis as evidence of their crimes that future generations could not deny. With this goal in mind, the section focusing on the genocide policies carries extreme importance. Majorly, the Archive recorded information about the Warsaw Ghetto itself and surrounding Polish camps and towns. The secrecy of the death camp of Chelmno was also discussed in several documents based on the account of a man named Jacob Grojanowski.\(^{117}\) The writers in this section viewed death as a type of final resettlement. Some Jewish writers described how “before us and behind us is death” as “life went on like an unoriginal thriller.”\(^{118}\) As death and agony became normalized as a part of everyday life, some Jews began to lose hope. Interestingly, one statement explained that “one can lose all hopes except the one –


that the suffering and destruction of this war will make sense when they are looked at from a distant, historical perspective.” 119 During their time of suffering in the Ghetto, Jews were aware of the importance that future generations would study and recognize what they went through. It was through the Archive that this possibility was created.

**Emmanuel Ringelblum on Resistance**

Throughout his writings, Ringelblum explored a variety of diverse types and forms of resistance. One of his most prominent pieces was included within the archive, titled *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor*. Ringelblum composed the essay in March of 1944 and sent it out to London through the Polish Underground at the end of May the same year. 120 Within this essay, he stated that “the fate of the tiny remnant of Jews who still suffer and expire... [has] been sealed.” 121 Ringelblum believed that the majority of Jewish people who had survived until that point were going to perish at the hands of the Nazis no matter what happened. As he briefly revisits the origins and purpose of the Oneg Shabbath Archive, 122 it can be understood that this archive was one of the most effective acts of Jewish resistance throughout the entirety of the Holocaust.

Passive acts of resistance were well recognized by Ringelblum. He emphasized the remarkable accomplishment of distributing publications

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119 “The Last Station of Resettlement is Death,” 704.
120 Ringelblum, “To Live with Honor and Die with Honor,” 762.
121 Ringelblum, “To Live with Honor and Die with Honor,” 762.
122 Ringelblum, “To Live with Honor and Die with Honor,” 764.
throughout the Ghetto despite “obstacles to communication and transportation.”\textsuperscript{123}

In addition to the impressive Archive, Jews ultimately resisted the Nazis by upholding and developing their culture. Libraries, symphonic orchestras, and children’s programs, among other things were all developed in Warsaw for Jews during their suppression.\textsuperscript{124}

Ringelblum also gives major credit towards armed resistance efforts across Poland after the end of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. In his March 1944 essay he expressed:

\begin{quote}
The superb epos of armed Jewish resistance in Poland began, – the heroic resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto, the magnificent fight in Bialystok, the destruction wrought by Jews in the slaughterhouses of Treblinka and Sobibor, the battles at Tranow, Będzin, Częstochwa and other localities. Jews demonstrated to the world their ability to give armed battle, to die with dignity in battle with the mortal enemy of the Jewish people and of all humanity.\textsuperscript{125}
\end{quote}

Ringelblum accepted active resistance and celebrated it after seeing the effect of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising one year earlier. Accrediting victories around the country legitimized them in a historical way because of Ringelblum’s recognition of their efforts. These events of active Jewish resistance would not be lost among Nazi coverups but instead were recorded by Ringelblum in the O.S. Archive for future generations to value.

\textsuperscript{123} Ringelblum, “To Live with Honor and Die with Honor,” 767.
\textsuperscript{124} Ringelblum, “To Live with Honor and Die with Honor,” 768.
\textsuperscript{125} Ringelblum, “To Live with Honor and Die with Honor,” 769.
Instead of addressing Jewish resisters as individuals, Ringelblum identified himself and others as a particular group of activists. He explained that

We, the survivors, aren’t many... a number of Polish-Yiddish writers still survive... We doubt that we shall see each other some time. Give our warm greetings to all Jewish cultural workers, writers, journalists, musicians, sculptors, all builders of present-day Jewish culture and fighters for a national and human liberation.\(^\text{126}\)

Ringelblum was aware of the demise of Jewish people. He knew that many of the remining survivors would still perish in the Holocaust, but that did not prevent his call to action of other resisters. From this passage, it can be seen that Ringelblum believed Jewish literature and the archive were a form of active resistance in themselves. Writers may not have been throwing grenades directly at soldiers, but their words were land mines, waiting to explode when the next generation would discover their power against the Nazis.

**Passive Resistance**

Evaluations of passive versus active resistance are indicated throughout Ringelblum's writings. The topic of Jewish resistance is not only debated among historians now, it is clear that Jews disputed over it during the Holocaust as well. From Ringelblum’s entry on *Thoughts About Resistance*, we find that initially he supported passive resistance only. He wrote, “Not to act, not to lift a hand against

\(^{126}\) Ringelblum, "To Live with Honor and Die with Honor," 769-771.
Germans, has since then become the quiet, passive heroism of a common Jew.” As mentioned, his caution in choice of resistance was not unwise. Within the Warsaw Ghetto, there were heavy restrictions on Jewish literature imposed by the Nazis. The regime did not allow the existence of Jewish writing, or any other documents which would provide evidence that would one day reveal the actions of the Holocaust. Ringelblum did not wish to see Jews be slaughtered from active resistance; he wanted Jews to resist in a way that would not physically provoke the Nazis. The irony in this situation is that Ringelblum’s opinions on uprising and resistance completely contradict the actions that eventually occurred in Warsaw.

Within his journal, Ringelblum takes time to describe the Jews’ move into the ghetto. Punishments were inflicted for disobeying the orders given by the Nazis. Specifically, in 1940 Ringelblum described how on “the 5th of October, more than one hundred Lodz Jews were put in prison. Some say because they left the Ghetto; others because they smuggled merchandise or got their goods out with the help of Germans, who later informed them.” As a result of the mass relocation and discriminatory actions taken against the Jews among this massive exodus, many Jews such as Ringelblum believed that “only a miracle can save us- the war’s speedy end.” In the beginning, it was clear that Ringelblum disbelieved in the capability of organized Jewish resistance. No act of resistance would save the Jews from their fate; only political acts of war could do that.

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128 Berenbaum and Peck, The Holocaust and History, xiii.
129 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw, 64.
130 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 60.
As Jews were being transferred into the Warsaw Ghetto, Ringelblum describes some small random acts of resistance. One of particular interest is the Happy Corner. Ringelblum explained in his Notes for October 1940 that this was the name given by the Jews to a particular newspaper page in which a German casualty list, or “marmalade” was featured. It is common knowledge that Germans kept lists as they murdered their countless number of Jewish victims. Jews apparently did the same thing, and shared the information in newspapers for other Jews to read. From this, it can be determined that Jews too celebrated in the death of their enemy in unusual ways. No further opinions of Ringelblum are included in his journal aside from the reference.

From each entry, Ringelblum plainly asserted his disgust with the Nazis and their treatment of Jews. A particular event is highlighted among his other notes, in which a Jews is cruelly abused. He explained that “on Leszno Street a soldier came through in a wagon and stopped to beat a Jewish pedestrian. Ordered him to lie down in the mud and kiss the pavement. —A wave of evil rolled over the whole city, as if in response to a nod from above.” Ringelblum hinted that God was the reason for the wrongdoings of the Nazis. His word choice is harsh and encapsulating. He described the Nazis as a collective wave of evil; one might envision a Tsunami wave damaging innocent people. This wave of evil further affected the whole city, not just a part of it. It is possible that from this hate stemmed Ringelblum’s desire to resist the Nazis, and eventually the approval of active resistance.

131 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 74.
132 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 87.
Intellectual Resistance

Writing and literature were recognized by Ringelblum as an important way for Jews to resist the Nazis. Through literature, Jews are able to not only record information against the Nazis, but it was also a way for them to cultivate their intelligence. Writing as diaries, poems, songs, stories, plays, and other art forms, can be represented as types of intellectual resistance. Ringelblum shared in his diaries that,

we, the Jews... have long since understood the importance of intellectual culture for the preservation of our life as a nation... we understand that our survival was impossible without an extensive network of popular schooling... without a written culture, without literature and arts.133

From this section of Ringelblum’s writing, it can be determined that literature not only preserved Jewish culture, but it also maintained a Jew’s humanity. In the wake of the Holocaust, Jews faced the challenge of maintaining dignity while suffering from unspeakable treatment. Ringelblum knew literature was an escape for Jewish minds during this time of horror and degradation. Although a multitude of Jews perished at the hands of Nazis, many others continued to live, despite the conditions of the Holocaust, through their own literary creations.

Cultivating intelligence through writing was important for Jews; it was the difference between survival and bereavement. Jews who wrote and fostered their knowledge lived healthier and rewarding lives as opposed to those who simply

existed. Even if a Jewish writer were to perish physically in the Holocaust, their spirit was preserved within his writing for future generations to recognize.

Importantly, intellectual resistance was the basis of the Oneg Shabbat Archive and Ringelblum's diaries, which have provided the majority of knowledge about Jewish Resistance. Ringelblum created the archive with the call to action for fellow Jews.

One of the documents in the Archive, titled “A Call for the Establishment of an Organization for ‘Moral Supply in the Warsaw Ghetto,’” exhibits this drive. Written by an unknown author, it implores that “we must undertake everything possible in order to prevent our final sinking into crass materialism so that our struggle does not exhaust the last, remaining vital force in our nation.”

Ringelblum and the other archivists believed that passive, intellectual resistance was the best weapon Jews had against the Nazis. When he started the Archive, Ringelblum understood passive writing to be more powerful than actively trying to fight the Nazis.

Instead of simply collecting what people had already written for the Archive, Ringelblum and the other archivists encouraged active writing from all Jews. Specifically, the same unknown author as previously mention demanded that Jews “must undertake a planned effort upon this all-important sector in the struggle for the survival of our nation. In the effort, we must draw on scholars, writers, musicians, and other artists for support and help.”

The organization of the Archive included the goal of preserving the Jewish nation. Like most educated Jews, Ringelblum was aware that the Holocaust would take the majority of Jewish lives.

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His survival, along with other intellectuals, had little guarantee. With this mindset, Ringelblum's archive served as a way for the thoughts and experiences of Jews to last beyond their time. Ringelblum understood that if Jews would not have developed an intellectual culture through writing, there would be no materials for future generations to study and become educated about their experiences.

**Smuggling**

When Ringelblum first resided inside the Warsaw Ghetto in the Winter of 1941, much of his journaling focused on the underground smuggling system. Restrictions had been placed by the Nazis on transactions between the Warsaw Ghetto and the rest of Warsaw, so that the Ghetto was essentially sealed off. Smuggling was important because Jews needed to obtain food for survival. Without the smuggled food, Jews would not be able to survive on meager rations distributed by the Nazis. Ringelblum described an example of smuggling in February of 1941:

> A scene on Leszno street: The heat of a Jewish smuggler is thrust through a hole in the basement of the gutted post-office building. Six guards see him, call over two Jews, and order them to pull the man out. They do it, receiving a blow from the guard in the act. They order the smuggler to crawl back into his hold again, and, as he crawls, pierce his head with their bayonets.

Ringelblum emphasized the severity of smuggling as both a necessity for Jews to survive and as a forbidden act against the Nazis. With this example, people were

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137 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 128.
willing to risk public torment and death in order to smuggle food because starvation in the Ghetto was such a problem. It is apparent that Ringelblum supported this kind of resistance because it was essential for Jewish survival within the Ghetto. Although the consequences were severe if caught, the possible benefits were outweighed.

He explicitly wrote that “despair and a sense of hopelessness are growing. There is the universal feeling that They are trying to starve us out, and we cannot escape, save through a miracle.” Smuggling may not have been the miracle Jews searched for, but Ringelblum recognized it was an important act of resistance against the efforts of the Nazis attempt to starve them. He even tried to include information about the role of women and smuggling within the Ghetto.

Smuggling took not only took place to provide food from outside the Ghetto, but also transformed into thievery. As the cost of living rose, people were forced to steal from each other within the Ghetto. For instance, Ringelblum related the situation in which “a Jew stole electricity by tampering with the electricity meter” in order to direct his neighbor’s line to his house. Ringelblum’s only comment of this act was that it could be included as a part of the “system of collective responsibility” within the Ghetto. The Jewish community had to look out for each other, as well as themselves, or else there would be no survivors.

As the year went on, Ringelblum explained that the threat of death had no impact on smuggling within the Ghetto. According to Ringelblum, “the death

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139 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 112.
140 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 147.
141 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 141.
142 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 146.
143 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 146.
sentence in general- has had very little deterring effect on smuggling, which continues with undiminished vigor. Jewish smugglers continue to scale the Wall, because, as they put it, if they can't smuggle they are sentenced to death anyway."

One of the ultimate ways for Jews to resist the Nazis was simply to survive within the Ghetto. With this quote from Ringelblum, one can see that Jews were caught in a dilemma of two separate ways to face death. Instead of waiting to die, Jews continued to smuggle because is sustained their lives. As Ringelblum put it, they had a “sufficient means of subsistence” thanks to the Jewish smugglers. Smuggling was more than simply staying alive; Jews choose to resist Nazis and risk a more honorable death by smuggling rather than to let themselves starve in the Ghetto.

Ringelblum made a profound connection between smuggling and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It was his belief that smuggling was the primary reason for the liquidation of the Ghetto. In Ringelblum’s diary for January of 1942, he wrote “what was the motive for liquidating the Small Ghetto? First, the matter of smuggling.” This is the only place in which Ringelblum stated a direct cause for the liquidation of the Ghetto. Placing blame on smuggling for this has not been seen before. Not only does this statement connect smuggling to the demise of the Ghetto, but it also links smuggling with the active resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Here is a clear example of the way in which Warsaw utilized both passive and active resistance to revolutionize Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. Smuggling had a larger impact on the Warsaw Ghetto than just keeping Jews alive and risking their

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144 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 237.
145 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 246.
146 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 222.
lives day to day; according to Ringelblum it was the primary reason for the liquidation and revolt of the Warsaw Ghetto.

From Ringelblum’s connection between smuggling and the liquidation of the Ghetto, it can be questioned if he considered smuggling to have been an active form of resistance. In the first stages of the Ghetto, he only gave mention to this form of active resistance with no indication of any more violent or direct acts against the Nazis. He further emphasized the action of Jews within the intricate system of smuggling, and the significance of these acts. Ringelblum explained in October of 1941 how “a phenomenon such as smuggling, which is very significant in all wars.... Portrays the overwhelming importance of smuggling in Warsaw which, as long as the Ghetto existed, saved the community of 400,000 from death by starvation.”

Although the Jews did not use violence against soldiers when smuggling food into the Ghetto, it does not mean they were not actively resisting the Nazis in this way.

A final statement to be made about smuggling is that if it were not for this crucial aspect of resistance, all of Ringelblum’s highly critical documents on Holocaust history and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising would otherwise have been lost. Smuggling became a part of the everyday culture of the Warsaw Ghetto as a way for Jews to avoid starvation. It played a larger role in the overarching resistance of the Holocaust, however, because of the Oneg Shabbat Archives. Smuggling was the reason for the preservation of the Jewish nation.

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Distribution of Information

Jews communicated information within the Ghetto through smuggling, as explained by Ringelblum within his notes. He especially related communication with the art of smuggling. For example, apparently “the telephone is the most important means of communication in smuggling.”148 In addition, Ringelblum commented that newspapers were important to make a living, with entertainment, and with smuggling.149 The ways in which Jews communicated was intertwined with smuggling around the Ghetto. This connection emphasized the importance of smuggling within the Ghetto because it was the center of all communication.

Illegally printed newspapers were also used as a method of communication within the Ghetto. One example provided by Ringelblum included the Polish publication of Your Freedom and Our, which was “sharply opposed to the employment of 5,000 young Jewish volunteers in agricultural work. They maintain that it is collaborating with the enemy.”150 His words reveal disagreement among the Jews during this time. This example specifically exposed conflict with employment of Jews by Nazis, as some sought the opportunity with excitement while others believed it to only benefit their Nazi enemy. Ringelblum made it apparent that not all Jews were on the same side or shared the same beliefs. Ringelblum told of “another paper of the Young Guard’s, Against the Stream, No. 3, had a fine lead article: ‘It’s the thing to say that the war is turning people into beasts. But we did not wish the war, and we do not wish it now, and we will not be turned

148 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 171-172.
149 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 172.
150 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 144.
into beasts. We were and we will remain, human beings.”

Maintaining humanity was one of the most accepted types of passive resistance within the Ghetto. Reading newspapers was passive, but allowed Jews to learn of events outside of the Ghetto and discuss them with others. Instead of acting out against the Nazis directly, Jews refrained from allowing the Nazis to dehumanize them by reading newspapers that contained information to cultivate their intellectual and analytical capacities.

Political information was communicated in diverse ways within the Ghetto, including word-of-mouth and jokes. In his notes, Ringelblum explained that learned of the alleged death of Goering, as well as the Hess Affair and spread these concepts by word of mouth. Like learning of the information from the camps, word of mouth was important for spreading ideas. Although Jews within the Ghettos were physically cut off from the rest of the world, they were still able to obtain news of politics from across the country. Even jokes acted as a medium for political outlets and spreading of information. One joke shared by Ringelblum posed the idea that, “if the Germans win the war, 25 per cent of the Jews will die; if the English win, 75 per cent’ (that’s how long the English victory will take place).” As a satire, Jews told this joke to reflect their ideas about the war that they were a part of. Despite the fact that they were not technically considered to be a side within the war, they still were a part of the politics and actively payed attention to what happened around them.

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151 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 151.
152 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 178-179.
153 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 183.
154 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 174.
Jews not only communicated within the Warsaw Ghetto, but also between Camps and Ghettos. Towards the end of the existence of the Ghetto, Ringelblum discussed connections with the Treblinka death camp. In May of 1941, he described learning of “Treblinki—The news about the gravediggers... the Jews from Stok who escaped from the wagons... the method of killing: gas, steam, electricity.”

Exchanging information with other camps was critical to the cooperation between Jewish communities. It was how Jews in the Ghetto learned about their ultimate demise instead of simply being relocated. The mere act of exchanging information between camps was remarkable because of strict Nazi regulations. After communicating with Treblinka, Ringelblum shared his astonishment that “the Jews from Western Europe have no idea what Treblinki is. They believe it to be a work colony...if they knew that they were going to their death, they would certainly put up some resistance.” It was this information that shifted the purpose of Ringelblum’s archive. Instead of simply collecting information for future generations, it became crucial to share the evidence right away for the sake of Jewish lives.

Spreading information about their current situation became the main objective of communication for Warsaw Ghetto. Distributing information throughout the Ghetto was fairly easy, and obtaining information from outside of the Ghetto was not too much of a challenge. Sending information out of the Ghetto was, in contrast, an extreme challenge. In June of 1942, Ringelblum explained in his

156 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 321.
diary how “everybody agrees that the most important thing was to arouse the world to the horror of the organized extermination we are now suffering. There was no point in even considering if this would worsen our condition. We have nothing to lose.”\textsuperscript{157} Add analysis.

Instead of risking their lives through physical resistance, Ringelblum advised for a more intellectual move against the Nazis. Eventually, Ringelblum shared in June of 1942 how “there was a broadcast summarizing the situation: 700,000, the number of Jews killed in Poland, was mentioned.”\textsuperscript{158} From communication within the Ghetto, to other camps, and eventually to the rest of the world, these interactions were a crucial form of passive resistance against the Nazis. To emphasize the importance of this broadcast, Ringelblum explained that “the O.S. has fulfilled a great historical mission. It has alarmed the world to our fate, and perhaps saved hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews from extermination.”\textsuperscript{159} Communication with such a distant and wide audience was no small feat. Because of this radio transmission, the world had its eyes opened to become aware of what was really happening in Eastern Europe. Unfortunately, not much effort would be done to stop the Holocaust aside from Allied forces striving to win the war.

The broad line of communication was not limited to simply educating the world about the Holocaust. Within Ringelblum’s diary entry “Little Stalingrad Defends Itself,” he describes another continentally-scaled exchange of information. Ringelblum reflected on another massive radio broadcast on the fifth or sixth of May.

\textsuperscript{157} Ringelblum, \textit{Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto}, 291.
\textsuperscript{158} Ringelblum, \textit{Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto}, 295.
\textsuperscript{159} Ringelblum, \textit{Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto}, 295.
1943, where “American and English radios... learned of the course of the April fighting from a short-wave transmitter, [and] called on the Polish people to help the Jews with material means and to hide them.”\textsuperscript{160} In contrast to the previous mass-scaled broadcast, this one provided tangible results for the people of the Warsaw Ghetto with other Poles to assist the fighters. Instead of simply sharing information about the situation, this broadcast seemed to provide a realistic opportunity for others to respond.

Ringelblum described the details of the Broadcast and their support for Jewish resistors. Apparently, the transmission was “filled with praise for the Warsaw Jews who were defending their honour with arms in their hands.”\textsuperscript{161} With the revolt, the sole purpose was for Jews to defend their humanity and die with honor. They did not believe in their physical victory over the Nazis, but rather a spiritual one. Hearing a foreign broadcast exclaiming these concepts allowed Ringelblum to confirm their efforts had not been done in vain. The effective communication of the Warsaw Ghetto as a passive act of resistance in the face of the Uprising, allowed their active resistance to be properly credited across nations other than Poland.


\textsuperscript{161} Ringelblum, “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” 603.
**Active Resistance**

A few cases of active resistance were observed by Ringelblum during the first year in the Ghetto. Specifically, in December of 1940 he explained how he “—Heard about the heroism of the Jews during the fighting against the German invaders... everyone but the Jews fled during an air raid. The Jews shot down seventeen airplanes.”\(^{162}\) When he described this situation, it was with respect and honor. Although he does not explicitly state whether he supported their activism or not, Ringelblum labeled the Jews as heroic as they “set an example of endurance and courage.”\(^{163}\) It is noteworthy that the act of heroism occurred outside of the Ghetto near Mlawa.\(^{164}\) Ringelblum probably accepted this act because of its location away from Warsaw rather than endangering the lives of other innocent Jews within the Ghetto.

News about the massacres of Jews from Biala Podlaska in Sobibor had reached the ghetto in March 1942. This propelled Ringelblum to compose an entry reflecting his reactions to hearing the news. He began his entry with a question asked by his friend. In anger, they questioned their position as sheep being led to the slaughter by staying silent and obedient in the face of their captors.\(^{165}\) This one particular metaphor, that Jews were sheep led to the slaughter, has resonated throughout Holocaust history.\(^{166}\)

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\(^{162}\) Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 107.

\(^{163}\) Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 108.

\(^{164}\) Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 107.

\(^{165}\) Ringelblum, “Thoughts About Resistance.”

\(^{166}\) Originated from the King James Bible in Romans 8:36, which states “As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”
Ringelblum rhetorically responded to his friend’s question in his diary, imploring that active resistance would only trigger Nazi reactions. If Jews were to revolt, wrote Ringelblum, then they would instigate Nazis to punish a multitude more to ensure that it never happened again. Ringelblum made a good point here in deep concern of his comrade. He explained that their fellow Jews “went passively to death and they did it, so that the remnants of the people would be left to live, because every Jew knew that lifting a hand against a German would endanger his brothers.” He encouraged Jews to not fight at first chance, because so many had already been slaughtered in Sobibor. Without evidence of the purpose of the Holocaust, one might even suggest that Ringelblum made the most educated decision at the time. Unaware of the genocide plan, his reactions were to simply save as many Jews as possible through compliance and patience.

Ringelblum’s seemingly hopeless attitude was evident throughout his entries. He made statements in reference to the “complete spiritual break-down and disintegration” of Jewish peoples. It is not false that the Holocaust severely impacted Jews spiritually, but Ringelblum choose to focus on this negative aspect. He further claimed that, in reference to action, “we are completely powerless and enemy does to us whatever he pleases.” The morose reflections of Ringelblum retract any possibility of encouragement for the Jew’s situation. As a powerful figure in the Ghetto, Ringelblum’s opinions would not have been limited to his personal diary, and would have influenced other Jews around him as he verbally shared his

167 Ringelblum, “Thoughts about Resistance.”
168 Ringelblum, “Thoughts about Resistance.”
169 Ringelblum, “Thoughts about Resistance.”
opinions. Swaying Jews to think as he did would have detracted from the planning and goals of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising rather than contribute to it.

Ringelblum specifically referenced a situation in which 40 Jews allowed themselves to be lead from a kibbutz, knowing they would be slaughtered. He argued that most people, including experts, would not understand the intentions of the Jews who willingly died. One can attempt to understand Ringelblum’s opinion. During the Holocaust, other ethnic groups and people would not know what reasons the Jews had for walking to their death without hesitation. Either they would be confused why groups of people would willingly die, or they would believe the dehumanizing propaganda of the Nazis and follow their false claims. The basis of this diary entry was for Ringelblum to share his thoughts by providing an explanation to those who did not understand. Those Jews did not actively resist because they knew resisting against the Germans would only lead to other more imminent deaths, from the same place they came or perhaps another town or country. Instead, Ringelblum choose to initially act through writing and constructing the archive, and encouraged others to do the same.

One of the lesser recognized acts of active resistance carried out within the Warsaw Ghetto was that against the Judenräte, who were Nazi selected Jewish Officials. Many Jews believed that the Judenräte acted as “informants” for Nazis by selling them information about their fellow Jews. Ringelblum indicated in his diary that “unfortunately,” in order to deal with the Jewish Officials, “we are afraid

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170 A Jewish communal settlement.
171 Ringelblum, “Thoughts about Resistance.”
172 Ringelblum, “Thoughts about Resistance.”
173 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 281.
to resort to terrorism, lest the Occupying Forces take bloody revenge.”¹⁷⁴

Ringelblum indicated that he and other Jews within the Warsaw Ghetto took some sort of action against the Judenräte, although it is unclear exactly what their actions were. He interestingly described taking out the Judenräte as an act of “terrorism” because it was done within the Ghetto to other Jews. This concept is fascinating in the context of the Holocaust. It indicated that the Judenräte were not completely outcasted by other Jews, otherwise the act would have been considered more commendable instead of an act of terrorism. Acting against the Judenräte was certainly a form of active resistance within the Ghetto, and was one of the events leading up to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

**Ringelblum’s Shift in Thinking**

In 1942, towards the end of the existence of the Ghetto, Ringelblum realized that active resistance was necessary to compliment the passive resistance he had carried out for the past few years. In May of 1942, Ringelblum wrote that “in a word, the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto aren’t content merely to recite Psalms and leave the rest in God’s hands; they labor day and night to lay their enemy down and bring an early peace... When will the war really end?”¹⁷⁵ Ringelblum was tired of sitting in the shadows waiting for the war to end. He began to understand that in order to truly resist the Nazis, the Warsaw Ghetto needed to act against their perpetrators rather than wait to be rescued by the Allied forces.

¹⁷⁴ Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 281.
In one of Ringelblum’s essays titled “Little Stalingrad Defends Itself” written in the Fall of 1942, he took time to express reactions within the Ghetto to hearing about the nearby death camp of Treblinka. At the time he composed this essay, Ringelblum experienced a transition from solely advocating passive Jewish resistance to encouraging active resistance, specifically against the Nazis. He wrote of how “the terrible awakening took place. The Jewish public understood what a terrible error had been made by not offering resistance to the SS.” Learning about Treblinka was not a normal exchange of information but completely shifted Ringelblum’s way of thinking as well as the thinking of the majority of Jews in Warsaw. The change in Ringelblum’s personal was influenced by a larger shift in thinking for other Jews within the Ghetto.

Not only does his essay reveal that was Ringelblum ready to act, but there was also a deep sense of regret with his past decisions to maintain passivity. In October of 1942, Ringelblum posed many questions within his diary about why the Jews didn’t resist sooner and “let themselves be led like sheep the slaughter.” This statement is extremely unique in the historiography of the Holocaust. Not many Jews, or historians, have admitted to this phrase. Instead, like Abba Kovner had famously expressed, they would not act like sheep and ignorantly die. But Ringelblum insists that at one point, the Jews of Warsaw did in fact accurately reflect this statement. He persisted with this opinion, exclaiming that “so long as the ‘operation’ was in progress (that was the name for the massacre of the Warsaw

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177 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 310.
Jews, the populace was silent. They allowed themselves to be led to the slaughter like sheep." Earlier in his writing, Ringelblum attempted to explain the reason behind Jews allowing themselves to willingly die. He asserted that if few Jews would voluntarily go to slaughter, then they would be saving the lives of thousands more. Now, at the end of 1942, Ringelblum had realized his mistake. He included himself in the population who kept silent and hid in the shadows. Essentially, this is a confession from Ringelblum, where he admits his wrongdoings and misjudgments.

After admitting his mistakes, Ringelblum began to express a deep sense of anger and regret. During late 1942, Ringelblum summarized with emotion in his Notes that,

> the resettlement should have never been permitted. We should have run out into the street, have set fire to everything in sight, have torn down the walls, and escaped to the Other Side. The Germans would have taken their revenge. It would have cost tens of thousands of lives, but not 300,000. Now we are ashamed of ourselves, disgraced in our own eyes, and in the eyes of the world, where our docility earned us nothing. This must not be repeated now. We must put up a resistance, defend ourselves against the enemy, man and child.

In just a few sentences, one can sense the change in Ringelblum's emotions from anger to remorse to inspiration. A completely natural reaction to such news, Ringelblum ended his rant with the desire to do something about the situation. Instead of lingering on what they could have done in the past, Ringelblum realized

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179 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 332-333.
180 Ringelblum, “Thoughts about Resistance.”
181 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 326.
the potential to contribute to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Following the completion of the first part of the Archive in the Summer of 1942, Ringelblum was ready to redeem his people in the face of the terrors of Treblinka.

Ringelblum further explained his regret to act against the Nazis in “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself.” First, he discussed how “if men, women and children, young and old, had begun a mass rising, there would not have been three hundred and fifty thousand murdered in Treblinka, but only fifty thousand shot in the streets of the capital.” Ringelblum realized that if the Warsaw Ghetto would have acted sooner, then perhaps thousands of Jews would have died but hundreds of thousands would have been saved. From the beginning of the Ghetto’s existence, Ringelblum always believed that risking the few to save the many was the best strategy for saving Jews. This specific logical application in relation to Treblinka occurred too late for him, as expressed with emotions of remorse within his journal. Instead of lingering on the past, however, Ringelblum understood the newfound potential to fix his past misjudgments.

With a new understanding about his mistakes, Ringelblum called Jews to actively revolt against the Nazis by participating in the Uprising. In his essay “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” Ringelblum showed the desire to mobilize, and declared “never again shall the Germans move us from here with impunity; we shall die, but the cruel invaders will pay with their blood for ours.” Here Ringelblum truly revealed the radical shift in his thinking. He advocated for active resistance with
eagerness and anticipated results of spilling enemy blood. Part of his rational thinking remained the same, however. Ringelblum continued to believe in the ultimate demise of the Jews. So instead of calling Jews to revolt in hopes of victory, Ringelblum set a tone of revenge in his promotion of active resistance. The idea of retaliation was not far off from his intentions with the Archive, it was just expressed in a new way for Ringelblum.

Ringelblum not only advocated revenge with active resistance but also encouraged Jews to use active resistance to regain their honor lost to the Holocaust. Although it appears he did not play a leadership role in the fighting of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Ringelblum certainly took part in the resistance movement and encouraged other Jews to participate as well. Specifically, he illustrated that “we must think not so much of saving our lives, which seems to be a very problematic affair, but rather of dying an honourable death, dying with weapons in our hands.”¹⁸⁴ Ringelblum never stopped believing that the Holocaust would destroy the majority of the Jewish Nation. It was challenging enough to simply continue to live within the Ghetto due to such little food and horrible conditions. Instead, he promoted the concept of martyrdom as an option for Jewish fighters. Jews did not have to sit around and wait for death to take them away from the earth. They could choose to meet death head-on with weapons by fighting against their perpetrators. Ultimately, actions like this would prove bothersome to Nazis and allow Jews to die in a self-selected manner.

¹⁸⁴ Ringelblum, “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” 595.
The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising lasted from April to May of 1943. Before it occurred, it was evident that the existence of the Ghetto was coming to an end. Instead of accepting this as defeat, Ringelblum expressed more interest and opinions on active Jewish resistance. He realized his mistakes of not acting prior to the breaking up of the Ghetto, and sought to make amends by participating in the Uprising and encouraging other Jews to do so as well.

**The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**

Ringelblum's essay on “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself” explained the progression of the Uprising from start to finish. He included details about the fighters preparing for the Uprising as well as how they carried out their plans. The mere title suggested the significance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Ringelblum compared it to one of the major confrontations of WWII where Germany and the Soviet Union fought over the city of Stalingrad in Southeast Russia. This battle included strategic operations, and ended with the successful defense of Stalingrad by the Soviets. Here it can be deduced that Ringelblum saw the preparations for the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as a similar battle; the Jews of Warsaw were preparing to defend their land from the Germans.

Ringelblum’s entry “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself” continued to describe preparations and organization of the resistance. Details of the comparison continue to paint an image of war in the reader’s mind. Ringelblum described Jews smuggling

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185 Ringelblum, “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” 597.
weapons into the Ghetto to arm themselves.\textsuperscript{187} These pre-resistance actions were meant to hinder the efforts of their German opponents before the real battles began. Small skirmishes, such as one where Jewish resisters burned down storage rooms filled with furniture meant for the Germany Army,\textsuperscript{188} provided increments of hope for the resisters. Smaller actions were significant because it meant that the Jews could successfully delay the Germans while they themselves grew stronger and increasingly prepared for the bigger action of resistance.

Ringelblum’s negative thoughts about the survival of the Warsaw Ghetto continue to be revealed. He blatantly stated

\begin{quote}
It was not thought, of course, that the Ghetto would be able to defend itself for long. It was understood that it would be the struggle between the gnat and the elephant, but national pride commanded that the Jews offer resistance and not let themselves be led helpless to the slaughter.\textsuperscript{189}
\end{quote}

Ringelblum is very honest in his analysis of the uprising. He does not try to hide his lack of faith in physical resistance, explaining what he believed to be the obvious demise of the resisters. Using a metaphor to compare Jews to gnats and the Germans to elephants, a deeper understanding of his thoughts can be obtained. Ringelblum did think the Uprising was meant for disaster. It was not, however, without meaning. While a gnat cannot destroy an elephant, it can be annoying and provide great discomfort. Jewish resisters may not succeed, but they would certainly wreak havoc in their wake.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{187} Ringelblum, “\textquote{Little Stalingrad\textquot; Defends Itself,” 597.
\textsuperscript{188} Ringelblum, “\textquote{Little Stalingrad\textquot; Defends Itself,” 598.
\textsuperscript{189} Ringelblum, “\textquote{Little Stalingrad\textquot; Defends Itself,” 598.
\end{flushright}
Perhaps one of the most enlightening statements made by Ringelblum is where he admits national pride as the necessary reason for resistance. Early on in his diary, Ringelblum adheres to the belief that fewer Jews should willingly die in order to prevent mass slaughter of others.\textsuperscript{190} It seems as if he went through a type of realization, where he now understood that the Jewish people would be killed no matter what happened. Like many other influential Jewish leaders, he finally agreed that Jews should resist in pride rather than be led helplessly to be slaughtered.\textsuperscript{191}

In another part of Ringelblum’s entry “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself”, the commentary involves the preparation directly leading up to proposed liquidation date. From the details and language included in Ringelblum’s entry, it is suggested that he had changed his outlook on the Uprising to view it as a war. He first explained the energy felt by the Jewish Combat Organization as they prepared for defense. This one word, “defense” is key to understanding this diary entry. Ringelblum regarded the resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto simply as a defense mechanism; it was apparent he did not believe in their ultimate success.

The entry on “Little Stalingrad” continued to describe the look of fear on the German’s face as they entered the Warsaw Ghetto. In this same section, he described Polish reactions to the Jewish resistance. At this point in Ringelblum’s entry, Germans had entered the Ghetto and nearby Polish citizens were reacting to the event. This entry provides intricate details on the warlike atmosphere of the ghetto during the uprising. Giving credit to the Jewish Combat Organization, he emphasized

\textsuperscript{190} Ringelblum, “Thoughts about Resistance.”
\textsuperscript{191} Ringelblum, “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” 598.
the fear of the Nazis, and how they were so afraid of what they might find in the
ghetto that they went “as if to a battlefield,” bringing with them small tanks,
machine guns and other weapons.\textsuperscript{192} The Jews accomplished something that was
thought to be impossible at that time; as the oppressed peoples, they struck fear into
the heart of their oppressors.

Ringelblum’s entry on “Little Stalingrad” continues with an account of the
fighting within the Warsaw Ghetto. Instead of explaining the Warsaw uprising with
confidence, Ringelblum begins this entry by stating the struggle as hopeless.\textsuperscript{193}
Details provided support this negative tone, such as how he compares the massive
6,000 German army to the Jewish army, a “handful of desperate young men” with
insufficient weapons.\textsuperscript{194} Ringelblum’s opinion is of significance because few
accounts of the Warsaw Uprising, from the perspective of the resisters themselves,
describe the event with such negative connotation. Typically, Nazi records
demonstrate their surprise in the strength of the Uprising but are still negative in
their descriptions. Ringelblum, therefore, goes against the status quo because he
himself is a resister describing the Uprising in a negative way.

Ringelblum further stated that Nazis refused to even enter Jewish flats
because they dreaded what would lie behind the doors. Jewish people were
powerful during the Warsaw Uprising because of the direct influence they had
against their persecutors. Although some Jews were caught, they were not
dehumanized but instead treated “like prisoners-of-war at the front.”\textsuperscript{195} Typically,

\textsuperscript{192} Ringelblum, “Little Stalingrad” Defends Itself,” 598-599.
\textsuperscript{193} Ringelblum, “Little Stalingrad” Defends Itself,” 600-601.
\textsuperscript{194} Ringelblum, “Little Stalingrad” Defends Itself,” 600-601.
\textsuperscript{195} Ringelblum, “Little Stalingrad” Defends Itself,” 598-599.
prisoners of war were severely mistreated as enemy filth. Ringelblum thus indicated two ideas of significance with this claim. The first is that even though the Nazis sought to dehumanize the Jewish race, in this situation they treated them as equal to any other enemy of war. In addition, this description furthers the notion that the encounters between the Jewish resisters and the German SS Soldiers were not simply skirmishes. Their confrontations held war-like equivalence, as supported with the treatment of captured Jews as prisoners-of-war.

Ringelblum does, however, accredit the resistance as warfare. He stated in “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself” that “war was declared” by the Jews. It is fantastic that Ringelblum would give such recognition to the Jewish resisters in Warsaw because he had previously opposed it. His choice in language can be interpreted to understand the significance and scale of the Uprising. The comparison Ringelblum made between Stalingrad and the Warsaw Ghetto can be truly understood. If someone as opposed to the movement as Ringelblum can admit that the Uprising upheld a war-like effort similar to Stalingrad, then it was indeed a war.

In reaction to these accounts, Ringelblum reflected on the opinion of the Polish public. Ringelblum wrote in his memoir that the Polish public “was intensely interested” with what had occurred inside the Ghetto. Specifically, they defined the attitude of the Ghetto as “heroic”, and held it with “great esteem.” The heroic actions of the Ghetto can thus be confirmed not only from the opinions of those who

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196 Ringelblum, “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” 597-598.
197 Ringelblum, “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” 598-599.
198 Ringelblum, “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” 598-599.
participated in the Warsaw Uprising, but also from those who heard about their accomplishments. If the rest of Poland believed Jewish resisters were heroic, it can be deduced they were seen specifically as war heroes from the nature of the situation.

Recorded in Ringelblum’s entry is reflection of the leadership and death of the Uprising’s leader, Mordecai Anielewicz. On May 8, 1943, after their location had been discovered by the Nazis, Anielewicz committed suicide along with 100 other fighters instead of surrendering. Ringelblum evaluated the leader, describing Anielewicz as a “quiet, restrained and pleasant young man” who became “the most important person in the entire Ghetto, a man whose name would recur in every conversation, inspiring boundless respect and, sometimes, fear and dread.”

According to Ringelblum, Anielewicz had profound leadership skills grounded in a good personality, humility and wisdom. It seems that although Ringelblum may not have approved of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, he still saw Anielewicz as a bright young man and sanctioned him the best man to lead the revolt.

Ringelblum’s diaries revealed unique insight about Anielewicz’s foreboding predictions about the failure of Warsaw Uprising. They mostly align with those of Ringelblum, further validating his certainty of the Ghetto’s demise. In his entry, Ringelblum wrote that

[Anielewicz] gave an accurate appraisal of the changes of the uneven struggle, he foresaw the destruction of the Ghetto and the workshop, and he was sure that neither he nor his combatants would survive the liquidation of the Ghetto. He

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199 Rappaport, *Beyond Courage*, 77-78.
was sure that they would die like stray dogs and no one would even know their last resting-place.\textsuperscript{201}

Ringelblum praised Anielewicz on his realistic outlook on the Uprising. Throughout his diary, Ringelblum makes it clear that he opposed the uprising. Through metaphor, Ringelblum compared Jewish resistors to stray dogs to emphasize his negative view of their decisions. The importance of this opinion is that soldiers die like stray dogs, where their bodies are left unfound on the battle field. This metaphor reveals the similarities of the deaths of resistors to those of soldiers in a war. It is important to clarify, however, that Ringelblum does not wish his comrades to die in this way, but rather he wanted to accentuate the consequences of their actions.

It is interesting, however, to learn that Anielewicz also believed in the bleak conclusion of the resistance. As the leader, one would assume that he had hope for its success in driving the Nazis out of Warsaw. Instead, Ringelblum revealed that Anielewicz was aware none of the resistors would survive. Understanding this viewpoint was held by Anielewicz, it would have also been viewed by the other resistors. It is therefore indicated that none of the resistors believed in their ultimate survival\textsuperscript{202}. With this in mind, the entire significance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising changes. Instead of measuring the success of the Uprising in terms of Jewish survivors and Nazi deaths, it is more appropriate to consider the ways in which the Jews were able to maintain their honor and hinder the Nazi’s plans.

\textsuperscript{201} Ringelblum, ““Little Stalingrad” Defends Itself,” 598.
\textsuperscript{202} Ringelblum, ““Little Stalingrad” Defends Itself,” 598.
**Women in the Uprising**

Within his writing, Ringelblum gave much credit to female resistors within the Ghetto and during the Uprising. One of the most important contributions women made to the resistance movement was with the distribution of information. In his notes, Ringelblum named two specific women who were part of this network. Calling them “heroic girls,” Chajke and Frumke travelled between the cities and towns of Poland with false papers. Ringelblum explained that the women “would rely entirely on their ‘Aryan’ faces and on peasants kerchiefs that cover their heads. Without a murmur, without a second’s hesitation, they accept and carry out the most dangerous missions... The girls volunteer as though it were the most natural thing in the world.”

These women seemed to have played a huge part in smuggling papers and other good to and from the Warsaw Ghetto. What is most interesting about the situation is the women's ability to selflessly use their looks to their advantage because not everyone would have been able to pass as Aryan. To willingly use this ability to blend in outside of the Ghetto demonstrated extreme courage and comradery for their fellow Jews, as expressed by Ringelblum through admiration. With due credit, Ringelblum wrote “the story of the Jewish woman will be a glorious page in the history of Jewry during the present war.” Their story is truly remarkable, and made a noteworthy contribution towards the resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto.

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204 Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, 274.
Women not only helped with communication outside of the Ghetto, but they also participated in the fighting themselves. In his notes, Ringelblum indicated that “particularly the women, put up resistance.” The efforts of women resisters did not simply accompany those of the men, but they outshined them. “Little Stalingrad Defends Itself” further reveals Ringelblum’s opinions on women fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He once again stated that “Jewish girls took part in combat alongside the men.” It is impressive that women were actually involved in the fighting alongside men within the Uprising. Ringelblum also revisits how, “disguised as Aryan women, they had carried illegal literature around the country.” The repetitive nature of his comments highlights the importance of women’s contributions to the revolt both in preparation and as a part of the Uprising itself.

Of the greatest importance is Ringelblum’s comment on the overall strength of women in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He admitted in “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself” that, “altogether they completely outdid the men in courage, alertness and daring. I myself saw Jewish women firing a machine gun from a roof.” The endeavors of the women clearly outdid the men. One could understand this from simply reading Ringelblum’s journal. It does not appear that Ringelblum makes these points to masculinize the women, but rather recognize their extraordinary efforts. He specifically chose to acknowledge the valor of women resisters to demonstrate their capabilities. Clearly, Ringelblum believed that women were a crucial part of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

205 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 336.
206 Ringelblum, “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” 602.
207 Ringelblum, “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” 603.
208 Ringelblum, “‘Little Stalingrad’ Defends Itself,” 603.
Hiding Versus Action

Prior to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising while preparations were being made, Ringelblum took time to comment on those who chose to hide instead of fight. In December of 1942, he observed how some Jews retreated to hideouts. Specifically, in his Notes for December 1942, he concluded that “everyone is making them. Everywhere, in all the shops and everywhere in the Ghetto, hiding places are being built.” This phenomenon was apparently more common than previously believed. Not everyone chooses to openly resist the Nazis, but decided the best way to survive was to conceal themselves. In his notes, Ringelblum explained that “in those days, the hideouts were more refined, better concealed. My family for example used to hide out in a subroom in an old house, on the first floor.” Even Ringelblum’s family was inclined to hide from the Nazis. But in the end, Ringelblum disapproved of the tactic. Exhibiting a negative tone, Ringelblum continued to write in December 1942 that “There is altogether too much to talk about hideouts—more talk than action.” According to Ringelblum, active resistance was overall the best way to act against the Nazis while facing the liquidation of the Ghetto. Although Ringelblum could recognize the need for some individuals or families to go into hiding, he ultimately disliked the idea of retreating rather than acting.

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209 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 338.
210 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 339-340.
211 Ringelblum, Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, 344.
Further Jewish Literature

Surrounded by exploding mines, the sound of gun fire, and the smell of burning flesh, Abraham Diamant defended his humanity during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Like many others, Diamant was a Jewish victim of the Holocaust. His comrades could “sense the burning desire to give battle in each of his words, in each of his movements.”

Amidst the war of the Ghetto, the solo actions of Diamant successfully hit six or more Germans. On this day, Diamant did not survive like the many casualties that preceded and would follow his death. Although his body was unrecovered, Diamant embodies the heroism of all Jews who bravely fought in the Warsaw Uprising. Although they themselves did not survive the fighting, their name and legacy lived on to inspire other resistance efforts.

The story of Diamant lives on through the diary of Hirsh Berlinski, which survived the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. Berlinski authored a diary entry dedicated to Diamant, called “To the Memory of a Fighter.” A lesser known figure, Berlinski took part in the organization of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as a part of the ZOB. He commanded a group of fighters in the main ghetto until May when he escaped to the forests of Wyszkow to join the other remaining ZOB members. Berlinski’s entry provides intimate characteristics of the Warsaw Uprising because it uniquely focuses on the story of Diamant from his perspective. His personal writing shed light on the unspoked voices of Jewish resistance, such as Diamant himself. Although Berlinski’s voice is not commonly found within historiography of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, it contributes greatly to the profundity of the event.

Additional diaries of various Warsaw inhabitants have survived since the fall of the ghetto. Many of these were accessioned into the Oneg Shabbath archive as organized by Ringelblum. One of these well-noted diaries is that of Chaim A. Kaplan. As a teacher, Kaplan instructed the youth of the ghetto until Hitler dismantled the education system. Some of his writings have been salvaged, including his personal diary. It has since been translated and published into its own book, *Scrolls of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*, as a useful resource in studying the culture and uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto from a first-hand perspective.

Of particular interest is Kaplan's outlook on life in the ghetto. Primarily, he describes resistance as the normalization of life in the ghetto, as “everyone is busy preparing himself for death.”213 With conflict comes fear of death, but war brings its expectation. Engaging in a war against the Nazis therefore brought the expectancy of death, which was coupled with ordinary life in the war-like ghetto conditions. According to Kaplan, “even the conquerors were confused”214 with this sense of normality. With the objective of dehumanizing the Jewish population, Nazis could not understand how the Jews were able to adapt to the war-like conditions. Here significance lies in the way the Jews went above and beyond the normalization; they did not just accept their fate but fought against their enemy.

In his diary, Kaplan interestingly indicated the aspect of smuggling as a contributing factor to the war between the Nazis and their prisoners. Smuggling was one of the most valiant forms of passive resistance within the Warsaw Ghetto, as

also indicated by Ringelblum, and was an especially important part of the Uprising. Members of the resistance would sneak food into the ghetto to survive, and weapons and ammunition to increase their arsenal in preparation for the uprising. In early July, Kaplan wrote in his diary, “The war against smuggling is at its peak. The size of the ghetto was reduced only to reduce smuggling!” This aspect of the ongoing war between Jew and Nazis corresponds with Ringelblum’s perspective on the conflict within the ghetto. Kaplan’s entry emphasized just how large of a factor smuggling was in the war waged by the Jews; it was not just an aspect of everyday survival in the ghetto. He indicated that smuggling hindered the intentions of the Nazis so much that they reduced the size of the actual ghetto. Because the Nazis reacted in this way, it exposed their concern for the rise in smuggling and therefore shows that this aspect of the war was no small feat. Kaplan’s diary was a part of the O.S. Archive, which illustrates the significance of his observations and experiences.

Like Ringelblum, Wladyslaw Szlengel was an active writer before war confined him and other Jewish artists to ghettos. Many of his poems written during his time in the Warsaw Ghetto satirize aspects of the war and Holocaust including the experiences of the Jewish people. Death and fear became themes of his work after deportations began, which exposed Jewish emotions in relation to their treatment and resistance. All throughout the existence of the Warsaw Ghetto, Szlengel’s works were shared publicly in meetings as pieces in which people could

\[215\text{ Rappaport, Beyond Courage, 66.}\]
\[216\text{ Kaplan, Scrolls of Agony, 304.}\]
relate.\textsuperscript{217} “Two Gentlemen in the Snow” and “Counterattack” are two of his poems that strike an emotional reaction in reader both Jewish and non-Jewish alike.\textsuperscript{218}

“Two Gentlemen in the Snow” eerily captures the similarities between Jewish men and German soldiers. Szlengel personifies snow to reveal comparisons between the two types of men. Because snow cannot distinguish between the two, it falls evenly on everyone. Significantly, he highlights that both the Jew and soldier in his poem actually have similar experiences during the Holocaust, such as how both are stripped from their homes. Of even greater importance, Szlengel poses the question “who is holding whom”? Jews are thought to be the captives, but one asks a soldier “aren’t you a captive too?”\textsuperscript{219} These rhetorical questions demonstrate the similar lives of Germans ensnared into the Nazis, and Jews ensnared as victims. The snow exemplifies the bitter and harsh conditions of the Holocaust experienced by all parties involved, as Szlengel portrays the message that neither Jew nor Nazi was pleased with their part in the Holocaust.

“Counterattack” describes a more active scene between Jewish men and German soldiers. Szlengel compares his Jewish comrades to cattle, and Nazis as dogs, who heard them into cars to be deported. Crude imagery describes the scene, with tears and blood of the fallen soaking the ground before they could even reach the cars.\textsuperscript{220} It is interesting that he compares the Jews to cattle instead of sheep like

\textsuperscript{219} Szlengel, “Two Gentlemen in the Snow,” 487.
\textsuperscript{220} Szlengel, “Two Gentlemen in the Snow,” 487.
many others had so famously done, probably because cattle can appear more
defensive and supple than sheep. This is shown when Szlengel’s transitions from
briefly depicting the innocence of the cattle to indicating their fangs as bared
towards the dogs.

Throughout the rest of the poem, details of the Warsaw Uprising are given.
Mila Street is mentioned, where “the first bullet fell.” According to the author,
“This revolt [was] like a bone in his throat-/ Choked in bloody drool- “. Szlengel’s
choice of words strikingly describe the terror felt by a dead SS officer, reflecting
what emotions the Jewish people believed they were invoking into their enemies
both dead and alive. Certain aspects of this gruesome battle are described with
positivity, like how “bullets ring in joyous song” as they compose a tune with
every target they hit. Through Szlengel’s poem, one can understand that Jews
involved in the revolt were pleased with their accomplishments.

One of the most prominent metaphors in this poem is when Szlengel
compares Jews not just to cattle, but to meat. Described in the poem, the meat “spits
grenades out of the window” and “bites with scarlet flames” as a “revolt of the
meat.” No longer are the Jews live cattle, but their efforts in the uprising have
practically sealed death as their fate. Many Jews were aware of their imminent death
as a result of their resistance, but still choose to participate as a way to regain their
honor. As meat, however, Szlengel emphasizes the unpredictability of their actions.

The Nazis merely thought the Jews as “meat” as lifeless people incapable of

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221 Szlengel, “Counterattack,” 488.
222 Szlengel, “Counterattack,” 488.
223 Szlengel, “Counterattack,” 489.
224 Szlengel, “Counterattack,” 489.
anything significant. By describing the Jewish resistors as meat instead of cattle, Szlengel celebrates their accomplishments against the Nazis during this “bloody battle”\textsuperscript{225} of hope and retaliation.

In April 1943, Szlengel was killed during the uprising.\textsuperscript{226} Like many other Jewish resistors, his body may have been gone but his spirit lived on in the work he left behind. The resistance in Warsaw was not merely violence and action, but included pieces of personal writing that fueled the Uprising and gave depth to the conflict. In Szlengel’s case, his poetic description of the revolt brings a deeper meaning to the combat between the Jews and Nazis. In \textit{Counterattack}, he described the essence of the fighting; “like purple blossoms of blood... Flames from our gun barrels flower—This is our spring, our counterattack.”\textsuperscript{227} It is difficult for readers to comprehend the sensations of resistance unless they have personally experienced them. Comparing blood and fire to flowers, Szlengel indicates that their attacks were beautiful and magnificent. Their attack was like Spring, celebrated with eagerness after waiting through a dry and silent “Winter” period of planning and preparing for the uprising. Bursting with color and promise, Szlengel illustrates that their Spring had come; a time for hope and new growth.

On April 23, 1943, Anielewicz wrote his last letter from the ghetto during the Uprising to fellow Jew Yitzhak Zuckerman. With the purpose of sharing his last thoughts to a close friend, this letter revealed intimate thoughts of Anielewicz that otherwise might not have been disclosed to the wider audience of the underground.

\textsuperscript{225} Szlengel, “Counterattack,” 489.
\textsuperscript{226} Shoah Resource Center, “Szlengel, Wladyslaw.”
\textsuperscript{227} Szlengel, “Counterattack,” 489.
The content of the letter also likely contained confidential information because Zuckerman was a co-commander of the ZOB. Emotions and information within the letter are significant when considering the Warsaw Uprising because of its rarity, and authenticity of the source.

Anielewicz’s letter conveys how the Uprising had become part of the war against Nazism. He describes how “the Germans ran twice from the ghetto. One of our companies held out for 40 minutes and another for more than 6 hours... our losses in manpower are minimal.”  

Each of these accomplishments are aspects any person would expect to see in a report on how a certain battalion or group is doing while away at war. Not only did Anielewicz state these war-like facts, but what he chose to include in his letter reflect the success of the Jews in their war against the Nazis. It was no small feat that dehumanized Jewish people could chase Germans out of the ghetto in fear, or hold off German soldiers for more than six hours at a time. An accomplishment such as this could not have been done in any random or small uprising, but only in a full-scale battle waged against the Nazis.

In the letter Anielewicz described his men as heroes. Specifically, he stated that one of his men, Yechiel, “fell a hero.” Identifying someone as a hero is not something to be taken lightly. This is especially the case when describing his friend who fell in the midst of a battle. It can be argued that because of this, Yechiel is portrayed as not just any hero, but a war hero. By describing his fallen comrade as a hero, Anielewicz identified further aspects of the Uprising as a war. This logic can

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229 Anielewicz, The Last Letter.
also be applied to the rest of his men. He clearly writes that “I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men in battle.” There is no question here that Anielewicz believed he and the other members of the ZOB heroically fought the Nazis. Specifying that the men were heroes from fighting in a full-on battle further demonstrates that they were all heroes of war, not just from a simple skirmish between themselves and the Nazis. Through this personal account, the significance of the Uprising and the heroic men who fought the Nazis can therefore be easily compared to a war battle.

Newspapers

The Polish Underground Press was a secret newspaper organized in Nazi occupied Poland. Over 1,300 newspapers were successfully printed and distributed, with torture and death as a consequence for anyone found guilty of making contributions. Many of their published articles discussed the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising during and after the event. One in particular, titled “The Last Battle in the Great Tragedy” was published on April 29, 1943. It covered details on the second stage of the attempted annihilation of the ghetto and the response of its Jewish inhabitants.

The article focused on the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) describes their exceptional efforts in fighting against the German Nazis. It is interesting that the

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230 Anielewicz, The Last Letter.
article fails to report that other organizations, such as the Jewish Military Organization (ZZW) also participated in the uprising. Perhaps the newspaper was aware of the cooperation between the two organizations and assumed they both identified as the ZOB at the end of the uprising. Of particular interest is the claim made by the newspaper that the Jewish Fighting Organization “opened a war of the weak against the strong.” Here the Underground introduced a negative tone towards the event. They identify the Nazis as the stronger of the two powers, and discredit the Jewish resistors as weak. From this, it can be deduced that the Polish newspaper did not believe in the capabilities of the Warsaw Ghetto resistors.

The negative tone towards the situation is coupled with a tone of disappointment. In the newspaper, it is stated that the participants in the Uprising “withdrew step by step” after the daylight was gone. Instead of indicating victories, the newspaper decided to highlight the retreat of certain Jewish resistors. What is truly surprising is the pronouns used by the newspaper at the end of the excerpt. “They” is used to describe the people of the Warsaw Ghetto, to distinguish that the rest of Poland were separate people from the Jewish resistors. In the newspaper, it is stated that “they considered it a victory if part of those imprisoned in the ghetto were able to escape; it was a victory in their eyes to die while their hands still grasped arms.” Referring to the Jewish resistors with “they” and “their” also demonstrated that the Polish Underground newspaper did not agree with the Jews in Warsaw. It was only the opinion of those in the Warsaw ghetto that they

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234 The Polish Underground Press, “The Last Battle in the Great Tragedy.”
235 The Polish Underground Press, “The Last Battle in the Great Tragedy.”
236 The Polish Underground Press, “The Last Battle in the Great Tragedy.”
were successful in the Uprising, and had victories even if they ended in death; it was not the same opinion held by the Polish Underground. Instead, readers can sense the tone of disapproval in the events that occurred in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.237

The Polish Underground Press published another article on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising the day after “The Last Battle in the Great Tragedy.” On April 30, 1943, “The Greatest Crime in the World” was released, and demonstrated a great attitude change in the opinion of the newspaper on the uprising.238 Not only did the article address the situation in a more positive tone, but it also appeared to address the situation in a more professional manner. Instead of addressing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in a negative way, the newspaper made a clear effort to identify the bravery of the resistors. The article stated that they could no longer refuse to overlook the change in attitude of the victims, who had decided to die valiantly with weapons in their hands. Rather than disapproving of the Uprising, the Polish Underground recognized the significance of the Uprising and how Jewish Resistors demonstrated strength in the face of the Nazis.239

The tone of the first newspaper report conveyed that the Polish Resistance was putting distance between itself and the Warsaw Ghetto, while the second one connected them. Specifically, they identify that “this stand by theirs, [was] understood by every Pole.”240 An incredible claim, the Polish Underground now associated themselves directly with the Jewish victims. They were no longer

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237 The Polish Underground Press, “The Last Battle in the Great Tragedy.”
separate peoples who opposed resistance, but essentially claimed they supported the Uprising and may as well have been resistors themselves.

An even more incredible statement made by the Polish Underground described how “from a people without hope, a herd slaughtered by the German murderers, the Jews rose to the heights of a fighting people.” This perspective of Jewish resistance had seldom before been expressed. Historians today have nearly all revoked the idea that Jews were sheep that were led to the slaughter. But this newspaper, which reported the information amidst the height of the uprising, bluntly stated that Jews were in fact at one-point innocent sheep who allowed themselves to be killed off by the Nazis. 241 Such a unique perspective, especially from a primary source, resurrects questions on the original state of the Jewish people during the Holocaust.

The statement further proposed that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was a key event that changed the fate of the Jews. It can be deduced that the newspaper believed Jews did lead themselves like sheep to the slaughter prior to the Uprising. But the significance of the Uprising flipped a switch, fueling the fire of Jewish resistance. The Uprising was the changing point for Jewish resistance, where they took matters into their own hands and would not let the Nazis destroy them without a fight. Credit was given to the Jews in this article, by recognizing their great achievements as “a fighting people.”242 It even be suggested from these claims made

by the newspaper, that the Underground did not truly understand this experience of the Warsaw Jews.

Respect for the Jewish Resistors was ultimately received from the Polish Underground Press. The newspaper explicitly stated that “the Polish Public looks upon this happening with great respect.”\textsuperscript{243} Perhaps something happened between the 29\textsuperscript{th} and 30\textsuperscript{th} that lead the newspaper to have such a contrasting opinion of the uprising from one day to the next. April 30\textsuperscript{th} marked the 12\textsuperscript{th} day of the uprising, and new fighting had broken out in the ghetto. It may have been this rejuvenation in the battle that sparked interest in the editors of the Underground. Other than this, nothing of extreme significance is recorded to have happened on that day. Whatever the situation, it is important to note that the Polish Underground Press did support the Uprising morally from that moment on.

From the article, it is evident that the editors believed morality was then a part of the fighting. It is clearly stated that the newspaper gave “it its moral support and hopes that its resistance will continue for as long as is possible.”\textsuperscript{244} The war was no longer simply political, but it involved ethical concerns of the Polish. This is significant because of the irony of the Uprising. On one side, the Nazis ignored their morals and attempted to dehumanize the Jews as much as possible to the point of endless slaughter. For the Jewish fighters, this battle was a matter of restoring their integrity and attempting to defeat the Germans. It is interesting that the Polish Underground would include such a statement in their article because of their bold


\textsuperscript{244} The Polish Underground Press, “The Greatest Crime in the World.”
statement affirming that their morals now aligned with the Jewish resisters rather than the Nazis.

**From the Nazis**

The majority of documents that discussed the activity and details of the Oneg Shabbat Archive and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising were collected by Ringelblum and included as a part of the Archive. All of the documents within the O.S. Archive, however, were created from the perspective of Jewish inhabitants of the Warsaw Ghetto or nearby Poles on the Aryan side of Warsaw. In order to fully understand the impact of the Jewish Resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto, the Nazi perspective must also be considered. The Nazis who controlled and later attacked the Warsaw Ghetto also shared their opinions of the Jewish resistance in private journals. These opinions contributed to understanding the significance and impact of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on the Nazis themselves.

insight on the German interpretation of the Uprising. Even the title of the entry as a “Battle Report” signifies the war-like characteristics of the event such as the creation of bunkers and fighting between Jews and Nazis with weapons.\textsuperscript{247} It proved not to be a typical skirmish with Jewish people.

The height of the uprising occurred from April to May 1943. Liquidation of the ghetto had been ordered, but the Jews resisted. This was not some mere resistance, but as General Stroop indicated, “the Jews resisted... in every conceivable way” which “proved rather difficult.”\textsuperscript{248} The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was not a random act of resistance, but was organized well in advance. Stroop explained the intricate organization of the Jewish Uprising. He stated the “whole ghetto had been systematically” arranged with places to hide, like bunkers and secret passageways, which accessed the sewers and allowed Jews to move freely underground. The language of Stoop’s diary entry is evident of a battle report. He included details of the Uprising in a way that categorized Jewish actions as tactics like those of an enemy of war. Stroop’s diary is important to distinguish Jewish planning as warlike instead of a last-minute as semblance of random efforts.

One of the most interesting aspects of the uprising that Stroop shared is that although the Jews “were determined to fight back by every means,” there was a lack of equality between different Jews. Specifically, Stroop indicated that rich and poor

\textsuperscript{248} SS General Jürgen Stroop, “SS General Stroop on the Battles in the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Final Report from the German Battle Diary, April- May 1943.”
Jews were provided with different bunkers. It can be assumed that this distinction would provide more wealthy Jews with better protected bunkers and hiding places over the impoverished Jews. An insight like this is critical when looking at the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising because details like that are often overlooked.

Stroop’s report showed that despite the desperate circumstances of the Jews during the potential liquidation and Uprising, social factors such as class still mattered. In fact, it was potentially a determining factor of survival. From the class differentiation in the ghetto, Stroop further comments that in many cases, capturing Jews “was made possible only through betrayal on the part of the Jews.” This statement reveals that Jews would sell-out other Jews. This was possibly on a basis of class. It is not clear, however, if wealthy Jews were selling out poorer Jews or vice versa. Either way, it was a survival tactic so that the Nazis could capture some of their enemy while waiting to get the remaining Jews. Stroop’s battle report has made it known that Jews were not only physically separated by wealth, but psychologically separated as well; their loyalty was corrupted.

In his battle report, Stroop comments that the activity of women during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was equivalent to that of the men. As a last battle report, the mere mention of women in such an Uprising is significant in itself. Stroop did not simply mention them, but provided much detail on their achievements. According to Stroop, women were not given different weapons than men because they were

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249 SS General Jürgen Stroop, “SS General Stroop on the Battles in the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Final Report from the German Battle Diary, April- May 1943.”

250 SS General Jürgen Stroop, “SS General Stroop on the Battles in the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Final Report from the German Battle Diary, April- May 1943.”
thought of as inferior but were armed in the same way as men. Stroop indicated "it was no rarity for these females to fire pistols with both hands.” Stroop indicated “it was no rarity for these females to fire pistols with both hands.” They would even hide extra pistols and grenades in their bloomers to use against the Nazis. Details like these are incredibly important in looking at the dynamics of the Warsaw Uprising. By sharing this information, Stroop is giving rare credit to women for their bravery and militant actions, which were usually only accredited to male fighters. Of even greater significance, Stroop clarified that these actions by women “happened again and again.” Resistance fighting did not only include a small number of these instances. Women were powerful resisters who made such an impression on Stroop that he did not fail to include them in his last battle report on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Although the Nazis captured at least 56,065 Jews, Stroop still gave significant credit to the resisters and their valiant efforts. Written in the report, Stroop confessed the “resistance offered by the Jews... could be broken only by the energetic, tireless deployment of storm-patrols day and night.” Even though the Uprising did not prevent the liquidation of the ghetto, it was not unsuccessful. The Jewish resisters continuously defended themselves against the Nazis. The Nazis were met with equivalent military forces to theirs and had to work above and beyond what they ever imagined in order to defeat the Jews. This was no small feat, as even indicated by Stroop.

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251 SS General Jürgen Stroop, “SS General Stroop on the Battles in the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Final Report from the German Battle Diary, April- May 1943.”
252 SS General Jürgen Stroop, “SS General Stroop on the Battles in the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Final Report from the German Battle Diary, April- May 1943.”
253 SS General Jürgen Stroop, “SS General Stroop on the Battles in the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Final Report from the German Battle Diary, April- May 1943.”
Information about Jewish Resistance was heavily restricted within the media of Nazis Germany. Joseph Goebbels was the minister of propaganda for the Nazi party. As Hitler’s right-hand man, he controlled all media and public information distributed throughout the German dominion, including newspapers and magazines. The stories he shared were carefully selected to include only those that were thought of as significant, or that were in support of the Nazi party. Some of his diary entries have been uncovered since the War, and disclose his personal thoughts on events that occurred during that time. In one entry, Goebbels reflects on the “noteworthy” Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and his admiration for the Jewish Resistance efforts.

The comments by Goebbels reveal a great deal. Dated May 1, 1943, the entry begins with by stating that nothing interesting has recently happened in the territories occupied by Germany besides the “exceptionally sharp fighting in Warsaw between our Police... and the Jewish rebels.” Goebbels gives equal credit to both his Nazi soldiers and the Jewish rebels. He does not specify one or the other as more accomplished or “exceptionally sharp” in the Uprising, but addresses their actions with equivalence. As the head of Nazi propaganda, it was Goebbels job to fully believe in his party and portray them as the superior group. Although his diary was not exposed to the public, it reveals the significance of the Warsaw Ghetto

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255 SS General Jürgen Stroop, “SS General Stroop on the Battles in the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Final Report from the German Battle Diary, April- May 1943.”
Uprising. If Goebbels, one of the most influential and powerful Nazis, gave such credit to the Jewish rebels by not specifying one side’s fighting as better than the others, then their efforts were truly extraordinary.

Instead of simply stating that the fighting in Warsaw was “noteworthy,” Goebbels further exclaims that “the Jews have succeeded in putting the ghetto in a condition to defend itself.” Here, Goebbels specifically gives credit to the Jewish resisters and exposed the unprecedented event. Jews did not only try to defend themselves against the Nazis, but were successful in doing so. Goebbels even indicated that “very hard battles” took place within the Ghetto, not just simple skirmishes or last-minute retaliations by Jews against their oppressors. The significance of the Uprising was both because of the disbelief it caused throughout the Nazi party, as well as its ability to impactfully and effectively counter Nazi attacks.

Aside from sharing his impression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Goebbels indicated an interesting detail in his opinion. He was indeed awestruck with the impact of the Jewish rebels, but he did not give them full credit. Instead, he specified that this event occurred because of the Jewish people acquiring German weapons. Goebbels indicated that if the Jewish resisters did not have such weapons, then they would not have had as much tenacity or strength against the Nazis. Somehow, he still found a way to pronounce German superiority amidst the most successful

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257 Joseph Goebbels, “Extract from Goebbels Diary on the Ghetto Revolt.”
258 Joseph Goebbels, “Extract from Goebbels Diary on the Ghetto Revolt.”
Jewish resistance movements during the Holocaust; the advantage of German weapons was what gave the Warsaw ghetto the ability to defend themselves.

As a powerful WWII figure, Goebbels’ opinion is particularly important when looking at the significance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. For someone like him, who daily sifts through every single piece of German information, to address the Uprising with such marvel in his private diary entry, it truly emphasized the importance of the event. Diary entries like his are extremely important in understanding the real meaning behind the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the secrets of the war.

**The Influence of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was extremely significant in itself due to the way it defied the Nazis and restored Jewish honor. Beyond the borders of Warsaw, the revolt heavily influenced other Jewish ghettos and camp across Poland and Europe after it ended in May of 1943. The death camp in Treblinka, located just northeast of Warsaw, was one of those inspired by the uprising. In many ways, Warsaw directly and indirectly affected Treblinka’s own uprising. In order to understand the complete significance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, it’s influence over other acts of resistance must be considered. Treblinka will thus act as the primary example of how Warsaw fueled the fire of Jewish resistance across Europe and throughout the rest of the war.
Written by an anonymous author without a date, one of the documents in the Oneg Shabbath Archive illustrated his escape from Treblinka. Although it does not directly mention his influence from Warsaw, it was included in the Warsaw Ghetto archive and therefore has influence in that aspect. The author details several attempts of leaving the sight of Nazis and fluctuating levels of confidence in his ability to do so. For example, he explained how “before entering the square, I tried to escape from the lineup. A Jewish policeman noticed me and forced me back.” This small effort was not done in vain, for it led to a more significant consequence. Following this act, he exclaimed that he and other Jews “were seized by terror. The foreboding of death was handing in the air. Nobody, however, found the strength to act. We were paralyzed by fear, exhausted by hunger.” Further along in his narrative, the author revisits these emotions, sharing his thought that “there was absolutely no hope for rescue or escape.” It was not easy for Jews to summon strength and fight back against the Nazis. Their efforts were exemplary in context to the conditions in which they carried them out. Despite these strong feelings of suppression and hopelessness, the author found the will to escape. His account summarizes that as “the train slowed down I jumped through the window into an unknown place. I was overwhelmed by the fresh night air. For a moment I delighted in the feeling of freedom, the nightmare of the past days disappeared...” For the author to escape Treblinka despite the effects of the Holocaust is remarkable. His

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connections with Warsaw demonstrate the power of Jewish resistance in many camps and ghettos across both Poland and Europe. Warsaw was the ultimate location for resistance, indicating the man’s account was recorded there in an act of resistance itself.

In the wake of the Uprising, the Polish Underground Press published a piece on the events that had taken place. On May 1, 1943, “The Heroic Resistance of the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto” was printed. A section of this article revealed the significance of the Uprising as seen by other groups outside of Poland. It is stated that people who were not previously aware of the situation in Warsaw, are now learning of the Ghetto’s achievements. The Nazis attempted to conceal any act of resistance by the Jews for fear of their power being questioned by others. To have information about such an event as the Warsaw Uprising be spread to other groups within Poland is amazing itself. But news of the revolt reached people beyond Poland. The Nazis were unable to stop reports of the Uprising from being shared, just as they were unable to easily stop the Jews from resisting.

Astonishingly, the Press told its readers that the people of Warsaw were “waiting tensely for an air attack by the Soviets or the British” to aid in the battle. This revealed that the resisters of the Warsaw Ghetto were in contact with Allies instead of just locals. The Warsaw Ghetto Jews had formed a type of network with the outside world. It signified that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was so important in the overarching goals of the War, that the Allies not only maintained contact with

the Jews but would also assist the resisters. On March 13-14, Soviet pilots did attack the German military in Warsaw. They acted in response of a telegram sent by the Jews, and in retaliation against the liquidation of the ghetto. Receiving help from the Soviet Union demonstrated that the Uprising reached well beyond the borders East of Poland. Aiding the Jews strengthened the battle by incorporating multiple armies and nations. It also verified it as a war effort and implemented the Jews as included in the Allied forces. The Soviet Union would not have provided the Jews with such assistance if they did not believe it to be a significant event.

The influence of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is further explained in the *Polish Underground Press* as compared to other influential resistance efforts. Suggested in the article, the Uprising apparently was unknown around the world. The Press argued how other smaller and less important efforts “were known in London almost immediately and broadcast to every part of the world.”²⁶⁴ One main thing is to be understood from these claims made by the press. The Warsaw Uprising was first extremely influential on the local Polish people to have received such a reaction about the lack of knowledge across Europe of the event. Polish citizens must have thought the Uprising to be so important and significant that the event should have been common knowledge around the world.

Besides reaching the Soviets, it appears that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was not as influential beyond Polish borders as one may assume. Determined by the content of the Press’s article, no one was really aware of the event in comparison to

other, smaller events. This could have been due to lack of communication or perhaps geographical distance from major Allied cities. Yet the Polish Underground Press insisted that the previous aktion\textsuperscript{265} eventually gained recognition. This was only done, however, after the entire liquidation had been completed. In the case of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, this future looked grim and disheartening. If it were to suffer the same fate, as suggested by the Press, then there would be no worldwide awareness of the event until after it had concluded. This would prevent any other powers from assisting, leading to the ultimate demise of the ghetto rather than a hopeful victory.

It is clear that news of Warsaw reached other cities and towns. There was also a direct connection with nearby camps, such was the case of Treblinka. Located just northeast of Warsaw, Nazis would send Warsaw Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the death camp of Treblinka to be exterminated in a variety of ways. Aside from death and destruction, the two locations were also linked through acts of resistance. In \textit{They Fought Back}, Samuel Rajzman retold the story of the Uprising in Treblinka from his point of view. He included information from several different survivors, along with himself, who describe the influence of Warsaw on their own uprising.

In the camp, Rajzman was involved in the uprising. He remembered a friend of his from Warsaw who saved his life at one point while at the death camp. Directly toward Rajzman, this friend told him "I did not save you to keep you alive... but to sell your life at a higher price. You are now a member of a secret organization that is

\textsuperscript{265} Action of the Nazis, meant to destroy certain minority groups.
planning an uprising, and you must live." Much about the Warsaw Uprising can be seen explicitly from the words of Rajzman’s friend. His friend, who was from Warsaw, did not simply suggest to Rajzman that he should join the Secret Uprising group but told him it was an obligation. Specifically, telling Rajzman he was kept alive to “sell your life at a higher price” indicated that resistance was the most valuable thing one could do during the Holocaust. Simply dying was not worth anything; sacrificing your life for others was seen as everything.

Inspired by the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, it was truly incredible for other ghettos and concentration camps to stage their own revolts. Another survivor, Stanislaw Kon, continued to explain the significance of the Uprising’s influence on Treblinka. According to Kon, following the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Jews who were transferred to Treblinka came armed and ready to assist in another revolt. Kon explained the Jews of Treblinka learned of the great Uprising from these people. They were inspired by not only their feats, but also by the fiery attitudes. News of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was influential in itself. When other Jewish people learned of the accomplishments of Warsaw, they too understood the need for active resistance to counter the plans of the Nazis. Warsaw did not only inspire others figuratively through word of mouth, but also literally. From Kon’s experience, it can be seen that people from Warsaw themselves contributed to the revolt in Treblinka, with their spirits and weapons. Warsaw was as influential on other camps and ghettos as it was significant in itself.

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Samuel Willenberg also survived Treblinka and participated in their uprising. In his book *Surviving Treblinka*, he recounts his journey of arriving to Treblinka, as well as the time he spent at the death camp. Particularly of interest are his comments about the Treblinka Uprising and its connections with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. A single section in his book is dedicated to retelling the details of the rebellion. Certain details reveal the emotions of the resistors. The sound of explosions gave them courage, and the fear on the faces of the Germans helped the resistors to believe in their own capabilities.\(^{269}\) Willenberg’s statement about the Warsaw Ghetto was predominant in their encouragement, as he stated

> Warsaw was the centre of our quiet hopes and dreams.... Our hearts were with the rebels... The Jewish uprising warmed our hearts, infused us with new strength and led to new decisions. Our spines stiffened; we wanted to act; we would not let them claim our lives easily.\(^{270}\)

It is suggested by Willenberg that the Warsaw Ghetto inspired and fueled the fire of Treblinka. While other smaller factors, such as emotional triggers on the battlefield, contributed greatly to the motivation of the Treblinka Uprising, Warsaw was the major inspiration for Treblinka. It can even be proposed that without the actions of Warsaw, the fighters of Treblinka may not have had the idea, courage, or inspiration to fight.

In his book, Willenberg provided more aspects of the fighting as related to emotions felt in Warsaw. Specifically, he shared his thoughts that “life was worth


\(^{270}\) Willenberg, *Surviving Treblinka*, 128.
much less now than in times of peace and quiet. Most people accepted their state at face value and were ready for death at any moment.”\(^{271}\) This is a different take on the end of life, as most who revolted thought that it brought more meaning to their lives, not less. Willenberg does, however, reflect how the resistors of Treblinka accepted the fact of imminent death as a result of their actions. He gave the reminder that “one thing you must know, however... everything is coming to an end anyway.”\(^{272}\) This is similar to what most Jewish resisters believed. They were aware that the end was coming anyway. So instead of submitting to the Nazis, Jews needed to stand up and fight while they had the chance.

\(^{271}\) Willenberg, *Surviving Treblinka*, 176.

\(^{272}\) Willenberg, *Surviving Treblinka*, 184.
Concluding Remarks

The “cornerstone” of the Oneg Shabbat Archive was laid in October of 1939, and continued to grow until the last section of the Archive was hidden in April of 1943.\footnote{Ringelblum, \textit{Notes From the Warsaw Ghetto}, xvi.} From it, historians have gained almost all known information about the Warsaw Ghetto and life within all Ghettos during the Holocaust. Ringelblum’s clandestine activities contributed to history in a revolutionary way. Despite restrictions on Jewish literature within the Ghetto, Ringelblum defied the odds and completed the most successful act against the Nazis ever known.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising raged from April 19 – May 16, 1943. It was an event successful in restoring the integrity of the Jewish fighters who participated. Warsaw was an inspiration for many other actions of Jewish resistance, including that of the uprising in the nearby death camp of Treblinka. Although much skepticism was received by influential figures such as the \textit{Polish Underground Press} and Emmanuel Ringelblum, they ultimately understood the intentions of the revolt and provided their support.

From the perspective of other Jewish participants, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was a battle for freedom and honor. Anielewicz, who was the leader of the Uprising, shared details about the militaristic planning and fighting within the ghetto. Szlengel similarly described the event through metaphors. Each one understood that like in a war, death was the imminent conclusion for the resistors; it was not about living or dying, but about providing hope for others by failing to
submit to the will of the Nazis. Anielewicz and Szlengel are just a few examples, and their opinions reflected those of the entire ghetto.

From the Nazi point of view, the strength and will of the Jewish resisters was made evident. Joseph both Goebbels and Stroop reveal in their private diaries how surprised they were at the tenacity of their Jewish opponents. Each Nazi did conclude that the Germans were stronger. But the details and emotions recorded about the event itself reveal just how forceful, well prepared, and militaristic the Uprising was in the eyes of the Germans. Warsaw had a major impact in the overarching context of WWII.

Today, the Warsaw Ghetto can be acknowledged as the hub of Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust. Many historians focus on the successes and defeats of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, as well as the work of Emmanuel Ringelblum. However, hardly any research has been done on Ringelblum himself. From the O.S. Archive and Ringelblum’s Notes, it can be seen that Ringelblum experienced a shift in thinking during his time in the Ghetto. Ringelblum had dedicated his entire life to passive resistance as he and other members of the Archive recorded the acts of the Nazis for future generations. Over time, Ringelblum realized that his work would not be enough in Warsaw’s resistance against the Nazis. Ringelblum encouraged active resistance and contributed to the action of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in addition to the completion of his Archive.
Epilogue: The Fate of Emmanuel Ringelblum and the Oneg Shabbat Archive

After the conclusion of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Ringelblum found a hiding place in the Other Side of Warsaw and lived as an “Aryan” with his family. Overall, the OS had “collected about one hundred volumes of memoirs, complete files of various official German documents, hundreds of reports.” The expressivity of the Archive can be compared to the courage of any of the Jewish fighters during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. To this day, only two of three parts of the Archive have been found.

Following his escape from the Ghetto, Ringelblum worked on composing “a history of the Jewish Combat Organization in Poland (the resistance movement).” After witnessing the importance of the Uprising himself, Ringelblum knew that he had to record information about all brave Jews who actively resisted the Nazis.

There are a few different versions of how he died with his family. But in early March 1944, Ringelblum and his family were discovered hiding in an underground bunker. Ringelblum wrote about Jewish resistance until the day he died. On March 7, 1944 Emmanuel Ringelblum and his family perished at the hands of the Nazis. As one of the most important Jewish figure in the entire Holocaust, work and legacy long outlived him.

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274 Ringelblum, *Notes From the Warsaw Ghetto*, 345.
276 Ringelblum, *Notes From the Warsaw Ghetto*, 346.
In September of 1946, nearly four years after ten metal boxes and one of the milk cans had been hidden, the first group of documents were found. This section of the Archive was uncovered where it had been buried within the Ghetto. Only three of the original archivists from the Oneg Shabbat were still alive to be informed of the monumental event. Another four years passed by before a second cache of the archive was uncovered. In December 1950, another part of the Archive was found. It contained documents pertaining to the early stages of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) and some initial fighting.\textsuperscript{277} Kept at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, six thousand documents currently make up the archive.\textsuperscript{278} To this day, the last part of the Archive remains undiscovered.

\textsuperscript{278} Rappaport, Beyond Courage, 86.
Some of the boxes and jugs in which Ringelblum’s the Oneg Shabbat Archives were hidden. The rest has not yet been discovered.

Taken from *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor! Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives 'O.S.' ['Oneg Shabbath']*. Edited by Joseph Kermish, (Jerusalem: Menachem Press, 1986).

Emmanuel Ringelblum was the founder of the Oneg Shabbat Archives, created in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Holocaust.

Twenty-three year old Mordecai Anielewicz, Commander of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
Taken from Doreen Rappaport’s *Beyond Courage: The Untold Story of Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust* (Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2012).

SS General Jürgen Stroop’s men in the street during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
Taken from Yad Vashem Online Archives: 
SS Soldiers Forcing a Jewish fighter out of a bunker during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Taken from Yad Vashem Online Archives:

Three women after being forced out of their bunker during the Uprising.

Taken from Yad Vashem Online Archives:
Jewish fighters caught by the Nazis at the end of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Taken from Yad Vashem Online Archives:

Monument to the heroes of the Ghetto Uprising. Created by sculptor Nathan Rapoport and erected in April 1948. Located in Warsaw, Poland.

Taken from Yad Vashem Online Archives:
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