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The Function of Memory from the Warsaw Ghetto as Presented by the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

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Because of the extreme challenges they endured within Warsaw Ghetto and the slim chance they had at survival, the Jewish people sought to protect their legacy and leave a lasting impact on the world. They did so by both documenting their experiences, preserving them in what was known as the Oyneg Shabes archives, and by engaging in a bold act of defiance against the Nazis with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, rewriting the narrative of Jewish passivity. With both instances, the POLIN Museum presents these moments of the past and shapes a collective memory based on a Jewish perspective with which the public can engage.

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Abstract

Because of the extreme challenges they endured within Warsaw Ghetto and the slim chance they had at survival, the Jewish people sought to protect their legacy and leave a lasting impact on the world. They did so by both documenting their experiences, preserving them in what was known as the Oyneg Shabes archives, and by engaging in a bold act of defiance against the Nazis with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, rewriting the narrative of Jewish passivity. With both instances, the POLIN Museum presents these moments of the past and shapes a collective memory based on a Jewish perspective with which the public can engage.

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Historiography

The study of the Oyneg Shabes archives[1] is rooted in the understanding of memory and the value it holds in the museum field of study. As outlined in the book *Bloodlands*, author Timothy Snyder emphasizes the importance of memory. He acknowledges that "when history is removed, numbers go upward and memories go inward, to all of our peril."[2] Snyder points out the instability of memory, how statistics can be inflated and adjusted to suit the political needs of those who use them. In the instance of the Holocaust, the memories of the victims ended up in the hands of the victors – whether or not the deaths were counted at the faithful, non-inflated numbers, most of the stories of the lives lost were buried along with the bodies. The records kept from the Oyneg Shabes archives and the publicity gained from the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising were two key elements that helped to preserve the Jewish memory of the Holocaust and shape it gradually and belatedly in the form that they would have wanted rather than in the image that the Nazis promoted.

The study of memory has gained traction in the 1980s, with the posthumous publication of Maurice Halbwachs' work titled *The Collective Memory*, in which he wrote a collection of essays throughout the 1930s and early 1940s interacting with Maurice Blondel's critique on the study of memory. Blondel argues convincingly that "human action is both historical and metaphysical, and based on this, he successfully shows us how tradition mediates history and truth to one another on the plane of human experience."[3] Although Blondel engages with the idea of memory, at the time of his scholarly work in the late 1890s, the study of memory had been extremely limited; because the field was so new, the philosopher had many questions about the

[1] A codename for the archival program; translated to "enjoyment of the Sabbath" because the group working on this project in the Warsaw Ghetto would meet on Saturdays to secretly discuss the archives.
[2] Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 406.
[3] Anne M. Carpenter, "A Theological Aesthetic of Memory: Blondel, Newman, and Balthasar," in *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 440.

topic and was "unclear about what role history plays in ideas."[4] By the 1930s, Halbwachs engaged with this concept by arguing that history plays a role in establishing a collective memory; this term was used first either by Halbwachs himself or by another European scholar, Aby Warburg.[5] In addition to being of the first to introduce the term 'collective memory' to the study of history, Halbwachs also highlighted "the importance of the social frameworks of memory."[6] Most important to consider in the field of museums, Halbwachs' work emphasized that remembering is always an act of reconstruction. He argued that memories are "shaped by the social context in which they are recalled; what we remember depends on the groups to which we belong."[7] In furthering the study of memory, sociologist Jeffrey Olick distinguishes between *collected* memories and *collective* memory, essentially "concluding that we must remember that 'memory' occurs in public and in private, at the tops of societies and at the bottoms … and that each of these forms is important."[8] While the processes of forming and incorporating public and private memories differ, the two distinct forms that Olick outlines blend within a museum gallery. In a museum setting, individuals confront their own private ideas with the public memories developed and presented by the curatorial staff. Considering Halbwachs' notion of the different groups creating memory, the public sector can involve various outlets and groups that help to shape the ways in which memory is formed.

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[4] Anne M. Carpenter, "A Theological Aesthetic of Memory: Blondel, Newman, and Balthasar," 440.
[5] Maurice Halbwachs, O*n Collective Memory,* ed. Lewis A. Coser, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38; Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5, (1997): 1388.
[6] Anna Saunders, "Memory, Monuments and Memorialization," in *Memorializing the GDR: Monuments and Memory after 1989*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018) 28.
[7] Anna Saunders, "Memory, Monuments and Memorialization," 29.
[8] Olick also referred to numerous other scholars who had considered the notion of "collective memory" including Henry Tudor (1972), Alisdair MacIntyre (1984), David Carr (1991), Edward Shils (1981), and Barry Schwartz (1982). These philosophers, sociologists, and historians have all touched upon the concept that was first introduced by Halbwachs, helping to shape the argument on memory Olick establishes in his publication '*Collective memory': A memoir and prospect.*

In a museum setting, the memories that are incorporated into the historical galleries are reshaped with various groups in mind – the ways in which visitors interpret the work will be dictated by the curators of the gallery in correlation with their own pre-existing viewpoints. While going through a museum exhibition, historian Barbara Franco explained the process whereby "museum visitors move comfortably from personal reminiscence to abstract issues and back to personal or global meanings in a seamless process that is quite distinct from the carefully constructed arguments of academic discourse."[9] This refers to the manner in which visitors incorporate their own personal and group biases with the reconstructed memories that are presented to them by the curatorial staff of a museum.

Memory and museums go hand-in-hand; as the popularity of museums increases, so does the reach of these institutions. As public historian Graham Black explains, "in selecting what to collect, they define what is or is not history."[10] Therefore, the reconstructed memory that the museums present determine much of what history the public is exposed to, along with the books, publications, online materials, living history centers, and more that also establish their own narratives of the past. Furthermore, as the study of memory becomes more common, it helps to mold the field of public history. Franco outlined that "the reengagement of academic historians and other disciplines in the scholarship of memory, place, and public practice will help define and shape the public uses of history to the betterment of history in all its many forms."[11] Museums grapple with this pressure of crafting the memory that they choose to present to the public.

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[9] Barbara Franco, "Public History and Memory: A Museum Perspective," *The Public Historian* 19, no. 2 (1997): 67.
[10] Graham Black, "Museums, Memory and History," *Cultural and Social History* 8, no. 3 (2011): 415.
[11] Franco, "Public History and Memory: A Museum Perspective," 67.

The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews helps mold the Polish-Jewish memory for those who encounter the museum exhibitions or any of its online resources or campaigns. Established on October 28, 2014, the POLIN Museum is relatively new and has not yet been extensively studied by researchers and historians in the ways it presents historical memory to the public.[12] The focus of one review was centered around the way the museum incorporates Jewish history into the Polish historical narrative for the country. With the complexities in the current government insisting that "Poland's history should be a narrative of Poles, ethnically defined as non-Jewish…,"[13] the challenges of the museum to preserve the memory of the Jewish individuals in the Warsaw Ghetto have become increasingly more difficult to navigate. In addressing these challenges, "The POLIN Museum of the History of the Polish Jews has the opportunity to change the attitudes of Poles" by reshaping the collective memory of Polish-Jewish history and the experience in the Warsaw Ghetto and using the preserved documents from within the ghetto and the powerful narrative of the uprising.[14]

Additionally, because of the near total destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto after the German forces crushed the uprising in 1943, what is left of the events that took place are only the memories preserved in the buried caches of the Oyneg Shabes Archives and the testimonies from the few survivors who made it out alive. Therefore, part of the responsibility of the POLIN Museum is to continue to tell the stories of those who lived in the ghetto and were involved in the uprising, shaping the narrative for future generations using the materials from the past.

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[12] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Making History Tangible: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw," *The Routledge Companion to Intangible Cultural Heritage,* ed. Michelle L. Stefano and Peter Davis (New York: Routledge, 2017), 359.
[13] Janine Holc, "Critical Review Essay: POLIN, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews," *The American Historical Review* no. 123, (2018): 1267.
[14] Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, "The Challenges of New Work in History and Education about the Holocaust in Poland," *New Directions in the History of the Jews in the Polish Lands* ed. Antony Polonsky, Hanna Węgrzynek and Andrzej Żbikowski (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2018), 171.

Considering the importance of a collective memory that is shaped by both the institution that presents it and the specific individuals who absorb it, it is important to look at the ways in which the POLIN Museum has incorporated the memories that were preserved by the Oyneg Shabes Archives and established by the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and presented them to the public.

Introduction

Polish Jewish history extends beyond the experiences of the Holocaust. The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews strives to emphasize the legacy of the culture and the history of the Jewish people who have been living in the Poland region for over 1000 years. Within the museum itself, the permanent exhibition gallery spans through little over a millennium of history, covering extensive Jewish traditions over a broad period of time starting in approximately the year 900. Regarding the Polish Jewish experience during the Holocaust, gallery sections 6, 7, and 8 (See Appendix, Figure 1 – galleries labeled as e, f, and g) tell the story of the significant inter-war years of Polish Jewish culture and intellectual activity, the struggles of the Jewish people during the Second World War, and the lasting impact of all of this on modern-day society. Specifically, this paper will narrow in on the Holocaust gallery, which tells the story of the Jewish people in the Warsaw ghetto through two distinct lenses, one view from Polish Jewish leadership and one view from the Jewish underground in the ghetto. It will also focus on programs developed by the museum that tell the story and promote the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. Although the museum itself is not solely a Holocaust museum, the Polish Jewish relevancy to the Holocaust ensures that this is a vital story for the museum to tell as a part of its mission is to be, as Prof. Dr. hab. Dariusz Stola, the former POLIN

director, explained, "a part of a wider and extraordinary process of restoring the memory of Polish Jews."[15]

In designing the museum's core gallery exhibition, an important focus for the curators was to ensure that visitors recognized the story being told was that of *Polish* Jews. The museum was not meant to be a Holocaust museum per se; however, it still filled a role for telling the stories of the Polish Jews who found themselves trapped within the walls of the ghetto, especially because of the location of the museum, which faces The Monument to the Ghetto Heroes and stands within the site of the ghetto in the heart of the prewar Jewish neighborhood, Muranów.[16] (See Appendix, Figure 2.1 and 2.2)

Prior to World War II, despite economic challenges and a rise in antisemitism, "there began what some historians consider a second 'golden age' for Polish Jews."[17] This period had seen Jews advance in culture, academia, and politics. The growth that the Jewish people experienced during this time period left much for them to want to preserve for future generations. Partially inspired by a movement created by the Jewish Scientific Institute (YIVO)[18] in the 1930s that promoted individuals to write out their experiences in autobiographies, many Polish Jews found the value in preserving their personal, daily-life experiences.[19] In their precarious position once the Second World War began, the Jewish people felt a strong desire to save the valuable cultural and intellectual developments that were at risk of being lost forever. As pointed out by historian Lucy Dawidowicz and reiterated in the exhibition

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[15] *Polin: 1000 Year History of Polish Jews*, ed. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Antony Polonsky (Warsaw: Museum of the History of Polish Jews, 2014), 16.
[16] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Making History Tangible: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw," 359.
[17] Radosław Wójcik, "A Short Guide to the Core Exhibition," A 1000 Year History of Polish Jews, last modified October 28, 2014. https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/a-1000-year-history-of-polish-jews/wR4060gq
[18] Translated in Yiddish as *Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut*; a prominent Jewish organization founded in Vilna, Lithuania in 1925.
[19] *Polin: 1000 Year History of Polish Jews*, 275.

of the POLIN Museum, Jewish people had often been scapegoated and targeted throughout history, especially in Europe where antisemitism was a constant factor that had to be navigated.[20] During the war, however, in the city of Warsaw, and in Europe in general, what the Jews were facing had reached a horrific level of scientifically organized murder and cruelty that had yet to be experienced by any ethnic or religious group. Almost immediately as a response, historian Emmanuel Ringelblum set out to save as much as possible about the Jewish people with topics encompassing all aspects of Jewish life. Not only did Polish Jews want to preserve what they were facing in real time, but they also wanted to make sure that in the case they were all killed, the legacy and culture of the Jewish people could continue on through memory. This was carried out by enlisting the help of hundreds of volunteers to keep a record of what they were experiencing. These preserved memories were then contained into three different caches and buried in the ghetto, hidden away from the Nazis. As those in the ghetto learned more about the formation of the death camps and the Nazis' evolving plan to annihilate the Jewish people, there was an increased push for to preserve the memory of the Jews because of the heightened understanding that many were not going to live to make it out of the ghetto. This desire to preserve the memory of a strong Jewish existence was also enacted by those in the Warsaw Ghetto who set out to leave a memorable impression through their actions.[21]

On April 19, 1943, the few thousand Jews remaining in the Warsaw Ghetto made the brave and inspiring decision to resist the Nazis and staged the largest and most violent Jewish uprising during the Holocaust. In addition to making a statement against the Nazis, one major goal of the uprising was to create a positive legacy for the Warsaw Ghetto Jews, rising up to protect the honor of their people and rewriting the German propagandized narrative of Jewish

[20] Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against Jews: 1933-1945 (*New York: Bantam Books, 1975), 165.
[21] Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994).

submissiveness. Either through the actions of the archivists or the activists, memory preservation was done to make sure the Jewish struggle did not disappear. From the establishment of the POLIN Museum, the formation of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Campaign instituted by the museum, and the construction of The Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, the story of the uprising would continue to be told even after their deaths. Through the museum's presentation of written records and the actions of resistance, the effectiveness of the POLIN Museum can be analyzed through its ability to present the memory that the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto had intentionally left behind.

Part One: *Into the Warsaw Ghetto*

On September 1, 1939, the German military invaded Poland, initiating World War II. By October 4, the city of Warsaw had fallen, the entire country had been taken over, and "Poland had ceased to exist."[22] Living in any part of the occupied region had been dangerous for Polish Jews, with direct attacks through shootings of Poles by the thousands and a reenactment of the *Kristallnacht*[23] in every town and city occupied by the Germans.[24] Those who were fortunate enough to avoid the direct killings then faced the challenge of survival from starvation, rampant disease, and severely lacking rations and resources.

Although antisemitism had been a resounding force that Jews involuntarily faced throughout their lives in Europe, what they experienced from the German attack had been something terrifyingly new for the Jewish population in Warsaw, a city that had the second

[22] Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, 127.
[23] Meaning 'Night of Broken Glass,' the original *Kristallnacht* was a state-sponsored attack against the Jews throughout Nazi Germany on November 9-10, 1938.
[24] Dawidowicz, *The War Against Jews: 1933-1945,* 200.

highest concentration of Jews in the entire world.[25] Directly after the invasion of Poland, the Jewish people felt the need to document what atrocities they were experiencing. One Warsaw Jew began writing at their very first encounter with the invaders, explaining that "one of the first things these 'honorable' German troops did was to conduct night raids on Jewish homes, where they demand money and jewelry at gunpoint, all while beating and kicking the residents."[26] As a part of being targeted by the invaders, Jewish individuals experienced total humiliation simply for being Jewish. One survivor from Warsaw, Marek Edelman, described in an interview the existence for Jews in Warsaw under the Nazi regime as "the humiliation of men." Edelman continued by explaining one specific instance when "a Jew was caught in the street, two boys put him on a barrel and publicly cut his beard with huge shears. The surrounding mob found it hilarious."[27] The antisemitism the Polish Jews once experienced had been overshadowed by the absolute torture they suffered through in occupied Warsaw.

The humiliation was eclipsed by the extreme levels of death that the Jews were forced to confront. Historian Emmanuel Ringelblum had noted in his personal documentation of the events in Warsaw that the city was "looking like a graveyard."[28] Many diary entries written at the start of the war echoed Ringelblum's despair. On September 25, 1939, one Jewish individual remarked in a diary entry the mentality of the Germans and their shooting in the streets of Warsaw: "A crack. A shot. Two bodies lying on the street. Two Jews fewer in the world."[29]

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[25] Omer Bartov, "The Truth and Nothing But: The Holocaust Gallery of the Warsaw POLIN Museum in Context." *New Directions in the History of the Jews in the Polish Lands Book,* ed. Antony Polonsky, Hanna Węgrzynek, and Andrzej Żbikowski (New York: Academic Studies, 2018), 114.
[26] Stanislaw Sznapman, "Life Within the Walls," *Words to Outlive Us: Eyewitness Accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto,* ed. Michal Grynberg, tran. Philip Boehm, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002) 17.
[27] Interview of Marek Edelman in "There was no hope," *Muzeum POLIN,* May 5, 2016, Educational Film, 1:33, https://youtu.be/VOpKGTz4GJA
[28] Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1958) 8.
[29] *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, Warsaw Ghetto: Everyday Life Volume One,* ed. Katarzyna Person, (Warsaw: Emmanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, 2017), 14.

Written between October and December of 1939, an account of another Jewish man in Warsaw had emphasized the regularity of death by noting that "a corpse in the street is nothing extraordinary. You pass them by with indifference."[30] To the Germans, a Jewish life was worth nothing more than the free labor it could provide, or in some cases, even less than that. Regularly in the ghetto, the Jews were equated to vermin, where they were better off starving to death than taking resources from more deserving individuals.[31] There was a stark sense of awareness regarding the inevitability of death that continued to proliferate the longer the Jews remained in the city.

Additionally, out of the occupation came codified restrictions that limited the Jews' ways of life. One month in, during October of 1939, a Jewish man had noted that "the public was terrorized..." and that "every day brought fresh decrees against the Jews who feared political repression and political searches."[32] By November, the government introduced a myriad of orders that included the restriction of Jewish families from possessing over 2,000 zloty[33] in cash, the marking of all Jewish-owned businesses, and the requirement for Jews in Warsaw to wear armbands with the Star of David to differentiate them from the other Poles living in the city.[34] These restrictions on life worsened in early 1940 with official decrees preventing free movement within the city, establishing the initial contours of a ghetto. While no walls were constructed, on January 5, 1940, "a decree appeared to the effect that Jews may not move out of their residences except with permission of the authorities. Nor may they walk about the streets between 9 P.M.

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[30] *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, Warsaw Ghetto: Everyday Life Volume One*, 15.
[31] Dawidowicz, *The War Against Jews: 1933-1945*, 200.
[32] Sznapman, "Life Within the Walls," 3.
[33] Polish currency.
[34] Sznapman, "Life Within the Walls," 15; David Wdowinski, *And We Are Not Saved* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 24.

and 5 A.M."[35] On January 20, religious activities were entirely restricted with the closure of all synagogues, yeshivas, and mikvas and the prohibition of public prayer. In September 1940, construction of the walls of the future ghetto began, surrounding the north-western region of Warsaw in a seemingly random zigzag pattern, engulfing the Jewish district. (See Appendix, Figure 3.1 and 3.2) By November 15, 1940, the walls of the Warsaw Ghetto were fully constructed and approximately 400,000 Polish Jews found themselves within 1.3 square miles in the Muranów neighborhood. At its highest estimate, up to 489,000 lived in the ghetto at one time between 1940 and 1943.[36] According to data from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, this meant that "almost 30 percent of Warsaw's population was packed into 2.4 percent of the city's area."[37] The quality of life continued to decrease as more people were subject to the starvation and disease that ran rampant in the claustrophobic quarters of the ghetto.[38]

In order to make it out of the ghetto alive, one would have to "survive the epidemics that race through the ghetto due to the horrific overcrowding, the filth and unsanitary conditions, the selling of your last shift for half a loaf of bread…"[39] As a result of the typhus epidemic from the summer of 1941 until the spring of 1942, dozens of Jews on average died daily. At the peak of the outbreak, from October to January, "the daily mortality rate approached two hundred…not counting all the nameless wretches who die of cold and starvation on the streets…"[40] With the average food ration for Jewish individuals in the ghetto containing only around 800 calories, and

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[35] Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, 11.
[36] Sznapman, "Life Within the Walls," 1.
[37] "Warsaw," Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Accessed April 26, 2021. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/warsaw.
[38] Dawidowicz, *The War Against Jews: 1933-1945.*
[39] Peretz Opoczynski, "Children in the Streets," *In Those Nightmarish Days: The Ghetto Reportage of Peretz Opoczynski and Josef Zelkowicz,* ed. tran. Samuel Kassow and David Suchoff (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015) 84.
[40] Stefan Ernest, "Life Within the Walls," *Words to Outlive Us: Eyewitness Accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto,* ed. Michal Grynberg, tran. Philip Boehm (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002) 43.

the economic activity being limited to importing only small quantities of food and raw materials, one of the most common challenges was starvation, combatted only by those who risked their lives to illegally smuggle in food from the Aryan side.[41] Within the ghetto, one Jewish reporter had noted that "thousands of Jewish children wander the streets—no roof over their heads or spoonfuls of hot food available to them, shirtless and barefoot."[42] In Janusz Korczak's diary, in which he documented his daily life in an all-boy orphanage in Warsaw, he wrote that "there isn't a bit of me left in sound health. Adhesions, aches, raptures, scars. I am falling to pieces…"[43] Many adults and children alike were left hungry and helpless in the ghetto.

If Jews were not killed by starvation or disease, every day they were at a constant risk of being attacked, leaving them wary of the paths they took when they left their homes. Written in his personal notes, Ringelblum described getting a "blow in the mouth for not saluting a German."[44] In more extreme cases, Jews who did not step aside and bow to the Germans were beaten to a pulp or even shot.[45] At the sight of a German officer, the Jews would alert each other: "Don't go, there's an SS man over there, he'll shoot you."[46] During the month of November 1942, one Jewish man kept track of those who were murdered by Germans, and within one day, he documented that "the number of people shot in the streets [on the 25th] came to 30."[47] As a

[41] Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, 97; "Aryan side" refers to the parts of Poland outside of the ghetto, where Polish individuals still lived. Those in the ghetto took advantage of Poles willing to help who sometimes provided the Jews inside the ghetto with information, hiding places, or additional resources needed to survive.
[42] Opoczynski, "Children in the Streets," 89.
[43] Janusz Kowczak, *Ghetto Diary* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978) 83.
[44] Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, 56.
[45] Sznapman, "Life Within the Walls," 19.
[46] Yehiel Gorny, "Notes," *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor!... Selected documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S." (Oneg Shabbath)* ed. Joseph Kermish (Jerusalem, Israel: Manechem Press, 1986), 91.
[47] Gorny, "Notes," 91.

result of the killings, starvation, and disease, within less than two years in the ghetto, over 100,000 people had died.[48]

Each day the Jews also faced the risk of being rounded up and sent away to one of the camps outside the ghetto that promised a deadly fate. One Jewish man, named Menahem Kon, wrote of all he observed during the Great Deportation beginning on July 22, 1942 that removed thousands per day from the Warsaw ghetto, totaling to about 250,000 Jews deported by the end of 1942.[49] Jews were removed daily from the ghetto at the *Umschlagplatz*[50] and relocated to the Treblinka extermination camp. Between August and October 1942, he documented the countless relocations, writing that these unfortunate Jews were taken to "that unknown but well-known destination where all go to be cruelly slaughtered."[51] As the Germans were vocally plotting to eradicate the entire ghetto, Kon wrote "the murderers bark and bellow, they boast that…Warsaw shall be purged of Jews."[52] From knowledge about deportation outcomes, death became increasingly expected in the ghetto.[53]

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[48] "There was no hope," 3:16.
[49] Samuel Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emmanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive,* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 307.
[50] The term used to denote the areas adjacent to railway stations in which Jews were assembled before being deported out of the ghetto.
[51] Menahem Kon, "Fragments of a Diary (Aug. 6, 42-Oct. 1, 42)," *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor!... Selected documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S." (Oneg Shabbath)*, ed. Joseph Kermish, (Jerusalem, Israel: Manechem Press, 1986) 81.
[52] Kon, "Fragments of a Diary (Aug. 6, 42-Oct. 1, 42)," 86.
[53] Among the torment from the Nazis, the Jews made many attempts to live a fulfilling life in the ghetto by also establishing different cultural institutions, like orchestras or libraries. The continued practice of the culture, education, and religion in the ghetto further emphasized the values of the Jewish people and why they felt so passionate about documenting these topics along with the more negative aspects to ghetto life. If they were not to survive the ghetto, they hoped the future would understand both the pain they experienced and the beauty of the Jewish culture. Further information on the underground cultural endeavors of the Jewish people in the ghetto can be found in Lucy Dawidowicz's book, *The War Against Jews: 1933-1945*.

Documenting the Tragedy: *The Oyneg Shabes Archives*

The Jews "had few illusions about their survival," with little expectation of making it out alive to verbally tell their stories.[54] As this grim fate in Warsaw became clearer, so did the need to record what was happening. So, in response to the mounting terror, "the Jews began to write."[55] They were convinced that if time capsules of preserved documents surfaced after the war and those outside of Warsaw could read of their experiences, "they would so shock their readers that future generations—Jews and non-Jews—would use their lessons to fight for a better world."[56] The diaries from the Jewish community served a greater purpose than simply as an outlet for the anxieties of those keeping them.

Starting in 1940, all of what the Jews had experienced in Warsaw was documented and preserved through the efforts of Jewish Historian Emmanuel Ringelblum and his coworkers, who organized the Oyneg Shabes Archives, a collection of "clandestine Warsaw Ghetto documents, underground press, photographs, memoirs, and letters."[57] Those working the secret Oyneg Shabes archives dedicated their lives to the project because they understood the urgency of remembering the Nazi atrocities and the need to ensure "that no important fact about Jewish life in wartime will remain hidden from the world."[58]

Before being forced into the ghetto, Ringelblum had been an accomplished community organizer and historian in Poland for decades. His education and work experience helped prepare him for the leadership role he would later assume. Since a young age, he was no stranger to

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[54] Kassow and Roskies, ed., *Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto: Writing Our History,* ix.
[55] Emmanuel Ringelblum, "Oyneg Shabes," in *Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto: Writing Our History*, ed. Samuel D. Kassow (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2019), 36.
[56] Samuel Kassow, "Foreword," *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, Warsaw Ghetto: Everyday Life Volume One,* ed. Katarzyna Person (Warsaw: Emmanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, 2017).
[57] "Foreword," *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes Ringelblum Archive: Catalog and Guide,* ed. Robert Moses Shapiro and Tadeusz Epsztein (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).
[58] Ringelblum, "Oyneg Shabes," 42.

antisemitism or anticommunist rhetoric, for he was an active member in both the Jewish and communist communities. During his upbringing, he faced the sober reality that while Jewish individuals were technically equal citizens in the Polish Republic, they were more often treated as second-class citizens.[59] In 1920, just one year after he enrolled in the Warsaw University, Ringelblum decided to become a historian.[60] His understanding of Polish-Jewish relations motivated him to create various projects outlining Jewish history with the goal of providing a deeper understanding of the culture and community. His passion for documenting Jewish history continued to take form in 1923 with the founding of the "Young Historians Circle" (Der Yunger Historiker Krayz).[61] This group was active until 1939. The organization played a major role in the Historical Section of the YIVO, in which they were dedicated to recognizing Jewish culture and history through archival preservation and "*zamling*," the YIVO term for collecting documents and Jewish folklore. Ringelblum and the other Jewish historians who worked on "*zamling*" believed their work would help "ensure that future generations would not have to rely on gentile sources and unfriendly official documents to study Jews; it signaled the determination of a stateless people to protect their identity and their national dignity."[62]

Ringelblum's historian-minded nature had inspired the secret Oyneg Shabes archives in the Warsaw Ghetto, a direct continuation of this YIVO project of collecting Jewish scholarship. Within the ghetto itself, the same terminology, *zamling*, was used to refer to the collection of items to be archived. While describing the Oyneg Shabes project, the historian explained the archives' mission was to preserve documents and artifacts that

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[59] Samuel Kassow, "Documenting Catastrophe: The Ringelblum Archive and the Warsaw Ghetto," *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust: New Transnational Approaches*, ed. Norman J.W Goda, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 175.
[60] Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emmanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive*, 51.
[61] Kassow, "Documenting Catastrophe: The Ringelblum Archive and the Warsaw Ghetto," 177.
[62] Kassow, "Documenting Catastrophe: The Ringelblum Archive and the Warsaw Ghetto," 178.

> "encompassed all aspects of life: economic life; the relationship of Germans and Poles to the Jewish population; the kehillah[63] and its activities; social welfare; important episodes in the life of the community, such as the arrival of the Germans, pogroms, expulsions, and acts of atrocity perpetrated during Jewish holidays; religious life; work and matters connected with it (labor camps, the obligation to work, impressment of labor, the Labor Department if the kehillah, relationship of Germans to Jews at work); etc."[64]

In October 1939, one month after the invasion of Poland began, Ringelblum "laid the first brick for the archive."[65] A few months later, a team was organized and the *zamling* would commence. What was collected included "testimonies, diaries, candy wrappers, tram tickets, restaurant menus, official decrees—anything that could give future historians insights into the life of the ghetto including material culture."[66] In a description of the project, written in 1942 by the organizer himself, Ringelblum noted that "everyone wrote: journalists, writers, teachers, community activists, young people, even children."[67] In this manner, history was being preserved by as many people as possible in the ghetto for future generations to bear witness to not only the struggles that the Jewish people faced but also the rich culture of the community that those who were a part of it felt was near extinction. The historian's passion with the Oyneg Shabes project resonated with the unofficial motto of the disassembled Young Historian's Circle: "history for the people and by the people."[68]

By the end of 1941, the Oyneg Shabes project, under the expanded leadership of Emmanuel Ringelblum, Menachem Linger, and Lipe Bloch, had grown to include a new, more specific goal meant to go beyond the work of the *zamling*: The Two and a Half Years Project. Through the use of questionnaires, interviews, and strictly defined topics, the project had

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[63] The Jewish organized administration for charity and communal work.
[64] Ringelblum, "Oyneg Shabes," 48.
[65] Emmanuel Ringelblum, "O.S. ['Oneg Shabbath']," *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor!... Selected documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S." (Oneg Shabbath)*, ed. Joseph Kermish, (Jerusalem, Israel: Manechem Press, 1986), 3.
[66] Kassow, "Documenting Catastrophe: The Ringelblum Archive and the Warsaw Ghetto," 182.
[67] Ringelblum, "Oyneg Shabes," 36.
[68] Kassow, "Documenting Catastrophe: The Ringelblum Archive and the Warsaw Ghetto," 182.

"intended to provide a survey and summing up of Jewish life in Warsaw during two and a half years of war."[69] The final concept for the project was to produce a sixteen-hundred-page long organized study of Jewish life under the Nazi regime and, in Ringelblum's words, "one of the most important documents of the war."[70] The Two and a Half Years project unfortunately came to a sudden end with the Great Deportation and the removal of thousands from the ghetto. With an abrupt shift in purpose, the remaining Oyneg Shabes workers decided to focus again on their *zamling* and collect "as much Judenrat[71] and German correspondence and proclamations as possible in order to document the step-by-step process of bureaucratized mass murder."[72] The dedication to preserving the experiences of the Jews had continued even with the risk of deportation hanging over their heads. They refused to give up on the project because they recognized the weight that it held for future generations.

The purpose of the archives, in Ringelblum's words, was to "ensure that the world would learn of the fate of Poland's Jews, to pass on the stories of the people who had lived and died in the ghetto…"[73] In addition to fighting for survival for as long as they could, they were also engaging in "a battle for memory, and their weapons were pen and paper…what was usually known was what their killers chose to say about them. The members of Oyneg Shabes did all they could to make sure that the Germans would not have the last word."[74] Ringelblum took great pride in the project and "had no doubt that the world would indeed believe what had

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[69] Ringelblum, "Oyneg Shabes," 40.
[70] Ringelblum, "Oyneg Shabes," 41.
[71] The term given to the German selected council of Jewish leaders who represented and advised the community in the ghetto.
[72] Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emmanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive,* 306.
[73] Kassow, "Foreword," *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, Warsaw Ghetto: Everyday Life Volume One*, 6.
[74] Kassow and Roskies, ed., *Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto: Writing Our History*, ix.

happened—as long as it had the proper evidence."[75] Similarly, the participants also saw the value in their work. In a passage written by nineteen-year-old David Graber on August 2, 1942, he explained that

> what we were unable to cry and shriek out to the world we buried in the ground….I would love to see the moment in which the great treasure will be dug up and scream the truth at the world. So the world may know all. So the ones who did not live through it may be glad, and we may feel like veterans with medals on our chest.[76]

The evidence provided in the archives would combat alternative histories promoted by the perpetrators. This was the war the Jews were able to engage in, not in a battlefield but within the walls of the ghetto.

The Germans had their own means of preserving what was happening in the ghetto, as seen in the propaganda they sponsored. For the citizens in Warsaw, the Germans had promoted falsified information that linked the Jews with typhus outbreaks in the city by posting quarantine signs on the walls of the ghettos, thereby justifying the ghettoization. For a broader international audience, as a part of a Reich propaganda campaign, the Germans shot a film in the ghetto on May 1, 1942 that "was aimed to show the social disparities in the ghetto and enhance a negative image of the Jewish community."[77] What the Jews were preserving was meant to contrast the German production and tell the unaltered experiences in the ghetto.

However, because of the punishment they would have faced if the Germans learned of Oyneg Shabes, the project could not be publicly shared until the war ended. Because this secrecy was imperative, those in the Oyneg Shabes avoided collaborations with the official Ghetto leadership, defending their choice by explaining that "an atmosphere of Gestapo seeped from the walls of the Judenrat. [The archivists] were afraid to have any dealings with it; that is why we are

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[75] Kassow, "Documenting Catastrophe: The Ringelblum Archive and the Warsaw Ghetto," 173.
[76] Quote from David Graber in Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emmanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive*, 3.
[77] Kassow and Roskies, ed., *Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto: Writing Our History*, xxi; "There was no hope."

so poor in its official materials."[78] In addition, those working on the archives went as far as to defame the actions of the Judenrat, making an attempt to "examine the failure of the Judenrat to lift a finger to save the Jewish intelligentsia as well as the role of the Jewish police."[79] Therefore, because of the distrust of the Judenrat, this underground archive was not the sole means of preserving memory in the Warsaw Ghetto. Outside of this project, as the leader of the Judenrat, Adam Czerniakow had taken it upon himself to record his ghetto experiences.

Czerniakow maintained a meticulously detailed diary from the beginning of the war up until July 23, 1942, the start of the Great Deportation. On this date, he took his own life after receiving impossible instructions from the Nazis to have several thousand Jews ready for deportation from the ghetto each day.[80] Similarly to those working on Oyneg Shabes, the leader of the Judenrat documented everything he had been confronted with, writing about a variety of different topics that ranged from the ghetto economy to religious life, providing new information and insight from each account.[81] Taking advantage of his position of power, he wrote detailed entries on his interactions with Jewish and non-Jewish public figures, providing a valuable glance at the relations between Poles and Jews. In his diary, he also made note of his decisions in leading the ghetto and his "constant attempts to have anti-Jewish decrees revoked or at least modified to lessen Jewish suffering."[82] The diary of Czerniakow provided a unique perspective that differed from the Oyneg Shabes archives. The memories that were recorded and preserved were vital for future generations to understand the experiences of the Jewish people in the

[78] Ringelblum, "Oyneg Shabes," 48.
[79] Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emmanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive*, 308.
[80] Saxby Pridmore and Garry Walter, "The Suicide of Adam Czerniakow," *Australasian Psychiatry* 19, no. 6 (December 1, 2011): 513.
[81] Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron, and Josef Kermisz, ed, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1979), 8.
[82] Hilberg, Staron, and Kermisz, ed, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom,* 17.

Warsaw Ghetto from both the specific perspective of the official ghetto leadership and the unique perceptions of the general residents.

Unfortunately, unlike the Czerniakow diary, not all the documentation that was saved in the ghetto was able to be studied by present-day historians. In maintaining the program's secrecy, in 1942, the archivists secured and hid "away their precious documentations when they realized that the Germans intended to murder the Jews of Warsaw and that the ghetto would soon be liquidated."[83] Between 1946 and 1952, survivors who worked on the project were able to estimate under the ruins of the city the locations of some of the caches containing the archived materials; however, buried somewhere in the city of Warsaw, one has yet to been uncovered.[84] The missing cache is the largest of the three and contains valuable documentation written between September 1942 and April 1943.[85] As uprising leader Simha "Kazik" Rotem had explained, those planning the 1943 rebellion "assumed the responsibility to preserve, and to tell, the story of Polish Jewry in the 'days of destruction and revolt.'" [86] Therefore, historian and expert on the Oyneg Shabes Archives Samuel Kassow projected that "had the missing third cache of the archive, buried in April 1943, been found, it no doubt would have contained a priceless trove of material on the mood of Warsaw Jews as they prepared for the final showdown."[87]

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[83] Kassow, "Foreword," *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, Warsaw Ghetto: Everyday Life Volume One*, 6.
[84] Some historians believe the missing cache is located below the Chinese embassy, making it impossible to dig up.
[85] Kassow and Roskies, ed., *Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto: Writing Our History,* xv.
[86] Simha Kazik Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me,* ed. trans. Barbara Harchav, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), xi.
[87] Kassow and Roskies, ed., *Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto: Writing Our History,* xv.

Refusing to Remain Silent: *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*

The Jewish people who had already survived three years of the harsh ghetto lifestyle, were not optimistic they would make it out. This growing recognition of death had led a significant portion of the approximate 50,000 Jews remaining in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943 to make the bold decision to resist the Nazis, which they had hoped would leave a powerful legacy of the strength of the Jewish rebellion against their tormentors.[88]

Since the start of the war, some Jews felt a stark sense of vengeance towards the Germans. Written in a diary entry from September 6, 1939 in response to the invasion, one Jewish man felt as if "it was an ocean we were drowning in, and we planned ways to drag our murderer into it. Whether as punishment or revenge, it didn't matter. Nor did it matter if this was the right thing to do. We only wanted to kill, to murder, to shoot our murderer."[89] The constant expectation of death, beatings, or transportations out of the ghetto had intensified this desire to fight, and many had been pushed to the edge.

With resentful energy and a growing incentive during the Great Deportation, on 28 July 1942, the Jewish Fighting Organization (*Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa* or ŻOB), a combatant resistance group in the ghetto, was established.[90] In the face of imminent final liquidation of the ghetto, they decided to resist the occupying force with their first attempt at resistance taking place on January 18, 1943, at the second mass deportation within a year. When the Germans entered the ghetto in search of Jews to deport, they were met with open fire. By the end of the brief insurgence, 1,000 Jews were massacred and approximately 5,000 more, the sick and the

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[88] "There was no hope," 4:35.
[89] *The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, Warsaw Ghetto: Everyday Life Volume One*, 6.
[90] "Warsaw Ghetto Uprising," Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed April 26, 2021, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-warsaw-ghetto-uprising

feeble who could not resist, were taken away.[91] While the four-day opposition was short-lived, it marked a turning point for the ŻOB, with the first sign of resistance from the ghetto Jews.[92] One main instigator in the momentous uprising that would soon follow, Yitzhak "Antek" Zuckerman, concluded that "the revolt in January is what made possible the April rebellion."[93]

The Warsaw Ghetto Jews decided that all they had left to do was to fight back, to show the world that the Jewish people were not going to allow their history to be wiped out. Zuckerman noted the purpose of the uprising was to "restore our honor. Let us go out into the streets tomorrow, burn down the ghetto and attack the Germans…It is fitting that we should be killed. But our honor will be victorious. There will be a day when we are remembered…"[94] Another resistance leader, Simha Rotem, reemphasized this, stating that "[The Uprising's] leaders had a strong sense of history and felt they were the last remaining Jews," therefore, it was up to them to control the Jewish memory that would be left behind. [95] Against the vastly superior German-led forces, the expectation of the Jewish insurrectionists was not the absolute defeat of the Nazis; it was simply to make an impact in defense of Jewish existence.[96] This mindset—the understanding that a lasting impact was more important than survival—was reiterated by comments made by Arieh "Jurek" Wilner, a fighter in the ghetto and an emissary with the ŻOB. He had been quoted as saying "we do not wish to save our lives. None of us will come out of this alive. We want to save the honor of mankind."[97] With the uprising, the Jews wanted to establish

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[91] Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 184.
[92] Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 183.
[93] Yitzhak Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, ed. tran. Barbara Harshav (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 175.
[94] Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 159.
[95] Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me*, xi.
[96] Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 175.
[97] Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 199.

a memory that proved they refused to remain submissive to the Nazis. The only question the Jews faced was whether they wanted to die "like sheep for the slaughter or like men of honor."[98]

Deciding to die with honor, in the months before the uprising, the Jews gathered into twenty-two fighting units, prepared to revolt against a German attack at any moment.[99] The ŻOB, working with an additional Jewish fighting group, the Jewish Military Union (*Żydowski Związek Wojskowy* or ŻZW),[100] based their fighting strategy on the grave reality of the situation and planned the attack without much consideration for rescue or survival.[101] Bunkers, underground tunnels, and roof-top passages were constructed to make navigating through the ghetto easier. Weapons, like revolvers and pistols were more difficult to obtain, so many made grenades and Molotov cocktails to use against the Nazis.[102] The date they would begin their uprising was dependent on the next time the Germans decided to liquidate the ghetto, so units of the [ŻOB] and the remaining Jews in general maintained "a permanent state of readiness."[103]

Beginning at 4:00 in the morning on April 19, 1943, the Germans used every weapon at their disposal, including guns, gas, and fire to liquidate and then attack the Jews. They moved into the ghetto "as if they [were] going to war."[104] Shortly after, the sounds of rifle and machine gun fire echoed throughout the ghetto. According to Dawid Jakubowski, a survivor from the uprising, the ŻOB had 700 fighters compared to approximately 2,000 S.S. Soldiers supplemented

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[98] Dawidowicz, *The War Against Jews: 1933-1945,* 312.
[99] Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 197.
[100] "There are few fully reliable sources of information on the activities of the ŻZW as almost all of its members perished without leaving behind any accounts; none of the staff of the command survived the war, and none of its administrative documents have been preserved." "Jewish Military Union (ŻZW-Żydowski Związek Wojskowy)," POLIN Virtual Shtetl, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed April 30, 2021, https://sztetl.org.pl/en/glossary/jewish-military-union-zzw-zydowski-zwiazek-wojskowy.
[101] Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 199.
[102] Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 199; Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me*, 33.
[103] Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 178.
[104] Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me,* 33.

with additional German, Polish, and broadly Eastern European police officers.[105] Even with these estimated totals that left the Jews outnumbered, Jakubowski described the Nazi response to the fight: "It was Hell for them."[106] Rotem emphasized this in his memoir by describing the scene he experienced during the fight with "German soldiers screaming in panicky fight, leaving their wounded behind."[107]

The Germans continued to retreat and come back to fight, "using automatic weapons, machine guns, and flamethrowers."[108] After three days of combat, the Germans eventually stayed outside of the ghetto walls and, as Rotem described, "poured hellfire onto us."[109] The ghetto fighters were surrounded in flames and fled to the bunkers as the city burned. (See Appendix, Figure 4) ŻOB commander, Mordechai Anielewicz, wrote a letter to Zuckerman on April 23, explaining what life had become in the ghetto:

> I can't describe to you the conditions in which the Jews are living. Only a few individuals will hold out. All the rest will be killed sooner or later. The die is cast. In all the bunkers where our comrades are hiding, you can't light a candle at night for lack of oxygen…[110]

Even though the streets were "nothing but rows of smoldering ruins," twelve days into the uprising, most of the fighters were still alive and hiding underground, as noted by Rotem.[111] In an attempt to escape from the ghetto, some took to the sewers, however, most were unable to get out and were rounded up by the Germans. Others chose to commit suicide rather than be captured. Many who remained in the bunkers died either from the fires that burned each building or the poison the Germans poured in through ventilating slits.[112]

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[105] Interview with Dawid Jakubowski in "There was no hope," 10:36. In addition to these totals, Jakubowski had also noted thousands more fighting with the S.S.; further data from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum disproved these numbers. "Warsaw," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
[106] Interview with Jakubowski in "There was no hope," 12:05.
[107] Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me,* 34.
[108] Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me,* 35.
[109] Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me,* 35.
[110] Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,* 357.
[111] Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me,* 41.
[112] Rotem, *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter: The Past Within Me,* 53.

After twenty-seven days of fighting, the uprising eventually ended on May 16, 1943, with the city in ruins and nine-tenths of the Jewish population of Warsaw murdered.[113] At least 7,000 Jews died fighting, while an additional 7,000 more were deported to Treblinka.[114] Although the outcome appeared grim, one surviving organizer of the uprising, Yitzhak Zuckerman, emphasized in an interview conducted in 1974 that "the uprising was way beyond our expectations. I didn't believe the fighters would hold out even for three days..."[115] His expectations remained low because the goal of the uprising had not been to make it out alive, but instead to rewrite the narrative of Jewish passivity during the Holocaust. In the same aforementioned letter to Zuckerman, Mordechai Anielewicz had ended his note by saying, "Be well, my friend. Perhaps we shall meet again. The main thing is the dream of my life has come true. I've lived to see a Jewish defense in the ghetto in all its greatness and glory." [116] While the two leaders were never reunited after this moment, they had not expected to be, as indicated by the 'perhaps' in the note. Instead, they achieved their goal of writing their own narrative of dignity and humanity. Historian Gunnar S. Paulsson analyzed the historical impact of the conflict, stating that "the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto was the single most significant act of Jewish armed resistance to the Nazis, an act of great moral, symbolic and political importance."[117]

The action that signified the end of the uprising was the moment when the Germans destroyed the soul of the ghetto and "blew up the Great Synagogue on Tlomackie Street."[118] To

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[113] Gunnar S Paulson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw 1940-1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 2.
[114] "Warsaw," Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Accessed April 26, 2021. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/warsaw
[115] Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 376.
[116] Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 357.
[117] Paulson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw 1940-1945*, 1.
[118] "There was no hope," 26:28.

the Germans, the destruction of the center of Jewish faith had been the deciding win. They wanted to ensure that the Jewish side of history was annihilated by destroying the very structure that represented them and their culture. Jurgen Stroop, the commander of the suppression of the uprising, wrote in a report to his superiors: "The Jewish residential quarter in Warsaw has ceased to exist. The area of the ghetto, except for a few buildings, has been burnt down and razed to the ground."[119] What was left in the ghetto was not people or buildings, but memories. The stories that remained to be told were either preserved in the buried caches from the Oyneg Shabes archives or engrained in the minds of the few survivors who made it out alive.

One reporter from the ghetto named Peretz Opoczynski had written in 1941 that "whoever survives will be a hero, able to tell the harrowing tale of a generation and an entire era, when human life was reduced to the existence of abandoned dogs in a city laid to waste."[120] This was why the Jewish people wrote; they penned their lives onto paper to tell the tales of the ghetto because they had not expected to make it out themselves. The Jewish people who risked death for the Oyneg Shabes archives were heroes for sharing the cruelty of the Warsaw Ghetto even if it was just their written word that was able to survive. Similarly, the Jewish fighters who resisted the Nazis in the April 19 Uprising were heroes for engaging in an act of bold defiance, establishing a deliberate moment to be embedded into collective memory. As one survivor of the uprising had stated, if it were not for the brave Jews engaging in this act of resistance, "we would have been swallowed up in the darkness of the Holocaust without a trace."[121]

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[119] "There was no hope," 26:44.
[120] Peretz Opoczynski, "Only Time Will Tell," *In Those Nightmarish Days: The Ghetto Reportage of Peretz Opoczynski and Josef Zelkowicz*, ed. tran. Samuel Kassow and David Suchoff (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 84.
[121] Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, viii.

Part Two: ***Discussion of the POLIN Museum***

Based on the impassioned accounts of the ghetto fighters, through their actions, the Jews intended on establishing a lasting memory on their own accord. Similarly, the documented goals of the Oyneg Shabes archive outlined the hope for future generations to understand through Jewish voices what the experience was in the ghetto. Seventy-eight years later, we still recognize the heroism of the ghetto fighters and deeply value the archived materials. Analyzing the ways in which the goals of the ghetto community align with the choices of the POLIN Museum can demonstrate how effectively the histories, preserved by the uprising and the archives, are being utilized to shape a necessary Jewish-based memory of the Warsaw Ghetto. [122]

Before the construction of the POLIN Museum, a historic monument was erected in 1948 Warsaw, Poland: The Monument to the Ghetto Heroes designed by Nathan Rapoport. As one of the most widely known, celebrated, and controversial monuments, it played a vital part in crafting memory surrounding the events in the Warsaw Ghetto.[123] The monument is famous for being in the spot where the first insurgence of the uprising had occurred. By looking at it, Warsaw resident Alice Lyons is constantly reminded of the event, stating that the monument itself serves the purpose of "holding memory."[124] Standing directly facing the museum, the curatorial staff of the Holocaust Gallery took note of this by similarly linking the historical accounts addressed in the museum to the real sites where they occurred. Acknowledging the

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[122] I have not been able to see the museum in person, therefore this discussion is based on information collected from various online resources from the museum, email correspondence with museum employees, and written work and published interviews from the curatorial staff. Further analysis of the specific contents of the Holocaust gallery itself would have been achieved had I seen the exhibit. Since there is no explicitly compiled list of artifacts or detailed explanations of the exhibit contents online, the analysis presented in this portion of the essay is on the aspects of the exhibition I have been able to experience and read about virtually.

[123] James E. Young, "The Biography of a Memorial Icon: Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 69.

[124] Alice Lyons, "Uprising, Warsaw," *The Poetry Ireland Review* no. 57 (Summer, 1998): 69.

relevancy, the curators explained that "a special emphasis is placed on the history of the Warsaw Ghetto [in the Holocaust exhibition]."[125]

The former Chief Curator of the museum, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, also took interest in the monument and noted its purpose within the field of history: "The Monument to the Ghetto Heroes is about memory and memorialization." Kirshenblatt-Gimblett links memory with memorialization, differentiating this from the role of the museum when she then explicitly states: "POLIN Museum is a history museum. History is its first obligation."[126] While the museum's purpose is to convey history, it can be argued that memory is an integral part of the study of history. History museums such as POLIN apply their best efforts to present as objective a narrative as possible, but total historic objectivity is unattainable. Museum curators choose how they design an exhibition and therefore have a hand in the collective memory that the visitors gain.

It is important to once again take a look at Halbwachs' term collective memory. Some sociologists who study memory state that "collective memory is not history."[127] However, collective memory is shaped by the public's exposure to history, in part, through primary source materials curated by museums, as emphasized by public historian, Graham Black.[128] The POLIN Museum is uniquely positioned to "build a historical narration from the historical record, from primary sources…it is from such materials that historians piece together what happened, and

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[125] Maria Ferenc Piotrowska, Kamila Radecka-Mikulicz, and Justyna Majewska, "Curatorial and Educational Challenges in Creating the Holocaust Gallery," *New Directions in the History of the Jews in the Polish Lands,* ed. Polonsky Antony, Węgrzynek Hanna, and Żbikowski Andrzej (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2018), 30.
[126] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett interviewed by Christopher Garbowski in "Polin: From a 'Here You Shall Rest' Covenant to the Creation of a Polish Jewish History Museum. An interview with Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett," *The Polish Review* 61, no. 2 (2016): 15.
[127] Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (May 2002), 180.
[128] Black, "Museums, Memory and History," 415.

visitors are encouraged to do the same—with curatorial help."[129] As the analysis of historians evolves to match the interests of those in the present looking back at historical events, so will the collective memory that follows. Both are aligned with the other, and it is nearly impossible to study the role of history in museums without also recognizing the popular consciousness and collective understanding that goes with it.

In a different piece written also by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, she slightly contradicts her other statements regarding the sole function of museums. Like before, she designated the role of the monument as a place to honor the memory of those who perished in the ghetto, specifically by remembering how they died. She then reserves the museum as a place "to honor [sic.] those who died—and those who came before and after—by remembering how they lived."[130] In this statement, she does not overlook the museum's role in honoring those in the Warsaw Ghetto, however, she does make a distinction between memorializing those who have died and recounting how those in the past lived. To emphasize this point, the initiator of the POLIN Museum project, Grażyna Pawlak, described POLIN as being a "museum of life."[131] In part, the Oyneg Shabes documents from the ghetto match this focus. Some of the topics they wrote about regarded death in the ghetto, but in including all aspects of the Jewish experience, they wrote about the "vitality and dynamism shown by the Jews of Warsaw, their tenacious resolve to hold on to life in spite of everything."[132] Therefore, with this mindset, the museum memorializes the lives of the Jews in the ghetto in their way of presenting the history to the public. The Jewish

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[129] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Historical Space and Critical Museologies: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews," *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum* ed. by Katarzyna Murawska-Mithesius (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2015) 161.
[130] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Historical Space and Critical Museologies: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews," 147.
[131] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Historical Space and Critical Museologies: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews," 152.
[132] Hilberg, Staron, and Kermisz, ed, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom,* 13.

documents of both life and death included in the breadth of information preserved in the archives play a major role in what has been included in the topics of the Holocaust Gallery.

Museums help generate a common memory for the public partly based on what they present in their exhibitions. Depending on what the curators decide to add and how they choose to "display and interpret that material evidence, they construct and transmit meanings."[133] In the exhibition of the Holocaust Gallery of POLIN museum, with the preserved artifacts and documents, the museum introduces visitors to two distinct voices from Warsaw: the official voice from the diary of Adam Czerniakow and the underground voices from the Oyneg Shabes archives. (See Appendix, Figure 5.1) By presenting the history of the Warsaw Ghetto through these multiple viewpoints, the museum curatorial staff attempted "to show the whole spectrum of attitudes."[134] This goal is reiterated by Zofia Bojańczyk, one of the coordinators of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Campaign, who explained the desire for visitors to leave recognizing that "there is no such [thing] as only one point of view or one and only truth."[135] While the memory that the gallery creates is still dependent on the selected versions of the Jewish narrative they present to the public, the museum attempts to maintain as close to historic objectivity as possible by including a multitude of voices.[136]

In an essay written by the curators of the Holocaust Gallery, they explain their set-up for the exhibition more in-depth, pointing out that "Czerniaków represents the official,

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[133] Black, "Museums, Memory and History," 415.
[134] Piotrowska, Radecka-Mikulicz, and Majewska, "Curatorial and Educational Challenges in Creating the Holocaust Gallery," 31.
[135] Email correspondence with Zofia Bojańczyk, March 3, 2021.
[136] One concept that can be further studied is 'reception theory' and the idea that while museums control what visitors perceive, they cannot dictate what visitors personally take away from the exhibits and how they process the information. For further reading, refer to "Reception Theory" and "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method." Martin Middeke, "Reception Theory," *English and American* Studies, ed. J.B. Metzler, Stuttgar (Germany: Springer-Verlag, 2012) 191; Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method."

administrative side of the ghetto's life; Ringelblum exemplifies the illegal and unofficial one. The narrative is structured around a collision between two conflicting strategies: the German-imposed ruthless regulation of life in the ghetto and Jewish reactions to this imposed reality."[137] The Ringelblum portion of the exhibit includes his own notes, in addition to a variety of documents from the archives written by the Jews in the ghetto. Throughout the exhibition, the curatorial staff has presented the documents explaining the hardships the Jews chose to write about, such as the death and humiliation. (See Appendix, Figure 5.2) With this organization, the museum is able to present memory in more than one way, giving a voice to "as many testimonies as possible, thereby returning to victims their subjectivity and identity, which is not possible in more linear narrations."[138] In addition to presenting the memory of the ghetto through primary sources, the gallery contents are supplemented with "a contemporary museum voice which provides context," adding another level to the voices in the gallery.[139] Museum critic Barbara Franco explained the success of this gallery model: "Multiplicity of viewpoints in exhibitions is not just a curatorial decision aimed at avoiding controversy in public exhibitions. It reflects the way that audiences actually receive and process historical information."[140] In the exhibition, visitors take in the provided information from the Jews in the ghetto and the curatorial context, thereby gaining a more Jewish-based memory of this part of history.

The Jewish perspective provided by the documents is the guiding narrative in the exhibition. The curators supplement the gallery using photographs taken of the ghetto, most of which include German-taken photos, including ones showing the April uprising from the

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[137] Piotrowska, Radecka-Mikulicz, and Majewska, "Curatorial and Educational Challenges in Creating the Holocaust Gallery," 31.
[138] Piotrowska, Radecka-Mikulicz, and Majewska, "Curatorial and Educational Challenges in Creating the Holocaust Gallery," 35.
[139] Piotrowska, Radecka-Mikulicz, and Majewska, "Curatorial and Educational Challenges in Creating the Holocaust Gallery," 29.
[140] Franco, "Public History and Memory: A Museum Perspective," 67.

German perspective. Rather than leaving these German propaganda-based images without context, they are filtered throughout the gallery, surrounded by the Jewish accounts of the event. With this setup, the curators aimed to do what the Jews in the ghetto had hoped and "deconstruct [The German] report and show the [Jewish] perspective from which it was written."[141] Essentially, context from the Jewish perspective is provided for any German photo used from the ghetto. This constructs a clear Jewish-based understanding of the past. This also aligns with Ringelblum's goals for the future use of the archives since they were written to combat the propagandized German narrative of the Jews. With the massive totals of death from the Holocaust perpetrated by the Germans, the museum plays a vital role in bringing life back to these individuals through memory with their own identities. As noted by Timothy Snyder, "each record of death suggests, but cannot supply, a unique life."[142] The records of death were preserved by the Germans, but in the POLIN Museum, they are not the only records told.[143] Because of the work of the Oyneg Shabes archives, the museum also is able to rely on the words of the Jews from the ghetto to tell their stories and protect their memories.

In addition to featuring the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto in the Holocaust Gallery, the museum holds an annual event called the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Campaign to commemorate the Jewish insurgence. With this campaign, the museum's role in promoting history moves between education and commemoration.[144] To memorialize the actions of the ghetto fighters, the POLIN museum engages in the international campaign to pass out thousands of yellow daffodils annually on April 19, the anniversary of the uprising. Those participating in the campaign are

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[141] Piotrowska, Radecka-Mikulicz, and Majewska, "Curatorial and Educational Challenges in Creating the Holocaust Gallery," 37.
[142] Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, 407.
[143] "Holocaust Survivors and Victims Database," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed May 13, 2021, https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source_view.php?SourceId=33026
[144] Interview of Mary Seidler by Hannah Labovitz, March 5, 2021.

encouraged to wear the daffodil and flood social media with photos of it and the corresponding hashtags, #WarsawGhettoUprisingCampaign and #RememberingTogether. The director of the American Friends of the POLIN Museum program, Rebecca Schaeffer-Moldovan, wrote in a statement that "the campaign was inspired by Marek Edelman, a leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, who would anonymously receive a bouquet of yellow daffodils each year and lay them at the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes."[145] The daffodils on the monument motivated the main feature of the campaign. Additionally, the International Program Coordinator for the campaign, Mary Seidler, noted in an interview that she joined the project after being inspired by both the museum gallery and the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes.[146]

Beginning in 2016, the museum has engaged in the program which, as Seidler explained, "raises awareness of the first and largest Jewish uprising in German-occupied Europe."[147] In an interview, Seidler emphasized that the goal is to "reach people worldwide, to understand that this [significant Jewish uprising] took place..." The actions of the campaign align with the purpose of the Jewish individuals who took part in the uprising, because they wanted future generations to "know the truth" about the ghetto and to avoid the common antisemitic narrative of Jewish passivity during the Holocaust.[148] As a result of the campaign each year, more people are 'learning the truth' and becoming increasingly aware of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, showing the effectiveness of the program's efforts. To gauge this recognition of the campaign, the museum staff polls individuals in Poland, asking: "Have you heard of the socio-educational 'Daffodil Campaign' organised on the anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw

[145] Written in a letter from Rebecca Schaeffer-Moldovan, April 7, 2021.
[146] Interview of Seidler by Labovitz, March 5, 2021.
[147] "The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Campaign," POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed April 28, 2021, https://polin.pl/en/Warsawghettouprising; Email correspondence with Bojańczyk, March 3, 2021.
[148] Interview of Seidler by Labovitz, March 5, 2021.

Ghetto Uprising?" At the start of the campaign, the affirmative responses were only thirty-five percent; in four years, the affirmative responses jumped to over ninety percent.[149] The Warsaw Ghetto Jews feared they would have submissively "fallen into oblivion" if they had not done something to stand up against the Nazis; through the efforts of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Campaign and the POLIN Museum, their stories are still being told and honored.[150]

In contrast to the function of German photographs in the Holocaust Gallery, the coordinators of the campaign chose to *avoid* using German materials as much as possible in their resources, which demonstrates another way in which public memory can be crafted. As a part of the campaign, the museum staff created an educational film called "There was no hope" that uses historic documentation and oral histories to explain the uprising. Parts of the film were largely animated, which Bojańczyk explained was because, "as you probably know, most of films and photographs from the ghetto were taken by Nazi Germany and we do not want use those materials."[151] By refusing to use the German photographs, the museum campaign elects to disregard the negative portrayal of the Jewish fighters in the ghetto, which emphasizes the campaign's role of commemoration. Rather than providing both the German propaganda and Jewish context like in the exhibition, the campaign educates and commemorates solely from the Jewish perspective.

Both students and teachers are intended to learn from the educational programing associated with the campaign. The museum promotes the Young Leaders Program in which students are encouraged "to learn about [the young Jewish uprisers] and to share their story with

[149] Email correspondence with Bojańczyk, March 3, 2021.
[150] Interview of Edelman in "There was no hope," 19:42.
[151] Email correspondence with Bojańczyk, March 3, 2021.

[modern] generations."[152] With this program, students work with educators to participate in various activities that they host in their schools, such as hanging posters on the school campus, giving speeches to student bodies, making paper daffodils and handing them out, or holding moments of silence.[153] In addition to learning about the basic information of the notable historic event, Seidler emphasized that "students learning about the uprising through the campaign [and the associated programming] should also take away the power in using their voices," which is supported by the actions of the Jewish fighters in the ghetto.[154] The Jews who engaged in the uprising decided to stand up for themselves and show they "were no longer silent and submissive."[155] Teachers are taught through workshops on "how to teach this education aspect of the holocaust."[156] What the museum emphasizes in the workshops is how through the sadness and the violence of the uprising, "[the Jews in the ghetto] arose for dignity, they would not bow their knee to the Nazis."[157] In both of these lessons, important concepts are covered about the historical impact of the event; the take-away focuses on the achievements of the Jews in the ghetto and the ways in which they should be commemorated. Additional educational resources for the campaign available online include films, storytelling, presentations, lectures, debates, concerts, etc. [158] In addition to raising awareness of the uprising, they are effective in combating the stereotype of Jewish passivity during the Holocaust and prove "to be a success in changing

[152] "Young Leaders Program," POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed May 13, 2021, https://www.polin.pl/en/young-leaders-program
[153] "Young Leaders Program," POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed May 13, 2021.
[154] Interview of Seidler by Labovitz, March 5, 2021.
[155] Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, 184.
[156] Interview of Seidler by Labovitz, March 5, 2021.
[157] Interview of Seidler by Labovitz, March 5, 2021.
[158] "Educational Resources," POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed April 28, 2021, https://www.polin.pl/en/educational-resources

young people's perceptions of the Jewish Uprising – now considered by many an important event in Polish history."[159]

The museum's online and in person resources act as a supplementary tool for learning from the POLIN exhibitions.[160] Within the museum building, there is an educational center and a resource center. The museum helps to shape public memory beyond their exhibitions by directly engaging with the public through these additional features. In 2019 alone, the POLIN resource center had almost 4,000 visitors in 2019 and answered hundreds of more inquiries over email.[161] The virtual resources available from the museum website include access to information about each part of the gallery, a virtual museum tour, and links to the museum's educational film. Beyond the POLIN website, the museum refers visitors to the following resources: a website portal referred to as the Virtual Shtetl, functioning as an encyclopedia of information compiled by the POLIN Museum staff, the Polish Righteous portal, which provides stories of Polish heroism during the Holocaust, and the Central Judaica Database, where thousands of items from the museum collection are available.[162] With the information provided online, they are able to expand their reach beyond those in Poland alone, thereby helping to shape the historical understanding of life in the Warsaw Ghetto on an international scale.

With the impressive reach of the international campaign, having more than 2.86 million participants posting photos worldwide, it can be easy to forget that the museum has only been open and functioning since 2013.[163] The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews began as

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[159] Email correspondence with Bojańczyk, March 3, 2021.
[160] POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, "The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Campaign."
[161] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Making History Tangible: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw," 359; Email correspondence with Krzysztof Bielawski, March 3, 2021.
[162] Email correspondence with Bielawski, March 3, 2021; "Virtual Sztetl," POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed April 29, 20201. https://sztetl.org.pl/en; "Polish Righteous," POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed April 29, 2021, https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en; "Central Judaica Database," Central Judaica Database, accessed April 29, 2021, judaika.polin.pl
[163] Interview of Seidler by Labovitz, March 5, 2021.

an idea in the 1990s, shortly after the fall of the USSR.[164] Because the museum's beginning discussions occurred during a contentious time for the study of history with a massive portion of the world newly opening up, the Polish government and the museum staff in general seem to have battling opinions on the focus of the museum. The current government insists on maintaining Polish history as being solely the narratives of Poles who were battered by the war as a unified ethnic group themselves, distancing the history of Poles from the struggles of the Jews in the Holocaust.[165] The focus the government wants is to avoid the image of Poles as perpetrators against the Jews or bystanders watching the Jewish struggle. Based on interviews with museum staff and written work by the museum curators, those who work for POLIN do not subscribe to this viewpoint of how memory of the war should be shaped. For instance, when asked what participants in the campaign should gain from engaging with the program, Bojańczyk emphasized: "Through this campaign, we also wish [for people to be] aware that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is a part of Polish history."[166] Furthermore, Krzysztof Bielawski, a POLIN resource center employee, reiterated this focus: "By promoting the ideas of openness, tolerance and truth, POLIN Museum contributes to the mutual understanding and respect among Poles and Jews."[167] This partially aligns with the mindset of Ringelblum, in that he recognized the importance of maintaining positive Jewish-Polish relations, pointing out that antisemitism in Poland and the "hatred of Jews…was largely the result of the manipulative capitalist system and of ignorance, and thus Jewish historians could build vital bridges between the two

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[164] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Historical Space and Critical Museologies: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews," 150.
[165] Holc, "Critical Review Essay: POLIN, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews," 1267;
Elisabeth Wassermann, "The Polish Discourse About the Righteous Among the Nations: Between Commemoration, Education and Justification?" *Politeja* no. 52/1 *DIVERSITY AND UNITY: HOW HERITAGE BECOMES THE NARRATIVE FOR EUROPE'S FUTURE,* (2018) 134.
[166] Email correspondence with Bojańczyk, March 3, 2021.
[167] Email correspondence with Bielawski, March 3, 2021

communities."[168] Following this point, the museum uses history of Polish-Jewish relations to link the two groups and shape a new collective memory for the past. The museum staff places immense focus on pointing out how Jewish history in Poland *is* Polish history, breaking down some barriers between the two communities.

From another interpretation, the historical memory of the government, with the distinction between Jews and Poles in the Holocaust, also may align with the beliefs of the Jewish community in the ghetto. In many cases, Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto working in the underground archives preserved documents written in Yiddish over Polish, creating a distinction between the ethnic groups.[169] Additionally, the goal of the Jews in the ghetto was to document all aspects of their Jewish culture and faith for future generations to study, showing an emphasis on the way they personally identified themselves by what was most important for them to preserve. Ringelblum himself had even made note of the "second-class" treatment of Jews in Poland, making a distinction between the Jews and the Poles prior to the war.[170]

However, no matter the state of the Polish-Jewish relationship and the national conflicting interpretations of what it means to be a part of Polish history, the museum teaches about the Jewish experience in the ghetto and shares an important part of Jewish history with the public. The museum fulfills the desires of those who documented their lives to preserve for future generations. Furthermore, just as the Jews would have wanted in the ghetto, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett hopes the museum will inspire Jews in Poland in the present "to stand up and say, 'We are here.'"[171] This hope from the former curator for the social contributions of the museum

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[168] Kassow, "Documenting Catastrophe: The Ringelblum Archive and the Warsaw Ghetto," 177.
[169] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett interviewed by Garbowski in "Polin: From a 'Here You Shall Rest' Covenant to the Creation of a Polish Jewish History Museum. An interview with Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett," 13.
[170] Kassow, "Documenting Catastrophe: The Ringelblum Archive and the Warsaw Ghetto," 175.
[171] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett interviewed by Garbowski in "Polin: From a 'Here You Shall Rest' Covenant to the Creation of a Polish Jewish History Museum. An interview with Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett," 16.

directly fits with the purpose of the Jews taking part in both the Oyneg Shabes Archives and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: to be recognized and remembered.

Conclusion

The POLIN Museum is able to shape collective memory, even without being a memorial museum specifically. While the focus of memory is vital in any museum, not all museums can be called memorial museums. This specific type of museum, as defined by Paul Williams, is "dedicated to a [specific or particular] historic event commemorating mass suffering of some kind."[172] The way the POLIN Museum exhibitions and programing illicit memory without fitting the context of a 'memorial museum' is in the manner of which it tells its stories. As previously mentioned, the museum focuses on telling the story of life, rather than death. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the museum's focus in combination with its multitude of resources allow it to fit into the label of 'critical museum,' which is defined: "to contribute in a significant way to debates on the issues most fundamental to the contemporary world, empower the viewer, expose conflicts, and redress social inequalities.'"[173] The museum uses the contents of the exhibitions and especially the additional campaign to empower those who engage with the Jewish memory these two features present. While the goal of the museum is not explicitly to form a collective memory, the curatorial choices for the Holocaust gallery craft a specific narrative for visitors to follow through the exhibition, having them leave the museum with the Jewish-based perspective of the ghetto. The formation of this common perspective is enhanced by the proximity of the museum to the memorial Monument to the Ghetto Heroes and the commemorative actions of the campaign.

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[172] Bryce Lease, "Shared Histories and Commemorative Extension: Warsaw's POLIN Museum," *Theatre Journal* 69, no. 3 (September 2017): 384.
[173] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Historical Space and Critical Museologies: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews," 152.

Through the education on and commemoration of the Warsaw ghetto uprising campaign and the use of the Oyneg Shabes archives in the Holocaust Gallery exhibition, the POLIN Museum creates a collective memory that aligns with the purpose of the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett explained it best: "the Jews in the ghetto do not have the same kind of authority as museum commentary…but they do have the authority of those who lived and responded to events from their experience and perspective."[174] Therefore, with curatorial work put into using the preserved materials and shaping the Polish-Jewish centered narrative of the experience in the ghetto, the Jewish truth is effectively told. Even as they took their last breaths, the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto wrote down a valuable testament to their lives and stood up for what they believed in, with the hope that they would be remembered by future generations according to their own truth.

In discussing the necessary role historians play following the Holocaust, theologian Emil Fackenheim outlined in *Explaining Hitler* that "if you face up to it and the result is that Judaism is destroyed…then it's a posthumous victory for Hitler."[175] In addition to the elimination of all Jews, the way the Nazis could posthumously win the war was by wiping out the memory of the Jewish people. The desire for the culture to be destroyed and forgotten was an extended goal of the Nazis that the POLIN Museum continues to combat. The POLIN Museum resists by establishing a positive collective narrative for visitors of the museum and telling the Jewish truth from the Warsaw Ghetto, which was all those in the ghetto could have hoped for. Buried in the archives is an extension to the passage written by David Graber, which discusses the general purpose for the archives. Even though the Jews would not live to see the archives be unearthed,

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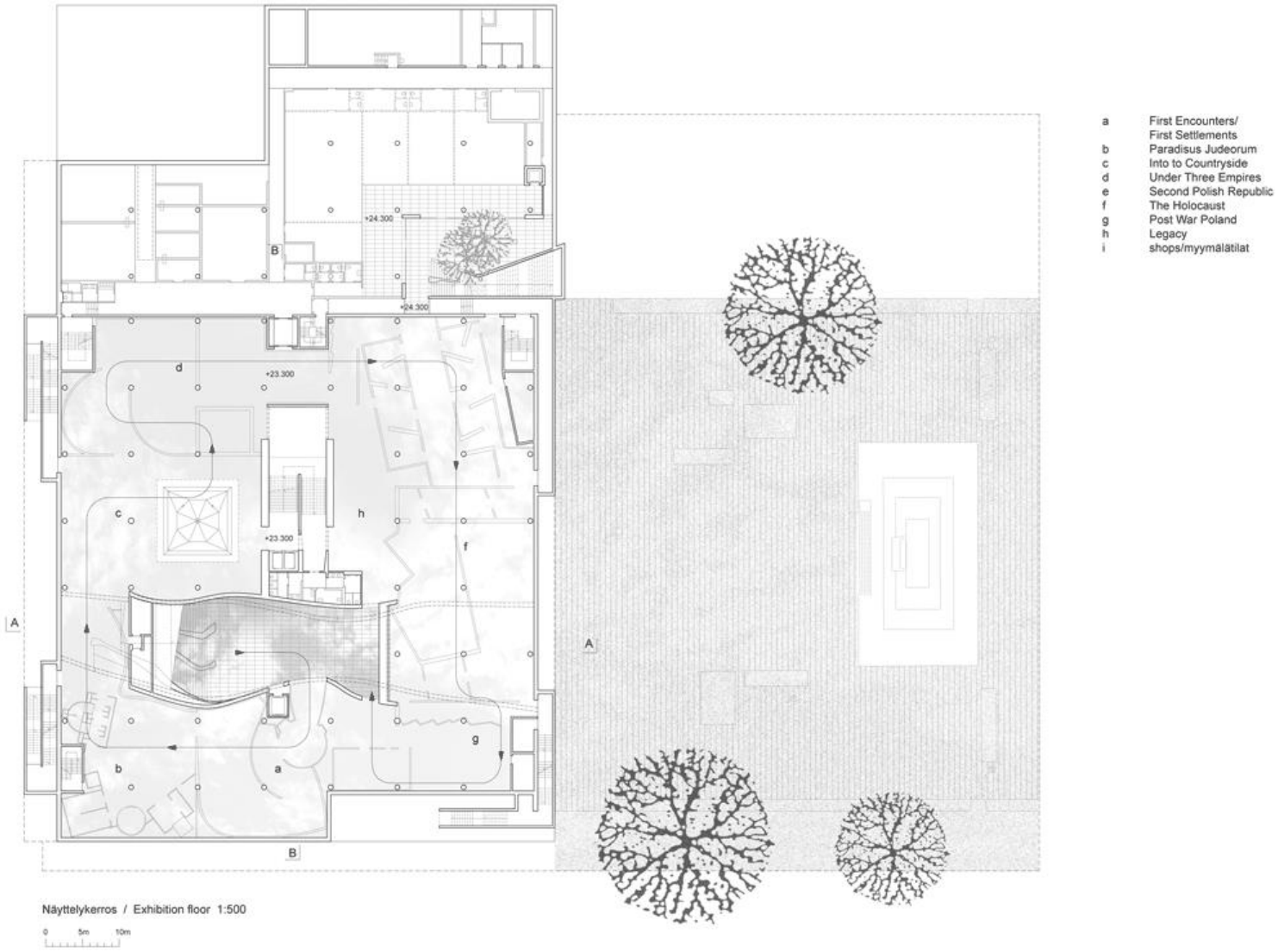
[174] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Historical Space and Critical Museologies: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews," 155.
[175] Quote from Emil Fackenheim in Ron Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil*, (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 1998) 298.

Graber hoped: "May the treasure fall into good hands, may it last into better times, may it alarm and alert the world to what happened…in the twentieth century…. We may now die in peace. We fulfilled our mission. May history attest for us."[176] The POLIN Museum is fulfilling the mission of the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto by continuing to honor the lives they lived, commemorating the uprising they engaged in, and telling their stories through their own words.

[176] Quote from Graber in Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Emmanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive*, 3.

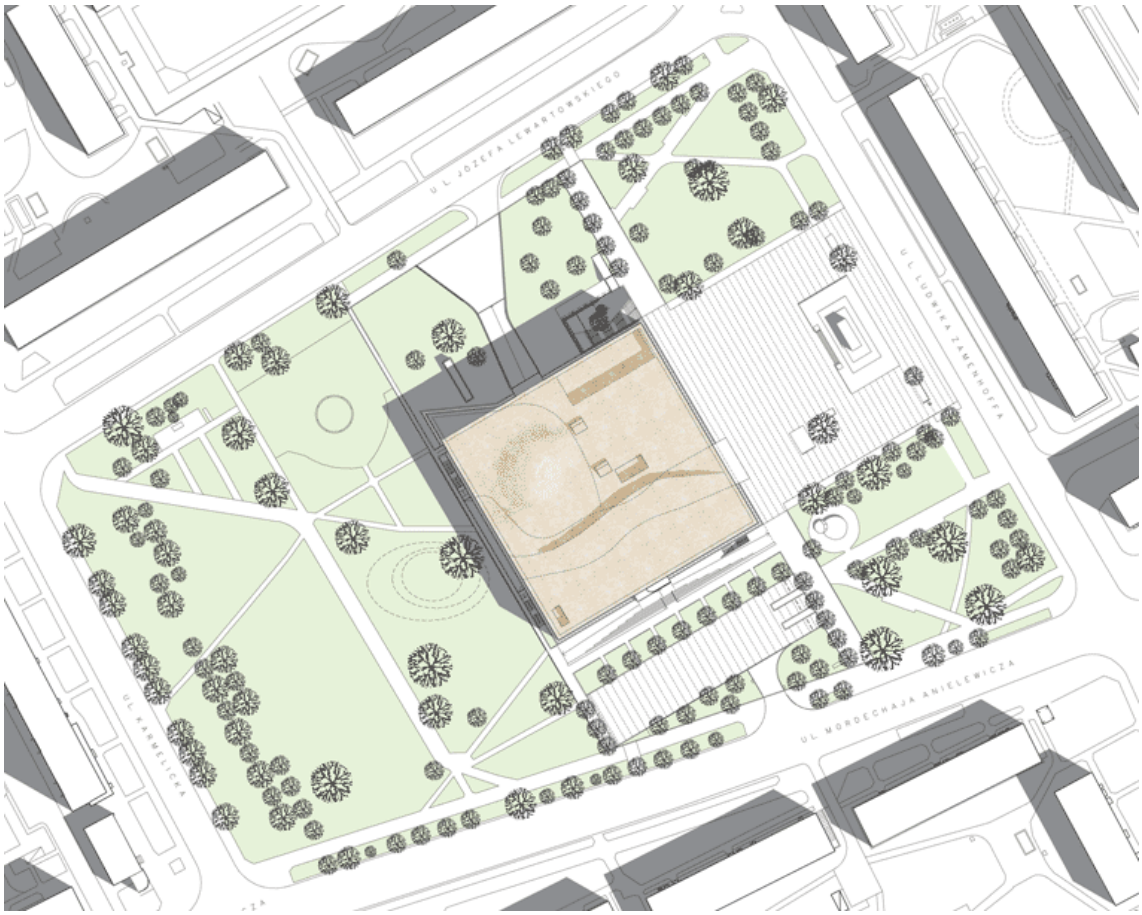
Appendix

Figure 1. *POLIN Museum floor plan, permanent exhibition*



"Museum of the History of Polish Jews by Lahdelma & Mahlamäki Architects," Dazeen, accessed April 26, 2021 https://www.dezeen.com/2013/10/03/museum-of-the-history-of-polish-jews-by-lahdelma-mahlamaki-architects/

Figure 2.1. *Image of Museum in proximity to the Monument to the Ghetto heroes*

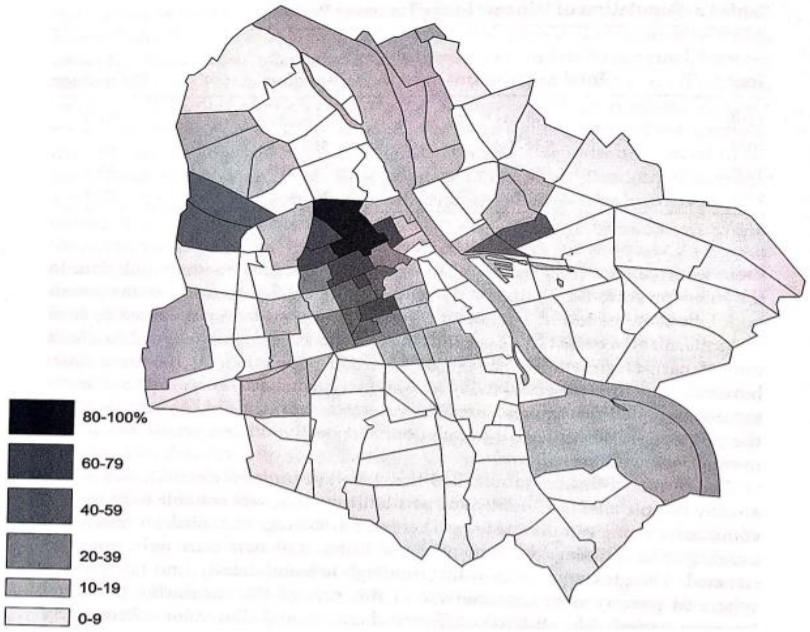


"Museum of the History of Polish Jews by Lahdelma & Mahlamäki Architects," Dazeen, accessed April 26, 2021 https://www.dezeen.com/2013/10/03/museum-of-the-history-of-polish-jews-by-lahdelma-mahlamaki-architects/

Figure 2.2. *Photograph with the front of the museum and the Monument to the Ghetto heroes*

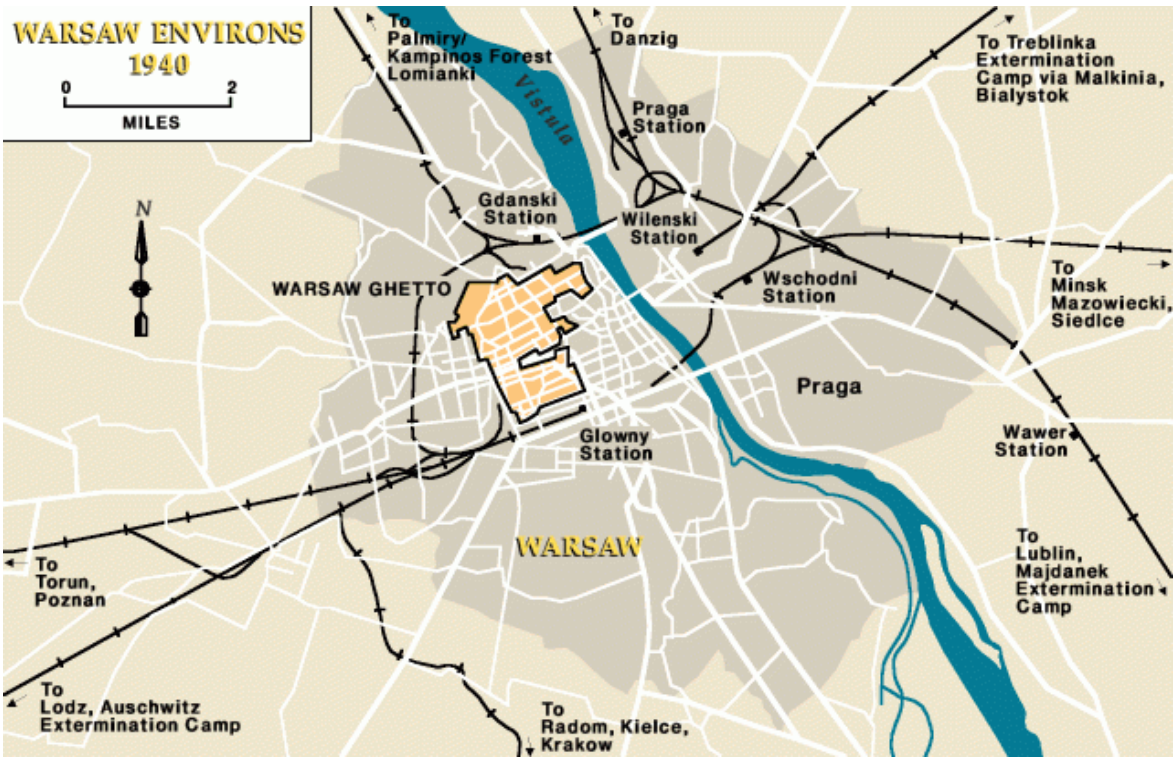
"POLIN Museum in your Home," POLIN Polish Righteous, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed April 29, 2021, https://sprawiedliwi.org.pl/en/news/polin-museum-your-home

Figure 3.1. *Distribution of Jews in Warsaw – greatest concentration in north-west Muranów neighborhood*



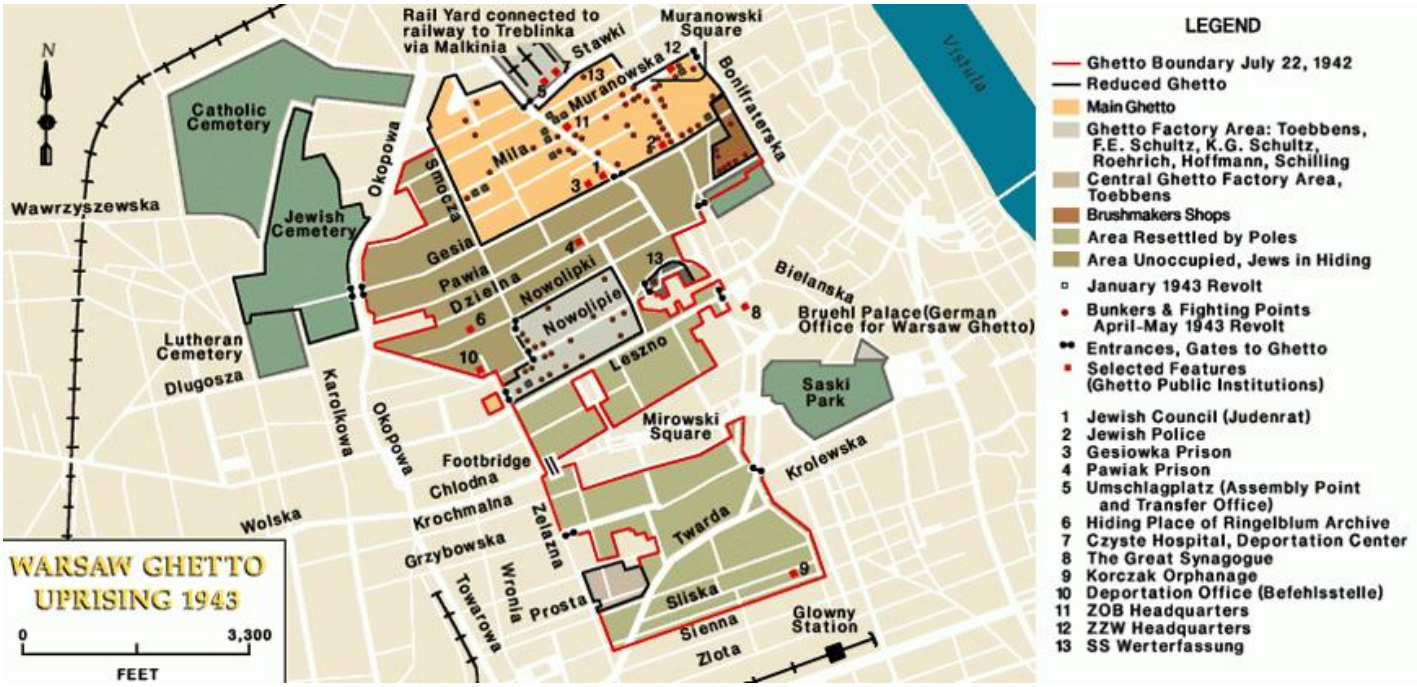
Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009) 16.

Figure 3.2. *Warsaw Ghetto boundary, 1940*



"Warsaw: Maps," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed April 29, 2021. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/gallery/warsaw-maps

Figure 4. *Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1943*



"Warsaw: Maps," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed April 29, 2021. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/gallery/warsaw-maps

Figure 5.1. *The Holocaust Gallery, perspective 1* (Ringelblum documents featured to the left, Czerniakow documents featured on the right)

"Holocaust (1939-1945)," POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed April 28, 2021, https://www.polin.pl/en/wystawy-wystawa-glowna-galerie/holocaust

Figure 5.2. *Taken of the Holocaust Gallery of the POLIN Museum, perspective 2*

"Holocaust (1939-1945)," POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed April 28, 2021, https://www.polin.pl/en/wystawy-wystawa-glowna-galerie/holocaust

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