

From Ringelblum's Diary: As the Ghetto is Sealed Off, Jews and Poles Remain in Contact

June, 1942

The Germans are doing everything under the sun to cleave a rift as deep as possible between the Jewish and the Polish populations. They have erected walls covered with glass splinters and barbed wire, day by day they are poisoning the minds of the Polish people by gutter papers, like the "Nowy Kurier Warszawski" [New Warsaw Courier], they are pouring hell fire out of the loud-speakers, or "barkers", as the Jews call them,¹ the number of telephones in the Ghetto is diminishing, only few persons are granted permits to cross to the other side; and yet, ties between Jews and Poles still exist.²

¹ The main task of the Germans' newspapers in Polish was spreading anti-Semitic venom among the Polish population. Parallel to the Germans' mouthpieces the anti-Semitic Polish underground press did not cease to incite the people against Jews. In addition to the press, the radio (called the "barker") stimulated Jew-baiting, pointing to the wrongs that Jews brought onto the whole of Europe, calling them warmongers, parasites, etc.

²First of all, the close economic relations between the Ghetto and the "Aryan" side must be indicated. Jewish manufacturers and artisans obtained raw materials illegally, having them smuggled from the Aryan side. The contact of the Ghetto with the outside world was so extensive that various raw materials, which would appear from time to time at the Aryan side, were directly transmitted to the Ghetto to be processed there. At times production in the Ghetto reached an enormous volume. Export from the Ghetto was mostly carried out again by means of smuggling, the finished products being sold to Gentile wholesalers on the Polish side. Back to the Ghetto was smuggled the money earned and also goods bought for this money. Statistics given by Czerniakow in his diary show that while the legal import into the Ghetto amounted to 2 million zlotys in December, 1941, the smuggled import reached the value of 80 million. Export from the Ghetto was mostly carried out by smuggling; it made up to a certain extent for the constant lack in foodstuffs. Thus, if Warsaw Jews had to subsist on the bread rations allotted to them officially, there would remain no trace of Jewish population one year after the establishment of the Ghetto. It would be starved to death. It must be added that, after having been deprived of their sources of livelihood with the establishment of the Ghetto, a great number of Jews continued to subsist for a long time by selling their property. The main articles of barter trade with the Poles were furniture, clothes, shoes, and also jewelry. According to the consumption poll in Warsaw Ghetto, carried out by the members of the

Jewish music, which has been banned from Aryan coffee-houses and from the radio, is becoming again a bond between Jews and Christians. The other day I heard of one such place of contact between the Ghetto and the Aryan side. At 3 o'clock every Sunday a Jewish symphony orchestra meets at the street crossing of Pańska and Zhelazna and they play next to the barbed wire fence which divides the Ghetto from the other side. Hundreds and hundreds of Aryans listen to the music; they go away after each half-hour, leaving the place free for a new crowd of Poles who come to listen to the forbidden music. A Polish policeman collects money from the listeners and gives them to a Jewish policeman, who in his turn hands them over to the orchestra. This way it goes on all through the afternoon and until the curfew hour, new crowds of Christians coming again and again to listen to Jewish music.

The same happens also at other places, wherever Jews and Christians may come into contact. So, for example, a group of musicians come every evening near the Hospital of St. Sophia to entertain sick prisoners. Music does not recognize any barriers of prohibitions. Nor does it know any differences in race and religion. It binds again the two people who were violently sundered apart. It is a symbol of the indestructible unity of the Polish and Jewish fate.³

Source: Kermish, Joseph (Ed.), "Emmanuel Ringelblum's Notes, Hitherto Unpublished", *Yad Vashem Studies VII*, Jerusalem 1968, p.175-176.

Underground Archives of the Ghetto, clothes and furniture to a value of 20 million zlotys were sold each month in the autumn of 1941.

³ The orchestra used to appear also in the Ghetto streets. There is, for example, an entry in Czerniakow's diary about the orchestra meeting next to Pinkert's office (funeral service) on June 20, 1941, where it "played some dancing tunes".