

## Barasz, Efraim

(1892--1943), Chairman of the *Judenrat* in the Bialystok Ghetto of northeast Poland.

Barasz, a long-time Zionist, moved to Bialystok in 1934. From that time on, he was very active in the city's Jewish affairs, serving as the executive director of the Jewish community. After the Germans occupied Bialystok in June 1941, they named Rabbi Gedaliah Rosenmann chairman of the *Judenrat*. However, it was actually Barasz, acting as Rosenmann's deputy, who ran the council. A month later he officially took over the job.

In the fall of 1942 the Nazis began liquidating the other Ghettos in the region and deporting the Jews to extermination camps. Barasz knew what was happening to Jews all around Bialystok, and he thought that the only way the Jews in his ghetto could avoid the same fate would be to become indispensable to the Germans as productive laborers. Thus, he did all he could to create industrial jobs for the inhabitants of the ghetto. He also cooperated with the Germans in the deportation of February 1943, in which 9,000--10,000 "nonproductive"

Jews were taken away. At the same time, Barasz was in close contact with the ghetto's underground and cooperated with Mordechai Tenenbaum, who later became the head of Bialystok's Jewish Fighting Organization (*Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, ZOB) and led the ghetto's uprising. Barasz helped the resistance by funding the manufacture of weapons. However, soon before the ghetto uprising, Barasz and the underground broke off relations.

The Germans began the final liquidation of the Bialystok Ghetto on August 16, 1943 with large-scale deportations. This led to an uprising in the ghetto, which was put down by the Germans after five days of fighting. Between August 21 and 27, 25,000 Jews were deported to Treblinka. Several hundred Jews, including Barasz and other *Judenrat* members, were separated from the deportees and put into a small ghetto. In September these Jews were transferred to Majdanek. From there, the last surviving Jews from Bialystok were sent to Poniatowa, where they were exterminated during the Erntefest operation of November 1943. Exact details of Barasz's death are not known.

