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Jewish social welfare institutions and facilities in the General Government from 1939 to 1944. A preliminary study*

Zarys treści: Artykuł stanowi zarys działalności całego sektora opieki społecznej dla Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie, która była realizowana przez dwie centralne organizacje: American Joint Distribution Committee i Żydowską Samopomoc Społeczną (później pn. Jüdische Unterstützungstelle) oraz sieć lokalnych komitetów pomocy i wydziałów opieki społecznej rad żydowskich. Omówiono system organizacyjny żydowskiej opieki społecznej i jego zmiany w czasie, zarówno na poziomie centralnym, jak lokalnym. Wymienione zostały wszystkie źródła, z których instytucje opiekuńcze czerpały środki na swoją działalność, w tym dary zagranicznych organizacji humanitarnych, dotacje rządu GG i samorządów oraz rodzaje wewnętrznych podatków i obciążeń lokalnych społeczności żydowskich. W trzeciej części opisano kierunki działań opiekuńczych, takie jak rozdawnictwo żywności, odzieży, leków, opału, tworzenie kuchni ludowych, ambulatoriów, szpitali, świetlic dla dzieci, domów sierot itd. oraz specjalną pomoc dla przesiedleńców. Artykuł jest próbą wypełnienia luki w historiografii okresu okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce, w której brakuje monograficznych rozpraw dotyczących życia społecznego Żydów przed Zagładą.

Overview: The article deals with the activities of the entire Jewish social welfare sector in the General Government, which was supervised by two central organisations: the American Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Social Self-Help Organisation (Jüdische Soziale Selbsthilfe, later renamed Jüdische Unterstützungstelle), as well as a network of local relief committees and social welfare departments in Jewish councils. First, the organisation of the Jewish social welfare system and its changes over time, both on the central and local level, have been discussed. Second, the sources from which welfare institutions derived their resources, including gifts of foreign humanitarian organisations, grants of the GG administration and local authorities, as well as internal taxes and charges levied on local communities, have been listed. The third section of the article describes the areas of welfare activities, such as distribution of food, clothing, medicines and fuel, establishment of soup kitchens (meal centres), first aid stations, hospitals, children dayrooms, orphanages etc. and special aid for the displaced. The article attempts to fill a gap in the historiography of Poland under the German occupation, as no monographs concerning the social life of the Jews prior to the Holocaust exist.

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Słowa kluczowe: II wojna światowa, Polska w II wojnie światowej, okupacja niemiecka Polski, Holokaust, Generalne Gubernatorstwo, opieka społeczna, Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna, American Joint Distribution Committee, rada żydowska, samopomoc, getta w Polsce

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The Jewish social welfare system that arose and grew in the General Government under the German occupation presents a peculiar paradox. The occupation authorities not only permitted such activities but supported them financially. For the Jewish population, deprived of all rights, oppressed by property seizures, forced to work in inhuman conditions and subjected to increasingly severe regulations, social welfare was a beacon of solidarity, support and empathy. Moreover, the two leading welfare organisations, the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) and Jewish Social Self-Help (JSS, Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna), developed a dense network of outlets in almost all GG Jewish population centres. Accordingly, they were the only central Jewish institutions in the General Government whose boards had a general overview of the situation and conditions of the Jewish population in German-occupied lands.

This article attempts to recreate this comprehensive insight by dealing with the fate of the Jews through the lenses of social welfare institutions. The AJDC offices in Warsaw and Kraków and the JSS Board in Kraków received thousands of letters from large and small GG towns describing how social welfare was provided and asking for aid. These documents have come down to us mostly extant. Found therein is information on social welfare, its conditions, organisation and issues, lending us a glimpse into the social life of the Jews just prior to the Holocaust. To describe it at length would go beyond the limits of a single article. I would like, however, to make a preliminary sketch of Jewish social welfare in the GG in three main areas. First, how was Jewish social welfare organised? How did central organisations, such as AJDC and JSS, operate? How much did they affect welfare activities locally given the limited possibilities of communication and supervision? Can this be treated as a social welfare system, or rather a set of separately operating entities? The second area is the financing of social welfare. What were its sources? How did they change over time? How was external aid divided among localities? What was the relationship between local and external sources? The third, and most important, issue is: what did the welfare organisations exactly deal with? What could they offer to the impoverished Jewish population? What activities were attempted? What difficulties had to be overcome?

The study is limited solely to the General Government, as established in central Poland by Hitler's decree of 26 October 1939. The GG was divided into four districts: Warsaw, Kraków, Lublin, and Radom. The territory's capital was Kraków

and it was there that the central offices of Jewish aid organisations resided (although an office of AJDC operated in Warsaw until the end of 1940). On 1 August 1941, as the Germans seized territories formerly under Soviet occupation, the GG was expanded by adding Galicia as the fifth district. Social welfare structures also began to be established there, though in very peculiar conditions. Generally, the history of Jewish social welfare in the GG ends with the dissolution of Jewish Social Self-Help by the German GG administration, which formally took place on 29 July 1942 and actually a few weeks later. This happened a few months after the launching of Operation Reinhardt, the mass extermination of Jewish GG population. JSS committees and local offices disappeared one after another as the central office lost contact with them. While on 16 October 1942 the authorities established the Jüdische Unterstützungstelle, an organisation similar to the JSS (the official Polish name was Centrala Pomocy dla Żydów w GG – the Jews Aid Agency in the General Government, however the German abbreviation JUS is used), they suppressed it on 1 December, only to permit it again in March 1943. Yet the JUS failed to establish a network of committees, even in camps and residual ghettos. The agency was in charge of distributing foreign aid among inmates of Jewish labour camps. Even though the JUS will be discussed in the article as well, my research has generally focused on the period from the outbreak of the war in September 1939 to the suppression of the JSS in the autumn of 1942.

An immense number of document files on this topic has been preserved. Social welfare among Jews was the purview of three kinds of institutions: Jewish councils (Judenräte), the Polish branch of the American Joint Distribution Committee and a network of Jewish Social Self-Help committees and branches. While only few Jewish council collections have been preserved (Warsaw, Kraków, Lublin, Częstochowa, Piotrków Trybunalski and fragments from minor Judenräte),¹ the 1939–1941 AJDC documentation is considerable,² and the 1940–1944 JSS

¹ State Archive (SA) in Warsaw, Der Obmann des Judenrates 1940–1942, fonds no. 483; SA in Lublin, Jewish councils in the Lublin province, fonds no. 618; the Jewish council in Lublin 1939–1942, fonds no. 891; Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute (JHI), the Jewish Council in Kraków, fonds no. 218; the council of Jewish elders in Częstochowa 1939–1942, fonds no. 213; SA in Piotrków Trybunalski, The Piotrków Trybunalski commissioner and municipal board 1939–1945, fonds no. 9; SA in Częstochowa, Częstochowa City Chief, fonds no. 15; the State Archive (SA) in Kraków; former German records, fonds no. 1576, file 75, the Jewish council in Krzeszowice; JHI, the Falenica Jewish council, fonds no. 214; the council of Jewish elders in Kielce, fonds no. 274, the Jewish council in Molidborzyce, fonds no. 256, the Jewish council in Staszów, fonds no. 222, the Jewish council in Zbaraż, fonds no. 277, the Jewish council in Włoszczowa, fonds no. 223, the Lwów file, fonds no. 229. Information on the place where these records were stored was found in the guide authored by Alina Skibińska, *Źródła do badań nad zagładą Żydów na okupowanych ziemiach polskich. Przewodnik archiwalno-bibliograficzny*, Warszawa, 2007.

² JHI, American Joint Distribution Committee 1939–1941, fonds no. 210. Less useful, but still important, was the query made in the New York AJDC Archive (AAJDC), New York Office 1933–1944 and Saly Mayer Collections.

documentation very large.³ According to my research, Jewish social welfare agencies operated in almost 600 localities. My query notes have been collected in a special database which is available online.⁴ It includes detailed information about specific local organizations (such as relief committees, JSS branches, Judenräte, *landsmanschafts*, self-help groups) and welfare facilities (soup kitchens, orphanages, first aid stations, hospitals, children dayrooms), together with particulars on their operation, employees, sources of financing and issues encountered, as well as a detailed description of the source database. This article is meant to be general and serve as an introduction to the challenges faced by Jewish social welfare in the GG. I hope that it will allow those researching more detailed issues to put their own results in a wider perspective.⁵

Part I – The Jewish social welfare structures in the General Government

To understand the form taken by the Jewish social welfare system in the General Government, we must go back to pre-war times. As Polish citizens, Jews were entitled to state social welfare regulated by the 1923 Social Welfare Act. The Polish state was obliged to provide for the life needs of those who “cannot do so temporarily or permanently using their own material resources or the work of their hands.” Social welfare was managed directly by boards of urban and rural communes in case of “open” (non-institutional) welfare and boards of urban communes and

³ JSS records are found in numerous archives: JHI, Jewish Social Self-Help 1940–1944, fonds no. 211, and Jewish Social Self-Help – Annex, fonds no. 211A; SA in Kraków, Division II, Jewish Social Self-Help, fonds 2125; SA in Kraków, Division III, former German records, fonds no. 1576, file 63; the Jagiellonian Library, Manuscript collection, Rkp. Przyb. 34-49/97; 94-100/01, 195-199/57; National Library of Israel in Jerusalem (NLI), Archive Department, Michael Weichert Archive, fonds 371.11; the Yad Vashem Archive in Jerusalem (AYV), Michael Weichert Collection, fonds O.21.

⁴ Available at the Digital Repository of Scientific Institutes website at: <http://rcin.org.pl/dlibra/publication?id=84280&from=&dirids=1&tab=1&lp=10&QI=>. While working on the article, I have not used all the archival fonds listed above, however any data found therein have been added to the database.

⁵ Literature concerning specific ghettos and regions, in which social welfare is discussed, includes among others B. Engelking, “Życie codzienne Żydów w miasteczkach dystryktu warszawskiego”, in: *Provincia noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, eds. B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka, Warszawa, 2007, pp. 119–221; B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, ed. 2, Warszawa, 2013; A. Kopciowski, *Zagłada Żydów w Zamościu*, Lublin, 2005; A. Löw, M. Roth, *Krakowscy Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945*, transl. E. Kowynia, Kraków, 2014; S. Piątkowski, *Dni życia, dni śmierci. Ludność żydowska w Radomiu w latach 1918–1950*, Warszawa, 2006; T. Radzik, *Lubelska dzielnica zamknięta*, Lublin, 1999; E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim w latach 1939–1945*, Rzeszów, 2014; R. Sakowska, *Ludzie z dzielnicy zamkniętej. Z dziejów Żydów w Warszawie w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej październik 1939 – marzec 1943*, ed. 2, Warszawa, 1993.

counties in case of “closed” (institutional) welfare. Provincial boards were supposed to provide financial support to counties and cities and run larger institutions. Social welfare was financed from the state and local authority budgets.⁶ Additionally, as a result of the 1933 Social Insurance Act that consolidated various social insurance systems, mandatory insurance was extended to all hired workers and civil servants. The Social Security Agency, established next year, provided them with benefits due to retirement and consequences of industrial accidents and occupational illnesses. Health insurance was provided by separate Social Insurance Funds to which employers contributed on a voluntary basis.⁷

Even though the state social welfare system was consolidated, the voluntary aid sector, consisting of charitable associations and foundations, often established by religious bodies, continued to operate. Parallel to the charitable activities of Catholic orders or associations, such as Caritas, there existed a system of voluntary social welfare for the Jewish population. On one hand, it was rooted in Jewish communities. Pursuant to a decree of the Chief of State of 7 February 1919, confirmed in 1927 by the President, Jewish communities were primarily religious organisations but also had the right to collect taxes and deal with social, philanthropic and cultural issues. According to calculations made by Żebrowski and Borzymińska, around 1930 the percentage of the community budget spent on social welfare was around 17.4%, ranging from 1–2% in small towns to 20% in large cities.⁸ In the hinterlands, this share was therefore far from considerable. Additionally, the communities were associated with traditional relief societies supported by member contributions, such as Bet Lechem that distributed bread among the poor, Bikur Cholim whose members visited the sick, Linas ha-Tzedek for doctors and medical personnel who provided medical care, Gemilas Chesed that granted loans and Tomchei Aniiim that helped the impoverished.

The other voluntary aid sector consisted of secular welfare organisations whose programme severed ties with traditional philanthropy and Jewish communities. It is no accident that the origins of the most important of these, operating on a nationwide scale, was tied to the activities of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. This American charitable organisation was founded in 1914 and became active in Poland while World War I was still ongoing.⁹ In 1919–1921, AJDC was recognised by the Polish authorities and undertook intensive activity

⁶ H. Konopka-Bunsch, *Historia opieki społecznej w Polsce*, w: *Pomoc społeczna w Polsce*, vol. 2, Warszawa, 1985, pp. 30–36.

⁷ I. Jędrasik-Jankowska, “Geneza, rozwój i stan ubezpieczenia społecznego w Polsce”, in: *Ubezpieczenia społeczne w procesie zmian. 80 lat Zakładu Ubezpieczeń Społecznych*, eds. K.W. Frieske, E. Przychodaj, Warszawa, 2014, p. 54.

⁸ R. Żebrowski, Z. Borzymińska, *Po-lin. Kultura Żydów polskich w XX wieku*, Warszawa, 1993, pp. 53, 60.

⁹ Y. Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper. A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929–1939*, Philadelphia, 1974, pp. 7–10.

in the areas of immediate relief, providing meals, healthcare, child care and constructive aid. Constructive aid consisted in subsidising Jewish cooperatives, granting low-interest loans to entrepreneurs, running vocational courses and financing the reconstruction of destroyed buildings. The last activity was managed by the Reconstruction Department, an AJDC agency that survived the longest, being suppressed only in 1928.¹⁰ Before that, AJDC had already transferred its welfare activities to local organisations. 1921 saw the establishment of the Jewish Health Protection Society (JHPS; *Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia Ludności Żydowskiej w Polsce*) whose objectives included disease prevention, hygienic education and running a network of clinics and analytic laboratories. Immediately prior to WW2, the JHPS maintained 368 facilities in 72 localities of central and eastern Poland.¹¹ In 1924, AJDC managed to unify seven Jewish child care organisations into the Central Union of Associations for Jewish Orphan Care (*Związek Towarzystw Opieki nad Sierotami i Dziećmi Opuszczonymi CENTOS*) whose headquarters were located in Warsaw. CENTOS branches operated in Warsaw, Kraków, Lwów, Białystok, Wilno, Pińsk and Równe, but the association was also active in more than 200 localities and ran more than 200 orphanages and boarding houses, providing meals and organising summer and winter camps.¹² Running vocational courses was left to the Crafts Development Organisation (ORT; *Organizacja Rozwoju Twórczości*), while cash loan funds for entrepreneurs were consolidated into the Central Interest-Free Loan Fund (CeKaBe; *Centrala Kas Pożyczek Bezprocentowych*) in 1926. CeKaBe, with 870 facilities all over Poland, provided loans to more than 100,000 people.¹³ These organizations were continually subsidised by AJDC and remained in touch with the AJDC central office in Warsaw, whose staff was cut down to a dozen in 1924. The Polish AJDC was then managed by Icchak Giterman, Dawid Guzik and Lejb Neustadt, with Icchak Bornstein as the secretary. AJDC also subsidised numerous other minor associations and welfare facilities.

Thus, in the inter-war period, social welfare for Jews was provided firstly by the state and local authorities, secondly by Jewish communities and traditional religious associations, and thirdly by secular welfare organisations. These three streams were not independent of each other, with the state subsidising welfare associations and facilities. For example, in 1937, 69.3% of the CENTOS budget came from member fees and donations, 13% from municipal board subsidies, 4.7% from government grants and 13% from AJDC.¹⁴ Therefore, the

¹⁰ M. Urynowicz, *Adam Czerniaków 1880–1942. Prezes getta warszawskiego*, Warszawa, 2009, pp. 74–75. Adam Czerniaków was employed in the Reconstruction Department.

¹¹ I. Einhorn, *Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia Ludności Żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1921–1950*, Toruń, 2008, pp. 72–78.

¹² JHI, AJDC, 210/44, Report of 11 March 1940 on CENTOS activities, fol. 7.

¹³ *Polski słownik judaistyczny*, vol. 1, eds. Z. Borzymińska, R. Żebrowski, Warszawa, 2003, pp. 255–256.

¹⁴ AAJDC, New York Office 1933–1944, fond 822, CENTOS. Child Care Work in Poland 1937–1938, fol. 5.

government and local authorities supported Jewish welfare organisations on a par with AJDC.

It is because of these considerations that the outbreak of the war and the anti-Jewish regulations had so dramatic an outcome. Already under the military administration in October 1939, Jews were deprived of the right to use state and local social welfare. A regulation to this effect published on 15 October in Warsaw is known, however state welfare in fact ceased to exist throughout the occupied territories.¹⁵ The Governor-General regulations of 9, 16 and 20 December 1939 stripped Jews of the right to collect pensions, unemployment benefits and war veteran allowances.¹⁶ The needy thus had to fall back on Jewish communities and associations. The capacity for action in both sectors was, however, limited due to financial reasons. The communities derived their income mainly from two sources: community tax and cult-related fees, principally ritual slaughter fees. Ritual slaughter was already prohibited on 26 October 1939, while tax collection had to be restricted due to the flight of many taxpayers, damage of property due to war, growing impoverishment and Jewish enterprises (and later real estate) being put under compulsory administration (Treuhandstelle).¹⁷ The associations, which prior to the war relied mostly on member fees and local authority subsidies, were also deprived of their financial backbone, nor could they use their savings as their bank accounts were frozen on 20 November 1939.¹⁸

In these circumstances, the only organisation capable of acting was AJDC. As an American organisation, registered in a neutral country, it had the right to maintain its own accounts. This was very important, as the New York central office transferred large amounts to Poland even before the war broke out.¹⁹ For this reason, AJDC and related associations could continue normal operations for a few months, and even extend their activities. The best results were produced in Warsaw, where AJDC initiated the unification of Jewish organisations into the Coordination Commission of Welfare and Social Organisations (Komisja Koordynacyjna Organizacji Opiekuńczych i Społecznych).²⁰ Not just CENTOS and TOZ but also many minor organisations thus obtained an opportunity to act and, equally importantly, employ former and new activists, recruiting mostly from among the now-unemployed intelligentsia. The AJDC

¹⁵ T. Szarota, *U progu Zagłady. Zajścia antyżydowskie w okupowanej Europie*, Warszawa, 2000, p. 21.

¹⁶ "Dziennik Rozporządzeń Generalnego Gubernatora dla Okupowanych Polskich Obszarów" of 21 December 1939, nos. 12–13, pp. 206, 227; 15 January 1940, no. 1, p. 2.

¹⁷ J. Grabowski, "Zarząd powierniczy i nieruchomości żydowskie w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie. 'Co można skonfiskować? W zasadzie wszystko'", in: *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych 1939–1950*, eds. J. Grabowski, D. Libionka, Warszawa, 2014, pp. 73–112.

¹⁸ Cz. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce*, Poznań, 1979, p. 307.

¹⁹ AAJDC, New York Office 1933–1944, fond 800, Appropriations for Poland 1933–1942, 4.08.1942.

²⁰ B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie*, pp. 322–323.

protective umbrella allowed to maintain and rebuild CENTOS and TOZ committees in other cities.

Providing social welfare benefits was, however, mostly not the work of these associations. Even though their activities were restored, they did not regain full capacity and all of their facilities. On the other hand, there was a Jewish council (Judenrat, plural Judenräte) in every town. It was these councils that all social welfare focused on due to snowballing needs of not just the local Jewish population but mostly those fleeing or displaced from regions annexed to the Reich. The maintenance of all institutions such as hospitals, orphanages and retirement homes that had previously been financed mostly by local authorities fell on the Judenräte. The burden was enormous, so once the councils learned about AJDC resuming its activities, they sent delegates to Warsaw or mailed letters with pleas for help.²¹

Another way to make contact was an intervention of AJDC inspectors. In mid-December 1939, AJDC hired seven inspectors who visited localities inhabited by Jews and known to be seriously damaged by war or hosting large numbers of displaced people. On site, the inspectors ascertained local needs, appointed contact persons and often founded relief committees within the Judenräte.²² Later, the inspectors came solely to check local conditions, but once the Jews were prohibited to travel by rail in February 1940, they were unable to regularly tour the countryside. They served, however, as AJDC representatives for individual districts, in charge of the entire social welfare system. In mid-1940, AJDC opened its offices in the district cities of Kraków, Lublin and Radom, and in late 1940/early 1941, under pressure from the German authorities, moved its central office to Kraków.²³

AJDC was very scrupulous in supervising the subsidised organisations. Both committees and Jewish councils were required to send detailed financial settlements and lists showing the names of all beneficiaries with their personal signatures. The reports were analysed in Warsaw and explanations firmly demanded if something was amiss. From February 1940 onwards, regular report forms were introduced in which all sources of income and expenditure figures, such as quantities of all products used in meal centres, had to be listed in detail. AJDC's bureaucratic approach occasionally met with opposition, particularly if the organisation provided few (or

²¹ Działalność Centrali Jointu w Polsce w czasie 13 wojennych miesięcy (wrzesień 1939 – październik 1940). Krótki raport, in: *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 27, *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna w Warszawie 1939–1943*, eds. A. Bańkowska, M. Ferenc Piotrowska, Warszawa, 2017, pp. 375–376.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 394–395. The inspectors were: Ita Mindla Melman (areas incorporated into the Reich), Artur Reinberg (Kraków district), Izrael Falk (Radom district), Mordechaj Goldfarb and Herszko Karcz (Lublin district), Abe Żychliński and Józef Szalman (Warsaw district).

²³ I was unable to find a document establishing the branch offices, but letters sent from them and expense settlements start to appear around the middle of 1940, see for example JHI, AJDC 210/9, fol. 6, 210/374, fol. 2, 210/454, fol. 22, 210/530, fol. 115, 210/566, fol. 7.

periodically zero) grants.²⁴ The Warsaw office also sent circulars to Jews councils and relief committees with instructions on how to organise aid in various areas.²⁵

AJDC thus quickly filled the role of the central Jewish care organisation and claimed the right to supervise all activities related to social welfare. Jewish councils had no choice but to comply, for two reasons. First, during the first year of war AJDC was the sole external source of assistance, and failure to send reports or provide accurate figures could cause the grants to be revoked. Second, it was AJDC that was in charge of distributing foreign humanitarian aid among GG Jews. This included food, clothing, footwear, medicines and medical supplies.²⁶ Only AJDC was able to distribute these gifts among Jews, as it was the sole organisation with contacts over the entire GG and some areas incorporated into the Reich. In mid-March 1940, AJDC was in regular contact with 230, and on 1 May 1940 with 294 GG localities.²⁷

AJDC's position slowly began to shift in mid-1940, initially at the central level only. This was due to the establishment of Jewish Social Self-Help. From early 1940, the German administration attempted to set up a single organisation to supervise the receiving and distribution of foreign aid and manage all welfare activities in the GG. Talks to this end started in January 1940, with the Chairman of the Kraków Jewish council Marek Bieberstein and the president of the Warsaw Coordination Commission Michał Weichert being the leaders on the Jewish side. Initially, a single organisation called the Polish Central Welfare Council (Polska Rada Główna Opiekuńcza) to deal with both Jews and Poles was envisaged. The Jewish population was to be represented by Marek Bieberstein.²⁸ Eventually, however, the German authorities (the General Governor office) decided to set up three separate organisations for Poles, Jews and Ukrainians. Representatives of these three nationalities sat in the Chief Welfare Council (CWC; Naczelna Rada Opiekuńcza) that distributed foreign gifts and government grants.²⁹ On 29 May 1940, the by-laws of the CWC, Polish Central Welfare Council, Jewish Social Self-Help and Ukrainian Central Council were approved.³⁰ Accordingly, the General Governor office set up Jewish Social Self-Help as the central welfare organisation for GG Jews. According to the by-laws, other social welfare organisations had to become subsidiary to the JSS.

²⁴ For example, the Jewish council in Jasienica Rosielna wrote in January 1941: *Instead of a subsidy or some form of support it's always papers to be filled. We cannot live on these papers.* JHI, AJDC, 210/375, fol. 21.

²⁵ SA Kraków, former German records, Krzeszowice Jewish council, ref. no. 1576/75, fols. 669–670.

²⁶ Foreign aid will be discussed below. List of foreign gifts in the first half of 1940, cf. JHI, AJDC, 210/85, fols. 7–8.

²⁷ Działalność Centrali Jointu w Polsce, *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 27: *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna w Warszawie 1939–1943*, p. 395.

²⁸ B. Kroll, *Rada Główna Opiekuńcza 1939–1945*, Warszawa, 1985, p. 72.

²⁹ The JSS was represented in the CWC by Chaim Hilfstein.

³⁰ B. Kroll, *Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*, pp. 59–62.

AJDC thus lost its monopoly on distributing foreign aid. Already in June 1940, the entire batch of Red Cross supplies was handed over for distribution to Bieberstein, a move that slowed down the process considerably as the JSS has not yet established any contacts in the field.³¹ The by-laws made AJDC-affiliated associations such as TOZ and CENTOS subsidiary to the JSS Board as well, with some autonomy retained.

However it would be a mistake to say that AJDC refused to support the establishment of JSS. AJDC representatives took part in appointing the JSS board and AJDC inspectors in recruiting members of JSS local committees. It was decided that the Board would be composed solely of Warsaw and Kraków representatives. Michał Weichert, Gustaw (Gamzej) Wielikowski, Benjamin Zabłudowski and Józef Jaszński were elected to represent Warsaw, while Marek Bieberstein, Eliaz Tisch and Chaim Hilfstein were the Kraków delegates.³² The Board was finally constituted only on 3 September 1940, with Michał Weichert as the chairman; he held this post until the eventual suppression of JSS/JUS. The Board composition soon changed, as Bieberstein was arrested in September 1940. He was replaced by Marek Alten, the vice-chairman of the Jewish council in Lublin. Following the death of Benjamin Zabłudowski in January 1942, Lejb Landau from Lwów joined the Board.³³ In addition, JSS advisors to chiefs of districts were appointed. The advisors were in charge of official matters on district level, and periodically dealt with care for displaced persons and distribution of donated property. They were Marek Alten in Lublin, Gustaw Wielikowski in Warsaw, Józef Diament in Radom and Juda Zimmermann (soon replaced by Jakub Sternberg) in Kraków. AJDC inspectors were employed by the JSS in January 1941.³⁴

Supervision over JSS and its agencies was exercised by the Sub-department of Population Affairs and Social Welfare (Bevölkerungswesen und Fürsorge, BuF) at the Department of Internal Affairs of the General Governor office (since December 1940 – government of GG). This was of consequence for financing, because from this date onwards, Jewish social welfare in the GG began to be subsidised from the budget. As an agency subject to the German administration, JSS also enjoyed full legal status and was able to intervene to curtail the excesses of local authorities, including law enforcement.

Already in September 1940 the JSS Board, acting according to its by-laws, began to establish committees in county towns and cities with county rights (seats of county and city chiefs: Kreishauptmänner and Stadthauptmänner). In December, it was decided to establish JSS representations (so-called branches, in Polish:

³¹ Cf. for example the letter of the Kraków AJDC office to the Jewish council in Gorlice on 19 June 1940, JHI, AJDC, 210/344, fol. 2.

³² JHI, Diaries, 302/25, The diary of Michał Weichert, part I, pp. 76–88.

³³ E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim*, pp. 229–231.

³⁴ Letters of Józef Jaszński to the JSH Board, JHI, JSS, 211/116, fols. 9, 31.

delegatura, German: Delegatur) in smaller towns as well.³⁵ The Board was insistent that committees and branches should be composed of persons experienced in social work and, if possible, not affiliated with local Jewish councils. While Jewish councils were asked to name candidates, more faith was placed in the opinions of AJDC inspectors and associates and the own opinions of Board members who made on-site visits. Establishing a committee was, however, a complex affair. First, local relief committees, usually affiliated with Jewish councils, existed since the beginning of the war and no intention of abandoning their work. These committees and councils undertook welfare activities in agreement with the AJDC. Second, the GG office circular establishing the JSS and its committees was received by German county chiefs already in June 1940. The chiefs ordered local Jewish councils to establish JSS committees before the JSS Board took any action. The Board considered such committees self-proclaimed, refused to acknowledge them and petitioned the chiefs to revoke the appointments. This resulted in immediate clashes between members of self-proclaimed committees (actually Judenräte) and candidates appointed by JSS, as well as between the JSS Board and local German administration. The Board had to negotiate and as a result the composition of committees was not always identical to the original proposal. In the majority of cases, a compromise could be reached, but sometimes, as in Nowy Targ, the self-proclaimed committee remained unchanged.³⁶

Except for a few problematic instances, in early 1941 all city and county JSS committees had already been appointed. Branches in smaller towns emerged next. Even though this process started already in December 1940, most branches were established only in mid-1941. The Board recruited branch members almost solely based on the opinions of county committees. At the end of February 1942, 311 JSS committees and branches existed in the four original GG districts.³⁷ It should also be noted that the Board did not establish committees in some localities, instead liaising with Jewish councils.

Relations between JSS committees and branches on the one hand and Jewish councils on the other were varied. In some places, the conflict was smoothed over by including individual Jewish council members in JSS committees. Not infrequently, the JSS branch members were recruited almost entirely from the Jewish council's

³⁵ M. Weichert, *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*, typescript in Jagiellonian Library collections, Rkp. Przyb. 195/57, fol. 22.

³⁶ JHI, JSH, 211/742, fol. 71. Cf. A. Bańkowska, "W poszukiwaniu elit. Rekrutacja członków komitetów lokalnych Żydowskiej Samopomocy Społecznej w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie w latach 1940–1942", in: *Elity i przedstawiciele ludności żydowskiej podczas II wojny światowej*, eds. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, Kraków–Katowice–Warszawa, 2017, pp. 119–130; E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim*, pp. 233–239.

³⁷ NLI, Michael Weichert Archive, Ms. Var. 371.11.19, Letter of M. Weichert of 27 February 1942 to Abteilung Bevölkerungswesen und Fürsorge, listing the JSS outposts and the number of patrons, fols. 120–123.

social welfare department. In other localities, the Jewish council was relieved to immediately transfer social welfare and all of its facilities to the branch. Often, the duties were split, with the council in charge of healthcare and sanitary hygiene (hospitals, baths, first aid stations) and the JSS branch taking over soup kitchens, child care and displaced persons care by providing extra meals and financial relief. In a special circular, the JSS Board obliged Jewish councils to pass some of the collected taxes to JSS committees and branches to be used for social welfare purposes.³⁸

On 1 August 1941, a fifth district, Galicia, was added to the GG. All three national welfare organisations extended their activities to this area. In November 1941, Michał Weichert visited Lwów to appoint a JSS advisor for the Galicia district. He already had a candidate approved by the Board – the attorney Lejb Landau, a good acquaintance of his from before the war. Landau accepted the nomination but was rebuffed by the Lwów Jewish council. To mitigate the conflict, Weichert obtained the consent of the district chief office to appoint another advisor in the person of Adolf Rothfeld, the Jewish council's president. In fact, the JSS network in Galicia was organised by Landau, who also became a JSS Board member in January 1942.³⁹ Unfortunately, no documents from the Lwów JSS committee could be found. Committees and branches in Galicia were established in the spring and summer of 1942, during the first wave of deportations to the Bełżec death camp. Their existence was necessarily brief, but this does not mean that they did not widely engage in any activities.

To return to the role of AJDC: in January 1941, all JSS committees and Jewish councils were informed that JSS was taking over the entirety of social welfare in the GG, including the distribution of foreign aid and government grants. AJDC was still entitled to distribute its subsidies and supervise the distribution, but only through JSS.⁴⁰ In fact, all money transfers sent to committees and branches stated which percentage of the amount was contributed by AJDC. AJDC continued to compile its reports,⁴¹ basically, however, it was reduced to being a donor. In the second half of 1941, AJDC encountered increasing problems with receiving allowances from the New York central office, as well as in contacts with the German administration in general. Once the United States joined the war, AJDC lost all opportunity for operating legally. On 21 December 1941, the AJDC office in the GG was shut down.⁴² Weichert managed to obtain the consent of the authorities for JSS to take over the AJDC agencies and the distribution of foreign shipments.⁴³

³⁸ JHI, JSS, 211/5, Circular no. 14 of 8 January 1941, fol. 3.

³⁹ JHI, Diaries, 302/25, The diary of Michał Weichert, part I, pp. 228–243.

⁴⁰ JHI, JSS, 211/5, Circular no. 17 of 28/01/1941, fol. 21.

⁴¹ The latest reports sent to the Kraków AJDC office from regional outposts refer to the first half of 1941, JHI, AJDC, 210/23, 27.

⁴² Y. Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1939–1945*, Detroit, 1982, pp. 317–318.

⁴³ NLI, Michael Weichert Archive, 371.11.2. M. Weichert, *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*, fol. 49.

The GG administration constantly tried to unify the social welfare system, as a result not only by limiting the role of AJDC, but also by opposing associations. On 24 July 1940, by regulation of the General Governor all associations active in the GG were suppressed. Following negotiations conducted by both CWC head Adam Ronikier and Weichert, social welfare associations were granted an exemption. While they had to act in agreement with CWC/JSS, they retained their independence. In June 1941, the JSS Board mentioned in a circular that associations are to be suppressed nonetheless, their property to be taken over by JSS.⁴⁴ The suppression was a process that lasted several months. Finally, in December 1941, the JSS by-laws were amended to remove a clause on the independence of associations. CENTOS, TOZ and other minor associations became departments of the respective city or county JSS committees.

In early 1942, the situation of JSS was dramatic. Losing AJDC subsidies ruined the budget and government grants were greatly limited. In March, the GG swarmed with thousands of Jews fleeing from Germany, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and Slovakia, who required basic necessities. In the second half of March, the Board had to face news coming from the Lublin region and Galicia, where thousands of Jews were deported to parts unknown and never heard from again. As JSS tried to locate them at their new domiciles, the awareness of the Holocaust grew. The Board was in constant contact with its committees and branches, but was virtually unable to provide any grants, especially since July 1942 when the government subsidy was cut off entirely.⁴⁵

On 3 June 1942, supervision over the GG Jews, including JSS, was officially transferred to the police and SS. On 29 July, JSS was formally dissolved. Weichert did not, however, announce this in a circular, so local committees – if any had remained – were unaware of this. The Central Welfare Council was likewise dissolved on 1 September. Weichert was, however, tirelessly negotiating to retain a Jewish social welfare institution, finding an ally in the BuF. Thanks to his efforts, 16 October 1942 saw the establishment of Jüdische Unterstützungstelle – the GG Jewish Aid Centre (JUS), now officially in charge of Jewish social welfare not only in ghettos, but also in Jewish labour camps. The decision was notified to committees and branches, yet the circular returned undelivered from many localities, as Jews from large and small GG towns had already been exterminated in death camps. The existence of JUS was contrary to SS plans, so efforts were quickly taken to suppress it. This took place on 1 December 1942.⁴⁶

As related by Weichert, JUS was reactivated in 1943 due to the pressure of the International Red Cross which required a Jewish organization in the GG to

⁴⁴ JHI, JSS, 211/6, Circular no. 31 of 8 June 1941, fol. 18.

⁴⁵ Cf. JHI, JSS, 211/123, fol. 86.

⁴⁶ M. Weichert, *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*, pp. 51–55. NLI, Michael Weichert Archive, 371.11.5, 6, 8.

acknowledge the receipt of medicines, threatening to cease providing aid for German POWs. On 13 March 1943, the date when the Kraków ghetto was finally liquidated, Weichert was summoned to become the head of the JUS and draft a plan of distributing a large transport of medicines sent by the IRC. In May and June, shipments of medicines ended up in the Płaszów, Prokocim, Biechanów, Poniatowa, Trawniki and Dęblin camps. Soon afterwards, contact was made with other camps in the Kraków and Lublin districts. Much later, in November 1943, JUS obtained consent to send gifts to Jewish camps in the Radom district, and later still, in 1944, to the labour camp in Treblinka (Warsaw district) and Drohobycz (Galicia district). Until the end of its existence, JUS kept on sending gifts to 44 camps, 8 residual ghettos and 24 German enterprises employing Jews.⁴⁷

Weichert tried to contact representatives of the Jewish resistance movement, the Coordination Commission of the Jewish National Committee and Bund. However, in August 1943, the Commission took a negative stance on JUS activities and sent the opinion to the Council to Aid Jews (Żegota) and Jewish members of the National Council in London. The main charge was misleading the world's public opinion that the life conditions of the Jewish population in the GG were unchanged since Operation Reinhardt. It was also suggested that aid sent from abroad was fully appropriated by the Germans. The Coordination Commission demanded that Weichert dissolve the JUS. Delaying the reply, he did not put forth a definite refusal until March 1944. His position was condemned by the Commission and the Jewish Combat Organisation sentenced him to death. No one able to carry out the sentence could be found, however.⁴⁸

In July 1944, Weichert was made aware of the impending second suppression of the JUS. He himself and his family were to be deported to Płaszów, with the JUS property seized by the camp's commandant, Amon Göth. This did not happen, however. Luxury articles still in JUS warehouses were sold and the resulting amounts transferred to the Kraków branch of the Council to Aid Jews.⁴⁹ Some inventories were, with the consent of BuF, handed over to the Central Welfare Council that supplied Jewish camps until the end of the war.⁵⁰ Weichert survived the war by going into hiding in Kraków.⁵¹

⁴⁷ M. Weichert, *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*, pp. 58–72. NLI, Michael Weichert Archive, 371.11.1.

⁴⁸ R. Węgrzyniak, *Procesy doktora Weicherta*, Warszawa, 2017, pp. 227–239, 248–249.

⁴⁹ M. Weichert, *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*, p. 83.

⁵⁰ NLI, Michael Weichert Archive, 371.11.43, Reports of the compulsory administrator of the JUS warehouse for the CWC.

⁵¹ After the war, Weichert found himself in the dock twice on the charge of aiding the enemy. In January 1946, the Special Criminal Court in Kraków cleared him of all charges. The People's Court of the Central Jewish Committee in Poland tried Weichert in 1948–1949, finding him a collaborator and passing of sentence of censure (a third-degree penalty after caution and reprimand, the fourth degree being suspension of member rights and the fifth expulsion from the Jewish community). R. Węgrzyniak, *Procesy dr Weicherta*, pp. 255–263, 275–286; A. Żbikowski,

Part II – The financing of social welfare for GG Jews

On 15 May 1941, the JSS Board sent an instruction to its local committees and branches, listing all possible sources of income which Jewish social welfare institutions could apply for. The list contained the following points: 1. Grants from the JSS Board, 2. Grants from city and county chiefs, 3. Allowances from Jewish councils, 4. Member fees, 5. Fundraising, 6. Events, 7. Benefit subsidies, 8. Efforts to obtain materials and articles regulated under the quota system.⁵² Possible income sources included in part external grants and gifts, grants by the local administration, and amounts collected from local Jews. Grants and fundraising could have the form of cash and property – given the supply problems in the GG, goods were more desirable than money.

First, external sources of financing welfare organisations will be discussed, starting with gifts in kind. Transports of foreign humanitarian gifts started to reach the GG in February 1940 and were collected by local Red Cross (mostly US) organisations and the Commission for Polish Relief (CPR), also known as the Hoover Commission. CPR and the Red Cross supplied basic foodstuffs (such as flour, fats, sugar, and canned milk), as well as clothing and medicines. Supplies were first sent to Europe by sea, but once the UK tightened the German naval blockade, attempts to purchase food were made in the Balkans, Baltic countries and the USSR.⁵³ The Jewish population had a share in these supplies, initially set at 10%. In May and June, AJDC received 20% of the CPR supplies to be distributed in the GG, and the Warsaw Coordination Commission 25% to be distributed in Warsaw and the Warsaw district.⁵⁴ From July 1940 onwards, US gifts were addressed to the Central Welfare Council, which in turn issued a 17% share for the Jews to the JSS Board.⁵⁵ Once Galicia was incorporated in the GG, the percentage dropped to 16%, and later to 10% in 1943.

GG Jews also received food, clothing and medicines sent by various Jewish organisations in Switzerland, such as Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE), Committee for Relief of the War-Stricken Jewish Population (RELICO) in Geneva, and most of all Hilfsaktion für notleidende Juden in Polen (HAFIP) in Zürich.⁵⁶ This aid was distributed by AJDC. In addition, the Warsaw AJDC office organised actions to purchase food outside GG, the largest of which took place before

Sąd Społeczny przy CKŻP. Wojenne rozliczenia społeczności żydowskiej w Polsce, Warszawa, 2014, pp. 133–158.

⁵² JHI, JSS, 211/6, Instruction no. III of 15 May 1941, fols. 2–5.

⁵³ The supplies, both by sea and by land, were scarce. Until the eventual suppression of the JUS, 28 transports with foreign gifts were delivered to the GG. Cf. B. Kroll, *Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*, pp. 142–150.

⁵⁴ JHI, AJDC, 210/85, fols. 7–8

⁵⁵ Y. Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, p. 99.

⁵⁶ JHI, AJDC, 210/154.

the Pesach of 1940,⁵⁷ and another in the autumn of the same year, when a large quantity of flour was bought in Slovakia.⁵⁸ Such purchases occurred at a much smaller scale in the spring and summer of 1941, including matzah for Pesach and cans of condensed milk for children.⁵⁹

Dispatching foreign gifts to the GG was not without its share of problems, requiring the intermediation of the German Red Cross and the payment of various customs and transport fees. Other difficulties arose during distribution. AJDC split the gifts between individual localities in its central office and then moved them to about a dozen large cities that had to issue the respective quantities to smaller towns.⁶⁰ The JSS Board initially sent the gifts to district capitals, in which ultimate distribution was made by the joint city and county committees with the help of the JSS advisor to the district chief.⁶¹ In later years, the Board decided on the distribution itself based on reports, but exceptions were made, for example a transport of ham and bacon in July 1941 was again handed over to advisors to district chiefs.⁶² For JSS activists from small towns, picking up the gifts was very difficult logistically. Jews could not travel by rail, and using carts to transport goods was expensive.⁶³ Thefts could occur, for example in Myślenice in September 1940 a hired driver absconded with the entire food transport.⁶⁴ Larger population centres tended to use their muscle, for example the Modliborzyce Jewish council demanded to be paid 142 zlotys for distributing clothing to the Kawęczyn Judenrat – more than the value of these goods.⁶⁵ Significant problems arose once ghettos in large cities became closed; picking up gifts required additional ghetto entrance passes, which could not always be procured.⁶⁶ Likewise, going out of town to fetch the gifts required consent of the county chief.

Despite the seemingly large number of deliveries to the GG, the actual quantities of goods to be distributed were minor. Small towns occasionally received supplies that were nothing short of bizarre. Alarming letters were sent, like the following: “From AJDC we received, among others, 6 pairs of shoes. Whom do we assign them to? Should it be the 65 boys who returned from the labour camp in rags and barefoot, or the remainder of the town’s population who goes

⁵⁷ JHI, ARG I 651, fols. 14–16

⁵⁸ JHI, AJDC, 210/110, passim; 210/38, fol. 59; 210/94, fol. 24.

⁵⁹ JHI, AJDC, 210/41, fol. 66.

⁶⁰ For example, in October 1940 Slovakian flour was sent to 19 cities which were to supply 320 smaller localities. JHI, AJDC, 210/97.

⁶¹ JHI, JSS, 211/4, Circular no. 8 of October 1940. fols. 31–32

⁶² JHI, JSS, 211/5, Instruction no. II of April 1941, fol. 33; JHI, JSS, 211/831, Letter of the JSS Board to the Przedbórz branch, fol. 7.

⁶³ As evident by complaints sent by the Łuków Jewish council. JHI, AJDC, 210/477, fol. 15.

⁶⁴ JHI, JSS, 211/713, fol. 6.

⁶⁵ JHI, JSS, 211/526, fol. 7.

⁶⁶ For example, gifts for Pruszków were lost as the Warsaw ghetto could not be entered, JHI, JSS, 211/828, fols. 3–5.

without shoes too?”⁶⁷ The chairman of the JSS branch in Proszowice directly criticised the Board for sending a mere 10 pairs of shoes; envy for the lucky few and dislike of JSS were the result.⁶⁸ Grievances against AJDC and JSS central offices simmered as some localities felt discriminated against, or had no gifts assigned when they knew from the *Gazeta Żydowska* that foreign aid transports arrived in the GG.

From 1943 to 1944, gifts in kind from abroad were the only source of aid for GG Jews. The pressure exerted by the International Red Cross was the probable cause of reactivating JUS as the Jewish social welfare institution. SS allowed JUS to operate on condition of its activities being limited solely to distributing medications sent by the IRC among prisoners of Jewish camps. Weichert, however, tried to sidestep this limitation by negotiating the inclusion of medicines from other sources (OSE, HAFIP, CPR, RELICO, the Sankt-Gallen Bikur Chaulim Society, Arbetsutskottet för Hjälp åt Europas Judar in Stockholm and others), and then obtaining consent to distribute food and clothing. The shipments ended up in camps even after JUS was dissolved in July 1944.⁶⁹

Another form of external support were financial subsidies. As noted above, during the first months of the German occupation the GG Jewish social welfare was primarily financed from pre-war AJDC funds. The funds started to deplete in the spring of 1940. Arranging a method of transferring money from the US to German-occupied territories was, however, not easy. The New York AJDC headquarters did not wish to send dollars so as not to improve the Third Reich's financial system which suffered from the lack of foreign currencies. Even before the war, a method of clearing operations was devised to avoid this. Jews leaving Germany, Austria or the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia transferred their property to local Jewish organisations and had travel costs reimbursed by the AJDC. By the end of March 1940, the Polish AJDC branch was included in the system. Transfers to AJDC bank account were made via the Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland with its seat in Berlin, the Jewish community in Vienna and, since 1941, also via the Jewish community in Prague. The money was sent to the Reich in dollars, then converted to marks at the 1 \$ = 5 RM exchange rate, then to zlotys at the 1 RM = 2 zł exchange rate (1 \$ = 10 zł). The exchange rate was artificially frozen, as negotiated with the German authorities. While these negotiations were pending in 1940, one dollar was worth 50 zlotys at the black market.⁷⁰

According to the official report, from 1 September 1939 to 30 September 1941 the Polish AJDC received 17,699,187.50 zlotys from the NY central

⁶⁷ JHI, AJDC, 210/486, Letter of the Markuszów Relief Committee to the AJDC office on 27 February 1941, fols. 57–58.

⁶⁸ JHI, JSS, 211/821, fol. 55.

⁶⁹ JHI, JSS-Annex, 211A/7, JUS reports from May 1943 to June 1944; 211A/106, List of shipments delivered to JUS.

⁷⁰ Y. Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, pp. 26–29, 70, 95.

office.⁷¹ The problem was that transfers reaching the Polish AJDC were neither regular or fixed. Only in 1939 was AJDC's financial situation relatively stable and over 1 million zlotys per month could be spent on its activities. From January to March 1940, AJDC finances collapsed, with no transfers from the central office arriving until March 1940. At the end of March, in April and in May the Warsaw office again received considerable amounts ranging from 840,000 to 1,000,000 zlotys per month. In subsequent months, things went downhill: no transfer in June, 650,000 zlotys in July and 500,000 zlotys in August, with token payments of 250,000, 162,000 and 220,000 in the next three months. From December 1940 to June 1941, the transfers reached Warsaw more regularly, being 300,000–500,000 zlotys on average and still lower from July to September 1941.⁷² The problem therefore was not only the insufficiency of funds sent from abroad, but also their irregularity and variability. The funds stopped arriving when the AJDC officially closed down its operations in the GG.

AJDC continued to finance social welfare but did so in an unofficial manner. The 1942 New York AJDC report clearly stated that, if contacts with the USA were severed, local offices would be entitled to finance their activities from loans to be repaid after the war.⁷³ For the first seven months of 1942, the central office earmarked 600,000 dollars for Poland.⁷⁴ It appears that these so-called internal loans, already drawn by the Polish AJDC directors before, then became the basis of financing various social welfare activities. This income was, however, in the grey area, its amount not being recorded anywhere.

From 1 February 1941, the AJDC transferred the decided majority of its funds to the JSS Board that was in charge of distributing them among local committees, branches and Jewish councils. The amounts were highly variable. In February 1941, 523,000 zlotys were transferred to the JSS, as compared to 807,000 in March, 268,000 in April, 450,000 in May, 520,000 in June, a mere 140,000 in September and 315,000 in October.⁷⁵ The other source of JSS Board income was the GG administration subsidy provided via the Central Welfare Council. As with gifts in kind, Jewish population had a share of 17% in CWC subsidies (16% from August 1941). In the settlement year 1940/1941 (from 1 April 1940 to 31 March 1941), JSS received from the CWC 3,500,000 zlotys, compared to less than 4,500,000 in

⁷¹ JHI, AJDC, 210/41, fol. 58. The data show a marked difference with the New York AJDC report, according to which 3,090,684 \$, or 30,906,840 zlotys, had been sent to Poland during that time. Cf. AAJDC, New York Office 1933–1944, fond 800, Appropriations for Poland 1933–1942, 4.08.1942; Y. Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, p. 73.

⁷² The data might be incomplete, because banking documentation was only preserved for 1940. 1941 data are based on correspondence. JHI, AJDC, 210/8–10, 210/186–190, 210/109.

⁷³ AAJDC, New York Office 1933–1944, fond 158, Aiding Jews Overseas. A Report for 1942, p. 21.

⁷⁴ AAJDC, New York Office 1933–1944, fond 800, Appropriations for Poland 1933–1942, 4.08.1942.

⁷⁵ JHI, AJDC, 210/8, fol. 37, 210/9, fol. 30, 210/10, fol. 1. Data for other months were not preserved.

1941/1942 and 600,000 from April to September 1942.⁷⁶ The JSS had certainly not received any money before September 1940, so in the first year of its activities, the subsidy could reach as much as 500,000 zlotys per month on average, compared to 375,000 in 1941/1942 and 100,000 in 1942. The amounts were drastically reduced in 1942 as a result of the GG administration issuing a regulation in March 1942 pursuant to which direct subsidy for the Board was decreased and individual JSS committees were to be financed by city and county chiefs.⁷⁷ It was assumed that JUS would no longer be using state aid.⁷⁸

The data cited above show that the JSS Board's budget was rarely higher than 1,000,000 zlotys per month, and usually lower, while in 1942, it was just 100,000 zlotys. These amounts were divided among more than 300 committees and branches. The amount of subsidy granted to a locality depended on the size of the Jewish population, the percentage of displaced people and various other circumstances, such as the possibility on purchasing food locally, outbreaks of epidemics, the existence of a closed ghetto etc. The amounts were never fixed: both the amounts sent by AJDC and by the GG administration fluctuated wildly. Activists from local committees and branches failed to understand this and any sudden delays, reduction or lack of subsidies sparked a flood of alarming telegraphs and pleas for help. The Board explained the situation in numerous letters and in July 1941 sent out the following circular: "The JSS Board distributes both cash and gifts in their entirety as soon as they are received. Asking the Board to expedite or increase allowances is totally useless. It is even less advisable to send alarming information by telegraph or phone, as it only serves to cause unnecessary hindrances in the routine work of an already meagre staff of the Board."⁷⁹ Additionally, each wave of Jewish displaced persons arriving in the GG meant the necessity of earmarking special funds, subsidies for other localities being reduced as a result. This issue was especially apparent in the spring of 1942, when virtually all subsidies started to be granted to localities in which Jews displaced from the Reich, Slovakia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia arrived.

Wishing to introduce certain limitations in the distribution of grants, the Board had initially announced that they will be provided solely to soup kitchens and closed care centres. Sometimes, it stuck fast to the principle, as for example in Przyrów where the local committee stated that establishing a soup kitchen was impossible. Ignoring their arguments, the Board ultimately managed to enforce the set-up of the facility through enormous efforts of local activists.⁸⁰ The Board subsidies could be used only to maintain the facilities and aid their patrons, but not to establish any new ones, even soup kitchens. As a rule, the subsidies could

⁷⁶ B. Kroll, *Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*, p. 96.

⁷⁷ JHI, JSS, 211/7, Circular no. 56 of 16/02/1942, fol. 13.

⁷⁸ JHI, JSS, 211/7, Circular no. 65 (JUS 1), undated (October 1942), fol. 31.

⁷⁹ JHI, JSS, 211/6, Circular no. 39 of 25 July 1941, fols. 27--28.

⁸⁰ JHI, JSS, 211/840, fols. 78, 87; 211/841, fol. 3.

not be used to maintain hospitals, administrative expenses, staff salaries, costs of hospital care etc.⁸¹ In addition, both AJDC and the JSS Board demanded regular reports, making subsidies contingent on them. Irregularities in settling a subsidy could lead to further aid being put on hold.

Foreign gifts, AJDC subsidies and GG administration subsidies distributed by the JSS Board was the only form of aid distributed on the central level. There was another source of external subsidies used by JSS committees and branches, namely local government subsidies. This was primarily a share in the so-called population tax (in German: Einwohner Abgabe). The tax was introduced by a regulation of the General Governor of 27 June 1940, with each GG inhabitant being taxed once per year in the amount depending on their income, tax thresholds being set at 6, 12, 25 and 50 zlotys. The tax was collected by commune boards, two thirds being sent to the county office. Income from the tax was supposed to finance social welfare. The order was retroactive and covered the period from 1 April 1940.⁸² While Jews were obligated to pay the tax, difficulties immediately arose in enforcing the share due to Jewish social welfare. Technically, requests for payment could be made by JSS county committees but were often refused by county chiefs. The JSS board negotiated with the Sub-department of Population Affairs and Social Welfare to send a circular to county chiefs requesting them to pay out the committees' share in the tax, but the request was not heeded everywhere.⁸³ In a circular of 12 July 1941, the Board stated that the tax was paid out to twenty committees and branches. In Warsaw, outstanding tax amounts were not paid until November 1941.⁸⁴ As a matter of fact, the struggle to include Jews in the population tax distribution lasted until the end of organised Jewish social welfare. This shows how county chiefs could comply with GG administration regulations or refuse to do so at their discretion.

Apart from the tax, local administration sometimes paid special allowances, especially when a larger number of displaced persons arrived at a locality.⁸⁵ In theory, county chiefs were bound to make these payments, but whether they did was contingent on their personal attitude to the Jewish population.

In the third point of the aforesaid instructions for JSS committees and delegates concerning the sources of financing social welfare, the Board mentioned subsidies from Jewish councils. The Board obligated the councils to support local JSS institutions, but this often resulted in considerable difficulties. Sometimes both sides squabbled over which of them is to provide social welfare in a locality. Using the threat of withholding subsidies, Jewish councils on occasion managed

⁸¹ JHI, JSS, 211/628, fol. 12; 211/703, fol. 9; 211/707, fol. 27.

⁸² Cf. *Dziennik Rozporządzeń GG*, 6 July 1940, no. 44, part 1, pp. 211–213.

⁸³ JHI, JSS, 211/5, Circular no. 22 of 9 March 1941, fol. 26; circular no. 24 of 27 March 1941, fol. 28.

⁸⁴ JHI, JSS, 211/6, Circular no. 38 of 12 July 1941, fol. 26; JHI, JSS-Annex, 211A/244, Notes from conversation with J. Jaszuński on 24 November 1941, fol. 19.

⁸⁵ JHI, JSS, 211/6, Instruction no. III of 15 May 1941, fol. 2.

to put their members in JSS committees and branches. At times, however, the lack of subsidies did not result from lack of good will on part of the council but its incapability to collect taxes or the demands of German civil or law enforcement authorities which the council had to comply with. What internal sources of income were available for Jewish councils?

The main source was the community tax inherited from pre-war Jewish communities. The communities taxed their members, especially entrepreneurs, real estate owners and landed farmers. Early during the occupation, Jewish enterprises were taken over by trustees, with compulsory administrators managing their profits and paying a share into the state treasury. In the summer of 1940, similar measures were applied to real estate owned by Jews. Jewish councils made efforts, sometimes successful, to tax the trustees with the local tax.⁸⁶ Soon, the Sub-department of Population Affairs and Social Welfare was involved, wishing to take over the collection of local taxes and use them directly for social welfare.⁸⁷ Eventually, it was agreed that the amount of local tax was to be set by Jewish councils, which notifications sent to the JSS Board. The Board was then to request the Sub-department to put pressure on county chiefs and, in turn, the trustees, to pay the tax, not to the Jewish councils but to city and county JSS committees. Unfortunately, data is missing on how often the tax was enforced from the trustees.⁸⁸ It is possible that Jewish councils and JSS committees did not provide detailed information on whether the collected community tax was paid by trustees or Jewish owners. This is because Jewish companies and establishments not subject to trustees existed until the end of the war.

Obviously, Jewish councils collected various fees related to their administrative functions, such as application processing fees, postal fees, fees for issuing certificates, passes and craft certificates etc.⁸⁹ Another form of tax were surcharges to quota products. It is common knowledge that in the GG, everyday necessities were rationed. Distribution of food, cleaning agents, fuel, lamp oil and other goods to the Jewish population in each locality was the purvey of the Jewish council. When selling these articles, the council collected a tax, either directly, or in the form of fees for issuing ration coupons (for all or some kinds of foodstuffs, such as bread coupons), with the income used to provide social welfare. A tax like this was present in almost every locality. Another form of taxation was reserving some

⁸⁶ JHI, JSS, 211/5, Circular no. 13 of 04/01/1941, fol. 1.

⁸⁷ M. Weichert, Note. Report of conferences with Mr. Heinrich, head of the Freiewohlfahrt section at the GG Bevölkerungswesen und Fürsorge in Kraków on 8 and 9 April 1940 in: *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 27: *Zydowska Samopomoc Społeczna w Warszawie 1939–1943*, p. 92.

⁸⁸ The Jewish councils in Bochnia and Gorlice did include such information in their reports, and so we know that they successfully enforced the community tax from trustees. In Dubienka, community tax collected from compulsory property administrators was used to pay the rent of patrons. JHI, JSS, 211/371, fol. 30.

⁸⁹ Cf. I. Trunk, *Judenrat. The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation*, ed. 2, Lincoln, 1996, pp. 230–258.

percentage of quota products for social welfare purposes, for example in Warsaw the figure was 10%.⁹⁰ This was not applicable to localities without town status, whose population was granted any quota at all and had to find supplies on the free market, where prices were much higher.⁹¹ Jews always received food allocations much below those required for survival, but periodically were deprived of even those meagre rations.

Taxes were also levied on meals in cafés and restaurants, entry into clubs and sale of luxury goods. Rent, gas and electricity fees and public transport tickets were surcharged as well.⁹² Fees related to religious functions, including funeral ceremonies, matzah sold for Pesach and etrogs for Sukkot, were also appropriated for social welfare purposes. In fact, in the autumn of 1941 the JSS Board divided the etrogs sent by the US AJDC among its committees and not Jewish councils.⁹³

Another means to obtain income locally was voluntary membership fees. These was introduced by Jewish council relief committees, the councils themselves, as well as JSS branches, welfare associations and self-help groups. Activists recruited people who declared to pay regular amounts (weekly or monthly) on behalf of a specific organisation. Any amount could be declared. Obviously, income obtained from this source was dependent on the affluence of the local population. Before the war, membership fees were the backbone of financing welfare associations and this is probably why the JSS by-laws considered them as the main source of financing.⁹⁴

Apart from regular fees, additional fundraising for special purposes was conducted. Either cash or goods such as foodstuffs, clothing, footwear or various household items could be raised. Relief actions were regularly held in winter and whenever a new institution, such as soup kitchens, epidemic hospitals and meal centres for children, was opened. Clothing was collected for displaced persons and labour camp prisoners, as was furniture, straw beds and mattresses used to furnish shelters. Branches established groups for women and young people to hold the fundraising. Welfare facilities, especially children care centres, existed that were supported almost exclusively from this source. Interestingly, in some cases fundraising for Jewish social welfare was also successful among the Polish population. The Board was enthusiastic to hear that in Proszowice, a considerable quantity of food for soup kitchen was collected from local landowners.⁹⁵ One form of fundraising were charitable events in which funds were collected for a specific group. In small communities, such events were usually organised in child centres on the occasion of religious holidays and included recitals, plays and concerts by

⁹⁰ B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie*, p. 448.

⁹¹ Localities were also stripped of town status, as was Krościenko in 1941, which greatly aggravated the supply situation of local Jews. JHI, JSS, 211/617, fol. 12.

⁹² JHI, JSS, 211/6, Instruction no. III of 15 May 1941, fol. 4.

⁹³ JHI, JSS, 211/6, Circular no. 44 of 28/10/1941, fol. 34.

⁹⁴ JHI, JSS, 211/1, Bylaws of the Jewish Social Self-Help, fol. 15 (§ 10, point 1).

⁹⁵ JHI, JSS, 211/822, fols. 61, 64.

the wards. Jewish councils and JSS branches were also entitled to manage larger donations and inheritances.⁹⁶

While not immediately apparent, fees for provided services became in time an important source of income for both Jewish councils and JSS branches. This may sound like a paradox, but social welfare services were usually provided for a fee. Fees were charged for meals, day care centre activities, baths, sanitary inspections, laundering and medical advice. The reasons were not just financial. In May 1940, an AJDC circular advised: "Persons visiting soup kitchens should be told to pay a fee, however minor (such as 10 groszy for lunch and 5 groszy for breakfast/dinner). This is important primarily for social and educational reasons, decreasing the likelihood of entire populations turning to routine begging, while those with a stricter social compass will be able to enjoy the meal centres with the feeling that the food they eat is not 'free'."⁹⁷ Of course, the fees were relatively low, with a large number (up to 50% and more) of patrons exempted or entitled to reductions. The Brzesko child centre officially announced that well-to-do parents will support poorer children, allowing them to use the centre for free.⁹⁸ When affected by a financial crisis, the facility increased the prices; the Board did in fact recommend such decisions to avoid the reduction of provided services.⁹⁹

To summarize, there were many sources of financing of Jewish social welfare, some of which local organisations could obtain on their own, and some distributed by the central office. What was the ratio between those two types of sources? As envisaged by both AJDC and JSS, internal sources were to be the basis of social welfare in each locality. In practice, things turned out differently. Whenever Jewish councils and JSS branches did manage to obtain income from local sources, it was a much more stable method of financing and the level of social welfare was higher. It could, however, be cut off in a moment when Jews were prohibited to leave the town or when a ghetto was closed, causing its inhabitants to lose their own sources of income such as working for non-Jews, commerce or sales. As a result, welfare organisations lost taxpayers and members. In some localities, however, local income was almost non-existent throughout the entire occupation period and social welfare, if any, was financed from the outside. AJDC and JSS did not tolerate this, sending constant reminders and even threats of withdrawing subsidies if the local welfare organisation does not start collecting money from locals. Their central offices disregarded reports of extreme poverty in the locality. An example letter to the Kałuszyn branch says: "We stress, therefore, that you cannot rely on our subsidies alone in your welfare activities but should base your budget on funds obtained from the local Jewish community, as well as from the Jewish council."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ JHI, JSS, 211/1, By-laws of the Jewish Social Self-Help, fol. 21 (§ 10, point 2).

⁹⁷ Kraków SA, post-German records, ref. no. 1576/75, AJDC circular of May 1940, fols. 669–670.

⁹⁸ JHI, AJDC, 210/279, fol. 5.

⁹⁹ Cf. for example the correspondence with the Lesko Jewish council: JHI, JSS, 211/636, fol. 29.

¹⁰⁰ JHI, JSS, 211/510, Letter of the JSS Board to the Kałuszyn branch of 7 January 1942, fol. 3

The diversity and plurality of income sources might suggest that lack of income from one source could be easily compensated with another. Nothing could be further from the truth. The plurality of sources was, in fact, the result of desperate search for methods of maintaining social welfare activities. The entire Jewish social welfare in the GG was facing a permanent crisis. The Board received letters with appalling descriptions of poverty, pleas for help and complaints about the inadequate nature of social welfare benefits. Says the chairman of the Jewish council in Latowicz: "We need to take this opportunity to voice our grievances because the subsidies received from you are so small. Having described to you our extreme troubles with the displaced and other afflictions which we can hardly put into words, we were certain you would take our critical situation in account and grant us a larger subsidy, but all you did was laugh in our face."¹⁰¹ The JSS branch in Komarówka made every effort to collect money locally, as per the AJDC and JSS instructions, but in October 1941, its chairman sent a dramatic letter saying: "We can no longer make any efforts to collect money in our town. What we were able to do we already did. We can do no more."¹⁰² The income of welfare organisations was uncertain, irregular and variable, but always highly insufficient.

Part III – Activities of social welfare institutions and facilities

To what extent could social welfare be provided in circumstances like these? What forms did it take? Before I review the areas of activity of social welfare organisations, I must make a reservation that not all activities were present in each locality. The scale and forms of welfare activities depended on a large number of factors: the size of the Jewish population and its dispersion, the ratio of displaced persons to locals, the property status of the Jewish community, the attitude of the German administration (as the county chief approved food distributions, issued JSS identity cards and passes, railway use permits and additional subsidies, and was also able to issue various minor but onerous regulations¹⁰³), the existence of a ghetto, aid provided by the Polish population, the skills, experience and creativity of social welfare activists, and efficient cooperation between them (including between Jewish councils and JSS).

The only form of aid prevalent everywhere was the redistribution of various goods. Gifts in kind and donations, both coming from outside and collected locally, were divided among the needy. Local institutions distributed cash allowances,

¹⁰¹ JHI, JSS, 211/634, Letter of the Latowicz Jewish council to the JSS Board of 2 March 1942, fol. 36.

¹⁰² JHI, AJDC, 210/416, Letter of the Komarówka JSS branch to the Kraków AJDC of 10 October 1941, fol. 31.

¹⁰³ Such as, for example, the prohibition of transporting more than 10 kg of potatoes at once, issued by the Niepołomice commune, which prevented supplying the meal centre. JHI, JSS, 211/724, fol. 4.

foodstuffs (dry goods), medicines, fuel, clothing, footwear and cleaning agents (soap and detergents). Distribution efforts intensified when goods from abroad or a cash subsidy reached the locality. Very little information on how the aid beneficiaries were selected exists. The number of applicants was always much higher than the number of welfare patrons. In Warsaw, JSS employees conducted community interviews and kept records, while house committees verified applications.¹⁰⁴ We do not know how this was done in small towns.

More advanced forms of social welfare were limited to a few areas: soup kitchens, healthcare and related medical assistance, child care and displaced persons care. Welfare facilities established to meet these objectives included soup kitchens, first aid stations and epidemic hospitals as well as meal centres for children, in time often converted into day care centres featuring some basic educational content. In larger cities, Jewish councils and JSS committees established major institutions such as orphanages, boarding and day boarding centres, hospitals and retirement homes.

Extra meals were provided via the food distribution mentioned above and the so-called soup kitchens (“kuchnie ludowe”). The latter were the most popular form of social welfare. According to a statistical report drafted on 15 March 1942 by the JSS Board, soup kitchens operated in 230 localities (not including the Galicia district), with larger cities obviously having more than one establishment of this kind.¹⁰⁵ The number of soup kitchens was highly variable, with new ones opening and existing ones closing down depending on whether they could be maintained. Opening a soup kitchen required finding suitable premises, furnishing them, employing a cook and staff, purchasing cauldrons and, of course, food – initially from local funds only, as the AJDC and JSS determined to subsidise only already established facilities. Some local organisations shirked these duties. In the so-called collective communes that included several villages, Jewish councils firmly resisted external pressure, claiming that since the Jewish population was scattered over a wide area, founding a facility that had to be commuted to would make no sense. The Jewish council in Jedlicze appealed to reason, asking the JSS Board whether it was worth to invest in a soup kitchen at all if they were unable to support it.¹⁰⁶ Soup kitchens were, however, ubiquitous; thanks to communal cooking, fuel could be saved, and patrons like displaced people, housed in buildings not suitable for residence or with strangers, simply had nowhere to cook their meals. Soup in a kitchen was their only opportunity for a warm

¹⁰⁴ A system of inspections was not introduced in Warsaw until the second half of 1940, cf. “Statystyka ŻSS”, no. 8, in: *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 27, *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna w Warszawie 1939–1943*, p. 413.

¹⁰⁵ AYV, Weichert Collection, O.21/16.2, Appendix to a letter of the JSS Board to the BuF of 19 March 1942, fol. 29.

¹⁰⁶ JHI, JSS, 211/477, fol. 17. The centre was indeed founded, but remained active for less than three months.

repast. For this reason, in colder months tea or coffee was additionally served at the kitchens.

The main issue faced by soup kitchens was the supply of food and fuel. Attempts were made to rely on quota supplies for which official (so-called maximum) prices, much lower than market prices, were paid. Earlier it was mentioned that Jewish councils set aside some of the entire food quota allocated to them for the needs of social welfare facilities, decreasing the quantity of food offered for the public. Special fundraising events of this kind were also organised, for example in Proszowice the JSS branch requested the Jewish population to donate their ration coupons for the poor before the Pesach of 1942.¹⁰⁷ The JSS board urged its committees and branches to regularly petition county chiefs for additional allocations for social welfare, in addition to the general allocation for Jews.¹⁰⁸ This method worked more than once, but never on a permanent basis; receiving an allocation in one month was not a guarantee of receiving it in another. In July 1941, the JSS Board mentioned in a circular that 25 committees and branches were successful in obtaining extra allocations, but only two of them, in Warsaw and Busko, managed to do so every month.¹⁰⁹ The JSS Board tried to obtain quota allocations on the central level, making them independent of the whims of the local administration. These efforts ended in failure.¹¹⁰ In its letters and circulars, the Board constantly urged local representatives to regularly pressure county chiefs.

When no allocation was received, products had to be bought on the free market at prices many times higher. And yet, in some localities there was no opportunity to purchase food at maximum prices because no cooperatives offering such food existed.¹¹¹ A curious method was used in the village of Kańczuga: the Jewish council exempted the more affluent inhabitants from the commune tax in return for selling food at maximum prices. It was therefore the taxpayers who had the duty to procure food.¹¹² Pleas were also sent to the Kraków AJDC and JSS to provide gifts in kind instead of money, exactly because of problems with purchasing food locally.¹¹³ Unfortunately, as the size of foreign aid to the GG diminished, so did the food deliveries.

Soup kitchens were sometimes located in separate buildings, and sometimes operated on premises of the Jewish council or JSS branch and had no dining room, meals being served as takeouts. Efforts were made to have the soup kitchens operate

¹⁰⁷ JHI, JSS, 211/824, fol. 8.

¹⁰⁸ JHI, JSS, 211/6, Instruction no. III of 15 May 1941, fol. 3.

¹⁰⁹ JHI, JSS, 211/6, Circular no. 36 of 07/07/1941, fol. 24. This situation did not last for long; in Warsaw, the special food allocation was already withdrawn in October. R. Sakowska, *Ludzie z dzielnicy zamkniętej*, p. 84.

¹¹⁰ JHI, JSS, 211/7, Circular no. 52 of 10/01/1942, fol. 7.

¹¹¹ For example in Kamionka and Krzeszów. JHI, JSS, 211/514, fol. 7; 211/623, fol. 14

¹¹² JHI, JSS, 211/524, fols. 2–3.

¹¹³ JHI, JSS, 211/624, fols. 5–6.

every day or six days per week. At times, especially in soup kitchens frequented by displaced people, not one but two or three meals per day were issued. Such prosperous soup kitchens usually did not last for long. As maintenance funds shrank, the benefits were limited in various ways. The number of meals was cut down, the cost increased or exemptions and limitations withdrawn. Ultimately, the opening frequency was reduced to as little as 1–3 days per week. Another tactic was to issue a single meal to an entire family, for example in Chęciny a family of two to four received a single lunch serving, a family of five or six received two, and a family of seven to nine, three.¹¹⁴ This allowed the soup kitchen to operate longer and continue to be subsidised from the central office, even though local activists understood that their efforts are ostensible. The chairman of the Kazimierz Dolny branch wrote to the Board: “We believe that to serve lunches three times per week is rather to mock human poverty than provide real assistance.”¹¹⁵ A much more dramatic example can be found in a letter sent from Końskowola: “[...] the conditions defy description, so we are forced to issue a single serving [of soup] to families of six and more, which then divide it between themselves like medicine, a few spoonfuls for everyone.”¹¹⁶

Related to soup kitchens was another social welfare area, namely child care. On the most basic level, it consisted in providing extra meals to children in the kitchens; apart from lunches, the children also received bread and warm beverages for breakfast and teatime. The JSS Board insisted that extra meals be combined with educational care by establishing day-care centres where, once the meal had been eaten, children could stay for a few hours in a warm room and participate in various activities. Such activities included lectures, signing and reciting, drawing, physical exercises and playing. Older children were also taught vocations such as sewing, handicrafts or joinery.¹¹⁷ In some towns, day care centres doubled as the first grades of primary schools.¹¹⁸ In summer, day camps were organised that included outdoor activities, forest walks and the like.¹¹⁹ The children also had access to health checks and medical care and were referred to bathing spas. Clothing was also distributed among them. According to a very late statistical report of 12 July 1942, there were 236 day-care centres in the entire GG. It may be speculated that, prior to Operation Reinhardt which targeted children first, this number was

¹¹⁴ JHI, JSS, 211/296, fol. 33.

¹¹⁵ JHI, JSS, 211/528, fol. 22.

¹¹⁶ JHI, JSS, 211/567, fol. 2.

¹¹⁷ Cf. reports of the Niepołomice centre: JHI, JSS, 211/724, fol. 37; 211/725, fols. 24–25; 211/726, fols. 8–10.

¹¹⁸ For example, in Działoszyce the day care centre housed a four-grade school, JHI, JSS, 211/378, fols. 28–29.

¹¹⁹ In most localities of the GG, Jews were prohibited from leaving their place of residence only after 15 October 1941, as a result of the third regulation on limiting the right to reside in the GG, and actually even later, in the winter of 1941/42. Up to that time, Jews were able to move freely in the immediate neighbourhood.

higher.¹²⁰ At times, it was the German county chiefs that ordered day care centres to be established, for example the Tomaszów Mazowiecki county chief coerced the JSS branch in Maleniec to do so in order to contain children begging in streets.¹²¹

Child care was typically organised on a voluntary basis. Women or young people groups were established to provide care and education. The JSS Board urged branches to involve local inhabitants in providing self-help, a tactic that was usually successful. The year 1940 also saw the resurgence of local CENTOS committees; according to a report of the Warsaw central office, in March 1940 they were active in 74 GG localities, caring for some 28,000 children.¹²² In April of that year, the Kraków district CENTOS was restored. However, due to communication issues and the subsequent suppression of associations it cannot be said that CENTOS operated effectively over the entire GG. Local committees tended to become subordinate to Jewish councils and later JSS branches.

Another topic are orphanages. Establishments founded before the war as a rule continued their activities, usually with a higher (and growing) number of wards. Their circumstances varied; the largest Warsaw ghetto orphanage, the Main Shelter Home, was dubbed the “abode of dying children”. On the other hand, the Beth Megadle Jesonim orphanage in Kraków, while faced with decreased food supplies and the need to move out of the building when the local ghetto was established, nevertheless performed satisfactorily.¹²³ Orphanages from lands incorporated in the Reich were resettled to the GG, for example the Jewish orphanage in Płock and its staff ended up in Chmielnik.¹²⁴ New orphanages were also established, especially in 1942, when the number of children who had been orphaned or could no longer be supported by parents grew.¹²⁵ When comparing the CENTOS report of December 1940, mentioning 22 orphanages with 2,500 children operating in the GG, with the JSS statistical report of 12 July 1942, with as many as 61 orphanages with 5,627 wards, a large increase is evident.¹²⁶

Another immense social welfare area was healthcare and related medical assistance. For large establishments like Jewish hospitals, the situation became bleak already when the war broke out. Prior to the war, the costs of hospital stay were covered by the patients themselves, with the exception of those insured in a social

¹²⁰ NLI, Michael Weichert Archive, 371.11.37, Letter of the JSS board to the BuF of 12 July 1942, fol. 49

¹²¹ JHI, JSS-Annex, 211A/199, fol. 1.

¹²² JHI, AJDC, 210/44, Report on CENTOS activities on 11 March 1940, fols. 8–10.

¹²³ Cf. A. Witkowska-Krych, “Główny Dom Schronienia”, in: *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, 13 (2017), pp. 372–398; M. Grądzka, *Przerwane dzieciństwo. Losy dzieci Żydowskiego Domu Sierot przy ul. Dietla 64 w Krakowie podczas okupacji niemieckiej*, Kraków, 2012, pp. 63–83, 104–135.

¹²⁴ JHI, JSS, 211/301–304.

¹²⁵ For example in Falenica, Parczew, Koluszki, Lesko, Przyglów. JHI, JSS, 211/384, 783, 549, 636, 839.

¹²⁶ JHI, AJDC, 210/50, Monthly CENTOS budget after 1 January 1941, fols. 8–9. NLI, Michael Weichert Archive, 371.11.37, Letter of the JSH Board to BuF of 12 July 1942, fol. 49.

insurance institution (which was not mandatory) or holding poverty certificates. In the latter case, the cost of treatment was covered by the Jewish community from which the patient hailed. The hospitals used the fees, aided by municipal or county subsidies, to maintain themselves.¹²⁷ When the war broke out, the subsidies ceased, and costs of treating poor Jews (whose numbers kept on growing) were shifted to Jewish councils. The councils also became hospital administrators. Obviously, they asked AJDC, and then JSS, for subsidies, and received them, but each amount granted was insufficient.

On 6 March 1940, the GG Health Chamber issued a regulation prohibiting “Aryan” doctors from treating Jews and Jewish doctors from treating “Aryans”.¹²⁸ As a result of the regulation, Jewish patients were moved to separate Jewish hospitals. The most conspicuous example of this practice was the mass transfer of mentally ill Jews to the sole Jewish psychiatric hospital in the GG, the “Zofiówka” in Otwock. “Zofiówka” was extremely underfinanced and its patients routinely died of malnutrition. Dr Miller, the hospital’s director, reported in November 1941 that the establishment had 198 patients as compared to 406 on June 1 – within five months, 208 of them died from exhaustion.¹²⁹ Another consequence of separating “Aryan” and “non-Aryan” healthcare was the shortage of Jewish doctors in the hinterland. In small towns, the prohibition was sometimes disregarded, with Polish doctors treating Jews and even being employed by Jewish councils.¹³⁰ There were also occurrences of the JSS Board transferring Jewish doctors between localities, on condition that the Jewish council was to provide them with a living.¹³¹

Social welfare organisations covered the costs of medical visits, first aid station treatment and hospital stay. Additionally, many localities founded first aid stations that offered medical advice, minor treatments and vaccinations. According to the 15 March 1942 statistical report cited above, these facilities operated in 108 large and small towns.¹³² Medicines and medical supplies were obtained initially from gifts made by the Health Protection Association (TOZ). TOZ received considerable deliveries of medicines from abroad, donated by the Red Cross as well as Jewish organisations like the Swiss branch of Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE). The first transports of humanitarian aid with medicines were sent for

¹²⁷ H. Konopka-Bunsch, *Historia opieki społecznej w Polsce*, pp. 35–36.

¹²⁸ The regulation was announced in the Official Journal of the Health Chamber of the GG dated 15 September 1940, quite late in the war. Quoted from NLL, Michael Weichert Archive, 371.11.34, fols. 5–6.

¹²⁹ JHI, JSS, 211/772, Letter of Dr Miller to Michał Weichert of 16 November 1941, fols. 52–53.

¹³⁰ For example the Nowy Korczyn hospital was managed by a Pole, Dr Stanisław Fornelski (JHI, JSS, 211/729, fol. 21), and the Jewish council’s first aid station in Ćmielów by Dr Eustachy Jerzy Kawiński (JHI, JSS, 211/310, fols. 28–32).

¹³¹ For example in Konstantynów, JHI, JSS, 211/559, fols. 5, 17–18.

¹³² AYV, Weichert Collection, O.21/16.2, Appendix to the letter of the JSS Board to BuF of 19 March 1942, fols. 26–28v.

distribution to the Warsaw TOZ central office.¹³³ Once the JSS was founded, in June 1940 distribution started to be taken over by the JSH Medicine Distribution Centre in Kraków.¹³⁴ A list of required medicines and medical supplies had to be signed by a local doctor. The list was then sent to the distribution centre and the necessary medicines were dispatched, provided they were in stock. The provision of medicines was modest, but it was rare for requests of local establishments not to be fulfilled at least in part. In some localities, vaccinations were staged, including against typhoid fever.¹³⁵

An outbreak of typhus was always a huge tragedy. It generated additional needs and expenditures, with providing and paying for treatment being just one of the issues. Other difficulties resulted from German anti-epidemics regulations that served to decimate local communities. In the town of Łopuszno, 70 persons, or 10% of the Jewish population, fell ill with typhus within a few days. The Jewish council sent the sick to the nearest hospitals in Włoszczowa and Radoszyce, but these soon ceased to receive patients due to overcrowding. Łopuszno had no Jewish doctors, therefore the sick remained without medical attention. The German county doctor ordered an epidemic hospital to be erected within a few days, threatening to resettle the entire population to the Kielce ghetto. Within a few weeks of the outbreak, the German authorities cordoned the town and cut off food supply, which immediately caused mass starvation and deaths. The JSS Board managed to send a doctor and food grants to Łopuszno but were unable to offer much help.¹³⁶ The town of Pilica was likewise cordoned during the epidemics, with local authorities prohibiting even the sending of mail. Letters of the JSS branch to the central office were therefore smuggled to the neighbouring town of Wolbrom and dispatched from there.¹³⁷

Social welfare organisations reacted to epidemics in two areas: preventive healthcare and running quarantine wards and epidemic hospitals. The hospitals were usually small, with around a dozen beds, more like infirmaries to provide basic medical attention. They were usually founded on the direct request of German administrative authorities. This involved the necessity of finding premises and furnishing them, a major effort for local welfare organisations. According to a JSS list of March 1942, 100 hospitals were operating in the GG, the majority being small epidemic hospitals founded on a temporary basis.¹³⁸ Anti-epidemic regulations also required isolating those in contact with the sick. This was usually done by

¹³³ JHI, AJDC, 210/85, fols. 7–8.

¹³⁴ Cf. JHI, JSS, 211/88–96.

¹³⁵ The Distribution Centre did not have the famous Weigl vaccine at its disposal; the PZH (Państwowy Zakład Higieny, National Institute of Hygiene) or Bujwid vaccine was sent instead. Cf. the correspondence with the Pilica Jewish council, JHI, JSS, 211/789, fols. 28–29.

¹³⁶ JHI, JSS, 211/671.

¹³⁷ JHI, JSS, 211/789, fols. 28–61.

¹³⁸ AYV, Weichert Collection, O.21/16.2, fols. 26–29.

cordoning the house in which a typhus case was discovered. In Proszowice, the Jewish council posted guards in front of the affected houses to prevent the inhabitants from coming out.¹³⁹ Occasionally, suspect people were moved to a separate building that served as a quarantine or isolation ward and kept there for two weeks. Both the sick and the quarantined had to be fed, and for this they were entirely reliant on the Jewish council and social welfare organisations. Additionally, during particularly virulent epidemics establishments like soup kitchens were shut down to prevent the gathering of crowds.

Preventing epidemics consisted mainly in sanitary inspections of social welfare establishments (soup kitchens, refugee shelters), apartments, courtyards and individuals. The inspections were conducted by special groups of Jewish council or social welfare employees called sanitary divisions. They assessed the cleanliness of premises and ordered inhabitants to tidy them up, whitewash the walls or replace the straw in beds. If a building was found to be infested with lice, the inhabitants had to subject their bedding sheets and clothing to a steam bath: disinfection with steam in municipal baths or in special disinfecting machines using sulphur agents. The baths tended to destroy clothing completely and were therefore avoided. In Warsaw, the baths became the Jewish population's nightmare and an area rife with corruption and violence.¹⁴⁰ It is difficult to ascertain how they were used in smaller localities. Sanitary divisions were, however, detested by ghetto populations, especially since on occasion they did additional policing, for example in Niepołomice, where the local division collected social welfare contributions.¹⁴¹

Individuals were also checked for cleanliness – the inspections were mandatory for social welfare patrons and for everyone if there was a threat of epidemics. Following inspections, people were sent for bathing and haircuts and also could wash their clothes. Bathing and washing were not a routine activity. Due to infrequent supplies of soap and detergent, they were somewhat of a luxury. Social welfare institutions tried to distribute household chemicals but had few opportunities to do so. In some localities, inspections of individuals went so far that special files were maintained to record the condition of each inhabitant.¹⁴²

Another form of preventive healthcare was education. Talks and training about hygiene were held and certain solutions promoted. For example, Piszczac inhabitants discovered a household remedy for pediculosis by mixing potash alum, egg albumen and mercury. A piece of cloth was then immersed in the mixture and wrapped around the neck. Attempts were made to promote that method, but mercury proved difficult to procure.¹⁴³ On instructions of the JSS board, an educational

¹³⁹ JHI, JSS, 211/820, fols. 32–38.

¹⁴⁰ B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie*, pp. 312–315.

¹⁴¹ JHI, JSS, 211/723, fol. 32.

¹⁴² JHI, JSS, 211/505, Letter of the JSS branch in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska to the JSS Board of 23 January 1942, fols. 11–15.

¹⁴³ JHI, JSS, 211/805, fols. 84, 88.

brochure entitled “How to prevent and fight infectious diseases” was written by Dr Stefania Silberberg and widely distributed among committees and branches.¹⁴⁴ Such initiatives were also taken at grassroots level, for example a series of lectures concerning the prevention of infectious diseases was delivered by members of the Jewish Relief Committee’s sanitary commission in Busko, who toured the county and distributed JRC brochures.¹⁴⁵

Apart from epidemics, another issue which social welfare organisations were unable to handle was care for refugees and displaced people. From 1939 to 1942, Jewish population was subject, willingly or not, to constant movements around the GG. The largest numbers of population were affected by compulsory resettlement. The expulsion of Jews and Poles from areas incorporated into the Reich (northern and western Poland) took place in three stages: in December 1939, from February to March 1940 and from January to March 1941. The number of Jews among these refugees is estimated at 80,000–90,000. In May 1940, the first regulation about total removal of Jews from Kraków was issued. The operation lasted several months; at the outset, 13,000 Jews still remained in the city, with about 50,000 resettled to various GG localities. In February and March 1941, almost 50,000 Jews from Warsaw district towns were resettled into the Warsaw ghetto. Conditions in the cordoned and overcrowded ghetto spurred mass flights into the hinterlands, as reported by JSS branches to the central office.¹⁴⁶ Jews were also expelled from Podhale in November 1940. In December 1940, 2,000 poorest Jews were thrown out of Radom, 9,200 banished from Lublin in March 1941, and Jewish inhabitants of Mielec forced to move to the Lublin district in March 1942. The German administration systematically rooted out Jewish presence in the countryside, forcing the population to move to the nearest town. Compulsory resettlement picked up pace when a regulation prohibiting Jews from leaving Jewish quarters on penalty of death was issued on 15 October 1941.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ The brochure can be found in JHI, JSS, 211/108, fols. 9–21. It was issued in the “JSS Library” series as no. 1. Another brochure on how to found and run a soup kitchen was written by Gina Birkenheim, but not published in print.

¹⁴⁵ JHI, JSS, 211/269, fol. 73. The JRC published (as photocopied typescripts) brochures by Dr N. Bałanowski on how to fight typhoid fever and by Dr J. Strzyga on how to provide paramedic aid in emergencies; JHI, JSS, 211/270, fols. 34–70.

¹⁴⁶ A sample report from Michów (Radzyń Podlaski county) says: “While compiling the list of necessary medicines we had regard to [...] a considerable number of refugees from Warsaw and other localities that roll through out town every day in hunger marches. Most of them are extremely exhausted and mortified by their experiences and should be provided with immediate medical attention entirely free of charge”. JHI, JSS, 211/687, fol. 24.

¹⁴⁷ Cz. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec*, pp. 117–132; *Wysiedlenia, wypędzenia i ucieczki 1939–1959. Atlas ziem Polski*, eds. W. Sienkiewicz, G. Hryciuk, Warszawa, 2008, pp. 62–65, 110–114, 123–125. M. Rutowska, *Wysiedlenia ludności polskiej z Kraju Warty do Generalnego Gubernatorstwa 1939–1941*, Poznań, 2003, p. 37; L. Prais, *Displaced Persons at Home. Refugees in the Fabric of Jewish Life in Warsaw, September 1939 – July 1942*, Jerusalem, 2015, pp. 51–185.

Additionally, Jews from Germany, Austria, Slovakia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were resettled into the GG. In February 1940, the GG received 1,200 Jews from Stettin, and in the next month almost 3,000 Jews from Vienna ended up in Opole and Modliborzyce in the Lublin district. From February to April 1941, 4,000 Austrian Jews were forcibly relocated to the Radom district. However, the largest wave of deportations from abroad to the GG took place in the first months of 1942; groups of resettled Jews were moved mainly to the Lublin district (with less than 4,000 others to Warsaw) and then transported to death camps within a few weeks or months.¹⁴⁸

In effect, in most GG localities newcomers accounted for a significant percentage of the Jewish population and occasionally even formed the majority. The situation of displaced people was dramatic. Often, they were not allowed to take anything but hand luggage, and so were deprived for additional clothing, footwear, utensils or basic household items. Accommodating them caused enormous difficulties. Jewish councils tended to place newcomers in private homes of local Jews, but sometimes this was not possible. Displaced people were therefore accommodated in synagogues, schools, deserted factories and the like, converting them into shelters. Such buildings were not fit for residential use due to lack of kitchens and sanitary facilities. Jewish councils and JSS branches were aware of this. Attempts were made to provide shelters with bunks, straw beds, tables, utensils and stoves, but this did not solve the issue of overcrowding and lack of basic amenities. Shelters soon became the hotbeds of typhus and other infectious diseases.

In January 1941, the JSS Board negotiated with the GG administration to provide transports of displaced persons with food for 14 days.¹⁴⁹ Such instances did indeed happen, but the food was not supplied by the authorities; Jews displaced from Vienna to Opole Lubelskie brought supplies donated by the city's Jewish community, while Jews in Płock received allocations from the Red Cross during its visit in the Działdowo camp where they stayed awaiting transport to the Radom district.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, county chiefs often delayed issuing ration cards to displaced persons. Therefore, such persons had to be fully supported by Jewish councils and relief committees for a few weeks after their arrival. Occasionally, the duty to feed the newcomers was imposed on the local population, sometimes via meal surcharges. More frequently, displaced persons were directed to soup kitchens, which caused an upsurge in the number of issued meals and rapid depletion of food stocks.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ *Wysiedlenia, wypędzenia i ucieczki*, pp. 120–124. J. Kielboń, “Deportacje Żydów do dystryktu lubelskiego (1939–1943)”, in: *Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, ed. D. Libionka, Warszawa, 2004, pp. 163, 166, 171–177.

¹⁴⁹ JHI, JSS, 211/5, Circular no. 18 of 29/01/1941, fol. 22.

¹⁵⁰ JHI, JSS, 211/562, fol. 21; 211/762, fol. 20.

¹⁵¹ For example, after the Mielec Jews ended up in Dubienka in March 1942, the local centre tripled the number of served meals with no reserves, food being collected from the locals. JHI, JSS, 211/372, fols. 10, 15.

More than once, arrival of the displaced prompted the establishment of a soup kitchen, especially if the town did not have one before.

To aid displaced people, the JSS Board set aside special funds in addition to regular grants. In March 1941, a decision was made to transfer displaced persons care to JSS advisors to district chiefs, but this idea was abandoned in April due to communication difficulties. Aid was also provided locally by special fundraising of cash and gifts. Additional subsidies were also to be paid by county chiefs, but this did not always happen.¹⁵²

The arrival of large numbers of displaced persons put a huge burden on the local Jewish population and sparked severe tensions. Additional subsidies for the displaced and the increased organisational effort caused envy and a sense of injustice among the locals who oftentimes were themselves steeped in penury. They rebelled against special grants, extra taxes and the need to house the newcomers free of charge.¹⁵³ On the other hand, the AJDC and JSS Board often received anonymous tips that subsidies for displaced people were spent for local needs or simply embezzled, and that local Jewish councils and JSS branches did not care for the displaced at all.¹⁵⁴ Jews displaced from Vienna to Opole Lubelskie even threatened to inform the German authorities about this.¹⁵⁵ Dramatic events unfolded in Grodzisk Dolny near Leżajsk. A group of Jews displaced from Kraków was overlooked when the Jewish council distributed subsidies. A JSS branch member Izak Schwarz who backed them had a bitter argument with the chairman of the Jewish council Markus Stempel. The local Jews, in turn, sided with the council. Physical violence ensued as Schwarz and his family were pelted with stones and the displaced attacked in the synagogue, showered with heavy objects and their sukkahs destroyed.¹⁵⁶ The displaced saw a solution in establishing their own committees and demanded that the JSS Board provide them with aid separate from aid provided to the town. The Board never agreed to this, suggesting that representatives of the displaced should join existing committees and branches. The conflict between the locals and newcomers was one of the most important factors that exploded the Jewish community, although examples of positive coexistence of both groups were not uncommon.¹⁵⁷

My intent is to wrap up this part by briefly discussing three AJDC and JSS areas of activity which were not typical for social welfare but were managed by these organisations in the role as representatives of the GG Jewish population.

¹⁵² JHI, JSS, 211/5, Circulars no. 18 of 29 January 1941, no. 23 of 18 March 1941, no. 27 of 26 April 1941, fols. 22, 27, 34.

¹⁵³ Cf. for example the correspondence of the Jewish council in Kraśniczyn (JHI, AJDC, 210/434, fol. 2) and Mrozy (JHI, AJDC, 210/501, fol. 19).

¹⁵⁴ For example in Kodeń and Szydłowiec: JHI, JSS, 211/543, fol. 35; JSS-Annex, 211A/148, fol. 11.

¹⁵⁵ JHI, JSS, 211/762, fols. 20–37.

¹⁵⁶ JHI, JSS, 211/433, fols. 19–35; 211/434, fols. 3–6.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. B. Engelking, *Życie codzienne Żydów w miasteczkach dystryktu warszawskiego*, pp. 140–145.

The first was intermediation in contacts with other countries and cooperation with the Polish Red Cross. This included sending mail, parcels, allowances and aid with leaving the GG (only possible until mid-1940). Initially, these activities were performed by the AJDC, and from 1941 by the Foreign Relatives Aid Section of the JSS Board.¹⁵⁸ The second area of non-typical activities of aid organisations involved an attempt to regain social insurance benefits for Jews. As mentioned above, by the end of 1939 the Jews were deprived of retirement and disability benefits, but their employers still paid the respective premiums to the Social Security Agency. The matter was negotiated, first in Warsaw and then in Kraków, by Michał Weichert. As soon as the JSS Board was constituted, Jewish councils were asked to provide lists of persons eligible for such benefits.¹⁵⁹ The talks, lasting until mid-1941, ended in failure.¹⁶⁰

The third non-typical area was the so-called constructive aid. In the initial stage of occupation, it consisted, just like before the war, in the AJDC granting entrepreneurs minor loans to open their own workshops.¹⁶¹ In some localities, attempts were made to continue the activities of the Gemilus Chesed interest-free loan funds.¹⁶² The JSS Board established an Employment Aid Division and an Economic Aid Division whose task was to manage matters related to employment of Jews. By the end of 1941, the aid was limited to conducting vocational training in crafts and agriculture.¹⁶³ In 1942, the Board expanded its activities in this respect. In January 1942, a circular was sent to all facilities, urging them to find farming jobs for Jews in nearby land estates. Giving support for employing Jews and sending a word to the landowners was even promised by count Adam Ronikier, the chairman of the Central Welfare Council.¹⁶⁴ In reply to the circular, reports were sent from the entire GG showing multiple successful attempts to send young people to work in the countryside.¹⁶⁵ This required contacting the administration because of the already effective prohibition of leaving the place of residence, as well as registering the workers in the Labour Office and exempting them from compulsory work.

¹⁵⁸ "Działalność Centrali Jointu w Polsce", in: *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 27: *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna w Warszawie*, pp. 393–394. NLI, Michael Weichert Archive, Ms. Var. 371.11.21.

¹⁵⁹ JHI, JSS, 211/4, Circular no. 6 of 12/09/1940, fols. 26–27. The lists can be found in the Kraków SA, JSH, 2125/1–64.

¹⁶⁰ JHI, JSS, 211/118, fols. 48, 50.

¹⁶¹ "Działalność Centrali Jointu w Polsce", in: *Archiwum Ringelbluma*, vol. 27: *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna w Warszawie 1939–1943*, pp. 378–380.

¹⁶² This was successful, among others, in Opoczno, where such a fund was maintained by the Jewish council until January 1941, JHI, AJDC, 210/526, fols. 7, 19.

¹⁶³ Cf. reports of Józef Jaszuński (JHI, JSS, 211/117, fols. 83–95; 211/120, fols. 63–64), as well as a list of amounts paid out of the vocational education fund (JHI, JSS, 211/119, fol. 85).

¹⁶⁴ JHI, JSS, 211/7, Circular no. 50 of 5 January 1942 r., fols. 1–3; JHI, JSS, 211/121, Letter of J. Jaszuński to the JSS Board of 5 February 1942, fol. 97.

¹⁶⁵ Reports of the JSS Board sent to J. Jaszuński, JHI, JSS, 211/121–123, *passim*.

In late 1941 and early 1942, the Board made an attempt to interest the GG administration in using the labour of Jewish craftsmen and homeworkers at a wider scale. In some cities, such as Warsaw, Bochnia and Tarnów, workshops already existed and were successfully winning contracts from German companies.¹⁶⁶ The Board wished to promote this scheme and asked committees and branches to assess the number of potentially interested craftsmen in each industry and the opportunities for finding orders locally.¹⁶⁷ Labour cooperatives thus slowly started to emerge, faced with the extreme challenge of obtaining orders and raw materials. In March 1942, Operation Reinhardt started, prompting deportations to death camps. Reports sent to Kraków suggested that craftsmen and industrial workers were usually spared. The urge to found cooperatives therefore increased. In a dramatic circular of 11 June 1942, the Board emphasised the gravity of the matter, unable to openly say that saving as many Jewish lives as possible was at stake.¹⁶⁸ As with farming jobs, in this matter the Board's role was likewise to inspire and advise.

The role of JSS as a central organisation was very important. Once it was established, Jewish social welfare gained legal protection and another source of financing. The Board could negotiate various matters with the GG administration (insurance, central food allocations, orders for labour cooperatives), distribute foreign gifts and central subsidies, and encourage various forms of activity. It cannot but be concluded that local committees and branches had to act very independently and, most of the time, were on their own. Too often, even in times of crisis, the Board replied that no funds for aid are available. The external subsidy amounts decreased steadily and a town's social welfare had to be maintained by the inhabitants themselves. The attitude of the local German administration was also essential. Letters sent by and to committees and branches show the important role of local activists and conditions that determined the scale and efficiency of social welfare in ghettos.

Conclusions

The history of Jewish social welfare during the German occupation can be divided into three phases. In the first, welfare activities were undertaken by Jewish councils and pre-war associations. They were financed from internal sources (fees, taxes) and by the AJDC which attempted to supervise and concentrate welfare. In the second, JSH was established as the sole central and official social welfare institution for the Jews. Diminishing AJDC grants were supplemented by GG administration subsidies and, in some areas, by city and county chief subsidies. The forms

¹⁶⁶ B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie*, pp. 425–438; D. Swałtek, "Salomon Greiwer i Warszaty Miejskie w Bochni", in: *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, 12 (2016), pp. 242–263.

¹⁶⁷ JHI, JSS, 211/7, Circular no. 55 of 18/02/1942, fol. 11.

¹⁶⁸ JHI, JSS, 211/7, Circular no. 61 of 11/06/1942, fols. 21–22.

and extent of welfare activities in both phases were similar: distribution of food, clothing, medicine, cash allowances, establishment and operation of soup kitchens, first aid stations, child centres, hospitals and orphanages. In the first year of the occupation, fee collection was certainly easier, as the population still had some financial resources. Foreign aid also arrived in larger quantities. The third phase is the activity of the JUS in 1943-1944, consisting in distributing foreign humanitarian aid, financed entirely from abroad, among inmates of Jewish labour camps.

It goes without saying that the aid was insufficient. In June 1941, the JSS Board used 315 questionnaires returned from various GG localities to calculate that, on average, 45% of the Jewish population in these areas, or 765,000 people, relied solely on social welfare. It was estimated that, to offer them minimum aid, the JSS budget had to equal almost 23 million zlotys per month.¹⁶⁹ AJDC's preliminary budget for the first half of 1942 mentioned a much more modest figure of 67 million zlotys for six months, a condition far from ideal.¹⁷⁰ With distributed funds being so meagre, conflicts and frustrations simmered and cases of abuse and misappropriation occurred. On the other hand, however, social welfare activities was a sphere of public life in which the Jewish population could demonstrate its solidarity and empathy. It is a fact that in the majority of large and small towns poor Jews collected money, food and clothing for their still poorer co-religionists until the very end. Weichert's attempt to maintain a central welfare institution was dictated by the wish to save the remnant of the Jewish people. The aid provided was symbolic in both senses of the word: while materially meagre, it was a sign of continued communal existence.¹⁷¹

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¹⁶⁹ M. Weichert, *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*, p. 176.

¹⁷⁰ JHI, AJDC, 210/2, Gesamtaufstellung der Ausgaben für die Wohlfahrtsaktion in Generalgouvernement für das erste Halbjahr 1942, fol. 3.

¹⁷¹ Cf. B. Engelking, *Życie codzienne Żydów w miasteczkach dystryktu warszawskiego*, p. 159.

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