

The Press of the Warsaw Ghetto: Poale' Zion Left and Poale' Zion Right

Summary

The present volume of the Ringelblum Archive materials contains the clandestine publications of Poale' Zion Left and Poale' Zion Right. The founder and leading ideologist of this political movement was Ber Borochov. His biography and an outline of the political doctrine he conceived, as well as an outline of the movement's structure in the years 1918-1939 and in the Warsaw Ghetto, are included in the introduction.

It is followed by documents divided in two groups, according to the movement's "Left" and "Right". However, the division is rather formal, taking into account the rapprochement between them in the ghetto. This press almost entirely belongs to the propaganda-political type of publications. Its contents feature three basic segments: War communications, texts concerning the present situation of the Jewish population and historical-ideological essays. None of these categories refers to any particular title, they are intertwined in given issues without any assumed order. The texts are usually not signed, or signed with organisation names, initials or pen-names.

The most pronounced characteristics of the press included in this volume is its high level of ideologism. All data, both historical and contemporary, are interpreted most often through their leading socialist-Zionist doctrine. Hence the omnipresent reference to the Soviet Union and its expected decisive role in fighting German fascism. The Palestinian question, which was objectively marginal at that moment, was also over-represented. This approach can be seen even in war communications. They lose their original character in order to become a mirror for the ideology. In the clandestine press we find reviews of the current official German press, sometimes also from other countries, as well as Polish and Jewish underground publications. Some texts are reprinted, aimed at their distributing or as bases for polemics.

For these titles' editors the information on occupied Poland was mainly obtained with the help of the "Oneg Shabbat". The information was included in almost every issue, however, it was presented in various ways. The most detailed are articles on the Warsaw Ghetto, with the data on prices, smuggling goods, raising mortality rates, November 1941 executions, and others. There are reports on the fate of Jews in Wartheland, including information on the killing centre in Chelmno on the Ner (Kulmhof).

There is repeated information on the murder of Jews in Zaręby Kościelne, on the fate of Jews in the districts of Białystok and Galicia.

The majority of space was devoted to ideological texts, reports from Palestine and visions of the post-war Jewish future. The latter was built upon the implementation of socialist ideals, establishment of the Jewish Workers' Centre in the Land of Israel, and visions of democratic Europe and the whole world. They commonly stress the role of socialism and the Soviet Union's leading role as a remedy for human suffering. We find also extensive texts on Jewish and universal history and culture, including the revolution of 1917, workers' uprisings in Germany and Austria, history of the Commune of Paris, and ancient ghettos.