

The Department of Statistics

One evening in March 1942, Józef appeared, unexpectedly, at the farm in Żarki. His appearance aroused astonishment and anxiety - usually, they announced visits from the leadership, in advance, by telephone from Warsaw. (The leadership centre in Warsaw was in a bunker, under Landau's factory on ul. Nowolipki. His daughter, Margalit, was a member of the cell - she later fell in the ghetto uprising - and her father was a friend of the Movement. Thanks to his aid, the leadership was able to take advantage, despite German supervision, of the long-distance telephone that was in his office and deliver messages, according to pre-determined codes, to the Movement's centres in the provincial towns). The late hour of his arrival was also surprising. At that hour, there was no connection between the town and the railway station, fifteen kilometres away. And this is the story of what happened:

The previous night, strong patrols of SS men appeared near midnight in the Warsaw Ghetto. They went from place to place by address, looking for Jews who were registered in a list which they had. When they found someone they were looking for, they verified his identity very meticulously, whereupon they took him out into the street, where he was shot and killed on the spot. About fifty people were murdered that night. The dead were forbidden to be buried for twenty-four hours. "This is a method of education", the Nazi commissioner said

The next day, it became clear that the dead were mostly members of the ŻTOS [Jewish Social Welfare Society] Department of Statistics, as well as other individuals, who had connections with certain circles within the Polish public.

The ŻTOS Department of Statistics was established as early as in the beginning of 1940, when the Warsaw Jewry's social aid institutions were first developed. Its primary task was bookkeeping and overseeing the sums spent to support those in need and on the meals provided in the "public kitchens". Its main role, however, far exceeded the "culinary" framework. Mgr¹ Linde, who headed it, began publishing "notebooks" - accounts of the Society's social aid, which surreptitiously reflected the situation of the Jews in Warsaw. Thus, for example, through the section "Aid to Victims in the Event of a Family Disaster", the rate of mortality in the ghetto was recorded. The number of people supported with free meals in the "public kitchens" was given in comparison to the whole population. "Assistance to Refugees" highlighted the tragic situation of the Jews, who had been deported from northern Poland and its western regions, and who had arrived in Warsaw with nothing. The numbers and accounts regarding the medical relief highlighted the terrible morbidity in the ghetto, where epidemics spread, etc., etc.

Over time, the Department of Statistics expanded its operations. It collected testimonies from the refugees who came from the eastern provinces which were occupied in the summer of 1941, who reported on the atrocity and killing committed there by the Germans. Linde, himself, was a popular lecturer on the work of the ŻTOS. The lectures were accompanied by an overhead projector and statistics, from whose dry numbers rose the cry of the Jews festering in hunger and disease.

The role of the Department was to gather material on Jewish martyrdom under Nazi occupation, and also to make connections with Polish circles. This activity was to the displeasure of the Jewish Council [*Judenrat*] appointed by the Germans and the OD men (the Jewish Police) who, even then, already concentrated the scum of the Jewish community in Warsaw. The Germans found out.

¹ [TN: Abbreviation "Mgr." (מג'ר.) in the Hebrew original – meaning "magister" – the holder of a Master's degree.]

Several of our members, with Józef at their head, participated in the work of the Department of Statistics. He, too, was on the list of fifty, but had not slept for a long time in his regular flat, as he changed his lodgings on a nightly basis.

A few hours after the searches, Józef left Warsaw and, in the evening arrived, at the farm in Żarki. On the next day, Tosia announced by phone that everything was quiet in the city. A week later, Józef returned to Warsaw.