

Notes

Protocol from 27 and 28 September 1949.

Type of document: Handwritten testimony during Dawid Gertler trial, defense witnesses

Witness name: TREGER

Language: Yiddish and Polish

Date:

Place:

I arrived at the Lodz ghetto at the end of 1942 and stayed there until August 1944. I was responsible for control over the kitchens and also had control over the Cooperative department. (...)

He asked permission to speak in Polish. The judge agrees and Wajzman (member of Central Revisions Committee) who is present will translate.

At the end of 1942, I came to the Lodz ghetto. At the same time in the Warsaw Ghetto, a resettlement action had been executed.

In 1941, in the Warsaw Ghetto, my wife talked to people from Lodz. By that time Gertler had come to the city (Warsaw). Huge crowds were waiting at the lane outside Gertler's apartment. People waited for material help and also to find out what was going on with their family members in Lodz. My wife also talked to Gertler to find out what was going on with her family in the Lodz ghetto. Thanks to that, I met Gertler, with whom I talked with about many issues. I knew that my future was in the Lodz ghetto, because my wife's parents wanted us to come back.

Speaking of Warsaw ghetto, the ghetto was making a big impression on Jews from Lodz ghetto because of the luxury shop windows. For me, these people were coming from a different world. (By the way, next to the luxury establishments in the Warsaw ghetto, one could see famine, destitution, and corpses in the streets). Then Gertler asked me what was better: the Warsaw or the Lodz ghetto? If it comes to comparing the two, more people survived in the Lodz ghetto than in the Warsaw ghetto.

Each time that Gertler would come to Warsaw, he was selling stuff. I was surprised by his passion to do business. He seemed to be a fine man. Every month I visited Gertler in the Warsaw ghetto and I had the pleasure to discuss with him social affairs. It lasted until June 1942.

Panic enveloped the Warsaw ghetto; everyone kept saying that something horrible was about to happen. So I asked Gertler if he could help me because I wanted to go to the Lodz ghetto. He told me that it was complicated and he thought about taking his wife to the Lodz ghetto. He also wanted to take more people. He was not taken by the panic.

In June 1942, the resettlement commenced in the Warsaw Ghetto. In August 1942, I heard gossip that Gertler was coming from Lodz. I was told that he was coming in the morning. A group of about 20 people had been waiting for him since 6 in the morning until 2 in the afternoon. The resettlement action was in progress literally around us; there were shootings and beatings. Finally, a big truck came with three uniformed Germans; Gertler came out of the car and said that he would take us. We got very excited. We got in the car and Gertler covered us with a big blanket, but then some Germans came and Gertler told us to get out of the car. He said that the security guards

had changed on the main gate to the ghetto. Gertler could bribe them as well, but the Germans were afraid.

Gertler gave us an address to one Pole – Muszynski [name unclear – U. M.] and said that if somebody appeared there, he would rescue us. Gertler ordered me to give this address to everyone and ensured them that they would be rescued. I went first with my wife because I knew I had an Aryan appearance. The Pole – Muszynski received us very hospitably. He could face execution for hiding Jews. This Pole gave me a telephone number to the Lodz ghetto, and because of that I was able to speak with Gertler. I waited for two weeks at this Pole's place because in the Lodz ghetto the "Szpera" was going on. This gave Gertler a chance to leave to come and get us. One night, somebody knocked on Muszynski's door. His wife got scared, and she told me to jump out of the balcony. They asked in Polish: who was this, and it happened to be Gertler. So the next day Gertler took us [him and his wife – U.M.] with this Pole.

In the Lodz ghetto many people were talking to me, asking what was going on in the Warsaw ghetto. Rumkowski bragged that thanks to him people in the Lodz ghetto would survive the war. Rumkowski offered me a position on the Jewish Council and I said I would talk about this with Gertler. In the meantime, I lost everyone I knew in the Warsaw ghetto. Gertler wanted me to have a position in the ghetto, which would be proportional to my knowledge. He told me the first get to know what kind of relations were in the ghetto. I stated corruption, immorality, and sexual immorality. I have realized that everyone who has a bit of power thinks that they can do whatever they want. There is no price; nothing could stop them from achieving their own comfort and pleasure. People were starving and there was a lot of corruption. Not only were the Germans corrupt, but members of the Jewish Council were also corrupt. Gertler told me that the fact that I could see this was not enough- we needed to do something to stop it. I told Gertler there was a need to control and inspect. Gertler enthusiastically accepted my proposal of control for victualing. I established a department of control (Sonderabteilung), which lasted until Gertler was arrested.

After taking control prices of food increased (before the inspection – bread cost 100 RM and after 1000 RM. Bread was so expensive because there was a little of it, but the numbers for corruption and stealing went down). Ration was one loaf of bread for 8 days. Before I took the position, there was a lot of theft. We ran out of bread, so people would receive a special "note of debt". Why we ran out of bread- nobody knew (...) there was 25 dag per day per capita. We controlled the kitchens and the jatkes [ritual butchers – U.M.].

Gertler took control over food supplies after the unforeseen additional importation. The regular provisions were controlled by Rumkowski. Gertler brought transports of meat and vegetables for the sick with the help of the department of control. At 5 in the morning, Gertler would already be in the bakery and by lunch time he was in the square, where they kept the vegetables. I was responsible for controlling the butchers. Once I noticed there was a crowd of people waiting for food. The Jewish police had difficulty keeping them calm, and they had to beat them. It was a crowd of hungry people, and suddenly Gertler arrived. He calmed the people down without beating them. People were pushing each other to get inside the butcher shop because they were afraid there wouldn't be enough meat. When Gertler assured them that everyone would receive meat, the crowd calmed down.

I noticed that Rumkowski was sending people to the bakery [to work – U. M.] so they could eat one's fill. Because Germans didn't allow anybody to take a break or a holiday, I came up with an idea called "secret vacation" for people who were extremely exhausted. I proposed that this vacation would last 4 weeks. This way, more people could use this vacation. Gertler had to fight with Rumkowski over this idea. They introduced a "benching system". This was Gertler's idea; care and control. If it wasn't for Gertler, the Kripo or Romkowski would have taken the program away within 24 hours. I completely understood my control activities because of Gertler.

What kind of control did the other departments have – for example – at the cooperative department? A sack of sugar weighed 100 kilograms. They were giving 20 dag per capita, 80 kilograms instead of 100, so the difference was 20 kilograms on every sack, which passed control. I ordered them to will call me every time they encountered this difference, because I noticed that sometimes the weight was correct, but the sugar was wet. Because of that, when they transferred the sugar from the department of victualing to the department of cooperative- it was written on the protocol: (100 kilograms, dry sugar) (...).

Gertler was bringing in products over the quota, which became the norm. These products were coming from outside the ghetto and also from (...). I don't know where Gertler got the money to do this. In the ghetto we had our own money, but that money didn't have any value outside the ghetto. I was wondering how Gertler was able to keep giving money away in the Warsaw ghetto: for example, he gave money to the rabbis. Gertler's wife confirmed that he was giving money away. He was bringing money to the Warsaw ghetto and was giving it away.

One day Gertler was distraught, because this the time when he entered the Warsaw ghetto, he was strip searched. They found his dollars, cash, and gold. They took away his documents and everything that he was carrying, and he was afraid that he wouldn't be able to leave the Warsaw ghetto. Afterwards, Gertler told me that he had resolved the issue.

Sonderabteilung had uniformed policemen and also post office's workers and physicians that had uniforms. The police division of *Sonderabteilung* was responsible for conducting revisions (home visits): home visits took place because of two reasons:

1. There were cases that people denounced others to *Sonderabteilung*, saying that in the street or in a certain place, there are items buried under the ground. In that case, the *Sonderabteilung* had to go and check that information, otherwise the person who made that claim would go to the Kripo instead.

2. There were cases where the owner of these belongings was afraid that he would be called by the Kripo and didn't want to say anything about his belongings. The owner thought it was better to tell the *Sonderabteilung*, so they would give him written proof and afterwards would keep his money.

I'm aware of Rumkowski's statement, which encouraged people to disclose information about their hidden valuable items. People didn't trust Rumkowski's statement; they were afraid that it was a trick.

On the court's question about whether Gertler acted as a confidant, I responded: the nature of his actions was that of a liaison rather than a collaborative nature. (...) Gertler was doing everything overtly. For example he talked to the Germans on the street

so everyone could see him. When I talked to Gertler, I often heard from him that the Germans were going to lose the war and if any decent German existed, he deserved two bullets. Then I came to the conclusion that Gertler and the Germans only did business. Why was he able to come into the Warsaw ghetto during resettlement? In this case, Gertler's money and courage mattered.

Gertler sponsored all of the secret radio stations in the ghetto. All of the political parties in the ghetto were in touch with Gertler and he supported all of them. After Gertler was arrested – half a year after that – somebody denounced the owners of the radio stations and they were arrested as well. When Gertler worked in the ghetto, it was a time of “freedom of speech”. By the time Gertler was arrested and disappeared, the entire ghetto was in mourning. When rumors began to spread that Gertler was about to come back, the entire ghetto population came out to welcome him. When I came to my wife's parents, my wife's sister gave her child, 5 years old girl and my brother-in-law gave us three kids, who were all alive thanks to Gertler.

I heard many good things about Gertler in the Lodz ghetto. If it comes to relations between Rumkowski and Gertler, you could describe them using Trotski's words: “no peace, no war”. Rumkowski was the master of the ghetto. Whenever somebody wanted to do something in the ghetto, they first had to convince Rumkowski that it was a good idea. The occupation wasn't as distressing as Rumkowski's authority. Gertler had the difficult task of convincing Rumkowski. Of course Gertler had better relations with the Germans than Rumkowski because Gertler was doing business with the Germans. Gertler got Czarnecki out of the prison because he got Bibow's permission. There were cases when Rumkowski ordered for some people to be arrested and imprisoned until resettlement. Thanks to Gertler bribing the Germans, he could set these people free. When Rumkowski wasn't successful with the Germans, it was beneficial to the ghetto. What Gertler did (bribing Germans) wasn't anything special back then. It was so simple that even a child could do it, but Rumkowski didn't want to do that.

I have known Gertler since the fall of 1941. My wife didn't know him before that. In the Lodz ghetto, I realized that my wife's family knew Gertler, but I did not know if they knew him prior to the war. I knew that Gertler had been arrested. For the first time, I had the impression that it was not because of smuggling. When it came to the second time he was arrested, it was because the Gestapo saw Gertler as a person who controlled the ghetto population. During the time of the last resettlement, the last act of (...) some of them went straight to the wagons.

On the question which is one of public opinion: Jewish police or (...) had better value – so even the (...) if he had the chance to steal he would because he was hungry. During the last action of resettlement people used to say that if Gertler had been here, this resettlement would not have taken place. Coincidentally by putting Gertler and the Germans together, people made a cheater out of him, perhaps even against their own will – the Jews imprisoned him. Before the war, Gertler was a secretary of an association. He was afraid of the Germans because they looked for people like him to send to the camps. After the Germans invaded, Gertler had to change his address; he had to do this to make sure that they would leave him alone. Germans did not understand Jewish problems, so Gertler could bribe them and afterwards he could bribe them again in the name of another Jewish person.

I didn't have a position in Warsaw. I didn't know that Gertler was transporting people from the Lodz ghetto to the Warsaw ghetto. I asked them why they chose to go to the Warsaw ghetto and they said that they believed that they would be safer in Warsaw – they were dazzled by the luxury and the cabarets even though outside there were thousands of corpses. I left the Warsaw ghetto during the resettlement and at the same time, the Warsaw ghetto uprising had started. During the time that I spent in the Lodz ghetto, the action of resettlement took place only once in August 1944. At that time, the Sonder [Sonderabteilung - Special Unit – U.M.] was sent away. In the Warsaw ghetto, there were Jewish police and another unit called the Btka, although for a very short time and it was closed down. The Jewish sign in Lodz was a yellow star and in Warsaw it was an armband. In the Lodz ghetto everyone had to work in a forced labor camp. I didn't know the Jewish Council (Judenrat) from the Lodz ghetto because it didn't exist. That was only Jewish (...) – Rumkowski. If I didn't inform Rumkowski that I would ask Gertler about what kind of job I was supposed to do, he would allocate me work. I had good relations with Gertler, and that saved my life. (...)

If a member of the Sonder [Sonderabteilung – U. M.] wanted to beat someone and somebody higher up in the hierarchy found out about that, the person would be removed from the Sonderabteilung.

During the prior actions, I wasn't in the Lodz ghetto. My brother-in-law or my sister-in-law, whose kids were saved by Gertler, were ordinary people in the ghetto.