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**„OUR CHILDREN MUST LIVE” BECAUSE  
„THE CHILD IS THE MOST SACRED THING WE HAVE.”  
THE PORTRAYAL IN *GAZETA ŻYDOWSKA*  
OF THE CHILDREN’S MONTH CAMPAIGN  
IN THE WARSAW GHETTO\***

The first Children’s Month during World War II was organized in late summer and early autumn of 1940, shortly before the Warsaw Jews were confined within the walls of the ghetto. It was a reference to the nationwide Week of the Child<sup>1</sup>, since 1928 celebrated in the Second Polish Republic in September under the patronage of the Polish Committee for Childcare<sup>2</sup>. As in the case of its pre-war model, the wartime campaign was intended to draw attention to children in need and to collect as much money as possible for their welfare.

\* The article is a translation of the Polish version of the text.

- 1 In the documents concerning the organization of the first interwar Week of the Child, we read that its aim was: „above all, to raise awareness among the general public of the child’s fundamental concerns, and in particular of the child’s welfare. We must honestly say that so far there has been no general, extensive interest in the child in our society. The child has been dealt with professionally or out of love by individuals, institutions and authorities, yet the society itself does not know and does not appreciate children’s affairs and pays little heed to them”; in: *Sprawozdanie Polskiego Komitetu Opieki nad Dzieckiem. Tydzień Dziecka 1928–1929*, Warszawa 1930, p. 5.
- 2 Polski Komitet Opieki nad Dzieckiem (Polish Childcare Committee) was established in 1928. It was among others entrusted with the construction and operation of care and educational facilities as well as the creation of special care facilities for children with disabilities. It moreover published the magazine *Życie Dziecka* (dedicated to the protection of motherhood as well as child and youth care), which came out between 1932 and 1937. Importantly, the first issue of the periodical of April 1932 published an article by Zofia Rozenblum, who later served as the chief physician of the Centos in the Warsaw Ghetto.

We read about it in the documents of the Jewish Social Self-Help<sup>3</sup>, which was formally responsible for the running of the endeavour: “This action [...] gained great popularity in the Jewish community and was significant for propaganda and educational purposes, yet its financial impact was small due to the impoverishment of the population and the substantial needs (we raised about 100 thousand zlotys)”<sup>4</sup>. Historical records from that time include the following note: “The public was made aware of the present-day plight of the Jewish child and of the care facilities run by the Centos<sup>5</sup>, especially orphanages that are under imminent threat. The slogan of emergency aid for children and orphans: thousands of people volunteered with their taxes already in August”<sup>6</sup>. It is therefore difficult to call it a full success or a complete failure, as the time did not favour universal generosity. One thing that was achieved was probably to draw attention to the problem of children in need. Most likely, the key to achieving the goal of the campaign was to involve home committees in it<sup>7</sup>, which could operate in the individual houses far more efficiently than the central organisation within the city limits. In August 1940, a special instruction was issued to the home committees, which emphasised that the Children’s Month collection was complementary to other collections and was to be held parallel to other actions. The instruction also included a lot of logistical advice (concerning the organization of fundraising events and social gatherings, as well as the sale of charity coupons), including a proposal to dispatch special speakers (representing the Jewish Social Self-Help) to the residents of particular buildings to make them aware of the importance of the

- 3 Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna, or Jewish Social Self-Help, was an official organisation of social work for the Jews in the General Government. Established on 29 May 1940, it was presided over by the presidium headed by Michał Weichert. Its local units created and supplied shelters for refugees and displaced persons, orphanages, old people’s homes, food kitchens, and distributed foodstuffs. Working under the auspices of the Jewish Social Self-Help were various social and cultural organisations, e.g. Centrala Związku Towarzystw Opieki nad Sierotami i Dziećmi Opuszczonymi (Central Office of the Union of Societies for the Care of Orphans and Abandoned Children, Centos), Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia (Society for Health Protection, TOZ) or Organizacja Rozwoju Twórczości Ludności Żydowskiej w Polsce (Organisation for the Development of the Arts of the Jewish Population in Poland, ORT). The Jewish Social Self-Help was dissolved on 29 July 1942; after: *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 27: *Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna (1939–1943)*, ed. A. Bańkowska and M. Ferenc-Piotrowska, Warszawa 2017, p. 1192.
- 4 Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, hereinafter: AŻIH], file no. 211/11, scan 4. Detailed financial data on the income obtained in the Month of the Child held in 1940 can be found in the report of 23 October 1940; see AŻIH, file no. 211/11, scan 41.
- 5 Centos is an acronym for Centrala Związku Towarzystw Opieki nad Sierotami i Dziećmi Opuszczonymi, or the Central Office of the Union of Societies for the Care of Orphans and Abandoned Children, established in 1924. It operated in the Warsaw Ghetto, where it ran all kinds of foster care homes, including orphanages and boarding houses, day care centres for children of refugees and displaced persons, as well as children’s premises operating at home committees; after: *Archiwum Ringelbluma...*, vol. 27, p. 1184.
- 6 AŻIH, file no. 211/1084, scan 25.
- 7 The home committee was the basic unit of the Social Sector of the Jewish Social Self-Help and gathered representatives of one (sometimes more) house. Its objective was to inspire and organize mutual assistance among neighbours, collect contributions, carry out collections, and control the distribution of goods from social welfare organizations. Home committees were established in September 1939 on the basis of voluntary anti-aircraft defence units. They were extended in the spring of 1940 and subordinated to the Jewish Social Self-Help, the Coordination Committee. Over one thousand home committees operated in the Warsaw Ghetto; after: *Archiwum Ringelbluma...*, vol. 27, p. 1186.

collection<sup>8</sup>. The action was supported by emotive propaganda slogans such as “Save children as long as you can” and “Children are waiting”<sup>9</sup>.

Children’s Month in 1941 coordinated by the Jewish Social Self-Help and carried out by Centos staff, was celebrated across the General Government, yet it was the best promoted and had the widest appeal in Warsaw, where the ghetto had been established nearly a year before<sup>10</sup>. This was due to both the size of the closed district and the huge number of people in need of help, particularly newly arrived refugee and displaced children. It is this particular campaign I would like to focus on. However, I am interested not so much in a thorough historical reconstruction of the 1941 Children’s Month activities as in how they were depicted (for an extended period of time) in *Gazeta Żydowska*, i.e. a magazine licensed by the Germans for the inhabitants of the ghettos of the General Government. I will be interested in the journalistic narrative itself and the way in which this initiative was described to the imaginary readers of this periodical, which was otherwise interesting as to its content<sup>11</sup>. This periodical as a historical resource has been often the subject of scientific studies, which indicated its ambiguous character and scholarly merit<sup>12</sup>. *Gazeta Żydowska* came out in a unique communication space, where even seemingly innocuous information was imbued with propaganda and racial hatred. One of the major issues raised by *Gazeta Żydowska* were those of assistance to the persons or groups in need. One of them were, naturally, children, including orphans and abandoned minors. It is not surprising, therefore, that apart from general reports on care activities, such as reportages from various institutions or information on gifts donated to them, in 1941 a great deal of space was devoted to the Children’s Month. However, it should be stressed at the outset that no matter how carefree and optimistic *Gazeta Żydowska* articles were about this action, the situation of abandoned children and orphans in the Warsaw Ghetto was undoubtedly tragic, as evidenced by the extant official documents and memoirs of people directly involved in aid activities.

It is not my aim to reconstruct the motivations of the people publishing in *Gazeta Żydowska*, although I will try to comment at least briefly on the ef-

8 AŻIH, file no. 211/108, scan 64

9 AŻIH, file no. 211/108, scan 113.

10 The course of events of the Month of the Child in the Krakow Ghetto was accounted for by Martyna Grądzka-Rejak, eadem, “Chrońmy dziecko przed ulicą!”. Miesiąc Dziecka w getcie krakowskim w świetle publikacji Gazety Żydowskiej”; in: *Zdeptane dzieciństwo. II wojna światowa i jej wpływ na sytuację dzieci*, ed. A. Bartuś, P. Trojański, Oświęcim 2017, p. 229–244.

11 In the introduction to the monograph on the Warsaw Ghetto, Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak wrote: „The press, both legal and underground, published on either side of the wall, was a valuable source in our research on the Warsaw Ghetto. Particularly noteworthy is *Gazeta Żydowska*, the only Jewish periodical in the General Government licensed by the occupant, published in Polish and published in Krakow between July 1940 and August 1942. We are fully aware that *Gazeta Żydowska*, next to *Nowy Kurier Warszawski*, [...] represents the press servile to the Nazis, yet when skilfully read, it becomes a priceless source of information about the everyday life of the ghetto”; after: B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, Warszawa 2013, p. 19.

12 See e.g. M. Janczewska, *Gazeta Żydowska (1940–1942)”; in: Studia z dziejów trójjęzycznej prasy żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich (XIX–XX w.)*, ed. J. Nalewajko-Kulikov, Warszawa 2012, p. 167–180.

fect of their journalistic activities concerning the description of the reality of care provision in the Warsaw Ghetto. Another issue which I am not concerned with at the moment, either, is that of the popularity of *Gazeta Żydowska* with readers and its real impact. It is known to be a channel of information generally mistrusted by the public. It is enough to quote here the opinion of Ludwik Landau, who wrote about the new magazine as follows:

A few more words about the newspaper itself, or which today's issue is the third in a row. The paper is edited in Polish - apparently this is supposed to attract a wider readership. [...] The whole tenor of the newspaper, similar to that of *Nowy Kurier Warszawski*, is maudlin sympathy for the fate of the Jews, naturally coupled with admiration for the brilliant decisions and plans of the Germans<sup>13</sup>.

Writing about Children's Month held in Warsaw, yet already in the ghetto, seen through the eyes of reporters or, more broadly speaking, people working for *Gazeta Żydowska*, I navigate a special discourse. These were texts written in a particular space-time and for a particular recipient, with a very specific intention. The language of *Gazeta Żydowska* is therefore the language I will use here on purpose and in abundance, in order to immerse myself in this particular way of describing reality, rarely adding comments based on sources external to the periodical. However, what will interest me on a par with formal, communication and language issues, and what is inseparable from them are the issues related to the children themselves. I would like to take a closer look at how they are presented there, as the object or, one would believe, as the subject of the whole campaign. I will also try to analyse how the periodical wrote about the organizers or private benefactors working for the sake of the needy, and what goals and tasks were attributed by *Gazeta Żydowska* to the activities of the Children's Month initiative and how their effects were presented.

Importantly, already during the summer months of 1941, preparations for this endeavour were being made in the Centos centres and the President of the Judenrat, Adam Czerniaków, tried to get the German authorities to look favourably on this idea, as he wrote in his diary already in the first days of September<sup>14</sup>. *Gazeta Żydowska* officially announced preparations for Children's Month in a short note only on 10 September 1941: "The Children's Month campaign is going to commence on the 15 day of this month and will last until 15 October this year. We ask already now that no one evades participation in the events organized during that time"<sup>15</sup>. It was the very first announcement about the planned launch. The second one, much more extensive, came out two days later and sounded a little less enigmatic:

13 L. Landau, *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji*, Warszawa 1962, vol. 1, p. 613.

14 Adam Czerniakowa dziennik z getta warszawskiego, ed. M. Fuks, Warszawa 1983, p. 213.

15 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 10 September 1941 (no. 83), p. 3.

As in previous years, the Centos proclaimed a large-scale campaign called Children's Month, which aims primarily to interest the widest possible masses in the Jewish community in matters related to children. [...] During the period from September 15 to October 15 this year, awareness-raising initiatives will be carried out, informing the public of the current tasks and needs of the childcare institutions. [...] Jewish society [...] must now pool all its resources in order to contribute with a doubled energy to enabling the child to survive the war and must fulfil its sacred duty without fail. The child is the future of the nation! The child is the most sacred thing we have! [...] All of us must unite in our work for the child<sup>16</sup>.

The whole project was to last a month, thirty-one days to be precise, which was undoubtedly an ambitious goal in comparison with the pre-war projects which lasted a mere week. The goals of the action were not clearly defined; there is talk of raising public awareness about children's issues. At that time, it had not yet been revealed how many people are to benefit. A little over a week later, a new advertisement was published in *Gazeta Żydowska*, correcting the earlier announcement. In the issue of 19 September we read that:

The Centos, the most viable institution of the Jewish quarter in the field of childcare, begins organizing the Month of the Child from September 20 to October 20, 1941, during which time [...] parties, concerts, artistic events, children's games, exhibitions of children's works, etc. will be organized, and there will also be a collection of money and goods for the benefit of the Centos institutions. The society will no doubt welcome this very useful action<sup>17</sup>.

It is interesting to note the great variety and unquestionable breadth of the activities undertaken. While earlier there was talk about vision, mission and opaque goals, specific methods of work are presented above. However, as you can see, for reasons unexplained here, the commencement date was changed. The campaign was postponed by five days, till Saturday 20. Was it because of religious issues and the intention to start fundraising on the Sabbath? Or perhaps another week was needed to better coordinate the actions? In the next reference to the event officially inaugurating Children's Month we read:

Last Saturday, the Femina Theatre hosted the inaugural gala of Children's Month, a social campaign for poor children, orphans and homeless “street children” [...] The gala was opened by the *Tarbut kuchen* children's choirs run by the Centos. Under the baton of Professor Szklar, they sang a number of songs in Hebrew. The whole performance was excellent. In his brief speech, delivered after the singing, Counsellor Wielikowski emphasized the lofty goals of the organisers of the Children's Month campaign<sup>18</sup>.

16 Ibidem.

17 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 19 September 1941 (no. 87), p. 3.

18 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 26 September 1941 (no. 90), p. 5.

Adam Czerniaków, who also delivered a speech during the gala, promised financial support on the part of the Judenrat in the order of one hundred thousand zlotys. He was followed by other invited guests, such as Counsellor Gustaw Wielikowski, head of the Department of Social Welfare of the Jewish Council, and Dawid Guzik, a representative of the American Joint<sup>19</sup>. *Gazeta Żydowska* enthused over the impact of the event on the inhabitants of the ghetto due to both its noble goals and the logistical panache<sup>20</sup>.

When Children's Month officially began in the ghetto, with an unprecedented grandiosity, in the middle of the planned period of the action, *Gazeta Żydowska*, apart from statements, started to publish specific information about how to obtain funds. Thus, on 3 October 1941, we read that this will be done by means of taxing so-called vouchers, i.e. food coupons issued to the ghetto inhabitants. An important role in this activity was to be played by the Supply Department, which was officially responsible for the distribution of food products in the closed district of Warsaw. The somewhat general and grandiloquent title *The child is the most sacred thing we have*<sup>21</sup>, which was no doubt meant to rivet readers' attention and appeal to their community and religious sentiments, introduced a text where we read:

The Supply Department of the Jewish quarter in Warsaw will take active part in the great Children's Month campaign, currently taking place in the Jewish district. Because of its position in the life of the Jewish community, the Supply Department has special responsibilities in terms of social welfare and, in particular, in terms of the care of the Jewish child. [...] The motto announced by the Supply Department after their joining the Children's Month is "*The child is the most sacred thing we have!*" A conference of the Supply Department with representatives of distribution groups resulted in the adoption of minimum levels of childcare benefits. Pursuant to these provisions, during the Children's Month campaign, special fees will be charged, namely: on food coupons 5 gr per coupon, on bakeries 5 gr, on potato shops 5 gr, on grocery stores 2.5 gr, and on soap shops 1.5 gr per customer served; other outlets and wholesalers will be charged lump amounts established by the Citizens' Commission<sup>22</sup>. [...] In connection with the taxation of grocery stores and bakeries, the Supply Department would like to remind all that the charges collected by the Department additionally for Children's Month must be paid within the prescribed deadlines and that the transfer of the burden onto the consumer is absolutely inadmissible and will be severely penalised by the Department<sup>23</sup>.

19 Ibidem.

20 Ibidem.

21 The motto was printed also on the food coupon issued by the Supply Department in January 1942; after: *Archiwum Ringelbluma...*, vol. 2: *Dzieci – tajne nauczanie*, ed. R. Sakowska, Warszawa 2000, p. 289.

22 Invited to join the Committee were: "Akerman, Baszuk, Blajman, Blumzwaig, Cederbaum, Falc, Gutowski, Lesińska, Recht, Szporn, Tekel, Weidenfeld, Wilner, Zyman, and Zyskind"; after: *Gazeta Żydowska*, 3 October 1941 (no. 93), p. 5.

23 Ibidem.

It should be noted that the above article appeared at a time when plans to change the ghetto borders had already been announced, which caused quite a stir among the residents of the closed Warsaw district. For hundreds of families, this meant looking for a new flat, moving to a flat that was usually already overcrowded and making an effort to reorganize their lives from scratch. For others, not directly affected by the change of the ghetto perimeter, it could also have been an unpleasant, distracting surprise. Perhaps this is why, in the second week of October, *Gazeta Żydowska* gave up publishing extensive texts on Children's Month collections and limited themselves to short announcements. On 8 October 1941, a short proclamation was published, addressed explicitly to Jewish women and evoking their maternal instincts. In this appeal, which stood out in terms of its graphic design, we read:

Jewish woman! We turn to you when the eyes of the whole society are set on one point: the plight of the child. We speak to you as mother, because whether or not you have your own child, the maternal cord in you is eternally tender and must resonate to our call. WOMAN, IN THE CHILDREN'S MONTH CAMPAIGN YOU MUST TAKE PRIDE OF PLACE! In this great collective effort, reason and energy alone are not enough. We need your heart, your enthusiasm and your faith, which can work miracles! No more sighs of compassion, no more helpless spreading of hands! TIME HAS COME TO STAND UP AND WORK – TIME IS SHORT!<sup>24</sup>

On the very same page, in a frame, one can also find the following expressive slogan: “A CHILD IS WAITING FOR YOUR HELP”<sup>25</sup>. In the following issue, of 10 October, we find another slogan, which was also an appeal, written entirely in capital letters: “MOTHER, WHEN FEEDING YOUR CHILD, REMEMBER ABOUT THOSE WHO HAVE NO ONE TO FEED THEM!”<sup>26</sup>. Interestingly, according to *Gazeta Żydowska* taking care of children in need was exclusively women's, in particular mothers', duty. These mothers, *a pars pro toto* of the entire community, were called upon to assume responsibility for all the children in need. Fathers (or, more broadly speaking, men) do not appear as addressees of these requests, which can be explained by the customs and social roles that were traditionally attributed to them at that time.

Less than a week prior to the official conclusion of Children's Month, *Gazeta Żydowska* published a long article by Chaim Storch, again appealing directly to the hearts of Jewish mothers. The text is worth reading, if only for its structure and poetics:

Children's Month, the most sacred action in the life of the Jewish community, is about to end. It emerges from the depths of one's conscience and hovers before

24 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 8 October 1941 (no. 95), p. 3.

25 *Ibidem*.

26 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 10 October 1941 (no. 96), p. 5.

one's eyes like a big question mark. What is the purpose of this everyday work? What is the point of this life's trials and tribulations? The child, responds with a thousand echoes the powerful string of humanity. All the trials and tribulations of life for the sake of the child. All your work for the child! You live for the child! The child is the heart of society, the flower that will bloom into the fresh future in the spring, the essence of human existence! Behold, we have to return this great treasure and envelop the child with tender care. Today, in Children's Month, every Jew whose heart beats for his society must realize this. But there is one heart that beats more strongly, one that has a more powerful spark within itself, one in which the mighty fire of motherhood and love for the child has been enkindled. It is the heart of a mother, a woman! Right so! In the history of mankind, truth has become the most sacred, indelible and holy reality. That is why, Jewish Mother, it is "time to get to work"! May the noblest ideal of humanity, the ideal of life, prevail!<sup>27</sup>.

Next to the vulnerable child, a woman, especially a Jewish mom, the *jidisze mame*, is the key figure here. She is once more represented in *Gazeta Żydowska* as the one who should bear the brunt of care over needy children. Those children, again according to *Gazeta Żydowska*, are sacred and work for their sake is especially sanctifying.

One day before the official conclusion of Children's Month, *Gazeta Żydowska* published two large articles that summed up the campaign. One concerned a gala event and the other the Centos, the symbol of the activities. We read in the former account:

On a holiday last Monday, a charming and unique event took place in the spacious hall of the Femina Theatre. It was the first gift during the Children's Month as if for [from] children, who are now the talk of our whole district, for adults. [...] The stage of [...] the theatre gathered several hundred Jewish children from places, shelters and houses of the Society for the Care of Children in the Centos district. The children came with their tutors and music teachers. [...] In a very solemn mood, [...] the children's choirs entered a singing contest<sup>28</sup>.

Next to the account of the gala at the Femina there is a text titled "Czytelnik ma głos" [A reader speaks up], implying that this is a commentary by a resident of the Warsaw Ghetto. This panegyric of sorts is at the same time a reprimand of the organisation that officially coordinated the campaign. We read there as follows:

The Centos union, which today is the only respectable caregiver [!] for orphans, vulnerable children and finally the homeless street children, is currently involved in a major aid campaign in our district, aimed at saving the street children. Despite the most sincere love for the sacred work of the Centos Society, which gives food

27 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 15 October 1941 (no. 98), p. 3.

28 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 19 October 1941 (no. 100), p. 3.



and board to so many of the poorest children in the district, sometimes, when walking the muddy streets of the district in autumn and finding little beggars leaning against the walls, one cannot help but ask: where is the Centos?! [...] However, in the days when a great action is being carried out under the slogans of rescuing street children, when colourful wall posters fling at us words of reprimand for this society, for which it is a “disgrace” to let children beg in the streets... In these very days, this institution should do everything in its power to make begging children disappear from our streets. Let the street not say it does not know who they donate to if humiliating and depressing views have not disappeared from the streets yet. On days when the big Children’s Month campaign of is in progress, the hottest counter-propaganda is every child who is still on the street in such weather! Let the Centos not provide counter-arguments to people who seek them. We need to dispatch a team of Centos social workers to the streets of the district as soon as possible. Let them gather children, wrap them up when the weather is cold, offer hot food, and only then can we be sure that no one in our society of the Jewish quarter in Warsaw, will refuse a donation to their youngest brothers and sisters<sup>29</sup>.

In this text, which is neither praise nor criticism, one important detail draws attention. The author accuses the Centos of inconsistency of actions, which results in an unresolved problem of children begging on the street, lying under colourful and expensive posters promoting the campaign. The reader of *Gazeta Żydowska* clearly sees that such situations observed on the sidewalks of the closed district are counterproductive with respect to the ostensible intentions and plans and are detrimental not only to the good name of the Centos, but ultimately also to the cause of aiding abandoned children. What not so long ago was a holy Jewish child is here a humiliating and depressing symbol of poverty. And although it is clear to everyone that the Germans are to blame for this situation, here it is the Jews themselves who are officially, propagandistically, held accountable.

A few days following the planned official conclusion of Children’s Month, scheduled to take place on Monday (October 20), *Gazeta Żydowska* of October 24 published a succinct note: “the Children’s Month campaign was extended to November 1. The Jewish community is called upon to continue to support it”<sup>30</sup>. Two days later, in Sunday’s issue of October 26, one could find more detailed information about the exhibition of children’s works. It was supposed to be a visual culmination of aid activities, and at the same time proof of the fact that in preceding weeks children in Centos-led institutions, now also subsidized by the general public, had been working intensively. The exhibition account reads:

For an adult, children’s work is always an interesting object of observation, especially if he knows how to look at it from the pedagogical point of view, and through the work of small hands he sees not only the personality of the child, but also the

29 Ibidem.

30 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 24 October 1941 (no. 102), p. 2.

educational work of his or her caregivers. From this point of view, the boarding houses exhibition opened within the framework of Children's Month on October 18 at the Centos boarding house at 18 Młynna Street in Warsaw is of particular value. [...] In all works without exception, regardless of the age of the authors, the diligence of execution is striking. Whether it's stickers and cardboard houses of five- and seven-year-olds, or bookbinding, tailoring, lingerie and carpentry items of older children - all of them show a focus on using materials, sometimes as treacherous as glue or scissors. What is especially commendable is the clean hands, often several dozen of them, which contributed to the collective effort [...]. Watching these works, we are no longer surprised that dormitories receive orders for children's works, because these works are certainly inexpensive and yet were executed flawlessly. Threaded buttons, sets of underwear, tablecloths and runners can compete through the precision of workmanship with professional lingerie studios; wooden dogs on wheels, made by boys from one of the boarding houses, are meticulously cut, painted and lacquered and the work of the dog's moving snout functions perfectly in all of them. The second aspect worth emphasizing is the ability to use waste material for the works. For example: duvet covers and shirts were sewn for children and cut-offs remained; then girls' skilful hands cut regular squares out of them, embroider them and piece together to make beautiful tablecloths and serviettes. Another example: torn old curtains were patiently wrung out, and the worn-out threads were used to make delicate crochet napkins. Add to this sweaters, socks and gloves made from laboriously wrinkled shreds of old articles of clothing, both hand and machine sewn. The artistic side of the exhibition merits a separate discussion. To put it briefly: there are juvenile talents among the boarding school children. [...] The most meaningful evidence of this is a room dedicated to the puppet theatre. The decorations, made by a teenage boy, have the drawing, perspective and colours of good theatre decorations. Puppet costumes are striking with their ingenious use of various waste bits and pieces, choice of colours, sense of the puppet's character, and in stylish costumes also a sense of a particular era, which is particularly difficult. Talking about the artistry of children, one cannot ignore the works of six-year-old Moniuś, a pupil of one of the boarding houses. [...] His "sculptures", merely a few centimetres long, depict scenes from a fairy tale about Snow White and the Dwarfs, a two-horse cart, a soldier, a street vendor of potatoes, etc. The accuracy in capturing movement, proportions, taste in the choice of colours and precision in the execution of even the minutest details indicate that the small artist will have a beautiful artistic future<sup>31</sup>.

A few days later, on November 2, *Gazeta Żydowska* published an article on its front page entitled "Społeczeństwo żydowskie opiekunem dziecka" [Jewish society – the caregiver of the child], most likely written by Guta Ejzenwajg. The text is full of clichés and propagandistic platitudes, such as: "Jewish institutions which, as part of their general Jewish welfare activities, are

31 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 29 October 1941 (no. 104), p. 2.

particularly concerned with childcare, such as the Centos in several districts of the General Government, various local committees, orphanages and children’s shelters, are working intensively and with utmost dedication”<sup>32</sup>. Interestingly, further on the author herself, as an employee of *Gazeta Żydowska*, feels personally responsible for the success of the action. She writes: “We, who are the link between them and the rest of society, know this best, [...] because our magazine is a platform from where appeals are made for providing help for particular childcare facilities. Immediately after depicting what she sees as the crucial role of *Gazeta Żydowska*, Guta Ejzencwajg writes with esteem about social welfare activists:

How willingly the officers of these institutions and their voluntary helpers take neglected children out of the street, how willingly they are to take extensive care of orphans and abandoned children. They sacrifice all their time, their strength and spiritual talents in the service of the child. This is a cardinal principle of their general operation and they duly implement it.

She goes on to look at the role of so-called “ordinary people” and cites the eloquent example of housewives who supposedly “skipped a meal in order to offer it for the children’s collection”. Could it be a reference to the aforementioned Jewish mothers called upon to take responsibility for the ghetto children in need? At the same time, however, the author of the article refers to examples, known to her from hearsay probably, of campaign collectors who are insulted and blamed for the sins of the institutions they represent. Guta Ejzencwajg urges her readers:

The fact that one or other officer bothered one or other donor, does not in the least harm the cause itself. Similarly, in no way do personal considerations dare to play a role when it comes to helping children. All kinds of particularism must also remain silent in this case. There are examples where individuals or associations have devoted themselves entirely to helping a particular group of children [...], to the [...] detriment of other groups [...]. However, such a rivalry [...] should be abandoned. Every child in need of assistance must receive it, and every institution must therefore take account of it<sup>33</sup>.

Guta Ejzencwajg generously proposed that these distortions should be excluded, as only then: “will the custom of performing a heightened activity during one month in order to help institutions dedicated to children be probably accepted everywhere and produce good results”<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore: “This will take place when Jewish society have come to call themselves a community subordinate to a higher cause, aiming at providing aid to the Jewish Child”.

32 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 2 November 1941 (no. 106), p. 1.

33 *Ibidem*.

34 *Ibidem*.

It is worth noting that this Jewish child, although deprived of its previous sanctity here, is addressed in capital letters.

A few days after Guta Ejzencwajg's text, another summary was published in *Gazeta Żydowska* on November 5, i.e. just a few days after the official end of Children's Month, which was prolonged by two weeks. We read in it as follows:

The Centos proclaimed the 26th day of this month Children's Day. Centos run boarding houses, half-boarding houses, kitchens, day centres, and common rooms held games and children's events. On that day, all children under the care of the Centos received increased food rations and – thanks to the special allocation of the Supply Department – bread with marmalade and sweets. The Centos also asked home committees, the Childcare Commission, etc. to make the day more pleasant for the children in their homes. Here and there children spontaneously organized gaming events. They were vividly moved by the sensation that someone cares about them, someone thinks about them and lives for them. It is to be expected that the Children's Month campaign will not die down at the end of the month but will be continued in the compassionate hearts of the Jewish community at all times<sup>35</sup>.

Importantly, throughout the Children's Month in Warsaw and after its official conclusion, *Gazeta Żydowska* every now and then published evocative advertising and propagandistic slogans meant to boost the generosity of the general public. Some are worth quoting verbatim to offer an insight into the presentation of the place of the child within the Jewish community. Here are a handful of them: "The morality of a society is commensurate with the level of its children and young people. Let us do our utmost to make this level high"<sup>36</sup>; "The health of our own children depends on the health of the street children"<sup>37</sup>. Slightly later, the periodical published a slogan that directly evoked the campaign: "Being an orphan is the saddest thing the child can experience. Extend our helping hands to orphans and wrap them in the warmth of a mother's heart"<sup>38</sup>. Still in the spring of 1942, over six months after the conclusion of the fall 1941 campaign, *Gazeta Żydowska* published passionate appeals; these were, in May: "Remember about children. Each day should be Children's Day"<sup>39</sup>, in June: "The child is something sacred for us. Remember about this at all times"<sup>40</sup>, in July, less than three weeks before the liquidation of the ghetto: "Children are our treasures! Protect them!"<sup>41</sup>. Perhaps, on the one hand, these slogans were supposed to remind the readers of what had been accomplished, and on the other hand, they were supposed to prepare the society for the next Children's Month planned for the summer of 1942.

35 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 5 November 1941 (no. 107), p. 3.

36 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 7 November 1941 (no. 108), p. 3.

37 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 9 November 1941 (no. 109), p. 2.

38 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 14 November 1941 (no. 111), p. 5.

39 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 17 May 1942 (no. 58), p. 2.

40 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 12 June 1942 (no. 69), p. 2.

41 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 3 July 1942 (no. 78), p. 2.

Coming back to summaries and evaluations, it is necessary to mention the financial report published in *Gazeta Żydowska*, which describes the sources of income. The report went as follows:

A special fundraising Children's Month campaign has just been concluded by the Supply Department. [...] Now the amounts [...] collected for Children's Month are being calculated. According to the first, still tentative calculations, the Supply Department has raised an amount in excess of 900,000 (on top of the 165,000 transferred to the Children's Month account, largely thanks to the Department)<sup>42</sup>.

Two days after the financial statement, another, unexpectedly extensive article came out, which spelled out what the collected one million zlotys was to be used for.

Children's Month is over. A month like any other, we might say. Was it really like any other? Is it possible to capture any feeling in temporal terms? Can slogans such as: “The child is sacred”, “Our children must live”, etc. be limited by the tight framework of a single month? What's next? Therefore, the month of the child [...] should not last 30 or 31 days, but the full 365 days in an ordinary year and 366 in a leap one. Such a reform of the campaign calendar will, or at least should, be carried out. This was the impression we got while listening to the speech of the president, Engineer Czerniaków, at the gala celebrating the conclusion of Children's Month, which took place a few days ago in the Melody Palace hall. [...] President Czerniaków, the man most active in the district, was not satisfied. While the words of other speakers echoed their satisfaction with the achieved results, the words spoken by Engineer Czerniaków resounded with clear dissatisfaction. He believes that what has been done in this respect is only the beginning and that real work is yet to be done. In fact, as the President put it in no uncertain terms in his speech, there were more taxes than donations... And one should expect voluntary generosity [...], which was not enough... [...] A total of over a million zlotys has been collected. Work began immediately on setting up new boarding houses for abandoned children, notably one large boarding house at 61 Dzielna Street and five others on the streets that are now to be annexed to the Jewish district. In addition, a number of half-board houses have been set up to house more than a thousand children. Shoes with wooden soles have been supplied to 700 children. [...] The Jewish Order Service also took an active part in the campaign, organizing the so-called half-board detention rooms for children at its district offices. [...] Above all, the success of the action was due to the chairman of the Jewish Council, who himself and through the authorities subordinate to him worked hard to achieve appropriate results. For example, the entire staff of the Supply Department was involved in the service of this operation. [...] Also the Jewish Postal Storage Facility was made available, and the sums collected by it are quite considerable. [...] Besides, all other agencies of the chairman of the Jewish Council [...] continued their efforts to ensure the success of this action.

42 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 3 December 1941 (no. 119), p. 3.

The Chairman of the Jewish Council pledged 100,000 zlotys for the campaign. [...] This amount was allocated in the following way: to create a boarding house for abandoned children and orphans - PLN 40,000, to create a boarding house for homeless children - PLN 10,000, to create a half boarding house for street children at 1 Nowolipie Street - PLN 10,000, to organize a stage point for homeless children at 11 Stawki Street - PLN 10,000, to supply clothing and shoes for child care institutions - PLN 25,000, to renovate orphanages - PLN 5,000. [...] In general, as said before, the Month of the Child campaign was to be only a reminder of the daily obligation: a permanent, long-term obligation. Children's Month is over, gifts, donations, taxes were collected, and appeals were made to generosity, conscience and hearts. They were responded to. And the echo continues to reverberate...<sup>43</sup>.

Meanwhile, less than a week later, *Gazeta Żydowska* published a news item with another critical remark about the organization of collections:

There are two ways of collecting appropriate funds: donations and taxes, as President Czerniaków aptly described it. As far as the latter way is concerned, there was only one form of indirect tax in Children's Month, burdensome for the poor and the rich alike. Perhaps it was even more cumbersome for the former, given the larger number of proletarian families. The rich, on the other hand, voluntarily taxed themselves very little. It is therefore necessary to reach them by means of direct taxation. Since appeals, urges and proclamations do not help, the Jewish Quarter Board has the appropriate means and ways to do so<sup>44</sup>.

The reflection on the method of obtaining funds is unequivocal: the public, not being asked for an opinion and instead burdened with making donations for the benefit of a campaign whose effects were not very spectacular, must have had significant reservations about this method of organization.

After the end of the Children's Month campaign and the presentation of reports, almost immediately another "grassroots initiative" was launched. Called Winter Aid, it was a reference to the pre-war charity campaign targeting the homeless and the unemployed<sup>45</sup>. *Gazeta Żydowska* wrote about it as follows:

The action of helping children has already turned into a general operation of Winter Aid in almost all Jewish communities of the General Government. In Warsaw it was launched with great momentum, but in the provinces there was no special publicity<sup>46</sup>.

We read this time, however, that as a result of previous experiences, the organizers ensured that the mode of work and in particular the way of collec-

43 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 5 December 1941 (no. 120), p. 4.

44 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 10 December 1941 (no. 122), p. 2.

45 Between the two world wars, this annual initiative was coordinated by the Winter Aid (Pomoc Zimowa) to the Unemployed Committee. The first Winter Aid collections took place in 1936, culminating in November and December. Donors offered cash, food, coal, and firewood.

46 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 24 December 1941 (no. 128), p. 1.

ting donations, was changed. “Fundraisers are more ambitious if they have a specific goal and members of the society are more willing to make smaller but more frequent donations than offer a single larger amount”<sup>47</sup>. Donations for of the Warsaw Children’s Month, which had previously been mentioned with great enthusiasm, were not completely satisfactory in the eyes of those writing for *Gazeta Żydowska*. Traces of this lack of full satisfaction can be found in one of the December issues of the periodical:

It appears that while the results of the autumn campaign have not always met expectations, they are generally satisfactory. In Warsaw, as a result of the child support campaign, a total of one million zlotys was collected, i.e. on average each resident of the district offered 2 zlotys. The relationship is similar when calculating the income from Children’s Month in Krakow and in the province<sup>48</sup>.

The Warsaw Ghetto therefore did not stand out favourably in comparison with other ghettos, which is not surprising given the drastic and widespread impoverishment of the population, the high food prices and the large number of newcomers from other places, who probably focused first and foremost on organising their own lives.

In the very same issue of *Gazeta Żydowska*, a few pages further on, the first report on the action and its visible effects were presented. It is worth quoting this text almost in its entirety, as it provides quantifiable data:

The first harvest of Children’s Month: five new childcare facilities. When the Children’s Month campaign was completed, the Centos began to expand childcare, based on the proceeds of the campaign. In accordance with the main motto of the action [...], the Centos immediately started to organise a number of new care facilities. Work on the creation of a new orphanage at 35 Twarda Street was carried out as early as November. On 10 December, the boarding house was already in operation and admitted the first group of orphans and abandoned children. It will provide shelter and foster care for nearly 100 children. At the same time, the Centos organised two new half boarding facilities for “street children” thanks to the proceeds of the Children’s Month campaign. [...] In addition, the Centos also set up a lodging house for “street children” at 1 Nowolipie Street. It is to be used primarily by children who are residents of the Centos half boarding houses, but who do not have adequate accommodation. The lodging house will be launched at the end of December [...]. In order to solve the extremely difficult and painful problem of child beggars, the Centos decided to join forces in this respect with the Jewish Order Service. As a result, a joint conference was held, during which a number of detention rooms for “street children” were established. The Order Service will bring begging or unaccompanied children to these rooms. Children will stay in the rooms for a short period of time (up to two weeks), and after appropriate interviews, being

47 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 12 December 1941 (no. 123), p. 1.

48 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 24 December 1941 (no. 128), p. 1.

equipped with clothing, etc., the children will be directed to Centos boarding houses or half boarding houses. [...] Since the matter of supplying children with footwear is one of the most acute concerns of the Centos, it was decided to proceed with the production of children's footwear (with wooden soles). Thanks to the activity of the Centos special Social Commission, over a thousand pairs of shoes were produced and distributed to children. [...] The above activities are only the beginning of a great effort to create care facilities for orphans and abandoned children. In the near future, the Centos will be able to set up several new large boarding facilities in buildings specially designed for this purpose<sup>49</sup>.

In the next calendar, two weeks after the first comprehensive summary, another one, largely reiterating the information from the previous one, appeared<sup>50</sup>.

In the next report, published in *Gazeta Żydowska* at the end of January 1942, we read about the establishment of a total of eight new institutions, including e.g. a lodging house, whose activity can be classified as so-called semi-open care<sup>51</sup>. We read about it as follows:

On the 12th day of this month, the Centos opened the first lodging house for children in the spacious premises at 1 Nowolipie Street. Already on the first day, over 60 children found accommodation and shelter in the house. [...] It will accommodate about one hundred children. Children staying in half boarding houses all day long go to the lodging house in the evening, where, having washed, they have dinner. After dinner, the children have a chat, read in a group or participate in a choral singing session, after which they go to sleep in their own beds. Every child has a bunk bed, a mattress, clean sheets, and a nightdress. [...] The Centos dormitory is the eighth in a row to be set up thanks to the Month of the Child funds (2 boarding houses, 2 half boarding houses, 2 detention rooms, an emergency facility, and a dormitory)<sup>52</sup>.

At the end of February 1942, when the memory of the Children's Month had faded away a little, *Gazeta Żydowska* published a short account of further initiatives funded by the money collected in the early autumn of the previous year. We read there:<sup>53</sup>

Thanks to the proceeds of the Children's Month campaign, the Centos has purchased some second-hand clothing and set up a special repair workshop where this

49 Ibidem.

50 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 7 January 1942 (no. 3), p. 2.

51 It is worth noting that this is almost a literal reprint of the official report on the main activities of the Centos in January 1942. The report was sent to the headquarters of the Jewish Social Self-help Centre in Krakow and was probably forwarded from there to *Gazeta Żydowska*. A copy of the report was moreover included in the documents collected by the collaborators of Emanuel Ringelblum; see *Archiwum Ringelbluma...*, vol. 27, p. 967.

52 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 28 January 1942 (no. 12), p. 2.

53 An identical excerpt can be found in the Centos report. *Gazeta Żydowska* divided the document into two instalments and published them ca. one month apart; see *Archiwum Ringelbluma...*, vol. 27, p. 968.



clothing (overcoats, etc.) will be made wearable again. The issue of clothing and footwear is still one of the main concerns of the Centos. [...] In January, a special legal department was established at the Centos in order to provide care for the property of orphaned children. In addition, [...] a special vocational training department for orphans, older children and young people in the custody of the Centos was set up<sup>54</sup>.

The last item of information about the 1941 Children's Month campaign in the Warsaw Ghetto came out in *Gazeta Żydowska* in April the following year. It gives the following account of new initiatives taken up by the Centos:

The Centos Committee of Children's Events organized in the first half of winter this year 23 events for children performed by (adult) actors and 39 events performed by children's groups. All these events were watched by more than 5,000 children from among the poorest children in the district. [...] For the purposes of propaganda, the committee organized a traveling puppet “circus”, popularizing the slogans of the Children's Month campaign conducted at the time. A lot of these entertainment and educational activities were conducted in the Jewish language<sup>55</sup>.

The only Children's Month campaign in the Warsaw Ghetto, held under the auspices of the Centos with the (financial) support of the Judenrat, commenced with a gala assembly in the Femina Theatre and concluded with a similar gala at the Melody Palace<sup>56</sup>. During the campaign, a street fundraising campaign was held, special taxes were levied, charity coupons were sold, performance were staged at people's homes, and concerts of children's choirs were organised<sup>57</sup>; there were also gymnastics competitions<sup>58</sup> and all kinds of concerts<sup>59</sup>. The artists performing during the shows included children living daily in Centos-run dormitories. It is important that in the heat of organisational and advertising works these children were not lost sight of. One of the reasons was their rather abstract yet universally acclaimed “holiness” and the other was their possibly unattractive appearance.

The Children's Month campaign, scheduled to last four weeks, was extended by two more weeks, as mentioned above, until 1 November 1941. This prolongation indicates that the project was extremely successful and worth continuing, yet it also gives rise to suspicions that the goals had not been achieved within a month and that additional time was needed to attain them. This inconsistency of the message is quite puzzling here.

Analysis of texts concerning the Children's Month published by *Gazeta Żydowska* indicates an interesting way of referring to its beneficiaries. The

54 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 27 February 1942 (no. 25), p. 2.

55 *Gazeta Żydowska*, 1 April 1942 (no. 39), p. 2.

56 A. Berman, *Was der gojrl hot mir baszert. Mit Jidn in Warsze*, Israel 1980, p. 139-140.

57 The documents in the Ringelblum Archive include an entrance card for the competition of children's centres supervised by Centos; see *Archiwum Ringelbluma...*, vol. 2, p. 274.

58 H. Bryskier, *Żydzi pod swastyką, czyli getto w Warszawie w XX wieku*, Warszawa 2006, p. 146-147.

59 The documents in the Ringelblum Archive include a ticket for a concert of oratorio music; see *Archiwum Ringelbluma...*, vol. 2, p. 277.

child is called here the heart of society, a flower, the essence of human existence which must be carefully cared for; occasionally, the child is referred to as a sacred treasure. These words, extremely serious, if not stilted in confrontation with the reality of the ghetto street, sounded quite grotesque. All the more so because children, spoken about so extensively, except for obtaining help were actually to disappear behind the wall of any institution, not to inconvenience passers-by with their poverty.

After the war, Centos staff member Józef Gitler-Barski enthused about the project: "All the social and economic organizations of the ghetto joined the event, which fetched about one million zlotys of income. The proceeds of the event allowed the Centos to provide additional care to a greater number of starving and poor children"<sup>60</sup>. A similar opinion was expressed by Adolf Berman: "Wide groups of our society have responded to the call to take action. the great social campaign involved nearly all social, economic, professional, and cultural institutions operating in the ghetto"<sup>61</sup>. However, not all shared the above opinions. Those who were watching and commenting on the Children's Month on an ongoing basis had every reason to be critical. They wrote that, generally speaking, the form of Children's Month exceeded its content. The costs of promoting the campaign were not commensurate with the results, while the funds allocated for the organisation should have been allocated directly to children in need. Rachela Auerbach, an insightful observer of the reality of the ghetto and herself engaged in social work for the residents of the closed district, wrote in her diary:

Life, especially life as ready for death as ours in a closed city, sometimes presents strangely evident symbolic shortcuts, resembling melodramatic ideas of a trivial movie. Once I saw with my own eyes near the gate of the house with a food kitchen and a Jewish police precinct, at the entrance to a cake shop, a corpse of a child covered with a Children's Month poster<sup>62</sup>.

Stefan Chaskielewicz was of the same opinion; he, too, had seen an equally farcical and dreadful view on a ghetto street: this time the dead body of a child was covered with a poster with the slogan "Our children must live" emblazoned on it<sup>63</sup>. In turn, Ringelblum was aware of blatant wastefulness and wrote that the campaign "was run with the support of extensive poster advertising (a new poster would come out every two or three days) and a massive load of money was spent"<sup>64</sup>. Years later, the unfortunate advertising campaign was commented on by Maria Czapska, who wrote that the posters: "proclaimed care of the child – 'the highest value of the nation'. [...] Dead children lay under such torn

60 J. Barski, *Przeżycia i wspomnienia z lat okupacji*, Wrocław 1986, p. 28–30.

61 A. Berman, "O losie dzieci żydowskich z zakładów opiekuńczych w getcie warszawskim", *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, 1958, no. 28, p. 69.

62 R. Auerbach, *Pisma z getta warszawskiego*, Warszawa 2015, p. 125.

63 S. Chaskielewicz, *Ukrywałem się w Warszawie*, Kraków 1988, p. 116.

64 E. Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, Warszawa 1983, p. 335.

posters and others moaned under the walls: ‘we are hungry’<sup>65</sup>. The contrast between the well-meaning slogans from colourful posters and daily reality of the ghetto must have been striking, even for those who lived outside the ghetto wall and visited the district only occasionally or merely heard about it.

Ringelblum, Czerniaków and Korczak had specific reservations to the entire campaign. As directly involved in providing assistance, they had the right, knowledge and authority to talk about the subject. Korczak wrote that the main motto of the Children’s Month is a cliché, a safeguard for a dishonest profiteer<sup>66</sup>. This is how he summed up the campaign:

There are different levels and temperatures of hypocrisy; among them a dirty platitude, a false check that will bounce – a mark’s trick – a swindler’s speculation – a scammer’s calculation – a hustle – a deceit – falsehood and scheme. – In all, to put it mildly, an unfortunate slogan – offering an erroneous pattern: mollycoddled baby fed on bananas and candy, pampered – puppet – pup – bambino – the sacred of the sacred<sup>67</sup>.

In January 1942, *Gazeta Żydowska* was very optimistic about the conclusion of the action. However, Czerniaków, who most probably had access to statistics, wrote in his diary on 26 April 1942, i.e. roughly half a year after the conclusion of Children’s Month: “Morning – the Community. [...] Subject – conclusion of Children’s Month. The Report of the Audit Commission (engineer Szereszewski) was turned down as plain stupid insane and sent for correction”<sup>68</sup>. This comment calls into question not only the purposefulness and effectiveness of the initiative, but also the reliability of the reports prepared. Despite the rather critical opinion of both the Judenrat and some of the ghetto inhabitants personally involved in the aid activities, the Centos planned to rerun the Children’s Month initiative in the summer of 1942. Even before its official commencement, Centos centres had prepared performances and artistic events<sup>69</sup>. It was to have started on August 1<sup>70</sup>, yet the commencement of the liquidation foiled those plans. The idea of organizing Children’s Month in the summer of 1942 can also be found in the report of the Jewish Council for July that year<sup>71</sup>.

It is not easy to evaluate this large-scale relief effort, held *ad hoc* yet rooted in tradition. It can certainly be assumed that both the Centos and the

65 M. Czapska, *Gwiazda Dawida. Dzieje jednej rodziny*, Londyn 1975, p. 20.

66 J. Korczak, “Votum separatum na marginesie Miesiąca Dziecka”; in: *Janusz Korczak w getcie. Nowe źródła*, Warszawa 1992, p. 252–253.

67 Ibidem.

68 *Adama Czerniakowa dziennik...*, p. 269.

69 Adolf Berman wrote as follows: “In May and June 1942, the Centos began intensive preparations for the celebration of the Children’s Month, which was scheduled to take place in August. To this end, dozens of rehearsals (preparatory performances) of children from different centres and schools were held. A very successful performance took place at the Borocho School, part of the CISzO, at 68 Nowolipki Street, entitled *The Victorious Spring March*. It consisted of dancing, singing and reciting poems by Bialik, A. Rajzen, M. Gebirtig and others”; in: *idem, Was der gojrl hot mir baszert...*, p. 142.

70 Ibidem.

71 “Permission was granted for the organisation of the ‘Month of the Child’ between 1–31 August”; after: *Tak było... Sprawozdania z warszawskiego getta 1939–1943*, Warszawa 1988, p. 77.

Jewish Community wanted to support the ghetto children in need, although this was not really possible for logistical reasons. There were more and more children on the street; the nursing homes couldn't possibly accept new wards and planning and carrying out collections and cultural activities in the dramatic conditions of life in the ghetto could be quite a challenge. Being themselves in a vulnerable position, people were unable to participate financially in the activities of an organization which, as we read in the surviving documents, although probably full of goodwill, could not cope with the evident problems of homelessness, beggary and demoralization among the children of the ghetto. What's more, the activities were often a bit haphazard. On the other hand, the amount collected in the autumn of 1941 was ten times higher than the previous year's, which can be considered an achievement, even given the inflation rate and the fact that in 1941 people were in some way made to contribute generously. However, if one wanted to draw conclusions only from the articles presented in *Gazeta Żydowska*, one would get the impression that the action was a chain of endless successes and that the Jewish child living in the Warsaw Ghetto in the autumn of 1941, as depicted in articles written by people working in the periodical, was the pupil of the whole community's eye and the focus of all aid activities. What is more, the breadth of the work was enormous, the participation of the community widespread and the aid activities, despite occasional logistical shortcomings, were extremely efficient. The fact that they were also effective was stressed by the colourful posters placed in the Warsaw Ghetto, proclaiming that "our children must live", which of course was only right and proper and reminded all of the moral obligation to look after children. And yet it was precisely the alerts, urges, appeals, and constant reminders of the obligation to support the most needy that was one of the main goals of the whole undertaking. *Gazeta Żydowska* itself, which was the cog of the great propaganda machine, joined the endeavour with greater or lesser skill. However, it did so on its own terms, in accordance with the superimposed guidelines of the occupation authorities<sup>72</sup>.

**"Our children must live" because "The child is the most sacred thing we have."**

**The portrayal in *Gazeta Żydowska* of the Children's Month campaign in the Warsaw Ghetto**

The article is an attempt of analysis of the written press narration concerning the social action called „The Children's Month” that was undertaken in

72 This sentence was strongly emphasized by Marian Fuks, one of the first researchers of *Gazeta Żydowska*, who wrote that it was a magazine "which, under the pretext of representing the interests of Jewish society confined in the ghetto, served, in fact, the ulterior purposes of the Nazi occupation forces"; after: M. Fuks, "Życie w gettach Generalnej Guberni na tle 'Gazety Żydowskiej' 1940-1942", *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, 1972, no. 1, p. 69.

the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941. This particular narration was being delivered on the pages of *Gazeta Żydowska*, a journal licensed by the Germans and designed to be presented to the Jews living in the ghettos of General Gouvenement. In light of this specific press discourse a few questions concerning this initiative i.e. „The Children’s Month” are raised, e.g. how to plan and organize any types of support for people in need, how to help children and how to share resources that are limited.

**Keywords:** Warsaw Ghetto, *Gazeta Żydowska*, The Children’s Month, social services, children, orphans