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## The Language of Cruelty of the Holocaust on the Example of *The Ringelblum Archive: Annihilation – Day by Day*

### Abstract

The Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto is one of the most significant testimonies of the annihilation of Polish Jews to be preserved in social life documents, mainly written reports and photographs. The founder of the Archive, Emanuel Ringelblum, described the purpose of the collected materials as follows: "We wanted the events in every town, the experiences of every Jew – and every Jew during this war is a world unto himself – to be conveyed in the simplest, most faithful manner. Every redundant word, every literary addition or embellishment, stood out, causing a sense of dissonance and distaste. The life of Jews during this war is so tragic that not a single extra word is needed". The aim of the paper is a linguistic analysis of the drastic language of the Holocaust on the basis of *The Ringelblum Archive: Annihilation - Day by Day*.

**Keywords:** Holocaust, Ringelblum Archive, language of emotions.

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## Introduction

From the 1950s, the term<sup>1</sup> Holocaust<sup>2</sup> (Hebrew: *sho'ah*) was principally synonymous with the genocide of the Jewish community in Europe under the Nazi regime and later employed as a description of the annihilation of other groups of people during World War II (see EH/V2, 1990, pp. 68–681). The Holocaust is undoubtedly a symbol of a huge tragedy in the history of humanity – a crisis of humanism, a transgression of the borders of human endurance and capabilities, as well as a fight for survival: “Annihilation is a transforming, borderline and traumatic occurrence” (Diner, quot. Bojarska, 2014, p. 538). Daily experiencing of trauma led to a lack of trust, feelings of apathy, helplessness, nostalgia, apprehension and even panic on one hand, while on the other it manifested itself in outbursts of rebellion, anger or aggression (see Sztompka, 2010, p. 467). Testimonies of the Holocaust have been preserved in many sources - memoirs, diaries, archival documentation. The Ringelblum Archive is one such source.

The paper aims to describe the everyday trauma of Polish Jews at the time of the Holocaust from a linguistic standpoint. The analysis of the language of cruelty and violence<sup>3</sup> during the annihilation focuses on characterising documents as a genre of a reportage<sup>4</sup>, as well as on the linguistic interpretation of emotions from the time encoded on the pages of the Ringelblum Archive, on the example of a selection of reports in the book *The Ringelblum Archive: Annihilation – Day by Day* (The Ringelblum Archive, 2008)<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The present analysis does not claim to be an exhaustive characterisation of the language of violence in reportage, as it constitutes a mere fragment of the author's extensive linguistic research on the language of emotions in the context of the Holocaust (cf. also linguistic approach to emotions in language: Ortner, 2014; Schwarz-Friesel, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> The word “Holocaust” is derived from the Greek *holokauston* and originally meant a sacrifice totally burned by fire (see Encyclopedia of the Holocaust [EH]/V2, 1990, p. 680).

<sup>3</sup> By the notion of violence the author understands both physical violence (conducted by means of physical force) and psychic violence (communicated verbally, such as threats, insults etc.). These types of behaviour have also been analysed in a linguistic approach (cf. e.g. Kinne & Schwitalla, 2019; Liebsch, 2007; Nduka-Agwu & Hornscheidt, 2010; Schwarz-Friesel & Reinharz, 2017; Technau, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> According to the author, *The Ringelblum Archive: Annihilation – Day by Day* is primarily a reportage, for it contains descriptions of real events and accompanying circumstances (descriptions of situations, participants, places) provided by actual witnesses. In this context the book is partly a war reportage (describing events from the period of WWII) and partly a social reportage (with characterisations of people's actual behaviour in their social environment).

<sup>5</sup> Descriptions of Holocaust reality have been studied e.g. in the works of Goldberg (2017), Kassow (2007), Garbarini (2006), Roskies (1999).

## The Ringelblum Archive

The Ringelblum Archive with its collection of papers, accounts and other documents of social life was arranged and preserved by the group *Oneg Shabbat*<sup>6</sup> under the leadership of a Jewish historian and social activist, Emanuel Ringelblum<sup>7</sup>. The purpose of gathering materials in the form of an archive was to document thoroughly the fate of Jews during World War II and their extermination. Putting everyday life in the ghetto on record in such detail was possible because, as Ringelblum explains: “The Germans did not care what the Jew did in the privacy of his own home. So the Jew began to put pen to paper. Everyone began to write: journalists, writers, teachers, social activists, young people, even children” (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 7). About the beginnings of his work, Ringelblum wrote as follows:

I began to collect material concerning these times as early as October 1939. As head of the Jewish Self-Help welfare organization ... I had personal daily contact with the everyday life of the community. I was kept informed of all that was happening to the Jews of Warsaw and the suburbs. The Coordinating Committee was a sort of off-shoot of [the] Joint, and almost every day delegates would arrive from the provinces and describe the difficulties experienced by the Jewish population. In the evening I wrote down all that I had heard during the day, adding my own observations. With time, these notes made up a sizeable volume of some hundreds of pages of small script, reflecting the events of those days. As time went by I began to make my notes weekly rather than daily, and later [monthly]. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 23)

In 1999 Emanuel Ringelblum’s Archives were listed on the Memory of the World Register by UNESCO.

The book analysed for the purpose of this article, *Annihilation - Day by Day*, is a part of the vast archival undertaking which was initiated by Emanuel Ringelblum and his associates from the group *Oneg Shabbat*. The book contains a selection of accounts and documents of Polish Jews with shocking descriptions of inhuman and savage treatment of the Jewish community under the occupation. These reports reflect a moment-by-moment insight into the process of annihilation which was taking place from 1939 until the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. The first printing of the English and Polish edition was published in the series *Polish Jews* in 2008 and contains about 230 pages of testimonies, often with photographs.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrew: “joy of the Sabbath”.

<sup>7</sup> Emanuel Ringelblum (1900-1944) - historian, social worker and founder of the clandestine archive *Oneg Shabbat*, shot with his family by the Nazis in Warsaw in 1944 (see Encyclopedia of the Holocaust [EH]/V3, 1990, p. 1283).

Eleonora Bergman, the coordinator of the full edition of the Ringelblum Archive, wrote in the preface to the Polish edition:

The book in front of us is a selection of passages forming the history of life and death of the Jews under the German occupation in this huge prison of the Warsaw Ghetto. ... The chapter titles: The Attack, The Surrounding, The Enclosure, The Annihilation, The End – attempt to reflect the feelings of people isolated from the outer world and render the destruction of their world. (*Archiwum Ringelbluma*, 2011, p. 230; transl. IO)

### Reality of Jewish Life During the Occupation by the Nazi Regime According to *Oneg Shabbat*

Empiric material from the Ringelblum Archive analysed for the present paper can be classified as a type of written reportage in the form of an anthology of texts: accounts, memoirs, diaries, letters received in the ghetto, reports or official documents. The objective of the Archive was to document and commemorate the extermination of Jews, as one member of *Oneg Shabbat*, Dawid Gruber says in his last note, "We buried underground what we were unable to shout out to the world" (*Archiwum Ringelbluma*, 2011, p. 230; transl. IO). According to Ringelblum, every redundant word, every literary addition or embellishment stood out, causing a sense of dissonance and distaste. The life of Jews during the war is so tragic that not a single extra word is needed (see *The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 62).

The criterion of intention indicates that the book *Annihilation – Day by Day* is a **whistleblowing written reportage** – a genre that includes both social or case studies and accounts from sites of annihilation. The book has the features of the reportage genre at the level of the conceptualisation of relations, like **informative static** reportage which informs about pure facts, without comments or vivid descriptions, e.g.:

(1) Tired with crying the children grow calm but their eyes, too, are filled with despair. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 38)

Another type of written reportage is the **informative dynamic** type, the purpose of which is to describe events following one after another, like in the following excerpt from an anonymous account from the Warsaw Ghetto:

(2) On the first of the half-holy days of Passover [15 April] I set out to visit the Joint [American-Jewish Joint Distribution Committee]. To go from Twarda Street to Tłomackie Street these days is no mean feat. At home the door never seems to close – people come to find out whether the Joint has sent anything for the Festival. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 67)

In the Ringelblum Archive we also recognise the **depicting static** type of conceptualisation, which describes events in detail as documentary information, for example in this excerpt from a Labour Battalion notice to the Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw:

(3) To all Jews who are subject to forced labour.

The organisation of forced labour has been entrusted to the Labour Office (*Arbeitsamt*).

Yesterday, the Labour Office announced:

1. that failure to fully comply with labour directives will be deemed to be refusal to carry out forced labour.
2. that such refusal will be subject to proceedings in accordance with the directive of 12 December 1939, and which envisages a penalty of up to 10 years imprisonment.
3. that, independently of any court proceedings, the first group of subordinates will be sent to a labour camp within the next few days.

Warsaw, 1 August 1940. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 46)

The last type of conceptualisation is **depicting dynamic**, which contains dialogues, monologues or narrative (see Skarżyńska, 2011, pp. 40–41):

(4) My Cousin begins to discuss the business terms in a whisper with the host. Meanwhile, the lady of the house offers me good tea and bread with butter. After a while, the host approaches me.

“Are you ready to cross over?”

“Yes, of course” – I answer him.

“Give me 100 zloties”.

“How come, I was told that the transfer would cost no more than 15 zloties?”

(*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 121)

Ringelblum’s reportage describes in detail the reality and everyday life of Jews during the German occupation. The image of the Jew, his struggle to survive the occupation, descriptions of stigmatisation and humiliation of Jews, as well as accounts of their death – all this can be found in the Archive’s texts. The tragic picture of a Jew as poor, dying of starvation, clothed in rags, emerges from almost every account, e.g.:

(5) In the streets, ... children dying of hunger cry helplessly. They howl, plead, sing, wail, shiver from the cold – no underwear, no outer clothes, no shoes, in tatters, sacks, rags tied round their miserable skeletal bodies with a piece of string, bellies swollen by starvation, distorted, semi-conscious – by the age of five already mature, sombre and dispirited, like old people. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 114)

The main lexemes describing people's mental or physical condition include, for example: *state of total exhaustion; to go mad; to run/ to cry/ to laugh in a state of nervous shock; thin little figures; bodies covered in spots and sores; phantoms; ghosts of former human beings; the miserable leftovers of former humanity; destitute vagrants*:

(6) Most of the others lost their boots and clothes. The following day, at roll-call before dinner, the Jewish prisoners made a sorry sight – a bunch of barefoot tramps, dressed in tatters and shivering with cold. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 21)

(7) It would take a new Goya to wield his pencil and create the contours of a face swollen with starvation; those little hummocks on either side of the nose and those still lakes for eyes, that skin colour, the individual changes and the typical changes. Who will paint those half dead bodies of children, whimpering beneath the walls ...? (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 100)

(8) Tremendous psychological changes occurred in children. The child stopped being a child. Beset by the tough conditions, the child had to earn money not just for itself but for its family. It works, smuggles or begs. Its main and most dominating interest is – bread. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 126)

(9) I see a group of prisoners bathing under the showers. Here the full picture of the tragedy can be seen. These are not people, these are skeletons. Legs, thin as sticks from starvation, barely hold them up. I stand and stare at these live corpses. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 167)

Reality became unbearable for the Jews – they wished for the hell they lived in to end. This is expressed in the Archive by means of an optative clause or wishes, e.g.:

(10) We are afraid to let out a loud sigh of relief – please don't let them come back, please don't let them find father. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 16)

(11) During a fraction of a second thousands of thoughts run through your mind and your heart misses a beat ..., people curl up to make themselves smaller, as small as possible, anything – to avoid the bomb. Nothing matters – but not this house, please, not this apartment, not one of our family! (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 18)

(12) Jews said: "They might as well gas us, as keep tormenting us like this. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 50)

The everyday life of Jews under the occupation was dominated by numerous acts of **humiliation**, violence, hatred or aggression committed mainly by the Nazis but also by Poles and even Jews themselves. In descriptions we also find expressions depicting activities linked to acts of humiliating the Jews, e.g.: *to be badly beaten; to be beaten with anything that came to hand; to lead sb. off for execution; to leave sb. naked; to kick*;

*to maltreat; to stab; to torment, or characterising acts of making Jews do things that discredit human dignity, like to dig up the corpses and place them in graves:*

(13) The Germans tormented the Jews unmercifully. They stabbed many of them with bayonets, others were kicked or beaten until they lost consciousness – whilst all the time being made to sing. Many of them had their teeth knocked out. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 13)

(14) We are beaten and maltreated and, added to this, we are in mourning for three of our colleagues who died a tragic death – executed by shooting. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 54)

(15) Rarely were people detained for really important work, nor was attention paid to a person's physical suitability for the work. Among the 'catchers', sadists reigned supreme. It was sadism which, combined with an attempt at practical jokes – usually lacking sophistication and humour - was frequently the deciding factor in choosing work for the detainees. Hence Jews were made to perform jobs such as cleaning carpets with a toothbrush and without bending their knees; sharpening pencils on the bald pate of a Jew; cleaning out toilets with their bare hands; using a truncheon to beat rugs placed on fellow Jewish sufferers' backs; standing Jews in two lines and making them spit at each other, or beat each other; pouring water on hot coke, then having to carry it down to the cellar without using a shovel, after which the Jew would have to wipe his face thoroughly with his soiled hands . . . Another Jewish labour was choral singing – about the fact that the Jews are responsible for the war. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 27)

The world of values changed in the face of the annihilation as well. The reportages reflect changes in the understanding of values in the circumstances of the annihilation – one can observe a change in priorities. Spirituality loses its significance, temporality and materiality become of primary importance. In a report of the Clothes and Distribution Department of the Jewish Social Welfare Society we read as follows:

(16) The vast long-term social welfare campaign which is being run by our organisation bears that most important of slogans: feed and clothe the needy! And it should be stressed that these functions must not be separated nor differentiated: he who hungers should be fed but if you want to keep him alive you must also clothe him. Among values of primary importance in the war period one can thus include: food (mainly bread), clothes, medicines. People died of hunger and illnesses as well as exhaustion. As Ringelblum says: "The morality rate amongst the Jewish population is enormous. It has increased from 150 to 500, and even to 600 per week". (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 74).

Hunger is the most underlined need of the Jews. The lack of food and the inability to satisfy hunger drive people insane, make them obsessed and, in

the worst case, lead to their death. Food becomes a treasure more precious than gold. The texts in question are full of accounts with such lexemes as: *starvation, hunger, bread* - as in the examples below: *To die of starvation; face swollen from starvation; Jewish people die silently of starvation; his mind was totally focused on the subject of food and bread; to die of hunger; anything's better than hunger, better than that torture; hunger is animal-like, wild, primitive, an animal matter; to be hungry; passivity results from hunger; cry of hunger; to dream of bread; beg for bread; half dead with exhaustion; to parcel bread; a handful of hungry Jews; to search dustbins for food scraps*. Also as an optative clause: *If only you had a quarter of a loaf of bread now!*, e.g.:

(17) I am hungry. Food, food, food! Last soup – yesterday, at one forty. The next today, at the same time. So much time behind me. How much left? Eight hours. Although, to be sure, that last hour – the one after twelve o'clock – need not to be counted. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 94)

## Emotions in the Reportage of the Ringelblum Archive

The main function of a reportage is to inform about events, but its ability to evoke feelings of sympathy and compassion is equally vital. Thus a reportage is not just supposed to inform but also to impress readers and evoke aesthetic feelings in them. According to Lewis and Haviland (1993, p. IX), "No one would deny the proposition that in order to understand human behaviour, one must understand feelings". Therefore, when attempting to describe the tragedy of the Holocaust one should take a closer look at emotions. In her analysis of the language of emotions in a lexicosemantic approach, Spaginska-Pruszak (Spagińska-Pruszak, 1994) proposed a division of notions related to emotions according to **inner state of spirit** (affect, emotion, temper, passion, mood, agitation, experience, shock, feeling, elation, disposition), **rapid reaction to some unpleasant external factor** (fury, anger, irritation, outrage, annoyance, rage, envy, jealousy, exasperation) and **emotional state** (fear, dread, awe, anxiety, uneasiness, panic, scare, fright, trepidation, horror). Ortner (2014) makes the following differentiation on the lexical level: **emotion-describing lexemes** (e.g. semantic field FEAR), **emotion-expressing lexemes** (words whose expression of emotion is inherent, e.g. *shit, disgusting*), **stigmatising lexemes** (depending on socially accepted evaluative norms), **invectives/bad names** and **emotive idioms**.

The analysis of the texts in the Ringelblum Archive principally revealed stigmatisation of the Jewish community. The symbols of stigmatisation

were armbands with the Star of David but also the very ethnonym “Jew” itself. Rachela Zilberberg, who escaped from a small ghetto in Krzeszowice near Kraków, describes in her account that “Once we were outside the ghetto we took off our marks of shame [armbands with the Star of David] which we had covered with the headscarves” (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 108) or:

(18) Having forced Jews to wear the ‘star’ signs, the Germans had made things easy for themselves – useful when, for instance, an order was issued prohibiting Jews from walking along Piotrkowska Street. This directive was a severe blow to the people of Łódź. It also prohibited people from crossing the road which, being the main thoroughfare, cuts through the whole city along a several-kilometre stretch. The Jews who lived on Piotrkowska Street were horrified. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 28)

The word “Jew” became a stigma – *Das ist Jude* [That’s a Jew] sounds like a death sentence – take this anonymous note: “Increasingly you can meet youths going along the street repeating to themselves – practising: *Verfluchter Jude, das ist Jude* [A curse on him, that’s a Jew, that’s a Jew]” (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 22). Stigmatisation leads to denying one’s Jewish identity. In reportages from the Archive, the ethnonym *Jew* appears in every instance of humiliation: *The Jew’s stolen the salt; Get lost Jew!; Stand still, Jew!; No Jews here, there won’t be; Du kannst laufen, Jude!* [You can run, Jew!]; *Jews, step out!*. Also with invectives: *Verfluchter Jude; after all, they’re your people, you bastards; the Jewish guttersnipes* [about Jewish police]; *clodhopping Jew*. The authors of the accounts often left whole sentences in the German language, probably to render strangeness or alienation: *Für Juden gibt es kein Brot und Milch* [There’s no bread or milk for Jews!]; *Jew-free Kalisz; Bist du ein Jude?* [Are you a Jew?]; *Du bist doch ein beschnittener! Du bist doch Jude!* [You’ve been circumcised! You must be a Jew!].

The most frequently depicted and vivid emotion was fear in all its possible shades. Fear was an inseparable part of Jewish life from the first days of the war and accompanied Jews throughout the whole time of the Holocaust. Fear became synonymous with terror and pain. It was a reaction to the new inhuman reality:

(19) People were afraid to put pen to paper, fearing their homes would be searched. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 7)

(20) This was no ordinary human fear, it was something quite different – a wild, consuming, panic-stricken terror... (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 8)

(21) Wide open, staring as though in deathly pain and terror bottomless eyes, wherein the entire pain, the entire fear of death were preserved .... (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 19)

(22) Fearing looters, the tenants of our house barricaded the gate for the night. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 10)

(23) We are just about to sit down to supper when our housemaid runs in, gasping for breath: "Please, Sir, you must hide! They're rounding up the men!". We are horror-stricken. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 16)

(24) We are afraid to let out a loud sigh of relief – please don't let them come back, please don't let them find father... (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 16)

(25) Before you hear it [a bomb] actually explode, there is a terrible second of anticipation. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 18)

(26) The silence is so unexpected, so intense that it is quite terrifying. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 18)

(27) The Jewish woman – cowering in terror, her eyes filled with fear – begins to explain in poor Polish that she didn't mean to... (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 22)

In the Ringelblum Archive's reports we observe, depending on the circumstances, a gradation of negative emotions: from anxiety, through fear or terror, to shock and panic as well as aggression, all the way to emotional indifference resulting from tragic experiences. At the beginning of the war the prevailing feeling was that of anxiety regarding everyday matters (food and accommodation) in the face of the approaching military troops and limited supplies of food, energy and water:

(28) People were frantically buying out foodstuffs, prices were twice as high as before the start of the war. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 10)

(29) The Jews in Lipno were increasingly worried – would we be ousted from our homes? (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 39)

The emotion of fear was accompanied by uneasiness, which constituted a kind of prelude to subsequent feelings of terror or panic:

(30) We lived in an atmosphere of constant unease and anxiety. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 30)

(31) Kalisz railway station was packed, the arriving trains could not cope with the number of Jews wanting to leave. The frustration was terrible, every second lost could bring new edicts and restrictions; so people would cling to the buffers, stand on the carriage steps – anything, so long as it meant escape from the impending hell. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 12)

As distressing news from the world continued to appear, uncertainty of one's fate increased, and terror, panic and even psychosis induced by fear took over:

(32) Aeroplanes circled low, dropping bombs continuously. However, it was not the bombs which terrified me as much as the aeroplanes themselves. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 8)

(33) The terrified people ran to the assembly point next to the town hall. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 37)

(34) Terrified, people rushed out of the trains, fell to the ground, crawled on all fours losing small children and baggage on the way. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 38)

(35) Halfway there I met with an incredible sight: hundreds of people, a whole crowd of Jews – pale, terrified, with dazed eyes and blood-streaked faces, people I knew, strangers – all were rushing straight towards me. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 26)

(36) Terrified with no way out, we gave the gendarme some 2,000 zloties. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 32)

(37) All these Jews - some 700 people all their heads bare, terrified, not knowing what fate awaited them. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 12)

(38) Succumbing to the general panic, we left Kalisz on the day war broke out ... (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 12)

(39) The pregnant silence of the Jews, the loud conversations of the Christians, and a panic-stricken fear that the Germans would appear, lay like a heavy shroud on our hearts. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 34)

(40) Panic - Jewish traders pack away their goods into suitcases and hand-baskets but it's difficult to get out of there. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 41)

(41) A veritable psychosis to escape to the Soviet Union overwhelmed the Jewish population and in particular Jewish youth. I, too, gave way to its disabling power. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 34)

Aggression, anger or fury were usually directed towards Jews:

(42) The face of one of the women is red with fury. She stands with her legs spread wide and wields a large piece of coal in her hand, aiming it straight at the Jewish woman. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 22)

(43) The harridan with the lump of coal in her hand continues to shout angrily in her direction: "They can say goodbye to the good times, at last. Their defenders are gone. Hitler will deal with them now and show them what's what". (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 22)

Particularly aggressive verbal actions are visible in invectives/abusive names expressed by means of pejorative lexis:

(42) Hey, you! Damned Jews! Why are you standing at the wall? (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 15)

(43) Suddenly I feel a strong hand grab my arm – that bodes brutality. I shuddered, my blood froze and there was a ringing in my ears: “*Komm, komm verfluchter*” [Come, come, you accursed Jew]. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 67)

(44) The working day is drawing to a close. At last the long-awaited: “Wash your spades!” and the whole group is ready for the march back. Our section has three corpses. “Pick them up!” the supervisor barks. Nobody moves. “After all, they’re your people, you bastards!” sneers the schachmeister. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 73)

An emotion particular to the time of the Holocaust was shock and confusion in response to the mistreatment of the Jewish people, their starvation and inhuman actions taken against them:

(45) When I arrived at the camp, I noticed that some of the prisoners had triangles of red material sewn onto the back of their clothes. These were Jews. At the time, this was quite unheard of and it made a shocking impression on me. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 20)

(46) Yet another sombre, terrifying phenomenon strikes the traveller: death notices adorn the walls of almost every building. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 114)

In the light of the miserable position of Jews, it is indifference (hopelessness, despair, a death wish to free oneself from hell on earth) that may seem the most inconceivable from our present viewpoint. Ringelblum points to this state: “In recent times almost every day you can see people lying in the streets, in the middle of the pavement, either unconscious or dead. This sight no longer makes an impression” (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 56). The indifference of cold-blooded executioners carrying out orders to kill was especially inhuman. We find examples of indifference expressed by means of phrases like: *Nothing matters; A growing lack of compassion can be clearly felt; No-one shows emotions*:

(47) Nothing matters – but not this house, please, not this apartment, not one of our family! (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 18)

(48) A growing lack of compassion can be clearly felt. People walking in the street see children whose bodies are skeletal, they are barefoot and naked, they lie there with their purple, frozen little legs yet no-one shows any emotion. Human beings have turned into stones. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 109)

(49) Some of the youths threw their spades on the ground, saying that nothing mattered any more, others began to weep loudly, while others still began to virtually kiss the hands of the Germans, imploring them to desist. The Germans were, however, unmoved: “If you finish the work in three hours, you’ll have an easy death, if not...”. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 25)

(50) This, of course, brought about a fresh wave of sobbing and pleas but the soldiers were again unmoved. “Are we ready now, shall we start to fire?” asked the impatient machine gun crew. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 25)

(51) They began to fire. But we carried on walking, regardless of the bullets, with no feeling of fear, not realising that a bullet could hit any one of us, not taking any notice of anything. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 36)

(52) At about 11.00-11.30, I was so desperately exhausted and tired (added to which my body ached so much that the blows now ceased to make an impression on me) that I decided to stop doing any more work – regardless of the consequences. ... One of the soldiers patrolling the area noticed this, unshouldered his rifle, aimed it at me and began to count. However, I had reached such a stage of indifference that ... I made no effort to move. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 44)

Negative emotions are also verbalised in the Archive’s text by means of emotive idioms and phrasal verbs (e.g. *to lose one’s head*; *heart stands still*; *to tremble like a leaf*; *with bated breath*):

(53) With a heavy heart and bowed heads we all made our way back. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 36)

(54) The heart grows heavy when one recalls those terrible times when we were ousted from our homes [in Żuromin]. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 37)

(55) People are losing their heads, there is nowhere to move to. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 50)

(56) Declaration of war came so unexpectedly, so swiftly that people lost their heads – even before German shrapnel hit them. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 8)

(57) The bombing continued, we were half dead of fright. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 11)

(58) I feel my legs going weak at the knees from fear. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, p. 15)

## Conclusion

Europe after the Holocaust was no longer the same and never will be. All boundaries of humanity had been crossed – a description of those events was preserved in text and language. Emanuel Ringelblum summed up the character of the reporting work of the group that documented the tragedy of Polish Jews under the occupation:

Oneg Shabbat tried to create a comprehensive picture of the life of Jews during the war. The aim was to reflect faithfully all that the masses had experienced, what they thought and what they had suffered. We tried to ensure that the same event – for instance the story of a given Jewish community – was recorded by an adult and a young person, by a devout and by a lay Jew. A comprehensive picture was the

main aim of our activities. Objectivity was the second principle we tried to follow. We endeavoured to tell the whole truth, however unpleasant it might be for us. Our photographs are true to life, they have not been touched up. (*The Ringelblum Archive*, 2008, pp. 78–79)

This “photographic” picture of the Holocaust, to use Ringelblum’s expression, preserved in texts and language, predominantly depicts the tragedy of the war and occupation, human misery and the emotions evoked by it. At the same time, it renders some sociocultural specifics of the tragic period in question and describes human attitudes – those of slaughterers and victims. Negative emotions prevail – fear, terror, panic. Fear is described as: *extraordinary; human; wild; consuming*; victims are *panic-stricken*; they experience *an incredible feeling of uncertainty and fear; apprehension because of the smallest noise; an atmosphere of panic* (that) *evolved gradually*. The most frequently observed synonyms are the following lexemes: *to terrify/terrified, to be afraid; general panic; to wait fearfully; afraid of the darkness; terrified Jews, not knowing what fate awaited them; quite terrifying*.

Apart from emotion-expressing and emotion-describing lexemes, we note the use of stigmatising linguistic means, emotive idioms and phrasal verbs, and pejorative lexis (invectives/abusive names).

The present analysis is not sufficient to describe the evil that fell on Jews during the Holocaust. Further linguistic analyses are necessary to investigate the Archive’s texts from the point of view of emotions and values in extreme situations, not only from a lexical viewpoint but also in terms of linguistic pragmatics, grammar, text-language. The picture of human disaster encoded in language should serve as a tragic warning for future generations – a warning against hatred that can lead to overstepping of the borders of humanity.

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### Język okrucieństwa Holokaustu na przykładzie książki *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Dzień po dniu Zagłady*

Podziemne Archiwum Getta Warszawskiego jest jednym z najważniejszych świadectw zagłady polskich Żydów zachowanych w dokumentach życia społecznego, głównie w reportażach i fotografiach. Założyciel Archiwum, Emanuel Ringelblum, następująco opisał cel zebranych materiałów: „Chcieliśmy, aby wydarzenia w każdym mieście, doświadczenia każdego Żyda – a każdy Żyd w czasie tej wojny jest światem dla siebie – były przekazywane w najprostszy, najwierniejszy sposób. Każde zbędne słowo,

każdy dodatek literacki czy ozdoba wyróżniały się, powodując poczucie dysonansu i niesmaku. Życie Żydów w czasie tej wojny jest tak tragiczne, że nie potrzeba ani jednego dodatkowego słowa". Celem artykułu jest analiza lingwistyczna drastycznego języka Holokaustu na podstawie książki *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Dzień po dniu Zagłady*.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Holokaust, Archiwum Ringelbluma, język emocji.

### Note

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