

Drawings and Commentary of Beniamin Rozenfeld

A series of four drawings depicting places and scenes from the life of the Warsaw ghetto. The author of the drawings was a draftsman Beniamin Rozenfeld. Beniamin (Benek) Rozenfeld was born in 1909 (according to another source: 1912) in Lviv to Mina and Natan. He studied at the Faculty of Architecture of the Lviv Polytechnic, from which he graduated with the title of engineer in 1936. He practiced painting and sculpture.

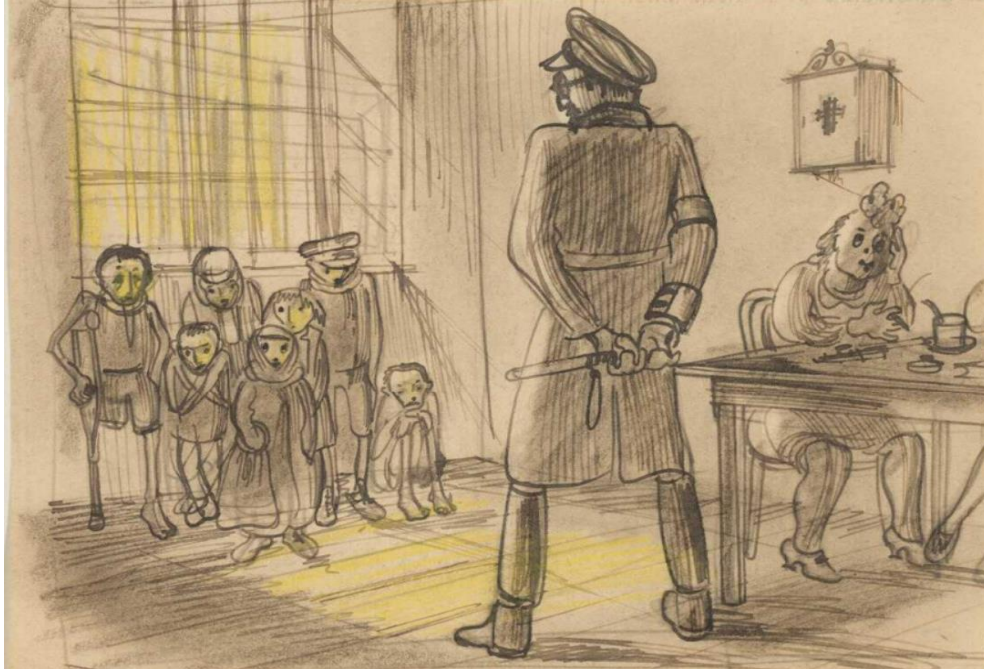
Rozenfeld spent the first years of the occupation in Lviv. After the city was occupied by the Germans, he managed to get to Warsaw and stayed in the Warsaw ghetto.

During the Nazi occupation, Rozenfeld stayed in the Warsaw ghetto. He contributed to the underground group "Oneg Shabbat". On the group's request, he created a series of drawings about life in the ghetto and outside its walls. On March 7, 1942, he delivered five drawings, with extensive comments, to the group's treasurer, Menachem Kohn, for which he received a gratification of 100 zlotys.

The drawings were made, most probably, between autumn and winter of 1941.

The drawings by Beniamin Rozenfeld were found after the war in the first part of the Ringelblum Archive, excavated from under the former ghetto's rubble in 1946. For many decades, their author was considered unknown, despite the fact that in the early 1950s Józef Sandel established his identity on the basis of Dora Zajczyk's eyewitness account.

The drawings were made in a mixed technique: ink, charcoal and crayon.



Staging Point

At Stawki Street 5/7, in the right wing, there is a stage Point and a detention room. The head of the Point is Henryk Kalmowicz.

Jewish children, detained outside the walls of the Jewish district, are taken by the Polish police or German gendarmes to the post of the Jewish Order Service, and the latter brings them to a stage point.

There, the children are detained under the supervision of a special order service guard.

Those who have a family are released, provided the relatives pay a fine of 50 zlotys and promise that they would not allow the "crime" to happen again. Full orphans, in turn, await the moment when they are accepted by an orphanage or boarding house. Until then, they stay at the Point. They receive 140 grams of bread and two rations of soup daily.

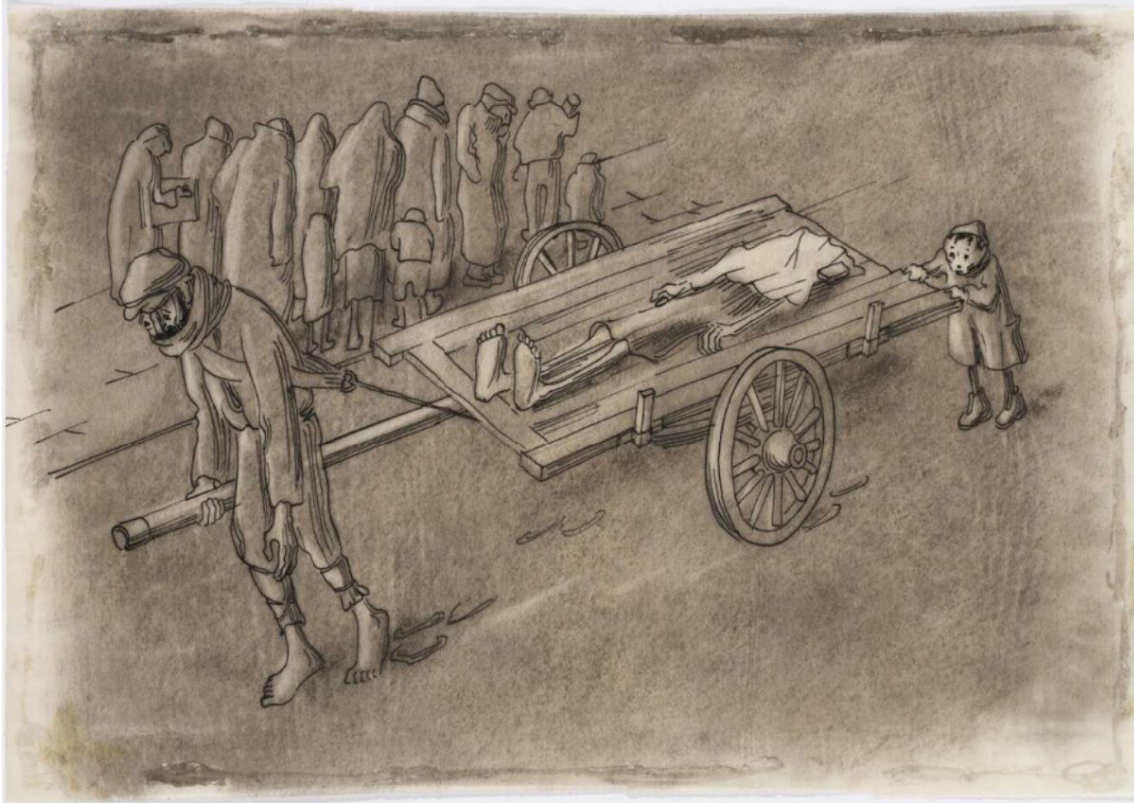


Funeral Fund

On a December morning in 1941, the owner of a shop on Mila Street found a dead child on the threshold of his closed establishment. The small, stiff, emaciated body was tightly pressed into the shop thresh-old, so that it was impossible to open the door without removing the corpse. On the street, the traffic is getting livelier and livelier - some trade could already be done, and here, such a misfortune - it was on this very threshold that this child chose to die.

But soon rescue arrives, the representative of the funeral parlor appears and, with professional routine, starts collecting the "funeral fund." The only legacy of the dead child - a pot of clay, which sometimes filled up with donated soup or a few coins, is now set up by the enterprising agent in the middle of the pavement. He covers the child with a sheet of paper and, assuming the pose of a preacher, calls in flowery Hebrew quotations upon passers-by to fulfil their last duty to the deceased.

It is not long before he achieves the desired effect - those who yesterday passed the dying child so indifferently, today, moved by the pathos-filled words of the preacher, throw grosz after grosz into the pot. A little more and the fund will be collected, the child will be buried, the funeral parlor will make a profit, the passers-by will perform one of the many mitzvot," the shop owner will start to trade, and life will go on, on Mila Street.



Funeral for the cart driver's Wife

Ber Ajzensztat, a cart driver from Muranowska Street, carried various goods on his cart. Once he would carry manufactured goods to Nalewki and Gesia streets, leather to Franciszkanska Street, sheet metal to Grzybowska Street, and then, during the resettlements, he would carry wardrobes, beds, sofas, tables, and all the Jewish poor.

Today, 23 November 1941, 42-year-old Ber Ajzensztat, who has been a cart driver for fifteen years, is carrying something he has never even thought about. He is carrying the corpse of his own wife, who died of starvation and exhaustion in the cellar. For three days he has been unsuccessfully appealing to various institutions for 20 zlotys, which was needed to pay for the funeral. Now he and his only son, 7-year-old Josaty, are taking his wife to the cemetery.



Chaimek Sztarkman

On 14 December 1941, Chaimek Sztarkman, orphan, 10-year-old, was arrested by the Polish police in the Praga district of Warsaw.

He was taken to the "Stage Point Detention Room" in the Jewish district at Stawki Street 5/7, which served, among other things, as a prison for Jewish children who were captured outside the Jewish district.

The Jewish order guard told the boy that if he paid a "fine" of 50 zlotys he would be released - if not, they would imprison him for six months.

In the evening, when the other children in the cell where Chaimek was placed were moved, Chaimek broke a window in order to escape. For this, he was beaten by the Jewish Order Service and moved to a cell on the third floor for security reasons.

At 6.30, Chaimek decided to run away and despite the fact that he was on the third floor, he jumped out the window onto the cobblestones in the yard. He was moved to a nearby infectious diseases hospital - Stawki Street 6/8 - and then taken in a rickshaw to the surgical hospital on Leszno Street where on 16 December 1941 under the watchful eye of the Jewish Order Service he passed away.