

## ADAM CZERNIAKÓW

Adam Czerniaków (1880-1942), Chairman of the Warsaw Jewish Council from September 1939 to 23 July 1942, was often known for what he was not. He was not a religious Orthodox, not a Bundist (Jewish social-democrat), not an ardent Zionist. Yet he was a man with qualities: an honest, reliable, responsible, carrying, and compassionate person. Reflections on what he was not, would only confirm his adequacy to the time of extreme challenges: he did not flee Warsaw in the wake of German occupation like the former chairman Maurycyj Mayzel; he did not misinform the German authorities on the gruesome situation in the ghetto like the chairman of the Łódź ghetto Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski did.

Adam Czerniaków being a captain of a sinking ship still believed in a positive outcome. When it has become obvious that the Germans commenced mass deportations from the ghetto in the end of July 1942, and they expected of him compliance with the quotas, Adam Czerniaków committed suicide on 23 July 1942. In his final passage of his Diary on Tishe B'Av, July 23, 1942, he wrote "It is 3 o'clock. So far there are 4000 ready to go. According to orders there have to be four thousand [more] by 4 o'clock."<sup>1</sup>

He kept the Diary from the beginning of the German occupation of Warsaw (October 1939) to the orders of mass deportation from the Warsaw ghetto (July 1942). The entries were concise, well to the point, whilst not without passion. His records comprise a truthful narrative, startling and stunning in its exactness and historicism. In the post-Holocaust world, Czerniaków's Diaries have become a credible standard allowing us to test the reliability of other relevant sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Raul Hilberg, Stanisław Staron, and Josef Kermisz, eds. *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 23.