It is seldom possible to identify the people in the photographs. The boy in the middle is Chaim Mietek Glezer, born in 1930. He was forced to move into the ghetto with his family in the spring of 1940. His father worked as an engraver in the metal department. He organized a job for his son, producing tin toys in the artistic sheet metal plant. Mietek Glezer was deported with the other ghetto inhabitants to Auschwitz-Birkenau in the summer of 1944.

He survived the Holocaust and immigrated to Israel in 1950 where he died in 1988. Over a period of ten years his widow filed a suit against the German pension insurance to receive an adequate pension for the work that Mietek Glezer did in the ghetto. Her claim was legally approved in February 2010.
If you want to find employment, you have to prove that you can do many things that are in demand outside the ghetto, and do them well. This advice was the most accurate and useful of all. In fact, it was the only way to get along in the ghetto, where it was both forbidden and impossible to produce anything for one’s own consumption. If people wished to work and stay alive, they had to manufacture for export, in consideration of which one could obtain food from the outside.

Josef Zelkowicz
June 28, 1942
Children's Colony

“Father told us excitedly, ‘and just imagine, from this man I learned that here in the Lodz ghetto the pioneer youth movements have extensive activities. The young people meet and make plans to immigrate, to make aliyah (literally: to go up) to the Land of Israel at the end of the war. How wonderful it is that they have the strength to organize. This also gives us hope and strength to get through the war which must end someday!’ [...] I felt my breathing stop from so much joy. Here, in the Lodz ghetto, Zionist activities? Here, youth organizing and making plans to make aliyah to the Land of Israel? If that was the case, then we were lucky to have arrived in the Lodz ghetto!”

Sara Plager-Zyskind
Religious life played a less important role in the ghetto than it did in freedom. The conditions in the ghetto made it extraordinarily difficult to observe the religious laws and holidays. Observing the Jewish dietary laws was basically impossible. Since the synagogues were destroyed in 1939, a new one was set up in a former cinema.

“My father continued to observe the Sabbath and did not work on that day. On the days that he did not work he did not receive a portion of food, of course. Father was lucky that in the Lodz ghetto, as in Bzeziny, his work supervisor overlooked the fact that he did not appear for work on Saturdays. Father also used to get up before sunrise every day in order to put on his tefillin [phylacteries] and pray. This too took away from his rest.”

*Sara Plager-Zyskind*

Oskar Rosenfeld
Old-age home, photo taken before September 1942

“Today a new tremendously important welfare organization was founded. It is the old-age home for the newly arrived population in the ghetto. The number of old people among the new population is strikingly high, but thanks to this institution, a special home especially for them can address the most urgent problems that have emerged as a consequence of the ghetto population growing by more than 20,000 people. [...] The buildings will provide housing for a few thousand elderly. Today the first 46 residents moved into the home.”

*Ghetto Chronicle*  
*December 1, 1941*
The young artist Zvi Hirsch Szylis (1909–1987), working on his portrait of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, with scenes of the Litzmannstadt Ghetto in the background. Szylis was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in the summer of 1944, and later sent to the Dachau concentration camp where he was liberated. He immigrated to Israel in 1957 where he continued to work as an artist. A large number of his works depict scenes from the Litzmannstadt Ghetto. Photo probably from 1942.
Children’s theater performance with banner “What rules the world,” 1941

“On Saturday, September 6, [1941] an event was organized by the Marysin administration in the hall of the cultural center under the motto ‘summer festival’. The many hours-long program was presented solely by children who were studying or recuperating in Marysin. It included choir singing, recitations, genre scenes from the life of children in Marysin, dances, works of the grotesque, and more. It was all very impressive. […] At the end of this nice performance the chairman held a short speech in which he pointed out that the well-being of the children still takes priority. No sacrifice should be eschewed to help the youngest ghetto inhabitants.”

Ghetto Chronicle
September 1941
“Cemetery death: A long extending field with a high wall that, built in the fall of 1941, turns its back on the Lodzer Cottage Maryshin … There, where one would expect to finally encounter a more cheerful peacefulness, there, at the villa quarter at the end of the ghetto, far from the actual ghetto city, lies the “green law” for the dead. Not a green lawn. Brown, thick muddy earth, on which thousands of gravestones already stand … The dead are carried without cease from the mortuary to all areas of the cemetery. […] The earth fills up with the dead. Those are the ones who were condemned to the Łódź ghetto, and to a brisk death. The starving, the freezing, the damned, the suicide victims. […] Mass mortality in the death corner of Europe!”

Oskar Rosenfeld
Although in a state of shock, whenever possible, people tried to maintain a degree of normality. In early December 1941, for example, 25 couples among the "new arrivals" from Western Europe were officially married. Altogether 63 of the 4,210 Jews deported from Berlin to Litzmannstadt got married in the ghetto to someone from their own or from another transport. The "West Jews," however, for the most part kept to themselves. There were even three children born in the ghetto to mothers deported from Berlin: Gitta Radomsky, born on December 3, 1941, Recha Halbersberg, born on January 25, 1942, and Tana Pollaczek, born on May 9, 1942. None of these children survived.
“A student from the same grade as ours died from hunger and exhaustion yesterday. As a result of his terrible appearance, he was allowed to eat as much soup in school as he wanted, but it didn’t help him much. He is the third victim in the class.”

Dawid Sierskowiak
Diary entry from May 13, 1941
“Preventorium”

“I want once more to force myself to find the courage to live. God willing, for my child, the poor thing. We have deteriorated so because no money was sent. May God deliver us as he sees fit. Our suffering is already so great; the sins of others have already been atoned for. I pray that I will soon be released from my suffering. God let me fall asleep in peace and rest by my mother, my final request, if need be that I cross over. The child cries in hunger, the father cries for cigarettes, the mother wishes to die, family life in the ghetto. The heart still functions, but it will never survive the war.”

Irene Hauser

*diary from July 15, 1942*
Children’s Colony

“At school they are already talking about the end of the school year, about the holidays, the choice of secondary school, etc. I am not going to change my previous intention of attending a humanistic school. The instructors here are quite awful, but I will somehow manage to get through it all. For now it looks quite bleak for the fourth grade class. We only just passably reached our goal in a few subjects. But only just passably. The school year is supposed to be over at the end of September. […] We will become somebody!”

Dawid Sierakowiak
diary entry, August 26, 1941
Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the “Jewish Elder,” went to considerable effort to improve the care and provisions available to the many thousands of children in the ghetto. A number of institutions — an orphanage, a baby ward, even a children’s colony — were established for this purpose. Beginning in summer 1940, 1,500 children were able to recuperate in the children’s colony and occasionally forget the reality of life in the ghetto. Free meals were provided there, but the children’s colony also suffered from a lack of provisions and the death rate rose rapidly.